



What's the Status of the Northland Project?

Can you picture the end of Needham Street where the Marshalls, Fresh City, AAA, Clarks Shoes and Paulette's Dance Studio have been?

Northland Investments (which is headquartered in Newton) came in to the City Council in August 2018 for a special permit to redevelop this 22.6-acre site. It borders Newton Upper Falls off Needham Street between Oak Street and Tower Road.

What's the status?

In February, Northland reduced the number of rental units by 2.7 percent from 822 to 800, with 123, or 15.4 percent, being set aside as affordable. Retail and restaurant space was also reduced substantially

by 51 percent from 237,000 to 115,000 square feet because of concerns of an oversupply of retail and restaurants close by, leading to empty storefronts. Office space in the revised plans will stay at 180,000 square feet at the old mill building along Oak Street (the former Clarks Shoes).

The revised plan also reduces parking from 1,953 spaces to 1,595. Northland cut the number of parking spaces for residents to attract people who will walk, ride bikes, use ride shares, a shuttle or public transportation.

Two of the largest buildings have been broken into several smaller buildings with alleys and courtyards separating them, creating more green space.



The playground (possibly including a spray park) and community building were moved from the Tower Road side to a new site close to the Depot Coffee Shoppe and the Upper Falls Greenway parking area for easier public access.

Traffic is a challenge. Cars are already backed-up along Needham Street even without the additional cars from the proposed apartments, stores and offices. Northland will operate a shuttle system open to the public that would run hourly during the morning and afternoon commutes to locations in Boston and Cambridge. They've also proposed a Newton route that links to the T. The cost per ride has yet to be determined.

"Northland needs to solve the problem of getting people to and from the area at peak

times. We're going to have to see if their proposal can work, as well as monitor and measure the success of their program over time, and have mechanisms to force Northland to make adjustments if it's not working," Newton Chief Planner Jennifer Caira said.

Northland's plans are currently being thoroughly vetted by the City Council's Land Use Committee. The special permit will ultimately need approval from 16 of 24 City Councilors.

The next meeting is Tuesday, April 9 before the Land Use Committee to discuss transportation. The meeting begins at 7:00 p.m. in City Hall (1000 Commonwealth Ave.) in the Council Chamber on the second floor.

(Congratulations to School Committee Member Matthew Miller and members of Newton Destination Imagination. Newton teams won top honors at a recent competition. Five teams will go on to represent Massachusetts at a Global Tournament in May. Pictured are Kiran Mak, Jasmine Liu, Isabella Shaw, Denise Chan, Austin Lang and Deon Chan who are in various grades, fifth graders Affy Kazmirski, May Bunton, Maddie Ngo, Ella Stone-Diliberto and Minh Le, and eighth graders Theo Hill, Tyler Tubman and Sam Hill. Bravo!)



Too Many Banks?

I get asked all the time, "What can we do about all the banks?" We're exploring our options.

Would a buffer zone requirement between new ground floor banks be a good idea? How about limiting the allowed storefront width of a bank, as Cambridge does? Should a bank sharing space with a coffee shop, for example, be excluded from restrictions?

The Planning Department and the City Council (the Zoning and Planning Committee chaired by City Councilor Susan Albright in particular) will look carefully at these and other ideas to address the issue of banks creating low activity areas and an unhealthy mix of businesses in villages like Newton Centre.

I'll keep you posted.

Reminder: Noisy MBTA Work Starts Monday

The MBTA is beginning noisy overnight work on the Green Line track and signal replacement project this Monday, April 8. Crews will begin near Waban Station on Beacon Street working Monday through Friday nights from 8:30 p.m. until 5:00 a.m.

Work is expected to occur for several nights.

Unfortunately, the work will be noisy and disruptive for those living nearby. The MBTA is taking steps to try to minimize the noise, but it will still be very loud at times throughout the night.

The MBTA has set up a noise complaint hotline at 508-676-3550. Project details, maps and a link to sign up for updates from the MBTA are [here](#).

Free Hearing Screening At The Senior Center

Wondering if your hearing is okay?

Go to a free hearing screening at the Senior Center (345 Walnut Street in Newtonville) on the first Tuesday of each month from 11:00 a.m. to noon. If you already have hearing aids, the licensed audiologist can clean and check them and replace the batteries.



Schedule a 10-minute session by calling the Senior Center at 617-796-1660.

I passed my hearing screening with Audiologist Melissa Mahaffey from the West Newton Hearing Center on Tuesday!

Join Me Before Tuesday's FORJ "Cross-Racial Conversation"

Something on your mind? Come to the Angier Elementary School (1697 Beacon St.) on Tuesday, April 9, for a "Mayoral Meet-Up" from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., and stay for the Families Organizing for Racial Justice (FORJ) dialogue.

FORJ is sponsoring "A Cross-Racial Conversation" from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m. with Debby Irving, racial justice educator and author of "Waking Up White," and Shay Stewart-Bouley, Executive Director, Community Change Inc. and blogger of "Black Girl in Maine."

More information about the event is [here](#).

(With Newton Open Studios Co-Directors Claudia Fiks and Ellen Fisher.)

Newton Open Studios This Weekend

Check out the work of more than 150 artists this Saturday, April 6 and Sunday, April 7 from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Newton



Open Studios is in its 22nd year showcasing jewelry and ceramics, wood carving, painting, multimedia work and more.

I attended the preview party on Wednesday evening at the library. As usual, our visual artists did not disappoint—what a talented group.

I also had the chance to gather with more than 30 attendees for an arts and culture focused Mayoral Meetup earlier this week in my office. I'm excited about the energy and excitement around arts and culture planning in the City right

now. To learn more or to sign up for updates, visit www.newtonma.gov/artsculture.

Find more information about our wonderful artists and a list of Newton Open Studios locations [here](#).

Easy for You! Good for the Planet!

I'm hearing from a lot of Newtonians being inundated by mail from electric companies with all kinds of offers. It can be very confusing, and unfortunately there are a lot of companies trying to get people to sign-up for their more expensive clean energy programs.

Don't be fooled.

Newton Power Choice is our City vetted program that provides electricity that is 60 percent from local renewable sources such as wind and solar. Right now it is less expensive than Eversource.

Click [here](#) for more information or to opt up to 100 percent renewable energy.



NewtonSERVES

Join me and more than 1,000 other volunteers at NewtonSERVES, a day of community service on Sunday, April 28, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (rain or shine).

We'll be completing more than 50 community projects at schools, City sites and non-profit organizations around Newton.

Find more information and sign up to help [here](#).

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. **Yard Waste Collection** has begun and will continue through Dec. 13. Find more information [here](#).

P.P.S. Remember, Newton has a **Leaf Blower Ordinance**. The use of all leaf blowers above 65 decibels is prohibited - no exceptions! See details [here](#).

P.P.P.S. **Shredding and Drug Take-Back Day** is on Saturday, April 27th, 8:00 a.m. to noon, rain or shine at the Rumford Avenue Recycling Depot (115 Rumford Avenue). Newton residents can sign up to bring their residential papers to be shredded and to safely dispose of expired prescriptions by calling the Senior Center at 617-796-1660 for a 15-minute time slot.

P.P.P.P.S **Help plant trees**. Volunteer with the Newton Tree Conservancy to help plant 130 trees on Saturday, April 27, at varied start times between 8:30 and 9:30 a.m. Sign up [here](#).

P.P.P.P.P.S Looking for a fun, affordable, **hands-on learning experience** for an 8th or 9th grader during April break (April 15-19)? Take a look [here](#) for information about "When I Grow Up: Discovering Strengths, Passions, and Career Pathways," a four, half-day program offered by the Newton Youth Services Department.

