



MINUTES

BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, June 27, 2023, 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 Commissioners Mimi Love, Linda Eastley, Jonathan Evans, David Manfredi, William Rawn, Catherine Morris, Shauna Gillies-Smith and Kirk Sykes. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, and Kenya Thompson were present for the BPDA.

The Chair, Mimi Love, 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 in the [BOSTON HERALD](#).

The first item was the approval of the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on June 13th and 20th. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly passed.

VOTED: To approve the June 13 and 20 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the Wentworth Institute of Technology (IMP). Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed Wentworth Institute of Technology (IMP) project in the Mission Hill neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the 500 Huntington Avenue project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 500 Huntington Avenue project in the Mission Hill neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the 500 Charles Park Road project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 500 Charles Park Road project in the West Roxbury neighborhood.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee.

The first presentation was for **1270 Commonwealth Avenue** in the Allston neighborhood.

Shauna Gillies-Smith is recused.

Rob Hagan, Matt McCollem, Danny Turgan and Jennifer Martel presented the project.

KS: I applaud your transformation along Gorham Street where you introduced true units in lieu of screened parking, this will activate the block, especially at the mid-block area. Kudos for pulling back at the alley those 15'. I very much like your lighting strategy which also doesn't disrupt, but instead adds rhythm to the street. They have a question about the façade face on Gorham. It's a long façade and it seems quite repetitive in the treatment. I wonder if it could use some variation in detailing and distraction in treatment.

DM: Bringing residential to the ground on Gorham was important, it makes the street more pedestrian friendly as opposed to a garage. The corner also feels better, before it did not feel appropriate to the scale of the building. There is still more work to do on the façade, it feels heavy and it lacks the level of detail that you have on Commonwealth Avenue, which I think largely comes from the bays. I don't know if the insets need to be deeper, but I do believe more diversity would make a richer streetscape. The detailing of the brick reminds me of the Copley Plaza Hotel and this has evolved to be a handsome project.

WR: Comments to add a proviso for BPDA Staff to work on the façade. Also the commissioner would like for the design team to submit something that can be distributed to the committee.

ML: I think you heard good points about Gorham Street, I also would like to see one more time with diverse materials you consider. I would like the benches and the coordination of materials at the ground plane, they have much improved.

LE: I think there could be some interesting articulation of that ground floor. I suggest a motion to approve with the proponent continuing to work with BPDA Staff on the Gorham Street elevation and massing and open space. There could be interesting spaces with the inset, and I think you can continue to work on that with BPDA Staff.

Public comments:

Ken Lambert – I see there is a lot of brick being shown in the renderings, is this planning on being conventional laid in place brick or something else?

A motion was made, and it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for 1270 Commonwealth Avenue.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for Wentworth Institute of Technology (IMP) in the Mission Hill neighborhood.

Gautam Sundaram and Brad Rogers presented the project.

LE: I think one of the challenges of the Wentworth Campus is all the angles from the collision of all the diagonal streets. This filters down to the varied geometry of the buildings and I think it leads to not knowing quite where you are on campus. I would like to see more discussion on how you help to orient the visitors and campus community. I would also like to see a better understanding of the open space framework; and how this feeds out into the greater neighborhood. How do you use the Pike to connect to and through the campus? More context would be useful here for understanding connections from the campus outward. Intentional thresholds (open space) at Ruggles, Huntington and other locations. I would like to learn more about the discussions around which ones are open and have longer views into the campus, and which ones are closed. Lastly, I am trying to understand the area in-between D3 and D2. I believe there are some mature trees there, and I am struggling as to why you would want to make this space more two dimensional; consisting of lawn and low plantings. I think the thresholds (open space) would help with orientation.

WR: My comments are about urban design issues. I am struck by the center part of the campus, it looks like a checkerboard and it is strange. It also doesn't sell for making connections. The B Building is huge and feels different from the other comparable buildings that have gone up along Huntington Avenue. Why isn't the dormitory somewhere else on this campus? It also feels like too wide open space along Ruggles Street from D3 to D2, there is not a lot of stuff surrounding this space to give it a sense of place.

SGS: Wentworth Hall has a significant accessibility issue, and it faces Ruggles Street. How is this pavilion acting as a front door, and threshold and inviting people in. I appreciate all the greenspace up front, but I too am worried about defining it. The scale of D3, does it align well with Wentworth Hall and Building B? I am interested in all the corridors, including Parker. Should there be this much focus along Ruggles? How will you bring more activity through the campus and to A1?

JE: The relationship to the residential scale is an important opportunity and transition moment that needs to be thought about carefully. There can be ground level connecting the community to the buildings along the residential edge. It could also have civic presents, the goal is to be more porous with the community. Possibly consolidate parking, currently there vehicular pressures in this area.

KS: Recognize the relevance of the adjacent developments. Share the programming, how students crossover and connect through the new development onto Huntington Avenue and beyond. I have a similar feel of how this project connects to P3, located on the other side of Columbus Avenue. You have an incredible opportunity to unmake some divisions that have existed due to the southwest corridor. I would love to understand all your connections, desire lines and pathways, and how you drive activity to P3 and even car centric spaces? These edges are important and will influence the campus to its community.

ML: I would like to talk about the idea of stitching the west side of your campus. How we connect past Huntington to the other side of the residential campus with clarity. What is truly part of the Wentworth Campus? I don't know that Building B really relates to the geometry. I see strong horizontals, but that doesn't go past Huntington Avenue. How can you connect? More analysis and even comparison of the open spaces, starting in front of the MFA and your new entry port. The character of these spaces and how they connect is important. I don't think that going treeless is the way to go. I want to know the thought process in sub committees. Bring more views along Huntington Avenue, and look back at urban design diagrams.

Public Comments:

Allison Pultinas - It was mentioned that the Pike will connect to the Southwest corridor, I didn't understand that in the site plan. Please show that next time. You don't have plans for it, but obviously the campus extends to the other side of Huntington Avenue and I assume the Master Plan makes references to the dorms and Vancouver Street, there are historic buildings in this areas and would be good for faculty; or consolidated student housing can all be placed in huge building you proposed leaving the neighborhood streets freed up. I heard the garage was seven stories, if that has gotten shorter, that would be good to know.

The project will continue in design committee.

The next project presentation was for 500 Huntington Avenue in the Mission Hill neighborhood.

David Manfredi and Kirk Sykes are recused.

Ethan Shaw, Donald Johnson and Christian Lemon presented the project.

LE: From an urban design point of view, these moves feel sound and the views and pedestrian connection towards Wentworth feel positive. But I would like to know how pedestrians will feel walking through the spaces. The last set of diagrams was a start, but I would like details of how the space will manifest because the open space is still unclear. I would like to better understand how the West building and East buildings touch the ground and the articulation of the architecture as they do that. In a largely masonry neighborhood in context this is such a different building when it comes to materials of metal panels and glazing. I would like to know the decisions around materiality.

WR: The secondary entrance to the lobby, between the two buildings... is there built form that fills in the pathway? This 60' wide space is a nice way of connecting to the archway of northeastern, and a great pathway across the tracks. It is very important to maintain.

SGS: I am interested in the character of all the open spaces. I know there are different representations on the rendering of the types of spaces, but I would like to get more details on the overall intentions. I wonder about the level of introverted and extroverted spaces. I appreciate the aunt Tre canopy on both Huntington Avenue and Ruggles Street. With these buildings being significant, will the open space match it? Lastly, what is the presence of the building and landscape in relation to the Wentworth premise of Ruggles Street being an important corridor.

JÉ: Please add on the genesis of the formal moves and how they respond to the neighborhood. This helps to understand more about your thinking and how you got there. Also, what happens if the buildings step away a little more to allow more light for the main pathway through the campus? I would like to know more about the convex scallop facade, it creates a striking presence and distinctly not of the neighborhood. Overall, I think it is an exciting project.

CM: I am curious about design choice, with the location of this site being along the Avenue of the Arts. Where this building sits needs to be a reflection of the people who have to use, bypass, engage and respond to the building.

ML: You have a challenge in that most of your front is facing Huntington, and you have Ruggles being the frontage to Wentworth. So some of the perspective views that you can bring to the sub committee can convince us that you have two faces. You have this massing strategy which decouples from the bases, can you at least play with these volumes and convince us that you are getting more light in that portal passage. Some introduction on masonry to tie into the context might be something to consider. Lastly, being along the Avenue of the Arts, thinking about what your art program is. Will there be specific public realms areas that draw your attention? Will the open space you've presented remain open space, and not a future development site? I truly want to understand because if it changes we might want to think about it differently.

Public Comment:

Luanne Witkowski: I am a resident with a couple of concerns. This is on the avenue of the arts and this building is a large lab like building "Big Ice Cubes" don't seem to fit with the mason, brick and mortar look. Maybe the building could stagger. I challenge the team to flex their architectural design. Also, can some green space be raised up and to add more rooftops. Maybe even a walkway from the surface to an area where people could get a view or even picnic. Not necessarily have access to the building, but a free and open space similar to the Highland in New York City. Could we incorporate more pathways for residence to also pass through so it's just not campus to campus, but more neighbors to neighbors.

Allison Pultinas: I would like to focus on Parker Street, it's such a historic street. This parcel used to be under water and you didn't talk about the underground garage, and I feel that is a big concern for the 400 plus parking spaces. Ruggles and Parker are terrible for traffic. I didn't see any views of what the driveway would look like. The Parker Street side needs to be treated well.

The project will continue in design committee.

The next project presentation was for 100 Charles Park Road in the West Roxbury neighborhood.

Dennis Geenwood and Jeff Drago presented the project.

JE: The massing strategy makes sense, I appreciate the subtle bays. I wonder if you bring the brick downgrade, will you get a relentless horizontal to separate the grade level from that above. I see what you have going on, but is there potential from some hierarchy? I appreciate the set backs, I think it makes the building disappear a little bit. Maybe rethink the proportions.

SGS: There seems to be inconsistencies between the rendering and plans. We received a letter from an abutter sharing that the building is about twelve feet from their unit. From the perspectives it looks like a lot of space on the right side. But in the plan with an adjacent building it looks close. Please bring a plan with more abutting neighbors and adjacent conditions. Also the open space representation in this plan looks different as well. I would like to understand the geometry and logic of the plaza space and the lawn space. How can that lawn space not feel just ceremonial, but inviting and usable for the residence and others.

KS: My comments go to the presentation materials. When you come back it would help to have a finer grain understanding of the building and pictures. In the context of the public realm, it would help to have that intermediate scale because I don't understand how the project is integrated into the neighborhood. It looks like you are doing some good for the community as it transits from industrial, but I just can't fully understand.

WR: Respecting the siting of the building is what I will comment on. A big part of the building closest to Gardner Street is a general open space on Charles Park Drive that feels welcoming. I wanted to compliment the urban design thinking here. The liveliness of these buildings is great. Charles Park Road, is this street parking along the street or just two lanes of travel? How will we have enough space for uber cars, or drop off and pick ups? Does all of that have to happen in this small space in the middle of the site? If more than two cars visit, you will run out of basic parking. May we get more content about this, loading and all?

ML: This is a great site, I am struggling with the C shaped building. It is so symmetrical and formal and it is not talking to the adjacent building. Maybe relax the building. Maybe at the gateway there can be where the two buildings have a conversation. If they want to act as two separate buildings, maybe the material changes. There is a conflict between these two and I would like you to walk us through this more. The corners line is hard to work out, maybe simplify the geometry of the building now. There are some hierarchy issues on the back side as well. There are a lot of ins and out of the bays, are they necessary? Some diagrams around that would be very helpful. You have an awesome open space strategy that needs further development.

Public Comment:

Haseeb Jawad: A neighbor to this site. The number of stories makes this building very imposing on the buildings around, there are two apartment buildings with four stories and this is the first with five. Peking is usually 1:1 ratio, this area is very walkable and bike friendly; still, there is not enough parking proposed for this development and area.

The project will continue in design committee.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 7:30 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for July 11, 2023. The recording of the June 27, 2023, Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.