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MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 19, 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: Transportation and Zoning

MEETING DATE: January 22, 2018

On January 18th the Planning Department hosted the latest in the Zoning Redesign event series; **A Parking Lot for Goldilocks: Zoning for Just the Right Size**. The event was well attended with approximately 55 attendees. A Summary Report of the community conversations and feedback from the event will be provided to the Committee at the meeting on Monday, January 22. 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 Outline document to be presented in May/June 2018.

The presentation slides and videos of the events can be found at:

<https://courbanize.com/projects/newtonzoning/updates>

Transportation and Zoning

Drawing from Newton's Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Strategy, and the Zoning Reform Group report, the Planning Department is proposing the following principle to guide how the future Zoning Ordinance would address the issue of transportation.

Reinforce and support a multi-modal transportation system that offers people a range of transportation options and increases the livability, sustainability, and economic vibrancy of Newton.

The issue of transportation intersects with zoning in two primary ways: One, through the development review process where transportation system impacts are assessed, and two, through parking standards, which include requirements for a minimum number of parking spaces and the

design of parking lots. Just as vehicle technology has advanced considerably since the 1950s, the ways that zoning can address these issues has also advanced.

In the presentation, staff discussed four policy areas:

- Transportation Demand Management
- Right Size Parking Requirements
- Optimize Parking Resources
- Site Design

In short, Transportation Demand Management (TDM) is a management system to promote a wide range of options for how people access a place. It includes programmatic things like free transit passes and flexible work hours and hardscape like clearly visible front doors and pathways to them. A number of communities have established performance standards with goals related to reducing the peak hour usage of single occupancy cars. Providing a wide range of transportation options is the only proven way to reduce traffic congestion and increase livability. Newton can establish such a performance goal for an individual development, and development projects can use TDM programs to achieve those goals – and in this way the City proactively establishes the outcome it wants, placing the onus on developers to achieve it.

Planning staff also discussed the ways zoning plans for predicted parking and how the tools for making these predictions can be improved. Reducing or eliminating the minimum parking requirement in Newton’s zoning and introducing a maximum parking requirement is a way to ensure the right amount of parking is built. Data collected across many parts of the City has found that our existing minimum parking requirements are too high, and when compared to neighboring communities, Newton’s parking requirements are among the highest in the region. A maximum parking requirement allows the City to mitigate the negative impacts of large parking lots. Reducing or eliminating the minimum, whether citywide or by geographic proximity to transit or walkable locations will similarly bring a range of benefits, particularly in promoting businesses in Newton’s village centers.

Shared parking is an important tool for optimizing the use of parking resources. Again, data from many different places in the Newton shows an underutilization of existing parking, even at peak demand times. Already, businesses across the city have informal parking sharing agreements. The Zoning Ordinance needs to allow these arrangements.

Finally, design and landscaping requirements for Newton’s parking lots need to be improved in order to address environmental concerns, safety issues, and to prepare the City for changing vehicle technologies, particularly autonomous vehicles.

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 complete outline of the proposed Zoning Ordinance, which will be presented to the Committee in May 2018 and will describe the policies and regulatory approaches for each topic. 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.