



Newton City Council
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

March 28, 2016

Dear Councilors,

We are writing to express our strong objection to the proposed installation of carport solar arrays in the Newton Free Library parking lot. Because both trees and solar panels are contributors to climate improvement, they should not have to compete. Both offer special benefits: trees provide beauty, food and habitat for wildlife, carbon absorption and reduced storm water runoff; solar panels provide electrical power without CO2 emissions. Newton should balance both resources.

The currently installed and scheduled solar panel arrays have made use of underutilized spaces (City building rooftops and Rumford Avenue) and have not affected Newton's tree canopy. To avoid sacrificing the benefits of one for those of the other, we request that the Council continue that policy by choosing an alternate location – one that, while visible to the public, would not require tree removal.

We are particularly concerned that the Library plan would require the removal of an 80+ year old oak, which was preserved when the parking lot was laid out in 1989. This tree is irreplaceable within any of our lifetimes.

The important issue is not the preservation of the individual small trees that are there now, but the lost opportunity for mature trees in this environment in the future. This is currently the greenest, best-landscaped public parking lot in Newton. We should preserve it.

Solar panels clearly have a role to play in climate improvement. We ask you to vote "No" on the Library site, and, instead, find locations that are both open and free of trees.

Barbara A. Smiley, chair,
on behalf of the Urban Tree Commission