

MINUTES BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, October 6, 2020, starting and began at 5:15 p.m. The meeting was held virtually via Zoom to ensure the safety and health of the Commission and members of the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. Members in attendance were Deneen Crosby, David Hacin, Eric Höweler, Anne-Marie Lubeanu, Andrea Leers, David Manfredi, Paul McDonough, William Rawn, and Kirk Sykes. Absent were Linda Eastley and Mikyoung Kim. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Dana Whiteside, Matt Martin, Ted Schwartzberg, Aisling Kerr, Meghan Richard, Alexa Pinard, and Natalie Punzak were present for the BPDA.

The Chair, Andrea Leers, 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 Friday, September 25, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the September 1 and September 22 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on September 8, 15, and 29. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the September 1, 8, 15, 22, and 29 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the Dorchester Bay City project. This is a PDA Masterplan that comprises 3.5 million SF on the almost 20 acre Bayside site and 2.4 million on the 13.6 acre Morrissey site. The uses include retail/restaurant, residential, and office/research and approximately 20 acres of open space. Given the scale and public nature of the project, review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Dorchester Bay City project in the Dorchester neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the F2 and F4 buildings in the Bartlett Station PDA project. Recently, the BCDC reviewed and recommended approval for Lot D (01/08/2019), senior housing, and for the updated PDA (07/09/2019). These two projects are at the corners of Lambert and Guild Streets and Lambert and Bartlett Streets. Both projects are well below the 100,000 SF threshold. They are reviewed by BCDC as a conditional of the approval for the Bartlett Square PDA. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed F2 and F4 Bartlett Station Buildings project in the Roxbury neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the Bunker Hill Housing Redevelopment project, last reviewed by the Commission in 2016. A new development and design team has proposed redevelopment of the 27.6-acre site, which will include replacing the existing BHA housing units and

adding market rate units. Since the last presentation to the Commission, the project has reduced 3,200 proposed units to 2,699 units. Height is reduced from 20 to 10 stories and parking has been reduced by 1,000 spaces while open space has increased from 1.9 to 2.7 acres. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Bunker Hill Housing Redevelopment update in the Charlestown neighborhood.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for the **Dorchester Bay City project**. Kirk Sykes was recused.

Ted Schwartzberg, Senior Planner, and Matt Martin, Urban Designer, from the BPDA gave an overview of the project process to-date: The Bayside site is bounded by Mass DCR, Harbor Point Apartments PDA, Mt. Vernon Street, and, on the north side, private property. Currently on site are the vacant Bayside Exposition Center and surface parking. The Morrissey site is bounded by Mt. Vernon Street, Boston College High School, Morrissey Boulevard, and property owned by the Roman Catholic Church and BPS. The site has two existing buildings used by Santander Bank, which will be demolished for the project. Planning in the area includes the Mt. Vernon Street Redesign from 2015 and Imagine Boston 2030. More recently, the BPDA Planning staff has been working with the community to update the Columbia Point Master Plan, originally adopted in 2011. Staff review has focused on the massing, lot coverage, and connectivity.

Tamara Roy from Stantec and Demetrios Staurinos from OLIN Studio presented the project to the Commission: The project will bring 1,740 housing units, 4 million SF of office and lab space, and 20 acres of open space that connect to a large climate resilient network. The project has regional multi-modal connections to transit and open space in the city, and the "T to the Sea" pedestrian and open space connection from the JFK/UMass red line station has been the driver of the urban design scheme. Green fingers through the site link pathways from the T, through the central spine of the site, to DCR open space and water. The site will be elevated to meet 2070 flood resiliency standards, and the edge of the site gently slopes up from the water's edge to our site. We are working with surrounding site owners to make sure this transition is seamless and includes a gradient of eco-regions. The building heights are constrained by Chapter 91 and FAA limits, and the heights of buildings in the masterplan step up from the water to the T Station. Given the scale of the project, there will be a series of topic-focused Design Committee meetings to deeply explain and explore each part of this context, vision, and masterplan.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: We want to better understand the relationship between this development and Harbor Point and adjacent projects. The existing pedestrian experience here is not the most hospitable, and I want to make sure that the length of buildings, particularly along Mount Vernon Street, do not further contribute to too big a scale. Phasing of development (specifically regarding use and building types) will be critical to the success of the project.

David Hacin: There seems to be a need for a clear, theatrical connection from this site to the T, and I'd like to address this in Design Committee. As the Seaport development evolved, it felt very divided by blocks. I like the idea of the Boardwalk idea and public realm concepts, but there are a lot of secondary streets and it makes me wonder if parts of the project might be better assembled if the blocks were less divided.

William Rawn: The project area along the water edge looks exciting and strongly connected to the broad public realm connections around the site. It's unclear to me what level of control this project can have on the opposite site, as you connect to the JFK/UMass T Station.

Andrea Leers: Please plan to fill us in about the scale and dimensions of the blocks at Design Committee.

Deneen Crosby: The topography of this landscape will effect the experience on site and the relationship of this project with its neighbors, and I'd like to see cross sectional relationships through the project and its neighbors.

David Manfredi: Thank you for the succinct presentation. I want to reinforce the importance of integrating relationship of buildings to their blocks. The thoughtful consideration of every kind of mobility is important in this project, and I imagine we could devote at least one design committee session to this topic. I would encourage you to share your programmatic phasing with us.

Eric Höweler: The flood plain map shows how critical this site will be to regional infrastructure. I'd like to know more about flood management on site.

Andrea Leers: I want to thank you for your cohesive and concise presentation. It was nice to see the thinking of both Stantec and OLIN so well integrated.

The project will continue in design committee.

The next project presentation was for buildings **F2 and F4 in the Bartlett Station** PDA Masterplan in the Roxbury neighborhood. Kirk Sykes was recused.

Meghan Richard, Urban Designer at the BPDA, gave an introduction: These are both considered small projects but are part of the Bartlett Station PDA Masterplan, and review of each phase of development was a condition of the Commission's approval of the Masterplan. Staff review has been focused on connecting the building to the existing neighborhood fabric and the other Bartlett Station buildings.

Diane Clark, Nuestra CDC: The F1 and F3 projects provide 100% affordable units; these F2 and F4 buildings are market rate apartments with 13% deed restricted affordable units.

Cliff Boehmer, Davis Square Architects: There is significant grade change across the F2 site. The primary entry of the building is at the corner of Guild Street. The south elevation mimics the rhythm of the residential building across the street. The north side of the building faces open space and a pedestrian connection down to Washington Street.

Greg Minott, DREAM Collaborative: Building F4 also has a substantial grade change on site with tuck under parking. The existing surrounding fabric includes single family homes, brick town houses, triple deckers. This building picks up on the materiality of the neighborhood with a modern addition at the corner that steps down the hill.

Deneen Crosby: I would like to better understand the public space behind F2 and how F2 relates. There could be better integration between the public and interior private spaces to encourage people to walk through here.

Eric Höweler: If the neighborhood is eclectic the parcelization is choppy, we want to make sure that these buildings are not also eclectic on their own. I'd like to understand the internal logic applied to each of these buildings. These buildings need to deliver a cohesion despite the diverse context.

David Hacin: There are unifying elements of the site, like the building scale and brick materiality. Both of these buildings occupy corners, and I'm surprised that the emphasis with both is on a hierarchy centered on volumes that are not corners. What are the tools you can use to unify these corner buildings despite their stylistic differences?

Andrea Leers: I think there's an argument for these buildings to have a common, legible sense of entry, since they are the two uphill anchor buildings in the masterplan. F2 seems to be treated/scaled as one building; F4 is scaled with an articulation that comes across as 3 separate parts. I'd like to see the parts of F4 made more separate and distinct.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: When we consider these buildings, we need to understand how they work in context with their surrounding public realm. I think it would be helpful to look at these projects together in context and then on their own. A number of our comments relate to both of the buildings.

Public comment - Kathryn Williams: All of the street faces on Washington, Guild, Lambert, and Bartlett are tall towering walls right on the street. The density is inconsistent with the neighborhood.

It was recommend that these projects are presented together in committee, looking at questions about entry, clear architectural expression, the development of the space behind the buildings, and the relation between the two buildings and their context. The project will continue in design committee.

The **Bunker Hill Redevelopment** in the Charlestown neighborhood was the next presentation. Kirk Sykes was recused.

Alexa Pinard, BPDA Urban Designer, gave an overview: Since the initial proposal in 2016, the density on site has been redistributed to lessen the height of the tallest building. We've developed design principles with the project team and focused on the public facing edges of the project. The existing site has about 1,000 units.

Megan Pasquina, Leggat McCall Properties: Built in the early 1940s, the existing BHA units on site are deeply in need of renovation. In addition to replacing these units, it's a priority to create a livable, sustainable, and equitable mixed-income community that is fully integrated with the Charlestown neighborhood. A DPIR was filed in February 2020 to revisit the 2016 proposal. The new proposal proposed reduced housing numbers (-400 units), reduced parking spaces (-1,000 spaces), and reduced height, with increased publicly accessible open space to 2.7 acres. Phasing is designed to reduce the impact of relocation of the 1,000 families on site. Puts the nexus of development next to the existing church to create a vibrant start to the development.

David Lunny, Stantec: The current buildings on site create a wall to the Charlestown neighborhood. It's one of our top priorities to enhance the pedestrian experience around and through the site. The proposed site plan reconnects the site to Charlestown by extending the Concord and Lexington street grids into the site. There will be 11 mixed-income buildings and 5 100% affordable buildings, 2 retail pavilions, a community building, and ground floor retail throughout the site.

John Copley, Copley Wolff: The open space network takes cues from the scale of the Charlestown neighborhood, where there are many historic sites and a variety of scales and uses, including active space and community gardens.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I want to better understand your approach to architecture throughout the masterplan, as large scale development has to work hard to knit with the fabric of the existing surrounding neighborhood. I appreciate the context you provided about how you're think about the site, but it would be helpful to understand how the architecture will also relate to Charlestown.

Andrea Leers: The earlier project was very ambitious in defining the characteristic architectural elements of the future development with a kit of parts. Will that kit of parts be the directive to the several architects that will develop projects in this new version of the Master Plan?

Deneen Crosby: I'm curious to know about the through streets in the project and how people in the neighborhood will be encouraged to walk through the project.

Eric Höweler: The impression I get from the video pan through the site is that there might almost be too much cohesion. I would encourage moments that stand out or break away from the kit of parts language so that there are opportunities for wayfinding.

Andrea Leers: The reconfiguration of height and massing on the site is a great development. This is a better overall strategy for this project to feel like a continuous part of the neighborhood. I do have some questions about the buildings that have parking on the street face (blocks H and I). I think we'll need to look at this block-by-block to understand the project.

The project will continue in Design Committee.

The final update on the agenda was an update from Elizabeth Stifel about Article 28 of the Boston Zoning Code.

Elizabeth Stifel: We are proposing a change to Article 28 of the Boston Zoning Code to add 2 members to the BCDC. The Commission continues to be extremely busy and will meet almost every Tuesday for the foreseeable future. We are required to do a text amendment to the Boston zoning code to address quorum from 5 to 7 with votes of approval from 4 to 6. Staff have reviewed this with City of Boston leaders and stakeholders. The first step of this process would be a public meeting, followed by a request from the BPDA to request a text amendment from the Boston Zoning Commission, followed by a request from the Boston Zoning Commission to approve this amendment.

Andrea Leers: This idea that has been discussed several times in the past, and gives us a chance to broaden our reach.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: What role will diversity (professional experience, sector, identity) play for the new members of the Commission?

Kirk Sykes: I would advocate for another voice from the development community to offer perspective.

Elizabeth Stifel: This will certainly be a key consideration in the appointment of new Commissioners.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 8:01 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for November 10, 2020. The recording of the October 6 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.