



Ruthanne Fuller  
Mayor

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Barney S. Heath  
Director

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**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** October 23, 2020

**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  
Nevena Pilipović-Wengler, Community Engagement Manager  
Zachery LeMel, Chief of Long Range Planning

**RE:** **#88-20 Discussion and review relative to the draft Zoning Ordinance**  
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING requesting review, discussion, and direction relative to the draft Zoning Ordinance.  
**Other docket items to be taken up within the context of Zoning Redesign include #30-20, #38-20, and #148-20**

**MEETING:** October 26, 2020

**CC:** City Council  
Planning Board  
John Lojek, Commissioner of Inspectional Services  
Neill Cronin, Chief of Current Planning  
Alissa O. Giuliani, City Solicitor  
Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer

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**Community Engagement Proposal**

The City of Newton's Department of Planning and Development will work in partnership with the ZAP Committee to undertake robust community engagement concerning Zoning Redesign. From 2017-2019, the department facilitated a series of public events to both educate the public as well as solicit their ideas and concerns on Zoning Redesign's main themes. While this engagement captured a multitude of voices and perspectives, it concluded over a year ago.

The Planning Department recognizes that some members of the public and organizations have dedicated extensive time to reviewing the proposed drafts, some have not had involvement since prior engagement efforts, and others are engaging with Zoning Redesign for the first time.

Given the varying levels of the public's familiarity with the proposal, the Planning Department intends to conduct a Listening Tour. This tour aims to establish a collective baseline understanding of Zoning

Redesign for the public-at-large, and to develop engagement efforts for 2021 that responds to stakeholders' different needs. The proposed timeline is:

- **November 2020:** Community Outreach for the Listening Tour
- **December 2020:** Listening Tour
- **January 2021:**
  - Synthesis of Learnings from the Listening Tour
  - Public Forum on Article 3 – Residence Districts
- **February – September 2021:** Comprehensive Engagement Strategies for Each Article

The following are descriptions of each phase:

***November 2020: Community Outreach for the Listening Tour***

The Community Engagement Planner will individually reach out to boards, commissions, community organizations and other stakeholders to raise their awareness of and invite them to the Listening Tour events. It is also an opportunity to solicit ideas for community engagement strategies. The Community Engagement Planner will begin to schedule introductions at stakeholders' meetings. Councilors are encouraged to recommend to staff community organizations to contact.

***December 2020: Listening Tour***

The Listening Tour has four purposes: (1) help the public get to know Zoning Redesign, (2) listen to residents' general concerns and hopes, (3) learn how residents resonate with the Zoning Redesign goals, and (4) solicit ideas for comprehensive engagement around each Article.

The Listening Tour aims to achieve these purposes through three channels:

1. **Two Public Roundtable Events via Zoom:** This virtual event will offer the opportunity for staff to present on Zoning Redesign and facilitate engaging conversations among Newton residents. The presentation will focus on the history of zoning and Zoning Redesign in Newton, why Newton needs Zoning Redesign, Zoning Redesign's goals, and what opportunities exist for community engagement around the Zoning and Planning Committee's article-by-article process. The breakout groups will facilitate prompts meant to gauge individuals' understanding of Zoning Redesign as well as the zoning topics and level of detail desired for future engagement events. The event will conclude with breakout groups sharing their main takeaways and questions. The proposed dates are:
  - a. Wednesday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 7-9pm EST
  - b. Thursday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 12-2pm EST
2. **Public Video of Presentation:** Staff will video record the same presentation that will be made at the Listening Tour roundtable events and make it available on the City of Newton's website. Stakeholders can view the video at their convenience. During her outreach in November, the Community Engagement Planner will encourage stakeholders to screen this video during December for their members who cannot attend the two Listening Tour events.
3. **Public Survey:** A survey will be created and dispersed to collect qualitative data on (a) what the staff can do to improve its education on and messaging of Zoning Redesign, (b) how residents

support the Zoning Redesign goals, and (c) the public's ideas and needs for community engagement tactics for each Article. Staff aim to disperse this survey at the two public events and to encourage stakeholders to further disperse the survey amongst their groups' membership and/or their neighbors.

***January 2021: Synthesis of Learnings from the Listening Tour***

Staff will synthesize the feedback and ideas gathered through stakeholder meetings, the two public events, and the survey. The results will be presented to the Zoning and Planning Committee and posted on the City website. The results will inform a more comprehensive engagement strategy for each Article, also to be presented to the Zoning and Planning Committee.

***January 2021: Public Forum on Article 3 – Residence Districts***

Building upon the Listening Tour and the feedback it provides, staff will begin the Article-specific community engagement with a public forum on Article 3 – Residence Districts, the Zoning and Planning Committee's current focus. Additional engagement will be determined based on what is learned during the Listening Tour.

***February – September 2021: Comprehensive Engagement Strategies for Each Article***

While the details of this strategy will be determined based on the public input collected during the Listening Tour, the following goals have been identified for this stage of community engagement:

1. Follow the Article-by-Article Calendar: Make sure that community input parallels the Zoning and Planning Committee's working calendar, so that the community input is relevant and informative for staff's and Councilors' decision-making.
2. Provide Public Education on Each Article: In a similar fashion to the Listening Tour, create accessible material on each Article that educates and invites the public into the conversation.
3. Goals Into Action: Enable opportunities for the public to share their opinions and input on which technical elements staff and the Zoning and Planning Committee should consider for each Article, in order to achieve the Zoning Redesign goals.
4. Goals Into Action Stewards: Recruit 'Stewards' for the community engagement of 2021 - volunteers to review public material staff create and to help disperse said material as well as additional engagement tools, including surveys or event notifications.

**Soliciting Feedback**

Feedback from the Councilors on any stage of this proposal would be much appreciated.