



**Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project  
CAC Working Meeting #16**

**Tuesday, June 15, 2010**

**Location: Christian Science Publishing House Building**

**CAC Attendees:**

Tom Aucella, Belvedere Condo Association  
Vanessa Calderon-Rosado, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA)  
Christian Coffin, Hilton Hotel Boston Back Bay  
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)  
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:**

Kelly Brilliant, Fenway Alliance  
Mark Cataudella, Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO)  
Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association

**Ex-Officio Attendees:**

Boston City Councilor Chuck Turner

**City of Boston Attendees:**

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

**Members of the Public:**

Sarah Kelly, Boston Preservation Alliance  
Shirley Kressel, NABB  
Barbara Simons, SUN  
Lucille Taitt, Church Member  
Bill Whitney, Berklee College of Music

**Meeting Summary**

On Tuesday, June 15, 2010, the sixteenth working session of the Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was called to order at approximately 8:10 a.m. in the Christian Science Publishing House Building by Inés Palmarin, BRA Senior

Planner. This meeting was called in order to allow the CAC to have an open discussion together for the entirety of the session.

Topics: Upcoming Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) Study Report & Draft Plan Document

- Review Process – Would it make sense to recommend deed restrictions in the Plan Document?
  - David Carlson, BRA: A Landmark Designation represents a significant permanent restriction on the property.
- Phasing –
  - Plan Document issued.
  - Request for Proposals released by the Church, at which point they will select one or more developers for the site(s).
  - Selected developer(s) then file a Letter of Intent (LOI) with the BRA, kicking off the Article 80 process.
  - Impact Advisory Group (IAG) is then formed (carryover from CAC members or at the very least someone else from their association, for continuity). IAG evaluates impacts and determines community mitigation measures.
  - Project Notification Form (PNF) is released (with sections covering shadow, transportation, zoning, site planning, renderings, environmental studies, LEED, etc.).
  - Followed by a 30-day comment period.
  - Scoping Determination is then issued, which includes all comments received by the BRA.
  - For this project a Draft Project Impact Report (DPIR) is likely necessary, which responds directly to the Scoping Determination, followed by another comment period, etc.
  - Three layers of review possible prior to BRA Board Approval.
- There is the potential that more than one developer will work on the site(s).
- Design Review is ongoing from start to finish. Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC) review will also be weaved in.
- Planned Development Area (PDA) process is a separate layer, which would involve its own review.
- **BLC document to be released on June 22<sup>nd</sup>**. Public comment period prior to Public Hearing, scheduled for 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, July 13<sup>th</sup> in Room 900, 9<sup>th</sup> Floor, Boston City Hall. Comments accepted 3 days after Hearing (due by 5:00 p.m. Friday, July 16<sup>th</sup>). Vote is not taken until the next meeting – and testimony is not taken at that meeting. BLC report will not be specific to a proposed plan; more general in that it may not preclude new construction in some locations, and new construction would be subject to approval of and design review by the BLC. CAC should carefully look at guidelines to make sure that they do not preclude the work that has been done. BRA has not seen the document. BLC team has been reviewing the CAC's process so it is not expected that the document will contradict the work thus far.
- **Draft Plan Document to be released by The Church Team after July 4<sup>th</sup>**.
- BLC document will be issued both electronically and in paper format. BRA will provide a link to the CAC and also post a link to the document on their website.
- George Thrush, Co-Chair and BSA: Good idea to assemble a common ground after both documents have been released, in order to establish what everyone agrees on. Likely a more effective way of organizing our thoughts.

- Inés: BRA can also put a matrix together, with Co-chairs reviewing.
- Next CAC meeting #17: Tuesday, July 6<sup>th</sup> morning. Lauren to circulate by email. Mornings seem to work better.
- CAC Meeting #18: Tuesday, August 3<sup>rd</sup> evening. The BRA will advertise this meeting in the Boston Courant and South End News in order to reach the widest possible audience.

### Open Discussion

- Bill Richardson, FCA: My group is more concerned about height on Huntington Avenue; we would like Church to look at additional height on Midtown Hotel site instead, since development there will not cast shadows. It seems that what they are asking for is reasonable, considering the plaza renovations needed. We consider the Dalton Street site an appropriate place for some height, since from a street level perspective you will not notice the height.
- Sybil CooperKing, Co-Chair and NABB: We have the same concerns but for the Dalton Street site. If this was not a church and instead a private developer, would we react the same way?
- George Thrush: We look at this differently because they have been great stewards of the neighborhood in the past. Also, we want to see the base of these buildings designed very carefully, since that will have a greater impact on the pedestrian use of the plaza and its environs. Huntington Avenue between Massachusetts Avenue and Belvidere Street is a dead zone.
- Joanne McKenna, Fenway CDC: The economic engine behind this overwhelms the good community design piece here. They are less responsive to building space that would activate Huntington Avenue (*i.e.*, restaurants) and this constrains the discussion.
- George Thrush: We haven't yet teased out successfully the public interests on this site versus the Church interests. This whole existing public space is the result of public and Church interests overlapping.
- Bill Richardson: We cannot assume that everyone walking down Huntington Avenue is more appreciative of small retail instead of the existing open space.
- Sybil CooperKing: I'm not sure we need another hotel.
- Bill Richardson: There is a huge demand for hotel uses in the City. Also, the Longwood Medical Area has a large demand for more hotels, and other area hospitals do as well.
  - Randi Lathrop, BRA: Both Hynes Convention Center and the Boston Convention and Exposition Center (BCEC) in South Boston need additional hotel space.
- George Thrush: A long-term stay hotel would also be beneficial, and meet a different need.
- Craig Nicholson, APA – Massachusetts Chapter: We should try to avoid specific use discussions now, since we do not know what will be in demand once the project gets built.
- George Thrush: The issue is that form follows function; skinny buildings tend towards hotel or residential, while those with a larger floorplate are better for office, and preclude hotel or residential.
- Sybil CooperKing: What about classroom space? Are these footprints possible for that? Or dormitory space?
- George Thrush: It's likely that these are not financially feasible for schools, though the actual floorplates might work.
- Lee Steele, SBNA: Regarding the Article 80 process, do they need to be definitive on what is in the building when the selected developer eventually files a project?

- Randi: Yes. And if there are changes, they have to file a Notice of Project Change.
- Lee Steele: Is there a vehicle for neighborhood associations to comment beyond the CAC?
  - Ines: Yes, the public comment period will reflect that. Ads will be placed in local papers (the Boston Courant and South End News) to notify the public. The Plan Document will also be placed in the Church and at the Boston Public Library branches in Copley Square and the South End.
- Lee Steele: Everyone should make sure that their associations are aware of the deadlines here.
  - Ines: We will make sure that the August meeting is more widely noticed so that the members of the public are aware.