



# CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

## Walker Center Joint Advisory Planning Group

### AGENDA

**Meeting Date:** November 14, 2024  
**Location:** Hybrid (City Hall, Room 204) & Zoom  
**Time:** 3:30 – 5:30 p.m.

Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

Barney Heath,  
Director, Planning &  
Development

Shaylyn Davis-Iannaco  
Housing Program  
Manager

#### Members

Ken Krems, Chair  
David Hedison, Vice Chair  
David Boronkay  
Rose Day  
Tom Gagen  
Paul Giragos  
Abigail Glovsky  
Ken Gould  
Julie Shea

1000 Commonwealth Ave  
Newton, MA 02459  
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[www.newtonma.gov](http://www.newtonma.gov)

This meeting will be a hybrid meeting that will take place in Room 204 at Newton City Hall and virtually via Zoom. To view and participate virtually, click <https://newtonma.gov.zoom.us/j/88543112963> or +13052241968 88543112963#

1. Approval of October 10 & October 29, 2024 Meeting Summaries
2. Walker Center JAPG Process and Calendar
3. Review of Alternative Site Scenarios/Committee and Staff Feedback
4. Straw Votes to Establish Preferred Alternatives
5. Adjournment

The location of this meeting is wheelchair accessible and reasonable accommodation will be provided to persons with disabilities requiring assistance. If you need a reasonable accommodation, please contact the city of Newton's ADA/Sec.504 Coordinator, Jini Fairley, at least two business days in advance of the meeting: [jfairley@newtonma.gov](mailto:jfairley@newtonma.gov) or (617) 796-1253. For Telecommunications Relay Service, please dial 711 or call City Hall's TTY/TDD line at 617-796-1089.



**Ruthanne Fuller**  
Mayor

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**Barney S. Heath**  
Director

**Walker Center Joint Advisory Planning Group (JAPG)**

Meeting Summary

October 10, 2024 from 4-5:30 p.m.

**Attendance**

The meeting was held virtually on Tuesday, October 10, 2024, beginning at 4:00 PM. All Walker Center JAPG (Joint Advisory Planning Group) members were present: David Boronkay, Rose Day, Tom Gagen, Paul Giragos, Abby Glovsky, Ken Gould, David Hedison, Ken Krems, and Julie Shea.

Also in attendance were City of Newton staff: Shaylyn Davis-Iannaco, Housing Program Manager; Lara Kritzer, Director of Housing and Community Development; Allison McIntyre, Housing Development Planner, Josh Morse, Public Buildings Commissioner; Barney Heath, Director of Planning and Development; and Jini Fairley, ADA/Section 504 Coordinator.

Guests present included Williams School Principal Anthony Byers, Ward 4 Councilor Randy Block; Ward 4 Councilor Leonard Gentile; Susan Mara of Weston & Sampson; Sandi Stroud of Urban Focus; Matt DeCotiis of CICADA, Nancy Grissom, Janet Paraschos, Joel Shames, Nancy Bowler, John Giesser, Erin Giesser, Larry and Caroline Schwirian, Gayle Turner, Ashley Remis, Johnathan W., Sonja Wadman, Maureen Kelly SD, "Mitchell's iPad," "Michael Munsen's iPad," and, "iPhone."

**Approval of September 19, 2024, Meeting Summary**

Vice Chair Hedison made a motion to approve the meeting summary. P. Giragos seconded the motion. The motion passes, unanimously. S. Davis-Iannaco welcomed members of the public and reminded everyone that the October 29<sup>th</sup> agenda included time dedicated to public comment.

**Site Visit Debrief and Member Discussion**

A. Glovsky thanked the JAPG members and introduced Williams School Principal Anthony Byers, whom she invited. She described feeling disheartened during the most recent JAPG meeting and expressed her wish that the Weston & Sampson presentation would address driveway placement on the parcel. A. Glovsky acknowledged that school expansion could be decades down the road, but said she was interested in options that could benefit the school right now. She cited her conversations with Principal Byers, and alluded to his ideas about uses for the Walker Center Complex, specifically that the building on Hancock Street could be used for school purposes. A. Glovsky said that the Williams School field needed to be updated. The field at the Williams School is smaller, especially compared to those at other schools in Newton and in surrounding communities.

P. Giragos agreed with A. Glovsky's assertion that the Williams School needed more space. He said that, during the site visit, he saw that there is no curb cut, nor driveway, nor parking near the Grove Street buildings [the Howard House Complex]. While there is a small driveway for the home on Hancock Street, he said, the plan that the JAPG saw from Weston and Sampson calls for creating a parking lot in the back of that home. P. Giragos said he realized for the first time that this project would require quite a bit of paving.

Vice Chair Hedison said that the Hancock House could be set aside for affordable housing, the 10,000 square feet behind the Howard House could be given over to the school, and the Hume House and Howard House Complex could be maintained for market rate units with a few affordable units. Without knowing the financial particulars, he stated that his current preference is to allocate some of the parcel to the Williams School and allocate some it for housing.

D. Boronkay pointed out the expenses related to converting the buildings on this parcel into multiple units while preserving the exterior. He said he was grappling with the expense of developing and managing properties that will be used for affordable housing, which would not likely generate a lot of money. He emphasized his interest in understanding better the costs associated with this project, and his empathy for A. Glovsky's perspective.

J. Shea noted that there is a huge need for affordable housing in Newton, and that there are not many places where it can be built. She said she was interested in understanding more about the numbers around the project and proposed that the properties, were they developed into housing, need not be one hundred percent affordable. A mix of market-rate and heavily subsidized units would be good to see.

R. Day said it was difficult to evaluate the options presented without knowing all the numbers. She recalled that renovations at the Williams School would not be possible for another twenty years and stated that the school had immediate needs that need to be addressed now. More information is needed to make a decision.

T. Gagen listed what he saw as the factors at play in the JAPG's decision-making process. There are the needs of the school, the need for housing, and the historical aspect of the properties to consider. It would be very hard to get the Historic Commission to approve tearing down the buildings or renovating them. If the playground were to be expanded, expanding it there would make the most sense, he said. He said he was interested in the later part of the meeting when housing financing would be discussed.

Chair Krems said that his children went to the Williams School too, and stated that he believes the school's needs are important. He went on to say that he thought the site should be used primarily for housing, and affordable housing, if the costs could support that. Chair Krems noted that the JAPG's charge is to look at affordable housing options on the site, and that the Walker Center parcel would be a very good place for it.

K. Gould reiterated the JAPG members' interest in getting a handle on the numbers. He said that if there were a way to do it without spending a lot of money, he liked the idea of making something available to the school now instead of waiting forty years. Congregate housing options would be good for the JAPG to look at, he said. More residents would be able to live at the site where it to be congregate housing, and the parking requirements would be reduced as a result. Reduced parking would solve some of the site problems, he finished.

Director Heath said he had heard from JAPG members this evening that they would like to see something happen sooner at the Williams School rather than later. He noted that is separate and apart from the JAPG process and went on to acknowledge that they are connected. We want to be clear on the expectations of what could possibly happen. A lot of what has been discussed is outside the jurisdiction of the JAPG, in terms of the City's ability to execute on any of this, Director Heath explained. He invited Commissioner Morse to comment on the discussion so far.

Commissioner Morse offered to review two points from earlier meetings. The City of Newton has a capital improvement plan. The Newton Public Schools and the Newton School Committee have a long-range facility plan. The School Committee is responsible for identifying these priorities and the order in which they are addressed, he said. Renovations at the Williams School are many, many decades away, according to the plan developed in part by the School Committee. Commissioner Morse commented that redesigning the fields and moving the parking lots around would be a wonderful project. That would cost many millions of dollars. Taking on such a project now would require the School Committee and Newton Public Schools to make a recommendation to slash other projects and move the Williams School ahead of other projects in the pipeline. If the JAPG were to recommend advancing such a scenario to the City Council, it could do so. Commissioner Morse continued to say that for projects at the Williams School to be reprioritized, there would need to be advocacy for that reprioritization directed at Newton Public Schools and the School Committee. As a result of that change, projects at other schools would need to be deprioritized. For immediate renovation projects to really come to fruition, the School Committee and Newton Public Schools would need to push this along, and other projects would need to go down for Williams to rise to the fore. Commissioner Morse said he could answer any questions.

Vice Chair Hedison asked if Newton's Community Preservation Committee (CPC) had every funded a project with schools. Yes, Commissioner Morse replied. Vice Chair Hedison asked if the School Committee or CPC could take a vote in favor of considering that area as a recreation space, and therefore permitting work to happen there independent of the school department. Commissioner Morse offered the following example: The Cabot School was renovated using Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. There are lots of projects that Newton Public Schools would love to happen that would be CPA eligible, such as fields and playgrounds. Then, the School Committee would need to consider that a priority and then support a funding request through CPC to obtain those CPA funds. It is a funding source that would be viable.

A. Glovsky remembered that the Riverside Development Project set aside \$1.5 million in mitigation fees for the Williams School before the pandemic. The development was paused, but is now, according to A. Glovsky, potentially moving forward. She said that renovating the field at Williams School was a huge issue for families in Auburndale and asked if the \$1.5 million was back on the table. Commissioner Morse noted that he could not speak for the Mayor nor City Council, in terms of where mitigation fees from development projects would go. It does not serve us well to earmark 10,000 square feet for the Williams School, and then sit on it for thirty years, he said. If the JAPG recommendation is to utilize the 10,000 square feet to better the Williams School parcel in the meantime, Commissioner Morse recommended that there be some additional advocacy and collaboration with Newton Public Schools and the School Committee to see something through.

Councilor Block mentioned Newton's Open Space and Recreation Plan, and the City's position on open space generally (we need more of it). There are lots of needs, and lots of competing needs. He continued to say that when and how the City sorts that out is very much outside this committee's jurisdiction. Focus on this property, Councilor Block advised JAPG members. The JAPG's recommendation about its best use will be very helpful to City Council. He is interested in the JAPG's consensus vision for how this land can be shared between educational purposes, field purposes, and housing purposes.

#### **Civico Plan**

L. Kritzer summarized Civico Development's plans for the privately owned parcel that is next to the City-owned parcel. Civico's parcel is also, confusingly, referred to as the Walker Center. However, Civico's parcel is not to be confused with the City-owned parcel that is the focus of the JAPG. Civico is developing sixteen market-rate units, using two of the buildings existing on the site. The smaller, Cape-style building on the site is being removed and being replaced by four units of townhouses. The entrance to the site will remain on Grove Street. There will be garage parking, so it is unclear how much of the surface parking will be used. Vice Chair Hedison noted that two of the units in that development will be affordable. L. Kritzer agreed and explained that two units are required to be reserved for residents making under eighty percent of the Area Median Income, according to the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance. Director Heath said that Civico just submitted its Inclusionary Housing Plan for the site to the City for review, indicating that the developer is eager to move ahead. Construction will start within the next two months, L. Kritzer said.

P. Giragos asked L. Kritzer to clarify what was happening with the garage. L. Kritzer replied that two of the existing buildings will have garages under the lower level of the unit and the townhouses will have garages, too. P. Giragos shared his thoughts about asking Civico to expanding the parking garage and giving an easement to the City so that certain parking spaces could be allocated for residents on the City-owned parcel. L. Kritzer confirmed that the City had floated the idea of sharing surface parking, but Civico is trying to move the project forward as quickly as possible, which means they are not open to changes to the plan at this time.

T. Gagen asked if Civico had the money to begin construction. L. Kritzer responded that Civico said it would begin construction in two months. Director Heath commented that Civico got a special permit for the site last year.

#### **New site plan presentation by Urban Focus, CICADA, and Weston & Sampson**

S. Stroud of Urban Focus noted that the consultation team was given specific directives and was asked to look at the site specifically for the purpose of affordable housing. She and the team went on to begin a presentation about the preliminary development and operating performance budgets for sets of scenarios.

The presentation was paused when Vice Chair Hedison asked if there was analysis performed related to parking on the site. He asked if there was a turning radius for fire safety and if there was snow storage on the site. M. DeCotiis of CICADA said he pulled a five-foot offset minimum from the existing buildings. He said that the team created this scenario reconciling the parking requirements related to affordable housing and limited space. This scenario fulfills all necessary requirements, given all the constraints, he said.

A. Glovsky asked if there was any type of traffic analysis done with eleven parking spots in this area. She noted that there was a lot of traffic on this street already. Director Heath answered that the Newton Department of Public Works looked at the site. The DPW estimated the number of trips in and out of the development. He added that he could appreciate concerns about traffic and visibility. Director Heath noted it was a relatively small development and the number of trips in and out would also be small. We might be getting ahead of ourselves, he said. A. Glovsky agreed it was small, but said it became larger when the Civico development was factored in.

Councilor Block said he was experiencing distress over the constraints that the consultant firm was under. S. Stroud replied that the consultant team wanted to create a site with a 1:1 parking space to unit ratio while also excluding the 10,000 square feet reserved for future school use. The scenario under discussion had eleven units and eleven parking spaces, which maximized the use of the space without creating more parking spots than suitable for the parcel. Councilor Block clarified that he wanted to know why the consultant team hadn't considered a scenario with fewer than eleven units. There is a lot of traffic at the beginning and end of the school day, he said. Councilor Block said it was unfortunate that the consultant team seems to be limited to looking at affordable housing options, because the land was acquired by the City for a dual purpose. The land should not be overbuilt and it should not be underbuilt. It's pretty complicated, he observed.

Director Heath clarified that the consultants were hired under a Housing Choice Grant by the City. Therefore, the consultants cannot look at any options other than affordable housing. This presentation is the first iteration of that charge, Director Heath said. Councilor Block replied, "maybe they need a consulting partner."

L. Schwirian expressed concerns related to construction on the site. Commissioner Morse responded and said that the goal with the 10,000 square feet was to bank the land, with the knowledge that the City will need to reconfigure the Williams School site and relocate parking. We were trying to think towards the future, he said. S. Davis-Iannaco reminded members of the public that they could submit questions and comments to [WalkerCenterJAPG@newtonma.gov](mailto:WalkerCenterJAPG@newtonma.gov). She noted that there would be time on the agenda at the next meeting for public comment, too.

P. Giragos said that Councilor Block's comments resonated with him. He pointed out that the historic buildings will not be visible from certain points once the other buildings go up, and asked if, because of this, perhaps this would fall outside of the Historic Commission's jurisdiction. P. Giragos also asked why they might not build a smaller number of units. S. Stroud answered that, in consultation with the City's Senior Preservation Planner, Barbara Kruze, the consultants determined there would still be lines of sight to the historic buildings because of the demolition occurring on the neighboring Civico site. They will be in full view.

P. Giragos said that Civico might put in plantings and screen its building, making buildings on the City-owned parcel not visible. Therefore, the Historic Commission might not have any jurisdiction over what does or does not happen to the historic buildings on the City-owned parcel. L. Kritzer answered that she used to do historic reviews, and the districts do not consider vegetation when they look at what is obstructing views and visibility. The trees screening the property might not have leaves year-round, she pointed out. The buildings become more visible, and not less visible, with the construction happening on the Civico site. S. Stroud confirmed that the team had explored this conversation and, regardless, the building is visible from the back due to the positioning of the playground.

Vice Chair Hedison mentioned that he attended the Newton Housing Authority board meeting last week and spoke with the Director. The Director confirmed that eight Section 8 project-based vouchers could be used at a site without

triggering requirements around prevailing wage. Vice Chair Hedison continued to say that the JAPG doesn't even know if this site is feasible financially.

K. Gould pointed out that there is a tremendous need for affordable housing. We all know that, he said. The JAPG should, if it goes the affordable housing route, look to maximize affordable housing on the site, not reduce it. The funding sources will look at per unit costs, and the more units on the site, the more feasible it is to get public financing, from the state and from other sources.

Mr. Newsom asked if this was perhaps not a good place for affordable housing and suggested that the property could be sold and the money used to finance affordable housing at a more appropriate location. Director Heath noted that the public forum will take place during the next JAPG meeting and said that this time is reserved for JAPG members to react. He added that Mr. Newsom's comments were appreciated, and they could be emailed to [WalkerCenterJAPG@newton.gov](mailto:WalkerCenterJAPG@newton.gov) Mr. Newsom indicated that he had not understood that previously and expressed his appreciation.

Director Heath reminded everyone that the site was purchased with federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. Therefore, what can be done with the site is limited to a public purpose. That would not include selling the site for remuneration. He said he would get a legal ruling on that.

#### **Review of Layout Options and Funding Sources**

M. DeCotiis resumed the presentation during which he outlined what construction would occur on the site. Next, he cited a list of different state, federal, and local funding sources for the project, including historic, MassHousing, Mass Affordable Housing Trust, HOME, the Community Development Block Grant (CDGB), the West Metro HOME Consortium, project-based vouchers, the Community Preservation Act, the Newton Affordable Housing Trust, and the Federal Home Loan Bank. Vice Chair Hedison asked if they would be pursuing LIHTC. No, M. DeCotiis replied, there would be significant historic tax credits at the state and federal level. He noted that there are limited sites for affordable housing in Newton, and this might be one that would work.

A. Glovsky said she understood the importance of affordable housing and asked if there was a plan to show the JAPG something with eight or seven or five units. S. Stroud replied that taking away the additions to the historic buildings would show a scenario with seven units. A. Glovsky guessed that an eleven-unit development on that sized parcel would cause concern among the neighbors, because it would be in combination with the new units built on the Civico site.

We need to look at scenarios for the site, Director Heath said. At today's meeting the JAPG members discussed the tradeoffs with respect to the number of units and financing. The group can continue determining options to pursue. At the next meeting, the consultants can lay out scenarios and the costs and benefits associated with them. He said that there's still some information that needs to be shared with the group to decide which scenarios should be delved into and pursued.

Director Heath noted that there were a number of members of the public in attendance. Regardless of what happens during the JAPG process and the subsequent City Council process, anything that happens on the site would have to go through a permitting process. That would go into much more detail.

R. Day said she was reading the chat in the Zoom meeting and noted that there was concern about the number of housing units and more cars. She said that the JAPG needed to take that into consideration.

T. Gagen said there has been some talk that the Walker Center project will be combined with some other project when it comes to seeking financing. Director Heath said that they were getting into the details of the tax credits just discussed, and whether or not this site could be combined with another site in the City to get to the requisite number of units that you could attract tax credits with. That's a conversation that is a long way off, Director Heath said.

P. Giragos said he had a question about the process of the JAPG. He asked when the JAPG members would really put their heads together and almost blank slate the project, a little bit. He said that the plans were interesting to look at, but asked when the JAPG will go back to square one and consider what should be done on the property. For example, what other uses could count as public use? He remembered that someone said during the meeting that the property was designated for education and for affordable housing and added that he was curious to know where that designation comes from. P. Giragos stated that he was not against public housing on the site but wanted to know the range of options that are possible, and when the JAPG will have the opportunity to explore those options.

Director Heath replied that was the whole intent of the JAPG, to explore those ideas. He proposed working with the Chair and Vice Chair to design a little more room to provide space for those ideas. There was work done under the grant by the consultants related to affordable housing that the City wanted to make available to the JAPG. The site was bought by the City with the express purpose of using it for affordable housing and education purposes. Director Heath said that they could consult with the City's legal department to talk about ARPA funds uses. He said he could not say if the site's purpose was restricted to the purpose for which it was purchased. Director Heath noted that it was affordable housing, not public housing. P. Giragos agreed it would be important to understand more about the ARPA funds.

Vice Chair Hedison asked for confirmation on the following. He said that the site may not be able to be sold to a private entity. If it is transferred through an intermunicipal agreement to the Newton Housing Authority, they are still subject to prevailing wage. He recalled the last meeting when it was suggested that a new structure could be created to keep it out of prevailing wage. If that happened, it is now being transferred to a private entity, he finished. S. Stroud said that it was an expensive project and would probably be subject to prevailing wage in any scenario. The other possibility is project-based vouchers, eight or seven from the housing authority, and four from another entity, if eleven units were built. S. Stroud said that she was hearing one scenario with just the existing buildings, and then a scenario with eleven units. In terms of other uses, there is a question mark.

Chair Krems asked if the JAPG was supposed to have its recommendation written by January. He asked if it could be extended, but noted that the process should not go on for another six or nine months. S. Davis-lannaco answered that the report was due one hundred eighty days after the JAPG was formed. That was August 1<sup>st</sup>, the day the letters went out to everyone confirming their JAPG membership. She said that would give the JAPG a deadline of late January or early February. There is an option to extend. S. Davis-lannaco said she would find out what the extension process was, and the length of an extension. As of right now, there is a late January, early February end date.

Director Heath pointed out that the report can include a range of options. There could be a suggested range of housing units, for example. It is a report written by the JAPG, together. The City is providing all information it has available at this point, he said.

A. Glovsky said she sent an email a week and a half ago with some thoughts that she didn't really hear back on. She said she was wondering how these proposals would be taken and asked if they were things that could be run by the Planning Department. Director Heath said he would turn to the Chair and Vice Chair to figure out how to manage the group and how they want to get to that. It's a group consensus, not the Planning Department. He said that the Planning Department was there to provide information. The JAPG grapples with options and decides which it wants to pursue. He invited A. Glovsky to send any thoughts to be shared with the Chair and Vice Chair to be put on the agenda for the next meeting.

S. Davis-lannaco announced that the meeting was at time. Chair Krems asked for any final comments, and announced the date of the next meeting, October 29<sup>th</sup> from 4 to 5:30pm.

A. Glovsky asked about how open meeting law works. She wanted to confirm that it was possible to speak to other JAPG members outside of the JAPG meetings. S. Davis-lannaco said that, when speaking about the Walker Center with other members of the JAPG, it is a best practice to do so at a public meeting. She offered to contact Andrew Lee, the City's legal counsel, and ask for a short explainer on what is allowed and what is not allowed under public meeting law.

P. Giragos said that he said that his neighbors are eager to have a voice in the process, and he is uncertain what he can say to them. He said that he wants to understand his neighbor's concerns and given them a voice during JAPG meetings. S. Davis-Iannaco replied that members of the public can speak for themselves during the public forums. Part of the next meeting will be dedicated to public comment. Director Heath made the distinction between a JAPG member talking to a JAPG member about the Walker Center, and a JAPG member hearing from the neighbors. There is nothing that prohibits that. Councilor Block thanked Director Heath for the explanation. He recalled going through open meeting law training as a member of City Council. He reminded members that they could not discuss the Walker Center with a number of JAPG members that would constitute a quorum. Vice Chair Hedison read from his materials from an open meeting law training. He read aloud. "Discussion between a minority of the members that is not shared to the majority of members is not a violation." Chair Krems said he thought it would be good to get a memo from the City going over what is and what is not permitted. Commissioner Morse agreed. He said that another member of the JAPG could not try to convince another member of the JAPG to vote a certain way outside of the meeting. That would constitute deliberation.

### **Adjournment**

P. Giragos moved to adjourn the meeting. T. Gagen seconded.

### **Meeting Dates**

Tuesday, October 29<sup>th</sup> from 4-5:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 21<sup>st</sup> from 4-5:30 p.m.

Thursday, December 12<sup>th</sup> from 4-5:30 p.m.



To: Walker Center Joint Advisory Planning Group  
Date: 10/29/2024 Meeting  
From: Caroline Schwirian  
7 Williston Road - across the street from the property being discussed.  
Auburndale, Ma 02466

*(The following was read during the public comment portion at the 10/29/24 meeting. Note that the additional comments in italics were added post meeting):*

When the land adjacent to Williams School became available for sale, my view was, and still is that as much of that land as possible should be provided for school use and public open space.

**REGARDING THE OCTOBER 10, 2024 REUSE STUDY:**

I understand that the purview of these drawings is to indicate the housing, but the proposed plan is shown as if it were a floating island. I feel strongly and it is extremely important that the location of the Williams School building be shown so that the location of the school's 10,000 sq. ft. can be seen in context with the building, the playground and Lasell St. It should also show the location of Williston Road. This would be a smaller scale drawing, but at least we would see the context. I believe it would help inform the JAPG as well as the neighborhood.

- *(In my opinion as a retired architect, I note that it is good planning practice to see a site in context with adjacent properties.)*

I believe that the location of the 10,000 sq.ft. area as shown is too separated from the existing schoolyard. If the Williams building were to be shown, I believe that the open space is almost entirely separated from the existing school yard. Williams School has one of the smallest plots of land of all the Newton Schools. It should not have to wait to use the 10,000sq ft, it should be incorporated into the school property as soon as possible.

**TRAFFIC:**

Traffic on Hancock St. is already a problem. A traffic study is needed to inform planning on this site. I request that a JAPG site visit take place at a time when parents are dropping off or picking up children so that the traffic congestion and danger to children can be seen firsthand.

**COMMENTS:**

I request that you consider this plan:

In lieu of building additions, move 136 Hancock St. toward the Grove St. houses to keep all the housing in one location on the site and provide only 7 units. I believe that this would increase the amount of land for Williams School and with fewer parking spaces, assist with the traffic problem.

- *(I will note that Randy Block also mentioned that moving the building either on-site or to another location be considered)*

**QUESTION:**

Is it true that if the existing driveway at 136 Hancock St. is expanded, part of it will be on the Civico project property? Will the cars from the Civico property have access to this driveway? It is not currently shown this way, but if so, this would increase the traffic problem on Hancock St.

Respectively,  
Caroline Schwirian

**From:** [Dave Nevins](#)  
**To:** [rb4newton@gmail.com](mailto:rb4newton@gmail.com); [Randall Block](#)  
**Cc:** [ashleygaia@gmail.com](mailto:ashleygaia@gmail.com); [WalkerCenterJAPG](#); [Barney Heath](#); [Joshua Krintzman](#); [Leonard J. Gentile](#); [Marc C. Laredo](#); [Vicki Danberg](#); [Tarik Lucas](#); [John Oliver](#); [Julia Malakie](#); [Rena Getz](#); [Richard Lipof](#); [abby glovsky](#); [veronica.k.horner@gmail.com](mailto:veronica.k.horner@gmail.com); [Randall Block](#)  
**Subject:** Re: Walker Center Meeting tonight- letter of opposition  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 29, 2024 9:47:13 PM

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Some people who received this message don't often get email from dnevins@eipcorp.net. [Learn why this is important](#)

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

Hi, all, I was able to jump on the last 20 minutes of the discussion today. I was frustrated that today's meeting was held at 4 PM on a workday, and even more frustrated to hear that the next meeting was moved up to 3:30 PM. Shouldn't a civic engagement meeting be held at a time that is more reasonable for folks that have work/childcare commitments? Even 4:30 or 5 PM? I think it's completely unreasonable to hold multiple meetings prior to the evening. At the very minimum can we keep it to 4 PM? 3:30 is unreasonable in my opinion. I've already spoken to three of my neighbors who concur and were equally frustrated that they were not able to attend between commitments with work and their kids, and I have to imagine there are many others that feel the same way. Can anything be done to move the next planned meeting to a later time? If the purpose is to truly engage the public and get meaningful feedback from as many constituents as possible, I think this is a very reasonable request and can't understand why it would not be accommodated. I tried raising my virtual hand to make this point, but of course I did not get an opportunity to speak. Doesn't feel like much of an opportunity for legitimate engagement (ie, what kind of a public process limits the public commentary to four speakers?)

On Oct 29, 2024, at 2:49 PM, Dave Nevins <dnevins@eipcorp.net> wrote:

Dear Councilor Block-

Thank you for your advocacy of Ward 4 and of our neighborhood group in reviewing the Walker Center proposed development. Enclosed, please find a letter of opposition for the record. As I mentioned in the letter, if you could read this on my behalf tonight, I would sincerely appreciate that, as I will not be able to attend the meeting. If not, I would appreciate your help getting this submitted into the record and/or distributed to the appropriate parties.

Thank you,

Dave Nevins  
228 Grove Street, Auburndale

<image001.jpg>

**Dave Nevins**  
*Chief Operating Officer*

Equity Industrial Partners Corp.  
20 Pickering Street, Suite 200  
Needham, MA 02492  
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[www.equityindustrial.com](http://www.equityindustrial.com)

<DN\_Walker Center\_10.29.24.docx>

**From:** [David Levoy](#)  
**To:** [WalkerCenterJAPG](#)  
**Subject:** Concern about development of Walker Center  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 13, 2024 11:43:54 PM

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You don't often get email from dhbl522@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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I am writing to express my concern about the proposed development of the Walker Center. My greatest concern is the increase in traffic expected in that area, and the associated safety concerns. In addition to the very local increased traffic potentially endangering the Williams School area, this would compound the traffic difficulties anticipated due to the development of Riverside.

Thank you for your consideration,  
David Levoy  
360 Central Street  
Auburndale

**From:** [Shimrit Paley Markette](#)  
**Subject:** Walker Center Plans and Development  
**Date:** Thursday, November 14, 2024 6:59:23 AM

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You don't often get email from shimrit.markette@gmail.com. [Learn why this is important](#)

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I'm writing to express my concerns, in writing, prior to today's JAPG meeting regarding the Walker Center Plans and Development. As a resident of the neighborhood and Williams Elem. Parent, I was very disappointed to see that much of the 10,000 SF designated for Williams is now being repurposed for housing. While I am pro-housing, the current plan will result in poor outcomes for the neighborhood and Williams.

Grove and Hancock street are already incredibly congested every single school morning. I urge you to drive down these streets at school drop off or pick up time to see for yourself. The 10K sq footage would have been critical to creating more parking, green space, and a safer space for our children. The Williams outdoor space and infrastructure is incredibly lacking and needs additional space.

I urge you to reconsider the plan as it exists and provide more space for the school, as promised and proposed in the original design.

Thank you,  
Shimrit Paley Markette  
60 Grove Street, Auburndale

**From:** [Anna Nolin](#)  
**To:** [Shaylyn Davis](#)  
**Subject:** Superintendent statement on Williams property  
**Date:** Wednesday, November 13, 2024 1:21:26 PM

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Hello Ms. Davis,

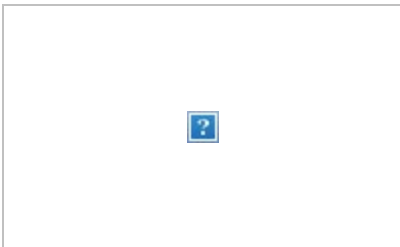
I have been asked to make a statement on the current plans for the Williams campus and adjacent buildings associated with that property.

As the superintendent I am but one voice in the process of deciding long-range planning in the district. I do not speak for the school committee, so I am sharing this as a status update on planning; the matter has not been brought before the committee. We (school administration and school committee leadership) are, however, engaged in a process of prioritizing building projects and needs for the coming decades with our school committee advisory group.

At this time, there are no immediate plans for this school campus property or the adjacent historic properties associated with it; no one can predict fully the trends of the future related to enrollment and changes based on other city trends in building, housing or employment. However, what has become clear in my short time here is that should enrollment changes occur that would make conditions at Williams more difficult, we would work collaboratively to address the needs. But again, at this time we do not feel we can take action regarding any additional plans for the land and adjacent historic properties not already promised to NPS, as there is no plan for anything else currently.

Anna

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**From:** [Erin Giesser](#)  
**To:** [WalkerCenterJAPG](#)  
**Cc:** [Ashley Gaia Remis](#); [Caroline Schwirian](#); [John Giesser](#)  
**Subject:** Concerns about the Development  
**Date:** Thursday, November 14, 2024 2:57:06 PM

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You don't often get email from [egiesser@gmail.com](mailto:egiesser@gmail.com). [Learn why this is important](#)

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Dear JAPG Members,

Thank you for the work you are doing.

I'm writing to you as an abutter to the Walker Center property. My husband and I have raised our three sons at 119 Hancock Street for the last fifteen or so years. We know the area well and particularly, we are aware of the traffic which can be quite dangerous on narrow Hancock Street. Here are my concerns in no particular order:

1. Lack of a legitimate traffic study on the increase of traffic that will result from the new Civico development as well as the building out of additional properties and the future Riverside development. I understand that the City of Newton DPW took a "look" but I do not have faith that they are a neutral party who has studied this area with much depth. I note from the meeting notes from Tues., Oct. 29 that *"Director Heath answered that the Newton Department of Public Works looked at the site. The DPW estimated the number of trips in and out of the development. He added that he could appreciate concerns about traffic and visibility. Director Heath noted it was a relatively small development and the number of trips in and out would also be small. We might be getting ahead of ourselves, he said."* This does not engender confidence that the traffic increase has been faithfully studied.
2. Lack of contextual photos of the Williston Street/Hancock Street intersection and the parking situation on Hancock at various times of the day. The Weston and Sampson presentation conveniently omits roads adjacent to Hancock.
3. Lack of a legitimate safety study regarding this egress on Hancock Street. Students have been hit on Hancock Street. Drivers speed down the street, especially around 5 pm.
4. Lack of opportunity for the public/neighbors to speak to these issues.
5. Lack of examination of other uses of this site. This project was launched with two JAPG meetings referring to the Planning Department's goal of affordable housing. Weston and Sampson's plans have been presented as foundational, rather than this committee's starting with an intentional consideration of other uses of the land.
6. The unrealistic proposal that each new unit will have *one* parking space. Where

shall families with two cars park? Where will their visitors park? This small area does not have the space to absorb more cars parked on the street. Additionally, there is two hour parking on Hancock Street used by employees of Williams School and no overnight parking during winter months. When cars are lined on Hancock Street, visibility decreases for drivers and danger grows.

Please do not move forward as if the Weston and Sampson plan is the best option. Please take more time to do more studies. Please consider other uses of this space.

Thank you,  
Erin Coyle Giesser  
119 Hancock Street  
617 293-5104



**From:** [Ashley Gaia Remis](#)  
**To:** [WalkerCenterJAPG](#)  
**Cc:** [Joshua Krintzman](#); [Leonard J. Gentile](#); [Randall Block](#); [Marc C. Laredo](#); [Vicki Danberg](#); [Tarik Lucas](#); [John Oliver](#); [Julia Malakie](#); [Rena Getz](#); [Richard Lipof](#); [Barney Heath](#); [Joshua R. Morse](#)  
**Subject:** Message for planning dept and JAPG members for Walker Center meeting today  
**Date:** Thursday, November 14, 2024 2:23:36 PM

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Good afternoon,

I would like this email shared with the city planning department and JAPG members in advance of the Walker Center meeting today.

My name is Ashley Remis. I am an abutter of the Walker Center and a mother to 4 young children. I have been following the development of the Walker Center property since the city purchased part of the land over a year ago. There are a few things I'd like to reiterate prior to today's JAPG meeting that I briefly touched on in my public comment last meeting.

First, many in the neighborhood have concerns with the presented plans the city has provided thus far, and the absence of alternate plans (other than affordable housing) that are being presented to the JAPG. Affordable housing in all 4 buildings and majority of the land presents many issues for the neighborhood. Top concerns include:

- lack of consideration of giving at least half, if not all, of the land and buildings to school and general educational use for the community
- lack of consideration of other municipal uses like adding green space/park, youth multipurpose sports fields, and/or a community center
- safety of walkers and Williams students with the additional traffic in an already congested location
- the effect on traffic flow on Williston/Hancock/Grove streets with the sudden addition of up to 30 homes on that corner when factoring in the 16-unit Civico development being built right next door.
- inadequate parking that will inevitably spill onto already saturated street parking on Hancock
- removal of green space (for driveway and parking spaces) in an area of Newton that is already severely lacking adequate green space given our proximity to 90 and 95.

Overall, I am very concerned with the size and scope of the affordable housing plan. I noticed on today's meeting agenda that alternative plans will be presented to the JAPG members, and I truly hope that there are other considered uses (other than affordable housing) that are included in these plans, ones that are more consistent with the best interest of the neighborhood and the Williams school community. Per the Newton Real Property Reuse Ordinance, *"It shall be the responsibility of the JAPG to work with the department of planning and development to identify alternatives for the future use of the subject property, including possible continued municipal use"* -- the planning department has not upheld their responsibilities up to this point to present various scenarios of use, despite JAPG members requesting this at every meeting.

In a June 2024 memo to the School Committee ([LINK](#)), the Superintendent proposed ideas for increasing enrollment, including School Choice and Universal Pre-K. She noted that *"more building and classroom space should be preserved, and buildings should not be closed"*. School Committee chair Chris Brezski also mentioned in an early Property Reuse Committee meeting on 6/12/24 that *"Any time land adjacent to school building... as a school department, we would like to preserve all the optionality we can."* Therefore, I support the Walker Center houses being reserved for community educational use, which will not only support the immediate needs of Williams School and the Auburndale community, but also the many possible uses across the district in the future to keep neighborhood schools - like Williams - open.

In a March 2024 "Athletic Fields Improvements Update" ([LINK](#)) presented by the Newton Parks & Rec

Department, they noted the following priorities:

Slide 3:

- Prioritize projects to better meet the needs of Multipurpose sports (Rectangular fields)
- Examine and identify **opportunities to increase MP fields**
- Find a creative approach to **expanding MP field offerings**
- Athletic field groups have been advocating for more fields

Slide 5:

1. IMPROVE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF ATHLETIC FIELDS

- **Increase available regulation-size athletic fields on Park and School lands**

With the city already achieving safe harbor status, along with the above needs from NPS and Parks & Rec, there is no reason that this very expensive affordable housing proposal in a historic district should supersede all other uses. This neighborhood is already dealing with the major developments of Riverside (which contains affordable housing), the Civico condos (which contains affordable housing), and the Lasell Village expansion. Eliza Walker originally established the Walker Home for Missionary Children to provide care for children, and it continued to serve for years as an education and retreat center. Let's keep the legacy of Eliza Walker alive and use the property for her original intent of supporting children and education.

I urge you all to make this a thoughtful project, one that is more aligned with the neighborhood priorities and supportive of the current residents.

Thank you,  
Ashley Remis

**From:** [Randall Block](#)  
**To:** [Shaylyn Davis](#)  
**Subject:** Fw: Walker Center Soccer Filed options  
**Date:** Thursday, November 14, 2024 2:59:12 PM  
**Attachments:** [Field options.pdf](#)

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Shaylyn,

I just received the email and attachment from Ted Chapman, the Ward 4 representative to the Parks & Recreation Commission. I suggest that you forward it to the JAPG.

**Randy Block**  
**Ward 4 City Councilor**  
**[RBlock@NewtonMA.gov](mailto:RBlock@NewtonMA.gov)**

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**From:** Ted Chapman <ehchapman@verizon.net>  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 14, 2024 2:37 PM  
**To:** Rose Day <rosekday@gmail.com>; Randall Block <rblock@newtonma.gov>; Joshua Krintzman <jkrintzman@newtonma.gov>  
**Subject:** Walker Center Soccer Filed options

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To support a discussion this afternoon of alternatives for the use of the Walker Center Space I have attached a graphic showing the various soccer field sizes as they sit on the site.

If appropriate feel free to share during the meeting, or I can jump on and do so.

Ted

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**Ted Chapman**  
91 Cornell St  
Newton, MA 02462-1320  
(617) 680-5278  
ehchapman@verizon.net

### Youth ScoCCer Field Sizes

U = age group

U6-8 = 105 x 75; 7,875 sf; perimeter = 360 ft

U10 = 195 x 135; 26,325 sft; perimeter = 660 ft

U12 = (min-max) 210-240 x 135-165;  
28,739,600sf; perimeter = 690-810 ft

