# BPG / Bluestone Planning Group

*Urban Design      Planning      Architecture*

**MEETING NOTES: Google Connector Buildings / DRAFT**
**Design Development Phase Progress Review Meeting on October 24, 2012**

*Attending:* Kathy Born (CRA), Barry Zevin (CRA), Susan Glazer (CRA & CCDD), Kevin Sheehan (BP), Mike Bowers (BP), David Manfredi (EM), Steve Dube (EM), Andrew Pirie (CBA), Roger Boothe (CCDD), and Larry Bluestone (BPG)

*Notes Submitted By:* Larry Bluestone, 24 October 2012

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On 24 October 2012, the CRA's and the City's design review team met with Boston Properties (BP), Elkus Manfredi (EM), and Clara Batchelor Associates Landscape Architects (CBA) at BP's Cambridge Center offices to further review design updates by EM based upon design comments offered at the previous review meeting on 10 October 2012.

**Design Review Process**
Kathy Born discussed the less formal design review process we are now engaged in and sought to confirm that the current process is working for all parties – the CRA, the City's CCDD, and BP. She further sought to define what Board actions or votes were required for approval of the Google Connector Buildings and rooftop park, and by when.

Kevin Sheehan of BP responded that the current review process was working well for BP and that the back-and-forth design discussions around the table were preferable to back-and-forth review memos and responses between the CRA and BP. He said that BP expected to submit another one or two formal design submissions – Design Development Phase and Construction Documents Phase for the CRA's review. Kevin commented that the itemized submission requirements outlined in the Development Agreement between the Authority and BP remain a good format to continue using because they provide all the information the Authority needs to make a sound decision – plans, specifications, material samples, cost estimates, and zoning change requirements.

No later than this spring, BP does expect to receive a final CRA Board approval vote of the Google project so that BP can apply for and obtain an Occupancy Permit from the City. That *final* approval must not be conditional, however, on additional design changes.

For now, Kathy requested that BP provide the Authority, in digital format, current updated designs to include in the next Board meeting distribution materials so that the public could be kept abreast of the evolving designs. This information will be disseminated for informational purposes only, and not for formal citizen review or comment.

**Arcade Design Updates**
Steve Dube presented design updates to the interior of the Arcade between CC 3 and CC5. Steve showed a series of design revisions that made for a more coherent and coordinated design which addressed issues raised at the previous review meeting that the interior elements were not fully resolved, well coordinated, and appeared a bit chaotic.

There were several design improvements presented by Steve Dube:

❑ The primary change was to bring the outside horizontal metal 'brow' into the Arcade so that it would run the full length of the Arcade and provide a consistent horizontal datum line to provide visual consistency and to provide a consistent top datum line for the interior retail and office lobby storefronts. This 'brow' would be set below the top ceiling so that uplights could be installed on the top edge of the brow to provide indirect lighting to the Arcade space.

❑ Additionally, the former sloped interior 'skylight' lighting panels had been replaced with flat horizontal lighting 'event' panels running the full length of the Arcade on axis with the two entry vestibules at either end of the Arcade that will incorporate programmable and kinetic images and patterns. Known as the IFlex system, images could vary from abstract patterns to day or night sky images. Barry Zevin and Roger Boothe both suggested that the width of these panels be expanded to the west if there was room in the ceiling plenum space to accommodate the expansion. Barry Zevin also inquired if the lighting panel's structural grid could be more uni-directional (in the direction of pedestrian flow from one end of the Arcade to the other) rather than egg-crate grid-like, to provide a stronger directionality to emphasize this direction of flow. The review team was enthusiastic about the proposed IFlex system.

❑ All interior column covers will now be of identical design – metal clad circular columns – to provide visual consistency through the length of the Arcade.

❑ The interior floor of the Arcade will consist of 5' x 5' cast in place polished gray concrete panels. Steve Dube brought a sample of the flooring for the design committee's review.

Larry Bluestone commented that BP and EM should make sure that the illumination levels within the Arcade should remain sufficiently bright to make the space feel safe, particularly at night; and, that the desired illumination levels should not overly rely on secondary ambient sources such as the individual interior storefront lighting since these may be turned off at night. All agreed that the space should not be overly lit, but should feel safe. Steve Dube said that EM will be conducting illumination model calculations to insure that lighting levels will be sufficient.

The CRA's and City's design review team thought that, with the above changes, the Arcade design was greatly improved and answered previous concerns that had been raised.

Steve Dube commented that there were no significant changes to the exterior entryway canopy design at the Main Street entrance or wall signage from what we had been shown at the previous design review meeting.

**Signage**
Kevin Shea requested that the next design review meeting be focused on a signage package – perhaps in a month or a bit longer since BP needs lead time to have the signage fabricated.

**Google Floor Plan Layouts for the CC4 - CC5 Rooftop Connector Building**
Google's designers have not yet prepared floor layout plans for the Authority's review. Kevin Sheehan said that he does not expect such designs until the spring. Larry Bluestone pointed out that what rooftop park users see when they look into the Google building remains an important design issue. Kevin assured everyone that Google was well aware of this issue and that he expects to see very interesting designs. He also stated that Google has provided BP with locations within EM's core and shell design for the Google-provided interior stair that will be visible to rooftop users and which Kathy Born regards as critical to the Connector Building's design.

**Next Steps**

❑ BP will provide the CRA with current updated designs in digital format for inclusion in the package of the Authority's next Board Meeting.

❑ Kevin Sheehan will set a date, in a month or more, for the next design review meeting which he would like to present a signage package.