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March 17, 2017

Mr. Phil Cohen
Boston Planning and Development Agency
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201
Via email: phil.cohen@boston.gov

Re: 1000 Boylston Street, Back Bay

Dear Mr. Cohen,

The Boston Preservation Alliance is Boston's primary, non-profit advocacy organization that protects and promotes the use of historic buildings and landscapes in all of the city's neighborhoods. With 40 Organizational Members, 98 Corporate Members, and a reach of 35,000 friends and supporters we represent a diverse constituency advocating for the thoughtful evolution of the city and celebration of its unique character. We appreciate the opportunity to offer comments on projects that impact the historic character of the city.

The Alliance has reviewed the Project Notification Form submitted by Weiner Ventures for a proposal at 1000 Boylston Street. While we support development at this site and appreciate the proponent's effort to infill the fragmented urban edge along Boylston Street, we have several concerns about the potential impacts of this proposal to the historic resources in the vicinity.

As noted by the Massachusetts Historical Commission in their January 31, 2017 letter to Secretary Matthew Beaton at the Executive Office Energy & Environmental Affairs, the towers proposed for this site will cast approximately three to four hours daily of new shadows throughout the year on three historically significant buildings- the Boston Ladder 15 & Engine 22 Firehouse, historic Back Bay Police Station (now known as Boston Architectural College), and the Boston Division 16 Police Station which are all listed in the State and National Register of Historic Places as contributing resources to the Back Bay Historic District. This degree of new shadow is unacceptable and we encourage the proponent to present alternatives that would minimize these specific shadows as well as other shadows across the Back Bay Historic District, the Commonwealth Avenue Mall, and the Charles River Esplanade. Shadows create more than visual impacts but can cause significant long-term damage to historic buildings, particularly masonry buildings such as these, by altering micro-climates and preventing stone and mortar from drying as designed. Often these impacts cannot be mitigated.

The Alliance also shares many of the concerns expressed to you by the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay in their March 7, 2017 letter. The proponent should be required to produce thorough wind and shadow studies so that all of the project's potentially detrimental impacts to the neighborhood can be fully understood, especially with the knowledge that other towers with similar impacts have been, and will continue to be, proposed for this area. We ask that the proponent produce renderings of the project site from several pedestrian perspectives throughout the affected historic areas.

Additionally, we request further investigation of set-backs and the impact on the pedestrian experience. While we fully support the need to restore a friendly street wall in this currently uncomfortable and unwelcoming zone, we also want to be assured that the public realm is fully considered and its benefits to Bostonians maximized. We should not be expected to accept a design simply because it is better than what currently exists.

As our thriving city continues to grow it is imperative that we prioritize stewardship of our most valuable resources- our unique historic spaces. The Back Bay's character and setting cannot be reproduced and large-scale development within and abutting the district can cause permanent damage through shadow, wind, and visual impacts if not fully considered. There is a degree of sacrifice with every new development in Boston and we must balance what is gained with what is lost. Careful assessment of all proposals is important so we are cognizant of these impacts and pause to assure that we don't regret the irreversible impacts of our unique historic neighborhoods. We, therefore, request more information from the developer of 1000 Boylston so that we may determine if the sacrifices to the historic district for this proposal are worth what is gained by new development or if alterations can be made to the design that satisfactorily mitigate these impacts.

Sincerely,



Greg Galer
Executive Director