

12/16 Chair and Vice-Chair Letter  
**Zoning Redesign: Village Centers**

Dear Colleagues,

Over the last few months we have been presented with a great deal of work by Planning and Utile on both our community's future vision for village centers – as well as various quantitative analyses probing the metrics of success for vibrant village centers, both in Newton and elsewhere. This was to build a foundation upon which we can improve the regulatory framework within which our village centers can thrive. Now we have to set our priorities for moving ahead. (See “**Homework**” below!!)

Before diving into our work on village center zoning, we will continue to discuss the work from Phase I, which staff synthesized into seven community takeaways:

- Creating more communal & public space + activation
- Increasing accessibility to buildings and infrastructure within village centers
- Incorporating climate resiliency through built structures and green spaces
- Helping small businesses to begin, stay and thrive in Village Centers
- Making the permitting process easier, clearer, and multi-tiered
- Adding more diverse housing options and encouraging mixed-use projects (although to what extent had a spectrum of opinion)
- Prioritizing safe and accessible routes to and through village centers, especially walking and biking

These “takeaways” are what staff and Utile have observed to be the overall consensus. Lessons (from on-the-spot surveys, focus groups, event tabling, vision kits, Polis, and quantitative analysis), can become a framework for both the Committee (via zoning) as well as other city departments to use to further Newton's overall planning efforts for village centers.

These ‘takeaways’ generally align well with the many policy and planning documents that Council has adopted and uses to guide future development. To aid in our ability to compare past and current work, staff synthesized the strategies and goals from these documents relevant to village center zoning into a table saved here:

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/70377/637577264339330000>

**Homework!!**

**At our December 16 meeting we need to discuss how well these takeaways align with our values and future vision for village centers. Your responses to the attached questions, will help guide our discussion on December 16th and help determine and path ahead for the coming year.**

**Please send your responses to the City Clerk, [cmoore@newtonma.gov](mailto:cmoore@newtonma.gov). We will have them available at the December 16 meeting.**

By establishing priorities about what the end result of Newton's village centers should be, we can begin to identify the right zoning tools to achieve those ends. Do we agree that these

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takeaways represent the components that make better village centers? If so, discussions around zoning, development, and density have a common end goal in mind and we can focus on what we need to determine to what degree a zoning proposal can help to achieve that end.

See you all next Thursday!

Deb Crossley, Chair  
Victoria Danberg, Vice Chair

For your convenience, below are links to the relevant material presented to ZAP this fall.

***September 13, 2021 - Quantitative Analysis: Village Center Metrics of Success***

ZAP Memo -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/74058/637668804968330000>

ZAP Presentation -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/77583/637726624712900000>

ZAP Report -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/76259/637704278887530000>

***October 25, 2021 - Community Engagement Results and Key Takeaways***

ZAP Memo -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/76311/637705088696800000>

ZAP Presentation -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/77793/637731840749430000>

ZAP Report -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/77187/637719810822230000>

***November 18, 2021 - Linking Takeaways to Zoning Tools***

ZAP Memo -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/77441/637723271656330000>

ZAP Presentation -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/77793/637731840749430000>

ZAP Report -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/78029>

In addition, Planning has posted all the “raw data” collected on their village center webpage here: <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/village-centers>. If you have any trouble locating a piece of information please reach out to Zachery LeMel, [zlemel@newtonma.gov](mailto:zlemel@newtonma.gov).

# Moving to Phase II of Village Center Zoning

## Takeaways from Phase I

Phase I of the Village Center Zoning Redesign effort has resulted in seven takeaways to guide the actual rezoning work which will begin in 2022. We want to know what you think of each of the proposed takeaways. Each takeaway asks whether you "agree", "disagree", or are "unsure". (put an x next to the term "agree" "disagree" "unsure". A follow up question for each takeaway asks you to share what, if any, additional information you need to properly evaluate the takeaway or if you would like to elaborate on your response.

### Takeaway 1: Creating more communal & public space + activation \*

Agree  
Disagree  
Unsure

Takeaway 1: If you would like to elaborate on your response to the previous question, please do so here. If you were unsure, what additional information do you need to evaluate this?

Your answer

### Takeaway 2: Increasing accessibility to buildings and infrastructure within village centers \*

Agree  
Disagree  
Unsure

Takeaway 2: If you would like to elaborate on your response to the previous question, please do so here. If you were unsure, what additional information do you need to evaluate this?

Your answer

### Takeaway 3: Incorporating climate resiliency through built structures and green spaces \*

Agree  
Disagree  
Unsure

Takeaway 3: If you would like to elaborate on your response to the previous question, please do so here. If you were unsure, what additional information do you need to evaluate this?

Your answer

Takeaway 4: Helping small businesses to begin, stay and thrive in village centers \*

Agree

Disagree

Unsure

Takeaway 4: If you would like to elaborate on your response to the previous question, please do so here. If you were unsure, what additional information do you need to evaluate this?

Your answer

Takeaway 5: Making the permitting process easier, clearer, and multi-tiered \*

Agree

Disagree

Unsure

Takeaway 5: If you would like to elaborate on your response to the previous question, please do so here. If you were unsure, what additional information do you need to evaluate this?

Your answer

Takeaway 6: Adding more diverse housing options and encouraging mixed-use projects \*

Agree

Disagree

Unsure

Takeaway 6: If you would like to elaborate on your response to the previous question, please do so here. If you were unsure, what additional information do you need to evaluate this?

Your answer

Takeaway 7: Prioritizing safe and accessible routes to and through village centers, especially walking and biking \*

Agree

Disagree

Unsure

Takeaway 7: If you would like to elaborate on your response to the previous question, please do so here. If you were unsure, what additional information do you need to evaluate this?

## Zoning Tools Matrix

The Zoning Tools Matrix outlines how various zoning tools might be used to advance the takeaways from Phase I. This is NOT a draft zoning proposal. Rather, it is an example of how various zoning levers might be used to achieve the goals.

When we begin the actual rezoning work in 2022, we will explore the most appropriate zoning tool to address each takeaway. This will involve working through the details of proposed zoning modifications and their corresponding impacts. Note that in some cases, zoning may not be the best way to address the takeaway.

Zoning Tools Matrix - see attached tools chart (please expand for easier reading) (full size pdf available

here: <https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/78368/637746401965646319>)

Do you understand the six zoning tools:

- (1) Dimensional Standards,
- (2) Development Standards,
- (3) Allowable Uses,
- (4) Allowable Density,

(5) Permitting/Process, and  
(6) Incentives?

If you have questions, please select "other" and explain.

Yes

No

Other:

Engagement Takeaways	Zoning Tools						Non-Zoning Tools
	Dimensional Standards	Development Standards	Allowable Uses	Allowable Density	Permitting / Process	Incentive	
Creating more communal & public space + activation	Setbacks that prioritize active use	Open space/ community space requirements for new development & redevelopment	Update Use Table		Public realm design guidelines that address accessibility, green infrastructure, and activation considerations	Height and density bonuses in exchange for greater public realm enhancements	X
Increasing accessibility to buildings and infrastructure within village centers	Ensure minimum sidewalk widths	Follow universal design guidelines  Require affordable accessible housing units			Public realm design guidelines that address accessibility, green infrastructure, and activation considerations	Height and density bonuses in exchange for public realm accessibility improvements	X
Incorporating climate resiliency through built structures and green spaces	Exemptions for sustainable building design components	Tier sustainability benchmark requirements for different sized projects  Planting/open space requirements for new development & redevelopment		Height and density allowance for sustainability measures	Public realm design guidelines that address accessibility, green infrastructure, and activation considerations	Height and density bonuses in exchange for increased sustainability measures	X
Helping small businesses to begin, stay and thrive in village centers	Smaller retail spaces  Flexible ground floor story height	Flexible parking requirements	Simplify home business regulations  Update Use Table	Upper floor residential above ground floor retail  Expand built-in customer base	Flexible parking requirements  Streamline process for use change in existing space	Height and density bonuses in exchange for subsidized commercial space	X
Making the permitting process easier, clearer, and multi-tiered	Update standards for by-right projects	Update standards for by-right projects  Design guidelines	Tiered process for by-right and Special Permit projects  Update Use Table		Tiered process for by-right and Special Permit projects  "How To" guide for small builders and developers	Streamlined process in exchange for greater levels of affordability, sustainability, accessibility, etc.	
Adding more diverse housing options and encouraging mixed-use projects	Setback requirements that allow for missing middle housing	Flexible parking requirements	By-right mixed use and multi-family projects  Update Use Table	Height and density allowance for missing middle and mixed-use buildings	Tiered process for by-right and Special Permit projects		X
Prioritizing safe and accessible routes to and through village centers, especially walking and biking	Ensure minimum sidewalk widths	Promote bicycle, shuttle, rideshare, and other alternatives to driving infrastructure  Flexible parking requirements	Update Use Table	Height and density allowance for missing middle and mixed-use buildings	Public realm design guidelines that address accessibility, green infrastructure, and activation considerations	Height and density bonuses in exchange for greater public realm enhancements	X