



Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts
Department of Planning and Development
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Telephone
(617) 796-1120
Telefax
(617) 796-1142
TDD/TTY
(617) 796-1089
www.newtonma.gov

Barney S. Heath
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 10, 2021

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

RE: **#88-20 Discussion and review relative to the draft Zoning Ordinance**
DIRECTOR OF PLANNING requesting review, discussion, and direction relative to the draft Zoning Ordinance.
Chair's NOTE: Planning staff and our consultant, Utile will begin a four part presentation/discussion series focused on Newton's village center districts.

MEETING: September 13, 2021

CC: City Council
Planning Board
Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer

Village Centers – Quantitative Citywide Analysis

Following the kick-off of Zoning Redesign: Village Centers (Phase I) at the April 26th ZAP meeting, our consultant, Utile, began their initial desktop research looking to gather and analyze quantitative data to better understand what makes a village center a village center. In May, Utile presented some of their initial findings, which have since been refined and expanded upon while City staff have conducted the community outreach and engagement of Phase I. At the upcoming ZAP meeting, Utile will share out their walkshed and business analyses of village centers and comparable commercial areas.

- Transit Analyses - This analysis aims to answer whether the presence of T stops or commuter rail stops affect the vitality of Village Centers. Data will include rail ridership and connections to other modes of transportation.
- Population Walkshed Analyses – This analysis looks at whether the number of people living within convenient walking distance of a Village Center affects the vitality of Village Centers and the diversity (and success) of the retail found there. Walksheds are created for each of the chosen Village Centers and key comparative commercial areas. The population and number of housing units within each walkshed are drawn out to understand the relationship between the population and retail activity.

- **Business Analyses** –This analysis aims to understand how the following factors impact the vitality of Village Centers: (1) the number of people working in Village Centers and (2) the mix of uses in Village Centers. The composition of businesses are analyzed and diagrammed for each of the chosen village centers and key comparative commercial areas. This information will be correlated with the number of jobs in each Village Center.
- **Non-Newton Comparisons** – Two local examples of village centers outside of Newton will be presented for further comparison: Wellesley's village center and Moody Street in Waltham. The work will use the same analyses, following the methodology of items above. The team will present the two examples as case studies, sharing the analysis, photographs, and conclusions for how these village centers compare to Newton.

Looking Ahead

The Zoning Redesign: Village Centers discussion continues next at ZAP on October 25, 2020. City staff and Utile will present on the findings from the engagement and outreach that collected community input on their experiences of and their future visions for their village centers. The information shared will be from the Vision Kit, Polis Interactive Forum, Focus Groups, Economic Development Community Outreach, and On the Spot Surveying. For a general timeline for Zoning Redesign: Village Centers through the end of the year, see the attached calendar (Attachment A).

Attachments

Attachment A Zoning Redesign: Village Centers – calendar