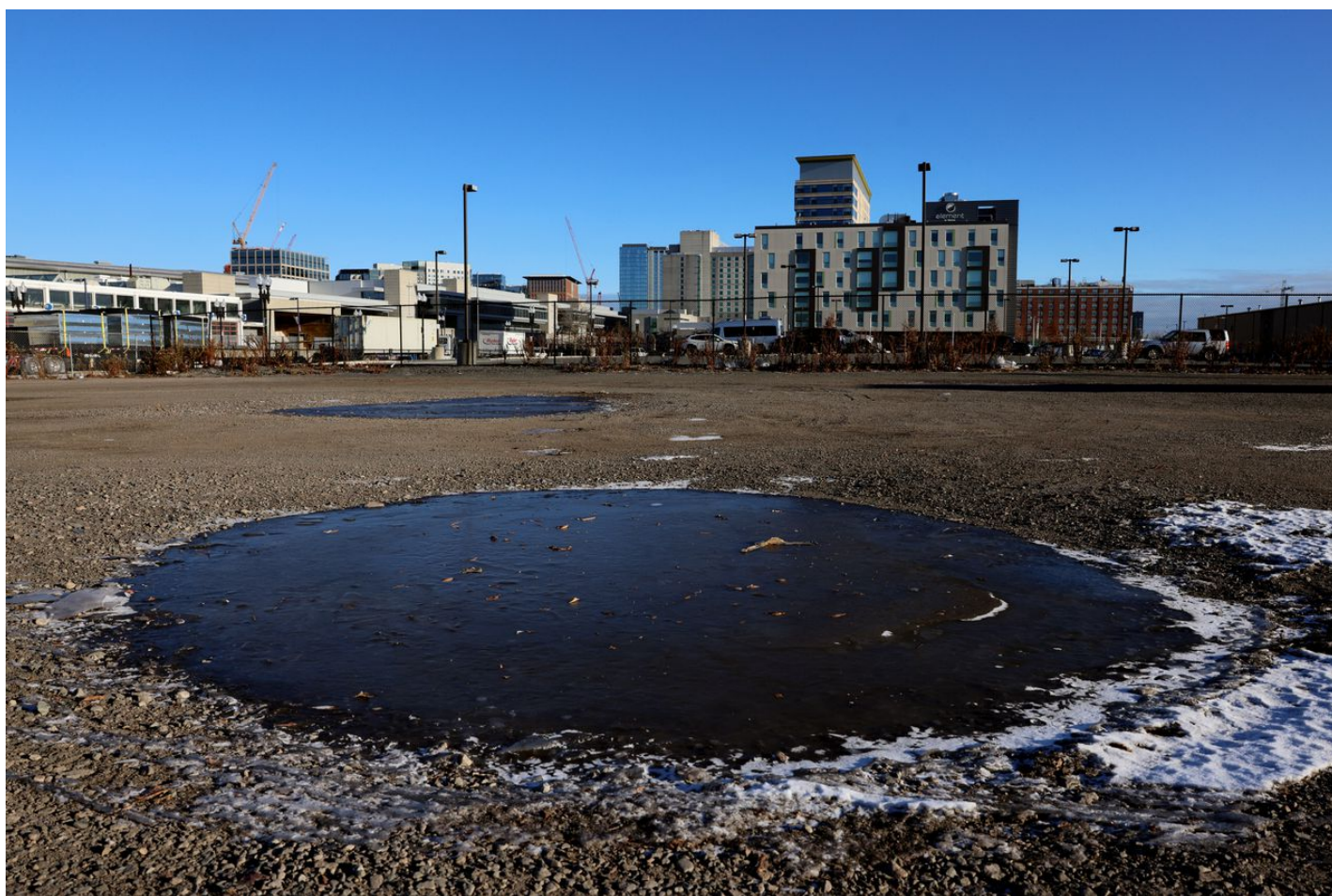


Big lab space — and a supermarket — could soon come alongside Southie convention center

Two developers have proposed projects for the 6-acre site near the BCEC

By [Jon Chesto](#) Globe Staff, Updated September 29, 2023, 7:26 a.m.



The Massachusetts Convention Center Authority this week received two proposals to redevelop parking lots it owns alongside the Boston Convention and Exhibition Center in South Boston. CRAIG F. WALKER/GLOBE STAFF

As Round Two begins in the showdown over prime land owned by the Massachusetts Convention Center Authority in South Boston, the same two rivals have shown up to compete.

One is a development team led by Jon Cronin, best known for [his restaurant group and the recently opened St. Regis condo tower](#) on the waterfront. The other: a team led by John Hynes III, whose Boston Global Investors helped redevelop much of what makes up [the modern-day Seaport](#).

Both teams have filed bids for the 6 acres, which are spread across three empty MCCA-owned lots on D and E streets in the shadow of the Boston Convention & Exhibition Center.

It's a redo of a [contest first launched late last year](#) for the same land, in the waning days of the Baker administration. Cronin Development's 1.6 million-square-foot plan is a bit smaller than what it first proposed, while BGI's 1.1-million-square-foot concept is larger than its previous design.

The previous bids were [put on hold in April](#), after South Boston politicians had complained to new Governor Maura Healey's administration that the MCCA had only given potential bidders a month to submit proposals in that first go-around. This time, the MCCA gave bidders three months but did not end up attracting additional any bidders.

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The biggest changes this time around, aside from the size adjustments: new public amenities and more involvement from people of color. Neither proposal includes any housing. The convention authority did not rule out residential development, but tried to discourage it, saying it wanted developments that could support the Aloft and Element hotels next door on D Street.



An aerial rendering of the development Boston Global Investors proposes for the D Street corridor in South Boston. CBT ARCHITECTS

The BGI-led proposal includes four buildings across the three sites. Two of the buildings would devote 700,000 square feet for offices and labs, and the taller one, on E Street, could reach up to 12 stories. A third building would feature a 300,000-square-foot hotel and a 60,000-square-foot below-ground supermarket. Hynes said nearby residents have long been asking for a full-sized supermarket in that area, and several chains have expressed interest. The fourth building would be home to a 30,000-square-foot public

library. There would be enough parking for 900 cars, as well as 50,000 square feet of open space.

While BGI initially would have had a majority stake in the development team, it has brought on additional partners such as Boston-based Rise, Ron Walker, and H.J. Russell of Atlanta. Hynes is also joined by Donald Cogsville and Gosder Cherilus, two other Black developers who are working with him to build a lab building nearby on Congress Street.



Cronin Development's proposal for land on D and E streets includes an arboretum that would be open to the public. SASAKI

The proposal from Cronin and Tavares Brewington — founder of Street2Ivy, a nonprofit that mentors entrepreneurs — is also primarily focused on life sciences, with about 1.3 million square feet for lab and office space, including a building on E Street reaching as high as 15 stories. Notable changes from their previous bid include a 2-acre outdoor arboretum that slopes down to the street level, and a 40,000-square-foot movie studio that would include two sound stages. The complex would also feature a food hall as well as a 34,000-square-foot grocery. The Pensole Lewis College of Business & Design, of

Detroit, would get a standalone space totaling about 8,000 square feet. The proposal also includes garage parking for 800 vehicles.

Developer Kaitlin McCarthy, whose firm Ionic Development is an equity partner in the project, said the bidders tried to respond to the South Boston community's request for more green space. Other new additions to the team include former state senator Linda Dorcena Forry and cinematographer Tommy Maddox-Upshaw, who would own the film studio.

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