

Boston Groundwater Trust

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Elliott Laffer

August 20, 2013

Katelyn Sullivan
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201-1007

Subject: Boston University

Dear Ms. Sullivan:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Institutional Master Plan Notification Form for the First Amendment to Boston University's current Institutional Master Plan. The Boston Groundwater Trust was established by the Boston City Council to monitor groundwater levels in sections of Boston where the integrity of building foundations, especially those supported on wooden pilings, is threatened by low groundwater levels and to make recommendations for solving the problem. Therefore, my comments are limited to groundwater related issues.

The IMPNF includes a proposal for a new Center for Integrated Life Sciences and Engineering Building located at 610 Commonwealth Avenue. While the location is not in the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District which extends to the other side of Commonwealth Avenue, it appears that the project may be located on, or very close to, made land. Based on conversations with the proponent and its consultant during and immediately after the scoping session, it is very possible that the adjacent Morse Auditorium, constructed in 1904 as one of the first buildings on this section of Commonwealth Avenue, is supported on wood pilings. This increases the importance of the new building, which is likely to include a basement level according to the IMPNF, be constructed in a way that will assure that it does not cause a reduction in groundwater levels.

The proponent agreed in those conversations to research the likelihood that Morse Auditorium is supported on wooden pilings. It would be very helpful to us in our work if the University would share any information it discovers about the building's foundation with the Trust.

I look forward to working with the proponent and the Authority to assure that any projects constructed under the Institutional Master Plan cannot have a negative impact on area groundwater levels.

Very truly yours,

Elliott Laffer
Executive Director

Cc: Kathleen Pedersen, BRA
Maura Zlody, BED