

BOSTON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

October 15, 2018

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Executive Director

Gregory J. Galer, Ph.D.

Mayor Martin J. Walsh
Boston City Hall
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201
Re: King Memorial Proposal, Boston Common

Dear Mayor Walsh,

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 41 Organizational Members, 121 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 was pleased to see that the City is embracing the concept of a new memorial celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King. Though Boston continues to make progress towards our shared goals of equality, diversity, and inclusion, I think we would all agree that these philosophies are underrepresented in the places and people we have traditionally chosen to preserve and honor. This discussion coincides well with comprehensive planning now beginning for the Boston Common.

The Common is one of the oldest and most historic open spaces in the country. In 1634 these 48 acres were set aside by the European settlers as shared space, making it the first public park in what would become the United States. Its significance is reinforced by its formal designation as both a Boston Landmark and a National Historic Landmark. These designations brought formal recognition and also established regulatory review requirements for proposed changes.

Each generation of Bostonians has made decisions about how to use this central open space, and the Common has been adapted to the needs of Bostonians over time. From 1860 onward many monuments have been added to the park, each a reminder of the concerns and public conscientiousness at the time of their erection. Some are prominent such as the Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Regiment Memorial. Others are more modest like the tablet commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Halifax Explosion in Nova Scotia, installed just last year.

The King Memorial proposal comes at an opportune time as the City prepares a Master Plan for the Common. This planning will examine the current use of the entire park, its challenges, and its opportunities and expectations for the future. It will be of great benefit that these new memorial concepts will be available to the planning team to assure that any new additions are evolved, refined, and developed collaboratively. The proposed memorial will be most successful if it harmonizes with the enduring history and landscape of the Common through a deliberative and democratic process- the sort of social engagement that provided the bedrock of King's vision of human progress and community. It is important that this process continue to involve active outreach to communities that have historically been underrepresented in decision-making regarding public spaces, particularly as the concept evolves in conjunction with broader planning for the Common.

We look forward to participating in this Master Planning process and dialog regarding the memorial. There are a wide variety of factors the Master Plan will

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consider to ensure success of the park ranging from archaeology and historic preservation to maintenance and sustainability. The process must be a comprehensive, open, and collaborative effort involving all stakeholders with interest and authority over the park including City agencies like the Boston Parks and Recreation Department, the Boston Landmarks Commission, and the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture as well as advocacy organizations and stewards such as the Friends of the Public Garden, the Boston Preservation Alliance, the Boston Society for Landscape Architecture, the committee and citizens promoting the new King Memorial, and all citizens with a particular interest in the Common.

With civil rights and public monuments a focus of national conversation, Boston has the opportunity to create a multidimensional space for reflection, conversation, and empowerment by utilizing the Kings' presence in Boston, and Boston's role within civil rights efforts throughout history, as the foundation of a possible new memorial on the Common. The Alliance feels strongly that while the City should consider this concept, it is necessary that the discussion be incorporated into the larger framework of planning for the Common and of course must meet all legally-required reviews.

The Alliance looks forward to working with you and your team, City agencies, regulators and review authorities, and all interested residents and organizations to collectively create a plan that both preserves the historic qualities of the Boston Common and brings to it the best opportunities for a successful future.

Sincerely,



Greg Galer
Executive Director

CC:

Andrea Campbell, Boston City Council
Michael Flaherty, Boston City Council
Annisssa Essaibi George, Boston City Council
Ayanna Pressley, Boston City Council
Michelle Wu, Boston City Council
Josh Zakim, Boston City Council
Lydia Edwards, Boston City Council
Ed Flynn, Boston City Council
Frank Baker, Boston City Council
Timothy McCarthy, Boston City Council
Matt O'Malley, Boston City Council
Kim Janey, Boston City Council
Mark Ciommo, Boston City Council
Chris Cook, Environment, Energy, and Open Space, City of Boston
Kara Elliott-Ortega, Arts and Culture, City of Boston
Rosanne Foley, Boston Landmarks Commission, City of Boston
Lynn Smiledge, Boston Landmarks Commission
Brona Simon, Massachusetts Historical Commission
Liz Vizza, Friends of the Public Garden
Gretchen Rabinkin, Boston Society of Landscape Architects
Paul English, MLK Boston
Liz Walker, MLK Boston
Karin Goodfellow, Boston Art Commission
Marita Rivero, Museum of African American History
Michael Creasey, Boston National Historical Park
Tim Logan, Boston Globe

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