



West End Civic Association



NORTH END / WATERFRONT RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

December 15, 2022

Gabriela Coletta
Councilor, District 1
1 City Hall Square, Room 550
Boston, MA 02201-2043

Subject: Proposed Development at 251 Causeway St. and Adjacent Parcels

Dear Councilor Coletta:

By this letter, we provide additional information following our meeting with you on September 27 regarding a proposed 700-foot skyscraper at 251 Causeway Street and two adjacent North Washington Street parcels. Attendees included your Chief of Staff Ellie Sanchez; Susann Benoit and Louise Thomas of the West End Civic Association (WECA); Victor Brogna and David Kubiak of the North End/Waterfront Residents Association (NEWRA); Rosemary Macero, a resident of Charlestown Navy Yard and member of the Charlestown Neighborhood Council; and Christine Savage, a resident of Strada 234.

In letters we sent to Chief of Planning/BPDA Director Arthur Jemison in June and September and copied to you, we requested that the BPDA/BRA not conduct an Article 80 project review of the 251 Causeway proposal or any other development proposal that significantly violates current zoning unless and until the City completes an area-wide planning process with public participation to update or affirm area zoning. In the September 27 meeting, you asked, "What do you want to see there (at 251 Causeway St. and adjacent parcels)?"

After the meeting, we received information describing recent (2000-2006) planning and rezoning for the Bulfinch Triangle District, which we summarize below. **Based on that comprehensive planning process and resulting zoning, our position is that any development must comply with current zoning, including maximum height of 100 feet and maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 8.** This position was confirmed and supported by vote of attendees at the North End/Waterfront Residents Association (NEWRA) meeting on November 10, 2022, and by votes of WECA's Board and members of its Zoning and Planning Committee on November 7, 2022.

The proposed 700-foot skyscraper **far exceeds** the current maximum height of 100 feet, maximum density (Floor Area Ratio, FAR) and other protections in Article 46, Bulfinch Triangle District, of the Zoning Code. Such a development would exacerbate already dangerous public safety conditions in the Keany Square intersection for both drivers and pedestrians, including the hundreds of Eliot School children and thousands of Freedom Trail visitors that pass through the intersection or across its intersecting streets each day. At a recent public meeting on the status of North Washington Street Bridge construction, we were told by a MassDOT senior engineer that Keany Square is the busiest intersection in the city and perhaps in the state. A larger development would also have impacts to the West End, North End, and Charlestown

neighborhoods, as well as public resource areas including the new North Washington Street Bridge/Park and waterfront parks on both sides of the Charles River and the Upper Inner Harbor.

We have attached copies of two documents that describe a major state and city planning effort conducted in the early 2000's. The documents include a Draft RFP dated May 8, 2003 that describes Design and Development Guidelines established by the Bulfinch Triangle Development Advisory Committee (BTDAC), whose members included Bulfinch Triangle, Downtown North, West End and North End business and residential stakeholders and representatives of the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority (MTA, now MassDOT), the MBTA, and the City of Boston. The BRA facilitated the BTDAC planning process. The BTDAC development guidelines included "**General Guidelines**" that applied "throughout the Bulfinch Triangle Area." These guidelines subsequently received approval by the BRA Board of Directors as the comprehensive "Bulfinch Triangle District Plan" and the "Central Artery Special District Plan" which set forth "the planning policies, development controls, and design guidelines" for these districts and are incorporated into Article 46 of the Zoning Code.

The **General Guidelines** included a maximum height of 100 feet and maximum FAR of 8, both subject to conditions. These are the same limits in the district plans noted above and in Article 46 of the Zoning Code.

The second attachment is a **copy of the Mayor's Central Artery Completion Task Force letter of June 1, 2005.** The letter listed many of the BTDAC's design and development guidelines, including the maximum building height of 100 feet and maximum FAR of 8. Also referenced by the Task Force was the guidelines' "primary goal" to "(r)estore and retain character of the District - suitable for adoption as part of a single National Register District." Most interesting are the Task Force recommendations on page 7, which included "prohibiting buildings from going much higher than 100 feet," and "public agencies continu(ing) to work closely with the BTDAC and adjoining neighborhood groups."

Given the comprehensive planning of the Bulfinch Triangle District by the BRA, the Bulfinch Triangle District Advisory Committee, and the Mayor's Central Artery Completion Task Force, we and the City should adhere to the development guidelines and resultant zoning, including the maximum height of 100 feet and maximum FAR of 8 for the entire Bulfinch Triangle District, including 251 Causeway Street and abutting North Washington Street parcels. We therefore request your support in holding to the current zoning.

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to have discussed our concerns with you. We look forward to further discussions, in part to gain your support of the Bulfinch District becoming part of a single National Register District as was envisioned by the Mayor's Central Artery Completion Task Force.

Sincerely,



Susann Benoit, Chair
Zoning and Planning Committee, WECA



Victor Brogna, Chair
Zoning, Licensing and Construction, NEWRA

and on behalf of Louise Thomas, David Kubiak, Rosemary Macero and Christine Savage

cc: Councilor Kenzie Bok, District 8
Cheryl Delgreco, President, NEWRA
Joseph McDonald, President, WECA