

CRA Design Review Committee - Meeting Notes

Meeting Held Virtually on Zoom
June 9, 2021

ATTENDEES

Barry Zevin (CRA Board), Kathleen Born (CRA Board), Hugh Russell (Planning Board), Erik Thorkildsen (CDD), Tom Evans (CRA), Alexandra Levering (CRA), Fabiola Alikpokou (CRA), Carlos Peralta (CRA), Susannah Shaw (BXP), Michael Tilford (BXP), Eric Weyant (Stantec), Brett Lambert (Stantec), Ian Hatch (BXP), Todd Lanham (Eversource), John Zicko (Eversource)

MXD SUBSTATION RESIDENTIAL BUILDING MASSING AND DEVELOPMENT PRESENTATION

RESIDENTIAL

Eric Weyant from Stantec presented the housing component of the MXD Substation project at 135 Broadway. The presentation included an overview of the baseline massing, relationship analysis to 145 Broadway, and a review of conceptual design ideas.

The baseline massing for the project is a simplified form of a 400' tall point tower with an 85' elevated podium on the street edge. Stantec noted they worked to create a design framework to allow for different variations of the building, with key elements of the design to position the tower on the east edge of the site to maximize separation from 145 Broadway, create a strong connection between Center Park and Danny Lewin Park, and create an independent structure relative to the substation. The simplified corner of the building facing 145 Broadway, is a placeholder to show a reciprocal response to the 145 Broadway building.

Stantec presented renderings to show the building's relationship and spacing on the ground plane to neighboring buildings. The first figure showed the spacing between the residential building and 145 Broadway, Center Park, and the connection to Danny Lewin Park. The second figure showed the space between the residential building and 145 Broadway to be similar to the spacing between other buildings in the area. The last figure showed 145 Broadway's eastern facade and the proposed massing with 40ft to 50ft of separation between the buildings.

Stantec presented 135 Broadway's ground-floor plan, and showed the relationship between the entrance of 145 Broadway and the residential building. The presentation showed 45' between the 145 Broadway curb and the residential building entrance and 78' from the Akamai entrance to the residential building entrance. The floor plan also showed the connection from Center Park to Danny Lewin Park.

Stantec also showed adjacency examples of buildings in close proximity in urban areas. Their first examples were in Fort Point, with two buildings roughly 40' and 26' away from each other. Another precedent was 47 Lagrange St. with 23' to 30' distance between the building and Winthrop Tower. The last example shown was the Broad Institute at 75 Ames Street and Residence Inn at 120 Broadway, which has 30' between the structures.

The second building variation presented, Variation Two, showed the building form pushed back to open up the western service corridor, and to capture the view of 145 Broadway's "Jenga" architecture from the southeast corner of Ames and Broadway. In this variation, each block of the building structure steps back 7-8 feet. Stantec

explained the lower part of the structure was designed to step back the facade with curvy expressions and columns that creates a transparent space. The east side of 135 Broadway will also be open, where residents can look down Broadway. Stantec noted that with this variation, the 6th floor of 145 Broadway would view Center Park.

Stantec presented a third building variation, the corner notch scheme, which pulled back and created an open space at 135 Broadway's southwest corner to create additional space for 145 Broadway's "Jenga" features. The scheme showed a design to allow a 60' opening. Stantec noted that the corner notch scheme would be able to accommodate the core designed in the baseline massing; therefore, no additional coordination with Eversource and the transmission lines would be needed. To make up the lost square footage, the cantilever would need to increase over the park and the East Service Drive.

Stantec showed two other building variations, both of which rotated the baseline massing at a 14-degree angle. The first rotated building created additional space between the southwest corner of the residential building and 145 Broadway, and the second shifted the building back, and rotated it so the southern façade was perpendicular with the most eastern façade of 145 Broadway. Stantec noted that with the second rotated scheme, they would need to be creative with how the upper levels were designed over the service drives and that they might need to add cantilevers.

COMMITTEE COMMENTS

After the presentation, committee members provided design comments.

Baseline Massing

Committee members identified that the baseline massing seemed boxy, and suggested the building would benefit by adding a notched corner for vertical contrast to the 145 Broadway "Jenga" features. It was also noted by some that the rounded ground floor corners in the baseline massing did not help to improve the visual connection to the 145 Broadway building entrance.

Variation Two – Step-Back

A question was asked about adding the balcony on the upper floors of Variation Two, and Stantec noted that it was possible. Another committee member noted preferring Variation Two because of its verticality facing the street, and because it offered more opportunity to create views of the 145 Broadway building than the others schemes. It was also noted that the southern building façade in this scheme could be pushed back and that the proximity of the buildings in an urban setting makes the project spatially exciting. Another member suggested that the ceiling of the entry to the residential building be similar in height to the canopy of 145 Broadway.

Corner Notch Scheme

Members noted that the corner notch scheme doesn't seem to need the whole 60' of setback, and that a smaller notch might still be able to create enough relief between the two buildings. Stantec also noted that the core of the building is more or less a fixed arrangement, which is why corner notch scheme, compared to the other variations is efficient because the core isn't changing. Another member commented that the notch scheme does a good job of defining the pedestrian line on Broadway.

Rotated Schemes

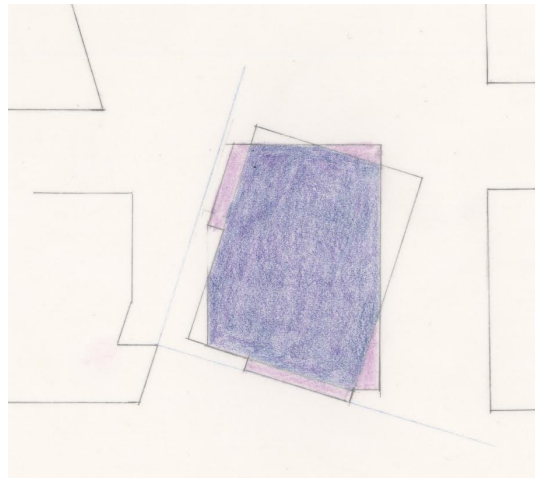
A committee member asked whether the core of the residential tower shown in the rotated building scheme is the same as the core in the baseline massing. Stantec noted that the core of the building in the rotated schemes has

not been tested, and would likely differ from the baseline massing's core. Stantec further explained that the geometry of the core shown in the baseline massing is the most efficient layout they came up with for a point tower. To create any other core geometry, they acknowledged that they would have to get creative. Committee members further noted that the two rotated schemes seem disruptive because they do not focus on defining streets or the open space. A committee member did express however, that maintaining the east-west connector behind the building might not be as important as initially identified, as it leads nowhere.

General Comments

Members of the committee noted the challenges of an infill development next to 145 Broadway. One member described the 145 Broadway building's distinct architectural design as an "object building". It was suggested that one approach to build next to an "object building", is to design another "object" structure that responds to it. Conversely, another member noted that the response to 135 Broadway's southwest corner, and its relationship to the 145 Broadway building edge shouldn't take precedent over the general consideration of fitting the building in the overall plan and site area. More importantly, noted a committee member, the building should be designed from the interior, not the exterior, and for residents of the building rather than the other way around.

It was also identified that the various schemes are designed as rectangles, but that that is not a necessary. A recommendation was provided by a committee member, shown below, that shaved the edges of the rotated building scheme. The conceptual sketch below was presented and discussed. It was also noted by a member that they want to see more consideration for the streetscape.



A member asked if the cable duct banks that will contain the Eversource transmission lines going through the building to the substation are fixed? Stantec noted that the four concrete duct banks have to run parallel to each other, and that their locations are largely fixed. It was also asked if the 135 Broadway columns can be placed between the concrete duct banks. Stantec answered that conceptually, the columns could be placed between the transmission lines, but more studies would need to be to confirm their exact locations. Stantec also noted that there is flexibility to rotate the baseline massing core, to an extent between the third and fourth transmission lines.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.