



WalkBoston

January 28, 2005

Secretary Ellen Roy Herzfelder
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114
Attn: Rick Bouré, MEPA Office

Heather Campisano
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Plaza, 9th floor
Boston, MA 02201

Re: Lovejoy Wharf ENF/PNF

Dear Secretary Herzfelder and Ms. Campisano:

WalkBoston is New England's premier pedestrian advocacy organization. We promote walking for transportation, health and recreation, and work to create and preserve safe and attractive walking environments that build healthy communities. Our pedestrian advocacy efforts address both statewide and local issues. We are writing today with comments on the Lovejoy Wharf ENF/PNF.

As described in the ENF/PNF, the Lovejoy Wharf Project is a mixed-use redevelopment that will include approximately 260 residential units, 38,000 square feet of ground-level retail uses, and the rehabilitation of the existing wharf structure to provide an extension of the Harborwalk.

The Lovejoy Wharf Project occupies a pivotal location in the City of Boston's pedestrian environment, a location where the City's gridded street and sidewalk system intersects with the Harborwalk. It will be a critical link in the pedestrian connection between the Bulfinch Triangle/Downtown North and Charlestown. Lovejoy Wharf also presents an important opportunity to connect the City with both Boston Harbor and the Charles River. We are very pleased that the development for this site is substantial enough to bring with it important public benefits, and applaud the developer's initial efforts to respond to the site's complicated access and design challenges. We offer our comments with the understanding that the project's design is in its preliminary stages and that there will be substantially more information provided in subsequent environmental, zoning and licensing filings.

Our comments progress from the neighborhood scaled pedestrian network to the site scale, and then to design details.

The Neighborhood Pedestrian Network

In order to evaluate the success of the project in fulfilling its role in the City's pedestrian network, it is necessary to see how the project fits within that network. The development team should provide a diagram of the neighborhood context that includes an area encompassing the Charles River Dam, the proposed CA/T pedestrian bridge across the

MBTA's North Station railroad tracks, Causeway Street, North Washington Street, and the Harborwalk (as it extends beneath the Charlestown Bridge). That diagram should be accompanied by an assessment of the number of people and types of pedestrian trips that will access the project or use the project's pedestrian ways. From that assessment, the development team can prepare a design for the pedestrian zones that reflects the intensity, directionality, and types of use that will be made of the site and enhances its connections to the surrounding area.

Specific pedestrian issues that need to be addressed at this network scale include:

- Visibility of the site from adjacent sidewalks and the establishment of a design and set of public uses that will attract pedestrians into the site, park and Harborwalk from Causeway Street and North Washington Street
- Relationship between the site and future (re-established) water transportation facilities
- Directionality of pavement, lighting and landscaping elements as they relate to walking routes to and across the site
- Coordination of site design with that of the CA/T project and the adjacent Strada 234 Building

The Project Site

Within the project site, the proposed new connection to North Washington Street and the addition of a small open space on North Washington Street are good additions to the pedestrian environment. The creation of these amenities through the addition of a new structure that will also accommodate accessible vertical circulation is a creative solution to a complicated access puzzle. A fully pedestrian wharf area will also be a welcome amenity.

On the south side of the building, Lovejoy Place must accommodate a complicated pedestrian/vehicular relationship because it will provide the only vehicle access and the primary pedestrian access for the building's residents. We believe that there is not adequate space to separate vehicles and pedestrians on Lovejoy Place, and therefore that the site design must create a comfortable mixed zone where both pedestrians and drivers are aware that the space is shared. Since the parking area that lies east of the building entrance will be a vehicle-only zone, it should be distinguished from the mixed access zone between that point and Beverly Way.

It is especially critical that the site plan, building architecture, and landscape design clarify the relationship between Beverly Way and Lovejoy Place. The designs must establish a visual gateway to the waterfront/open space resources of the site and the adjacent DCR parklands.

Design Details

As the project proponents develop and refine the details of the project design, we suggest several issues for study and clarification.

- Consider the use of fully flush paving for Lovejoy Place to avoid restricting pedestrians to narrow sidewalks against the face of the building (bumpers incorporated into the building façade can be used to protect the building from vehicles and will take much less room than bollards). Recent experience in Europe suggests that eliminating curbs reduces the speed of vehicles and enlarges, rather than reduces, the paving perceived as “belonging” to pedestrians. Local examples of shared streets include Winter Street in Downtown Crossing and the St. Paul’s Archdiocese site in Harvard Square.
- Carefully evaluate the use of plant materials within Lovejoy Place because of space conflicts with pedestrian/vehicular needs and the deep shade in this narrow space.
- Give special consideration to paving materials that respond to the icy conditions that often prevail in waterside locations and the shady conditions in Lovejoy Place
- Provide high quality pedestrian level pathway lighting that connects to the Harborwalk and the dam crossing to Charlestown

We look forward to the further development of the Lovejoy Wharf Project proposal, and to seeing this very important piece of the city come back to life.

Very Truly Yours,

Wendy Landman
Executive Director