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Leading By Example *Boston's South Station Redevelopment Highlights Need for Constant Modernization*

By Debbie Swanson

Boston's South Station transportation complex, the second-busiest transportation center in New England, is slated to begin a major renovation. With its emphasis on sustainable building, the project is poised to become a frontrunner in Boston's new standards for green buildings.

Green buildings, called the "wave of the future" by Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino, are those that use resources more efficiently and have less impact on the environment. In addition, the buildings provide natural lighting and improved indoor-air quality, contributing to the health of their inhabitants.

The focal point of the transportation hub's renovation will be a 40-story, 621-foot glass office tower to be built on top of the South Station commuter rail platform. Also included in the project are two additional towers: a 9-story, 500,000-square-foot office building, and a 13-story building that will house a 200-room hotel and a 150-unit residential building. Stores and a parking structure are also included.

The Boston office of Hines, an international real estate firm, and Tufts University Development Corp., are leading the renovation. Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects, a New Haven-based firm renowned for designing some of the world's tallest buildings and major urban landmarks, designed the glass tower.

The end result will be quite a turnaround for a building that was slated for demolition in the 1970s. In 1975, a grassroots effort succeeded in adding the main South Station Headhouse building to the National Register of Historic Sites, stopping the planned demolition and ushering in the building's first revitalization.

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Now, with its upcoming renovation, the complex stands to become a landmark in green-building development. While the project will be modern in its construction, Hines plans to maintain the historic integrity of the main South Station Headhouse building.

The project's emphasis on sustainable development will become an important example for the city of Boston. It comes in the wake of local green-building legislation spearheaded by the mayor's Green Building Task Force, first created in 2003. The legislation, effective as of 2007, requires that "new construction of more than 50,000 square feet and renovation projects of more than 100,000 square feet must achieve at least 26 points on a 69-point scale." The scale details construction and design elements, ranging from energy-efficiency to waste management.

To address city-specific areas of concern, Boston's system also includes "four credits in the areas of groundwater recharging, historic preservation, modern mobility (trans-



The above rendering depicts a 40-story glass office tower that is the focal point of South Station's renovation.

portation) and modern grid (energy)."

Many of the project's features satisfy these requirements. South Station is the largest train station and intercity bus terminal in Greater Boston. Transit-related improvements will improve public access to this transportation, of particular importance

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given the new residency and hotel occupants. The capacity of the bus terminal will be expanded by approximately 40 percent and improvements will be put into place to link the existing commuter rail and bus terminals.

The main tower will feature energy-efficient curtain-wall and HVAC systems, designed to improve higher indoor-air quality by drawing in a high proportion of outside air. The air will be purified by a highly efficient filtration system and controlled by a carbon dioxide monitoring system.

Several water conservation measures are also in place.

A Smarter Future

Based on the submission of documented plans satisfying green performance, the South Station project has been pre-certified at the Silver Level by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards. The standards were developed by the United States Green Building Council, a national nonprofit membership organization, to provide a guideline and rating system for

green buildings.

After the project's completion, currently estimated to be in 2010, the South Station Tower will be reviewed to become Boston's first LEED for Core and Shell-certified, high-rise office building.

According to the USGBC, "LEED for Core and Shell development is a green-building system designed to provide a set of performance criteria for certifying the sustainable design and construction of speculative developments and core and shell buildings. Broadly defined, core and shell construction covers base building elements, such as the structure, envelope and building-level systems, such as central HVAC, etc."

Pre-certification is "a unique aspect of the core and shell program in which formal recognition is given to a project for which the owner/developer has established a goal to develop a LEED for Core and Shell building. Pre-certification provides the core and shell owner/developer to market to potential tenants and financiers the unique and valuable green features of a proposed building."

Earlier this year, the tower earned the honor of being the only Massachusetts project to receive the Environmental Protection Agency's Green Design Award. The project was determined to meet the EPA's standards for reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and energy efficiency in a commercial building. It joins 46 projects nationwide receiving this distinction in 2008, all estimated to eliminate 120 million pounds of greenhouse gasses and save \$5 million in energy costs.

The South Station renovation project and the city of Boston are on the cusp of the green-building movement, joining other major cities that have adopted similar standards, such as Washington, D.C., San Francisco and Chicago.

In addition to state and city government mandates, federal government agencies such as the General Services Administration now require new construction projects and substantial renovations to be LEED-certified.

As environmental concerns continue to shape policy, buildings that embrace green building standards will become the standard for future building development. ■

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