

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, August 1, 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 Jonathan Evans, Mikyoung Kim, Kathy Kottaridis, Mimi Love, Anne-Marie Lubenau, William Rawn, Laura Solano, and Kirk Sykes. Deputy Chief of Urban Design Diana Fernandez and Director of Planning Aimee Chambers attended as Ex-officio members. Shauna Gillies-Smith, Catherine Morris, David Hacin, were absent. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Adam Johnson, Seth Riseman, and others 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 July 11 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on July 18 and July 25. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the July BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the 103 North Beacon Street project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 103 North Beacon Street project in the Allston neighborhood. Kirk Sykes was recused..

The next Review Committee report was for the 125 Tremont Street project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 125 Tremont Street project located Downtown. Bill Rawn was recused.

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

The first presentation was for **165 Park Drive in the Fenway neighborhood**. Peter Spelios, Jay Szymanski, and Sean Sanger presented the project.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: The changes are successful in helping the project both harmonize with the existing context and the adjacent church.

Kirk Sykes: Continue to look at the detailing of the surrounding buildings as you develop the facade.

Bill Rawn: Compliments to the team on the urban design aspect of the building.

David Manfredi: This has been a very good process, thank you for your responsiveness and willingness to listen.

Laura Solano: I appreciate your showing the existing trees. Shifting the street has made for a more interesting view. Think about using larger trees at the rear of the church.

Mikyoung Kim: The simplification of the landscape and the entrance sequence is much improved.

Kathy Kottaridis: This is the first time I'm seeing this. The Fenway neighborhood presents a solid wall to the neighborhood, and this has always been an open site. This project begins to fill in that gap and create density and create a solid backdrop for the historic church. This is a good example for other congregations around the city who might be in a similar situation.

Linda Eastley: The access road has been reinvented into a significant *lane*. It serves not only as an open space but as a forecourt for the residential buildings.

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

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for 165 Park Drive. Mimi Love was recused.

The next presentation was for **425 Medford Street in Charlestown**. Jamie von Klemperer, Sanjukta Sen, and ... introduced the project.

Kirk Sykes: Great but keep thinking about developing the site

Kathy Kottaridis: How do projects like this relate to the ongoing neighborhood planning?

Aimee Chambers: PLAN: Charlestown has been on-going for a long time, and we released a draft last week. A portion of the PLAN focuses on growth areas, working in parallel with the on-going review of projects like 425 Medford.

Diana Fernandez: From a master planning perspective, we want to be thoughtful of the connections and adjacencies to community amenities, and to efforts surrounding resiliency.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: The project seems much more connected to the surrounding waterfront and the adjacent playground. I appreciate the thoughtfulness to the architectural character.

David Manfredi: There is a wholeness to these buildings—they relate to each other and don't try to put together too many facades, materials, etc. Continue to think about locating the retail, concentrating it and letting it grow long-term.

Laura Solano: This plan shows how architecture and landscape can be fluid. This is a tough site with difficult connections and transitions.

Mimi Love: Very exciting project. The hierarchy of that central space has come a long way. As Laura said this is a difficult site and the project has come a long way.

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

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for 425 Medford Street. Mikyoung Kim was recused.

The next presentation was for **1 Mystic Avenue in Charlestown**. Aeron Hodges and Rob Adams presented the project.

Jonathan Evans: The form is cleaner and much more confident. I like how it sits in the ground. It's a tough, tight site and you're giving it quite a bit of clarity. Moving forward, the facades will require more development—think about the color palette more. What is the story you're trying to tell?

Linda Eastley: A lot of challenges on this site and you've taken it on in a clever way. You're creating a strong urban design and landscape structure and you're setting the bar high for further developments nearby.

Laura Solano: The improvements are terrific. The spaces in front of the building feel very successful. Just be careful about planting on the ground plane.

Bill Rawn: Look at adjacent parts of the city to understand how pedestrians will move.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I appreciate the changes you've made at the ground plane. As you develop the architecture—such as the colors and palette—think about the context. This building is a fulcrum that balances many different districts, lines, etc. You have a valuable opportunity to create a distinctive landmark.

David Manfredi: I agree with Jonathan and Anne-Marie.

Mimi Love: Continue to work with BDPA staff to develop the plinth and the cornice detail. You have been very responsive. This sets the bar high for neighboring projects and we will use it as a precedent in the future.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: This project is a good example of how the public realm includes the skyline and how that is perceived from different realms.

Diana Fernandez: There is continuing review by BPDA staff, and there may be an opportunity to bring updates back to the Commission.

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

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for 1 Mystic Avenue, provided that the proponent gives an informational update on massing and material updates made during BDPA staff review. Kirk Sykes was recused.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for **103 North Beacon Street** in the Allston neighborhood. Kirk Sykes was recused.

Philip Casey presented the project. Elizabeth Stiffel presented the Urban Design context.

Bill Rawn: I am finding that the stepping and slanting of the volumes is making the building feel even bigger, not smaller. A model may be helpful to access. I applaud the invention, but I fear it may not be achieving what you want. How do you envision this fitting into a pattern of buildings along North Beacon Street?

Linda Eastley: I appreciate being able to see this project early. I'd like to see this building in more context. Also, how can you bring more activity to Herrick, Hichborn, and Arthur Streets? Some of the views feel very shear. I'd also like to understand more about how the building was sited.

David Manfredi: There should be an emphasis on creating a really nice active edge along Arthur Street. Urban Design mentioned curb cuts - I'd love to see a solution that can consolidate.

Laura Solano: The landscape doesn't take full advantage of the space you have. These are tough streets-busy, loud, etc-and making a landscape along them is challenging. But the current design doesn't quite have the presence to hold its own. Use every square foot more carefully and think about densification.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I'd like to better understand your approach to the architecture. You mentioned the former industrial context, but how does it respond to the surrounding context in terms of materials, your color palette, etc.? In these views it looks like the building is without context.

Mimi Love: This building is described as a gateway, but it does not hold the corner. I'd like to see if you studied any more massing strategies.

Diana Fernandez: There's a real opportunity to take a look at North Beacon Street's "main street vernacular": how are we thinking about that neighborhood edge? What's the narrative?

The project will continue in design committee.

The next project presentation was for **125 Tremont Street** located Downtown.

Jonathan Traficonte and Stewart Marshall presented the project. Alexa Pinard of the BPDA presented the urban design context.

Jonathan Evans: I was blown away by how much *stuff* is in front of your building—blue bikes, trash cans, etc. How does your entrance negotiate the flow of people in and out, up and down? I like the gesture of turning off the street, but calibrating the sizing is important. I agree with the need to understand the lighting conditions.

Kathy Kottaridis: I'd love to hear more about the rationale for your material choices—not so much the actual material, but the choice of color, and your narrative for how the design has evolved. How does the building relate to the common and the church? How many people will be coming in and out at any one time? I'd love to hear more about the exterior interpretive plans—interesting use of lighting, day and night communication, etc.

Linda Eastley: I appreciate how the symbolism has moved into the building itself. Picking up on the “power of long views” – where are there opportunities to look out? Also, on the upper terrace, I find that the glazing stops rather abruptly on Hamilton place. Is there an opportunity to pull the glazing around further?

Kirk Sykes: It'd be great to see how you experience this across the Common. The cultural structures on the Common “talk” to each other—how does this building talk? This is an important departure point of transition from historical structures.

Diana Fernandez: This is an exciting opportunity. The materiality is important to us, and the introduction of the granite at the base is a good direction. It's important to understand the stainless steel mesh and we would value seeing any photographs of physical mockups.

Laura Solano: I'd love to see more sun studies. I have to reiterate what everyone has said about the location – topography is really tricky in the urban context. The entrance will be in darkness most of the time. There ought to be some way to think about that corner as the entrance even if the facade isn't the entrance. How can you herald that corner?

David Manfredi: All of the comments have been good. There is a delicacy to the expression of the building. I'd like to see the building at dawn, at dusk, in clouds, on a beautiful day, at night, etc. It would be important to understand the envelope and how it responds to everything that happens around it.

Anne-Marie Lubenau: I'd like to understand the experience on Hamilton Place. Is there natural light? What is the topography?

Mimi Love: Other cultural venues use Hamilton Place – we need to understand what's happening. There are practical issues on Tremont to address. I appreciate your material descriptions, but your renderings don't necessarily express the materiality. Excited to review a museum.

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 7:57 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for September 5, 2023. The recording of the August 1, 2023 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.