

Mayor's Update



(With Max Cote, son of Marine Veteran and City Councilor Jim Cote at yesterday's Veterans Day Ceremony at American Legion Nonantum Post 440, paying tribute to the women and men who served.)

Webster Woods Update

We are moving closer to permanently protecting Webster Woods. Votes by the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) and the City Council to approve the acquisition are expected by the end of this year.

Preserving Webster Woods for Newton in perpetuity is essential. The 17.4 acres of pristine woods off Hammond Pond Parkway lie in the middle of Newton's largest forest, with 80-plus acres on the west side alone.

As the process for acquiring this parcel from Boston College through eminent domain proceeds, I want to keep everyone updated and try to answer some of the questions we've been hearing from residents.

Why didn't the City buy the land when it was for sale?

Boston College bought the woods, along with the former Temple Mishkan Tefila building and parking lots, in 2016. While I can't speak for the previous Administration, I have always been committed to preserving the woods. As Mayor, I made it a priority. Rather than looking back to 2016, I am looking forward to Newton's needs now and in the centuries to come.

Why now?

For 18 months, I held conversations with Boston College officials about our desire to permanently preserve Webster Woods. In spite of our best efforts to achieve a mutually agreeable solution, including an offer by the City to buy the undeveloped woods portion of the property at fair market value, we were unsuccessful at finding common ground. Boston College would not commit to permanently preserving the woods, so, in the end, my only choice was to proceed with an eminent domain action. This was our only way forward for acquiring the 17.4 acres of undeveloped wooded land surrounding the buildings and parking lots at 300 Hammond Pond Parkway.

The City is not disrupting or acquiring any portion of the developed buildings and parking lots that Boston College is using now. We are acquiring only the unused woods

at the rear of the property that knit together over 88 acres of undisturbed forest land. Boston College will retain ownership of approximately 8 acres that include the former temple, the existing parking lots and the access road.

How was the acquisition price determined?

An independent, professional appraisal determined the current market value of the 17.4 acres of land to be \$15.2 million.

Once the CPA and City Council vote, the order of taking will be filed; at that point, the City will own the property. We will then cut a check to Boston College. After that, any future legal proceedings about the land's value will be focused on the value on the date the order of taking was filed.

What is the source of the funding?

We applied with the Conservation Commission to the Community Preservation Committee for monies from the Community Preservation Act open space reserve to pay for the acquisition and associated costs. The amount will be bonded, and the bonds will be paid over 30 years. This will leave CPC funds available to invest in other important priorities for Newton.

By state law, CPA funding can be used only for four specific uses: land preservation, affordable housing, historic preservation, or complete renovations of outdoor recreation facilities. In other words, CPA funds cannot be used for such areas as augmenting the City or School operating budgets, on salaries for teachers, or for routine field maintenance.

What about legal costs?

Any land acquisition requires legal costs as well as professional costs for appraisals, surveys, etc. We also anticipate Boston College will challenge our decision to take the land by eminent domain and the appraised value we are offering. We have included \$740,000 for professional services, outside counsel and expert witnesses needed for litigation in our request for CPA funding. (The legal and associated costs may ultimately be higher than \$740,000.)

Has this action damaged Newton's relationship with BC?

Boston College continues to be an important part of the fabric of Newton. They have my respect. They will continue to be my partner. This is just one area where we disagree. I will continue to collaborate with Boston College on a wide range of issues.



Riverside, Version 3.0

A compromise plan for a smaller residential and commercial development at Riverside Station off Grove Street has a tentative nod of approval from a neighborhood group and Ward 4 City Councilors that have pushed Mark Development to revise its original plans for the site.

The City Council’s Zoning and Planning Committee last Thursday night also unanimously passed necessary zoning changes to allow this type of development at the site that straddles Newton Lower Falls and Auburndale along I-95 and the end of the Green Line D Branch. The zoning change will come before the full City Council for a vote on Monday, Nov. 18.

Revised plans for the smaller development will be filed with the City before the end of the year and will go through the special permit process early in 2020.

The compromise plan reduces the total project size from 1.5 million square feet to 1.025 million square feet. The project includes approximately 600 housing units (17.5 percent of which would be affordable), bringing the percentage of residential use in the development to 65 percent from an originally proposed 50-50 split of housing and commercial/retail space. Heights of the buildings are reduced (from 18 stories at the tallest building to 11 stories), a greater setback is provided for the buildings fronting Grove Street, and parking is reduced and consolidated (from 2,922 to 2,039) into two buildings at the center of the site.

After months of work by our residents, City Councilors, and Planning Department, a completed Riverside Vision Plan, robust and productive discussion between neighbors and Mark Development with compromise from both sides, this is a project that works for the neighborhood and turns a parking lot into a well-designed place for people to work, live, stay overnight, eat, shop, and walk the trails along the Charles. I am pleased with the progress.

Northland Moving Toward a Vote

Plans to develop the 22.6

acres of vacant mill buildings, retail area and huge parking lot at the end of Needham Street is moving forward for a vote by the City Council before the year's end. The project is where the Marshalls is located and where Clark's Shoes and Paulette's Dance Studio had been, bordering Newton Upper Falls off Needham Street between Oak Street and Tower Road.



Northland Investments filed the special permit application to develop the site in August 2018. Since then, the City Council and the Newton Planning Department have been hearing from residents of the area and experts in design, traffic, environmental sustainability and demographics during the public hearing process.

In the process, the project has been revised and reduced from its original proposal. It now includes 800 housing units (123 affordable), 115,000 square feet of retail and restaurant space, and 180,000 square feet of office space located in the old mill building along Oak Street (the former Clarks Shoes).

One of the specific community benefits I requested be included is \$1.5 million in mitigation funds paid by the developer to be used solely for renovations at the Countryside Elementary School. This is the first time mitigation funds have been directed toward a school near a development.

Another great addition for the City is a sizeable spray park bordering the Greenway. Plus, a shuttle will run to the Newton Highlands MBTA stop every 10 minutes, 16 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Land Use Committee is also continuing to refine the transportation plan. Councilors are focused on reducing the number of cars in and out of the site and determining the best way to count, monitor and enforce limitations on the number of vehicular trips.

Our City Councilors, Planning Department and residents have worked for months with the developer to make this project better for Newton. With these changes, I am comfortable supporting this project as it moves forward to the City Council for a vote.



Introducing The Centre at 1294

Can you picture the beautiful former branch library building at 1294 Centre Street in Newton Centre next to the Learning Express?

Owned by the City of Newton, it has been vacant and unused since our Health and Human Services Department moved out in 2013.

Parks, Recreation and Culture Department programs have now brought it back to life with a variety of classes from fitness to bridge, knitting, music and arts.

As the building approaches its 100th anniversary, I wanted to see if it could once again be used by the community until we decide on the permanent use of the building. Together with Park, Recreation and Culture Commissioner Bob DeRubeis and Building Commissioner Josh Morse, we took a look at the building as a location for community programs. After some light renovations over the summer, the doors opened for its first Tai Chi class in July.

Programs are scheduled four mornings a week. Evening classes and workshops are also starting to fill the schedule. There's also space available to rent for meetings, birthday parties and other gatherings.

Save the date for an Open House at The Centre at 1294 on Jan. 4, 2020 (time tbd).

Sign-up for classes [here](#).



(Newton Creative Start is a non profit that provides early childhood education to children 3 to 5 years-olds, as well as a Head Start preschool. Head Start is a federally funded program which provides free education and family services to income eligible families. The school is continuing to enroll families for the 2019-2020 programs. If you think you or a family you know may be eligible, please call 617-527-6687 or

email kim@communitiesunitedinc.org.)

Shortened Winter Parking Ban

The winter overnight on-street parking ban in Newton is 30 days shorter this winter. It begins on Sunday, Dec. 1 and goes through Tuesday, March 31. (The previous parking ban ran from Nov. 15 to April 15.)

Need a place to park overnight during the on-street parking ban? Free municipal parking lot permits are available. Permits are for Newton residents only. You need a valid driver's license and vehicle registration (proof of residency is required if your car is not registered in Newton). Parking permits are given out on a first-come first-serve basis. The permits are for a calendar year and need to be renewed by Jan. 1. Stop by now for 2019 permits. The application period for 2020 begins on Dec. 16. Permits are available at the Newton Police Department, 1231 Washington St. in West Newton Square, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Where are the municipal parking lots? Lexington/Melrose Streets (same lot - two entrances); Cherry/Elm Streets (same lot - two entrances); Chapel Street (full through 2019); Adams Street; Austin Street; Cypress Street; Langley Road; Pearl Street; Richardson Street; Pelham Street; Hartford Street; and Chestnut Street (angled spots at end of Chestnut St in Petty Square). See a map of the municipal parking lots [here](#).

Please Help Us Celebrate

Help us celebrate our non-profits. Newton's many non-profits help our vulnerable residents, support our youngsters and seniors, foster community and creativity through arts and culture, and are committed to improving our city, our country and our planet.

Join us the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, "Giving Tuesday," at the festivities on December 3rd at 10:00 a.m.

to noon at the John M. Barry Boys & Girls Club of Newton, 675 Watertown Street.

Warmly,

Ruthanne



PRE-ORDER, PICK UP, SHOP

THANKSGIVING Farmers' Market

Tues. Nov 26 1-5 PM

**Turkeys
Pies
Produce
& More**

**Newton City Hall
War Memorial**

THE Village Bank

P.S. If you don't already have a ticket for this evening's annual [Newton Inspires](#) at Newton South High School, consider joining Sheriff Peter Koutoujian and the League of Women Voters Newton at the Angier Elementary School. He'll be talking about his office's partnership with local law enforcement and efforts to address substance abuse and mental health issues.

P.P.S. It's getting dark earlier every afternoon, meaning

more kids are walking and biking home at dusk and in the dark. Be careful! [Newton Safe Routes to Schools](#) has information for drivers and students to stay safe during this time of year.

