



February 4, 2011

John FitzGerald
Project Manager
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

Re: Fenway Triangle Mixed Use Project
Expanded Project Notification Form

Dear Mr. FitzGerald:

Fenway Civic Association, the neighborhood's oldest and all-volunteer neighborhood organization which accepts no developer funds, would like to make the following comments regarding Samuels & Associates' (Samuels) proposal for the Fenway Triangle Mixed Use Project (the Project). These comments reflect our review of the Expanded Project Notification Form, submitted to your office on December 21, 2010.

While the Fenway Civic Association is generally satisfied with the overall development concept for the two adjacent sites, we have a number of concerns we would like to see addressed via the Boston Redevelopment Authority's (BRA) scoping process.

Housing

Samuels (the proponent) has opted to take advantage of the Planned Development Area (PDA) option provided for in Article 66 of the Zoning Code. We note, however, that the proponent will be requesting zoning relief from the requirement that use be 70% residential in a PDA. The proponent instead proposes residential use of 42%. Given this significant departure from the zoning requirements, we feel that special attention ought to be paid to the residential uses that do exist in the project. In particular, the proponent should consider ways to fulfill the qualitative goals of the residential requirement, despite not meeting the quantitative threshold.

In place of some of the required residential use, the proponent has proposed additional office and commercial use. These uses bring more traffic to an already congested area and give the area fewer people with a stake in keeping the area a livable urban environment. We recognize that as the Fenway Triangle is a complex mixed use project, with significant opportunities for residents to work and shop in the neighborhood, the

economic and social benefits to the neighborhood mitigate the net loss of potential new housing.

One way to enhance the value of the residential uses that are being proposed would be to include home ownership units instead of rental units. The Fenway neighborhood suffers from the lowest level of home ownership of any Boston neighborhood. Unfortunately recent residential development has only increased the rental housing supply rather than creating meaningful home ownership opportunities for people wishing to call the Fenway their long term home. Samuels has already developed 776 rental units in the neighborhood, and has not to date developed any home ownership units. Initial discussions contemplated condominium units in other Samuels developments, but it seemed that market forces dictated the decision to make the units rental.

Nevertheless, the Fenway Civic Association would strongly urge the proponent to consider making home ownership units available. Each new home ownership unit helps to increase the sense of community and strengthen the fabric of our neighborhood. In the alternative, the proponent could consider creating homeownership opportunities through conversion of existing rental units in either Trilogy or 1330 Boylston Street to condominiums.

Should the project end up including condominium units, it would be our preference that a larger portion of the project's affordable housing requirement be met on site. Affordable home ownership opportunities are rare in our neighborhood and would be of great value to our community.

Transportation & Parking

We are concerned about the additional traffic that would be brought to the area through the addition of office and commercial units. We are particularly concerned about the possibility that 'big box' retailers will generate an amount of vehicle traffic that will overwhelm existing capacity.

One specific area which could prove problematic is the Kilmarnock Street secondary garage egress. Traffic on this short street can back up quite quickly during both peak and non-peak times. Currently, vehicles seeking to turn onto Kilmarnock from both Van Ness Street and the Trilogy Garage can see long wait times during these periods. On Red Sox game evenings the street frequently becomes gridlocked. Adding additional vehicle traffic to this road is undesirable.

As always, we have concerns about increasing the parking supply in an area already overwhelmed with parking garages and lots. In particular, we question the need for additional parking when existing garages, such as those at Trilogy, 1330 Boylston, and Landmark Center, are routinely utilized at less than capacity. If this is the case, what is the explanation for the need for an additional 107 parking spaces over the existing number off site? We question how much of the increase in parking is being driven by the big box store model, and whether such an increase might be reconsidered.

Figure 4-10 does not include several surface lots and garages within the 5 minute walking zone. Despite dismissal as "additional ballgame parking" in the PNF, these garages and lots are not typically accessory parking. Although they do offer ballgame parking, they are normally utilized for resident, visitor, and business parking, and thus should be included in the Fenway Triangle parking study numbers. Fenway Center's garage impacts on the number of spaces should also be estimated. The number of new on-street parking spaces created on New Street must be taken into account as well.

Fenway Civic Association would encourage the BRA to consider including provisions for snow emergency parking for Fenway residents in the proponent's new parking facility, or a related facility (such as Trilogy or 1330 Boylston). The Proponent has been responsive to the neighborhood's request to provide snow emergency parking, but we would like such a provision to be memorialized in the TAPA.

To encourage residents and visitors to the Project to use public transportation, the proponent should consider coordinating with BTD and the MBTA add a stop to the #55 bus route directly in front of the Project near the intersection of Boylston and Kilmarnock Streets. We would also urge the proponent to consider allocating space to bike parking within the Project.

Form of Zoning Relief

Although the zoning relief sought by the proponent is not unreasonable, we would urge caution as to the method of obtaining such relief. It is unclear from the PNF whether the proponent intends to seek modification of the zoning code itself such that the Project fits within the PDA guidelines contained therein, or whether the proponent intends to seek a variance permitting deviation from those PDA guidelines. We would be wary of setting precedent for allowing others to make similar deviations without demonstrating the need for and appropriateness of such measures.

Design

FCA feels that the Project as a whole reflects smart urban design and carefully considered planning. The project height in modest excess to zoning is acceptable; with the understanding that the proposed massing scheme is less squat and, by stretching vertically, more favorable to the continued penetration of natural light into the environs. We think the project will create an excellent urban environment at the street level, one far superior to that provided by the existing uses.

Understanding that market conditions may require the "phasing" of the project, with the Brookline Avenue portion likely to be developed second, we nevertheless look forward to additional development of the design for the Brookline Avenue parcel. Some neighbors have expressed concerns about an overabundance of glass, particularly on that intersection.

Figure 3-18 depicts the proposed building at 132 Brookline Avenue as having a significant portion of the ground floor occupied by a transformer vault or switchgear.

The Fenway Civic Association is concerned with amount of dead space at the intersection of Kilmarnock and Van Ness Street created by the blank wall enclosing this mechanical space. We recommend either: flipping the location of the transformer vault and switchgear with the proposed retail space on Van Ness Street, or providing display windows to wrap the mechanical space, in order to avoid presenting pedestrians a blank wall at the intersection.

New Street

Fenway Civic Association would encourage the BRA to consider naming the new street “Olmsted Street” or “Olmsted Avenue.” Doing so would continue the neighborhood street naming convention, Ipswich, Jersey, Kilmarnock, Lansdowne, M (currently omitted), Van Ness (bit of a stretch), Olmsted (proposed), Peterborough, Queensberry.

Or an appropriate name should be selected from Olmsted's original plan:

http://maps.bpl.org/details_12679/?srch_query=fenway&srch_fields=all&srch_style=exact&srch_fa=save

Ipswich, Jersey, Kenyon (Kilmarnock), Lansdowne, Mornington, Nottingham, Onslow, Peterborough, Queensbury, Roseberry, Salisbury, Thurlow, Uxbridge, Vivian, Westmeath (Wellesley), X omitted, York, and Zetland.

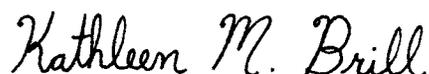
We would also like the BRA to ensure that the new street contributes to a meaningful pedestrian/bike connection between Boylston and Beacon.

In summary, Fenway Civic Association is pleased with the overall concept and design of the Project. We look forward to having more responsible, mixed use development from Samuels in the neighborhood. We appreciate what an excellent neighbor the proponent has been to the Fenway to date. We hope that the proponent will commit to taking reasonable steps to address our housing and transportation concerns.

The Fenway Civic Association's board and its many resident members appreciate the opportunity to comment and value the BRA's role in helping protect the quality of our urban areas. We look forward to further exploration of the impacts and issues outlined above during the Article 80 review process.

Content

Sincerely,



Kathleen M. Brill
Vice President, Fenway Civic Association

Fenway Civic Association – P.O. Box 230435 – Astor Station – Boston, MA 02123

cc. Fenway Civic Association Board
Steve Samuels, *Samuels & Associates*
Mike Ross, *City Councilor*
Will Onuoha, *Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services*