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Barney S. Heath
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 22, 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
Zachery LeMel, Chief of Long Range Planning
Nevena Pilipović-Wengler, Community Engagement Manager
Cat Kemmett, Planning Associate

RE: **Chair's Note:**
The Zoning & Planning Committee will receive a presentation and report from Community Engagement Planner Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler on the Community Engagement Event held in December. The Committee will also begin a discussion on how to approach the Zoning Redesign work plan for 2021.

MEETING: January 25, 2020

CC: City Council
Planning Board
Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer

December Community Engagement Review

'Where We Are Now' Community Engagement Information

Planning staff have recently completed "Zoning Redesign: Where We Are Now", which included two community engagement events on December 2 and 3, 2020, a survey, and efforts of the Community Engagement Planner (Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler) to meet as many stakeholders as possible. 'Where We Are Now' aimed to establish a baseline understanding of Zoning Redesign, collect the Newton communities' questions, hopes, and concerns for the project, and learn what Newton communities envision for future community engagement.

The qualitative data for 'Where We Are Now' is available for the public to review, linked here:

- ['Where We Are Now' Events on December 2 & 3, 2020](#): 18 break-out discussion room recordings and corresponding Chat boxes (total of ~500 attendees, combined)

- [‘Where We Are Now’ Events RSVP Form](#): Registrants were offered the opportunity to share questions they had regarding Zoning Redesign in their RSVP form (total of 169 comments/questions from 533 registrations)
- [‘Where We Are Now’ Survey results](#): made available from December 8, 2020 to January 10, 2021 (total of 343 submissions)

In addition, Nevena began to build community relationships; after her October 1, 2020 start date, by meeting with or presenting at 6 commission/committee meetings, 3 Neighborhood Area Councils, and 19 stakeholder entities. The commissions and stakeholders included are (listed in alphabetical order):

- Commissions & Committees: Commission on Disability, Community Preservation Committee, Conservation Commission, Transportation Advisory Group, Urban Design Commission, Youth Commission
- Neighborhood Area Councils: Newtonville, Newton Highlands, Upper Falls (Waban was reached out to but have not responded)
- Stakeholders: 350Mass Newton Node, Bike Newton, Chinese American Association of Newton (CAAN), Defund Newton Police, Engine6, Families Organizing for Racial Justice (FORJ), Green Newton, Green Newton – School Connections, League of Women Voters – Newton, Newton Center for Civic Engagement, Newton Interfaith Clergy Association (NICA), Newton Lower Falls Improvement Association, Newton Neighbors Helping Neighbors, NNHS Next Gen Voices, Right-Size Newton, Safe Routes to School, Temple Emanuel Social Justice Group, Understanding Our Differences, West Suburban YMCA

This list continues to grow; these are additional groups that Nevena has reached out to or would like to reach out to and build stronger relationships with: Citizens Commission on Energy, Council on Aging, Economic Development Commission, Human Rights Commission, Newton Housing Authority and Newton Housing Partnership, Waban Neighborhood Area Council, Harmony Foundation, Newton Coalition of Black Residents, Newton Conservators, Post 440 – Nonantum, Waban Improvement Society, Nonantum Neighborhood Association, and Newton PTSO Councils.

ZAP and Newton community members are heartily welcomed to introduce Nevena to any stakeholder groups/representatives.

‘Where We Are Now’ Recap

Newton community members’ responses to the break-out discussion prompts and survey questions traversed a range of nuanced curiosities, personal experiences, and concerns for the wellbeing of Newton. Upon review, the following themes emerged from the breadth of public comment (listed by the rough number of questions/insights that fell into that theme): Process (283), Housing (283), Neighborhood Context (73), Transportation (61), Environmental Sustainability (58), Financial Sustainability (43), and Other (61).

The following recap identifies the most recurring questions for each theme:

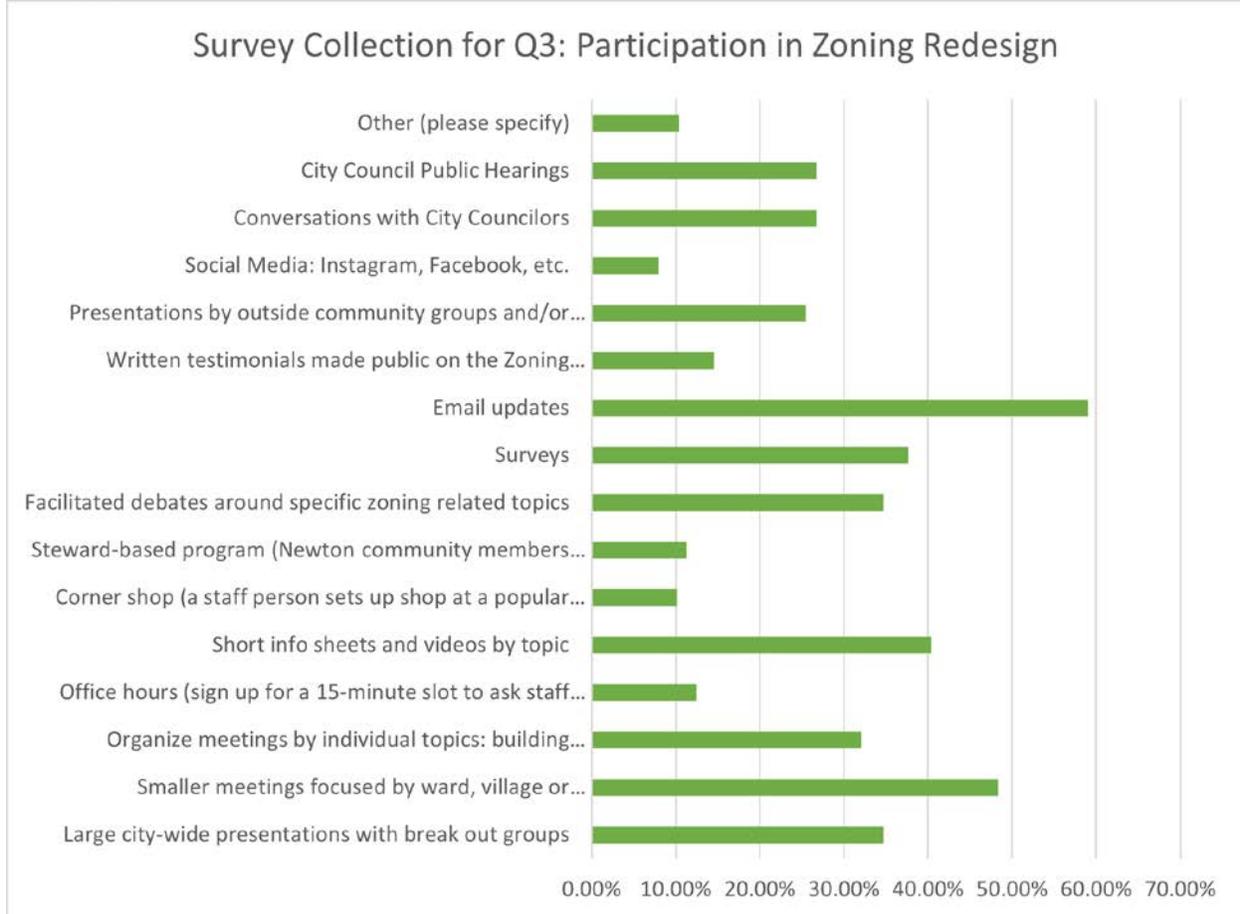
- Process (283): Why are we doing a “complete overhaul” versus incremental changes to the current Zoning Ordinance? Why is Zoning Redesign needed and who determined that? What

research and expertise backs up the issues and the proposals? What are the impacts of proposed changes in the ordinance? Can there be a referendum? How are staff and elected officials considering a socioeconomic equity lens?

- Housing (283): How will the new Zoning Ordinance address the current tear down of reasonably priced homes that are then replaced with larger and expensive homes (happening under the current Zoning Ordinance)? How can Zoning Redesign truly diversify and increase the affordability of the housing supply (and how is 'affordability' being defined)? Is Universal Design being considered for accessibility? And regarding single-family zones and multi-family zones, opinions ranging from one end that worries that more multi-family zoning will "ruin the character or most parts of Newton," while another end finds more multi-family zoning important for "climate proactive, affordable, diversified housing opportunities."
- Neighborhood Context (73): How will a design review be incorporated into Zoning Redesign? How will increased density affect the way neighborhoods currently feel?
- Transportation (61): How is MBTA's updated routes, schedules, and budget cuts in context of the pandemic being considered for transit-oriented-development? Would allowing more multi-family housing by-right result in an increase to road congestion?
- Environmental Sustainability (58): What are the proposals in the draft Zoning Ordinance that supports climate action (and do they factor in carbon commissions)? How do we balance housing goals and preservation of open space and tree canopy?
- Financial Sustainability (43): How would the draft Zoning Ordinance impact real estate values, property taxes, city revenues, the city budget, and business?
- Other (61): Will allowing more multi-family housing by-right impact school enrollment? What are the impacts for historic preservation? Why is adoption of a form-based code necessary? What are the impacts for non-conforming properties?

In addition to gathering the public's overall questions about Zoning Redesign, staff asked those who attended the events or completed the survey for their input on future community engagement. Both the break-out discussions and the survey revealed general support for staff's ideas, listed below in the Survey graphic:

Survey Responses to: “How would you like to participate in Zoning Redesign conversations? (Check all that apply)”



Some community members expressed concern with the extent to which the inability to meet in-person impedes effective dialogue for Zoning Redesign. At the same time, other community members expressed enthusiasm for the Zoom format and overall expressed appreciation for the December 2 and 3 events' format.

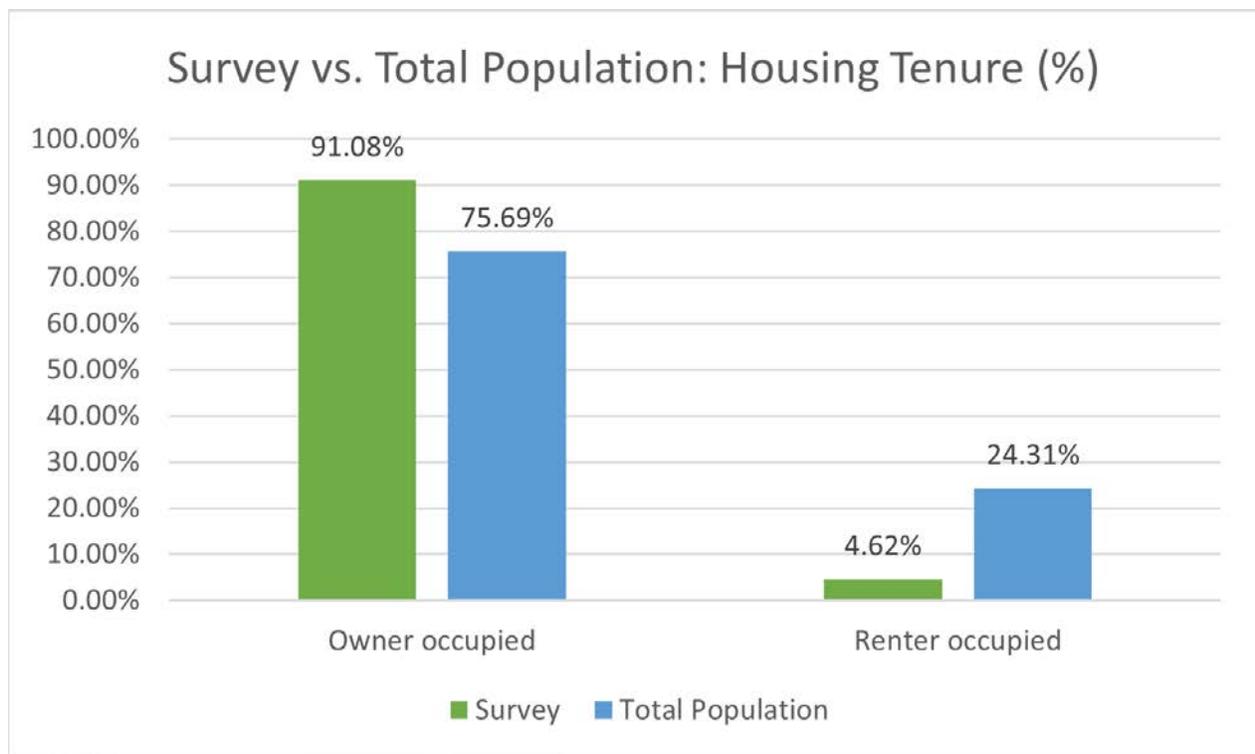
Interestingly, multiple community members highlighted a need for community engagement tactics that do not take place in person, such as better email updates, short easy-to-read info sheets and a “Zoning 101” resource, mailers, and a more organized website. While staff look forward to returning to in-person engagement, based on the responses received, it seems virtual options can provide additional accessibility. Moving forward, staff plan to incorporate in-person and virtual engagement opportunities.

In terms of ideas for community engagement, there has been general support for the ideas listed by staff during the events and in the survey, including smaller (Zoom) meetings focused by ward, village or neighborhood, email updates, and short info sheets and videos by topic. Another idea that surfaced was for staff to focus engagement more on younger people in Newton, and youth from NNHS NextGen Voices and the Newton Youth Commission encouraged the use of social media as a platform to engage.

'Where We Are Now': Who We Heard From

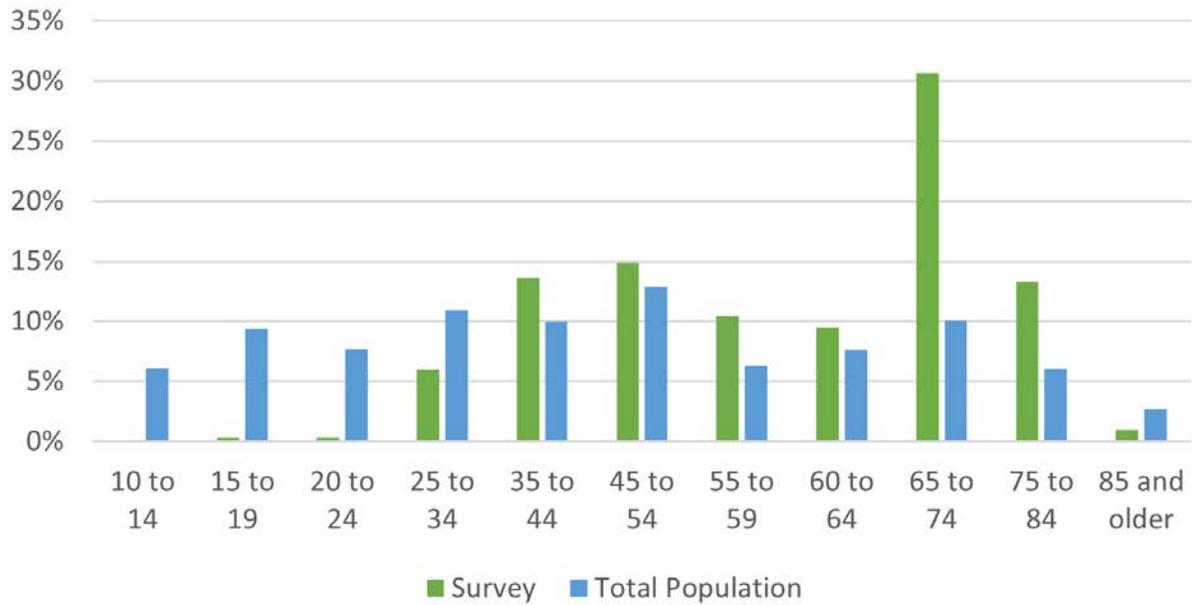
Lastly, the survey helps reveal who currently accesses and participates in Zoning Redesign outreach. When put in juxtaposition to Newton's most recent demographics from the 2019 U.S. Census' American Community Survey, it informs staff of the need to put more effort into reaching out to and engaging the populations of renters, ages 15 to 34 and 85 and older, and Black, Hispanic or Latinx, and Asian communities. Lastly, there was less turnout from Wards 1 and 8, also requiring more attention.

Data and data sources for the following tables are listed at the end of this document (Attachment A). 'Survey' in the titles of the following tables all refer to the Zoning Redesign 'Where We Are Now' Survey offered to the public from December 8, 2020 to January 10, 2021.



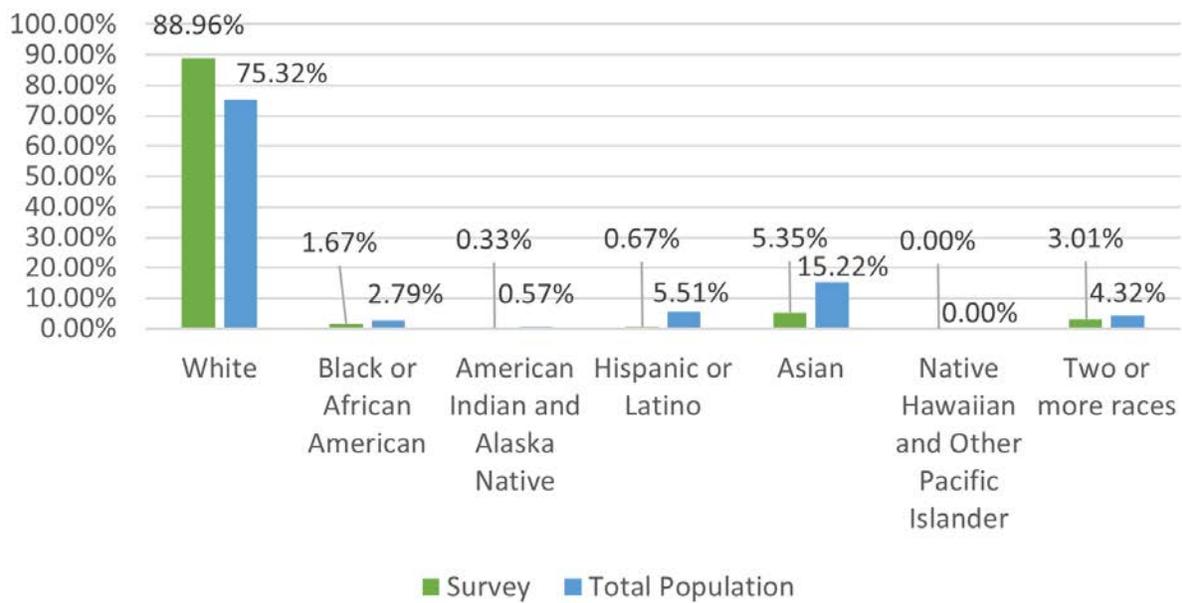
Total Population data pulled from the U.S. Census American Community Survey 2019, 1-year estimate.

Survey vs. Total Population: Age (%)

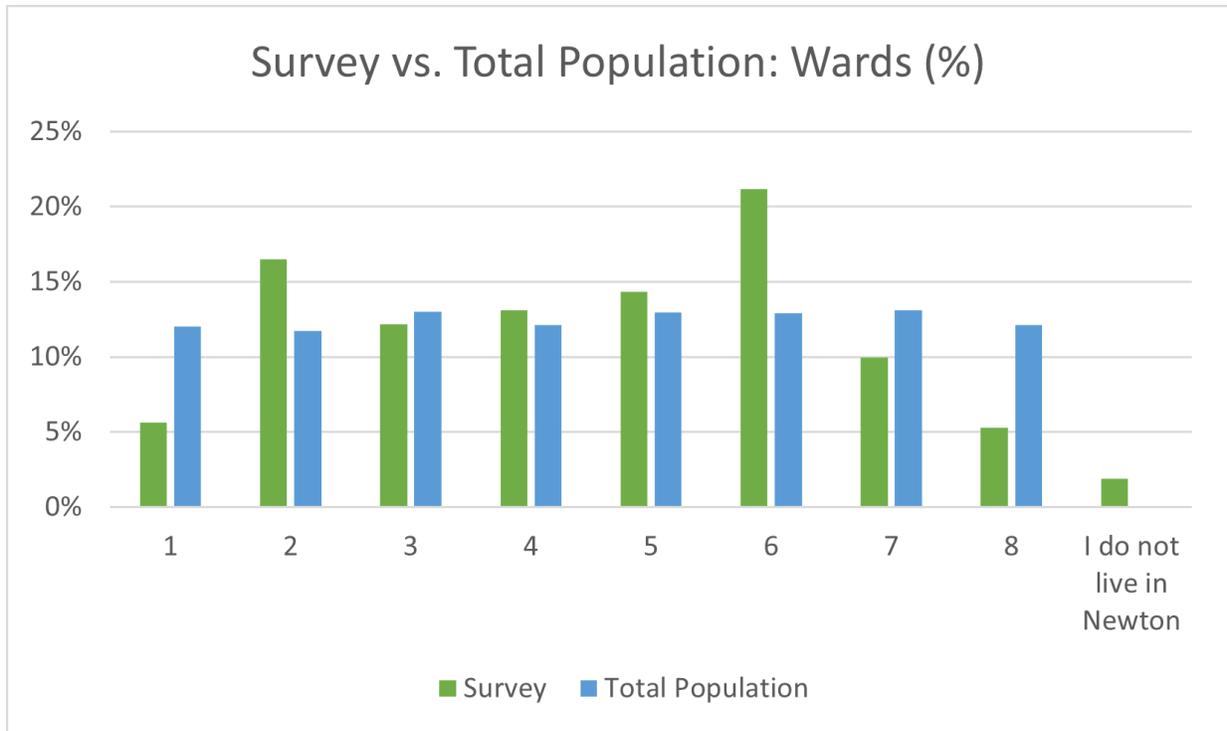


Total Population data pulled from the U.S. Census American Community Survey 2019, 1-year estimate.

Survey vs. Total Population: Race (%)



Total Population data pulled from the U.S. Census American Community Survey 2019, 1-year estimate.



Total Population data pulled from the Newton City Census, last updated October 2020.

Based on What We Heard: Community Engagement We're Considering

Staff have identified ways they can immediately address concerns heard during the 'Where We Are Now' community engagement. Newton community members expressed needs for a better organized website and more accessible Zoning Redesign information both for newcomers as well as for community members to utilize in inviting their neighbors into the conversation. Staff continue to improve the website and are creating a Zoning Redesign 'booklet' that covers the basics of zoning and contextualizes it in Newton (inspired by the Center of Urban [Pedagogy's 'What Is Zoning? Guidebook'](#)) and have committed to releasing monthly Zoning Redesign newsletters that recap ZAP meetings and any updates to the project as well as upcoming events.

As for Zoning Redesign's future community engagement, staff will consider the issues just discussed as well as the additional needs of the public wanting (1) transparency around what data and voices of expertise influence the policy proposals and technical suggestions of the draft Zoning Ordinance, (2) to better understand the specific issues with the current ordinance, and (3) more space for (virtual) discussions that offer opportunities to contextualize the Zoning Redesign deliberations to where they live, work, commute or attend school.

Lastly, it is critical for the City to carry out equitable community engagement. Several Newton community members expressed both through the break-out discussions and through the survey a need for the City to consider zoning through the lens of equity across race, class, ability, housing tenure (whether one owns or rents), age, and more. To do so includes both incorporating such a lens into all research and analysis of policy and technical proposals, along with prioritizing community engagement of those most impacted by these inequities.

Zoning Redesign 2021 Work Plan

Moving Forward in 2021

From these events, and the overwhelming feedback received, it became apparent that moving forward in 2021 requires an updated planning framework that begins with clearly articulating why the City is undertaking Zoning Redesign and lays out the tools to effectively engage the community in a transparent and inclusive process. Planning staff have worked closely with the ZAP Chair and Vice-Chair to develop a draft workflow outlined below. Staff look forward to feedback from the ZAP Committee to refine and improve this proposal.

Synthesizing the Past Work in 2020 (Article 3 - Residence Districts)

Over the past year, ZAP has reviewed and discussed the proposals within Article 3 - Residence Districts. On December 14, 2020, the Committee expressed support for temporarily setting down Article 3, with the understanding that coming to an overall consensus on the proposed zoning language will require additional analysis and community engagement. Staff will synthesize the work to-date in a similar manner to the Newton Charter Commission review process. Specifically, staff plan to compile a cover letter summarizing the work to date, an annotated draft zoning text, and an updated draft zoning map. Staff look forward to sharing this material with Committee members prior to the scheduled February 22, 2021 meeting.

Shifting to a Geographic Based Review

At the beginning of 2020, ZAP set forward to work through the Zoning Redesign proposal Article-by-Article. Looking at the feedback from our recent engagement, this framework has proved challenging. For example, participants expressed confusion over discussions focused on housing opportunities that did not include village centers/transit-nodes. Others expressed using the organizational structure of the Zoning Ordinance as “abstract” or “disconnected” from the guiding goals and objectives, which clearly apply to multiple articles.

To systematically look at the topics and themes laid out by previous policy and planning documents, like the Comprehensive Plan and the Zoning Reform Group report, staff recommend organizing the work into the following geographies:

- Village Centers/Transit-Nodes (ex. Newton Centre/T-stops)
- Corridors (ex. Route 9)
- Single Purpose – institutional/office/recreational/industrial (ex. Newton Wellesley Hospital/Wells Ave/Golf Courses)
- Neighborhoods (ex. predominantly residential areas)

Moving forward by geography is a natural progression from the most recent work on Article 3, which would fall under the Neighborhoods geography. In addition, this lens will put greater emphasis on mapping and visuals from the beginning. The lack of mapping and visuals was a regular criticism of the past Article review approach. Within each geography staff recommend breaking down the work into the key themes and topics identified from the recent community outreach. These themes and topics closely align with those outlined in the City’s guiding plans, policies, and documents:

- Sustainability/Climate

- Housing Opportunity
- Economic Development
- Transportation
- Arts, Culture, and Institutions
- Development Process/Review
- Neighborhood Context

Community Engagement Tactics

Per the feedback and ideas gathered during ‘Zoning Redesign: Where We Are Now,’ staff proposes the following community engagement tactics for this workflow proposal:

- Geography-based community meetings: Smaller discussions organized around the geography in focus (for example, if Village Centers, meetings will be formed around each Village Center.) More description of the purpose and timing of these meetings is described in the workflow process below.
- Focus-groups community meetings: In addition to the geography-based community meetings, holding meetings focused on the voices that have not been as present in previous community engagement, including but not limited to youth, people with disabilities, young families, renters, and ESL (English-as-a-Second-Language) communities.
- Strong communications effort: Monthly email updates, easy-to-access info sheets for each geography-based set of topics, and the finalized ‘Zoning Redesign Booklet’ to help those new to the conversation get familiar and jump in.
- Targeted outreach for equitable engagement: utilizing canvassing, ‘lit-drops’ (leaving information sheets at community members’ doors), on-the-street pop-ups (social distanced), and language translation.
- ‘Zoning Redesign Stewards’ program: where community members volunteer to review Zoning Redesign public material for its accessibility and clarity, help spread word of Zoning Redesign community engagement events, and help staff identify ways to increase equitable outreach.
- Area-specific walks: (social distanced or digital) to understand effects of the current Zoning Ordinance and what changes may be merited.
- Create a social media presence: (Instagram and Facebook), with NextGen’s Zoning Redesign working group offering to help create posts to share with Newton high schoolers.

Phases for a Geographic Framework

A five-phased framework builds from previous efforts in Newton, as well as common problem-solving methodology used by designers, planners, and managers, to identify problems and create informed solutions. The time period can be amended to meet the specific needs of a geography, but the framework stays the same. This framework provides a methodical way to evaluate zoning proposals within the given geography by reestablishing shared goals and problems, determining the appropriate analysis required, and focusing on solutions that address the shared problems and stated goals.

These phases are listed below along with an example that would fall under the village centers/transit-nodes geography. These examples are meant to illustrate the workflow and a more detailed work plan will be developed in collaboration with the committee.

- Phase I - Organize Key Data and Analysis
 - Objective: Identify key community concerns, goals, and values; establish what falls under zoning and what is outside of zoning
 - Example: The Climate Action Plan highlights buildings and transportation as the two sectors contributing to greenhouse gas emissions in Newton (concern). To address this, the plan proposes that the Zoning Ordinance facilitate an increase in housing development near public transit and village centers that utilizes climate friendly construction methods and decreasing dependence on automobiles (goal). Finally, the plan outlines that the chosen development standards must be tailored to the specific neighborhoods (value).
 - Deliverable: Geography scope of work; analysis of the current and proposed Zoning Ordinances as they relate to the concerns, goals, and values; list of questions to be answered and data and analysis needed
- Phase II - Gather Community Input
 - Objective: Develop a shared community vision and set of guiding principles
 - Example: Neighborhood walk around village centers/transit-nodes to develop a visual understanding of how the current ordinance does or does not address the identified concerns, goals, and values
 - Deliverable: Share the compilation of information gathered in Phase I and solicit feedback through a variety of engagement tactics
- Phase III - Conduct Research
 - Objective: Conduct the necessary research and testing of proposals (including those from the 2018 draft as well as new ideas) before bringing proposals to ZAP and the public
 - Example: Determine the appropriate building types and development standards that will facilitate new housing that will be more environmentally friendly, affordable, and better support local businesses
 - Deliverable: Regular check-ins with ZAP and the public; outside voices presenting on their experiences addressing the same issues; draft solutions and proposals
- Phase IV - Test Solutions with the Community
 - Objective: Test preliminary solutions with the community for viability, feasibility, and desirability
 - Example: Bring in outside voices (consultants, other relevant communities, etc.) who have recently created new zoning to facilitate environmentally friendly housing development and draft Newton specific solutions
 - Deliverable: Share the initial findings of Phase III and solicit feedback through a variety of engagement tactics events/workshops
- Phase V - Finalize Solutions
 - Objective: Present the community prioritized solutions along with supporting analysis and research to elected officials
 - Example: ZAP meetings, Committee-of-the-Whole, Public Hearings
 - Deliverable: Annotated technical zoning proposals for the given geography

Again, the examples and deliverables listed above do not represent a complete list. Though these phases provide a framework, each geography will have its own specific work plan and community engagement strategy.

Looking Ahead

Staff will work to refine this proposal following the feedback received at the January 25, 2021 ZAP meeting. In addition, staff plan to share the synthesis of Article 3 - Residence Districts from this past year prior to the scheduled February 22, 2021 meeting.

Attachments

Attachment A Data and Data Sources for Survey Tables

Sources for Graphs

For 'Survey' in all graphs and tables listed below: Zoning Redesign 'Where We Are Now' Survey, administered through SurveyMonkey from December 8, 2020 through January 10, 2021

For 'Total Population' in graphs and tables for Housing Tenure, Race, and Age: U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey, 2019 1-Year Estimate

For 'Total Population' in graph and table for Wards: Newton City Census, last updated October 2020

Data for Graphs**Survey vs. Total Population: Housing Tenure**

Housing Tenure	Survey		Total Population	
	#	%	#	%
Total	325	100%	80877	100%
Owner occupied	296	91.08%	61212	75.69%
Renter occupied	15	4.62%	19665	24.31%

Survey vs. Total Population: Race

Race	Survey		Total Population	
	#	%	#	%*
Total	299	100%	88411	105.51%
White	266	88.96%	66595	75.32%
Black or African American	5	1.67%	2463	2.79%
American Indian and Alaska Native	1	0.33%	501	0.57%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	2	0.67%	4870	5.51%
Asian	16	5.35%	13453	15.22%
Some other race**	-	-	1581	1.79%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Two or more races	9	3.01%	3818	4.32%

*Total Population is the combination U.S. Census' identification of 'Race' and the count for Hispanic or Latinx (of any race)

** 'Some Other Race' was not offered as an option on the Zoning Redesign Survey but is listed in U.S. Census data.

Survey vs. Total Population: Age

Age	Survey		Total Population	
	#	%	#	%
<i>Total</i>		100.00%	88411	100.00%
Under 5 years	-	-	3989	4.51%
5 to 9 years	-	-	5138	5.81%
10 to 14	0	0.00%	5416	6.13%
15 to 19	1	0.32%	8274	9.36%
20 to 24	1	0.32%	6778	7.67%
25 to 34	19	6.01%	9665	10.93%
35 to 44	43	13.61%	8842	10.00%
45 to 54	47	14.87%	11361	12.85%
55 to 59	33	10.44%	5580	6.31%
60 to 64	30	9.49%	6757	7.64%
65 to 74	97	30.70%	8881	10.05%
75 to 84	42	13.29%	5345	6.05%
85 and older	3	0.95%	2385	2.70%

Survey vs. Total Population: Wards

Ward	Survey		Total Population	
	#	%	#	%
<i>Total</i>	321	100%	80424	100%
1	18	5.61%	9686	12.04%
2	53	16.51%	9434	11.73%
3	39	12.15%	10467	13.01%
4	42	13.08%	9753	12.13%
5	46	14.33%	10416	12.95%
6	68	21.18%	10365	12.89%
7	32	9.97%	10545	13.11%
8	17	5.30%	9758	12.13%
I do not live in Newton	6	1.87%	0	0.00%

Survey response to: How would you like to participate in Zoning Redesign conversations? (Check all that apply)

Community engagement tactic	%*	#
<i>Total</i>	-	337
Large city-wide presentations with break out groups	35%	117
Smaller meetings focused by ward, village or neighborhood	48%	163
Organize meetings by individual topics: building components, housing types, incentives for affordable sustainable housing, financial impact, etc.	32%	108
Office hours (sign up for a 15-minute slot to ask staff questions)	12%	42
Short info sheets and videos by topic	40%	136
Corner shop (a staff person sets up shop at a popular neighborhood corner to hand out Zoning Redesign information and solicit ideas,	10%	34
Steward-based program (Newton community members sign up to be 'Stewards,' where they review material that staff creates for public education, such as flyers, educational pamphlets, or surveys and help engage Newton community members)	11%	38
Facilitated debates around specific zoning related topics	35%	117
Surveys	38%	127
Email updates	59%	199
Written testimonials made public on the Zoning Redesign website	15%	49
Presentations by outside community groups and/or elected officials that have experienced the zoning code being redesigned in their city	26%	86
Social Media: Instagram, Facebook, etc.	8%	27
Conversations with City Councilors	27%	90
City Council Public Hearings	27%	90
Other (please specify)	10%	35

**Because the surveyor could 'check all that apply,' the 'Total' is calculated as the total amount of surveyor responses (vs. the total amount of 'checks') and each percentage of a community engagement tactic is calculated against the 'Total'*