

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs

100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900

Boston, MA 02114-2524

MITT ROMNEY
GOVERNOR

KERRY HEALEY
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

ELLEN ROY HERZFELDER
SECRETARY

December 30, 2004

Tel. (617) 626-1000
Fax. (617) 626-1181
<http://www.mass.gov/envir>

CERTIFICATE OF THE SECRETARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
ON THE
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

PROJECT NAME : Natick Mall Expansion
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY : 330 Speen Street - Natick
PROJECT WATERSHED : Concord & Sudbury Rivers
EOEA NUMBER : 12935
PROJECT PROPONENT : General Growth Properties, Inc.
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR : October 23, 2004

As Secretary of Environmental Affairs, I hereby determine that the Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) submitted on the above project **adequately and properly complies** with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MGL, c. 30, ss. 61-62H) and with its implementing regulations (301 CMR 11.00).

As described in the FEIR, the proposed project consists of the expansion of the existing 1,159,000 square foot (sf) Natick Mall by approximately 565,000 sf of new retail space. The proponent is proposing to build as its Preferred Alternative the 565,000 sf of retail space, a 250-unit apartment/condominium building, and approximately 3,110 new parking spaces. The parking spaces will be provided at grade and in new, expanded and reconstructed parking structures. The proposed mall expansion will be constructed in two phases. Phase I includes the construction of 385,000 sf of retail space, 250 residential units, and parking on the North Parcel (16.87 acres). Phase II includes the construction of the remaining 180,000 sf of retail space, the physical connection to the existing mall, the expansion of Parking Deck A, and utility and roadway improvements on the South Parcel (41 acres). The South Parcel is where the existing mall is located. Phase I is designed to minimize impacts to the existing mall and, when completed, will be a severable project with no physical impacts on the South Parcel.

This project will require an Access Permit from the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD). The project needs a

Fossil Fuel Utilization Permit, a Non-Major Comprehensive Plan Emission Permit, and a Sewer Connection Permit from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). It must comply with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for stormwater discharges from a construction site. The project received an Order of Conditions from the Natick Conservation Commission on July 15, 2004 for Phase I. An amendment to this Order of Conditions or a new Order will be required to complete Phase II.

Review of the FEIR:

The FEIR evaluated alternatives for the project driveways onto the Mall Ring Road and the New Connector Road. It presented additional traffic count data taken during the December shopping period. The FEIR substituted the Speen Street/Hartford Avenue and Speen Street/Route 135 intersections for additional traffic counts. It provided LOS analyses for the weekday pm and Saturday peak hours for these intersections. The proponent also attempted to obtain daily traffic volumes on Speen Street, but was unable to do so on several occasions due to vandalism. The FEIR explained its methodology used to arrive at the trip distribution assumptions, which differs from the Natick Promenade project (EOEA# 13103) trip distribution. It addressed the comment (Wadsworth & Grady 11/24/03) regarding trip generation at the existing Natick Mall using the ITE standard rates with the June counts at the driveways. The FEIR and the supplemental material dated December 29, 2004 also responded to the Wadsworth & Grady comment letter of 12/15/04 regarding issues raised in the above comment letters.

The FEIR explained that it was not feasible to move the proposed Ring Road intersection alignment along Speen Street to the existing signalized Chrysler Road intersection, as requested by MHD. It provided a discussion of reasons why mitigation is not appropriate to alleviate the increased delay factor at the following unsignalized intersections: Speen Street/Sears south drive; Mall Ring Road/Filene's south site drive WB LTR; and Mall Ring Road/Sears north site drive/southeast site drive (Sears NB LT and southeast drive SB LTR). It included a description of the proponent's existing and proposed holiday traffic management plans. For signalized intersections where delay factors increase, the FEIR explained that the proponent committed to make a contribution toward the design of Route 27 corridor improvements to improve the Route 30/Route 27 intersection. The Route 30/Burr Street Extension intersection does not have sufficient public layout to construct improvements.

The FEIR provided a breakdown of parking needs by land use

category/use, time of day, and shopper/employee/hotel/resident/patron category to demonstrate the need for the proposed parking spaces. It identified the parking supply recommended by land use category by the Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE) Parking Generation, Zoning Required Supply, and Urban Land Institute Projected Parking Demand for comparative purposes.

The FEIR identified the Lift Transit Service bus routes and stops near or at the project site.

The FEIR identified the proposed bicycle facility improvements included with this project. It generally identified the location of bicycle parking areas. The FEIR discussed the use of the adjacent railroad siding as a pedestrian/bicycle connector across Speen Street, which could connect the Mall to other bicycle/pedestrian facilities located along the rail line (the Cochituate Rail Trail). It showed where sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities are located at the project site.

The FEIR included additional, reasonable and feasible VOC/NOx reduction/mitigation measures. It discussed opportunities to enhance pedestrian, bicycle, and transit modes. In the FEIR, the proponent committed to joining the MetroWest/495 Transportation Management Agency (TMA) to improve its ridesharing capabilities.

The FEIR identified capacity deficiencies within the municipal wastewater system to handle the project's additional wastewater flows. The proponent identified its proposed mitigation package to alleviate Inflow/Infiltration (I/I) in the Natick wastewater system.

Even though the project is a redevelopment project, the proponent will achieve a Total Suspended Solids (TSS) removal rate of in excess of 80 percent for stormwater collection system. The FEIR explained how the proponent would improve its TSS projections.

Summary of FEIR Mitigation:

As part of its Phase I construction, the proponent has committed to implement the full off-site traffic mitigation that was identified for the full build-out scenario. The off-site mitigation includes a comprehensive traffic improvement program throughout the study area, including signalization, signal coordination and interconnection, geometric modifications, signage, pedestrian and emergency access improvements that total approximately \$5,620,000 for traffic mitigation. The proponent has committed approximately \$2 million to mitigate its additional

flows to the Natick wastewater system. It will provide approximately \$188,000 to improve stormwater quality and \$30,000 to restore the existing degraded wetland. In the FEIR, the proponent committed to the following mitigation measures:

- Route 27 Improvements - Town Line to North Ave., Bacon St., Rutledge Rd., Pine St. Sidewalk - design only - \$350,000.
- Route 30/Route 27 - Geometric and signal improvements - cash contribution for design - \$25,000.
- Speen St./Route 135 - Additional southbound through lane, culvert upgrade - cash contribution toward feasibility study - \$50,000.
- Route 135/Washington St. - Signal hardware upgrade - cash contribution - \$150,000.
- Speen St. between Edwards Rd. and Hartford St. - Reconstruct existing sidewalk, add new sidewalk on easterly side - cash contribution - \$800,000.
- Speen St./Bellmore Rd. - High visibility pedestrian signal system and in-ground lighted crosswalk - design and construct - \$50,000.
- Speen St./Francis St. - High visibility pedestrian signal system and in-ground lighted crosswalk - design and construct - \$50,000.
- Speen St./Purrington Ave. - High visibility pedestrian signal system and in-ground lighted crosswalk - design and construct - \$50,000.
- Speen St./Nottingham Dr. - Reconstruct Nottingham Dr. approach to prohibit left turns in and out - design and construct - \$25,000.
- Speen St. north of Nottingham Dr. - Advance signage for Hartford St. intersection - design and construct - \$25,000.
- Speen St./Hartford St./Travis Rd./Fire Station - Add southbound left turn lane, signal upgrade, fire station access and landscaping improvements - design and construct - \$500,000.
- Hartford St./Barnesdale Rd. - High visibility pedestrian signal system and in-ground lighted crosswalk - design and construct - \$50,000.
- Hartford St./Brown Elementary School - High visibility pedestrian signal system and in-ground lighted crosswalk - design and construct - \$50,000.
- Hartford St./Bowden Lane - High visibility pedestrian signal system and in-ground lighted crosswalk - design and construct - \$50,000.
- Improve pedestrian access along Speen St. near Mall -

- Construct system of connected sidewalks (from Hartford St. to Mall) - design and construct - \$100,000.
- Speen St./Mall Ring Rd. - Consolidate lanes/reduce size of intersection - design and construct - \$400,000.
 - Speen St./Connector Rd. - Install new signal, with at grade rail trail crossing and system queue detection - design and construct - \$400,000.
 - Cloverleaf Mall middle driveway - Close or modify driveway - design and construct - \$25,000.
 - Public transportation - Transportation concourse under the Mall (bus stop, bike racks, pedestrian and building access) - design and construct - \$75,000.
 - Natick Mall Road (full-build) - Depress Natick Mall Rd. under expanded Mall to maintain link to Flutie Pass - design and construct - \$775,000.
 - Flutie Pass/Mall Ring Rd. (full-build) - Implement a roundabout - design and construct - \$50,000.
 - Mall Ring Rd./Ring Rd. Link (full-build) - Implement a roundabout - design and construct - \$75,000.
 - Macy's Pedestrian Crossing (full-build) - High visibility pedestrian crosswalk - design and construct - \$35,000.
 - November/December traffic mitigation - Comprehensive traffic management plan (implementation cost per year) - design and cost of implementation - \$25,000.
 - Ease traffic at Speen St./Mall Ring Rd. - Construct new connector road (Ring Rd. Link) - design and construct - \$800,000.
 - Speen St./Chrysler Rd. - Tie-In signal with the proposed signal at Speen St./Ring Rd. Link - design and construct - \$30,000.
 - Speen St./Route 30 - Lane configuration/alignment adjustment for north bound Speen St. - design and construct - \$50,000.
 - Speen St./Prime Parkway/Superior Dr. - Hardware and compliance upgrade - design and construct - \$30,000.
 - Speen St. Signal Coordination - Coordinate four signals along Speen St. corridor - design and construct - \$175,000.
 - Flutie Pass/Mall Ring Rd. (Phase I Build) - Implement an interim traffic signal - design and construct - \$150,000.
 - Mall Ring Rd./Ring Rd. Link (Phase I Build) - Implement an interim traffic signal - design and construct - \$200,000.
 - Join the Metro West/495 Transportation Management Association (TMA) and implement a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program that includes ridematching, emergency ride home, public transportation information, a transit subsidy program, bicycle/walking subsidy program,

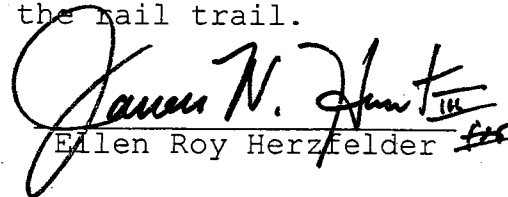
- carpool gas card program, and vanpool-leasing subsidy.
- Slipline 2,100 linear feet of 12-inch and 16-inch sewer force main from the Prime Park sewer pump station to the intersection of Speen St./Travis Rd. - \$370,000.
 - Replace 3,000 linear feet of 15-inch and 12-inch clay gravity sewer with 18-inch diameter PVC pipe on Speen St. from Travis Rd. to Crescent St. - \$1 million.
 - Reline 3,530 feet of 18-inch gravity sewer on Speen St. from Crescent St. to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) trunk line - \$630,000.
 - Install Vortech water quality structures for the stormwater system - \$188,000.
 - Restore the North Parcel Wetland - \$30,000.

The Proposed Section 61 Finding for MHD, which was contained in the FEIR, must be redone by the proponent and resubmitted to MHD and the MEPA Office. It should update the Natick Mall's ongoing efforts to coordinate traffic, transit, and parking in this regional shopping area. The Proposed Section 61 Finding should clarify the number of proposed new parking spaces and their locations. Each mitigation measure should be explained in greater detail. The Proposed Section 61 Finding should identify who will receive the funds for each proposed mitigation measure. The status of each mitigation measure with the specific town and/or MHD should be clarified. The Proposed Section 61 Finding for MHD should identify what the proponent is proposing for a transit subsidy, bicycle/walking subsidy, carpool gas card, and a vanpool leasing subsidy programs. It should identify the costs of the TMA and TDM program.

The proponent should be diligently working with the proponents for the rail trail to find a mutually agreeable alternative to its proposed at-grade, activated, signal-protected crossing of Speen Street to connect the portion of project site's pedestrian/bicycle trail to the Cochituate Rail Trail. The Proposed Section 61 Finding for MHD should update the discussion on this topic, as well as provide some preliminary cost estimates of a grade-separated crossing of Speen Street for the proposed rail trail connector. It should also identify if the pedestrian/bicycle trail on the project site can be widened to 12 feet with two to three-foot shoulders as recommended by the AASHTO guidelines and the proponents for the rail trail.

December 30, 2004

DATE


Ellen Roy Herzfelder *ERH*

EOEA #12935

FEIR Certificate

December 30, 2004

cc: Nancy Baker, DEP/NERO

Comments received:

Northeast Greenway Solutions, 11/15/04
Dick Miller, 11/16/04, 11/16/04, 11/17/04, 12/10/04, 12/20/04
VHB, 11/16/04, 11/17/04,
MA Bicycle Coalition, 11/16/04
DEP/NERO, 11/22/04
Framingham Cochituate Rail Trail Committee, 11/26/04
Timothy J. Collins, 11/29/04
Natick Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee, 12/6/04
Rails to Trails Conservancy, 12/7/04
John Wadsworth & Alan Grady, 12/15/04
MetroWest Growth Management Committee, 12/22/04
EOTC, 12/23/04
Framingham Planning Board, 12/23/04
Andy Clarke, 12/23/04
MAPC, 12/23/04
VHB, 12/29/04

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ERH/WTG