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Historic Boston Inc. begins work on transforming the historic Upham's Corner comfort station

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Rendering of the new Sip '&' Spoke - Dorchester, MA

Dorchester, MA Historic Boston Inc. (HBI) has begun construction on the historic Upham's Corner comfort station that will transform the neglected building into Sip '&' Spoke, a café, bike repair shop and meeting place for the neighborhood.

In 2015, the city of Boston Department of Neighborhood Development designated the redevelopment of the historic comfort station, on Columbia Rd., to the partnership of HBI and The American City Coalition.

The Bowdoin Bike School is also a partner in the project, which is set to open this spring. HBI and The American City Coalition are working with Noahde Amor, founder of Bowdoin Bike School, to re-purpose the existing building, which has been empty since 1977.

The former rest station, a stucco 940 s/f facility with full basement, is undergoing \$1.4 million in renovation and improvements that will create a full-service bicycle shop joined with a coffee shop.

HBI is the developer and will own the building and lease it to operator.

The comfort station served the city's streetcar system and is near the Upham's Corner Station of the MBTA's Fairmount commuter rail line, as well as being within the City of Boston's Upham's Corner Main Street District.

The Comfort Station is a one-story stucco and tile "mission style" building built as a convenience station in 1912 to support the expanding streetcar system in Boston. It was designed by architect William Besarick, who also designed the municipal building at the corner of Columbia Road and Bird Street, as well as many triple-decker residences in the area.

The Comfort Station lies on what was once part of the Dorchester North Burying Ground, which is listed in the State and National Register of Historic Places and within the Boston Landmark

designation.

“Rehabilitation of the Comfort Station helps tell the story of the City of Boston’s 19th century expansion and the Dorchester neighborhood’s urbanization and related transportation growth into the 20th century,” said Kathy Kottaridis, executive director of Historic Boston Inc.

“The Comfort Station is a remnant of a time of growth and transportation innovation, and its rehabilitation and reuse -- particularly for a transportation-related purpose -- will help to preserve and express that story.”

Kottaridis said the renovation and reuse not only preserves a historic building but also supports and advances a mission-oriented entrepreneur and business. It promotes bike use at a time when roads and the MBTA system are at or exceeding capacity, and it creates a local business that will enhance the overall Upham’s Corner business district.

Fundraising totaling \$450,000, plus \$365,000 in Community Preservation Funds, were combined with capital from the tenant and permanent financing secured by Historic Boston to make the project possible. Historic Boston Inc. will employ \$176,000 in proceeds from Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits as a funding source to save and establish the new uses for the historic structure.

The joint proposal for the Comfort Station reflects the objectives of both nonprofit organizations to strengthen the Upham’s Corner business district through their combined expertise in real estate development, historic preservation, and economic development.

The Sip & Spoke Café proposal was chosen for support from Boston’s Department for Neighborhood Development.

The architect for the development is Utile, Inc. Architecture + Planning. The contractor is MJ Mawn, Inc.