

# Union Park Silver Line stop to move

## Relocation will allow construction to begin on Penny Savings Bank

BY LINDA RODRIGUEZ  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Developers on the Boston Penny Savings Bank, at the corner of Washington and Union Park Streets, will finally be moving forward with project, after a delay of nearly four months.

The Stonegate Group, the Needham-based development group, recently received approval from Boston's Public Improvement Commission (PIC) to move the existing Union Park Silver Line bus stop from its home in front of the Bank to a spot approximately 500 feet adjacent to the Blackstone Elementary School. According to Stonegate's project manager, Sean McGrath, relocation of the stop is necessary to facilitate the construction of the early 19th century-style storefront awnings set to grace the building's façade. The bus stop, he said, will be moved "as soon as possible," pending negotiations of site restrictions with the city.

At this point, with the winter coming on, the project is nearly a year behind schedule, due for occupancy in summer 2007, said McGrath.

Per agreements and plans hashed out with the Boston Landmarks Commission, the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and the community, the structure's marble and granite façade will be cleaned up and maintained as it is; however, the interior of the building will

be virtually gutted and completely redesigned, and the roof will be completely removed. Three additional floors will be erected, set back from the building's façade, and the building will contain 23 residential units, three of which will be designated as affordable housing, ranging in size from 955 to 1835 square feet. A retail space covering 9000 square feet on the ground level is being outfitted, in part, for restaurant use, and an underground parking garage that can accommodate more than 25 cars is being laid in under the structure.

So far, only exploratory work on the structure has been on the interior of the building. The next steps in the renovation, said McGrath, will be asbestos abatement and beginning work on demolition of the existing interior and the roof. McGrath could not say exactly when construction will begin, citing the pending move of the bus stop, but did say that it would be soon.

Built in a Classical Revival style between 1911 and 1917, the building was an active bank until 1959, when it was purchased by the Archdiocese of Boston and converted to a community education center. Not long after, however, the building's main portion fell into disuse and the majority of the building's charitable activities were accessed through a side entrance and housed downstairs. The Archdiocese sold the property on July 22, 2003 to PSB Investments LLC, a company in which McGrath is a principal. The property, which is currently covered in equal parts with a thick glaze of bird droppings, miscellaneous detritus, and rusted gating, has stood absolutely vacant since June 2004, after its sale effectively closed a thrift store and de facto community center

run by a much-beloved nun, Sister Eustace Caggiano. In early August, *South End News* reported that Stonegate would be moving forward with reconstruction beginning this past fall, a reconstruction delayed by the need for approval by PIC.

PIC approval was the last in a series of city-based hurdles for Stonegate, which has been working with the property for around two and a half years now.

Waiting another year for the building's completion and occupancy won't be too much of a hardship, given how long the building has been in need of renovation, said Sheila McGrath, executive director of Washington Gateway Main Street. "It takes a long time to get the permitting," she acknowledged. "We're really delighted that the project is moving forward and we've been waiting for that building for quite a long time."

Said McGrath, "We're excited to get going."