



## Zoning Redesign

The City of Newton's project to redesign the zoning code

### February Newsletter



February has been full of both snow and Zoning Redesign activity, with ZAP discussing the future of Zoning Redesign and staff updating the Zoning Redesign website. This month's newsletter covers:

- The **outcomes of this month's ZAP Committee meetings** related to Zoning Redesign, the Garage Ordinance, marijuana zoning, and updates to the Research & Development zoning definitions
- Suggested readings to think about urban planning in honor of **Black History Month**
- The state's new **Housing Choice Bill** and what it may mean for Newton
- The **updated Zoning Redesign website**
- Tentative agendas for upcoming ZAP meetings

#### Outcomes of February's ZAP Committee Meetings

The full reports for the ZAP meetings can be found at the [Zoning & Planning Committee website here](#).

#### Zoning Redesign:

At the February 22 meeting, ZAP continued their discussion on the future of Zoning Redesign. Chair Deborah Crossley posed two questions for the committee: (1) Should the current Zoning Ordinance be taken up in pieces or comprehensively? Are there any pieces that can be taken up independently? (2) Should any of the tools in the (zoning rewrite) toolbox be eliminated? The majority of ZAP Councilors, as well as members of the Planning & Development Board and visiting Councilors, expressed a commitment to a comprehensive approach to a Zoning Ordinance rewrite, with several suggesting that parking or teardowns could be discrete items taken up independently. No ZAP Councilor expressed interest in eliminating any "tool" from the toolbox, but did articulate a need to better assess and compare the zoning framework of FAR (Floor-Area-Ratio) to form-based code.

In addition, several ZAP members and visiting Councilors expressed support for moving forward with Zoning Redesign's research and community engagement in a geography-based manner, beginning with the Village Centers and transit nodes.

#### Garage Ordinance:

After several months of discussion and revision at ZAP, the City Council voted to adopt the [Garage Ordinance](#) on February 16 and set an effective date of May 1. Staff are developing materials to assist homeowners, builders, and architects on these new standards, stay tuned.

#### Marijuana Zoning:

Planning staff have introduced proposed changes to the zoning ordinance to allow for marijuana courier and delivery ([see staff memo here](#).) Adding these allowed uses will bring the ordinance into compliance with new regulations put forth by the Cannabis Control Commission in January. ZAP will hold a public hearing for this item on March 8 ([click here for the public notice](#).)

#### Research & Development Zoning Definitions:

On January 11, the Economic Development Commission proposed an amendment to the zoning ordinance to clarify inconsistencies in the way Research and Development is treated in the use tables and definitions in the current zoning ordinance. At a joint public hearing on February 8, ZAP and the Planning & Development Board approved these amendments ([see staff memo here.](#)) On February 16th, City Council voted to approve these changes ([see decision here.](#))

#### Thinking about Urban Planning during Black History Month

As many of you know, February marks Black History Month. It calls on us to acknowledge, learn from, and reflect on Black leadership, imagination, and histories - and to practice this for all months, not just this one. While not all tied to zoning nor Newton, here are a few suggested pieces that highlight Black leadership and visions for racial justice in urban planning in Newton and across the country. These are just a few of countless examples - so please send us any other suggestions you have! (*And thank you to those who contributed to the list below!*)

- [Myrtle Baptist Church Documentary](#)
- [The Civil Rights Movement in Newton: 1950s - 1970s](#), by Katherine Jones with Lillie Jefferson and Nina L. King
- [Black People Have Been Building a Better World. Who Will Join them?](#), by Oscar Perry Abello
- [How Black Cartographers Put Racism on the Map](#), by Derek H. Alderman & Joshua F. J. Inwood
- [11 Black Urbanists Every Planner Should Know](#), by the American Planning Association (APA)
- [Black Design Still Matters](#), by Brentin Mock
- Newton Mayor Ruthanne Fuller's '[Overdue: Confronting Race & Racism](#)' Series

#### The New 'Housing Choice Bill'

On January 14, Governor Baker signed into law an [economic development bill](#) which affects zoning and planning in Newton. The Housing Choice provisions in this bill change state law to lower the vote threshold needed to adopt certain zoning changes from two-thirds to a simple majority. This language went into effect immediately. Also included in the bill are new multi-family zoning requirements that are likely to impact Newton. The bill requires "MBTA Communities," those communities served by MBTA transit stations, to include at least one zoning by-law or ordinance that provides for at least one zoning district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is allowed as of right. Communities that fail to come into compliance with this will no longer be eligible for certain state funding sources. Further guidance on the changes required for some of these measures is still forthcoming, and there is not yet a clear date by which the changes to zoning must be completed.

To learn more, you can read [this memo issued by the City of Newton's Law Department.](#)

#### Updated Zoning Redesign Website

One of the things we heard loud and clear during the community engagement of December 2020 was that people had difficulty navigating the Zoning Redesign website. Please check out the updates we have made to the [Zoning Redesign landing site](#) and it's new pages, [Why Zoning Redesign?](#), [Process](#), [Zoning Ordinance Draft](#), [Community Engagement](#) and [Document Library](#). Please let us know what you think by emailing us at [zoningredesign@newtonma.gov](mailto:zoningredesign@newtonma.gov)!

#### Dates of Upcoming ZAP Meetings

*The following agenda items are not finalized and subject to change. You can find the Zoom links for these meeting in the agendas, once posted, at [the Zoning & Planning Committee Website.](#)*

*March 8, 2021 at 7pm*

- Marijuana Zoning (public hearing and possible vote)
- Historic Demo Delay Ordinance updates (continued discussion)
- Outdoor Dining and Parking Requirements (intro discussion)
- Zoning Redesign, Article 3 - Residence Districts Annotated Draft (continued discussion)

*March 22, 2021 at 7pm*

- Housing Trusts, presentation from the Mass. Housing Partnership (intro discussion)
- Housing Choice Legislation (intro discussion)

Visit Zoning Redesign on the web

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