



Ruthanne Fuller,
Mayor

Barney Heath,
Director
Planning & Development

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Lizbeth Heyer, Chair
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CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Newton Housing Partnership

May 31, 2024

Michael Rossi, Chair
Newton Zoning Board of Appeals
City of Newton
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton MA 02459

Dear Chairperson Rossi:

The Newton Housing Partnership (NHP) is pleased to support the request of Boylston Properties for a Comprehensive Permit in state Chapter 40B for their proposed mixed-income housing development at 78 Crafts Street in Newton.

This project will provide, in four buildings ranging between four and six stories, 295 units of badly needed housing, including 59 units with rents affordable to low- and moderate-income residents, all at the truly affordable level of 50% of Area Median Income (AMI). The developer's choice for this deeper than usual level of affordability will bring Newton more truly affordable units for low- and moderate-income families and individuals at this location than exists anywhere else in the City – a rare opportunity which we must not miss. This project is also consistent with the city's goals of promoting diversity in its housing stock, goals that were established in its Comprehensive Plan, its 2040 Housing Leads Strategy of 2017, and its Economic Development Action Plan of 2019.

The developer has responded to constructive comments from the peer review process and from concerns voiced by members of the community. They have reduced the height and massing at the building closest to Crafts Street, added a playground by reducing the footprint of another building, made façade and lighting enhancements throughout the project for attractive screening of ground-level parking located within the buildings, and modified the site plan for more open space and better pedestrian and bicycle circulation and safety. They are contributing traffic calming and signalization improvements on surrounding streets for mitigation of already existing short-term rush-hour bottlenecks and for better pedestrian safety and are currently working with DPW and the stormwater peer reviewer to improve site drainage performance beyond state and local stormwater standards.



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The project has the endorsement of the City's Climate and Sustainability Team and will address climate change in many ways. The site is within walking distance of two commuter rail stations and commercial services, encouraging less reliance on cars. The buildings will be built to Passive House standards for energy savings, the appliances will be all electric, the parking lots will have 10% of its spaces equipped with EV chargers and another 10% made EV-ready. The 263 parking spaces provided across the site will result in a parking ratio of 0.89 spaces per unit, which is in line with actual parking usage at nearby multi-family developments in Newtonville.

The members of NHP are mindful of Newton's commitment to the Metro Mayor's Coalition landmark housing production goal: to build 185,000 new units by 2030 in 15 surrounding communities. This goal cannot be reached unless we find ways of producing our share of new housing units at scale, and this project's addition of 295 housing units provides a meaningful step in that direction.

We are pleased also that the proposed ZBA approval comes with the condition that the affordability protections will be placed on the 59 affordable units *in perpetuity*, that the affordable units will be dispersed evenly throughout the project, and that they will be of the same bedroom mix as the other units in the project.

Our recommendation comes with two conditions that we have encouraged the developer to pursue: to connect the households in the affordable units, when needed, with agencies in the area who can provide services, such as referral to childcare and job training, to help assure stable occupancy at the property.

We encourage your favorable decision on permitting for this development. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Lizbeth Heyer, Chair

Cc: Mayor Fuller and City Council