

Nadia Khan

From: David A. Olson
Sent: Wednesday, January 11, 2017 3:00 PM
To: citycouncil
Cc: Nadia Khan
Subject: FW: Washington Place

From: David Wagenknecht
Sent: Wednesday, January 11, 2017 2:56 PM
To: David A. Olson
Subject: Washington Place

City Clerk David Olson

Dear Mr. Olson, As long-time residents of Newtonville, we're writing to register our skepticism about the claims made by the Mayor and others for the desirability of the Washington Place project. The Mayor's enthusiastic letter in The Tab repeatedly underlines aspects of the project--its enormous physical size and scope (160 apartments plus 9000-square-foot plaza, 2000 square-foot indoor community arts center, "pocket park, widened sidewalks, etc. etc.)--as underwriting and making possible the project's social service: providing middle and low-income housing, which is hard to find in Newton. The letter is not long on specifics with respect to the actual rents imagined for either category of tenant, nor for the remaining 100 or so units, but we suspect that if these charges were to be specified, the idea that Newton would be contributing to its "diversity" or availability by means of this project would be questionable. What seems more clear is that this giant step, together with the Austin Street project, towards urbanization would be hugely profitable for its developers. Their contribution of \$800,000 to the "city's sewer maintenance fund" and an annual contribution of \$300,000 "transportation stipend" (paid to whom?) for "encouraging" bus and commuter rail demonstrates the amazing profitability expected by its developers. It doesn't require a systematic critique of capitalistic expenditure to wonder whether there isn't something wrong with this picture, whether the imagined social progress isn't really just a pretty face on a vastly over-blown urbanization of Newtonville. We doubt the real benefits, if any, of this project will reach very far beyond its projectors, and while local businesses may enjoy the influx of 160 more families, assuming they will ever be able to cross Washington Street, the large-scale profit seems mainly reserved for the builders and the Mayor's bragging rights.

David and Patricia Wagenknecht
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