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Neighbors for a Better Newtonville Applauds City's Purchase of Land Adjacent to the Senior Center

Newton, Mass. – Neighbors for a Better Newtonville (NBN) applauds Mayor Ruthanne Fuller's recent announcement that the city has reached an agreement to acquire the property at 47 Walnut Place immediately adjacent to the Senior Center. At some point in the future when the current owner is ready to relinquish the property, the city will have a total of .8 acre for its proposed facility. Despite this positive development, we note that this plot will still be substantially less than 2 to 2 ½ acres that the NewCAL Working Group determined in 2021 was needed for a new Senior Center.

We also note that the mayor's announcement does not indicate how the newly acquired space will be used. Josh Morse, Newton's Public Buildings Commissioner, commented at the NewCAL meeting on June 30 that the space might be used for public open space or for parking. The new Senior Center will need more space for both of these important needs.

We call on the mayor to consider redesigning the new Senior Center so that the parkland in front of the Senior Center is preserved. Parkland on Walnut Street is immediately visible from that major street, so it will be used to a much greater extent than parkland created behind a new Senior Center. Further, the historic nature of the building and the existing setback are major contributions to making the Newtonville village center such an attractive place for residents and visitors.

If a redesigned Senior Center is not feasible, perhaps it is time to recognize that this parcel is just too small for the Senior Center that Newton deserves.

Fred Arnstein, President of NBN issued the following statement:

"We filed a lawsuit because the city refuses to recognize the Senior Center Park as city parkland protected by Massachusetts state law. The city continues to deny that the Senior Center Park was officially designated as a park by the Board of Aldermen in 2005.

We also filed our lawsuit because the Newton Historical Commission failed to follow its own procedures when it voted not to accept the landmark petition for consideration. The NHC has also ignored its responsibility, described in the Board Order creating the Senior Center, 'That all

feasible means be taken to preserve and/or replace the architectural elements, both interior and exterior, which gives the building its historic character...'

Allowing demolition of this building would set a dangerous precedent. We will continue to oppose the City's willingness to sacrifice our parks and historic buildings."

About Neighbors for a Better Newtonville

Neighbors for a Better Newtonville (NBN) is a group of residents who want to preserve and strengthen the best of what our village offers while encouraging such change as will enhance and invigorate it.

More information can be found at our website <https://sites.google.com/view/nfabnv/home>.
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