

WORCESTER SQUARE AREA NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

George Stergios, President

c/o 35 Worcester Square, Boston, Massachusetts 02118

August 3, 2009

Kamran Zahedi
Urbanica, Inc.
142 Berkeley Street, Suite 402
Boston, MA 02116

RE: Proposed Residences on 691 Massachusetts Avenue, Boston, MA

Dear Mr. Zahedi:

Thank you for appearing with your architect, Anthony Piermarini of Studio Luz, before the Worcester Square Area Neighborhood Association (WSANA) on July 28th, 2009 to discuss your revised plans for the condominium building on the empty lot at 691 Massachusetts Avenue.

The membership had an opportunity after your departure that evening to discuss your proposal. We found it a great improvement over all of the earlier iterations you have presented to us formally or informally during the last two years. Your willingness to engage with WSANA during this long period, and your record of successful projects in Boston and the South End give us the fullest confidence that the final design will be a pleasing addition to our neighborhood. Therefore, we voted unanimously to support this project, with some reservations, noted below:

- Careful attention needs to be paid to the colors of the masonry, terra cotta, metal panels, and window frames. Many of the members thought a greater contrast in color might make the building both more distinctive and more consonant with the architectural context. In particular, there were widely held concerns about the proposed bronze/brown color for the windows and metal work, relative to the color of the terra cotta panels.
- While we are comfortable with a modernist building, we believe that a greater amount of ornamentation/detailing will help better establish this as a residential building that relates to the surrounding context.
- There should be a bolder articulation of both the main entry and the façades of the first-floor units. Architectural elements at the recessed entries of the townhouse units (such as additional entry canopies) could help maintain the rhythm and pedestrian scale of the street expressed in the stoops of the adjoining buildings and break the verticality of the façade and the monolithic mass of what is a very large building.
- Because of the lack of drawings, we are unsure of what is being proposed for the rear façade. The materials should be consistent in quality, color, and architectural expression with those selected for the front façade. The design should thus acknowledge the high visibility of the rear façade, given its size and location adjacent to open space along

Northhampton Street. Further, because the building backs directly onto the Northampton Community Garden, we request that the surface parking spaces be screened with fencing or gates.

- We also have some concerns about access and parking. We are happy to see that the developer has incorporated underground parking into his design. However, we think it is worth noting that the thirty parking spaces proposed is in excess of what is required under the City's zoning code. Moreover, if the vehicles access/egress via Trask Street, as it appears, the street may not have the required turning radii once the proposed new driveway entrance to the underground garage is extended out from behind the new building. We ask that the appropriate expertise within the City's Transportation Department evaluate this concern and whether the traffic from and to these spaces will negatively impact traffic operations and pedestrian safety on Harrison Avenue and Trask Street. Further, to promote alternatives to private car ownership, we request that the developer be required to both designate some parking spaces for Zipcars and install bicycle racks.

Based on our understanding, you will need approval from the South End Landmarks Commission and the Zoning Board of Appeal. As may be useful, feel free to provide a copy of this letter to those bodies.

Do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely yours,

George Stergios, President, WSANA

cc: WSANA Executive Board