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BRA approves 500,000 s/f institutional master plan for Berklee College

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The BRA approved Berklee College of Music's institutional master plan for developing three parcels along Mass. Ave. that will add 500,000 s/f of classroom, performance, administrative, student life, and dorm space for 800 students. The architect is William Rawn Associates Architects, Inc. Construction for one of the projects will begin this fall.

The three parcels are 168, 161 - 171, and 130 - 136 Mass. Ave., the latter of which is at the corner of Boylston St. where the Berklee Performance Center sits. That site, referred to as the Berklee Crossroads project, will see the most dramatic changes when it's fully developed as a 24-story tower featuring a new performance center. The Crossroads was originally designed for 29 stories, but in a series of meetings over four years, neighbors asked that the college seek ways to lower the height, which was accomplished with the acquisition of the other properties.

The projects will also add housing for a total of 800 students contributing to mayor Thomas Menino's request that colleges and universities move more students on campus to free rental apartments for neighborhood residents.

The first project to be constructed is 168 Mass. Ave. for a projected cost of \$100 million. An existing building will be razed to create a 16-story, 155,000 s/f mixed-use structure with floor-to-ceiling windows on the bottom floors. Construction is planned for this fall with an opening for the 2013 fall semester. 168 Mass. Ave. will house new dorm rooms with 370 beds, a two-story dining hall and student performance venue with seating for 400. A music technology center with recording studios will be developed below grade. Practice and ensemble rooms, a fitness center, and student lounges will occupy the upper floors. Along the street will likely be retail space.

"Developing these projects promises to be the most exciting event in my tenure at the college," says Berklee president Roger Brown. "With all of the new living space, we'll be able to house our entire entering class. And, with all that it has to offer, 168 Mass. Ave. is going to be an important addition to the fabric of the neighborhood. I really appreciate the BRA Task Force for all their hard work on the project."

William Rawn Assoc. is responsible for a number of award-winning performing arts and campus buildings, including the Seiji Ozawa Hall at Tanglewood, the Williams College '62 Center for Theater and Dance, the new Cambridge Public Library, and Northeastern University Buildings G and H.

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