

Public Meeting
Review of the Project Notification Form for Harvard's Allston Science Complex
Honan-Allston Library
Monday, November 13, 2006
6:30 p.m.

Harvard Allston Task Force Members

Paul Berkeley
John Bruno
Cathy Campbell
John Cusack
Rita DiGesse
Brian Gibbons
Mike Hanlon
Harry Mattison
Ray Melone
Tim Norton
Brent Whelan

Harvard University

John Audi
Harris Band
Nathalie Beauvais
Will Donham
Chris Gordon
Lauren Marshall
Kevin McCluskey
Dave Moffatt
Allison Nichols
Alison Reinhardt
Kathy Spiegelman
Maile Takahashi
Stefan Behnisch, Behnisch Architekten
Chris Conklin, VHB, Inc.

City of Boston

Gerald Autler, Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA)
Vineet Gupta, Boston Transportation Department (BTD)
Linda Kowlacky, Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA)
Representative Mike Moran

The meeting started at 6:40 p.m.

Gerald Autler (BRA) explained that the public meeting was being held in response to Harvard University's filing of a Project Notification Form (PNF) for its proposed science complex on Western Avenue.

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Gerald explained the review process required by the City of Boston for all higher educational institutions in Boston and the specific requirements for Harvard. Harvard has an existing Institutional Master Plan (IMP) for its Allston Campus. In April 2006 Harvard filed an Institutional Master Plan Notification Form (IMP/NF) to amend its existing IMP to include three new projects: (1) science building on Western Avenue; (2) Harvard University Art Museum Allston Brighton Center at 1360/1380 Soldier's Field Road; and (3) interim art facilities at the former Verizon building. Harvard is required to file a PNF for each of the proposed projects in the IMP/NF. On October 27, 2006 Harvard filed the PNF for the first science complex, which prompted tonight's public meeting. The BRA told Harvard that before it will approve the amendment for the IMP, and the projects within that amendment, it will require a new IMP/NF explaining Harvard's broader development plans and long-term vision for its Allston campus for the next 10 years. Harvard has expressed its intention to file the IMP/NF for the new master plan in January which will initiate another public meeting to review the document, a public review and comment period, and a scoping determination issued by the BRA.

Gerald said that community members have expressed concerns that there is not enough information in the PNF filing for Harvard's science complex but he said that a PNF filing is really only intended to address information about the parameters of that specific project. The PNF filing is supposed to generate additional questions that community members and the city want Harvard to address in a more detailed Project Impact Report. The PNF filing is not meant to be a plan but to provide baseline information that the city and community can then provide comments on. After the BRA issues a scoping determination to Harvard about the science complex, Harvard will have to respond to the questions and concerns and file a Project Impact Report for the science project. Gerald also said that a lot of the questions that community members have will be addressed in Harvard's new IMP in January.

Questions/Comments:

Audience Member: Do the comments and concerns raised at tonight's meeting get recorded and incorporated into the scoping determination?

Gerald Autler: I will record the general themes and concerns that are brought up tonight but I would suggest that you also submit written comments to me so that they can be an official part of the public record and incorporated into the scoping determination. The most useful comments for me are those that identify very specific questions and concerns.

Audience Member: Could the meeting minutes from tonight's meeting be an official part of the scoping determination?

Gerald Autler: We have never done that before but the minutes are certainly a part of the public record.

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Audience Member: Can people provide comments to the BRA after tonight's meeting?

Gerald Autler: Yes, people can send me their written comments. As Harvard files additional documents there will be more public comment periods. When an institution files a document for its Master Plan it starts the clock for a public comment period after which, the BRA issues a scoping determination to the Institution. Once that is issued Harvard can take as much time as it needs to revise its plan and respond to the community's questions and concerns.

Audience Member: I want to make sure all the community members here know that the deadline to provide comments to the BRA is Wednesday, November 29th so you have two weeks to turn in your written comments to the BRA.

[*Note: After the public meeting, the BRA extended the comment period to December 15, 2006]

Gerald Autler: The questions and comments should be focused on the science project and should identify areas where you would like more information. I'm not going to disregard your comments if they arrive to me on the 30th of November but they don't need to be long and elaborate.

Audience Member: Can you explain more about what the scoping determination is?

Gerald Autler: The scoping determination for the PNF is a compilation of the city's and community's comments about what information Harvard needs to provide in the project impact report filing. At the last meeting I handed out the Article 80 document which provides an outline of the specific categories that are required for a large project review like Harvard's science building. You can find this document online at the BRA's web site.

Audience Member: You haven't told us exactly where the science project is located.

Gerald Autler turned the meeting over to Kathy Spiegelman, Chief Planner for the Allston Development Group at Harvard to explain more about Harvard's science project.

Kathy Spiegelman introduced Chris Gordon, Chief Operating Officer for the Allston Development Group, and Stefan Behnisch, of Behnisch Architekten, the architect for Harvard's science building.

Kathy said that Harvard started its first Master Plan in the Allston neighborhood in 1989. Harvard has three very important projects that they are trying to move forward through the IMP amendment while at the same time developing a new Master Plan that Harvard will file in January.

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Audience Member: What is the purpose of this big science building in the middle of the city and what kinds of scientific things will be taking place inside the building?

Kathy Spiegelman: The presentation that Stefan Behnisch will give will provide you with as much information as possible. The building will host biological science initiatives, specifically the Harvard Stem Cell Institute. If the community is interested we can invite the scientists to come to a future meeting to talk about the science initiatives planned to go in the building.

Stefan Behnisch presented his design concepts for the science building. Summary points of his presentation included:

- The site for the science building will be an extension of the Harvard campus and will have a campus/university feel.
- The science complex will consist of four buildings of different sizes.
- The ground floor of the buildings facing Western Avenue will be programmed with public functions such as retail, day care, fitness center and restaurants.
- The complex will incorporate a lot of green space within the design.
- There will be a significant east-west green connection or prolonged park through the complex.
- The buildings at the back of the complex will be lower in height because they approach a residential section in the neighborhood. The back of the science site is aligned next to Harvard property.
- The buildings will go 3-4 floors below ground.
- The main building, building one, will have a central atrium which will be accessible from the street.
- The look of the building is still being developed and his team is still working on the façade choices. Because it is a lab building there are certain restraints on what kind of façade will go appropriately with the building. The façade will be a functional element of the building. Currently, he is looking at a limestone grid canvas for the façade.
- The central atrium will be a winter garden that you will be able to see from the outside of the building.
- Each of the buildings will have several winter gardens that will become an extension of the yard and move vertically into the buildings.
- There will be a north-south pedestrian-friendly connection from the science complex across Western Avenue to Harvard's campus.
- Large trees will be planted within the yard to create a canopy.
- Sustainable landscaping practices will be incorporated into the design including wind management and rain water irrigation and drainage systems.

Gerald introduced the Task Force members. Members were appointed by the Mayor to serve as the community review body for Harvard's development plans and to function as the liaisons between the community, the BRA and Harvard.

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Audience Member: Can you tell us the exact location of the site?

Kathy Spiegelman: The site comprises the following addresses: 118 and 118R Western Avenue; 130-140 Western Avenue; 144-148 Western Avenue; 100 Windom Street; 28 Travis Street; 156 Western Avenue; and 168 Western Avenue. Most of those buildings include the old Pepsi plant, WGBH and Comcast. The demolition of those buildings is not just for the final location of the science building but also to allow for the construction of the science building.

Harry Mattison: Parking and transportation issues weren't really covered in your presentation.

Stefan Behnisch: There will be 550-570 parking spots in a garage under the buildings. This will cover more parking spots than are needed for the science complex. We needed to strike the right number to cover the need for parking but not too much that would attract more traffic than necessary. We are also trying to promote bicycle use by incorporating a lot bike stalls within the design.

Audience Member: Does Harvard charge its employees to park in its parking garages? If so, then won't the employees prefer to park on the neighborhood streets for free instead?

Kathy Spiegelman: More detail about parking and transportation will come in the new IMP. Harvard charges for parking because it is committed to promoting sustainable practices and encouraging employees to use public transportation. At the same time, Harvard has to provide enough parking spots for its employees who really need to park. The Boston Public Transportation Department (BTD) has been working with Harvard and the Task Force already to address issues of parking and transportation.

Audience Member: Will Harvard need to blast into the ground 4-5 feet in order to start construction?

Chris Gordon: Harvard hasn't done the geo-technical borings assessment yet but it is unlikely that this will need to be done.

Gerald Autler: All of this will be explained in greater detail in the draft project impact report that Harvard files after it receives the scoping determination. Once Harvard does that we will hold another public meeting and you'll have another opportunity to discuss the impacts and the project mitigation.

Audience Member: Can you tell us how many parking spots Harvard will be providing when the whole campus development is completed?

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Kathy Spiegelman: This information is still being developed for the new Master Plan but the new Master Plan will have an overall projection for Harvard's development in Allston. The parking plan is not going to just be done building by building.

Audience Member: Is something being done about the parking situation on North Harvard Street? People park their cars there all day.

Ray Mellone: I want to let the community know that the Task Force is listening to all of your comments and we understand them because we've been talking about the same things with Harvard and the city for the last several months. We have been working on parking and traffic solutions for Western Avenue and North Harvard Street. I want to ask the Task Force members to provide their questions and comments on the science project. I would also encourage the Task Force members to incorporate the community's comments into their written submission to the BRA.

John Cusack: I live on Windom Street and I have questions about the proposed new road on the eastern side of site B. How much of the road will be built for the science project?

Kathy Spiegelman: The road will be built from Cambridge Street through Harvard property directly to Harvard's property. This will be addressed further during the scoping process. It's important for us to hear your comments about how far you feel the road should go.

Audience Member: How are people going to access the new road?

Kathy Spiegelman: You will access the road the same way you currently access Windom Street; from Cambridge Street.

Ray Mellone: Cambridge Street is already one of the busiest streets; we don't need another cut-in from Cambridge Street. The access to the new road should be at ground level and you shouldn't have to go under the bridge. I think Harvard should negotiate with Romar and modify the alignment of the new street so there aren't 2 cut-ins off Cambridge Street. I don't like the way the new road is currently aligned.

Kathy Spiegleman: Our transportation consultants are here tonight so they are listening to all your comments and suggestions.

Brent Whelan: I would like to talk about the PNF document. I think the building proposed is elegant but the PNF doesn't address any community issues. Section 1.7-Community Outreach leaves out a very important fact that Harvard quietly acquired land in Allston and concealed this from the neighborhood. I think if we're trying to move forward Harvard needs to acknowledge its past instead of presenting a falsified version of its relationship with the neighborhood. I propose that in future documents Harvard uses wording that restores the truth. On Harvard's shield it says "veritas" which means truth

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and Harvard should present the truth in all its future documents to begin to build trust with the neighborhood again. Sections 3.1.1, 3.1.2 and 3.1.3 are all about Harvard and its campus and express nothing about how pedestrian, bicycle and transit routes will be affected in the neighborhood. The new road isn't even mentioned in the PNF. 99 percent of the PNF is devoted to the institution's concerns and 1 percent is devoted to the community's concerns. In the future I propose that these documents do not overlook the impact on the community.

Cathy Campbell: I would like to address Section 2.3 where it refers to a newly built extension of Rena Street that might connect to Travis Street and the new proposed road. I am opposed to the extension of Rena Street because it will increase the traffic on North Harvard Street. Right now it is an extremely dangerous road as it is. Harvard needs to explore alternatives that will keep cars out of the existing neighborhood.

Harry Mattison: What is the height of the proposed buildings?

Stefan Behnisch: The highest building is 125 feet or 8 stories.

Harry Mattison: This is not in agreement with the North Allston Neighborhood Strategic Plan (NANSP) that suggested that building heights of 55-95 feet would be appropriate for this location on Western Avenue. The NANSP said that exceeding these heights would require additional community benefits, and we don't know what those benefits are yet.

Kathy Spiegelman: Harvard's thinking about height will be further expressed in the Master Plan. Height will be a big topic of negotiation for each project and the master plan as a whole.

Stefan Behnisch: As part of the design process we broke the building down into four buildings rather than having one massive building to allow for the creation of a yard between the buildings. The buildings are higher on Western Avenue and as you go toward the neighborhood the buildings get lower.

John Bruno: Harvard should express the percentage of open space on the site that is created because of the heights of the buildings.

Audience Member: How can we get copies of the PNF document?

Gerald Autler: The document is available online on the BRA's web site and hard copies are available at the Honan-Allston Library.

Audience Member: Do you know what other kinds of occupants will be in the building to support the scientists?

Kathy Spiegelman: For the 500,000 square foot building we project that 1,000 jobs will be created. Since the building hasn't been completely programmed I don't know what

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kinds of vendors will be in the building. The construction will probably bring in at least 1,000 jobs if not 200-300 more than that.

Audience Member: What kind of residential complexes are planned in the future? Private developers are cherry picking properties that abut my home to accommodate graduate students. Harvard has a sufficient amount of land that they can use to create housing complexes. Leave the neighborhood homes alone in the neighborhood. Single family and 2 family homes should be left alone. I would like a sound commitment from Harvard on this.

Kathy Spiegelman: Harvard can't control what private developers do on the land that Harvard doesn't own. Harvard is planning on providing a variety of different housing options on the land that it does own however, that is not part of this current project. The new master plan will include housing to handle Harvard's need. Harvard isn't buying residential homes.

Representative Mike Moran: I think the BRA should extend the comment period deadline to mid-December and provide more copies of the PNF to the library. I haven't seen a turnout like this at a public meeting in a long time.

Gerald Autler: We can provide more copies of the PNF to the library. I will have to look into extending the comment deadline because this isn't something I have control over.

Audience Member: We could have all the time in the world to make comments but the bottom line is that Harvard isn't going to fundamentally change this project. This is a top priority for the administration at Harvard. Harvard doesn't see this as a neighborhood but views it as a place to make a buck. I ask the Task Force members to take it amongst themselves to have more of these public meetings. We should teach Harvard a lesson with this building because it's not going to get any easier as the development goes on. City Hall has this project on the fast track too. I'd like the Task Force to comment on their efforts to do more work with the community.

Rita DiGessee: This committee has been meeting twice a month since early January and every one of those meetings has been a public meeting that everyone in the neighborhood has been invited to. People should come to every meeting but it's not the Task Force's fault if you don't.

Ray Mellone: Harvard has filed an amendment to its Master Plan to get this project going under the condition from the BRA and the Task Force that the project will not be approved until they provide the community and the city with a master plan for its 10 year vision. The project can't go forward until we see its filing for the new IMP. I can't say we're all opposed to a project that may have a significant effect on mankind.

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Audience Member: The proposed building is a beautiful building but I'm more concerned about what's inside the building and the environmental effects that it will have.

Kathy Spiegelman: The science programs will be programs that are currently in Longwood and Cambridge. We can invite the scientists to a community meeting to talk more about their work. Harvard is developing sustainability guidelines that will be implemented throughout its development.

Audience Member: Can you explain how binding the Institutional Master Plan is?

Gerald Autler: This is a regulatory document required by the city for every higher educational institution and all the large medical institutions in Boston. The institution cannot build something that is not in its IMP and they can not build something that is substantially different than what is proposed in the IMP.

Harry Mattison: In Harvard's old IMP it identifies projects that it might do or could do but is there any obligation from the University to carry out all the projects mentioned?

Audience Member: Why did Harvard have people surveying the land behind the library the other day?

Chris Gordon: The surveyors have been hired to survey all of the land that Harvard owns that will fall under the master plan.

Audience Member: Will any of the labs be designated containment labs?

Kathy Spiegelman: No, that is not part of the science programming for this building.

Audience Member: Construction parking wasn't regulated when One Western Avenue was built. What are Harvard's plans to manage construction parking?

Kathy Spiegelman: We are just now hiring a construction mitigation consultant. The city requires Harvard to submit a construction mitigation plan.

John Cusack: Section 3.1.10 on construction mitigation is very vague.

Kathy Spiegelman: Construction mitigation will be addressed but it's not addressed at the PNF stage.

Harry Mattison: What does it mean when it says that parking for construction workers will be provided at market rate.

Chris Conklin (Harvard's traffic consultant from VHB): Currently the construction mitigation plan suggests off-street parking for construction workers to pay for but this

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doesn't mean this will be the method that Harvard will use. The plan tries to encourage the use of public transportation and provide disincentive for driving by requiring construction workers to pay for parking.

Ray Mellone: There should be a hotline number that people in the neighborhood can call if anything comes up that needs to be reported to the construction manager, BRA or Harvard.

Chris Gordon: We anticipate that we will have a hotline number available.

Audience Member (Paul Alford): The programmatic uses in the buildings that face the community are a machine shop, 6,000 square foot cleaning room, 18,000 square foot energy facility and the entrance to the parking for the science building. The neighborhood is going to take a hit and the PNF is absent of traffic and parking questions. I have 65 questions here that need to be addressed by Harvard. There is more in this document that isn't said than is said. Article 80 says the BRA can postpone the comment period deadline.

Gerald Autler: The PNF document is not intended to answer all of those questions. If you have specific questions and comments about the science project those will be incorporated into the scoping determination.

Audience Member: I attended the public meetings very frequently a couple of years ago but Harvard doesn't notify the community of the meetings now.

Gerald Autler: Please put your name on the sign-in sheet tonight if you would like to be included in notifications about the public meetings.

Audience Member: I would like a show of hands from people in the audience who think this PNF document is incomplete.

Kevin McCluskey: The PNF document is not meant to answer all of your questions. The questions and concerns that are raised are meant to be a starting point for issues to explore further to move forward. Harvard can continue to do additional outreach to the community as we did for this meeting. It's important to remember that the Task Force has been representing the community throughout this whole process and it is our hope that we can work together constructively and positively to move forward.

Audience Member: I would suggest that everyone copy the task force members on their written comments to the BRA. Harvard has purchased 1.2 million square feet of commercial space, of which 600,000 square feet is vacant. The IMP amendment should provide more information about the interim-uses plan. The community is also out-gunned and out-manned. We need help. I would like to request that Harvard put aside 1 percent of the development cost into a treasury that the community can use to hire

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consultants to guide as though Harvard's development and help us run a community meeting without Harvard.

Audience Member: For construction mitigation, I would suggest that Harvard convert one of its athletic fields into a parking spot for construction workers. Charging a fee to park is a conflict of interest for the construction workers.

Audience Member: Construction workers have large tool boxes that they have to bring on site so I am in favor of having free parking for the construction workers on the construction site. Also, Stem Cell Research can be a very controversial issue and I was wondering how Harvard plans to deal with protesters and crowd control issues. The building design doesn't seem very conducive to allow for public gathering spaces. Will these kinds of things spill onto the street and effect the neighborhood?

Chris Gordon: We are in the process of going through a full security review with the city and we can share this information with you as it develops. We don't yet have an answer for construction parking because we haven't developed a solution yet but it is clear that we will spend time talking with the community to come up with a decision.

Audience Member: Will there be other PNF documents for Harvard's other projects?

Gerald Autler: Harvard will need to file a PNF for all of their proposed large projects.

Audience Member: In Stefan Behnisch's presentation he mentioned creating a better pedestrian walkway from Building One of the science complex across Western Avenue. How will this effect foot traffic vs. auto traffic, won't a pedestrian walkway slow the flow of traffic on Western Ave?

Stefan Behnisch: Once a campus atmosphere is created in that area, the traffic will tend to slow down any way. As it is right now cars are traveling fast down Western Ave. because there is nothing there to slow it down.

Audience Member: Can you elaborate on the plans to increase public transportation? How is the MBTA going to really be able to do this with the budget deficit problems that it has?

Kathy Spiegelman: For this first building, the MBTA isn't going to significantly increase service but as the campus grows and the population grows Harvard will work with the MBTA on transit improvements. Harvard also plans to increase its shuttle service. Right now the Harvard shuttles are for Harvard constituents only but we are considering the idea of making the Harvard shuttles public.

Brent Whelan: The PNF suggests that the route 66 bus is already congested in both directions. Additionally, I would like further explanation for your transit analysis

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regarding the replacement of traffic from the WGBH building. It doesn't seem like there will be a net reduction with the first science building.

Kathy Spiegelman: Traffic models treat different populations differently.

Chris Conklin: The density of use for the science building will be lower than WGBH. Typically the occupants of science labs don't follow the same commuting hours that occupants in WGBH follow. Our traffic analysis accurately reflected the delta and change of the WGBH traffic. Harvard will work with the BTM in the scoping determination but if you have any technical concerns please include them in your written comments to the BRA.

Audience Member: Because of Allston's geographical location it is cut off by the river and the Pike. We have to exit the neighborhood by Western Ave. which is why it is the busiest street.

Kathy Spiegelman: Harvard recognizes that the local transportation issues happen at the entry and exit of the neighborhood and the Task Force and Harvard have been working with the BTM to address these issues.

Audience Member: The addition of 500 cars into the neighborhood is going to pollute the air. Harvard should require that every employee and every Harvard bus be hybrid. It should follow the lead of UMass.

Audience Member: I am a transient member of this community and have lived here on and off for the last 3-4 years and I think Harvard's development is an extraordinary opportunity and the Task Force is doing a great job. It's disheartening to hear the neighborhood's anger and vindication. The situation could be a whole lot worse and I think we should be more open to dialogue and discussion.

John Bruno: I know how you can handle the traffic situation; give everyone in the neighborhood a job. Harvard should be committed to hiring a percentage of people from the Allston-Brighton area and should provide training opportunities.

Gerald Autler: Economic development will be a key portion of Harvard's Master Plan.

Gerald wrapped up the meeting and encouraged attendees to put their name on the sign-in sheet and to submit their written comments to him. He announced that the next Task Force meeting is Wednesday, November 29th.

The meeting ended at 8:45 p.m.