



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Ruthanne Fuller,
Mayor

Newton Center for Active Living Working Group

Members

Sandra Butzel,
Community Rep.
Bea Goldsmith,
Community Rep.
Brooke Lipsitt,
Community Rep.
Norm Meltz,
COA Member
Jack Neville,
P&R Commission
Richard Rasala,
Community Rep.
Sue Rasala,
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John Rice,
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Susan Albright,
CC President
Nicole Banks,
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Jayne Colino,
Sr. Services Director
Jini Fairley,
ADA Coordinator
Barney Heath,
Planning Director
Maureen Lemieux,
CFO
Josh Morse,
PB Commissioner
Nancy Scammon,
P&R Dept.
Alex Valcarce,
Public Buildings
Jonathan Yeo,
COO

August 12, 2020

Dear Mayor Fuller:

The Newton Center for Active living (NewCAL) Working Group is pleased to provide its formal site recommendation for the location of this very important and exciting project.

Since the Spring of 2018, we have hosted hundreds of public meetings including community forums, office hours, Building Committee and Working Group meetings; and have participated in Council on Aging (COA) and City Council updates. Through this process we have worked with various city departments and the Parks and Recreation Commission and solicited thousands of comments, ideas, thoughts and suggestions from the community, and analyzed more than 150 potential sites for the NewCAL Project.

In February of this year, we narrowed the list of potential sites to two: the Newton Centre Triangle Parking Lot and the Existing Senior Center site in Newtonville. Over the past few months, we have worked collaboratively with the community to explore the opportunities and challenges associated with each of these sites. The following is a summary of the pros and cons identified and expressed by the community:

Newton Centre Triangle Parking Lot

Pros:

- Centrally located (0.68 miles from the geographic center of Newton)
- Good access to public transit
- Great access to amenities

Cons:

- Removes an infrastructure asset heavily relied upon by residents and businesses
- Very little community support
- Significant impact to village during construction
- 8-10 years to complete project due to phasing requirements
- ~\$10M over our Project Budget

Existing Senior Center Site in Newtonville

Pros:

- Minimal impact to village during and after construction
- Good access to bus routes 59, 553, 554, and 556
- Great access to amenities
- Overwhelming community support
- 4-5 years to complete project
- Fits within our \$16.65M Project Budget

Cons:

- Only access to commuter rail is station with difficult stairs
- Less centrally located (1.26 miles from the geographic center of Newton)

Both the Newton Centre Triangle Parking Lot and the site of the Existing Senior Center in Newtonville align with the NewCAL Vision Statement and Guiding Principles. The building program can be accommodated at both sites. Parking is easier to accommodate at the Newtonville site, although the Newton Centre site has more desirable green space. In the end, these two sites have great potential with minor programmatic compromises.

With similar potential at both sites, we then looked to project schedule, cost, village impact, and community support. The site of the current Senior Center in Newtonville is more desirable on all of these fronts. It is significantly less expensive, takes far less time to complete, has far less impact to the village, and has the overwhelming support of the community.

At its July 14, 2020 meeting the COA discussed both the Newton Centre Triangle and the existing Senior Center sites and voted unanimously in favor of the existing Senior Center site in Newtonville.

The Newtonville site does present some challenges that will need to be addressed including the temporary relocation of senior programs and services during construction as well as a parking management plan for additional parking beyond the allotted number of spaces that can be accommodated onsite. The Working Group and design team will work to identify, evaluate and capitalize on opportunities through creative site and streetscape planning to try and accommodate as much green space and on-site parking as possible.

Based on all of the above, on July 21, 2020 the NewCAL Working Group made a unanimous motion to make a formal recommendation that 345 Walnut Street in Newtonville be selected as the preferred site for the NewCAL Project. The motion was approved with 13 in favor, 0 opposed and 0 abstentions.

Therefore, the Working Group is pleased to provide this recommendation and looks forward to keeping this important City project moving ahead.

Respectfully submitted,
Newton Center for Active Living
Working Group

CC: Jonathan Yeo, COO
Josh Morse, Public Building Commissioner
Jayne Colino, Sr. Services Director
Donna Murphy, COA Chair
Joel Bargmann, BH+A
Melissa Gagnon, NV5