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July 19, 2024

Via email: [Natalie.Deduck@Boston.gov](mailto:Natalie.Deduck@Boston.gov)

Boston Planning and Development Agency  
Attn: Natalie Deduck  
One City Hall Square, Floor 9  
Boston, MA 02201

Re: Pier 5 Draft RFP

Dear Ms. Deduck,

Boston Harbor Now respectfully submits the following comments on the Pier 5 Draft RFP put forth by the Boston Planning & Development Agency (BPDA). Our staff has followed this project since its inception and previously submitted a comment letter in June 2024.

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.

*Creating a Destination for the Public*

We appreciate the BPDA's clarification on the permissibility of built structures. As noted in our prior letter, we are open to both scenarios and favor the option that helps support the pier as a destination for local residents and the communities we hope to bring to the waterfront. As the BPDA has noted, Pier 5 offers one of the best vantage points along the waterfront to view the Harbor and we hope to continue to encourage Harborwalk visitors to take advantage of this valuable public asset. The pier should also include amenities that ensure the comfort of those who visit the site. As previously shared, we hope the future Pier 5 will have public amenities, like seating, shade structures, wayfinding signage, and other community-identified amenities that enhance the space. The new space should be welcoming and open to the public.



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Should buildings be located on or along the pier we expect that the selected ground floor uses to help activate the waterfront and welcome the public. The proponent's requirement to keep "[a]t least 40% of the first floor of any built structures ... devoted to facilities of public accommodation" will support public use of the space, but we specifically hope to see FPAs and other waterfront amenities that provide services at various price points, including low-cost and no-cost opportunities, to eliminate social barriers that may deter visitors from coming to the area and to make it accessible to all.

### *Designing for Coastal Flooding*

The RFP will evaluate proposals based on "the extent to which a proposal's: (1) plan aligns with current coastal resiliency efforts in the CNY (2) plan can adapt to future planning efforts (3) plan meets or exceeds sustainability and energy standards and (4) development team is willing to work with other entities surrounding this topic." We are pleased the BPDA acknowledges the importance of collaboration when building coastal flood infrastructure. District-wide flood infrastructure will require action from a multitude of stakeholders and property owners, and coordination will be imperative to its success. In addition to compliance with the recommendations from the Coastal Resilience Solutions for Charlestown Phase II and Flood Resilience Planning, Feasibility and Design Study for the Charlestown Navy Yard, we hope RFP applicants will also comply with any coastal resilience plans undertaken by the National Park Service, which is a major nearby property owner also working to prevent coastal flooding. As the BPDA reviews proposals, we hope they will also consider how the applicant plans to maintain physical ADA-compliant access to the site even with climate infrastructure in place.

*In conclusion*, we agree with the requirements outlined in the RFP and are looking forward to seeing a more activated Pier 5 that invites the public down to the waterfront. We hope to see creative proposals that allow people to get on and take in the lovely views of the harbor. The redesign of Pier 5 comes at an apt time, aligning with recent and upcoming planning to address coastal flooding in the Charlestown Navy Yard. The selected proponent will need to coordinate the design of their pier with the work of the NPS and BPDA to ensure that their designs are elevated appropriately, and their site is accessible to all abilities of potential users.



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We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this project and look forward to following its progress toward implementation. We would be happy to speak with you further if you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

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

Kathy Abbott  
President and CEO  
Boston Harbor Now