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Re: Waterfront Access as a Public Asset = Social Justice

To Our Community, City and State Leaders,

Social justice needs were being met even during the 1970s Economic Recession. One of the only jobs in 1970s Boston was the Modernization Program for Public Housing in Charlestown - Phase 1; The goal was to re-establish these, then 30 year old, 1100 units as a substantial residential environment. Phase 1 was to renovate all of the bathrooms and kitchens; later phases were to be recreation areas, landscaping and community facilities. Ecodesign, Inc., my then fledgling architectural firm and an early Women's Business Enterprise (WBE), was awarded Phase 1.

This complicated job required us to work closely with the resident-elected, fully-empowered Task Force, do detailed site surveys, catalogue intolerable conditions of each unit, determine the common needs and design economical solutions to these problems. For example, in the 1970s Boston Housing projects the bathrooms did not have showers. As a solution, we designed a fixture easily installed in tub corners — **filling this need was greatly appreciated by the residents who called it “Shower Tower Power” (in true 60s style)!**

Another Housing need was, and still is, recreation and open space. Some of the Boston housing projects had some open space, some even had trees. When surveying Bunker Hill Housing, I remember the sense that the sea was so near by, but the U. S. Navy Yard waterfront was not available to the public in the early 1970s. Today, there is still the need for open space, but **TODAY there is a unique opportunity for all the public to have real open space access to the Charlestown Waterfront at the Head of the Boston Harbor- Pier 5.**

The recent Superior Court decision on the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) lawsuit has brought to light how illegal approvals of the Municipal Harbor Plan (MHP) process (and in Charlestown the manipulation of an obsolete and expired Navy Yard MHP) was **used by the BRA/BPDA to block the promise of Chapter 91 and the Big Dig to “provide public access to the sea”.**

With public access blocked, these improper BRA/BPDA planning techniques were then used to give that waterfront access, instead, to powerful developers for access to only a very few residents. After public waterfront advocates have battled for a quarter century and the City of Boston has endured the Big Dig, **this CLF decision now offers a chance to reclaim this Waterfront Assess Public Asset for all the People!**

The social justice of the need for true open space for all has never been more clear than during this time of Pandemics. Waterfront activities such as that offered to the children of Boston by the world-renown Courageous Sailing Center should not be curtailed by continuing improper development of the waterfront. Rather than being impeded, outdoor learning and open space education opportunities should be expanded and maximized for many children. Such waterfront sites should not be made residences for only a few affluent or well-connected people. Legitimate, usable open space for education and recreation programs must not be "scraps of left over land" or "unreachable pretend gardens" or other Trojan Horse offerings.

COVID has made us acutely aware of the need for recreational open space. High levels of asthma in Charlestown residents makes us value the greenspace to breathe clean air. Numerous studies prove inadequate greenspace is a social and environmental injustice that burdens affordable housing residents.

In Boston, 20% of all housing units are income-restricted. The Report from the City of Boston on Income-Restricted Housing (2019) shows that of Housing Units that are Income-restricted, the neighborhoods with the highest percentage include Charlestown at 3rd highest with 25% (and growing exponentially). Of Rental Only Properties, where Boston has 27% of all rental units being income-restricted, Charlestown has 42% income restricted. That includes Bunker Hill Housing where the BPDA is now trying to remove 340 beautiful-mature trees- from their open space. **Charlestown, perhaps more than any other Boston Harbor area, needs and deserves the Public Asset that is Waterfront Access.**

We also need Climate Justice with responsible solutions to achieve resilient open space, environmental education and the chance to enjoy the Harbor now cleaned by our taxes. **We need to demand access to unique historic sites like the Head of Boston Harbor at Pier 5** — a special place of rare original harbor edge of the Charlestown Peninsula where Paul Revere started his ride, Bunker/Breeds Hill battle was fought, 1800s cannons were set, WWI and WWII ships were readied, the gateway to our Harbor ...but where the BPDA now conspires to take this public amenity for privatized development.

"Waterfront Access is a Public Asset". Charlestown/Boston public and the residents of all Boston Public Housing deserve clear, equitable access to the worth of the waterfront —their right granted by the MA Public Waterfront Act, by the ancient Chapter 91 law and by the Promise of the Big Dig. **We need our Leaders to use their power to return the Public Asset that is Access to Our Waterfront!**

Please understand what is at risk by Privatization: Pier5.org —

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