

BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, October 1, 2019, starting in Room #900, Boston City Hall, and beginning at 5:15 p.m.

Members in attendance were: Deneen Crosby, David Hacin, Milkyoung Kim, Andrea Leers, Anne-Marie Lubenau, David Manfredi, William Rawn, and Kirk Sykes. Absent were Linda Eastley, Eric Howeler, and Paul McDonough. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Natalie Punzak was present for the BPDA.

The Chair, Andrea Leers (AL), announced that this was the meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission that meets the first Tuesday of every month and welcomed all persons interested in attending. She added thanks to the Commissioners for the contribution of their time to the betterment of the City and its Public Realm. This hearing was duly advertised on Saturday, September 21, in the BOSTON HERALD.

Andrea Leers restated the BCDC Principles and Priorities, which were introduced to the public in September 2019. These include the following:

- Height, scale, and massing: The Commissioners will look to city-wide initiatives such as Imagine Boston 2030, and planning and precinct studies developed by the BPDA, as well as drawing on their own experiences in an effort to offer the best guidance possible. The Commission will encourage growth that responds to the scale and massing of surrounding properties, sustains the quality of life and distinctive physical character of the city, and supports neighborhoods in ways that citizens value.
- Accessible open space: The BCDC is committed to supporting functional, beautiful and connected open space throughout the City of Boston. To achieve this vision, the Commission encourages each project to provide thoughtful, public open space that addresses human and ecological resiliency, prioritizes street-level improvements, and responds to the site and neighborhood context.
- Parking and mobility: The Commission believes that the provision of abundant and inexpensive public parking in the city should be questioned in light of a larger movement to recover space from cars, provide a better pedestrian experience, and demonstrate best environmental practices.
- Design creativity: The Commission strongly encourages creative problem solving that reflects the unique qualities of the city's fabric and public realm as well as the city's identity as a global center of leading edge innovation. With a mind to quality, sustainability, and contemporary 21st century expression, the Commission asks proponents and designers to propose thoughtful projects that advance Boston's identity as an internationally recognized hub of design creativity and education

while simultaneously respecting its unique character as the capital of the New England region and a touchstone of American history.

The first item on the agenda was the approval of the September 3, 2019 Monthly Meeting Minutes and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on September 10, 17, and 24. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the September 3, 10, 17, and 24, 2019 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Seaport Square Parcel N** project. WS Development proposes ~470,000 SF office/research building along Congress Street and Boston Wharf Road as part of the Seaport Square Masterplan. Morris Adjmi Architects are the design architects, JCFO are the landscape architects; this is the same design team for Parcel P adjacent to this site which the Commission recommended for approval on June 4, 2019. The scale of the project exceeds the BCDC review threshold of 100,000 SF and review is recommended. As such, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC review the schematic design for the proposed Seaport Square Parcel N project in the South Boston Waterfront neighborhood.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Hood Park 6 Stack Street** project. This project comes to the Commission for review as a requirement in the Hood Mark Master Plan. The site contains a small pavilion that will contain 241 bike parking spaces, locker and shower facilities to be used by the office buildings, a small bicycle retail space, and public restrooms. A sloped 4,200 SF lawn can be programmed with performances or passive recreation. The project will be completed and opened in conjunction with 10 Stack Street. The Commission preliminarily reviewed this project with the review and approval of 10 Stack Street earlier this year (voted on March 5, 2019). A motion was made, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC review the schematic design for the 6 Stack Street project in the Hood Park PDA Masterplan in the Charlestown neighborhood.

The Review Committee presented a report on the **St. Elizabeth's** project. This is part of an update to the hospital's IMP. The primary proposal is for a approximately 215,400 SF, 51.5-foot high, six-floor precast concrete parking garage structure that accommodates approximately 610 parking spaces. The Project will meet the changing SEMC patient, visitor, and staff parking needs and improve open space and access to the SEMC. The scale exceeds the BCDC review threshold and the project has significant impact on the public realm, so review was recommended. It was then moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC review the schematic design for the St. Elizabeth's Medical Center Parking Garage as part of the St. Elizabeth's IMP in the Brighton neighborhood.

The next item on the agenda was a report from the Design Committee on the **Northeastern University EXP** project. Mikyoung Kim and David Manfredi were recused. Bob Schaffer, Payette Architects: At the end of the last Design Committee meeting, the Commissioners commented on the relationship between the opacity and porosity of the facade skin. The physical model contains the project in context with the entirety of Northeastern's campus. This project with its partner, the completed ISEC building and bridge, connect across train tracks to link the portion of the campus within the Roxbury neighborhood. There is a network of communication between the two buildings that the EXP will complete. The rendered views from around the site show how the design has evolved through the BCDC process. The dynamic building skin made of stainless steel serves to animate the building.

Deneen Crosby: As a visitor to this campus, I think wayfinding will be useful to people who may not know where they're going or that this portion of the campus connects across a bridge to the main campus to the North. How much do you want to say that this is a campus entry versus a place to connect through?

Andrea Leers: I appreciate the changes you've made in articulating the building. There is a better distinction now between what is open and closed. All told, this is a very complex site and I think you have tackled the problem very well. When both buildings are there, the presences of the EXP will define the welcoming passage to the campus.

Hearing no public comment, it was moved, seconded and

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of the schematic design for the proposed Northeastern EXP at 795 Columbus Avenue in the Roxbury neighborhood.

Mikyoung Kim returned. Prior to the proponent presentation, Executive Director Elizabeth Stifel, presented one slide on the context of **Seaport Square Parcel N**. The discussion of the project internally has been largely about the scale and materiality of the building as it relates to the recently approved Parcel P building. William Rawn, Kirk Sykes, and David Manfredi were recused.

Yanni Tsipis of WS Development introduced **Seaport Square Parcel N** in context of the ongoing Seaport Square Development. Morris Adjmi designed 400 Summer Street (Parcel P); the design of this building on the shared site in relation to the Fort Point Channel Landmark District must be contextual. Morris Adjmi Architects will also design this building in composition with Parcel P and the adjacent Fort Point Landmark District.

Tom Lewis, Morris Adjmi: The building deploys a similar language to Parcel P with masonry, but diverts with arched window openings. The building setback at the top levels mirrors those from Parcel P. Cornice line carries through at the third level. On the facade facing the Summer Steps and Parcel P, referred to as "The Cut," the facade material is expressed with metal. Street front retail along Summer Street will help activate the street. A single bay in the center of the building provides access to the lobby. Views from around the site show how the design is informed by its context between historic brick buildings and the new Parcel P building. We did not want the buildings to be twins, but we think of the buildings as cousins. The rectangular verse arch-top openings set the buildings apart.

David Hacin: When you come to subcommittee, this project would benefit from a model of both projects at the same level of detail. I think it's good that these projects are visually similar as a gateway to the area, but a model will help us better understand the relationship to each other and the public realm. It's not completely clear to me from the view down Congress Street that you are signaling a major urban moment. Think about how the Summer Steps/The Cut can better announce themselves.

Mikyoung Kim: I'd like more detail on the sectional information in relation to the sidewalks and streets. These major pedestrian roads in the Seaport plea to be more friendly.

Deneen Crosby: At design committee, clarify relationship of one building to the other along the Summer Steps. I think it's a question of scale, especially in relationship to storefront entries.

David Hacin: Help us better understand the shade and shadow conditions along the Summer Steps to ensure that this public space does not become a canyon.

Andrea Leers: Backing up to the big idea of this project, I was interested and impressed by the way Parcel P took shape from its environment and interpreted masonry detailing and steel in a new way. To some extent, I think this design defaults to a less nuanced, more nostalgic design which I find to be less inventive. I could imagine this building as a partner that is yet another invention of the architecture in Fort Point. I would encourage you to look more closely at the building's three sides and the relationship of materials, especially on the cut face.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: Think about the inventory of historic warehouse structures in the Fort Point district. There is quite a contrast in legibility of the sides, even in color, in the historic buildings. Add the existing buildings to the views and renderings from around the site and use them for inspiration in the continued development of this design.

The project will continue in Design Committee.

The project presentation was **6 Stack Street** in the Hood Park PDA Masterplan. David Manfredi was recused.

Mark Rosenshein, Trademark Partners: This project is unique in two ways: at 3900 SF it is a small addition to the Hood Park Masterplan and it was developed from suggestions during the Commission's review of 10 Stack Street. On a community and development level, we

prioritized open space while looking for ways to activate space between buildings at the end of the site. There will be 240 parking spaces and ~1,000 SF bike-related retail space. Mark Sardegna, Elkus Manfredi Architects: We always envisioned the public realm along Hood Park Drive that connects to Rutherford Avenue as green space. 6 Stack Street terminates the view of the green space network on campus while supporting a public program. Atop this small storefront and bike parking facility will be a lawn that gradually slopes from the sidewalk to provide an accessible route to a small patio. A deep layer of soil atop the roof will allow full sized trees to grow.

Kate Kennan, Offshoots Landscape Architects: We are interested in how this site can ecologically serve the site. The trees are hydro-poplars that grow quickly and can treat air pollution from the industrial uses surrounding Hood Park. The meadow will serve all-season plantings that are constantly changing. A rain garden will capture and treat stormwater from around the site. Light and airy handrails will be incorporated as the design evolves.

Deneen Crosby: One of the concerns I have is that there is not enough activation of the lawn.

David Hacin: I'm intrigued by the trees, but I'm wondering what this site looks like in the winter. Is there a strategy of layering trees or plantings that will still look full during winter?

Mikyong Kim: I think all of the components of this project are good, but I think the scale needs to be slightly adjusted. I like the sloped lawn, but could the whole corridor have a more equal weight? It feels like the end of the green space network is too densely populated here in scale with the whole of Hood Park Drive.

David Hacin: Could this space be dense enough and planted enough that this becomes a kind of architectural moment through natural landscape? It seems like the ramp is the problem we will need to tackle.

Andrea Leer: This is a project that was created in response to comments we made. They brought an idea in this small building for a public place. This can work as a flat or an incline plain, but I want all the rails to go away. The pathways and building are trying to do too many things. But given the scale of the project and I wonder whether we wouldn't consider referring this back to staff.

Kirk Sykes: The goal for this project is to be a community amenity. It will be important that this project is visible from Rutherford Avenue. The visual connection is as important as the amenity. Simplicity: celebrate the lawn instead of the gap. Make the bike parking space accessible and safe, and consider the context beyond your site.

Mikyong Kim: I appreciate so much the investment you're making in the landscape. I think scale can be worked out. Make this a special culmination point. I am comfortable with this continuing with BPDA staff.

Deneen Crosby: This building is trying to do a lot. You can get rid of the staircase, simplify the circulation. Think through the details.

Mikyong Kim: Think about winter.

With no further comments, the Commission moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission refer 6 Stack Street in the Hood Park PDA Masterplan to BPDA Staff with correspondence as necessary. No further BCDC review is required.

The final project presentation of the evening was for the **St. Elizabeth's IMPNF** and garage proposal in the Brighton neighborhood. Executive Director Elizabeth Stifel presented one slide on current staff concerns, which focus primarily on issues of height, massing, and design.

Steve Van Ness, VP Planning & Design of Steward Health Care: Provided an overview of master plan. Parking Garage A is nearing the end of its life and it is not feasible to repair.

The IMP proposes a new parking garage on the vacant site along Washington Street.

Brandon Schrenker, Walker Consultants: We propose a two bay parking structure. We are bringing the grade down one level to embed the garage in the hill. Landscape design includes an accessible path along the slope of Washington Street with seating areas and plantings. Washington Street in this location is wide (so cars are going fast). There is an existing retaining wall along the 35' hill. We're creating a secondary space between the back of the public sidewalk and the parking garage to improve the pedestrian condition.

Mikyong Kim: You're spending a long time explaining the complexity of the grading on site. The presentation would really benefit from a physical model.

David Hacin: We are not crazy about new parking garages or parking in general. I think the removal of the other parking garage can help enhance the image and drop off for the hospital which is a huge plus. This feels like a parking diagram that is dropped onto a site where the landscape design is trying to make this fit as best as possible into the site left around it. The placement of the garage seems like it's creating an awkward relationship to the new opening on the site when the existing parking garage is removed. I'm not comfortable with the condition of the garage facade in scale and height along Washington Street.

Andrea Leers: There is topography on the immediate site but also the insertion of this project into a surrounding residential context. We need a diagram of the site circulation: where people arrive from, where they are dropped off, and how people get into the main body of the building. This needs to either go farther into the ground by several levels or be less tall. Fundamentally, it is too long of a wall along Washington Street. I want to see views and a model that give us a sense of what this is like next to all of the houses.

William Rawn: I think this parking garage needs to see the most creative solutions you can deploy to minimize the scale. I would like to see some examples of garages that step down a hill or are embedded into the hill. You also need to deal with the design moves along the elevation of the garage.

Kirk Sykes: Look at Washington Street in the broader context, including where it crosses with other streets. We need to understand how this fits in.

Andrea Leers: It feels like you decided how many spaces you needed, laid them out, dropped them onto the site, and then thought about everything else. You need to think

about the circulation and what it means for the comfort of your families and patients. We encourage you to take a big step back and look creatively at other ways to achieve a lot of parking on a steep slope next to a small-scale neighborhood. There is a lot of work to be done before you return to the Commission.

The project will continue in Design Committee.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 7:41 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for Wednesday November 6, 2019. The recording of the October 1, 2019 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Planning and Development Agency.