

## Mass. Eye and Ear Infirmary has eye on Navy Yard building

By Barbara Rabinovitz

One of the three remaining historic Navy Yard buildings yet to be redeveloped for civilian use could become a home for Boston's Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary.

Building 105, or the Chain Forge Building as it was known when it was in the service of the U.S. Navy as a chain-manufacturing plant, is under active consideration by a local developer for use by the MEEI.

According to Boston Redevelopment Authority senior project manager Geoffrey Lewis, Kavanagh Advisory Group, of Danvers, has been tentatively designated developer of Building 105 and is surveying the property to determine if the infirmary could be accommodated there. Reportedly, the MEEI has

informed Kavanagh it is interested in leasing up to 100,000 square feet for research and laboratory space.

If the MEEI, whose main facility is adjacent to Massachusetts General Hospital in the city's West End neighborhood, were to take space in the Navy Yard, it would join yet another medical facility soon to move into the

Yard. As reported in the Summer 2010 issue of The Navy Yard News, Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital will leave the North Station area in 2013 when its new \$225 million building is scheduled to open in late 2013 at the far end of First Avenue.

The BRA's Lewis cautioned that Building 105, a hulking century-old



The Yard's Chain Forge Building is under consideration for use by the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary.

brick structure that spans First Avenue from Ninth to Thirteenth streets, is a complicated building to redevelop. Considered a historic monument and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the building still holds the kilns, forges, test pits and casting ovens used in the manufacture of chains. That equipment and

machinery are owned by the National Park Service.

"The issue is you have to keep all the equipment as it was [on the ground floor]," Lewis said. "If you take the whole first floor for public [exhibit] space, you won't get the revenue you need to get from the rest of the building."

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## New non-resident parking plan in high gear in the Yard

The hotly debated issue of resident parking in the Navy Yard appears to have been settled with the implementation late this summer of a non-resident parking policy.

Signs were posted in August indicating that two-hour non-resident parking is permitted weekdays between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.



From 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. weekdays and on Saturday and Sunday, parking is unrestricted.

Navy Yard residents wishing to park their cars during the weekdays in the newly restricted areas for unlimited amounts of time can do so provided they obtain and affix a resident parking sticker to the car's

rear window. Information on obtaining a sticker is available on the website at [www.FriendsCNY.org](http://www.FriendsCNY.org).

The new parking policy does not reflect the hope by some residents, voiced at a June 24 neighborhood meeting, that non-resident restricted parking be enforced on a 24-hour basis.

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# BRA's man in the Yard speaks fondly of 'his pride and joy'

He may not have the power or presence of a mayor, but in Richard Mulligan the residents, businesses and other occupants of the Navy Yard have an ardent advocate in Boston City Hall.

Mulligan's official title is senior project manager for the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and in that capacity he is a self-styled troubleshooter, constantly keeping watch over the 9 million square feet of property the BRA is responsible for citywide.

Included in that impressive property portfolio are the 100 acres that comprise the Navy Yard (excluding the 30 acres overseen by the National Park Services in the vicinity of the berthed U.S.S. Constitution).

"My pride and joy" is Mulligan's description of his feelings for the Yard, which, nonetheless, is a major burden in terms of its maintenance needs.

"Waterfront infrastructure is difficult to maintain," Mulligan said in a recent phone interview from his City Hall office. "People think nothing is going on, but we're

actually spending a lot of time and money there.

"By way of example, Mulligan cited several maintenance projects he has under way or recently completed:

- The iron fence lining Chelsea Street along the back of the Ropewalk building is being painted.
- A nine-alarm fire that roared through the Ropewalk building a few years ago is a source of ongoing concern for Mulligan and the BRA. "We've got the building buttoned up very tight," he said, adding that its long-term future is worrisome. "It's very difficult to develop, at a quarter-mile long and 80 feet wide."
- The mercury vapor lights in place in various locations, including Shipyard Park, have been declared environmentally hazardous and must be replaced with halogen lights. All the lights surrounding the dry-dock have already been replaced.
- All the chains and bollards

surrounding the dry-dock have been upgraded and reinforced for safety.

- The sprinkler system for the Korean War Memorial in Shipyard Park was recently repaired.
- The 30-year-old water pump and (newer) filter used at the wading pool, also in Shipyard Park, is in need of an upgrade.

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**"We're beating swords into ploughshares."**

*Richard Mulligan*

*Senior project manager, Boston Redevelopment Authority*

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- Pier 3 was recently rehabilitated to provide a safe and aesthetically pleasing water transportation location.
- The marinas at Piers 6 and 8 are in deplorable condition with pilings that "are corroded and starting to fall over," Mulligan said, noting that "the city is in court trying to get a plan in place for what we're going to do."

The old-new aspect of the Navy Yard only makes Mulligan's job that much more challenging. The property between Chelsea Street and First Avenue is considered the Historic Monument Area while the land between First Avenue and the waterfront is the New Development Area, under the Navy Yard's master plan. In the case of the latter, the city owns the land under the terms of a long-term ground lease, the buildings on the land are owned and maintained by their developers.

This public-private partnership in what was a ship-building facility for the U.S. Navy has caught the attention of public planners and private developers worldwide, according to Mulligan.

"The Navy Yard is an international model for all military conversions," he said. "People come here from all over to see how we've put a shipyard to civilian use." Or, putting it another way, by drawing on a biblical metaphor, Mulligan said, "We're beating swords into ploughshares."

## The Navy Yard News

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# Tenants appear to have a good view of Harborview

Jutting into Boston Harbor from a scenic site at the far end of the Navy Yard's First Avenue, the 224-unit residential building known as Harborview is truly deserving of its name.

Originally planned as a condominium development, Harborview came on the market just as the Great Recession was reaching its nadir. No sales advanced to the closing stage. Instead, the building was purchased in August 2008 by Prudential, which promptly put the units on the market as rentals.

As of six months ago, the building was 98.8 percent leased, according to Scot Ste. Marie, director of operations at Harborview for New Jersey-based Roseland Property Co., which manages the building.

Harborview leasing specialist Matt Brockman attributed the popularity of Harborview with tenants to the fact that "it is a very high-end building. Everything is of condominium quality," he said.

Indeed, the units are equipped with state-of-the-art appliances and fixtures. The floors are Brazilian cherry wood, and huge windows

open to sweeping views of the harbor, a marina and, from the higher floors, the Boston skyline.

The units range in size from studio to penthouse duplex, and rents currently start at \$2,000 and top out at \$6,000. Each unit comes with a parking space.

As for the demographics of Harborview, "We have the whole gamut of ages," Ste. Marie said. "We have a lot of people who were in downtown [neighborhoods], such as Back Bay, who were spending much more for an old unit that hasn't been renovated, for no parking, no fitness center, no views."

Tenants who might have been concerned about accessibility to their jobs downtown can take advantage of Harborview's shuttle bus service to and from Government Center several times a



With 224 units, Harborview has assumed a major presence in the Navy Yard.

day and the T's commuter boats and bus service, the latter all available to residents of other buildings in the Yard.

Another incentive for would-be tenants who are dog owners, Brockman pointed out, is Harborview's pet-friendly policy, "which has no weight restrictions. ... We just got Pet No. 104."

Ste. Marie said the pace of rentals remained steady through the summer, leaving the building with a waiting list. But he is even more encouraged by the "retention rate," he said. "People are staying beyond their first-year lease."

## Old commercial building finds new life as apartments

Tucked behind busy First Avenue in the Navy Yard, Building 33 attracted little attention as it was converted from offices to 47 apartments. But when it opened in the fall of that year, it quickly drew tenants willing to pay upward of \$3,000 a month for a chance to live in the brick-and-beam apartments lining a stretch of vehicle-free Second Avenue.

So strong was the interest, according to Timothy O'Brien, asset manager of Navy Yard 33, as the building is billed, that "we were fully leased by March of '09, and we have held a single-digit vacancy rate ever since."

The spare granite façade of the

building, typical of many of its commercial neighbors along tree-lined Second Avenue, masks a starkly different design within. From the bamboo floors to the soaring ceilings and, in between, the gourmet kitchens and ceramic-tiled bathrooms, the Navy Yard 33 apartments have "contemporary" stamped all over them.

Their proximity to the T commuter boat dock and to the Partners HealthCare shuttle bus has been a big draw for would-be residents, O'Brien reported. "A lot of people who live here are medical and financial people, and they commute to jobs downtown," he said, noting that the building does

not offer parking. And then there's the tranquility of the Navy Yard – "away from the college scene" in other downtown neighborhoods but near to the attractions of the North End and the TD Garden at North Station.

The conversion of Harborview, at the far end of First Avenue, from a condominium to a rental building also helped, O'Brien believes, in signaling that the condo-heavy Navy Yard could also be a place of residence for non-owners.

"Savvy consumers are waiting out the [condo] market," now not as buoyant as it was five years ago. "That's not a bad attitude," O'Brien said, "until the market returns."

# Mass. Eye and Ear could be Yard's next medical facility

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Still, Lewis estimated that redevelopment of the entire building would free up 125,000 square feet of useable space, even with a passive interpretive exhibit on a portion of the main floor.

Representatives of Kavanagh, whose redeveloper designation has been extended by the BRA to July 2011, appear to be stepping up their review of Building 105. "They're in there often with engineers and architects," Lewis said.

Meanwhile, the BRA is in active discussions with the National Park Service to determine what chain-

making equipment is "historically significant and what is not," Lewis said.

The BRA, he continued, will issue a request for proposals by consultants interested in conducting that historical survey and making recommendations on what equipment should be preserved.

As for the exterior of the building, Lewis emphasized that any renovation would require preservation of the original design of the building, whose tall arched windows are now covered with unsightly plywood and whose façade of brick and metal siding is badly in need of repair.

Asked if he expects the project to come to fruition, Lewis voiced optimism. "There's a good team in place," he said.

If the chain factory were to be converted to civilian use, the Rope Walk building where the Navy made rope, located along the Chelsea Street perimeter of the Yard, and the Power House, connected to Building 107, would be the last undeveloped buildings in the conversion of the Yard to a mixed-use community.

*Barbara Rabinovitz is senior reporter for The Navy Yard News.*

## In good taste



The FCNY hosted a Taste of Charlestown in late August at the Courageous Sailing Center on Pier 4. Several local eateries donated the fare for the event, the last of four free summertime programs hosted by the Friends and co-sponsored by the Boston Redevelopment Authority. Enjoying the festivities were: State Senator Sal DiDomenico (third from right) and (from left) FCNY board members David Whelan, Karen Dempsey Carney and Kate Fillo.

## The word on the street: Parking plan in place

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James Mansfield, director of community and intergovernmental services for the Boston Transportation Department, said in a recent interview that the Charlestown Neighborhood Council had voted in July in favor of the policy subsequently implemented by the city.

"I do think it will improve the situation under which non-residents were taking full advantage of the unrestricted parking spaces," Mansfield said. "If it's not working satisfactorily, we could go back and re-look at it."

Asked about the enforcement of the new plan, Mansfield said that parking enforcement officers are assigned to the Navy Yard on a "random" and ongoing basis to be on the lookout for violators at metered spaces and fire hydrants and other no-parking areas. They will be able to determine if a car has been parked for more than two hours in a non-resident space, he explained, by entering the license plate number and recording the time on a handheld electronic device and then checking two-plus hours later to see if the car is still there.

FCNY Chairman Michael Parker, noting that residents have also been pressing the city for a street-cleaning program in the Yard, reported that such a program "will follow shortly."

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