

# Exploring the History of Newton's Village Centers

Zoning Redesign  
Village Center 'Vision Kit'

Corrections, Suggestions, Questions? –  
Send to [zoningredesign@newtonma.gov](mailto:zoningredesign@newtonma.gov)

# Presentation Outline

- Where & how did Newton's village centers develop?
- How have Newton's village centers changed through time?
  - Reshaping nature in & near village centers
  - Living, working, shopping & playing in village centers
  - Public buildings & schools in village centers
  - Transportation in village centers: horses, trains, & cars
- How To Get Involved/Contribute More History
- Let Us Know What You Think

# How Have Newton's Village Centers Changed Over Time?

From this...



Nonantum Sq / Newton Savings Bank...

From this...



Mason Rice School...

From this...



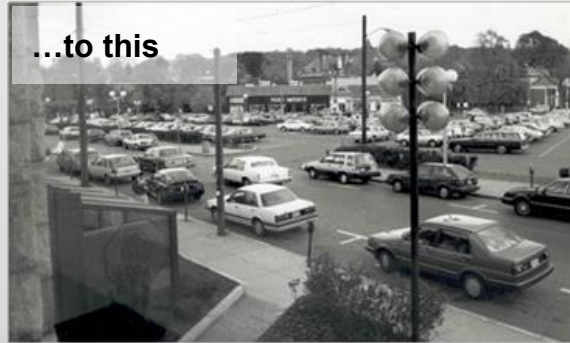
Cochituate Aqueduct...

...to this



...I-90 Ramps / Gateway Center

...to this



...Newton Centre Public Parking

...to this



...Walking Trail at Waban Village

# Where And What Are Newton Village Centers?



Newton Centre



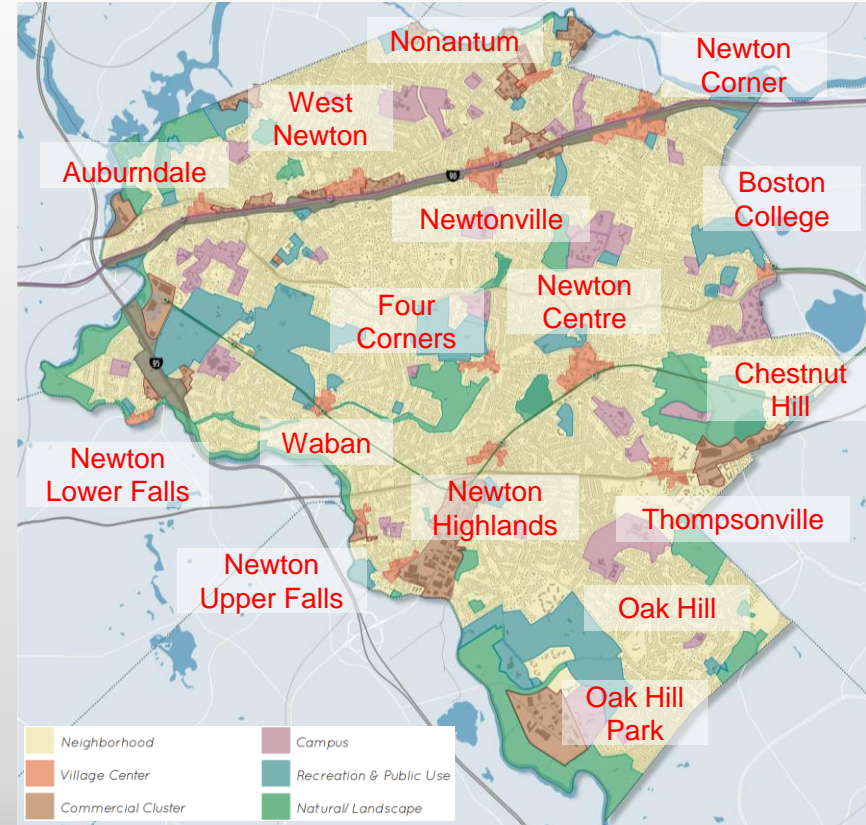
Newton Highlands



Newton Corner



West Newton



Source: Newton Pattern Book

# Where And How Did Newton's Village Centers Develop?

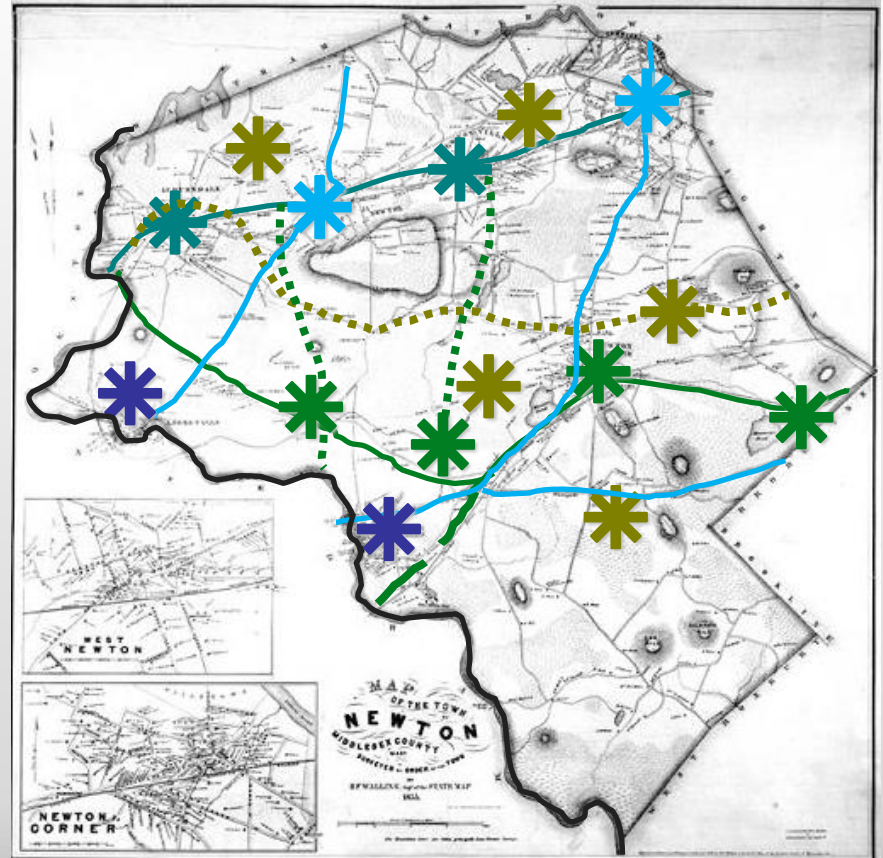
River Mill Villages

18<sup>th</sup>-Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Villages

1840s-1870s Railroad Villages

1880s-1920s Railroad Suburbs

1890s-1930s Streetcar Suburb



Map of Newton 1855 - Newton GIS

# Where And How Did Newton's Village Centers Develop?

River Mill Villages

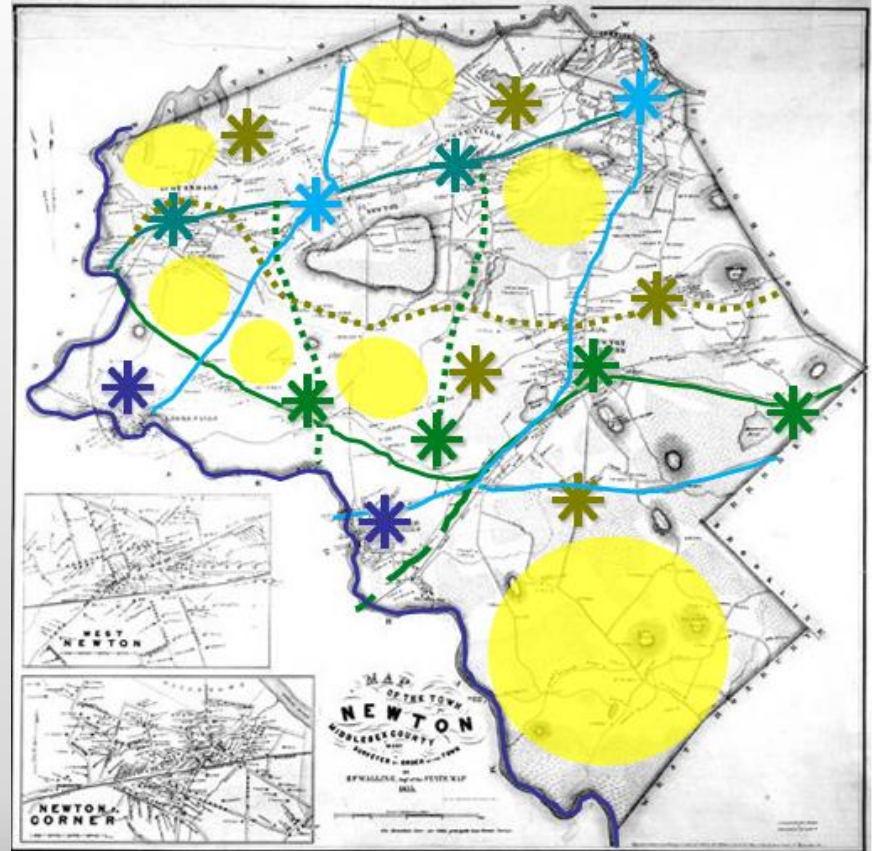
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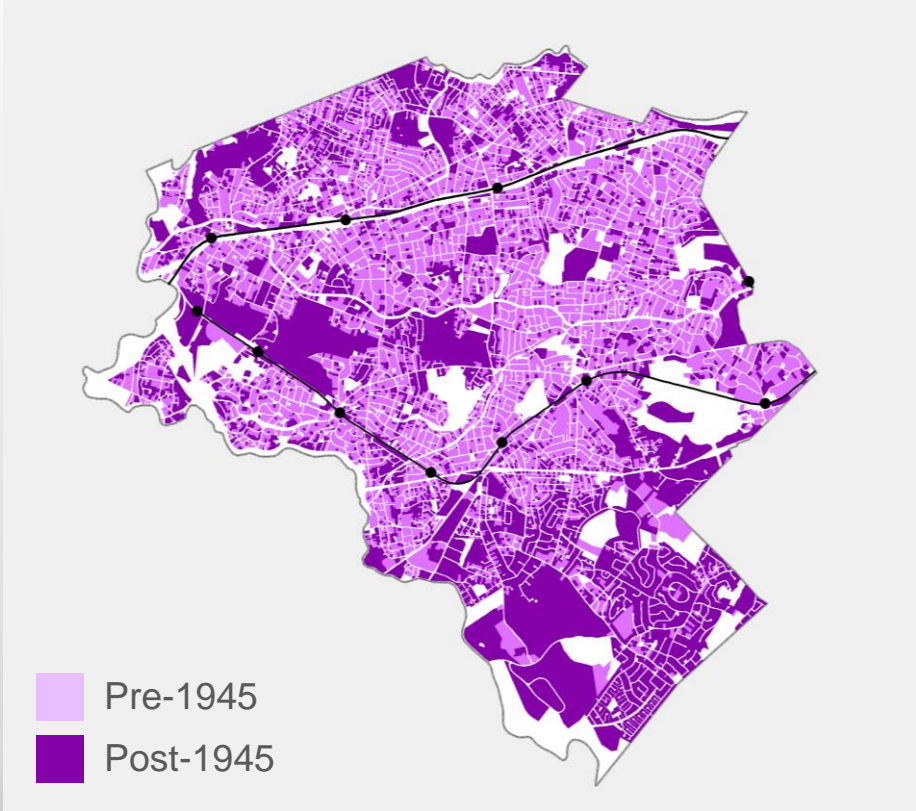
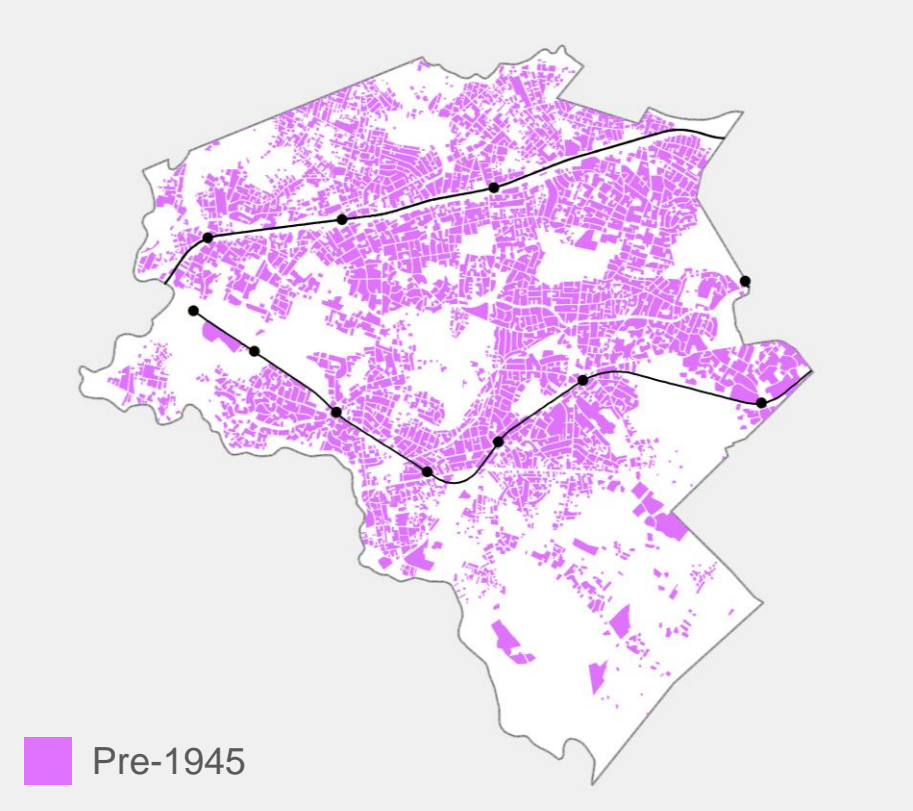
1890s-1930s Streetcar Suburb

More auto-dependent suburban development fills in around village centers



Map of Newton 1855 - Newton GIS

# How Do Village Centers Compare In Age To The Rest Of Newton?



# What Makes A Vibrant Village Center?

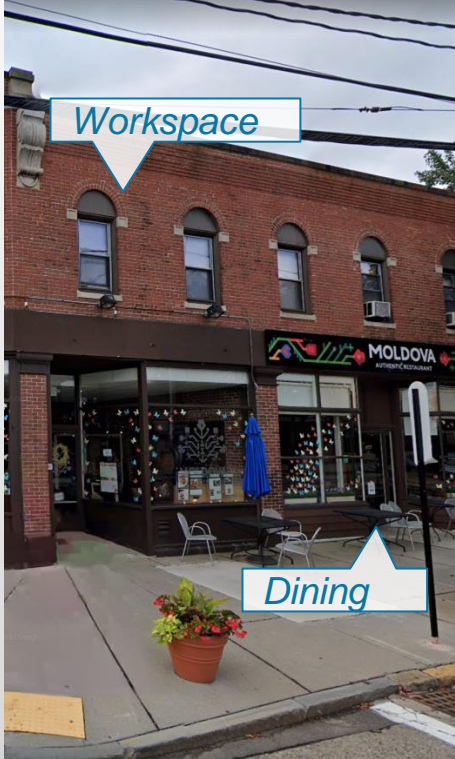


Shopping

Transit



Entertainment



Workspace

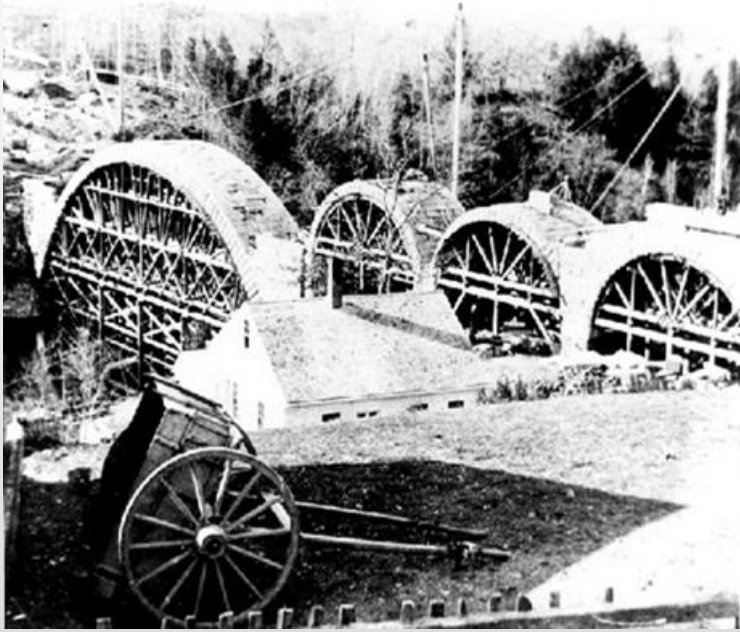
Dining



Gathering



## How Have We Reshaped Nature In And Around Village Centers?



Echo Bridge Under Construction to Carry Aqueduct Over the River - Newton Upper Falls, 1876



Dresser's Pond (Created for Either a Tannery or Glue Factory) - Waban, 1890

## Who Has Lived In Village Centers?

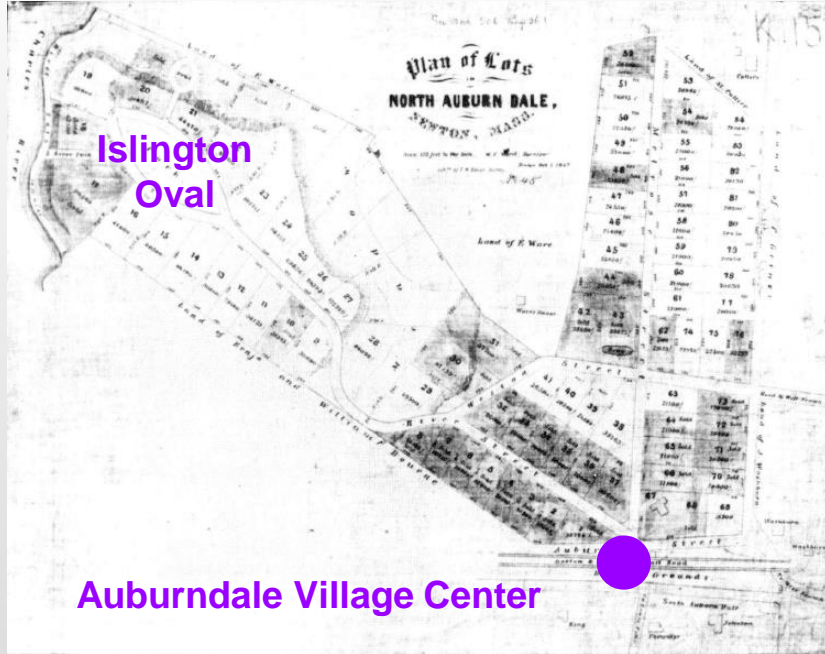


Workers' Housing: "The Beehive" Building -  
Newton Upper Falls, 1880-1890

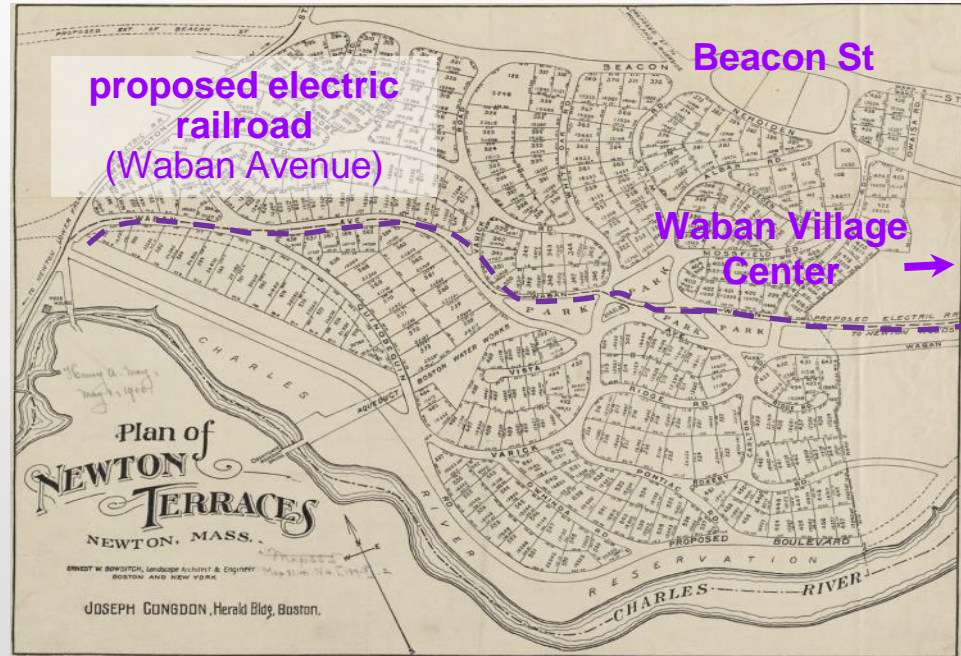


Otis Pettee Home (now part of the Stone Institute)  
Newton Upper Falls, 1880-1890

# How Have People Planned For Village Centers?



Plan of Lots in North Auburn Dale, A Joint Venture Led By William Jackson - Auburndale, 1847



Unbuilt Streetcar line linking Residential Development to the Train - Waban, 1890s

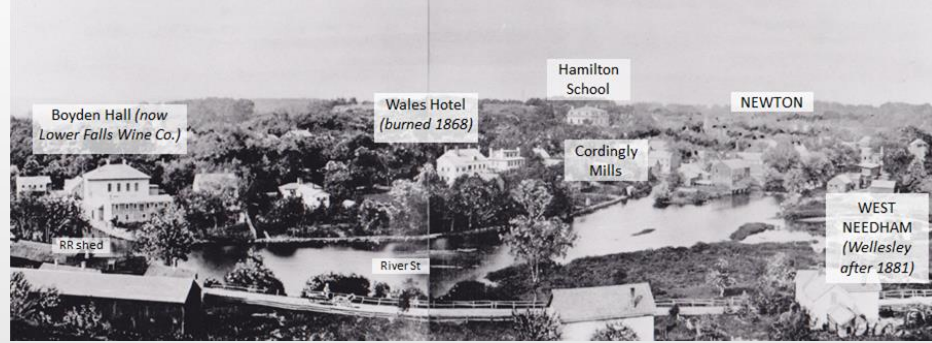
# Who Has Worked In Village Centers?



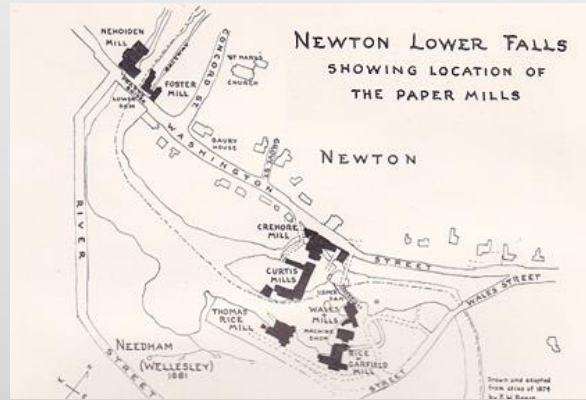
Left/Above: Smallwood Furniture Factory in "Snake Hollow" - Newton Corner, 1855



Left: Watch Factory - Auburndale, ??



Above: Aerial View - Newton Lower Fall, pre-1868



Left: Map of Paper Mills - Newton Lower Fall, 1881

# Who Still Works In Village Centers?



Above: Silver Lake Cordage Company  
(constructed in the 1860s) - Nonantum, 1910s



Above: Silver Lake Cordage Company building  
converted to offices in the 1980s - Nonantum, 2000s

# Where Could You Shop In Village Centers?



Left: Shops & Offices -  
Newtonville, 1910s



Left: Waban  
Square - 1940s

Right: Union  
St - Newton  
Centre, early  
1900s



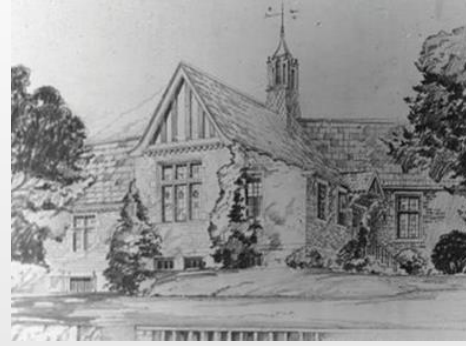
Right: Grocery  
Store - Four  
Corners (now  
the site of the  
Whole Foods),  
1922



# What Public Buildings Were In Village Centers? - Where Are These Buildings Now?



Post Office -  
West Newton,  
1900s



Planned Branch  
Library - Waban, 1929



Stearns School -  
Nonantum, 1910s



Fire Station - Newton  
Highlands, 1890s

## How Did People Play In Village Centers?



Amateur Opera on  
Crystal Lake  
Newton Centre, 1933



Pie Eating Contest -  
Thompsonville,  
1937



Ice Skating in Farlow Park Newton Corner, 1900s



Toboggan Slide - Newton Centre  
Playground, 1929

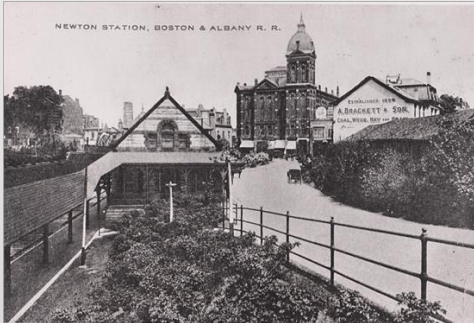


# When Were The Train Tracks Put Below Grade In Village Centers?

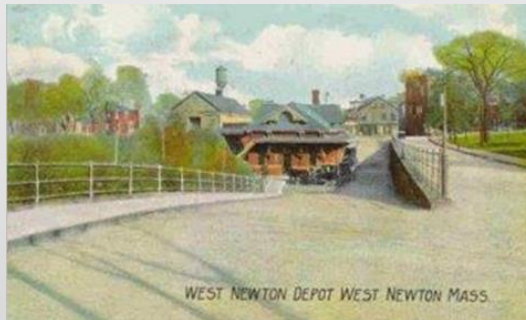
At Grade  
(1880s)



Below  
Grade  
(1910s)



Newton Corner



Auburndale (top) & West  
Newton (bottom)



Newton Highlands

# How Did People Get To And From The Village Center Train Stations?



Livery Stable at  
Washington and  
Tremont Sts. -  
Newton Corner,  
1887



Cates Stables -  
West Newton,  
mid-1800s

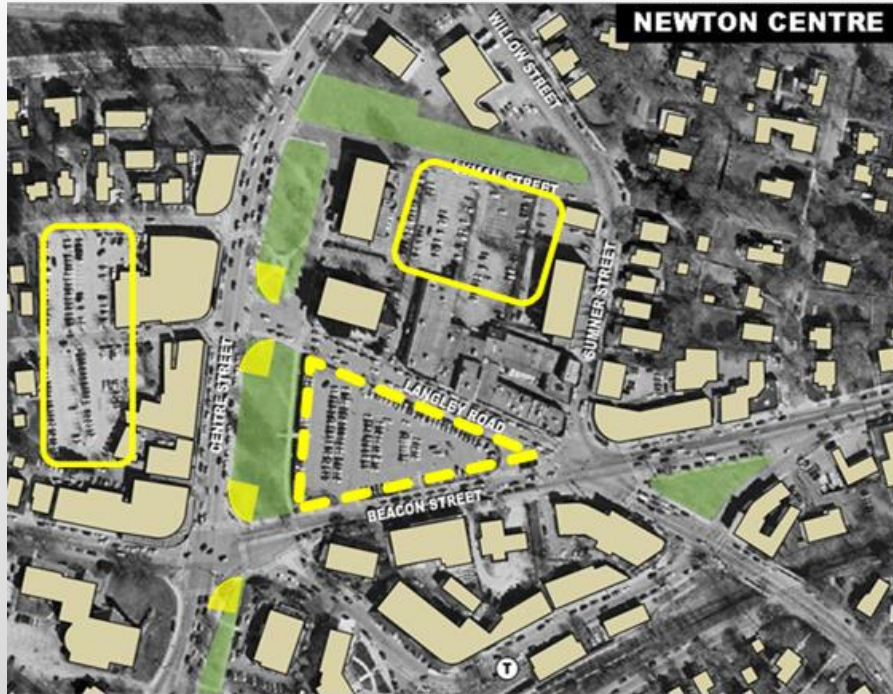


Blue Bike Station  
- Newton Corner,  
2020



Blue Bike Station  
- West Newton,  
2020

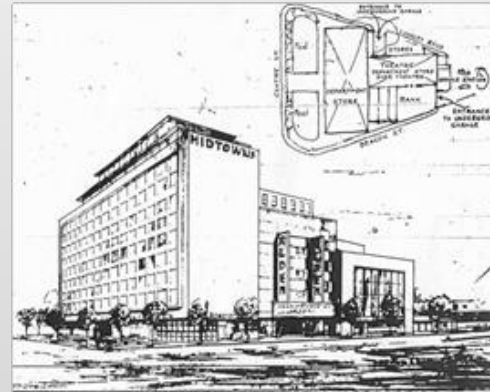
# How Have Cars Changed Village Centers?



Parking Lots - Newton Centre, 2010s



Mason Rice School  
(demolished) -  
Newton Centre,  
1960s



Proposed  
Development  
(unbuilt) - Newton  
Centre, 1960s

# Tell Us How You Experience and Envision Village Centers! – What Does The Future of Village Centers Look Like?

Shopping, Eating  
& Working



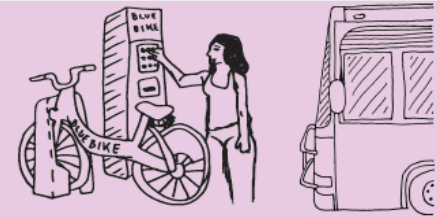
Environment



Arts + Culture



Transportation



Accessibility



Inclusive, Diverse  
+ Welcoming Spaces



<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/village-centers>

## Interested In More History

- Historic Newton Research page, <http://www.newtonma.gov/government/historic-newton/research>
- Interactive Map of Newton's Surveyed Historic Properties (*in Massachusetts Cultural Resources Information System - MACRIS*),  
<https://newtonmagis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=bcf2bdccdf2046ee99d7565ec3a0231d>
- Historic Guided Walking Tours of Newton's villages  
<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/historic-preservation/discover-historic-newton-walking-tours>
- Historic City Directories (*from 1899, include a section organized by street, listing occupants and their occupations for each house*),  
<http://www.newtonma.gov/government/city-clerk/city-archives/city-directories>
- Digital Newton (*Newton Free Library local history resources online*),  
<https://guides.newtonfreelibrary.net/c.php?g=576770&p=3979004>
- Atlascope (*Boston Public Library interactive tool for overlaying historic maps from different years, including for Newton*), <https://atlascope.leventhalmap.org/#view:address-search-bar>

## Tell Us What you Think!

- Corrections, suggestions or questions on this presentation?

Email: [zoningredesign@newtonma.gov](mailto:zoningredesign@newtonma.gov)

Subject: Village Center History

- Polis Interactive Forum

<https://pol.is/4vfmwwzdds>

Provide your own statements and others can vote on them!

- Vision Kit

<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/village-centers>

[tinyurl.com/NewtonPhotos](https://tinyurl.com/NewtonPhotos)

- Social Media



[@NewtonPlanning](https://www.instagram.com/NewtonPlanning)



[@Newton Planning and Development](https://www.facebook.com/NewtonPlanningandDevelopment)

# Thank You!