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OFFICIAL LETTERS OF COMMENT

**Office of the Mayor,
City of Boston**

**Office of the Chief Planner,
Boston Redevelopment
Authority**

**Executive Director,
Metropolitan Area
Planning Council
(with Statement Of
Relationship to the MAPC
MetroGreen Plan)**



CITY OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
THOMAS M. MENINO

December 19, 2001

Justine M. Liff, Commissioner
Parks and Recreation Department
1010 Massachusetts Avenue
Boston, MA 02118

Dear Commissioner Liff:

Citizens and officials alike will use Open Space Plan 2002-2006 for years to come as a guide for open space planning and policy.

I endorse the goals of the Plan, and urge all elements of city government and the entire community to continue to work hard in the years ahead to address the specific objectives and recommendations contained in the Plan. I look forward to working with your staff and the citizens of Boston on a green, accessible, and sustainable park and open space system.

Sincerely,

Thomas M. Menino
Mayor of Boston

Boston Redevelopment Authority

Boston's Planning & Economic
Development Office

Thomas M. Menino, *Mayor*
Clarence J. Jones, *Chairman*
Mark Maloney, *Director*

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Boston, MA 02201-1007
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December 14, 2001

Justine M. Liff, Commissioner
Boston Parks & Recreation Department
1010 Massachusetts Avenue, 3rd Floor
Boston, MA 02118

Dear Commissioner Liff:

The Boston Redevelopment Authority applauds your Department's efforts in producing the Open Space Plan 2002-2006. With the variety of input from agencies and citizenry from all areas of the city, you have developed plan goals and objectives that reflect a board spectrum of Boston residents and officials.

As the City's Chief Planner, at the Boston Redevelopment Authority, I strongly support this new Open Space Plan and look forward to continuing to work with the Department in fulfilling the goals and objectives of this progressive agenda.

Sincerely,



Rebecca G. Barnes, FAIA
Chief Planner

Cc: Mark Maloney, BRA
Andrea d'Amato, Chief of Environmental Services



Metropolitan Area Planning Council

60 Temple Place, Boston, Massachusetts 02111 617-451-2770 fax 617-482-7185 www.mapc.org

Serving 101 cities and towns in metropolitan Boston

December 27, 2001

Aldo Ghirin, Senior Planner
Boston Parks and Recreation Dept.
1010 Massachusetts Avenue, 3rd floor
Boston, MA 02108

Dear Mr. Ghirin:

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council has reviewed the City of Boston draft Open Space Plan 2002-2006. The plan is extremely thorough and appears to meet all of the guidelines of the Division of Conservation Services. I would like to offer the following comments to help strengthen the plan.

1. Surrounding communities - Within the discussion of the regional context in Section 3, there should be mention made of the open space plans and planning activities of surrounding communities.

2. Metropolitan Area Planning Council – On Page 3-2 MAPC is incorrectly referred to as the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission.

3. Subregion – Within the discussion of the regional context, it should be noted that Boston is a member of the Inner Core Committee, one of eight MAPC subregions. The Inner Core Committee is a group of communities that meet regularly and is an excellent forum for discussing regional open space issues and opportunities.

4. MetroGreen – There should be a discussion of how the open space plan relates to MetroGreen, the land resources protection element of MAPC's regional development plan (MetroPlan). I have enclosed a copy of MetroGreen for your use.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this plan.

Sincerely,

David C. Soule
Executive Director

Cc: Joel Lerner, Division of Conservation Services
Andrea d'Amato, MAPC Representative, City of Boston

Mayor William J. Mauro, Jr., *President* Donald A. Walsh, *Vice President* Lauren DiLorenzo, *Secretary* Mary Ellen Lavenberg, *Treasurer*

David C. Soule, *Executive Director*

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STATEMENT OF RELATIONSHIP TO THE MAPC METROGREEN PLAN

In response to comment #4 of the letter of comment from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), we are providing the following statement outlining the relationship of this open space plan to MetroGreen, the Land Resources Protection Element of the MAPC Regional Development Plan (MetroPlan).

Preserve a Network of Land Resource Protection Areas throughout the Region

Two of the three major open space systems in the region affect Boston: the Emerald Necklace and the MDC parks system. The city, using its own capital funds as well as state, federal, and private sources, has mobilized a strong rehabilitation effort for the Emerald Necklace: over \$24 million was spent in the period from 1993 to 2000. While certain portions of the Emerald Necklace are under MDC jurisdiction, the city has worked cooperatively with the MDC to improve the connectivity of this linked park system, such as with the current project to study improvements to the Arborway. The city also advocates for further state support for the MDC management and redevelopment of its current holdings and for expansion of the system within Boston, such as the New Charles River Reservation, the Neponset River Greenway Trail, and Pope John Paul II Park.

Support Regional Scale Land Acquisition

The city Parks Commission and Department have supported land acquisition by the MDC in the Stony Brook, Charles River, and Lower Neponset River Reservations. This open space plan also supports such acquisitions in the future.

Improve Access to Regional Open Space

This plan anticipates that the Urban Ring mass transit project will help provide access to regional open spaces in the Inner Core. It also advocates for improved transit access to the harbor beaches and larger spaces such as the Emerald Necklace, Millennium Park, the Stony Brook Reservation, and the Lower Neponset Reservation from inland communities.

In addition, it supports greenways that connect to regional open spaces, such as the Neponset River Greenway, the East Boston Greenway (connecting to Belle Isle Marsh and beyond), the Charles River Reservation, and the Harborwalk system.

Identify Environmental, Scenic, and Historic Resources for Protection

This plan provides maps and text identifying such resources, many of which are already protected through jurisdiction by conservation agencies or regulatory mechanisms. The plan identifies the strong system of protection – the Conservation Commission, the Landmarks Commission, the Parks Commission, the BRA Article 80 project review process, etc. – which exists at the local level to protect these resources.

Establish a Procedure for Timely Acquisition of Threatened Parcels

This plan supports the City of Boston Open Space Acquisition Program managed by the Parks Department. Established in the mid-1990s, this program has provided some flexibility and speed in the open space acquisition process. By partnering with others on an as-needed basis – such as the Trust for Public Land (TPL) or the Boston Natural Areas Network (BNAN) – the Open Space Acquisition Program has been able to achieve timely acquisitions in some difficult cases through the more flexible means at their partner's disposal. The city would welcome a regional approach that would further advance the cause of timely acquisition, such as a special pool of funds as suggested by MetroGreen.

Inventory & Preserve Valuable Agricultural Land

Allandale Farm is the only working farm in Boston and Brookline. At the time of this writing, two parcels at the farm are the subjects of an acquisition process. Through this process, which has already received Boston Conservation Commission approval, The Trustees for Reservations will acquire an agricultural preservation restriction from the property owner, which will allow the owner to receive some equity while keeping

the farmland in open agricultural use. These parcels have also received Chapter 61A preferential property tax treatment for agricultural land preservation. This plan supports such efforts to preserve open land for agricultural use at the Allandale Farm.

Retain Federal and State Surplus Lands for Long-Term Public Benefits

The city's open space system has benefited from surplus lands, such as the former Boston State Hospital site (a new Massachusetts Audubon sanctuary has just been built there) and the Charlestown Navy Yard (Navy Yard Park). Should other such opportunities develop, the plan encourages efforts to determine if open space development is an appropriate part of the re-development scheme. One potential site for study and evaluation is the abandoned right-of-way in West Roxbury owned by the MBTA.

Plan for Sufficient Land Resource Protection Areas in Concentrated Development Centers

The city's open space acquisition program – combined with state and federal acquisition funds – will continue to seek additional open spaces where needed, per plan and agency recommendations. The city's zoning of sensitive lands as Conservation Protection Subdistricts has yielded gains through private sector development and will continue to do so in the future, as will the Article 80 review of larger projects. Conservation Commission action through the Wetlands Protection Act has also assisted the protection of valued land resources. Transportation and other urban development projects can also contribute open space, as the Central Artery/Tunnel Project will show.

Encourage Implementation of Local Open Space and Recreation Plans

The city's capital and operating budget, supplemented by the continual pursuit of state and federal grants and private funding, forms the largest implementation mechanism available. State and federal funding for park sites in Boston under their jurisdiction also helps. The regulatory process through the BRA, Landmarks Commission, Conservation Commission, Parks Commission, etc. provides additional measures to assure implementation of this open space plan's actions. Non-profits and grassroots efforts are necessary components to meeting several plan actions.

Protect Critical Environmental Resources through Local Bylaws and State Regulations

The Conservation Commission carries out the state regulations mandated by the Wetland Protection Act (the Parks Commissioner is an ex officio member of the Conservation Commission). It is now developing a draft of a local wetlands bylaw to supplement the state law. The plan encourages the greatest degree of protection of sensitive environmental resources such as wetlands and supports the drafting of a local bylaw by the Conservation Commission.

The plan also supports the Conservation Protection Subdistricts zoning which protects critical environmental resources through site plan review, the Area of Critical Environmental Concern Program, carried out by DEM and EOEA/MEPA, and the 100-foot rule jurisdiction of the Boston Parks and Recreation Commission.

Support Local Option Supplementary Funding for Open Space and Housing

The plan supports supplementary means beyond existing mechanisms where these are feasible and equitable. The city endorsed the Community Preservation Act proposal before the voters in November 2001. The Community Preservation Act called for local option property tax increases for open space acquisition, affordable housing development, and historic preservation. Unfortunately, it failed to achieve the approval of a majority of voters in Boston, in part due to the uncertainty of the local and national economy. Should future conditions warrant a new proposal before the voters, the city will review the new proposal for consistency with the local open space plan.

Advocate Adequate Funding for Land Resource Protection

The city instituted a \$250,000 per year open space acquisition fund. The plan supports continued appropriations for this fund.

The plan also supports increases in state and federal funding for open space acquisition programs, capital rehabilitation programs, and other land resource protection programs. The city has been particularly active in supporting state and federal funding for the Muddy River restoration project.

Support Riverbank Protection

The plan supports riverbank protection through its advocacy for existing and future greenways along the Neponset River, the Charles River, the Mother Brook, and the Muddy River. It also supports protection of smaller streams such as the Bussey Brook through Allandale Woods and the Arboretum, and the Saw Mill Brook through Brook Farm and Millennium Park. The Conservation Commission has vigorously implemented the

River Protection Act Amendments to the Wetlands Protection Act. The plan supports acquisitions by the MDC along the Neponset for the implementation of the Lower Neponset River Reservation Master Plan. The plan supports the Muddy River restoration project, which includes riverbank protection measures as part of its scope of work.

Encourage Private Sector Implementation of the Plan

The plan encourages continuation of private sector funding support to specific projects and funds. It also supports the development of public/private partnerships for park operation and maintenance, and grassroots involvement in the parks, such as Friends groups.

Support Efforts to Limit Conversion of Article 97 Lands

The plan has not called for any such conversions, and calls for improvements to all existing parklands, and even expansion of the system where appropriate. Strengthening the existing open space system, a major goal of the plan, is one of the best measures to prevent conversion.

Use the State and Federal Transportation Enhancements Program to Fund Implementation of the Plan

The ISTEA Enhancements Program and its successor, the TEA-21, has funded the development of the East Boston Greenway, the Children's Wharf Harborwalk, and the rehabilitation of the shoreline and paths in Jamaica Pond Park. Bicycling and walking opportunities have consequently increased, benefiting both recreation and multi-modal transportation. The *Connecting the Corridors* Project will also be funded through this program, as has the South Bay Harbor Trail. The plan's Greenways, Trails & Bikeways chapter lists other projects that may also be candidates for funding through this program.

Coordinate Open Space Plans with the MetroGreen Plan

This plan was submitted to the MAPC and approved. The city regularly submits grant applications for projects that implement the city's open space plan to the MAPC for consistency review and has always been found consistent. The plan supports coordination with the regional MetroGreen plan.

APPENDIX 5

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