

## BH NORMANDY RIVERSIDE LLC

To the Community, Mayor Warren and Ward Aldermen:

We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience that postponement of the community meeting for the Riverside MBTA project, originally scheduled for tonight at Williams School, may have caused.

The project team has been working diligently with City officials, the community and Mass DOT officials for nearly 3 years now. While we believe progress is being made there remain a few key traffic concepts that require further study and analysis by the City and community. We feel that it is important that this further study and analysis occurs prior to the next community meeting to assure that the meeting would be a productive use of time for everyone involved, including members of the community who are interested in this project.

As you know, much planning information has already been presented and a great deal has been accomplished to date. Over the past 18 months our project team has undertaken a comprehensive planning study of the site including program uses and traffic mitigation, guided by both the City of Newton Comprehensive Plan and a number of interactive meetings with the community and residents. The team has presented a mixed use transit oriented development that includes office, residential, retail and parking uses, all consistent with both the Comprehensive Plan and community input. While items such as heights of buildings, walking paths, open space and other issues remain to be addressed at future meetings, it is our understanding that the basic uses and scope of the project are consistent with the desires of the community with whom we're hopeful we can reach a consensus. The project team has also presented a traffic improvement plan that we are confident will constructively address the myriad of traffic issues along Grove Street today, including delays, pedestrian and vehicular safety, and vehicular speeds. The traffic improvement plan establishes a predominant direct access north, east and westbound onto Route 128/Mass Pike from the site. Other planned traffic improvements minimize the use of Grove Street and make full use of the existing Route 128 interchanges with Grove Street.

As requested by members of the community, we have also looked long and hard at possible ways to create a direct northbound Route 128 access to the site. For some, establishing such a direct access to the site from northbound Route 128 has been framed as a threshold issue for the project, apart from the overall merits of the project. In addition to the traffic analysis previously prepared by the project traffic engineers, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB), a number of meetings have been held with senior officials from Mass DOT to determine the feasibility of creating such a direct access. Without prejudging any future environmental reviews, Mass DOT indicated that such a solution was fatally flawed because it did not satisfy applicable design and safety requirements and policy objectives of either MassDOT or the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). A senior official of the FHWA was also present at a recent meeting and confirmed this view.

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On April 1, 2010, we plan to formally submit the comprehensive Traffic Study prepared by VHB to the City for review. The Traffic Study outlines VHB's findings with respect to Traffic Mitigation. The Traffic Study explains why the construction of a northbound Route 128 direct access to the Riverside site is unnecessary and infeasible. The Traffic Study also presents traffic solutions that will create the optimal outcome for the community from a traffic management and traffic safety standpoint.

We are pleased to learn that the City of Newton will be moving ahead with an independent third-party peer review of the VHB Traffic Study. We believe that future meetings with the community concerning the Riverside project will be most productive if the City of Newton is well underway with its peer review of the Traffic Study and is in a position to validate or critically assess the analysis and recommendations of that report. We are confident that any objective and professional review of the traffic solutions presented by the VHB Traffic Study will serve to further demonstrate that the proposed "direct northbound Route 128 access" to the Riverside site, thought by some to be a real traffic "solution," is unnecessary, infeasible, and undesirable from a traffic engineering standpoint.

We are hopeful that as a result of this peer review and other analysis new and useful, information will be available for presentation to the community on this issue in the near term. At that time we plan to re-establish our dialogue with the community and with the City of Newton. Through that process, we are confident that the many benefits that redevelopment of the Riverside site, in its proposed form and with the proposed traffic solutions, will be better understood by all.