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Barney S. Heath  
Director

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** May 27, 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:** June 1, 2022

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

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### Village Center Zoning Proposals

Over the past few months, Planning staff, Utile, and Landwise have analyzed potential zoning frameworks for village centers (focusing primarily on the commercial cores). The attached zoning framework represents a series of 12 main zoning proposals. These proposals are based upon the existing zoning, with adjustments to address desired building form, economic feasibility, and housing and climate goals. The attached packet identifies each proposal and includes a brief description, comparison to existing zoning, explanation of why it is being proposed and/or what undesirable outcomes it is intended to address, special permit threshold if applicable, and how the proposal aligns with the engagement takeaways from 2021 and City plans and policies.

Planning staff believe this proposal represents an improvement upon existing zoning without deviating radically from the existing zoning. These proposals align with what we heard during 2021's engagement effort and are well supported by over a decade of City plans and policies. Additionally, the provision of some level of by-right zoning in our village center districts is aligned with the thrust of the MBTA Communities law.

Planning staff look forward to discussing these proposals with the Committee and identifying any remaining questions or areas of concerns. Following the June ZAP meetings Planning staff will work with Utile and the Law department to develop detailed design standards, draft an ordinance, and start working on mapping the districts, while simultaneously engaging the community around these proposals.

**Attachment A:** Village Center Zoning Proposal Packet

# 1. Village Center Zoning Proposal: Reduce parking requirements in Village Centers

## Comparison to existing zoning:

	Residential	Office	Ground floor commercial	Other Commercial
Existing	2 per unit	1 per 250 sf	Retail: 1 per 300 sf + 1 per 3 employees Restaurant: 1 per 3 seats + 1 per 3 employees	Retail: 1 per 300 sf + 1 per 3 employees Restaurant: 1 per 3 seats + 1 per 3 employees
Proposed	1 per unit	1 per 700 sf	Exempt	

### What?

- Reduced parking requirements for residential and commercial uses in all village center zoning districts

### Why?

- Utile/Landwise analysis found that parking minimums had significant negative impact on site design and overall financial feasibility
- City Council regularly waives existing zoning parking requirements for ground floor uses and residential units in Special Permits
- Lower parking minimums encourage less vehicle use
- Many existing buildings in village centers do not have parking and the need for a Special Permit to waive parking is a deterrent to small businesses with limited resources
- Limits restaurants’ ability to add seats or additional employees
- Village centers tend to be walkable, near transit, and have public parking
- Providing parking for each individual business in a village center contributes to congestion and detracts from vitality. Better to have visitors park once and visit multiple establishments on foot
- Aligns with MBTA multifamily zoning guidelines

### Special Permit Thresholds

- Continue to allow parking waivers by Special Permit

### How does this align with engagement takeaways and City plans and policies?

- Takeaways from 2021 engagement:

- o Overwhelmingly people want walkable, vibrant village centers
- o Promote pollution and waste reduction through allowing residents to live low carbon lifestyles
- o Encourage a mix of commercial uses in village centers
- o Encourage development projects in villages and commercial corridors, especially those with transit
- o Find ways to decrease, de-emphasize, combine, or repurpose parking
- Climate Action Plan (2019):
  - o Work with the City Council to explore reducing or eliminating the minimum parking requirement in the Zoning Ordinance and instead setting a maximum on parking allotments
  - o Work with the City Council to adopt Zoning Ordinances that encourage additional, appropriate low-carbon housing near public transportation
- Housing Strategy (2016):
  - o Green design includes both technological solutions for reducing energy and water usage and reducing the environmental impacts of a project as well as placing new development in locations that promote alternative forms of transportation and reduce the need to create housing on greenfield locations on the periphery of the region.
- Washington Street Vision Plan (2019):
  - o Newton should consider reducing or eliminating the parking minimum, while also considering a parking maximum
  - o New housing should be focused physically around transit stations, and programs should be put in place to ensure that new residents near transit service have every incentive not to drive.
- Economic Development Strategy (2019):
  - o Reduce or eliminate parking requirements for ground floor uses in village centers
  - o Encourage housing in villages and commercial corridors with mass transit to create “built in” customers for businesses who need less access to private automobiles.
- Newton Centre Task Force Report (2008):
  - o Clarify permit process and provide flexible options for property owners to meet building heights and tenant parking requirements
- Comprehensive Plan (2007):
  - o Clarify and ease by-right parking requirements to reflect special residential uses and access circumstances, for example location in transit-served village centers
  - o Move towards parking as a shared resource in village centers, allowing fees in lieu of on-site parking



## 2. Village Center Zoning Proposal: Increase floor-to-floor heights

### Comparison to existing zoning:

	Residential	Office	Ground floor retail
Existing	12'	12'	12'
Proposed	11'	13'	18'

### What?

- Set maximum by-right and special permit heights based on industry standards for residential and commercial uses
- Continue to regulate height by either maximum number of stories or overall height

### Why?

- Current standards are too rigid
- Looking to appeal to commercial interests
- Aligns with industry standards
- Makes commercial development more viable

### Special Permit Thresholds

- N/A

### How does this align with engagement takeaways and City plans and policies?

- Takeaways from 2021 engagement...
  - Encourage a mix of commercial uses (retail, office, etc.) in village centers
  - Encourage and support small, local, and independent business that contribute to the vibrancy of village centers
- Comprehensive Plan (2007):
  - We should revise zoning to actively support a mix of uses within a building
- Newton Centre Task Force Report (2008):
  - Clarify permit process and provide flexible options for property owners to meet building heights and tenant parking requirements
- Economic Development Strategy (2019):
  - Add office space by allowing appropriately scaled additional stories in the zoning redesign in targeted areas with demand for office space such as Riverside, Wells Avenue, Nonantum, and village centers
  - Redo zoning to make sure that market driven mixed-use developments are allowed in village centers and along commercial corridors.
- Washington Street Vision Plan (2019):
  - Tailor building design regulations to the expected range of uses in the building

### 3. Village Center Zoning Proposal: Set design requirements for half stories

#### Comparison to existing zoning:

	Residential	Commercial	Mixed Use
Existing	none	none	MU4: 1:1 stepback plane above 40'
Proposed	10' setback along perimeter of building or pitched roof with 14:12 max slope		

#### What?

- Require half stories to either be set back a minimum of 10 feet along the entire perimeter of the building or have a pitched roof with a maximum slope.

#### Why?

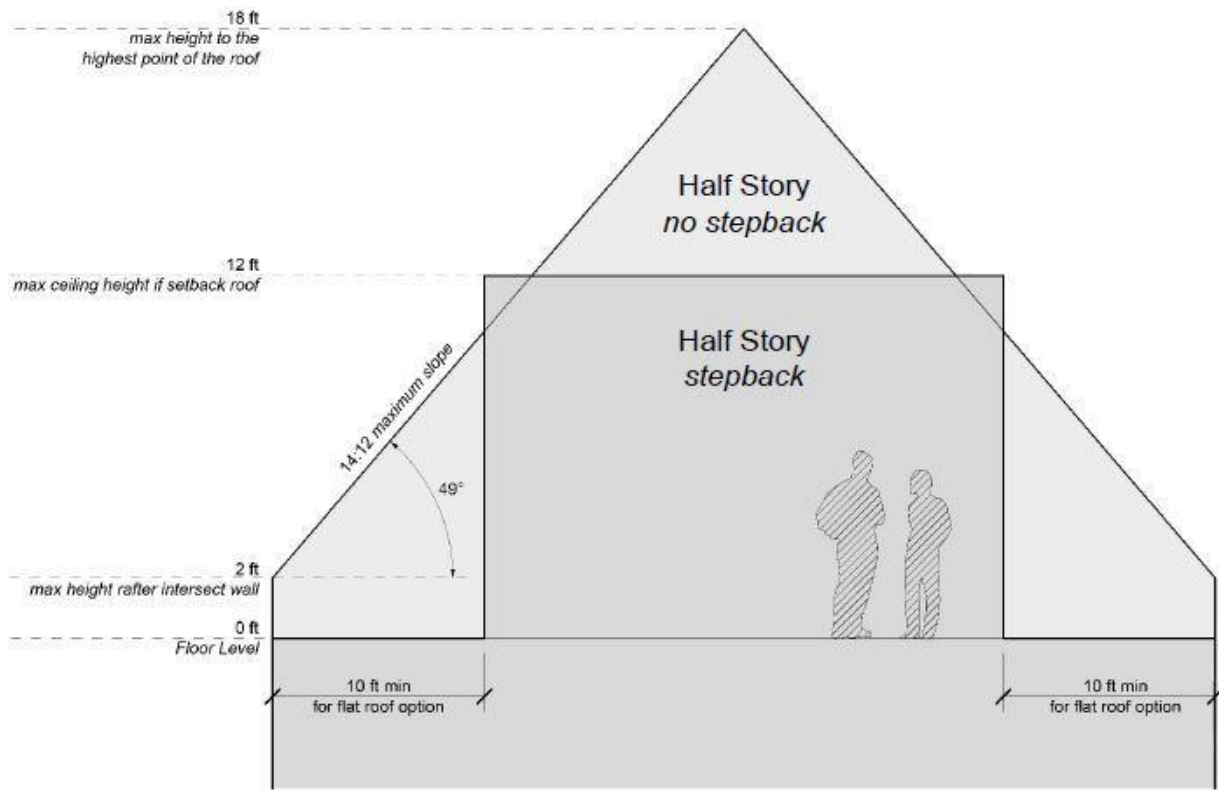
- Facilitates more varied, interesting rooflines
- Allows for useable space in the half story
- Reduces the bulk of the building and the appearance of height

#### Special Permit Threshold

- Allow Special Permit to deviate from half story requirements if design intent to mitigate bulk and vary roofline is met

#### How does this align with engagement takeaways and City plans and policies?

- Takeaways from 2021 engagement:
  - Seek high quality design that is responsive to context
- Washington Street Vision Plan (2019):
  - Ensure that building types are contextually appropriate
  - Encourage traditional New England roof diversity: allow the area under a roof to be habitable above and beyond the allowed number of stories
- Newton Centre Task Force Report (2008):
  - Encourage building designs that are compatible with each other and their surrounding environment



Above: Diagram to define half-story condition for a flat roof or pitched roof



Left: Example of a pitched roof half-story  
Right: Example of a stepped back flat roof

#### 4. Village Center Zoning Proposal: Eliminate lot area per unit minimums

##### Comparison to existing zoning:

	MU4*	BU Zones
Existing*	1,000 sf lot area/unit	1,200 sf lot area/unit
Proposed	none	none

\*Existing MU4 lot area per unit may be waived by Special Permit.

##### What?

- Existing zoning sets a cap on the number of residential units that can be built on a site based on the total lot area. This proposal would remove that cap, allowing for more flexibility in unit size.

##### Why?

- Existing lot area per unit minimums lead to larger units and often acts as a cap long before other zoning rules come into effect
- Controlling building size through FAR, setbacks, building footprint, and height allows for flexibility when it comes to unit size and allows for smaller, less expensive units
- Allowing for more units to be built also increases the number of units in buildings accessible by elevators and the number of fully accessible units
- Allowing more units also increases the number of deed restricted affordable units

##### Special Permit Thresholds

- N/A

##### How does this align with engagement takeaways and City plans and policies?

- Takeaways from 2021 engagement:
  - Promote pollution and waste reduction through allowing residents to live low carbon lifestyles
  - Pursue diverse housing choices to meet changing housing needs of a diverse population
  - Create more affordable housing options overall, as well as specific projects for people with disabilities, seniors, and other vulnerable populations
  - Increasing accessibility across a broad spectrum is a key value, and we should work towards inclusivity through updates to current infrastructure and requirements in future development
- Washington Street Vision Plan:
  - Allow for smaller unit residences
- Climate Action Plan (2019):

- o Work with the City Council to adopt Zoning Ordinances that encourage additional, appropriate low-carbon housing near public transportation
- Housing Strategy (2016):
  - o Green design includes both technological solutions for reducing energy and water usage and reducing the environmental impacts of a project as well as placing new development in locations that promote alternative forms of transportation and reduce the need to create housing on greenfield locations on the periphery of the region.
- Economic Development Strategy (2019):
  - o Encourage housing in villages and commercial corridors with mass transit to create “built in” customers for businesses who need less access to private automobiles.
- Comprehensive Plan (2007):
  - o We should allow higher density for specific locations, such as village centers and commercial districts, and should explore allowing multifamily at some locations where otherwise not allowed.

## 5. Village Center Zoning Proposal: Remove minimum lot size

### Comparison to existing zoning:

	MU4	BU1/BU2/BU3
Existing	10,000 sf	10,000 sf
Proposed	none	none

### What?

- Existing zoning requires lots to be a minimum size in order to be developed. This proposal would remove that requirement for village centers, where lots tend to be smaller. The total size of buildings will still be tied to lot size through other dimensional controls.

### Why?

- Current rules disincentivize smaller, infill development
- Minimum lot size requirements often lead to the consolidation of lots, resulting in larger buildings
- Many village center lots are less than 10,000 sf

### Special Permit Thresholds

- N/A

### How does this align with engagement takeaways and City plans and policies?

- Takeaways from 2021 engagement:
  - Pursue diverse housing choices to meet changing housing needs of a diverse population
  - Encourage development projects in villages and commercial corridors, especially those with transit
- Newton Centre Task Force Report (2008):
  - Encourage building designs that are compatible with each other and their surrounding environment
- Comprehensive Plan (2007):
  - We should allow higher density for specific locations, such as village centers and commercial districts, and should explore allowing multifamily at some locations where otherwise not allowed.

## 6. Village Center Zoning Proposal: Set a maximum building footprint

### Comparison to existing zoning:

	MU4	BU3	BU2
Existing	none	none	none
Proposed	15,000 sf	10,000 sf	5,000 sf

### What?

- Limiting the by-right footprint of buildings. If the other dimensional controls allow for a building with a larger footprint, it could be broken into multiple buildings on the lot.

### Why?

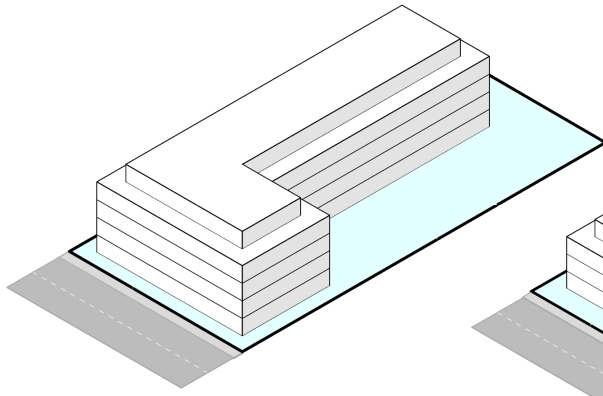
- Prohibits by-right larger buildings in village centers, a concern for many
- Promotes smaller, more contextual buildings

### Special Permit Thresholds

- Allow for larger building footprints by Special Permit with a finding that the building has been designed to reduce the bulk of the building and to appear as multiple buildings

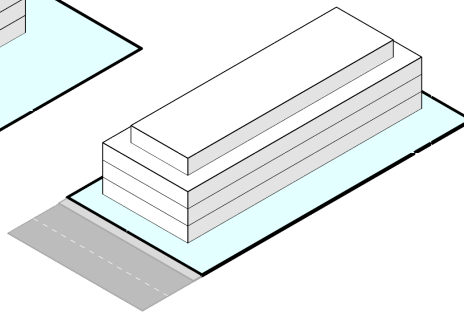
### How does this align with engagement takeaways and City plans and policies?

- Takeaways from 2021 engagement:
  - Pursue diverse housing choices to meet changing housing needs of a diverse population
  - Seek high-quality design that is responsive to context
  - Balance housing needs with the need for open/public space
- Washington Street Vision Plan (2019):
  - Ensure that building types are contextually appropriate
  - The Zoning Ordinance can play a role in ensuring developments that span a large area create opportunities for pedestrian and vehicular interconnections
- Newton Centre Task Force Report (2008):
  - Encourage building designs that are compatible with each other and their surrounding environment



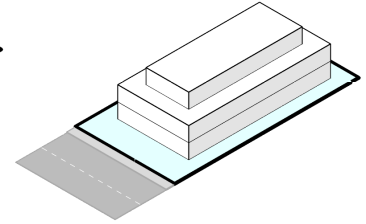
**MU4 (Left):**

*Max footprint = 15,000 sf*



**BU3 (Center):**

*Max footprint = 10,000 sf*



**BU2 (Right):**

*Max footprint = 5,000 sf*



**1149 - 1151 Walnut Street**

*Building footprint = 11,000 sf*



**28 Austin Street**

*Building footprint = 26,380 sf (would require Special Permit)*



**432 Cherry Street**

*Building footprints = 1,700 sf and 1,932 sf*



**7. Village Center Zoning Proposal:** Replace 20,000 sf of floor area Special Permit with Special Permit for development on parcels greater than 3/4 acre

**Comparison to existing zoning:**

	Special Permit Threshold
Existing	New construction or substantial renovation resulting in at least 20,000 sf of gross floor area
Proposed	New development on parcels greater than 3/4 of an acre (32,670 sq ft)

**What?**

- Existing zoning requires a special permit for any project creating more than 20,000 square feet of gross floor area. This proposal would remove that threshold and instead require a special permit for new development on parcels greater than ¾ of an acre.

**Why?**

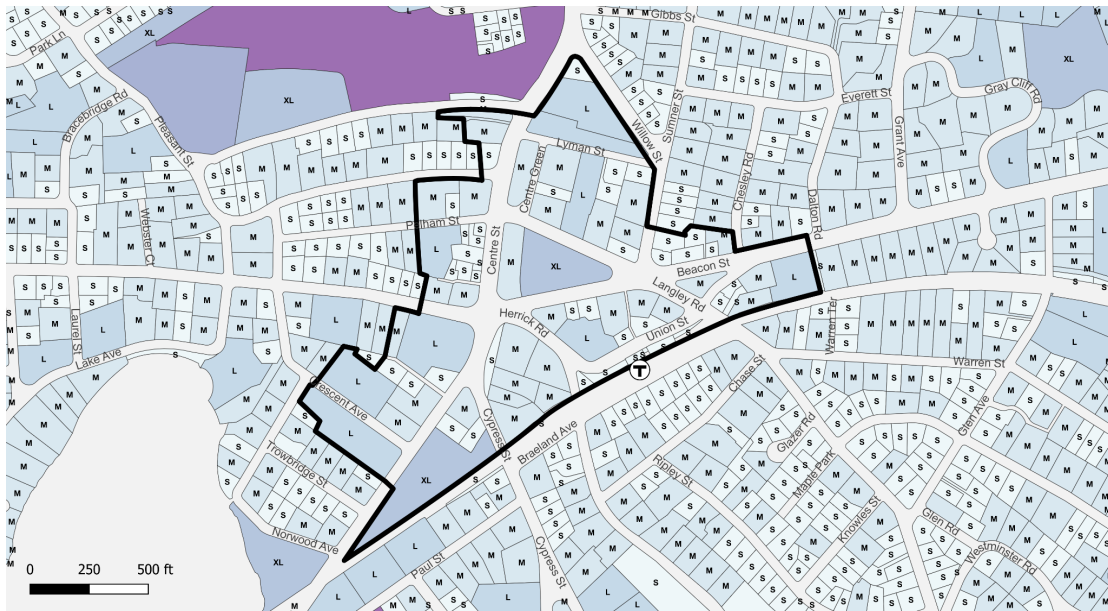
- Land area threshold is a better standard for encouraging more compact development
- Encourages contextual infill development
- Increases the number of potential by-right developments
- Aligns with MBTA Communities guidelines

**Special Permit Thresholds**

- 3/4 of an acre

**How does this align with engagement takeaways and City plans and policies?**

- Takeaways from 2021 engagement:
  - Tier the Special Permit process based on the project size
  - Multifamily buildings should be easy to build near transit
  - We need multi-unit housing in and near the village centers. Preferably by-right.
- Comprehensive Plan (2007):
  - Increase the proportion of residential development applications that can be approved by right rather than through special permit, variance, or comprehensive permit, utilizing clear objective standards and administrative review processes that can obviate the necessity of case-by-case review by the Aldermen (City Council).
- Economic Development Strategy (2019):
  - Zoning redesign focus on reducing the need for special use permits to make development more predictable and easier in places where it is appropriate
- Transportation Strategy (2017):
  - Improve development review process



Map of parcels coded by size in Newton Centre



Map of parcels coded by size in Newton Highlands

Parcel Size Key (in square feet):

- S 0 - 10000
- M 10000 - 30000
- L 30000 - 70000
- XL 70000 - 130000
- 130000 - 220000
- 560000 - 870000

**8. Village Center Zoning Proposal: Require Site Plan Review with Design Review for certain by-right projects**

**Comparison to existing zoning:**

	Site Plan Review
Existing	Site Plan Approval is required by the City Council for projects between 10,000 sf and 19,999 sf. Design review is encouraged but not required
Proposed	Require projects above a certain threshold undergo Site Plan Review by the Planning Board with Design Review by the Urban Design Commission

**What?**

- This proposal would create a new Site Plan Review process that would go to the Planning Board for review and would incorporate design review by the Urban Design Commission for certain projects. The proposed design standards would be incorporated into the review. Site Plan Review can be used to review design and to impose conditions related to site layout, pedestrian safety, internal circulation, and other public safety considerations.

**Why?**

- Provides more predictability for smaller projects
- Larger projects would still require a Special Permit from the City Council
- Allows City Council to focus on the larger, more complex projects
- Aligns with MBTA Communities requirements

**Special Permit Thresholds**

- N/A

**How does this align with engagement takeaways and City plans and policies?**

- Takeaways from 2021 engagement:
  - Tier the Special Permit process based on the project size
  - People want more communal spaces, both indoors and outdoors
  - Keep and expand outdoor dining
  - Use zoning to encourage or require public art and creative uses in public and private new development
  - Balance housing needs with the need for open space

- o Seek high-quality design that is responsive to context
  - o Develop village center design guidelines
- Washington Street Vision Plan:
  - o Expand advisory design review and what comes under Urban Design Commission
- Comprehensive Plan (2007):
  - o Increase the proportion of residential development applications that can be approved by right rather than through special permit, variance, or comprehensive permit, utilizing clear objective standards and administrative review processes that can obviate the necessity of case-by-case review by the Aldermen (City Council).
- Transportation Strategy (2017):
  - o Improve development review process
- Housing Strategy (2016):
  - o Maintain a process that is predictable and efficient: position the City to be more predictable in reviewing projects that meet local need and vision
- Economic Development Strategy (2019):
  - o Zoning redesign focus on reducing the need for special use permits to make development more predictable and easier in places where it is appropriate

## 9. Zoning Proposal: Incorporate design standards

### Comparison to existing zoning:

	Design Standards
Existing	Limited examples of design standards in existing zoning. MU4 has zoning requirements for transparency and entrances for commercial uses and for open space on parcels greater than one acre
Proposed	Create design standards that would apply at various development thresholds

### What?

- Staff and Utile will create a set of design standards to complement the village center zoning. Design standards must be quantifiable and are enforced through zoning. For example, design standards could include the following:
  - Require minimum frontage buildout
  - Locate parking behind or below buildings
  - Require minimum transparency for ground floor commercial uses
  - Provide options for 'frontage zone' within front setback, such as patios, landscaping, seating areas, outdoor dining
  - Require public open space
  - Require front entries along primary street for residential and commercial uses
  - Require public art on projects over a certain threshold
  - Require a minimum sustainability standard that considers a property's entire environmental impact
  - Require Universal Design in new construction

### Why?

- Ensures quality design for by-right projects and a better baseline design for Special Permit projects

### Special Permit Thresholds

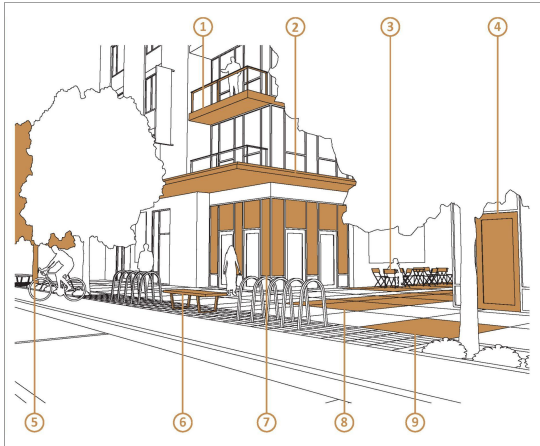
- Consider ability to seek alternative compliance by Special Permit

### How does this align with engagement takeaways and City plans and policies?

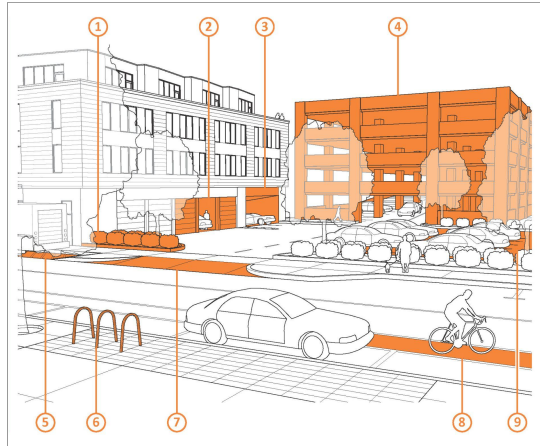
- Takeaways from 2021 engagement:
  - People want more communal spaces, both indoors and outdoors

- Keep and expand outdoor dining
- Use zoning to encourage or require public art and creative uses in public and private new development
- Balance housing needs with the need for open space
- Seek high-quality design that is responsive to context
- Develop village center design guidelines
- Incorporate Universal Design into spaces and amenities through updates to current infrastructure and requirements of new development
- Washington Street Vision Plan (2019):
  - Ensure that building types are contextually appropriate
  - Zoning rules can be used to mandate that new development in these village centers extend the traditional pattern of narrow storefronts with large windows while providing flexibility for larger tenants to use space toward the back of a property or to use multiple storefronts.
  - The zoning ordinance should require mid-large-scale projects to include new neighborhood plazas and seating
- Comprehensive Plan (2007):
  - Increase the proportion of residential development applications that can be approved by right rather than through special permit, variance, or comprehensive permit, utilizing clear objective standards and administrative review processes that can obviate the necessity of case-by-case review by the Aldermen (City Council).
- Washington Street Vision Plan (2019):
  - Parking should be behind buildings, screened from the sidewalk, or ideally below ground
- Arts and Culture Plan (2019):
  - Incorporate art into new projects such as space for artists to live or work, commissioning of pieces, and more community art experiences
- Newton Centre Task Force Report (2008):
  - Encourage building designs that are compatible with each other and their surrounding environment

Examples from Watertown Design Guidelines by Gamble Associates, 2015:



Left: *Public Realm Interface*



Right: *Parking and Access*



Left: *Sustainable Design*



Right: *Building Massing*



Left: *Building Setbacks*



Right: *Facade Treatment*

## 10. Zoning Proposal: Revise MU4 dimensional standards

### Comparison to existing zoning:

	FAR	Height	Building Footprint
Existing (by-right)	1.5	3 stories	N/A
Proposed (by-right)	2.5	4.5 stories	15,000 sf

### What?

- This proposal creates a modified version of the existing MU4 zoning district. This district would be the most intense of the village center districts and would be used predominantly in the larger village centers and in conjunction with the other proposed village center districts. Draft mapping of districts will occur over the next several months.

### Why?

- Provides a viable by-right path to achieve village center housing and economic development goals, consistent with multiple City adopted plans and MBTA Communities requirements.
- Built in site plan review and design standards ensure quality outcomes
- Allowing for more units to be built also increases the number of units in buildings accessible by elevators and the number of fully accessible units
- Allowing more units also increases the number of deed-restricted affordable units

### Special Permit Thresholds

- Allow up to 5.5 stories by Special Permit. Additional analysis needed to determine an upper limit of FAR.

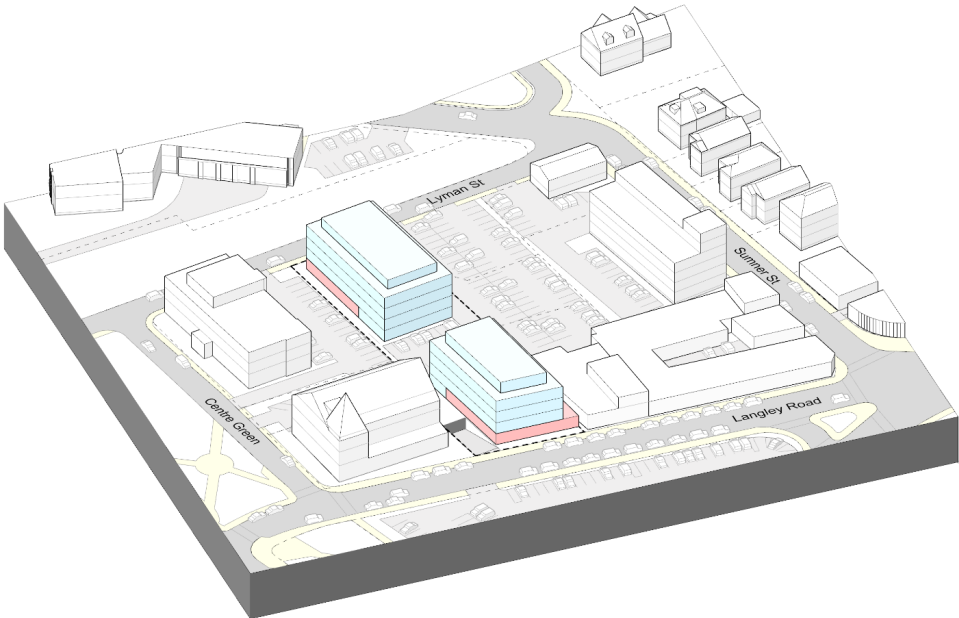
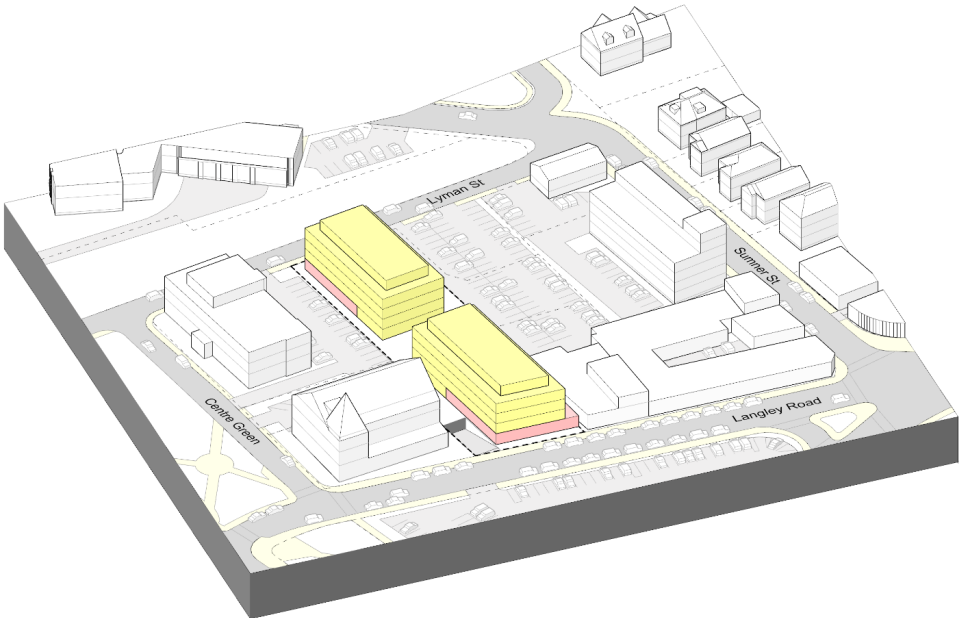
### How does this align with engagement takeaways and City plans and policies?

- Takeaways from 2021 engagement:
  - Encourage development projects in villages and commercial corridors, especially those with transit
  - Pursue diverse housing choices to meet changing housing needs of a diverse population
  - Encourage a mix of commercial uses (retail, office, etc.) in village centers
- Climate Action Plan (2019):
  - Work with the City Council to adopt Zoning Ordinances that encourage additional, appropriate low-carbon housing near public transportation



- Housing Strategy (2016):
  - Green design includes both technological solutions for reducing energy and water usage and reducing the environmental impacts of a project as well as placing new development in locations that promote alternative forms of transportation and reduce the need to create housing on greenfield locations on the periphery of the region.
- Economic Development Strategy (2019):
  - Encourage housing in villages and commercial corridors with mass transit to create “built in” customers for businesses who need less access to private automobiles.
  - Redo zoning to make sure that market driven mixed-use developments are allowed in village centers and along commercial corridors.
- Newton Centre Task Force Report (2008):
  - Establish zoning overlay for village center: provide a plan tailored specifically to the needs of the village center, allowing for mixed-use development and the use of district improvement financing, and removes some of the barriers posed by special permits
- Comprehensive Plan (2007):
  - Assure that lot area per unit, FAR, yards, maximum height, and building coverage rules work together reasonably, which again is clearly not the case in the Mixed Use districts
  - Encourage mixed use in the village centers by promoting housing above retail. Increasing density allowing mixed-use development in the village centers would increase the population within walking distance and as a result would likely expand the available range of goods and services offered there. It would also increase the stock of affordable housing located close to employment centers and public transportation.

Examples of potential massing under the revised MU4 zoning:



*Top: Residential building with ground floor retail and subgrade parking  
Bottom: Commercial building with ground floor retail and subgrade parking*

## 11. Village Center Zoning Proposal: Revise BU3 dimensional standards

### Comparison to existing zoning:

	FAR	Height	Building Footprint
Existing (by-right)	1.5	3 stories	N/A
Proposed (by-right)	2.0	3.5 stories	10,000 sf

### What?

- This proposal creates a modified version of the existing BU3 zoning district. This district would be in the middle in terms of the intensity of the three proposed village center zones. Draft mapping of districts will occur over the next several months.

### Why?

- Minor changes to BU3 to encourage increased by-right housing and economic development opportunity, consistent with City plans and MBTA communities requirements.
- Allowing for more units to be built also increases the number of units in buildings accessible by elevators and the number of fully accessible units
- Allowing more units also increases the number of deed-restricted affordable units

### Special Permit Thresholds

- Allow up to 4.5 stories Special Permit. Additional analysis needed to determine an upper limit of FAR.

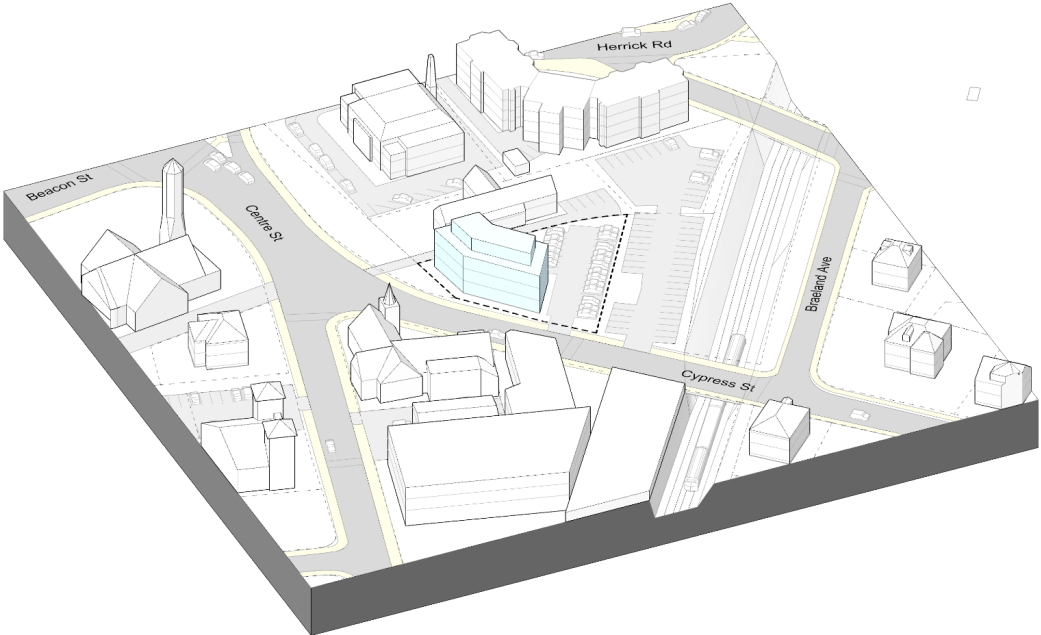
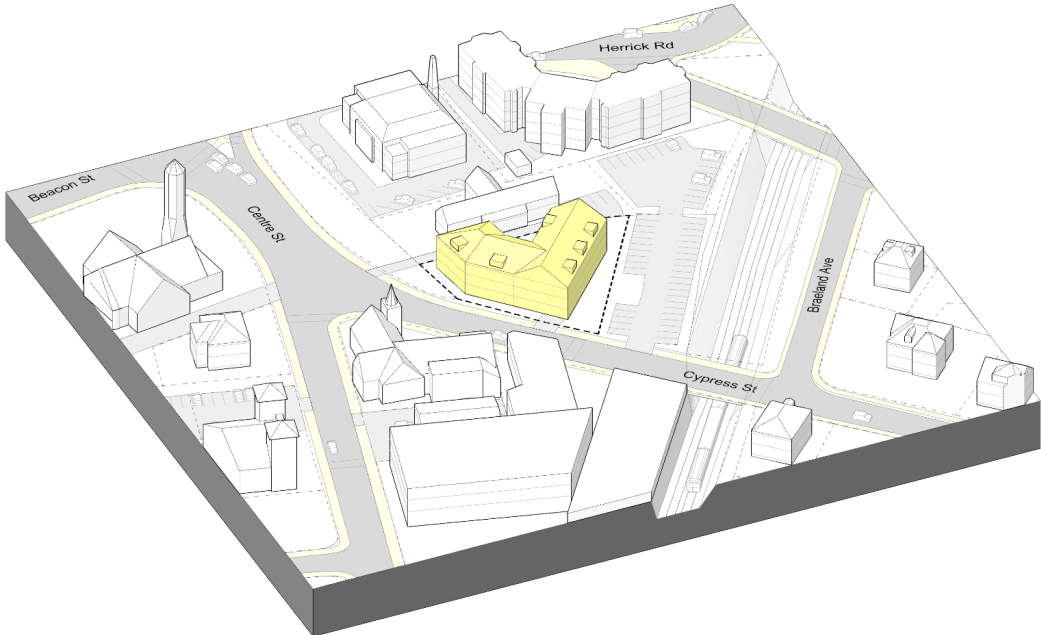
### How does this align with engagement takeaways and City plans and policies?

- Takeaways from 2021 engagement:
  - Encourage development projects in villages and commercial corridors, especially those with transit
  - Pursue diverse housing choices to meet changing housing needs of a diverse population
  - Encourage a mix of commercial uses (retail, office, etc.) in village centers
- Climate Action Plan (2019):
  - Work with the City Council to adopt Zoning Ordinances that encourage additional, appropriate low-carbon housing near public transportation
- Housing Strategy (2016):
  - Green design includes both technological solutions for reducing energy and water usage and reducing the environmental impacts of a project as well as placing new development in locations that promote alternative forms of

transportation and reduce the need to create housing on greenfield locations on the periphery of the region.

- Economic Development Strategy (2019):
  - Encourage housing in villages and commercial corridors with mass transit to create “built in” customers for businesses who need less access to private automobiles.
  - Redo zoning to make sure that market driven mixed-use developments are allowed in village centers and along commercial corridors.
- Newton Centre Task Force Report (2008):
  - Establish zoning overlay for village center: provide a plan tailored specifically to the needs of the village center, allowing for mixed-use development and the use of district improvement financing, and removes some of the barriers posed by special permits
- Comprehensive Plan (2007):
  - Assure that lot area per unit, FAR, yards, maximum height, and building coverage rules work together reasonably, which again is clearly not the case in the Mixed Use districts

Examples of potential massing under the revised BU3 zoning:



*Top: Residential building with subgrade parking*  
*Bottom: Commercial building with surface parking*

## 12. Village Center Zoning Proposal: Revise BU2 dimensional standards

### Comparison to existing zoning:

	FAR	Height	Building Footprint
Existing (by-right)	1.0	2 stories	N/A
Proposed (by-right)	1.75	2.5 stories	5,000 sf

### What?

- This proposal creates a modified version of the existing BU2 zoning district. This district would be the least intense of the village center districts and would be used predominantly in the smaller village centers and where a gentle transition to adjacent neighborhoods is desired in conjunction with the other proposed village center districts. Draft mapping of districts will occur over the next several months.

### Why?

- Minor changes to BU2 to encourage housing and economic development, consistent with City plans and MBTA communities requirements
- Allowing for more units to be built also increases the number of units in buildings accessible by elevators and the number of fully accessible units
- Allowing more units also increases the number of deed restricted affordable units

### Special Permit Thresholds

- Allow up to 3.5 stories by Special Permit. Additional analysis needed to determine an upper limit of FAR.

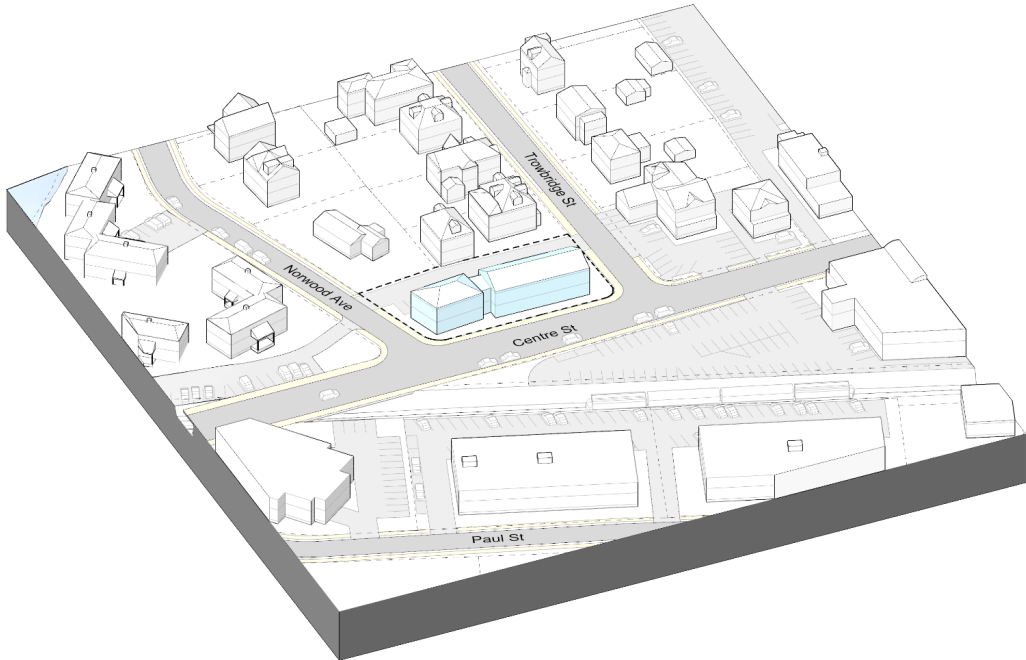
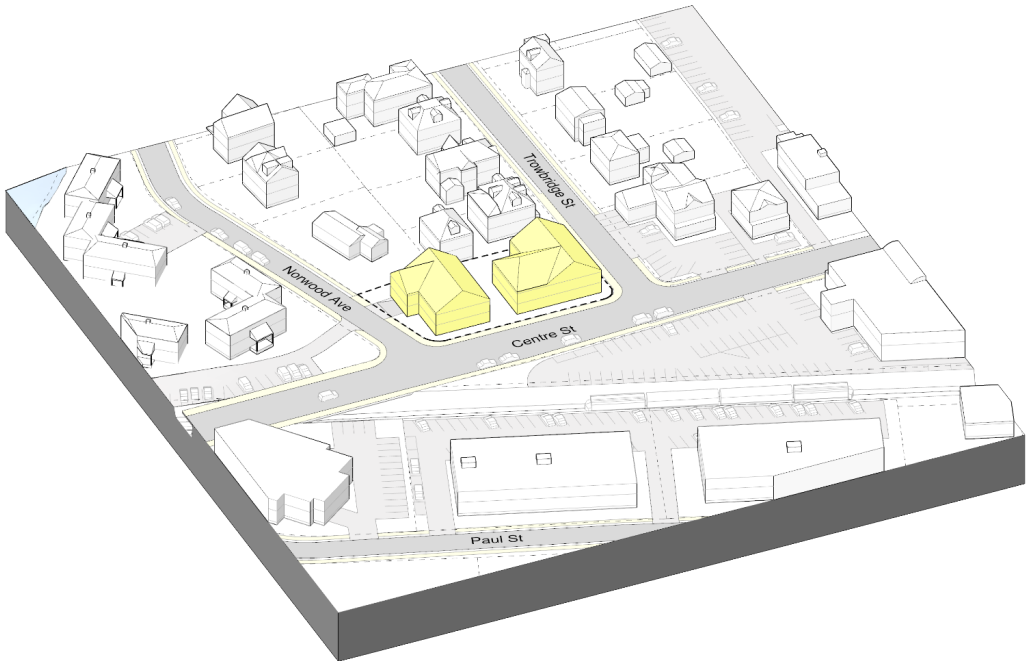
### How does this align with engagement takeaways and City plans and policies?

- Takeaways from 2021 engagement:
  - Encourage development projects in villages and commercial corridors, especially those with transit
  - Pursue diverse housing choices to meet changing housing needs of a diverse population
  - Encourage a mix of commercial uses (retail, office, etc.) in village centers
- Climate Action Plan (2019):
  - Work with the City Council to adopt Zoning Ordinances that encourage additional, appropriate low-carbon housing near public transportation
- Housing Strategy (2016):
  - Green design includes both technological solutions for reducing energy and water usage and reducing the environmental impacts of a project as well as

placing new development in locations that promote alternative forms of transportation and reduce the need to create housing on greenfield locations on the periphery of the region.

- Economic Development Strategy (2019):
  - Encourage housing in villages and commercial corridors with mass transit to create “built in” customers for businesses who need less access to private automobiles.
  - Redo zoning to make sure that market driven mixed-use developments are allowed in village centers and along commercial corridors.
- Newton Centre Task Force Report (2008):
  - Establish zoning overlay for village center: provide a plan tailored specifically to the needs of the village center, allowing for mixed-use development and the use of district improvement financing, and removes some of the barriers posed by special permits
- Comprehensive Plan (2007):
  - Assure that lot area per unit, FAR, yards, maximum height, and building coverage rules work together reasonably, which again is clearly not the case in the Mixed Use districts

Examples of potential massing under the revised BU2 zoning:



*Top: Residential building with subgrade parking*

*Bottom: Commercial building with surface parking*