

1-2 Thompson Square Update

The Charlestown Savings Bank is the neighborhood's only commercial building with an individual landmark designation with the City of Boston. It is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

A five-story addition to the Charlestown Savings Bank at 1-2 Thompson Square was approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals pending review by the Boston Landmarks Commission with a design provision that states that the mansard roofline may not be demolished.

Thank you to Counselor Gabriella Coletta and Sean Breen at the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services for helping us navigate and negotiate this project. We appreciate the willingness of the bank's ownership team in working with our Design Review Committee to incorporate the committee's comments on the architectural details of the new addition and their commitment to finding a solution so that the mansard roofline is not compromised.

Preservation, restoration, and additions to historically significant buildings in the United States are guided by the [Secretary of the Interior's Standards](#) for each. These standards guide the review and approval activities of the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) and the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC). Our Design Review (DRC) and Protect Historic Charlestown Committees (PHCC) also use these standards as a guide when we review and comment on renovation and new infill projects in Charlestown so that we do not conflict with the official review processes.

Our review determined that the project concept did not meet the standards for the *Treatment of Historic Properties* guidelines that "new additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment."

The project's five-story addition proposed to wrap the side and back of the Bank and the connection between the two would require the demolition of portions of the mansard roof, compromise the spatial relationship of the building and adjacent buildings, and block the views of the building from the public way.

Despite the inclusion of these standards in *PLAN: Charlestown*, the BPDA recommended approval for this project and its clear conflicts.

Shortly before the second hearing at Boston's Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), we learned more about the approval process and were concerned that an approval at the ZBA would limit the BLC's ability to revise the proposed plans regarding the demolition of the rear mansard roofline. The city's approval process requires the ZBA to resolve zoning issues prior to the design review process at the BLC. When the ZBA approves variances for height and massing, the BLC typically upholds that decision because reversing it would mean loss

of buildable space. In this specific case, a ZBA approval would mean that the BLC is limited only to changes on this like architectural details.

Because of this process, we were successful in getting the BLC to agree to an advisory review and we asked the project proponent to defer the hearing until the BLC could conduct this review. Councilor Coletta's office worked as a mediator and was successful in obtaining a design provision to the ZBA's approval decision that addressed our concerns. The proviso states that no portion of the mansard roof or cornice shall be demolished.

The project will proceed through the BLC's design review process, and we will monitor the process and defer to their decision as the City of Boston's designated authority on historic preservation.