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CITY OF NEWTON

Planning and Development Board

October 5, 2022

To: The Honorable City Council President, Susan Albright
City of Newton
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

CC: Honorable Newton City Councilors
Planning & Development Board

SUBJ: Planning & Development Board Recommendation on Petition #357-22
Request to Rezone 3 parcels (1314 Washington Street, 31 & 33 Davis Street) from Business Use 1 to Mixed-Use 4

Dear Honorable Council President Albright:

The Planning and Development Board joined with the City Council Land Use Committee for the July 19th opening public hearing on the above petition. Subsequently, the Planning and Development Board met on August 1st to take additional public testimony, after which it closed the public hearing. On September 12th, the Planning and Development Board met again to consider and vote on this matter, and to submit to the full City Council the following recommendation on the rezoning request.

The Planning and Development Board was persuaded that the change in zoning from Business Use 1 to Mixed-Use 4 requested in Petition #357-22 is appropriate. The Board voted 6-0-1 (Director Heath abstaining) to recommend this change for the following reasons:

The site is particularly well-suited to respond to the purpose and intent of the Mixed-Use 4 zoning district which seeks to:

- Allow the development of buildings and uses appropriate to Newton's village commercial centers and aligned with the vision of the City's Comprehensive Plan.
- Encourage development that fosters compact, pedestrian-oriented villages with a diverse mix of residences, shops, offices, institutions, and opportunities for entertainment.

- Allow sufficient density and intensity of uses to promote a lively pedestrian environment, public transit, and variety of businesses that serve the needs of the community.
- Expand the diversity of housing options available in the City.
- Promote the health and well-being of residents by encouraging physical activity, use of alternative modes of transportation, and creating a sense of place and community.

The Board also finds that the site and Mixed-Use 4 zoning are consistent with the Washington Street Vision Plan in the following respects:

- Unique and Vital Village Centers
 - The villages of Newtonville and West Newton both represent opportunities to strengthen and expand the local economy relying on the unique business mix and the competitive advantages of walkable and transit served mixed-use villages. Growth, focused on serving local needs and building on existing strengths, can support a stronger commercial tax base and reduce the share of residential taxes in the city
- Use buildings and trees to make a more comfortable environment
- Streets and sidewalks with defined edges created by close-by buildings and trees is an essential component of designing comfortable walking environments. The physiology of the human species means that there are some universal principles to creating comfortable environments for people – among them is a near universal preference for spaces with edges.
- Incorporate opportunities for outdoor dining
- Actively manage village parking
 - Develop and implement a public parking management strategy
 - Shape where and how much parking is in private developments
- Housing Diversity
 - Without multi-family housing options, households that would choose to live in an apartment, most frequently down-sizing seniors and young professionals, would not find opportunities in the community
- Ensure availability of accessible units
- Link Housing and Transportation
 - Focus housing where residents have transportation options
 - Pair housing near transit with new commercial and retail space
- Mitigate Mass Pike Effects

- Planning and Design Principles
 - Protect iconic buildings
 - Develop standards and guidelines for human-scale design
 - Encourage variety in building size and shape
 - Limit visible parking
 - Allow form to follow function
 - Encourage traditional New England roof diversity
 - Promote energy-efficient, human-scaled and durable construction

The Board also feels strongly that the Washington Street Vision recommendation to “Develop and implement a public parking management strategy” is essential to support the kind of mixed-use development that is essential to keeping West Newton village an attractive and lively place for everyone.

In addition, the Planning & Development Board concluded that the petition to rezone the property from Business Use 1 to Mixed-Use 4, as referenced in Docket #357-22, qualifies as an eligible location for a simple majority vote under M.G.L Chapter 40A, Section 5 because the zone change requested would increase the residential density of the property, the site is less than 0.5 miles from the West Newton Commuter Rail station, and the property is located in the heart of the West Newton Village center. The Board therefore recommends to the City Council by a vote of 6-0-1 (Director Heath abstaining) that this rezoning petition should be subject to a simple majority vote.

Sincerely,



Peter B. Doeringer, Chair