



February 8, 2010

Julie Crockford
Emerald Necklace Conservancy
891 Centre Street
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

Re: Gatehouse Restoration Project

Dear Ms. Crockford:

Fenway Civic Association (FCA) is the Fenway's only volunteer organization that accepts no public or developer funds. Our mission is to promote a safe and vital neighborhood that serves the interest of our residents.

We are writing to express our enthusiastic support for the Gatehouse restoration project spearheaded by the Emerald Necklace Conservancy. We believe that the amenities it will provide for residents and visitors alike will enhance the vitality of our beloved Back Bay Fens. Our organization represents the residents of the East and West Fenway. The historic, federally-landmarked Back Bay Fens is both the geographic and cultural center of our neighborhood, providing ample space for the community to gather and pursue their individual and collective interests.

The Fens has something for everyone: young and old, residents and visitors alike. The Fens provides a venue for active recreation in the newly reconstructed Clemente Field. The Fens is also a haven for solitude and quiet contemplation in the midst of the city. Bird watchers, walkers, dog owners, and nature lovers of all stripes come to enjoy a peaceful communion with nature. The Fens provides a place for more than 400 city residents to explore their passion for gardening in the renowned seven acre Victory Gardens. The Fens' Rose Garden is tended to by volunteers who beautify it for the enjoyment of all. The Fens is also home to the City's War Memorials from Vietnam, Korea, and World War II. The multitude of users who actively enjoy this single important park are a testament to the park's status as the only open space area in this very dense and growing neighborhood.

We strongly support the Emerald Necklace Conservancy's vision for the transformation of H.H. Richardson's Gatehouse into the Emerald Necklace Park Visitor and Volunteer Center. We see the primary benefits of the project as follows:

- Providing a central location where visitors could gather to orient themselves to the park and learn more about its history and resources.
- Adaptively reusing what would otherwise be a vacant structure.
- Promoting safety through the establishment of an active presence, with eyes and ears on the park.
- Enhancing organizational capabilities for the already numerous volunteer efforts that take place in our park.
- Creating a flexible space that could be used for small community meetings and gatherings. Such a location would be easily accessible to residents in both the East and West Fenway.

The Fenway Civic Association was proud to have the Conservancy present its plans for the gatehouse restoration at our Annual Meeting this December. The response from our membership was overwhelmingly positive. You can be sure to count on our community's support as you seek the permits and approvals necessary to bring this project to fruition.

Sincerely,



Kathleen M. Brill
Vice President, Fenway Civic Association

cc. FCA Board
Boston Landmarks Commission