



September 8, 2014

Chris H. Busch
Senior Waterfront Planner
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

RE: Municipal Harbor Planning Process and the Chiofaro Company Harbor Garage
Redevelopment Concept Proposal

Dear Mr. Busch:

The Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy is pleased to have been part of the MHP Advisory Committee process to date. The presentations, dialogue and draft planning recommendations have been productive and raised many important issues. With the Committee's recent focus on The Chiofaro Company's proposed Harbor Garage redevelopment, we feel it is timely to offer feedback on the opportunities and challenges this project can offer for the Greenway in particular.

The Harbor Garage site sits in the heart of the Greenway and the downtown waterfront. It is an eyesore, an uninspiring edge to the emerging Greenway District, and a barrier to the Boston waterfront. Retaining the status quo is unacceptable when there is an opportunity to transform this critical waterfront block into something spectacular. The Conservancy supports replacing the garage with a signature multi-use development which would open connections to the harbor and reimagine a dynamic four season public realm. This is an opportunity that should be embraced now.

There will continue to be discussions about the optimal height and massing for the project and the right mix of uses. We believe the current proposal warrants being advanced into the next phase of design development and environmental review. Issues critical to the Conservancy are providing an engaging ground plane of activities; minimizing shadow and wind impacts on the parks; and improving local circulation. To insure that the Greenway experience remains vibrant and enjoyable, there must be a thoughtful, forward-looking focus on the public realm and innovative thinking about circulation.

The Conservancy recommends that the BRA advance a public open space design which integrates the disparate spaces adjacent to the existing Harbor Garage. The Harbor Garage redevelopment project necessitates creative, big-picture thinking about coordinating the area's public realm spaces. The area does not necessarily need more outdoor park space as much as it needs better coordinated and integrated public spaces. The current Public Realm Plan draft is a good start, but must be strengthened. The adjacent Greenway parks (parcels 15 & 16) have little relationship to abutting uses. Many open spaces around the Harbor Garage and Harbor Towers, the India Street corridor, the plaza in front of the Aquarium are far less than the sum of their parts; currently they are disconnected and largely



unwelcoming. The Harbor Garage redevelopment project offers a major opportunity for improving the design, programming, and integration across these different spaces to create a rich, year-round mix of public experiences.

The Conservancy also recommends that the BRA initiate planning for a shared public realm of local streets and sidewalks in the waterfront area surrounding the Garage. Innovatively managing circulation in the Greenway District and the Downtown Waterfront is essential to the quality of the public experience. The Greenway District has become a river of walkers, bikers, and joggers, fed by the Harborwalk, the Walk to the Sea, the Freedom Trail, and attractions like Faneuil Hall, the Aquarium, the ferries, and the Greenway Carousel. Local circulation, particularly for pedestrians, will be a critical component of the discussion when considering the increase of people that will be introduced into the immediate area. The BRA and BTD should advance the thinking about a shared-streets approach—rather than the traditional model of separate, grade separated vehicular streets.

The Harbor Garage redevelopment presents an enormous opportunity to rethink and vastly improve the existing public realm and experience for residents, workers and visitors. We are excited to be part of this innovative, forward looking dialogue.

Sincerely,

Linda Jonash
Director of Planning and Design, Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy
Member, Municipal Harbor Planning Advisory Committee

Cc:
Jesse Brackenbury, Executive Director, Greenway Conservancy
Members of the Municipal Harbor Planning Advisory Committee
Kairos Shen, Richard McGuinness, BRA