

MINUTES OF THE BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION DESIGN SUBCOMMITTEE MARCH 19, 2024 - SESSION B

This meeting was held virtually. A recording of this meeting is available upon request. Please reach out to bcdc@boston.gov for more information.

CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC) Design Subcommittee was called to order by BPDA Deputy Director of Urban Design Seth Riseman at 5:05 PM on Tuesday, March 19, 2024.

ATTENDEES

The following members of the Boston Civic Design Commission were present: Chair Mimi Love, Commissioner Shauna Gillies-Smith, Commissioner David Hacin, Commissioner Kathy Kottaridis, Commissioner Mikyoung Kim, and Commissioner Kirk Sykes. The following BCDC staff were present: BPDA Deputy Director of Urban Design Seth Riseman.

PRESENTATIONS FOR REVIEW AND PUBLIC TESTIMONY

232 A STREET, SOUTH BOSTON WATERFRONT

Representatives of the proponent team, including Lauren Ferrando (Tishman Speyer), Charlie Klee (Payette), and Ian Downing (MYKD) presented the proposed project. Commissioner Kim recused himself from the review. Commissioners Love, Gillies-Smith, and Hacin participated in the review. Discussion: Commissioners expressed lingering concern regarding the treatment of the western facade. "When I look at a larger panorama image like this (referring to a rendering from the perspective of the Fort Point Channel), and something stands out differently, I ask myself why? I interpret this as a little piece of the Seaport brought into this district, which, to me, is a little unwelcome." The proponent asserted that the proposed Low-E glass facade would mirror the surrounding park and adjacent buildings, thereby reducing its presence. Elizabeth Stifel, BPDA Urban Design staff, contributed support for the study of a vertical expression on the western facade. Commissioners expressed appreciation for the masonry facades and a general aversion to "flat, flush, glass facades" and "blue glass," which have proliferated elsewhere and are associated with the architectural language of the Seaport. Commissioners interrogated the treatment of the garage access on Binford Street and asked the proponent to consider alternatives to the proposed mural - either locating art away from the garage door to redirect attention or introducing greater texture to the surrounding brick.

Public testimony was given by Valerie Burns, Steve Hollinger, Roy, Domingo-Martin, Shirley, Tom, Sara McCammond, Brian, and Tom McIntyre.

Following discussion and opportunity for public testimony, there was consensus among the commissioners that the proposed project at 232 A STREET, SOUTH BOSTON WATERFRONT, should return to a future convening of the BCDC for review and final recommendation.

180 WESTERN AVENUE, ALLSTON

Representatives of the proponent team, including Emily Paparella (Elkus Manfredi Architects), and Doug Jones (Leblanc Jones Landscape Architects), presented the proposed project. Commissioners Love, Gillies-Smith, Hacin, and Kim participated in the review.

Discussion: Commissioners expressed appreciation for changes made to the proposed project in response to feedback received previously, characterizing the result generally as “a calmer and more consistent building.” Commissioners asked that the proponent study methods for further differentiating building volume above the cornice line from below the cornice line in lieu of a step back. Suggested options included changes to window stacking and treatment, brick texture, or further emphasis of the cornice line itself. Commissioners commented on the appearance of the double doors facing the ground-floor public space and suggested the proponent study a more visually prominent solution. Commissioners commented on the perspectival view from Western Avenue and suggested the proponent study alternative treatment of the end of the building where the mass steps down from 7 to 6 stories. Commissioners asked the proponent to study further the proposed planting palette, particularly the proposed species of trees, to create greater diversity and variation. Commissioners interrogated the treatment of the facade along back-of-house areas, currently rendered as a mural. Commissioners commented on the corner of the site at the intersection of N. Harvard Street and Western Avenue and asked that the proponent identify opportunities to better “screen” pedestrians from the intersection and provide more “protection” from the context. Commissioners commented on the potential appearance of mechanical units (not rendered in the presentation), especially given the long views of the building.

Public testimony was given by Paula Alexander, Dan Hickey, and Thomas Leonard.

Following discussion and opportunity for public testimony, there was consensus among the commissioners that the proposed project at 180 WESTERN AVENUE, ALLSTON, should return to a future convening of the BCDC for review and final recommendation.

295 W 1ST STREET, SOUTH BOSTON

Representatives of the proponent team, including Laura Portney (Prellwitz Chilinski Associates), Katya Podsiadlo (Verdant Landscape Architecture), Robert Leyen (Prellwitz Chilinski Associates), Raber Umphenour (ARTICO), and David Chilinski (Prellwitz Chilinski Associates), presented the proposed project. Commissioners Love, Gillies-Smith, Hacin, and Kim participated in the review.

Discussion: Commissioners expressed lingering concern regarding the proposed character and configuration of the ground-floor open space, in particular the proposed “lawn.” In addition to the initial scheme, the proponent prepared two “curved” alternatives. Of the schemes presented, commissioners expressed more support for “Curved Option B” (as demonstrated on slide 16 of the presentation) but asked for further study of circulation and program of the open space in service of creating greater clarity of purpose and greater differentiation between elements within the scheme. Commissioners interrogated the proposed location of the lobby and suggested relocating it to W 2ND Street, which is a more residential context, and relocating the “community use” space to W 1ST. Commissioners asked that the next meeting focus on revisiting the programmatic layout of the ground floor and building architecture.

There was no public testimony.

Following discussion and opportunity for public testimony, there was consensus among the commissioners that the proposed project at 180 WESTERN AVENUE, ALLSTON, should return to a future convening of the BCDC Design Subcommittee for additional review.

ADJOURNMENT

At the conclusion of presentations for review and public testimony, the meeting was adjourned at 7:35 PM.