



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

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Barney S. Heath
Director

November 28, 2023

[By Electronic Mail]

Kat Miller
Planning and Programs Specialist
Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency
One Beacon Street
Boston, MA 02108

RE: Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit Project Eligibility Application/Site Approval

Project Name: 78 Crafts Street
Location: 78-84 Crafts Street; 68-70 Crafts Street; 9 Maguire Court;
17-19 Maguire Court; 67 Court Street; 67R Court Street;
63 Court Street; 31R Maguire Court; 31 Maguire Court;
13-15 Maguire Court; Portion of 24 Maguire Court
Number of Proposed Units: 307
Subsidizing Agency: Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency (MassHousing)
Applicant: Boylston Properties

Dear Ms. Miller:

The Planning and Development Department, on behalf of the City of Newton, appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Project Eligibility/Site Approval application recently submitted by Boylston Properties (the "Applicant") for 78 Crafts Street (the "Project"). This letter constitutes the City's response to your letter addressed to Mayor Fuller, dated October 25, 2023, seeking comments regarding the Project.

The Planning and Development Department (the "Department") solicited written comments from abutters to the proposed project as well as from City staff, and members of the City Council and Boards and Commissions. Comments were received from several abutters, which can be found in Attachment A.

Comments in Response to the Project Proposal

The Planning and Development Department offers the following comments in response to the information provided by the Applicant to help MassHousing evaluate this request for Project Eligibility/Site Approval:

A. Affordable Housing

- **Affordable Housing Need.** The need for affordable housing in Newton is vast, impacting extremely low-income individuals and families to those earning upwards of 120% of the area median income (AMI). These needs continue to persist as evidenced by the latest Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy data published by HUD. Of the total 30,850 households in the City, 23% are low-to-moderate with incomes at or below 80% of the AMI. Startingly, close to 30% of *all* households in Newton, regardless of income level, are housing cost burdened, meaning those individuals or families spend over 30% of their monthly gross income on housing costs. Low-to-moderate income families in Newton are disproportionately affected by this, with 46% of all families at or below 80% AMI paying greater than 50% of their annual incomes on housing costs, making them severely cost burdened.¹ As a result, these households are likely to struggle to afford other basic needs such as food, clothing, transportation, medical care, and childcare, which force difficult trade-offs.

In Newton, the lowest income families experience the greatest challenges related to housing. According to the City's 2016 Housing Strategy, approximately 16% of all households in the City, or over 4,900 households, earn at or below 50% of AMI, yet there are only 2,145 rental units and 106 ownership units affordable to families at these low-income levels.² This affordability gap amongst Newton's vulnerable populations is also highlighted by the over 1,300 families and seniors on the Newton Housing Authority waitlist. Many of these households spend close to ten years on the Housing Authority's waitlist before receiving notification of an available unit in Newton.

While there are a handful of pending and approved developments in the City with SHI-eligible units, these additional units will not meet the overwhelming demand for affordable rental and ownership housing throughout Newton. As of October 2023, 8.90%, or 2,879 units of the City's housing units are listed on Newton's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). However, only 5.2%, or 1,729 units, of the City's housing units are deed-restricted affordable units, set at prices affordable to households at or below 80% AMI.

¹ 2014-2018 CHAS.

² 2011-2015 CHAS.

- **Newton's Housing Strategy and Priorities.** Newton's housing priorities stem from the urgent need for affordable housing. According to the City's *Newton Leads 2040 Housing Strategy*, published in 2016, since 2003 the average sale price of a single-family home in Newton has doubled from approximately \$600,000 to \$1.2 million. A 2021 Boston Globe article cited that more than one out of every four single-family homes sold in Newton that year went for more than \$2 million and the median single-family home price from January to July 2021 was \$1.5 million.³ The rental market in Newton also corresponds to this widening price trend as most rentals in the City are only affordable to households earning 100% of the area median income (AMI) or higher. In addition, the number of households earning less than \$125,000 declined by 22.2% between 2000 and 2013. The combination of escalating housing prices and the City's significant loss of low- and middle-income households over the past 15 years means that without action, Newton will become predominantly a city affordable to only the wealthy, with limited diverse housing options for younger and older Newtonians and those of more limited means.⁴

The dearth of housing options affordable to a variety of populations at a range of incomes, including individuals with disabilities, threatens the vibrancy of our village centers, our schools, and community life. The City, therefore, has consulted with stakeholders and residents to create public plans with clear goals to guide Newton in combatting this challenge. These documents, the City's Comprehensive Plan, the *2040 Housing Leads Strategy*, the Economic Development Strategic Plan, and the Needham and Riverside Vision Plans all identify the protection and broadening of Newton's housing diversity as major priorities. The plans emphasize that the creation of affordable housing could assist in maintaining the diversity of Newton by providing housing opportunities of varying types to different populations at mixed incomes. Doing so creates the opportunity for greater economic and social diversity, as families and individuals of varying ages, ethnicities, occupations, and income levels can find a home in Newton.

The enactment of these overarching goals and others (e.g., walkable village centers, lowering greenhouse gas emissions, co-locating housing, and public transit to address congestion) requires the implementation of key strategies, which are also outlined in the City's public planning documents. One strategy is the purposeful placement of new housing. For instance, housing development in mixed-use developments, near walkable amenities and access to transit.

In addition to the desirability of mixed-use development, Newton also recognizes mixed-income development as an integral strategy. Mixed-income projects that offer equitable housing units and amenities for both low-and middle-income and higher income

³ "More than one out of every four homes in Newton sold for more than \$2 million this year," Boston Globe, John Hilliard, August 31, 2021, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/08/31/metro/more-than-one-out-every-four-homes-newton-sold-more-than-2-million-mayor-says/>

⁴ Newton Leads 2040 Housing Strategy, p. 28

individuals and families are crucial for encouraging newcomers to Newton and helping residents stay in the community. The creation of a greater number of mixed-income developments may help to reverse the trend of Newton's shrinking low- and middle-income populations. Finally, leveraging a mix of local, state, federal, and private dollars to create affordable ownership and rental housing is crucial for Newton to meet its housing goals and create the diverse and welcoming city it desires.

- **Project Unit Mix and Affordability.** The Project will add 62 units affordable to households at 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI): 8 studios, 28 one-bedrooms, 19 two-bedrooms, and 7 three-bedrooms. By producing affordable units at these sizes, the Project allows individuals and families with a range of social and economic diversity to find a home in Newton. The remaining 245 units will be rented at market-rate.

The Project's affordability component responds to the City's interest in adding to the permanent supply of deeply affordable housing stock as articulated earlier in this document, with 62 units being affordable to individuals and families at or below 50% AMI. Newton's Planning and Development Department appreciates the unique opportunity this project provides to set aside deeply affordable units to the City's affordable housing inventory.

B. Land Use, Site Plan Design and Sustainability

The regulation for a Comprehensive Permit under M.G.L. Chapter 40B states that the Subsidizing Agency determines whether *"the conceptual project design is generally appropriate for the site on which it is located, taking into consideration factors that may include proposed use, conceptual site plan and building massing, topography, environmental resources, and integration into existing development patterns."*⁵

- **Land Use and Density.** The subject site is located along the south side of Crafts Street between Court Street to the south and Crafts Street to the north. The subject properties are zoned Manufacturing (MAN) and Multi-Residence 1 (MR-1) and contain a variety of light industrial uses such as automotive services, engineering office, and one two-family residence. The site is largely impervious with pavement and/or building structures located throughout the site. The site is surrounded by a mix of uses including multi- and single-family, public use (including a Department of Public Works building and yard), and neighborhood serving business uses. To the north, properties are zoned Public Use (PUB) and Multi-Residence 1 (MR-1) and to the south properties are zoned MR-1 and MR-2, and to the east one block on Crafts Street is zoned Business Use 1 (BU-1). The single residence districts primarily allow for single-family homes, as well as some institutional or civic uses. In 2022, the City Council approved both a rezoning and special permit for adjacent parcels

⁵ (760 CMR 56.04(4)(c))

to the southeast. The project consisted of a rezoning to Business 4 (BU-4) with an approved elder housing with services facility with 105 independent living units, 52 assisted living beds, and 28 memory care beds. However, the special permit has not been exercised as of the issuance of this memorandum.

The Applicant proposes a series of four multifamily buildings and a separate two-story parking structure on 11 parcels fronting Crafts 4.76 -acre site. There would be a total of 307 apartments ranging from studios to three-bedrooms, of which 62 (20%) would be affordable at 50% of area median income (AMI). A total of 266 parking spaces are proposed. Parking will be located within ground level parking garages and the separate parking structure.

The project requires zoning relief for the use, type of building, dimensional standards, and parking. The MR-1 and MAN zoning districts where the project is located does not allow for multifamily buildings at this scale, therefore there are no dimensional standards to apply, and the ZBA will be required to determine reasonable standards through the comprehensive permit process. The proposed development will convert a majority of the site from a manufacturing use to a residential use. The existing properties on the current site are a mix of older automotive and storage facilities and the site itself lacks appropriate stormwater controls as an older industrial area. The proposal does present an opportunity to improve site conditions including environmental conditions such as stormwater management and open space.

- **Building Massing, Design and Architecture.** The project proposes four residential buildings containing 307 rental units with a mix of studio, one, two, and three-bedrooms. The four buildings are arranged from east to west on the site starting at Crafts Street to an area just north of Court Street and east of Wilton Road. The buildings range in height and size from a four-story to a six-story building (with ground level parking occupying the first story). There is also a two-level parking structure proposed at the western portion of the site to the east of Wilton Road. All existing improvements (including buildings) will be razed prior to construction of the site. The design of the site is constrained by several easements including City of Newton drainage easements, which bisect the property and limit where buildings may be located. It is important to note that all infrastructure improvements within the City easements will need a License Agreement and the applicant will need to work closely with the City to determine appropriate procedures for the protection of City infrastructure in addition to licensing.

In general, Planning supports the design choice to include buildings of varying heights and styles, which helps to minimize the overall visual mass of the project. Planning has concerns about the setback to the residential neighborhood toward Court Street and recommends scaling back the development toward this area and planning for a smoother transition between the density of the proposed development and the residential

neighborhood in the vicinity of Court Street. The applicant should submit renderings and additional information on how the proposed development will appear from Crafts Street, Court Street, and Wilton Road. In addition, the building on Crafts Street may need to be set back further from Crafts Street (proposed at 8.9 feet) to create a more attractive environment for pedestrians and abutters. The Planning Department encourages the applicant to submit to the City's Urban Design Commission for design review, and they are strongly urged to work closely with the Commission prior to filing the Comprehensive Permit application. The applicant has stated they are investigating Passive House feasibility and Planning looks forward to further information on achieving this goal as well as other sustainability commitments.

- **Open Space, Landscaping and Stormwater.** The existing site contains a mix of industrial uses such as automotive services (salvage, storage, maintenance, repair, and sales), mechanical engineering, and one two-family home. The site is largely impervious with very limited vegetated areas. There are no known wetlands or related wetland buffers, streams, rivers, or ledge on the site.

The applicant will be required to comply with the state Stormwater Standards and should consult with the City of Newton Engineering Department if the project moves forward. As part of this review, it will be important to understand the impact of the project on stormwater management and to ensure the project improves upon the existing conditions. This will likely be a critical point of interest of the project by City Staff, Zoning Board members, and the public.

The proposed project as designed lacks usable open space. While there is open space in the form of a courtyard and buffer areas, these have limited function for passive and active recreation. The proposed dog park is not large enough to be functional and could be better located sited away from the active DPW yard. The applicant should find a way to include additional active and passive outdoor areas for residents, ideally incorporating areas for children to play. While there is proposed to be more open space than currently existing on the primarily industrial site, because of the change of use from industrial to residential, it is critical that adequate and functional open space is incorporated into the site plan.

While the proposed project lacks open space, the proposed project will provide a significant improvement on stormwater management where currently little stormwater infrastructure exists. In addition, the site will reduce the amount of impervious surface helping to provide enhanced stormwater treatment and reduced heat island effect from less asphalt surface.

- **Noise, Lighting, and Construction Management.** The applicant should submit a detailed site lighting plan to ensure the lighting does not negatively impact neighboring properties.

HVAC and other equipment and their locations should be selected carefully to minimize sound heard by residential abutters. A construction management plan should be prepared to give assurance to the neighborhood that the contractor will mitigate the impacts of construction, including noise and vibration. The construction management plan should include a designated contact person for the construction along with 24-hour contact information.

- **Access to Public Transit and a Village Center.** The project site is located on Crafts Street in Newtonville, approximately 0.25 miles from the main commercial corridor of Washington Street, with a mix of restaurants, commercial and multi-family developments. The site is located approximately 0.7 miles from the MBTA Newtonville Commuter Rail Station on Washington Street. The site is conveniently located within walking distance of a grocery store (5-minute walk or under 0.2 miles) and many services, restaurants, services, and stores nearby on Washington Street (retail, banking, restaurants, veterinarian, and dental services). Multiple MBTA bus lines run along Washington Street (MBTA Bus 553, 554, and 556) with a stop at 641 Washington Street (within 0.2 miles).

While the site is well-located with access to many convenient destinations for residents, Planning would like to better understand how the applicant plans to improve upon the walking and biking conditions, including onsite facilities as well as the potential for bicycle and pedestrian improvements to facilitate connections in the immediate area. In addition to improved pedestrian connections to the neighborhood, Planning believes there could be better pedestrian connections and pathways internal to the site (between buildings and access to streets) to facilitate residents' movement within the development, which would support the proposed village concept.

- **Site Improvements and Clean Up.** The site consists of a variety of industrial uses and automotive uses and will require careful planning and removal of any hazardous materials that are likely to be present. A portion of the Site is subject to an existing Activity and Use Limitation (AUL) that prohibits residential use, pursuant to the Massachusetts Contingency Plan (MCP). Prior to the acquisition and development of the Site, all hazardous, flammable and/or explosive materials are proposed to be removed from the Site by the current occupants and owners and according to state environmental regulations. The proposed development does present an opportunity to address historic issues with prior hazardous materials that exist on the site currently.
- **Traffic, Parking and Transportation Impacts.** The Planning Department will request authorization from the ZBA to engage with an on-call consultant to respond to the Applicant's traffic study and potential impacts and mitigations. Of particular concern is safe access to and from Crafts Street. The Project proposes to add 266 parking stalls, the

majority of which will be located in ground level garages and a separate two-level parking structure, for the 307 apartments. More information is necessary to fully analyze traffic impacts, parking needs, infrastructure improvements, loading, and circulation within the site.

There will need to be careful consideration of the planning around the shared driveway with 67 Court Street to ensure that the needs for emergency access are balanced with the potential impact on the residential abutters. Further details will be required on the roadway layout including Maguire Court. The Department supports minimizing parking and impervious surfaces to the extent feasible and incentivizing alternative modes of transportation. The Department is concerned with the siting of ground level parking on the majority of proposed residential structures as it gives a more commercial instead of residential character. The applicant should submit a traffic impact analysis study, parking analysis, and transportation demand management plan as part of their Comprehensive Permit application.

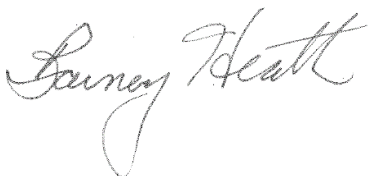
C. Conclusion

Balancing many factors, the proposed multi-family use may be appropriate for this site on Crafts Street; however, the design and level of density will be important components to consider as the site is located in a neighborhood with abutting residential, public, and commercial uses as well as a recently approved six-story elder housing with services facility. Determining the appropriate levels of density as well as other dimensional controls such as building height, floor area, and setbacks, will require careful consideration by the ZBA along with input from City staff, peer reviewers, and the community.

We would like to see the applicant address the concerns and questions raised above, as well as those included in the attached abutter comment letters. If a Comprehensive Permit application is filed City staff will provide additional analysis of the Project, both internally and through peer reviews, pending an announcement of 40B project eligibility from MassHousing.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the contents of this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barney Heath".

Barney Heath
Director, Planning and Development Department

cc: Mayor Ruthanne Fuller
Alissa O. Giuliani, City Solicitor
Applicant
Councilor Albright
Councilor Lucas
Councilor Norton

ATTACHMENT A: Comment Letters/Emails Received

Attachment A

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

From: Bob Kavanagh <bob.kavanagh@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, November 9, 2023 1:07 PM

To: Mayor Ruthanne Fuller <rfuller@newtonma.gov>

Cc: Eleonora Azenstein <norachka17@gmail.com>; Alice Denn <TAAEP@comcast.net>; Marcy Campbell <VSMarcy@aol.com>; Michael Kaufman <mkkaufman@rcn.com>; Patrice Simonelli <psimonelli@geico.com>; Jacques Lucchesi <jacques.lucchesi@gmail.com>; Kerri Collins <kerri.mendonca@gmail.com>; Ann Rounseville <annrounseville@yahoo.com>; Lenore Miller <ldmillersp@aol.com>; Scott Machen <scottmmachen@gmail.com>; Bob O'Hare <81ohare@comcast.net>; Janet Porcaro <janet@janetporcaro.net>; Andy Thomas <thomaslepore@yahoo.com>; Zita Hesterman <zita.hesterman@gmail.com>; Abhishek Verma <abhiverma_us@yahoo.com>; Jacob Hesterman <jhesterman@gmail.com>; Emily Norton <emily@emilynorton.org>; Lois Biener <lois.biener@umb.edu>; Barbara Quebec <bquebec@rcn.com>; Andre Luk <luka00@gmail.com>; Elina Karasik <eli_krs@yahoo.com>; Shirley <tshews1234@yahoo.com>; Anne Slater <anne.slater70@gmail.com>; Tricia Canning <canningp7@aol.com>; Stefano Navaroli <snavaroli@gmail.com>; Brendan Collins <brendan@thistleandleek.com>; Sandy Ow <Robert_Ow@yahoo.com>; Al Quebec <alquebec@outlook.com>; Vanessa McClinchy <v_mcclinchy@hotmail.com>; Bob Kavanagh <bob.kavanagh@gmail.com>; Kathy Lin <ywklin@gmail.com>; Monica Oh <hoacinom@yahoo.com>; Adam Lunin <adam.lunin@gmail.com>; bill.keaveney@arbelli.com; John Deffely <john.deffely@comcast.net>; Margaret Howard <mardihow@gmail.com>; Gabriel Wachman <wachmang@gmail.com>; Dow Drukker <dowdrukker4@gmail.com>; Miri Skolnik <mskolnik@mit.edu>; Peter F. Harrington <pfh@aol.com>; Annie Cohen <paulandannieblues@yahoo.com>; Danijela Dukovski <danijela.dukovski@gmail.com>; Lia Fahey <lia.fahey@yahoo.com>; Christina Wyee <christinawyee@hotmail.com>; Anand Nair <anand_nair79@yahoo.com>; Kate Huleatt <khuleatt@gmail.com>; Sheng Xiao <immunology@gmail.com>; Tim Stehly <tstehly12@gmail.com>; Tressa Fiore <tressalicsw@aol.com>; Monique Brown <brownmank2002@yahoo.com>; Carole Kavanagh <bace@rcn.com>; Datong Tang <ristocetina@gmail.com>; Lynda Holich <lhlich@hotmail.com>; Ken Brown <brownmank2002@yahoo.com>; Sarah Quigley <sarah.p.quigley@gmail.com>; Bent Sorensen <bent.e.sorensen@verizon.net>; Dong Li <lidong329@yahoo.com>; BK Yun Choi <rayniky@hotmail.com>; Jacqueline O'Toole <jotoole@GentleGiant.com>; Susan Albright <salbright@newtonma.gov>; Emily Norton <emily@emilynorton.org>; Tarik Lucas <tariklucas19@gmail.com>; David Micley <dmicley@gmail.com>

Subject: Meeting to discuss 40B proposal from Boylston Properties

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Hello

I want to arrange a meeting with you to discuss the 307 unit, 261 parking spot development being proposed by Boylston Properties for Court St/Craft Street.

We need to meet before any official response is given to the Commonwealth regarding the city's position.

When the 40B project at 77 Court St was under discussion, we were told by Mayor Warren that his administration would withhold official comment until after meeting with residents. That promise was broken by him. We do not want the same result on this project so we need to meet prior to the deadline for submitting comments.

The deadline for submissions according to the letter dated Oct 25th that you received from MassHousing is Monday November 27th. Residents of this neighborhood did not receive notice until November 8th so time is of the essence.

Thank you

Bob Kavanagh
69 Court Street
Newton, MA 02458
617-964-1136
bob.kavanagh@gmail.com

From: Bob Kavanagh <bob.kavanagh@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, November 11, 2023 7:46 PM
To: Mayor Ruthanne Fuller <rfuller@newtonma.gov>; Barney Heath <bheath@newtonma.gov>
Cc: City Council <citycouncil@newtonma.gov>; David Micley <dmicley@gmail.com>;
alan@alanlovovits.org; Rena Getz <rl.getz@verizon.net>; Randall Block <randy.s.b.4510@gmail.com>
Subject: 500+ units and the Mayor won't talk to us

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Dear Mayor Fuller

I must say that I was taken aback by your refusal to meet with Newton residents concerning the now 307 unit development planned for our already densely populated neighborhood. Since you had time on August 23rd to meet with Boylston Properties, I am at a loss to understand why you have no time for those who will have to live with now 500+ new apartments when you add Robert Korf's 200 unit senior living project in close proximity to our homes

You said that we could submit comments and that was it. How in heaven's name are we to comment in a knowledgeable way with limited time and information? I will remind you that comments are due by Nov 17th.

None of us were notified by the Planning Department until the day after the elections, November 8th, about these very large alterations. One had to [download a 10MB file](#) and then read a 249 page submission from Boylston Properties. And the residents have had no further meetings with Boylston Properties since Nov 19, 2022 and none have been announced.

Perhaps you cannot understand why many of us are feeling like the proverbial mushroom: kept in the dark and covered in manure.

Bob Kavanagh (registered voter and taxpayer)

[69 Court Street](#)

[Newton, MA 02458](#)

617-964-1136

bob.kavanagh@gmail.com

From: Jon Pollack <jpollack01@comcast.net>
Sent: Saturday, November 11, 2023 12:28 PM
To: Brenda Belsanti <bbelsanti@newtonma.gov>
Cc: Jennifer Caira <jcaira@newtonma.gov>; Barney Heath <bheath@newtonma.gov>; Fiona Epstein <fepstein56@comcast.net>; bob.kavanagh@gmail.com; Mayor Ruthanne Fuller <rfuller@newtonma.gov>; Susan Albright <susansophia.albright@gmail.com>; tariklucas19@gmail.com; emily@emilynorton.org; Michael Kaufman <mkkaufman@rcn.com>
Subject: 78 Crafts Street Project

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Comments on Comprehensive Permit Site Approval Application for 78 Crafts Street Project

I have some preliminary comments (notice was received just a few days ago) on the comprehensive permit site approval application for the proposed 78 Crafts Street project. I'm a nearby resident, and my residence is less than 200 feet from portions of the project. As a result, I have some concerns about the effect of the project on the nearby neighborhood.

This is a large project that is proposed in a part of Newton that has historically been disproportionately impacted by nearby, non-residential activities, such as those at the DPW yard and those at the adjacent Belli facility. We welcome the opportunity to participate meaningfully in future discussions and review activities involving this proposed project.

Construction

- Is there a construction plan?
- What is the proposed duration and scheduling (days per week, hours per day) for construction activities, including deliveries?
- What measures will be taken to limit impacts (noise, vibration, dust, diesel emissions) on the neighborhood?
- The application indicates that there may be hazardous waste on site. Will there be an environmental assessment? Will any wastes be remediated?

Project Design

- Will the "podium parking" areas and the dedicated 2-level parking structure (Building E) be fully enclosed or screened to limit impacts of noise (alarms) and headlights from vehicles?
- It appears that the height of project structures will exceed those of nearby features, such as the DPW sand/salt sheds and buildings on Court Street. The application should include visual renderings so that neighbors can visualize how the proposed structures would be perceived from several vantage points in the neighborhood.

- **The application should also examine the extent to which the proposed structures may reduce the quantity of sunlight that the neighborhood receives (shadowing).**
- **The application has no analysis of potential effects on traffic and congestion. The addition of 266 parking spaces as part of the project would be expected to generate an appreciable numbers of vehicle trips that might affect traffic flow and level of service on Crafts Street. Traffic currently backs up at times near the corner of Washington Street and Crafts Street, due in part to vehicles exiting Whole Foods. In addition, it can be difficult to turn onto Crafts Street from Central Avenue due to the backup of vehicles at the light at the corner of Crafts Street and Watertown Street. Additional traffic associated with the proposed project would be expected to exacerbate this problem.**

**Jon Pollack and Fiona Epstein
22 Turner Terrace
Newtonville, MA 02460**

From: Janet Porcaro <janet@janetporcaro.net>

Sent: Wednesday, November 15, 2023 10:27 AM

To: Brenda Belsanti <bbelsanti@newtonma.gov>; David micley <micleyfornewton@gmail.com>; Susan Albright <susansophia.albright@gmail.com>; Barney Heath <bheath@newtonma.gov>; Emily Norton <emily@emilynorton.org>

Subject: Boylston Properties request for project eligibility from Mass Housing Finance Agency

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

I am expressing my strong opposition to the proposed development project at 78 Crafts Street. A 307-rental unit development would impact the surrounding neighborhoods and beyond in a negative way. The City of Newton has too many new rental developments (and more coming) to serve the needs of that demographic.

Newton needs more homeownership opportunities. Homeownership also increases stability for Newton. Homeowners are less likely than renters to move frequently. Locally, homeowners settle in, make friends, get to know their neighbors and develop a sense of community. A commitment to a community fosters civic participation.

"Research has consistently shown the importance of the housing sector on the economy and the long-term social and financial benefits to individual homeowners. The economic benefits of the housing market and homeownership are immense and well documented. . .

. . .In addition to tangible financial benefits, homeownership brings substantial social benefits for families, communities, and the country as a whole. Because of these societal benefits, policy makers have promoted homeownership through a number of channels. Homeownership has been an essential element of the American Dream for decades and continues to be so even today. " [Social Benefits of Homeownership and Stable Housing, National Association of Realtors](#)

These oversized developments also cause increased traffic and parking congestion and strain the school system.

Please consider these important facts before you allow this development to go forward. If this development is built, our City will be impacted negatively.

Yours truly,
Janet Porcaro

--

Janet Porcaro, Realtor®
617-797-9497
Keller Williams Realty

1340 Center Street, 202
Newton, MA 02459



November 17, 2003

Dear Commissioner Heath, members of the Planning Department and MassHousing:

I am writing as a 50-year resident of Newton. I grew up on Court Street adjacent to the site of the proposed 40B at 78 Crafts Street and neighboring properties. I know the history of the neighborhood, its land use and its topography. That is why I am writing to say that the site is wildly inappropriate for the 307 unit development that is being proposed, for several reasons:

-the site sits on an underground waterway. There have been many incidents where intense construction projects have disrupted the water table, causing building failures both upstream and downstream of the new construction.

-the site is adjacent to another 40B development. This is virtually if not entirely unprecedented. One of the goals of 40B is to distribute affordable housing more equitably. Clustering these developments on adjacent lots amounts to segregation of lower-income populations away from neighborhoods of average or greater income.

-Crafts Street is too narrow to manage the amount of car and truck traffic required to serve 300 units.

-Rental apartments are a moneymaking proposition for a landlord and do not allow residents to build equity or community roots.

-There is no wheelchair accessible rapid transit within 2 miles of the site, and the nearest bus line is on Washington Street is almost a quarter mile away.

There are more reasons, but as the City was late in notifying neighbors, I wanted to make sure to get this letter finished in time. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the number below.

Thank you,
Ann Cohen
50 Court Street
617-501-8990
email: paulandannieblues@yahoo.com

November 17, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

To put it simply, the 307- unit development proposed by Boylston Properties is totally out of context with the neighborhood, where most of the homes are modest one- or two- family dwellings occupied by a diverse population. While the properties they plan to incorporate into this project may seem unattractive at first glance, the fact of the matter is that they have minimal impact on area residents. There is minimal visibility from Court and Craft Streets, and noise and traffic from these businesses is also negligible.

Secondly, it is a fallacy that this will be a transit-oriented development. The commuter rail and express busses are of meaningful use only for those who work in Boston and who use them during commuting hours. In contrast, the Green Line offers much more service throughout the day, so we are left asking why there is little building along its route on the south side of Newton.

Living next door to the 40B development on Court St., we have firsthand observations on which to base our belief that residents of the proposed Crafts. St. development will be using their cars for almost everything. They won't be walking or biking or taking the train. The amount of traffic that this will add to Crafts and Washington Streets is alarming. Both already have serious back-ups at rush hour. The 200+ unit senior housing

project planned for Crafts St. will further exacerbate this problem. As senior citizens and grandparents, we need to be concerned about the impact on safety and air quality that all of this additional traffic congestion will bring to our neighborhood.

Thank you for your consideration,

Carole Kavanagh
69 Court St.
Newton, MA 02458

Why Are We So Lucky and Unique?

Where does one start?

The obvious place to start is the sheer size of this project: 5 separate structures ranging in size from 4+ story to 6 story apartment buildings and a 2 story parking garage to boot.

But no, that is not where I am going to start. I will start with my understanding that the Mayor met with the developers of this project and encouraged them to go forward.

What role did the Mayor have in bringing this project to fruition? It will be very difficult for the Mayor to take an objective view if she was involved at all in bringing the developers together and encouraging them.

Now on a very personal level, I have been unable to find any residents of Newton or in all of the Commonwealth who are scheduled to have two (2) separate and distinct 40B projects abutting their property on two (2) separate sides: to the west property line and now on the northern property line. One structure towers 5 stories above our backyard while the newest addition to our backyard will be more than 4 stories.

Why are we so lucky and unique?

The affected parties to this development were not notified until Nov 8th, the day after a very contentious City Council election. That has provided the residents minimal time to download Boylston Properties' (BP) application, digest its 249 pages, study maps and architectural drawings and then compose a thoughtful, intelligent critique of the project.

Add to that the fact that the Mayor and her Planning Department never bothered to hold a meeting with residents to explain the 40B process. Once again, kept in the dark.

Why are we so lucky and unique?

Seeing that the Mayor held at least one meeting with BP on August 23rd, it is difficult to understand why residents were kept in dark so long. The last meeting that residents had with BP was on Nov 19, 2022. Such **massive changes** have been made to the plan that we were shown a year ago that the meeting last year is now meaningless.

Why are we so lucky and unique?

What massive changes you might well ask.

For starters, the project grew from *5 parcels totaling 148000 SF of land* to *11 parcels totaling 205000 SF*. This 39% growth took place between November 2022 and July 2023. This was all done while keeping the neighbors totally uninformed and in the dark about this explosive growth. Engine 6 was shown these plans on July 12th however. I wonder why?

Why the need for so much more property?

For starters, the number of units grew from 163 to 307, an 88% increase in the number of units.

Why are we so lucky and unique?

Parking spaces increased from 221 to 262, an almost 20% increase. Yet the # of apartments grew so exponentially that there is now only .85 spaces/unit. Where are guests supposed to park? Perhaps on the surrounding residential streets.

The project now includes the aforementioned 2-story parking garage for 92 vehicles. The only public parking lot in all of Newton that has more parking spaces than this is the Langley Lot in Newton Centre. Why are we so lucky and unique?

How in heaven's name are we, the most directly affected Newton citizens, who have been kept in the dark about all these changes, suppose to submit our concerns in a thoughtful and timely manner when we are treated like mushrooms by the Mayor, the Planning Department and the developers: kept in the dark and covered in manure.

Newton and the Commonwealth are forever saying how they are concerned about senior citizen and want us to age in place. It is difficult to believe there is really any concern for us when the Mayor and the Planning Department and the Commonwealth plan to insert many hundreds of vehicles into our living environment with all the accompanying pollution and noise. The current land uses are minimally invasive seeing that many of them are closed on weekends and are unseen by most residents. Add this environmental stress to the pollution we already suffer here due to the very close proximity of the Mass Pike, Washington St and the MBTA commuter rail and it would seem that Newton and the Commonwealth are more concerned with we seniors dying in place than they are with us aging in place.

Currently the entire Newton city government is very busy with VCOD/MRT zoning. Do I have to remind the Mayor and the head of the Planning Department that the maximum height allowed in the VC3 is capped at 4.5 stories. Take a look at the architectural plans from BP and, lo and behold, there are 4 different structures that blow right by this supposed 'limit'. Is this why only the south side of Court St was zoned MRT?

Again, why are we so lucky and unique?

I will reiterate one final time: How do the Mayor and her Planning Department expect the most directly affected Newton citizens, who have been kept in the dark about all these changes, to submit our concerns in a thoughtful and timely manner when we are treated like the proverbial mushrooms by the city administration and the developers.

Robert and Carole Kavanagh
69 Court Street
Newtonville, MA 02458
617-964-1136
Bob.kavanagh@gmail.com

From: Lin <quanlin0521@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, November 17, 2023 4:52 PM
To: Brenda Belsanti <bbelsanti@newtonma.gov>
Subject: 78 Crafts Street Project

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Hi Newton Government,

I'm the neighbor on Craft Street. When will this project start? My concern is:

1. The air pollution
2. Safety in our neighborhood
3. Our property value will be affected.

How will you address these issues?

Thank you,
-Lin

From: Paul Rishell <paul.rishell@yahoo.com>

Sent: Friday, November 17, 2023 4:50 PM

To: bbelisanti@newtonma.gov; Brenda Belsanti <belsanti@newtonma.gov>; Barney Heath <bheath@newtonma.gov>; Jennifer Caira <jcaira@newtonma.gov>

Cc: Emily Norton <councilornorton@gmail.com>; Tarik Lucas <tlucas@newtonma.gov>; Susan Albright <susansophia.albright@gmail.com>; Mayor Ruthanne Fuller <rfuller@newtonma.gov>

Subject: 40B

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Dear Commissioner Heath, members of the Planning Department and MassHousing:

I am writing as a 50-year resident of Newton. I grew up on Court Street adjacent to the site of the proposed 40B at 78 Crafts Street and neighboring properties. I know the history of the neighborhood, its land use and its topography. That is why I am writing to say that the site is wildly inappropriate for the 307 unit development that is being proposed, for several reasons:

- the site sits on an underground waterway. There have been many incidents where intense construction projects have disrupted the water table, causing building failures both upstream and downstream of the new construction.
- the site is adjacent to another 40B development. This is virtually if not entirely unprecedented. One of the goals of 40B is to distribute affordable housing more equitably. Clustering these developments on adjacent lots amounts to segregation of lower-income populations away from neighborhoods of average or greater income.
- Crafts Street is too narrow to manage the amount of car and truck traffic required to serve 300 units.
- Rental apartments are a moneymaking proposition for a landlord and do not allow residents to build equity or community roots.
- There is no wheelchair accessible rapid transit within 2 miles of the site, and the nearest bus line is on Washington Street is almost a quarter mile away.

There are more reasons, but as the City was late in notifying neighbors, I wanted to make sure to get this letter finished in time. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the number below.

Thank you,
Ann Cohen
50 Court Street
617-501-8990
email: paulandannieblues@yahoo.com

From: Teresa Sauro <stat766@comcast.net>

Sent: Friday, November 17, 2023 11:46 AM

To: Brenda Belsanti <bbelsanti@newtonma.gov>; Barney Heath <bheath@newtonma.gov>; Alyssa Sandoval <asandoval@newtonma.gov>

Cc: 'Cristiniana Cardoso' <cristiniana2611usa@icloud.com>; 'HauckBurke, Marcela' <marcela.hauck-burke@steward.org>; 'antoinette gentile' <plumis8@yahoo.com>; 'alison leary' <alisonlearymooradian@gmail.com>; andrea mazzola <andreamazzola4622@gmail.com>; Barbara Wong <WongJBT@gmail.com>; 'benny arpino' <BarpinoJr@gmail.com>; janinestewart510@yahoo.com; Jimmy Pellegrine <jimpell538@gmail.com>; 'john oliver' <john@jayareo.com>; johnkathymac@yahoo.com; linda de Valpine <linda@greentailtable.com>; 'lisa difelice' <lisa.difelice@arbelli.com>; 'lois Dominique' <loismargaret@gmail.com>; 'maria greenberg' <echomaria1@gmail.com>; leofm294 <leofm294@gmail.com>; 'rajeev parlikar' <rajeevparlikar@gmail.com>; 'rich sauro' <abtechrich@verizon.net>; 'stacey horsik' <horsiks@rcn.com>
Subject: RE: Court/Maguire 307 40B

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

My name is Terry Sauro, Chair of the Nonantum Neighborhood Association, and I am writing to you in regards to 40B project at 78 Craft Street that backs up to Court Street.

Our concerns are:

- 1. Traffic and the traffic that will go into the adjacent streets such as Clinton, and then Lincoln Road, Ashmont..**
- 2. Density**
- 3. Number of units 307**

We have a 40B on Riverdale with 206 units which is quite large filtering their traffic on to California Street and now this proposed site will have 307 units.

Thank you

**Terry Sauro, Chair
Nonantum Neighborhood Association**

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Sent: Friday, November 17, 2023 11:46 AM

To: Brenda Belsanti <bbelsanti@newtonma.gov>; Barney Heath <bheath@newtonma.gov>; Alyssa Sandoval <asandoval@newtonma.gov>

Cc: 'Cristiniana Cardoso' <cristiniana2611usa@icloud.com>; 'HauckBurke, Marcela' <marcela.hauck-burke@steward.org>; 'antoinette gentile' <plumis8@yahoo.com>; 'alison leary' <alisonlearymooradian@gmail.com>; andrea mazzola <andreamazzola4622@gmail.com>; Barbara Wong <WongJBT@gmail.com>; 'benny arpino' <BarpinoJr@gmail.com>; janinestewart510@yahoo.com; Jimmy Pellegrine <jimpell538@gmail.com>; 'john oliver' <john@jayareo.com>; johnkathymac@yahoo.com; linda de Valpine <linda@greentailtable.com>; 'lisa difelice' <lisa.difelice@arbelli.com>; 'lois Dominique' <loismargaret@gmail.com>; 'maria greenberg' <echomaria1@gmail.com>; leofm294 <leofm294@gmail.com>; 'rajeev parlikar' <rajeevparlikar@gmail.com>; 'rich sauro' <abtechrich@verizon.net>; 'stacey horsik' <horsiks@rcn.com>
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We have a 40B on Riverdale with 206 units which is quite large filtering their traffic on to California Street and now this proposed site will have 307 units.

Thank you

**Terry Sauro, Chair
Nonantum Neighborhood Association**

From: Jackie Otoole <jotoole224@gmail.com>

Sent: Saturday, November 18, 2023 2:49 AM

To: Mayor Ruthanne Fuller <rfuller@newtonma.gov>; Barney Heath <bheath@newtonma.gov>; City Council <citycouncil@newtonma.gov>; David Micley <dmicley@gmail.com>; alan@alanlovovits.org; Rena Getz <rl.getz@verizon.net>; Brenda Belsanti <bbelsanti@newtonma.gov>

Subject: the large development behind court street.

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Dear Mayor Fuller,

Thank you for asking that I submit questions and concerns regarding the very large 40B development in our neighborhood behind Court St. I am flattered that you believe I can digest and fathom it all so quickly... But alas! I cannot.

I don't quite understand what is where, as I am not used to looking at site maps, or even which are the residence buildings. Therefore it is difficult to understand the specific personal impact on my property. But I can see that this is a huge impact on our neighborhood, and our lives, and we should be better informed, and we certainly need more time to respond to the enormous change-up. On the one hand we are told (or perhaps I should say 'we are NOT told') that it's 40B, so we and our city representatives are not part of the process. But we can comment, but that is with ridiculously short notice.

One thing I can understand easily, is that the expectation for the number of cars and needed parking seems unrealistic. Though we have better public transportation than some other neighborhoods; it is NOT THAT great. It only works for certain destinations at certain times. Many people who use the commuter rail etc, drive from their home and park in our neighborhood. It is already hard to park around the village area. Many people in the neighborhood walk to the public transportation to go to into the city; but they have cars to go to other places. I imagine our new neighbors won't be that different. I understand that developments are being strongly encouraged to be family friendly. That's great, and it means more people that need to go to more places, activities, events and social gatherings. It is unlikely the commuter rail and bus routes and their limited schedules will accommodate. Families might do a lot without cars, but they will need them. I expect they will have lots of visitors with cars. The parking reality does not seem to be properly addressed.

Thank you for your attention.

Jackie O'Toole

From: Leonardo Neves <leobafunfa@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, November 20, 2023 12:16 PM
To: Brenda Belsanti <bbelsanti@newtonma.gov>
Subject: 78 Crafts St. project

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Hi,

I'm excited to see interest in developing 78 crafts st. I live directly across the street from the project site. However there are a few concerns on our part:

1. I would like to see more of a green buffer between the first building and Crafts St.. Based on the project images the side of the building will be facing Crafts with very little space between the building and the sidewalk. I would like to see a bigger distance and the commitment from the developer to add greenery and trees in there.
2. The site is currently a mixed-use area, and honestly, I would like to keep that way. I would like to push the developer to add 2+ commercial spaces in the project, as I believe this could also help avoiding people driving (adding to the already busy Crafts St.) to get places. Would love to see things that would help avoid that from happening, going in there, for example a coffee shop, dry-cleaners, restaurants, etc..
3. My biggest concern however is that the project currently has 0.8 parking spaces per unit. I would like to see at least 1 parking space per unit PLUS guest/visitor spaces (would recommend at least 10% of total amount of unites for guest/visitor spaces. (would like to remind everyone involved that there is no street parking allowed on Crafts St on the side where the building will go up.

Parking is also necessary because this park of the city doesn't have any buses connecting people to the wider public transportation.

4- Combining this project with the proposed project right next door, we are talking about almost 600 new units to the block. There is a st light (Crafts at Washington) less than a mile away, the street cannot hold a potential increase of 600 cars entering and leaving the buildings. I would like to see what the city and developer have to show for safety and easy traffic flow of the surrounding streets.

I saw that the current proposal is for the residents to be able to get in and get out from Crafts AND Court Street. This is a MOST in my opinion for the project to go ahead. We can not have just a one way in and one way out to the potential number of cars this will bring.

Looking forward to discussing more about my concerns and excitement for the project.

Best,
Leonardo

From: Nicole Payne <njpayne216@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 21, 2023 2:42 PM
To: Brenda Belsanti <bbelsanti@newtonma.gov>; Jennifer Caira <jcaira@newtonma.gov>
Cc: Barney Heath <bheath@newtonma.gov>; micleyfornewton@gmail.com
Subject: 78 Crafts Street

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Mass Housing and Newton Planning:

I have lived at 77 Court Street for nearly six years and am concerned about how my neighborhood functions.

I attended an outdoor meeting about this proposed development approximately one year ago. At the time the neighbors in attendance stated that this project is much too large for that property, would completely change the neighborhood in an intrusive way, would be bringing more renters into the area, who have little interest in Newton's future, and the added traffic would threaten the neighborhood we now have.

Apparently this new proposal is even larger than was originally suggested. The footprint is much too large for that space, unless the buildings are allowed to climb into the sky at five, six or more stories. At that size the buildings would dwarf every other building nearby, blocking light and casting shadows on the neighborhood.

Currently Court and Crafts Streets are primarily residential, with homes, and even my condo building, no higher than 3 stories. Erecting five very tall buildings in this tight plot of land would not maintain the quiet neighborhood we want and bought into.

Every community should have rental apartments available but Newtonville already has two new buildings whose units are only for rent. Bringing 300 more units of rental space within 2 blocks of the other new buildings will establish Newtonville as a place of temporary housing, of people just passing through who have little commitment to Newton's future.

Bringing 200-400 car trips per day down Crafts Streets will be more than unpleasant, it will be dangerous. Court Street is a small, narrow one-way street right now and adding even 100 more car trips will cause disruption and accidents.

Please do not go forward with plans to bring over 300 rental units into our quiet, established neighborhood. Newtonville has already paid its dues regarding rental property. We do not want or need a gigantic project, as proposed, in our neighborhood.

**Nicole Payne
77 Court Street, Unit 209
617-939-3533**