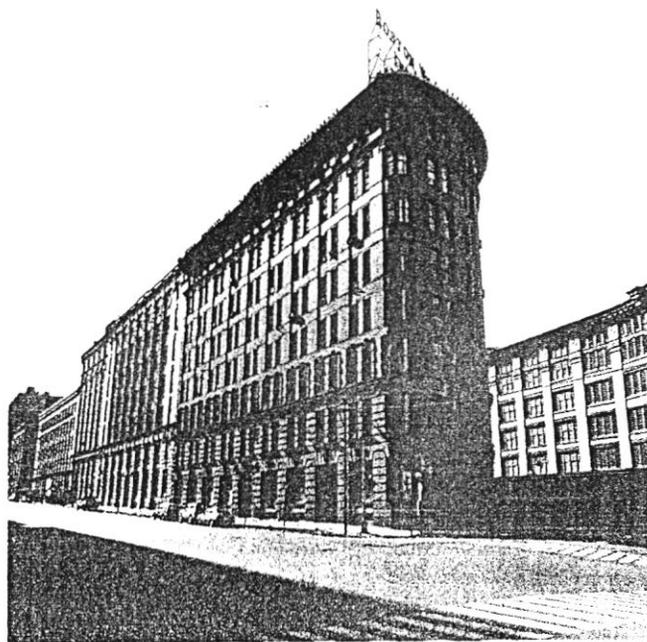
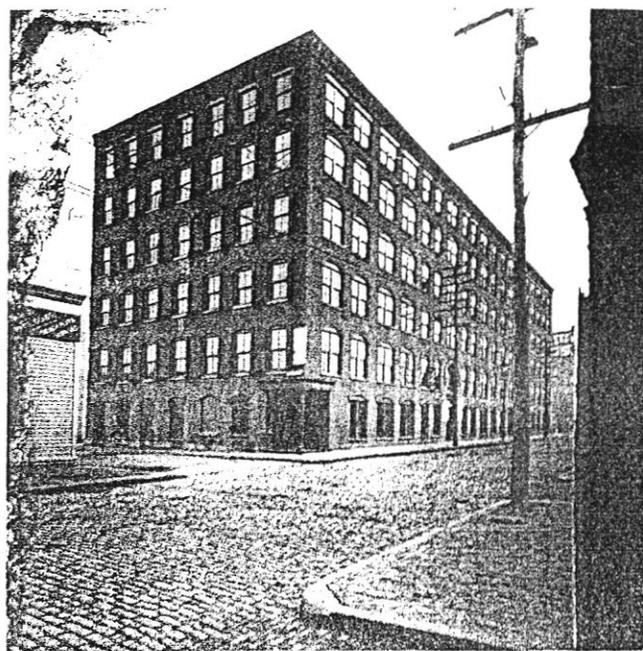


'We're just concerned about the future.'

STEVE HOLLINGER, Fort Point resident



The Boston Wharf Co. building at Summer and Melcher streets, an example of the type of building Fort Point activists want preserved.



A circa 1900 view of 299 A St., now an artist-owned cooperative at Fort Point, which activists want protected.

Holding the fort

Residents ask city to preserve character of old channel area

By Karen Weintraub
GLOBE STAFF

Hard times have been good for Fort Point Channel. From the departure of the wool industry through the arrival of the Big Dig, the century-old industrial buildings a bridge away from downtown have been frozen in time, with economic neglect leaving their architecture unchanged since the Great Depression.

Until now.

Last year, a brick stable dating from 1907 was demolished to make way for a concrete parking garage. As developers carved up the nearby Seaport District, those living and working in the warehouse space of Fort Point Channel could sense the pile-drivers moving their way. In January, Beacon Capital Partners announced plans for a multi-use development including a 25-story office tower.

Yesterday, a group of neighbors took their case to City Hall, seeking to preserve the special character of the neighborhood across the

bridge.

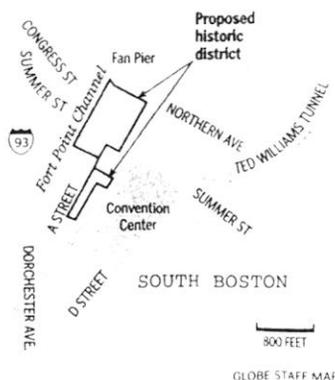
Walking across the Summer Street bridge "is a transformative experience — it takes you back to the early 1900s," said Steve Hollinger, a 10-year resident of Fort Point Channel.

At the turn of the last century, the blocks around what is now the Boston Children's Museum were a major entry point for sugar and molasses. By 1930, the area was the center of the wool industry in the United States. In recent decades, the neighborhood has been a crucial source of studio space for artists, who are now worried they will be pushed out by rising rents.

The Boston Landmarks Commission agreed last night that the neighborhood deserves to be considered for historic status. If it wins the designation — which would take months or even years — buildings within the district could not be demolished or changed significantly without public input.

Preservationists say they don't want to stop necessary development, just get an insur-

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GLOBE STAFF MAP

Residents try to preserve character of Fort Point

► FORT POINT CHANNEL *Continued from B1*

ance policy against overbuilding.

"We're just concerned about the future," Hollinger, an inventor, said yesterday.

But the largest local landowner said it has been a good caretaker of the neighborhood for 160 years and doesn't need the city or its neighbors to tell it what to do.

"This ties our hands considerably," said John K. Dineen, a lawyer with Peabody & Arnold, which represents Boston Wharf Co., owner of 50 properties in Fort Point. There are no plans to demolish or radically change any buildings, he said, but the company does not want to face extra complications when it does decide to make changes.

Beacon Capital Partners, which owns 6.8 acres in the district, said its \$300 million development would respect the history of the area, and it supports landmark designation, assuming it will not derail its project.

Beacon hopes to build two office buildings — one 12 stories,

one 25 stories — and 1,200 parking spaces. The project, to be called Midway, also calls for residential development. Almost all of the development would be on vacant land. Other local buildings would be restored to maintain their original appearance.

"The whole intent was to preserve the character of the Midway area," said Alex McCallum, Beacon Capital spokesman.

The Landmarks Commission members all supported further study of the district, which would begin some time after July 1.

Commission members praised Boston Wharf for its stewardship of the neighborhood, but said the company probably would not retain ownership forever, and not all landowners are as responsible.

The mayor or City Council could veto landmark designation.

Commission member Thomas Herman said he hopes Fort Point Channel can be protected for all time.

Said Herman: "This area is a national treasure."