1991-09-27

Campus Update: September 1991
v. 3, no. 8 Special Edition

Boston University Medical Center

http://hdl.handle.net/2144/19019

Boston University
BRA gives go-ahead to huge University Associates project

The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) on Thursday evening (Sept. 26) gave final approval for construction of the $300-million University Associates project along Albany Street on land currently used for BUMC and Boston City Hospital parking. The development project, the result of a joint master-planning effort by Boston University and The University Hospital, has been under discussion for at least 10 years. Ultimately, this development will produce a dynamic and progressive medical complex to be called South End Technology Square.

The University Associates development, which will involve construction of medical-research facilities, a parking garage, a new medical-arts complex, office space and a hotel, has been subjected to close scrutiny in a planning process involving not only the City of Boston, The University Hospital and Boston University, but also BCH, local residents and citizens' organizations. The development will roll out over a number of years, beginning later this fall with construction of the first building, a 180,000-square-foot Boston University biomedical research facility. Construction of a 1,000-car parking facility will begin in the spring of 1992 on an adjacent site.

Medical Center officials involved in the project note that the construction obviously will impact employee and visitor parking. However, intense planning efforts have been in progress for several months to minimize this effect. William J. Gasper, the University's associate vice president for business affairs, said, "Every effort is being made to minimize any adverse impact, but there is no avoiding a significant effect on the configuration of Albany Street parking. The Hospital has acquired the western-most Flower Market building, adjacent to Lot C. This building will be razed and the site converted to BUMC parking. This will replace many of the spaces lost to

--- over ---
construction." Gasper stated that detailed communications on the forthcoming parking-lot changes will be issued in the near future, as soon as the details are finalized.

Richard J. Towle, the University's vice president for administrative services, and Michael D. Blaszyk, The University Hospital's executive vice president for corporate services, have led the BUMC team that has shaped the project, working with project manager Robert F. Walsh. Towle pointed out that the primary goal of the University Associates project is to "meet the opportunities—and the constraints—that will occur at the Medical Center in the coming decade." Blaszyk emphasized that an overriding aim of this planning has been "to take a leadership role in contributing to the stable growth of the South End. This major step forward represents an integral objective of the Hospital's strategic planning process, which took shape two years ago."

BUSM Dean Aram V. Chobanian said "This [BRA approval] is extremely welcome news. Obviously, my focus is the exciting opportunities we'll gain in numerous research areas, and those will begin to unfold in the very first building to go up—the Boston University Center for Advanced Biomedical Research. But that is only part of it: the University Associates project holds the potential to advance many other interests: outpatient care, medical education and the community itself. In addition, we also hope to recruit pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies into this site."

The University Hospital President J. Scott Abercrombie Jr., M.D., hailed the BRA's action on the University Associates development as "the beginning of an important new era here in the South End. What is most exciting about this project," said Abercrombie, "is that the benefits are so broad: We'll gain important research space, new facilities for ambulatory care, space for our physicians, and major benefits to the community; in addition, we'll be part of a new 'Gateway' to the City of Boston."

Richard H. Egdahl, M.D., director of the Medical Center, said "Our biomedical research programs are extremely important for the future growth and success of our medical center. The replacement of our outmoded facilities is necessary if we are to keep our high-quality researchers and attract talented new research people. The presence of a state-of-the-art biomedical research facility will make it possible for us to talk to some major pharmaceutical firms about new cooperative ventures."

The Medical Center plans to break ground on the first segment of the project—the nine-story medical-research building—this fall. Walsh said the research building will be completed by mid-1993. This building also will house some research activities for the Goldman School of Graduate Dentistry. Retail space will be included on the first floor of both the research building and the parking garage. A medical office building, two smaller office buildings, a 250-room hotel and additional parking are planned for later phases.

The project is expected to improve the economic condition of the South End community by creating both construction and permanent jobs, and by bringing additional retail and commercial activity to Albany Street. Most of the land for the complex is owned by the City of Boston and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.