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Peregrine Group, Historic Boston Inc. and Roslindale Village Main St., Inc. begin demo on Roslindale building at substation redevelopment site: Former MBTA structure will be centerpiece of Roslindale mixed-use complex

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Demolition began on the closed F.J. Higgins Funeral Home on Washington St., making way for Parkside on Adams, a new mixed-use project with 43 apartments that includes a restoration and repurposing of the adjacent historic MBTA Substation.

Development partners in the project include Historic Boston Inc., Roslindale Village Main Street, Inc., and Peregrine Group LLC of Rumford, RI.

Peregrine Group purchased the funeral home on July 24, 2014, and began demolition of the building on July 28, for the new apartment structure.

The entire project, located across from the popular Adams Park, includes both the former Higgins Funeral Home site as well as the substation.

The Roslindale Substation, an 8,000 s/f former switching and transformer station that was originally part of Boston's elevated railway network, preceding the existence of the MBTA, is at 4228 Washington St.

"Peregrine is very excited to be embarking on our first project in the Greater Boston Area," said Jordan Stone, principal partner of Peregrine Group. "We are looking forward to our continued team effort with both Roslindale Village Main St. and Historic Boston on this development."

Roslindale Village Main St. and Historic Boston were originally tasked by the Boston Redevelopment Authority in 2001 with figuring out a feasible development plan for the long-empty Roslindale Substation in Roslindale Village. After further study at the request of the BRA in 2011, they played a critical role of acquiring the properties and assembling the development opportunity.

Peregrine joined as the master developer in late 2012, and the three partners purchased three parcels of land owned by Higgins Funeral Home. Pending zoning approval, the substation property is slated to be transferred in this month from the Boston Redevelopment Authority to a limited liability company controlled by Peregrine Group, in which HBI and Roslindale Village Main Street will be included as limited partners.

"The Roslindale community is delighted that, after 12 years of community activism and hundreds of hours of work by our Main St. volunteers and staff, Roslindale will see this architectural jewel finally restored and this underdeveloped corner of our business district activated day and night," said Christina DiLisio, executive director of Roslindale Village Main St.

"No doubt the development will be transformative for our neighborhood. We could not have asked for a better team to take on this unique development opportunity than HBI and Peregrine - they have been truly remarkable."

The substation will be rehabilitated following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for

Rehabilitation of historic properties and will be transformed into a multipurpose structure including a restaurant. This will be the most substantial and transformative project of Roslindale Village Main Street to date.

"This project demonstrates that preservation of historic buildings can be catalyst for broader economic development in Boston's neighborhoods, and that cross-sector collaboration is key to creating good housing and commercial opportunities for our residents," said Kathy Kottaridis, executive director of Historic Boston, Inc. "We are very proud of the many victories here for the Roslindale community."

The residential portion of the project is scheduled for completion in August 2015. The restoration and repurposing of the substation is expected to be completed at about the same time.

The project was approved by the City of Boston Zoning Board of Appeals in October 2013.

The apartments will be located in a four-story building and will include studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom units. Six of the units will be designated as affordable and available by lottery. There will be parking spaces for residents in an at-grade garage.

The former MBTA substation was designed in Classical Revival style by a well-known Boston architect, Robert S. Peabody, and was built in 1911.

The Mass. Historical Commission's State Review Board approved the Roslindale Substation's nomination to the National Register of Historic Places in June 2013. The Roslindale Substation was then listed on the National Register of Historic Places as of Aug. 27, 2013.

Then mayor Thomas Menino joined Historic Boston Inc., Roslindale Village Main Street, Peregrine Group, and scores of members of the local community to celebrate the listing of the substation on the National Register of Historic Places, which makes the substation eligible for State and Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits.

The landmark substation was one of six stations built in the Boston area to convert AC electric power from the South Boston Power Station to DC power for trolley use.

It went out of use in 1971 and has been vacant since.