

Hall of Fame History

Now or Never for a Center

It has been more than a year since the idea for a Boston Jazz Hall of Fame on the East Boston waterfront was introduced, and many music appreciators throughout New England have added their support for the concept, with some offering new thoughts as to how to make such an ambitious dream become a reality. Since last spring, there is little doubt that interest in New England's jazz and "Swing Era" traditions has grown, with capacity and near-capacity crowds attending events staged by long-time producers and promoters of the music, such as The Boston Jazz Society, Highland Jazz, Inc. and Lennie Sogoloff, and some new ones, such as Save Music America, The Jazz Company and the city of Brockton.



The view of the Boston skyline from the East Boston side of the Harbor is second to none as this look from Lopresti Park, designed by landscape architect Paul Lu, attests.

Although most people acknowledge that a center to preserve, present and market New England's most cherished musical tradition is a great idea, the reality is that property along the Boston Harbor waterfront is more valuable than ever, with scores of profit-minded developers growing eager to take advantage of an area in which billions of taxpayers' dollars have already been spent on environmental improvements and infrastructure, including the third harbor tunnel, new roads and bridges, a state-of-the-art treatment plant to ensure a cleaner Boston Harbor, a national harbor islands park system, a convention center and an upgraded MBTA system. The uses for virtually all of the waterfront property on the "mainland" side of the harbor have been pretty much determined, but there is still a window of opportunity for East Bostonians to have a significant say as to what develops on their side of the pond.

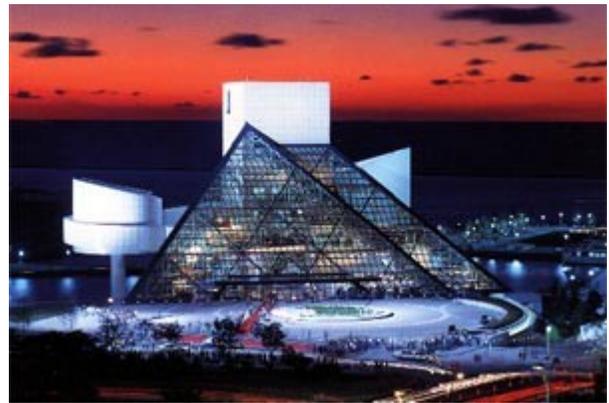
It is clear that many of the community's strongest leaders know what they do not want - high-rise hotels, office buildings or housing projects. So far, they have been effective in moving Massport to finally make some amends for airport expansion and its takeover and destruction of Wood Island Park, by all accounts one of the finest recreational facilities in New England into the 1950s. Thanks to continuing political pressure from hard-fighting East Bostonians, Massport has constructed and maintains a beautiful \$17-million waterfront "passive" park, and is in the process of constructing a sports/active complex on the adjoining pier (#3). Whether the people of East Boston rally in support of a public music center on Massport's last available choice waterfront property (Pier #1) remains to be seen. Massport and the Boston Redevelopment Authority have chosen the firms that will determine the overall plan for the remaining undeveloped portions of the East Boston waterfront.

The economic forces that will argue against a nonprofit enterprise like a jazz center on Pier 1 will be enormous. It will take strong political will and determination from East Bostonians to counter them. But, as was pointed out by community activist Edith DeAngelis, "Most people said Massport would never agree to allow Piers 3 and 4 to be used for park lands. The impossible just took us a little longer."

One thing is certain, if there is any chance for the East Boston waterfront to become home for a world-class music center, the local advocates will need all the support they can get from music and dance lovers throughout New England.



After decades of neglect, the East Boston waterfront is finally being looked upon as a valuable resource, connected to the world, region and community by Logan Airport, a greenway and harbor walk, ferry service and the federal harbor islands park system; and a soon-to-be-rebuilt MBTA station at Samuel Maverick Square. Piers 3 and 4 already have been designated as park land. Pier 1, currently home for a blighted warehouse, is the choicest undeveloped MassPort property remaining.



Cleveland is making the most of its Lake Erie waterfront with the establishment of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.