

Cronin's Landing and Riverwalk

Site Details: 281 Residential Units and 25,500 ft² of retail.

Zoning: 18 variances and 3 special permits

Date(s): February 1997 - June 1998

Funding: Cronin's Landing - Developer funded; Riverwalk - Publicly funded.

Goals: Downtown revitalization; housing options; historical preservation; riverwalk.



Background

The core of Waltham's downtown experienced significant decay in the 1980s. Moody Street, the main thoroughfare through the city, was rundown and pocketed with vacancies. By the early 1990s, policy makers sought to rejuvenate the downtown, investing Federal Block Grant dollars to improve the streetscape. Moody Street was starting to become a popular restaurant row, drawing patrons and new businesses to the area. However, despite many attempts at redevelopment, the Grover Cronin Department Store site, which was once the economic anchor to Waltham's business district, had remained vacant for over a decade.



Apartments with ground floor retail and restaurants.
Cronin's Landing, Moody Street, Waltham, Ma.

Site Development

Property developer, Roy S. MacDowell Jr., president of The Boulder Company, Inc. of Weston, bought the Cronin's site in 1996. Previous developers had proposed big box stores for the site, which was not contextually appropriate, nor was this use strongly supported by the City. Located at the end of Moody Street, on the Charles River, and across the bridge from an MBTA commuter rail station, MacDowell envisioned a high density, 281-unit market-rate, mixed-use apartment complex for the site. In addition, MacDowell's plan incorporated restoration of the architecturally significant art deco portion of the building and ground floor retail. As part of the Cronin's Landing development The Boulder Company also restored the retention wall of the Moody Street Bridge with new iron balusters and rails, making the river visible as it was crossed, removed a billboard from the MBTA right of way that blocked the view of the railroad station and the town green, and purchased the old Daily News Tribune building on Pine Street, in the interest of creating a new Embassy Cinemas.

Development Process

For Cronin's Landing to develop smoothly, MacDowell worked closely with Waltham City Council and the mayor throughout the zoning and planning process. Community outreach presentations kept the conversation open with



Cronin's Landing: Before and After
Source: Boulder Capital, 2010

residents to address their concerns. Redevelopment of the site proved challenging due to the historic register designation on the art deco portion of the building, and the environmentally sensitive location of the parcel adjacent to the Charles River. MacDowell cultivated a relationship with the Waltham Museum to ensure the historical aspect of the site was conserved appropriately. In addition, eighteen variances and three special permits were necessary to address height, setback, density and parking issues. The City obtained an easement over a strip of land between the complex and the Charles River through a Riverfront Overlay District special permit. As part of a proposed continuous river-front walkway, the City designed and funded a Riverwalk on this strip of land with street access required from both ends. An exception for the site was written into the Massachusetts River Bill, which was put into place while the development was being permitted.



Cronin's Landing, Riverwalk and the Charles River, 2010.

Cronin's Landing and MetroFuture Goals



The original Grover Cronin's storefront façade, 2010.

Sustainable Growth Patterns

The 281 housing units and eight street level businesses, including a restaurant, dentist office, indoor children's gymnasium, and specialty stores has brought families, professionals and students to the area.

Housing Choices

Cronin's Landing brought housing to downtown Waltham that had not existed before. The developer sought to create a neighborhood feel inside the complex with a variety of floor plans and inviting hallways. Additionally, the apartment complex included three one-bedroom affordable units reserved for the elderly.

Community Vitality

The preservation of the original Grover Cronin's Art Deco limestone storefront maintained the store's original Moody Street façade, in recognition of historical relevance of the site. The developer worked with the Waltham Historic Commission and Massachusetts Historic Commission on the site's preservation.

Transportation Choices

Cronin's Landing is transit-oriented development as it is located across from and within short walking distance to the Waltham MBTA commuter rail station. Access to the commuter rail station was improved through the development of the riverwalk, bridge renovations and the removal of a billboard.

Healthy Environment

Cronin's Landing Riverwalk, a 1,000-foot public walkway, serves as a centerpiece for passive recreation and has increased public access to the Charles River in Waltham. This is part of a walkway development plan that is being implemented by the Massachusetts Department of Recreation and Conservation (DRC). In addition, state of the art stormwater control, drainage, and irrigation measures ensure the health of the trees and plantings while protecting the water quality of the river.

Contact Information

For more information about the development of Cronin's Landing contact Steven Zieff, developer at szieff@baystoneddevelopment.com.

"We put this building together with love and respect; the City, the market and the environment rose to meet the building, creating a wonderful synergy between them." – Steven Zieff, Owner's Project Manager.