

# BOSTON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

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Gregory J. Galer, Ph.D.

May 23, 2019

Megha Vadula  
Pembroke  
255 State Street  
Boston, MA 02109  
megha.vadula@pembroke.com  
**Re: 200 Seaport Boulevard, Commonwealth Pier**

Dear Ms. Vadula,

We appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and the design team for a discussion about the Commonwealth Pier Revitalization project. We have also attended BCDC's design review and have heard feedback from various stakeholders. After considering the public realm improvements and the associated modifications to historic fabric, we feel that the project is beneficial for the site but we do have some concerns that we have encouraged your team to consider. We are submitting these comments for the record though we discussed many of these points in our meeting.

1. We strongly urge your team to embrace a restoration approach to the historic headhouse. It stands as one of the few extant examples of historic fabric in the Seaport District and should be carefully preserved as a part of this project. While we feel the proposed interventions, such as the increase in open space in the arcade, are acceptable, we would expect the highest quality materials and execution in construction throughout the scope of work as well as preservation standards to be utilized in the treatment of the historic materials themselves.

2. We echo many of the concerns stated at the BCDC design review meeting regarding the north end of the pier- this space should be programmed as a destination for the public with adequate seating and placemaking elements. Furthermore, in order to encourage public use of the entire pier, we strongly recommend a robust wayfinding system with signage, maps, etc. so that pedestrians know that the pier is public space, approximately how long it takes to walk the full pier, and the public amenities that are available along the way. In order to create a vibrant space where the public feels welcome to engage with the historic site, special attention should be given to these important details. We also support creative educational elements throughout the site that interpret its maritime history.

3. Though we do not oppose the introduction of the public plaza with removal of some building fabric, we do feel that it creates a visual disconnect between the shed and the headhouse that reduces readability of the site's historic use. We ask the proponent to develop and share concepts that retain the trusses from

the shed so that the benefits of preserving that historic fabric can be evaluated. Some visual dialog between the headhouse and the shed should remain or be created to provide a perceivable link across this new, large open span.

4. We are not convinced that removal of the gantry system is necessary and are concerned that its loss further dissolves the visual link to the site's historic industrial use. We request an exploration of options to retain all or portions of the gantry with both educational interpretation as well as creative new uses. We feel the gantry could present an opportunity to embrace this unique industrial fabric for a dynamic blend of old and new components.

We look forward to further dialogue and responses to these concerns. Thank you for your efforts to revitalize a historic site in Boston.

Thank you,



Greg Galer  
Executive Director

CC:

Purvi Patel, MEPA  
Brona Simon, Massachusetts Historical Commission  
Elizabeth Stifel, Boston Civic Design Commission  
Rosanne Foley, Boston Landmarks Commission  
Nicole Benjamin-Ma, VHB