



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

City Hall

1000 Commonwealth Avenue, Newton, MA 02459-1449

Telephone: (617) 796-1065 TDD/TTY: (617) 796-1089 Fax: (617) 796-1086
www.ci.newton.ma.us

Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

To: Zoning Board of Appeals Members
From: Adrianna Henriquez, Clerk
Date: June 1, 2020
Subject: Materials for **June 3, 2020** Public Hearing

PACKET 3

Hello,

Please see the following materials for the upcoming hearing on June 3, 2020 Public Hearing. The following board members are scheduled to sit: **Brooke Lipsitt (Chair), William McLaughlin, Barbara Huggins Carboni, Michael Rossi, Stuart Snyder, and Treff LaFleche**

1. Letter dated May 28, 2020 from Newton Transportation Advisory Group (TAG)
2. Letter dated May 29, 2020 from Bike Newton

Thank you,

Adrianna Henriquez

ahenriquez@newtonma.gov | (617) 796 1133

Newton Transportation Advisory Group (TAG)

May 28, 2020

Newton Zoning Board of Appeals

Re: TAG citizen member comments on proposed development at 15 Riverdale Ave.

Dear ZBA members,

As Chair of Newton's official Transportation Advisory Group (TAG), and speaking for its citizen members, I would like to provide comments on mitigation for the proposed 40B development at 15 Riverdale Ave. in Newton.

The proposed development offers the opportunity for non-motor vehicle access to Nonantum, Newtonville, and West Newton. Unfortunately, California St. currently serves as a barrier to safe pedestrian and bicyclist access to and from the site. The Charles River multi-use paths provide natural connectivity for some, but not all, pedestrian and bicyclist trips. The convenience of a shopping center with a large grocery store (Stop and Shop) and pharmacy (CVS) is a significant amenity to this project and will likely be a strong desire line. As other development occurs along California St., access to and from other sites will become more and more important.

To meet these easily foreseeable needs, pedestrian access to and across California Street from the site must be safe, convenient, and universally accessible. The current conditions lack sidewalks of any kind between the site and California St. along Los Angeles St. and Riverdale Ave. Furthermore, we believe that two improved crossings of California St. will significantly improve non-motor vehicle access to the site and reduce dependence on car trips. These improvements are shown on the attached map.

First, improvements to pedestrian access from California St. to the site is an essential safety and convenience element to support the development. Current conditions on both Los Angeles St. and Riverdale Ave consist of a right of way with no sidewalks (see attached pictures). Multiple industrial/commercial uses border the street, with informal parallel and perpendicular parking blocking what would be a pedestrian's desire line. This access to the front entrance of the site poses a clear hazard to pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers. We strongly believe that safe, universal access to the front entrance of the development must be provided.

Second, access to the shopping center across California St. should be made safe, universally accessible, and convenient to the site. Natural crossing points are at or between Los Angeles St. and Riverdale Ave. A crosswalk with a pedestrian-actuated RRFP in conjunction with curb extensions would be a mechanism suitable for improving the crossing. A crossing at Los Angeles would also provide access to Stearns Park. An improved permeable connection through Stearns Park could connect to a contraflow bike lane on one-way Jasset St, forming a direct bike connection into the center of Nonantum. This route could also provide a universally-accessible pedestrian connection.

Finally, a natural and important connection to the site exists where the Charles River path segments exits on California St. across from Chapel St. west of the site. We recommend an improvement of the California St. crossing to Chapel St, with pedestrian actuated RRFB and curb extensions. Chapel St. is connected to Linwood Ave to the southwest through a bike-ped path between 55 and 57 Chapel Street. Linwood Ave., in turn, is a low volume, low speed connection to Horace Mann Elementary School, F. A. Day Middle School, the playing fields and recreational facilities at Albemarle, and connections to Newtonville and West Newton.

These changes will serve to help “pedestrianize” the site and the larger section of California St., making it safer for all road users. They will provide significant safety and accessibility enhancements for the community and reduce the need for residents to drive for every off-site need.

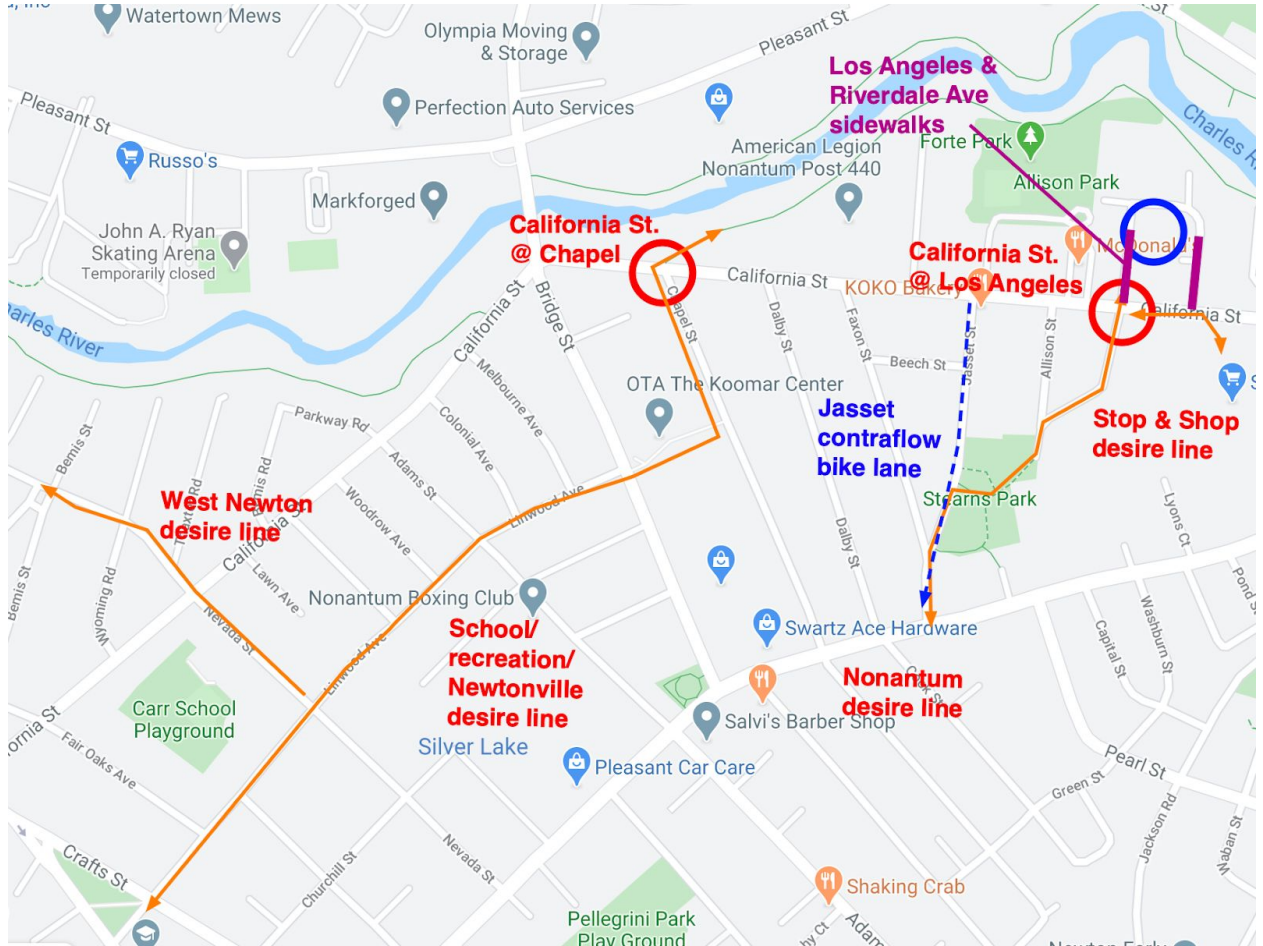
Thank you for providing a forum for our input. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or desire additional input.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Halle", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Michael Halle
Chair, Newton Transportation Advisory Group (TAG), for its citizen members

62 Cherry Place
West Newton
m @ halle.us





Current conditions on Los Angeles St. and Riverdale Ave. between California Street and the front of the proposed site. Neither street has sidewalks. Commercial vehicles and informal parking are a hazard for bicyclists and pedestrians. No universal accessibility to the front of the site.




Current conditions of pedestrian desire lines across California Street. Top: Los Angeles Street near the Stop and Shop. Bottom: Chapel Street across from the entrance to the Charles River multi-use paths, which connects directly to the rear of the proposed development.

Comments from Bike Newton re: Riverdale

John Pelletier <john.f.pelletier@gmail.com>

Fri 5/29/2020 1:06 PM

 **To:** Riverdale <riverdale@newtonma.gov>

1 attachments (139 KB)

Bike Newton letter for Riverdale.pdf;

[**DO NOT OPEN** links/a achments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Good afternoon members of the board,

Please see the comments for the Riverdale project from Bike Newton attached here.

Thank you for your time,

John Pelletier
Board member Bike Newton

BIKE NEWTON
139 Gibbs St.
Newton, MA 02459



5/29/2020

Newton Zoning Board of Appeals

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Julian Phillips

Srdjan Nedeljkovic

Dear Members of the board:

As members of the Board of Directors for Bike Newton and speaking for its over 1500 members, we would like to endorse the comments provided to this committee by the members of TAG.

The proposed development offers the opportunity for greatly improved pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to Nonantum, Newtonville, and West Newton. Unfortunately, California St. currently serves as a barrier to safe bicycle and pedestrian access to and from the site. The Charles River multi-use paths provide natural connectivity for some, but not all, trips by people on bikes or wheelchairs. In this section these paths are a mixture of paved and unpaved with narrow constraints further limiting their use. Critically they provide very limited safe access to the commercial properties along California limiting their use for local shopping trips.

Access to and across California Street from the site must be safe, convenient, and universal. Los Angeles St. and Riverdale Ave currently lack sidewalks of any kind, let alone bicycle infrastructure. California St. itself is quite unfriendly for people taking trips by bicycle, though we understand improvements to this road are outside the scope of this project. The neighborhood streets to the south and west of California St. offer potential as quiet streets and, with additional crossings along California St., would allow an improvement in access. However, the current



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crossings near the site at Gates and another at 5th ave are a distance of over 1/3 of a mile. Improving and adding additional crossings along California St. in strategic locations for people biking and walking will significantly improve non-motor vehicle access to the site and reduce dependence on car trips. It will also help neighbors in the surrounding area better access by bike, foot, or wheelchair to the businesses along California St. the Charles River and the transit connections at Watertown Square. TAG has spelled out these connections in their letter, and we fully endorse these improvements in access.

Respectfully submitted,

The Board of Bike Newton