



**Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project
CAC Working Meeting #5**

Monday, May 18, 2009

Location: Christian Science Publishing House Building

CAC Attendees:

Tom Aucella, Belvedere Condo Association
Kelly Brilliant, Fenway Alliance
Vanessa Calderon-Rosado, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA)
Mark Cataudella, Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO)
Sybil CooperKing, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB)
Marie Fukuda, Fenway Civic Association
Ryan Higginson, Resident of the South End
Donald Margotta, Church Park Apartments
Joanne McKenna, Fenway Community Development Corporation (Fenway CDC)
Craig Nicholson, American Planning Association (APA) – Massachusetts Chapter
Lee Steele, St. Botolph Neighborhood Association
George Thrush, Boston Society of Architects (BSA)
Robert Wright, Symphony United Neighbors (SUN)

Ex-Officio Attendees:

Elizabeth Corcoran-Hunt, Office of Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing

City of Boston Attendees:

Heather Campisano, BRA
David Carlson, BRA
Randi Lathrop, BRA
Will Onuoha, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services
Inés Palmarin, BRA
Lauren Shurtleff, 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:

Susan Ashbrook, NABB
Jim Cronin, Boston Courant
Sarah Kelly, Boston Preservation Alliance
Mark Laderman
Sheri Olans Wright, SUN
Barbara Simons, SUN

Meeting Summary

On Monday, May 18, 2009, the fifth working session of the Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was called to order at approximately 6:05 p.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 is one addition to the CAC representing the Boston Society of Architects, George Thrush.

Inés then mentioned that the CAC will elect a Chairperson sometime in the future, noting that thus far only two CAC members have expressed interest in serving as Co-Chairs: Sybil CooperKing, NABB, and Ryan Higginson, Resident of the South End. Inés asked the CAC to email her other nominations, if there are any.

Next, Inés reviewed a map showing the active, permitted, and proposed projects within a ¼-mile and ½-mile radius of The Mother Church. In response to a question, Randi Lathrop, BRA Deputy Director for Community Planning, stated that the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority (MTA) has put the process for Turnpike Air Rights parcels 12-15 on hold to instead concentrate on the projects that they already have in the pipeline. The appointing of the CAC for these parcels is also on hold.

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 focused on identifying opportunities for underutilized real estate within the boundaries of the project site.

Questions and comments raised in response to the presentation included:

- In response to a series of questions from Tom Aucella, Belvedere Condo Association, regarding the reflecting pool, Barbara Burley replied that the reflecting pool, although in need of repairs, will not be reconstructed until the whole plan for development is in place. Bob Herlinger added that the project team desires to integrate a water management strategy for the reflecting pool as part of the site's overall sustainability program.
- In response to a question from Lee Steele, St. Botolph Neighborhood Association, Bob Herlinger indicated that the existing square footage of the buildings on the site is approximately 750,000-SF.
- George Thrush commented that the site is one of the more successful examples of 1960s urbanism, and noted that while it is very well woven into the City, the areas identified by the project team as potential development sites seem like the appropriate places to add density, while still maintaining the high quality of the public elements on-site.

Next, Bob Herlinger reviewed each of the potential development sites. Comments and questions are summarized below and grouped according to the area they correspond to:

Massachusetts Avenue

- George Thrush agreed that this is not an appropriate site for development, noting that the street edge at this location is very successful now, and is framed nicely by the Church Park Apartments across the street.

- Lee Steele concurred, noting that this edge functions as the Church's "front yard" and added that any development would block a critical view corridor.

Huntington Avenue Bosque

- George Thrush stated that while he appreciates the bosque of trees, he suggested that the project team might be able to be more flexible when considering this area, since there is no defining structure across the avenue and the pedestrian connections are relatively poor. He noted that Huntington Avenue could also use more activity.
- Kelly Brilliant, Fenway Alliance, added that she would like to see this area softened.
- In response to a question from Sybil CooperKing, Bob Herlinger stated that the project team is considering adding places to sit and relax in this area, perhaps with some type of food service that people could use.
- Marie Fukuda echoed Sybil's comments, and added that the seating area adjacent to the reflecting pool is wonderful, and she would not like to see this disappear.
- Joanne McKenna, Fenway Civic Association, commented that some sort of low-rise development on this site could work, in that she wishes to see the project's density spread out beyond the Dalton Street sites.

Belvidere Street Bosque/Childrens Fountain Corner

- The CAC agreed with the Church team that this site is not an appropriate place for further development.

Huntington Avenue side of the Sunday School Building

- George Thrush suggested that the project team consider building above the Sunday School Building, or perhaps in place of the building, as this is a good place to add a significant amount of square footage. Bob Herlinger replied that the project team desires to preserve the building's curvature, and added that the historical nature of the building would also likely preclude replacement.
- Lee Steele asked if Horticultural Hall is included in the Church's list of sites for potential development. Bob Herlinger replied that the area under consideration for a new building is adjacent to the Sunday School Building next to Horticultural Hall. Potential development in this area is still being explored.
- Marie Fukuda, Fenway Civic Association, expressed concern over this concept, noting that the Hall's relationship to the Symphony across the street would be impacted.
- Mark Cataudella, BSO, reiterated Marie's concerns, and stated that he would not want to harm the character of the Symphony building.
- Vanessa Calderon-Rosado, IBA, asked if the project team had identified uses for each of the sites yet. Bob Herlinger responded that this would be determined later based on the location, square footage, building footprint, as well as market factors, but noted that the uses are likely to include residential, office, and in general, mixed-use.
- Public Comment:
 - Sarah Kelly, Boston Preservation Alliance, noted that the idea of building adjacent to and connected to the Sunday School Building and Horticultural Hall is intriguing as a concept, in that it would serve to have buildings from three distinct architectural periods represented in one mass. She added that the Church would have to consider the impacts to the existing buildings before moving further with this concept.

Belvidere and Dalton Street Parking Lots and the Triangular Service Area

- In response to a comment from Sybil CooperKing, Bob Herlinger confirmed that the Church team is looking to combine these sites to form a larger site, which would move vehicular access to Clearway Street and close Dalton Street's connection to Belvidere Street.
- Lee Steele noted that this site would work well for residential use. Bob Herlinger added that it would likely be a mix of residential and office space.
- George Thrush stated his opinion that this is the best site for development, in that it could accommodate a significant amount of square footage. He also noted that this is the one edge of the Church's property that was never addressed in the original Master Plan, and added that the intersection of Belvidere and Dalton Streets could use some improvements.
- Mark Cataudella agreed with George, noting that the realignment of Clearway Street might alleviate some of the area's traffic problems.
- In response to a question from Vanessa Calderon-Rosado, Bob Herlinger replied that one of the parking lots is used by hourly parkers, and the other one is leased to the Abbey Group for residential and office parking.
- Sybil CooperKing asked if the Church team has hired an architect yet. Bob Herlinger replied that they have hired Elkus Manfredi, Architects, Sasaki Associates (Urban Design and Sustainability), Halvorson Design Partnership (Landscape Design), and Vanasse, Hangen, Brustlin (Transportation).

Finally, the CAC gathered around a model of the project site and reviewed several options for each of the areas within the site's boundaries, in order to gather an understanding of how the project team arrived at their decision to focus on the Belvidere and Dalton Street parking lots with the Triangular Service Area and the Huntington Avenue side of the Sunday School as potential development sites.

The meeting was then adjourned at approximately 8:00 p.m.