



WalkBoston

May 16, 2006

Mark Maloney, Director
Boston Redevelopment Authority
Boston City Hall, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02210

Attn: Heather Campisano, Project Manager

Stephen Pritchard, Secretary
EOEA, MEPA Office
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

Attn: Rick Bourre
EOEA No. 13415

Re: Lovejoy Wharf Draft Environmental Impact Report/Final Project Impact Report

Dear Director Maloney and Secretary Pritchard:

WalkBoston is pleased to provide comments on this third round of environmental documentation for the Lovejoy Wharf Project. WalkBoston promotes walking for transportation, health and recreation, and works to create and preserve safe and attractive walking environments that build healthy communities.

We are pleased that the development of Lovejoy Wharf is continuing toward implementation, and are excited to see that the North Station area is moving toward taking its place as one of Boston's walkable neighborhoods. As described in the DEIR/FPIR, the Project is a mixed-use redevelopment that will include approximately 250 residential units, 40,000 square feet of ground-level retail uses, and the rehabilitation of the existing wharf structure to provide an extension of the Harborwalk.

As WalkBoston noted in our previous project comments, Lovejoy Wharf 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 presents an important opportunity to connect the City with both Boston Harbor and the Charles River.

As the design for the Lovejoy Wharf Project has grown more detailed in each succeeding document, it has improved. In particular, the revised building massing which opens up views to the water from Beverly Way and Causeway Street, the further definition of the crossroads marker, and the proposed programming for the site will each help to enliven the pedestrian environment. We also believe that the commitment of the project proponent to the

maintenance of off-site open spaces will provide important benefits to pedestrians and will enhance the usability of the waterfront for all users.

Our comments focus on several design details that we hope the developer and the design team will continue to work on as the design progresses.

Universal Design

Several elements of the site design seem to create impediments to access that should be carefully reviewed and perhaps modified.

- While the concept of articulating the separate historic wharves through the use of paving materials is interesting, we are concerned that rough surfaces may make the wharf less than welcoming to visitors who use wheelchairs and to any visitors who feel uncomfortable on rough walking surfaces. These walkers should not be limited to narrow walking bands (note for example how almost all visitors to the Quincy Market area walk in the narrow “smooth” areas and avoid the cobbles).
- The Harborwalk itself is set off from the plaza area by a band of steps, with ramp access only at each end. It may be appropriate to review the feasibility of adding a third point of access – in particular as the project is making a significant effort to provide access from North Washington Street to the wharf – this theme of access should be maintained throughout.

Beverly Way

The revised building massing will improve Beverly Way’s pedestrian environment, and we believe that the crossroads marker will become an important element in the streetscape. These are welcome changes since the previous filing.

We continue to have concerns about the garage operations and their impact on pedestrians walking in Beverly Way. The description of the queuing area for cars awaiting entry into the garage, and the “one-way” curb cut for exiting drivers is not clear and we would like to see those movements shown on a site plan. The concern is simply that the shared use entry plaza should be as safe as possible for pedestrians, and that vehicles should not be making any surprising turns or be queued across this zone.

As we noted in prior comments, in order to enhance views toward the water, and into the site from Causeway Street, several elements of the landscaping and design require careful attention so that the development’s site design reinforces the City’s aspirations for the Harborwalk and waterfront. These include:

- Ensuring that views to the water remain unobstructed by planting or site furniture. Trees should be limbed up to allow vistas below the canopy.
- Consistent lighting fixtures and lamp types should clearly indicate a seamless connection from Causeway Street to Beverly Way to the Harborwalk beyond. Lighting design (including the types of fixtures and their location) should be based on defining the overall pedestrian space and entries.

North Washington Street

The relationship of Lovejoy Wharf to North Washington Street is also critical to the success of the project. The new concept of an “art screen” at the railing overlooking Lovejoy Place is a welcome addition.

In order to attract people to the waterfront and to the proposed facilities of public accommodation in the building, pedestrians on North Washington Street must perceive the site as attractive and accessible. The creation of the small pavilion building to create a connection between the street and wharf levels is a good way to make this connection, but additional measures will be needed. Several issues should be considered as the project progresses:

- As the design of the pavilion building progresses we hope that its attractiveness to passing pedestrians will be very carefully thought out. If pedestrians using the Freedom Trail are to be attracted to the pavilion and to Lovejoy Place, the pavilion will need to have a compelling presence on North Washington Street.
- Further enlivening the sidewalk of North Washington Street through paving, lighting, window displays, flowers, and other elements should be considered, though they should not narrow the walking right of way. In addition to the “art screen,” the description to date simply includes a re-paved sidewalk.

We look forward to seeing the project’s more detailed designs.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Wendy Landman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Wendy Landman
Executive Director