

**MINUTES
BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION**

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, August 2, 2022, 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, Jonathan Evans, David Hacin, Eric Höweler, Kathy Kottaridis, Andrea Leers, David Manfredi, William Rawn, and Kirk Sykes. Absent were Linda Eastley, Mikyoung Kim and Anne-Marie Lubenau. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Adam Johnson, Matt Martin, Scott Slarsky, and Jill Zick 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 in the BOSTON HERALD.

The first item was the approval of the July 12 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on July 19 and July 26. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the July 12, July 19, and July 26 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

Votes were passed for signature. The next item was a report from the Review Committee on the 1400 Boylston project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 1400 Boylston project in the Fenway neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the 776 Summer Street - Phase 1 project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 776 Summer Street - Phase 1 project in the South Boston neighborhood.

The next Review Committee report was for the 990 American Legion Highway project. Review is recommended. It was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission review the schematic design for the proposed 990 American Legion Highway project in the Hyde Park neighborhood.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first presentation was for **30 Leo M Birmingham in the Allston-Brighton neighborhood.**

Deneen Crosby: This is a great improvement over what we'd previously seen—the access, connections, etc. The sunken open space made it feel a little more private. The Lothrop side is particularly improved. I would allow for a more generous connection to the sunken space. The dog park has been addressed.

Eric Howeler: The clarification of the massing is appreciated. This is a beautiful “fabric” building.

David Manfredi: I completely agree. I appreciate your responsiveness, and I think that the building is nicely designed and well-thought-out.

Two members of the public spoke, one in favor of the project and one opposed.

A motion was made, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for 30 Leo Birmingham Parkway.

The Commission moved to project presentations, the first being for **1400 Boylston Street** in the Fenway neighborhood. David Manfredi was recused.

Abe Menzin, Kevin Lennon, and Keith LeBlanc presented the project.

Eric Howeler: My impression is that the urban gesture is very clear. Whereas the Pierce leans out, this leans back. The park along the edge will feel like an extension of some of the open space networks, and the modulation of the massing is clear. I wouldn't have so much color variation, work to unify the building. It's not four buildings. I appreciate the stepped terraces but what are the programs on them and adjacent to them?

David Hacin: I agree with everything Eric has said. It is reinforcing an urban condition that has been set up down Boylston in a very satisfying way. When you come to subcommittee, I'd love to see the elevation along Boylston street with much of the rest of Boylston. Boylston has many expressions along its length, and it would be interesting to see how this building plays into that. I'd also prefer to see it a little quieter. The gradation of the colors makes the building seem shorter. Could it be expressed as two buildings, rather than four? I don't know if the theatricality of the color scheme is helping reduce the scale.

Andrea Leers: First, let's appreciate that a big portion of this site is given over to park. That's not a small choice. I also read this project as two buildings, not four. You have a building that faces the park, and a building that faces the street. To me, the differences in height are too small to be meaningful. I agree that the slight variations in color could do more to break down the building. Think about other envelope strategies for the building next to the opening: think about two variations on a theme rather than one.

Deneen Crosby: I love the two parks bookending the project. I would like to hear more about Kilarnic Street.

Bill Rawn: Asks about adjacent heights and building dimensions.

Kirk Sykes: This is a three dimensional exercise. I don't think these static drawings do justice to the variety of the neighborhood. When you come to subcommittee, it would be great to see this in a 3D representation of the context.

Kathy Kottaridis: I agree with what most of the commissioners have said. I'm enjoying the park arrangement. I'd like to understand the alley and the impact on the adjacencies.

Eric Howeler: Look at this Renzo Piano building in New York, which has a bundled scheme as well. 565 Broom Street.

A member of the public spoke to encourage the project team to think about wind and shadow impacts on nearby streets.

The project will continue in design committee.

The next project presentation was for **776 Summer Street - Phase 1** in the South Boston neighborhood.

Melissa Schrock, Victor Vizgaitis, Karen Tamir, John Clifford, Peter Vieira, Robert Brown presented the project.

David Hacin: We need to develop a subcommittee strategy to break this down.

Deneen Crosby: I'd like to understand this open space system in a larger context. I'd also like to understand the topography and the elevation of the buildings, streetfront, and waterfront. I'm also curious to hear more about the new street.

Jonathan Evans: This is an impressive amount of work. It would be nice to see how the buildings plug into each other—what is the framework for how these pieces come together?

David Hacin: I'll focus on parcels D and F. I'm curious to understand why the massing expression remains very horizontal. Were there any strategies for massing that broke the buildings down in some other ways? Strategies that were less about the horizontal pancake, and more relating to the scale of the taller buildings?

David Manfredi: What is the relationship between the old buildings and new buildings? I want to walk through Turbine Alley and the big cutout in the turbine building to get a better sense of what it's like to be a pedestrian. There's a lot of very nice work here. It's hard to discuss without the other pieces, because they provide an element of scale.

Andrea Leers: Creating the M Street greenspace is a great suggestion. The strategy for the ground plane at the waterfront walk seems more mineral, hard than the PDA. It's a lot more structured and

a lot less natural. I'd be interested in knowing the evolution of thinking there. On Blocks D and F, I appreciated that Block F is both facing the water and being a face to the greenspace. I miss some of that in Block D. To some extent it turns a shoulder. I am interested in the progression of the idea from the PDA.

Bill Rawn: If there are no driveways, what kind of security is applied? How is there a sense of urban life 12 months of the year? How can people feel that they have access? Will there be a lack of eyes on the street, as it were?

Kathy Kottaridis: I'm interested in whether there have been changes to the treatment of historic buildings. I'd like an explanation of the story you're going to tell over time—how will you explain what this place was?

David Hacin: As we see more life science projects outside of traditional life science neighborhoods, I have to ask: fifty years from now, do these buildings function for uses other than life sciences? As the industry evolves, how do these buildings remain sustainable and usable?

Several members of the public spoke to raise concerns about architectural integration with the neighborhood and building size.

The project will continue in design committee.

990 American Legion Highway was the next presentation. Kirk Sykes was recused.

Eric Rosenthal and Christopher Sansone presented the project.

Andrea Leers: I wonder whether this is ready for us to be reviewing. It's a project in a very particular topography and neighborhood, and we see no images whatsoever of the ground/topographic layout, what exists there now, the rationale of site sections, adjacent buildings... this is without context. It is premature for us to even be looking at this. We are looking at flat floorplans as if the site were flat. Most trees would be removed. We need to see the nature of what exists there now, and several options of how to occupy this land given the site. I do not think it's useful at this point to comment on architecture at this point.

David Hacin: The proponent mentioned they would be pursuing LEED Gold. I'm surprised by the limited goal of Gold on a project of this type. Could it be reaching for much higher goals?

Deneen Crosby: I'd like to understand more about how important this natural resource is. We've received a number of letters commenting on that fact. Maybe the Environment Department could comment on what this resource is doing for this part of the City. Should this be developed? If so, how should it be developed so that it can live *with* the natural resource?

Eric Rosenthal: We were scoped by the BPDA in 2021, and submitted a DPIR earlier this year. We worked with local arborists to conduct a detailed assessment of the trees and the conditions present

on the site today. The tree canopy is predominantly young. We are committed to an extensive landscaping programming plan that replaces all impacted trees one-to-one.

Andrea Leers: I would like to see a map of the existing tree canopy. Again: we need to see site information, including site sections and alternate strategies and their consequences. A zoning variance might be necessary.

David Manfredi: Ian McCarg wrote a book when I was in school that would look at a site like this and look at a series of overlay studies—wetland, tree canopy, grades, etc.--as a way of seeing what was actually buildable. That's the kind of analysis I would like to see even before even thinking about the architecture.

Kathy Kottaridis: I'd also like to understand whether or not the Environment Department has commented. It sounds to me like "urban wilds" are understood as an important part of the environment. We should slow down and bring this to a more elementary level.

Eric Rosenthal: We didn't have the space in this presentation to look at "how we got here," so to speak.

Andrea Leers: We are not asking "how we got here," but rather what other options there might be that are in greater harmony with the site and adjacent neighborhood buildings. We want to see alternative thinking that looks at the site's fundamental characteristics to determine what is appropriate. Ten slides can tell a lot.

David Hacin: I agree with Andrea. This appears to be an extraordinarily typical approach to car-oriented, suburban development, in a sensitive urban environment, at a time when we are trying to reach new goals. This feels surprising to me, because it feels so unambitious. This development could literally be built almost anywhere in New England. Why this strategy here? At this point, maybe it's an opportunity to pull back.

Several members of the public spoke to urge the Commissioners to consider the impacts of the project on equity and environmental justice.

The project will be returned to BPDA staff for further study.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 7:39 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for September 6. The recording of the August 2, 2022 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.