

## MEMORANDUM

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To: Newton Board of Aldermen Land Use Committee  
Alderman Ted Hess-Mahan, Chair

Copy: Mayor Setti Warren; Alderman Scott Lennon; Candace Havens; Attorney Stephen Buchbinder

From: Philip Herr, 20 Marlboro St., Newton MA 02458

Date: April 30, 2013

Re: Riverside Mixed Use Development Design

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In the long course of its preparation, the design of the proposed Riverside development has changed in many ways, often in order to make improvements, sometimes to maintain feasibility. However, the evolution of the design of Building B, the residential component of the development, appears to have departed from the earlier expressed intentions of both the City and the developers in a way that is neither an improvement nor required to achieve feasibility. Most critical is the re-orientation of that, the only residential building now contemplated, so that it turns its back to Grove Street.

On the following page is an image from a 2011 presentation by the developer to a community meeting on the BH Normandy proposal. It struck me then and strikes me now as exemplifying the implementation of the intent of the City in its November 2011 adoption of the Mixed Use Centers amendment to the *Newton Comprehensive Plan*. One paragraph from that *Plan* (on the following page) clearly articulates the importance of building orientation as a means of integrating new development with its context, a basic intention of this City's support for such complexes. The Riverside design has moved away from the illustrated image through a series of steps, as I understand culminating in a design offering no direct access between the residential building and Grove Street.

I also understand that the Land Use Committee has expressed its non-support for that configuration, resulting in an assurance from the developer that the design will be reconsidered. I want to express my gratitude to the Committee for its action, and to urge that its members persevere in insisting upon a design that truly reflects the intention of the City's planning. The most recent design, by turning its back on the neighborhood, could hardly be found to not be adverse to that neighborhood, and could hardly be found to be consistent with the City's *Comprehensive Plan*.

MASTER PLAN UPDATE



Illustration from “06.09.11 Community Meeting Update: Presentation” by BH Normandy

*Newton Comprehensive Plan* as amended November 7, 2011, page 3A-3:

“DESIGNING MIXED-USE CENTERS”

“Vision

“New mixed-use centers should create positive, integrated relationships with the surrounding neighborhoods. Sites should be visually and functionally integrated to increase their vitality. Shared spaces and streets are critical to that goal, which suggests new buildings should be oriented toward rather than turning their backs on them.”