

## Islington Center Redevelopment Project Issue Resolution

Issue or Concern	Description of Issues Raised by Residents, Task Force, Planning Board Members, Board of Selectmen, Staff, etc.	Proposed Resolution
<p><b>1. Project Timing – Review and Approval Process</b></p>	<p>There is some concern that the proposed redevelopment project has been rushed and residents have not had sufficient time to consider whether or not to vote in favor of the proposed land disposition and zoning amendments at Town Meeting.</p>	<p>The Selectmen appointed the Islington Center Task Force in 2015. The task force issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the sale of town-owned land in Islington Center in May 2016. The task force then began in-depth review of the Petruzziello properties response to the RFP in September 2016.</p> <p>Following seven months of open public discussion about Islington Center, the attributes residents most want to see preserved, and those that could benefit from improvement, the task force recommended the Petruzziello Properties’ Islington Center Redevelopment Project to the Selectmen for further consideration. The proposal that was recommended to the Selectmen reflected numerous improvements over the original proposal, many of which evolved directly from thoughtful public participation in the task force review process.</p> <p>The Selectmen then conducted its own review of the Petruzziello Proposal, and signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the developer in June 2017.</p> <p>The developer spent the next few months working with town staff to prepare a FMUOD special permit application for the Planning Board’s consideration. That application was submitted in December 2017. The Planning Board held six open public hearing sessions on the FMUOD application, and received a unanimous recommendation in favor from the Islington Center Task Force, before granting the FMUOD special permit on April 10<sup>th</sup>.</p> <p>The Conservation Commission then voted on April 25<sup>th</sup> to issue a Notice of Conditions for the project, and the Finance &amp; Warrant Commission voted on April 30<sup>th</sup> to recommend Town Meeting approval of three warrant articles related to the project. Voters will now have an opportunity to consider the project at Town Meeting on May 30<sup>th</sup>.</p>

<p><b>2. Architectural Design and Aesthetics – Preference for Quaint Village Feel</b></p>	<p>There is a strong desire to maintain the look of a quaint New England village center with a prominent corner church building.</p>	<p>The developer altered his redevelopment plans to designed the multi-use building with a replica of the former Islington Community Church (ICC) façade and steeple.</p>
<p><b>3. Architectural Design and Aesthetics – Objection to Typical CVS Store Design</b></p>	<p>The traditional design of a CVS store would not fit in the Islington Center neighborhood.</p>	<p>The developer worked with CVS to redesign the store with gables to reflect the prominent architectural style exhibited throughout the Islington Center neighborhood.</p>
<p><b>4. Housing – Preference for Condominiums over Apartments</b></p>	<p>Owner-occupied units would be better maintained than rental units, and residents living in the units would have a stronger commitment to the community if they owned their homes.</p>	<p>Although the original proposal called for 28 one-bedroom apartments, the developer ran a cost assessment and found that he could make a sufficient return on 18 condominiums. However, he did point out that he could afford a larger contribution to the town if he were to build rental units. Further, the condominium units would need to consist of two-bedrooms to attract potential buyers.</p>
<p><b>5. Housing – Objection to High Rise Buildings</b></p>	<p>High rise buildings would distract from Islington Center’s quaint village character.</p>	<p>No high rise buildings are planned for Islington Center, and none would be permitted under current zoning. The proposed redevelopment project includes a mix of one, two and three-story commercial and commercial/residential buildings, consistent with the town’s historical development character.</p>
<p><b>6. Housing – Affordability Requirements</b></p>	<p>Westwood’s Zoning Bylaw requires new affordable housing units in association with all special permit projects including residential components. Projects developed under FMUOD special permits must provide a number of permanently restricted affordable housing units equal to 15% of the proposed housing units that would be created by the special permit. This requirement is intended to help Westwood maintain a minimum of 10% affordable housing on the State’s Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). Westwood’s SHI value will be recalculated following an update of the total number of housing units following the 2020 Census. If the town’s SHI value falls below 10%, Westwood will be vulnerable to a potential unfriendly 40B projects.</p>	<p>Per the Town’s Zoning Bylaw, a total of 3 affordable housing units are required in association with the 18-unit condominium component of the Islington Center Redevelopment Project. The town has negotiated with the developer to design an affordable housing plan that not only allows for the creation of 3 units to serve residents in need of affordable housing, but also allows the town to add a total of 12 new housing to its SHI count. These 9 extra SHI units will go a long way toward keeping Westwood above the required 10% on the SHI.</p>

<p><b>7. Safety – Concern about CVS Drive-thru</b></p>	<p>If the CVS store includes a drive-thru window, the design might not adequately address potential safety issues that could be caused by traffic patterns associated with the drive-thru lane.</p>	<p>Although CVS requires drive-thru windows at all new stores, the CVS corporate office agreed to a design that eliminated the drive-thru window at this location. Curb-side Pick-up spaces will be provided to assist customers who are unable to leave their vehicles to enter the store.</p>
<p><b>8. Safety – Concern over Potential for Increased Truck traffic on School</b></p>	<p>The construction of a new CVS building on the corner of Washington and School Streets might encourage trucks delivering products and supplies to CVS to exit the site and travel west on School Street, thereby adding additional truck traffic in the vicinity of the School Street Playground.</p>	<p>The Planning Board required a “Trucks - No Right Turn” sign at the exit from the CVS parking onto School Street, and the Selectmen will establish a traffic rule prohibiting trucks from making right hand turns at this location.</p>
<p><b>9. Current Tenants – Mothers Morning Out Nursery School (MMO)</b></p>	<p>MMO has been providing an important service to the Westwood Community over 40 years and expressed a desire to assist the non-profit nursery school to continue operation in Islington Center.</p>	<p>The developer has agreed to provide the MMO with 5,000 sq. ft. of built-to-suit rental space at the same lease amount that MMO current pays the town for its operation in the ICC. The developer has agreed to contract with MMO for a one-year renewable lease to allow the school to continue operations despite its inability to meet commercially acceptable lease terms, and despite the fact that the cost of construction will significantly exceed the rental income, thus subsidizing MMO’s rent.</p>
<p><b>10. Current Tenants – Matt the Barber and Crown Cleaners</b></p>	<p>Long-standing Islington businesses might be displaced by the proposed redevelopment project.</p>	<p>The developer negotiated long-term leases with Matt the Barber and Crown Cleaners and will provide updated, renovated space for each business to not only continue operation in Islington Center, but to improve their space conditions. Crown Cleaners will remain in its current location with interior and exterior upgrades to that building. Matt the Barber has relocated to newly renovated space in the former Ski Stop building at 256 Washington Street. Both businesses are looking forward to continuing their relationships with customers and to contributing to the village retail/service mix in Islington Center.</p>
<p><b>11. Future Tenants – Preference for Improved Mix of Retail and Food Service Uses</b></p>	<p>More vibrant commercial uses are desired, such as restaurants, coffee shops, bakeries or similar food establishments.</p>	<p>The developer has committed to actively market the commercial space in the proposed mixed-use building to the desired type of users, and has designed the space to accommodate at least one restaurant.</p>

<p><b>12. Urban Design – Preference for More Greenspace/Open Space/Gathering Area/Landscaping</b></p>	<p>The village character of Islington Center could be improved by adding more open space than currently exists along Washington and East Streets.</p>	<p>The proposed redevelopment project will introduce more greenspace along roadways and in buffer areas, and will create additional public gathering spaces in front on the east and west sides of Washington Street, adjacent to the proposed mixed-use building and in front of the relocated Wentworth Hall/Islington Branch Library building. The project will include new outdoor seating, new street trees, and enhanced buffer areas adjacent to existing residential uses.</p>
<p><b>13. Urban Design – Preference for Narrow Streets</b></p>	<p>The village character of Islington Center could be improved by maintaining the current street widths and encouraging pedestrian activity.</p>	<p>The Planning Board made a decision not to increase the roadway widths by adding new turning lanes to the Washington Street/East Street intersection. Maintaining the existing roadway widths, while adding on-street parking spaces along Washington Street, will lead to an improved pedestrian experience. In order to avoid the cost of potential right-of-way acquisition if road-widening is pursued at some time in the future, the town will maintain ownership of a strip of land on the northeast side of the intersection, in front of the proposed mixed-use building.</p>
<p><b>14. Historic Preservation – Wentworth Hall</b></p>	<p>The RFP requires that the historic Wentworth Hall be preserved in Islington Center.</p>	<p>The Islington Center Redevelopment Project is designed to include the relocation and restoration of Wentworth Hall for continued use as the Islington Branch Library.</p>
<p><b>15. Historic Preservation - Blue Hart Tavern</b></p>	<p>While its preservation is not required by the RFP, the Blue Hart Tavern has local historical importance. The members of the Westwood Historical Commission and a number of residents would like to see this building restored as part of the project.</p>	<p>The developer has revised the project site plans to provide a site on the west side of Washington Street which could accommodate the Blue Hart Tavern. While funding for the relocation and restoration of this locally historic building is not a condition of the redevelopment project, land has been reserved to accommodate this structure if restoration funds are secured within a reasonable time period.</p>
<p><b>16. Community Space – Space for Youth &amp; Family Services, Recreation and Other Uses</b></p>	<p>A new space is needed to accommodate all of the uses that are currently housed in the ICC.</p>	<p>The proposal calls for the construction of an addition to the rear of Wentworth Hall to house the Youth &amp; Family Services Offices. That addition is proposed to have an approximate 2,000 SF footprint, which will be sufficient to meet the needs of that department. The proposal also calls for the construction of a new community meeting space in the expanded Wentworth Hall which will be designed to meet the needs of the current users, including the Recreation Department and various community groups.</p>

**17. Accessibility, Code Compliance, and Efficient Design**

Extensive repairs are needed today to both the ICC and Wentworth Hall just to keep these buildings functioning. If these repairs are undertaken, at significant expense, the buildings will still not meet accessibility and code requirements.

Unlike the current meeting space in the ICC, the new meeting space will be fully accessible, code-compliant, and energy-efficient. The new office and community space will be designed to accommodate the uses and programs that can be expected to occupy the new building. All of the programs that are currently offered in the IIC, and others that may be offered in the future, can be expected to operate more conveniently in a space that is newly built. The proposed construction will be significantly more cost effective than an overhaul of the ICC to accommodate the same uses, which has been estimated to cost at \$1,701,487 for minimum essential repairs, and approximately \$4,846,500 for improvements to make the structure code-compliant, accessible and more efficient.

**18. Parking – Number and Location of Parking Spaces**

The proposed development might not provide a sufficient number of parking spaces in proximity to the proposed commercial and community uses.

The Planning Board carefully reviewed the proposed parking in relation to proposed uses, and obtained a professional opinion from its peer review consultants on the sufficiency of parking. Those consultants determined that the proposed parking plan is more than sufficient to meet the needs of all project components. Where there are today 100 parking spaces needed, and 100 parking spaces provided, following construction there will be 163 parking spaces needed, and 178 parking spaces provided, for an excess of 15 spaces more than the project uses require. Although the project cannot be expected to address the entire pre-existing parking shortage at Morrison Park, parking spaces associated with the project will remain available for visitors to the ballpark.

**19. Traffic – Existing Conditions**

Congested traffic conditions in Islington Center may be worsened by the proposed redevelopment project.

The developer's traffic engineers and the Planning Board's peer review engineers have reviewed existing and proposed traffic conditions. All are in agreement that the Islington Center Redevelopment project will not add significantly to the already congested traffic area. The vast majority of traffic is related to "pass through" traffic. Islington Center roads are used by commuters from neighboring towns to avoid traffic delays at offsite intersections. The best way to decrease the volume of commuter traffic through Islington Center is to improve the capacity and flow of those intersections. The state is currently working with Norwood to implement improvements to the Providence Highway/Everett Street intersection. If those improvements are made, drivers will find it more convenient to stay on Route One, and we will see less commuter traffic through Islington Center.

<p><b>20. Traffic – East Street Bridge</b></p>	<p>The developer’s traffic study should account for the East Street Bridge replacement.</p>	<p>The developer’s traffic engineers and the Planning Board’s peer review engineers were made aware of the plans to replace the East Street Bridge. Following the bridge replacement project, East Street will remain a two-lane road with a bridge underpass, and truck exclusions will remain in place. Although lane widening and the addition of pedestrian and bicycle accommodations will improve safety along East Street in the area of the bridge, these improvements are not expected to alter the traffic volume, traffic flow or intersection operation.</p>
<p><b>21. Financial Impact – Revenue and Tax Receipts</b></p>	<p>The net fiscal benefits of the proposed redevelopment project must exceed the costs to the town.</p>	<p>The value of the town-owned property after completion of the proposed Islington Center Redevelopment Project will significantly exceed the current value of town-owned property, with the effective value expected to increase from \$615,471 to \$4,250,000 as a result of the project. In addition, the proposed Islington Center Redevelopment Project will result in a substantial increase in tax revenue for the Islington Center properties. The net annual revenue is expected increase from \$101,097 to \$423,986. This increase reflects both the loss of \$84,000 in rental income that is currently paid to the town by MMO, and increased service costs related to the proposed development.</p>
<p><b>22. Financial Impact – Library retention and enhancement</b></p>	<p>The Islington Branch Library building is in need of repair and renovation to remain useful.</p>	<p>A recent capital needs assessment for the Islington Branch Library building identified substantial repairs that must be made in the near future to keep that building functioning as a branch library. If the Islington Center Redevelopment Project does not go forward, funding for repairs to the library in the amount of \$258,042 will require the support of voters at a future Town Meeting. If the Islington Center Redevelopment Project does move forward, the Islington Branch Library will be fully renovated, thus ensuring the continuation of this valuable community resource for years to come.</p>
<p><b>23. Response to Residents’ comments</b></p>	<p>Residents have attended multiple public meetings and expressed opinions about Islington Center and the proposed redevelopment project. Some have felt that their comments have not been heard.</p>	<p>The Town has listened to all of its residents. Over the course of more than two years, many residents have participated in meetings of the Islington Center Task Force, Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and Finance &amp; Warrant Commission. Others have sent letters and emails or called officials and staff to express their points of view. The Town has heard both praise and criticism for the project. Residents’ concerns have been considered and thoughtfully addressed by the developer: The project has been altered to maintain the look of the ICC; apartments have been replaced with condominiums; plans have been redesigned to reduce the size of the new CVS building and to eliminate the drive-thru; MMO has received a commitment for a new 5,000 SF build-to-suit space without any rent increase; the Washington Street/East Street/School Street intersection will undergo signalization improvements; and land has been set aside for the Blue Hart Tavern with the hope that funding can be identified to save that historic property.</p>

