

**SOCIETY OF
ARCHITECTURAL
HISTORIANS**

20 October 2023

Ms. Rosanne Foley, Executive Director
20 City Hall Avenue
Boston, MA 02108
blc@boston.gov

Re: Support for listing Boston City Hall as Boston City Landmark

Dear Ms. Foley,

The Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) expresses strong support for the listing of Boston City Hall as a Boston City Landmark.

SAH is the principal scholarly organization for architectural historians in North America. It does not regularly become involved in local preservation issues and speaks only to issues of national and international importance. We evaluate threats to nationally and internationally significant architectural resources thoroughly, and do not take positions on them lightly.

Boston City Hall is recognized by a diverse array of architects, architectural historians, planners, and other design professionals as a landmark of American architecture. The Massachusetts Historical Commission determined that City Hall was eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 1991. A 2007 petition to the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC), backed by a large number of design professionals and historians, made a convincing argument for naming City Hall a Boston City Landmark; it was accepted for future study but unfortunately, the Boston Landmarks Commission did not advance the petition for listing. The initial determination of eligibility for the NRHP was made when City Hall was but 22 years old, recognizing the exceptional case for eligibility presented by that building. Now, 54 years after the completion of City Hall, 32 years after it was first determined eligible for listing on the NRHP, and 16 years after the petition for naming it a Boston City Landmark, the passage of time has only confirmed the architectural significance of Boston City Hall.

Boston City Hall is an important symbol of Boston's economic and cultural resurgence that began in the 1960s. The result of a 1961 design competition, its design by Gerhard Kallmann and Michael McKinnell resulted in one of the most iconic Brutalist buildings in the United States, as well as the establishment of Kallmann McKinnell and Knowles, which had a long and significant impact upon American architecture. Constructed between 1963 and 1968, Boston City Hall is situated in a plaza whose paving material flowed seamlessly into the building itself, with its distinctive permeable ground floor expressing the centrality of City Hall to urban life in Boston, and the accessibility of Boston city government to its citizens.

The petition under consideration posits a limited scope of portions of the building to be preserved. This petition calls for the preservation of the exterior of the building and, on the interior, only the main lobby. We believe the interior scope should be expanded to include other significant interior spaces, such as the

City Council Chamber.

The Society of Architectural Historians expresses strong support for the expeditious designation of Boston City Hall as a Boston City Landmark. The passage of time has only confirmed its architectural significance. Boston City Hall is an architectural landmark of national and international distinction and is well deserving of this protection. We urge the Boston Landmarks Commission to designate this building as a Boston City Landmark to ensure that future generations of Bostonians and Americans are able to experience this landmark of American architecture.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. C. G.' followed by a horizontal line.

Bryan Clark Green, Ph.D., LEED AP BD+C
Preservation Officer and Chair, Society of Architectural Historians Heritage Conservation Committee

cc: Kenneth Breisch, Ph.D.; Anthony Cohn, AIA; Pushpita Eshika, Ph.D.; Yannick Etoundi; David Fixler, FAIA; Suha Hasan, Ph.D.; Priya Jain, AIA; Basak Kalfa; Patricia Morton, Ph.D.; Theodore H. Prudon, Ph.D., FAIA; Deborah Slaton; Ben Thomas, Ph.D.; Members, SAH Heritage Conservation Committee.