

**Responses to the  
November 6, 2018 Horsley Witten Group Peer Review  
and  
Planning Staff Comments  
from  
Northland Investment Corporation  
February 2019**

**Planning Department comments:**

1. HW highlighted Building 7 as presenting a challenge for flow-through retail in particular and **recommended the petitioner look at strategies to frame Needham Street while addressing parking, access, and permeability.**

***Response:***

*The Petitioner's design team is focused on creating an optimal balance of pedestrian permeability along Needham Street with an active building edge. The Mobility Hub will serve as a key connector through Building 7 with wide glass storefronts on both sides of the building and an inviting, well-lit and transparent space. In Petitioner's response plan, the Mobility Hub has been relocated to the center of Building 7 to allow greater pedestrian permeability and access from Needham Street the heart of the development, and also to allow provide for two activated end cap retail spaces better situated to serve both Needham Street and the development.*

2. HW also made recommendations regarding the internal circulation such as **reviewing turning movements at the mobility hub, extending the drop-off lane on Building 6, and reducing internal travel lane widths.**

***Response:***

*To be addressed in the traffic and transportation responses.*

3. The Planning Department recognizes both Building 7's importance and the challenge it represents for creating a truly active environment along Needham Street. Ground level retail is projected for this building, yet experience indicates **that "flow-through" retail is difficult to operate, and the tendency of stores is to limit access/egress to one side** (usually the one better oriented to available parking).

**The Planning department recommends that the petitioner examine strategies to bring activity through the building – perhaps by creating a large street level arcade through the building or perhaps redesigning it as two smaller buildings- to visually and/or functionally connect Needham Street with those elements of the project "behind" Building 7.**

***Response:***

*See response to comment number 1 above.*

4. **Can a pedestrian passageway that respects the historic nature of the structure be created through Building 1 (the existing mill building) to create an additional entrance to the site on Oak Street?**

**Response:**

*A public pedestrian connection through 156 Oak Street mill building is undesirable due to the elevation differential between the street level at the Oak Street side and the Village Green. In addition, the Petitioner does not want to encourage parking on Oak Street to access the project. In Petitioner's response plan, the pedestrian pathway entrance at Oak Street is being improved and the Oak Street Park and its connection to the Village Green is being expanded. Petitioner's design team is evaluating opportunities to strengthen the pedestrian connection from Oak Street through Oak Street Park to the Village Green.*

5. Building 4 faces Oak Street but is set back with the small Oak Street Park and a surface parking lot directly fronting Oak Street. Aside from this location, the proposed project has screened off-street parking well. The Department **recommends that the petitioner explore alternative options such as expanding Oak Street park and placing parking below grade or within a building, or redesigning Building 4 as two smaller buildings facing one another with one located somewhat closer to Oak Street, and open space in between the buildings.**

**Response:**

*In its response plan, Petitioner has decreased the size of both Building 4 and the surface parking lot behind Building 4. The Oak Street Park has been expanded and will be richly landscaped with trees, planting, and a pedestrian pathway connecting Oak Street to the Village Green.*

6. **Department will need additional information on the community space's expected management structure, mission, operations, and programming to better assess the appropriateness of this proposed location.** Planning believes this information will evolve through the review process and the location and function of the community center can be revisited at a future meeting.

**Response:**

*The Petitioner has had discussions with several groups that would have an interest in using the community building, including arts groups, Upper Falls neighborhood groups, the YMCA and others. No final arrangements have been made yet with any groups regarding the use or management of the community building. As part of the response plan, the community building and the neighborhood park have been relocated to be closer to the Depot area of the Greenway.*

7. The Department is also concerned that the scale of several of the proposed blocks and buildings are relatively oversized. the perimeters of Buildings 5 and 6 exceed (albeit slightly) the quarter-mile standard generally applied for "walkable blocks. While the blocks are on the large side, some of the buildings themselves far exceed recommended lengths for active, human-scale streetscapes. Buildings 5 and 6 in particular comprise the entire blockfronts **and the Planning Department recommends the petitioner break these into smaller buildings, with 180 feet as a goal for maximum building façade lengths.**

**Response:**

*Petitioner has taken to heart the comments from Councilors, the Planning Department and the peer reviewer to reduce the scale of blocks 5 and 6 to create greater permeability and connectivity throughout the site. In its response plan, Petitioner has eliminated the above-ground structured parking within blocks 5 and 6 and relocated it underground. Buildings 5 and 6 also have been broken up into smaller buildings bisected by new pedestrian connections through the blocks via residential scaled laneways. The laneways will function as active courtyard spaces and pedestrian connections, providing additional open and landscaped spaces.*

8. The Department recommends the **Petitioner explore placing Building 5's parking level below grade. This modification could have the concurrent benefits of lessening this large structure's apparent mass, giving it a street-level appearance of separate buildings, and creating a large open space.**

**Response:**

*In its response plan, Petitioner has eliminated the above-ground structured parking within blocks 5 and 6 and relocated it underground. Buildings 5 and 6 also have been broken up into smaller buildings bisected by new pedestrian connections through the blocks via residential scaled laneways. The laneways will function as active courtyard spaces and pedestrian connections, providing additional open and landscaped spaces.*

9. The Department also recommends **the Petitioner explore breaking Building 6 into multiple buildings.** At a minimum there should be a break in the building façade every 180 feet to give the appearance of multiple buildings and both north-south and east-west pedestrian access should be provided through the building, lined with active uses and of sufficient width and height. Staff believes such passages could create more street-level interest and help “break down” what could be perceived as overly large structure.

**Response:**

*In its response plan, Buildings 5 and 6 have been broken up into smaller buildings bisected by new pedestrian connections through the blocks via residential scaled laneways and Petitioner has eliminated the above-ground structured parking within blocks 5 and 6 and relocated it underground. The laneways will function as active courtyard spaces and pedestrian connections, providing additional open and landscaped spaces.*

10. **Make the “bump-outs” along Pettee Lane larger and install seating to enhance that street's residential street nature.**

**Response:**

*Petitioner's revised plans make a series of changes to enhance Pettee Lane's residential feel including the relationship of the community park and community building, lowering the scale of Building 4 and breaking up Building 5. All of these design changes are intended to enhance the residential quality of the street.*

11. It is unclear how snow storage and removal would be handled. The petitioner should be prepared to describe its plans for this issue.

**Response:**

*Petitioner will develop a snow storage removal plan (SRP) based upon the final approved plan. Part of the SRP will provide for off-site snow removal as necessary.*

12. Horsley Witten's review of the parks and open space within the project noted the parks are spread out around the development and each serve a particular purpose with an assumed user group. HW concurred with the overall approach and recommended **that the petitioner further consider the intended users and incorporate design details to meet the needs of these users.** Suggestions include **reviewing elements such as access, park elements, bathrooms, ADA parking and drop offs, on-street parking, bicycle infrastructure, play areas adjacent to outdoor food venues, and seating options.** HW provided **specific recommendations such as adding bicycle racks to the Main Street connection to the Greenway, providing gateway elements between the Village Green and Oak Street Park, providing seating and tables in the Mill Park, and adding benches in the hardscaped area where the shuttle bus pull off is located.**

**Response:**

*All parks and open spaces will meet requirements for ADA accessibility. Petitioner's landscape architect has taken into account the recommendations noted above and they will be incorporated in the final design of individual park spaces.*

13. **Additional information on the precedent sites for the Village Green, recommended a stronger connection between the playground and South Meadow Brook Park, and recommended the final plant schedule more closely align to the sustainability and ecological restoration goals.**

**Response:**

*In its response plan, Petitioner has relocated the playground to a more central location in Upper Falls Village and within the site to establish a more prominent connection with components of the development and easier access by the community. The final plant schedule will include a mix of native and non-native but appropriate plantings to align to the project's sustainability and ecological restoration goals.*

14. Regarding the design of the Village Green itself, the Planning Department **suggests the need to work with the petitioner and others to explore issues related to whether ADA access through the village green should be provided. It also recommends the inclusion of additional shaded seating around its perimeter.**

**Response:**

*The Village Green will provide ADA accessibility. In its response plan, Petitioner has expanded the Village Green and has eliminated general vehicle access and parking around it, which will create greater opportunity for landscaping and shaded seating areas.*

15. As for the other proposed park and open spaces, the Planning Department notes that:

- **Shading would also be important at the playground and requests additional detail on that issue;**

**Response:**

*Petitioner concurs and will incorporate into the final design of the relocated playground area.*

- **The installation of built-in seating at appropriate locations, especially including spaces for wheelchairs to be located in and around such facilities is encouraged;**

**Response:**

*Petitioner concurs and will incorporate into the final design of all park spaces where appropriate.*

- **The various play areas should be programmed for different age groups as indicated by design and equipment;**

**Response:**

*Petitioner's landscape architect will take this into consideration in the final design of the playground.*

- **An appropriate location for an off-leash dog area should be identified;**

**Response:**

*Petitioner intends to include a dog park within the development on the north side of the site, west of Tower Road Extension.*

- **The petitioner should confirm and maintain the accessibility of Mill Park for all users;**

**Response:**

*The Mill Park will be ADA accessible and available for all users.*

- **The petitioner should identify how it proposes to provide for and ensure permanent ongoing public access to the project's public spaces including the above referenced parks and open spaces as well as the street system;**

**Response:**

*Petitioner will agree to make public access to the project's parks and street system a condition of the special permit for the development, subject to rules and regulations applicable to all persons at the property.*

16. Create a "Sustainable Living" theme for Needham Street focused on the natural amenities of the area including the Charles River, South Meadow Brook, and the Upper Falls Greenway. (Vision for Environmental Health)

**Planning Department staff recommends that the petitioner highlight these amenities with wayfinding and educational signage.**

**Response:**

*Petitioner has consistently noted that the proposal is a significant upgrade from existing conditions. Elements of both sustainability and the historic context will be highlighted in displays on the site. Petitioner intends to highlight South Meadow Brook and provide connections to The Upper Falls Greenway. Both locations will be identified through wayfinding signage.*

17. Require new development/redevelopment to incorporate new publicly accessible open spaces in the Needham Street area. (Vision for Environmental Health)

**Planning Department staff recommend that if the petition is approved, a condition be included requiring these spaces stay open to the public in perpetuity.**

**Response:**

*Petitioner will agree to make public access to the project's parks and street system subject to rules and regulations applicable to all persons at the property a condition of the special permit for the development.*

18. Place bike racks, benches, and informational, educational, and/or play features along trails. (Vision for Environmental Health)

**Planning Department staff recommend that this park and connection include bicycle racks, seating, and wayfinding signage.**

**Response:**

*The parks will all have bicycle racks, seating and wayfinding signage.*

19. Locate parking behind and/or below buildings (Vision for Design)

**Planning Department staff recommends the petitioner further investigate pushing parking below ground wherever possible and breaking up large buildings at the ground level. As most of the proposed buildings will have four visible sides the petitioner should also continue to find creative ways to screen any un-lined parking areas as well as loading areas.**

**Response:**

*In its response plan, Petitioner has eliminated the above-ground structured parking within blocks 5 and 6 and relocated it underground. Buildings 5 and 6 also has been broken up into smaller buildings bisected by new pedestrian connections through the blocks via residential scaled laneways. The laneways will function as active courtyard spaces and pedestrian connections, providing additional open and landscaped spaces.*

20. Line public open spaces with active facades to invite people to utilize the public space (Vision for Design)

The central gathering space in the development, the "Village Green", is lined by active residential and commercial uses on all sides. In addition, office workers at the Mill Building will be required to park within Building 6 and walk adjacent to the Village Green to get to the Mill Building, adding additional pedestrian activity in this area. The Mill Park is lined by the Mill

Building on the southern side and Building 3 on the northern side. This section of Building 3 is parking and does not have active uses, however the linear park will benefit from the adjacent office use of the Mill Building. **The petitioner should take extra care in designing the façade of Building 3 to ensure this section is well screened.**

**Response:**

*Petitioner acknowledges this comment and will take appropriate care in the final design of the rear façade of Building 3.*

21. Work with property owners to activate the Greenway and its edges with art installations, access into abutting shops, direct entries, public gathering spaces, etc. (Vision for Design)  
**petitioner has noted however that due to the cars that park perpendicular to the Greenway on Chestnut Street, some low landscaping may be necessary in order to block headlights from the residential units in the townhouse buildings.**

**Response:**

*In its response plan, Petitioner has relocated the community building and playground into a community park along the Greenway in a central location near Upper Falls Village and The Depot with convenient access to parking.*

22. Require new building heights to meet residential heights at neighborhood edges; utilize grade change and upper story setbacks to reduce visible height of larger buildings  
**Planning staff recommends that the petitioner provide sections through the taller buildings and internal streets within the site.**

**Response:**

*In its presentation on November 13, 2018, Petitioner provided sections through the plan, running east/west from Upper Falls across Needham Street, and running south/north from Oak Street to 233 Needham Street.*

23. Encourage deep lots along Needham Street to be divided into smaller blocks to increase walking route options and public space opportunities; set requirements for changes in building facades to break up the massing of buildings.  
**Staff recommends the petitioner aim to increase pedestrian connectivity through the larger blocks by breaking up buildings or providing alternative connections through the buildings.**

**Response:**

*In its response plan, Petitioner has eliminated the above-ground structured parking within blocks 5 and 6 and relocated it underground. Buildings 5 and 6 also have been broken up into smaller buildings bisected by new pedestrian connections through the blocks via residential scaled laneways. The laneways will function as active courtyard spaces and pedestrian connections, providing additional open and landscaped spaces. The Mobility Hub also has been relocated to the center of Building 7 to allow greater pedestrian permeability and access from Needham*

*Street the heart of the development, and also to allow provide for two activated end cap retail spaces better situated to serve both Needham Street and the development.*

24. Establish standards for and encourage active commercial front yards along Needham Street, e.g. outdoor dining, new tree planting, lighting, etc.

**Planning staff would like to see more attention paid to this edge and more opportunities for activity along Needham Street, as discussed above.**

***Response:***

*The Petitioner's design team is focused on creating an optimal balance of pedestrian permeability along Needham Street with an active building edge. The Mobility Hub will serve as a key connector through Building 7 with wide glass storefronts on both sides of the building and an inviting, well-lit and transparent space. In Petitioner's response plan, the Mobility Hub has been relocated to the center of Building 7 to allow greater pedestrian permeability and access from Needham Street the heart of the development, and also to allow provide for two activated end cap retail spaces better situated to serve both Needham Street and the development.*

### **Horsley Witten Group Comments:**

1. The City's Comprehensive Plan land use strategies focus on Smart Growth and place centered planning. With Newton being mostly built out, strategic redevelopment provides an opportunity for the City to grow within the existing land use, transportation, and open space framework. The majority of the Northland Newton Development site is currently impervious, featuring existing building roofs and generally underutilized parking areas. The project development concept appears to be consistent with Newton's goals for mixed-use Smart Growth development. For this review, our analysis is limited to preliminary site layout, access to the site and movement within the site, organization and design of public spaces, and sense of place. We have not reviewed economic or traffic/transportation impacts. At this point our comments are limited to "big picture" design framework, understanding that future detailed design development review will be required.

***Response:***

*Per HW's comment, the original plan successfully addressed Smart Growth and place-centered planning. The response plan advances these goals further by enlarging some of the project's parks, further reducing impervious surface, and improving numerous details that enhance public space programming and the project's overall sense of place.*

2. The scale of the proposed development requires structured parking to meet the proposed program requirements. Proposed structured parking is mostly "wrapped" with mixed-use building space including active ground floor uses, which is strongly encouraged to reinforce vibrant and beautiful streetscapes, an active public realm, and "eyes on the street" for safety and comfort.



**Response:**

*The response plan has moved the above-ground parking below grade to reduce the scale of the internal blocks and create greater permeability through the site.*

3. The plan defines a clear center, focusing internally on the proposed Village Green and framing Main Street and the Village Green with active commercial uses and consistent building frontage. The Upper Falls Greenway and Needham Street are also treated as active frontages, requiring dual-sided buildings that front both onto these edges as well as internal streets. This requires advanced approaches to architecture, service/loading, circulation, and use and tenant mix, especially for Building 7 as discussed in further comments. The existing mill building (Building 1) provides much of the edge condition fronting on Oak Street, facing the existing residents to the south, with the inclusion of Pettee Lane and the proposed pedestrian connection into the site from Oak Street via Oak Street Park. The edge condition to the north varies, consisting of the proposed playground and community building, Tower Road, the streamside park, and Building 8 backing onto existing buildings. HW concurs with the general approach, with more detailed review comments for specific streets and buildings in following comments.

*Response: As architectural design advances, we will continue to apply best practices to maximize high quality edges and frontages along important streets, parks, and corridors such as Needham Street, Main Street, and the Greenway. Where possible, loading access and other “back” conditions have been shifted to edges that least impact our primary public spaces or internalized within buildings and thus fully concealed from view. We are also planning to tightly manage loading and servicing activities to avoid times of peak traffic or activity.*

4. The site plan layout as currently configured meets Needham Street at logical points, setting up an internal framework of walkable blocks and increasing connectivity to Needham Street consistent with the vision expressed in the Needham Street Area Vision Plan to increase intersection density and reduce block sizes. The distance between Charlemont Street and Main Street is approximately 350 feet, and the distance from Main Street to Oak Street is approximately 360 feet – far exceeding the existing auto oriented intersection density.

**Response:**

*In our response plan, Buildings 5 and 6 have been subdivided into multiple buildings each to increase walkable permeability through their blocks.*

5. The alignment of Charlemont Street at a signalized intersection in the location shown on the plans offers the potential to extend the street network east of Needham Street, with improved linkage to Christina Street, consistent with the Needham Street Area Vision Plan vision for a better-connected roadway system.

**Response:**

*The realigned and signalized Charlemont intersection is indeed intended to significantly improve bike and pedestrian access across Needham Street to support connections to the neighborhoods and bike corridors to the east.*

6. The proposed separated shared use path connects the Upper Falls Greenway to Needham Street at the Charlemont Street intersection, taking advantage of proposed intersection crossing improvements on Needham Street to facilitate pedestrian/bicycle access to the east and a

potential future greenway connection over the Charles River. HW recommends the proposed intersection design and details be confirmed to clearly and comprehensively address the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, and other disadvantaged users to maximize safety and comfort at this key crossing location.

**Response:**

*The design of the Needham Street/Charlemont intersection has been completed by MassDOT in anticipation of a construction start in the next 12 months. VHB provided input to MassDOT to coordinate design parameters for the crossing. As on-site design advances, we will continue to optimize the dedicated bike lane connection to the Upper Falls Greenway for safe, comfortable, and convenient bike and pedestrian circulation to, from, and through the project.*

7. As currently proposed the two-way shared use path takes a 90-degree turn by the bioretention area in order to cross the street and continue between the playground and community center. Is there a way to make this angle less severe? The design might incorporate a boardwalk section of path to bring bicyclists over the bioretention area, view the stream, and potentially park the bikes to use the stream observation area.

**Response:**

*Comment noted. We will explore how we can improve this condition as we advance design details of the Response Plan.*

8. Tower Road is designed to intersect Main Street at a "T" terminating on the Village Green at a raised intersection condition. HW concurs with this design element for its traffic calming and placemaking benefits. Because the vehicular circulation is proposed one-way around the Village Green, it appears that the turning and queuing conflicts that may have been presented by the intersection offset will be minimized. An offset intersection is also proposed at Charlemont Street and Tower Road. HW concurs with this general approach, however recommends additional details be provided as the design progresses and during traffic engineering review to ensure safety and function at these intersections.

**Response:**

*The response plan has eliminated the vehicular circulation around the Village Green. The raised intersection is being reviewed in connection with street redesign around Main Street.*

9. In conjunction with the termination of Tower Road at the Village Green, HW understands Pettee Lane has been designed with a jog at Tower Road and a jog south of proposed Main Street to provide traffic calming and discourage "cut-through" traffic to Oak Street and residential neighborhoods south of the project. HW concurs with this approach.

**Response:**

*No response required*

**Following comments regarding the development from the block, street, and building Scale:**

10. Building 4, Building 8, and Building 13 are the only proposed buildings that appear to be oriented with a clear front and back. All other buildings face high quality public realm on multiple sides, and in some cases, all four sides. This will require multiple building facades appropriate for facing the high-quality public realm proposed in the plan, and careful coordination of service, loading, deliveries, trash/recycling, and parking garage access. It appears part of Charlemont Street is dedicated to service, deliveries, and garage access for Building 6 and Building 8. Additional information is required to clarify these functions for all buildings.

***Response:***

***Agreed.*** *Most buildings indeed require high-quality façade designs on most or all sides to help enhance (and not detract from) the streets and parks they frame. Our design guidelines address these concerns in numerous ways. For example, façade demising ensures prominent building edges are divided into multiple segments of distinct architectural expressions along key faces. Loading areas have been embedded into buildings or otherwise concealed from view where possible and loading/servicing activities will be limited to off-peak times to the extent possible. While Charlemont Street plays an important role in accessing buildings 6 and 8, the street and the buildings along it are designed with the pedestrian experience in mind. Garage and service portal breadths have been minimized and parking and other utilitarian uses largely concealed from view by active uses such as housing.*

11. Building 7 is proposed with active frontage on both the Unnamed Street to the west and Needham Street. The placement of Building 7 with active frontage on Needham Street is consistent with the Needham Street Area Vision Plan for increased walkability and placemaking within the corridor. The building design may pose challenges due to its dual frontage. HW requests additional information regarding the proposed design of Building 7, potential tenants and their orientation to both streets, expected points of arrival via vehicle/pedestrian/bicycle/other and flexibility for this building to adapt over time as the Needham Street corridor evolves. Additional methods to frame Needham Street with active building frontage and address parking/access/permeability should be investigated. There appears to be opportunity to provide a gateway public open space fronting Needham Street in this location. This may benefit the development and the Needham Street streetscape, but would have to be balanced to maintain the significant benefits provided by a rhythm of consistent building facades facing the street, especially when Needham Street is in the preliminary stages of a long-term character transition.

***Response:***

*The Petitioner's design team is focused on creating an optimal balance of pedestrian permeability along Needham Street with an active building edge. The Mobility Hub will serve as a key connector through Building 7 with wide glass storefronts on both sides of the building and an inviting, well-lit and transparent space. In Petitioner's response plan, the Mobility Hub has been relocated to the center of Building 7 to allow greater pedestrian permeability and access from Needham Street the heart of the development, and also to allow provide for two activated end cap retail spaces better situated to serve both Needham Street and the development.*

12. The existing Mill Building is a barrier to accessing the site from Oak Street. HW understands the location of the intersection of Pettee Lane with Oak Street was designed to minimize cut-through vehicular traffic and shifting the intersection location further east may be infeasible due to topography. HW recommends additional detail regarding pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to the site via Oak Street Park be explored. See comments in the Parks and Open Space review section of this letter.

**Response:**

*A public pedestrian connection through 156 Oak Street mill building is undesirable due to the elevation differential between the street level at the Oak Street side and the Village Green. Also the Petitioner does not want to encourage parking on Oak Street to access the project. In Petitioner's response plan, the pedestrian pathway entrance at Oak Street is being improved and the Oak Street Park and its connection to the Village Green is being expanded. Petitioner's design team is evaluating opportunities to strengthen the pedestrian connection from Oak Street through Oak Street Park to the Village Green.*

13. The location of the community building, Building 9, is adjacent to the playground, shared use path, and Upper Falls Greenway. HW recommends additional information be provided detailing the anticipated operation of this building and potential programming to clarify the building's function and review its proposed location. Parking spaces at the playground are limited and additional information should be provided on who the intended users are and how they would be accessing the site. Ensuring there is convenient access to the playground for parents with children will be part of its success.

**Response:**

*In its response plan, Petitioner has relocated the community building and playground into a community park along the Greenway in a central location near Upper Falls Village and The Depot with convenient access to parking on Chestnut Street. The Petitioner has had discussions with several groups that would have an interest in using the community building, including arts groups, Upper Falls neighborhood groups, the YMCA and others. No final arrangements have been made yet with any groups regarding the use or management of the community building.*

14. The perimeters of the blocks occupied by Building 5 and Building 6 both slightly exceed 1/4 mile, a typical measure of a walkable block. Both buildings are designed to occupy the entire block with internal wrapped parking decks, thus minimizing pedestrian permeability through the blocks. This may also be detrimental to the "park once" strategy proposed by consolidated visitor parking within the Building 6 parking deck, especially for elderly or other mobility impaired visitors. HW recommends that additional strategies to improve permeability and walkability be considered.

**Response:**

*By pushing structured parking underground, we have subdivided buildings 5 and 6 into multiple buildings each with public "laneways" creating new permeability through the centers of the blocks. We have also shortened building 6's Main Street frontage by "pulling back" the corner at Tower Road. Universally, our design guidelines include numerous strategies to reduce the pedestrian's perception of block length. For example, demise lines ensure prominent building facades are "broken" into segments of distinct architectural expression. Active ground floors, high-quality streetscape design, and unique parks populate the public realm with dynamic visual*

*and experiential diversity to keep pedestrians engaged as they walk. Entrances to the public parking garage in building 6 are positioned to insert visitors centrally and directly “into the action” along Main Street from which point desirable destinations are a short walk away.*

15. Is parking for the existing mill building provided in the Building 6 parking deck? Is the Building 6 parking deck the only “public” parking location for office users and visitors to the site (other than on-street parking)? Where is ADA parking for the existing mill building provided?

**Response:**

*Parking for the mill building (office use) will be provided in the central garage, which in the Response Plan is now under the footprints of Buildings 5 and 6. Handicap parking spaces will also be in the central garage. An accessible route from the garage (via an elevator) to the front entrance of the mill building is provided.*

16. The location and alignment of the mobility hub requires access to the site via Main Street to align pick-up and drop-off on the east curb adjacent to Building 7. HW recommends the function of turning movements - design vehicle turning movements to facilitate these maneuvers, as well as traffic impacts on the Needham Street and internal intersections, be reviewed in more detail as the design progresses (HW understands that others will review the traffic movements).

**Response:**

*This is addressed in the traffic and transportation peer review and responses.*

17. Why does the drop-off lane along the east face of Building 6 not extend to Main Street for either drop-off or on-street parking purposes?

**Response:**

*Petitioner’s response plan has re-designed the eastern edge of building 6 to create multiple buildings and a curb cut for laneway access and separate loading access.*

18. Limited on-street parallel parking is proposed in the vicinity of the Village Green, including the Tower Road approach. Understanding that this is a shared street condition which, properly detailed, should provide significant traffic calming and placemaking benefit, has additional on-street parallel parking in this location been considered?

**Response:**

*Further design will continue to maximize traffic calming in primary pedestrian areas with strategies such as raised intersections, on-street parking, landscape, and other streetscape design features (and combinations thereof).*

19. Ten-foot wide travel lanes are generally considered a maximum for safe slow-speed streets and maximizing placemaking benefits. HW requests clarification for eleven-foot lanes proposed for Tower Road, Charlemont Street, and the Unnamed Road.

**Response:**

*Throttling the pavement width down is just one technique but we are trying to strike a balance between achieving slow travel speeds and accommodating a variety of turning movements. 20’ wide is the minimum allowable for fire truck access under the MA State Fire Safety Code. The*

*width has been increased to 24' along Main Street to minimize traffic flow constraints resulting from on-street loading by retailers, and even for autos maneuvering into and out of the on-street parking spaces.*

20. The proposed one-way loop around the Village Green is designed with a 20-foot travel lane. This is wide given the one-way condition, especially in a shared-street design adjacent to the Village Green. HW recommends that the Applicant clarify this decision.

**Response:**

*This is per fire department requirements as we understand them. It is also a width that if a vehicle is parked temporarily, a second vehicle can get by. The width of the loop will be further evaluated in the response design. The drive will serve as an emergency response and limited service access only, and 20' wide is the typical allowable minimum for fire truck access under the MA State Fire Safety Code.*

21. HW understands additional detail is being developed regarding shade analysis and welcomes review of this information as soon as it is available.

**Response:**

*In its presentation on November 13, 2018, Petitioner presented an animated shadow study showing minimal to no impact on surrounding neighborhoods and the proposed parks within the project.*

**Following comments regarding the Parks and Open Space:**

22. The Northland Development has seven different named parks: Village Green, Mill Park, Linear Park, South Meadow Brook Park, the Neighborhood Playground, the Main Street Connection to the Greenway, and Oak Street Park. These parks are spread out around the development and each serves a particular purpose with an assumed user group. HW concurs with the approach to provide a diverse variety of open spaces around this development; however, HW recommends considering the intended users and incorporate design details to meet the needs of the various users. Access to or between the parks, park elements, bathrooms, etc. can be reviewed with a more explicit vision of who is likely to occupy which space. Handicapped parking and drop offs, on-street parking, bicycle infrastructure, additional play areas adjacent to outdoor food venues and bathrooms, seating options, etc. all help make these outdoor spaces more comfortable to a variety of users. For instance:

- Bike racks could be added at the Main Street Connection to the Greenway for bicyclists taking a break or parking their bikes to enter the development.
- The Oak Street Park would benefit from gateway elements and open sight lines into the Village Green so it seems more welcoming and less like a back door. As designed the park consists largely of a sloped sidewalk connection and bioretention system.
- Seating and tables could be included in Mill Park for the office employees.

- Benches could be included in the hardscaped area of the Linear Park where the shuttle bus pull off is located.

**Response:**

*The Petitioner concurs with the recommendations above. As design progresses, we will continue to refine how each park is programmed and detailed so the project offers facilities, features, and activities for a wide range of visitors and residents.*

23. Information on precedent sites per the proposed uses of the Village Green open space is required to review whether the scale of the park suits the vision. Currently the lawn space is approximately 100'x120' in the Village Green, this compares to 180'x160' of park space at Needham's Town Hall which is used for farmer's markets and performances. The space in Needham has trees within its lawn. The lawn space adjacent to Dewey Square by South Station in downtown Boston is approximately 65' by 190'. Programs for this space include seasonal ice skating rinks, "screens on the green", visitors eating lunch in lawn chairs and a variety of other uses. Currently the space shown for the Northland Village Green is open and flexible, amenable to multiple programmatic uses like the space by Dewey Square. HW concurs with this approach, however additional information would be beneficial to ensure the scale correlates with the intended uses.

**Response:**

*Comments noted. There are many different opinions on how the green should be used, and as the dialogue continues the programming may change. The Response Plan increases the size of the green and eliminates everyday use of the loop road. The Petitioner is committed to keeping the Village Green largely open and grass while allowing for passive and active recreation.*

24. HW recommends combining the benefits of having the playground and South Meadow Brook Park across the street from one another. Like the hardscaping detail that follows the stream to the daylighting location, elements of the playground could speak to being in close proximity to the stream as well as the bioretention area, and educational signage or other features could be spread between both parks acting as a connection between them. Per the vision of Environmental Health in the Needham Street Vision Plan to create natural areas that encourage activity and environmental education, the opportunities in these parks should be maximized. In addition, HW recommends utilizing other parks and streetscape stormwater elements around the Northland Development as opportunities to meet the environmental education goals with signage and actively connecting people with nature.

**Response:**

*Petitioner will provide additional detail based on the revisions in its response plan, which relocates the playground to a more central location to Upper Falls Village and parking. Petitioner intends to highlight South Meadow Brook and provide connections to The Upper Falls Greenway. Both locations will be identified through wayfinding signage.*

25. Currently the plant set includes a draft plant schedule. More than half of the trees on the plant schedule are not native. A final plant schedule is required to review the plant selection for these spaces, however the selection of the plants should both align to the sustainability, community and wellness site design and ecological restoration goals of the Northland Guidelines by using native and drought tolerant plantings to reduce irrigation and save water.

***Response:***

*Native plantings will be utilized for natural areas within the site. For more dense locations, plant material selections will be made based on the greatest potential for flourishing in a certain location, given considerations for water demand, shading and tree form.*