

150 Staniford Street, #900
Boston, MA 02114
April 13, 2015

Erico Lopez, Director
Development Review and Policy
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Plaza
Boston, MA 02201

RE: Garden Garage Planned Development Area Comments

Dear Director Lopes:

I am writing as a resident of West End Place, a mixed-income cooperative condominium, and a direct abutter to the above referenced project by Equity Residential. I am also a member of the Impact Advisory Group for the project and was a member of Equity's past project, the West End Apartments.

While I am not opposed to replacing the Garden Garage with a project that is more appealing, the project that Equity has currently proposed is not in proportion to the other residential properties in this area of the West End, the Charles River Park area. This area of the West End is a unique, long-standing residential community. We take pride in our neighborhood.

What Equity is currently proposing is a building that is out of proportion with the rest of the community. They are proposing a rental property that is over 100 feet taller than their current properties at Longfellow Place and they are unwilling to work with the Impact Advisory Group to alter their proposal in any way. Additionally, they have been disingenuous with the members of the IAG and have gone behind our backs in getting this height approved by the BRA without even discussing it with IAG members. Presumably, that is because they know that the IAG, which represents residents within the community, is opposed to the height and massing of the project.

The allowable height for a replacement of the Garden Garage is clearly laid out in the original West End Land Area and Redevelopment Plan of 1957. In 1971 this parcel was redesignated for residential and commercial use and on some of the City of Boston maps it was shown as the West End Recreation Complex. The as-of-right height for this site was 155 feet with possible allowances to go higher if there were setbacks. In November 2014, without notifying the IAG members, Equity Residential included the Garden Garage parcel in the Longfellow Place PDA which allows the height of a replacement for the Garden Garage to be up to 400 feet. They are

now asking to increase that to nearly 500 feet - almost 200 feet taller than their current tallest property.

Equity likes to compare the height of this project to the heights of the projects in the North Quadrant, namely Avalon at North Station and the Delaware North/Boston Properties projects. Those two projects are in an Economic Development area where zoning is not comparable. These developments should in no way be compared to the Garden Garage project.

As I wrote in my letter of December 2014, Equity has put much emphasis on the added open space that this one tower would allow. That open space does not compensate for the height and massing that is currently requested. Equity says that the open space would be available to all residents of the West End but they have not shown that in the past. Recreational areas that were supposed to be accessible after the past project (West End Apartments) are clearly marked as being for residents of Equity properties only.

Again, as I wrote in December 2014, Equity Residential wants this project so they can put their out-dated and ugly parking garage below ground. This is commendable but they state that they need to build almost 500 residential units to pay for this. Equity has not been willing to show the IAG why this number of units is justified. Understanding the financials for this project is greatly needed by members of the IAG.

Equity has been unwilling to negotiate on this current project - since they first presented this current proposal last year, they have not changed the design in the least. It feels as though they will build it whether or not the community wants it. This is not negotiation. I am very pleased that the BRA has told Equity that they need to modify their current proposal and represent it to the IAG and the community.

There have been many articles written recently regarding the number of luxury apartments being built throughout Boston. Because of this, ordinary people with normal incomes are being priced out of the city, including young professionals, families, and the older generation. Having high-priced apartments for transient renters does not allow for a community to grow and prosper. It took a long time for the West End to rebuild itself into the community we now live in and enjoy. It would be a travesty to again destroy this neighborhood by not hearing neighbors' complaints.

Although I did not sign the letter that has gone throughout the West End community, I do agree with my neighbors. The BRA, the city, and the state need to look at the complete picture of the West End as a whole, not parcel by parcel. A transportation and traffic study is sorely needed and improved infrastructure needs to be put in place before additional residents and vehicles are added to our neighborhood. Since 1957, developers and the BRA have been working with the self-renewing West End Land Area and Development Plan and have been amending it as development proposals come up. A comprehensive plan for the entire West End is long over-due.

As a member of the IAG, I am not opposed to replacing the unattractive Garden Garage. I am, however, concerned that the proposed replacement project is out of context and will detract from the close-knit community that we live in. More work is needed on the design and massing of this project before it goes to the BRA Board.

Sincerely,



cc: Edward McGuire, BRA
Councilor Josh Zakim
Representative Jay Livingstone
Brian Golden, BRA Board
Nicole Leo, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services
Jerome Smith, Mayor's Office
Senator Anthony Petrocelli
Andrew Copelotti, Equity Residential