



January 18, 2008 **The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
John F. Palmieri, Director Massachusetts Historical Commission
Boston Redevelopment Authority
1 City Hall Plaza 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201

RE: Boston College Institutional Master Plan Notification Form, Boston & Newton,
MHC# RC.43420

Dear Mr. Palmieri:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has reviewed the Institutional Master Plan Notification Form (IMPINF) for Boston College's Chestnut Hill, Brighton and Newton campuses. After a review of materials submitted, MHC has the following comments concerning the identification of historic and archaeological resources and the effects of the proposed projects outlined in the IMPINF.

The information contained in the IMPINF indicates that the implementation of projects outlined in the plan would result in significant adverse effects to historic properties.

MHC observes that the historic resources section of the IMPINF provides a substantial list of historic properties within and adjacent to Boston College's Newton, Chestnut Hill, and Brighton Campuses. The MHC offers the following comments on the identification of historic properties.

The MHC notes that Section 8 of the IMPINF, titled Historic and Archaeological Resources, does not identify Commonwealth Avenue in Brighton as an historic property. Commonwealth Avenue in Brighton is included in MHC's Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth (MHC# BOS.YY). It is the opinion of the MHC that Commonwealth Avenue meets National Register Criteria A and C in the significance areas of community planning and development, engineering, landscape architecture, and transportation (36 CFR 60). Under Criterion C, Commonwealth Avenue is an excellent example of a combined roadway-public transit corridor that integrated transportation and recreational parkway functions through an engineering and design program based on maximizing the benefits of the natural landscape and topography for residents, commuters and travelers. It meets National Register Criterion A, embodying the vision and design intent of designers, city planners, and local real estate promoters at the turn of the century. The MHC is concerned with BC's proposal to widen Commonwealth Avenue in order to move the MBTA station platform into the center of Commonwealth Avenue. These changes would constitute an adverse effect on the historic characteristics of Commonwealth Avenue (950 CMR 71.05(a) and (c)). The

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display elements of Victorian eclectic style and are fine examples of this period and type of construction.

Review of the IMPNF reveals that properties at 188, 192, and 196 Foster Street are proposed for demolition. Demolition of these historic properties would constitute an adverse effect (950 CMR 71.05(a)) through their complete destruction and through the construction of new buildings that are out of scale and character, and would alter the setting of the Foster Street area (950 CMR 71.05(c)). The IMP should study alternatives to the demolition of these houses in order to protect and preserve the character-defining elements of the Foster Street area, such as the uniform setbacks of houses, size and scale of residences, and mature vegetation. Alternatives to demolition must be explored and must include rehabilitation and reuse of the Foster Street houses. Rehabilitation alternatives should include additions to the existing houses and/or compatible, adjacent new construction. Feasible alternatives that would preserve and protect the historic properties should be adopted and implemented.

The Chancery-St. John's Seminary consists of several historic buildings and landscape features that are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places together as a historic district. The Chancery-St. John's Seminary area meets Criterion C of the National Register as one of the finest collections of Roman Catholic Church buildings in Boston, displaying a range of architectural designs designed by Boston-based architects including Maginnis and Walsh, representing an evolution of the site as it reflects educational and monastic architectural trends over time. Because of the particular placement and arrangement of buildings within the designed landscape features and consideration of the topography, the site is an outstanding example of a well-preserved cultural landscape in the City of Boston. The site meets Criteria A, B and C at the local and state levels (and criteria considerations A and G) for its associations with the evolution of the archdiocese of Boston and the social and educational role it played in shaping the city, for its associations with Archbishop William Cardinal O'Connell, and for its outstanding architectural styles and types (36 CFR 60).

The proposed construction of new buildings and roadways at the Chancery-St. John's Seminary would result in adverse visual effects through the introduction of new buildings that are out of character and would severely alter the character and setting of the Chancery-St. John's Seminary historic district (950 CMR 71.05(c)), as well as result in an adverse effect to its historic landscape (950 CMR 71.05(a)). The proposed Fine Arts construction is currently sited immediately adjacent to the Cardinal's Residence, and the footprint shown as #10 on Figure 3-1 suggests a building(s) of major scale. Also proposed for Chancery-St. John's Seminary site are dormitories of 4-5 stories in height (#7 and 8 on Figure 3-1) and a parking garage of up to 5 stories (#5 on Figure 3-1). The total accumulation of new construction on this rolling topography will result in severe visual impacts. The historic buildings in the Chancery-St. John's Seminary site were historically sited and constructed with specific consideration of the landscape and topography. The result was a cohesive, pastoral landscape with designed elements and spaces and planned views and vistas. The IMP must consider alternatives to the quantity and siting of new buildings that would avoid adverse visual effects to historic properties

These comments are offered to assist in compliance with Mass. General Laws Chapter 9, sections 26-27C (950 CMR 71), should any state agency funding, license, or permit be required for these projects. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Brona Simon
Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer
Massachusetts Historical Commission

xc: ~~John FitzGerald and Gerald Autler, Boston Redevelopment Authority~~
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