



Zoning Redesign: Village Centers

The City of Newton's project to redesign the zoning code

April 2023: Updated Version 2.0 Village Center Zoning Maps Coming Soon!

- ZAP Meeting on April 24th to Discuss Updated Version 2.0 Village Center Zoning Maps
- Public Hearing Anticipated for June
- New Community Engagement Planner Introduction



View down Union Street in Newton Centre, one of twelve village centers that are the focus of zoning updates in Newton.

ZAP Meeting on April 24th to Discuss Updated Version 2.0 Village Center Zoning Maps

Version 2.0 Zoning Village Center Zoning

At the April 24th Zoning and Planning Committee (ZAP) meeting, Planning staff and consultant, Utile, will present the Version 2.0 Village Center Zoning maps. Since the beginning of the year, the team has been working closely with ZAP on proposed updates to Version 1.0 of the proposed Village Center Zoning. This next iteration will incorporate public feedback received during the winter [2022 public info sessions](#), public comments provided at the [two January ZAP meetings](#), as well as perspectives offered by the City Council over the last few months. Important updates that were workshopped with ZAP include:

- Asking to identify mixed-use streets that require ground floor commercial use
- How best to incentivize historic preservation through adaptive reuse
- How much to reduce parking requirements
- Should special permits for increased building height and footprint be permitted
- A by-right building height and footprint bonus only in the case of additional

- affordable housing
- Should City Owned parcels be designated with Village Center Zoning
- How best to revise VC1 metrics to a smaller building footprint, maximum of four-units for new construction, and further incentivize preservation of existing buildings

Information on all workshopped proposals can be found in the [Version 2.0 framework](#) and [ZAP reports](#).

MBTA Communities Law

In January, 2021 the state passed the MBTA Communities Law. This law applies to 177 cities and towns, including Newton, and focuses on communities that have or are near communities that have MBTA transit stops. It aims to increase the amount of available housing through a number of statutes:

- Minimum gross density of 15 units per acre
- Located not more than 0.5 miles from MBTA transit stop
- No age restrictions and suitable for families with children

On August 10, 2022 the DHCD released final guidelines for compliance. You can learn more about Newton's strategy for complying with the new law by visiting our [MBTA Communities Law webpage](#).

Attorney General Andrea Campbell released [an advisory](#) to all MBTA communities on March 15, 2023. In her letter, the Attorney General provides further details on the final guidelines for communities to follow.

The required zoning changes stipulated by the MBTA Communities Law relate directly with ongoing efforts to pass new Village Center Zoning. The City is in a good position to accomplish the goals set forth by the community for Village Center Zoning in addition to meeting the requirements of the MBTA Communities Law. This is due to all of the zoning redesign efforts that have already taken place over the last few years.

Planning staff and Utile presented an update to ZAP on March 29th on how Version 1.0 of the Village Center zoning compares to the MBTA Communities requirements. You can read the Planning memo [here](#) and find the ZAP report and Planning presentation [here](#). While version 1.0 does not bring Newton fully into MBTA Communities Law compliance it is a significant step forward. Based on the conversation with ZAP on March 29th Planning and Utile are exploring options for coming into full compliance and will present these along with the Version 2.0 maps on April 24th.

Stay Up To Date!

The Village Center zoning effort began in early 2021. If you have not recently followed the zoning redesign process, don't worry! Click [here](#) to view our previous newsletters to get up to speed.

You can remain in-the-know by visiting our [Zoning Redesign website](#).

Public Hearing Anticipated for June

After Version 2.0 zoning maps are presented to the City Council on April 24th, the Planning and Development Department will work with Utile to incorporate feedback that reflects the needs and considerations of the City Council and community with the goal of holding a public hearing in June. Stay tuned for the exact date in a future newsletter, and by following [our website!](#)

New Community Engagement Planner Introduction

Hello! My name is Olivia. I am a native Newtonian and thrilled to be our new Community Engagement Specialist!

A bit about me...I recently completed a dual-master's in Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning from UMass, Amherst. I then began a PhD in Regional Planning at UMass and I am currently doing research on public participation and placemaking. My passion for landscape finds expression in my garden - a lifelong project I am sure!



My work with the City will pick up where our previous planner, Nevena, left off. I look forward to meeting everyone who is involved in this process and continuing the strong engagement actions that have already taken place.

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