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Subject: Riverside Special Permit
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I live on Asheville Road in Lower Falls --a short distance from one of the two new rotaries that will be built on Grove Street in an attempt to mitigate the traffic that will be generated by this massive development. I am shocked that the special permits are being treated as a given, even though the project fails to meet the applicable the legal standard. I am also shocked that fellow Newton residents would bring this down on the heads of those of us in Lower Falls Auburndale for what amounts to a de minimus net increase in tax revenues. Although this project will likely have no adverse effect on your neighborhood, please vote against it to protect mine.

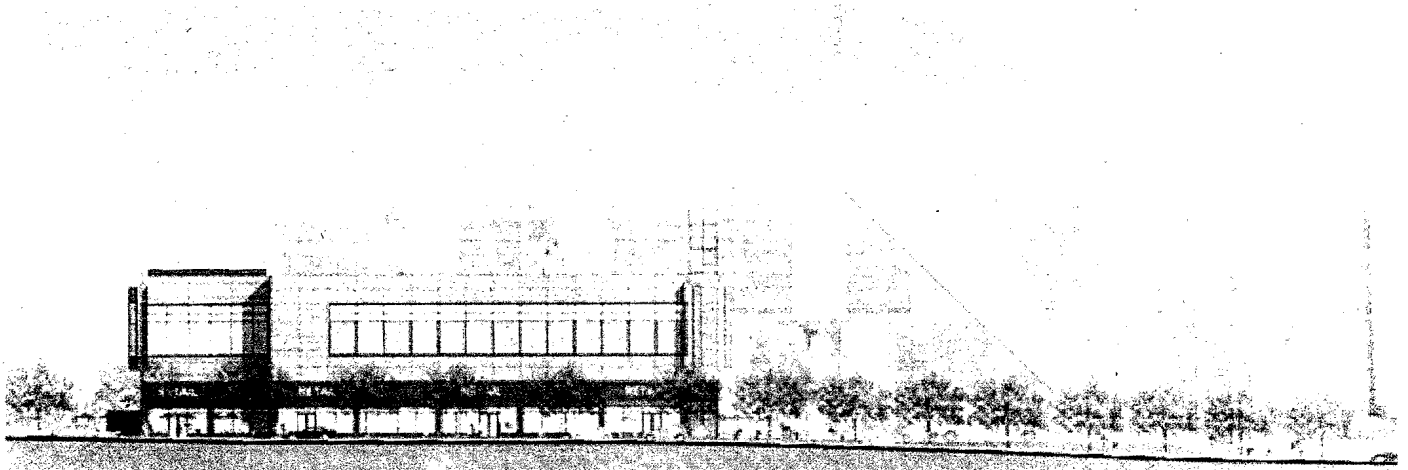
The facts do not support any of the findings the Board is **legally required** to make in order to grant the special permit.

1. The site is not an appropriate location for the use. Lower Falls and Auburndale are predominately single family residential neighborhoods of small leafy streets. Each of us, as homeowners, bought and invested in our homes because this is the sort of environment in which we wanted to live. If we wanted to live next to a massive office tower and apartment/retail complex, we wouldn't have chosen this neighborhood-or likely anywhere in Newton. A commercial development of this scale is completely out of place and will entirely transform the character of the neighborhood.

This is Grove Street in front of Riverside now:



Do you really think the structures below (which are only a small portion of what will be built) are appropriate in its place?





Nothing makes the Riverside site more appropriate for a development of this scale than Waban, Newton Highlands or Newton Center. All of these places have some existing commercial development and are at T stops. What if a developer wanted buy up the commercial block in Waban and put up an office tower? The site is right next to the T, it's a very short drive to the intersection of the Mass. Pike and Rt. 128, and Beacon Street is a wide street, far more capable of absorbing a traffic increase than Grove Street. If you would not vote for that, you should not vote for this.

2. The use a developed and operated will adversely affect the neighborhood. No one can, in good faith, conclude that this development will not adversely affect Lower Falls. In addition to the drastic transformation of the character of the neighborhood, very severe traffic and noise impacts are undeniable. If these adverse impacts did not exist, the heavy emphasis on various attempts to mitigate these issues would not be necessary.

Please do not be snowed by the "pretty" architectural renderings- such renderings can make anything look "pretty." The question is whether a development of this scale will have an adverse impact-not whether you think it's pretty.

Please also do not be snowed by the "transit oriented" myth. In reality, no one who lives or works than a quarter mile from a stop on the Riverside line will take the T to Riverside, and given how wildly inefficient the "D" line is, even people in these very small zones surrounding other "D" line stops will likely opt to drive. Think about what you would do if you worked at the new office tower, even if you live in Newton Center. Would you walk to the T, wait for it to come and then take the slow ride when you can instead hop in the car at your door?

With respect to residents of the new apartment complex, please keep in mind that every single one will need to have a car. Buying groceries (never mind going anywhere not on the Green Line, e.g., a

restaurant in Waltham) requires a car. Since all of these residents will have cars, what is the likelihood that even if they work near a T stop (as opposed to the much higher likelihood that they work somewhere along Rt. 128) that they will opt to take the T? Keep in mind that it takes over 45 minutes from the time you board at Riverside to get to Government Center. The drive is about 20-25 minutes. 3 and 4. There will be a nuisance to vehicles and pedestrians and access over streets to the site is inappropriate for the number of projected vehicles. Even the developer cannot claim there will be no nuisance to vehicles. This means you cannot legally grant the specially permit. If the tangle of rotaries and traffic lights proposed are required, then the project is too big. Even assuming traffic is not bumper to bumper, imagine what it will be like for Lower Falls residents simply to get to the grocery store (the Star Market in Auburndale is the only one anywhere near us). To start my journey, I would first have to negotiate around the Asheville Rotary; travel only a few hundred yards before having to negotiate through the rotary at the Hotel Indigo, then travel only about 50 yards to the traffic light at the entrance to Riverside, and then travel another 30 yards or so to the traffic light at the Equity Office building. After all this, I will have made it less than a half mile down the road from my house. Even assuming there were any reality to the developer's magical animations showing cars at regularly space intervals moving in lockstep (entirely unlike any real traffic flow I have ever driven in), having to deal with this many traffic calming devices in a half mile stretch of road can only be described as a nuisance. Moreover, in reality, people drive less than perfectly. This complex of rotaries, traffic lights, and stacking lanes will be a hazard. Imagine if any number of people were to try to bike to and from the cite in the proposed bike lanes. Having the cars, bike and pedestrians all trying to figure out how to get through these rotaries together is a disaster waiting to happen.

In addition, the developer has given specious and evasive answers to questions about how Lower Falls will be impacted by traffic. For example, when asked how people whose houses are along Grove Street in Lower Falls between DeForest and Asheville will be able to get out of their driveways, the developer responded that there will be a bigger buffer between their houses and Grove Street than there is now, so their driveways will be longer. See VHB Memo dated March 31, 2013 at pp 2-3. Having a longer driveway will not solve the problem which is that backing out of the driveway into heavy traffic will be dangerous, if not impossible. The developer also offers that people who need to go from their houses toward Auburndale (a left turn if one is facing Grove Street), they can just go right and make a U-Turn in the rotary at Asheville. *Id.* This presumes that people drive forwards out of their driveway, which of course they don't, so whether they turn right or left, they will have to back into the traffic. Further, if everyone who now exists Lower Falls between DeForest and Asheville now makes a right hand turn and reverses direction by going around the rotary, the rotary traffic will be even more unmanageable.

Finally, the fact that vehicle trips will be monitored and that the Board can require further mitigation attempts is not an answer. If it turns out that there are more vehicle trips than predicted, what else can be done? Add more rotaries? There will be no going back. Short of tearing down the project or at least blocking the entrance from Grove Street, the idea of additional mitigation isn't realistic, no matter how much money is put aside for this. Also, there is nothing in the Board Order which calls for traffic impacts to be measured. What if the number of vehicle trips is as predicted by the developer, but the developers' predictions about the level at which Grove Street will function are wrong. We could have complete gridlock for hours every morning and evening, with the number of vehicle trips predicted and there will be no recourse against the developer.

PLEASE DO NOT LET THIS HAPPEN TO US. IT IS TOO LATE FOR US TO SELL OUR HOUSES, SO WE ARE STUCK.

Barbara Gruenthal
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