

December 16, 2016

Dear City Council Members,

Re: Orr Block Development

Let me open by saying I'm an abutter (14 Foster Street), a proponent of affordable housing, and an opponent of rezoning the Orr Block development property

You have a challenging decision before you regarding the direction your order takes on Washington Place and the resulting vote. If passed, it will alter the City of Newton in profound ways. It will take a toll on surrounding neighborhoods (and those that occupy them) and especially the abutting Historic District.

Before you vote or put a word to an order, take a journey to surrounding suburbs -- Waltham at the corner of Moody and Main (The Merc Building) and then further down Main—transit oriented, retail, residential establishments, not dissimilar aesthetically to the design proposed for Washington Place. Unattractive and unimaginative in rendering. And, by the way, Central Square, Waltham, directly across from these new establishments is the starting point of buses servicing Newtonville. In other words, those buses are well populated upon arrival in Newtonville.--an indication that in this impatient world, Washington Place residents will simply forego discomfort and lengthy waits and hop in their cars, head for the pike. Next, take a look at The Gables on Arsenal Street, Watertown and it's 296 units. Again, the same uninspired formulaic design. Travelling further into Brighton you would be confronted with the same. (Incidentally The Merc and The Gables are not in the heart of neighborhoods) Is this what you want for Newton? We already have Austin Street that so much duplicates what I have just mentioned. Why not make Washington Place something that can be exclaimed about and not just another mountain of bricks on the landscape. Working with the existing zoning creates an opportunity to construct numerous units (103 according to Planning Department) but within a three story edifice that could reflect Newton's style and environment and would not curtail affordable housing. Opportunities have come and gone for the City to act on affordable housing in various areas of Newton but thus far Newtonville has been the focus of a great part of it.

Ultimately the costs the City will bear for 161 units will also be to the detriment of Newton. An increased population that WILL be using their cars. After all this is not Florida with yearly bike riding weather. Traffic now is excessive which the developer's traffic studies have not captured. Drive down Walnut Street now – experience for yourself --even without cars exiting onto Walnut left and right from the proposed development's main roadway. Be prepared to idle, then add the bike lanes and street parking. Scary to think of the dangers that brings to school children from the south side gamboling to Day Junior High. In peak morning hours those kids come running off the bridge, unaware the cars are turning on the walk signal. And we know that mostly bikers don't obey the rules of the road. Prepare for accidents to happen and children's safety to be at risk.

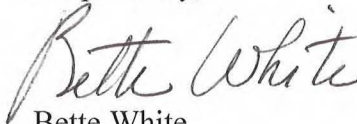
Then, check out Foster Street and Lowell Avenue on a Sunday morning and the parking situation created by the parishioners of both Walnut Street church and Lowell Street church.

This will only be exacerbated from overflow retail parking and Washington Place tenant friends and relatives parking.

Back to the Historic District and its surrounding neighbors. The City legislated the Historic District as a snapshot in time (something cast aside by the Planning Department in its enthusiasm for the Development). That snapshot of the abutting Historic District will now be violated by five story buildings, roof decks, city lights, environmental changes. This too will have an impact on Newton residents of the surrounding area. Our lives, property, privacy, peaceful existence will be forever changed should you allow the size, density, mass of this development to go forward.

Is Newton in such dire straits that it has to succumb to an uncompromising developer? More is at stake here than the meager tax revenue offered the City with the possibility of school, police and fire services eating away at it. Newton will become just like any other city if this development is acted up in its present form. There is no mandate to approve this. Please vote NO.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bette White".

Bette White  
14 Foster Street  
Newtonville, MA 02460





**Washington Place**  
Washington Street @ Walnut Street, Newton, MA

05/05/2016

# *Newton* Massachusetts

THE OFFICIAL CITY WEBSITE

## 28 Austin Street - A Public Private Partnership



et@newtonma.gov | 617-796-1127

### Message from Newton Dept. of Public Works

### 28 Austin Street

The City of Newton and Austin Street Partners have come together as a partnership for this exciting mixed use project at 28 Austin Street in Newtonville, the site of a long-standing public parking lot. Austin Street Partners will construct mixed-income housing and new retail space, restore the parking lot, and work with the community to design and construct two new public spaces. When construction is finished, the City of Newton will retain ownership of the property and maintain and operate the public parking lot as it has in the past. A project of this size involves considerable preparation and planning (see approximate timeline





*The Merc*



*The Tables*