

CRA Design Review Committee
Held Virtually on Zoom
Meeting Notes
May 6th, 2020

Attendees – Kathy Born (CRA Board), Barry Zevin (CRA Board), Tom Sieniewicz (Planning Board), Hugh Russell (Planning Board), Suzannah Bigolin (CDD), Cara Seiderman (CDD), Brian Skrovig (PCA), Tony Markese (PCA), Patricia Smirnoudis (Stantec), Eric Mo (BXP), Ian Hatch (BXP), Michael Tilford (BXP), Michael O’Hearn (BXP), Christian Lemon (Lemon Brooke), Michael Blier (Landworks Studio), Steve Watt (Landworks Studio), Thu Ngan Han (Landworks Studio), Tom Evans (CRA), Alex Levering (CRA), Ellen Shore (CRA) Carlos Peralta (CRA), Heather Hoffman (Public), Steve Kaiser (Public).

In response to the COVID-19 State of Emergency, on March 12, 2020, Governor Baker issued an Order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law. The Order allows government bodies subject to the law to meet using remote participation, without presence of members of the general public, the chair, or a quorum of the public body in a physical location at a specified meeting location. In accordance with the Order, the CRA held the Design Review meeting virtually via Zoom webinar, with the ability for the public to access and participate either through a computer or by calling in via a cell phone or landline.

325 Main Street - Social Stair & Digital Wall

BXP and PCA presented two design alternatives for the Social Stairs at 325 Main Street. The first option widened the width of the stairway to 9’ at the base of the stairs and narrowed the bench seating to 5’ at the base. The second option widened the stairway to 9’ at the base of the stairs like the first option, but removed the bench use altogether.

The Design Review Committee agreed that the expanded stair width was a good compromise between sitting and pedestrian circulation. There were differences in opinion regarding the preference for bench seating. Some committee members thought the stairs looked cleaner without the benches, others felt the benches added a nice amenity and that without them the stairs looked barren.

It was noted the benches made sense due to the irregularity of the stairs, being broad at the bottom and narrow at the top (bottom 14’ and top 70”). The concept of removable benches was discussed. PCA noted they disliked the idea of creating temporary or removable elements as that would make the benches less durable, more complex in design, and dependent on a good maintenance program. It was noted that the wood benches will degrade over time. It was

suggested that the benches be made out of concrete or stone. The committee members agreed that was a strong idea, as it would create something that would stand the test of time and visually grow out of stair if it is the same material.

Committee members noted that they liked how the digital wall turned the corner to Main Street, and that breaking up the screen with terracotta was good, but there was dislike of the faux digital terracotta.

Action Item – *Implement the 9’ pedestrian egress and 5’ bench social stair design, using a stone rather than wood material. Use real terracotta in the digital wall design to break up the screen.*

Marriott Lobby Wall

To improve heating and cooling capacity in the Marriott lobby, the Marriott submitted plans to install a glass wall between the west side of the public pedestrian corridor and the lobby seating area. The Design Review committee first reviewed the designs at an onsite Design Review meeting on March 4th. Modifications were made to the plans, and Boston Properties presented revised designs at the May 6th meeting.

Modifications included an adjustment to the Starbucks’ retail door to make it swing into the retail space and away from the traffic flow of the corridor. The new Marriott lobby door on the north side, across from the Starbucks entrance, was recessed a few inches so the door will not open into the Marriott lobby walkway. Locations for pedestrian wayfinding signage were also identified to direct the public on Broadway to Main Street and the Kendall MBTA Stations.

Action Item: *Bring the Marriott Lobby proposal to the CRA Board Meeting for review. ** these notes have been finalized after the CRA Board Meeting took place on 5/20, where the Marriott Lobby was also an agenda item. Concerns were raised regarding the walkway’s safety in response to COVID-19 and how the proposal affects public egress and access to Kendall Square. Further discussions will be had.*

Galaxy Park

Landworks Studio (LS) began their presentation by providing the Design Review Committee with a site context analysis for local open spaces in close proximity to Galaxy Park. The study provided the Committee with the context to the concept design for the lawn area located at Galaxy Park. LS presented a design focused on improving pedestrian connections and also allowing the lawn area to be utilized as a “second social space”.

LS rationalized how their design offers the opportunity for improved pedestrian access onto the existing lawn area by installing a ramp onto the Broadway side of the Park with an entry threshold structure. The ramp directs pedestrians to the Porch at Galaxy Park, a social area

created by removing the point of the lawn area and installing a wood veneer platform with two wood wrapped benches integrated into lawn area and a broad set of stairs that could also be utilized for seating. This first concept provides opportunities to incorporate ambient lighting fixtures within the proposed wood veneer material.

Committee members noted that the CRA has looked at several designs for this space over the past few years and that previous design iterations have not been able to draw people to the area. The Committee agreed that materials other than wood should be considered. Additional comments incorporated altering the threshold at the ramp to be moved to a 90-degree angle, including bench backs for comfort, and recognizing the existing MBTA “zone of influence”.

Tom Evans cited that the ongoing streetscape design work between the CRA and Sasaki may overlap this design project and allow for further revisions.

Action Item: *Provide Landworks with a survey that specifies the MBTA “zone of influence”. Further design revisions should be planned in coordination with the SoMa project.*