

CRA Design Review Committee Meeting

Broad DNAtrium

3/21/2018

MEETING SUMMARY

The following points are key takeaways from the public meeting held by the CRA Design Review Committee on 3/21/2018. These items should be taken into account by the Broad Institute when coming back to the full CRA Board for approval. If approved at a future CRA Board meeting, any of these could become conditions of approval especially if it is not clear that they have been fully addressed by then.

- Density along the Curtain Wall: The density of information and exhibits has greatly improved while the flexibility of the interior space has been maintained, and outdoor sculptures added to begin to draw people in. However, the curtain wall glass / retail edge needs to be utilized more. Urban retail design begins with a layer of items on display that go beyond singular sculptures in the windows which help draw people in. That is where the term “window shopping” comes from. While the trees are nice, they are of lesser importance than having a greater density of visual interest along the glass, and the Board would be fine with reducing their number or eliminating them if it resulted in more visual interest along the glass. This aspect is critical because the DNAtrium and building are generally open 9am-5pm Monday-Friday, leaving all evening and all weekend for the windows to serve a greater sidewalk activation role than sculptures alone. Signage that stands out more than the existing signage should also be utilized along the Main Street glass frontage. The Broad Institute should bring more information about how these concerns will be addressed when coming back to the CRA Board.
- Kendall 3D Model/Map: The CRA is very excited about the concept of beginning the DNAtrium journey with a 3D model/map of the district and using it to tell the story of the biomedical innovation ecosystem in Kendall Square. The CRA encourages the Broad Institute to contact the MIT MediaLab City Science Group to view their neighborhood model that uses projection software on a flat white map in order to tell a more dynamic story. Such an electronic projection system would be less static, easier to update, and be able to tell more varied stories than a solid model. The Broad Institute should contact the City Science Group about this technology prior revisiting the CRA Board.
- What is in a typical biomedical research building: For those who do not work in Kendall Square, and even many of those who do, what is inside most buildings in Kendall Square remains a mystery. The innovation ecosystem that has been built over the past 50 years contains a variety of institutions and corporations, all with different industries, or different focus areas within the same industry, although their facilities sometimes share much in common. The buildings themselves and their basic functionalities are often easier to understand than the work going on inside of them. Understanding the facilities these institutions operate within is a strong pathway to understanding what happens inside of them, and one that is used in museums across the country. Rooms and floors in some buildings in Kendall including the Broad have unique and interesting functions that are not found in more standard buildings. The building as the operating unit of what happens within it is a vehicle to tell the story of Kendall Square. Explanatory diagrams of buildings can be intuitive and well understood by the general public. The 75 Ames Street Broad tower is also an impressive engineering achievement, and unique for its nature as a vertical lab building within a medium density urban environment as well as its intentional design for climate change resilience. The Broad Institute should address this when revisiting the CRA Board.

- Timeless conversation piece: The CRA envisions the sculpture elements outside the building becoming iconic conversation pieces that people of all ages will interact with, take photos with, and learn from. There were several precedent examples mentioned during the meeting. The Broad Institute should bring more detailed ideas regarding the design of this feature to the full CRA Board.
- Exterior experience at night: The CRA encourages the Broad to consider what the sidewalk experience could be at night. How are the sculptures lit? Are any other items in the window lit? Is there a light, projection or sound element that could be activated at night by pedestrian movement? An example in an alley from the Cité Mémoire project in Montreal was mentioned during the meeting. The Broad should address this aspect of the DNatrium design when revisiting the CRA Board.
- Connections with adjacent neighborhoods: Public comment during the meeting highlighted the need for the Broad Institute to work on forming closer ties to the three neighborhoods that border Kendall Square – East Cambridge, the Port, and Wellington-Harrington. The CRA encourages the Broad Institute to meet with neighborhood associations, institutions and individuals in those neighborhoods to discuss the Institute’s relationship with the community, what the new DNatrium will be and how it will connect to them. The Broad Institute should present a plan for addressing this when revisiting the CRA Board.
- Complementarity to MIT Museum: The CRA Board would like to see a strong link between the DNatrium and the new MIT Museum coming to the adjacent block of Main Street in the coming years. The DNatrium has the potential to be the biomedical/biotech and genetic research compliment to the more engineering focused MIT Museum.
- Interaction through questions: The CRA encourages the Broad to have ongoing interaction with the public through asking probing questions from the screens in the entry lobby vestibule, or on the glass. This direct interaction with the public would create a changing and less passive, more thought provoking experience on the street.
- CRA annual reporting requirement: The CRA typically requires annual reports on the status of projects that have a significant ongoing publicly-accessible programmatic component to their success over time. An annual reporting condition may be a paper or PDF report submitted annually, or it may be an annual presentation to the CRA Board.