

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The Monthly Meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, December 5th, 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, Mikyoung Kim, Mimi Love, Catherine T. Morris, William Rawn, Laura Solano, and David Manfredi. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Seth Riseman, Matthew Martin, Meghan Richard, and Lizzie Turac were present for the BPDA.

Co-Chair, Linda Eastley, 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 November 14th Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on November 28th. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly.

VOTED: To approve the November 14 and 28, 2023 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the 475-511 Dorchester avenue (On the Dot) Phase 1 project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 475-511 Dorchester Avenue (On the Dot) Phase 1 project in the South Boston neighborhood.

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

The first presentation was for **1400 Boylston Avenue in Fenway**. David Manfredi was recused. The project was presented by Kevin Lennon and Keith Leblanc.

[ML, LE, WR, LS, JE, CM]

Seth Riseman: I want to remind the commissioners that the civic building is a placeholder. As that advances on a separate track, sponsored by this project, the programming for the intended space will be determined. The associated design changes and impact on the open space will be brought before the commissioners.

Mimi Love: This proponent has been very responsive, and we have asked for a lot. The massing and cadence of volumes are satisfying for the scope of the neighborhood and the penthouse has gone through a positive evolution. I do have three recommendations to consider looking at. I did mention

this at the sub-committee, so I apologize for repeating it. Curved glass would have a significant impact. Consider the color of the glass or recessing. I also ask the proponent continue to work on the terracotta grid concept as you continue to work with the BPDA staff.

William Rawn: I appreciate that Kevin said they will study the massing and a potential break at the Penthouse level from the middle. At the last meeting, the team clarified the facade details to provide more consistency. But that consistency has made the building feel more massive than it should. I welcome the decision architecturally, but from an urban design perspective, there are ways to remedy the massiveness.

Laura Solano: The open space's connection to the civic building will be critical—and in this new landscape design, you have recognized this connection. I'm wondering if there may even be another social space at the corner of Boylston and Park because it is a critical component in the public realm. It may take on a slightly different character or scale than the rest of the open space on that side. Other than that, I appreciate the changes and think it will be a terrific space.

Hearing no public comment, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for 1400 Boylston Avenue in Fenway. With the

PROVISO: to return to BCDC for Design Review once the civic building is further along and, in the interim, work with BPDA staff on the façade elements.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for **Mildred Hailey Master Plan, Buildings 2 & 3** in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood. Mimi Love was recused.

[LE, WR, LS, JE, CM, MK, DM]

Mark Eclipse, Cesare Cascella, and Andres Bernal presented the project.

Mikyoung Kim: I appreciate you addressing some landscape comments—particularly with Building 3 for Bickford Street. There are a lot of solid elements, and I appreciate the responsiveness.

Jonathan Evans: I commend the team for the significant amount of work. I have one comment on Building 2—I'm intrigued by some of the studies. but I am cautious about using context to relate to buildings in a way that makes things too confusing. I encourage establishing clear hierarchies to simplify without eluding the power and energy you have. Additionally, the eyebrow still feels heavy; I'm not sure if maybe rounding the corner would help. There is much development, and I am excited to see this progress.

Catherine T. Morris: Given the last revision, there is more of a cohesive story and openness. Congratulations on it. You took our comments to heart and I'm thankful for that.

Laura Solano: The landscape has been invigorated, especially in the amount of time you had to react. I appreciate the accessibility that is baked into all of the parts of the landscape. The only part I will comment on is the plaza at the intersection. Instead of having the path skirt its edge, it might be

better to have the path go through the plaza and have some of the trees go through to the other side as well. This would create two subspaces: one bigger and one smaller. It would make the plaza feel larger and not impact any intended event space.

David Manfredi: I found [JE] 's comment very articulate, and I'll pick up on some of his remarks. As you continue to work with BPDA, I would edit and reduce the number of ideas. I agree with [JE] that the brow feels heavy and detracts from the other good moves you're making in the building. I look at the building at 255 Centre St, and the simplicity there feels strong. It meets the sky in a much lighter way, and you can benefit from looking at that.

William Rawn: I am still concerned – I saw this project early on but not in the last meeting. I appreciate the honesty of the architect, but I worry we're going with something that hasn't been studied enough. The elevations of the building seem much too busy and too complex, as [DM] and [JE] have articulated.

Linda Eastley: The alternate study resonates more with me because the heaviness feels removed. I highly recommend further working with BPDA staff. I understand how they would like each building to feel distinct, like a home.

David Manfredi: The project needs to be further developed with BPDA guidelines for affordable housing projects. I'll put forward a motion to approve with the stipulation that the proponent continue working with BPDA staff along the specific goals of simplicity, clarity, and reduction. There should also be an informal return to show us progress at the sub-committee.

Hearing no public comment, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for Mildred Hailey Masterplan, Building 2 and 3 with the PROVISO: that the project will continue working with BPDA staff aiming at simplicity, clarity, and reduction. There will also be an informal return to design committee to show the project's progress.

The next project presentation was for **1033-1055 Washington** in the South End. Mikyoung Kim and David Manfredi were recused.

[ML, LE, WR, LS, JE, CM]

The project was presented by Christian Galvao and Ian Downing.

William Rawn: I'm more excited the more I look at it: site plan, the passageway through. It is okay whether it connects the South End to a different part or doesn't connect. Whether the building has one façade material in the north and another in the south is acceptable and within a developer's legitimate power to make these changes. I say this with a big smile, but I would still encourage you to think of ways to make the bridges more dynamic as they signify the building to the rest of the city. That said, I strongly endorse an approval.

Laura Solano: I wanted clarification from Seth or Diana about the parcel in the back that will be incorporated into the site. I don't know if you can predict the timing, but will the site plan be built before that parcel is integrated into the overall site plan?

Seth Riseman: No, Laura, that is not the intent—this is a BPDA disposition process. We are negotiating that disposition, which will be integrated holistically into the site design.

Laura Solano: The only thing I'll say is more plants. And you'll have that future opportunity with the parcel, so there's time to do that. But plants in the city will provide soft fascinations with fall color and the sound of the wind hitting vegetation.

Mimi Love: I am thrilled to see the swoop was considered, and you lowered it a level- the proportions look very handsome, and it improved the overall massing. I also appreciate the penthouse not having a separate massing. These palettes work well-, but I encourage you to move towards warmer tones rather than white. I will mention activating Washington St. again, as more ground activation would be beneficial. Please continue to consider that.

Catherine T. Morris: I agree with [WR] about the connector bridge—there's an opportunity to make it more unique and pull both buildings together, and something that could happen in the design of the bridge's relationship to what's above and below. I also agree with [LS] about adding more trees; even in the floorplan of the schematics of the floorplan, it felt a little empty. More trees would activate it all year round.

Hearing no public comment, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for 1033-1055 Washington in the South End with the
PROVISO: to approve the project with the proponent returning to review the adjacent parcel once it's been resolved and integrated with the landscape and the final outcome of the bridge design.

The next project presentation was for **Mary Ellen McCormack Redevelopment** in South Boston.

[ML, LE, WR, LS, JE, CM, DM, MK]

The project was presented by Drew Colbert, Kishore Varanasi, Mike Doherty, Vickie Alani, and Henry Weinberg.

WR: I've been fortunate to follow this project closely. I want to compliment you on such a fantastic presentation and product here. I see the variety and yet powerful consistency. B1 and B2 and C1 and C2 are quite brilliant buildings. Mary Ellen McCormack has been known in the city for 90 years for its sense of community. I was worried that the redevelopment would lose the sense of power and leadership of the community that MEM represents. You've preserved that and expanded upon it. Thank you to the proponent and BPDA for making that possible. I know we're not reviewing it today, but as you move forward, I'd be careful not to make Building G too monolithic and imposing.

DM: I echo entirely what WR had to say so well. It's so important—you've created diversity between buildings and unity within the buildings. It's extraordinarily successful. Each building has a clear strategy and limited palette. They're all whole but very different from building to building.

ML: I want to thank the proponent for putting such a clear presentation together. I have a remaining question: what is the fate of Building D? Or when does that come along?

Drew Colbert: The greenspace that Building D fronts is Veterans Park, which is created with Building A. Building D is anticipated to undergo further design and approvals with Buildings E and F. So we're thrilled to create this new public open space with Building A, which will set the geometry and dictate the design with Building E.

ML: I agree I think the wall condition that will come with Building D will be a positive.

LE: I think breaking down the massing has been one of the most positive parts of evolution. This will be an amazing project, and I'm excited to see it evolve—the positivity of connecting to the existing fabric, as you've done so well.

LS: Much of the landscape's intensity takes advantage of the existing trees. Saving those will be a real effort and should be examined every step of the way.

Hearing no public comment, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for Mary Ellen McCormack Redevelopment.

The next project presentation was for **475-511 Dorchester Avenue (On the Dot) Phase 1, in South Boston**. Mimi Love was recused.

[LE, WR, LS, JE, CM, DM]

The project was presented by Mark Rosenshein, BK Boley, Michael LeBlanc, and Rob Adams.

Jonathan Evans: Thanks for the thoughtful presentation—particularly the housing component. Regarding the massing, I would like to see the view from the opposite side—I understand it's back of house, but it's crucial to consider. The materiality is exciting, but we need close-up views. I also appreciate the resiliency goals here; and once again I would like to see a closer view of the retail space as I'm concerned it may be too deep in the shadows. Overall, I think the massing and sculpting is very exciting.

Laura Solano: This is a rare opportunity in the city, and I want to challenge the idea of one big park. These are big parcels, and I think there's a distinct opportunity to consider the complexity of nature and provide people with various experiences in nature. City dwellers long for different types of landscapes, so I think it's essential for them to watch and experience the cycles of nature. The orientation and connections are vital in this. This building is referencing sails and the history of the site itself being water. I think those components in particular can be reconsidered to create a

destination place with a unique landscape experience. I'd like the team to bring some ideas back to the subcommittee to address these points.

William Rawn: When this was presented in the planning stages I was very excited about the clarity of the intentions and the urbanist aspect. As I look at it now, I ask, "is it urban enough? Is it too much like a park full of science buildings or residential buildings? I think the podiums detract from connections between the four buildings. They push the neighboring building farther away from it rather than tying it together with urban connections.

Catherine T Morris: I agree with all the commissioners. Particularly with 495 and the podium of 505 and the relationships to the residential buildings across the street. I cannot see how the communities will interact with these buildings over time. The story of this building being mixed-use and mixed-income feels very separate rather than integral to the community. Consider that as these buildings will be here forever and they should have connections to small businesses and other small residential buildings. Please bring some of these contextual ideas to the next Design Committee meeting.

Linda Eastley: I suggest looking at these ground-floor experiences within the podiums. It was interesting to see the section for 495 and then the cantilever's interaction with the street. I'd like to understand how it is experienced on the sidewalk. I'd love to hear more about that in the subcommittee.

Hearing no public comment, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: The project will return to Design Committee.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at [7:56] p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for January 2nd, 2024. The recording of the December 5th, 2023 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.