



"As to further expansion, the School of Public Health has always considered Allston to be one of its possible future planning scenarios," public health school spokeswoman Julie Rafferty said in an e-mail.

The university says it is currently reviewing its "broad academic needs and aspirations and analyzing how best to advance those goals through future development," in Allston, according to an e-mail from Harvard spokeswoman Lauren Marshall. Conducting that review is a work team of Harvard officials that includes the health school's dean Julio Frenk, she said.

"We will have a clearer sense of the Work Team's recommendations by mid-year," Marshall said.

Frenk is "actively engaged in the process to develop the recommendations for the site, which [Harvard] President [Drew] Faust has said will undoubtedly be tied to one or more science-based uses," added Rafferty.

With **some exceptions**, Harvard's plans for major campus developments in Allston have been put on hold indefinitely since late 2009.

For some in Allston, the Mission Hill development raises more doubts about Harvard's longterm plans for their neighborhood.

"It's just further confirmation of what everybody knows, which is that Harvard won't admit it doesn't have any plans for its land in Allston," said Harry Mattison, a member of a city-appointed task force created to provide community feedback to the university on its Allston plans.

Brent Whelan, another task force member, said the decade-long lease of 90 Smith St. in Mission Hill is "too long to think of as an interim lease until the Allston property is ready."

About a year ago, Harvard signed the lease for the 40,000-square-foot space. At that time, the 1889 red-brick building, formerly part of the Mission Church complex and abandoned for more than five years, was in rough shape.



(Courtesy: Chris Johnson)

The building's new interior.

construction, said fire department spokesman Steve MacDonald.

From an inspection last year around three months before the facility's overhaul had started, a city inspection urged "Extreme caution. Holes in floor. Ceiling rotted joists."

However, "If you drive by, it looks like a new building, but even better," said David MacKay, project manager at Weston Associates, which owns the building.

He said it's "even better" because the \$15-million project funded by Weston



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Associates to restore the aging structure did not sacrifice key historic components, including brick work and wooden beams, which were left exposed inside.

Harvard put a “multi-million” investment of its own for the interior office space portion that workers began settling into two weeks ago, said Rafferty. The building is one of 21 sites leased by the health school; the other seven health school sites are Harvard-owned.

But, four years ago, that building and two other adjacent vacant buildings were three months away from being demolished as Weston Associates has [city approval](#) to construct 229 rental housing units on a 1.5-acre plot that the Back Bay-based real estate firm had purchased in 2005. The city's approval came after an initial, larger-scale proposal [had been denied](#).



(Courtesy: Chris Johnson)

The building's new interior.

In the center of that site is the newly-renovated Harvard public health school's administrative headquarters that includes a university police substation. Formerly, it was the Mission School. More recently, the building was used temporarily by Boston Latin when that school's current facility was under construction.

On that facility's left is the former St. Alphonsus Hall and on the right a former convent. Those two building's addresses, 80 and 100 Smith St., respectively, were not included as properties deemed unsafe for firefighters when the city released its [full list in September](#).



(Courtesy: Chris Johnson)

The three-building site.

All three facilities were built in the late 1800s and comprised half of the Mission Church complex's six main buildings. Some [residents have fought previously](#) to save them from being torn down citing their historic significance. Others in the neighborhood have [supported the site's prior housing proposal](#).

A [2004 study](#) by the city's landmarks commission recommended the entire complex be designated as a landmark. The study said the Basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, also known as Mission Church, was one of 54 minor basilicas in the country, and the oldest of three in the state.

While the report said preserving all of the complex's buildings would be preferable, the commission “may consider demolition of whole or portions of individual secondary buildings as part of a larger plan to preserve the basilica and the sense of the complex. Demolition shall only be considered for the purposes of new construction.”

As the housing market declined, Weston Associates pull backed on its initial development plans.

The company's principal, Mark Donahue, said how the other two properties will be revitalized and when those processes will begin are “dependent on the

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economy.”

He expects the former church hall and convent sites will either be restored for office space use, like the school in between them has been, or replaced with housing. Weston Associates still has permits to construct 201 units of housing on the adjacent sites if the company chooses that direction.

“We’re taking one step at a time,” Donahue said. “We’re very happy to see the first phase happen to revitalize this great site and we hope to continue with the process and revitalize the rest of the site in the near future. We really appreciate the work of the Boston Redevelopment Authority, the community and the Mayor’s Office to make this happen.”

E-mail Matt Rocheleau at [mjrochele@gmail.com](mailto:mjrochele@gmail.com).



(Matt Rocheleau for Boston.com)

The Kresge Building on Huntington Avenue is the main Harvard School of Public Health building of a 28-site campus based in the Longwood Medical Area.

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