

BUSINESS TODAY

S. Station developer rejected by panel

By **SCOTT VAN VOORHIS**

A grand scheme for a giant development on the city's southern gateway — including plans for the Hub's tallest tower near South Station — has hit a stumbling block.

Members of a key community panel reviewing the South Bay project are urging a rethinking of the developer tentatively selected to execute this grand vision.

In a recent letter to the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, the South Bay Planning Study Task Force lays out a litany of concerns about the Boston Residential Group's plans, including a lack of a major office component in a development vision that was originally supposed to include a skyscraper.

"We find both the approach and design unacceptable," states the community panel in its letter.

As overseer of the Big Dig, the Turnpike is looking to cut a lucrative development deal for a broad swath of land and buildings off Kneeland Street near South Station. Turnpike officials are marketing the acreage, which includes the Big Dig's headquarters, as the giant highway project winds down.

The panel's letter comes a few months after the Turnpike tentatively selected Boston Residential. The company was the only one to bid for the site.

But Curtis Kemeny, chief executive of Boston Residential, said in a statement that his firm is still hopeful of winning the coveted designation. Such a step would allow the firm to begin work on a plan that "brings to life many of the concepts developed by the task force" while also being "economically viable."

Task force members, however, say development guidelines should be fully hashed out before the property is put back on the market. With a better understanding of what exactly can be built on the downtown land, more developers will show interest.