

BOSTON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

February 11, 2021

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Executive Director

Gregory J. Galer, Ph.D.

Ebony DaRosa
Boston Planning & Development Agency
Boston City Hall
Re: 15-17 Northern Avenue, Hook Wharf Hotel/Harborwalk Expansion

Dear Ms. DaRosa,

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, 103 Corporate Members, and a reach over 100,000 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 seen a presentation of this proposal at the Boston Civic Design Commission and is attempting to schedule a meeting with the proponent. While we would prefer to have more direct engagement, we feel compelled to comment before the deadline with feedback based on the information available at this time. Our major concerns revolve around the hotel's relationship with the proposed Northern Avenue Bridge. The Alliance has advocated for a preservation solution for the historic bridge for decades and has been closely involved with the design process over the last several years. We are disappointed that the City's proposal for the bridge includes transit vehicles. Any vehicular traffic beyond the capacity for emergency vehicles is opposed to our vision and that of many other advocates. Additionally, the community has seen little of an evolved design for the bridge, particularly as it meets the streets at each end. As last seen there were a host of concerning and unresolved issues. Not surprisingly, with that design solution unclear, it is difficult to fully understand how a new project will integrate into the shared spaces on Atlantic Avenue. The feasibility of the hotel proposal is so integrated with the Northern Avenue Bridge that it is hard to see how the project can be forwarded without further information on the bridge.

Because any final design details or approvals of the Northern Avenue Bridge remain unshared publicly, we have no clarity if the anticipated mayoral change will impact the plan. We urge collaboration between the teams responsible for the bridge, this project, and the GSA as operators of the adjacent historic Coast Guard building. And we insist that the community be informed and part of the dialog how all these pieces will function together. The public space shared by these three properties and their users is critical to a successful urban realm at this prominent location, and none will succeed without the cooperation of the others. One obvious solution to ease the

conflicts in this public space is to eliminate the proposed vehicular traffic on the new bridge, reserving that span for pedestrians and bicyclists only.

We hope that as the design for the tower of the hotel evolves, the design team will consider elements that contextual the building with its surroundings. The view of Boston from the water is iconic and immediately recognizable as *Boston*. The more we add glassy towers to this section of the city, the more we lose our identity. The new building should complement the materiality, color palette, and punched fenestration of the buildings in this area. Additionally, the view to the water and the connection between pedestrians and the harbor and Fort Point Channel should always be given high priority in design. Disconnecting the Greenway from the Harborwalk and the water would be a disservice to the many positive strides that have been made in this part of the city.

We look forward to further dialogue and exploration of this project.

Thank you,



Greg Galer
Executive Director

Cc:

Jonathan Greeley, Boston Planning and Development Agency
Elizabeth Stifel, Boston Civic Design Commission
Andrea Leers, Boston Civic Design Commission
John Moriarty III, Moriarty Partners
David Manfredi, Elkus Manfredi Architects
William Zielinski, SKW Partners
Wendy Landman, Walk Boston
Stacy Thompson, Livable Streets Alliance
Carol Chirico, GSA
Kim Janey, Boston City Council
Annissa Essaibi George, Boston City Council
Michael Flaherty, Boston City Council
Julia Mejia, Boston City Council
Michelle Wu, Boston City Council
Ed Flynn, Boston City Council