

**City of Salem Massachusetts
Public Meeting Minutes**

Board or Committee: Design Review Board, Regular Meeting
Date and Time: Tuesday, May 10, 2016 at 6:00 pm
Meeting Location: 120 Washington Street, Third Floor Conference Room 314
Members Present: Paul Durand, Christopher Dynia, David Jaquith, Glenn Kennedy, Helen Sides, J. Michael Sullivan
Others Present: Andrew Shapiro
Recorder: Colleen Anderson

Paul Durand calls the meeting to order at 6:00PM.

Urban Renewal Area Projects Under Review

- 1. 50 St. Peter Street (Bit Bar Salem):** Discussion and vote on proposed installation of signage and sidewalk design

The submission under review includes; a map of the sign locations, proposed sign designs, images of previous signs used by The Great Escape restaurant and A&B Burger, a day-time view with illuminated signs. Mr. Gideon Coltof (co-owner and co-designer of the signs) was present to discuss a proposed signage.

Coltof stated that the revised signage proposal incorporates the suggestions that Kennedy offered them outside of the DRB meeting.

Kennedy stated that the proposal is similar to the original proposal but the proportions of proposed sign to the size of the building were off. The revised proposal includes images with human scale for reference and markers to show the actual size of the signs. Signs 1 & 2 could be lowered to either the top of the second floor window sills or the lintel of the first floor windows if the Board would prefer it. Sign 4, which was previously sign 3, is in the right location but the height has been reduced by 1 foot to fit between the courses, and the entire sign has been lowered 1 foot to begin below the second floor window sill. The proposed signs will not obstruct the view for the tenants inside their units. The Board recommended at the previous meeting to include a wall sign at the entrance door. Kennedy recommended that the new sign 3 be a plaque sign. The applicant submitted a 18"x12" back-lit wall sign instead.

Jaquith asked if the power would be fed from behind and not from a conduit.

Kennedy replied yes.

Sides stated that she prefers the signs lowered and asked how sign 4 on the corner relates to the other proposed signs.

Kennedy replied that that sign relates to the previous signage at that location.

Kennedy asked if the Board thought signs 1 & 2 should be lowered.

Sides stated that the bottom of the signs should be just above the second floor window sill and not centered within the height of the window.

Coltof replied that he will also make sure that they do not go below the 10 foot height requirement.

Jaquith: Motion to approve as noted to lower signs 1 & 2 as discussed and sign 3 shall remain a lit sign.

Seconded by: Sides, Passes 6-0.

North River Canal Corridor Projects Under Review

- 2. 44 Boston Street and 401 Bridge Street (Gateway Center):** Continued discussion of proposed mixed-use residential and retail development with City's Community Life Center

The submission under review included a slide show presentation of; existing photos, a full set of plans, proposed perspective renderings of the mixed use building from Bridge Street, landscape plan, enlarged landscape plans, and a site lighting plan with light fixture selections. Mr. Chris Semmelink, of The Architectural Team (tat), Katia Podsiadlo of Blair Hines Design Associates (Landscape Designer), and Harry Gunderson of Gunderson Associates were present to discuss the proposed construction of the Community Life Center and the proposed residential building on the corner of Bridge and Boston Streets.

Landscape Design

Podsiadlo stated that the plan being presented today was before the Planning Board two weeks earlier, but with one slight revision. The landscape design has 6 main components. The Bridge Street side, the Southern side, the central area, Boston Street side, CLC, and the several areas are on the parking lot side. The landscape design will help unify the overall site consisting of two different buildings and three different uses, with plantings, access, and pavement design.

Podsiadlo stated that the first component along entire North side of the CLC building will be planted with a thick mass of 6 or 7 different varieties of species of blue and green shrubs. The shrubbery and trees were chosen for their tolerance level to floods and drought conditions. The shrubs will produce berries and flowers and provide visual interest and a rhythm of color to the streetscape along Bridge Street.

Podsiadlo stated that the second component along the South side of the site (the rear of the yards along Federal Street) will be a heavy duty buffer of deciduous shade trees and evergreen trees. The proposed trees will work with the overlapping canopy height of the existing trees in the rear of the Federal Street yards. The large retaining wall along part of the South property line is currently being investigated structurally and there are some existing species of shrubs on top of that retaining wall.

Podsiadlo stated that the third component is within the parking area. The planting plan complies with the zoning ordinances (1 tree per 3 parking spaces – every 27 feet on center) and the layout may be adjusted based on the site lighting layout. The parking lot tree will be of a hearty urban variety – honey locust, lace bark elm, ginkos, birch, and tulip trees.

Podsiadlo noted that the ground plane will be lawn for snow removal concerns. The trees along the South property line were moved from the North side of the sidewalk to the South side, to accommodate snow removal and storage – snow can be moved from the parking lot to the sidewalk and then from the sidewalk to the grass between the trees. All the trees will have ample root based zones.

Podsiadlo stated that the fourth component is the mixed-use retail area from the North-West corner of the property and along the Boston Street façade. Retail entrances will be along the Boston Street side and parking for those retail shops will be within the parking lot. The sidewalk outside the retail spaces is approximately 12 feet wide that is separated from 5 foot wide public sidewalk with a 17” high retaining/seal wall, that makes up the difference in grade from the corner of Bridge & Boston Streets and the Boston Street vehicular entrance to the site.

Podsiadlo noted that the Civil Engineer and Traffic Department are considering a future right only turn lane from Boston Street onto Bridge Street. For this reason no landscape embellishments have been added in this area. The addition of that lane would eliminate the existing sidewalk, lawn area and 4 street trees. A bus stop further up Boston Street would be moved closer to the corner of Boston and Bridge Streets. If this lane does occur the retail entrance walkway would become the only sidewalk along this portion of Boston Street. The colors shown at the retail sidewalk are an integral concrete color band for with saw-cut joints which create a smoother rolling surface.

Podsiadlo stated that the fifth component is at the entrance/drop-off to for CLC Building. The welcoming colorful plant bed has been placed in front of the entrance with flowering shrubs, sculptural evergreens shrubs, and perennials. There is room for benches under the overhang.

Podsiadlo stated that the sixth component is at the circular patio of the CLC Building. The area will be framed with flowering trees, low shrubs, and perennials to create a sense of enclosure. Evergreens to the North of the patio will provide a buffer from Bridge Street. The same integral concrete color banding with saw-cut joints are proposed to highlight the two CLC entrances.

Podsiadlo stated that various shrubs and ornamental grass will be planted at the two entrances. A private residential courtyard will be placed at the South-West corner of the mix-used building and it will be enclosed with a 6 foot high fence with horizontal slats spaced accordingly to allow for some visibility. The same integral concrete coloring is proposed in this area. Images of the proposed landscape plantings and examples of the integral concrete paving, is included in the packet.

Podsiadlo noted that continuous walkways were incorporated to unify the two buildings and their various uses, especially for seniors and residents. The raised crosswalks provide prominence to the pedestrians rather than cars.

Mixed-Use Building

Semmelink stated that plans have been refined since the last presentation. Fencing that resembles the board and batten siding on the building, has been incorporated into the plan along the East side of the building to screen the long row of gas meters, and as an enclosure around the transformers. The floor plans are color coordinated to highlight the different uses and the roof plan shows the condensing units, air handlers at each end of the building, access from stairwells, and elevator overruns. Semmelink noted that rooftops will not be seen due to equipment screening.

Semmelink stated that the perspective elevations show how they feel they've made some improvements to the façade. When looking at the length of the Bridge Street façade, the strong geometry speaks to the movement of along the street. The original scheme grouped all the windows from the second through fourth floors with vertical bands. They've eliminated the narrow bands but kept the grouping of the living room windows and created punched openings for the bedroom windows to calm the rhythm of the bands, but the narrow banding remains at the stairs. The banding change occurs at all elevations. Fiber cement panels are used at the bottom first floor and lap siding in a syncopated pattern is being used at the floors above. This can all be seen in the revised renderings.

Semmelink noted that the previous perspective did not read well with the colors and the context. The current perspective relates more to the previous industrial feel and use of the site previously and has a rehabbed warehouse look. This look is broken at the retail spaces along Boston Street and at the corners of the building.

Semmelink displayed a rendering with a viewpoint from the rear of a Federal Street property, noting the scale of the building from that distance and the tree canopy coverage, and a rendering of the retail side elevation.

Semmelink introduces Gundersen to speak about the proposed CLC building.

CLC Building

Gundersen stated that he wanted to respond to a few questions from the previous meeting. In plan, some modifications were made to the First and Second Floor plans due to some elevation changes, and the patios were also added for informational purposes. Gundersen stated that they will meet with the CLC Design Committee the following week, to inform them of the recent changes.

Gundersen noted the ongoing discussion about the Bridge Street elevation. That elevation has changed slightly and the window pattern has changed slightly, and four windows have been added. The other elevations have remained unchanged.

Gundersen stated that the renderings have been modified to include the green Boral siding color. Gundersen provided a slightly greyer sample of the green siding in response to Kennedy's color concerns from the previous meeting that could be a better option. Kennedy and Sides prefer the optional color choice.

Lighting

Semmelink noted that the lighting package is for the exterior lighting only and was also presented to the Planning Board. Semmelink stated that double-headed LED's will be throughout the parking lot, single-headed LED's will be places along the perimeter of the lot and they will light the path and parking lot only and will not shine at the Federal Street neighbors. LED utility lighting will be placed at the mixed-use building stairs and utility entrances. Decorative LED lights will be placed at the private resident area. LED downlights will be placed at the underside of the canopy of the main entrance. Pole lights will be placed along the retail space at Boston Street to provide more street lighting.

Gundersen stated that linear LED's will be placed at both entry canopies and sconces will be placed at the entry walls. Both ground and wall mounted lighting will be used to highlight the signage. Ground mounted narrow beam spot lights will shine up under the overhang. Bollard fixtures will light the perimeter of the patio. Lighting will also be placed within the planter area.

Durand opens the public comment session.

Dana Andrus of 166 Federal Street. Understand the modern look but doesn't get a sense of statement from the building. No use of classical materials like brick.

Ken Wallace of 172 Federal Street. At the retaining wall on Boston Street/retail side there was no mention of a fence at the top to keep people from stepping over it and falling off. Podsiadlo replied that the maximum height will be 28" high on the tallest side. Wallace also requested that the fence that Federal Street residents requested not be constructed with horizontal boards that could encourage people to climb it and fall off the 20 foot drop on the other side.

Jane Arlander of 92 Federal Street. Read a letter from Meg Twohey of 122 Federal Street. Twohey's letter expressed her disappointment with the scale & design of the mixed-use building and urged the Board to spend the time to improve it. Doesn't conform with the NRCC letter. Please ensure that it is worthy of its location.

Jennifer Firth President of Historic Salem. Happy to see something go up in this location. Support the North River Canal district and this does not conform with the master plan for this area. Asked why the project is under review by the DRB when it hasn't received the ZBA variances required for it to be built.

Jane Arlander of 92 Federal Street. Noted a senior living facility project in Marblehead called Mariner. Their Zoning Board did not give them the variances for the project because the massing and style of the building did not fit the context of the neighborhood. Arlander stated that this project also doesn't fit within the context of the neighborhood.

David Eppley of 69 Boston Street and Ward 4 Councilor. Stated that the project has improved and fully supports the project.

Durand closes the public session.

Durand asked the applicant why this project has not been review by the ZBA.

Shapiro stated the City's perspective on the review process is that the applicant can choose the order in which Board they present their project to for review. Receiving design approval recommendations first and then being denied variances by the ZBA, is the risk the applicant takes if they choose to meet with the ZBA last. It also makes the process even longer for them if they have to return to the DRB and Planning Boards to revise their design.

Semmelink replied that it is a risk to the client, but it was their choice to proceed with Board reviews in this order.

Jaquith questioned the difference in material color on the mixed-use building that appears to be different colors in the various renderings. Jacquith stated that he preferred the newer color and requested a true to color material sample. Jacquith noted that the elevations have improved with the inclusion of the Boards comments.

Semmelink replied that some of the renderings are from the earlier model and that he did not have a lap siding sample to show the Board.

Shapiro questioned the color of the horizontal siding. Shapiro noted that the DRB can request that the Planning Board require the applicant to meet with the DRB and provide further detail or a CD set of plans, prior to obtaining a building permit.

Semmelink replied that the siding is a tone of gray and not as yellow as it appears in the renderings.

Sullivan stated that they've spent a lot of time discussing materials and their importance. They could produce a mock-up with real colors to review. Durand and Sides agree.

Semmelink stated that they could produce an on-site mock-up for approvals and noted that there will be time to play around with colors, as the various companies may even change their colors over time.

Sullivan stated that he likes where the project is going and the collage of materials they've provided. Sullivan questioned how red maples are in shade conditions because their location in the landscape plan places them primarily in the shade.

Podsiadlo replied that they will be open to the sky and to reflective light. It will grow anywhere they are planted.

Sullivan questioned whether the sidewalk width has been reduced.

Podsiadlo replied that the sidewalks are a minimum of 5 feet wide. Semmelink noted the sidewalks are generous in size and property lines vary from 7 to 8 feet away from the curb and they plan to make the sidewalks wider. They are also planning to remove the street lights along Bridge Street and place new ones next to the curb to provide a wider travel lane.

Jaquith asked where the 4 ginkgo trees would be located.

Podsiadlo replied that they are around the private resident courtyard and they will use the male variety which doesn't have an odor.

Sullivan stated even if the site lighting is not shining at the Federal Street neighborhood that points of light will be seen from their back yards and questions of the lights posts will have shades.

Semmelink replied that the new LED parking lot lights are amiable, on 18 foot high poles, and there will be a sharp cut-off at the back of the light, although a glow will be seen.

Kennedy stated that he liked some of the latest color choices would prefer natural and warmer colors – copper vs. orange. Along the Boston Street retail side there should be consideration for signage – blade signs and window signage, no band signage. The building owner should stipulate a retail signage program. Kennedy wants something to break up the façade about halfway down the length of the building. The Bridge Street façade view when traveling towards downtown Salem doesn't look a broken up as when traveling towards Boston Street.

Jane Arlander of 92 Federal Street. Questioned the lack of entryways on the Bridge Street into the mixed-use building, residents shouldn't only have access from one side or have to walk half a block to get to an entrance on the other side of the building. Arlander questions if the units had backdoors.

Kennedy replied that the building will not have access points from Bridge Street. There are more units between entrances at Brooksby Village than there are in this building.

Semmelink replied that there is a security issue with having multiple entrances. The building has four entrances; one main, one secondary, one for bicycles, and a service entry. The building will be separated by a fire door and has stairways and elevators towards each end, so the two halves of the building will almost act as two separate buildings. Semmelink replied that the building is fully sprinkled, the units have a single entry and once in the hallway there are two directions to exit the building, which meets the fire code.

Durand reiterates that the public comment is closed.

Kennedy stated that he is in favor of the landscape and lighting plans but would like to see one or two other alternate type of lights in the parking lot and landscaped areas. There is a lot of space in need of lighting.

Semmelink replied that the general site lighting is downplayed and designed to fade into the background.

Durand agrees and suggests bollards.

Dynia agrees with Kennedy and would like to see the façade along Bridge Street broken up a bit more so it has more distinct components. When traveling North on Bridge Street all you see are the sails. Possibly just the windows grouped together at the corner of the upper three floors can have some sort of flair to break up the façade.

Semmelink replied that there will be too much movement in the building if another façade change is incorporated.

Durand agreed that the building would look too busy if more changes were made to the corners.

Sides stated that the CLC building has come a long way and it will be a wonderful destination. The mixed-use building has also come a long way but they need to see material samples and a mock-up. It's undeniably long and will be hard to break-up.

Durand stated that the landscape will soften the hard edges of the building. The parking lots have been handled better than most of these types of buildings. This project successfully addresses the urban village concept and leans more towards the urban side. The retail space is one of the more successful ones in the history of the CC. The CLC will bring even more activity to the site which is what creates the urban village. The lighting plan was not a concern prior to Kennedy mentioning it. The landscape will break up the façade. With the amount of land on the site, and with the various textures, colors, heights, and variety, the landscaping plan is successful. The outdoor areas at both buildings are successful. The changes made to the CLC building after the comments from the previous meeting also make it successful and the color changes are perfect.

Jaquith recommended that the first floor corner unit at Boston and Bridge Streets should be retail and not residential. Kennedy noted that it is separated by an entrance corridor and adjacent to a retail.

Durand suggested the corner retail unit be switched with the inside corner residential unit.

Shapiro stated an outside corner retail unit could be the most successful but it could make it a recommendation to the planning board.

Sullivan asked if there have been any considerations for public art around the site.

Podsiadlo replied that considerations were made early on and ideas were brainstormed.

Sullivan suggested at the inside of the property or CLC Building.

Sides suggested at the transformer enclosures.

Durand stated that the bicycle room is a great addition for those that cycle to work or for pleasure.

Sullivan stated that the City could be encouraged to add a bike lane to Bridge Street.

Shapiro questioned whether the Board would feel comfortable voting on a recommendation to the Planning Board with stipulations to return to the DRB for a final review. Durand and Jaquith replied yes.

Jaquith: Motion to approve the proposed mixed-use residential and retail development with City's Community Life Center and include the following stipulations; 1) The applicant shall submit a truncated construction package that shows changes made based on this special meeting and changes made as they finalize the design, 2) The applicant shall construct a mock-up of materials for review, 3) The applicant shall provide a building signage plan for review, 4) Area allotments shall be defined for the retail spaces so future retail tenants will not require Board approval, 5) The ground floor Boston and Bridge Street corner unit shall be switched with the interior corner facing parking lot and become retail and not residential, 6) Stake out one or more locations on site for public art.
Seconded by: Kennedy, Passes 6-0.

Gundersen asked if a construction mock-up would also be required of the CLC Building.

Durand replied yes.

Adjournment

Sides: Motion to adjourn the meeting.
Seconded by: Jaquith. Passes 6-0.

Meeting is adjourned at 7:30pm

Know your rights under the Open Meeting Law M.G.L. c. 30A §18-25 and City Ordinance Sections 2-028 through 2-2033.