

## MEMORANDUM

### **BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION**

OCTOBER, 2001

Periodically the BCDC may issue memoranda to clarify our review process, or our typical position on issues which arise in a number of cases presented to us. This memo is intended as a brief discussion of the BCDC review process in the context of Article 80 review, and as a vehicle for transmitting the various memoranda prepared to date.

**Boston Civic Design Commission review** is mandated under Article 28 of the Boston Zoning Code. Review is triggered by Large-Scale Development Projects (over 100,000 SF), by Projects of Special Significance, by Civic Projects, and by District Design Guidelines, which the BCDC has interpreted to include PDA and IMP plan areas. BCDC review is part of the Article 80 process, which was created to embrace public participation and comment and to create a more City-wide consistency in the development review process. The Commission is advisory to the BRA. BCDC review should therefore occur early in the development or project review process, and the Commission Vote of Recommendation should occur *before* the BRA Board takes action on a given Project or Plan. Article 80 provides that the BRA shall not issue its final Certificates of Compliance pursuant to Article 80 process until the BCDC has issued its Recommendation. Boston is one of the few major cities with what is essentially a peer review procedure for public realm issues.

**Public Participation in the BCDC Decision-Making Process.** The Commission meetings are, of course, open to the public and we encourage the attendance of interested citizens and their expression of opinions on issues where they have concerns. We also want to hear the thoughts of people directly affected by a proposed project—both pro and con. This has given us valuable perspective and information in the past and helped us to form a recommendation. However, the BCDC tries to evaluate the impact of a proposed project on the City as a whole as well as on the immediate neighborhood. And in the final analysis, although our decision will be affected by new information or ideas we learn from the public, it will not be determined by the number of people appearing in support of or opposition to a project, repeating the same arguments. In order to understand how a project is perceived by its neighbors, we ask that each BRA Project Manager or Project Proponent undertake to alert all recognized citizens groups with whom they have been in contact to the meetings at which the BCDC, sitting as a Commission or in subcommittee, will discuss the project.

**BCDC Positions.** The Commission has prepared and distributed memoranda concerning pedestrian bridges, BCDC development review requirements, Institutional Master Plan criteria, and most recently, the context in which the BCDC considers Project submissions. These documents are intended to clarify our process and typical concerns; they are attached for your information and reference.