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Subject: West Newton landmarking nominations; Armory public hearing; NewCAL update

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Tonight, Jan. 23, 7pm, Rm 205: Newton Historical Commission takes first look at West Newton village center landmarking nominations



If you were on this newsletter mailing list last year, or watched the Ward 3 Councilor debates, you may recall that a big concern of mine is preservation of iconic historic buildings like the Davis Tavern, and Brezniak-Rodman Funeral Home in West Newton Square. On January 2, I wrote to the Newton Historical Commission (NHC) requesting they consider seven buildings for landmarking, including the former Carley Realty building (1173 Washington Street) pictured above, which is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and six of the buildings contributing to the West Newton Village Center Historic District:

Because of impending and increasing development pressure on West Newton's village center and vicinity, I feel it is a matter of some urgency, now that I am able, as a city councilor, to nominate the following buildings for Local Landmark status. I hope they may be expeditiously reviewed and scheduled for public hearings and votes. As you are probably aware, all are included in the West Newton Village Center Historic District, and/or individually listed on the National Register, and therefore automatically eligible for designation.

-- 1265-1269 Washington St (Davis Hotel, c1831, also individually listed on National Register)

-- 989-1003 Watertown St (Robinson Block, c1875)

--1253 (formerly 1251) Washington St (Brezniak-Rodman Funeral Home, c1861, oldest continuously operating business in West Newton, currently on demolition delay expiring November 2020)

-- 1239-1247 Washington St (cast stone faced one-story block, c1925, currently on demolition delay expiring November 2020)

-- 1235 Washington St (Colonial Revival former gas station, c1930, currently on demolition delay expiring November 2020)

-- 1173 Washington St (former Carley Realtors, 1928, individually listed on National Register. Would be demolished as part of Dunstan East 40B project whose ZBA public hearing begins on January 22)

-- 1 Chestnut St (Bank of America, c1932)

Other buildings included in the West Newton Village Historic District merit Local Landmark status, including 25 Chestnut St (former branch library), Police HQ and Courthouse, and 1326 Washington St (First Unitarian Society of Newton, individually listed in National Register), as well as the Armory outside the district, and I would be happy to nominate them. However, because of their current ownership and use, I don't believe they are at risk to be lost at this time, so I believe those buildings most under threat should take precedence in the review process.

In particular, I hope you will expedite review of 1173 Washington St. Aside from historical significance as the 50-year office of Doris Carley, one of Newton's first female real estate brokers, it is really an architectural gem whose preservation would enhance the streetscape of the proposed Dunstan East 40B development, by providing authentic architectural variety and allowing preservation of two mature trees adjacent to the building. A precedent is the preservation of the tile-roofed former gas station at 352 Boylston Street, now a fitness center for that condo development, with a pocket park/shaded public seating area facing Rt 9.

The city will have very limited control over the proposed 40B development (essentially limited to environmental and safety concerns), but arguments to preserve 1173 Washington will have more weight if we are willing to give it our highest level of protection.

Washington Street Vision Plan is minimal, and the language is weak, and essentially an invitation to developers to use historic buildings as bargaining chips/hostages to achieve larger projects. Without more than lip service in support of preservation, we could lose some of our most iconic buildings in West Newton and other village centers as well. Please let me know if there is anything else I can do to help avert that outcome.

Tonight the NHC will discuss which of these nominations they will consider further, in a two- or three-meeting process, including a public hearing, described [here](#). Landmarking a building requires a 3/4 vote of the NHC, and is a higher level of protection than demolition delays, which expire.

Tonight's meeting is not a public hearing, but if you care about saving Newton's historic buildings, please consider attending to show your support, as the NHC will be under great pressure from developers and other opponents of landmarking. (Police details have been needed in the past.)

To avoid making this section too long, I'll add other building photos at the end of this email. But please read about [Seth Davis](#) and [Doris Carley](#), the notable Newtonians associated with two of the buildings.

Renewed attempt by 11 councilors to suspend landmarking

In addition, a modified version of last July's docket item to suspend any landmarking nominations or consideration for 18 months has been docketed, and there will be a [public hearing on this at Zoning & Planning's January 27 meeting](#). This was so rushed that the required newspaper advertisements were taken out even before the City Council had voted on holding a public hearing. Like the earlier version, the 12-month moratorium on landmarking consideration would allow the clock to run out on demolition delays (which expire in November) for three of the properties in the West Newton Village Center Historic District.

**Competing for your attention: public hearing
on reuse of West Newton Armory, tonight,
Jan. 23, 7pm, City Hall 2nd floor**



This is your opportunity to weigh in on what you would like to see happen to the former National Guard Armory, surplus to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The Real Property Reuse Committee agenda is [here](#). Which meeting is in the Council Chamber may depend on which has the biggest crowd. (I will be first at NHC, and then at this public hearing.)

New approach to NewCAL: your input wanted on second look at seven locations (including current Senior Center)



Last Thursday, January 16 was the first Community Meeting about NewCAL since the reboot on site selection. As you may have heard, parks are now off the table, and off the stove. Six city-owned sites -- Newton Centre Triangle parking lot, the existing Senior Center, former Aquinas Junior College, West Newton Armory, the Ed Center, and Police HQ, plus the YMCA, are getting serious second looks, and cost estimates with assumptions have been developed.

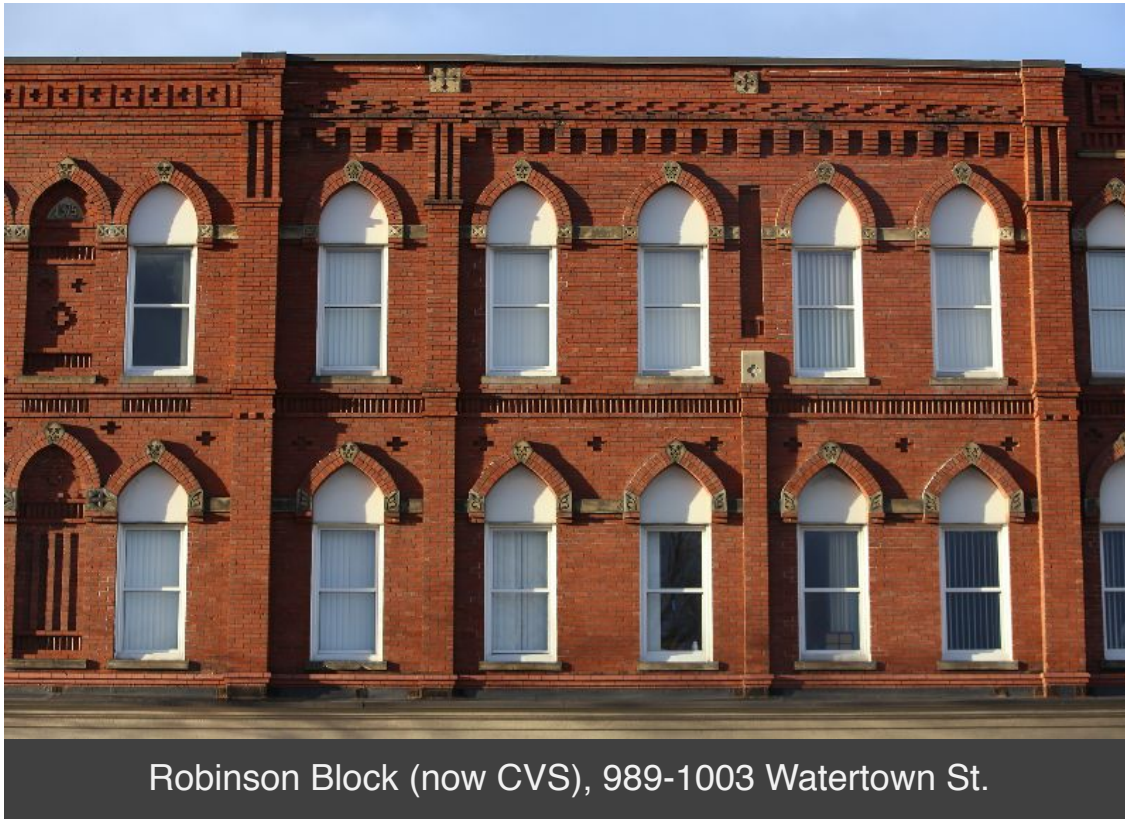
There was a presentation of about a half hour which I missed due to coming from work, then people broke up to walk around the room and comment with stickies and ask questions of NewCAL Working Group representatives at each of the seven site boards. Due to a great turnout, they ran out of oversized spreadsheets which are too big for my scanner; I will get a PDF for my next email update. I did not even get to each station, but here are a few quick, random and by no means comprehensive things learned:

- enlarging the current Senior Center by going back and up from the current building is the fastest and least expensive option, at 4-5 years and \$16.65 million
- Police HQ and the Ed Center are the slowest and most expensive, due to cost escalation over time, and the need to relocate current uses. However, I learned that the estimated \$75-103M cost of the Police HQ option includes \$40M for building a new HQ somewhere else, and \$10-20M for acquiring that land. But if NewCAL doesn't go there, I was told Police HQ will stay where it is, and be renovated (eventually) also at a \$40M cost. So it seems unfair to attribute that \$40M to this NewCAL alternative.
- the YMCA alternative (6-8 years, \$32-46M) assumes building where the track is, putting a new track on top of the building, and building a parking garage to satisfy NewCAL parking needs and the Y's desire for more parking.

There was talk of having the display/comment boards up at the Senior Center for up to a week, but the schedule was unclear. All comments were to be compiled and published but are not yet on the [NewCAL website](#).

The other West Newton village center landmark

Nominations





Cate/Brezniak-Rodman Funeral Home, 1253 Washington St



1239-1247 Washington St (currently Baby Koo)





1235 Washington St (c 1926 gas station)



Bank of America, 1 Chestnut St

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