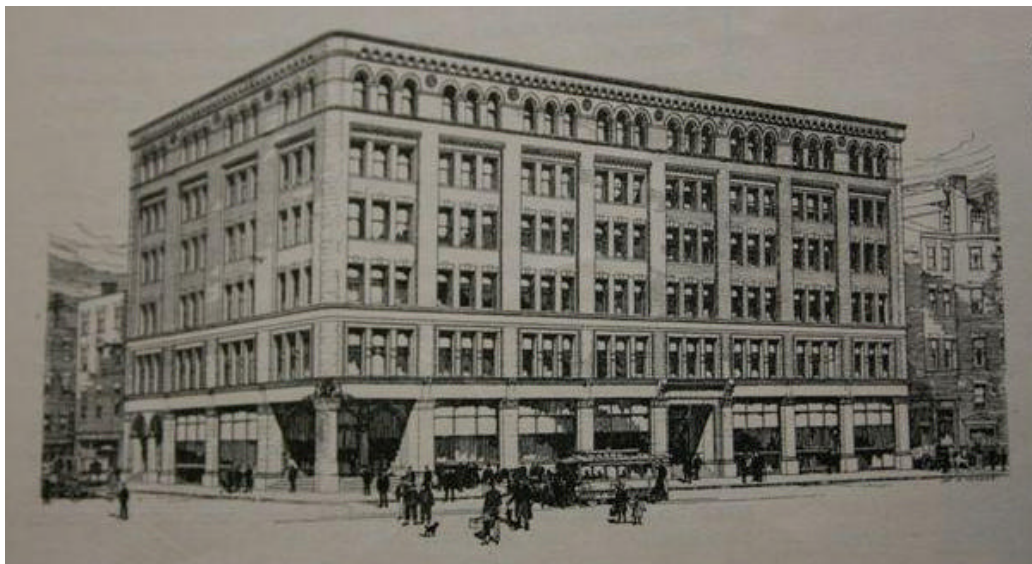


# AUCHMUTY BUILDING

## Study Report



Boston Landmarks Commission  
Environment Department  
City of Boston

Report on the Potential Designation of  
**The Auchmuty Building**  
**120 Kingston Street, Boston, Massachusetts**

As a Landmark under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ellen J. Lipsey, Executive Director Date

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Susan D. Pranger, Chairman Date

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**1.0 LOCATION OF PROPERTY**

**1.1 Address:**

120 Kingston Street, Boston, Mass.

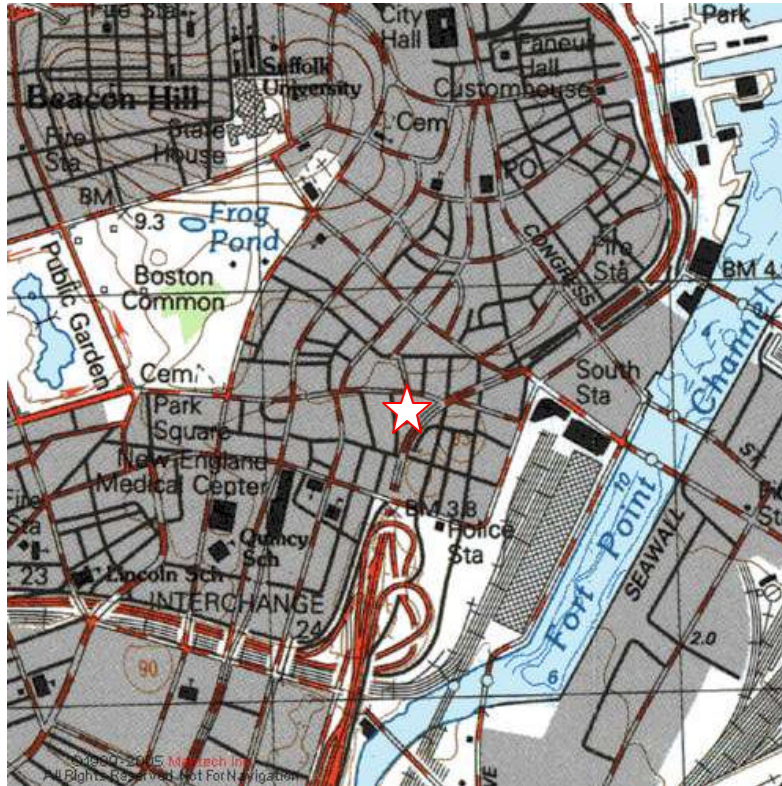
**Assessor's parcel number:**

0304308000

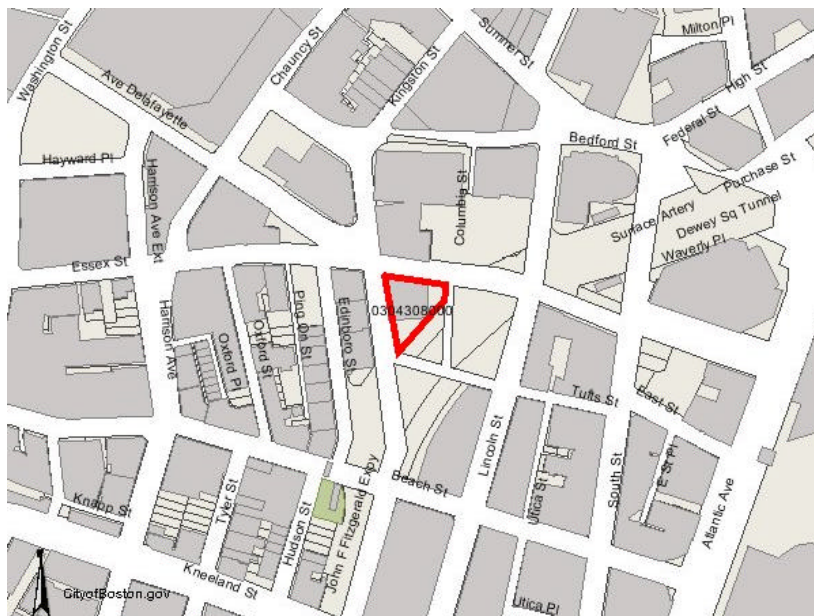
**1.2 Area in which property is located:**

The Auchmuty Building at 120 Kingston Street is located at the southeast corner of Kingston and Essex Streets, in the Textile District section of downtown Boston. The 14,463 square foot parcel occupies part of a roughly triangular block bounded by Essex Street, Kingston Street, and the Central Artery Surface Road, a site that bridges between the Financial District to the north, Chinatown to the south and west, and the Leather District to the east. Chinatown Park, part of the Rose Kennedy Greenway, borders the southeast side of the parcel.

### 1.3 Maps Showing Location



Topographic map illustrating the property location within the greater context of downtown Boston.



City of Boston assessor's map illustrating the location of the property.

## **2.0 DESCRIPTION**

### **2.1 Type and Use**

120 Kingston Street was built in 1889 for mercantile use, combining warehouse/storage space, salesrooms, and light manufacturing. Textile-related businesses continuously occupied the building for these uses into the 1990s. The building is now vacant.

### **2.2 Physical Description**

The Auchmuty Building stands on a flat 14,463 SF site on the southwest corner of Kingston and Essex streets, at the eastern edge of the Textile District.

Construction of the Central Artery surface road to the east of the property truncated the original building and isolated the Textile District from the Leather District. The building originally occupied the great majority of a large, generally rectangular block bounded by Essex, Kingston, and Tufts streets on the north, west and south, respectively, and Essex Place on the east. The northeast corner of this block was occupied by the small (2370 SF) Ludlow Building, which was under different ownership.

Constructed in 1889, the Auchmuty Building rises six stories above a raised basement to a flat roof. Its primary facades on Kingston Street (five bays) and Essex Street (four bays) are constructed of red brick with prominent brownstone trim. The south and east elevations, largely blank and unornamented surfaces, are constructed of rough brick. The present building footprint occupies approximately 10,000 square feet, with the remainder of the parcel taken up by a modest triangular surface parking lot on the south and a smaller, trapezoidal-shaped parking lot on the east. The building extends to the sidewalk edge on both Kingston and Essex streets.

The Auchmuty Building's traditional masonry construction consists of exterior bearing walls that taper from 30 inches thick at the base to 16 inches thick at the upper story, enclosing a structural system of iron columns, a heavy timber frame (reinforced with steel), and wood floors on the interior. The storefront level features rusticated brownstone piers with foliated capitals supporting an iron lintel and brownstone cornice. The wood sash of the original display windows sat approximately midway in the depth of the piers; these were replaced in the late 1940s with a metal storefront system set close to the outer face of the wall plane. (Early images show the storefront openings divided into thirds, with glazed transoms and base panels.) The Kingston/Essex Street corner is slightly rounded and trimmed with brownstone quoins.

Upper levels of the building are typically organized around groups of three windows with multifarious ornament. Second floor windows are framed with brownstone quoins and topped by a continuous brownstone entablature. The third through fifth floors are composed of recessed, rectangular bays separated by wide brick piers; typically, the third and fourth floor windows feature flared lintels and

keystones, while a modillion cornice surmounts the fifth floor windows. The sixth floor features round arched windows, still grouped in threes, surmounted by an arched, corbelled cornice. Wood window sash have a 1/1 configuration of panes on the second floor and 2/2 on the upper floors.

The building currently features three major entrances. At the east end of the Essex Street façade is a paired doorway and loading dock, framed by round-topped arches and a squat brownstone column. At the present south end of the building on Kingston Street (which was near the center of the original structure), brownstone piers support a lavishly carved cornice with foliated modillion brackets and egg and dart molding. In 1947, a new green marble surround, double-leaf doorways, and glazing were added to this opening.

The primary entrance to the building is located at the Kingston/Essex Street corner, where a massive, free-standing brownstone column with an all-over, low-relief pattern of abstract floral design supports a cut-away building corner. The original doorway was set within this recess on a platform three steps above grade, with a triplet of round-arched openings. The current entrance stands at-grade and features a simple metal framework with marble panels at the base, a center doorway with sidelights and transom, and a terrazzo floor.

The east elevation of the building was designed as a party wall facing the adjacent Ludlow Building, which occupied the northwest corner of the block from the time the Auchmuty Building was constructed until its demolition in the 1950s. This previously invisible elevation now features scattered utilitarian openings. Similarly, the present south wall of the structure was constructed as an interior fire wall; a loading dock and a bay of utilitarian openings have since been inserted into a center bay. The original Kingston Street elevation was roughly cut off during demolition and extends a short distance beyond the fire wall, with an unfinished edge and exposed steel structure.

As indicated by a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century aerial photograph and the 1946 renovation plans, the original Tufts Street façade was detailed similarly to the Kingston and Essex street facades, with grouped windows and a prominent cornice element. The Essex Place elevation, which formed the fourth side of the original block, was more utilitarian; six pairs of windows on each floor were closed with iron shutters, as they originally faced the back of the huge Ames Building and Essex Place was used for deliveries.

Minor exterior changes are documented in the building permits until the mid-1940s, when both ownership and major occupancy of the building changed. Plans dated 1946 formed the basis for a 1947 building permit, in which storefront alterations and a new entrance on Kingston Street were proposed, along with interior work such as stairways, elevators, and bathrooms, in order to accommodate four stores, a dry goods warehouse, and offices. One of two new entrances flanking the original Kingston Street entrance survives; it consists of a

low, recessed center doorway with flanking storefront windows, a green marble lintel and base panels; a glazed transom; and picture windows above. Sometime after 1947, the original three-arched, raised entrance at the corner of Kingston and Essex streets was replaced with the present metal storefront configuration at grade.

The most significant alteration to the Auchmuty Building has been the demolition of more than half of the structure in the mid-1950s, to accommodate construction of the Central Artery. The entire portion of the building south of the interior brick fire wall was removed. This included not only three bays along Kingston Street, but also the large mass of the building that angled out along Tufts Street and wrapped around Essex Place. Where the original building had a footprint of 20,732 square feet, the present structure has a footprint of approximately 10,000 square feet. In addition to the volume of the building being drastically reduced, utilitarian brick walls that were not intended to be public now serve as very visible facades.

More recently, the building appears to have suffered from deferred maintenance. Deterioration of the carved surface of the corner entrance column and damage to the arched brownstone surround at the Essex Street entrance are notable examples evident at street level.



## 2.3 Photographs

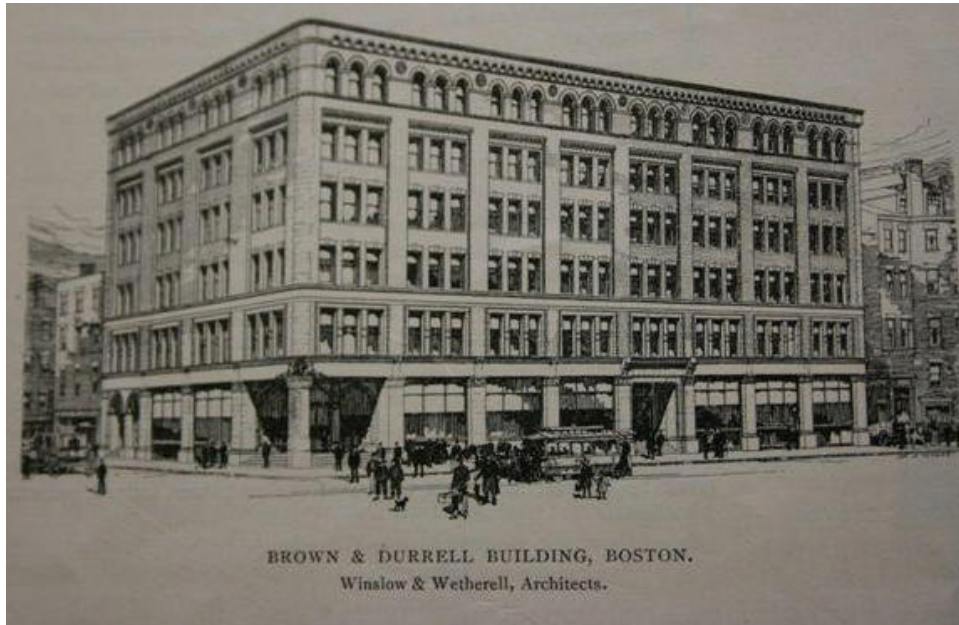


Illustration published in the *Brickbuilder*, July 1897.



Illustration published in Charles Damrell's, *A Half Century of Boston's Buildings*, 1895.



Photograph published in the *Brickbuilder*, February 1893.



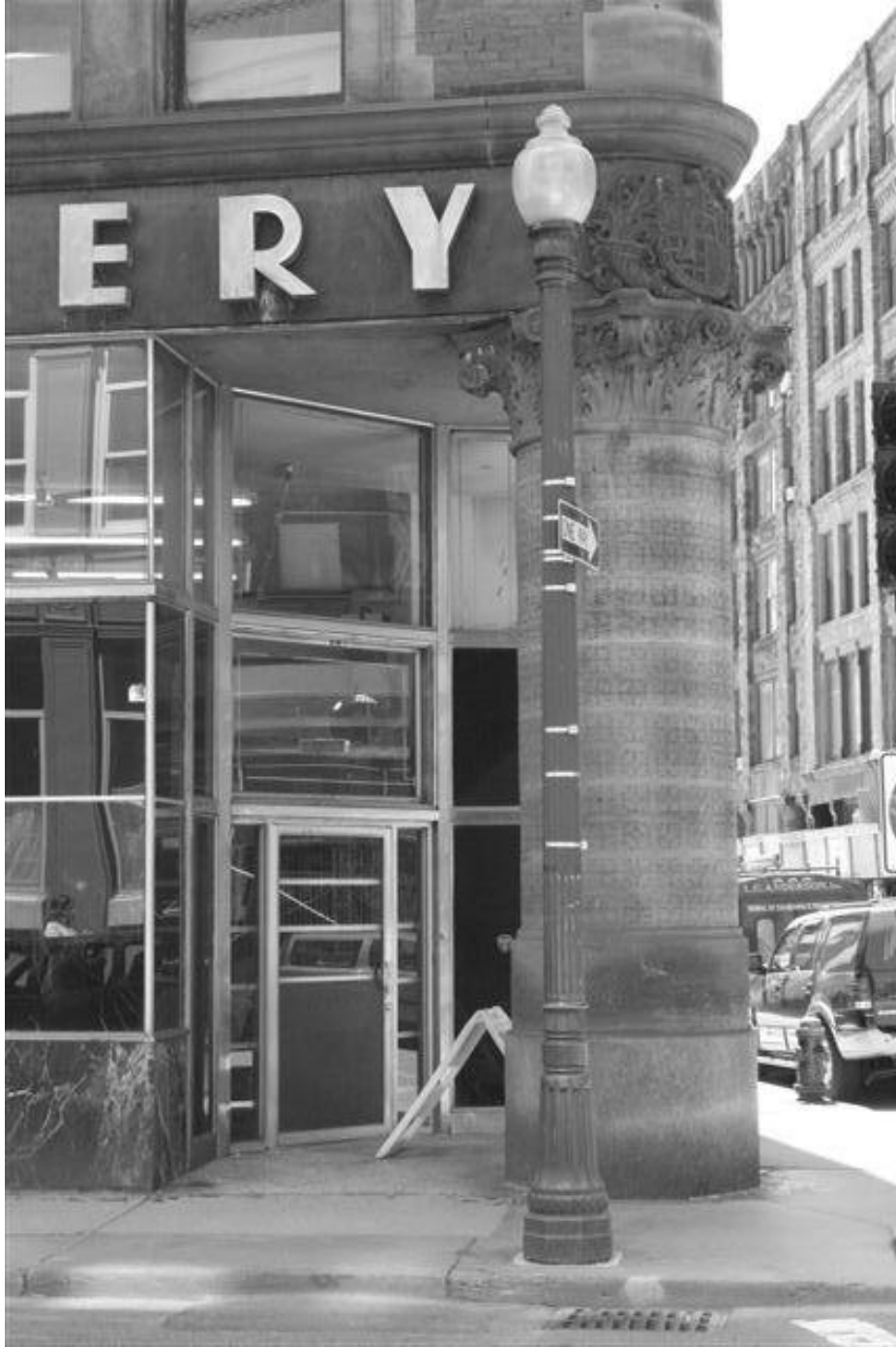
1890 Bromley Atlas showing the original footprint of the Auchmuty Building.



Corner of Kingston and Essex streets. (Photo: Wendy Frontiero, May 2007).



Kingston Street façade. (Photo: Wendy Frontiero, May 2007).



Entry at corner of Kingston and Essex streets. (Photo: Wendy Frontiero, May 2007).



Column detail, corner of Kingston and Essex streets. (Photo: Wendy Frontiero, May 2007).



Essex Street entrance. (Photo: Wendy Frontiero, May 2007).



Kingston Street entrance. (Photo: Wendy Frontiero, May 2007).



South and east elevations of the building. (Photo: Wendy Frontiero, May 2007).



### **3.0 SIGNIFICANCE**

The Auchmuty Building is notable for several historical and architectural qualities: as an early survivor of commercial development in the Textile District; for the Romanesque influence in its architectural design; as the work of the prolific Boston architectural firm of Winslow & Wetherell; as a project of the Boston Real Estate Trust, one of the city's leading investment firms in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which commissioned the structure and owned it for more than half a century; and, for a similar period of time, as the home of Brown, Durrell & Co., a nationally prominent dry goods business.

#### **3.1 Historic Significance**

##### Overview

The Auchmuty Building stands on what was the eastern edge of the original Shawmut peninsula, on the shore of the South Cove. Essex Street, laid out in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, bordered the waterfront through the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the area encompassed by the Textile District was largely open space with a scattering of small, modest houses in that period. Kingston Street was created in 1708.

The tripling of Boston's population after the Revolutionary War led to large-scale landmaking and geographic transformation all around the Shawmut peninsula in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Although some new land was created at the narrow isthmus of the Neck in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, major filling of South Cove began in the 1830s. The area around the Auchmuty Building was developed largely as an affluent residential neighborhood, initially known as the South End. As the Back Bay and "new" South End were filled and developed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, wealthier residents moved outward, and less affluent residents and commercial uses moved into the area.

The Great Fire of 1872 destroyed 776 buildings on 65 acres of land between Washington, Milk, Broad, and nearby Summer streets. The area was quickly and densely re-built with commercial buildings spreading south and east to fill the present Textile and Leather districts with impressive warehouses, showrooms, offices, and some manufacturing facilities for these particular industries, in which Boston was nationally prominent. Many well-known and talented architects—including H.H. Richardson—were commissioned to design these mercantile buildings.

In the 40 years after the Great Fire, the single-family row houses that originally dominated the present Textile District were completely replaced with five- to eight-story masonry commercial buildings, designed by a number of well-known architects primarily in the Classical Revival style. (Even the two buildings classified as Romanesque Revival have significant Classical elements.) The earliest extant structure in the Textile District is at 105-107 Essex Street (1888), immediately opposite the Auchmuty Building, which followed in 1889. Woolen

and cotton goods dealers, small-scale clothing manufacturers and wholesalers, and dry goods merchants were the chief occupants of this three-acre district, which served the textile industry of the whole New England region.

In the 1881 atlas, the block of land at the southwest corner of Kingston and Essex streets is shown subdivided into many small parcels, with a hodge-podge of brick and wood buildings on them. Essex Place bordered the block on the east, and Kingston Court bisected it north/south. Tufts Street did not exist at the time, and the mammoth United States Hotel (which at one time could accommodate up to 300 guests) bordered the site on the south. By 1889, the Boston Real Estate Trust had assembled the entire block with the exception of a small portion on the northeast corner, and Tufts Street was extended between Kingston and Lincoln streets at the southern end of the site.

The Auchmuty Building was constructed for the Boston Real Estate Trust in 1889 at a cost of \$280,000. Winslow & Wetherell were the architects and Woodbury & Leighton, well-known Boston contractors, the builder. The name for the building came from an 18<sup>th</sup> century name for Essex Street, which in turn derived from an old Boston family that was distinguished as lawyers and judges.

In April of 1889, the *Boston Globe* announced the commencement of construction, and called the building a “magnificent business structure” in “a bold, massive style”. (*Boston Globe*, Apr. 18, 1889) Brown, Durrell & Co. was identified as the future occupant of the majority of the building. Also going up at the same time was the adjacent H.H. Richardson-designed Ames Building, which faced Lincoln Street.

On Thanksgiving Day of 1889, a fire consumed 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  acres of land near Bedford and Kingston streets (north of Essex Street), causing \$11 million of losses in buildings and merchandise. Brown, Durrell & Co. was then occupying part of a six-story granite building at Bedford and Kingston streets that was owned and partially occupied by Jordan, Marsh & Co. This building and the Ames Building were completely destroyed and \$800,000 of merchandise was lost. Brown, Durrell soon removed to the newly completed Auchmuty Building at 120 Kingston Street, which had escaped the fire.

In March of 1893, another fire broke out in the new Ames Building (designed by Shepley Rutan & Coolidge) and quickly spread to the Auchmuty Building and to the Ludlow Building (by Peabody & Stearns), which occupied the small northeast corner of the Auchmuty Building's block. The Auchmuty and Ludlow buildings were badly damaged, the Ames Building totally destroyed. Total losses in this fire were estimated at \$4.5 million, including a little more than \$1 million in buildings and the rest in stock.

It appears that the top three floors of the Auchmuty building were destroyed by the fire, while the lower floors suffered primarily from water damage; Brown,

Durrell & Co. lost about \$900,000 in merchandise. It is not clear how much, if any, of the Auchmuty Building was re-built anew or what might have been salvageable from the original construction. The *Boston Globe* (March 11, 1893) reported that the walls were still standing (except for a piece next to the Ames Building), but the loss to the building was listed as \$225,000, about 80% of its original construction cost. In any case, the re-built structure looks identical to the views published in 1889.

At the time of the 1893 fire, Brown, Durrell occupied the basement, first, second, and sixth floors of 120 Kingston Street and sublet the remaining space. (It is assumed that this arrangement continued throughout their occupancy of the building.) Other occupants in 1893 included the Willimantic Linen Thread Company (thread and braids), H.P. Emerson & Co. (small wares), and Brainard & Armstrong Silk Company on the third floor; Day, Callahan & Co. (cloak makers, with production on site) on the fourth floor; and Richardson, Howe & Lovejoy (manufacturers of aprons, ladies' wraps and underwear, and other items) on the fifth floor.

Brown, Durrell & Co. occupied the Auchmuty Building until the mid-1940s, moving to Cambridge in 1947. Building ownership changed about the same time, and Dainty Dot Hosiery became the primary tenant. The new owner renovated the storefronts and entrances on the exterior and made several interior modifications, as well; Archie Riskin of Boston was the architect.

Dainty Dot Hosiery, run by Bernard, Copal, and Nathan Levin, first appears in the city directories between 1930 and 1935. In the latter year, the business was located at 83 Essex Street in Boston. Little is known of the company, with the exception of Copal Levin's serving as a vice president of the Hosiery Wholesalers National Association in 1943 and 1946; a classified ad in 1948 that describes the business as "ladies' full-fashioned hosiery"; and ads for their line of products at Macy's department store. Dainty Dot occupied 120 Kingston Street until around 1990, when the company was dissolved. A variety of other textile-related tenants also occupied the building through the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Boston Real Estate Trust**

The Boston Real Estate Trust was originally composed of five trustees—John Quincy Adams of Quincy, and Robert Codman, Abbott Lawrence, Samuel Wells, and William Minot, Jr., of Boston—and 20 directors. Four of the latter were sons of the trustees, while others came from such well-known Boston families as Ames, Coolidge, and Storrow.

The Trust was established in 1886 with an initial capitalization goal of two million dollars "for the purchase and improvement of real estate in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts" – or, as described in the BLC survey form, "as a speculative scheme for growth and perpetuation of family wealth as handed

down from father to eldest son and heir.” A real estate article in the *Boston Globe* on December 16, 1899, shows the Boston Real Estate Trust as the largest in a list of 30 local real estate trusts, with capital stock outstanding of \$7 million, far above the second-ranked trust, with \$2.8 million of stock. Another *Globe* article later that month (Dec. 31, 1899) reported that the Trust had increased its capital stock by \$1 million over the course of 1899. The significance of this particular type of investment vehicle is subsequently described:

“Among the notable features of the year has been the increase in the number and popularity of real estate trusts. Many conservative investors and trustees have bought largely of these securities instead of purchasing buildings outright. The return averages very well as an investment, and for the funds of a small trust is more satisfactory than owning an entire building.”

Another contemporary newspaper account describes the Boston Real Estate Trust as “one of the most powerful real estate trusts in the country.” (*Boston Globe*, Mar. 12, 1898) No properties outside of Boston have been identified in their ownership, but the Trust appears to have maintained a large and diverse portfolio within the city, comprised of both existing buildings and buildings it commissioned from various architects. The Trust was the original owner of the three Russia Wharf buildings on Congress Street (built in 1897); the Kingston Building at the southwest corner of Kingston and Essex streets (1888); 232-236 Congress Street (corner of Purchase Street; 1889); 106-112 Beach Street in the Leather District (1898; also by Winslow & Wetherell); and a two-story brick and stone stable at 30 Chestnut Street (ca. 1898).

Existing structures known to have been purchased by the Trust in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century included two small mercantile buildings at 45 and 49 High Street (built ca. 1873); the Church Green Building at 101 Summer Street (ca. 1873-74); 143-145 South Street in the Leather District (1885); the Boston Music Hall (address unknown); and a five-story brick factory at 95-107 Albany Street. In the 1890s, the Trust also owned two large brick structures (with footprints of 8,581 and 11,389 square feet) on the east side of Atlantic Avenue, between Summer and Congress streets; it is not known whether these were commissioned by the investment company.

Boston Real Estate Trust was one of many local investment firms operating in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century for the benefit of individuals, estates, and corporations. The trustees and subscribers were usually from the elite families of Boston, many of whom made their early fortunes in the maritime trade, the textile industry, and/or railroads. The five original trustees of Boston Real Estate Trust were a particularly distinguished group. All five were trained as lawyers, and several of them took over investment firms established by their fathers. They were often affiliated in a variety of businesses with other constellations of the same families.

*John Quincy Adams 2nd* (1833-1894) was the son of Charles Francis Adams, who was active in politics as an elected official and as ambassador to Great Britain, and the grandson of President John Quincy Adams. John Quincy 2<sup>nd</sup> was a lawyer by profession, member of the Board of Directors of the Fitchburg Railroad Company, was elected four times to Massachusetts' House of Representatives (and nominated for governor five times), and served "brilliantly" (*Famous Families of Massachusetts*: 37) as administrator of many trusteeships.

*Robert Codman* (1823-1901) was the son of the Rev. John Codman of Dorchester and the grandson of the Hon. John Codman, a prosperous merchant in Lincoln. Codman was a graduate of Harvard and Harvard Law School, a member of the Board of Directors of the Fitchburg Railroad Company and the New England Trust, associated with the Norfolk County Railroad, and a member of a law partnership that specialized in probate issues and trusts. His obituary (*Boston Globe*, Jan. 21, 1901) observed that "While prominent in the legal profession he was better known to the financial world. He was a director in many corporations, but his greatest success came as an investor of marked sagacity", managing many multi-million dollar funds.

*Abbott Lawrence* (1828-1893) was the son of Abbott Lawrence, who with his brother Amos made a fortune in the dry goods business and then invested in textile manufacturing in Lowell and Lawrence, the latter city being founded by their company. Lawrence graduated from Harvard, worked in the mercantile business for about 10 years, and graduated from Harvard Law School, but never actively practiced law. At the time of his death, Lawrence was president of the Pacific Mills and of the Essex Company in Lawrence. Pacific Mills had headquarters in Boston, offices in New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco, St. Louis, Baltimore, and Manchester, England; and mills in Lawrence, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and two in South Carolina. Manufacturing both cotton and woolen fabric, this enormous company had the capacity to produce more than 1.4 million yards (or about 800 miles) of finished cloth every day.

*Samuel Wells* (1836-1903) was the son of Hon. Samuel Wells, who was a judge on Maine's Supreme Judicial Court and governor of Maine before moving to Boston and establishing a law practice with the younger Wells. The son was a graduate of Harvard and, after his father died, a co-partner in his own firm, specializing in corporate law and the management of trusts. He served as president of the State Street Exchange of Boston, counsel and director of the John Hancock mutual life insurance company, and was a director of several other corporations. Interested in scientific matters, Welles "made a close study of the use of the microscope and was one of the first in this country to employ that instrument in photography." (*Boston Globe* obituary, Oct. 4, 1903).

*William Minot Jr.* (b. 1817) was the son of William Minot, Sr., a prominent lawyer who managed the Benjamin Franklin Trust for the City of Boston. William Jr. graduated from Harvard and Harvard Law School worked in the

family law firm and as co-partner in a separate firm, and gradually took on the work of his father “as administrator and trustee of large and exceedingly valuable estates. . . . It is probable that no man in Massachusetts had the management of a larger amount of trust funds than the elder Mr. Minot, and it is certain that in no other hands were these considered more safely deposited or more conscientiously and wisely invested.” (*Professional and Industrial History of Suffolk County*: 581).

The Auchmuty Building was one of the larger buildings in the Trust’s portfolio, which included a sizeable and distinguished group of downtown properties—many still extant—that contributed to the economic and physical development of the city. The full significance of this firm outside of Boston has not yet been documented, however.

### **Winslow & Wetherell**

The architectural firm of Winslow & Wetherell was well-known and extremely prolific in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Boston, both benefiting from and contributing to the real estate boom of that period. A native of Cambridge, Walter T. Winslow (1843-1909) apprenticed in the office of Nathaniel J. Bradlee and studied in Paris during the Civil War, after which he returned to Bradlee’s firm, becoming a partner in 1872. George H. Wetherell (1854-1930) studied architecture at MIT and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, and began his professional career in Bradlee’s office as well, advancing to partner in 1884; the firm was known as Bradlee, Winslow & Wetherell until Bradlee’s death in 1888. In 1898, Henry F. Bigelow (1867-1929) became a third partner and the firm continued as Winslow, Wetherell & Bigelow.

Described at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as the largest architectural firm in Boston (“The Brochure Series of Architectural Illustration,” August 1895), Winslow & Wetherell produced a great number of residential, commercial, and public buildings in a wide range of styles. The vast majority were in Boston, with a smaller number (mostly residences) in immediately adjacent communities. Among the most prominent of these projects were several mill buildings at the Baker Chocolate Factory in Dorchester (1880s-1890s); the Shreve, Crump & Low Building on Tremont Street (1890); the Edison building on Atlantic Avenue (1892); the Castle Square Hotel and Theatre on Tremont Street (1894), the Hotel Touraine (1897), and additions to the United States Hotel (1894) and the Parker House Hotel (1895); the M. Steinert & Sons Building and Hall on Boylston Street (1896); the Proctor Building at Bedford and Kingston streets (1896-97); the S.S. Pierce Building at Coolidge Corner in Brookline (1898-99); and the Jewelers’ Building on Washington and Bromfield streets (1898; addition in 1902-05).

Other known Winslow & Wetherell buildings in the warehouse area of Boston included 88-100 Kingston Street (1893) in the Textile District and, in the Leather District, 106-112 Beach Street (1898; also for the Boston Real Estate Trust) and

136-134, 138-144, and 145-154 Lincoln Street (the latter three in the Romanesque Revival style). The firm also designed numerous houses in the Back Bay, on Bay State Road, and in the suburbs of Brookline, Newton, and Cambridge.

Winslow & Wetherell's notable work outside of metropolitan Boston include the St. Marks School in Southborough, Mass.; Union Railroad Station in Portland, Maine (published 1893); the New England Building in Kansas City, Missouri (1887-88; that city's tallest building at the time of its construction); and The Oaks mansion and a resort hotel in Virginia (between 1888 and 1890).

The firm's work was frequently published in the nationally-circulated *American Architect and Building News*— including 13 of the 17 buildings ascribed to them in the Avery Index. Furthermore, George Wetherell's obituary was published in *The New York Times*, suggesting that although their work was predominantly local, they did enjoy some wider-spread reputation. (The Boston Society of Architects' notice of Winslow's death stated that "architecture in this city has lost one of the foremost leaders." (*AIA Quarterly Bulletin*, 1909: p. 266))

Among the office's best known employees was Charles Greene, who became a seminal figure in the development of modern architecture in southern California with his brother Henry. Charles worked with Winslow & Wetherell between his graduation from MIT's School of Architecture in 1891 and his and Henry's departure for Pasadena in 1893. (Henry Greene was working for Shepley, Ruten, and Coolidge.)

### **Brown, Durrell & Company**

Brown, Durrell & Company was a large and well-known firm in Boston's textile industry and gradually occupied some of the largest buildings in the district. In business for approximately 90 years, the company occupied 120 Kingston Street for more than six decades, and also had offices in New York and Chicago for a time in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Its products were sold by national department stores and were nationally advertised.

The company was founded in 1873, when it first appears in city directories as purveyors of millinery and small wares "in an old house" at 105 Chauncy Street (*Boston Globe*, Oct. 9, 1882). ("Small wares" could encompass gloves, hosiery, yarns, corsets, ribbons, etc.) The firm's namesakes were Joseph A. Brown and Oliver Durrell of Cambridge; Thomas B. Fitz (aka Fitzpatrick) was also identified with the company at the beginning. Growth in business led the company to move to larger space at 60 Summer Street by 1875, then 83 Summer Street by 1880, and in 1882 to a large building at 71 Bedford Street, on the corner of Kingston. The *Globe* reported that the latter location featured an "immense store with... ample accommodations", including salesrooms on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors, separate waiting rooms for "ladies" and "general customers", warehouse space on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, and offices. After this building was damaged in the severe Thanksgiving Day fire of

1889, Brown, Durrell moved to the newly completed Auchmuty Building, where they remained until 1946. In that year, the company moved to 75 Cambridge Parkway in Cambridge.

Over the years, the firm's business expanded into the importing, manufacturing, and wholesale distribution of a large range of dry goods and small wares. At one point (in 1920), an enumeration of the company's products included hosiery, underwear, gloves, handkerchiefs, laces, "Ladies' and Men's Furnishings", ribbons, knit items, and sweaters. In the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, their line included the popular Gordon brand of hosiery (for men, women, and children) and Gordon's silk and rayon underwear.

Signs of the company's growth and success can be read in the description of their losses in the 1889 and 1893 fires. In the 1889 fire, Brown, Durrell lost merchandise valued at \$800,000; in the 1893 fire, they lost \$900,000 in merchandise and \$1.2 million overall. By 1909, in a public response to a tariff bill proposed in the U.S. Congress, Paul Fitzpatrick of Brown, Durrell put his importing business in the category of Marshall Field & Co., Lord & Taylor, and Henry Schiff & Co., who were also purchasing from German hosiery mills at the time. In 1929, the company's gross revenues were reported as approximately \$18 million a year, and assets were at a high of nearly \$10 million.

Brown, Durrell's economic significance and legacy are suggested in an article titled "Innovation in American retailing, 1919-39: Improving inventory management" (*The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, July 1999). The article cites Brown, Durrell as an exemplar of the "development of a direct reorder system directly related to stock in sales departments" (Savitt: 317)—part of an important and innovative retailing system pioneered by E.A. Filene to better control inventory and to improve marketing of products based on actual sales in different store locations, rather than stocking and supplying each store with the same selection and quality of items.

While Boston was the main office of Brown, Durrell & Co., important branch offices were located in other major American cities. The Chicago office of the company (located first in the Rand McNally Building and subsequently the Textile Building in that city) was active at least from 1910 to 1920. The New York branch (on West 19<sup>th</sup> Street) was longer-lived, also appearing by 1910 and maintained through at least 1930. A financial statement dated 1916 on company letterhead depicts the Boston and New York locations, featuring the Auchmuty Building in Boston and an equally substantial-looking commercial building in New York—11 stories high and with the Brown, Durrell Co. signboard across the entire storefront on the street façade, indicating at least that it was a major tenant.

Oliver Durrell's obituary in *The New York Times* (Feb. 1, 1900) calls Durrell "one of the most prominent merchants of Boston" and Brown, Durrell "the largest house in the United States in its line[,] which is small wares, notions, &c." At the



time of his death, Durrell was head of the company and had recently been appointed to the Governor's Council. The Lieutenant Governor was a pallbearer at the funeral, and Boston's dry goods businesses closed during the funeral services.

### **3.2 Architectural Significance**

The Auchmuty Building comprises a six-story brick commercial building that is straightforward in its design, combining Romanesque and Classical design elements. Its most impressive Romanesque Revival style components are found at the storefront level, with less vibrant Romanesque features at the top edge of the building; other detailing is in a fairly traditional Classical style. Although 120 Kingston Street is one of the earliest extant buildings in the Textile District and one of its few representations of the Romanesque Revival style, the building's design and construction are not uncommon in the larger context of the Central Business District.

The Leather District, for example, which is now isolated to the east of the Textile District, was originally a contiguous and contemporaneous development in which suppliers and wholesalers for New England's shoe manufacturing industry congregated. Developed chiefly in the last two decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the buildings in this district are recognized for the number and quality of their Romanesque Revival designs. The National Register form for this district calls this area "Boston's most intact and homogenous district of late nineteenth century vernacular commercial structures, as well as one of only a few such remaining in New England." MHC's Regional Report for Boston goes further, calling the Leather District "the high style standard in the warehouse architecture of the region" (MHC, Boston Regional Report, 1980: 169-170).

120 Kingston Street is a solid and interesting example of the work of Winslow & Wetherell. However, other of their commercial buildings—including the Hotel Touraine, Shreve Crump & Low, the Proctor Building (which was designated a Boston Landmark in 1983), and the Jewelers' Building—were more favorably ranked at the time of their construction.

Finally, the Auchmuty Building has lost much of its architectural integrity through demolition of more than half of the original structure. The Essex Street façade is intact, but more than a third of the Kingston Street façade, the entire Tufts Street façade, and more than half of the original volume of the building have disappeared. The remaining portion of the building continues to anchor one corner of the important Kingston/Essex Street intersection, but without its original sense of scale. The loss of historic context and the current views of the rough, exposed south and east walls adversely affect the property and contribute to the visible sense of loss that the original construction of the Central Artery engendered.

### 3.3 Relationship to Criteria for Landmark Designation

The Auchmuty Building at 120 Kingston Street illuminates and is illustrative of Boston's industrial and economic history in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, but it does not appear to fully meet the following criteria for Landmark designation, found in Section 4 of Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, with significance above the local level, as required in Section 2 of Chapter 772:

A. *A property listed on the National Register of Historic Places.* The Auchmuty Building is listed as a contributing building within the Textile District, which is identified as significant only on the local level. The property failed to gain approval from the National Park Service for individual listing in an earlier application, in which the significance of the property is evaluated as local.

B. *A property with prominent associations with the cultural, political, economic, military, or social history of the city, Commonwealth, region, or nation.* The Auchmuty Building has significant associations with the textile industry of the region and the nation through Brown, Durrell & Co., and may have significant associations with regional economic history through its association with the Boston Real Estate Trust, but corroborating documentation of the Trust's influence beyond the local level has not yet been discovered. The survival of less than half of the original building diminishes the strength of these historical associations, however, as the physical size of the structure was directly related to, and reflective of, the success of both companies.

C. *A property associated significantly with the lives of outstanding historic personages.* The Auchmuty Building was directly affiliated with the business lives of its original trustees (Adams, Codman, Lawrence, Wells, and Minot), who were eminent both locally and regionally in a variety of leading industries. It is one of several large commercial buildings extant in the area that were built and/or managed by the Trust. Other structures, such as residences of the individual trustees or the factory buildings of Lawrence's Pacific Mills Company, may equally or better represent the personal significance of the trustees, however.

D. *A property representative of architectural design, craftsmanship, or distinctive characteristics of a type inherently valuable for study of a period, style, or method of construction or development, or a notable work of a designer or builder.* The Auchmuty Building is a skillful example of its architectural style and designer, embodies traditional construction techniques at a time of structural innovation in large commercial buildings, and is a typical example of commercial development of its period. However, the loss of more than half of the original structure diminishes the building's architectural integrity.

#### **4.0 ECONOMIC STATUS**

##### **4.1 Current Assessed Value**

According to the City of Boston Assessor's records, the property at 120 Kingston Street, Boston, has a total assessed value of \$4,116,000, with the land valued at \$2,377,000 and the building at \$1,739,000.

##### **4.2 Current Ownership**

According to the Assessor's records, this property is owned by Hudson Group North America Real Estate Trust. The managing partner of the company is Ori Ron, 441 Atlantic Avenue Swampscott, Massachusetts 01907.

## **5.0 PLANNING CONTEXT**

### **5.1 Background**

The Boston Landmarks Commission survey of this property in 1980 evaluated the property as Category IV and recommended it for the National Register as a contributing building within the Essex/Kingston Streets Textile District. Two years later, the significance of the property was upgraded to III, F.S.

An individual application for National Register listing was prepared for the Auchmuty Building in 1986. It was voted eligible by the State Review Board but was returned by the National Park Service with questions about the integrity of the structure as well as owner objections to listing. A petition for Boston Landmark designation was received by the BLC in 1988 and accepted in 1989.

### **5.2 Current Planning Issues**

Hudson Group North America submitted a Project Notification Form for the redevelopment of the property at 120 Kingston Street to the Boston Redevelopment Authority in March 2007, followed by an Environmental Notification Form to MEPA in April 2007.

Current plans call for demolition of the two end bays of the existing building on both Essex and Kingston streets, leaving two bays of the original building on Essex Street and three bays on Kingston Street. A new 29-story addition would wrap around and rise above the remaining portion of the historic structure, using the full footprint of the parcel. Retail space is proposed on the ground floor and residential units on the upper floors, with parking occupying the historic structure and fenestration above the first floor treated as window boxes.

The project proponent has presented two alternatives to demolition of portions of the historic structure. The no-build alternative would leave an underutilized building and vacant parking lots on a highly visible site adjacent to an important new community park. Construction above the existing structure is reported by the project proponent not be feasible due to the inability of the current structure to support added floors. The project proponent also has represented that currently undeveloped portions of the site are not large enough by themselves to sustain independent development.

The proposed project envisages a contemporary 325 foot glass tower on the site, which only preserves the massing of the historic building at the intersection of Essex and Kingston streets. The project requires demolition of about 45% of the extant structure.

### **5.3 Current Zoning**

The Auchmuty Building is located within the Chinatown District of the Boston Zoning Code as established by Article 43 of the Code, effective May 19, 1990. More specifically, the property is located within the general Chinatown

Commercial Subdistrict along Essex Street, which allows a maximum height of 80 feet and an FAR of 6.0 for projects not subject to Section 80-B, Large Project Review. For projects that are subject to Section 80B, the allowable height is 100 feet and the FAR may be increased to 7.0.

## **6.0 ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES**

### **6.1 Alternatives available to the Boston Landmarks Commission:**

#### **A. Individual Landmark Designation**

The Commission retains the option of designating the Auchmuty Building as a Boston Landmark. Designation shall correspond to Assessor's parcel 0304308000 and shall address the following exterior elements, hereinafter referred to as the "Specified Exterior Features:"

- The exterior envelope of the building.

#### **B. Denial of Individual Landmark Designation**

The Commission retains the option of not designating any or all of the Specified Exterior Features as a Landmark.

#### **C. Preservation Restriction**

The Commission could recommend the owner consider a preservation restriction for any or all of the Specified Exterior Features.

#### **D. Preservation Plan**

The Commission could recommend development and implementation of a preservation plan for the property.

#### **E. National Register Listing**

The Auchmuty Building is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Textile District.

**Impact of Alternatives:****A. Individual Landmark Designation**

Landmark Designation represents the city's highest honor and is therefore restricted to cultural resources of outstanding architectural and/or historical significance. Landmark designation under Chapter 772 would require review of physical changes to the Specified Exterior Features of the property, in accordance with the standards and criteria adopted as part of the designation. Landmark designation results in listing on the State Register of Historic Places.

**B. Denial of Individual Landmark Designation**

Without Landmark designation, the City would be unable to offer protection to the Specified Exterior Features, or extend guidance to the owners under chapter 772.

**C. Preservation Restriction**

Chapter 666 of the M.G.L. Acts of 1969 allows individuals to protect the architectural integrity of their property via a preservation restriction. A restriction may be donated to or purchased by any governmental body or non-profit organization capable of acquiring interests in land and strongly associated with historic preservation. These agreements are recorded instruments (normally deeds) that run with the land for a specific term or in perpetuity, thereby binding not only the owner who conveyed the restriction, but also subsequent owners. Restrictions typically govern alterations to exterior features and maintenance of the appearance and condition of the property.

A preservation restriction would also afford the owner of the property with a one-time income tax deduction, based on the appraised amount of the loss of property value due to the restriction placed on the exterior of the building. Thus, the preservation restriction would offer an incentive to preserve all of the historic fabric of the Kingston and Essex street facades and to ensure that an addition would be compatible with the historic fabric. Listing in the National Register of Historic Places, within the Textile District, qualifies the Auchmuty Building for a preservation restriction that may be tax deductible.

**D. Preservation Plan**

A preservation plan allows an owner to work with interested parties to investigate various adaptive use scenarios, analyze investment costs and rates of return, and provide recommendations for subsequent development. However, it does not carry regulatory oversight.

**E. National Register**

National Register listing provides an honorary designation and limited protection from federal, federally-licensed or federally-assisted activities. It creates incentives for preservation, notably the federal investment tax credits and grants through the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund from the Massachusetts Historical Commission. National Register listing provides listing on the State Register affording parallel protection for projects with state involvement and also the availability of state tax credits. Tax credits are not available to owners who demolish portions of historic properties.



## **7.0 RECOMMENDATION**

The Auchmuty Building does not appear meet the criteria for Landmark designation as found in Section 4 of Chapter 772, Acts of 1975, as amended, for reasons cited in Section 3.2 and 3.3 of this report. More than half of the original structure, the remainder of its original block, and two entire blocks surrounding it were demolished in the 1950s for construction of a new highway. The greatly compromised physical integrity of the building thereby reduces its architectural significance, and its representation of the economic potency of its original owner/developer and of its leading occupant. For this reason, the staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission recommends that the Auchmuty Building not be designated a Landmark under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended. Staff does, however, recommend that the property owner work with interested parties to pursue an alternative project and preservation plan for the Auchmuty Building that considers using state and federal tax credits to help finance sensitive rehabilitation of the building, and also considers the option of donating a preservation restriction which would ensure the preservation of the building and afford the property owner a tax deduction.

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