



BOSTON CITY COUNCIL

Committee on Planning, Development, and Transportation
Sharon Durkan Chair

One City Hall Square 5th Floor, Boston, MA 02201 ◊ Phone: (617) 635-3040 ◊ city.council@boston.gov

REPORT OF COMMITTEE CHAIR

April 23, 2026

Dear Councilors,

The Committee on Planning, Development, and Transportation was referred the following docket for consideration:

Docket #0771, Communication was received by the City Clerk from the Boston Landmarks Commission for City Council action on the designation of the Petition #147.89 - The Copley Plaza Hotel, Back Bay (in effect after April 30, 2026 if not acted upon).

This matter was sponsored by Mayor Michelle Wu, and was referred to the Committee on April 8, 2026.

Summary of Legislation

Docket #0771 authorizes the City Council to take action on the Landmark designation of Petition #147.89 - The Copley Plaza Hotel, Back Bay

As stated in Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975: “Within thirty days of the mayor's approval of a designation, amendment or rescission of designation of a landmark, landmark district, architectural conservation district or protection area pursuant to this section, the city council may override such designation, amendment or rescission of designation of such landmark, landmark district, architectural conservation district or protection area by a two-thirds vote of the council. In the absence of such override or express approval thereof, any such designation, amendment or rescission of designation of any such landmark, landmark district, architectural conservation district or protection area shall be deemed approved by the council after the thirty-first day following such action by the mayor pursuant to this section.”

Information Received at Hearing

The Committee held a hearing on Tuesday, April 21, 2026 to discuss Docket #0771. The Committee heard from Elizabeth Sherva, Deputy Director of Historic Preservation, Office of Historic Preservation; and Jennifer Gaugler, Architectural Historian, Boston Landmarks Commission who stated that this Docket is a communication from the Boston Landmarks Commission requesting the City Council take action on designating the The Copley Plaza Hotel a Boston Landmark.

The panelists discussed the historical significance of The Copley Plaza Hotel stating that the hotel has been a prominent establishment in New England since opening their doors in 1912. They stated that Copley Square, by the 1870s, had emerged as a civic center with monumental institutional and religious buildings with the hotel harmonizing architecturally with adjacent landmarks such as the Boston Public Library and Trinity Church. The hotel's architectural design by Henry Janeway Hardenbergh is a key example of Italian Renaissance Revival, characterized by a palazzo-style structure with pale brick and rusticated limestone blocks, and Massive, graceful swell fronts and flanking wings.



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The panelists stated that the proposed landmark designation boundary corresponds to the hotel parcel and includes specific interior spaces on the lobby level. The hotel's interiors are noted for their exceptional decorative finishes including mosaic tile floors, marble and plaster work, painted murals, and elaborate crown molding and decorative ceilings. Restoration efforts in the 1970s utilized original floor plans and historic photographs to accurately restore many original features.

Councilors and panelists further discussed the Landmarks' designation criteria process, accessibility and impact on persons with disabilities, and ongoing Landmark petitions and reviews.

Committee Chair Recommended Action

As Chair of the Committee on Planning, Development, and Transportation, I recommend moving the listed docket from the Committee to the full Council for discussion and formal action. At this time, my recommendation to the full Council will be that this matter **OUGHT TO BE APPROVED**.

Sharon Durkan, Chair
Committee on Planning, Development, and Transportation