



21 January 2015

Mr. Phil Cohen
Senior Project Manager, Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

RE: REVISED comments on the Notice of Proposed Changes (NPC) for the Fenway Point Project

Dear Mr. Cohen:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the NPC for the Fenway Point Project (“The Point”) proposed by Samuels & Associates. As you know, the Audubon Circle Neighborhood Association (ACNA), founded in 1982, is an all-volunteer association of residents, business people and institutions in Audubon Circle. This small “pocket neighborhood” abuts the proposed project site. Our neighborhood has three representatives on the IAG: Richard Ong, Alex Monreal, and myself. We are writing a joint comment letter as we did on the original proposal in May of 2013.

At that time, we enthusiastically supported the development of The Point. Given the examples of previous Samuels & Associates projects, including Trilogy and 1330 Boylston, and how they have contributed to a renaissance of the Fenway and Audubon Circle neighborhoods, we looked forward to having The Point serve as a true “gateway” into Boston and the Fenway.

Since that time, Samuels & Associates have refined their design. In September 2014, Peter Sougarides, who has demonstrated a sustained and genuine commitment to the neighborhood and to working with the ACNA Board on previous projects, visited the monthly meeting to review the possibility of increasing the design from 22 stories to its currently proposed height, in order to accommodate home ownership units (condos). There was much discussion and some pushback from our constituents, and the ACNA Board did not vote at that time. The proposed changes make it by a large factor the tallest building abutting the neighborhood, and raises serious concerns among our constituents in the neighborhood, although we welcome the inclusion of home ownership units.

Our response is three-fold.

1) The height of the building is unprecedented. The originally permitted height of 250 feet, well above regular zoning limits, is already a special dispensation for “iconic,

gateway buildings.” At 30 stories and 340 feet, it will stand almost double the height of the tallest building in the neighborhood, nearby Trilogy, which my notes indicate tops off at 174 feet. Few at the meeting were persuaded that the expanded project would result in reduced congestion, despite the traffic study. We applaud the increased mitigation for wind at ground level, the inclusion of a public art component, and the silver LEED designation proposed by Samuels. But our approval of the new height is contingent on two conditions.

- a) We want to draw a line in the sand on any further height increases in this project.
- b) We expect the BRA to enforce the current zoning restrictions on any future buildings in the neighborhood – this cannot become a precedent.

2) As was expressed, repeatedly and forcefully, at the IAG meeting last week, the issue of affordable housing is a pressing neighborhood concern.

a) The ACNA would like the developer to incorporate all of the HUD mandated (20%) affordable units in the Fenway/ACNA neighborhood, rather than ‘buying out’ through a contribution to the city’s IDP fund. If this is not feasible within The Point itself, the ACNA would not object to the inclusion of these units in one of their other residential developments within the neighborhood.

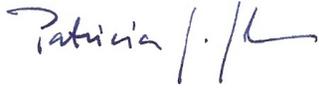
b) We also would like the ratio of affordable apartments/condos to mirror the ratio of apartment/home-ownership units in The Point (i.e. not just affordable rentals, but also affordable condos).

I think we all agree that an urban village requires a mix of income, age and family structures, and home ownership. We believe this is an opportunity for Samuels to confirm its commitment to neighborhood values and earn serious bragging rights as a leader of the Boston development community by applying a generous interpretation of the affordable housing guidelines to The Point. Such a contribution would go a long way toward making this very large project palatable to the neighborhood.

3) With the building’s current design, we think that the developer will miss a great opportunity to build a truly ‘iconic’ building in the neighborhood. The current design for the building is lackluster, unlike many of Arquitectonica’s recent buildings (portfolio at <http://arquitectonica.com/portfolio/>). The special zoning is intended for buildings that would finally put Boston’s name on the map as the home of interesting and innovative architecture. Even Mayor Walsh has recently advocated for more forward-looking architecture in Boston (<http://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2014/12/10/marty-walsh-boring-architecture/a186hSWSR5FmV9XrePhadI/story.html>). We encourage the developer and Arquitectonica to make more of a statement with the building’s exterior.

As always, we look forward to working with Peter Sougarides and his team on this project. We applaud the BRA's pledge to reform its affordable housing and other policies, and hope this development will lead the way.

Sincerely,



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Mr. Alex Monreal, Board Member, ACNA
Mr. Richard Ong, Co-President, ACNA
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