

Charlestown has lost an important advocate and neighbor with the passing of Bill Lamb. I have had a number of jobs and projects over time that intersected with Bill's advocacy and vision for Charlestown. A thoughtful and creative architect, Bill's down to earth manner and willingness to find solutions to the most difficult design problems were critical in bringing many improved projects to fruition.

The Big Dig is when I first saw Bill's calm resolve in action. He participated as a community member and designer with others in the "Scheme Z" Charles River Crossing debate. Extremely problematic, it was named Scheme Z because it was the twenty-sixth proposal given by highway planners and the twenty-sixth letter of the alphabet, and it brought on the ire of residents and businesses alike.

It was also called the "Spaghetti Transit Solution" because of the negative impacts that the many ramps, huge structures, barriers and increased noise and pollution levels would impose on Charlestown. Bill saw the opportunity to create a bridge that allowed for the connection of the Charles River Parks to Boston Harbor and a smaller and more elegant series of ramps and barriers.

To say that Bill had vision and the long view is an understatement. He sat through endless meetings with highway designers, city planners, and business and community leaders. But through Bill's persistence, thoughtful suggestions and advocacy, a better solution did indeed result. New parks were created, and a more modest solution was undertaken by Swiss Engineer Christian Menni that resulted in the Leonard Zakim Bunker Hill Bridge. This bridge today is an icon of 21st century Boston and a source of pride to most in Charlestown.

Bill and I both worked on historic preservation and environmental issues in different capacities. Through the Charlestown Preservation Society's Design Review Committee, Bill helped to save, shape and improve many of Charlestown's historic and non-historic structures. He spent endless volunteer hours working for the betterment of his community while establishing his own successful architectural practice.

I can also attest on a personal level to Bill's handling of difficult clients. He redesigned my kitchen and helped me to see the potential instead of the limitations of a difficult space. He made what seemed to me to be hopeless choices of colors, cabinets, fixtures, flooring less stressful with a wonderful end result.

Bill and his wife Carol are part of the fabric of Charlestown. As property owners, neighbors and participants in civic life, they have given so much to the community. Because of their work and many others, Charlestown is a much more attractive and livable neighborhood today. Yet I am sure Bill would tell us all "there is so much more to do."

Antonia Pollak is the former Director of the Boston Preservation Alliance, former Director of the City of Boston Environment Department, former Commissioner of the Boston Parks and Recreation Department, and a former Charlestown resident.