



**Request for  
Expressions Of Interest**

***Adaptive Reuse of the Men's Comfort Station  
Boston Common, Boston, MA  
August 2009***

**Boston Parks and Recreation Department  
Thomas M. Menino, Mayor  
Antonia M. Pollak, Commissioner**

Electronic copy and forms available at [www.cityofboston.gov/parks/RFEI](http://www.cityofboston.gov/parks/RFEI)

**REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

Adaptive Reuse of the Men’s Comfort Station, Boston Common, Boston, MA

---

Table of Contents

Advertisement.....3

Request for Expressions of Interest ..... 4-7

Submission Requirements .....7

Appendices

Location Map.....8

Building Photos .....9

**REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

---

Adaptive Reuse of the Men's Comfort Station, Boston Common, Boston, MA

**ADVERTISEMENT  
CITY OF BOSTON**

**PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT**

**NOTICE TO DEVELOPERS AND BUSINESS OWNERS**

**INVITATION FOR REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

NOTE: For information specific to this particular project, please contact Margaret Dyson, @ 617-961-3028 or Liza Meyer @ 617-961-3014

The Boston Parks and Recreation Department, acting through its Commissioner, is requesting expressions of interest for the Men's Comfort Station on the Boston Common, Boston, Massachusetts.

The Request For Expression of Interest will be available for pick up (no mailings will be sent) from the Chief Engineer, Boston Parks and Recreation Department, 1010 Massachusetts Avenue, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Boston, MA 02118. It will also be available for download from the City of Boston website at: [www.cityofboston.gov/parks/RFEI](http://www.cityofboston.gov/parks/RFEI)

For further information, please call Ms. Margaret Dyson, Director of Historic Parks, at 617-961-3028 or Liza Meyer, Parkman Manager for Historic Parks, at 617-961-3014, and refer to this advertisement. The Request For Expressions of Interest will be available for pick up as of August 17th, 2009 and must be returned no later than 2:00 P.M. on October 5th, 2009.

**CITY OF BOSTON  
PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT,**

**ANTONIA M. POLLAK,**  
Commissioner

(Aug. 17 & Aug. 24)

## **REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

---

Adaptive Reuse of the Men's Comfort Station, Boston Common, Boston, MA

### **OPPORTUNITY**

The last remaining underutilized structure on the Boston Common is a former Men's Comfort Station. The Boston Parks Department (BPRD), under the guidance of Mayor Thomas Menino, is interested in developing a reuse plan for this empty building.

BPRD presents this Request of Expressions for Interest (RFEI) in the solicitation of adaptive reuse ideas and implementation strategies for the Men's Comfort Station. The BPRD sees this process as an opportunity to clarify the requirements of adaptive reuse of the building. The Boston Common, including this building, is on the National Register of Historic Places with the other parks of Boston's Emerald Necklace, as well as a City of Boston Landmark.

Parties with interesting and competitive ideas for the building's reuse are encouraged to respond to this Request for Expressions of Interest. Submission of an Expression of Interest will not be a prerequisite for submitting a final proposal when the city proceeds into a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. Also, BPRD will not consider the information submitted through the RFEI to be binding on the respondent or BPRD.

The purpose of the RFEI is to:

1. Determine the type of information and materials to be incorporated into the RFP;
2. Gauge the interest in the building and identify the market for a potential RFP.

BPRD is seeking expressions of interest that provide for a public benefit and complement park management and programming. If a compatible use can be identified, BPRD could grant a lease to a tenant who would restore the building for this use, provide public benefit, and enhance the Boston Common. BPRD would consider a long lease term; however, if the term is longer than three years, legislation will be required to enact such an agreement.

### **BOSTON COMMON LOCATION**

Boston Common, America's oldest park, is centrally located in downtown abutting Beacon Hill, Back Bay, Midtown, Downtown, Bay Village and Chinatown. Its proximity to both commercial and residential areas of the city makes it a very popular location. Boston's median household income is 16% higher than the median income in metropolitan areas nationwide, and the downtown Boston average household income is over \$75,000. Two colleges now consider Boston Common their front lawn. The park is close to thousands of workers in Government Center, Downtown Crossing, the Financial District and Midtown Cultural District. Downtown Crossing alone boasts over 100,000 visitors each day and offers 30 full service restaurants and 60 quick food operators. The developing "Ladder Blocks" within Downtown Crossing have many new food venues to choose from as does Beacon Hill's Charles Street and the Back Bay. All of these options are within a ½ mile radius of the Boston Common. The Common is serviced by multiple lines of the MBTA, and has an on site underground parking garage. Each year, according to the Greater Boston Convention and Visitor's bureau, nearly 18 million people visit the city. Three million people walk Boston's "Freedom Trail" each year which begins at the Boston Common Visitor's Center.

Boston Common encompasses 48 acres of open space in the heart of Boston. Over the years the park has changed from a passive cattle grazing area to a multi-use year round open space. These uses include:

Freedom Trail  
Tennis Courts  
Ball Fields  
Underground Parking  
Visitor's Center with public restrooms  
Ranger Station  
34 vending locations for food and notions  
Parkman Bandstand – location of seasonal arts and cultural activities  
Brewer Fountain – currently under restoration

## **REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

---

Adaptive Reuse of the Men's Comfort Station, Boston Common, Boston, MA

Maintenance Facility at Deer Park  
Frog Pond Spray Pool and Skating Pavilion  
Pedestrian walking paths used by visitors and commuters  
Two subway stations (Park St. and Boylston St.) with head houses  
The historic Central Burying Ground  
A historic parade ground drawing tens of thousands to permitted special events annually  
Locations for freedom of speech rallies near the State House  
Monuments and sculptures honoring many historic events  
Lawns and a significant shade canopy from 646 trees

### **THE BUILDING AND SITE**

The Men's Comfort Station was built in the 1920's for use as a public toilet facility. It has been closed to the public since the 1970's. The 660 square foot building is centrally located on the Boston Common between the athletic fields, tennis courts and the Parkman Bandstand. It is a heavily trafficked, highly visible area with minimal existing services or concessions. The Men's Comfort Station is a Boston Parks and Recreation owned building, one of nine historic structures on the Boston Common. The historic significance of the Boston Common and this structure is narrated below:

From the National Register Nomination Statement of Significance:

*"Boston Common, generally considered the oldest public park in the United States, merits examination for its significance in the history of conservation, landscape architecture, military and political history, and sculpture, as well as recreation.*

*It and the adjoining Public Garden are still one of the greatest amenities of Boston. Much of their importance springs from their location in the heart of one of America's oldest and historically most important cities. The Common was, for example, a political rallying point and military training field before and during the American Revolution and Civil War. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, it became a showplace for public sculpture. It was also the playground field of the first organized football club in the country, the Oneida Club, which began competing in 1862."*

The Report of the Boston Landmark's Commission on the potential designation of the Boston Common as a Landmark from 1977 describes the "General Standards and Criteria for Physical, Landscape or Topographical Feature(s) Designated as Landmarks". These general standards include:

*"New architectural materials should, whenever appropriate, match the material being replaced in physical properties, design, color, texture and other visual qualities.*

*New additions or alterations to the landscape should not disrupt the essential form and integrity of the property....*

*New additions or alterations should be done in such a way that if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the landscape could be restored."*

To preserve this landscape, the city developed the Boston Common Management Plan which includes a comprehensive set of recommendations to guide maintenance and improvements for park buildings and structures, as well as vegetation, furnishings, pathways, and utilities among other things. The Management Plan suggests that the Men's Comfort Station be removed from the park unless a suitable use can be found for the building. In the interest of retaining the historic fabric of the Common, BPRD seeks a compatible and appropriate use for the building. The Boston Public Facilities Department (PFD) commissioned a feasibility study for the building to outline the extent of work and investment required for restoration and reuse of the building. The findings of this report are summarized below, and a more complete version of the document is available on the BPRD website at [www.cityofboston.gov/parks/RFEI](http://www.cityofboston.gov/parks/RFEI)

## **REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

---

Adaptive Reuse of the Men's Comfort Station, Boston Common, Boston, MA

The building is octagonal in shape and approximately 16 feet high at the roof edge. It is a single story building with probable utility space in the basement. The basement has not been accessed and evaluated in recent years. The structure is made of cast stone with remnants of a glazed copper roof. There is one point of entry, four clerestory windows, and seven blind masonry panels around the building's exterior. The structure will require hazardous material abatement, exterior stabilization and renovation, and reconnection of all utilities. While the original building was used as a restroom, there is currently no known sewer or water connection. The interior of the structure requires a full renovation.

All renovations planned for the building's exterior will require review and approval by the Boston Landmarks Commission.

### **REUSE OBJECTIVES**

1. The proposed use(s) are compatible with the mission of the Boston Parks and Recreation Department to provide clean, green, safe and accessible open spaces throughout the city.
2. The proposed use(s) are compatible with the historic urban park setting.
3. The proposed use(s) are complementary to current Boston Common activities and programs.
4. The proposed use(s) are compatible with BPRD's maintenance and management operations, and will not be a burden to these operations.
5. The proposed use(s) are complementary to the historic integrity of the building.
6. The proposed use(s) are contained within the existing footprint of the building, with limited seasonal use of the adjacent landscape.
7. The proposed use(s) will not make permanent changes to the landscape.
8. The proposed use(s) will offer a public benefit(s) and public component at the building for the citizens of Boston.
9. The proposed use(s) and/or management will provide security and public safety as a high priority.
10. The proposed use(s) and/or management will provide for the maintenance of the structure.
11. The proposed use(s) will be economically self-sustaining.
12. The proponent must be undertaken by person(s) with documented successful real estate redevelopment and business experience, in either the for-profit or not-for-profit sectors, and appropriate qualifications and/or licensure.

### **POSSIBLE REUSE IDEAS AND PARAMETERS OF REDEVELOPMENT**

Because this is a National and local Landmark protected by law and BPRD rules, there are both great opportunities and challenges in a reuse plan. The park draws thousands of visitors daily whether they are commuting to their workplace or home, enjoying lunch on the Common, attending an event / rally or enjoying some of the outdoor activities offered. Challenges include seasonality, limited space, no immediately adjacent parking, service access, and garbage / recycling management. As with any vending operation, delivery access will be limited to early morning and evening given the large number of pedestrians using the park's pathways. Because of limited space in the building, BPRD anticipates that an off site commissary and storage space will be required.

The PFD feasibility study assessed the cost and work associated with renovating the building to be used as a walk-up snack bar with a restroom. The preliminary floor plan and cost estimate for this proposal is available in the full report posted on line at [www.cityofboston.gov/parks/RFEI](http://www.cityofboston.gov/parks/RFEI)

While the Boston Parks and Recreation Department is interested in Expressions of Interest that include food concessions, interested parties are encouraged to submit any reuse ideas, provided that the new use is compatible with the historic character and current uses of the Boston Common and with the mission of the Boston Parks and Recreation Department. Any redevelopment of the Men's Comfort Station should capitalize on its central, visible location in the Boston Common and make the best possible use of its adjacencies within the Common and beyond.

## **REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

---

Adaptive Reuse of the Men's Comfort Station, Boston Common, Boston, MA

Because the building is within an historic landscape, permissible landscape alterations will be limited. Designs will be reviewed and approved by the Boston Landmarks Commission and restrictions may include: no parking, no rerouting of existing paths, no significant addition of impervious area, no removal of existing trees, no permanent dumpster facilities, no fixed year-round outdoor seating, and preservation of the existing metal fence (though reconfiguration may be possible).

### **SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND PROCESS**

The Boston Parks and Recreation Department invites all qualified interested parties to respond to this Request for Expressions of Interest. Responses to the RFEI are public documents and will be utilized by the Department to develop a Request for Proposals should the Department deem it in their best interest to proceed.

Respondents to this RFEI understand that information they provide may be used in whole or in part by the City. Response to this RFEI does not legally bind the respondent to the City in any way, nor the City to the respondent. All submissions are welcome and due on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2009. Please submit three copies in an 8 1/2 " x 11" format, with one copy unbound ready for photocopying. No fax or email transmissions will be accepted.

Submissions shall include:

1. Project Narrative
  - o Describe reuse idea
  - o Describe how it meets the Reuse Objectives described herein
  - o Describe how the redevelopment will be executed
  - o Preliminary floor plans or sketches are welcome, but not required.
2. Experience and Capabilities of the development team
  - o Describe experience with other projects comparable in scope with the reuse proposal.
3. Business Model
  - o Provide a pro forma that demonstrates the specifics of the project's feasibility and ability to be self-sustaining including possible source(s) of funds (conventional sources, foundations, etc).
  - o Length of lease required by the respondent to make the project financially viable
  - o Potential financial value the submission might offer the city.
4. Contact Information
  - o Full name and business of all members of the response team
  - o Primary contact person within the team. Provide telephone number, fax number, email, and mailing address for the primary contact person.

Respondents with ideas deemed the most compelling, executable and fiscally viable may be invited to interview with BPRD staff prior to the issuance of a Request for Proposals. Submissions will be reviewed by the City before previewing the submissions to the public.

Questions about this request and submissions should be directed to:

Margaret Dyson

OR

Liza Meyer

Director of Historic Parks

Parkman Manager – Historic Parks

Boston Parks and Recreation Department

Boston Parks and Recreation Department

1010 Massachusetts Ave, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

1010 Massachusetts Ave, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

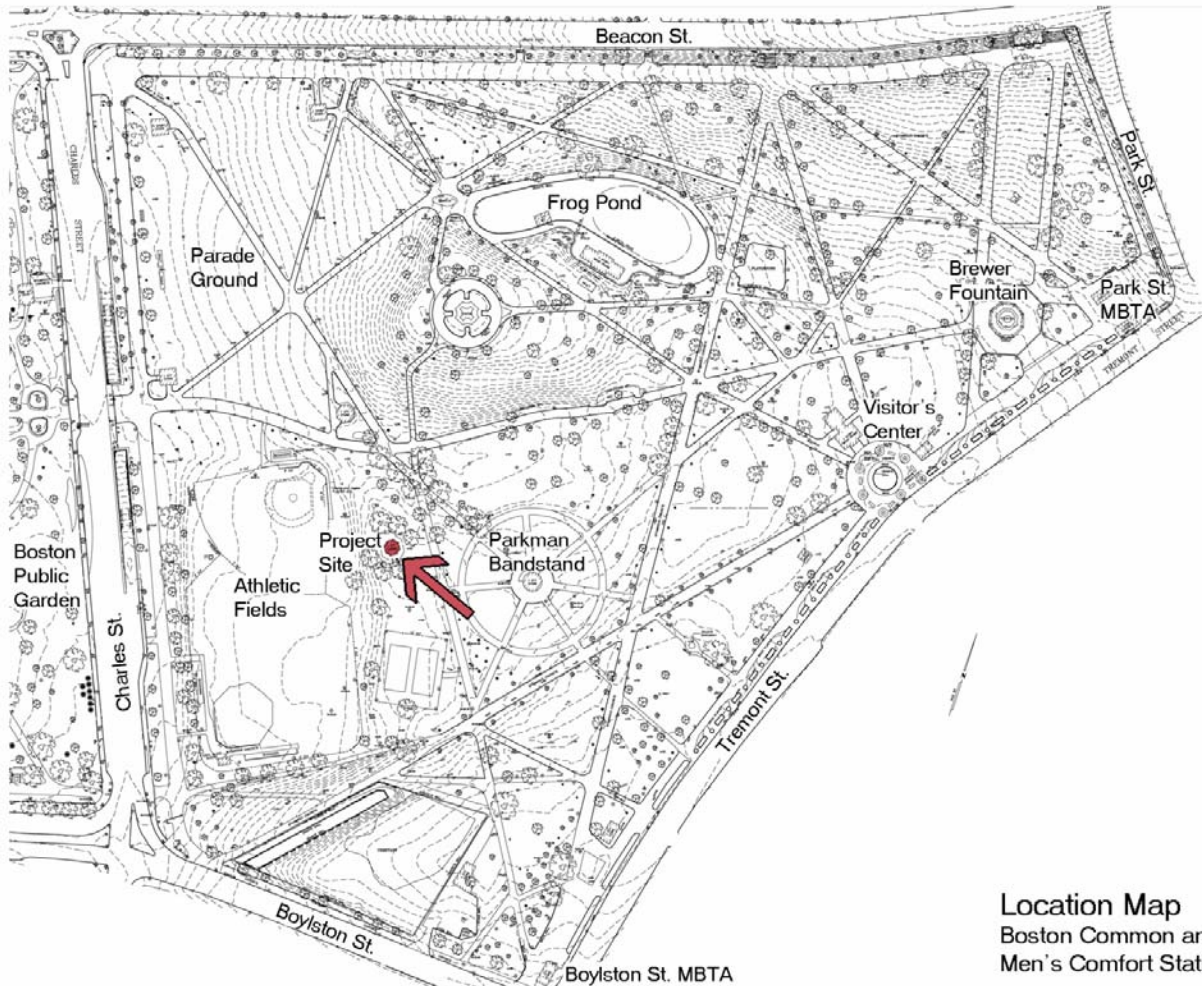
Boston, MA 02118

Boston, MA 02118

## **REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

Adaptive Reuse of the Men's Comfort Station, Boston Common, Boston, MA

### **Appendix A – Location Map** **Boston Common, Boston, MA**





## **REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST**

Adaptive Reuse of the Men's Comfort Station, Boston Common, Boston, MA

---

### **Appendix B – Building Photos**

This building is kept locked and is enclosed by a fence. There will be at least one scheduled site visit for interested parties, at which time the building will be opened.

