



## **Public Facilities Committee Report**

### **City of Newton** **In City Council**

**Wednesday, January 17, 2018**

**Present:** Councilors Crossley (Chair), Leary, Norton, Kelley, Gentile, Danberg, Laredo, Lappin

**Also Present:** Councilors Albright, Downs

**City staff Present:** Commissioner of Public Works Jim McGonagle, City Engineer Lou Taverna, Director of Planning and Development Barney Heath, Fire Department Chief Proia, Community Engagement Manager Lily Canan-Reynolds, Police Department Captain Anastasia, Police Department Lieutenant Daly, Long Range Planner Rachel Blatt, Director of Transportation for Planning Nicole Freedman

#### **Referred to Public Safety and Transportation and Public Facilities Committees**

**#51-18**      **West Newton Square Enhancements Project**

COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC WORKS, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT and COUNCILORS COTE, KELLEY, & BROUSAL-GLASER requesting approval pursuant to §26-51 of the City of Newton Ordinances for the West Newton Square Enhancements Project on Washington Street running approximately from Chestnut Street to Lucas Court.

**Action:**      **Public Facilities Approved 5-0-3(Councilors Gentile, Lappin, Laredo abstaining)**

**Note:**      Director of Planning and Development Barney Heath, staff representatives and consultants joined the Public Facilities Committee to provide an overview of the proposed West Newton Square redesign. The project includes changes to curb alignments, widening sidewalks and public plazas, advanced traffic signalization, clear crosswalk markings and the installation of bicycle lanes, requiring approval by the Public Facilities Committee. All of the proposed improvements are designed with a focus on ensuring public safety while maximizing efficiencies and enhancing West Newton Square. Details of the presentation are in the attached PowerPoint and online at: [http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/parking\\_transportation/west\\_newton\\_sq\\_n\\_enhancements.asp](http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/planning/parking_transportation/west_newton_sq_n_enhancements.asp)

The Planning Department has been working to design the Square with improvements to the pedestrian and vehicle experience, to help encourage a lively but safer village center. Mr. Heath noted that there are currently a total of six uncoordinated signals in a space of a 1/4 mile, contributing to driver frustration and unsafe conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists. There is currently no bike infrastructure and only eight of eighty trees remain from thirty years ago. The transportation strategy noted that Mass DOT has identified West Newton Square as a hot spot for accidents involving vehicles and pedestrians.

For about 18 months, The City has been engaging in extensive outreach with stakeholders, holding well attended community meetings, conducting site walks, going door-to-door and online to solicit feedback from businesses and residents. The team includes Long Range Planner Rachel Blatt, Community Engagement Manager Lily Canan Reynolds, Commissioner of Public Works Jim McGonagle, Director of Transportation for Planning Nicole Freedman, City Engineer Lou Taverna, Chief Police David MacDonald and Police Captain Anastasia, Fire Chief Proia and Assistant Fire Chief Lucchetti, ADA Coordinator Jini Fairley, Commissioner of Parks and Recreation Bob DeRubeis, Tree Warden Marc Welch, Chief of Staff/Chief Financial Officer Maureen Lemieux and the three Ward 3 Councilors. The group's collaborative effort will be the first village center completed using the "Complete Streets" approach.

HDR Civil Engineer Richard Kelly, Rick Lenday and Landscape Architect Kaki Marten provided an overview of the proposed design changes at West Newton Square. Mr. Kelly showed the project limits on Washington Street (from Chestnut Street to Elm Street) on the attached presentation and noted that upgrades to the intersection will include the installation of emergency preemption equipment, decreased crosswalk lengths and reoriented bus stops that satisfy Mass DOT's preferences. A new, raised island in front of Waltham Street will be installed to help prevent left hand turns onto Watertown Street and left turns will now be prohibited from Elm Street.

Landscape Architect Kaki Marten presented architectural details of the enhancements to the Square, stating that while the treatments used will not be identical throughout; they will be coordinated. Upgrades to the square will include trees in raised beds, planters with structured soil, permeable pavers, artistic furniture, bike racks and new benches.

Mr. Heath stated that the proposed changes will include a reduction in traffic signals from six to five, with improved signal coordination and incorporating new technology to allow emergency vehicles full access. Dedicated bike signals will provide clear traffic rules for cyclists, improving public safety. Bike lanes (shown in green) will be buffered and/or protected on both sides of the street. The relocation of fire hydrants to more sensible locations will help create additional space for parking and crosswalks. While four parking spaces will need to be relocated from the intersection of Washington/Watertown/Waltham, the project will result in a net gain of 22 parking spaces (including two accessible spaces) and one motorcycle space. It was noted that while a slight increase in vehicular travel time (20-40 seconds) through the square is anticipated initially, adjustments can be made that increase efficiency after construction is completed. It was additionally noted that the current estimates generated by the traffic model are based on fully functional pre-construction conditions and not actual conditions, meaning that traffic flow estimates are conservative.

Committee members questioned how the City will plan to address maintenance of the square. It was noted that during design, the City incorporated elements intended to minimize some maintenance. One example is how the permeable pavers will help naturally infiltrate and tree bed design will prevent roots from lifting and damaging sidewalks. It was noted that the permeable pavers will require purchase of a small street vacuum and periodic vacuuming to ensure that the pavers do

not clog from debris. A Committee member encouraged staff to select options that require less long term maintenance, even if the upfront costs are more.

Fire Department Chief Proia, Police Captain Anastasia and Police Lieutenant Daly confirmed that the Planning Department has worked to address concerns and incorporate feedback related to emergency operations. The Chair noted that the administration has reiterated their commitment to the Opticom emergency preemption equipment which allows for clearing of the traffic for emergency vehicles. It was noted that, while making the square safer for pedestrians and cyclists, the changes could result in slightly increased emergency response times. Captain Anastasia noted that if the reconfiguration and redesign of the square creates issues, there are small, inexpensive measures that can be taken to rectify the issues (ie. Restriping of the lines, eliminating some turns, changing light sequence/duration and/or changing signage).

Committee members expressed concern with regard to the positioning of some bike lanes as they transition through the project. Two specific areas in question were adjacent to the “floating bus stop” and on the outside of a right hand turn. Ms. Blatt noted that the bus stop’s current position relative to the bike lane requires the bus to pull out, crossing over the bike lane. The proposed plan includes a “floating bus stop”. The MBTA has found success with “Floating bus stops” which are placed on the outside of the bike lane, allowing minimized conflict points and reducing time pulling travel in and out of traffic. Director of Transportation Nicole Freedman emphasized that having the bike lane on the outside of a right hand turn is the best practice as the most frequent biker/vehicle accident is a “right hook”.

The Committee raised concern with regard to the possible loss of spaces for the businesses on Washington Street and whether there is a surplus of accessible spaces. It was confirmed that the Planning Department did evaluate the option to relocate or reduce the number of accessible spaces to accommodate additional parking on Washington Street, but determined that the accessible spaces must remain. Ms. Blatt noted that more spaces will be created and located on Waltham Street, adjacent to the businesses. She added that it is possible that there will be one short term parking space, particularly for customers of the dry cleaners.

A Councilor raised concerns relative to the turns from Cherry Street onto Washington. Currently, there is one right hand only turn and one left hand only turn. The proposed plan includes a non-exclusive right hand turn from the right lane. Committee members questioned whether right hand turning drivers might be aggravated as a result of having to wait behind drivers turning left. It was noted that the volume of vehicles travelling from Cherry Street to Washington and then onto Highland is so great that it is essential to keep the flow of traffic moving. Committee members questioned whether the island in front of Waltham Street will be sized sufficiently to prevent left hand turns onto Watertown Street from Waltham Street and whether there will be adequate signage that clearly specifies that right hand turns may be made from Washington Street onto Waltham Street, but not onto Watertown. Committee members were assured that the plan has been reviewed and supported by various traffic engineers.

Some Committee members shared concerns with Chief Proia and Captain Anastasia with regard to the traffic data and how it was taken. It was noted that the traffic engineers followed best practices and took peak hour counts on two days in addition to obtaining data from the automatic traffic counters. Committee members asked that the Planning Department provide a narrative detailing how the traffic data was taken and the results. A Committee member asked if the plan included concurrent crossings. It was confirmed that there will be locations in the square where there are concurrent crossings. Committee members questioned the safety of concurrent crossings and asked why they were included when they were a source of conflict in Auburndale Square. Commissioner McGonagle noted that when the design for Auburndale Square was completed, it was recommended that concurrent crossings not be included. He stated that there were not recommendations against concurrent crossings in the plan for West Newton Square but confirmed that if there are issues, the signalization can be adjusted.

Committee members questioned whether a trial or pilot program would be helpful prior to construction. It was noted that a pilot or trial is not possible ahead of reconfiguring certain intersections and installing upgraded traffic signalization reflecting future conditions, however, Mr. Heath noted that pilots can be done at some key points, once these things are in place. Some Committee members felt that a peer review would be beneficial for the project. Committee members asked that DPW, Planning and Engineering keep the Council informed as plans move forward. Councilor Kelley motioned to approve the design of West Newton Square, Committee members voted 5-0-3 in favor of the item.

### **Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees**

**#87-18**

**Appropriate \$120,000 for design engineering services for West Newton Square**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend one hundred twenty thousand dollars (\$120,000) from Free Cash for the purpose of funding additional final design engineering services for the West Newton Square rehabilitation project.

**Action:**

**Public Facilities Approved 6-0-2(Councilors Gentile, Lappin abstaining)**

**Note:** City Engineer Lou Taverna presented the request for \$120,000 for design and engineering services for the West Newton Square Project. A Committee member noted that \$371,000 has already been appropriated for design and engineering services. Upon approval of the requested funds, \$491,000 will have been spent on design and engineering services, which does not include the engineering costs during construction. Mr. Taverna noted that engineering and design fees on comparable projects typically cost between 10-12% of the construction costs (anticipated to be \$4 million dollars). A Committee member noted that the City should be more conscious of using the services in order to contain the costs of design and engineering. It was requested that information be provided for the Finance Committee meeting relative to who is managing the budget and what steps are being taken to ensure that the project remains on budget. It was also requested that an estimate for the expected total amount of design funds be provided for Finance. Councilor Kelley moved approval of the item which carried 6-0 with abstentions from Councilors Gentile and Lappin.

### **Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees**

**#88-18      Appropriate \$380,000 for design engineering services for Newtonville**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend three hundred eighty thousand dollars (\$380,000) from Free Cash for the purpose of funding expanded streetscape design and engineering services for Newtonville Village improvements, including Washington Street at Walnut Street, southerly on Walnut Street to Cabot Street, and Austin Street from Walnut Street to the 28 Austin Street development.

**Action:      Public Facilities Held 8-0**

**Note:**      City Engineer Lou Taverna, presented the request for \$380,000 to begin design and engineering services for the purpose of coordinating materials and street furniture on several private and public projects planned throughout Newtonville. Mr. Taverna stated that the design must be a coordinated effort among DPW, Engineering and Planning in order to achieve a coherent streetscape design for the village center that would include direction to major private development efforts in the area.

Community Engagement Manager Lily Canan Reynolds provided an overview of the scope of work, which would include coordination of the City's Walnut Street Enhancements Project, a streetscape plan for Newtonville, oversight of the streetscape designs for Austin Street and Washington Place and the Newtonville Bridge redesign. The description of the full project scope is attached.

Committee members noted that the Austin Street and Washington Place developers have committed to completing some streetscape enhancements. Additionally, it was noted that the Walnut Street Enhancements project is separate and ongoing. Director of Planning and Development Barney Heath emphasized that the request for funds is to cover the expense of coordinating the oversight of the various components of the project as well as streetscape design and detailed engineered plans for the bridge. It was noted that Mass DOT will not accept plans for the bridge without detailed engineering documents.

Some Councilors noted that the liaison committees (established by Special Permits) for projects in the area have agreed to hand over their landscaping and streetscape designs to a coordinated City process, but noted that the City must first finalize design standards. Committee members expressed concerns that \$380,000 for design and engineering services seems excessive, given that some components have alternate funding sources. It was noted that the project was not put out to bid and that the City selected Environmental Partners because of their ongoing work on Walnut Street. The Committee was in agreement that the project components should be itemized before approval of design funds. Councilor Lappin motioned to hold the item which carried unanimously.

**Referred to Public Facilities and Finance Committees****#89-18      Transfer of \$2 million for snow and ice removal expenses**

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to transfer the sum of two million dollars (\$2,000,000) from the Budget Reserve – Snow and Ice Removal Account to the following accounts:

Rental - Vehicles	
(0140110-5273) .....	\$1,400,000
Regular Overtime	
(0140110-513001) .....	\$600,000

**Action:**        **Public Facilities Approved 8-0**

**Note:**        Commissioner McGonagle presented the request to transfer \$2 million for snow and ice removal expenses. He stated that there have been eight snow events totaling approximately 30” of snow. Because snow removal costs are approximately \$100,000 per inch, the Commissioner estimates that any new snow events will require additional funds. Committee members noted that the administration can amend the request for funds prior to the Council meeting on February 5. With a motion from Councilor Danberg to approve the item, Committee members voted unanimously in favor.

The Committee adjourned at 10:25 pm.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Deborah Crossley, Chair**



Department of Planning and  
Community Development

Department of Public Works



Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

#51-18 West Newton Square Enhancements  
Public Facilities  
January 17, 2018



West Newton Square Today

#51-18 West Newton Square Enhancements  
Public Facilities  
January 17, 2018

## Project Goals

Maximize **Safety** and convenience for all travel modes

- Simplify intersections and traffic patterns
- Accommodate bicycles
- Improve wayfinding to MBTA services and to parking

Enhance Pedestrian **Experience** / Village Character

- Vehicular traffic calming
- More direct and rational pedestrian crossings and routes
- Places to linger and socialize
- Pleasant and maintainable streetscape and landscape elements

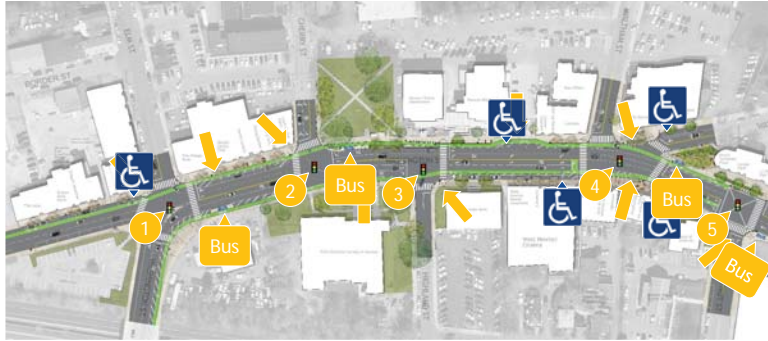
Benefit the **Environment**

- Increased tree canopy to mitigate urban "heat island"
- Green Infrastructure to improve stormwater quality
- Encourage walking, biking and transit use

## PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS





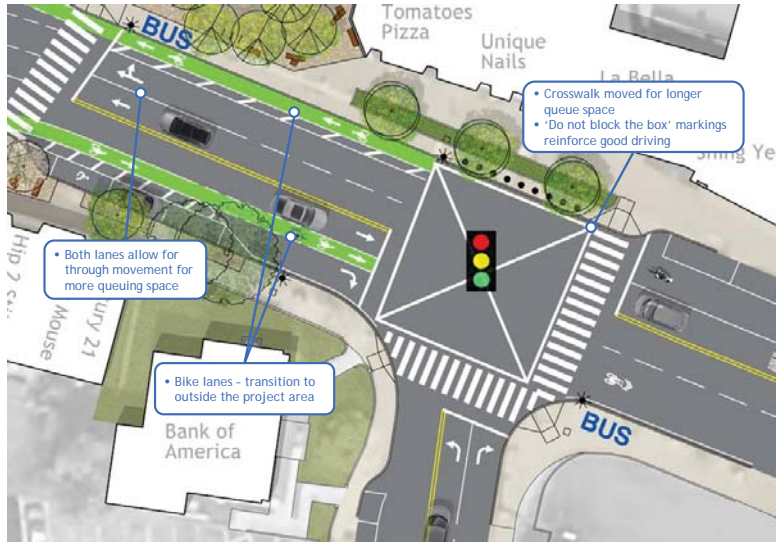
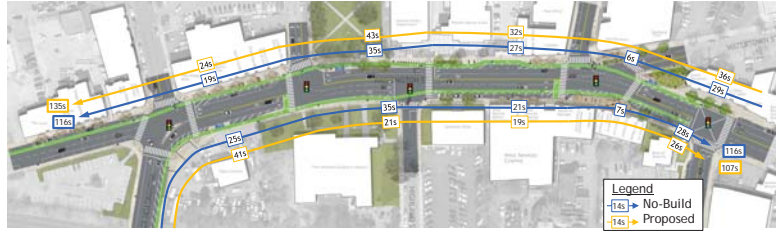
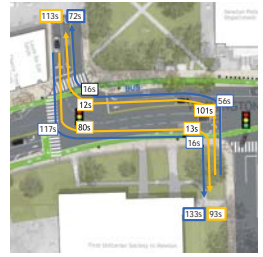


- ~~Proposed bus stops~~ 8 accessible stalls
- All new, modern traffic signal equipment

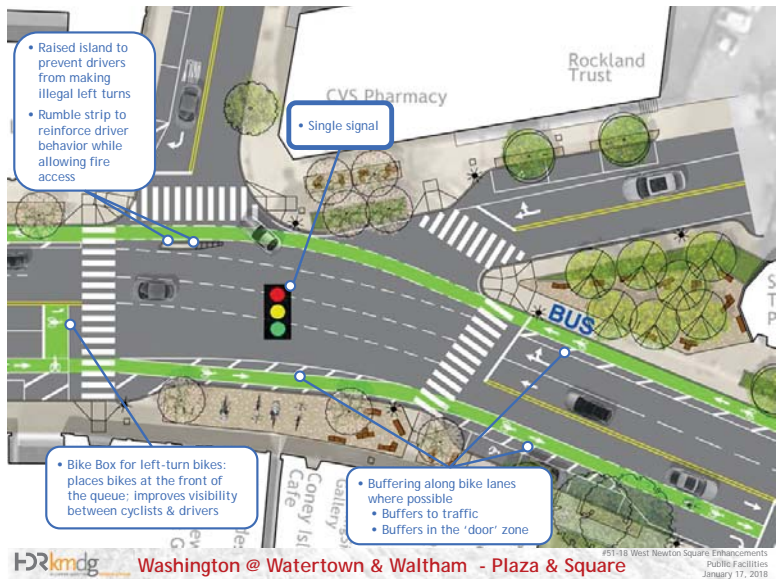
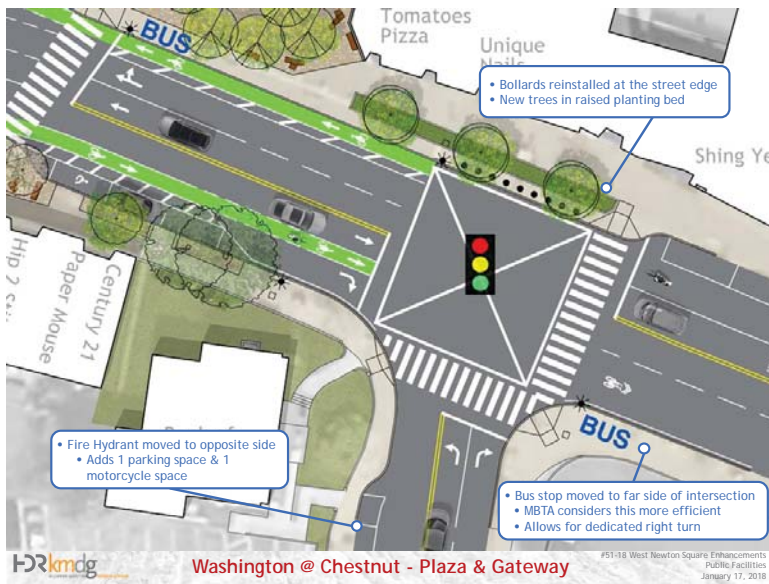
## Drive Times

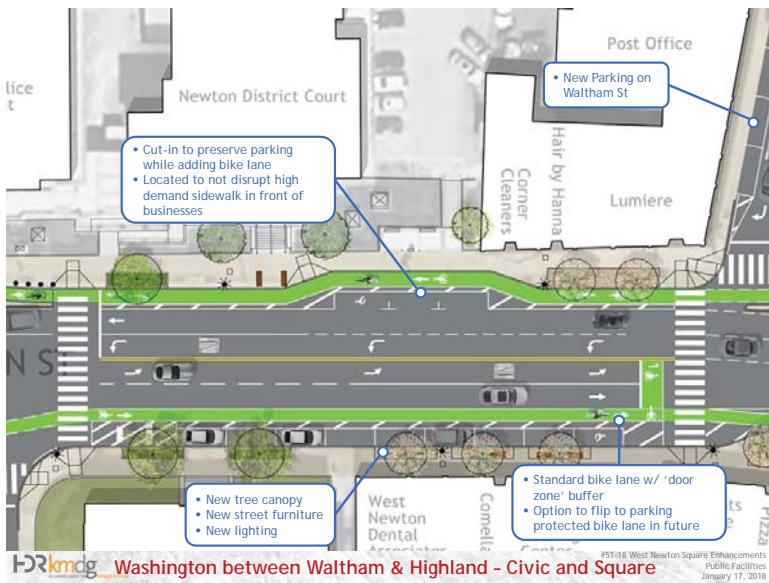
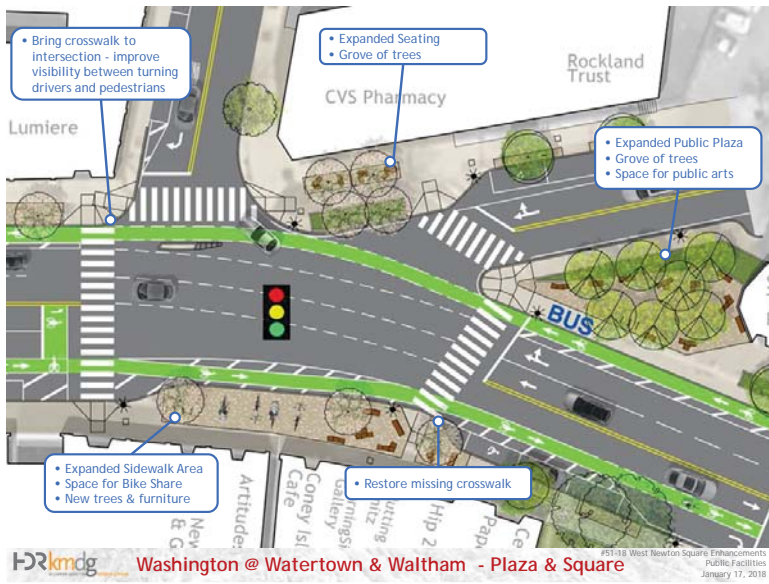
- Balance the needs of all users
- Improving safety and operations
- 5:00 - 6:00 pm is the peak of all travel in West Newton Sq
- Anticipating 20 - 40 seconds longer\*
  - 40 sec shorter for Southbound
  - 40 sec longer for Northbound
  - 10 sec shorter for Eastbound
  - 20 sec longer for Westbound

\*Compared to travel through the square if all current signals worked properly (not reality)

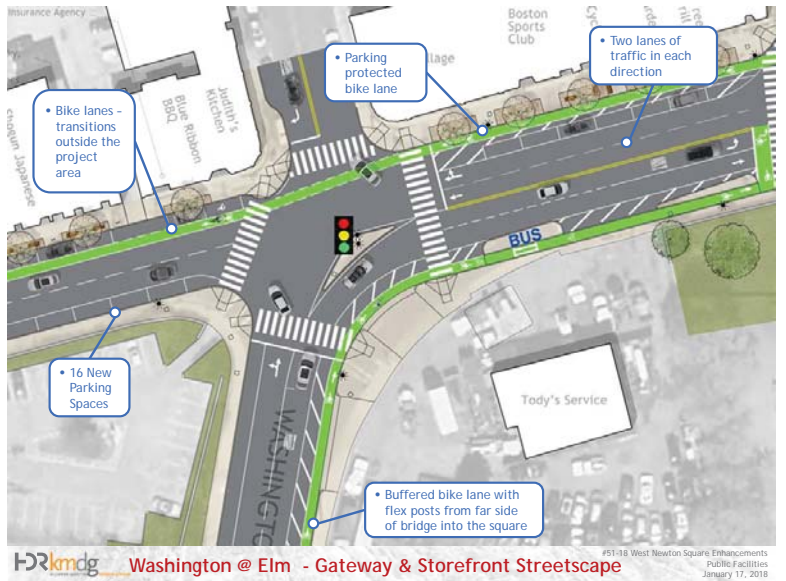
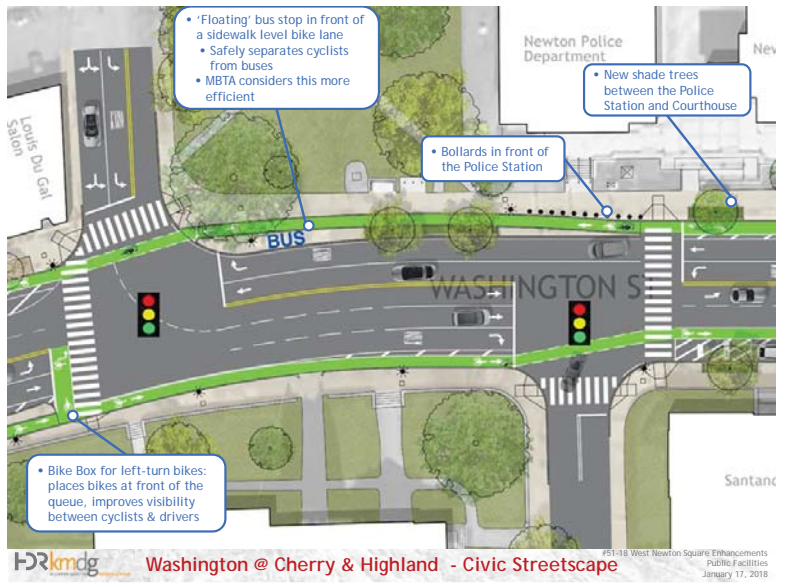
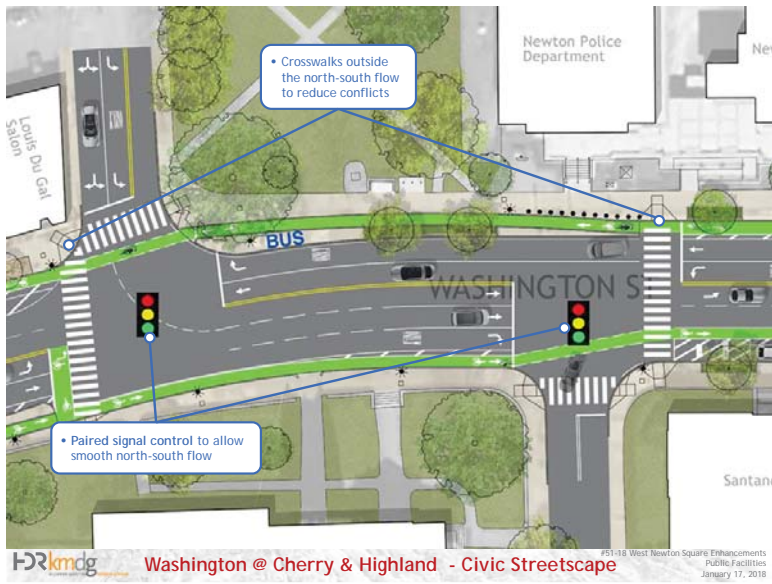


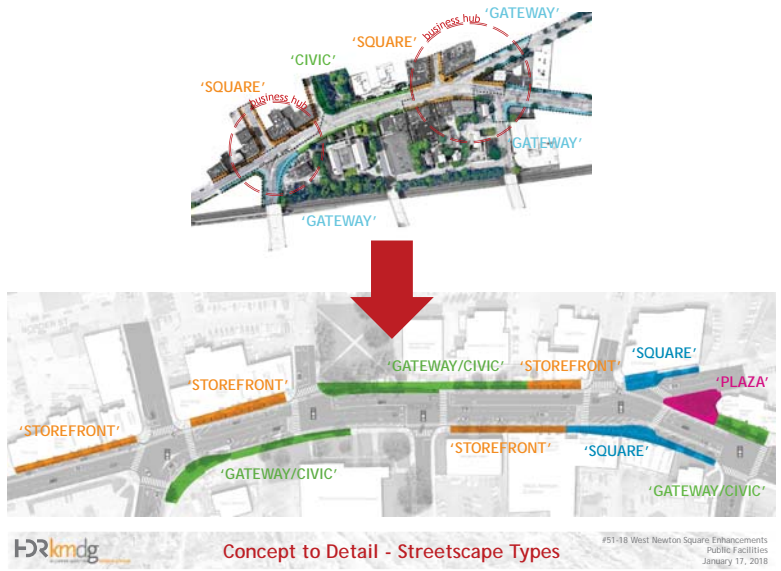
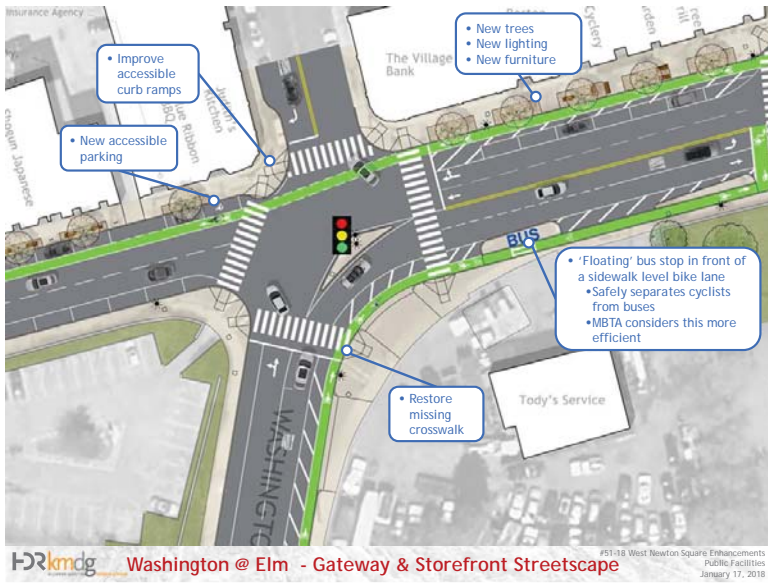




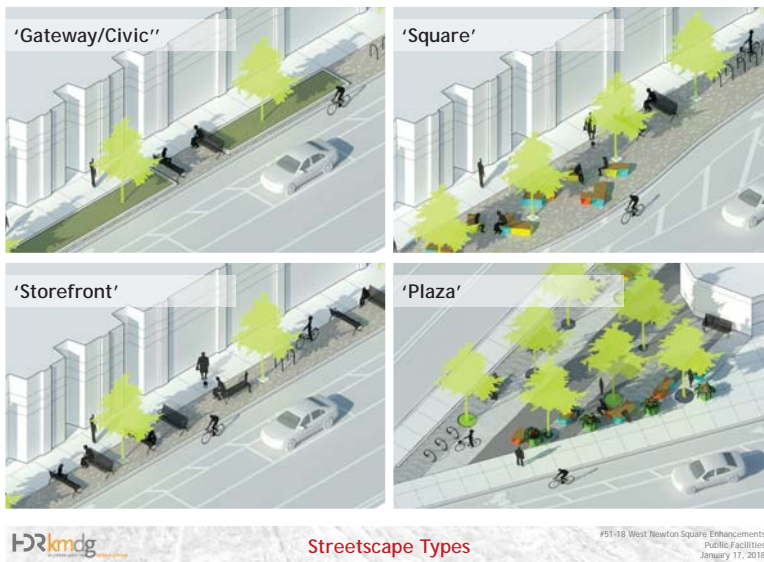


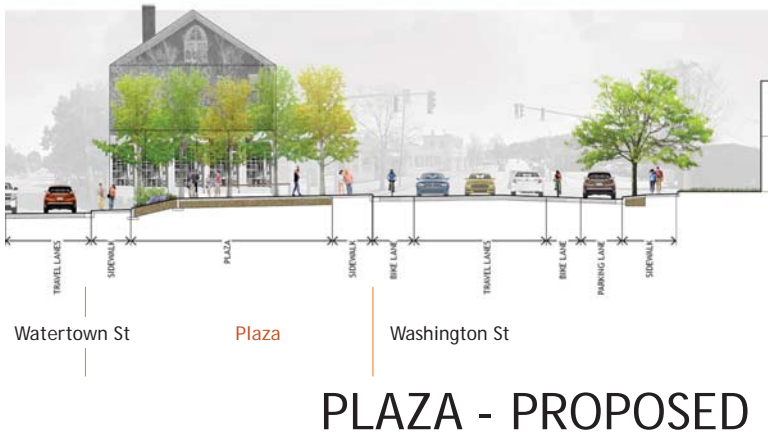
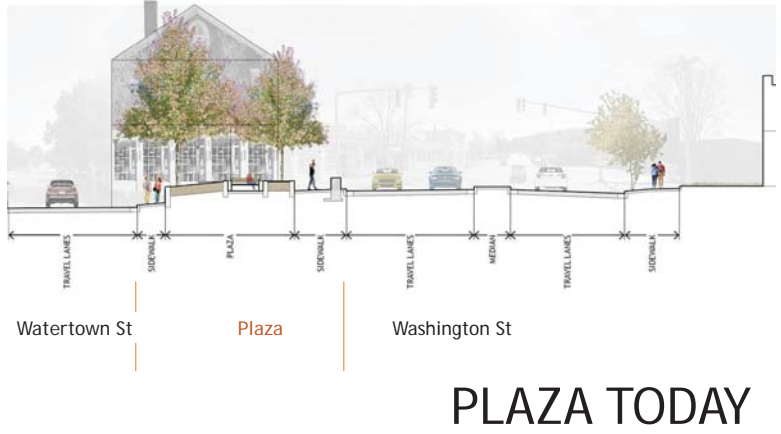
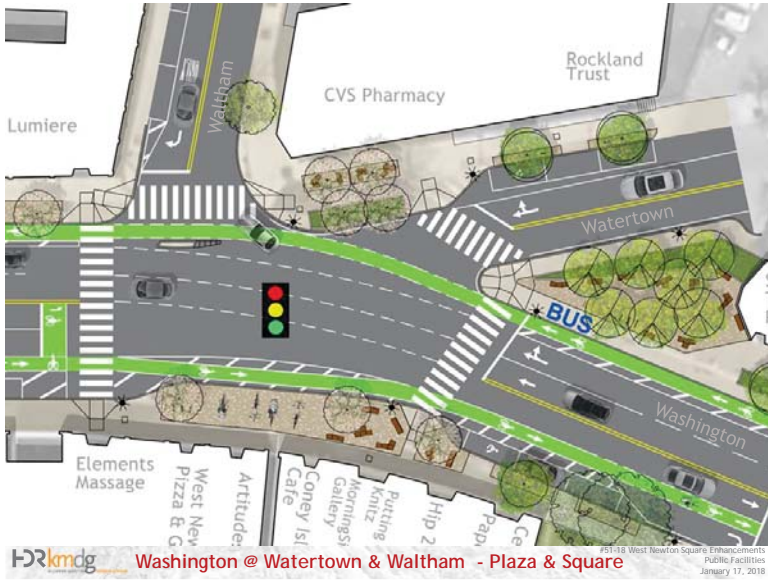


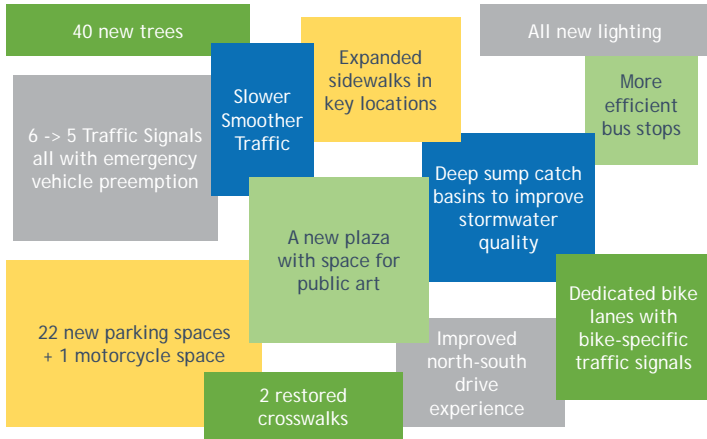












Thank you!



# Newtonville Coordinated Design

Public Facilities Committee  
January 17, 2018



## Coordination of Streetscape



1. 28 Austin Street
2. Walnut Street Enhancements
3. Connecting Over the Bridge
4. Washington Place
5. Washington: Harvard –Lowell

## Coordination of Streetscape



1. 28 Austin Street
  - Plaza
  - Trees/Planters
  - Furniture
  - Lighting

## Coordination of Streetscape



1. 28 Austin Street
2. Walnut Street Enhancements
  - Roadway
  - Trees/Planters
  - Furniture
  - Lighting
  - Sidewalks

# Coordination of Streetscape



- 1. 28 Austin Street
- 2. Walnut Street Enhancements
- 3. Connecting Over the Bridge
  - Unify Newtonville
  - Improve Experience

# Coordination of Streetscape



- 1. 28 Austin Street
- 2. Walnut Street Enhancements
- 3. Connecting Over the Bridge
- 4. Washington Place
  - Intersection
  - Trees/Planters
  - Sidewalks
  - Lighting

# Coordination of Streetscape



- 1. 28 Austin Street
- 2. Walnut Street Enhancements
- 3. Connecting Over the Bridge
- 4. Washington Place
- 5. Washington: Harvard –Lowell
  - Potential City extension of improvements