

Newton voters approve 800-unit Northland development

By Catherine Carlock

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Northland Investment Corp. has proposed 180,000 square feet of office space as part of its Northland Newton development. RENDERING COURTESY OF NORTHLAND INVESTMENT CORP.

The city of Newton on Tuesday voted to approve a 23-acre mixed-use project with 800 new residential units in Newton Upper Falls.

The Newton City Council had approved Newton-based Northland Investment Corp.'s project, planned on Needham and Oak streets, in a 17-7 vote in December. But the project faced opposition from a group called RightSize Newton, which said the project represented "excessive development" and lobbied for a for a ballot initiative for voters to decide the project's fate.

Some 18,565 Newton voters voted to allow the project to move forward, about 58% of those who voted on that question. According to Newton's unofficial election returns, 13,449 voted against the measure.

[Larry Gottesdiener](#), chairman and CEO of Northland Investment Corp., celebrated the project's approval on Tuesday evening.

"We worked with passionate local volunteers, community activists and city officials to form a coalition that championed the twin existential threats of our times — the need for affordable housing and climate change," Gottesdiener said. "This is the future, a new paradigm, thoughtful developers, communities, and city leaders partnering to create a 21st century

built environment that solves these and other pressing issues. Developers don't win referendums, communities win referendums, and we are delighted that we could build this coalition together here in Newton."

Northland has long proposed what it calls a "21st century green neighborhood" at its 23-acre site. The plan is to build 800 residential units, of which 140 would be defined affordable, as well as 180,000 square feet of office space and 115,000 square feet of retail space.

[Greg Reibman](#), president of the Newton Needham Chamber of Commerce, said the approval of the ballot question delivered "a loud message that the city's residents want to be a community that is more welcoming and part of the solution to the region's housing crisis and climate change."

"This proposal won't just transform 24 acres into a vibrant, thoughtful, sustainable, amenity rich community. It will activate and energize Needham Street and beyond, bringing new businesses, new jobs, new tax revenue and vitality to our city," Reibman's statement said.

Critics had argued the development would prompt increased traffic in the neighborhood, and had successfully lobbied for the ballot initiative after the City Council's approval of the project. But another civic organization — dubbed Yes for Newton's Future — had organized in support of the project.

"Thank you to the thousands of Newton residents who voted in favor of bringing affordable housing, new open space, sustainable design, and smart growth to our city," said Allison Sharma, chair of the Yes for Newton's Future ballot campaign, in a statement. "The Northland Newton project is a huge win both for current residents and for future neighbors who will now have the opportunity to join our community."