



73 Hemenway Street  
Boston, MA 02115  
617-267-4637, [www.fenwaycdc.org](http://www.fenwaycdc.org)

March 3, 2009

Gerald Autler  
Senior Project Manager/Planner  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
One City Hall Square  
Boston, MA 02201

**RE: Comments on Institutional Master Plan Notification Form for Berklee College of Music**

Dear Gerald:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Berklee College of Music's Institutional Master Plan Notification Form (IMP NF).

We submit this letter on behalf of Fenway CDC, a 36-year-old community-based organization that builds and preserves affordable housing and champions local projects that engage our full community in enhancing the neighborhood's diversity and vitality. These comments reflect a review of the IMP NF against our Urban Village Plan<sup>1</sup>, the CDC's vision for the neighborhood as a smart-growth-oriented community that welcomes the broadest spectrum of residents. The plan sets goals in five key areas: 1) a sufficient and varied housing supply, 2) access to public transportation and reduced vehicular traffic, 3) community-building facilities, 4) a healthy business community and jobs for residents, and 5) open space and a responsible impact upon the environment.

Institutions play an important role in the neighborhood. They bring vitality and economic activity. They can also fuel housing inflation and undermine the neighborhood's residential qualities. We see the master planning process as an important means to assure that the overall impact of institutions is positive.

Berklee College of Music has been a good institutional neighbor. They have tried to exist and grow in a way that enhances rather than overwhelms the neighborhood. They have approached this master planning process in that same spirit. They have been forthcoming about their goals and about their plans to acquire property to meet some of those goals. Berklee has earned goodwill from the community through this approach.

The Fenway CDC and its Urban Village Committee have identified several items we believe should be addressed in more depth in the Institutional Master Plan (IMP). The following comments to Berklee's IMP NF are driven by the vision articulated in our Urban Village Plan. We believe they are also consistent with Berklee's intention to grow and improve their facilities in ways that enhance the Fenway as a whole:

- 1. Housing:** The college should hire an independent consultant to conduct a study of the college's impact on the housing market in both the West and East Fenway. This would help the CDC to evaluate whether additional student housing at the Crossroads location and along Boylston Street in the West

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<sup>1</sup> The complete text of the current version of the Urban Village Plan can be found at the Fenway CDC web site, [www.fenwaycdc.org](http://www.fenwaycdc.org)



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Fenway would help or hinder our goal of maintaining 18% of the housing stock in the neighborhood as contractually affordable.

Berklee should explain in its IMP how it plans to dispose of certain residential properties it owns – most notably its property at 98 Hemenway Street – that are located relatively far from campus, once it has achieved the approval it needs to add more student population and facilities on-campus. The ideal use for these properties would be affordable housing.

**2. Transportation:** The Urban Village Plan calls for new development to cause a minimal increase on the number of additional vehicles in the Fenway. Berklee states that the extra 400 seats at the new performance center at the Crossroads location will not materially impact traffic or parking. In their IMP, the college should provide an analysis that shows this to be true. The college also should prepare data to support its claim that most students do not own cars.

**3. Community Facilities:** Prior to issuing the IMPNF, Berklee had developed at least one new public gathering space in the coffee shop at Café 939 on Boylston Street, which has been a welcome addition to the area. The Fenway community has a dire need for more indoor public spaces that are appropriate for meetings and other activities. The ideal public spaces are ones that are visible from the street and welcoming to residents of all ages. The college should consider ways it can make more space in the vicinity of the campus accessible for public use.

**4. Jobs and Business Development:** There is a potential conflict between creating a more cohesive campus and maintaining a community that is shared by residents and students. This conflict already manifests itself to some degree in the number of retail stores in the area near Boylston Street and Massachusetts Avenue that cater to Berklee students. Enhanced signage meant to identify the area as a campus could further diminish residents' sense that this is their neighborhood. Berklee should provide visuals and written explanation of how they will achieve a centralized campus that also functions as part of a larger city neighborhood and business district. Berklee should also show how they will seek a mix of retail tenants that serves students as well as a more general market.

**5. Open Space and Environment:** The Urban Village Plan emphasizes energy efficiency and use of renewable energy. The college should explain in detail how its buildings will maximize green practices and technologies. Berklee's IMP should describe how it will compensate the community for the slight loss of public open space in its proposed development on Cambria Street and the adjacent Parcel 14.

In addition to considering how Berklee's IMPNF meets the goals of our Urban Village Plan, we also looked at three other areas Berklee should cover in the IMP:

**Development rights.** Berklee will greatly increase the market value of its properties by creating an IMP. They will gain this added value through increased height and square footage that is not possible under the existing zoning. Anecdotal market research indicates that a developable square foot in this neighborhood is worth \$50-60. The college should calculate this increase in market value, and outline how it proposes to return some of that added market value to the neighborhood in the form of community benefits. (One example of how the college might return some market value would be to dispose of some of its existing property at below market prices, as mentioned in the Housing section



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above.) The college's calculation should include an estimate for property the college does not yet own in the West Fenway, but which the college is actively pursuing and has included in the IMPNF.

**Alternatives analysis:** Berklee should provide an analysis comparing the cost and feasibility of concentrating most of its new square footage at the Crossroads project with an alternative scenario in which the college adds floors to other buildings in the nearby area. In other words, how would Berklee re-distribute its density either under the current zoning or if the height of the building at the Crossroads site were significantly less than the 330 feet proposed in Berklee's IMPNF?

**Analysis of cumulative impacts:** The community made clear through the Civic Vision process that it favored only one new building higher than 15 stories in the immediate area of Berklee's campus. Berklee is the first developer to propose a tall building in this area since the Civic Vision was completed. By the time a proposal is accepted for one of the air rights parcels, Berklee's building may have completed the permitting process. Therefore, the college should conduct a massing study that shows how its proposed Crossroads development will interrelate with the proposals that were submitted to the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority (MTA) for Parcels 12, 13, 14 and 15.

As noted above, Berklee's IMPNF includes Parcel 14 and a section of Cambria Street as part of its Crossroads proposal. We support this concept and urge the BRA, the MTA and the Citizens Advisory Committee for the air rights parcels to do the same. We also urge Berklee to continue to actively pursue partnerships with potential air rights developers as a means of accommodating some of the college's program needs.

To reiterate, Berklee College of Music has consistently been open and forthcoming with information about their intentions, including potential leases and building purchases. We appreciate this stance and look forward to a productive conversation with the college as its master plan takes shape.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carl Nagy-Koechlin". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized script.

Carl Nagy-Koechlin  
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Pendleton". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized script.

Richard Pendleton  
Member, Fenway CDC Urban Village Committee  
FCDC Rep to Berklee Task Force



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c.c.:

Fenway CDC's board  
William Whitney, Berklee College of Music  
Karla Rideout and Susan Ashbrook, Co-chairs, Berklee Task Force  
Senator Steven Tolman, Second Suffolk and Middlesex  
Representative Byron Rushing, Ninth Suffolk  
Representative Martha Walz, Eighth Suffolk  
Representative Gloria Fox, Seventh Suffolk  
City Councilor Michael Ross, District 8  
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