



Are you on board?

15 State Street Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02109
617 223 8667
bostonharbornow.org

Board of Trustees

Meaghan Hooper-Berdik
Grace Macomber Bird
Kevin Clarke
Robert Delhome
Jamie M. Fay
Robert Gollidge
Greg Herrema
Ann Lagasse
Malia Lazu
Mary Kay Leonard
Shelagh Mahoney
Andrew McElwee
James Miner
Martin O'Neill
Elaine Richardson
Bud Ris
Demetriouse Russell
Nalini Sharma
Cathy Douglas Stone
Kishore Varanasi
Richard Walker
Betsy Wall

Ex-Officio Members

Katherine F. Abbott
Rev. Mariama White-Hammond
Michael Creasey
Fred Laskey
Rebecca Tepper
Andrew Hargens

Lifetime Trustees

Governor Michael Dukakis
Governor William Weld

President & CEO

Katherine F. Abbott

June 30, 2023

Via email: delaney.morris@boston.gov

Boston Planning and Development Agency
Attn: Delaney Morris
1 City Hall Square, Floor 9
Boston MA. 02203

Re: Lovejoy Wharf Civic/Cultural Space RFI

Dear Ms. Morris,

Boston Harbor Now respectfully submits the following comments on the responses submitted to the Lovejoy Wharf civic and cultural space Request for Information (RFI) by the North End Historical Society, Toussaint Louverture Cultural Center, and Transformative Culture Project. Our staff have reviewed the proposal submission summaries provided on the Boston Planning and Development Agency's (BPDA) website and watched a recording of the public presentation from June 1, 2023.

As longtime stewards of the Boston Harborwalk, Boston Harbor Now is committed to ensuring that the waterfront we build today is designed for a more resilient and inclusive future. We use the term "Harborwalk 2.0" to capture the aspirations of this work to ensure the waterfront is accessible and welcoming; is prepared for the coastal impacts of climate change; and centers equity and inclusion in the development of its design, construction, and programming. An accessible waterfront should have both linear and lateral connections between the city and the water, as well as numerous activation strategies to serve all Bostonians. A resilient waterfront includes a variety of climate adaptation strategies to protect and serve Boston at a district scale. To center equity in waterfront design is to focus on strategies that make the waterfront feel safe and inclusive through lighting, signage (preferably multi-lingual), full ADA accommodations, and the elimination of features that make users feel unwelcome or excluded.

The Lovejoy Wharf RFI presents members of the public with the opportunity to weigh in on a new civic/cultural space on the waterfront. Although the building was completed in 2017, this Facility of Public Accommodation (FPA) has remained vacant rather than providing a promised amenity. We commend the BPDA and City of Boston (COB) for creating a more transparent and community-informed selection process to



Are you on board?

15 State Street Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02109
617 223 8667
bostonharbornow.org

identify a tenant for the space, and we are excited to have a new indoor waterfront civic space in this area. We appreciate the thoughtfulness of each proposal and note that all of the applicants have outlined engaging visions with the promise of bringing new activities and audiences to the wharf. As the review committee evaluates the qualified proposals, we hope they will consider the selection of a team that can attract a new audience to the waterfront, create a welcoming environment for all, and successfully implement their vision of this space.

Evaluation Criteria

After reviewing the presentations and responses of the qualified applicants, we believe all three have the potential to activate Lovejoy Wharf in unique and compelling ways. We commend the applicants for the creative thinking and passionate enthusiasm that they brought to their visions. As we believe each proposal had merit, we are not writing a letter to endorse a particular selection. Rather, Boston Harbor Now recommends that the selection committee considers the following evaluation criteria and work with the selected group to further these goals. First, the selected proposal should be able to attract new audiences to the waterfront. Along Boston's waterfront, there are many spaces intended to appeal to the general public, but there are many fewer spaces explicitly designed and programmed to bring underrepresented communities to the waterfront, particularly low income and BIPOC residents. As a part of this process, which allows for more influence on the choice of ground floor use, we would like to see a space intentionally designed with equity in mind to attract communities that have not historically felt welcome at the waterfront.

Even if the new space is tailored to a specific group of users, we hope that everyone who visits the area feels welcome in the space through its amenities, programs, signage, and price points. To create a welcoming environment, we expect the selected respondent to clearly outline what amenities they intend to provide to the general public during opening hours and how to access them. If the respondent hopes to provide space for rent, for example, we hope they have clear guidelines on how neighborhood groups and nonprofits can sign up to use the space and what rental discounts they may be eligible for. Similarly, we hope any programs or classes open to the public are well-advertised and affordable ways to participate are made available. If this space is intended to house a public restroom as part of Lovejoy Wharf's Chapter 91 obligations, its availability should be indicated on exterior and interior signage, and it should be located in a place that is accessible even during events. We also hope that any



Are you on board?

15 State Street Suite 1100
Boston, MA 02109
617 223 8667
bostonharbornow.org

organization selling food or gift shop items or charging for services offers a diversity of price points so that they are accessible to a wide range of patrons.

Finally, we hope the selection committee chooses a team that can implement the ideas that have been outlined in the proposal. While this location has many strengths, including its proximity to a variety of public transit options, activating this space may still be challenging. The room is oddly shaped and may prove complicated to build out. We hope the selected respondent can overcome the unconventional layout of the space and provide consistent, high-quality activation to capitalize on the special location.

The RFI Process

We wish to note that the BPDA and the COB have organized an RFI process that is worth replicating. We appreciate that the process allowed for a level of transparency and public input that is rarely executed at this level during typical Article 80 or Chapter 91 processes. We are especially pleased that the RFI process has solicited diverse applicants who all have the potential to bring new and exciting ideas to an FPA space and provided the community with a broader menu of options for imagining what is possible in that space. We hope the success of this process can be replicated for other FPA spaces in the future. Should this process be repeated, we recommend that the BPDA and COB provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants that will enable them to more effectively apply for and be considered for FPA spaces that may be available elsewhere on the waterfront.

We are grateful for the opportunity to comment on this project and look forward to following its progress toward implementation. We would be happy to speak with you or the selected proponent further if there are additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathy Abbott".

Kathy Abbott
President and CEO
Boston Harbor Now