



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

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ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

To: Zoning Board of Appeals Members
From: Brenda Belsanti, ZBA Clerk
Date: January 20, 2023
Subject: Materials for **January 25, 2023** Public Hearing

Packet 1

Hello,

Please see the following supplemental materials for the upcoming hearing on January 25, 2023 Public Hearing. The following board members are scheduled to sit: *Brooke Lipsitt (Chair), William McLaughlin, Betsy Sweet, Michael Rossi, and Stuart Snyder. Denise Chicoine will be present sitting as an alternate.*

1. January 25, 2023 Agenda
2. ZBA memo dated January 4, 2023 and all attachments.
3. Design Peer Review dated January, 2023

Thank you,

Brenda Belsanti

bbelsanti@newtonma.gov |



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ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

Brenda Belsanti, Zoning Board Clerk

The Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a public hearing on Wednesday, January 25, 2023 at 7:00 pm. This is a hybrid meeting that will take place in the City Council Chamber (Room 207) and virtually via ZOOM. To view and participate in this meeting using Zoom, click this link:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86330892359> or +13052241968,,86330892359#

AGENDA 01/18/23

A public hearing of the Newton Zoning Board of Appeals will be held in person and virtually via Zoom on Wednesday, January 25, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. on the following petitions:

1. #09-22 Northland 160 Charlemont, LLC, requesting a Comprehensive Permit, pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 40B, to construct a nine-story mixed-use development with 410 residential units and approximately 10,689 square feet of ground floor commercial space on 6.98 acres of land located at 160 Charlemont Street and 56 Christina Street in the Mixed Use 1 Zoning District. The proposal includes 103 affordable units and 486 parking stalls.

The comprehensive permit application and associated plans and documents are on file with the Zoning Board of Appeals' office in Newton City Hall at 1000 Commonwealth Avenue, and are available for review online at <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/zoning-board-of-appeals/-fsiteid-1#!/>

2. Elections

The location of this meeting/event is wheelchair accessible and Reasonable Accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities who require assistance. If you need a Reasonable Accommodation, please contact the city of Newton's ADA/Section 504 Coordinator, Jini Fairley, at least two business days in advance (2 weeks for ASL or CART) of the meeting/event: jfairley@newtonma.gov or (617) 796-1253. The city's TTY/TDD direct line is: 617-796-1089. For the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), please dial 711.



Ruthanne Fuller
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Barney S. Heath
Director

PUBLIC HEARING III MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 18, 2023
MEETING DATE: January 25, 2023
TO: Zoning Board of Appeals
FROM: Barney Heath, Director of Planning and Development
Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director for Planning and Development
Katie Whewell, Chief Planner for Current Planning
Michael Gleba, Senior Planner
COPIED: Mayor Ruthanne Fuller
City Council

In response to questions raised at the Zoning Board of Appeals public hearing on October 26, 2022 and December 21, 2022, the Planning Department is providing the following information for the upcoming continued public hearing/working session. This information is supplemental to staff analysis previously provided at the public hearing.

PETITION #09-22

60 Charlemont Street and 56 Christina Street

Northland 160 Charlemont, LLC, requesting a Comprehensive Permit, pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 40B, to construct a nine-story mixed-use development with 410 residential units and approximately 10,689 square feet of ground floor commercial space on 6.98 acres of land located at 160 Charlemont Street and 56 Christina Street in the Mixed Use 1 Zoning District. The proposal includes 103 affordable units and 486 parking stalls.

The Zoning Board of Appeals (Board) opened the public hearing on this petition on October 26, 2022, which was held open for the petitioner to respond to questions and concerns raised in the Planning Department's Memorandum and at the public hearing by the Board as well as by members of the public. The Board continued the public hearing on December 21, 2022.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The subject site is comprised of two parcels known as 160 Charlemont Street and 56 Christina Street located in a Mixed Use 1 (MU1) zoning district and is improved with two structures.

The applicant, Northland Charlemont, LLC, intends to demolish the existing structures and combine the lots into a single 304,308 square foot through-lot with frontage on Charlemont and Christina streets and is seeking a Comprehensive Permit under M.G.L. Chapter 40B to construct a nine-story, 639,047 square foot, mixed use building with 410 residential units, 486 parking stalls (471 garage stalls and 15 surface stalls) and 10,689 square feet of first floor commercial space. One hundred and three (103) of the units (25%) would deed restricted to remain permanently affordable to households at up to 80 percent (80%) of Area Median Income (AMI). The proposed development would result in a net decrease in impervious cover by approximately 1.7 acres.

Per Section 4.4.1, a Comprehensive Permit in lieu of a special permit is being sought for the proposed development including the following uses: ground floor residential uses with residential units above, standalone ATM, fast food establishment, for-profit education, and a restaurant with more than 50 seats.

Reflected in this memo are comments from the NBBJ and the Horsley Witten Group, the City's design, site design and open space peer reviewers who have been engaged by the City to review and analyze relevant aspects of the proposed development.

Project materials submitted for review can be found on the City's website at:
<https://newtonma.viewpointcloud.com/locations/117660>.

I. ANALYSIS

A. Design Peer Review

The City's design peer reviewer for this application, NBBJ, submitted an initial memorandum on January 6, 2023 (**Attachment A**). As discussed in the memorandum, the review identified some recommendations for the applicant and the Board to consider. A summary of the key points of NBBJ's analysis follows. The ***bolded and italicized*** phrases refer to sections so entitled in NBBJ's review memorandum.

- ***Vehicular and Pedestrian Access***

To ***promote small blocks***, NBBJ suggests that the project have two blocks with perimeters of less than ¼ mile, per the Needham Street Vision Plan and similar to those projected for the Northland Newton development across Needham Street.

To ***convert Needham Street from an isolated to a connected roadway*** the peer review suggests that the applicant ***consider adding a new east-west connection to Needham Street***.

NBBJ suggests that the entrance from Christina Street be realigned to follow the west edge of the proposed open space on the east side of the property so to **create a more public park road instead of an entrance drive** as currently envisioned. The City will confer internally with the Transportation Division of Public Works about the connections suggested and overall access to the site.

- **Open Space (Landscaping)**

Toward **promoting low impact development to protect wetlands and waterways**, the memo notes that the development would reduce phosphorus loading into the Charles river by 65%, and suggests the applicant provide more specific information regard roof design elements (e.g., solar, green, and reflective roof areas and outdoor amenities).

So as to **design to encourage active community life**, and consistent with the Needham Street Vision Plan, the applicant is encouraged to make the north-south park a social gathering space for the neighborhood and the peer reviewer recommends that the number of berms and other visual obstructions planned for the park be minimized and that on-street parallel parking be provided along its entrance drive. This would also serve as a traffic calming measure.

The peer reviewer encourages the applicant to **find additional ways to celebrate the history of the site** by expressing the site's history in the landscape design and consider providing historical interpretive signage, on the site, especially along the proposed north-south trail.

To **create a stronger connection to the Upper Falls Greenway along Charlemont Street**, the peer reviewer encourages the applicant to consider creating a ten-foot-wide separated multi-use trail along Charlemont Street that is consistent with the proposed multi-use trail within the Newton Northland development on the west side of Needham Street.

Per the reference above regarding the proposed ten-foot-high retaining wall, the memo recommends that **site grading on the west side** of the site match more closely abutting properties to maintain the option of creating a connection of the parcels. The applicant should also reconsider their design choices that preclude future networks and growth in the area.

Regarding **site lighting and overhead utilities**, the peer reviewer has requested additional information regarding the proposed lighting on the site and potential relocation of existing overhead utility lines.

- **Building Use, Placement and Massing**

Given their distance from Needham Street, the memo suggests that the applicant consider adding on-street parking in proximity to the two small, **proposed retail spaces** on Charlemont and Christina street. Also suggested is that the applicant

consider having a single, larger retail space to create more of a destination retail opportunity.

Importantly, the peer reviewer recommends that to **reduce the length of the building** the applicant break its mass into two separate buildings, separated by an east-west passage that would connect to Needham Street.

Regarding the **building height and massing**, the peer review recommends the applicant revisit the proposed eight floor height and overall massing by creating more human-scale street walls of approximately 4-5 floors along Charlemont and Christina streets with the maximum eight story height being located only at the center of the building, away from those two public ways. That said, it is also suggested that the western side of the building have some setbacks and that lighter colors and fenestration be used on its upper floors to visually mitigate the height of the building's tallest sections.

Also related to the western boundary of the site, the peer review recommends that the applicant revisit the **location of service and parking entrances**, especially the single loading area on the side with alternative locations and/or being distributed to multiple locations.

Lastly, as the **parking structure includes a total of three entrances** the peer reviewer recommends that this be reduced to two and that the entrances include shielding of the parking area's internal lighting to minimize their visual impact.

NBBJ will be present at the upcoming public hearing to discuss its review.

B. Site Design & Open Space Peer Review

The City's Site Design & Open Space peer reviewer, the Horsley Witten Group ("HW"), submitted a memorandum on September 9, 2023, (**Attachment B**) addressing issues related to the project's proposed landscape design. The attached memo discusses, among other topics, the requested waiver from provisions of the city's Tree Preservation Ordinance the species of trees to be installed and removed, potential habitat loss, soil requirements, and the sustainability of proposed wood and stone materials.

HW will be present at a future public hearing to discuss these, and other topics related to the proposed site design and landscaping, as well as its recent stormwater review memorandum.

II. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND MATERIALS

The applicant should be prepared to respond to all questions and requests for more information raised in this memo and the peer reviews by NBBJ and Horsley Witten at the

upcoming public hearing and/or at subsequent meetings.

III. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

The Planning Department will continue to review the proposal and, where appropriate and authorized, coordinate reviews of the project by City agencies and consultant peer reviewers and provide updated and expanded memoranda in advance of future ZBA hearings. It is anticipated that future meetings will focus on additional discussions regarding transportation and site design issues, as well as the proposed development's stormwater management, sustainability, and consistency with the Needham Street Vision Plan.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: NBBJ design peer review dated January 6, 2023

Attachment B: Horsley Witten Group (HW) landscape design peer review memorandum dated January 9, 2023

ATTACHMENT A



www.nbbj.com

January 6, 2023

Ms. Katie Whewell
Chief Planner for Current Planning
1000 Commonwealth Ave.
Newton, MA 02459

Subject: Northland Charlemont Proposed 40B Development (DRAFT)

Dear Ms. Whewell,

NBBJ is pleased to submit the following memo on the design review for Northland Charlemont at 160 Charlemont Street in Newton, MA. NBBJ was engaged to provide peer design review in June of 2022 and signed a work order for this review project in November of 2022. The following design review comments are based on a review of materials supplied by the City of Newton, along with site visits, historical research, zoning analysis, and a review of recent local planning documents.

Project understanding

The 7-acre project site is in the Newton Upper Falls neighborhood between Christina Street and Charlemont Street. It is proximate to the Charles River to the south, commercial and industrial uses to the north and west, and single-family residential uses to the east. Additionally, the project is near the approved *Northland Newton Development*: a mixed-use project that will include 800 residential units, office, and retail uses to the west of Needham Street. It is also our understanding that Northland owns the existing commercial property at 260 Needham Street between the two projects along Charlemont Street

The applicant proposes to demolish two existing industrial structures and construct a nine-story building with 410 residential units, 486 parking spaces (471 garage spaces and 15 surface spaces), and approximately 10,000 square feet of first floor commercial space. The building includes what the applicant describes as a “zigzag” shape with three

courtyards – two at ground level and one above a central loading area. The 600' length of the building spans the full width between Christina Street and Charlemont Street. *For reference, the shape and length of the building is nearly identical to the Avalon at Newton Highlands project at 99 Needham Street, a 5-story project that also has three courtyards with a length of 560'.*

The building is located primarily along the western property line and is oriented towards a linear open space area along the eastern portion of the site. The project includes a service drive on the western property line and serpentine entrance drive along the park space on the eastern edge of the property. A central entrance for the building faces the open space on the east, with garage entrances and service docks facing west along the service drive. Very limited surface parking is provided adjacent to the main entrance on the east and along the service drive by Charlemont Street.

Methodology:

As part of NBBJ scope of work to include “high level research on the Newton context, development precedents or other best practices to support design review comments”, we will refer to existing conditions and master plans, such as the Needham Street Vision Plan (2018) to determine project consistency and the Washington Street Vision Plan (2019) for recent best practices in Newton’s neighborhoods. We will also refer to previously approved and built projects in the vicinity as references for development standards that may apply to the Newton Charlemont 40B Project.

Recommendations:

Vehicular and Pedestrian Access

Promote Small Blocks – As noted in the Needham Street Vision Plan, the surrounding neighborhood scores poorly on two walkability metrics: intersection density and small block sizes (less than ¼ mile perimeter). Additionally, the *Washington Street Vision Plan* states that “blocks with more than ¼ mile in perimeter are considered too big to support the benefits of interconnectivity.” As in the Washington Street areas, breaking up the larger blocks of the former industrial district can support a more human-scaled and walkable environment. For reference, all new development blocks at the *Northland Newton Development* on Needham Street have a perimeter less than ¼ mile, with many that are significantly less. The current Northland Charlemont 40B proposal includes a block perimeter of 1,810' that exceeds the ¼ mile target by 35%. An alternative approach with two separate blocks could allow for blocks that are less than ¼ mile that promote a more walkable environment (See attachment).

Convert Needham Street from an isolated to a connected roadway - According to the *Needham Street Vision Plan*, creating a network of smaller streets, walkways, or alleys parallel to Needham Street will reduce congestion and improve walkability. To support this effort, the project applicant should reconsider the grading (elevation) and character of the proposed north-south service drive along the western edge of the property. As designed, this proposed drive will require a large retaining wall that acts as a physical barrier – limiting pedestrian and vehicular connectivity to the west. Adjusting the grading to align with the 260 and 300 Needham Street properties more closely will eliminate the need for a large retaining wall and will allow this north-south street to evolve into a real public and pedestrian friendly street in the future. If this is not done, future redevelopment of 260 and 300 Needham Street will likely require a redundant service drive parallel to, but higher than, the proposed drive, thus increasing impervious areas. The proposed retaining wall will also prevent future east-west connections as the abutting properties are redeveloped (See attachment).

Consider Adding a new East-West Connection to Needham Street – As outlined the *Needham Street Vision Plan*, breaking up the larger blocks of the former industrial district by placing roads between parking lots along property edges can create a more walkable neighborhood.

A new public east-west pedestrian/vehicular street or pedestrian way between 260 and 300 Needham Street parcels could provide a critical link to Needham Street and will break up the existing “superblock” at 160 Charlemont and create a more fine-grained urban grid that supports a more walkable pedestrian environment. This approach is outlined in the *Needham Street Vision Plan* that aspires to “Convert Needham Street from an isolated to a connected roadway” by creating new driving and non-driving connections. The developer’s project narrative acknowledges that the Needham Street properties west of the 160 Charlemont site will likely be redeveloped from a low density auto-oriented use to a mixed-use development, stating that “they are quickly becoming an out-of-place typology in the emerging mixed-use residential fabric and patterns of mid-rise development in the area.” Because of this, we believe that it is critical to consider how 160 Charlemont will be able to utilize future connections not only to the Charles River and the proposed walking trail but also to the emerging mixed-use development pattern towards Needham Street. This could include breaking up 160 Charlemont into two blocks to allow through traffic of pedestrians or vehicles through the middle of the site (See attachment).

Create a more Public “Park Road” instead of an Entrance Drive

As outlined in the *Needham Street Vision Plan*, creating additional north-south streets or alleys parallel to Needham Street will reduce congestion and expand route options. The project proponent has stated that the entrance drive is designed to prevent public use as a cut-through. This road includes a bend near Christina Street that passes underneath a portion of the proposed building, reinforcing it as a private driveway for use only by residents. The roadway also lacks consistent sidewalks and on-street parking. We recommend realigning the entrance drive to follow the edge of the open space to make the road more “public” and supportive of the park (See attachment.) Continuous sidewalks and on-street parking (particularly on the park edge) would make the park more accessible, open to the surrounding neighborhood and encourage more use. Methods to discourage cut-through traffic could be proposed, such as one-way traffic, raised intersections, and neckdowns to keep vehicular speeds low.

Open Space (Landscaping)

The project includes a large open space on the east edge of the site that fulfills many connectivity goals including the Needham Street Vision Plan and other open space network goals. This park also buffers the large scale of the project and the adjacent smaller scale neighborhood. The park includes a much needed universally accessible pedestrian route to the neighborhood where Charlemont Street continues. Our comments are further questions or suggestions to improve what is a good conceptual beginning for the project.

Promote low impact development to protect wetlands and waterways – The Needham Street Vision Plan calls for increasing climate resilience and promoting low impact development. According to the Sustainability narrative provided by Steve Winter Associates, this project will meet the Massachusetts Stormwater Management Standards and reduce existing phosphorus loading to the Charles River by 65% or more. In addition to a series of ground level LID measures, the building will also be designed to allow solar readiness, outdoor amenity areas, green roofs, and reflective roofs. We encourage the applicant to include a more detailed plan that outlines the specific roof design elements and the timing of construction.

Design to encourage active community life - The Needham Street Vision Plan promotes the creation of a range of community gathering spaces (potential for civic/cultural spaces that bring people together). The proposed north-south park could serve as one of these social gathering spaces if it is designed in a way that creates opportunities for neighbors

to linger and gather. We encourage the applicant to minimize berms and other visual obstructions to invite the public to utilize more of this critical open space. Additionally, the inclusion of on-street parallel parking along the park entrance drive will help encourage neighborhood access.

Find additional ways to celebrate the history of the site - The 160 Charlemont site was originally the site of a pumping station that captured water from the Charles River. Constructed in 1875, the pumping station was designed by local architect Charles Edward Parker and provided much needed water for residential growth and fire protection. When Newton joined the Metropolitan Water District in 1954, this building was demolished and later replaced with industrial buildings. We encourage the project applicant to explore ways to express this history in the landscape design. We also encourage the applicant to consider historical interpretive signage, particularly along the proposed north-south trail (See attachment).

Create a stronger connection to the Upper Falls Greenway along Charlemont Street -

The Needham Street Vision Plan calls for more connections between Needham Street and the local green/natural spaces including to the Goddard Street neighborhood and Christina Street Bridge that connect to Cutler Park. Charlemont Street is indicated as a prime connection.

The project applicant proposes a 6' sidewalk along the south side of Charlemont Street and a two-lane (24') roadway with a marked sharrow. We encourage the applicant to consider a separated (10'+) wide multi-use trail along Charlemont Street that is more consistent with the proposed multi-use trail on the west side of Needham Street. This would provide a safer and more fluid connection from the DCR Blue Heron Trail along the Charles River to the Upper Falls Greenway and transit. It would also eliminate some of the potential bike safety conflicts associated with the perpendicular parking on the north side of Charlemont. Additionally, we recommend that the applicant locate shade trees on both sides of the street along the curb line to increase shading and to buffer pedestrians from vehicles.

Site Grading on the west side - As indicated elsewhere in this memo, the project applicant proposes a variance to build a 10-foot-high retaining wall that separates the Northland site from the commercial properties to the west. This 8'-10' grade difference will create a physical barrier that will frustrate any future pedestrian or vehicular connections to Needham Street. This may reinforce the "superblock" configuration rather than the smaller fine grained block network called for in the *Needham Vision Plan*. We recommend that the applicant more closely match the grading of the adjacent properties to the west (260 and 300 Needham Street) to ensure future connectivity between the three parcels (Refer to attachment).

Site lighting and overhead utilities – We would like additional information on the proposed site lighting strategy, including the location and type of streetlights, pedestrian lighting, building lighting, and the relocation of existing overhead utility lines.

Building Use, Placement and Massing

Proposed Retail – The project applicant proposes two retail spaces on either side of the project. These two small retail spaces may be difficult to tenant given the distance from foot traffic and visibility on Needham Street. We strongly encourage the project applicant to consider adding on-street parking on Christina and Charlemont Street in the proximity of the proposed retail uses. This parking would be more visible and accessible to patrons than the proposed parking spaces along the alley that appears to be private. On Christina Street, we suggest the realignment of the proposed park road with on-street parking to support the retail adjacent to the Charles River and future bridge connection to Needham. Lastly, the applicant may wish to provide a single larger retail space with more flexibility to create a destination retail that would more likely flourish in a remote location.

Reduce the length of the building – The length of the building (600'), while mitigated by the building massing, is excessive and is not in keeping with other local development in Newton, including the *Northland Newton Development* on the other side of Needham Street. We recommend that the project applicant consider breaking up the existing building into two separate buildings with a vehicular and/or pedestrian street running east-west. This new east-west corridor can provide a link to Needham Street as proposed by the Needham Street Vision Plan and create smaller blocks that are more walkable and pedestrian-oriented (Refer to attachment).

Building Height and Massing – The project applicant proposes building heights of eight stories above the adjacent streets. This exceeds the highest levels of the Northland Newton Development (same applicant) with a maximum of 7 stories and generous setbacks at the highest levels and most buildings reaching lower heights or 4-5 floors along public streets such as Needham Street. Eight stories exceed most buildings in Newton and certainly the most recent residential developments in the vicinity including The Kendrick and Charles River Landing in Needham. While project applicant proposes generous step-backs and height reductions on the eastern side adjacent to the park and residential neighborhood, the applicant should explore additional measures, including:

1. Establish human-scaled street wall proportions on Charlemont and Christina Street. This could include a 4 or 5-level street wall height that then transitions to the maximum height of 8 stories in one or two steps. The proponent should provide

renderings of these street views without trees obscuring the tallest portions of the building.

2. Include additional building step-backs on the western edge of the building. This façade will be more visible as the properties to the west are redeveloped. More careful attention should be given to this elevation to break up the scale and massing. The proponent should provide a rendering of this area of the building.
3. Utilize a *base-middle-top* approach to the façade design with deeper setbacks and lighter materials and fenestration at the upper level to mitigate the unprecedented scale of the building.

Location of service and parking entrances - The project applicant proposes one large central loading area along the service drive midway between Christina Street and Charlemont Street. While this configuration allows efficiency for loading, it also acts as a physical barrier that limits future pedestrian and vehicular connections. We encourage the applicant to consider alternate service locations to allow for more flexibility in the future, including the potential for multiple smaller loading areas that consider future infill development on abutting properties (See attachment).

The parking structure includes a total of three entrances - one along the entry drive and two along the service drive. To minimize the number of curb cuts on the property, we encourage the applicant, to the extent possible, to eliminate one of these entrances. Additionally, we recommend that the applicant minimize the visual impact of each parking entrance, including shielding internal lighting.

We truly appreciate the opportunity to offer design review service to the City of Newton.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alan Mountjoy". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and a long, sweeping tail.

Alan Mountjoy, Principal, NBBJ

ATTACHMENT B

Horsley Witten Group

Sustainable Environmental Solutions

112 Water Street • 6th Floor • Boston, MA 02109
857-263-8193 • horsleywitten.com



January 9, 2023

Katie Whewell
Chief Planner for Current Planning
City of Newton
Planning and Development Department
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459-1449

Re: Peer Review regarding Landscaping
Northland Charlemont Comprehensive Permit Project
160 Charlemont Street, Newton, MA

Dear Ms. Whewell:

The Horsley Witten Group, Inc. (HW) is pleased to submit this peer review regarding the landscape design for the Northland Newton Development located at 160 Charlemont Street and 56 Christina Street, off Needham Street in Newton, MA. We understand that the Comprehensive Permit Application, pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 40B, includes the construction of a nine-story, mixed-use building with 410 residential units, approximately 16,633 square feet (sf) of amenity space, and approximately 10,680 sf of commercial space in one building on 6.98 acres of land. HW understands that the proposed development also includes approximately 2-acres of new publicly accessible open space and bicycle and pedestrian paths to connect with Newton's existing and proposed network.

HW provided the Newton Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) with a peer review regarding the Site Design and Open Space, dated December 13, 2022 as well as a separate peer review letter regarding the stormwater management design, dated January 9, 2023. A few landscape comments were included in HW's December 13, 2022 letter. HW has repeated them here to keep landscape comments together.

As part of the landscape design review process, HW reviewed the following documents and plans:

- Emails between Chris Bridle and March Welch, dated November 8, 2022 and forwarded to Katherine Adams, dated November 22, 2022 (1 page)
- Landscape Plan Set, The Northland Charlemont Development, prepared by Stantec, dated September 15, 2022, Sheets L-100, L-300, L-310, L-901, L-902

Trees and Landscaping

1. The Applicant has requested a waiver of Newton's Tree Preservation Ordinance. HW echoes the City of Newton's comments and recommends that the Applicant provide additional justification for this requested waiver. HW has reviewed communications between the Applicant and the City of Newton City Forester about tree caliper size. HW recommends that the Applicant provide additional support for these decisions and the waiver request, building on the Landscape Plans (L-300, L-310).

2. HW notes that the proposed multi-use path crosses south-north along the eastern edge of the site. HW suggests that the Applicant show additional details to avoid conflicts between users of the path and parkgoers in the adjacent passive recreation areas, especially children (see for example, Rendering C and D on L-901 in the Landscape Plans). HW notes that in one version of the open space plan the path appears farther east than in an earlier version of the plan. HW believes that the farther east orientation is preferable to avoid potential conflicts.
3. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation tool indicates that the endangered northern long-eared bat (*myotis septentrionalis*) may be affected by activity at the site, HW recommends that the Applicant comment on how the landscape design may impact this endangered bat species specifically related to lighting.
4. The fencing proposed for the project meets Newton’s Chapter 5 Public Building and Inspection Services requirements for fencing.
5. HW requested a photometric study/plan for the project.
6. The Northland Plant Schedule per the landscape plan issued on September 15, 2022 is generally aligned with the Newton Recommended Plant List. The following table identifies species and quantities of each to be planted that are not accounted for in the Newton List but are included in the Northland Plant Schedule. None of these additions are known to be invasive in Massachusetts.

Northland Plantings not on Newton Plant List	Quantity
Deciduous Canopy Trees	
Honey Locust (<i>Gleditsia triacanthos</i>)	9
Sweet Gum (<i>Liquidambar styraciflua</i>)	3
Eastern Cottonwood (<i>Populus deltoides</i>)	5
American Hophornbeam (<i>Ostrya virginiana</i>)	23
Chestnut Oak (<i>Quercus montana</i>)	10
Pin Oak (<i>Quercus palustris</i>)	3
Smaller Deciduous Trees	
Autumn Brilliance Apple Serviceberry (Amelanchier X Grandiflora)	5
Sweetbay Magnolia (<i>Magnolia virginiana</i>)* endangered in MA	9

7. The landscape plan does not provide the species of trees to be removed, except for some noted small cedars. HW suggests that the Applicant identify existing species and potentially incorporate this information into the current plant schedule.
8. HW recommends that the Applicant consider the habitat loss associated with the four dead/declining tree removals. Two out of these four trees are significant in size (24 caliper inches) and one, noted as declining, is the largest at the site (52 caliper inches).
9. HW recommends that the 200-foot Riverfront Area be added to the landscape plans, as this resource area is regulated by the Newton Conservation Commission and will have implications for planting requirements within the 200-foot Riverfront Area. Reference the

Mitigation/Restoration Planting (Trees, Shrubs, and Herbaceous Plants) Consolidated Guidelines for the landscape implications for working within the Riverfront Area and will require consultation with the Newton Conservation Commission.

10. The landscape plan does not show the different respective native pollinator landscape plantings as referenced in the Northland Charlemont Proposed 40B Development ZBA Hearing Responses presentation. HW recommends that different landscape planting areas be shown on the landscape plan and the respective species for each landscape type be listed on the plan.
11. The landscape plan does not currently specify the soil requirements for the site pertaining to soil volume or soil structure, which is important for plantings areas above structures. This was previously reflected in comments submitted by The Urban Design Commission to the Zoning Board of Appeals on October 24, 2022 requesting that 3 to 4 feet of soil should be provided above the garage or otherwise plants must be in planters. HW recommends this information be added to the landscape plans to ensure that the trees planted around courtyard two will have sufficient soil volume, given that they are planted over the parking garage.
12. The Play Landscape structures presented in the Northland Charlemont Proposed 40B Development ZBA Hearing Responses Presentation are appropriate as they provide flexible play opportunities for children and are natural materials of wood and stone. As the project further develops it is recommended that the Applicant consider sustainability and maintenance when sourcing the wood and stone materials.
13. HW recommends that the bicycle runnel be included in the L-100 Materials Plan. HW observed that stairs are integrated into the pedestrian ramp with handrails to allow for ADA accessibility to the shared used path from the northeast corner of the site.
14. HW recommends that the Applicant verify that the Notes on Sheet L-100 are legible.

Please contact Janet Bernardo at 857-263-8193 or at jbernardo@horsleywitten.com if you have any questions regarding these comments.

Sincerely,

Horsley Witten Group, Inc.



Janet Carter Bernardo, P.E.
Associate Principal



Kellie Knight
Landscape Designer/Environmental Scientist

DRAFT

**NORTHLAND
160 CHARLEMONT STREET
URBAN DESIGN REVIEW**

January 2023

Newton Vision Documents

Needham Street Vision Plan

This vision plan included specific recommendations to convert Needham Street from an "isolated to a connected roadway".

Short-Term Actions

- Encourage public connections between parking lots and require wayfinding signage to guide drivers to those routes
- Minimize driveway entrances from Needham Street as possible

Ongoing/Long Term Actions

- Create new driving and non-driving connections off of Needham Street as opportunities present themselves



Staff created the above set of possible new road location ideas based on principles and ideas discussed during the Community Engagement Group meetings.

Washington Street Vision Plan

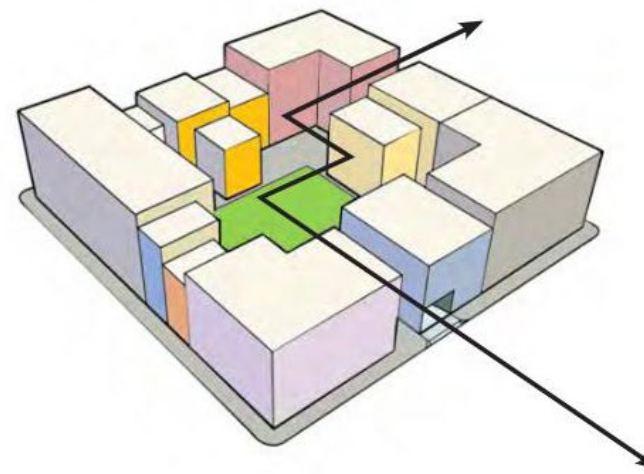
This plan includes guidance on block size (1/4 mile perimeter max) and a network of streets and pathways to promote walkability.

Create More Route Options

Promote small blocks

One of the strongest indicators of a walkable place is the density of intersections per square mile. In order to increase intersection density, a community needs smaller blocks. Blocks with more than 1/4 mile in perimeter are considered too big to support the benefits of interconnectivity. Many of the blocks along Washington Street exceed this threshold.

Smaller blocks within neighborhoods help to distribute traffic and also mean more direct and faster response times for emergency services. Keeping any pass-through traffic on small neighborhood blocks moving slowly and safely is critical but creating connections through large blocks can in fact contribute



to improved traffic conditions within neighborhoods as well.

The process for building new routes through existing blocks is not always simple. The Zoning Ordinance can play a role in ensuring developments that span a large area create opportunities for pedestrian and vehicular interconnections. Additionally, the City can track opportunity sites to create new public connections between blocks.



Needham Street Vision Plan

Urban Design Concepts

Emulate Newton Villages

The Needham Street area will be a prosperous mixed-use district that emulates many of the positive aspects of Newton's villages (scale, block size, character)

Diversity and Mixed Use

Needham Street will be a walkable retail spine, supported by diverse options for getting to the street whether by transit, walking, biking, or driving.

Connectivity

Convert Needham Street from an isolated to a connected roadway - A connected roadway network increases options and improves walkability.

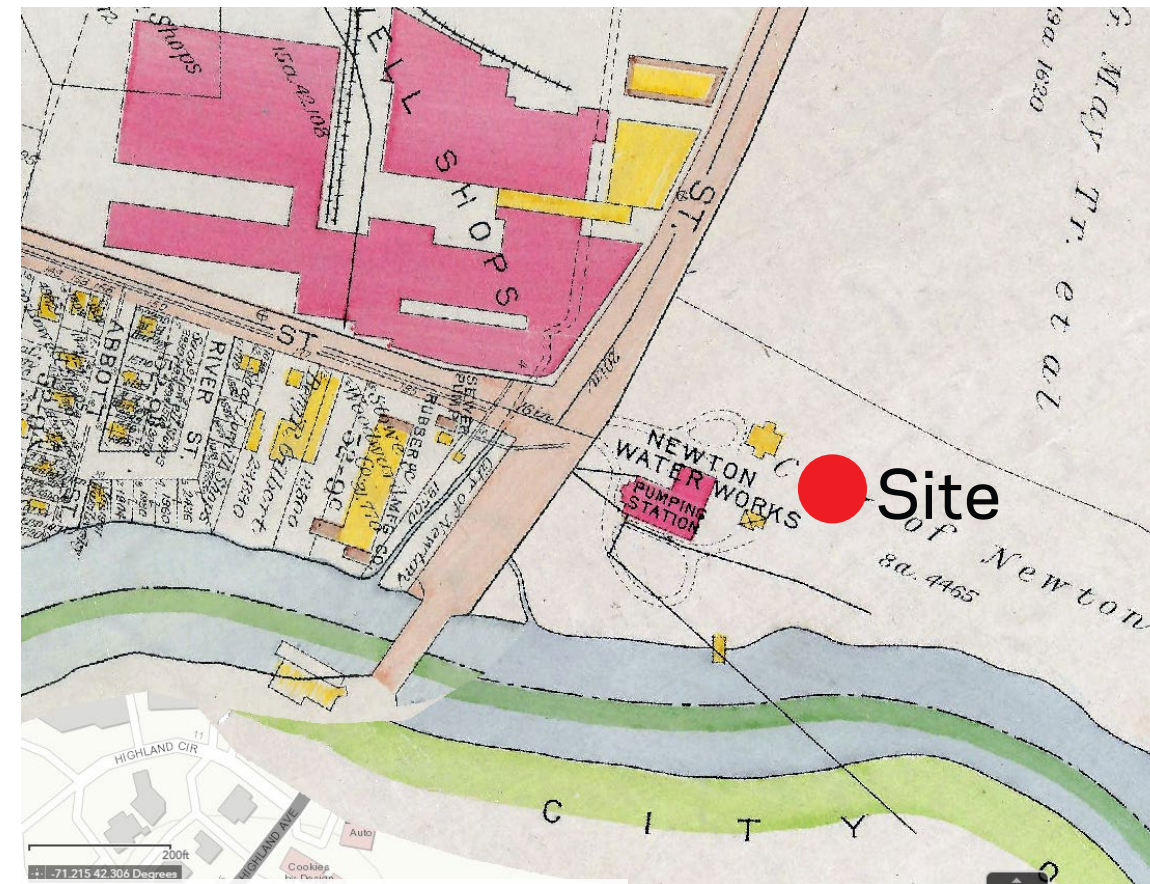
Engage with nature

Construct trail and open space infrastructure that increases access to the Charles River
Expand trails, walking loops, and open space connections on a regional level
(e.g. into Needham, Brookline, Dedham, etc.)

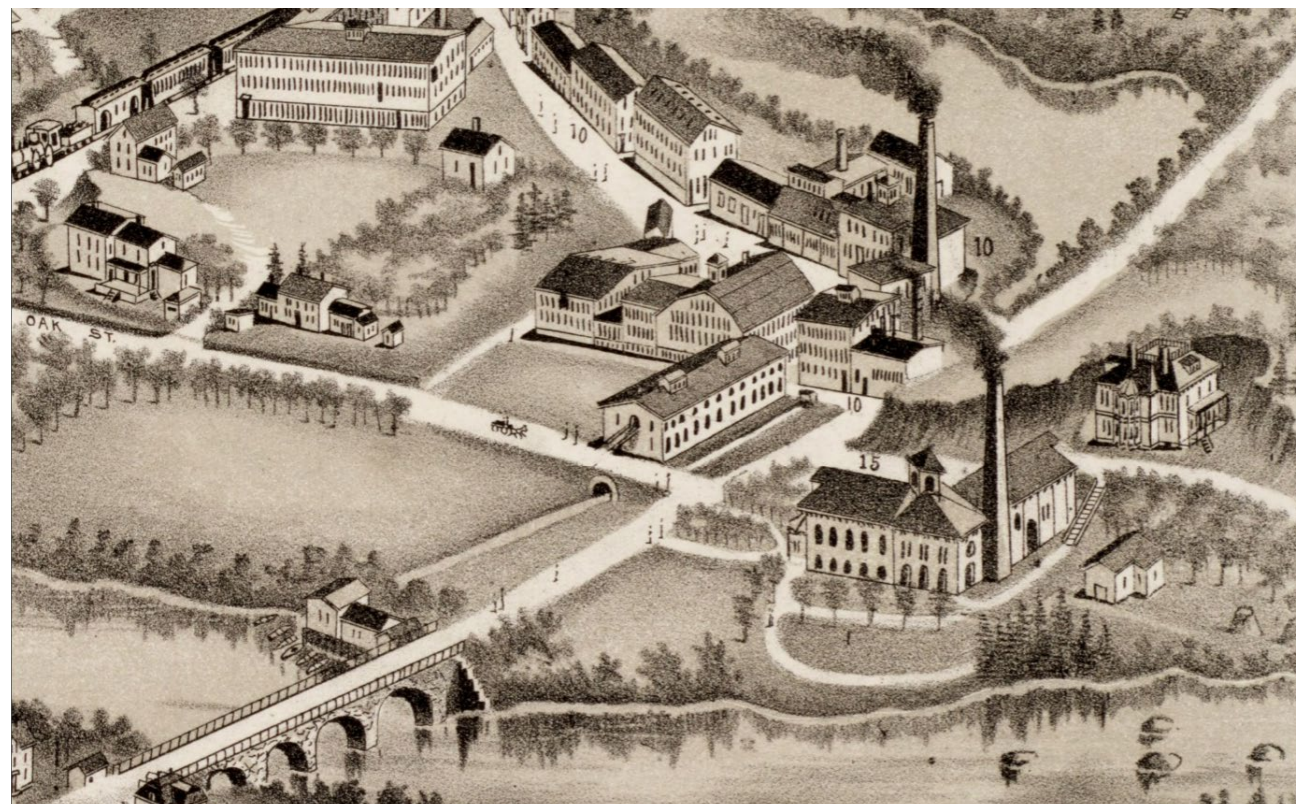
History



Newton Upper Falls - 1874



Newton Upper Falls - 1917



Newton Waterworks Pumping Station - 1888



Newton Pumping Station - 1925

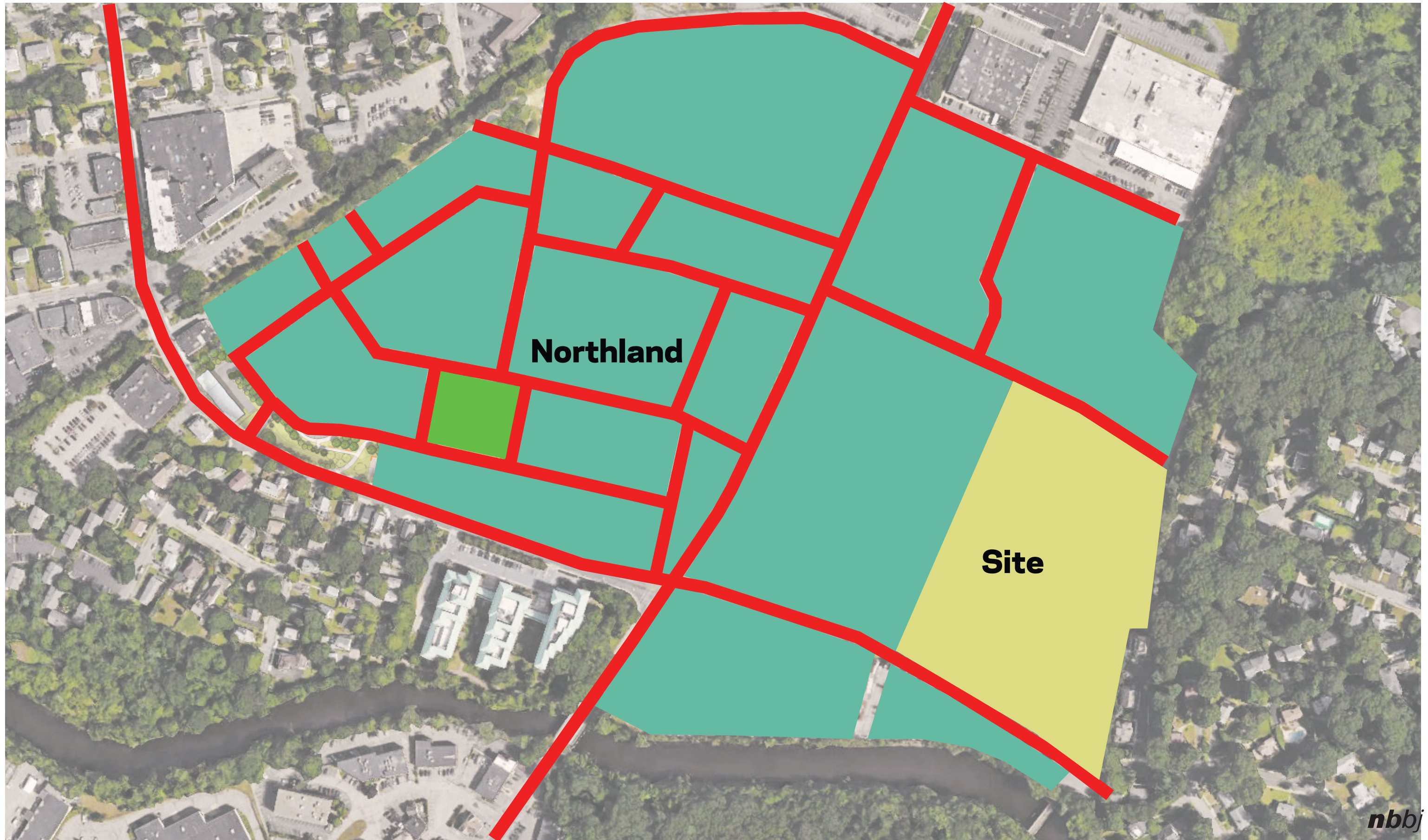
Context



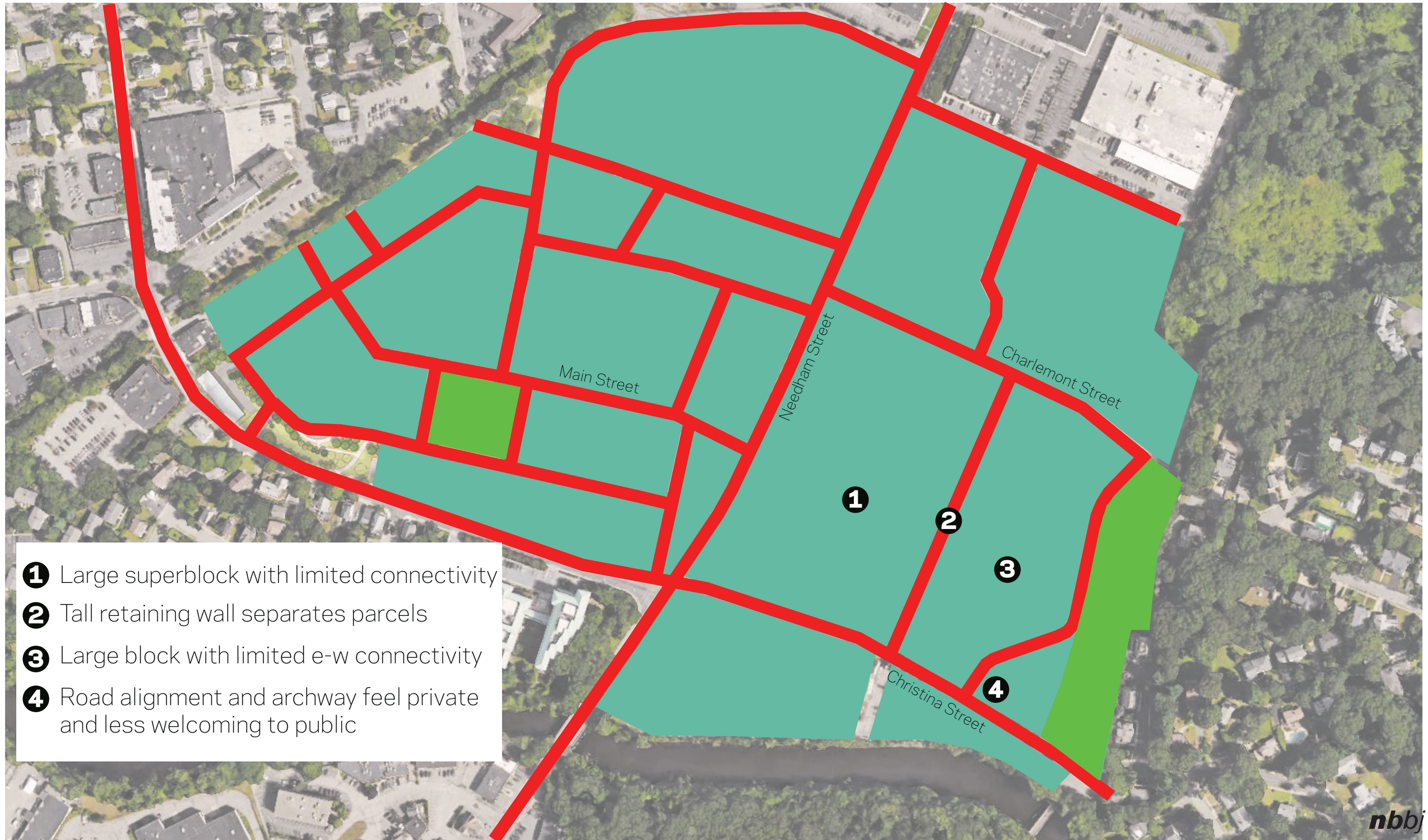
Northland and 160 Site



Northland and 160 Site



Northland and Current 160 Plan



- 1** Large superblock with limited connectivity
- 2** Tall retaining wall separates parcels
- 3** Large block with limited e-w connectivity
- 4** Road alignment and archway feel private and less welcoming to public

Potential 160 Modification



- ❶ Potential extension of Main Street
- ❷ Regrade alley to eliminate retaining wall
- ❸ Extend street to create multiple blocks
- ❹ Realign Park Drive to follow park edge

160 Modification with Main Street Spine



Active frontages for Current Proposal



Active frontages for Modified Proposal



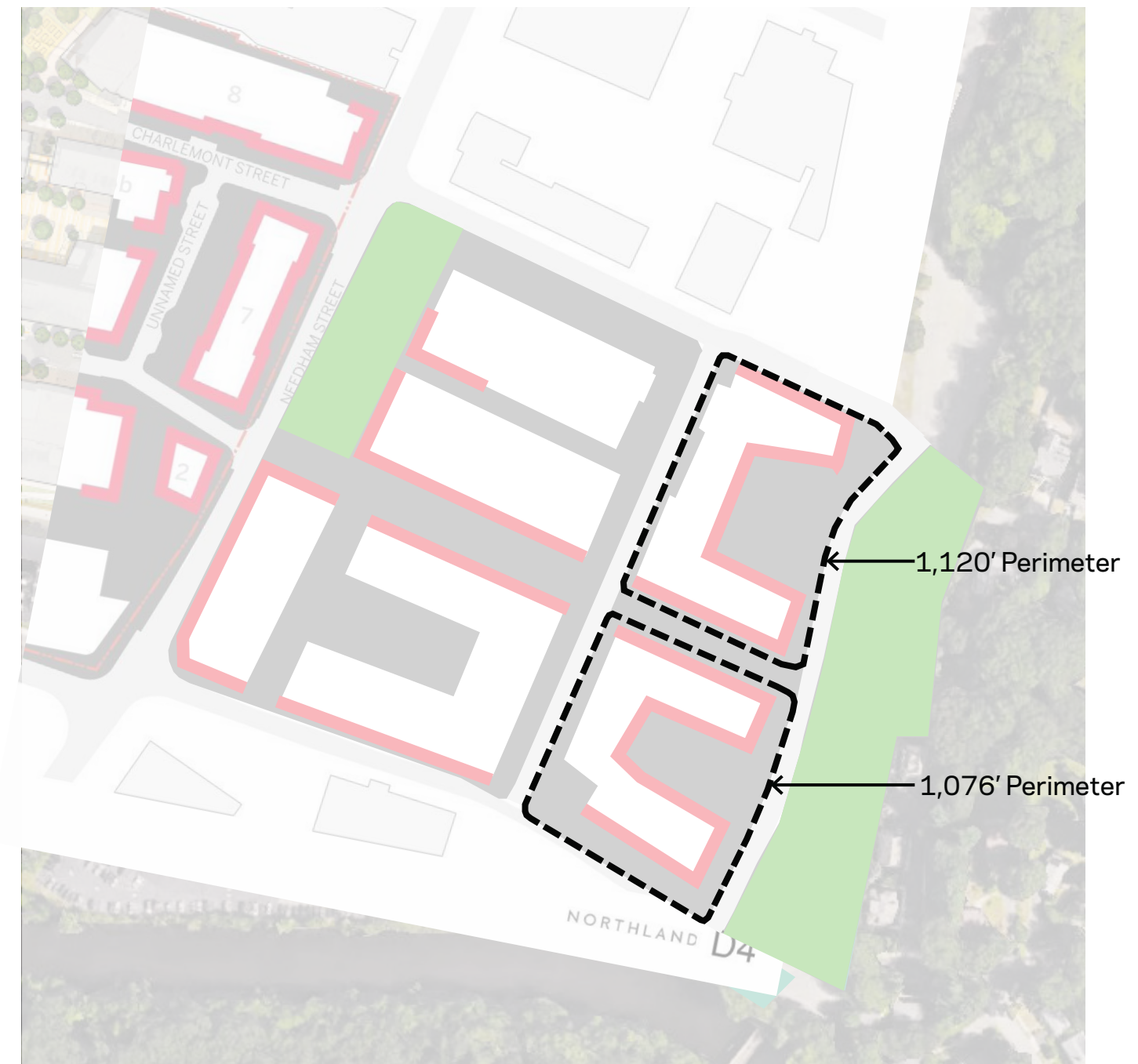
Block Size Comparison

According to the Needham Street Vision Plan, this area scores poorly on two walkability metrics: intersection density and small block sizes (less than $\frac{1}{4}$ mile perimeter or 1,320'). The current proposal has a single block with a 1,810' perimeter that exceeds the maximum by nearly 500'. An alternative two-block approach (shown on the right) could have two separate blocks with a perimeter between 1,076' and 1,120'.

Current Plan



Alternate Plan



Block Size Comparison - Newton Villages



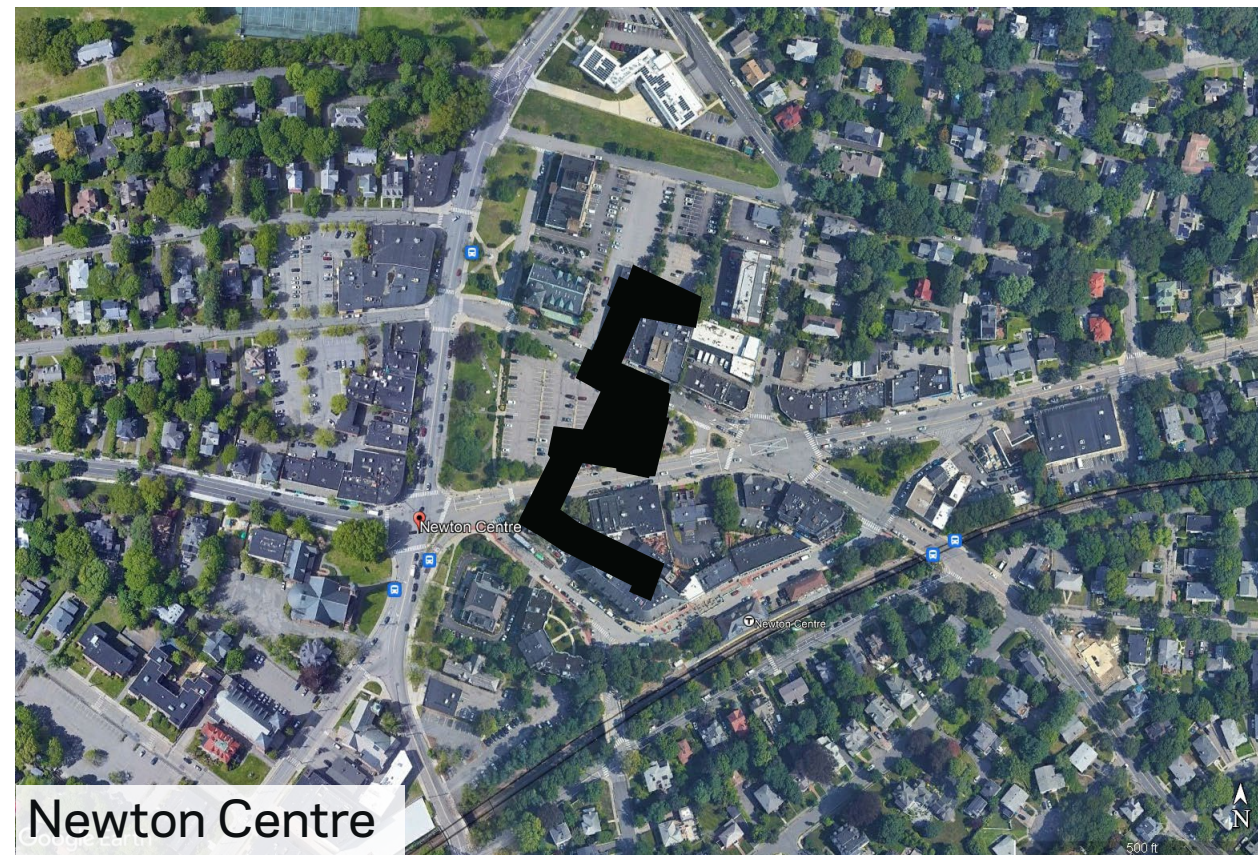
Needham Street District



Auburndale



West Newton



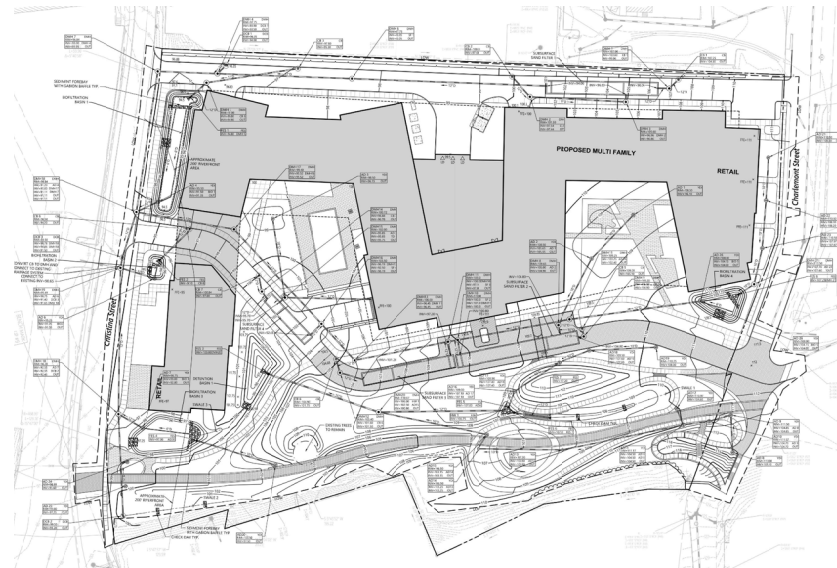
Newton Centre

Newton Project Comparison

The block sizes and maximum building length for the proposed 160 Charleton project greatly exceed recently approved projects in the surrounding area.

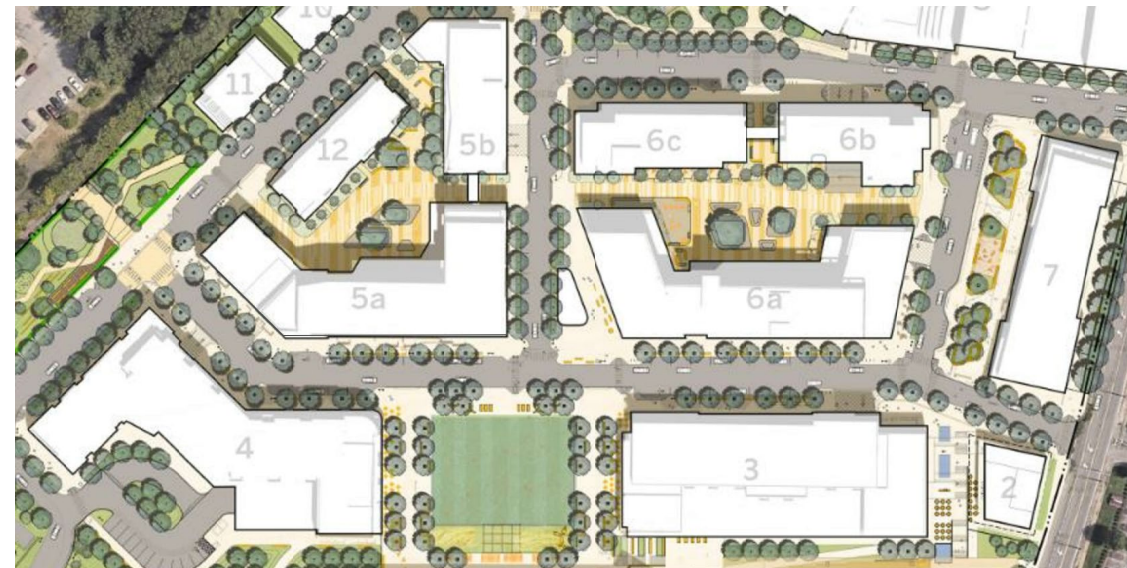
160 Charlemont

Building Length: 605'
 Total Units: 410
 Parking Spaces: 486 (1.2 per unit)



Northland Needham St.

Typical Building Length: 350'
 Total Units: 800
 Residential Parking Spaces: 800 (1.0 per unit)



15 Riverdale

Typical Building Length: 300'
 Total Units: 204
 Residential Parking Spaces: 236 (1.16 per unit)



Charlemont Street

The current conditions for Charlemont Street include a narrow sidewalk on the south side, overhead utilities, and a mix of parallel and head-in parking. The applicant has proposed a limited 6' sidewalk on the south side of the street along with a marked bicycle sharrow that could have significant safety conflicts with the existing head-in parking on the north side of the street. We suggest that the applicant consider a 10' wide separated multi-use path on the south side of Charlemont (see example below), tree planting on both sides of the street to buffer pedestrians from automobiles, the burial of all site utilities, and the installation of pedestrian scaled lighting. These improvements would significantly improve safety along Charlemont and would be consistent with the proposed improvements for the Newton Northland Development on the other side of Needham Street.

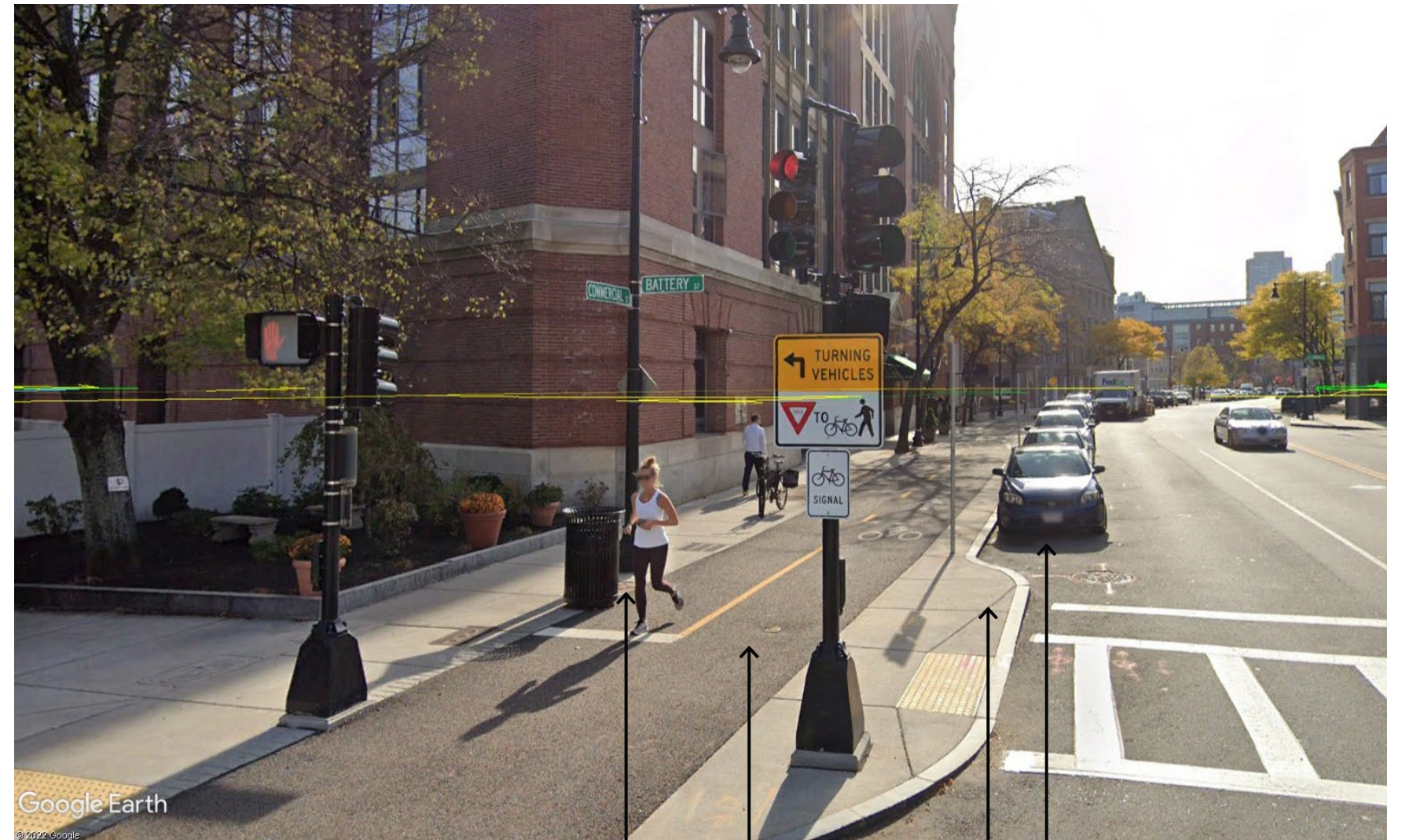
Existing Conditions



Overhead Utilities

Potential Parking Conflict w/ Sharrow and no sidewalk on north side of street

Example: Commercial Street, Boston



Decorative light fixture w/out overhead wires

Two-way protected multi-purpose trail

On-street parking

Curb Extension