

## Compilation of Other\* Vision Kit Submissions

### For the first phase of engagement on Village Center Zoning Districts, May – October 2021

*City of Newton – Department of Planning & Development*

\*All of the vision kits submitted as PDFs, Word Documents, phone calls, emails, and more, are compiled here. The order of documents is determined by the alphabetical ordering of the original documents' titles. All vision kits submitted through the SurveyMonkey platform are available here.

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**Vision Kit Meet Up  
Newton Highlands Tour**

**Tour:  
September 2, 2021  
5:30-6:30 pm**

**Subject areas**

- **Lincoln Street**
- **Walnut Street**
- **Hyde Center and Park**
- **At the edges of the Village Center**

*Plus*

**Historic Newton villages images**



A



B



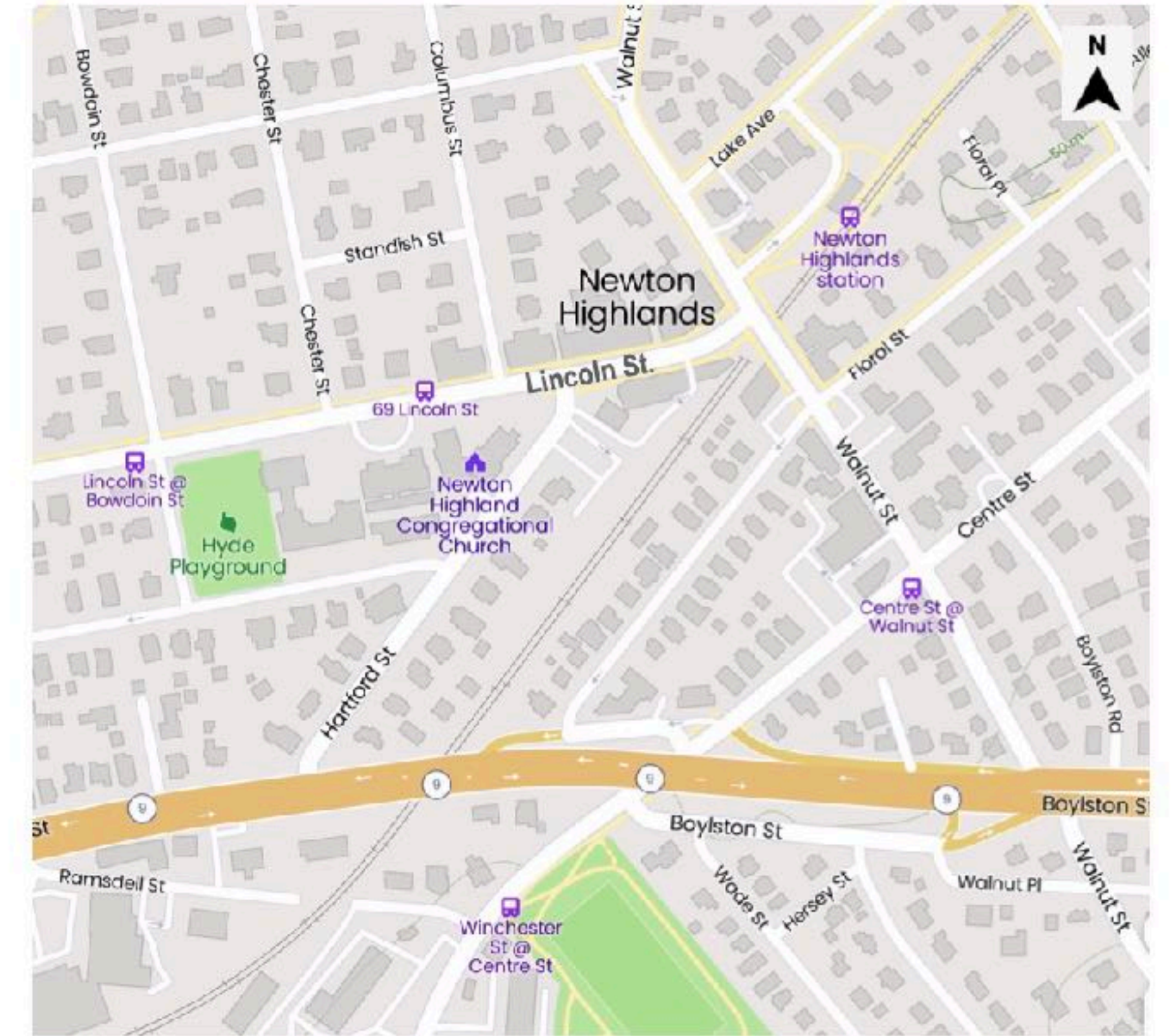
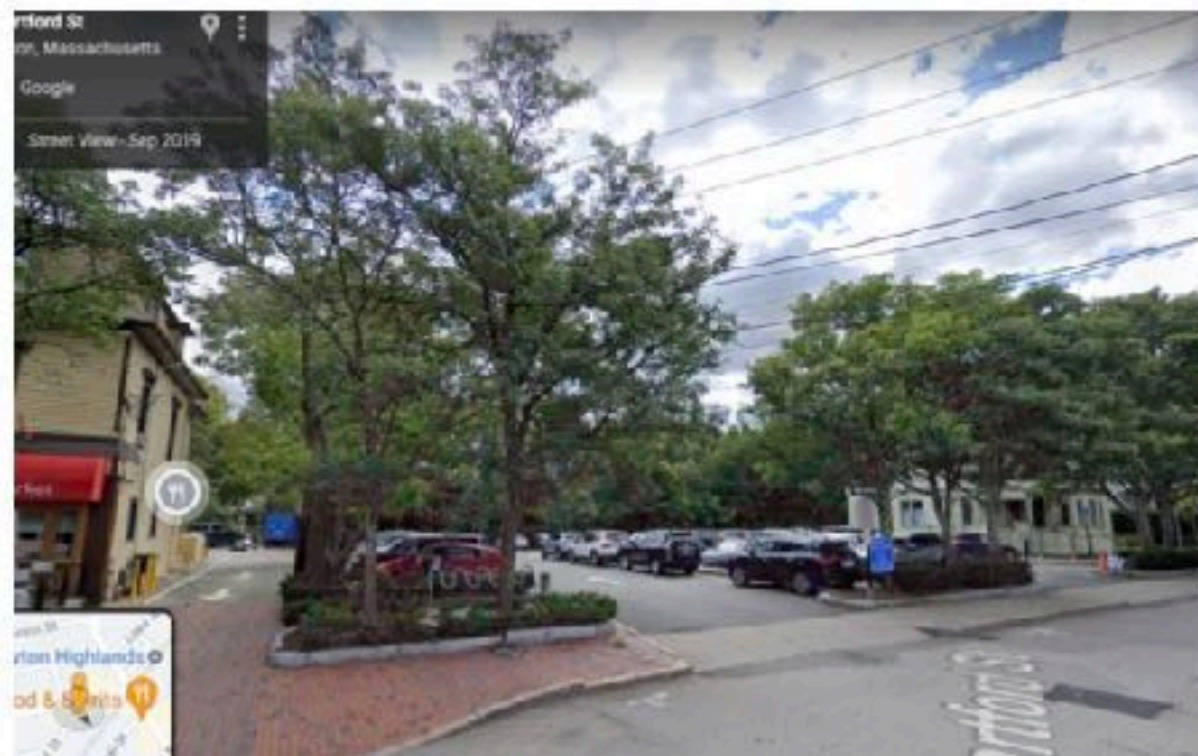
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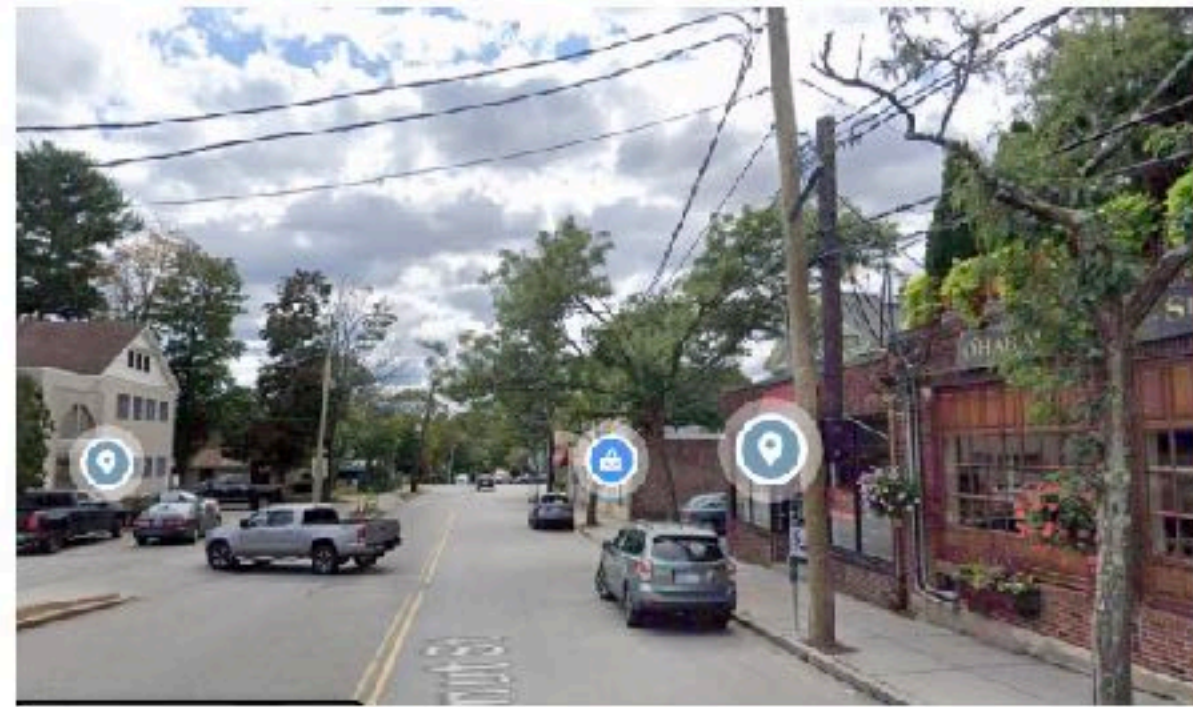
## Newton Highlands Photographs

### Lincoln St.

- A. Approaching East end of Lincoln at Walnut and T stop pocket park - could be spiffed up. Stevens bldg. anchors Lincoln St.
- B. North side of Lincoln St., north side, some empty storefronts - several in the village.
- C. South side of Lincoln St., restaurants, retail with apartments above. Outdoor dining to plaza at Hartford St.
- D. Parking lot on Hartford St. next to plaza and community bldg.
- E. View looking east from PO @ Columbus, visual end of VC core.



A



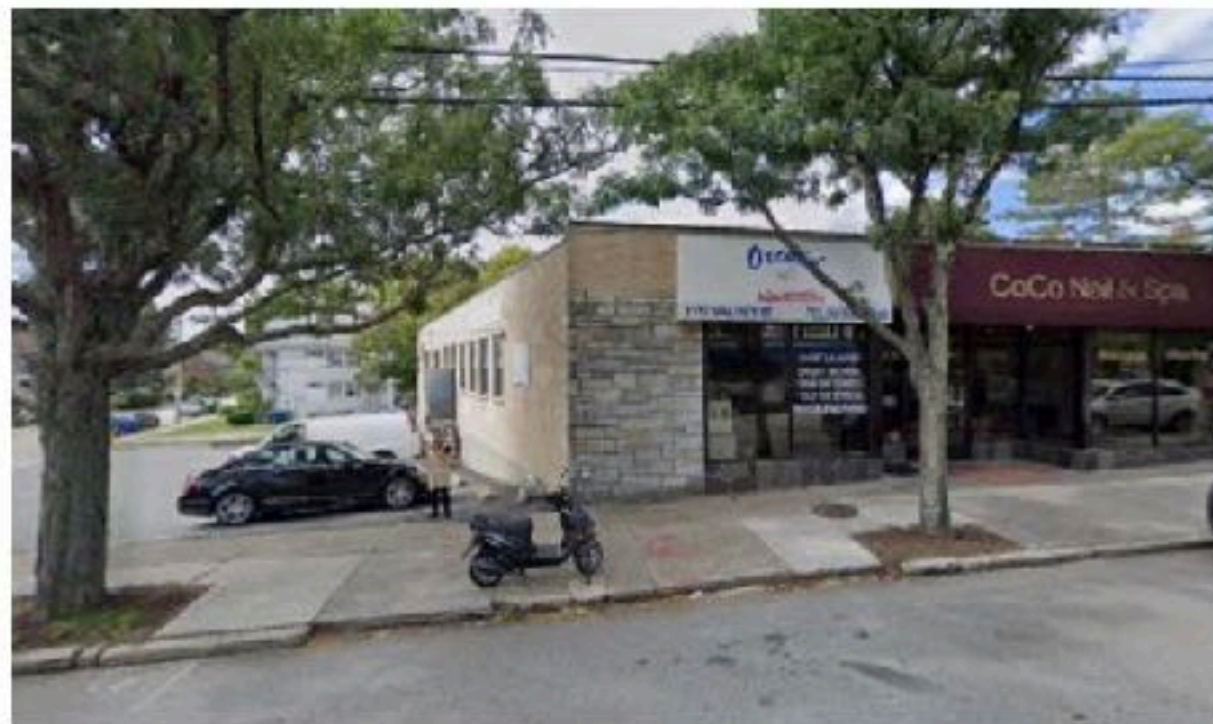
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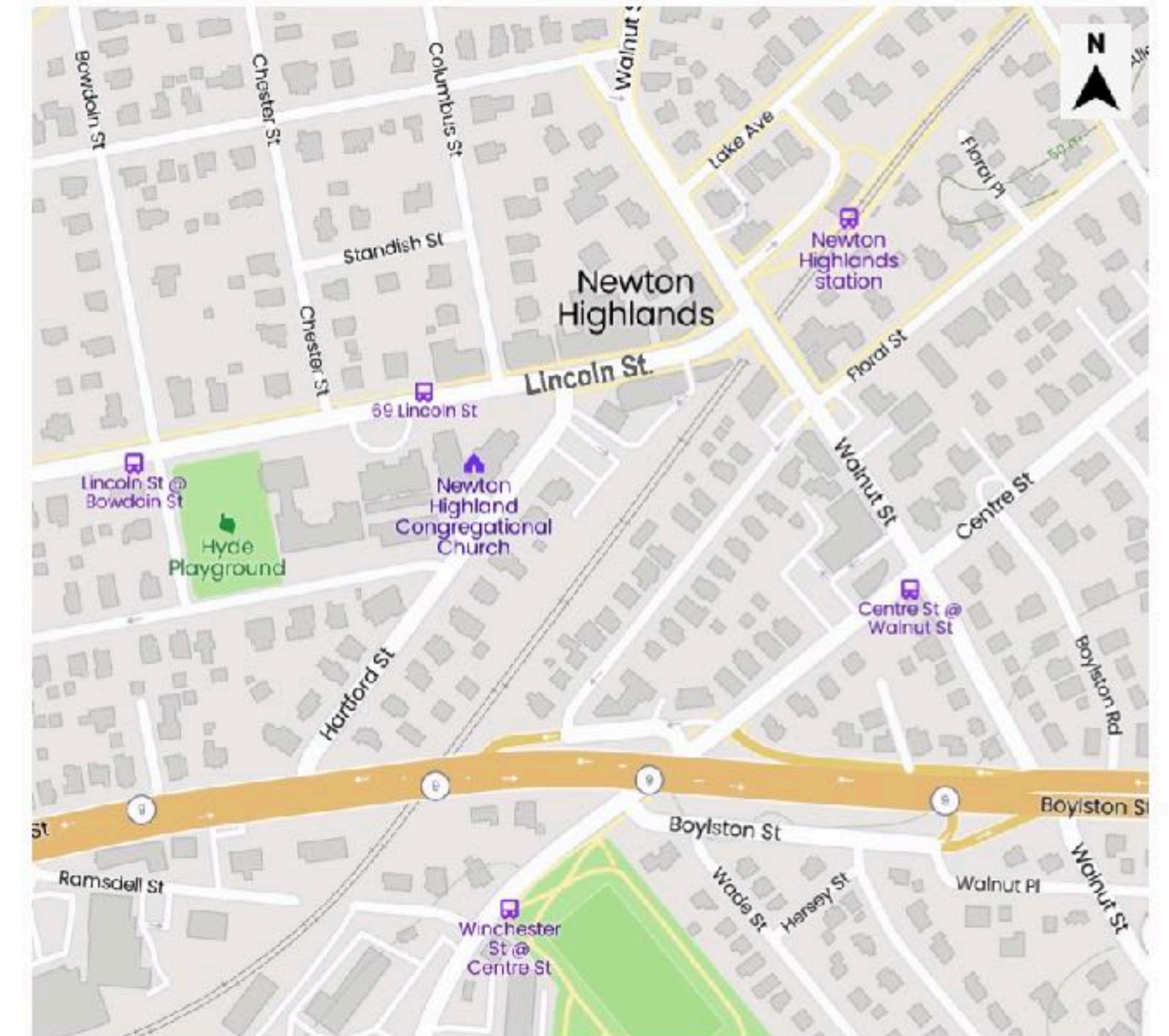
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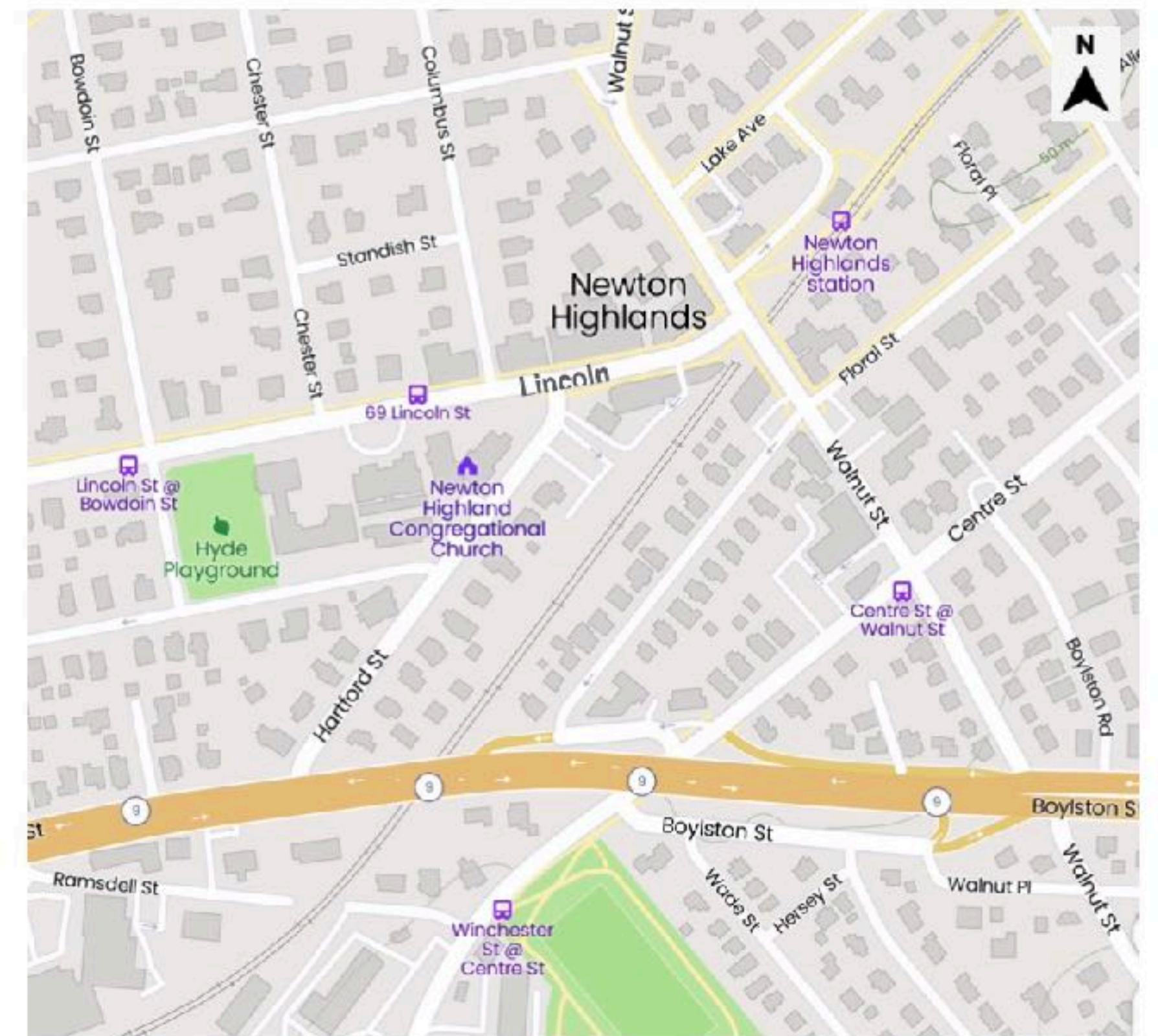
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Newton Highlands Photographs

**Walnut St.**

- A. Walnut block looking toward Lincoln St., and T stop, retail on east w/ res. above. West side 1 story, w/lower level opp. from Floral St.
- B. Walnut St., from Floral looking toward Centre St. Sidewalk narrow for the level of foot traffic in the block - could it be made wider?
- C. Walnut St., east side, former car service, now O'hara's outdoor dining and adjacent retail parking lot. Street fronts held back from street edge creating major gap. Could be a "place" + a big opp.
- D. O'Hara's popular outdoor dining in former auto repair lot.
- E. Walnut/Floral - open lot at Orchid Cleaner, gap in block opp.
- F. Southern edge of Walnut @ Centre - Visual limit of the VC



## Newton Highlands Photographs

### Around Hyde Center and Park

- A. West on Lincoln, leaving village center, approaching Hyde on left
- B. Hyde Community Center and entry to Lincoln St. Apartments
- C. Hyde Playground, field and bandstand
- D. Looking back eastward down Lincoln St. at Bowdoin, Hyde Park on the right



A



B



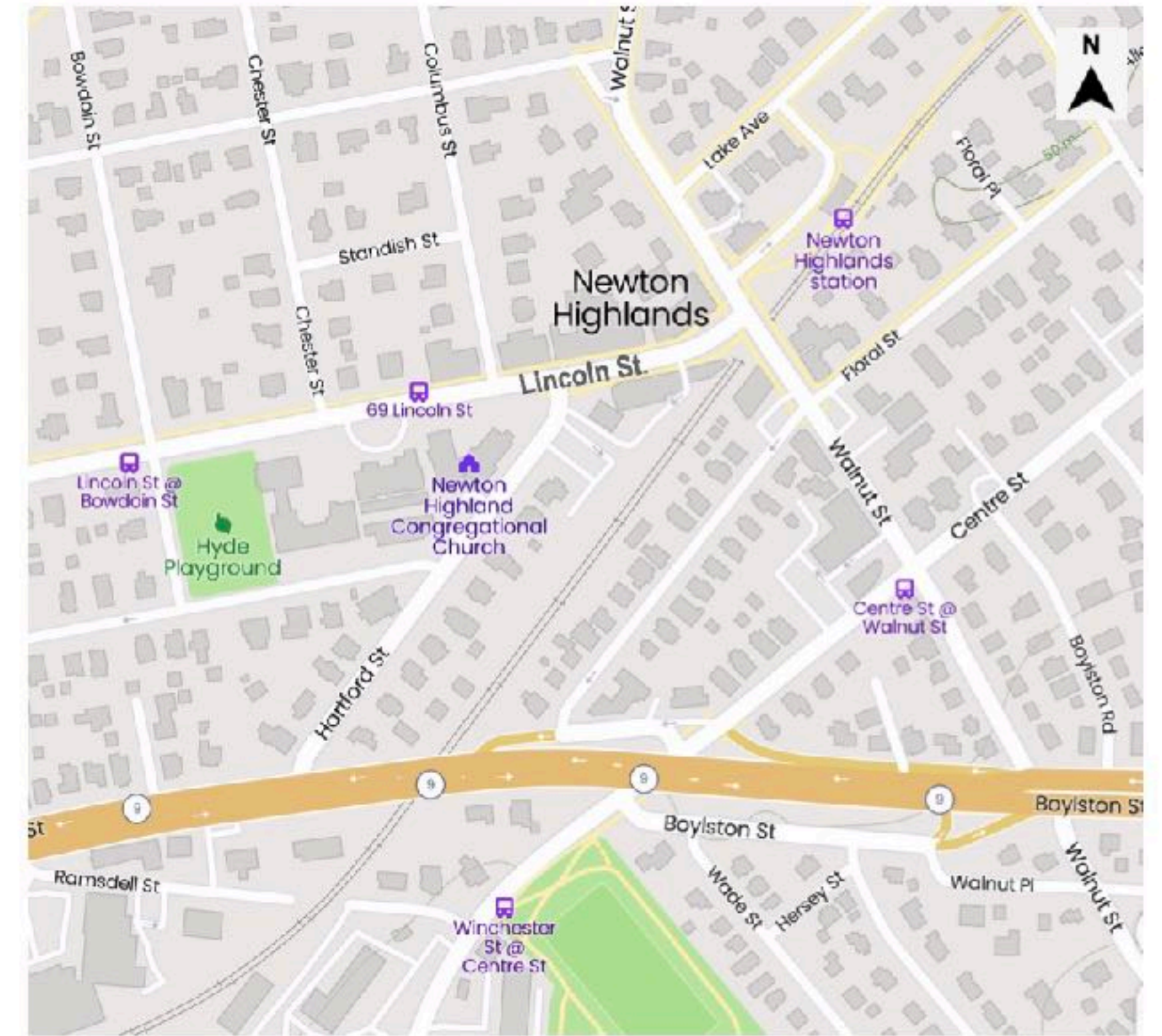
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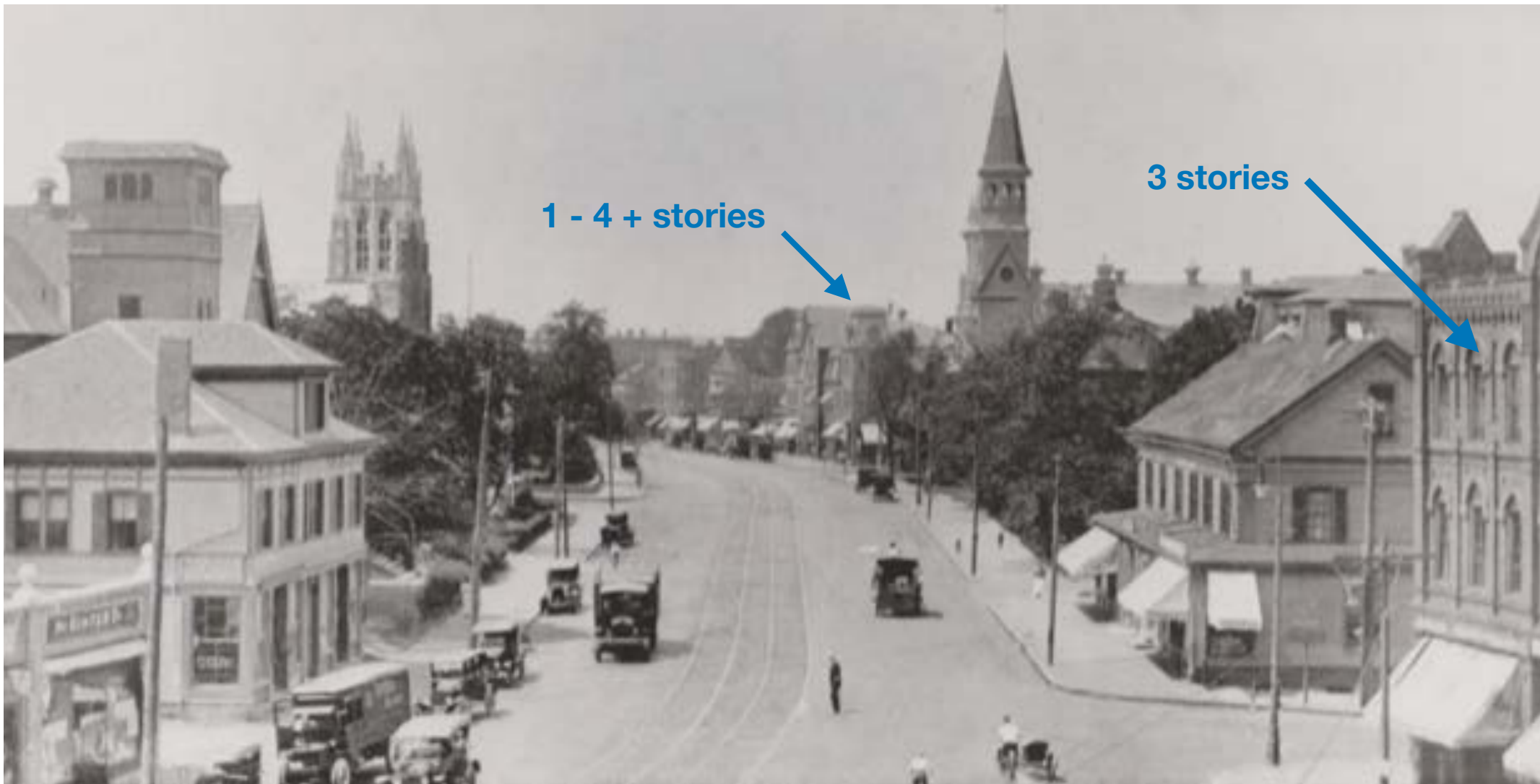


### Newton Highlands Photographs

#### At the edges of the Village Center

- A. On Walnut St, north of the Highlands houses have been converted to office + institutional uses, St. Pauls provides some green space.
- B. Erie and Hartford Streets just outside of the village center has 3 condo buildings, including 4, 5 and 18 units, respectively.
- C. Hartford St. preschool, church parking and view to condos
- D. Floral at Walnut, residential to commercial - open parking lot, lower level at Orchid Cleaners site may be opp.
- E. Columbus looking toward Lincoln, view of monumental church tower, mix of commercial, community use and residential.

Historic village center images showing taller buildings along main streets than exist today



Newton Center, Center St.

West Newton Square, Washington St.



DRAFT

Vision Kit Meet-Up Newton Highlands  
September 2, 2021, 5:30 – 6:45pm  
Notes by Lisa Monahan + Kathy Pillsbury

Attendees:

Councilor Deb Crossley  
Alice Ingerson  
Susan Levy  
Nathaniel Lichtin  
Lisa Monahan  
Councilor Brenda Noel  
Kathy Pillsbury  
Joyce Pollock  
Helen Waters

We met at the Newton Highlands Plaza at the corner of Lincoln and Hartford Streets. We sat in the benches around trees and on the picnic table. After about 5 minutes we all agreed that it was too loud to talk / hear and decided to walk to the bandstand at Hyde Park, just down the street.

The following bullet points are things that were brought up about each of the themes identified in What makes a Village Center by the Planning Department.

Environment:

- The plaza space could be greener, have more plantings
- Right now, there are no sound absorbing materials – brick paving, brick and glass building fronts – nothing soft to take up noise of cars and trucks
- Perhaps planters could be built into benches
- Keep the big open green space of Hyde Park near the Village Center

Transportation:

- **Newton Highlands is very walkable, maybe among the most walkable of Newton's villages**
- Need more protected bike lanes
- Need a safe way to bike from here to the Greenway
- With Northland coming online there will be much more back and forth between these two places, electric shuttles will be one mode of transit, bikes will be another important one.
- Two types of bike travel hazard considerations – such as, 1. from the Highlands to Needham St. and, 2. traffic hazards and door swing hazards from parked cars on streets.
- Perhaps a bike route could circumvent the village center all together
- **Some places such as Ft. Collins, CO have a “dismount zone” at the village center.** No bike riding allowed at all.
- Need better bike racks
- Zip car and ride share spots seem to have disappeared
- Really need to look at parking minimums as related to housing – do the same standards apply to units close to public transit as a similar unit much farther away? Right now, the standards are all the same.

## Housing:

- Village centers are good places for adding more housing. Newton Highlands would be good for up to 4 stories – like the newly approved Walnut St. apartment building. That 4 story building is the same height as the 3 story Stevens building.
- Having up to 4 stories in height would be best at the major intersection of Lincoln and Walnut and Centre – unsure of how high elsewhere.
- Could be 3 (or 4?) stories on Walnut between Lincoln and Centre where it is mostly one story now.
- The one-story commercial buildings could be added onto – we had differing thoughts on how high. Range of 2 to 4.
- Converting the older homes into 2 and 3 family homes would be good around the village center. Keep the historic house and streetscape.
- There are many 2 family homes and some 3 families now, some group homes too – but there is no visual distinction between these and 1 family homes.
- It would be great to make it easier to build ADUs, the code was improved a few years ago which made a lot of improvements and there might be additional improvements that could be made
- Would be nice to have an elevator building options close to the village center for older adults, downsizing, perhaps going without a car.

## Inclusive, Diverse, Welcoming:

- The **Steven's Building used to have a meeting** space on the top floor
- The Hyde School used to provide meeting space for the community
- People can meet in coffee shops and restaurants
- The Hyde Center is a public building – it has good outdoor space and good indoor activity space
- The Brigham House is a public building, but it does not have drop in open meeting space
- **The Newton Highlands Women's Club is a private organization in the neighborhood that rents out space**

## Shopping, Eating, Working

- Lots of places to eat in the village – including on Walnut St.
- Walnut St. could really be better connected to the Village than it is.
- There are currently some apartments on upper floor levels along both Lincoln St. and Walnut St. and offices too.
- People thought that Lincoln St. one-story commercial could go to two or three stories.
- There used to be an IGA grocery store where Walnut Grille is now.
- The stores on the north side of Lincoln St. charge higher rent than the south side.
- Service industries that are not possible to get on the internet are coming in but there are still many empty store fronts.
- How many people are needed to live in the surrounding village to sustain the shops?
- **The sidewalk in front of O'Hara's is too narrow.**
- **The storefronts opposite O'Hara's and adjacent shops are set back and as such, the strength of the 2-sided street is weakened.** (a two-sided commercial street is generally more successful than a one-story commercial street).
- Perhaps the street could be realigned – **to widen the sidewalk on the O'Hara's side?**
- Opportunity at the open parking area @ the Orchid Cleaners site.

## Traffic

- What about making part of Lincoln one-way?
- What about making part of Hartford one-way?
- Would need to make sure that cut through traffic on side streets was managed if this was done.

end

## Stan Kugell (Newton Centre) –

### 09.10.21

- Like many residents, I am ignorant of the current zoning and what it allows vs. not allows
  - Became engaged when the City brought forward “the end of single-family zoning”
- When I read about the densification ideas I saw potential and pitfalls:
  - Potential –
    - Increased vitality within the village centers through increased precision density
  - Pitfalls –
    - Not allow two-family and multi-family everywhere, only in key areas
- Haussmann’s Paris is the ideal version of density
  - 4.5 stories of good mixed-use architecture in village centers is great, not boxes
- The triangle in Newton Centre is such an opportunity...think Post Office Square in Boston
- Interesting building in Brookline at the corner of Harvard and Fuller Street (good example!)

Ann Berwick

Think about the idea of a 15-minute city, i.e., all the commonly used retail shops are available within a 15-minute walk or bike ride—food shop, restaurants, hardware store, pharmacy, bakery, ideally bookstore, ice cream (!) The places we use the most in Newton Center now are the bookshop (excellent!) and JP Licks.

Related to this: Newton Center has too many banks! When we first moved here (45 years ago), it had a grocery store (Sage's), a great bakery, and a movie theater. Newton Highlands had a good hardware store and an ice cream shop.

Name/Group: \_\_\_\_\_ Courtney Foster \_\_\_\_\_ Village Center: \_\_\_\_\_ Auburndale \_\_\_\_\_

**What's a Village Center?** What are the defining features of a village center? Where does it begin and end? Why did you pick this one?

**Observations/ ideas for the future:**

- Small businesses, including dining establishments, cafes, bakeries, clothing stores, gift/novelty stores, etc. Preference for local businesses over large national chains (e.g. Dunkin Donuts and Starbucks in Auburndale...Bruegger's I am more amenable to :D)
- Green space – flowers, picnic tables, parks, places to play and hang out outdoors, also where people can hang out without spending any money. Some art installations like the swings on Lawn on the D support this and are wildly popular for young people, especially teenagers! Even better, make outdoor power outlets so people can sit outside with their computers and work.
- Made for people, not cars. Cars take up a lot of room and greatly diminish green space and other outdoor space. Village centers should be safe for walking and biking and encourage alternate means of transit. This also means having public transit available to access these areas. Supporting the MBTA to add more circulator busses would be great
- Affordable. Businesses should be able to afford rent, and so should homeowners or renters, including those who might live in apartments above commercial space. Some village centers due to lack of affordability are turning towards mostly banks and real estate firms, which is sad to see and decreases the quality of the village center
- Village centers need to be inclusive. People from all walks of life – race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, etc. – should be welcome. And people with disabilities should be centered in the design so that the village centers are accessible.
- Ways to support residents in need like community fridges and take what you need stations, and public bathrooms, should be available in village centers or within walkable distance of them
- I am not sure there is a concrete beginning and end point for village centers. People conceptualize themselves as living in Newton villages regardless of whether or not they are that close to their village center. For instance, I live probably a 15 minute walk away from my village center and there are no stores right near me, but I still say I live in Auburndale.
- Village centers should support sustainability! Solar panels on roofs, touchless water bottle filling stations, energy-efficient buildings, recycling bins wherever there are trash cans, and using compostable or reusable products such as for utensils are great steps.

**Sketch/ map/ drawing:**

[insert text here]

Name/Group: \_\_\_\_\_ Village Center: \_\_\_\_\_

**Environment:** Find elements in your village center that support a greener future. What does the 'green future' of your village center look like? Are there more places for things like walking and biking, trees and plants, rainwater collection, or solar panels?

**Observations/ ideas for the future:**

Yes, absolutely! To add to my point above, I think village centers should strive to be net zero or as close to zero GHG emissions if possible, and should support nature/biodiversity and water replenishment. Rainwater collection is a great idea, and there should be a diversity of trees and plants, which will also help keep ecosystems healthy. Fountains are also always fun, as long as they recycle the water to limit usage, and can be used for kids or pets to cool off. Expanded areas for bikes/scooters or walking would also be great. There could even be community gardens, which support farmshares and communities learning to garden and grow their own food, or food could also be used at local restaurants. Green spaces with parks and tree canopies also should always be accessible and include wide paths for people in wheelchairs or with other mobility devices to get by. Also, we should explore using alternative pavement options which save GHG emissions, e.g. recycled tires, and which are permeable to protect the city against flooding. Storms and flooding will continue to be more frequent and more severe, so our greener future should include climate mitigation as well as adaptation measures such as these (also including things like more shaded areas for people to use during heat waves). On the topic of heat waves, village centers could also develop small community cooling or heating centers to use during summer or winter when electricity bills are high, and make them powered by renewables.

Environmental justice should also not be sidelined. Making our city greener should not make it more exclusive (physically or in terms of cost) and benefits of a greener Newton should be available to all.

**Sketch/ map/ drawing:**

[insert text here]

Name/Group: \_\_\_\_\_ Village Center: \_\_\_\_\_

**Shopping, Eating + Working:** Go to the stores and restaurants you often visit, or ones you are looking forward to revisiting when safe to do so. What do you prefer to buy in person versus online? What businesses would you like to see open? Would you like to be able to work in a village center?

**Observations/ ideas for the future:**

We really like Wally's for ice cream, and Just Next Door for gifts. We are always looking for more restaurants to get take-out from (or for outdoor dining). We like Tom's and Boca Bella, and also Mango Thai, which is in West Newton. We had some other cute jewelry and clothing shops in Auburndale (besides the Dressing Room which is still there), but most are now out of business. Also having more grocery options in village centers with local produce would be great – Star Market doesn't seem to carry any and not everyone can make it to the farmer's market. I think in-person and online shopping options should both be available. Especially with more remote work, it would be great to work in a village center, so other types of businesses besides stores would be welcome in my opinion.

**Sketch/ map/ drawing:**

[insert text here]

Name/Group: \_\_\_\_\_ Village Center: \_\_\_\_\_

**Housing:** Go to one of your village center public transit stops and observe what kind of housing you see. Find a multi-family building (3 or more units). If you don't see any, find one in/around your village center. Guess what year the building was constructed. What types of housing do you envision in your village center in the future?

**Observations/ ideas for the future:**

At the Woodland stop, there is an apartment complex, but I think it's just for seniors. I feel like the complex has been here pretty much my whole life, so probably 25 years old at least. Actually, apparently the Lasell Village (which is just for seniors) and the Woodland Station apartments are two different things. I can't figure out when the Woodland Station apartments were built, but they look like mostly luxury apartments. I think having more housing and apartments within walking distance of transit is really critical – a mixture of different types of housing and for people with different income levels and stages in life. I am fine with some areas having greater density and having taller buildings and apartments above shops, for instance, if it helps chip away at the housing crisis here.

**Sketch/ map/ drawing:**

[insert text here]

Name/Group: \_\_\_\_\_ Village Center: \_\_\_\_\_



**Inclusive, Diverse + Welcoming Spaces:** Find a part of a village center that feels most welcoming and safe for you and your identities. What makes it feel inclusive? Examples include community centers, non-profits, places of worship, a place where your language is spoken, where you see and interact with people who share your identity, places that are age-friendly. How could your future village center welcome people of all ages, genders, races, socioeconomic statuses, sexualities, and more backgrounds?

Observations/ ideas for the future:

I really like Waban and Newton Center in particular is a place I have spent quite a bit of time, but a lot of the places where young people used to read, study, or catch up with friends, like Pete’s Coffee and Panera Bread, have been replaced, which makes me really sad and limits the options available. I think Newton Highlands and Newtonville now may have more of the types of businesses I am thinking of where people of all ages can gather. Also, since I was a little kid, the library and the branch libraries, and the neighborhood bookstores, have been likely some of the most inclusive, diverse, and welcoming spaces I’ve experienced. I think places where people can experience nature and animals – even Newtonville Pet used to be a favorite place to visit – are also a plus. I’ve also gotten a lot of use out of the public parks and playgrounds, even to walk around with people when I am past the point of using them (some where pets are not allowed to roam off-leash can be helpful for younger children or people who are afraid of dogs).

The one thing I can think of that unites all of these options are that they are accessible to all, and that you need to spend little to no money to enjoy them. The city also makes an effort to have features like art and music in places like libraries and outdoor places in village centers, which I think adds to the welcoming and enticing atmosphere (people love the outdoor pianos!) I think having more places like this will allow diverse groups to enjoy the city. I also think having community centers where specifically people of certain identities could go to hang out (e.g. spaces for BIPOC or LGBTQ+ only) serve an important need. Lastly, for people to be welcomed and included, we cannot continue to overpolice our communities, which could scare people away.

Sketch/ map/ drawing:

[insert text here]

Name/ Group: \_\_\_\_\_ Village Center: \_\_\_\_\_

**Arts + Culture:** Find a place in a village center that creatively engages you. Examples include art (statue, mural, painting) or an area that is used for a pop-up, temporary event or creative activities (outdoor market, concert, parade). How are village centers currently encouraging creative practices? What would a more ‘creative’ village center look and feel like?

**Observations/ ideas for the future:**

I think Auburndale isn't that creatively inspired, but we do have some of those painted electrical boxes now. When I think of somewhere creative, I think of Newton Center, with the doors art installation, the piano, and the pop-up concerts, as well as the arts and crafts fairs in the fall and spring. I think if we could have more of these things, especially outdoors while it is nice enough out since we are still in COVID, that would be great! I think arts and cultural events should be diverse in type, medium (visual art, music, poetry/creative writing, dance, film (even outdoor screenings in fields), food pop-ups/trucks/events/tastings, etc), and location, and it should be an easier barrier to entry for people to stage them (for instance, there could be a form to fill out on the Newton website where you can share your idea and desired date/location, and the city can get back to you to get your event approved if it is within a certain size range). I think some of the events, if not all, should be free, and should be good for all ages when possible, and participatory events rather than things where people just watch/listen would be great to include. Some cities like Boston also have microgrants available for people to put on arts & culture activities or events, which would be helpful potentially – I think we may have some of these in Newton for some purposes, but I am not positive.

**Sketch/ map/ drawing:**

[insert text here]

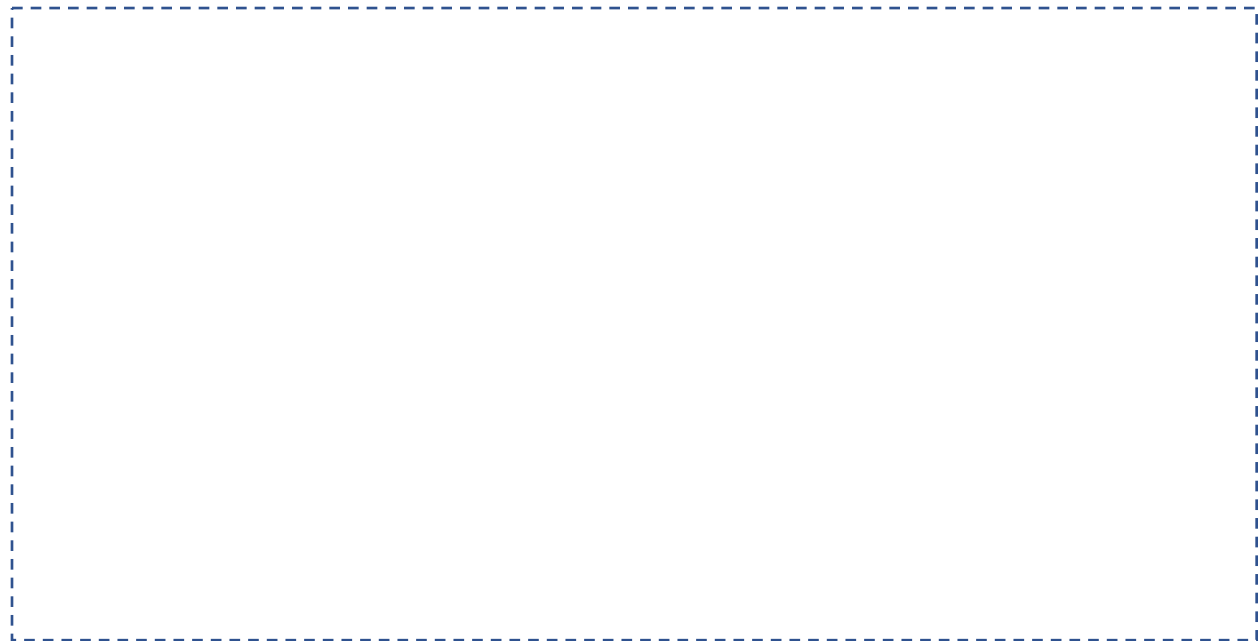
Name/Group: \_\_\_\_\_ Village Center: \_\_\_\_\_

**Accessibility:** Find a place in your village center that feels most accessible for you, and a place that feels least accessible. This can be considered physically (abilities to physically move, see, hear, speak and more) as well as emotionally & in terms of senses (noise, smell, how calm a place feels, or access to public furniture). What would a fully accessible village center look and feel like?

**Observations/ ideas for the future:**

Places with a lot of cars are really hard to hang out in, because they tend to be really loud, polluted, and lacking walkable areas, as well as areas to sit and talk, like green space. To me, car-free areas (with ample sidewalk space for people to get by) are the most accessible physically and emotionally. Picnic tables and benches also always help! I think a fully accessible village center would cater to people of all ages and abilities, with things to do that are outdoors and which cost little or nothing to carry out (for instance, eating a picnic lunch, looking in a store window, grabbing a tea or coffee with someone). Events should have ASL interpreters, Braille should be available on signs/plaques around the city, and there should be some lively options and some calmer options for people looking for a more low-key sensory environment. Areas should be equipped with curb cuts and even sidewalks for people to get around.

**Sketch/ map/ drawing:**



Name/Group: \_\_\_\_\_ Village Center: \_\_\_\_\_

**Transportation:** How do you get to your village center (walk, bike, public transit, car)? Is there infrastructure that makes this safe and easy, like sidewalks/crosswalks, bike lanes/racks, sheltered transit stops, parking (lots/garage/on-street)? How do you move through your village center? Are there any alleyways or cut-throughs that break up the different spaces? How will you get to and from your village center in the future? What will be the most visible transportation features in your village center? Parking for cars? Bike lanes? A public transit station?

**Observations/ ideas for the future:**

I don't have my driver's license, so I will typically walk, or get a ride either from a friend or family member, or an Uber. There is not infrastructure that would make this easy; a circulator bus, even if it just operated on weekends or for limited hours (e.g. once every hour) during the day would be great to help people get from one place to another. The biking infrastructure is pretty good though due to the carriage lanes around where I live. There are some cut-throughs, so you don't always have to walk on busy Comm Ave to get places. I hope we have more public transportation options available in areas which are farther off the green line (e.g. Auburndale, Newton Center, Newtonville), or even having a Newton city-sponsored rideshare could be helpful for a lot of people, especially those who need help getting to the grocery store, appointments, and the like. I think typically we have more than enough parking in Auburndale and that more of the parking lots could be turned into sitting areas – even an area where 4 parking spaces are taken away, or even 2, makes a huge difference.

**Sketch/ map/ drawing:**

[insert text here]

**Anything Else?** Take a photo of, draw or imagine anything else that feels important to you about the village center(s). Is there anything else that would make your 'future' village center come to life? Is it something new or something old?

**Observations/ ideas for the future:**

New and old mixed together is great for me! For instance, the cinema in West Newton is a favorite. I hope the city can keep institutions like this running!

**Sketch/ map/ drawing:**

[insert text here]

*Submission by Ed Olhava, emailed 09.28.21*

Below is my feedback on Newtonville, the village center I frequent the most.

### **What's a Village Center?**

- a nexus of each village where consumer-facing businesses (shopping, retail, personal services) can concentrate allowing residents of the village to fulfill many of their daily tasks. In addition, fast and reliable public transportation and/or non-automotive transit options (bike, scooter, walking) to Boston is ideal.

### **Environment**

- I definitely favor a greener environment overall. We need to look at examples of other cities (Singapore comes to mind) for ways to have both density and lots of trees and other greenery. The village centers currently discourage cycling (a greener form of transport) by not having safe cycling options, such as protected bike lanes. We should discourage parking by both increasing rates and removing spaces. Frequent shutdowns to cars, such as on weekends and during school transit hours should be put in place to encourage walking and biking to and through our village centers. Exceptions can be made for mobility impaired and buses. Again, we should look for examples of other cities globally in order to implement this. Sadly, we dropped the ball on this with Newtonville when we continued to encourage auto transport/discourage kids biking to school in the redesign.

### **Shopping, Eating & Working**

I enjoy the restaurants and coffee shops in Newtonville. I would love to see other types of retail that is personal and harder to come by online. A specialty food market would be wonderful, especially given the closing of Russos! I would love to work in Newtonville as it would make my commute easier. I work in biotech so it would require a large parcel being redeveloped!

### **Housing**

The new apartment buildings in Newtonville have breathed fresh air into this village center. It has felt slow and almost dying for almost a decade, but the improvements (such as the pedestrianized Bram Way) are palpable. We need denser housing with commensurate retail to continue to revitalize this part of the city. And we need to push MBTA to enhance commuter rail and buses to allow people convenient access to/from Boston.

### **Accessibility**

A fully accessible Newtonville would have pedestrianized streets. I was in Asheville recently and one of the streets in the center of town allows cars one-way only, with a 5 mph speed limit and pedestrians have automatic right of way. This would be great for Walnut Street! and it would cut down on the street noise from cars.

### **Inclusive, Diverse + Welcoming Spaces**

Push MBTA to enhance public transportation to/from Newtonville. Increase affordable housing - put in more apartment buildings and push developers to put in as many affordable units as possible. This would drive up the price of the market rate units but so be it. Increasing the number of luxury units will relieve pressure on the current stock of housing and allow renters living in old stock to maintain their residency.

**Transportation**

I primarily walk or bike to Newtonville. The new redesign is OK for walking, horrible for bicycling. The shifts from protected bike lane to painted bike lane to sharrow to painted bike lane to protected bike lane makes it one of the most hair-raising parts of the city to bike in. I don't use the sidewalk but completely understand the kids who do while struggling to get to Day or North.

**Arts+Culture**

The Brahm pedestrian area is great! I love the live music we have had. I would like to close of Walnut on a regular basis (such as we did for Newtonville Village Day) to have more pop-up arts/food/temp.

thank you,  
Ed Olhava  
11 Scarsdale Rd

My Vision: Future of 4-Corners

Sarah Luria, 38 Garland Rd., [sluria@holycross.edu](mailto:sluria@holycross.edu), 857-231-6678 (c)

**Problem:** 4-Corners is not a village but it is an important center. These level of center deserves attention too in this process. 4-Corners will always and must be a traffic intersection. Right now that intersection dominates its identity when it need not. It could be greened in many ways that would help highlight its environmental identity and its history. It is more than just a conduit for cars—it is also the intersection of 2 aqueducts, and the many tributaries of Cold Spring Brook that flow under it to meet up with Hammond Brook at Walnut and Homer. It has an impressive number of off-road walking paths and wild spaces (Cold Spring Park, Wilson Conservation Land) as well as the Cemetery—right in the heart of Newton.

**Objectives**—Cultivate the historic and environmental identity of Four Corners. Highlight it as a walking hub, watershed, as well as a busy intersection for car traffic.

Connect the dots to join and highlight its pieces of walking paths and surprisingly large amount of park space.

Mitigate water/flooding problems in this old floodplain.

**New Features:**

1. Consider if there could be space for a rotary to calm traffic by creating a more continuous, slow, flow. A fountain in the center would nicely mark that we are in the floodplain of Cold Spring Brook.
2. Divert foot traffic from rotary: Consider pedestrian crosswalk Across Walnut at Brentwood (may already exist) (59 Bus Stop)
3. Increase 59 Bus Service—it does connect Newtonville to Newton Highlands T
4. Open a pedestrian access to Newton Cemetery from Beacon Street across from Cold Spring Park. The Cemetery is a neighborhood and city gem. It is underused and not useful enough as a walking space, which as a Garden Cemetery it was designed to be. It is huge. It is something you have to walk around unless you go in its one open entrance—very car focused. I would use it as a throughway to my neighborhood walks all the time if it were more porous.
5. Divert foot traffic from rotary: Use crosswalk/Green Stripe to highlight the Sudbury Aqueduct, which leads nicely to the Wilson Conservation Land, Andree Wilson Treeway and Mason Rice, Playground, as well as a lovely route to Newton Centre
6. Advertise 4-C as a place for off-road walking with a walking trails sign and distances listed to T stops (at Newton Highlands and Newton Centre), Library, Mason Rice, City Hall, Bullough's Pond, etc.





Nice Walking Trail Sign model—these signs are all over Austria

7. Fix /dredge? beautiful but usually gunky looking City Hall pond (designed by Olmsteds (I believe)). Cut vegetation to open up view of pond and City Hall behind. Make it much more of a destination to sit on benches and picnic. It is our civic center, arguably. Make is also a clear connector from the Cemetery—Library—Bullough’s Pond and now Happy Trail (on west side of Walnut directly across from Bullough’s Pond in the woods above the Carriage Way).
8. Add Wetland/Green solution to flooding behind 858 Walnut Street and homes on east side of Garland Rd. below Sudbury Aqueduct. 858 Walnut is now backed by a large parking lot, a concrete desert in the middle of the block. It is also the lowest point of the block. There might be enough space there to remove some parking and add a wetland, even pocket park to center of the block. This shot is taken behind the shopping plaza. It’s a mess, but if we could combine these interior spaces of the block there is potential to create some good drainage and a bit of useful green space there.



9. Bike Share on corner by Whole Foods
10. Consider if some of the open space, or flat roofs near 4-Corners could be a solar farm.
11. Add a handsome sign about 4-Corners History with old photos. Placing it near the 59 bus stop by WF would be good—more readership. Verify that name comes from when there

was a gas station on each corner. Old neighbors tell me we were the first intersection in the country to do this—true? Show map of complicated Cold Spring Brook and its source in CSPark. Explain this was the “wilds” of Newton Center—hard to develop because so wet and boggy. Tell Irish history of this area (including north of Cemetery) where communities were established at “Kerry’s Cross” and “Cork City.”

12. Ultimately the block of Walnut Street between Beacon and Brentwood shows haphazard (although inspiringly mixed-use) city development and its results. I have been told three buildings from there were moved to my street, Garland Rd. It is wonderfully located but strangely and inefficiently used. A mish mash. The inexpensive businesses (pizza; Taiwanese food, etc.) and optician are great assets that increase our shopping options. 858 has had a hard time keeping a tenant. It’s a small odd shaped building for that huge lot. Seigel Civic Engineers has a nice Bauhaus-type structure and it sounds like they have rented their garage out to professional bands as a practice space. Great music coming from there sometimes. I didn’t think we had room for culture in 4 Corners, but maybe I was wrong!
13. Last but definitely not least: Build more affordable housing around 4 Corners. I believe housing is being built where ApuJung Restaurant was. May it be more apartment style with good density for this prime location. The townhouses north side of Beacon are nice but how efficient a use of space? 4-Corners could sustain more density. It would give it more substance as a community, too. The new home construction around 4-Corners has been worrisome—very large houses or townhouses over 1.5 million dollars. This was a working-middle class neighborhood once—that is its history and it should be honored. People with less income should be able to live in this green walkable well connected and centrally located almost-village.

Thanks to ZAP for hosting a very important engaging community discussion about, of all things, zoning!

PARK → CEMETERY TRAIL

MY FUTURE 4 CORNERS

Sarah LURIA  
 38 PARKLAND RD  
 857-231-6678  
 sluria@holycross.edu



COLD SPRING PARK

COCHITUATE SLEDGEWAY AQUEDUCT

N.H. STOP  
 1.1 miles

BIKE SHARE

WALKING TRAILS SIGN

WF  
 PKNS

CROSSWALK

FLOOD ZONE

3.59 BUS - INCREASE SERVICE

WALNUT

CROSSWALK  
 BIKERTWOOD

COCHITUATE

WILSON CONSERVATION LAND

LOOK TO ADD SOLAR PANEL FARM SOMEWHERE IN PARK OR ROOFTOPS (WF / WALGREENS?)

*Submissions by Halina Brown*

I am not inclined to engage in a community discussion on line, but want to contribute my ideas. So please take the comments below and post them where appropriate to contribute to the wider discussion. You have my permissions to cut and paste.

About me: I live in a double decker condo on Cloverdale Road, a walking distance from the village of Newton Highlands

1. I would like all our villages, especially mine, to become real villages: with people and life. For that, we need people to live in them.
2. I would like my village to have many additional residential dwelling units. If we could add between 50 and 100 units to the village (on Lincoln street and Walnut on both sides of Lincoln) it would come to life. Right now, the village is dead, especially after dark. With the newly reconfigured NewMo people can really live without a car, or at least leave their car at home except when traveling out of town.
3. It is really killing me to see two more teardowns right in the middle of this village. They will be surely replaced by 4000+ s.f. mansions. It should not be allowed. I would like to see all the multistory current buildings to be converted to residential dwelling in the upper floors. With mostly offices in these spaces, there is no life in the village after dark. Also, the current single story buildings should increase in height to at least three stories, with residential on top.
4. If the current zoning does not allow you to stop these by right constructions, the City should put a temporary moratorium on single family construction in village centers, until we as a community figure out how to move toward a better future. That will give everybody an incentive to find a compromise solution to the current standoff between development and antidevelopment people. Otherwise, the pace of teardowns and huge replacements will accelerate. This is a race which happens only once in a century! And we are losing it.
5. The vacant spaces of the former car repair shop and store 24 have been empty for years. That is unconscionable. The owners of these properties should be required to develop them or sell. And they should be restricted for residential dwellings only.
6. I would like to see a café where I can have a scone and coffee in the morning. The last one we had, Coffee Corner, closed during the pandemic. These very fancy and expensive shops with sweet things do not fulfill the need for an inexpensive place where the staff know your name and remember how you take your coffee. And where I can meet people from the neighborhood and linger with them. Everything now is for foodies and for people with deep pockets! What about seniors like me, who love to meet friends and neighbors in the morning or afternoon over a simple coffee and a scone? Where do we go without having to drive or having to pay high prices? We all say that we want walkable villages but that requires that there are businesses to which we can walk!
7. Please find a way to discourage all these banks from opening branches in village centers. They contribute nothing to the life of a village.

8. When the Northland village is built, the people who live there should be able to come on bikes to the very center of Newton Highland village. Please start now to study how to make a connection from the Greenway to the very center of the village. This is the time to do because such projects take years to accomplish. Otherwise, the traffic on Needham street will be a nightmare.

Halina Brown, 56 Cloverdale Rd

**Notes by Randy Block on Lower Falls Village Center  
Emailed on 9.28.21**

Most people would probably consider the Hamilton field and community center (former Hamilton elementary School) as the center of our village. There is a playground, tennis courts, and many benches for relaxing. Residents walk their dog around this green, open area and socialize in a spontaneous way. Community events are also often held in this space. The Community Center offers a pre-school and after-school program. It is used for indoor community meetings.

However, there is no commercial activity. One cannot even purchase a cup of coffee from a vending machine. People do not seem to mind the absence of commercial activity. Auburndale Square and Wellesley Lower Falls are close enough to meet most commercial needs of the residents.

The nearest public transit is the terminus of the Green Line at Riverside. This is 1/2 mile to one mile distance from different locations in Lower Falls. However, even pre-pandemic, service was not frequent enough or reliable enough to attract significant ridership.

NLF consists largely of single-family homes with a few two-family homes and small apartment complexes. This seems to make for a congenial neighborhood. The strenuous opposition to the scale and density of the Riverside development was rooted in a concern that the NLF neighborhood would be adversely affected. Although the neighborhood committee negotiated a compromise agreement with the developer of Riverside, residents continue to be concerned that the density at Riverside will clash with the much lower density in Lower Falls and Auburndale.

Theme	Statement
Village Center	I always wonder where Newton highlands ends and Newton center begins. I will consider Crystal lake part of the village center but also really when we get to the preschool on beacon.
Environment	I always enjoy the newton center garden.
Environment	We have to rethink the triangle. Too much encouragement of driving here. Would like more normal shopping options but I know that's hard. Hardware store, bike shop, etc. We do frequent the toy store and bookstore here and enjoy Ellana's, Galit's, Rosenfeld's, JP licks, etc. we have a big loss with Central not being a cafe anymore. Tatte might fill that gap but I'm not sure.
Shopping, Eating +	There is a huge lack of housing in this area. I feel like these low slung shopping areas could have an extra level of apartments above them. We have lots of open storefronts but no places for people to live. Could the triangle be senior apartments or townhouses? Lots of empty church areas too!
housing	I do enjoy the beautiful old Victorians in the area too.
housing	The huge building near the fire station has open offices. Couldn't that be apartments? I do think as we open up zoning let's think about add one level of apartments above stores, or some of these old buildings (churches especially) to become apartments??
housing	Thinking mostly about when I visit with kids there aren't a ton of spaces to just be with them here. We have picnicked on the green with takeout but there aren't a lot of other options immediately in the village center. The newton center playground is wonderful but there are bathroom accessibility issues there too and it somehow feels cut off from the village center.
Accessibility	Notice that not many things are accessible to community members with limited English. Union pharmacy is a place that has multiple languages among their staff but more businesses should advertise this and make themselves more available to more of our community.
Accessibility	I would love to have more community space options in Newton center. Coffee shops where you can sit for hours with a \$2 cup of tea or an actual community center or something like the Piccadilly pop up which hosted little events... we need more of that! I guess we do have the bishop Mackenzie center but not sure how that's being used now. I used to take the green line to Newton center every Saturday to music class. Bike and walk here all the time. It's just super dangerous to bike across the main part of the village center especially with kids and it always feels like it takes too long to get where you want to go because you have to navigate the parking.

Arts & Culture

I've enjoyed the doors. Would be nice to have more things like that ongoing. We also really liked the drum circle sponsored by newton community pride this spring. More events like that on weekends or early evenings.

Arts & Culture

The part of the newton center triangle that has tables now is super cute and fun. More things like the hopscotch there, the color and tables. More planters with flowers. More vibrancy and energy and fun.



Naomi Krasner

Called Nevena P.W. with these thoughts on Village Centers

### **About Newton Corner**

- washington st : difficult to reach, there are some offices and a tiny little lunch place for some of the businesses in the area. there's Walgreens - not quite in the center. and the Honda Dealer.
- having just come from Burr Park - it's a shameful little park. there's a playing field for Bigelow Middle School - that park needs some attention. need more benches.
- Underwood Playground is lovely and large. this gets used to and is very pathetic.
- hugest elephant in the room: on washington st, there are no friendly businesses, no markets, no stores.
- circle of death
- Max & Leo's is great

### **What values do you want to see guiding village centers?**

- comfort & convenience for people of all ages & capabilities
- along Waverly, issues with the crosswalks - have been ill equipped - i don't see it but I use some of the cross walks when I go to Burr Park, take walks, but I was just with a group of neighbors and they were all complaining about the crosswalks. There's a good amount of traffic on Waverly.
- Pedestrian-centered spaces for school children & everybody who crosses the street
- Local businesses & community oriented businesses.
- Thrilled that they now have a piano in Farlow Park - that's really lovely. Redid the bridge and the pond, it's lovely.
- Walkability and biking are wonderful, but sometimes when all the lanes seem to be for biking & buses, it's hard for cars to get around
- Newton Highlands, Newton Centre - even West Newton is working on improvement
- wants to know more about Burr Playground (possibly wants to help maintain it) – wants better language than adoption (because of adopted kids)

# Newton Centre Visioning

Lynn Weissberg and Sean Roche

# Themes

1. Housing in the walkshed
2. Big opportunities near tall buildings
3. People or cars -- pick one
4. Opportunity for residential above a parking garage
5. A people alley at Beacon Place
6. No drive-throughs
7. Village centers are no places for automotive service
8. Better walkways
9. Additional notes

# 1. More housing in the walkshed

The number one thing we could do to improve Newton Centre: add more housing -- more people -- in the walkshed. More people would:

- Revitalize the commercial district
- Help curb climate change by promoting more mass transit use

We propose gentle density providing a range of housing options to a wide variety of households with different incomes. This is frequently referred to as the “missing middle.”

A good example of the kind of housing that we need is Branfield Court on Herrick Rd. We also need other kinds of housing types, like duplexes and triplexes.



## 2. Big opportunities next to tall buildings

Lots of folks propose a few floors of residential space above the existing eight commercial strips in Newton Centre. **On our walk, we were really struck by the fact that nearly all of the strips are bracketed by tall buildings.** Making retail buildings taller with two or more stories of residential will not be at all out-of-scale with their neighbors. Additionally, many of these strips are separated from the closest neighbors.

- A. Union St -- north side
- B. Beacon St. -- north side, east of Langley Rd.
- C. Beacon St. -- south side, west of Langley Rd.
- D. Langley Rd -- between Centre and Beacon St.
- E. Centre St. -- west side, north of Beacon St.
- F. Beacon St. -- north side, west of Centre St.
- G. Centre St. -- east side, south of Beacon St.
- H. Beacon St. -- south side, near Dalton Rd.

## 2.A. -- Langley Rd -- between Centre and Beacon St.

The long stretch of one-story retail along Langley Rd. is a prime candidate for two or more stories of residential. To the west is the very tall stone building with office space, which is separated from the retail by a driveway. To the east are the three- and four-story buildings on Summer St. Behind the Langley retail is a huge expanse of parking. And, behind that parking is Station 3. It's hard to overstate how isolated these properties are. We could add two, three, or even four stories of residential above retail here without negative impact on residential or commercial neighbors.



## 2.B. -- Union St -- north side

The one-story building from 63 to 45 Union St. is bracketed by a two-story building to the west (which, itself, is neighbor to a three-story building) and by a three-story building to the east. Adding two or three stories of residential above this retail would fit the context of the street.



## 2.C. -- Beacon St. -- north side, east of Langley Rd.

The single story of retail on the north side of Beacon St. east of Langley Rd. and the retail at the south end of Summer St. is bracketed by three-story homes on Chesley and a four-story apartment building on Summer St. These retail strips could add two or three stories of residential and not be at all out-of-context with their neighbors.





## 2.D. -- Beacon St. -- south side, west of Langley Rd.

The banks and retail on the south side of Beacon St. between Langley Rd. and Centre St. are significantly smaller than their neighbors. In the lower photo, the Union St. building looms above Santander Bank. Adding two or three stories of residential to these building would not be out-of-context with their neighbors.



## 2.E. -- Centre St. -- east side, south of Beacon St.

The one-story retail buildings on the east side of Centre St., north of Beacon St. are separated from three-story residential properties by a large parking lot behind them and are bracketed by a two-story commercial building to the south and three-story commercial buildings to the south. Adding a story or two of residential along this strip of Centre St. would not be out-of-context with the neighborhood.



## 2.F. -- Beacon St. -- north side, west of Centre St.

The strip of one-story retail on the northside of Beacon St. west of Centre St. is bracketed by three-story and two-story commercial buildings. Adding two or three stories of residential above the retail would not be out-of-context with the neighborhood.



## 2.G. -- Centre St. -- east side, south of Beacon St.

The one-story building that is the home of Learning Express and Pure Barre is both separated from residential -- its closest residential neighbor is the back of Bradford Court on Braeland St. -- and is neighbors to taller buildings, like the Picadilly Building and the two-story commercial building and the church across the street. This would be a great candidate for residential floors above the retail that would fit nicely in its context.



## 2.H. -- South side of Beacon St. near Dalton Rd.

The old one-story car dealership on the south side of Beacon St. is much shorter than the homes next to it and it backs up to the Green Line. This would be a great property for two or three or more stories of residential and would not be out-of-context with the neighborhood.



### 3. People or cars -- pick one

On the sections of the Newton Centre with three lanes of traffic, we should make a decision: do we want to support the Centre and its businesses, or provide convenience for through traffic. We cannot do both.

Centre St. southbound from Lyman St. to Cypress St. is two lanes, creating three lanes for pedestrians to cross, particularly those pedestrians who park on the east side of the street to patronize the retail on the west side. This is also true of Beacon St. westbound from Chesley Rd. to Centre St. This is especially dangerous, because one lane of the two way traffic may not stop and the person crossing may not see that car continuing.

This is unacceptably dangerous. Those two stretches should be narrowed to two lanes, with the extra space being devoted to outdoor dining, bike lanes, wider sidewalks or something else that would help enliven the Centre.

## 4. Opportunity for residential above parking

An unattractive parking garage servicing office space along Centre St. represents a great opportunity to add residential space, with no impact to the neighborhood.



## 5. A people alley at Beacon Pl.

Beacon Pl. represents a great opportunity to create something people-centric, like outdoor dining.

Beacon Pl. is the only access to a parking area behind stores on Beacon St. Access to the parking area is not available from the Pelham St. lot. If access to the parking were provided through the Pelham St. lot, Beacon Pl. could be made a nice public area for Starbucks customers or others.

Additionally, the turn to Beacon Pl. from Centre St. northbound is awkward and potentially dangerous. It should be closed.





## 6. No drive-throughs

There are three drive throughs in Newton Centre. There are two on Beacon St., for the Bank of America and Santander. The Bank of America drive-through starts on Braeland St. There is a Citizen's Bank drive through on Centre Green.

There is no reason for a pedestrian-centric village to have any drive throughs, much less two on one block. Drive-through driveways create unnecessary traffic over sidewalks. They waste space that could be used for retail, public space, or other amenities. The Santander driveway is particularly egregious.



## 7. Village centers are no places for automotive service

Newton Centre has a gas and automotive repair station, a body shop, and a repair shop.

We need to create incentives that encourage property owners to put these properties to more appropriate uses. The Gulf station would make a terrific site for an apartment building.



## 8. Better walkways

Newton Centre has two walkways that need to be improved. The walkway connecting Beacon St. and Union St. needs better lighting. The walkway along the Cypress St. lot connecting Cypress St. and Herrick Rd needs better signage and a ramp along Cypress St. to make it ADA compliant.



## Additional notes

- We strongly support making outdoor seating permanent. On Beacon St. and Centre St., where there are three lanes of traffic, give up one of the lanes for the outdoor seating and restore parking.
- We don't need slip lanes in a village center. They make things worse for pedestrians for the convenience of cars. We must make Newton Centre pedestrian-focused.
- The building on the east side of the Langley Rd. bridge over the T tracks has potential that isn't being met. We need to figure out how to make the building work, perhaps as residential.

**From:** Ian Swett, resident of 15 Hancock Ave  
**Newton Centre ideas**

Place a 3 or 4 story building with the bottom floor as restaurants and/or commercial. Possibly reserve outdoor seating on the side away from Beacon for outdoor dining. I'd suggest the housing be all senior housing, because there are many seniors in Newton living in houses much larger than they want because there are no good senior housing options in their neighborhood. I believe each neighborhood should have its own senior housing, ideally. This provides a walkable neighborhood nearby and a T and drugstores and they don't have to live in giant houses by themselves like my neighbor. If they moved, that could free up more houses for families.

The remainder of the parking lot should be converted to park. Adding trees around the new building reduces the heat island effect the parking lot was creating.

Consider converting some of the parking in back of Walgreens/etc into shared parking to add more public parking. Currently, that lot is mostly empty every time I've been there.

Building next to the T([85 Union St](#) aka Piccadilly square) is older and 3 plus basement stories, so ideally that could be used as architectural inspiration for the 3-4 story building? Include a photo of the building and point out it's already in Newton Centre and people seem to think it's charming. It's top story is sort of mansard, which reduces the visual height and would be a great way to minimize the visual height of the 4th story of the new building.

### **Beacon & Centre Intersection**

Restructure the intersection of Beacon and Centre. Currently it's confusing and the road is too wide, increasing the cycle time by increasing the necessary time for the walk signal and yellow lights. The first time I drove through the intersection, I was unsure where to drive because there was so much pavement and no lines or dividers to direct drivers.

Remove a few parking spots(ie: in front of Sandwich Works) as needed to improve traffic flow by adding dedicated right turn lanes from Beacon onto Centre. Ideally create a small island which separates cars taking a right turn from the other two lanes, similar to Beacon & Walnut. Improve bike lanes wherever possible, since currently it's quite scary to bike through that intersection in any direction.

### **Beacon and Sumner Intersection**

Another intersection that's vastly too large and takes a long time to walk across. I'd suggest converting it into a 4-way from a 5-way by merging Sumner and Langley earlier. Also, narrow this intersection at the same time.

### **Bike Lanes**

Add a bike lane to Sumner and Willow, removing parking on one side of the street if necessary. This is a much safer path through Newton Centre the the Beacon & Centre intersection, so we should direct bike traffic there. Similarly, Langley Rd should have a bike lane. It may have the space already, but if not, parking should be removed, because it's a safer way through Newton Centre.

Newton Corner Vision Kit, Saturday, 9/11/21

Councilors: Maria Greenberg, Alison Leary, John Oliver

Residents: Laura Johnson; Robin Boger; Rosalind Williams; Marcus and Deb Breen



1. Restore the 1896 Chaffin House for use as the Museum of Transportation and Society, dedicated to educating the public about the impact of transportation on economic and social development which was a critical aspect of the growth of the village of Newton Corner.
2. Link to museum proposal: [NCNA\\_\\_Museum of Transportation and Society DRAFT](#)

“In the name of progress, the Mass Pike cuts through Newton Corner and destroys most of its community and commercial life. We are still working to nurture Newton Corner’s community and commercial lives, but the damage is lasting and the work is tough. We need a museum that will admit this outcome, not duck it.” Rosalind Williams
3. Restore historic gazebo.
4. Another resident suggested restoring the Chaffin House as a library



3. Update and beautify Underwood playground, greenspace, and playing fields.



4. Redesign awkward landscaping areas of Farlow Park.



5. Repair unsafe sidewalks around park.



6. Repave surrounding streets.





7. Move the Newton Corner Firehouse Bell to Farlow or Chaffin Park for easy access to the public.



8. Upscale café with outdoor seating to revitalize the village; also the addition of a small grocer. Retail on first level with transit-oriented housing above.



9. Retail (including a grocery store) on ground level of Gateway Center with transit-oriented housing above.



10. Rotary: unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists. Very car-centric area. Possible pedestrian/bike bridge to connect both sides of Newton Corner with connection to Charles River. Greenspace/park/plaza over Mass. Pike. Our family would vote for protected/raised bike lanes on Washington, Tremont, and Centre Streets and another restaurant on Centre Street near Farlow Park.

#10. A model we might keep in mind is the network of “flying bridges” at the south (Boston) end of the Longfellow Bridge. Taken together, these air-borne walkways and bridges and stairs allow pedestrians and cyclists to navigate the busy roads and conventional bridges of Storrow Drive without mixing it up with car traffic. I would like to see such a network of bridges float over Newton Corner. Combined with far more attention to pedestrian safety at the current ground level (see #13), it could “tame the Pike” and reconnect Newton Corner with the Charles River.

A bike-path/jogging trail down to the Charles River would greatly expand the range of recreational (and possibly retail) opportunities available to the village.

11. The addition of both guardrails and handrails on bridges over the Mass. Pike in the rotary would separate and shield pedestrians from adjacent motor vehicles, as well as offer stability during winter months when sidewalks are covered by ice and snow.





12. Former Immanuel Baptist Church (designed by H. H. Richardson, 1886) to be included in walking tour of historic Newton Corner.

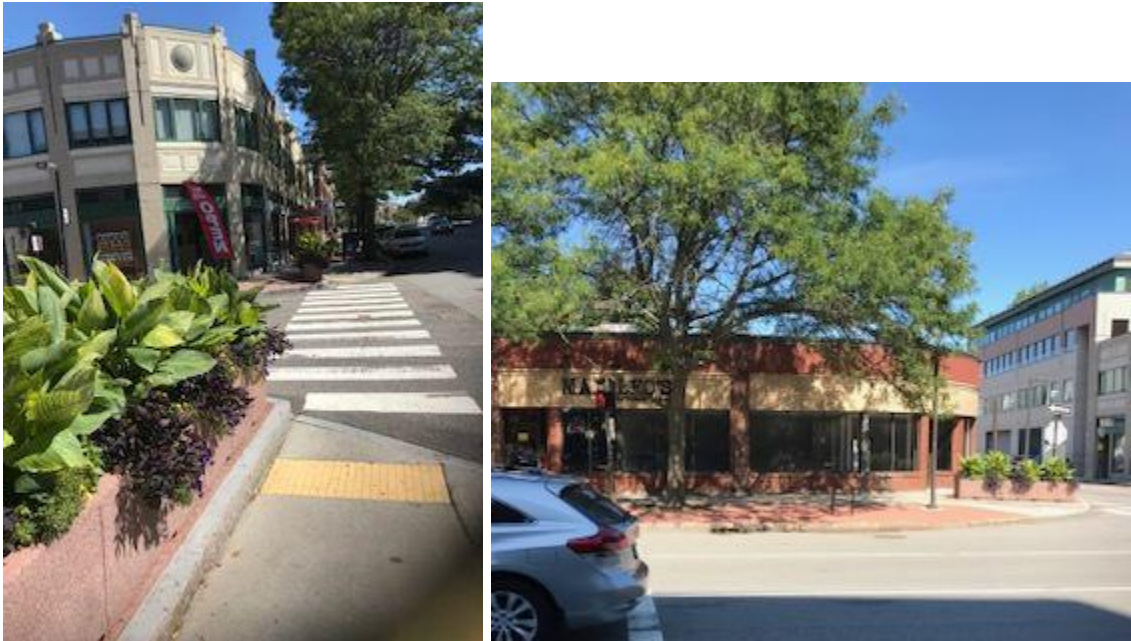


13. Richardson Street parking lot needs redesign and landscaping, as well as repair of gas leaks.





14. Unsafe, inaccessible sidewalks along the inner circle of the rotary.



15. More outdoor plantings and outdoor dining.



16. Four-story, European-style Warren Apartments at Washington and Channing adds character to the village center.



17. Prominent “Entering Newton/Mayor Ruthanne Fuller Welcomes You” sign on green space opposite One Newton Place.



18. Fill vacant storefronts and interior spaces with residential amenities. Also, too many medical and non-public serving businesses in the area.



*Additional comment added by Robin, after Vision Kit was submitted: When I was in Nonantum the other day I saw poetry inscribed on a block of pavement at a street corner and thought that would be a lovely thing to do at the entrances to Farlow Park. Just wanted to share this idea with you and ask to include it in the Vision Kit.*

Newton Corner Vision Kit 9/19/21  
Resident Agi Sardi, Sue and Bill Dickinson,  
Councilor Greenberg



Store fronts closer to the sidewalk  
with parking in the rear. Residential on top.



Glass pedestrian bridges over  
Washington st at the Hotel then over to Center st.



Unattractive Pearl st parking lot

converted into a park. There's plenty of parking in Newton Corner. More neighborhood amenities like cafe, grocer, movie theater, bowling alley. Garden roof deck on top of buildings.

**Entice community/ recreational activities such as bowling, cinema , restaurants, entertainment in One Newton Place or in the immediate area.**

**Create a lot more green space and community based businesses such as flower shops/ restaurants/ on this side of Newton corner.**



Single line of traffic from Galen st to West exit onto Pike made into 2 lanes so traffic does not back up past Pearl st.

Mass Pike: / complete Division of Newton Corner

Correct: "single line of traffic from Galen st to West **exit** onto Pike made into 2 lanes so traffic does not back up past Pearl st." to

"single line of traffic from Galen st to West **entrance** onto Pike made into 2 lanes , exactly the way it is on the curve around the circle of death/ washington st, so traffic does not back up past Pearl st. **Widen small island to enable cars to line up by 2 widths for a longer period.**

**The "footbridge" from one side of Newton Corner to the other should extend to Farlow Park and be bicycle friendly to enable kids to ride bicycles to Bigelow or the park. (like the footbridge at the hatch shell )**

**BUT what would be preferable is to create a cover over the highway and create a PARK Above the entire area!!!**



More trees planted along berms.

IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION in NC

**Provide robust transportation = the T should run *right on the tracks* from 128 through Newton Corner to Boston and back!!! The express busses currently do not operate on weekends when most post-Pandemic traffic would happen to Boston now that we no longer commute to offices.**

**Turn the rail into what is in Brookline - the green line - and run it continuously up to a parking lot on 128/90 intersection where commuters could park**

**There should be an electronic board to show where busses are at all times or the app that is the most reliable listed on the signs. You NEVER know where any of the busses are and when they will appear - freezing your butt out there and vowing NEVER to use public transportation again.**

Sue and Bill Dickinson's suggestions.

We are very excited about the possibility of a community garden at the corner of Washington Street and Walnut Park. I think that would be a great addition to the neighborhood.

I do hope we are able to have a dog park when the Lincoln-Eliot School is moved to the Convent area. It doesn't have to be there but somewhere in the neighborhood.x

I would also like to see the "wild edge" by Brad and Larry remain. Quite a bit of wildlife live there.

I think that the concept of a village in Newton Corner is already a lost cause.

It is so unattractive with little to draw people in. Although there could be more restaurants, small shops and cafes. Agi's suggestions would be nice but not very likely.

Many of the streets and sidewalks in our part of Newton Corner need major repairs. I know we are on a schedule but ... I'd like to see it in my lifetime.

As far as the JFK Elderly Housing complex, the older buildings need updates, more plantings and a closer connection to the community. This may be in the works. It looks sad now.

We are interested in keeping Nonantum as a village. It has local shops, restaurants, bakeries and neighborhood space. I would favor more housing (three stories). I'm not sure I want to have more pole dancing studios but who knows. I understand it has very high rent.

**Also**, add traffic platforms in Waban Park - too many speeding cars and too many children in the neighborhood.

## **Newton Corner**

Vision Kit / Tour  
September 11, 2021

This kit is being submitted by a small group (say 8) of neighbors to Newton Center (NC), based on a walk through on 9/11/21. [Submitted by Councilor John Oliver.]

All of the photos are here : <https://photos.app.goo.gl/9aXaebFM292eFqhEA>

### The Heart of Newton Corner

We started south of the pike at Farlow Park, by Chaffin House (the former children's library in Newton Corner). There are a couple neighbors with some very creative ideas for this building's use including a train museum, and that could be the topic of an entirely separate discussion. It is, however, important to note how important something like that COULD BE as a draw card for the area!

The park is amazing. With a pond and working fountain and a pedestrian foot bridge this is a very relaxing park and was being used heavily on this day; parents and kids playing on the playground at Underwood school, dog walkers, and people simply enjoying the outdoors.

The idea of bringing the firefighter's bell from its current location next to the pike (alongside the WB on ramp!) into the park will increase its's visibility tremendously, add more context to the park for residents and visitors alike.

The park is bound by 4 churches, 1 elementary school and a former children's library. A middle school is just a couple blocks away, as is the West Suburban YMCA. Many other structures in the immediate area are very handsome (see photos!) and set a tone for the scale and diversity in architectural styles.

### North and South

NC is begging to be brought back to life; to be re-connected north and south. Realistic solutions probably have to avoid the traffic circle (commonly referred to as the 'circle of death' although nobody has ever died in a traffic accident here). There are some great structures around the circle, along Washington, Centre Street and along Galen toward Watertown ... but they do not have first floor retail or restaurants (with very few exceptions) so this area will NOT ATTRACT ANYONE. Even office workers will need to leave the area (many by car) for lunch or after work - there are very few reasons to stay in the area (Buff's pub, Max&Leo's pizza and Social are notable exceptions)

### Top of Centre St

There are retail locations that could likely change over to more restaurant / cafe / bar options with more people looking to come into this area ... and I suspect that making this more accessible can help these businesses, as well as begin to make NC more of a destination.



### Missing

From a top-line perspective what is missing is a reason to visit NC, and therefore a reason to add housing to the area.

Its also missing many of the amenities that you would expect to see supporting a residential area - including a grocery store. Interestingly, there are dry cleaners, coffee stores a drug store all within walking distance - but criss-crossing the pike is required to find them all.

It would appear that we have the structures, but they need to include retail, restaurants and cafes to attract people to the area, and provide entertainment for anyone living within the area, others to visit!

It will not be easy, it will be expensive and will require collaboration with the state. BUT:

How can we accommodate pedestrian traffic across the pike safely? If not over the pike, then how to create a path elsewhere?

Can we bring bicyclists to NC safely? Through NC?? (And yes, I see these as two separate questions worthy of evaluation separately) For example, would Church St be a more likely crossing point (over the pike) as opposed to the circle?

### Approach

Can Newton begin either north or south of the pike, then drive to the other side of the pike .... Leverage a state collaboration to then bridge the pike (literally)?

**Email sent by Laura McCarthy Johnson**

Dear Councilors,

Thank you so much for meeting with us this morning and for leading us on the Village Vision Kit walking tour of the commercial/business district.

Attached are photos of an example of the sort of exhibit I have in mind to stand beside the Newton Corner Bell if we were successful in having it relocated in Farlow Park.

The exhibit could feature black and white archival photos of the original Fire Station 1, a list of Newton firefighters who have died in the line of duty, the history of the bell and its journey from the “Circle of Death” to Farlow Park, etcetera.

Benches could be placed near the bell for people to sit in contemplation, and positioned in such a way to allow enough room in the surrounding green space to host annual ceremonies in observation of National Firefighters Day as well as September 11.

An additional sign could be posted nearby, with an arrow pointing the way to Robin’s transportation museum in the Chaffin House. Both the bell and the museum could be be numbered points of attraction on a walking tour map of Historic Newton Corner.

I look forward to more brainstorming, thoughtful discussions, and working with you!

All the best,  
Laura



Email from Seth Parker regarding Newton Corner

**Sir / Madam,**

**Strengthening Newton's village centers is an admirable goal. Newton Corner, however, suffers from having a busy traffic circle in the middle of it, so what we really have are small groups of stores centered on (i) the north side (Hopsters, Amarin, etc.), (ii) the west side (Buff's Pub, Walgreens), and (iii) the south side (Marathon Phys Therapy, Benchmark Senior Living).**

- **Most customers arrive by car, not foot, and do not linger in the area or browse other stores.**
- **I see no way to connect these three groups as a shared destination.**
- **Walking along the major thoroughfares (Washington and Center Streets) is unattractive due to the heavy traffic flow.**

**I would be interested in any realistic approach to improve Newton Corner.**

**Seth Parker**

**P.S. On a related note, the traffic flow around Newton Corner could and should be improved, but it will take a large coordinated Newton / MA effort and will require creative thinking and possibly additional land taken by eminent domain.**

Newton Highlands  
Neighborhood Area Council  
MEETING AGENDA – AUGUST 21, 2021

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**Attendance**

Area Council Members present: Bob Burke, Groot Gregory, Nathaniel Lichtin Barbara Darnell;  
Not present: Srdjan Nedeljkovic, Larry Rosenberg, Amy Wayne

Ex Officio Members Present: Brenda Noel

Guests: Sean Roche, Amy Sangiolo, Lyndsey (last name not known)

**Vision Kit for Four Corners Area**

**Boundaries**

Attendees defined the Four Corners area as being consists of Beacon Street from Cold Spring Park to Whole Foods and Walnut Street from the Newton Cemetery to the Aqueduct.

**Buildings**

The area consists primarily of one story retail buildings with a few office buildings and houses/townhouses. The attendees discussed the types of uses and size of buildings that they would like to see in the area. Attendees wanted retail on the first story and were willing to have one or possibly two stories of housing above. The third story should be setback further than the rest of the building. Attendees wanted buildings setback from the sidewalk with plantings and trees in the setback like the Waban Dental Group (1180 Beacon Street). Some attendees though that parking in the front setback might be okay if the parking was shielded from the sidewalk by trees like at Walgreens (1101 Beacon Street) while others disagreed. The office building at 1087 Beacon Street was mentioned as something that the attendees did not want to be replicated.

**Transportation**

Attendees suggested adding bus shelters and benches would make public transportation more desirable. It was suggested that the slip lanes at the Walnut Street/Beacon Street intersection could be closed and the extra area turned into greenspace with shade trees and benches. Protected bike lanes and slower traffic speeds were also desired by attendees.

**Welcoming Environment**

Attendees felt that Four Corners is not a welcoming environment. It is noisy and lacks amenities for people using the area. It is not a nice area to walk. The sidewalk in front of the strip mall was mentioned as especially unwelcoming and in need of improvement. There is no community space in the area. Adding commercial space such as a coffee shop that encourages the public to gather was suggested as an idea for adding community space. The Dunkin Donuts in the strip mall is not inviting as a gathering space. The area could also be made more welcoming by adding shade trees and benches. It was also suggested that Cold Spring Park

could have a public bathroom. Attendees also suggested reducing the number of curb cuts to make walking more attractive. Adding art including murals on buildings was another idea suggested to improve the area.

### **Environment and Green Space**

Attendees felt that the area needs more shade trees. Attendees suggested requiring solar panels on buildings especially those with flat roofs, commercial parking lots, and the Cold Spring Park parking lot. Parking lots with longer term parking should include electric charging stations. However, concerns about the aesthetics of parking lot solar panels were raised.

### **Commercial Space**

Attendees wanted retail space on the first floor of buildings. It was suggested that gas stations should be prohibited in the area and other village centers. There was a desire for a casual kid friendly restaurant with reasonably priced sit-down meals in the area,

DRAFT

Newton Highlands  
Neighborhood Area Council  
MEETING AGENDA – AUGUST 28, 2021

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**Attendance**

Area Councilors: Bob Burke, Barbara Darnell, Groot Gregory, Nathaniel Lichtin, Larry Rosenberg

Ex-officio City Councilors: Brenda Noel,

When: Saturday, August 28, 2021, 1:00 pm

Where: Rodney Barker Square (brick plaza next to the Hartford Street parking lot) (this meeting will be conducted entirely outdoors)

**Meeting Agenda**

I. Conduct Zoning Redesign Vision Kit for Newton Highlands Village Center

The meeting was attended by approximately 20 residents and users of the village center and one business owner. Urupong “Kope” Kharuhat, co-owner of Lakon Paris Patisserie stated that he feels that the Highlands is a very supportive environment and much of his business comes from local customers who walk to his store. The Patisserie is busy and at peak times has a line of customers. His biggest concerns were the lack of parking for employees and the challenges he had getting his store sign approved by the city. He was not aware of the village parking program. He felt that the village could benefit from more parking for both employees and customers. Attendees suggested that the city could do a better job informing businesses about the Newton Highlands parking program.

**Boundaries**

Attendees agreed that the Highlands village center consists of Walnut Street from Forest Street to Center Street and Lincoln Street from Walnut Street to the Hyde Community Center. There was also agreement that the adjacent side streets are important to the village center. Some attendees mentioned that the village center was not well connected with adjacent areas including the CVS shopping plaza across Route 9 and the Needham Street corridor and that it would be nice to have better connections to those areas including the Upper Falls Greenway.

**Commercial Stores**

Attendees felt that the village center would be improved if it had a book store and more service oriented businesses. People supported keeping the first floor of buildings in the village center as retail/service business space.

**Building Size and Housing**

There was some disagreement on the appropriate size of buildings with most people agreeing that two story buildings were okay and there was some support for a third story especially if it was setback from the rest of the building face. There was discussion about what people meant by a story and attendees envisioned a story as the traditional story height rather

than the taller heights that exist in some new buildings. Many attendees were concerned that the village center not have a canyon like feel especially on Lincoln Street where buildings are not set back from the sidewalk. The ability to see the sky and having a feeling of openness was highly valued. Most but not all attendees were willing to see higher housing density in the village center and the adjacent side streets but did not want apartment block style structures. Instead, there was interest in having multiple housing units in buildings that have existing “single family” styles such as the Victorian houses on Lincoln Street. Some attendees were supportive of possibly having apartment building style buildings close to the Center and Walnut Street intersection part of the village center and its adjacent streets. At least one attendee opposed adding housing density to the village center.

### **Green Space and the Environment**

It was very important that the village center include green and open space. People really like the open spaces provided by Rodney Barker Square, Hyde Center Playground, and Officer English Garden. People love the benches that exist in the village center including at Rodney Barker Square, Officer English Garden, and the north side of Lincoln Street in front of the Stevens Building (the first building as you turn onto Lincoln Street from Walnut Street). People suggested adding additional benches on the north side of Lincoln Street from Anna’s Taqueria down towards the post office. It was also suggested that benches should also be positioned so that people can have conversations between the benches. The flower boxes/pots in the village center were appreciated by attendees for making the village center seem more open and inviting. Keeping existing green space and potentially adding additional green space was highly prioritized.

People commented that they would like wider sidewalks and more shade on the north side of Lincoln Street and in the Officer English Garden. People suggested that there should be solar panels on roofs and either solar panels or trees in parking lots. People also suggested that there should be water and electrical infrastructure added to improve the existing spaces.

### **Traffic and Transportation**

There was much discussion about traffic issues on Lincoln Street include people traveling through the village center at high-speed creating noise and safety issues and people illegally making U-turns at the Lincoln Street/Hartford Street intersection. It was suggested that it might make sense to narrow the street to slow cars down although some people opposed this suggestion. Pedestrian safety at crosswalks was discussed with the crosswalks near the Hyde Community Center and Adams Jewelry store specifically identified as areas of concern. Bicycle safety concerns attendees expressed concerns about biking down both Lincoln Street (because of car doors) and Center Street (because of traffic and the Route 9 intersection). The ability to add protected bike lanes was discussed, but the consensus was that there are higher priorities for any space created by narrowing the street. It was suggested that Hartford Street could be made one way to prevent cars from cutting down it to get onto Route 9. People also mentioned the need for increased bike rack space around the village center and improving bike connectivity to other

parts of the city. Attendees suggested the need to find a better place for private shuttle buses than on Walnut Street by the Officer English Garden and adding bus shelters for buses.

### **Accessibility**

The brick plaza at Rodney Barker Square was identified as a significant accessibility issue because the bricks are uneven and present a tripping hazard. People suggested removing the bricks and replacing it with either patterned concrete that looks like brick or adding berms with more shade trees. Some attendees did not like the idea of using patterned concrete. More generally, the narrowness and poor state of sidewalks were mentioned as accessibility concerns. People also suggested shortening crosswalks especially at the Lincoln/Hartford intersection.

### **Welcoming Spaces**

Overall people felt that the village center was a welcoming space. The seating area in front of the Stevens Building, Rodney Barker Square, Hyde Center Playground and the bandstand, and the area in front of Brookline Bank were all mentioned as welcoming outdoor places in the village center that people wanted to maintain. The religious and community institutions/spaces including the churches, Women's Club, and Hyde Center were identified as important to the vibrancy of the village center and attendees wanted to maintain those organizations. Attendees expressed a desire for an improved entrance to the T-stop.



Name/Group: Patricia and Leonard Rosenthal Village Center: Newton Highlands

**What's a Village Center?** What are the defining features of a village center? Where does it begin and end? Why did you pick this one?

**Observations/ ideas for the future:**

Newton Highlands is the village center closest to our house and the one we are most familiar with. We come to the Highlands center to go the Post Office, to dine out, to get our eyeglasses and occasionally to try the new shops. On occasions, we take the T from the Highlands station. In that sense, the village center is clustered around shops and other services.

Our idea for the future is to leave the Village center alone. Even with Covid-19 it has 3 different ethnic restaurants, a vegan restaurant, and an "American" one in O'Hara's Bar & Grill. Other types of eateries come and go. For example, Bakers Best thrived in the Highlands Village Center and we patronized them on both sides of Lincoln Street. However, they decided that it made the most sense economically to only do catering and to move their location. Another restaurant took their place that appears to be successful. This is market forces at work.

It has 2 jewelry stores. 2 wine stores, 3 buildings that are well occupied with degreed, licensed health care professionals. There is a community center that has free movies and plays along with a field for children to play sports, including baseball.

We don't need a hardware store in Newton Highlands, despite the convenience. We go Swartz's Hardware in Nonantum if we need something special like window glass cut, etc. Newton cannot support 11 such stores.

**Sketch/ map/ drawing:**

[insert text here]

Name/Group: Patricia and Leonard Rosenthal Village Center: Newton Highlands

**Environment:** Find elements in your village center that support a greener future. What does the 'green future' of your village center look like? Are there more places for things like walking and biking, trees and plants, rainwater collection, or solar panels?

**Observations/ ideas for the future:**

We think that there are plenty of trees and plants in the Highlands village center. Walking is fine except for the bricks at corners of Lincoln and Walnut since they stick up and are "hard to read." This especially true for handicapped people, those with crutches, etc., and other walking problems (e.g., from impaired vision).

We are not sure where or why solar panels come into this. The parking lot should not be taken over for solar panel as it serves the parking needs of the stores and restaurants in the village center. Some people park in the lot who take the T. Roofs of municipal buildings are better places for solar panels, provided the roofs can support the panels. Trees should not be cut down to make room for solar panels since trees are a great carbon sink. The trees absorb lots of the water from rainstorms helping to alleviate flooding.

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**Sketch/ map/ drawing:**

[insert text here]

Name/Group: Patricia and Leonard Rosenthal Village Center: Newton Highlands

**Shopping, Eating + Working:** Go to the stores and restaurants you often visit, or ones you are looking forward to revisiting when safe to do so. What do you prefer to buy in person versus online? What businesses would you like to see open? Would you like to be able to work in a village center?

**Observations/ ideas for the future:**

Obviously, eating vs. purchasing items, which can be done in person or online, in the case of the latter, has to be differentiated. In other words, the second sentence in the context of going to restaurant vs. online is ridiculous.

With respect to purchasing items in the Village center, like most Americans we buy many things online as well as in person. The in person purchases are made all over the metro Boston area. It is not based on a particular village center or town. It is based on what we want, price, quality and availability – the same criteria that many people use. We happen to buy our eyeglasses from a store in the Village center because of a recommendation we received from our ophthalmologist who works in Boston and Waltham.

I (Leonard) am recently retired. I worked in Waltham as a university professor for 37 years. Before that I worked as a university professor in Boston for 5 years. The essence of being a university professor, for me, is to interact face to face with students, and in person with my colleagues. It never occurred to me to restrict my working life to a village center in an office without those in person interactions. The answer to whether I would like to work in a village center is profoundly no.

**Sketch/ map/ drawing:**

[insert text here]

Name/Group: Patricia and Leonard Rosenthal Village Center: Newton Highlands

**Housing:** Go to one of your village center public transit stops and observe what kind of housing you see. Find a multi-family building (3 or more units). If you don't see any, find one in/around your village center. Guess what year the building was constructed. What types of housing do you envision in your village center in the future?

**Observations/ ideas for the future:**

We are not sure why there is an emphasis on when building were built. The age of building stock is far less important than how up to date the interior is, as how well the buildings are maintained, and what kind of rent is charged to the occupants. For example, New England Realty owns and rents 9 apartments from 4 to 34 Lincoln Street. Rents appear to be modest for this area and have increased little in recent years. The stores below serve a useful function to Highland residents as well.

It appears there is a desire on the part of some for more 3 story buildings. Currently, an additional multi-story apartment building is in the works for just around the corner of Lincoln, on Walnut Street. It is worth noting that 3 apartments at 4 to 34 Lincoln Street were vacant earlier this year.

If the market can support more apartments in this area, subject to zoning and area residents' concerns, etc., it would happen. Among the resident concerns is that a new building not block out the light to existing structures or at least do so in a way that substantially mitigates any loss of sunlight.

**Sketch/ map/ drawing:**

[insert text here]

Name/Group: Patricia & Leonard Rosenthal Village Center: Newton Highlands

**Inclusive, Diverse + Welcoming Spaces:** Find a part of a village center that feels most welcoming and safe for you and your identities. What makes it feel inclusive? Examples include community centers, non-profits, places of worship, a place where your language is spoken, where you see and interact with people who share your identity, places that are age-friendly. How could your future village center welcome people of all ages, genders, races, socioeconomic statuses, sexualities, and more backgrounds?

Observations/ ideas for the future:

There are two churches and a community center in the Newton Highlands village center. The community center provides movies and concerts free to the public. The community center has a park for children to play in next door and indoor gym to play basketball.

There have been Village Day parties going back years and years. In this day and age of social media, if there were any deliberate act of discrimination or boorish behavior on Village Days as well as at other times, they would have been reported on. The city's role is to deal with discriminatory behavior.

[insert text here]

Sketch/ map/ drawing:

[insert text here]

Name/Group: Patricia and Leonard Rosenthal Village Center: Newton Highlands

**Arts + Culture:** Find a place in a village center that creatively engages you. Examples include art (statue, mural, painting) or an area that is used for a pop-up, temporary event or creative activities (outdoor market, concert, parade). How are village centers currently encouraging creative practices? What would a more 'creative' village center look and feel like?

**Observations/ ideas for the future:**

People are free to sit at outdoor benches or tables outside of restaurants to engage in creative activities should they wish to. This occurs all year round.

As noted in the Inclusive, etc., section, Newton Highlands village center has a community center that offers free movies and concerts. There is a Village Day every year that is well attended.

[insert text here]

**Sketch/ map/ drawing:**

[insert text here]

Name/Group: Patricia and Leonard Rosenthal Village Center: Newton Highlands

**Accessibility:** Find a place in your village center that feels most accessible for you, and a place that feels least accessible. This can be considered physically (abilities to physically move, see, hear, speak and more) as well as emotionally & in terms of senses (noise, smell, how calm a place feels, or access to public furniture). What would a fully accessible village center look and feel like?

**Observations/ ideas for the future:**

We feel the village center is safe and accessible.

To be fully accessible, a number of sidewalks would have to be covered with ramps. Clearly, this is not feasible.

[insert text here]

**Sketch/ map/ drawing:**

Name/Group: Patricia and Leonard Rosenthal Village Center: Newton Highlands

**Transportation:** How do you get to your village center (walk, bike, public transit, car)? Is there infrastructure that makes this safe and easy, like sidewalks/crosswalks, bike lanes/racks, sheltered transit stops, parking (lots/garage/on-street)? How do you move through your village center? Are there any alleyways or cut-throughs that break up the different spaces? How will you get to and from your village center in the future? What will be the most visible transportation features in your village center? Parking for cars? Bike lanes? A public transit station?

**Observations/ ideas for the future:**

We use our car. In general, we combine our trips to access a service and then go elsewhere to buy items such as groceries that we can't carry home on foot. Alternatively, we might go to a surrounding town for something (goods or services) and stop in the village center for something else on the way back. While in the village center, after we park, we walk.

If we were to walk to the village center, we would need sidewalks to be installed in places where they are missing, in order to get there safely. More than a few homeowners do not have sidewalks on their property. Indeed, they consider their lawn all the way down to the street to be their own property. It poses a problem for everyone since we have to walk in the street (this includes children on their way to school). In the winter, they don't have to shovel what would be their sidewalk. This poses a danger to everyone on foot.

[insert text here]

**Sketch/ map/ drawing:**

[insert text here]



Name/Group: Patricia and Leonard Rosenthal Village Center: Newton Highland

**Anything Else?** Take a photo of, draw or imagine anything else that feels important to you about the village center(s). Is there anything else that would make your 'future' village center come to life? Is it something new or something old?

**Observations/ ideas for the future:**

We are going to use this section to make some general comments about the village centers. Each of them is different and has evolved for their own reasons. They, the village centers, are all part of one city. If one or more village centers are offering artistic performances, art or other things of interest, citizens can drive to these village centers. It is not as if each village center has to be self-contained like it was in the 1800s. It is also the case that Newton village centers draw from other communities both in Newton and outside and vice versa. The latter is important to keep in mind as one of the big draws of Newton is its proximity to Boston and surrounding towns and its cultural attractions and medical care in the case of Boston.

We live in a market economy, not a command economy. Our city can't command a supermarket, or an ice cream parlor, an architect, or anything else to be located in every village center.

**Sketch/ map/ drawing:**

[insert text here]

Newton Village Centers Community Engagement Vision Kit

Newtonville and additional notes about all village centers in Newton

Submitted by Rev. Devlin Scott & Dr. Nancy Zollers

Standing at Bram Way we were reminded of how Newtonville has significantly improved as a gathering, housing, shopping and culture center. In many ways Newtonville has recently become a vibrant Village Center. Trio and Austin St. Projects created housing – a large percent affordable - that Newton needed and continues to desperately need. (Zoning redesign in our view will need to pay particular attention to the well documented lack of housing availability at all price ranges and of all sizes in Newton.)

Also, in Newtonville the New Art Center has a new location; and there is a new plaza at Bram Way (that previously was an ugly parking lot) that has become a frequent place to meet up with others. **We love the courtyard between Starbucks and Caffe Nero and would love to see more spaces like this where it seem safer and less busy to gather and hang.**

In addition, can we mention how congested it can get when people are out enjoying the village center, but cars are also sharing those vibrant spaces. Walnut can get pretty busy and sometimes unsafe for pedestrians.

On the negatives, the stairway to the train is very difficult to navigate and the highway cuts Newtonville in two.

We envisioned how Newtonville and other village centers can stay vibrant and even improve as places that are good for Newton and Newton residents. Newtonville and all Village Centers can only become vibrant and stay vibrant going forward with broad revisions to the current exclusionary zoning that was adopted 100 years ago. No policy from 1922 could be expected to reflect what Newton is today and what we need today. Zoning reflects values and fortunately our values have significantly changed. Old zoning laws were an obvious example of systemic racial and economic bias and many current residents have urged public officials to first publicly identify Newton's single-family-only zoning as systemic racial bias and then pledge to eliminate it. Eliminating it boils down to legalizing multi-family housing in the Newton; notably, 70% of Newton currently zoned single-family-only!

Single-family only zoning makes it illegal to build the variety of housing stock — duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, small apartment buildings — that would provide the choices that everyone believes are necessary. Our lack of available accessible homes is easily fixed. And it is our obligation as Newton residents who are aware of our lack of diversity in housing, in economic status and in racial diversity to encourage policies that better reflect a community that will change the zoning rules so that people can live here if they can't buy a nearly million dollar home.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Community Engagement.

Rev. Devlin Scott  
Dr. Nancy Zollers

Newtonville Vision Kit let by Tarik Lucas, Emily Norton, and Susan Albright (Ward 2 Councilors) 9/12/21

15 people met from 10am to noon in the Austin St Plaza and went through the questions together. We did not seek consensus even though it emerged on certain issues. The purpose of this document is to reflect everyone's views.

Some attendees: Besides the Ward Councilors- Susan Riesler, Peter Bruce, Faith Justice, David Bornstein, Kevin McKormak, Aline Sammut, Eric (young high schooler), Brooke Lipsitt,, Meg, Jan Saglio. Amy Sangiolo came at the very end. Few other people whose names we didn't catch

## 1. What's a Village Center

In terms of defining a village center, some people said it's "walkable", "a magnet", someplace with "destinations", commercial areas and public buildings, has things to draw people from outside Newtonville. The conversation began suggesting the village boundaries North/South are the senior center to the south and the bridge over the turnpike to the north. The consensus was that the boundaries should be further apart. The boundaries suggested were as follows - again with no consensus except that the boundaries should include more than the first statement above.

1. To the west it should go to Lowell ave OR it should also include the Boys and Girls club on Watertown st.
2. To the east it could include the New Art Center, could include Cabots, Garden Remedies, not Whole Foods, up to Crafts St (those 2 latter were contradictory)
3. To the South we heard the Senior Center or the High School as the furthest Southern Boundary
4. To the North we heard the bridge, or Walnut St, or the Asian Church on Walnut st as a boundary

We talked about how to handle all the residences that are within these boundaries and people talked a bit about the transition from commercial to residential and how to handle all the zoning for these residences.

## 2. Environment

Issues that arose included the following:

- Trash - there should be more trash and recycling barrels in the village clearly marked, and they should be emptied more often.
- The recycling barrel openings should be wide enough to accept pizza boxes - (kids leave them around)
- Kids and trash was a much-discussed topic - how to get kids to not leave litter - how to reach out to the high school and get kids to clean up?
- We need green borders on the turnpike edges
- Should repurpose old buildings
- Like the Blue Bikes

- Passage over the bridge should be more attractive - decorate the bridge and make it more inviting to unite the two halves of the village
- Need many more EV charging stations
- Should require solar for all new developments
- More trees
- Who will clean the bricks in the Austin st plaza to keep it beautiful?
- Newmo should increase their destinations
- More stormwater management, climate resilience, including educational placards

### 3. Shopping, Eating and Working

- Popular mentioned stores were Henry Bear's Park and Natural Sense
- There are too many banks
- People like the mix of stores in Newtonville - but mentioned that we should have an Indian restaurant and a bagel store
- Need more inexpensive options for shopping
- Concern that the rents are so high it is hard to get local business - could we have "Inclusionary zoning" to help out locally owned stores?
- We can have more height for housing over the shops
- Transit must be improved, more frequent trains
- We need "P" signs to make it clearer where there is public parking in Newtonville

### 4. Housing

- Encourage more congregate/cooperative housing
- Multi-story mixed-use housing is good
- Pay attention to good architecture and aesthetics
- Some want to partner with non-profits on public spaces such as Austin St parking lot - in other parking lots, and also encourage smaller sized units so even the market rate ones are cheaper
- More public/private partnership to use public spaces such as Austin st to get more affordable housing. More variations on the streetscape - why does a building have to be "flat" can't a building be closer to the street in some places and further away in other places?
- Should respect Vision Plan
- Unaffordability of Newton was raised regarding racial justice - need more options
- More accessory apartments make the easier to create
- Finish the zoning for the Washington ST vision plan - what will happen re: the CVS project in Newtownville?
- Get more smaller units
- Need more housing in the middle
- Need more housing below 50%
- One person brought an analysis of the rents in Newtonville showing that the affordable rents in Trio is higher than the "naturally affordable" rents in Newtonville. In addition the market rate rentals are higher than the "naturally affordable rents in Newtonville. Someone else explained that Newton's inclusionary zoning ordinance raises the cost of the market rate rentals as they subsidize the affordable units.

- Outdoor dining is a positive
- High rents are not welcoming

## 5. Inclusive, Diverse Welcoming Spaces

Welcoming things about Newtonville

The Plaza - enlarged by the inclusion of Bram Way

People like the trees

Need more Shade to make it more welcoming

We like Newtonville Village Day

Need a better city calendar to share all the events - many didn't know there would be a concert later in the afternoon

More trees throughout the village

## 6. Arts and Culture

- We like the Art in the Plaza - there are 2 doors there, we have the permanent mural in the plaza – It would be great to have more public art
- We need a liaison with “the kids” to create more for Newtonville
- The memorial day parade used to go through Newtonville
- The little league has a parade on opening day from the high school to Cabot School Field

## 7. Accessibility

- The plaza is accessible - good for everyone
- Whoever purchased the red plastic adirondack chairs (we think this is beautiful newtonville) shouldn't ever buy more - hard for older to people to get in and out of
- Discussion re: the new benches - some people think they are terrible and not in keeping with the Newtonville theme - not enough public input
- Not many people in wheelchairs around newtonville - (ed note: on retrospect this is probably because there isn't much accessible housing)
- Snow removal is a barrier particularly around the commuter rail
- The Commuter rail is not accessible - large discussion the problems with the Worcester line, stairs, snow removal, lack of service)

## 8. Transportation

- Fix the Commuter rail
- Flagging down the train feels unsafe
- Does the commuter rail collect fares?
- Need protected bike lanes on Washington st
- The steps to the Commuter rail are a barrier
- Need a shared bike lane/bus lane on Washington st.
- Concerned about road diet for Washington St, that its too densely traveled

9. Anything Else?

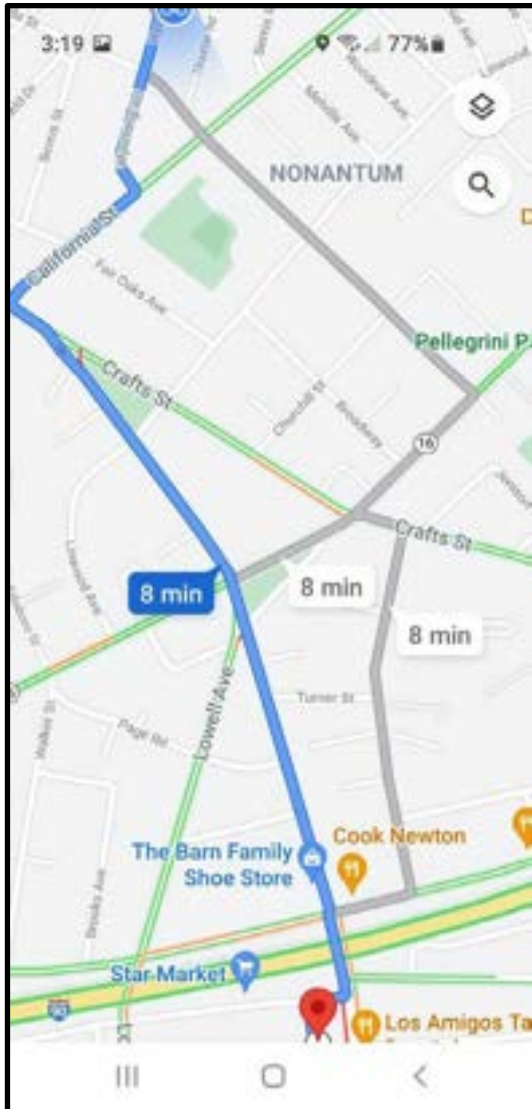
We need more to attract 20 year olds. One person talked about moving to Newton in her 20s and always going into Boston for fun and entertainment  
Let's have more beer gardens

## Newtonville Vision Kit, by Councilor John Oliver

This is a vision kit that I created in July for Newtonville.

I am not sure if the format is OK [?], but here we go.

I was meeting a group in Newtonville at 930A on a Saturday; we were planning to meet @ Bram Way between the new Nero's and Starbucks on Austin St.



I live close enough for a casual bike ride .... So good. Google shows this as the best route, and for the most part, they're right.

While this is not an exercise for taking a jab at our streets, wow they are bad along this route - which basically takes you past FA Day MS, and over the Pike toward NNHS. No bike lanes (until Washington St) and plenty of potholes and such.

As you approach the Pike, the new Trio development is on your right and over the hill that is the bridge over the Pike, you can see a few of the larger buildings in Newtonville center - but not cars coming from the south ... heads up.



Before you get to the Pike, there is a new feature for biking / bicyclists.

This routes bikes on the 'inside' of parked vehicles, away from the traffic that generally queues up at the light @ Walnut & Washington.

Some friends of mine are critical of this; at the corner it 'dumps' the rider back into the road ... and if the traffic is moving, with cars parked here, it would be easy for a driver turning right (with the light) to NOT SEE the rider.





While I get their point, it seems to me that this is a relatively solid solution ... there is room for both the cyclist and drivers to see each other before the intersection (I hope).

But this is the view coming up to the Pike. Prominent buildings include the church and [Masonic Building](#).

Now, coming over that hill into the village center there were no busses; if there had been the street markings show bikes should move left, to share the road with cars. Fine.



Turning right on Austin, I arrive at the Bram Way.

I am not sure if these jersey barriers are temporary, but I hope so; I am also assuming that this area will be permanently used as an outdoor seating area.

SO here we can easily make this an even more approachable useful space.

First, convert the 'roadway'; put in a full curb along Austin St., put in a bike rack that accommodates more than 1 bike (there are only a couple effectively single-

use, yet decorative places to lock up a bike). Maybe lose the 'do not enter' signs too.

Second, there is an oppty to introduce some simple green plantings here - it would help the overall aesthetic immensely - and maybe even some shade over time?

If Newton is going to get serious about making room for non-personal transportation (walking, biking) then we need to make room for bike parking. There is almost none.



Regardless of other factors, the 28 Austin St project fits in well. A comment about housing in our village centers (think : Newtonville, Nonantum, Newton Corner, Newton Centre, Highlands, maybe Waban) I would think that MODEST housing developments in these areas would not only fit contextually, but would enhance the village centers themselves (support the local businesses, provide a 'seat' for each village). Keys are limited parking, variability in housing size (perhaps with a slant to smaller units) and rental v owned.

For example, in Newtonville, why wouldn't a 2nd story along Walnut work? I wouldn't want to see 3 stories and above, but some homes, maybe a rooftop deck for a restaurant would really add some atmosphere. Make them interesting to look at; unique from building to building.

Side note : Banks. Enough already. There is a bank every other storefront it seems. I know the city cannot really control for this, but there are too many. They are crowding out what I want to see there.



NO THANKS (I think there are about 10 banks?)

Here is also a good view of where a 2nd story might be beneficial to the village center. Please do not mistake what I am advocating here - I do NOT want 28 Austin St heights up and down the road. AT ALL. That is Brookline-like development. Not Newton.



YES PLEASE

More local endeavors make this is a destination. Make it 'fun' to browse store fronts ... chains and banks do not. Ok done bashing banks. It'd be GREAT to take a page from Waltham's Moody street; close Walnut from time to time (like 3rd Sunday of the month?) for restaurants, local musicians, etc. Hard to justify right now, maybe. But traffic could be re-routed to Lowell and Newtonville Ave.

Here is a good place to talk about some other factors too.



I would much prefer to see a blend of architectural styles ... but make them all interesting ... less boxy than Trio or 28 Austin please. More uniqueness and character will help retain that 'home town' vibe that I believe is a cornerstone of Newton's appeal.

Put another way, much closer to this than to Trio.

And definitely keep any old, historic or not, buildings!

I neglected to grab photos of the artwork (painted doors, mural @ Bram Way), but there is room for more ... lights in the trees. Music and banners on our buildings ... create a 'sense of the center' somehow.

**Focus Group with Staff from the City of Newton's Health & Human Services Department**  
*Spoke from both the place as workers in Newton as well as residents in Newton*

**Day/time:** Friday, August 20th, 9:30-10:30am

**Facilitator & Notetaker:** Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler

**Participants:** 6

- **Q1: What kinds of values do you want to see present in planning for village centers? Both in terms of the built space (building types for retail or mixed use, housing types, accessible sidewalks, etc.) and how the built space is activated through programming and use (can the public use it, is there general meeting space)**
  - Walkability - ease of getting there - as someone who uses village centers for lunch and knowing the population, they're not always easiest to get there - and yet where our commercial areas are centered - feeling safe walking around, definitely are areas not as bad as Cambridge or Boston
  - Being able to do multiple tasks in one center- so if I have groceries or going to the bank or dry cleaner, get a coffee - multiple reasons for stops – I feel like that's what they are for my clients too
  - Visit locally owned stores + restaurants - not that you can't have a CVS, that's where I get my prescriptions from – but local is an important value
  - Want to grab lunch, park my car, and get out without causing waiting for folks to cross the street. A 'get in, get out' village center user - I want to park my car, want to go get my lunch, and then I want to leave
  - Really liked walkability that they did in Newtonville - space for walking past each other and sitting down. Do have that Star Market giant parking lot - not hard to drive there and spend time there.
  - Like to see more smaller businesses - hear that the rents are so high in the VCs for folks that small businesses - especially minority owned businesses, those STRUGGLE - and then they're outpaced by banks. But the market is so tricky that it's hard - so I go to the same coffee shop every day for 15 years - and I know them, and I was thinking about this the other day about community- who would miss you if you didn't show up? I know that coffee shop, the bread store, would be like "huh" - or the dry cleaner. So, getting to know your people and that sense of community is something that used to be common - I like that sense of community and knowing who your people are
  - Think it's really unique that there are several - from an outside perspective, think it's great that there are the smaller businesses - but other thing to keep in mind is affordability for folks who can't afford those things. When you get into larger chains, they're a little bit cheaper... so personal experience, like Target - takes me extra time to get there - trying to find an affordable place like that in Newton is hard.
- **Q2: Do any of the village centers already represent these values? Share examples of specific parts of village centers that have or do not have these values.**

- My coffee shop is in Newtonville (the one that highlighted that community) - that sense of community is really nice
- Newtonville is the side I stay on - don't know much about the other village centers
- I'm on the same boat - I spend most of my time in the village center in Newtonville and Newton Centre - spent a little time in West Newton because of the police station up there... but of those three, I spend the most time in Newtonville because that's where I drive through on my way to work - but I like Newton Centre, like that it has that green space you can hang out in. Similar to Newtonville, you can park and then walk around to all of the different spaces (but I don't like in Newton Centre in that it's a little scary there sometime around lunch time in terms of busyness) - middle school early release day -
- Drove through Auburndale all the time - right off of 128, I would stop at the Starbucks all the time, a gas station there I would stop at all the time, Star Market I would stop by on my way through, I did like being able to drive and hit a couple of different stops on my way - got that intersection right there and feel like it's pretty smooth -
- Like the part of Newton Centre that's next to the green line stop - and Blackbird Doughnuts - but if you're trying to cross any of the major streets it's pretty impossible
- The food pantries are sort of isolated in terms of walkability - Centre St, there were huge lines of cars, but no one could walk there - very few people who go there don't live in that area - so if I have families, like if NCDF, how do you get to the food pantries? If I'm in NHA, how am I going to get from that side of town to any of the food pantries? And the Freedged, yes... but not for everyone. I know we can't be all things for all people. But food pantries are not always available for folks who need it in terms of walkability. Also looking at SNAP resources - no central place at city hall, for folks to get to us as social workers - do we think about satellite places in village centers? Go over here and set a POP-up shop in Nonantum, or on the south side
- Schools are where our clients get their needs met (in terms of physical spaces). But I also don't really have a center in mind, which is an answer that speaks volumes. With Covid, we saw a huge spread of people seeking answers [to their questions about where to find resources.]
- Senior Center, which has its own interesting background - these tensions between people wanting to make it a broader community center because of lack of community space - and senior advocates pushing back and saying, 'but then we'll forget the seniors.'
- Have the Greater Boston Chinese Center at New Hyde - not a group I ever got really plugged into but does exist. Have a few of those but - Newton has the one main library, but they're tiny - and not knowing how many buses go there
- Just in terms of how spread-out Newton is - there are so many high school students who have never been to the library. I put an intern there, her biggest issue was transportation - took a bus to and from the library and to us for our

workshops - relies heavily on the schedule. I've also been looking into the public transit routes to get here [city hall], and it's really not that simple.

- **Q3: If we had no barriers - did not need to worry about budgets or the law of physics, etc., everything is on the table - what would be your dream Village Center? What would look different in the village centers we just talked about?**
  - Density - having a lot of different available services in one location - affordability -
  - Mixed use building complexes - that'll be multi-family housing, which we have very little of in Newton and need more - some of that is affordable. And dipping into social services world, 'affordable' is a little fraught. So truly affordable. With lots of types of services, green space, public transit access, but also plenty of parking for those of us who just want to pop in and pop out
  - What's tricky about this is that Newton is so large and there are so many village centers - so how do you decide which one or where would be the center point?
  - Yeah, because the city is so different and there are different types of demographics
  - It's almost like 2 different worlds. When you go to Chestnut Hill and go to Newtonville, it's like - am I in the same city?
  - Newton Highlands also - and that's a completely different one too
  - Talking to the community members - and really listening - and putting things in those village centers that makes sense to folks - because Chestnut Hill, that street works for that population (I'm making broad strokes)
  - My grandfather grew up in Belmont - Cushion Sq had a pharmacy, had a bakery next to the pharmacy, had a little market, had a little bank, and everything had a 5 and dime - and I loved it, had all of these affordable options - things were affordable and walkable, in my brain, that's what a village center is
  - Something that's really important to younger people is a place to hang out where you don't have to spend money. But not just green space either. Not talking about grass, not talking about a park or a playground. Very specific - an example was the space between Cafe Nero and the Starbucks. More spaces with tables and chairs and sit outside, do homework, gather together safely.
  - And something that's come up a lot in the [high school] internships was also transportation - a lot of kids ride their bikes. So, places to store their bikes, ride them safely.
  - Newton is split very city / suburb - I grew up in the suburbs and our 'town center' was just like a triangle, green, had the library, had a community center, and - something I would look for would definitely be not a lot of high rises, still a lot of trees, but definitely echo what we've all been saying with walkability, access to transit, I agree with what has been throw out so far
  - I liked the idea of mixed-use development, especially for Newtonville, definitely space above those shops to add one or two floors of more affordable housing to look like Newton Centre does, where they have apartments above their stores - having access to the green line is great, a parking lot further on the edge where you can park and walk your way in

- Like the idea of a plaza, big, shared space - a big chess board kind of thing, games, and that kind of thing
- Would be a dream to open a youth space - don't have to join a program to be there - will not be drilling science down your throat – but a way to offer a positive option for where youth spend time
- Intergenerational spaces ('Time for Partner' spaces - Covid killed it - Family Access has that contract now but aren't getting it until September)
- Kendall Sq - a really cool kind of, hidden space – example to look at.



# Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council

## Meeting Minutes, September 2, 2021

### **Area Council members:**

Bob Burke, Barbara Darnell, Groot Gregory, Nathaniel Lichtin, Srdjan Nedeljkovic, Larry Rosenberg, Amy Wayne

### **Ex Officio:**

City Councilors Brenda Noel and Bill Humphrey present; Holly Ryan: not present

### **Guests:**

Lisa Gordon, Rena Getz, Robert Fizek, Jeremy Freudberg, Barry Bergman, Julia Malakie, Carol Carroll, Loumona Petroff, Tarik Lucas

Meeting called to order at 7:38 pm. Srdjan Nedeljkovic taking minutes. Area Council President Nathaniel Lichtin presiding. The meeting was held using Zoom videoconferencing technology.

### Meeting with Nicole Banks, Parks & Recreation Commission

Ms. Banks was not available due to a personal issue. Area Council President Nathaniel Lichtin noted that Ms. Banks had previously stated that the Levingston Cove project would not be a topic of discussion at our Area Council meeting, as this topic had been discussed at other public forums. Nathaniel reported that Commissioner Banks had informed him that this fall and next spring, new access will be provided to the park and bathhouse area at Crystal Lake to allow for fishing and better access to the shoreline.

### Zoning Redesign Update and Visioning Session

Area Council President Nathaniel Lichtin noted that the Newton Highlands Area Council had two visioning sessions in August. The first session was held at Four Corners, and only a small number of people attended, including 4 Area Councilors, City Councilor Noel and Mayoral Candidate Amy Sangiolo, along with Newton resident Sean Roche. One of the visions presented for Four Corners was to close off the slip lanes on Walnut Street and to expand the sidewalks at the intersection. The group had a discussion about building heights. Most participants expressed a preference to have buildings with heights of 2-3 stories with appropriate set back from the street. It was noted that the dental office on Beacon Street with the greater setback could have an activated streetscape with more retail on the first floor. A more pedestrian friendly environment was suggested that includes planting trees to separate pedestrians from the roadway. Area Councilor Barbara Darnell noted that there was a bit of disagreement regarding the optimal height of buildings, as some participants advocated for 3 stories and others supported 4 stories. It was noted that the currently existing brick building on the NE corner seems to stand out. City Councilor

Brenda Noel noted that there was creative thinking about what may happen if the gas station was eliminated. Solar panels on roofs of buildings were discussed, as well as the concept of shared parking. Area Councilor Srdjan Nedeljkovic commented that the current proposal for a new condominium complex on Beacon Street lacks street level retail and pointed out how that does not fit the vision of a walkable streetscape. Robert Fizek asked if there was consideration about what is allowed by the current zoning and City Councilor Brenda Noel replied that the visioning process is not constrained by current zoning codes.

The second visioning session held by the Area Council took place on August 28. This session was focused on the Newton Highlands village center, including Lincoln and Walnut Streets. This session was attended by more people including City Councilors Noel and Downs, Waban Area Council Vice President Rena Getz, Area Councilors Barbara Darnell, Groot Gregory, Larry Rosenberg, and Bob Burke, as well as Newton resident Sean Roche, and others. There were about 20 people participating at times during this session. People expressed a preference for Lincoln Street to continue to have an open feeling, and to not be canyon-like with large scale development on each side. In terms of building heights, most people supported 2 stories above retail, with another floor above that if it could be set back. People were favorable to allowing the subdivision of existing houses and having multiple units in a single-family house, along with accessory apartments.

Support was given towards retaining the existing buildings while allowing more housing density. People did not want block-type apartment buildings. Area Councilor Groot Gregory mentioned that traffic calming was discussed, such as having a round-about on Lincoln Street. He noted that Hartford Street is used as a cut-through street to Route 9, and that Hartford Street could be considered for traffic calming to reduce cut-through traffic. Robert Fizek mentioned undergrounding of utilities and cables. People liked aspects of what we have currently, such as the Hyde garden, the bandstand, the flower boxes on the bridge, the Hyde Center, the Brigham House, the Women's Club, the Congregational Church and community gathering aspects of the Highlands. The Officer English Garden was liked, but it was noted that improvements are needed. There was discussion about the north side of Lincoln Street to expand the sidewalk. Area Councilor Bob Burke noted that he was pleased with the meeting since there was a sentiment to preserve the historical elements of the village center. Other specific ideas included solar panels on flat roofs, solar on the parking lot if it did not interfere with the trees, improving the sidewalks and making accessibility improvements, possibly by removing the brick walkways at the Rodney Barker plaza, making sure there is an increase in shade, better locations for shuttle buses, improved bus shelters and pick up and drop off locations, and increasing connections from the village center to the CVS plaza on Route 9. Another visioning session took place today in the village center, during which better connections from the village center to the Needham Street area were discussed.

Robert Fizek spoke about better night lighting. Area Council President Nathaniel Lichtin noted there will be a streetscape improvement plan that will be started for Newton Highlands. Rena Getz commented that during the visioning session, she noticed that there was an appreciation of what exists in the village center now in terms of gathering places and being a destination where people can enjoy the streetscape. There was support for enlarging the sidewalks, adding benches, and adding outside dining for the restaurants. Ms. Getz pointed out that there were big differences between the visioning process for Four Corners and the Highlands village center. A positive aspect

of the village center is that the Congregational Church has green space in front of it, and many people supported the addition of trees to the village center. Area Councilor Srdjan Nedeljkovic commented that it is unfortunate that positive aspects of what people like in Newton Highlands can't seem to be implemented as we plan new developments. Area Councilor Bob Burke advocated for charging stations for vehicles, although it is understood that cars may not be stationary for a long time when their owners are in a village center. Nathaniel Lichtin noted that he will be submitting minutes of the visioning sessions to the Planning Department

Area Council President Lichtin informed meeting attendees that the City's Zoning and Planning Committee came out with a schedule of meetings for the rest of the year. The committee is proposing to continue work on the village centers through the rest of the year.

### Parking and Double Parking on Lincoln Street

Area Council President Lichtin noted that City Councilor Andreae Downs and Newton resident Jenn Martin from Smart Routes to School had brought up the issue that people are double parking on Lincoln Street. A discussion ensued about a proposal to implement short-term, 15-minute parking spaces on some parts of Lincoln Street. This would allow people to go in-out of businesses quickly and perhaps decrease the urge for double parking. City Councilor Downs has asked for more police enforcement to prevent the double parking. Councilor Downs also noted that the requirement for a 15-minute parking spot can be handled administratively and does not require a public hearing. Area Councilor Amy Wayne noted that several businesses have asked for short term parking in the past. City Councilor Noel commented that we should do due diligence to make sure that there is substantial support for this idea before making any decisions. Area Councilor Amy Wayne noted that she knows of at least 4 businesses which are in support of having short term parking, but that there are also some hair salons that would prefer longer term parking. Carol Carroll mentioned that there is a blind spot at the crosswalk between the Walnut Food Market and Anna's Taqueria, and that this may be a good area to place a short-term parking space. Area Councilor Srdjan Nedeljkovic advocated for the 15-minute spaces to be without meters.

Newton resident Robert Fizek pointed out that several restaurants may have already implemented an informal short term parking space in front of their business, such as at O'Hara's. Area Councilor Barbara Darnell noted that she had spoken with the City Traffic Engineer about having a blinking sign placed at the crosswalk at the Walnut Market. However, the city budget for these kinds of items is very small. Area Council President Nathaniel Lichtin summarized that the Area Council is generally in favor of having a limited number of short-term parking spaces, perhaps near the crosswalk if it would improve safety.

Robert Fizek noted that perhaps having one short-term parking space on each side of the street in the village center would be appropriate. Perhaps a trial run could be implemented to see how it goes. Area Councilor Groot Gregory suggested that further study of this issue is needed before a recommendation is made. He noted that evaluating a couple of short-term spaces on a trial basis has been done in Newtonville, and perhaps this could be done in the Highlands to give people a chance to see if the proposal is acceptable.

### Other Traffic Issues in Newton Highlands

Area Councilor Barbara Darnell expressed concern about speeding cars on Lincoln Street, including DPW trucks. OA discussion ensued, and it was noted that additional opinions from the community would be welcome regarding traffic issues. Robert Fizek agreed with the request for a speed notification sign on Lincoln Street. Area Councilor Larry Rosenberg noted that without enforcement, traffic calming measures may not be effective. City Councilor Lucas noted that after a road near his house was repaved, speeds have increased. Area Councilor Srdjan Nedeljkovic and Newton resident Jeremy Freudberg pointed out that there is safety zone legislation that allows for communities to lower the speed limit to 20 mph in certain areas of high pedestrian activity.

Area Council President Nathaniel Lichtin suggested that the Area Council may find a time at a future Area Council meeting to discuss traffic issues in the Highlands in more depth. Area Councilor Barbara Darnell also expressed concern about cars which turn right on the red light at the corner of Lincoln and Walnut Street going northbound, potentially striking pedestrians. She suggested that this may be a “no turn on red” intersection. Carol Carroll asked what number should be used to report “near miss” incidents to the City. It was pointed out that the “311” number is a good place to register those complaints.

### Halloween Activities in the Highlands

Area Councilor Barbara Darnell noted that indoor activities related to Halloween are unlikely to happen this fall due to Covid-19 concerns. However, she suggested that the “Parade of Horribles” could potentially be held as an outdoor event and party that would start at 4 pm and end around 6 pm. Having this event would help carry on a Halloween tradition in the Highlands. The parade would happen on the Sunday prior to Halloween. Parks & Recreation will support painting in the business windows in the village. There was general support for this idea and Area Councilors encouraged planning for the “Parade of Horribles” to go forward. Area Councilor Barbara Darnell requested a budget allocation of up to \$300 to support this event. A motion was made and then seconded. The motion was approved 7/0.

The other Halloween question is whether the Area Council would like to do another photo contest like last year. Area Councilor Amy Wayne mentioned that we had several photo contest events last year, and that a small group participated in each event. There were about 10-15 people who participated. Past Area Councilor Amanda Theunissen had organized this event along with Amy, and Amy will follow up regarding further information about the photo contest. After a discussion by the Area Council, there was not much interest in proceeding with having a photo contest this year.

### Local and City Updates

#### Driving School at 1087 Beacon Street

At the Four Corners vision session, participants noticed that there was a notice posted regarding a special permit at the 1087 Beacon Street location. The special permit notice was regarding a request for variances in existing parking allowances for a Driving School to allow for classes weekday afternoons and then classes during school vacation weeks and during the summer, with

parent classes on Sundays once per month. The proposal was discussed by the City's Land Use committee. There was a lot of talk about traffic management, with regards to drop off and pickup at the site. The building has two parking lots, one accessed from Beacon Street and the other from Walnut Street. The Land Use Committee approved the driving school special permit with a restriction to allow classes for parents to be held only on weekends, when there is less demand for on-site parking spaces at this building. The final proposal will go before City Council at an upcoming meeting. Area Councilor Srdjan Nedeljkovic suggested that the rear of the Walgreens Parking Lot across the street on Walnut Street could be used as a shared parking arrangement to mitigate the parking demand on the office building's existing parking lot. It was noted that regardless of any formal agreement, it is likely that parents and students who utilize the driving school will likely use the Walgreen's parking lot even without a formal agreement.

### Levingston Cove update

The proposal for a landscape plan for Levingston Cove was presented at the recent Conservation Commission meeting on August 26. Newton resident Robert Fizek attended the meeting and provided a report. He noted that 60% design documents for the project were presented at the meeting. A discussion ensued by members of the Conservation Commission but it did not seem to be oriented towards environmental issues. There were comments about walkways and benches, and materials of the proposed decking, but not many comments about environmental issues. Mr. Fizek noted that Ms. Janice Bourque from the Crystal Lake Conservancy spoke about concerns regarding the proposed design of the fishing wall, which is a small part of the project that represents about a third of the budget. The Conservation Commission was informed that changes were being requested to reduce the scope of alterations at the fishing wall.

Mr. Fizek noted that the current proposal for the fishing wall is a highly intensive construction project that involves large amounts of concrete, steel, and projections that would have an impact on the lake. The proposal is overdesigned and is no longer what many had hoped for. Items of concern include the length of new wall construction, which would extend 200 ft with new concrete walkways, 150 ft of new safety rails, and an increase in height of walkways by 2 feet. In order to construct this structure, micropiles would be drilled into the stone. The entire area would need to be stripped to do the drilling. This would involve pushing water into the ground while the drilling is taking place. There would be cantilevered slabs to support the deck, with additional construction on top of the existing wall, representing the equivalent of 8 full truckloads of concrete and a significant CO<sub>2</sub> burden. The Conservation Commission was presented with drawing S-101 that shows the extent of the proposed construction. Area Council President Nathaniel Lichtin noted that pending more information, the Conservation Commission continued the hearing until September 23. It is expected that the Parks and Rec department will be making some revisions to the plans.

Councilor Noel stated that she had also attended the recent Conservation Commission meeting about Levingston Cove, and that she had also attended the CPA presentation on the project. She noted that the main purpose of the Conservation Commission was to evaluate the environmental impacts of the proposal, but that the Commission was not able to make a conclusion at the August meeting, so the meeting was continued. Councilor Noel emphasized that there are two main goals

for this project: to improve accessibility and sustainability. It's important to keep in mind the accessibility issues.

Area Councilor Srdjan Nedeljkovic expressed a number of concerns about the Levingston Cove project and process to implement this project. He noted that during community meetings in 2018 and 2019, there was widespread agreement that the project should address run-off and degradation that was happening at the cove. There was also agreement that the cove should remain in a natural state and not overdesigned or overengineered. The current proposal addresses the issue of run-off but it has expanded to involve much more construction than is necessary. Also, the current design actually degrades accessibility to the lake by calling for a dumping of stones on a portion of the shore of the lake.

Area Councilor Nedeljkovic reiterated concerns he has made at prior meetings that the dumping of stones at the water's edge will create a barrier that is specifically intended to exclude people from accessing the lake at Levingston Cove. He pointed out that as a welcoming community, Newton must support continued use of the cove by diverse groups of people of all ages. Newton should strive to be a welcoming and inclusive community and placing physical barriers at the lake to prevent people accessing the shoreline should be opposed.

City Councilor Brenda Noel suggested that the proposed river stones on the shore line may be soft and walkable. A discussion ensued regarding the walkability of river stones and several people commented that river stones are slippery and can become slimy, difficult to walk on, and that they can result in falls and injuries. It was noted that the project will need to go to City Council for funding and approval, and Area Councilor Nedeljkovic commented that he hopes that the City Council will reject aspects of the plans involving dumping stones on the water's edge for the reasons he noted. The project will go back to Conservation Commission for a public hearing on September 23.

#### New Village Businesses

Area Council President Lichtin stated that a new restaurant will be opening at the former pizza place location near the post office. Also, a sandwich shop will be opening at the former Eatery location. It was noted that there may also be some pop-up stores coming to the Highlands.

#### MBTA Green Line Work

The MBTA will be doing track welding in Newton Highlands through the end of the month and signal work until the end of the fall. Area Councilor Barbara Darnell expressed outrage that the work is continuing for such a long time and the construction work is poorly planned. She noted that the work goes on all night long and is highly disruptive to abutters.

#### Other Updates

City Councilor Lucas noted that the City's Land Use Committee approved a dance or fitness studio on Lincoln Street Crow Bar. Robert Fizek asked what is being planned for the building next to the post office. The project at 69 Lincoln Street may be waiting for the 1-year demolition delay to

expire before proceeding. At 956 Walnut Street, which is the proposed 7-unit development project, Area Council President Nathaniel Lichtin noted that the existing house has been demolished.

Debates for City Council. Area Councilors Bob Burke, Nathaniel Lichtin and Barbara Darnell will help organize the candidates debates this fall. Members of all four area councils will help with the process. Dates and the location of the debates have not been confirmed. A moderator has not yet been selected. Srdjan Nedeljkovic asked about whether the candidates will be attending the debates in person or if the debates will be entirely virtual, but that has not yet been decided.

Administrative Items:

Approval of August Minutes: The draft minutes were submitted for review from the August 5<sup>th</sup> Area Council meeting. A number of edits, clarifications, and changes were proposed, specifically regarding the Levingston Cove and Demolition Delay discussions. The minutes were approved as amended 5:0, with two abstentions by Area Councilors who were not present at the August meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Area Council Treasurer Groot Gregory had provided an update. No transactions took place in the past month.

New Business:

City Councilor Tarik Lucas noted that Newtonville Village Day will be taking place on September 25<sup>th</sup>. No additional new business was proposed for discussion.

Meeting Adjournment:

The meeting was adjourned at 9:19 pm.

DRAFT

## Reimagining our Village Centers

Focus Group for Newton's League of Women Voters members

Date: September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Participants: 8

### **[1] What are the defining features of a village center? Where does it begin and end? What village center(s) are most well/poorly defined?**

1. There's a major commercial aspect. Hopefully restaurants, more than banks and nail salons. And also, they used to be where the schools were, but that's not the case anymore. So I think also access to public transportation and hopefully some green or communal outdoor space that makes it feel like a center.
2. A post office, a school and a church. I grew up in a village. And a bank.
3. They don't all have train stops but most of the village centers I think of have a train stop that prompted the develop.
4. I really like the religious aspect and post offices in village centers.
5. I can tell you where villages begin and end on a center by center basis. In general, I would say the last commercial or entwined professional building at each end.
6. So if you hit a residential street, that's where the village center ends? Like Newton Centre playground, Tyler terrace on one side – so not a perfect definition, and I hope that Newton Centre playground is considered a part of Newton Centre. But on the other side of the playground, on Mason-Rice – that's the end. But as you go up Pleasant Street, on the other side there, you come up to the big municipal parking lots and those are part of the village center.
7. Favorite part of the village center is where you see they've just put out a couple picnic tables – and I see families there, it's truly lovely.
8. In Newtonville, when we created the Newtonville Area Council, Newtonville was defined all the way to my house and I'm probably a mile out from the core of the center.
9. I think Newtonville is poorly defined, as well as poorly designed. First the railroad went through there but now the two sides do not feel united.
10. The Highlands has the nicest village center – it's very central, you know where it begins and ends, it has postal office and banks and restaurants and retail and playgrounds and the Hyde, and it's sort of compact. And the residential begins on all sides of it and it has a T stop too. Yay for the Highlands!
11. I think one of the things that's most interesting is that there was a goal articulated early on in the Zoning Redesign process to have gradual transitions from the centers into the neighborhoods but that's really hard to do with zoning, which tends to draw these sharp lines. One of the things I think is kind of, not a silver lining but maybe an aluminum foil lining, I think people are now, people who used to worry about keeping business and commercial from coming into the neighborhood, are now worried about losing the businesses altogether. So starting to think about our interdependence with the businesses – and not seeing that as something you have to box in but something you want to sustain.
12. Newton Centre is well defined.
13. Auburndale is weird because Auburn St used to be the real center but now with the pike, now Comm Ave is, with the big intersection being Comm Ave and Lexington street, feels more like



the center but you know, Auburn St is a much more commercial strip of shops and it's more attractive, other than the huge chain link on the other side of it.

14. I would agree with Newton Highlands of it being well defined – I can't think of a poorly defined one or don't want to call it out.
15. Nonantum is pretty well defined, it doesn't have your church, but it's got a post office, got a bank, got a Dunkin' Donuts, it's got restaurants, it's got shops – a couple of cute shops – and a lot of loyalty.

**[2] What values do you want to see present in the planning of the village center?**

16. Loyalty – the longevity of the businesses. Part of why people keep coming back to Nonantum is that's where they buy their sausage, their cannoli's, go to what used to be Schwartz's and know that it's a hardware store where people will give you advice and pay attention to your question. And there are many businesses in Nonantum that have that kind of sense, people come to those businesses. It also has the Christmas children's, Christmas Association, it has Santa Clause – so it has a lot that, and it has an ethnicity identification, it has a number of ethnicity identifications – but no other part of the city did they go out and keep repainting the city's street's stripes in nationalistic colors.
17. Newtonville is divided – everything happens on the other side of the turn pike, so you don't feel included. So inclusion is a value that needs to be part of the process.
18. In Auburndale, because we have Burr school on one side and Williams on another side – that's a natural division of population groups because people get to know each other based on where their kids go to school. One of the things that makes Auburndale weird is that we have these two parallel commercial districts that almost compete with each other.
19. Loyalty is an interesting word – and there is a sense of loyalty – but it's also about identifying with, not like, 'my village do or die!' loyalty, more about – these are my people, I go into the grocery store, I run into the people I know – that community, I guess.
20. Centrality of green space – for me, it says a lot about a place to gather, and it says a lot about the environment and our valuing open space and shared space.
21. I agree with having centrality of green space.
22. Why is this happening before the city has worked on some of the centers? My center is West Newton, and they've already redesigned the streets. And I think they did a bad job. The traffic patterns have already been established. What's supposed to be a bike lane through West Newton is still dangerous, the traffic flow has been redirected somehow, but there hasn't been any improvement. So many traffic lines painted on the road now that it's very difficult to know where you're supposed to be and where you're not supposed to be, where it's safe to be and where it isn't. So for me, that's something that hasn't improved at all. This is a done deal, nothing's going to really change.
23. Every time a neighborhood is "improved," the rents go up. And so, individual partisans find it more difficult to be able to stay in their neighborhood. I'm talking about the businesses in the village centers – the local artisans, or Newton artisans, can't afford the rent when the rent goes up. Local small businesses are important and affordability for them.
24. Values are really hard for me. Being inclusive and welcoming.
25. One of the things we heard on our village center vision kit walk in Waban, and Waban is one of the village centers that hasn't been 'improved' recently, she said that space in a Newton's small

village centers rents for the same rate as Newbury street space, which I found shocking. And that's even without it being 'improved.' And I don't know if that's based on someone looking at our average income in Newton, and saying, 'well this must be a place where you could sell things to people with a lot of disposable income,' or what, but we have several of these storefronts in Waban Square now and it's not because anything got improved. So one of the questions is, what can zoning really do? And maybe it needs something besides zoning, to help sustain small local businesses that aren't part of giant banks or chains. We still have a grocery store and a hardware store, I just don't know how long we'll hang onto that.

26. I had done my own little visioning kit, talking about Newtonville, because I live in what I think should be the heart of Newtonville but isn't, now when you look at newtonville, you have what I like to call 'consumables,' which is a personal service, whether that's banking, nails, hair salon, massage, dry cleaners – but we don't have that. But there's one shop, two shops now, a little gift shop and Henry Bear's Park (across the street from Street Market)... and The Barn is on the other side, that's part of the issue with Newtonville. But there are very few stores, thank god the Barn is here.
27. Diversity – that goes to what others were talking about, making sure rent is more affordable for local businesses and not having multiple banks.

**[3] In what village(s) do you already see these values happening? Please provide specific examples and village where this is happening?**

28. Because of the poor traffic lights pattern they have at Washington & Chestnut, I was watching the person who kept starting and stopping, and my car wheels went over the elevated bike lane that's about 10 feet long, and then I came crashing down – it was very dangerous. But I agree whole heartedly that the traffic patterns are a mess in West Newton.
29. I think Waban has a lot of the values. Waban hung onto its elementary school when a lot of places have lost theirs, which is amazing. Waban still has the library although that's thanks to the volunteers. Hardware store, has a grocery store and has a T stop. What it doesn't have, it has this beautiful new green space that's been improved across from Angier, which used to be two terrible traffic islands and it's now beautiful, but it's not a place where if you wanted to pick up food and sit outside to eat it, you can't do that because you have to cross the bridge... so a lot of what we talked about in Waban was, can you do something to knit together the part where the Starbucks, sort of in the downstairs of Waban center, with the strong block that's sort of in the upstairs of the center? On the assumption that outdoor dining isn't going away anytime soon, si there a place to create something that's sort of like the picnic tables in Newton Centre, like an outdoor food court, outdoor eating space that lots of restaurants could share so they don't each have to provide their won but would encourage people to pick up their food and take it out in good weather.
30. All villages exemplify some of the values.
31. Crystal Lake area is not a village center but, it exemplifies many of the values. You have access from Newton Centre and Newton Highlands to crystal lake. And has picnic tables.
32. There are aspects of Newton Centre that have these values but it has too many banks, has too many nail salons, but has many of the other things. I go back to when it had a movie theatre and a hardware store and a grocery store and, but I also live practically across the street from Whole

Foods. So theoretically that whole strip, down to where that cleaners was which is now a marijuana store, is it all part of Newton Centre?

33. Four Corners isn't much of a village center.
34. There are a number of villages – Thompsonville, Chestnut Hill, Oak hill – where compared to Newton Centre, West Newton, Nonantum, even Auburndale – they're really different. Actually West Newton has shops, is it Artitutes?, and a couple of restaurants, you've got a theater. Hopefully they'll survive.
35. Auburndale does have a lot of the values – we have the commuter rail station right there, good bus service, a real diversity of businesses – most of them are small businesses, not big corporate things – we've got a big grocery store. Just Next Door. We've even got a tattoo parlor! Used to be the tea place. That's a constantly rotating location. We have a couple of banks. But I think Nonantum is similar, it's a contrast to Newton Centre for example, where there are all those banks and stuff. Waban's probably about the same number of businesses...

**[4] If there are no budget constraints, no law of physics getting in the way – what would your ideal village center look & feel like?**

36. Look and feel are two very vague descriptors. It would encompass a lot of the values – it would be welcoming, you would enjoy going there, would feel safe, feel that you're small children would be relatively safe and able to navigate if it's a community center. Your basic needs would be met in terms of being able to buy food, a bank, get your clothes or your shoes repaired – we used to have a tailor in West Newton, I'm not certain there's still one – you could have your hair done, you could have a barber. We have a post office, we have a pharmacy. And I think that those things are important – I think that's one thing Waban lost, a pharmacy. And it's all walkable.
37. If we're talking about conserving and not using our cars more, I think having those basic needs services makes it important – so you can just walk to your center.
38. That's what I do, I rarely get into my car these days.
39. In July, my son came to visit with his two children. His first son, who's 11, and his daughter, who's 6.5. He walked them over to Newton Centre village center for an expedition, and I told him where the toy store was, and they visited the toy store and got something, and they visited the music shop and I don't know what else. My son said to my grandson, 'how did you like the trip?' and he said, 'it was great,' and my son asked, 'well why was it great?' and my grandson said, 'It had an aura of activity and busyness.' I said, oh, he should work for the chamber of commerce!
40. Walkability, accessibility, being able to go to the village center and meet up for a reason. Whether that's the ice cream shop or the pizza place or the coffee place – but to gather and to build that community. And plus everything else that everyone else said.
41. Have places where people have a reason to gather. And we have the 'Naughty Pine' \* and that's a really safe place for kids who are getting a little older, and I always felt pretty safe letting kids go down and, it would be very exciting to go get a sandwich.
42. I'm just a big green space fan – that's the best part of my feel for village centers.
43. Should housing be part of a village center?

44. If a village center has sufficient grocery store access, then I think it's a wonderful opportunity for downsizing, aging in place – the housing would have to be carefully planned to have elevators. But I think it would be wonderful to have housing.
45. I'll second that -I think part of the challenge is that those of us who are hogging our not very big but still too big for us houses, don't have anywhere to downsize to. So having more places, and building townhouses doesn't do it because the kitchen and bedroom are on different floors – at some point at my age, it's not worth moving into a place that you have to hike up and down on. I happen to be in a house where the kitchen, bathroom and bedroom are all on one floor, granted it's a very old house. But I wouldn't move from that to a new one that has them on separate floors, so I'm not moving. But having a place where you can go out and buy your food every 2 or 3 days instead of having to stock up in your car every 2 weeks. That requires, the customer and the store be within walking distance of each other. And you can't just have a walkable commercial center if there's nobody within walking distance of it.
46. I think housing in the business district also does a lot to what that 11 year old grandson called an 'aura of activity,' bustling comes into my mind. But you have people walking their dogs, are going to groceries, and it does make it a much more friendly, welcoming, vibrant-seeming place.

**[5] What constituencies are frequently left out when the city is planning for its future?**

47. City is trying to involve a diverse group of, to gather a diverse group if input. I'm not certain that it isn't just lip service. And that decisions have already been made. That there isn't some plan that was set in place a few years ago, and that the city councilors are very hesitant to abandon that plan or to double check that plan, before they move forward. So even though they're asking for citizen input, I'm not sure that citizens – they may be heard but I'm not certain they're going to change anything that hasn't already been decided. I haven't seen that.
48. That's an important message for Nevena to bring back to the department.
49. I think it's hard to hear from all constituencies, I think it's hard to get people's attention at the time you need the input – you ask, and nobody takes the time, and... I don't know.
50. It's interesting because we had 18 people sign up and how few are here. People forget – I'm not being critical but people try, and we all leave very busy lives so it's hard.
51. I think the city is trying to listen to all the voices, but as it was said, you try and the city doesn't hear you. So if you want your voice heard, the city has an open mind to listen – but you just need to get out there.
52. It does take work to be involved.
53. I don't think our lower-income residents are involved as often as they can be, especially if they're working 2 to 3 jobs to keep house and home together. I think that's also true for renters – renters are often not heard. Often you hear in public meetings, people complaining that too much of the new housing is rental and not enough is ownership, but not everyone can afford to own, especially in Newton. Not that the rent's on the new buildings are low either, but those are two groups I can think of. And I think Nevena's made an effort to reach both of them, pretty hard.
54. What about children? I think I heard somebody talk about places for kids, but if you think about the village centers, other than Newton Centre (where you have the lovely park there, that's a little bit to one side by Mason Rice), but a lot of the places don't have places for children.
55. Playgrounds are scattered. Newton Highlands does have a playground right in the center.

56. Most of the centers that have schools have playgrounds. Newton Highlands' was a school, so they have their playground and their community made that lovely amphitheater, if you will.
57. Even some of the neighborhoods that lost their schools, like Lower Falls and Upper Falls, still hold onto the playgrounds at least.
58. I live on South Gate Park, when we moved in 20 years ago, I would say most of the people there were families of DPW workers, they were older, and in the 20 years the neighborhood has transformed dramatically. It is diverse, there are many young families, they all have children – and it's the families that have put forth the greatest effort to have space for their children and to voice concern at public hearings for the safety of their children. There is a park at the end of South Gate Park & Kilburn – Wellington Park – and it is the families, the neighbors, that have plantings – gatherings – there is a dog club, the children are always there, but from what I can see, it has been the families – not the city – that has helped in anyway to make that what it is. I don't know if the city has done anything for that area. But it is the neighbors who have really contributed to create a space for their young families.
59. A program for engaging kids with community planning that I've always loved and wished we could try is Box City, where kids build their own vision of a city out of boxes. It looks like a lot of fun. Here's one example: <https://denverarchitecture.org/events-programs/box-city/>
60. It's interesting, here at the Trio – there are a lot of kids. But there isn't a place for them to go play -they'd have to go to Cabot school.
61. What's one improvement you would make to Auburndale?
- There's a grubby sort of middle area that's kind of a parking lot behind the village bank, going into this grubby area – I would love to see that be a green communal area.
62. What about for Waban?
- I wish there would be the businesses that have left, I wish they would fill those spaces with not a bank or a nail salon and an ice cream shop would come back.
  - Second those votes – especially the ice cream store, I miss the ice cream store.
63. And for Newton Highlands?
- Improving railings of the MBTA Green Line.
64. Newton Centre?
- Fewer banks
  - Fewer banks. Would be nice to buy groceries and hardware. I miss Woolworth...
65. West Newton?
- We've lost our ice cream store, we've lost the bike store. I don't know if there's a hardware store. I don't think so. We lost our tailor. So the one thing I'd like to see changed is zoning – and traffic patterns.
66. Newtonville?
- Make it one village – need to find ways to connect the two sides.
  - You look at the old bridge of Newtonville and the bridge over the pike was flat, and it made such a difference! It pulled the two together!
  - They need to do something there so that the train is accessible. One way to do that, though very expensive, is to add green parkway over the train, and then that would give them space to be able to slope down somewhere with a ramp, would increase accessibility, and you're right – flat says, "we are one!" The curve says, "you have to climb the hill to get to the other side!"

67. I thank the League for creating this as a way for our voices to be heard. And I do think that one of the issues is that people don't step up to put in their input – it's always easier to complain than to make the effort to give an hour and you really made that easy. Thank you so much.
68. I would encourage you all to do something fun, access the Vision Kit and go to your village center. I found it very cathartic.

Nonantum Vision Kit, 9.22.21

Participants: Chuck Proia, Anthony Pellegrini Jr, Maria Proia, Bo Pellegrini

*Notes and photos taken by Maria Proia, Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler & Jennifer Caira*

1. At Pellegrini Park, Joanne “Mac” Pellegrini Park, the murals were painted by the kids of the neighborhood. Anthony “Fats” Pellegrini funded it through the Nonantum Christmas Party Association. These murals are integral to a sense of community for Nonantum as well as reflect a community-based process that long-time Nonantum residents connect to and are proud of. One idea is to have professionals oversee the restoration with assistance from the community members of Nonantum.
2. Want to better monitor the graffiti on the memorials as well as improve overall sense of safety in Pellegrini Park.
3. The Pellegrini Park murals represent connections of Watertown & Adams St – it highlights current and old businesses, including Anthony “Fats” Pellegrini . The murals represent important historical roots of Nonantum and need to be preserved and maybe used to re-activate the community.
4. This place [Pellegrini Park] has always had opportunity for cook outs, senior citizen cook outs, marching bands coming in, huge tents. Festa is hosted here – there’s a lot of history here. Only in the last 10 years that things have changed and the space has been used less often. [Things have changed because of] the pandemic, issues with security, and old-time residents being priced out.
5. What would make younger people come to Pellegrini Park? Food trucks, farmers markets on the cement space, programming and events. Recognize there’s a lot of potential for activating that space.
6. Pellegrini Park used to be used for a “Hack Around” club annual gathering – would like to see this return.
7. The green space in Pellegrini Park is used well and often by sports teams.
8. There’s neighborhood trust in the neighborhood management of Pellegrini Park. Sometimes elders and life-long residents of the community get a call before the police do when there’s an issue in the neighborhood.
9. For years the community members took responsibility as the caretakers of Pellegrini Park, while the city overlooked the neighborhood. Community/neighborhood management of public spaces feels really important to Nonantum stakeholders and is also something that community members are invested in, as well as proud of, doing.
10. Many years ago, the neighborhood was known just for two things: car shops and bars.
11. Dion’s was the drug store here for 50 years that went away.
12. Likes that the Village Bank ‘fits’ into the neighborhood – in the sense that it’s height, texture, and aesthetics match the rest of Nonantum’s physical characteristics. This stands in contrast to the more modern homes going up that don’t feel like they fit in Nonantum – like the new development at Adams St that feels constant.
13. Interested in future, new buildings having brick, masonry and Italian culture.
14. Happy for more retail with housing above as long as it has culturally relevant and sensitive representation in the architecture.
15. The new development in Newtonville would not fit in Nonantum.

16. Are happy with and excited for John Mula's proposal for Watertown Street.
17. A lot of history in the retail of Nonantum. Anthony "Fats" Pellegrini repaired the old clock at the intersection of Adams St and Watertown St; Columbus Hall used to be the original place where everyone got married and still has the same set of stairs that Anthony remembers looking down as a child.
18. The closing of Russo's has a big impact on the neighborhood.
19. There's a difference between the types of bars that feel more accessible for long-time Newton residents, in comparison to the Tommy Doyle's which feels more like something from Cambridge.
20. Want historical and art revitalization of Coletti-Magni Park. For example, why not use the fence (that runs parallel to Watertown St) as a place to display photos of Nonantum's historical buildings?
21. It would be difficult to add bike lanes to the main streets in Nonantum, we have narrower streets.. We were taught as children to get off of our bikes and walk through the village center.
22. Years ago, everything was perfect. Now things are waning with a lack of maintenance.
23. Want more green spaces, nature and beautification required in new developments.
24. Love Pátzcuaro Taqueria & Bar – love the food quality, the environment, that it's family-owned, and it has the best margaritas! Want more diverse food options in Nonantum.
25. De Pasquale's Market, Guiseppes, D&A, Antoine's Pastry Shop and Olivia's highlight the 'family' element of businesses in Nonantum. It's also food that people come from all over the place for – for example, people travel in order to get the Chinese sausage from De Pasquale's!
26. Excited for the new West St to open up. Looking forward to another option – West St is more townie. We are looking forward to having another restaurant/bar in the neighborhood, especially one with as much history as West Street has. This has been the place where generations have gathered. You can go in on a Saturday night and see anyone from your recent 21 year olds to those in their 80s having dinner or a drink and enjoying a conversation.
27. There were a lot of events that we used to have that don't happen anymore, largely because people have been priced out.
28. It feels like any development can get approved here with the current zoning.
29. Nonantum is historical – it was built around the turn of the century, Chuck's dad worked at Raytheon just across the river in Watertown, and his entire family used to live on Morgan Place, at one point in time almost every home on Morgan Place was the Proia, and Gemma families, and there's even an old bowling ally in the basement of what's now Schwartz's!
30. Former fighter station, Hose 8 became a Newton Free Library but now is rented out to an Italian organization [Ciociaro Social Club] that's very culturally relevant and they rent out of the space. Like how this space is getting used.
31. Where the blue bikes currently are placed, in the paved driveway of the old fire station/library, feels like a good location. Originally, the city proposed to put that directly on the corner of Bridge St & Watertown St, and in place of a tree – Chuck attended a public meeting and proposed they put the bikes on the driveway. A moment in which a community member's knowledge of their neighborhood resulted in better modifications of public space. Now you can't even really tell the blue bike station is there, it fits right in – even though it apparently has the highest use in Newton.
32. Really like how much Nonantum feels like an Italian-American town.

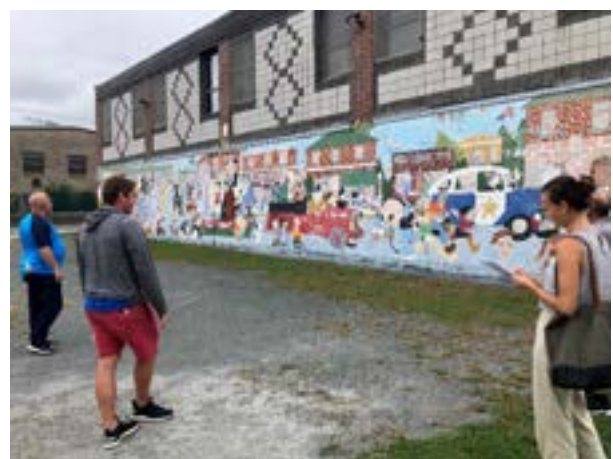


33. I would love to see places in Newton become more like Italian village centers.
34. Would like to see more outdoor pedestrian activation of the spaces.
35. I would love to see a farmers market, whether at Post 440 or in Pellegrini park or Coletti-Magni park.
36. The funeral home in Nonantum plays an important role in the community. Even if you don't live here anymore, families still come back to have services at this funeral home. The building also feels like it's part of the neighborhood character.
37. There's a history to people running businesses out of their homes in Nonantum, but that happens less often now.
38. It really takes the community to rise up in response to developments that do not feel like they fit Nonantum.
39. Do not feel like there's any need for traffic calming efforts.
40. There is limited parking availability – would like more of this.
41. Putting in a bike lane will not balance things – but I could see putting in a bike rack. So folks can ride their bikes to the village center and then walk around to our shops and restaurants.
42. Some of the bus stops / shelters could be updated.
43. Love the electrical boxes with old Newton photos, they feel connected to the neighborhood.
44. Were really sad when the original West Street closed – it was really intergenerational.
45. It stinks to see all of my [younger] generation move out. Cousins, nurses and teachers are moving out because of being priced out. We also see this in the Boys & Girls Club and the amount of turn over it has.
46. We don't want to keep people out, but rather, want to protect the affordability and culture of Nonantum – keep making it accessible to people who are working frontline jobs and blue collar jobs – like nurses, teachers, firefighters and more.

Photos from the Vision Kit (the number labeled below is the statement the photo accompanies)



Statement 1



Statement 3



Statement 5



Statement 9



Statement 12



Statements 12, 13 & 14



Statement 17



Statement 17



Statement 20



Statement 24



Statement 31



Statement 36



Completing the Vision Kit 1



Completing the Vision Kit 2

Nonantum village center  
Vision Kit  
Submitted by Councilor John Oliver + 3 community members

August 29, 2021

After a quick discussion we determined the area we feel is roughly the 'village center' and [walked this basic route](#). All of the photos referenced in this document [are here](#).

### **Transportation**

Getting in / out of Nonantum right now is likely a majority of personal auto and for those close enough, walking. I do see a lot of walking in and around the shops and restaurants, fields that surround the village.

There are 2 or 3 bus routes that run through the village to Boston (553 and 554), and the 556 (and others?) routes are on Washington St.

For this trip, I drove in and parked behind the village bank (there is a municipal lot there). I often bike into the Village but there is very little - VERY little bike parking. Add bike parking perhaps off of Watertown along some side streets where parking lots already exist (e.g., @ Dunkin Donuts, behind Moldova restaurant) I also hope the Blue Bike station next to the old Children's library has enough use to remain there. To this end, I could see having room for a bike lane on Watertown, but not Adams.

A note about accommodating bike paths THROUGH a village center. I do wonder if we are creating safety challenges when forcing bikes, cars and pedestrians to share such crowded spaces as Watertown St through Nonantum. How can we consider different paths through these pinch points that we have in place? How can we support our existing businesses' needs for parking now, and as well as prepare for future needs that may shift to less cars, more bikes & pedestrians? I am not convinced yet that we are ready to prioritize bikes (by volume).

Due to the narrowness of both Adams and Watertown Streets, I would not want to see much public transportation added to this area - it will only increase congestion and wait times at the traffic lights.

### **Some attributes that exist today that we should keep**

Overall, there is a lot of history in and around this village center that is partially represented in a handful of structures that should be preserved, and will set a tone for the style and scale of the village.

Notably, these structures should anchor the style, scale - let's protect these structures and point to them as examples or anchor points for the village 'tone'(pics in photo album):

- Children's Library

- Old building (name?) corner of Adams and Watertown
- Chapel St office building

There are several parks in and adjacent to the Village center that contribute positively to the village! While there is a large opportunity for improving their upkeep, the green space is essential.

- Magni-Coletti memorial park. The heart of the village, both literally and figuratively speaking. We started and ended our tour here. It is attractive and can be more so. Heavily treed and the shade offers a great break from sun and heat. There are benches, picnic tables here - great. Artwork is on display (the doors) and the 'piano in the park' is here as well - the concrete chess table is a nice touch. This park is a well-known gathering place for the community and MANY events that support the neighborhood.
- Pellegrini park on Hawthorn (pics). Has a ton of potential to be one of the nicest spots in the city. Basketball court, a softball diamond, tennis courts and two playground areas are all here. As is a pavilion for shade behind the field house (which is about to receive a much-welcomed facelift).
- A block off of Watertown is Stearns field as well. Its close enough that I consider this part of the village center. A large field with tennis courts, basketball and a little league baseball diamond are the primary features for this park. Again, there is ample shade in this park thanks to the large trees on the property.

I know this is controversial for some, but I believe the road striping and fire hydrant painting add a lot to the neighborhood. Make room for it today and moving forward.

### **What the Future could look like in Nonantum**

I generally want all of our village centers to retain their charm - but this is the Village center that most benefits from maintaining its' cultural feel. Allowing large, monolithic developments in this center would be a mistake, as these would quickly diminish or even destroy the visual 'nod' to its history.

When we consider zoning for this village center, preservation of older buildings, facades and the overall scale that exists today should be paramount. Up and down Nevada, Chapel and Bridge street are churches, large converted factories that are great representations of the character that should be maintained. Most of the buildings I feel should be protected are red brick buildings (pics)

There are multiple large, privately owned parking lots that we need to be thoughtful about as well. Prime spaces for creative combinations of retail, small office spaces and housing are likely for these parking lots and a few of the existing businesses there today (eg., behind the Childrens' library).

I would love love love to see Nonantum become home to restaurants and bars, cafes and similar meeting locations. What about creating an arcade-like area for mini-shops in one of the

open parking lots? Newton should partner with developers that want to add to the culture of Nonantum - and avoid the banks that are overpopulating other village centers.

### **Some aspects of what is there Today that detract from the Village center**

- The overhead electrical wires are overdone (pics), and we should look to underground them on main thoroughfares (Watertown, Adams) at a minimum.
- The sidewalks are a disaster and get in the way of walkability - tree roots are causing uneven pavement up and down the streets.
- Nonantum, and Newton in general needs a bath; Some soap and water with a good scrubbing :-) Many amenities are not being kept up. From simple cleanup to maintaining our parking lots, parks and sidewalks - the trash, weeds and more all add up to a less than ideal visit. Even the 'big bellies' are in need of a cleaning!

# NEWTON UPPER FALLS AREA COUNCIL



23 September 2021

Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler  
Community Planner Engagement Specialist  
Planning Department  
City of Newton  
1000 Comm. Ave. Newton, MA 02459

Dear Ms. Pilipovic-Wengler:

The Upper Falls Area Council has reviewed and attempted to use the visioning package for Pettee Square. The following lists highlights from that review.

In approaching this project, we looked to a report released by the London School of Economics called 'New London Villages,'<sup>1</sup> which identifies six characteristics of an urban village. These include being a place that is unique, mixed, locally driven and designed for social interaction. It emphasizes that villages should be walkable with places to congregate and strive for more than 50% green space.

There is strong consensus to conceptualize Pettee Square as a pedestrian center for Newton Upper Falls.



Greenway along Bocce Court in Pettee Square, 18 September 2021

The Upper Falls Area Council is, of course, unanimously and implacably opposed to any vision for Pettee Square that includes light rail along the Greenway.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lse.ac.uk/business/consulting/reports/new-london-villages>



Any pedestrian-oriented vision for Pettee Square must also include the Upper Falls Greenway and trail loops along the Charles River as diagrammed above.

To the east, the Upper Falls Riverwalk<sup>2</sup> needs connecting steps to the Greenway to complete pedestrian loops to Saco and Williams Streets. We understand that a realistic budget for these steps will be included in Newton’s Conservation Commission 2022 budget, and we enthusiastically look forward to completion of this critical connection in the spring of 2022.

To the northwest, there is an existing easement along the Charles River between the Greenway and Braceland Park, shown as a dotted line on the diagram. The city plans to improve Braceland Park in about 5 years as part of a Master Plan. A pedestrian connection along the easement, with steps, will need time for permissions, designs, and approvals. We urge the city to start that process in 2022 so that implementation can be included with the Braceland Park improvements.

To the southwest, we look forward to a day when Needham and Newton will work together to establish a pedestrian and bicycle connection across the Charles River to Needham’s “Mixed Use 128” zone and beyond.

<sup>2</sup> Renamed in 2021. Appears as Charles River Pathway on various maps.





During our visioning process, a constituent identified an opportunity to convert Linden Street, between Chestnut St. and Ossipee Road, into green space. That would eliminate most of the traffic and noise on the east portion of Pettee Square, and also provide a quiet space well separated from Northland and the splash park. The Upper Falls Area Council enthusiastically supports this concept.

Sincerely,

Anil Adyanthaya  
President  
Newton Upper Falls Area Council

- Cc: Mayor Ruthanne Fuller  
City Councilor Deb Crossley  
City Councilor Andreae Downs  
City Councilor Bill Humphrey  
Director Barney Heath, Planning & Development  
Chief Environmental Planner, Jennifer Steel  
Commissioner Nicole Banks, Parks & Recreation  
Newton Upper Falls Area Council

**DEVELOPMENTAL RESOURCES, INC.**  
**ARCHITECTURE \ PROJECT MANAGEMENT \ REAL ESTATE**

September 22, 2021

To: Zach LeMel, Newton Planning Department

Xc: Mayor Ruthanne Fuller & Newton City Councilors

From: Dennis Rieske AIA, Developmental Resources, Inc.

RE: Zoning Redesign, +55 Housing in Village Centers + Robust Design Review  
Bullet Points for Zoning Reform;

(1). Keep Special Permits and FAR Restrictions for all Commercial Projects + any  
Residential Projects over 4 Units in Size.

(2). Require 20 to 25% Affordable Housing Units for all Residential Projects over  
12 Units and Require Cash Payments to Newton Housing Partnership for all  
Residential Projects between 4 Units and 11 Units. Amount TBD.

(3). Affordable Housing required under Newton Zoning @ 80% AMI is a joke.  
This is not Affordable Housing. There should be a housing mix of 80%, 50% +  
30%. 80% of AMI for Family of 1=\$67,400, 2=\$77,000, 3=\$86,650, 4=\$96,250.

(4). Require +55 deed restricted Elderly Housing in Village Centers. +55 deed  
restricted housing is the only allowed legal RE discrimination allowed in the US.

(5). +55 deed restricted housing in OTHER states also includes reduced RE Tax  
since there are no school-age children. RE Tax deduction would be determined  
depending on the restriction and should be negotiated BEFORE a Special Permit.

(6). There is little Affordable Housing for Elders and little rental housing in the  
Village Centers where there are appropriate services. This should be a priority.

(7). Unbuildable lots offer a unique possibility for construction of affordable  
housing if combined with a +55 deed restriction.

(8). Newton Housing Partnership could become a major player with CPA and  
developer linkage funds. Newton Housing Authority could also be a player.

(9). Robust Design Review BEFORE a Special Permit must be included in Zoning  
Reform by Newton Historical, a Historic District Commission or the Urban Design  
Committee. Design Approval MUST be obtained before filing for a Special Permit.

As I told Deb Crossley, architects have unlimited ideas. Not all of them are good  
but if you don't like one idea, wait a minute. I will have another idea. Dennis

## **Vision Kit Exercise Conducted in Mr. Andrew Thompson's Senior Sustainability Class at Newton South High School**

**May 12, 2021**

**Participants: 10 High Schoolers**

### Group 1

#### **Environment**

- Newton has a lot of nice public areas, parks and public recreation areas.
- An increase in trees blocking sidewalks for bike lanes would help in making the walker feel safer and improving air quality in the town

#### **Housing**

- Barrier around public areas for drivers to slow down
- More aid for handicapped peoples - grooves in the sidewalk for walkers and visual/audio aid in navigating newton roads

#### **Accessibility**

- Providing availability for citizens and tourists to see the shops safely - possibly shutting down roads in busy retail areas for full consumer accessibility

#### **Arts and Culture**

- Parks being opened for bands or farmers markets
- Events that can bring together people for community growth
- Painting necessary but visually dull infrastructure like electrical boxes, streetlights, trashcans.

#### **Diversity and Inclusion**

- Gender Neutral Bathrooms
- Portray encouraging flags and symbols
- Increasing minority support and inclusion

#### **Transportation**

- Transportation connecting various villages through a shuttle
- Providing ample public transportation for people to access all of Newton, although there is no space and money to implement a full transportation system that caters to different Newton villages

-

### Group 2

- Green spaces are important → either make sure to keep those that are already in place and possibly create more with new housing.
- Bike lanes → encourage people to bike, and ensure safe bike lanes
  - Problems: Newton housing is super expensive.
  - If you lower housing, then people lose the money they paid for their home. If you keep housing, you are still pushing some people away because they cannot afford it.

- Perhaps have more transportation options like blue bike stations around Newton to encourage and facilitate more sustainable transportation.
  - ((I am not sure if there are already a lot of blue bike stations in Newton or not)).
- More sustainable housing codes.
- Sustainability index cards - selling point maybe.
  - How sustainable a house is
- Make sure there are safe crosswalks
- Transparency and communication in doing anything is key
  - Making sure that everyone is heard and whatever is being changed is open for discussion by the community.
- I am not sure how helpful this would be but perhaps there could be water filling stations around town.

### Group 3

- making parking and driving easier, simpler
- more public transportation/buses/commuter rail between some villages especially the north and south side, ones without mbta green line stations
- public transportation/bus around newton south and newton center - “people movers” like in detroit
- more cool attractions outside, in villages
- more affordable housing/attract more socioeconomic diversity
- active conservation
- Governance: transparency / democracy / equity/justice / process for how a society is run
- 3 stakeholders groups interact: (1) the state (gov’t) (2) private sector (3) civic organizations/citizens

### Group 4

Familiar with Newton Center, Newton Highlands, and Newtonville

#### Newton Center

- Those smart bikes
- Train station
- Some multifamily housing, also a lot of big single family houses
- A lot of restaurants have been shut down and been taken over by banks (like 8 of them where there is no need)
- Not a lot to shop for if you aren’t an adult, could make it more welcoming

#### Oak Hill Park

- Used to be a bus stop (52 bus) but then it stopped
- Little community center and pizza place and stuff nearby
- Lots of teardowns and construction of giant houses built for profit, not affordable or anything

## Newton Highlands

- Train station

## Newtonville

- Good that it is right near schools, students provide business, get to go out, have experiences, be a part of the community, get jobs there, South is more isolated

## All

- Bus stations
- Hard to cross the street/be a pedestrian in most of them
  - Closing down a whole block so that it's only open for pedestrians, would encourage walking there and would be safer, maybe get more business
- Lots of shops have the button with the automatic door for wheelchair accessibility
- Sidewalks are bad everywhere
  - Repaving the sidewalks, more small ramps instead of curbs
- Increase public transportation to centers, more accommodations on public transit
- Not a whole lot catered to young people, have to go out to bigger malls. We don't need a mall, but more community based things to do
  - Like a small fair thing that comes to Newton center
- Village days are pretty good
- Biggest problem with bringing in diversity is Affordable housing, which Newton lacks
- Washington street vision, getting affordable housing but also getting input from community to make the backlash smaller and get people more involved
- Newton pride parade??? (so many white gay people)
  - Could make it seem more inclusive and welcoming
- Surface level white liberal thing, NIMBYism
  - Just more affordable housing, easier to accept people living around you
- Things that make Newton a place where people want to go (schools and stuff)
  - Make the welcoming part less surface level, actually bringing new people with new experiences and perspectives into the community

Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler  
 Community Engagement Specialist  
 City of Newton  
 1000 Comm. Ave. Newton, MA 02459  
 By email

Dear Ms. Pilipovic-Wengler:

Below find a survey of 4.79 acres of property in Newton Upper Falls, privately held, that would be candidates for some kind of Village Center zoning.

Parcel	Current Use	Lot Size	Assessed Value	Per Acre
107-109 Oak	Office	63,770	\$3,320,000	\$2.27M
1185 Chestnut	Cannabis Dispensary?	17,091	\$1,171,600	\$2.99M
1191 Chestnut	Retail, Office, Daycare	25,392	\$2,666,800	\$4.57M
1195-1209 Chestnut	Retail, Biltmore, Office	12,012	\$2,006,600	\$7.28M
1215-1223 Chestnut	Retail, Office	8,270	\$2,352,700	\$12.39M
1214-1220 Chestnut	Retail	19,378	\$1,758,300	\$3.95M
81 Oak, 16 Indiana	Office, Post Office	22,955	\$1,873,400	\$3.56M
70 Linden, 69 Mechanic	Parking Lot	39,757	\$441,300	\$0.48M



Assessed value is an imperfect metric, but these numbers do seem to align with untapped potential in Pettee Square. Compare these assessments to any recently completed mixed-use development in Newton. This mismatch will become even more apparent when Northland is developed.

Consider one example. Walking around the expansive parking lot at 107-109 Oak Street, one can easily imagine a mixed-use development, in scale with “Building 14” Northland townhouses across Oak Street, and a new pedestrian plaza along the Upper Falls Greenway.<sup>1</sup>



107-109 Oak Street today



Northland Building 14 across Oak Street

Under current zoning, the future of Pettee Square is left to a mishmash of decisions by individual parcel owners as they each maneuver to capture some of the value of their private property. A new zoning framework for Pettee Square is urgently needed.

Sincerely,

Jay Werb  
31 Williams Street  
Newton Upper Falls

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<sup>1</sup> 28 Austin Street, on a similar sized parcel, is assessed at \$18,294,200.

**Vision Kit:** Upper Falls Visioning Walk

**Participants:** Jay Werb, Garry Miller, Andreae Downs, Deborah Crossley, Kathaleen Brearley

**Mode:** Emailed to Nevena P.W. from Andreae Downs

**Comments:**

- The pedestrian loops at the Charles River (Greenway-Williams soon, and Greenway-Braceland Park later) should be part of the vision for the Village Center, to help the city and the community "remember" to get those done eventually.
- "Across Newton", which is worth doing on its own merits, might also be a helpful framework to think about Pettee Square as a pedestrian friendly village center. ("Across Newton" is something that Jennifer Steel – Chief Environmental Planner – is working on as a long term project.)
- Depot--great outdoor gathering space marred by the traffic noise (most traffic going left from Oak NB to Chestnut WB-->NB and in reverse, but going faster up Oak now that the double-yellow line continues past Chestnut.) Mostly pass-through traffic.
- Pettee Sq could be a much more walkable, green space.
- Upper Falls Village has moved over time. Originally at Chestnut/Summer St. area (Brass Shop) and the mill buildings; Then moved to High/Oak area (Bob's Sub Shop), now Pettee Square -- started after the railroad became freight/commuter rail (origin of the Depot), and includes the recently restored as office, former manufacturing block from about 1910.
- Feeling local history should be better known, and public signage/QR codes would help. Love the explanatory signage on the Greenway, think should add the history of the manufacturing from the Industrial Revolution in UF, want history integrated into any improvements to the public spaces, possibly linked to "walking loops" - see below.
- Pettee Sq should have an ice cream shop to the west of the future splash park.
- Thoughts of closing the block of Linden from Osippee south to the Telegraph Block driveway--planting it with a bioswale, trees, grass--make the private parking lot to the East into an open market space such as Brighton's Speedway
- What else could go there? No appetite in the neighborhood (Area Council?) as yet for more housing until Northland project finished. Possible location of the Farmer's Market?
- Talk of a 15-minute pedestrian neighborhood centered on the Greenway. Greenway, when connected to the Northland park system some feel it may become the center of the village.
- But then we discussed the difference between a center of activity and the village center, though we did not address other areas in terms of what could go there, all agreed we can do better than the strip mall across Chestnut.
- Across Lexington (make it for Newton)--loop walks from Transit. Jay Werb drafted maps and possible connections...
- The neighborhood demographics: lower income/younger/denser and more diverse than most of Newton.



**VILLAGE CENTER VISION KIT**  
**AUBURNDALE SQUARE**  
Prepared by Randall Block and Phil Wallas

## What is a Village Center?

Regrettably, the Planning and Development Department has declined to provide a definition of “Village Center” to help us with our use of the “Vision Kit”. This will make it very difficult to compare how people apply the Vision Kit to different Village Centers.

In order to do our analysis of Auburndale Square, we decided to develop our own definition of a Village Center.

In our opinion, a Village Center must fulfill two functions for the immediate neighborhood:

- 1) It must provide services and amenities such as grocery shopping, a post office, a bakery, a restaurant, etc.
- 2) It must provide a central gathering place where people socialize.

Note that a Village Center differs from a Commercial Cluster in that it has a central gathering function. Without that, a Village Center is no different from a Commercial Cluster.

Note also that our definition of a Village Center does not require public transit. That may be a desirable amenity but a Village Center can function quite well without the presence of public transit.

## Description of Area

Auburndale Square is the intersection of two major streets: Commonwealth Ave. and Lexington St. Continue west on Commonwealth Ave. for about 1 mile for access to I-95 and the Mass Pike. Continue north on Lexington St for about one mile to enter Waltham and one of its major commercial areas, Moody Street.

The eastern edge of the Auburndale Square area begins with a small office building at 2000 Commonwealth Ave. and extends to the public library at 375 Auburn St. which runs parallel to Commonwealth Ave. one block to the south. This commercial area is approximately ¼ mile long and two city blocks wide. It takes about 8 minutes to walk from one end to the other.

## Shopping, Eating & Working

The shopping opportunities provide many of the needs of Auburndale residents. The Star Market grocery store serves not only Auburndale but draws customers from Waltham and Weston. A major parking lot serves Star and a few other businesses, a bagel bakery, dry cleaners, hair salon, and a bank. Other notable businesses in the area are a gas station, pharmacy, liquor store, post office, Dunkin Donuts, Starbucks, pizza shop, women’s clothing store, pet groomer, gift shop, bakery, and Village Bank. There are also a few small restaurants. People complain

that restaurant dining could be improved. A new bar/restaurant, Ward 4, recently opened in response to this demand.

The small businesses on Lexington Street turn over frequently. The pandemic caused some businesses to close on Auburn St. Businesses on Commonwealth Ave. are more stable.

There are several small office buildings on Commonwealth Ave, Lexington Ave., and Auburn St. Medical, accounting, financial services, and computer repair are examples of businesses that are located in these buildings.

## Welcoming Spaces

Very small resting spaces with benches and some landscaping dot the area. One is located off the Star Market parking lot; another is in front of Starbucks; another is on Lexington St. at the entrance to the parking lot belonging to the office building at 350 Lexington St; another is in the roundabout at Auburn and Melrose Streets.

These small spaces get a modest amount of use but they add a welcoming feel to the area.

By far the most welcoming building in the area is the Auburndale Community Library at 375 Auburn St. It has been run by a non-profit organization ever since Newton opened the main library in 2009 and closed branch libraries. The library is handicap-accessible. Flowers and landscaping are beautifully maintained. Immediately adjacent to the library on Auburn St. is a vacant city lot with grass, flowers, and benches for sitting.

The library is the last building in the Auburndale Square area before the street turns residential.

**There are three major challenges to making the Auburndale Square area more welcoming for pedestrians:** 1) The noise on Auburn St. generated by Mass Pike traffic; 2) The traffic congestion on Lexington St. and Commonwealth Ave.; and 3) The absence of a park or other natural gathering place.

Holding a normal conversation was difficult while walking on Auburn St. at 3pm on a weekday afternoon. We believe more people would linger on Auburn St. if noise containment barriers were installed on the Mass Pike. Benches and potted plants could be installed in front of businesses on Auburn St. from Lexington St. to Melrose St. This improvement would connect with the roundabout at Melrose St. and the public library which are already attractive.

Newton reportedly spent \$2 million upgrading the traffic signal system at Auburndale Square in an effort to better regulate traffic. Most people believe that traffic congestion has worsened. During rush hour, traffic on Lexington St. heading south toward Auburndale Square can be backed up for a mile nearly to the Waltham border. Similarly, traffic on Auburn St. heading north toward Auburndale Square will often cause a backup onto Grove Street. Traffic on Commonwealth Avenue in both directions can be backed up at rush hour. We do not have any suggestions that would reduce Village Center congestion. However, this congestion could be aggravated by an attempt to increase housing density in the immediate area.

The most logical public gathering place that would turn Auburndale Square area into a true Village Center is the community library. It is unfortunate that this building and surrounding grounds are at the very edge of the Village Center. However, with some creative thinking, the library and adjacent grounds could attract many more people. We suggest that a Farmer's Market be tested at the library site. Crafts and art work could be sold along with fresh fruits and vegetables. We also suggest that the grassy lot adjacent to the library be considered for some sort of recreational development – perhaps a playground.

We wondered if the housing complex being built on the site of the Turtle Lane Playhouse includes any significant park or playground space. We suspect that it does not and so this is a missed opportunity for making Auburndale Square a more welcoming and pedestrian friendly place.

## Transportation

By far the most frequent form of transportation is vehicular. Bicycling is infrequent probably because it is unsafe given the dominance of vehicular traffic and the complexity of the Auburndale Square intersection. The unpredictability of New England weather is likely another factor in discouraging bicycle traffic.

There is a commuter rail stop on the south side of Auburn St. However, this is used primarily by non-Newton residents who park-and-ride into downtown Boston.

There is bus service on the 505 which originates in Waltham and makes several stops on Lexington St., Commonwealth Ave. and Washington St. (Rt. 16) on its way to becoming an express bus to downtown Boston via the Mass Pike. This bus runs only at peak commuting times, 6:30 am to 9am and 3:40 to 7:40pm. Buses run every 20 to 30 minutes.

There are frequent discussions in Newton about encouraging greater use of public transit to reduce carbon emissions. However, if Auburndale residents do not currently use the commuter rail or the 505 bus, we should learn why. Increasing the amount of housing within walking distance of the commuter rail station is not likely to generate increased ridership unless we can figure out why it is not more popular with existing residents.

In our opinion, the commuter rail and 505 bus serve a very small percentage of the people who live in Auburndale. It does not appear to play a significant role in the vitality of the Village Center. A survey of residents of Auburndale would be useful to determine how many people currently use the commuter rail station for commuting purposes.

## Village Center Gathering Place

Auburndale Square lacks a natural gathering place for socializing. Thus it cannot be called a "Village Center". It is better described as a commercial cluster with pedestrian-friendly elements, e.g., the community library and small resting spaces described above. The most likely

space that might function as a gathering place is the library, adjacent park, and businesses along Auburn St.

## Housing

Housing can be found immediately adjacent to the boundaries of the Auburndale Square area on the north side of Commonwealth Ave., on Melrose Street, and on Auburn Street beyond the library. The housing is mostly single and two-family homes with one and two-story apartment complexes nearby. In our opinion building taller apartment complexes in the Village Center would clash with the current human scale of the square.

There is an undeveloped parcel behind Village Bank that is currently used as a dirt parking lot. This could provide a modest amount of additional housing. Perhaps a non-profit developer could build 100% affordable housing for people who might not need a car. Grocery shopping and commuter rail are within walking distance and many other amenities are available nearby.

*Submission by Beth Smith*

### **Thoughts About Newtonville**

I have lived in Newtonville since 1975 and know it very well. My thoughts about the village are as follows, both the positives and not-so-great attributes.

But first, how would I define Newtonville as a village center? I would say that its “heart” and best characteristics are south of the Mass Pike along Walnut Street up to the current Senior Center. There also is a row of stores and now Trio and the Post Office north of the Pike, which I would say ends at Lowell on the west and at the Verizon building going east on Washington St. The most obvious aspect (and challenge) of Newtonville is being divided by the Pike and the Commuter Rail, something that received considerable attention during the Washington Corridor planning process. (See the ideas generated, some of which were considered unrealistic financially. Air pollution from the Pike also is a problem and health hazard.)

1. Stores/Restaurants/Etc. – Newtonville has always had a good mix of stores and restaurants though they have changed significantly over the years and continue to do so today. We also have empty storefronts, which is a concern. Sadly, some of the best stores (the Hallmark stationary/gift store, Newtonville Camera, Newtonville Books, and Debby’s Pet Land) are no longer here, and what has replaced them is not as varied or as interesting. I also just heard that COOK is closing, which is very sad, on top of losing Rox Diner. (MIDA is great and very popular, but it may have hurt COOK and also is definitely more expensive....) We are glad that a barbershop survived (even though it was displaced due to Trio), and we value our wonderful long-time family-owned car repair shop (though we no longer have a gas station in Newtonville and have to go to West Newton). How can the City help to encourage a good “mix” of stores and businesses while also filling vacant store fronts? And BTW, having local banks here is not bad as they serve local residents.)
2. Transportation – My husband and I have commuted into Boston for years on both buses and the Commuter Rail. The buses have been great, when they go from local to downtown (553, 554, 556). We all know that the Commuter Rail is a HUGE problem in terms of accessibility. If the MBTA had not come up with its current plan, I always wondered if someone would file a law suit to force improvements. We walk into Newtonville all the time, which is not a problem. However, I have seen that the new street configuration on Walnut has made it difficult to park and harder for traffic to move through. We would never try to park there and are glad that we do not need to.
3. Housing – One of the key aspects of Newtonville (and perhaps other villages) is that it is basically “one store or business deep”, taking up much less than a half a block from Walnut or Washington Street. For the most part, Newtonville abuts very residential areas, including the Newtonville Historic District where I live. Sensitivity to this reality is extremely important as village planning moves forward. Those of us on Foster Street have already experienced a situation where the so-called “buffer” between a very large development and a big parking lot and our adjacent single family homes is inadequate. As Newtonville is considered “transit oriented” (for some anyway!), it is seen as a good location for more housing. I would only want this to be as affordable as possible, no more than three or possibly four stories (if set back) high, and homeownership if at all possible, given all the new rental units we already have at Trio and Austin Street. While some added height along Walnut Street would be fine (with housing above stores), the idea of five or even four-story buildings there would be totally inappropriate and begin to create a canyon-like effect. One

question I do have is whether the Star Market parking lot could be redeveloped as a three and maybe partly four-story condo development, with the parking put underground.

4. Welcoming spaces – Newtonville has the Senior Center, and I personally am sad that the current building, which has both historical value and a distinctive design, will most likely be torn down. While having the Center in Newtonville is nice for anyone who lives here, given the proposed design and community needs, the current site is too small. I also feel badly for the homeowners who abut the site as they are in for a very challenging time. I do not know what the building was previously (at the corner of Walnut and Washington Park), but it was restored as condos at some point and is a lovely addition to Newtonville. So is the former Christian Science church building. One building that was beautiful but has a rebuilt steeple that is just horrible is the former Methodist Church at the corner of Walnut and Newtonville Ave. I do not know how the City ever approved of that change and wonder if there is any way to use CPA or historic tax credit funds to redo the work properly.

On the whole, while the new trees along Walnut Street are wonderful!, I do not find that Newtonville has any kind of central “green” or communal space that feels welcoming to all. Relatively speaking, Newtonville also suffers from having many heat “islands” and roads. Whatever can be done to add more trees to Newtonville would be a plus in terms of climate and health.

We also need to keep in mind that Newtonville is a destination for Newton North teens. How can residents and the City embrace this reality and create spaces where NN students feel that it is “their” space while also being responsible for it? Teens definitely should be a part of the planning process. Day Junior High students also are a part of Newtonville but perhaps more because they travel through it.

Sincerely,

Beth Smith  
40 Foster Street  
Newtonville

*Additional thought emailed after this original submission:*

**Thanks for doing the focus group yesterday. One thing I was reminded of in terms of the three village centers (and other areas) along the Pike is the issue of noise. It is a huge problem. Building barriers can help to mitigate it, but they also do not help unify the villages. The other thing I forgot to mention is the wonderful Masonic building in Newtonville, a true historic asset. (Though it should not mean that every corner lot should be five stories!)**

## MY VISION KIT -- Peter Bruce 11 Claflin Place, Newtonville

The most important values I'd like to see represented in my village center (of Newtonville) and Newton itself are a sense of realism in addressing the future, and respect for those of us who live here and have contributed over the years to the city becoming the fine place that it is. While the usual goals of addressing climate change, housing affordability, fiscal solvency, and preserving and sustaining our environment and our wonderful old architecture are also crucially important, they need to first be addressed with those two previously stated goals in mind.

Regarding a sense of realism, it would be nice if we weren't confronted with questions that seem leading and ideologically driven. For instance, the housing question asking us to stand at a transit stop and try to locate multi-family units somewhere nearby seems leading because we know the Planning Department is pushing for that, but it's not necessarily what residents want. And it's downright silly in Newtonville Center since such places are already a "brooding omnipresence" on the ground. Not only do we already have recently completed large new developments like 77 Court Street, 28 Austin Street, and Trio, but the first several blocks north of Washington Street are full of older multi-family units and the main census tract in Ward 2, Precinct 2, south of the Pike, my tract, is also mostly comprised of two- and three-family residences, the only such tract in the city. The question also distracts from the more important questions of how are the recent, new, large developments which were built here against majority community opposition, working out? And what do they portend for other, future densifying developments here and elsewhere in Newton?

### Newtonville as a Critical Case study

Excellent concerts and (not so excellent) art in Newtonville's Bram Way (28 Austin St.) plaza and the success of the upscale restaurant Mida in Trio's building are being touted by *Vibrant Newton* as showing that large new developments in Newtonville are creating a better city. And, indeed, Newtonville does serve well as a critical case study, since we are the first village to have had such large, mixed-use developments not only approved in recent years, but also completed and occupied! But, despite these nice community benefits, in terms of their most important goals, the success of these large projects is questionable. And, as canaries in the coal mine, we Newtonvillers need to let the rest of the city know that:

**Transit-oriented development (TOD) doesn't work well here** – Although large developments in Newtonville and billed as "transit-oriented," even in their Board/Council Orders, they aren't, as buses and trains run infrequently. The mainstay of the areas' transit, the commuter rail, makes only ~ 15 trips a day, with an hour between most trains. But the nation's premier institute that certifies places as transit-oriented (*Reconnect America's* "Transit-Oriented Development Institute") requires that intervals between trains be 15-30 minutes or less, with consistent service throughout the day. By its criteria, Newtonville didn't qualify for even the most basic type of transit-oriented neighborhood even before the pandemic. Also, by its criteria, our bus service is spotty as well. So, neither Newtonville, nor West Newton, meets its lowest level of transit-orientedness (although the Green Line, with 100 trips a day, easily does). New developments should conform to the transit we have, not what we wish we had!

As for the future, problems with the commuter rail have only worsened since the pandemic. Due to increased work-from-home, and Uber and Lyft pulling large numbers of people out of transit, commuter rail ridership had declined 25% from 2002 to 2018 according to the Pioneer Institute. And, as of last May, in the midst of the pandemic, its ridership was down another 90% from its pre-pandemic level. By mid-summer, it had risen to 23% in the last reporting I've seen on this in *The Boston Globe*.

Of course, perhaps the availability of "Biden dollars" and MassDOT and the MBTA's recent greenlighting of new, dual platforms and bi-directional service for Newton's three platforms may greatly improve our commuter rail service. But these improvements' construction costs are estimated at ~\$150 million. And, both federal and state guidelines decide the deservingness of such projects by balancing projected ridership versus project costs. And, given the commuter rail's relatively anemic ridership, and the fact that competition over the state's \$3 billion share of federal transportation money, with many other meritorious projects, is likely to be fierce, these potential improvements are quite iffy in the visible future, especially because that rail line depends heavily on white collar workers – 40% of whom say they would prefer to work at home after the pandemic, according to Gallup in national polls.

Also, regarding Newtonville's new developments, there is always the possibility that many of its residents will choose not to use mass transit, especially given pandemic concerns. Furthermore, at 28 Austin Street, according to Newton's *List of Residents*, it appears that there are a very large number of units with only one adult in them, and that the ratio of adults to leased car spaces is about 1.3/1. Not much better than the City's average of roughly 1 car per adult. [Trio opened too recently for this to be a good indicator there.] That many residents at 28 Austin don't indicate their residence on the *List of Residents*, and that it only has 59 registered voters in 68 apartments, suggests that many residents may still maintain their primary residences elsewhere, quite possibly with their personal vehicles. As in Boston, people who live elsewhere may be using these apartments as seasonal or temporary residences, or as "pieds a terres."

Finally, if the mayor's recent promise comes to fruition to make NewMo freely available to anyone who wants to go to a transit station or stop, that would seem to obviate the need, to a large extent, to build lots of housing around transit stops in village centers. So would the fact that despite the growth of environmental consciousness, commuting to work via transit has remained stable over the past several decades at about 12-13% of our workforce according to the MAPC. As such, it might make more policy sense for the city to invest in charging stations that can charge electric vehicles much faster than most home energy sources and do more to educate people about global warming and the advantages of buying hybrid and electric vehicles.

**New developments are making housing less, not more affordable.** The market-rate apartments at Trio have all been leased, according to a spokesperson recently at Newtonville's Village Day (9/26). But when many apartments were still on the market there in June, here's what they were renting for and how they compare with the rest of Newtonville's rentals. The 1-Br+den and the 2-Br and 3-Br apartments all exceed affordability for households earning Newtonville's median income or less, as you can see in bold in the top chart. (This assumes households should pay no more than one-third of their income in rent.)



Furthermore, while the studios and 1-bedrooms are technically affordable by this criterion, as you can see in the lower right-hand corner, they rent for almost double what our comparable, naturally-occurring affordable housing (NOAH) rents for, while the two- and three-bedrooms rent for about two-thirds more. These market-rate apartments represent 105 units, or three-quarters of Trio’s housing stock.

At Newtonville’s Village Day, Trio also distributed a more recent list of prices for market-rate apartments now available, which had been updated as of July 10, 2021. As with the figures in the chart, the following figures represent midpoints of ranges which vary by square footage. The newer average rents for 1-Brs, 1Br+den, 2-Brs, and 3-Brs are: \$3,460, \$3,705, 4,490, and \$5,260 respectively. All, except the 3-Br price, have increased since June, making these apartments even more exclusive. For instance, to pay less than one-third of its income in rent, a household would need \$161,802 to afford a 2-bedroom apartment, while Newtonville’s median income is ~\$127,000.

MARKET-RATE APARTMENTS AT TRIO					
Trio Apartments (June 2021)	Average Monthly Rent		Average Annual Rent	Household \$ needed to afford (1/3 rule)	
Studio	\$ 2,760	\$	33,120	\$ 99,459	0.333
1-Bedroom	\$ 3,340	\$	40,080	\$ 120,360	0.333
1-Bedroom + Den	\$ 3,565	\$	42,780	\$ 128,468	0.333
2-Bedroom	\$ 4,110	\$	49,320	\$ 148,108	0.333
3-Bedroom	\$ 5,590	\$	67,080	\$ 201,441	0.333
<i>The median household income is \$126,659 for 02460</i>					
Current					
Trio Apartments (June 2021)	Average Monthly Rent	Newtonville Median Rent/Mo.	Trio- Newtonville Median Rents/Month	Diff. as % of N'ville Median	
Studio	\$ 2,760	\$ 1,423	\$ 1,337	94%	
1-Bedroom	\$ 3,340	\$ 1,595	\$ 1,745	109%	
1-Bedroom + Den	\$ 3,565	NA	NA	NA	
2-Bedroom	\$ 4,110	\$ 2,550	\$ 1,560	61%	
3-Bedroom	\$ 5,590	\$ 3,250	\$ 2,340	72%	
Source for Newton and Newtonville Rents - Zumper.com; Data as of 9/11/2021					
<a href="https://www.zumper.com/rent-research/newton-ma">https://www.zumper.com/rent-research/newton-ma</a>					
Source for Trio: TRIO/TCC Real Estate, Website data from June 2021 (printed out).					
<i>The median household income is \$126,659 for 02460</i>					
Source: Data is billed as current, from Cubit, which supplies data to MIT and other top institutions: <a href="https://www.incomebyzipcode.com/massachusetts/02461">https://www.incomebyzipcode.com/massachusetts/02461</a>					
Note: These data represent only the Trio apartments on the market in June. I will try to get a full record of all apts. Rented there.					
Overall, 3/4 of Trio's apartments are market-rate like these. Peter Bruce					

These rents are making Newtonville and Newton more gentrified and less welcoming to the less affluent. Ditto for Trio’s “affordable” housing available to those making up to 120% of AMI, as these 1-Brs rent for \$2,492 versus the \$1,595 Newtonville median, and \$2,804 versus \$2,550 for 2-bedrooms. Also, for six of the 13 categories of affordable rents Trio offered, Newtonville’s median rents for comparably-sized places are cheaper. (See attached.) So, while the 21 units of affordable housing at the 80%, and especially the 50% of AMI levels offer substantial bargains for the less affluent, overall, this is far outweighed by the expensiveness of its market-rate apartments, and the more expensive “affordable” apartments.

Finally, as noted on the spreadsheet for the 100% and 120% of AMI apartments, and **for all the market-rate apartments**, there are extra charges for gas heat, electricity, water, and sewage, as well as a \$160/month fee to lease a parking space and a \$50-75/month pet fee which further add to costs and decreases the affordability of the vast majority of these apartments. With these extra charges, a 2-

bedroom with the most recent rent, a leased car stall, and a cat, would need an annual income of >\$169,000 to live at Trio.

Similar high rents (medians of \$3200/mo. for a 1-BR, and \$4,100/mo. for 2-BR) were featured at 28 Austin while it was attempting to rent large numbers of apartments the previous year. But, to its credit, one-third, as opposed to 15% (at Trio), of its apartments were affordable by state standards.

Also, to the extent, as noted, that people in our large new developments retain their primary residences, this impedes the “trickle-down effect” assumed by those asserting that expanding housing supply is, regardless of price, adequate to ensure prices will become more affordable.

### **Newton, largely a cultural and intellectual city, is becoming more commercial and coarser**

Newton is largely a cultural and intellectual city. This is clear from the occupational and industry- sector breakdowns of where people work, and which businesses are the largest employers here, i.e., especially healthcare/medicine, education, scientific research, high tech, and the arts. Some years ago, one of the local papers also reported that Newton was exceptional in the number of people who work in a non-profit capacity.

Despite this relatively humanistic orientation, Newton is taking on a new look. And, as Plato once noted, aesthetic change indicates cultural change. We see this especially at night, as a lit billboard over the Pike invites people to come to Newtonville and conveniently buy recreational marijuana, while the electrographic architecture continues, as one drives into Newton Corner to see neon signs light up buildings in which nothing is happening at night. Then, one gets another dose of neon at Trio, with the lighted ring on top of what looks like a bellhop’s cap at the corner of the building, all of which looks more like 1960s Los Angeles than the north side of Newton, with its 19<sup>th</sup> century ambiance.

As for our new developments’ architecture, Trio’s buildings’ style clashes with the historic look of other large buildings in the neighborhood, lacking the sort of turret or spire that had been promised, which would resonate with the other classically-styled building in the area. It is also massive, arguably ugly, and looks like an army barracks out-of-scale with the residential neighborhood it protrudes from. The HVAC pipes on its roofs also look like clutter. 28 Austin is a better fit, though its exterior material looks like vinyl siding.

**The Washington Street Vision Plan’s proposed zoning and other broken promises** For a year or more, residents on the northside of Newton, community groups, the Principle Group, and the personnel in the City’s planning institutions devoted a great deal of time and energy to holding community engagement events, regular meetings, doing and analyzing surveys, with the City Council eventually deliberating using all this “input” to produce the *Washington Street Vision Plan*. The plan’s early iterations were accompanied by zoning documents and “drop-in” zoning for the whole corridor was supposed to implement it. According to City Council President Albright, however, that zoning was never finished because the Planning and Development Department regarded it as “too controversial.” (She said that to Emily Norton, Tarik Lucas, myself, and other local residents at a recent “Vision Kit” meeting.)

If it had followed the Vision Plan, that zoning would have limited the height of any new building next to the Masonic Hall to four stories or less. But lacking that zoning, we are left in a much-weakened position to retain the prominence of the iconic Masonic building against a proposed five-story building there. Not to mention that the payment of \$500,000 to the Principle Group was, to a large extent, a

waste of money and the community's time and good will. While the Vision Plan was incorporated into the city's Comprehensive Plan, which is a good thing, and at least gives us some leverage to retain the principles and guidance we fought for, this still does not give us the sort of legally enforceable rules that zoning would have given us.

Mayor Fuller, herself, pointed to the imperative of creating zoning for the *Washington Street Vision Plan* in an article by John Hilliard, in *The Boston Globe*, on May 4, 2018:

*"I understand completely that in the past, too often, here in Newton, and in too many other communities, we're not genuinely listening and creating the zoning based on what people want. Instead, there's kind of a hidden agenda," Fuller said. "This is the genuine real deal of listening to people and creating the zoning based on that."*

Given the fact that her administration and the City Council failed to follow through on this promise, is it any wonder that so many people in our area are refusing to participate in the more recent community engagement projects for Zoning Redesign and say "fool me once shame on you, fool me twice..." She broke that promise, just as she did the one in her mayoral debate, in which she promised that a democratic commission, not the Planning Department, would formulate the goals that would guide planning and development.

Beyond that, arguably, Mayor Fuller's signed pledge, along with 14 other mayors, to create 185,000 new units of housing in and around Boston contravenes the Comprehensive Plan. That plan foresaw the need for Newton to increase its housing supply by ~ 15% to maintain a stable population. With all the new developments recently built, and in the pipeline, however, we are already going to be most of the way there, once these projects (totaling about 3500 new units) are all built. But with Fuller's unilateral signing of the 15-mayor pledge, proportional to population, Newton's share of that 185,000 would require that we build another 7,000 more units. Altogether, that ~10,700 units would be one-third of Newton's total housing supply in 2010, and more units than were built in the last 50 years!

This high-handed, unilateral behavior is not only ethically reprehensible, but it explains why our policy-making around planning, development, and zoning reform has seen a series of false starts, reversals, and drift, all wasting taxpayers' dollars, time, and good will for much of the past decade. I see three major false starts:

- 1) The *Pattern Book*, and especially the Form-Based Zoning which was supposed to be based upon it, has seemingly been rejected (at least for the most part) by President Albright, ZAP, and Planning.
- 2) The *Washington Street Vision Plan's* zoning has been abandoned, except to the extent that we can still invoke the Comprehensive Plan to defend it. And,
- 3) The allowance of multi-family units to be built, by right almost anywhere within one-quarter or one-half mile of transit stops, and the related proposal to abolish single-family zoning have been "pivoted" away from, perhaps permanently.

All these reforms were, at least initially, aimed at radically increasing height, density, and development, changes that simply aren't popular on this side of town, and perhaps in most of Newton. To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, with public sentiment, everything is possible. Without it, nothing is possible. Mayor Fuller and many on the City Council have consistently misread public sentiment on these issues, which violates one of the first principles that I stated at the outset of this Vision Kit, i.e., that the people who already live here, and their interests and opinions should be respected.

<sup>i</sup> *"Washington Street has divided Newton for years..."* May 4, 2018. <https://www3.bostonglobe.com/metro/regionals/west/2018/05/04/washington-street-has-divided-newton-for-years-can-city-build-consensus/efleyd2gCU4T6lBjK8Oybl/story.html?event=event12&arc404=true>

Excel document submitted by Peter Bruce as part of their Vision Kit

**TRIO "AFFORDABLE RENTS"**

# of Units	# of Bedrooms	# of Bathrooms	Square Feet	Rent**	Income Limit	N'ville median rent
1	Studio	1	583	\$923	50% AMI	\$1,423
1	Studio	1	582	\$1,447	80% AMI	\$1,423
2	Studio	1	570-590	\$1,784	100% AMI	\$1,423
5	1-BR	1	661-837	\$1,021	50% AMI	\$1,595
5	1-BR	1	687-739	\$1,621	80% AMI	\$1,595
2	1-BR	1	673-765	\$2,039	100% AMI	\$1,595
3	1-BR	1	665-723	\$2,492	120% AMI	\$1,595
4	2-BR	2	942-1109	\$1,079	50% AMI	\$1,595
4	2-BR	2	937-1053	\$1,753	80% AMI	\$2,550
2	2-BR	2	1054-1101	\$2,294	100% AMI	\$2,550
4	2-BR	2	1050-1213	\$2,804	120% AMI	\$2,550
1	3-BR	2	1285	\$1,139	50% AMI	\$3,200
1	3-BR	2	1297	\$2,549	100% AMI	\$3,200

\*\*Tenants are responsible for paying the full amount of rent each month. Rents are not based on each applicant's income (unless they already have a Section 8 voucher or similar). Tenants will be responsible for paying their own utilities. Tenants will pay own Gas Heat and Hot Water and Cooking, Electricity, Water and Sewer. For 50% and 80% units, one parking spot is included. Parking is NOT included for the 100% and 120% AMI units, and parking is estimated to be \$200/mo. The rents are set annually using a calculation that determines the "affordable" rent, which is based on the Area Median Incomes for the Boston MSA.

**Source:** Trio Information Packet for May 22, 2020 Housing Lottery

[https://sebhousing.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/InfoPack\\_Trio\\_Lottery\\_2020.pdf](https://sebhousing.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/InfoPack_Trio_Lottery_2020.pdf)

**Note:** Red figures indicate Trio "affordable" rents exceed Newtonville median rents.

Units	"Affordable," deed-restricted	(all AMI levels)	N'ville median rent
35	Combined average		
	<b>Trio apts.</b>	<b>Trio rents</b>	
4	Studios	\$1,484	\$1,423
15	1-BR	\$1,650	\$1,595
14	2-BR	\$1,938	\$2,550
2	3-BR	\$1,844	\$3,200

Vision Kit Submission by Linda Chafets

Emailed 10.03.21

**Hello,**

**Your kit includes wonderful elements to draw people to the village centers. I believe it also needs cafes and shopping spaces that draw folks to the centers, places to happen upon neighbors, places that include local bakeries, cheese shops, butcher/vegetables shops, etc, knick knacks and gift shops, plus a theater, wine shop, etc., instead of more banks or national chain stores. Places to sit with a friend. Look at the vibrant European centers, where locals and even tourists flock because it is so appealing.**

**Best of luck!**

**Linda Chafets**

**Waban Neighborhood Area Council's Vision Kit Submission**

**Emailed by Chris Pitts**

**Participation: 25 to 30 community members**

Key Suggestions:

Village Entrance signage - there used to be such signage.

Institute robust design review to ensure careful construction.

Preserve Library, Strong building, churches, school and greenspace.

Beacon st.:

- Continue decorative pole lighting Angier to Windsor Road.
- Expand northside sidewalks with brick and possibly trees to accommodate more dining, arts, and slow down traffic.
- Parking structure in the back of a Strong building to replace the front slots. Businesses will have to take advantage of backdoor entryways and make them customer entrances.

Regards,

**Chris Pitts**  
**WAC/WIS President**  
**617 515 7579**

Notes – Traffic Safety in Waban Village Center

Oct 1 2021

Participants: Jenn Martin & Rena Getz

Car dominated zone throughout the Village Center

- The wide streets divide and isolate the sections of the village – Waban Library, Suzuki School, Upper Village, Lower Village, Waban Common, and Angier.
- No real safe way to cross Beacon
- Streets are very wide which make street crossings hostile to pedestrians and allow for drivers to pass turning vehicles which endangers those in crosswalks and the bike lane.
- Woodward has a long crossing distance (82 feet!) and the wide mouth encourages two lanes to exit onto Beacon, one in each direction. The wide entrance onto Woodward similarly encourages high speed turns. Drivers are looking for gaps in traffic and not watching for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Northbound Collins has a Right on Red After Stop. Drivers look to the left for oncoming vehicles but don't always look to the right for westbound pedestrians who may have a Walk signal.
- Similar concern with right turning vehicles from Windsor onto Beacon. Drivers may not see pedestrians crossing Beacon or attempting to cross the wide mouth of Windsor – that crosswalk is 72 feet.

Streets need to be narrowed and crossing distances narrowed significantly to improve pedestrian safety. Reducing side street exits (Windsor & Woodward) to a single lane is appropriate for the village setting.

“Unwelcoming” for bikes/pedestrians starts down at the intersection of Chestnut & Beacon where the street narrows, there is no sidewalk along the north side of Chestnut, and the bike lane fully disappears. The sidewalk drops down to Short St., which requires pedestrians to then negotiate the tricky crossing at Montclair Rd to return to the Chestnut St. sidewalk.

Lack of ADA-compliant curb ramps.

Vehicles enter the parking along the southside of Waban Village at high speeds across the bike lane, and when no one is parked there then vehicles drive in the bike lane.



Head-in parking and poor driver behavior (U-turns into and out of parking, sometimes reversing in to parking) make biking in the westbound direction unsafe through Waban Village.

Reducing excess road space in the area of Pine Ridge, Wyman & Woodward would connect the Waban Library and Lower Village. This is a heavily used pedestrian route to the T as well.

There is a clear desire for gathering in Waban Village, as seen by the heavy use of Waban Common, the outside benches and tables at the Waban Library, and the benches near Starbucks. Taking away some of the space from vehicles and ceding it to people would make Waban Village even better.

#### Angier School

Street design driven by the need of use for 20 minutes (2x/day)

At Angier School intersection (east bound) no need for left turn lane for buses (remove)

Biking/ to Angier School not possible (not safe) – zone too car-centric

Possible squaring off of the intersection in front of Angier School with a raised intersection to induce traffic calming (reduction of automobile speed) and pedestrian safety.

#### Connectivity of Upper & Lower Village centers

- Problematic green wall of vegetation on island
- Cars angle parked issue with changing exiting direction (drivers making U-turns in the middle of the road)

## **Waban Vision Kit Submission**

**Participants:** Andreae Downs, Frances Godine, Nancy Zollers, Isabelle Albeck, Maureen Reilly-Meagher, Carol Todreas, Kathleen Hobson, Tom Gagen, Bill Humphrey, Deborah Crossley

Village Center: it was hot. We just went as far as the end of the T stop to the southeast, the parking lot behind Waban Market to the north and to Waban Hardware to the west. this is roughly the commercial/multi-family/transit part of the neighborhood & was shaded (mostly). We did discuss "waban common" which is the modern roundabout at Collins/waban/beacon.

Environment: We agreed a green future would include more shade and smaller roads/reconsidering parking in favor of people.

Shopping/eating/working: We looked at places for outdoor dining--both by narrowing beacon, closing the block of Wyman that abuts the T stop for a block to allow outdoor gathering, and the private parking lot (expanse of cracked asphalt) behind Waban Market and the Strong Block.

Many liked Rodney Barker Square in the Highlands and wanted that for Waban. Some wanted more setback before multi-family buildings like is the case further east on Wyman (brick buildings). We noted that if these were 3+ stories, the apartments could support an elevator and single-story living. The parking lots around these units are underutilized, and should be smaller to support the T and the local businesses.

Most of us walk to Waban, I bike. Some drive, park & do multiple errands. The station isn't accessible. We hope that is going to be solved soon. The intersection of Woodward & Beacon is overlarge and supports speeding, when it should protect kids enroute to/from school and other pedestrians.

Arts/Culture: we treasure the Suzuki School but wish it had more green & less parking (an artifact of zoning). We love the Waban Library Center.

We would favor a 20 mph safety zone through waban center to also support commuters and the nearby Angier School.

Can the T parking be undergrounded? The station needs a continuous, accessible sidewalk from the stop to the sidewalk on Wyman. This is entirely lacking/blocked.

We like the aqueduct path that is off-road and continuous to Cold Spring, except where it's now blocked by an abutter's new fence (between Chestnut and Woodward)

We'd like more tables out front on Beacon--bigger sidewalk? the angle parking is a source of many crashes. But front-door spaces are highly valued. More 15-minute spaces?

the Waban Market/Strong building parking lot is badly configured/stripped and could be so much more. Cafe seating? what used to be here? It's reportedly currently used for all-day commuter (t) parking--illegally.

Does the Suzuki school really need & use all the asphalt now around it?

We all value the presence of the Strong building--historic--what would it take to fill the 4 vacant storefronts? are the rents too high? How can Newton better support independent commercial businesses? Is the permitting too difficult?

we loved Kouzina (restaurant at what is now Stone L'Oven), noticed lots of foot traffic taking pizza home on a Wednesday night!

some suggested housing over the starbucks on Wyman to make that area more accessible & to support the village commercial.

Allys (well-lit, but small pedestrian walkways) were mentioned as great ways to support village centers. Waban has none, but we know they are valuable in Newton Centre, West Newton and Newtonville

Andreae Downs  
Newton City Council

## WABAN VILLAGE CENTER VISION SUGGESTIONS by Sallee Lipshutz September, 2021

The Village Center of Waban is actually divided in into three parts:

- 1) Half of the Village Center lies to the west of the MBTA tracks and includes Waban Common, the two Churches and the Angier School which comprise a cohesive western half of the entry to our main Village Center. Perhaps the single most important improvement to this area would be signage, indicating that visitors are about to enter the Village Center of Waban as they travel east and approach the crest of the "MBTA hill" on Beacon Street.

The eastern half of Waban's Village Center is divided by a steep grade change from Beacon to Wyman Streets.

- 2) The portion north of Beacon Street is referred to as "The Upper Square," and is comprised of historic structures such as the Strong Building which houses the major commercial center; the Staples-Craft House (now the Suzuki School); and the Windsor Club.
- 3) The portion south of Beacon Street is where the several other historic structures such as the Waban Library, Waban Hall (now Starbucks) and the Waban Post Office are located. This section is referred to as the "Lower Square."

What follows is a suggestion for use of the real estate between Upper Waban Square (between Windsor Road and the MBTA tracks on Beacon Street and Lower Waban Square (between Starbucks and Bank of America on Wyman Street).

Between these two sections of Wyman Street and Beacon Street there is a wild strip of land that has a steep grade of at least six feet. It is covered with bushes and plants and, the well-loved "holiday tree,".

With the objective of knitting these two central portions of the eastern half of our Village Center together, I suggest that the community and the City of Newton explore the following:

- 1) Determine who owns the land: is it owned by Newton or the MBTA or some other government agency? If not owned by Newton, would that entity sell/give it to Newton?
- 2) If Newton is (or becomes) the owner of this property, it should promote its development in the following manner: Provide or raise community funding for a transparent, glass-walled and slope-roofed building (think Quincy Market) providing a meeting/shopping area that might include indoor/outdoor seating and such commercial uses as a bakery, a florist, and an ice cream parlor.
- 3) The building should be transparent from north through to south...glass-sided or some other see-through, perhaps technologically advanced weather-resistant medium! (Call in the artists...maybe a wave wall sloshing; maybe nocturnal projections of color or pictures or other outside-of-the-box displays.)

Other notes for improvement in Waban Square:

- 1) Add historical lamp lighting (such as in Wellesley on Washington Street or along Moody Street in Waltham) along Beacon Street from Manitoba Road, continuing east along Waban Common, continuing through the commercial area past Woodward Street to the intersection with Chestnut Street. Also add this type of matching lighting along Woodward from Beacon to the Aqueduct and along Wyman Street from Woodward to Chestnut Street.

- 2) Build ATTRACTIVE affordable housing, three stories high along the MBTA tracks where a two-story brick residential building now exists on Wyman Street, expanding the number of residences there by half.
- 3) Form a Historical District to preserve the Strong Building, the Staples Craft Building, the Windsor Club, Waban Hall (Starbucks), the Waban Library, the Union Church, and the Church of the Good Shepherd.
- 4) Develop and facilitate a plan for the Windsor Road façade of the Annex to the Strong Building that includes a new, vintage-matching look to the Beacon Street façade. (From the corner clock tower north along Windsor Road to the parking lot.)
- 5) Develop and facilitate a plan that preserves the rear façade of the Strong Building and allows entry to the building from the parking lot. Study road leading uphill to back of Strong Building and make suggestions for reconstruction.
- 6) Develop and facilitate a plan to construct a parking garage along the back portion of the present Waban Market parking lot that is adjacent to the MBTA, with two stories of residences above it, offering small affordable apartment housing that would permanently accommodate young renters.
- 7) Investigate air rights over MBTA tracks between Church of the Good Shepherd and the parking lot behind the Strong Building. Use, if possible, to expand parking and two-story residential use described in Number 6 above.
- 8) Develop and facilitate removal of the three ugly garages behind Waban Market. Replace with architecturally compatible structures as necessary. Preserve a portion of the parking lot toward Windsor Road from the rear corner of the Waban Market, at ground level, as is.
- 9) Construct a “roundabout” at the intersection of Woodward, Beacon and Wyman Streets.
- 10) Install a flat “raised” table at the crest of the MBTA hill on Beacon Street to calm traffic along the main portion of Beacon Street.

What's a Village Center?

Waban Village

What are the defining features of a village center? Where does it begin and end? Why did you pick this one?

Classic lighting, trees  
Shops, greenspace, signage, easy walking, traffic calming  
Village center should be inviting, safe, active but also serene in some areas

Environment

Find elements in your village center(s) that support a greener future.

Trees/new plantings, solar panels on commercial rooftops, under sidewalk  
Painted crosswalks Rotary ~~parking~~

What does the 'green future' of your village center look like? Are there more places for things like walking and biking, trees and plants, rainwater collection, or solar panels?

Yes, there is room for landscaping, more areas for people/pedestrians to congregate! A bike lane has been painted on one side of Beacon not the other

Shopping, Eating & Working

Go to the stores and restaurants you often visit, or ones you are looking forward to revisiting when safe to do so. What do you prefer to buy in person versus online?

Hardware store, specialty items/suntans need it last minute, coffee

What businesses would you like to open up? Would you like to be able to work in a village center?

Bakery, <sup>local option</sup> smoothie/coffee/ice cream shop additional restaurants

Housing

Go to one of your village center public transit stops and observe what kind of housing you see. Find a multi-family building (3 or more units). If you don't see any, find one in/around your village center. Guess what year the building was constructed.

1960? - Next to Waban D Stop

What types of housing do you envision in your village center in the future?

Mixed - commercial on ground/street level, apartments/corndogs on 1-2 fls above.

Accessibility

Find a place in your village center that feels most accessible for you, and a place that feels least accessible. This can be considered physically (abilities to physically move, see, hear, speak and more) as well as emotionally & in terms of senses (noise, smell, how calm a place feels, or access to public furniture).

Lots of ~~car~~ noise, not much public furniture in nicely maintained greenspace next to sidewalks

What would a fully accessible village center look and feel like?

Wide walking paths, trees to ~~provide~~ provide traffic calming, shade, beauty

## Inclusive, Diverse + Welcoming Spaces

Find a part of a village center that feels most welcoming and safe for you and your identities. What makes it feel inclusive? Examples include community centers, non-profits, places of worship, a place where your language is spoken, where you see and interact with people who share your identity, places that are age-friendly.

*Ethnic restaurants, art installation, rotary (slow down traffic for young families to feel safe)*

How could your future village center welcome people of all ages, genders, races, socioeconomic statuses, sexualities, and more backgrounds?

*Village events, commercial businesses hosting open houses  
holiday strolls*

## Transportation

How do you get to your village center (walk, bike, public transit, car)? Is there infrastructure that makes this safe and easy, like sidewalks/crosswalks, bike lanes/racks, sheltered transit stops, parking (lots/garage/on-street)? How do you move through your village center? Are there any alleyways or cut-throughs that break up the different spaces?

*Bike/Walk. There are insufficient painted crosswalks on my home walk and cars are allowed to travel too fast ~~and~~ unchecked by police*

How will you get to and from your village center in the future? What will be the most visible transportation features in your village center? Parking for cars? Bike lanes? A public transit station?

*Walk, bike lane*

## Arts + Culture

Find a place in a village center that creatively engages you. Examples include art (statue, mural, painting) or an area that is used for a pop-up, temporary event or creative activities (outdoor market, concert, parade).

How are village centers currently encouraging creative practices? What would a more 'creative' village center look and feel like?

*Painted pianos, art installations, celebratory signage/events*

## Anything Else?

Take a photo of, draw or imagine anything else that feels important to you about the village center(s).

Is there anything else that would make your 'future' village center come to life? Is it something new or something old?

## Vision Kit Session

### What's a Village Center?

Drake McCabe  
617 657 9277  
drakemccabe@gmail.com  
September 18

What are the defining features of a village center? Where does it begin and end? Why did you pick this one? Usually starts with a feature like a school, rail station, or commercial block. I picked this village center because of the community, local businesses, and location relative to other points of interest in the broader Boston area.

### Environment

Find elements in your village center(s) that support a greener future.

The green space at the Water Common, trees along side sidewalks, channels for EV, rail and bus transportation.

What does the 'green future' of your village center look like? Are there more places for things like walking and biking, trees and plants, rainwater collection, or solar panels?

Green space that is functional - benches, trails, tables, etc. Make people want to green space - ensure it is supported by future generations.

### Shopping, Eating & Working

Go to the stores and restaurants you often visit, or ones you are looking forward to revisiting when safe to do so. What do you prefer to buy in person versus online?

I visit for restaurants often - Barry's, Stone Oven. The grocery, Whole Market. These I prefer to buy in person.

What businesses would you like to open up? Would you like to be able to work in a village center?

A bakery or independent coffee shop, ice cream parlor.

I'm sure I would like it if I was in an industry like that.

### Housing

Go to one of your village center public transit stops and observe what kind of housing you see. Find a multi-family building (3 or more units). If you don't see any, find one in/around your village center. Guess what year the building was constructed.

There is one brick constructed right now behind Strong's tower.

What types of housing do you envision in your village center in the future?

Thoughtful, appropriately sized housing options that don't disrupt the village center character.

### Accessibility

Find a place in your village center that feels most accessible for you, and a place that feels least accessible. This can be considered physically (abilities to physically move, see, hear, speak and more) as well as emotionally & in terms of senses (noise, smell, how calm a place feels, or access to public furniture).

I think the most accessible place (emotionally) is the Water Village library. They say libraries are one of the best places where you are allowed to exist without the expectation of spending money. The library is great & it is very welcoming.

What would a fully accessible village center look and feel like?

Public spaces that everyone can enjoy.



## Inclusive, Diverse + Welcoming Spaces

Find a part of a village center that feels most welcoming and safe for you and your identities. What makes it feel inclusive? Examples include community centers, non-profits, places of worship, a place where your language is spoken, where you see and interact with people who share your identity, places that are age-friendly.

*I think the two churches in the village center feel pretty welcoming and interact with the community.*

How could your future village center welcome people of all ages, genders, races, socioeconomic statuses, sexualities, and more backgrounds?

*Support amenities for those who are disabled - parking, ramps, etc.  
Public spaces available to all.*

## Transportation

How do you get to your village center (walk, bike, public transit, car)? Is there infrastructure that makes this safe and easy, like sidewalks/crosswalks, bike lanes/racks, sheltered transit stops, parking (lots/garage/on-street)? How do you move through your village center? Are there any alleyways or cut-throughs that break up the different spaces?

*I walk. I find the crosswalks to be good. The sidewalks are nice. I find it easy to get around.*

How will you get to and from your village center in the future? What will be the most visible transportation features in your village center? Parking for cars? Bike lanes? A public transit station?

*I live close enough to walk, but I usually drive to the village centers. I support bike lanes, but I also think it's important to have parking as well.*

## Arts + Culture

Find a place in a village center that creatively engages you. Examples include art (statue, mural, painting) or an area that is used for a pop-up, temporary event or creative activities (outdoor market, concert, parade).

*"doors" exhibit outside of the Wabun library.*

How are village centers currently encouraging creative practices? What would a more 'creative' village center look and feel like?

*I love the outdoor piano at the library, the outdoor musical performance at the Sweets school and the village day activities. More events, public art projects, artistic use of public space.*

## Anything Else?

Take a photo of, draw or imagine anything else that feels important to you about the village center(s).

Is there anything else that would make your 'future' village center come to life? Is it something new or something old?

*Keeping the historical charm/character intact, making changes that engage the community and look past short-term interests!*

Vision kit response.  
17-June-2021

Jay Werb  
31 Williams Street  
Newton Upper Falls  
Member Newton Upper Falls Area Council  
Member Northland Construction Liaison Committee  
All opinions are my own

## What's a Village Center?

What are the defining features of a village center? Where does it begin and end? Why did you pick this one?

My local village center is known as "Petee Square", at the intersection of Oak & Chestnut Street. I live on Williams Street, less than a 5-minute walk from Petee Square.

Traditionally (19<sup>th</sup> century and earlier) the village of Newton Upper Falls was in the area that roughly corresponds to the extensive historic district north of Petee Square. The area around Chestnut/Ellis has tremendous potential but I think there is consensus in the neighborhood that Petee Square is the main village center today. In recent years, developments on the Greenway and the Northland site make Petee Square even more clearly a gathering place in Upper Falls.

I suggest that the Greenway should be considered the pedestrian "Main Street, of the Petee Square "village center". Most of what follows builds on that idea.

## Environment



Find elements in your village center that support a greener future.

What does the 'green future' of your village center look like? Are there more places for things like walking and biking, trees and plants, rainwater collection, or solar panels?

A major opportunity is to locally upgrade and regionally link the Greenway as a pedestrian and biking resource. This work has been underway for over a decade. I am in support of the objectives and accomplishments of the Bay Colony Rail Trail Association.

<https://www.baycolonyrailtrail.org/>

Under Newton's control, there is already a project underway to build steps at the Charles River, creating a pedestrian loop along the river from Pettee Square to Williams Street. Existing easements also allow for a similar loop on the other side of the Greenway, along a nice section of the Charles River to Braceland Park.

The prison-like aesthetic at "Sunset Bridge" (Greenway at the Charles River) should be immediately replaced with more attractive fencing<sup>1</sup>. I understand that an improvement is already being planned.

Not under Newton's control, we should do we can to encourage development of the rail trail on the Needham side, especially on the east side of Route 128. For example, I understand that development of 250 apartments is likely in Needham near Sunset Bridge, and those Needham residents would immediately benefit from a bike/pedestrian link to Newton. With a recent change of leadership in Needham, there may be an opportunity to get this situation unstuck.

The Greenway itself is host to a one-mile tangle of out-of-control invasive plants that established itself over long decades of neglect by the MBTA and Newton. The city can do better. Please encourage Northland to establish the section of the Greenway abutting their property as an example of what the rest of the Greenway can become.

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<sup>1</sup> Is the razor wire around the American Tower site legal in Newton?

## Shopping, Eating & Working



Go to the stores and restaurants you often visit, or ones you are looking forward to revisiting when safe to do so. What do you prefer to buy in person versus online?

What businesses would you like to open up? Would you like to be able to work in a village center?

There is already planning underway for the Greenway east of Oak Street, and I would like to see the Greenway extended as a pedestrian “Main Street” on the west side.

The “All Star Liquors” site is a disgrace, and the city should do what it can to upgrade this site.

It is absurd that Pettee Square is being considered as an appropriate location for a regional pot shop. That site should be far too valuable for that tenant. This is a disgraceful failure of zoning and planning by the city.

The local post office is an important part of the fabric of this village center. Any development plan should prioritize the continued existence of an Upper Falls post office.

## Housing



Go to one of your village center public transit stops and observe what kind of housing you see. Find a multi-family building (3 or more units). If you don't see any, find one in/around your village center. Guess what year the building was constructed.

What types of housing do you envision in your village center in the future?

As much as planning folks talk about pedestrians in Pettee Square, today there isn't a lot of pedestrian activity. This can change with Northland nearby. As it stands, Pettee Square isn't much of a destination. But there is high potential for mixed use development in Pettee Square. See map and notes on next page.



It appears that the main opportunity is to incentivize multiuse development on 3 “sites” (See my comments on the last page about urbanization.):

- 107-109 Oak Street (~60,000 square feet). This site, currently an office building with a large parking lot, is about the size of 28 Austin Street. Does the city have tools to incentivize Café Nero on the Greenway, parking below, and some reasonable amount of housing above?
- 1185-1191 Chestnut Street (about 40,000 square feet): Folks, we can do better than a pot shop as the city’s vision for these sites. Can’t the city incentivize some interesting mixed use development that would benefit the city and the village?
- 1214-1220 Chestnut, 81 Oak, 16 Indiana: A similar failure of zoning, about 40,000 square feet total. The city should encourage re-development of these sites for mixed use at some reasonable scale. Note that 81 Oak is the Newton Upper Falls Post Office, which as noted previously is an important part of the fabric of Newton Upper Falls.

The strip along 1195-1223 should retain its current scale, with the “Biltmore” building being preserved if possible. A development plan for the Pettee Square should, if possible, find a parking solution that allows the Greenway-facing side of this site to be more pedestrian oriented, e.g. outdoor dining, not just a parking lot.

## Accessibility



Find a place in your village center that feels most accessible for you, and a place that feels least accessible. This can be considered physically (abilities to physically move, see, hear, speak and more) as well as emotionally & in terms of senses (noise, smell, how calm a place feels, or access to public furniture).

What would a fully accessible village center look and feel like?

A pedestrian “Main Street” along the Greenway is naturally accessible.

There are various accessibility challenges on Oak and Chestnut Streets that are already being looked at by the planning department under a state grant. I generally support the work as presented to the Upper Falls Area Council. Let’s find a way to get that done!

I have concerns about the Greenway crossing at Oak Street, where the pedestrian crossing has very low compliance today. Generally, the crosswalk is perceived by drivers to be part of the Chestnut/Oak intersection, but is actually a separate crosswalk and perceived as such by pedestrians. Especially in the northbound direction when there is a green light, many drivers choose to ignore the crosswalk. I’m not persuaded that the city’s proposal (raised intersection, including the Greenway, on-demand pedestrian signal at the Greenway) will entirely solve the problem. Some proportion of drivers will charge through the crosswalk toward a green light 100 feet away, and perhaps a signal on the Greenway should discourage pedestrians from crossing in that situation.

The southwest corner of Chestnut and Oak is an accessibility disgrace, which should be addressed as an urgent matter. Many constituents have raised this issue many times over many years.

## Transportation



How do you get to your village center (walk, bike, public transit, car)? Is there infrastructure that makes this safe and easy, like sidewalks/crosswalks, bike lanes/racks, sheltered transit stops, parking (lots/garage/on-street)? How do you move through your village center? Are there any alleyways or cut-throughs that break up the different spaces?

How will you get to and from your village center in the future? What will be the most visible transportation features in your village center? Parking for cars? Bike lanes? A public transit station?

Assuming that the long-term program for Pettee Square includes a significant amount of new housing....

Proximity to all of the development along Needham Street, accessed via the Greenway, will limit the need for new Pettee Square residents to use their cars.

For the right kind of commercial tenant, Northland residents will provide a market within walking distance.

The transportation hub in Northland will be within easy walking distance of Pettee Square.

Eliot Street Station is not a long walk from Pettee Square.

Within the next 10 years or so, I believe that self-driving vans be able to handle a structured route between Pettee Square and Eliot Station. If so, Pettee Square can become a small transportation hub in its own right. Not today, but not far into the future.

I am implacably opposed to light rail on the Greenway, as are most residents of Newton Upper Falls<sup>2</sup>. The Greenway is Pettee Square's pedestrian "Main Street" and should be developed as such.

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<sup>2</sup> Light rail on the Greenway was suggested as a desired outcome in the Needham Street Vision Plan. I attended every meeting. There was literally one constituent, not from Upper Falls, who kept bringing up light rail on the Greenway over the objections of many participants. In the final report, which was never approved by the group of people named as participants, the planning department chose to imply that there was consensus on this point. I am quite certain there was not.



## Arts + Culture



Find a place in a village center that creatively engages you. Examples include art (statue, mural, painting) or an area that is used for a pop-up, temporary event or creative activities (outdoor market, concert, parade).

How are village centers currently encouraging creative practices? What would a more 'creative' village center look and feel like?

Pettee Square, even in its current form, is already a great venue for outdoor art and community events.

Northland originally offered a community center in its plan. The City of Newton, in its infinite wisdom, decided that we need an outdoor skating rink instead. Subsequently decided that the city does not have the resources to operate a skating rink, so the program was scaled back to a splash park built by Northland but operated by the city. So, instead of a new free community center, Newton Upper Falls got a regional splash park without parking. Huh?

The public portion of the Emerson Center would be considered intolerable as a neighborhood center for most other neighborhoods in the city. Newton can and should do better.

The Mall at Echo Bridge (corner of Elliot and Chestnut) is operating nowhere near its potential. I don't know if the city has anything in its toolkit to change that.

Can the city identify and facilitate an arts/cultural/community use for the wonderful "Old Stone Barn" on Oak Street?

## Anything Else?

Take a photo of, draw or imagine anything else that feels important to you about the village center(s).

Is there anything else that would make your 'future' village center come to life? Is it something new or something old?

In Upper Falls, our Village Center situation is unique in the city.

Not everybody in Upper Falls is on board with urbanization of our village. That's not what most of us signed up for when we moved here. That being said, Pettee Square became an urban village center on the day that the Northland referendum failed. Now it's up to us to make it as great as it can be.

The Upper Falls Area Council has been talking about Pettee Square a lot in our last few meetings. It started when the group was reviewing the Pettee Square design work that is being done by the city under a grant from the state. It is good work as far as it goes. But half the time when I asked a question about something I care about, I was told it was out of scope.

In February, we learned that a company called Nuestra selected Pettee Square as a perfect location for a marijuana dispensary. I asked myself how is that even possible? Isn't that site too valuable for that purpose? Something did not make sense.

Eventually I connected the dots. I realized there are actually two Pettee Squares.

There is the Pettee Square that is on the other side of the tracks. This Pettee Square is surrounded by radio towers. This Pettee Square sold its neighborhood school (Emerson) for 30 pieces of silver. This Pettee Square is home to the dumpiest liquor store in the city. This Pettee Square is where trucks park on the sidewalk while they buy lottery tickets. This Pettee Square is where we thank our lucky stars every year the post office isn't shut down. This Pettee Square has for rent signs in the windows. This Pettee Square is an ideal location for a regional pot shop.

Then there is Pettee Square in 2025. That Pettee Square has Northland across the street. That Pettee Square should be some of the most valuable real estate per square foot in suburban New England. That Pettee Square is going to change, and it's going to change fast.

How is it going to change? I have no idea. But I'm pretty sure that if the city does not take decisive action, Pettee Square will end up a mish-mosh of whatever a random series of developers decide to build under the current zoning code.

We have to get in front of this.

