

## MEMORANDUM

AUGUST 15, 2013

**TO:** BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND  
PETER MEADE, DIRECTOR

**FROM:** HEATHER CAMPISANO, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR DEVELOPMENT  
REVIEW  
TYLER NOROD, SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER

**SUBJECT:** 17 COURT STREET RENOVATION, DOWNTOWN

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**SUMMARY:** This Memorandum requests that the Boston Redevelopment Authority ("BRA") authorize the Director to: (1) issue a Scoping Determination waiving the requirement of further review pursuant to Article 80, Section 80B-5.3(d), Large Project Review of the Boston Zoning Code ("Code") for the 17 Court Street Renovation Project, located in the Downtown (the "Proposed Project"); (2) issue a Certification of Compliance under Section 80B-6 of the Code upon successful completion of the Article 80 review process for the Proposed Project; and (3) execute and deliver a Cooperation Agreement and a Boston Residents Construction Employment Plan, along with any and all other agreements and documents that the Director deems appropriate and necessary in connection with Article 80B review of the Proposed Project.

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### LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

The Proposed Project is located on an approximately 18,143 square foot parcel of land at 17 Court Street on the edge of the Government Center area of Boston (the "Project Site"). The Project Site is bounded by Court Street to the south, Franklin Avenue to the west, City Hall Plaza (previously Cornhill Street) to the north, and the 13-story Ames Hotel and 15-story One Washington Mall Building to the east. The Project Site is immediately adjacent to government, office, and commercial uses, and has excellent access to public transportation, including the Blue, Orange, Green and Red lines.

The Project Site contains two adjoining buildings: the 1908 Old Colony Trust Company building, a 4-story structure at 17 Court Street, and a 10-story office addition built in 1925. The combined buildings contain approximately 130,000 square feet of occupiable space. The owner of the Project Site is Vietnam Veterans Workshop, Inc., d/b/a New

England Center for Homeless Veterans (the “Proponent”). The Project Site has been utilized for over two decades to service and house the Proponent’s veteran clientele.

## **PROPOSED PROJECT**

The Proponent is proposing a reconfiguration and renovation of space within its existing facility at 17 Court Street in Downtown Boston (the “Center”) in order to improve and expand upon the Proponent’s services to veterans and create permanent supportive housing. The Proposed Project will result in the creation of 35 new studio apartments, make service programs more accessible to veterans, upgrade, modernize and revitalize existing facilities, and allow the Proponent to implement newer and more varied models of service to veterans.

The Proposed Project will consolidate program/service space, offices, and building support space on the lower floors (semi-basement, first floor, mezzanine, and second floor) to be more accessible from the Center’s Court Street entrance and lobby. A 4,800 - square foot extension of the interior mezzanine level will increase the total occupied area within the existing building. This more efficient use of the building will create room for thirty five (35) new studio apartments on floors three, four and nine (above and below the existing single room occupancy (“SRO”) floors five through eight). The Proponent’s facility currently offers 59 affordable SRO’s, a separate 16-bed female veteran’s dormitory, and transitional and emergency beds. The program as envisioned for the future will include a separate space for female veterans’ permanent housing. Circulation systems will be modified to separate residential from program uses and meet current code and egress requirements. Two new elevators and modifications to two existing elevators, new sprinkler, plumbing, and fire alarm systems, electrical and mechanical upgrades, and modifications as required to make the entire building accessible are all components of the renovation scope of work.

The planned exterior work includes restoration of the window glazing in existing historic frames and upgrades to the facility’s historic canopy on Court Street. Roof replacement, maintenance and repair work of the masonry veneer, flashing and select replacement of windows and doors are also part of the scope of work. The Proponent will construct a new roof deck on top of the building addition to create a private outdoor space for the veterans served at the Center. This roof deck will be screened from view by an existing 8’+ high roof parapet. The Proponent may construct a second outdoor deck on the roof of the Court Street building (all of the foregoing improvements comprise the (“Proposed Project”). The Proponent will encourage its residents and visitors to use the proposed exterior deck(s) for outdoor activity and discourage congregating on the street near the building entrance.

The Proposed Project is estimated to cost approximately \$21 million. Construction of the Project is estimated to last 16 months, with initial demolition work expected to begin in the fall of 2014 and be completed in late 2015.

## **PROJECT TEAM**

The Proponent, Vietnam Veterans Workshop, Inc., a/k/a the New England Center for Homeless Veterans ("NECHV") is a private not-for-profit organization that is among the nation's leaders in providing supportive services to homeless or at-risk veterans. The mission of NECHV is to equip veterans who are facing or are at-risk of homelessness with the tools for economic self-sufficiency and to provide them with a path to achieve independent living. Founded in 1989 to address the challenges of veterans without an adequate voice, NECHV has been in operation for 23 years and has matured into a professional and innovative institution for veterans and their families. The Center is a multi-functional, one-stop support facility, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, where veterans have access to a comprehensive range of services. Three meals per day are provided to the more than 250 veterans who call the Center home every night, with approximately 130,000 meals served annually, and supportive services being provided to over 1,000 veterans each year.

The architect for the Proposed Project is Tise Design Associates (Tim Smith); the Owner's Representative is Pinck and Co., Inc. (Tom O'Neil); and legal counsel to the Proponent is Edwards Wildman Palmer LLP (Rebecca A. Lee, Esq.)

## **ARTICLE 80 REVIEW**

On May 16, 2013, the Proponent filed a Letter of Intent in accordance with the BRA's policy regarding Provision of Mitigation by Development Projects in Boston. On July 8, 2013, the Proponent filed a Project Notification Form with the BRA pursuant to Article 80B of the Boston Zoning Code ("Code"). Notice of receipt by the BRA of the PNF was published in the *Boston Herald* on July 11, 2013, initiating the public comment period with a closing date within 30 days of the published advertisement in the *Boston Herald*.

The PNF notice and the PNF were sent to the City's public agencies by the BRA pursuant to Section 80A-2 of the Code. Pursuant to Section 80B-5.3(c) of the Code, a scoping session was held on July 24, 2013 with the city's public agencies at which the Proposed Project was reviewed and discussed. The BRA convened a public meeting for the community's review and comment on July 31, 2012 in the BRA Board Room on the 9<sup>th</sup> Floor of City Hall. The public meeting was advertised in *The Boston Herald*.

On August 5, 2013, a design review meeting was held between BRA Urban Design staff and the Proponent to discuss the relationship between the Proposed Project and improvements to City Hall Plaza which are currently in the conceptual design stages at

the BRA. Future coordination will be necessary between the BRA and the Proponent as the City Hall Plaza project evolves.

## **ZONING**

The Project Site is located within (i) the Government Center/Markets District, as established by Article 64 of the Code, and (ii) the Restricted Parking Overlay District ("RPOD") established by Section 3-1A(c) of the Code.

The Project will require zoning relief from the Board of Appeal related to the minor expansion of interior space, and the transitional housing at the Center.

## **PUBLIC BENEFITS**

The Proposed Project will provide a number of important public benefits to the City of Boston and its residents. The renovated Center will significantly enhance the Proponent's ability to provide crucial support services to the City's most challenged veterans and serve as a key component in ending homelessness for veterans in the City of Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The renovated Center will help the Proponent improve the lives of many citizens by providing immediate aid, a supportive home, and a path to permanent housing for veterans who have served our nation and might otherwise find themselves living on the street. The Proposed Project will also result in the preservation and rehabilitation of an important element in the historic and architectural fabric of the city. In addition, the Proposed Project represents transit-oriented development and LEED-certifiable development.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Approvals have been requested of the BRA pursuant to Article 80, Section 80B of the Code for the issuance of a Scoping Determination waiving the requirement of further review pursuant to Article 80, Section 80B-5.3(d) of the Code, and for the issuance of a Certification of Compliance under Section 80B-6 upon successful completion of the Article 80 review process. In accordance with Section 80B-5.3(d) of the Code, the BRA may issue a Scoping Determination Waiving Further Review if the PNF, together with any additional material and comments received by the BRA prior to the issuance of the Scoping Determination, are found to adequately describe the impact of the Proposed Project and offer appropriate mitigation of such impacts.

BRA staff believes that the PNF meets the criteria for the issuance of a Scoping Determination Waiving Further Review. It is therefore recommended that the BRA authorize the Director to (1) issue a Scoping Determination waiving the requirement of further review pursuant to Article 80, Section 80B-5.3(d) of the Code for the Proposed Project; (2) issue a Certification of Compliance under Section 80B-6 for the Proposed

Project upon successful completion of the Article 80 review process; (3) execute and deliver a Cooperation Agreement and a Boston Residents Construction Employment Plan in connection with the Proposed Project.

Appropriate votes follow:

**VOTED:** That the Director be, and hereby is, authorized to issue a Scoping Determination under Section 80B-5.3(d) of the Boston Zoning Code, which (i) finds that the Project Notification Form adequately describes the potential impacts arising from the 17 Court Street Renovation Project, located in the Downtown (the “Proposed Project”), and provides sufficient mitigation measures to minimize these impacts, and (ii) waives further review of the Proposed Project under subsections 4 and 5 of Section 80B-5 of the Boston Zoning Code, subject to continuing design review by the Boston Redevelopment Authority (the “Authority”); and

**FURTHER**

**VOTED:** That the Director be, and hereby is, authorized to issue a Certification of Compliance for the Proposed Project, upon the successful completion of all Article 80 processes; and

**FURTHER**

**VOTED:** That the Director be, and hereby is, authorized to execute a Cooperation Agreement and a Boston Residents Construction Employment Plan, along with any and all other agreements and documents which the Director deems appropriate and necessary in connection with the Proposed Project all upon terms and conditions determined to be in the best interests of the Authority