

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, January 5, 2021, and was held virtually via Zoom to ensure the safety of the public, staff members, and the BPDA Board Members during the COVID-19 pandemic, and beginning at 5:00 p.m. Members in attendance were Deneen Crosby, Linda Eastley, Jonathan Evans, David Hacin, Kathy Kottaridis, Anne-Marie Lubeanu, Andrea Leers, Mimi Garza Love, David Manfredi, Paul McDonough, William Rawn. Absent were Eric Höweler, Mikyoung Kim, and Kirk Sykes. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Director Brian Golden, Scott Slarsky, Matt Martin, Meghan Richard, and Natalie Punzak] were present for the BPDA.

The Chair, Andrea Leers, announced that this was the meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission that meets the first Tuesday of every month and welcomed all persons interested in attending. She added thanks to the Commissioners for the contribution of their time to the betterment of the City and its Public Realm. This hearing was duly advertised on [DATE], in the BOSTON HERALD.

Andrea Leers restated the Commissions' intent and principles. The work of the Commission is advisory and is the advice of a group of respected design and development professionals with an eye toward embracing the future of Boston in ways that will continue to make the city beautiful, livable, sustainable, and just.

Director Brian Golden made an announcement, offering appreciation and recognition to Commissioner Paul McDonough, who was elevated to Emeritus status. Paul began his distinguished career as an inaugural member of the Boston Civic Design Commission in the spring of 1990 and rose to serve as Co-Chair and Vice-Chair of the Commission. Director Golden offered a proclamation signed by Mayor Martin J. Walsh, thanking Paul McDonough for his more than 30 years of service to the Commission, which declared January 5, 2021 Paul F. McDonough Day in the City of Boston.

During this meeting, the Commission also welcomed three new members: Jonathan Evans of MASS Design Group, Kathy Kottaridis of Historic Boston, Inc., and Mimi Garza Love of Utile.

The first item on the agenda was the approval of the December 1 and December 8 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from the meeting on December 15, 2020. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the December 1, 8, and 15, 2020 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the 220 Huntington Avenue project. The proposed project is a 351,500 SF mixed-use development with 325 residential units, retail, and parking. Given the size of the project, review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 220 Huntington Ave project in the Back Bay neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the Willow Baker Development project, which is a proposed ~200,000 SF residential and mixed-use development in the South Bay area of Dorchester. The project exceeds the 100,000 SF threshold so review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Willow Baker project in the Dorchester neighborhood.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the Madison Tropical Parcel 10 project. Just over 100,000 SF this building is part of a larger Parcel 10 project that the BCDC recommended approval for in May 2013. (At that time Building A, Tropical Foods Market was approved and has since been constructed. Building C was a renovation of the building at the corner of Williams and Washington into residential and retail. It is also complete.) Review for this third phase is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Boston Civic Design Commission review the schematic design for the 2085 Washington Street, Parcel 10 Phase 3, project in the Roxbury Neighborhood.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first presentation was for **the Bunker Hill Housing Redevelopment project**.

Megan Pasquina, Bunker Hill Housing Redevelopment project manager: Buildings F and M will be returning to Design Committee shortly, as this approval is for the overall masterplan and urban design strategy. We also have information about transportation impacts to respond to questions raised at the last design committee meeting.

John Copley, Copley Wolff: In response to the conversation at the most recent design committee meeting, we extended Festival Street to Monument Street, simplified the courtyard uses and made them more green, and differentiated the use, scale, them, and activities of parks within the master plan.

Shauna Gillet-Smith, Ground: The courtyards have a public street level access, and in response to feedback these spaces will be passive spaces and pockets for discovery with opportunities for art and historic interpretation. The four parks each have their own character new: the "Connect" space will be an urban plaza drawing connections from the Bunker Hill Monument, the "Explore" park will be a passive green space envisioned as a community garden and/or urban forest with education opportunities, the larger "Gather" open space will support programmed activities like concerts, exercise, and festivals, and the "Play" space will provide playscapes and programming that can connect to adjacent retail.

David Hacin: You've been responsive to our comments in developing program for the parks. I notice that in many of the schemes you are showing mature trees in your drawings. We've received many comments from members of the public regarding concern for loss of mature trees and the project's overall urban forest.

John Copley: There is a blend where we can preserve existing trees on site. The “Explore” space will maintain many existing trees, which is part of the impetus for making this an urban forest opportunity.

Deneen Crosby: Existing trees are an environmental justice concern, but will also help ground this new development with a strong sense of place. Let the preservation of existing trees guide the design and program of open space.

Megan Pasquina: We are not seeking approval of the design of any building, as each of these buildings will undergo BPDA Article 80 Design Review and BCDC review. This BPDA and BCDC approval will lock in the zoning envelopes, open space size and locations, unit counts, and street network. We will return to the Commission for the design of each building as it is developed.

Deneen Crosby: The strategy for the open space is moving in the right direction. Extending Festival Street to Monument strengthens the connections through the site and integration with the neighborhood.

Linda Eastley: We didn’t talk much about massing tonight, but this team has been thoughtful about building scale and height as it relates to the neighborhood. In addition to the tree canopy, we did have questions about transit. It would be great to understand this in a bit more detail.

Selma Mandzo, VHB: With the full build out, our model shows that Bunker Hill will remain a free-flow condition, several intersections can be mitigated with striping and signage or signalization in compliment with plans for Sullivan Square. We studied transit service and found minimal impact on water taxi, shuttle, and Orange Line. There is capacity from a transportation perspective for this project with modest tweaks to the roadway surrounding the project.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: As a point of clarity in your future meetings it would be helpful to better indicate through drawings where transit and trees are located, as these have been key areas of community concern.

Andrea Leers: Your overall sign plan might do well to include or indicate where courtyards will be located, as this is a key part of the master plan from the perspective of the public realm.

Public comment - Dan Jaffe: We have continued concerns with traffic quantity with increased cars on Rutherford Ave.

Hearing no other comments, a motion was made, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Boston Civic Design Commission recommend approval for the schematic design for the Bunker Hill Housing Redevelopment project in the Charlestown Neighborhood with the proviso that subsequent buildings and open spaces return to the BCDC for review.

The next project reporting from Design Committee was **776 Summer Street**.

Greg Bialecki, Redgate Capital Partners with Melissa Schrock, Hillco Redevelopment Partners: Like the project that you just voted on, each building will return to the Commission as it is developed and we are here tonight to seek approval for the overall master plan.

BK Boley, Stantec: Since the beginning of our review process with the BCDC in June of 2017, we have improved connections across the site, expanded open space internally and along the waterfront to create a more walkable environment, and revised and reduced the massing to improve view corridors and step down to the surrounding context. Our most recent meetings focused on the design character of streets and buildings to create a cohesive design language.

Chris Reed, STOSS: Open space has been expanded along Elkins Street and we've added a new community space, adding more than an acre of open space through this process. There is more green, usable open space along the waterfront in the current iteration of the design (38% of the site is public open space) with a variety of character and programmatic use. Materiality and character honor the industrial history of the site.

BK: We've lowered all buildings, consolidated blocks to create more open space, chamfered buildings to give light and air to waterfront. Warmer palette of materials closer to neighborhood. Becomes cooler and more modern closer to the water. Entire grade of site being raised 5' for resiliency. The historic turbine is being envisioned as a public open space with transparency to draw visitors in.

Deneen Crosby: Parks connect strongly and build off neighborhood open spaces. If there is a possibility that freight bridge becomes more public in the future, this edge of the project along M street should anticipate a connection.

Linda Eastley: One of the best parts of this project is the expression of building interiors to pedestrians on the exterior. I would suggest that you think about the duality of service and pedestrian use along the service road since this street is a part of an open space loop you're setting up with park space.

Andrea Leers: It's exciting to see the way this project has evolved. Views along First and Summer Streets show the ways this project massing has given space to the surrounding city streets.

Public comment - Eileen Smith: Concerned with traffic and entry to the site along First Street. I think the primary entrance will add congestion to the residential neighborhood.

BK: Our traffic analyses and network plan anticipates that M Street will be the primary access point for the site and that there will be a lower level of traffic along First Street.

Public comment - Greg Galer, Boston Preservation Alliance: (Disclosed that several members of the team are corporate members of the BPA.) We look forward to working with the team as the design continues. Excited about the preservation and new life being brought to these historic buildings.

Hearing no other comments, a motion was moved, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of the schematic design for the proposed L Street Station Redevelopment Project at 776 Summer Street in the South Boston neighborhood with the proviso that subsequent buildings and open space return to the BCDC for review.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for **220 Huntington Ave** in the Back Bay neighborhood.

Scott Slarsky, Senior Architect and Urban Designer at the BPDA introduced the project: From a review perspective, we've discussed the scale and public realm along Huntington Avenue, as well as some concern over the demolition of the building along Cumberland Street.

Ted Tye, National Development: This project proposes to replace existing Midtown Hotel and small building on Cumberland St, and retain the building at 236 Huntington Ave. This 325 unit residential proposal is by-right in zoning.

David Nagahiro, CBT: Opportunity to fill the missing tooth between Back Bay, Christian Science Center, Prudential Center, and St. Botolph neighborhood. This building supports the original master plan and vision for the neighborhood. This project will create a more pedestrian friendly environment along Huntington Ave opposite of the Christian Science Plaza with larger setbacks than exist today. Parking access is in and out of Cumberland Street to reduce traffic impacts on pedestrians on Huntington Avenue. Retail wraps the building along Huntington and around the corner onto Cumberland.

William Rawn: Designing a building across from the Christian Science Plaza is a challenge, as this is one of the great open spaces of Boston. I think this project needs to elevate the architectural approach in response.

Andrea Leers: Your understanding of the site, of its boundary condition, of the way you've respected the height so it does not exceed the zoning guidelines is all good. This feels like the right mass of building, but I share Bill's questions about the development of the volume. I think about the Church Park condominiums across Mass Ave, which are long and similar in height. That building is continuous without much variation and importantly has an arcade, which provides a strong edge to the Christian Science Plaza. You might return to thinking about how this building bounds the Church site. I wonder if your building can be simplified without so many setbacks and insets on Huntington Ave. This seems like an appropriate strategy along St. Botolph, but the edge on Huntington Ave seems like it should be quieter.

Linda Eastley: My first impression on seeing this project was "wow - what a site and what an opportunity." I appreciate the care you've taken to consider the pedestrian setback along Huntington Ave, which is currently a very uncomfortable condition. The sidewalk, bike lane, trees feel right. As you discussed the retail frontage, I was thinking about the tight condition on Cumberland and about wanting to see the public alleyway behind the site become a real street condition. I'd like for you to take us through the decisions made around street treatment along Cumberland and the rear of the site.

Deneen Crosby: I have a question about Huntington Ave in its existing condition. I believe there is an existing barrier wall. This seems like an attempt to have the building relate to the reflecting pool, but if the barrier remains I'm not sure how effective this connection will be. Please share the plans for the future condition of Huntington Ave with us at design committee.

David Hacin: It would be good to discuss at design committee the patterns you have studied around the site and how they inform your design. What is the framework of this facade relative to the existing buildings that already create a backdrop for the Christian Science Plaza? I also wonder if the cornice line at 236 Huntington is strong enough to justify carrying across as the setback datum on the new building.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: Elevation studies of the building and adjacent context would be helpful at design committee. How do materials and texture affect the building's presence and the pedestrian experience? How does this project fit into plans and studies for the vision of Huntington Avenue and the Avenue of the Arts?

Mimi Love: Huntington Avenue is a challenging street for pedestrians. I think the weighted experience you've presented at the corner of Cumberland is right, but I worry about the quality of space at the corner closer to the 236 Huntington building. There seems like an opportunity for an improved quality of space between this building, its retail space, and the building that will remain.

Public comment - Alison Pultinas: 236 Huntington historically had retail at the ground floor. The T has put out a design contract for elevators at the Symphony Station and it is likely this plaza will be redesigned, so can more ground floor retail activate Huntington Ave?

Greg Galer: (Disclosed that David Nagahiero is on the board of the Preservation Alliance and CBT is a supporter.) We'd encourage the BCDC to push the proponent for a robust and earnest attempt to incorporate/save/move the 1 Cumberland building.

Andrea Leers: We've identified a number of topics to bring to design committee, including: the differences between the design/character on Huntington Ave versus St Botolph St, the development of the alley abutting the St Botolph neighborhood, study of the incorporation of the building at 1 Cumberland, and the nature of the street wall on Huntington Ave.

The project will continue in design committee.

The next project presentation was for **Willow Baker project** in the Dorchester neighborhood. Matt Martin, Urban Designer at the BPDA: This project is immediately adjacent to the South Bay Center expansion adjacent to I-93. This project was initially envisioned as an expansion of that project context. Since it is a smaller site, it has a different sense of scale and height than recent developments in this area. We've worked with the team to find ways to expand the lacking infrastructure as exists today. There is a lot of work to be done to improve the substandard quality of the streets that were not envisioned for this kind of program/density.

Nidhi John, PCA: This project site contains three parcels. The immediate context contains a variety of commercial and parking uses with tight 25' rights-of-way that have 3' sidewalks that often have utility poles blocking pedestrian pathways. We're proposing three buildings, one on each site, and we hope to activate and improve most of Willow Court and much of Baker Court. We'll add trees and a green parklet for neighbors to meet. These buildings will be taller than adjacent neighbors, so we'll be using setbacks and widening Willow Court to mitigate the impact of height. We'll be relocating street utilities underground to improve the public realm and creating more pedestrian connections through the site.

David Hacin: You began the presentation acknowledging that these streets and infrastructure were not intended for residential uses. I'm a bit skeptical about the proponent's ability to develop a streetscape as described. Are all of these streets through the site needed? I would like to know more about the City's vision for this evolving neighborhood.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I would like to know more about how this micro-district connects to its broader context. This site feels intensively developed as residential, but how does it relate to a vision for transit and use at a district scale?

Deneen Crosby: I realize this is a small enclave but it's connected to a larger part of the city that is undergoing change. I'd like to see this diagrammed so we can get a better understanding of how these streets internal to the site are functioning.

Linda Eastley: In addition to the three buildings you're proposing in this project, there are other remaining sites between the buildings you're envisioning. How will these sites work with this project in the future? Because of the height and orientation, I think the parklet will be in shade for much of the day—can this location be shifted to maximize daylight exposure? It looks like there's a really tight

pedestrian passageway between Building 1 and its abutter and I'm curious about this condition and if we can better strengthen this connection.

Jonathan Evans: I'd like to see massing studies. Bring some alternatives to design committee.

The project will continue in design committee.

The 2085 Washington St Madison Parcel 10 Phase 3 was the last project presentation of the evening. Meghan Richard, BPDA Urban Design: Some focus areas during the urban design review process so far include the site as a prominent gateway to Nubian Square, activation of the streetscape along Melnea Cass and Washington Street, and the relationship of this building to the Tropical Foods building and parking.

Kenan Bigby, Trinity Financial: We're excited about this project as a gateway to Nubian Square and as informed by the PLAN: Nubian Square initiative, and to finish this Parcel 10 redevelopment. This building will bring 144 mixed-income residential units, both rental and homeownership.

Fernando Domenech, DHK architects: Located on the corner of Melnea Cass and Washington, this is the last phase of a project that has been reviewed by the Commission over the course of previous years. The approved 2013 site plan raised issues concerning surface parking, the gap between buildings that became an open space. We're maintaining connections to Melnea Cass and Washington Street for the Tropical Foods grocery store. Building height takes cues from the Bolling Building further down Washington Street. Tower element and corner of the building are strong to establish presence as a gateway. Lower datum engages pedestrians at the street level with amenity spaces and the podium height relates to 2101 Washington Street. Passive house and infinity structure system result in a restrained facade that also allows for increased affordability of units.

Linda Eastley: It's helpful to see the building in context with the skyline. Since we haven't reviewed this project in a while, it would be good to see the project in closer context with buildings on Melnea Cass.

Kathy Kottaridis: I would also like to understand this project in context of proposed and ongoing development. This is kitty-corner to the Eustis Street architectural district, which is home to the oldest buildings in Nubian Square, most of which are 1-3 stories.

Jonathan Evans: This is the front door to Nubian Square, but how can this project from a design perspective announce itself as such in a place-specific way.

Andrea Leers: I would challenge the basic strategy of making an L-shaped building. I would like to see studies of other massing configurations. The height is not so much of a concern for me as is the length and breadth of the mass at this height. I think this needs more than just strong articulation at the corner to be a prominent marker into Nubian Square.

William Rawn: This articulation of the facade seems lively and light in a positive way. We should look carefully at the facade treatment at the podium between the mezzanine and the residential amenities and parking, and see options for screening the above grade parking.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I appreciate the context images as they relate to the facade design. So much of this district is in transition, which presents a challenge for new projects, so I'd like to see how this project relates to place more clearly.

Public comment – Alison Pultinas: Speaking from the perspective of the coalition that has formed for the Melnea Cass redesign, we're thinking about the future of Melnea Cass as a greenway with trees

on both sides. How do trees fit into this project's street face, because we want to make sure there is space for trees to flourish and to continue the greenway condition that is being planned.

David Hacin: It would be good for us to be updated on all the gateway conditions and plans for the Melnea Cass edge, as well as for the future greenway condition.

Kenan Bigby: We've intentionally pulled back the building face along Melnea Cass to give space to future plans for greening this edge.

The project will continue in committee.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 8:08 PM p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for February 2, 2021. The recording of the January 5, 2021 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.