



Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

**City of Newton, Massachusetts**  
Department of Planning and Development  
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Telephone  
(617) 796-1120  
Telefax  
(617) 796-1142  
TDD/TTY  
(617) 796-1089  
www.newtonma.gov

Barney S. Heath  
Director

---

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** May 19, 2023

**TO:** Councilor Deborah Crossley, Chair, Zoning & Planning Committee  
Members of the Zoning & Planning Committee

**FROM:** Barney Heath, Director, Department of Planning and Development  
Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director Department of Planning and Development  
Zachery LeMel, Chief of Long Range Planning

**RE:** **#38-22 Discussion and review relative to the draft Zoning Ordinance regarding village centers**  
ZONING & PLANNING COMMITTEE requesting review, discussion and possible ordinance amendments relative to Chapter 30 zoning ordinances pertaining to Mixed Use, business districts and village districts relative to the draft Zoning Ordinance. (formerly #88-20)  
**#39-22 Requesting discussion on state guidance for implementing the Housing Choice Bill**  
COUNCILOR CROSSLEY on behalf of the Zoning & Planning Committee requesting discussion on state guidance for implementing the Housing Choice element of the MA Economic Development legislation. (formerly #131-21)

**MEETING:** May 22, 2023

**CC:** City Council  
Planning Board  
Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer

---

### Introduction

At previous ZAP meetings, Councilors have requested additional data to help better understand, and clarify, various components of the proposed village center overlay district (VCOD). Some of this information was provided in the [May 8, 2023 ZAP memo](#). Additional data/responses are provided here.

### Parking Sensitivity Analysis for MBTA Communities Unit Capacity

As outlined at the [April 24, 2023 ZAP meeting](#), the version 2.0 VCOD zoning would bring Newton into compliance with state law. One of the main requirements Newton must meet through zoning is a by-right unit capacity of 8,330 multi-family housing units. The unit capacity of version 2.0 is calculated at 10,250 units (rounded) by allowing on-site parking, but not requiring it. This policy is consistent with the Newton's goals of encouraging less paved surfaces (improved stormwater capacity), more open/public space and less expensive housing.

Some City Councilors requested to calculate a unit capacity at different amounts of required parking, or a parking sensitivity analysis. Working with our consultant, Utile, we ran this analysis for a 0.5 and 1.0 parking space per unit requirement. The results are outlined below:

**0.5 Parking Spaces per Unit Required**

<i>MBTA VCOD</i>	MRT	VC1	VC2	VC3
<i>MBTA Unit Capacity</i>	2,600	1,400	1,550	2,300
<b>Total Units</b>	<b>7,850 (below Newton's required unit capacity)</b>			

**1.0 Parking Spaces per Unit Required**

<i>MBTA VCOD</i>	MRT	VC1	VC2	VC3
<i>MBTA Unit Capacity</i>	2,600	1,100	1,400	1,800
<b>Total Units</b>	<b>6,900 (below Newton's required unit capacity)</b>			

Given these results, Planning staff continue to recommend allowing but not requiring parking within the VCOD zoning. Beyond the advantage offered in terms of helping to meet the MBTA Communities compliance, there are numerous quantitative and qualitative benefits expressed by both staff and Councilors at previous ZAP discussions.

**MBTA Unit Capacity by Village Center Zone**

Previously, staff provided the MBTA Communities unit capacity by village center, see April 24 link above. City Councilors requested the unit capacity breakdown by village center zone:

**Version 2.0 Unit Capacity**

<i>MBTA VCOD</i>	MRT	VC1	VC2	VC3
<i>MBTA Unit Capacity</i>	2,650	1,950	2,300	3,350
<b>Total Units</b>	<b>10,250</b>			

\*Areas tested only include, a) Only VCOD zones within station area (½ mile of transit), areas with a minimum contiguity of 5 acres or more, and parcels less than 30,000 sf

**Next Steps**

Beyond the data provided here, all past work on village centers can be found on the city website: <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/village-centers>. In addition, Landwise and Utile are performing financial feasibility and urban form studies, which will inform updates to the MRT development standards to be presented at the upcoming June 12, 2023 ZAP meeting. As appropriate, additional data can and will be provided.