

**Free-Response Comments**  
**from the RSNC Riverside Station Development Survey**  
**March 13, 2012**

It is an improvement, but it is dismaying that the developers have not studied the expected traffic impacts on Quinobequin Road between Route 16 and Route 9. Furthermore, there is no evidence that any official, at any level, is looking at the combined impact of the Riverside Project and the anticipated restructuring of the Route 9/Route 128 interchange.

too big; infrastructure concerns and schools are already overcrowded

Can't say I'm familiar with all the latest details, but I do have an overwhelming concern about increased traffic and congestion on Grove Street. Also, with all the new housing, retail buildings and potential restaurants, office space, etc. where are all those (new) vehicles going to find parking??

So much better than all the earlier ones. Not sure how far we can push additional changes. What do you think?\_

Under no circumstances would I welcome a big-box store, major retail center, or anything else that creates significant traffic, garbage, noxious fumes, or toxic by-products (regardless of whether they are properly disposed of). I do not want a new mall or shopping center built in my neighborhood.

Most of your retail options I'm strongly opposed to, but the addition of independent, community-minded small shops, bistros, urban food centers (e.g.: small food markets) would be OK—essentially, "green" businesses with a small footprint.

Two smaller buildings (4 stories) are far more desirable than a 9-story high-rise, which dwarfs everything short of the N-W Hospital.

I think that the biggest concern revolves around traffic and that direct access from I-95 is key to mitigating this issue. The second most important thing is to create something positive with this project that the neighborhood will enjoy being next to. This might be accomplished by creating recreational paths to the development and enhancing access to Charles River behind the development. Selecting more prestigious commercial endeavors may also help — nice restaurants and shops.

Overall the developers have made good strides and have been very accommodating. The project numbers have to work for them of course, but also no one doubts, the neighborhood and City. I actually look forward to this project advancing and have no stake whatsoever in the project.

It's getting there but still seems like it will add an awful lot of traffic. That is really my only concern\_\_

For our work with the developer it is all about traffic; direct access to and from 95/128, real support for public transportation.

It is up to the city to plan for the schools and to fund them adequately

Still too big

Still needs direct access 128, not enough open space, not adequate river access, if no direct access then still too big, no three bedrooms, handicap access to Charles River

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The project is still way too big, I am very concerned about traffic on Grove Street and the impact on Williams School

Too much traffic on Rt. 16 & Quinobequin

The reduction in size is good. I still don't see how the traffic issues will be dealt with so there are not too many entrances/exits. I like the idea of improved river access very much, wish we could have a walking path like the Newton/Waltham/Watertown river paths. It makes sense to have residential and commercial development at a transit center. There should be provisions for electric car charging for both residents and commuters. A gated community feel/reality should be resisted.

Overall density and office building height needs to be further reduced. Most importantly, the project should not be permitted unless a combination of:

- (1) reduction in project size (scale and massing); and
- (2) direct ingress/egress to Rt. 128 to the site, the Indigo and Riverside Center

are sufficient to achieve no degradation in the level of service on Grove Street ***without the need to widen any portion of Grove Street to four lanes and without the need for roundabouts.***

In addition, the height of the buildings on the site must be reduced to be consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhoods and Riverside Center.

The City must resist a zoning change which would permit a development of a scale which necessitates such dramatic changes in the character of Grove Street. For most Lower Falls residents, these changes will transform everyday errands, such as a trip to Star Market, into a project requiring the negotiation of a left turn across multiple lanes of heavy traffic (for example exiting DeForest) and/or navigating two roundabouts just to get as far as the entrance to the Indigo. For the residents of the condominiums across from the Indigo, the roadway changes and increased traffic will have an even more serious impact –making it impossible for them to exit their parking lot in either direction without significant hazard. The City should not be cowed by threats of a c.40B project – a common scare tactic rarely implemented.

I'm opposed to any development of the site, I think that the proposal is too large and will have a dramatic effect on the quality of life in LF at every level

project is still too large and doesn't do enough to address traffic concerns for Lower Falls

Still too big for this community. City may want more taxes but at what cost. The rest of the city has to realize Lower Falls and Auburndale are villages. Not just an access way to the highways. The city will lose revenue if values of residences change due to the traffic issues and changes of the look and feel of the community. The infrastructure cannot handle such a large project. The roads already cannot handle the traffic flow. Sewer and gas lines are overloaded and leaking. The attempts to clean up the Charles are hampered already by untreated overflow of runoff and waste.

It is larger than we would like.

It does not address the sewage problem.

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Newton will not gain as much from the increased tax base as it will cost in additional services, police & school, etc., - See Philip Herr studies on this subject. Aldermen from other wards should be informed (lobbied) of this.

I continue to be extremely concerned about the effect on traffic, commuting to downtown, etc. We bought in this area because of ease of commuting access to downtown and good schools; this proposal will significantly affect the neighborhoods commuting access (along with the MBTA's plans to cancel express bus service to Riverside! And will create crowding at the schools, while significantly decreasing pedestrian safety in walking to Riverside station from Lower Falls.

I FEAR MOST FOR THE SEWER OVERFLOWS INTO LYONS FIELD AND THE WARE'S COVE AREA NEAR THE ISLINGTON PENINSULA. MAJOR TRAFFIC IN AUBURNDALE, AND IN THE GROVE STREET NEIGHBORHOOD, IS ALSO A DANGER.

I think this site is extremely development-friendly. The site is wedged between an off-ramp, hotel parking lot, the highway, a train repair depot, and a T-stop. This is clearly an area that the city and residents should support improving. Naturally, we need to balance the project against nearby residents and environmental concerns, and consider the impact on local schools. I do believe that this is an excellent opportunity to improve access to the river and nearby parkland, creating a unique asset for Lower Falls and Auburndale. Further, I think it is important to embrace potential new sources of tax revenue to support our community schools and services. I look forward to a well-reviewed plan and ultimately the completed project.

Still an order of magnitude too big not to be disruptive to the surrounding communities

Traffic analysis using linear extrapolation of existing vehicle trips on Grove St unrealistic  
\_\_\_\_\_ Unacceptable until *direct* North AND South-bound access to 128 is resolved

I am still very concerned about the traffic that would be generated by this proposal. The number of additional vehicle trips is overwhelming and I am so worried about the negative impact on the neighborhood. The City and developer have competing interests vis-a vis the neighborhoods and are just focused on the \$\$\$\$\$. They really don't care about our quality of life. I am also concerned about the dangers presented to pedestrians walking to and from Riverside.

**Thanks to all of you on the RSNC working hard on our behalf.**

We doubt that this plan/development will yield sufficient revenue for Newton to justify the cost of all the adjustments/betterments that it will require. Additional children will crowd Williams and Angier schools -- another expense for the taxpaying public.

It's not transit-oriented. We should have 4, 5 and 6 story buildings – village scaled businesses – maybe 1 big office building close to the highway – as long as there is direct access. The MBTA parking garage should incorporate retail as well as the office building. Rather have a massive reduction in the housing units – no more than 200 studio and one bedroom units. Need more restaurants and maybe a bowling alley.

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This plan does NOT provide strategies to address traffic down Quinobequin Rd. as well as Route 16 and Beacon St. through Waban and Route 9 at the end of QBO. It also does not address the issues of water and sewer flow and overflow for Quinobequin Rd. and all the streets that intersect. This area is already stressed and broken in many locations. Any additional stress could cause catastrophic results. Many residents along these routes are extremely

I am very concerned that the size of this development as currently proposed will have a hugely negative impact on our wonderful Lower Falls neighborhood. My primary worries are about traffic and decreasing home values. Traffic is already terrible on days of Red Sox games; I hate to imagine what it will look like with thousands of additional vehicle trips per day, despite the roundabouts. We chose to live in Lower Falls because it is a quiet, family-friendly neighborhood. Additional traffic could change that.

It is an improvement over others. My major concern is the safety when pedestrians cross the street from the condo and the hotel and when cars are leaving the condo and make a left turn. I think that since the retail and community space only have the parking garage this make that area unappealing to potential renters and users of the area.

I think it is still awful and does not address community needs. I think instead of being a draw for neighbors across Newton it will destroy the neighborhood character and make Lower Falls and Auburndale congested and ugly, and I think it will cause unimaginable costs that can't be measured now to the schools over time

The roundabouts do not make sense. Even with them, there will be traffic backups that will prevent residents entering and leaving Lower Falls for hours in morning and evening. We need to have a safe way to walk to Riverside from Lower Falls that includes safe ways to cross the entrance ramps to 95 24/7 (traffic lights and better street lighting.) Residents want easy and safe access to Auburndale from Lower Falls 24/7 without having to get stuck in traffic jams. We already have this problem on Red Sox home game days and during morning rush hour to a much smaller degree than will occur if more traffic is added, due to this proposed development, unless a way is found to bypass Grove St

PROJECT WILL LINE THE POCKETS OF A FEW AND DO LITTLE GOOD FOR THOSE WHO NOW LIVE HERE. A BETTER EXPLANATION OF THE WHOLE PROJECT SHOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC IN AUBURNDALLE. WHO ARE THE INVESTORS AND HOW MUCH MONEY DO THEY PLAN ON MAKING AT THE EXPENSE OF PROPERTY OWNERS IN THE AREA. THIS PROJECT TAKES A QUIET AREA AND TURNS IT INTO A CITY. IT IS TRASHING AUBURNDALE AT THE EXPENSE OF THE REST OF THE CITY. IT IS AS GOOD AS STEALING.

It is mandatory to do all items under Stormwater and Wastewater management.

I don't know how to really react until the thing is built. To me, the impact may be predictable but not conclusive until it is built. Personally we live far enough away from the hotel and Riverside that if we have to go another way to get from place to place, we will. I have other concerns that far outweigh the Riverside Development Project.

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It is still too big, I'm concerned about the impact on Williams, and very concerned about the traffic impact during rush hour, particularly afternoon.

Thank you for allowing community input! I would like to see more retail and community-oriented space and less residential. I am concerned about the strain on the already overcrowded school situation of added students. I think it is essential to have resident-friendly access via a bike path along the river and bike paths on the street from Auburndale Square (and bike racks available and conveniently located) so that nearby residents don't have to drive there. I am in favor of smart growth and don't want everything to be car-dependent. I do like that the parking is not facing Grove Street - that is a big plus. It should be pedestrian-friendly (and bike-friendly), not only designed for cars. In order for the community to benefit, there should be more amenities for residents rather than more residences and offices, though I'm not opposed to some office and residential space. But looking at the plan online (unfortunately I have not been able to make the public meetings thus far), it looks like very little of the development is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for existing residents.

\_\_\_I think that the current parking lot/MBTA station is ugly, and I would be in support of some sort of development. I just don't think that the developers have a realistic idea of what the increased traffic could do to access in and out of Lower Falls, especially now that Washington Street in Wellesley Lower Falls has become much more congested with the new construction there. I believe there is a real possibility that we could become "trapped" in the neighborhood without appropriate traffic mitigation measures - therefore, this would be my priority for the development. I would actually really like a restaurant and/or sundry store within easier walking distance.

It will be a problem and a negative for the families that live around it, no way to get around that. Anytime that "industry" is moved in or around a residential area it is a negative for the neighborhood. Folks picked this area to live because of the balance that existed when they moved in, not for the hope that there might someday be another "drive through" next door. I worry about increased traffic on roads that were never meant for it and that are already stressed. I worry about who will be coming into our neighborhood, for what reasons, in what numbers and for what purpose. I truly hope that these choices are real and not "carrots" of intention, designed to lull the neighborhood into a false sense of security, only to be pulled away after the construction actually starts due to "circumstances beyond our control".

I think there are too many empty office and apartment buildings along the 128 corridor and building another is a waste of space and money.

Roundabouts don't work, look at the Bourne Bridge area, traffic does not flow. No change in zone should be allowed, too much vacant office space.

Cars do not stop at stop signs

Project too big

Developer should assume all responsibility for any damages due to the project. Developer pay life time payments for deaths related to traffic injury on Grove St.

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The plan is great improvement in size. Developer should consider partnering with LaSelle to expand their campus to create truly commuter friendly academic campus or 55 plus housing community, emphasis on green/smart growth including access to recreation, Charles river, golf course, and dedicated space for community gardens and local food

Concern about noise, traffic, pollution at roundabouts impacted adjacent homes. Scale still too big. Will ruin quality of life in NLF.

I think the proposal is way too big, it is like adding another village to Newton at a huge cost to the existing neighborhoods. I understand and agree that the site needs to be developed. There is such an opportunity here to make this truly transit oriented. How it is currently configured insures more traffic, more congestion and not a way to decrease how much cars are used, to increase pedestrian and bike use, to facilitate greater use of transportation. I think the idea of trying to develop this to increase tax revenue without fully considering the costs to the city and the costs to the existing neighborhoods is really too bad. I understand that there is a fear (and probably a reality?) of 40B but really that doesn't make sense for the developers unless I am totally misinformed.

I applaud efforts to reduce the size of the project but believe any form of development on this site is irresponsible until effective sewers/systems/infrastructure—based on quantitative analysis-- is in place to eliminate sewage and groundwater from running directly into the Charles at Quinobequin at Ware Cove/Lyons Park where discharges are clearly evident. Current capacity and overload of these systems precludes further development. Newton must honor state and federal environmental mandates and look to protecting the environmental health of its residents, recreational resources, and river.

I am most concerned about the traffic congestion and think the office park should be no more than 5-6 stories tall rather than 9 or 10 as proposed, in this RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD and thereby contain far fewer parking spaces. Let us save this Auburndale from becoming just another congested suburban site.

It is lacking in imagination and will lead to development of a cultural desert. There are examples of mixed use zoning proposals out there that truly integrate the uses so that all regions of the site would be utilized 24 hours a day. I can imagine a site that would be like a very upscale village with retail distributed throughout at the lowest levels, business throughout at second and third levels, and upscale residential in the upper levels. This may strike us as strange, but it how people live in dense urban settings. Such development would be extremely desirable to a certain demographic (that could afford it), offer very desirable amenities to adjacent neighborhoods, not overburden schools, and not lead to such an increase in transportation demands that they would overburden Grove Street.

I do not think that the elementary school can handle the increased number of students from the current proposal (which greatly underestimates the number of students that will result from this project) and I also think that the increased volume of traffic will cut us off from the rest of Newton, at least during rush hours. There are already serious traffic issues getting on to 128 N in the morning – this will make a bad situation worse. Also, I am pretty certain that the increased traffic and rotary in front of my house will decrease my house's value

I think the latest site plan is still too large. I would prefer a 400K sq.ft. project (150K office, 200 residential units and 30K retail).

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Off site: creating an ice rink/gardening. Concerned about capital improvements due at Williams and perhaps Burr. The schools must have the space, staffing, Angier particularly due to age, Williams and Burr should have added space if needed

I think we need to think of this proposal in tandem with the MBTA proposal too. With that in mind, the proposal has way too much parking which means more cars. Until the state proposes a way to mitigate already bad rush hour traffic problems, I think any proposal it too much for our neighborhood. I want to support public transportation but don't want to support traffic jams.

Much too large, traffic problems, health, population, problems school crowding, school safety, roundabouts a nightmare.

9 stories is too high, businesses that generate few cars.

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I continue to have grave concerns about the scope of this project.

It's moving in the right direction, but the project still is too big for the neighborhood. We are very concerned about the impact on traffic and the schools, given the size and scope of the proposal. We do favor some kind of development, as the current Riverside station is an eyesore. We would like to see an appropriately scaled, mixed-use development that brings greenery and life to that asphalt-laden spot. Thanks to the coalition for all your hard work!

Question: Can we do a neighborhood field trip to see a roundabout?

I think the proposed plan is still too big. I don't want to see any projects of this scale anywhere in Newton. I want Newton to be primarily a residential community with businesses in the existing villages that serve residents.

Retail space hours: Rather than any 24 hour facilities, it may make more sense to have something open the same hours the T operates.

I wrote "NO" for retail uses I thought would generate excessive traffic and idling cars. In general retail that will serve occupants of the new buildings, T users and neighbors without generating more car trips would be most desirable

It does not address the traffic issues properly, that will be required for Auburndale and Lower Falls to function. A serious infrastructure plan from BH Normandy needs to be put on the table, i.e. direct access/exit ramps from I-95. Round about is not the answer, as it will never mitigate the number of vehicles on Grove St.

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I think it lacks the vision to be an interesting multi-use development, along the lines of a Coolidge Corner type of destination area with housing/office and interesting shops/restaurants. If it turns out to be an office park with some apartments and only one sandwich shop, drycleaners/bank, etc. this will be a hugely missed opportunity to be more than a transportation hub/office park development

\_As a resident of waban whose home is impacted by water issues on quinobequin road I am concerned about the increased traffic and sewerage that will tax out overburdened system. Additionally, our schools cannot handle additional students without significant improvement to infrastructure. What happens to the middle schools when these students get there – are our schools all ready to handle issues? Elementary is addressed but what about Middle and High School?

1. I am against roundabouts.
2. I think the residential section is too large. I'm not concerned with the number of units, but think that five stories is too tall.
3. I do not believe there will be enough parking for the residential units. Each adult will probably own a car. If only 1.5 spaces are provided per unit, then where will these cars park? Where do visitors for these units park? They should not be able to take up space in parking reserved for commuters, since increasing the parking space for commuters has been described as one of the major goals of the developers. (I have been a visitor to other 'residential' developments where parking was a major problem.)
4. Where will delivery trucks park for residential units. Fedex, etc, trucks shouldn't block traffic while driver is running around looking for a signature.

Same goes for delivery trucks for the retail space.

We are of the opinion that this development is too large for the already burdened sewage and flooding problems in this part of town .Please review the sewer/water department presentation about DIMINISHING WETLANDS given at Mayor Warren's meeting with Quinobequin's flood victims of March 2010.

Fundamentally I am opposed to this entire project because it will exacerbate the traffic problem in Auburndale square.

I favor density and the economic revenue benefits, but not with tall buildings that dominate the skyline. Rather, I favor density that comes from space freed up by curtailing parking spaces. This has the added effect incentivizing public transit, and reducing the need for costly traffic engineering to mitigate traffic. Objections related to spillover parking in neighborhoods is unfounded and easily mitigated by residential-only parking and parking time limitations, with exceptions made for residents for party parking. Preventing spillover parking is not difficult; it is routine and effective in Boston neighborhoods.

There should be a Hubway bike station at the Auburndale Commuter Rail station, and one at the Riverside station, that allow commuter rail users to easily ride to and from the development.

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Prefer to eliminate residential space or restrict it to senior citizen housing as was done in Wellesley Lower Falls development. Prefer that retail space be reduced or eliminated. Prefer office space to residential/retail as office space will not generate traffic 24 hours a day. A transportation hub is not a safe or healthy place to raise children, so there should be no housing for families with children. I don't understand why the many health professionals in Newton aren't opposed to locating family housing at a transportation hub. Prefer that Grove Street be bypassed altogether.

I continue to believe that the project as proposed is far too big to be wedged in between 2 neighborhoods that are as cohesive, residential, quiet, and historic as Lower Falls & Auburndale. As currently configured, the Riverside project would overwhelm the neighborhoods with noise, pollution, and impossible traffic. In addition to the problems it would create on Grove St, the affect on other, already congested routes (such as Route 16 and Concord St, 128 to the Mass Pike) would be unbearable. I believe that the project would make Lower Falls a LESS desirable place to live and reduce the value of our houses, as well as the quality of life.

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I agree that something should be built on the site. However, the current mixed-use proposal would not improve the city for its residents nor its reputation as the "Garden City" or a city dedicated to being a green pioneer. Public transportation is very important, and enhancing the Riverside depot makes sense. But does Newton really need more office space? If there was an existing structure for commercial space (such as Linden St in Wellesley), some shops & restaurants would be great. But imposing this use onto our residential neighborhood just doesn't make sense.

(P.S. In terms of retail store suggestions, above, I'd like to add: bookstore.)

It is an improvement, but it is dismaying that the developers have not studied the expected traffic impacts on Quinobequin Road between Route 16 and Route 9. Furthermore, there is no evidence that any official, at any level, is looking at the combined impact of the Riverside Project and the anticipated restructuring of the Route 9/Route 128 interchange.