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May 20, 2009

Katelyn Sullivan
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

RE: Comments on Institutional Master Plan Notification Form for Wentworth Institute of Technology

Dear Katelyn:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Wentworth Institute of Technology Institutional Master Plan Notification Form (IMPINF).

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 IMPNF against our Urban Village Plan, 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.

Wentworth has been a good institutional neighbor. They have tried to exist and grow in ways that enhance rather than overwhelm 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. Wentworth Institute of Technology 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 Wentworth's IMPNF are driven by the vision articulated in our Urban Village Plan. We believe they are also consistent with Wentworth's intention to grow and improve their facilities in ways that enhance the Fenway as a whole:

1. **Housing:** While we acknowledge that the development of some 260 new bed spaces to be located at 525 Huntington Avenue will pull many student out of neighborhood housing –an important goal of ours – we have not seen the full design of the proposed project.

If Wentworth wishes to remain in the East Fens neighborhood, it must make a positive contribution to the needs, aspirations, and quality of life of community residents. This is no more than what the city has required of other universities in other neighborhoods. To that end, we ask that before the IMP is made final on student housing that the university meets with representatives of the community to begin the development of a collaborative process for planning the design.

In addition, we would like to see the language strengthened in the IMP regarding Wentworth's plans on maintaining the size or at least limiting the growth of its student population. Linkage money is important to our neighborhood. Finally, we would like for Wentworth and the City to agree to direct housing linkage payments from any development on the Sweeney Field site toward affordable housing development projects in the Fenway and/or Mission Hill.

2. Transportation: The Urban Village Plan calls for new development to cause a minimal increase on the number of additional vehicles in the Fenway. It is a big concern of the community that the development of the 40,000 square foot addition to the Wentworth Annex and relocation of the soccer field will attract additional traffic, although Wentworth states that these new developments 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.

We like fact that the goal of the campus center is to attract more students onto campus and it creates a more formal campus space. However, we would like to see more on how the "Pike" path across campus helps with transportation.

3. Community Facilities: We would like to see that Wentworth developed at least one new public gathering space in the new campus center, which will be 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 that cater to Wentworth students. Enhanced signage meant to identify the area as a campus could further diminish residents' sense that this is their neighborhood.

Wentworth 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. Wentworth should also show how they will promote neighborhood stability by making sure that local residents are considered for jobs, both construction jobs and permanent on-campus jobs. We ask that Wentworth and the City direct some substantial portion of any job linkage payments from any development on the Sweeney Field site toward job placement and training efforts in the Fenway and/or Mission Hill.

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. Wentworth's IMP should describe how it will compensate the community for the slight loss of public open space in its proposed development on Huntington Avenue.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments to Wentworth's amendments to its master plan. We look forward to continuing to engage with Wentworth and the BRA to find ways for Wentworth and its neighbors to meet their respective goals

Sincerely



Sheneal Parker
Board member and representative to Wentworth Task Force



Carl Nagy-Koechlin
Executive Director