

MINUTES

DESIGN COMMITTEE OF THE BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

December 19, 2023

Meeting A

5:00pm, Held virtually via Zoom

Project: **80 – 100 Smith Street, Mission Hill**

Present: Commissioner Mimi Love, Commissioner Anne-Marie Lubenau, Commissioner Kirk Sykes, Commissioner Shauna Gillies-Smith

DISCUSSION: The design team's presentation focused on the site context with specific reference to the Basilica, efforts to salvage masonry materials from the existing buildings, and their strategies to develop a character that resonates with the rest of the campus. Commissioners questioned the rationale behind the materials but appreciated the efforts not to replicate what was there before. They later suggested interweaving the material choices between the two separate buildings for a more cohesive relationship between the two buildings.

There was additional feedback regarding each project's relationship to one another: how could these masses act as bookends and retain a gradual transition in form to the street? These comments further developed into concerns that the 80 Smith residential building exudes a monumental civic presence and that the team should soften its verticality. Additionally, there was feedback that the 80 Smith building should better relate to the neighboring residential buildings across Smith street in scale and articulation.

Further comments suggested incorporating additional green space and punctuation in the parking court. More specifically, the commissioners asked the proponent's commitment and approach strategy to public art and if the public art will become a significant element of the landscape. Finally, the commissioners questioned whether it was necessary to stay completely true to the previous building's envelope, as flexibility could provide room for additional open space.

There were three public comments by members of the community.

The public comments mentioned concerns with the height of the proposed project, their impact on view corridors to downtown and of the Basilica from the nearby neighborhood, the materiality and scale of the 80 Smith Street building, and a call for stronger materiality connections to the Basilica and to the neighborhood.

The project team responded to these comments by stating that the height of the project was established by the previously approved project on the site, and that they had received feedback to date from the community to stay within those height limits. The project team also mentioned that some of the floorplate, massing and materiality choices were based on direction provided by the landmarks commission.

The Project will continue in Design Committee.

Meeting B

6:00pm, Held virtually via Zoom

Project: **18 – 22 Arboretum Road, Roslindale**

Present: Commissioner Anne-Marie Lubenau, Commissioner Catherine Morris, Commissioner Kirk Sykes, Commissioner Shauna Gillies-Smith

DISCUSSION: The project team addressed how, since the last presentation to the commission, they focused on the revised massing, improved vehicle circulation, and updated views. The commissioners voiced concerns regarding the unarticulated CMU ground floor facade on Lochdale and suggested breaking it up. Additionally, they provided feedback that the underpass from Lochdale to the courtyard felt tight and the paving in the courtyard felt vast. They asked the proponent team to incorporate additional greenspace and create a continuous progression through the site from Lochdale to the Arboretum tunnel entrance.

The commissioners then discussed the unique identity of the location and honed in on the entrances: how can these work from an architectural design standpoint and become better read as points of orientation to the building?

Three public comments positively focused on the impact of additional housing and public transit in the neighborhood. However, the Arboretum's director, William Friedman, also requested that further interaction between the project and the interaction between the project and the stonewall entrance into the Arboretum be redeveloped as the proposed connection feels tight and hindered by the dog park. The commissioners felt comfortable with the proponent continuing to work with the BPDA staff on their comments and further refining the specialized gateway for an elegant interaction.

STIPULATIONS:

The commissioners require the project team to work with BPDA staff to address the following design concerns and to present their updates on these items upon return to the full commission:

1. Provide all building elevations
2. Better explain the relationship between the building and the MBTA property
3. Explore the articulation of the Lochdale ground level facade

4. Explore improvements to the ground level courtyard and vehicular connection through the site including:
 - a. create a more cohesive sense of place and arrival building off of current design
 - b. explore as continuous movement through the site as possible
 - c. enhance the legibility of the building entrances with improvements to landscape and building articulation
 - d. reduce total amount of pavement
 - e. articulate a pedestrian zone within the overall paved area to promote safety and legibility, update plantings to reinforce
 - f. make the knuckle feel less tight for pedestrians
 - g. develop better relationship of drop-offs to building entrances
5. Better integrate language of on-site plaza with design for plaza on Arboretum Road
6. Better relate materiality of site and building to materiality of existing stone gateway to the Arboretum
7. Better integrate the stone gateway to the Arboretum into the design of the site plan

The Project will return to the full commission.

Meeting B

5:00 pm, Held virtually via Zoom

Project: **475-511 Dorchester Avenue, (On the Dot) Phase 1,**

495 Dorchester Avenue, South Boston

Present: Commissioner Jonathan Evans, Commissioner David Hacin, Commissioner Catherine Morris, and Commissioner Laura Solano

DISCUSSION:

The project team's digital presentation focused on their massing analysis, relationship of the building to the site and grading, and changes to the project since it was last seen. The commissioners were positive about the green color of the facades, saying that it is unusual and placemaking. They expressed interest in more work on the window placement—gathering and grouping windows—to help the high-rise tower in particular feel more residential. They asked about shadow and light across the façade as it is developed. They discussed the conflicting programs and the senior porch. They also asked for a reduction in the number of staircases and to look more at how the different programs will work together in that space and whether different levels might be useful for separating the different programs. There was discussion about the notch on the south side and the possible opportunities for public art in that location, how it might work as a performance space, and the importance of landscape design/site furnishing to manage the bright southern light.

There was no public comment.

The Project will return to full commission.

6:00 pm, Held virtually via Zoom

Project: **66 Cambridge Street**, Charlestown

Present: Commissioner Jonathan Evans, Commissioner David Hacin, Commissioner Mimi Love, and Commissioner Laura Solano

DISCUSSION:

The Project team used a digital presentation to outline their approach and project updates. The meeting focused on the development of the project since the last meeting including updates on the turn-around, the site plan, and façade strategy. The focus of the Commissioners comments were on the site plan and the arcade. There was a concern that the scale of the building is too large next to the small scale of the passage and that the wind screen felt too flimsy and disconnected from the rest of the project. Discussion focused on how that scale incongruity and the need for a middle scale to bridge between the building and the human next to it. There were several suggestions—reduce the scale of the arcade, increase the width of the arcade, remove the arcade. The Commissioners asked the proponent to look into the issue and come back with a solution.

There was no public comment.

The Project will continue in Design Committee