

20 December 2014

Mr. Phil Cohen

Senior Project Manager, Boston Redevelopment Authority

One City Hall Square

Boston, MA 02201

RE: Comments on the Fenway Point Project

Dear Mr. Cohen:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on 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 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 27 stories, to accommodate home ownership units (condos). There was much discussion and some pushback from our constituents, and the Board did not vote at that time. The Board was quite surprised to learn that another phase of design had been undertaken in the meantime, and that a Notice of Project Change was filed on November 25th, about which IAG members were informed in an email on December 12th, that calls for 30 stories, an increase of almost one-third from the original approved design, and a height of 340 feet. This makes it by a very large factor the tallest building abutting the neighborhood, and raises serious concerns.

Our response is four-fold.

1) The IAG is scheduled to meet on January 8th. Such a short neighborhood review period is unacceptable, especially since most of the review period falls during the Hanukkah, Christmas and New Years’ holidays when many residents are busy and/or out of town.

2) The height increase of the building is unprecedented. The original allowed height of 250 feet, well above 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.

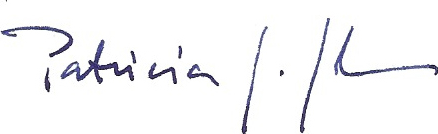
3) The building, thought in its original design presented to the ACNA Board in Fall 2012 to be truly innovative and “edgy,” can no longer make that claim. It will be a very tall and for the most part far less interesting piece of architecture.

4) The primary amenity in the building for the neighborhood was the retail component, which has now been reduced by half. The residential square footage has increased by over 90,000 square feet, yet only 30 more residential units are envisioned. It is hard to tell where those square feet are going. There is no pledge in the proposal to incorporate the required affordable units in the project itself, which would be most desirable for the neighborhood.

As always, we look forward to working with Peter Sougarides and his team on this project. But the “Thanksgiving/Christmas Surprise” timeframe will not suffice for any of the leadership of our organization, much less we three IAG members.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this major new project.

Sincerely,



Ms. Patricia Johnson, Member, ACNA

Mr. Alex Monreal, Board Member, ACNA

Mr. Richard Ong, Co-President, ACNA

Cc: Mr. Peter Sougarides, Samuels & Associates

ACNA Board

Councillor Josh Zakim

Councillor Stephen Murphy

Councillor at Large Ayanna Pressley

Councillor at Large Michelle Wu