

TITLE SLIDE (slide #1)

Mayor and Planning Director remarks.

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AGENDA (slide #2)

Thank you Barney. Whether you are hearing about Zoning Redesign for the first time today or have been engaging with this effort for years, we'd like to thank you for taking the time to join us. We appreciate the time many of you have already invested towards making this a better proposal for Newton as well as the time you are willing to dedicate going forward. Today, we are going to give a quick update on where we are in the process and how we got here and then we want to focus on how we move forward with participation from the community. What we want you to think about as we break off into groups later on are the ways in which you would ideally like to participate in this project and the questions we should be asking.

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WHAT IS ZONING (slide #3)

For those of you new to this process, zoning law regulates how land is used across the city and shapes buildings, homes, blocks, neighborhoods, and village centers. It includes the regulations in the zoning ordinance text (the written rules), as well as a map that organizes the city into zoning districts (residential, business, manufacturing, recreational, etc.). So, zoning matters for sustainability, housing, the viability of our village centers, and how our city looks and feels.

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WHAT IS ZONING REDESIGN? (slide #4)

Zoning Redesign is a multi-year effort to create a new zoning code that is more flexible, predictable, and context-based (in other words deriving many of the rules from Newton's existing fabric) in order to encourage development and redevelopment that is in keeping with the city's celebrated villages while guiding future development appropriately and sustainably.

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TIMELINE (slide #5-6)

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So why are we doing this? Why not just leave the zoning ordinance as it is today? To give some context, here's a timeline of zoning in Newton. As you can see the ordinance was last significantly amended in the 80s and most of the residential zoning regulations date back to the 50s. A lot has changed since then. At the time the zoning was a response to increased developmental pressure on undeveloped land, particularly on the south side of the city. The zoning regulations put in place intentionally lead to large houses on large lots with an emphasis on the automobile. Today Newton is mostly built out and there are few large swaths of undeveloped land left, which makes it a good time to determine if new tools are needed to address today's challenges and goals. Acknowledgement that the current zoning was not always producing desirable results began with the *Comprehensive Plan* in 2007. Then in 2010 when a working group was formed to evaluate and recommend changes to the floor area ratio (a critical zoning tool), which is how the current ordinance regulates building size. Today's effort to redesign the city's zoning began in 2011 with the formation of the zoning reform group, which was a collaborative effort to recommend changes to the zoning ordinance.

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HISTORY IN CONTEXT (slide #7)

As many of you are already aware, zoning in the United States, through both intentional and unintentional decisions, plays a role in economic and racial segregation, the climate crisis, and housing shortage and affordability. Zoning reforms alone cannot solve these massive problems, however acknowledging and addressing the role Newton's zoning plays in issues of segregation, housing access and affordability, climate change, and mobility is important. Our zoning is rooted in the ideals of the 1950s and now is a good time to ask whether our zoning ordinance can contribute towards removing barriers to making Newton a more inclusive community, providing diverse housing options, and to ensuring the way

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we live and move is more sustainable and better serves the needs of today's community as well as future generations.

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DEVELOPING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES (slide #8)

Zoning is how we regulate what gets built and where it gets built. Defining the right set of controls is important for ensuring new buildings fit within the existing context and it is also how we implement our goals. Since the adoption of the *Comprehensive Plan* in 2007, the City has set forward many goals around housing, transportation, economic development, and climate action. More specific recommendations and vision plans have also been created for targeted areas such as Needham Street, Washington Street and Riverside. These plans all include recommendations that necessitate changes to our current zoning.

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ZONING GOALS (slide #9-10)

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Building upon these goals and objectives earlier this year the Zoning and Planning Committee (ZAP) of the City Council unanimously agreed on 3 overarching goals, or principles, that will guide the work we do. They are 1. Housing: A zoning code more responsive to a demand for housing that serves a range of incomes and promotes sustainable community development patterns; 2. Sustainability: Environmental stewardship, fiscal strength and meeting community needs, and 3. Context: Preserve and protect what we like in our neighborhoods. Encourage new development to fit in the context of our neighborhoods and villages. These goals are consistent with the major themes published in the Zoning Reform Group (ZRG) report of 2011, a collaborative effort of the administration, Board of Alderman, and community. These 3 guiding principles are also recurring themes in the policies, plans and visions which have been produced in the past decade. In addition to these goals, we want to hear if you think there are other big goals the City Council should be considering?

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DOES OUR CURRENT ZONING ACHIEVE THESE GOALS? (slide # 11)

Now we have to ask ourselves how the current ordinance is serving us and whether it is meeting these identified goals. The zoning reform process began a decade ago in part in response to the community sentiment that our zoning regulations do not always produce desirable results. Those concerns still exist today and many have become exacerbated over time, particularly as land values rise.

>> (slide #12)

Most new homes built today are fully in compliance with zoning and yet are often out of scale with the existing neighborhood, altering the neighborhood fabric.

>> (slide #13)

These large new homes typically replace an older, less expensive home, which continues to drive up the median home price making Newton less attainable for many people. Single family home size grew by 70% from 2005 to 2014 in Newton. Homes just become larger and do not contribute to the need for housing diversity.

>> (slide #14)

Most of the land in the City only allows for single family homes. While the detached single-family home will continue to be desirable, the zoning allows few opportunities to gradually increase housing or provide other housing options.

>> (slide #15)

When multifamily housing does get built it tends to be in large developments, resulting in housing at either end of the spectrum, and not much in the middle.

>> (slide #16)

Our current zoning doesn't provide enough opportunity for missing middle housing. This house scale housing with multiple units exists successfully in some areas of Newton, providing additional housing options and price points. However, this type of housing is now not allowed anywhere by-right (and more than 2 units

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is not allowed by-right anywhere in the city) and often would not be allowed at all under today's regulations.

>> (slide #17)

Demographics in Newton have changed since the zoning was put in place. Today a quarter of Newton residents live alone. We've also seen a dramatic decrease in the under 44 population. Home prices continue to increase pricing out more and more people. Since existing zoning offers little opportunity to build housing other than single family homes, Newton is becoming less and less diverse. The lack of diversity in both housing price points and types of housing also contributes to challenges in attracting new businesses to Newton as there are limited housing options for their employees.

>> (slide #18)

Increasing home sizes and costs and a lack of housing options have continued to make Newton less and less attainable across all class, race, and income brackets. Moving to Newton today requires being in the uppermost income brackets. The median income is rising dramatically and faster than the state as a whole (and still is not enough to afford the median sales price for a single family home). This means many current homeowners could not buy their home today. This results in limited options for seniors looking to downsize and makes it all but impossible for children to stay in Newton when they move out of their family home. These graphs show how Newton has far outpaced the state overall in an increase of top earners, a decrease in the lowest earners, and a squeeze of the middle earners.

>> (slide #19)

When most of our zoning was written, environmental and fiscal sustainability was not part of the conversation. Newton has since adopted ambitious goals through the *Climate Action Plan*, which require changes to zoning to realize these goals. Buildings and vehicles make up the majority of our greenhouse gas emissions, as shown in this graph, which means we have an opportunity to impact these emissions through zoning. Our current zoning does not incentivize smaller, more energy efficient housing, or prioritize housing focused around walkable village centers or public transit.

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>> **(slide #20)**

Additionally, while 39% of Newton households have one or no cars, our zoning requires a minimum of two parking stalls for every household, regardless of size or type of housing or proximity to transit. The parking requirements for commercial uses are similarly once size fits all, even for small retailers in village centers. This emphasis on parking encourages reliance on automobiles, and requires large amounts of land be dedicated to parking, further increasing the amount of paved area and contributing to high costs for housing.

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ZONING REDESIGN STATUS (slide #21-22)

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As we've mentioned, today's effort began in 2011 when the Zoning Reform Group was tasked with undertaking a comprehensive review of the zoning ordinance along with providing recommendations for changes. This was in response to broad sentiment that the zoning ordinance was difficult to understand and did not always lead to desirable outcomes. The zoning reform group's 2011 report identified 11 themes to focus on in creating a new ordinance. The themes centered around making the ordinance and the process more user friendly, creating housing opportunities, supporting commercial areas and village centers, protecting neighborhood scale, addressing parking regulations, and improving sustainability.

The first phase of the zoning redesign effort was to reformat and clarify the existing ordinance into something easier to use and understand. This current version of the ordinance was adopted in 2015. The pattern book, which was released in 2017 is a comprehensive survey of all the lots and buildings in Newton. A first draft of a new zoning ordinance was released in 2018 and was largely based on the existing conditions found in the Pattern book. Following extensive outreach around the first draft, our work on Zoning Redesign was briefly paused in 2019 to focus on other planning efforts, such as the Washington Street Vision Plan and large development projects.

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LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD (slide #23)

In order to guide the future of Newton, we first looked to the past. Much of the fabric of Newton that we love was built prior to our current zoning regulations and could not be built today. Newton is a built out city with little undeveloped land left and it is time for a new operating system. Our pattern book allows us to use a data driven approach to develop zoning rules that help to reinforce the existing context of Newton's neighborhoods. This is a departure from a traditional zoning approach that is first focused on uses and separating uses. The proposed context based approach looks to create forms that are compatible with the scale of existing neighborhoods, with less of a focus on what happens inside the buildings.

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PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT (slide #24)

A lot of work has been done with community participation over the years. However, there is much work still to be done. Significant engagement efforts in 2017 and 2018 led to a first draft of the new ordinance in October 2018. Events in 2017 and 2018 included large events focused around particular topics, regular drop in office hours, and ward by ward meetings. The 2018 draft was followed by six months of community meetings, drawing over a thousand residents.

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CHANGES TO DRAFT ORDINANCE (slide #25)

As a result of these and continuing engagement efforts, including groups of stakeholders who are studying and analyzing the draft, the Council Zoning and Planning committee and Planning staff have received substantial and important feedback that we are considering. We will continue to refine the proposal based on community and stakeholder feedback by way of conversations and decisions made with the City Council Zoning and Planning Committee. Some of the changes that have been made since the first draft include adding a new residential district to better transition from village centers to less dense neighborhoods; removing certain building types;

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>> **(slide #26)**

reducing the maximum size of some homes by-right; eliminating a proximity rule; and adjusting setbacks and minimum frontages; among others. We will continue to make changes and refine the ordinance as we evaluate and analyze the proposals and continue the conversation at the Zoning and Planning Committee.

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ZONING ORDINANCE: ARTICLES (slide #27)

So, where are we now? Work on zoning redesign started again at the beginning of this year, building upon the 2018 draft and responding to issues raised both by the City Council through regular meetings with ZAP and from the public as a result of the previous engagement efforts.

The proposed new ordinance contains 12 articles as well as the zoning map. A draft for the entire ordinance was published in 2018 but it is just an initial draft and each section requires additional time spent discussing the technical details and big picture policy decisions.

>> **(slide #28)**

Most of the focus so far has been on Article 3, residence districts. This article contains the rules for housing within the neighborhoods. We are continuing to refine this article and will be engaging around some of these topics early next year. The next article that we will focus on is Article 4, which contains the rules for the village districts. The residence and village districts make up the bulk of our zoning districts and it will be important to consider them together in order to achieve our big goals, which will require moving back and forth between the two districts, while also considering where lines are drawn on the map. We will hold additional public events next year on these articles in particular and will continue to refine the proposed ordinance.

>> **(slide #29)**

So, how do we expand housing diversity and make Newton more welcoming to a larger range of incomes and background and ages? How do we further our climate goals when housing and transportation are responsible for the majority of

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our greenhouse gas emissions? How do we ensure that neighborhood fabric is enhanced by new development and new homes? And what other questions should we be asking? We have some ideas, which we look forward to discussing in more depth in upcoming events, but we also want to hear from you. And we want to hear how best you would like to engage as we continue to discuss the substantive topics next year.

Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler, our Community Engagement Planner, will now introduce our break out discussions.

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Break-Out Discussions (slide #30)

>> **(slide #31)**

Hi everyone, my name is Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler. I am the new Community Engagement Planner for the Department of Planning & Development, and I am delighted to be with you here today. I have had the fortune to meet some of you already and hope to meet many more of you in the coming months. I have a couple things to go over for our break-out discussions. The first is that each room will have a facilitator, who is a staff person from the Department of Planning & Development, and either a Zoning and Planning Committee Councilor or a member of the Planning & Development Board.

Second, the break-out discussion rooms will be randomly populated and you will receive a notification soon inviting you to a breakout room.

>> **(slide #32)**

Third, we have a set of community guidelines to foster as smooth and respectful of a discussion as we can.

How to speak up? Facilitators will call on people in the order that they raise their blue Zoom hand. How do you do this? Look at the bottom of your screen and find the icon 'Participants' (sometimes you have to make your screen larger to see this) – click on 'Participants.' Then you will see a list of icons appear to the right – you will see the blue hand. When you want to speak in response to a prompt,

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click the blue hand – and when you're done speaking, click it again to take it down.

Please stay muted except while you're speaking

Use the Chat Box to share your opinion. Since we have such an incredible turnout, not everyone will be able to speak more than once. If you have a response but have already spoken or time runs out for your prompt, leave your response in the chat box. We will record this information. You may be wondering, what's the chat box? Look at the bottom of your screen and click the icon of three dots that says 'More' – click Chat. Your Chat box will open up.

Explore the prompts and listen to diverse opinions with respect, curiosity, and civility

And this session is being recorded for the Department of Planning & Development's use. If you do not want to participate in the recording, please turn off your video and mute yourself.

Lastly, I had noted earlier, we have an incredible turn out tonight – this is amazing, and it means that we will have large discussion groups. To hear as many people as possible, please keep your comments to about a minute. Your facilitator will kindly encourage you to wrap up if you take more time, in order to make as much space as we can for the diverse set of thoughts and questions that you all have.

>> **(slide #33)**

Here is the set of prompts that will guide our conversations today. Your facilitator will share these questions with you in your break-out room, so you do not need to memorize these. Joe, can you please open the break-out rooms? You will soon get a notification – thanks for your patience and enjoy your conversation!

>> **(slide #34)**

Welcome back everyone. We appreciate the depth and range of everything you all shared in your discussion rooms. In the coming weeks, all of your questions and comments will be compiled and shared publicly. We will answer all the questions we can, and we will highlight common themes for future engagement.

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What's Next? (slide #35-36)

So what is next?

As mentioned earlier, the Zoning and Planning Committee has begun working on the proposed ordinance for Article 3 – Residence Districts. We will use December to continue soliciting questions on Zoning Redesign and ideas for community engagement, and the month of January to synthesize what we learn and, working with Zoning and Planning Committee and the Planning & Development Board, develop a comprehensive community engagement strategy for next year around the substance of the Zoning Redesign policy proposals.

How to Get Involved (slide #37)

Your insights and questions are crucial to this process. We will have the same event with the same presentation and prompts tomorrow afternoon, where we will hear from more Newton community members. In addition to your participation in these events, we invite you to complete the brief Zoning Redesign survey, to screen the presentation we gave with your respective community groups – a recording of which will be posted on the Zoning Redesign website, and to sign up for the Zoning Redesign email list to stay updated on the events we host next year. In addition, I invite you to connect with me if you would like me to introduce myself to your community group or if you have more ideas on how we can engage the Newton communities around this important issue.

Lastly, I want to take a moment to highlight an important transition that temporarily affects your access to Zoning Redesign information. The City of Newton's website has transitioned to a new platform, and some of our staff as well as City IT staff will be devoting the next couple of days to ensuring we have essential information listed here. We are also taking this as an opportunity to reorganize the Zoning Redesign material and make it more accessible and user-friendly. In the meantime, if there is a document you are seeking and cannot find, please do not hesitate in emailing us to get that information. We apologize for this inconvenience and immensely appreciate your patience.

Contact Information (slide #38)

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So here is the main email you can contact us at – zoningredesign@newtonma.gov and you can find our own emails on the City of Newton website. And we now come to the conclusion of our event. Facilitators, if you haven't had a chance yet, please save your chat information now. I want to thank the ZAP Councilors and Planning & Development Board members for co-hosting, our staff for facilitating and creating the presentation material, and most importantly, I want to thank you for coming to this event and helping shape the public participation of Zoning Redesign. Thank you, and have a good night (or afternoon)