

November 11th, 2014

Mayor Setti Warren
City of Newton

Dear Mayor Warren,

The Newtonville Area Council received a September 26th, 2014 letter (included below) from Citizen Assistance Officer Terry Crowley in response to the September 20th letter we addressed to you, in which we expressed our strongest concerns about proposed angled parking on Walnut St.

We applaud the City's commitment to revitalizing Walnut St. between Newtonville Ave and Washington Park. However, we reiterate our strong opposition to a proposal to install angled parking on either side of Walnut St., which would seriously impact any revitalization effort.

Although through Ms. Crowley's below letter, you have assured us that, "there will be plenty of opportunities for residents to weigh in on the layout of Walnut St...", we wish to point out that there already have been plenty of such opportunities. Residents have made their interest in widening both sidewalks -- and their opposition to widening only one sidewalk abundantly quite clear:

1. As underscored in the first Newtonville survey ("Common Ground," by Beautiful Newtonville, January, 2013), the vast majority of Newtonville residents overwhelmingly support widening Walnut St.'s sidewalks to promote outdoor dining and a more pedestrian-friendly environment.
2. That interest was confirmed in a live public working meeting ("Re-imagining Walnut Street") organized by the City and Beautiful Newtonville, attended by 100 people on May 23rd, 2013. Though residents support preserving original parking on Walnut St., they clearly do not support adding parking on Walnut St. at the expense of the cornerstone of a Walnut St. revitalization plan.
3. In a second public meeting, at Day Middle School, after a presentation by Newton's Planning department, the idea of widening only one sidewalk on Walnut was discussed -- and resoundingly opposed by the public.

We believe that this underscores that residents have made clear on three occasions, in three different venues, their interest in widening both of Walnut Street's sidewalks.

The City already postponed last summer's original plan to revitalize Walnut St., saying that it would be implemented the summer of 2015. We hope now, the City can move on the timeline needed to meet its stated summer of 2015 schedule to widen the sidewalks.

Ms. Crowley also wrote, "We are not sure of the nature of the conversation between a council member and Ms. Hyde. " We can also provide more detail on the nature of this conversation:

In a September walkthrough of Walnut St. to explore the Walnut St. revitalization plan, Economic Development Director Nancy Hyde and Transportation Director Bill Paille mentioned to Newtonville Area Council member Tim Stone that angled parking on one side of *Walnut Street* was a potential way to reduce the amount of parking needed in the proposed *Austin Street* development. Bill and Nancy added that a sidewalk could not be widened on a side of the street with angled parking.

We since have learned that a consultant proposed angled parking on Walnut St. to the developer selected by you to redevelop the Austin St. parking lot.

No part of Newton should be sacrificed to the needs of a developer, certainly not in Newtonville, which has yet to recover from the construction of the mass Turnpike, which demolished its downtown in the early 1960s. Here's why:

4. The Newtonville Area Council agrees that widening both of these extremely narrow sidewalks represents a cornerstone of revitalizing Walnut St. This would allow sufficient room for street furniture such as benches, street lights, social gathering areas, landscaping, and flower planters, while for the first time, providing pedestrians sufficient space to walk side by side.
5. Eateries exist on both sides of the street and not widening one side would significantly disadvantage establishments who wound up "on the wrong side of the street."
6. Angle parking was removed in the 1950's on Walnut due to safety and traffic issues on such a narrow thoroughfare. More pedestrians, families pushing strollers, and bicyclists make safety an even greater concern today, especially since Walnut St. is also one of the City's few major North-South arterials. Increased density of angled parking would cause traffic jams, a higher accident frequency, and possibly a serious accident. That's not the "traffic calming" Newtonville needs.

Widening both sidewalks on Walnut Street is a once-in-a generation opportunity and a wise urban planning decision. Conversely, installing diagonal parking at any spot on Walnut St. between Newtonville Ave and Newton North High School would significantly erode a universally supported vision in order to appease a private developer.

Our highest priority is to transform Newtonville from an errand spot to a destination that invites all Newton residents to share a meal, buy locally, and enjoy the public space created by wider sidewalks.

In the Walnut Street walkthrough, Bill Paille asked Beautiful Newtonville to propose community gathering spots on Walnut St. to assist with a revitalization plan. Ms. Adams has volunteered to present a plan to the Newtonville Area Council on Wednesday, November 12 at 7pm. We have invited the Planning department to attend this next step in the City's original commitment to widen both sides of Walnut St. We also invite you to attend.

With kind regards,

The Newtonville Area Council

Steve Bart, Jacqueline Freeman, Marc Kaufman, Wayne Koch, Tom Kraus, Joy Huber, Barbara Perlo, Helene Sroat, Tim Stone, Emily Norton (Ward 2 Alderman).

PS See Terry Crowley's email below answering our first letter to you.

To: Tim Stone

Dear Mr. Stone,

My name is Terry Crowley and I am the new Citizen Assistance Officer for the City of Newton. I'm writing to you today in response to an e-mail you sent to Mayor Warren regarding parking on Walnut Avenue in Newtonville.

Mayor Warren would like you to know, there will plenty of opportunities for residents to weigh in on the layout of Walnut Street. We are not sure of the nature of the conversation between a council member and Ms. Hyde. I want to assure you there will multiple opportunities for you and other concerned residents to weigh in on the revitalization of Walnut Street and this will include plans for parking.

Please feel free to contact me directly if you have any additional questions or if I can ever be of service to you.

Sincerely,
Terry

Terry A. Crowley
Citizen Assistance Officer
Office of Mayor Setti D. Warren
[617-796-1102](tel:617-796-1102)