



Wednesday, June 8, 2022

Dear Neighbor,

Our mission at the Charlestown Preservation Society (CPS) is to preserve Charlestown's historical character by protecting our historic architecture and landscape; advocating for preservation; guiding responsible development; and educating people about the unique character of our community.

Members are invited to virtually attend the CPS Annual Meeting on Monday, June 13th at 7PM (details below).

Meanwhile, will you take a few minutes today to advocate for Charlestown by calling our elected officials regarding three very urgent matters?

As a direct result of PLAN Charlestown (a neighborhood-wide planning initiative led by the BPDA), many development projects have been proposed and are undergoing review. This has led to an unnecessary increase in anxiety for residents having to organize and resist individual efforts on too many fronts, causing a drain on the neighborhood's attention, resources and emotional well-being. If the city doesn't address this death by a thousand paper cuts, it shows a stunning apathy towards us.

We need your help in advocating for Charlestown. Charlestown's history should be preserved and maintained for future generations through responsible development and landmark district designations.

- [Renew your membership to CPS today.](#) Your support allows us to speak in a collective voice and further our mission.
- **Attend our annual meeting on Monday, June 13th at 7PM to hear about how we have been advocating for Charlestown's historical resources and character through preservation planning and development review.** Meeting details will be emailed to active members on June 13th.
- **Call our elected officials and city staff and ask them to support our neighborhood efforts** (more information below.) We have three very urgent issues that we need to address *today*. Read more about them in the following pages.

Rest In Peace – Apollos Field House, built c.1813

Unfortunately, Charlestown has lost yet another one of her early important buildings—one of the 25 oldest buildings in Charlestown. **We need your help to prevent this from happening again. Under current law, this could happen to almost every other building in Charlestown!**

How did this happen?

While Charlestown has several districts and single building designations on the National Register of Historic Places, an Historic Neighborhood Zoning Overlay District, and several pending Landmark and Architectural Conservation Districts, *none offer historically significant buildings protection against demolition.*

Spring of 2020: 8 Lawrence Street was sold to a developer who quickly applied for a demolition permit. The developer met with both the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) and CPS multiple times and was informed of its important role in Charlestown's history. The developer eventually abandoned the demolition application; 8 Lawrence was re-listed for sale and ultimately sold to a second developer in January of 2021.

Spring of 2021: Nestor Limas (developer) purchased the property and restarted the demolition application process with the BLC. After two hearings and a public meeting with over 30 neighbors attending in opposition, the BLC implemented a 90-day demolition delay. At the same time, we researched the historical significance of the building and submitted a "Form B" to the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), resulting in the property being added to MHC's database of significant buildings in the State. We also presented a petition for the creation of an Architectural Conservation District to the BLC, and it was accepted. Shortly after Mayor Wu took office, she authorized BLC to hire a consultant to undertake the study portion of the process. While this was a huge success (many petitions are backlogged and have not made it past this step in 30+ years), there are no laws that prevent the Inspectional Services Department to withhold a demolition permit for a "pending" landmark building. Because the BLC was unable to provide an estimate for when the study would be completed, the demolition permit was released.

How can we prevent this from happening to another historic building in Charlestown?

1. The 90-day demolition delay in Boston is weak. Ninety days is easily accommodated in a developer's schedule. Other cities, like Cambridge, have longer delays—as much as 12 months). A longer delay would discourage the developers looking to demolish historic houses.
2. Ninety days is not enough time for us to retroactively protect historically significant building(s) from the wrecking ball. Under current law, the only way to prevent the demolition of historic buildings is with local landmark and/or district status. A Landmark District or Architectural Conservation District honors the area's history and significance to the city, state and country. It would transfer design review from the BPDA to a local commission made up of Charlestown residents and staff from the Boston Landmarks Commission, and it would enable this commission to deny demolition applications for historically significant structures within the district boundaries.

We are aware of at least two buildings that date from the late 1700s that could soon suffer a similar fate as 8 Lawrence, and five buildings around Monument Square are currently owned by developers. We must act now before it is too late.

Will you please call and email our elected officials and appointed decision-makers to “support our petition for a Monument Square Landmark District and ask Roseanne Foley, Executive Director of Boston Landmark Commission, to present our petition to the commission at the next hearing.” Please also ask them to “work with Councilor Kenzie Bok, the Boston Preservation Alliance, and the Charlestown Preservation Society to extend the 90-day demolition delay to 18 months.”

- Councilor for District 1 Gabriela Coletta, 617-635-3200, GGabriela.Coletta@Boston.gov
- Mayor Michelle Wu, 617-635-4500, Mayor@Boston.gov
- Jason Ruggiero, Charlestown Liaison to the BPDA, 617-918-4383, Jason.Ruggiero@Boston.gov

Peace Park – We are at risk of losing funding!

Last year, CPS supported the Charlestown Coalition’s Community Preservation Act application as a fiscal sponsor for the Peace Park. The Peace Park was created as a place where people can gather to remember lives lost to community violence and addiction and to recognize the suffering brought about by their loss. The area was chosen because it had been long neglected and underutilized by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MASSDOT).

MASSDOT (the owners of the land on Lowney Way) supported the project, and Undersecretary and Chief Strategy Officer Scott Bosworth provided a letter to the Community Preservation Committee stating that MASSDOT would support the project with:

- A 15-year (minimum) permit for use and restoration
- Good faith efforts to transfer the land, by lease or ownership, to the Boston Parks Department or other public entity for maintenance and capital improvements going forward (post-restoration)

As a result, we were awarded \$500,000 from the Community Preservation Act Fund.

Today, **MASSDOT will not honor their commitments, have broken many promises to the Peace Park, and our funding is at risk.** At this point, the only option we have to move this park forward is with a “Chapter Act” through the Massachusetts State Legislature that will require MASSDOT to uphold its commitments to us by leasing the land. The ask is simple, all we need from MASSDOT is a lease on the land. We will do the rest.

We need your help today! Please call our elected officials and let them know how important the Peace Park is to our community and ask them to work with us to create this Chapter Act for the Peace Park today!

- Senator Sal DiDomenico, 617-722-1650, Sal.DiDomenico@masenate.gov
- Representative Dan Ryan, 617-722-2460, Dan.Ryan@mahouse.gov

We are at risk of losing Commercial Space on Bunker Hill Street!

A developer has proposed a project at 194-198 Bunker Hill Street (BHS) that would eliminate three units of commercial space on the ground floor of each building in exchange for residential units.

The proposed new building at 198 BHS has four stories and is overly historicized and overbuilt. The nine requested variances to Charlestown’s zoning code are too many for a new building.

Charlestown is rapidly growing in population and commercial space needs to be added rather than eliminated. We cannot afford to lose existing commercial space!

Please join us in opposing this project by contacting the following with your opinions on the project and an ask to “oppose the project at the ZBA hearing on June 21st.”

- Office of Neighborhood Services Caitlin Stapleton, 617-635-3549, caitlin.stapleton@boston.gov
- Councilor for District 1 Gabriela Coletta, 617-635-3200, GGabriela.Coletta@Boston.gov
- Zoning Board of Appeals: zbapublicinput@boston.gov
(Reference “Case Number ERT1133235/Parent App BOA1279022” in the subject line.)

In summary, please call our elected officials and City Staff this week with the following issues:

	Mayor Wu	Sen DiDomenico	Rep Ryan	Councilor Coletta	ONS Stapleton	BPDA Ruggiero	ZBA
Demo Delay	X			X		X	
Monument Sq Landmark District	X			X		X	
Peace Park		X	X				
194-198 BHS				X	X	X	X

- Mayor Michelle Wu, 617-635-4500, Mayor@Boston.gov
- Councilor District 1 Gabriela Coletta, 617-635-3200, GGabriela.Coletta@Boston.gov
- Senator Sal DiDomenico, 617-772-1650, SalDiDomenico@masenate.gov
- Representative Dan Ryan, 617-722-2460, Dan.Ryan@mahouse.gov
- Office of Neighborhood Services Caitlin Stapleton, 617-635-3549, caitlin.stapleton@boston.gov
- Jason Ruggiero, Charlestown liaison to the BPDA, 617-918-4383, Jason.Ruggiero@Boston.gov
- Zoning Board of Appeals: zbapublicinput@boston.gov

Thank you for your support and your advocacy for Charlestown.
We hope to see you at our Annual Meeting.

Amanda Zettel
Amanda Zettel
President, Charlestown Preservation Society

