



April 23, 2009

Secretary Ian Bowles
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, MEPA Office
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

RE: Comments on the Notice of Project Change (NPC) for Seaport Square in Boston

EOEA #14255

Dear Secretary Bowles:

WalkBoston is submitting comments on the Seaport Square Notice of Project Change (NPC), because we are concerned that some of the proposed changes may impact the pedestrian environment to be created by the project. In general, the proposed changes in the NPC do not appear to be detrimental to the walkability of the project. However certain changes are proposed that may indicate differences in the way the project will be used by walkers.

1. The single largest change is indicated, not in text, but on the map showing the “Currently Proposed Plan.” This change appears to show the removal of a large park called “Seaport Hill,” formerly a major open space located along a pedestrian spine between Summer Street and Northern Avenue. This park was a major feature of the pedestrian network for the project and if our interpretation of the map is correct, the park should be restored to its position of importance within the network. If we have simply misread the map, the proponent should clarify the information.
2. The pedestrian-only area between Autumn Lane and Seaport Boulevard remains intact in the currently proposed plan. It is unclear if this pedestrian way can or will be connected across Seaport Boulevard to the pedestrian areas along the waterfront – the Harborwalk in particular. The route to be taken by pedestrians along the pedestrian spine is unclear. From this plan, it seems unlikely that pedestrians will be able to cross Seaport Boulevard mid-block between East Service Road and Boston Wharf Road for a direct connection to the waterfront. Clarification of intended pedestrian circulation in this location is needed.
3. Blocks J and C are proposed to be the new focus for retail/entertainment and potentially other uses, seemingly intended to form a core of entertainment uses immediately adjacent to the headhouses that serve the MBTA’s Silver Line at Courthouse Station. This location is likely to attract a city-wide clientele to the retail/entertainment complex constructed as part of this project, and will concentrate what may be heavy pedestrian activities in and around the MBTA station. We think this concentration of activity near the MBTA station is a good idea.
4. A performing arts center of 1,800 seats is proposed to be located on Summer Street, depending on economic conditions. Now that the entertainment area is being rethought, (and if the performing arts center can be economically constructed) it might be better

sited in the proposed entertainment district at Blocks C and J, or in the pedestrian-only corridor between Blocks L1 and L2. In either place, it would bring life and pedestrian traffic to the new location, and might be constructed to attract walkers long before the Summer Street site would become viable.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the NPC for the Seaport Square Project. Please contact us for any clarification or additional comments that would be useful.

Sincerely,

Wendy Landman
Executive Director

Robert Sloane
Senior Planner