

October 20, 2023

**Rosanne A. Foley, Executive Director
Boston Landmarks Commission
20 City Hall Avenue
Floor 3
Boston, MA 02108**

Re: Landmark status for Boston City Hall

Dear Ms. Foley:

On behalf of DOCOMOMO US / New England, I am writing to express our enthusiastic support to grant landmark status to Boston City Hall. Docomomo International is a non-profit organization working in over 70 countries around the world to identify, document, and protect buildings, sites, and neighborhoods of the Modern Movement. In 2007, when city hall was threatened with demolition, the DOCOMOMO / US New England Chapter (under President David Fixler), the DOCOMOMO/US Board (under Professor Heléne Lipstadt) and the DOCOMOMO International Board (under President Maristella Casciato) wrote letters in support of landmarking the building, as did many other concerned citizens and prominent architects and preservationists.

Boston City Hall has since been recognized as the city's most significant 20th Century Building, and as an exemplar of outstanding modern architecture in the United States and the world. As the headquarters for the municipal government, the building represents the city's commitment to democratic governance and civic engagement. The building is also considered a bold and prime example of "Brutalism" - a global movement in architecture from the 1950s to the 1970s that has been broadly reevaluated in recent years in a number of publications and exhibitions. The term (coined as a humorous epithet by British critic Reyner Banham in the 1950s) refers to buildings with exposed concrete ('béton brut'), evocative sculptural forms and often grand spaces inside. The fact that the name in the popular imagination evokes something akin to 'brutal' architecture, certainly did not help the style's popularity. In reality, it is grounded in a deeply moral ethos of honesty of structure and materials, frugality, monumentality and durability.

Boston's City Hall, designed by Kallman, McKinnell and Knowles, and constructed in 1968, was designed as a keystone for the city's urban renewal efforts and in response to an open architectural competition under the parameters set by the Boston Redevelopment Authority and the architect and planner I.M. Pei. The building reflects the political movements and social unrest of the time, representing the democratic attitudes of powerful civic expression - authenticity, honesty, directness, and strength. It is notable for its masterful craftsmanship using cast-in-place concrete and brick from many local manufacturers. The design was intended to foster transparency and accessibility, with the aim of bringing government closer to the people. Multiple entrances allow access from different directions - rather than a central grand entrance typical of traditional government buildings. Breathtaking spatial sequences inside

turn the building into a veritable cathedral of government, a 'city crown' emerging from a large open plaza for gatherings and demonstrations.

While Boston City Hall is not currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), it is eligible under Criteria A and C at the local, state and national levels as the building retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. (The John F. Kennedy Federal Building (Walter Gropius and TAC, 1966) nearby has been listed since 2021.)

In addition to considering the exterior and interior central courtyard lobby and third floor lobby for landmark designation, Docomomo US / New England urges you to consider landmarking some additional significant interior spaces including the City Council Chamber, and the Mayor's Suite within the ceremonial level of the interior, and the Transaction Zone. Boston City Hall is highly significant as a civic symbol, as a masterwork of Brutalism, as an economic catalyst and example of a U.S. city's Urban Renewal Program, and as an example of the first work of an acclaimed U.S. architectural practice.

As an organization dedicated to the promotion and recognition of modern architecture, DOCOMOMO New England strongly supports the landmark designation of Boston's City Hall, a building which has long deserved landmark status. The city of Boston can be proud of having built, and beautifully restored one of the most significant modern buildings of its time worldwide.

With best regards,



Dietrich Neumann

President, Docomomo US / New England