

Department of Conservation and Recreation

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Karyn Polito
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Baker-Polito Administration Announces Completion of Speedway Revitalization Project *Historic State Park Building Becomes Hub for Community Gathering and Commerce*

BOSTON – Building on efforts to conserve and protect the Commonwealth’s cultural resources while fostering economic development, the Baker-Polito Administration today announced the completion of the \$11 million Speedway Revitalization Project as part of the Department of Conservation and Recreation’s (DCR) Historic Curatorship Program. On Thursday, September 9, 2021, DCR Commissioner Jim Montgomery joined state and local officials, and representatives from stakeholder organizations including Architectural Heritage Foundation, Bellwether Salon, Super Bien, The Koji Club, Tipping Cow, Chase Bank, and Eastern Bank at The Speedway in the City of Boston’s Brighton neighborhood to celebrate the completion of the project, which includes the creation of a vibrant marketplace and gathering space for the public.

“The Speedway has enormous potential to drive tourism, increase access to the region’s natural resources and promote economic growth in a way that simultaneously preserves historic buildings for future generations to enjoy,” **said Governor Charlie Baker.** “We are pleased to actively foster public-private partners through the Historic Curatorship Program and other measures in an effort to achieve mutual goals that greatly benefit the public.”

“By partnering with key stakeholders on projects like the revitalization of The Speedway, we are able to further strengthen community bonds and expand visitor opportunities,” **said**

Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito. “Additionally, the Historic Curatorship Program serves as a great example of the many ways we are able to combine state assets with third party resources in order to protect culturally significant properties located throughout the Commonwealth.”

To advance the project, DCR partnered with the Architectural Heritage Foundation (AHF) to revitalize the Charles River Speedway Headquarters Administration Buildings to preserve the historic space while enabling local enterprise, such as Notch Brewing, which now operates a brewery and taproom at the Speedway. The project was funded by AHF’s own equity, Massachusetts Rehabilitation and New Market Tax credits, the City of Boston Community Preservation Commission, and other sources to restore the once dilapidated facility into a now thriving gathering space for residents and visitors.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated how important recreational and cultural outdoor spaces are for urban communities across Massachusetts,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Kathleen Theoharides.** “The completion of The Speedway Revitalization Project highlights the Baker-Polito Administration’s commitment to not only increasing access for state park visitors, but also its efforts to work closely with dedicated stakeholders.”

“Supporting restoration projects within the state parks system advances critical priorities for the Baker-Polito Administration, and we are thankful for the strong partnerships with AHF and other state agencies that helped deliver this project to completion,” **said Department of Conservation and Recreation Commissioner Jim Montgomery.** “The revitalized space will surely be a popular destination for the Brighton community and beyond, bringing new energy and excitement back to the historic site.”

“This project was a true partnership and a strong example of the success that can come from public and private sector collaboration. It is an exceptional outcome for a very complex project,” **said Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance Carol Gladstone.**

Once the headquarters to administrative operations for the historic racetrack and park, the project transforms the buildings into 17,000 square-feet of unique and varied spaces. Additionally, the facility includes an 8,000 square-foot courtyard with seating and space for public events and programs.

"This project has transformed a historic spot along the Charles River into an opportunity to expand access to Boston's natural beauty," **said Boston Mayor Kim Janey.** "As we continue to recover from the pandemic, outdoor recreation is more important than ever for Boston residents. I want to thank the Baker-Polito Administration, DCR, and all the community partners for creating spaces for commerce and recreation in our City."

“We are particularly proud to have partnered with DCR on the rehabilitation and revitalization of the Charles River Speedway through the Historic Curatorship Program,” **said Sean McDonnell, president of Architectural Heritage Foundation.** “As we cross the finish line, we are so thankful to those who made this complex, but worthwhile, project possible. The revitalized Speedway serves as a true testament to the success of this unique and creative program.”

“We’re very excited to have the new Brewery, Tap Room & Biergarten at the Charles River Speedway open this summer,” **said Chris Lohring, founder of Notch.** “We look forward to being a part of the diverse collection of small businesses at the Speedway, as

well as being a part of the vibrant and growing community in Brighton.”

Notch Brewing serves as one of the retail anchors with a taproom and brewery at The Speedway. The taproom and brewery is the first Boston-area location for the Salem-based craft beer brand. Notch’s beer garden features outdoor seating in the courtyard.

“As we continue to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and open back up, I could not be more grateful to have the Speedway as a place to gather with friends and neighbors in Allston Brighton. After so many years of hard work and dedication, it’s incredible to see this place restored and revitalized. The Speedway is a model example of development in our neighborhood as it embraces our history, encourages small business and entrepreneurship, assists local non-profits, and acts as connection point to the Charles River. I would like to thank all of the community activists, DCR Commissioner Jim Montgomery, DCAMM Commissioner Carol Gladstone, and Sean McDonnell and Kara Anderson at AHF for their commitment to this project,” **said Representative Michael Moran (D-Brighton).**

In 1994, the Commonwealth launched the Historic Curatorship program to preserve and protect unused, significant buildings found across DCR’s nearly half-a-million acres of land. Under the Historic Curatorship Program, DCR enters into a long term lease with a Curator, in this case AHF, who pays rent in the form of services, specifically the rehabilitation and maintenance of the property. The reuse of these significant properties must be compatible with the surrounding community while enhancing the visitor’s experience of the public park. Over \$38 million in private funds have been leveraged toward the preservation of twenty-four of the state’s unused but historically significant properties. The program has become a national model, inspiring other government entities to add this innovative public-private partnership model to their preservation toolbox. To learn more about the program, please visit the DCR [website](#) and [YouTube](#) channel.

In recent years, DCR has actively taken steps to preserve the Speedway Building. Since 2008, DCR has invested over \$250,000 in protecting the structure, making it weather-tight and renovating the entire Western Avenue façade. The building became eligible for DCR’s Historic Curatorship Program in 2011 and was included on the list of properties within the Historic Curatorship Enabling Legislation in 2013. Lease authorization legislation passed in August 2014 and AHF planning began. Unfortunately, a fire in December 2014 gutted the interior of the headquarters and stable buildings.

With support from state agencies and local elected officials, the project began with a ground breaking in fall 2019. The project scope included:

- Repairs to the deteriorated foundations, windows, roofs, entrances, porches, shingles, and wood trim;
- Reconstruction of the facade and interiors destroyed by the fire;
- Adaptive reuse of interior spaces for 21st-century occupancy;
- Installation of glass curtain walls in the garage and carriage bays to enable year-round use;
- Ramping, decking, and regrading throughout the courtyard and exterior entrances to comply with ADA regulations (including the restoration of a historic carriage ramp); and,
- Installation of interpretive signage about the Speedway’s history and Charles River conservation.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, completion of the project was delayed by approximately one-year. Now, the Speedway offers:

- Retail shops;
- Restaurant and brewery taproom space;
- Studios and maker space for local artisans;
- Office space for nonprofits; and,
- A publicly accessible courtyard available for community events.

The Charles River Speedway, once a mile-long racetrack and popular gathering area, was built in by the Metropolitan Parks Commission (MPC) in 1899 as a destination within the Charles River Reservation. Located at 525 Western Avenue in Brighton, the buildings were designed to accommodate park management functions for the racetrack and the park – office space, the superintendent’s house, storage and horse stables. Architect William D. Austin designed the building along with many of the MPC’s structures in new reservations around Boston, including the Broderick Stable in the Blue Hills. The structure evolved in the 1920’s to accommodate an MDC police station and dormitories, and to accommodate automobiles. The track remained until the 1950’s when it was razed and integrated into Soldier’s Field Road. In the 1980’s the building was no longer in use for park management, and by 2005 was no longer home to the park superintendent. It has been used as DCR storage since and recently fallen into disrepair.

About Department of Conversation & Recreation (DCR): The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees over 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, trails, watersheds, dams, and parkways. Led by Commissioner Jim Montgomery, the agency’s mission is to protect, promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. Since 1994 the Curatorship Program has partnered with outside parties to preserve 24 endangered properties across the Commonwealth, representing over \$38 million in outside investment in significant historic resources. Reuses include residential farmhouses, non-profits, house museums, an overnight mountaintop lodge, wedding and events facility and a market / cafe. Learn more about DCR, its facilities, and its programs, please contact them at mass.parks@state.ma.us or visit mass.gov/dcr.

About Architectural Heritage Foundation (AHF): Founded in 1966, the Architectural Heritage Foundation is a not for profit organization dedicated to preserving and reactivating historic properties to stimulate community growth. AHF specializes in advancing stalled preservation projects, helping government agencies, communities, and private sector stakeholders to transform at risk historic real estate into economic and cultural assets. For more information, please visit ahfboston.com.

About Notch Brewing: Launched in 2010, Salem, Massachusetts’s Notch Brewing was the first brewing company in the U.S. to focus exclusively on session beer, which only has 4.5% alcohol or less. These lower alcohol styles bring people together for social occasions without the intoxicating effects of some of today’s popular craft beer styles. Notch’s focus on flavorful subtlety, and traditional European brewing practices, as well as the contemporary approaches of American craft beer, has garnered international renown from beer drinkers, industry peers, and the food and drink media. To learn more, please visit Notch's Salem Tap Room and Brewery or online at notchbrewing.com.

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