



# CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Department of Planning and Development



Setti D. Warren  
Mayor

**DATE:** January 28, 2011  
**TO:** Newtonville Advisory Committee and Interested Citizens  
**FROM:** Danielle Bailey, Community Development Planner  
**SUBJECT:** January 19, 2010 Newtonville Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

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### ***Meeting Attendance***

January 19, 2010

**Members:**

Mark Chudy  
Michael Kaufman  
Ald. Stephen Linsky  
Giles Taylor, Chair  
Carol Warner

**Interested Citizens:**

John Cedrone  
Bonnie Foz  
Florence Salvucci  
Harry Sanders

**City Staff:**

Danielle Bailey, Community Development  
Carol Schein, Parks & Recreation

### **LOWELL PARK AREA IMPROVEMENTS**

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On November 18, 2009, the Public Facilities Committee reviewed additional data and discussed the effects of the trial of the closure of Lowell Avenue at Watertown and Crafts Streets. By a 3-1-2 vote, the committee agreed to proceed with another one-way trial. On December 9, 2009, the Board of Aldermen overturned Public Facilities' decision. The Board of Aldermen's comments can be heard online. The item will most likely go back to Public Facilities on February 3, 2010. It will be public meeting but not a public hearing; it is up to the discretion of the Public Facilities chair to hear public comments.

(Post-meeting note: On February 3, 2010, the Public Facilities Committee voted 5-1 to approve the closure of Lowell Avenue at Watertown and Crafts Street citing the safety benefits of the change. On March 8, the Finance Committee approved of the project by a 6-1 vote. On March 15, 2010, the Board of Alderman upheld the committees' decisions and voted for the closure with a 19-3 voice vote, with two members absent.)

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**Housing and Community Development Division**

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Regarding the park, once the traffic issues have been resolved, staff recommends bringing back Ray Dunetz Landscape Architecture for one more community meeting to alter the draft Lowell Park master plan to be more inclusive of Watertown Street residents as well as make some updates (show new tree plantings) and general tweaks. This strategy was questioned; it was preferred not to spend more money on a master plan. Staff said it looks much more professional to have a final plan and cost estimate rather than have the draft plan marked up. Parks and Recreation concurred; while it is acceptable for someone else to prepare the construction documents, it is not courteous to modify someone else's work before it is complete. It is much more effective to have clean and clear documents to help leverage implementation funds. It was agreed that RDLA would return for one more community meeting to revise the master plan. After the plan is revised, the Newtonville Advisory Committee and staff must present the plan to the Parks & Recreation Commission for adoption.

One attendee reminded the committee that maintenance of the new park improvements must be considered beforehand as the City is unable to maintain the current conditions well.

### **PRIORITIES AND PROJECTS FOR THE FY2011-2015 CONSOLIDATED PLAN**

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This was the third and final Newtonville Advisory Committee (NVAC) meeting devoted to the development of the FY2011-2015 Consolidated Plan. Staff explained the remaining steps that the committee must take to lead to an expenditure plan for Newtonville's next funding round in FY2015, which begins in July 2014.

Building off the needs assessment and the strategic plan developed by the City and the Newtonville Advisory Committee, the committee first was asked to prioritize the strategies. Staff provided the committee with funding estimates for each strategy. After reviewing and discussing each strategy, each member and interested citizen was invited to select their top priorities through sticker votes. Staff tallied and ranked the community's priorities. The committee members then deliberated and discussed funding options based on the top priorities. Lastly, the committee made a recommendation on future projects totaling \$160,000.

The following section lists each strategy, an estimated cost, additional background information, and committee discussion.

Needs			Estimate
<b>Beautification and other improvements at Lowell Park</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>Implementation of the master plan with a 15% contingency is approximately \$300,000. If the design is not prepared in-house, it could cost up to 10% of the cost estimate for construction drawings and bid specifications- \$30,000. It is expected that at least \$60,000 in CDBG funds will be spent to improve the park depending on the final cost of the traffic improvements. The total cost would be \$240,000-\$270,000. It is possible that CPA funds could be used for Lowell Park.</i>	OPEN
	NVAC Discussion	Most attendees would like to continue the planned improvements at Lowell Park. Most still agree that the fountain is not feasible now or even in the next phase. Some thought it should be removed but others argued that it should remain in the plan as a future possibility since a fountain was the only physical structure in the park historically. As far as CPA funding goes, because there was little there in the past, the case is very weak for historic preservation. However, there is still some hope that the law would be changed to allow the use of CPA funds on existing recreation land. Specific improvements for FY15 were not suggested as the master plan will be modified once a decision on the traffic trial is made and it is unclear what Phase 1 will include.	
<b>Replace existing bus shelters with new shelters or add new shelters where needed, include security lighting and Big Belly solar-powered trash compactors</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>There are two bus shelters in target area: 1) Walnut @ Watertown- in Lowell Park, and 2) Washington @ Walnut. Both are in need of replacement. Estimate \$10,000-15,000 per shelter replacement including site adjustments. However the new Mayor may be interested in joining the MBTA shelter replacement program through a private company that places advertisements in the shelters at no cost to the towns...</i>	\$20,000-\$30,000
	NVAC Discussion	The committee was very interested in obtaining new bus shelters through MBTA's program. A photo of the type of bus shelter with advertising that would be used was passed around on an attendee's phone. One person suggested moving the bus shelter at Walnut and Watertown closer to Lowell Avenue so it is not block the corner as much. Staff will share this recommendation with the City's Transportation Planner.	

<b>Install bike racks, especially nearby heavily used bus stops, like express routes</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>There are four bus lines that run through the Newtonville target area, the 553 and the 554 that run along Washington Street, the 556 that travels Walnut and Washington Sts., and the 59 that runs on Walnut St. The commuter rail line also goes through the target area, running parallel with the Turnpike. There are seven intersections where the buses stop with fifteen individual bus stops plus the commuter rail station. A bike rack next to a bus stop could cost up to \$2,000 for each rack including site prep and concrete pad.</i>	\$2,000- \$16,000
	NVAC Discussion	There is a bike rack on Washington Street further down from the wooden bus stop. No one had ever seen this bike rack used. Most bicyclists hitch their bikes to the fencing on the bridge over the Turnpike. One person thought that a bike rack by the post office on Washington Street could be beneficial. Staff warned that while most of these strategies are generally CDBG eligible, the specifics of each situation must be weighed. According to CDBG regulations, the improvements must primarily benefit the residents of the target area. Some improvements, especially in the commercial areas serve a much wider area than just the target area. For these reasons some thought it best to stay away from project ideas on the southern border of the target area, which are more commercial in nature.	
<b>Support bicycle transportation through bike lane striping, signage and roadway improvements where possible</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>Newton has no official bike routes. Bike Newton has a draft plan that identifies the best options for Designated Bike Routes and Preferred Bike Routes. No roads in the target neighborhood were recommended as Designated Bike Routes (with striped lanes) however Watertown Street, Washington Street, Crafts Street, and Walnut Street have been identified as Preferred Bicycle Routes. For the most part, the only changes would be to install "Share the Road" signs along the route and bike parking near major destinations/village centers. These signs are estimated at \$500 each.</i>	OPEN
	NVAC Discussion	Staff relayed the position of the West Newton Advisory Committee. Even though they were mostly supportive of these suggestions, they felt that routes should be marked on a citywide basis and not on a small section of roadway. The group concurred with this philosophy.	
<b>On-street bike parking</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>This suggestion is conceptual with no specific methods. One possible idea is to place a bike rack in a striped space. Installed bike racks are estimated at \$2,000 each.</i>	OPEN
	NVAC Discussion	Harry Sanders, a member of the Newton Bicycle-Pedestrian Task Force elaborated on this idea. During bike season (spring-fall), one on-street striped parking spot would be dedicated for bicycle parking. That spot would contain a bike rack that could accommodate 3-5 bikes. On-street bike parking would be placed in major destinations such as village centers. During the winter, the parking spots would revert back to car parking. Harry reported that one potential funding source is no longer available.	

<b>Install accessible pedestrian signals with countdown features at existing intersections with traffic signals</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>There are five traffic signals in target area: Walnut &amp; Washington has ped signals with the countdown feature. The other four have non-accessible, non-countdown signals. For a typical four-way intersection, an estimate of \$8,000 is used.</i>	\$8,000-\$32,000
	NVAC Discussion	There was little discussion of this item.	
<b>Traffic calming (consider Central Avenue, Walnut &amp; Washington, Lowell &amp; Washington)</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>City Engineering staff have draft plans for improving accessibility at the intersections of Walnut &amp; Washington and Lowell &amp; Washington. The idea is to create bump outs on the four corners in order to achieve the required grades for code-complaint curb cuts. As a secondary benefit, bump outs cause the traffic to slower down and make safer turns. There are no cost estimates at this point, only plans. However the work is complicated and costly. Though the CDBG Access program will primarily fund it, it cannot cover all the costs. Some City funds will be provided but more funding may be needed. Other traffic calming measures could be considered for Central Avenue.</i>	OPEN
	NVAC Discussion	Staff showed the committee draft plans for the access improvements at the intersections of Walnut & Washington and Lowell & Washington. Most felt that the changes would be an improvement though some expressed concerns over adequate turning radii for larger vehicles. The Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities (MCPD) hopes to address the Lowell & Washington intersection as soon as possible especially because a disabled person in a wheelchair tipped over due to the steep grades. Given their timeframe, it is unlikely that they would be able to wait until FY15 when Newtonville is funded again. As for Central Avenue, the group thought that something should be done since people use it as a cut-through. Some frustration remained from several years ago when the residents asked the City to consider a stop sign on Central Avenue to help slow traffic. The request was denied and no alternatives were offered. Staff thought that perhaps a raised crosswalk might work here and this option was not under consideration at the time the stop sign request was made. The City has developed criteria to assess if a street would benefit from a raised crosswalk.	
<b>Install concrete sidewalks where they are missing</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>Based on the VHB Pavement Management Report, only 4.3% of the sidewalk network lacks sidewalks. This number may even be less upon closer examination of each segment. For example, a sidewalk is probably not needed on the Prescott St. cul-de-sac. For a typical five foot wide concrete sidewalk, an estimate of \$50 per square yard is used. In the Newtonville target area, it would cost \$43,375 to add sidewalks where there are none.</i>	OPEN
	NVAC Discussion	One person asked if heated sidewalks had been considered. They are warmed through solar panels which eliminates the need to shovel the snow. Staff was unaware of this type of sidewalk though it could be funded with CDBG funds. After looking at all of the missing sections, the only place the group felt strongly about improving is by the Lowell-Walnut triangle. See discussion below.	

<b>Installation of granite curbing in areas with missing curbs or replacement of asphalt or concrete curbing</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>Over three-fourths of the curbing network is granite, the preferred type of street edging. Only 7% of the curbing network is missing. This translates into 2,400 linear feet of missing curbing on five streets. To fill in these missing sections, at a cost of \$40 a linear foot, the work is estimated at \$96,975. To replace the remaining 17% of non-granite curbing (asphalt and concrete), the cost would be almost \$250,000.</i>	OPEN
	NVAC Discussion	There is a good deal of interest in this group to fill in the missing curbing gaps. The committee previously funded 500 linear feet of infill curbing. They would like to continue to "complete the street" with respect to granite curbing where possible. One attendee stated that Foster Street really needs curbing improvements.	
<b>Installation of accessible, code compliant curb cuts</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>Based on the VHB Pavement Management Report, there are 9 missing curb cuts: 4 along Central Ave., 2 on Washington St., 2 on Court St., and 1 on Walnut St. To create accessible concrete curb cuts in these locations, it would cost \$5,000 per curb cut, for a total of \$45,000. Bituminous concrete is not the preferred material for curb cuts as it is difficult to achieve precise grades and sections required. There are 26 bituminous concrete curb cuts, many of which are on Crafts St. To replace the asphalt curb cuts with concrete, it would cost \$130,000. There are 6 concrete curb cuts in fair-poor shape which are not code compliant. To replace these curb cuts, it would cost \$30,000. To address all the curb cuts needs in the target area, the cost would be \$205,000.</i>	OPEN
	NVAC Discussion	This is the first time that the City has ever had an inventory of all the curb cuts including missing ones. It was asked if the CDBG Access program could fund some of the curb cut work. Staff said that installing compliant curb cuts is a high priority for the MCPD. For the next five years, there will be a curb cut budget annually. The MCPD is open to requests for locations for new/replacement curb cuts; the committee would need to formally make such requests.	
<b>Address the triangular corner of Lowell Avenue and Walnut Street by installing granite curbing and concrete sidewalks and removing overgrown shrubs</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>There is a lack of critical infrastructure at this corner. There is almost 550 linear ft. of sidewalks missing. The sidewalk work would cost \$15,256. There is 442 linear feet of missing curbing on Lowell Avenue. This work would cost \$17,680. With curb cuts upgrades and landscaping improvements, the total cost is estimated at \$40,000.</i>	\$40,000
	NVAC Discussion	Many saw the need to complete the sidewalk and curbing network here as the crossroads of two major streets which are also important pedestrian routes. Allegedly, the owner of the property on the corner finally trimmed back the overgrown shrubs that were causing visibility issues.	
<b>Install new street signs with larger, more reflective print</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>The City is currently installing the new signs at major intersections but will eventually get around to replacing them all. If the committee wanted to accelerate this pace, signs cost about \$75 per installed sign. No funding recommended.</i>	ZERO
	NVAC Discussion	There was little discussion of this item.	

<b>New and replacement trees in residential areas, parks and other city properties</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>There is no information on how many trees could be planted throughout the target area but a minimum of 20 trees is suggested in order to produce a visible impact. On average, new tree plantings cost \$500 per tree.</i>	\$10,000-20,000
	NVAC Discussion	This committee previously set aside funds for a tree planting projects and about 30 trees were planted. It was mentioned that there are not many places left to plant trees. One person countered that trees are constantly dying so there is a need for replacement trees. Most people like the idea of having some CDBG funds set aside for this strategy.	
<b>Install Big Belly solar-powered trash receptacles in all parks</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>Big Belly receptacles presently sell for approximately \$4,000 each. Factoring in contractor profit and inflation, an estimate \$4,500 will be used. 1-2 of these receptacles could be located within the target area.</i>	\$4,500-\$9,000
	NVAC Discussion	It is unlikely that Lowell Park would ever the foot traffic to warrant having a Big Belly however other locations such as Walnut & Washington could definitely benefit from one of these receptacles. However, staff was unsure if this item at that location would meet the CDBG requirement of primarily benefiting target area residents.	
<b>Appropriate residential lighting, especially within the historic district</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>Most of the area has cobrahead lights. In 2007 lower watt bulbs were installed citywide. However there are a few gaslights left in the target area, mainly on Prescott St. Recently, in conjunction with road work, the city replaced the gaslights with electric replica gaslights on Farlow Hill (Franklin St, Shornecliffe Rd, and Beechcroft Rd.). The new lights were lower wattage and much less expensive to operate. They City would like to continue to replace the gaslights with electric lights. The work cost about \$4,000 per light. In Washington Park, the cobrahead lights were swapped with ornamental street lights. This work is estimated at \$5,000 per light.</i>	OPEN
	NVAC Discussion	Many of the attendees wanted to keep the gaslights. However there was interest in swapping the cobrahead lights with ornamentals lights.	
<b>Beautify the edge of Washington Street that abuts the Mass Turnpike</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>Some possible ideas could be green screening from the Turnpike, new sidewalks, benches, etc. This strategy is too conceptual to provide an estimate but a range could be \$15,000-35,000. The Creating Connections: Newtonville Town Center report by Sasaki and a group of interns suggested linking the north and south sides of the Turnpike through mixed development opportunities over the Turnpike. The greenspace in question is the site of potential mega-development which might incorporate commonspace/greenspace.</i>	OPEN
	NVAC Discussion	Staff showed the group some of the conceptual plans for a new commuter rail station along with first-floor commercial development and residential units on the upper floors. Staff thought that the likelihood of this happening is much stronger because of the commuter rail stop. Transit-oriented development is popular right now. The CDBG program might not be able to afford any capital improvements, but perhaps there is a way to leverage the CDBG funds in others ways, such as plan preparations.	

<b>Address the memorial at the corner of Washington and Walnut Streets</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>The plaque is no longer on the old drinking fountain. Staff had no information on its whereabouts.</i>	ZERO
	NVAC Discussion	One member had a photo of the plaque. The water fountain with the plaque had been donated over fifty years ago by the Rotary Club. One recommendation was to approach the Rotary Club with the photo of the plaque and ask them to contribute once again toward the improvement of this small greenspace. Some were willing to improve the area through volunteerism. One attendee did not want to see the drinking fountain restored as it was deemed unsanitary.	
<b>Drainage improvements (consider Omar Street and Central Avenue)</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>The City would first investigate the catch basins and laterals pipes to look for blockages. Next they would use a camera to search for cracks and other issues in the trunk line. The results of the field investigations would determine the next step. Most typical actions would be considered maintenance and would not be CDBG-eligible. If a street does need all new sewer work, this could be CDBG funded but could be quite expensive and there are no general cost estimates available- it is case by case.</i>	OPEN
	NVAC Discussion	There was little discussion of this item.	
<b>Burial of overhead utilities</b>	<i>Cost Notes</i>	<i>This is a complicated and costly strategy. There are no specific places/streets where burying utilities is recommended which makes estimating infeasible. Regardless of location, the cost would probably be greater than the CDBG allocation and the City is unlikely to share costs for this item.</i>	ZERO
	NVAC Discussion	Though a worthy ideal, it is not practical at this time.	

Once the committee had reviewed each strategy, staff instructed the committee on the sticker voting. Members and interested citizens were each given five dot stickers to vote for their top priorities. Attendees were able to put all their stickers on one need, five stickers on five different needs, two on one need and three stickers on three needs, or any other combination they wish. The voting produced a consensus of five priorities. See the table below.

<b>Needs</b>	<b>Sticker Voting</b>
Beautification and other improvements at Lowell Park	6
New and replacement trees in residential areas, parks and other city properties	6
Address the triangular corner of Lowell Avenue and Walnut Street by installing granite curbing and concrete sidewalks and removing overgrown shrubs	5
Installation of granite curbing in areas with missing curbs or replacement of asphalt or concrete curbing	4
Traffic calming (consider Central Avenue, Walnut & Washington, Lowell & Washington)	4
On-street bike parking	3
Appropriate residential lighting, especially within the historic district	1
Beautify the edge of Washington Street that abuts the Mass Turnpike	1
Replace existing bus shelters with new shelters or add new shelters where needed, include security lighting and Big Belly solar-powered trash compactors	0
Install bike racks, especially nearby heavily used bus stops, like express routes	0
Support bicycle transportation through bike lane striping, signage and roadway improvements where possible	0
Install accessible pedestrian signals with countdown features at existing intersections with traffic signals	0
Install concrete sidewalks where they are missing	0
Installation of accessible, code compliant curb cuts	0
Install new street signs with larger, more reflective print	0
Install Big Belly solar-powered trash receptacles in all parks	0
Address the memorial at the corner of Washington and Walnut Streets	0
Drainage improvements (consider Omar Street and Central Avenue)	0
Burial of overhead utilities	0

Using \$160,000 as an estimated budget for FY15, the group debated the dollar amounts for the top priorities. Eventually a consensus was reached and the members voted unanimously to the following projects and budgets for FY15:

- **Lowell Park Improvements- Phase 2** **\$92,500**
  
  - **Newtonville Infrastructure Improvements** **\$60,000**  
*(Combines the two strategies of infill granite curbing and sidewalk and curbing work at the triangular corner of Walnut Street and Lowell Avenue)*
  
  - **Newtonville Tree Plantings** **\$7,500**  
*(up to fifteen new and replacement street trees)*
- 
- \$160,000**

### **OTHER BUSINESS, APPROVE MINUTES & SET NEXT MEETING DATE**

This item was not addressed.