



Zoning & Planning Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Monday, June 26, 2023

Present: Councilors Crossley (Chair), Albright, Danberg, Wright, Krintzman, Leary, Baker, and Ryan

Also Present: Councilors Oliver, Greenberg, Lucas, Norton, Kelley, Malakie, Gentile, Markiewicz, Downs, Humphrey, Danberg, Bowman, Noel, Laredo, Lipof, and Kalis

City Staff: Barney Heath, Director of Planning; Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director of Planning; Zachary LeMel, Chief of Long Range Planning; and Jaclyn Norton, Committee Clerk

Planning & Development Board: Kelly Brown, Peter Doeringer, Lee Breckenridge, Kevin McCormick, Laxmi Rao, Jennifer Molinsky

For more information regarding this meeting, a video recording can be found at the following link: [Zoning & Planning Committee - June 26, 2023 \(newtv.org\)](https://www.newtv.org/Zoning-Planning-Committee-June-26-2023)

#38-22 Request for discussion and amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map regarding village center districts

ZONING & PLANNING COMMITTEE requesting review, discussion and amendments relative to Chapter 30 zoning ordinances by adding a new Village Center Overlay District, consisting of four (4) district tiers, by establishing requirements for such District, and requesting amendments to the Zoning Map to include the Village Center Overlay District.

Action: Zoning & Planning Held 8-0; Public Hearing Continued

Note: The Chair outlined the procedure for the public hearing during this meeting and that the Committee will continue the public hearing at future meetings. Zachary LeMel, Chief of Long Range Planning, and Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director of Planning, presented the attached presentation which provided an overview of the proposed Village Center Overlay District (VCOD). Their approximately 20 minute presentation is a shortened version of that which was presented at the 6/20 ZAP meeting for Council. A recording of the presentation can be found [here](#).

A revised report with public testimony will be posted at a later date.

The meeting adjourned at 10:56pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Deborah J. Crossley, Chair

City of Newton
Zoning and Planning Committee



Village Center Rezoning Public Hearing: Draft Zoning Proposal

June 26, 2023

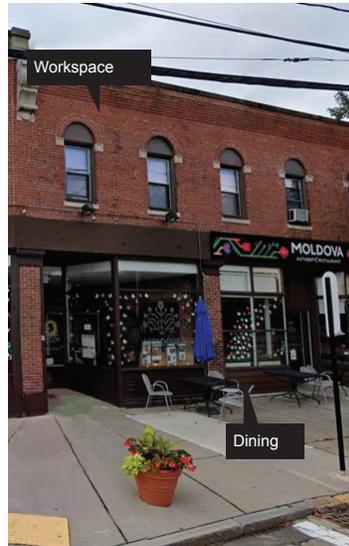
Agenda

1. **Introduction**
 - a. Village center goals
 - b. Challenges facing Newton
 - c. Purpose of village center rezoning
2. **Village Center Overlay District (VCOD) Zoning Proposal**
 - a. Overview
 - b. Development and design standards
3. **MBTA Communities and VCOD**
 - a. General requirements
 - b. Newton requirements and VCOD compliance
 - c. Deadline for compliance
4. **Expected Outcomes to VCOD Zoning**
 - a. Benefits to the City
 - b. Engagement and Outreach
5. **Conclusion**
 - a. Timeline and next steps

Introduction

Village Center goals

Build upon existing successes and strengths to create vibrant village centers

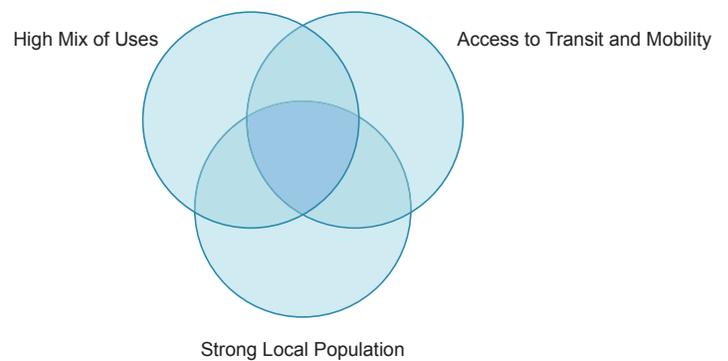


Introduction

Village Centers can Address Challenges Facing Newton

1. Lack of housing options (size, price point, and accessibility)
2. Struggling local business trying to compete with online retail
3. Climate change
4. Transportation and traffic issues
5. Aging in place / welcoming new families
6. Lack of space to gather and socialize

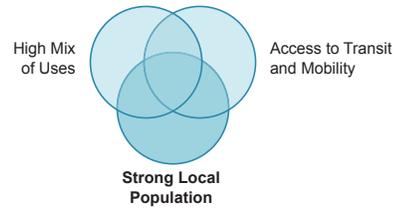
Metrics for Successful Village Centers



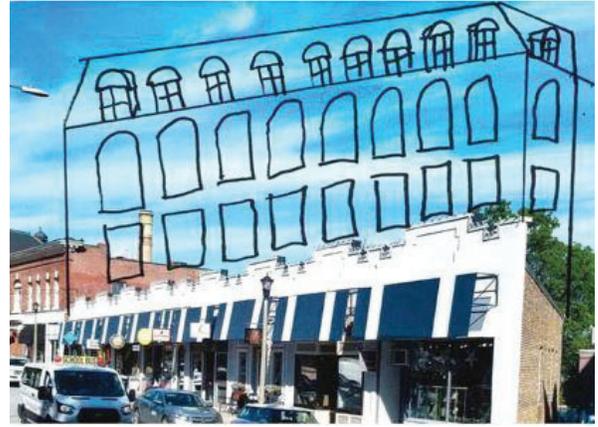
Introduction

Why Updates are Needed

Multi-family housing is difficult to build or not allowed



One and two-story retail in Newton Centre



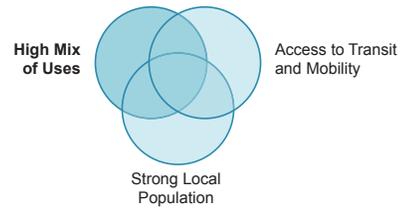
Vision Kit submission of housing above retail

Source: Community Vision Kit Submissions

Introduction

Why Updates are Needed

Restrictions make it difficult for businesses to open and grow



Vacant commercial spaces



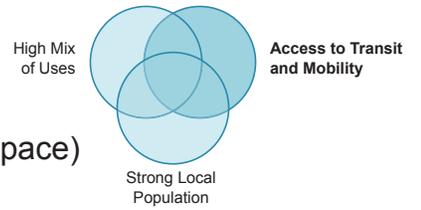
Pop-up Commercial Space in Newton Highlands

Source: EDC 2020 COVID Recovery Plan, Project Pop-Up, Boston Globe

Introduction

Why Updates are Needed

Parking requirements prevents quality design (buildings, streetscape, open space)



Austin Street parking lot, pre-development

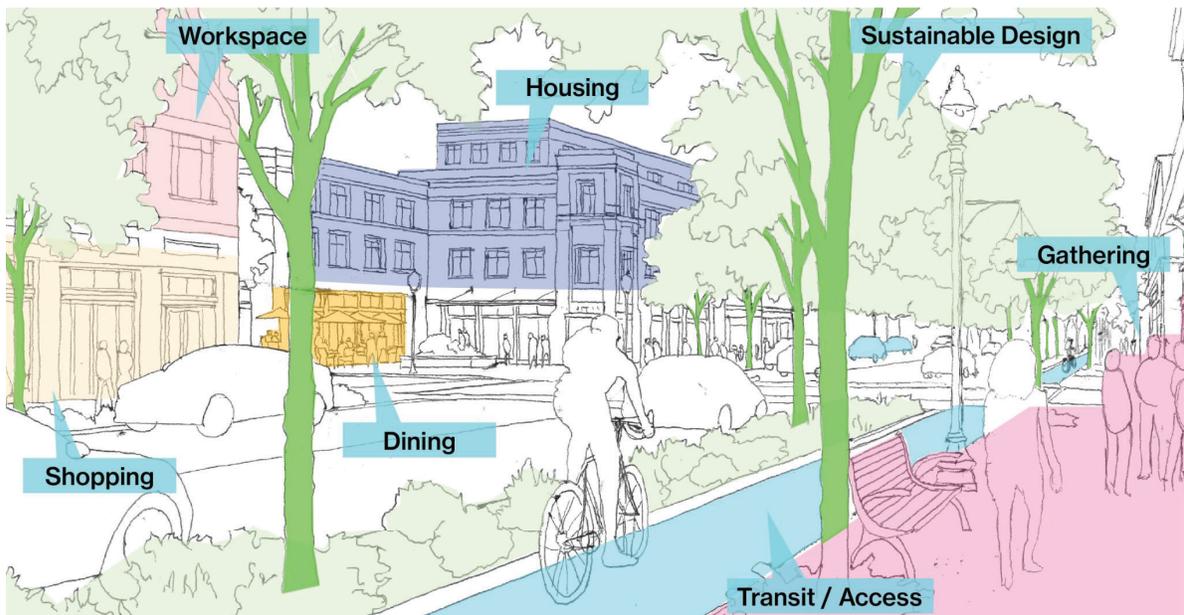


Bram Way Plaza hosting live music

Source: City of Newton, Newton Community Pride

Introduction

Intended Outcomes - Achieving the Community Vision



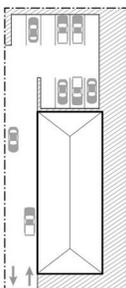
VCOD Zoning Proposal

- Zoning approach
- Development and design standards

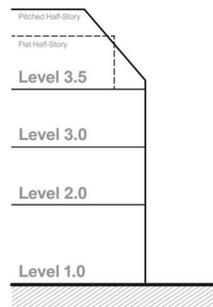
Zoning Approach

Three Principal Mechanisms Regulate Urban Form:

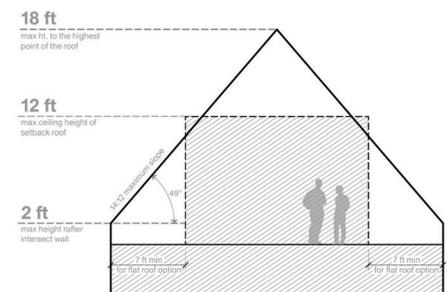
1 Building Footprint
Sets the maximum area per story



2 Building Height
Sets the maximum height in stories/feet



3 Roof Form
Provides options for a flat or pitched roof half-story



Zoning Approach

Four Sub-Districts Customized to Each Village Center

MRT*

2.5 Stories
40 Feet tall, max.
1,500 SF, max. Footprint

Residential development allowed



VC1

2.5 Stories
45 Feet tall, max.
4,000 SF, max. footprint

Residential & Limited Retail development allowed



VC2

3.5 Stories
62 Feet tall, max.
10,000 SF, max. footprint

Mixed Use/Commercial, & Residential development allowed



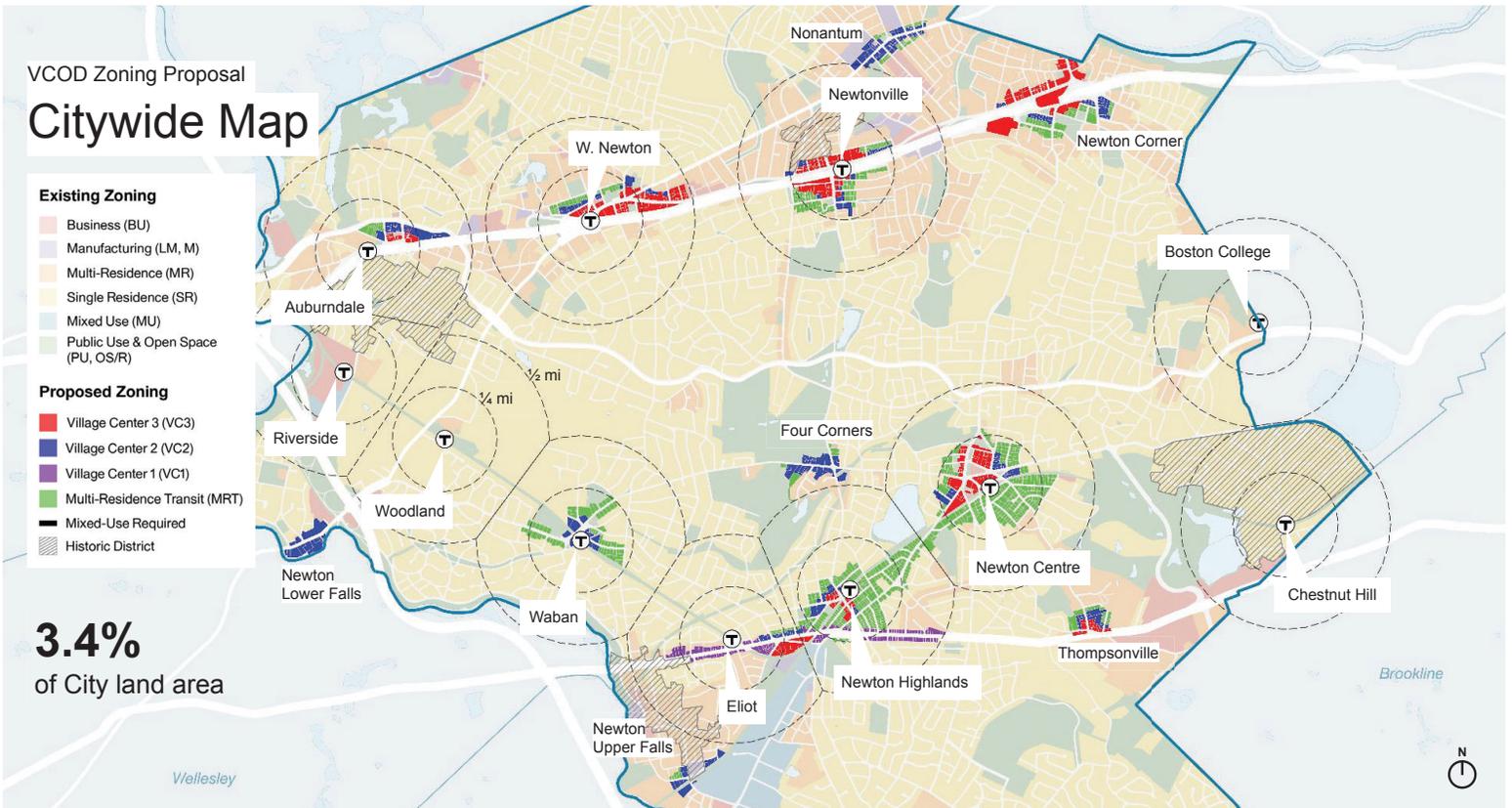
VC3

4.5 Stories
75 Feet tall, max.
15,000 SF, max. footprint

Mixed Use/Commercial, & Residential development allowed



* MRT metrics may be revised based on financial feasibility and urban form studies
 + The figures represent proposed by-right zoning allowances for new construction



Zoning Approach

Alignment with Newton's Historical Development Patterns



Newtonville



Newtonville



Upper Falls



West Newton



Newton Corner



Newton Corner



Newton Centre

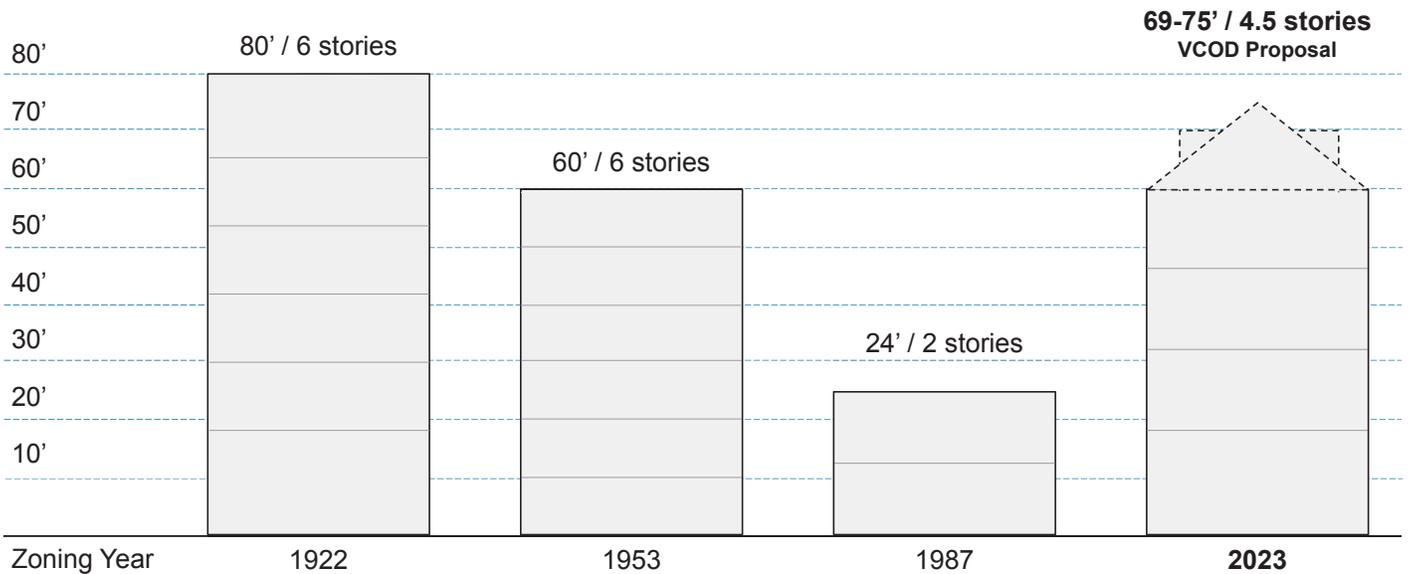


Thompsonville

Zoning Approach

Alignment with Newton's Historical Development Patterns

Maximum By-Right Building Heights Allowed in Village Centers



VCOD Zoning Proposal

Walnut St, Newtonville: Existing



Existing Street View

Existing Context

Uses: single-story small retail; two-story bank; three-story function hall with ground story retail



VCOD Zoning Proposal

Walnut St, Newtonville: Potential Development

Design Standards

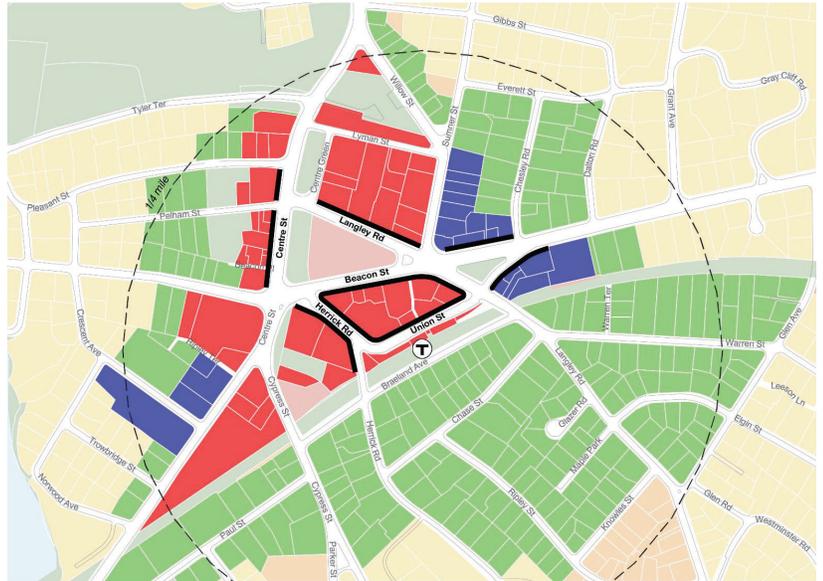
1. **Building Placement:**
When development occurs on any lot abutting a sidewalk that is <12' in total width, inclusive of the Furnishing Zone, buildings must be set back an additional distance such that a paved area meeting City sidewalk standards of at least 12' width is provided, inclusive of the Furnishing Zone.
2. **Building Entrances:**
Principal entrances must either be recessed from the plane of the facade, or have a projecting Awning or Canopy, to signal building entry and provide adequate protection from the elements.
3. **Architectural Features: Canopy**
A wall-mounted structure that provides shade and weather protection over a storefront or building entrance.
4. **Fenestration:**
For ground story fenestration, glazing must have a min. 60% Visible Light Transmittance (VLT) and no more than 15% Visible Light Reflectance (VLR) as indicated by the manufacturer.
5. **Number of Stories:**
A pitched roof may be composed of roof planes with different slopes. The slope of any pitch must not be greater than 14:12 (49 degrees). The roof rafters must intersect the wall plate or top of wall frame of the exterior walls at a height no more than 2' above the finished floor of the half-story.
6. **Half-Story Step-Back:**
A required distance that certain upper stories of a building must be recessed from the plane of the facade of the stories below.
7. **Parking Lot Access:**
Access to parking lots and structures parallel to the Front Elevation is prohibited when access along another lot line is available.



Mixed Use Required

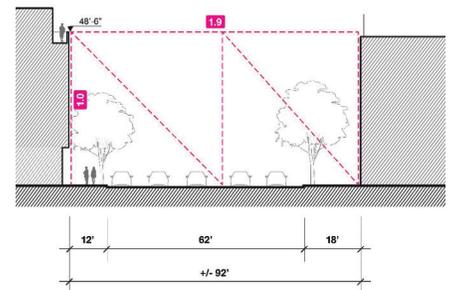
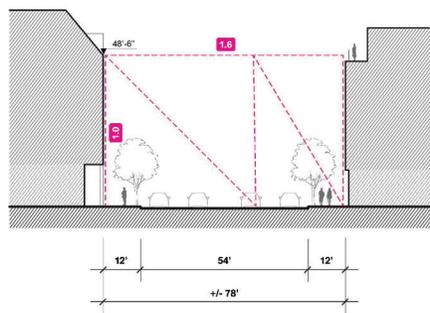
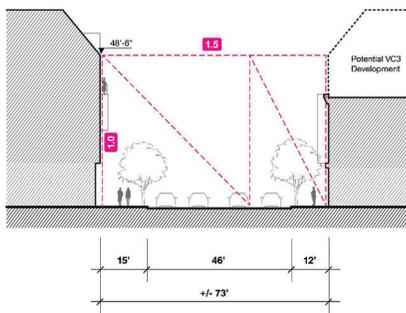
Promote vibrancy and placemaking in village centers

- Lots with Mixed Use Priority Street frontage must provide ground story Active Use space for 100% of the total width of the building
- Lots with Mixed Use Priority Street frontage must provide Active Use space at a minimum depth of 25'
- Only VC2 and VC3 lots are considered for Mixed-Use Priority Streets



Newton Centre Mixed-Use Priority Streets map

Potential Development in Different VCs



Lincoln St, Newton Highlands



Walnut St, Newtonville



Washington St, Newton Corner

Parking Requirements, Allowed but not Required



No curb cuts or garage entryways along Main Street - Brattleboro, VT

- Not requiring parking improves:
 - Streetscape/pedestrian experience
 - Environment
 - Traffic congestion
 - Cost of construction
- Half of existing multifamily parking sits empty



Unused parking from Newton multi-family housing

More Affordable Housing Provided

Current Zoning Proposed Zoning*

	Base Conditions	Option 1 (VC2 and VC3)	Option 2 (VC3 only)**
Allows For			
Height Bonus (stories)	N/A	+1	+2
Building Footprint Bonus (sq ft)	N/A	+2,500	+2,500
Required Affordable Units (min)	17.5%	25%	30%
Must Provide⁺	Required AMI for Affordable Units ⁺⁺ 50-80% Rental / 80% Ownership		

- More opportunities for base requirements:
 - Applies to all 7+ unit projects
- Bonus option for more and deeper levels of affordable housing

* Bonus cannot be used within 50 feet of a lot line abutting a MRT or residential district.
 ** VC3 lots abutting a VC1, MRT, or residential district cannot opt in.
 + Both options has been analyzed for financial feasibility with no additional City funding/resources
 ++ The average AMI can be no more than 65% AMI for a rental development

MBTA Communities and VCOD

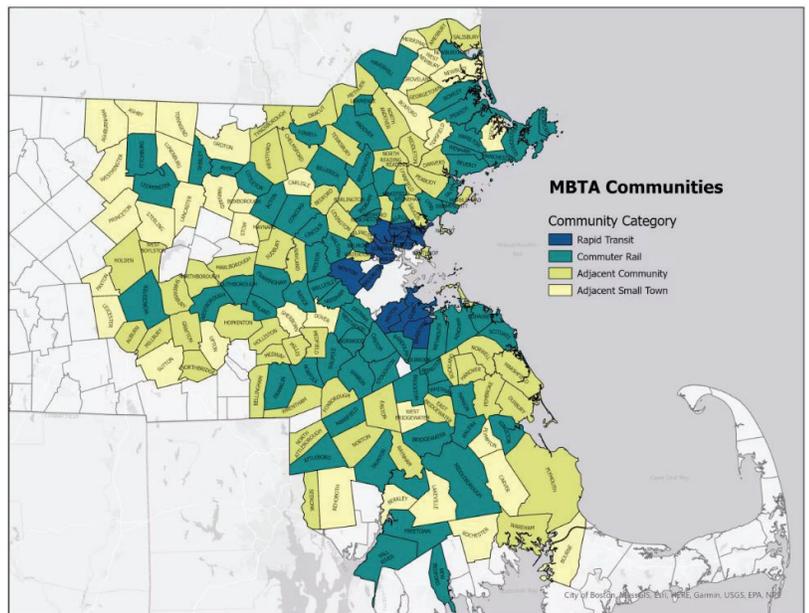
- General requirements
- Newton requirements and VCOD compliance
- Deadline for compliance

MBTA Communities and VCOD

Newton is One of 177 MBTA Communities

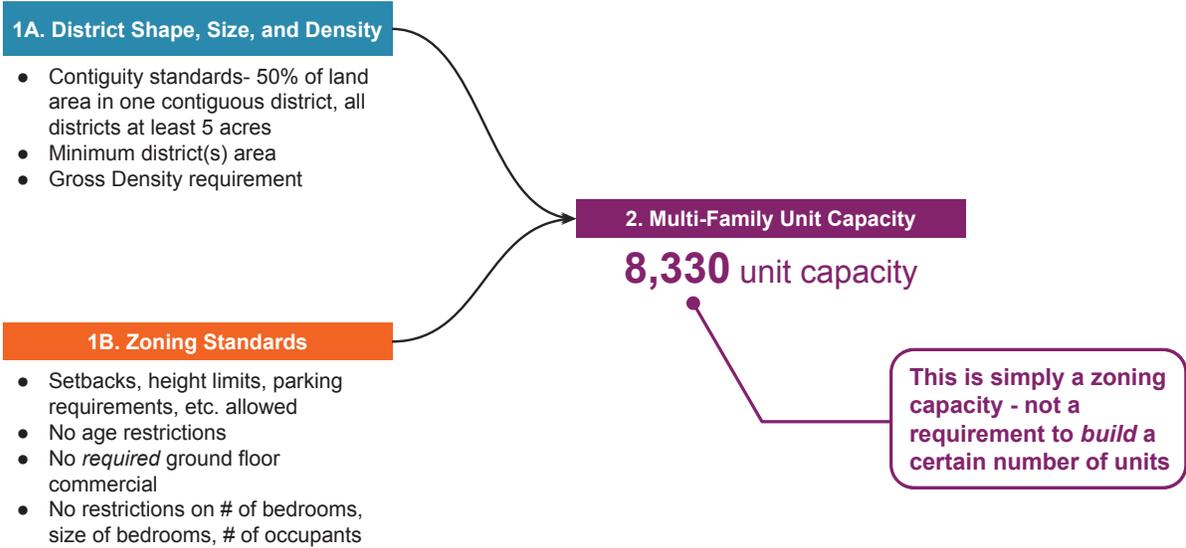
Appendix I: MBTA Community Categories and Requirements (top 20 communities)

Community	Community category	Minimum multi-family unit capacity*
Cambridge	Rapid Transit	13,477
Worcester	Commuter Rail	12,642
Quincy	Rapid Transit	11,752
Somerville	Rapid Transit	9,067
Newton	Rapid Transit	8,330
Brookline	Rapid Transit	6,990
Malden	Rapid Transit	6,930
Lowell	Commuter Rail	6,522
Medford	Rapid Transit	6,443
Revere	Rapid Transit	6,135
Brockton	Commuter Rail	5,596
Lynn	Commuter Rail	5,517
Everett	Rapid Transit	4,552
Lawrence	Commuter Rail	4,501
Framingham	Commuter Rail	4,355
Haverhill	Commuter Rail	4,189
Waltham	Commuter Rail	3,982
Weymouth	Commuter Rail	3,813
Braintree	Rapid Transit	3,769
Taunton	Commuter Rail	3,745



The total unit capacity across all MBTA Communities is over 280,000 residential units

Criteria for compliance



Version 2.0 VCOD Meets MBTA Compliance

MBTA Compliance Summary (rounded)

	MBTA Requirements (min.)	Version 2.0 VCOD Results	MBTA Compliant
Unit Capacity	8,330 units	10,000 units	YES
Aggregate Gross Density	15 units/acre	35 units/acre	YES
Total Land Area	50 acres	288	YES
% of District to be Located in Station Area	90%	100%*	YES
% of Contiguous Land for Multi-Family Zoning District(s)	50%	69%	YES

Notes:
 * Only VCOD zones within station area were tested
 ** Parcels not included in analysis (Priority Street lots and lots greater than 30,000 sf)
 *** Assumes no minimum parking requirements

Must meet every requirement to reach compliance by December 31, 2023 deadline

Expected Outcomes to VCOD Zoning

- Benefits to the City
- Engagement and Outreach

Expected Outcomes to VCOD Zoning

Benefits to the City



New housing options

New housing will provide options at sizes and price points that currently do not exist in Newton

Opportunities for older adults to downsize

Less expensive options for young adults and families

New affordable and accessible housing

New housing will be energy efficient



Support for businesses

Increased customer base

Less onerous requirements

Greater height for first floor uses

Wider sidewalks



Sufficient city services

New housing would be near transit and in walkable village centers, reducing congestion

Limited number of new students living in recent mixed use buildings

Opportunities to coordinate with schools and other city services

Increased tax revenue

Engagement and Outreach

Engagement Process

Phase 1: Visioning

Quantitative and Qualitative Research (April 2021 - April 2022)

- **Vision Kit:** 290 participants; 102 submissions
- **Online interactive forum:** 1,249 participants
- **Equitable focus groups:** 139 participants; 18 community facilitators
- **Economic Development engagement:** 41 participants
- **On-the-spot surveying:** over 500 engaged in person

Phase 2: Workshopping

Zoning Framework (May - Oct 2022)

- **Library exhibit:** up from Sept 1 - Oct 17
- **Feedback tool**
- **Focus groups:** 3 total
- **Community Engagement Network:** 90 members

Phase 3: Refining

Version 1.0 Zoning Text and Map (Nov 2022 - Jan 2023)

- **Info sessions:** 7 to discuss Version 1.0 maps
- **Postcards mailed to owners within VCOD**
- **ZAP meetings:** 2 meetings opened up to feedback from community groups

Phase 4: Finalizing

Public Hearing and Beyond (Feb 2023 - Present)

- **Public Hearing:** opens June 26
- **Postcards mailed to owners/occupants within VCOD and abutters:** 6,039
- **Zoning and Planning Committee:** discussed at 40 ZAP meetings



NHA & NHN in Newton Centre



NHA & NHN in Newtonville



Newton Public Library Exhibit



Planning intern at Festa in Nonantum

Timeline: Where we are

Next Steps

