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Subject: Washington Street Draft 2 comment deadline March 12, & more!

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Tuesday March 12 (or maybe 13) deadline for comments on Draft 2 of Washington Street Vision Plan and Zoning Code



New Zoning: By Special Permit
 Village Gateway zoning runs behind the Unitarian Church, Cinema block, Rockport office block. Extends into Blue Ribbon BBQ block, all of Border Street, and Dunstan to Armory Streets east of village center.

The Unitarian Church in West Newton village center is shown for height reference. Half of the property is zoned 'Village Center'.

This coming week reminds me of the saying at MIT: "getting an education at MIT is like getting a drink from a fire hose." You could actually say that about all of last year and this year, when it comes to zoning and development issues.

The most pressing item is the expiration of the online comment period on Draft 2 of the Washington Street Vision and Zoning Plan (two separate documents). It was midnight on March 12, but now appears to be March 13 . (Which midnight is unclear.)

The newly-formed Unite! West Newton neighborhood group, of which I'm a part, has prepared [this handout](#) (from which the photo comparison above is excerpted), explaining the concerns and questions we have about Draft 2.

Please forward this email, or the handout, to your own Newton contacts who may not otherwise be aware of the impending rezoning of Washington Street.

We also know, from the thank you notes we got after leafleting our neighborhoods about the recent West Newton Planning update at the Franklin School, that many people would not have been aware of the impending changes if they had not received a paper copy. If you'd like to help raise awareness in your own neighborhood, we've also created an easier-to-print [two-page version](#).

You may think, 'I commented before, why do I have to do it again?' Well, if you take a look at the preferred (by the Principle Group) options for Washington Street, they don't look much like what most people were asking for on the first go-round. They look like what Robert Korff would like to build. So we must all comment again, lest silence be taken as consent. (Whatever happened to 'No, unless you say Yes'?)

It's rather awkward to comment on the documents on the [Planning Dept page](#) because the text is really small, or if you zoom in, you have to scroll every which way to read the whole page. It's somewhat easier on the Principle website link (included in our handout) <http://principle.civiccomment.org> because the window is bigger. Unlike Draft 1, with multiple scenarios at each location, Draft 2 is down to one 'preferred option' at each location.

Despite a slow start, there were a lot of comments on Draft One which make interesting reading. To their credit, Principle and the Planning Department created a spreadsheet of all the comments, but the spreadsheet may be difficult to view or print for those without Excel, so [I've converted it to a PDF](#) via Google Sheets.

What else is happening this week?

Monday, March 11

[Zoning & Planning Committee agenda](#) includes a continuation of their review of draft Zoning Ordinance (for entire city); tonight the focus is on the transfer of authority for approval of most special permits, from the City Council to the appointed Planning & Development Board (Planning Memo [here](#)), and changes to the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance aimed at increasing the number of subsidized affordable units without "chilling" development (Planning Memo [here](#)).

Tuesday, March 12

Land Use Committee continues review of Northland proposal that includes 822 residential units on Needham Street (agenda [here](#)). This is a public

hearing/working session that was postponed from February due to snow. The resident group [Rightsize Newton](#) urges anyone concerned about the scale of this development to attend.

Thursday, March 14

Public meeting on Riverside proposal that includes 675 residential units (Planning Department notice [here](#) and concept plans [here](#)). While not a formal public hearing, it appears that public comments will be allowed. See the Lower Falls Improvement Association's [fact sheet](#) and [flier](#).



Livestream video of recent Zoning meetings

If you weren't able to attend any of the recent series of meetings about Zoning Redesign, and are curious about your fellow residents' reactions, you can see videos of Wards 1, 2, and 3, as well as a special meeting about West Newton (Zoning Redesign, Washington Street, and WN Square Enhancements and traffic reconfiguration) on my YouTube page. I livestreamed these meetings in an effort to make them more accessible. (Pardon the inadvertent special effects at the beginning of the West Newton meeting.) In reverse chronological order:



Ward 2 zoning roadshow (Feb 28)



West Newton Planning update (Feb 27)



Ward 1 zoning roadshow (Feb 7)



Ward 3 zoning roadshow (Jan 24)

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