



Chairman Greg Schwartz  
Land Use Committee  
Newton City Council  
1000 Commonwealth Ave.  
Newton, MA 02459

Sept. 24, 2019

Dear Chairman Schwartz

The Newton-Needham Regional Chamber's Board of Directors has voted unanimously to support Northland Investment Corporation's proposed mixed-use development on Needham and Oak streets.

Our directors are impressed by the thoughtfulness of this project's site design as well as its commitment to sustainability. But they are most enthusiastic about the economic benefits and vibrancy they believe this development will bring to the Needham Street corridor, the city and the region. Highlights include:

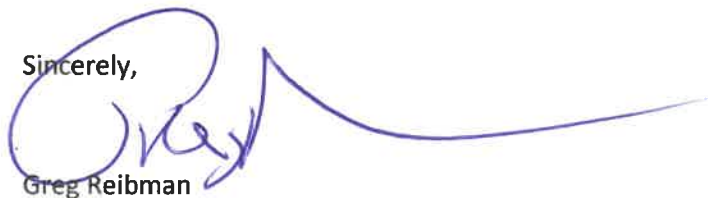
- **A new hub for small and mid-sized companies:** The historic Saco-Pettee Mill building will provide 180,000 square feet of Class A brick and beam office space that can become home for the small and mid-sized employers that are driving Massachusetts' innovation economy but have struggled to find aspirational, amenity-rich space in Newton. Saco-Pettee represents a 10 percent increase in overall Class A office inventory in the N-Squared Innovation District (including Wells Ave and Needham Crossing); an increase we believe to be the right size for this market.
- **Housing for our workers:** Housing supply is critical to our ability to attract companies to locate and grow here. Northland provides 800 units of desperately-needed apartments, including 140 affordable units. Not every worker wants to live in a house with a yard and garage. Northland will provide the housing diversity and flexibility that can bring new workers and employers here, while also serving seniors and others looking to downsize.
- **Multi-modal transportation:** Concerns about congestion are well-founded and the Council is right to seek a responsible Transportation Demand Management program. We have confidence in results of peer review of the program as proposed. We're excited about the robust, modern, free shuttle system that will be available to all workers, residents and shoppers in the region. We view this proposed public-private system as a building block to creating more regional shuttles and reducing congestion across the region. We also applaud the commitment of \$5 million to explore new transportation initiatives; such as connecting the Greenway to the Green Line or converting the old MBTA rail bridge into a bike path to Needham. And we remind the

Council that this project will be fully integrated into Mass DOT's Needham Street reconstruction project, making the entire corridor more walkable and safer for all modes of travel.

- **Placemaking:** Northland's Newton project creates public gathering spaces that are too scarce now and that are integral to the success of a vibrant live, work, play community. Ten acres of open space, including a central common where hundreds of people can gather, a splash park, dog park, the historic mill park featuring a restored South Meadow Brook water feature and other public spaces are the amenities that will make this project a success, not just for tenants, but for our entire community.
- **Subsidized retail:** When Northland stepped up to rescue the New England Mobile Book Fair from moving to another community, we were reminded once again of the challenges facing our cherished, local merchants. This project sets aside 10,000 square feet at a discounted rate for our independent merchants and is sure to enhance the development's overall shopping experience.
- **Northland's vision is Newton's vision:** There is no daylight between this project and the goals of the Needham Street Vision Plan, Newton's Economic Development Strategy and the Chamber's N-Squared Innovation District project. This proposal won't just transform 22 acres into a vibrant, thoughtful, sustainable, amenity-rich community. It will activate and energize Needham Street and beyond, bringing new business, new jobs, tax revenue and vitality to our city.

The Chamber's Board urges the Land Use Committee and City Council to approve Northland's special permit application this fall.

Sincerely,



Greg Reibman

President

Newton-Needham Regional Chamber