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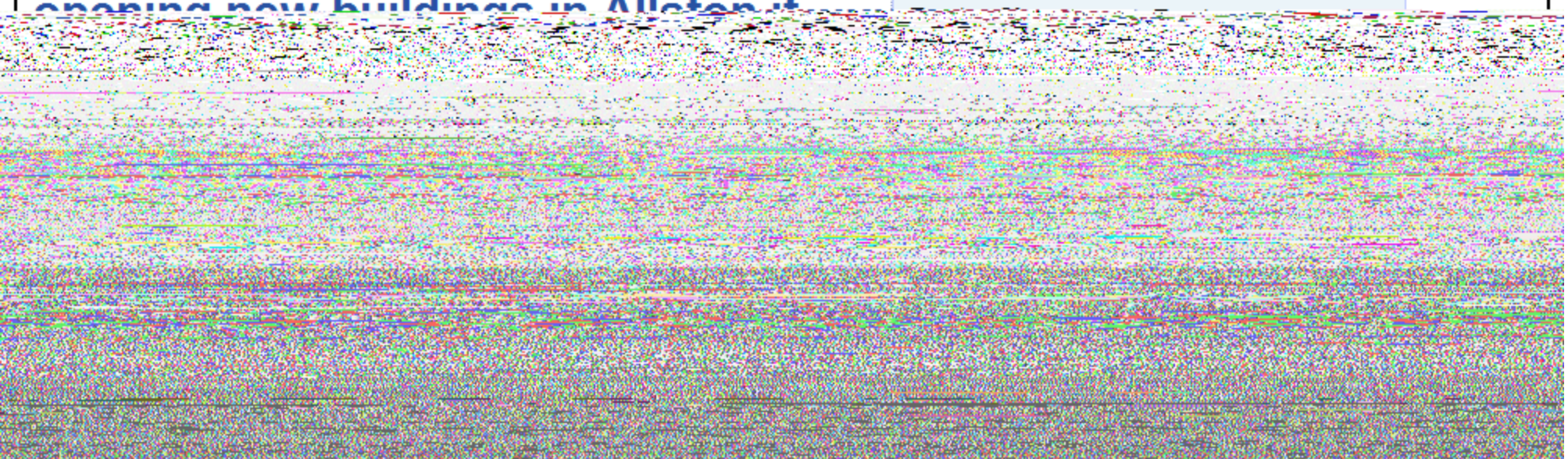
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ALLSTON BRIGHTON

City proposes blocking Harvard from opening new buildings in Allston if



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school fails to meet terms for development

Posted by Matt Rocheleau, March 13, 2013, 10:38 AM

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Boston officials have warned Harvard University that the city would block the



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college from opening new buildings in Allston if it fails to comply with terms Mayor Thomas M. Menino has proposed based on concerns from residents of the neighborhood, where Harvard is planning the first phase of decades of development to expand its campus.

Those terms would be included as conditions of approval for a controversial project Harvard has proposed: relocating campus services — mailing, information technology, police training, recycling, storage, and transportation; fleet management — from a building at 219 Western Ave. in Allston to a site a few blocks away at 28 Travis St.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority board is scheduled to vote Thursday on whether to approve the university's project and the city's terms that would come with it.

Relocating Harvard's campus services facilities — a move the university has said it does not intend to be permanent — would make room at the Western Avenue site for a proposed 350,000-square-foot residential and retail project, which a private developer hopes to start work on in the fall and finish in about two years.

But, the relocation proposal has faced criticism from some who have said putting the campus services facility on Travis Street, even temporarily, would

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At a community meeting Tuesday night, the redevelopment authority's chief planner, Kairos Shen, unveiled the city's proposed terms, which the resident task force voted to adopt as its new conditions for giving their support to Harvard's relocation project.

A Harvard spokesman said at the meeting he believes most or all of the conditions would be do-able for the university.

The proposal would require Harvard to:

Start a community planning process this April to build its promised Rena Park and begin the first phase of the park's construction in 2014; develop a comprehensive master plan for campus services, which would clarify that the 28 Travis St. relocation project is temporary; implement that campus services

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master plan within one year after the university opens its proposed science complex in Allston, which is scheduled to open in about five years; and to not run vehicular service between midnight and 6 a.m. at the 28 Travis St. site, Shen said.

If Harvard fails to comply with those conditions, the city would withhold occupancy permits for new buildings the university builds until the school is in compliance.

The school has a \$100 million building under construction that is scheduled to open later this year on its business school campus in Allston. And, this past fall the university unveiled a 10-year master plan framework for Allston that, in addition to the proposed science complex, calls for nine new projects, including a new basketball arena, a refurbished football stadium, a hotel and conference center, and new business school buildings.

Harvard owns about 360 acres in Allston, nearly double the size of its Cambridge campus.

The university's presence and development plans in the neighborhood have been rife with controversy for years. Many Allston residents have said their patience and trust with the university is running thin, if not gone all together.

But, Kevin Casey, who works for Harvard's public affairs office, said at the meeting night that he hoped the university's latest round of concessions would help foster a better partnership with the community.

"I think this is a foundation upon which we can build," he told the crowd. "We have been forcefully urged to be reaching out to the community. Your strong push on Harvard has been heard."

He said that most of the city's conditions should work for Harvard. He said the biggest challenge would be not running any vehicles between midnight and 6 a.m. at 28 Travis St.

Some resident task force members wanted to see some additional terms and stronger language.

"This was never a good idea," member Brent Whelan said of the 28 Travis St relocation. "We really want to see this become a vibrant, animated

neighborhood and Harvard just wants it to be their back office space.”

“When I look at the army of planners in suits, I think they’d have to be able to come up with a better idea,” he said pointing across the room to teams of formally-dressed development officials.

Shen noted that the city’s proposal was somewhat different from the conditions the task force listed last week.

However, said Shen, “The mayor said ‘look, we’re not going to necessarily make everyone happy with this.’ But, he wanted to facilitate a compromise.”

Task force member Bruce Houghton agreed that while not perfect, the offers from the city and Harvard should not be passed up. He said residents should push for more from Harvard and the city during an upcoming process over the university’s master plan for Allston.

“The powers that be have made an effort. It may not be sufficient ... [but] if you don’t fold your cards now you’re going to hurt yourself,” he said. “You fought a battle, and you won part of the battle.”

At the meeting, city officials also announced that the redevelopment authority has canceled plans to have its board vote Thursday whether to waive the next step in the review process for the 350,000 square-foot proposal for Western Avenue, a project dubbed the “Residential and Retail Commons at Barry’s Corner.”

Instead, the city plans to hold another meeting about that project in early April before bringing the request to waive before the board later that month.

Residents voiced concern about that project Tuesday, particularly over traffic and parking issues.

To read more about Harvard’s proposals for Allston, [click here](#).

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