



Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project
CAC Working Meeting #8
Thursday, September 17, 2009
Location: Christian Science Publishing House Building

CAC Attendees:

Tom Aucella, Belvedere Condo Association
Kelly Brilliant, Fenway Alliance
Christian Coffin, Hilton Hotel Boston Back Bay
Sybil CooperKing, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB)
Marie Fukuda, Fenway Civic Association
Eric Georgi, Resident of St. Germain Street
Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association
Joanne McKenna, Fenway Community Development Corporation (Fenway CDC)
Craig Nicholson, American Planning Association (APA) – Massachusetts Chapter
George Thrush, Boston Society of Architects (BSA)
Robert Wright, Symphony United Neighbors (SUN)

CAC Members Not in Attendance:

Mark Cataudella, Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO)
Vanessa Calderon-Rosado, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA)
Ryan Higginson, Resident of the South End
Donald Margotta, Church Park Apartments
Lee Steele, St. Botolph Neighborhood Association

Ex-Officio Attendees:

Elizabeth Corcoran-Hunt, Office of Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing
James Hellen, Office of Massachusetts State Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz
Michelle Snyder, Office of Boston City Council President Michael Ross

City of Boston Attendees:

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

Church Team Attendees:

Barbara Burley, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Jennifer Carr, 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
Jim Van Sickle, Elkus-Manfredi Architects

Members of the Public:

Maura Burke, NABB
Craig Elliott
Marc Laderman
MK Merelice, Tech Center at Tent City
Meghan Miller, VHB
Bill Whitney, Berklee College of Music

Meeting Summary

On Thursday, September 17, 2009, the eighth 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 began the meeting by reviewing the role of the CAC in the planning process. CAC members serve to 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 and will be held in the Christian Science Publishing House Building. In addition, all meeting notices are posted to the BRA's online website calendar (<http://www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org/calendar/calendar.asp>).

Inés noted that it had come to her attention that a separate residents-only meeting was held independent of the rest of the CAC. A list of questions and concerns emerged from this meeting. Inés stated that the list of questions is certainly valid, but expressed her concern that the remaining members of the CAC and the BRA were left out of the meeting. If the CAC feels that they need more time to review everything, the BRA can schedule additional meetings.

Randi Lathrop, BRA Deputy Director for Community Planning, added that Inés and Lauren Shurtleff, BRA, are the BRA planners staffing the CAC. All comments, questions, and concerns should go to them – at which point they will then share it with the rest of the BRA team, elected officials, and Church team, as well as the Co-Chairs.

Inés stated that a planning document will be created as a result of this CAC process. This document will have a public comment period. Once the Article 80 development review process begins, the CAC (or representatives from the same organizations and neighborhoods) will likely become the Impact Advisory Group (IAG) for the process.

Randi added that a CAC is appointed by the mayor when a project is particularly complicated, and CACs have more involvement with a project than a standard IAG.

David Carlson, BRA Senior Architect, added that all of the topics covered by the CAC in the planning process will be covered later on during the Article 80 process.

Heather Campisano, BRA Project Manager, explained that the CAC will be responsible for assisting the BRA during the Article 80 development review process. Currently, the CAC is in a planning process that precedes the Article 80 process. After this planning process

has concluded, the Church will select a developer, who will then file a Letter of Intent, followed by a Project Notification Form (PNF), which kicks off the formal Article 80 review process. The IAG will be appointed once the Letter of Intent has been filed.

The Article 80 process includes facilitating the evaluation of design, density, use, and physical and social impacts of a proposed project in conjunction with City agencies and the impacted community. For more information, see **A Citizens Guide to Development Review** (<http://www.cityofboston.gov/bra/PDF/Documents/A%20Citizens%20Guide%20to%20Article%2080.pdf>).

A proposed schedule showing topics for CAC working sessions through February 2010 was also distributed to the CAC.

Several comments were made in conjunction with this discussion:

- Sybil CooperKing, NABB, noted that it is important for everyone to have a voice in the process.
- George Thrush, BSA, stated that it is good to have this discussion and noted that now that the CAC has two Co-Chairs and a schedule moving forward, it is in the best interest of the group that they not split off again in the future. George also suggested that if CAC members feel that they need more meeting time, more meetings can be scheduled on a more frequent basis.
- Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association, explained that it is very helpful for the non-residents, institutions, business owners, and professional organizations on the CAC to hear the concerns of the residents directly in the open forum that the CAC provides.

Inés then noted that at the previous meeting, the CAC had requested a review of the current zoning for the site. Rick Shaklik, BRA Deputy Director of Zoning, then provided an overview of the site's zoning with a PowerPoint presentation (available on the BRA's project website: <http://www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org/Planning/PlanningInitsIndividual.asp?action=ViewInit&InitID=143>). He also distributed a handout showing the zoning map, which is also available on the project website. Within the Huntington Avenue/Prudential Zoning District, there are three protection areas, which include the St. Botolph Street Protection Area, the St. Germain Street Protection Area, and the Massachusetts Avenue/Belvidere Street Protection Area. These three areas tend to have a lower Height and Floor Area Ratio (FAR) limit. The District also includes the Christian Science Institutional Area (not to be confused with an Institutional Master Plan, or IMP, a separate overlay that only applies to colleges, universities, and hospitals), which reflects the character of the Church campus, and three other major subdistricts: Huntington Avenue Boulevard Area, St. Cecilia Special Study Area, and the General Area, which includes Copley Place and the Prudential Center. The project site includes the Christian Science Institutional Area and portions of the Massachusetts Avenue/Belvidere Street Protection Area.

Within the Huntington Avenue/Prudential Center Zoning District, there are three overlay districts, including:

- Restricted Parking: This applies to most of the City's core and makes accessory parking a conditional use, excluding residential parking, which is required.
- Planned Development Area (PDA): There are two PDAs within this Zoning District, the Prudential and the Back Bay Hilton. A PDA is a discretionary zoning tool that must be approved by the BRA Board of Directors and Zoning Commission to amend the Zoning Code for very large projects. PDAs allow for greater flexibility but also for greater control in that they identify specifically what will be built and where. All PDAs must be at least an acre in size. They are set with very specific restrictions on FAR, height, public improvements, and community benefits.
- Urban Renewal Area: Two parcels – the Colonnade Hotel and 116 Huntington Avenue are under Urban Renewal Area overlays within this Zoning District. This type of overlay is permitted in Urban Renewal Plan areas – in this case, the Fenway Urban Renewal Area. An Urban Renewal Area overlay must be approved by the Zoning Commission, and in these cases, the zoning under the original Urban Renewal Plan becomes the zoning for the site.

Rick continued his presentation, noting that while the entire project site is located in the Fenway Urban Renewal Area, the current zoning, represented in Article 41 of the Boston Zoning Code, is applicable unless an amendment is adopted – which would require action by the Boston Zoning Commission.

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

- In response to a question from Kelly Brilliant, Fenway Alliance, Rick responded that the goal of urban renewal was originally for rehabilitation and strategic clearance, but this has evolved over time. Randi added that a more recent example of urban renewal working successfully is the Washington Street corridor in the South End.
- In response to questions from George Thrush and Sybil CooperKing, Rick explained that the Zoning Code acknowledges the need for flexibility and change – and this is done through a PDA, an Urban Renewal overlay, the Zoning Board of Appeals, or an amendment or revision to the underlying zoning.
- In response to a follow-up question from George Thrush, Rick answered that in order for the Church site to become PDA-eligible, there would need to be an amendment to the underlying zoning map by the Zoning Commission. A PDA is somewhat similar to the Church pursuing an IMP if it were a college, university, or hospital.
- In response to questions from Marie Fukuda, Fenway Civic Association, Rick responded that the PDA process is separate from the Article 80 process, and either one could go before or after the other, or at the same time.
- In response to a question from George Thrush, Rick replied that changes to zoning require review and approval by the BRA Board of Directors, a public hearing, and approval by the Zoning Commission, as well as approval by the mayor. A change to a PDA also requires a public hearing and approval by the BRA Board of Directors.
- Tom Aucella, Belvedere Condo Association, asked if the Midtown Hotel were to be redeveloped, would it go through the Article 80 process? Rick responded that it would fall under Large Project Review of Article 80, owing to its size.
- Robert Wright, SUN, asked about the zoning on the Belvidere/Dalton Street site on the Church's property. Rick indicated that it falls within the Massachusetts Avenue/Belvidere Street Protection Area.

- Joanne McKenna, Fenway CDC, asked about as-of-right zoning with respect to averaging FARs. Rick replied that you would determine the as-of-right zoning by the zoning for the district. Barbara Burley of the Church Team clarified that the issue for them is that there are multiple districts – and the Church has calculated figures based on their overall project site.
- George Thrush stated that it is clear that careful attention to the zoning will be required here, and commented that the Massachusetts Avenue/Belvidere Street Protection Area that the Belvidere/Dalton Street site is located within has very different characteristics compared to the others within the Huntington Avenue/Prudential Zoning District.

Next, the Church Team began their presentation on massing. Bob Herlinger introduced Jim Van Sickle, of Elkus-Manfredi Architects. Jim moved through the PowerPoint and explained that it is important to distinguish the difference between massing and design. At this point, the Church is only looking at the massing on their site. The massing includes the block of space in which the building is constricted. Setbacks and stepbacks may be indicated, but no windows or architectural details are outlined. Bob then briefly reviewed the Church's goals and objectives for the site once more.

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

- George Thrush commented that the Church's ideas for the Belvidere/Dalton Street site are great. He expressed his concern that the ideas for the Huntington Avenue building are far less developed, perhaps out of a fear of modifying the Sunday School Building. He added that he would not compare the Sunday School Building to Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum in New York.
- Kelly Brilliant suggested that the Church Team consider Huntington Avenue's moniker of Avenue of the Arts when thinking about the Huntington Avenue site.
- Sybil CooperKing expressed her appreciation of the Sunday School Building, and added her concern for placing any part of the reflecting pool in shadow.
- Meg Mainzer-Cohen reiterated that whatever happens, the tour bus parking along Huntington Avenue must be reconsidered. She also suggested looking into removing the underpass on Huntington Avenue, as it would likely improve the intersection for the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the Christian Science Plaza.
- Marie Fukuda stated that in view of restrictive zoning on the protected district, it might be good to revisit massing on the plaza.

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

The following list of questions was submitted by the residential members of the CAC to the BRA prior to the meeting:

- 1) PROCEDURE
 - a. What is the schedule of approvals required if the project is to go forward? What has to be approved and by whom? What are the specific BRA approval protocols?
 - b. What are the legal milestones of the project?

- c. What are the deliverables needed from the CS CAC?
 - d. What did the Church file to begin the project?
 - e. What would be the approval process for such a significant exception? Is a PDA being proposed?
 - f. If this is large project review, can the BRA provide examples of projects where they have done large project review for this amount of square footage, especially one where other owned properties have not been addressed as potential sites?
 - g. How does the Landmark filing for the Plaza impact the approval requirements while under review, and if approved?
- 2) SCOPE OF PLANNING & ZONING ISSUES
- a. Is there a master plan for all the properties, what the properties are and how best to responsibly look at development both for the church and for the abutting neighborhoods?
 - b. What, specifically, is the Church's economic rationale for "needing" an additional 950,000 SF of rentable commercial space on the site?
 - c. Could there be other large scale buildings/developments in the adjacent properties such as the Midtown Hotel that would affect the context of these two proposed buildings?
 - d. Could the large mass of these two proposed buildings possibly be mitigated by adding reasonable mass elsewhere?
 - e. Is it appropriate to put all the new square footage in a protected district, or should it be spread around?
 - f. Can FAR be averaged across differently zoned areas?
- 3) USAGE OF NEW BUILDINGS
- a. What forecasting methods have been used to determine that the proposed buildings are being built to meet actual demand?
 - b. What is the assumed usage of the proposed buildings?
 - c. What institutional link, if any, is under possible consideration for the development site? (NU, Berkeley)
 - d. Has there been any discussion with any institutions with regards to new real estate?
 - e. What would be the business/commercial impacts of the proposal for varying usages, e.g. effect on class A rents?
- 4) TAX IMPLICATIONS
- a. If the Church rents the new space to a non-profit what are the implications for property tax to the City? How does this change if the same space is rented to a for-profit?
 - b. Same question as above but what are the implications on other taxes, e.g. "UBIT" tax to city, state or IRS?
- 5) ENVIRONMENT
- a. Approximately, how tall are the two buildings currently proposed?
 - b. What planned or completed studies have been done to model shadowing during appropriate times of the year? Minimum Studies should include autumnal/vernal equinox and winter/summer solstice at 9, 12, 3, and 6.
 - c. Have shadow studies considered where the resultant shadows extend across the street obscuring south facing facades, depleting light in the interior work spaces, and harming potential rooftop solar access?

- d. What groundwater recharge systems are being considered?
- e. Has communication with the Boston Groundwater Trust begun? If not, when will it begin?
- f. Has past ground water well monitoring data been shared with the Boston Groundwater Trust? If not, when will this be done?
- g. What planned or completed studies have been done to model traffic during appropriate times of the year, including during Red Sox games, and concerts?

6) HISTORY

- a. Please paraphrase in laymen's terms the report by Kevin Morrison at the 8-4-09 CAC meeting, especially regarding the fact that the Urban Renewal Plan's extension to 2015 may or may not effect the Plaza development.
 - 1. What is the history with the Urban Renewal Plan and the two sites?
 - 2. There used to be a building on the parking lot what is the history behind its removal?
 - 3. For the triangle parcel (parcel 23), what were the specifics behind the rehabilitation agreement made in 1982?
 - 4. Are there outstanding commitments from UR that have not been addressed? There was reference made to replacing housing lost during UR in the last meeting, was there a plan for housing on Belvedere that may be related to its being zoned as a protected area.

7) MISC.

- a. Is the Church considering selling off (or swapping/trading) the development rights to a private party or another institution?