



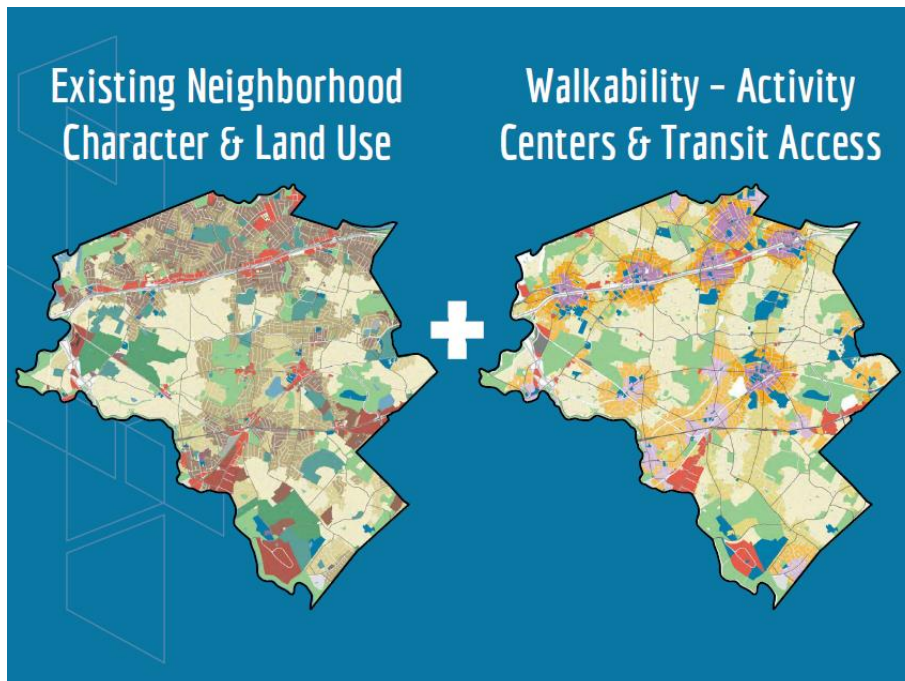
## Summary Report

### A New Zoning Map for Newton

This summary report is for the Zoning Redesign event on Thursday May 10, 2018 and the presentation slides and video of the presentation are available online ([www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning](http://www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning)). An informational sheet was published ahead of the event and is appended to this report.

At this final event in the Zoning Redesign series the consultant team, Sasaki Associates, provided the presentation covering the following topics:

- Data-driven map making process
- Reviewing the draft district boundaries and draft building types
- Showing examples of how context-based zoning districts and building types may get more 'context-based' results and less buildings that don't fit in with the existing context



The event was well attended by over 70 members of the public. After the presentation, City staff and the consultant team fielded several clarifying questions from attendees. Then, the event proceeded to small group discussions where attendees were asked to provide feedback on the entire presentation and,

specifically the two maps presented. The first map proposes zoning for existing neighborhood character and land use. The second map proposes zoning that would allow appropriately scaled growth in existing activity centers and close to transit.

One of the main themes in the discussion groups was how to reconcile the strengths and weaknesses of the two zoning maps. These maps present different options; one, proposes a zoning map that reflects the existing context and character of Newton and the other, proposes a zoning map that directs future change to be in areas where commercial uses or transit access already exist.

### **Community Feedback: Tradeoffs Between Two Maps**

Attendees discussed tradeoffs presented by these options and several people expressed wanting to review maps more carefully over time. One table noted the first mapping approach represents maintaining status quo policy objectives dating to the 1950's, while the second mapping approach represents directing change over time mostly to village centers and transit accessible areas. Several table discussions noted that the second map, which locates areas of greater transformation in commercial or village centers, would mean policy goals on environmental sustainability, reducing carbon footprint, and responding to climate change are more likely to be addressed. Many attendees were skeptical of any zoning changes and expressed opposition to promoting growth or change of any kind.

Several groups discussed the desire to **preserve the architectural styles and characteristics** of an area and its immediate surroundings. It was noted by staff that zoning can't legislate taste, but it can regulate the degree to which a new building or changes to an existing building are reflective of the existing neighborhood context. The zoning approach proposed at the presentation would use **building types** to specify what building forms would be allowed in varying neighborhoods, and these building types would be based on the existing neighborhood context. Some groups discussed design reviews as an additional tool that could be incorporated into zoning.

Many attendees provided positive feedback on this concept. Some people were interested in seeing the **context-based zoning approach** also be applied to the village centers. In general, many people asked for more details about the proposed building types for **village centers**. Some suggested that zoning redesign look to zone the entire city as a historic district. Some felt as though village centers in Newton are already dense and were concerned about ideas of more density. Many asked how zoning in village centers and near village centers would respect smaller homes in village centers.

As in previous events in the Zoning Redesign series, attendees expressed a need to combat **"teardowns"** that replace older, smaller homes with new homes that don't fit the neighborhood context. Several people appreciated the proposed context-based zoning approach and building types, as a way for zoning to address and reduce teardowns. Some people responded to the presented building type information negatively stating they felt as though the examples were based more on statistics than neighborhood feel.

In the context of conversations regarding the “**missing middle of scale**” in village centers, many people were interested in finding ways to zone for medium-sized projects closer to transit. One group discussed whether the current zoning ordinance renders such medium-size projects risky and therefore less financially feasible. Other tables looked to recent proposals such as a proposal on Adams Street as an example of a proposal that some said is not compatible with the neighborhood. One group used West Newton as an example and expressed concern that if a neighborhood is zoned with a character district that is denser, the neighborhood might become progressively denser. One table discussed how Newton’s Comprehensive Plan describes the importance of **open space** as a balance to development.

Some people expressed dissatisfaction with the **public process** to date for Zoning Redesign and expressed interest in zoning changes to be passed by citizens’ referendum instead of by City Council vote. A few attendees mentioned interest in a **moratorium** on buildings wholesale and looked to zoning redesign to accomplish this. One group discussed ward-by-ward meetings about Zoning Redesign with Ward Councilors and suggested these be open to the public.

There were also discussions about population growth over time including concerns with **schools, traffic and congestion**. Several people hoped that zoning changes are considered with **fiscal impacts** to the city in terms of increased tax revenues or increased costs. One group discussed zoning for golf courses in Newton and recommended they not be zoned residential in the future and the City seek a right of first refusal in the case golf courses change hands. People also discussed types of housing units built in the future including smaller units and apartments.

### **What’s next?**

Residents had an opportunity to drop in to City Hall on Tuesday, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018 from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. to ask more detailed questions of staff, discuss any of the presentations from the event series over the last year, and share further ideas for consideration. Over the coming months future opportunities for providing feedback will be announced by City staff.