



# Newton Zoning Redesign

Cracking the Code:  
Understanding Zoning for  
Homeowners

11. 29. 17

# Welcome!

**6:35**    **Zoning 101**

**6:45**    **Cracking the Code: Understanding Zoning  
for Homeowners**

**7:10**    **Q&A**

**7:15**    **Table-top Sessions**

**7:50**    **Report Outs**



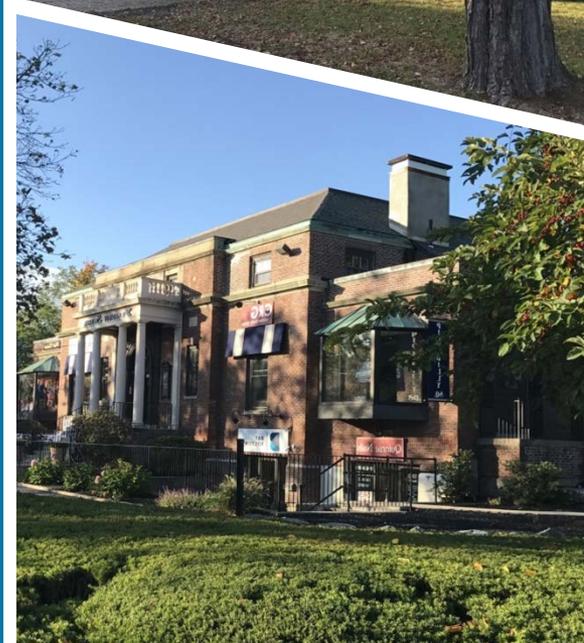
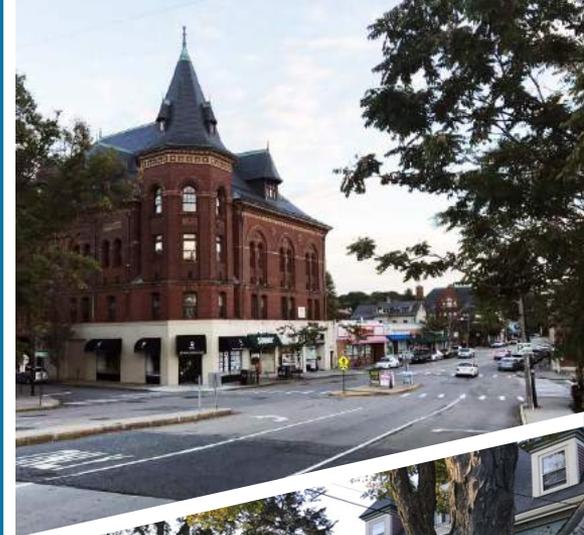


# Zoning 101

# Zoning Is...

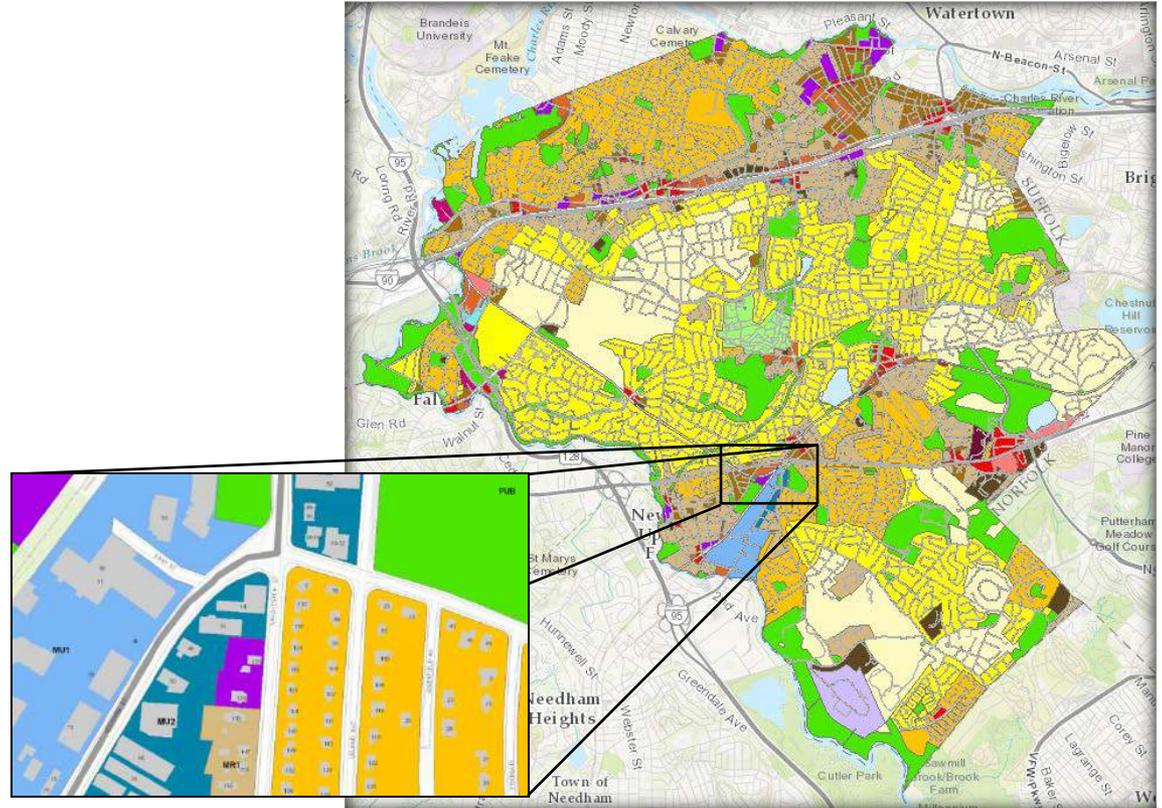
Zoning shapes our city. It ensures that buildings and uses of land promote positive outcomes for the community and are consistent with the neighborhood context.

Zoning is the regulation of our built environment: types of buildings, their locations, and their uses.



# Central Elements of Zoning

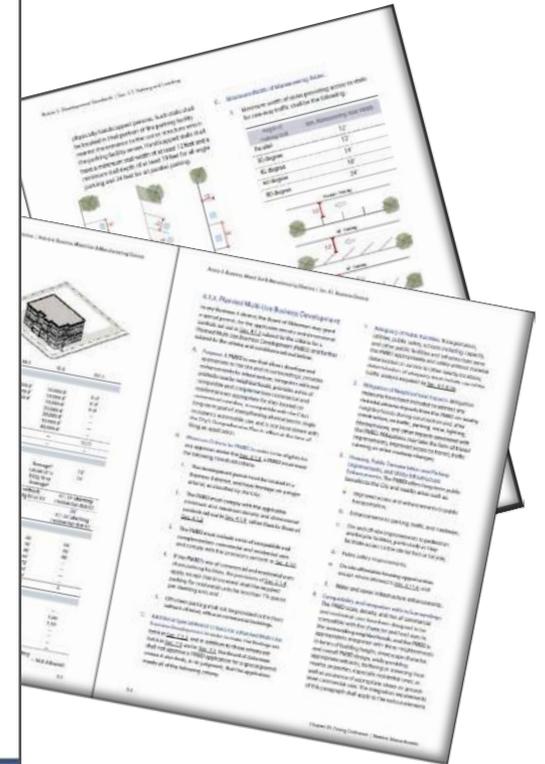
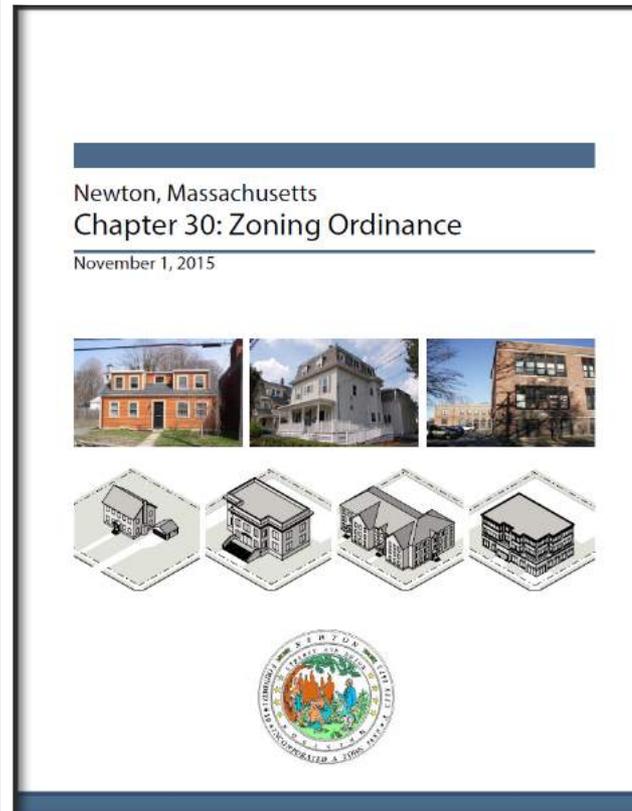
- The Zoning Map
- The Zoning Ordinance
- Dimensional Requirements
- Development and Use Standards
- Decision Making Processes



The Zoning Map divides the city into districts, each of which represents a different set of land uses and scales of building types.

# Central Elements of Zoning

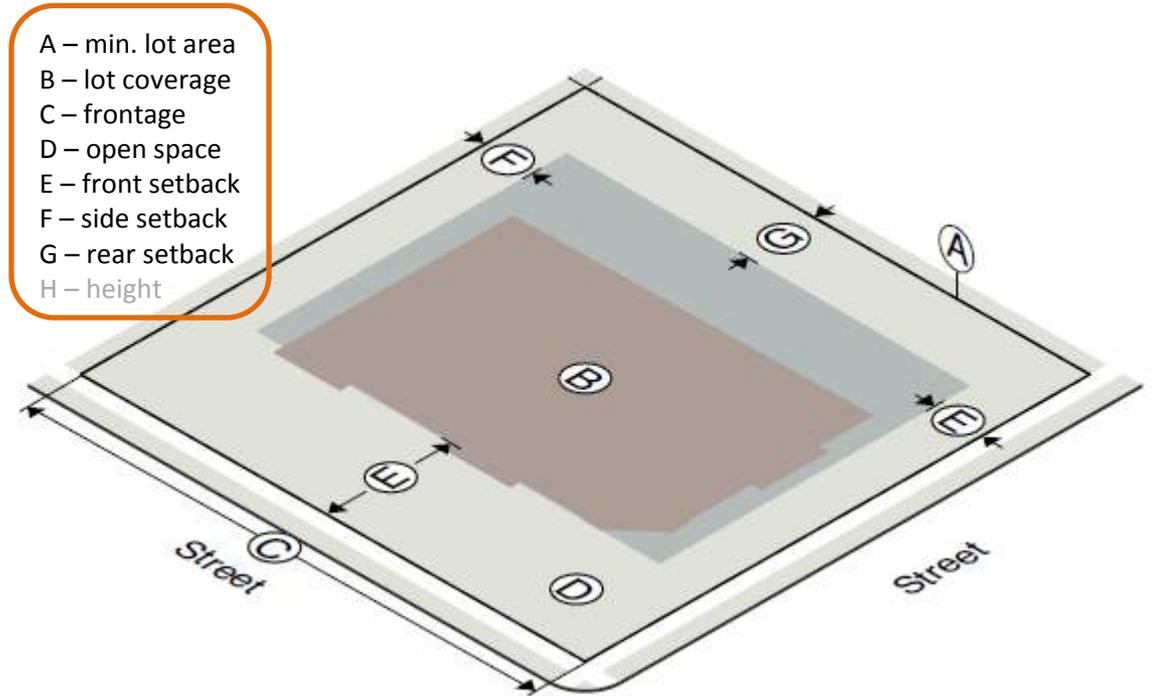
- The Zoning Map
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The Zoning Ordinance is the book of rules and regulations for how private property lots are divided, how buildings are constructed on those lots, and how those buildings are used.

# Central Elements of Zoning

- The Zoning Map
- The Zoning Ordinance
- Dimensional Requirements
- Development and Use Standards
- Decision Making Processes



Dimensional Requirements control the dimensions of private property lots and the buildings constructed on them, including: width and depth of properties, height and overall scale or mass of buildings, as well as how far buildings are from the street and from neighboring property lines.

# Central Elements of Zoning

- The Zoning Map
- The Zoning Ordinance
- **Dimensional Requirements**
- Development and Use Standards
- Decision Making Processes

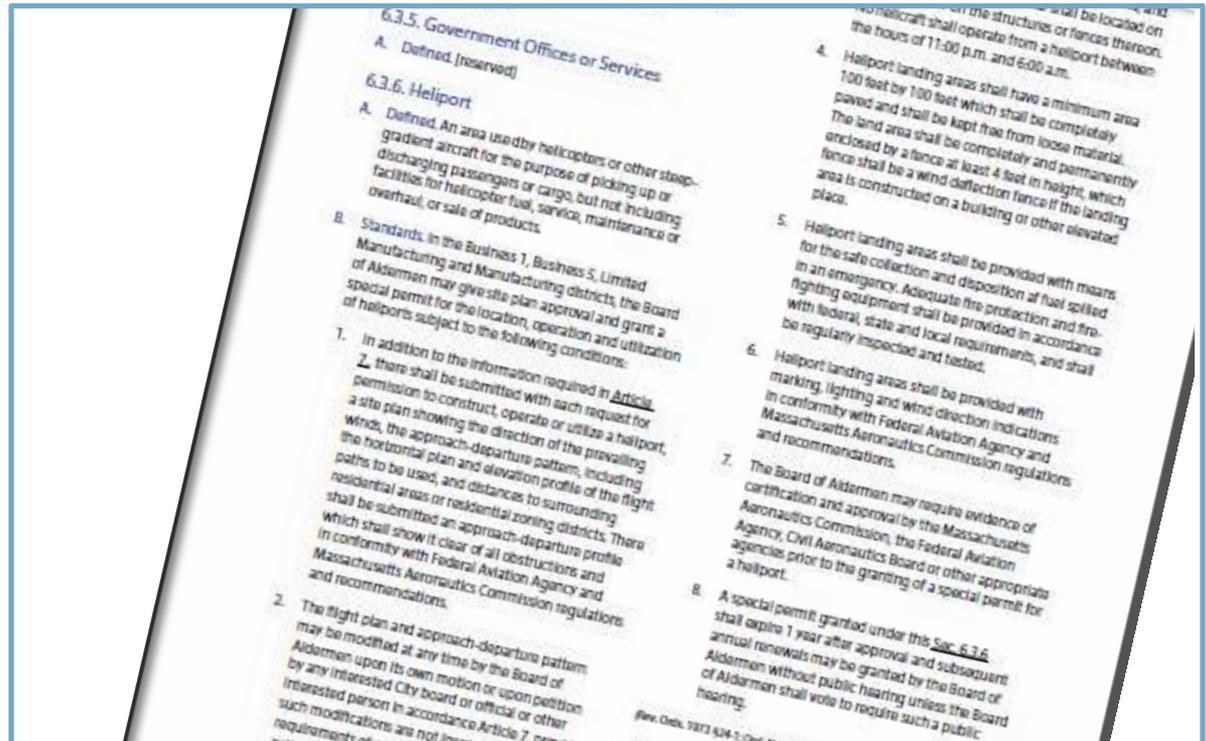
A – min. lot area  
B – lot coverage  
C – frontage  
D – open space  
E – front setback  
F – side setback  
G – rear setback  
H – height



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# Central Elements of Zoning

- The Zoning Map
- The Zoning Ordinance
- Dimensional Requirements
- Development and Use Standards
- Decision Making Processes



## For each use

- Define it. State Intent.
- Set standards - Specific application materials, specific site layout standards, specific operations standards

# Central Elements of Zoning

- The Zoning Map
- The Zoning Ordinance
- Dimensional Requirements
- Development and Use Standards
- **Decision Making Processes**

**Who approves? What standards for approval are applied?**

**City Council**

*e.g. Special Permit*

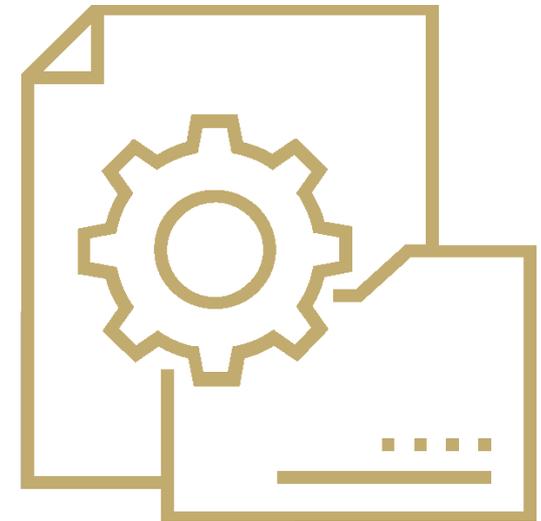
*Zoning Amendments*

**Zoning Board of Appeals**

*e.g. Variance*

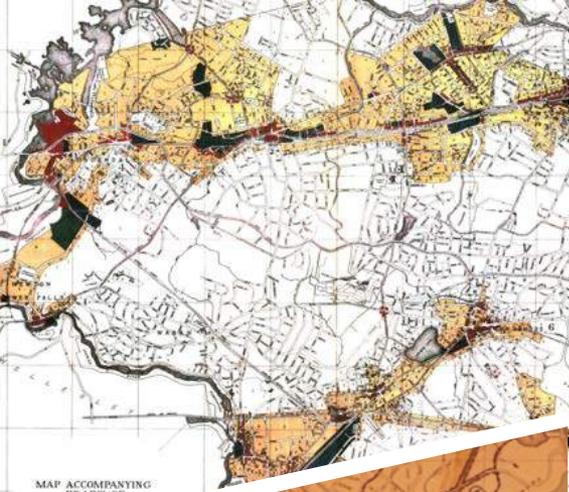
**Inspectional Services Department**

*e.g. Building Permit*



Created by Creative Stall  
from Noun Project

Decision Making Processes for applying the zoning rules are outlined in the ordinance as well.



# 30-Second History of Zoning in Newton



1922 – First zoning code in Newton

1941 – Add residential zones

1953 – Introduce lot sizes & setbacks

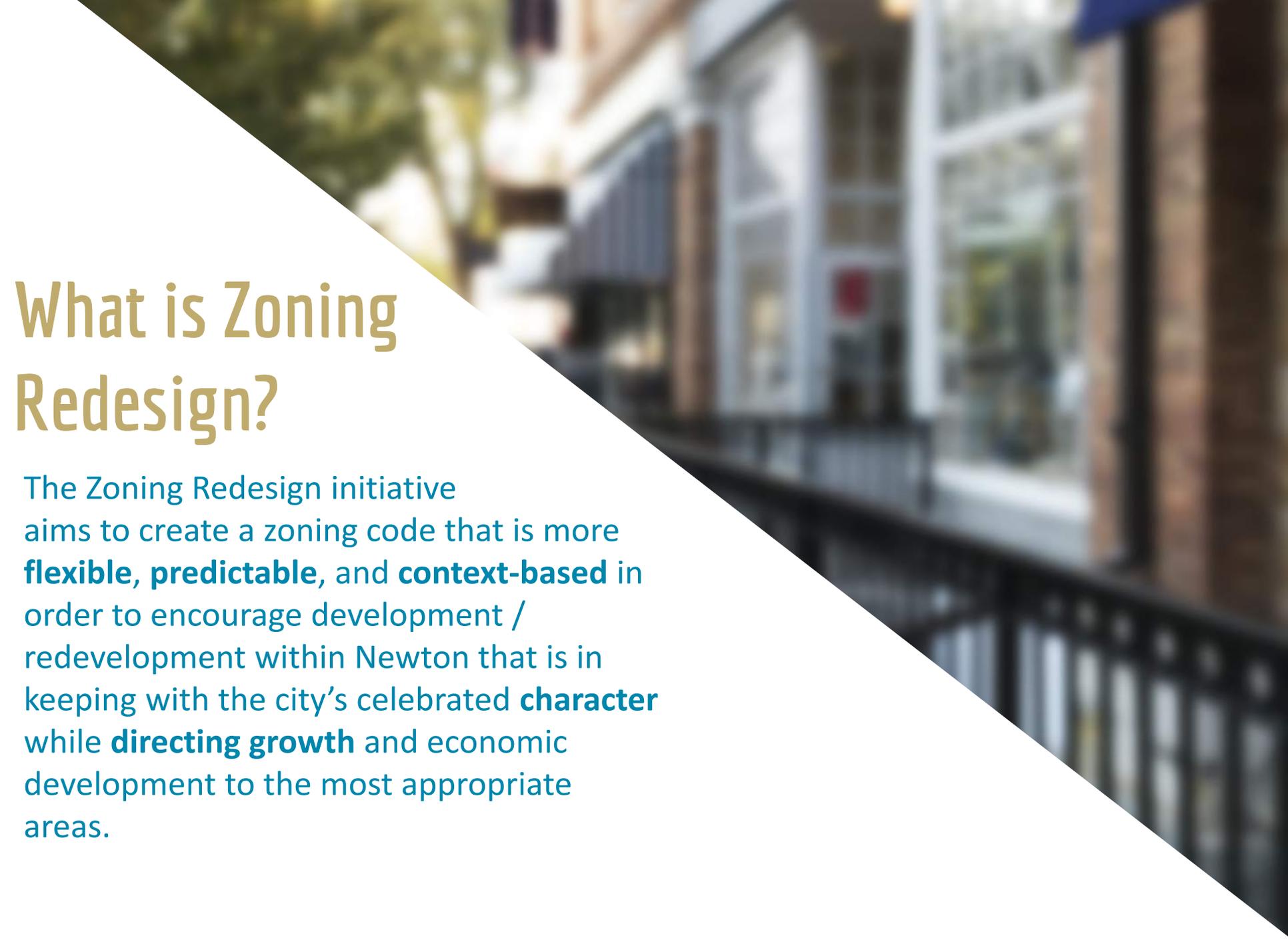
1987 – Major reorganization, and update to commercial zones

2011 – Zoning Reform Group

2015 – Phase One completed

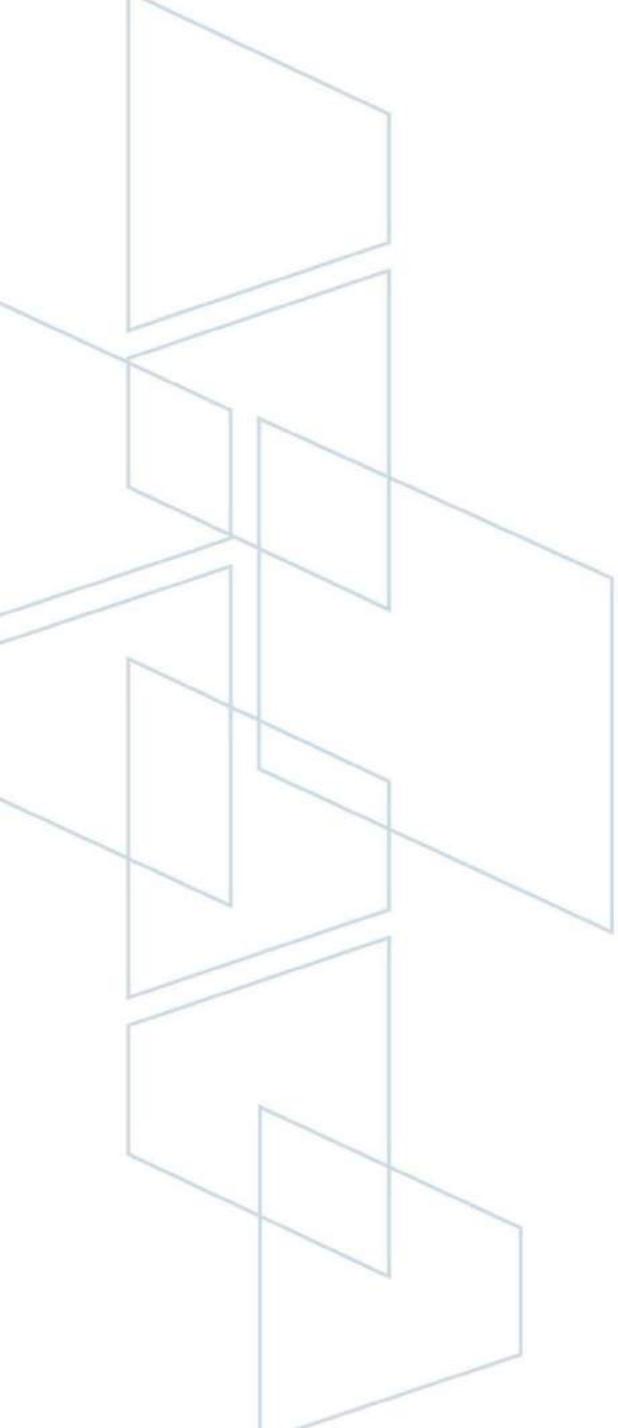
2017 – Phase Two – TODAY!

} *Current efforts*



# What is Zoning Redesign?

The Zoning Redesign initiative aims to create a zoning code that is more **flexible, predictable, and context-based** in order to encourage development / redevelopment within Newton that is in keeping with the city's celebrated **character** while **directing growth** and economic development to the most appropriate areas.



# The Pattern Book

The Pattern Book represents several months of effort collecting first-hand data and analysis. We will be collecting comments on this document through December 8.

Complete draft online at:

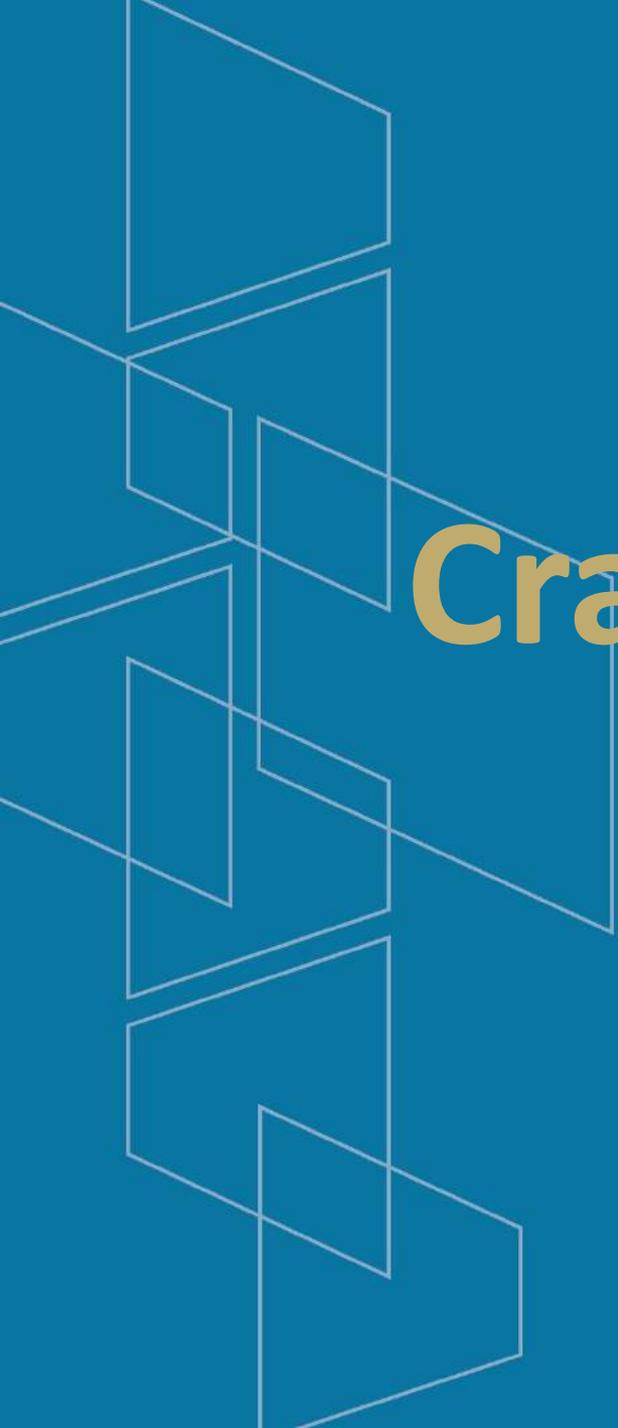
[www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning](http://www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning)

# Zoning Redesign Timeline



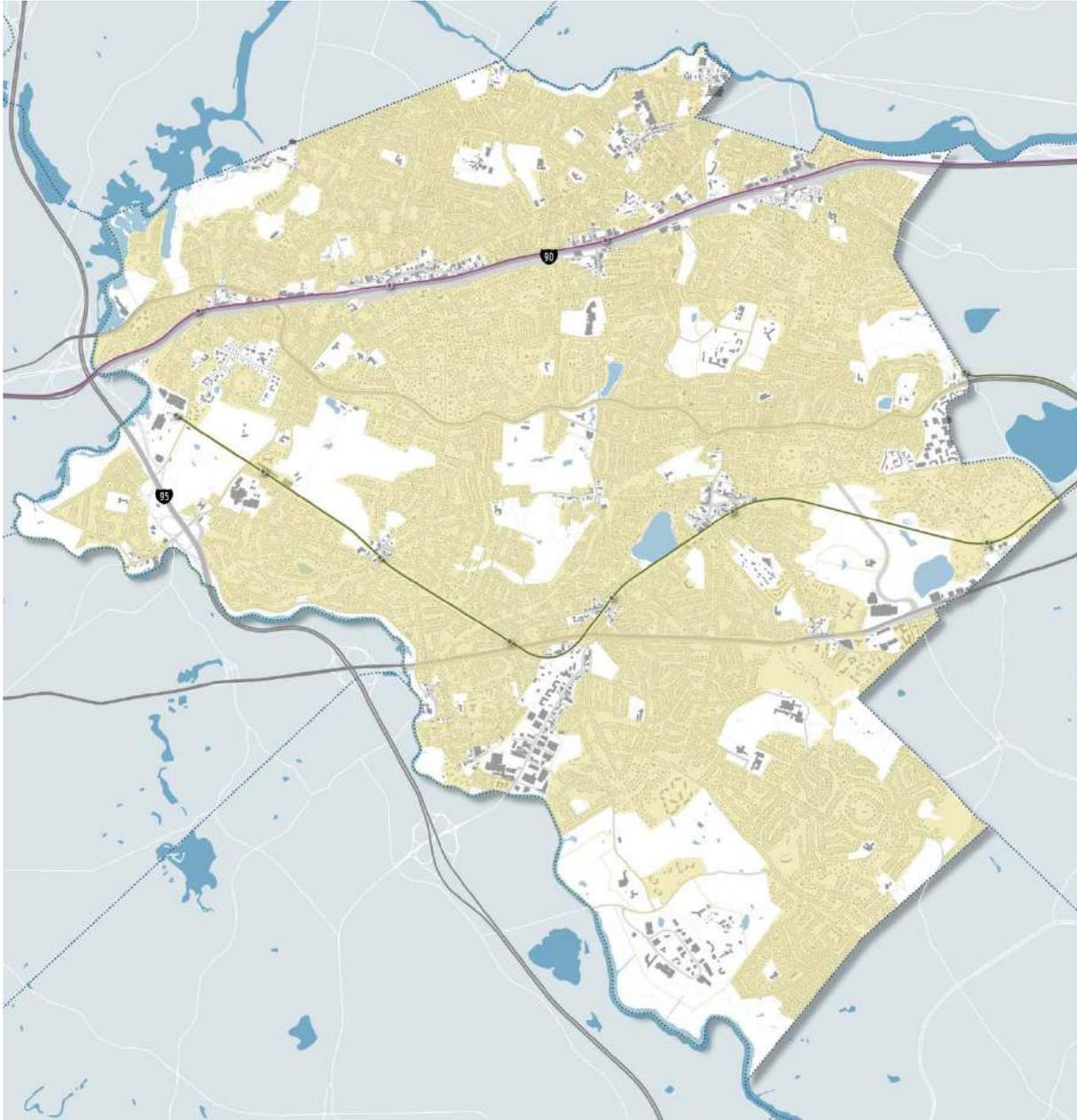


**Zoning is our  
opportunity  
to shape the  
future of  
Newton**



**Cracking the Code:  
Understanding  
Zoning for  
Homeowners**

# Pattern Book: Newton's Neighborhoods

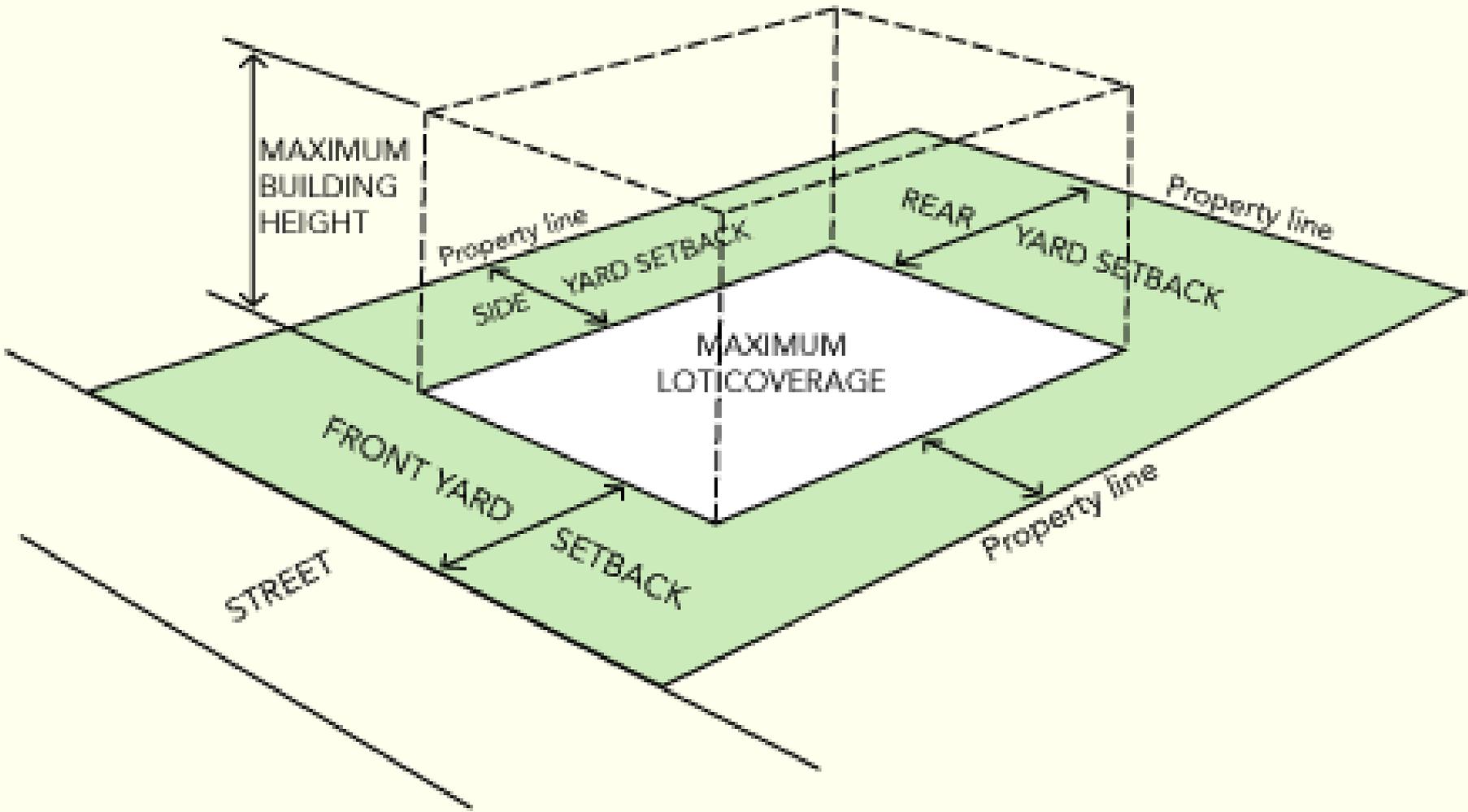


**68%**

# Objectives for Zoning for Homeowners

- 1. Easy to use and administer.**
- 2. Clear guidance on what a homeowner can do.**
- 3. Reasonable ability to modify a property to meet the homeowner's changing needs.**
- 4. Ensure changes to property respect the context of the neighborhood.**

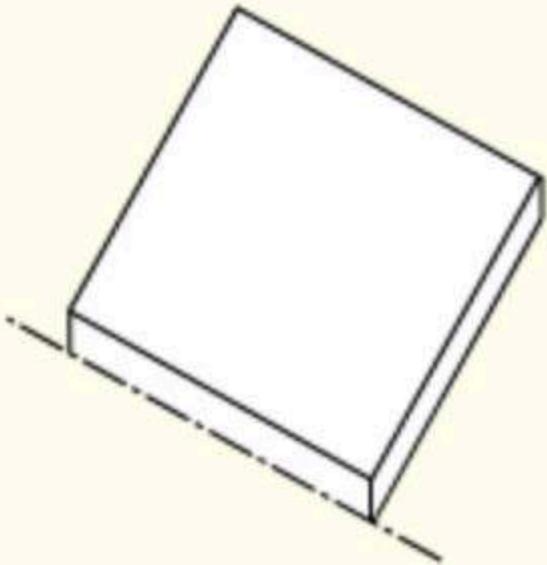
# Dimensional Controls



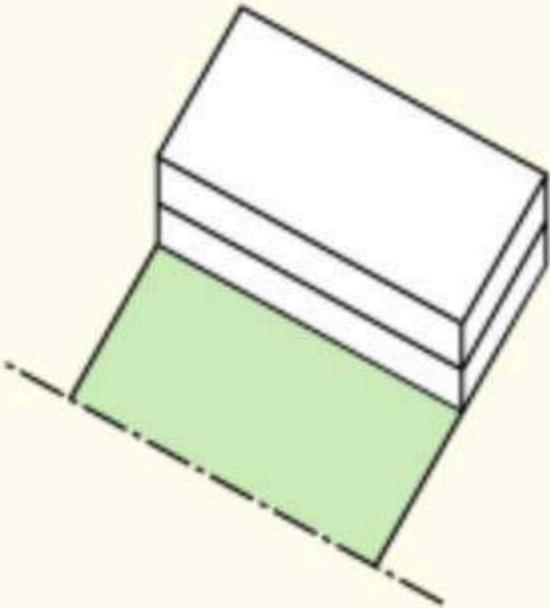
# Dimensional Controls: Floor Area Ratio

## Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

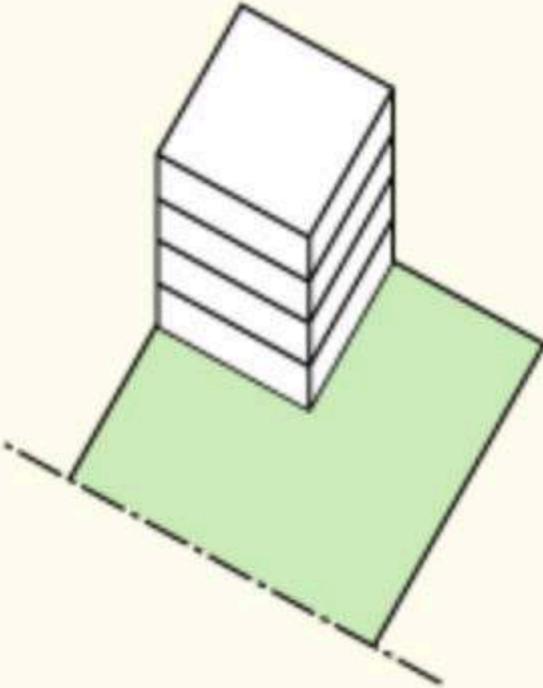
1:1 Ratio



1 story  
(100% lot coverage)



2 stories  
(50% lot coverage)

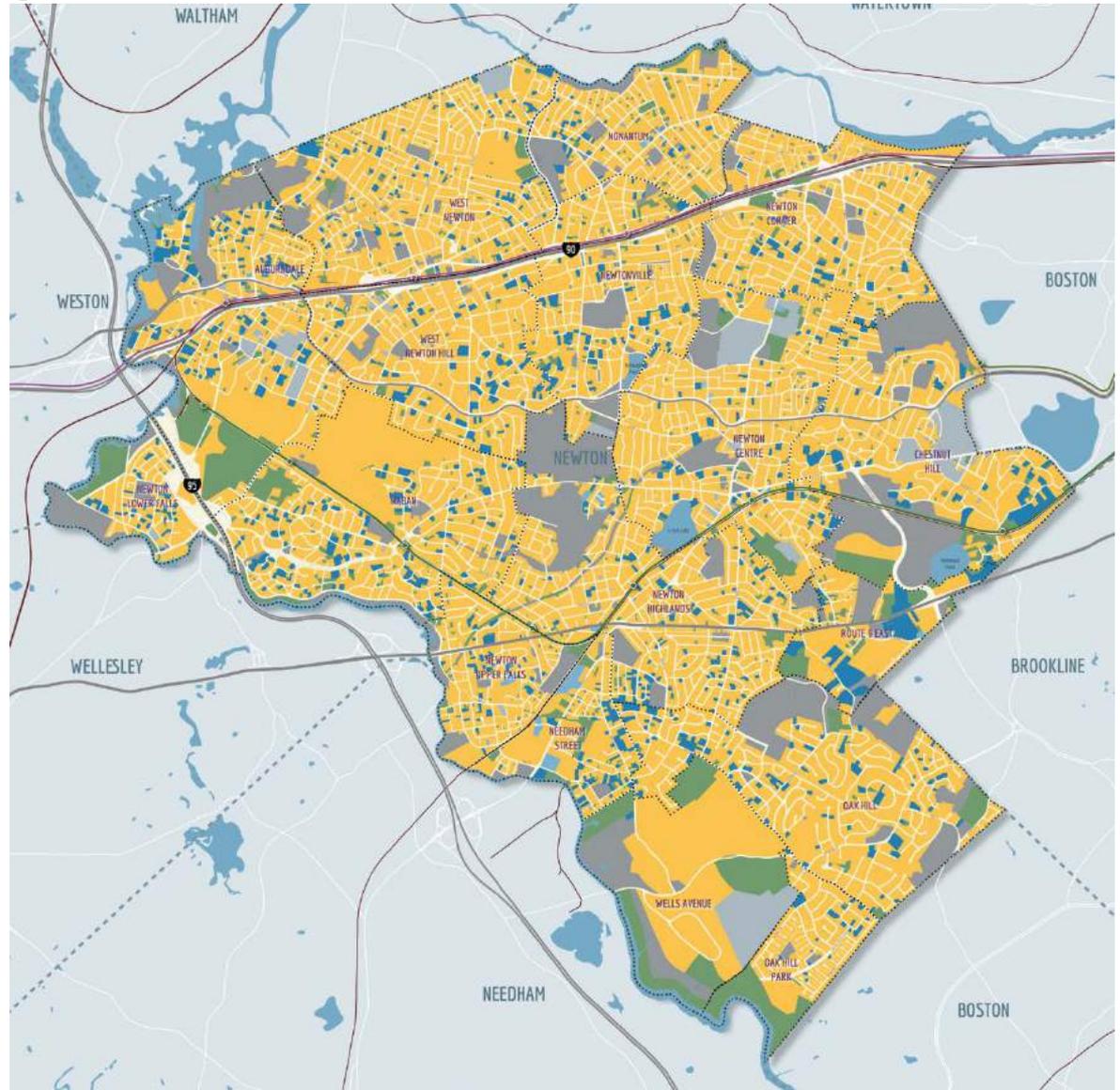


4 stories  
(25% lot coverage)

# Non-Conforming Homes, Old Lots, & Special Permits

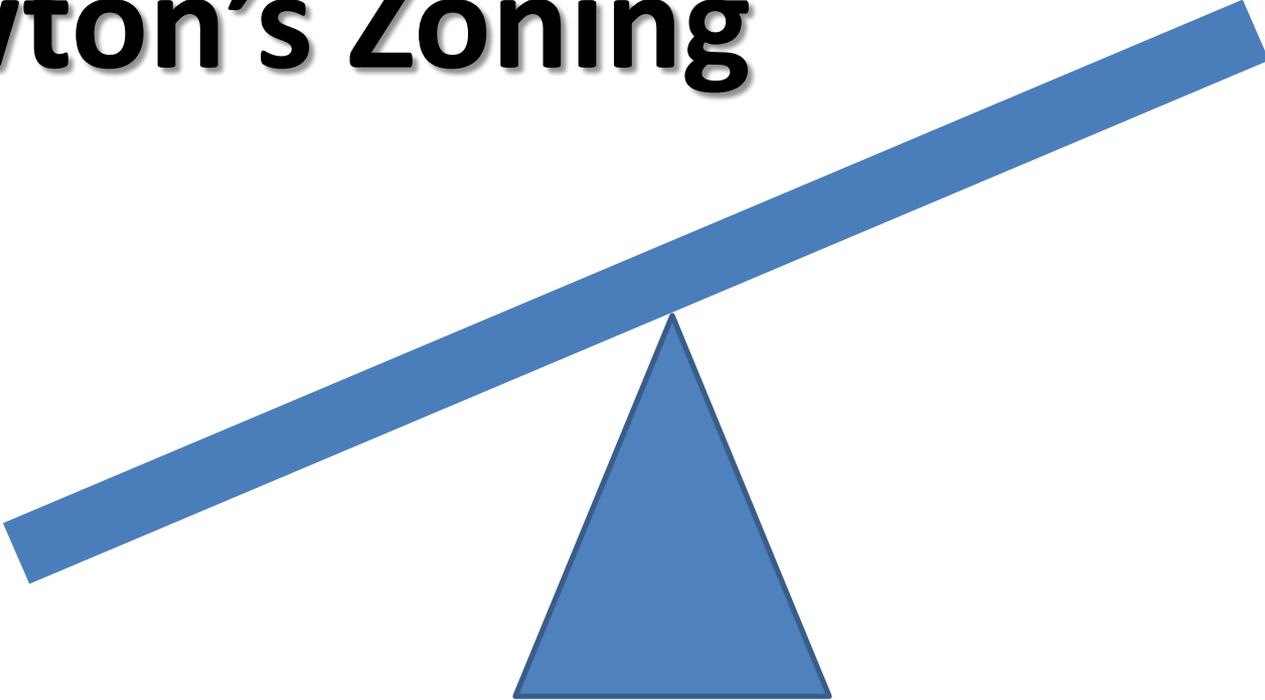
87%

Non-Conforming



# Flexibility and Predictability

## Newton's Zoning



**Flex**

**Predict**

Zoning can...

...provide easy to use rules for making improvements to your property.

...ensure that changes in neighborhoods are in keeping with its scale and character.



# Zoning & Homeowners

## **Lot Types & Context**

Regulating dimensions  
for neighborhood  
consistency

## **Dimensional Controls**

Options relative to  
flexibility & predictability  
How to handle massing

## **Garages**

Where do they go?

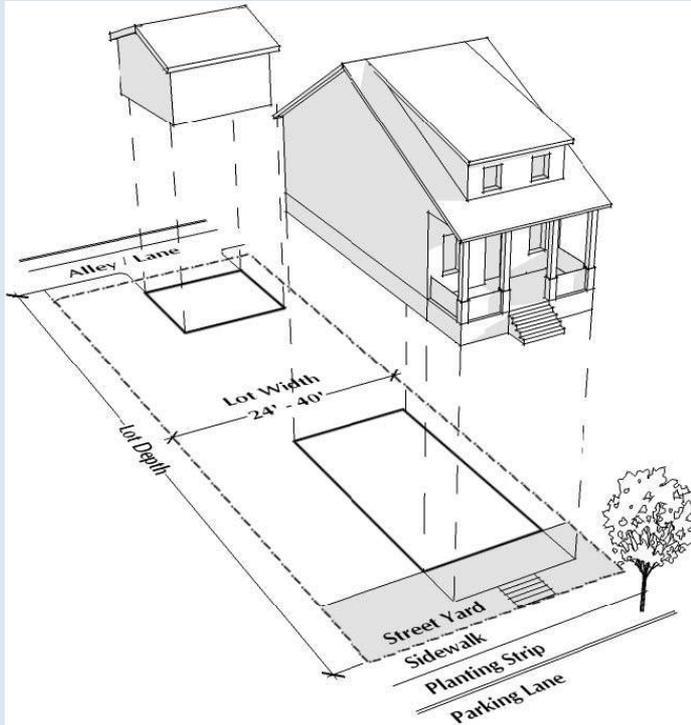
## **Fences & Retaining Walls**

Making good  
neighbors

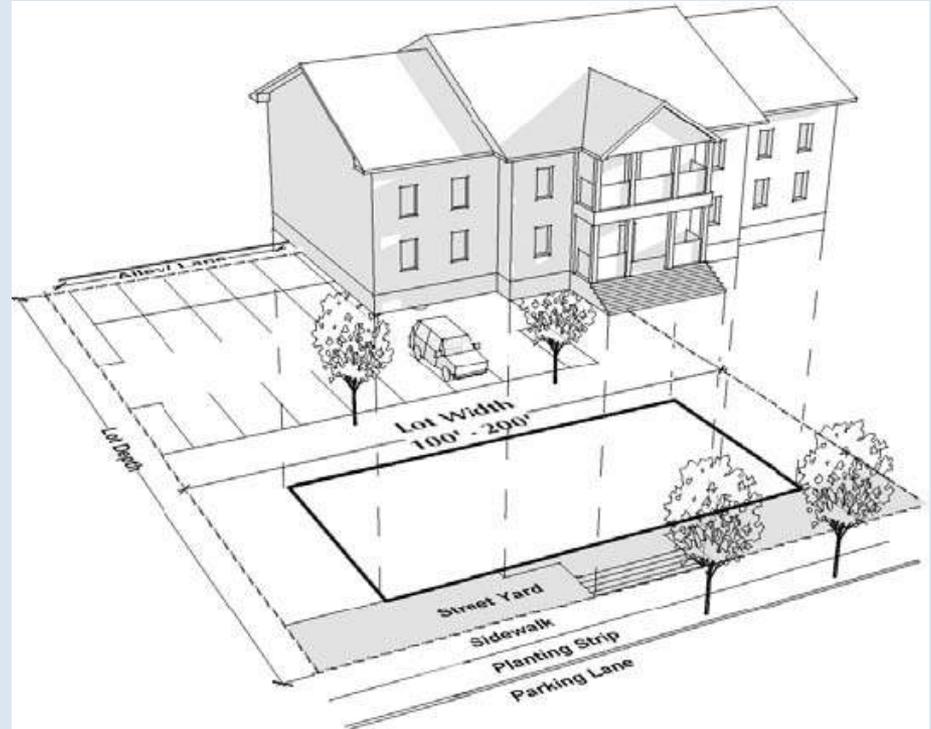
# Lot Types & Context



# Lot Types & Context

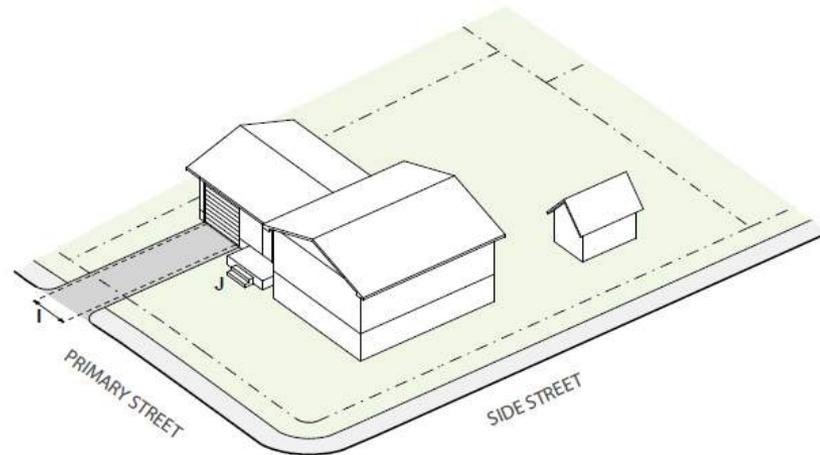
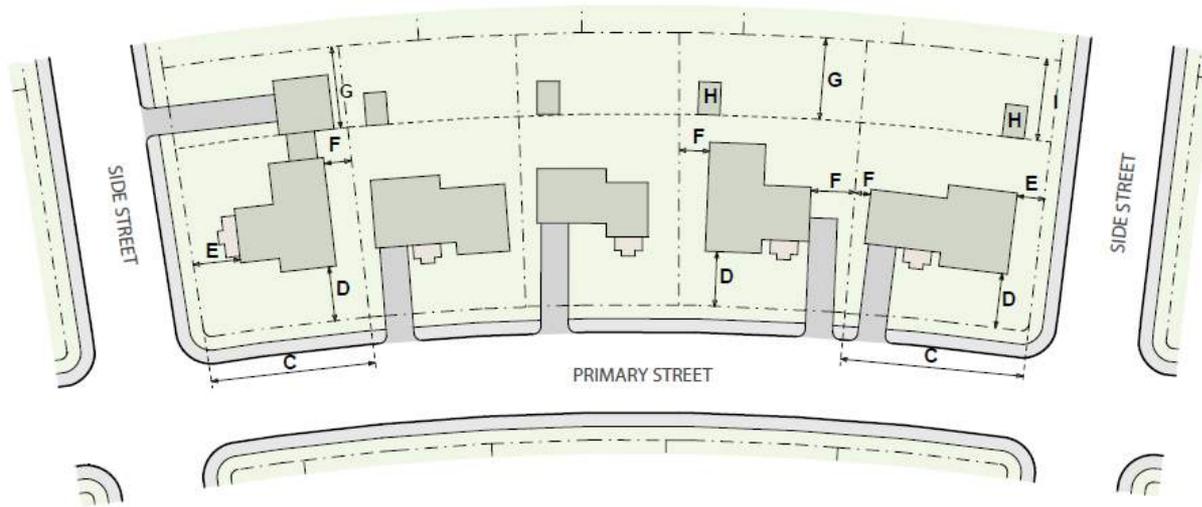


Cottage



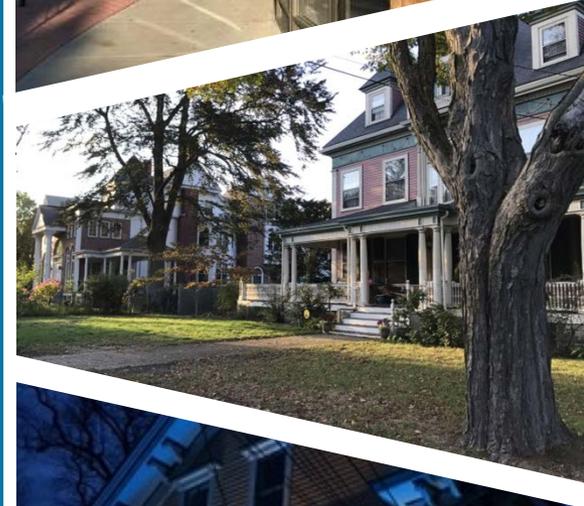
Multi-Family Building

# Lot Types & Context



# Lot Types & Context Based Zoning

Goal: Direct development to be consistent with existing and desired context and differentiate rules based on types of building.



# Zoning & Homeowners

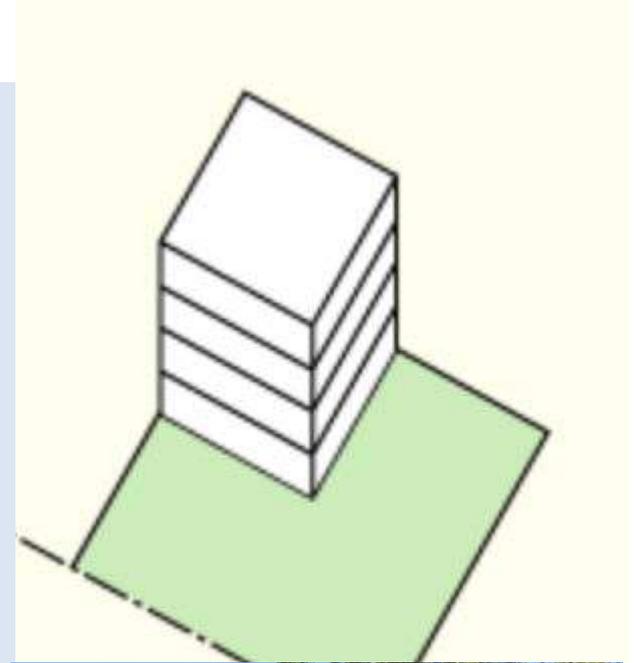
## Dimensional Controls:

- Setbacks – min and max, contextual
- Height – Re-evaluating how this is measured
- FAR -
- Lot Coverage – potentially more prominent role as replacement to FAR.

# Dimensional Controls

## Floor Area Ratio:

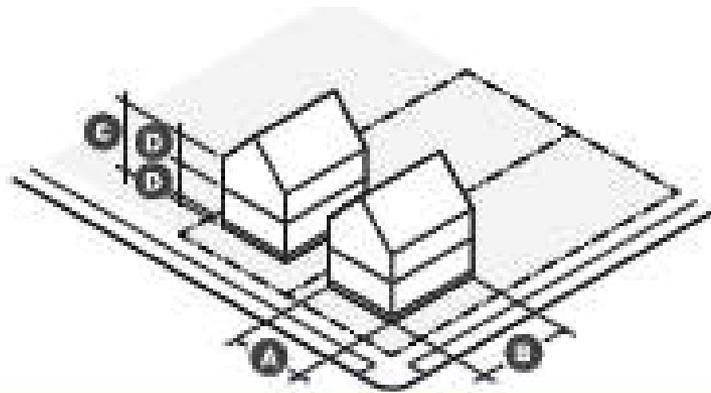
- Not intuitive or easy to explain
- Not easily verified by outside parties
- Complicates treatment of basements and attics
- Leads to a multitude of unintended outcomes as builders work to maximize building size within the rules



# Floor Area Ratio Alternatives

## Set rules for building height, width & depth

- Allow exceedance of these numbers under certain circumstances or within clear guidelines.

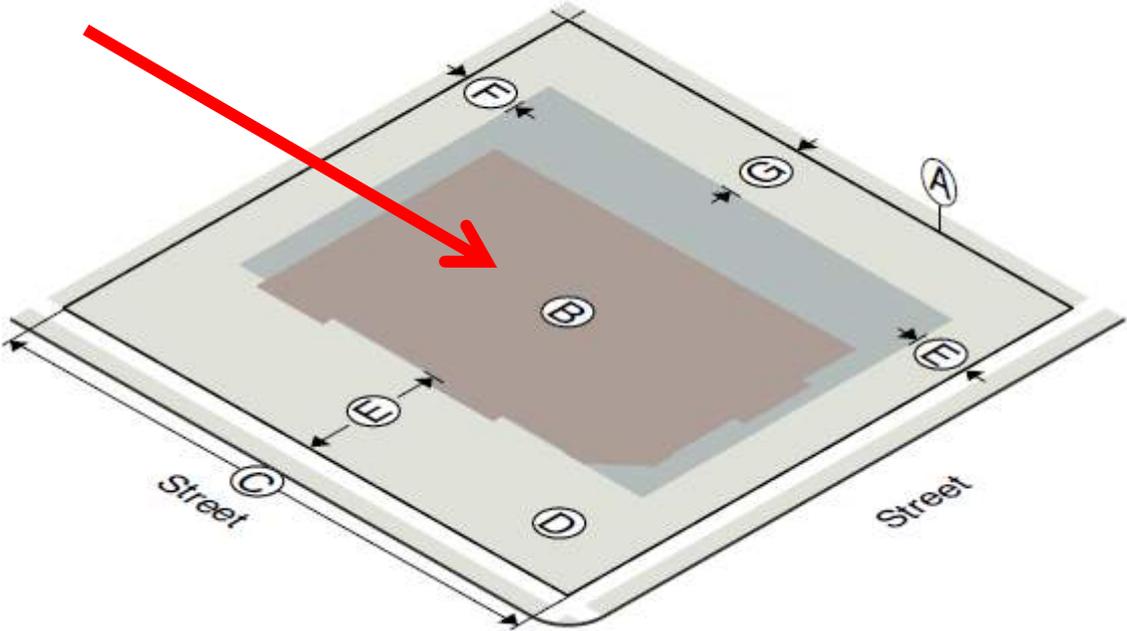


Main Body	
Facade Build Out (min)	60%
<b>A</b> Width (min/max)	22 ft 28 ft
<b>B</b> Depth (min/max)	24 ft 32 ft
<b>C</b> Building Height (max)	2 stories
<b>D</b> Story Height (min/max)	10 ft 12 ft
Ground Floor Elevation (min)	2 ft
Roof Type	Flat, Gable, Mansard

# Floor Area Ratio

# Alternatives

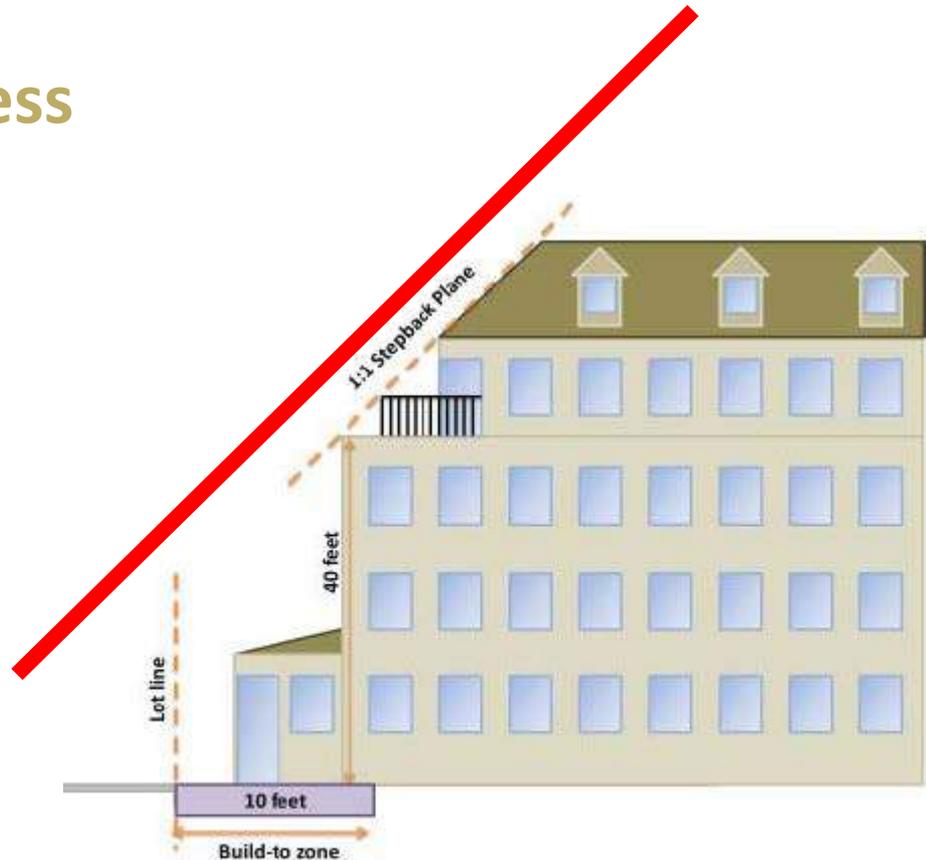
Create a primary building lot coverage max



# Floor Area Ratio Alternatives

## Stepback Plane rules

- Used to protect access to sunlight, reduce building massing at edges.



# Proposed Dimensional Controls Policy

Goal: Support more easily interpreted and enforced rules that result in contextually appropriate development.

1. Have min and max setbacks.
2. New rules for measuring height – better account for slopes.
3. Replace FAR with some combination of:
  1. Building width & depth rules
  2. Building lot coverage rules
  3. Stepback plane rules



# Garages



# Zoning & Homeowners

## Garages:

- Address issue of garages dominating streetscape.
- In some districts, establish min garage setback and max garage width



# Proposed Garage Policy

**Goal: Support strong connection between homes and street and promote welcoming streetscape.**

- 1. Set a minimum front setback for garages behind the front building facade.**
- 2. Set max garage width based on percentage of building width.**
- 3. Vary these rules based on context district.**



# Fences & Retaining Walls



# Proposed Fence Policy

**Goal: Ensure consistency of fence ordinance with zoning. Make fence and retaining walls better and improve enforceability of the rules**

- 1. Move fence ordinance into Zoning.**
- 2. Apply fence rules to vegetation/bushes that effectively serve as fences.**
- 3. Apply retaining wall rules to all retaining walls, not just those in the setbacks.**





# Stay involved

We've only scratched the surface today.  
Participate in future events and online at:

[www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning](http://www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning)

# City of Newton Zoning Redesign

## Event Series: September 2017 - May 2018

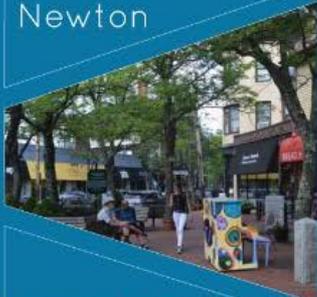
**Location:** Newton Free Library, 330 Homer Street, Druker Auditorium\*

**Time:** 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.\*

**RSVP online at** [www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning](http://www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning)

**Wednesday,  
September 27th**

Think Globally,  
Act Locally:  
Zoning for a  
Sustainable  
Newton

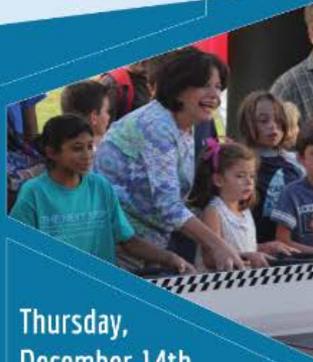


**Wednesday,  
November 29th**

Cracking the  
Code:  
Understanding  
Zoning for  
Homeowners

**Thursday,  
October 19th**

Newton's  
Advantage: Zoning  
and Economic  
Development



**Thursday,  
December 14th**

Housing for  
Whom? Zoning,  
Affordability,  
and Fair Housing

**Thursday,  
January 18th**

A parking Lot for  
Goldilocks: Zoning for  
Just the Right Size

**Thursday,  
February 15th**

Tapping the  
Creative  
Economy: Zoning,  
Arts, and  
Artisans

**Thursday,  
March 15th**

Building Shape,  
Size, and Form in  
Neighborhoods  
and Village  
Centers

**Thursday, April 12th**

What's the  
Process? How Stuff  
gets Built in  
Newton

**Thursday,  
May 10th**

A New Zoning  
Map for Newton



\*All the events will be held at this location and time.

The location of this meeting is wheelchair accessible and reasonable accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities who require assistance.

If you need a reasonable accommodation, please contact the city of Newton's ADA/Sec. 504 Coordinator, Jini Fairley, at least two business days in advance of the meeting: [jfairley@newtonma.gov](mailto:jfairley@newtonma.gov) or (617) 796-1253.

The city's TTY/TDD direct line is: 617-796-1089. For the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), please dial 711.



Thank You!

**What do you think**



# Zoning & Homeowners

## **Lot Types & Context**

Regulating dimensions  
for neighborhood  
consistency

## **Dimensional Controls**

Options relative to  
flexibility & predictability  
How to handle massing

## **Garages**

Where do they go?

## **Fences & Retaining Walls**

Making good  
neighbors

# What do you think?

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How to handle massing

## Garages

Where do they go?

## Fences & Retaining Walls

Making good neighbors

What did you like?

What did you not like?

What did we miss?

How should we refine these proposals?