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Sent: Monday, October 3, 2022 9:33 AM

To: Barney Heath <bheath@newtonma.gov>

Cc: Katie Whewell <kwhewell@newtonma.gov>; Clerk <clerk@newtonma.gov>

Subject: Re: Washington St Plan

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Dear Planning Board chair Doeringer, Director of Planning Heath, and members of the Planning and Development Board.

As you all know, the traffic and parking continues to be a challenge. Nonetheless, another large residential complex is being planned in addition to the 40B on Dunstan Street and the West Newton Armory. With the desire to increase housing--and the wishful thinking that this may reduce prices by increasing availability--the residents of Newton spent a lot of their volunteer time contributing to both the Washington Street Vision Plan and the drafted Village Center plans.

Here is a list of the Washington St Vision Plan principles that are potential areas for modifications in the 1314 Washington Street proposal that might be included in the conditions you are sending to the Land Use committee as the Planning Board's Review and Recommendation.

**I hope you will consider some of the points I have made in blue below.
Thank you for your consideration.**

**Sachiko Isihara
15 Davis St (one of three direct abutters)**

Washington Street Vision Plan

From the opening:

Washington Street will showcase Newton's values.

- The villages of West Newton and Newtonville will be lively**

- Washington Street will be safe for everyone
- Diverse housing options will be available
- Newton residents will have places to connect with their community
- Decisions will be sensitive to climate and environmental necessities
- Excellence in placemaking principles will be incorporated

Mark Development now has control of a large block of the retail buildings on the north side of Washington St. If we want to keep West Newton village lively for commerce, it is important to monitor rental occupancy rates to ensure there is no price gouging causing high levels of vacancy.

The Washington St Vision plan states clearly that Newton does not want "block" construction, yet our three houses are slotted as desirable for multiple story construction. This point notwithstanding, the developer should take into consideration appearances and submit south and east face renderings of the new development for someone walking from east to west on Davis Street. The drastic change in height and scope will be mostly felt from this viewpoint.

Two changes to the plan for 1314 Washington St have improved by creating a public community seating area along Highland St, and diverting the entrance to the residential portion to Washington St. This indicates Mark Development's willingness to consider outside suggestions and modifications.

This Vision Plan addresses this question with consideration of:

- Renewed development interest in Washington Street
- Newton's housing needs and trends
- Changes in the transportation system
- The need for more community gathering spaces
- Economic development opportunities
- Community ideas and feedback

This Vision Plan will additionally be used to shape zoning for this portion of Washington Street. As the zoning ordinance draft development continues, this Vision Plan will serve as a guiding document.

While there is a strong interest in creating diverse housing, the rental apartment units in general may be far from affordable. The commuter rail service has not been reliable and area businesses cannot rely on the commuter train for transportation of their employees. The new development which includes a restaurant will need a parking management plan to cover employees of the future tenant.

A. UNIQUE AND VITAL VILLAGE CENTERS

Strengthen the Village Business Climate

Explore incentives and investments in locally-owned businesses

Design for Engaging Walks

Guiding Principles:

- Use buildings and trees to make a more comfortable environment
- Activate the Pike edge
- Promote narrow and transparent shopfronts
- Incorporate opportunities for outdoor dining'

Newton has not yet allowed restaurants to block off curb-edge space for outdoor dining, but with a wide enough sidewalk, that space can sometimes be the more efficient way of providing outdoor dining while meeting accessibility goals

There is a lack of landscaping and greenery being provided on this site. As a matter of fact, the few bushes along the front and side of Santander bank do help to diminish the surface temperature of West Newton square. These areas are all slated to be converted into concrete raising the surface temperature and increasing run-off. There is no transparent storefront on any of the three remaining facades. A strong positive aspect of this project incorporated by Mark Development is preserving the front historic facade and is an enhancement to continuing West Newton's architectural uniqueness.

- Design streets and plazas as places to linger

These principles of creating comfortable edges are recommended to be integrated into the setting of height and setback standards in zoning for the Washington Street corridor.

A variety of seating options should be provided, with some furniture oriented to groups included where space is generous enough to accommodate it. Movable and playful furniture gives people a reason to engage directly with the items and some control over how they use the space.

Invest in Public Art and Programming

Guiding Principles:

- Promote West Newton and Newtonville artists
- Allow for arts production, presentation, and artist housing
- Design for music and community events in public spaces

Because of noise from the Mass Pike we should consider encouraging new development to create publicly accessible courtyards tucked between buildings and away from the Washington Street edge. Guidelines and mechanisms for encouraging music and community activities in those courtyards should be developed.

There has been no provision to provide public art or arts production in the development plans. It is often encouraged that public seating areas include outdoor electrical outlets for holiday lighting or for music performances.

B. SAFE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION

- Prioritize People, Safety, and Comfort

Guiding Principles:

- Reconfigure Washington Street for safety of all users
- Promote safe neighborhood streets
- Make room for people-powered transportation
- Design sidewalks for year-round comfort
- Test before the City invests

- Create More Route Options Organize and
- Advocate for Better Transit

Guiding Principles:

- Support new accessible stations
- Improve the bus experience
- Organize and advocate for early implementation of the Rail Vision

- Actively Manage Driving & Parking

Guiding Principles:

- Actively manage village parking
- Develop and implement a public parking garage strategy
- Shape where and how much parking is in private developments
- Require transportation demand management by developers
- Track and prepare for driverless technology

Newton currently requires a minimum of two parking spaces for every residential unit and at least three spaces for every 1,000 square foot of new office space. The parking requirement is often at odds with the City’s priorities to reduce drive-alone trips, to reduce the community’s climate impacts, and on Washington Street to see smaller and diverse buildings with open civic spaces. **If the special permit meets the desire to reduce the parking requirement, then the developer should also be required to meet the demand "to see smaller and diverse buildings with open civic spaces."**

Managing transportation demand is an operational challenge that requires ongoing monitoring to ensure that incentives to not drive continue to work. Strategies can vary depending on the available transportation options near a particular development and whether the strategies are aimed at residents, employees, or shoppers. Each TDM plan will need to consider and contribute to actively managing traffic, parking, and other long-term goals of the Washington Street Vision Plan. The zoning ordinance could be used to ensure that these first steps happen as new development occurs and that large development projects include ongoing management.

Attract All Ages, All People

Guiding Principles:

- Ensure availability of accessible units
- Promote diverse building and unit sizes
- Allow communal living models

The residents currently on Davis Street already represent a more diverse population. By removing our houses and the ability for us to live in our houses, the City is in effect supporting a developer who is marketing his rental units to Newton's wealthier community.

Link Housing and Transportation

Guiding Principles:

- Focus housing where residents have transportation options
- Pair housing near transit with new commercial and retail space

Create incentives and mandates for an energy-efficient future

Guiding Principles:

- Allow for smaller unit residences
- Build in features to make low-carbon living easy
- Create incentives and mandates for an energy-efficient future

These guidelines are being met: solar ready roofing material was mentioned as well as Electric Vehicle charging stations at 10%-20% of residential spaces.

Improve Climate Resilience

Guiding Principles:

- Improve Cheesecake Brook to reduce downstream flooding
 - Reduce heat island effect through building and site design standards
- Shade is an essential element for addressing excessive heat and should be required when new sidewalks and parking lots are being developed to shade large hardscaped areas.*

Expand Access to Open Green Spaces and Recreation

Guiding Principles:

- Facilitate the creation of a network of pocket parks, tot lots, and community plazas
- Activate existing and new public spaces
- Expand tree canopy and add layers of vegetation

Install plants at the Pike edge to improve noise, air quality, and aesthetics.

E. EXCELLENCE IN PLACEMAKING AND DESIGN

Area-wide Planning Principles

Site Planning Principles

Building Design Principles

Guiding Principles:

- Ensure Newtonville and West Newton remain distinct and vital
- Protect iconic buildings
- Foster moments of arrival
- Require gentle transitions to adjacent neighborhoods
- Develop standards and guidelines for human-scale design •
- Encourage variety in building size and shape
- Implement planning principles through project review

This diagram describes two of the design principles for setting building height in relationship to a street. First, note the gray square with an X through it above each street. The sides of the square are equal. The diagram demonstrates that the height of the buildings at the street edge are similar to the width of the open space. Building to street width ratios with a similar relationship have generally been found to make for a comfortable sense of enclosure. Second, note that on the left, the buildings are taller, but are set back at the upper levels. This preserves the proportions at which the street is comfortably enclosed and allows more sunlight to the street.

If the building height of the new construction is allowed at 60 feet, it is arguable that this concept of building height to street width is being met.

Thank you,
Sachiko Isihara
15 Davis St