

MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, January 3, 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 Deneen Crosby, Linda Eastley, Jonathan Evans, Andrea Leers, Mimi Garza Love, Kathy Kottaridis, David Manfredi, William Rawn, and Kirk Sykes. Absent were David Hacin, Eric Höweler, Mikyoung Kim and Anne-Marie Lubeanu. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present, along with Kenya Thompson and Yarisamar Cortez 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 on December 21, 2022, in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the December Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on November 29th, December 13th and 20th. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the November 29th, December 13th and 20th BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the **Dorchester Bay City** project. Review is recommended. This project is already in Design Committee, and has recently made significant changes to the project. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed the Dorchester Bay City project in the Dorchester neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the **175 North Harvard Street** project. Review is recommended. The project consist of 300,000 SF of residential and performance space. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 175 North Harvard project in the Allston neighborhood.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first presentation was for **776 Summer Street**.

John Flaherty, Melissa Schrock, Karen Tamir, Dryden Raazook, Peter Viera and Robert Brown Presented

ML: The project has made meaningful improvements. What material approach will be used for the Turbine Halls on Elkins Street? Is there a rendering to show the interior of this space?

LE: The mesh material is persuasive because it allows transparency of the industrial nature of the buildings. I like the mesh, and it creates more of a punctuation in the length of the building. You get a reading of the inside and outside, along with a beautiful illumination with light from the inside going out and functioning as a gateway and beacon

DM: Elizabeth, are we the Commissioner missing staff's point of views, it terms of the continuity of the brick, as opposed to the separation that the mesh provides?

KK: I am in favor of the mesh, largely because of the contrast. Using masonry work is not needed in order to express the solid quality. This is a nice way of saying we made a change here, and it add luminance which is a huge advantage.

WR: I find the mesh quite beautiful. I fear the brick feels different based on the images shared; it feels like a confused response rather than the clarity of the mesh. The mesh brings a lot more light opportunity into the street. This is a street going through the building and safety is a concern because this space will be filled with pedestrians and cyclists.

AL: This is my first time seeing the First Street arcade which I think is going to be terrific and I am really glad to see the attention. This will be an important piece of the neighborhood. It look as though it will be very engaging; it actually jumps the sidewalk and will be the place that scoops people in the complex from the sidewalk. I appreciate building D on Summer Street. All the work you have done to explore to making this as attractive from Summer Street, coming up and both going down. I urge you to think about this approach throughout South Boston and not just along this street.

DM: Building D, the identification of the front door of the building and the illumination of this kind of sheer cut through the steps have made this a much more interesting streetscape and not just feel like the side of a building, it is now one of the important facades.

LE: These will be unforgettable experiences for pedestrians and vehicles going through the building. You have created a beautiful open space lattice and a very compelling urban design framework. There have been so many open space techniques that have employed here and I think it will be a wonderful place to inhabit.

ML: The interior space off of T3 looks great. I just wanted to make sure there were meaningful plan changes because it really looked tight in the plan. The ask is to continue

There were no public comments made; it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for 776 Summer Street.

The next project was **1234-1240 Soldiers Field Road**

Jason Tilly, Ryan Ort, Ruthie Kuhlman and Eric Robinson Presented

RW: I am concerned about the urban design sense of safety under the bridge over Soldiers Filed Road to the park, and that there needs to be some responsiveness to it. My issue is eyes on the street. I like the new base, not so much the ramping. Also the bike storage unit isn't going to generate enough human activity and perhaps as an architect you'll ultimately close up some of the views of the bikes jammed up in the room. I continue to be worried about the sense of safety at the base of the ramp just as you are showing it now. Overall, the project is impressive in its urban design elements.

KS: At the last subcommittee meeting most of our conversation focused on this corner, the edge along Soldiers Field Road and the nature in which that edge met the drive port. We felt good about where the Western Avenue front was and I agree with the reversal of the ramp or the moving of the ramp beginning to the Telford edge as a way to improve site lines and increase visibility as far down as Western Ave.

The work done to increase visibility and transparency along Soldiers Field Road is also good, especially with the series of terraces leading to the drive port. We've all been pretty consistent that we would prefer a more animated, visually connected, active place rather than a bike room. The building is very four sided and maybe you've run out of program to cover all your building corners and edges.

DC: Pulling the ramp back so that you can have a continuous plaza and open space is a great improvement. I like the connection into the interior open space system. Now the space feels more like a comfortable place you can look though and walk through the development and bridge itself. The building across the street on Telford will bring eyes to the site. A more active use of the building would be great, and I agree with Bill on safety concerns. The views in the renderings look a little sparse, so in the design development you can add a few trees to the plaza. I am glad that you relocated the dog park, this will help make a strong connection into the interior of the site. I have a question about process. DCR is designing the bridge, will it be done before or at the same time as your construction?

How does your development work with the existing bridge? Lastly, lighting the whole space will be extremely important.

AL: The corner now has a sense of arrival and it encourages you to walk along Central. It feels more welcoming and not as much as a private space for dogs and residence only. I appreciate you tackling this corner and the envelope of the three buildings. It's so much better with the family palette of materials that has distinction one building to the next, but clearly working all belonging together. It's tremendously different from what we saw last week, thank you for being agile and able to make a difference in such a short time.

ML: I like the way the buildings are organized and the façade material of the two lower buildings and the hotel looks great. My only comment is to maybe not feel so strict to only use the black material and wood look material. Do you think you can evolve in design development? I think the lower building having that wood look lighter seems right, but I'm not sure that the wood look is spot on. I encourage you to continue developing that palette and not be so strict.

There were no public comments made

The motion was moved, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of 1234-1240 Soldiers Field Road.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for **Dorchester Bay City** in the Dorchester neighborhood.

Linda Eastley are Kirk Sykes are recused

Richard Galvin, Tamara Roy, Canan Staurinos and Demo Staurinos presented.

DM: What the future of the "Karcusco" circle? How did your project influence it? How are you a catalyst for all of that happening? I know it's big and complicated and expensive

DC: I have a question about all the new green space created and the connection to Carlson Beach. Are you maintaining all of the park space adjacent to your project? It is a lot of space and I am curious about the programming on the park. Are you having conversations with DCR and The Parks Department, especially around Moakley Park? Will it all passive space, in which case will the planting in that area be different in the plateau which sits a little bit higher or is that more formal lawn area or is there a thought for any active programming in that space?

I would also think about what the landscape is itself. Are there flood friendly planting you can incorporate? It all doesn't need to be lawn.

AL: Tell us about Building A.

RW: Is Morrissey Boulevard coming at grade? This location is a powerful selling point for your project. Has the city and BPDA signed on to this as an aspirational goal?

AL: The direction of the changes are terrific. I am having students study the site and what we've learned that the most desirable and valuable in the community is the nature of the open space and the ease of using it without paying for expensive things, using it for all kinds of activities both passive and active. There is a lot of space here and it is a real benefit to the community. I appreciate you bringing the buildings back and away. This former area was landfill, it was underwater, and the water is coming back. I am interested in committee, looking at sections of your design. Site sections, as it meets the housing to its adjacent side, height section all the way down to the water from your esplanade, your site section across Mount Vernon. I saw somewhere in your materials that you are raising Mount Vernon, is that correct? Correction, Day Boulevard. I am interested in all of these edges, what it is like walking along the boulevard and turning into your property and what it is like from the housing adjacent. I think this is a tremendous step forward in understanding what really benefits this community. The edge by the housing is one of the most difficult, so I am interested in knowing what it is like in there. It has a lot of potential, but it is tricky.

ML: I would love to know more about the heights of the building by the pivot park plaza and how they relate to the adjacent fabric and how. There are some ghosted white building in the rendering, what are they, are they future proposals? I would like understanding in decisions around the heights of the buildings with greater context.

DM: This is an incredibly important project with so much implication for public realm in terms of transit and transit connections, in terms of open space. There are benefits here that accrue all the way into South Boston in a positive way, and you've made it better. There is a lot here, but it would be great to understand streetscape and see this from a pedestrian perspective, and really understand with or without the redevelopment of K circle, what's the path from JFK all the way to the waterfront? If you were on the Redline from Kendall Square and you came here, where would you go from there?

Public Comments:

Maria Lyons: There is room for improvements, the public pavilion and the water park playground area are very small especially compares to the massive round building. The building overwhelms the public area, it blocks the view of the harbor and it shades out the pavilion and park. Is the round building research and if so, why does it need the best view in this area. The pavilion should be the apex of the entire, not over on the side in the corner. It should be larger. Are you hoping to have concerts here? Maybe it can be angled toward the grass and a stage can be added? Will any of the rooftop of the proposed building be open to the public? What is the plan for getting pedestrians from the boulevard over to JFK station? There will be a lot of foot traffic, and it needs to be designed for people not just cars.

Lorraine Fowlkes: This design looks impressive. Will there be any biological research going on here, is there space dedicated for that, and if show how much and what companies would you be in conversation with? Is there a level of security that might be needed? Would the Boston Public Health Commission be part of the development conversation?

The project will continue in design committee.

The next project presentation was for **175 North Harvard Street** in the Allston neighborhood.

Yarisamar Cortez BCDC – Staff Context

Andrea Lears are William Rawn are recused

Dennis Vermeulen, Tom Gibson, Ariel Poliner, and Chieh Huang

LE: I have a question about the ART Drama Center, I am thinking about the urban design layout of this block. You will have a very public face along North Harvard, you'll have a fairly quiet street with the South Campus Drive as it winds around the building, and it will be pretty private even as it faces Smithfield. Then coming along Ivy Lane becomes more of a quiet street but also a service street. That's where you enter parking, and you have loading docks on either side of that street and I am reflecting on North Harvard Street and thinking about the way the ART Drama Center now functions on Brattle Street in Cambridge. I think one of the really beautiful things about that today is that there is a permeability about what belongs to the theater, what belongs to Brattle Street or that public face, even west of the ART today there is kind of a green space, I am not sure of the name, but during performances, visitors and spectators spill into that greenspace and sidewalk on Brattle Street. I uses that as context for this project because that outdoor performance space feels very private. I think part of the privacy comes because of its intent. You want to be able to close it off at certain times to have these performances and part of it comes with that covered walkway that essentially comes along what I think is the East façade and extends at least partially out to that outdoor performance space. I think in sub committed I would love to understand more is any other urban design test that you did in particularly for that South Campus Drive, North Harvard Street edge/corner and running along North Harvard Street and just trying to understand how any of the public/private realm might be able to be blurred a little more. Further up South Campus Drive, as you're thinking about the courtyard space between the housing and the performance space, I am equally interested in this gateway area. Is it intended to be public, what might be some other test that you've done to maybe open up those corners a little more to make that public? The last comment I have is along Smithfield, I see that you have some townhouse units here. This will be a pretty quiet street I think and I am curious as you show diagrams and sections. You've got this private space along the façade there and then more of a public sidewalk, I would like to know what these area really feel like when we see you again.

KS: Given the amount of the solid walls, I would love to know about your studies about treatment of these walls. This is very much a public realm issue, because given the visibility on Harvard Street with the amount of open space surround it, and understanding that you can perforate them. I am wondering if you have looked at a range of typologies and treatments of solid walls. Building like the Boston Food Bank come to mind as buildings that are fairly opaque surfaces but have textural treatment and show ways of expressing themselves than just public art topically applied. I understand a mural, but I also recognize that there is a lot of solid wall. Given the prominence of that building I would love to see what thought you have given to the treatment at this location.

ML: What are some of the iterations that were looked at? You don't have to look much further than the ART building itself with those existing beautiful articulated panels that create that texture, but yet aren't windows on the streets. I am not suggesting that you have to do anything exactly like that; but what were other interventions that you looked at besides looking immediately to the mural or to the script that's dynamic, but I don't know if it is enough for North Harvard Street in particular. With the mural, did you look at it facing the courtyard, and why is it in your opinion best located facing South Campus Drive? Hearing the though process would give greater context. My only other comment is the town houses facing South Campus Drive, I think is spot on for activating the street and perhaps it's the right program. It was really impossible to see what it is really doing in the renderings. The trees where blocking what's happening. It's right in terms of activation, but that's a really hard program; housing to also activate the street. I am curious as to how you are imaging this to happen? Is there a portraiture, what does articulation look like on this side and entre points?

JE: I don't think a mural can't be the alibi for an architectural intent, but using a timber frame and reclaimed brick I think there are some things that can be really latched on to, maybe consider the brick bonding pattern to create a tapestry. Would love to see longer views in your renderings, to better see how this fits into the context. Also looking at the housing, I appreciate the density and scale, in subcommittee I would love to see more understanding

about the form. I am seeing the sort of stepping of the height, but I'm wondering if that stepping can happen in plan as well. There is a lot of sheerness to the building and are there opportunities for relief.

DC: I would like to see this in a larger context of how circulation works through the surrounding public spaces in this development, specifically I see that there is an entrance to Smithfield and the park. I know Ivy Lane has loading docks and other back of house activities, but has a grove of trees with a terminus on one side and a connection to the park other, and I wonder if that's the best thing for Ivy Lane. I would like to know who the courtyard is for, from which I understand is primarily to be used by the housing, but there is also this sort of connection through. So an understanding of who is using the paces and where they are coming from.

LE: I agree with Johnathan about the stepping, there is no change in plane along this façade. If the materiality is to be this consistent as the building is stepping up, or have you thought about a different kind of vertical treatment as you essentially have those four elements that are coming together there? Because looking at what's next to you, there is a variation in the materials in the façade and heights there and the context that will be so immediate

KS: That also prompts the question if there is a relationship between the two buildings, are there datum and other elements that suggest that the theater building and residential building are a family in any way shape or form. At the ground plane podium or the awning or projections. I think there is another layer that would be helpful for you to share with us about your thinking of the evolution. The long view renderings don't talk to that or the neighbors.

LE: This idea of the pavilion in the garden between the ART and the residential is kinda exciting. I think it labeled a bike pavilion. Is it more of a community space? Does it feel like a baronial that's been added on to the performance space and what are your thoughts about it terms of it function and also in terms of its architecture.

DC: Please bring dimensional information on all of the edges of the project.

Public Comment:

Lorraine Fowlkes: I am interested in the research space and will there be labs in space?

Matthew Broady: I like to learn more about how pedestrian and bike access work. What the ART moving to a redline adjacent spot to a not super redline adjacent spot, I'm thinking this is a space where pedestrian and bike access is even more of a priority and it is not entirely clear to me how that works and weather the blue bike station that is already there would stay, these details would be helpful as the project evolves.

Paula: I am a resident that lives about a block away at Barry's Corner. Just looking at the façade, it looks like a warehouse building to me, there is no attractive features to the building and underwhelming architecture to the ART building. The Harvard Business School built an auditorium, and it's round and beautiful. There is a lot of open space and you come upon it and can see that it is really beautiful and I did not get that reaction when I looked at this new ART building. Also the residential building is not attractive and a superblock. That is just one side of Smithfield Park, on the other side are more high-rise buildings, so the park is going to be pretty enclosed by high-rise buildings and I would hate to see that happen. Transportation, how will people get to this site? There is parking for about seventy-five cars and yet they say in the ART they have seating for 1000 people, that's just not enough accommodations for people that maybe be driving to the sire in addition to folks coming other ways. Improving the façade and breaking up some of the density of the residential building.

The project will continue in design committee.

Staff Updates was the final task for the meeting.

Elizabeth Stifel shared a slide which addressed the BPDA's Design Vision and Next Steps. The consultant team was selected which consist of Agency, Dream, Consult LeLa, Isidor and OJ Slaughter, and BPDA's new colleague Breeze Outlaw will be running this process.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 8:00 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for January 10, 2023. The recording of the January 4, 2023 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.