



Image: Courtesy Trans National Properties

Rendering of the proposed Trans National project

Trans National Proposal Violates Park Ordinance

by Tanner Stening

A city ordinance protecting national parks could stand in the way of the Trans National Tower slated for 2 Charlesgate West at its proposed height.

The Parkway Ordinance, cited in a letter from the Parks Department to the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) last month regarding the proposed 29-story tower, “establishes a maximum height of 70 feet for buildings constructed on land that ‘abuts on and has an entrance into and is within a distance of 100 feet from’ certain designated parkways,” including the Back Bay Fens.

According to city officials, the building would be within 100 feet of the Fens, which is part of the Emerald Necklace park system.

“The so-called ‘100’ rule’ is measured from the property line of the park, outward to adjacent properties,” writes Carrie Marsh, executive secretary of the Parks Department. “In this case ... the rule applies to the site, and in fact, the current buildings on the site were reviewed and approved by Parks ... prior to construction.”

“It is our protection,” said Fenway Civic Association President Tim Horn. “And it depends on the willingness of the city to enforce it.”

The building would sit on one or two “gateway parcels,” which were specifically rezoned to allow a new height cap of 135 feet. The other gateway building is the under-construction Pierce building at 188 Brookline Avenue, which complied with the ordinance and needed to be set back.

The current proposal by developer Trans

National Properties lists the building height at 340 feet. According to project documents, the building would cast new shadow on parts of Charlesgate Park, the Commonwealth Avenue Mall and surrounding open space at various points throughout the year.

The Emerald Necklace Conservancy, which is a steward of the park, expressed its concern in a separate letter to the BPDA on October 31 written by the group’s president, Karen Mauney-Brodek. She said that in addition to new shadows, the building may cause light pollution and will disrupt bird migration.

“Adequate reasoning has not been presented so far to support the assertion that the height of the building needs to be in line with the other Gateway location,” she wrote. “The proposed building ... would be a new dominant visual presence from inside the Emerald Necklace, and could have a very real impact on the Emerald Necklace experience and its users.”

“2 Charlesgate West is really important. We have protections in place,” said Horn. “If the project gets outside the zoning, then everything is at risk.”

The project manager could not be reached in time for press, but BPDA spokesperson Gina Physic said the agency is aware of concerns.

“Since it is still under review, we are working on the applicability of various parkway ordinances,” said Physic. “We’re continuing to work with the Parks Department and eventually with the Parks Commission.”

A representative for the developer, Justin Krebs, could not be reached by press time.

An Artistic Weekend

The Fenway Studios, one of the city’s oldest cultural landmarks, opened its doors last weekend to visitors. Guests were treated to intimate viewings of some 20 studios with the chance to converse with local artists.



Artist Peter Williams



Artist Keith Maddy (right)

Photos: Tanner Stening



Henry Woodhull Gates' studio



David Lowrey's studio



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