



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Department of Planning and Development

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February 5, 2008

VIA TELECOPY AND REGULAR MAIL

John Fitzgerald, Project Manager
Boston Redevelopment Authority
Boston City Hall
One City Hall Square, 9th Floor
Boston, MA 02201-1007

RE: Boston College Institutional Master Plan Notification Form – Review Comments

Dear Mr. Fitzgerald:

This letter summarizes the comments and concerns of the Planning and Development Department regarding proposed changes to the Boston College campuses as described in the Boston College Institutions Master Plan Notification Form, dated December 5, 2007. Our remarks also relay concerns from neighbors most affected by changes on the campuses who have met to discuss them and express their interests. We hope that our comments and concerns will be taken into consideration by the BRA during its review process and when moving forward towards implementation of projects included in this master plan.

First, it is important to say that we applaud and support the master planning process that Boston College initiated in 2004. We appreciate the willingness of the College officials and its planners to engage in conversations with affected constituencies. It was truly a collaborative and productive process that we hope and trust will continue.

The final ten-year plan is impressive in its detail and recommendations. However, because the details of building designs are not yet refined, our focus is conceptual and our comments focus particularly on alterations that will take place in and may effect the City of Newton. We look forward to reviewing details regarding building alternatives, traffic and parking, building design and function, change in campus circulation, design considerations, construction management and infrastructure at a scale which lend itself to complete analysis at some point in the future. In the meantime, we offer the following thoughts:

A. Chestnut Hill Campus (City of Newton portion)

The proposed demolition of Cushing Hall (-64,000 S.F.) and a service building will make way for a new Science Center (+100,000 S.F.). Located behind Campion Hall, the center should have little visual impact on the Beacon Street neighborhood.

The proposed demolition of McElroy Commons (-138,000 S.F.) will make way for the new Humanities Academic Offices and Classrooms (+125,000 S.F.). The submitted site plan seems to depict the new five-story Humanities Building situated on Beacon Street with limited setback from the street. The existing building to the east is the six-story Carney Hall, which is located 40 feet back from Beacon Street on the McElroy side, and 28 feet on the McGuinn Hall side. The Planning Department strongly recommends that the new Humanities Building be set back a minimum of 28 feet and preferably 40 feet so it is more in keeping with other facilities nearby and a better complement to the streetscape. Additionally, planners for Boston College should consider stepping the upper stories of the proposed academic building back in height.

The proposed Humanities Academic Offices and Classrooms (+125,000 S.F.) may include an underground parking facility for up to 90 parking spaces. The Planning Department strongly supports an underground parking facility under this building and urges consideration of more underground parking wherever any new building is proposed to be constructed consistent with this master plan.

The renovation of Carney Hall (101,000 S.F.) should have minimal visual impact on the Beacon Street neighborhood.

The Institutional Master Plan shows two new buildings on the College Road frontage. Stokes Common (+85,000 S.F.) is a five-story building that will connect to the existing Lyons Hall (84,000 S.F.), which is located 44 feet back from College Road. Stokes Hall is proposed to be sited with little or no setback for a significant portion of its length along College Road. In this case, it is adjacent to a residential neighborhood, although Boston College owns nearly all of the former single-family residences on the west side of College Road. The second building being proposed nearby on the College Road frontage is a new five-story Academic Building for Nursing and Social Work (+75,000 S.F.), and also has little or no setback from College Road. The Planning Department strongly recommends that the new Stokes Common and the Academic Building for Nursing and Social Work be set back from College Road so as not to create a canyon effect along this public way. Additionally, planners for Boston College should give further consideration to providing additional underground parking in either or both Stokes Common and the new Academic Building for Nursing and Social Work to make up for the spaces lost in the existing "dust bowl" area.

B. Newton Law School Campus.

The renovation of Stuart Hall and the infill project of the Smith Wing (+23,000 S.F.) should have minimal visual effect on the Mill Street neighborhood. The site can easily accommodate the additional students, parking and vehicle trips. However, the Planning Department has an ongoing concern with the amount of uninterrupted impervious surfaces (for parking) at this campus and recommends that the College consider reducing impervious surfaces whenever possible. In addition, the City's Zoning Ordinance requires a five-foot wide evergreen buffer around all parking facilities, a minimum of 5 % interior landscaping, which includes interior tree plantings at one tree per 20 parking stalls.

C. Chestnut Hill Campus (City of Boston portion)

The plan depicts three areas for construction of undergraduate housing; one will replace More Hall (-64,000 S.F.) at the corner of Commonwealth Avenue and St. Thomas More Road. Another new residential housing complex is proposed near the corner of Beacon Street and St. Thomas More Road at Shea Field and a third building is proposed in the interior of the lower campus. These structures do not abut existing facilities; however, the same care should be taken to design and orient the buildings in a way that projects a positive face towards the street frontages and have setbacks that allow for the open space and attractive landscaping on the public streetscape.

The University Center (+245,000 S.F.) and the Recreation Center (+200,000 S.F.) will be built where the Flynn Student Recreation Complex (+118,000 S.F.) and Edmonds Hall (-245,000 S.F.) stand, respectively. *(Note that the University Center is a critically important facility and needs to be completed as soon as possible, but some consideration should also be given to siting the new dorms nearby rather than at the edge of the college property.)*

If possible, student access and circulation (including parking for pickup and delivery as students move in and out or their buildings are serviced) should be internal to the campus and not rely solely on external streets. The plan also depicts a 350-parking stall addition to the existing Beacon Street Parking garage. The Planning Department supports placement of these spaces in the Beacon Street Garage and, as previously noted, wherever any new building is proposed within the Chestnut Hill Campus underground parking should be given serious consideration. It is important that Boston College not only provide adequate parking on campus but parking located near its associated uses should avoid spillover impacts into the neighborhood as faculty, staff and even students look for more convenient locations outside the campus.

D. Brighton Campus

There are two areas where undergraduate housing will be constructed on the Brighton campus: one on the northern corner of Commonwealth Avenue at Lake Street (+100,000 S.F.) and the other (+150,000 S.F.) to be located between St. Williams Hall and the STM Library. A third facility, Jesuit Housing (+50,000 S.F.) will be located on the east side of Jackson Street. Given that most of the academic buildings are on the opposite side of Commonwealth Avenue, pedestrian travel between the two will be significant and safe crossing should be assured for students. Improvements in the area should be considered to assure the best possible means for safe pedestrian travel over and across this busy street.

Several proposed buildings should have no visual impact on the neighborhood. The first is the renovation of Bishop Peterson Hall (70,000 S.F.), the Cardinal's residence (23,000 S.F.) and Chancery and Creagh Library (12,000 S.F.), although it will contribute to increases in traffic and the need for on-site parking. The Brighton Athletics Center (+100,000 S.F.) will be built in place of three parking lots, just east of St. John's Hall. The last of the new buildings is a Library Storage Building (+14,000 S.F.) attached to the existing STM Library.

The plan depicts a new Fine Arts Building (+86,000 S.F.) being constructed on the north side of Commonwealth Avenue, apparently without any setback. The Planning Department is very interested in working with planners for Boston College to study footprint options for the

new Fine Arts Building with regard to setback from Commonwealth Avenue, and believes that any final solution for building placement be mindful of any final plans for relocation of the Boston College Green Line Station. The Planning Department strongly favors the center platform for this station, as it appears that making the station fully accessible cannot be accomplished at the existing station location on the north side of Commonwealth Avenue.

The plan also depicts a 500-parking stall garage in the center of the Brighton Campus. Again, the Planning Department favors construction of parking in structure to reduce impervious surfaces and promote better use of available land.

E. General Overview

As previously noted, since design details are not available that would enable a more specific analysis of the individual buildings and their impacts relative to the City's zoning standards and consistency with the *Newton Comprehensive Plan*, the focus of this review is on any conceptual concerns. The Planning Department recommends that following items be given further study and consideration:

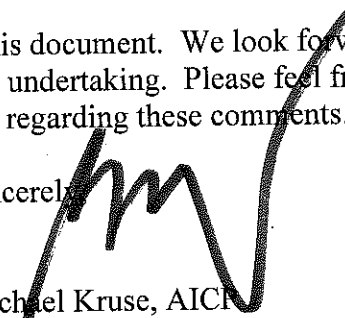
- Internal vehicle circulation patterns and the means of addressing pedestrian flow and potential conflicts with vehicles inside and around campus, as well as impacts on surrounding areas so that as much as possible, college generated vehicular traffic stays inside. (For example, what happens to the existing internal bus drop off near the existing garage at the back of Conte Forum.)
- Additional opportunities for consolidation of parking underground wherever possible.
- Inclusion of pick-up and drop-off areas for students and visitors as well as loading zones for short-term access to dorms.
- Clarification of how students will cross existing streets, including Hammond Street, College Road, St. Thomas More Road and Commonwealth Avenue, including consideration of possible over- or under-passes.
- Relocation of existing St. Thomas More Road to the east side of the St. Thomas More Hall site with or without changes to and relocation of the Boston College Green Line Station.
- Clarification of how the shuttle bus routes will work in the new roadway configuration.
- Consideration of post ten year plans involving Newton with the Boston College Neighborhood Council and the Chestnut Hill Historic District Commission, among others.
- Articulation of buildings and footprints that foster a sense of community within the campus and complement existing structures along the streetscape in terms of scale and design, as viewed from within the campus and from the public streets. While the College has worked to provide itself with additional green space inside the campus, it would be inconsistent with its community service mission to wall itself off from surrounding neighborhoods.
- Setbacks that are consistent with the existing character of the neighborhoods upon which the proposed buildings front, so the new buildings do not "turn their backs" on the City (e.g., College Road, Beacons Street, St. Thomas More Road, and

Commonwealth Avenue) and attractive landscaping and open spaces along those street frontages.

- Placement of loading docks away from residential areas.
- Orientation of the new Humanities Academic Building and the Academic Building for Nursing and Social Work so they are pulled away from the corner of College Road and Beacon Street and form an archway that both greets visitors entering from the outside and embraces an interior courtyard.
- Additional landscaping of existing parking facilities.
- A construction management plan that includes truck routes and minimizes impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Impacts on neighborhood during special events, particularly athletic events during construction and thereafter, with special attention to the impacts of student and visitor parking on adjacent residential streets.
- Limits on the acquisition of single-family residences in abutting neighborhoods and any further campus expansion into existing residential areas.
- Design, colors and materials that complement existing buildings on campus and consideration of an institutional scale that is context sensitive.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this document. We look forward to future opportunities to provide input on this significant undertaking. Please feel free to contact me at 617-796-1130 with any questions you may have regarding these comments. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Michael Kruse, AICP
Director of Planning and Development

Cc: Mayor David B. Cohen
R. Lisle Baker, President, Board of Aldermen
Alderman Sydra Schnipper
Alderman Verne Vance
Ruthanne Fuller, President, Chestnut Hill Association
Thomas J. Keady, Jr., Vice President, Office of Governmental and Community
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