

November 2, 2007

Ms. Kristen Kara, Project Manager
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201-1007

Subject: Boston East

Dear Ms. Kara:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Project Notification Form for the Boston East project. 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 lowered groundwater levels and to make recommendations for solving the problem. As such, my comments are limited to groundwater related issues.

While the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District does not include East Boston, there are areas in that part of the City where groundwater levels are extremely low and many buildings are supported on wooden pilings that are subject to deterioration when exposed to such conditions. The Trust has extended its network of observation wells in East Boston; two of those wells are located close to the project site. The well at the corner of Border and Decatur Streets, adjacent to the site, has been measured at around Elevation 5 feet relative to Boston City Base. This level is of concern, especially in East Boston where many buildings have had their pilings cut off at higher levels than are common elsewhere in Boston. The groundwater level is also of concern because it is so low while being less than a block from the harbor. Of even more concern is the groundwater level two blocks away at the corner of Border Street and Central Square, which is 4-5 feet lower.

Because of these low groundwater levels, the project should take all possible steps to assure that it cannot cause reductions at either current elevations or if repair of infrastructure causes those levels to increase. The project includes an underground garage. I was pleased to read that the below grade space will have waterproofed slabs and foundation walls. It is important to make sure by design and construction methods that the underslab drainage system not have the ability to remove groundwater from the upper aquifer that is critical to keeping wood pilings wet. It

would be helpful to install another groundwater observation well between the two mentioned above and to monitor these wells before and during construction to make sure that the project is not contributing to a reduction in level. After construction, the new well, which should be installed in accordance with our standard specifications, should be turned over to the Trust for incorporation into our monitoring network.

I look forward to working with the proponent and the Authority on measures that assure that the project cannot have negative impacts on groundwater levels in this sensitive area.

Very truly yours,

Elliott Laffer
Executive Director

Cc: Kathleen Pedersen, BRA
Maura Zlody, BED