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Barney S. Heath
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 11, 2022

TO: Councilor Deborah Crossley, Chair, Zoning & Planning Committee
Members of the Zoning & Planning Committee

FROM: Barney Heath, Director, Department of Planning and Development
Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director Department of Planning and Development
Zachery LeMel, Chief of Long Range Planning
Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler, Community Engagement Planner
Cat Kemmett, Planning Associate

RE: **#38-22 Discussion and review relative to the draft Zoning Ordinance regarding village centers**
ZONING & PLANNING COMMITTEE requesting review, discussion and possible ordinance amendments relative to Chapter 30 zoning ordinances pertaining to Mixed Use, business districts and village districts relative to the draft Zoning Ordinance. (formerly #88-20)

MEETING: March 14, 2022

CC: City Council
Planning Board
Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer

At the ZAP meeting on February 28th, 2022, consultant Utile presented a comprehensive overview of the work making up the second phase of the village center zoning district updates. Time will be allocated for continued discussion of this presentation. In addition, staff will present the second phase’s engagement strategy.

Phase II Community Engagement

We aim to bring community members into this more technical and policy-oriented process of the zoning updates utilizing Utile’s development scenarios and economic feasibility analyses, which will be built upon the 2021 engagement takeaways. City staff’s engagement goals and means are:

Goal	Means
[1] Continue to engage community members inclusively and equitably.	[1] Create a ‘Community Engagement Network,’ where community leaders give feedback on the engagement material and receive leadership training on how to engage their neighbors and communities.

<p>[2] Present to ZAP a synthesis of community members’ answers to the main question, “Considering economic feasibility and zoning processes, to what extent do these development scenarios align with what you shared with us last summer?”</p>	<p>[2+3] Create an interactive installation/ ‘discussion kit’ that explains the development scenarios and highlights where community members’ feedback can genuinely be incorporated in the scenarios as well as what hard boundaries to consider.</p>
<p>[3] Collect community members’ thoughts regarding MBTA communities.</p>	

[1] Community Engagement Network

As described above, this ‘Network’ aims to work with community members on designing the engagement material and engaging as many community members as possible. In addition to the regular meeting agendas, every meeting will be open to the public with time allocated at the end for any attendee’s comments and questions. The Network will be managed by the Community Engagement Planner, who will co-facilitate the Network meetings with its members. One can become a member of the ‘Network’ if they agree with a set of requirements (see below for overview; more detailed descriptions will be listed in the application):

- Have curiosity about people’s wide range of opinions & priorities.
- Committed to wide-reaching, inclusive & equitable engagement.
- Acts as a conduit for one’s respective group (the group can be as informal as a group of friends who meet regularly or as formal as a city commission). As a conduit, one will (a) hold at least one meeting or speak on at least one agenda of their respective group, (b) aim to engage at least 5 individuals to give feedback on the development scenarios, and (c) share out engagement material through their group’s communications channels.
- Attend all four required Network meetings (and if one cannot attend a meeting, must at least review the meeting agenda, and email one’s feedback, commitments and/or updates to the Network coordinator).
- Maximum of two representatives per unique group.
- Mayor & City Councilors cannot be members.

Applications will be open from March 15th through April 10th, at newtonma.gov/zoningredesign/vc. The Network will have a total of four meetings from May through November.

[2 + 3] Collecting Feedback on Development Scenarios + MBTA Communities

Feedback on the development scenarios will be collected from the beginning of August through the end of October. The engagement tools, library installation and calendar of specific events (including on-the-spot surveying and focus groups) will be designed over the spring and summer. It will be possible to provide feedback on the tools’ drafts if one attends the future ‘Community Engagement Network’ meetings. Otherwise, staff will present an overview of the finalized details in July or early August.

Conclusion

Staff aim to move the village center zoning district updates forward in as democratic and a community-informed way as possible, in the final intensive engagement phase for this part of Zoning Redesign (similar engagement will be carried out when Zoning Redesign moves onto residential districts and more). Ultimately, staff will present a synthesis of this Phase II engagement to ZAP in the fall of this year.