



Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project
CAC Working Meeting #12
Thursday, December 9, 2009
Location: Christian Science Publishing House Building

CAC Attendees:

Tom Aucella, Belvedere Condo Association
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
Vanessa Calderon-Rosado, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA)
Christian Coffin, Hilton Hotel Boston Back Bay
Eric Georgi, Resident of St. Germain Street
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
Elizabeth Corcoran-Hunt, Office of Representative Byron Rushing
Laura Sargent, Office of Massachusetts State Representative Marty Walz

City of Boston Attendees:

Gerald Autler, BRA
Heather Campisano, BRA
David Carlson, BRA
Randi Lathrop, BRA
Rachel Mercier, BTB
Inés Palmarin, BRA
Lauren Shurtleff, BRA

Church Team Attendees:

Ann Byer, Elkus-Manfredi Architects
Barbara Burley, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Bob Herlinger, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Debbi Lawrence, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Mahmood Malihi, Leggat McCall Properties
Meghan Miller, VHB
Bob Ryan, ML Strategies

Jim Van Sickle, Elkus-Manfredi Architects
Susan Sloan-Rossiter, VHB

Members of the Public:

Susan Ashbrook, Berklee Task Force and NABB
Rebecca Blum, Berklee College of Music
Don Carlson, NABB
Valerie Hunt, Berklee Task Force
Romin Koebel, Fenway CDC Urban Village Committee
Randy Kreie, Berklee Task Force
Shirley Kressel, NABB
James McCoy, Berklee College of Music
Christine Piontek, Boston Preservation Alliance
Karla Rideout, Berklee Task Force
Donald Sheehan, IBEW Local 103
Ellen Shortell, Berklee Task Force and NABB
Barbara Simons, Berklee Task Force and SUN
Jonathan Smith, KV Associates
Kathleen Solomon, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Bill Whitney, Berklee College of Music

Meeting Summary

On Wednesday, December 9, 2009, the twelfth working session of the Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was called to order at approximately 8:05 a.m. in the Christian Science Publishing House Building by Inés Palmarin, BRA Senior Planner.

Inés began the meeting by welcoming the Task Force for the Berklee College of Music Institutional Master Plan (IMP). The Task Force was invited to the CAC meeting in the interest of both groups collectively sharing their progress to date.

Inés then turned the meeting over to Bill Whitney, Berklee College of Music, who provided an overview of the IMP in a PowerPoint Presentation (available on the BRA's project website: <http://www.tinyurl.com/ChristianScienceCAC>) for the Christian Science CAC members. He stressed Berklee's goal of housing 50% of their student population in 2,000 dorm beds upon completion of the IMP; currently, Berklee only houses 800 of their 4,000 students. The remaining expansion plans include new academic space, a new performance center, and new student life space. Presently, Berklee's IMP is on hold as they develop a plan for the new building they recently purchased from the Church (168 Massachusetts Avenue). Bill also suggested that the CAC refer to Berklee's Master Plan website for more information (<http://www.berklee.edu/taskforce>).

Questions and comments in response to Bill's presentation are summarized below:

- In response to a question from Joanne McKenna, Fenway CDC, Bill indicated that Berklee is not looking to increase their enrollment beyond the 4,000 full-time students currently enrolled. If they were to institute a Masters program in the future, it would be very small.
- In response to a follow-up question from Joanne McKenna regarding traffic and air quality studies, Bill responded that Berklee is not proposing to build any new parking so there are

no significant traffic impacts. He added that they will discuss with the BRA whether to include the Christian Science project in their base calculations when it is appropriate.

- Tom Aucella, Belvedere Condo Association, asked whether any pedestrian improvements are planned. Bill replied that they are looking to acquire part of Cambria Street from the City, which will improve the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street. Berklee also hopes that as a result of the Master Plan's changes, many students will be moved off of the streets and into buildings. Bill added that the school will also be creating an open space area on Haviland Street.

Next, the Church Team, led by Barbara Burley and Bob Herlinger, provided a similar project overview for the Berklee Task Force, also included in the PowerPoint Presentation on the BRA's project website.

Questions and comments to the Church Team's presentation are summarized below:

- Susan Ashbrook, Berklee Task Force and NABB, commented that the Church's Belvedere Street site seems like the perfect space for Berklee to expand. Bob Herlinger replied that the Church Team is only looking at general land uses now and it is still too early to determine specific uses for proposed buildings.
- In response to a comment from Karla Rideout, Berklee Task Force, regarding Berklee and the Church working together, Bill Whitney stated that they have made significant efforts to acquire property in the adjacent area over a long time. Berklee's recent purchase of 168 Massachusetts Avenue was a key component of their multi-year plan. They want to concentrate their academic uses at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street, and the creation of new dorm space will take over a large portion of their developable land. He added that it is possible in the future that Berklee could look at leasing space from the Church, but noted that it is likely to be better for the Church to lease space to a for-profit developer.
- In response to a question from Lee Steele, SBNA, Bill Whitney reiterated that while Berklee does lease space in the neighborhood, since they are price-sensitive, the school cannot afford to lease Class A office space. Additionally, buildings used for dormitories are typically built for a single purpose and are less flexible for conversion to other uses down the line, which would likely be undesirable for the Church.
- Co-Chair George Thrush, BSA, stated that it was good to see that Berklee is looking to create more of a place and an identity. As a college, a different set of criteria can be applied, as dorms, for example, bring less traffic than almost any other use. He noted that it would be great to have a theater in this location. He added that it would be good to see the ground floor theater area being used more often, as the use of the ground plane is of primary importance to a development like this one.
- Valerie Hunt, Berklee Task Force, stated her desire to see the building at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street become a landmark building, and would prefer to see a tall and slender building in this location, than one that is shorter but set back less, like the Mandarin Oriental Hotel on Boylston Street.
- Randy Kreie, Berklee Task Force, stated that there are areas in this neighborhood that would benefit from improvement, and identified the area on Belvedere Street as an excellent opportunity; enhancements to the streetscape and pedestrian experience are more important than height.

Next, the Church's traffic consultant, Susan Sloan-Rossiter from VHB, gave a PowerPoint Presentation (also included in the presentation online at the BRA's project website) on the transportation study about the Plaza Revitalization Project. Included in this presentation was a brief overview of the Symphony Streetscape Project.

Questions and comments in response to Susan's presentation are summarized below:

- Sybil CooperKing stated that it would be helpful to know how many residential parking spaces will be lost as part of the project.
- George Thrush commented that it would be good to know the overall counts in relation to the project.

The meeting was then adjourned at 10:00 a.m.