

# ALLIANCE LETTER

BOSTON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

AN ASSOCIATION OF PRESERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

## Spotlight: City Hall News



### Regulatory Developments

by Matthew Kiefer, Esquire

RECENTLY AT THE Boston Conference, several possible changes in the city of Boston's planning and development policy and regulation were discussed by Mayor Menino, Marisa Lago, director of economic development, and Robert Walsh, an informal advisor to the mayor.

In a panel discussion regarding the

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## NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

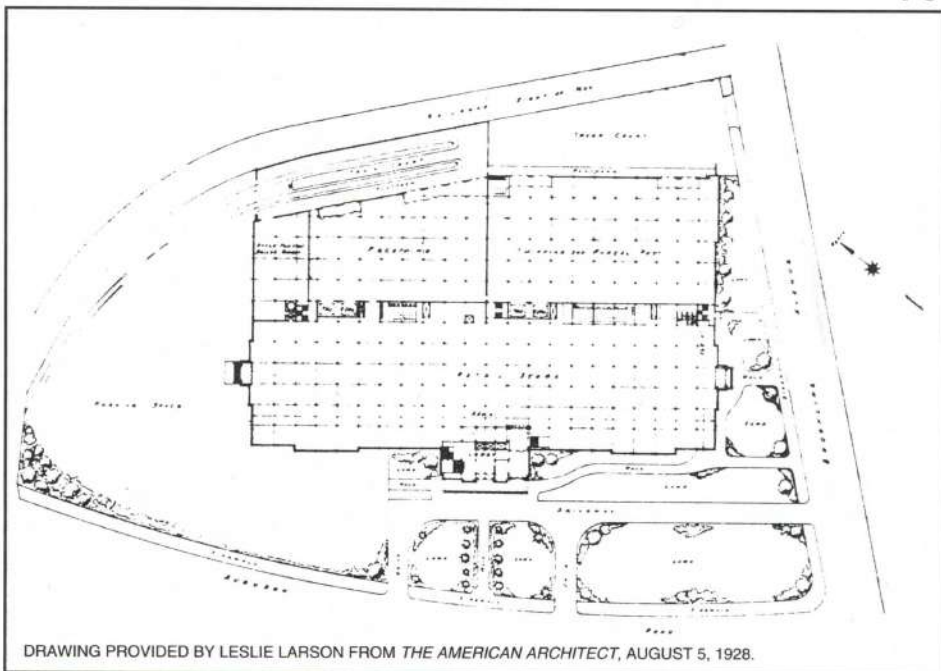
### Fenway Sears Proposal Reemerges

ONE OF BOSTON'S largest landmark buildings, prominently sited in the Fenway, is dark and empty. The nine-story Sears Building, covering a 385,142 sq. ft. parcel, needs a new owner and tenant. The Sears Building, at 309 Park Drive, has been empty since its closing in January of 1988. Sears has, however, continued to heat the building at a cost of over \$300,000 annually to prevent the building from sustaining serious damage.

Several attempts have been made during the intervening years to develop the site. JMB/Urban, the last developer, came very close to creating a mixed-use project including a hotel and commercial uses on the site, but the deal fell apart. A

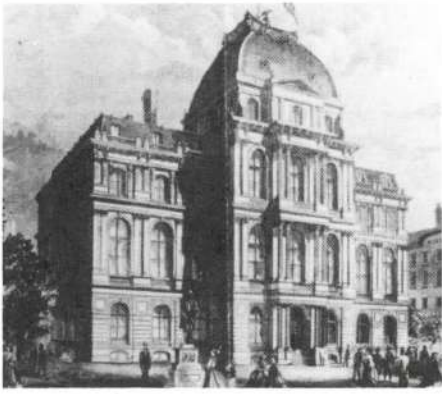
new proposal has been recently presented to various city agencies including the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC). New England Development Corporation holds an option to purchase the building and proposes to build a new retail complex abutting the Sears Building, which will include a grocery store and transform the Sears Building into a 2450-car parking lot. According to New England Development representative Joseph Fallon, "the challenge will be to integrate the old and new buildings and provide services to the surrounding neighborhoods and the medical area." The intention of New England Development is to convey the adjacent parking

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DRAWING PROVIDED BY LESLIE LARSON FROM *THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT*, AUGUST 5, 1928.

Sears, Roebuck & Co. Mail Order Store, Boston, MA. Nimmons, Carr & Wright, Arch.



## Proposal Reemerges

*Continued from page 1*

lot, part of the Olmsted Emerald Necklace, to the city who will eventually convert it to its original use as a park.

The 1928 Art Deco building, designed by George C. Nimmons, is constructed of tan brick and Indiana limestone trim. Nimmons designed ten similar buildings across the country for the Sears Corporation. The building was designated a Boston Landmark in 1989. The adjacent parking lot, also owned by Sears and once part of Olmsted's Emerald Necklace park system, is included in the Emerald Necklace landmark designation.

The proposal is to clean and stabilize the facades and design a new landscaping scheme for the front of the building utilizing Investment Tax Credits. By retaining mullions and screening windows, the necessary ventilation is created while

maintaining the appearance of windows. The change in use, according to Project Architect Robert Slatterly, AIA, of Arrowstreet Inc. "is reversible with some minimal interior reconstruction."

A precedent for creating parking in a historic property occurred in Building #199 in the Charlestown Navy Yard. Building #199 was an annex to building #149, and both were storage supply and distribution centers for the Navy. Currently, Massachusetts General Hospital holds the ground lease for #149 and is using the building for research.

The BLC has review over any architectural changes to the building but does not address the issue of "use," which is the domain of the neighborhood. Community concerns regarding parking, traffic, and types of use must be addressed with appropriate city agencies before approvals for the project can be attained. ♦

This newsletter is published by the Boston Preservation Alliance, Inc., 45 School Street, Boston, MA, 02108; (617) 367-2458. The opinions expressed by the contributors are not necessarily those of the Alliance. Those interested in reprinting articles must obtain written permission from the editor. ©Copyright, Boston Preservation Alliance.

Receipt of this newsletter is a privilege of at-large membership in the Alliance, an association of preservation organizations connected with recognition and preservation of historic resources in the city of Boston. At-large membership is \$25 per year.

Historic Boston Incorporated and the Architectural Heritage Foundation have underwritten part of the cost of producing this publication.

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## New Appointment

**A**FTER SERVING AS the regional director of the National Trust for Historic Preservation for more than seven and a half years, Vicki Sandstead resigned effective March 31, 1994. During her tenure, Ms. Sandstead created the successful Project PREPARE, assisting rural communities with the issues of growth management, worked closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to integrate historic preservation into disaster preparedness, and assisted countless local groups with preservation challenges.

Peter Brink, National Trust vice president, recently announced that Wendy Nicholas, executive director of the Providence Preservation Society, will replace Ms. Sandstead in mid-May. Ms. Nicholas has served in her current position since 1981, managing Providence's community-based historic preservation organization, which includes a revolving fund, educational, advocacy, and technical support programs. In addition, Ms. Nicholas serves on the Board of Directors of the Heritage Trust of Rhode Island and Preservation Action. ♦

## AllianceLetter Mission Statement



THE BOSTON  
PRESERVATION  
ALLIANCE,  
INC., an  
association  
of preservation  
organizations and  
concerned citizens,  
publishes the

*AllianceLetter* six times a year.

The *AllianceLetter* seeks to expand and sustain a constituency for historic preservation in Boston by increasing the awareness of civic leaders and the general public about preservation initiatives and issues. The *AllianceLetter* strives to report accurately and fairly on activities that will have a lasting impact on the preservation of the city's architectural heritage. ♦