

# WASHINGTON STREET VISION PLAN

12.12.2019



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# Acknowledgments

## Special Thanks

The City of Newton would like to thank the many community members who attended our planning events and provided their valuable input in a collaborative process. This plan would not exist without them.

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A CITY OF NEWTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT

12.12.2019

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# I. Introduction

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A Vision for Washington Street

What is a Vision Plan?

Where is this applicable?

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How will this plan be used?



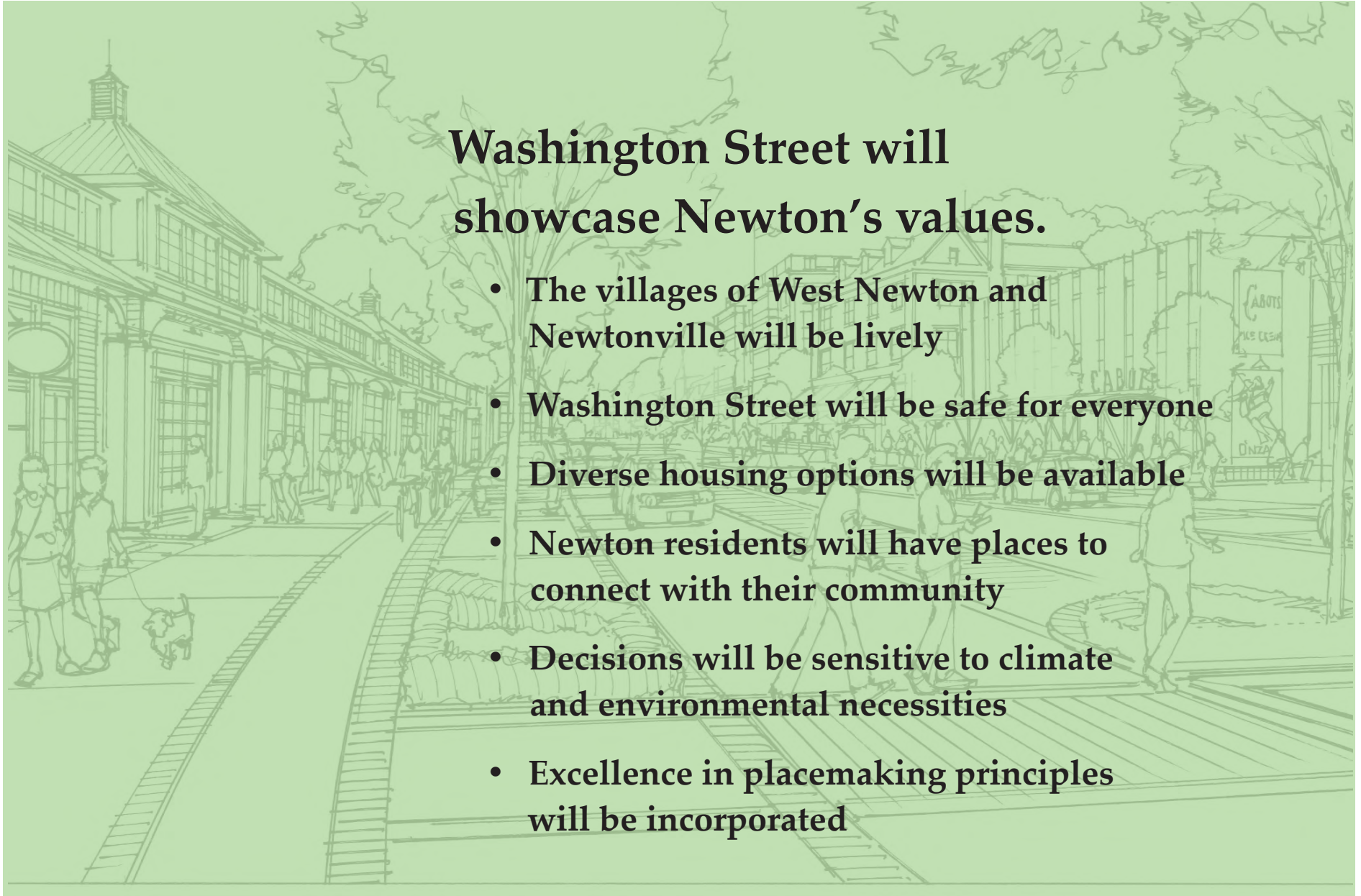
## *Introduction*

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# A Vision for Washington Street

## 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



## Introduction

# What is a Vision Plan?

A vision plan is a guide to assist future decision-making regarding a specific area, in this case the area along Washington Street through West Newton and Newtonville, that brings together and expands upon citywide policies and goals with input from community members.

The Washington Street Vision Plan is the result of a year-long engagement program led by the City of Newton Planning Department and its consultant team at the Principle Group. The Principle Group produced the Hello Washington Street Report documenting the work and ideas developed through that effort.

This document, the Washington Street Vision Plan, [has been] adopted by the Newton City Council as an amendment to the City of Newton Comprehensive Plan. Like the broader Comprehensive Plan and the other recent amendments, this plan is intended to be used by the City Council as well as staff in the City's departments to inform discussions about public investments and to guide private development to align with Newton's priorities.



## Where is this plan applicable?

Washington Street stretches across Newton from Boston to Wellesley connecting the village centers of Newton Corner, Newtonville, West Newton and onward through neighborhoods in Auburndale to the village center in Lower Falls. This Vision Plan discusses priorities





## Introduction

# How was this plan developed?

The “Hello Washington Street” planning process spanned an entire year and involved hundreds of Newton residents in developing ideas for the area along Washington Street and in refining the vision. Community members participated in large events, small meetings, and by providing their thoughts online. Community input forums were structured to collect input from as broad a range of stakeholders as possible and for participants to provide feedback in a range of settings to ensure that as many voices as possible could be heard. Community input has been reviewed along with a study of existing conditions, planning and design best practices, and the current real estate market to create this Vision Plan.

The City of Newton worked with consultants from the Principle Group on the Hello Washington Street Process. The process concluded with the Hello Washington Street Report and a draft zoning ordinance for the area. The report has been used to inform this Washington Street Vision Plan that [has been] incorporated as a Comprehensive Plan amendment.

## Timeline of Community Involvement:

- May 1, 2018 – Launch Event at Second Church in West Newton
  - Surveys gathered responses online through late June; 1,345 surveys completed
- June 5 – 12, 2018 – Public Design Week several events and open-studio in West Newton
  - Over 75 hours of public engagement; 400+ individual visitors
- October 24, 2018 – First Draft released at the Plan Open House at Newton North High School
  - Month-long comment period; 2,672 comments from 317 individuals
- November 2018 – Four open drop-in sessions at City Hall
- February 11, 2019 – Second Draft released at City Council and community preview event
  - Month-long comment period; 1,017 comments from 97 individuals & 50+ emails/ letters
- March 2019 – Three drop-in sessions at City Hall









## How will this plan be used?

The Washington Street Vision Plan [has been] adopted by the City Council as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan because it is a basis for future decision-making by the City Council, the Mayor and City staff, and other decision-making bodies.

Many of the ideas described in this Vision, including the public investments proposed, require additional discussion by the City Council before they can be implemented. The Planning Department, along with other City staff, the Mayor, and the City Council will carry the conversation forward in the coming months and years. The City Council will also be able to use this Vision to guide decision-making on proposed private and non-profit development projects. Project proponents will be encouraged

to use the Vision Plan when preparing their proposals in order to align with this adopted vision for Washington Street.

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

In addition to this amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, the Washington Street report provided by the City's consultant team can provide further background information and ideas. Particularly useful from that report are a series of site studies showing potential development scenarios that could inform and inspire publicly or privately led projects.

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## II. A VISION FOR WASHINGTON STREET

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Unique and Vital Village Centers

Safe Multimodal Transportation

Housing Diversity

Global Climate and Local Environment

Excellence in Placemaking and Design

## **A. UNIQUE AND VITAL VILLAGE CENTERS**

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Strengthen the Village Business Climate

Design for Engaging Walks

Invest in Public Art and Programming

# Strengthen the Village Business Climate

## Guiding Principles:

- Promote the village centers' competitive advantages
- Encourage clusters of office & lab activity in each village
- Explore incentives and investments in locally-owned businesses

Newton's villages are significant centers of economic activity in the City and in many respects Newton has a strong local economy. There are also aspects of the Newton economy that recommend active investment in supporting economic growth. Newton is a jobs center, with more workers commuting into Newton each day than residents commuting out. Additionally, Newton is an attractive place to locate new jobs: job growth in Newton outpaced the Boston regional average for the 10-years between 2007 and 2017 (14% vs. 9% growth over 10-years).

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.

See also: *Economic Development Action Plan for the City of Newton*, January, 2019.

## Promote the village centers' competitive advantages

Newtonville and West Newton have many attractive features to companies looking for business space. The mix of supportive amenity businesses in each village make for lively places to locate a new office space. Local coffee, lunch, dry-cleaning, gyms, and gift shops all are ancillary businesses that residents as well as employees at major companies find beneficial. Highlighting the range of collocated businesses in each village can be an inducement to companies looking to move into lively business locations.

Beyond the local business mix, West Newton and Newtonville offer a better than typical range of transportation options for the Greater Boston area. The mix of commuter rail, express bus service, and highway

access is an advantage. Highlighting existing transportation diversity and continuing to expand options is another way the City can promote this area to businesses.

Finally, highway visibility along the Mass Turnpike is a potentially substantial benefit to companies locating along Washington Street. Ensuring that prominent yet appropriate signs are allowed along the Turnpike edge are possible for major employers is another way that Newton can promote business growth on Washington Street. Thinking critically about sign placement, size, and lighting is important to ensuring that new signs along the Mass Pike demonstrate Newton's commitments to excellent placemaking while also showcasing the businesses that choose to locate on Washington Street.

## Encourage innovation clusters of office & lab activity in each village

One of the successes of traditional downtowns and 21st-century innovation districts is the benefits employers can gain through the intermingling of ideas and people in places that support formal and informal collaboration and networking. Such places exhibit design characteristics that include mixed-uses, public gathering spaces, and various types

of social and business related events. Newton can support the development of such clusters through zoning, event programing, and urban design.

The pattern in both West Newton and Newtonville is for office-type buildings to be at the outer edges of the villages and the shops and restaurants to be

located in the cores. There is already a small cluster of offices and industrial activities at the Crafts St intersection in Newtonville and a cluster of office and industrial businesses at Elm St/Border St and east of Chestnut St in West Newton. In each case this puts these office areas in easy walk of the village cores. Zoning for Washington Street could build upon this pattern to expand the mix of uses, create more gathering spaces, and support more office and lab space development opportunities at the village center edges.



A casual open meeting space within Rockport's West Newton headquarters

## Explore incentives and investments in locally-owned businesses

Locally owned businesses are among the most important assets of Newtonville and West Newton. These individual stores, services, and restaurants help to make each village center a unique destination. As redevelopment or rehabilitation occurs, and as the overall vitality of the villages improves, commercial rents will rise, and these locally owned businesses may struggle to afford to stay. The City will need to study a range of approaches for fostering and encouraging existing and new locally-owned businesses. Development along Washington Street offers an opportunity to pilot different approaches in concert with new zoning and public and private investments in the corridor.

Zoning, through requirements or incentives, can be the most direct way to influence the opportunity for locally owned businesses in new developments. Ideas to consider include regulations on formula style (chain) businesses, conditions related to reduced rent spaces reserved for locally owned businesses, and

incentives that allow for greater density or a greater range of allowed uses where space for locally owned businesses is provided. There is also an interesting opportunity to create low-cost business incubator space in kiosks on public land along the Mass Pike side of Washington Street (see pg. 20).

Small business assistance programs are another effective means of encouraging locally owned businesses. Through the Director of Economic Development in the Planning Department, the City provides assistance to businesses getting started or expanding in the City. Some communities have gone further to expand these assistance programs to include basic market analysis information, connections to existing state or federal business lending programs, and other creative business support services.

Finally, area or village-based business associations can be a strong support system for small locally owned businesses, allowing these businesses to aggregate resources for the creation of marketing programs that advertise the village as a destination and



create events and programming that draw people to the village centers.



# 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
- Design streets and plazas as places to linger

Vitality in the village centers is in part measured by how much activity is visible on the street. Are people strolling from shop to shop or are people hidden away in buildings, emerging only when absolutely necessary? A place that has vitality is one where the life of the place is bursting out into the public realm - It could be the frenetic energy of a business center spilling out into sidewalk cafes or the peaceful quiet of a residential street with front yards full of flowers. No matter the place's character – a place with vitality is one where it is interesting to go on a walk. Washington Street has a few blocks that have a lot of interest, but over and over again community members have expressed that walking along most of Washington Street could be so much better.

## 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.

Cognitive science and urban planning researchers Ann Sussman and Justin B Hollander have confirmed what designers have recommended for centuries, writing: “When edge conditions are ill-defined, we instinctively go on alert...clear edge conditions, on the other hand, do so much: they can release us from anxiety, enable our subconscious construction of mental maps, suggest a way forward that fits our bipedal frame, and our preferred way of holding our head, all the while helping us conserve energy” (Cognitive Architecture, 26). In other words, well-defined edges make people feel comfortable walking. 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.

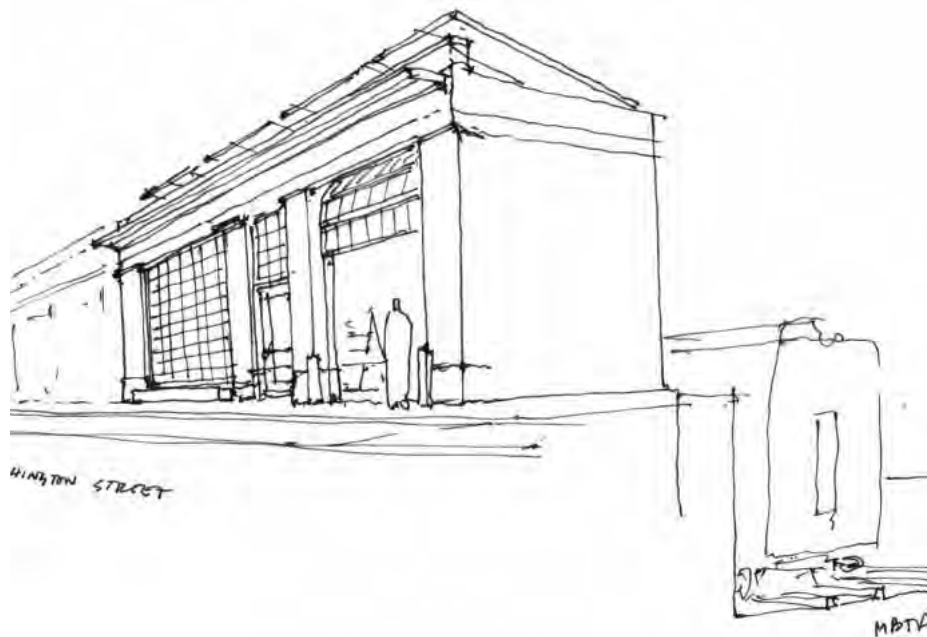
The Mass Pike adds a unique challenge to defining edges for Washington Street. Right now, the views are very open such that one can see all the way to the south side of the Mass Pike, which is a substantial distance in some portions of the corridor. There are many reasons to create a defined edge along the Mass Pike, among them giving Washington Street more comfortable edges.

## Activate the Pike edge

The Mass Pike edge of Washington Street is an opportunity within a challenge. There are multiple negative effects of living and working so close to the Mass Pike; the noise, the air pollution, and the unsightly views. One of the most well received ideas coming out of the design week was the idea of creating more than just sound walls along the Mass Pike edge and thinking more creatively about how the south side of Washington Street could be better than today.

One concept is to create small scale storefronts along certain

publicly owned areas next to the edge of the Mass Pike. These pavilions could serve as a sound barrier with a thick wall at the back, could have south-facing solar panels on the roof to generate electricity, and serve as low-cost start-up space for new entrepreneurs. Retail-focused planning research has found that retailers generally do better when there are shops on both sides of a street. Where possible, extending the village center experience to the south side of Washington Street along the Mass Pike has the potential to strengthen the village shopping experience.





### Promote narrow and transparent shopfronts

Narrow shopfronts are a common feature of the retail blocks in West Newton and Newtonville. Some of these storefronts are as narrow as 20-25 ft. Not only are narrow storefronts a typical feature of these two village centers, but a typical feature of many of the great retail streets around the world. Narrow storefronts generally means there are more retailers in a business district, that there are more doors, and more diversity in the window displays; detail and diversity in the retail environments makes for great walking.

Frequent doors and large clear-glass windows offer connections to the shops within. These physical and visual connections between shops and sidewalks have benefits to both the passersby and the retailer. Retailers thrive on foot-traffic, and clear windows into stores encourage passersby to stop in and explore the shop. Having clear windows out to the street also means that those inside can see out and help monitor activity outside.

Zoning rules can be used to mandate new development in these village centers extend the traditional pattern of narrow storefronts with large windows while providing flexibility for larger tenants to use space toward the back of a property or to use multiple storefronts.

The Cinema Block in West Newton Square demonstrates several principles with regard to narrow storefronts. The Cinema itself is a large facility with a narrow storefront that primarily occupies space toward the back of the property, thereby mirroring the storefront widths of the district. The Elements Massage center next to the Cinema is also a slightly larger facility and utilizes two storefronts, while the neighboring shops each have just one storefront bay.



## Incorporate opportunities for outdoor dining

Newton already allows outdoor dining in village centers, but the sidewalks are not always wide enough to allow for accessible sidewalks and outdoor dining. The Walnut Street Enhancements Project in Newtonville will substantially widen the sidewalks to create new outdoor dining opportunities for restaurants and cafes along the street. Along Washington Street, there are generally wider sidewalks but there may still be physical limits relating to the configuration of furniture and infrastructure.

There are two approaches to expanding outdoor dining opportunities that are worth further investigation: allowing seating at the far side of the sidewalk and allowing seating in “parklets.” 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. This approach should be considered where sidewalks are wider than 16 ft, which is



common in parts of West Newton Square and will be a new condition on Walnut Street after the Enhancements project. A similar result can be achieved with parklets – seasonal sidewalk expansions into parking spaces. Lexington Center has a public parklet that has seating and table space accessible to everyone. Private parklets are also common in many communities – Montpelier Vermont has several private parklets that

are built and maintained privately by restaurants for seasonal outdoor dining.

Both strategies would need to be considered in the context of site-specific design but are opportunities to create more outdoor dining space. Any public seating program could also include seating with tables to further open up outdoor dining opportunities in village centers.

## Design streets and plazas as places to linger

A great walk often includes stopping. Creating places for people to sit and talk when out for a walk in West Newton and Newtonville is an investment in community life and village vibrancy. 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. Both the West Newton Square and Walnut Street Enhancements projects will include new seating areas in the village centers and new plazas are being built at Austin Street and Washington Place. The zoning ordinance should require mid-large-scale projects to include new neighborhood plazas along Washington

Street and as the street design project continues, seating areas should be dispersed along Washington Street.





# Invest in Public Art & 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

West Newton and Newtonville are home to some of Newton's most active arts organizations and artist-led businesses. Part of the identity of the Washington Street corridor is the arts and culture community that has chosen to locate here. The City of Newton is organizing and beginning to work with stakeholders on an Arts and Culture Master Plan process that will strategize about supporting Newton's arts community at a broader level; the ideas here are based in the findings of the Hello Washington Street planning process and are intended to be refined by this forthcoming work.

## *Invest in Public Art & Programming*

### Promote West Newton and Newtonville artists

The arts is one of Newton's most highly concentrated economic sectors. A significant portion of those in this sector are self-employed - these artists are in-fact independent local business owners. Connecting artists into Newton's economic development programs and supporting and promoting their work is a link between economic development and arts and culture planning that could be further explored.

The City could also explore public art programs to showcase local artists from the area. Whether in the form of temporary installations and live-arts programs or commissioning and installing a permanent piece, the City could lead in promoting the local arts communities by bringing locally produced art into the village centers.



An exhibition at the New Art Center

## Allow for arts production, presentation, and artist housing

The practicalities of making art can mean different things depending on one's craft – dancers need large open spaces with high ceilings, musicians need sound proofed practice rooms if sharing walls with neighbors, and sculptors may need access to a metal or woodworking shop. Artistic production and presentation spaces often involve a combination of traditional land use categories that appear in zoning that can prove challenging for artists to navigate when seeking new workspaces. Zoning for Washington Street should clarify the standards for arts spaces to make permitting processes clearer for artists.

Artist housing should also be given special consideration. Artist-specific housing models, like the Claflin School Studios off of Lowell Ave, often combine units with studio spaces or offer an array of studios and practice spaces within the building and even sometimes publicly accessible galleries and performance spaces. As the Arts and Culture Master Plan process develops, local artists should be engaged directly in identifying needs that can be met either through zoning standards or partnership development projects.



## Design for music and community events in public spaces

Arts programming does not always need to be formal; it could be someone who simply brings his or her guitar and friends to a park or plaza. Such public spaces need to be large enough for the musicians to be out of the path of travel of passersby and quiet enough for their music to be heard. For event music, electrical outlets for amplifiers and electric instruments may be needed.

The West Newton Square Enhancements and the Walnut Street Enhancements projects are both creating spaces that could work well for casual music

and small gatherings in the village centers. The new plaza at Austin Street will add another community space for slightly larger events.

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.

Another idea to be explored is the creation of large deck parks, which could serve as village greens, over the Mass Pike in Newtonville and West Newton, shielded from the Mass Pike with buildings on the edges. As this idea is developed in the coming years, attention should be given to ensuring the parks can accommodate large community events.



Artful Pianos, 2018  
Newton Senior Center

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## **B. SAFE MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION**

Prioritize People, Safety, and Comfort

Create More Route Options

Organize and Advocate for Better Transit

Actively Manage Driving & Parking



# Prioritize People, Safety, and Comfort

Washington Street is one of the major east-west connectors through Newton. In both West Newton and Newtonville, Washington Street is a “Main Street” environment where locals gather together, go out for dinner, and do their shopping. Between village centers, Washington Street is lined with residences and civic spaces. These multiple functions mean that there are competing demands for space and priority in the road design.

As the street design process moves ahead, Newton envisions a Washington Street where people are the priority. Prioritizing people means thinking about the human element of all transportation: the experience of how people perceive the safety and comfort of moving along the street. This idea includes improving the safety and experience of driving on Washington Street. Improving the driving experience is consistent with improving Washington Street for all users. By reducing conflicts with walkers and bikers, encouraging everyone to behave predictably, and focusing on a smooth drive experience over a fast drive along Washington Street we ensure that safety and comfort are always top of mind no matter if the discussion is about transportation on foot, by bike, bus, or car.

See also: Newton Street Design Guide, 2018  
Newton Transportation Strategy, 2017

## 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

## Reconfigure Washington Street for safety of all users

Washington Street presents a remarkable opportunity for transformation into a street that is safer, better functioning for all users, and attractive - a true world-class street. A design option to consider is to use the great width of this street to reconfigure it into a boulevard with a strong emphasis on trees and landscaping. A typical boulevard has one lane of traffic in each direction separated by a planted median that becomes turn lanes where needed. There are many benefits

to this type of roadway configuration: limited conflict between drivers going in opposite directions; simplified crossings for pedestrians because of the median; the environmental benefits of street trees, and additional spaces on the edges for bikeways and parking. At the same time, such a boulevard design must provide opportunities for short-term parking, drop off/pick up, and deliveries. A boulevard design should also accommodate increased

demand on all modes of transportation generated from new development.

To advance this design idea, a boulevard approach would require in depth study as part of a roadway design project for Washington Street alongside other alternatives. Since Washington Street in the study area ranges from approximately 75 ft to 95 ft, the design will need to be responsive to changing conditions block-by-block.



## Promote safe neighborhood streets

Slowing traffic on neighborhood streets is important for public safety. One recommendation is to tighten up the curb-radii at intersections with higher speed roads to force drivers to slow down as they turn onto the neighborhood streets. Another is to add crosswalks across the entrances to the neighborhood streets to improve visibility between pedestrians and drivers and to take the opportunity to update the accessible ramps at each of these corners.

Beyond the entrances, traffic calming strategies could be employed to slow drivers to the speed limit of 25 mph and encourage them to take it even slower throughout neighborhood streets. Pedestrian safety on neighborhood streets is important and should include new sidewalks and crosswalks where appropriate.





## *Prioritize People, Safety, and Comfort*

### Make room for people-powered transportation

Despite the fact that Washington Street is a major connector in Newton, it does not have complete sidewalks on both sides of the street. Along the Mass Pike side of Washington Street there are long stretches without sidewalks. This makes it difficult for those who park or take the bus on that side of the street to safely make their way in and out of vehicles or just walk along the road. In addition to the inconvenience this routinely causes, the lack of sidewalks is counter to Newton's accessibility goals and standards. As the street design project moves forward, the Street Design Guide should be utilized and accessibility standards must be met to ensure that Washington Street has accessible sidewalks along both sides for its entire length.

Infrastructure for residents who bike also requires consideration. With no dedicated space for cyclists, conflict with drivers is frequent and those conflicts have the potential to be deadly. The Street Design Guide includes a range of recommendations for safe bikeway design that are applicable to Washington Street as well as the side streets that connect Washington Street into the neighborhoods.





## Design sidewalks for year-round comfort

Walking should be comfortable throughout the year with adequate street lighting, shade from summer heat, trash receptacles, and places to sit. The West Newton Square and Walnut Street Enhancements Projects will greatly improve walking comfort in Newtonville and West Newton village centers. Combined, these projects are expected to add more than 80 new trees to the village centers, widen sidewalks, add unique furniture, and upgrade the lighting for both the roadway and the sidewalks.

However, there will still be substantial areas of Washington

Street that could use more comfortable sidewalks. The area between Chestnut St and Walnut St and Walnut St and Crafts St could both benefit from routinely spaced benches and trash receptacles and improved lighting for winter evenings. There are two ways in which the City of Newton can pursue these features – by working with developers to upgrade the sidewalks in front of their buildings (as is the case with Washington Place) or by directly investing in sidewalk comforts, which could be done as part of the street design project.



## *Prioritize People, Safety, and Comfort*

### Test before the City invests

Reconfiguring Washington Street will require substantial investment and take several years to implement. In order to test the idea of a boulevard on Washington Street, the City should explore a trial layout change on a portion of the street. Testing the idea will allow the engineering team to adjust the layout and improve upon the design before the project is fully implemented. Newton has used trials and demonstrations of road designs before with good success. The trial implementations not only allow the

design team a chance to test details of the layout but also allows the public an opportunity to experience a pared down version of the design.

A test before invest strategy can also be used for smaller safety and traffic-calming initiatives on neighborhood streets (see pg 31), for parklets and similar public space initiatives (see pg 22), and a range of other public improvements. Some of the same materials used to test ideas, like paint, flex posts, planters, can also be used for long-term interventions, allowing the

City, for example, to complete a larger number of public safety improvements at a lower cost for immediate safety improvements. Then, over time, as funding is available, those improvements can be made more permanent.



A demonstration sidewalk extension in Newtonville, 2016.

# Create More Route Options

Transportation starts with a destination - a need to go somewhere. Then there are three basic questions involved in deciding to go to that destination: what time should I go; how should I get there (walk, bike, drive, transit, or combination); and what route should I take. These three questions have to be considered simultaneously since the available options and the travel time-cost estimate will change depending on when one makes the trip. In addition to creating the infrastructure to make all modes of travel viable options for Washington Street area residents and employees, all modes benefit when there are a variety of routes to choose.

## Guiding Principles:

- Promote small blocks
- Connect Washington Street to the Charles River Greenway
- Consider building more bridges over the Pike
- Make way for crosswalks



## Create More Route Options

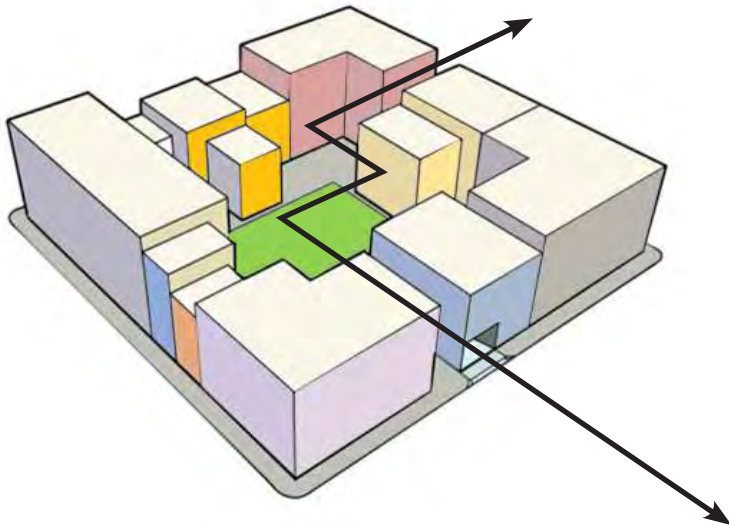
### Promote small blocks

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  $\frac{1}{4}$  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.



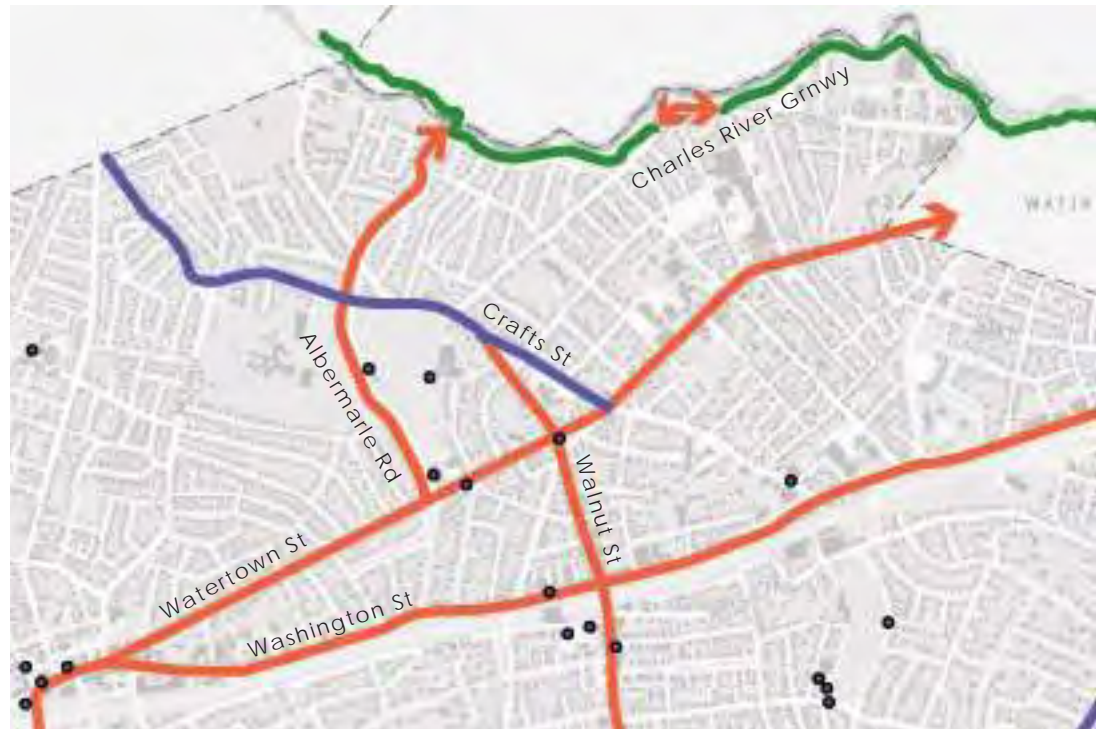


## Connect Washington Street to the Charles River Greenway

The Charles River Greenway is a key link in the regional commuter and recreational biking and walking network connecting to Waltham Center, Watertown Square, the Arsenal Mall in Watertown, and ultimately into Boston and Cambridge.

Improved bicycle connections northward to the Charles River Greenway should be considered at the following locations:

- between Washington Street and Albemarle Rd (with bicyclists then following Albemarle Rd to the Greenway and the Greenway Bridge)
- along Watertown St from West Newton Square to Nonantum and then to the Greenway connection in Watertown Yard
- on Crafts St and North St to the Greenway connection



### Bicycle Facilities

- Existing Bike Rack (black dot)
- Existing Bike Path (green line)
- Existing Bike Lane (blue line)
- Proposed Bike Lane (red line)

## Create More Route Options

### Consider building more bridges over the Pike

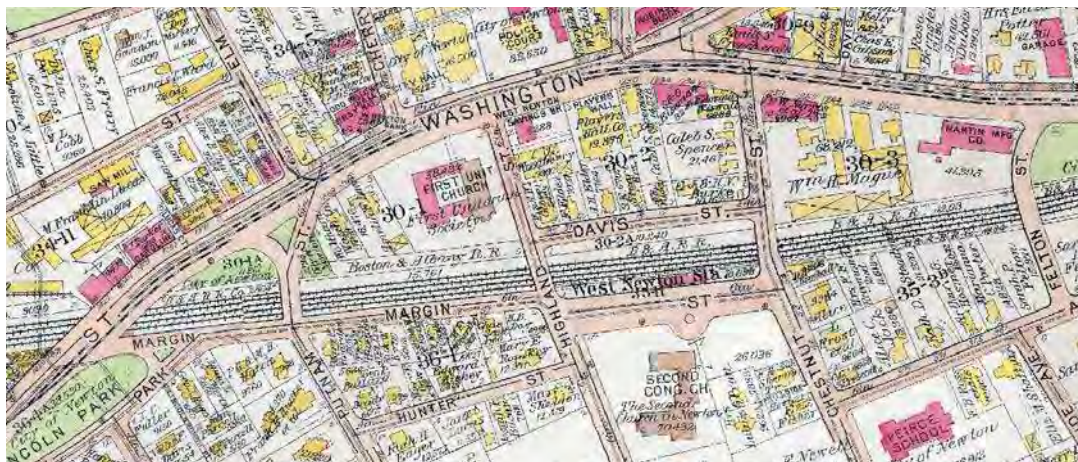
When the Mass Pike was developed in the 1960s, several of the older bridges across what was then just the railroad were demolished. In West Newton, Shaw and Putnam Streets connected more seamlessly into West Newton Square; Felton St (now the driveway to Rockport's headquarters) connected across from Washington St to Austin St.; and Mount Vernon Street connected from West Newton hill across to Brookside Ave through what is now Walker Park. In Newtonville, there was also a pedestrian bridge from

Bowers St to Central Ave that provided access to the Newtonville rail station.

There are a number of possibilities for re-establishing these connections. One recommendation is a pedestrian and bicycle bridge between Mount Vernon Street and Brookside Ave, integrating the bridge into a new design for Walker Park. Longer term, we should consider deck parks over the Mass Pike at two locations, each of which would be edged by road and sidewalk connections. These

deck schemes would re-establish the Central Ave to Bowers St connection in Newtonville and the Putnam St and Shaw St connection to West Newton Square.

Each of these ideas requires additional investigation and substantial financial planning before it could be implemented. As a first step, the City of Newton could invest in a finance strategy to understand the process involved and the resources required to bring these proposals to reality.



The 1917 Atlas shows several bridges that no longer exist, mostly demolished during the construction of the Mass Pike. Lincoln Park and Felton St in West Newton Square, Mt. Vernon St through Walker Park, and the station pedestrian bridge between Bowers St and Central Ave in Newtonville Square.



## Make way for crosswalks

There are not enough crosswalks on Washington Street. Crossing from the south side of Washington Street to Newtonville destinations such as Cabot's Ice Cream is an area of particular concern. Safe crossings are needed to guide people who need to cross the street.

with respect to key contextual considerations when developing a new design for Washington Street.

We recommend that crossings should be located approximately every 400 feet. This recommendation should be considered along with the Street Design Guide's recommendations



# Organize and Advocate for Better Transit

## Guiding Principles:

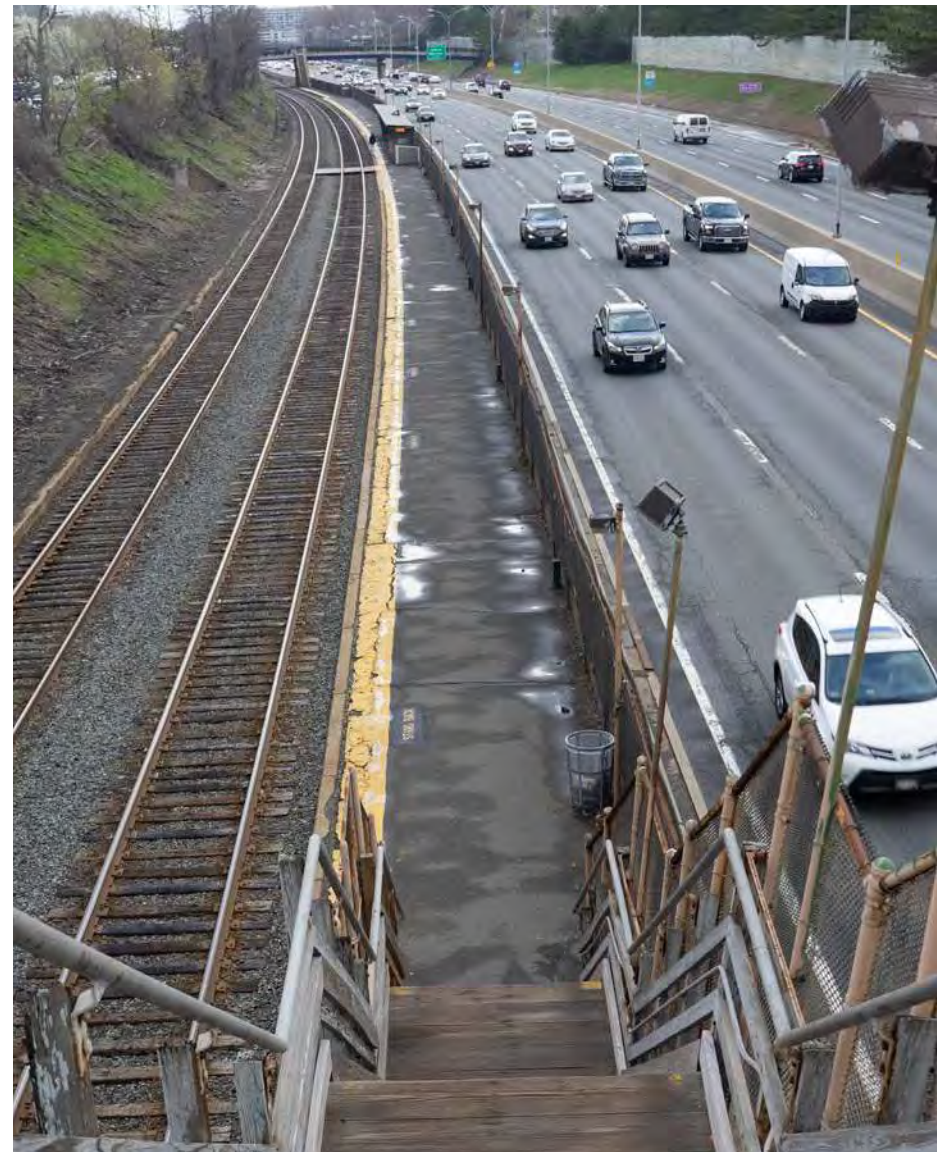
- Support new accessible stations
- Improve the bus experience
- Organize and advocate for early implementation of the Rail Vision

The neighborhoods along Washington Street were built for rail commuting. In the 1890s, when Newtonville saw a wave of growth, the village was accessible by the commuter service on the Boston and Albany Railroad (now the commuter rail) and trolley services south as far as Needham, north to Watertown, and west as far as Waltham (Newtonville Historic District Study Report, 7). During the 20th century, trolley service was replaced by bus service and the commuter rail service eroded. There is a long-standing interest in restoring modernized rail services to West Newton, Newtonville, and the surrounding neighborhoods as well as a state-of-the-art bus system. That vision dovetails well with the MBTA's current effort to develop a Rail Vision to guide the transformation of the commuter rail system across the Boston region into a robust service and their on-going efforts to improve bus services. While Newton does not have control over how these public transit services are developed, the City and community can and should advocate for a vision that includes robust service to the villages and neighborhoods along Washington Street.

## Support new accessible stations

The Newton commuter rail stations at Newtonville, West Newton, and Auburndale are among the 32 remaining non-accessible commuter rail stations in the MBTA network. The City should make every effort working with the MBTA to ensure these stations become accessible as soon as possible.

The MBTA has begun the design process to make all three stations accessible via a high-level platform at each station on the northern embankment and ramp access to the platforms from street level. The City's key priorities in this project are that the station designs can be implemented cost-effectively, expediently, and will not preclude future service expansions.





## Improve the bus experience

Washington Street has several well utilized express buses that run from a variety of locations to the north, then along Washington Street to the Mass Pike, and ultimately into Boston.

Some of the ideas already described would substantially improve the bus ride experience - having sidewalks connecting to the eastbound bus stops and adequate lighting on the sidewalks and roadway for instance. Additionally, the City can further improve the bus experience by:

- Providing crosswalks at every bus stop to make it easy to get from the neighborhoods to and from the eastbound stops on the south side of Washington Street
- Working with the MBTA to make sure that stops are placed conveniently but not too frequently along Washington Street
- Incorporating transit-signal priority technology to move buses through intersections faster
- Investing in bus shelters and real-time wait information at major stops along Washington Street

With commuter rail available, especially with future improvements to that line, and other priority uses of the street space like dedicated bike lanes, parking, and landscaping, we do not recommend dedicating a lane on Washington Street to buses at this time. However, every effort should be made to improve the service, as described above, and to lower the cost of commuter rail for low-income riders.



## Organize and advocate for early implementation of the Rail Vision

The MBTA's Rail Vision outlines seven alternatives for the future of the Commuter Rail. In four of them, all of the Newton Stations are shown to be upgraded to have access to both tracks and service is shown to be upgraded with trains every 15-minutes in each direction throughout the day. Such an investment would be transformative for the Washington Street area. The City of Newton should actively advocate for the options that bring new service to Newtonville, West Newton, and Auburndale stations (and potentially adds a station at Newton Corner).

The proposed investment described in Rail Vision would represent a significant advancement in service for the entire Worcester Line, including the idea of extending service to western Massachusetts and connecting service to Cambridge. The City should partner with the other municipalities on the line and state and federal representatives, to secure support and funding to bring the Rail Vision investments to fruition ASAP.





# 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

Driving and parking go hand in hand – the private car portion of the transportation system depends on there being available parking at the end of the trip. In West Newton and Newtonville, the City is faced with striking a balance of both ensuring there is adequate parking to serve those driving while also not oversupplying parking to the extent that people are induced to drive. There are many well tested techniques to creating enough parking for those who need to drive while not disincentivizing other transportation options.

See also: *Newton Centre Parking Strategy*, 2015

## Actively manage village parking

In addition to private off-street parking, Washington Street and the village centers have a variety of public parking resources. The West Newton Square and Walnut Street enhancements projects will include new smart meter technology that will enable the City to more nimbly adjust parking regulations in the village centers and better track how the metered parking is utilized. This new infrastructure along with the kiosks in the public lots, and the Passport pay-by-phone service will soon provide the City the data needed to dynamically respond to parking demand in each village with changes in price or time limits.

As parking regulations are updated in the village centers, the City should also develop expanded management plans for the neighborhood streets that immediately surround

the village centers. The City can build on successes in Auburndale, Waban, and Newton Highlands to incorporate the needs of residents and village center businesses in district parking plans for West Newton and Newtonville.

Finally, these parking plans should also address the quick access curbside uses – loading areas for delivery vehicles, passenger pickup/drop-off locations, and 15-minute quick visit parking that is needed for some businesses like dry-cleaners and take-out restaurants. If not actively incorporated in curbside management/parking plans, these vehicles are likely to double park and can cause backups in traffic and safety hazards for all involved.



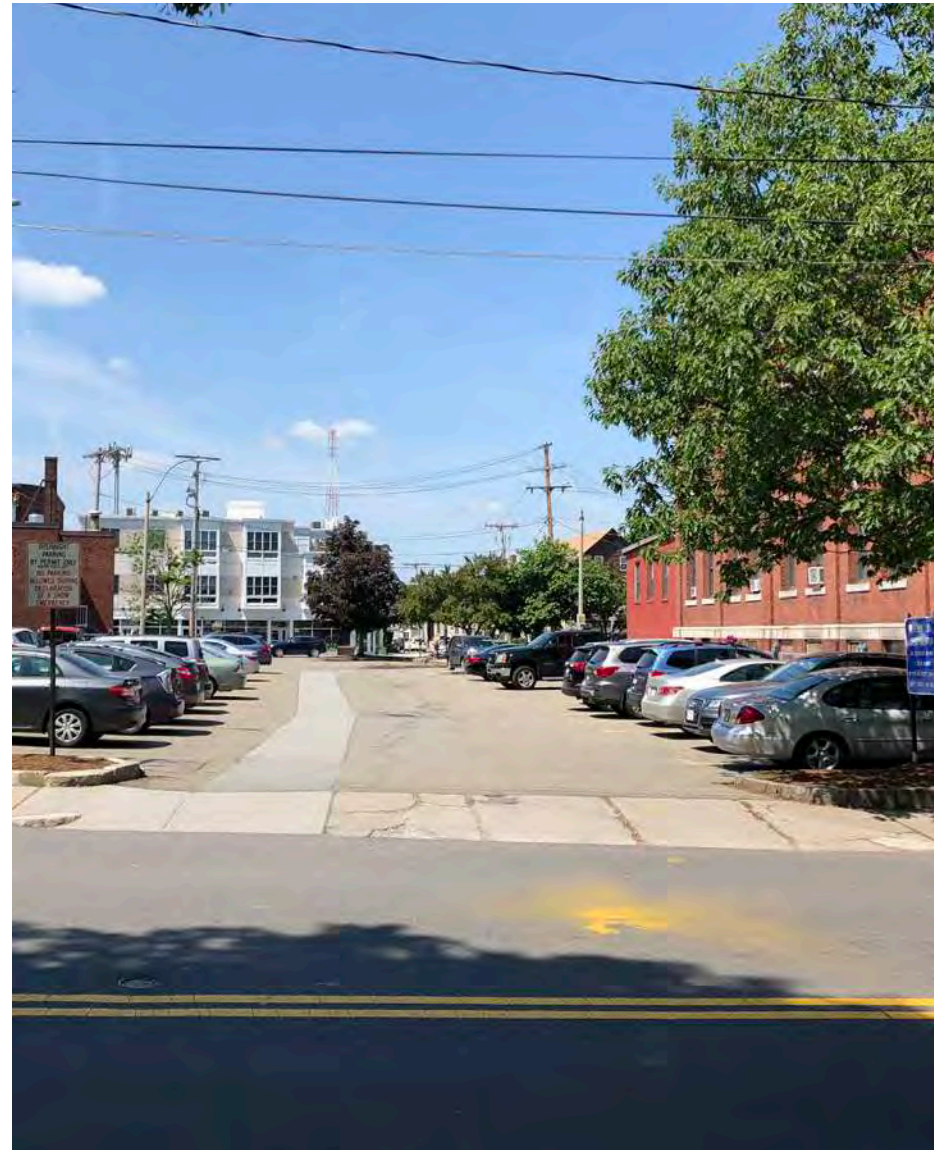
## *Actively Manage Driving & Parking*

### Develop and implement a public parking garage strategy

One way the City of Newton can support smaller-scale buildings with limited or even no on-site parking is to expand the supply of public parking in the area. Possible locations could include building a municipal parking garage as part of a project on the MBTA parking lot in West Newton Square or working with the owner of the Rockport garage at the corner of Chestnut Street and Washington Street to open it up to the public on nights and weekends.

Financing a new parking garage is expensive, as each space in an above ground parking garage costs between \$30,000 and \$50,000, and even more for an underground garage. These costs mean that any new municipal project to build a parking garage is likely to take time to finance. The City of Newton can start by considering potential financing strategies and potential partners such as the MBTA or property owners who wish to have access to the garage for long-term parkers from their properties instead of providing it on site. Any plan to design and construct a parking garage should also include consideration of future reuse of that garage in the eventuality that parking demand declines in the future.

Given the high costs, the City should maximize strategies to make best use of existing parking supplies first, then use parking utilization data and an assessment of any other public benefits to determine the need for a parking garage.



## Shape where and how much parking is in private developments

Buildings with large amounts of above ground structured parking are large, boxy, and contrary to the village scale character intended for the areas of Washington Street near West Newton and Newtonville. Such buildings are less likely to exhibit varied building heights or courtyard-style plazas.

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.

Zoning for Washington Street should include revised parking standards that align with the community priorities. Newton should consider reducing or eliminating the parking minimum, while also considering a parking maximum. Determining an appropriate parking standard should be considered

within a broader zoning ordinance update for Washington Street.



Projects like this residential complex in Watertown are shaped around a large above ground garage. This example is better than some because it hides the garage from view, but the bulky shape that results was not viewed positively in Newton.



## *Actively Manage Driving & Parking*

### Require transportation demand management by developers

Transportation demand management strategies aim to create parity between the incentives to drive and the incentives to walk, bike, or take transit.

Ensuring that non-driving options are available and that buildings are positioned to make walking up to the building as easy as or easier than driving up to the building are essential first steps as well. 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.



Washington Street is in the service area of the Watertown Transportation Management Association which provides coordinated transportation demand management services to employers and developers in northern Newton and Watertown.

## Track and prepare for driverless technology

Driverless vehicles will be here in the near future. There are still many questions about what driverless technology will mean for the design of Washington Street and the City of Newton must understand how the technology is developing and consider how it will be deployed and regulated in Newton.



Little Roady is a pilot autonomous shuttle service in downtown Providence. These electric vehicles go up to 25 mph and connect 12 shuttle stops along a 5.3 mile route from 6:30 am to 6:30 pm.



## C. HOUSING DIVERSITY

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Attract All Ages, All People

Seek Affordable Housing Opportunities

Link Housing and Transportation

# Attract All Ages, All People

The nature of Newton's housing stock determines the diversity of the community. Housing affordability determines the range of households at different income levels in the community, which itself often ties to racial 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. This lack of diversity then has compounding effects such as employers struggling to find employees, except those who must commute long distances. Fundamentally, Newton has historically been a diverse community and has sought to encourage and welcome that diversity, especially in the area around Washington Street.

Throughout the Boston region, and in Newton, the cost of housing is rising. Those rising costs are a product of limited supply relative to a growing demand and the significant drop in housing production over the last several decades. Multiple organizations have documented the housing crisis in greater Boston and its implications for the economy.

See also: Newton Housing Strategy, 2016

## Guiding Principles:

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

## Attract All Ages, All People

### Ensure availability of accessible units

Accessible units are needed in buildings of all sizes in order to accommodate those with disabilities. Newly constructed buildings have to meet strict federal and state accessibility requirements which often means they are better equipped to serve residents with disabilities and those aging-in-place. To ensure that a unit is accessible and age-friendly, the Newton Council on Aging has created a checklist with criteria to guide the development and renovation of age-friendly housing. This often overlaps with meeting the diverse needs of residents with disabilities and residents of all levels of physical ability. This checklist is a useful tool for future conversations about housing development on Washington Street.

Station 162 in Gresham OR is an affordable housing complex for seniors and disabled individuals. Units are adapted to meet tenants' needs including accessible kitchens and bathrooms. It is located near transit and accessibility features extend to the site layout and community amenities as well.

*Case Study: HUD - Office of Policy Development and Research*



## Promote diverse building and unit sizes

The diversity of people and families is one of the positive aspects of Washington Street. In order to further bolster that diversity, the housing stock needs to be diverse enough to serve the community's diverse population. The neighborhoods along Washington Street have a wide range of living environments including single-family homes, two-family homes that are both condominiums, two-family homes where a one family owns both units and rents one of them out, and two-family homes where both units are rented. There also are small multifamily buildings with 3-8 units and larger multifamily buildings, some that are only apartments and others that have commercial uses on the ground floor. New construction should continue to enhance the diverse offerings in the area. New zoning for Washington Street can ensure that the building

types allowed in each portion of the corridor are contextually appropriate and support the goal for diversity in housing, including ownership and rental products as appropriate.

In Massachusetts, both age and familial status are protected classes, meaning that denying a person housing based on their age and family status (including whether or not the family includes children under 18) is discriminatory. At a citywide level, Newton is obligated to affirmatively further fair housing and actively facilitate an inclusive, equitable community with free and open access to housing opportunities. This includes evaluating local actions, policies, processes, and practices to ensure they do not have a discriminatory effect on people of a protected class, like seniors or families with children.





## *Attract All Ages, All People*

### Allow communal living models

There are a broad range of multi-unit housing options with a focused mission that need specific allowances in a zoning ordinance. Age-restricted senior housing is possibly the most common communal living model. There are also all-age models like cohousing that bring multiple families into a community with shared amenity spaces and communal activities. There is also purpose-built multi-generational housing to bring together extended families. Artist housing, like the Claflin School on Lowell Ave, is another form of communal living. Live-work housing units that incorporate maker space within residential space, often are created to foster communities of entrepreneurs and artists/artisans. Washington Street is a location to consider for these more complex forms of multi-family housing.



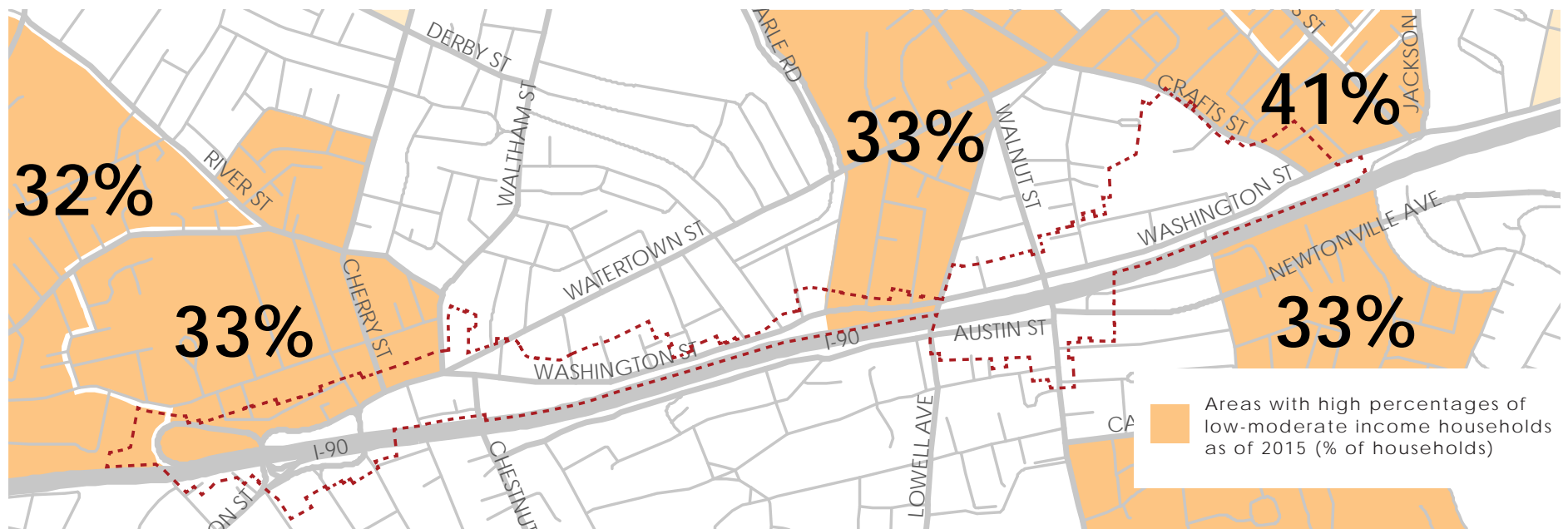
Jamaica Plain Cohousing is a multigenerational intentional community with 30-units with community spaces and a central courtyard

# Seek Affordable Housing Opportunities

## Guiding Principles:

- Invest directly in affordable housing
- Leverage public land for affordable housing development

The neighborhoods along Washington Street have historically been communities with income diversity. As of 2019, low-moderate income households comprise between 32% to 41% of some of the census block groups along Washington Street (HUD 2019 LMISD, based on 2011-2015 ACS). Ensuring that those families can afford to reside in their communities is a growing concern as housing prices in Newton continue to rise. In the coming years, the City of Newton should look for ways to support diverse and affordable housing throughout the Washington Street area to maintain economic diversity in these neighborhoods. In addition the City of Newton should encourage and support diverse and affordable housing throughout all the Villages of the City.



## *Seek Affordable Housing Opportunities*

### Invest directly in affordable housing

The City of Newton has a variety of funding sources that can be directed to the production and preservation of affordable housing units. The City of Newton receives approximately \$3.5 million each year from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to support economic diversity and expanded opportunity for low-to-moderate income households in the city. The majority of these funds is aimed at producing and preserving affordable housing. The City of Newton and WestMetro HOME Consortium's FY16-FY20 Consolidated Plan identifies affordable housing as the City's greatest need

when it comes to supporting economic diversity and obligates approximately 60% of each year's allocation toward this critical line item. Additionally, the City raises a little over \$3 million each year through a local surcharge for the Community Preservation Program, a portion of which is intended to support affordable housing activities. At the end of 2019, the City may also begin receiving fractional payments from private development projects subject to the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance. These diverse funds could collectively be utilized to directly invest in affordable housing in the Washington Street area.



New affordable housing under construction on Auburn Street, a project supported by funds from Newton's housing programs.



## Leverage public land for affordable housing development

The City should consider opportunities to support affordable housing development through the use of public land or through the public acquisition of land. This strategy could work with a for-profit developer to build mixed-income housing with a substantial affordable housing component or the City could partner with a non-profit affordable housing developer in a 100% affordable units project. The City should conduct an inventory of City-owned properties, as well as properties that might be acquired, to facilitate affordable housing development.





# Link Housing and Transportation

A home location relative to transportation options guides what jobs are accessible and how a person likely commutes to that job. Washington Street is served by the commuter rail at West Newton and Newtonville and the express bus lines 504, 553, 554, and 556. Already residents along Washington Street are some of those most likely to take transit to work. In some Census tracts along Washington Street more than 25% of residents commute to work by transit (Census ACS 2010-2014, Newton Transportation Strategy). As new development occurs on Washington Street, the City of Newton is interested in seeing developments that build on the existing transit infrastructure, encouraging new residents to use transit, and improving the link between the neighborhoods and the transit services on Washington Street.

## Guiding Principles:

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

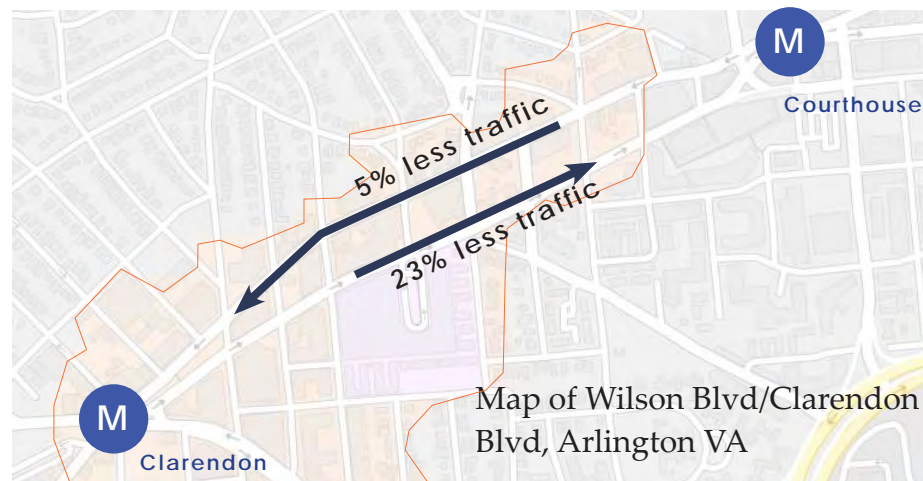
## Focus housing where commuting traffic can be mitigated

Washington Street sees its peak traffic during commuting hours, as residents from across Newton use Washington Street to travel east or west through the city or to connect with the Mass Pike at West Newton or Newton Corner. There is a strong interest in seeing new housing that is transit-oriented and in putting in place a framework to curtail traffic growth related to new development.

One of the most effective ways to limit the traffic impacts of new housing is to focus new development near transit. Some communities, such as Arlington, Virginia, have been able to achieve substantial residential and office development while actually decreasing automobile traffic through smart growth principles and a focus on good walkable design. Newton could encourage a similar transition by focusing new housing close to transit and ensuring that new development meets walkable design standards.

Newton has also been developing

and applying transportation demand management to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips coming from new residents (see page 48). Not only should new housing be focused physically around transit stations, but there should be programs in place to ensure that new residents near transit service have every incentive not to drive. Development particularly close to transit, like the locations where taller height buildings are possible (see pg. 84-85), should have strict requirements to prevent traffic increases.



The Wilson Blvd and Clarendon Blvd pair of streets was measured for traffic changes before and after a period of substantial mixed use development. Both saw a decrease in traffic while the population increased; the change has been credited to improved walking, biking, and bus riding comfort.

## *Link Housing and Transportation*

### Pair housing near transit with new commercial and retail space

Traffic is not just about commuting. Housing located within a comfortable walk of shops, services, and dining options also reduces driving. Furthermore, having these daily services in close proximity allows transit commuters from the surrounding neighborhoods to “trip-link,” to pick up dry-cleaning, prescriptions, or dinner on their walk home, further reducing car trips. The mix of uses in West Newton and Newtonville already allow for some trip linking. This service mix can be further enhanced as new development occurs, particularly at the West Newton station which is much less integrated into the village center than the Newtonville station.



Vintage on Selby in St. Paul Minnesota pairs housing with a large format grocer, making trip linking easy for all the residents of the new site and those commuting past this site on the rapid bus line out front.



## D. GLOBAL CLIMATE AND LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

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Provide Options for Low-Carbon Living

Improve Climate Resilience

Expand Access to Open Spaces and Recreation

Mitigate Mass Pike Effects

# Provide Options for Low-Carbon Living

Fighting the climate change crisis requires that individuals make choices that will lower their carbon footprint. Newton has an important role to play in ensuring there are places in the city that enable those choices. The longer we delay taking ambitious action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and change how we interact with our environment, the greater the environmental, public health, and economic problems we will face, both now and in the future. Two of the greatest sources of emissions, buildings and transportation systems, must fundamentally change to move towards greater efficiency and reduced reliance on fossil fuels.

Redevelopment along Washington Street can help to make low-carbon living easier. The recommendations in this Vision can help people significantly reduce their individual greenhouse gas emissions.

See also: *Use Less & Green the Rest, A Climate Action Plan for Newton*, 2019 (DRAFT)

## 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

## Allow for smaller unit residences

One way to achieve greater efficiency in housing is through smaller unit sizes. Smaller units require less energy to heat or cool. Smaller units can also mean higher overall residential densities which, coupled with local services in walking distance and transit opportunities, can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Smaller units can address the city's needs for a greater housing diversity, and by virtue of their size, even market rate units may be more affordable.

While smaller units of various types, from small single-family to small apartments make sense anywhere within the Washington Street area, higher density clusters should occur close to the village centers and the rail and bus transit services.



Made possible by efficient interior design, folding furniture, or a minimalist lifestyle, there is a growing interest in living in smaller more energy efficient spaces. The piece shown here is a bookshelf, bed, and wardrobe combination.



## *Provide Options for Low-Carbon Living*

### Build in features to make low-carbon living easy

An enhanced walking, biking, and transit environment will allow more people to take advantage of these modes of transportation and thereby encourage a low-carbon lifestyle. Vibrant and appropriately dense village areas will make for destinations that are more desirable to walk to and will be more competitive than other shopping or entertainment areas that require a drive.

Individual development projects are encouraged to make low-carbon living easier by further incorporating substantial insulation, high-efficiency heating and cooling systems to

provide comfortable indoor temperatures with less energy, as well as electric vehicle charging stations to encourage residents and employees to purchase electric vehicles.

Wherever possible, operational aspects should include low-carbon lifestyle features like waste management systems that include recycling and composting and stormwater/graywater recapture to reduce water consumption.



EV-charging is available at City Hall and becoming more common at residences and offices.

## Create incentives and mandates for an energy-efficient future

The Washington Street zoning should include a combination of standards, special permit criteria, and incentives to ensure the highest degree of energy efficient design is achieved. One successful model is the Passive House design. Passive House's requirement for strong sound insulation and indoor air filtering are both valuable added benefits for Washington Street given the proximity to the Mass Pike.

For large projects, investments to increase efficiencies through low embodied carbon construction materials and the development of on-site energy production should be encouraged.



Auburndale Builders is retrofitting an existing office building to meet Passive House standards on Adams Street.

# Improve Climate Resilience

Excessive heat and storm-related flooding will likely be the most significant climate change impacts in the Washington Street area.

See also: *Newton's Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment and Action Plan*, December, 2018

## Guiding Principles:

- Improve Cheesecake Brook to reduce downstream flooding
- Reduce heat island effect through building and site design standards

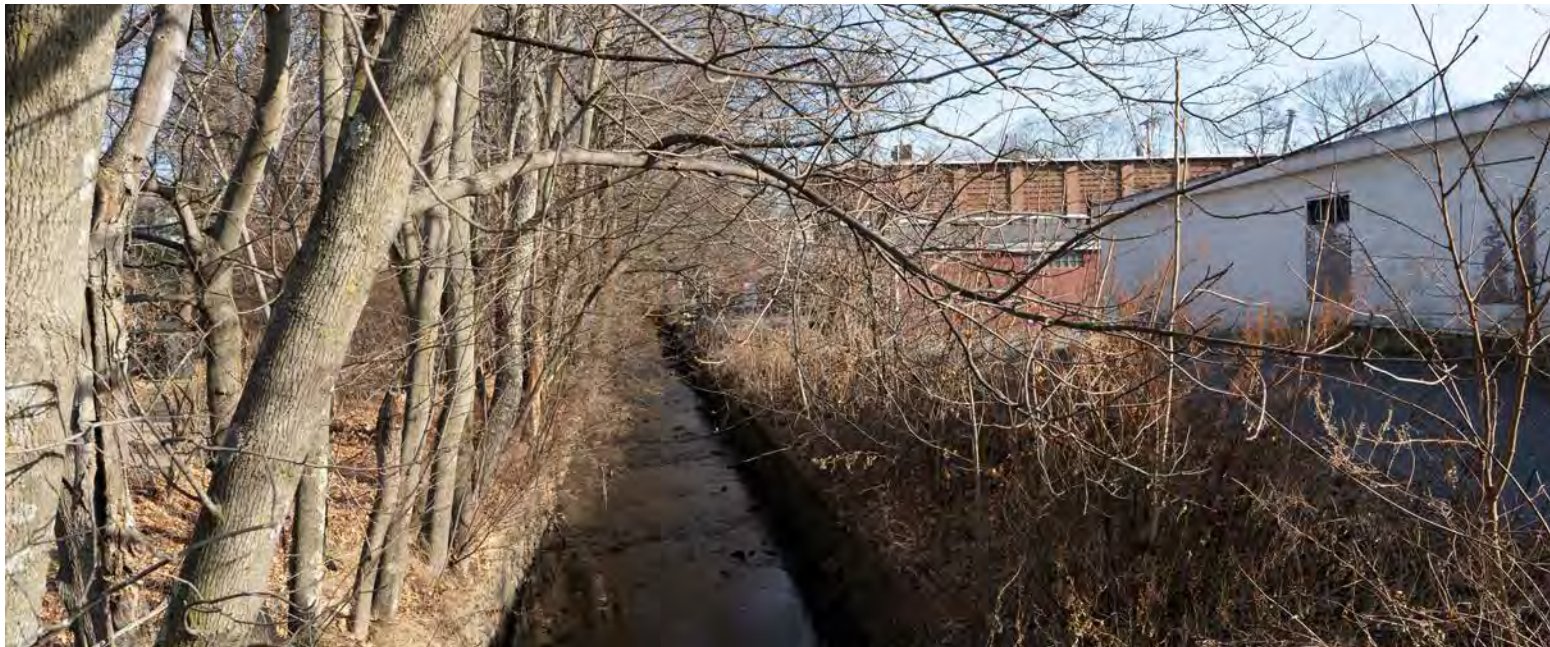


## Improve Cheesecake Brook to reduce downstream flooding

During the first half of the 20th century Newton's engineers made the decision to underground and channelize Cheesecake Brook in long sections of culvert. Doing so was likely perceived as the best course of action to protect land from flooding. While the engineered waterway was likely sized appropriately at the time for the anticipated volume of water, the

increasing size and intensity of storm events are already being felt in Newton and we can anticipate even larger storms and greater amounts of rainfall, further straining the capacity of this system. Today there are other design solutions that can ameliorate flooding and improve stream ecology and water quality. The City should work with adjacent property

owners to uncover or "daylight" portions of Cheesecake Brook where feasible and line the brook with park space that can serve to both buffer the waterway and absorb stormwater during flood events.



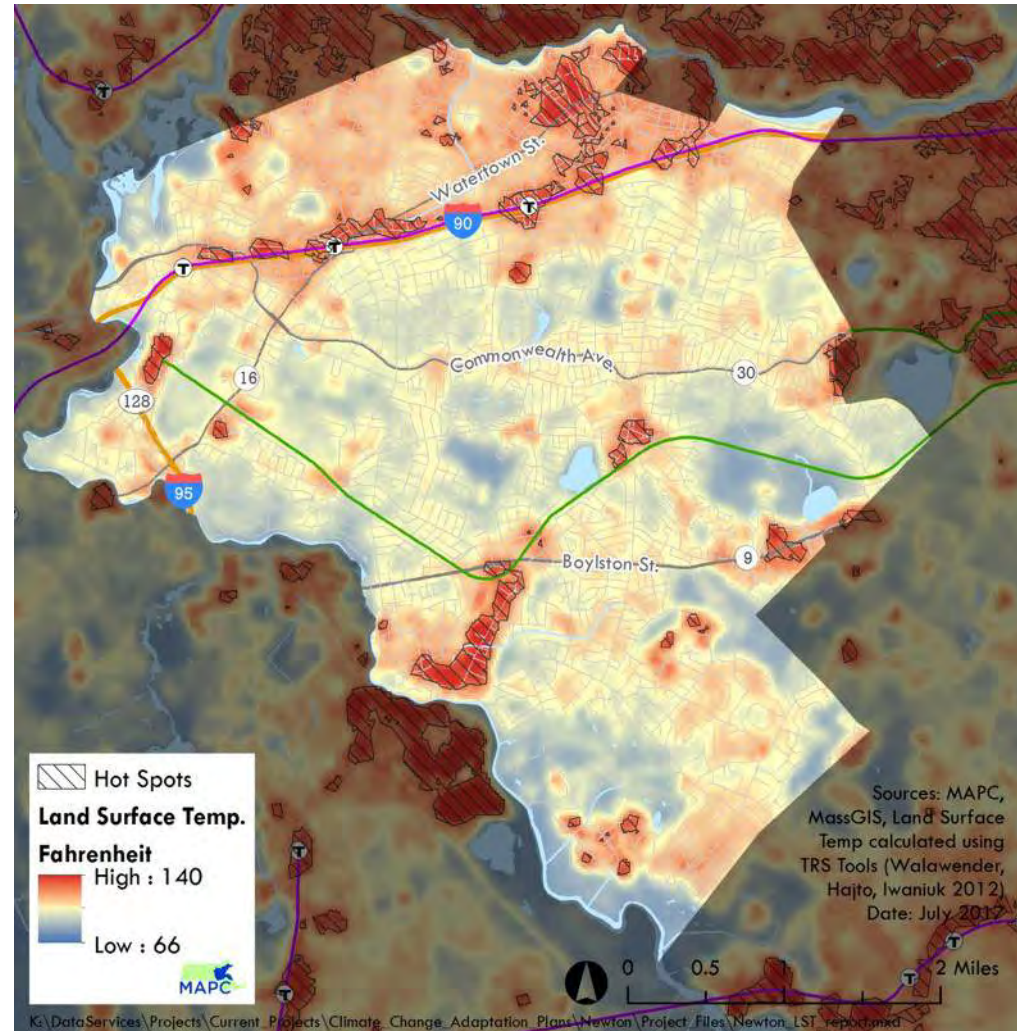


## Improve Climate Resilience

### Reduce heat island effect through building and site design standards

One of the challenges Newton will face regularly as a result of climate change is the increase in hot and extremely hot days. Along the Washington Street corridor, there is an increased “heat island effect” where paved surfaces and other factors exacerbate the effects of high heat. Building and site design can be used to lessen the heat island effect. For example, buildings can have deep awnings or other similar features that shade the front of the building and the sidewalk. Rooftops that are white, green (planted), and/or blue (trapping rainwater) reduce the urban heat island effect. Minimizing pavements from driveways and parking lots and light colored pavement also reduces summer heat.

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. Shade can be provided by trees, canopies, or a combination of both.



# 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

Most residents in the Washington Street area are within a 10-minute walk to a park, but there are some notable gaps. For example, Court Street is almost entirely more than a ten minute walk from the nearest parks (Cabot Park and Lowell Park). There are also gaps in walkable park access on West Newton Hill and just north of Watertown Street. One of the goals of this Vision is to create a network of new small parks and plazas, to reinvigorate existing park space, and possibly to create new village greens over the Mass Pike for both West Newton Square and Newtonville Square (see page 76 for more on this idea). In time, the hope is that all residents in the Washington Street area will be within a ten minute walk of a communal outdoor space.





## *Expand Access to Open Green Spaces and Recreation*

### Facilitate the creation of a network of pocket parks, tot lots, and community plazas

Parks are an essential part of a community with a wide range of recognized benefits for the local environment, public health, and general sense of community. While Newton overall is well-served by park space, the neighborhoods along Washington Street could benefit from a range of smaller, infill parks and plazas. Such civic-space should be incorporated as required amenities in new development

projects. At the same time, the City should work to reinvigorate existing parks and open spaces. Captain Ryan Park in West Newton should remain as open space and improvements should be made to make it a more vibrant community space. The Walker Street green space, located in the bend of Washington Street by the Mass Pike, currently unprogrammed lawn, could be re-imagined as a new park.





## Activate existing and new open spaces

Parks and public spaces are more than just their built features; a bandshell after all means little without a band. As parks and plazas are being developed, it is important to consider how they will be managed and programmed. This is particularly significant for newly created private plazas and courtyards. During the permitting of large developments with new civic spaces, it will be important to discuss how new privately-built civic spaces will be programmed – particularly those spaces that are being arranged to accommodate community events.





## *Expand Access to Open Green Spaces and Recreation*

### Expand tree canopy and add layers of vegetation

The Washington Street corridor has relatively few trees compared to other parts of the Garden City. Beyond simply looking beautiful, street trees provide a sense of enclosure that helps slow vehicle speeds in neighborhood settings; filter pollution by capturing particulate matter and buffering traffic noise; reduce the urban heat island effect and provide shade for people in the summer; capture rain and help infiltrate stormwater thereby reducing the burden on the stormdrain system and contributing to healthier waterways. Trees and ground-level

landscaping also may enhance property values. Perhaps most importantly, connecting the built environment to nature is known to benefit mental health.

The West Newton Square and Walnut Street Enhancements Projects will each add dozens of new trees and new landscaped areas to the village centers in the next few years. The redesign of Washington Street should provide for the incorporation of trees as an important element of the design, recasting the street as a tree-lined boulevard. Neighborhood

streets all around the Washington Street area would also benefit from the aesthetic, safety, and environmental benefits of more street trees.

As will be modeled in the upcoming village center projects, newly planted trees should use the latest planting techniques to provide for the longevity of the trees. In keeping with the City's Street Design Guide, stormwater management best practices for street trees and shrubs should be incorporated wherever feasible.



# Mitigate Mass Pike Effects

## Guiding Principles:

- Install plants at the Pike edge to improve noise, air quality, and aesthetics
- Build sound barriers that have multiple positive outcomes
- Investigate opportunities to deck over sections of the Mass Pike

The construction of the Massachusetts Turnpike through Newton in the 1960s has had some negative local effects on Washington Street. Communities to the north and south were further separated from each other and bridges between neighborhoods were removed. The air pollution and noise of Mass Pike traffic is constant throughout the day. The City should work to mitigate the negative local effects of the Mass Pike on Washington Street and the surrounding neighborhoods.

## Mitigate the Mass Pike's Effects

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

One strategy to tame air pollution is to install plants on buildings, bridges, and structural sound barriers. Plants mitigate noise and remove particulates from the air. A diversity of densely planted, multi-story perennials along the Mass Pike could have a substantial visual, environmental, and public health impact, especially where Washington Street and the Turnpike are situated at the same grade. Plantings could

be installed in conjunction with structural sound barriers. Cities such as Paris have enlisted private citizens to promote and even manage planting programs. Newton should look to such models.



Two photos of a planted highway sound barrier in Chicago, IL. The photo on the left shows the concrete elements that are custom designed to hold soil for the plantings. The photo on the right shows the view from the adjacent park - neither the concrete sound wall structure nor the highway is visible behind all of the plantings. [Precast.org](http://Precast.org)

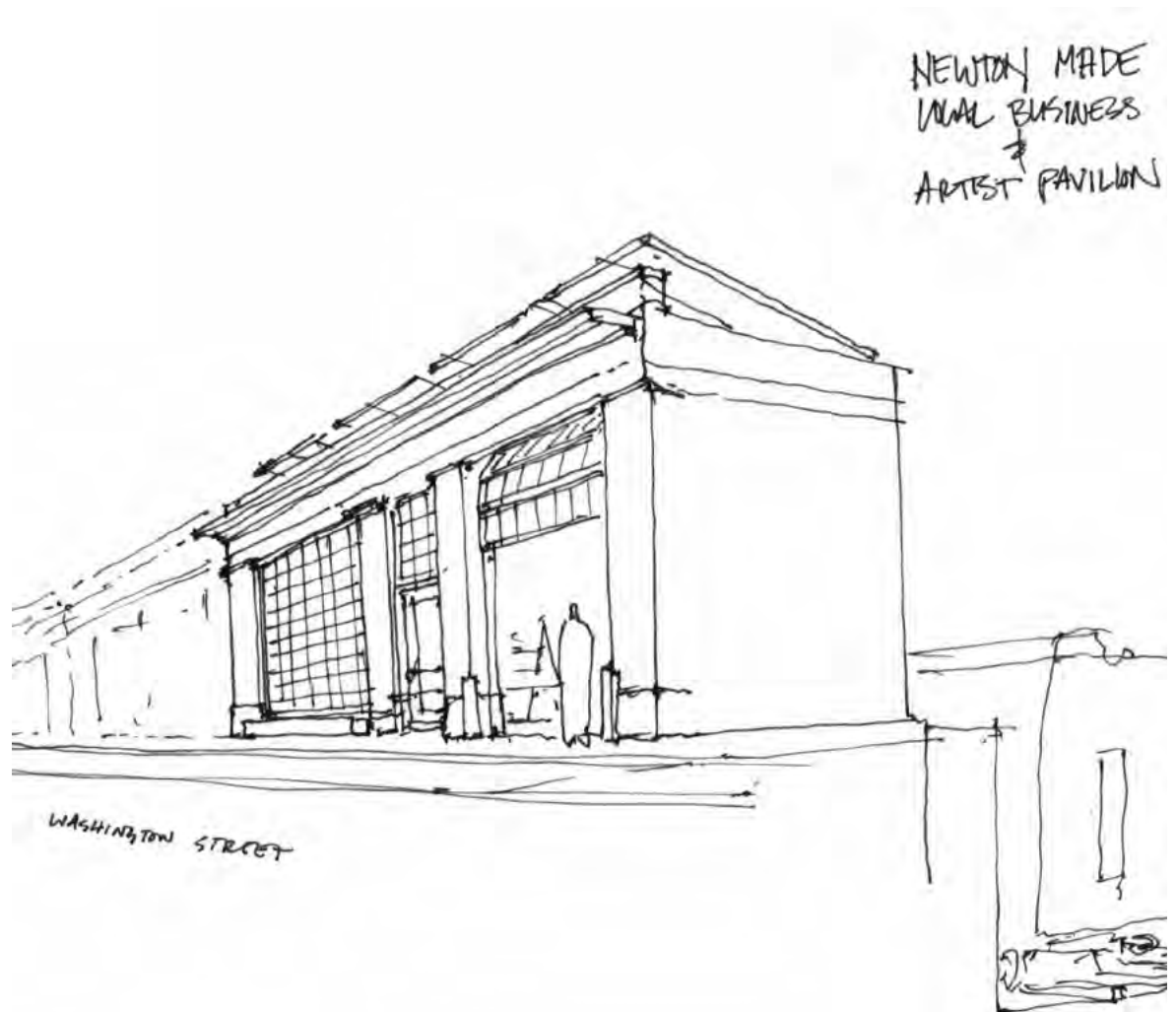


## Build sound barriers that have multiple positive outcomes

The Mass Turnpike/commuter rail edge of Washington Street could provide much greater community value.

One concept would be to install solar panels on sound walls on the City-owned land between the commuter rail tracks and Washington Street. The east-west orientation of the Mass Pike provides an opportunity for solar panels to have a clear southern exposure, facing toward the tracks and the Mass Pike.

The City might also construct, or allow a private or non-profit group to construct, small scale buildings along the Mass Pike edge in the places where there is sufficient public land. The idea would be that these buildings could provide noise mitigation, generate solar power with panels on the roof, and fill a need for low cost business/arts space.



An illustration of the pavilion sound barrier idea. The sketch shows a row of small pavilions built with a solid sound absorbing wall at the back, toward the commuter rail and Mass Pike. There are solar panels on the roof to power the buildings and generate income to the City. The small interior spaces could be provided to local businesses and artists at low cost.

## Mitigate the Mass Pike's Effects

### Investigate opportunities to deck over sections of the Mass Pike

The City should examine the potential value of air-rights development in West Newton and Newtonville by building decks over the Mass Pike for economic development, the creation of new public open spaces, and to help heal the divide created by the Mass Pike. These open spaces could be created for each village center - a similar to the traditional New England village - to serve as central gathering spaces in both villages, contributing to village vitality. With new buildings and other mechanisms for buffering the Mass Pike from these village greens, they could be attractive new parks that serve to ameliorate the presence of the Mass Pike in the villages. Decking over the Mass Pike is a substantial investment that development in the Washington Street area could help to financially support. A potential early action is to research the financial tools and partnerships available to make this idea possible.



The Principle Group prepared this drawing of what a Newtonville village green over the Mass Pike could look like. The proposal recreates the historic connection between Central Ave and Bowers St. The space between the Walnut Street bridge and the new Central Ave bridge would be filled in with park space. The edges would have liner retail/restaurant buildings, like the example photo from Columbus Ohio, to block noise from the highway and create a connected village experience around the green. On the Walnut and Washington Street corner of the green there could also be elevator access down to the commuter rail platforms below.

# E. EXCELLENCE IN PLACEMAKING AND DESIGN

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Area-wide Planning Principles

Site Planning Principles

Building Design Principles



# Area-wide Planning Principles

The Washington Street Vision Plan covers an area with multiple neighborhoods and two distinct village centers. The interplay of the City's priorities for vitality, transportation, housing, and the environment ultimately come together and are expressed through the development of buildings, the creation of open and recreational spaces, the opening of new stores, and the implementation of roads and other infrastructure. Thinking about this portion of Washington Street as a whole, there are a number of physical planning principles that will be used to guide the development of zoning for Washington Street.

## 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

## Ensure Newtonville and West Newton remain distinct and vital

West Newton and Newtonville are two distinct villages that should remain separate and distinct rather than appear to blend together into one continuous development along the length of Washington Street. Much of Newton's identity derives from having separate and individually unique villages. For Washington Street, the appropriate place to focus new, denser development is at the edges of the village centers.

There is a portion of Washington Street around Brookside Ave and Walker Park where the neighborhood meets Washington Street. This Vision recommends that the neighborhood scale be reflected in new zoning for this part of Washington Street.



## Area-wide Planning Principles

### Protect iconic buildings

The center of West Newton is a federally designated historic district, its character derived from several important civic buildings and a handful of historic commercial buildings. Newtonville is similarly home to iconic civic structures. The residential neighborhood north of the village center is a local historic district. Newton should continue to protect iconic buildings and to treat them as guideposts in the views along Washington Street while also growing and changing to support the other objectives of this Vision Plan.

Typically the center of a village is where more height is allowed, but that

approach could mean detracting from the historic structures and character in the core of the village centers.

In this Vision, density and height are recommended to be located in areas of underutilized land just outside of the village cores and yet well within the walkable and transit served areas of the villages. In West Newton, this area includes the MBTA parking lots and the “Cheesecake Brook lots” east of Chestnut Street as far as the Trader Joe’s on Armory Street. In Newtonville, this area is along Washington Street approaching the intersection with

Crafts Street. Essentially, the vision calls for improving these areas that are currently less reflective of the ideal of Newton placemaking excellence. The Vision proposes that these portions of the corridor could realize the important policy objectives while also incorporating the quality design that define the West Newton and Newtonville village cores.



The photo on the left shows the view across the Walnut Street bridge in the early 20th century. This building was lost during the Great Depression. The Masonic Temple in Newtonville is now one of the dominant feature buildings in Newtonville Square that should continue to have a prominent position as a landmark.



## Foster moments of arrival

Because height is being guided to the edges of the village rather than the center, it can be used to mark moments of arrival as one moves through the village. Newly created taller buildings would mark arrival at the edges of each village, and then heights in the village core areas would be kept relatively low in order to allow the historic civic buildings to continue to have prominence. The taller features of the Masonic Hall on Walnut Street in Newtonville and the Unitarian Church in West Newton should continue to catch one's attention as one passes through the village centers.

This approach would mark each transition into and out of the village centers with a moment of well-designed height – for example, arrival at West Newton Square near the MBTA station or West Newton before Chestnut Street.



## Require gentle transitions to adjacent neighborhoods

The gentle transition from the village centers to surrounding residential neighborhoods is an important part of retaining the historic pattern of villages and neighborhoods. This Vision recommends, and the zoning could ultimately require, that building heights be lower adjacent to residences in order to be complementary to the scale of surrounding neighborhoods.

Setbacks are another way to create a gentle transition, a taller building that is pulled away from the side property line in

favor of green space or even a driveway lined with trees creates a more gentle transition. The transition can also be made gentler by locating smaller footprint buildings adjacent to residential neighborhoods; for instance, a small four-story office building that has the same footprint as a house could actually be a better transitional structure than a one-story office building with a long facade and large footprint. All of these approaches to creating gentle transitions should be incorporated when developing zoning for Washington Street.



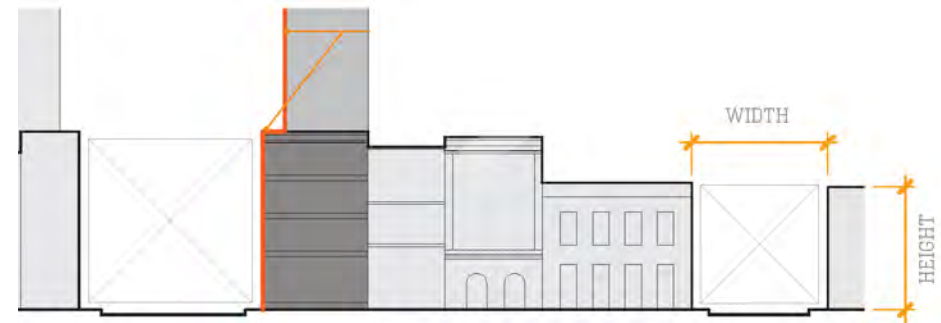
This sketch of Dunstan Street shows a gradual transition from a 6-story building on Washington Street to a 3.5-story building closest to the neighborhood. The building closest to the neighborhood also has a 1-story portion at the edge nearest to residences.

## Develop standards and guidelines for human-scale design

Every building and public space along Washington Street should be designed with a focus on what it feels like to be in the space. This includes thinking about the relationship of the human body and the sensory experience of a space - texture, enclosure, views, variety, sound, and feel. The human field of vision relates to building height and width, as well as the details of the architecture – the layout of windows on the ground floor, the frequency of doorways, the architectural details that relate a building to the people who will ultimately use it. Such “human-scale” design principles should be incorporated into zoning for Washington Street as well as design guidelines for Washington Street.

It is a well established principal of urban design that people gravitate to well-defined edges such as provided by buildings or landscaping. People generally feel more comfortable in these sheltered edge areas than in wide open spaces. Building height is an important component of creating this sense of shelter or enclosure.

Building design should also respond to the fact that people can see a lot of detail at eye-level and closer to the ground, and generally less detail up above. Therefore the ground level should be well-detailed with architectural features, signs, windows, and similar.



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.

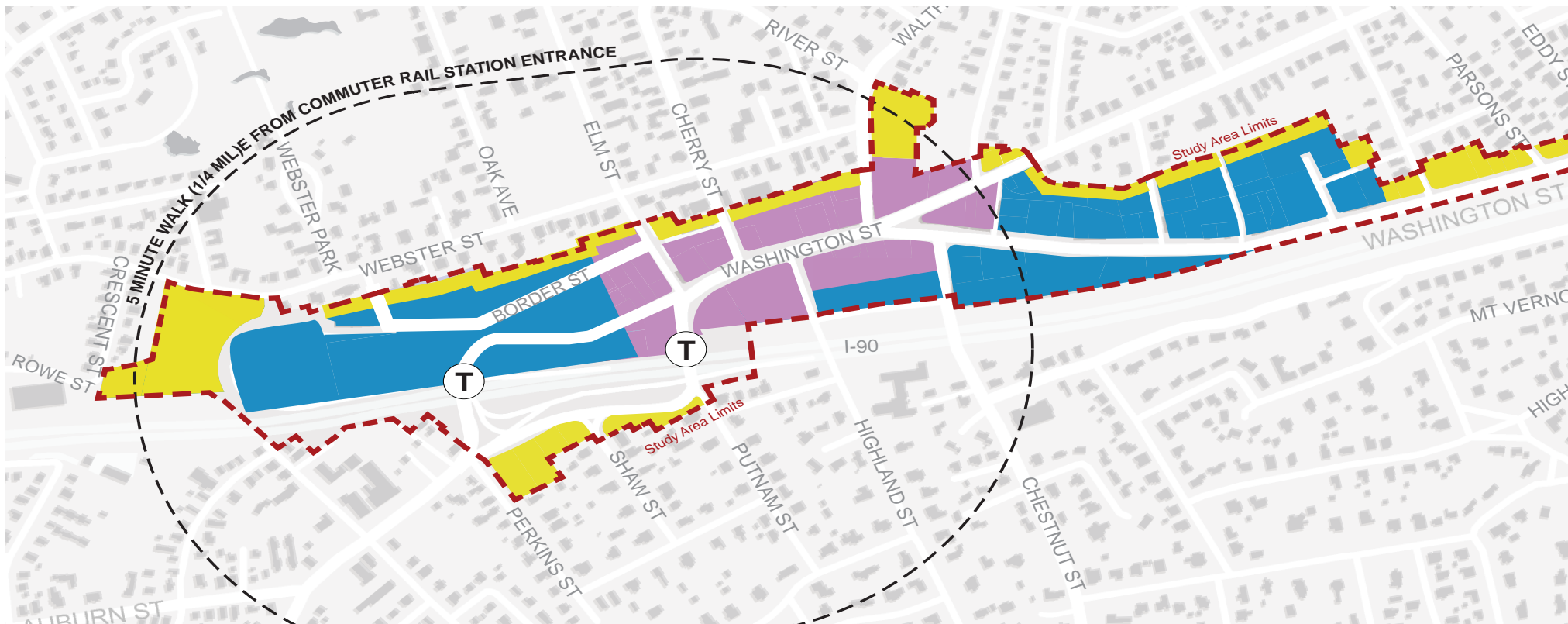


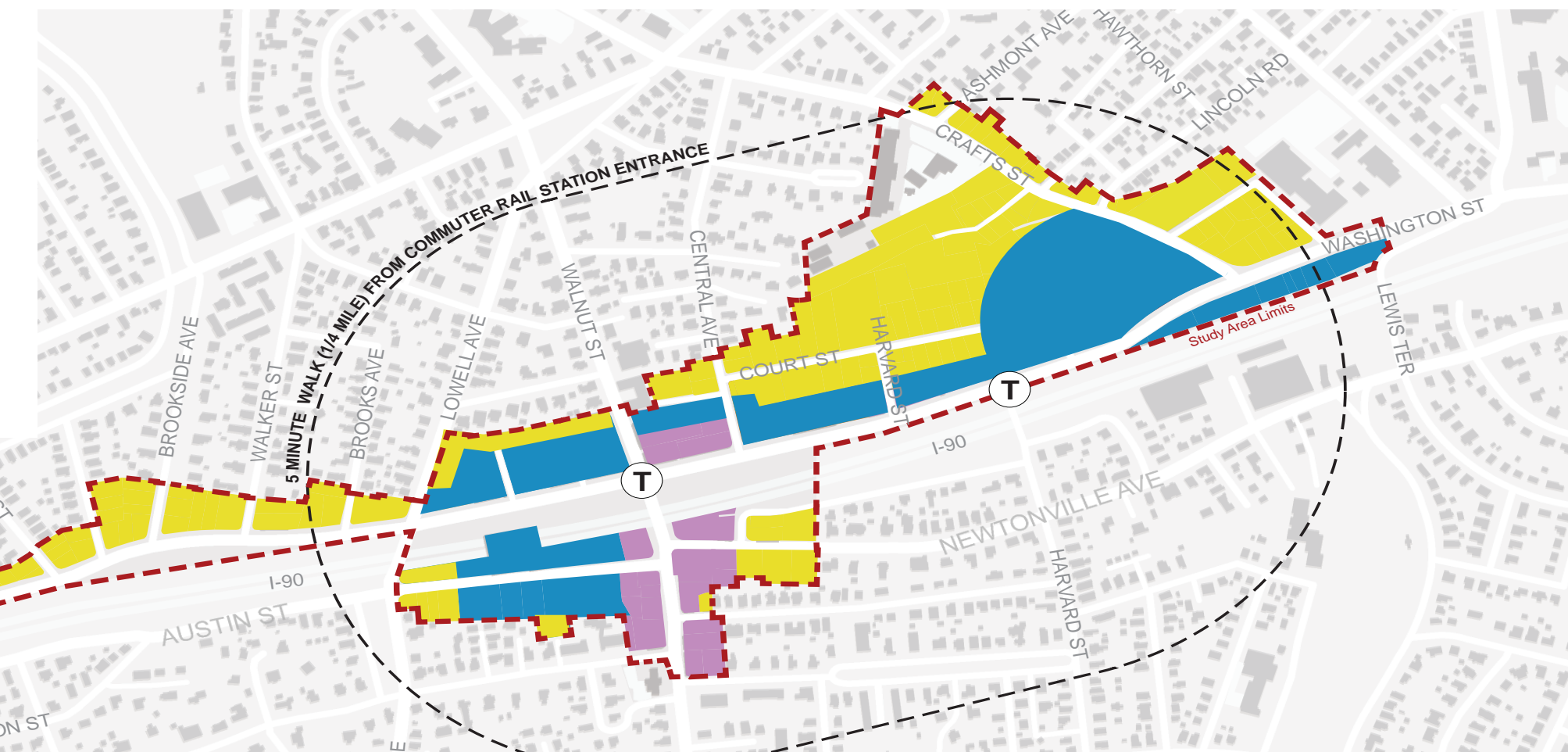
## Area-wide Planning Principles

### Height Principles Diagram

This diagram illustrates the height principles along Washington Street. The height ranges shown correspond to the area-wide planning principles:

- Maintain the lower height neighborhood between West Newton and Newtonville.
- Ensure heights vary along any given block so as to maintain the sense of buildings having developed incrementally over time.
- Maintain gentle transitions to adjacent neighborhoods by requiring height step downs on taller buildings
- Maintain the prominence of historic iconic buildings in the village cores.
- Create moments of arrival and transition at the edges of the villages.
- Ensure buildings respond to human-scale throughout the area including upper story setbacks on taller buildings.





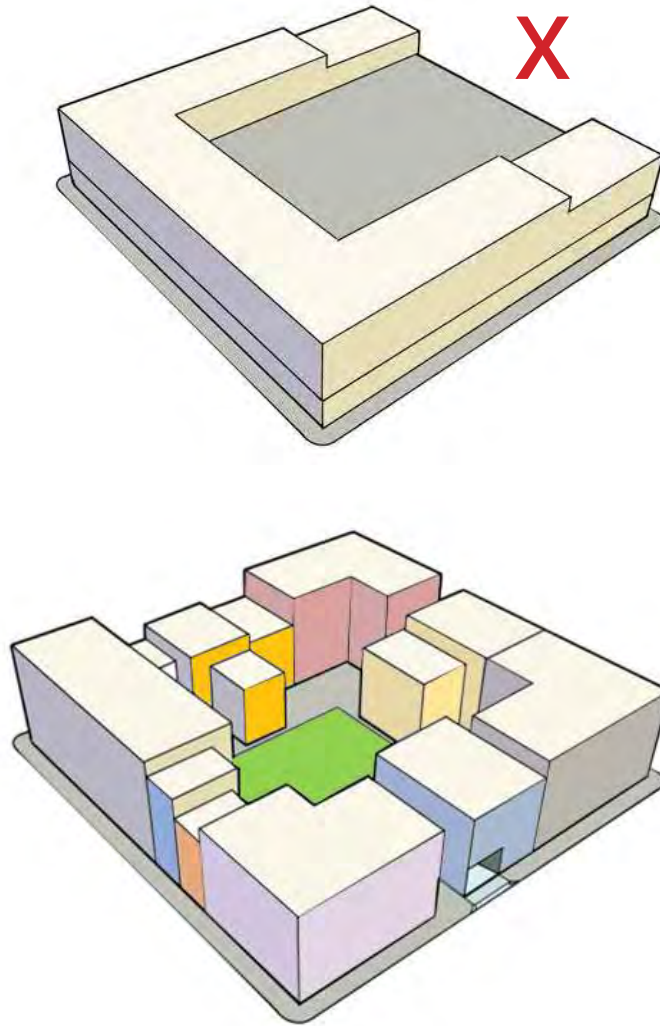
- Low Heights - Neighborhood Character (1 to 3 stories)
- Low Heights - Village Character (1 to 4 stories)
- Medium Heights - Village Character (3 to 6 stories)

**Footnotes:**

- This is an illustration of principles only; this is not a regulatory or zoning map.
- Further nuance must be developed in Washington Street Zoning including specifying the limits of each zoning district and the rules for each district and building type.
- The scale of some buildings, including taller height buildings, will require additional review and community input as can be achieved through the Special Permit Process.

### Encourage variety in building size and shape

A distinguishing characteristic of both West Newton and Newtonville is that the buildings in these villages developed incrementally over time and are therefore distinctive from each other, varying in height, width, materials, and other aspects of their design. These building patterns are another essential feature that defines the unique sense of place of Newton. The vision recommends that zoning for Washington Street require that new development reinforce these building patterns. In particular, where a larger new development is proposed that might include multiple buildings or stretch over an entire block, that such a development reinforce the idea of multiple buildings with varying heights, materials, and other design distinctiveness. In addition many of the most iconic buildings are historic, meaning new development may want to draw upon such historic elements.



A market-driven building shape common today is a large parking garage with the building shaped around it. Such buildings would be out of context for Washington Street, so the Vision recommends developing standards that require large scale projects to mirror the building diversity that is typical on Washington Street.



## Implement planning principles through project review

The planning principles identified in this vision plan are essential to how Washington Street can accommodate residential and commercial growth while respecting the architectural character and built heritage of the community. This vision plan is setting a pathway to incremental change over time, not abrupt and immediate change to remake the corridor as a new place. Zoning, and the development project review process that accompanies it, is essential to realizing this intent.

Achieving the outcomes described in this plan will require new zoning with stronger requirements for controls on building height, size, and placement than is currently found in Newton's zoning ordinance. These requirements will need to clearly require that building heights reduce as they get closer to adjacent neighborhoods, that building widths be controlled, that taller buildings step-back in height, and that there be clear diversity in building heights within a project. At the same time, the maximum allowable height of 6 stories in some areas, as shown on the height diagram on pages 84-85, will be an important component of achieving the many public objectives of this plan, from plazas and open spaces to underground parking. Therefore, the development project review process provided by the requirement of a special permit for any building that exceeds 3 stories in height, or contains a gross floor area greater than 20,000, is also important for

realizing these same planning principles on individual sites. The special permit process formally brings the City into the design process through its role in reviewing and approving a project. This role should be used to further ensure that the planning principles enumerated in this vision plan are incorporated into each proposed development. To that end, the criteria in the Washington Street zoning used to shape the decision-making of the City Council on a special permit must clearly identify consistency with this vision plan and its planning principles. Among these should be the idea that the tallest buildings should be used sparingly along the corridor, marking significant locations and otherwise used to advance public purposes.

Setting the special permit criteria and development standards of the Washington Street zoning so that the public, property-owners and potential developers can have clear expectations of what can happen along this corridor will be one of the most important implementation steps of this plan. The vision presented here offers an opportunity to improve the quality of life for the neighborhoods and villages in the area. New zoning and thoughtful review of development proposals will be necessary to realizing that opportunity.

# Site Planning Principles

Individual properties affect the fabric of the neighborhood and excellence in placemaking. Site design principles should be carried forward through zoning and design guidelines to ensure that any new development adds to design excellence on Washington Street.

## Guiding Principles:

- Limit visible parking
- Broaden the toolkit to incentivize historic preservation
- Break down the scale of larger projects with new streets, paths, and open spaces

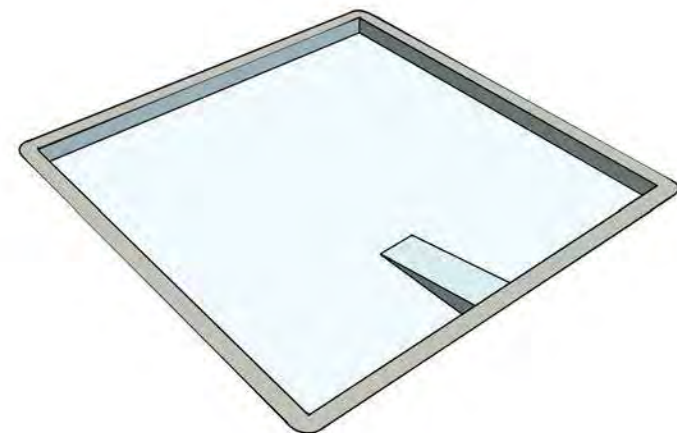
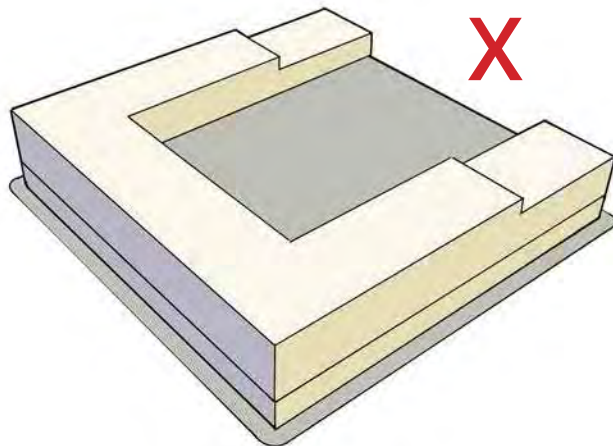
## Limit visible parking

Parking should not dictate the size of buildings nor dominate the landscape. Any parking that is provided should be behind buildings, screened from the sidewalk, or ideally below ground.

Generally, below-grade parking garages are preferred for Washington Street over above-ground garages because they do not add to the visible mass of buildings. Understanding though that below-grade parking is not always achievable due to physical and financial constraints, the second priority is for parking to be at the back of a property, away from the street. Parking lots are very boring to walk alongside and can discourage pedestrian activity. In addition to locating parking lots behind a building, parking lots on the side of

a building should be as limited as possible, and parking should not be located between a building and the street. Small convenience parking areas are more effective from a range of perspectives: higher customer convenience, reduced design impact, lower heat island effects, and lower opportunity costs.

The details of parking requirements, including parking lot design standards, should be considered as part of future zoning and design guidelines for Washington Street.





### Broaden the toolkit to incentivize historic preservation

Historic preservation in Newton has long been an important community goal and there are many tools in place to preserve important structures. There is a challenge though in preserving the structures that are underperforming economically relative to their land value. Some of the most challenging with respect to preservation are the one-story commercial properties built in the 1930s that are valuable for

their narrow shopfront and detailed facades but are based on a simple box structure at the back. An added tool for keeping the portions of the property that have historic value, would be to establish a height/floor area bonus that would be granted on condition of maintaining the historically significant portions of the existing structure. This approach would give the Newton Historic Commission

and the City Council an additional option when discussing preservation in the context of a special permit project. Such a bonus should be structured to allow the Historic Commission an opportunity to weigh in on what building-specific historic features need to be preserved in order to be granted the bonus.



The incentive of an added story should be tied to featuring the preserved historic portion of the building. In the precedent photo, the added story contrasts with and does not compete with the historic brick facade. In the sketch of a building with an added story on Washington Street, the pattern of narrow bays continues on the upper stories and the new portion of the building is set back to give the historic storefronts prominence.

## Break down the scale of larger projects with new streets, paths, & open spaces

Washington Street today is an eclectic mix of architectural styles and building sizes and there is an interest in seeing that pattern continued in new construction. Writing zoning requirements that treat large projects as a series of contextually appropriate buildings rather than single large structures can reinforce the desired outcomes. In addition to requiring large new projects to be multiple varied buildings, the zoning for Washington Street can require that large projects include new streets and paths to create new smaller blocks and can require that new large projects include public open spaces, such as public courtyards.

Courtyards can be used as public space that is buffered from the noise and pollutants coming from the Mass Pike and offer more intimate settings for community gatherings.



# Building Design Principles

## Guiding Principles:

- Allow form to follow function
- Encourage traditional New England roof diversity
- Promote energy-efficient, human-scaled and durable construction

Like site planning, the decisions of individual architects can have an effect on the overall feel of Washington Street. The issues at hand have a lot less to do with architectural style (modern vs. traditional for example) and more to do with how a building addresses issues of scale. There are many building design elements that affect the perception of scale: the proportion of height to width along the street, the composition and arrangement of windows and doors, and even the size of the exterior materials (traditional brick or clapboards vs. large panels). As zoning and design guidelines are developed for Washington Street, the architectural principles below should be incorporated into those standards.



## Allow form to follow function

Washington Street is a mixed-use area, meaning that there will be properties that are primarily commercial and properties that are exclusively residential. Tailoring the building design regulations to the expected range of uses in the building is important to ensure that the rules work with today's building code requirements and desired uses.

For instance, a restaurant space requires a high ceiling height in order to accommodate the requisite hoods in the

kitchen and air exchange system in the dining room. In order to accommodate restaurants in new construction, the zoning would need to allow sufficient ground floor height to meet those needs (estimated at 15 ft or more). Likewise, if Newton would like to see new buildings in the village centers have the flexibility to be used for either residential or office, the floor-to-floor height will need to be tall enough for all of the additional infrastructure that offices need between floors (additional

wiring, air exchangers, etc.). Residential buildings are anticipated to need 9-12 ft floor-to-floor while offices are estimated to required 10-14 ft floor-to-floor.

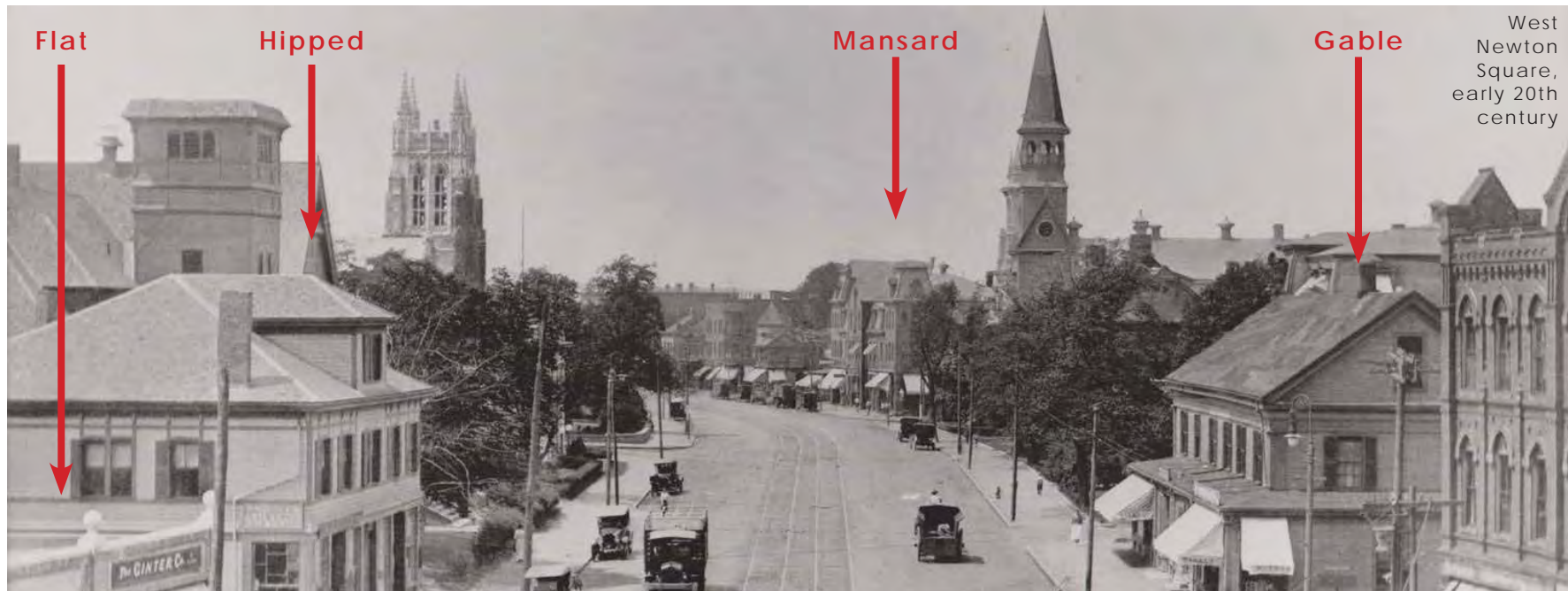


These two buildings have the same functions: ground floor retail with upper story residential. Because of changes in construction techniques and building codes, the more modern building is necessarily taller than its historic counterpart.

### Encourage traditional New England roof diversity

Washington Street has a wide range of roof types reflecting the variety of development periods and land uses in the area. The Seth Davis Tavern, one of the oldest buildings in West Newton Square has a gable roof as do many of the residential homes between the village centers. There are also a variety of hipped roofs and mansard roofs on the residential structures, including those that have been since converted into small offices. While most of the 20th century commercial buildings have flat roofs (often with parapets), there are two commercial buildings with pitched roofs - the office building at 246 Walnut Street has a gable roof and a turret at the corner,

and the office building at 580 Washington Street has a post-modern split gable roof. Today's construction methodology, particularly for commercial buildings means that pitched roofs are rarely cost-effective. One way Newton could incentivize roof diversity is to allow the area under a roof to be habitable above and beyond the allowed number of stories. It is expected that most new buildings would still find the flat roof to be the more cost-effective choice, but this trade-off could result in a few more interesting building shapes over time.





## Promote energy-efficient, human-scaled and durable construction

New construction or major renovation on Washington Street should be expected to last many decades or longer. Therefore, new construction and renovations should be of the highest quality possible, including energy and resource efficient, relating to human-scale, and durable. While the principles for high quality design and construction have been described elsewhere in this Vision, it is important to recognize that the City of Newton can play a role in promoting quality design and construction for projects of all sizes. One means of doing so is through advisory design review. Newton already has an Urban Design Commission that reviews projects and provides advice to applicants, city staff, and the City Council. That role could be expanded for a broader range of projects on Washington Street and could be supported with Washington Street specific design guidelines.



This sketch prepared by the Principle Group shows an idea for a new park and buildings surrounding it along Watertown St in West Newton. Concept plans for specific development projects should be considered by the City's design review bodies.





# III. IMPLEMENTING THE VISION FOR WASHINGTON STREET

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How is the Comprehensive Plan and its amendments used?

Guiding Principles for Implementation

Early Actions

# Guiding Principles for Implementation

## Return to the Vision Statement

The Vision described by this plan is intentionally broadly defined. The ideas presented in this document will likely need to be adjusted over time as implementation proceeds, feasibility is studied, and new ideas towards the same objectives are explored. Those priorities for vitality in the villages, safe streets, housing diversity, community gathering, and environmental protection should be integrated into the purpose statements of future activities coming out of this Vision Plan. For instance, the zoning for Washington Street could integrate the vision statement into an overall purpose statement for the new districts. This way the vision for Washington Street is always top of mind when projects are being implemented.

## Engage the Community at Key Touchpoints

The development of this Vision Plan benefited immensely from the involvement of community members who live and work along Washington Street. The community conversations at the large meetings and in small group office-hours settings was an essential input in the process.

Many of the ideas described in this Vision will need substantially more discussion in the future and there is a role for the community to play in each of those major implementation projects. At key touchpoints, the community should be asked again to share their ideas and perspectives as the vision is implemented.

## Establish Equity as an Essential Consideration

Maintaining Washington Street's diversity is an underlying objective throughout this Vision plan. Where opportunities arise in new private-development projects and in City investment projects, the equity impacts of decisions should always be considered.

## Collect Data & Monitor Change

As implementation of this vision plan advances, the City should have a program of data collection and monitoring to understand change over time and have the ability to make adjustments in strategy as warranted. Data should be collected related to transportation, public revenue and expenditures, housing costs, commercial rents, and environmental and public health conditions.



## *Implementation*

# Early Actions

The following are some early actions for the first 6-18 months after adopting this Vision as an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan, in order to make immediate progress toward the vision of lively villages, a safe street, diverse housing, places for community connections, and environmental protection.

### **Develop a Concept Design for Washington Street Enhancements**

The City of Newton intends to develop a concept design for Washington Street and a long-term trial for a portion of the roadway. This concept plan, along with the finance strategy below, will give the City a clearer understanding of how to proceed with the street repair objectives outlined in the vision plan.

The West Newton Square & Walnut Street Enhancements projects will both move into construction in 2019-2020. Any future roadway or sidewalk work will be coordinated with these current investments.

### **Adopt Washington Street Zoning**

The City Council will work toward the adoption of specific zoning changes to implement the ideas about building shape, size, and form and related performance standards for new construction.

### **Develop Parking Management Strategies for West Newton and Newtonville**

Effective public parking management requires continuous action to ensure that parking policies conform to the city's transportation goals. Effective parking management is an essential first step towards understanding the parking demand characteristics of a place in order to consider planning for a possible new public garage as well as preparing to incorporate driverless vehicles and other new mobility services.

### **Prepare a Finance Strategy for Washington Street Infrastructure & Public Spaces**

This strategic effort would explore the financing tools available to guide the City in budgeting for the proposed public investments in this vision, including the ideas for new public spaces, street improvements, and possible public parking garages.

## **Incorporate the Vision Plan into Ongoing Citywide Strategies**

The City of Newton is currently developing an Arts and Culture Master Plan and working on implementing the Economic Development Strategy. Supporting artists and small businesses in Newtonville and West Newton are of vital importance to the community. The findings and ideas developed here will be integrated into these efforts along with other city initiatives like the City's street tree program.

## **Convene a Commuter Rail Conference**

The City of Newton will work together with Newton's representative government leaders at the state and federal levels and the leadership of other municipalities on the Worcester line to convene a discussion on how to move the commuter rail vision forward to implementation.

## **Pilot Pop-Up Retail Pavilions**

The City of Newton will create a process for testing pop-up retail pavilions along Washington Street.

## **Host a Design Imagination Day at Walker Park**

Walker Park (located along the Mass Pike across from Walker St) could be an excellent neighborhood resource. In this early action time frame, the City of Newton will host an "Imagination Day," at Walker Park to bring local families and children into the idea development phase of the design.

## IV. SUMMARY OF GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR WASHINGTON STREET

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Unique and Vital Village Centers

Safe Multimodal Transportation

Housing Diversity

Global Climate and Local Environment

Excellence in Placemaking and Design



## A. Unique and Vital Village Centers

### **Strengthen the Village Business Climate**

- Promote the village centers' competitive advantages
- Encourage clusters of office and lab activity in each village
- Explore incentives and investments in locally-owned businesses

### **Design for Engaging Walks**

- Use buildings and trees to make a more comfortable environment
- Activate the Pike edge
- Promote narrow and transparent shopfronts
- Incorporate opportunities for outdoor dining
- Design streets and plazas as places to linger

### **Invest in Public Art & Programming**

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

## **B. Safe Multimodal Transportation**

### **Prioritize People, Safety, and Comfort**

- Reconfigure Washington Street as a boulevard
- 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**

- Promote small blocks
- Connect Washington Street to the Charles River Greenway

- Consider building more bridges over the Pike
- Make way for crosswalks

### **Organize and Advocate for Better Transit**

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

### **Actively Manage Driving and Parking**

- 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

## C. Housing Diversity

### **Attract All Ages, All People**

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

### **Seek Affordable Housing Opportunities**

- Invest directly in affordable housing
- Leverage public land for affordable housing development

### **Link Housing and Transportation**

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

## D. Global Climate and Local Environment

### Provide Options for Low-Carbon Living

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

### Improve Climate Resilience

- Improve Cheesecake Brook to reduce downstream flooding
- Reduce heat island effect through building and site design standards

### Expand Access to Open Green Spaces and Recreation

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

### Mitigate Mass Pike Effects

- Install plants at the Pike edge to improve noise, air quality, and aesthetics
- Build sound barriers that have multiple positive outcomes
- Investigate opportunities for larger parks over sections of the Mass Pike



## E. Excellence in Placemaking and Design

### Area-wide Planning Principles

- Ensure Newtonville and West Newton remain distinct and vital
- Protect iconic buildings
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### Building Design Principles

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