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MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 5, 2018

TO: Councilor Susan Albright, Chairman
Members of the Zoning and Planning Committee

FROM: Barney Heath, Director of Planning and Development
James Freas, Deputy Director of Planning and Development

RE:# Zoning Redesign: Zoning for Homeowners & Housing Presentations

MEETING DATE: January 8, 2018

Since the last time the Zoning and Planning Committee has discussed the Zoning Redesign project there have been two events in the monthly event series; **Cracking the Code: Understanding Zoning for Homeowners** on November 29th and **Housing for Whom? Zoning, Affordability, and Fair Housing** on December 14th. Both events were well attended and generated interesting and varied comments and discussions among the participants. Summaries of the community conversations and feedback about zoning proposals are attached. Below is a brief summary of the primary policy ideas presented. Our intention with these Zoning Redesign event series discussions with the Committee is to elicit feedback from the Committee to inform the Policy Content Outline document to be presented in May/June.

The presentation slides and videos of the events can be found at:
<https://courbanize.com/projects/newtonzoning/updates>

Zoning for Homeowners – Discussion Held November 29, 2017

The intent of this presentation was to raise issues and potential ordinance changes that would be most relevant to homeowners considering making modifications to their homes. To that end, much of the policy ideas relate to the dimensional standards that govern the single and two-family uses. There were some overarching concepts discussed, then some specific ideas. Foremost, the following objectives for the new ordinance were presented:

1. Easy to use and administer.
2. Clear guidance on what a homeowner can do.
3. Reasonable ability to modify a property to meet a homeowner's changing needs.
4. Ensure changes to property respect the context of the neighborhood.

Context is an important component of this subject area and appears to be one of the most significant concerns that residents have with regard to changes homeowners may make to their properties. Most prominently in this category is the concern over complete teardowns and the frequently very large replacement homes. As was discussed at the event, this issue of contextually appropriate development in Newton's neighborhoods is one of the central issues to be addressed in this project (hence the approach of the new ordinance is a context-based ordinance). Addressing this issue will require the designation of new zoning districts that more closely align to the reality of the actual existing homes in the city, with the Pattern Book providing the data necessary to develop such districts, and the use of lot or building types to better organize and present the dimensional requirements of the ordinance and tailor them to the types of homes existing in the city.

As a context-based ordinance with new zoning districts, staff will be proposing a number of changes to how dimensional requirements are addressed, with some variation based on the district. Front setbacks in many districts would have both a minimum and a maximum setback, instead of just a minimum as the ordinance currently states. Staff is also considering changes to how height is measured, looking at approaches taken by other communities that may better incorporate issues of sloping topography. This would reduce the likelihood of ambiguous height measurements and drainage problems when homeowners build artificial slopes to gain more height. Most significantly, staff is proposing removing Floor Area Ratio (FAR) as a regulating tool because using FAR has contributed to the ability of homeowners to construct new homes that are out of proportion relative to the surrounding context. Staff is proposing replacing FAR with lot coverage, building width and depth requirements, and more detailed height restrictions. By using massing regulations based on the existing lot context, the zoning for buildings would reflect site specific dimensions.

Staff also presented the idea of revisiting requirements limiting front facing garages. In some districts, particularly those with smaller lots and homes generally closer to the street, garages would be restricted in width and location. Requiring garages to be located behind the front façade of the home would reduce the likelihood of a street that feels like an alley.

Finally, staff is proposing to bring the fence ordinance into the Zoning Ordinance to ensure greater consistency and allow zoning to more comprehensively regulate together the impact of building *and* fence structures on the lot. Vegetation used as de facto fences would be regulated as well. Furthermore, staff is recommending more stringent regulation of retaining walls, including requiring those exceeding four feet in height to get a Special Permit wherever they are located on the property.

Zoning and Housing – Discussion Held December 14, 2017

Zoning regulations are one of the most significant determinants of housing production in Newton. Newton's Housing Strategy published in 2016 identified a significant need for more affordable housing and more diverse housing choices. Better meeting the housing needs of Newton would ensure that the city both retains a degree of economic diversity and provides housing options to meet the needs of a younger workforce and older adults. People at early stages of their working life and people at retirement age are two demographic groups that have demonstrated market preferences for non-single family housing options in walkable locations. The data for Newton shows significant declines in economic diversity as low, moderate, and middle income households in the city are being replaced with wealthy households. Other findings include a strong need among all employer types in the city for housing choices for their employees, and the need to provide options for the increasing older adult portion of the city's population. These findings are similar in nature to those of most communities in the great Boston region, illustrating the nature of the housing crisis the Governor and other cities in the region are taking action to address.

In the event, staff placed an emphasis on the City's obligations under Fair Housing law. Fair Housing requirements extend across all aspects of housing access and housing development. Zoning is central to fulfilling the requirement for Newton to take meaningful action to overcome historic patterns of segregation, promote fair housing choice, and foster inclusive communities that are free from discrimination. Fair Housing law identifies protected classes and Newton is required to be free from barriers that restrict access to housing opportunity for these protected classes. Specifically, staff is proposing that Fair Housing be explicitly included within the purpose statement of the Zoning Ordinance, be acknowledged in the development review processes section of the Ordinance, and that potential barriers in the form of setback requirements and the regulation of group homes be updated and revised to reflect the current Fair Housing Law.

As described in Newton's Comprehensive Plan, and nationally recognized as a best practice for a wide range of environmental, economic, transportation, and public health reasons, the best place for multi-family and mixed use development is in walkable, transit oriented locations. For Newton, this practice is reflective of how the city developed historically, before the 1940s. With the creation of Newton's current Zoning Ordinance in the 40s and 50's, largely reflective of zoning ordinances nationally at that time, the City introduced the concept of lot area per unit among other requirements. In total, these requirements resulted in multi-family style developments like Towers at Chestnut Hill, Nahanton Woods, and other projects largely found across the southern portion of the Newton that feature large lots with large areas of parking and greenspace. This approach to development does not work in the walkable, mixed use environments that characterize Newton's villages, requiring that the City consider new approaches to multi-family zoning that fit within the context and promote walkability. The Mixed Use 4 district presents a good starting point.

The Housing and Zoning event presentation also featured a discussion of so-called "Missing Middle" housing types. These are mid-scale residential housing types that were once prevalent

throughout the country, but are largely no longer produced. As the market for walkable communities has surged, there has been renewed interest in these housing types, but most zoning ordinances make them difficult if not impossible to produce. The presentation highlighted several examples from triple deckers to courtyard apartments. At the meeting, staff asked participants to consider what types of places these building types might fit and to consider the types of review processes that would make sense.

Finally, staff presented on the proposed Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance. As the Zoning and Planning Committee will be taking this item up in an upcoming meeting, we won't spend additional time on it here.

Discussion

As was noted above, the purpose for bringing these presentations and the community feedback received to the Committee is to elicit discussion of the ideas presented. This discussion will inform the policy content outline document that will be presented to the Committee in May. This document will provide a complete outline of the proposed Zoning Ordinance, with the policies and regulatory approaches for each topic described. After feedback from the Committee, this document will be turned into draft Zoning Ordinance text, which will come back to the Committee in the fall.



Summary Report

Cracking the Code: Understanding Zoning for Homeowners

The third event in the Zoning Redesign series took place on November 29th, 2017 and focused on Newton's Zoning Ordinance for single- and two-family homes. With over 90 people in attendance, this event had the highest turnout yet in the series, perhaps because the majority of Newton is single- and two-family residential. The event followed the standard format used in the series where City staff presented on Zoning 101 and then spoke to the content relevant to zoning for homeowners. Staff then facilitated a few clarifying questions before breaking into smaller discussion groups where attendees delved into more detail on the presentation materials and provided feedback. At the end of the event each table shared one important or new idea that was generated by their discussion. Ahead of the event, the project team released an informational sheet which provided the basic structure of the presentation. This is appended to the end of this summary report.

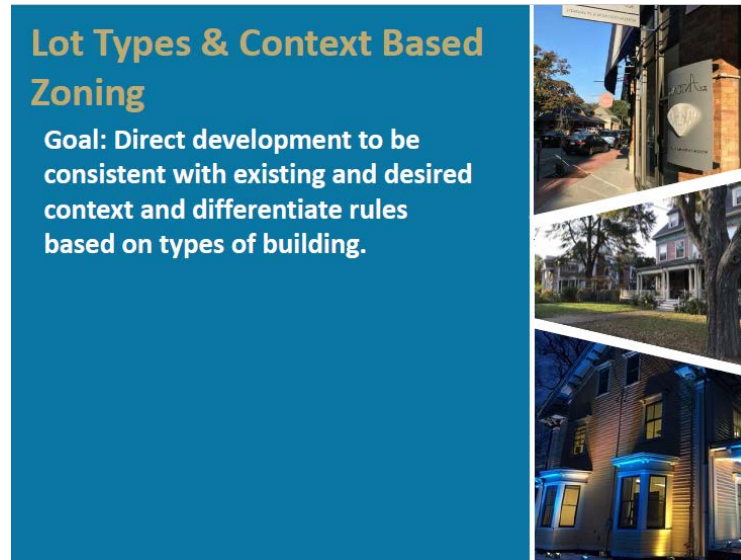
Zoning proposals on four ways to make zoning for homeowners

The presentation on Zoning for Homeowners began with a summary of the objectives that are aimed for in Zoning Redesign with regard to single- and two-family zoning. Through this re-write process, the future zoning ordinance should be easy to use and administer by homeowners, elected officials, staff, and other real estate stakeholders. By providing clear guidance on what a homeowner can do through zoning will help people understand how zoning affects them and their property. An objective is to provide homeowners with reasonable ability to modify a property to meet their changing needs. Finally, zoning should ensure that changes to individual properties respect the context of the neighborhood.

The reality of meeting all of these objectives requires that Newton's stakeholders grapple with the need for zoning to strike the right balance between flexibility and predictability. How to strike this balance was one of the main areas of feedback that attendees at the event provided. Not surprisingly, people liked having both: flexibility for homeowners to make changes to their property and predictability for neighbors to understand what their neighborhood may look like in the future. When considering their own property, people want to make reasonable changes without unnecessarily struggling with a complicated and costly process. They also want to preserve the financial investment they have made in their home, often the largest investment a person or family will make in their lifetime.

Table discussions discussed how to determine what type of changes should be deemed appropriate. Both the presentation and group discussions focused on how tools in zoning that can help homeowners determine if changes fit in with the context of the neighborhood or street.

Community Feedback: Lot Types and Context Based Zoning



Staff presented the idea of using neighborhood-specific contexts that are more individualized to the varying areas of Newton. This concept resonated with many of the attendees who like the idea of a zoning code that reflects this variation more precisely. The biggest question that arose from table discussions is where and how the context of an area is measured; in other words, what is the baseline for defining the context?

Attendees were largely surprised at the high proportion of lots in Newton – 87% - 95% - that are currently non-conforming to the Zoning Ordinance. With regard to context, one table wondered, if 87% doesn't conform with current zoning, how will the context be determined? Attendees recognized they most likely live in a non-conforming home or lot and therefore want to know, how will the new zoning take into account these properties. Several tables supported having minimum lot sizes be more flexible.

Not surprisingly, many people are concerned about teardowns of older homes in neighborhoods and how new, larger homes change the look and feel of a street. If a house is torn down, at least one table suggested, new zoning rules should apply to the new building. A similar idea was that lot sizes should become conforming if a house is torn down. Concern about tear downs also led to the question of whether newer building stock would be used as part of the context for an area or if older building stock would be used. Several tables recommended that contextual measurements could be made as an average of the homes' dimensions found a particular street. The ability to use the Pattern Book as part of this exercise is one that will prove useful as the project moves forward.

In general, people want to find ways for the new zoning ordinance to protect modest homes and protect older homes. In some cases, as one table pointed out, doing a rehab to an old home is too expensive, so tear downs shouldn't be banned altogether. Accessory apartments were brought up, again, as a way to encourage existing housing stock to remain while allowing for marginally more units.

Community Feedback: Proposed Dimensional Controls Policy

Proposed Dimensional Controls Policy

Goal: Support more easily interpreted and enforced rules that result in contextually appropriate development.

1. Have min and max setbacks.
2. New rules for measuring height – better account for slopes.
3. Replace FAR with some combination of:
 1. Building width & depth rules
 2. Building lot coverage rules
 3. Stepback plane rules



While FAR is probably a new and somewhat complicated zoning tool for most people at the event, table discussions provided thoughtful feedback on proposed dimensional controls. Overall, people thought dimensional regulations for the volume of the home should dictate that any allowed growth be proportionate to the lot, neighborhood, and account for topography. Because of Newton's topography, people understood the need for more precise way to measure height especially on hilly lots. Many expressed concern about lots that are regraded and the effects this may have on run-off issues and erosion. For setbacks, people liked the idea of ensuring that setbacks relate to the size of the lot. Residents want to see their access to sunlight protected and are interested in height and dimensional controls that take shadowing effects on abutting properties into consideration.

Community Feedback: Proposed Garage Policy

Proposed Garage Policy

Goal: Support strong connection between homes and street and promote welcoming streetscape.

1. Set a minimum front setback for garages behind the front building facade.
2. Set max garage width based on percentage of building width.
3. Vary these rules based on context district.



Attendees largely understood the need to limit garage dimensions and their orientation in order to support strong connection between homes and the street. Several tables supported the proposal to have garages set back from the front of a home. Some people wondered about locating garages on the sides of properties instead of facing the street. The need to respect and meet the homeowners need for flexibility does need to be taken into consideration, however. One table pointed out the garage ordinance may want to consider predictions about future personal car ownership and changing transportation options such as ride share and autonomous vehicles.

Community Feedback: Proposed Fence Policy



Proposed Fence Policy

Goal: Ensure consistency of fence ordinance with zoning. Make fence and retaining walls better and improve enforceability of the rules

- 1. Move fence ordinance into Zoning.**
- 2. Apply fence rules to vegetation/bushes that effectively serve as fences.**
- 3. Apply retaining wall rules to all retaining walls, not just those in the setbacks.**

The photograph on the right shows a wooden fence with a lattice top section, a stone retaining wall, and a lawn area.

No objections were raised in the table discussions to moving the fence ordinance into the Zoning Ordinance. People generally understand the need to regulate fences because of visibility and safety of vehicular movement on the street, especially for corner lots. Furthermore, some people expressed that, in general, large fences on a front yard are not desirable.

Groups agreed that there need to be more restrictive rules for retaining walls. Because of how retaining walls change the topography of a lot, people expressed concern for both the need to upkeep retaining walls, manage stormwater flow, and meanwhile find a way to deal with sloped lots.

Community Feedback: General

Some more general comments emerged during the discussion portion of the event. Enforcement was a topic of discussion for single- and two-family homeowners. It was pointed out how challenging it is for neighbors to report zoning violations and people want inspection and enforcement activities to be carried out by the City. The Special Permit process was also brought up and people expressed concern that it seems arbitrary, costly, and complicated for the average single- and two-family homes. At least two tables suggested that a zoning board or planning board be more involved in this process instead of City Council.

As in previous events, people expressed affinity for Newton's villages. People appreciate that Newton has many villages instead of one downtown and that each village has its own context and character. One table discussed how to preserve village centers and add new uses like promoting co-working spaces, while preserving existing office uses. One group pointed out the goal of sustainability and how to use zoning to encourage density, limit house size, and increase the walkability of Newton's neighborhoods. The need for housing that meets the needs of an aging population was also brought up. It will be important for zoning and building code to allow Newton homeowners to easily retrofit single- and two-family homes with ramps, elevators, attached garages, and overall flexibility for aging-in-place. Zoning that encourages smaller homes, cluster housing and ways to protect moderately-priced, existing homes are priorities that emerged from this event. At the next event in the series, Housing for Whom: Zoning, Affordability, and Fair Housing on December 14th, 2017 these particular aspects of the Zoning Redesign conversation will continue. The informational sheet for the upcoming event is also appended to this document. As a final note, staff received many positive comments about the Zoning Redesign process, the event series, the website, and materials published for each event.

Cracking the Code: Understanding Zoning for Homeowners

November 29th, 2017 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Newton Free Library, 330 Homer Street



www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning

Have you ever done an addition to your home? Added a deck, shed, or a garage?

If you're a homeowner in Newton, the City of Newton's Zoning Ordinance regulates your house and any associated structures on your lot. Join us on November 29th to explore zoning for single and two-family properties throughout the city and how those regulations could change in a new ordinance.

Zoning regulates where structures are allowed to be located on your lot, the structure's maximum height, and how much of your lot must be devoted to open space. These same rules apply to your neighbors as well.

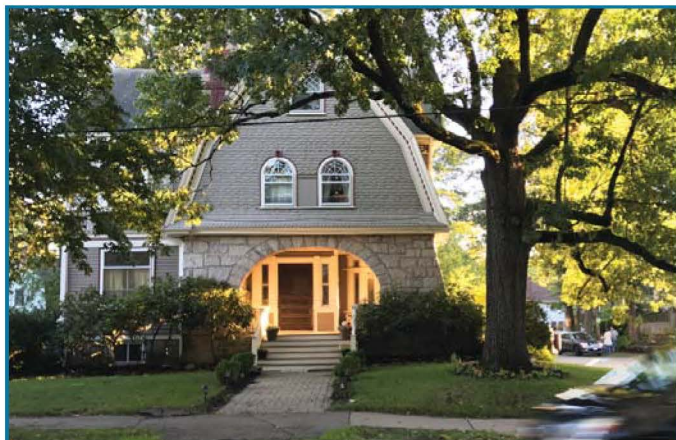
FLEXIBILITY VS. PREDICTABILITY: The degree to which zoning rules grant property owners **flexibility** in using or changing their property generally contradicts with the degree to which the ordinance offers **predictability for neighbors** (what may be done with a property) and **predictability for the property owner** (how the rules will apply to their property). In practice, zoning requirements fall on a spectrum between absolute flexibility and absolute predictability. Discussion will include how Zoning rules could vary depending on the regulatory issue or neighborhood context.

MASSING: City staff will present how the zoning ordinance currently treats setback, height, and massing, using the floor area ratio (FAR) calculation. We will explore alternative ways to address these issues by utilizing prescriptive dimensional controls or design review related processes. We expect discussions to include issues of neighborhood context and fairness.



GARAGES: In some neighborhood contexts, garages can transform the sense of a neighborhood street into a street that feels like an alley. Many communities have begun to regulate the connection between the dimensions of the garage, house, lot, and street. We will discuss what neighborhood contexts, if any, in Newton should require garages to be set back from the front façade of the building and be limited in how much of the home they can cover. Newton residents have raised concerns in recent years about garages that stick out in front of a house or dominate the appearance of a home when viewed from the street.

FENCES: Fences are not currently regulated by the Zoning Ordinance. Instead, the City Ordinance regulates fences. Bringing the fence ordinance into the Zoning Ordinance could more coherently regulate the relationship of fences to other structures on residential lots. Shrubs, hedges and similar types of vertical plantings may need to be included within the fence ordinance where they serve a similar function and can have similar impacts on corner visibility and related issues. Regulation of retaining walls will also be discussed.



Wheelchair accessible location. For ADA accommodations, contact Jini Fairley at least two business days in advance: jfairley@newtonma.gov or 617-796-1253. For City's TTY/TDD: 617-796-1089. For TRS, dial 711.

Housing for Whom? Zoning, Affordability, and Fair Housing

December 14th, 2017 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.
Newton Free Library, 330 Homer Street

www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning



Newton's Zoning Ordinance is the major determinant of the locations, types and amount of housing that is permitted in the city. The 2016 Newton Leads 2040 Housing Strategy clearly shows the increasing exclusivity of the city as the wealthiest residents of the Boston region are drawn to the desirability of Newton and low and moderate income households have few, if any, options.

MULTI-FAMILY ZONING CLOSE TO TRANSIT AND JOBS

Environmentally sustainable development strategies have identified that the more cities can locate housing options close to public transit and jobs, the more we can reduce the negative impacts of car-oriented transportation and long commute times. Newton's Comprehensive Plan recommends new housing development in certain village centers with transit options and in major employment centers like Needham Street.

Over the last several years businesses of all sizes in Newton have faced challenges in accessing sufficient workforce in part due to lack of housing options near jobs. Meanwhile, the millennial and baby boomer generations continue to demand more multi-family residential in mixed-use, village center type locations. Newton must decide how it will respond to these needs and reflect that decision in its zoning. Encouraging this type of housing development in appropriate locations could include lower unit to



lot area ratios and clear guidance on the City's expectations for this type of development.

THE "MISSING MIDDLE" HOUSING CHOICES

Historically, neighborhoods across greater Boston featured a range of building types such as triple deckers, fourplexes, courtyard apartments, townhouses, cluster housing, and live/work buildings. With the advent of zoning, these types of buildings required special permits, which generally discourages smaller multi-unit projects because they don't allow a developer to absorb processing costs (time, attorneys, redesigns, etc.). What if Newton were to allow some "missing middle" buildings in multi-family zoning districts with a more expedited review process?

AFFORDABLE HOUSING THROUGH INCLUSIONARY ZONING

An inclusionary zoning ordinance requires that every residential development over a certain

size contributes deed-restricted affordable units. Newton was one of the early adopters of inclusionary zoning and has had such an ordinance since 1977. There is currently a proposal to update that ordinance and increase the percentage of affordable units a development must provide, depending on size, from 15 to 20%, perhaps even 25% in certain circumstances, as well as proposing to include middle-income units.

FAIR HOUSING

Newton's Fair Housing Policy states that each person shall have equal access to and equal opportunity in housing throughout the City, regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, familial status (families with children under 18), public assistance (including rental vouchers), genetic information, or military status. To what extent can the City's Zoning Ordinance promote this important goal and support fair housing throughout all of Newton?



Summary Report

Housing for Whom: Zoning, Affordability, and Fair Housing

The Zoning Redesign project ended the year with an event on December 14th, 2017 about how zoning could regulate multifamily housing, contribute towards the development of affordable housing and comply with Fair Housing laws. The event was well attended by over 50 Newton residents; several members of City of Newton staff presented and facilitated group discussions where attendees provided feedback on the zoning proposals. The presentation slides and video of the presentation is available online (www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning).

Affirming Fair Housing and meeting other housing goals through multifamily zoning

While the November event focused on zoning for single- and two-family housing, the December event focused on multifamily housing. Four categories of zoning proposals were presented and community feedback to the proposals is described below. The full presentation is available via slides and video recording posted online (www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning). An informational sheet was published ahead of the event and is appended to this report.

Community Feedback: Fair Housing

An informational sheet with a blue background on the left and two photographs of houses on the right. The text on the blue background is white. The top photograph shows a modern brick house with a gabled roof and a small porch. The bottom photograph shows a traditional yellow house with a gabled roof and a front porch with white columns.

Proposed Fair Housing Policy

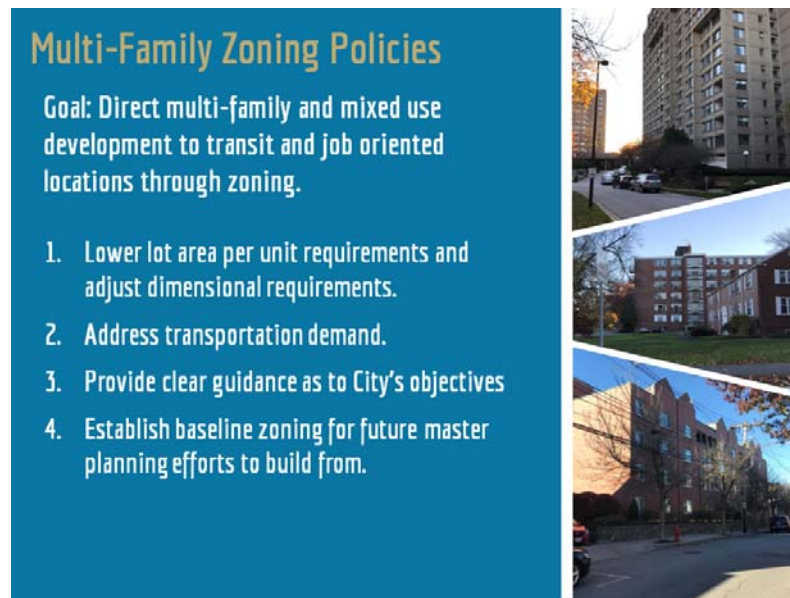
Goal: Incorporate Fair Housing requirements, definitions, and standards into Newton's Zoning.

1. Zoning Ordinance Purpose Statement
2. Development review process purpose statements.
3. Waivers for ramps or other accessibility features
4. Update regulations for group homes

Fair Housing is a federal requirement that Newton must adhere to and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 provides guidance on how Newton can meet its obligation to affirmatively further fair housing. As part of Zoning Redesign, staff proposed **incorporating Fair Housing into the purpose statement** of the zoning ordinance. In addition, for development review procedures, the zoning ordinance could recognize Fair Housing considerations relative to both how development review is conducted and with regard to development review outcomes. Staff proposed the ordinance should **explicitly recognize the duty to further Fair Housing** in its development review process purpose statements. Because disability is one of the Fair Housing protected classes, zoning should **allow waivers for accessibility features** to homes (e.g. ramps). Newton’s zoning ordinance also needs to be updated to appropriately regulate **group homes**, which are residences for people with disabilities or those in need of group residential supports. Currently Newton’s zoning ordinance does not sufficiently define group homes, which is out of step with Fair Housing regulations.

In breakout table discussions attendees provided feedback on the proposed Fair Housing zoning elements and overall were very supportive of the proposals. Particularly, attendees appreciated the need to clearly define “fair housing” in the ordinance purpose statement and suggested using examples to make the definition explicit. A table supported the idea of allowing by right accessibility features necessary for adapting homes for people with disabilities. Participants asked about the **number of bedrooms** and ways to make sure families are given equal housing opportunities in Newton regardless of their size. Because zoning generally doesn’t regulate the interior spaces of buildings, the zoning ordinance is not the best regulatory tool for number of bedrooms. For group homes, one table asked if residents would require a waiver for the number of occupants. As the zoning ordinance is updated to include more specifications about the **group home** use category, the ordinance should fully comply with Fair Housing law and not create any barriers to introducing this residential use in Newton.

Community Feedback: Multifamily Zoning



Multi-Family Zoning Policies

Goal: Direct multi-family and mixed use development to transit and job oriented locations through zoning.

1. Lower lot area per unit requirements and adjust dimensional requirements.
2. Address transportation demand.
3. Provide clear guidance as to City’s objectives
4. Establish baseline zoning for future master planning efforts to build from.

The graphic also features three photographs of multi-family housing buildings: a tall brick apartment building, a brick building with a green lawn, and a brick building with a street view.

As attendees entered in the room for the event they were prompted to reflect on their ‘**housing history**’ – all of the different types of housing units that people have lived in over their lifetime and predict living in as they age. Every person who reported on their housing history shared a diversity of housing unit types. Many people had lived in both multifamily and single family residences.

Community feedback on the multifamily zoning proposals was mixed. Some want to see **more areas** zoned as multifamily, while others have concern about where housing density should be **located** if at all. While one participant was interested in the total **number of units** that may be proposed, the zoning ordinance does not identify a specific number of units.

Housing Options for Different Stages in Life

Reflecting on the housing history exercise, one person pointed out that some people prefer single family detached homes to multifamily buildings. Other tables emphasized the need for multifamily housing types as people **age in place** since single family residences are not ideal for older adults. Several tables gave strong feedback that currently Newton does not have sufficient options for residents who want to downsize from a single family to a unit in a multifamily building and supported zoning for more multifamily units. Housing for seniors should be transit oriented, near grocery and convenience stores, walkable, easily accessible to medical care, and have elevators in multistory buildings. People suggested both rental apartments and owner occupied units are needed.

Housing within the Neighborhood Context

Groups discussed how zoning could allow a range of multifamily building types and locate them in the appropriate contexts. There was general agreement that zoning should allow building types sized according to the **scale of the neighborhood**. How zoning can help “transition” between residential and commercial centers was a key point of discussion that will need further attention as the zoning map and ordinance are drafted and refined. People asked questions about the current areas of the city that are zoned single family and if new multifamily zoning would affect these zones. One person suggested changing the zoning for areas that have a high proportion of two-family buildings in a single family zone, to be zoned as two-families. As in past events, groups complained about how **tear downs**, which replace smaller, older single-family homes with much larger, new single-family homes, are currently presenting proportional issues to the neighborhood feel, all without any changes to zoning.

Locations for Multifamily Housing

Some groups discussed **specific locations** for multifamily zones in Newton and among those discussions there was consensus that the best locations are **close to commercial areas and transportation hubs**. Even more specific locations included Washington Street, Needham Street, Riverside, Newton Corner, north of West Newton Square, near border with Lexington and Waltham, Parker Street, and Auburndale. Groups discussed **mixed use multifamily buildings** and in general were interested in finding the right locations for these building types. Attendees noted how housing options near shops and services provide great benefits including increased sustainability and health as well as reduced congestion.

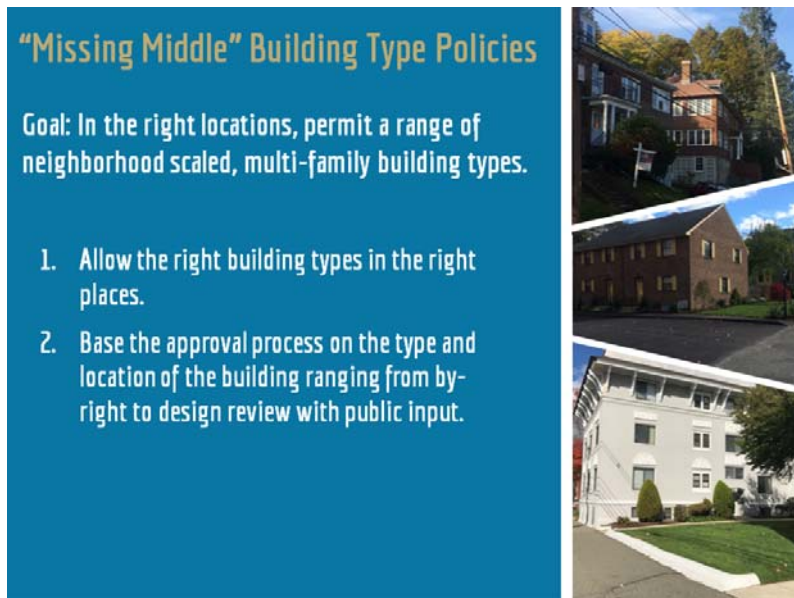
Housing Connected to Transportation Options and Community Assets

Locating housing options near transportation options was a theme among many of the table discussions. People expressed a need to locate multifamily zones close to where Newton currently has the highest **transportation capacity and options**. Several groups said they want to see housing in locations that are walkable, pedestrian friendly, bike-able. One table discussed how **housing near community assets** and activities means safer environments for kids. Another group talked about zoning for more density around temples and churches so people can more easily walk, especially seniors. Many asked about how the new zoning ordinance could anticipate new paradigms in transportation like autonomous vehicles. Several other people expressed concern about the number of cars, on street **parking**, and how to regulate car ownership. One group asked if there was a way to encourage shuttle service from village to village or stops along multifamily housing routes that would connect to public transportation. All of these topics will be discussed in **January 18, 2018 at the next Zoning Redesign event, “A Parking Lot for Goldilocks: Zoning for Just the Right Size”**.

Dimensional Proposals

Finally, groups provided feedback on dimensional proposals in multifamily zoning included support for eliminating the lot area per unit requirement and allowing smaller setbacks with relaxed standards for multifamily buildings with or without garages. One table was interested zoning that didn’t encumber multifamily buildings by reducing the requirement to face the street or allowing driveways in the back.

Community Feedback: “Missing Middle” Building Type



“Missing Middle” Building Type Policies

Goal: In the right locations, permit a range of neighborhood scaled, multi-family building types.

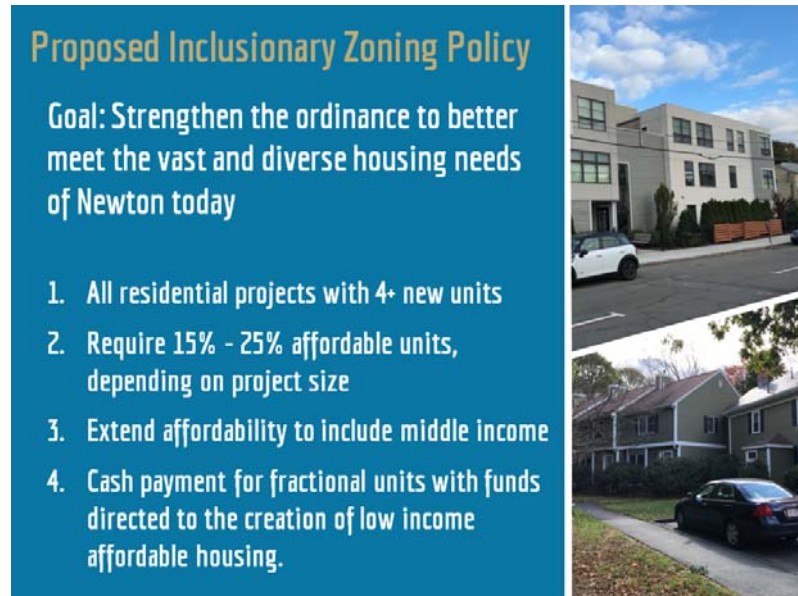
1. Allow the right building types in the right places.
2. Base the approval process on the type and location of the building ranging from by-right to design review with public input.

The graphic includes three photographs of buildings: a large brick house on a hill, a two-story brick building, and a white multi-story building with a porch.

In general, there was a great deal of positive feedback about zoning proposals for “missing middle” building types – buildings with 3, 4, or more units by right. People understood this type of zoning as an opportunity to add **slightly more density in residential areas**. Table discussions saw this zoning proposal as a good option for transitional density zones in neighborhoods. One group mentioned

accessory apartments and wondered if there were further ways zoning could allow multiple units in existing buildings like large Victorians. Clustered cottages could be useful for older adults who want to transition out of single-family to single floor living, but don't want an apartment. Adapting existing homes with more units or with additions such as elevators or stairs were also mentioned. Community members asked if tiny houses could be included as a housing typology. Some commented that "missing middle" building types could achieve some density while preserving green space access.

Community Feedback: Inclusionary Zoning



Proposed Inclusionary Zoning Policy

Goal: Strengthen the ordinance to better meet the vast and diverse housing needs of Newton today

1. All residential projects with 4+ new units
2. Require 15% - 25% affordable units, depending on project size
3. Extend affordability to include middle income
4. Cash payment for fractional units with funds directed to the creation of low income affordable housing.

The graphic includes two photographs: the top one shows a modern, multi-story apartment building with a white car parked in front; the bottom one shows a row of smaller, two-story houses with a dark car parked on the street.

Overall the feedback about the inclusionary housing proposals was positive, although there was less discussion about this topic than the other three topics. In general people were interested in finding ways to provide housing options for **middle income earners** - people who fall outside of qualifying for affordable units designated for low or very low income, but don't earn enough to be able to afford a market rate unit in Newton. Attendees were interested in ways to **bridge this very large gap** and incentivize developers to build these units at no cost to the public. Some attendees had remaining questions about how **non-profit housing developers** would be affected by this change if at all, and what the role of the Newton Housing Authority could look like with a new ordinance and creating more mixed income multifamily housing. One person suggested looking at policies like linkage units, which are used in some communities to increase the benefit capture of housing and mixed use space production. Staff will likely need to continue to explain why the proposed inclusionary zoning ordinance has been composed this way as there may be some remaining questions about the logic behind the proposed thresholds and income calculations, for example.

Community Feedback: General Comments

As mentioned at nearly all prior events in the series, attendees asked if the new zoning ordinance will be able to lessen the amount of **tear downs** or 'mcmansions' currently affecting Newton's residential neighborhoods. Several attendees asked about **design review** and whether this will become a greater

part of the zoning ordinance. One person suggested reviewing the design review processes in Brookline and Boston. People want to see how the zoning ordinance will encourage more commercial spaces and commercial tax base. The zoning ordinance should comply with all State law. People expressed concern about Newton's infrastructure especially roads and schools and how these will interplay with zoning for multifamily housing.

What's Next?

Join us on January 18, 2018 at the next Zoning Redesign event, "A Parking Lot for Goldilocks: Zoning for Just the Right Size"!