



BOSTON COLLEGE

OFFICE OF GOVERNMENTAL & COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

January 16, 2007

Ms. Jean Woods, Chair
Allston-Brighton Boston College
Community Task Force
77 Nonantum Street
Brighton, MA 02135

Dear Chair Woods:

On behalf of Boston College, I would like to acknowledge and thank the Allston- Brighton Boston College Community Task Force for its letter of August 2004 outlining the challenges facing the Allston-Brighton community and the essential issues that the group would like Boston College to consider as it prepares a new institutional master plan. Boston College appreciates the time and effort necessary to draft such a comprehensive and thoughtful letter and has utilized it as an important resource in guiding the University and our master plan consultants engaged in this process.

As the Task Force is aware, Boston College completed an Institutional Strategic Plan in June of 2005 and hired Sasaki Associates in July of 2005 to prepare a comprehensive, long-range (30-50 year) campus master plan for the University's property located in both Boston and Newton. The goal of the campus plan was to reinforce the priorities of the strategic plan and the mission of Boston College by shaping the physical environment of the campus and creating the space and facilities required to implement the strategic initiatives.

At the outset of work on the long-range campus master plan, Boston College provided Sasaki Associates with a copy of the Task Force letter and requested that they address the issues outlined in the letter related to the planning process such as housing, open space, land use, buffer areas and enrollment management. We believe that Sasaki, in conjunction with Boston College, has developed a long range plan that is responsive to these issues and that the letter has served as a valuable tool in guiding the thinking and dialogue around many of these topics.

Problems Confronting the Allston-Brighton Community

As an institution of higher learning with deep roots in and commitment to the Allston-Brighton community, Boston College is aware of many of the challenges and pressures facing these neighborhoods relating to the high cost of home and rental housing, employment opportunities, and poverty rates. One of the primary ways that Boston College positively impacts the community and contributes to the stability of the local economy is through the employment of local residents at the University. As one of the largest employers in Brighton, Boston College employs approximately 600 residents from Brighton and 78 from Allston. University faculty,

staff, and students contribute to the economic vitality of the neighborhoods in a variety of tangible ways: generating tax revenue, purchasing goods and services, and attracting research funding that creates jobs and spawns future industries, businesses and entrepreneurial activities.

The issue of housing affordability is one that the city of Boston, the Allston-Brighton community and Boston College have all had to confront over the past few years. The decline in home ownership rates and the number of families residing in the Allston-Brighton community were raised by the Task Force as primary issues of concern during the 2000 Master Plan and again as we embark on this new plan. While building new on-campus residence halls to accommodate both undergraduate and graduate students living in the neighborhoods will not alone solve the affordable housing problem in Allston-Brighton, Boston College is making significant efforts to be a part of the solution along with other universities, private developers, community development corporations and city and state agencies charged with increasing housing capacity.

In the 2000 Master Plan, the University committed to adding 800 new beds to its housing inventory over five years and actually exceeded that number by approximately 60 beds. Currently, Boston College provides housing for approximately 85% of our undergraduate students seeking housing, placing the University as the leader among other colleges in the city of Boston, many of which are at or approaching 50%-60%. As part of the long-range campus plan, Sasaki and Boston College examined the demand and need for additional housing beds, both undergraduate and graduate, and identified the possible locations of new residence halls. While the long-range plan builds in an increase in housing capacity over time, the University and Sasaki, are studying what increase in beds may be possible during the ten year time frame of the institutional master plan and where that housing might be located.

While adding to the undergraduate housing capacity remains a primary focus of the Task Force, Boston College currently provides no on campus graduate and professional housing and this has surfaced as an issue during the recruitment of prospective students. In order to attract and retain the most talented junior faculty and graduate students to our professional schools, Boston College is considering offering graduate and professional housing and the long-range plan includes the construction of graduate and professional housing in various locations across campus, with a strong focus on the Brighton campus.

Recommendations Concerning the Master Planning Process

Boston College agrees with the Task Force that transparency, open dialogue and strong communication are elements of a good master planning process. Since Boston College purchased the Brighton property from the Archdiocese of Boston in June of 2004, the University has made great efforts to keep the Task Force, the mayor, our elected officials, local community groups and residents informed of our activities through a series of over forty (40) meetings, a design workshop and written communication. These cooperative efforts continued through the successful amendment process to utilize four existing buildings on the Brighton campus and were carried through to Sasaki's work in formulating a long-range comprehensive plan for the campus. Boston College and Vanasse Hangen Brustlin Associates (VHB), the firm recently hired to assist us in developing our ten year Institutional Master Plan (IMP), intend to replicate this model with the same positive results.

Now that we have completed the long-range campus vision plan and are entering in to the preparation of an Institutional Master Plan for the city of Boston, the more detailed information requested in the Task Force letter regarding schedule, program needs, building sites, and construction phasing will be addressed in the preparation and submittal of an Institutional Master Plan Project Notification Form (IMP NF) and ultimately the Institutional Mater Plan (IMP) document. The information requested on immediate plans for the reuse of the Brighton campus

and request for site maps showing existing conditions and significant features of the property were provided in the Master Plan Amendment for the Brighton Campus and the Sasaki long-range campus master plan presentations.

Recommendations Concerning Specific Issues Relating to the Next Master Plan

1. Boston College is preparing an Institutional Master Plan for land it currently owns in Boston. If approached, however, the University will consider opportunities for other strategic acquisitions. For example, the Wade Street properties were purchased to provide housing options for faculty and administrators to live in Brighton in close proximity to the University. These four houses will not be converted to institutional use, but remain residential, and the University will continue to pay taxes to the City of Boston.
2. With the exception of modest increases in graduate and professional enrollment, Boston College is not planning an increase in enrollment during the next master plan period. Over the past decade, Boston College's enrollment has remained stable.
3. As stated earlier in this letter, Boston College and Sasaki are studying the needs of the University as it relates to increasing the number of undergraduate student beds. An increase in the undergraduate beds is being considered. Boston College has stated that it is unlikely that it would ever accommodate 100% of its students on campus due to students who opt to commute, live in the neighborhood, or participate in study abroad programs. Boston College and Sasaki recognize the potential for providing additional housing density on the current site of the mods and this area has been identified in the long-range plan for the construction of residence halls.
4. Brighton Campus:
 - a. The current uses outlined for the Brighton Campus include administrative and academic uses, a conference facility, graduate housing, recreational uses including a tennis and racquet facility with locker rooms and athletic support, baseball and softball fields with lighting, multipurpose fields and parking facilities.
 - b. The development of the Brighton campus is organized around preserving as much of the existing green space and wooded areas along residential streets, in particular Lake Street, as buffer zones with a majority of the building program located in the interior of the property.
 - c. As currently designed, development is clustered with a focus on locating the building program around large open space quadrangles to capture storm water to assist with flooding issues and to be reutilized by the University.
 - d. One of the key design elements of the long-range plan is to organize the campus and its building program around a series of open space quadrangles that will provide a method of linking the upper, middle, lower and Brighton campuses together and provide for quality passive recreation space for our students, faculty, staff, community and visitors. Sasaki and Boston College have paid particular attention to the issue of open space and have created a balanced plan that seeks to preserve open space as an integral part of the campus, while accommodating the building program without the need for formal conservation easements.

- e. As stated previously, Boston College and Sasaki are in the process of examining the demand and need for additional undergraduate housing beds in the ten year time frame and identifying all possible locations for the construction of new residence halls.

Recommendations Concerning Community Benefits

As Boston College and VHB begin to prepare the IMP, we look forward to a productive discussion with the Task Force and the community around the community benefits package. Boston College is very proud of the outreach and support that the University currently provides to the Allston-Brighton community through the existing Allston-Brighton scholarship program, institutional financial aid to Boston students attending Boston College, community service programs, grants to community based organizations through the community fund and our recent partnership with St. Columbkille School and the Archdiocese of Boston, just to name a few. We look forward to a productive dialogue on these issues and working with the Task Force to develop an appropriate community benefits package that will match the needs of the community with the resources of Boston College over the next ten years.

Conclusion

Boston College appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Task Force letter and looks forward to continuing a productive and open dialogue with the Task Force as we build on the long-range vision plan developed by Sasaki and work with VHB to craft a ten-year Institutional Master Plan that meets the needs of the both the community and Boston College.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Keady, Jr.
Vice President
Office of Governmental & Community Affairs