

BOSTON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

www.bostonpreservation.org

May 19, 2023

Sarah Black
Boston Planning and Development Agency
Boston City Hall
Re: 17-23 West Street, Ladder Blocks

Dear Ms. Black,

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, 107 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.

The Alliance has had the opportunity to discuss the proposal for 17-23 West Street in the Ladder Blocks with the project team. We are pleased that a surface parking lot will be converted to a better use and feel that a hotel will be an asset to the neighborhood. We feel that the design is contextual and contributes to the character of the streetscape and have encouraged the proponent to use high quality materials. We suggest the team pay closer attention to the sides of the building at the upper level; those sides are visible and will ideally remain visible (the existing abutting buildings are significant) so those facades should also have a thoughtful design.

We are aware that some neighboring property owners are concerned about height and the impacts of shadow and shade. We encourage the proponent to explore minimizing those impacts, but we feel that the height is within an acceptable range of what is currently as-of-right, and within limits that will likely result from PLAN: Downtown. Views of this building from the Boston Common and from Washington Street are limited, and we do not feel that the height negatively impacts the streetscape.

The Alliance supports this project and encourages the proponent and the BPDA to work with the neighborhood to address any unresolved impacts, especially those outlined in the PLAN: Downtown preliminary findings. We have encouraged the proponent to document the visible facades on the neighboring buildings, especially the ghost markings of former structures that this project will permanently obscure, and to cooperate with abutting building owners to monitor for and address vibrations and any other potential effects to those structures.

Thank you,



Alison Frazee
Executive Director