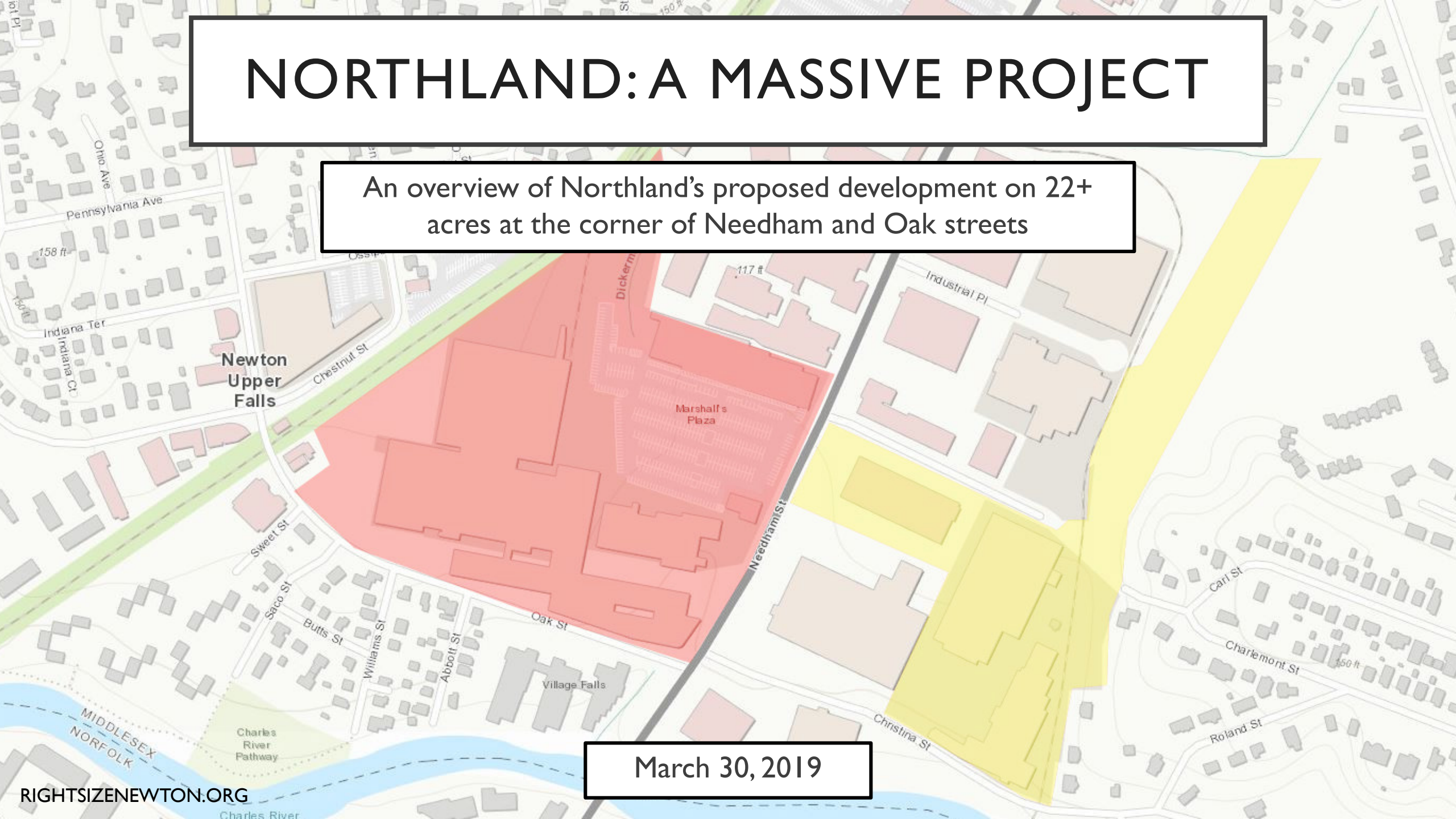


NORTHLAND: A MASSIVE PROJECT

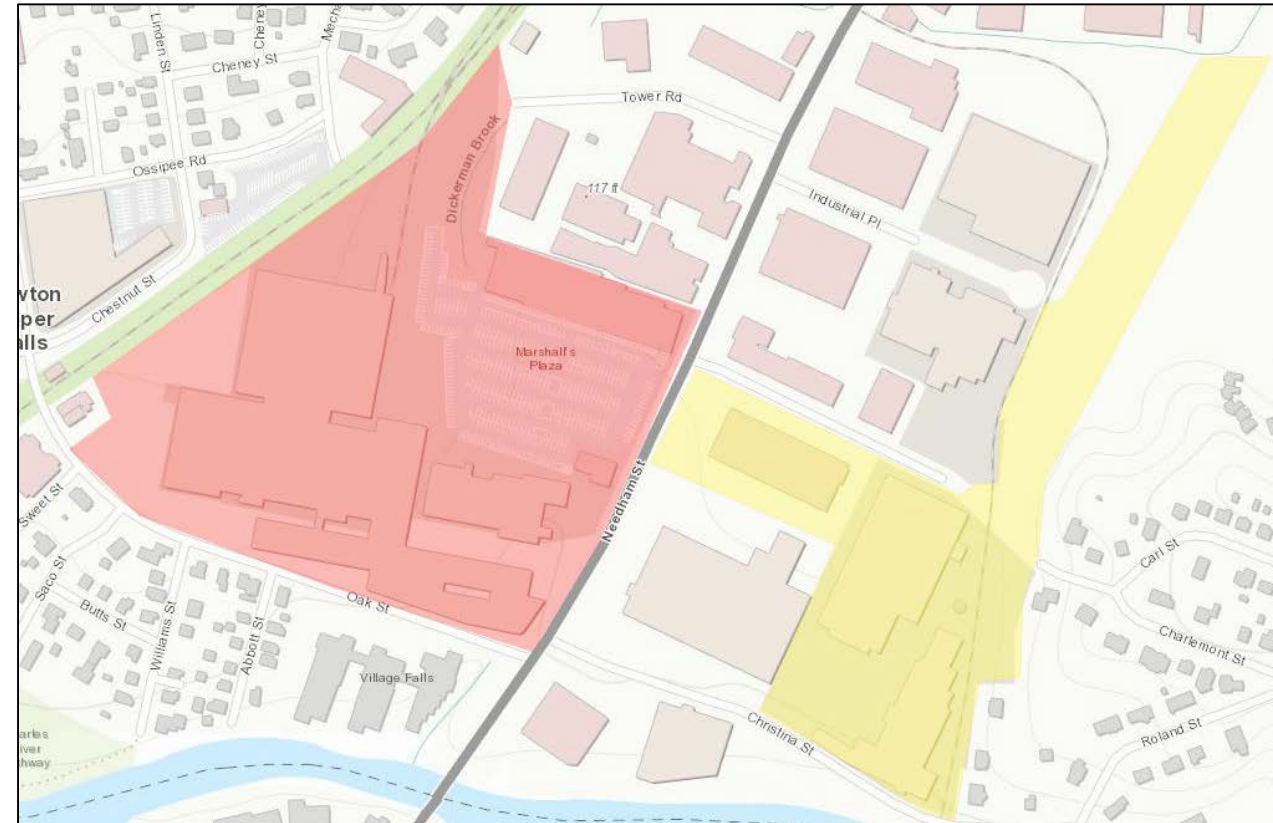
An overview of Northland's proposed development on 22+ acres at the corner of Needham and Oak streets

March 30, 2019



PROJECT OVERVIEW

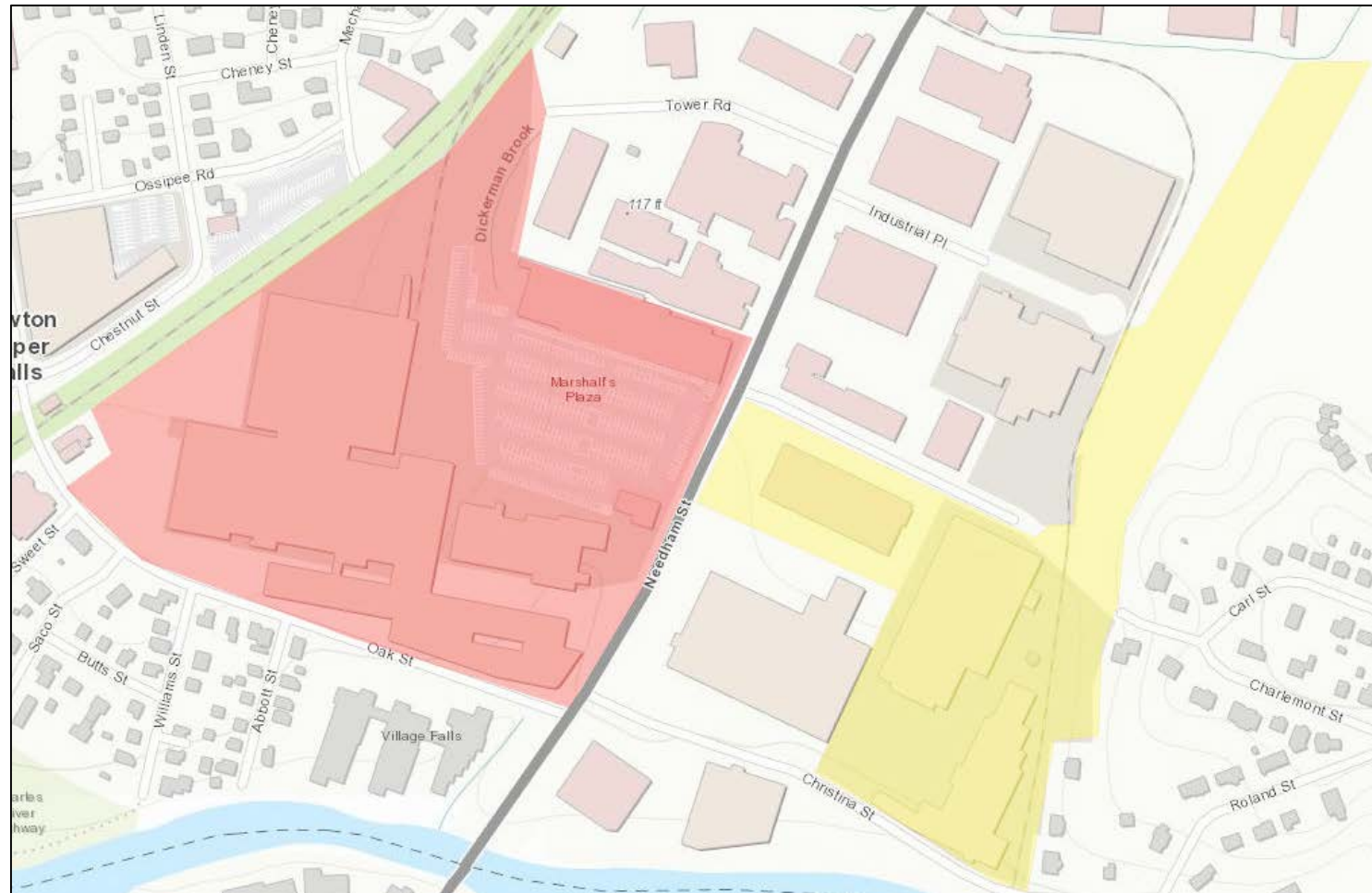
- 22.6 total acres (the area shaded in red)
- 800 rental units
 - 80 studio units, 360 1-bedroom units, 320 2-bedroom units, 40 3-bedroom units
- 180,000 square feet of office space (in existing Mill building)
- 115,000 square feet of retail, community and office space in new buildings
 - Replacing 70,753 square feet of current retail space
- 1,550 parking spaces (1,410 in underground garages)
 - 3,400 spaces are required by current Newton zoning for a project this size



- 17 buildings, up to 8 stories and 96 feet high

WHAT'S WITH THE YELLOW SHADING?

- Northland has also acquired **14.6** acres across Needham street (the area shaded yellow)
- Plans for this site have not been announced
- Consider the current proposal **“Phase 1”**
- **Phase 2** is likely to be more of the same



OUR MAIN CONCERNS

- City council and the developers
- Density, scale, and size
- Impact on schools
- Insufficient parking
- Impact on traffic
- Affordability
- Senior housing

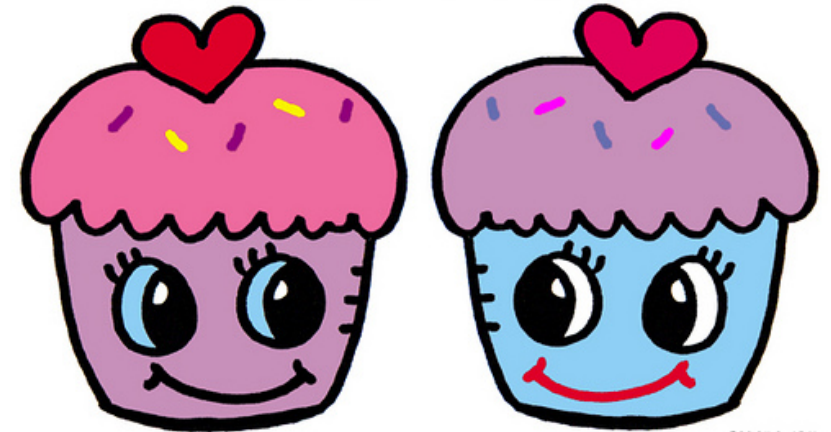


WE ARE **NOT** ANTI-DEVELOPMENT. WE WELCOME **APPROPRIATE** DEVELOPMENT OF THIS SITE!

CITY COUNCIL AND DEVELOPERS

- Developers **DO NOT** represent our best interest; they represent **THEIR INVESTORS**
- City council feels very pro-development (clearly not all councilors)
- Visioning process was inadequate
- Regional push to create housing creates pressure
- Uncanny match between proposed rezoning and Northland's proposed rezoning
- Approving Phase 1 without knowing about Phase 2 is illogical
- The council should represent **US**, not developers

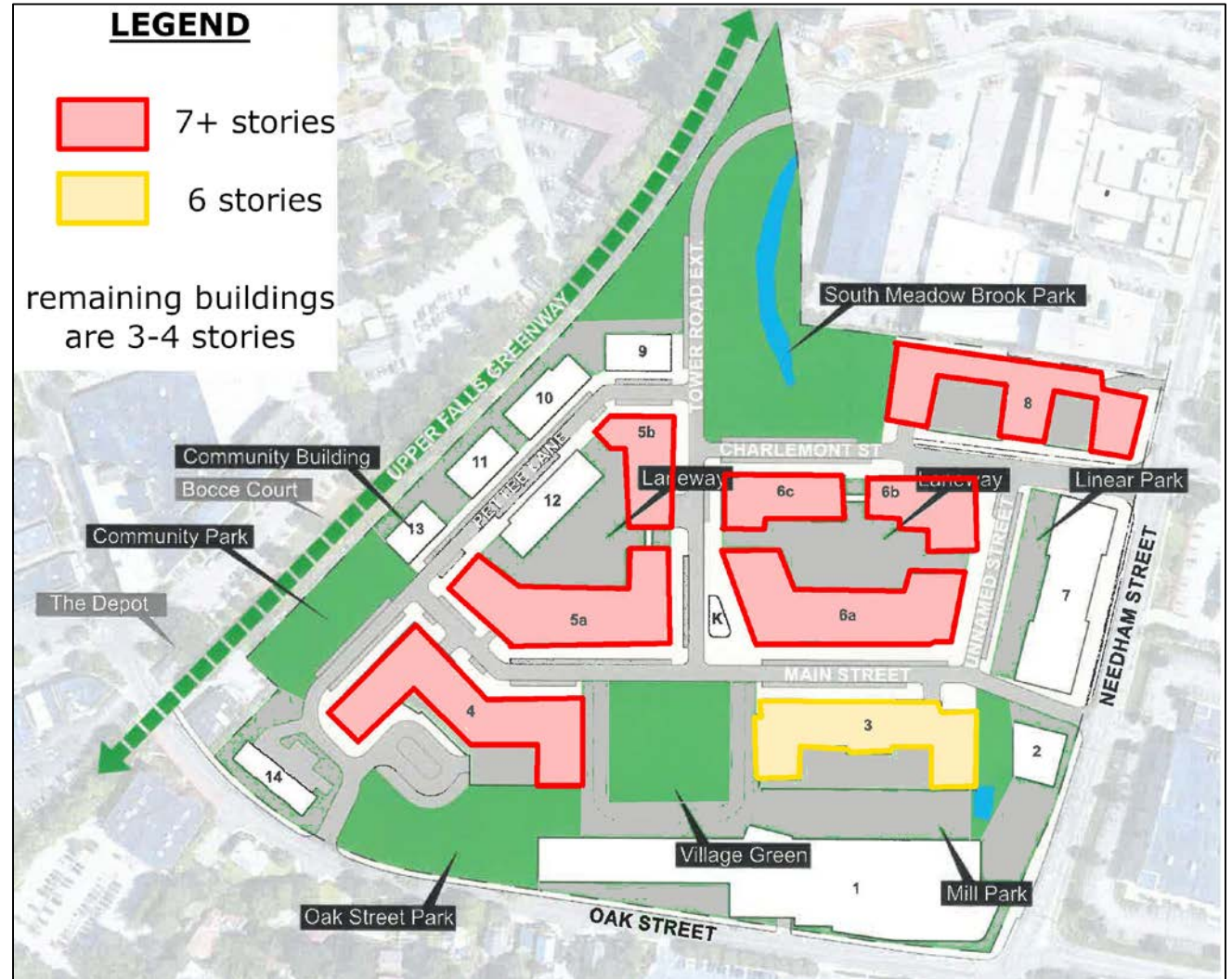
Best Friends!!



JELENE.COM

DENSITY, SCALE AND SIZE

- 17 buildings
 - 7 are 7+ stories, 96' high
 - “By right” height is 3 stories and 36 feet
- “Green” space not actually green
 - Most is pavers / walkways
 - Meadow brook area not usable
- Open space ≠ public space
 - Northland owns and controls all land



IMPACT ON SCHOOLS

- Northland estimates that the proposed development will result in only **138 new students**
- Newton Public Schools' Interim methodology estimates **170 new students**
 - Using estimated Student Generation Ratio (SGR) based on average bedrooms, not counting studios (.236)
 - Estimated Northland SGR is much lower than existing large projects
- Avalon at Newton Highlands is 294 units and has 102 students
- Correcting NPS' low SGR to match average of large projects raises the estimate to **280 new students**
- This is consistent with housing trends (between 2004 and 2018)
 - 47% more condominium units in Newton
 - 204% increase in student enrollment from condominiums
 - 130% increase in student enrollment from apartments
- Newton Public Schools claims enough capacity
 - But overrides (higher taxes) are needed to expand and rebuild schools
- City council **WILL NOT** take school impact into account



INSUFFICIENT PARKING

- **Not enough parking** for the proposed development
 - Latest proposal calls for **1,550 total parking spaces** (reduced from 1,900+ in original proposal!)
- Northland estimates **776 cars** from **800 apartments** (half of them 2-3 bedroom); this is way too low, a conservative estimate is **980 cars**
 - Leaving **774 spots** for:
 - Northland's estimated **1,346 employees** in retail/office portions of the project
 - Retail customers who Northland states will have to drive, since “the customer radius is more than a **5 minute drive**”
 - Guests and visitors
 - Shuttle bus passengers
- Newton Nexus (141-165 Needham Street) has 1/3 the parking (**518 parking spaces**) and is <1/10th the size
- Newton zoning requires **3,400 parking spaces** for a project this size
 - **Artificially** decreasing the number of spaces without decreasing the scale of the project does not reduce the number of cars
 - Cambridge tried this and failed (though some of our councilors continue to welcome this as a form of “social engineering”)
 - Residents will still drive; they will still own cars; they will just **park on city streets**
 - Neighborhoods streets not wide enough to accommodate two-sided 24/7 parking and emergency vehicle access

TRAFFIC

- By far, the most important issue
- Everyone knows how bad it already is!
- Waze/Google Maps/Apple Maps already reroute drivers around Needham street
- Many in the community refuse to patronize stores because of traffic
- 70% of the traffic is **pass-by/pass-through** traffic
- Studies consistently show no improvement from proposed road changes
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council's (MAPC) September 2017 review of the Northland proposal states it will generate an **additional 4,521 DAILY vehicle trips**
- According to Northland's own consultant (VHB), daily (weekday) unadjusted total vehicle trips nearly triple from **6,249** to **17,176**
- Oak Street exit from property will cause gridlock

THE SHUTTLE SERVICE

- Northland proposes a shuttle service to: Newton Highlands/Newton Centre/Newtonville, Needham Heights, Central/Kendall Square, and Seaport
 - It will run every 30 - 45 minutes (or less frequently)
 - It will cost money (Northland will tell us how much on the 9th)
 - Will anyone use it?
 - 13% of Newton residents take public transportation to work; 95% own a car
 - Northland's own consultant (I28 Business Council) says:
 - It is “*extremely difficult to project ridership for a population that is not already using public transportation*”
 - “*If someone owns a car, they will use it – even when other transportation modes are available*”
- This is Newton Nexus Redux



AFFORDABILITY

- Northland will comply with the **bare minimum** affordable requirements
- Newton's median rents for 1 and 2-bedroom apartments are \$2,700 and \$3,500
 - Considered "affordable" for households making at least \$108,000 and \$140,000, respectively
 - Northland will command higher rents in its "exciting new mixed use development"
- Newton's 2016 Housing Needs Analysis report
 - Need for 5,000 housing units priced at or below 80% of area median income (AMI)
 - **Oversupply of 6,400 housing units priced at or above AMI**
 - According to HUD, Newton's AMI is \$107,800
- Between **82.5% and 85%** of the project will be market-rate
 - **Adding to the oversupply** of such units



SENIOR CITIZENS AND AGING IN PLACE

- Northland cites the Newton Council on Aging to suggest that between 1,000 and 2,000 senior housing units will be needed by 2020 and proposes making one building “age-friendly”
- However, seniors **overwhelmingly DO NOT WANT** to live in luxury high-rise rental apartments
 - The Newtonville Area Council’s recent public opinion survey shows that almost **60%** of surveyed residents over 60 prefer to stay in their current houses
 - Only **5%** would prefer to move to a high-rise building with elevators
- Most seniors also **CANNOT AFFORD** to live in the luxury apartments proposed
 - 44% of seniors in Newton have income below \$49,000; 66% below \$100,000
- Rising real estate taxes **force seniors out of their homes**
 - Overrides for building schools, providing services, and financing our pension obligations cause taxes to increase dramatically for those who can afford them the least

FOR MORE INFO

- See the Appendix to this presentation for more information on:
 - Inaccuracy and incompleteness of Northland's traffic studies
 - Inaccuracy of Northland's shuttle bus projections
 - Inadequacy of Northland's transportation plan
 - Issues with the heavily-residential nature of this proposed development
- Visit RIGHTSIZENEWTON.ORG
 - AND **REGISTER** SO YOU CAN STAY UP TO DATE

WHAT WE ARE ASKING YOU TO DO

- Get informed!
- Get involved!
 - Attend Land Use Committee meetings
 - Voice your opposition to this massive project; make them build it right!
- Inform your neighbors and friends!
- Call your city councilors:

Ward 1 (Newton Corner / Nonantum)	Ward 2 (Newtonville):	Ward 3 (West Newton):	Ward 4 (Lower Falls / West Newton):
Maria Greenberg: 617-631-8691	Emily Norton: 617-795-0362	Barbara Brousal-Glaser: 857-256-0646	Christopher Markiewicz: 617-332-7231
Alison Leary: 617-527-1182	Jake Auchincloss: 617-835-9895	Andrea Kelley: 857-297-2177	Leonard Gentile: 617-527-5446
Allan Ciccone: 617-965-2690	Susan Albright: 617-527-7108	James Cote: 508-983-4535	Joshua Krintzman: 617-558-0699

Ward 5 (Upper Falls / Waban):	Ward 6 (Newton Centre):	Ward 7 (Chestnut Hill):	Ward 8 (Highlands / Oak Hill):
John Rice: 617-201-7088	Brenda Noel: 617-620-2721	Lisle Baker: 617-566-3848	Cheryl Lappin: 617-244-9226
Andreae Downs: 617-329-1261	Greg Schwartz: 617-396-4160	Marc Laredo: 617-527-9889	Richard Lipof: 617-332-8909, x24
Deborah Crossley: 617-775-1294	Victoria Danberg: 508-641-4500	Rebecca Grossman: 617-467-5195	David Kalis: 617-504-3301

APPENDIX

TRAFFIC STUDY IS INACCURATE

- Study based on assumptions that conflict with previously provided information
 - Northland’s consultant (VHB) expects “many residents, patrons, employees and some local residents ... will take advantage of the shuttle system,” but provides **no basis for this claim**; this claim conflicts with The 128 Council’s own admission that it is “**extremely difficult to project ridership** for a population that is not already using public transportation”
 - VHB’s list of potential retail uses includes only “small eating establishment, coffee shops, pharmacies, or gallery uses,” but these uses are **inconsistent** with Northland’s assertion that “the customer radius [for its proposed retail establishments] is more than a 5 minute drive” and is **inconsistent with the permit request**, which also includes “drive-in businesses,” “hotels,” “places of amusement,” “radio or TV broadcasting studios,” and “restaurants of over 50 seats”
- VHB’s estimate of a 0.5% traffic growth rate is too low
- VHB estimates that 47% of residential traffic and 35% of office traffic will approach the site from Route 95
 - VHB claims that with a **robust** shuttle service, 30% of residential and office traffic will use public transit; but since **the transportation plan does not include any public transit options to/from Route 95**, this is 30% of 53% and 65%, respectively, meaning **at most 16%** of residential traffic and **20%** of office traffic **might use public transportation**, with a **robust** shuttle service

TRAFFIC STUDY IS INACCURATE

- VHB identified the “land use along Needham Street [as] primarily commercial”
 - This ignores the 294 residential apartments at Avalon Newton Highlands
 - These apartments have not resulted in a meaningful increase in the utilization of the MBTA bus service along Needham street
- Comparing the proposed development to no development or to a commercial-only development is misleading
 - Northland is unlikely to leave the property undeveloped and is also unlikely to develop it as a 100% commercial property; a better comparison would be to a project that is more appropriately scaled for the area
 - VHB’s own report states that “[n]o operational analyses have been conducted using the as-of-right trip generation volumes”
- VHB indicated that “Traffic flow along Needham Street is heavier in the northbound direction during all peak periods,” but this observation contradicts decades of observed traffic patterns

TRAFFIC STUDY IS INCOMPLETE

- No average speed data for Needham street is provided for weekdays (only weekend data is provided)
- Intersections in the area that are heavily impacted by back-ups on Needham street (especially through use of GPS navigation) were not examined, for example:
 - No data is provided for the intersection of Goddard St / Rachel Rd and Winchester St
 - No data is provided for the intersections of Charlemont Rd and Winchester St and Charlemont Rd and Roland St
- Concentrating on Peak-Hour Person Trips (and avoiding overall Weekday Daily and Saturday Daily numbers) and failing to collect data for the weekday “lunch-time rush hour” along Needham St misses one of the busiest times of the day for the roadway
- The future use of Northland’s property east of Needham St (14+ acres across the street from current proposed development) has not been described and has not been included in the study

TRAFFIC STUDY NUMBERS

- According to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council's (MAPC) September 2017 review of the Northland proposal, the project will generate an **additional 4,521 daily vehicle trips**
- According to VHB's study, daily (weekday) unadjusted total vehicle trips nearly triple from **6,249** to **17,176** with the proposed development
- According to an earlier (2013) MAPC study, traffic on Needham Street is **regional** (not local) in character
 - MAPC observed license plates registered to 100 Massachusetts communities
 - 70% of traffic on Needham Street is **pass-by/pass-through** traffic
- MAPC Buildout Analysis is **653,850 square feet, 1.3 million fewer square feet than the proposed development!**
 - 304,850 total square feet of new or repurposed development
 - 200,000 square feet of additional office space development
 - 500,000 square feet of residential development (512 units)
 - -51,000 of retail development
 - -300,000 square feet of industrial space

SHUTTLE BUS PROJECTIONS ARE INACCURATE

- Northland’s own consultant (The I28 Business Council) admits that it is “**extremely difficult to project ridership** for a population that is not already using public transportation”
 - According to their survey, **only 13% of Newton residents** and 7% of people who work in Newton use public transportation to get to work
- The projections provided by the consultant, “from the **limited data available** and reflecting upon past service metrics” reflect the **capacity** of the proposed service, and “**are not a projection of actual ridership**”
- The consultant also states: “If someone owns a car, they will use it—even when other transportation modes are available”
 - Northland’s own survey results confirm that **95% of Newton commuters own a personal vehicle** (note that this means that **only 5% of Newton residents use public transportation to get to work and do not own a car**)
- We have tried this before
 - MBTA bus #59 along Needham street runs a similar route to the proposed “Newton Circulator” route at the same schedule and is largely unused and has not reduced traffic
 - The Newton Nexus bus service failed due to lack of ridership

SHUTTLE BUS PROJECTIONS ARE INACCURATE

- The ridership numbers are incorrect
 - The formula used is faulty: it anticipates travel in both directions during rush hour and that 1/4 of the riders at each stop will disembark and be replaced with new riders, but this would be accurate only if there were no existing service between the stops
 - In the current case, this is unrealistic, since the shuttle service is travelling between an area unserved by public transit (Needham Street) and transportation hubs (the shuttles would essentially run empty in one direction during rush hour)
 - 2 of the 4 proposed shuttle stops on the “Newton Circulator” route are already connected by public transportation (why would anyone take the proposed shuttle from the Newton Highlands MBTA stop to the Newton Centre MBTA stop?)
 - The consultant **believes** that a ridership of 75% of total capacity for on-peak travel on the “Newton Circulator” route can be attained, resulting in 1,033.5 passengers during rush-hour
 - Assuming that all other estimates and assumptions are correct, and that morning rush-hour lasts from 5:15am to 9:45am and afternoon rush-hour lasts from 3:15pm to 7:45pm, using a more realistic formula, the projection drops to: **360 total potential passengers** during rush hour

TRANSPORTATION PLAN IS INADEQUATE

- The proposed service is too infrequent to be effective
 - Northland's consultant states that infrequency of service is often cited as a barrier to use of public transportation
 - Wait times of **30-45 minutes** during rush hour (e.g. the "Newton Circulator" route, stopping at Newton Highlands, Newton Centre, and sometimes at Newtonville)
 - This is the same frequency as the **under-used Route 59 bus** (which stops at Newton Highlands, Needham Highlands, Needham Center, Needham Junction, and Newtonville)
 - **No commuter will risk a 30-45 minute delay** of getting to work due to missing a bus or due to the bus being full!
- The shuttle plan does not sufficiently account for traffic
 - **12-minute** trip is anticipated from Newton Highlands MBTA stop to the project site at 1:15pm on a weekday (when traffic is often heaviest)
 - **10-minute** trip is anticipated at 12:43am on a weekday (when traffic is often non-existent)
 - No one who has driven west-bound on Needham street (towards route 95) at 1:15pm will agree that they spent only 2 extra minutes in traffic compared to travelling at midnight

TRANSPORTATION PLAN IS INCOMPLETE

- The I28 Business Council currently provides shuttle service along Needham Street for its various members, but no ridership information was provided in the report
- Will Northland be obligated to continue to operate the buses for a certain period of time at the level of service that is described in the report?
- How will Northland finance the service? What will the cost to ride the shuttle buses be to Northland residents? To the general public?
- What happens if the project is built, but the transportation plan fails (like the Newton Nexus)? What is the contingency plan?
- What is the environmental impact of idling buses (especially if ridership does not materialize)?
- How many parking spaces will there be for waiting Uber/Lyft cars? For shuttle buses? How will Northland manage idling buses and Uber/Lyft pick-ups at the same physical location?
- How will the buses be maintained? What happens if a bus breaks down?
- Where will the shuttle bus users park?

HEAVILY RESIDENTIAL MIX

- The original proposal mix was **ONLY 19%** commercial/retail and **81% residential**
 - By eliminating 70,000+ square feet of retail space, while eliminating only 22 apartments, Northland has **INCREASED** the heavily-residential mix of this project
 - Currently, the site has 80,753 square feet of retail space
 - The **HUGE** proposed development will add **ONLY** 40,647 square feet of retail space while adding **almost 2 million square feet** of development!
- Northland is also proposing that the **RETAIL** space be approved as **FLEXIBLE** space, allowing them to fill it with “smaller professional office spaces, medical office spaces, coworking spaces, and a wider variety of commercial space”
- Mixed-use projects succeed when there is **RETAIL** space (restaurants, bars, entertainment places) that attract tenants to the residential and office portions of the development; Northland’s latest proposal does the **OPPOSITE** by substituting more office space for retail space (instead of substituting it for residential space, as recommended by the planning department)