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October 28, 2019

Mr. Timothy Czerwienski
Boston Planning & Development Agency
One City Hall, Ninth Floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02201

Dear Mr. Czerwienski:

I write to you regarding the Suffolk Downs Redevelopment Project (“Suffolk Downs”), and to discuss the projected impacts this project will have on my neighborhood and constituents of East Boston. Situated on a 162-acre site straddling East Boston and Revere, Suffolk Downs will be the largest property development in either community's history. Therefore, the impacts it will undoubtedly have on these communities will be substantial. The residents of East Boston in recent years have faced challenges related to transportation, housing affordability, and environmental sustainability. East Boston is an environmental justice community, one of the hardest-hit in the Commonwealth when it comes to traffic, public transportation challenges, air quality and noise, flooding susceptibility, and, more recently, a surge in housing prices. These issues will be further exacerbated by the construction of Suffolk Downs. Throughout the consideration of this project, it is vital that the issues facing our neighborhood be thoroughly comprehended and addressed in the planning, construction, and development of Suffolk Downs.

After a year of studying this proposal, engaging in and observing the community process, and speaking with constituents to understand their views and feedback, my office has identified how Suffolk Downs affects each of the major issues discussed below, and suggests how to mitigate its impacts, and become a thriving part of the East Boston community. I acknowledge the transparency and engagement of HYM Investments, specifically founding partner and managing director, Thomas N. O'Brien, and appreciate their willingness to listen to the community's concerns and feedback. I am confident that many if not all of the following recommendations are in alignment with HYM's goals, as we all hope to see positive changes not only at Suffolk Downs, but in the surrounding areas, as well.

Transportation

East Boston residents face a number of challenges across our transportation system, including outdated and insufficient public transit infrastructure, increased traffic congestion, and lack of connectivity to the rest of Greater Boston. In recent years, the neighborhood has experienced a rapid rise in congestion, placing streets in gridlock and clogging the harbor tunnels connecting us to downtown and beyond. At the same time, East Boston continues to be impacted by a lack of reliable, robust public transportation options, with buses and the Blue Line experiencing capacity issues, breakdowns, and delays. The combined effect has been increased difficulty in moving around the neighborhood, and to and from East Boston into the city. This is the transit landscape into which Suffolk Downs enters.

When fully built, the Suffolk Downs site proposes to be home to up to ten thousand units of housing and a number of businesses, retail venues, hotels, and restaurants. This will add an infusion of thousands of new daily trips to an already overcrowded system, affecting our roads and public transit alike. An addition of this size to our transportation network is untenable with our current traffic situation. Not only would these additional trips further cripple our regional transportation system, but the resulting congestion would have the effect of deterring people from living in, working in, and visiting Suffolk Downs. A project of this size can only be realized in conjunction with an overhaul of the transportation network in East Boston. This is a process in which Suffolk Downs must commit itself as a fully engaged, fully invested partner.

The gridlock which currently exists in East Boston is emblematic of increasing congestion throughout Greater Boston. This increase, however, is especially acute along the Route 1A corridor, and can be largely attributed to two factors. First, there has been an increase in commuter traffic from the North Shore, which primarily travels along Route 1A, past the Suffolk Downs site. The second is the number of vehicles travelling to and from Logan International Airport (“Logan Airport”), which has spiked since the introduction of ridesharing services. This traffic comes to a head at the Sumner, Callahan, and Ted Williams Tunnels, crossing underneath the Boston Harbor to and from Downtown. These tunnels have a bottleneck effect on traffic. Additionally, the prevalence of wayfinding technology, such as Google Maps and Waze, whose algorithms indiscriminately direct drivers to take the shortest route available, steers vehicles off the highways and along local streets in an attempt to bypass traffic. This practice has led to a surge in cars on East Boston streets, creating backups not only on major arteries and the tunnel toll plazas, but also on small neighborhood streets. This idling traffic decreases quality of life, hurts our economy by reducing productive work hours, and contributes to the burden of air pollution, which is already substantial due to vehicle activity at Logan Airport.

Suffolk Downs, as a new addition to the neighborhood directly abutting Route 1A, will invariably be affected by these same conditions, and will most likely contribute to them as well. No matter how great the site’s emphasis on public transportation, cars will realistically, to some degree, still be part of the new development. This is anticipated in the number of parking spots currently planned on-site, and is clear from precedent developments such as Assembly Row, which experiences a high volume of traffic despite having its own MBTA station. Mitigation will be essential to offset the effect of the number of vehicles which Suffolk Downs will be injecting

directly into a high-congestion corridor, and may even be able to play a part in a wider array of solutions to alleviate congestion in the area.

The HYM Investment Group (“HYM”) has proposed a number of roadway and intersection improvements in East Boston, Revere, and surrounding communities, the result of a far-reaching traffic study, which they believe will aid in relieving congestion and improving traffic flow along the Route 1A corridor. These suggestions include, among other improvements, reconfiguring intersections, revising signals and signage, and widening Route 1A to three lanes in each direction for a portion near the Suffolk Downs site. While commenting on each of these suggestions specifically would be tedious, particular scrutiny must be paid to the proposal to widen Route 1A. Precedent suggests that widening the highway only invites more congestion, and is an unsustainable solution which would be ineffective in solving local traffic issues. In addition, such a widening would only happen in the immediate vicinity of Suffolk Downs, with the highway remaining two lanes before and after--and even narrowing to a single lane approaching the Sumner Tunnel, rendering the lane increase more harmful than helpful in that it would most likely create a bottleneck. Our emphasis in reforming our transportation system should be on moving more people, not more cars, promoting transportation improvements which facilitate high-capacity transportation, including HOV lanes, bus rapid transit (“BRT”), increased MBTA investment, and exploring partnerships for water transportation. Instead of focusing on expanding lanes on Route 1A, efforts would be better spent toward promoting efforts to reduce vehicle traffic and improve flow through other road improvements. Such improvements are good in principle, but in order to be effective, it will be important that specific proposals are developed in conjunction with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation and the Boston Transportation Department.

The traffic plan for Suffolk Downs must also give thorough consideration to the possible effects of transportation network companies (“TNCs”), such as Uber and Lyft, used by visitors and residents. Businesses planned for location at Suffolk Downs, such as restaurants, bars, hotels, shops, and other public venues are all prime destinations for passengers using ridesharing apps. Recently, such services have been shown to be a major component of regional traffic issues, with their effects especially acute in East Boston as the host community to Logan Airport. In 2018 alone, there were twelve million trips to and from Logan Airport, five million of which were deadhead trips - trips that lacked any passengers. These additional vehicles have contributed to a large spike in congestion felt throughout our neighborhood. The traffic plan for Suffolk Downs must realistically evaluate the expected number of TNCs at the site, and introduce logistical infrastructure which can limit the quantity and effect of these vehicles. Such measures might include dedicated drop-off and pick-up areas, and other solutions and incentives which promote pooling and prevent deadhead rides.

In addition to rideshare apps, Suffolk Downs also has the opportunity to plan ahead for a new advancement in transportation technology: micromobility devices, such as bikeshares and electric scooters. Legislation and regulations on these technologies are currently being considered and implemented on the state and municipal levels. Micromobility devices show potential for serving as “last mile” transportation, useful for someone to travel around the Suffolk Downs site, between the site and the surrounding communities, and to and from public transit. They also, however, come with their own set of challenges, with questions such as what

will be allowed on-site, availability to residents and visitors, docking and parking protocols, and usage on certain streets and pathways. HYM has the ability to plan for this technology in advance, taking into account best practices employed in other areas as the site progresses.

Another creative proposal is for HYM to invest in some designated cars for its residents to use when public transportation is not a viable option. There are many people in East Boston who primarily use public transit, but still own cars for trips out of town and to the supermarket, just to name two examples. If Suffolk Downs were to advertise that on top of its transit-friendly setting, there are cars available for residents to use (similar to a ZipCar, but for exclusive use of residents), this could go a long way in limiting the number of vehicles in the development. HYM should also consider offering incentives for people who are willing to live car-free, whether a reduction in rent or condo fees, credits for stores or markets on site, subsidized MBTA fares, and other innovative perks.

HYM has proposed to make the Blue Line the “front door” of their site at Beachmont and Suffolk Downs Stations. This is a commendable and forward-thinking goal, in line with the principles of transit-oriented development. In addition to this, they have also outlined plans for shuttle systems throughout the site and a commuter shuttle back and forth from locations such as downtown Boston. HYM has also planned for bike and pedestrian paths, as well as more ambitious proposals, such as a commuter rail connection at Wonderland Station. These plans, from the most simple to the complex, are important for incentivizing the use of public transit and reducing vehicular traffic for the site. But, this can only succeed if public transit receives robust attention and funding to encourage people to make it their primary mode of transportation to and from the site. HYM must be a fully-invested partner in this process in order to make it a reality.

Today, public transportation throughout the neighborhood is hindered by a number of issues; the lack of a direct connector between the Red and Blue Lines, the need for signal and power upgrades, as well as capacity expansion along the Blue Line, the lack of an inner-harbor ferry system, the need for improved bus service and BRT, the limits of late-night options, among others. All of these issues have an effect on Suffolk Downs, and finding solutions will be essential to facilitate greater connectivity to and from the site, and encouraging future residents and visitors alike to view public transit as the best mode of transportation available.

To make public transportation welcoming at Suffolk Downs, it’s important that the site’s “front doors,” Suffolk Downs and Beachmont stations, are well-maintained and welcoming. Both stations are currently in need of cosmetic and infrastructure improvements, with Suffolk Downs station the more critical of the two. While the overall design and construction of the station is good, it stands in severe need of maintenance. This includes resurfacing of the platform, improvement of drainage, and the repair and replacement of corroding metal and concrete throughout the station, such as on the stairwells, overhead pedestrian walkway, and platform awnings. Additionally, upgrades such as increased fare boxes and gates, and the addition of amenities such as elevators and escalators may also be desirable to improve accessibility and capacity with the anticipated increase in ridership. Suffolk Downs must be fully committed to the rebuilding and continued maintenance of their eponymous station in order to facilitate ridership.

Improved Blue Line service will also be essential in drawing commuters to Suffolk Downs by means of public transit. Signal and power upgrades along the line will result in improved reliability, reducing the risk of delays and breakdowns. These upgrades also make it possible to expand capacity along the Blue Line through the introduction of additional train sets, which will be essential in handling additional capacity from Suffolk Downs, as well as increases in passengers from a growing commuter population along the Blue Line corridor as well as to and from Logan Airport. Additional train sets will allow for reduced headways, especially during peak transit hours, and reduce instances of overcrowding and crush capacity situations. Making the Blue Line more reliable, more frequent, and more comfortable to ride greatly enhances its appeal for those considering public transportation options to access Suffolk Downs.

The lack of a direct rail connector between the Blue Line and Red Line also hinders East Boston's connectivity with other surrounding areas, such as Cambridge, Somerville, the Seaport, and South Boston. This missing link, and the hassle of transferring by way of a third line, makes it more difficult for residents to access opportunities along the Red Line corridor, including high-opportunity areas where many new residents may work. Additionally, it disincentivizes travel to East Boston for residents living along the Red Line. Increased connectivity to sites like these is important for the attractiveness of Suffolk Downs as a residential and business location. Their support for the Red-Blue Connector has been greatly appreciated, and it is critical that HYM continues to be proactive in supporting the community to achieve this long-awaited goal.

Increased congestion in East Boston has affected bus service, including normal MBTA buses, the Silver Line, and private shuttles, all of which are reliant on public streets for much or all of their routes. Traffic congestion makes bus schedules unreliable and service unevenly spread. This is a hassle to those who must take the bus and a significant disincentive for those who have a choice in transit options beyond bus service. These issues speak to the need for, in addition to decreasing congestion, investment in BRT and dedicated bus lanes, to speed up bus service and make it a reliable, speedy, and attractive alternative to car traffic.

HYM's plans to introduce shuttles both within the site and to and from important locations, such as commuter rail stations, are important pieces of the plan to encourage connectivity. These shuttles should be robust and provide incentives which outweigh private vehicle commutes. However, these shuttles will face the same issues as buses across the region unless better practices are introduced to make them appealing, rapid transit options. Dedicated bus lanes would allow both public buses and shuttles to move quickly and bypass traffic with ease, the best use of any proposed additional lanes. It is also important that public MBTA bus service is integrated into the new development, between the growing Suffolk Downs site and the areas around it, to promote accessibility and integration of important community infrastructure. HYM must be a willing and eager partner to work among stakeholders to make BRT in East Boston and along the Route 1A corridor a reality.

The revitalization of an inner-harbor ferry network, connecting the East Boston waterfront to those in Charlestown, the North End, and the Seaport will also be important to increase use of public transit. Not only will it provide an additional commuter option for residents, with the potential to help reduce congestion on other transit modes, but it will also be critical in activating the East Boston waterfront. Although Suffolk Downs does not lie directly on the waterfront, the

connection between these two ends of the neighborhood will be important for drawing visitors to East Boston, something that will be mutually beneficial for our community as a whole. HYM should be a partner in the discussion about how to implement and fund water transit in East Boston. HYM's insight into expanding the reach and impact of water transportation to Orient Heights and Suffolk Downs will be invaluable in shaping a system that works for our entire community.

In addition to the inherent value of reducing congestion and improving various means of public transit, these goals when combined have the critical effect of building redundancy into our local transportation system. In terms of connectivity with the rest of Boston, East Boston is an island, separated by the Boston Harbor. Our community has frequently experienced instances where a breakdown in the Blue Line, or gridlock in the harbor tunnels, impeding private vehicles, rideshares, and buses alike, has left hundreds stranded during peak commuting hours. We have seen occasions where small water taxi docks have begun to submerge beneath the water line under the weight of all the passengers looking to use these services during a breakdown, with no ferry alternative to turn to. Redundancy is critical for this transit corridor to remain up-and-running even when something goes wrong, and will prevent Suffolk Downs, along with the rest of East Boston, from becoming an island separated from the rest of the city when such inconveniences inevitably re-occur. These redundancies also encourage faith in the public transit system, allowing people to truly rely on it and consistently choose it over private vehicle modes of transportation, even in inclement weather.

Lastly, a critical effort across all modes of transit will be the expansion of late-night services, which is severely lacking in the Boston area. Our neighborhood's geographical separation from the rest of Boston means that, once modes of public transportation have shut down for the night, the only two options which remain to get home are either to drive a private vehicle, or to take a rideshare, both of which can be prohibitively expensive for certain populations. Expanding late-night service is important for two reasons. First, it facilitates the expansion of night life, allowing our community to grow both our economy and nighttime culture, both of which are in the best interest of Suffolk Downs. When residents and visitors do not need to worry about catching the last train home or risk being stranded on the wrong side of the harbor, it allows them to stay out later, socializing with friends and patronizing local businesses. More importantly, late night service is critical to providing an affordable transit option for workers with evening and night shifts. For working class members of our community staffing the hotels, hospitals, office buildings, bars, and restaurants fueling this economy, paying for a car or nightly rideshare represents a significant portion of their wages. Late night public transportation options are important to Suffolk Downs, for both the businesses that will be located there and those who will work in them. HYM must be a partner in achieving better late-night public transit options, to allow workers and patrons alike to have a reliable, affordable, and safe option to commute home.

Housing Affordability

Housing affordability is one of the greatest issues facing East Boston residents today. Over the past several years, East Boston has seen a surge in housing prices, with both rental and ownership options becoming scarcer and less affordable to residents. This is emblematic of a larger housing crisis across Massachusetts, a result of a lack of adequate low-moderate income

housing, which is especially acute in our neighborhood. East Boston has historically been a working class, immigrant community, whose affordable housing stock offered accessible rental and home buying options. The neighborhood, however, has experienced a wave of gentrification and development in recent years, with rents skyrocketing and many apartments being converted into condominiums with prices beyond the reach of many longtime residents. This is despite a development boom in East Boston which, while increasing the number of new units, is not doing enough to provide affordable options for existing residents. Newer, more expensive developments have had the effect of contributing to increasing rent prices across the neighborhood. The cumulative effect of these changes has been an increase in displacement of longtime residents, traditional working class, and immigrant families, a trend which threatens to permanently tear the fabric of our neighborhood.

When completed, the Suffolk Downs site proposes to contain up to ten thousand units of housing, the largest single project in Greater Boston. While this will go a long way towards addressing housing shortages in the area, the introduction of these units will have a substantial impact on local housing prices, not only on-site, but also in the surrounding community. While rising housing prices will benefit some, Suffolk Downs has the potential to raise prices in East Boston, exacerbating an already strained affordability crisis.

However, Suffolk Downs also has the potential to positively impact the local housing situation through the introduction of affordable units. Suffolk Downs is currently on track to introduce the largest number of affordable units in the city's history, an exciting opportunity with the potential to allow more families and longtime residents to remain in the neighborhood. But there is still room to go further than the minimum requirements of thirteen percent currently set by the city of Boston for affordability, and doing so will be crucial to making the impact that is truly needed for a project of this size. HYM needs to offer more affordable units, set at a lower threshold of affordability so that they are accessible for the populations that need them most.

A frequent and accurate criticism of the affordable housing process in our community is the definition of Area Median Income ("AMI") as it is applied in the city of Boston. Anyone reasonably familiar with local geography would view the AMI map under which East Boston falls with considerable skepticism. This map groups our community in with wealthy suburbs, while leaving out nearby cities which have more similar demographic and socioeconomic compositions to our neighborhood. The result is a calculated AMI which far exceeds reality for East Boston and the surrounding communities. This has the effect that many units listed as "affordable" under these criteria are oftentimes still too expensive for the populations which they are intended to benefit. To rectify this issue, HYM should work with the city to lower the percentage of AMI at which each unit is offered. This will ensure that these units can truly be accessible to working-class and low-income populations from East Boston and surrounding communities.

Suffolk Downs has excelled at putting a strong emphasis on senior affordable units throughout the site. This is a component of affordable housing which is critical to fighting some of the worst effects of displacement. Elderly residents are often disproportionately affected by rent increases and evictions. They are also among the hardest hit. Many have lived their entire lives in this neighborhood, and know no other place to call home. When displaced at an advanced age, many

find it difficult to adjust and rebuild. Suffolk Downs will allow more of these seniors to remain in their community and continue to be connected to the important social and support networks on which many rely.

In addition to senior housing, Suffolk Downs should also be building housing, both affordable and market-rate, geared toward families. East Boston has traditionally been a family-oriented neighborhood, an economical option for parents to raise children with access to a variety of community resources, and where strong intergenerational and extended family ties help to reinforce a tight-knit sense of community. However, rising prices throughout East Boston have made it increasingly difficult for families to remain here. A lack of family units has also persisted in new developments. Developers, citing “market demands,” rarely propose any project with units larger than two-bedrooms. Many new developments in East Boston also boast “microunits” with low square footage that makes it hard to imagine residents staying long term. We cannot design an urban landscape which has the effect of pushing families out. It is critical that Suffolk Downs incorporate affordable family units into the site to ensure that families continue to have a place in East Boston.

In addition to on-site affordable housing at Suffolk Downs, HYM will also have the option of paying linkage fees to the city of Boston in order to cover some of their affordability obligations. These fees go toward a fund for investing in the creation of affordable housing throughout the city. Should HYM pursue meeting their obligation through linkage fees, it is essential that such funds be specifically earmarked for affordable housing projects in East Boston. As mentioned, Suffolk Downs will have a substantial effect on local property and rental prices throughout the neighborhood amidst an existing shortage of low-income and working-class housing. For a project of this size, with such direct and acute impact on the surrounding community, it is critical that these funds are used to make a substantial investment in local affordable housing. To redirect any of these funds away from East Boston would be putting an unfair burden on our neighborhood.

As an alternative to creating additional affordable inclusionary development policy (“IDP”) units on-site at Suffolk Downs, HYM could also consider funding off-site programs to preserve existing housing stock in East Boston. There are a number of organizations, such as the Neighborhood of Affordable Housing (“NOAH”), the East Boston Community Development Corporation (“EBCDC”), and others which buy and maintain existing housing stock in the neighborhood to keep them as affordable units for local residents. There is evidence to suggest that this is a more cost-effective way of generating affordable housing, it being less expensive to purchase and preserve existing buildings than to erect new structures with the current costs of construction. This would be another way for HYM and Suffolk Downs to drive the creation of affordable housing, offsetting the impacts of new developments and supporting important community institutions in their vital work.

Sustainability and Climate Resiliency

Thoughtful development is critical to promoting climate resiliency. As a coastal community, East Boston is particularly susceptible, and has already been impacted by the effects of climate change. Situated on low-lying, partially filled land and bordered by Belle Isle Marsh, the

shoreline, and Chelsea Creek, any development at Suffolk Downs must place resiliency at the forefront of its planning process. To ensure the sustainability of the development, Suffolk Downs must be ready for the impacts of climate change, and must contribute to the resiliency of the surrounding areas, including neighboring Orient Heights, existing shoreline, the Belle Isle Marsh, and a restored Sales Creek.

Suffolk Downs must also take a leading role in promoting sustainability across the site, working toward energy-efficiency, zero-waste and carbon-neutral goals, through measures which are practical, yet ambitious. Suffolk Downs should strive to achieve the highest possible Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (“LEED”) certification standards across new construction, and explore options for placing renewable energy sources, such as solar panels, on-site. Efforts should also be made to build in systems which promote low-waste living and operations for the residents and businesses which will occupy the site. Such measures could include electric vehicle charging systems, water recycling and reuse systems, and site-wide single-stream recycling and composting programs, among other options. These investments will not only make Suffolk Downs a more sustainable development, but will also distinguish the site and make it a more attractive location for sustainability-minded residents and businesses alike.

HYM’s proposal for Suffolk Downs is commendable for its focus on resiliency and attention to achieving sustainability throughout the site. The development team has been thorough in establishing both the general principles and specific details of a plan which will not only protect their own site, but contribute to the broader resiliency of the community and its natural resources. However, as the impacts of climate change become more and more apparent, we must continue to strengthen our sustainability goals. Fortunately, with each passing year green technology becomes not only more advanced, but also more affordable and accessible. The buildout of this development is projected to take twenty years, over a number of phases. The Boston Planning and Development Agency (“BPDA”) must be prepared to hold Suffolk Downs to increasing standards as the project progresses, and HYM must be committed to reevaluating each successive phase, updating their goals to match increased capacity for sustainable development. These improvements are an investment in the future of this site and in our community, and I encourage the commitment to resiliency be continued with the highest diligence.

Building a New Neighborhood

East Boston is a community of neighborhoods, subdivided into several distinct sections: Eagle Hill, Jeffries Point, Orient Heights, and more. With the development of Suffolk Downs, neighbors are preparing to welcome another neighborhood into the East Boston community. As the Suffolk Downs site is designed and constructed, it is essential that it is planned as a neighborhood, geared towards fostering community, and seamlessly integrated as a part of East Boston.

The precedent for large mixed-use developments of this scale are projects such as Assembly Row, Wellington Circle, and the Seaport. These sites combine ground-level retail and office space alongside multifamily residential towers, and generally some component of open space.

Though a popular format, continued discussions have shown that this is not the sort of project many East Boston residents want in their neighborhood.

Projects like Assembly Row and those found at the Seaport are sleek, modern, commercial successes. But the common overarching criticism of them all is that they fail to be spaces that foster the development of community. These large projects sit in urban spaces like solitary islands, their designs and composition engendering a membrane of separation between them and populations which surround them. They lack services like police stations, fire stations, and schools, public amenities such as libraries, community spaces, and engaging, accessible community green space. Suffolk Downs will develop the last major untouched section of East Boston, and will be built right up alongside the existing neighborhood, not separated by highways, open space, or any other physical barriers. It is important that in creating a plan for this site, HYM is proactive in avoiding the creation of any intangible boundaries that isolate this new area from the rest of East Boston. Though the traditional components of mixed-use development - retail, office space, and multifamily residential buildings - will remain the backbone of the site, they must be designed with a focus on creating a new part of the East Boston neighborhood at Suffolk Downs.

One aspect in which HYM has shown great commitment toward integrating the site with the wider neighborhood has been in designing the transition from Orient Heights along Waldemar Avenue into Suffolk Downs. HYM worked diligently with abutters to address their concerns and to create a design which smoothly transitions between the taller, denser interior of the Suffolk Downs site and Orient Heights, which is primarily comprised of smaller single- to three-family houses. An improvement on Suffolk Downs' original design, the community-informed plan demonstrates HYM's capacity to work with residents to address their needs and to integrate this site into the fabric of East Boston. In addition to a gradual transition in height and size, this plan also calls for features such as a neighborhood park, walking and bike paths, and a rehabilitation of the Walley Street dead end through the creation of "Belle Isle Square," which will serve as natural connection points between the existing and planned parts of the neighborhood.

Another point at which HYM has excelled is in the amount of open space which will be available to the community. The preservation of this open space will be a vital addition to the neighborhood, giving residents areas to congregate, relax, recreate, exercise, and host events. HYM has further demonstrated this commitment by giving the city ownership of land near Orient Heights and 50% of programming rights in the open space throughout the Suffolk Downs site. Moreover, HYM has ensured the community that the entirety of its public space will remain such in perpetuity, a significant promise that will have a positive effect on the entire neighborhood. Additionally, by committing to building this open space in phases during the construction period, residents will be able to start benefiting from these improvements immediately and this will allow for incremental planning and adjusting as the project develops. In designing this open space, it will be important to gather community feedback regarding how it should be used and what programmatic features would be best utilized by residents. Everything from playgrounds to dog parks, from basketball courts to soccer fields have been brought up in community discussions, and each would contribute to activating and encouraging the use of Suffolk Downs' open space. This open space should be active and dynamic. It should offer opportunities for engagement in all seasons and hours of day, and must carefully balance the

desire for preservation and maintenance with the flexibility to truly allow people to harness the full potential of this important resource. This open space will be a key selling point for Suffolk Downs, and a pivotal aspect of integrating the site with the rest of the neighborhood.

Many residents have asked about the existence of community space and public amenities at Suffolk Downs. Community space for meetings, events, and recreation has been a critical asset in strengthening neighborhood bonds and fostering East Boston's robust activism of nonprofit and community groups. In addition, many have asked about basic public amenities which are common in any part of the neighborhood, such as fire stations, schools, and libraries. Suffolk Downs must have a vigorous plan for embracing community space, activating nonprofits, and fully accounting for how residents will be served by public amenities. Further, if Suffolk Downs itself will not have its own public safety stations, libraries, and the like on-site, HYM must contribute to bolstering these existing resources within the East Boston community, as the population that utilizes them will significantly increase with the addition of 10,000 housing units.

It is also important that HYM prepare to engage the local workforce and attract local businesses to work and operate on their site. The businesses coming to Suffolk Downs have a ready and eager workforce in the East Boston community, willing to learn new skills and to devote themselves to any position with dedication and enthusiasm. HYM should support any workforce training needed to prepare East Boston residents for the employment opportunities at Suffolk Downs. Additionally, HYM should emphasize bringing local business owners into some of the retail and office space on the site. East Boston has a thriving business community, much of which would be eager for the new opportunities presented by this development. Logan Airport has already engaged some of the neighborhood's most popular restaurants to locate on their property, realizing that the exciting culinary scene in East Boston offers more enticing options for passengers than standard airport chains. Suffolk Downs is similarly presented with an opportunity to distinguish itself from the many mixed-use developments offering similar chain options, and present a more distinctive draw and local flavor to potential customers. Many people who visit East Boston talk about the culture and the food as being unique draws to the neighborhood. A massive development like Suffolk Downs can have the effect of embracing and enhancing that reputation, or quelling it. I deeply hope that HYM will contribute further to what makes this neighborhood so great, building up the local businesses and restaurants, in turn helping East Boston while also satisfying its residents, visitors, and customers alike.

Suffolk Downs should strive to be a unique and distinct site, breaking from the common mold of mixed-use developments by more than just a few simple façade changes. Not only will this serve to make the site more attractive to businesses and residents, but it will also better allow Suffolk Downs to integrate into the East Boston community. Suffolk Downs should seek to pilot new and innovative programs, pursue distinct, exceptional architectural and design characteristics, and integrate the natural and historical features of the site in exciting ways. By making Suffolk Downs a landmark, it serves the dual purpose of making the site stand out among its competitors, and enhancing the East Boston neighborhood with an innovative new district.

Continuing the Public Process

Over the past year, HYM has carried out an extensive number of community meetings across East Boston, presenting to residents about plans for the site, meeting with abutters, and soliciting feedback from the community. I appreciate all of the hard work and diligence that HYM has devoted to participating in the public process, and I believe that these efforts should not be understated.

At the same time, however, there are concerns from residents about how effective this outreach has been in certain parts of the community, as well as the extent to which their involvement in this process is meaningful. These criticisms are not unique to the development at Suffolk Downs, but rather are systemic issues which numerous public processes in East Boston have faced. As they continue through the public process, HYM has the opportunity to enhance their community outreach, engaging with a wide cross-section of the community in thoughtful, productive dialogue.

HYM should continue to foster public discourse through equal and collaborative partnerships with community-based organizations whose members and leaders reflect the underrepresented sectors of our community. These groups and organizations have unique insight into the most meaningful ways to diversify discussions around important issues, including housing affordability and matters affecting our quality of life. By forging substantive connections with entities that have established themselves firmly in underrepresented communities, HYM will be better able to make informed and innovative decisions about the way it engages in public dialogue.

We are grateful to have HYM as a partner, engaging with the community in good faith, and committed to robust and meaningful discussion as this process moves forward. We are hopeful that the BPDA and HYM will each consider the comments and concerns outlined above and take action to implement solutions. I look forward to working with all parties to ensure that what is built at Suffolk Downs benefits our community and its current residents in both the short- and long-term.

Conclusion

Throughout this letter I have outlined some of the most important issues impacted by the Suffolk Downs Redevelopment Project and potential solutions. With changes to our housing, transportation, environmental, and community landscape imminent, residents of our neighborhood have been proactive in evaluating the proposal HYM has put forward. More than any traditional development, Suffolk Downs demands a heightened scrutiny due to its size, scale, and impact. HYM is not only constructing a new building or a group of buildings, but an entirely new neighborhood within the broader neighborhood of East Boston. It is important that the BPDA and HYM remain involved in a comprehensive, enhanced community process to allow residents to see the changes made following this comment period, to understand what feedback was incorporated, and to weigh in on the updated status of the project. I have no doubt that HYM and the BPDA will continue to work with all stakeholders to bolster the community process,

increase public awareness and participation, and create a final plan which enhances East Boston and builds upon the essential character of our neighborhood.

Putting this project into perspective, the Suffolk Downs Redevelopment Proposal is a plan for the creation of an entire new neighborhood, filling in the last remaining vacant section of East Boston. The impacts Suffolk Downs will have are both substantial and permanent, and whether they are beneficial or detrimental to the community depends on the results of this ongoing dialogue. The decisions we make through this process will be critical, and will forever define the future of our neighborhood and the fabric of our community. We owe it to the residents of East Boston, as public servants committed to preserving, enhancing, and growing the neighborhood, to make sure that we get it right.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please do not hesitate to reach out should you have any comments or questions.

Sincerely,



Adrian C. Madaro
Representative
1st Suffolk District