

Blessed Sacrament CAC
August 28, 2006
DRAFT Notes

CAC Members Present: Clara Garcia, Rafael Benzan, Damaris Pimentel, Michael Reiskind, Jennifer Spencer, Carmen Velazquez, Sylvia Villar, Ashley Cotton; BRA: Inés Soto, Jonathan Greeley, Heather Campisano, Randi Lathrop; Office of Rep. Sanchez: Andrew Michaud; JPND: Lizbeth Heyer, Kalila Barnett, Maria Mulkeen; NADC: Peter Roth

Welcome: Ines Soto (BRA) welcomed the group and introduced the agenda.

Landmarks Feedback: Ines asked the group for feedback on the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) meeting.

Clara Garcia (CAC) offered that the meeting was very long and focused on discussion between the development team and the commission. There was significant discussion about the dimensions of the corner building. They support the project but have some issues they would like resolved.

Carmen Velazquez (CAC) added that the BLC made some minor changes in the older buildings. For example, they suggested that the Church roof be slate as opposed to plastic. They would also like to see the big building broken down and switched from brick to wood.

Michael Reiskind (CAC) stated that much of the discussion focused on the Church building and was very detailed and specific. Clara (CAC) added that they ran out of time. The next meeting of the joint BCDC and Landmarks sub committee will be on 9/19 in 937 A at the BRA.

Michael Cannizzo (CAC) stated that on 9/19, you would see BCDC and BLC respond to the proposal. Both groups recognize the corner building as an issue. They asked the developer to step back in order to examine the massing and narrow down the overall issues on the project. As a reminder, BCDC deals with the public realm while BLC looks at the specifics of buildings.

Development Team Presentation:

Lizbeth Heyer (JPND) stated that the development team has worked on many changes to the project in response to the CAC, BLC, BCDC, and public comments. They come in 2 parts. The first focuses on overall site issues and the second focuses on the mixed-use building.

Nick (Architect) introduced the changes accompanied by revised and original drawings. He then introduced an item-by-item list of the revisions.

Parking

- Reduction in surface parking (8 fewer spaces)
- Realignment of retail parking
- Realignment of Underground parking (resulting from realignment of buildings above)
- HC parking spots

Peter Roth (NADC) stated that in order to take mass out of the upper part of the mixed-use building from the 4th floor and place it on the Creighton Street ground floor. With this reduction in the amount of retail, retail parking was decreased.

Nick (Architect) added that the setbacks on Creighton Street are uniformly 15 feet, which represents moves of no more than 1 foot from the last design scheme.

Rafael Benzan (CAC) asked about trash pickup. Peter (NADC) replied that the parking ratio for retail remains the same, with about 2 spaces per 1000 square feet of retail.

Damaris Pimentel (CAC) asked how the loss of retail parking would affect the project. Nick (Architect) replied that with less retail, there was less need for parking.

Damaris (CAC) asked about the two other spots in the back. Peter replied that the spaces had been previously aligned to the community space. Their removal was a response to BCDC.

Michael (CAC) asked for the reason behind the 15-foot setbacks. Is this to meet requirements of MFR zoning? Peter (NADC) replied yes.

Micahel (CAC) stated that he would like to see as much open space in the back as possible and questioned if those setbacks were necessary for Creighton Street. Nick (Architect) stated that the total move was very little.

Trash

- Elimination of Dumpsters at Garage Entry
- Adding of Trash Storage Enclosures for Convent Building
- Trash Pickup for Compass/Cheverus, and Church building (parking island removed; trash rollout area at rear of Church widened)
- Trash Pickup for Mixed-use building
- Truck turning radius
- Dual-track Back-up area at mixed-use building

Clara (CAC) asked if the buildings in back would not have trash pickup. Nick (Architect) replied that they would bring their trash to the compactor.

Jennifer (CAC) asked if the units on Creighton would have trash storage during the week. Nick (Architect) replied that they would in the garage.

Delivery

- Time reserved along Centre Street fir retail
- Time reserved along Creighton?

Nick (Architect) stated that 35 foot and smaller trucks would be able to go behind the mixed-use buildings and turn around. In talking with the BTDC, they are considering a loading zone with early morning delivery hours.

Clara (CAC) suggested looking at the school bus pickup in the morning in front of the Church on Centre Street. Carmen (CAC) also reminded the group about the MBTA bus pickup as well.

Clara (CAC) stated that situations like this could cause bottlenecks on Centre Street.

Peter (NADC) stated that a loading zone would depend on who is leasing the retail and whether it is needed or not. The project will work with the BTDC on this issue. This is being considered in the BTDC Centre Street traffic analysis.

Vehicular Site Entry

- Widening of Creighton Street Garage Entry with Plantings (20' 2-way)
- Widening of Centre Street Access to Parking (24' 2-way)
- Widening of Creighton Street Access to Retail Parking (24' -30' curb cut)

Nick (Architect) highlighted the change near the Convent, where the opening has been widened so there are separate pedestrian and vehicular entrances as well as no dumpster.

Pedestrian Site Experience

- Easing of Tight Rear Entry/"pinch" into green core; landscape strip
- Space/Fence at green core play area
- Fence at play area/walkway buffer at retail parking
- Reconfiguration of retail parking to maximize open space
- Realignment of Church Entry Walk
- Amount of ornamental fencing retained on Centre Street/Size of pedestrian opening
- Walkway at west side of large parking area (not for through use)
- Separation of private and public site areas

Carmen (CAC) asked about a walkway near the Compass building. Peter (NADC) replied that he preferred to avoid access there and wanted to encourage using the walkway between the Cheverus and Compass.

The issue of public versus private was discussed, for example "Where is the hibachi?" The private area between the Rectory and Condos on Creighton is such an area.

Lizbeth (JPND) asked for feedback before the building discussion.

Michael (CAC) stated that the projects looks better and is coming along. The group still needs a feeling for the green space. What about snow removal? Peter (NADC) replied that the project will store what it can and the rest will be removed.

Building Massing

- Realignment of 10 unit and rectory building on Creighton Street
- Change to secondary egress from Church
- Proposal to relocate 3 residential units in the mixed-use building to the 1st floor.

- Location of Entries to proposed new units
- Reduction in footprint of mixed-use at trash/parking
- Proposed massing changes in mixed-use building

The development team announced their intention to take 3 units from the top of the mixed-use building and place them on the Creighton Street side where retail was formerly scheduled. Two options were proposed, with each proposing a variety of height and setback variations that would work to reduce the overall massing of the mixed-use building.

Peter (NADC) indicated a preference for the 1st option, which worked to reduce the Centre Street roofline of the building.

Jennifer (CAC) asked about value decision in regards to the relocated condos. Peter (NADC) stated that the decision was a design one, not a value one. Also, the corner of the building is strong, and the closer to the Church, the height is lowered in deference to the Church.

Jennifer (CAC) stated that massing, to her, had more to do with the corner.

Carmen (CAC) referenced the BCDC comments on the building's roof. In terms of massing, it is not just the height of the building. It acts like two walls on the side of the site.

Peter (NADC) referenced the setbacks and breaks. Carmen (CAC) preferred breaking up the building to allow view of the green space. Peter (NADC) stated that does not work from a functional or cost sense.

Clara (CAC) asked about a possible archway. Nick (Architect) stated that would be a loss of programming. It also becomes a security issue if the opening is too small and is 60 feet deep. He understood the point, but it needs to be viable.

Michael (CAC) liked the new massing and wanted to see the building materials. This is pretty good.

Jennifer (CAC) liked the first Centre Street option.

Peter and Nick diagrammed it out with setbacks and height changes.

Michael (BRA) offered a staff perspective. He appreciated the massing changes but the commissions also wanted the building simplified. The massing discussion is separate from the façade one. This building will contrast the other, simpler buildings on site. There are other massing shifts and options. There are a lot of height changes and varying setbacks, contrasting with the rest of the campus, and this will be reflected in the comments from the two committees.

Peter (CAC) stated that they would try to simplify the building and setbacks, focusing on simply removing the lost footage.

Michael (BRA) stated a way to examine the height would be to make changes where the programming shifts from retail to housing. For example, the design could have more of a residential feel further down Creighton Street.

Lizbeth (JPND) stated that a further pushback on the building would affect overall green space.

Jennifer (CAC) stated that materials made a big difference.

Damaris (CAC) felt that she liked the first proposal as well. She commented on how the various setbacks affected the street and might affect retail on the site. Peter (NADC) replied that simplification might help.

Damaris (CAC) stated that the height breaks are better now and that she supported Jennifer's thoughts on Creighton Street.

Michael (CAC) felt some of the setbacks felt complicated and need to be simplified. He disagreed with Michael Cannizzo on the simplicity issue and felt the building could be a bit fussier.

Peter (NADC) stated that there is a way to break down massing with materials and patterns.

Jennifer (CAC) asked if the developer cutouts and the possibilities of roof decks?

Community Space

Peter (NADC) highlighted aspects of the community space and how handicapped access would be via a lift.

Damaris (CAC) asked about the space's capacity. Nick (Architect) stated that it could hold 125 people audience style.

Michael (BRA) suggested the developer look at the two design options. They should be prepared to bring changes to the 9/19 BLC and BCDC subcommittee.

Ines (BRA) suggested people attend the various upcoming hearings meetings if possible. The CAC should also share information with their constituents. The JPNC hearing will be another chance for the public to hear about the project.

Heather (BRA) reminded the group that written comments were due by 9/8.

Peter (NADC) stated that design review by public agencies was ongoing.

Jesus (JNPC) stated that the 9/5 hearing would be the first of several meetings on the project. There will also be a full public meeting to be scheduled in October. Zoning Commission hearing is in November and BRA Board will ask for permission to go the Zoning Commission in October.

Lizbeth (JPND) listed 3 other issues for later discussion: Income affordability, youth programming, and green space.

CAC Discussion: The development team was asked to leave to allow the CAC time to meet.

Jennifer (CAC) offered to write a draft of the letter on behalf of the CAC. Heather (BRA) suggested using the sections of the PNF to organize the letter.

Michael (CAC) stated that the CAC has been reluctant to discuss zoning. How should this be included in the letter? Heather (CAC) suggested that the JPNC's first zoning meeting is on 9/5, that would be a good place to draw from.

Randi (BRA) stated that the letter is to the city and should include issues that have not been dealt with and what else needs to be addressed/emphasized.

Michael (CAC) stated that the CAC never fully discussed transportation issues as it kept on getting bumped.

Heather (BRA) suggested looking at parking ratios. Randi (BRA) stated that the developer is working with BTM on transportation issues. For example, she pointed to loading areas and truck access on Creighton Street.

Rafael (CAC) asked for access to the current city comments. Ines (BRA) responded that they were reactionary to comments raised and not yet available.

Michael (CAC) felt that there would be no real consensus by 9/8 so the CAC should ask for certain issues to be addressed in the letter. The development team filed an expanded PNF. We should attempt to have the other steps in this process included.

Heather (BRA) stated that even in that event, design issues are not covered in the PNF process.

Michael (CAC) remained uncomfortable. Randi (BRA) added that this project has BRA Design Review. Heather (BRA) added that the developers would respond to the City, CAC letter and community comments.

Michael (CAC) still felt the process compressed as a result of the expanded PNF.

Randi (BRA) stated that supplemental steps might happen if too many questions remain unanswered.

Heather (BRA) stated that the BRA Board is a public meeting. This is an open public process with two committees. Randi (BRA) added that if there were supplemental steps, the CAC would remain the same. This is something that could be requested in the CAC's letter.

Clara (CAC) felt the need to respond to the community, as newspapers will report what the CAC said.

Ines (CAC) stated that the City departments at time have the same questions that the CAC does. Additionally, Sylvia will write a letter in Spanish and share it with the Jennifer.

Jennifer (CAC) stated that she would get the letter done by 9/5.

Ines (BRA) stated that all CAC meeting notes are available electronically.

Carmen (CAC) asked if outsiders' comments should be based on changes. Randi (BRA) replied that yes and that all meeting notes will be included with the CAC comment letter.