

Congress Square, Quaker Lane get makeovers



CITY LIFE: Artists' renderings show a revitalized Quaker Lane. Courtesy of Arrowstreet.

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By Donna Goodison

A Boston developer revealed more detailed plans for its Congress Square project yesterday that call for two building additions, a new 13-story boutique hotel on Devonshire Street and a mix of offices, residential units, and retail and restaurant spaces.

Related Beal plans to renovate six Financial District office buildings in the existing Block on Congress to bring 24-hour activity to an area historically dominated by financial institutions, it said in documents filed yesterday with the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

The 458,300-square-foot project includes about 92,700 square feet of proposed new construction: a cantilevered glass, five-story condominium addition above 15 Congress St.; a three-story office addition to 40 Water St.; and the new 133-room hotel tower on what's currently a vacant lot used for parking. The hotel tower would be connected to the building at 68 Devonshire St.

"From their original conception in the late 19th century as bank buildings, the existing buildings have conveyed an image of grandeur and security," the BRA filing said. "For the last 40 years, these buildings have been restricted to private use and turned inward, cut off from the surrounding neighborhood and streets. The design for Congress Square restores these buildings and Quaker Lane to a destination within the heart of downtown Boston."

Related bought what's now about 343,000 square feet of primarily office space from Fidelity in December for \$87.25 million.

The ground floors of the buildings would include new lobby entrances and glass-fronted shops and restaurants that open up to outdoor dining areas on Quaker Lane. Quaker Lane would be converted into a European-style pedestrian area with suspended cable lighting between buildings, cobble pavers, sculptural seating and landscaping.

"Quaker Lane will be transformed from an under-utilized service way into an exceptional pedestrian experience, lined with boutiques, cafes and restaurants, nightlife attractions and distinct retail venues," the project filing states.

Buildings at 40 Water St., 82 Devonshire St. and 33-35 Congress St. would be combined for innovation-economy office space and capped with the three-story office addition.

Related Beal hopes to start construction this fall and complete it in spring 2017. Although it's presenting the project as one development, each component may be developed by individual companies.

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