



Zoning & Planning Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Monday, October 25, 2021

Present: Councilors Crossley (Chair), Danberg, Albright, Leary, Ryan, Wright, Krintzman and Baker

Also Present: Councilors Bowman, Lipof, Downs, Norton, Malakie, Humphrey, Oliver, Lucas, Kalis and Greenberg

City Staff: Deputy Director of Planning and Development Jen Caira, Director of Planning and Development Barney Heath, Assistant City Solicitor Andrew Lee, Director of Housing and Community Development Amanda Berman, Chief of Long Range Planning Zachery LeMel, Planning Associate Cat Kemmett, Community Planner Engagement Specialist Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler and ADA Coordinator, Jini Fairley

Utile Consultants: Timothy Love and Lisa Hollywood

Planning and Development Board: Chair Peter Doeringer, Barney Heath, Kelley Brown, Sudha Maheshwari, Chris Steele, Kevin McCormick and Jennifer Molinsky

Others Present: NewTV

#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.

Zoning & Planning Held on 01/27/20, 02/10/20, 02/24/20, 03/09/20, 03/23/20, 04/13/20, 04/27/20, 05/19/20, 06/01/20, 06/15/20, 06/29/20, 07/09/20, 07/16/20, 08/13/20, 09/14/20, 10/01/20, 10/15/20, 11/05/20, 11/09/20, 12/14/20, 02/22/21, 03/08/21, 05/24/21, 07/08/21, 09/13/21

ACTION: Zoning & Planning Held 8-0

NOTE: Director of Planning and Development Barney Heath, Chief of Long Range Planning Zachery LeMel, Community Planner Engagement Specialist Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler, Planning and Development Deputy Director Jen Caira and Utile Consultant Timothy Love joined the Committee.

Mr. Heath stated that we're pleased to be here this evening to report back on our village center community engagement efforts. Any engagement effort that is designed to be true, diverse, equitable, inclusive and representative of all segments of the community - needs to be intentional and tireless. I for one had my doubts about our ability to pull folks into this conversation, especially ones

not usually invited or interested. Our team, led by our engagement specialist Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler, designed multiple, easy and fun individual and communal ways to engage about the future of our village centers. Ms. Pilipovic-Wengler, Ms. Kemmett and Mr. LeMel were able to get word on the street to individuals whose voices are often not represented. Opportunities to engage were created at the Farmers Market, Village Day festivals, via community led vision kits, on-line interactive surveys and vision kits allowing individual submissions, random interviews with people on the street and our Newton high school summer interns. Many people provided statements on the Polis forum, as well as pictures and images and in some cases, full plans. Individuals took the time and effort to send in what they thought about, and we should consider when future planning for village centers. Thanks to our team, you can comb through everyone's submissions firsthand by visiting our village center zoning redesign webpage at <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/village-centers> and see where folks organized their own vision kit, village center tours, and/or sent in pictures and sketches that they thought told a story. I'm especially proud of the lengths to which Ms. Pilipovic-Wengler, Ms. Kemmett, and Mr. LeMel went to meet people. The team put in many hours including nights and weekends to reach folks in the community and invite them to participate and share their thoughts. I'm also grateful to various community members who helped facilitate these discussions. Although tonight represents the end of this phase of engagement and will help in guiding the committee's future thoughts with respect to zoning policy for our village centers in the coming months, we are committed to a continuous engagement feedback loop as ZAP continues its work around village center zoning.

Community Planner Engagement Specialist Nevena Pilipovic-Wengler, Planning and Development Deputy Director Jen Caira and Utile Consultant Timothy Love presented a detailed summary of the engagement process and effort, who and how many participated, tools used to sort the data, the key takeaways, examples of zoning considerations based on these key takeaways, and next steps through December. (PowerPoint attached)

Ms. Pilipovic-Wengler stated that the team just wrapped up four months of community engagement that included qualitative research, quantitative data analysis in partnership with our consultant Utile.

Seven themes that emerged from the community engagement efforts:

- Focusing on the environment
- Public space
- Transportation
- Accessibility
- Process
- Housing
- Businesses

We heard almost from 2000 voices during this community engagement effort. More specifically in terms of the information we tagged and synthesized that was about 1720 voices. One big goal in the beginning of this community engagement was to more equitable to engage our community members

and have a more diverse representation of the people we heard from. The data we had to directly compare it are the people we heard from during the 2020 survey and December 2020 to the online interactive forum, also known as Polis. It was exciting to see that we were able to jump from our respondents being 0.6%, 4% of younger people ages 15 to 24 to 13% of our respondents being that age. In addition, we jumped from 4.62% of our respondents being renters to 13%. We were happy to see that we were able to match almost an on the point representation of the homeowners in the city and the online interactive forum as well.

The engagement was very similar including creating, handing and getting out the vision kit, which was a self-guided tour of the village center of one's choice. We also had the online interactive forum, also known as Polis. We had our equitable focus groups, broken down into eight categories, and we had community members be able to facilitate the breakout rooms of each focus group that they identified with. In addition, we had economic development engagement and close partnership with the Economic Development Commission which involved both focus groups, as well as a survey that business owners could complete. Mr. LeMel created a history presentation on what village centers meant historically for Newton. In partnership with Historic Newton, we held a panel after this presentation of community members, and with a questions and answers for the attendees. Lastly, we did do on the spot surveys, which meant bringing the online interactive forum as well as awareness about this engagement phase to multiple events and busy places, with our fabulous high school interns. The Vision kit submissions were fantastic, we got an incredible array of photos and observations, many of these were in direct response to the prompts we listed in our vision kit. What was exciting about the vision kits is that we heard from multiple community members that these prompts and this exercise helps them have a different lens of how they approach their village center, and kind of take a pause and take a breath and reflect on what currently exists in one's village centers was as well as what doesn't. We heard that it was a great exercise to pull in more community members, as well as people who possibly had different opinions from. In addition, we got a wide array of the types of vision kits submissions, and this included maps.

The high school interns engaged hundreds of people who had never heard of zoning redesign. But that doesn't mean their expertise and village centers is not relevant, and the direct experiences of those places. The interns went to the YMCA, the fest and completed their own vision kits. Halfway through the summer, we realized that we were able to engage more people by going to more populated areas such as the library and the farmers markets. We also had site observations at three village centers, new entities that we reached out to throughout the four months. We also marked which of all the people we individually reached out to either co-hosted a focus group, submitted a vision kit, or also worked with staff to engage community members either through allowing us to table at their events, or helping us engage their own workers.

In terms of what we heard about each village center, it was about 50/50, hearing about specific village centers, and hearing about just a city wide reflection. We did ask staff to make a significant effort to make sure we were getting specific examples of village centers and reflections of specific village centers as often as we could. This is both through asking people to do vision kits and a specific village center, as well as in the focus groups that weren't village center specific, asking people for

examples of the different sentiments and values, hopes and concerns that they raised in those meetings.

Overall, more than 1,700 community members contributed to at least one of the community engagement channels offered (focus groups, Vision Kits, online interactive forum, on-the-spot surveying, etc.). There was a clear emphasis on engaging those who are disproportionately under-represented. Ms. Pilipovic-Wengler presented on how this phase of engagement tripled the number of renters and people aged 15-24 as compared to previous engagement efforts.

Ms. Caira then presented on how through this engagement staff received everything from big ideas and dreams for village centers, to specific requests for maintenance or improvement, to mini master plans for areas of the city. Every statement was reviewed and logged and through this these seven takeaways emerged, focusing on the environment, public space, transportation, accessibility, process, housing, and businesses. These takeaways are:

- Creating and activating more community gathering & open public space
- Increasing accessibility to buildings and infrastructure within Village Centers
- Incorporating climate resiliency through built structures and green spaces
- Helping small businesses to begin, stay and thrive in Village Centers
- Making permitting process easier, clearer, and multi-tiered
- Adding more diverse housing options and encouraging mixed-use projects although there were many opinions about how to do this
- Prioritizing safe and accessible routes to and through village centers, especially walking and biking

Ms. Caira went through each of these takeaways using examples of different community input received to highlight different points. Following this, Mr. Love gave a brief preview of how these takeaways may translate into various zoning recommendations that will be presented at upcoming ZAP meetings for the committee to consider.

Committee member's comments, questions and answers:

The survey was conducted over the months when the weather was relatively good – how would poor weather have changed the results? When we begin to discuss these findings and their implications, I think it's very important to try and separate, if possible, from the means that are public and those that are private.

Regarding access and transportation, because there are times when vehicles are really the only easy way to get places - If you keep expanding the public space, and diminishing the travel space, are you getting people to the village centers?

You reached 2000 community members, your interns went out and contacted 500 people, are these good numbers? Mr. Love answered that people have to choose to do an online survey and many people started out doing it and didn't get to the seven questions to become part of the

statistical model that was done. If you want to look closely at the questions, because participants could ask the questions, you'll see that the questions represent a wide range of opinions and the answers to the questions that sort out the group A and group B. I would invite people to look at the data of the survey, to understand the kind of the granularity of the feedback to see that. We think that a wide range of people in Newton with a wide range of opinions did participate in the questions that were posted, was probably the best evidence of it.

The survey shows that 32% of the population or respondents wanted easy parking. It would be interesting to know the number of seniors (who participated)? What does the minority population need in the village centers? Are the answers broken down into populations that responded to it all? Mr. Love answered: No, there wasn't extensive data collected about each person in front of the questions. Ms. Caira answered: Just because it was 32%, doesn't mean parking isn't necessary. We included statements from focus groups, Vision kits, and submissions that discussed the need for parking, and the need to think about how we provide parking and where was really important. To be very clear, we're not disregarding any of these statements, or using that 30% to say there's no need for parking. Ms. Pilipovic-Wengler answered: For example, the older adults focus group would be a fantastic place to dig into the kinds of comments we got regarding parking and transportation. To your question earlier on the statistical relevance of the data, like I had presented on some months ago, I did consult MAPC, the regional planning agency, as well as Professor Ann Forsyth at the Harvard Graduate School of Design who focuses on qualitative data. Those entities confirmed that it is actually less about the numbers and more about the range of voices that you are consulting. When we got to about 100 people who'd completed the online interactive forum, we actually found the percentages and the ways people were grouped and answering certain questions, remained fairly consistent with every 100 additional persons. Professor Ann Forsyth, MAPC and I discussed as well that you often can see, as certain number, a pattern emerging that is confirmed by the additional hundreds of people you add on. I do feel confident that this information does represent a fair amount of patterns held by other community members. I do feel confident that this information indicates a representative sample of community opinions.

What does the term "strategically fit" in village centers mean? Mr. LeMel answered he thinks it ranges from looking renovations and rehabilitation of existing structures, if possible, to thinking about possibly smaller, mixed-use developments that could be more surgically inserted into village centers. "Fitting" had to do with what people think is contextual. Sometimes this was about using specific materials. In Nonantum there was a specific call for masonry and brickwork, for example, in the Visioning sessions. So, it really ranged depending on the source.

Regarding the addresses on the spot survey - Was that pulled out separately? Mr. LeMel answered that this was getting people to engage particularly with the Polis survey. For the most part, the people who engaged in on the spot survey were directed to Polis and they are grouped within Polis.

Wonderful presentation, great information and strong data, It was more inclusive and included a greater slice of Newton voices. The information here is information that I feel innately during this

time where we're facing both a housing crisis and a climate crisis. We are absolutely on the right track.

Newton residents who understand the importance of both offering opportunities for more housing and village centers and that connection between living closer to amenities and not being so car dependent. We're building thoughtful developments with green spaces, and a lot of significant sustainable benefits.

It's important to understand the concept of complete streets. We've been building around the car for a century. Now it's time for us to also remember there are other important types of ways people are getting around, which are important to us to meet our climate action goals. If we can get even 10% of people out of their cars and onto other options, we're really helping those people that do need to drive and in terms of reducing traffic congestion. Remember that some of the some of the goals we have for our climate action plan are very difficult. The reason we have to do these things is because we're facing an existential crisis, both for our planet and our community, but also for the Newton that we want. The change will greatly benefit Newton residents, local businesses and our environment.

I continue to worry about the 70% versus the 30% (referring to the 78%-22% of respondents who favor change v. no change) that are reflected. Sarah Ronan, Chair of the National Historic Advisory Committee by President Biden, has helped change the enabling legislation for the State of Connecticut with an organization called Desegregate Connecticut. Her expertise bridges a gap that I see reflected in the 70% versus the 30%. Let's say keep everything the way it is now, no, let's change everything. Could we invite her if she is willing to come and talk to us in Newton it just might be one way for us to look for the commonalities and what we're all trying to achieve here.

Happy to hear that we were able to reach out to 500 people on the street, because this goes a long way toward getting a representative sample of everyone's voices.

I would like to see a meeting of the minds of the 70 (78%) and the 30% (22%). There was mention of the number of commonalities that everyone wanted including outdoor dining, walking, ease of walking within the villages, the need for many amenities and being able to have amenities rather than just banks and nail salons in our villages. Newton needs a good mix of shops and stores. Especially if we are able to bring back housing, which I think will go a long way toward revitalizing our villages and bringing them back to the vitality and usefulness that they had in the 19th century when there was more density in the villages. We have to look at the perfect ratio of building height.

Chair Crossley stated that a sample of over 1700 individual contributions is quite a significant number of people. Can you discuss the statistical validity of these numbers? The community outreach undertaken is more than any effort in the city has ever achieved. I've never seen an attempt to be this inclusive, and this broad. I'm actually extremely impressed with the number and mix of folks that responded to this survey and participated in the vision kits.

Councilor comments, questions and answers:**What is the implication that part of investing in village centers or identifying what we would like about village centers would be eliminating special permits for any developments?**

Mr. LeMel answered that statement was from one particular person. The results were public the entire time, and I think that might have been a direct response to some comments pushing for making more multifamily mixed use development by right. I think this this particular comment was wanting to just make sure that that the special permit process was preserved, and they particularly called out larger projects. Mr. Love answered that there's another context for that, from one of the EDC organized sessions that we held that there might be projects below a certain density or size threshold that don't require a special permit. So that the special permit process is reserved for projects above a certain size (to be determined) to encourage more missing middle and smaller scale development to happen without the cost burdens of a special permit. A special permit process can be subsidized for a larger project but make smaller development a bit more difficult to make financially feasible. That was also part of the discussions that came up through the three sessions we had with the EDC.

Please clarify the slide to reflect the one person or the EDC.

Chair Crossley stated that we probably also need to wrap that conversation into the state mandate, and we are not sure how we're going to meet that in Newton. We are supposed to be identifying an area in the city where certain minimum level of density will be allowed by right in order to meet the requirements of the Housing Choice Bill.

It is important that our villages be vibrant. Happy to hear so many great comments of people who were thinking differently about how our village centers work. Seven out of ten residents I spoke with want to move to a village center. 30% want to stay right in their home. I think that aligns with that 70% of people are thinking we should be doing something a little bit differently. We have a lot of opportunity. We're not just doing because we think it might be a great idea. This is what we need to do to support a growing senior population and to address climate change and so many other items.

I participated in three vision kits. I found the visions kits to be fun and productive. I think the residents really appreciated making wishes and dreams of what they want to see in their villages. I think it was just such a positive way to get residents engaged in the whole process that could otherwise be very dry and technical.

We must be cautious to not project our own wishes onto the data, but to look at what we've gathered and really dig into it. It behooves us in crafting the zoning code to look very carefully at what people have told us and accept it, even if it doesn't comport with our own views.

It's all about car trips, people are not going to give up their cars completely. When we talk about getting out of our cars in our village centers, it's not 100%. Reducing these trips is good for the

environment. It creates these middle market units, creates middle market units, creates more truly affordable by program, affordable housing units. It brings vitality.

Some people are scared about removing the special permit process away and letting (too many) things go through by right. As Chair of the Land Use Committee, I will tell you that we have a lot of little things, porches, garages, things that take up a lot of our time that if we did give to another board, or to another lane, we could spend more time on the larger projects which is necessary. The special permit process should never go away. I think we do a great job. I think we come up with better projects. I would not see any multifamily greater than I won't even say the number of units, but it would not be many that would exceed what we would look at. I'm all for streamlining the process so that we can pay attention more to bigger projects.

What was the exact number of total respondents to the engagement process? Was 2000 the actual number? Ms. Pilipovic-Wengler answered the number of unique individuals who submitted vision kits combined with the number of people who attended the focus groups, including equitable and economic development focus groups, as well as the number of people who statistically contributed to the online interactive forum is 1720.

What quantitative data will the planning department and other consultants review when it comes to creating our new zoning code in village centers? What were the other sources of data? Ms. Caira answered that this is the beginning of determining where we need to focus on a zoning recommendation. We'll be collecting more data as we go, more engagement and feedback, as well as deeper analysis of demographics of businesses that exist, economics, how these things get built, what you need to build these things and market research, Mr. Love answered that the data that we've looked at and presented at previous meetings included looking at transit ridership to see if there was a correlation between transit ridership and particularly specific transit stops into village centers and the impact on business vitality. We looked at the mix of jobs and found interestingly that the more kind of daytime workers who were in village centers had a positive impact on the kinds of retail, food and beverage services there was a correlation there. A lot of our research had to do with unlocking thorough data driven spatial research. The ideal recipe is for mix of uses in a village center, so that retail is supported across the full spectrum of a day. So that's analysis that we've done in the rearview mirror. As we're starting to think about what tools we can use and zoning to affect some of those priorities that were presented tonight, other types of research questions will come up that might drive some additional research.

I urge people to go the Newtonville Area Council website and please read the survey analysis because I think it's a good one for village centers in terms of questions, data and responses.

Planning Board members comments:

The excel spreadsheet is an amazing summary resource for someone looking for pros and cons on the perspectives of Newton citizens on the village centers. Interpreting data is really more of an art than a science. I hope we won't get hung up on either the quality of the sample or the particular numbers as we search for some kind of common ground on the belief. I like the fact that some

attention has been paid in having multi language materials and interviews because I think that's a very important element of the Newton population that needs to be included in our in our work.

Ms. Berman provided the following links:

The registration link for the November 15 @ 6:00 pm 'public info session' on this presentation

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mEzgXDDTTtCkMzFbX6fvow

The excel document that has been referenced is linked right under the big, bolded letters saying,

'Engagement Results' on this website at <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/village-centers>

Committee members thanked Ms. Berman, Planning Department, interns, for their positive, extensive and thorough process.

Without further discussion, Councilor Krintzman made a motion to hold this item. Council members agreed 8-0.

The Committee adjourned at 10:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah J. Crossley, Chair

City of Newton Zoning & Planning Committee

Village Center Zoning: Phase 1 Engagement



Zoning
Redesign

#88-20

Agenda

1. Introduction

Context of Engagement

2. What We Learned

Takeaways

3. Looking Ahead

Zoning Considerations
Calendar

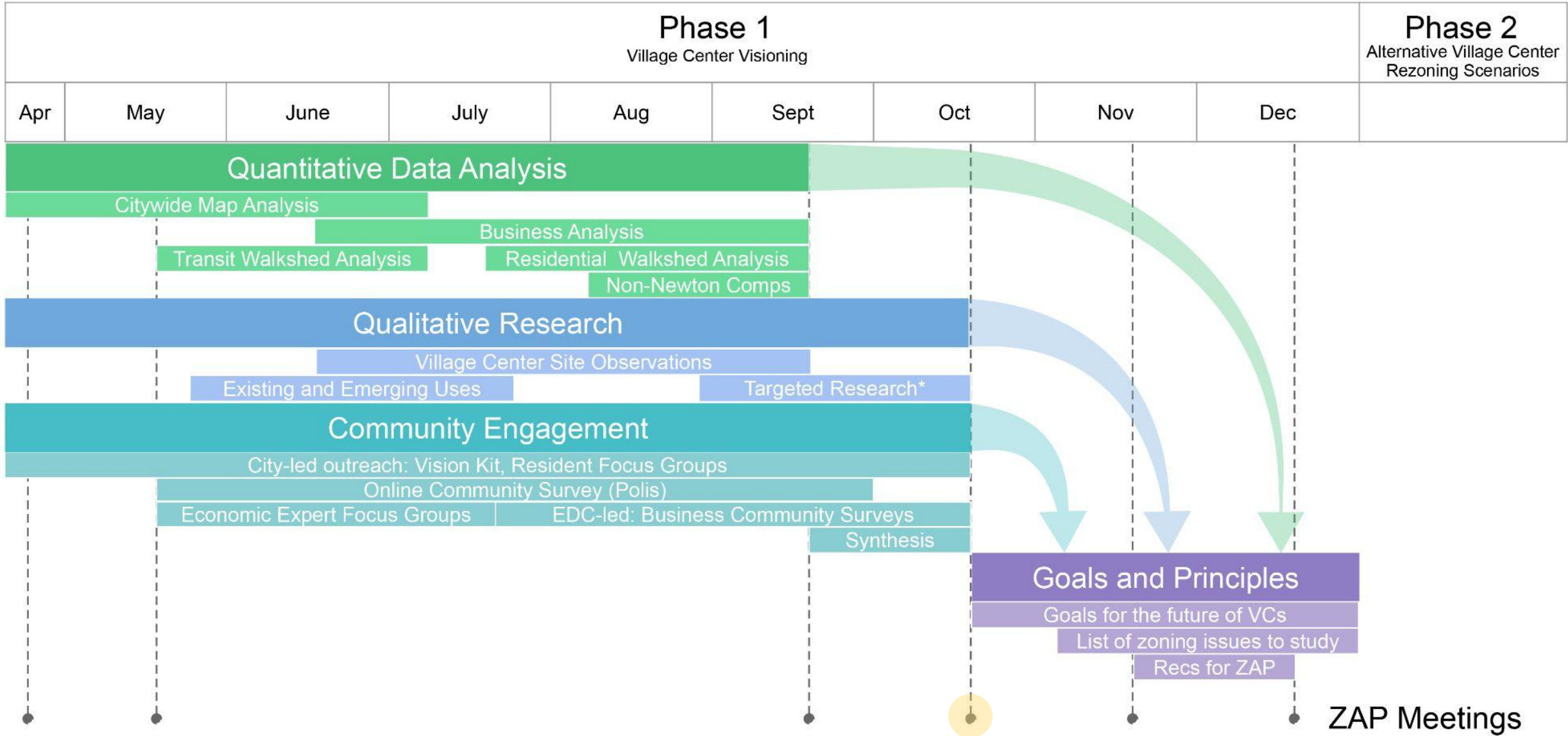
4. Discussion

2021 Calendar



Today
Present engagement results.

#88-20

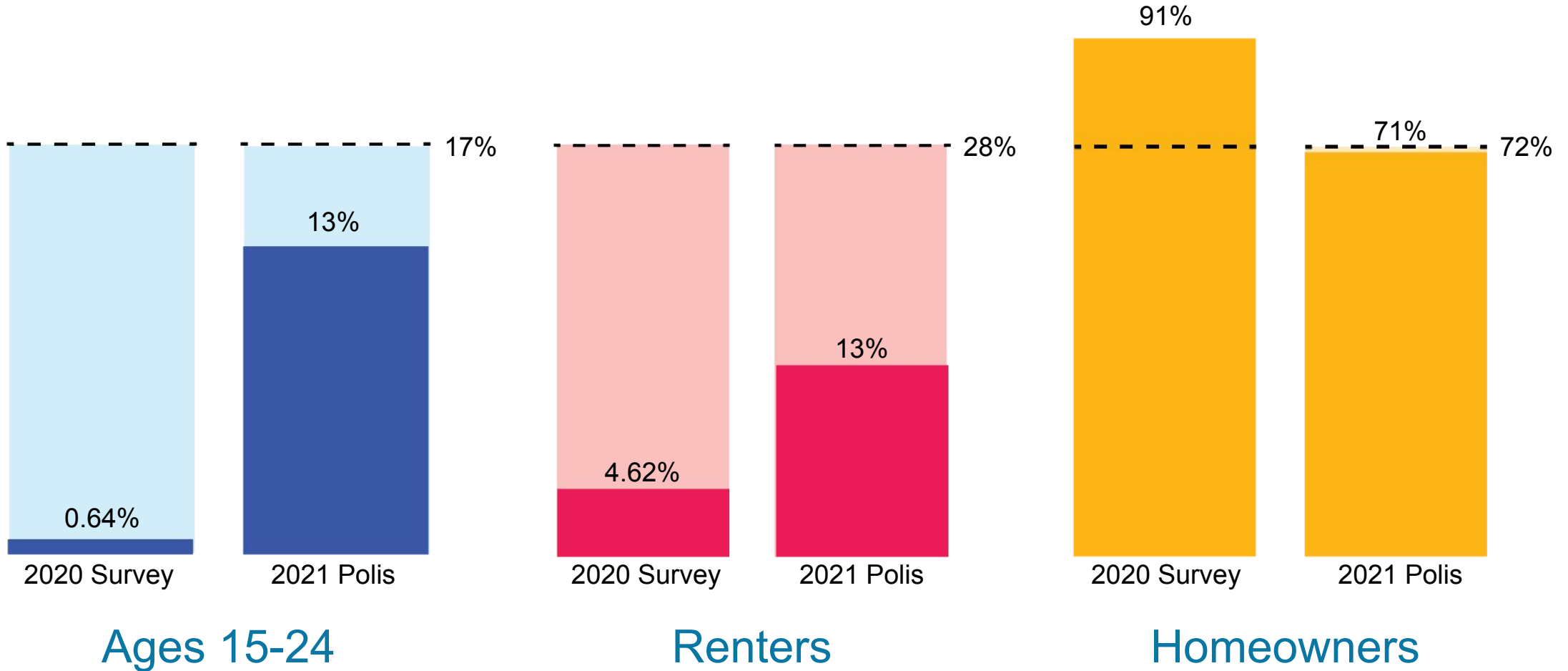


Context of Engagement



Engagement participation - broader representation (~2000 voices)

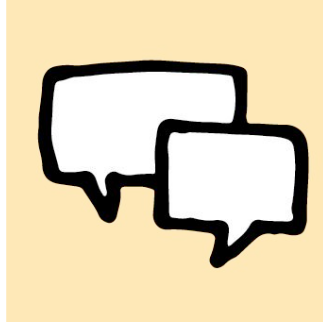
Total of Population (2019 5-year ACS Estimates)



What the engagement was - what we had planned



Vision Kit
290 participants /
102 submissions



Online interactive forum
1,249 participants



Equitable focus groups
139 participants
18 community facilitators



**Economic development
engagement**
41 participants



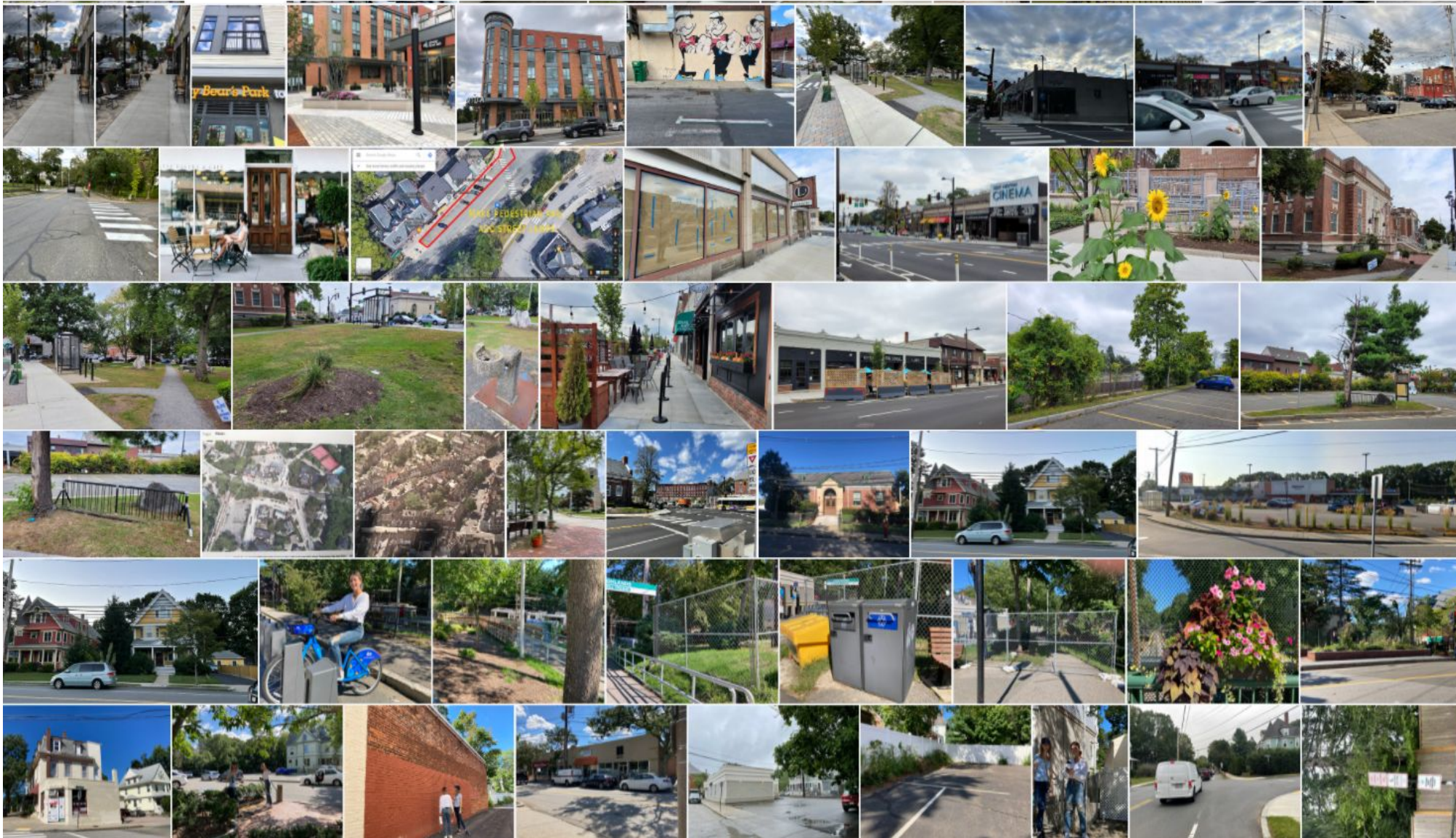
History presentation
88 attendees/
viewed 165 times



On-the-spot Surveying
Over 500 engaged in-person

Vision Kit submissions

#88-20



Themes

What's a Village Center?

What are the defining features of a village center? Where does it begin and end? Why did you pick this one?

Click Here to submit your photo & idea

Click Here to submit just text

Environment



Find elements in your village center(s) that support a greener future.

What does the 'green future' of your village center look like? Are there more places for things like walking and biking, trees and plants, rainwater collection, or solar panels?

Click Here to submit your photo & idea

Click Here to submit just text

Shopping, Eating & Working



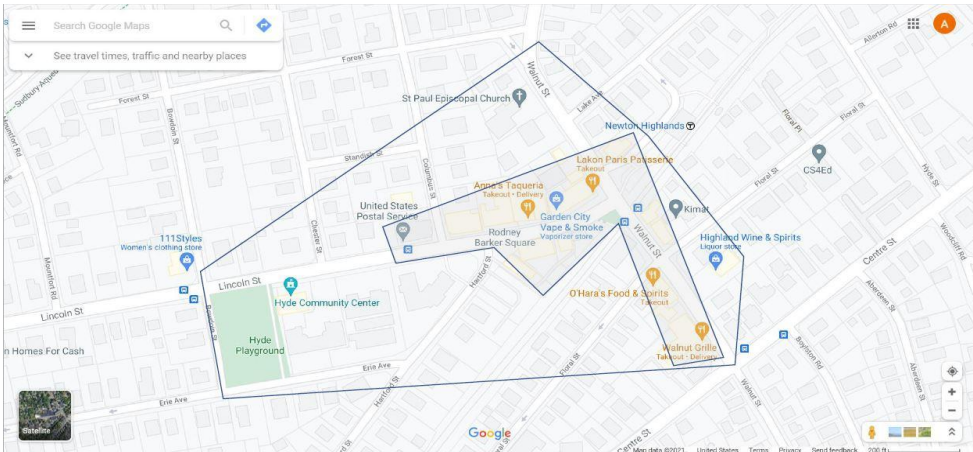
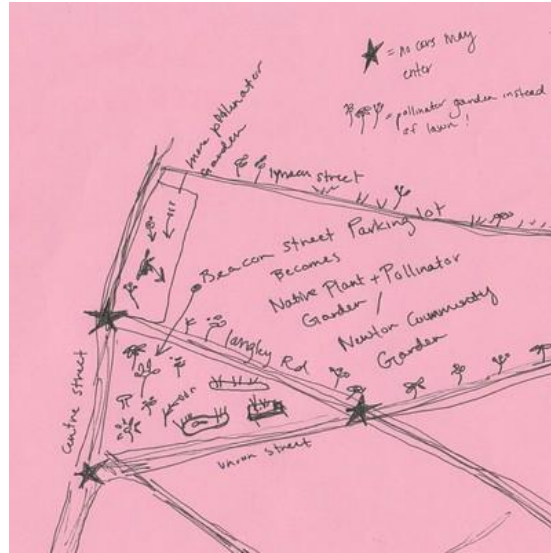
Go to the stores and restaurants you often visit, or ones you are looking forward to revisiting when safe to do so. What do you prefer to buy in person versus online?

What businesses would you like to open up? Would you like to be able to work in a village center?

Click Here to submit your photo & idea

Click Here to submit just text

Vision Kit submissions - maps



Vision Kit submissions - collages



Vision Kit submissions - historic and other images



What the engagement was - additional opportunities



NHA & NHN in Newton Centre



NHA & NHN in Newtonville



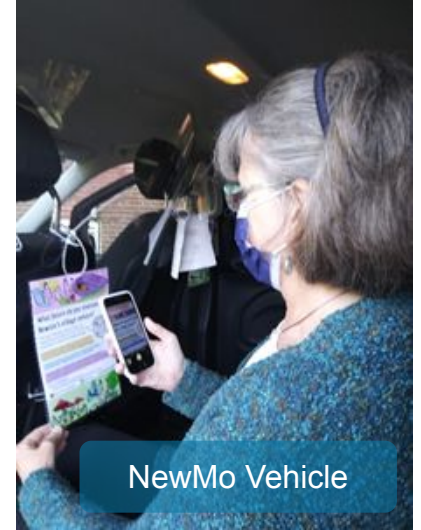
您对牛顿乡村中心的未来有何设想?

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

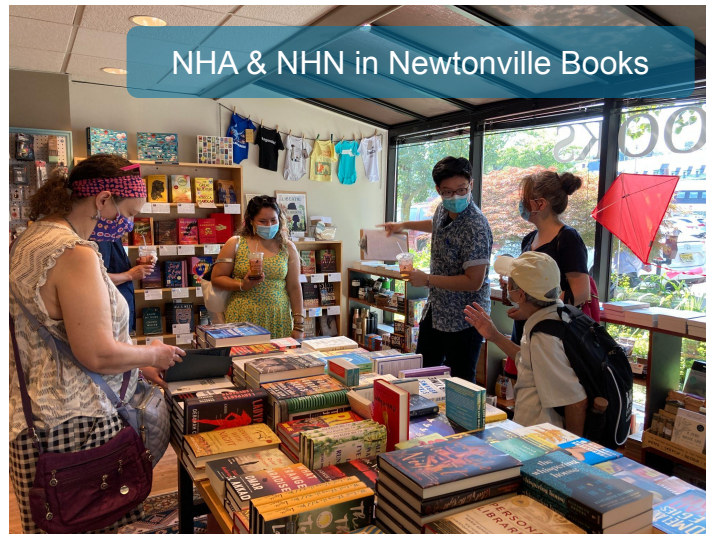


NewMo Vehicle



New Art Center

FOR ADULTS, TEENS, & CHILDREN
ART CLASSES
 IN-PERSON, ONLINE, & HYBRID
 FALL 2021 | SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER



NHA & NHN in Newtonville Books



NNHS Sustainability Class

What the engagement was - additional opportunities



Where?

Site Observation



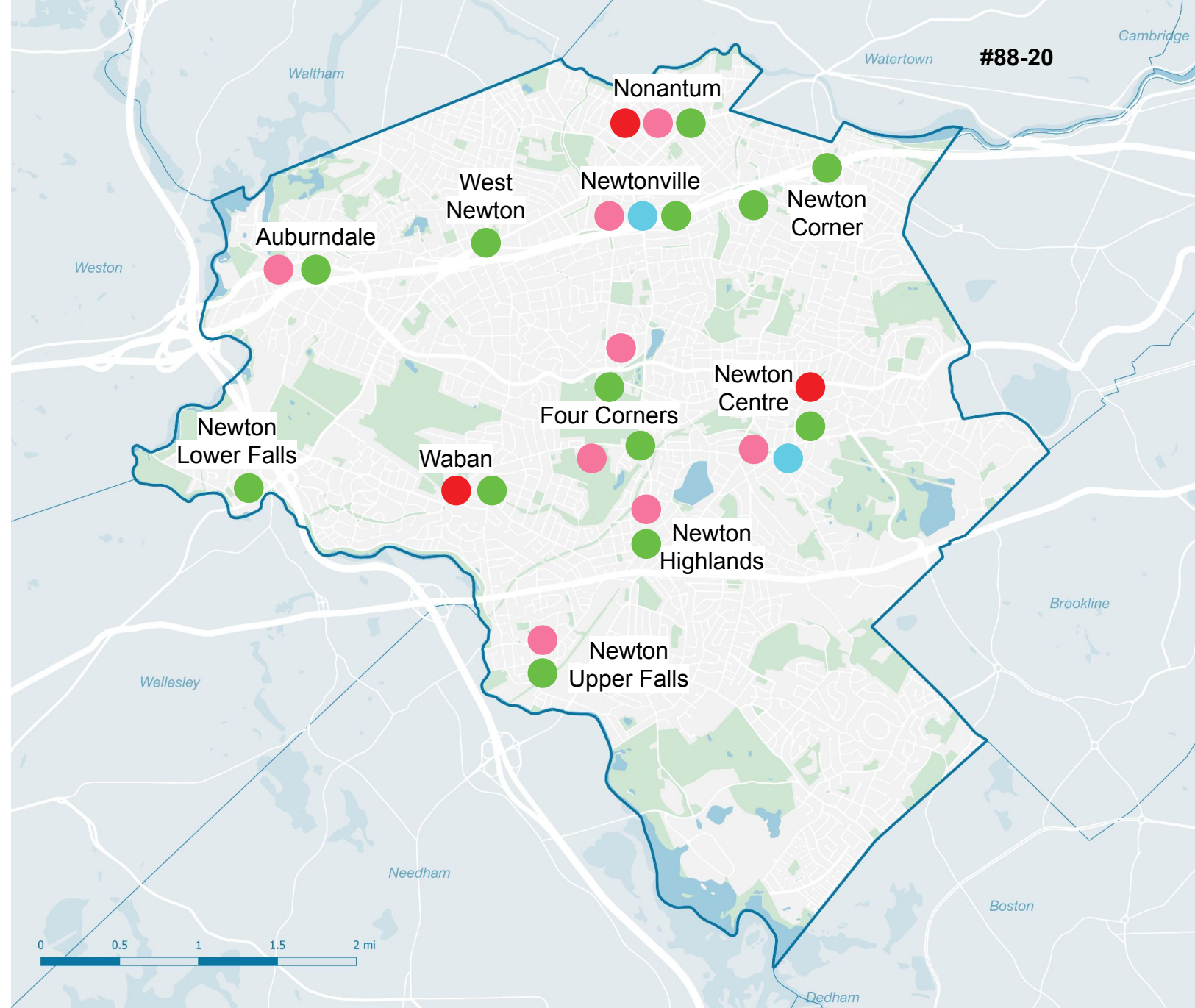
NHA & NHN Tours



High School Interns



Staff Tabling



Who we reached out to & heard from

- co-hosted focus group
- submitted a Vision Kit
- staff tabled at event of

Neighborhood Area Councils

- Newton Highlands
- Newtonville NAC
- ● Upper Falls NAC
- Waban NAC

Commissions, Committees & Departments

- Commission on Disability
- Council on Aging
- Youth Commission
- Department of Health & Human Services (workers)
- Department of Planning & Development (workers)
- Historic Newton
- Human Rights Commission
- Newton Senior Center
- Transportation Advisory Group
- Economic Development Commission
- Citizens Commission on Energy
- Parks, Recreation + Culture Planning & Development Board

Councilors

- Reached out to all Councilors
- 12 Councilors of 5 Wards

Stakeholders

- 350Mass Newton Node
- Bike Newton
- Boston College Graduate Student Union
- Boys & Girls Club
- Chestnut Hill Association
- Chinese American Association of Newton (CAAN)
- ● *Cultural Development (City)*
- Culture Center of Taipei
- Economic and Cultural Office
- Defund Newton Police
- Engine6
- Families Organizing for Racial Justice (FORJ)
- FUUSN - Social Action Council
- ● Green Newton
- Green Newton - School Connections

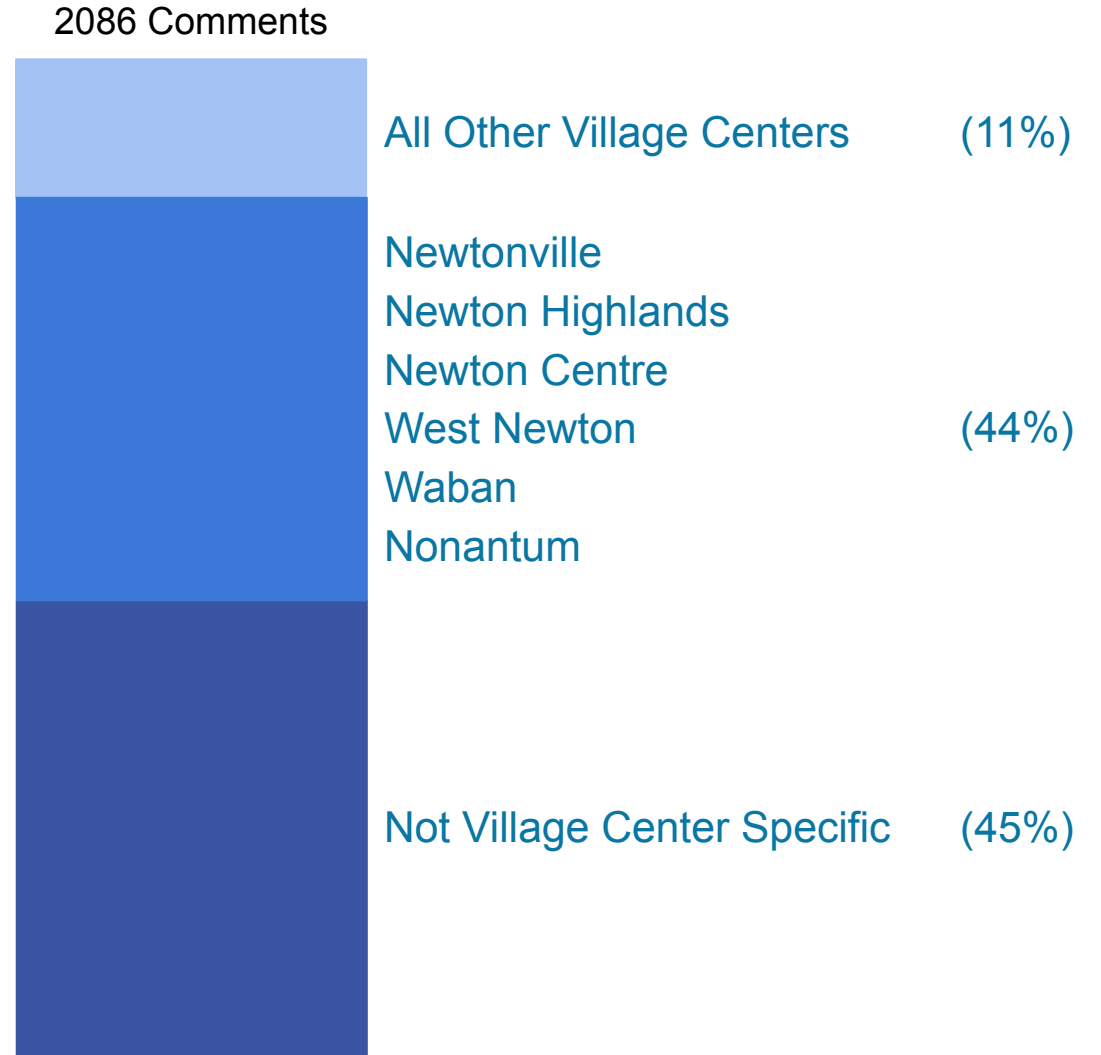
- Green Newton - Youth Group
- Harmony Foundation
- Hyde Community Center
- League of Women Voters - Newton
- Myrtle Baptist Church
- New Art Center
- Newton Center for Civic Engagement
- Newton Coalition of Black Residents
- Newton Community Development Foundation
- *Newton Housing Authority*
- Newton Interfaith Clergy Association (NICA)
- Newton Lower Falls Improvement Association
- *Newton Neighbors Helping Neighbors*
- NNHS & NSHS's Sustainability Courses
- Newton Open Studio

- Newton Public School System (PTOs + Teachers + Social Workers + Students)
- Newton Talks Race
- Newton Teachers Association
- NNHS NextGen Voices
- Right-Size Newton
- Safe Routes to School Task Force
- St. Mary of Carmen Society
- Team Sangiolo
- Temple Emanuel Social Justice Group
- Temple Shalom
- The Village Bank
- Tour de Newton
- U-CHAN
- Understanding Our Differences
- Waban Improvement Society
- Welcoming Newton

How much we heard about each village center

Staff asked community members to cite specific examples of village centers that already modeled what they hope for.

Community members reflected on hopes for village centers in general as well as cited specific wants or needs.



How we synthesized the information - tagging



Value T	Theme	Sub-Theme/Category	Specific comment	Village Center
4.8	Environment Environment	Create and implement sidewalk lighting standards	Dense shrubbery, changes in level and inadequate pedestrian links between the upper and lower parts of the village fragment it, leading to a suboptimal retail environment and/or excessive car travel over very small distances. Without eliminating the well-tended planting, it should be quite easy to establish a better connection, both visual and pedestrian between the two parts of the village.	Waban West Newton
4.12	Environment	Use shared parking to reduce parking footprint in village centers	this is a very sad water fountain There are a lot of surface parking lots in west newton, both private and public. These spaces create "heat islands" and incentivize driving. Is there a way to consolidate these lots into a garage and adapt the parking lots for more environmentally conscious uses?	West Newton
4.5	Environment	Embrace alternatives to driving	A multi-modal bike/bus interchange that makes it easy to get around without a car! It would be nice if there were more destinations in Newton I could take the bus to	West Newton
2.1	Housing	Balance Housing Needs with the Need for Commercial Space	This area would be a great place for housing with retail on the 1st floor. Though it has been nice to have the empty space for outdoor dining	Newton Highlands
2.1	Housing	Balance Housing Needs with the Need for Commercial Space	Two or three stories of housing should be built above these stores on Lincoln St., including Post Office	Newton Highlands
2.1	Housing	Balance Housing Needs with the Need for Commercial Space	Housing should be built here, 3 stories above the stores. Stores could remain.	Newton Highlands
-	Housing	Seek high-quality design that is responsive to context	Can DRT define encourage building styles and elements and such that work for each village rather than responding to individual projects each time?	Newton Highlands
2.3	Housing	Pursue diverse housing choices to meet changing housing needs of a diverse population.	While Newton Highlands is one of the more compact Village Centers and one with a narrower thru street and narrower sidewalks, I do not feel like the buildings are too tall. In fact I think they all ought to be able to be at least 3 stories.	Newton Highlands
2.3	Housing	Pursue diverse housing choices to meet changing housing needs of a diverse population.	Is there an opportunity to build a multi-use building over the public parking lot? It is over 16k square feet of space.	Newton Highlands
2.6	Housing	Need more affordable housing	MU4 should have 25% affordable.	Newtonville
2.11	Housing	Encourage mixed-use projects in villages and commercial corridors, especially those with mass transit.	Good location for multi-unit development at the corner of Langley and Union across for the T. The building to the right is currently for sale. Redeveloping these properties would help strengthen governance so the city and developers and businesses are working together to improve our city centers, MBTA and T stations.	Newton Centre
1.13	Housing	Require new construction and major renovations to maximize energy efficiency, maximize the use of renewable energy including thermal energy, and use electricity for heating and cooling.	1188 Centre St Citizens Bank—very ugly and has potential to be beautiful and multifunctional and in a perfect location walking distance from everything essential. Any similar development must be done in tandem with building complete streets so that new residents will not worsen traffic and increase GHG emissions by driving. High energy efficient and 100% fossil fuel free development should be prioritized and other environmental benefits to restore local ecology through rain gardens/landscaping/trees. In the heart of Newtonville, 28 Austin St, a Mixed-use development with affordable units. Allowing more similar development could strengthen	Newton Centre



- Environment [1.01-1.07]
- Housing [2.01-2.10]
- Shopping, Eating + Working [3.01-3.12]
- Transportation [4.01-4.10]
- Village Center Context [5.01-5.06]
- Regulatory Process [6.01-6.05]
- Accessibility [7.01-7.06]
- Arts + Culture [8.01-8.04]
- Inclusive, Diverse + Welcoming Spaces [9.01-9.09]
- Zoning Redesign Engagement + Process [10.01-10.08]



How we synthesized the information - tagging

- Environment [1.01-1.07]
- Housing [2.01-2.10]
- Shopping, Eating + Working [3.01-3.12]
- Transportation [4.01-4.10]
- Village Center Context [5.01-5.06]
- Regulatory Process [6.01-6.05]
- Accessibility [7.01-7.06]**
- Arts + Culture [8.01-8.04]
- Inclusive, Diverse + Welcoming Spaces [9.01-9.09]
- Zoning Redesign Engagement + Process [10.01-10.08]

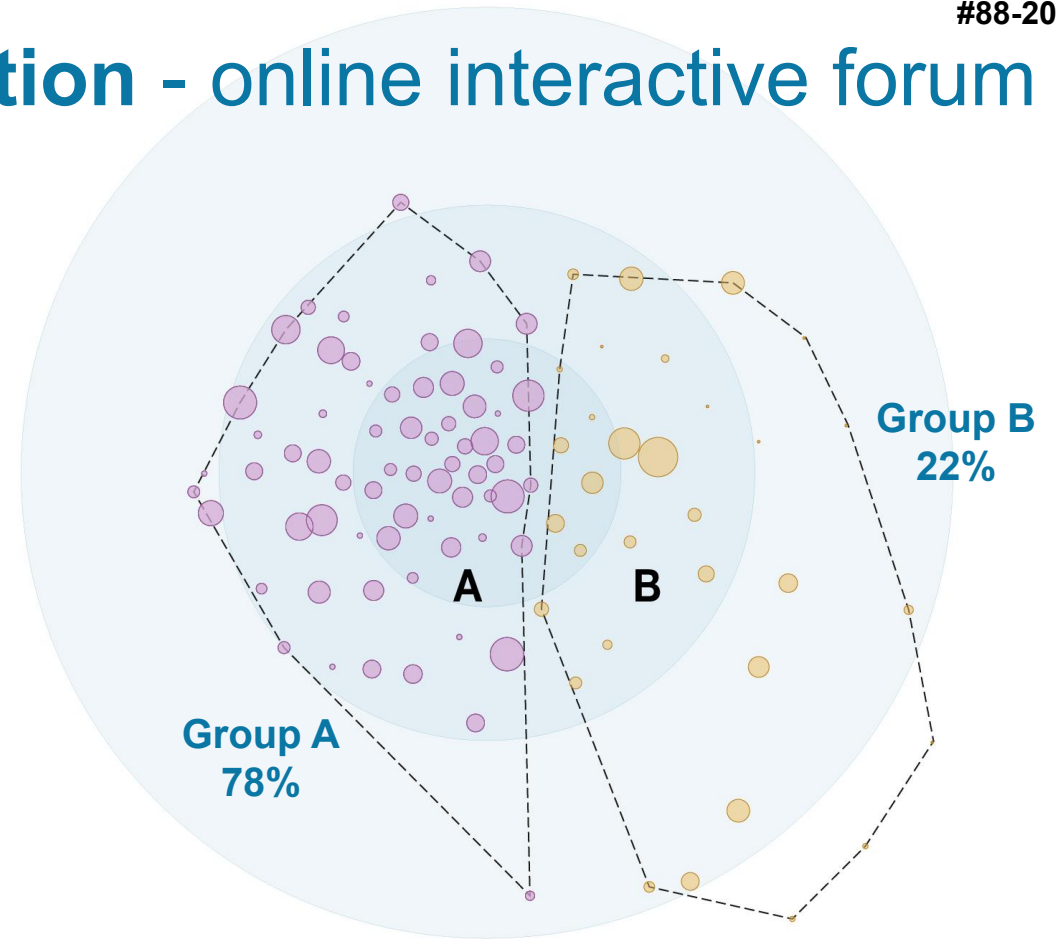


Accessibility [7.01-7.06]

Theme	Sub-Theme	Tag #	Count
Accessibility			7
Accessibility	Make sidewalks and curbcuts more accessible for people with physical disabilities	7.01	50
Accessibility	Incorporate Universal Design into spaces and amenities, through updates to current infrastructure and requirements of new development	7.02	35
Accessibility	Need more seating options in public space	7.03	13
Accessibility	Accessible all four seasons (including winter!)	7.04	3
Accessibility	Need more accessible parking stalls	7.05	2
Accessibility	Observation - accessibility options currently in VCs	7.06	1

How we synthesized the information - online interactive forum

- **1,427** people voted (based on logins or individual devices)
- **1,249** people grouped (978 in Group A, 271 in Group B)
- **124,427** votes were cast
- **484** statements were submitted
- **87.19** votes per voter on average



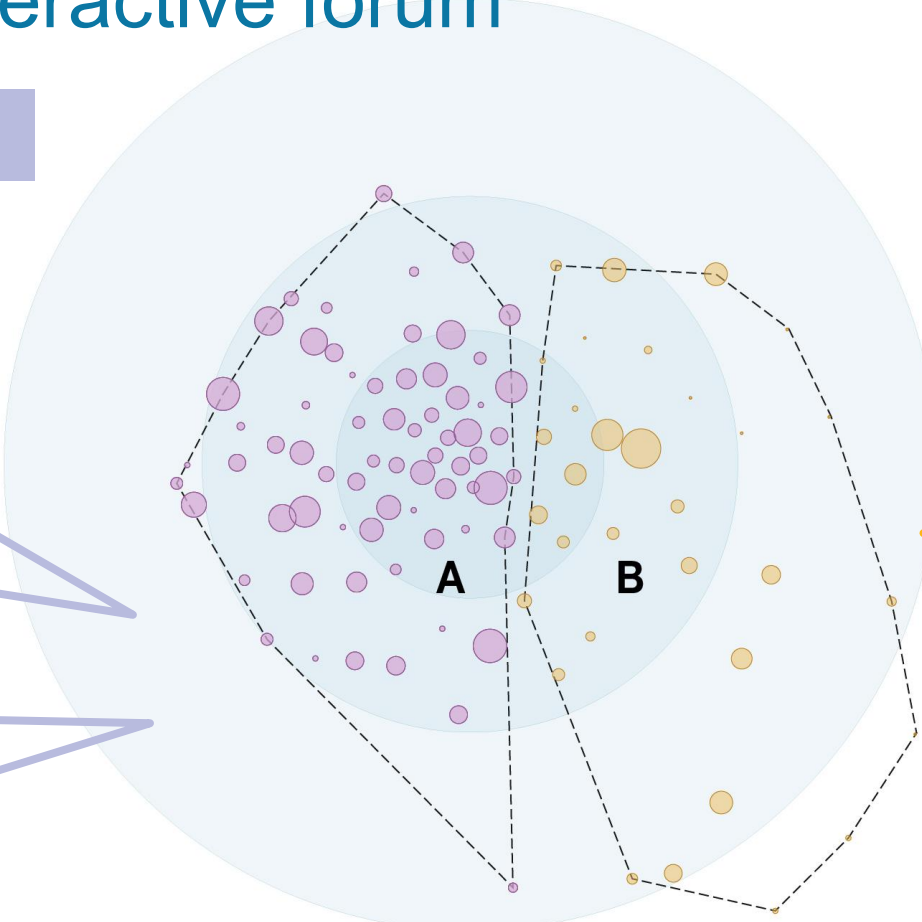
Groups - online interactive forum

Group A (78% of respondents)

Group A agrees with
and Group B disagrees with:

Increasing density in village centers will increase walkability and encourage people to do more trips without their cars.

We need multi-unit housing in and near the village centers. Preferably by right.



Group B (22% of respondents)

Group B agrees with
and Group A disagrees with:

I moved to newton for what it was, don't try to radically change it.

3-4 story blgs a in VCs is a major change/bad idea. It only takes a few taller buildings to make a canyon. NO MORE TRIO HULKS

Both Groups Agree:

Village Center should have places to do errands, get a bite to eat, go to an event and also to "just hang out" and talk and people watch.

Once I am in a Village Center, being able to easily and safely walk to all the businesses is important to me.

More outdoor seating, dining, meeting places. COVID has taught us that we can (and like to) hang out outdoors.

What We Learned



***almost all photos in this presentation come from community member Vision Kit submissions**

What we learned - takeaways

Climate resiliency through built structures and green spaces

Communal & Public Space + Activation

More Diverse housing options and encourage mixed-use projects

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

Increase accessibility to buildings and infrastructure within Village Centers

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

Make the permitting process easier, clearer and multi-tiered

Communal & Public Space + Activation

People want more communal and green spaces: indoors + outdoors where they can naturally bump into people, activated for events and public art and markets, and feel included and seen.



Communal & Public Space + Activation

Keep and expand outdoor dining

Rethink parking lots for these uses

Some current public spaces do not feel inclusive nor representative

Use zoning tools to encourage or require public art and creative uses in public and private new development

Love the NewArt OutDoors and Murals

Limited space for teens/young people to gather

Create village center branding for arts, culture, history, and civic life

Balance housing needs with the need for open/ public space

Appreciation for existing park/recreational areas

Communal & Public Space: More + Activated



Great night for music and community gathering at the Hyde Playground. Could there be places like this in other villages?
(Vision Kit Submission)

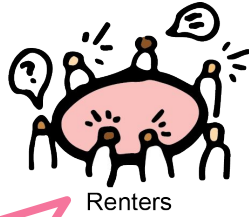


Rehab Nonantum Children's Library roof, stairs, landscaping, open for community use, restore library use
(Vision Kit Submission)

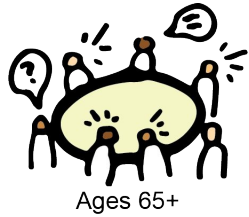
Communal & Public Space: More + Activated



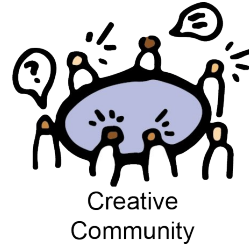
LGBTQ+



Renters



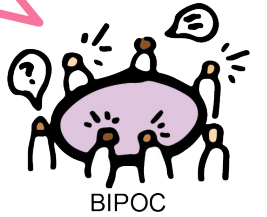
Ages 65+



Creative Community



People with Disabilities



BIPOC

Because I live in a building, with limited space for storage and other extra needs, and on a fixed income, I want my village center to help fill/provide my needs, and other general community needs that could be met through the public realm.

(Renter Focus Group)

I have to go to other cities and towns to eat my food, hear my music, etc. I know this won't happen overnight. But maybe we can have more temporary spaces so these things can happen on a regular basis. I love my community and I want to keep my money here.

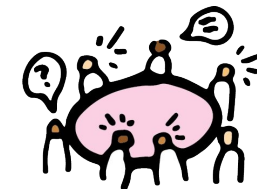
(BIPOC Focus Group)

Because of the resistance a number of Newton citizens demonstrated when they learned that a group home was opening in their village/neighborhood, there needs to be public education about the value and benefit of inclusion.

(People with Disabilities Focus Group)

Dedicated spaces to just be a young person that is not affiliated with a school or actual building. Example: open space with tables and chairs, green spaces to sit on and play games, spaces for young people to just "be."

(Age 15-24 Focus Group)



Ages 25-35

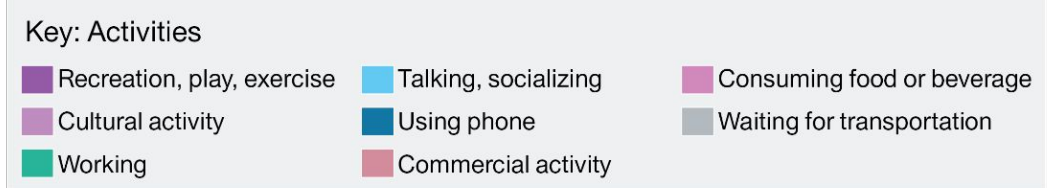
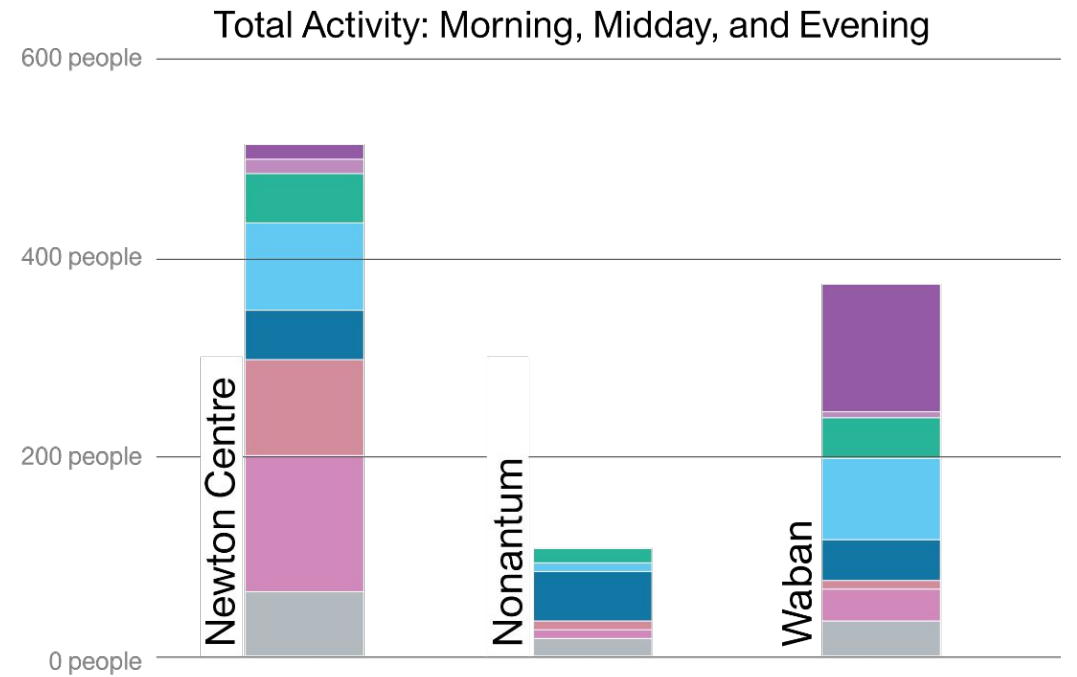


Ages 15-24

Communal & Public Space: More + Activated



Encourage activity at all times of day to support businesses
 (Economic Development Focus Group #2)



Observed July 2021, 7-9am, 12-2pm, and 4-6pm. Gathered information contains aberrations due to the season, weather, the pandemic, differences in the data collectors, etc.

Communal & Public Space: More + Activated

More Agreement

Less Agreement



Outdoor dining brings vibrancy to village centers
87% agree

The pandemic has shown the importance of sidewalks and streets for businesses. We should (...) make it easier for businesses to use the open space in village centers moving forward.
82% agree

Outdoor performance space (for music, visual art, theatre) belongs in our village centers.
67% agree

There should be public spaces which can be enjoyed without buying anything
85% agree

Village centers should have a center-- a public green space to congregate-- in the spirit of a European plaza.
70% agree

Each village center will have a space for cultural & community events that can be used by all.
60% agree



Climate resiliency through built structures and green spaces.

People want more and better green spaces, more trees, and stronger commitments to climate resiliency



Climate resiliency through built structures and green spaces.

Increase green space and street/park tree canopy coverage throughout the City in public and private spaces

Want better maintenance of and improvements to city parks, playgrounds, public spaces, and other recreational facilities

Appreciate existing park/recreational areas

Focus on natural climate resilience - encourage natural areas, native species habitat, stormwater management capacity, and passive recreational potential

Environmental justice is important

Focus on built climate resilience - require new construction and major renovations to maximize energy efficiency, maximize the use of renewable energy, and use electricity for heating and cooling

Promote pollution and waste reduction through allowing residents to live low-carbon lifestyles

Climate resiliency through built structures and green spaces.



Want more green spaces, nature and beautification required in all new developments.

(Vision Kit Submission)

A good location for pollinator gardens is the green space along Centre St across from CVS and Tango Mango. Pollinator gardens help with biodiversity and promote healthy ecosystems, educate the public about the importance of pollinators, encourage community beauty and peace.

(Vision Kit Submission)



Climate resiliency through built structures and green spaces.



Village centers should strive to be net zero or as close to zero GHG emissions if possible, and should support nature/biodiversity and water replenishment.
 (Vision Kit Submission)

Parking lot behind Walgreens - good for slower chargers, biggest lot with most open spaces often and easy to get in and out. Another idea: this space could be developed into new apartment buildings with some affordable housing units and then add EV charging spaces at the end of that process.
 (Vision Kit Submission)



Attendees suggested requiring solar panels on buildings especially those with flat roofs, commercial parking lots, and the Cold Spring Park parking lot. Parking lots with longer term parking should include electric charging stations. However, concerns about the aesthetics of parking lot solar panels were raised.
 (Vision Kit Submission)



Climate resiliency through built structures and green spaces.

More Agreement

Less Agreement



We should believe the scientific consensus on climate change and plan for a sustainable future that is less car dependent

71% agree

It would be great for the environment/climate change and for local businesses if more people could live in or near village centers

65% agree

Buildings like the one just approved in Newton Highlands are good for village centers and the environment. There should be more like this

41% agree

The city should prioritize planting trees where there are fewer trees in the city

79% agree

More public green spaces -- parks, playgrounds on the north side of Newton

65% agree

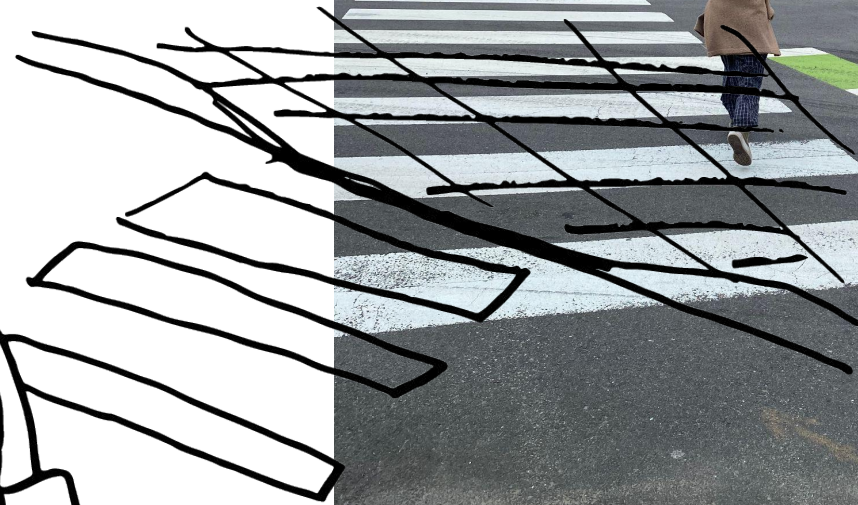
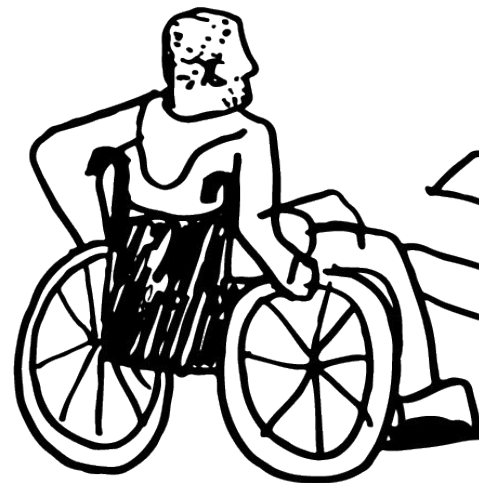
We need to find ways for people to live near villages to help deal with climate change. Less driving. Fewer cars.

60% agree



Increase accessibility to buildings and infrastructure

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



Increase accessibility to buildings and infrastructure

Make sidewalks and curbcuts more accessible for people with physical disabilities

Need more seating options in public space

Accessible all four seasons (including winter!)

Need more accessible parking stalls

Incorporate Universal Design into spaces and amenities, through updates to current infrastructure and requirements of new development

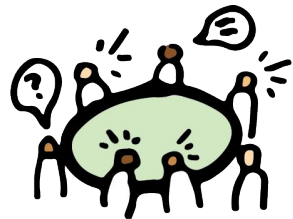
Increase accessibility to buildings and infrastructure

Accessibility is an issue ..it's really hard to get fully accessible housing without getting buildings that are big enough to have an elevator. But if we build multi-families where each flat is one floor instead of townhouses, maybe that could work.

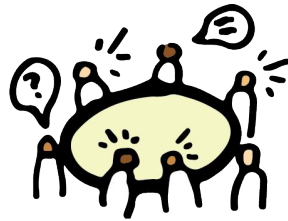
(Older adults Focus Group)

The many non-vehicle interests are competing for a small amount of space... We simply need more outdoor non-vehicular space in our villages for people

(VIsion Kit Submission)



People with Disabilities



Ages 65+

Everyone who makes policy for the city should try to navigate the city for a day in a wheelchair and see how hard it is with the way things are now.

(People with disabilities Focus Group)



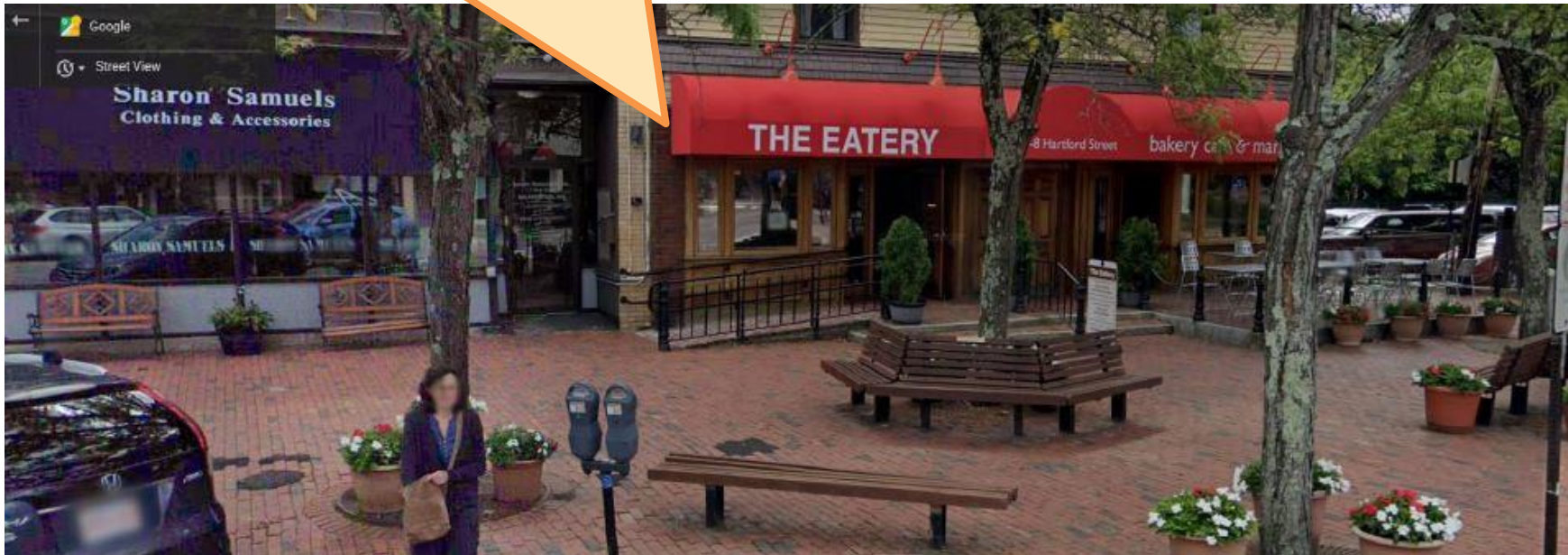
Increase accessibility to buildings and infrastructure

BAD: The brick, while pretty, is difficult to keep smooth enough to not impede safe travel by foot and for people with limited mobility or in a wheelchair. **GOOD:** Benches. Ramp up to historic building.

(Vision Kit Submission)

My ideal village would have a number of crosswalks, traffic lights with crossing instructions that you can hear and enough time to cross the street, curb cuts for wheelchairs and strollers, benches near the bus stops, a bank, a pharmacy, a restaurant or pizza place, and a post office. Also, store owners would be very good about shoveling their sidewalks in winter.

(People with disabilities Focus Group)



Increase accessibility to buildings and infrastructure

More Agreement

Less Agreement



Once I am in a Village Center, being able to easily and safely walk to all the businesses is important to me.

84% agree

Traffic in village centers and neighboring streets needs to be slowed down and intersection violations addressed

51% agree

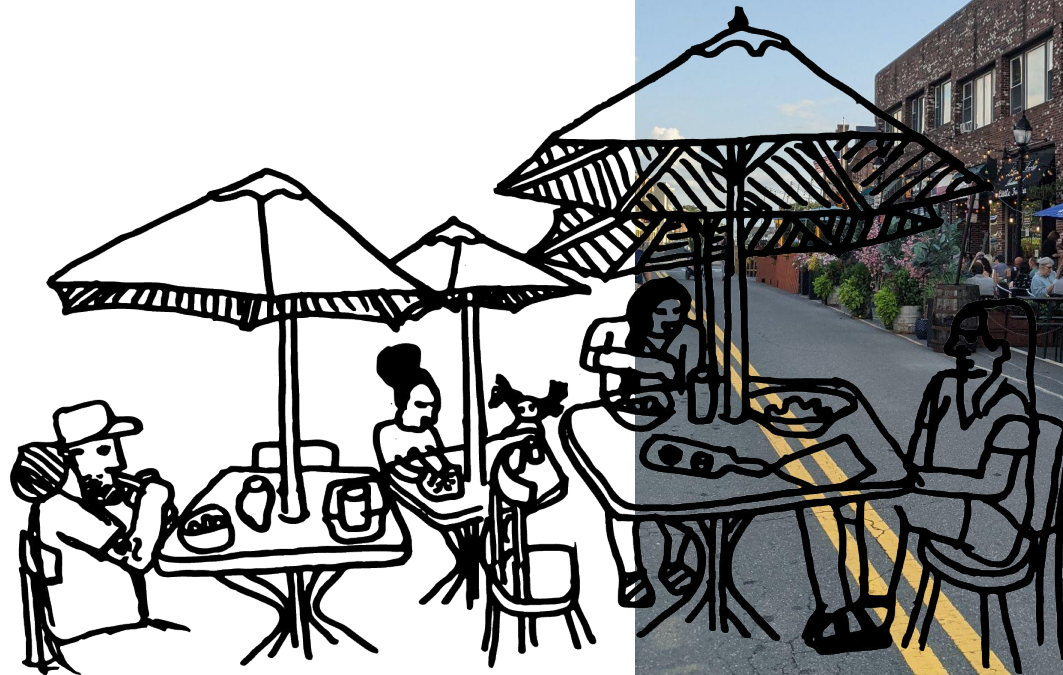
We need to include renewable energy technology and accessibility modifications for disabled people in our village center buildings.

69% agree



Allow small businesses to begin, stay and thrive

Encourage and support small, local, and independent business that contribute to the vibrancy of village centers



Allow small businesses to begin, stay and thrive

Encourage a mix of commercial uses (retail, office, etc.) in village centers

Observation - Newton has strong purchasing power

Promote businesses that have longer operating hours and nightlife uses

Develop more programs to attract small businesses in village centers (incubator spaces, pop-ups in vacant storefronts, and subsidized rent)

Better understand and provide more support to existing businesses

Allow small businesses to begin, stay and thrive

The adaptability of retail space is important. Allowing larger spaces to be broken down into smaller spaces, with shared infrastructure, creates density and the conditions for smaller more local retail.

(Brokers and Consultants and Developer Focus Groups)



Pop-up retail can incubate new businesses

(Brokers and Consultants and Developer Focus Groups)



Nonantum has something special - mix of uses? narrowness of street? It is a tight knit community where business owners know each other. (Business Owners Focus Group)

Likely increase in demand for offices, both typical and co-working, as well as fast-casual dining for lunch meetings. (Brokers and Consultants and Developer Focus Groups)



Allow small businesses to begin, stay and thrive



These are some of the businesses that make West Newton Square interesting and unique. Need to keep small storefronts like these, some <15ft wide, to have room for variety, and affordable small spaces.

(Vision Kit Submission)



**Too many banks!
newton center NEEDS
more PRODUCTIVE
businesses!!!**

(Vision Kit Submission)

Waban small businesses have closed in part because there is insufficient housing and more housing built above these businesses would help them thrive.

(Vision Kit Submission)



Allow small businesses to begin, stay and thrive

More Agreement

Less Agreement



Village Centers need a variety of boutique businesses, not just banks and nail salons.
86% agree

My village center needs more useful everyday shops like a grocery, hardware, clothing, and shoe stores.
67% agree

There's a chronic lack of small business stores, somehow rents must be come down to have more diversity.
63% agree

Village centers could do more to attract arts and cultural uses, including permanent venues and pop-up/temporary opportunities.
71% agree



More Diverse Housing Options and Encourage Mixed-Use

Housing in village centers should be varied (size, type, price, etc.) to meet the needs of Newton's diverse population. Designs should be sustainable and high quality to fit within the different village centers.



More Diverse Housing Options and Encourage Mixed-Use

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

Create more affordable housing options overall, as well as specific projects for people with disabilities, seniors, and other vulnerable populations

New development of big apartment complexes is not affordable and increases prices overall in the neighborhood

Seek high-quality design that is responsive to context

Balance housing needs with the need for commercial space and open/public space

Maintain, reduce or limit density currently permitted

Concern about teardowns

More Diverse Housing Options and Encourage Mixed-Use

More Agreement

Less Agreement

Allow more housing above stores in our villages

72% agree

Housing should be part of our village centers.

68% agree

3-4 story mixed use buildings in VCs would keep our village economies strong, provide needed housing in walkable locations, build community.

62% agree

I would like to see more housing in the villages but it needs to be aesthetically congruent with interesting architecture...

61% agree

3-4 story blgs a in VCs is a major change/bad idea. It only takes a few taller buildings to make a canyon. NO MORE TRIO HULKS

31% agree

I think it's important for the local stores and restaurants in villages to have enough people living nearby to support their businesses.

66% agree

We need to find ways for people to live near villages to help deal with climate change. Less driving. Fewer cars.

60% agree

I'd like to make sure that the spirit of the village and not a high density city, including traffic, is preserved in all improvements.

54% agree

More Diverse Housing Options and Encourage Mixed-Use

More Agreement

Less Agreement

Newton needs more affordable housing for different income levels.

68% agree

Not everyone can afford a down payment so there should be more rental opportunities near village centers

60% agree

Newton needs more homes or ... apartments that are smaller so they will be less expensive

58% agree

I wish there were smaller housing to own options in Newton!! I bought a house twice as big as what I wanted ... 55% agree

working class people should be able to live in Newton

78% agree

Young people/ students should be able to afford a place to live near/around a village center in Newton

60% agree

Older adults (like me) need apt. bldgs. near village centers – small, but big enough for elevators (12-24 units?) -- so we can drive less.

58% agree

People who already own houses please stop gatekeeping homeownership for millenials. There's not enough houses at any size in boston area. 50% agree

If we make Newton high density we leave people no choice - all cities around will be high density - let's keep Newton single family!

21% agree

More Diverse Housing Options and Encourage Mixed-Use

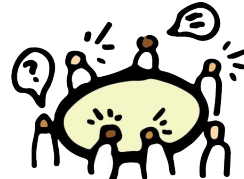


The new apartment buildings in Newtonville have breathed fresh air into this village center. It has felt slow and almost dying for almost a decade, but the improvements (such as Bram Way) are palpable. We need denser housing with commensurate retail to continue to revitalize this part of the city.

(Vision Kit Submission)

In order for Newton to remain a viable city, it needs an availability of housing options. I live in West Newton village center and see that place in dire need of help. I think having more housing there will actually be very helpful.

(Older adults Focus Group)



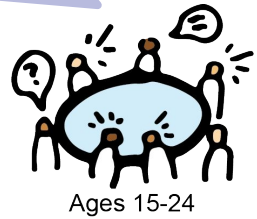
Ages 65+

We need to continue addressing housing shortages in village centers (ownership & rentals, market rate & affordable).



More Diverse Housing Options and Encourage Mixed-Use

Housing of all levels and housing that's affordable for young people to move into. Common experience for Newton young people to be asked "why don't young people stay here?" It's point blank, too expensive. (Ages 15-24 Focus Group)

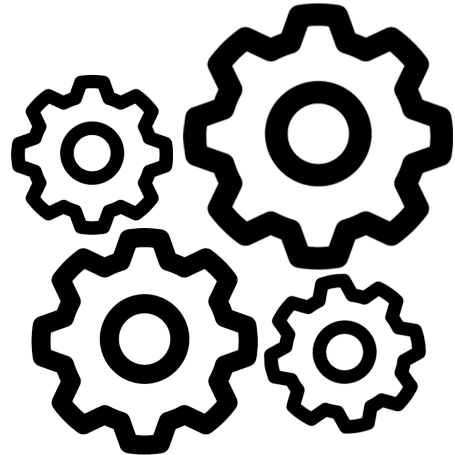


Ages 15-24



Make the permitting process easier, clearer, and multi-tiered

Fix the regulatory barriers that prevent desired projects at all scales



Make the permitting process easier, clearer, and multi-tiered

Align the Zoning Ordinance with the City's Contemporary values

Develop village center design guidelines

Incentivize the preservation and reuse of the City's historic fabric

Maintain the Special Permit process for larger projects

Make the permitting process easier, clearer, and multi-tiered

If village zoning could allow for more flexibility on how space is used and allow for faster transitions, ability to pivot as opportunities arrive,
 (Vision Kit Submission)

As an affordable housing developer, we do not even look at zoning, we just assume 40B.
 (Developers Focus Group)



Certainty is needed and Newton doesn't have it! The City needs to make the rules before the developers show up, otherwise we are always reacting and behind the curve.
 (Developers Focus Group)



Lots of potential for old factory buildings along California Street.
 (Vision Kit Submission)

Make the permitting process easier, clearer, and multi-tiered

More Agreement

Less Agreement



It should be easier to building housing that is more affordable right near or in villages -- simplify the process with clear guidelines.

60% agree

Newton should make the process easier to build affordable housing by either non-profit or private developers -- whatever it takes to do it.

50% agree

If want to attract more business to village center then streamline process at city hall to make more business friendly and cost effective

44% agree

Multifamily buildings should be easy to build near transit

61% agree

We need multi-unit housing in and near the village centers. Preferably by right.

49% agree



Increase ease to get to Village Centers, alternatives to driving.

People want to be able to visit village centers easily- and not just by car. There is a strong interest in embracing alternatives to driving, prioritizing the pedestrian experience, and increasing connectivity overall.



Increase ease to get to Village Centers, alternatives to driving.

Embrace alternatives to driving by expanding access to public transit, local transit, and walking and biking infrastructure

Re-envision major traffic corridors to improve safety for all travel modes

Improve public transit routes and frequency

Improve road safety for pedestrians at crosswalks and intersections

More development will cause more traffic

Prioritize pedestrian-focused core of village center

Find ways to decrease, de-emphasize, combine, or repurpose parking

Availability and quality of parking is an important aspect of village centers

Concern about potential impacts of creating new bike lanes

Increase ease to get to Village Centers, alternatives to driving.



I would like to bike more, but I don't always feel safe. I take public transit when I can, but need greater interconnectivity.
(25-35 Focus Group)



We moved our business to Newton Highlands from Newtonville 3 and half years ago with the hopes that locating on the green line would make it easier to attract young staff. It's generally turned out to be true and I also take advantage of the bus from Needham. It is one of the top two or three reasons we stay in this location.
(Vision Kit Submission)

New Blue Bikes rack and newly accessible T stop are both great. This makes Newton Highlands a great place for more people to live near.
(Vision Kit Submission by 350mass.org)



Increase ease to get to Village Centers, alternatives to driving.



There are a lot of surface parking lots in west newton, both private and public. These spaces create "heat islands" and incentivize driving. Is there a way to consolidate these lots into a garage and adapt the parking lots for more environmentally conscious uses?

(Vision Kit Submission)



This area with the large parking lot and one story buildings could be a multi story multi-use building. Could have a design like Austin Street with parking and retail on the 1st floor. This is just blocks from the T.

(Vision Kit Submission))



Increase ease to get to Village Centers, alternatives to driving.

More Agreement

Less Agreement

Living within walking distance of a village center is important to me.
74% agree

Village Centers should be safely reachable by bicycle
73% agree

It's difficult to get between city centers without a car
70% agree

It is not realistic to not expect folks to drive their cars. We need parking in the village centers
56% agree

Easy parking in the village center is more important to me than the walking and biking experience
32% agree

It should be easy, safe, and cheap to travel without a car (using public transportation, biking, walking, etc)
74% agree

I prefer a balanced, or shared approach to transport in Newton and our village centers (between cars, bikes and walking).
66% agree

Increasing density in village centers will increase walkability and encourage people to do more trips without their cars
55% agree

Looking Ahead



Continued discussion

- More information, including raw data, available at <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/village-centers>
- ZAP discussion to continue on November 8

Engagement Results



[Click here for the Community Feedback Compilation](#)

The 'Community Feedback Compilation' document shows how city staff organized all of the community input, gathered through the channels listed below (except for the Online Interactive forum, which has [its own report](#)), and identified patterns in thoughts and observations.



VISION KITS - PHOTOS



VISION KITS - OTHER



INTERACTIVE FORUM



HISTORY WEBINAR



FOCUS GROUPS



BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Spanish, Chinese & Russian	+
Vision Kit	+
Online Interactive Forum	+

Where does zoning come in? - zoning impact matrix

	Zoning Considerations						Non-Zoning Considerations
	Dimensional Standards	Development Standards	Allowable Uses	Allowable Density	Permitting/ Process	Incentive	
Communal & Public Space: More + Activated		X			X	X	X
Increase the ability for small businesses to begin, stay and thrive in VCs	X	X	X	X		X	X
Climate resiliency through built structures and green spaces		X		X		X	X
Increase accessibility to buildings and intersections within VCs		X			X		X
Make permitting process easier, clearer + multi-tiered	X	X	X		X		X
More diverse housing options and encourage mixed-use projects	X	X	X	X	X		X
Increasing ease to get to Village Centers, especially through alternatives to driving				X		X	X

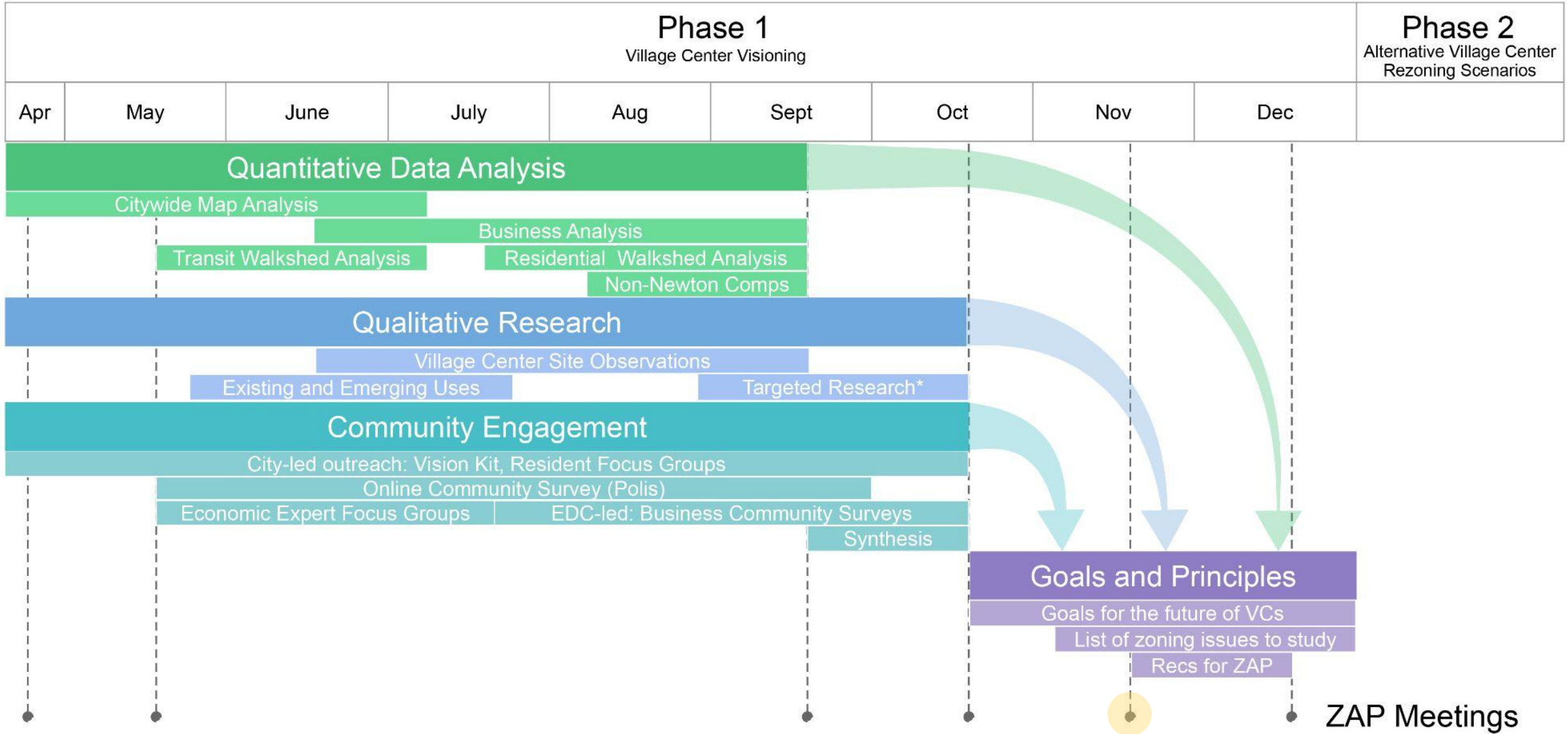
2021 Calendar

November 18 ZAP Meeting

Present draft goals and principles for the future of Village Centers based on engagement and analysis.



#88-20

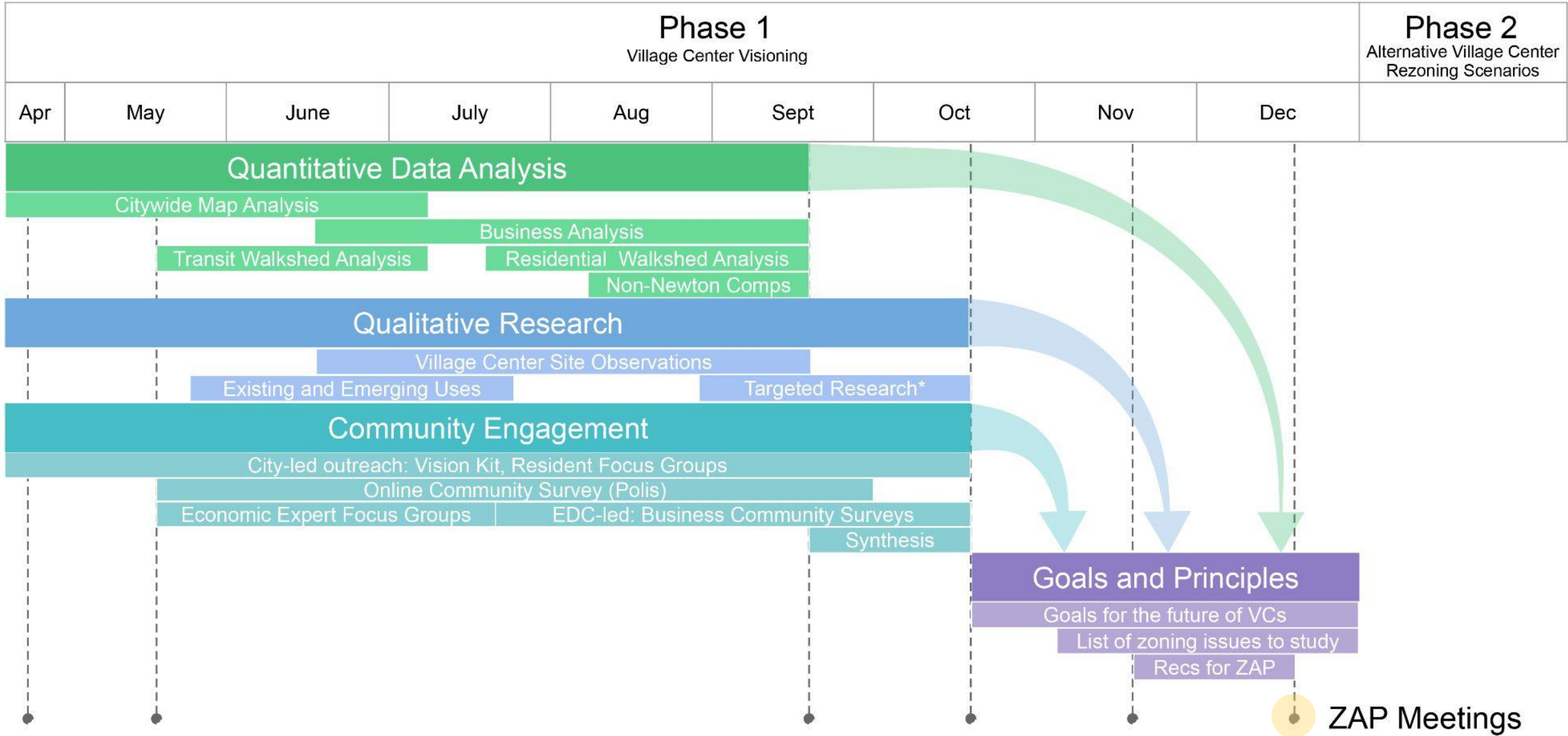


2021 Calendar

December ZAP Meeting
Present zoning issues to study in the next phase based on goals and principles.



#88-20



Public info session - 6pm on Monday, November 15

Virtual webinar version of this presentation with a Q+A for community members until 7:30pm

[Register here](https://newtonma.gov/zoningredesign/vc), at newtonma.gov/zoningredesign/vc or email zoningredesign@newtonma.gov for the registration link



Thank you!

