



TO: City Council

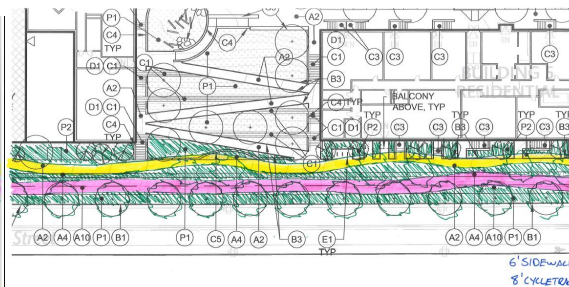
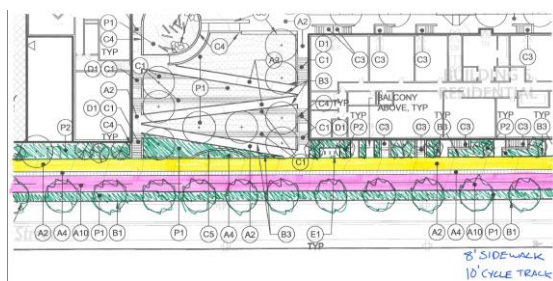
FROM: Councilor Downs and Councilor Bowman

Cc: Department of Planning and Public Works Transportation Division

RE: #26-20, #27-20 Riverside **Flexibility in design of the Grove Street frontage**

Current Design

Potential Additional Green Space



Dear Colleagues:

We introduced an amendment to the Council order language before the Oct. 6 Land Use meeting to allow for more flexibility in our conditions for the project frontage along Grove Street. Our concern was, given the amount of pavement between the very wide sidewalk and a wide bike path, the area may look more urban and paved than is appropriate for a scenic route.

The amendment failed 4-4 in Committee, but we think with more detail many councilors will approve of this change. NOTE: This proposal had NOTHING to do with a bike lane on the alternate side of the street.

Background

Currently, the Council order has strict language about how the frontage along Grove (between the curb and the development) will look.ⁱ We think this is overly prescriptive and may create far more pavement than necessary. This condition does not conform to other conditions in the order, which allow for some flexibility in implementation, with final decisions to be made by DPW, Planning and the City Council.

As written:

1. The condition specifies wider than normal sidewalks. The condition specifies 8 ft. in front of the residences, dropping to 6 feet by the stores and down to 5 1/2 feet close to the restaurant/cafe and entrance to T. We would be less concerned if this was the only pavement required.
2. In addition, the condition specifies a two-way cycle track of 10' for the length of the project. This is a standard width for shared-use paths that serve both cyclists and all other users. But given this is a dedicated bike path, in a location where cyclists should be moving slowly, 8' would be acceptable.

The Newton [Street Design Guide](#)ⁱ provides engineering and design guidance for Newton streets based on a “Complete Streets” approach to street design that ensures the needs of all users are met, including people walking, biking, taking transit, and driving. In the design guide, the minimum sidewalk width is 5-6 feet and minimum two-way bike lane width is 8 feet.

In talking with path advocates outside of Newton, comments focused on large amount of paved surface between the curb and the new development that might be unwelcoming and lacking in the shady, scenic look some prize on Grove Street. Looking east to the Riverside Office Center, there is a beautiful example of pleasant sidewalk design that includes a slightly curved walkway with generous plantings.

The Transportation Advisory Group, in its comment on the streets around Riverside, also highlighted that the safety and beauty of the Grove Street frontage could be enhanced by allowing the cycle path and sidewalk to curve:

“The current design features a primarily straight sidewalk and cycle track, potentially encouraging higher speed cycling and limiting visual interest. Consider a gentle chicane of the cycle track or sidewalk to allow for larger trees in both planting strips. Chicanes can be created with occasional slight narrowing that still allows for congregating and passing.” (July 28, 2000 letter to Land Use Committee)

Our proposal

Perhaps the current, prescribed design is the absolute best practice for this stretch. *But what if it is not?*

With some flexibility, the extra space created could be used to expand the buffer between the bike lane and sidewalk, thus enabling an amenity zone for benches plantings, trees, art or other things.

Our suggested language gives DPW, Planning and eventually Council via Public Facilities, the final decision on the design, with set minimum widths that are slightly smaller than in the Council order now, but still in keeping with minimums in Newton’s [Street Design Guide](#). We suggest a few criteria for staff to consider. Our amendment does not preclude the design in the current Council Order, but allows for additional consideration for the final design. **Refer to diagrams on next page.**

We are open to discussion of how to further improve our amendment, but we ask that you consider it.

Our motives

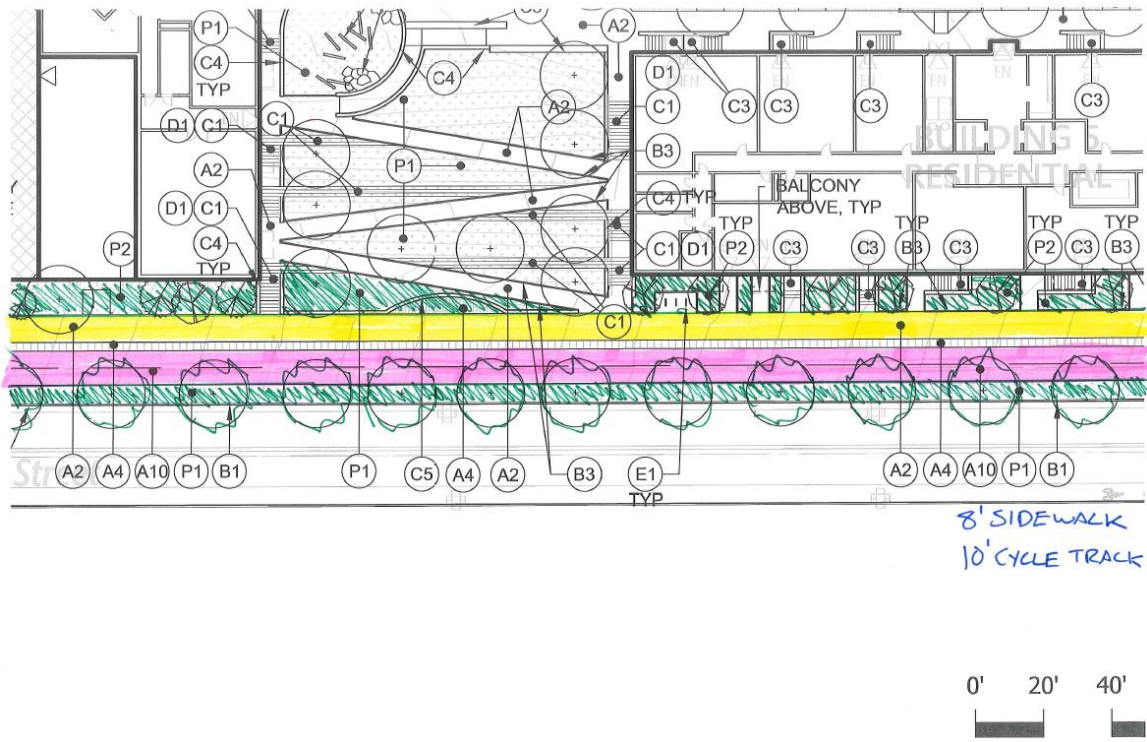
In the Land Use discussions, it was implied that our motives were around making room for a bike lane on the golf course side of Grove Street. While we still like that idea, that is a separate discussion. This amendment *on its own* will improve the project independent of what happens on the golf course side.

In summary: We think that the City and the neighborhood would be better served if the Council Order included flexibility to allow for better design of the most public (for Newton) face of the project, and the part most likely to be used by pedestrians accessing Riverside Station.

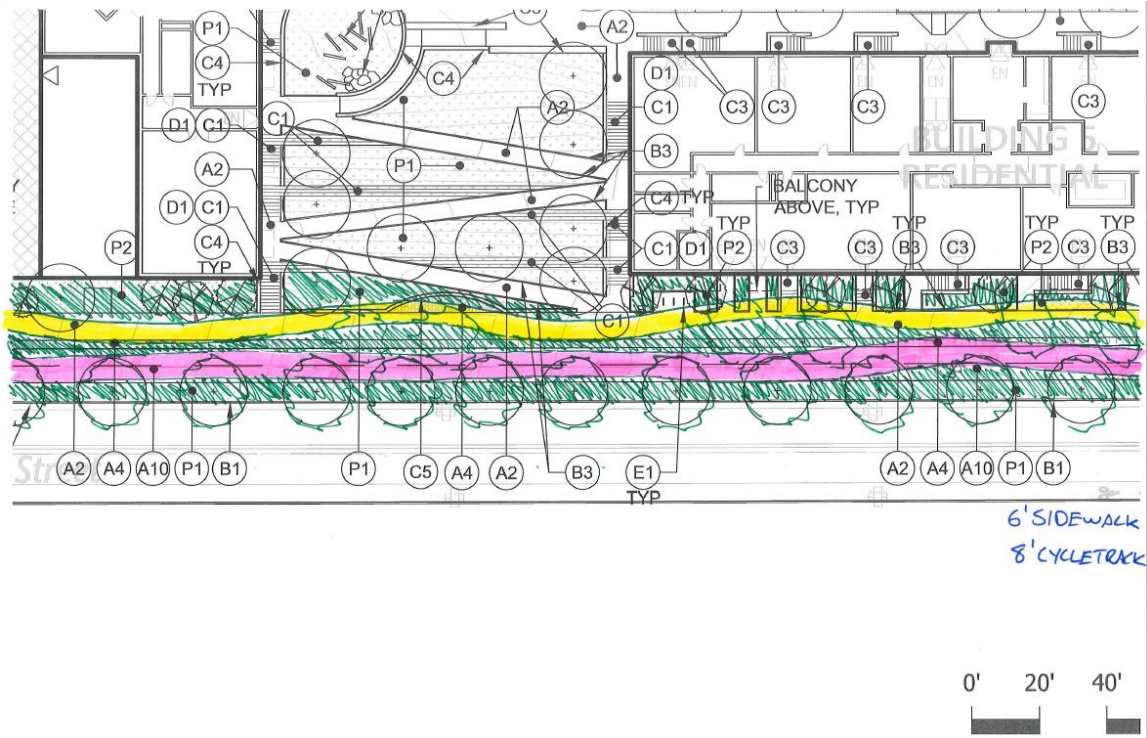
ⁱ <http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/106652> p. 24-26, off site improvement condition #14 a

ⁱⁱ <http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/90912>

Grove Street Frontage (partial) – As Currently Designed



Grove Street Frontage (partial) – With Potential Additional Green Space Added



14. The Petitioner shall design and construct, at its sole cost, the roadway improvements and mitigation along Grove Street as shown and described on the Off-Site Improvements Plans and as further described in Condition #14(a) below (hereinafter the “Grove Street Improvements”).

a. The Grove Street Improvements shall consist of the following:

- i. The installation of three new traffic signals at the following locations: (1) at the Project’s Grove Street entrance; (2) at the Recreation Road Extension intersection/NB Ramp; and (3) at the Grove Street and Recreation Road extension intersection. Such signals shall use adaptive technology as well as transit signal priority and shall be connected to one another. The signal and lane striping at the Project’s Grove Street entrance shall discourage left hand turns into the Project, in accordance with the expectation that the City will adopt a traffic regulation prohibiting such left hand turns at this location. Prior to operation of the new traffic signals, as well as prior to any subsequent adjustments or modifications to the timing of the signals, which timing is expected to require the approval of MassDOT, the Petitioner must consult with the Commissioner of Public Works regarding the timing of the signals.
- ii. Adjustment or modification to the timing of the signal at the intersection of Grove Street and the Riverside Business Center drive entrance, to be reviewed and approved by the Commissioner of Public Works, in order to establish the most beneficial traffic flow.
- iii. A ~~ten-foot wide~~ two-way bicycle track, no less than eight feet in width, along the entire length of the Development Parcel’s Grove Street frontage and continuing from the southerly end of that frontage to the northerly corner of Grove Street and Asheville Road.
- iv. A ten-foot wide multi-use path on the westerly side of Grove Street from Asheville Road to the driveway entrance of the Lower Falls Community Center at 545 Grove Street, subject to any necessary approvals from the City which the Petitioner shall diligently pursue.
- v. A pedestrian walkway, no less than five feet in width, along the entire length of the Development Parcel’s Grove Street frontage and continuing from the southerly end of that frontage to the northerly corner of Grove Street and Asheville Road. ~~which shall be:~~
 - ~~1. no less than six feet in width from the northerly end of the Development Parcel’s Grove Street frontage to the Project’s Grove Street entrance;~~

~~2. no less than eight feet in width from the southerly side of the Development Parcel's Grove Street entrance/exist to the southerly end of the Project's Grove Street frontage; and~~

~~3. no less than 5 feet in width from the southerly end of the Development Parcel's Grove Street frontage to the northerly corner of Grove Street and Asheville Road.~~

- vi. A tree way no less than five feet in width throughout its length along the Development Parcel's Grove Street frontage on the easterly side of the two-way bicycle track.
- vii. Light poles in a buffer separating the two-way bicycle track from the pedestrian walkway for the length of the Development Parcel's Grove Street frontage. This buffer shall be at least 2.5 feet wide. All details of the light poles including but not limited to type, height, fixtures, and level of illumination shall be reviewed and approved by the Commissioner of Public Works or his/her designee.
- viii. A crosswalk with a Rapid Reflectorized Flashing Beacon (the "RRFB") adjacent to the transit plaza between Buildings 6 and 7. The Petitioner shall also design and construct a sidewalk on the eastern side of Grove Street from the RRFB to the existing sidewalk north of the Project. The final location of these improvements shall be reviewed and approved by the Commissioner of Public Works or his/her designee.
- ix. The Off-Site Improvements Plans shall be updated to retain the crosswalk across Grove Street adjacent to 406-416 Grove Street.
- x. General grading and drainage improvements on Grove Street as shown in the Special Permit Plan Set.
- xi. Signage appropriate to direct pedestrians and bicyclists, subject to the approval of Traffic Council and/or the Public Facilities Committee and, to the extent necessary, MassDOT.

b. The final ~~widths~~ design of the two-way bicycle track described in Condition #14(a)(iii) and the pedestrian walkway described in Condition #14(a)(v) shall be reviewed and approved by the Department of Public Works and the Director of Planning and Development, in consultation with the City's Complete Streets Committee. Such review and approval should take into consideration best practices in design for pedestrian and cyclist safety and usability, accessibility, and environmental sustainability.

~~b.c.~~ To the extent required, it shall be the responsibility of the Petitioner to receive all necessary approvals from MassDOT to complete the Grove Street Improvements.

~~e.d.~~ Prior to the issuance of any building permits for any of the buildings, except for the Parking Garage, the Petitioner shall submit final engineered plans for the Grove Street Improvements for review and approval by the Public Facilities Committee and docket a petition with the Traffic Council, pursuant to Revised Ordinances, §19-29, for adoption of a regulation prohibiting left turns from Grove Street into the Project. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Petitioner shall have no obligation to enforce any such traffic regulation and shall not be required to reconstruct the intersection at the Grove Street entrance to the Project in connection with the same.

~~d.e.~~ Prior to the issuance of a certificate of occupancy (temporary or final) for any of the buildings, except for the Parking Garage, the Petitioner shall, at its own expense, offer a permanent easement in favor of the City, in a form approved by the Law Department, to allow the public to access and use the portion of the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along the Development Parcel's Grove Street frontage that is located within the Development Parcel (which includes the pedestrian walkway, buffer, and two-way bicycle track). Such easement shall be executed and recorded upon substantial completion of the Grove Street Improvements. At the same time, the Petitioner shall also enter into a License Agreement with the City, in a form approved by the Law Department, obligating the Petitioner to indemnify the City and maintain (including but not limited to snow removal), at its sole cost, the pedestrian walkway, two-way bicycle track, and landscaping along the entire length of the Development Parcel's Grove Street frontage that is located between the Development Parcel's property line and the curb line. The License Agreement will not obligate the Petitioner to maintain any lighting, signage or fire hydrants.

~~e.f.~~ Prior to the issuance of any certificate of occupancy (temporary or final) for any part of buildings 5 and 6, construction of the Grove Street Improvements shall be inspected and approved as substantially complete and fully operational from a traffic management perspective by the Commissioner of Public Works and the Director of Planning and Development, but final punch list items for such improvements, including but not limited to landscaping, may be scheduled for completion after the issuance of a temporary certificate of occupancy provided the Petitioner posts a bond or other security as determined by the Commissioner of Inspectional Services to be sufficient to complete such outstanding work.