

# WORCESTER SQUARE AREA NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

George Stergios, President      c/o 35 Worcester Square, Boston, Massachusetts 02118

June 2, 2010

Mr. Robert Shortsleeve, Chairman  
Zoning Board of Appeal  
City of Boston  
1010 Massachusetts Avenue  
Boston, MA 02118

RE: 9 East Springfield Street, South End, Application # BZC 29643

Dear Mr. Shortsleeve:

We are writing regarding the proposed development at 9 East Springfield Street (with a dual address of 1730 Washington Street). The developer has presented his plans several times to the Worcester Square Area Neighborhood Association (WSANA), most recently at our May 25, 2010 Board and General Membership meeting. It is our understanding that the developer will be withdrawing his application temporarily, currently scheduled for a June 8, 2010 hearing by your board. Still, WSANA believes that it is important to express its concerns about the project as it currently stands.

Following the developer's presentation and an extended discussion on May 25, the WSANA membership voted to oppose the development as presented. We urge the Board to deny the requested relief (variances):

Article 64, Section 19: Usable Open Space

Article 64, Section 19: Insufficient Rear Yard Setback

WSANA regrets the need to oppose the proposed development. However, despite several presentations and meetings by and with the development team, WSANA has concluded that the team has not yet adequately addressed fundamental issues that will make this an acceptable project.

The developer's presentations have focused on zoning matters and, in particular, the building's massing and footprint. The presentations have not presented a detailed design, which we understand will occur later in the design process. Still, WSANA offers the following comments. We hope that the developer will modify the project to address these major concerns:

- 1) The project needs to give the utmost respect to the adjacent Porter Houses, located at the corner of East Springfield and Washington Streets. This c.1806 federal building is thought to be the second oldest extant structure in the South End. It is a rare survivor and important structure that reflects the early period of post-colonial development along the Boston Neck from Roxbury to the Shawmut Peninsula. This original duplex (back-to-back) building was designed as a detached, stand-alone dwelling. The proposed development will be sited on what originally would have been the grounds of the building. We recognize that development patterns have evolved since the building's construction. Still, as currently proposed, the scale of the development overwhelms and diminishes the

importance of the Porter Houses. The proposed building's footprint covers virtually all of the feasibly buildable area. The result is that it does not respect the context of the site and the adjacent Porter Houses. The building needs to have a much greater spatial and visual separation from the Porter Houses.

- 2) The proposed development is on a "pork chop" lot that fronts both on Washington and East Springfield Streets. The building's main orientation and frontage is to East Springfield Street and not to Washington Street, where its frontage is very narrow and is being dedicated to vehicular access to the development. WSANA feels strongly that the present massing is excessive: when compared to the typical front yards on East Springfield Street the proposed building has an insufficient setback and its front elevation is also higher than the typical structures on the street. These conditions directly relate to the insufficient usable open space for which the developer is seeking relief.
- 3) The proposed building's massing and the inadequate rear yard setback intensifies the development to an unacceptable level. We urge the developer to consider a rear yard that will enable the construction of the rear decks (or garden), thereby providing amenities and a development pattern typically found throughout the South End, and on East Springfield Street in particular. This will also reduce the intensity of the development to abutters, increase usable open space and approach or meet the required rear yard setback.

While not directly germane to your deliberations, the development team stated at WSANA's May 25, 2010 meeting that WSANA had earlier expressed its opposition to the development of a roof deck. This is not correct, and WSANA is open to reviewing a roof deck as a way to meet the usable open space requirement.

WSANA will be supportive of thoughtful, carefully-planned development of the site that addresses our concerns. As such, we look forward to continuing to work with the developer to that end.

Very truly yours,

George Stergios, President, WSANA

cc: Boston Redevelopment Authority  
South End Landmark District Commission  
Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services  
Councillor Bill Linehan  
Dan Toomey, 9 East Springfield Street LLC  
Doug Doulezal, Doulezal Architecture + Interior Design  
James Greene, Esq.