

April 28, 2005

Tai Y. Lim, Economic Development
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201-1007

Subject: Boston Children's Museum Expansion and Renovation Project

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Project Notification Form filed by the Children's Museum. The Boston Groundwater Trust was established by the Boston City Council to monitor groundwater levels in sections of the city where wood piling building foundations are threatened by declining groundwater levels and to make recommendations to help in solving the problem. As such, our comments are limited to groundwater related issues.

While the Trust does not yet have monitoring wells in the vicinity of the Children's Museum, a condition that we expect will change later this year, we have heard and read press reports about deteriorating pilings supporting nearby buildings. This expansion and renovation project may offer an opportunity to both provide some mitigation for this problem and to educate young people on how what's happening below the ground can threaten the integrity of structures and demonstrate how a building can also be part of the solution.

I note in the section on sustainable design a commitment to study the use of alternative management strategies and to use those, if viable, to educate the public. A recharge system to handle the stormwater runoff from the existing roof, now drained by a main in Sleeper Street, would allow the recapture of this valuable resource. It would also be an opportunity to show why we need to keep groundwater levels up and how this can be done. Because it drains a much larger surface, and because it is farther from the Fort Point Channel, recharge from this system would be more valuable than recharge from the new roof over the addition.

The Trust would appreciate the opportunity to speak with the proponent, its consultants, and the Authority about the feasibility of installing such a recharge system. We appreciate the opportunity to work cooperatively to help to overcome this threat to so much of Boston's historic character.

Very truly yours,

Elliott Laffer
Executive Director

Cc: John Walser, BRA
Maura Zlody, Boston Environment Dept