

**Nadia Khan**

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**From:** David A. Olson  
**Sent:** Monday, March 20, 2017 2:37 PM  
**To:** citycouncil  
**Cc:** Nadia Khan  
**Subject:** FW: letter for City Council

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**From:** Joy Huber  
**Sent:** Monday, March 20, 2017 2:14 PM  
**To:** David A. Olson  
**Subject:** letter for City Council

Five years ago the City Council voted unanimously in favor of creating a Mixed Use 4 (MU4) Zoning District. The purpose of MU4 was to “Allow the development of buildings and uses appropriate to Newton’s village and commercial center... encourage development that fosters compact, pedestrian-oriented villages with a mix of residences and commercial use ... Expand the diversity of housing options.” Developers have taken the city at its word, that the city wants to encourage new mixed-use development. Yet to date, only one property has been re-zoned MU4, the Austin Street parking lot, a parcel owned by the city. Other proposed MU4 developments have gotten stalled by aggressive opposition from abutters, legal maneuvers by anti-development residents, and the City Council members pulling back from MU4 support. The City needs to decide where MU4 developments are appropriate and identify them in plans and reports. It needs to separate zoning changes from particular developments. This means having a plan for each village center and other commercial districts. It would give assurances to developers that they do not have to spend years fighting for re-zoning as well as special permits. It would give some assurance to residents that they don’t need to fight every development for fear that a large development will soon appear in their backyard. It might discourage the creation of more historic districts across Newton, which are partly driven by fear of large developments. The city is in the process of updating its zoning code, but it cannot happen soon enough. Further, the City Council must have the backbone to support its own new rules.

Joy Huber

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