

Statement of Values

The Environment and Sustainable Growth Subcommittee has worked to develop a program that addresses issues such as environmental stewardship, quality of life, and planning for Newton's future. Our goals are based on promoting the following four key shared values. Newton residents want our government to:

- Reduce or mitigate negative environmental impacts associated with government operations, like pollution and wasted energy;
- Increase the availability and quality of public services like libraries and trash collection, as well as private-sector services like grocery stores, movie theatres, and cell phone reception;
- Enhance the quality of life in our city, by working to reduce traffic congestion, improve pedestrian and bicycle amenities, keep our parks clean, maintain City buildings and streets, and protect public safety; and
- Adopt and adhere to smart growth principles that generate new tax revenue and enhance our village centers, while reducing environmental impacts, providing services, and improving the quality of life.

To achieve the goals embodied in each of these shared values, we propose a number of specific initiatives including implementation timetables and measures of success.

A) Reducing Negative Environmental Impacts

Newton residents place a high value on protecting the environment. Consistent with the principle, "Think Globally, Act Locally," they expect their local government to be a model of environmental sustainability and resource management. We propose the following initiatives to

reduce Newton's negative impacts on the environment:

- 1) **Improve and expand our recycling program;**
- 2) **Reduce our carbon footprint by increasing the energy efficiency of city buildings, installing solar panels where viable, and eliminating the non-essential use of city vehicles through the development of a comprehensive fleet management plan;**
- 3) **Adopt environmentally-sound open space care practices that protect our parks and preserve street trees and our urban forest;**
- 4) **Reduce air pollution and fuel consumption from private vehicles through public actions, such as improved street maintenance, enhanced public transportation resources, and smart intersection technology that relieves traffic congestion; and**
- 5) **Protect people and ecosystems from environmental toxins.**

1) Improving Our Recycling Program

Statement of Problem and Opportunity

For decades, Newton had been a leader in the recycling area, developing its first glass collection program long before most other Massachusetts communities and accepting many types of plastic and paper before other cities and towns. However, in recent years, Newton's recycling program has declined from a high of 47% of waste recycled down to just 38% in 2006, the most recent year for which data are available.¹

Our research identifies four reasons for Newton's poor performance: barriers

¹ Source: Mass. Dept. of Environmental Protection, <http://www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/priorities/munirate.pdf>

to participation, lack of recycling containers in public places, inadequate recycling containers for residential collection, and poorly conceived program incentives.

Due to the significant environmental and financial costs of waste disposal, efforts to expand Newton's recycling program will be cost-effective. Even a 5% increase in recycling (from our current level of 38% up to 43%) could save the City over \$200,000 in trash collection fees and could generate \$65,000 in receipts for the sale of recyclables.

If Newton were to achieve recycling rates comparable to Massachusetts cities with highly successful programs by recycling two thirds of our local waste stream, the combined net positive impact on the City's budget could exceed \$1 million. We propose that Newton set a goal of achieving a 75% recycling rate by the year 2015.

Summary of Proposed Solution

Modest steps in improving recycling rates in Newton will result in substantial savings in waste disposal costs. We will increase recycling rates in Newton by:

- i) Eliminating barriers to participation;
- ii) Providing recycling containers everywhere City garbage cans are located in village centers, municipal buildings, and schools;
- iii) Providing convenient, covered, wheeled recycling containers to all Newton residents; and
- iv) Tracking progress toward our goal of 75% recycling by 2015, adjusting program incentives as needed to achieve this objective.

Implementation Plan

i) Eliminating Barriers to Participation

Our recycling contract will be nego-

tiated or renegotiated to allow Newton businesses to participate on a voluntary basis for the incremental cost of collecting their recyclables. Ordinance changes and/or special permit requirements will be adopted to allow all Newton residents to participate in Newton's recycling program free of charge regardless of whether they live in houses, condominiums, or apartments. Businesses and institutions will be allowed to buy-in to the program for the incremental cost of their participation.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with our contractors to expand the recycling program by January 1, 2012.

ii) Providing Recycling Containers at Public Facilities

Each garbage can currently placed by the Newton Public Works or Parks & Recreation Department will be accompanied by recycling containers for bottles & cans and for paper. This step will be taken in concert with the implementation of a facilities maintenance plan, as discussed in the Finance & Management section.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with the Board of Aldermen to have recycling containers installed in every village center, park, and City-owned building by July 1, 2010.

iii) Providing Superior Residential Recycling Containers

Newton residents should be provided with covered, manageable, wheeled recycling containers of adequate size to accommodate their needs. Ideally, Newton residents will be provided with a choice in container sizes most suited to their individual needs.

Since the first draft of this Blueprint was produced, the City has entered into a contract that should provide Newton residents with covered, wheeled recycling containers by the end of calendar year 2009 (current target date as of this writing is October 3). If for some reason, this does not happen on schedule, as Mayor Ken Parker will work with our contractor and city staff to make the containers available in early 2010.

iv) Tracking Progress and Adjusting Incentives

Achieving a 75% recycling rate by 2015 requires that we improve by an average of 7.5% each year. We will make monthly, neighborhood-based recycling rate data available as part of our total transparency in government (see Finance & Management section, page 32). If we fail to achieve adequate progress, appropriate adjustments to the program will be made, including possible financial incentives for participation, as needed.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with city staff and the Board of Aldermen to develop and implement a participation tracking system by July 1, 2011 and will make program adjustments as part of the budget process before the start of each fiscal year.

2) Reducing our Carbon Footprint

Statement of Problem and Opportunity

Rapidly increasing energy costs was identified by the Blue Ribbon Commission as one of the drivers of the structural deficit. With energy costs escalating and the globe's fossil fuels being depleted, we will take the necessary steps to reduce our energy use and carbon dioxide emissions. We will also develop and implement a plan to generate significant amounts of green energy through installation of solar panels on municipal buildings and similar technologies, as they become cost-effective. Our goal is to cut the city's energy usage and carbon footprint in half.

Summary of Proposed Solution

To reduce the amount of energy used to heat and cool our buildings, we propose to:

- i) Conduct a citywide inventory of our capital assets and their energy use, develop a preventive maintenance plan for each building, and target inefficient systems for immediate upgrade or replacement;
- ii) Track energy usage on a monthly basis and place building users in charge of reducing their energy consumption;
- iii) Establish energy-efficiency as a core objective in all building renovation and construction projects, such that all new and renovated buildings require half the energy for heating and cooling than was consumed by the older structures they replaced;
- iv) Take a bold step into the twenty-first century by making green energy generation an integral part of every

City facility and an attractive option for private homes and businesses; and

- v) Eliminate non-essential use of City vehicles through the development of a comprehensive fleet management policy.

Implementation Plan

i) Citywide Capital Asset Inventory

We propose to put systems in place to track all energy used by a given building, as well as the ages, maintenance status, and estimated efficiency of all heating, cooling, lighting, and other energy-consuming systems.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with Public Buildings Department and School Department staff to identify systems requiring regular maintenance by May 1, 2010 and adequate resources to conduct needed maintenance will be included in the Fiscal Year 2011 operating budget.

ii) Tracking Energy Usage

Systems to track monthly energy usage on a building-by-building basis *should be in place by January 1, 2011* and energy-inefficient systems should be prioritized for replacement starting in Fiscal Year 2012 of the Capital Improvement Plan (this tracking system will be part of *NewtonStat*; see page 33 of Finance & Management section for more details). The relevant department head or other managing building user (e.g. Police Chief for the police station, principal for a school) will be empowered to work with the maintenance division to repair energy-inefficient systems and will be allowed to expend a portion of their energy savings on supplies and equipment the following fiscal year.

iii) Energy-Conscious Building Construction and Renovation

Each time a building is renovated or constructed, a core objective will be to make the new facility as energy efficient as possible, with a goal of reducing energy consumption by at least 50 percent. This goal should be an integral part of the process from building siting to design through construction and landscaping. We can accelerate the schedule of capital improvements that reduce energy consumption through the use of increased bonding financed by energy savings and/or through the use of performance management contracts with energy services companies. For more discussion of our plan to improve these capital asset management practices, please see the Finance & Management Section.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will direct capital project managers to include these energy-efficiency principles in all public facilities projects starting January 1, 2010.

iv) Green Energy for Newton

The technology is now available to generate significant amounts of clean energy in Newton. While we currently have photovoltaic solar panels on some city buildings, these panels only generate a small percentage of the energy our buildings consume. As part of our capital assets inventory, we will identify buildings whose current energy consumption make them strong candidates for photovoltaic or hot water solar panels and aggressively pursue grants and other available funds to defray installation costs.

Any building where the return on investment of the net installation cost after discounts, grants and incentives for either photovoltaic or solar heat systems is five

years or less should have appropriate solar panels in place by October 1, 2011 and other municipal buildings and schools should follow as technologies improve and energy costs increase with a goal of every public facility in Newton generating at least ten percent of the energy it consumes annually on site by the year 2015.

Initially, excess locally-generated electricity will be sold back to the NSTAR grid. Once Newton has established its own municipal power company (see Finance & Management section, page 27, for details), it will be possible to further lower costs by redistributing generated electricity to other municipal facilities and to generate and to purchase green energy at much lower costs, all while improving customer service and reducing energy costs for Newton residents, businesses, and government.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with the Board of Aldermen, state agencies, and city staff to lay the groundwork for submitting Newton's application to form a municipal electric utility by January 1, 2015.

In addition to municipally-generated green energy, we propose to partner with state agencies, private foundations, local businesses, and energy providers to make it simple and cost effective for Newton residents and businesses to install solar energy systems. For example, the cost of installing a photovoltaic system on a single family home in Newton today is approximately \$15,000 after government incentives. By combining these incentives with available grants and low-interest loans, the payback period on the investment can be reduced significantly, making it an attractive option for Newton residents.

Towards this end, as Mayor, Ken Parker will work with city staff, public agencies, and the Board of Aldermen to develop and implement a Green Energy Newton one-stop shopping residential and business solar panel program by June 1, 2011.

v) Comprehensive Vehicle Policy

As recommended in the Finance & Management Working Group Report in June, 2005, Newton should develop a comprehensive fleet management plan for municipal vehicles that limits the use of municipal vehicles and improves fleet maintenance:

We recommend that the City undertake a top-down review of its auto fleet and its personnel policies relating to auto use. Specifically, the City should identify which positions in City government merit use of vehicle on a 24/7 basis and which positions require access to a motor pool during working hours. For motor pool vehicles, the City should undertake a demand study based on the requirements of various departments and individuals utilizing the pool. Based on this survey, the City's auto fleet should be sized and managed accordingly.

As part of this review, City officials should compare the ongoing maintenance cost of older vehicles to the amortized acquisition cost of newer vehicles. It is possible to reach a point of diminishing returns at which it is less costly to replace an older vehicle than it is to continue to repair it.²

As part of this comprehensive vehicle policy, high priority should be given to purchasing low-emission, fuel-efficient vehicles. Our vehicle inventory survey should track usage patterns to determine what kinds of vehicles should be used as replacements. We need to know:

² Finance & Management Working Group Report, p. 26

- How much a vehicle is driven per day, how much of that driving is local and how much is highway driving? and
- Do vehicles remain on City property when not in use?

Initially, the strategy will involve purchasing hybrid electrical vehicles whenever practical and cost-effective. Hybrids result in reduced pollution and reduced fuel consumption. Depending on usage patterns, hybrid vehicles will likely have 50 percent less pollution and 50 percent less fuel consumption than conventional models they replace.

Garbage trucks and school busses and other large municipal vehicles are also excellent candidates for hybrid technology. To the extent that these services are currently being contracted to independent providers, the energy savings achieved by using more energy-efficient vehicles should be factored into our full-cost accounting analysis of the most cost-effective way of providing the service in question.

Each year's vehicle replacement analysis should include a review of the available technologies to determine which are appropriate for Newton's needs.

The Parker Administration will complete its analysis of which positions merit use of City vehicles in time for the submission of the Fiscal Year 2011 operating budget (approximately May 15, 2010) and the maintenance cost analysis, fleet management, and low-emission vehicle policies will be in place by January 1, 2011.

1) Adopting Environmentally-Sound, Community-Based Open Space Care and Tree Management Practices

Statement of Problem and Opportunity

Newton's prides itself on being the Garden City, with parks in every neighborhood and trees lining our streets. In recent years, however, lack of maintenance and open space management has caused many of our parks to fall into neglect and our street trees to die at a rate of approximately 553 per year. Combined with our rate of planting 133 new trees per year, will result in a net annual loss of approximately 420 trees. If this trend continues virtually all street trees will be eliminated by 2068.

By developing open space management and tree preservation plans, we can improve the health of these natural resources and at the same time improve the efficiency with which these services are delivered.

Summary of Proposed Solution

We will incorporate environmentally-sound practices and community involvement into the development and implementation of:

- i) An open space management plan; and
- ii) A tree management plan.

Discussion and Implementation Plan

i) Open Space Management Plan

Keeping our parks green requires mowing, re-seeding and other turf maintenance activities. However, these maintenance requirements have been underfunded in recent years, resulting in unusable playing

fields and poorly-maintained parks.

To lower maintenance costs of keeping our parks and playgrounds in excellent condition, we propose to partner with community groups, neighborhood associations, open space advocates, and youth sport leagues to develop plans that make use of volunteers, private donations, and sustainable planting practices.

For our active recreation sports fields, we should install wells and irrigation systems, use hearty blends of grasses and deep-root seed mixes that are able to thrive during high-intensity use and are tolerant of variations in watering, and partner with community groups willing to take charge of the maintenance of the playing fields they use. Elements of this model have already resulted in an improvement in several of Newton's parks. We should also manage our active recreation fields responsibly, avoiding overuse and abuse that undermines efforts to seed, aerate, and fertilize.

For passive recreation areas, we should make use of low-maintenance landscape materials, such as drought-tolerant grasses that require little or no mowing; wild-flower meadows that, once established, are self-sustaining; and native plant materials that require minimal pruning and maintenance.

In all of our parks, we should make use of permeable paving surfaces that reduce run-off and plant to enhance microclimates, using such techniques as planting shade trees on the south side of parks to reduce heat islands and to create wind breaks. We should also make use of Newton's Integrated Planning and Management Policy (IPM) to reduce field maintenance costs and the use of toxic pesticides.

The Open Space Management Plan will also include the following components:

- Realistic resource allocation: Each component of the plan should be ap-

propriately budgeted and funded; resources can be identified for this purpose by consolidating snow plowing responsibilities in the Department of Public Works and education programs into our Community Education office, allowing the Parks & Recreation Department to focus on open space management.

- Expansion of the adopt-a space program that allows individuals and private organizations to maintain small neighborhood open space parcels.
- Specific maintenance schedule and standards for each parcel with integrated user feedback to make sure we are achieving those standards and making adjustments to plans as needed.
- Regular progress evaluation with respect to the goals of the plan and the Five Year Park Assessment and Development Planning Evaluation that was prepared on January 1, 2006.
- Qualified contractor selection procedures for maintenance contractors who make use of competitive bidding practices and available technologies, such as the state's Compass System for posting Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to ensure maximum competitive bidding.
- Public education about appropriate and sustainable field use practices, particularly on our active recreation fields.
- Use of project teams and employee incentives to measure and reward exceptional job performance and foster a sense of pride and ownership within the Parks and Recreation maintenance department. (Please see page 31 of the Finance & Management section for more discussion of project teams.)

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with the Parks and Recreation Department, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Urban Tree Commission, the Planning Department, the Board of Aldermen, and interested citizens and community groups to develop an open space management plan by January 1, 2011.

ii) Tree Management Plan

The City of Newton estimates that our urban forest is a \$64 million dollar asset. The City's trees provide countless benefits to the residents of Newton, as well as visitors and guests. Trees enhance and preserve the air quality through their filtering effects. They reduce noise and soil erosion. They reduce energy consumption and storm water runoff. Property value is increased through proper plant selection and location.

We currently have approximately 33,000 street trees, but are losing trees at a net rate of more than 400 per year. To properly preserve trees they need to be maintained and pruned proactively. Cyclical pruning reduces storm damage, misshapen trees and increases longevity. The number of trees proactively pruned in Newton has declined steadily. This decline can be attributed to several factors. Newton's tree population is aging; at the same time environmental pressures are increasing. Over the last fifteen years, the amount of money budgeted for tree care has not increased (fifteen years ago the budget was cut in half). This level funding translates into a net loss of money and significantly reduced services. These factors have led to an increase in citizen requests for service.

Despite the efforts over the last fifteen years to perform some proactive pruning, there is no established schedule or cycle to the work. Once an area is completed

there is no assurance that those trees will be pruned again. A cyclical and strategic approach to tree maintenance needs to be developed.

Planting new trees is critical to managing Newton's urban forest. In recent years, the number of trees planted by the City of Newton has been far fewer than the number of trees removed and far fewer than the number of trees requested by residents. The net loss of trees has averaged 420 per year over the past five years. During this time, much of the available funding has come from the Tree Preservation Ordinance. This funding is short-lived and is not considered a long-term solution.³ Consequently, the rate of tree loss will accelerate if we do not act soon.

Newton's tree management plan should map out a strategy for maintaining

³ Sources: <http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/Parks/UrbanForestry/documents/NewtonTreeManual2006.pdf>

<http://www.ci.newton.ma.us/legal/ordinance/Chapter-20.pdf>



the health and population of our urban forest and street trees. It should include:

- Realistic budgeting and funding for tree care and replacement that does not rely solely on tree ordinance funding, but instead invests resources from the annual operating budget;
- Partnering with private individual and groups to supplement our tree maintenance and planting budget through the creation of a Newton Tree Conservancy Foundation.
- Develop and implement a tree-planting program that puts appropriate species in specific locations, such as smaller trees under overhead power lines to reduce the pruning requirements as well as species with root systems that will not damage sidewalks or berms.
- Encourage use of our off-berm planting program through an aggressive public information campaign.
- Develop and maintain and up-to-date inventory of trees and areas in need of trees;
- Update and improve the tree preservation ordinance to close loopholes and improve enforcement and compliance procedures
- Raise public awareness of the needs of public trees, including the opportunity to participate in the public watering program that allows Newton families to take responsibility for watering one or more trees in their neighborhood and establish a tree stewards program that allows the public to help with maintenance, working in partnership with our public schools.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with the Parks and Recreation Department, the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Urban Tree Commission, the Planning Department, the Board of Alder-

men, and interested citizens and community groups to develop a public tree management plan by January 1, 2011.

2) Reducing Pollution to Protect People and Ecosystems

For those in whom cancer is already a hidden or a visible presence, efforts to find cures must of course continue. But for those not yet touched by the disease and certainly for the generations as yet unborn, prevention is the imperative need.

The most determined effort should be made to eliminate those carcinogens that now contaminate our food, our water supplies, and our atmosphere, because these provide the most dangerous type of contact -- minute exposures, repeated over and over throughout the years.

Rachel Carson, Silent Spring, 1962, Chapter 14, 'One in every four.'

Statement of Problem and Opportunity

Transportation, construction, maintenance, and other local activities can release toxins into the environment that pose a threat to human health and to the ecosystems around us. The largest single generator of pollution in Newton is vehicular traffic on our streets. By reducing the amount pollution created here, we can protect public health and local ecosystems.

Summary of Proposed Solution

We can reduce the release of pollution generated in Newton by:

- i) improving street maintenance to reduce fuel consumption and emissions; and
- ii) reducing exposure to toxic materials; and
- iii) supporting community public health initiatives.

Discussion and Implementation Plan

i) Improving Street Maintenance to Reduce Fuel Consumption and Emissions

Newton's poorly-maintained streets and outmoded traffic signals increase vehicle fuel consumption, wear out tires, and cause accidents and other damage that costs Newton residents repair charges and depletes natural resources. Since smooth streets are not solely an environmental issue and can influence our overall quality of life, we discuss these issues in Part C of this section.

Traffic congestion not only causes excessive and unnecessary fuel consumption, but also negatively impacts the quality of life of Newton residents and our municipal budget. Our proposed transportation plan, which addresses traffic congestion and other issues, can also be found in Part C of this section.

ii) Reducing Exposure to Toxic Materials

Exposure to toxic materials can harm public health and disrupt delicate ecosystems. Children are particularly vulnerable to these impacts, which can include developmental problems, learning disabilities, and behavioral issues. We should commit to safeguarding the quality of our water, soil, food, and air inside and outside of

public buildings by setting standards for design and maintenance that reduce or eliminate exposure to toxic materials.

Towards this end, we should establish health and environmental criteria that must be considered as part of the purchasing and contracting procedures. We should also provide the training and tools to our building management staff that they need to understand and follow these principles.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with city staff, the Board of Aldermen, and community groups to develop purchasing, contracting and training criteria and protocols designed to protect the health of city employees and the public by reducing municipal generation of toxic materials. This process will be an ongoing effort throughout the term of the Parker Administration.

iii) Supporting Community Public Health Initiatives

Newton is fortunate to have a wide range of community groups working to protect our environment and public health. We should support their efforts and collaborate with them for the benefit of the entire community.

For example, we can partner with community organizations to make our classrooms safer and healthier (please see Education Section for more discussion) and with area non-profits and businesses to encourage them to reduce their use of pesticides.

Alderman Parker has already initiated discussions with one such organization to discuss ways to protect the Charles River watershed from run-off containing high levels of pesticides and nitrates, which can disrupt the natural ecosystem of the river.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will reach out to community groups, businesses, and non-profit organizations to explore ways of protecting the environment and public health. These efforts will take place throughout the term of the Parker Administration.

B) Increasing the Availability and Quality of Services

Newton residents benefit from public services such as libraries and trash collection, as well as private-sector services like grocery stores, movie theatres, and cell phone reception. We propose the following initiatives to improve the quality and responsiveness of services valued by our community:

- 1) **Measure public satisfaction and priorities;**
- 2) **Support village-based initiatives; and**
- 3) **Modernize zoning and work with the business community to encourage private-sector services desired by Newton residents.**

1) Measuring Public Satisfaction and Priorities

Improving the services Newton residents care about requires knowledge regarding which services are most valued and measures of customer satisfaction. Through the use of management tools, such as project teams, service level agreements, and our *NewtonStat* customer service database and performance management system (please see the Finance & Management section page 33 and page 66 of this section for discussion), we will generate data which will inform us which services are delivered most efficiently and which need improvement. We will also know which City services and employees deserve recognition for excellence and

which areas need improvement. Services should be designed to meet the needs of residents and should be modified or eliminated if they are not meeting those needs.

For example, Newton developed a fixed-route shuttle bus system known as the Nexus without first identifying which Newton residents were in need of public transportation services and where they needed to go, which failed to meet the needs of Newton residents and was discontinued.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with city staff and the Board of Aldermen to integrate customer satisfaction and service prioritization metrics into the City's budget process, starting with the Fiscal Year 2011 operating budget.

2) Supporting Village-Based Initiatives

Each neighborhood of Newton is unique and has different needs. In addition to improving citywide responsiveness to those needs, we should support neighborhood- and village-based initiatives that address the needs of local residents. To encourage and support these local efforts, the city should provide resources to help start and maintain these initiatives. One village might want a community center, another might want local library services, and another might want new playground equipment. By providing some resources to be allocated at the local village level, we will not only help to address the needs of each neighborhood, we will also foster innovation that makes a few dollars go a long way. The creative solutions piloted in individual villages may show us how to provide better services more efficiently citywide.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will make it the City's official policy to support these initiatives and to provide seed money, operational support, and other assistance to make them succeed, starting on January 1, 2010.

3) Adopting Smart Growth Strategies to Encourage Private-Sector Services Desired by Newton Residents

Statement of Problem and Opportunity

Newton's current zoning laws are complicated, confusing, and often counter-productive in that they effectively discourage the establishment of businesses that Newton residents would like to see. For example, many Newton residents would like to see a neighborhood grocery store open near their home, but our zoning laws are written to make it much easier for a bank or beauty salon to open than a neighborhood grocer.

Summary of Proposed Solution

To implement a smart-growth strategy, we should reform our zoning laws to focus them on stimulating and shaping the kinds of development that best serve our community, including those offering services valued by Newton residents and employing sustainable growth and transit- and pedestrian-oriented development principles. We should also strengthen relationships with Newton businesses and respond to their needs to build the foundations of public-private partnerships.

Discussion and Implementation Plan

i) Zoning Reform

Our zoning laws should reflect the values of our community, identifying desired uses and making it as simple as possible for the private sector to provide the services desired by Newton residents. Aligning our zoning laws with our community's goals and objectives is at the core of our zoning reform proposal. For a more detailed discussion about zoning issues, please see Part D of this section, starting on page 61.

Part of the problem with past zoning reform efforts in Newton has been lack of leadership from the Executive Department. As Mayor, Ken Parker will file key zoning reform initiatives with the Board of Aldermen by September 1, 2010.

ii) Working with the Business Community to Promote Desired Services

In addition to zoning reform, it is also important that strong communication between City Hall and the business community be initiated. Newton government should be responsive to the needs of our business community. If a business requests an additional police patrol, repair of a street, replacement of a street light, or other improvement, our policy will be to act promptly and courteously. Similarly, the input of Newton businesses should be considered when evaluating zoning, parking, infrastructure, and other changes that affect their operation. To improve communication with Newton's business community, we will establish strong relationships with the Chamber of Commerce and village business associations and solicit their input on a regular basis.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with the Planning Department, the Chamber of Commerce, and Newton businesses to establish these communication channels by May 1, 2010.

iii) Consistent and Predictable Enforcement

Currently Newton's enforcement of zoning and related ordinances is haphazard and inconsistent. Fair and consistent enforcement will protect residents and businesses alike, so that everyone will know what to expect.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with the Inspectional Services Department to establish enforcement protocols that should be in place by December 21, 2010.

C) Enhancing the Quality of Life

Some of the same issues that cause negative environmental impacts in Newton, such as poorly-maintained streets and overflowing garbage cans in our parks also negatively affect our general quality of life. In addition to these issues that were discussed in Section B, we propose the following initiatives to address quality of life concerns raised by Newton residents:

- 1) **Improving Transportation Resources while Reducing Traffic Congestion;**
- 2) **Improving Pedestrian, Wheel-chair and Bicycle Access;**
- 3) **Keeping our Parks and Open Spaces Clean;**
- 4) **Maintaining our Infrastructure and Streets;**
- 5) **Protecting Public Safety; and**
- 6) **Protecting and Expanding Community Assets and Amenities.**

1) Improving Transportation Resources while Reducing Traffic Congestion

Statement of Problem and Opportunity

As discussed in Part B of this section, traffic congestion causes negative environmental impacts and diminishes the quality of life of Newton residents. Development and implementation of a comprehensive transportation plan will make it easier for people to get from place to place in Newton while mitigating the effects of automobile use and traffic.

Summary of Proposed Solution

Newton's Comprehensive Plan outlines an integrated vision of transportation improvements, addressing roadway, traffic, parking, transit and pedestrian/bicyclist issues. We will implement key aspects of the Plan that will improve access to public transportation, enhance bicycle and pedestrian amenities, and reduce traffic congestion.

Discussion and Implementation Plan

Transportation issues often rank as a major factor in quality of life for Newton's residents. Our City is known and valued for its pedestrian-friendly streets, pleasant residential neighborhoods, and vital village centers. We have excellent transit connections in the form of light rail (the Green line), commuter rail, and various bus routes. Many of Newton's 1500 streets have sidewalks and both on-street and off-street parking is available.

It is our goal to maintain and enhance Newton's transportation network and to make decisions on development and land use that respect the mobility needs of New-

ton's citizens. Our vision is of a Newton with a well-maintained roadway network and an enhanced system of public transportation, bicycle accommodations, and pedestrian-friendly streets. Our future transportation system must be consistent with the character of our villages and communities and supportive of development that is sensitive to building good environments. It is our goal to promote transportation changes that are environmentally sound and consistent with conserving natural resources, while improving the health of our community.

i) Roadways and Intersections

Newton's streets and roadways need to serve a variety of functions. We must strive to make many of our streets safe and comfortable for not only automobiles but for pedestrians and bicyclists. In addition to maintaining the infrastructure of our roadways and bridges, the City of Newton will work to develop design guidelines for walkable, environmentally sound streetscapes that promote pedestrian use and safety. New development and redevelopment should be sensitive to the community's need for pedestrian and transit-friendly environments.

In our villages and commercial corridors, we will work to enhance the quality of our streets by implementing traffic calming techniques and pedestrian accommodations, such as bulb-outs and raised crosswalks at intersections. We will work with citizen advocacy groups to improve bicycle accommodations in key locations and that are associated with new and existing development. The design and reconstruction of Newton's streets will respect the historical nature of our communities and we will work to improve traffic flow. However, this will be accomplished without expanding streets by adding turning lanes, unnecessarily and excessively widening

streets, and enlarging intersections. We will avoid the types of changes that result in higher automobile speeds and volume and that reduce pedestrian safety and comfort.

ii) Public Transportation

We need to expand mobility options for our citizens and businesses and improve the capacity of our public transportation system. Our commuter rail and light rail transit systems are excellent resources, but there have been no new expansions of rail public transit in Newton in over half a century. Having and using nearby systems of readily accessible and frequent public transportation can reduce energy consumption and reduce the burdens on our environment that are a result of excess automobile driving. Simply put, the more options Newton's citizens have for public transportation, the better our quality of life will be.

Two major corridors that will benefit from improved rail transportation are the Massachusetts Turnpike Corridor and the Needham Street corridor.

Enhance commuter rail in the Massachusetts Turnpike corridor: Our existing commuter rail access can be improved by enhancing the frequency of service and by improving our commuter rail stations. New stations can be planned for Riverside and for Newton Corner, both important transportation nodes and intermodal hubs of activity. Newton Corner has the potential for becoming a more transit oriented and pedestrian friendly village by extending electric trolleybus service from Cambridge and Watertown into Newton Corner and by adding a stop on the commuter rail line. In addition, the currently dysfunctional, high-speed automobile roadways that encircle the Turnpike at Newton Corner can be redesigned to improve safety and access for pedestrians and for those

using bicycles and public transportation.

Implement light rail in the Needham Street corridor: The Needham Street corridor is a major source of economic activity for Newton and represents a significant portion of our City's commercial tax revenues. However, its further development has been constrained by issues of traffic congestion and lack of adequate transportation resources. By implementing light rail in the unused railway corridor paralleling Needham Street, the City can realize new transit-oriented development that is environmentally sensitive and pedestrian-friendly. Light rail in the Needham Street corridor will provide Newton with a classic opportunity to develop "smart growth" in the corridor and create a new

and vibrant mixed-use community.

This public transportation investment will not only help to improve transportation access to the Needham Street corridor, it will also have important economic benefits for Newton. Building a new light rail line in the Needham Street corridor is a cost-effective and realistic opportunity for Newton to stimulate appropriate modest development that will significantly enhance our commercial tax base.

In addition to supporting rail enhancements, the City of Newton should support measures to improve the efficiency and utilization of our bus system. Key north-south and east-west bus routes can be strengthened by improving service frequency. New routes can be explored that provide interconnections between the Route 9 corridor and adjacent commercial and residential areas. The Washington Street corridor that runs between Wellesley and Watertown can also be studied for new bus service.

The City of Newton needs to advocate for our transportation interests at the state and regional levels. We will increase our input to organizations such as the regional Metropolitan Planning Organization, the offices of the Central Transportation Planning Staff, and the Metropolitan Advisory Planning Commission so that they prioritize transportation decisions towards Newton. And we need to work towards enhancing our relationships with surrounding communities so that we can better address common transportation goals.

iii) Pedestrian and Bicycle Accommodation

The design of our roadways and of our villages and corridors must respect the needs of those who wish to walk or bicycle around Newton. Roadway reconstructions and new development must be well-relat-



ed to our goals to improve non-auto access for our citizens, as well as to maintain the safety and efficiency of our roadways for automobile drivers. And transportation decisions need to preserve the tranquility of our residential neighborhoods by working to diminish cut-through traffic on local streets.

New roadway improvements should avoid degrading pedestrian or bicycle accommodations in Newton. Similarly, new development that may increase traffic should be designed to maximize use by pedestrians and bicyclists. By implementing design principles that avoid roadway widening, maintain safe curb-radii, minimize curb-cuts in village and pedestrian centers, and encourage walking, Newton can go a long way to insuring that new development enhances our collective environment.

Our streetscapes should be pleasant and comfortable. This goal can be achieved by building wide sidewalks, planting street trees, and requiring that new development orients its main access towards pedestrian-friendly streets. Utilities should be placed underground. Pedestrian and bicycle interconnections between parcels and various land uses should be encouraged. Zoning rules that regulate parking need to be modernized to reduce parking demand while improving its access.

Pedestrian safety can be further enhanced through the use of pedestrian-activated traffic lights, as well as traffic-calming measures at conflict points, such as raised crosswalks and pedestrian islands.

Newton can also become a much more bicycle-friendly city. By encouraging safe use of bicycles to school and work, we can promote higher utilization of bicycles as part of an overall transportation plan. Certain roadways in the City are appropriate for accommodating bicyclists in well-marked lanes and others can be designated as specific “share the road” routes

where bicyclists can travel safely. New development should be designed so that it complements and promotes bicycle use. We should also provide bicycle-activated traffic signals as a component of new street construction and reconstruction where appropriate.

iv) Smart Intersections

Major intersections should be upgraded to include traffic sensors and traffic-light control systems that reduce congestion and improve public safety by preventing gridlock and making most efficient use of available road capacity.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will request funds from the Board of Aldermen for the purchase and installation of bicycle racks for Newton buildings and parks that currently do not have them by June 20, 2010. The Parker Administration will develop guidelines for walkable, environmentally-sound streetscapes by January 1, 2011 and will work with the state, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and MBTA on public transit improvements, presenting annual updates on our progress. We will integrate bicycle and pedestrian improvements and smart-intersection technology into the design of all applicable roadway projects starting January 1, 2010.

2) Improving Pedestrian, Wheelchair and Bicycle Access

Statement of Problem and Opportunity

In addition to the pedestrian and bicycle accommodation improvements that should take place as part of our overall

transportation plan, there are a number of concrete steps we can take to make Newton safer for bicycles, pedestrians, and wheelchair access that will not require physical changes to our roadways. Taken together with the infrastructure improvements discussed above, these initiatives will make Newton more hospitable for human-powered transportation. (For purposes of this document, the term “pedestrians” is intended to include persons traveling by wheelchair, consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act.)

Summary of Proposed Solution

In order to make our community safer and more accommodating for pedestrians and cyclists, Newton should:

- i) Improve pedestrian safety by keeping our sidewalks clear of snow in the winter and clear of other obstacles year-round;
- ii) Integrate consideration of impacts on cyclists and pedestrians into planning processes;
- iii) Develop a comprehensive, three-tier bicycle accommodation plan;
- iv) Improve and expand public education and information efforts regarding bicycle and pedestrian issues.
- v) Provide bike racks in village centers and at City buildings; and
- vi) Adopt innovative initiatives to encourage non-motorized transit.

Discussion and Implementation Plan

i) Clear and Accessible Sidewalks

Many sidewalks are blocked by parked cars and other obstacles, preventing safe pedestrian and wheelchair access. Furthermore, during the winter, many of Newton’s sidewalks remain uncleared and are layered in ice and snow. The City should plow snow from sidewalks on major walking routes to schools, village centers, and

public transportation in a timely and effective manner. We should educate our Public Works Department employees and outside contractors about the importance of not plowing street snow onto sidewalks near intersections. We should educate the public about the importance of not blocking sidewalks with parked cars, as well as the importance of driving slowly when there is snow, slush, and ice in streets. Driving fast in winter conditions is not only dangerous for vehicles, but can also result in slush being sprayed onto sidewalks, which can result in a slippery layer of ice that poses a hazard to pedestrians.. And we should vigorously enforce the laws that require that sidewalks be kept clear for pedestrians, wheelchairs, and baby carriages and other appropriate uses.

ii) Planning for Accommodation

Impacts on pedestrians and cyclists should be integrated into local and regional planning processes. That means that Newton’s land use policy, development initiatives, traffic and speed regulations, and public construction projects should take into consideration whether the proposed changes are bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly. Also, we should work with our neighboring cities and towns to coordinate bicycle accommodation plans, so that we can have safe, consistent cycle-community routes.

iii) Three Types of Bike Routes

As discussed in the transportation section, arterial roadways should incorporate bike lanes and share-the-road signage, as appropriate to the street in question. In addition to this type of in-road bicycle accommodation, the City should also develop a system of scenic bike routes on lower-traffic streets that traverse the City as an alternative to biking on arterials. Third, we should develop recreational bicycle routes

that are free of motorized transportation entirely. These routes should be added to the City's bicycle accommodation map as they are identified and marked.

iv) Public Information and Education

We should inform the public about bicycle and pedestrian accommodation and safety initiatives by working with neighborhood groups, parent teacher organizations, driver's education instructors, and other appropriate individuals and organizations.

v) More Bike Racks

Functional, attractive bike racks should be included in all construction projects and should be added to all public facilities, village centers, and public transportation nodes where they are not currently available. We will also work with local businesses to encourage them to integrate bike racks into their expansion, construction, and renovation plans.

vi) Innovations to Encourage Non-Motorized Transit

We will explore the feasibility of implementing a "shared use" plan for bicycles, where a number of bicycles would be placed in key city areas for use by the public. We will also work with our employees to develop incentive programs to encourage use of bicycles and public transportation for commuting to work. As part of our building renovation and construction program, we will offer amenities for walkers and cyclists, including bicycle lockers, changing rooms, and showers and encourage Newton businesses to do the same.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with city staff and Board of Aldermen to im-

plement these initiatives starting with the Fiscal Year 2011 budget process.

3) Keeping our Parks and Open Spaces Clean

Statement of Problem and Opportunity

We in Newton pride ourselves on the many beautiful woodland areas and playing fields in every neighborhood of our community. Sadly, it is hard to visit our parks in recent years without encountering bottles, cans, wrappers, boxes, broken glass and other waste strewn about. Every year, hundreds of volunteers do what they can to pick up some of this garbage, but each year the problem worsens. It is well within our ability to have clean, well-maintained parks. Clean parks have the ability to improve our quality of life and property values and to make a statement about the kind of community we live in.

Summary of Proposed Solution

We will adopt the four-point clean parks plan that has been proven effective in other communities:

- i) plentiful waste containers that are frequently emptied;
- ii) locally-accountable open space management; and
- iii) community-based partnerships and public education efforts; and
- iv) strict enforcement of littering laws.

Discussion and Implementation Plan

i) Waste Container Management

Garbage cans adjacent to playing fields are quickly filled during athletic events with water bottles and other recyclable containers. The addition of recycling con-

tainers in our parks, as discussed in Part A of this section, will significantly reduce the overflow that results in much of the loose trash in our parks. However, even the best waste receptacles properly placed in high-use areas will overflow if not emptied regularly. It is essential that we empty our waste receptacles before they reach capacity. Simple computer modeling can calculate the most efficient routes for collection of these containers. Ideally, sensors in each container would send a signal through the City's WiFi network (see C-6 below on page 61 for discussion) when the container is ready to be emptied. Also, neighborhood cooperation and feedback will go a long way toward identifying which containers tend to fill up quickly and at what times.

ii) Locally-Accountable Open Space Management

With a reduction in garbage overflowing from trash cans, the amount of labor to pick up trash and other litter will be reduced. City staff will therefore be freed for other park maintenance responsibilities. Upon encountering a potential problem, park users will be able to contact those re-

sponsible for maintaining the park through our customer service and feedback system. Thus, open space managers will be able to allocate resources as needed.

iii) Community-based Partnerships and Public Education Efforts

By partnering with park users and community groups, we can generate increased volunteerism for park maintenance efforts and improve feedback channels to track and address problems. Neighborhood associations, youth sport leagues, and people who live near parks may wish to participate in "adopt-a-space" programs when given the full support of the City.

iv) Strict Littering Enforcement

It is important that laws prohibiting littering be taken seriously. We will track and monitor the number of littering violations being written in each park and the level of public satisfaction with the cleanliness of that park. We will likely find that after some initial tickets are written, the level of public satisfaction will increase and the number of tickets that need to be written will decrease.



As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with city staff and Board of Aldermen to implement these initiatives starting with the Fiscal Year 2011 budget process.

4) Maintaining our Infrastructure and Streets

Statement of Problem and Opportunity

Smooth, well-maintained streets have a positive effect on quality of life, increase property values, and reduce fuel consumption. Preventive maintenance of streets reduces the need for expensive street reconstruction, lowering the overall cost of maintaining roadways while improving the quality of road surfaces.

Summary of the Proposed Solution

Newton will develop a comprehensive infrastructure maintenance plan that emphasizes investments in preventative maintenance that reduce long-term repair and reconstruction expenditures. This plan will be designed to maximize our return on investment for each dollar expended on infrastructure and should take advantage of the most cost-effective, environmentally-sensitive and reliable technologies. It will include:

- i) A street maintenance plan and
- ii) A bridge and culvert maintenance plan.

Discussion & Implementation Plan

i) Street Maintenance Plan

The appearance of well-maintained streets establishes a sense of well-being that comes from the knowledge that neighborhoods are well cared for and that citizens' concerns are addressed. Street recon-

struction and maintenance is a major component of our budget. In Fiscal Year 2008, Newton spent \$1.7 million of state Chapter 90 funds plus an estimated \$2.4 million of local receipts on road repair, reconstruction and maintenance. Newton can do a much better job of maintaining our streets, reducing the need for major street reconstruction, which can cost as much as 14 times as much as street resurfacing.

Neglect of roadway infrastructure maintenance provides a short term budget advantage but is costly in the long run because of continuing damage from ice and water. Maintaining streets is far more cost-effective than re-building them after they have failed. Patching and filling has the potential to reduce long term costs, provided that the efficacy and durability of the repairs is significant. Haphazard repairs may not be cost-effective. An additional consideration is cosmetic- extensive temporary repairs can themselves cause a street and a neighborhood to look shabby.

Other cities have developed comprehensive street surface maintenance programs that provide a wealth of information and experience applicable to conditions in Newton. Newton should develop a street maintenance program designed to maintain smooth streets throughout the City that incorporates the best aspects of programs already existing in other cities, including:

- Developing a regular schedule of resurfacing that allows us to resurface our three hundred miles of street on a regular basis (crack-sealing about every 5 years and overlaying every 20-25 years), preventing the need for costly road reconstruction.
- Investigating and incorporating the most appropriate surfacing technologies for each type of street, including slurry sealing, microsurfacing, cape sealing, rubber cape sealing, overlay-

ing, and rubber overlaying.

- Maintaining transparency concerning street maintenance and repair budgeting, planning and operations, so that Newton residents and businesses will know when work is scheduled to take place on a given street.
- Incorporating public input into prioritization of repairs, matching recommendations generated by engineers and software with local knowledge of street conditions and feedback from Newton's customer service database (see the Finance & Management Section for details).
- Interfacing with our transportation and environmental goals by considering possibilities for enhanced bicycle access (see Part C.1iii on page 52) and making use of cost-effective, environmentally-friendly paving materials, such as water-based asphalt-like material and pervious concrete that uses storm water to replenish watershed systems.
- Exploring public-private partnerships to generate new sources of revenue that can accelerate implementation of the street maintenance and repairs.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with city staff to put a paving plan in place by May 15, 2010 (in time for the Fiscal Year 2011 operating budget) and will adopt service level agreements for infrastructure performance (e.g. potholes will be filled within 48 hours) by January 1, 2011.

ii) Bridge & Culvert Maintenance Plan

Bridge maintenance is essential to public safety. Currently, Newton lacks an inspection and maintenance plan for our bridges that are less than 20 feet in length

(known as culverts) and relies on state inspections of longer bridges.

Newton must also work with state agencies to develop a regular schedule of bridge inspection and maintenance that includes:

- Working with neighboring communities to inspect and maintain the bridges that join our municipalities;
- Inspecting and maintaining pedestrian bridges for safety and ADA compliance;
- Working with state agencies, such as the MBTA and MWRA to make sure that their bridges are safe for vehicles and pedestrians; and
- Implementing a preventive maintenance plan for pedestrian bridges and culverts that are not inspected by the state.

Implementation Plan

We will develop and implement an infrastructure maintenance plan that takes into account the fiscal impacts of deferred maintenance and the performance standard desired for our public infrastructure. Our roads and bridges should be safe and functional. We will implement service level agreements (please see page 17 of the Finance & Management section for discussion) to establish performance standards for such activities as filling potholes and we will work to coordinate major street reconstructions with utility and water main work to minimize traffic disruptions.

An essential component of our infrastructure management plan will be to determine the frequency with which our streets should be repaved and to allocate resources accordingly, since the lack of a paving plan allows cracks to form in the surface of streets into which water can infiltrate, forcing the need for costly and disruptive street reconstruction.

We must also make sure that our bridges are safe for vehicle and pedestrian use.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with city staff to develop a bridge and culvert maintenance plan in place by July 1, 2010.

5) Protecting Public Safety

Statement of Problem and Opportunity

In addition to the public safety benefits that will accrue from the traffic mitigation and infrastructure maintenance plans discussed above, Newton faces significant other public safety challenges. In particular, due to budgetary constraints, we are faced with staffing and service reductions in our Police and Fire Departments, as well as a troubling lack of emergency preparedness. While we have taken excellent public safety protection for granted in Newton for many years, we are at risk of losing that sense of security if we do not take decisive action to support these essential services.

Summary of the Proposed Solution

To protect public safety in Newton, we will take prompt and decisive action to:

- i) Restore Police Department services, particularly crime prevention and community policing, to acceptable levels;
- ii) Improve Fire Department equipment and response times up to nationally-recognized safety standards;
- iii) Modernize and upgrade our combined dispatch center; and
- iv) Develop and promulgate an emergency response and communication plan.

Discussion and Implementation Plan

i) Restore Community Policing Services

As a result of recent reductions in the number of police officers in Newton, a number of important functions that help to prevent crime and to protect public safety have been reduced or eliminated. For example, youth officer functions have been reduced, the senior liaison position has been eliminated, and the community policing program in which police officers spent time in our schools educating students about building an identification profile was eliminated.

Restoring important crime-prevention functions to the Police Department will require adding back some of the positions that have been eliminated, making use of modern resource-allocation practices, and prioritizing the functions we ask our police to perform. This last point is particularly important. We can free up police resources for important public safety initiatives by eliminating lower-priority activities. We can also create a culture of high levels of voluntary compliance by enforcing important ordinances and repealing those that are unimportant, relieving the police from having to enforce them. For example, there is no need for an overnight parking ban, if the justification is to prevent cars from blocking snow plows. We simply need to prohibit parking during snow-clearing (at all hours, day or night). Other ordinances that are important to the quality of life in Newton but are confusing, complicated and difficult to enforce should be simplified and enforcement training should be offered to all interested police officers.

ii) Improve Fire Department Equipment and Response Time

The Newton Fire Department has suffered in recent years from elimination of a fire engine, significant reductions in

staffing, and inadequate and outdated equipment. As a result, we do not comply with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards for response time. We will upgrade the equipment used by our firefighters and invest the resources needed to bring fire prevention and suppression up to acceptable standards to protect Newton residents and the people who work in our city. We should also place a high value on ensuring the safety and well-being of our firefighters and other emergency responders. By working with our professionals in these departments, we will be able to agree on safety standards that will allow us to measure performance and engage in an ongoing process of improvement that will make Newton a safer place to live and to work.

iii) Modernize and Upgrade our Combined Dispatch Center

All emergency calls in Newton are routed through our emergency dispatch center, which has suffered in recent years from outdated equipment, poor working conditions, understaffing, lack of back-up communication lines, and other operational challenges. While some of the outdated equipment has recently been replaced and the center has been renovated, many problems with this important operation remain. We will map out needed improvements, develop and test a back-up operations plan, and vigorously monitor progress toward achieving the level of reliable functionality needed to make sure every emergency call is handled as efficiently as possible.

iv) Develop an Emergency Response and Communication Plan

Newton needs to be better prepared to respond to a natural disaster, terrorist attack, disease outbreak, or other emergency.

We will work to develop and promulgate an emergency response and communication plan with the following components: clear lines of communication, pre-positioning of emergency supplies and medicines in strategic locations throughout the city, and planned evacuation routes in case a portion of the city is not safe.

The communication plan will include channels of communication with state emergency responders and response teams in neighboring cities and towns, so that we can coordinate efforts effectively. It will also incorporate direct lines of communication with state and local public health officials, so that vaccine, treatment, and other contagion-related information can be distributed quickly and accurately. The plan will also include secondary and tertiary communication channels, in case primary channels, such as phone, email, and radio, are not functioning.

The most important aspect of emergency response planning is to make sure that everyone who has a role in the plan or may be able to assist in implementation of the plan is familiar with the plan and has access to it. That means that every municipal department, school, library and other public building should have a printed copy of the plan available and all city employees should be briefed on how they should respond in case of an emergency.

In addition to initial training of relevant personnel, periodic drills are essential to working out implementation challenges and maintaining knowledge of the emergency response plan.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with city staff and the Board of Aldermen to implement these initiatives over the course of his administration, as resources become available.

6) Protecting and Expanding Community Assets and Amenities

Statement of Problem and Opportunity

Over the course of our many hundreds of conversations with Newton residents, we identified a number of characteristics of our neighborhoods that are valued community assets, such as the quiet of our residential neighborhoods and the historic charm of our architecture. At the same time, there are new amenities that Newton residents would like to see become available, such as expanded wireless Internet access. As we move forward, we must be careful to protect the community assets and amenities we value, even while we explore ways to offer new ones.

Summary of Proposed Solution

We will enforce laws that protect and preserve the quiet historic character, and other valued attributes of our neighborhoods, while exploring opportunities to offer Newton residents new amenities, such as wireless Internet access.

Discussion and Implementation Plan

In order to protect our neighborhoods from noise pollution, we should make sure that the standards of our noise ordinance are as simple and enforceable as possible, and then provide our police and with the training and equipment they need to enforce those standards.

Historic preservation is a delicate balancing act. On the one hand, we need to identify and to protect treasured cultural and historic assets. But we need to do so without placing an undue burden on residents who want to improve their homes or

businesses seeking to take part in our sustainable growth plan. Our historic preservation strategy must recognize that every day we are writing new history. We should not allow our desire to preserve the past to prevent us from embracing the future. We must develop well-thought-out historic preservation standards that balance these competing interests.

While the WiFi initiative led by Alderman Parker has been delayed by the decision of a vendor not to participate, we should continue to work to develop a city-wide wireless network in Newton. In addition to offering inexpensive Internet access to Newton residents and businesses, NewtonNet will serve to lower operating costs of municipal departments, to improve emergency communications, and to offer free Internet access in hot spots around the City.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with the Police Department to determine whether changes are needed to the noise ordinance to simplify enforcement and will submit any required ordinance revisions to the Board of Aldermen by September 1, 2010. Adequate resources for enforcement will be included in the proposed Fiscal Year 2011 operating budget. The Parker Administration will work with the Historic Commission and the Board of Aldermen on historic preservation issues, preparing any needed revisions by January 1, 2011. We will prepare a draft NewtonNet plan by March 1, 2010.

D) Adopting and Adhering to Smart Growth Principles

Newton is a city of villages, commercial corridors, and residential neighborhoods. This pattern of mixed land use, with closely adjacent residential,

work, and commercial uses adds to the livability of our city and is a sustainable type of development for our future. Development standards should reflect the diversity and individuality of our villages and neighborhoods while being open to modest new growth. Our zoning codes and land use policies should reflect the values and direction we wish to take for our City and help us accomplish planning efforts that help achieve excellence in place-making. Towards these ends, we will:

- 1) **Integrate the principles of the Comprehensive Plan into our zoning ordinances;**
- 2) **Pursue environmentally-sustainable mixed-use growth opportunities;**
- 3) **Target commercial growth to appropriate areas;**
- 4) **Expand and improve open space and recreation amenities; and**
- 5) **Meet Newton's changing housing needs.**

1) Comprehensive Plan Implementation

Statement of Problem and Opportunity

Newton's City Charter and Massachusetts law require the City to have a Comprehensive Plan. Following an inclusive citywide effort, chaired by Newton resident and planner Philip B. Herr, Newton's current Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the Board of Aldermen in November, 2007. The Comprehensive Plan represents a set of "best practices" designed to guide the City of Newton in its development in the ensuing years. However, the Plan is only as useful as we make it. Newton officials must decide how aggressively to integrate the principles and ideas of the Comprehensive Plan into our land use policies

and practices and the decisions that are made every day at City Hall.

Summary of Proposed Solution

We will actively integrate the principles and ideas of the Comprehensive Plan into Newton policymaking at every level.

Discussion and Implementation Plan

The Comprehensive Plan makes recommendations on future decisions regarding land use, transportation, housing, and economic development in the city. Its recommendations reflect a broad consensus of ideas on how Newton can grow and develop with a respect for the city's open space, history, and community character. The principles and implementation actions that are outlined in the Plan should serve as benchmarks to guide the city as new projects and plans come forward in proposed development. The Mayor's office will work with the Board of Aldermen and the City Planning Department to advise developers and others so that the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan may be implemented. Investments in capital funds will support maintenance of our facilities and support new growth in the manner it is envisioned in our Comprehensive Plan. We propose to revise the Zoning Ordinance to incorporate the principles of the Plan.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will submit proposed ordinance amendments to the Board of Aldermen that are designed to incorporate the principles of the Comprehensive Plan into our zoning ordinances and other local laws by January 1, 2011. The Parker Administration will conduct an annual review to measure to what extent Comprehensive Plan ideas

and principles are being considered and acted on by City departments.

2) Environmentally-Sustainable Mixed-Use Growth

Statement of Problem and Opportunity

Although many parts of Newton have been developed, in some areas of our city there remain opportunities for new growth or redevelopment that is environmentally sustainable and sensitive to the needs of our community and its neighborhoods. Modest new growth can build our city's tax base, provide needed services, jobs, and amenities for our residents, and create or improve on places of which we can be proud.

Summary of Proposed Solution

Newton will pursue a mixed-use growth strategy centered on maintaining the quality of life in our villages and neighborhoods.

Discussion and Implementation Plan

Newton's residents take pride in our mixed-use villages that add to the vitality of our community. It's where people can live, shop, work, and mix and mingle. Appropriate modest new growth should be possible in some of our villages that will also serve to further enhance our neighborhoods and our economy. At the center of the consideration of new development plans will be the question, "Would the proposed development make this neighborhood a better place to live?" Priority will be given to development that does not increase vehicular traffic, but instead provides services to people who are already

living in nearby neighborhoods. Development will be encouraged that allows residents to get services locally that they might otherwise have to drive considerable distances to find.

New development should maintain and reflect the character of the type of city Newton residents currently enjoy. Well-planned development needs to balance our housing and commercial needs while enhancing our village centers and interrelating with the community in a complementary way. New mixed-use development can work to produce improvements in our transportation system and to offer improved transit, pedestrian, and bicycle access. Development approaches that respect our existing neighborhoods and environmental resources will be supported.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will propose a mixed-use zoning plan to the Board of Aldermen by January 1, 2011.

3) Targeted Areas for Commercial Development

Statement of Problem and Opportunity

Because of historical factors that influenced the development of Newton's villages, businesses are often in close proximity to residential uses. This pattern of development can benefit residents by providing them with ready access to goods and services and employment, but can also have negative impacts on residential quality of life as noise, traffic, and other impacts of commercial uses can impinge upon residential quality of life. Because Newton does not have a large central commercial district, the City is also heavily reliant on residential property taxes.

Summary of Proposed Solution

New commercial growth, with a preference for mixed use development, will be targeted to appropriate non-residential areas of the city.

Discussion and Implementation Plan

Newton's commercial areas consist of small neighborhood villages, larger local and major centers of business activity, and regional business areas. In order to preserve the residential nature of our neighborhoods, new commercial growth should be guided to existing areas of business activity. In our larger village centers and regional transportation corridors, such as the Mass Pike, Route 9, and Needham Street corridors, new or reconfigured development can be supported that will complement and enhance existing commercial nodes. In many areas, mixed use development will be more appropriate for maintaining a balance among our city's needs for housing, jobs, and commerce. However, in areas where commercial growth alone is appropriate, it should be encouraged to serve as an economic engine to provide jobs, services, and new tax revenue.

The Needham Street corridor represents an area in Newton that may benefit from targeted commercial or mixed use development. By implementing zoning and design principles that lead to modest scale growth, development can take place of appropriate scale and integration with adjacent parcels and surrounding neighborhoods. Development in the Needham Street corridor in conjunction with the extension of light rail transit to the corridor can reflect true "smart growth" principles and result in transit oriented and pedestrian accessible homes and businesses. Density bonuses should be awarded to developers who contribute to the city's open space and transit resources.

Another important opportunity for commercial growth that will be pursued is for air rights development over the Mass Pike, which if appropriately designed and constructed could offer amenities to existing neighborhoods, could reconnect villages with pedestrian access, and could result in significant new property tax growth.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with the Economic Development Commission and the Planning Department to identify areas of the City appropriate for commercial development or redevelopment and will present the findings of this research to the Board of Aldermen by July 1, 2011.

The Parker Administration will also work with the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority or its successor agency and appropriate state officials to explore the process by which Newton can authorize uses for the air rights over the Pike. This process should be initiated by March 1, 2010.

4) Expanded and Improved Open Space and Recreation Amenities

Statement of Problem and Opportunity

Newton has many beautiful parks, playgrounds, and wooded areas (many of which are in need of improved maintenance – please see page 43 for discussion). However, new development can bring new growth and increased activity, creating more demand for parks.

Summary of Proposed Solution

New development and redevelopment in Newton will include provisions for new parks, recreation areas, and other open spaces that can be enjoyed by the entire community. In addition, parcels identified in the Open Space Plan will be targeted for acquisition to expand existing parks and to create new usable open space around Newton.

Discussion and Implementation Plan

Zoning rules that allow additional density by special permit or other means will require that developers include usable open space in their plans where feasible. In cases where a lot is too small to accommodate functional open space on site, developers will be allowed to contribute to build a larger, publicly accessible and usable recreational space or park rather than having each parcel developed with its own open space. These pocket parks are most appropriate in moderate-density, mixed-use areas, but can also be viable in residential neighborhoods and even in commercial areas, if properly planned to integrate with the needs of the surrounding businesses.

In addition to allocating a specific portion of their site to open space, developers of larger parcels seeking special permits or other zoning relief should work with adjacent property owners and the neighborhood to insure that the open space created is usable and accessible.

In all cases, open space zoning requirements will balance the needs of the community with the rights of property owners. Increased open space requirements are appropriate when something is being offered to the property owner in exchange, such as increased density allowances than would otherwise be permitted.

Existing passive recreation areas (parks, playgrounds, woods, etc.) will be

expanded when opportunities arise, consistent with the priorities of Newton's open space plan. Active recreation uses like sports fields, basketball courts and tennis courts will be upgraded, expanded and otherwise adapted to meet changing community needs. The City will work closely with schools, youth sports leagues, and community groups to determine utilization patterns and needs.

Shared usage parks that integrate active and passive uses will be encouraged and supported where possible.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with the Planning Department to develop an updated Open Space and Recreation Plan by June 30, 2010, to meet state re-



Using NewtonStat to Measure Environmental Impacts

As part of the *NewtonStat* performance management system that tracks delivery of services and costs, we incorporate an environmental measurement tool that tracks our performance in four key environmental areas: 1) energy consumption, 2) waste generation, 3) tree and open space preservation, and 4) green transit.

We should set clear performance goals in each of these areas, tracking progress and seeking input from Newton residents on how we can improve our performance in each area. In addition to dollar costs, our City budget and capital planning documents would include environmental costs of each program.

This would allow us to conduct an on-going self-assessment in these important areas of environmental impact.

1) **Energy Consumption**— This tool would allow Newton residents to track the energy consumption of all 85 public buildings. When budgeting funds to replace a boiler or upgrade an HVAC system, the anticipated reduction in fossil-fuel consumption will appear along side the cost of the project. Newton students would be able to track how much energy their own school consumes and compete to find ways to make their school buildings more energy efficient. What would be the environmental impact of solar panels? Would replacing windows have a greater environmental return-on-investment? We would have total transparency to see the energy-consumption consequences of our tax dollars.

2) **Waste Generation**— Newton residents are conscious of the need to reduce the amount of trash we throw away. The new, improved recycling containers that will soon be available to all Newton residents should go a long way toward reducing the amount of non-recycled garbage Newton generates. Also important are source-reduction efforts to eliminate unnecessary packaging. The *NewtonStat* environment module would allow Newton residents to monitor the total amount of solid waste being generated in each neighborhood, as well as what percentage of that waste stream is being recycled. Similarly, it would show trash and recycling numbers for city and school buildings.

3) **Tree and Open Space Preservation**— Newton is currently suffering net losses of more than 400 street trees each year, while development pressure threatens some of our remaining open spaces. The loss of City trees and undeveloped land would be mapped on the City's website, enabling Newton residents to track the vitality of Newton's urban forest and protected open-space resources.

4) **Green Transit**— Each year, more and more cars clog Newton's streets, generating pollution and negatively impacting our quality of life. We can reduce our reliance on automobile transportation through development of bike paths and lanes, walkable sidewalks, and improved public transportation choices. We can also make our roads safer for bicycles and pedestrians through better maintenance, since potholes that are expensive inconveniences to motorists can be dangerous for cyclists and pedestrians. Smoother streets are not only safer, they have the added benefit of reducing automobile fuel consumption and releasing less toxic material (broken asphalt) into our rivers and streams. We should have the tools to measure our progress in developing these alternative green transportation choices in Newton.

These monitoring tools should include an online, interactive map of the City, allowing Newton residents to make suggestions for improved environmental performance, find public transportation hubs and bike routes, view the carbon footprints of city buildings, and monitor the health of our urban forest.

quirements. Open space requirements will be included in the mixed-use plan to be submitted by the Mayor to the Board of Aldermen by January 1, 2010. In addition, the Planning Department should consider the functionality and accessibility of proposed open space, not just its square footage, when considering development proposals.

5) Meeting Newton's Changing Housing Needs

Statement of Problem and Opportunity

Newton experiences periodic demographic cycles that change the population mix of the City. While Newton has had a high percentage of older residents in recent years, it is reasonable to expect that there will be a cycle in the next decade during which an increasing number of young families will move into Newton. Similar to many suburbs, Newton's housing is primarily comprised of single-family homes. As a result, two particular groups of Newton residents are often unable to remain in the City when their needs change: senior citizens who decide it is time to sell their houses and move into smaller accommodations and the children of Newton residents who want to stay in the community, but are ready to move out of their parents' homes. In addition, there is a need to update our affordable housing strategy to target public subsidy resources where they can be used most effectively. Currently, we do not have a plan to attain the state-mandated level of ten percent affordable housing. Instead, we have ceded de-facto control of our affordable housing development program to private developers who seek comprehensive permits un-

der Chapter 40B of Massachusetts General Laws. We need a proactive approach to meeting the affordable housing needs of our community.

Summary of Proposed Solution

Newton will:

- i) Encourage the development of small- and moderately-sized apartments and condominiums in existing residential and mixed-use areas, particularly near public transportation, village centers, and key mixed use corridors;
- ii) Develop an affordable housing plan that describes how we will improve the supply of reasonably priced housing with annual benchmarks that aim to meet state requirements; and
- iii) Weigh environmental impacts as part of the housing development process.

Discussion and Implementation Plan

i) Small Residential Unit Development

The first challenge of local officials seeking to influence housing markets to meet community needs is to match housing policies and regulations to intended goals and consequences. For example, an unintended consequence of zoning restrictions that require large minimum lot sizes can have the effect of increasing housing prices. For this reason, it is important to balance competing community values when making housing policy. Zoning restrictions should therefore be developed with full understanding of their consequences.

Some of the unintended consequences we should seek to avoid are adding students to already overcrowded classrooms, decreasing tax revenue by allowing residential development to replace businesses

in commercial areas; and negatively impacting the quality of life in our neighborhoods by adding traffic, noise and other disruptions. If new residential development is not accompanied by new mixed use, commercial, and office development, our tax base may not be able to support the service needs. To achieve a balance between the revenue and costs of new growth, we should promote the development of small- and mid-sized apartments and condominiums in existing residential areas and new mixed use areas, especially those that are near public transportation. These units can be designed to appeal to senior citizens who sell their houses looking for smaller places to live, and to young people who wish to live within easy walking distance of shops and public transportation. Promoting development of smaller housing units which are inherently more affordable than single-family homes will create local affordability without public subsidy.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will submit a small residential unit zoning amendment to the Board of Aldermen by January 1, 2011.

ii) Affordable Housing Plan

Under Chapter 40B of Massachusetts General Law, cities and towns that do not have ten percent affordable housing or an approved plan to get to ten percent affordable housing lose local control over housing developments that are proposed through the comprehensive permit process described under the statute. However, municipalities that take the initiative to plan their affordable housing strategy locally can have a much greater local autonomy with respect to housing development decisions.

Known as a "Housing Production

Plan," this type of local initiative is described by the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development as follows:

A Housing Production Plan (HPP) is a community's proactive strategy for planning and developing affordable housing by: creating a strategy to enable it to meet its affordable housing needs in a manner consistent with the Chapter 40B statute and regulations; and producing housing units in accordance with the HPP.

The HPP regulation became effective on February 22, 2008 when the DHCD promulgated 760 CMR 56.00, Comprehensive Permit; Low or Moderate Income Housing. The HPP regulation is contained in 760 CMR 56.03(4). HPPs replace Planned Production under 760 CMR 31.07(1)(i).

If a community has a DHCD-approved HPP and is granted certification of compliance with the plan by DHCD, a decision by the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) relative to a comprehensive permit application will be deemed "consistent with local needs" under MGL Chapter 40B. "Consistent with local needs" means the ZBA's decision will be upheld by the Housing Appeals Committee.⁴

By adopting a Housing Production Plan, Newton would not only regain control of our affordable housing strategy, protecting our neighborhoods from the threat of inappropriately dense construction, but we would also engage in a discussion about how best to allocate our limited affordable housing dollars to achieve the maximum possible results.

Newton's current reactive approach to affordable housing has resulted in proposals that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars in public subsidy per affordable unit being approved, not because that was the

⁴ Source: http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=ehedterminal&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Community+Development&L2=Chapter+40B+Planning&sid=Ehed&b=terminalcontent&f=dhcd_cd_ch40b_planprod&csid=Ehed

most cost-effective use of those funds, but because it was the proposal offered by a developer.

Through the process of creating and implementing a Housing Production Plan, we will be able to target our limited resources to help the neediest amongst us.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will work with the Planning Department, Board of Aldermen, housing developers, neighborhood associations, and other interested parties to develop a Housing Production Plan by January 1, 2012.

iii) Environmental Impacts of Housing Development

Environmental impacts of housing development will be considerations in zoning and land use policy, as well as in the allocation of public resources for the creation of housing. The impacts considered

will include: a) the environmental health impacts of building materials; b) the impact on wetlands, parks and conservation land; c) the energy efficiency of the heating and cooling systems, particularly with respect to projected energy consumption; d) the water use and retention characteristics of the project; and e) the projected traffic generation and the associated pollution.

As Mayor, Ken Parker will file a package of zoning reforms with the Board of Aldermen by September 1, 2010 that includes environmental impacts of new development as land use criteria and will work with the Board of Aldermen, Community Preservation Committee, and other Newton entities that develop housing to ensure that environmental impacts are considered in their deliberations.



Notes

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