

BOSTON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

July 7, 2017

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bostonpreservation.org

Mr. Michael Rooney
Boston Planning and Development Agency
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201
Re: 9 Chelsea Street, East Boston

Dear Mr. Rooney,

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, 98 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 has attended several public meetings and communicated with the proponent, members of the community, and staff at both the Boston Planning and Development Agency and the Boston Landmarks Commission about the proposal to redevelop 9 Chelsea Street in East Boston's Maverick Square. Like many in the neighborhood, we are excited about the proposal to transform a parking lot into a project that better contributes to the vitality of the neighborhood. However, we do have concerns about the project.

The current proposal for this site requires the demolition of several structures, including two red brick rowhouses (144-146 Maverick Street). Despite the proponent's insistence that the rowhouses have no historic significance, the community has made clear, and the Alliance agrees, that these buildings are significant contributors to the historic character of Maverick Square and that the preference is to preserve them. With an influx of insensitive new development across the neighborhood, the residents of East Boston have repeatedly suffered the loss of buildings that create a sense of place and retain the character of their neighborhood. Though the latest iteration of the design for the site incorporates some of the architectural qualities of traditional structures, it still requires the demolition of existing buildings that have contributed to the neighborhood for over a century. The Alliance strongly urges the BPDA to require the proponent to explore alternatives that incorporate the rowhouses into the new development. It is important that buildings like the rowhouses are preserved and rehabilitated whenever possible to create a complementary blend of old and new in a quickly evolving public square. Additionally, studies clearly demonstrate that reuse of existing fabric is far more environmentally friendly than demolition and replacement.

Furthermore, the historic clock that once stood on this site, now in storage, is a designated Boston Landmark. Any changes to this clock, including relocation, require Boston Landmarks Commission approval. The BLC may require the proponent to restore and reinstall the clock on the project site. We therefore urge the BPDA to request that the proponent develop a concept that includes the clock in the current location of its base at the corner of the site. This scenario would necessarily alter the design currently proposed and we feel that it would be most helpful to begin that dialogue as early as possible in the process. We encourage the proponent to begin a dialogue with the Boston Landmarks Commission immediately.

The Alliance remains willing and eager to meet with the project team and discuss alternatives to the current proposal that would make the project more appropriate for this prominent corner of Maverick Square.

Sincerely,



Greg Galer
Executive Director

CC:

Max Gruner, East Boston Main Street
Todd Satter, Boston Landmarks Commission