

Behind A Better City

Business View

Boston Business Journal – May 19, 2006

Several large mergers and closures or relocations of local corporate headquarters have led many to ask the question: Is business-based civic engagement dead?

Our answer is a resounding no.

Since 1989, the Artery Business Committee has represented Boston's business community in ensuring the completion of the Central Artery/Tunnel project. We made tremendous contributions to the project: forging consensus on design issues; providing strategic thinking, expertise and advocacy on financing; and monitoring and mitigating construction impacts. We helped keep Boston open for business during the most challenging construction project in our city's history. With the project nearing completion, we could have claimed success and closed our doors.

The tremendous expertise ABC gained through the CA/T project is an important resource for Boston and the region. This knowledge led the business and institutional community to conclude that we need to build on our success and apply our focus to other important projects.

On May 9, the Artery Business Committee unanimously voted to adopt a new name and mission. The newly renamed organization, A Better City, will be a vehicle for Boston's major businesses and institutions to provide leadership on transportation, land development and public realm issues critical to our future and will be a conduit for civic engagement.

The new mission is a logical outgrowth of ABC's expertise and accomplishments, recognized over a two-year strategic planning process. Our strategic planning process emphasized the importance of institutions in civic engagement, and the ABC has added many hospitals, universities and cultural institutions to the board as a result. The leadership of institutions, together with the traditional business community, will enable ABC to represent the key engines that drive economic vibrancy in the city of Boston and the commonwealth.

As A Better City, we will continue our focus on the CA/T project through to its completion. We will also maintain our involvement with the Rose Kennedy Greenway and will partner with the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, the city of Boston and the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy in the construction, maintenance and programming of these spaces.

In addition to these projects, Silver Line Phase III, the Urban Ring and the Crossroads Initiative will form the foundation of our future work plan. Over the next 12 months, the ABC will research what other investments may be necessary to keep Boston vibrant.

Mayor Thomas M. Menino, who was honored at our May 9 board meeting and helped launch A Better City, said, "The ABC provides a framework to channel the business and institutional community's participation to areas where we need their expertise and support."

ABC could have come to an end, but instead business and institutional leaders chose to stay together and invest in A Better City.

John E. Drew, president and CEO of the Seaport Hotel and Seaport World Trade Center, is chairman of A Better City. Paul Levy, president and CEO of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, is an executive committee member of A Better City.