

Proposed Village Center Zoning Framework Details from May 27, 2022 City Memo and June, 2022 ZAP Workshops

Created by Department of Planning & Development, 8.02.22

What is this document?

This document lays out the (1) twelve proposed changes to village center zoning described in a city memo as well as the (2) takeaways from the Zoning and Planning Committee workshopping each of these proposals, shared in Zoning Redesign Monthly Newsletters. The document merges the memo and the overview of the ZAP workshops for a more convenient reading experience.

What are the next steps with these proposals?

As you will read in this document, the ZAP councilors reached consensus on the overarching ‘framework’ of the twelve proposed changes to zoning. They provided comments, feedback, thoughts, and questions about the proposals outlined in this document – and there were disagreements.

As a result of these workshops, city staff have guidance from the councilors on what to focus on and can bring something concrete to the community to get their feedback on it.

The next step is to now present these proposals, including the councilors’ arguments for and against them, to the community in accessible and engaging ways. The Community Engagement Network is a group of 80+ community members who are bolstering this engagement effort and giving city staff feedback on engagement material. Community input will be collected from September 1 through October 16th.

Based on the community’s feedback, city staff will then present a more developed iteration to ZAP in late October to consider, and ultimately, to vote on.

How to Read This

Each proposal has the following sections:

- *Part I: May 27 Memo (earmarked as ‘#38-22’)*
 - Table comparing existing VS proposed zoning regulation
 - What?
 - Why?
 - How does this align with engagement take ways and City plans and policies?
 - Some include additional sections or graphics
- *Part II: Synthesis of ZAP Workshop (earmarked as ‘Synthesis of ZAP Workshops’)*
 - Table comparing existing VS proposed zoning regulation
 - Committee takeaways
 - Straw vote results

Sources

[May 27, 2022 Planning Memo](#) – Written by City of Newton planning staff and consultant Utile, outlining the key elements comprising a proposed framework for updating village centers’ zoning.

[Zoning Redesign Monthly Newsletters](#) – Written by City of Newton planning staff in effort to highlight engagement opportunities and to synthesize what happens in ZAP meetings:

- [April Recap](#): Highlights consultant’s initial recommended zoning framework for village centers. (City staff and ZAP conversations built upon this initial set of recommendations.)
- [May Recap](#): Highlights planning staff’s May 27 memo and the beginning of the ZAP workshops.
- [June Recap](#): Synthesizes councilors’ arguments and straw votes for every proposal, made during all three of the ZAP workshops.

Zoning and Planning Committee (ZAP) Meetings – ZAP Chair Deborah Crossley facilitated three workshops with ZAP in June, focusing discussion on the recommended zoning framework and policy changes. During these workshops, planning staff and consultant Utile were on hand to answer any questions. [The ZAP website has all information pertaining these meetings](#). See below for direct links to the meetings’ audio recordings and reports:

- Wednesday, June 1, 2022 at 7pm: [Audio](#), [Report Part 1](#), [Report Part 2](#)
- Monday, June 13, 2022 at 7pm: [Audio](#), [Report Part 1](#), [Report Part 2](#)
- Monday, June 27th, 2022 at 7pm: [Audio](#), [Report](#)



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Barney S. Heath
Director

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

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:

- Overwhelmingly people want walkable, vibrant village centers
- Promote pollution and waste reduction through allowing residents to live low carbon lifestyles
- Encourage a mix of commercial uses in village centers
- Encourage development projects in villages and commercial corridors, especially those with transit
- Find ways to decrease, de-emphasize, combine, or repurpose parking
- Climate Action Plan (2019):
 - 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
 - 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.
- Washington Street Vision Plan (2019):
 - Newton should consider reducing or eliminating the parking minimum, while also considering a parking maximum
 - 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):
 - Reduce or eliminate parking requirements for ground floor uses in village centers
 - 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):
 - Clarify permit process and provide flexible options for property owners to meet building heights and tenant parking requirements
- Comprehensive Plan (2007):
 - Clarify and ease by-right parking requirements to reflect special residential uses and access circumstances, for example location in transit-served village centers
 - Move towards parking as a shared resource in village centers, allowing fees in lieu of on-site parking

#1

Reduced parking requirements in village centers

Proposal

	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	TBD

Committee Takeaways

- There was overwhelming support for lowering parking minimums in village centers, with unanimous support for looking at the most current usage data to consider lowering requirements further for residential buildings.
- Members who voted against or abstained on 1:1 residential parking voiced support for eliminating all parking minimums in favor of letting the market decide how much parking is needed.
- Some members were not in favor of entirely exempting ground floor retail uses from parking minimums.

Straw Vote

ZAP members voted by a nonbinding straw vote, breaking the proposal into two parts:

- 1:1 for residential uses / Upper floor commercial requirements
 - 5 - Yes
 - 1 - No
 - 2 - Abstain
- Elimination of parking requirements for ground floor commercial
 - 6 - Yes
 - 2 - No
 - 0 - Abstain

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

#2

Increase floor-to-floor heights for office and ground floor retail uses, and reduce for residential uses to match industry standards

Proposal

Floor heights (max)	Residential	Office	Ground floor retail
Existing	12'	12'	12'
Proposed	11'	13'	18'

Committee Takeaways

- There was general support among committee members for the recommendation to allow story heights to be increased to accommodate the physical requirements of desirable commercial uses. Several Councilors proposed an amendment to keep the allowed residential floor-to-floor height at 12' maximum.
- Utile explained that these recommendations are maximums, and that the additional cost for building higher floors is significant, making it in the developer's best interest to only build as high as necessary to accommodate the use.

Straw Vote

ZAP members voted by a nonbinding straw vote on the modified proposal:

- 4 - Yes
- 2 - No
- 1 - Abstain

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?

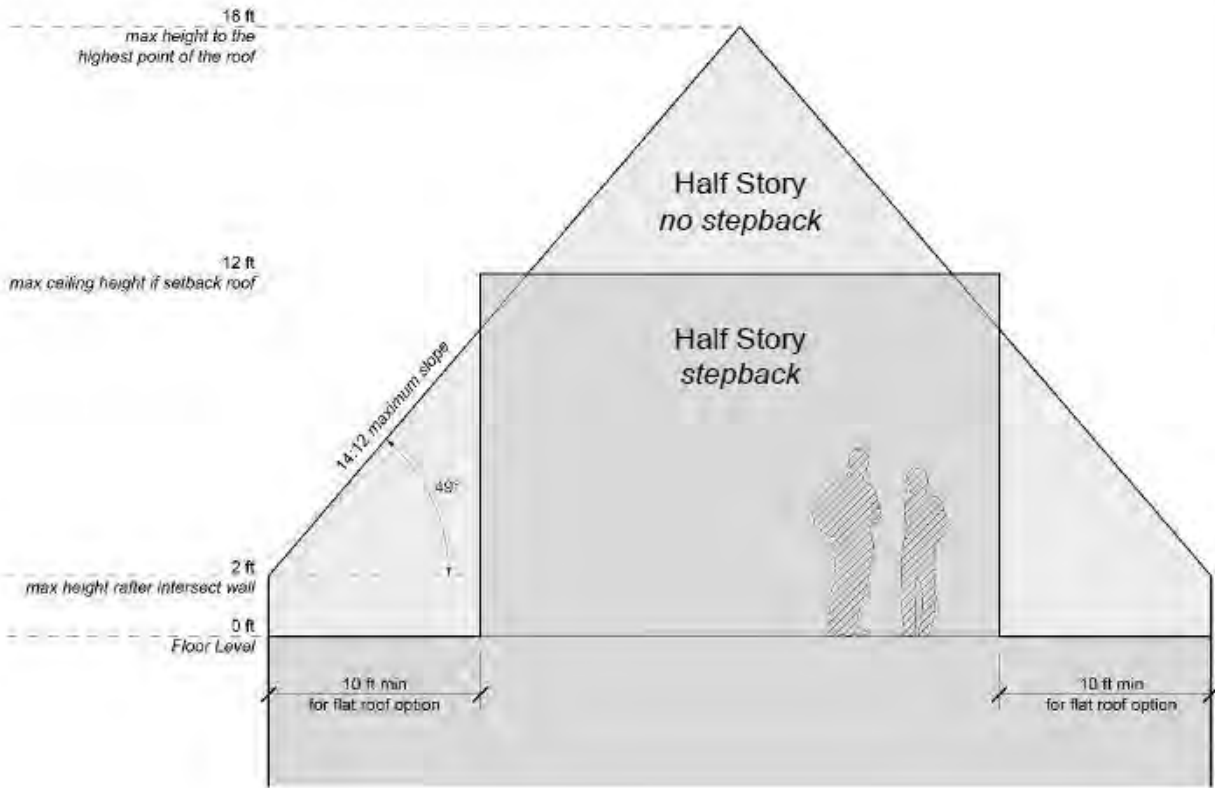
- Facilitates more varied, interesting rooflines
- Allows for useable space in the half story
- Reduces the bulk of the building and the appearance of height

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

#3

Create design requirements for half stories

Proposal

	Residential	Commercial	Mixed Use
Existing	none	none	MU4: 1:1 stepback plane above 40'

Proposed (for all 3 - residential, commercial, & mixed use)	10' setback along perimeter of building or pitched roof with 14:12 max slope
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Committee Takeaways

- The Committee supported the design standards for half stories, which would apply to projects looking to build to the maximum number of stories allowed.
- Some members felt that the step back on the top floor could be reduced from the proposed 10' setback, with Utile recommending 6' or 7' as a good dimension for a usable balcony.
- With the Committee's support, Utile will further refine the proposed standards so as to facilitate and incentivize a variety of rooflines.

Straw Vote

ZAP members voted by a nonbinding straw vote:

- 6- Yes
- 0- No
- 1 - Abstain

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.

#4

Eliminate minimum lot area per unit

Proposal

	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.*

Committee Takeaways

- The Committee supported eliminating this regulation to facilitate the creation of more, smaller units.
- Case studies previously shared with ZAP highlighted how the current regulation often leads to larger and more expensive units, because developers build to the maximum building size, while reducing the number of units to comply with the minimum lot area per unit.
- Utile explained how the proposed standards (overall height/stories and building footprint) act as better tools to regulate building size, but not to restrict the number of units within that envelope so as to allow for a variety of unit sizes to accommodate a diverse population (e.g. downsizing seniors and growing families).

Straw Vote

ZAP members voted by a nonbinding straw vote:

- 5 - Yes
- 0 - No
- 2- Abstain

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.

#5

Remove minimum lot size

Proposal

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

Committee Takeaways

- The Committee was generally supportive of the elimination of minimum lot sizes, noting that the requirement is somewhat arbitrary and precludes development on typically smaller sized village center parcels.
- One Councilor was supportive of a lower minimum lot size over an overall elimination.

Straw Vote

ZAP members voted by a nonbinding straw vote:

- 8 - Yes
- 0 - No
- 0 – Abstain

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?

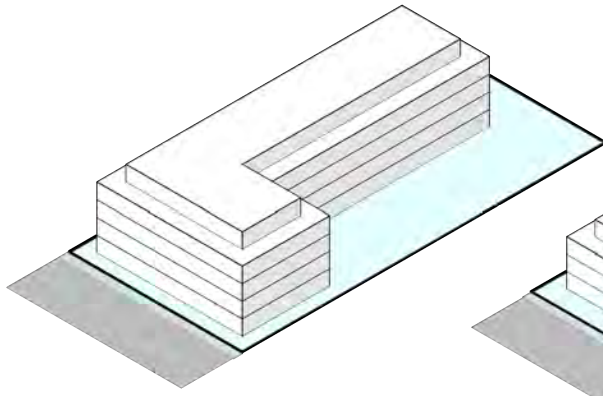
- Prohibits by-right larger buildings in village centers, a concern for many
- Promotes smaller, more contextual buildings

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

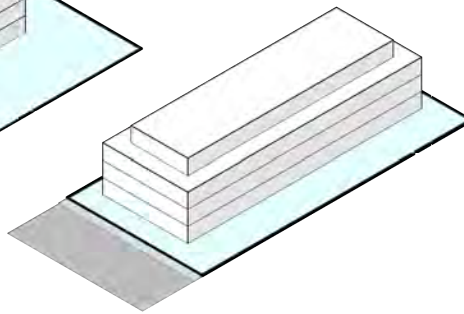
How does this align with engagement takeaways and City plans and policies?

- 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



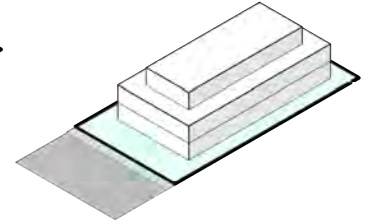
MU4 (Left):

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

#6, 10, 11, 12

Revise MU4, BU3, BU2 dimensional standards

Proposal

The following table outlines the proposed changes ZAP considered for these three districts, which would be applied to different village centers according to its scale:

	Revised MU4	Revised BU3	Revised BU2
By-Right (max)	Existing / Proposed	Existing / Proposed	Existing / Proposed
# of Stories	3.0 / 4.5	3.0 / 3.5	2.0 / 2.5
Building Footprint	-- / 15,000 sf	-- / 10,000 sf	-- / 5,000 sf
FAR	1.5 / 2.5	1.5 / 2.0	1.5 / 1.75

Committee Takeaways

- Councilors were overall supportive of the tiered framework, with the understanding the revised MU4 would only be applied to Newton’s larger village centers and the two other proposed districts could be used to step down in scale toward the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Many Committee members expressed support for this tiered framework given that it will help Newton come into compliance with the MBTA Communities multi-family housing requirements.
- Some Councilors expressed support in that allowing more projects by-right would allow a larger variety of, particularly smaller, developers to create smaller in-fill projects.

Straw Vote

ZAP members voted by a nonbinding straw vote:

- 6 - Yes
- 0 - No
- 2- Abstain

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?

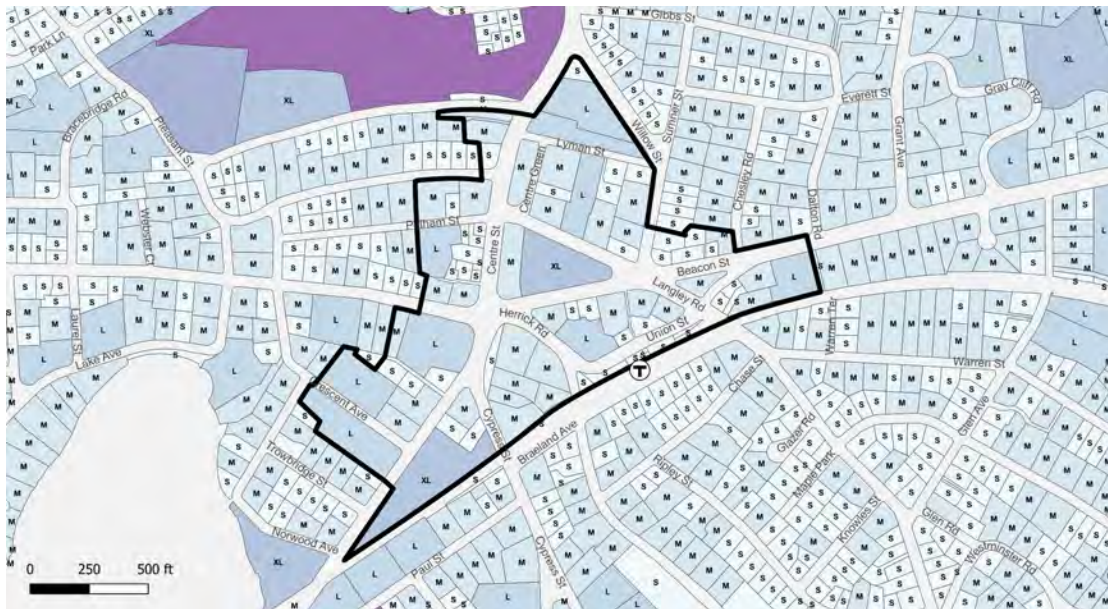
- Land area threshold is a better standard for encouraging more compact development
- Encourages contextual infill development
- Increases the number of potential by-right developments
- Aligns with MBTA Communities guidelines

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

#7

Replace 20,000 sf of floor area Special Permit with Special Permit for development on parcels greater than 3/4 acre

Proposal

	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)

Committee Takeaways

- There was general agreement on the Committee that not all projects that currently require a Special Permit should continue to require one.
- Most Councilors agreed that switching from an overall building square footage (i.e. size) Special Permit trigger to one based on lot size could allow for a simplified permitting process as long as it was paired with objective design standards and Site Plan Review under certain conditions.
- Two committee members expressed concern that the ¾ acre threshold is too large. They recommended exploring a tiered threshold for lot size similar to the building footprint size proposal (#6).

Straw Vote

ZAP members voted by a nonbinding straw vote:

- 6 - Yes
- 0 - No
- 2- Abstain

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

#8, 9

Require Site Plan Review with Design Review for certain by-right projects (8) and Incorporate design standards (9)

Proposal

	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

	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

Committee Takeaways

- These two items were taken up together in Committee.
- Overall, Committee members were supportive of a robust Site Plan review and Design Review for certain sized by-right projects accompanied by required objective design standards for all projects.
- The Committee requested additional visuals and details regarding objective design standards to be incorporated directly into the Zoning Ordinance.
- Many Committee members expressed support because these two items assist Newton in complying with the MBTA Communities multi-family housing requirements.
- Some Councilors asked if additional incentives (ex. more height) could be incorporated into the design standards if certain conditions were met (ex. deeper affordability).

Straw Vote

ZAP members voted by a nonbinding straw vote:

- 8 - Yes
- 0 - No
- 0 - Abstain

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

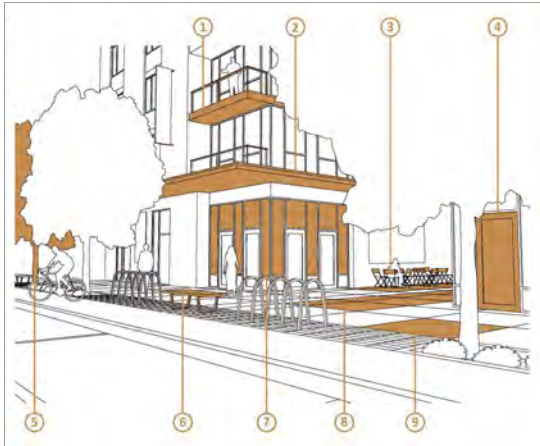
- Consider ability to seek alternative compliance by Special Permit

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

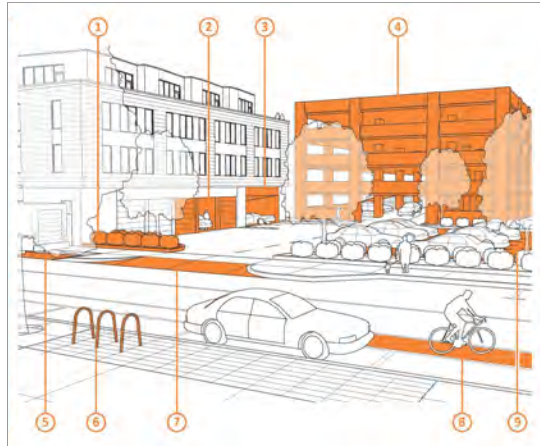
- Takeaways from 2021 engagement:
 - People want more communal spaces, both indoors and outdoors

- 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 walk, 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*

#8, 9

Require Site Plan Review with Design Review for certain by-right projects (8) and Incorporate design standards (9)

Proposal

	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

	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

Committee Takeaways

- These two items were taken up together in Committee.
- Overall, Committee members were supportive of a robust Site Plan review and Design Review for certain sized by-right projects accompanied by required objective design standards for all projects.
- The Committee requested additional visuals and details regarding objective design standards to be incorporated directly into the Zoning Ordinance.
- Many Committee members expressed support because these two items assist Newton in complying with the MBTA Communities multi-family housing requirements.
- Some Councilors asked if additional incentives (ex. more height) could be incorporated into the design standards if certain conditions were met (ex. deeper affordability).

Straw Vote

ZAP members voted by a nonbinding straw vote:

- 8 - Yes
- 0 - No
- 0 - Abstain

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

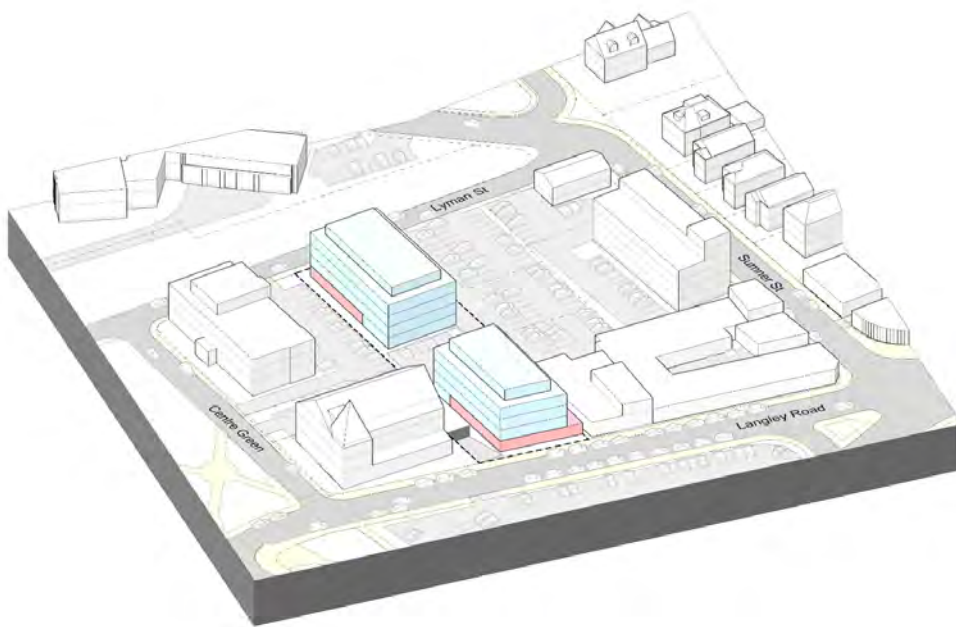
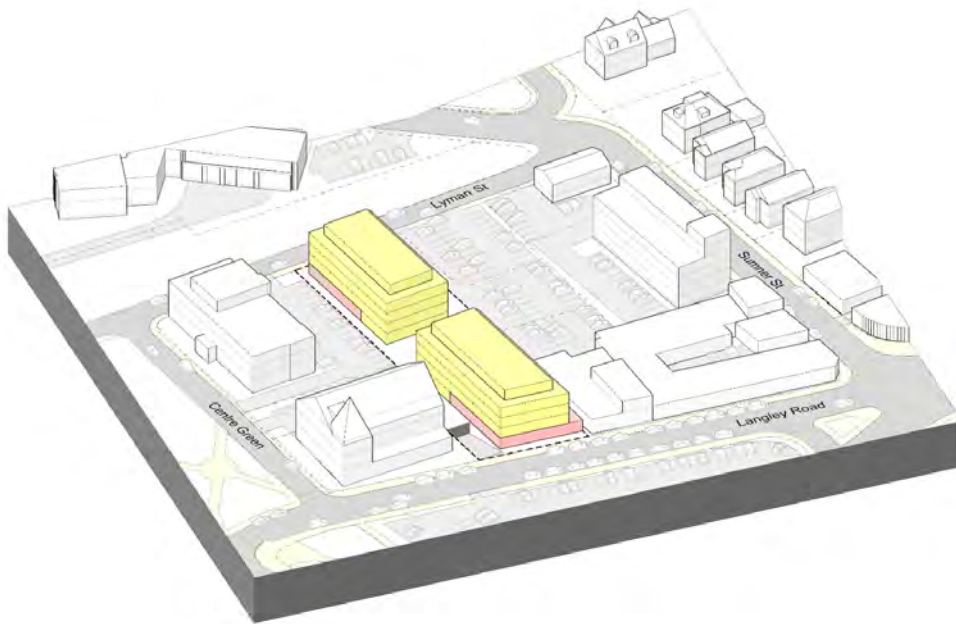
- Allow up to 5.5 stories by Special Permit. Additional analysis needed to determine an upper limit of FAR.

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

#6, 10, 11, 12

Revise MU4, BU3, BU2 dimensional standards

Proposal

The following table outlines the proposed changes ZAP considered for these three districts, which would be applied to different village centers according to its scale:

	Revised MU4	Revised BU3	Revised BU2
By-Right (max)	Existing / Proposed	Existing / Proposed	Existing / Proposed
# of Stories	3.0 / 4.5	3.0 / 3.5	2.0 / 2.5
Building Footprint	-- / 15,000 sf	-- / 10,000 sf	-- / 5,000 sf
FAR	1.5 / 2.5	1.5 / 2.0	1.5 / 1.75

Committee Takeaways

- Councilors were overall supportive of the tiered framework, with the understanding the revised MU4 would only be applied to Newton’s larger village centers and the two other proposed districts could be used to step down in scale toward the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Many Committee members expressed support for this tiered framework given that it will help Newton come into compliance with the MBTA Communities multi-family housing requirements.
- Some Councilors expressed support in that allowing more projects by-right would allow a larger variety of, particularly smaller, developers to create smaller in-fill projects.

Straw Vote

ZAP members voted by a nonbinding straw vote:

- 6 - Yes
- 0 - No
- 2- Abstain

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.

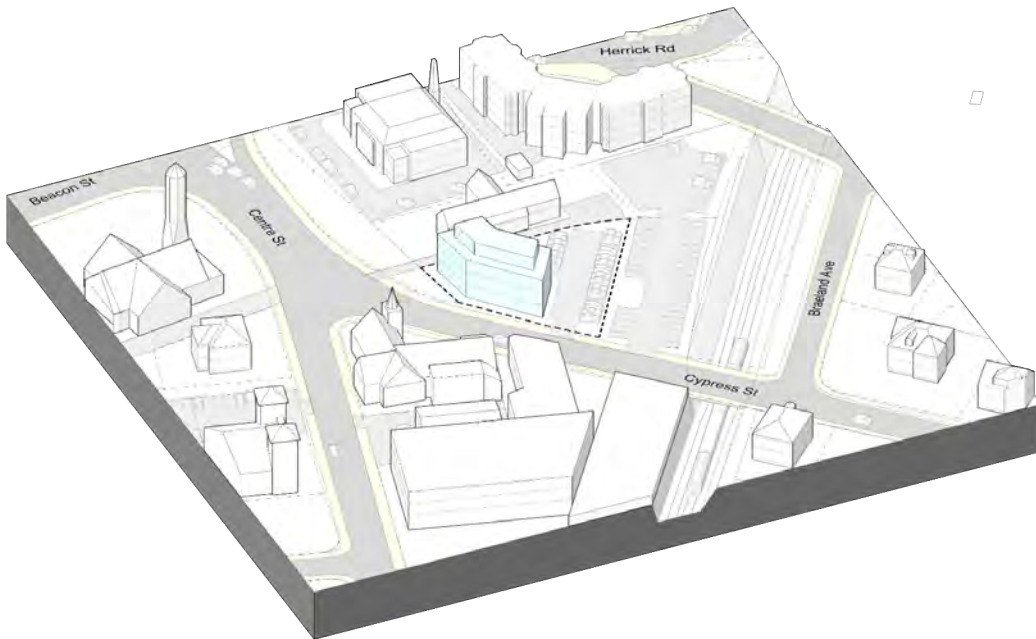
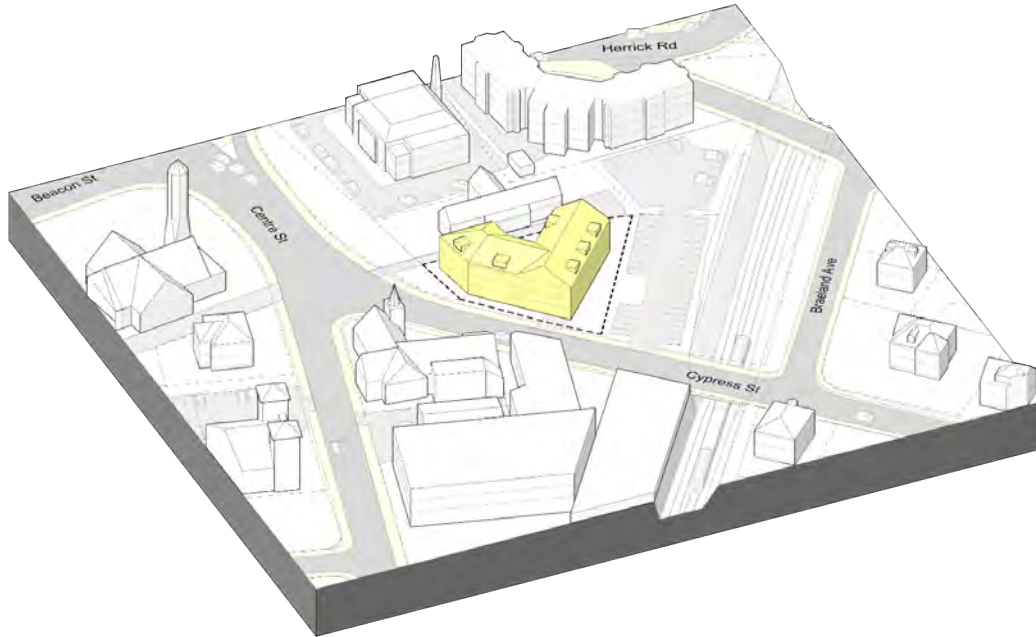
How does this align with engagement takeaways and City plans and policies?

- 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

#6, 10, 11, 12

Revise MU4, BU3, BU2 dimensional standards

Proposal

The following table outlines the proposed changes ZAP considered for these three districts, which would be applied to different village centers according to its scale:

	Revised MU4	Revised BU3	Revised BU2
By-Right (max)	Existing / Proposed	Existing / Proposed	Existing / Proposed
# of Stories	3.0 / 4.5	3.0 / 3.5	2.0 / 2.5
Building Footprint	-- / 15,000 sf	-- / 10,000 sf	-- / 5,000 sf
FAR	1.5 / 2.5	1.5 / 2.0	1.5 / 1.75

Committee Takeaways

- Councilors were overall supportive of the tiered framework, with the understanding the revised MU4 would only be applied to Newton’s larger village centers and the two other proposed districts could be used to step down in scale toward the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Many Committee members expressed support for this tiered framework given that it will help Newton come into compliance with the MBTA Communities multi-family housing requirements.
- Some Councilors expressed support in that allowing more projects by-right would allow a larger variety of, particularly smaller, developers to create smaller in-fill projects.

Straw Vote

ZAP members voted by a nonbinding straw vote:

- 6 - Yes
- 0 - No
- 2- Abstain

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.

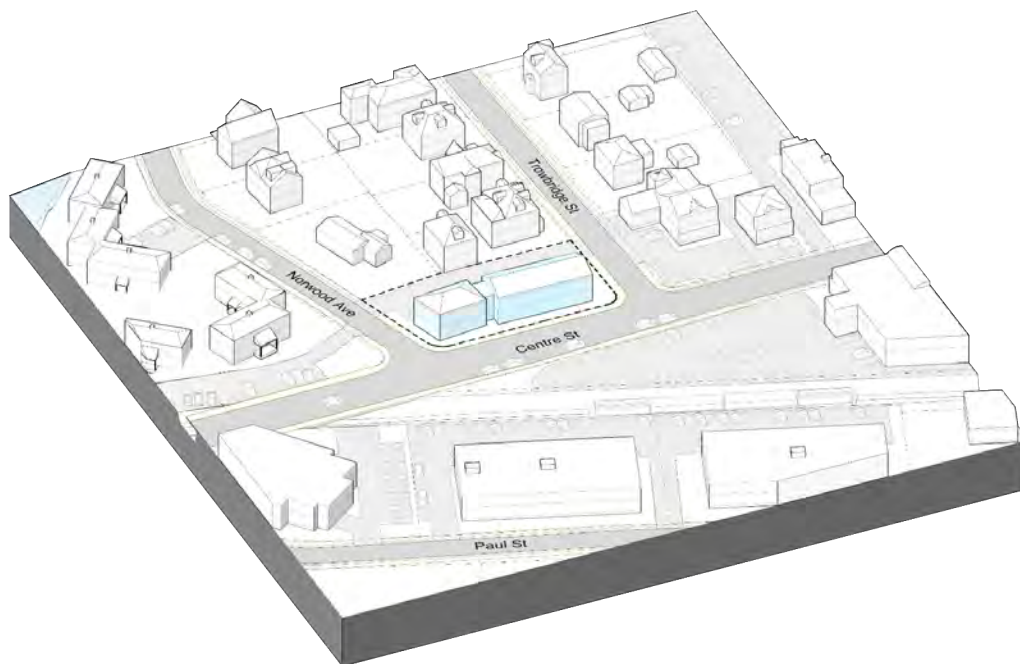
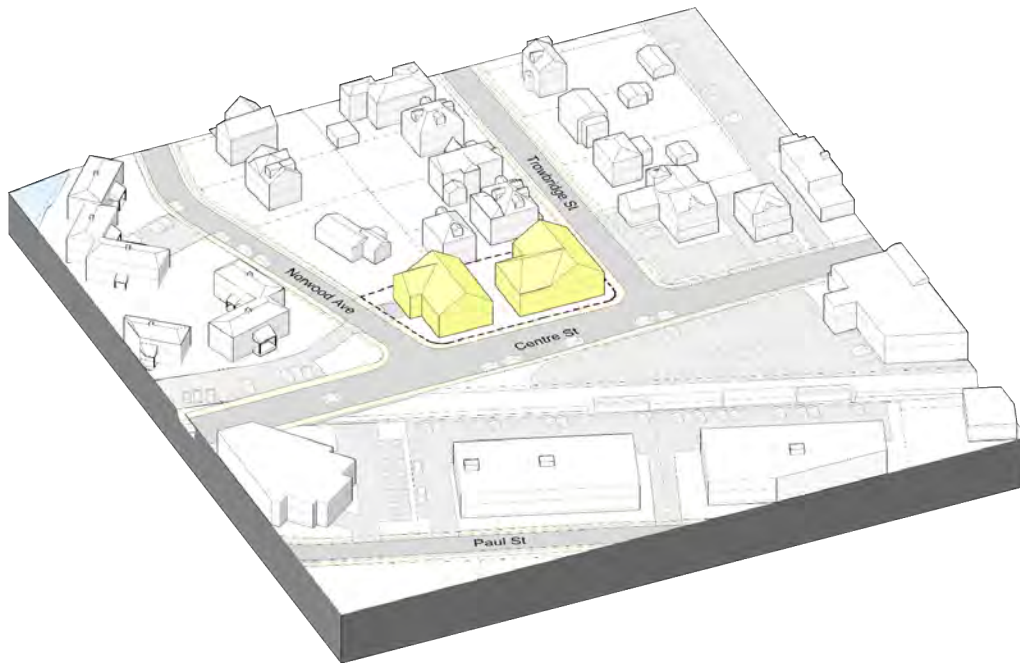
How does this align with engagement takeaways and City plans and policies?

- 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

#6, 10, 11, 12

Revise MU4, BU3, BU2 dimensional standards

Proposal

The following table outlines the proposed changes ZAP considered for these three districts, which would be applied to different village centers according to its scale:

	Revised MU4	Revised BU3	Revised BU2
By-Right (max)	Existing / Proposed	Existing / Proposed	Existing / Proposed
# of Stories	3.0 / 4.5	3.0 / 3.5	2.0 / 2.5
Building Footprint	-- / 15,000 sf	-- / 10,000 sf	-- / 5,000 sf
FAR	1.5 / 2.5	1.5 / 2.0	1.5 / 1.75

Committee Takeaways

- Councilors were overall supportive of the tiered framework, with the understanding the revised MU4 would only be applied to Newton’s larger village centers and the two other proposed districts could be used to step down in scale toward the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Many Committee members expressed support for this tiered framework given that it will help Newton come into compliance with the MBTA Communities multi-family housing requirements.
- Some Councilors expressed support in that allowing more projects by-right would allow a larger variety of, particularly smaller, developers to create smaller in-fill projects.

Straw Vote

ZAP members voted by a nonbinding straw vote:

- 6 - Yes
- 0 - No
- 2- Abstain