



August 16, 2011

Secretary Richard K. Sullivan, Jr.
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)
Attn: MEPA Office
Deirdre Buckley, EEA No. 14590
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston MA 02114

Re: BH Normandy Riverside, LLC, Riverside
Development Project, Draft Environmental
Impact Report (DEIR)



Dear Secretary Sullivan:

The Newton Conservators has reviewed the Riverside Development Project –BH Normandy Riverside, LLC Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) and, acknowledging that the project presents many challenging issues, particularly related to Site Access and Traffic, we limit our comments to linkage of the site to existing open space. We fully support linkage from the site to the Charles River paths to encourage access to and enjoyment of the Charles River and the DCR properties abutting the proposed development area, which includes renovation and restoration of a crumbling underpass and stairs at various locations.

THE DEIR addresses these issues in two sections. First, bicycle and pedestrian access are addressed on Page 1-22 as follows: “Travel to the site by biking or walking will be promoted by the Proponent or prospective tenants through the provision of convenient bicycle and pedestrian amenities. Bike racks will be provided throughout the site at locations in the vicinity of various buildings within the overall redevelopment. In addition, an extensive bike storage area with a capacity in excess of 100 spaces will be provided on the first floor of the garage. Due to the sites proximity to residential neighborhoods, walking to/ from and within the site will be encouraged by the provision of a pedestrian -friendly site layout, which features an extensive network of sidewalks and crosswalks at key points both within the site and connecting to the existing pedestrian network. As part of the Project, a multi-use path is proposed along the site frontage that will travel across the north side of the Route 128/ I-95 Bridge and connect to existing sidewalk facilities in the Lower Falls area. As mentioned previously, the proposed roundabouts at the Route 128 ramp terminals will also enhance the pedestrian safety in this area by slowing vehicles down on Grove Street. In addition, roundabouts are well known for improving the safety of roadway crossings, which is important in this area with adjacent residential neighborhoods and nearby schools. **The on-site pedestrian network will also provide a connection to the existing access points to the Charles River”.**

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Second, linkage to the existing paths to the Charles River is addressed on Page 1-14 in the discussion of issues relating to the Wetlands Protection Act: "There will be no direct wetland fill associated with the site redevelopment. Relocation of railroad tracks and a gravel access road elsewhere within the active rail yard area to clear the site for redevelopment in the western portion of the lease area will result in work within previously disturbed Riverfront Area and Buffer Zone. Paved areas associated **with potential connections to the Riverside Rail Trail and Charles River Basin, should these initiatives be advanced by DCR**, will be installed within Riverfront Area and Buffer Zone in the southwestern portion of the site, adjacent to the Interstate 95 ramp system and existing railroad track.

We support initiatives of the DCR to repair and improve the existing connection to the planned Riverside Rail Trail and to improve the pedestrian access to the Charles River Basin, including repair of the crumbling underpass, stairs and clearing of overgrown paths. We recommend that EEA ensure the inclusion of the developer's support of these proposals in the final approval of the project.

Sincerely yours,

Jane E. Sender
President
president@newtonconservators.org

cc Candace Havens, Director, City of Newton Planning Department
David A. Olson, Clerk, City of Newton Board of Aldermen
Alderman Ted Hess-Mahan, Chair Land Use Committee
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