



WalkBoston

September 11, 2006

Secretary Robert W. Golledge, Jr.
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, MEPA Office
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

Geoffrey Lewis
Boston Redevelopment Authority
1 City Hall Plaza
Boston, MA 02201

RE: Comments on the Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital Environmental Notification Form and the Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital Institutional Master Plan Notification Form/ Project Notification Form. EOEPA No. 13861

Dear Messrs. Golledge and Lewis:

WalkBoston appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital Environmental Notification Form and the Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital Institutional Master Plan Notification Form/Project Notification Form. We have combined our comments on these documents because both contain detailed information on the relocation of the hospital to the Charlestown Navy Yard.

These documents set the stage for the discussion of the relocation of the hospital from its current location on the Charles River near North Station to a new site at Yard's End in the Charlestown Navy Yard. They describe the site for the new hospital along with the services it will provide for access in and around the site.

While we understand the need for the hospital to construct a new facility – and are certainly glad that they will continue to be an important presence in Boston, we are sorry to see SRH lose its good pedestrian and transit accessibility. We hope that the next environmental review filing will provide more details on how the TDM program will work, and how it will provide for access by visitors and staff who are pedestrian and transit-dependent. We are very interested in seeing a discussion of pedestrian connections to the North Station and Community College transit stations, each of which are approximately 20-minute walks from the new site. If the walking routes were pleasant, safe, well lit and well traveled, SRH could potentially increase its pedestrian and transit mode shares, an outcome that would be good for the city and good for the health of the walkers.

Our detailed comments focus on pedestrian access and movement around the site.

1. The Harborwalk. - The site description includes a discussion of provisions for extensions of the Harborwalk through the site. WalkBoston is delighted that the site description references the Harborwalk so frequently and is committed to extending this wonderful and essential pathway through this site. We hope that the Harborwalk will soon be continued in other construction along the waterfront in this portion of the Navy Yard.

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2. Harborwalk connection at Dry Dock #5 - The site is very close to the end of Dry Dock #5, noted in the report as a historic resource. This designation suggests that the dry dock will be retained and improved for the enjoyment of residents or workers in the area. A pedestrian connection will ultimately be required around the end of Dry Dock #5 to connect the Harborwalk in the remainder of the Navy Yard to this site and to Parcel 11. Whether that connection will be provided as a part of the construction of the hospital at this site is unclear.
3. Pedestrian connections at 1st Avenue - A walkway is required to connect the end of First Avenue to both Pier 11 and the waterfront/Harborwalk along the alignment of 1st Avenue at the edge of this site. (See Fig. 1-3 in the IMP or Fig. 4 in the ENF) The outline of this connection is provided by the site plan, which includes the view corridor from the Navy Yard into this site and the sidewalk located within it. The ROW of the 1st Avenue Extension into the site is laid out in Fig 2.7-1 and appears to be in excess of 50', while the proposed pavement within the extension is 25' wide, according to Appendix B: Conceptual Site Plan. The sidewalk is about 12' wide at the principal entrance into the building. The continuation of the sidewalk is about 25' wide (wide enough for motor vehicles to use) as it extends from the building entrance to the Harborwalk along the harbor's edge. Above the 25' wide sidewalk is a 30-60' projection of the building and its outdoor areas at the third floor level. This will be an interesting addition from a pedestrian point-of-view, as it adds a visible goal for walkers on the extension of 1st Avenue as well as a overhanging protection from inclement weather or excessive sunlight. It is not clear whether the sidewalk extends beyond the building to the Harborwalk – this should be clarified in the next submission.
4. Pedestrian connections at 2nd Avenue - The extension of 2nd Avenue across the property is proposed to be a sight line easement with a 50' width. It is used primarily for a 25' motor vehicle way that connects to delivery areas and to the parking areas under the hospital. This 25' way (wide enough for motor vehicles to use) continues as a sidewalk to the harbor's edge. There appears to be no sidewalk that connects along the roadway from the 25' wide sidewalk to 16th Street. Perhaps because a sidewalk on this side of the building will not connect to the building entrance, it may not attract as much pedestrian usage as the sidewalk on the 1st Avenue side of the building. However, if there is a sidewalk along the building from the edge of the driveway, there should also be one along the full length of the drive.
5. The traffic turnaround - The site plan shows a cul-de-sac for turning traffic that enters the site, approaches the main entrance and then exits the site. The layout of the turnaround requires a portion of the property of Parcel 11 to operate effectively for the hospital. It is not shown with accompanying sidewalks – either on Parcel 6 or on Parcel 11.
6. Connections with neighboring construction – Parcel 11 - There may be effects on this site from development of adjacent Parcel 11. The development of Parcel 11 is tied to this site via 1st Avenue, as depicted in Appendix B: Conceptual Site Plan, which shows a dotted line connecting the turnaround into Parcel 11. Sidewalk access to Parcel 11 would also presumably follow the 1st Avenue Extension route and turnaround. Will the development of Parcel 11 rely on this site's pedestrian facilities to reach the harbor's edge?
7. Connections with neighboring construction – Parcel 7 - According to the document, the BRA transferred parcels 6 and 7 to Partners in 2004. It is not clear how the development of Parcel 7 may influence a building on this site. For example, will it share the service drive on the 2nd Street alignment? Will there be a joint sidewalk, also on the 2nd Street alignment, from 16th Street to the harbor's edge?
8. Public transit access Route 1 of the Partners Shuttle bus service provides frequent access (25-30 minutes, depending on the time of day) on its Number 1 route, which connects the MGH Main Campus with the buildings at the east end of the Charlestown Navy Yard. MBTA Route 93 also provides limited service to the Navy Yard. According to the IMP Map 2.4-3, these services use

16th Street and 1st Avenue as part of the routing. If this access is continued the proposed Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital building will be well served by shuttle services. Pedestrians desiring access to the site will be able to use the shuttle services and avoid a long trek through the Navy Yard.

9. Setback issues There is a 60-foot setback of the building from 16th Street. This setback, plus the added distance required to reach the principal entrance (a total of perhaps 200 feet which could take a full minute to walk) is formidable for transit riders/pedestrians in inclement weather. Perhaps there could be a covered walkway from a designated transit stop on 16th Street to the main lobby of the hospital.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this document. Please feel free to contact us for clarification or additional comments.

Sincerely

Robert Sloane
Senior Planner