



Copley Place Expansion Project
CAC Meeting #15
Wednesday, September 28, 2011
Location: Copley Place – 4th Floor Office Level

CAC Attendees:

David Berarducci, Resident of the South End
Nikki Fortes, Tent City Corporation
Anthony Gordon, Ellis South End Neighborhood Association
Zeina Grinnell, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB)
Eugene Kelly, Resident of the Back Bay
Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association
Ted Pietras, South End Business Alliance (SEBA)
Mark L. Schmid, Trinity Church
Judith Wright, Pilot Block Neighborhood Association

Ex-Officio Attendees:

David Blaisdell, Office of Massachusetts State Representative Marty Walz
Elizabeth Corcoran-Hunt, Office of Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing

City of Boston Attendees:

Heather Campisano, BRA
David Carlson, BRA
John Fitzgerald, BRA
Vineet Gupta, BTB
Mary Knasas, BRA
Lauren Shurtleff, BRA

State of Massachusetts Attendees:

Robin Blatt, MassDOT
Peter O'Connor, MassDOT
Martin Polera, MassDOT
Bill Tuttle, MassDOT

Simon Property Group Attendees:

Donna Camiolo, R.F. Walsh Collaborative Partners
John Copley, Copley-Wolff Design Group
Kristi Dowd, R.F. Walsh Collaborative Partners
Rob Halter, Elkus-Manfredi Architects
Jack Hobbs, R.F. Walsh Collaborative Partners
Bill Kenney, Simon Property Group
Lynn Wolff, Copley-Wolff Design Group

Members of the Public:

Kathy Bianchi, Residences at Copley Place
George Cramer, Cramer's Hair Salon
Ann Hershfang, WalkBoston

Janet Hunkel, Southwest Corridor Park Parkland Management Advisory Board (PMAC)
Felicia Jacques, Maloney Properties/Tent City Apartments
Ken Kruckemeyer
Douglas Murphy
Shelia Randolph, Resident of Tent City
Sheila Pelosi, Tent City Resident Alliance
Lyda Peters, MBE Consultant to Copley Place
Marvin Wool, NABB
Jackie Yessian, NABB

Meeting Summary

On Wednesday, September 28th, 2011, the fifteenth working session of the Copley Place Expansion Project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was called to order at approximately 8:10 a.m. at Copley Place by Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association, on behalf of Judith Wright, Pilot Block Neighborhood Association and CAC Chair, who later joined the group.

David Berarducci, Resident of the South End, then provided the group with an overview of the Subcommittee meeting held on September 9th, reflected in the notes below, compiled by Meg Mainzer-Cohen.

Copley CAC Subcommittee Meeting Notes September 9, 2011

Attendees: Anthony Gordon, David Berarducci, Elizabeth Corcoran-Hunt (representing State Representative Byron Rushing), and Meg Mainzer-Cohen.

The goal of the subcommittee was to review plans for the Copley Place expansion, focusing on concerns expressed by the community related to the public realm given the proposed height and scale of the project. We sought to encourage improvements that would make the spaces in and around Copley more inviting, active, and accessible for all.

The following comments were reviewed by the subcommittee and synthesized into our comments: emails from Dan d'Heilly, Lee Steele, George Cramer, Judi Wright, Nikki Fortes, and Ted Pietras, in addition to comments forwarded to us from Ann Hershfang, Jennifer Leonard and Dan Munson. Also, we discussed issues brought up during meetings, reflected in minutes from CAC meetings. The notes were distributed to the entire CAC, and comments have been incorporated from Ted Pietras, Gene Kelly, Nikki Fortes, and Zeina Grinnell.

1. SOUTHWEST CORRIDOR

The Southwest Corridor is the gateway to Copley Place and the Back Bay. The expansion of Copley is an opportunity to improve the park, which will serve as the foyer for the south entry into Copley from the South End and Back Bay Station. Improvements to the Corridor Park will be a benefit to residents, visitors, tourists, and new residents of the Copley tower. We received numerous comments encouraging improvements to the park, and agree that this is an ideal opportunity for the developer to provide improvements, both long-term and short-term, to that portion of the Southwest Corridor park adjacent to the development.

- The Southwest Corridor between Harcourt Street and Dartmouth should be redesigned to reflect the major change proposed for Copley Place, to better serve the new residents there and the surrounding neighborhoods.
- This portion of the Corridor Park should serve as a forecourt to the Copley Place south entry. The redesigned space should function as a destination space so neighborhood residents and pedestrians would want to sit and linger rather than simply pass through.
- The Harcourt / Dartmouth Streets portion is the “head” of the Southwest Corridor Park and the design should reflect the celebrated gateway that it is to the South End and the Back Bay from the Back Bay Station.
- The granite poetry columns are ineffective in this new role for this space and should be removed or relocated to a more appropriate/reflective area of the City.
- The public art proposed as mitigation for the development should be concentrated here. The “art” could incorporate a significant water element functional during the warmer months, but should also serve as an attraction year-round. Based on community review and appropriateness, a water element that is attractive to children might also be explored, as an alternative.
- The sculptural water element should be located closer to Dartmouth Street (in the vicinity of where the granite poetry columns are) to serve as a focal point so it is visible to the passer-by.
- It should be large enough in its scale so as to appropriately fit the space defined by the façade of Tent City and the new Copley Place entry and should express its celebratory, gateway / focal point role.
- Recognizing that there will be no truly open new public space associated with the new residential tower, it is anticipated that the Southwest Corridor will be the chosen open space for tower residents, including their dogs. The area would benefit greatly from the inclusion of dog-waste bag dispensers and additional trash cans.
- The area should be re-landscaped to be more attractive and welcoming for pedestrians, as well as the adjacent neighborhood, businesses and Tent City. Landscaped areas should be fenced as needed, protecting plantings from dogs and increased foot traffic. Lighting for the area should be updated and improved.
- Fund and perform an assessment of the underground watering and irrigation system that services Section 1 of the SWCP. The assessment should enumerate the measures and costs required to get the watering system running on a fully functional and reliable basis
- Fund and arrange for the first, critical system upgrade measures to be performed, with a focus on activating sprinkler and hose connections currently inoperable.
- The management of this area should be incorporated into a long-term management plan. Either the developer should be required to donate significant funds for the yearly maintenance of the park, managed by the “Friends,” group, or the developer should manage the park at a level that will satisfy the community.
- All materials, landscaping and access points (including entryways) should meet the latest ADA accessibility standards.

2. PEDESTRIAN ACCESS ON DARTMOUTH & STUART STREET

- Pedestrian and wheel chair access between the Boston Marriott/Copley Place garage has been problematic since inception. Especially for those not familiar with the area, neither side of the street, on Stuart Street between the Copley Place main entrance and Dartmouth Street, is acceptable. We believe that an improved pedestrian connection will animate the street for retail as well as pedestrians, improve public safety, permit a natural flow of pedestrian traffic, and increase the access to and marketability of the upper level retail space.

- We suggest that the developer study and present all possible solutions to this problem in greater detail, including external and internal walkways that would connect the Dartmouth / Stuart intersection over the I-90 exit ramp from the tunnel. We also encourage meetings with PWD to examine ways to as well as leveling and join the sidewalk fronting the Marriott along Huntington Avenue to allow for a continuous accessible path from Stuart to Dartmouth (where Au Bon Pain is currently). The CAC should review all possible studies and configurations to remedy this “severed” connection (please don’t say it is not feasible without demonstrating this to the CAC’s satisfaction).
- It is understood that the ramp from the Massachusetts Turnpike is reality to contend with, we strongly advocate for some measure that would slow down traffic as it approaches the neighborhood, such as “slow” signs, speed reduction grids, flashing yellow lights, or adding a “stop sign” at the exit, similar to the Prudential Center ramp.
- Propose element(s) at building entryway to deal with the wind high wind load pressure point in the center of Dartmouth Street intersection.

3. WINTER GARDEN

- Some comments expressed an opposition to the incorporation of a new “winter garden” as a replacement for the open space fronting Neiman Marcus. We thought that the addition of the enclosed space should be weighed as part of a big picture and refined to become a benefit to the community
- There is a strong desire for the garden to have infrastructure that would enable the windows to open when weather permits (such as Sonsie) to welcome people.
- Since it is replacing a public “open” area, it is suggested that the “winter garden” be called something like, the “Public Square at Copley Place,” underlining the fact that the public is welcome. It should also have a sign stating that it is open to the public.
- To further convey the notion of this as a public enclosed “open” space we encourage such things as a “farmer’s market” stand, located within the space, during the winter months, attracting local shoppers and serving as a benefit to the community (please note, this would only be for the winter months when the Copley Farmers Market is closed). We encourage indoor café tables and seating, free wireless services, and the inclusion of a coffee shop/café to encourage one to sit and linger in the space.
- This space would very transparent and an ideal location for some event programming, such as live music and other commercial and public uses for recreation and reflection.
- Since the existing space is now a resting spot for those shopping in the area, it is suggested that outdoor seating be incorporated into the landscaping plan at the upper level of the entry podium to better connect with the indoor space emphasizing a better indoor/outdoor spatial connection.

4. COMMUNITY RETAIL

- The issues of the community retail spaces were discussed at length in the subcommittee meeting.
- We have reviewed the comments of George Cramer and have heard concerns about the community retail program adjacent to the Southwest Corridor on the lower level of Copley Place. There is a strong desire to better understand the community retail program as it was first conceived, and whether the original intent was full integration into Copley Place, or the separate condition that exists.
- Just as the CAC has (and continues to) explored the affordable housing in the development, we would like to better understand the history of this program, how tenants are

chosen, what kind of subsidized rent is expected, longevity of the initial agreement, and if the community has some role in choosing tenants.

- We have reviewed the new conditions for the community retail spaces, which will be improved with the new design, but understand the different condition will remain for this program (compared to tenants on the main floor of Copley). We suggest that the CAC be fully briefed on the history and economics of this program, and incorporate our comments about this “community benefit” as we do other aspects of the overall community benefit program associated with the development.
- The existing location of the Community retail spaces should be better “featured with the redesign of the Corridor Park. Their visibility should be enhanced by the pedestrian experience of the park and surrounding area.
- The CAC would like to revisit the proposed “enhanced” connection from within the mall to these community retail spaces to ensure every effort has been made to feature them and improve access to and their visibility to the public.

5. COPLEY SQUARE

- Copley Square is one of the most used public parks in Boston throughout the year and an important venue for open concerts, farmer’s market, demonstrations, Boston marathon and many more events. It is surrounded by a treasure of historic buildings that are recognized worldwide and photographed from every corner. Copley Square will be negatively affected by a two hour shadow during prime time uses of the Park impacting the quality of life of all visitors to the park.
- Concerns have been expressed about the view of the new tower from the Back Bay, especially the view from Dartmouth Street because of its location directly on the corner of Stuart/Dartmouth Streets. The building’s height will dominate the approach from Back Bay on Dartmouth Street all the way from the Charles River to Copley Square like no other current building in or surrounding the square today since its site, on the raised up Stuart/Dartmouth will loom over Copley Square in a way that the John Hancock Tower does not.
- Residents of Tent City would like more information about the impacts of the project on Copley Square, an examination of whether the size of the project negates the quality of life for the community and whether it should be decided for future generations what a project as tall and large as this will do to the quality of life for them.

6. SIDEWALK / STREETSCAPE DESIGN

The design of the streetscape elements should continue to be presented to the CAC as the plans develop. There are some basic elements that the design should reflect and incorporate:

- Pavement material should be of a high quality material that is suitable, durable and attractive to reflect the high quality of the overall development. The CAC would like to be involved in the choice of material and design.
- Understanding that the sidewalk along Dartmouth St. is mostly over structure, raised planters should be incorporated for tree planting as well as for perennial and other seasonal / changeable flower displays along the curb line. There is concern over the width of the sidewalk given that the Winter Garden is taking any open space therefore street trees and softscape need to be incorporated at every opportunity.
- Raised planters should be permanent design elements not movable and temporary and should provide for and incorporate seating opportunities wherever possible.

- The upper level podium at the “Winter Garden” level should be large enough to function as a pedestrian assembly / gathering space, incorporating seating at that upper level to connect to and correspond with the interior public space.
- The lower level sidewalk at the Dartmouth/Stuart corner should be equally inviting and sized to accommodate limited public gathering, incorporate seating and feature attractive plantings, emphasizing its role as the main foyer into Neiman Marcus and Copley Place.

7. OTHER

- Concerns remain about the impacts of trucks loading on Harcourt Street. The developer should improve the masonry, landscaping and broken post and chain barriers. Better management of delivery systems should be explored to minimize impacts on pedestrians and the adjacent neighborhood.
- Concerns has been expressed about the plans for car valet that calls for circling the block (a very large block) and the impact this will have, especially on Dartmouth Street which is one lane, and a major pedestrian crossing from the MBTA.
- Some members would like to see more information related to the affordable housing program.
- A top to bottom review of all curb and roads should be studied, including the proposed reduction of one parking space on Dartmouth and Stuart streets and reducing the U-turn on Huntington Avenue. All crosswalks in the area should be repainted.
- There are concerns that the use of the building could change from condos, to rental, and questions related to the sales and marketing of the building.

CONCLUSION

There continues to be a great deal of concerns about the height of the building, shadow and wind, which the CAC must weigh in balance to the comments and improvements sought/encouraged above. We propose a walk around the site in 4 weeks to review in detail the changes the owner incorporates from this letter into the project design. At that time we would like to walk around and review proposed building materials, finishes, installations, entries, architectural features and landscaping.

Next, in response to the CAC’s Subcommittee notes/letter above, Jack Hobbs, R.F. Walsh Project Management, stated that the project team is prepared to address the public realm issues raised in the notes/letter. He added that the project team has met with the Boston Civic Design Commission, BRA, BTD, and MassDOT about the various design elements, and that each entity has raised their own separate issues as well. MassDOT, for one, has indicated that they would be receptive to any traffic calming measures incorporated by the proponent, providing that they meet all acceptable engineering and road safety standards. Thus far, some ideas that have emerged to calm traffic exiting the ramp from the Turnpike include reducing the exit lane to one travel lane, and the introduction of flashing signage. MassDOT has indicated that rumble strips on the exit ramp will not be allowed because of the possibility of cars skidding and crashing during inclement weather conditions.

Rob Halter, Elkus-Manfredi Architects, then gave a PowerPoint presentation (available on the BRA’s project website) covering several new ideas that the proponent had developed to address

the traffic and pedestrian conditions at the exit ramp. All options include the incorporation of shortened pedestrian crossings at the Huntington Avenue/Exeter Street intersection, plus:

- An elevator/stair combination over the ramp. This was determined to not be a viable proposal, based on the fact that people will not opt to use a set of stairs or an elevator in this location.
- A 5% ramp sloping up along Stuart Street, which would involve a cantilevered bridge 15' over the ramp that would connect to the interior of the mall.
- A final option included the same cantilever as above, with an additional ramp sloping downwards to ground level at the Stuart and Dartmouth Street intersection.

Rob explained that all of these alternatives were presented to MassDOT and BTM. At that point, it became clear that the project team was unaware of the required sight lines, which would result in obstructed views to drivers if any of these options were instituted. Additionally, a stop sign and/or a traffic signal are also not feasible in this location, because of the exit ramp's turning radius, which would not meet safety standards.

Rob continued to explain that the remaining options on the table included the shortening of the pedestrian crossings at the Huntington Avenue/Stuart Street intersection, as discussed earlier, as well as the following:

- All of the islands will be made wider, resulting in more space for pedestrians.
- All of the curb space will be made wider, resulting in more space for pedestrians.
- A raised landscaped area/planter bed will be introduced along the exit ramp's edge on Stuart Street, to act as a barrier.
- The size of the turning lane off of Huntington Avenue will be reduced in size.

The following questions were raised by the CAC following Rob's presentation:

- Ted Pietras, SEBA, commented that trucks delivering goods to the Westin Hotel often stick out from the Westin's loading dock into Stuart Street. Rob responded that the travel lane will not be reduced in that spot, but rather closer to the intersection of Dartmouth Street.
- In response to a question, Jack Hobbs replied that both MassDOT and BTM had told the project team that a pedestrian bridge is not an option in this location. Vineet Gupta, Director of Planning for BTM, added that it is the City's goal to see this entire area be made more friendly to pedestrians.
- Eugene Kelly, Resident of the Back Bay, noted that new signage can also be added to help direct tourists coming out of the Marriott Hotel and looking for Copley Square. He then asked about the number of pedestrians that routinely use this dangerous route alongside the exit ramp, and speculated that they are most likely area residents or workers that are very familiar with the area.

Mary Knasas then passed around a Summary of the Community Retail operations at Copley Place. The following questions were raised by the CAC:

- In regards to the community retail at Copley Place, Meg Mainzer-Cohen asked if it is being offered to the tenants at reduced rates. Bill Kenney, Simon Property Group, replied that it is offered at far below the comparable space for its category.
- Eugene Kelly commented that its entrance should be made far more prominent.
- In response to a question about whether Simon Property Group is honoring its commitments to the community retail tenants, Lyda Peters, Copley Place's MBE Consultant, responded that this is in fact the case.

Next, Rob showed a video made by the project team in 2008 showing a walkthrough of the Winter Garden and the public realm elements around the building.

He then introduced Lynn Wolff, Copley-Wolff Design Group, the proponent's landscape architect for the project. Lynn gave a PowerPoint Presentation (available on the BRA's project website) that highlighted three alternatives for the Winter Garden and two alternatives for the Southwest Corridor Park. These designs are still in the early development phases, and will evolve with input from the CAC.

The following questions were raised by members of the CAC:

- Nikki Fortes, Tent City Corporation, stated that the trees seem to block views of Tent City. Lynn responded that the trees are not meant to be barriers, but rather enhancement, especially when the right species are chosen.
- Anthony Gordon, Ellis South End Neighborhood Association, reiterated his desire to see dog stations, that would provide disposal bags and a small trash bin.
- David Berarducci added that a low fence barrier could be added near shrubs in order to keep dogs away from them so that they are not damaged.
- Zeina Grinnell, NABB, stated that she wanted to emphasize the importance of including street trees in the plan for Dartmouth Street, since they were not represented in all of the schemes.
- Vineet Gupta, BTDA, added that bicycle stands should be designed and incorporated, and noted that the MBTA #10 Bus Stop should also be represented in all diagrams.

The following questions were raised by members of the public:

- Ken Kruckemeyer stated that there is no information here that helps people make a decision with these schemes, and added that a land use diagram would be useful, as well as information on pedestrian movements through the space.
- Marvin Wool, NABB, asked how much shorter the building would have to be in order to entirely eliminate the shadow on Copley Square. Rob Halter replied that while he cannot provide an exact figure, he estimated that the building would have to be reduced in height by approximately less than half of what is proposed.
- In a follow-up question, Marvin Wool asked about the specifics of the building's residential units. Rob answered that there will be a mix of studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom units.
- In response to a follow-up question from Marvin Wool, Jack Hobbs replied that Article 80 gives developers options on how they would like to fulfill the Affordable Housing requirement. The developer will strive to build 5 of the required units within the building, with the remainder hopefully built elsewhere in the adjacent neighborhood.

Before closing the meeting, Meg Mainzer-Cohen asked that the proponent respond to the CAC's Subcommittee notes/letter above as they would in an Article 80 filing. The CAC also agreed that they would like to use the next meeting to close the loop on some of these issues in advance of the Draft Project Impact Report (DPIR) and Planned Development Area (PDA) comment period deadline, set for October 31, 2011.

Since the CAC meeting ran over in time, the proposed site walk was held on the morning of Friday, September 30th to provide the CAC and other interested persons an opportunity to walk the site with the project team.

It was additionally determined that a Subcommittee would meet to discuss the Turnpike Exit Ramp conditions on Tuesday, October 4th. They will report back to the CAC at the next working session, scheduled for Wednesday, October 12th.

In addition, subsequent to the CAC meeting, it was confirmed that the project would be presented to BCDC on Tuesday, October 4th.

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