

Science Design Update Meeting
March 20, 2007
6:00 PM
Honan Library

Harvard Allston Task Force Members

Paul Berkeley, *Meeting Chair*

John Cusack

Rita DiGesse

Mike Hanlon

Harry Mattison

Harvard University

Nathalie Beauvais

Will Donham

Allison Nichols

Kathy Spiegelman

Maile Takahashi

Stefan Behnisch, *Behnisch Architekten for Harvard University*

City of Boston

Robert Kroin, Chief Architect, Boston Redevelopment Authority

Discussion and Questions

The meeting started with a presentation by Stefan Behnisch on the status of the design of the Science Complex. He presented the design, highlighting the changes since the last presentation, including: reducing building heights, combining Buildings II and III, and simplifying the landscape.

1. What is going on over at the science site?

There is geotechnical testing. Harvard will get more specific information for the next meeting.

2. What bio-level is this facility going to be? What is the level of biology work to be done in the building? Will there be clinical trials in the building? Scientists needed to come to meetings to talk about the work.

Harvard will come back with a specific answer at the Task Force meeting on April 9th. Harvard will also set up a meeting for the scientist to talk about their work with the community.

3. What are the heights of the building? Why do they exceed the heights in the NANSF?

Behnisch discussed the height of the buildings, including and not including mechanical space. He compared the heights of the buildings as presented in the PNF and the revised heights.

Paul Berkeley explained that the NANSP was not intended to be a zoning document with strict height limits. He said that the NANSP allowed for additional height over 95' if there was community review and community benefits. Kathy Spiegelman explained that the project was undergoing community review and that the community benefits were part of an ongoing discussion with the BRA and the Task Force.

4. What are the destinations in the courtyard? The design needs to work on the permeability. The design should soften the edges of Buildings II and III as they face Rena Street. What is the status of the day care? (extended to neighborhood people?) How big is the fitness center and will neighborhood people be able to use it?

Kathy S. stated that day care would be run like Harvard's other day care where about 10-20% of the slots are occupied by non-Harvard families. The fitness center is not designed as a real fitness center, more of a fitness room that would only be available to the occupants of the building.

Other space that is open to the public includes the retail store frontage along Western Avenue, the cafe, and the conference center (two rooms with 250 and 80 seats) will be available for community uses.

5. What are the building uses facing the neighborhood? The design needs to create more of a buffer from Rena Street.
6. Are there walkways over Western Avenue?

Behnisch explained that there were not.

7. Does the project propose banning parking on Western Avenue in front of the building?

Kathy Spiegelman explained that there was no proposal to do that, and that it was an issue between the Boston Transportation Department and the community. But it was possible that some street parking could be helpful for retail.

8. What are the exterior materials? Would it be sheet metal like a Frank Gehry building? Have you considered staining by rain? Would all four buildings have the same material?

Behnisch stated that currently he was thinking some sort of stone.

9. How is the building powered?

Behnisch explained that there would be a cogeneration facility in the building.

10. Have you looked at making the complex two or three buildings, rather than four?

Behnisch responded that from the beginning their design goal has been to break down the program into smaller elements in order to reduce the scale of the design.

11. There were a number of comments on the number of parking spaces, the users of those spaces, and the size of the loading docks. How many people will work there? Drive there? Will the parking garage serve the next phase of science development?

It was suggested that there be a separate meeting to focus on parking and transportation issues related to the Science Complex.

12. How big is the conference center?

Behnisch responded that the conference center has two areas: one with 250 seats and a second with 80 seats.

13. What are the sustainability elements of the project?

Behnisch responded that there are numerous sustainability elements, including daylighting features, reduction and reuse of energy, and providing a variety of climates within the building. He also stated that the energy goals for this building were to achieve a 50% savings over a “traditional” science building.

14. What will the facades on Rena Street look like? Will they look like the back of the building?

Behnisch responded that he will develop some images for the neighborhood to show what the science complex will look like from the neighborhood.

15. Will the project be built in phases or all at once?

Behnisch responded that the project would be built all at once.

16. How many ramps will be included? Will there be a central loading facility for Allston? Will there be underground tunnels for pedestrians?

The plans now show two ramps; one for loading and one for parking. Harvard is planning that the loading facility in the science complex will serve the future science buildings in this area. There are a number of significant constraints to developing a large central loading facility, including the MWRA sewer.

17. Representative Moran said that the project should include a buffer of greenspace between the south side of the project and the new Rena Street.

18. Harvard needs to clarify what the public uses are in the building and what the community benefits will be from the project.

19. There need to be additional renderings of the project, showing what it will look like from the neighborhood.

20. How does the project fit into the short, medium and long-term goals?

Bob Kroin (Chief Architect from the BRA) said that the BRA's concerns include: ensuring that the design of the project does not preclude implementation of the master plan; emphasizing integration of the project into the neighborhood and the neighborhood into the project; recognizing the future Rena Park as a buffer; and ensuring that the courtyard is permeable and welcoming.