Newton’s Laws:
Rethinking suburban corridors and main streets in a Boston inner-core suburb

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How can land use and transportation decisions contribute to creating a high-value, high quality of life community with access and opportunities for all?

How can Newton’s villages and corridors create more value for the City?
City of Newton, Massachusetts
City of Newton, Massachusetts

18.3 square miles

85,000 people

“Inner Core” of Boston

Strong Mayor + 24 member Board of Aldermen
City of Newton

55% households have income exceeding $100,000

47% of Newton residents have a graduate of professional degree
A City of Thirteen Villages

Placenames for neighborhoods

Not incorporated municipalities

No legal status
90% of property valuation is from residential property taxes

pay lower tax rate

higher fiscal impact

Residential quality of life is vital
“undevelopable” areas

preserve open space and historic areas because they bring intrinsic value even if they are “underperforming” on tax revenue

golf courses

private schools and colleges
Only 8% of property valuation is from commercial property taxes

pay higher tax rate

lower fiscal impact

limited locations for development in Newton
How can Newton create value?

Areas with highest assessed values have the greatest tax yield; they generate the highest value

Return on Investment (ROI)
Walnut Street, Newtonville
Village Main Street
Newtonville
Newtonville
Street Banner Design Competition
Newtonville

Placemaking

Streetscape

Crosswalks

Bump-outs
Newtonville
Village Day
“Reimagining Walnut Street” Streetscape Study

- Improve Safety for All Users
- Create Value for Businesses
- Enhance Multi-Modal Access
Newtonville
Reimagining Walnut Street workshop
Newtonville

Illegal de facto “Loading Zone”
Newtonville

Remove parking spaces to improve sight lines

Add bicycle accommodations
Newtonville
Value-added
Newtonville
Austin Street redevelopment
AUSTIN STATION NEWTONVILLE
Newtonville is not Manhattan

By David Wenstrom
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NEWTON

A great disconnect is happening between Mayor Warren and his planners, and the vast majority of Newton villagers, especially about the Austin Street parking area (still citizen-owned) and its alleged "revitalization." I can't find one person who likes this new scheme; many see it as just more government political rigmarole.

Listen to the planners and the politicians talk: you would think this new grandiose mega-project has already been built. We, the taxpaying public villagers have seemingly been invited a wee bit late to the very idea. A seemingly foregone conclusion, so -- live with it.

With this absurd lack of public input, here are four simple questions taxpayers might ask themselves: Have you ever seen your taxes go down after one of these revitalization projects have happened? Have you had any real input as to what this land should be used for, if anything?
Why is this happening?

When/how can the community weigh in?

Will there be enough parking?
Needham Street Commercial Corridor
Needham Street Corridor
Needham Street

Streetscape
SOUTH NEEDHAM STREET PERSPECTIVE
Needham Street
Upper Falls Greenway
Natural Resources
Ecological Systems
Pocket Parks
Needham Street
Traffic Congestion

40% of the traffic on Needham Street is through traffic without a destination on the corridor.
Needham Street
Street Network
MassDOT Roadway Plan

5-foot bicycle lanes

Center turn lane with some medians
Needham Street
Market Supply
Needham Street

Market Demand

Developed, Owned and Managed by Bierbrier Development, Inc.
Needham Street
Housing
Zoning
Density
Scale
Village?
Regional Corridor?
Inner-Core Suburbs
“Even while these [streetcar] suburbs replicated urban villages, a separate vision was emerging that saw the suburbs as tranquil, pastoral places that more closely represented the country.”
The Triumph of the City

“Cities produce better restaurants than schools.”
“Nationwide, suburbs have more jobs than cities do: about 23% of jobs in major metropolitan areas are within 3 miles of a traditional downtown, and 43% are more than 10 miles out.”
“There is no reason why our village centers cannot be vibrant, exciting, attractive places; why our major corridors cannot expand and change without chaos and panic.”

(Newton Comprehensive Plan)
Thank you!

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