



**Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project
CAC Working Meeting #3
Thursday, April 2, 2009
Location: Christian Science Publishing House Building**

CAC Attendees:

Tom Aucella, Belvedere Condo Association
Vanessa Calderon-Rosado, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA)
Sybil CooperKing, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay
Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association
Donald Margotta, Church Park Apartments
Craig Nicholson, American Planning Association (APA) – Massachusetts Chapter
Lee Steele, St. Botolph Neighborhood Association
Robert Wright, Symphony United Neighbors

Ex-Officio Attendees:

Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing
Johanna Sena, Office of Boston City Council President Michael Ross

City of Boston Attendees:

Heather Campisano, BRA
David Carlson, BRA
Inés Palmarin, BRA
Gary Russell, Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC)
Lauren Shurtleff, BRA
Rodney Sinclair, BRA

Church Team Attendees:

Barbara Burley, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Harley Gates, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Bob Herlinger, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Debbi Lawrence, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Bob Ryan, ML Strategies

Members of the Public:

Pamela Hawkes, Ann Beha Architects
Doug Kelleher, Epsilon

Meeting Summary

On Thursday, April 2, 2009, the third working session of the Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was called to order at approximately 8:05 a.m. in the Christian Science Publishing House Building by Inés Palmarin, BRA Senior Planner.

Inés began the meeting by greeting the CAC members and thanking them for attending. She noted that there are two additions to the CAC that represent abutting properties, Eric Georgi, a resident of St. Germain Street, and Donald Margotta, a resident of Church Park Apartments.

Additionally, Inés noted that the Hilton Back Bay's representative on the CAC, Greg Brown, has moved and will be replaced once the Hilton has recommended a replacement.

Next, Inés asked the CAC if they had any comments on the site tours given in March, noting that another tour could be arranged for any CAC members who had not attended either of the tours. Several CAC members expressed appreciation for the tours and stated that they were very useful in developing a background understanding of the site.

Inés then mentioned that the CAC will elect a Chairperson. Lee Steele, St. Botolph Neighborhood Association, asked if it was possible to have a Vice Chairperson since it may be difficult for one person to assume all of the roles of a Chairperson. The CAC agreed that this was a good idea.

Inés reiterated that the CAC had determined at the first meeting that future working sessions will be held monthly, alternating between meeting in the morning and in the evening. The next three meetings will be scheduled once the CAC has provided their availability to the BRA.

Inés then turned the meeting over to the Church Team, led by Barbara Burley and Bob Herlinger. They gave a PowerPoint presentation (available on the BRA's project website: <http://www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org/Planning/PlanningInitsIndividual.asp?action=ViewInit&InitID=143>) that provided an overview of the Church's history on the site and also outlined their planning objectives for the future, which includes enhancing the open space on the site, implementing improvements to the site's sustainability, and identifying opportunities for underutilized real estate within the site.

Questions and comments raised in response to the presentation included:

- In response to a question from Sybil CooperKing, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay, Barbara responded that the ground leases on some of the adjacent properties owned by the Church (*i.e.*, the Midtown Hotel, Symphony Towers) will not expire for many years, and will be reviewed in the future as part of a separate process.
- In response to a question from Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing, Barbara indicated that the Church retains the option in the very distant future to purchase Church Park Apartments and the Greenhouse Apartments.
- Lee Steele asked for a clarification about the wood piles underneath the Church. Bob Herlinger replied that there are more than 50 test pits within the site that are monitored regularly.
- Donald Margotta, Church Park Apartments, asked about the importance of the reflecting pool to the philosophy of the Church. Bob Herlinger indicated that the reflecting pool is an integral element of the site's landscape design, and expresses the universal qualities of reflectivity and peacefulness, rather than being specifically tied to the Church's beliefs.
- Representative Rushing asked if the original design of the reflecting pool included any features to capture the water and use it elsewhere on the site. Bob Herlinger responded that for the most part, this is not the case, and despite the original intent of the design, this feature was never realized. Harley Gates, also a member of the Church Team, added that the Childrens Fountain does recycle its water, however. Bob Herlinger stated that Araldo Cossutta originally meant for the reflecting pool to be filled with water year-round, but this notion was abandoned after the energy crisis in the 1970s.

- In response to a question from Donald Margotta, Barbara replied that the Church Team had reviewed the design and programming of other public sites, but not other religious sites. Bob Herlinger elaborated on this, explaining that while The Mother Church and its Extension are the key elements on the site, the other features are meant to activate the space and welcome people. Barbara added that the Church Team aspires to maintain the site as a safe, family-friendly environment that allows visitors to enjoy the site as either an active or contemplative space.
- Vanessa Calderon-Rosado, IBA, asked about what can be done to eliminate the buses that line up along the Huntington Avenue curb adjacent to the site. Bob Herlinger acknowledged that this is a problem, adding that the Church Team has discussed the issue with the City, but at this point there is nowhere else for the buses to go. Barbara added that the Church Team is open to suggestions.
- In response to a question from Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association, Barbara responded that the Church does not currently share their well monitoring data with the Boston Groundwater Trust, but added that this is certainly something they can look into.
- Sybil CooperKing asked if the new pavers that are eventually installed on the site will be permeable. Bob Herlinger replied that they are looking into this, and that it will likely be possible on much of the site, with the exception of areas reserved for maintenance and safety vehicles.
- Craig Nicholson, APA – Massachusetts Chapter, asked if any studies had been performed to determine the pedestrian traffic moving through the site. Bob Herlinger replied that these had not been done since the 1990s.
- Lee Steele asked about the role of the BLC in the site's review. Gary Russell, BLC Staff Architect, noted that a petition for landmark status was filed on the property in January 2007, and added that the BLC had accepted the petition for further study. He stated that the BLC believes that the site is likely to achieve landmark status, but at this point it is unclear when or if an actual designation will occur. Lauren Shurtleff, BRA, added that she will email the petition to the CAC after the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:30 a.m.