



Wellesley Historical Commission

Town Hall • 525 Washington Street • Wellesley, MA 02482-5992

WWW.WELLESLEYHISTORICALCOMMISSION.ORG

December 11, 2015

Joseph Strazzulla, President
Straly Realty Corporation
PO Box 35
South Grafton, MA 01560

Re: 339 Washington Street (Wellesley Hills Railroad Station), Wellesley, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Strazzulla:

I write on behalf of the Wellesley Historical Commission (“WHC”), which recently became aware that the existing tenants of the historic Wellesley Hills Railroad Station (the “Station”) at 339 Washington Street in Wellesley have vacated, and that the Station may be renovated in connection with a new tenant taking possession.

The WHC frequently collaborates with both commercial and residential landowners to assist in ensuring that important Town structures — like the Station — can both retain their historic character while simultaneously being updated to accommodate twenty-first century needs. As such, the WHC is writing for the following three reasons: (1) to emphasize the importance of the Station in Wellesley’s history, (2) to obtain a preliminary understanding regarding the extent of any proposed renovations, and (3) to offer our assistance in this process, particularly with respect to the preservation of the Station’s existing historic design elements.

Pursuant to G.L. c. 40, § 8D and Article 17 of the Bylaws of the Town of Wellesley, the WHC is the town governmental body charged with the preservation and protection of the tangible evidence of the architectural, economic, and social history of the Town. Although no WHC approvals are required in order to obtain any Town permits or approvals in connection with renovation of the Station, many permitting processes require that historic elements be taken into account, and the WHC often provides its insight and advice to Town boards in this regard.

I. The Historic Nature of the Station.

As you may be aware, the Station was commissioned and designed in July 1885 by the famous architect Henry Hobson Richardson — the last such station that he designed for the Boston & Albany Railroad (the “B&A”) prior to his death. H.H. Richardson was the designer of such other landmarks as the Trinity Church in Boston. By January 1886, construction of the Station was completed by Norcross Brothers, a prominent construction company that was a favorite of H.H. Richardson. Of roughly 30 railroad stations designed by H.H. Richardson or his adherents, the Station is only one of approximately 12 that survive today. The Station was also

one of only approximately 10 B&A stations to have its grounds designed by Frederick Law Olmsted (designer of such landmarks as NYC's Central Park and Boston's Emerald Necklace).

Despite significant prior renovations to the interior and portions of the front exterior of the Station, the remainder of the Station's exterior remains in remarkably excellent, original condition — a testament to the quality of materials used. Of particular note are (a) the stone exterior on all sides of the Station (except for the southern corner), (b) the curved wood overhang supports, and (c) the Simpson Bros. paving marker in the concrete on the northern side of the Station, bearing their hallmark shamrock design. The track side of the station is remarkably well preserved, and many commuters today walk past the Station and down the stairs much as their predecessors did over 100 years ago.

II. Request for Preliminary Understanding of Renovations.

Given the historic significance of the Station to the Town of Wellesley, the WHC respectfully seeks a preliminary, high-level understanding as to any renovation plans that may be proposed. The WHC recognizes fully that the Station is privately owned, and that approval of the WHC is not required in connection with a renovation thereof. However, recognizing that you and/or the potential tenant may still be in the early stages of this process, the WHC would be pleased to work with you and/or the tenant to review the proposed design plans in order to understand the impact of the renovations, if any, on the original design elements of the Station. Moreover, when design changes to commercial structures are brought before Town boards from whom approvals may be necessary (such as the Design Review Board or the Zoning Board of Appeals), minimization of impact on the historical aspects of a property or structure is often considered a strong factor in favor of such requests. The WHC frequently provides its opinion to these boards during their public hearing processes.

III. Consultation During Design and Renovation.

Finally, due to the historic nature of the Station and per the WHC's statutory obligations, the WHC is pleased to make itself available generally to you and or your new tenant(s) during the design and renovation process. Additionally, if the tenant is considering renovations to the Washington Street (i.e., non-original) side of the Station, we would also be pleased to advise on designs that incorporate or reflect the original H.H. Richardson-style of the Station. The WHC frequently advises developers on the re-use of historically-significant design features in both rehabilitated structures and new construction, and would welcome the opportunity to collaborate with you, the new tenant, and your architects and engineers in this regard.

* * *

We hope you agree that for many decades the Station has been a success story for how historic structures can be retained while being adapted for new uses to ensure their continued economic viability. The WHC is both excited for the possibilities for your new tenant, and keen to ensure that the surviving design elements of the historic Station are not further diminished — particularly given that few H.H. Richardson railroad station buildings remain standing at all.

The WHC looks forward to hearing from you in the hopes that we may be of some assistance during the renovation process of this historic and well-known Wellesley structure. I can be reached at tad@wellesleyhistoricalcommission.com.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tad Heuer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Tad Heuer, Chair

cc: Ria K. McNamara, Retail Real Estate (Via email to ria@retailre.com)