

MINUTES BOSTON CIVIC DESIGN COMMISSION

The meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was held on Tuesday, July 12, 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, Linda Eastley, Jonathan Evans, David Hacin, Eric Höweler, Kathy Kottaridis, Andrea Leers, Mimi Garza Love, David Manfredi, William Rawn, Kirk Sykes. Absent were Mikyoung Kim and Anne-Marie Lubenau. Elizabeth Stifel, Executive Director of the Commission, was present. Representatives of the BSA attended. Adam Johnson, Kenya Thompson, and Nupoor Monani 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 June 7, 2022 Monthly Meeting Minutes, and the Design Committee Minutes from meetings on June 14, June 21, and June 28. A motion was made, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: To approve the June 7, June 14, June 21, and June 28 BCDC Meeting Minutes.

The Commission moved into Votes of Recommendation for projects from Design Committee. The first presentation was for Harvard Enterprise Research Campus in the Allston neighborhood. Commissioners Eric Howeler, Mikyoung Kim, Anne-Marie Lubenau, Andrea Leers, Mimi Garza Love, and Kirk Sykes were recused. Kathy Kottaridis presided as interim chair.

Members of the project team presented the project.

Deneen Crosby: All of the landscape comments have been addressed. I know in past design committee conversations we spoke about continuing the cycle track. Keep thinking about how to signal to people that this is not a place to speed through. Otherwise, the project has evolved very nicely.

Jonathan Evans: I appreciate the development team's response. I'm excited to see this move forward.

David Hacin: I really appreciate the strengthening of the building entrances and the distinctions that have been made, all enhancing the incremental sense of a "collection" of architecture and uses on the site.

Linda Eastley: There are a lot of things I enjoy about this project. Could you take us to the Western Avenue façade to understand the pedestrian experience?

Marlon Blackwell: [Shows a rendering along Western Avenue] The loading is on Cattle drive, so it doesn't impact Western Avenue at all. The street edge allows for movement as well as lingering.

Linda Eastley: Thank you, this rendering helps. We've had a lot of conversations about how to make this space inviting, and I can feel it now.

David Manfredi: It's a wonderful project. You're making important spaces here, and eventually the connectivity from the library to the river will be one of the great spaces in the city. The one comment I'll make again is that the hardest problem you've created is the relationship between the two lab buildings. I agree that the simplification has made each of the two parts stronger. This sets a nice precedent for the blocks that will come.

Hearing no public comment, it was moved, seconded, and

VOTED: That the BCDC recommend approval for the Harvard Enterprise Research Campus.

The next project was Seaport Circle, in the South Boston Waterfront.

Amy Korte, Natasha Espada, and presented the project.

David Manfredi: I thought from day one that this was a wonderful project, and it's gotten better and better. Everything you've done on the first and second floors over the past several months are all really good moves. I struggled with the bridge, but I have to say I do appreciate the lightness and thinness, and I hope it's constructable as you've drawn it. I do believe that the hall road one day will be another street in the city, and will be walkable and part of the city. Maybe Starboard will also be open to traffic.

Deneen Crosby: I'm not sure about Starboard but I do agree about the haul road. The team has really paid attention to the ground level. Keep anticipating those two streets being part of the city someday. For the bridge, I don't think it's going to feel heavy underneath, but keep thinking about the underside (and lighting).

Linda Eastley: The first time we saw this project we were all a little confused by the layers and levels, but you've made it very clear. Do you have a view that looks from Congress and Starboard?

Amy Korte: [Shows view]

Linda Eastley: The idea of having a bridge felt uncomfortable at first. Can you remind me of the pedestrian experience on the pavilion side?

Amy Korte: There's a stair, and you can walk into the main entrance and take an elevator, and you can go along Congress Street up to the second level.

Linda Eastley: The pavilion is a very successful piece of urban design.

Bill Rawn: I echo the other comments. I understand the ground floor better than I did.

Eric Howeler: Thanks for all the updates. I'm excited about the double ground plain. The ramp level change is a challenge. The bridge geometry is still a little funny, but I know you'll keep working on this. This will be a place where there is a lot of vehicular and pedestrian conflict so a double ground plain will work.

Kirk Sykes: We're seeing more of these two-level public realms, and how you get up there is so important—as is signaling how to get up there. Think more about how to message that the upper-level is public and for pedestrians. That said this is a very successful project.

Andrea Leers: Since the last review, you've made a lot of progress. Thank you especially for the views. Do continue to think about the stair.

The motion was moved, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of Seaport Circle.

24 Drydock Avenue in the South Boston Waterfront was presented next. David Manfredi was recused.

Alberto Cardenas and Katya Podsiadlo presented the project.

Jonathan Evans: I appreciate the teams responsiveness.

Mimi Love: I agree. The only comment I'll make is that I'm still a little worried about the west side of the building. There's some confusion about what the entrance is.

Kirk Sykes: The chronology of the façade treatments has moved in the right direction. I would still encourage you to think about the resolution of the top of the building, and the heaviness of it. The adjacent building has a much lighter penthouse. Otherwise, certainly this strategy is well evolved.

Eric Howeler: I agree. I wonder about the expressed profile. What if it has a different hierarchy that plays a different game from the curtain wall below? I'm also curious about the breaking of the façade above the entrance—but these are just detail questions.

Andrea Leers: Many of these same suggestions were made at the last design committee. It was suggested that you lengthen the entrance, and so now you should respond with the above façade. These are details, but I had hoped to see some studies in response. I encourage you to continue to work with BPDA staff on the entry expression. The other changes have been good.

Mimi Love: There's some asymmetry going on with the entryway canopy.

Eric Howeler: Can the canopy just extend over the two bays?

Alberto Cardenas: We've done some studies.

Jonathan Evans: It's a little awkward, timid right now.

Andrea Leers: This can be continued in talks with the BPDA. The entry reading needs to be strengthened.

A motion was made, seconded, and

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval for 24 Drydock Avenue, contingent on continued study and discussion with BPDA staff concerning the entryway.

775 Huntington Avenue in the Mission Hill neighborhood was presented next. Kirk Sykes was recused.

Aeron Hodges and Terry Kinsler presented the project.

Bill Rawn: The changes are really good. Thank you for having the façade mirror the curve of the street. Wonderful to hear that the project is 75% affordable. I do wonder about the rear parapet.

David Manfredi: I agree. The improvements are terrific: simplifying, calming the whole building down. There are two things I wonder about being hangovers from the past: I like the building on the east side. I'm not sure why the east side and the west side aren't similar. I like that you set back the penthouse enclosure screen, but I'm not sure why there's a metal piece inserted into the brick structure. Lastly, why do you change the brick color on the lower floors? It separates those pieces in an awkward way.

Eric Howeler: The corner view looks so elegant. I'm a little concerned about the thinness of the upper brick volume in front of the metal. It should feel solid.

Andrea Leers: You've got a building which on almost all sides has the sense of a wall wrapping a corner. I agree that articulating the one edge differently doesn't help.

Jonathan Evans: I do agree that whether it's a punctured volume or a wrapping plane, it should be consistent across all sides. I wouldn't lose the opportunity of the building reading differently on each side.

A member of the public spoke to ask a procedural question.

David Manfredi: We could move to approve, provided that the proponent works with BPDA staff to continue thinking about how the building turns the corners, how the east and west facades are consistent, and the color of the brick at the base.

The motion was moved, seconded, and it was duly

VOTED: That the Commission recommend approval of 775 Huntington Avenue, provided that further study into the building corners and façade materials and colors be undertaken.

The Commissioners expressed interested to the Executive Director in meeting with the new Chief of Planning and Director of the BPDA, and the Executive Director agreed to work to schedule a meeting.

The subject of virtual meetings was discussed.

There being no further items for discussion, a motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was duly adjourned at 7:02 p.m. The next regular meeting of the Boston Civic Design Commission was scheduled for August 2, 2022. The recording of the July 12, 2022 Boston Civic Design Commission meeting was digitized and is available at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.