

Boston Groundwater Trust

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April 6, 2011

Mr. John FitzGerald, Project Manager
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201-1007

Subject: 41 Westland Avenue

Dear Mr. FitzGerald:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Project Notification Form for 41 Westland Avenue. The Boston Groundwater Trust was established by the Boston City Council to monitor groundwater levels in sections of the City where the integrity of building foundations is threatened by low groundwater levels and to make recommendations for solving the problem. Therefore, my comments are restricted to groundwater related issues.

I appreciate the proponent's acknowledgement that the project site is located in the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District and commitment to meeting the requirements imposed under Article 32 of the Zoning Code. This is an area where we have often measured particularly low groundwater levels, and there have been multiple buildings nearby on Hemenway Street that have required substantial and expensive repairs because of low groundwater related foundation failures.

During the scoping session, the proponent stated that the required recharge system would be installed under the sidewalk on private property. I look forward to seeing the plans before the project is reviewed by the Board of Appeals.

As acknowledged in the PNF, the project also must demonstrate that it will be designed and constructed in a way that it will not cause a reduction in area groundwater levels. The language in the document makes it appear that the existing basement extends below Elevation 7, measured against Boston City Base; during the scoping session, the proponent came to the conclusion that this might not be the case. I look forward to clarification from the proponent of the elevation of the bottom slab. I look forward to confirmation that the garage does not have a sump pump and commitment to do any necessary waterproofing to make sure that groundwater will not infiltrate the renovated structure.

As our Technical Coordinator, Christian Simonelli, noted during the scoping session, the trust has a groundwater observation well located in the public sidewalk on Burbank Street very near the project location. Provisions should be taken to assure that the well is not damaged during construction. Burbank Street has chronically low groundwater levels, and this well is a critical part of our infrastructure for monitoring what is happening there.

I look forward to working with the proponent and the Authority to assure that the project can have only positive impacts on area groundwater levels.

Very truly yours,

Elliott Laffer
Executive Director

Cc: Kathleen Pedersen, BRA
Maura Zlody, BED