

Newton Councilors Reach Consensus On Village Zoning Framework

The Zoning & Planning Committee's agreement on framework marks the next step in the city's zoning redesigning project in Village Centers.

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The Newton Zoning & Planning Committee has reached a milestone in the city's zoning redesign project in Village Centers by reaching a consensus on the zoning framework. (Jenna Fisher/Patch)

NEWTON, MA — The Newton Zoning & Planning (ZAP) Committee has

reached a milestone in the city's zoning redesign project in Village Centers by reaching a consensus on the zoning framework.

ZAP Chair Deb Crossley facilitated three workshops in June that focused on discussing the recommended zoning framework and policy changes in three zoning districts designed for Village Centers. The three districts are tiered according to allowed intensity of use, with the intention to apply one or more of the districts according to the nature of a Village Center.

"We have a unique construction and community organization in Newton with multiple villages and village centers that are all fairly different from one another," Crossley said. "We know we have problems like the housing shortage, we want to be sustainable, and we know small businesses are struggling to stay afloat and thrive. Our challenge has been to decide on the right set of rules to put down that will allow the kind of balanced development we want in our Village Centers."

In May, consultants from Utile Architecture & Planning outlined the key elements comprising the proposed framework in a [planning memo](#) to ZAP. They also attended the workshop series last month to answer any questions.

During the workshops, ZAP discussed how well each element, as well as the framework as a whole, has the potential to both facilitate the shared community visions gathered in 2021, align with City policy objectives, and allow for desirable development that is financially feasible. This led to the committee reaching a consensus on each of the key elements of the proposed zoning framework.

The framework agreed upon includes reduced parking requirements in Village Centers, an increase in floor-to-floor heights for office and ground floor retail uses and decrease for residential uses to match industry standards, and the creation of design requirements for half stories.

This summer, planning staff and the Utile consulting team will begin drafting

village center zoning from the consensus achieved and share it with the community between mid-August and early October for feedback. The draft zoning language and maps will then be brought back to ZAP for any changes to be made.

Since the zoning redesign project began, ZAP has received many official letters of support, formal votes of approval, and constructive comments from local groups including the Newton Housing Partnership, Planning Board, Economic Development Commission, Newton Zoning reform Coalition, Building Professionals Working Group, and Engine 6. These letters, along with the proposed zoning framework, will be made available [here](#).

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