



Zoning Redesign: Village Centers

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

April Recap & Looking Toward May

- **Zoning Redesign Framework for Village Centers & ZAP**
- **Dates for Zoning Redesign 'Community Engagement Network' Meetings**
- **Watch the Fair Housing Month Workshop!**
- **Tentative Agendas for May ZAP Meetings**



Image description: Aerial view of the Centre St and Beacon St intersection in Newton Centre. Village centers are the current focus for zoning updates in Newton.

Zoning Redesign Framework for Village Centers (Discussions in ZAP)

Building upon the analysis and data presented at ZAP (Zoning & Planning Committee) in February and March, consultant Tim Love of Utile Architecture & Planning presented a potential zoning framework that seeks to achieve community objectives at the ZAP meetings of [March 28](#) and [April 25, 2022](#) (with discussion on [April 11](#).) Mr. Love referenced his previously described tiered framework for our village centers that moves gradually from more intense development allowed in the village center's core business districts, out to more modest development in the village center's outer edge that abuts residential areas, with moderate development allowed in between.

These tiers are meant to reflect and respond to the village centers' current range of sizes and activities. If applied to Newton's diverse set of centers, the tiered framework would adjust for their shared characteristics as well as their uniqueness. In addition, the tiers are shaped by current zones in Newton's zoning code: Mixed-Use 4 (MU-4) and Business Use 2 and 3 (BU2, BU3) districts.

Furthermore, Utile crafted the tiered framework in context of the objectives from [the first community engagement process \(2021\)](#), as well as the Utile and staff feasibility analyses that

recognize economic realities, community needs, and physical village center boundaries.

Considering their own framework and building upon the questions and concerns shared in ZAP committee in March, Utile recommended to ZAP in April the following zoning framework for village centers:

- Eliminating parking minimums for ground floor commercial use
- Removing lot area per unit minimums (to allow for smaller units) and rely on other factors to control building size (i.e. building footprint and FAR)
- Changing the current threshold for Special Permits from any building of 20,000 sq. ft. or more, to limiting the relative size of a building footprint on a site, which in combination with story height limits and FAR controls the size of a building
- Requiring a Special Permit for new development on sites greater than three-quarters of an acre rather than buildings larger than 20,000 square feet
- Incorporating administrative site plan review into certain by-right developments
- Creating design standards to ensure new buildings will be consistent with the vision for an active and engaging streetscape

Once the City Council Zoning and Planning Committee reach consensus on the basic policies underlying zoning district definitions, Planning staff will begin a parallel process of conducting community outreach about the proposed amendments, and mapping and technical writing of the ordinance.



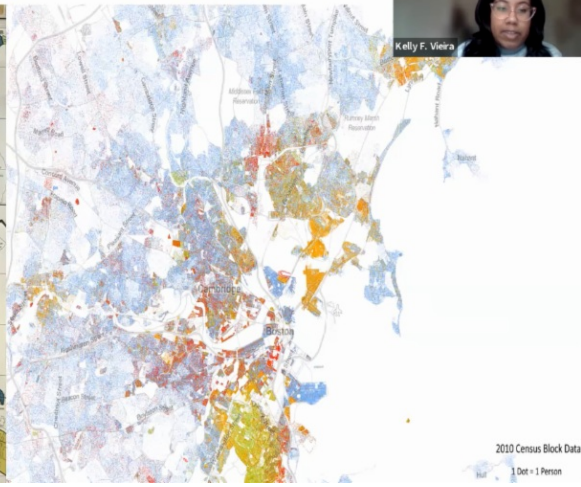
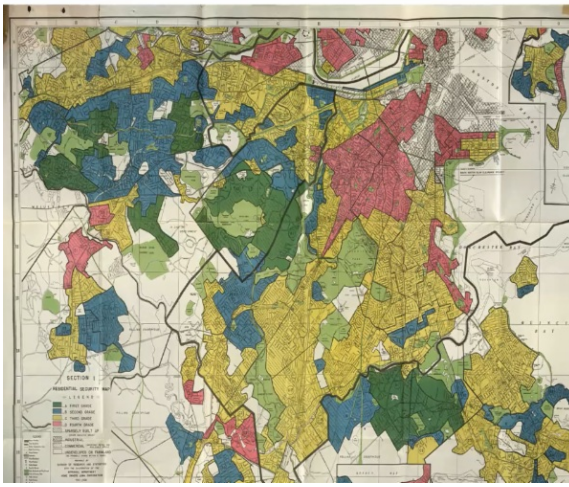
Final Dates for Zoning Redesign ‘Community Engagement Network’ Meetings

The planning department is kicking off the Zoning Redesign ‘Community Engagement Network’ in May! The Network is a group of community members who will work with city staff to help inform and engage Newton’s stakeholders. More specifically, they will collaborate with city staff to prepare for the next phase of engagement on village center zoning updates, which will take place in late summer of this year.

Over 95 community members have applied to join the Network, with goals to engage community groups from all over the city. The intention is to work together with community leaders to engage as many people as we can, and to make sure we hear from diverse voices that well represent Newton opinions as much as possible.

Join network members at their meetings - dates, zoom links and agendas are all listed here: newtonma.gov/zoningredesign/vc. While members will workshop their ideas for most of the meetings, a half hour will be allocated at the end for city staff to answer all attendees’ questions and hear their ideas. The first meetings will take place on May 17th and May 18th, 6-7:30pm (with Q+A for all from 7:30-8pm).

Watch the Fair Housing Month Workshop!



In honor of Fair Housing Month, the West Metro HOME Consortium (WMHC)* hosted a workshop titled 'Fair Housing Past to Present - Insights from the Field,' presented by attorneys Kelly Vieira and Jamie Langowski from Boston, Massachusetts' Suffolk School of Law Housing Discrimination Testing Program. They examined the history of the real estate industry and government's roles in housing discrimination and offered ways to mitigate implicit biases to ensure that everyone has equal access to housing. The workshop began with remarks by Newton's Mayor Ruthanne Fuller.

[Click here](#) to watch the recording, and [click here](#) to access the PDF of the presenters' slides.

To learn more about Fair Housing Month and the WMHC (of which Newton is the lead member), visit the city's site: newtonma.gov/FHMonth

Image descriptions: Top image is a snap shot of Kelly Vieira presenting on the history of red lining in the U.S., comparing two maps of Boston, one where the federal government color coded and categorized neighborhoods by "where it was safe to insure mortgages" through a racist lens, to another of the 2010 U.S. Census block data of racial demographics. The bottom image is an illustration of tenants sharing resources with each other, across their apartment windows.

Upcoming ZAP Meetings in May

Review April's meeting reports at [ZAP's website](#). See the tentative agendas for May (these are not finalized and are subject to change):

Monday, May 9th, 2022 at 7pm

- Citizen Appointments to the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust
- Proposed amendment to the Sign Ordinance
- Budget hearings: CPA, ISD, Planning

*Wednesday, June 1, 2022 at 7pm**

- Committee discussion with Planning & Utile on village center zoning ideas to date, and which policies to pursue to best achieve community objectives
- *The second 'May' meeting must be held Wednesday, June 1, 2022



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