

# BOSTON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

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## Executive Director

Gregory J. Galer, Ph.D.

August 5, 2019

Jonathan Greeley  
Boston Planning and Development Agency  
Boston City Hall  
Boston, MA 02201

## Re: MGH Clinical and Campus Services Building

Dear Mr. Greeley,

The Boston Preservation Alliance represents a diverse constituency advocating for the thoughtful evolution of the city and celebration of its unique historic character. We represent 40 organizations across the city and 125 corporations that support our mission to protect places, promote vibrancy, and preserve the character that makes Boston, Boston.

We write today to express broad, community disapproval of the current proposal by Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) to demolish three historic structures of the West End. We are joined by several neighborhood groups and stakeholders on this letter to express our dismay with yet another attempt to continue the sixty-year effort to purge this neighborhood of its historic architecture, history, and sense of place. It is hard to understand why the BPDA would continue to disregard the West End's plight by failing to require MGH to strategically incorporate these buildings into their proposal. We would think, following Director Golden's 2015 apology to the community for destruction of the West End, there would be far more sensitivity.

While recognizing MGH's need for new facilities and the merits of utilizing this location, the Alliance, and the organizations that have signed this letter, find the current proposal unacceptable. The Winchell School, the West End House, and the tenement building represent the character and fabric of the West End before it was decimated, and its community displaced, by Urban Renewal in the 1950s. They are three of only a handful of buildings that survive and their demolition would be detrimental to the neighborhood.

We have asked the proponent repeatedly for an earnest, thorough analysis of alternatives to demolition but have yet to receive one. Though all possible alternatives should be detailed, we especially seek a complete analysis of relocating the buildings to the Cambridge Street edge of the property. Frustratingly, while we wait for this analysis and discussion, the project continues to progress as proposed. There should be no further review hearings or approvals until this analysis is completed and vetted with the community. We are certain that the MEPA review will require such an analysis by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, so the BPDA process would be far more productive and transparent if preservation options were seriously considered early in the process, rather than categorically dismissed as unviable by the proponent.

The hospital's presence dominates much of the West End neighborhood. As they expand, MGH has an opportunity to preserve what remains of the historic character of the neighborhood and contribute a positive story to the narrative of the West End by incorporating these important buildings. We look forward to a prompt response from the BPDA and the proponent.

Sincerely,



Greg Galer, Boston Preservation Alliance

Joined by:

Jane Breschard Wilson, West End Civic Association

Carl Nold, Historic New England

Duane Lucia, West End Museum

Robin Assaf, Friends of the West End Library

James Campano, Old West End Housing Corp.

Samantha Nelson, Boston by Foot

Martha J. McNamara, Beacon Hill Resident/Wellesley College Professor

CC:

Representative Jay Livingstone, Massachusetts State House

Josh Zakim, Boston City Council

Annissa Essaibi George, Boston City Council

Michael Flaherty, Boston City Council

Michelle Wu, Boston City Council

David Hanitchak, Massachusetts General Hospital

Nick Haney, Massachusetts General Hospital

Doug Kelleher, Epsilon Associates

Geoffrey Melhuish, Epsilon Associates

Tom Sieniewicz, NBBJ

Brona Simon, Massachusetts Historical Commission

Rosanne Foley, Boston Landmarks Commission

Lynn Smiledge, Boston Landmarks Commission