

150 Staniford Street, #900
Boston, MA 02114
October 22, 2013

Sent via Email

Peter Meade, Director
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Plaza
Boston, MA 02201

RE: The Garden/80 Causeway Street Project

Dear Mr. Meade:

I am writing as a member of the Impact Advisory Group for the 80 Causeway Street Project as proposed by Delaware North Companies and Boston Properties. I am also a resident of West End Place, a mixed income residential building that is in close proximity to the proposed project.

I applaud proponent's commitment to continue with the long-standing plan to redevelop the former Boston Garden site and participate in the completion of the rebirth of this area of the West End. I do, however, have a few concerns on the project as proposed.

Phasing

- The developer has said that the project will likely be built in phases with the podium being the first phase. In one sense, phasing could give the community much needed retail and service businesses. However, it also means that we could be living in the midst of construction for the foreseeable future.
- The indication is that the developer cannot determine when they will complete their phasing due to market conditions, particularly the office market demands. Residents of the area deserve to have a better understanding of this timeframe so that we can be assured that we are not left with an incomplete project for years to come.

Height

- A maximum height of 400' or lower continues to be more suitable for this project site. It was mentioned in one of the early IAG meetings that the 600' height of the residential tower would act as a defining edge to the northern portion of the City of Boston. In my opinion, the height of this tower would act as an imposing wall telling people coming into Boston from the north that they are not welcomed. The height of the proposed residential tower is more than twice the height of the current residential towers in the West End. Rather than feel like a

blockade to the City, the height of the proposed towers should be a more gradual transition to the taller buildings in the rest of the city.

- New properties on the opposite side of Causeway Street have a height limit of approximately 155' to remain in keeping with the historic Bulfinch Triangle. The proposed podium for the 80 Causeway Street project is in keeping with that height limit, but the height of the proposed towers, particularly the residential tower, is out of character for the area.
- The Zakim Bridge has become a symbol of Boston throughout the country just as much as the statue of Paul Revere or the Custom House Tower. The proposed residential tower height of 600' would detract from the iconic Zakim Bridge and would eliminate it from the view of many.
- The developer has shown view impacts of the proposed project from every direction except from the west - the top of Staniford Street or the State House. Seeing how the towers look from that direction would be beneficial in determining the impact of the towers, specifically the residential tower.

Design

- The original Boston Garden and the nearby properties had architectural character. While I am in agreement with the exterior design of the proposed podium, some of the old design characteristics should be on more than just the podium to compliment the historic aspects of the Bulfinch Triangle. Distinguishing architectural detail should also be reflected on the exterior of the towers as well.
- The exterior design of the office and hotel towers has been improved from the original presentation so that those buildings do not appear as solid blocks against the skyline. This also will help with alleviating some of the issues with strong winds at street level. This same treatment needs to be applied to the residential tower to give it more character and to also alleviate some of the wind issues at the Lowell Square street level. Perhaps some of the residential units could be moved to the podium, similar to what is being shown for the hotel, and set-backs made to soften the shape of the building and decrease its height.
- I applaud the fact that the developer has moved away from the marquee over Champions Row and opting instead to use signs in the windows of the west building. The developer needs to be mindful, however, of the impact digital lighting of these signs will have on other residential properties in the area. Additionally, any lights should not blink or stay lit throughout the night.
- I am pleased to see that an awning over Champions Row is now being considered. This will make entering the complex more pleasant for pedestrians in foul weather. However, care must be taken to ensure that ice and snow buildup does not fall on pedestrians during the winter months.
- Since there is no defined pick-up/drop-off for taxis and limousines at the proposed hotel, care must be taken so that the drivers of these vehicles do not use the awning over

Champions Row as protection for their passengers during inclement weather. It needs to be made clear that Champions Row is a pedestrian walk-way and is not to be used for vehicles.

Retail Use

- The developer has indicated that they would like to include retail opportunities in their project that would benefit the surrounding communities, not just those patrons attending TD Garden events. It is well known that the West End, North End and Beacon Hill communities have been without an affordable supermarket for well over 10 years. Trinity Financial has a commitment to include a supermarket in their project at One Canal Street unless another location is identified within 18 months after the Trinity project is completed. The 80 Causeway Street site is much more conducive to a full-service, affordable supermarket and as such it is hoped that the developer will sign an agreement with a supermarket chain prior to the start of construction for a supermarket to be included in the first phase of the project.
- The developer has said that a cinema will be within the project and there could also be a bowling alley. Although these would be welcomed amenities for the area, they are not essential. Many residents of the West End, North End and Beacon Hill communities are on fixed incomes, or have moderate incomes. Having an affordable grocery option and service retail businesses are more critical in maintaining quality of life.

Traffic

Traffic on Causeway Street and the intersections at either end of it (Lowell and Keany Squares) is some of the worst in the city. I am aware that there are plans to update and upgrade Causeway Street but there are still issues that this project needs to address.

- The entrance/exit for the retail loading dock on the west building is on Causeway Street. There is a strong potential that tractor trailer truck drivers will not be able to navigate the turn in to or out of the loading dock area easily. Drivers entering the loading dock may not be able to stay in their lane of travel to make the turn and they could block traffic on Causeway Street causing back-ups.
- The developer has said that this loading dock opening will be wide enough for one vehicle so a truck entering the loading dock will need to stop on Causeway Street and wait if another truck is exiting the loading dock. In turn, this will block traffic on Causeway Street.
- When large trucks leave the loading dock, it may be difficult for them to take the left turn on Causeway Street so that they can access Rte. 93 North or South. If those truck drivers are expected to leave the area turning right onto Causeway Street then left onto Merrimac Street, they could cause significant traffic tie-ups at Lowell Square.
- The effects of traffic in the Bulfinch Triangle/West End area from areas north of Boston have likely not been studied since before the Big Dig was completed. The additional traffic by this project, the Lovejoy Wharf project and the Government Center Garage project needs to be redone by the City and State so that residents can get a true picture of how these projects will impact traffic in our residential communities.

Pedestrian Safety

- As mentioned above, the entrance to the loading dock for the west block of the project is on Causeway Street. This entrance crosses a very busy pedestrian sidewalk and having trucks enter and exit over this sidewalk could be extremely dangerous for pedestrians.
- There are many school-aged children in the West End. In fact, there are approximately 85 children under the age of 18 living at West End Place alone. With the opening of the new school on Commercial Street, many children from the West End will be using the sidewalk in front of the project to get to and from school. Their safety is of utmost importance.
- It is not expected that many local residents will need to drive to a supermarket if it is located at this site. Currently, the entrance of the proposed supermarket will be on Champions Row. Residents from the West End and Beacon Hill will need to walk across the loading dock area to access this supermarket entrance on Champions Row which will be unsafe, especially for people who have physical challenges and the elderly. Additionally, it will be difficult to enter the supermarket at this location before or after a TDGarden event or when most commuters are going to or from North Station – it will be too difficult to get through the flow of people on Champions Row.

Parking

The project will add 800 parking spaces in the current below-grade garage. Some of these spaces will be used by residents of the project, and some for short-term retail or office parking.

- Since there is a lack of affordable and adequate parking for West End residents in the area, it would be appreciated if the developer offered discounted parking to West End residents for guests, local business employees, or customers of local businesses.
- It would be beneficial for guest parking to be available over-night.
- Several taxi drivers pick up and drop off fares in front of the current TDGarden/North Station. It would be very beneficial to have this amenity remain in this location.
- Hubway bicycles are now housed to the east of the project site. Accommodation for this transportation service should remain and be easily accessible to users.
- Since the loading dock will likely not be used during events at the TDGarden, the developer should look to see if that space could accommodate limousine parking, especially during concerts. This would help to alleviate the many issues these vehicles currently pose by being parked throughout the community.

Affordable Housing

- Although the city permits developers to allocate some of their 15% affordable housing requirement to other parts of the city, I encourage the developer to keep these units on site.
- The original West End was a humble community of immigrants from throughout Europe. Since the re-emergence of the West End, rents and home prices have been increasing steadily keeping mid- and low-income families from moving to the community. It's imperative that workforce housing be kept in the West End so that we may again enjoy a diversified community.

Shadow

- The developer has shown that the project as proposed will cast few new shadows on the surrounding community. However, there will be shadow on the Charles River Basin area and Boston Harbor. Just as the designers of the Zakim Bridge had to be mindful of the effect of shadow on the fish life in this area, the developer should also be mindful of this possible concern.

I realize that the redevelopment of the old Boston Garden site has been in process for 30 years and I appreciate the opportunity to be a part of this project. I look forward to working with the developer, the BRA, and fellow IAG members in making this a showcase property in the re-emerged West End community.

Regards,

Jane ForreSTALL

West End Place

cc: Kevin Sheehan, Boston Properties
Chris Maher, Delaware North Companies Boston
Mayor Thomas Menino
John FitzGerald, BRA Project Manager
Nicole Leo, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services
Michael Ross, Boston City Council
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Representative Aaron Michlewitz
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