

Boston Groundwater Trust

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June 13th, 2019

Tim Czerwienski, AICP Project Manager
Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201-1007

Subject: Boston University Data Sciences Center Draft Project Impact
Report (DPIR) Comments

Dear Mr. Czerwienski:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Boston University Data Sciences Center Draft Project Impact Report Comments (DPIR) located in the Fenway. The Boston Groundwater Trust was established by the Boston City Council to monitor groundwater levels in sections of Boston where the integrity of building foundations is threatened by low groundwater levels and to make recommendations for solving the problem. Therefore my comments are limited to groundwater related issues.

The project is located in the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District (GCOD) established under Article 32 of the Zoning Code. As stated in the document and confirmed at the scoping session, the project will be designed and constructed to comply with the requirements of Article 32.

As stated in the document the proposed building has a 2-level deep basement on the west side of the Site and a 1-level deep basement on the east side of the site. The excavation depths vary from approximately 45-ft. on the west side of the Site to approximately 22-ft. on the east side. There will be locally deeper excavations for pits, such as elevators.



The 5-story building podium on the east side of the site has one basement level below grade. The foundation below the building will consist of a reinforced concrete mat foundation that is fully waterproofed. The mat foundation will be soil bearing in the naturally deposited sand unit. The proposed tower on the west side of the Site has 2 basement levels and this structure will also be supported on a continuous reinforced concrete, soil bearing, mat foundation. This deeper mat foundation will bear in the marine clay deposit.

All basement walls that extend below the groundwater level, and also the mat slab, will be fully waterproofed. The structure will not cause the groundwater to raise, pond, or be lowered in the surrounding area.

The document also states that a temporary lateral earth support system will be required to complete the excavation for the below grade space. The earth support system will be a relatively impermeable wall such as continuous interlocking steel sheet piles. The excavation support wall will be laterally braced with 1 to 2 or 3 levels of bracing during construction. The proposed approximately 45-ft. deep excavation on the west side of the site will result in surrounding soil movements. Street surface settlements of typically 1 inch are anticipated within approximately 30 feet of the excavation support wall. The excavation performance and street settlements will be monitored during construction with a geotechnical instrumentation program to evaluate if the performance coincides with the design assumptions. Corrective actions such as limited excavation areas or additional bracing will be implemented if measured movements exceed design phase estimated movements.

The excavation support wall will extend into the underlying marine deposits (clay) to create a groundwater barrier around the perimeter of the Site. Temporary construction dewatering will be required inside the limits of the excavation support wall. Groundwater drawdown outside the limits of the excavation will be controlled by the continuous interlocking steel sheeting that will be used for temporary excavation support. Any leaks or holes in the sheeting that are revealed during excavation will be plugged or grouted in the field or prior to excavation, if known.



Prior to the issuance of a building permit, the Proponent will provide the BPDA and the Boston Groundwater Trust a letter stamped by a professional engineer registered in Massachusetts that details how the Project will meet the GCOD requirement for no reduction in groundwater levels on Site or on adjoining lots.

As stated in the document a geotechnical monitoring program will be implemented prior to and during construction and will likely consist of settlement monitoring of adjacent buildings. The Proponent will coordinate with the Trust regarding groundwater monitoring prior to and during construction. One groundwater monitoring well may be installed to document existing groundwater levels and hydrogeologic conditions. If required, the new well will be installed prior to the start of construction and will be installed in accordance with City and Trust standards for permanent monitoring wells. The well will be installed at a location where it will be accessible for long term monitoring.

As stated at the scoping session, the Proponent will coordinate with the Trust to ensure Trust observation well #23H-2374, located on Commonwealth Avenue in the sidewalk, adjacent to the project site, will be preserved throughout the entire construction process.

I look forward to continuing to work with the proponent and the Agency to assure that this project can have only positive impacts on area groundwater levels.

Very truly yours,



Christian Simonelli
Executive Director

CC: Kathleen Pederson, BPDA
Maura Zlody, EEOS



June 13, 2019

Mr. Tim Czerwienski
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square – 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201

RE: Boston University Data Sciences Center

Dear Tim Czerwienski:

I am a resident of the Kenmore neighborhood of Boston and a member of Boston University's Community Task Force and I am writing to you today in support of BU's proposed Data Sciences Center to be located at 665 Commonwealth Ave.

The innovative design of the BU Data Sciences Center will enhance this block of Commonwealth Ave and make it more accessible and engaging for pedestrians and neighbors. I appreciate the changes in design that were made to the project throughout the process, and overall I believe this new building will be a great addition to the Kenmore neighborhood.

It is my hope that the BPDA Board will approve this project.

Sincerely,



Teri North

***Boston University
Community Task Force
P.O. Box 15735
Boston, Massachusetts 02215***

June 13, 2019

Mr. Tim Czerwienski
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square – 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201

RE: Boston University Data Sciences Center

Dear Tim Czerwienski:

As the chairperson of the Boston University Community Task Force I am writing to affirm the Task Force's support of the proposed Data Sciences Center to be located at 665 Commonwealth Ave. At the BPDA public Task Force meeting on Thursday, June 6th, the Task Force voted unanimously in support of both the Data Sciences Center project and the 5th amendment to BU's Institutional Master Plan which includes the digital sign package proposed for the exterior of 700 Commonwealth Ave (Warren Towers).

During the BPDA Task Force meeting members present expressed support for the updated design and scope of the Data Sciences Center and for the improvements it will bring to this section of Commonwealth Ave. It is our hope that the project will move forward in the BPDA process and be voted on by the BPDA Board.

The Boston University Community Task Force looks forward to continuing to work with you on this transformative project as it moves forward.

Sincerely,



Pamela G. Beale
Chairperson



June 21, 2019

Mr. Tim Czerwienski
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square – 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Tim Czerwienski:

I am writing in support of Boston University's Data Sciences Center that is currently under the development review process at the BPDA. As a member of BU's Community Task Force and a longtime resident and home owner of Brighton, I appreciate the opportunity to submit written comments on this project.

I was in attendance for both the public meeting and Task Force meeting on the Data Sciences Center earlier this month and was pleased with the presentations. I am excited about the new building and the positive additions it will bring to BU's campus and to Commonwealth Ave.

I hope that this project will move forward favorably and be approved by the BPDA board.

Sincerely,

Daniel M. Cuddy

Daniel Cuddy
125 Lake Shore Road
Brighton, MA 02135



Tim Czerwienski <tim.czerwienski@boston.gov>

Boston University Data Sciences Center

Shlomo Pinkas

Thu, Jun 27, 2019 at 6:03 PM

To: Tim Czerwienski <tim.czerwienski@boston.gov>

Cc: Elizabeth Leary

June 25, 2019

Mr. Tim Czerwienski
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One [City Hall Square](#) – 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201

RE: Boston University Data Sciences Center

Dear Tim Czerwienski:

I am a long term member of Boston University's Community Task Force and I am writing to you today in support of BU's proposed Data Sciences Center to be located at [665 Commonwealth Ave.](#)

The innovative design of the BU Data Sciences Center offers a world of options, to the imaginations of its occupants (both teachers, and students.) Centered in the campus, this symbol of the purpose of education will be BU's gift from one age to another.

The university has met with the BU Task Force and the Community on multiple occasions over the past 9 months and it is my hope that the BPDA Board will approve this project.

Sincerely,

Shlomo Pinkas

Comment: Created Date	First Name	Last Name	Organization	Opinion	Comments
6/29/2019	Norman	Lamonde	Sustainably Minded and Concerned Citizen	Support	<p>I am writing in support of the Boston University Data Science Center project and, in particular, the goal for this project to be fossil fuel free. The City of Boston has been a leader in taking the concerns of Climate Change seriously and have committed to significant goals as expressed in Climate Ready Boston and Carbon Free Boston. It's now time for the city to continue to demonstrate leadership by supporting projects that bend the marketplace towards a more sustainable future such as the BU Science Data Center. The city needs leaders to make the investments and take the risks to employ cutting edge solutions and accelerate the change needed in the building industry if the City is going to meet its goal to be Carbon Free by 2050. The Data Sciences Center's innovative geothermal approach will enable this new structure to address the biggest challenge of achieving a fossil fuel free future ? eliminating the need for natural gas for heating. This is in line with the recommendations laid out in the Carbon Free Boston report by BU's Institute for Sustainable Energy ? BU is translating research into action through this Data Center project. By moving away from natural gas for heating university buildings, BU will set an example for others of how to implement clean energy projects in dense, urban setting. In addition to this project striving to be an example for others to follow, it will also be seeking a Platinum level certification by the USGBC utilizing the most up to date V- Rating System. In closing, I would like to add that the City of Boston and BU, if not already a goal of this project, to consider an effort to minimize the use of products that contain chemicals of concern in the building materials and furnishings for this project.</p>
6/28/2019	Arlen	Stawasz	Perkins+Will	Support	<p>Greetings, I wanted to share my thoughts on this great upcoming project within the city of Boston. With Climate Ready Boston and Carbon Free Boston, the city needs leaders to make the investments and take the risks to employ cutting edge solutions and accelerate the change needed in the building industry if the City is going to meet its goal to be Carbon Free by 2050. The Data Sciences Center's innovative geothermal approach will enable this new structure to address the biggest challenge of achieving a fossil fuel free future ? eliminating the need for natural gas for heating. This is in line with the recommendations laid out in the Carbon Free Boston report by BU's Institute for Sustainable Energy ? BU is translating research into action. By moving away from natural gas for heating university buildings, BU is setting an example for others of how to implement clean energy projects in dense, urban settings. The project is targeting LEED Platinum in V4, which is a major milestone for the city. We need more exemplary projects like this in the city of Boston, and this effort should be supported. Regards, Arlen Stawasz</p>

Comment: Created Date	First Name	Last Name	Organization	Opinion	Comments
6/28/2019	Rebecca	Lee	BU	Support	To the City of Boston, I am a student at Boston University and I am in full support of this project. This is a great opportunity for us to be a leader in our path towards carbon neutrality for both the University and the City. The geothermal approach for the new Data Science building will allow us to move closer towards the goal as we translate research presented by BU's Institute for Sustainable Energy into Action. Thank you.
6/27/2019	Hayley	Gambone	Boston University	Support	The Data Sciences Center is a pioneer for geothermal energy, and I am proud that it is on my campus as a BU student. This is an essential step in the process of bringing all of Boston up to speed with the city's strong CAP goals.
6/27/2019	Ian	Johnson	Linnean Solutions	Support	As a BU Alumni, I see BU taking big strides to support Climate Ready Boston and Carbon Free Boston. In order to meet these ambitious goals, the city needs leaders to make the investments and take the risks to employ cutting edge solutions and accelerate the change needed in the building industry in order for Boston to meet its goal to be Carbon Free by 2050. The Data Sciences Center's innovative geothermal approach will enable this new structure to address the biggest challenge of achieving a fossil fuel free future ? eliminating the need for natural gas for heating. This is in line with the recommendations laid out in the Carbon Free Boston report by BU's Institute for Sustainable Energy ? BU is translating research into action. As this project moves away from natural gas for heating university buildings, BU will set an example for others of how to implement clean energy projects in dense, urban settings. The project is also targeting LEED Platinum v4.

Comment: Created Date	First Name	Last Name	Organization	Opinion	Comments
5/1/2019	Christian	Cole	Boston University	Neutral	<p>It seems that the University did not take into account many of the comments from the previous BCDC meeting. The only changes I can see in the new DPIR is that the building is set back more from both Commonwealth Avenue and Granby Street. As it stands, there are a few discrepancies that should be addressed. First, in the site plan, the laneway is shown as being paved with asphalt and having a loading dock right on the alley. Once this building is complete, this alley will probably get a fair amount of foot traffic and this will directly conflict with the placement of the loading dock. In one of the renders, the alley is envisioned with concrete paving rather than asphalt - this would be much better for the public realm. It's also unclear as to how much of the laneway will be reconfigured, but it is important that the University rework the entire roadway from Granby Street to Silber Way. This will become a highly-used corridor and there needs to be consistent rights of way for pedestrians. Next, the pocket park at the corner of Granby Street and Bay State Road is shown to be completely covered with permeable pavers and new, small trees. This area should be reconsidered for a more natural landscape and every effort should be made to retain the large, healthy, flowering tree that is currently on that site. Last, the exterior treatment to the top floors of the building is incredibly inconsistent and jarring. Having just the courtyard area without the metal fins looks incomplete. As indicated by the BCDC minutes, the overall massing and exterior treatments of this building are a bit bizarre. If the University does not intend on making the massing lighter as the building rises, they should at least make the exterior treatment consistent. Overall, however, this building is incredibly important for the future of Boston University and needs to be built as soon as a coherent design is achieved.</p>
10/28/2018	Christian	Cole	Boston University	Neutral	<p>I think the podium needs to be knit a little better with the street and the diagonal cladding needs to be taken off the surfaces that'll have the best views. Who wants to have a view of the city tainted by diagonal lines?</p>
10/24/2018	Sydney	Ellis		Oppose	<p>This would be a monstrous addition to Comm Ave. First of all, the size is ridiculous and it will destroy the open feel of the street as it overlooks the river. It is also hideous and would destroy the cohesive and enjoyable walk down Comm Ave.</p>

Comment: Created Date	First Name	Last Name	Organization	Opinion	Comments
10/23/2018	Brian	Sandford		Oppose	<p>I would have liked to present these comments at the meeting on 10/23/18, but cannot attend. I write as an aspiring architect and recent graduate of Wentworth Institute of Technology, and someone who has spent a significant amount of time on and around the BU Campus. I want to make clear I am not fundamentally opposed to the University growing, it is well within their right. It is nice to see a proposal for what is now an underutilized site along Commonwealth Avenue. I am also not fundamentally opposed to the University building at the scale of the proposed building. It adds nice density and a counterpoint on the overall skyline. Overall, I support the ambition behind this project. What I am fundamentally opposed to is bad design. The proposed building is bad design. It's overall massing, with a 5 story podium and shifted cube tower, is uninspired, outdated, and completely blind to it's surrounding context. The sun studies provided in the PNF show how much shadow the proposed building would cast, cloaking wide swathes of Bay State Road and the Esplanade. The facades are incoherent and ill-considered, with the red metal screens appearing and disappearing seemingly at random. Despite some attempt to suggest potential louvres or sun shades, the form in general does not seem to respond at all to solar or environmental conditions. It is deeply disingenuous to aim for a LEED-certified Gold building with a South facing facade primarily sheathed in glass, even if that glass is triple-glazed. One of the few valuable pieces of the proposed design is the first and second floor elevations along Commonwealth Avenue. The ramping floor, butterfly stair, and general translucency has the potential to provide a lively view to passers-by. While the PNF claims that the spaces created by overhangs would create places for seating, I would push the design team to develop this experience further, creating truly</p>
					<p>human-scale spaces to be occupied and enjoyed, not merely walked or biked past. Figure 3-5, on page 74, is the best demonstration of my multitude of concerns. The massing is random and widely out-of-scale, appearing so large that even the behemoth of Warren Towers looks diminutive in comparison. The materiality is lacking any unity or coherence. The overall proportion seems heavy, ungainly, and nowhere near pleasing to the eye, especially next to the slim, solid Law Tower to the west. I appreciate the time, effort, and expense put forward by the University, the architects and planners, and the entire design team. However, this building will be visible by thousands of people a day, impacting the urban life of students, neighborhood residents, and many more Bostonians. Much more care and thought needs to be expended to create an elegant design that will be a strong contributor to the city for decades to come. I look forward to seeing revisions at further public meetings.</p>

Comment: Created Date	First Name	Last Name	Organization	Opinion	Comments
10/23/2018	Sam	Burgess	BU Graduate Student	Support	I support this project. I find it a bold new addition to the Comm Ave skyline and a welcome contrast to the Warren Towers across the street. It's great that this project replaces a surface parking lot, making more productive use of the parcel and ideally reducing the number of SOV trips in the area. Secure bike parking on-site is welcome and a must given the high-rate of bicycle theft and vandalism on BU's campus. The proposed changes to Granby Street also look great - removing street parking and converting into two directions from a one way while adding bike lanes. Importantly, as Granby St. is a city street, I urge the project team to work with BTM in installing flexposts or bollards in the newly-installed bike lanes. This would be in line with MassDOT's Comm Ave work and build-out of protected bike lanes between the BU Bridge and Packard's Corner. They are cheap, easy to install, and will cause minimum disruption given that Granby will no longer have street parking. More importantly, they prevent cars from parking or otherwise obstructing the bike lane - an all too common problem on the current unprotected lanes on Comm Ave. The whole area in general is still very dangerous for cyclists, and protected infra should be a design must for any new streetscape improvements. Thank you for your consideration.
10/19/2018	Jonathan	Rodrigues		Oppose	As a taxpayer in Boston, I hope the city will consider holding this project contingent upon assurances that BU pay their Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) contributions in full. While they are relatively good compared to other institutional actors, there is still millions left unpaid that BU should be contributing for the good of all our students in families in BPS and other city services. We hope the City may hold this consideration.
10/16/2018	Diane	Brown	Boston Resident	Oppose	It's ugly. I don't like the design. It's not aesthetically pleasing at all. The height is all wrong. The height should be the same as the building next to it. It is completely out of character with Boston. It is grotesque.
10/9/2018	Steve	Appell	Boston resident	Oppose	A terrible design that will create an eye sore Keep these designs in Canada , not Boston Who?s political favor is being paid off with this firm ?
10/8/2018	Karen	Heffernan		Oppose	What an eyesore. Please please please do not make this building a reality. It will detract from this neighborhood.
10/8/2018	Dianna	Carney		Support	I love the new concept, I think it adds an interesting and fun look to the Boston sky rise. Boston though rich with tradition is also a place of innovation. I think this building concept reflects just that.
10/8/2018	Merrill	Bloor		Oppose	Ugly, out of character for the city and just plain heinous.
10/8/2018	Larry	Ouellette		Oppose	The building as designed is simply one of the ugliest building designs I've ever seen. The brown elements look so out of place. The large number of offsets also looks very bad. Time for "Stack of Books" version 2.