

Compilation of Other* Vision Kit Submissions _B

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

City of Newton – Department of Planning & Development

Additional Vision Kit submissions received after the first compilation was posted online are available here. Please reference newtonma.gov/zoningredesign/vc for fir the first compilation and all other community engagement input received.

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Vision for Auburndale Square
Submitted by Johanne Campbell

It would be nice to have a pocket park with a few tables for outdoor dining (take-out, coffee, employees on lunch breaks), and reading/relaxing. Currently, there is no real place to sit. But where to locate it? There is an empty parking lot behind the buildings at 17 Melrose Ave., but appears to be privately owned. Could the city purchase it?

Nicer looking storefronts would be welcome (building facades and signage).

Would like to see more useful/everyday shops like a hardware store, and we could always use more evening dining options. Maybe some specialty shops (specialty/gourmet foods, cheese, etc.), like Judith's Kitchen in West Newton, or another independent business. Maybe pop-up shop/s showcasing local artisans (maybe for holiday shopping).

Auburndale is an outward-facing square. It would be nice if the side of Auburn street along the train rail and turnpike could be utilized somehow. While there may not be room for buildings alongside (if there is, that would be ideal), perhaps a sound barrier wall could be erected with some greenery planted in front of it (or murals painted by artists), and maybe some outdoor seating and a park-like area added along the sidewalk at the widest end opposite Knotty Pine. Some filling in would be required between the tracks and the sidewalk, depending on where the wall would go, as there is a steep drop. Right now all we see is turnpike traffic, a chain link fence, some scraggly trees, and lots of weeds. Could building over the tracks/turnpike be an option in the future?

It is extremely noisy because of the turnpike. If there were some noise-mitigating steps taken, the outdoor space at the Auburndale Library could also be better-utilized.

When the Auburndale commuter rail station is rebuilt, it would be nice to add a proper station - a nice entrance from the street (maybe even over the tracks), perhaps a building with a coffee shop and other amenities.

The buildings in the back of the Star Market parking lot should ideally be at the sidewalk, not the back. It would be more pedestrian-friendly, and safer than walking through a parking lot with cars entering and exiting. The parking could be located behind. Parking lots as a rule are unattractive. Incidentally, all the shrubs along the sidewalk buffering the parking lot were removed this week and I am told walls are going in...abutting the sidewalk.

The lovely granite checkerboard crosswalks at the base of Melrose Street crossing the carriage lane were removed several years ago. We were told they were unsafe for cyclists, yet they remain in other parts of Newton along the carriage lane (West Newton and near City Hall). They were replaced with stamped concrete, which is now wearing down and cracked. We in the neighborhood would love to see the lovely checkerboards returned.

Thank you for the opportunity to share ideas.

Kathaleen Brearley on Upper Falls

Upper Falls was established as a village on the banks of the Charles. The river and the Falls were at the epicenter, and its main source of power. Upper Falls is the oldest village center in Newton, and unique in many ways. One of the ways it is different from other village centers in Newton is the multiple village centers within the village now and throughout history. From Post Office Block (977 Chestnut St) to Prospect Block (295 Elliot St) to Otis Pettee Square (1225 Chestnut St), Upper Falls residents have centered their activities around these three areas over the past 250 years.

The earliest Village center of the first European settlers was Post Office Block, just up the hill from the Falls and soon to be established Mills.

These British Colonists built a Meeting House (where the current Second Baptist Church sits a@65 Ellis St.



The village center migrated from Post Office Block to Prospect Block as electrification arrives and housing for mill workers expanded, schools multiplied, and the streetcar railway increased mobility.

In 1823, the Elliot Manufacturing Company was incorporated for the purpose of manufacturing cotton goods. In 1827 Otis Pettee was part of a group who founded the Upper Falls Religious Society where they would meet at the Upper Falls Meeting House (@65 Ellis St). In 1846, Otis Pettee and others petitioned the state for authorization to construct a Railroad from Newton to the south near Blackstone. ^a The Charles River Railroad CO. (Inc. 1848) connected Upper Falls and the Boston Worcester Railroad all the way to Woonsocket, Rhode Island with the aim to continue on to NY. The Boston – Albany Rail at the Depot Station, connected Upper Falls with the larger manufacturing world of the Northeast from the 1830s- mid/late 20th Century.

^a 1846 Senate Bill 0101. An Act To Incorporate The Boston And Woonsocket Rail-Road Company. <http://archives.lib.state.ma.us/handle/2452/686120>

Contemporary image of Post Office Block



The above ground street car on Elliot Street, and the Depot Railway at the bottom of Oak St provided transportation to the growing immigrant population. Fast forward to the Prospect Block in 2021, Bettina’s Bakery just opened last week (10/6/21) next to the current Bravo Salon, and is already becoming a village gathering center.

As the generations increase the density in our villages, let us strive to maintain the elements of a village that make Newton a healthy place to live:

(Kathy Scanlon of London School of Economics has outlined the components essential to every urban village: Her report on London's urban villages identifies six characteristics of a village:

1. **Small and intimate** and can be comfortably covered on foot
2. **Unique**, and has an identifiable center with its own atmosphere and sense of place
3. **Designed for social interaction with plenty of public and green space, and places for community events**
4. **Locally driven and locally responsive**, and residents are involved in decisions
5. **Functional**; well served by public transport and with good access to core services like a doctor's clinic, food shops and schools.
6. **Mixed** – the community has a mix of ages, backgrounds and tenures; there are long-standing residents as well as new arrivals.*

* <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/lse/london/urban-villages-some-observations-from-se-london-by-kath-scanlon/>



Prospect Block, (Currently occupied by Bravo Salon and Bettina's Bakery)

VILLAGE CTR COMPONENTS to Consider:

Schools? (Emerson Elementary School closed in 1980)

Public Transportation (train/bus)

Post Office (Chestnut/Ellis St, Prospect Block, Pettee Square)

Bank (Needham Street)

Bakery (Pettee Square and Prospect Block)

Coffee Shop (Pettee Square and Prospect Block)

Ice Cream Shop

Tailor/Dry Cleaner

Parks

Playgrounds

Doctor/Dentist Offices

Pharmacy

Salon/Barber Shop

Small Grocer/Convenience Store

Florist
Library
Bookstore
Print Shop/Art Shop/Gallery
Churches/Synagogues/places of worship

Pettee Square is an important village center for Upper Falls

With visions for improvement, partially funded by a MASS SAVE grant, I can envision a new ice cream shop, pocket park and a more pedestrian friendly Pettee Square. There are currently 3 liquor stores in Upper Falls, when only one is needed. The best/cleanest neighbor of the three is Upper Falls Liquors on Needham St. There is so much potential for improvement on Corner D of Pettee Sq.



Sincerely, Kathaleen Brearley