

## Islington Center Update

Many exciting things are happening in Islington Center! From the rehabilitation of Morrison Park, to the construction of the new Islington Fire Station and the design of the East Street Bridge replacement, this treasured section of Westwood has seen a lot of recent attention. In addition to these ongoing public improvements, a private development project proposed by Supreme Development was granted a special permit from the Westwood Planning Board. That special permit will allow Supreme Development to renovate the Islington Pizza/Wild Blossom building and to construct a new mixed-use building next door, with two commercial storefronts and 12 one-bedroom apartments above.

Along with the potential for great change comes the desire for careful guidance. Toward this end, the Westwood Board of Selectmen formed the Islington Center Task Force (ICTF) to spearhead a well-coordinated, proactive approach to redevelopment. The task force is comprised of representatives from various Town boards and committees, Islington residents, business owners, and Town staff. This dedicated group has been meeting monthly since November 2015, and will continue to meet over the next two or three years to review and discuss all issues affecting Islington Center. The ICTF will focus its attention on Washington Street between Fairview Street and Clapboardtree Street, on School Street between Washington Street and Schaefer Avenue, and on East Street between Washington Street and the East Street Bridge. The task force will identify the most significant character-defining elements of Islington Center, consider obstacles and opportunities for improved pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular circulation, and encourage building, site, and infrastructure improvements appropriate to this area's unique village style of development. The ICTF will consider all aspects of Islington Center and make recommendations to the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen as either board considers decisions affecting Islington Center.

The ICTF recently issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to explore options for the potential redevelopment and/or reuse of various town-owned properties along Washington Street. That RFP invites interested parties to submit creative proposals for possible uses of various town-owned properties, including the Municipal Parking Lot, Wentworth Hall and the Islington Community Center. Interested bidders can obtain RFP documents by signing up on the town's Procurement webpage. Bidders will be required to demonstrate the financial capacity to move forward with their proposal, and must meet other requirements, such as compensation for community space presently associated with these properties, including the Islington Branch Library, Youth & Family Services offices, and several Recreation programs. Bidders are also encouraged to provide a home for the MMO Nursery School, which has operated in Islington for more than 40 years.

The Islington Center RFP is intentionally open-ended to encourage creative responses. It does not obligate the town to sell or lease any of these properties, and requires an exhaustive public process before a sale or lease could even be considered. That public process will involve the open review and competitive analysis of proposals by the ICTF

and by the Board of Selectmen. If any proposals warrant further pursuit, the Board of Selectmen may negotiate a disposition agreement with selected bidders. If a proposal reaches this point, its developer will be directed to apply for all necessary approvals, and to follow the normal permitting process with the Planning Board and all other relevant boards and commissions. If the required permitting approvals are eventually granted for a project requiring a property transfer, residents will then have an opportunity to decide at Town Meeting whether or not to authorize the Board of Selectmen to proceed with the proposed transfer. Active public participation will be encouraged at every stage of the review process, so that residents truly have a say in the future of Islington Center.

In addition to inviting creative proposals through the RFP process, the ICTF has also prepared a survey to solicit information from residents about their ideas for Islington Center. This survey is intended to obtain information about how Islington Center is viewed today, and to gather opinions about how this area might be improved. The task force would like to hear your thoughts about Islington Center - its present, past, and future. Please take 15 minutes out of your day to share your ideas and help the task force better understand your thoughts and desires for this prominent village center.

Take the Islington Center Survey here: <http://goo.gl/forms/XcNs1B5w39> .