

February 19, 2015

Tyler Norod
Senior Project Manager
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

Re: The Chain Forge Hotel

Dear Mr. Norod:

The Friends of the Charlestown Navy Yard (the "FCNY") is a non-profit, public interest organization that works to improve the quality of life for residents of and visitors to the Charlestown Navy Yard. The FCNY has over 200 members who are Charlestown residents and businesses. We promote responsible development in the Navy Yard consistent with its historical character and National Historic Landmark Designation.

One the most important issues we face is the proposed and eventual build out of the Historic Monument Area ("HMA"). We thank the Authority for the allowing us the opportunity to comment on the Chain Forge Hotel proposal. As a threshold matter, FCNY strongly supports this long anticipated, and important, redevelopment initiative. The current state of the dilapidated Chain Forge building has long been an unsightly blight on the neighborhood, and at times posing a palpable danger to pedestrians and cars due to debris and ice falling from the failing roof. The proposal cleanup and conversion of the Chain Forge to a productive use is a crucial step in the HMA build out. Please carefully consider our comments below.

Parking and Traffic

FCNY representatives have raised parking and traffic concerns about both the proposed redevelopment and future HMA redevelopment. FCNY feels that the limited parking situation in the Navy Yard has reached a critical point and needs to be addressed. A short-term solution is creating additional on-street parking in the Navy Yard. Suggestions that 13th and 16th streets are wide enough to accommodate on-street parking should be followed up. FCNY urges that the TAPA agreement between the City and the developer include: a) a plan to better regulate 1st Avenue with simple and inexpensive traffic calming measures; b) examining a traffic circulation plan that utilizes Gates 5 and 6 and away from Gate 4, prohibiting delivery and construction trucks from using Gate 4 and traversing the entire internal length of the Yard, and keeping them on Chelsea Street until Gates 5 and 6 ; and c) the recalibration of the Gate 4 traffic light to allow an better flow of traffic exiting the Yard (regardless of traffic study data, Gate 4 is a failed intersection, primarily due to the timing of the traffic light).

In addition, both the Chain Forge redevelopment and the Ropewalk redevelopment should provide the impetus for the demolition of the completely deteriorated Building

108. Building 108 is an environmental and safety threat, as well as an eyesore that dominates the Navy Yard's skyline for the tens of thousands of persons who drive over the Tobin Bridge every day, signaling that the Navy Yard is not a desirable place to visit, live, or do business. It has been suggested that the Building 108 site would be an ideal spot for additional parking, which should be further investigated. Finally, FCNY challenges the recent transportation studies that utilize the assumption that FCNY traffic will increase by a scant 1% annually, we believe that the annual increase is higher and that a larger increase should be factored into future traffic studies.

FCNY also challenges the assumption that 35% of the hotel's clientele will arrive by foot. While on the surface, it appears that the Yard is well-served by public transportation and within walking distance, the reality is that: a) the water shuttle is not close enough for travelers with luggage to walk to the hotel; and b) the two closest subway stops are a mile away. FCNY suggests that the developer explore shuttle service for its guests, possibly incorporated with an airport shuttle service that offers to residents a discounted rate.

Historic Guidelines

FCNY would like a copy of the Historic Monument Area Guidelines that are to be revised as soon as they are available. FCNY feels strongly that in the future any proposed changes to the Guidelines be subject to the community process. FCNY currently has no objection to the proposed changes to the Guidelines that are specific to this important redevelopment only, but wants to insure that future, and possibly more far-reaching modifications are properly vetted. FCNY's concern is that through an incremental modification process, that the Guidelines lose efficacy, cohesion and meaning. The Guidelines are little known and understood in the community and its role in HMA development should be more transparent at both the local and federal levels.

Site Design

It is indisputable that the building design is a great improvement over existing conditions. FCNY has no issues with the proposed addition to make the project more economically feasible. FCNY appreciates the developer's willingness to move the restaurant entrance further down 9th Street, both from a logistical and business perspective. That said, FCNY views the redevelopment as a great opportunity to activate and beautify the often-neglected 2nd Avenue pedestrian walkway and view corridor. It is the seam of the HMA and warrants special attention. FCNY is pleased that the developer shares that vision and is working with the BRA to explore funding for such activation. Adequate screening of the loading dock is important in that regard, as well making the project's impacts on 2nd Avenue as minimal as possible. In other words, FCNY views 2nd Avenue as an important public venue which should be functionally annexed by adjoining property owners. An improved and vital 2nd Avenue has the potential to be an economic driver in the Yard (i.e., increased retail services and tourist trade). FCNY welcomes future participation in the activation of 2nd Avenue.

FCNY urges the developer to be more aggressive in its pursuit of LEED certification wherever possible, but is also mindful of the challenging economics of the project (i.e., the total construction costs is estimated as \$100,000 more per hotel room). FCNY also asks that the developer develop a low-impact lighting plan to reduce its impact on its neighbors. Trash removal and delivery time schedules should be mindful of abutters.

In closing, FCNY is very excited by the proposal. We encourage the developer and eventual operator to be involved with the community and to work together with the YMCA/Constitution Inn to lessen its impact on the Y's business, as well as utilize local businesses to service the hotel (e.g., catering, if used) and hire local residents when possible. FCNY looks forward to continuing the positive dialogue with the developer - redeveloping the Chain Forge is a challenging task that will require positive collaboration between all parties and we appreciate our inclusion in the process.

Sincerely,

Michael Parker - Chair
Lois Siegelman - President
Marion Dancy - Past President

Cc: Councilor LaMattina
Thomas McKay