

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, April 4, 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 Linda Eastley, Jonathan Evans, Shauna Gillies-Smith, David Hacin, Mikyoung Kim, Kathy Kottaridis, Anne-Marie Lubeanu, Mimi Garza Love, David Manfredi, Catherine T. Morris, William Rawn, Laura Solano, and Kirk Sykes. None were absent. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Adam Johnson and Alexa Pinard 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 in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the March 7 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on March 14, March 21, and March 28. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the March BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on 409 Huntington Avenue project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 409 Huntington project in the Fenway neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the 45 Worthington Street project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 45 Worthington project in the Mission Hill neighborhood.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first presentation was for **155 North Beacon Street** in the Fenway neighborhood.

The project was present by Matt Formicola.

David Hacin: Thanks for your responsiveness to the comments you were given. When the project first came to us, we were enthusiastic about how you had located this project on the site. The changes you've made have helped. It's been a good process.

Mikyoung Kim: My comments are that the courtyard space could be simplified, and the Life Street streetscape could be simplified.

Matt Formicola: We got your responses.

Elizabeth Stifel: You could add a proviso asking that the team provide an informational update.

Mikyoung Kim: I think it will require a little more process.

David Manfredi: There has been a lot of progress. The entrances are a little hard to find. Life Street is good, but the interior entrances are hard. The separation between the parts is important, and you could do more with that. I'm a little worried about the seams between the parts. The buildings have gotten lighter and brighter, which is good, but the seams between the buildings will be dark.

Laura Solano: Were there any shadow studies done?

Matt Formicola: The shadows go behind the building onto the parking garage.

Laura Solano: Just as you've simplified the buildings, simplify the landscape. That doesn't mean taking away the richness, but instead let it be contiguous enough that you can read it as one thing. The entrance and accessibility along Life Street could also be simplified.

Bill Rawn: There needs to be more attention to the landscape and streetscape on the corners and sidewalks.

Mimi Love: The glass in the renderings is not helping you.

Mikyoung Kim: We need to look at the whole thing together. Maybe two of us could have a secondary conversation to review the landscape.

Mimi Love: The project team has heard some great comments. We definitely need and would welcome a landscape review, and we could set that in motion through a proviso for a follow-up meeting.

Shauna Gillies-Smith: The past information will be helpful for that conversation.

David Hacin: The proviso should recommend approval for the project, noting transparency of the interstitial components, noting the need for a landscape focused work session that presents an evolution of the current project and potentially brought back to the full Commission for information.

Mikyoung Kim: We should see progress at that workshop.

A motion was made, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for 155 North Beacon Street, with the provision that a follow-up workshop be scheduled to discuss landscape. Shauna Gillies-Smith abstained.

The next project was the Stanhope Hotel in Back Bay.

Harry Wheeler and Sean Sanger presented the project.

Linda Eastley: You've been very responsive. Kathy Kottaridis and I were at the last meeting and a lot of our comments were picked up here. Warming up the pedestrian-scape materials will make a big difference and will complement the brick façade of the historic structure. Continue to think about public art, especially since public art is part of the existing park. The brighter feeling of the "seam" has improved this so much. This project has evolved into something really beautiful.

David Manfredi: This has evolved very nicely. You've solved the problem of the "seam"—it's proportional. Now you've got to build what you've drawn. The relationship of the tower to the base feels so much better.

Kathy Kottaridis: However the challenge of preserving the existing building was put in front of you, you've met it. Do think about exterior opportunities for how to interpret the evolution of the building and your role in it. That could factor into your expansion of the park experience.

Bill Rawn: How will you deal with some of the noise of the turnpike?

Sean Sanger: There is an existing wall along the turnpike and the back edge of the park.

David Hacin: This was a difficult project, and your design proves that the original building should have been saved. The new seam brings the new and old into a comfortable dialogue, more of a composition. Tell the story of this building – it shouldn't just be a façade.

Shauna Gillies-Smith: What's exciting to me is the maturity of the moves. It's deceptively simple. I don't have a sense of the scale—but that may come out of the habitation of the space.

Mikyoung Kim: Look at the scale of the plaza space to make sure the paving to planting ratio is right.

Harry Wheeler: There is a required fire lane that needs to be hardscaped. We will continue to work with the city.

Catherine Morris: Consider simplifying the lines and amount of elements in the plan.

Laura Solano: Adding elements that allow people to stop and occupy the space would be really valuable.

Two members of the public spoke to express concerns about impacts on abutters.

Linda Eastley: We should encourage the BPDA to continue to look at the building on all sides.

David Hacin: Continued discussions with design staff should consider the 3D character of the city.

The motion was moved, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of Stanhope Hotel in Back Bay. Shauna Gillies-Smith abstained.

Fenway Corners was presented next. Yanni Tsipis presented. David Hacin was recused.

Kirk Sykes: Are we giving you approval for the design and guiding principles?

Yanni Tsipis: The guiding principles are summarized here. Each subsequent building will be viewed through this lens.

David Manfredi: The work you've done on Jersey St and Arthur's Alley is impressive in terms of granularity and scale. Can you clarify the heights of the buildings?

Yanni Tsipis: *Clarifies*

Mikyoung Kim: It's a transformational project. I commend you on the scale. I'm assuming that there's a strategy that each building will have unique character, but the streetscape will have a unity of language?

Yanni Tsipis: We are aspirational about how we treat public realm.

Linda Eastley: Think about how to fold in some wayfinding. And, think about how the Arthur's Alley can introduce light to feel less like an Alley.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I want to highlight several words in your guiding principles: granular, organic, authentic grit, intimate quality—these are the characteristics that are often lacking in a project of a scale and magnitude as this one.

Catherine T. Morris: How are new visitors, returning visitors, and people of color seeing themselves in every inch of this design? Representation of people could be incorporated into the design.

Yanni Tsipis: This space will be a transformation.

Jonathan Evans: Is there a phasing plan or division diagram?

Bill Rawn: Are we approving the basic massings outlined by this drawing?

Yanni Tshipis: Yes. This project is a partnership between WS, the Red Sox, and a local landowning family.

Two members of the public spoke in support of the project.

Mimi Love: This project will need guidelines. Work with the BPDA on those.

Linda Eastley: We should have an informational session by Yanni when the guidelines are ready.

A motion was made, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval for Fenway Corners. Shauna Gillies-Smith abstained.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for 409 Huntington Avenue in the Fenway neighborhood. Michele Littlefield presented.

David Manfredi: I didn't quite follow the diagram of the massing strategy. We'll need more information when you come back. It might be complicating your design solution.

Shauna Gillies-Smith: When you come back, it's unclear what the scope or strategy are for the landscape intervention with respect to Hemingway Park and the surrounding streets.

Kirk Sykes: I'd like to see more long views to understand how this building presents itself along Huntington from 10, 20 blocks away. Take a look at the typologies along Huntington. We also need a better understanding of the ground floor retail.

David Hacin: I agree with David M. about the massing diagramming. The diagram implies an L-shaped building, but I'd love to further understand what massing strategies you had pursued. It's somewhat in-between to me about how the top relates to the base. The horizontal setbacks blur the reading.

Linda Eastley: I'd love to understand some of the options. The composition seems overly busy. This is such a prominent diagonal building along Huntington and we should understand the relationship to the surroundings (the MFA, the Necklace, etc.).

Catherine Morris: I agree—we need to better understand the massing strategy and how it is connected.

Laura Solano: We need to see more context in plan and perspective to see what else is around the building. How can everything on the ground start to knit together? I'm not an architect, but the scale of windows from the bottom to the top doesn't click for me.

A member of the public spoke to emphasize the importance of surrounding view corridors.

Mimi Love: You've made a choice to keep the base, and with that choice, you need to simplify the tower. It's busy, as others have said. The views you showed are prominent, but the massing is formed from the other side. You got some great comment so bring a lot of work to the design committee.

The project will continue in design committee.

The next project presentation was for 45 Worthington Street in the Mission Hill neighborhood. Vickie Alani presented the project.

David Hacin: This is a nicely scaled project. I'm curious if you studied putting the lobby on the other side. Maybe then the end unit could depart from the rest architecturally. The neutrality of the background building could benefit from a richer expression of the front building.

Jonathan Evans: Is there a way to create a better sightline of that through-path? I appreciate the massing, but the steps you have now could be simplified.

Linda Eastley: Great project. Five comments: The first thing I want to do is rotate the whole site 90 degrees. Two: the façade feels very flat, and could have more visual interest. Is there something you can do about the depths of the window openings to call out the richness of this building type? Three: planting with dimension rather than just at the ground plane would help call out the architecture. Four: Walk us through how it feels to walk through the path. How do materials changes as you move through the space? How do the different massing volumes relate to one another?

Laura Solano: The ground plane still needs some work. You've made public space, now think about the topography and how that can enhance what you're trying to do. We should understand the progression through the spaces and the relationship between them. The connection could use some studying as well. I appreciate how much space you've cleared out for landscape.

Mimi Love: The scale of the townhouses along Worthington is appropriate, but they aren't actually townhouses. I agree that the location of the lobby should be flipped. Anything to create a moment where you can see through from Smith Street. Those townhouses also need a material change somewhere—e.g. where it hits the ground.

Kirk Sykes: We could do a lot more with this through-block.

Several members of the public spoke to oppose the project due to its density and ownership/rental distinction.

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 8:45 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for May 2, 2023. The recording of the April 4, 2023 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.