

BOSTON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

www.bostonpreservation.org

May 20, 2022

Nupoor Monani
Boston Planning and Development Agency
Boston City Hall
Re: 125 Lincoln Street, Leather District

Dear Ms. Monani,

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, 134 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.

As the dialogue around the 125 Lincoln Street project continues the Alliance would like to express support for the proposal, with some outstanding concerns. We applaud the proponent for reaching out to our organization early in the process for our feedback, maintaining a connection with us as the project evolved, and responding to our concerns and suggestions. We have attended several meetings, including BCDC subcommittee discussions, and feel the project has successfully transformed to the benefit of both the Leather District and Chinatown neighborhoods.

Our outstanding concerns are:

- This project, like many others that have been proposed along the Greenway, violates the height limits of the Greenway Guidelines. We understand that these standards need to be reevaluated since it has become clear that many parcels along the Greenway cannot be feasibly redeveloped within the parameters of the guidelines. A new study should commence immediately and include all stakeholders in a transparent, public dialogue that results in permanent zoning; abutters and property owners deserve to know what kind of development impacts to anticipate, developers deserve predictability, and community members deserve to know that their time helping to establish plans and development guidelines is not wasted.
- Because this project does introduce new height and density to this site with potentially detrimental effects to two historically significant neighborhoods, we commend the mitigation package offered by the proponent, especially the rehabilitation of 79 Essex Street into affordable housing. We are eager to hear more about this partnership with the Chinatown community as its successful transfer and preservation are a condition of our support for the 125 Lincoln Street proposal. It may be necessary to further stabilize the building in the meantime and we encourage all measures be taken to ensure its future viability for reuse.
- Development in Boston almost always takes something from the neighborhood- sunlight, sky views and viewsheds, historic character or sense of place, embodied carbon, or even just memories and associations with what was once there. It is the responsibility of developers to

BOSTON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

also give back through quality design, materiality, and execution of the new structure, public realm improvements, historical signage or wayfinding, local retail and community space, historic preservation, and place-making. The proponent has committed to these contributions and we believe that this project will be an improvement to the area compared to existing conditions. We have asked the proponent for a donation to the Legacy Fund for Boston which will enable future projects to preserve the history, character, and culture of the city. Sometimes the impacts of development are not predictable or evident until the project is completed and the Legacy Fund for Boston allows for mitigation of unforeseen impacts to historic resources.

- We feel that the Boston Civic Design Commission plays an important role in Boston's development process. Projects would ideally not move forward without BCDC approval. We urge this project team to continue to work with BCDC to resolve outstanding concerns with the project.

We look forward to further dialogue with the proponent, BCDC, and the two abutting communities as this project continues through the review process.

Thank you,



Alison Frazee
Executive Director

CC:

Mark McGowen, Oxford Properties
Christopher Whittier, Oxford Properties
Nicole Benjamin-Ma, VHB
Elizabeth Stifel, Boston Civic Design Commission
Rosanne Foley, Boston Landmarks Commission