



To: Phil Cohen, Project Manager  
Boston Redevelopment Authority

Date: February 5, 2015

Memorandum

From: Lauren DeVoe

Project #: 11381.00

cc: Leslie Cohen, Samuels & Associates  
Doug Husid, Goulston & Storrs  
Mark Junghans, VHB

**Re: The Point Notice of Project Change  
Responses to Comments**

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The enclosed memo includes supplemental information in response to comments and feedback received from the public on the Notice of Project Change (NPC) filed to describe the changes to The Point project (the "Project Change" or "Project") located at the terminus of Boylston Street and Brookline Avenue in the Fenway neighborhood (the "Project Site").

The following is a list of commenters:

- Fenway Civic Association (FCA)
- Fenway Community Development Corporation (Fenway CDC)
- Audubon Circle Neighborhood Association (ACNA)
- Medical Academic and Scientific Community Organization (MASCO)
- 23 individual community emails/letters

In summary, the comments fall into the following key categories:

- Affordability
- Building Height
- Vehicular Traffic & Circulation
- Parking

The following responses/supplemental information below aim to address each key category. We hope these responses provide sufficient clarification in order to move forward with BRA Board approval at the next hearing.

### **Affordability**

The current proposal for affordable housing presented to the community and the City of Boston meets the requirements of Article 66 in the Fenway Zoning, which includes 10% of units onsite (35 units consisting of 32 apartments and 3 condominiums) at 70% AMI, \$5.8M contribution to the IDP fund and 5% in public benefits which includes the creation of the Point Plaza, public art, pedestrian pathway and improvements, and park contributions. The Proponent has been in active discussions with the City and the neighborhood to balance each of their goals regarding affordable housing by increasing the number of on-site units to 41, similar to the previously approved project, with a range of AMI from 70%-120%, as allowed under the Fenway Zoning, and with modifications to the rental/homeownership mix.

### **Building Height**

#### Regulatory and Planning Context

The Project has been designed in accordance with both the planning objectives and the regulatory requirements of the City's zoning. The Project is located in one of two specially-designated Gateway Development Areas created by the City of Boston in connection with a five-year master planning and rezoning effort completed by the Boston

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Redevelopment Authority (BRA) in 2002 (the "Fenway Master Plan"). The zoning was adopted in 2004. The stated purpose of the Gateway Development Area zoning is to "allow for the development of architecturally-distinctive civic landmarks at major entrances to the Fenway neighborhood." In keeping with this objective, the City of Boston has established an allowed building height of 340 feet in this area of the neighborhood.

### Project Design Evolution

Following the BRA's and Zoning Commission's approval of the previously proposed building in 2013, Fenway Ventures Point Properties LLC, the Proponent moved forward with furthering the building design. The architectural equivalent was, and is, an effort to respond to strong urgings from the City and the neighborhood to create an iconic structure. Unfortunately, the planning and permitting process for the Project has paralleled a period of unprecedented inflation of construction costs in Boston, the practical effect of which is a 20 percent increase in project costs (equating to approximately \$25 million) making the development unfinanceable. The design team has pursued a number of options to address this reality, including reducing building finishing costs, but found that the uniqueness of the design would be lost, thus failing to fulfill the key goal of the Fenway Master Plan to create a distinctive gateway "civic landmark." Additionally, it has been a common goal of the Proponent, the City and the community that new homeownership opportunities be created in the Fenway as part of the ongoing redevelopment of this neighborhood. In order to maintain the iconic design and incorporate homeownership units, the design team turned to re-evaluating the program. Because of the unique shape of the lot the only practical method of achieving the necessary additional density was to add height and units, as detailed in the NPC.

### Planned Development Area Amendment

The Proponent is seeking approval for a fourth amendment to the Development Plan for Planned Development Area (PDA) No. 56 for the Project Change, as currently allowed under Section 3 1A.a of the Code and as allowed under Section 66-27 of Article 66. The PDA amendment will, if approved, establish the dimensional requirements applicable to the Project Change. Pursuant to Section 80C of the Code, the approval process for the amendment of the PDA requires a public hearing and approval by both the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and the Boston Zoning Commission (BZC). Consistent with the limitations set forth in Article 66, the dimensional requirements for the Project Change will be applicable to the Project Site only and will not apply to any other sites within the Fenway Neighborhood District. For example, any proposed change to the height requirements applicable in the rest of the Fenway Neighborhood would be subject to an independent review and approval process by the BRA and the BZC.

### Changes to Environmental Conditions

As demonstrated in the updated environmental analyses provided in the NPC, the incremental change in environmental conditions (specifically, shadows, daylight, and wind) as a result of the increase in building height is negligible when compared to the previous building design approved by the BRA and BZC in the summer of 2013.

#### *Shadows*

As shown on the enclosed updated shadow studies (that illustrate the incremental change in hatched marking of the net new shadow of the Project Change compared to the 2013 PNF Project), the Project Change does not introduce a significant amount of new shadow. The majority of new shadows continue to be along the portions of Brookline

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Avenue within the vicinity of the Project Site and on existing building rooftops—most of which are owned by the Proponent or its affiliates. There continues to be no negative impact on the surrounding public open spaces, including the Back Bay Fens west of the Project Site.

### *Daylight*

The 2013 PNF Project's approved density and massing necessitated obstructing a large portion (approximately 80 percent) of the sky dome at the Project Site and, therefore, it can be expected that by increasing building height the obstructed daylight would increase slightly. The Project Change continues to propose a varied massing with a setback at the third level that lessens the impact on daylight as compared to a build option that would use a uniform massing. Furthermore, pedestrian enjoyment of the urban experience along Boylston Street and Brookline Avenue will be greatly improved over existing conditions through streetscape and open space improvements where the net effect of the Project will be a substantial enhancement of the public realm surrounding the Project.

### *Wind*

The BRA has adopted two standards for assessing the relative wind comfort of pedestrians:

- An effective gust velocity (hourly mean wind speed +1.5 times the root-mean-square wind speed) of 31 miles per hour (mph) should not be exceeded more than one percent of the time; and
- Specific criteria to determine the relative level of pedestrian wind comfort for activities, such as sitting, standing or walking. (The BRA wind criteria was presented in Table 4-1 of the 2013 PNF.)

In general, the BRA requires mitigation for Unacceptable wind gusts and Dangerous wind conditions. Based on current design, which includes wind reduction measures, the Project will not result in Unacceptable wind gusts or Dangerous wind conditions at the pedestrian level. The NPC included an updated wind tunnel analyses of the Project Change, which demonstrate that the annual wind conditions are expected to be mainly suitable for sitting to walking with some increased wind activity expected immediately adjacent to the Project Site. Whenever a new structure is introduced, wind speeds will typically increase at the street level as the new structure interacts with existing wind flow. The Project Site location is a very difficult location from a wind conditions standpoint as the predominant wind direction is from the west, either NW or SW, depending on season. Specifically at the Project Site the westerly space is open without buildings further exacerbating the condition. This condition required the team to undertake an extensive wind evaluation that included assessment of various massing placements and ground level mitigation to meet BRA wind performance standards.

The Proponent has worked closely with the design team and further wind tunnel tests have been conducted to confirm the effectiveness of the modifications to improve the comfort conditions around the building and on-site. Early in design, multiple building massing options were evaluated in the wind tunnel with differing lower podium configurations and relationships to the tower element above before finally arriving at the currently proposed shape, which proved to have the least impact on wind conditions. The building design was then supplemented with the addition of canopies and a wind trellis to address areas of negative wind conditions in the immediate vicinity of the building. As a result, the final design does not create any Unacceptable or Dangerous conditions.



The Project Change does have an effect on the wind environment of Brookline Avenue given that the wind from the west is predominant. Any additional massing at the Point location will cause a change. Of the four (4) points mentioned in the MASCO comment letter, only two (2), Points 37 and 38, show an increase in average wind speed of 3 miles per hour (mph) and 1 mph, respectively. However, both of these points are within the BRA's range of acceptable results.

## **Vehicular Traffic & Circulation**

### Changes in Traffic Generation

Attachment A of the NPC included a traffic assessment that estimated trip generation for the Project Change using the Institute of Transportation Engineer's (ITE) trip generation data with adjustments made to account for the urban characteristics of the area, including Boston Transportation Department (BTD) mode splits as presented in the 2013 Expanded Project Notification Form (PNF). The findings show that the change in building program—an increase in residential units combined with the decrease in retail space—results in 454 fewer unadjusted Project-generated vehicle trips (168 fewer vehicle trips when adjusted for account for alternative modes of transportation).

The traffic study that was original presented in the 2013 PNF provided a detailed analysis based on the prior, higher traffic generating, project program. This analysis included planned area developments along with the inclusion of several planned infrastructure improvements that are planned to help facilitate additional growth in the area such as the City's Boylston Street Reconstruction Project and the New Street (Ross Way) Extension. Currently the local site area is not operating at its full capacity due to on-going construction and increased truck traffic. Historic traffic volumes from recent years suggest there is little traffic growth in the neighborhood and that auto-dependency is being reduced as residents shift to other modes of travel such a bicycling.

### Site Access/Circulation

A new pedestrian walkway ranging from 6 feet to 11 feet wide is proposed along the shared driveway between the Project and Trilogy connecting Brookline Avenue and Boylston Street. This pedestrian walkway is defined by a flush curb and bollards. It will be open to the public and will be designed to be ADA-compliant. The paving materials for the walkway as well as the shared driveway are composed of integral colored concrete and unit pavers. The design includes paving patterns that extend through entire area to create a more pedestrian friendly environment.

The shared driveway will be extended to Boylston Street as a one-way exit for right-turning vehicles only. This driveway was intended for use by trucks since the geometry to Brookline Avenue prevents larger trucks from exiting to Brookline Avenue. The treatment of the driveway will provide for a shared pedestrian environment with very low, infrequent, vehicular traffic.

## **Parking**

Based on the Proponent's experience with renting out residential units in Trilogy, only a small number of tenants (less than 2%) have obtained on-street resident parking stickers. It is unknown whether these stickers are used on a regular basis. Therefore, given the City's and the Proponent's commitment to alternative transportation options in the vicinity of the building, it can be expected that a relatively low number of future residents of The Point will obtain on-street resident parking stickers.