



**Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project
CAC Working Meeting #1
Tuesday, February 10, 2009
Location: BRA Board Room, Boston City Hall**

CAC Attendees:

Tom Aucella, Belvedere Condo Association
Kelly Brilliant, Fenway Alliance
Vanessa Calderon-Rosado, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA)
Mark Cataudella, Boston Symphony Orchestra
Sybil Cooper-King, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay
Marie Fukuda, Fenway Civic Association
Ryan Higginson, Resident of the South End
Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association
Joanne McKenna, Fenway Community Development Corporation
Craig Nicholson, American Planning Association – Massachusetts Chapter
Lee Steele, St. Botolph Neighborhood Association
Robert Wright, Symphony United Neighbors

Ex-Officio Attendees:

Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing
Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner

City of Boston Attendees:

David Carlson, BRA
Will Onuoha, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services
Inés Palmarin, BRA
Prataap Patrose, BRA
Lauren Shurtleff, BRA

Church Team Attendees:

Barbara Burley, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
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

Members of the Public:

Tom Grillo, Boston Herald
Bob Preer, Boston Globe

Meeting Summary

On Tuesday, February 10, 2009, the first working session of the Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was called to order at approximately 8:00 a.m. in the BRA Board Room at Boston City Hall by Inés Palmarin, BRA Senior Planner.

Inés began the meeting by greeting the CAC members and thanking them for attending. After a round of introductions, Inés continued with a brief overview of the roles and responsibilities of

CAC members. CAC members will represent the concerns and opinions of the neighborhood and/or business group that they are affiliated with, and are expected to report back to those groups as the process moves along. All CAC working sessions are open to the public. Inés indicated that Lauren Shurtleff, BRA Planner, will serve as the contact person from the BRA for the CAC.

The CAC determined that future working sessions will be held monthly rather than every other week. They agreed that it would be better for everyone if they alternated between meeting in the morning and in the evening. All subsequent meetings will be held at the Publishing House Building on the Christian Science Church campus. While CAC working sessions are not publicly advertised, all meetings will be posted on the BRA's online calendar (<http://www.cityofboston.gov/bra/calendar/calendar.asp>), and notices will be e-mailed to all CAC members and ex-officio members.

The second meeting will be scheduled shortly and will include a tour of the Church grounds. It is likely that this meeting will be held twice in order to accommodate each of the CAC members. The third meeting will provide the CAC with a general history of the Church's growth on the site.

In terms of other logistics, it was also decided that the CAC will elect a Chairperson after a few meetings, once they have gotten to know each other.

A project-specific page will be set up on the BRA's website shortly. Meeting notes will be emailed to all CAC members but also posted to this website.

Before moving on, Lauren noted that a petition for landmark status was filed on the property with the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) in January 2007. The BRA has met with the BLC and will continue to do so as this process moves forward. Additionally, a representative from the BLC will be available at one or more of the future CAC working sessions. Both processes will move forward concurrently.

Inés also noted that the BRA team has been meeting internally with the BRA planners and project managers responsible for coordinating the other CACs and Task Forces in the vicinity, including the Berklee College Task Force, Copley Place Expansion Project CAC, PruPAC, Turnpike Air Rights Parcel 7 CAC, and in the future the CAC for Turnpike Air Rights Parcels 12-15.

Questions and comments raised in response to Inés's overview included:

- Lee Steele, St. Botolph Neighborhood Association, asked if the Church's property falls within a historic protection area. David Carlson, BRA Senior Urban Designer, indicated that it does not.
- In response to a question from Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing, Inés replied that a history of the property's development will be prepared and distributed prior to the third working session, where the CAC will review the site's history.

Inés then turned the meeting over to the Church Team, led by Barbara Burley. After a round of introductions, Barbara gave a brief overview of the site and their goals for this process. The site serves as the Christian Science Church's worldwide administrative headquarters. The Church

has been located on the site for more than 100 years. The original church was constructed in 1894, and the domed "Extension" was completed in 1906.

The Mother Church forms the heart of the Plaza, which is bordered by Huntington and Massachusetts Avenues and Belvidere and Clearway Streets. The Plaza includes the following buildings: the Sunday School building, the Administration building, the Colonnade building, Horticultural Hall, and the Publishing House building. In addition, the Plaza, which is the largest privately-owned open space in the City, contains the Children's Fountain and Reflecting Pool.

The neighborhood surrounding the Church has greatly changed over the past few decades, and the Church has changed as well. They are operating with a smaller staff and no longer need as much space as they once did, especially since many of their functions have been outsourced. The administrative staff is now consolidated into one building, the Publishing House building. New short-term leases have been negotiated for portions of the Colonnade building and the Administrative building.

The Plaza and its environs are very expensive to maintain and the Church seeks to extend its operating use to 12 months a year. This could include the addition of landscaped elements, improvements to the plaza's environmental sustainability, better water management, and improved groundwater levels.

There is also an opportunity for the Church to reactivate some of their vacant real estate within the site, thus ensuring that the site will retain its value to the community in the future. This could entail new development on the site, which would proceed in a thoughtful manner. Barbara concluded that the entire Church Team is looking forward to hearing the thoughts of the community and the CAC and working with the BRA as the process moves forward.

Debbi Lawrence, also on the Church Team, spoke briefly on the mission of the Church, and stated that the Church welcomes all visitors to their site and frequently co-sponsors events on the Plaza with other community organizations. She added that the Church will be launching their own website for the project shortly, which will be provided to the CAC once it becomes available.

The following questions and comments were raised:

- In response to a question from Representative Rushing, Barbara indicated that this process will apply only to the land included in the Church plaza's home site.
- Joanne McKenna, Fenway Community Development Corporation, asked about the timeline. Barbara replied that they are looking to move the process along as rapidly as the process will allow.
- In response to a question from Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association, Barbara responded that they are looking to develop somewhere within their site so as to allow the real estate within the property to pay for itself, which would include the maintenance of the plaza.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:10 a.m.