



NORTH END / WATERFRONT RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

August 10, 2022

Mayor Michelle Wu  
One City Hall  
Boston, MA 02201

Christine Araujo, Chairwoman  
City of Boston Board of Appeal  
1010 Massachusetts Avenue, Fifth Floor  
Boston, MA 02118

James Arthur Jemison II, Chief of Planning/Director  
Boston Planning and Development Agency  
One City Hall, Ninth Floor  
Boston, MA 02201

Re: North End Cross Street Boutique Hotel Project

Dear Mayor Wu, Chair Araujo, and Mr. Jemison:

North End/Waterfront Residents' Association (NEWRA) is extremely concerned about, and strongly opposed to, the abdication of community process that has occurred with respect to the proposed North End Cross Street Hotel Project (the "Project").

We understand that the Project has been placed on the agenda for the August 23, 2022, Zoning Board of Appeals ("ZBA") hearing prior to the occurrence of any public abutters' meetings or any appearances by the Developer before either NEWRA or the North End Waterfront Neighborhood Council ("NEWNC"). While an earlier version of the Project did undergo the first steps of the Article 80 BPDA Large Project Review process, the modified version of the Project that was "approved" by the BPDA and submitted to the City of Boston Inspectional Services Department ("ISD"), resulting in the issuance by ISD of a denial letter, did not undergo any public review at all.

Public review and comment on the Project effectively ended with the Supplemental Filing submitted by the Project developer in September of 2021. The Project purportedly approved by the BPDA in March of 2022 was not the same project that had been presented to the public in the Supplemental Filing. Changes to the proposed Project were only presented by the developer verbally at a Zoom meeting on February 16, 2022 but were never available to the public in written form of any sort for review. Those changes included, among other things, increased use of the roof area resulting in ISD's determination, as set forth in the denial letter, that the proposed building is greater than both the 1 story height limit under Article 54, Section 18 and the 55-foot height limit.

The result of this lack of public process is that the ZBA will be hearing, on August 23, a project that was "approved" by BPDA, but never presented to the public, including but not limited to the Project's IAG, NEWRA and NEWNC. To our knowledge, this complete abdication of public process has not occurred before in Article 80 Large Project review.

The Project is a sizable hotel project with restaurants and other ancillary uses that will have many major impacts on the North End community, Cutillo Park and the Rose Kennedy Greenway. These impacts have been documented by NEWRA and other organizations in letters submitted to the BPDA in connection with the Project as originally proposed; we refer you to those letters and are happy to provide copies. We also expressed, in letters following the February 16, 2022, Zoom meeting, our serious concerns with the procedural defects concerning that meeting.

This lack of public process flies in the face of everything we have been told that the City's new Mayoral administration and new BPDA leadership stand for. Our concern is not only with the lack of proper public process prior to the Project being heard by the ZBA. We are also concerned that the BPDA process did not address impacts directly related to the zoning violations and conditional uses that are intended to be addressed by the ZBA in a public forum and with community input, including the impact of excessive height and the impacts to abutters specified under Article 54, Section 18. It is our understanding that the BPDA and the ZBA are independent agencies with the authority and obligation for independent review and public process. The Article 80 process and BPDA approval should not relieve the ZBA of its obligations, including considering public comment regarding projects and their impacts.

NEWRA and NEWNC are the key North End community civic organizations. NEWRA is an association run by its membership, and NEWNC is a City established body elected by community residents. Input from each community group is vital to the ZBA process. Project developers are generally required by the ZBA to present their projects to each of NEWRA and NEWNC prior to appearing before the ZBA to obtain zoning relief. There is no apparent reason why the Project proponent should not be required to take the same steps prior to being heard by the ZBA.

We must insist that the Project be removed from the August 23 ZBA agenda, and the Project proponent be required to present the final Project (as submitted to ISD) to each of NEWRA and NEWNC.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Delgreco  
President, NEWRA

cc: Mayor Michelle Wu  
Senator Lydia Edwards  
Representative Aaron Michlewitz  
District 1 Councilor Gabriella Coletta  
John Romano, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services  
Ciara D'Amico, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services  
Joel Faller, President, North End/Waterfront Neighborhood Council