

March 17, 2017

Phil Cohen, Project Manager  
Boston Planning and Development Agency  
One City Hall Square  
Boston, MA 02201

RE: Comments on the Weiner Ventures proposal for 1000 Boylston Street

Dear Mr. Cohen:

We submit this letter on behalf of the Urban Village Committee of the Fenway Community Development Corporation. Fenway CDC is a 44-year-old, community-based organization that builds and preserves affordable housing and promotes projects that engage our full community in enhancing the neighborhood's diversity and vitality. We have reviewed the project documents on file with the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) and have attended the Article 80 community meeting. We thank you for the opportunity to comment on this agreement.

Our comments are based on the values and objectives laid out in our Urban Village Plan for the Fenway. The Fenway CDC organized community workshops, conducted in person and on-line surveys, hosted topic-based working groups, and then refined the ideas and comments contributed by more than 200 community members into our final plan.

The current Urban Village Plan builds on and broadens earlier revisions of the plan, but it is not an official document of the Fenway CDC. It is a vision for balanced growth, created with the CDC's help by hundreds of our neighbors. To summarize our comments for 1000 Boylston Street, the Urban Village Committee believes that reductions in height, density, massing and parking are necessary to give this project a more neighborhood-friendly design.

#### **SUFFICIENT AND VARRIED HOUSING SUPPLY**

The lack of specifics on compliance with the City of Boston's Inclusionary Development Policy (IDP) affordable housing commitment concerns us. However, we recognize and appreciate Weiner Ventures' pledge to fully abide by the IDP requirements. We realize that the requirements could be met by a mix of affordable units built on site, off site or by contributions to the IDP fund and that this mix is not yet set. We are very interested in the

specifics of this plan and expect to see the details spelled out in a public and transparent process.

## **NATURE OF THE PROPOSAL**

Weiner Ventures has filed a Project Notification Form (PNF) with the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) for a project to be located at 1000 Boylston Street.

The proponent for 1000 Boylston St. proposes to build two residential towers with approximately 689,000 square feet of residential space that surmount a 6-story pedestal. The 40-story West Tower would be 566 feet tall and feature 160 condominiums. The 24-story East Tower would be 283 feet tall and feature 182 rental apartments. The six-story podium would consist of two lower stories with 35,000 square feet of retail space and four upper stories of vehicle parking, providing 303 parking spaces.

This project combines publicly and privately owned parcels. The bulk of the public parcels are owned by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and consists of air rights above the Massachusetts Turnpike and air rights above the rail yards that lie under Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street. Air rights over Cambria Street belong to the City of Boston and are also part of this site. Using these air rights creates engineering and construction challenges, since a deck must be built over existing uses to form the “foundation” for the project. This deck adds a significant cost that becomes the rationale for a denser, taller development. Our broad concerns center on the significant impacts on the landscape and functioning of this neighborhood that the project will have.

We are concerned that this proposal could divide neighborhoods rather than unite them. It will exacerbate the growing complexity of the Dalton Street-Belvidere Street corridor, helping to make it into a boundary owing to overuse by motor vehicles. We are concerned that this project could easily become a virtual gated community. Another concern is that the retail will be targeted to national chains focusing on wealthy transients and their specialized needs rather than focusing on the residents of the Fenway and the Back Bay and their needs.

## **THE BELVIDERE STREET - DALTON STREET CORRIDOR**

The Belvidere St.-Dalton St. corridor is a short heavily used north-south route that runs between Huntington Avenue and Boylston Street, with signalized intersections at each end and nowhere else. This corridor services an entrance to Prudential Garage and both the Hilton and Sheraton hotels, with 390 and 1220 rooms respectively. The associated commerce and traffic will become noticeably denser as it is joined by similar demands arising from 30 Dalton Street, which is now being leased, and the demands arising from the massive project at One Dalton Street. One Dalton will consist of a midrise building and a high rise building, comprising 61 residences, 252 hotel rooms, a restaurant, and retail businesses.

## **TRAFFIC FLOW CHANGES UNDERWAY**

Plans for One Dalton Street include creating a counterclockwise traffic flow around it, making part of Dalton Street one-way southbound, extending Clearway Street to meet Belvidere Street at a new intersection, and creating a traffic ramp into the underground garage at 101 Belvidere Street. To get an idea of where this street is already headed visualize the taxi line for the new Four Seasons Hotel, as takes up a whole lane of the street, and think of the private car traffic as well. With no new signals planned, the crosswalks, along Belvidere Street for example, will become even more daunting and dangerous. Equally worth noting is that this heavy new use will push drivers into accessing the area using Massachusetts Ave., with St. Germain Street, Clearway Street, and the west end of Belvidere Street serving as connectors.

## **TRAFFIC**

With 303 parking spaces and two floors of retail, the proposed 1000 Boylston Street may overload this area beyond its capacity, given the cumulative effect of current developments.

It is very hard to think that the loading areas shown in the preliminary plans will be adequate to service 342 residential units with 303 parking spaces and two floors of retail. Building for car owners in this part of the city seems impractical, it's counter to the times, and it certainly increases the overall impression of creating a project for people who drive everywhere.

## **PUBLIC TRANSIT CONCERNS**

We believe that suggesting that nearby public transit will mitigate traffic issues is flawed. The additional traffic created by the extensive parking and retail aspects of this project will compromise surface-level lines. Consider the current plight of the No. 1 bus, for example, as it negotiates the traffic and choke-points along Massachusetts Ave. Every year brings additional challenges to this bus route and this project will just add to them. For example, it will add still more traffic to Belvidere Street and worsen the existing choke-point at its intersection with Massachusetts Ave.

## **PARKING**

Given current trends in the downtown luxury market, and given the project's proximity to multiple MBTA bus and trolley lines, the proposal has far too many parking spaces for the number of total units being proposed.

According to an article in the Boston Globe (March 17, 2017), Related Beal's new Lovejoy Wharf development, opening this summer near North Station, will not offer a single parking space for its 157 condos. In addition, Related Beal recently received city approval for a 324-unit building in the South End that will have 180 parking spaces.

Another point of comparison is the Pierce Boston, a 30-story tower Samuels & Associates is building in the Fenway. It will have 80 parking spaces for 349 apartments and condos. In addition, 171 Tremont, a smaller condo building along the Boston Common, jettisoned plans for a garage last year after being forced to reduce the building to 12 stories.

Given these trends, it seems reasonable to ask the developer to reduce the number of parking spaces to half the number of apartments. This will allow for a smaller parking structure and have the added benefit of reducing the height of the overall complex. In addition it should ease the traffic flow in and out of the garage on the Dalton Street side of the project.

## **DISABILITY ACCESS**

As new developments emerge along Boylston Street, one benefit is sidewalk repaving, which eases access throughout corridor. We are happy to see the sidewalk improvements along this portion of Boylston Street, and strongly state the need for smooth paving material that allows access for residents in wheelchairs. It is also important to ensure that sidewalks maintain their width along the span of the site, even where drop off locations, landscaping, and other amenities are going to be located. This will ensure that no bottlenecks occur and thus provide for smoother travel for everyone, especially those in wheelchairs.

## **LOCAL BUSINESS COMMUNITY**

The addition of ground-floor retail at this location will benefit the street life and economic vitality of this corridor, continuing the trend of mixed-use developments along Boylston Street. We want to emphasize the need for affordable food options, as many seniors and residents on fixed-incomes live nearby. Affordable retail in the neighborhood has diminished along with the affordable housing, and Weiner Ventures has an opportunity to provide needed services for Fenway and Back Bay residents. We wonder if this project could emulate the plan of Skanska's development at 1350 Boylston Street to subsidize some retail space in the project, allowing smaller local business access to this prime commercial real estate.

We also want to emphasize the importance of local hiring and contracting for the development. We encourage Weiner to employ both Boston residents and minority contractors. We would particularly like to make sure that Fenway residents are connected to the neighborhood jobs created through this project. Weiner Ventures could work with local employment centers, such as our "Walk to Work" employment program, run by Kris Anderson ([kanderson@fenwaycdc.org](mailto:kanderson@fenwaycdc.org)), to provide notifications about job opportunities.

## SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

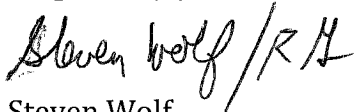
We appreciate that this proposal will revitalize a currently unusable series of parcels. The project will improve the quality and quantity of site stormwater runoff compared to existing conditions, including consideration for groundwater recharge in accordance with provisions applicable to the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District ("GCOD"). Additionally, the proposed stormwater management systems will comply with the 2008 Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection ("MassDEP") Stormwater Management Policy and Standards.

We also applaud the fact that the project will be in compliance with Article 37, the Project intends to be Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design version 4 ("LEEDv4") certifiable. Through the incorporation of a variety of sustainable design strategies, the Project will improve water quality and reduce the urban heat island effect, among other environmental benefits.

## IN CONCLUSION

We believe that reductions in height, density, massing and parking are necessary to give this project a more neighborhood-friendly design. We look forward to attending the BPDA scoping session and reviewing the responses from Weiner Ventures as the Article 80 process continues.

Respectfully yours,



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Urban Village committee



Eric Daniel  
Urban Village Committee



Richard Giordano  
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