

Information Session

City of Newton's Engagement for Village Center Zoning Proposals

**Thursday,
September 8,
6-7pm**

Department of Planning +
Development



Agenda

Introduction (Zoom reminders, city staff introductions, and purpose of session)

What is the city collecting input on?

What will be done with the input?

 **How does a Newton community member give input?**

Q+A

Zoom Reminders

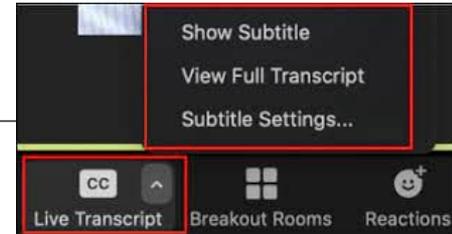
Everyone is muted in order to reduce noise interference. We may have time to unmute people to ask questions during Q+A

Have questions/comments about the engagement process? Send them to the Host & Cohosts in the chat box.

How to turn captions on & off

We are recording the meeting for public use

Meeting material will be posted afterwards (recording & slides)



City of Newton Staff Introductions

From the Department of Planning & Development

Barney Heath
Director

Cat Kemmett
Associate Planner

Jennifer Caira
Deputy Director

Zachery LeMel
Chief of Long Range
Planning

**Nevena
Pilipović-Wengler**
Community
Engagement Planner

Purpose of Info Session

Learn what the City is collecting input on for village center zoning and what will be done with the input

Learn how to give input

Learn how to pull in one's neighbors and community into the discussion

Q+A for questions about the engagement process

What is the city collecting input on?

A set of proposed changes for the village center zoning, including types of zoning districts, building heights, and parking requirements.



What is the city collecting input on? **How we got here**

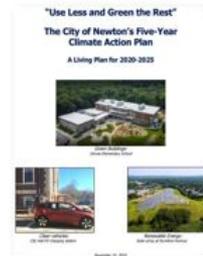
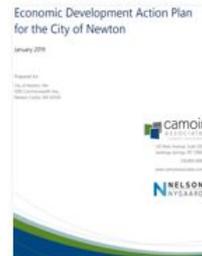
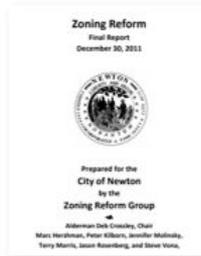
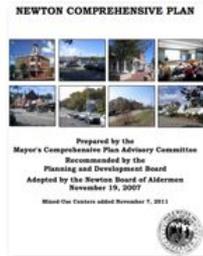
It has been over 30 years since the zoning for commercial areas were majorly updated in Newton. Since then, multiple City of Newton reports have highlighted needed changes to village center zoning in order to achieve certain City goals.

2000

2010

2020

- 2007_Comprehensive Plan
- 2016_Housing Needs Analysis
- 2017_Transportation Strategy
- 2018_Needham Street Area Vision Plan
- 2019_Economic Development Action Plan
- 2019_5-Year Climate Action Plan
- 2019_Washington Street Vision Plan
- 2019_Riverside Vision Plan



Beginnings of Zoning Updates

The 2007 Comprehensive Plan highlighted how the zoning ordinance was difficult to read and did not always lead to desirable outcomes. In response, City staff, City Council and community members formed the Zoning Reform Group in 2011. It recommended comprehensively updating the Zoning Ordinance, kicking off the Zoning Redesign project.



What is the city collecting input on? **And why?**

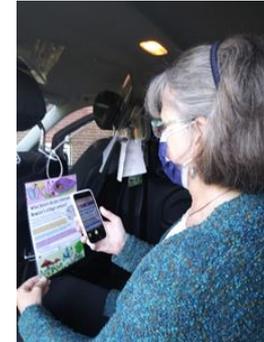
The City is soliciting community input on these proposals because zoning makes an important impact on cities. It regulates how land in Newton can be developed and what kinds of new buildings are allowed.

For example, zoning can influence  store and business activity through  parking and density requirements, whether  green space or  public spaces are required in new developments, or the amount of  housing supply near  public transportation.

What is the city collecting input on? **How we got here**

Phase I Identifying Values Summer 2021

Initial analysis of
village centers &
engagement of
community



您对牛顿乡村中心的
未来有何设想？

牛顿市希望听取您的体验和想法，
为分区更新提案提供信息！

从五月下旬至七月，请参与：
在线调查 // 自助式愿景套件 (Vision Kit)

登录 newtonma.gov/zoningredesign
@Newton Planning and Development @NewtonPlanning

What is the city collecting input on? **How we got here**

Phase I **Identifying Values** Summer 2021

Initial analysis of village centers & engagement of community

Climate resiliency through built structures and green spaces

Increase ease to get to Village Centers, especially through alternatives to driving

Communal & Public Space + Activation

Increase accessibility to buildings and infrastructure within Village Centers

Make the permitting process easier, clearer and multi-tiered

More Diverse housing options and encourage mixed-use projects

Increasing the ability for small businesses to begin, stay and thrive in Village Centers

What is the city collecting input on? **How we got here**

Phase I
Identifying Values
Summer 2021

Initial analysis of
village centers &
engagement of
community



Phase II - Today
Getting Technical
Late Summer/Fall 2022

City staff draft zoning
change proposals based
on Phase I

ZAP workshopped these

Engagement on the
workshopped proposals

What is the city collecting input on? **Proposed changes**

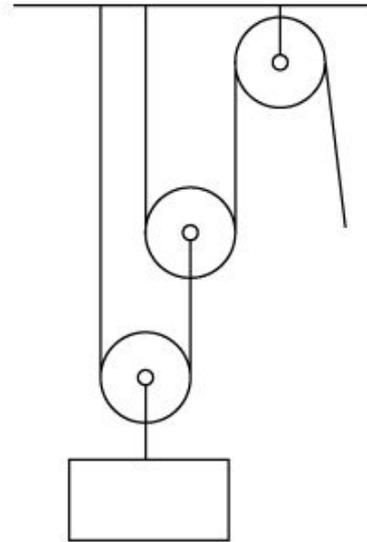
City staff drafted ~12 proposals and the Zoning and Planning Committee (ZAP) deliberated over each:

1. Increase height proportionate to the village center size - create a small scale district for small village centers
2. Increase height proportionate to the village center size - create a medium scale district for medium village centers
3. Increase height proportionate to the village center size - create a large scale district for large village centers
4. Set maximum by-right building height at a half-story
5. Establish a maximum building footprint
6. Allow standard floor-to-floor heights
7. Incorporate strong design standards
8. Eliminate lot area per unit minimums
9. Remove minimum lot size
10. Lower parking requirements
11. Revise the special permit threshold for new Development
12. Revise the special permit process - incorporate a Site Plan Review

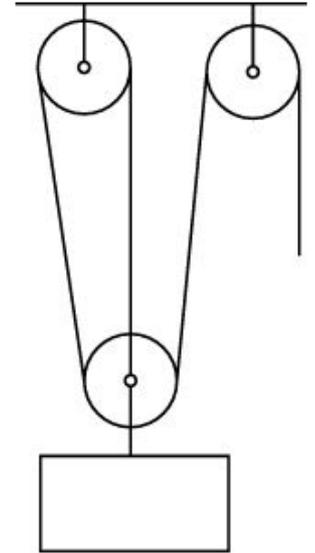
What is the city collecting input on? **Proposed changes**

Zoning rules often function like a pulley system - you pull on one pulley, it impacts other pulleys in different ways. Similarly, these 12 proposals are in dialogue with one another, working individually and together to create a complete proposed zoning framework.

So the City is asking just three zoning questions that try to get at the core reasoning behind the 12 proposals.



Pulley System 1



Pulley System 2

What is the city collecting input on? **Proposed changes**

Of the ~12 proposals, the City is zooming in on the highlighted ones for community input:

1. Increase height proportionate to the village center size - create a small scale district for small village centers
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What is the city collecting input on?

Scale: Right now, all of Newton's village centers have basically the same zoning district - regardless of their differences. Do you think there should be differently scaled zoning districts (for new buildings) for differently sized village centers?

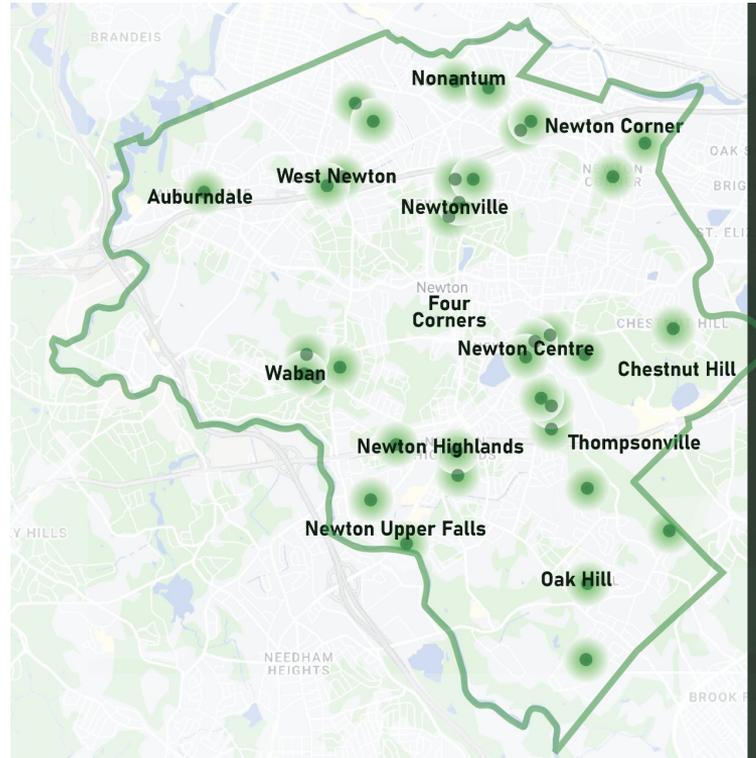
Mapping: Which proposed heights are appropriate for which village centers?

Parking: Do you agree with the proposal to reduce the parking requirements for new buildings in the village centers?

What is the city collecting input on? **Help from community members**

The City hosted the **'Zoning Redesign Community Engagement Network** - over 80 community members who joined to test-drive engagement material and bolster engagement through their community spaces.

The image to the right shows all of the different places community members signed up to engage (but not represent):



Groups focused on arts, transportation, environmental advocacy, housing, or business	14
City commissions or councils	4
Community & affinity groups	10
Faith-based institutions	5
Neighborhood Area Councils	4
Neighborhood Associations	5
Neighborhood block-based groups	31
School-based groups (of both students and parents)	7

What is the city collecting input on? **How we got here**

Phase I **Identifying Values** Summer 2021

Initial analysis of village centers & engagement of community



Phase II - Today **Getting Technical** Late Summer/Fall 2022

City staff draft zoning change proposals based on Phase I

ZAP workshopped these

Engagement on the workshopped proposals



Phase III **Going to Vote** (End of 2022)

1: Language drafted: concrete regulation language created based on Phase II results & ZAP discussions

2: ZAP votes on zoning changes

3: If ZAP votes yes, City council votes on zoning changes

What will be done with the input?



Phase III Going to Vote (End of 2022)

1: Language drafted:
concrete regulation
language created based on
Phase II results & ZAP
discussions

2: ZAP votes on zoning
changes

3: If ZAP votes yes, City
council votes on zoning
changes

How to give feedback?

Conversations will be facilitated in multiple ways:



Library exhibit
Newton Free
Library



Library exhibit online or
printed



**Equitable
focus groups**



**Contact
Newton City
Councilors**

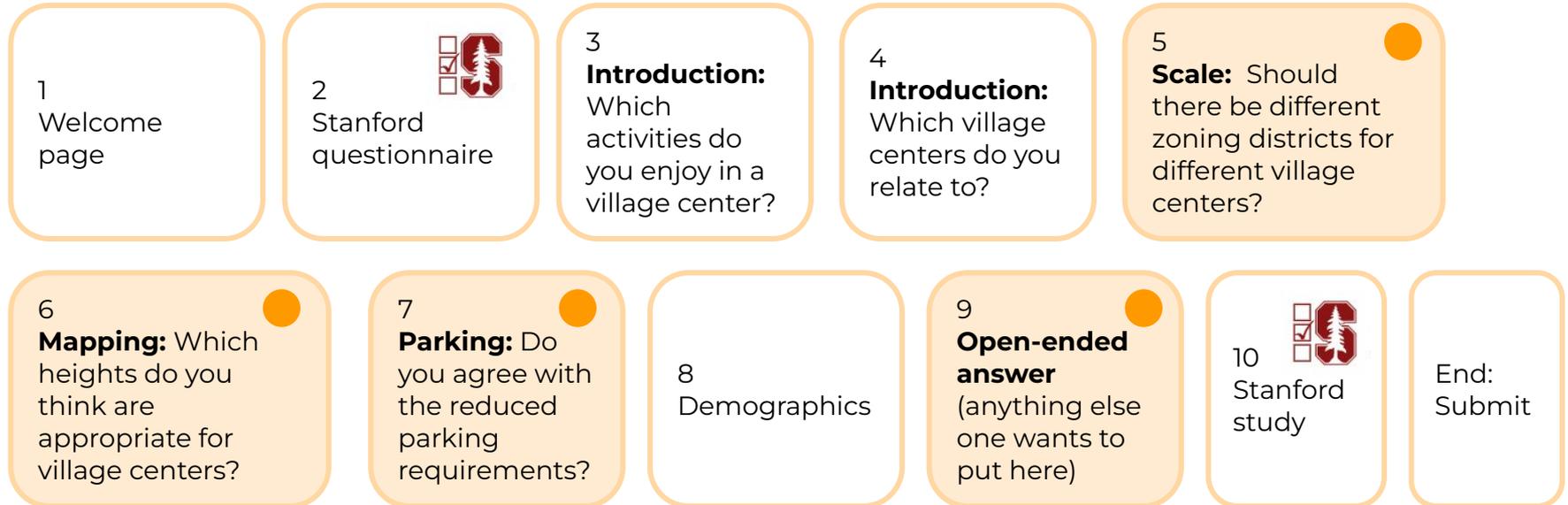
All input is collected through the online feedback tool: <https://tinyurl.com/ZoningFeedbackTool>

How to give feedback? **Feedback tool**

● Orange circle marks where there is an open-ended answer option.

Can be pulled up on one's phone or computer: <https://tinyurl.com/ZoningFeedbackTool>

Created with Stanford Crowdsourced Democracy Team. Broken up into the following sections:



How to give feedback? Feedback tool

Can be pulled up on one's phone or computer:

<https://tinyurl.com/ZoningFeedbackTool>

Tips for using:

Drop-downs

Councilor deliberation

Back-and-forth

Accessibility

Paper copy

How to connect this with the library exhibit?

We will review on the following slides.

Which Village Centers do you spend time in?

The amount of time you spend in a village center, and what you do when you are there, can influence how you relate to the area and what you hope to see there in the future. Which ones do you feel connected with? Which ones do you shop at or spend time in?



Image description: A map of Newton with the village centers under consideration for the zoning proposals, all of different sizes, outlined in blue circles and marked by their names. From south to north, approximately, they are: Newton Upper Falls, Thompsonville, Newton Lower Falls, Newton Highlands, Waban, Newton Centre, Four Corners, Auburndale, West Newton, Newtonville, Newton Corner, Nonantum.

How does this project define a village center in Newton?
Why are village centers like Chestnut Hill, Oak Hill and Oak Hill Park not included here?

Select all of the village center(s) you feel connected with:

- Auburndale
- Four Corners
- Lower Falls
- Newton Centre
- Newton Corner
- Newton Highlands
- Newtonville

Which Village Centers do you spend time in?

The amount of time you spend in a village center, and what you do when you are there, can influence how you relate to the area and what you hope to see there in the future. Which ones do you feel connected with? Which ones do you shop at or spend time in?

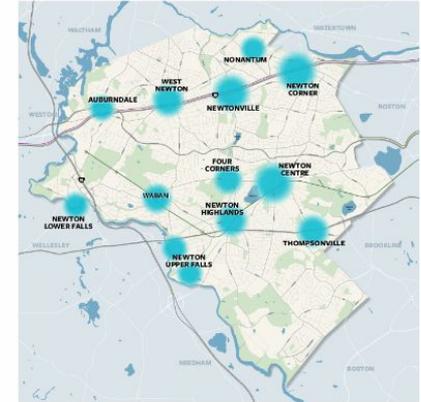


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How does this project define a village center in Newton?
Why are village centers like Chestnut Hill, Oak Hill and Oak Hill Park not included here?

In the first phase of engagement, when asked "how do you define a village center?," there was a shared sense from community members that a village center is a hub for social and commercial activity. People highlighted stores (for shopping & public goods), gathering spaces (through parks, community centers, schools, etc.) and maybe a transit stop (the green line, commuter rail or buses.)

Why are village centers like Chestnut Hill, Oak Hill and Oak Hill Park not included here?

Though the important cultural and historical role that Chestnut Hill, Oak Hill and Oak Hill Park continue to play in the city remains, the lack of a central commercial area in those neighborhoods means that they are not necessarily the best candidates for some of the changes proposed here. For that reason, you will not see questions regarding certain village centers that are officially recognized.

Select all of the village center(s) you feel connected with:

- Auburndale
- Four Corners

How to give feedback? **Feedback tool**

Can be pulled up on one's phone or computer:

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Tips for using:

Drop-downs

Councilor deliberation (ZAP)

Back-and-forth / Progress

Accessibility

Paper copy

How to connect this with the library exhibit?
We will review on the following slides.

Councilors' arguments for and against: ↓

Arguments for	Arguments against
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The height allowances better align and differentiate between the different scales and types of village centers in Newton• Combined with other proposals it can incentivize smaller lots to develop, which will lead to more contextual and diverse projects• Will help Newton come into compliance with the state MBTA communities requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The allowed heights, particularly for the zoning district allowing 4.5 stories, are too tall for Newton's village centers• Allowing these heights by-right means the City Council loses their discretionary review through the special permit process, which produces better projects

This is a recent law passed by the state to address some of the causes of the regional housing crisis, including low housing supply. It requires towns and cities served by the MBTA to create zoning districts that allow multi-family housing by-right. If they do not, they are made ineligible for some state funds that support affordable housing. [You can learn more about MBTA communities here.](#)

Prev 0% 100% Next

How to give feedback? **Feedback tool**

Can be pulled up on one's phone or computer:

<https://tinyurl.com/ZoningFeedbackTool>

Tips for using:

Drop-downs

Councilor deliberation (ZAP)

Back-and-forth

Accessibility

Paper copy

How to connect this with the library exhibit?

We will review on the following slides.

If you need a reasonable accommodation: Please contact the City of Newton's ADA/Sec. 504 Coordinator, Jini Fairley, at least two business days in advance of the meeting: jfairley@newtonma.gov or (617) 796-1253. The city's TTY/TDD direct line is: 617-796-1089.

How to give feedback? **Feedback tool**

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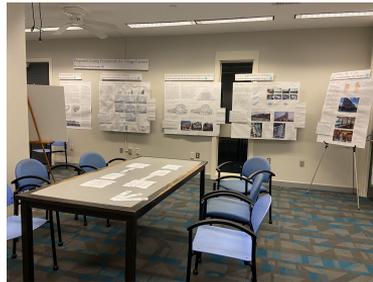
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A paper copy of the feedback tool will be available soon on the village center website.

That said, community members will still need to ultimately submit their input through the online feedback tool in order to make sure their input is (a) recorded, and (b) recorded correctly.

How to give feedback? **Library exhibit in-person**

Visit the Newton Free Library for an exhibit that covers the following:



- (1) Introduction (including map with pins)
- (2) Zoning history
- (3) Zoning Framework - Development standards
- (4) Zoning framework - Review Process
- (5) Zoning Framework - The Zoning Map
- (6) Next Steps

Engagement Table

How to give feedback? **Library exhibit in-person**

□ **How to get there?** It is on the second floor, in Room C. From the spiral staircase and elevator, go straight and pass the informational desk and study rooms on your left.

🕒 **Hours?** The exhibit is open at the same time as Newton Free Library hours, which you can find here: <https://newtonfreelibrary.net/about/our-library/hours-directions/>

💬 **City guidance in the exhibit?** City staff will identify blocks of time that they will be on hand to answer questions and offer guidance in the exhibit. Please visit the village center website to stay updated on the finalized days & times:
<https://newtonma.gov/zoningredesign/vc>

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How to give feedback? **Library exhibit in-person**

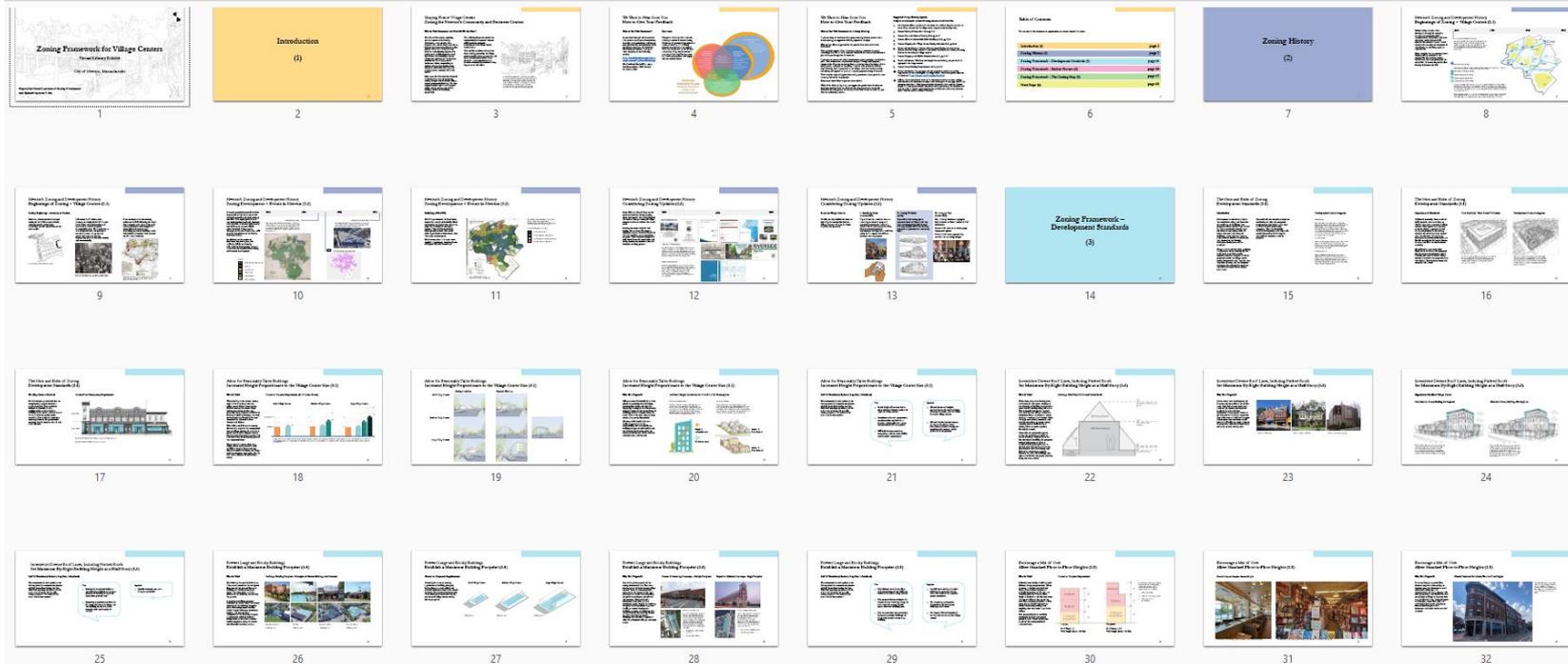
Tight on time?

As mentioned before, the three questions try **to get at the core reasoning behind the 12 proposals**. We suggest the following ‘tour’ of these 6 sections in the exhibit if you do not have enough time to go through all of it but want to submit your input:

1. Zoning History (2.1-2.3)
2. Nuts and Bolts of Zoning (3.1)
3. Allow for Reasonably Taller Buildings (3.2)
4. Mapping the Village Center Zoning Districts (5.1)
5. Mapping and MBTA Communities (5.2)
6. Lower Parking Requirements (3.9)

How to give feedback? **Library exhibit online or printed**

[Click here for the virtual version of the library exhibit.](#) It can be printed or shared in a virtual meeting. It also includes a suggested agenda for presenting the slides in a meeting.



How to give feedback? **Equitable focus groups**

The City is co-hosting focus groups with community members from the Network, with support by MAPC (regional planning agency.)

- Ages 15-24
- Ages 25-35
- BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Color)
- People with disabilities
- Renters

Days and times are still being nailed down, as well as whether they are in person or virtual. Fill out this interest form so that you can stay informed of when they are scheduled:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSceLnTGF2i2TRQYupHgSyvNy240ms6IlzgY8FiFP0OT--tYrQ/viewform?usp=sf_link

How to give feedback? **Contact City Councilors**



Zoning and Planning Councilors

Chair: Councilor Crossley / **Vice-Chair:** Councilor Danberg

Members: Councilors Leary, Albright, Wright, Krintzman, Baker and Ryan

Find their contact information as well as that for all of the remaining of the 24 City Councilors here:

<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/city-clerk/city-council/council-members>

Before Q+A

This meeting is being recorded and will be available at <https://newtonma.gov/zoningredesign/vc>

All questions: zoningredesign@newtonma.gov



Q+A

For questions related to the engagement process. Please submit opinions about the zoning proposals through the feedback tool or by emailing or calling your city councilors



Have a good night!

This meeting will be recorded and will be available at <https://newtonma.gov/zoningredesign/vc>

All questions: zoningredesign@newtonma.gov

