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Newton Zoning Redesign

ZAP Presentation
01.27.20



Shared Goal

The Zoning Redesign initiative aims to create a more flexible, predictable, and amendable *context-based* Zoning Ordinance derived from the existing fabric of Newton while directing growth and economic development to the most appropriate areas.

Welcome Back!

Zoning 101

A Context-Based Approach

Looking Ahead

Questions & Comments



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Zoning 101



Zoning Is...

Zoning shapes our city. It ensures that buildings and uses of land promote positive outcomes for the community and are consistent with the neighborhood context.

Zoning is the regulation of our built environment: types of buildings, their locations, and their uses.



Traditional Zoning

Traditional or “Euclidian” zoning is designed around the principle of separation of land uses and guidelines designed to facilitate the approval process for proposed developments that conform to the code.

Context-based Zoning

Context-based zoning is an evolution in thinking when it comes to zoning policy. In place of an ordinance that attempts to regulate simply by land uses (e.g. residential, commercial, industrial, etc.), context-based zoning aims to understand, respect, and build from the design and character of existing neighborhoods to help steer new development/ redevelopment efforts.



Context-based Zoning: A Hybrid Approach

For Newton, context-based means a hybrid approach that draws from the best practices of different zoning models (conventional, form-based, performance, etc.).

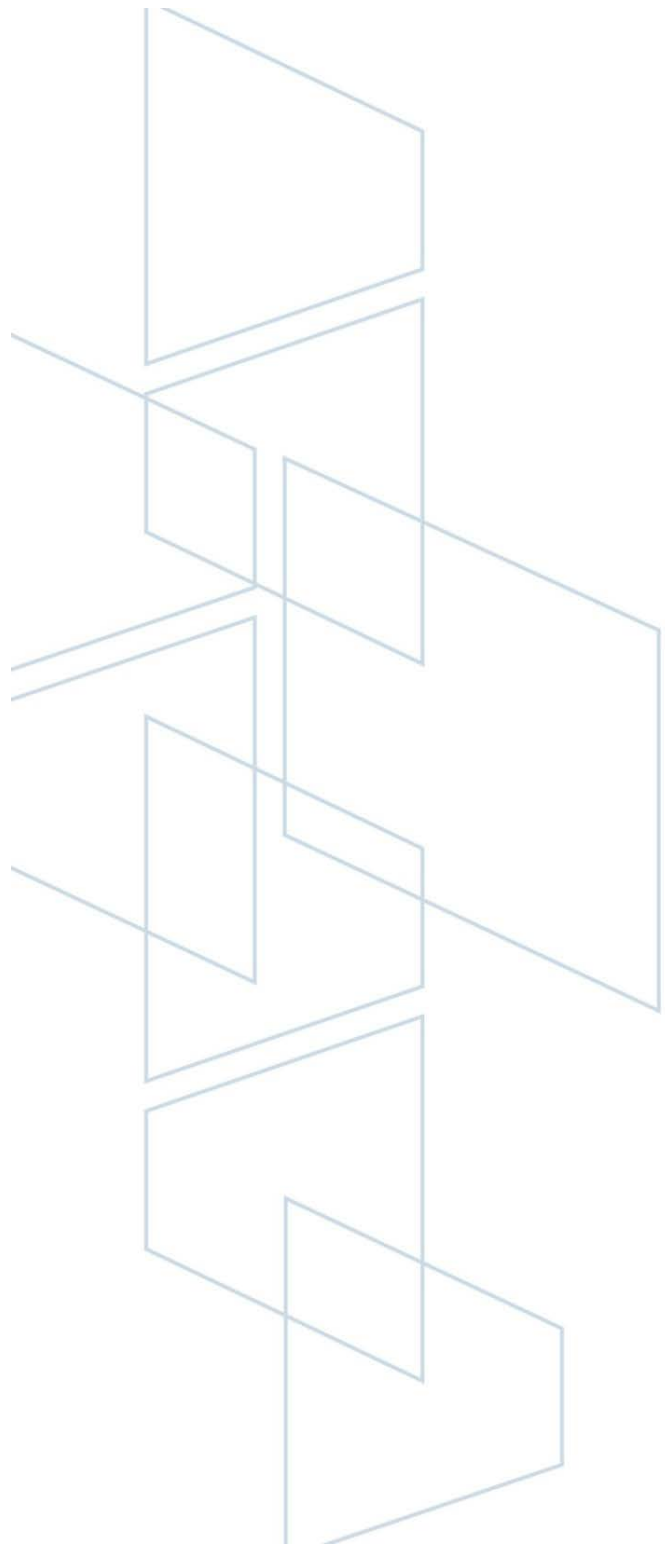
Doing so will not only allow the City to place added emphasis on development that matches a desirable physical character (form-based), but also more strongly regulate the negative effects of development such as traffic and environmental degradation (performance).



Trend towards *Context-Based*

By 2016 in the U.S.

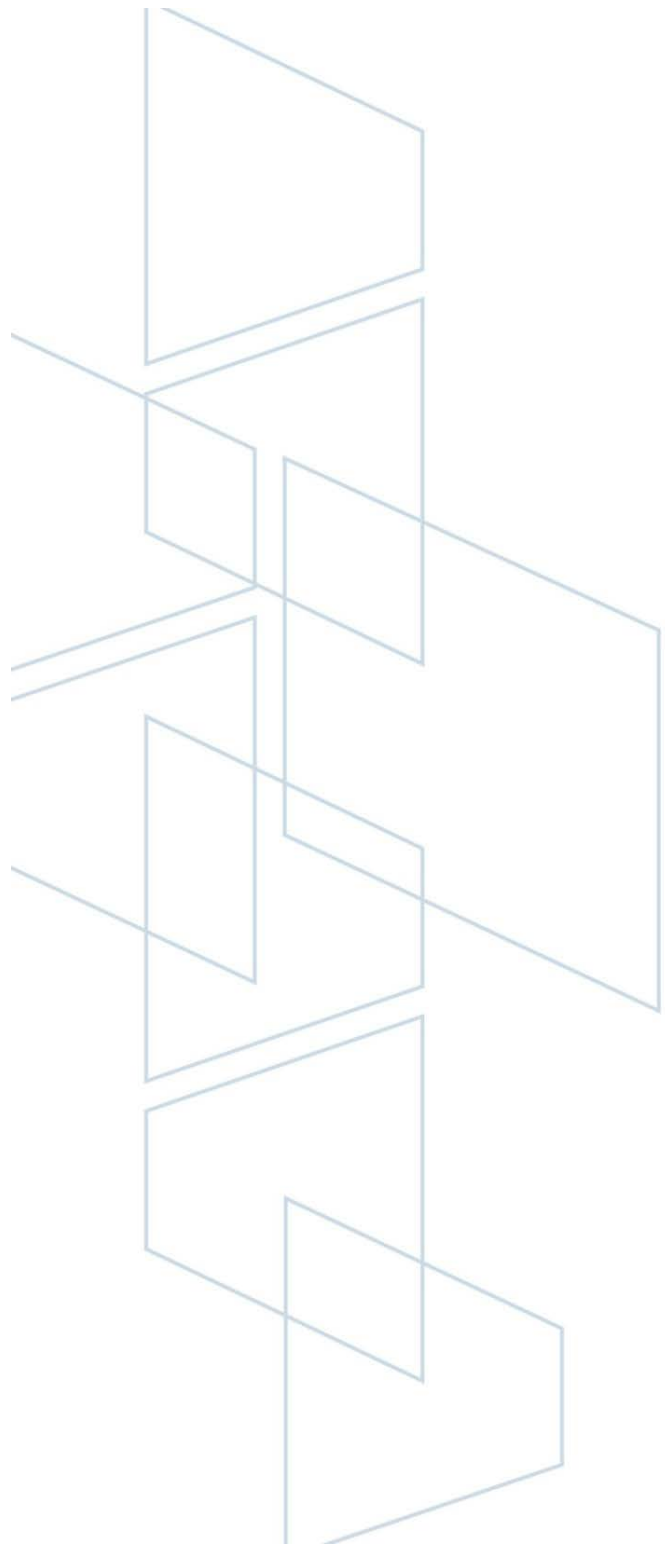
1. Over 360 such zoning codes adopted
2. Over 250 such zoning codes in development



Trend towards *Context-Based*

Advantages

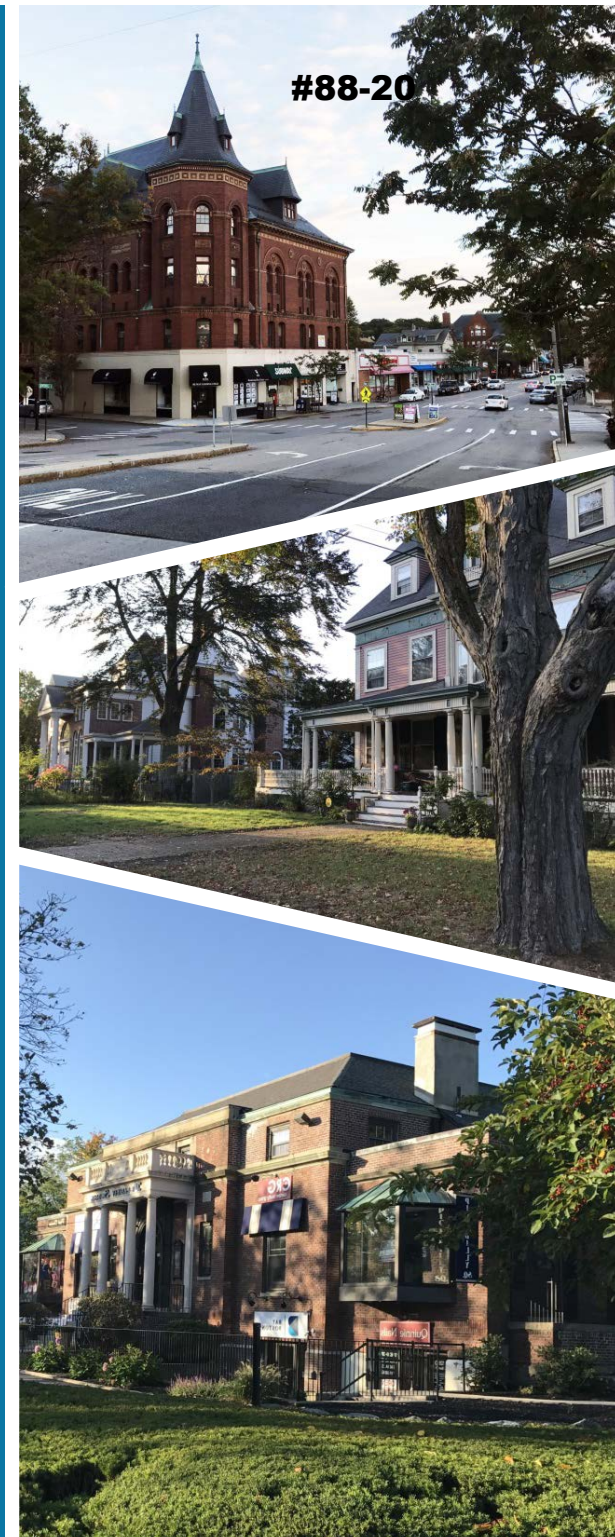
1. Stronger connection between City vision and development
2. Calibrated to existing desirable conditions
3. Encourages diversity and quality
4. Strongly links the public and private realms



Why A New Format for Newton

1a. FAR Working Group (2010)
determined the existing Zoning
Ordinance cannot be reasonably
altered to stop tear-downs:

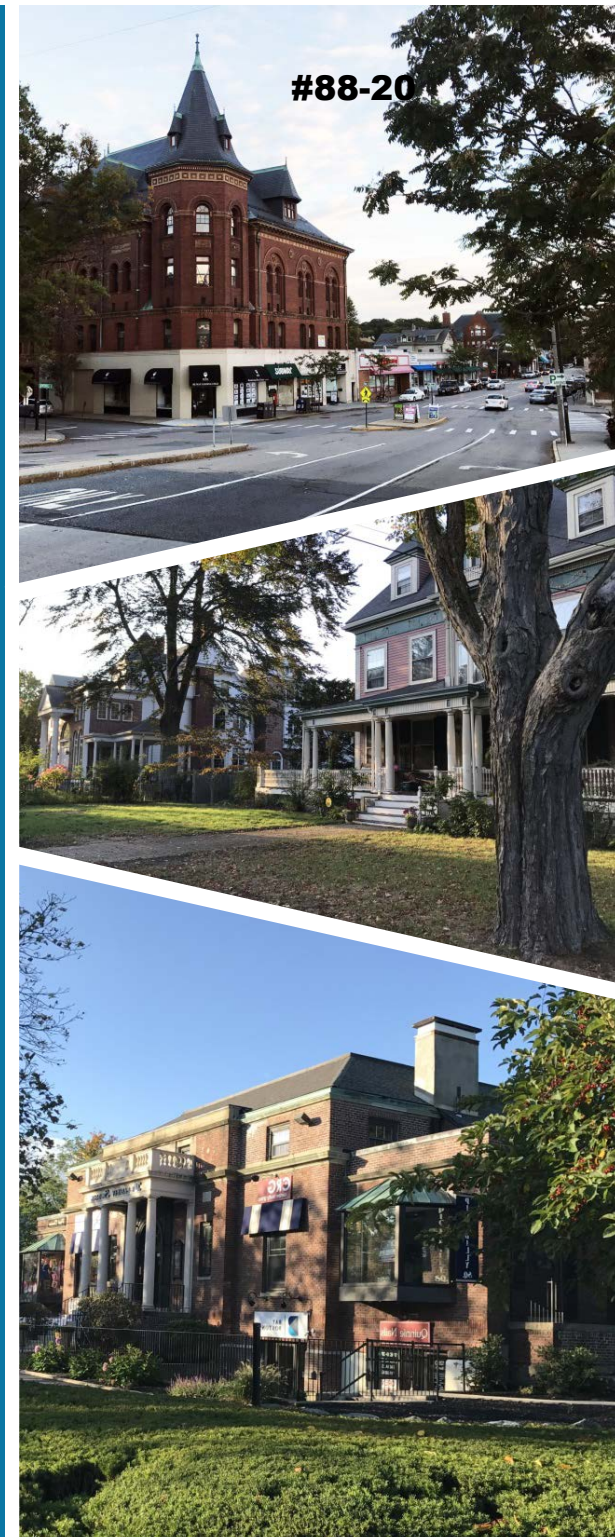
*“...the City’s existing residential
zoning districts are too blunt to
account for the range of
neighborhood character...”*



Why A New Format for Newton

1b. FAR Working Group (2010)
determined the existing Zoning
Ordinance cannot be reasonably
altered to stop tear-downs:

*“...a number of elements of
massing cannot be regulated by
FAR limits, or indeed, by other
dimensional controls”*



Why A New Format for Newton

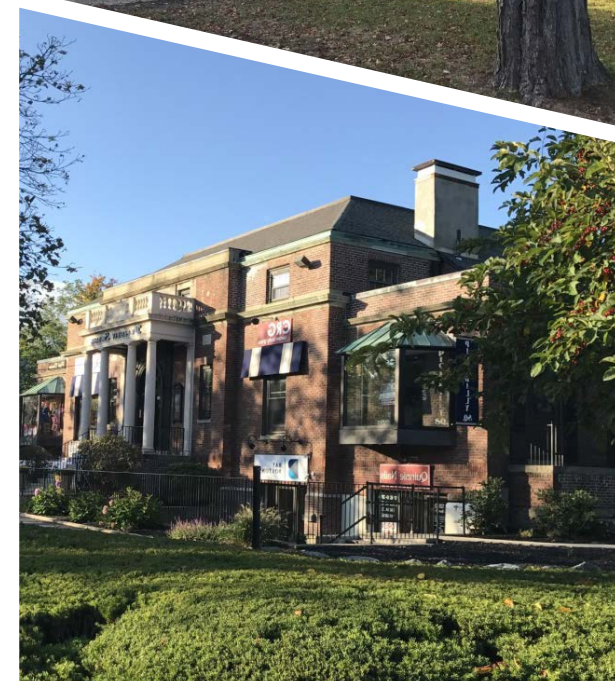
2. The existing Zoning Ordinance does not function as “zoning” rather it manages non-conformity



Why A New Format for Newton

3. The existing Zoning Ordinance does not align with the City's values.

- *Easiest thing* - tear-down a small home and built a significantly larger one
- *Hardest thing* - build contextual residential units around village centers with access to public transit and amenities



How and Why We Got Here

1. Respond to the Comprehensive Plan
2. Respect the existing built environment
3. Reflect the values of Newton's residents and businesses





A Context-Based Approach

Models from Around the U.S.

1. Denver, CO
2. Philadelphia, PA
3. Somerville, MA



Models from Around the U.S.

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Denver, CO

Type of code: Context-based
(hybrid)

Adopted: 2010

Duration: 2005-2010



Neighborhood Context

The Denver Zoning Code is organized by neighborhood contexts. A context-based approach sets standards for compatible development. The neighborhood contexts are distinguished from one another by their physical and functional characteristics including but not limited to:

- street, alley and block patterns
- building placement and height
- diversity, distribution and intensity of land uses
- diversity of mobility options



Suburban Neighborhood

Curving streets, single-family residential and shopping centers.



Urban Edge Neighborhood

Curving and grid street patterns, single family residential and shopettes.



Urban Neighborhood

Regular street grid, single-family homes, main streets and corner stores.



General Urban Neighborhood

Predominantly multi-family grid and alley block pattern, main streets and corner stores, multi-modal.



Urban Center Neighborhood

Mixed use with both residential and commercial, high pedestrian activity, multi modal transportation.



Downtown Neighborhood

Mixed use, transit hub, tallest buildings, high pedestrian activity, historic areas.

 **Photo of a special context area**

Special Context and Districts

For areas that typically serve a principal purpose.

Models from Around the U.S.

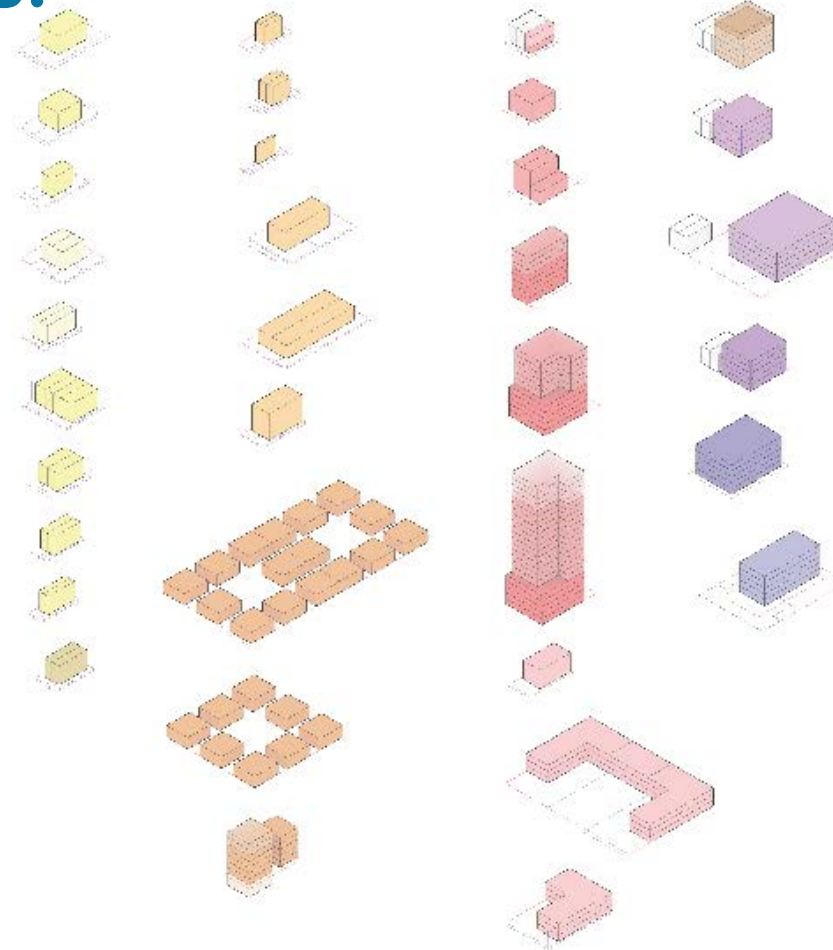
Philadelphia, PA

Type of code: Hybrid

Adopted: 2012

Duration: 2008-2012

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2016

PHILADELPHIA CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

PHILADELPHIA ZONING CODE
INFORMATION MANUAL: QUICK GUIDE



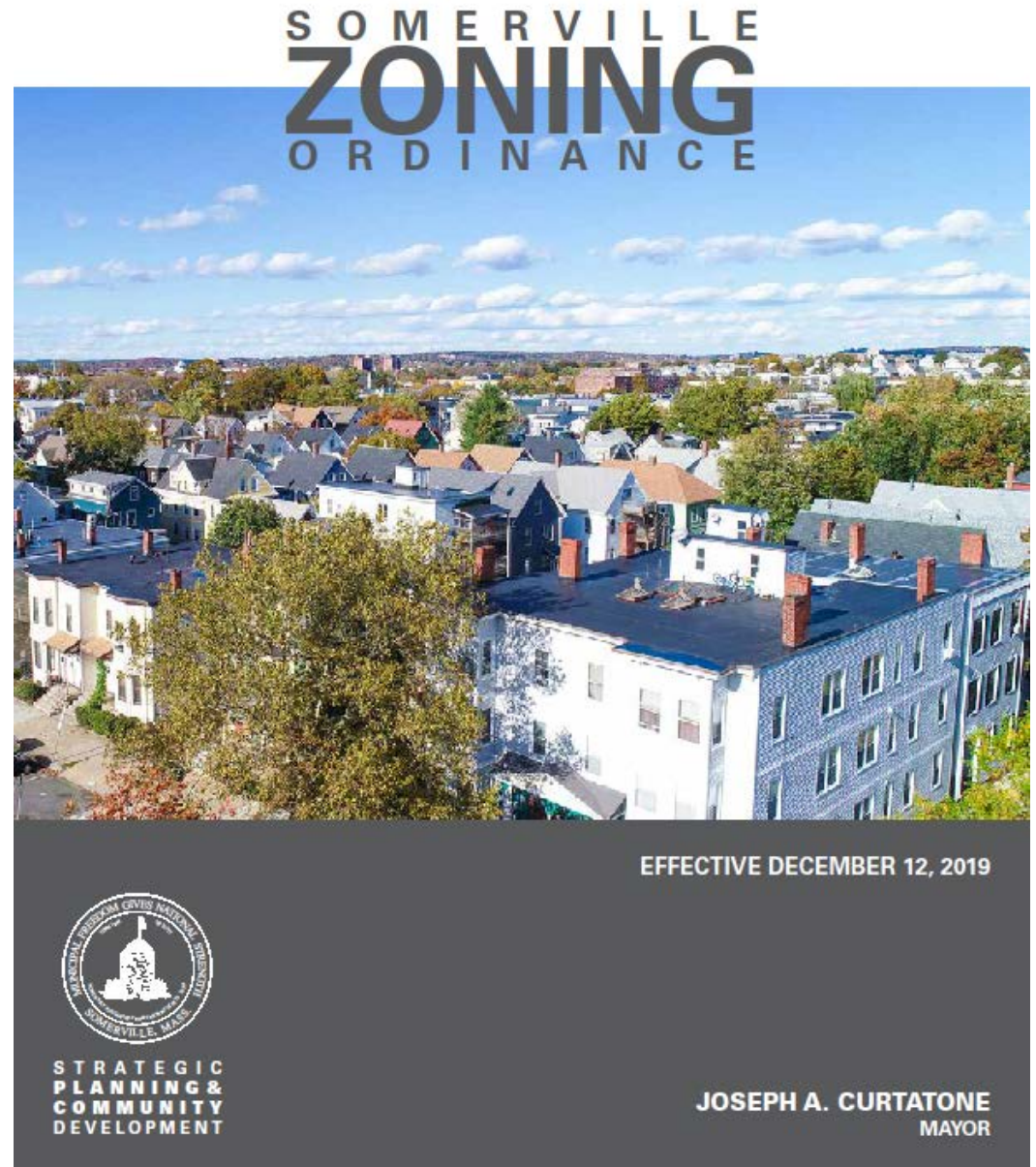
Models from Around the U.S.

Somerville, MA

Type of code: Hybrid

Adopted: 2019

Duration: 2012-2019



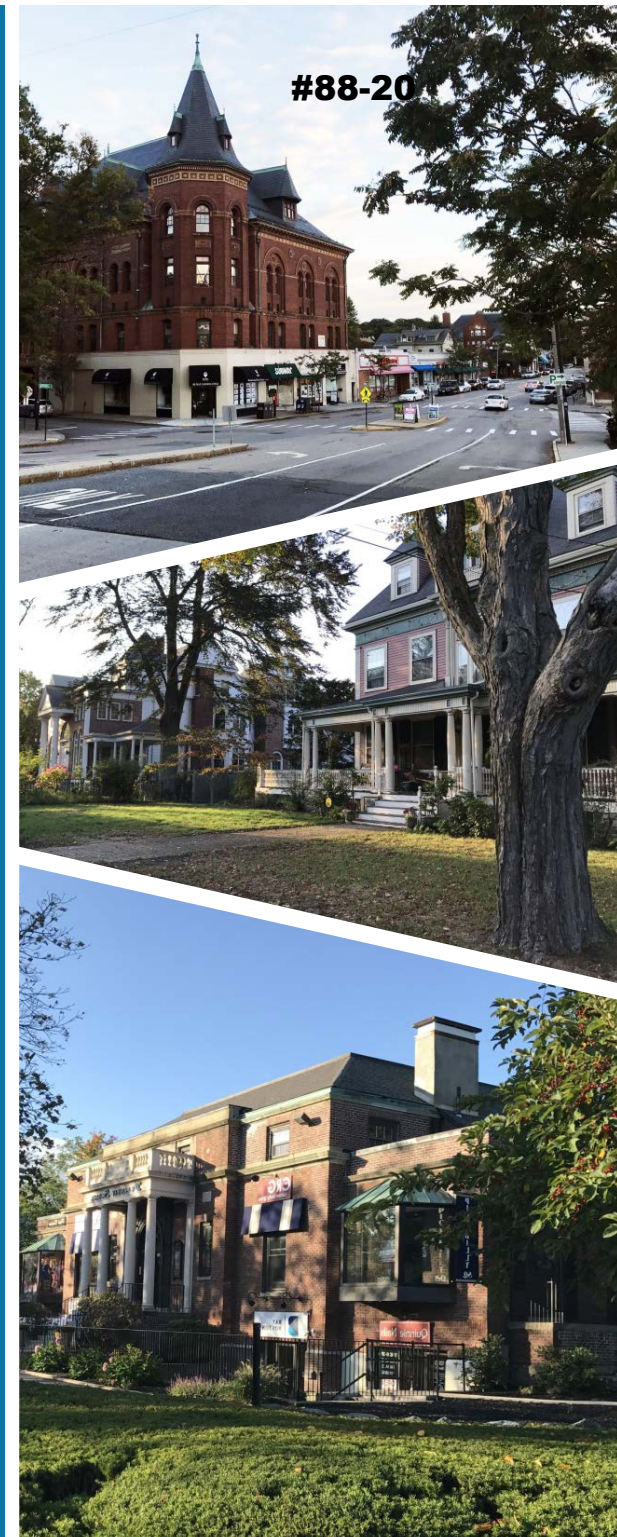
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Looking Ahead



Zoning Redesign is Our Main Priority

1. Build from the draft Zoning Ordinance
2. Frame individual zoning projects and priorities within Zoning Redesign



Next Steps

February 10th Meeting – Discussion of Zoning Redesign process and timeline

Homework

Share the most egregious residential project in your Ward for the Planning Department to analyze



Question & Comments