



CITY OF BOSTON
THE ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT

Boston City Hall, Room 805 • Boston, MA 02201 • 617/635-3850 • FAX: 617/635-3435

6 September 2006

BACK BAY ARCHITECTURAL COMMISSION

Apple Computer, Inc.
1 Infinite Loop
Cupertino, CA 95014
ATTN: Bob Bridger

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

NOTICE OF DECISION
Application 06.776 (BB)
815 Boylston Street

Dear Mr. Bridger:

At a public hearing held at Boston City Hall on 9 August 2006 the Back Bay Architectural Commission reviewed your continued application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish an existing two-story building and to construct a new three-story building on its site, at 815 Boylston Street. The subject property is a pier-and-spandrel commercial building dating from the first decade of the twentieth century; its architect is unknown.

This project was initially reviewed by the commission on an advisory basis in March of this year, at which time historical and structural information relating to the existing building and drawings reflecting its proposed replacement had been presented to the commission for comment in anticipation of the subsequent filing of a formal application. Commissioners present at the March advisory hearing had noted that demolition is seldom proposed within the district and expressed reservations regarding the new building's fully glazed expression which, in tandem with the horizontal orientation of the façade, it found to be at odds with the bearing-wall construction and vertical fenestration of the existing building and its context alike. Thus at the 14 June hearing of the formal application the commission was pleased to observe the introduction of vertical structural elements, in the form of columns or pillars underpinning floor plates previously cantilevered without visible support (other than from the party walls), and additionally promoted by the use of glass fins. The commission observed that the former elements evoked the pier-and-spandrel construction of the existing building while the latter, carried upward through the façade and returning horizontally above the roof plane, served as an aesthetic culmination akin to a traditional parapet.

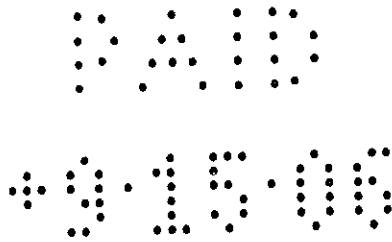
Considering the intrinsic and contextual significance of the existing building, the commission observed that it was not known to have been designed by a noted architect and that, being neither a rare nor a quintessential example of its type, its aesthetic merit appeared to be of a lesser order relative to the majority of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century buildings of Boylston Street. The commission also noted that at two stories the building is quite low relative to the general scale of the street. Concluding therefore that the existing building lacked distinction both in itself and in relation to the streetscape as a whole, the commission accordingly voted to approve its demolition in concept. In order to ensure that the site will be cleared only upon the resolution of the new building's design, the commission in its decision attached the proviso that issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness allowing the demolition to proceed will be deferred pending the approval of the aesthetically promising replacement building, which it voted, as a separate motion, to deny without prejudice. In order to assist you with the design development of the application, the commission at its June hearing constituted a subcommittee of its members and alternates to advise you on the appropriate revision of the design in anticipation of its further review by the full commission at a subsequent public hearing.

At its hearing of 9 August, the commission accordingly reviewed plan, elevation and section drawings reflecting the guidance provided by the subcommittee. Thus it was pleased to note that the pillars now project forward of the floor plates they support and that the primary (glass) and secondary (metal) planes are layered so as to evoke the depth of a traditional masonry wall. The reduction in height of the mechanical penthouse, aligning with the adjacent building to the east, as well as the introduction

D. Bryan Glascock, Director

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Thomas M. Menino, Mayor



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(continued)

of a fenestration pattern (comprising window openings, mechanical louvers and solid panels of stone), were also regarded as improvements relative to the prior scheme; the commission also noted that plant material is to be sustained upon a "green" roof, the first to be introduced within the district. While not yet resolved to its satisfaction in subcommittee the commission anticipated that the final selection of materials, issues of lighting and display, and the refinement of certain details, including but not limited to the juncture of the façade glazing with the sidewalk pavement (whose materials and modules shall conform with the Boylston Street Master Plan), could yet be concluded with the applicants' cooperation.

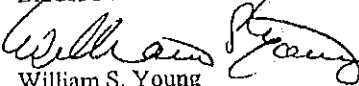
Concluding that the applicants had addressed the concerns voiced at previous hearings and thereafter in subcommittee in a responsive and responsible fashion, the commission accordingly voted to approve the application substantially as presented. In its decision the commission attached the proviso that this determination is not to be construed as a general precedent but rather, understood to reflect the specific interrelationship of the visual qualities of the existing and replacement buildings, and the immediate environment of its location within the Fairfield-to-Gloucester block of Boylston Street. In order to ensure that the site not become a vacant lot for an indefinite period, the commission stipulated that the existing building shall be demolished only in order that new construction may begin immediately thereafter. The commission also remanded to the previously constituted subcommittee the review and approval of all project materials and details with the understanding that any item it might be unable to endorse must return to the full commission for further review at a subsequent public hearing.

Commissioners who were unable to support the motion to approve the application cited their reservations regarding the appropriateness of a glass curtain-wall façade to the context as well as the rigorous standards of maintenance and retail display that such an aesthetic may, for all its acknowledged elegance, prove in practice to demand. Understanding the new building's design to have been tailored to suit a particular commercial program, those opposed to the motion also questioned its adaptability as patterns of use and occupancy may change over time. Emphasizing that their concerns were interpretive in nature, however, all expressed appreciation of the applicants' cooperative engagement throughout the review process.

This determination is based solely on documentation presented at the hearing. Statutory reviews by other agencies in conflict with this decision may affect the status of this certificate, which is valid for one year from its date of issue. The applicant is required to consult the subcommittee regarding those items deferred to its further review, as summarized above. In addition, the applicant must notify the commission of any changes to this proposal, and failure to do so may affect the status of this certificate. Please present this letter at the Inspectional Services Department (1010 Massachusetts Avenue) when applying for permits. Finally, kindly submit photographs of the completed work to confirm compliance with the terms of this certificate.

Thanking you for your cooperation, | |

BACK BAY ARCHITECTURAL COMMISSION


William S. Young
Senior Preservation Planner

RECORD OF VOTE ON APPLICATION 06.776

MOTION by Christiansen; SECOND by Moraitis

AFFIRMATIVE: Casendino, Christiansen, Moraitis, Tutunjian, Prince, Rooney

NEGATIVE: Mitchell, Rizvi, Duffly

cc: A. Casendino, Chairman