

Fenwickian Helps City Blend Green Policies, Innovation to 'Greenovate'

BY DUKE HARTEN

Last summer, Mayor Thomas M. Menino's office advertised two job openings in the City's Greenovate Boston initiative. The Greenovate movement is a collaborative effort between the city and Boston businesses, institutions, and residents aimed at reducing emissions and ensuring that the city enjoys sustainable growth in years to come. And now one of the Fenway's newest residents, Benita Hussain, is helping expand the mayor's program.

As one of two "Greenovate Fellows," Hussain is responsible for promoting Boston's environmental resources and inspiring businesses and residents to 'greenovate' their own lives and operations. Originally from New York, Hussain moved to the area last August. That's when she heard about the Greenovate fellowship. "The advertisement was a complete composite of all my skills," says Ms. Hussain. "I just had to throw my hat in the ring and see what happened."

And quite a hat it is. Hussain graduated from Cornell University in 2001 with a degree in Environmental Studies. Her interest in underserved urban communities and environmental justice translated to a job in affordable housing, where she ran a program that converted city-owned buildings to housing cooperatives. She helped train new tenants in maintenance and upkeep of their buildings: "We went block-by-block... you could see the city change."

After two years, Hussain went back to school and earned her JD at Fordham University School of Law. Despite plans to pursue environmental or real estate work, Hussain found herself employed as a corporate associate by international law giant Morrison & Foerster. The experience, she says, was highly educational. But corporate securities were not for her: "I knew I needed to leverage my law degree towards doing something else."

She began to do a bit of freelance journalism on the side, writing about the environment, travel, and surfing. (Hussain is an avid surfer and enjoys rock climbing.) After two and a half years, she left Morrison & Foerster and went to work for Civic Builders, a New York-based nonprofit. Hussain spent time in Newark, N.J. collaborating with local developers and Mayor Cory Booker's office to plan and build charter schools.

Cut to last summer, when Hussain moved to Somerville. She was still freelancing at the time, unsure of her next move. Then she saw

the Greenovate advertisement. She applied for the fellowship in September, underwent a rigorous screening and interview process, and was offered the position around Halloween. "I missed the bustle of being in the city," says Hussain. So she found a sublet in Jamaica Plain and began looking for places closer to downtown.

A friend suggested the Fenway. Hussain went to check out an apartment on Queensbury Street: "It was after work," she says. "I was tired. It was dark and tree-lined and I saw the lights of the MFA across the Fens. And I thought: I'm living here." And now she is. As a Fenway resident, Hussain feels more connected with the city she's helping to transform.

"Personally, I think Greenovate is amazing," she says. She describes the movement as a collective initiative that stemmed originally from Mayor Menino's Climate Action Plan and the work of the Green Ribbon Commission, which he helped convene. Its goals are lofty: reduce emissions twenty-five percent by 2020, eighty percent by 2050. Says Hussain: "The plan is to become the greenest city in the country."

Working under the mayor and Chief of Environment & Energy Brian Swett, Hussain is responsible for the outreach and communications side of the initiative. (Her co-fellow, Charles Zhu, is a numbers man.) She meets with community groups, business and institutional leaders, and City Hall commissioners to explore the green resources available to the city.

Hussain believes that community engagement is the answer to environmental issues the city faces. "In the end, what we're trying to do is incite behavior change." The challenge faced by Hussain and Zhu is how to mobilize Bostonians, how to get people excited about sustainable living. Already the Greenovate initiative's efforts are being felt. According to Hussain, the mayor's goal of 25% emission reduction by 2020 is on schedule.

Citing the attention and credit given to cities like Portland and San Francisco, Hussain says: "[Boston] has done amazing stuff—I'd love to see it get the recognition it deserves."

The Greenovate fellowships are funded by a grant from the Barr Foundation, a private foundation dedicated to improving Boston environmentally and culturally.

Duke Harten lives on Mission Hill.



West Fens resident Benita Hussain works to shrink the city's environmental footprint.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY MAYOR'S OFFICE

Caracas Park Plan Has Deep Fenway Roots



Manuel Delgado—an associate professor of architecture at Wentworth Institute with strong ties to the Fenway—has good reason to smile after winning an international design competition for a site in Venezuela. With Jorge Perez, dean of an architecture school in Colombia, Delgado co-led a team that designed a park for a decommissioned airport in Caracas, Venezuela. Delgado first came to the Fenway as an MIT fellow working with the Fenway Community Development Corporation, on whose board he now sits. Delgado and Perez's team comprised young architects from the Office of Urban Projects in Medellín, where Perez teaches. Their winning proposal drew on Frederick Law Olmsted's design for the Emerald Necklace, applying lessons learned from 19th-century flood-control techniques Olmsted pioneered in his Boston parks designs.

Neighborhood Newslines

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE TOWERS COULD BREAK GROUND THIS YEAR

Forging ahead with plans to wring more revenue out of its campus on the Fenway/South End border, the Christian Science Church announced last month that it has chosen a developer for two towers on land it owns across from the Back Bay Hilton at Dalton and Belvidere streets. The BRA has already approved a master plan that calls for one tower of 250 feet and a second of up to 500 feet on the parcels (by comparison, 111 Huntington in the Prudential Center is 549 feet tall). The buildings would house a mix of office space, housing, and hotels and, at ground level, restaurants and stores. A two-year review of the plans for revamping the complex left some Fenway residents frustrated by the church's refusal to agree to a more gradual transition from the new buildings to the three-story townhouses along adjacent St. Germain and Clearway streets. The lower of the two buildings would sit closer to those streets. Carpenter & Company, developer of the Liberty Hotel on Beacon Hill and the Charles Hotel in Harvard Square, will develop the buildings and has hired Pei Cobb Freed & Partners and Cambridge Seven Associates to design the buildings. Henry Cobb, who designed the plaza and its buildings as well as the John Hancock Tower, will lead the team. Both buildings will undergo a BRA-managed review before construction can begin—possibly by the end of this year, according to *The Boston Globe*.

FILMMAKERS REUNITE LOCAL HEROES FOR 'BURNING GREED' EVENT

Approximately 75 Fenway residents and friends gathered on January 17 for an inspirational night of stories and history in support of the documentary film, *Burning Greed*, which tells the story of the arson-for-profit ring that burned dozens of properties in the East Fens in the 1970s. Three of the people essential to saving the neighborhood from arson returned to the Fenway for the event, held at Jerry Remy's on Boylston Street. Former State Representative Mel King and former STOP (Symphony Tenants Organizing Project) members Jack Mills and David Scondras shared their memories and stressed the importance of telling this story. They were joined by Stephanie Schorow, who has written about fire history in Boston, and

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STATE REP. WALZ WILL LEAVE LEGISLATURE, TAKE TOP JOB AT PLANNED PARENTHOOD

On January 30, State Rep. Marty Walz surprised constituents by announcing that she will resign from the legislature this month to become president of the Massachusetts branch of Planned Parenthood. Walz added a portion of the East Fens to her district just last year, but many residents already knew her as an active monitor and sometimes critic of development projects in the

Fenway and the Back Bay, where she lives. Here are excerpts from Walz's announcement.

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Representing Boston and Cambridge for the past eight years has been an honor—it is work I have loved. I am truly grateful to those who elected (and re-elected!) me, held signs during campaigns, wrote checks, and worked side-by-side with

me to make Boston and Cambridge better places to live and to ensure that Massachusetts is a vibrant state with an unlimited future.

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PPLM operates seven health centers serving nearly 50,000 women and men, leads pioneering education and research programs, and pursues high-impact advocacy during elections and within

state government. It is an extraordinary organization, and I'm thrilled to become its next CEO.

A special election will take place in the spring to fill my legislative seat. In the meantime, my excellent staff will remain in place to provide assistance.

Thank you for the privilege of being your representative.