

BOSTON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

March 25, 2019

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bostonpreservation.org

Tim Czerwienski
Boston Planning and Development Agency
Boston City Hall
Boston, MA 02201

Re: Fenway Theatre, 12-28 Landsdowne Street

Dear Mr. Czerwienski,

The Boston Preservation Alliance is Boston's primary, non-profit advocacy organization that protects and promotes the use of historic buildings and landscapes in all of the city's neighborhoods. With 40 Organizational Members, 125 Corporate Members, and a reach of 35,000 friends and supporters we represent a diverse constituency advocating for the thoughtful evolution of the city and celebration of its unique character. We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on projects that impact the historic character of the city.

The Alliance has met with the proponent to discuss the project and has attended the Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC) design committee meeting. Fenway Park, as well as its immediate surroundings, is a hallowed ground for baseball fans around the world. Unlike most other major sports venues, Fenway Park has been carefully stewarded for over 100 years, preserving the unique experience of America's pastime. The Alliance recognized the Red Sox ownership with our President's Award, our highest recognition, in 2017 for its successful park enhancements and modifications.

As a pending Boston Landmark, all changes to Fenway Park itself receive careful scrutiny by the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC). We believe BLC's comments regarding this project will likely be limited to the impact on the ballpark, not the surrounding buildings or context. But we think the City should be sensitive to the fact that the success of the park is based on the experience of visiting the entire site and we should recognize that this experience also includes the approach to Fenway Park from surrounding corridors: the sounds, smells, and sights, and the ambience of the ballpark inside and out. To date the Red Sox and the City have stewarded this unique asset remarkably to the benefit of all Bostonians, baseball fans, and the Fenway neighborhood. As a major icon for the city of Boston, changes to the space, its context, and the experience should be carefully considered and executed.

Overall we believe the proposal is a creative and likely successful way to utilize an awkward open parking lot to enhance activity, particularly during non-game periods. We appreciate the efforts made to consider how the theater proposal fits within the

context of Fenway Park through materials and design. However, we have some concerns about the proposal that we request be addressed as well as some additional information we feel necessary before we can state an overall recommendation on the proposal.

First and foremost, the filing provides insufficient views of the proposal from perhaps the most critical vantage points- those within Fenway Park itself. The team has so far successfully made a wide range of enhancements without overly-impacting the historic look and feel for game attendees. It is imperative that we better understand the impact of the proposal to the essential view across the outfield, over the bleachers, and toward downtown. The proposed removal of six rows of c 1934 bleachers is not an inconsequential change to the historic fabric of the park. And while we understand the desire to provide enhanced amenities to fans in the bleachers, we ponder if this change is too drastic an alteration. Without renderings and perspective drawings from various levels and locations of seating it is impossible to make this determination. Also of benefit would be images like 2.4a and 2.4b from the PNF that show existing conditions as well as the proposed.

Additionally, while the theater itself isn't visible from inside the park, the overall proposal is. In particular the new bleacher overlook area and the function space above with its deck overlooking the field will certainly alter the look of the park. While Figure 2.6 of the PNF provides some understanding of this new arrangement we need views from actual locations that would be observed by fans – from seats in different sections rather than an aerial perspective. Without such renderings we are not able to satisfactorily review or render a complete opinion on the proposal.

In consideration of changes outside the park, we concur with concerns raised by members of BCDC about the loss of significant portions of the Fenway Garage building and the resulting challenge of the space between the remaining garage pieces and the new construction. We encourage the proponent to reconsider this aspect of the proposal and examine integrating the entirety of the 1913 Fenway Garage façade into the project. The building was designed by John E. McLaughlin, the same designer of Fenway Park, and we feel plays an important part of the overall character and context of the Park.

We also concur with BCDC suggestions about not including trees alongside the theater on Lansdowne Street. The industrial feel of the Park is an important part of the context, and while we agree that the long-term health of the trees in this location is of question, we also believe it is the wrong visual/design choice for this location.

We look forward to receiving additional information and to working collaboratively with the BPDA and the Red Sox to reach a proposal we can all support. However, additional information is required before we are able to support the proposal.

Thank you,



Greg Galer
Executive Director

CC:

Rosanne Foley, Boston Landmarks Commission
Kelly Brilliant, The Fenway Alliance
David Friedman, Boston Red Sox
Jonathan Gilula, Boston Red Sox