

# BOSTON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

www.bostonpreservation.org

June 30, 2021

Mayor Kim Janey  
Boston City Council  
Boston Art Commission  
**Re: Humphreys Street Studios**

Dear Mayor Janey, Councilors, and Commissioners,

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 of 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.

It has come to our attention that the long-time community use of a historic building in Upham's Corner is under threat. In our 2011 Preservation Priorities Report of Upham's Corner, the Alliance included 11 Humphreys Street as a building of value to the neighborhood based on guidance from community members. Our report shared,

11 Humphreys Street, the current home of Humphreys Street Artist Studios, was built in 1899 to house Daloz Cleanser, a dry cleaning business owned by Albert Roland Daloz, one of two sons of French immigrant Laurent Hippolyte. Daloz Cleanser operated as a successful business for nearly a century; the family abandoned the building in the 1990s following a failed attempt to clean up damage caused by a ruptured underground oil storage tank. Artists Gneal Widett and Joe Wheelwright purchased the front and rear buildings in 2001, and divided the space into 32 artist studios, which accepted their first tenants in 2002 and remain active today- housing painters, woodworkers, metalworkers and other artists.

We have recently been made aware of the pending sale of the property and, potentially, the loss of the building and/or the thriving artist community within it. With this news we did a little research and have learned that parts of the site may date to as early as the 1870s. The main building still holds several elements from the 1890's Daloz Cleansing Works, including massive signs, terracotta floors, and the original wood windows which were lovingly restored by Gneal Widett. The original rear factory building still has its brick stack and saw-tooth roof, an industrial architectural element used to bring natural light into factory spaces.

Artists of this building have impacted the city's landscape today. Joe Wheelwright was a renowned stone carver and wood sculptor who lived in Ashmont and whose work, "Sleeping Moon," graces Peabody Square outside of Ashmont Station. Gneal Widett was a woodworker and is known for making several hand-carved signs throughout Boston including signs for Charlie's Sandwich Shoppe, Brattle Bookshop, The Corner Book Store, and many more. His sign business occupied a shop on Charles Street in Beacon Hill for many years.

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The artists within this eclectic site are a rare cross-section of Boston creatives and entrepreneurs. Uphams Corner has been a center of creativity in Boston since the Strand was built in 1918 and thrives today. 11 Humphreys Street is a local landmark, both because of its unique character and the artists' contributions to the community, and its presence helps to make Boston, Boston.

We urge each of you – the Mayor's Office, City Councilors, and the Boston Art Commission to work with the seller, the potential buyer, and the artists to find a mutually agreeable solution to preserve this special place in Boston.

Thank you,



Greg Galer  
Executive Director

Cc:

The Steering Committee of Humphreys Street Studios Artist Tenant Association- Cristina Todesco,  
Josh Rose-Wood, Nora Valdez, Franklin Marval  
Jonathan Greeley, Boston Planning and Development Agency  
Karin Goodfellow, Boston Art Commission  
Rosanne Foley, Boston Landmarks Commission