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September 14, 2018

Mr. Lance Campbell
Boston Planning and Development Agency
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201
Re: Allston Square

Dear Mr. Campbell,

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 36 Organizational Members, 104 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.

This ambitious proposal could bring needed investment to Allston's historic hub. Located at the gateway to the neighborhood, the project area is within a National Register Historic District. The proposal encompasses four historic buildings that contribute to this Historic District, though it proposes demolishing three of them. It is also adjacent to the Allston Depot which is a local Historic Landmark and the Harvard Avenue Fire Station which is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is important to consider the impacts the project will have to the historic fabric and sense of place in this area of Allston.

The scale of the proposed new buildings, the demolition of existing buildings, and the large scope of the project will have vast impacts on the character of this neighborhood. It will also bring new vibrancy and activity, hopefully stimulating additional investment and rejuvenation. Achieving a balance between new and old is essential to the success of this project and the community. We have two main concerns regarding the proposal's balance between old and new.

The Jack Young Building, or Allen Building, at 334 Cambridge Street is important to the historic fabric of the neighborhood. This building welcomes those entering Allston from Cambridge Street and establishes the sense of place. We are disappointed the proposal calls for its demolition and urge the BPDA to require the proponent incorporate the existing building into the proposal. We feel that rehabilitating the prominent, curved building and adding a sympathetic addition would introduce the unique blend of old and new that will define the neighborhood after this project's completion.

Additionally, while we appreciate the proposed rehabilitation of the historic Allston Hall building at 10-14 Franklin Street, we feel it is important that special attention be given to its renovation in order to preserve historic fabric and recreate missing fabric with sensitive designs and materials. The Alliance is happy to provide guidance. This building is not only central to the historic character of the area but is also one of only a relative few historic buildings that will survive the current wave of development, making its presence and preservation even more important in this changing streetscape.

The Alliance is not opposed to the proposal overall, but we strive to reach a place where we can support the project moving forward. This support may be possible with more attention to the historic resources within the project site and National Register Historic District. We do not feel strongly that the other buildings in the project that are proposed for demolition make strong contributions to the character or historic narrative of the area and are therefore not advocating for their preservation. In their place, however, should be well-designed, thoughtful new buildings that are vibrant, sensitive additions to the neighborhood.

We look forward to working with the project team, the community, and the BPDA as this project progresses.

Thank you,



Greg Galer
Executive Director

CC:

Rosanne Foley, Boston Landmarks Commission
Charlie Vasiliades, Brighton Allston Historical Society
Elizabeth Stifel, Boston Planning and Development Agency