

4 December 2012

William Tuttle, Director
Office of Real Estate Development
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
State Transportation Building
Ten Park Plaza
Boston Ma 02116

Re: Developer Selection
Parcel 9

Dear Bill.

At our Parcel 7 and 9 Advisory Committee meeting last Tuesday, you informed us that the developer of Parcel 9 will be designated based solely on financial considerations since DOT had determined that in all other material respects the two finalist proposals were equivalent and, presumably, equally acceptable.

I differ vigorously, convinced that the merits of the Blackstone Market proposal far outweigh those of the Normandy hotel proposal.

The planning and design attributes of the Blackstone Market proposal best exemplify a thorough and thoughtful response to the priorities developed within the Committee and with our numerous community representatives throughout the long process of public discussion. The planning includes the rehabilitation of existing retail establishments along the south side of Blackstone Street, controlled by Mr. DeNormandie, a partner in that venture. Thus the achievement of a genuine market district is better assured in this proposal than in any other.

The building which is proposed is sensitively sited both to reinforce a well-proportioned streetscape but also to emphasize the difference of function of food shopping and restaurant uses at lower levels together with rental apartment uses above. The tradition of open public food court with related restaurant uses above has been the pattern of public food halls for well over a century, and is a convincing identifier of the natural order of urban activity we have sought.

The residential structure has been displaced along Blackstone Street to afford open views into the neighborhood from the North End and the Greenway; after much discussion, the consensus within the committee and the community was to depart from the potential of a 55' high wall within existing zoning in order to achieve a much better integration of a Parcel 9 development with its surroundings, especially to facilitate views into the market in Blackstone Street. The proposed design accomplishes this and more, by locating the rectilinear residential component in association with the denser, larger scale of North Street. In turn, the design and detail of the residential structure is closely analogous to the prevailing early 19th century masonry canon of the neighborhood.

The use of brick as the single predominant material is essential to the sense of repose and fitness of this building in this context. The congruence of the proposed material, proportion, and contemporary detail with historical precedent is remarkable; one might say brilliant.

A similar examination of the Normandy hotel proposal leaves much to be desired. The forms appear arbitrary and obscure views into Blackstone Street, the fenestration and exterior skin wrapped with vertical slats is totally at odds with genuine architecture. This is a mediocre design suitable perhaps for purely commercial purposes far from the unique historical environment of the Market District.

Overall, I feel that the Blackstone proposal exceeds my original expectations of what might be achieved on this site for the purposes we have established. The architecture which we create here will be a prominent part of a very key urban district for generations to come. I find the concept of equating the dramatically dissimilar characteristics of these two proposals illogical and essentially indefensible, and urge you and the other participants in the final selection to support the Committee in recognizing the values which upon which the entire enterprise has been based.

Respectfully,

Frederick A. (Tad) Stahl FAIA