

# BOSTON

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## GROUNDWATER TRUST

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November 1, 2004

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Elliott Laffer

Mr. James Gribaudo  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
One City Hall Square  
Boston, MA 02201-1007

Subject: West End Residences At Emerson Place

Dear Mr. Gribaudo:

The Boston Groundwater Trust was established by the Boston City Council in response to the threat to wood pile foundations caused by reductions in the groundwater level. Thousands of historic structures in Boston's 2000 acres of filled-land area are supported on timber pile foundations. As such, our comments on the Draft Project Impact Report are limited to groundwater level related issues.

The proposed project is located on the edge of Boston's historic shoreline. It appears from the description of subsurface conditions in Section 4 that the Eastern Site may be on original land, while the Western Site is likely on filled land. Because of the project's location, we request that the proponent survey the surrounding area to determine if which, if any, nearby buildings are supported by wood pilings. We appreciate the proponent's assertion that no such foundations exist in the area, but would like to see documentation that confirms that statement, particularly as it pertains to the nearby Bulfinch Pavilion building at Massachusetts General Hospital.

We also appreciate the proponent's intention to install a groundwater monitoring system to assure that drawdown during construction will not threaten nearby foundations. We would like to see more details of the monitoring plan and its contingency measures prior to approval of the project.

The proponent asserts that the project will have little adverse effect on long term groundwater levels because the site is largely covered. We would like to see a calculation of how much stormwater currently percolates through the site surface to the groundwater, how much would penetrate if the project as proposed is approved, and what steps will be taken to make up for the difference if any.

We acknowledge the proponent's statement that long term groundwater levels may be monitored using observation wells installed for the project, which will be made available to the City.

The project includes two underground garages, including one in the Western Site (Building C). We request that a registered professional engineer certify that the garages have been designed to resist infiltration by groundwater so that no dry weather pumping of water from the garages will occur. We further request that

the proponent or its successors be required to submit annually a certification by a registered professional engineer that no dry weather pumping has occurred in the previous twelve months. Aging leaky basements have been the cause of groundwater drawdowns in other parts of the city; prevention of this condition is a critical long term requirement to overcome groundwater problems.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this project. We at the Trust look forward to continuing to work with the Authority to help overcome the threat that depleted groundwater levels poses to the vitality of our city.

Very truly yours,

Elliott Laffer  
Executive Director