

ST. MARY OF THE ANGELS CATHOLIC CHURCH
IGLESIA CATÓLICA SANTA MARIA DE LOS ANGELES
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To: Egleston Square Branch Library Study Team

Date: February 4, 2022

Re: Egleston Square Branch Library - Response to Egleston Square Programming
Study Final Report

From: Saint Mary of the Angels Parish, Church located at 2056 Columbus Ave, Roxbury, 02119

Saint Mary of the Angels Parish (the "Parish") supports the development of Approaches 4 or 3 as proposed in the Final Report, for a stand-alone library. The Parish supports the building of affordable housing in Egleston Square; however, we are opposed to building housing on top of the library as described in Approaches 1 and 2.

The Parish has had a long, supportive and collaborative relationship with our next-door neighbor, the Egleston Square Branch Library (ESBL). The Parish, which has been in its present location since 1907, welcomed its new neighbor when the new branch opened on July 16, 1953.

The strength of the relationship between these two institutions was clearly evident in 1981, when under the constraints of Proposition 2 ½, drastic budget cuts forced the closure of the Egleston Square Branch Library.

During the nearly two-year period the ESBL was shut down, a group of neighborhood women parishioners, the first "Friends of the Egleston Square Library", organized a successful campaign to compel the Mayor to reopen the ESBL.

We strive to continue our historic role as a good neighbor to the Egleston Square community. Therefore, the Parish asks the City of Boston and the Boston Public Library to be supportive, respectful and collaborative neighbors in your proposed development plans for the ESBL.

The Parish believes in and supports the development of a state-of-the-art branch library for Egleston Square, which our community warrants and deserves, as have been built in other neighborhoods throughout the City. The stand-alone-library should provide a public space, that is respectful of and reflective of the rich diversity of the Egleston Square neighborhood. To help achieve that end, we support Approaches 3 or 4 as proposed in the recently published Programing Study for a stand-alone library:

- The need for outdoor green space is a basic requirement. In particular, the Parish supports the elements, of the outside design, that enable The Friends to continue its critical collaboration with the ESBL
- The Parish joins with ESNA and The Friends, to support the existing plan to double the interior space of the library in order to accommodate increased programming, classroom & meeting space, and improved facilities for staff and patrons.
- The Parish does want the ESBL design to be mindful and respectful of development that encroaches on the Church property.
- The parish supports the addition of adequate parking for library staff and spaces for time limiting access for patrons.

The Parish has consistently supported and advocated for needed and appropriate affordable housing, including the Delphine Walker Apartments, the Fran Grady Apartments, both named for late, long-time parishioners, Stacey Kirkpatrick House, the Spencer, Cooper and Carleton Houses, to name a few, as well as other projects outside Egleston Square. We also continue to have ongoing communications and longstanding relationships with our neighbors, Urban Edge, Inc. Rogerson Communities, Jamaica Plain Neighborhood Development Cooperation, as well as other agencies providing services in the community.

However, with our experience and involvement in the community, the Parish believes that housing is ill-suited for the site atop the ESBL. The Parish recognizes that truly affordable housing is a need across the city; but to build housing above the library in an already existing dense neighborhood of multi-unit dwellings, creates a series of community challenges:

- Housing would add to an already overly densely populated and highly trafficked area, increasing the safety risk to pedestrians, many who are elderly and physically challenged.
- The recent reconfiguration of Columbus Avenue has already contributed to the congested traffic from Walnut Avenue to the heart of Egleston Square. Housing at the library site would add to this congestion and potential dangers caused by traffic related to trash and recycling pick-up, public service and utilities vehicles, school buses, drop-off and pick-up by Uber, Lyft and taxis services as well as deliveries that postal and other carrier services make, especially as no adequate provisions have been made for use by any of these services, other than on Columbus Avenue.
- Columbus Avenue, State Highway 28, is already heavily used as a major vehicular artery to downtown Boston, and educational, medical, sports and arts institutions that are in the central-western part of the City.
- The construction of a six-story structure to the immediate left of the Church, as shown in the drawings for Approach 1, would be an affront to the Parish, a neighbor and long-time supporter of the ESBL and the Egleston Square community at large.

Saint Mary of the Angels Parish and the Egleston community request and deserve a vibrant stand-alone library, supported by an active Friends group who will continue to help keep the library vital, relevant and welcoming to all.

The Parish leadership members are available to meet with you to continue this conversation. Thank you for your consideration.



Rev. Carlos Flor, Pastor

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