

Thursday, May 16, 2024

Mayor's Newton Update



Route 9 Apartments Approved

Newton's Zoning Board of Appeals approved last week the Toll Brothers 40B project to build 184 apartments at 528 Boylston Street on the eastbound side of Route 9 between Olde Field and Dudley Roads and behind Hagen Road. The 6-acre site is currently used by Sam White & Sons, a landscaping company and includes a laydown area for mulch and other materials.

Of the 184 apartments, 25% or 46 units are affordable. These deed restricted affordable apartments include 37 which will be affordable to households earning up to 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI), and 9 which will be affordable to households earning up to 50% AMI. (Click [here](#) for information on Area Median Income levels.)

The Zoning Board of Appeals heard over the course of a year of public hearings from a lot of neighbors with concerns.

In addition to taking into consideration the concerns of neighbors, the ZBA operates under the State's Chapter 40B Affordable Housing law enacted in 1969. Developers who choose to proceed through the Chapter 40B process apply for "comprehensive permits" directly through a local Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) (which Toll Brothers chose to do). This law allows developers in Massachusetts to bypass local zoning if their plans include a particular amount of affordable housing in their proposal and are determined to be eligible by Mass Housing or another subsidizing agency. In other words, developers can choose to bypass the Newton City Council's special permit process and instead apply for a 40B comprehensive permit with Newton's Zoning Board of Appeals.

Under the State law, in considering an application, the ZBA must balance the regional need for housing against Newton's health, safety, open space, site and building design concerns.

Over the course of the year of public hearings and the extensive input from the community, City staff and the City's external peer reviewers, the ZBA reviewed and considered the complexities of this site. This included access to and from Route 9, stormwater and groundwater concerns, safe pedestrian access through the site and along Route 9, the amount and location of open space, and the proximity of the building to nearby single-family homes.

In the process, Toll Brothers made modifications to their original plan. The number of apartments was reduced from 244 to 184 and the overall building size was reduced from 493,000-square feet to 361,000-square feet. The building was moved further away from the neighbors along Hagen Road. City stormwater requirements were considered, and the project will meet or exceed all of them.

The ZBA members included in their decision specific conditions to provide both mitigations and protections for the neighborhood, including:

- Installing a new 5-foot-wide sidewalk and a 10-foot landscape edge to provide a buffer along the property's Route 9 frontage.
- Extending the current Route 9 island on the Parker Street ramp to eliminate the dangerous maneuver of vehicles sharply turning from Route 9 onto Sheldon Road.
- Striping a new acceleration/deceleration lane from the Parker Street ramp to allow for a more gradual entry on to and exiting from Route 9.
- Installing two speed feedback signs on Dudley Road to make drivers aware of the speed at which they are travelling to help reduce speeding.
- Extending the future Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Multi-Use Path along Route 9 from Olde Field Road to the apartment building to improve safety for all pedestrians along Route 9.
- Providing a north-south footpath through the site with landscape screening to provide a pedestrian connection to Hagen Road from Boylston Street.
- Contributing \$500,000 in mitigation funding to the City for off-site improvements in transportation, pedestrian, bicycling, safety, open space, or recreation; additionally, the developer must pay \$582,183 to the City for sewer and stormwater infrastructure improvements to decrease inflow and infiltration (I&I).
- Committing to an all electric and Passive House certified building; additionally, the developer will conduct an embodied carbon analysis, and 20% of the parking stalls will be equipped with electric vehicle charging stations, and an additional 30% of the parking stalls will be EV ready.

At the time the 528 Boylston project was filed by Toll Brothers with the ZBA, the City had not yet reached the 40B safe harbor threshold (i.e., 10% of year-round housing being eligible for the state's subsidized housing inventory). Now that this threshold has been met, the ZBA has more discretion over the approval of future 40B projects. Read Newton's current 40B Safe Harbor status calculations [here](#).

The project still needs review by the City's Conservation Commission; it will be subject to an Order of Conditions under the Wetland Protection Act to ensure the construction of the project does not have an adverse impact on the adjacent

wetlands. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) also needs to approve the changes and access to Route 9.

School Committee Votes No on School Choice

The Newton School Committee last week voted against a plan (6 against, 1 for, 1 abstention, 1 absent) that would have allowed students from outside Newton to attend the Newton Public Schools under the state's Inter-District School Choice program.

I want to commend Superintendent Dr. Anna Nolin for bringing School Choice forward for the School Committee to consider as a way to supplement the \$282.6 million FY2025 NPS budget.

I came into the discussions with an open mind. However, after considering the information provided, I can not support School Choice for Newton. As a member of the School Committee, I voted no.

Click [here](#) to watch last week's School Committee starting at the 2:49:35 mark of the NewTV broadcast.

Click [here](#) to read more about School Choice from my Update of April 22.

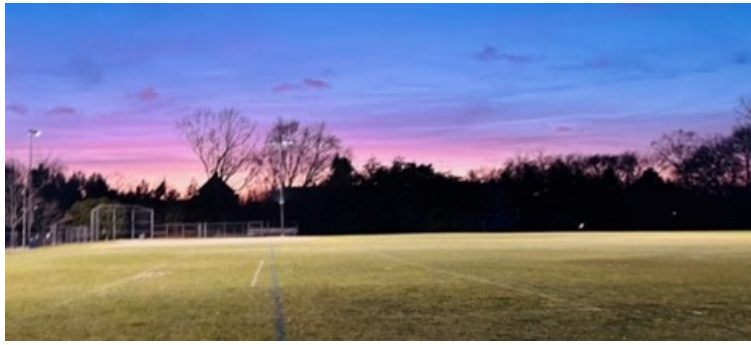
We officially cut the ribbon on Monday morning to celebrate new two-way bike travel on the Commonwealth Avenue Carriage Lane. We have many to thank for bringing the idea for this improvement to reality including Bike Newton, City Councilors, City staff and many residents. Most important is Jane Hanser whose vision and persistence over the years proved to be the catalyst in making the Carriageway safer for walkers, rollers and bikers traveling in both directions.

State-of-the-Art Lighting at Forte Park

Our Parks, Recreation & Culture team recently installed a state-of-the-art LED lighting system at Forte Park in Nonantum. Players on the softball field, the multipurpose field, the basketball court and bocce courts now have optimum lighting conditions with excellent, direct lighting on the playing areas.

Simultaneously, the light pollution and excessive glare experienced from the old lights have been eliminated. (The previous lights produced glare onto neighboring properties in Newton and also went across the Charles River into Watertown.)

The new LED lighting is highly efficient, saving energy. Plus, the new lights are electronically programmed, usable until 10 p.m. The lights also are push-button activated, staying on for one hour at a time with a blinking light notification when the lights are about to go off so the button can be pressed again.



The new, neighboring Riverdale housing apartments (now known as “Allee on the Charles”) paid for the light systems as part of their approval and mitigation funding.

Click below to see the button system for the basketball court.



50th Annual Community Breakfast

Join us next Wednesday, May 22 for our 50th annual breakfast to break bread and renew our commitment to our neighbors and our community.

We'll gather outside, under a tent at UMass Amherst Mt. Ida Campus in the Shaw Hall Courtyard from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m.

Led by the Harmony Foundation, and in conjunction with the Newton Public Schools, the Newton Interfaith Clergy Association, FORJ, the Village Bank, Newton's Human Rights Commission, the Rotary Club of Newton and the Newton Theatre Company, We welcome residents, community groups, businesspeople, and clergy of all faith traditions to reconnect during a morning of camaraderie and community.

This year's keynote speaker is Newton resident and Acting United States Attorney for the District of Massachusetts Joshua Levy.

Click [here](#) to purchase tickets and for more information.

Friday Night Lights: View of the Northern lights over NNHS fields and Elmwood Park on Lowell Avenue from Hull Street hill. Photo taken by Newton's Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Yeo on Friday, May 10.

Memorial Day in Newton

Join us on Memorial Day weekend to honor the sacrifice made by our fallen service members when they answered duty's call to preserve and defend the United States of America, freedom and democracy.

On Sunday morning, May 26 at 9:00 a.m., we will begin at Forte Park, 235 California Street, and proceed together to hang flags in honor of the soldiers memorialized on bridges over the Mass Pike in Newton.

Later Sunday afternoon at 3:00 p.m., the Newton Memorial Day Parade will begin. We will follow the usual route from Newton North High School at 457 Walnut Street, crossing over the Mass Pike, turning onto Watertown Street, and ending at Coletti-Magni Park in Nonantum near the corner of Adams Street. There is fun for all ages with horses, superheroes, live bands including the North End Marching Band and a steel drum band, and much more.

A solemn Memorial Day Wreath Laying Ceremony begins at 10:00 a.m. the following day, Monday, May 27, at the Newton Cemetery. The ceremony will begin at the Veterans Lot near the entrance and will continue to the next two lots with Newton's fallen heroes.

Mental Health Awareness Month

For the 75th year, May has been designated as Mental Health Awareness Month. This is such an important time to recognize and help address the challenges faced by people living with mental health conditions.

Below are resources that may help:

- [Riverside Emergency Services](#) – Riverside offers mobile crisis intervention. Call 800-529-5077 for support.
- [988 Crisis Support](#) – If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis, call or text 988 to talk with a trained counselor or [chat online](#).



- [Behavioral Health Help Line \(BHHL\)](#) – This new behavioral health helpline connects Massachusetts residents struggling with mental health or substance use directly to clinical support where and when they need it. It's free, available 24/7, and offers real-time interpretation in over 200 languages. Call or text 833-773-2445 or [chat online](#).
- ["Hey Sam" by Samaritans](#) – This is a dedicated peer-to-peer texting service for people up to 24 years old. Designed for and staffed by young people, Hey Sam allows youth to reach peers if they are struggling, need someone to talk to, or need support. Volunteers ages 15 - 24 will be responding to the messages that come in through this line, available from 9 a.m. - 9 p.m. every day. Text 439-726 and check them out at [Hey Sam](#).
- [The Trevor Project](#) – They provide information and support to LGBTQ+ young people 24/7, all year round. Connect with a crisis counselor for free, confidential support by calling 866-488-7386 or texting 678-678.

Questions? The [City of Newton's Social Services Division](#) can help navigating these services. Call 617-796-1420 to connect with us.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Congratulations and thank you to the 45 athletes of **Team Newton who raised \$346,796** for non-profits connected to our community by running the Boston Marathon. Click [here](#) to see the runners and the non-profits they supported.

P.P.S. Interested in watching some great tennis? Head over to Newton South High School, 1 Lions Drive (or 140 Brandeis Road) on Thursday, May 23 (rain date, Friday, May 24) for the **Garden City High School Cup 2024** starting at 4:00 p.m. All the tennis teams at Newton North and South will play in the annual exhibition tournament to honor the memory of Linda Zuker, a beloved assistant tennis coach at Newton South. Click [here](#) for more information.

P.P.P.S. The adorable and comforting **Minis with a Mission** – mini horses and mini donkeys – will be on the grass outside at the playground/park next to the Hyde Community Center, 90 Lincoln Street, on Tuesday, May 20 from 11:30 to 12:30 p.m. Grandkids, young friends and people of all ages are welcome.

P.P.P.P.S. Looking for a way to thank a special teacher or staff member in the Newton Public Schools who's made a difference in your student's life? Consider participating in Newton Schools Foundation's (NSF) [Honor Thy Teacher](#) program which recognizes our educators and supports our schools.

P.P.P.P.S. **Kudos**

to Newton Youth Hockey (NYH) players, coaches, volunteers and supporters for raising \$4,100 at their annual FigPot game in support of homelessness advocate FamilyAid, the organization opening a center in Newton later this year. The FigPot was held between U14 players and area coaches and volunteers. The funds raised for the FamilyAid was given in honor of NYH parent Jim Partridge, a long-time supporter of the organization.

Past P.S.s Happening Soon:

P.S. Learn **how to recognize a scam** from members of Middlesex County Sherriff Peter Koutoujian's Office later today, Thursday, May 16 from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. at the Hyde Community Center, 90 Lincoln Street. RSVP requested if possible. Please stop by the Front Desk at Brigham House, 20 Hartford Street, call 617-796-1675, or send your name, telephone number, and email address to our receptionists at seniorprograms@newtonma.gov.

P.P.S. A full day of entertainment and celebration at **Family FunFEST** at City Hall is this Saturday, May 18 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Click [here](#) for more information and a full schedule of events.

P.P.P.S. The **Newton Community Farm's Annual Seedling Sale** is this Saturday and Sunday, May 18 and 19, from noon to 3:00 p.m. at the farm, 303 Nahanton St. Click [here](#) for more information.

P.P.P.P.S. **Historic Newton's annual Newton House Tour** is this Sunday, May 19 from noon to 5:00 p.m. Click [here](#) for more information.

P.P.P.P.P.S. **Waban Village Day and Family Fun Run** is this Sunday, May 19 from 11:00 a.m. to noon in Waban Square (1608 Beacon St.). Click [here](#) for more information.

P.P.P.P.P.P.S. The **9th Annual Linda Plaut Festival of the Arts** is this Friday, May 19 through Sunday, May 19 on three different stages in Newtonville, West Newton and Newton Highlands. Click [here](#) for more information and a full list of performers and schedule.

P.P.P.P.P.P.S. The **Newton South Booster Club's third annual Lions 5K road race** and fundraiser to support Newton South High School athletes is this Sunday, May 19 starting at 9:00 a.m. at the high school. Click [here](#) for more information and to register to run or walk.

P.P.P.P.P.P.S. We want to hear from Newtonians about their access to city services and programs, quality of services and programs, and satisfaction when interacting with City staff while obtaining services. **Are We as a City Equitably, Inclusively and Respectfully Delivering Services?** Take the survey by clicking [here](#).



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