



WEST END CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Committed to Enhancing the Quality of Life in Our Community

Mr. John Fitzgerald, Senior Project Manager
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square,
Boston, MA 02201

October 23, 2013

Subject: The Government Center Garage Project

Dear Mr. Fitzgerald,

The West End Civic Association (WECA) submits the following comments regarding the Project Notification for the Government Center Garage Project by HYM Investments.

WECA, representing the residents of the West End Community, wants to make sure that this project will enhance the quality of life for all residents of the West End.

The West End Civic Association (WECA) must regretfully oppose the immediate approval of the proposal for redevelopment of the Government Center Garage. WECA is in support of the concept of removing the barrier and reopening the connection between the West End and Downtown Neighborhoods. It appreciates the willingness of the developer to reduce the height of the office tower from 600' to 527' and to make several other changes that we requested, but the changes do not go far enough. The new plans for the block east of Merrimac/Congress Street win our enthusiastic approval.

The reasons that WECA cannot support the project at this time are:

TRAFFIC - The traffic studies indicate major traffic problems will be created south of New Chardon Street, on the ramps to the Central Artery. There may be a problem with the methodology of these studies, as the ones concerning the Innovation District have underestimated the increased traffic to a large degree. ***We cannot support the full build requested until after a full traffic study for the entire West End is complete.*** The traffic study must be based on data no older than 2010 and must include the full build out of the area including Government Center Garage development, 80 Causeway Street, Lovejoy Wharf, Garden Garage development, Nashua Street residences, the Avenir, the Merano, the Victor, One Canal Street, and Haymarket Square Hotel (Parcel 9).

Moreover, the traffic study must incorporate traffic and construction issues in Keaney Square, the Charlestown North Washington Street Bridge, Lowell Square and the Causeway Street construction project. The cumulative impact of the new buildings and the construction will be untenable for the residents.

HEIGHT - The major obstacle to our approval is the height of the office tower, which at 527' is a major increase for the neighborhood. The adjacent JFK Federal Building at 387' is the tallest structure for many blocks. The market/government districts to the south, North End neighborhood to the east, and Bulfinch Triangle sub-neighborhood to the West are all marked by much shorter (<300') structures.

Proposals for even higher towers on Causeway Street are being processed simultaneously with this Government Center Garage proposal. Public opinion throughout the West End cannot separate the

projects and believes that together they will greatly change our neighborhood without adequate prior discussion.

ZONING – WECA cannot support the changes to the Zoning Code which would allow a tower of 527' on the West Parcel. Furthermore, WECA will explain in a separate letter why it opposes the creation of any PDA based on the Greenway District Planning Study Guidelines.

PEDESTRIAN FLOW - The two simultaneous development plans have possible deleterious effects on the Bulfinch Triangle sub-neighborhood by drastically changing the pedestrian flow from the North Station to Downtown, funneling it all down Canal Street instead of dividing it among four parallel streets. However Friend and Portland Streets will lose the present pedestrian flow and have the views at either end blocked by massive towers, and might decay to the level of Lancaster Street.

SHADOWS - The shadow studies indicate there will be no significant problems within the Charles River Park sub-neighborhood. There is an affected area in the West End which will suffer a significant loss of sunlight. It is the grassy park within the Hurley/Brooke State buildings. This delightful park is presently little used because the Commonwealth has chosen to block the grand staircase to Lowell Circle, turning a passage into a cul-de-sac. The West End Neighborhood still hopes the State will rectify its error and return to the original design. We do not want this park ruined by a lack of sunlight before it can be re-opened to the public.

LONG TERM PLAN - The BRA could dispel the negative public image of high-rise development only by publishing its long-term plan for the West End defined as the area within periphery of North Washington Street to the East, Cambridge Street to the South, Charles River to the West and North, and New Sudbury Street to the Southeast . When that is done, and is followed by public debate, WECA will reconsider its objections.

Sincerely,



Louise Thomas
Co-Chair, Zoning & Planning
West End Civic Association



Jim Zahka
Co-Chair, Zoning & Planning
West End Civic Association



Marlene Meyer
President
West End Civic Association

Cc: Peter Meade, BRA Director
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Nicole Leo, Neighborhood Coordinator
Mr. Chris Maher, Delaware North
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