

Benefits of Parcel 13 plan

Boston Business Journal - June 22, 2007

by [Victor Brogna](#)

A turf war is under way over the smallest piece of turf on the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway: the half-acre located in the North End on Cross Street, between Faneuil Hall Marketplace and Christopher Columbus Park.

The parcel is owned by the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, builder of the Central Artery/Third Harbor Tunnel project that created the greenway. The challenger is the Mayor's Central Artery Completion Task Force, which disputes the process by which the Turnpike Authority selected the Armenian Heritage Foundation to build and maintain a public park on Parcel 13. The Task Force complains that it has been kept out of the loop. The Foundation disputes the accusation and says that the Task Force turned a cold shoulder when the Foundation asked to be put on an agenda.

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs has weighed in and directed the parties to address and apply a "joint development" process contained in documents related to the Central Artery project.

Although many words have been exchanged, the words "public benefit" seem to have been left out of the debate. The Task Force has framed the dispute by focusing on process, but process should not be permitted to become an end in itself. The process should serve the product, in this case the design that everyone approves and many applaud.

Some background: The Turnpike Authority had no funds budgeted for Parcel 13. The Armenian Heritage Foundation stepped up to the plate, offering to finance both the construction and maintenance of a public park on Parcel 13. The park would have benches, trees, fountain, and a sculpture. There would be a plaque commemorating the victims of the Armenian Holocaust in the early part of the last century, and a few names of famous Armenians in history. Nothing large or oppressive.

At the April meeting of the North End/Waterfront Residents' Association, members heard a detailed presentation by the Foundation. Many questions were asked and opinions exchanged. The public benefits were clear. After 15 years of heavy construction on Cross Street, residents of the North End/Waterfront community would now have an attractive park to enjoy. The Foundation is ready to begin construction immediately. The members present at NEWRA's meeting voted overwhelmingly to support the project as proposed.

Here is where the pettiness of the turf war emerges starkly. The Mayor's Central Artery Completion Task Force says that it speaks for the neighborhoods, not the Turnpike Authority, nor the community groups in the neighborhoods directly affected both by what happens on the Greenway and how soon it happens.

Concerns of turf protection should now be put aside. It is time for the public benefits of the surface restoration of Parcel 13 to be implemented. Delays do not serve the public interest. No other organization has come forward with a competing proposal. The proposal of the Armenian Heritage Foundation for a public park design, that has received wide public acclaim, should now be built.

Victor Brogna is president of the North End/Waterfront Residents' Association.