

DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

Our proposal for the redevelopment of the Austin Street Mixed-Use development is based on the following fundamental principles: 1) the proposal should aspire to complement and unify the existing village strengths; 2) the proposal should increase the effectiveness of satisfying each resident, merchant, commuter, customer and stakeholder's "service need;" 3) the proposal should integrate into the existing scale of the village; 4) the proposal should be mindful that strengthening the village concept but ensuring that the business operations of the district can flow well (including during construction) is central. If successful, the synergy of scale, new uses and energized public spaces will in fact "create the spark."

Our development includes all of the desired attributes as listed. Foremost, we create the blueprint for a more vital village center, creating and in many cases reinforcing the interconnections within the district and creating enhances opportunities in the civic realm.

Adjacent parcels to be integrated (functionally only): Our development is fully contained on the City-owned land parcel; however, we are working with the Grossman Companies, the owners of the building located at 10-20 Austin Street as well as the abutting Swedenborgian church property, the Church of the Open Word, both who are interested in exploring synergies with the operations of their buildings as well as assisting with the development of the retail concept related to the commercial space as proposed.

Physical Summary: The site is approximately 74,000 SF and our development (building and parking) covers approximately 39,000 SF. Bram Way supports vehicular access and so, excluding that area as well (approximately 8000 SF), the remaining **36%** of the site (27,000 SF) is dedicated open space as walkway and/or green spaces. The maximum height of the fourth story section of the building is 58 feet while the height at the 5th story section is 69 feet. The gross floor area is approximately 116,000 SF excluding garage (and is approximately 184,000 SF including garage).

Program Summary: Our development includes approximately 6750 SF of commercial space on the first level, and 79 residential units on 5 floors (total gross residential area of approximately 107,000 SF). In terms of parking, there are 191 new parking spaces being created on the Austin Street property and 6 additional on sites spaces being created on Austin Street. New open space at street level include an area which can be used as a public gathering place along Austin Street as well as green walkway/courtyard area to access the public access garage level. We introduce an area which can be used as an outdoor public plaza and gathering space as well as a green walkway to access the public access parking area. This walkway begins at Bram Way with a courtyard connection with the adjacent church property and runs along the full boundary to the end of the parking area.

The type of commercial uses being proposed along the Austin Street will promote an active street scape along Austin Street. In scoping the opportunities for new commercial demand in the

district, the following observations were made by our retail marketing consultant in her initial assessment of the task ahead,*”The biggest change in the market is the demand for smaller retail with 1000 – 2000 sf spaces the norm. Larger spaces 2000- 3500sf, are mostly being leased to full service restaurants, following the trend of eating out/take out by busy families. Experience dining is the new adventure with chef driven menus in a more casual atmosphere, both family as well as nonfamily friendly. Taking the proposed project’s planned 6000 sf and offering this type of restaurant with outdoor seating as well as a couple of small format retail spaces would be the ideal configuration. Uses could include a needed service for new residences, unique boutiques offering sports apparel, pet needs/wants, fashion apparel or any other concepts that fit this demographic. With the smaller sizes there will be a wide ranging selection of retailers that want to be on Austin St. The foot traffic is already in place with the current Starbucks, yogurt shop, dry cleaner and of course, Shaw’s right across the street.”*

Residential Unit Summary and Configuration: All of the residential units will be for-sale condominium units. All will be serviced by 2 elevators and all will be “visitable.” Almost half of the units will have an outdoor balcony, and all will have access to storage lockers located in common areas.

Of the 79 units, 20 will be affordable units, affordable to low and moderate-income residents. The sales prices for these units will be permanently restricted (via deed riders), and the will be eligible for the state’s Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) stock, as they are priced such that they are affordable to households earning an income, adjusted by household size of no greater than 80% of area median.¹ In addition, we will be creating 4 units of housing affordable to middle income residents which also will be permanently deed restricted, in terms of future sales price. These units will be priced such that they are affordable to households earning an income of no greater than 120% of area median.²

			BR Size				
Bdrm. Config.			1	1+	2	2+	
Avg size			Total	786	973	1161	1765
Units	Market Rate	55	13	14	22	6	
	Affordable 120%	4	1	2	1	0	
	Affordable 80%	20	12	1	7	0	
	TOTAL	79	26	17	30	6	

Parking: There are 191 new parking spaces being created, on two parking trays, plus an additional 6 on-street spaces being created. The parking trays operate independently of each other (i.e., there is no internal ramping). The lower parking tray which is serviced off of a new entrance on Austin Street includes 99 spaces and will largely be for private use. The upper parking tray which is open air includes 92 parking spaces and will function like a surface parking

¹ The sales price of the affordable for sale units in all cases (both 80% and 120%) are affordable to an eligible household having an income 10 percentage points lower than the maximum eligible income.

² Currently, the 2013 maximum income established by HUD for a 80% of area median household is \$47,150 (for a one person household) and \$53,900 (for a two person household), respectively. The maximum income for a 120% of area median household is \$79,300 (for a one person household) and \$90,600 (for a two person household), respectively.

lot will be accessed off of a new entry off of Highland Avenue. The intent is that eighty five (85) of these spaces will be available for public use, secured with a deed rider running with the land.³

We will also be creating opportunities for residents to explore other means of transportation. We are exploring the opportunity to introduce carsharing and have confirmed interest from ZipCar to the site (confirmation included as Section E.20, referenced). We have made ample provision for convenient bike storage (both indoor and outdoor) on site.

We understand that one of the amenities that the business district now enjoys is ample parking, which enables the kind of convenience shopping that occurs currently. Our intent, as reflected in the design of the parking (having it “feel” like a surface parking lot, with a high level of visibility and accessibility including ample signage, and also using a green space pedestrian walkway entrance to enhance the experience of entering the lot). In creating the final parking number and configuration, both to ensure that the publicly accessed parking adequately services the district as well as to secure the City’s financial and civic goals, we are open to working with the City to achieve its multifaceted goals.

Also with an optimal parking management program in place, parking in the upper tray could be made available for overnight or weekend uses that do not compromise its attractiveness for public use during peak retail hours. Included is a very preliminary scoping approach relating to vehicle access and revenue control systems suggested by Pilgrim Parking, a parking management firm that we propose to use in planning for the lower parking level as well as the upper parking level which will provide public parking to area patrons, employees, visitors and residents (see Section e.19) .

Concept and Integration of Surrounding Nonresidential Uses:

In keeping with the village concept, the proposed massing is conceived as a collection of smaller, abutting buildings of varying roof heights and architectural vocabularies to maintain that sense of scale and architectural diversity which contribute to Newtonville’s charm and visual interest. Along Austin Street this takes the familiar form of multistory residential over first floor commercial storefront, maintaining a strong street-wall along the westerly two thirds of the block, but set back at the corner of Austin Street and Bram Way to create a new public plaza.

When viewed from the Washington and Walnut Street intersection, the six story massing of the proposed building can be seen as a bookend to the commercial neighborhood of Newtonville, opposite the five+ story volume of the Masonic Temple and the spire of the converted church at 288 Newtonville Avenue.

To the south, the building massing steps progressively down towards Highland Avenue, partially covering, but not enclosing, an at-grade, open public parking lot. When viewed from Bram Way, the proposed public lot is in the same location as the existing public parking lot, with the proposed building massing supported by columns where it extends over the public parking.

³ However as a few of the parking spaces on the upper tray are tandem spaces, with the exception of perhaps being of interest to area businesses as employee parking, it is likely that spaces (approximately 5) on the lower level and immediately adjacent to the entrance would be (swapped) and made available to the public. Further study is needed to ensure the optimal approach.

The public plaza, shaped by the building setback from both Austin Street and Bram Way maximizes the amount of natural light falling onto and through the public plaza onto Austin Street as well as extending, organizing and improving the pedestrian existing pedestrian connections from Walnut and Highland Avenue. The plaza itself is lined with commercial storefront, including the existing cafe at the easterly corner of Austin Street and Bram Way. With the potential of additional fair weather restaurant uses spilling out onto the public plaza, as well as active retail storefront, the plaza will become a place of ongoing activity as well as a venue for public events.

In addition to the new program on the site, we see opportunities working with its commercial abutters and the adjacent church initially, to create social settings that benefit those uses as well as the district overall. Orienting pedestrian walkways to a well-designed, sunny-side-of-the street area which creates an edge which perhaps could feature some outdoor seating for Starbucks at one end and a manicured green space which flows into a pocket courtyard for the church at the other.

Physical Design Description: The development will include a single building, however, it is designed in a manner that suggests that there are multiple side-by-side separate buildings (possibly three) along Austin Street. Pedestrians will enter the commercial spaces through three individual retail doorways along Austin Street, or to the residential lobby with entry door access along Austin Street. By locating the main lobby entrance to the residential building farther along Austin Street (toward the Shaw's market), the goal was draw pedestrians down along the Austin Street streetscape as well.

The plan includes an open space at the intersection of Bram Way and Austin Street that allows for service vehicles and automobiles full access to and from Bram Way from Austin Street, but also organizes the space so that outdoor commercial can spill into the public plaza. The plaza exists as a raised platform with a consistent masonry treatment across the existing Bram Way, but a fully functional vehicular drive lane is created via the use of concrete bollards in lieu of a street curb. The northernmost part of Bram Way, which now serves as a service alley will be enhanced such that it serves as a driveway into the publicly accessed parking lot as well as an access drive to the adjacent Walnut Avenue businesses.

Pedestrians will enter the public parking area through a designated walkway area accessible (and highly visible) from Highland Avenue, Bram Way and the public plaza. Parking will be contained in two parking trays, one at grade approximately, which will be predominantly for public use and which will be accessed from Austin Street or Highland Avenue via Philip Bram Way. The other tray will be below grade, which will be predominantly for private use, and accessed from Austin Street. Service trucks for the new building will access through the Austin Street entrance (service doors next to the garage entrance). Bram Way will continue to provide service access to the Walnut Street businesses.

Sustainability and Energy Conservation: By design, the development is based on the principle of conserving resources. It utilizes existing water and sewer infrastructure. Materials for the exterior of the building will be selected for durability, do not utilize wood products, and require

less care and repainting. Native landscape plants that are drought resistant will be used in landscaping. The design team will employ energy modeling of the building to confirm compliance with the stretch code. Energy modeling takes into accounts certain characteristics of the building which include but are not limited to; the building's exterior wall assemblies, HVAC system efficiencies, and energy efficient lighting and appliances. In terms of specific goals the following would be relevant: Exterior Assemblies R-Values [to meet or exceed]– Exterior Walls – R-21; Under Slabs – R-10, Roofs – R-38, and :Window Criteria [to meet or exceed] – U-Factor 0.30, Solar Heat Gain Coefficient – 0.30, Performance Class and Grade of window: HR50.

Management of Public and Private Garage Spaces: We are proposing contracting with a Parking Management company in the planning and implementation of the parking program. It has been in discussions with Pilgrim Parking, one of the largest parking companies in New England, regarding some of its preliminary ideas regarding control measures and shared parking strategies for consideration. Both the publicly accessed parking as well as the private parking will be managed by the same parking management company which will develop appropriate management policies for each.

In terms of long term ownership, we will retain ownership the publicly accessed parking lot and will enter into a long term operating agreement with a to-be-formed condominium association regarding the management of the private garage (private parking spaces are proposed to be deeded with residential units) with this full service parking operator.

Other matters of Interest to the City: Our development is designed to serve as a catalyst to realize the larger vision of the revitalization of one of Newton's most heterogeneous and eclectic of its villages. The location of the Austin Street site plays a pivotal role in transitioning the commercial Walnut Street zone into the residential neighborhood. If programmed to focus inward, the development could function as a barrier between the two. Instead, the site plan has been designed to take advantage of existing pedestrian pathways and to expand where possible these connections. Landscaped and hardscaped walkways are programmed along three sides of the development in an effort to encourage this pedestrian flow.

We have identified a transportation planning professional who will take the lead working with the it, the local merchant community and the City in all aspects of transportation demand management. Finally, managing the parking needs of the district during project construction will be a major task. We take a hands-on approach of working directly with neighbors through a committee to problem solve and ensure that impacts are minimized through the development process. We would suggest forming a committee which includes area businesses to facilitate communication and to address all aspects of planning and construction at the site. Within this process, we will work closely with the area merchants and property owners to explore temporary parking resources in the immediate area to serve the needs of the district during the projected 18 month construction period.