

# Boston Groundwater Trust

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## Executive Director

Elliott Laffer

July 8, 2013

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 for Northeastern University. 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 is threatened by low groundwater levels and to make recommendations for solving the problem. Therefore, my comments are limited to groundwater related issues.

As noted at multiple points in the IMP, the portion of Northeastern's campus north of the MBTA Southwest Corridor is located in the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District established in Article 32 of the Boston Zoning Code. Having been required to repair buildings that have suffered from piling problems in the past, the university is well aware of the importance of maintaining adequate groundwater levels. As noted in the IMP, Northeastern has installed multiple recharge systems as part of recent construction projects. I am pleased with the university's goal, as stated in the IMP, "to recharge the equivalent of 1-inch over the impervious area of any new development if feasible whether or not that development lies within the GCOD."

Article 32 also requires that proponents of projects to which it is applicable certify, in a filing stamped by a professional engineer registered in Massachusetts, how the project will not have a negative impact on groundwater levels on site or on adjoining lots. Several of the proposed projects that lie within the GCOD may, according to the IMP, include underground parking or other below grade uses. It is critical that these projects meet this requirement before final construction approvals are granted. Because the projects, as part of an IMP, will not be required to go before the Board of Appeals for zoning relief, the proponent should commit in writing, before the IMP is approved, to meet this standard.

I look forward to continuing to work with the university and the Authority to assure that the projects undertaken under the master plan can have only positive impacts on area groundwater levels.

Very truly yours,

Elliott Laffer  
Executive Director

Cc: Kathleen Pedersen, BRA  
Maura Zlody, BED