

# Herrick Green: An Iconic Newton Center Landscape in Peril

By Brian Kinney and Philip Warburg, Co-chairs, Friends of Herrick Green



PHOTO: PHIL WARBURG

*Herrick Green From Colby Hall*

Those venturing up Herrick Road, just a few blocks from the Newton Centre T stop, may have noticed a procession of yard signs emblazoned with the words, “Keep Herrick Green!” This message reflects the growing alarm among neighbors of Andover Newton Theological School (ANTS) following its announcement last November that it would be selling its Newton Centre campus.

Over the past two decades, ANTS has sold off several portions of its historic property in an effort to keep the seminary afloat amidst ever-shrinking enrollment. The sale of the School’s remaining 22 acres will end nearly two centuries during which ANTS and its predecessor, the Newton Theological School, have occupied this hilltop site — a dramatically beautiful spot steeped in Newton history.

The heart of the ANTS campus is a cluster of buildings — some modern, some more than a century old — graciously spaced around a leafy quadrangle. Leading up to the campus along Herrick Road is a broad, tree-lined meadow that opens onto a dramatic hillcrest view of Colby Hall, a steeped gray stone building dating back to 1866, displaying a handsome blend of Second Empire and Romanesque architecture.

Herrick Green, as neighbors call this grassy hillside, was once a pasture used by the Theological School for livestock grazing. Today, it is widely enjoyed by pedestrians and dog walkers, by summertime picnickers, and by sledders, cross-country skiers, and snowboarders during the winter months. Located just a few blocks from Newton Centre’s Piccadilly

Square, Herrick Green offers visitors and residents welcome relief from the commercial bustle nearby. It is this unique landscape, an iconic site in Newton Centre’s history, that the Newton Conservators and the Friends of Herrick Green, a neighborhood group with more than 100 signatories supporting its efforts, have joined together to preserve.

Among the factors favoring the preservation of Herrick Green is its size: it’s no more than three acres, or a small fraction of the overall parcel slated for sale. Also important is its location, in the heart of the Newton Theological Institution Historic District, which includes the ANTS campus and surrounding residential streets replete with well-maintained Victorian homes from the late 1800s. The District is officially recognized by the U.S. National Register of Historic Places.

The District’s historic designation may slow down, but will not likely prevent the demolition of buildings on the ANTS campus quadrangle. Colby Hall’s protection is more assured, thanks to an extraordinarily long-term lease that ANTS signed a few years ago with the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute, giving it full use of the building and surrounding property for the next three centuries.



PHOTO: PHIL WARBURG

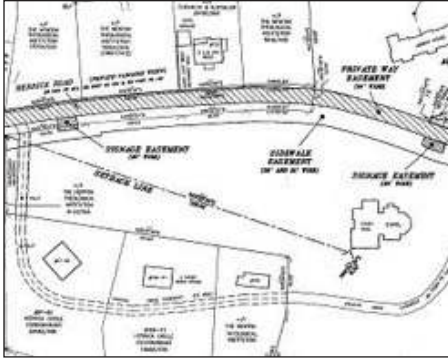
*Herrick Green Alternate View*

Herrick Green enjoys more limited protection under a viewshed easement jointly held by ANTS and the Hebrew College. This easement,

signed in 1999 when ANTS sold 6.3 acres of its land to the Hebrew College, forbids any development other than a sidewalk and agreed-upon signage on a stretch of land extending from the bottom of the Green, at the corner of Herrick Road and Herrick Circle, up to the far side of Colby Hall. Triangular in shape, the viewshed easement covers about half of Herrick Green. (See map next page.)

As an agreement between two private parties, the viewshed easement leaves neighbors feeling very uncertain about the fate of Herrick Green following the sale of the ANTS campus. We fear this idyllic hillside will be blanketed with buildings. Representatives of the Friends of Herrick Green

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Herrick Green Easement Plan

have met with ANTS president, Rev. Martin Copenhaver, and Hebrew College president, Rabbi Daniel Lehman, to urge that the Green's current viewshed easement be honored. They have also called for preserving the full

expanse of the gently sloping meadow leading up to Colby Hall. Both educational leaders have said that they recognize the importance of this historic landscape, yet they have given no concrete assurances as to its status following the sale of the ANTS campus.

According to Rev. Copenhaver, an undisclosed buyer is now carrying out due diligence on the property. A final agreement is not expected before late summer.

The Newton Conservators will support the Friends of Herrick Green in monitoring developments before and after the sale of this beautiful campus. We will also work closely together to ensure that plans for the property respect the historic value and extraordinary beauty of Herrick Green.



PHOTO: PHIL WARBURG

Herrick Green In Winter

### What you can do:

- Join the Friends of Herrick Green by going to their website at [www.friendsofherrickgreen.org](http://www.friendsofherrickgreen.org).
- Support the Friends of Herrick Green by making an earmarked contribution to the Newton Conservators at <http://bit.ly/1ZoPgID>
- Write to Newton City Councilors to register your support for preserving Herrick Green.
- Volunteer your time to the Friends of Herrick Green. Contact co-chairs Brian Kinney ([Bkinney@bkinvestments.com](mailto:Bkinney@bkinvestments.com)) and Phil Warburg ([pwarburg@verizon.net](mailto:pwarburg@verizon.net)) for further details. ■

## Webster Woods Update

by Jacob Stern, Community Organizer for the Friends of Webster Woods

It's been almost nine months since Congregation Mishkan Tefila first announced the plan to sell their property to Boston College. The notion that Boston College could develop the wooded portion of the land and destroy an irreplaceable public asset prompted an immediate community outcry. Neighbors from across the city have come together as the "Friends of Webster Woods" to fight to preserve Newton's largest forest.

The Friends have been working hard to send a clear message to the city and to Boston College that the land is off-limits for future development. It's difficult to miss the eye-catching navy blue "Save Webster Woods" lawn signs that have started popping up across Newton.

Most recently, the Friends of Webster Woods invited Mayor Warren to tour the property in question. Over one hundred residents turned out to demonstrate their support for the cause. Mayor Warren, joined by Councilors Lisle Baker, Ruthanne Fuller, and Vicki Danberg, pledged to begin the appraisal process and to prepare to negotiate with Boston College now that the sale has closed. Stay tuned for updates, as the process is far from over.

If you'd like more information about the campaign to save Webster Woods, visit the Friends of Webster Woods' Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/fowwnewton](http://www.facebook.com/fowwnewton)) or email Jacob Stern ([jacobstern2@gmail.com](mailto:jacobstern2@gmail.com)) to request a lawn sign. ■