

## downtown north association

June 3, 2012

William Tuttle, Director of Real Estate Development  
Massachusetts Department of Transportation  
State Transportation Building @ Ten Park Plaza  
Boston, MA 02116

**RE:** Comments on CAT Parcel 9 Development Options

Dear Bill,

As a member of the Parcel 7 & 9 Advisory Committee, which has been considering the options for the development of Parcel 9 and the occupancy of Parcel 7 for over a year now, I endorse the consensus comments of that group with respect to the relative strengths and weaknesses of the four proposals that have now been submitted for Parcel 9 in particular.

There is no need to repeat all of those points here; but I would take this opportunity to emphasize and amplify some of them as they more specifically apply to the Downtown North/West End community, including the Bulfinch Triangle and the Government Center Garage (GCG) site. Those points have to do with connections – between the Market District and the surrounding communities, within the Market District itself, and across and along the Kennedy Greenway – and whether and how those matters were addressed in the Parcel 9 proposals and might best be addressed hereafter:

- ❖ ***The Importance of the Connections Between the Market District and the Surrounding Communities:*** It is generally well understood that the emerging Market District -- which encompasses CAT Parcels 7 & 9, the Blackstone Block and Blackstone Street and has been home for well over a century to the Haymarket pushcart outdoor market -- has a special relationship to the North End. Indeed, the Market District had been an integral component of the North End before the elevated Central Artery bisected that neighborhood, among others including ours, more than fifty years ago. What is less generally appreciated is the importance of the relationship between the Market District and the other surrounding neighborhoods like Beacon Hill and the West End and other adjacent districts like Faneuil Hall Marketplace, Government Center and the Kennedy Greenway – all of which were not coincidentally also represented on the Parcel 7 & 9 Advisory Committee itself.

From the perspective of the West End, there have been long and strong historical and economic links with the Market District. Indeed, the apex of the Bulfinch Triangle was Haymarket Square itself, which was then a focal point of the original market district. That all changed for the West End with the construction in the 1950s of the Central Artery, which bifurcated the Bulfinch Triangle and demolished much of it; and that process was exacerbated by the construction of the Government Center Garage in the 1970s, which obliterated Haymarket Square and further diminished the size and symmetry of the Bulfinch Triangle. Both projects thereby served to visually and physically disconnect the West End from what is now becoming a renewed Market District.

Thankfully that is now all changing again; and those adverse connectivity impacts are at long last being reversed. The Central Artery is down and the Kennedy Greenway is up; and the Government Center Garage site will soon begin to be redeveloped. The Bulfinch Triangle is not coincidentally evolving into a more mixed-use district by virtue of the redevelopment of the parcels in the former CAT and MBTA rights-of-way, which are creating a new residential sector and the expectation of a revitalized retail sector, with plans for a new supermarket at the end of the Triangle nearest to the Market District.

When all of that is fully accomplished, a new apex for the Bulfinch Triangle will be recreated on the scale of this historical district; the cavernous tunnel over Congress Street will finally be removed; and the balance of the GCG site will be developed for a mix of uses and a variety of structures that will again restore the visual and physical connections – not to mention the social and economic ones as well -- between the West End and the Market District. In that new and evolving context, the development of Parcel 9 and the occupancy of Parcel 7, as well as the success of the Market District as a whole, are of far more than just academic interest to the West End community.

- ❖ ***The Importance of Connections Among the Elements of the Market District:*** As well noted in the Parcel 7 & 9 Advisory Committee comments, the success of the Market District as a whole depends in no small part on the need for complementary, and not competitive, retail uses among its principal components – i.e., the retail uses proposed for first floor of Parcel 9; those planned for the Public Market on the first floor of Parcel 7; those that will emerge for the properties to be hopefully soon redeveloped on Blackstone Street; and, of course, the well established and truly fundamental Haymarket pushcart operations on Blackstone Street itself. But they also include the critical relationship between Parcels 9 and Parcel 7 as a whole – not just the Public Market on its first floor, but also the relevance of its upper floor occupancy, its on-site parking, HPA use its plaza area and the critical role of the space between them – i.e., the crucial Hanover Street intersection.

These matters are of particular relevance to the West End because Parcel 7 is our closest point of connection to the Market District, both in the Bulfinch Triangle as it now stands and even more so with the planned redevelopment of the GCG site. It is most important that the occupancy and operation of Parcel 7 as a whole not only contribute positively to the success of the Market District, but also that they create a legible link with West End. This should include a synergistic connection between the planned new Bulfinch Triangle supermarket and Market District retail uses as well as between the growing residential population in the Bulfinch Triangle and planned for the GCG site and the potential for residential development in the Market District itself – a link that would be enhanced by the possibility of residential uses on both Parcels 7 and 9, as envisioned in the Market Square proposal.

- ❖ ***The Importance of Connections Along and Across the Greenway:*** Finally, it is important to acknowledge and address some of the unfinished Greenway elements that will also have significant implications for the nature, scope and schedule of the links between the Market District and both the West End and North End.

These outstanding issues and opportunities primarily involve the two ramp parcels for which civic and cultural development plans have not yet been realized and are now not likely to be. They are Parcel 6, for which recreational facility construction plans have been officially withdrawn by the YMCA; and Parcel 12, which is designated for development by the Boston Museum, but does not appear likely to be developed for that purpose whether or not the Boston Museum is selected as the developer of Parcel 9.

Along the Greenway, Parcel 6 is important because it is a critical link from the Charles River parkland system through the Bulfinch Triangle to the Kennedy Greenway; and across the Greenway, it is at least as important since Parcel 6 is a potential link between Parcel 7 in the Market District and the related North End retail sector along Cross Street. Parcel 12 is likewise significant because it affects the quality of the connections between Parcel 9 in the Market District and CAT Parcels 11 A and B in the North End, for which development plans are expected in the foreseeable future – not to mention the adjacent city buildings recently purchased as a new home for the North Bennett Street School.

We emphasize the timeliness and relevance of these issues in the context of our comments on the Parcel 9 development proposals for three principal reasons:

- ***To Commend Upton + Partners for Most Fully Addressing These Connectivity Issues and Opportunities:*** While all of the Parcel 9 submissions acknowledge the larger district and community context to some extent, the Parcel 9 submission that most fully addressed those issues and opportunities is the Market Square proposal of Upton + Partners – and it did so strongly and explicitly in both in its written proposal and its public presentation.

On the one hand, it recognized the importance of the historic links between the Market District and its surrounding communities and districts; and it based its planning and development strategy on the premise that those links are still relevant and essential. On the other hand, it was explicit and specific with regard to the interdependence of all elements of the Market District, including the entirety of the Parcel 7 building, for which it alone addressed possible uses above the first floor of this important property.

While the Market Square proposal may not be the only one that could ultimately achieve these connectivity goals, Upton + Partners recognized and pursued them from the outset with a comprehensive approach that addressed both the district and community context and consequences of their Parcel 9 development plan. We appreciate and applaud that emphasis and understanding, which needs to be an essential element of any urban design and development strategy for Parcel 9 and the Market District.

- ***To Urge DOT to Address and Resolve the Still Unresolved Issues of Parcel 7 Occupancy and HPA Use of the Parcel 7 Plaza:*** We join with the Parcel 7 & 9 Advisory Committee in recommending that MADOT, in consultation with both the BRA and the community, promptly address and resolve the still outstanding issues of Parcel 7 occupancy above the first floor, as well as HPA use of the Parcel 7 plaza -- which we support along with the Advisory Committee and others. This should certainly include attention to how the

proposed approach to these options for Parcel 7 would contribute to the success of the Market District as a whole; and the results of that process could/should then be reflected in the further refinement of the Parcel 9 planning and development process.

- ***To Urge the BRA to Address and Resolve the Still Unresolved Issues of Ramp Parcels 6 & 12:*** We likewise urge the BRA, in consultation with MADOT and the community, to promptly address and resolve the still outstanding issues related to the improvement of Parcels 6 and 12. That is what was promised in the wake of the BRA Greenway District Planning Study that collaboratively and successfully formulated design and development guidelines for the areas abutting the Kennedy Greenway before Parcel 7 & 9 planning and designation process began. At this stage in the Parcel 7 & 9 process, it would be timely and appropriate to address the still outstanding urban design issues and opportunities related to the ramp parcels along the Kennedy Greenway itself. Once those increasingly relevant matters are clarified in and through another such collaborative BRA planning process, the results of that effort could/should then be reflected in further refinement of the Parcel 9 planning and development.

In conclusion, we commend all those involved with the participatory community process that has evolved in and around the Parcel 7 & 9 Advisory Committee, as well as the successful results that it has produced to date. Our appreciation most certainly extends to the staff and consultants of both MADOT and the BRA, to the innumerable participants from surrounding districts and neighborhoods impacted by the development of Parcels 7 & 9, and to the four project teams interested in pursuing these development opportunities. We hope we have made a positive contribution to that effort; and we also look forward to continuing to work with all of them to fully and finally realize the goals that have been established for Parcel 7 & 9 and for the Market District as a whole.

Sincerely,

Robert B. O'Brien  
Executive Director

cc: Members of the Parcel 7 & 9 Advisory Committee  
Secretary Richard Davey and John Romano & Roy Avellaneda of the MADOT  
Director Peter Meade, Kairos Shen & Lauren Shurtleff of the BRA Staff  
Commissioner Scott Soares & Mark Lillienthal of the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture  
City Councilor Salvatore LaMattina, Sen. Anthony Petrucci & Rep. Aaron Micklewitz  
Officers, Directors and Members of the Downtown North Association  
Other Interested Parties