

# Zoning Redesign

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

## May Newsletter

This month's newsletter covers:

- Zoning Redesign **Community Engagement for Village Centers: Live!**
- **May ZAP Committee:** Regulating Firearms Business Zoning Amendments + Building Heights
- Upcoming ZAP Meeting Agendas



**Image Description:** A colorful collage of different elements that village centers have or could be capable of having in the future. The collage includes drawings of people sitting underneath a tree, a pregnant person taking a bus, an individual walking with their service dog and white cane, a storefront with a LGBTQ+ flag and a sign that says 'Welcome, Bienvenidos,' a guitar, a person in a wheelchair crossing a street, hands holding a smartphone typing "My future Newton is...", people eating at a restaurant outdoors, and a public transit bus.

### Upcoming Community Engagement for Village Centers!

The Zoning Redesign project will ask Newton community members - those who live or work in Newton - to share their experiences of and future visions for village centers, from now until the end of September! Community engagement includes:

- **Vision Kit for Everyone:** This is a self-guided tour of a village center of your choice, with a set of prompts that asks you to reflect on what is currently there as well as what you would want to see in the future. We ask you to share your thoughts with us by sending us photos or drawings and the idea or observation that accompanies the image. You can read the Kit [on your computer or as a printed version](#), or [scroll through it on your phone](#). You can do this on your own or as a group, for which you can use the [Vision Kit Guidance on Group Facilitation](#)!

- **Online Interactive Forum for Everyone:** Don't have any photos or don't have time to carry out your own Vision Kit? Spend as little as a minute to as long as several hours on this [Polis interactive forum](#) - weigh in on others' statements or submit your own!
- **Equitable Focus Groups:** While anyone in Newton can organize their own group to carry out a Vision Kit\*, in addition staff are working with multiple city committees and commissions for targeted outreach to ensure that we hear from all the diverse set of voices who live and work in Newton. Please fill out [this Focus Group Interest Form](#) if you identify with the following: BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color), younger person (15-35), renter, someone with a disability, LGBTQ+, in the creative community and/or an older adult (65+). *\*If you are worried that your voice will not be heard because you do not identify with any of these groups, please reach out to [zoningredesign@newtonma.gov](mailto:zoningredesign@newtonma.gov) to learn how you can organize your own group or to get connected with another group to participate!*
- **Economic Development Engagement:** Are you a business owner, property owner or real estate broker in a village center? [Fill out this interest form](#) to stay updated on when we will host focus groups and surveys to engage Newton's business communities.

On May 20th staff presented on this first phase of village center engagement including a run-through on how to carry out the Vision Kit. [Watch the recording here](#) - presentation lasts for the first 20 minutes and the remaining consists of a Q+A. All engagement material can be accessed at [newtonma.gov/zoningredesign/vc](http://newtonma.gov/zoningredesign/vc)! And join us on our new social media accounts on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) for updates + engagement announcements!

Lastly, as staff collect qualitative data on how you relate to village centers, Utile Architecture + Planning are collecting and analyzing more quantitative data on current village center economic trends, transit, housing, and more. [Watch their May 24th presentation here](#) at NewTV.

### Outcomes of March ZAP Committee Meetings

Full ZAP Meeting Reports can be found at the [Zoning & Planning Committee website here](#).

#### *Firearm Business Zoning Amendment:*

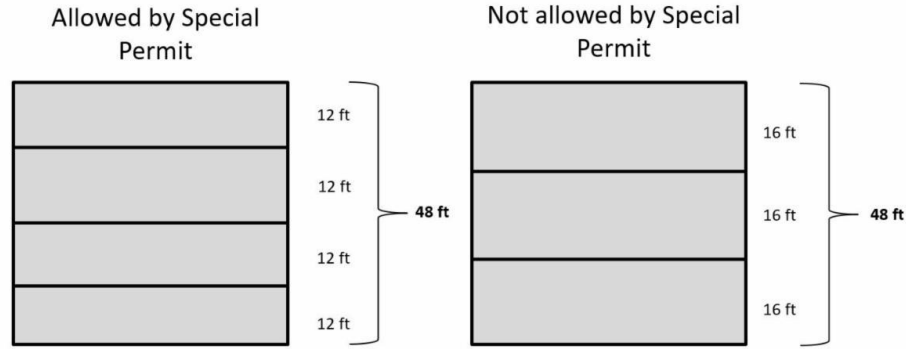
On May 10th, the Zoning and Planning (ZAP) Committee held a public hearing and voted unanimously to recommend a zoning amendment to restrict firearm businesses (firearm sales, firing ranges and gunsmiths) to certain limited areas of the city and to require a Special Permit for these uses. This item will be before the full City Council at a special meeting called for June 2th. More information, including the draft ordinance, a memo from the Planning Department, and a regularly updated FAQ can be found [here](#). ZAP also held an initial discussion of a newer proposed ban of the sale and manufacturing of firearms on May 26th. The agenda can be found [here](#). This newer item to prohibit firearms uses will also be taken up at the special June 2nd full City Council meeting.

#### *Building Heights:*

On May 10th, the Zoning and Planning Committee discussed a proposed amendment that would allow fewer stories within the same building heights in business, mixed use, and manufacturing districts. If adopted, the maximum building heights allowed by-right and by Special Permit would remain the same, but would allow fewer stories within the allowed height. This flexibility is to accommodate laboratory, R&D and other uses that need taller story heights (for mechanical, air purifying and ventilation equipment) than are currently allowed in some of Newton's commercial districts. The staff memo explaining this proposal can be [found here](#) and the video of the presentation/discussion can be [found here](#) (4:10-25:30). The City Council is expected to set a date for the public hearing for this item on June 28th at ZAP.

# Current Zoning

Sec. 4.1.3, BU4



**Image Description:** The graphic is called “Current Zoning,” depicting two scenarios for a building in a BU4 district according to Section 4.1.3 of the Zoning Ordinance. It shows two boxes in black in white of equal height and width, representing the shape of simple buildings. The building on the left has the label “Allowed by special permit.” It is divided by three horizontal lines to indicate that it is 4 stories tall, and each story is labeled with its individual height of 12 feet. A curly bracket encompassing all four stories shows the total height of the building as 48 feet. The building on the right has the label “Not allowed by special permit.” It is divided by three horizontal lines to indicate that it is three stories tall, and each story is labeled with its individual height of 16 feet. A curly bracket encompassing all three stories shows the total height of the building as 48 feet.

## Dates of Upcoming ZAP Meetings

Due to the ongoing City Budget discussions scheduled through June at the City Council, the June ZAP meetings (dates and agendas) have not been finalized. Please check the [ZAP website](#) for further updates.

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