



William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth

Contact: Brian McNiff
Telephone: 617-727-9180

October 27, 2015

**I.J. FOX BUILDING, BOSTON, APPROVED FOR NOMINATION TO THE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

Secretary of the Commonwealth William F. Galvin is pleased to announce that the Massachusetts Historical Commission recently approved the I. J. Fox Building in downtown Boston for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination will be submitted to the National Register of Historic Places at the National Park Service in Washington, DC, for final consideration and designation.

“The Massachusetts Historical Commission is dedicated to preserving the Commonwealth’s rich historic, architectural, archaeological, and cultural resources,” Secretary Galvin said. “Inclusion of the I. J. Fox Building in the National Register will help to preserve this rare and intact example of an Art Deco-style commercial building in downtown Boston.”

The I. J. Fox Building, 407 Washington Street, is a rare and intact example, prominently situated opposite the Filene’s building in the heart of Boston’s Downtown Crossing shopping district. Constructed in 1935, the building served as a showroom for the I. J. Fox Furriers retail establishment, reportedly the largest furrier in the United States. After Boston’s Great Fire of 1872, Washington Street was widened, and damaged structures were replaced with modern, tall buildings.

During the early years of the 20th century, the Downtown Crossing area saw the construction of large department stores and tenant buildings that served the apparel and garment trade, including the Filene’s Building in 1912, the S. S. Kresge Company building in 1920, and later the Jordan Marsh Company building in 1948.

-more-

Construction of the I. J. Fox building in 1935 further established the area as the heart of Boston's retail district. The New York-based firm Elias, Rothschild & Company designed the Fox Building, along with the locally prominent firm of Shepard & Stearns, in the Art Deco style. It is the only known example of Elias, Rothschild & Company's work in Massachusetts, and the firm considered the building's intricate façade to be the epitome of their massive plate-glass storefronts.

The limestone-clad, symmetrical façade features a black granite base with a stepped-back ziggurat design at the first floor, and a delicate ironwork balcony between the third and fourth floors. The upper levels of the façade feature a smooth limestone surface terminating in a stepped parapet at the roofline, in keeping with the Art Deco style.

While much of the building's interior was altered during the course of the mid to late 20th century to suit the needs of the building's various retail tenants, several key interior architectural features survive intact. These include an artificially lit, ornamental skylight above the recessed two-story entrance, with decorative glass featuring a Deco-inspired floral motif. Also greeting visitors upon entry is the original I. J. Fox Company's etched black marble sign panel, framed by gilt bronze reliefs of minks and squirrels, with a distinctive fox head projecting from the top center of the panel.

The building recently underwent renovation that utilized state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credits. Completed earlier this year, the project included the substantial rehabilitation of the basement level through the third floor for the building's sole retail tenant, The GAP. Rehabilitation of floors four through seven created twelve new residential units ranging from one to three bedrooms in size. The completed rehabilitation project preserved the key interior and exterior architectural features of the I. J. Fox Building, and represents a nearly \$13 million investment in Boston's Downtown Crossing retail district.

The I. J. Fox Building is one of five historic resources around the Commonwealth approved for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places by the Massachusetts Historical Commission at this meeting.

-more-

Secretary Galvin serves as Chairman of the 17-member board, which meets regularly and considers historic resources eligible for the National Register four times a year.

The National Register is the nation's official listing of significant historic resources. In Massachusetts, there are more than 70,000 properties listed in the National Register. The Massachusetts Historical Commission has been administering the National Register of Historic Places program in Massachusetts since 1966.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission is the office of the State Historic Preservation Officer and the State Archaeologist. It was established in 1963 to identify, evaluate, and protect important historical and archaeological assets of the Commonwealth. Visit our website to learn more about the Commission's programs (www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc).

-End-