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Ebony DaRosa  
Project Manager  
Boston Planning and Development Agency

November 16, 2020

Dear Ms. DaRosa,

On behalf of the Charles River Conservancy (CRC), an organization with a twenty year history of stewardship of the lower Charles, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed development project located at 1234-1240 Soldier's Field Road at this important juncture in the Article 80B, Large Project Review process.

In partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), as well as other state, city, and local stakeholders, we promote the active use and vitality of the Charles River parks, including Herter Park, a 45-acre recreational resource for the Allston Community. We aim to increase recreational opportunities and work to conserve the beauty and integrity of this extraordinary natural asset.

The 1234-1240 Soldiers Field Road project is one that will set an important precedent in defining the edge of Herter Park. As such, there are several development principles that will be critical in supporting a positive relationship between this residential development, which will contribute to the growing population of Alston-Brighton, and the iconic Charles River Parklands.

**Ensure improvement to Soldiers Field Road crossings to Herter Park.** The redevelopment and widening of the Teleford Street pedestrian bridge must be included as part of this project. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) began the public process to remedy this narrow, unsafe crossing in 2018. At the time, they cited that additional resources were needed to enable the full rebuild that this pedestrian bridge desperately needs. The Davis Companies team should coordinate with DCR and support the reconstruction of a fully accessible, two-way pedestrian bridge that meets the appropriate design standards and best practices. This bridge will certainly serve those at 1234-1240 Soldiers Field Road as well as the broader Allston Community.

**Coordinate with the Herter Park master plan.** Similarly, the timing of this project coincides with DCR's pursuit of a Herter Park master plan. The design team should work in close coordination with the DCR on this process to ensure a cohesive and

welcoming public experience from the 1234-1240 Soldiers Field Road site to the Charles River Reservation.

**Provide public restrooms and drinking fountains.** Herter Park and the larger Charles River Reservation are within walking distance of 300,00 Greater Boston residents and more than one million people visit this urban green space annually. In order to ensure that these parks remain welcoming to all, basic amenities need to be provided. Access to clean year-round restrooms and drinking water are necessities not only to active runners and cyclists, but even more so to mothers with small children and seniors. These facilities must be clearly marked and advertised, so that these more vulnerable populations can plan their visits to the Charles River with confidence.

**Support public programming and maintenance in Herter Park.** Herter Park is a valuable neighborhood asset thanks to the dedicated efforts of DCR and their organizational partners, such as the CRC. In a typical year we enlist 2,000 volunteers to perform vital park maintenance along the Charles River, including at Herter Park. The Friends of Herter Park also organize free performances at the Herter Park Amphitheater each summer for the surrounding community. Given that the residents of 1234-1240 Soldiers Field Road will benefit directly from these efforts, we implore the development team to collaborate with DCR and partner organizations to support public programming and maintenance at Herter Park.

In addition to these principles, which we would encourage for any development along this stretch of the river, we also have concerns with the design presented at the public meeting on October 22, 2020:

**The current design walls-off new public space from Herter Park and creates a private public space.** Instead of engaging the Charles River Reservation with the buildings' position and form, the three-sided development has put its back to the 45-acre park. Even with the inclusion of a "portal" on the lower levels of the northwest corner, we are concerned that the development will effectively privatize its central courtyard. This has been proven by similar "U" shaped buildings, where the public is deterred from passing through implied gateways. We encourage the design team to prioritize an inviting design from Western Avenue all the way through to the Charles River.

**The building will have significant shadow impacts on Herter Park.** We would like to review a full shadow study to better understand the conditions throughout the year and how this may inform the in-progress Herter Park Master planning effort. Increased shadows can significantly impact the planting and uses of the parks, particularly in the shoulder seasons, and should be avoided or minimized.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on this significant development project along the Charles River. As the project progresses, we hope to see further analysis of the site's design, pedestrian/bicycle connectivity, and shadow studies. We look forward to future conversations and collaborations to ensure this site is truly welcoming to the public and maximizes connectivity to the Charles River while minimizing negative impacts to the surrounding parkland.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Jasinski". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Laura Jasinski, Executive Director  
Charles River Conservancy