

June 7 2016 — Land Use Committee

Introductory Remarks - Helen Nayar

Good Evening.

As Dr. Arnstein has said, Newton has been consistently listed as one of the best places to live in the United States, in large part because of the livable qualities of our villages and neighborhoods. These include walkable, human-scaled village centers, tree-lined residential neighborhoods, good schools, parks and open space, and stability in our built environment.

People have invested their lives and their life savings into homes and small businesses in Newton because Newton has a strong tradition of zoning to protect single and two-family neighborhoods, commercial districts in our village centers, and a mixture of housing choices to accommodate a socio-economically and ethnically diverse community.

That stability, diversity, and quality of life is endangered when one person can buy up much of a village center and unilaterally decide to evict dozens of local businesses and renting families.

The thousands of people who live in Newtonville and the owners of small businesses in Newtonville, many who have been here for decades — all of us who are the life and breath of Newtonville — we have the most at stake. Some of us will be cast out when our homes and businesses are demolished; the rest of us will be left to endure the very negative impacts of this inappropriate development: a looming structure, traffic and parking messes, the overcrowding of our schools, the costs of providing city services to so many apartments and commercial establishments, plus higher rents and upward pressure on nearby housing and land prices. It will set a precedent that other developers will then repeat.

There is no reason to allow this project to be anything other than what is allowed by right under existing zoning. To grant rezoning and a special permit under these circumstances is to harm those constituents who have put our trust in you to protect our way of life.

Thank you.