



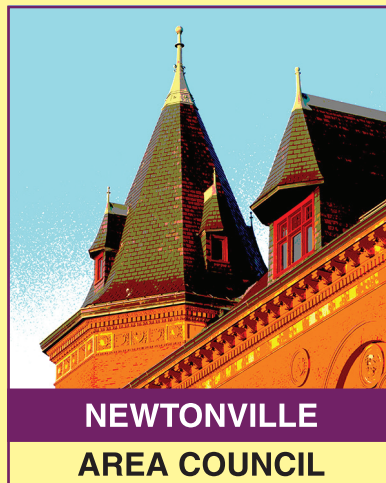
Envisioning Washington Street

NEWTONVILLE AREA COUNCIL

SUMMARY REPORT

Public Charrette on the Future of
Washington Street

May 2018



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INTRODUCTION

The coming years will bring changes to Washington Street — the area along Newton Corner, Nonantum, Newtonville, and West Newton — including approximately 1000 new housing units, traffic flow changes, tighter parking, higher density, increased pressure on schools and public transportation, the loss of existing local businesses, and the appearance of new commercial establishments. However, these changes are not inevitable. What happens depends to some extent on the residents. To get out ahead of these as-yet undefined changes and the impending overhaul of Newton’s zoning ordinances and to find out what *you* want on Washington Street, the Newtonville Area Council (NAC) sponsored a *charrette*, or brainstorming session, called “Envisioning Washington Street.” The event was held on February 15, 2018, at the Newton Senior Center, at 7 PM.

The charrette was well attended, with more than a hundred residents and business owners from different villages. Also attending were representatives from development firms, special-interest groups, and the city administration.

We set up the charrette as follows:

- The following six issues were chosen as points of discussion:
 - » Housing
 - » Transportation
 - » Business Mix
 - » Physical Character
 - » Community Benefits
 - » Community Impacts
- NAC members facilitated group discussions on one of the above issues.
- Publicity was distributed through as many means as possible — email, phone, *Newton Tab*, *The Boston Globe*, posters, and paper postings — to get as wide a swath of the populace to attend as possible.
- When attendees registered at the charrette, they provided name, address, email, and ward/precinct information and then were randomly assigned to one of six color-coded groups.
- Before leading the group discussion, facilitators gave a brief, unbiased introduction to their issue. Anyone who wanted to speak was allowed to speak.

- Every 15 minutes facilitators rotated to another group, so that each of the six groups discussed every issue.
- Recorders paired with facilitators captured all comments (in abbreviated form) on a flip chart.
- After the charrette, facilitators prepared summaries of the discussion they led. These summaries make up the remainder of this report.

Our goal was to have residents and business owners in these four villages express their ideas, hopes, and fears regarding changes to Washington Street. We believe we achieved our goal. The flip charts were full of interesting suggestions (what residents want to see) and troubling concerns (what residents don’t want to see) with respect to housing, businesses, and other issues.

The public’s voice is vital to ensure that those most affected by change have a determining impact in Washington Street’s future. We expect that Mayor Fuller, the Planning Department, and the Principle Group (the city’s consultant on zoning and development) will read this report and take what we learned into consideration as they continue their planning efforts.

Our next step is to conduct a public opinion survey to be distributed to residents in spring 2018. Following the survey, there will be at least one public meeting to present a summary of the charrette and a report on the results of the public opinion survey.

Structure of This Report

This review of the charrette has four components — this introduction, a summary of comments, bullet lists of participant comments, and facilitator insights and comments.

Members of the Newtonville Area Council

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SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

While the charrette focused on six topics, some comments seemed to cut across each topic. Below is a list of observations and comments from participants.

- More trees and greenery to help screen the turnpike and beautify the street.
- Many participants asked for wider sidewalks (pedestrian friendly) with benches for sitting, with new green space and shade trees.
- Participants did not want a monolithic wall of new buildings lining Washington Street. They want diversity in style and materials, with natural materials (brick and wood) used extensively. There is a distaste for “cheap-looking” siding.
- New buildings should pull back from the sidewalk with generous green space, trees, and other plantings in front and parking behind buildings.
- Better street lighting was requested for safety and to draw residents to Washington Street.
- Many participants asked for safer road crossings with new and better signals, and bump-outs to shorten the crossing space. Others did not like bump-outs.
- It was requested that bicycle riding be made safer on Washington Street. Some called for a dedicated protected bike lane.
- People called for sound barriers to quiet turnpike noise, including more trees and the type of physical sound barriers used on I-95 and elsewhere.
- Improve physical access to Newton’s three Commuter Rail stations; make them handicapped accessible.
- Some argued that more housing will bring more riders to the T. Improved access is a public benefit developers could fund.
- Many participants asked for a shuttle or other connection to MBTA stations in Newton (Green Line, Purple Line, buses).
- There was a recognition that Newton has to coordinate with Watertown and Waltham — two communities experiencing housing growth — regarding road maintenance and mass transit.
- There was concern that “luxury” apartment housing would displace naturally affordable housing and the middle class.
- Many participants do not want to lose their village feel. Washington Street should be seen as distinct villages, not as a single entity.
- Parking is an issue for many. Some people called for less parking; some called for more parking. There was consensus that there needs to be adequate parking to meet the needs of small businesses.
- Many participants feel that historic buildings need to be preserved. The West Newton Cinema and Newton Armory were mentioned often.
- Some people argued for building heights to be limited to existing zoning (two and three stories). Others might consider more than three stories. This is a topic for wide public debate.
- Some participants embraced the idea of a road diet (reducing the street to one lane per direction, plus a turning lane) for Washington Street. Some wanted to know more about it while others feared greater congestion. This, too, is a topic for public education and debate.
- As Washington Street evolves, many participants asked for ways to bridge the physical barrier created by the turnpike with the goal of unifying the north and south sides of the villages.
- Participants want to see local businesses on Washington Street, not national chains.
- Several groups discussed ways to subsidize rents for small, local businesses in what would otherwise be expensive new space.
- Concurrent with this discussion is the need to have retail space of all sizes, including small spaces for tailors, barbers, and other hyper-local businesses.
- A number of groups asked for developer-supported community spaces for public meetings, community gatherings, art, and education. Some asked for space for innovative start-up businesses and worker technology labs.
- There was great diversity of opinion regarding housing density. Some wanted density clustered in the village centers; others wanted no added density at all.

HOUSING

List of Participant Comments

DENSITY

- Concern about high density
- What is the impact on taxes?
- Schools: how many new children will come into the school system, and at what cost?
- Add green space for children
- Greater density near transportation
- Provide affordable housing
- City should direct development, not developers

BUILDING TYPE

- Decent-sized condos for seniors
- Large residential buildings only in village centers
- Shortage of housing for seniors
- Mix of housing types = vibrancy
- Need balance between residential and commercial
- Commercial on first floor; residential above
- Parking needed for families

OWNERSHIP

- Rental versus owner occupied
- Rental — housing for all adds to the city's diversity
- Do renters have less involvement and community commitment?

AFFORDABILITY

- What is affordable?
- Place higher requirements on special permits
- Does conventional housing result in more affordable housing?
- What is affordable for middle-income housing?
- Inventory natural affordable housing
- Are we losing naturally affordable housing to luxury apartment housing?
- 25% affordable housing target
- Use non-profit developers
- Let villages decide the distribution of affordable housing

Comments from Facilitator Thomas Kraus

A very wide range of opinions were expressed regarding possible development of housing along Washington Street. One of the most interesting observations was that although the six groups were randomly assigned, each group had a very different tone and view on housing.

Density. There was a particularly wide range of views regarding density. Two of the groups strongly supported adding substantial housing density and focused on the importance of walkability and proximity to grocery stores, pharmacies, and so on. Two of the groups strongly opposed adding density. And two of the groups were mixed, with numerous voices expressing desire for low-height (two-three story) mixed-use housing, such as is found in Nonantum. At one extreme was an individual advocating for substantial height (more than six stories), and at the other extreme were individuals saying that we should add no housing. The vast majority of people were in-between.

Despite the range of views, a common theme was that if higher density housing is developed, it should be clustered at the village centers, and that a continuous stretch of higher density housing along Washington Street should be avoided.

Building Type. Most of the groups had some number of speakers who advocated for building housing that provided easier living for seniors and others with mobility issues. There was a strong call for elevators in multistory buildings. There was no substantial interest in specifically targeted senior (or other group) housing, and a general sentiment in favor of mixed populations, whether it be by age, income, or other criteria.

There were a number of people who advocated for townhouse development, where there would be shared green space. Additionally, there were requests that housing appropriate for families with children should have some child-centric areas on the site, such as green space or other play space.

Mixed-use Versus Residential. The general consensus was that both mixed-use facilities and pure housing facilities were of value. There was a strong desire for mixed-use, as defined by ground-level retail and upper level(s) of housing. As mentioned above, there was substantial range of how much housing should be above the retail. However, there was no support for the idea of

making Washington Street a continuous strip of mixed-use facilities; there was a general sense that maintaining a separation between the three villages was of value. There was a strong sense that the areas that are currently purely residential should stay residential. There was also a desire expressed that some purely commercial space should be kept purely commercial to help the municipal income balance.

Rental Versus Ownership. This was an interesting topic. There were a range of opinions on the need for rental apartments versus condominium units, whether in a mixed-use building, a more traditional apartment building, or townhouses.

While most participants seemed to support the idea that Newton needs more rental housing, there was a small number of participants who seemed almost frightened of renters, asserting that rental units would bring crime and that renters would not contribute to the Newton community in the same way as owner-occupants do. A number of other participants made their voices heard opposing those positions, citing that they themselves were long-term renters in the city, and/or that they had positive experiences with Newton's renters.

Affordability. There were some number of people who expressed interest in "Affordable" ownership units, as well as "Affordable" rental units, where the uppercase "Affordable" refers to deed-restricted subsidized housing. There was substantial frustration expressed that newly constructed "Affordable" units were displacing naturally affordable units in older buildings, such as at Court Street. There were desires expressed that new projects

be required to provide a net increase of affordable units, where the numbers of naturally affordable units lost would be subtracted from the number of "Affordable" units to be built when a project is being considered for approval.

Several participants expressed desire for rental units for the express purpose of downsizing seniors, that is, themselves. They felt that renting would be the better solution for them in terms of freeing up capital that is captive in their existing home.

A number of people expressed concern about the affordability of market-rate units in new developments, whether condo or rental. There was a concern that the market-rate units of recent developments were priced outside the reach of existing Newton residents. Some expressed disappointment that Austin Street was not being developed by one of its non-profit bidders, with the sense that the price of the market-rate units could have been more contained with a non-profit developer. There was strong sentiment expressed that new developments provide opportunities across the income range, with particular concern that the middle range not be squeezed out.

Other Factors. A common theme was that improved public transit should accompany any increased density; that is, even if the MBTA doesn't boost service to what it should be, a shuttle bus should be established that would connect residents to grocery stores, drug stores, and so on, which would allow residents to reduce reliance on cars. Also, there were comments made that noise abatement from the turnpike would be a great improvement, particularly for residential areas.

TRANSPORTATION

List of Participant Comments

TRAFFIC FLOW

- Narrow (reduced) lanes on Washington and Walnut streets will not work
- Don't reduce the number of lanes on Washington Street
- Reduce the number of traffic lanes; more lanes are dangerous
- Slow traffic — road diet, provide bike lanes
- Link to West Newton Square improvements
- Trial for road diet
- Too much traffic in Newton
- Traffic diet studies — where do they work?
- Washington Street not for thru traffic

SAFETY, MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORT

- Take on all modes of transportation, not only cars
- Make safer for bikes
- Expand sidewalks for pedestrians
- Encourage people not to drive
- Make corridor walkable
- Add benches to sidewalks
- Safer for walkers; new traffic and street lights
- Add protected bike lanes
- Buffered bike lanes

PARKING

- Don't reduce existing parking spaces
- Add parking spaces
- Reduce parking spaces to have less traffic
- Parking estimates understated
- Concern that parking will be restricted
- More parking for employees
- Pay impact fees (for more parking)
- Don't shrink parking spaces
- Ample parking concerns
- Facilities for Uber, Lyft, Zipcars
- Too much parking in Newton
- Need more parking near mass transit

MASS TRANSIT

- Add shuttles to the T
- Increase public transportation
- Add elevators to MBTA Purple Line stations
- Better non-auto transport
- True inner city rail service
- No North/South bus (one is needed)
- More buses needed after 8 pm

BUDGET, HOLISTIC PLANNING

- Maintain sidewalks and roads
- Coordinate MBTA planning with the city
- Coordinate with Watertown
- Who will pay for road improvements?
- Traffic study including surrounding towns

Comments from Facilitator Peter Bruce

My sessions featured both recurring themes and an incredible heterogeneity of topics and views, as we discussed traffic flow and “road diets,” safety, parking, traffic planning, and mass transit.

Road Diets. I'd planned to downplay this controversial topic. (A “road diet” reduces the number of traffic lanes and adds bike lanes.) But Jeff Speck, developer Mark Development LLC's transportation consultant, made it a major focus by interrupting my first session, stating who he was, and touting his video proposing road diets for Washington Street. (It's on the Chamber of Commerce website.) He then insisted on accompanying me in other sessions. I agreed, realizing this could stimulate debate and allow me to challenge claims in his video. Once I clarified that these were *my* sessions, he was respectful and friendly. I usually began each session by introducing him, and we had excellent discussions about this and other topics.

The first resident to speak reinforced the question: would road diets be good or bad for the city? That resident, a college professor who drives through Newton Corner into Boston, argued that Mr. Speck's video was misleading in suggesting that road diets could improve the flow of traffic. He further contended that the number of bike riders is miniscule, and that it made no sense

to narrow traffic lanes with bike lanes and fewer lanes of through traffic when the motor vehicle demand for the lanes on Washington Street was so heavy. He also rejected the idea of a compromise with narrower lanes, saying large vehicles would not fit easily into them and would create more problems.

The next resident, an avid long-time Newton bicyclist, said he would never ride his bike on Washington Street as currently configured because it's too unsafe. He was followed by a woman in her seventies, also an avid biker, who wanted to dispel popular views that older people don't ride bikes, especially in winter. She also asserted that Washington Street was too unsafe for her, and that she should have a right to ride there with well-protected bike lanes. Protected bike lanes were very popular.

Others had less pure ideas. Some wanted more safety to be achieved, but without road diets, i.e., using more prominent traffic signals, street lights, speed bumps, bump-outs, or a stronger police presence. Some also suggested fewer lanes for vehicles to slow traffic and better protect walkers. Others liked road diets but wondered if they wouldn't cost too much. Some said they'd prefer expanded sidewalks to bike lanes.

Controversy also mounted over what the city was planning for the West Newton Square area with its new road configurations. Many people voiced concern about the dangerousness regarding Newton Corner's "Circle of Death," but with no consensus as to what to do about it.

Some people wanted less traffic, but others wanted a better flow, and little or no reduction in volume. Some advanced the idea that road diets should be put to a temporary trial before deciding one way or the other. Some people argued that Nonantum Road was an example of such a diet that works in Newton. Others asserted the opposite, i.e., that traffic on it can result in major delays, especially during the morning rush period. One woman complained of long "tail-backs" (Irish/English slang for "back-ups") in the evening rush too.

Shuttle Buses. An idea that was nearly universally popular was that Newton should run shuttle buses to the Green line stations and Newton-Wellesley Hospital along and around Washington Street. So too was the idea that our roads and sidewalks be better maintained.

Parking. Those who wanted more bike lanes often wanted a reduction in parking to incentivize people to drive less. Many other people wanted to know what the city's current parking requirements were, and how well new developments were going to meet them. They were

concerned both that the number of parking spaces be ample and that they be large enough. Many wanted more parking with larger stalls than the new developments were calling for.

Some people advocated for more "ride-share" facilities for Uber, Lyft, and Zipcars. Others mentioned that those services were luring people away from mass transit, bikes, and sidewalks, and putting more congestion on the streets and pollution in the air.

In one session, a bike enthusiast said there was far too much parking in Newton. In response, a man with a slight disability, but not enough to qualify him for a handicapped space, said that both he and his wife needed cars to get to work in Newton. Their argument became so heated that I called the session to an end immediately, even though it had a minute more to run.

Traffic Planning and Overall Growth. Other ideas sprung up regarding methodologies of traffic study and planning. People in several sessions spoke of new traffic coming in from new developments in Waltham and Watertown, which traffic planners would need to study and plan for with a holistic multi-city view, rather than a specifically Newton-centered view.

Relatedly, to better plan and study traffic and parking needs, several people said they wanted to know how much development developers were planning. One woman asked, "How can we have an informed discussion about transportation needs and capabilities, when we have no idea how many new businesses and people might be added to the corridor?" In response, another resident volunteered that Mark Development LLC was planning to create about 1,000 new housing units. (I thought his estimate was wildly exaggerated, but in fact, *The Boston Globe* has reported that that company envisions building about 450 new housing units at The Barn and environs. And Mark Development has asserted that it might build 500 rental units in Newtonville's Whole Foods area.) Concern was voiced in this session, as well, that the developers' estimates for our parking needs were too low.

People also voiced concerns that parking was getting harder to find for employees and for people needing to park near mass transit.

Mass Transit. People also wanted more cooperation between the T and Newton.

One woman suggested a monorail.

People generally wanted to see more funding and provision of mass transit, more commuter rail trains, and elevators to the tracks. As mentioned, a shuttle bus

or more city-subsidized taxis to take people from various places on the north side of town to the Green Line were popular ideas, though one woman voiced concern that these might congest these parts of Newton too much if they attracted many people from other towns.

There seemed to be consensus that the city should partner with Mass DOT and MBTA on the eventually forthcoming “Indigo Line” to run diesel multiple unit (DMU) trains along the Purple Line corridor from Newton to Boston and Kendall Square.

Several people suggested that Newton should levy heavy impact fees on developers to help pay for the costs of accommodating more traffic and parking and modernizing T stations, and that it has the right to do so.

More buses after 8 pm and more commuter rail service in non-rush hours and on Sunday were also requested. More North/South bus service was also demanded by several people.

BUSINESS MIX

List of Participant Comments

PEOPLE WANT:

- A dedicated public space for a business incubator
- A co-working space (e.g., We Work)
- Quality, independently owned restaurants (non-chain)
- Small businesses, such as small retail, service-oriented, medical, dental, arts-based, and pet service businesses
- To preserve the character of The Barn
- No more banks or nail salons
- More entertainment options, such as another cinema, a bowling alley, or a venue space for private parties, weddings, etc.
- Creative spaces for teen activities, like Watertown's "The Hatch"
- Trees and green space outside and in between businesses
- Affordable space for small businesses
- Art galleries and book stores
- Sidewalk restaurants with outdoor dining areas
- Pop-up store space for seasonable businesses
- Hardware store
- More grocery stores with fresh fruits and vegetables
- Mixed income housing and business rental opportunities
- Gluten Free and Vegetarian restaurants

PEOPLE WERE CONCERNED ABOUT:

- A potential lack of options for housing, such as rental units vs. ownership and apartments vs. condominiums, vs. town houses
- Some iconic buildings may be torn down, such as the Armory, the Santander Bank, the Police Station, the West Newton Cinema, and others

Comments from Facilitator Maura Harrington

The Business Mix conversations were lively, and every group was engaged, with a lot of ideas for the types of business mix they want in the new development areas along Washington Street.

The recurring concerns expressed by all groups included building height (no more than three stories high); that there be an equal mix of housing and businesses along Washington Street; and that they be clustered, rather than continuous.

Other key points brought up were that businesses be varied (not only retail, for example), and that rent for businesses remain affordable enough to enable new/small business owners to rent space (possibly offering rent control options) along Washington Street. People suggested small business space could be made available above retail space but below housing units in new developments along Washington Street.

People expressed concern about their taxes increasing due to new development. They were concerned that more people will strain school and other social service resources, causing an increase in taxes. Many people complained that schools are already overcrowded in Wards 1, 2, and 3; particularly north of Washington Street. Many expressed a desire for Mayor Fuller to ensure an adequate business mix, so taxes don't go up due to development. Some suggested that with the right mix, taxes might go down!

All in all, people generally agreed that the development along Washington Street can have a positive outcome for the community with the proper business mix. People stressed the importance of being informed before change occurs, so they can express their opinions and have an impact on outcomes. A lot of people said they hope things won't move too fast, so they have time to respond to ideas and be heard.

PHYSICAL CHARACTER

List of Participant Comments

- Wide sidewalks on both sides of Washington Street with benches and space for outdoor dining
- Add many more trees to Washington Street. Add depth and variety of trees, shrubs, and other plantings
- New street lighting to provide better lighting (not sensor lighting). Lighting to support street life day and night
- Add sound barriers such as trees or fencing
- Shorter and more crosswalks
- Add protected bike lane
- Enhance train station (MBTA Purple Line)
- Limit new building height to three or four stories — maybe four stories if developers provide greater community benefits
- No heights above current zoning
- Two-three story new buildings to maintain historical look. Not ugly; not a flat facade to building fronts; keep attractive old architectural elements
- Buildings with varied setbacks
- No huge commercial buildings; avoid big, boxy buildings
- Building materials: traditional brick stone and wood; not all glass and not cheap-looking cladding
- Preserve historical features
- Deck over the turnpike to create green space
- Accommodate housing diversity
- Buildings with green space in front and parking in back
- Variety of building heights and types; varied setbacks with continuous sidewalks (see Mass Ave. in North Cambridge); avoid monolithic look
- Preserve Jackson Homestead, Newton Police Station, West Newton Cinema, Armory
- Get rid of ugly highway look
- Lower the speed limit on Washington Street
- Place taller buildings in village centers; shorter buildings adjacent to existing houses
- Build unique buildings, not generic buildings with a flat roof

- Create a village green on Washington Street
- Attract people to Washington Street — more pedestrians, bikers, shoppers

Comments from Facilitator Helene Sroat

In the Physical Character session, residents were asked to consider the overall look and feel they would like to see realized in the streetscape and buildings along Washington Street. This included sidewalks, lighting, crosswalks, trees, plantings, and green space. Residents were also asked to consider building design, thinking in terms of height, setbacks, facades, and materials. Residents stated overwhelmingly that they are not satisfied with the current physical character of this stretch of Washington Street. Its openness to the noise and views of the pike are experienced as unpleasant. Conditions for pedestrians, bikers, and drivers are viewed as unsafe and uncomfortable. The condition of its sidewalks, lighting, and landscaping is viewed very negatively.

Trees and other greenery along the north and south sides of Washington Street repeatedly came up as the feature that is currently most sorely lacking and would be most welcome. Residents hoped plantings could mitigate the openness of Washington Street to the turnpike on its south side. They also wanted trees, appealing plantings, and small pocket parks in front of buildings on the north side.

Residents wished for wider, nicely paved, accessible sidewalks that are furnished with shade trees and frequent benches with backs and armrests. They also wanted safer crosswalks and more attractive lighting. Many spoke about not liking “developer” buildings — large boxy buildings with flat roofs that try to disguise their large size with multi-colored facades. With any new buildings, residents would like to see varied rooflines and setbacks, balconies, and “real” materials like brick, stone and wood, but not too many materials and colors in any one building leading to a patchwork effect.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

List of Participant Comments

- Community center (meeting, performance area, indoor and outdoor space, and community garden)
- Add elevators and handicap provisions to the Newtonville station
- More accessibility to all three train stations
- Community center should be near public transportation
- Connect the sides of villages split by the turnpike
- Open space; parks; green space
- Play area for children
- Park next to police station (more trees)
- Increase plantings along corridor
- Abatements for sound barriers
- Put utilities underground
- Bus station with shelter and solar lighting
- Benches and wider attractive sidewalks
- Improved street lighting
- Zipcars, bike share, and electric charging stations
- Safe place for bicycles
- Funds and endowment for schools (admitting many new students)
- Incentives for small businesses; affordable small spaces
- Disclose height and density plans for public discussion
- All buildings should be LEED certified
- Increase affordable housing zoning to 25%
- Incentives for historical preservation
- Preserve neighborhood identities
- Cohesive development throughout the area
- Commercial space for art and business collaboration
- Unified and consistent snow removal
- Funding for street maintenance

Comments from Facilitator Dana D'Agostino

My sessions were lively and upbeat. I asked the groups to envision developer-funded community benefits. We had many great ideas with the most popular listed below.

- Upgrade the commuter rail to include a handicapped-accessible elevator, benches, improved lighting, and aesthetics.
- Install sound barriers and plant trees along the turnpike. Need a cohesive plan for landscaping with attractive sidewalks. Set up a fund for maintenance and upkeep and put utilities underground.
- Build a community center with a performance arts area, indoor and outdoor space, and community gardens.
- Designate set-asides and funds for local small business, schools, roads and the West Newton Cinema.
- Build a bridge connecting the north and south side of the turnpike.
- Create incentives for historical building preservations, LEED buildings, and smaller commercial spaces. Put restrictions on height (two-three stories) and density of new buildings.
- Open and green space with parks, play area for kids, and trees is crucial.
- Include Zipcars, bike shares, and electric car charging stations along Washington Street. Upgrade the bus stops to include protection from the weather and solar lighting wherever possible.
- City Councilors need to include community benefits in their negotiations with developers.
- Very important to keep the unique character of each village!

COMMUNITY IMPACTS

Bullet List of Participant Comments

TRANSPORTATION

- Provide sufficient parking for residents
- Public transportation needed if we want less on-street parking
- Adjust train schedule; add a shuttle; target elderly and working population
- Want walking accessibility, including better sidewalks and signals
- Some want biking accessibility (e.g., separation from cars); others question practicality of adding bike lanes and more bikes
- Current traffic is too fast; manage speed and flow; want bike lane, wider sidewalks, longer traffic lights

DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

- Gradual development wanted; not all at once
- Fear loss of local small businesses
- How familiar are developers with community?
- How much development is driven by developers, by people?
- Residents should decide overall appearance; developers respond to their proposals
- Enhancement to buildings versus new development

HOUSING

- Some afraid that expensive units will end up decreasing diversity
- Fear of high rents in the area
- Add buildings for older people; identify requirements
- What is the impact on real estate taxes?

BUSINESS MIX

- Want economic diversity; shops and businesses along with housing
- Want diverse local businesses; affordable rents to local businesses plus parking
- More commercial space in the mix, not necessarily commercial-only buildings
- Add incubation office space

PHYSICAL CHARACTER

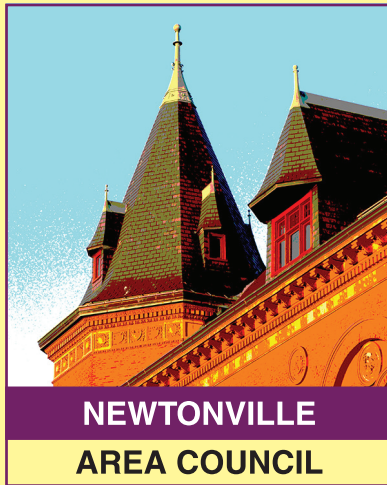
- Add green space, playground for kids, and parks, with seating and trees
- Provide greenery in front of new construction
- Turnpike = noise and pollution. Add more greenery.
- Don't want new construction to change the neighborhood vs new construction is good
- How to retain village feel with zoning
- Tension between village feel versus big urban wall of buildings

Comments from Facilitator Susan Reisler

To my surprise, the attendees of each session hit on the same themes over and over. Here are some ideas to lessen the impact of development — that is, increased population and vehicles.

- A line of big, tall buildings is very undesirable. They don't want Washington Street to have a monolithic appearance. Green, green, green. To maintain the quality of life as urbanization encroaches, plant lots of trees, shrubs, flowers on sidewalks. Build pocket parks.
- To lessen the feeling of crowding, structures should have fewer than four stories.
- Build housing that is friendly to the elderly: one floor, near amenities, elevator access.
- Attendees are eager for more places to shop. However, they insist upon locally owned shops that meet everyday needs: barber shop, tailor, cobbler, and so on. NO chains staffed by minimum-wage employees.
- Attendees want stores that are affordable. This implies reasonable rents. Attendees inquired whether the city/developer could provide subsidies to such establishments. They also inquired as to whether the developer can set aside small spaces for start-ups.
- Attendees are concerned that high-priced buildings will bring a loss of diversity. City should keep diversity in residents and stores.
- Some of the new structures should offer space for commercial offices.

- Parking problems seem a likely consequence of development. Install bike lanes as much as possible, but give priority to cars. Relieve parking problems with a shuttle-type vehicle running along Washington Street, from Newton Corner down to the Green Line, even Riverside. A local store owner wanted parking for employees.
- Developers should put up distinctive buildings, like in Europe. The architecture should encourage people to want to walk. Keep the village feel.
- Attendees want wider and more attractive sidewalks.
- Avoid accidents; make street crossings safer: more lights, longer crosswalk “walk” signals, slower traffic.
- Attendees ask what the city can do to keep diversity, keep stores affordable, and monitor the development to make sure it is going well.



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