

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

May 16, 2019

This is a public hearing before the Boston Redevelopment Authority, doing business as, the Boston Planning & Development Agency, being held in conformance with Article 80 of the Boston Zoning Code, to consider the 15-19 Congress Street Notice of Project Change in Downtown as a Development Impact Project.

The hearing was duly advertised on May 1, 2019 in the Boston Herald.

In a BPDA hearing on a proposed petition by the Agency, staff members will first present their case and are subject to questioning by members of the Agency. Thereafter, others who wish to speak in favor of the proposed petition are afforded an opportunity to do so under the same rules of questioning. Following that, those who wish to speak in opposition may do so, again under the same rules of questioning. Finally, the proponents are allowed a period of five to ten minutes for rebuttal if they so desire.

In an effort to accommodate all who would like to speak about this proposal, each person will be given up to two minutes to comment. BPDA staff will indicate when thirty seconds remain. At that time, please conclude your remarks so that the hearing may continue and others may be heard.

Mr. Sinatra will present.

Doc# 26
7816

BOARD APPROVED

MEMORANDUM

MAY 16, 2019

TO: BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
D/B/A BOSTON PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (BPDA)¹
AND BRIAN P. GOLDEN, DIRECTOR

FROM: JONATHAN GREELEY, DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT REVIEW
MICHAEL CHRISTOPHER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR DEVELOPMENT
REVIEW/GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS
ALEXA PINARD, URBAN DESIGNER II
KENNAN RHYNE, SENIOR PLANNER II
MICHAEL SINATRA, PROJECT MANAGER

SUBJECT: PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER THE NOTICE OF PROJECT CHANGE FOR
15-19 CONGRESS STREET AS A DEVELOPMENT IMPACT PROJECT,
DOWNTOWN

SUMMARY: This Memorandum requests, that the Boston Redevelopment Authority ("BRA") d/b/a/ Boston Planning & Development Agency ("BPDA"): (1) authorize the Director to issue a Determination waiving further review pursuant to Article 80A-6 of the Boston Zoning Code (the "Code") in connection with a Notice of Project Change ("NPC") filed by Hemisphere Development Group, LLC (the "Proponent"), on January 31, 2019, for the 15-19 Congress Street Project (the "Proposed Project"); (2) authorize the Director to issue one or more Certifications of Compliance or Partial Certifications of Compliance for the Proposed Project pursuant to Section 80B-6 of the Code, upon successful completion of Article 80 Large Project Review; and (3) authorize the Director to enter into a Development Impact Project Agreement, Cooperation Agreement, Boston Residents Construction Employment Plan, along with any and all other agreements and documents that the Director deems appropriate and necessary in connection with the Proposed Project.

¹ Effective October 20, 2016, the BRA commenced doing business as BPDA.

PROJECT SITE

The project site is an approximately 5,010 square-foot parcel located at 15-19 Congress Street, in the Financial District of Downtown Boston (the "Project Site"), and currently contains two vacant, connected buildings of varying height. The Proposed Project is one of the three components of the Congress Square Project. The Project Site is bounded by Quaker Lane to the north, south and west, and Congress Street to the east.

DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The Development Team for the Proposed Project consists of:

Proponent: Hemisphere Development Group, LLC
800 Boylston Street, Suite 2330
Boston, MA 02199

Architect: Finegold Alexander Architects
77 N Washington Street, #7
Boston, MA 02114

Legal Counsel: Reuben, Junius & Rose, LLP
Jared Eigerman
171 High Street
Newburyport, MA 01950
978-376-6355

Permitting Consultants: Epsilon Associates, Inc.
3 Mill & Main Place, Suite 250
Maynard, MA 01754
(978) 897-7100

Transportation and Parking Consultant: Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.
99 High Street, 10th Floor
Boston, MA 02110
(617) 728-7777

Civil Engineer:

Nitsch Engineering
2 Center Plaza, Suite 430
Boston, MA 02108

LEED Consultant:

Nauset Strategies/Wharf Partners
Christine McMahon
One Design Place, Suite 638
Boston, MA 02210
617-270-8640

PROJECT HISTORY

The Proposed Project is part of the larger Congress Square Project that underwent Large Project Review by the BRA in 2014 and 2015.

The original Congress Square Project planned to maintain the existing buildings at 15 Congress Street and 19 Congress Street and add a five-story addition to 15 Congress Street. These buildings were contemplated as the residential component of the Congress Square Project, with approximately 51,250 square feet of residential space (35 residential condominiums), and approximately 5,750 square feet of street-level retail/restaurant space.

A Letter of Intent for the Congress Square Project was submitted on October 31, 2014, followed by an Expanded Project Notification Form ("Expanded PNF") on March 25, 2015. After submission of the Expanded PNF, a Scoping Session at the BRA was held on April 13, 2015, followed by an Impact Advisory Group ("IAG") meeting on the same day.

A project update letter for the Congress Square Project was submitted on May 19, 2015, which included updated information on the other components of the Congress Square Project, but did not change the 15 Congress Street component. The comment period was then extended one month to June 29, 2015. During that time, another IAG meeting, to review the proposed changes, was held on June 22, 2015.

The Boston Civic Design Commission ("BCDC") voted to recommend approval of the Congress Square Project design on July 7, 2015. On July 16, 2015, the BRA Board held a public hearing and voted to consider the proposed Congress Square Project as a Development Impact Project. The Boston Landmarks Commission ("BLC")

issued its design review approval with provisos on January 26, 2016. The BPDA Director issued a Scoping Determination Waiving Further Review on May 24, 2016.

In 2018, the Proponent purchased the property and development rights. On January 31, 2019, the Proponent submitted the NPC, which includes the proposed change in use from residential to hotel. An Impact Advisory Group meeting was held on February 25, 2019, at the Hyatt Regency Boston, and was lightly attended. The meeting was advertised on the BPDA website and distributed to the BPDA Downtown mailing list. The comment period for the Proposed Project closed on March 4, 2019.

DESCRIPTION AND PROGRAM

The Proposed Project includes the following changes to the 2016 approved Congress Square Project, as described in the NPC filed by the Proponent on January 31, 2019:

- Change the use from residential to hotel, thus exchanging the originally-proposed 35 condominium units for approximately 116 hotel guest rooms.
- Provide approximately 3,100 square feet for ground floor retail/restaurant space, as opposed to the 5,750 square feet originally proposed.
- Locate a hotel lobby on the north side of the Project Site.

The Proposed Project continues to propose a five-story addition to 15 Congress Street.

ZONING

The Project Site is located within Subdistrict M, which is a "Medium Growth Subdistrict" of the Downtown Interim Planning Overlay District ("IPOD"), the zoning controls for which are set forth in Article 27D of the Code.

DEVELOPMENT IMPACT PROJECT ("DIP") EXACTIONS

Due to the square footage and uses within the Proposed Project, which is part of the larger Congress Square project, it is considered a Development Impact Project ("DIP") and is therefore subject to DIP exactions for the office/retail uses in excess of 100,000 square feet. With this addition of 54,350 square feet of hotel/retail

resulting from this project, the total number of square feet of DIP uses will be approximately 412,650 square feet of DIP uses subject to DIP exactions.

Pursuant to the provisions of Article 80, Section 80B-7 of the Code, the Proposed Project will provide estimated linkage funds of \$453,270 for the Housing Exaction and \$90,764.50 for the Jobs Exaction pursuant to the provisions of Article 80, Section 80B-7 of the Code. The estimated addition to the linkage payments are calculated as follows:

Housing Linkage:

54,350 SF
X \$8.34

\$ 453,270.00

Jobs Linkage:

54,350 SF
X \$1.67

\$ 90,764.50

COMMUNITY BENEFITS AND MITIGATION

1. Recipient: Boston Transportation Department ("BTD")

Address: Boston City Hall, 7th Floor
Boston, MA 02201

Use: The contribution will be used to the Congress Street BRT project which will be included in the Transportation Access Plan Agreement ("TAPA").

Amount: \$35,000

Timeline: The payment shall be made payable to the BRA upon issuance of the building permit by the City of Boston Inspectional Services Department ("ISD") and the BRA will distribute as outlined above.

RECOMMENDATION

Approvals have been requested of the BPDA pursuant to Article 80, Section 80B of the Code for the issuance of a Scoping Determination waiving the requirement of further review pursuant to Article 80, Section 80B-5.3(d) of the Code, and for the

issuance of a Certification of Compliance under Section 80B-5 upon successful completion of the Article 80 review process. In accordance with Section 80B-5.3(d) of the Code, the BRA may issue a Determination Waiving Further Review if the NPC, together with any additional material and comments received by the BPDA prior to the issuance of the Determination, are found to adequately describe the impacts of the Proposed Project and offer appropriate mitigation of such impacts.

BPDA staff believes that the NPC meets the criteria for the issuance of a Determination Waiving Further Review. It is therefore recommended that the BPDA: (1) authorize the Director to issue a Determination waiving further review pursuant to Article 80A-6 of the Boston Zoning Code (the "Code") in connection with a Notice of Project Change ("NPC") filed by Hemisphere Development Group, LLC (the "Proponent"), on January 31, 2019, for the 15-19 Congress Street Project (the "Proposed Project"); (2) authorize the Director to issue one or more Certifications of Compliance or Partial Certifications of Compliance for the Proposed Project pursuant to Section 80B-6 of the Code, upon successful completion of Article 80 Large Project Review; and (3) authorize the Director to enter into a Development Impact Project Agreement, Cooperation Agreement, Boston Residents Construction Employment Plan, along with any and all other agreements and documents that the Director deems appropriate and necessary in connection with the Proposed Project.

Appropriate votes follows:

VOTED: That the Director be, and hereby is, authorized to issue a Scoping Determination under Section 80B-5.3(d) of the Boston Zoning Code (the "Code"), which (i) finds that the Project Notification Form ("PNF") adequately describes the potential impacts arising from the proposed 15-19 Congress Street project (the "Proposed Project"), and provides sufficient mitigation measures to minimize these impacts, and (ii) waives further review of the Proposed Project under subsections 4 and 5 of Section 80B-5 of the Code, subject to continuing design review by the Boston Redevelopment Authority ("BRA"); and

FURTHER VOTED: That the Director be, and hereby is, authorized to issue a Certification of Compliance for the Proposed Project upon the successful completion of all Article 80 processes; and

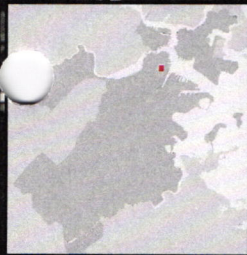
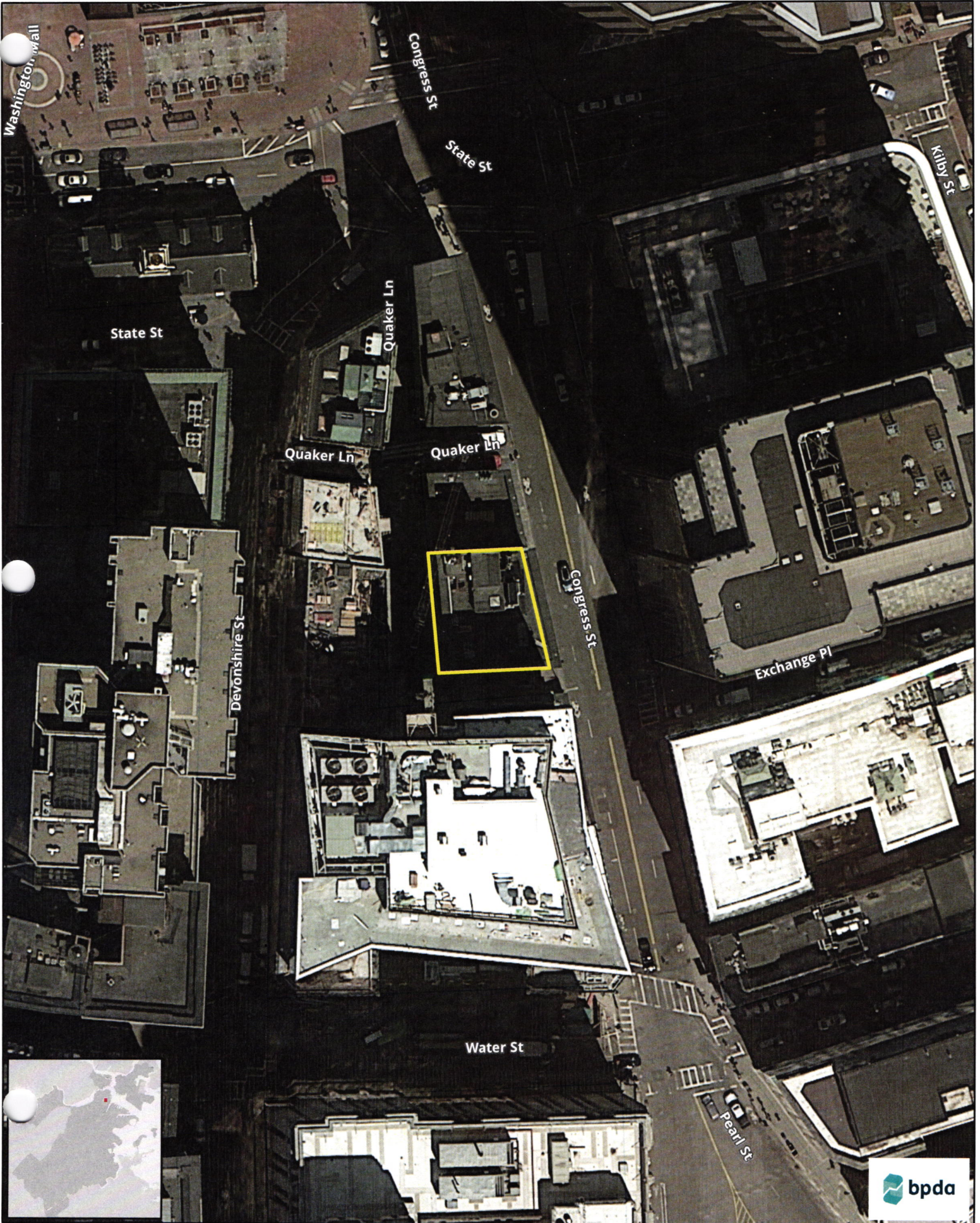
FURTHER

VOTED:

That the Director be, and hereby is, authorized to execute a Development Impact Project Agreement, a Cooperation Agreement, a Boston Residents Construction Employment Plan, and any and all other agreements and documents which the Director deems appropriate and necessary in connection with the Proposed Project, all upon terms and conditions determined to be in the best interests of the BRA.

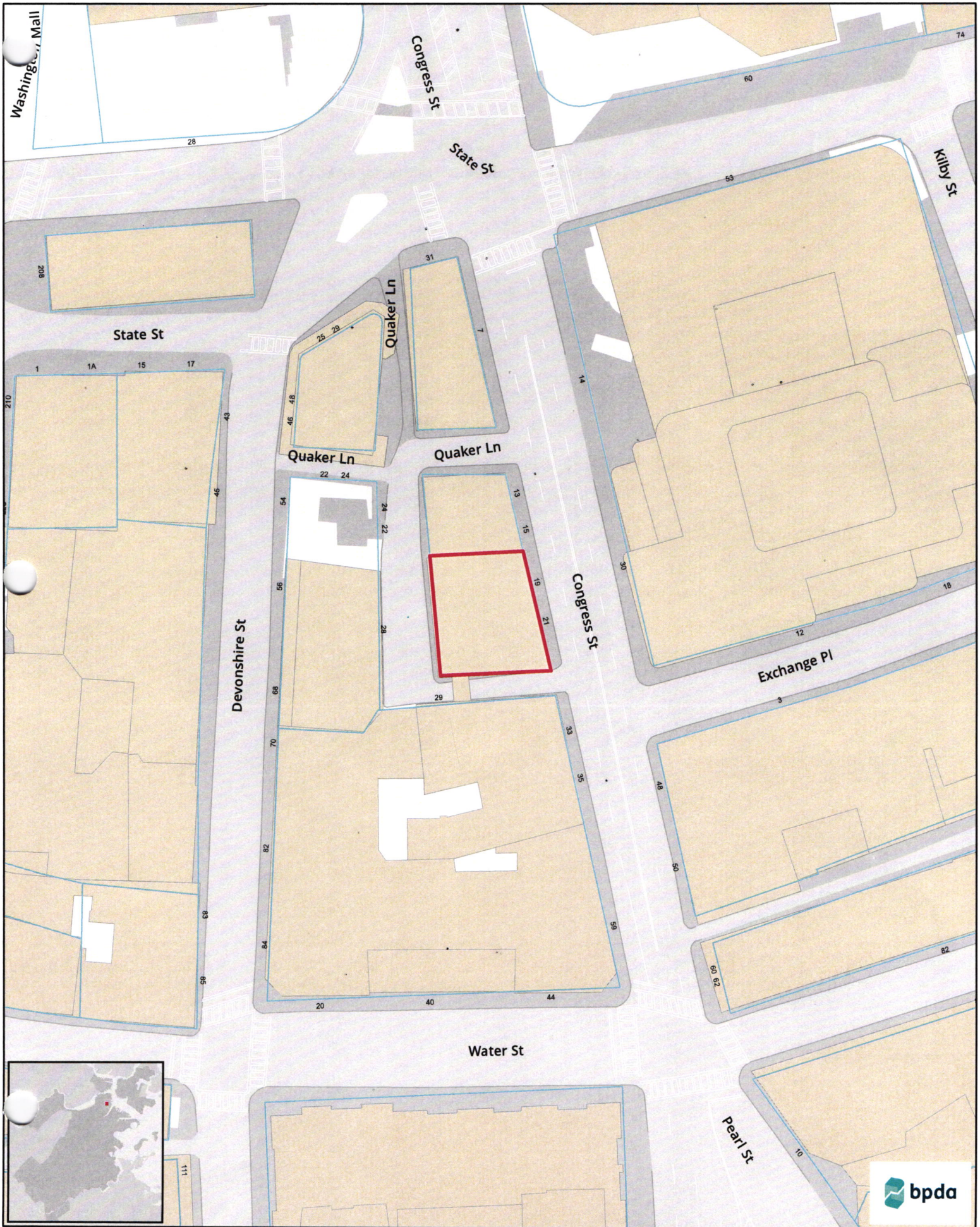
19 Congress Street, Downtown

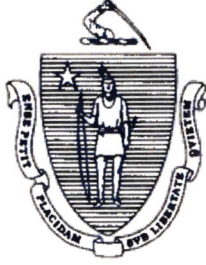
1:800



19 Congress Street, Downtown

1:800





The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
MASSACHUSETTS SENATE

SENATOR JOSEPH A. BONCORE
First Suffolk and Middlesex District

STATE HOUSE, ROOM 112
BOSTON, MA 02133-1053
TEL. (617) 722-1634
FAX (617) 722-1076

JOSEPH.BONCORE@MASENATE.GOV
WWW.MASENATE.GOV

March 4, 2019

Mr. Michael Sinatra
Boston Planning and Development Agency
1 City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

RE: 15 Congress Street

Mr. Sinatra,

I am pleased to comment on the proposed hotel at 15 Congress Street. I have received feedback from constituents in the hotel industry in regard to traffic mitigation as it relates to Hotel use on this site.

Constituents who are familiar with hotel operations and transportation related issues at hotels downtown have expressed concern to me in regard to (1) how a pick up and drop off would work on Quaker lane at this proposed hotel and (2) the amount of automobile-related pick up and drop off this hotel will create on Congress Street.

In regard to the first issue, according to your filing the proposed hotel and restaurant will add 140 new automobile trips on a weekday, with the intended pick up and drop off location to be on a side street with a single load corridor currently known as Quaker Lane. For this pick up and drop off location to be successful the operator of the automobile would need to be familiar with Congress Square and access this single load corridor via Devonshire Street where a 163 key hotel and full service restaurant just opened. Even if pick up and drop offs would occur at this location, the proposal assumes no waiting time as a backup of cars waiting for guests would spill out onto Devonshire. Similarly, the proponent assumes deliveries will happen on Quaker Lane and distributors would keep deliveries to off-hours. We all know this is rarely the case in reality.

This leads to the second issue: While the proponents intention is to have pick up and drop off on Quaker Lane, we know that with the proliferation of TNC's in the City of Boston there is a high probability that both TNC, taxi and other modes of vehicular pick up and drop off will occur on

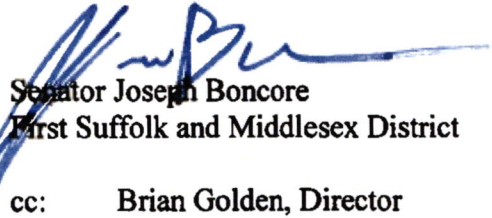
Chairman
JOINT COMMITTEE ON HOUSING
AND
JOINT COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
Vice Chairman
JOINT COMMITTEE ON HEALTHCARE FINANCING

FINANCIAL SERVICES
GLOBAL WARMING AND CLIMATE CHANGE
REVENUE

Congress Street. While this is not the proponents' intention, it is the reality of this new mode of transportation. A hotel guest or restaurant patron will simply see the hotel or restaurant sign on Congress Street and remark "you can let me off here" creating a dangerous situation for other motorists, cyclists and hotel employees.

I encourage the proponent to engage with hotel employees in regard to these issues or retain the projects approved residential use and help provide more housing here in the City of Boston.

Sincerely,



Senator Joseph Boncore
First Suffolk and Middlesex District

cc: Brian Golden, Director
Jonathan Greeley, Director of Development Review

Michael Sinatra
BPDA
One City Hall, Ninth Floor
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Michael Sinatra,

My name is Khalid Zidouh and I am against the proposed hotel at 15 Congress Street. As a hotel doorman, I know how bad traffic is in this city. Putting a hotel drop off area on Quaker Street is going to be a mess. There's going to be increased traffic on Devonshire and confusion on Congress Streets. Already during rush hour, Congress Street is simply too busy. All that traffic is going to get in the way of people and luggage trying to get safely in and out of the hotel and put the guests and the doormen at risk of getting injured. That's why its so important for you to not allow this project to become a hotel.

Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Khalid Zidouh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'K'.

Michael Sinatra

BPDA

1 City Hall, 9th Floor

Boston, MA 02201

Re: 15 Congress Street Hotel

Dear Project Manager Sinatra,

I am writing to you today to let you know about my opposition to the proposed hotel at 15 Congress Street. My name is Edmilson Romao and I am a doorman and Boston resident. The hotel project will take up Quaker Lane for its drop off. This will cause increased traffic back-ups onto Devonshire Street and confused hotel guests will end up dropping off on Congress Street. I worry that this will be a safety hazard to doormen like me and visitors to our city. Congress Street is busy and has all kinds of traffic. Safety should be our number one priority and I don't see that in this project.

Thank you,

Edmilson Romão

Michael Sinatra
Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall, Ninth Floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02201

Dear Michael Sinatra,

My name is Richard Aliferis and I am writing to you as a long-time Beacon Hill resident and doorman at the Omni Parker House. I want to let you know that I am opposed to the proposed hotel at 15 Congress Street.

My experience as a doorman has shown me how to stay safe and manage traffic while assisting visitors to our city. The proposed hotel at 15 Congress Street is at the corner of Quaker Lane and Congress Street. The developer wants to put the pick-up and drop-off area right on Quaker Lane, blocking the road. I can also see visitors to the hotel blocking Congress Street because the route to Quaker Lane from Devonshire Street is very complicated. I can't see this proposal working out without increased traffic and a safety risk to hotel employees and hotel guests.

Thank you for taking my thoughts into consideration.

Respectfully,

Richard Aliferis

Michael Sinatra
Project Manager
BPDA
1 City Hall, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201

Michael Sinatra,

My name is Nick Panagakos and have been a doorman at the Ames Hotel on Court Street in Boston. I am writing to you regarding the 15 Congress Street hotel project. I am opposed to this project and I don't think that the BPDA should approve it. The proposed hotel has its guest loading area directly on Quaker Lane.

Now, I know a few things about working at a hotel without a driveway – the Ames doesn't have one. However, unlike the Congress Street hotel, the Ames has its drop off right on the main street. It's difficult enough without a driveway, but the confusion of having the drop off on Quaker Lane would be too much. I can't imagine how much more difficult it would be to try to do my job in that confusion.

That's why I am asking the BPDA to not approve this project until these safety issues are worked out.

Sincerely,



Nicholas Panagakos

Michael Sinatra

BPDA

1 City Hall, Boston, MA 02108

Dear Michael Sinatra,

My name is Juan Eusebio and I am writing to you about the proposed hotel at 15 Congress Street. As a longtime doorman at the W Hotel, I am opposed to this project. I feel that the hotel's choice of Quaker Lane for a drop off site is too small and would lead to traffic backing up onto Devonshire Street. I also believe that because the front of the hotel is on Congress Street, many visitors and guests will end up trying to unload there. This will result in an unsafe situation on a particularly narrow stretch of Congress Street. Hotel doormen and other employees would be spending effort to both re-direct guests in a confusing network of streets and make sure that everyone remains safe. For these reasons, I am asking the project to not be approved.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Juan Eusebio".

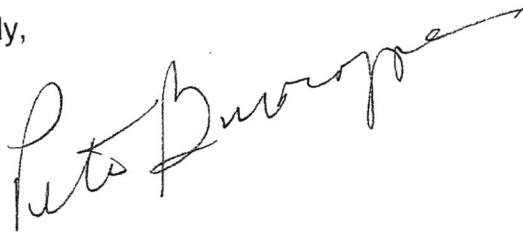
Mr. Michael Sinatra
Boston Planning and Development Agency
1 City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

Mr. Sinatra,

My name is Peter Buonopane and I am writing to oppose the 15 Congress Street hotel. Congress Street is a busy street. While the pick up and drop off for this proposed hotel may be on Quaker Lane, as a doorman here in Boston I know that Uber and Lyfts will just drop off on Congress Street. While this is not what anyone wants, it is what will happen. This puts people in my profession, in addition to people driving and biking, in a bad position.

This project was originally residential. I think the city should keep it that way and allow for hotels on streets that can accommodate them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Buonopane". The signature is written in a cursive style and is slanted upwards to the right.



ED FLYNN
BOSTON CITY COUNCILOR
DISTRICT 2

March 4th, 2019

Mr. Michael Sinatra
Boston Planning and Development Agency,
Boston City Hall
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Mr. Sinatra,

I am writing to encourage the developer of the proposed hotel at 15 Congress Street to work with our Boston's doormen and bellmen to mitigate traffic at this new hotel and to help create economic opportunities and partnerships similar to those created at the Hyatt Centric next to this hotel. I cannot support a project that does not take into consideration the years of experience our city's hospitality professionals can provide as it relates to both traffic and economic development.

Congress Street is a busy main thoroughfare for many commuters. While the intention is to have pick up and drop off on Quaker Lane, we know from experience Uber, Lyft and rideshare operations will often simply drop off where they please. This is also a public safety issue. This would be devastating to those who travel down Congress Street. I encourage the developer to either keep the project as housing or work with the doormen and bellmen who attended the public meeting to find ways to mitigate this issue.

Secondly, the effects of new development on rising rents and low paying jobs still impact residents who live in Chinatown, South End and South Boston. While affordable housing is a chief concern among many residents, a good job with good benefits alleviates some of the net increases in rents we see in places like Chinatown. As the developer heard at the IAG meeting, there is a desire from neighborhood residents to make sure women, people of color and Boston residents are represented among the proposed hotel's workforce. Codifying this commitment in a formal way with the community will ensure that this project benefits Boston in a substantial way.

There is an established understanding that hotel development in Boston is one of the few opportunities to create many good, diverse jobs for those with or without a college degree. I encourage this development team to carry on this tradition and work with the Boston City Council to ensure this project helps the working people of Boston.

Edward M. Flynn

Ed Flynn, Boston City Councilor, District 2

3/4/2019

CC: Brian Golden, Director
Jonathan Greeley, Director of Development Review



FRIENDS
OF
POST OFFICE
SQUARE

50 FEDERAL STREET
BOSTON, MA 02110

TEL: 617-423-1500
FAX: 617-423-0507

Pamela C. Messenger
direct line:

February 26, 2019

Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall Square, 9th floor
Boston, MA 02201
Attention: Michael Sinatra

Re: Comments and caution in support of the NPC on 15-19 Congress Street, Ward 3

Dear BPDA Members:

As a member of the Impact Advisory Group for the review of Related Beal's Expanded Project Notification Form for Congress Square, I wrote a letter in May, 2015 supporting many ideas in their proposed renovation of the former Fidelity block. The new owners of the 15-19 Congress Street portion of the project have filed a Notice of Project Change to replace 35 residential condominiums with a 116-room boutique hotel.

While we preferred the plan to bring residents to this part of the Financial District, we agree with the owner/developer that a boutique hotel will also bring an after-hours positive presence to the block. We reiterate our support of retaining the historic building facades and the distinctive fire stairs. The proposed additional floors add interest. We are pleased to see large, open windows into the hotel lobby and restaurant on the first floor along Congress Street which will open and brighten up this very imposing block.

I urge that no portion of Congress Street be used for stopping, parking, hotel/restaurant valet parking or unloading *at any time*, as this is an essential artery through the Financial District at all hours. We support the change of use to boutique hotel with a restaurant on the first floor, with clear windows to animate and activate the street well beyond the close of the business day, as this will help eliminate a dark and dreary section of the walk from Post Office Square to Faneuil Hall.

Sincerely,

Pamela C. Messenger
General Manager



Project Comment Submission: 15-19 Congress Street

1 message

kentico@boston.gov <kentico@boston.gov>

Tue, Feb 12, 2019 at 11:10 AM

To: BRAWebContent@cityofboston.gov, michael.a.sinatra@boston.gov, jeff.ng@boston.gov, comment_email_processor@o-2zlaqa64yog14nfnqlzmbrrpfox00q4is2vvlpd3irp6a8fovy.36-1heureao.na30.apex.salesforce.com

CommentsSubmissionFormID: 4972

Form inserted: 2/12/2019 11:10:39 AM

Form updated: 2/12/2019 11:10:39 AM

Document Name: [15-19 Congress Street](#)

Document Name Path: /Development/Development Projects/15-19 Congress Street

Origin Page Url: /projects/development-projects/15-19-congress-street?utm_source=Neighborhoods&utm_campaign=9b44c5d63a-15-19_Congress_St_IAG_Meeting_2_12_2019&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_bccda74844-9b44c5d63a-274785941&mc_cid=9b44c5d63a&mc_eid=072eb20c6b

First Name: Patrick

Last Name: Higgins

Organization:

Email:

Street Address: [18 Romsey St](#)

Address Line 2: Apt 2

City: Dorchester

State: MA

Phone:

Zip: 02125

Opinion: Oppose

Comments: I understand the need for the property owner/developer to make money, but Boston also has a housing crisis. There are plenty of hotels in Boston. How is it that a developer planned for 35 condos and suddenly decided that instead they will add 116 hotel rooms? I'm willing to bet they planned on this being a hotel all along.

PMContact: michael.a.sinatra@boston.gov

Project ID: 3253