



BEFORE

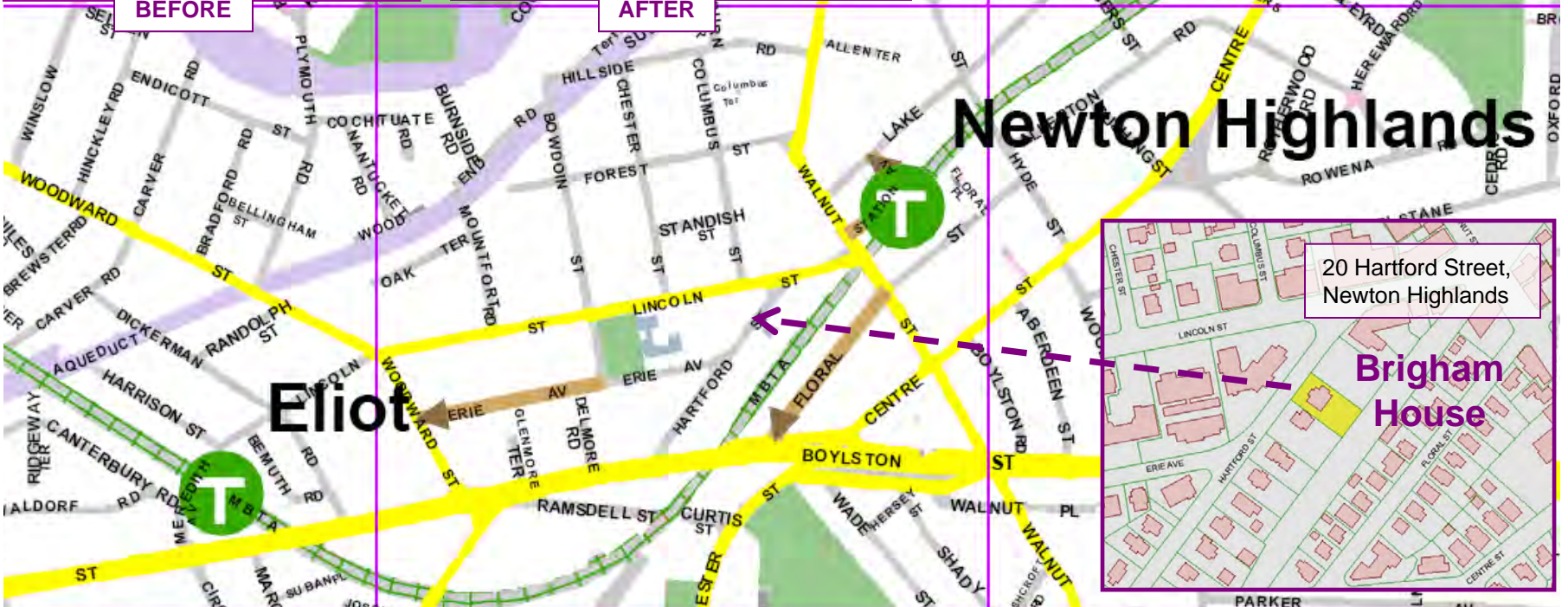


AFTER



CRYSTAL LAKE

Weeks Field

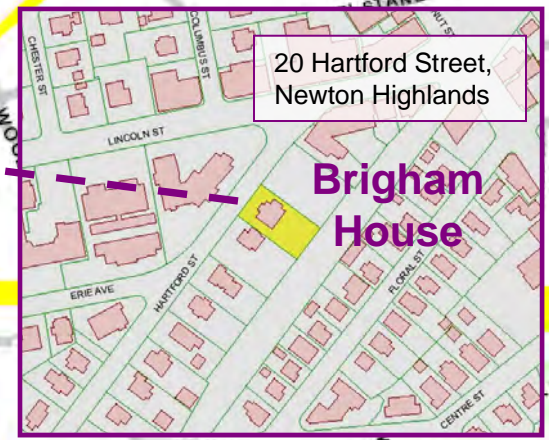


# Newton Highlands

## Eliot

20 Hartford Street,  
Newton Highlands

Brigham House



## Brigham House opens for after school program in the Highlands

By **Chrissie Long/Staff Writer**

**Wicked Local Newton**

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Newton — Twenty Hartford St. feels like home.

The rooms are small and oddly shaped. The dark-wooded doorframes contrast warmly with the bright-colored walls, and the building blends in with the other houses along the Newton Highlands street.

Home is the feeling Rochelle Acker wants to create for the dozens of children who come here after school.

So often, after-school programs are pushed to the unwanted, unwelcoming rooms in school buildings, whether they're converted locker rooms, storage space or basements, said Acker, who has worked for more than 25 years with children, and now serves as director of the Highlands After School Program.

"Child care gets the most rejected space," she said. Looking around a well-lit living room, she added, "But this space was created specifically for the after-school program."

In the newly renovated Victorian that was once owned by the founder of Brigham's Ice Cream and more recently served as a branch library, the Newton Highlands After School program has found its new home.

Filling a void in the south side of the city, the afternoon program was created this year to provide a place for middle school students to go when school lets out. With three options north of Commonwealth Avenue for after-school care, the director of the Hyde Community Center, John Rice, and others looked to create a program in the Highlands.

With Community Preservation Act money, they redid the



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*Wicked Local photo by Kate Flock*

The Brigham House, a former branch library and once home to the founder of Brigham's Ice Cream, reopened on Jan. 5 as a space for the Newton Highlands After School Program. From left: Lindsey Caliga, 12, Owen Kreindel, 11, James Patti, 11, and Jacob Schwartz, 11, engage in a game of pool.

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exterior and the interior of the home, replacing the bathrooms, sanding the floors and knocking out walls. No longer would Rice, who keeps an office on the second floor, need to step over fallen gutters to access his office.

"The building has been worn out for some time," Rice said. "People are so excited about how it has changed. It's really an outstanding facility."

The middle school program it houses runs five days a week from 3-6 p.m. (except on early-release days when it opens earlier) and can accommodate up to 30 students. Students help plan activities and field trips and participate in homework blocks or unstructured activities.

"I like this place because it is nice and free-flowing, and you can pretty much do whatever you want," said James Patti, a sixth-grader at Brown Middle School, who was playing pool with a handful of friends.

Working on an art project in an adjacent room, Oak Hill sixth-grader Nora Stein said, "I like [it here] because you can make a lot of friends."

When children tire of the Brigham House, they can always walk over and play basketball or other sports at the Hyde Center gym, Rice said.



*Wicked Local Staff Photo by Kate Flock*

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Teacher Nico Gargaro, far left, leads a group of students in a game of Scattergories, among them are Georgia Leven, 11, Hannah Karten, 12, and Alexi Reibman, 12. Remnants of the home's history as a branch library are on display above them.

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"We want students to have ownership of this program," he added. "We want them to gain a sense of independence."

For more information, visit [www.highlandsafterschoolprogram.org](http://www.highlandsafterschoolprogram.org).

*Chrissie Long can be reached at [clong@cnc.com](mailto:clong@cnc.com).*

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### **Scooping out the Brigham House**

Want to know more about the [Highlands After School Program](#)?

The program directors have ordered in enough ice cream to serve 400 people, and are opening the doors of the Brigham House to anyone interested in hearing more.

A grand re-opening of the home is scheduled for Friday, Jan. 9, at 7 p.m. at 20 Hartford St. in Newton Highlands.



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Teacher Kerry Doyle and Jacob Schwartz, 11, choose materials for an art project on Monday afternoon.