

Boston Groundwater Trust

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December 3, 2010

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

Subject: Northeastern University

Dear Mr. Autler:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Institutional Master Plan Notification Forms for the Fourth and Fifth Amendments to the Northeastern University Institutional Master Plan. 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 limited to groundwater related issues.

I appreciate the acknowledgement by the proponent that all of the proposed projects are located within the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District and the commitment to meet the standards imposed under Article 32 where they apply. While the IMPNF documents do not include enough detail to be sure of that applicability, it is fairly likely that the project at 140 the Fenway (the former Forsyth Dental Institute) is large enough to trigger recharge requirements because it exceeds 50% of the assessed value of the building. The nature of the work to be undertaken there, as well as that at the two other sites covered under the Fourth Amendment, consisting entirely of interior renovations, is unlikely to cause a reduction in groundwater levels on the sites or adjacent lots.

The project covered in the Fifth Amendment involves major new construction. It seems clear that it will trigger the requirements under Article 32. Rising 17 stories, the project will also include two basement levels; this will likely extend its occupiable space below Elevation 7 measured relative to Boston City Base, another GCOD trigger. In addition to recharge requirements, the project will also need to include, in a certification stamped by a registered professional engineer, an explanation of how it will not cause a reduction in groundwater levels.

As plans are further developed, I look forward to working with the proponent and the Authority to assure that the projects can have only positive impacts on area groundwater levels.

Very truly yours,

Elliott Laffer
Executive Director

Cc: Kathleen Pedersen, BRA
Maura Zlody, BED