

Samuel D. Perry

March 8, 2017

Mr. Philip Cohen, Project Manager  
Boston Planning & Development Agency  
One City Hall Square  
Boston, Massachusetts 02201

Dear Mr. Cohen:

RE: 1000 Boylston Street Project Notification Form

I am writing to you as an individual who formerly resided and still owns property within Newbury Street's historic Stable District (the block between Hereford Street and Massachusetts Avenue) going back to 1946. As such, over some seventy years, I have observed the many transformations that have taken place within this corner of the Back Bay. Arguably, the two of greatest significance were the replacement of the former expansive steam engine railroad yards by the Prudential Center and the creation of the Back Bay Historic District.

The Back Bay enjoys a unique and world famous urban planning design thanks to the foresight of Arthur Gilmore and his contemporary planners when they initially and thoughtfully laid out the Back Bay. The "green buffers", so nouvelle at the time, are the envy of many cities today while the "recharge sumps" continue to serve their important role in maintaining high ground water levels so critical for protecting the wooden pilings on which all Back Bay buildings rest. My great-grandfather, Eliot Channing Clark, was the City's engineer who designed and oversaw the installation of the so-called "Westside Interceptor". Besides being the City's first effort to sewer the newly created "Back Bay", even today it remains the only system tracking west along Beacon Street, crossing Hereford Street, and then traversing under what is now the Prudential Center. Although this system's installation occurred some 130 years ago, what was built remains largely "intact" and, because of its careful design, still operates effectively today.

When the decision was made to develop what had been the "railroad yards" then anchored by Mechanics' Hall at one corner, the Mother Church at a second, the State Street Bank at the third and a hotel at the fourth, great care was taken to insure that the height of the new buildings constructed across the site (with the exception of the Prudential Tower itself) would be kept low enough so as not to impact or compete against the developed areas surrounding this site whether in the Back Bay or the adjacent South End. This sensitivity had been well respected until recent years when several newer projects were approved and erected involving such high heights that they intrude upon the "open vista" which the original development of this site had sought so earnestly to preserve.

In 2013, the design prepared by the Samuels Weiner team was one of three shared with the neighborhood. For Parcel 15, it envisioned a "low" small-scaled building featuring reasonable "setbacks" and ample "open space". As a result, this proposal

received “neighborhood support”. It was respectful to the historic Back Bay buildings in proximity while also in keeping with the original vision governing how the former railroad yard site should be developed.

What is being proposed now by Weiner Ventures is a large building with two tall towers, limited setbacks, and minimal open space. If constructed, it will have considerable impact upon the adjacent Back Bay Historic District because of its large mass, the shadows its two towers will cast, and its density which seeks to maximize “site development”. The Stable District, in particular, with its architecturally low two-story and three-story structures, will be particularly overwhelmed by this looming mass and will become seriously “over-shadowed” detracting from the openness and warm ambience of this singularly unique boutique block. Only recently, the City authorities approved an unfortunate new project within the Stable District which will fenestrate 53 Hereford Street’s fabled “blank wall” and which will eliminate one of the Back Bay’s larger “green buffers” to allow a different developer the opportunity to construct a large four-story retail building. In this instance, the City’s approval violated both zoning and the BBAC’s architectural guidelines to permit a new structure completely “out of character” with respect to the other existing buildings comprising this historic Stable District block. The latest alterations to the 1000 Boylston Street proposal would introduce yet another new structure of such scale and mass that it will further impact the Back Bay’s historic character to an even greater extent while being in “complete conflict” with the civic vision that governed the original development of this former “railroad yard” site.

Based on these observations, I would ask that you and all other City authorities involved in reviewing this project carefully consider what is in the “best interest” of the larger neighborhood. An improper development benefits only the developer while its impact upon the surrounding historic neighborhoods becomes permanent. Boston is special and the Back Bay is even more so thanks to careful and forward looking planning undertaken many years ago.

Please consider the legacy we have inherited and modify this proposal so that this legacy is not lost or destroyed but protected and preserved.

Sincerely,



Samuel D. Perry

SDP/bm

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