



David Grissino <david.grissino@boston.gov>

Some recommendations for the Avenue of the Arts Guidelines Report

1 message

Kelly <kbrilliant@fenwayculture.org>

Thu, Jul 23, 2015 at 2:46 PM

Reply-To: kbrilliant@fenwayalliance.org

To: David Grissino <david.grissino@boston.gov>, Martin Zogran <mzogran@sasaki.com>

Hi David and Martin,

I think the ideas expressed in the BRA's Avenue of the Arts Guidelines seem to make good sense. You've done some really nice urban design work here. I love the elements ideas of "welcome mats" and the interesting lighting to liven up the streetscape as well as more ground floor activities, and more activated green space. In terms of cultural programming, you have many of the very best cultural programming experts in the City, here, within the individual institutions and the Alliance itself. I'd urge you to call on our collective creativity and our expertise in cultural place-making. I'd also like to know how this connects to Chief Burros "Boston Creates" cultural plan that we are embedded in right now. I am an area co-chair for that.

I do think the final report must include some reference to what has come before it, even if in a summary form as it will impact the credibility of the guidelines if not. In addition, the community members who need to feel invested in this document will not do so, if the report does not reflect at least some recent historic understanding of the area.

Some examples:

1) The Fenway Alliance has planned and hosted the annual cultural festival Opening Our Doors now for the past 14 years. Held on Columbus Day holiday, each year, it is THE largest day of free cultural experiences in all of Greater Boston with 65 events taking place in 17 indoor/outdoor venues throughout the Fenway, many of those activities take place on the Avenue of the Arts.

2) Within the past three years the Fenway Alliance has created the Public By Design Public Art initiative whereby we place a temporary public art installation that is created by a rotating Boston-based architecture firm on Evans Way Park that is part of Opening Our Doors event, but also continues before and afterward for the public's enjoyment. Our first one was designed and created by architect Kim Poliquin under Perkins + Will. Entitled "ENfold/Evans Way Park is garnered numerous award citations, and media coverage including a recognition by the BSA in their "Unbuilt" design award category. Our second one was "Interlace" created by architect Rachel Hampton with a team of talented young architects from Goody Clancy. Last year's piece was entitled "Sparkle + Chime"--a beautiful giant chime art piece created by architect Jean Kim and his team at Shepley Bulfinch. Shepley was so committed to the idea that they had six teams competing to have one selected by a juried panel. I sat on the panel along w an esteemed group of institutional leaders, architects,

artists and a dean of NEU's architecture school. The Alliance creates cultural programming to interact with these pieces so children can not only see but also creatively experience them.

3) Muddy River Restoration Project--this 65 mil dollar US Army Corps of Engineers project has been spearheaded by the Alliance working w dozens of local groups and concerned citizens in the neighborhood and beyond--please call me for more detail if need be, but it is a restoration of one of Olmsted's jewels to its former grandeur after decades of deferred maintenance. This has been a 20 year successful advocacy effort.

4) Huntington Avenue/Avenue of the Arts Beautification Project==22 mil project that the Alliance with spearheaded to achieve all the trees, new t tracks, street furniture, etc. MASCO worked side by side on this effort w the Alliance and now we both care for the hundreds of trees on the Avenue and the grass in the T reservation in a unique private/public partnership with the City of Boston. This was a 12 year effort with funding from Federal, State, City and MBTA, and oversight and advocacy from Alliance institutional members and MASCO members, w both orgs at helm.

5) The Emerald Necklace Conservancy has done an incredible job of beautification projects for the Olmsted parks right in our area--Pres Julie Crockford would be the contact.

6) MASCO has done lovely green renovation projects that they have undertaken in this area--including a wonderful renovation of Evans Way Park that we were also involved in. Sarah and Jan can fill you in.

7) Fenway Civic takes care of Ramler Park, Symphony Park and several other beautiful pocket parks, and is now in process of getting a wonderful piece of permanent public art installed in one of the pocket parks. Marie Fukuda is the person to talk to.

8) Individually, our institutions care for dozens of "acreage" in this area. NEU alone spends thousands each year, as does the MFA, and Berklee College of Music--worth a separate phone call to them. Berklee does so much in terms of cultural programming as does the MFA.

Please feel free to contact me for any more explication or detail. Warm regards, Kelly

Kelly Brilliant, Executive Director

The Fenway Alliance, Inc.

Tel: [617-437-7544](tel:617-437-7544)



David Grissino <david.grissino@boston.gov>

Avenue of the Arts Planning

1 message

Wilhelmi, David <David.Wilhelmi@childrens.harvard.edu>

Fri, Jul 24, 2015 at 3:38 PM

To: "David Grissino (David.Grissino@Boston.gov)" <David.Grissino@boston.gov>

Cc: "Jacob Wessel (jacob.wessel@Boston.Gov)" <jacob.wessel@boston.gov>

The Avenue of the Arts "planning" was no more of a planning session in the 4th meeting than it was during the 1st. Another example of the BRA coming in with an idea of what they want to do and the people in the room are there so they can say that they had a "public" meeting. Perhaps this satisfies some legal requirement. An example is that at the first meeting the question was asked... Why does the planning area start at Longwood Avenue and not at Brigham Circle (where the project originally began) or at the Jamaica Way Bridge (which forms the gateway on Rt 9 into Boston). When I asked this question at the 4th meeting I got the same imprecise answer I heard at the first. My gut feeling is that the starting point is politically motivated. Harvard Medical School, Brigham and Women's Hospital, and Mass School of Pharmacy probably don't want the BRA to dictate the height of their buildings and the length of their shadows. Speaking for NHS (we own one building in that 2 block length between Longwood and Brigham Circle) we would welcome some planning oversight in that area. Especially now when 2 groups are trying to build residential towers in our historic district. I have been told by someone who attended either the 2nd or 3rd meeting that the Wentworth's project became a problem when Malcom Rogers complained the tower part of the project would cast too much shadow across the Indian Sculpture. More political pressure. After 6 years of Art School I know that light and shadow are part of art. Or, as someone pointed out at the last meeting, "One man's shadow is another man's shade"... It makes sense to me after all... why else would sidewalk cafes have umbrellas? The "Avenue of the Arts" is being planned by technicians.

To summarize your hired planners did their thing and showed us the results of their efforts. This includes little input from us taxpayers, it is far too technical for our little minds to absorb. One of the most telling things was when the presenters kept telling us "this is very technical". I know that in my work on the 2 Mission Hill groups where I serve as a board member for the last 20

years, I probably have seen at least as many shadow studies as they have.

No attention was given to transportation (pedestrian, bicycle or vehicular). These questions were deflected. No attention was given to utility planning. Surely with any new buildings there will be more toilets to flush and lights to light. Perhaps this is deflected to the utilities. But, shouldn't a plan provide guidance in an area as restricted as this?

This was a disappointing experience and as member of the neighborhood I find this to be another in a whole series of exasperating experiences with the BRA. Like, with the planning process for South Huntington Avenue this has all taken place after permits were issued and the project was a done deal. It was a number of years ago during Mayor Menino's administration that the Avenue of the Arts was built. Now you are planning it. It seems something is wrong with this.

David Wilhelmi



David Grissino <david.grissino@boston.gov>

comments on Huntington Avenue study

1 message

dpultinasboston@aol.com <dpultinasboston@aol.com>

Mon, Aug 3, 2015 at 4:35 PM

To: david.grissino@boston.gov, mzogran@sasaki.com, marc.laderman@gmail.com

Dear all,

Huntington Avenue/MOBILITY AND PLACEMAKING

I realize the consultants had a difficult assignment working within a narrow scope and the Huntington Avenue right of way was not in their purview. However a major point could have been made to connect the existing bus stops to the vision for a public realm - both Huntington and on the side streets, namely Ruggles. They are the authentic activated spaces that the suggested "welcome mats" could enhance. Why not imagine quality improvements for the Huntington/Gainsborough stops for the route 39, both inbound and out, also the Northeastern campus stops, Ruggles/Huntington, Longwood /Huntington?

From the 2013 comments I submitted on Wentworth's PDA - Open space and pathways should relate both to the building entrances and to the bus stops along Huntington and Ruggles. The proposed development should be an impetus to improve the public realm conditions particularly for pedestrians and bicyclists. The existing transit stops particularly on Ruggles are awkwardly cut off from Wentworth's property. The landscape should be developed in coordination with the transit waiting areas so that shade (and possibly benches) are available to T riders. An example of successful public realm planning for bus passengers is Beth Israel's East Campus along Brookline Avenue. A well-designed waiting area would be more visible and comfortable and could accommodate a future increase in bus passengers.

The effort to define Huntington as a boulevard always seemed forced, the scale is wrong and except for the block in front of the MFA there is no green edge between the road and the sidewalk. The 20 yr plus PWD/BRA project that labelled Huntington a boulevard with a wide green median was all about the image. Trees along the MBTA tracks and a prettified reservation were supposed to create a Parisian boulevard effect. The platforms for the MBTA's E line at Northeastern, Museum and Longwood are aesthetically proportioned but useless: far longer than the trains they serve, occupying considerable roadway space. The comments about the cost of the maintenance and the frequent need to replace trees -is the

image so important that the institutions want to perpetuate the narrowed road width that endangers bicyclists ? Isn't it time to take back the Avenue, reclaim it as a neighborhood connector /mixed uses street, and make it safe for those bike commuters who want to take the shortest route to their destination? Keep the length of the T platforms where the riders are boarding but reduce it where its unused.Focus on maintaining healthy sidewalk trees ,the ones in the median and on the platforms are never going to be long lived or have large canopies.

sincerely,
Alison Pultinas
Mission Hill resident



WIT PDA August 9.docx

130K



David Grissino <david.grissino@boston.gov>

500 Huntington/Avenue of the Arts

1 message

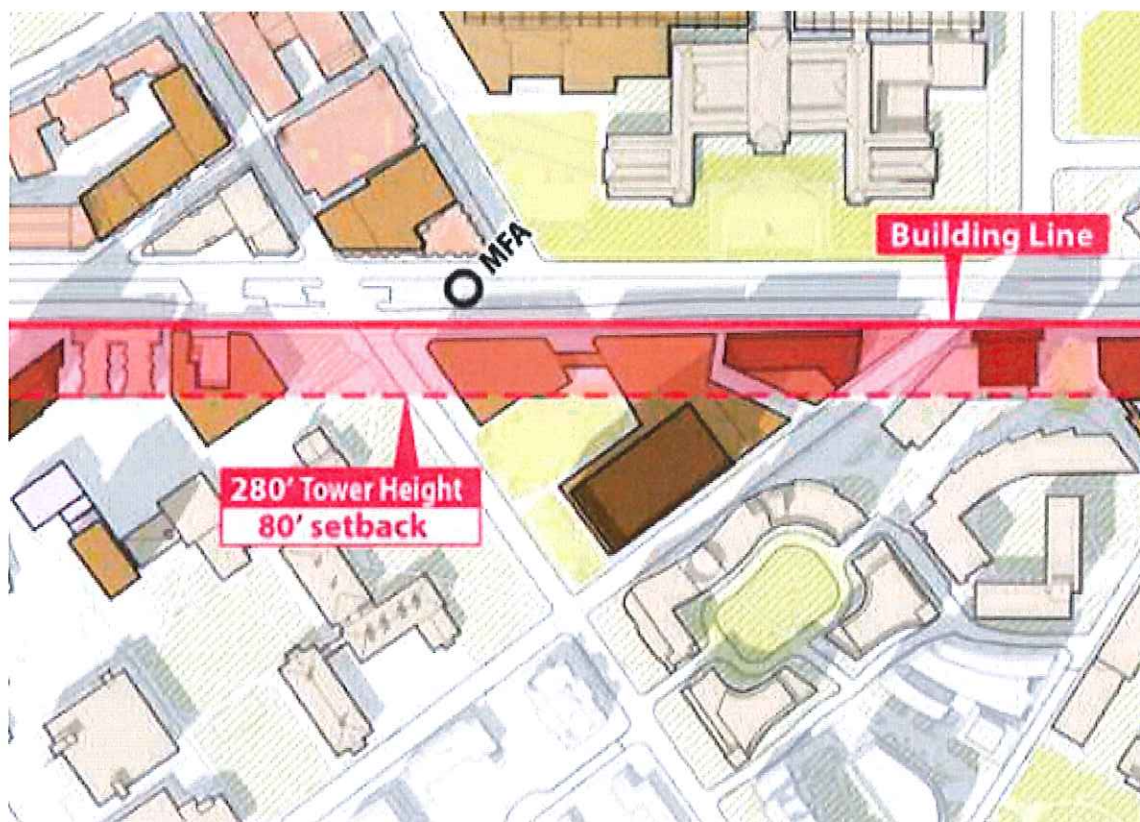
Tsipis, Yanni <Yanni.Tsipis@colliers.com>

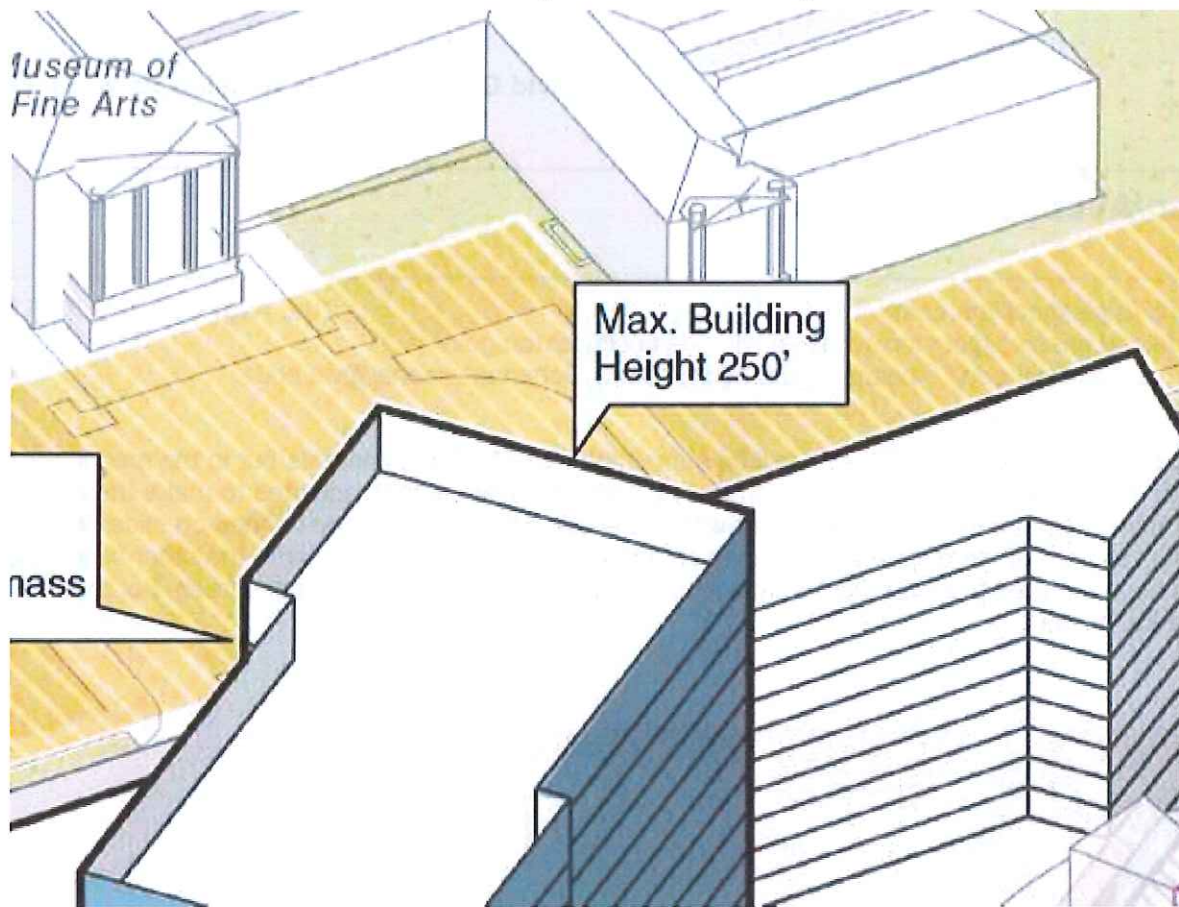
Tue, Aug 4, 2015 at 7:35 AM

To: "David Grissino (david.grissino@boston.gov)" <david.grissino@boston.gov>

Cc: "Sandy Pascal (pascals@wit.edu)" <pascals@wit.edu>, "Sena, Johanna" <senaj@wit.edu>

Hi David, just a quick note - I believe Wentworth will be submitting more formal comments but in the meantime could the guidelines expressed on page 43 of the community meeting slide deck be adjusted to make the note about maximum building height on slide 43 consistent with the shadow performance line defined on slide 38? Please also infill the top floor of the diagrammatic representation of 500 Huntington similar to the other buildings; this diagram could be interpreted to mean that the maximum height applies to a mechanical screen, not the building itself. Thanks. Yanni





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WENTWORTH

Institute of Technology

August 5, 2015

David Grissino
Boston Redevelopment Authority
Boston City Hall
1 City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201

RE: Avenue of the Arts Guidelines

Dear David,

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the study and offer comments prior to the finalization of the Avenue of the Arts Guidelines. Below are a few comments based on the presentation shown at the community meeting on July 22nd.

First the email submitted by Yanni Tsipis (per attachment) on Wentworth's behalf, dated August 4th accurately represents our position on the 280' tower height planned for the Wentworth development at 500 Huntington Ave. and we ask that his comments be reflected in the final submittal to the BRA Board. It is our understanding based on the statements made by the BRA team at the July 22nd meeting that the tower height approved in the PDA does not create a significant shadow on the MFA. It is also our understanding based on comments made by the BRA team that the wind can be mitigated by the structure on the corner of Ruggles and Huntington and that the article 80 process will provide the opportunity to further address these issues.

In addition, our earlier comments concerning the pedestrian path ways thru our 500 Huntington Avenue site from the Orange Line Commuter Rail Station at Ruggles and thru the NEU portal were based on extensive discussions with residents and institutional neighbors at the Task Force meetings that informed our PDA submittal. For those of us who live and work in this neighborhood, much of the major foot traffic is directed from the train station toward the LMA and Colleges of the Fenway. Our massing design was positioned to reflect this and to allow for community place making venues. Please also note that the "welcome mat" in front of Wentworth Hall is also meant to run parallel to Ruggles Street allowing for a clear viewing area to the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral from Huntington Avenue.

Lastly we thank you for the considerations and recommendations that effect other related Wentworth properties close to Huntington Avenue within our West Parking Lot and along Vancouver and Louis Prang streets.

Wentworth would also like to thank you for efforts made to move this study to completion and to incorporate the comments voiced at the community meetings both by Wentworth and other stake holders. A study of this scope requires an extensive level of effort and we appreciate your diligence in balancing a demanding time frame. The Wentworth team looks forward to further work with you, Katelynn Sullivan and the BRA as the 500 Huntington Ave project moves forward into the article 80 process.

Best Regards,



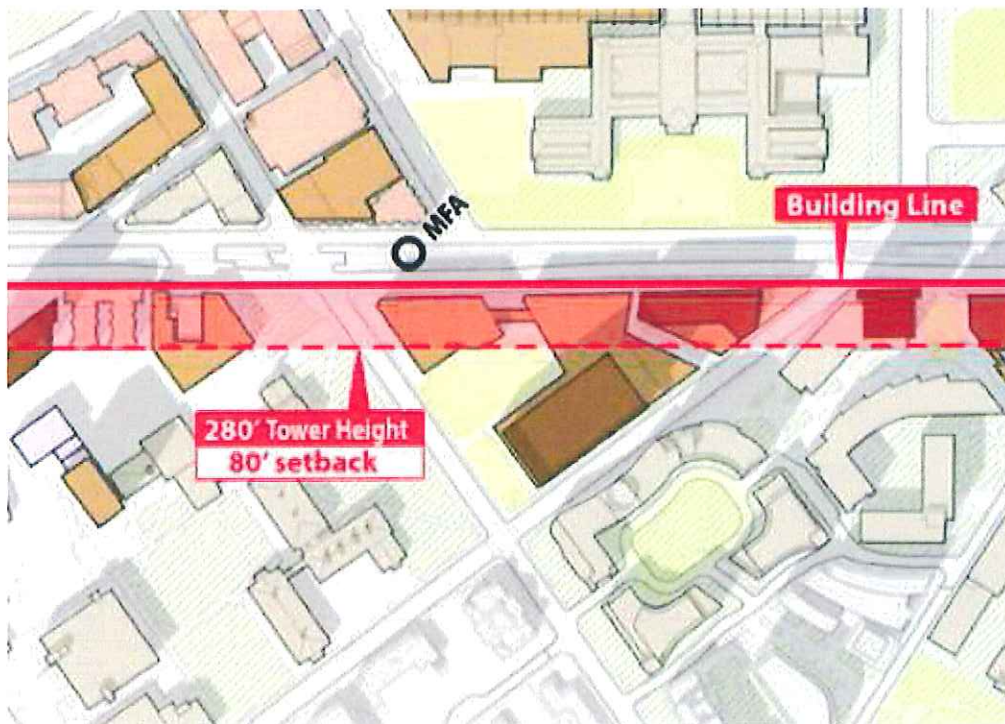
David Wahlstrom
Vice President for Business Affairs

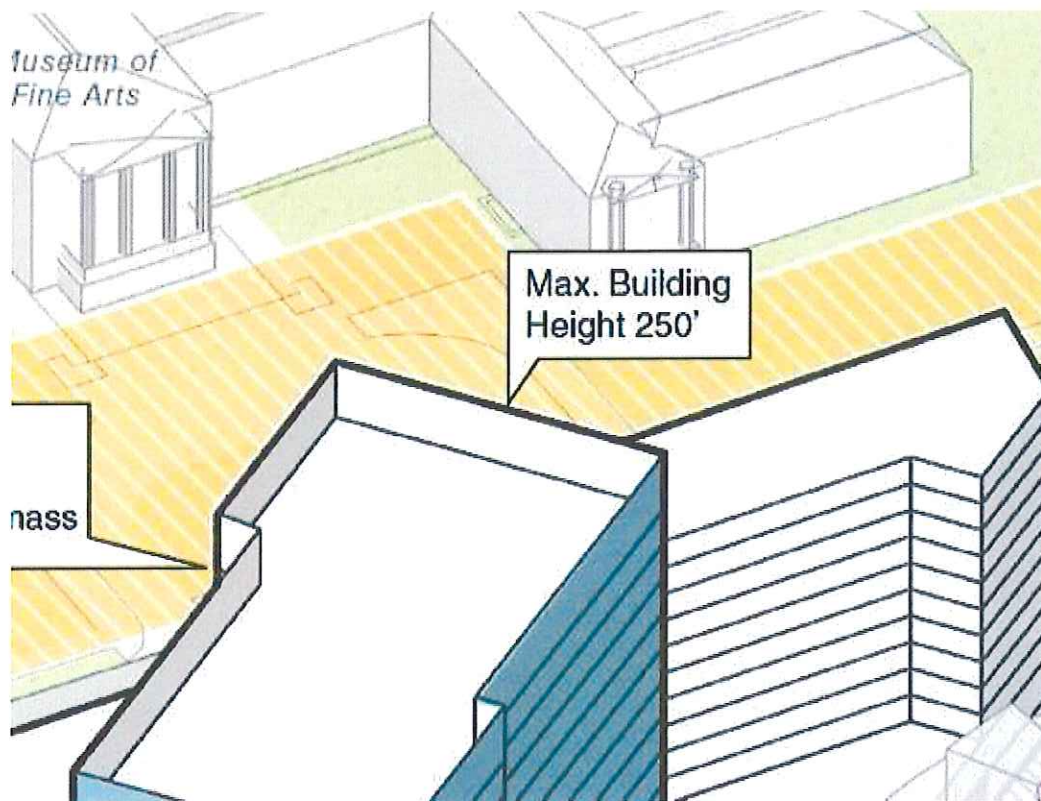
cc: Katelyn Sullivan

From: [Pascal, Sandra](#)
To: [Neal, Christine](#)
Subject: FW: 500 Huntington/Avenue of the Arts
Date: Thursday, August 6, 2015 11:13:30 AM
Attachments: [image006.png](#)
[image007.png](#)

From: Tsipis, Yanni [mailto:Yanni.Tsipis@colliers.com]
Sent: Tuesday, August 4, 2015 7:35 AM
To: David Grissino (david.grissino@boston.gov)
Cc: Pascal, Sandra; Sena, Johanna
Subject: 500 Huntington/Avenue of the Arts

Hi David, just a quick note - I believe Wentworth will be submitting more formal comments but in the meantime could the guidelines expressed on page 43 of the community meeting slide deck be adjusted to make the note about maximum building height on slide 43 consistent with the shadow performance line defined on slide 38? Please also infill the top floor of the diagrammatic representation of 500 Huntington similar to the other buildings; this diagram could be interpreted to mean that the maximum height applies to a mechanical screen, not the building itself. Thanks.
Yanni





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- Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences
- Massachusetts Department of Mental Health
- Simmons College
- Temple Israel
- Wentworth Institute of Technology
- Wheelock College
- The Winsor School

August 25, 2015

David Grissino, Senior Architect/Urban Designer
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

**RE: Proposed Avenue of the Arts Design Guidelines
(Huntington Avenue from Massachusetts Avenue to Longwood Avenue)**

Dear Mr. Grissino,

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in the community process and provide input to the draft Design Guidelines for Huntington Avenue between Massachusetts Avenue and Longwood Avenue. The draft Guidelines are of particular interest to our member institutions --Massachusetts College of Art and Design and Wentworth Institute of Technology --which are located within the Study Area. Other members are located in the Context Area and have an interest both in some of the procedural issues raised by the Guidelines as well as in the Guidelines themselves.

We appreciate the BRA's planning efforts and endorse the BRA's overall goals to develop coherent urban design principles pertaining to massing and scale, site organization and landscape, relationship of buildings to the street, public realm, site furnishings, environmental comfort, identity and materials. However, we respectfully suggest that the material entitled "Avenue of the Arts Public Meeting #4" be modified and is not yet in a form to be presented to or adopted by the Boston Redevelopment Authority Board. Specifically, we believe the Guidelines should be prospective in their application; be clearer as to their status as Guidelines only; recognize institutional needs and constraints; and be augmented with explanatory text which eliminates inconsistencies or ambiguities.

Backdrop of Current Zoning:

The current Design Guidelines are being proposed to unify the study area, through urban design, which is divided among several distinct zoning districts in Boston proper: Mission Hill (5/9/1996, Article 59); Fenway Neighborhood District (10/22/2004, Article 66), and Huntington Ave/Prudential District (3/20/1990, Article 41). Each district article was adopted after exhaustive study and contains specific dimensional requirements. At the same time, there are approved Institutional Master Plans (IMPs) and approved

Associate Members

- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts
- Harvard Vanguard Medical Associates
- Merck Research Laboratories



Development Plans for Planned Development Areas (PDAs) in these zoning districts and the Guideline Study Area which allow for alternative dimensions; the LMA Interim Guidelines also affect part of the area under study.

The IMP and PDA vehicles require extensive evaluations of environmental and other impacts, based on fairly specific building plans that describe site locations, approximate building footprints, uses and principal sub uses; square feet of gross floor area, FAR and building heights. Shadow and wind studies are generally completed as part of the process leading to adoption of the IMPs and PDA Development Plans. However, the only requirements in zoning for meeting specific General Design and Environmental Impact standards, including shadow and wind criteria, are typically specific to Planned Development Areas in a limited number of districts. The districts in which General Design and Environmental Impact standards are tied into adoption of PDAs include: the Midtown Cultural District (Article 38-16); Huntington Avenue Prudential Center District (Article 41-16); Harborpark District—Fort Point Waterfront (Article 42E-20); Chinatown District (Article 43-17); and Government Center Markets District (Article 45-13). Neither the Mission Hill Neighborhood District nor the Fenway Neighborhood District contains similar General Design and Environmental Impact standards applicable even to PDAs.

Relationship of Design Guidelines to approved PDA Development Plans and IMPs:

Within the Study Area, Institutional Master Plans have been approved for the New England Conservatory (last updated 2014), Northeastern University (last updated 2013) and Wentworth Institute of Technology (last updated 2013). Development Plans for Planned Development Areas have been approved for the Museum of Fine Arts (PDA No. 63, approved 2004) and Wentworth--500 Huntington Ave PDA (approved 2013).

Much thought, time, effort, environmental studies and expense have already been put into Development Plans for PDAs and Institutional Master Plans by the time of approval of these “master plans” by the BRA and the Boston Zoning Commission, including review and approvals by the BRA Design Review staff, the Boston Civic Design Commission, the institutional proponents or private developers, and the community task force participants. It is customary for project proponents to receive these zoning approvals based on concept plans which have gone through the IMP or PDA Article 80 review process. After receipt of such zoning approvals, project proponents engage further consultants and obtain financing to refine the projects from schematic design to contract document approval, all in reliance on the zoning approvals of the concept plans which have been secured through the PDA or IMP.

It would be very problematic for institutions and other developers to go through such an extensive review and approval process for IMPs or PDA Development Plans, including impacts analyses and detailed design discussions, and be left without a very high level of certainty about approved uses, site plans and dimensional requirements. Certainty as to such project elements is needed at the outset in order to proceed with financing, leasing and engaging third party development entities, in order to develop and construct a proposed project.



Because of the importance of this reliance, we believe any approved Design Guidelines should be prospective in their application only, and that criteria in the Design Guidelines should not be applied to restrict the approved dimensions of proposed projects described in approved PDA Development Plans and IMPs. Also, in considering this issue, the differences between what has been described for proposed projects in existing IMPs and PDA Development Plans and what is now proposed in the material made available as “Avenue of the Arts Public Meeting #4” is not completely clear to a reviewer. It would be very helpful for the public to see clearer diagrams that show these differences, before the Guidelines are presented to the BRA Board, in order to more clearly understand and be able to comment on the effect of the Guidelines on approved PDA Development Plans and IMPs.

Role and Extent of Guidelines:

In proposing to adopt “Guidelines” rather than as the more formal amendments of the Zoning Code, the BRA has stated its intent in public meetings to allow flexibility. We assume this means that the material and principles in the Guidelines will serve as principles and design parameters to be considered during the design review process rather than as strict requirements, and we support their application in a flexible manner.

To reinforce the intended role of the Guidelines, we recommend that the third bullet on page 4 (entitled “What are Design Guidelines?”) of the material made available as “Avenue of the Arts Public Meeting #4” be modified to read: “Will be approved by the BRA Board but will not modify existing zoning, including zoning regulations and approvals.”

It is also our understanding that these Guidelines have been developed specifically for the uses and built environment conditions--both existing and proposed--in this specific section of the Avenue and that they will not be extended to or applied to other areas of the Avenue without further study of the conditions, neighborhood context and types of building uses, and further public review and comment.

Explanatory Text and Elimination of Inconsistencies and Ambiguities:

The material made available as “Avenue of the Arts Public Meeting #4” relies on diagrams and lacks the explanatory text and format included in the General Design and Environmental Impact standards in the zoning articles referenced in the fourth paragraph of this letter. We believe that this makes the material difficult to understand and that it would benefit from the type of explanatory text and table format contained in the referenced zoning articles.

As an illustration, the following sections specifically would benefit from clarifications and from concepts of flexibility and trade-offs to balance public realm goals with institutional needs:

Sidewalk Width/Welcome Mats /Café Zones

The sidewalk width and café zone standards, as well as “welcome mats”, when able to be followed, would contribute to creation of an attractive pedestrian zone. However, the Guidelines are not clear about how these approaches might be applied to new building developments. For example the sidewalk width and café zone diagram on page 13 would imply that the minimum width at the



sidewalk level would be 27 feet. Other diagrams (pages 42, 44 and 45) for specific buildings that have been reviewed state a minimum of 27-30 feet.

Moreover, the dimensions suggested may be difficult to achieve at some locations without sacrificing internal program or floorplate requirements for programmatic use. Accordingly, if ground floor design is an imperative, then Institutions should be allowed to make up the loss of space at the ground level elsewhere in a building through flexibility on other dimensions, including height or through allowing buildings to cantilever over the sidewalk high enough above the second level to accommodate the café zone at grade, achieve program needs and design an aesthetically attractive building and public realm. If there is no flexibility built into the Guidelines, these proposed dimensions could render sites very difficult to develop.

Placemaking Furniture/Multi Modal Transportation Connectivity/Urban Street Trees

We assume that the “placemaking” furniture images represent a starting point for discussion, rather than standards, to enable institutions to have the ability to choose furnishings that are in keeping with their campus aesthetic and operational requirements.

We strongly support the goal of making stronger, greener pedestrian connections to the Emerald Necklace and local and regional bicycle network planning and the Avenue. One of the strongest existing pedestrian, cyclist and transit connections is via Ruggles Street, Louis Prang and the Fenway. The Colleges of the Fenway, institutions in the greater LMA and the West Fenway community’s multi-modal needs in this corridor are all significant. Page 11 shows that in the network of side streets in the study area, Ruggles (and Mass Ave.) have the most regional significance in terms of mobility and connectivity. As such, we believe the Guidelines should especially reinforce the Ruggles/Louis Prang/Fenway corridor for improvements and amenities that encourage pedestrian, bicycle, and transit use. The 500 Huntington Avenue PDA plan, as approved, was thoughtfully designed to reinforce views, create plazas and open space corridors and serve both existing and future pedestrian and cyclist needs along the Ruggles axis all the way to Ruggles Station while also setting back building structures to not preclude future surface or underground transit needs consistent with the City’s transportation objectives. The Guideline document (page 16) seems instead to reinforce competing connections from Ruggles Station through the 500 Huntington site to Museum Road which would direct people to use an unsafe, unsignalized mid-block crossing of the Avenue.

We also note that on the Public Realm diagram (pages 16, 51) the area colored green for open space is actually a 40 foot transit easement set aside for the future Urban Ring (or successor transit) project which should be acknowledged on the diagrams and protected during design review of any projects along this corridor. Finally, we recommend that the BRA consider through the Guidelines, how future development height along Louis Prang might enable more generous pedestrian, bike and transit resources as future redevelopment occurs.

As stewards of many trees in the LMA, including the 225 street trees on the Avenue from Ruggles Street to Brigham Circle which MASCO maintains as part of an agreement with the City of Boston, we are supportive of creating street tree planting zones and sidewalk treatments that enhance trees’ ability to survive the harsh urban environment. Creation of tree planting troughs which allow a



shared rooting and watering environment and keep trees out of the heavy pedestrian zone are encouraged to reduce the amount of compaction on and around the tree root systems. A number of the species already planted on Huntington Avenue have not been found to be resilient to conditions on the Avenue. MASCO has spent much time and money planting replacements for Red Maple and London Plane trees, most recently removing 18 of a combination of these species. It would be helpful for the BRA to consult with the City Parks Department regarding a suitable list of hardy, salt-tolerant urban street trees and structural soils specifications for use during design review.

Lastly, we support the use of permeable paving in the street tree zone, after the adoption of a standard that has been proven by the Department of Public Works to be durable under typical snowplowing conditions, etc.; the use of structural soils; and the use of tree grates if the latter are designed in a way to not choke mature trees.

Permeability/Street Activation/Programming/Street Furniture

The ability to create porous or permeable edges and activated space at the street level depends completely on building use and program. Ground level retail space is not always appropriate in every building and therefore should not be mandated as a required element of all proposed or future buildings. There are many examples where the level of pedestrian traffic simply does not support the introduction of ground level retail in institutional buildings. In addition, “permeable edges” can complicate the ability to control and channel access into a building’s central entry points that can be staffed by security. Programming activities should be consistent with the institution’s mission and needs as well as the context of the greater neighborhood. Finally, not all institutional uses at grade are appropriate to be transparent in order to activate the street. For these reasons we encourage the BRA to be flexible during design review to identify the right approach for each site based on ownership and uses.

Shadow

The proposed Guidelines appear to reflect the mandate that shadows not be increased beyond 2 hours on any areas of Huntington Avenue. This 2 hour time limit is included in the Midtown Cultural District zoning as applicable to the Boston Common based on the Boston Public Common Shadow Act, in the Huntington Avenue Prudential Center District as applicable to dedicated public parkland and “to the extent practicable” in public open spaces, and in the Chinatown District as applicable to Gateway Park, Pagoda Park, and Tai Tung Park. Shadow limitations without any specific time limit are included in the Harborpark District—Fort Point Waterfront as applicable “to the extent reasonably practicable” to dedicated public parkland and public open spaces, and in the Government Center/Markets District “to the extent reasonably practicable” to dedicated public parkland and publicly accessible open space.

We do not see any examples where a 2 hour shadow time limit is imposed on an area which is not a dedicated public park or public open spaces. The Guidelines would apply the most rigorous shadow standard in the City – currently for protection of the Boston Common and Boston Public Garden and certain other limited public parkland – to Huntington Avenue, without an apparent rationale or basis other than to preserve sun on the western side of the street. Although mitigation of serious impacts is



important, the rationale for the application of this shadow standard, which is only used in very special circumstances, is unclear. Applying this standard would effectively penalize future developments on the east side of the Avenue.

We strongly urge that the Guidelines be modified to reflect flexibility by inclusion of the concept “to the extent reasonably practicable” and by elimination of a specific 2 hour time limit. The BRA has successfully used building glazing in high rise districts in many areas of the City, not just height and shadow limits, to avoid creation of dark canyons, to create additional reflected light and sky, thus allowing tall buildings to exist comfortably with historic buildings, public art, plazas and open spaces. The shadow guideline is particularly significant since it drives the other guidelines for height, setback and stepback, all of which may make it more difficult to achieve institutional building floorplates and program.

Height, Setback, Stepback, Density

The Guideline diagrams suggest different combinations of streetwall heights, setbacks and stepbacks, and overall building heights on specific sites where buildings have already been proposed. The Design Guidelines should clarify which of the specific Design Guidelines result in the specific elements of the Guideline diagrams.

It is also not clear whether these Guideline diagrams are mandatory or illustrative or even which of these concepts the BRA intends to apply as guidelines for future development sites. For example: the diagram on page 38 suggests a setback of 80 feet from the street edge for a building height of 280'; Page 43 suggests a building height of 250' which conflicts with 280' on page 38; page 45 suggests a height of 200'; page 47 suggests height of 210'; page 48 suggests a minimum setback of 65'. Other than the shadow standard which we believe to be too rigorous, the rationale for choosing these dimensions as guidelines is not clear from the material. Will ranges be established setting the relationship between height, setback and stepback? Is 280' the maximum height? If so, how and why has this been selected? The document is not clear on these points or on the applicability of these concepts to additional sites that might be redeveloped in the future within the Study Area.

As the city grows and in order to meet the needs of institutions owning land fronting the Avenue, we believe that height should continue to be encouraged along the Avenue and in the blocks closest to it, as a way to focus development away from lower rise neighborhoods and closer to transportation resources such as the MBTA's E Line. Accordingly, we support allowing flexibility for developers and institutions to select an appropriate combination of stepback, setback and height based on their programmatic needs within broad parameters set by the BRA.

In summary, MASCO endorses the BRA's overall goal to establish a continuous, pedestrian friendly streetwall at a height that does not overwhelm pedestrians, with a step back for taller heights and a pedestrian zone with provisions for amenities such as adequate width for walking, street trees, plazas and open space, benches and other site furnishings that can make a walk more pleasant and can buffer wind impacts.



MEDICAL ACADEMIC AND SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION, INC.

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However, we believe that the goals should be implemented based on appropriate criteria, and with flexibility in implementation, recognizing community needs and institutional missions and constraints. We further believe that the Guidelines should be applied prospectively and in a manner that does not restrict dimensions of proposed projects once approved through the PDA or IMP processes, so that developers and institutions may continue to rely on approvals received through the PDA and IMP processes. Finally, we would hope that any revised Guidelines would be more clearly stated and would clarify which element of a Design Guideline is derived from specific environmental impacts, so that they can be appropriately analyzed and mitigated.

We want to express our appreciation for the efforts of the BRA to examine the urban design in the Study Area of the Avenue of the Arts in a more integrated fashion and we look forward to the opportunity to continue participating in the dialogue on development of this important area.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sarah J. Hamilton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sarah J. Hamilton
Vice President, Area Planning and Development

cc: MASCO Strategic Planning Committee members



August 27, 2015

Mr. David L. Grissino
Sr. Architect, Urban Designer
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

Dear David:

The Museum of Fine Arts is grateful to Mayor Walsh, his administration, and the Boston Redevelopment Authority specifically for undertaking Urban Planning on the Avenue of the Arts. We believe this study is complimentary to the City's announced goal of a City wide Planning process, a process we enthusiastically support. We are also grateful to our institutional neighbors on the Avenue of the Arts for their active engagement in this process. Their recognition of the need for guidelines as evidenced by the significant dedication of both time and financial resources is verification that institutions can greatly collaborate towards a common goal. We thank you, David for shepherding this process over the many months, and for your professionalism, fairness and patience during this study. Finally we would be remiss if we did not mention the fine work of Sasaki Associates as they conducted the study. They proved to be thoughtful listeners and skillful at their craft in suggested guidelines and possible alternatives that might benefit all. Many useful recommendations have emerged, that if incorporated, will make the Avenue of the Arts an even better urban context, not only to the benefit of the institutions that are immediately adjacent to it, but for all Bostonians and visitors to our great city.

We even appreciate the reminder that the MFA itself needs to continue to do its share to continue to maintain and consider better programming of our outdoor environment, thus contributing more vitality to the Avenue along our section of Huntington from Museum Road to Forsyth Way. We commit to doing our part when and where we can.

While we support many of the recommendations made by the Study, several clarifications are appropriate, in our view, prior to the conclusion of the Study. Some key questions need further clarification: 1) Which of the recommendations are intended to become regulatory *requirements*, precisely where, and which will remain merely suggestions for guiding future design and development along the corridor? 2) Similarly, it is unclear where the responsibility is intended to fall to achieve all of the suggested streetscape improvements – such as proper tree planting, storm water enhancement measures, sidewalk widening, curb adjustments and pedestrian crossings. Many of these we assume will be the responsibility of the city, rather than expected to be achieved gradually in piecemeal fashion as a result of

future private developments. In our view, additional precision regarding responsibilities and requirements seem to be in order.

While we recognize that the Avenue of the Arts Study has been a worthwhile, useful and aspirational guide for how development must contribute to protecting and enhancing the public realm of the street, a number of our initial concerns remain. These concerns were identified in letters to the BRA in 2013 relating to the 500 Huntington Avenue Planned Area Development (PDA) submitted by the Wentworth Institute of Technology, as well as comments relating to the Northeastern University Institutional Master Plans. For the record, we attach to this comment letter those letters for reference.

In summary, the concerns that have not fully been addressed through the Study, at least from our perspective, include:

1. **Traffic and pedestrian impacts.** We recognize that the BRA has been consistent throughout this process in its position that traffic impact would not be part of this study. If there was one virtually unanimous concern from all of those who spoke during the study process, it was concerns about traffic. Traffic impacts from the proposed uses at 500 Huntington Avenue are likely as, or more impactful than height or scale on the experiential quality of the Avenue of the Arts. It is already a busy corridor at peak hours, with grid lock occurring frequently during the year, and the addition of several hundred thousand square feet of commercial space – generally a traffic generator – will be felt on the street, both by drivers and pedestrians. We remain concerned specifically about the ability of fire apparatus from the Fire station on the Avenue to come and go as needed during peak times especially with the addition of significant incremental traffic. While the Study is silent on this, the VHB portions of Wentworth’s PDF material reveal more than 400 parking spaces and 230 auto trips during each daily peak hour. And this traffic count apparently does not take into account Wentworth’s planned 97,000sf Center for Innovation, or any future Northeastern expansion. Therefore, greater attention should be focused on traffic before the Avenue of the Arts Study can be completed. We use this comment letter to ask the Walsh Administration to conduct a traffic study on this important Avenue. It is difficult to understand how an appropriate limit to the scale of development can be established without a more detailed transportation impact study. We strongly request that the BRA in conjunction with the Boston Transportation Department (BDA) undertake such a study as soon as possible.

2. **The scale, height, size and uses proposed 500 Huntington Avenue project.** At the outset of the Study the BRA made it clear that this process was about guidelines not a review of granted entitlements or zoning. This point seemed to be lost to some, as evidenced by their comments during the third and fourth meetings of the Study. What also seemed to be lost was the fact that the 500 Huntington Avenue PDA was subject to an Article 80 Large Project review when the PDA was initially approved. The oft stated comments from the BRA to audiences at the Study meetings that these guidelines might help smooth the Article 80 process downstream regarding this Project seemed to not be fully appreciated by some.

We remain committed to working as collaboratively as we can, regarding this proposed project. As the Director of the Museum asked at a proposed developer due diligence meeting some months ago, regarding this project: "How can we best work together to have this proposed development celebrate the Avenue of the Arts". We continue to ask this question.

We feel we would be remiss if we did not reiterate that we continue to believe that, as approved, this is too large, too tall, too different in use in relationship to its neighbors (at least as it pertains to the proposed commercial uses of the tower) and thus potentially an intrusion rather than an asset along the Avenue of the Arts. We also worry that it may set a long-term precedent for the scope that future projects will seek for approval in the area.

As a related matter, the MFA remains equally concerned about the height, though not the use, of the proposed Northeastern University's Burstein/Rubenstein replacement residential tower. We have, however, been assured by President Auon of Northeastern that the University has no plans for the foreseeable future to advance such a project and we hope to work with them as future plans are formulated.

3. **Potential shadow impacts.** While the impact of shadows on the front courtyard of the MFA would be lessened by the Sasaki Plan's recommendation of substantial setbacks above a certain height from Huntington Avenue, and the limitation of building heights to below 280 feet, a more thorough analysis of shadow impacts will be required, including of course not only on MFA property, but on Huntington Avenue itself and its public sidewalks.

Again, to press for specificity: Diagrams indicate building heights of 200, 260 and 280 feet. Is there a conclusion as to a maximum allowable height, and is there an intention to mandate this? Or is the matter regarding height to be determined by a concept of no shadow to exceed 2 hours in duration between the equinoxes on the northern sidewalk of Huntington (and therefore also on the MFA property)? Would such be established by required setbacks above the recommended 80' height limit along Huntington Avenue? That would suggest that buildings even greater than 280' might be possible if a sufficient setback is achieved. Does the BRA intend to mandate either a specific height limit, or a limitation in shadow duration, or both?

4. **Wind and other environmental impacts.** The Sasaki work wisely identifies this as an important issue and introduces some wind mitigation strategies. But the study does not establish specific benchmarks or criteria for what would be acceptable for the comfort of all those along the Avenue of the Arts, 'comfort' being one of the four overarching principles introduced by the study. Such benchmarks are no doubt beyond the scope of this particular study. However, we would expect quite detailed wind and other environmental studies, and suitable benchmarks established, to accompany any Article 80 process.

5. **Further advancing the concept of an Avenue for the Arts.** The following may be our most subjective concern, though we believe still worthy of consideration and debate. Does a substantial, large floor plate, tall, commercial or bio-medical research facility belong

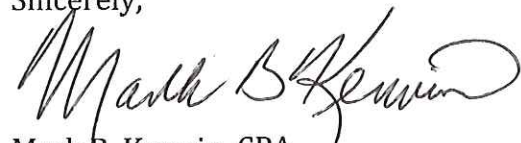
on a relatively short stretch of an urban corridor dedicated to the Arts? While the mixing of uses, activities and people are a noteworthy goal in support of urban vitality, the scale and even patterns of use of office and commercial functions may not make for the likeliest 'kindred spirit' along an avenue devoted to the Arts.

The 'girth' (floor plate size) of the proposed office tower is greater than any of the other 'towers' along this stretch of Huntington, as nearby tall buildings are academic and residential in nature. That already represents an incompatibility as significant as undo height. The lower floors as the tower-meets-and-merges-with-its base are even more unprecedented in size for this district. The odd-shaped 'Center for Innovation,' may be more compatible in use, but seems out of place as so conspicuous a volume along Huntington. The overall site plan, with its overtly Wentworth campus focused open spaces, remains somewhat awkward as well.

We expect that these and related issues will be addressed in much greater detail, if not through the continuation of the present process, then through subsequent city planning efforts, and of course through the Article 80 review process, as new development proponents for 500 Huntington emerge.

Again, we express our appreciation for the BRA's efforts to promote the highest quality urban design along the Avenue of the Arts. We welcome such an aspiration and look ahead to continuing discussion on how to achieve this worthy goal as each successive project is brought forth for implementation.

Sincerely,



Mark B. Kerwin, CPA
Deputy Director and CFO

Attachments

Cc: Martin J. Walsh, Mayor, City of Boston
Matthew Teitelbaum, Ann and Graham Gund Director, Museum of Fine Arts
Lis Tarlow, Chair, Board of Trustees, Museum of Fine Arts
Sandra Moose, President, Board of Trustees, Museum of Fine Arts
David Croll, President Elect, Board of Trustees, Museum of Fine Arts
Samuel Plimpton, Chair, Building Committee, Museum of Fine Arts
Brian P. Golden, Director, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Jack Hart, Partner, Nelson, Mullins, Riley & Scarborough, LLP



David L. Grissino, Sr. Architect/Urban Designer
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

September 03, 2015

Dear David,

On behalf of the Fenway Alliance, I applaud Mayor Walsh and the Boston Redevelopment Authority in engaging in a community urban planning process for the Avenue of the Arts. As you know, Huntington Avenue and the Fenway Cultural District as a whole is a uniquely culture-rich urban area in Boston with regional, national and international importance. This has been the first such planning undertaken since the Avenue of the Arts was conceptualized and beautified in the late 1980s through mid 1990s. The Fenway Alliance supports both this specific process on our beloved Avenue and the citywide urban planning process "Boston 2030" that is about to begin.

Several of our institutional members have been actively engaged in the Avenue of the Arts guidelines process—through providing both a significant amount of time and financial support of the process. Indeed as the Fenway Alliance, a consortium of like-minded institutions that share a geographic location and have been working collaboratively since 1977, we have a rich history of commitment to common goals and accomplishments that enhance the entire Fenway and our surrounding neighborhoods.

We are pleased with the detailed and comprehensive urban design process initiated by Sasaki Associates, and are excited to see some of the ideas Sasaki shared for enlivening the Avenue, as well as some of the guidelines to make the area more welcoming, livable and pedestrian friendly. The Avenue of the Arts is one of the few areas in all of Boston and possibly the world with such a diversified mix of use and populace. We are fortunate to have this vibrant Boulevard where residents, students (temporary residents), employees, patrons of the visual Arts, theatre-goers, those who enjoy world class music in world class halls (Symphony and Jordan), and those who play and reflect in a beautiful Plaza (Christian Science) and stroll through a distinctive Olmsted Park all converge. The Avenue of the Arts is certainly deserving of the time, attention and eventually agreed upon and accepted design guidelines that the BRA with Sasaki have begun to create.

In whole, we support the process that has been undertaken by the BRA with Sasaki. We would like some clarification in some instances and some more detail in others before the Guidelines are finalized and implemented. Please see the following.

Acknowledgement of history of contribution to the Avenue of the Arts and near surrounding area

Per the information I submitted to you in a prior email, we would like the Study to include at least summarily work that has gone before on and around the Avenue of the Arts and that which many Fenway Alliance members contributed political advocacy, numerous hours of staff time, and financial resources toward.

- The Huntington Avenue/Avenue of the Arts beautification Project was a 10 year, 22 million dollar project that Alliance members successfully advocated for city, state and MBTA funding. Along with MASCO, we oversaw work of this major infrastructure initiative and now maintain the important green aspect of it (500 trees and grass beds in T reservation) in a private/public partnership with the City of Boston. Fenway Alliance members that abut the Avenue (BSO, YMCA, NEU, MFA, MassArt) in conjunction with MASCO (who contributes to a much smaller portion of the Avenue), now maintain all the green aspects of the project—trees on the sidewalks, along the Avenue and in the T reservation, and all the grass. Annually, the Fenway Alliance abutting institutions financial share of the costs for this maintenance is over \$20,000. And several FA institutions including NEU and the MFA contribute much more.
- The Alliance maintains a fairly vigorous schedule of cultural programming for the public that includes our hallmark *Opening Our Doors* event in October which is currently in its 14th year (14,000 visitors); a temporary Public Art initiative—*Public by Design*, and an annual *TEDxFenway* event in its fourth year—all free, all open to the public. In addition, our individual members contribute hundreds of public cultural programs, annually.
- Though not directly on the Avenue of the Arts, the Olmsted Muddy River Park and Parklands exists along and beside the Avenue, and Alliance members in collaboration with several other organizations for over two decades have achieved its restoration. Collectively, we have achieved the participation of the US Army Corps of Engineers to dredge and daylight the River and engineer flood control mechanisms.

We believe that any new urban design, public amenities and cultural programming—all of which we heartily support—will certainly benefit from what has come before and continues to thrive on and around the Avenue.

Some clarification on role of the Guidelines and the responsibilities for executing them:

- Though David made it clear in his presentations that all guidelines endorsed will be utilized as recommendations versus regulations, the Sasaki presentation was fairly prescriptive and largely sensible. With that in mind, our question is--Will any of the guidelines become regulations? And, by what process might they become so for future projects on the Avenue? Is it yet known whether or not a future community process would be undertaken by the BRA to create these regulations?
- Given that several FA institutional members already contribute significantly to green maintenance of the Avenue, we suggest that additional recommended hard scape improvements – including storm water enhancement measures, sidewalk widening, curb adjustments and pedestrian crossings be the responsibility of the City of Boston

Areas where further study is needed

- **Traffic and pedestrian impacts.** We understand the purpose of this Study was not to look at traffic impacts; however, it is an area worthy of, and in fact critically needing, study. All community participants from residents to large institutional leaders agreed upon this during the discussions that arose from this process. Traffic impacts from the proposed uses at 500 Huntington Avenue would certainly impact the Avenue of the Arts, which already experiences gridlock during peak hours. This not only poses hardships for motorists but pedestrians as well and potential safety hazards as fire trucks and ambulances have a very difficult time getting through. Wentworth Institute of Technology's PDF describes an addition of more than 400 parking spaces and 230 auto trips during daily peak hour. This traffic count does not take into account Wentworth's planned 97,000sf Center for Innovation. We urge the BRA in conjunction with the Boston Transportation Department to undertake a traffic study as soon as possible.
- **Height and potential shadow & wind impacts.** We appreciate that the impact of shadows on the front yard of the MFA would be decreased by the Sasaki's recommendation of substantial setbacks above a certain height from Huntington Avenue, and the limitation of building heights to below 280 feet. We request a more thorough shadow study on not only the impact of shadow on the MFA's front lawn, but on all of Huntington Avenue itself and its public sidewalks. Sasaki's presentation did discuss wind mitigation strategies, but the presentation did not establish specific criteria for what would be acceptable and unacceptable wind conditions for those walking along the Avenue of the Arts. For example, Sasaki diagrams include building heights of 200, 260 and 280 feet. Will there be a maximum allowable height, or will the recommended guideline be based on shadow impact alone? (i.e., As long as there is enough set back buildings could potentially go above 280 feet?).

Character of the Avenue of the Arts

- The Fenway Alliance has some concerns about WIT's proposal for a large office tower that is taller and larger than any of the other towers on this stretch of the Avenue of the Arts as it seems out of place since our other towers are for academic/student residential uses and are elegantly designed and narrow (NEU's award-winning Building H), or significantly set back from the Avenue, sited off center from it and vibrantly enhancing the entire area (MassArt's award-winning Tree House). We would hope this issue would be addressed in more detail through the Article 80 review process, and as new developers emerge. We look forward to working with WIT for solutions to this solvable challenge. We recognize that this process was not a review of already granted entitlements or of zoning. However, we expect that this Study and forthcoming Guidelines would *guide* development by WIT, and avoid future development problems that could possibly have significant negative impact on the Avenue of the Arts.

We very much support the BRA's efforts to promote quality, pedestrian and visitor-friendly urban design along the Avenue of the Arts. We look ahead to continuing to work with you on how to best accomplish such a critical endeavor, and believe this is a solid start.

Sincerely,

Kelly Brilliant, Executive Director
The Fenway Alliance, Inc.