

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

JOINT MEETING

REAL PROPERTY REUSE & ZONING & PLANNING COMMITTEES

TUESDAY, MARCH 25

Real Property Reuse Committee members present: Ald. Albright (Chairman), Ald. Leary, Hess-Mahan, Gentile, Crossley, Danberg, Fuller, and Lipof

Zoning & Planning Committee members present: Ald. Johnson (Chairman), Ald. Leary, Hess-Mahan, Sangiolo, Yates, and Danberg; Absent: Ald. Baker and Kalis

Also present: Ald. Norton, Harney, and Blazar

Staff: Alexandra Ananth (Chief Planner for Current Planning), James Freas (Chief Planner for Long Term Planning), Candace Havens (Director of Planning & Development), Nancy Hyde (Economic Development Director), Nick Read (Chief Procurement Officer), Ouida Young (Associate City Solicitor), Linda Finucane (Assistant Clerk of the Board of Aldermen)

A Public Hearing was held on the following item:

REFERRED TO ZONING & PLANNING & REAL PROPERTY REUSE COMMITTEES

#47-14 SARAH QUIGLEY et al. filing on February 3, 2014 a Group Petition pursuant to Sec. 10-2 of the Newton Charter which seeks the following:

1. Review and rescind the declaration and classification of the Austin Street public parking lot as surplus municipal land.
2. Recommend that the mayor or other municipal authority withdraw the offer to sell the land, exercising an option listed in the Request for Proposal dated February 13, 2013.
3. Rezone the Austin Street parking lot from the recently created Mixed Use 4 (MU4) zone to a zone that is more appropriate to the scale of Newtonville village: Public Use, BU1 or BU2.

ACTION: HEARING CLOSED

NOTE: Co-chairs Albright and Johnson asked that everyone be mindful that many people wished to speak and in order to accommodate as many as possible, speakers were asked to limit their comments to three minutes. People were encouraged to send written comments to the Board. Peter Harrington, 157 Lowell Avenue, had raised a question as to whether the hearing was required to be held in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, which format would include alternating speakers, pro and con, and allowing 10 minutes to one half hour to speak. However, Co-chairs Albright and Johnson had spoken about this with City Clerk David Olson, who informed them that the hearing was not subject to Robert's Rules.

Sarah Quigley, 105 Atwood Avenue, presented a PowerPoint, *attached*, on behalf of the petitioners. Also *attached* are her comments.

Economic Development Director Nancy Hyde also presented a PowerPoint, *attached*.

[Type text]

Questions from members of the Board:

- Why were respondents to the Request for Proposals (RFP) who exceeded requirements, e.g., height, of the zoning district considered?

Ms. Havens explained that it was an evaluative process, so that in the spirit of having a robust competition, height compliance might not be listed at first level but at the second level. Mr. Read said that any deficiencies would be reflected in the rankings. Ms. Havens explained that the process involves selecting a developer, not a design.

- Is the parking lot still underutilized? Is a minimum of 85 parking spaces still correct? When will the current study be completed?

Ms. Haven s said the minimum 85 parking spaces came from a previous study. A preliminary report of the current study is expected in April and a final report in June. The special permit process will require another parking study and a traffic study with peer reviews.

- Is Newtonville perceived as still needing a “spark?”

Although several new businesses have opened in Newtonville over the past few years, unfortunately it has a large number of banks. Do banks make a thriving community? The 2007 Comprehensive Plan targeted it for a bigger purpose. It could be shaped to provide diversity for the neighborhood.

- How would future development of the Shaw’s site or the proposed MBTA Indigo Line impact Newtonville and the proposed development? These are two new factors. Can and should these potential changes influence decisions in 2014?

Ms. Havens spoke with a representative of the new owner of Shaw’s. Shaw’s indicated that it is in the stage of exploring its new acquisition and has no immediate plans. The MBTA Indigo Line, which if implemented will eventually provide Newton easier connections to Boston and Cambridge, was a surprise, but it is a fairly long way off – 2024 – with no effect on decision making at this time.

Public Comment – please note that speakers are listed in the order in which they appeared on the sign-in sheet, not by preference.

A sign-in sheet was provided for people who wished to speak, a number of whom subsequently submitted their comments in writing. Written comments from the following individuals are attached:

Reverend Bob Tafel, Church of the Open Word, Highland Avenue.

Ron Mauri, Bradford Avenue

Jill Geiger, 72 Madison Avenue

John Koot, 430 Winchester Street

William Roesner 72 Fuller Street

Ernest Lowenstein, 57 Hyde Street

Sarah Sturtevant, 87 Washington Street

Rena Getz, Pine Ridge Road

Nancy Honig, Newton Centre

Betty Falxa, 12 Chesley Avenue

[Type text]

Louis Sanchez, 32 Walnut Place
Peter Harrington, Lowell Avenue
Eve Tapper, 24 Nathan Road
Pamela Geib, Newtonville
Jack Porter, 79 Walnut Street
John Sisson, 45 Greenlawn Avenue
Kathleen Kouril Grieser, 258 Mill Street
Jim O'Connell, 5 Fairfield Street
Fred Arnstein, 7 Briar Lane
Maxine Zarchan, 25 Frederick Street
Peter Harrington, 157 Lowell Avenue

The following individuals did not submit their comments in writing:

Matthew Yospin, 156 Kirkstall Road, a resident since 1988, challenged the declaration of surplus. Land in Newton is like water front property. In his opinion, this proposal is misguided. Housing should be developed on private land at market prices.

Ted Siporis lives at 59 Highland Avenue and owns Lorraine Village Cleaners, told the committees that the lack of parking is often inconvenient for his customers. He has 3-5 employees who also need parking. He wants to live in a village not a city.

Safaii Homa, 103 Atwood Avenue and 32 Farlow Road, supports this petition. The proposal is too dense for Newtonville. There is not enough parking. The city is already adequately built up.

Barbara Fabricant, 96 Washington Park, said as a neighbor to Newtonville Square she is well aware there is already a vibrant night life. The past two years have brought not always positive changes. She said the Senior Center has 4000 clients a year, approximately 450 a day, and only has 13 parking spaces. Please keep that in mind.

George Havanis, 156 Highland Avenue, a resident since 1990, said the parking lot belongs to the citizens. Businesses need parking. The proposal doesn't fit the community.

Jim Colnan, 65 Fuller Street, a 28-year resident, said the parking lot has been a key parcel for approximately 55 years and it can provide the catalyst for future smart growth of the Washington Street/Lowell Avenue/ Walnut Street area. He supports this petition. Gaining 13 affordable units is not worth it. The proposal for redevelopment reminds him of something most often coming out of city hall: the three stooges.

Kathleen Hobson, 128 Dorset Road, a member of Engine Six Group, a housing advocacy group, said that the loudest, latest voices are not necessarily the best or have the best interests of the city at heart. She opposes this petition. The need for parking shouldn't scuttle the plans. She urged the city to proceed to choose a developer as soon as possible. There will be time for additional community input.

[Type text]

Matt Cuddy, 151 Harvard Street, also opposes the petition. He supports the proposal to develop the parking lot and is convinced it will add to the vitality of Newtonville. The recent “rebirth” doesn’t negate the need for new residents, which means more wallets for businesses. Parking is a commodity that depends on policies and regulations. There are hundreds of potential spaces on surrounding streets. He too urged the process go forward.

Jack Leader, 613 California Street, a 55-year resident, chaired the Joint Advisory Planning Group. He said the city has an unsustainable deficit, recognized as far back as the Blue Ribbon Commission. Taxes continue to rise. The JAPG recognized that a mixed-use proposal can enhance the vitality and vibrancy far better than office space. 85 parking spaces is the *minimum* a developer is required to give the city. A parking lot is a parking lot and he can’t believe so many people are in love with it.

Lee Paul, 326 Highland Avenue, said parking is a problem in many areas. In West Newton Square, although the Police lot is always empty, it is difficult to go to a movie because there is no parking available. The same thing will happen in Newtonville.

Lynn Weissberg, 5 Alden Street, a member of Engine Six Group, supported the comments of Ms. Hobson. She also supports development of the parking lot. The city is lacking affordable housing units.

David Berkeley. 34 Otis Street, a 58-year resident, supports this petition and is opposed to the proposed development of the parking lot. He believes that the so-called affordable units in Oxford House, the former Christian Science Church, were \$460,000.

Chris Steele, Chairman of the Economic Development Commission, opposes this petition. The proposed development is an opportunity to create housing and enhance things people love about Newtonville. There was much input to ensure the proposal worked well. The height is predicated on the historic Masonic Temple. Conversations will continue and any proposal will be subject to further scrutiny.

Miles Fidelman, 130 Austin Street, supports the petition. Declaring the parking lot redundant and selling it should be a last resort. The city will never get it back. The process is seriously flawed. What are the qualifications of the bidders? Was the rezoning of the parcel spot zoning? What about the costs placed on public services if it is developed?

Karla Hailer, 130 Austin Street, a support staff member at Cabot School and employee of the Newton Tab, also supports the petition. It is okay to revisit the project. The area cannot be revitalized with decreased parking. The MBTA 59 bus stops at 7 PM. The commuter rail runs at peak hours. The schools are bursting at the seams.

Jay Walter, 83 Pembroke Street, opposes this petition. Proposed development of the parking lot has been thoroughly vetted. He is appalled at the allegations of railroading; there has been ample review over a long period of time. A development can provide diverse housing units and reduce the need for cars. He urged that the petition be rejected. There is no need to start the process over.

[Type text]

Tom Kraus, 480 Walnut Street, a member of the Newtonville Neighborhood Area Council, speaking on his own behalf said he neither supports nor opposes the proposed development. He questions the data that drove the decision to surplus and develop the parking lot and retain 85 spaces. He believes the utilization even at that time had gone beyond 85 spaces. The city should hold off its choice until the current parking study is completed and assess whether the requirements of the RFP need to be changed and, if so, allow resubmittals.

Jane Franz 12 Glastonbury Oval, opposes the petition and supports the proposed development that can be a wonderful addition to both Newtonville and other villages.

Timothy Grieser, 258 Mill Street, said the Aldermen need to take this seriously and listen to the citizens.

Paul Zarchan, 25 Frederick Street, supports the petition. The meetings were not public in his opinion. He suggested the city use reverse 911 to notify citizens of meetings.



Newtonville Neighborhood Association

*Dedicated to preserving the village character
of Newtonville*



A Public Hearing will be held on the following item:

REFERRED TO ZONING & PLANNING & REAL PROPERTY REUSE COMMITTEES

- #47-14 SARAH QUIGLEY et al. filing on February 3, 2014 a Group Petition pursuant to Sec. 10-2 of the Newton Charter which seeks the following:
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 2. Recommend that the mayor or other municipal authority withdraw the offer to sell the land, exercising an option listed in the Request for Proposal dated February 13, 2013.
 3. Rezone the Austin Street parking lot from the recently created Mixed Use 4 (MU4) zone to a zone that is more appropriate to the scale of Newtonville village: Public Use, BU1 or BU2.

We recommend the Board of Aldermen take the following actions on Petition #47-14:

- 1. Recommend that the Department of Public Works re-examine the decision to declare the lot surplus.
- 2. Recommend to the Mayor that he withdraw the offer to sell the land
- 3. Recommend a resolution for a separate public hearing on re-zoning the lot to Public Use, or another zone consistent with scale of existing village; ie BU1 or BU2.
- 4. Recommend the Board of Aldermen analyze the process by which the lot was considered for development

What has changed since Austin St. Lot was declared surplus in 2010?

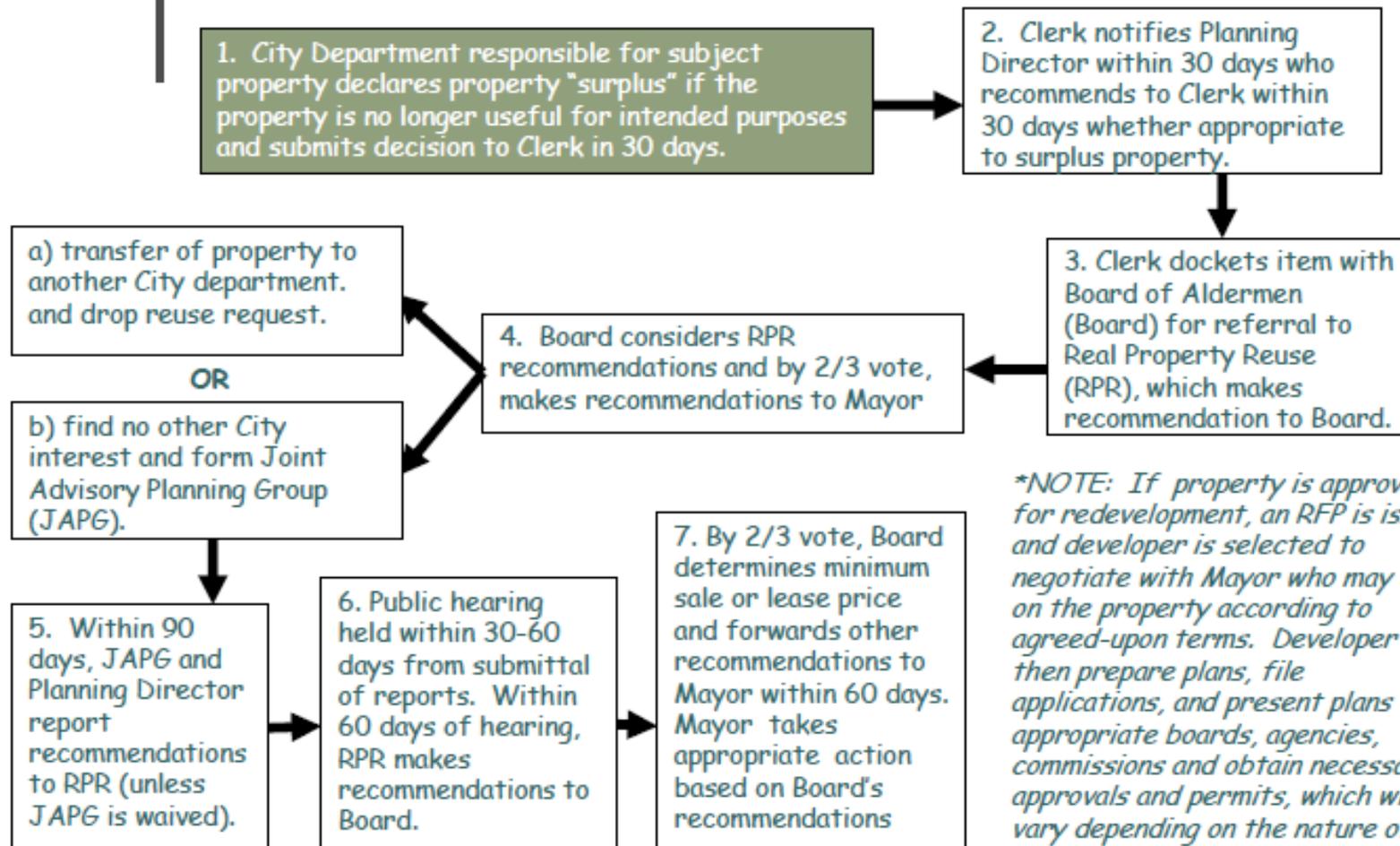
- Significant increase in business activity and related parking demand.
- Planning Dept. has commissioned a parking study
- Shaw's is now owned by Cerberus Capital Mgt, and is exploring development plans for its Newtonville site.
- MBTA has proposed a new Indigo Line, which will include high speed trains to Boston, and is likely to increase parking demand by commuters.

How was Austin St Lot declared surplus in 2010?

- Informal parking study in conducted 2009.
- Did not include non-customer parking in Shaw's lot.
- Cited peak of 81 cars in lot while a aerial photographs show over 100 cars.
- Study did not consider potential growth of parking demand. Projected maximum demand as only 85 spaces
- Commissioner of Public Works did not provide data analysis or a report when submitting a letter declaring the lot surplus while retaining 85 public spaces

"STEP-BY-STEP" REAL PROPERTY REUSE PROCESS

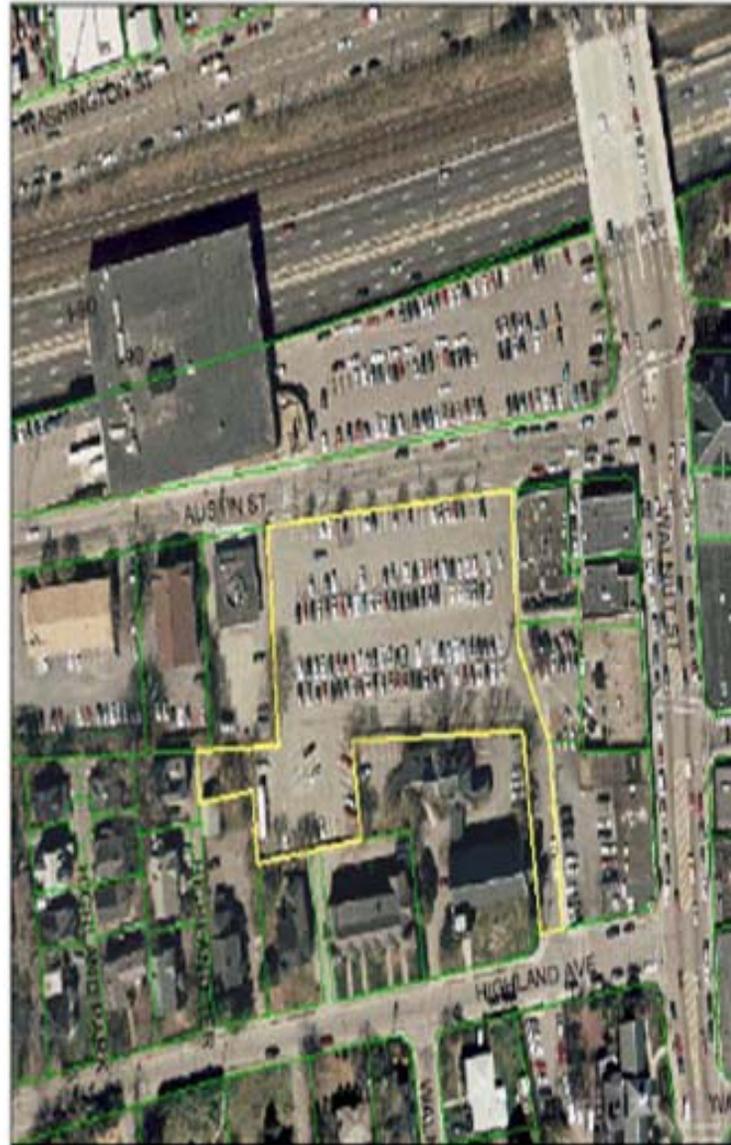
START HERE



**NOTE: If property is approved for redevelopment, an RFP is issued and developer is selected to negotiate with Mayor who may close on the property according to agreed-upon terms. Developer may then prepare plans, file applications, and present plans to appropriate boards, agencies, commissions and obtain necessary approvals and permits, which will vary depending on the nature of the proposal.*

END HERE

City Department responsible for subject property declares property “surplus” if the property is no longer useful for intended purposes and submits decision to Clerk in 30 days.



Economic Impact of Proposed Developments on Newton Public Schools

- For Riverside project, fiscal analysis included school enrollment projections of .52 students per 2/3 BR apt.
- Proposed Impact from Austin Street proposals:

Developer	# BR	Total Units	Estimated students	Estimated cost
New Atlantic Development	2BR	76	40	\$563,882
Austin St Partners	2BR	32	17	\$237,424
Newtonville Square Development	1BR + Den	6	3	\$44,517
Newtonville Square Development	2 BR	22	11	\$163,229
Newtonville Square Development	2 BR + Den	5	3	\$37,098
Newtonville Square Development	3BR	6	3	\$44,517
		Newtonville Square subtotal	20	\$289,361
1BR units omitted				
Studio units omitted				

0.5225 Estimate of students per 2/3 BR Apartments - Based on Technical Memorandum for Riverside

- **2002-2007 Comprehensive Planning**

- **2008 Sasaki Charette**



- **2009 Community Workshops**

- **2010 Request for Interest**

- **2011 Reuse Review/Mixed Use Element**



- **2012 JAPG appointed by BOA and Mayor**

- **2012 MU4 zone created and property rezoned**

- **2013 RFP Issued**

NEWTON HOUSING ACTION PLAN INITIATIVE (HAPI)

A collaborative effort among the Newton Housing Partnership, CAN-DO, U-CHAN, Newton Planning & Development Department, Newton League of Women Voters, AvalonBay Communities, Newton Planning & Development Board, Newton Fair Housing Committee, NCDF, Newton Human Rights Commission, Newton Economic Development Commission

NEWTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)

CAN A NEWTONVILLE PARKING LOT BECOME A MODEL FOR DEVELOPMENT IN NEWTON VILLAGES?

Newtonville businesses, shoppers, residents, property owners, and others who care about Newton Villages, please come to help explore how such redevelopment on Austin St. might best be shaped:

- What uses and activities should be included;
- How should buildings be designed; and
- How should parking be handled?

and finally to discuss next steps in light of that.

7:00 PM, Thursday, September 24, 2009
New Art Center, 61 Washington Park, Newtonville



#150-09

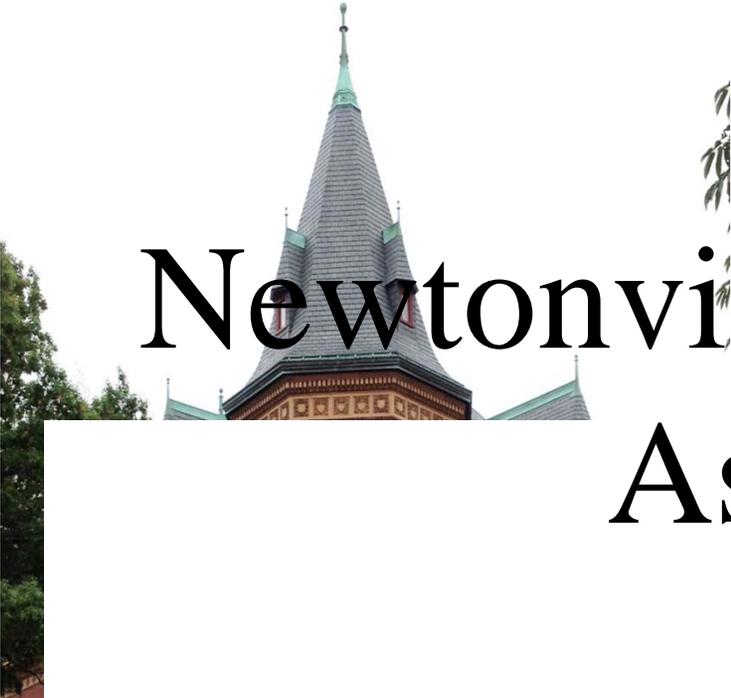
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT requesting a discussion re the potential redevelopment of the Austin Street municipal parking lot in Newtonville for mixed-use development, including affordable housing.

Quote from HAPI representative documented in 11/24/09 Real Property Reuse Report

- “Because the parking lot is currently zoned Public Use, a rezoning will be necessary. HAPI recommends that a Business 4 District, which abuts the site, would be appropriate and allow more height – probably 4-5 stories

They also referred to the process for declaring the parcel surplus, and developing an RFP:

- Should the new Mayor choose to proceed, additional steps include:
- refinement of the RFI by City staff and others
- issuance of the RFI
- review of responses by City officials/organizations including the Economic Development Commission and the Housing Partnership
- declaration of surplus by the Commissioner of Public Works and subsequent reuse process through the Board of Aldermen
- issuance of a Request for Proposals



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of Newtonville*



Department of Planning and Development



**BOARD OF ALDERMEN
ZONING & PLANNING COMMITTEE
REAL PROPERTY REUSE COMMITTEE**



**AUSTIN STREET REDEVELOPMENT PROJECT
NEWTONVILLE
MARCH 25, 2014**

AGENDA

Background

Process

Next Steps



When/how can the community weigh in?



Why is this happening?



Will there be enough parking?

NEWTON'S VILLAGE CENTERS

- Turn of the century
 - Dense, walkable, mixed-use communities
 - Three- and four-story buildings
- Last fifty years
 - More low-density, single-story buildings
 - Fewer services, shops, houses, and amenities
 - Streetscape interrupted by driveways to parking lots
- Today
 - Restore variety of services
 - Improve walkability and transit access
 - Provide greater diversity of housing options





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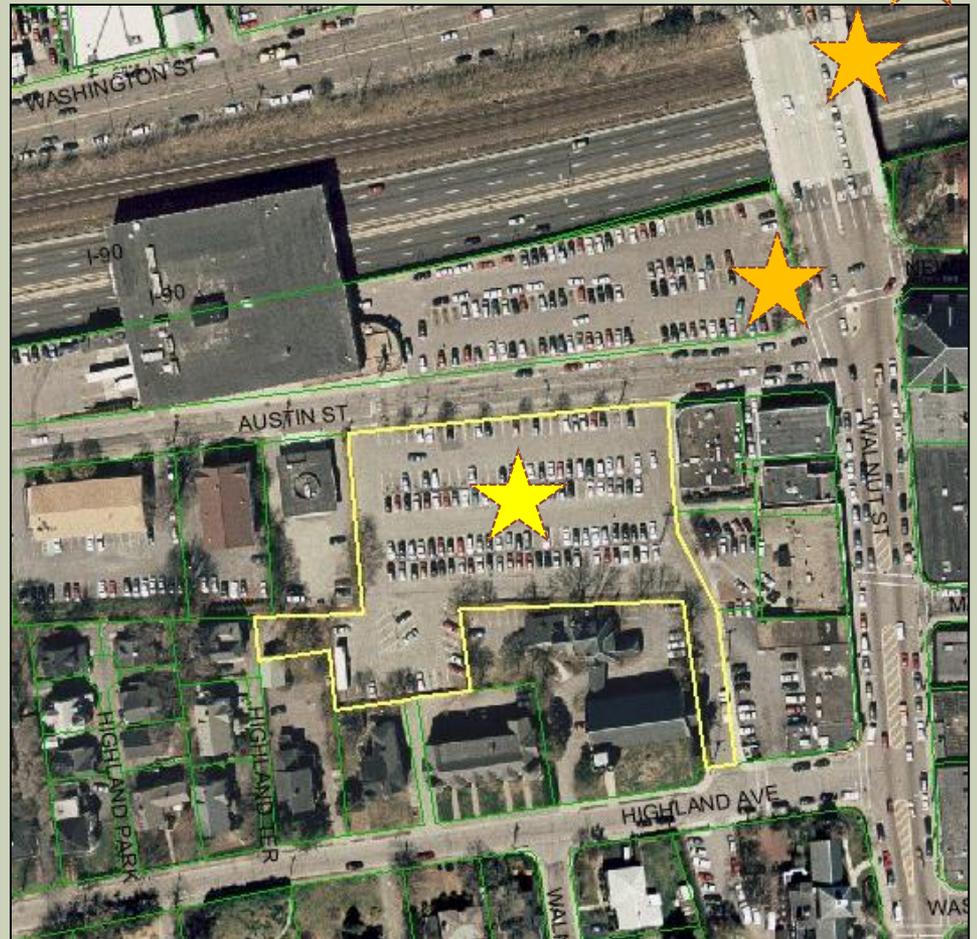
A 6985 Washington St., Newtonville, Mass.

AUSTIN STREET PARKING LOT

5

SITE

- 74,536 square foot lot (1.7 acres)
- City-owned
- 159 metered parking spaces
- Philip Bram Way
- Mixed Use 4 zone



Planning Steps

- 2002-2007 Comprehensive Planning
 - CPAC \pm 30 resident professionals
 - Framework for Newton's future
- 2008 Sasaki Charette
 - Student study
 - Explored ideas
 - Created concept plan with mixed use on-site
 - Spurred a community conversation
- 2009 Community Workshops
 - Housing Action Planning Initiative (HAPI)
 - Economic Development Commission (EDC)



Add vitality
to
Newtonville
Village

Create village
housing

6

Fiscal benefits
to the Village
and the City

Planning Steps

● 2010

- Real Property Reuse review
- Request for Interest released
- 3 written responses rec'd

● 2011

- Real Property Reuse Committee review
 - ✦ Considered the data presented
 - ✦ Found sufficient merit to continue exploration
- Joint Advisory Planning Group appointed
- Mixed Use Element of *Comprehensive Plan*

Add vitality to
Newtonville
Village

Create village
housing

7

Fiscal benefits
to the
Village and
the City

JOINT ADVISORY PLANNING GROUP

8

- 14 residents
- Most from Newtonville, including abutters
- Appointments
 - ½ by Mayor, ½ by Board of Aldermen
- Met for 3 months
- Made recommendations for future use of property

“Redevelopment of Austin Street should be the spark that lights the fire of rejuvenation in the Newtonville Village.” JAPG

Planning Steps – cont.

- 2012

- Board of Aldermen recommendations on reuse to Mayor
- Adoption of Mixed Use 4 zone by Board of Aldermen
 - Architecture compatible with scale and character of surroundings
 - Consistent with *Comprehensive Plan* goals
 - Physically, financially, and legally feasible
 - City to work with developer to address infrastructure needs
 - Cash contributions be used to enhance Newtonville Center
 - Pre-zone property for mixed use
 - Provide sufficient information to developer
 - Appoint committee of experts to review proposals and advise Mayor

Add vitality
to
Newtonville
Village

9

Create village
housing

Fiscal benefits
to the
Village and
the City

Planning Steps – cont.

- 2013/2014
 - Request for proposals issued
 - 6 responses received
 - Process of evaluation underway



Add vitality
to
Newtonville
Village

10

Create village
housing

Fiscal benefits
to the
Village and
the City

EVALUATION TEAM

11

- **Judy Jacobson**, Deputy Director of the Massachusetts Housing Partnership, member of the Newton Housing Partnership
- **Joy Huber**, PhD, Economist, Newtonville Area Council
- **Barbara Smith-Bacon**, Vice-President and Project Manager at Berkeley Investments
- **Phil Herr**, former MIT Planning Professor, Chair of the Newton Comprehensive Planning Advisory Committee, Member of the Newton Housing Partnership
- **Susan Albright**, Board of Alderman, Land Use Committee member, Masters in Planning
- **Candace Havens**, Director of Planning and Development

REQUEST for PROPOSALS

MINIMUM CRITERIA

12

- Complete proposal
- At least one member must have completed one comparable mixed-use development within past 7 years
- 3 satisfactory references
- \$5000 security deposit
- Evidence of financial capacity

REQUEST for PROPOSALS

EVALUATIVE CRITERIA

13

- Proposed methods and procedures for accomplishing tasks in project description
- Qualifications of the development team
- Budget proposal and fiscal benefits of the development team
- Project feasibility, including ability to obtain financing
- Viability of financial assumptions
- Consistency with project description

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

14

- Parking
- Housing
- Business Uses
- Open Space
- Connectivity
- Design
- Sustainability
- Consideration of adjacent parcels
- Austin Street setback
- Other City regulations and ordinances

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

15

- Parking during and after construction
- Lease vs. Sale
- Rental vs. Homeownership
- Timing of construction
- Ability to work with all stakeholders
- Inclusion of the arts
- Context-sensitive design
- Flexibility and creativity

WHY IS THIS GOOD FOR NEWTON?

16

- **Village vitality**
 - Synergy among uses
 - More points of interest
 - More patrons for local businesses
- **Provides more diversity to housing stock**
 - Aging baby boomers/empty nesters
 - Young singles and couples
- **Better use of existing land**
 - Parking
 - Public use space

NEXT STEPS

17

Mayor
selects
developer



Negotiate
conditions
for sale or
lease

Parking/
circulation
study



Community
meetings,
Newtonville
Area Council,
DRT

Urban Design
Committee &
Zoning
reviews,
other prep
for Special
Permit



Special
Permit to
Land Use
Committee
& Board of
Aldermen
for action

Spring 2014

Summer – Fall
2014

2015

Austin Street Redevelopment Project

Good Evening, Chairmen, and the Aldermen of the Real Property Reuse and Zoning and Planning Committees. I'm Sarah Quigley, the primary petitioner for Petition #47-14 which requests the following from the Aldermen:

(slide 2)

SARAH QUIGLEY et al. filing on February 3, 2014 a Group Petition pursuant to Sec. 10-2 of the Newton Charter which seeks the following:

1. Review and rescind the declaration and classification of the Austin Street public parking lot as surplus municipal land.
2. Recommend that the mayor or other municipal authority withdraw the offer to sell the land, exercising an option listed in the Request for Proposal dated February 13, 2013.
3. Rezone the Austin Street parking lot from the recently created Mixed Use 4 (MU4) zone to a zone that is more appropriate to the scale of Newtonville village: Public Use, BU1 or BU2.

(slide 3)

First, we request that the Real Property Reuse and Zoning and Planning Committees take action on this petition by recommending to the Department of Public Works that they re-examine the decision to declare the Austin St lot surplus.

(slide 4)

There are four principle reasons we are requesting that the Committees recommend this course of action: Current business activity, the need for flexibility to accommodate forecasted changes in the vicinity, the fact that the lot was declared surplus without evidence from a formal parking study, and procedural flaws with the process. Due to significant improvement in the local economy, and the addition of several popular new businesses and restaurants, the Austin Street lot can no longer be considered underutilized, as it may have been when development of the lot was initially explored. There is currently only one retail vacancy on Walnut St south of the Mass Pike. The City's marketing of proposals for Austin Street development emphasize phrases such as the need to 'revitalize' and 'enliven' the village. In reality, Newtonville village is already thriving, through the success of its businesses and the enthusiasm of the community as local consumers. In addition, there are two major factors which could increase the importance of the Austin Street lot as a municipal resource. Shaw's has been acquired by Cerberus Capital Mgt, a private equity firm. They are reportedly investigating potential development of their own site, which could further increase parking demand in the village. Secondly, the MBTA has announced plans to develop a high speed rail service called the Indigo line, which would service Newtonville, and is likely to increase parking demand from commuters. It is imperative that the City take a holistic approach to master planning for Newtonville village, especially when significant changes are already on the horizon, rather than selling off a valuable community asset that may hold even greater significance in the future.

In section 10-9 of the 2007 Comprehensive Plan it states "in Newton residential development pays less in taxes than it costs to service..."

Finally, we ask BOA to analyze the process by which the Austin Street lot was declared surplus, rezoned to Mixed Use 4 and marketed for sale to developers.

(slide 9)

According to this slide from the Dept. of Planning and Development, a series of Community Workshops were held in 2009 about Austin Street lot development. These were sponsored by the Housing Action Planning Initiative, also known as HAPI.

(slide 10)

A meeting announcement for one of the 2009 HAPI (Housing Action Planning Initiative) Workshops seen in the this slide includes the title "Can a Newtonville Parking Lot Become a Model for Development in Newton Villages." This meeting invitation, which included the names of over a dozen sponsoring organizations, including Avalon Bay Communities

(slide 11)

According to a Real Property Reuse Committee Report from 11/24/09, a representative from HAPI visited the meeting to discuss Petition 159-09 on 'Potential Re-development of the Austin Street parking lot in Newtonville, for Mixed-Use development, including affordable housing.'

(slide 12)

The HAPI representative stated:

"Because the parking lot is currently zoned Public Use, a rezoning will be necessary. HAPI recommends that a Business 4 District, which abuts the site, would be appropriate and allow more height – probably 4-5 stories

They also referred to the process for declaring the parcel surplus, and developing an RFP. This was in 2009.

Is this what we want for all our villages? Is the City of Newton going to allow all our village parking lots and other municipal land to be targeted for dense Mixed Use development?

In conclusion, we request that the Board of Aldermen recommend that the Department of Public Works reexamine the declaration of surplus of the Austin St lot, recommend to the Mayor that he withdraw the offer to sell the land, have a resolution to hold a second public hearing to re-zone the lot back to Public Use, and re-evaluate the procedure involved in evaluating municipal property for reuse, including considering benefits of retaining property for community use.

Thank you

- - -

2014-03-25 HearingFD.doc Statement to be presented by me at the Hearing *FINAL DRAFT*

Good evening, aldermen and citizens of Newton, especially of the Village of Newtonville:

I am Rev. Bob Tafel, a graduate of Andover Newton Theological School, pastor of
Church of the Open
Word (on Highland Avenue, off Walnut Street) that abuts the Austin Street Parking lot
and Philip Bram Way. I speak in favor of the petition.

I was appointed to the Joint Advisory Planning Group (along with another abutter) apparently to represent views of abutters. It was clear to me that development was the goal of most of the group members. When asked, I stated development might be acceptable if concentrated along Austin Street, with building height and density appropriate to the neighborhood.

The co-chairs repeatedly assured us a RFP document could ensure that what would be built would be "something wonderful." Now, I realize "beauty" and "wonderful" are in the eyes of the beholder. Yet, I believe what is now contemplated is far from "something wonderful."

In retrospect, from the proposals being recommended, I must conclude that I was appointed only for appearance's sake. (As an aside, when discussing my involvement with the JAPG with leaders of the Rainbow Girls of the Masonic Lodge who volunteered at our site at Newton Serves 2012, I understood they resented that their building, built before zoning ordinances, was being used as a standard of scale in the area.)

Our Society has served continuously since its founding in 1864, although not as active now as in previous years. The present historically landmarked building (with Charles Connick stained glass windows and a noteworthy Huchins organ) was designed by Ralph Adams Cram and built in 1893. We have engaged the services of Cram & Ferguson, successor to the firm of Ralph Adams Cram, to develop a master plan for preservation, and have applied for a restoration grant. We plan to stay, serve and grow.

In recent months, I have been discussing with community cultural organizations and leaders the possibility of the Church buildings (Sanctuary and Parish House) also serving as a community gathering space and performance center to enliven nightlife and

provide more business for the local dining establishments and other businesses. However, we need to achieve handicap accessibility first, which we are endeavoring to address. When the building does become handicap accessible and useful as a performance center as well as space for public meetings and lectures, there would then be a need for more, not less parking.

Our major concern about the development proposals is the scale of height and density. Our sanctuary chancel borders Philip Bram Way by about two feet and stands in danger not only to construction, but loss of light as a result of proposed developments.

Our whole community needs its sunlight, wind and sky. In the words of Chief Seattle, we have a moral obligation to consider the impact of what we do to our land for seven generations.

I urge you please to reconsider.

Thank you for your attention.

Good Evening Madam Chairmen and members of the Committees

I am Ronald Mauri of Bradford Rd. in NH.

I am here tonight to support the petition to reconsider and reverse the decision to develop the Austin St. lot by offering you the perspectives, not of a resident in the Newtonville neighborhood, but rather as an economist, transportation planner, and affected Newton resident.

First some brief remarks about this issue based on Economics. I taught Economics at UNC, U of DE, and Babson College. In economic policy analysis there is the widely used concept of "externalities." I'm going to come back to this concept so please indulge me a moment to explain it for any who are unfamiliar with the concept – not everyone went to college and took a economics course, or remembers it if they did.

"Externalities" is the technical term for 3rd party effects – the idea that when two private parties do something it can have broader effects or impacts or costs on the community – the public. If those 3rd party impacts are sizable and negative, they can swamp any benefits and make what is at its core a private matter undesirable – uneconomic – sub-optimal – various terms are used, but the basic idea is that society as a whole would be better off if the initial event did not occur. This is the rationale and logic behind much of what you and other governmental entities do when you make rules that affect what we can or cannot do. Think about it. Why do we have speed limits? Safety is a 3rd party effect. Why do we have zoning rules? To protect our property values from the 3rd party effects of inappropriate development in our neighborhoods.

In the case of the petition before you tonight, the question is whether there are enough 3rd party negative impacts or externalities to warrant reversing the planned to develop the Austin St. lot and thereby avoid outcomes that are uneconomic from the broader societal perspective of the community.

I support this petition because the perceived costs far exceed any benefits.

Now I would like to focus a bit more on the costs- the negative impacts – coming from the perspective of a transportation planner. I have had a long career working at the U.S. DOT's Volpe Center in Cambridge. The Volpe Center is DOT's internal think tank and as a transportation economist and planner, I evaluated the benefits and costs of many proposed investments and rules. How does that apply to this you might ask? The connection is street traffic.

Any of us who have lived in Newton more than a few years have observed the "drip-drip" of significantly worsening traffic. I generally car pool to work by driving down Centre St. and taking the turnpike into Boston. It used to be a relatively quick ride from NC to Newton Corner (Google maps puts in at 2.1 miles and 5 minutes), but it has gradually worsened. Now it is common for morning stop-and-go traffic to back up to Cabot St., and sometimes to the BC campus or Comm. Ave. The same is true about backups on other Newton's commuter arterials – Beacon St., Walnut St., Chestnut St., Rt. 9, etc. What was 5 minutes for me is now at least 10 minutes. An extra 5 minutes does not sound like much, but multiply it very conservatively by the 1000 other morning drivers (from Mass DOT traffic counts), twice a day, 200 days a year, and DOT's recommended \$13.50 per hr., and it's a big number - \$450,000. And that's only the time cost for one year on one street. It's no wonder that residents raise the traffic issue when you are campaigning – they intuitively feel the high cost of traffic congestion even if they have not done the monetary calculations. All this sitting in traffic is burning extra fuel and adding emissions to the atmosphere – those are 3rd party costs too and easy to monetize.

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The traffic delays are simply from more driving trips on a street network that is not expanding. It would be nice if "Smart Growth" or TOD meant every added resident only walked and used transit or biked, but that's just not realistic. If you did a traffic study I am pretty sure you would find that Avalon alone adds 20 or 30 extra morning rush hour trips down Centre St. Every little bit of development – more housing units – will add to the problem and make the extra 5 minutes turn into 7 or 10, and increase the hours of the day when the congestion costs occur. For Newton Smart Growth is commercial development not large, new housing projects.

If I were a NIMBY I would not worry about Austin St. because by itself it's not going to affect my Center St. commute, but that would be unfair to others I share this City with. I would not want them to support something like this in my village, and I am not going to support imposing it on their village. That's why a group of us are forming a Newton Villages Alliance to work together to advocate for preserving the character and livable scale of Newton and counter the efforts to densify our villages so they resemble places like Harvard Square with all its congestion, pollution and lack of inexpensive parking. It's a nice place to visit but I live in Newton so I don't have to deal with those problems as an everyday fact of life.

It would be nice to have Smart Growth in Newton if we could expand the street network, but there is no plan to make Centre and our other two lane streets into four lanes, and I am not advocating that, nor would it be realistic. Instead this so-called Smart Growth we've had in Newton results in new traffic signals that add to delays (most recently on Parker St., Needham St., and Rt. 9). It's also the cause of last year's Newton Center street realignment fiasco as Newton's traffic engineers looked for ways to mitigate the increasing traffic delays in that area.

In conclusion, what we are dealing with tonight is not just a neighborhood issue. It is a 3rd party problem for all of Newton. In spite of what some would have you believe, TOD on Austin St. is really not smart for Newton. As I am sure you are all aware, your responsibility to the residents who elected you is to protect them from unwarranted 3rd party impacts.

I hope you will consider the traffic and other obvious negative externalities and decide to stop the unwarranted and unwise development on Austin St. as a small step towards preserving what most of moved to Newton get – a livable community close to Boston – not over-crowded schools and streets and more traffic signals. Those are not what you promised us when you were campaigning and they are not what you should be voting in favor of now.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Linda M. Finucane

From: Jill Geiger <bjill@verizon.net>
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2014 5:02 PM
To: David A. Olson
Cc: Linda M. Finucane
Subject: for Aldermen re: Petition #47-14 on Austin Street Lot

Dear Board of Aldermen,

A longtime resident of Newtonville, I chose to buy a house here because I love the village character of Newtonville. A large, high density development on the Austin Street lot will not contribute to the vitality and village character of Newtonville but will instead contribute to increased density, traffic congestion and difficulty parking.

What seems to be informing the city's process to date is a short-term view of what's best for developers rather than a long-term vision of what's best for the village of Newtonville. Retaining valuable, city-owned property gives the city flexibility now and in the future whereas selling it would result in loss of control over what happens with it forever. A large, high-density development on purchased property is most appealing to a developer because it offers the greatest profit but a project of the scale of those proposed doesn't serve to preserve the village character of Newtonville.

The first of the three issues cited in the 2008 Sasaki Charrette was the importance of providing connectivity between the neighborhoods on the north and south sides of the Pike. The Charrette's Master Plan details a decking structure over the turnpike (p. 63) and air rights development in Newtonville is part of the City's Comprehensive Plan as well (p. 3-31). Use of the Austin Street lot would be essential in a construction project of that size and impossible if it no longer belongs to the city.

Also in the Charrette:

"Now the village is in need of a new identity, more green space, and restoration and upkeep of its historic areas in order to restore Newtonville's character." (p. 25)

"Residents noted that there is little open space in the Newtonville town center." (p. 38)

The City's Recreation and Open Space Plan states that most Newton residents generally care about the "garden-city" character of our Community. It says that "there is an ongoing need to preserve, protect and provide additional open space including pocket parks in the more densely populated neighborhoods of Newton." (Section 6 p. 3)

The City's Comprehensive Plan has a section called: "Clarity about what the community wants" (p. 2-4). It states that the process of articulating guiding intentions and goals "should critically involve those who live, work, or have other stakes in those places. That results in guidance for which they feel real proprietorship and responsibility, not something imposed on them."

The section on Transportation & Mobility says that "the citizens of Newton frequently rank traffic as one of their chief concerns when rating quality of life issues." (p. 4-1) Traffic is already congested in Newtonville and would only be worsened with a large development on Austin Street.

Considering a development at this point is putting the cart before the horse. I ask the City and the Aldermen to take a step back and consider a vision for the future of Newtonville with input from the Newtonville community. That should be what guides a decision as important as this one that will affect generations to come - not any short term monetary gain.

I attended the public hearing last Tuesday and recorded the comments of each speaker. 33 of the 100+ people present spoke in favor of the petition. Of those 33, the majority are Newtonville residents and business owners. Eight people spoke against it. Of those eight, five are connected to the process of development of the lot in some way and most are not residents of Newtonville.

Thank you for considering the concerns of those who know Newtonville best – people like me who live there.

Sincerely,

B. Jill Geiger
72 Madison Ave.
Newtonville, MA 02460

To: The Members of the Board of Aldermen
From: John Koot [430 Winchester St, Newton Highlands]
Date: March 27, 2014
Subject: Follow-up comment #2 to the 25 March hearing on Petition #47-14 concerning the Austin Street Public Parking Lot: **Austin Street and Newton's Comprehensive Plan**

Virtually all the proposals solicited by the City for redeveloping the Austin Street parking lot allude to their adherence to **Newton's Comprehensive Plan**. It makes sense for them to do this because the Comprehensive Plan is supposed to be the City's guide for future development.

Unfortunately, the writers of the Comprehensive Plan, in their efforts to accommodate the needs and desires of a large and diverse group of people, ranging from the City's administration and its twenty-four aldermen, to the businesspeople involved in the Economic Development Commission, to advocates of affordable housing, to ordinary residents wishing to preserve the character of their neighborhoods, included something for everyone. While this approach was successful in getting the Plan approved by the Board of Aldermen, it left certain contradictions embedded in the Plan's fabric.

Among those contradictions are repeated references to protecting the character of the City's diverse neighborhoods and preventing overdevelopment, even as the Plan in other places prescribes denser residential development that would irrevocably alter the character of some of those neighborhoods.

One of the ways the Plan attempts to reconcile this contradiction is through redefinition. In section 3, p. 30, for example, the Plan simply states that "A village center is not a neighborhood." Yet anyone familiar with the city knows that neighborhoods are immediately adjacent to village centers and in some instances even surround them, so that whatever development takes place in the village centers is bound to affect those neighborhoods.

And in fact, later on under "Taxonomy of Places" we find that the Plan recognizes this: "**Neighborhood** – an area of a community having characteristics which distinguish it from other areas of the community, including at least some sense of shared interests among those who occupy it. A neighborhood can but need not include a village center within it, but other forms of business center such as an office park probably are not functionally a part of that neighborhood, even if within its 'turf.' The areas loosely called "villages" in Newton are probably more descriptively termed 'neighborhoods.'"

The Plan proposes "moderate, controlled and responsible growth" in the City's various "nodes and corridors," nodes in this case representing T stops. Yet even as it envisions denser commercial and residential development in village centers (section 3, p. 32), the Plan acknowledges the need to "[b]e cognizant of the need for open space" and to "[b]e sensitive and responsive to the perception of the character of the neighborhood and sense of place."

In several places the Plan recognizes that Newton is essentially a built-out community, yet in other places it tries to appease the proponents of more intense commercial and residential uses by making provision for "transit-oriented development." Maybe it's time to admit that Newton is already fully grown, and that the only changes the City should be envisioning involve ensuring that Newton remains a pleasant place to live for residents of all ages and interests.

However one chooses to interpret the text of the Plan, nowhere does it support the notion of surplusing an asset that a neighborhood uses—say the Austin Street parking lot—and replacing it with something that the neighborhood doesn't want.

To: The Members of the Board of Aldermen
From: John Koot [430 Winchester St, Newton Highlands]
Date: March 27, 2014
Subject: Comment #1 made during the 25 March hearing on Petition #47-14 concerning the Austin Street Public Parking Lot: **Some Thoughts on "Affordable" Apartments**

Having been a homeowner in Newton and thus out of the rental market for some 30 years, I recently checked the rates at some large local apartment complexes. The results gave me something akin to sticker shock:

Apartment complex/location	1-bedroom	2-bedroom	3-bedroom
Arbor Point (near Woodland T stop)	\$2,350 and up	\$3,150 and up	\$3,850 and up
Avalon at Newton Highlands	\$2,300 and up	\$2,605 and up	\$3,450 and up
Avalon at Chestnut Hill	\$2,200 and up	\$2,540 and up	\$4,185 and up
Charles River Landing (in New England Industrial Park, Needham)	\$2,412 and up	\$3,946 and up	
Avalon at Station 250 (Dedham)	\$1,740 and up	\$2,360 and up	

Since it's commonly preached by people offering financial advice that one's rent or mortgage ought not exceed 36% of one's gross income, ponder for a moment that even the cheapest 1-bedroom at Avalon at Newton Highlands would represent 36% of a monthly salary of \$6,400 (\$76,000+ per year). That's pretty steep for many "young professionals," at least until they are fairly well established, particularly since many of them graduate with sizeable student loans whose repayment often takes between 10% and 20% of their gross income.

And speaking as a representative of the "(potential) downsizing senior" demographic, I'd like to offer some more real-world figures. Having bought our home in Newton nearly 33 years ago, my wife and I, like many of our contemporaries, have finally succeeded in retiring our mortgage. That means that our monthly housing expenses are these:

Expense	Monthly amt.
Property tax	\$435
Home insurance	\$115
Natural gas/ Electricity/ Water Sewer	\$320
Maintenance fund	\$125
Total	\$995

(Let me add that while we're far from wealthy, we wouldn't qualify to add our names to the thousand or so that are on the waiting list for an "affordable" apartment.) Would it make any sense for us to move into even a one-bedroom market-rate apartment at twice our current monthly cost, or a two-bedroom at three times the price, as opposed to staying put for as long as we can? No, it would not.

Would it make sense for us to sell our house and use some or all of the proceeds as down payment on a condo, taking out a mortgage on the balance of, say, \$200,000? Possibly, but at this stage in our lives, we're not too keen on taking on debt.

I think we need to keep the real world in mind when we hear developers and city planners refer to various developments under consideration as being "appealing" to both young professionals and downsizing seniors. Appealing they may be, but affordable they often are not. I'm afraid that the most likely customers for any two-bedroom apartments—and even some of the larger one-bedroom units—added to Newton's housing stock are new arrivals with one or two children whom they are eager to place in Newton's excellent school system. That, of course, leads to other complications.

Linda M. Finucane

From: David A. Olson
Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2014 2:57 PM
To: aldermen
Cc: Linda M. Finucane; Karyn Dean
Subject: FW: Re In Support of Petition # 47-14

-----Original Message-----

From: Roesner William E. [<mailto:blueprintbill@verizon.net>]
Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2014 11:22 AM
To: David A. Olson
Subject: Re In Support of Petition # 47-14

Dear Aldermen,

I am writing in support of the petition #47-14, to stop the sale of the Austin Street Parcel.

Until a comprehensive review of the entire Newtonville Village Center Design alternatives are taken into account the Austin Street parcel should be maintained in City ownership.

The possibility of the reunification of the North and South halves of the Newtonville Village Center via the introduction of a new air rights decking, commercial structures, rail road station structure, landscaping etc (similar to the so called Sasaki Charette study of June 2008), should be the focus of any major new development in Newtonville. Austin Street is peripheral to such a project, and may even provide space for the staging of such a project and as such should be held for future, more comprehensive, usage. Once a major overhaul of Newtonvilles' real center is accomplished Austin Streets' correct and proper disposition will fall into place.

Thank You for Your Consideration.

William E. Roesner Architect
Member Newton Historical Commission
72 Fuller Street
Waban

Linda M. Finucane

From: David A. Olson
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2014 11:58 AM
To: aldermen
Cc: Linda M. Finucane
Subject: FW: Tuesdays Joint Public Hearing of the Real Property Reuse and Zoning& Planning Committees

From: Roesner William E. [mailto:blueprintbill@verizon.net]
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2014 11:47 AM
To: David A. Olson
Subject: Fwd: Tuesdays Joint Public Hearing of the Real Property Reuse and Zoning& Planning Committees

Dear Mr Olson,

Please forward my remarks from last nights meeting to the Board of Aldermen,
Thank You,
Bill Roesner

Tuesday Meeting Speech

William E Roesner, Architect - 72 Fuller Street
, Waban

I am here tonight to support the Citizens of Newtonville Petition to reverse the cities decision to rezone and declare surplus, the Austin Street Parking lot.

I am also here to support 'affordable' housing in Newton. As an Architect and a 23 year member of the Newton Historical Commission, I have seen a steady erosion by demolition, of our affordable housing stock and the character altering, replacement of these affordable homes with expensive housing, available exclusively to the wealthy. What the city really needs, is a radical revamping of regulations, (both Zoning and Historical Commission), to slow and / or dampen derogatory development activity and to allow the existing, character defining, affordable garden City housing stock to remain, be maintained and be

reabsorbed by a more diverse ownership. Given that we are all "green", and aspire to environmental rectitude, how can we continue to allow such a massive waste of material, natural resources, timber, concrete, brick and human energy. We recognize the need to recycle our paper, plastics, and glass, but are we truly as environmentally cognizant as we should be?

As a part of the frequently referenced elderly community here in Newton, when I downsized, from my 6 bedroom home in Newton Centre 6 years ago, I, like anybody else with any equity in a home, was not qualified financially for subsidized housing, and so, because Newton was my home, having lived here for 44 years, and as a retired widower, I went in search of a smaller, more affordable place, complete with the green spatial amenities I have come to expect of this community. There were hundreds of homes available to me, during my 3 month search, 6 years ago, and I would expect, put in a similar situation today, much the same market would have availed itself to me,.. although perhaps somewhat diminished now by the current rash of developer activity.

So I am here to argue that the elderly do not require expensive developer built and estate absorbing housing. We need to maintain, as retirees, what ever equity we have built over the years, and do not need to subsidize a developers bank account. Why would I, or any settled, or new, newton citizen, want an apartment in a high density, high priced housing block, with nothing more attractive than roof top views of a branch bank, a Starbucks coffee shop, or a supermarket parking lot and turnpike, when this city has so much more to offer? Is this all we can provide for our elders and our less fortunate? There is no, "significant open space", as a part of this crowded site design program, and there is nothing here that " will increase the vitality of the Newtonville Village Center", as opponents argue. There is no center to be found today, this mythical village center, and that is the crux of Newtonvilles problem.

Before this city- owned, Austin Street property, is given away, to the development of an ill considered 5 story urban housing block and underground parking garage, I would suggest and encourage the city, to step back and look holistically at the planning possibilities and opportunities that this Village warrants. Among the concepts that You, our Mayor, and our current planners should most definitely be exploring, is the reopening of the Sasaki Charette design project from June 2008. This project sought to reunify the North and South halves of the Newtonville village, split in two by the 1962 construction of the turnpike. This proposed, platformed decking of the MBTA and the turnpike, would allow and encourage an organic and market driven revitalization of the area and would be the real key to the future and identity of a Newtonville village center. A peripheral, oversized apartment block, built on Austin Street, will in no way, positively transform this community. But, a HUD funded , imaginative and comprehensive 'suburban', not urban, Kennedy Greenway type project, tying together both halves of the village, providing handicapped accessibility to the Indigo Line, new commercial space, with human scale housing over it, an accessible post office with its own off street parking, landscaping, street furniture, and a village green at its Heart, is the future of this village. The currently considered 'surplus' Austin Street parcel could serve as an ideal staging place for this construction, and eventually found to be more correctly requisitioned, for a use, that may, or may not be, housing, parking , parkland or commercial activity.

Let the market determine Austin Streets best usage, not Mr Mayor, or the Board of Aldermen, or the Planning department or its professionally / monetarily biased supporters.

Thank You.

Questions ?

Linda M. Finucane

From: David A. Olson
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2014 3:15 PM
To: aldermen
Cc: Karyn Dean; Linda M. Finucane
Subject: FW: Petition #47-14

From: Ernest Loewenstein [<mailto:ernvl@yahoo.com>]
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2014 8:53 AM
To: David A. Olson
Subject: Petition #47-14

I am writing to support petition 47-14 and ask that the Austin Street parking lot be returned to its original zoning. This important facility receives much more use than the city's outdated study shows and should not be sacrificed to a residential development which will only generate a demand for more, not fewer parking spaces.

Ernest Loewenstein
Newton Highlands

Ernest V. Loewenstein
57 Hyde Street
Newton MA 02461
(617) 244-6454
ernvl@yahoo.com

March 25, 2014

In favor of petition 47-14

I appear here this evening to make the case for leaving the Austin Street parking lot as it is and not transforming it into a housing development.

It is not difficult to demonstrate the importance of the parking lot. All that is needed is to visit the lot during any day of the week and noting the occupancy as well as the volume of traffic entering and exiting. The city first stated that there is need for only 85 public spaces, out of an original 159, when the development takes place. There has recently been some indication that perhaps the city will up the number to 100. There are days, moreover, when the occupancy has been observed to be greater than 100 cars.

The lot was declared surplus several years ago, during the recent recession when business activity in Newtonville was at a low point. Activity has picked up since then, and with it so has parking demand.

The designation as surplus was done by administrative fiat. In the meantime many meetings were held by a small group that led to the decision by the mayor to solicit bids for development of this valuable property. While these meetings may have been open to the public, few knew of them and even fewer were aware that the end of the process would lead to the destruction of the parking lot. Once the proposals for development were published in the newspaper a growing storm of public dissent has erupted.

I use the phrase 'destruction' advisedly. There is a great deal of difference between the present parking lot, with its open view and wide aisles compared with a facility that is hidden behind a looming building. At present there are two entrances from Austin Street to the lot in addition to one from Highland Street. There are excellent sight lines for drivers entering from Austin Street. It is easy to see where there are empty spaces, and it is equally easy to see traffic exiting the parking lot. The aisles in the parking lot are wide enough for two cars easily to pass each other.

These advantages will all be lost when drivers have to maneuver behind the building through a single entry on Brahm Way. There is no way to assess the occupancy of the concealed lot without entering it. There will be slow movements within the lot as drivers seek a space and maneuver into it. There will be an inevitable slowing of both entering and exiting with an accompanying spillover to Austin Street. This spillover can very well extend to the intersection with Walnut Street, which is already subject to congestion through much of the day.

One additional consequence of the destruction of the existing Austin Street lot will be increased pressure on the Shaw's market lot. The convenience of parking across the street from the market will be lost. More shoppers will use the Shaw's lot and, even if they do shop there, many drivers

will then do an errand on Walnut Street before departing. There is no easy way for Shaw's to protect its lot from this use, and the result will be reduced parking for the store.

There is a traffic study under way at this time, paid for by the city. This study has merit, and has some limitations, but the most important point about the study is that the final report is not due until late June. The mayor has expressed his intent to designate a developer at an earlier date. What, then, is the purpose of this study?

The mayor and the proponents of the development are fond of repeating a statement to the effect that citizens will have plenty of opportunity to influence the project once a developer is chosen. This may be true in a narrow sense but in the overall view, once a developer has been designated there is going to be a building on the existing lot, and probably a very big one, and all that will be left to citizen input is where to put the trees.

The only way to protect the very important Austin Street parking lot from destruction is to rescind the authority to transfer the land to a developer.

I therefore ask that petition 47-14 be adopted.

Linda M. Finucane

From: David A. Olson
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2014 11:53 AM
To: aldermen
Cc: Linda M. Finucane
Subject: FW: Austin Street development; Newtonville

From: Sarah Sturtevant [mailto:sjsturt@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2014 8:55 AM
To: David A. Olson
Cc: Newtonville Neighborhood Association
Subject: Austin Street development; Newtonville

Dear Alderman,

Given time constraints I was unable to fully convey the following last night.

Executive Summary:

I support the petition to reverse the prior spot-zoning decision, and the related intent to sell municipal land for a 5 story, mixed-use development in Newtonville. I agree that further, more comprehensive, study is needed regarding the development of northern Newton villages, especially in light of the massive building in bordering cities (e.g. Pleasant Street Corridor in Watertown and in Brighton) and the resulting (and anticipated) congestion on Washington Street, Newton Corner traffic circle and demand on other city resources. The current Watertown/Brighton construction alone could double the number of cars on the Newton traffic circle and Mass Pike ramp during rush hour.

Full Comments:

My name is Sarah Sturtevant, This is my 20th anniversary as a resident of Newton Corner. Recently (from 2007-2014) I was the Portfolio Advisor for Wellington Management's Global Macro Research Group, and the macro analyst for Global Perspectives (a global small cap equity investment approach with \$1 billion AUM).

I've wondered if I were in your shoes, what questions would I ask? Three straightforward questions come to mind.

1. What do we hope to achieve in Newtonville?
2. Do the proposals achieve those objectives?
3. Are the follow-on ramifications able to be evaluated, assessed, analyzed ... and therefore can we make a knowledgeable decision about the acceptability of the potential related consequences?

The first two questions have been discussed by many. It is the third question that I wish to address. I do not believe that we can take the Newtonville development in isolation. The list of project criteria and description of factors of consideration were highly Newtonville centric. Rather than looking at this project in isolation I believe we need to look at the cumulative impact of many decisions - some made by the Aldermen and the city of Newton and some outside of your control. Cumulative development, both through time and through space, will have a direct impact on the quality of life in Newton - especially for the northern Newton Villages (Newton Corner, the Lake and Newtonville).

I felt compelled to comment on this as a resident of Newton Corner from two reasons:

- A. What happens in Newtonville affects the rest of Newton.
- B. There may be lessons to be learned from Newton Corner's development.

A. Cummulative impact and unintended consequences of Austin Street Development:

You have no doubt heard many opinions and views, and I'm sure I will add my own to that list. However, let's start with some facts:

1. Newton Corner is a major cross roads - for both North-South traffic and East-West traffic (Mass Pike but also links to Storrow Drive, Commonwealth Ave, Beacon Street and Route 9)

2. The traffic on the Newton Corner traffic circle was untenable in 2007 when the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) began studying the area that feeds traffic onto the circle. After 2 years of study, a joint group including the Newton Adlerman and city of Newton, released a summary of 10 options. As far as I can tell none of the CTPS recommendations have been adopted. In the intervening 5 years since the report was released, the traffic has worsened each and every year. <http://www.ctps.org/Drupal/data/pdf/studies/highway/NC-Phase-II-Study.pdf>

3. The impact area in the Newton Corner traffic circle CTPS study includes Newtonville, as well as, Watertown and Brighton.

4. Those bordering cities have been very busy developing housing units of there own. There are currently 550 units being added to the existing units on the Pleasant Street Corridor. 25% of which are deemed to be "affordable housing". A Boston Globe article last year suggests 650 units are approved in a mile and half stretch, and the central plan of Watertown views another several hundred additional housing units as viable (beyond what is already under construction or permitted) along the Pleasant Street Corridor and Arsenal Corridor. In Brighton the Brighton Mills location has seen retail space torn down and 240 Section 8 low income housing apartments and 100 condos being built. These are just a few examples, there is also development in other parts of Newton and in surrounding areas.

5. The consumer expenditure survey data tells us that nationally, low income households own 1 car per household, middle income 2 cars and highest income 3. The CES data also indicates that the lowest income have .5 wage earners per household, the middle about 1.5 and the highest income 2 wage earners per household. While we may all wish that mass transit was more viable and more heavily utilized, the data does not bear out that hope. The vast majority of Americans still commute to work by driving alone. And the more affluent the neighborhood, the more wage earners per household.

Taking these facts together, it is highly likely that we could see several thousand more cars on the traffic circle at rush hour in the coming years. How do I get this number? I've presumed 240 low income housing units have 1 car each; and 750 have 2 which equals 1740 vehicles from those two developments alone. While it is true that not everyone works, drives to work, or drives through Newton Corner - this is just vehicles from these two sets of developments alone.

To put 1000+ vehicles into perspective:

- The 2006 CTPS survey showed 1400 vehicles using the west bound Mass Pike exit ramp at rush hour
- And the two most viable suggestions (#2 and #4) in the CTPS report would only reduce traffic by 300-500 cars

The Austin Street development proposal would add additional traffic to Washington Street and Newton Corner traffic circle (maybe 100 or more cars a day getting to and from Newtonville through the circle). This will strain the transportation system which is already extremely over-burdened (and about to be additionally strained with the completion of hundreds more housing units in Watertown/Brighton).

Adding much higher volume to Newton Corner traffic circle, infrastructure that is already near critical failure, is a mistake.

B. Lessons Learned from Newton Corner Development

Proponents argue that higher density, mixed-use, development is the answer to "revitalizing" Newtonville. Newtonville residents argue that it is revitalizing itself just fine already, thank you. Others have a better sense of that than I do. However, I think we can take away a few observations from high density, multi-story development near mass transit in Newton Corner. There is no missing the presence of the T on Newton Circle with a massive number of buses circling regularly. Clearly access to Mass Transit is available. And there is also no shortage of 5 story buildings.

And what is the result?

High levels of vacancy:

- Gateway Center alone has more than 47,000 square feet of office vacancy - which is more than a quarter of the building
- Every major office building around the circle has significant vacancy. A back of the envelope estimate is at least 80,000 square feet of vacancy and it could be multiples of that.
- Unos restaurant remains empty and vacant - and it appears that much of One Newton (275 Washington) is vacant.
- The small market that had been on the corner of Robinson and Center Street closed and a succession of short-lived businesses have come in and out of that spot. It is unclear if the "going out of business" sign for the current shop is real.

If higher density is the answer to Newtonville's future, then why is the Newton Corner circle of death in need of revitalization when it meets so many of the professed Austin Street objectives. My sense is that it is because Newton Corner is a "no man's land". The scale is not a human one and the congestion is so intense as to leave it isolated. One takes their life in their hand driving through the circle, let alone trying to cross the street with your kids or your dog.

The circle is not drivable. It's not walkable. It's not livable. Is this the future we really want for another of Newton's villages?

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Sarah

Sarah Sturtevant
87 Washington Street
Newton, MA 02458
617-965-7841

Linda M. Finucane

From: David A. Olson
Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2014 2:58 PM
To: aldermen
Cc: Linda M. Finucane; Karyn Dean
Subject: FW: Petition #47-14

From: Sarah Sturtevant [<mailto:sjsturt@gmail.com>]
Sent: Thursday, March 20, 2014 1:48 PM
To: David A. Olson
Subject: Petition #47-14

Dear Sir,

I live in Newton Corner (87 Washington Street) and have been a resident of Newton for 20 years. I've commuted to Boston for all of that time, having been an equity analyst and Global Portfolio Advisor in Macro Research at Wellington Management Company until earlier this year.

I do not support this scale of development for one of our prime Newton villages.

We have seen first hand from the Newton Corner "circle of death" what happens to a neighborhood that gets over-developed.

The Newton Corner circle of death is intolerable as it currently exists and gets worse every year. The traffic is a nightmare especially at any time approximating rush hour and especially when you add poorly maintained roads and bad snow-plowing to the mix. It is New York or Beijing level traffic.

I raise this because I do not believe that the traffic affect will be small either on Newtonville or Newton Corner (despite the emphasis on mass transit in the proposal... Arsenal Mall is still the closest shopping and requires a trek through Newton Corner as does commuting on the mass pike). And there's a lesson to be learned from the Newton Corner experience.

The rest of the city seem to treat our streets like the on-ramp of the mass pike. Few businesses want to locate in Newton Corner as a result of this with no neighborhood market and few restaurants.

We live here (and pay very high property taxes) to enjoy a neighborhood environment close to Boston. We receive nearly zero services from Newton - with no kids in school and little time to use the library or other services. I am looking for a walkable neighborhood and a reasonable commute. The reality of these dreams are quickly fading even before adding additional traffic from a large Newtonville re-development.

The villages of Newton are one of its strengths. **Destroying Newtonville - which a large 5 story, apartment and shopping development would do - while adding substantial traffic to an already over-burdened infrastructure - makes no sense to those of us who are wondering what happened to the dream of a neighborhood-based community.**

I highly support taking a step back to consider a comprehensive review with voter input - into Newton's eastern villages' livability and walkability - and how any further development might affect current tax payers, commuters and voters.

Thank you.
Sarah

Good evening

My name is Rena Getz and I reside on Pine Ridge RD in Waban village center.

IN light of full disclosure, I am a member of the Waban Area Council, but tonight I come before you as a resident of Newton. My interest in this petition is for Newton and I am speaking as a resident advocate and in that role I am advocating for the full transparency of process, as well as for any process that is deemed to have a significant impact on the quality of life of members of a community, needing to start with the people that reside within that community. As Newton is a built out city, I believe that village center development needs to have the purview of contextual considerations, but more importantly, with the considerations of all of those that reside within that community.

I as you, an elected official, serve at the pleasure of our constituents and I would ask you to heed your electoral mandate and listen to your constituency and to be respectful of the neighborhood and abutters expressed concerns and interests, irrespective of when they are brought to the table.

I applaud and support the residents that have come before you tonight. Their voice is representational of the views and concerns I heard expressed by many of the residents of the Village of Newtonville, when I attended a meeting at the New Arts Center last month. I was very concerned with regard to the opinions expressed by those that I considered a group of disenfranchised residents of Newtonville.

The Austin ST process and its formulation is still a plan on paper. But I would ask the City of Newton to reconsider how process is formulated when a municipal property is surplused, especially one that originated with property taken by eminent domain from previous Newton residents. The Austin ST municipal lot is an asset belonging to all of the residents of Newton. Would it not be more egalitarian to put forth a city asset to a referendum for the community-at-large to decide how best to realize that asset? Why the urgency to privatize a city asset that will only increase in value over time. Especially now in light of the fact that we are entering a period of active zoning reform

where lies the possibility of creating overlay zones within our village centers.

IF one is to consider re-development in Newtonville village center would it not be best to consider the totality of Newtonville? For example, the inherent needs of commuters to the expanding rail service through the Indigo line as well as the potential development of the recent acquisition of the Shaw's property by investor group led by Cerberus Capital Management group. The Austin ST parking lot is but one piece in the overall scheme of the potential Newtonville village center re-development consideration.

On another page, I recently attended a community event in Somerville initiated by their mayor, Joe Curtatone. Somerville has recently developed a comprehensive plan that they call "SomervilleVision" which is the result of three years of community meetings or what they called "visioning exercises." It cobbled together a rough consensus of the community priorities for housing, parking, open space, and business development. The plan set out ambitious goals. It calls for 20 percent of new housing units to be affordable. It commits to developing 125 acres of new open space and it aims to complete a community path through the city for bikes and walkers that will eventually hook up to NorthPoint in Cambridge and connect all the way into Boston.

The other thing that has been said by engaging the community in this process is that it mitigates community opposition to zoning or development proposals, as the residents have bought into the larger picture through participation in the process. As their Mayor pledged "Values will guide our planning"

Now I am hoping this will occur within Newton during our phase II of the zoning reform process. We as residents in the City of Newton can aspire to reach some sort of consensus of what we would want to value within our community. We will have the potential of this opportunity and our area councils can provide the needed forums.

The community event that I did attend in Somerville was a showing of a film by the Danish architect, Jan Gehl, entitled "The Human Scale". One of his main messages, based on his many decades of study, was

that it behooves our "humanness" to use a people centered approach in the design process of our cities. We as residents need to consider the criteria we use during that process. To consider designing highly walkable streets with the expansion and improvement of a cycling infrastructure and to create open spaces that allow for gathering places for people.

If ever we live in a world with less need for individual ownership of cars, I would like to see the Austin ST parking lot site revitalized into an open space, a green space. To reestablish a centrally located Village Green for the betterment of the quality of life of the existing Newtonville community, as a community gathering place.

#47-14, March 25, 2014

I am Nancy Honig of Newton Centre.

I would like to address the third point of this petition, requesting that the Austin Street lot be rezoned to Public Use, Business Use 1 or Business Use 2. This would actually reverse the action taken by the city to rezone the parking lot in preparation for development.

In order to allow a type of density and use not previously possible in this location, or any of Newton's villages, the city created a brand new zone called Mixed Use 4. Then they rezoned just the Austin St lot to Mixed Use 4. This rezoning enabled the city to put out an RFP to private developers for the creation of a high density residential and commercial building which the city claims will eventually provide financial benefits to the city.

In addition to any other process errors that may have been made, the action of rezoning in this manner may have constituted Spot Zoning.

A strikingly similar development project was attempted by the town of Swampscott which resulted in abutters and other parties bringing a lawsuit against the town to stop the project.

In a decision given on March 19, 2014, the Land Court sided against Swampscott, and said that Swampscott had engaged in impermissible Spot Zoning and that their project was unlawful under Massachusetts law.

The judge described spot zoning as "a singling out of one lot for a different treatment from that accorded to similar surrounding land indistinguishable from it in character all to the economic benefit of the owner of that lot". This sounds very similar to what Newton has done.

By using a similar scheme with a similar rationale behind it, the City of Newton may be exposing itself, and the residents and taxpayers, to a very lengthy and extremely costly litigation if this development is allowed to go forward as it is now.

For that reason, and others, I would ask that you reconsider and rescind the surplussing and rezoning of the Austin Street Lot and start over. And next time please bring residents into the process right from the very start and not at the end.

Thank you.

To: The Aldermen of the City of Newton
Date: March 25, 2014

Re: Proposed Austin Street Development

From: Betty Falxa
12 Chesley Avenue
Newtonville, MA 02460
(617) 699-3535
our family has been in Newton for 79 years

Statement:

I have a strong position against the proposed Austin Street Development. I would like to point out that the use of the **long term parking** lot today is not what it was in 2009. Long term parking use of an hour or more for the 4 exercise establishments is tying up both on-street, Shaw's and the Austin Street parking lot. These are Get in Shape, Martial Arts, Fitness Together and the Yoga Studio, all clustered together on Walnut St. Add to these the instant popularity of the 3 new restaurants: Brewers Coalition, the Roz and Aji Sushi, and we have more long term parking use than ever before.

Employee parking of 8 hours or more for all the 39 establishments is long term parking use.

Conclusion: We should put a premium on preserving long term parking at the Austin St Parking Lot.

Short term parking to the 5 banks, the 9 take-out and coffee shops, and the 14 other general establishments puts more pressure on space for parking and especially for quick in and out business that a parking garage would not facilitate.

My final thought: More density means more traffic. Already walking across Walnut Street is tying up traffic and a daily hazard to pedestrians. Increasing the activity in this area is a mistake. In the future existing buildings might be reconfigured for more intense use of the area than even today, putting more pressure on available parking spaces. We can't cut corners and still live in a livable city.

Linda M. Finucane

From: David A. Olson
Sent: Tuesday, April 01, 2014 9:07 AM
To: aldermen
Cc: Linda M. Finucane
Subject: FW: Austin Street Parking Lot.

From: Luis Sanchez [<mailto:ltsanchez@verizon.net>]
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2014 9:48 PM
To: David A. Olson
Subject: Austin Street Parking Lot.

It is my understanding that you will be forwarding Newton residents' comments to the Real Property Reuse Committee which meets Tues, April 1.

As a 35 year resident of 32 Walnut Place, Newtonville, a block from Austin Street, I and my wife vigorously oppose the City's sale of the lot to developers. It makes no sense in our opinion. Newton land is too valuable to sell to developers with a profit motive. The city's continued ownership and spending some money to beautify the lot is a reasonable alternative. Newtonville does not need high rise apartments and an underground parking lot. The list of reasons not to sell is quite long as presented by other Newtonville residents at the public hearing last week which we attended.

I trust that the Aldermen will hear the viewpoint of Newtonville residents during their deliberations.

Sincerely,

Luis and Gail Sanchez

Linda M. Finucane

From: James W. Colnon <james.colnon@verizon.net>
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2014 2:03 PM
To: David A. Olson
Cc: Linda M. Finucane
Subject: Petition #47-14 Submission of Comments

Remember, Swampscott got dressed down for similarly not protecting the property rights of the community.

The terms of transfer are below fair market value. Additionally, the city officials have misrepresented the true cost of the externalities: the loss of vital parking to its village center, and the ancillary costs of educating children that Newton can't seem to afford regardless of budget amounts put forth.

24 Nathan Rd
Newton, MA 02459

March 23, 2014

Alderman Susan Albright, Chair, Real Property Reuse Committee
Alderman Marcia Johnson, Chair, Zoning and Planning Committee
c/o Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

Re: March 24, 2014 joint public hearing on a petition regarding the Austin Street redevelopment project

Dear Aldermen Albright and Johnson:

I am writing to the Committees today as a private citizen, but by way of full disclosure I am an urban planner who worked for the City's Planning Department until last May. I started working on the Austin Street reuse project in 2007 when the Economic Development Commission (EDC) requested that I research the City's process for declaring a City-owned property surplus. As part of that task, I visited many of the businesses in Newtonville to invite the owners and employees to an early morning meeting to discuss with the EDC the future of Newtonville and what they might like to see happen on the parking lot.

A few years later, after the Commissioner of Public Works declared the property surplus, the Mayor and the Board of Alderman appointed a 14-member Joint Advisory Planning Group (JAPG) to explore the best use of the property. Many members of the JAPG live in and/or work in Newtonville. I was the City staff member assigned to work with the group. We met every other week for three months to discuss options for the site. These meetings were open to the public and attracted the attention of several prominent Newtonville business owners and residents. At the end of each meeting, the JAPG chair opened the floor for questions and comments from the audience so that the group could incorporate public sentiments into its final report. The JAPG report was presented to the Mayor and the Aldermen in June 2011. The RFP issued in February 2013 included the JAPG's recommendations.

The point of this recap is to be clear that there were people paying attention to the process from the beginning. The City did community outreach and we were successful in getting a number of people to provide valuable input. While it is virtually impossible to reach every stakeholder at the beginning of a project, the City's reuse process is a long, multi-phased process by design. During each stage, there is an opportunity for significant public input.

When the Austin Street project began, there were many involved stakeholders. Some of these people who were interested when the Austin Street project began have now moved on to focus on different issues and new residents and business owners have now become interested in the process. The petition before the Committees on Tuesday night essentially asks the Board of Aldermen to start over. I believe this is the wrong action to take and negates the hard work of the JAPG, professional City staff, the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen and the many neighbors and business owners who participated in the process for almost six years before the RFP was issued.

I am pleased that the Newton TAB published the RFP responses last year because as a result many more residents and business owners have now become engaged in the public process. But I also strongly believe that we must not scrap what has been accomplished to date and start over. We are still in the project's infancy stage and there is plenty of analysis and collaboration that must occur regarding this site during the Board's special permit process.

Many of tonight's petitioners say that they want a project on the Austin Street lot, they just want a smaller project. These residents are rightly concerned about some of the adverse impacts that a project on this site may have on the surrounding neighborhoods. I agree that the impacts must be addressed, but I am not convinced that a smaller project is necessarily the answer. I appeal to the Board and the community to keep an open mind throughout the reuse process. Instead of asking for the repeal of the Board Order recommending sale or lease of the land, I believe that we should be focusing our efforts on identifying the possible impacts of a project and how these impacts should be mitigated through the special permit process. Approving the petition currently in front of your Committees will stop the process before we can even begin to discuss these details.

As for the petition to rezone the property from Mixed Use 4 (MU-4) to a business or public use zone, I urge the Committee to resist this temptation as well. The JAPG report suggested rezoning the property and the City's staff report, of which I was one of the primary authors, analyzed several zoning options for the site. The JAPG, the Planning Department, the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen have all looked at this site to accomplish several goals outlined in the 2007 Newton Comprehensive Plan. Chief among these goals are the provision of more affordable housing in the City and the desire to increase the vibrancy and walkability of our village centers.

The RFP sets minimum thresholds to meet these important goals. But these amenities are expensive for a developer to provide to the City free of charge. The zoning must allow for a large enough project to make it financially feasible for a private developer to invest. The Business and Public Use zones recommended in the petition cannot do this. During the special permit process, the developer and the Land Use Committee could agree to reduce the size of the project to a level that makes a development feasible while still minimizes impacts to the community.

Finally, I want to be clear that I am not advocating for any of the particular projects under review for this site. Instead I simply ask that the Board of Aldermen and the Mayor reject the petitions before your Committees and allow the process to continue to the next phase.

Thank you. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Eve Tapper
617-332-1822
etapper1@comcast.net

cc: Mayor Setti Warren
Candace Havens, Director, Dept. of Planning and Community Development
Linda Finucane, Clerk, Real Property Reuse Committee
Karyn Dean, Clerk, Zoning and Planning Committee

Linda M. Finucane

From: David A. Olson
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2014 8:26 AM
To: aldermen
Cc: Linda M. Finucane
Subject: FW: #47 - 14 Regarding Austin Street Lot

From: Pamela Geib [<mailto:pamelageib@comcast.net>]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2014 4:52 PM
To: David A. Olson
Subject: #47 - 14 Regarding Austin Street Lot

To David Olson and Aldermen,

I'm writing as a long time resident of Newtonville to strongly support petition #47-14. This petition asks for a roll back of 1) the decision to classify our parking lot as surplus land, and 2) the decision to rezone the property.

Newtonville is a village, and a crowded one at that. We are already choked with traffic on Walnut Street. We already have parking problems. We don't need more density that would:

- 1) eliminate parking spaces
- 2) increase traffic
- 3) negatively impact already existing businesses
- 4) overload adjacent school systems
- 5) lower property values for those of us who have faithfully paid taxes
- 6) compete with the character of the village
- 7) negatively impact traffic in the "circle of death" traffic circle in Newton Corner

In addition to the above strong concerns, I believe that the process was not transparent and strayed from even it's own original purpose. Guidelines were apparently waived, and only developers with plans for larger and taller buildings were allowed into the last phase of the process.

Please roll back this process and let the citizens of Newtonville retain what peace they have. We can have a parkway over the MassPike, with shops and dwellings if need be. (Although I heard that retail space around Newton Corner was 25% unoccupied.)

Do not let this be another case of the government bowing to money considerations over critical quality of life issues. Please raise money some other way than ruining our village.

Respectfully submitted,

3/25/14

From Jack Bates
(617) 965-8388

* 5 small Villages

* 20-30 units

10%

low-in

* Set ~~back~~ back

* No more than 25/30

night

* 120 party plants to

public

* open space, green area

* Community garden

* Villages

* Have not supported
to make a "profit"

* You "profit" is the

help: ion + well day

of the city zone

Linda M. Finucane

From: John Sisson <sisson.john@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2014 10:34 PM
To: Susan Albright; Theodore M. Hess Mahan; Victoria Danberg; Leonard J. Gentile; Deborah J. Crossley; Ruthanne Fuller; Richard Lipof; Alison M. Leary
Cc: Mark C. Laredo; Emily Jean Norton; Brian E. Yates; Allan Ciccone Jr.; Amy Sangiolo; Scott F. Lennon; Gregory J. Schwartz; Richard B. Blazar; James R. Cote; John W. Harney; Anthony J. Salvucci; Cheryl Lappin; David Kalis; John Rice; Marcia Johnson; Linda M. Finucane
Subject: This is an important moment for the City of Newton.

Dear Aldermen:

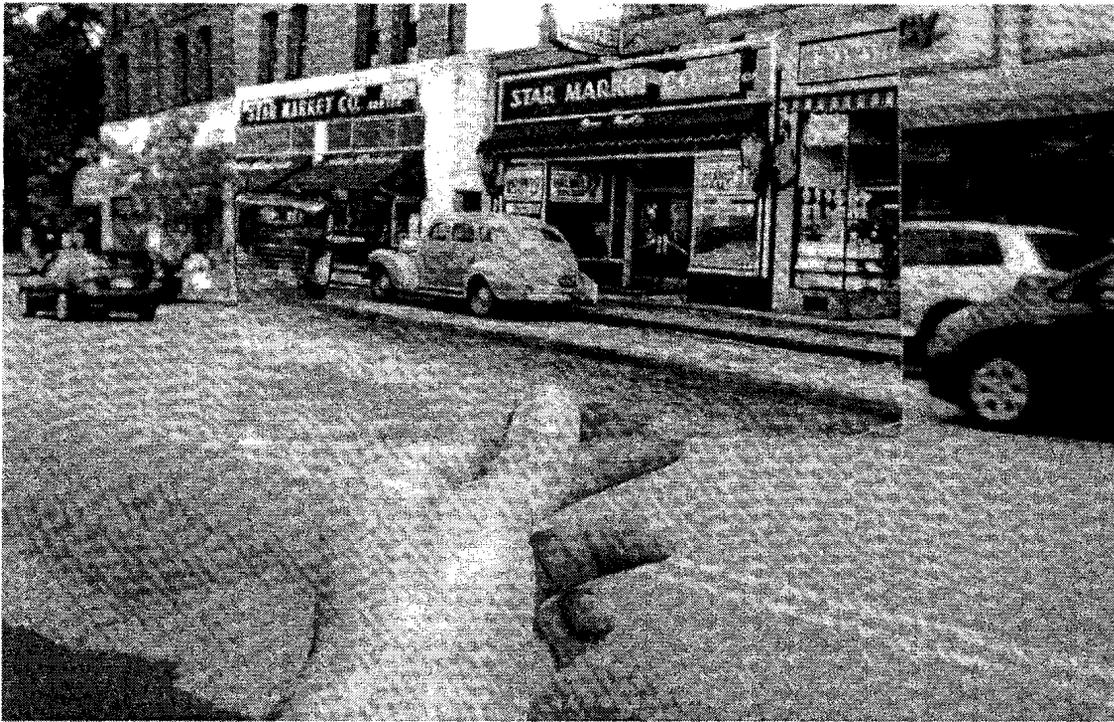
I spoke last week at the public hearing on the Austin Street petition and wanted to stress the importance of the development process continuing for the City of Newton. A lot of people came out to argue against any development on Austin Street. A few of us came out to speak in favor of the ongoing development process. But most Newton residents, those who do not see this development as a big deal, stayed home or took their kids to swimming lessons or basketball practice. But this development process is a big deal. And it's vital that it continue. It's time for the City to decide how it will respond to changes in our population, changes in our built environment, and changes in the retail landscape:

1. Newton has a growing population of seniors, many of whom leave Newton to find single-floor living spaces in walkable town centers.
2. We have aging streets, sidewalks, water mains, and sewer pipes that require maintenance -- and tax revenue to pay for it.
3. And, we have a changing retail world in which village center spaces must remain competitive despite big box stores and online shopping.

People have raised reasonable concerns about how development of the Austin Street site will affect parking, traffic, and existing merchants. These concerns need to be addressed. And, I am assured that they are being addressed as part of the ongoing public process. Parking, traffic, and the economic health of Newtonville are reasonable concerns. They are not, despite the emotional pleas of the petitioners, reasons to halt development. Nor is the claim that we cannot build new housing because Newton's schools are crowded. My wife and I have two sons in the public schools; I know they're crowded. But halting development won't solve school crowding. Across this great city, more than 8,000 householders are age 65 or older. That would be the equivalent of 100 buildings of the size proposed on Austin Street. The City cannot stop these empty nesters from selling their homes. Nor can it stop families from moving here because of our excellent school system.

The real dangers here are not the development of Austin Street. Instead, the dangers are:

1. that we will fail to provide housing options for young people and seniors,
2. that we will fail to develop this site sufficiently to ensure we have appropriate tax revenues to pay for our aging infrastructure,
3. that we will fail to develop this site for the benefit of this village's -- and this City's -- economy.



Newtonville, circa 1936

Around 1936, when the photo pictured above was taken, more than 100 small grocers operated in villages across this city. A retailer could, at that time, rent a storefront on Walnut Street and make a living selling only eggs and dairy products. I bring this up for two reasons. First, it's important to consider how much the retail world has had to evolve over the past century -- or even over the past decade. Second, when people talk about "protecting the character of the village," is this what they are talking about -- some nostalgic notion of better times gone by? Frankly, the petitioners assertions about what they are protecting seem even more unfounded than their criticisms of the development process. Are they hoping to bring back some pastoral ideal, a village economy that would be viable if only more Newton residents didn't spend their money on Amazon or load up on groceries at BJ's in Waltham? The one thing that would ensure these retail spaces remain viable -- the proximity of more wallets living nearby -- would, they argue, destroy the village.

In a recent op-ed in the local newspaper, Jack Leader pointed out that only two buildings have been developed in Newtonville since the turnpike eviscerated the village in 1963. I'm unsure how anyone can interpret that as a measure of success. It hardly heralds the demise of Newtonville as a victim of development. Quite the opposite, in fact. Perhaps the real danger here is attrition.

Thank you for your consideration on this issue.

John

--

John Sisson
45 Greenlawn Avenue, Newton, Mass.
(781) 929-6621

TO: The Members of the Board of Aldermen
FR: Kathleen Kouril Grieser, 258 Mill St., Newtonville
DT: March 28, 2014
RE: Follow Up Comment to the March 25th Hearing on Petition #47-14
(filed by SARAH QUIGLEY et al., on February 3, 2014, re. the Austin Street
Public Parking Lot)

Aldermen Marcia Johnson and Susan Albright assured the public at Tuesday evening's hearing (March 25th) that they would welcome reading our comments, beyond what we were able to say within the allowed three minutes, if we would submit them to the Clerk for distribution to the aldermen, which is what I have done. My comment is simply a true account of something I experienced.

I attended a meeting in Waban on March 13, 2014. The meeting was sponsored by the Engine 6 group led by Kathleen Hobson and by a pro-urbanization group led by Chris Steele, Matt Cuddy and Andrea Kelley oddly named "Newton Villages".

The meeting was by invitation, with the stated intention of reviewing only the positive aspects of the proposed high-density development of the Austin Street parking lot in Newtonville. The host organizations invited the Newtonville Area Council members to attend. To his credit, Newtonville Area Council member Tim Stone questioned whether other interested members of the public would be turned away. The event invitation stated that there would be a presentation made by Candace Havens and Nancy Hyde, who are paid employees of the City's planning department. The hosts apparently decided that no member of the public could be turned away. So a number of Newtonville residents attended, including one member of the Newtonville Area Council. Aldermen Marcia Johnson and Deb Crossley were present, and sat at the front of the room directly opposite and in eye contact with Havens and Hyde. Economic Development Commission head Chris Steele was also present, but in the audience, as was Phil Herr, urban planning consultant, HAPI and U-CHANN member and lead author of Newton's Comprehensive Plan.

Andrea Kelley served as the moderator. Nancy Hyde gave a pro-development presentation about Austin Street, but did not, during her presentation, display any full-screen renderings or images of the proposed projects. After Nancy Hyde's presentation, she and Candace Havens answered questions. Questions were required to be written on index cards, along with one's name, and handed in to Kathleen Hobson of Engine 6. Hobson passed them to Andrea Kelley, who read them out loud. Most of the questions revealed that the non-Newtonville residents in the audience knew very little about the Austin Street process and proposals. At first they seemed impressed by the presentation, but that changed when one of the questions asked was, "Could you show us what some of the proposals look like?"

As Nancy Hyde scrolled through some additional PowerPoint slides showing the renderings, there were a few muffled gasps of surprise, and at least one whisper of "They're so big!". After that the questions became more skeptical in tone and not so approving. (The presentation slides are now posted on the City's website.)

I decided to submit a question. I wrote it out and gave it to Kathleen Hobson. My question was, "Can you tell us if the parking study that Matt Cuddy did was "official"? was it commissioned by the City? was it used as the rationale for determining the Austin Street lot wasn't needed and could be surplused?"

Candace Havens answered that she didn't know the answer to any of those three-parts of my question, and that perhaps Phil Herr knew. She looked at Mr. Herr in the audience, but he declined to acknowledge her request for assistance. I wondered silently how our well-compensated director of planning could fail to know the answer to that three-part question. I decided to ask another question.

I wrote down and submitted the following question, which was not intended AT ALL as a serious proposal. I wanted to make the point that there was something very wrong with a bunch of people in affluent Waban meeting to encourage a development in less-affluent Newtonville, which the residents of Newtonville don't want. My intended message was that this was wrong. So I was very surprised by what happened next.

The question I wrote down was this: "Since this meeting was called to discuss the benefits of a 5-story high-density mixed-use, mostly housing development in a village center, would the Planning Department be willing to consider also a proposal in conjunction with the MBTA to build a 5-story, MU4, mixed-use high-density housing development on the Waban T parking lot?"

The room went silent. I noticed Deb Crossley shaking her head side to side in a silent NO. To my astonishment, and I believe, to the astonishment of most of the Waban residents in the room, Candace Havens said, "Yes, we would consider that." More silence. Andrea Kelley, the moderator, added, "I would like to see that". As I understand it, Ms. Kelley doesn't live in Waban.

The meeting broke up soon after that. Chris Steele spoke to me and told me emphatically that Waban didn't need a 5-story mixed use development on the Waban T parking lot, because Waban already has "high-density affordable housing" in the form of those little two-story brick apartments that run along the T tracks on Wyman Street past the Waban post office. So, it seems the head of the Economic Development Commission wants high-density housing development in some village centers, but not in others.

I don't want high-density, 4 or 5 story housing developments anywhere in Newton, and especially not in our village centers, and I believe most people in

Newton don't either. That's not why we have invested our lives and savings into living in Newton. The fact that Candace Havens stated that the City would consider such a preposterous idea that would destroy the charming village center of Waban is sign of just how out of touch with its citizenry this City has become. I urge you to take this true, verifiable account as a parable and apply it to Newtonville. I ask you to reverse the decisions to surplus and spot re-zone the Austin Street lot, and to deny a special permit for its development. Thank you very much for your service to Newton, and thank you for considering this request.

Linda M. Finucane

From: Kathleen Kouril Grieser <kik860@mail.harvard.edu>
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2014 1:11 PM
To: David A. Olson; Linda M. Finucane
Subject: Comment in Support of Petition #47-14
Attachments: KourilGrieserFollowUpComment2.pdf

Dear Mr. Olson and Ms. Finucane,

I respectfully request that you convey the attached comment document to the aldermen of the Real Property Reuse Committee and those of the Zoning and Planning Committee and any other aldermen whom you believe to be interested in the matter concerned in Petition #47-14.

Thank you so much.

Yours truly,
Kathleen Kouril Grieser
Newtonville Resident

TO: The Members of the Board of Aldermen
FR: Kathleen Kouril Grieser, 258 Mill St., Newtonville
DT: March 31, 2014
RE: Follow Up Comment 2 to the March 25th Hearing on Petition #47-14
(filed by SARAH QUIGLEY et al., on February 3, 2014, re. the Austin Street Public Parking Lot)

The City has submitted a follow up comment to the aldermen after the Tuesday, March 25th hearing about Petition #47-14. The City's comment is in the form of a memorandum dated March 28, 2014 to the Real Property Reuse Committee and authored by Candace Havens and Alexandra Anath. The memorandum describes the process that led to the current proposals for the development of the Austin Street parking lot. That process is coming under increasing scrutiny, and you will no doubt discuss that soon.

I am concerned in this comment with Attachment A to the memo by Havens and Anath. Attachment A is called "AUSTIN STREET Redevelopment Project" and was authored by Nancy Hyde, the City's newly hired Director of Economic Development. Ms. Hyde made a presentation at Tuesday's night's hearing that was virtually identical in content to Attachment A. In this follow up comment I will rebut the content in Attachment A, which is indicative of a decision-making process about Austin Street that was not data-driven.

In her document, Ms. Hyde states that a proposed high-density housing project built on the Austin Street parking lot would be an example of "Transit-Oriented Development" which "reduces household driving, lowers regional congestion, air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions". However, adding high-density housing will bring more cars to Newtonville and more gas emissions. It is not a "green" solution. According to US Census data households make an average of 5 trips per day, and only one or two of those is the journey to and from work. Most trips are for running errands, etc. Only 20% of the trips to and from work happen on public transit. Just because people might live near public transit doesn't mean that they will find or keep jobs for which traveling by public transit is the best choice. A high-density housing complex of 96 units would generate 480 household trips each day, of which only approximately 142 would be the work commute, and only 29 of those would likely happen on mass transit. That leaves 451 journeys to happen by car, with all the congestion, traffic and emissions that come with cars.

Ms. Hyde also writes that Transit-Oriented Development "means residents may not need to own vehicles", but based on the U.S. census data, that seems unlikely. Furthermore, only 29% of Newton commuters commute to Boston. If this development is aimed at young professionals, the City has provided no data to prove that they want to travel to Boston. Many growth industries attractive to young professionals are expanding to cheaper, more spacious office space along

and beyond the Route 128 corridor. Young professionals will need cars to get to those jobs, just as most Newton commuters do already.

If the proposed Austin Street high-density housing project is for seniors, the City has provided no data to prove retirees need transportation to Boston beyond what is already available. Buses and "The Ride" can bring seniors to the MBTA Green line and commuter rail stops in Newton. The Senior Center and other organizations organize bus trips into Boston. For many seniors, the Newtonville commuter rail station is not an attraction because it is not handicapped accessible. In fact, we need to maintain the flexibility to use the Austin Street lot as a staging area to make needed improvements to the MBTA commuter rail station as part of the Indigo Line project or a bigger project to re-unify the two sides of Newtonville.

Ms. Hyde's document states that Transit-Oriented Development creates "a walkable community" and healthier lifestyles. But Newtonville doesn't need a massive high-density housing development to become a walkable community. Newtonville *is already* a walkable community. In good weather, in our village center shopping area, the narrow sidewalks of Walnut Street are jammed with people walking.

Ms. Hyde's document states that Transit-Oriented Development means "inclusion of housing at various price points which offers housing for a spectrum of residents, including young adults, empty nesters and senior citizens". But there is nothing about locating a high-density housing complex near public transit that ensures that the prices at that housing complex will range across various price points. And, in fact, all of the market-rate prices are high. The lowest proposed Austin Street market-rate rents start at \$2200 a month for a one-bedroom unit and they rise to a high of \$3300 a month for a 2-bedroom unit.

In this document, Ms. Hyde also states that a high-density housing project proposed for the Austin Street parking lot is needed because of demographic change.

Ms. Hyde writes that "the Massachusetts Area Planning Council has generated projections of population change" and that the "Metropolitan Area Council" has just released data. Neither of those two organizations actually exists. The organization Ms. Hyde is referring to is actually called the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, and it was created by the same Chapter 40B legislation that brought us forced high-density housing and windfalls for developers under the guise of affordable housing. It is an organization whose purpose is to create data to support development projects. The data it generates is meant to be used by urban planners, who by definition, plan *urban* environments. That's the source of the demographic information the City is citing. It is a source with a bias toward high-density building.

Even if all of the projections provided by the MAPC are correct, there is no evidence that Newton seniors want to live in high-density housing developments, nor that they want to see Newton transformed into a concrete, urban environment. Ms. Hyde's document claims that there is evidence that young people have left the State due to lack of housing they can afford. In fact, the research shows that young professionals tend to leave Massachusetts to live in areas with *even higher* housing costs – New York City and the San Francisco bay area – because there are better job opportunities there for them in law, finance, high tech and creative industries. We need to create better high-skills jobs opportunities in Newton. Building very expensive high-density housing is a not a smart way of growing Newton's economic base, as even Newton's Comprehensive Plan acknowledges residential developments cost more in City services than they generate in City revenues.

In this document, Ms. Hyde also states that a high-density housing project proposed for the Austin Street parking lot will benefit Newtonville. Ms. Hyde's document claims such a project will generate increased walk in customers for local businesses, but supplies no data to support that claim. In fact, local business owners in Newtonville have expressed grave concerns over a loss of business due to less convenient parking, and have fears that new retail establishments will take away their customers. The City is *not able to guarantee* that new shops won't compete with existing businesses, nor that new tenants will frequent local shops.

The so-called amenities and beautification of high-density development mentioned in Ms. Hyde's document have been rejected overwhelmingly by Newtonville residents at meeting after meeting, in petitions and in the Newtonville Area Council's survey. Requiring only 5% open space is a disgrace. The proposed housing projects will loom over the village, casting shadows where there is now sunlight. The skimpy plazas proposed don't create a community gathering space, other than a place to sit on a bench and sip one's latte. There is NO infrastructure demanded in the RFP or present in any of the proposals to support any engagement with the arts, nor any budget to support such engagement.

There have been calls from the neighborhood for a plan that would incorporate the development of a performance space, provide space for the displaced Suzuki School, and facilitate a public-private partnership with a village historic treasure, the Swedenborgian church. That beautiful church could be a venue for evening concerts to give people another reason to visit Newtonville and its restaurants in the evening. The church could provide additional space for Senior Center activities like lectures and screenings. As Newton's population ages, the Senior Center will need more programming space and parking spaces, not less. In addition, taking away the parking lot takes away an open space that has been and could be utilized on Newtonville Village Day for amusement rides, fair booths or parking. The City has, thus far, displayed a profound lack of vision regarding a

holistic restoration of Newtonville's historic village green and a re-unification of Newtonville's village center.

In this document, Ms. Hyde states that a high-density housing project proposed for the Austin Street parking lot is necessary because Newton needs more housing. Ms. Hyde claims that Newton is seeing a growth in its senior population. However, this is not growth, just a transition of a cohort from one age range to another. This is not an influx of new seniors.

Moreover, the City has provided no data to prove that seniors wish to downsize into \$600,000 condos (Court Street) or \$2500-\$3000/month apartments (Austin Street) currently proposed for high-density housing projects in Newtonville. In fact, the City presents options for seniors in what seems to be a purposefully confusing way. Newton senior homeowners selling their homes and wishing to downsize almost always have assets too high (above \$250,000) to qualify for affordable housing. They are not eligible for the affordable units in developments like those proposed for Austin Street.

If presented with the accurate facts about the cost of the market rate units, you would likely find that seniors are unwilling to spend these amounts. They might join the many seniors who are choosing to age in place in their homes, or downsize to much less expensive accommodation on the Cape, in Florida or elsewhere. Those seniors who truly want city life, and can afford Austin Street developers' prices, might prefer to live in Boston and cut out the commute altogether. Seniors who have looked to downsize have found that *there are already* many good options for them, and there is no need to destroy the village character and traditional scale of Newton's neighborhoods in the name of senior downsizing.

Ms. Hyde writes that the average price of a home in Newton is \$700,000 and not affordable to seniors on a fixed income or those starting out in their careers. The prices of the proposed Austin Street market-rate units are almost as high - in the range of \$2500 to \$3000 a month for 2-bedroom apartments. These units would add density, but not affordability.

Ms. Hyde states that more than 1000 households are on waiting lists for existing rental units in Newton. She fails to say that these are households on the waiting lists for subsidized affordable housing, not the mostly high-priced, luxury market rate housing the Austin Street developments would create. She also fails to mention that many of these households are lower-income people from outside of Newton who, understandably, would like to obtain subsidized housing in Newton. Very few of them would benefit from an Austin Street development because the chances of obtaining one of the 20 to 25 subsidized units at Austin Street which will be awarded by lottery are very slim, but the impact on the working people who already live in Newtonville would be profoundly negative and wide-ranging in terms of traffic, parking, school impacts and other externalities.

In this document, Ms. Hyde also addresses the question "Isn't a development of 80-100 units too big?" Ms. Hyde states that the zoning regulations for the Austin Street parking lot set a height limit of 60 feet or five stories. But Ms. Hyde fails to admit that the City created an entirely new zoning category, MU4, and spot-zoned only this parcel specifically to allow these developers to propose high-density housing complexes of 5 stories in height. Spot-zoning a single property violates the City's Comprehensive Plan, planning best practices, and was found to be illegal by the Land Court in a recent decision concerning similar circumstances in Swampscott. It may not matter that the Newton had a "planning rationale" as cover for its actions, when Austin Street JAPG head, Jack Leader publicly admitted at the March 25th hearing that the City told the JAPG it's goal in seeking to surplus Austin Street was to raise revenue.

Ms. Hyde's document states that unit sizes will vary, so that some designs might be smaller overall than others, but all of the proposed designs that the City is seriously considering are too big. Furthermore, Massachusetts law prohibits discriminating against families with children, so a certain number of the units must be large enough to accommodate families. It is not as if the units can be as small as closets. Of course 80-100 units, and four or five stories, is too big a development to force into our suburban village center.

Ms. Hyde's document makes the claim that citizen input will be important in determining the appearance of the development, but doesn't say citizen input can affect the size of the development. That's because developers always say that reducing the size will make the project uneconomic for them. Ms. Hyde's document also doesn't admit that the ordinary taxpaying residents of Newtonville have not yet been able to convince the City to incorporate our public input into this process, which is part of the reason it was necessary to petition to compel Tuesday's hearing.

Let's be absolutely clear: The people of Newtonville have overwhelmingly rejected any idea of developments of this height, mass and scale. 105 Newtonville residents signed the Newtonville Neighborhood Association's paper petition calling for the Mayor to reject all of the proposals currently submitted because they are inappropriate in scale and design for our village, and asking the Mayor to create a new RFP with input from Newtonville residents and business owners. A similar online petition sponsored by the Newtonville Trust has to date garnered more than 268 signatures from other residents of Newtonville and other Newton villages. Another 50 signatures can be found on the petition that compelled Tuesday's hearing. These are hundreds of your constituents putting their real names and identities out there, bravely, to plead with you to act according to our wishes. These are real signatures from real Newton taxpayers, along with their addresses. They are not anonymous. They are verifiable. They deserve that you act accordingly. In addition to these identifiable constituents, the Newtonville Area Council, with the financial support of another community organization, Beautiful Newtonville, conducted an anonymous survey open to

anyone identifying themselves as a resident or business owner of Newtonville over the age of 14.

The Newtonville Area Council, the newest and closest tier of government representation for those of us in Newtonville, is to be commended for taking the initiative to seek information about what the residents and business owners of Newtonville actually want, rather than preaching to us about what others think we should endure. In this, they were following the good example of Beautiful Newtonville which conducted an earlier, more general, survey of what we in Newtonville would like to see happen in our village center. Beautiful Newtonville's survey found support for beautification, wider sidewalks, more trees and period streetlamps. Not one respondent asked for a massive high-density housing development.

The Newtonville Area Council's survey attracted more than 700 responses, representing about 10% of this village. That is a very successful survey response rate. The survey was not a perfect document, as its dedicated and hardworking authors, Tim Stone and Tom Kraus, have admitted publicly. It contained an inherent pro-development bias because it presumed development would happen, and failed to ask the direct question "Do you oppose or support the development of the Austin Street parking lot?" It also failed to put the question of whether a respondent preferred a condo or rental development into the context of what that decision would mean in terms of the City achieving Chapter 40B affordable housing compliance. Despite those biases, the Newtonville Area Council's survey found that the overwhelming majority of respondents reject a large-scale development. 82% want a development of no more than 3 stories. 80% want 40 or fewer units, and 20% want no residential development at all. Only 12% noted *any* benefit from housing on the site at all. 69% ranked the loss of parking as a major concern, and 55% ranked added traffic congestion as a major concern. The people of Newtonville have spoken loudly and clearly in rejecting proposals that have been submitted on the basis of this very flawed surplus, spot rezoning, RFP process. Are you able to hear us? If so, please reverse your decisions to surplus and re-zone the Austin Street lot, and please deny a special permit.

In this document, Ms. Hyde also addresses the question "Will 85 parking spaces be sufficient?" The City based the decision to surplus on an unofficial parking study in 2009 by Matt Cuddy, a volunteer urban planner with a degree in parking. When asked at a meeting in Waban on March 13, 2014, Director of Planning Candace Havens admitted she didn't know if Cuddy's parking study was "official", nor if the City had commissioned it. As Planning Director, how could she not know that? Yet, this unofficial study was used as the rationale for surplus of the Austin Street lot. When the plan to have only 85 public parking places became public knowledge last May, there was an outcry from Newtonville residents and business owners. The City has recently acknowledged that their parking assumptions were not valid, and has asked the developers to increase the number of public parking places to 125, and taxpayers are currently paying for a

new and official parking study, taking place, *finally*, six years into the process, in March 2014.

As Newtonville's authentic, market-driven commercial vibrancy continues, the City's updated parking assumptions will likely once more prove insufficient to meet actual demand. Furthermore, it is alarming to learn that the City Treasurer has admitted that the City has not tracked revenue generated by the Austin Street lot through meter usage or parking tickets since 2008. Not only is this a failure to provide adequate information for making an accurate cost-benefit analysis of the idea of developing the parking lot, it is also a dereliction of duty. It is highly irresponsible for the City to be unable to account for any source of revenue, and opens the door for that revenue to be skimmed or otherwise disappear.

In this document, Ms. Hyde also states the intent of the Austin Street development is to "improve traffic" on Walnut and Washington Streets, but that intent is not expressed in the RFP. Instead the RFP states: "Prior impact analyses indicate *that Austin Street can readily handle the trip volumes projected for it*, but the intersections of Austin Street with Walnut Street and Lowell Avenue and Philip Bram Way with Highland Avenue will each require attention. Changes to the intersection of the Austin Street/Walnut Street/Newtonville Avenue intersection may require revisions, which will be addressed by the parties *at the appropriate time.*"

It is not clear if the appropriate time will ever be found, because none of the developers submitting proposals have included any mention of providing improvements to those intersections, nor have they included measures to reduce the traffic to be generated by 80-100 housing units, with at least one car each. I have already mentioned above US Census data about trip generation. To recap, a high-density housing complex of 100 units would generate 500 household trips each day, of which 470 would happen by car, leading to more, not less, traffic congestion.

The only concession to traffic mitigation is the suggestion of a Zipcar facility in some of the proposals. A Zipcar facility may or may not generate even more traffic if used by people in the Austin Street apartment complex or elsewhere who don't otherwise own vehicles.

Ms. Hyde's document states that the chosen developer must pay for a traffic study, which will be peer reviewed by a consultant, and that the City is proactively looking at information to make traffic projections to assess traffic impacts. None of these words describe an actual plan to prevent traffic jams, rather, just an intention to assess and note that traffic jams *will occur*. For this, and all the other reasons I've expressed, I believe you must agree with me that the process has not been data-driven. I urge you to reverse the surplus and spot re-zoning decisions, and to deny a special permit for development of our Austin Street parking lot.

From: jcoconnell@comcast.net [mailto:jcoconnell@comcast.net]
Sent: Saturday, March 22, 2014 10:39 AM
To: mjohnson@newtonma.gov
Subject: Austin Street Parking Lot Project

Dear Alderman Johnson:

I am a resident of Newtonville and Ward 2. I am writing in support of the proposed development in Newtonville on the Austin Street parking lot. I walk by that parking lot everyday on my way to the commuter rail station and believe that a new development there can help improve Newtonville. The village center has not had any new development since the Star Market was opened in the 1960s. It could use an injection of new vitality, something that would be good for local residents and businesses.

I think that the biggest plus of this proposed development is the creation of housing units that could accommodate empty-nesters and young professionals. My wife and I, now that our sons have gone through the Newton school system and moved out on their own, would be interested in moving into a property that requires less maintenance than our single-family home—and we would love to be able to stay in Newton. Housing like that proposed for the Austin Street parking lot could fit the bill. As for my two sons, they have found housing in Brighton and Brookline, but it has not been easy. Again, housing such as that proposed for Austin Street could provide more housing options that they could take advantage of.

When I hear concerns that the proposed Austin Street housing could be filled with children attending the Newton public schools, I doubt that many families would choose to live in such housing. If housing units were limited to two bedrooms or less, there would be very few families with potential school children living there.

I realize that there are various concerns about the design of the proposed Austin Street development. I hope that they can be worked out in a rational way. As I understand it, the Mayor would choose a preferred developer from those who have made proposals. The proposals are schematic; there is nothing final about them. There would be ample opportunity for considered public input in coming up with a project that would truly improve Newtonville's village center. It would be a waste and a shame if no project were ever built on Austin Street. As some people say, if a community is not growing, it is declining.

I should explain that I bring a professional planning perspective to the Austin Street project. I work as a planner at the National Park Service Northeast Regional Office in Boston. I served on Newton's Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC), which recommended in the city's comprehensive plan redeveloping our village centers. Recently, I wrote a book on the history of suburban Boston's, including Newton's, development and its future prospects—*The Hub's Metropolis: Greater Boston's Development from Railroad Suburbs to Smart Growth*. If I could ever provide more perspectives on planning and development in Newton, please contact me. I appreciate your efforts to strengthen Newtonville.

Yours,

Jim O'Connell

5 Fairfield Street

Newtonville, MA 02460

617-244-4038

jcoconnell@comcast.net

Linda M. Finucane

From: Pfh <pfh@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 01, 2014 2:54 PM
To: Marcia Johnson; Susan Albright; Emily Jean Norton; Allan Ciccone Jr.; Scott F. Lennon; Alison M. Leary; James R. Cote; Theodore M. Hess Mahan; Anthony J. Salvucci; Amy Sangiolo; Leonard J. Gentile; John W. Harney; Deborah J. Crossley; Brian E. Yates; John Rice; Victoria Danberg; Gregory J. Schwartz; Richard B. Blazar; Mark C. Laredo; Ruthanne Fuller; R. Lisle Baker; Richard Lipof; David Kalis; Cheryl Lappin; Karyn Dean; Linda M. Finucane
Subject: Docket #47-14
Attachments: Comments #47-14.pdf

Attached are additional remarks concerning Docket Item #47-14.

Further, as I understand it, some of the issues before the Committees are:

Has there been sufficient public discussion to support a decision to rebuild our villages with new urban enclaves?

Recognizing the limited amount of public land owned by the City, should we be selling it for development?

Should the City adopt a new paradigm for the creation of public/private partnerships where the land owner/developer provides the land and financing and the City provides administrative help in the form of sponsoring neighborhood meetings, plan review, liaison with various municipal Departments, etc.?

Was there an omission in the process of declaring the land available for sale where there is no record of a vote or policy change that is required by the Ordinance? Does the acceptance of the Comprehensive plan satisfy that requirement and, if so, are all the lots described in the plan eligible for surplus declaration?

Peter F. Harrington
157 Lowell Avenue, Ward 2

From: jcoconnell@comcast.net [mailto:jcoconnell@comcast.net]

Sent: Saturday, March 22, 2014 10:39 AM

To: mjohnson@newtonma.gov

Subject: Austin Street Parking Lot Project

Dear Alderman Johnson:

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I think that the biggest plus of this proposed development is the creation of housing units that could accommodate empty-nesters and young professionals. My wife and I, now that our sons have gone through the Newton school system and moved out on their own, would be interested in moving into a property that requires less maintenance than our single-family home—and we would love to be able to stay in Newton. Housing like that proposed for the Austin Street parking lot could fit the bill. As for my two sons, they have found housing in Brighton and Brookline, but it has not been easy. Again, housing such as that proposed for Austin Street could provide more housing options that they could take advantage of.

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I realize that there are various concerns about the design of the proposed Austin Street development. I hope that they can be worked out in a rational way. As I understand it, the Mayor would choose a preferred developer from those who have made proposals. The proposals are schematic; there is nothing final about them. There would be ample opportunity for considered public input in coming up with a project that would truly improve Newtonville's village center. It would be a waste and a shame if no project were ever built on Austin Street. As some people say, if a community is not growing, it is declining.

I should explain that I bring a professional planning perspective to the Austin Street project. I work as a planner at the National Park Service Northeast Regional Office in Boston. I served on Newton's Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee (CPAC), which recommended in the city's comprehensive plan redeveloping our village centers. Recently, I wrote a book on the history of suburban Boston's, including Newton's, development and its future prospects—*The Hub's Metropolis: Greater Boston's Development from Railroad Suburbs to Smart Growth*. If I could ever provide more perspectives on planning and development in Newton, please contact me. I appreciate your efforts to strengthen Newtonville.

Yours,

Jim O'Connell

5 Fairfield Street

Newtonville, MA 02460

617-244-4038

jcoconnell@comcast.net

Linda M. Finucane

From: David A. Olson
Sent: Monday, March 31, 2014 8:36 AM
To: aldermen
Cc: Linda M. Finucane
Subject: FW: Petition #47-14 Regarding Austin Street Lot

From: Fred Arnstein [<mailto:fred@onthelane.com>]
Sent: Sunday, March 30, 2014 10:58 PM
To: David A. Olson
Subject: Petition #47-14 Regarding Austin Street Lot

Dear Mr. Olsen and Aldermen,

I am writing in support of petition 47-14. I would like to comment specifically about the recent survey that was done by the Newtonville Area Council. The report appears to be very misleading about the amount of support there is among Newtonville residents for the development. And it is questionable in several other respects. I don't at all mean to suggest that the Council deliberately misrepresented anything, but I do want to point out some important problems with the results as they are presented.

Survey summary says: "75% of Newtonville residents would be receptive to an Austin Street development – if it met their criteria." [in other words only 25% are opposed]

-- The question is phrased to ensure a high positive response. Naturally, if I can have any kind of development I want, I'm pretty likely to be in favor of it. We have to guess that there would be a lot more people saying they don't want development if the question had been posed without "if it met their criteria." The percent of those opposed could easily be twice as high as what the report claims.

Note says: "738 residents completed the entire survey (over 10% of the population of the Newtonville Area Council District), with an additional 39 residents answering at least the first substantive question."

-- 'The first substantive question' was presumably the one asking whether one would be receptive to development (if it met your criteria). It's quite likely that most of the 39 residents who stopped after this question were people who were not receptive. Why go on to talk about details of the development when you don't want any development. These people are not reflected in the subsequent results.

Survey summary says: "Establishments paralleled resident sentiment, except some favored higher residential density and a higher building."

-- The survey doesn't distinguish between those residents and businesses who are very close to the site and those who are farther away. I have spoken with a half dozen business owners whose businesses are on the 'main drag' of Walnut Street (e.g., DownUnder Yoga) or on Austin Street right near the site (e.g., Lorraine cleaners). Although it's a small sample, I can tell you that not a single one of these business owners are in favor of the development. They are horrified by the parking and traffic implications, some of them fearful for the very survival of their businesses. It may be true that

businesses across the pike, e.g., along Washington Street, might well like the idea of having more residents to trade with. But they would not experience the attendant woes.

Survey summary says: "Over three quarters of residents (82%) say a development of three stories or less would work best."

-- The chart for this question says that only 5% want no building. But this doesn't make sense in light of what we were told above – that 25% don't want development at all. Those people would presumably want "No building" of any height.

-- There's more sentiment against a high building than the summary statement suggests. The chart shows that 41% want development of 2 stories or less. And we're not told how many people would prefer one story.

Survey summary says: "The overwhelming majority of residents (80%) want 40 or fewer residential units. That includes 20% of surveyed residents who want no residential units at all."

-- Again, it's important to look at the chart. A majority of residents (55%) want just 20 units or zero units. In other words no development or almost no development.

Thank you very much,

Fredrick Arnstein (Ph.D.), Survey Action Associates
7 Briar Lane, Newtonville MA 02460
617-916-5150
fred@onthelane.com

Linda M. Finucane

From: David A. Olson
Sent: Wednesday, March 26, 2014 11:51 AM
To: aldermen
Cc: Linda M. Finucane
Subject: FW: Petition #47-14

-----Original Message-----

From: Maxine Zarchan [<mailto:mzarchan@rcn.com>]
Sent: Tuesday, March 25, 2014 6:07 PM
To: David A. Olson
Subject: Petition #47-14

Please be advised that we support petition #47-14 and do not want any of the proposals currently under consideration for the Austin St. parking lot.

We feel that the density and vision for the plans are misguided. We do not want a "metro center" in this part of the "garden city" as Newton has been proud to be declared. The city is losing sight of why people moved to Newton - to be in an attractive and comfortable suburb with close proximity to a dense urban center - Boston. We did not choose to live in Boston or Brookline, for that matter.

Newtonville has had some wonderful retail stores over the years. For some years it did get quiet. It is now experiencing a regrowth and vitality with new restaurants and services. We, the residents, want to support that, not to urbanize the area.

We want partnerships with the arts - I am particularly upset that the Suzuki School could not move into the church on Newtonville Ave because it was not given enough parking spaces. Why could they not get spaces in the Austin St. lot? Was it because this decision of reuse was already decided? The families connected to the Suzuki School would be the people we would want in our village and they would patronize our businesses.

We are particularly opposed to precious land that belongs to the residents of Newton being sold for small amounts of money to developers who stand to make large profits from it under the guise of supplying some affordable housing. This land, at the very least, should be leased. Look at the Carr school - lucky the city did not sell it. It was used to house our arts organizations and now has to be reclaimed for use as our schools are rebuilt.

Our schools, Cabot especially one of them, are stretched in enrollment. Newtonville is already a very diverse village, which has added to its vibrancy. Its two family homes provide housing to different demographic groups. We don't need the character to change by bringing in high density housing.

Thank you for your consideration of our opinions,

Maxine & Paul Zarchan
24 Frederick St.
Newtonville

To: Ald. Marcia Johnson, Chair of Zoning & Planning Committee
Ald. Susan Albright, Chair of Real Property Reuse Committee
From: Peter F, Harrington
RE: Docket #47-14
Date: April 1, 2014

As you know, Newton has a plan to create a new suburban city by replacing village centers with urban enclaves composed of mid-rise buildings, less parking (adjusted to modern concepts) and more commercial space, to enliven our village centers and create new competition for existing businesses. This plan, to revitalize “village centers through redevelopment of underutilized publicly-owned sites”(HAPI, NPDD & EDC Request for Interest, revised May 15, 2010) is called the Comprehensive Plan, dated November 17, 2007 (Exhibit 1) and was approved by the Board of Aldermen in 2007 (Exhibit 2).

The Comprehensive Plan says that all but 3% of Newton’s 18 square miles is built out (page 3-1, Exhibit 3); that since 1970 our housing units have increased from 27,000 to 32,000 and our population has decreased from 91,000 to 84,000 (page 3-5, Exhibit 4). It also says that there is room to increase our commercial floor area by 40% by adding new building space in all of our villages, from Chestnut Hill to Waban to Lower Falls; from Auburndale to Nonantum to Oak Hill Park; and places rarely heard of, such as Four Corners and Nightcaps Corner (page 3-24 & 3-25, Exhibit 5A & 5B). It does not say where the customers for the new business enterprises will come from.

The plan to urbanize Newtonville started in 2005 (Real Property Reuse Committee Report of May 26, 2009, Exhibit 6) and expanded in September, 2009 (Exhibit 7). A Newtonville project was identified as “the least troublesome” opportunity (Real Property Reuse Committee Report of November 24, 2009, (Exhibit 8) and was supported by the Ward 2 Aldermen in a letter to Mayor Warren dated October 4, 2010 (Exhibit 9). A RFP issued on February 14, 2013 (Bid openings April 27, 2013 Exhibit 10).

A question arises, “Did the years of planning include the discovery of the desire of the owners of the 90,926 square foot Shaw’s Market lot to build a similar project across the street from the Austin Street parking lot?” If not, why not? Were they invited to propose a plan for development on their privately owned land or was the planning limited to developing municipal parking lots?

Question #2, “Did the years of planning take into consideration the citizen opposition to a similar plan to build mid-rise buildings in air rights over the turnpike in Newtonville, a few decades ago?”

Question #3, “How did this plan for urbanization of our villages come to be a municipal plan without the natural discussion and debate that one would expect for such a significant change?” Is it the fault of the citizenry? If so, should they now, at this late date, be allowed or prohibited to speak out? Is the support of the League of Women Voters for the development of the Newtonville parking lot enough public input? The League is known for their thorough examination of an issue.

A little mentioned fact is that in the last election cycle, two candidates for Aldermen, who were involved in the production of the plan, were defeated in their bid for office. The fact that they failed to campaign on their support to implement this city wide village urbanization plan is not so much a criticism of the plan as it is an acknowledgement that there has been a lack of public discussion on the subject of rebuilding our city to create new urban enclaves.

I think that the next municipal election may well revolve around the question of the Comprehensive Plan for village improvements and do we want to urbanize our villages. Perhaps we should await the outcome of that debate before urbanizing Newtonville.

As pointed out by Kathleen Kouril Grieser, in her written comments to the Committees, not all villagers, particularly Wabanites, see this plan as a good plan for their village. The opposition to the plan by Newtonville citizens, voiced at the Public Hearing on the Sarah Quigley petition, is another indicator that the plan for urbanization does not have universal acceptance; perhaps not even a majority support. In Newton Centre, a long standing land use plan for multi-family housing is under attack because of the changing policies that permit high density urban type living in our City of village communities.

Intensifying our housing does not seem to be the kind of municipal planning that our citizens want. When you look at the trail of evidence of meetings and discussions in the development of the urbanization plan you discover a plan born from a group of development-oriented people. This does not make it a good plan or a bad plan. It is just a plan without the input from the citizens it will most directly effect.

The opportunity to make large amounts of money is driving a private market demand to build more residential units and commercial space in our city. Vacant lots and "tear downs" are becoming scarce and the cost of land acquisition is constantly rising. An example is the crisis on Court Street, where over 1.5 million will be spent to purchase two large lots to build a project containing 9 units of low income housing in a low/moderate income neighborhood. The new low income units will replace existing low income units. The problem is that the existing units are not "qualified". Also, the new units will not meet the requirements set out for special permit developments.

The public sector response has been, so far, to go along with this market driven demand. The support has come from administration planners, some few elected officials who support urbanization under inaccurate economic theories that such building is going to improve the economic conditions of the municipality and a number of concerned people who support the concept of providing more affordable housing for seniors, young people and those in the low/moderate income range.

One problem is that the opportunity to make money conflicts with the intent to provide the affordable housing. Another is the creation of new commercial space creates new opportunities for large business enterprises to compete with our locally owned businesses.

The stigma of the mid 20th century "Project" housing blurs the vision of the planners. The lack of leadership in thinking "outside the box" holds back the exploration of new concepts.

Why not direct our Planning Department to focus on "Village Planning", with low rise buildings and new parking opportunities, reminding them that every downsizing senior opens up a three or four bedroom house for families with children. Every increase in commercial space creates an opportunity for increasing competition for our locally owned businesses. If the Housing Authority or a non-profit builds a three or four family low/moderate income dwelling, we do not have to build an additional nine to twelve units to provide developer profit.

As one of the speakers at the Quigley Petition public hearing said, we could conserve publicly owned land and re-use it for public and open space purposes. Let the builders and developers use traditional methods of acquiring private land for their projects and save what little public land is left.

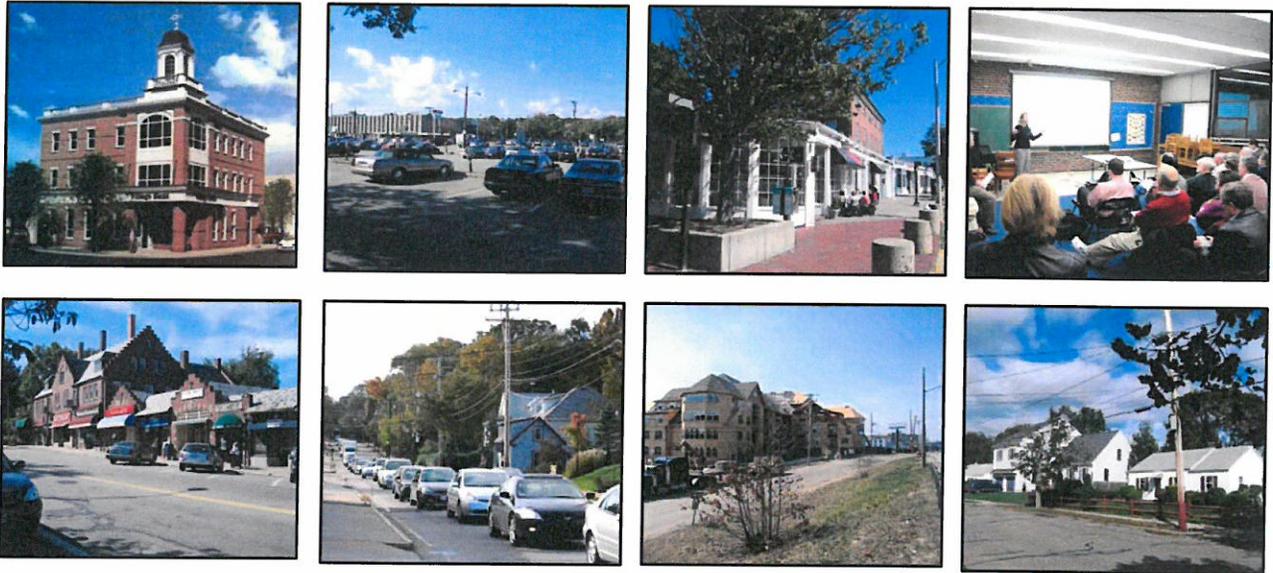


Peter F. Harrington

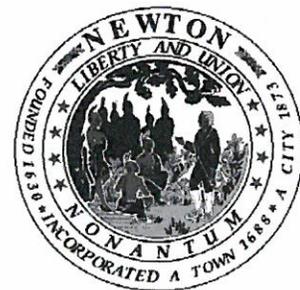
157 Lowell Avenue, Ward 2



NEWTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



**Prepared by the
Mayor's Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee
Recommended by the
Planning and Development Board
Adopted by the Newton Board of Aldermen
November 19, 2007**





#351-06

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

November 19, 2007

BE IT RESOLVED:

WHEREAS the Board of Aldermen has received a proposed Comprehensive Plan from the Mayor of the City of Newton;

WHEREAS the Board of Aldermen has received a report and recommendations concerning said plan from the Planning and Development Board, and has held a public hearing on the proposed plan;

WHEREAS the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to set forth policies to govern the future physical development of the City;

WHEREAS the effect of the Comprehensive Plan's policies are to serve as a guide to all future action by the Board of Aldermen concerning land use and development regulations, urban renewal programs, and expenditures for capital improvements;

WHEREAS the Board of Aldermen recognizes that specific recommendations for zoning change in the Plan are guidelines or suggestions for improvement, not mandates;

WHEREAS the Board of Aldermen has considered said proposed plan and made modifications and amendments thereto;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that The Newton Comprehensive Plan, as amended, is hereby adopted.

Under Suspension of Rules
Readings Waived and Adopted
20 yeas, 1 nay (Ald. Coletti), 3 absent (Ald. Gentile, Harney, Vance)

(SGD) DAVID A. OLSON
City Clerk

LAND USE

“At the heart of the struggle to determine the direction any city will take is the question of how its land is to be used. It can either be treated primarily as a source of profit, to be packaged, bought and sold, or else, as the holistic perspective teaches, as a resource that in an interrelated manner serves the spiritual as well as the material needs of the people who live upon it¹.”

- John Guinther

“This land is your land and this land is my land, sure, but the world is run by those that never listen to music anyway.”

- Bob Dylan

BACKGROUND

Newton’s land area of almost 18 square miles is all but fully built out, with less than 3% of the City’s land area being in parcels not already developed or permanently preserved from development. However, land use change continues. Infill occurs on parcels already developed, existing structures are replaced with new ones, or more subtly the activities within existing structures change, often with major impacts, even without major changes to the structure. All of that constitutes land use change, and it is one of the major on-going concerns in the City.

The structure and pattern of Newton’s early land use was shaped by water and land qualities, while later development reflected transportation change more than anything else. We now have an enviable pattern of well-established and largely healthy village centers, commonly surrounded with a mix of single- and multi-family dwellings, with a generous interweaving of protected open space contributing to the “Garden City” character of the community.

Municipal zoning, together with land availability, essentially caps the amount of future development which could be added to the City without bypassing or amending those rules. City staff working with CPAC volunteers produced detailed build-out analyses to illustrate the remaining capacity for growth and where it might occur. Whereas in 2002 about 31,700 housing units existed in the City, under current zoning rules and expectations of special permit approvals, no more than 35,200 housing units could reasonably be expected at “build-out,” an 11% increase. Variances, zoning changes, open space acquisition, and development exempt from zoning such as “Chapter 40B” development, might be expected to increase that somewhat over time, but probably not resulting in any increase above about a 15% growth above the 2002 figure. Whereas in 2002 the City had about 10.8 million square feet of commercial and industrial floor area in the City, under realistic assumptions about building allowable under current rules that could grow to 18.6 million square feet, far more than is reasonably expectable under the regional economy as currently understood.

Maps illustrating the potential location of those amounts of growth and existing land use are on the following three pages. They show vividly the structure of growth potential which continues to follow major transportation facilities and to reflect the City’s existing and preferred structure of multiple village centers.

¹ Guinther, John, *The Direction of Cities*, New York, Penguin Books, 1996. Cited in Gene Bunnell, *Making Places Special*, Planners Press, Chicago, 2002.

CHANGE IN NEWTON’S HOUSING, PEOPLE AND JOBS

Future change in housing, population and jobs in Newton will in large measure reflect the City’s circumstances of land use, location in the region, and regional change but it should also reflect what the City wants. Throughout the time that this *Plan* has been under preparation efforts to quantify such expectations have been made, resulting in two slightly different pictures of the future, a “Base” of change anticipated if no change in City policy actions is taken, and a second “High” scenario showing change anticipated given the directions contained in this *Plan*. Given the major uncertainties involved, no precision in the future levels can be claimed, but the extent of difference between the “Base” and the “High” is more reliable. It indicates only small differences, but as spelled out in the elements which follow those differences are of some importance to achieving the City’s goals.

The future figures are strongly driven by our “build-out” analysis of how much housing and business development could fit on Newton’s land as currently zoned, joined with reflection of key demographic change which is beyond local control, such as declining household size, an aging population, and location within a low-growth part of a slowly growing region.

Table 3-1. CPAC HOUSING, POPULATION, AND JOBS

Year	BASE PROJECTION			HIGH SCENARIO		
	Housing units	Population	Local jobs	Housing units	Population	Local jobs
1970	27,425	91,066	26,000	27,425	91,066	26,000
1980	29,131	83,622	41,175	29,131	83,622	41,175
1990	30,497	82,585	44,793	30,497	82,585	44,793
2000	31,300	83,829	48,090	31,300	83,829	48,090
2005	31,800	83,800	45,500	31,800	83,800	45,500
2010	32,240	83,920	46,750	32,370	84,260	47,110
2020	32,960	83,890	47,690	33,300	84,760	48,320
2030	33,500	83,710	48,000	34,010	84,980	48,728
Build-out	35,200	86,350	49,510	36,200	88,810	50,920

% CHANGE FROM 2005

2010	1.4%	0.1%	2.7%	1.8%	0.5%	3.5%
2020	3.6%	0.1%	4.8%	4.7%	1.1%	6.2%
2030	5.3%	-0.1%	5.5%	6.9%	1.4%	7.1%
Build-out	10.7%	3.0%	8.8%	13.8%	6.0%	11.9%

Historic data sources:

Housing units: US Census & interpolations & building permits

Households: US Census except 2005 = housing units -100 to adjust to build-out basis.

Population: US Census except 2005 = Census 2004 figure adjusted per permits.

Local jobs: MA DET except 2005 = DET adjusted, 1970 adjusted for omitted categories.

Table 3-3. **COMMERCIAL GROWTH LOCATIONS**

LOCATIONS	Commercial floor area (sq. ft.)			Potential % increase	% of potential increase
	Existing	Potential*	Total		
Regional business areas					
Needham Street	2,515,542	2,978,437	5,493,979	118%	38.5%
Chestnut Hill	947,058	448,929	1,395,987	47%	5.8%
Wells Avenue	1,078,152	-	1,078,152	0%	0.0%
Riverside	579,500	100,000	679,500	0%	1.3%
Subtotal	5,120,252	3,527,366	8,647,618	69%	45.6%
Major Centers					
Newton Corner	713,343	325,565	1,038,908	46%	4.2%
Newtonville	684,905	277,873	962,778	41%	3.6%
Newton Centre	649,324	131,198	780,522	20%	1.7%
West Newton	565,848	265,824	831,672	47%	3.4%
Subtotal	2,613,420	1,000,460	3,613,880	38%	12.9%
Local Centers					
Upper Falls Oak Street	280,248	75,021	355,269	27%	1.0%
Upper Falls Echo Br	143,593	125,148	268,741	87%	1.6%
Nonantum	269,018	196,344	465,362	73%	2.5%
Auburndale	207,562	126,784	334,346	61%	1.6%
Hammond/Boylston	154,740	58,854	213,594	38%	0.8%
Newton Highlands	148,888	60,799	209,687	41%	0.8%
Four Corners	117,949	220,618	338,567	187%	2.9%
Newton Lower Falls	88,885	166,748	255,633	188%	2.2%
Subtotal	1,410,883	1,030,316	2,441,199	73%	13.3%
Neighborhood Centers					
Thompsonville	85,924	44,973	130,897	52%	0.6%
Waban	48,658	42,159	90,817	87%	0.5%
Lexington/River	38,608	60,305	98,913	156%	0.8%
Oak Hill Park	-	58,590	58,590	n/a	0.8%
Subtotal	173,190	206,027	379,217	119%	2.7%
All other locations	1,532,255	1,975,831	3,508,086	129%	25.5%
Citywide total	10,850,000	7,740,000	18,590,000	71%	100.0%

* Net added commercial floor area at build-out including special permits under "reasonable" assumptions.

30-Aug-06
Village Commercial

Category choices reflect not only what exists but what is intended to exist in the future.

REGIONAL BUSINESS AREAS are those now containing or intended in the future to contain 1 million or more square feet of commercial floor area. At that scale, they are chiefly supported by a regional market.

- Needham Street
- Wells Avenue
- Chestnut Hill
- Riverside

MAJOR CENTERS are those now containing or intended in the future to contain at least 500,000 square feet, but not more than 1 million square feet of floor area. They too are supported in part by regional markets, but that generally accounts for a smaller share in these compared with the Regional Business Areas.

- Newton Corner
- Newtonville
- Newton Center
- West Newton.

LOCAL CENTERS are those containing or expected to contain 100,000 or more square feet but not as much as 500,000 square feet of commercial floor area. With some exceptions, such areas typically are chiefly supported by a primary market area that is a sub-area of the City.

- Upper Falls at Oak Street (Petee Square)
- Upper Falls at Echo Bridge
- Nonantum
- Auburndale
- Hammond/Boylston
- Newton Highlands
- Four Corners
- Newton Lower Falls
- Elliot/Woodward

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS are those whose locational constraints suggest their continuing to have less than 100,000 square feet of commercial floor area, dominantly serving the immediate vicinity.

- Thompsonville
- Waban
- Lexington/River (Nightcaps Corner)
- Oak Hill Park
- Commonwealth/Irving.

Map 3-4 indicates the classification and location of those centers. The “Economic Development” element of this *Plan* contains a map graphically indicating the current amount of commercial floor area in these centers and their potential total commercial build-out.



CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

REAL PROPERTY REUSE COMMITTEE REPORT

TUESDAY, MAY 26, 2009

Present: Ald. Merrill (Chairman), Ald. Salvucci, Johnson, Danberg, Brandel, Fischman, and Gentile; absent: Ald. Baker

Other Aldermen present: Ald. Linsky and Albright

Also present: John Wilson (Newton Housing Partnership), Phil Herr (Chair Comprehensive Planning Committee), Rob Gifford (Economic Development Commission)

City staff: Michael Kruse and Candace Havens (Planning Department) and Linda Finucane (Clerk)

#150-09 DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT requesting a discussion re the potential redevelopment of the Austin Street municipal parking lot in Newtonville for mixed-use development, including affordable housing.

ACTION: HELD 7-0

NOTE: Alderman Linsky voiced his support of this item before he left to attend the Committee on Community Preservation. Phil Herr gave a PowerPoint presentation (attached) and an overview of HAPI, the Newton Housing Plan Initiative, whose goal is to help the city implement housing-related aims, particularly those articulated in the Comprehensive Plan. The 11 organizations that participate in HAPI have held 5 workshops and identified approximately a dozen actions including exploring several public sites for potential reuse. Alderman Johnson noted that the concept of developing the Austin Street lot with reconfigured parking began in 2005. Last year, interns for the design firm Sasaki Associates included development of the lot as part of a sketch plan made for Newtonville square. That sketch showed one large residential structure. HAPI envisions a mixed residential/commercial development. The committee agreed that although the existing parking lot appears to be underutilized, it is important to retain a number of parking spaces for the existing businesses and the Senior Center.

The purpose of bringing this item before the committee – where the process will begin if a proposal is submitted and the parking lot declared surplus– is to get a sense of the physical, economic, and political feasibility for a public/private partnership development. Currently, the concept is in a preliminary stage and several steps away from the city's issuing a request for proposals. If the sense of the committee is positive, the goal is to put together a package of information by the end of 2009 so the city can begin the formal process for such development. If there is no positive sense, then at least the impediments will be identified and can be addressed. Mr. Kruse asked for a straw vote from the committee this evening.

In response to questions relative to the current economic downturn, Lynn Sweet, of LDS Consulting and a member of HAPI, said that now is the time to plan and that to developers and financiers a project this size is considered small and therefore less risky.

The Chairman asked the committee for a straw vote as to whether the Planning Department should proceed to put together a package to present the committee and the public. The committee voted 7-0-1, with Alderman Gentile abstaining, in the affirmative. The item was held, as were the other items, and the meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Carleton P. Merrill, Chairman

NEWTON HOUSING ACTION PLAN INITIATIVE (HAPI)

A collaborative effort among the Newton Housing Partnership, CAN-DO, U-CHAN, Newton Planning & Development Department, Newton League of Women Voters, AvalonBay Communities, Newton Planning & Development Board, Newton Fair Housing Committee, NCDF.; Newton Human Rights Commission; Newton Economic Development Commission

NEWTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (EDC)

CAN A NEWTONVILLE PARKING LOT BECOME A MODEL FOR DEVELOPMENT IN NEWTON VILLAGES?

Newtonville businesses, shoppers, residents, property owners, and others who care about Newton Villages, please come to help explore how such redevelopment on Austin St. might best be shaped:

- What uses and activities should be included;
- How should buildings be designed; and
- How should parking be handled?

and finally to discuss next steps in light of that.

7:00 PM, Thursday, September 24, 2009
New Art Center, 61 Washington Park, Newtonville



The New Arts Center is accessible, and reasonable accommodations will be provided to persons requiring assistance. If you need an accommodation, contact Trisha Guditz at 617-796-1156, or via email at tguditz@newtonma.gov, or via TDD/TTY at 617-796-1089.

CITY OF NEWTONIN BOARD OF ALDERMENREAL PROPERTY REUSE COMMITTEE REPORTTUESDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2009

Present: Ald. Merrill (Chairman), Ald. Salvucci, Danberg, Fischman, and Baker; absent (Ald. Brandel, Johnson, and Gentile)

City staff: Linda Finucane (Chief Committee Clerk), Ben Solomon-Schwartz (Senior Planner), Candace Havens (Chief Planner)

Also present: Phil Herr, Newton Housing Action Plan Initiative (HAPI)

#150-09 DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT requesting a discussion re the potential redevelopment of the Austin Street municipal parking lot in Newtonville for mixed-use development, including affordable housing.

ACTION: REFERRED TO 2010-2011 BOARD

NOTE: HAPI representative Phil Herr and Planning Director Mike Kruse presented this item to the Committee on May 25, 2009, when the Committee voted informally to support the concept. Mr. Kruse was at the Zoning Board of Appeals this evening, but Mr. Herr joined the Committee. Mr. Herr said that since May, additional studies were undertaken and various plans for reuse were discussed in HAPI workshops in June and September. HAPI will take it up again at its final workshop on December 17 and Mr. Herr anticipates that following that workshop, the study report incorporating a draft Request for Interest will be presented to the Mayor-elect. He reminded the Committee that out of the 8-9 sites identified for potential development by the Comprehensive Plan the Austin Street lot was chosen because it looked the least troublesome. Other than a grant of \$10,000, many people, including architects John Wilson and Rick Heym, have worked pro bono.

Site issues include infrastructure: water service in Austin Street is only a 6" main and the sewer line has a history of backups. The Engineering Division has recommended that a TV inspection be performed to determine the adequacy of storm drainage facilities. The intersection of Walnut and Austin Streets nearly-but-not-quite opposite Newtonville Avenue is seriously flawed and should be redesigned and reconstructed whether a new development occurs or not.

Because the parking lot is currently zoned Public Use, a rezoning will be necessary. HAPI recommends that a Business 4 District, which abuts the site, would be appropriate and allow more height – probably 4-5 stories maximum. A modest sketch shows a 4-story building above one below-grade level and containing about 18,000 sf of business floor area, 18 housing units, and sufficient parking for both the new uses and replacement spaces for the ones displaced from the parking lot. A more aggressive sketch shows approximately 24,000 sf of business floor area, all retail, and 30 housing units, plus required parking for the new uses and replacement spaces. Currently, the lot contains 159 parking spaces, of which 129 are available to the public, and a Goodwill trailer. Recent parking studies show that on average 81-90 spaces are occupied daily.

Ald. Marcia T. Johnson, Chair Zoning & Planning Committee, mjohnson@newtonma.gov
Ald. Susan Albright, Chair Real property Reuse Committee, salbright@newtonma.gov
Ald. Emily Norton, Ward 2 Alderman, enorton@newtonma.gov

In an attempt to determine the order of the presentation at the Public Hearing (Docket #47-14) before the Zoning & Planning & Real Property Reuse Committees, to be held on Tuesday, March 25, 2014, I am led to understand that there is to be no order of presentation.

As a member of the Newton Charter Commission when Article 10 was added to the Newton Charter, it is my best memory that the intent of those provisions was that the interests of the citizens on Newton should take precedence. This would include providing some order to the presentation of complaints, petitions and other matters to the Board of Aldermen.

I refer you to the Rules and Orders of the board of Aldermen, Article IX, Section 2 and Robert's Rules of Order, Part 1, Article 1, Section 3, (1) "*(b) No member who has already had the floor in debate on the immediately pending question is again entitled to it for debate on the same question. As the interests of the assembly are best subserved by allowing the floor to alternate between the friends and enemies of a measure, the chairman, when he knows which side of a question is taken by each claimant of the floor, and these claims are not determined by the above principles, should give the preference to the one opposed to the last speaker.*"

I urge you to adopt a rule for the orderly presentation by both the proponents and the opponents to the questions before you. I suggest this might be achieved by alternating speakers or by giving proponents 30 minutes followed by opponents 30 minutes and alternating in 30 minute intervals thereafter.

mjohnson@newtonma.gov, salbright@newtonma.gov, enorton@newtonma.gov

Board of Aldermen

2010-2011

City of Newton



October 4, 2010

Mayor Setti Warren
City of Newton
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

Dear Mayor Warren:

It is our distinct pleasure that the Board of Aldermen's Real Property Reuse Committee has authorized us, as the Ward 2 Aldermen, to report the Committee's recommendation to proceed with the 'surplusing' process relative to the city- owned parcel located on Austin Street.

As you know, this parcel currently serves as a municipal parking lot. However, many in the community believe it can become a vibrant village center supporting the existing commercial and residential base in the surrounding Newtonville village area. This project is also seen as a potential model for future village re-development in accordance with the smart growth precepts set out in the city's Comprehensive Plan. We recognize you are personally aware of this potential from your participation in the public visioning sessions and your initiative in publishing the Request for Interest (RFI), the responses to which have encouraged the Committee to move ahead.

A working group of the Real Property and Reuse Committee is being formed to work with you to begin the reuse process to allow the Board to proceed with the process set out in Section 2-7 of the ordinances.

We would very much appreciate setting up a meeting to initiate this effort at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Stephen Linsky
Ward Alderman

Susan Albright
Alderman-at-Large

Marcia Johnson
Alderman-at-Large

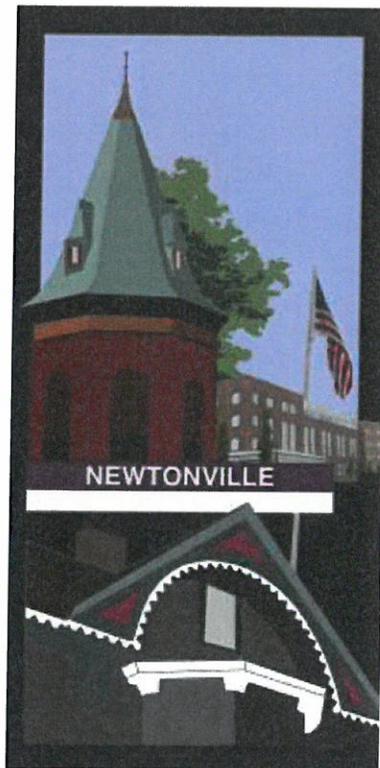
cc: Ald. Vicki Danberg, Chair, Real Property Reuse Committee

Department of Planning and Development

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:

Austin Street Mixed-Use Development

RFP #13-51 Proposal Opening Date: April 25, 2013, at 10:00 a.m.



FEBUARY 14, 2013

Setti D. Warren, Mayor