



**Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project
CAC Working Meeting #17**

Tuesday, July 6, 2010

Location: Christian Science Publishing House Building

CAC Attendees:

Tom Aucella, Belvedere Condo Association
Vanessa Calderon-Rosado, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA)
Mark Cataudella, Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO)
Sybil CooperKing, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB)
Ryan Higginson, Resident of the South End
Donald Margotta, Church Park Apartments
Joanne McKenna, Fenway Community Development Corporation (Fenway CDC)
Lee Steele, St. Botolph Neighborhood Association (SBNA)
George Thrush, Boston Society of Architects (BSA)
Robert Wright, Symphony United Neighbors (SUN)

CAC Members Not in Attendance:

Kelly Brilliant, Fenway Alliance
Christian Coffin, Hilton Hotel Boston Back Bay
Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association
Craig Nicholson, American Planning Association (APA) – Massachusetts Chapter
Bill Richardson, Fenway Civic Association (FCA)

Ex-Officio Attendees:

Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing
Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner
Patrick Beaudry, Office of Massachusetts State Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz

City of Boston Attendees:

David Carlson, BRA
Randi Lathrop, BRA
Ellen Lipsey, Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC)
Inés Palmarin, BRA
Lauren Shurtleff, BRA
Emily Wolf, BLC

Church Team Attendees:

Harley Gates, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Bob Herlinger, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Debbi Lawrence, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Bob Ryan, ML Strategies
Kayle Williams, The First Church of Christ, Scientist

Members of the Public:

Tom Berents, South End Resident
Romin Koebel, Fenway CDC

Shirley Kressel, NABB
MK Merelice, Tech Center at Tent City
Christine Piontek, Boston Preservation Alliance
Bill Whitney, Berklee College of Music

Meeting Summary

On Tuesday, July 6, 2010, the seventeenth working session of the Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was called to order at approximately 8:15 a.m. in the Christian Science Publishing House Building by Lauren Shurtleff, BRA Planner.

Lauren then introduced Ellen Lipsey, Executive Director of the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) and Emily Wolf, BLC Preservation Planner and turned the meeting over to them to review the BLC process with regards to the recently issued Study Report on the Christian Science Center Complex (available on the BLC website: <http://www.cityofboston.gov/landmarks>). Ellen thanked the CAC for inviting them to attend and reminded the CAC that the BLC Hearing on the Study Report will be held next **Tuesday, July 13th at 6:15 pm in Room 900, 9th Floor, Boston City Hall.**

Emily then provided an overview of the Study Report's highlights:

- BLC staff recommends that the Christian Science Center Complex be designated a Boston Landmark. The complex is significant at the national, regional, state, and local level and is significant for its scale as a religious complex in Boston, for the architectural distinction of its individual buildings and landscape design, for its associations with regionally and nationally significant architects and landscape architects, and for its status as the international headquarters of The First Church of Christ, Scientist.
- In the Study Report, BLC staff included a recommendation that the grassy triangle bounded by Belvidere and Dalton Streets and the Church Colonnade Building service ramp not be included in the recommended designation. This differs from the area outlined in the original petition.
- Sections of the specific Standards & Criteria, which are the guidelines that the BLC would apply in their review of any proposed exterior alterations to the complex that may be of particular interest to the CAC include Section 9.14 – New Construction, Section 10.0 – Landscape, and Section 10.6 – Water Features.
- It should be noted that the Standards & Criteria section is written from a preservation perspective. In this particular case, this section is quite lengthy.
- Each section is specific to particular existing or potentially proposed materials or elements (*i.e.*, masonry, plantings, additions) and outlines specific treatments and actions for said material and element.
- It is important to note that the Standards & Criteria are guidelines that are meant to guide the BLC in any future design review of proposal alterations to the site.
- The Standards & Criteria were not written to be specific to a particular plan, although the current proposal was taken into consideration when the Standards & Criteria were drafted.

Next, Ellen outlined the process for the July 13th BLC Public Hearing:

- BLC staff will present the Christian Science Center Study Report.
- Public testimony will be taken, in the following order:

- from elected officials;
- from the BRA and the Massachusetts Historical Commission, who have statutory review responsibility;
- from the property owner(s);
- from those speaking or submitting written testimony at the hearing in support of designation;
- from those speaking or submitting written testimony at the hearing in opposition to designation;
- from those who wish to comment, not necessarily in support or in opposition to designation; and then
- from anyone with questions or rebuttals on the testimony.
- Written testimony may be submitted prior to the hearing. Commissioners will receive copies of all written testimony received prior to the hearing. Written testimony that is received prior to the hearing will be read into the record at the hearing.
- Written testimony may be submitted for a period of at least three days following the hearing (in this case, the deadline would be Friday, July 16th at 5:00 pm). The BLC Chair may elect to leave the official hearing record open for a longer period of time, at her discretion – if so, this will be announced at the hearing.
- Written testimony, in the form of a letter, may be mailed, emailed, or dropped off at the BLC office. The letter must include name, address, and signature.

Ellen also reviewed the next steps in the process following the Hearing:

- After the closure of the hearing record, BLC staff will review all of the testimony and comments made at the hearing and all written testimony received prior to the closure of the hearing record.
- Copies of any written testimony received after the July 13, 2010 hearing and before the closure of the hearing record will be distributed to the Commissioners.
- Upon review of all testimony, the BLC will determine if any amendments to the Study Report are appropriate. Proposed amendments may be drafted by staff or by a subcommittee of the Commission, at the discretion of the BLC Chair.
- When amendments (if any) to the Study Report are drafted, they will be posted online and interested parties will be notified that the proposed amendments are available for review.
- At a future BLC public meeting (date TBD), the BLC will discuss and vote on any proposed amendments to the Study Report. Public comments will be taken, but comments may only relate to the proposed amendments.
- At the same meeting, the BLC will discuss and vote on the potential designation of the Christian Science Center as a Boston Landmark.

Questions and comments in response to the BLC's review from the CAC are summarized below:

- Donald Margotta, Church Park Apartments, asked how Landmark designation would affect the current proposal by the Church. Ellen replied that while the BLC Study Report took the current proposal into account, it is meant to be more general. Once a design proposal becomes an actual project, it will be reviewed by the BLC. Landmark designation therefore adds another layer of review to the process already existing, in this case the Article 80 Large Project Review Process.
- In response to a question from George Thrush, Co-Chair and BSA, Ellen indicated that any exterior modification to the existing buildings on the site would require the approval of the

BLC. Specifically, this includes changes to the concrete planters as well as the proposed crossing over the Reflecting Pool. Ellen stressed that none of these modifications are precluded by Landmark designation, however. While the Study Report was written with preservation in mind, Landmark designation is also about recognizing a unique site.

- Lee Steele, SBNA, asked how the BLC process overlaps with the BRA review process. Ellen replied that the BLC and the BRA often collaborate, though it is possible in certain cases to move forward on separate tracks. Each project is different. David Carlson, BRA Senior Architect, added that the Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC) would also review any project on the site. Ellen stated that in the past, it has often been the case that the BLC would review a project first, then BCDC, and then they would work together, but vote separately. Additionally, the BRA and BLC staff meet together to discuss projects.
- David explained that the BCDC was created by Article 28 of the Boston Zoning Code. Its eleven commissioners are appointed by the Mayor but independently meet and consult on projects that impact the public realm, generally when a project meets a 100,000-SF threshold. BCDC has the ability to waive their review if another committee is reviewing the project, but in general they do not. BCDC review is coordinated through the Article 80 process, so that a project's conceptual design elements are reviewed and approved. Their role is advisory to the BRA Board of Directors.
- In response to a question from Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing, Ellen indicated that the original petition on the site was for the site itself, presumably since it is under one ownership, and not for a historic district, such as the South End's designation as an Historic District. Comparable Landmarked properties include that Chestnut Hill Reservoir, Blessed Sacrament Church, and the Emerald Necklace Parks System.
- In response to a follow-up question from Representative Rushing, Ellen indicated that every proposed modification to a Landmarked property is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The BLC review process works to identify why changes are being proposed to a property, and how to accommodate those while keeping the elements that led to the property's Landmark designation in the first place.
- Joanne McKenna, Fenway CDC, asked if by removing the Belvidere and Dalton Streets site and the Midtown Hotel from the Study Report if that also removes BLC review of those sites. Ellen responded that the Study Report includes a recommendation by BLC Staff to remove the Dalton and Belvidere Streets site from the included Landmark designation area, but the Midtown Hotel site was not included in the original petition, and is not within the designation. In terms of review, a property is either in the Landmarked area or out, BLC designation does not include proximate areas.
- In response to a question from Representative Rushing, Ellen responded that in order to create an Historic Protection Area, a common story or shared history would have to exist over an area. A Historic Protection Area would require a separate petition and a separate Study Report from the ones already existing for the Christian Science Center Complex.
- In response to a question from Sybil CooperKing, Co-Chair and NABB, Ellen responded that the St. Germain Street Protection Area is different from a Landmark Historic Protection Area, in that it is created by zoning and is not under the purview of the BLC.
- In response to a question from Donald Margotta, Ellen responded that the petition on the property was submitted by a group of Boston residents, predominantly comprised of architects. Inés Palmarin, BRA Senior Planner, added that the petition had been distributed to the CAC earlier in the process and is available if anyone would like another copy.
- In response to a question from Robert Wright, SUN, Ellen replied that if after being designated as a Landmark, a design is denied, it cannot be re-submitted for one year. If a

design proposal is denied without prejudice, it can be re-submitted immediately, providing that the modifications requested by the BLC have been addressed. An outright denial would be unusual in this case since the Church Team has been working with the BLC already.

- Tom Aucella, Belvedere Condo Association, thought the plans looked fine.
- Lee Steele asked how the Church feels about the potential Landmark designation. Bob Herlinger and Harley Gates, both on the Church Team, explained that from the beginning they have understood the importance of the site, and in fact whenever they currently make a modification to the site, they alert the BLC. They added that they understand that this does not preclude anything on the site, and they also do not seek to go in a direction that is not in harmony with the larger community.
- Tom Aucella commented that the crossing over the Reflecting Pool could be considered part of the Church site's "original" features, since at one point there was a crossing there.
- Mark Cataudella asked if there is a referee for the BLC process. Ellen replied that the decisions made by the BLC can be taken to Superior Court, but in her 18 years with the agency, this has not happened. She added that BLC review is binding.

Public Questions:

- In response to a request from Shirley Kressel, NABB, regarding the Mission Church Complex, Ellen replied that each Landmark has its own specific set of Standards and Criteria that are created, and in the case of the Mission Church, the demolition that occurred within that site was under an entirely separate set of circumstances than those that exist within the Christian Science Center Complex. The BLC does have an economic hardship clause, although this is rarely exercised and involves a lengthy and detailed information-sharing process.

The remainder of the meeting included a discussion amongst the CAC members on how to best respond to the BLC Study Report. It was determined that George Thrush would represent the CAC at the BLC Hearing and he would circulate a draft response this week to the CAC for everyone to provide comments on. He will then read that response at the BLC Hearing.

Finally, Bob Herlinger explained that the Church Team is still several weeks away from distributing the Draft Plan Document. Each CAC member will receive a hard copy of the document when it is ready. The next CAC meeting, scheduled for August 3rd, will function as a joint CAC and public meeting, and will provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the document. After that, the following CAC working session in September will provide the CAC a chance to discuss the public comments and their own representative organization's comments together.

The meeting was then adjourned at 9:30 a.m.