

July 28, 2006

Mr. Gerald Autler, Senior Project Manager
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201-1007

Subject: Northeastern University Residence Hall I, Building J, and
Residence Hall K

Dear Mr. Autler:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Project Notification Form for these new buildings proposed by Northeastern University. The Boston Groundwater Trust was established by the Boston City Council to monitor groundwater levels in those sections of the City where building foundations are threatened by lowered groundwater and to make recommendations for solving the problem. As such, my comments are limited to groundwater related issues.

I appreciate very much the stated commitment of the University, offered both in the PNF and during the recent BRA scoping session, that buildings will be designed to not impact area groundwater levels. The University has experience with the consequences that can occur when groundwater levels remain too low for an extended period of time.

As the PNF notes, the Parcel 18 West project, incorporating Residence Hall I and Building J, is not within the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District, and the GCOD requirements do not apply. However, it might still be worthwhile to consider the feasibility of a recharge system to capture rainwater and maintain groundwater levels.

Residence Hall K is, again as noted in the PNF, within the GCOD. I appreciate the commitment to build without perimeter foundation drains. I also appreciate the commitment to meet the recharge requirements of the GCOD. As I did at the scoping session, I would like to again point out that the recharge requirement is misstated in the PNF. Rather than capturing and recharging the water from a 1 inch rainfall event, the system must be designed to capture one inch of water across the surface area of the building, with no allowance for recharge during the event. This makes the required storage capacity a clearer calculated value.

The section of St. Botolph Street on which the new residence hall will be located is one on which we have seen relatively low groundwater levels. That makes it particularly important that groundwater issues are treated properly as this building is designed and constructed. It also suggests that it would be appropriate to add some additional groundwater monitoring capacity in the immediate area of the building that would be incorporated into the Trust's network after construction.

I look forward to working with the University, its consultants, and the Authority to assure that these projects will have only positive impacts on groundwater levels in the area.

Very truly yours,

Elliott Laffer
Executive Director

Cc: Maura Zlody, BED