

22 October 2013

TO: John Fitzgerald
Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA)
City Hall, Boston 02201

RE: The Boston Garden Project

1. I have not carefully studied the PNF for the Boston Garden Project, but I am a third-generation West Ender, have been active in Civic Affairs, and have served on the IAG for a different development project. Therefore I am often asked questions about the many proposals for development in the West End, and I believe I have a good grasp of local opinion.

2. The West End Neighborhood expects and wants the development of what has been a parking lot into a large complex development with provisions for retail, hotel, supermarket and residential uses. Yet it does not want to give approval to the proposal before us now, which is still being constantly changed and is too vague about development after Phase One. The main reason for this dichotomy in public opinion is the extreme haste with which this (and other nearby projects) are striving to be approved before 31 December 2013. This has caused suspicion and opposition in the neighborhood.

3. Even if successful, this hasty approval will be useless, for no approval will protect any development from rejection by the new mayor. No building in Boston could have been built over the past 30 years if the mayor had instructed that the Boston Building Code be followed without waivers. A delay of at most six months could gain co-operation and could create a better project.

4. I would strongly urge the developer to (1) slow down the project to the normal pace for development and (2) negotiate with the neighborhood over details of the project. I will give examples of each. The Avalon Bay developer for the adjacent Nashua Street project gained the active support of the West End by doing so. This neighborhood is not anti-development, but it wants it done in the best way.

5. There has been a three month period between successive briefings by the developer to the West End, and many, many details have been changed. The removal of the underground access from North Station to the MBTA stop has worried the elderly, especially if the closure of the present north entrance were to be in the winter. The plans for the entrance (size, cover, placement of electronic sign) have all changed. These indicate the PDA is being submitted while still in a sketchy phrase just to meet an arbitrary, useless deadline.

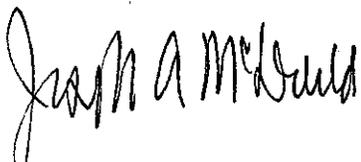
6. The membership of the West End Civic Association have never voted to support a project until the details of such questions as (1) is affordable housing on-site (2) what is mix of 1/2/3 bedrooms (3) condos, rentals, or mixed? are settled. It should

be no surprise that WECA has voted to support Phase One, but not the residential tower. Negotiations over these details could lead to an amiable approval.

7. Tax breaks are always going to be controversial and unpopular. A verbal defense was made at the 17 October briefing but the developer and the BRA must realize that more explanation is needed. They need to widely distribute a letter by a reputed economist explaining in layman's English why such breaks do not accrue to the developers. Otherwise the public will view it as corruption.

8. My advice to the developer is thus (1) Slow down. (2) Make peace with the new mayor. (3) Make peace with the Civic Association. It will pay off for you.

9. My advice for the BRA is to take responsibility for coordination of all the many projects proposed for the West End. I do not mean merely to say "We will coordinate" but to make absolute promises that certain disastrous co-incidents will not occur, such as (1) BRA will not allow 4-story holes on both sides of Lomasney Way. One must be filled before the other can begin. (2) BRA will not allow any simultaneous closure of the western access to the Garden (from the West End) and the northern entrance to the MBTA stop. The willingness of the BRA to stagger the four housing projects in the Bulfinch Triangle was exemplary and earned you the public trust (until the recent frenzy). This also would better the relations between the BRA and the neighborhood, which are frosty at present.



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