June 22, 2012

Anna M. Stetson, City Clerk
Office of the City Clerk
Providence City Hall
25 Dorrance Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Notice of Approval for Amendment to Brown University’s Institutional Master Plan

Applicant: Brown University

Dear Ms. Stetson:

At a regular meeting of the City Plan Commission (CPC) on Tuesday, June 19, 2012, and pursuant to Section 503 of the City of Providence Zoning Ordinance, the CPC reviewed the amendment to Brown University’s Institutional Master Plan (IMP). The CPC voted unanimously as described below to make certain findings of fact and to approve the amendment.

Amendment Overview

The CPC approved the IMP for Brown University in July 2011. This amendment is an update to that plan and includes a description of the University’s proposed abandonment of portions of three streets, the institution of an onstreet parking license and demolition of the Sanford Gold building.

Street Conveyance

The City and Brown University have entered into a financial agreement where the University would pay the City $31.5 million over 10 years in addition to an existing payment agreement. As part of the agreement, Brown has petitioned the City Council to abandon three street areas to promote a pedestrian environment and improve mobility. The abandonment areas include the portion of Olive Street between Brown Street and Thayer Street, the portion of Brown Street between George and Charlesfield Street and the portion of Benevolent Street between Magee and Brown Street. Loading zones will be created at both ends of Olive Street, servicing the BioMed Complex, Sidney Frank Hall, the Granoff Center for Creative Arts and the Brown Bookstore.
The abandonments are intended to improve the pedestrian environment by integrating “the Walk” into the Olive Street abandonment area and creating pedestrian thoroughfares and campus entrance points along the Brown and Benevolent Street areas. Based on a traffic study conducted in this area, pedestrians outnumbered vehicles at peak hours. The study notes that the abandoned areas may be closed to the public during special events. All three streets will include provisions for emergency vehicles and easements for the public utilities currently located in the streets. Plans for the streets will be developed through an open design process.

On street Parking License

The College Hill Parking Task Force convened in 2007 found that efforts should be taken to reduce demand for parking and existing parking should be better managed. The study found that the demand for onstreet parking, restricted to a two hour limit, outweighed the supply of available parking. As part of the agreement with the City, 250 onstreet parking spaces will be ceded for exclusive use to Brown during certain hours. Brown will collect a license fee from users of these spaces. The spaces are highlighted on the map submitted with the amendment and were chosen based on the findings of the College Hill Parking Task Force.
To prevent vehicular traffic caused by drivers trying to find parking, the spaces will be available exclusively for Brown faculty and staff between 8 am and noon with the option to park all day. The spaces will be available to the public outside of those hours. Parking will be enforced by Brown and the City, but all revenue from violations will be collected by the City.

Demolition of the Sanford Gold Building

The Sanford Gold Building is a flat roof two story brick building located at 285 Tockwotton Street located outside of the Institutional Overlay District. It was purchased by Brown in 1981 and used for storage till 2003. A structural assessment of the building revealed a number of issues including deterioration of the exterior brick walls, deterioration of interior load bearing walls, bulging and separating exterior walls, rotten heavy timber floor and roof framing, and several isolated structural deficiencies. As repair and restoration of the building would not be economical, the University will demolish the building and landscape the vacant site.

FINDINGS

Providence Tomorrow

The CPC found that the amendment was in conformance with Strategy F of Objective LU-7 of Providence Tomorrow, which requires educational institutions to provide five year IMPs with regular updates to ensure that there is limited growth and no negative impacts on neighborhoods. The CPC found that Brown University satisfactorily described intended mobility
and development changes. By addressing changes to mobility that would promote pedestrian activity and efficient flow of traffic, the CPC found that the amendment conformed to Objective LU-12, which promotes the efficient use of land to promote transit, walking and biking through appropriate land use controls.

Zoning Ordinance

The CPC found that the amendment followed the format prescribed by the Zoning Ordinance. The CPC found the demolition of the Sanford Gold building to be in conformance with the Zoning Ordinance as it is not a historic structure and not located within a historic district.

RECOMMENDATION
Based on its analysis and findings, the CPC approved the amendment to Brown University’s Institutional Master Plan subject to the following condition.

Please post this notice for 20 days.

Note that this approval does not require any action by the City Council.

Sincerely,

Christopher J. Ise
Administrative Officer

cc: Michael McCormick, Brown University