

Shurtleff, Lauren

From: Ian Mackenzie [ian_mackenzie@verizon.net]
Sent: Thursday, August 05, 2010 8:36 AM
To: Shurtleff, Lauren
Subject: Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project

To whom it may concern,

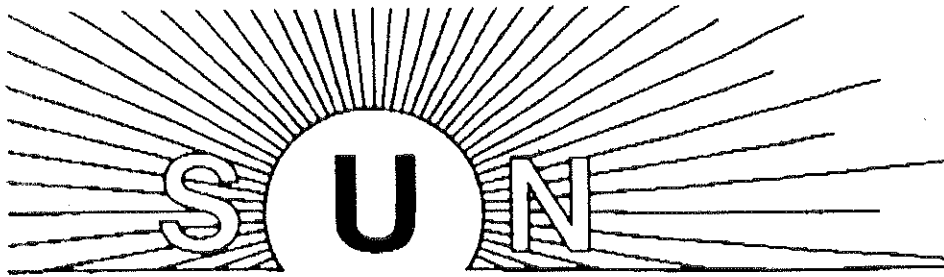
My name is Ian Mackenzie. I live at 126 Saint Botolph Street, one block away from the Christian Science Plaza. I attended the recent Citizens Advisory Committee working meeting of August 3rd.

Please add my name to those who think dividing the reflecting pool would seriously detract from the awesome sight of one large rectangle, seemingly endless, with little wavelets coming at you from afar.

Also, the points made by the speaker from the local preservation group generally reflect my own thoughts. Nevertheless, I can accept the proposed building over the Sunday school.

I have no objection to the two buildings across from the Hilton and Sheraton.

Ian Mackenzie
ian_mackenzie@verizon.net

**SYMPHONY UNITED NEIGHBORS**

P.O. Box 230134

Boston, MA 02123-0134

FAX TRANSMISSION**NO. PAGES** 2
(including this one)

August 18, 2010

TO: Lauren Shurtleff
Boston Redevelopment Authority
1 City Hall Square, 9th floor
Boston MA 02201 617-367-6087

FROM: Symphony United Neighbors
RE: Christian Science Plaza Revitalization Project

Dear Ms. Shurtleff:

Symphony United Neighbors (SUN) is an all-volunteer community association in the East Fenway. The Christian Science Plaza is central to our neighborhood and an important factor in making the Fenway a desirable place to live. Many of us cross the Plaza at least several times a week.

Of course, we are very interested in the changes the Church has proposed. Many of them are appealing, such as the redesign of the reflecting pool. Others are less so. While most of the issues that trouble us have been raised and discussed at CAC meetings, they are still of concern to the neighborhood.

First, as several neighbors brought up at the open meeting, is the height of the new Dalton/Belvedere high- and mid-rise buildings. We wish that the Church had at least tried to live within the "as of right" figure of 600, 000 square feet instead of considering only the requested 950,000 sq. ft. We don't agree with the philosophy that zoning is simply a baseline from which to start!

Second, we wish that the Midtown Hotel site—a rather large footprint— had been considered in this proposal, although the church refused to do so. With a lease expiring in 2016, this parcel on Huntington Ave. is certainly vulnerable to becoming the site of another out-of-scale development. Adding a deed restriction or something similar would allay this concern.

Third, we are really uneasy about the plans for the Sunday School building and Horticultural Hall. Any structure of the kind proposed would certainly overpower

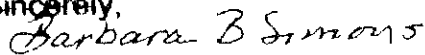
SUN/ page 2

both Horticultural Hall and Symphony Hall. This is not just a question of not wanting another tower, it's an issue of destroying what is now a harmonious juxtaposition of two historic buildings at that corner. In addition, these plans need to be integrated with the long-delayed Symphony Streetscape project.

We hope that a final plan might consider some of these issues.

Thanks for considering our opinions.

Sincerely,



Barbara B. Simons, President
and the Board of Symphony United Neighbors

cc: Councilor Mike Ross

Shurtleff, Lauren

From: Soto Palmarin, Ines
Sent: Monday, August 30, 2010 3:55 PM
To: frederick gardner
Cc: Shurtleff, Lauren
Subject: RE: Christian Science Church Plaza

Mr. Gardner,

Thank you for your comments.
Best,
Ines

-----Original Message-----

From: frederick gardner [mailto:fwgardner@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, August 30, 2010 3:49 PM
To: Soto Palmarin, Ines
Subject: Christian Science Church Plaza

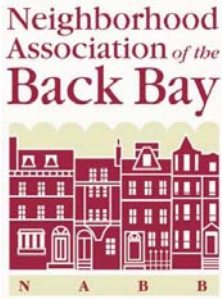
Dear Ines Soto,

I writing to you in regard plans for the Christian Science Plaza, as there doesn't seem to be a way to get to the comment page from the project page. As proposed, the building at Huntington and Mass Avenues would severely mar the existing symmetry of the corner, and open the way to additional high rises further down Huntington, which are not desired by the neighborhood.

Additionally some 120 rental units proposed for the building would throw considerably more riders onto the already overburdened E Green Line. Approval of this building must hinge on the First Church of Christ Scientist and BRA using what ever methods necessary to obtain additional service from the MBTA on the E line. To do less than that would be unconscionable and a great disservice to the adjacent community.

Sincerely

Frederick W. Gardner
90 Gainsborough St., #101e
Boston MA 02115
fwgardner@verizon.net



August 31, 2010

Lauren Shurtleff
Boston Redevelopment Authority
1 City Hall Square 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201
lauren.shurtleff.bra@cityofboston.gov

Christian Science Center Complex Draft Plaza Revitalization Plan Document

Dear Ms Shurtleff:

We are writing to respond to the document "Draft Plaza Revitalization Plan Document" posted on the BRA website www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org/Planning/PlanningInitsIndividual.asp?action=ViewInit&InitID=144, although we request a response to explain the purpose of the document and the planned use for comments received. We are concerned that we participate in a structured process.

To date, although one of our members has spent many hours, not only in meetings, as a participant and leader, but also working with the BRA to plan the meetings and work with others on the Community Advisory Committee, not an insignificant volunteer activity by a fully engaged professional business owner, we have yet to see the church respond to the input conveyed. We have not seen a planning process. We are disappointed that after all the presentations, the Church has not changed their plans since the first meeting, although now the plans have illustrations.

Below we submit our requests regarding the Christian Science Center Development Proposal

NABB requests the presentation and review of an additional plan that represents the Church's concept of an as-of-right development that conforms with current zoning regulations including FAR and height restrictions. Within these legal parameters, the primary goals of such a proposal would incorporate the following:

- a) A zoning-compliant design proposal that contributes to good urban design.
- b) Planning by the proponent, BRA and CAC that views the site not solely as an isolated project but in the context of both sides of the Huntington Ave. corridor and in the larger context, considering appropriate complementary improvements in road/street and other elements of a sustainable urban environment with an eye toward maintaining the fabric of the plaza and existing open space near and surrounding the reflecting pool.
- c) Per the unique and purposefully written preamble of Article 41, utmost respect for the maintenance of the protection zone regarding any additional buildings on Belvidere Street through the support of an appropriately scaled development within the existing guidelines.
- d) A commitment that any developments will be fully subject to all applicable commercial and residential property taxes as it is dangerous precedent and contrary to the long-term interests of the city, nearby commercial developments and the residents of the city to promote construction of large scale developments that do not generate sufficient revenues that support the burdens of additional city services required for incremental development in the city."

As you are aware, NABB supports the designation of full landmark status for the site, without any caveats or amendments in order that the Boston Landmarks Commission have the opportunity to participate in future development of the Complex.

We look forward to your response,

Ann Gleason, Chair

Linda Zukowski, President

Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay, Inc.
337 Newbury Street, Boston, MA 02115
Tel 617.247.3961 Fax 617.247.3387

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*Office
Administrator*



September 1, 2010

Mr. John Palmieri
Director
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Plaza
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Director Palmieri:

I am writing on behalf of the Back Bay Association in support of The First Church of Christ, Scientist Plaza Revitalization Project. I have very much appreciated the opportunity to participate on the Citizens Advisory Committee, and all the time and effort members of the community, Boston Redevelopment Authority staff and the developers took to review plans for the area.

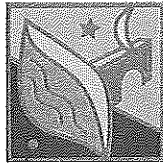
Acknowledging that this will be an ongoing review process, the Back Bay Association would like to offer the following comments:

- We support adding 950,000 square feet of new development to the site. The Church has made a good case for supporting this, and as a nonprofit, is not able to sustain the costs of maintenance for this public space into perpetuity. Since there will be much greater process brought to bear on the specific buildings that have been proposed, the Back Bay Association would like to participate in further review. We believe the proposal is in the right direction, and think greater detail regarding the building's design, traffic impacts, and further environmental review will ensure that added development on the site serves to enhance the area.
- We support changes to the reflecting pond that would both improve pedestrian traffic both within the plaza, and in the neighborhood. A modest reduction and adding a "cut through" will change the character of the reflecting pond slightly, with significant gain for the neighborhood. The addition of better systems to reuse and reduce water is a great benefit as well.
- We very much understand the desire by members of the community to preserve the Christian Science Plaza, yet also believe the church has been a stellar steward of the plaza. They should be granted the approvals needed to render the real estate which *they own* to be sustainable, both financially and environmentally.
- Lastly, the Plaza will truly be improved by activity and improvement to the streetscape. Businesses nearby will benefit from increased foot traffic, better connectivity, economic activity. At times it does seem that the plaza is missing an essential element, the hustle and bustle of people.

We look forward to further public review and very much appreciated the opportunity to participate on this important Citizens Advisory Committee.

Sincerely,

Meg Mainzer-Cohen
President



THE FENWAY
ALLIANCE

Lauren Shurtleff
Boston Redevelopment Authority
1 City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02201

September 2, 2010

Lauren
Dear Ms. Shurtleff,

On behalf of the 22 members of the Fenway Alliance, I am writing in enthusiastic support of the First Church of Christ, Scientist's Draft Plan for its Plaza Revitalization Project.

The Fenway Alliance is a consortium of 22 cultural and academic institutions located in the Fenway whose collective goal is to enhance the Fenway and surrounding neighborhoods, creating an area in the City that remains and grows in its uniquely rich academic and cultural offerings, and its beautiful parklands and green spaces. We create and sustain the Fenway Cultural District, providing quality intellectual, social, and cultural opportunities for individuals and families throughout the region. We care deeply about our area and the entire City of Boston.

The First Church of Christ, Scientist, one of the founding members of the Fenway Alliance (est. in 1977), has been part of the Boston community for over 130 years. Since the early 1970s and as the world headquarters of the Christian Science religion, the First Church has recognized the value of its 14.5-acre Plaza, not only as an enriching area for its international religious followers, but for the general Boston public, as well.

The Church has been an excellent steward of this much used and loved area in Boston. Though on private property, the Church opens its Plaza to the public on a daily basis. In the summer, the Church enables children from near and far to enjoy its lovely (and fun) Children's Fountain, employing numerous staff members to maintain and watch over the area. The Church also takes great care in maintaining its stunning Reflecting Pool, so that generations of people from all over the world, as well as local Bostonians, are able to enjoy its beauty and be spiritually and emotionally renewed while taking in its vista.

As it has been 40 years since the development of the Plaza, repair and revitalization is definitely indicated. The Church has clearly and effectively outlined the reasons for the Reflecting Pool's need to be rebuilt and made more sustainable. The Church's draft plan also details a process to better manage and improve ground water. Smaller landscaping changes to the hardscape of the Plaza are included in the draft revitalization plan to improve its welcoming quality and general

usability for the public. Reuse of existing building space and construction of new building space are planned to generate real estate revenues needed to offset real estate expenses and the ongoing (and not insignificant) costs of maintaining the large open space.

The proposed new building as designed would be built adjacent to the Huntington Avenue/Avenue of the Arts edge of the existing Sunday School Building. This would allow the main portion of the Plaza to retain its wonderful open quality, while helping to activate a stretch of the Avenue of the Arts that often feels lacking in activity and vitality. A highly positive and welcomed plan to activate the Children's Fountain in the winter through ice-skating is also proposed.

The First Church of Christ, Scientist has been a dedicated steward of its Plaza for decades, and has openly embraced the larger community's use and enjoyment of its essentially private space. We do not anticipate the Church's demonstrated care and commitment to the Plaza and its public uses changing in any significant way in the future. The Fenway Alliance wholeheartedly supports the Church's plan to revitalize and renew this important open space in the City of Boston.

We thank you for your consideration of this letter, and for the BRA's ongoing commitment to the protection and renewal of our beloved City of Boston.

Sincerely,



Kelly Brilliant, Executive Director
The Fenway Alliance, Inc.
Tel: 617-437-7544

THE FENWAY ALLIANCE

Berklee
college of
music

*Boston Arts
Academy*



**Massachusetts College
of Pharmacy and
Health Sciences**



THE BOSTON CONSERVATORY
MUSIC DANCE THEATRE



**Massachusetts
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- Emmanuel College
- The First Church of Christ, Scientist
- The Forsyth Institute
- Harvard School of Public Health
- Huntington Theatre Company
- Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
- The Mary Baker Eddy Library for the
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- Massachusetts College of Art and Design
- Massachusetts College of
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- Massachusetts Historical Society
- Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
- National Braille Press
- New England Conservatory
- Northeastern University
- School of the Museum of
Fine Arts, Boston
- Simmons College
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**BOSTON
SYMPHONY
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**Museum of Fine Arts,
Boston**



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**The First Church
of Christ, Scientist**

**NEW ENGLAND
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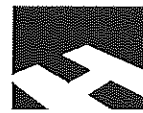
**Northeastern
UNIVERSITY**



**Harvard School
of Public Health**



SIMMONS



**the
Huntington**

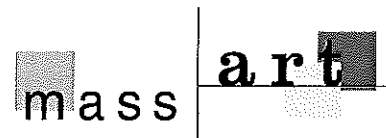


**School of the Museum of
Fine Arts, Boston**

**ISABELLA
SEWART GARDNER
MUSEUM**



**WHEELOCK
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THE MARY BAKER EDDY LIBRARY
for the BETTERMENT of HUMANITY



**WENTWORTH
INSTITUTE OF
TECHNOLOGY**



**YMCA of
Greater Boston**
Keeping Families Strong

The Fenway Alliance, Inc.
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Boston, MA 02108
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bostonpreservation.org

September 3, 2010

Ms. Lauren Shurtleff
Boston Redevelopment Authority
1 City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Ms Shurtleff:

On behalf of the Boston Preservation Alliance, I would like to commend the Boston Redevelopment Authority staff for its excellent work in managing the Citizens Advisory Committee process for the Christian Science Center Revitalization Project and to express the Alliance's overall support for this important work.

The Christian Science Center is truly unique in Boston and is an internationally celebrated modern complex of extraordinary architectural and landscape design quality. This pending Boston Landmark is internationally significant for its religious history as the world headquarters of the First Church of Christ, Scientist, its association with the life and work of Mary Baker Eddy and its recognition as an architectural masterpiece that successfully integrates the nineteenth-century Mother Church and extension with an outstanding example of mid-twentieth-century architecture and landscaped open space.

The Alliance believes that the Christian Science Church has historically approached the complex with a stewardship mentality that is warranted by its profound importance. Specifically, the Alliance feels that the Church has taken a thoughtful approach to preservation of the existing buildings on the site and has selected two development sites for new buildings that are wholly appropriate, in that the construction of new buildings on these sites, if done sensitively, would not diminish the experience of the complex or adversely impact the surrounding historic neighborhoods.

We would like to call the BRA's attention to three aspects of the planning document where we recommend additional consideration and specific text changes (and we likewise ask that the modifications are reflected in the Executive Summary).

The Reflecting Pool

The Alliance believes that the character defining attributes of the Reflecting Pool must not be degraded or diminished by any proposed changes or additions to it. The drama and impact of the Reflecting Pool largely is due to the site's monumental horizontality, the fact that it is unbroken in length and unencumbered by any element visually

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encroaching upon the space that it defines, and the "infinity edge" that produces the effect of water extending to the horizon and then vanishing.

The Alliance does believe that some reduction in the pool's length and depth, as is proposed by the Church, may be achieved without damaging its defining characteristics provided that changes are managed to ensure that the pool retains its reflective quality. However, the Alliance feels that the proposed bridge across the Reflecting Pool has the potential to severely impact its power and visual effect. The Alliance believes that the challenge of designing the bridge in such a way that will not diminish the integrity of the pool is substantial and may ultimately prove irreconcilable with the goal of retaining its inherent design characteristics.

For this reason, the Alliance believes that the planning document should leave open the possibility of other means of improving visual and walking connections between to the Original Mother Church that would not interfere with the design of the Reflecting Pool. While potential designs for a bridge may be tested and reviewed by appropriate public agencies, should they fail to meet the standards that protect the integrity of the Reflecting Pool, they should not be pursued.

Accordingly, the Alliance recommends that the following language in the report be modified:

- On page 18, under Design Criteria III. "Historic Resources", following the phrase "Reestablish the importance, visibility, and access to the Original Mother Church," the sentence "Changes should reestablish convenient pedestrian access between the Original Mother Church and Huntington Avenue, which existed prior to the creation of the Plaza" should be broadened to state that the bridge is one possible way, but not the only way, to achieve this goal. The Alliance recommends a sentence that reads "Changes should emphasize sight lines and may seek to improve pedestrian access between the Original Mother Church and Huntington Avenue." This phrasing is less prescriptive than the original sentence, and does not preclude the possibility of other interventions that might achieve the same objectives without construction of a bridge across the pool.

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- On page 22, the Alliance believes that general description of the Reflecting Pool incorrectly implies that the overriding public perception of the pool environment is negative, in stating that it “can feel uninviting and inhospitable to the surrounding neighborhoods” and “acts as a barrier to pedestrian circulation through the Plaza” without mentioning the positive ways in which the pool contributes to its environment in its current form. The Alliance recommends that this negative language be counterbalanced with a preceding statement that makes clear that the Reflecting Pool is an alluring destination that is greatly enjoyed by the public during the majority of the year. The Alliance suggests that the following sentence be added: “The Reflecting Pool is a dramatic landscape feature that serves to draw visitors into the complex, creating an enticing, contemplative space that is enjoyed by both pedestrians passing by and visitors spending time along its perimeter.”
- Also on page 22, the fourth bullet under the heading “Reflecting Pool” should be changed to language that more broadly interprets the objective of re-establishing the importance, visibility and access to the Original Mother Church with multiple possible solutions, rather the prescribing that a bridge should be built.
- Similarly, the Alliance recommends changes to the text on page 23 that will ensure that the bridge would only be constructed if it can be demonstrated that the feature does not diminish the integrity of the reflecting pool. The Alliance recommends including conditional language similar to what is used in describing the potential for artwork at the bottom of the pool on the same page, and state that the Church “will study the possibility of” a new at-grade pedestrian crossing that will not interfere with the defining characteristics of the reflecting pool. Again, this leaves open the possibility to not build the bridge should studies demonstrate that doing so would adversely impact the design and visual impact of the Reflecting Pool.

New Huntington Ave. Building’s Relationship to Sunday School

The Alliance has supported the Huntington Avenue site for potential new development. We believe this is an appropriate location for a new building on the site that could add to the collection of existing buildings and open spaces in a positive way. The Alliance does believe, however, that the

Ms. Lauren Shurtleff
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height of the proposed new building has the potential to adversely impact the spatial dynamic between the uninterrupted horizontality of the plaza and the dramatic verticality of the Administration Building. A tall building at the other end of the reflecting pool will alter this relationship, and will seem to “book end” the pool in a way that is likely to diminish the impact of the Administration Building. For this reason, the Alliance urges the BRA to request that the church reconsider the height of the proposed building on the site and study alternatives that might fit more sensitively into the complex.

Additionally, the Alliance does not believe that all potential configurations of this building that would not require cantilevering over the Sunday School building have been fully vetted. For this reason, we recommend a more comprehensive assessment of design and massing alternatives for this site be studied, in consultation with the Boston Landmarks Commission and others with relevant expertise in the preservation of Modern architecture, in order to ensure that the design of this new building is compatible with the complex as a whole and the Sunday School building in particular.

Softscape Enhancements

The Alliance does believe that the addition of some new vegetation materials and features is appropriate for the plaza if they do not alter the basic concept of the historic site design. However, the Alliance believes the nature of the plaza, as a successful hardscape landscape—one of relatively few in Boston from the Modern era—should not be compromised by efforts to soften the plaza. Some of the proposed new “green” elements in the plan seem wholly appropriate, such as expanding the green lawn in front of the Mother Church Extension along Massachusetts Ave. On the other hand, the Alliance believes that the proposed planters along the 101 Belvedere building will break up the expanse of the plaza in a way that will diminish its character and the spatial relationships within the hardscape design. Similarly, the Alliance believes that new trees must be carefully located so as not to disrupt current sightlines through the plaza.

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The Alliance appreciates the opportunity to comment on the planning document for the internationally significant complex. We look forward to working with the BRA and the Church to realize a shared vision for a truly extraordinary historic and cultural asset for the city, the region, the nation and the world.

Sincerely,



Sarah D. Kelly
Executive Director

cc: Brona Simon, Massachusetts Historical Commission
Ellen Lipsey, Boston Landmarks Commission
David Fixler, DOCOMOMO-US/New England
Henry Moss, BSA Historic Resources Committee
Mark Pasnik, HEROIC Project
Jackie Yessian, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay
Wendy Nicholas, National Trust for Historic Preservation
New England Regional Office
Charles Birnbaum, Cultural Landscape Foundation

do_co mo.mo_/US-New England
130 Prospect St.
Cambridge, MA 02139

3 September 2010

Ms. Lauren Shurtleff
Boston Redevelopment Authority
1 City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Ms. Shurtleff:

I am writing on behalf of docomomo-US/New England to commend the Boston Redevelopment Authority for the exemplary management of the Citizens Advisory Council in shepherding the process for the Christian Science Center (CSC) Plaza Revitalization Project. The CSC as it exists today is one of the most prominent and successful modern urban complexes in the world. Although the Christian Science Church has been an important physical and spiritual fixture in Boston since its founding in the late 19th century, it is the present plan, conceived in the mid-1960s by Araldo Cossutta in conjunction with I. M. Pei and Partners, and completed in 1975 that makes the precinct as a whole – buildings and landscape – one of Boston and America's great urban places.

The CSC as it evolved under the eye of Cossutta is a rare example of an attempt by an institution and their architects to employ a synthetic, ameliorative modernist urbanism as a unifying device to better define an entire precinct of a city. Its location in Boston's urban plan – at the juncture of the different grids of the South End, Fenway and Back Bay makes it a pivotal presence in reconciling and clarifying a very complex urban condition. Through a unique juxtaposition of design strategies, a collection of modern buildings and landscape elements are disposed across their site in a fashion that recalls both the hard urbanity of the traditional European plaza – in the heart of the plaza and to the north of the reflecting pool – and the tempered, more open configuration of the American city, in the greenswards that project the space of the CSC across Massachusetts and Huntington Avenues. This is accomplished with great economy of means; the palette is dignified and elegant, but simple almost to the point of minimalism – which means that every element has both meaning unto itself and plays a key, interrelated role in ensuring the quality and integrity of the whole.

The CSC is also, unlike many other large urban complexes of this era, a genuinely popular place, beloved by the citizenry of Boston and visitors to the Church, as well as being consistently honored by the design and scholarly communities.

The Christian Science Church is well aware of the history, quality and significance of their buildings and site and they have been conducting the public review process with great care and deliberation. We applaud their method and willingness to be inclusive, feel that in general their approach to the preservation of their buildings and the plaza is to be commended, and that in

addition, they have selected two sites, those located north of the colonnade building toward the Prudential Center, that we concur should be well considered for future development. .

We do have several specific concerns relative to the changes that are being proposed to the Plaza and about the third development site, adjacent to the Sunday School. We respectfully offer the following observations and recommendations that we hope will be taken into consideration as information that can help to inform the further development of the Revitalization schemes.

Reflecting Pool:

1. The pool is unbroken in length and unencumbered by any element visually encroaching upon the volume of space that it defines. It commands but is clearly separate and distinct from the ground plane. Befitting its design as a work of modern minimalism and its expression of the spirituality embodied in this precinct as the center of a major Christian sect, it has an ethereal presence, hovering in space as an interface between the earth and the sky, whose unbroken reflection enhances the unity and totality of the composition of the entire complex.
2. The infinity edge, with water continually spilling over all the sides of the pool, renders visible only the water itself; any sense of a solid boundary is thereby dematerialized.
3. It is sufficiently deep so as to appear under most conditions as a substantial, opaque mass.
4. In its unbroken nature it acts as a figural, unifying tie for all of the elements that sit on the plaza.
 - a. Along the northern edge it defines and unites all of the frontage of the Colonnade Building, the Mother Church and the Mother Church extension
 - b. As an axis it ties the curved horizontal thrust of the Sunday School back to the vertical thrust of the Administration Tower, helping these elements to achieve balance.
 - c. The fountain is the period of the unbroken exclamation point of the pool.
 - d. It provides an effective and emphatic boundary between the more active pedestrian zone on the north side and the planted areas and bosque on the south.

We Suggest the Following as Allowable Alterations:

1. The depth of the pool may be considered for alteration and only then if it is able to be unquestionably proven, through full scale mock-up or similar examples to what is proposed that the appearance of the pool would not be altered by making it shallower.
2. The proposed shortening of the pool at the Sunday School side may be considered given the constriction of the pedestrian space that occurs at this juncture, though it should be noted that the fact that the pool extends beyond the line of the last planter, rather than aligning with it (as is proposed under the Plaza Revitalization), reinforces the idea that it is the dominant landscape feature; one that unites but is not bounded by any single other element or group of elements on the Plaza.
3. No other alterations to size, elevation, edge detail etc., are recommended.
4. We also strongly oppose the introduction of any element that interrupts the unbroken expanse of the pool. While we understand the Church's position that this represents

the re-introduction of an historic passage, we would respectfully ask why this was not considered at the time of the Pei/Cossutta Plan.

Hardscape:

1. A unique aspect of the Christian Science Center lies in the balance that it achieves between a traditional, European type of hardscape plaza and the pastoral openings that the Center presents toward Huntington Avenue, in the form of the bosque and planters, and the lawn at the forecourt of the Mother Church extension along Massachusetts Avenue. These are at present well balanced, and any proposed changes should be undertaken with the maintenance of this balance and appropriate zoning in mind.

We Suggest the Following as Allowable Alterations:

1. The hardscape to the north of the reflecting pool up to the line of the Colonnade Building should be inviolate. The proposed rhomboid green swatches adjacent to the Colonnade Building are token gestures to sustainability that read exactly as such – they compromise the integrity of the both the plaza design and the Colonnade itself. We suggest that if any plantings are to be allowed in this area at all that they be in appropriately designed planters, reversible, and very limited in scope.
2. The idea of expanding the green space in front of the Mother Church extension could possibly work with an appropriate design, provided there remains sufficient hardscape around the church itself for it to work as a unifying element in establishing its setting within the plaza, similar to all of the other buildings of the complex.

Sunday School Development Site:

1. The Sunday School is the object that terminates the axis of the reflecting pool.
2. Its asymmetrical form anchors the Huntington avenue edge of the plaza on the south, while pivoting the thrust of the space to the northwest toward the church forecourt and Mass. Ave.
3. It provides a screen to the backdrop of the Beaux-Arts monuments of Horticultural and Symphony Halls.
4. The overall composition is a minimal tipped over “L” form that constitutes the main armature, with the top arm curving back toward the church forecourt. The ribbed, angled element hung from the horizontal arm of the L is perfectly counterpoised to the heavy structure from which it is suspended and the entry wall below. The masses as they exist at present are in an assured but delicate balance.

We Suggest the Following as Allowable Alterations/Additions:

1. The counterposition of the Sunday School to the Administration tower sets up one of the most powerful and dynamic asymmetries of the CSC scheme. In addition, the tower is a unique element that continues to effectively function as the southern terminus of the High Spine, even given the many new towers that have been added in the intervening years. The High Spine is an urban design concept first envisioned in the late 1950s by Kevin Lynch, and later developed and refined by the Boston Society of

Lauren Shurtleff
3 September 2010

Architects Civic Design Committee to become one of the fundamental planning tenets of Modern Boston, Adding another tower of similar height and proportion adjacent to the Sunday School will forever destroy this balance and rob the Administration tower of its unique qualities, as well as compromising the larger urban design qualities of this area, including the integrity of the Beaux-Arts Symphony and Horticultural Halls.

2. However, although it would compromise to some degree the purity of Cossutta's original composition, in recognition of the need to provide more activity, vitality and a welcoming front to Huntington Avenue at this corner of the Plaza, it might be possible to imagine a lower structure built on the footprint suggested in the Plaza Revitalization plan, provided the height of the new structure was restricted – perhaps at most to the level of the Symphony Towers at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue.

In conclusion, the Christian Science Center is both a priceless cultural resource and a prominent, well-loved urban amenity that has reached a point in its life where change in the form of repair and further development is inevitable. The Church has thus far shown great deliberation and sensitivity in its planning process and we hope that the present planning document for the Plaza Revitalization will continue to develop and be refined to help buttress the Church's efforts to ensure that any work will always be undertaken with the long-term appreciation of the complex as both an historic site and a unique, world-class example of modernist urban design.

Very truly yours,



David N. Fixler, FAIA, LEED AP
President, docomomo-US/New England

Cc:	Henry Moss	Boston Society of Architects Historic Resources Committee
	Gary Wolf	docomomo/US-New England
	Sarah Kelly	Boston Preservation Alliance
	Ellen Lipsey	Boston Landmarks Commission
	Carl Nold	Historic New England
	Wendy Nicholas	National Trust for Historic Preservation
	Charles Birnbaum	Cultural Landscape Foundation
	Brona Simon	Massachusetts Historical Commission



September 10, 2010

Mr. John F. Palmieri, Director
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Mr. Palmieri:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Christian Science Center's Draft Plaza Revitalization Document. I submit this letter on behalf of the Fenway Community Development Corporation (FCDC), a 37 year old community based organization that builds and preserves affordable housing and champions local projects that engage our full community in enhancing the neighborhood's diversity and vitality. Institutions play an important role our neighborhood. They bring vitality and economic activity. They also fuel housing inflation and undermine the neighborhood's residential quality. We see our participation in the planning process as an important opportunity to assure that the overall impact of institutions meets the needs of both parties.

These comments represent a review of the proposed plan against the our Urban Village Plan, the FCDC's vision for the neighborhood as a smart-growth-oriented community that welcomes and supports the broadest spectrum of residents. The plan sets goals in five key areas: 1.) a sufficient and varied housing supply; 2) access to public transportation and reduced vehicular traffic; 3) community building facilities; 4) a healthy business community and jobs for residents; and 5) open space and a responsible impact on the environment.

Housing: The Fenway CDC is pleased that the current planned use for the development includes residential uses. This will strengthen the existing residential character of the surrounding neighborhoods. Because one of the FCDC's primary goals is to ensure the continued economic diversity of its residents, advocating for the development of housing that is affordable for a broad spectrum of working families is critical to our vision of a successful project. We welcome the opportunity to work with the Church and the City of Boston to develop the affordable housing the Fenway needs to meet this goal.

Transportation: The Urban Village Plan calls for new development to cause a minimal increase on the number of additional vehicles in the Fenway. The proposed location of the new development is well-served by public transportation and could have minimal impact on the number of vehicles on the roads. However, given the already congested conditions in the area,

the addition of service and personal vehicles associated with the proposed 950,000 square feet of development cannot help but have a negative impact on existing difficult conditions.

Jobs and Business Development: An important element of any new development in the community is the type of jobs it will offer residents in the long term - after the construction workers have left. We are concerned about who will work here, what sorts of employment and economic opportunities this development will provide residents of the city.

Open Space and Environment/Community Spaces: As the Church has stated, the Plaza is the largest privately owned and maintained public space in the City of Boston. The Church's commitment to maintaining the quality of the space is laudable. But as we have learned, the design and construction of the Plaza now places an economic burden on the Church and dictate that the Church develop the underutilized real estate on the Plaza. While the proposed changes and the addition of the 950,000 square feet of development will meet the Church's goals, they will impose a cost on the nearby neighborhoods that will not be off-set simply through the preservation of this dramatic space.

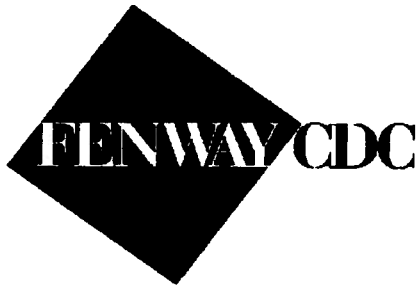
As the Church and its partners have stated repeatedly, their commitment to the plaza is unwavering. Their need for capital to support its repair and on-going maintenance is real and significant. The FCDC understands this, and understands the need for the City of Boston to grow and support new development. Our concerns lie in the fact that the driving force behind the 950,000 square feet of development is to generate the most capital possible for the Church. The development, as we heard repeatedly, must be this large in order to generate the funds needed to make the repairs and support the plaza in the long-term.

We are deeply concerned that all other interests will be secondary as this project moves forward. Nothing we have heard thus far in the process indicates that the vision of community benefits and improvements extends beyond maintaining the Plaza.

We understand and can accept the ideas of density and height when and if the size and scale of a project can be well absorbed by its surroundings. We cannot, however, accept a proposal whose vision of success is simply sufficient cash flow. The price that will be paid by this approach could well be the sacrifice of the pedestrian realm and externalizing costs and impacts to nearby neighbors. Any new development must be well and gracefully designed; it must include a mix of uses; it must fully support and enrich the pedestrian realm; and it must incorporate the complete range of environmentally responsible construction and operational techniques that fall under the "regenerative building" label. These measures are the price any developer---for profit or not-for-profit---must pay for building in this highly congested section of the city. Well-designed and properly programmed density can benefit the surrounding neighborhoods and mitigate the impacts of new development. As neighbors and as representatives of the larger city, we don't see how we can support anything less.

Sincerely,

Joanne McKenna
Board Representative, Fenway CDC
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73 Hemenway Street, Boston MA 02115
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October 22, 2010

Mr. John F. Palmieri, Director
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Mr. Palmieri:

We submit this letter on behalf of the Fenway Community Development Corporation (FCDC), a 37-year-old community-based organization that builds and preserves affordable housing and champions local projects that engage our full community in enhancing the neighborhood's diversity and vitality. Our letter of September 10, 2010, details our review of the proposal against our Urban Village Plan¹, the FCDC's smart-growth vision for the Fenway. This letter supplements the Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) letter of October 2010, which we feel did not fully address five issues, which we describe below.

Objective of the project

An overarching concern lies in the Church's inflexibility on development size and its fixation on 950,000 square feet as the area required to generate sufficient capital to maintain the Plaza. All other interests – including urban design and environmental impacts – appear to have been subsumed by this goal. More worrisome, the vision of community benefits and improvements sketched by the Church appears to extend no farther than maintaining the plaza. We cannot accept a proposal whose vision of success is limited to generating sufficient cash flow, especially when that income comes at significant social cost to nearby neighbors. We believe the development could be successfully reconceived within a FAR of 650,000 square feet and employing an approach that respects existing zoning and the architectural integrity of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Open Space

The proposed changes in the character of the open space also raise a concern. The Christian Science Plaza is one of the few successful examples of a dry urban plaza for walking and contemplation in Boston, and the reflecting pool is a landmark that represents a unique experience not only in Boston but also in the western world. This plaza has a different character than other open public spaces in the city. Walking around the pool stimulates individual reflection and generates emotion, two rare feelings that should be preserved in an urban environment. Breaking the pool into two pieces would destroy its magic proportions, creating a transverse focus not intended in the original design. Allowing people to cross would disturb the contemplative potential of the edges, creating noise and generating movement where there should be quietness.

Design

Forty years ago the Church carved out a space that created a public benefit – albeit at the cost of destruction of significant architectural, social and urban fabric. The current proposal seems poised

¹ <http://www.fenwaycdc.org/programs/urban-village>

to repeat and compound the original injury. We strongly encourage the church to reconsider the proposed design of these buildings.

Any new development on the CSC campus must: be gracefully and well designed; blend with the surrounding area; include a mix of uses; fully support and enrich the pedestrian realm; and incorporate the complete range of environmentally responsible construction and operational techniques that fall under the "regenerative building" label. These measures are part of the price that any developer — for-profit or not-for-profit — should expect to pay for building in this desirable and highly congested section of the city. Disturbingly, the proposed development accomplishes none of these goals. The three buildings, which are well outside of the as-of-right zoning, do not blend with current architecture.

We agree that the heaviest development should take place on the north side of the site, where it would be consistent with other higher buildings, rather than on the south side, where it cannot easily make an esthetic or scalar transition to the architecture of the South End, Horticultural Hall, Symphony Hall and the East Fens. The utmost care needs to be taken to create structures that can fit harmoniously with the existing built environment; we do not see how that end can be reached with a project at the proposed size.

Landmark Designation

An additional concern relates to what happens should the Church receive historic landmark designation. We are concerned that in that event, all development will be pushed to the Dalton Street site, creating a heavy (and inappropriate) burden on that street. We believe that the Church should produce for the CAC's review alternative scenarios that take possible landmark designation into account.

Midtown Motel

Our final concern relates to the exclusion of the Midtown Motel from this proposal. We understand that the church holds a long-term lease on the motel; however because the lease expires in 2016, it should be included in this discussion. The Church's unbending attitude toward including this critical property in the plan has been more than disconcerting – it suggests that the Church does not take the CAC process seriously.

As you are aware, the Fenway CDC is not opposed to development, nor are we opposed to density. We do have concerns about density and development that are not executed well, and that are driven by a narrow vision of success. The Church has a long history in the neighborhood and has been a good steward of its property, creating an architectural icon that enhances the city. We urge its administrators to reconsider the current plan, broaden their vision, and propose a development that brings more to the neighborhood than a revenue stream. We hope that these comments will be taken into consideration as this project moves forward.

Sincerely,

Joanne McKenna
Board President
CAC Member

Dharmena Downey
Executive Director

cc: Manuel Delgado Fenway CDC, Urban Village Committee Chair