



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

A graphic with a blue background on the left and two photographs of houses on the right. The blue section contains the title "Proposed Fair Housing Policy" in yellow, a goal statement in white, and a numbered list of four items in 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 prominent front porch and a gabled roof.

Proposed Fair Housing Policy

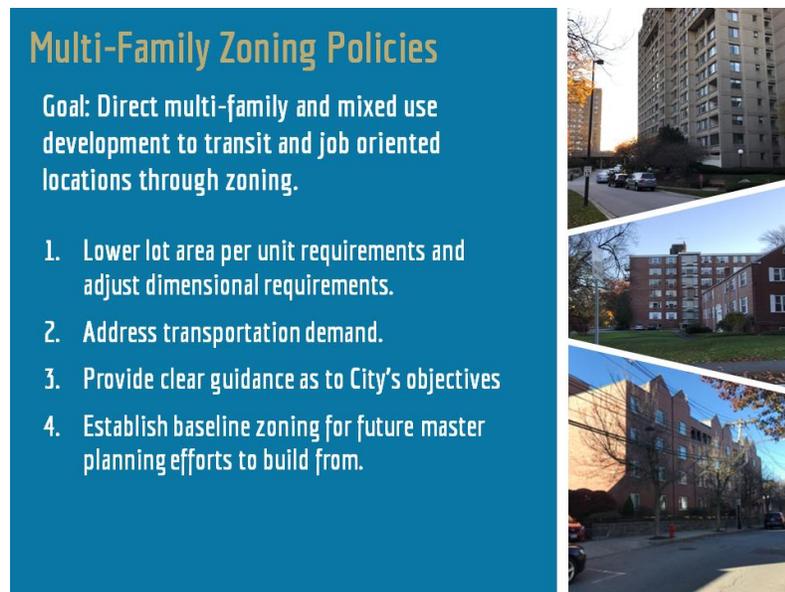
Goal: Incorporate Fair Housing requirements, definitions, and standards into Newton's Zoning.

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 modern high-rise apartment building, a brick multi-story building, and a brick building with a street-level 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.

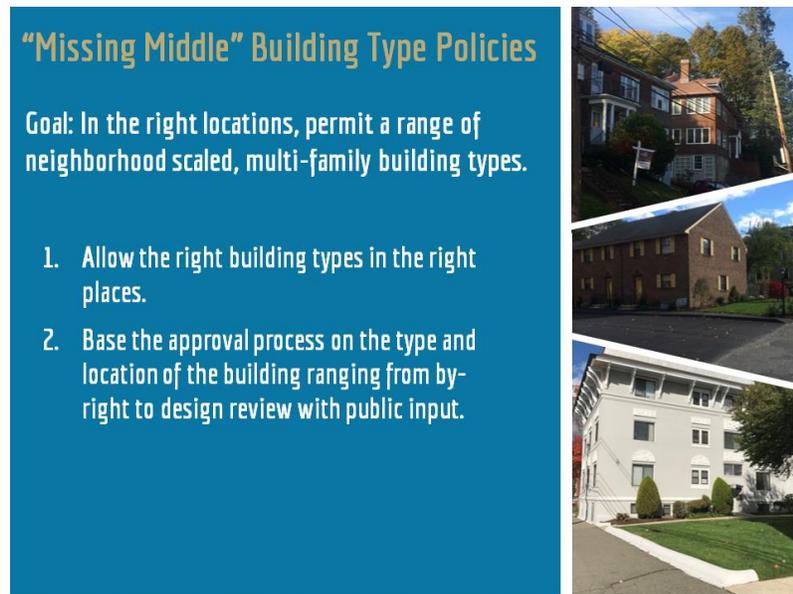
Housing Connected to Transportation Options and Community Assets

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.

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.



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"!