



From: Engine 6 Leadership Team and Zoning Group

To: Zoning and Planning Committee and Newton City Council

Re: Engine 6 Support for New Zoning Framework

Date: June 22, 2022

At Engine 6, we have been following the zoning reform process. We are pleased to see that ZAP is moving forward by discussing concrete ideas for updating our zoning. Based on the analysis by Utile of our current zoning it is clear that changes are needed to help revitalize our village centers by allowing more homes right in the villages.

We applaud the proposal for lowering the parking requirement. This would allow more and smaller units in buildings in our villages reducing the cost to buy or rent. With more units in a building more affordable units would also be required. To increase affordability parking requirements could be even lower than one to one. Boston recently [amended](#) their zoning code to remove parking minimums for buildings when 60% of the units are affordable. This could significantly reduce the cost of construction. To allow this in Newton near transit would be a great idea. To allow more housing in areas where one does not need a car could provide significant savings money for families.

Although some new housing has been built recently, even with Newton's challenging special permit process, allowing more housing to be built by right, with clear rules would help make the process more accessible to non-profit developers who cannot afford the risk of the special permit process.

Allowing buildings with 7 or more units to be built by right so that our inclusionary zoning ordinance will take effect will be important for affordability. For accessibility, it would be important to allow by-right buildings large enough to support the expense of an elevator.

We applaud the idea of eliminating minimum lot area per unit in order to allow more units in a building. The new apartment building planned for Newton Highlands which has smaller units has quite a bit less lot area per unit than is now required in the zoning code. If the special permit had not been granted to allow for less lot area per unit, it would have fewer, larger and more expensive units.

We look forward to the upcoming community engagement and then seeing new draft zoning that will help revitalize our villages with both more and more affordable homes.

Thank you,

Fran Godine, Doris Ann Sweet, Kathy Pillsbury, Jay Walter, Lynn Weissberg, and Nancy Zollers
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