



Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project
CAC Working Meeting #14
Thursday, April 1, 2010
Location: Christian Science Publishing House Building

CAC Attendees:

Tom Aucella, Belvedere Condo Association
Kelly Brilliant, Fenway Alliance
Vanessa Calderon-Rosado, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA)
Sybil CooperKing, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB)
Ryan Higginson, Resident of the South End
Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association
Donald Margotta, Church Park Apartments
Joanne McKenna, Fenway Community Development Corporation (Fenway CDC)
Craig Nicholson, American Planning Association (APA) – Massachusetts Chapter
Bill Richardson, Fenway Civic Association (FCA)
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:

Mark Cataudella, Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO)
Christian Coffin, Hilton Hotel Boston Back Bay

Ex-Officio Attendees:

Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner
Elizabeth Corcoran-Hunt, Office of Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing
Michelle Snyder, Office of Boston City Councilor Michael Ross

City of Boston Attendees:

Heather Campisano, BRA
David Carlson, BRA
Randi Lathrop, BRA
Inés Palmarin, BRA
Lauren Shurtleff, BRA

Church Team Attendees:

Ann Byer, Elkus-Manfredi Architects
Barbara Burley, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Harley Gates, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Howard Elkus, Elkus-Manfredi Architects
Bob Herlinger, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Debbi Lawrence, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Bob Ryan, ML Strategies
Jim Van Sickle, Elkus-Manfredi Architects
Kayle Williams, The First Church of Christ, Scientist

Members of the Public:

Susan Ashbrook, NABB
Neil Conley, Ironworkers Local 7
Craig Elliot, Church Member
Romin Koebel, Fenway CDC
Shirley Kressel, NABB
Christine Piontek, Boston Preservation Alliance
Barbara Simons, SUN
Jonathan Smith, KV Associates
Lucille Taitt, Church Member
Bill Whitney, Berklee College of Music
Jackie Yessian, NABB

Meeting Summary

On Thursday, April 1, 2010, the fourteenth 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 Christian Science Publishing House Building by Inés Palmarin, BRA Senior Planner.

Inés then turned the meeting over to Bob Herlinger, The First Church of Christ, Scientist, who indicated that the Church Team has been working on developing a concept for the Huntington Avenue site adjacent to Horticultural Hall and the Sunday School Building, as a logical location for some additional development. He then introduced Howard Elkus, Elkus-Manfredi Architects, who gave a PowerPoint Presentation (available on the BRA's project website). Howard explained that the project team is currently looking at creating a building with a smaller footprint than before, which would likely be residential. This would offer an opportunity to create a slender "point" tower that would connect harmoniously with the Sunday School building and provide a new framing element for The Mother Church and the Plaza as a whole. By setting the building back from Huntington Avenue, a new plaza space would be created as well and views of the historic Horticultural Hall when heading west on Huntington Avenue would be retained. This new building would also integrate with the composition and context of 177 Huntington Avenue (the former Administration building) and the entire Christian Science Plaza. The new building, in addition to supporting the Church's objectives, would create an opportunity to strengthen the intersection of the Avenue of the Arts (Huntington Avenue) and the Avenue of Music (Massachusetts Avenue).

Questions and comments in response to Howard's presentation from the CAC are summarized below:

- Robert Wright, SUN, commented that he liked the new design concept, and appreciated its integration with the surrounding context.
- Tom Aucella, Belvedere Condo Association, thought the plans looked fine.
- Lee Steele, SBNA, also expressed his support for the design concept, as well as for the opportunity to improve the adjacent streetscape.
- Joanne McKenna, Fenway CDC, stated that she hopes that a residential building on this site would be an opportunity to include affordable housing for a range of incomes.
- Kelly Brilliant, Fenway Alliance, said she thought the building looked great. She asked if this reconfiguration would solve congestion challenges with the garage emptying out onto

Massachusetts Avenue after events. Bob Herlinger responded that this will be explored further as the process moves along.

- Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association, asked if HVAC structures will be visible at the top of the building or be hidden within the structure. Howard Elkus replied that they would likely be enclosed, as they are in the Hancock Tower.
- In a follow-up comment, Meg Mainzer-Cohen added that she appreciates the fact that the trees along Huntington Avenue will largely be preserved.
- George Thrush, Co-Chair and BSA, stated that the project team has come up with some great ideas, and added that he likes the relationship to the existing buildings. He noted that he still believes that although the proposed plans meet the Church's objectives, they don't address many urban design aspects, primarily those which relate to the pedestrian streetscape and shadow impacts to the plaza. Bob Herlinger responded that the Church Team has done some preliminary shadow explorations, which have revealed that some new shadow will be created by a building on this site, but that this may be perceived as positive, since it frequently becomes very hot on warm days.
- In response to a follow-up comment from George Thrush, Howard Elkus indicated that the new crossing of the reflecting pool will be located at a point that leads one directly across to the Original Mother Church, replicating a pathway through gardens that historically existed before the Plaza development.
- Vanessa Calderon-Rosada, IBA, indicated that she liked the new concept and also that the building is back from the street. She asked about the wind impacts in this location. Bob Herlinger responded that the project team has done some preliminary wind studies and is looking at ways to minimize wind impacts.
- Craig Nicholson, APA – Massachusetts Chapter, stated that he appreciated the proposed setback offered by this new design.
- Sybil CooperKing, Co-Chair and NABB, spoke favorably about the concept of the building being transparent, but challenged the reality of a building with physical mass being transparent. She added she would rather see the building be spectacular and groundbreaking in its design. Sybil also noted that she liked the building's proposed footprint and setback.
- Bill Richardson, FCA, expressed his preference for the proposed taller, slender building on this site, and stated that he liked the openness created by the plaza in front of the building on Huntington Avenue. In terms of shadow, he said that he is more concerned about shadow created in the colder months.
- In response to a follow-up question from Bill Richardson, Randi Lathrop, BRA Deputy Director of Community Planning, replied that the long-term protection of the plaza will be covered as the process moves forward.
- Ryan Higginson, Resident of the South End, asked about the activation of the ground plane along Huntington Avenue. Bob Herlinger replied that there are a series of other issues in this location, one of them being the buses that park at the curbside. Ryan also indicated that he liked the proposed straight-across pathway in the Reflecting Pool and felt it was more in concert with the reflective nature of the Pool and the Plaza.

Next, Bob Herlinger reviewed the improvements made on the Belvidere/Dalton Street site (also available in the PowerPoint Presentation on the BRA's project website). These modifications include moving the service and loading operations to a proposed extension of Clearway Street and adding an open space adjacent to Dalton Street where there is currently a parking lot.

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

- Joanne McKenna asked about the use of eminent domain in the past on the Belvidere and Dalton Streets site. Inés indicated that the BRA does not have any further information on it, and Barbara Burley added that she thought that a portion of the LAZ parking lot had been taken by eminent domain in the past, but the BRA would have to confirm whether or not that occurred.
- Meg Mainzer-Cohen stated that the process thus far has been very good, and thanked the co-chairs for keeping everyone on point.
- Bill Richardson stated that he would like to see the relationship between the cost of repairs to the open space and the actual amount of development proposed. Barbara Burley explained that several years ago, the Church had cost estimates that anticipated it would cost around \$12 million to rebuild the Reflecting Pool alone – and this is likely to have increased by now and doesn't include other improvements. Currently, the Church spends around \$2 million annually to maintain the plaza.
- In response to a request from Sybil CooperKing regarding an approximation of how much revenue the new buildings would generate for the Church, Barbara Burley replied that the Church Team has tried to address the financial aspects of the project in previous meetings. She continued that since there still seem to be questions, the Church Team will give the issue more thought and address it at the next CAC meeting.
- In response to a question from Meg Mainzer-Cohen regarding a potential skating rink on the reflecting pool, Bob Herlinger indicated that they are still exploring ice skating as an option, and that if it were to happen, it would likely be some sort of temporary rink surface, similar to what is done in Bryant Park in New York City, and located at the Children's Fountain.

Public Questions:

In response to a question from Shirley Kressel, NABB, as to whether the Church had considered demolishing the Sunday School building, Bob Herlinger replied that the project team concluded that it is important to retain this structure as part of the historic ensemble of the Plaza.

The meeting was then adjourned at 9:55 a.m.