



WalkBoston

December 16, 2010

Tai Lim, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Tom Tinlin, Boston Transportation Department
Antonia Pollack, Boston Parks Department

Re: Comments on the Kensington Project @ Boylston and Washington Streets

Dear Commissioner Tinlin, Commissioner Pollack and Mr. Lim:

WalkBoston submits comments on the proposed Kensington Project in two areas – the operation and design of the alley behind the China Trade Building and the park area in front. Given the significant loss to the public realm caused by destruction of the historic Gaiety Theater, we believe that the project should be held to a high standard in its treatment of the surrounding streetscape during the TAPA review by BTDA.

The Alley behind the China Trade Building: The design and operation of the loading alley that replaced the original glamorous proposal for Boylston Square is of concern because it seems quite possible that loading/unloading/arriving/departing trucks will extend across and block the Washington Street sidewalk, as they have done during our observational trips. Are there plans to move the loading dock further in from Washington Street or to limit the length of trucks serving the building? We understand loading is to be "off-peak." Does that mean there will be no truck activity until after midnight so that the Washington Street sidewalk is not blocked during either work hours or the heavily pedestrian theater hours? Between downtown workers and theater-goers, it will be hard to determine "off-peak."

While revised plans for the alley seem still to consider it a pedestrian place – with lighting and overhangs – we doubt that people will walk through there rather than using the front sidewalks for the same distance. We hope the potential danger of such a hidden space will be carefully addressed.

The Front of China Trade: As suggested by members of the community, a library in the China Trade Center would be a good match with the proponent's commitment to revitalizing the landscape. Attractive benches and summer seating and a reading area in front would be a complementary use to a library. However, the \$400,000 committed by the developer to the Boston Parks Department to redo the elevated area in front of China Trade seems inadequate to make a truly pleasant open space, especially since we recall there being subsurface limitations. Ideally, the park would be lowered to sidewalk level, include sustainable plantings, and at last provide a restful oasis. We recommend a review by the Parks Department of what can be done with \$400,000 before settling for that amount.

We hope the Kensington Project will enhance its very urban location.

Sincerely,

Wendy Landman
Executive Director