

From: Julia Malakie <malakievvara3@gmail.com>

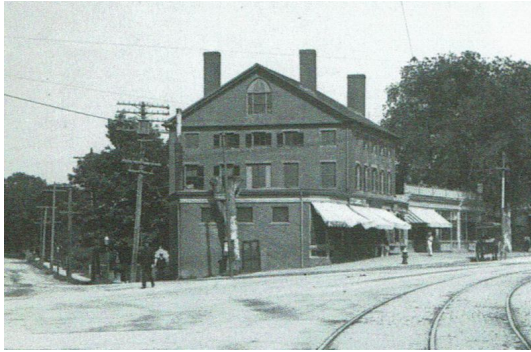
To: Julia <malakiephoto@aim.com>

Subject: Landmarking, Ascend marijuana, Armory reuse, traffic & public safety, 40B & NewCAL

Date: Mon, Feb 3, 2020 6:20 am

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## Does City Council believe in preserving any historic buildings?



There's a lot to catch up on about historic preservation, and the proposed suspension of any landmarking reviews (scheduled to be voted on at tonight's (Monday, February 3) City Council meeting). The Globe's John Hilliard wrote about the issue [here](#), where you can comment on the story online. (Or read the PDF [here](#).)

As noted in the Globe article, the Newton Historical Commission at its January 23 meeting, scheduled the two buildings that are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places -- the Davis Tavern, above, and the Carley Realty building (which will likely be torn down any day), for February 27 public hearings on whether they should be landmarked. They voted to have the Robinson Block, the Bank of America building, and the Brezniak-Rodman Funeral Home -- contributing buildings to the West Newton Village Center Historic District (on the National Register) -- studied further before deciding whether to send them to public hearing. And they ruled out two buildings (the former gas station and Baby Koo) for further study.

Last Monday, January 27, the Zoning & Planning Committee held a hastily-scheduled public hearing that appeared orchestrated with opponents of landmarking, then voted 5-2 (Baker and Wright opposed) to suspend all landmarking nominations and reviews through a new date of June 30. While presented as giving a working group (that has only met once since last summer) time to update the demolition delay and landmarking ordinance, the moratorium is likely to remove any urgency to update the ordinance. That's

because the pressure will be on, and if the speaking doesn't get done, the same councilors will likely vote to extend the moratorium.

Much of the opposition to even the idea of landmarking seems to be based on misinformation. It's not easy (it takes a 3/4 majority vote of the Historical Commission), it's not done without the property owner's knowledge, a public hearing is required, and it doesn't prevent any changes to a building -- it requires that future changes be approved by the NHC.

One attorney said landmarking would make it harder to find tenants. I have argued the opposite: what could be more discouraging to a potential tenant than the uncertainty of not knowing whether they'd be kicked out, or their lease not renewed, so their building could be demolished? As we saw so many small businesses ousted from the Orr Block in Newtonville. And as the Shepherd & Maudsley Studio artists space at 27 Dunstan Street ([featured last summer in the Newton Tab](#)) will face. Their non-historic building was recommended not preferably preserved at the December 2019 NHC meeting.

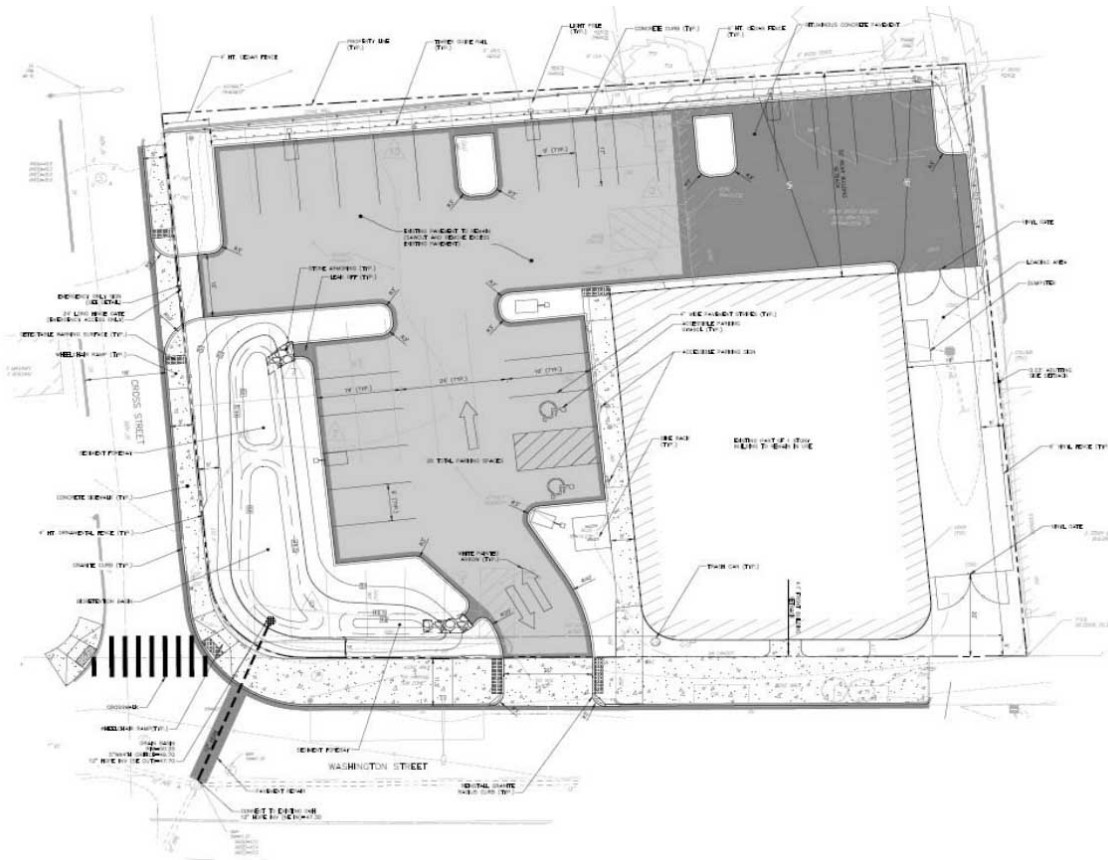
## What about other village centers?



Most of Newton's village centers have at least one office block from the late 1800s or early 1900s that feels like a landmark of its village. Some may be more architecturally interesting than others, but they all provide a sense of history and continuity, as well as the type of spaces that smaller local business can afford. When is the right time to try to preserve such buildings? Now, before they are threatened with demolition for something more profitable to a developer? Wait until an owner applies for a demolition permit? Or never -- just let them be replaced?

If you believe, as I do, that keeping our most iconic and historic buildings is not incompatible with new development, but will rather make the end result more interesting, and keep our village centers from becoming expensive clones of new development everywhere, please tell the City Council and mayor to let the Historical Commission carry on doing their job.

## Public hearing Tuesday, Feb. 4 on Ascend retail marijuana special permit



The Land Use Committee holds a public hearing tomorrow night, 7pm in the Council Chamber, on Ascend Mass' proposed adult use marijuana dispensary at 58 Cross St/1089 Washington Street. It will be the 4th item on the [agenda](#) (and followed by another marijuana dispensary, Union Twist at 1158 Beacon St). The Planning Department memo is [here](#). As revised since December, the plan now is for emergency vehicle only use of a gated exit/entrance on Cross Street. Ascend has agreed to eliminate any gaps between gate and fencing that customers could walk through, and take other measures to discourage customer parking on Cross Street. Delivery and pickup vehicles will enter and exit through locked gates on the east side of the

sanding, and not back out the Washington Street Access has not agreed to provide a customer restroom, preferring to have customers in and out faster. They plan to comply with a new state law requiring businesses to provide restroom access to people with doctor-certified medical conditions (like Crohn's Disease), by escorting the customer to the employee restroom.

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## **Also Tuesday, Feb. 4: West Newton Armory JAPG reviews housing grant and brainstorms alternatives**

The Real Property Reuse Committee's initial public hearing on the Armory was held on January 23. (I missed it because it coincided, and was shorter than, the Newton Historical Commission's discussion of landmarking, but [audio is now available on the RPR webpage.](#)) Next up: the Armory Joint Advisory Planning Group (JAPG) meeting tomorrow (agenda [here](#)) will discuss the \$200,000 Housing Choice Grant to study the feasibility of using the Armory for 100% affordable housing, issuing an RFP (request for proposals) on Feb. 5 for a consultant to do the study with a target completion in three months, and brainstorm other possible uses.

The city can buy the Armory for \$1 if it's used for 100% affordable housing, or for about 25% of fair market value if used for another municipal purpose. From discussion of the grant last week at Finance Committee, it's unclear how the city will get comparable estimates of the cost of renovation for other uses in the same timeframe (assuming the RFP requires a cost estimate as part of feasibility of housing). This could make a fair comparison of uses difficult, and leave little time to figure out the cost of an alternate use within a six month state deadline for deciding, if the cost of renovating for housing is not feasible.

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## **Public comment session on traffic & other public safety issues - Wednesday, Feb. 19**



Watertown & Eddy Streets. (Photo courtesy of Brooks Mathewson)

Pedestrian safety, speeding, distracted driving -- all continue to be concerns, brought home by recent injuries (and death of a dog) in collisions in school zones. We are awaiting the 2020 Traffic Calming Prioritization report (based on evaluations done in 2019), which should be published later this month. This will indicate what locations will be at the top of the list for a portion of the \$150,000 currently budgeted annually for traffic calming measures (an amount that I think needs to increase). This was [last year's list](#).

Some good news: we have a just-filed docket item to accept a \$43K grant to be used for overtime traffic enforcement:

#115-20 Authorization to expend a \$43,943 Office of Public Safety and Security Grant HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to accept and expend a forty-three thousand nine hundred and forty-three dollar (\$43,943) grant from the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security for the purpose of funding overtime to have Police Officers monitor high accident locations and conduct traffic enforcement through written warnings and/or citations.

Coming up, on Wednesday, February 19, 7pm, the Public Safety & Transportation Committee will hold a public comment session on any related issues including but not limited to traffic safety, traffic enforcement, bike lanes, bike share (do you miss Lime bikes?), NewMo, 911. We expect this to be in the Council Chamber, with two minutes per speaker, so bring your concerns and questions.

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## Dunstan East 40B hearing has opened; next session March 17

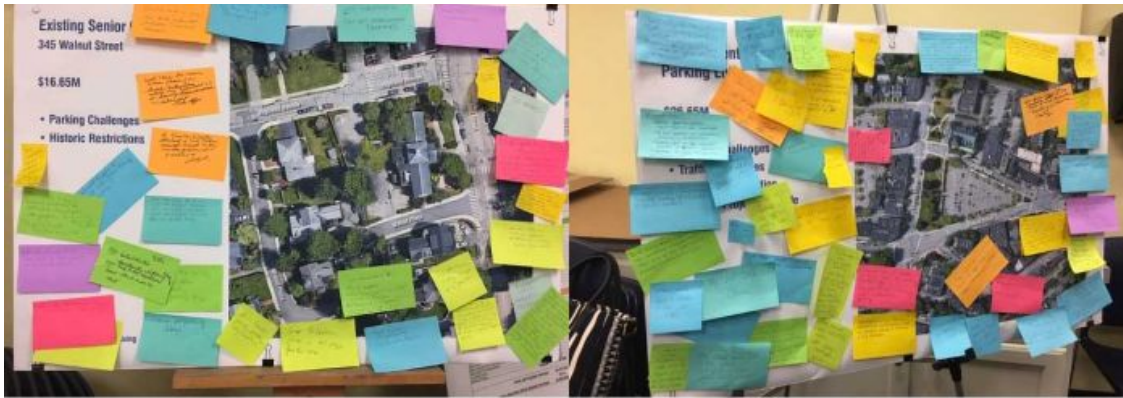


Kempton Place elevation (from Jan. 22 Mark Development presentation to ZBA). Right side is where The Barn shoe store currently is. Length of corridors was one concern raised by ZBA chair Brooke Lipsitt.

If you missed the opening of the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) hearing on this Comprehensive Permit (40B) application on January 22, (which I did, due to another competing meeting), you can catch up by listening to the audio (Audio 2) on [this ZBA webpage](#), and following along on the [presentation](#), which is available on the High Interest Projects [Dunstan East page](#). The Planning Department will update this page with further documents as the hearing progresses. Note that the pretty pictures labelled "character images" I believe are ideas for what different areas could look like, not literal plans. **The last 16 minutes of audio are ZBA members' initial questions.**

Hearings on a 40B, especially one this large (244 housing units), typically run over a period of several months. The hearing resumes March 17, to give the ZBA time to get some peer review studies done, and the petitioner time to respond to questions raised. There will be more opportunities for public comment.

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## NewCAL site comparisons & comments; next Community Meeting Thursday, Feb. 27 at Senior Center

The [NewCAL project home page](#) now has the [comparisons](#) of seven sites now being actively considered (current Senior Center, Newton Centre Triangle, former Aquinas, Ed Center, West Newton Armory, Police HQ and YMCA), including rough cost estimates and timetable. There are also [photos of all the comments](#) from the January 16 Community Meeting. The NewCAL Working Group meeting minutes now appear to be up to date on [this page](#) and provide insight into why other sites have been ruled out. The next Community Meeting will be 7pm on Thursday, February 27, this time at the Senior Center.

You are welcome to forward this email to friends and neighbors who may be interested!

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