

ZAP

City of Newton's Engagement Results Phase II: Village Center Zoning Framework

**Monday,
November 14,
2022**

Department of Planning +
Development



Agenda

Calendar

Engagement review (methods + participation)

Takeaways on zoning framework input

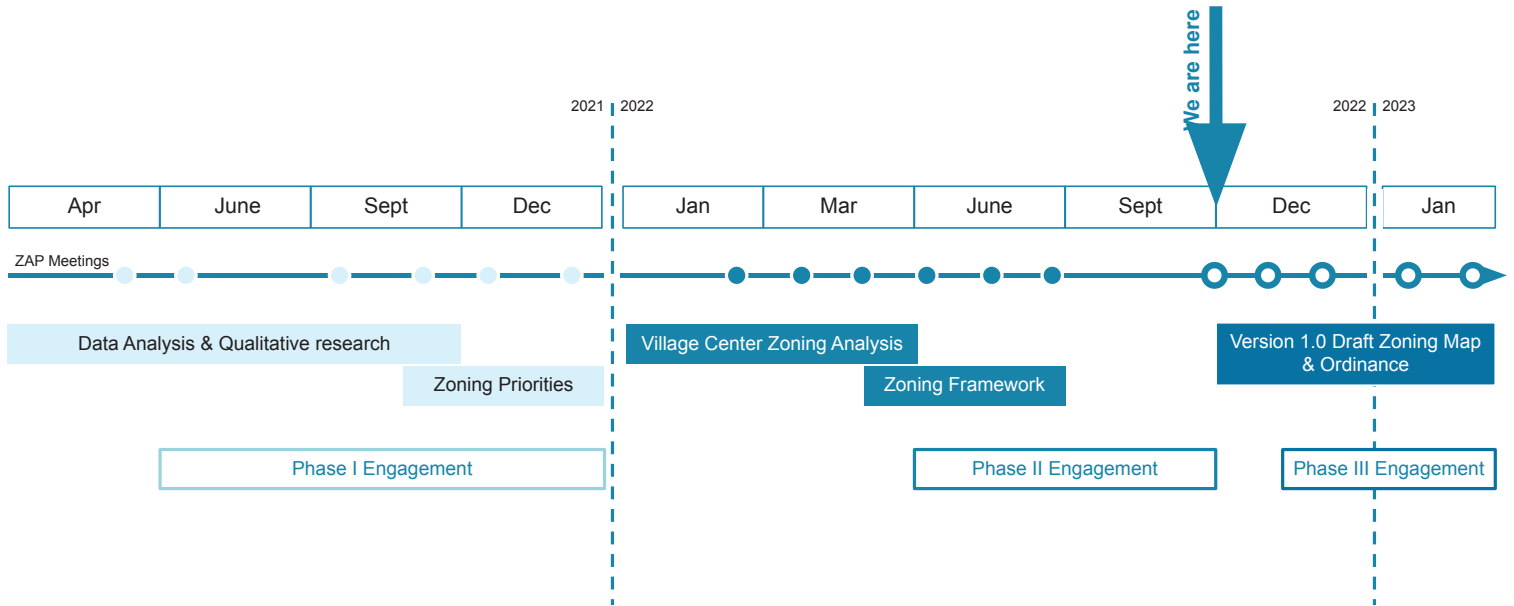
Learnings for civic processes + equity

Next steps

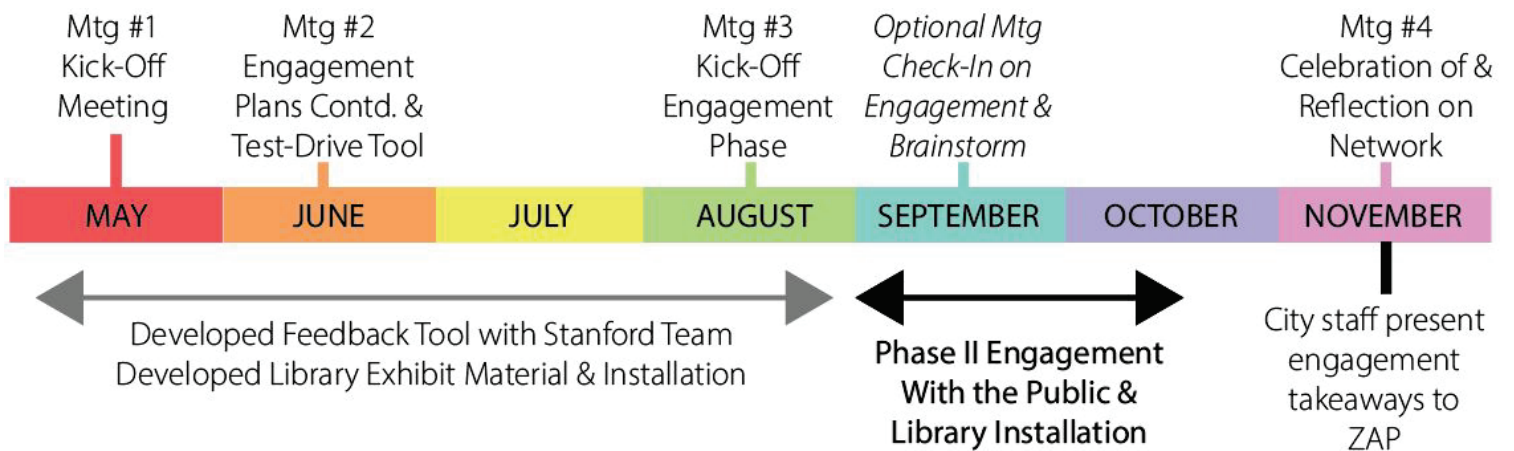
Where to find information

Timeline: Where we are

Building Upon A Multi-Year Effort



Phase II Engagement - Calendar



Zoning framework engagement_purpose





To collect community input on the proposed zoning framework for village centers (that ZAP workshopped in June 2022)

Received **1,078** feedback tool submissions and additional emails

Newton North High School students mark where they live, study and work in Newton



Zoning framework engagement_methods

-  **Feedback Tool:** Where all community members will give their input
-  **Library Exhibit** (in-person at Newton Free Library and as an online PDF)
-  **Equitable focus groups**
-  **Zoning Redesign Community Engagement Network**

Zoning framework engagement_methods

Feedback tool

Online informational survey co-designed with the Stanford Crowdsourced Democracy Team (identified through previous working relationship for Participatory Budgeting efforts)



Included drop-downs for more information // overview of ZAP councilor deliberation // open-ended responses for each multiple-choice question

Did not require identification in order to increase accessibility (pros outweigh the cons)

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

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Zoning framework engagement_methods

Feedback tool

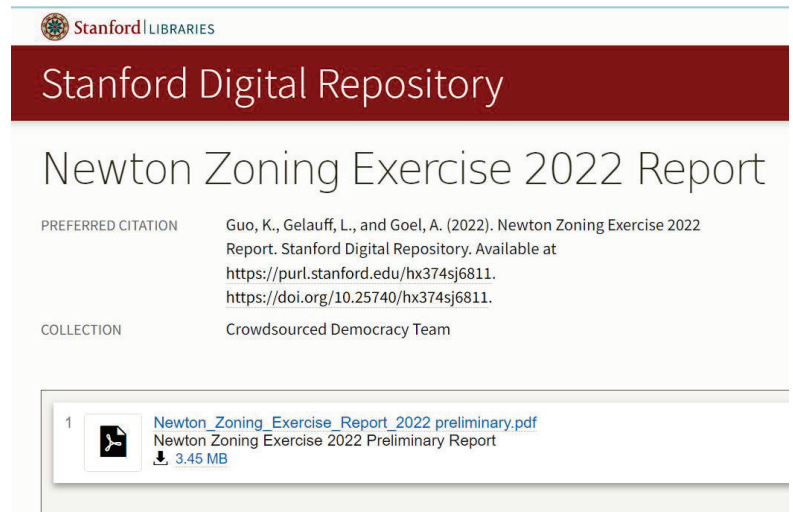
Recognizing that it would probably be laborious and inaccessible to engage community members on each of the framework’s 12 proposals, City staff attempted to condense all of this information into 3 questions to get at the core reasoning:

1. **Scale:** Should there be different zoning districts for different village centers?
2. **Mapping:** Which heights do you think are appropriate for village centers?
3. **Parking:** Do you agree with the proposed reductions to parking requirements?

Zoning framework engagement_methods_

Feedback tool

Stanford Crowdsourced Democracy Team conducted analysis of the feedback tool results and can be found here: <https://purl.stanford.edu/hx374sj6811>



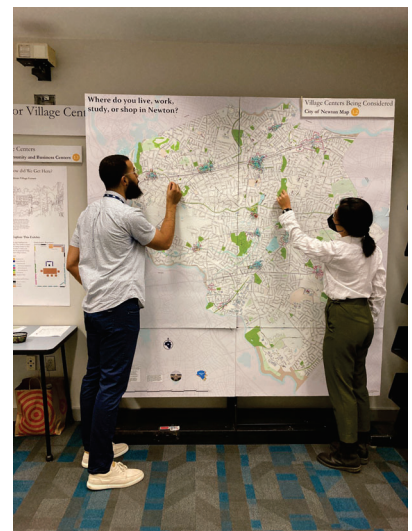
Zoning framework engagement_methods_

Library exhibit

The library exhibit broke down every part of the proposed zoning framework:

- (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)

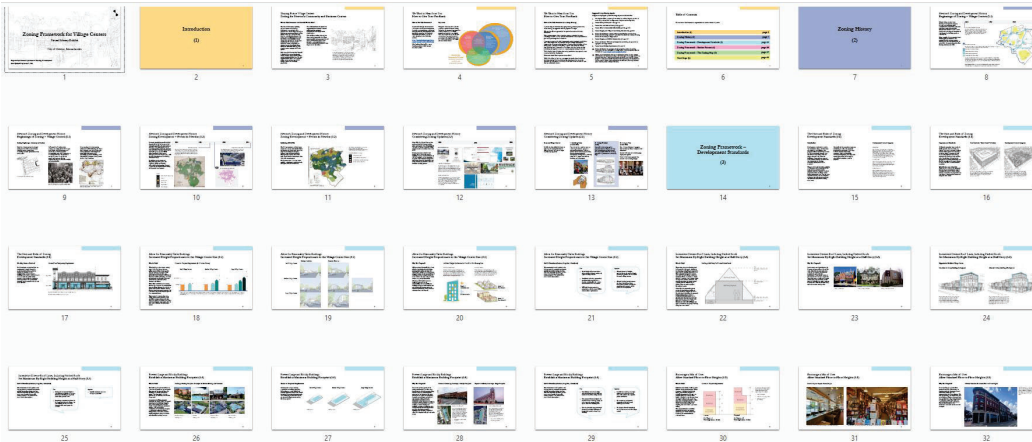
City and MAPC staff acted as docents and used the exhibit for high school class visits



Zoning framework engagement_methods_



Offered as a PDF as well, for community members to access from their computers or to present & deliberate over through virtual meetings ([click here to access](#))



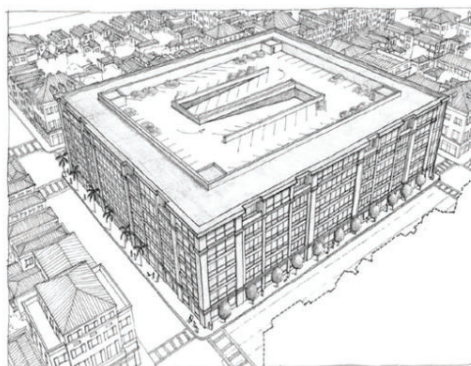
Snap-shot of the first 22 pages of the PDF of the library exhibit

Zoning framework engagement_methods_



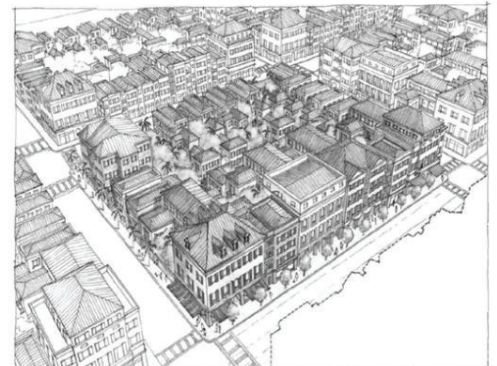
The zoning framework addresses concerns about increased density through required development and design standards:

Poor Standards: "Texas Donut" Urbanism



An all-too-common building type proposed across the United States, an Anyplace USA. It is a 6-story building wrapped around a parking garage covering the entire city block and only has windows facing the street. No public or private green space is provided.

Good Standards: "Place Based" Urbanism



The same city block developed with a variety of buildings and open space that draws inspiration from the surrounding forms and architecture. This development pattern has the same number of units as the "Texas Donut" but in buildings no taller than 4.5 stories and with significant space left for light, air, and gardens.

Zoning framework engagement_methods_



Equitable focus groups

Received a \$5K grant through the MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Council) Technical Assistance Program to be library docents and help carry out focus groups for equitable engagement.

MAPC synthesized the focus groups' meeting minutes, [available here](#)

- > **Renters** (8 participants)
- > **Disability community** (4 participants)
- > **Young people** (16 participants)
- > **Tabling & facilitated library visits:**
 Tabled at Indigenous Peoples Day event and a Chamber of Commerce's young adults event. Hosted the Youth Commission and 4 Newton North High School class visits, consisting of over 100 high school students.

Zoning framework engagement_methods_

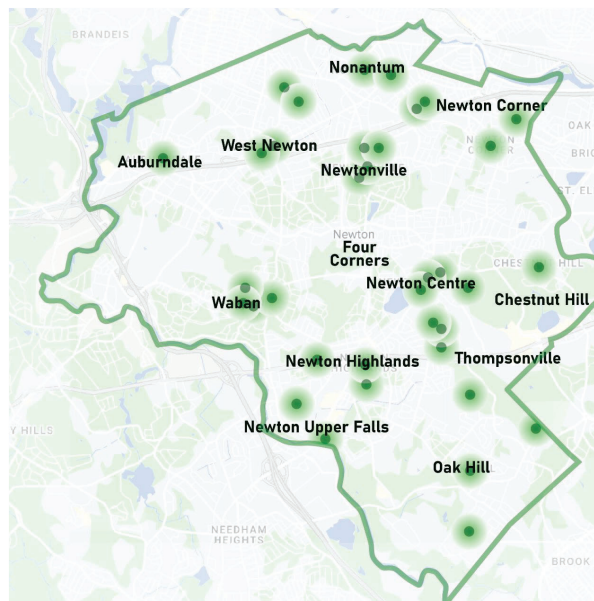


Community engagement network

Test-drove the feedback tool (and a lot of input was incorporated)

Facilitated thoughtful & important conversation about civic discrimination against renters in Newton

Community members spread word and hosted engagement sessions with their respective spaces



| | |
|--|----|
| 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 |

Zoning framework engagement_participants



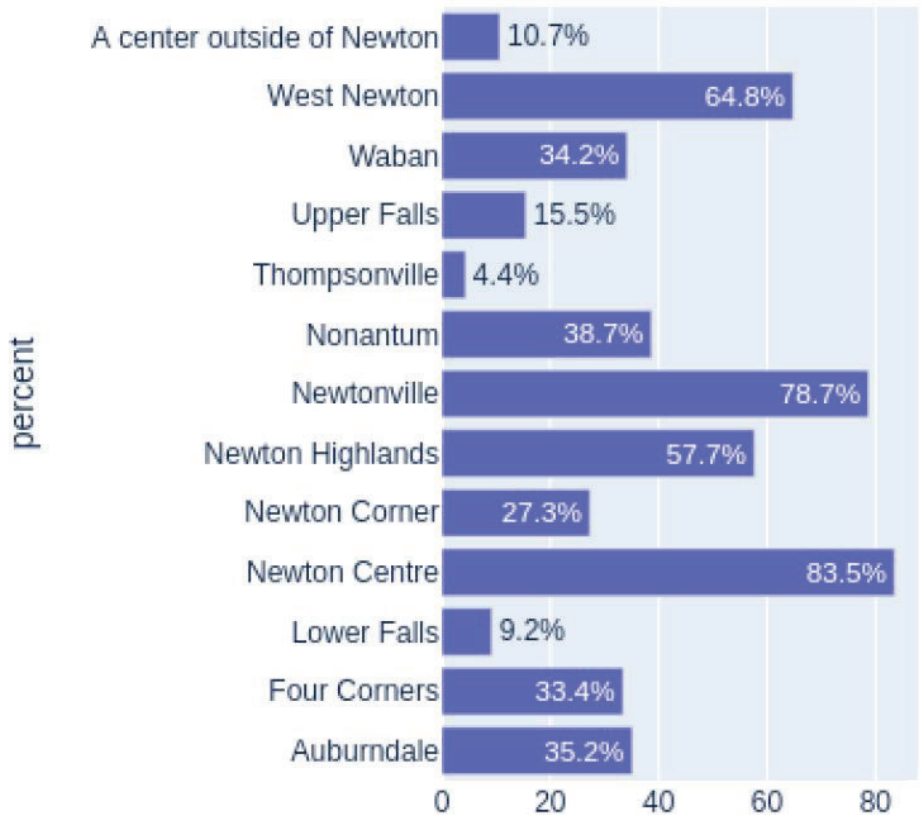
- Village centers you visit
- Where you live
- Where you work
- Where you study

A collage of 12 photos, each zoomed in on the 12 village centers being considered for village center zoning updates. The photo shows how many pins community members put into the large interactive map in the former library exhibit. 15

Zoning framework engagement_participants

Feedback tool question:

Which village center(s) do you relate to?



Zoning framework engagement_participants

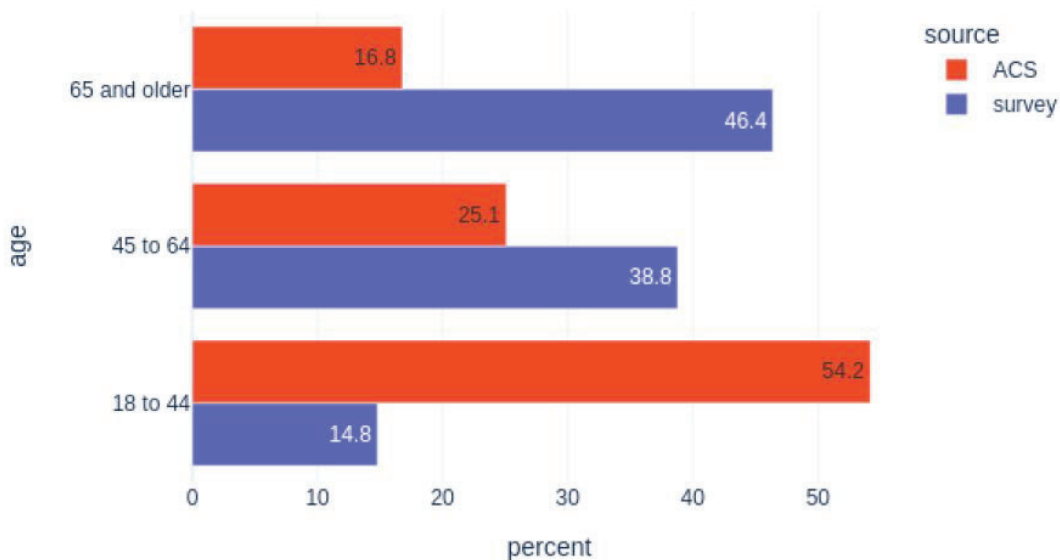
1,078 feedback tool submissions

Validity of responses, per the Stanford Crowdsourced Democracy Team's report:

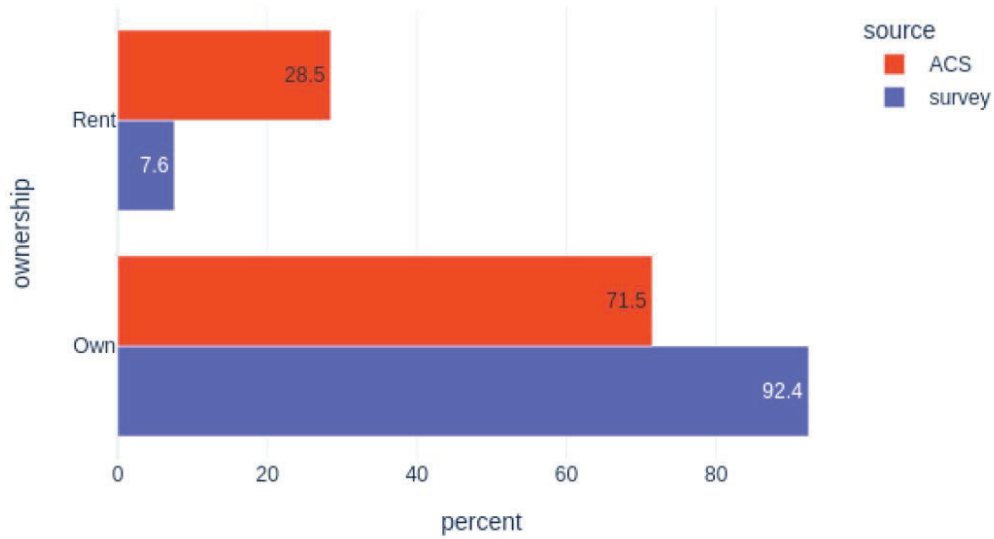
"In order to check whether there were many responses from a single participant, we checked whether a large number of responses was submitted from the same IP-address (it should be noted that IP-addresses can be manipulated). The highest number of responses for a single address was 25, and 8 IP addresses were used for 5 or more submissions. This is not unusual, and could simply point to public access points such as a library, coffee shop or even a large family. We also analyzed the geo-location associated with the IP-addresses used for the submissions and 82% of these addresses can be associated with the geographic area of Newton or Boston and 88% with Massachusetts. It should be noted that geo-location is not always reliable and that the fact that an IP-address is associated with a location far away could simply indicate to the database being incorrect, or the more and more common practice of using IP-masking technology.

These signals do not constitute hard evidence that all submissions are cast individually, by people targeted by the City. However, we also don't see evidence that suggests that the main conclusions were substantively affected because of such behavior." - p. 18

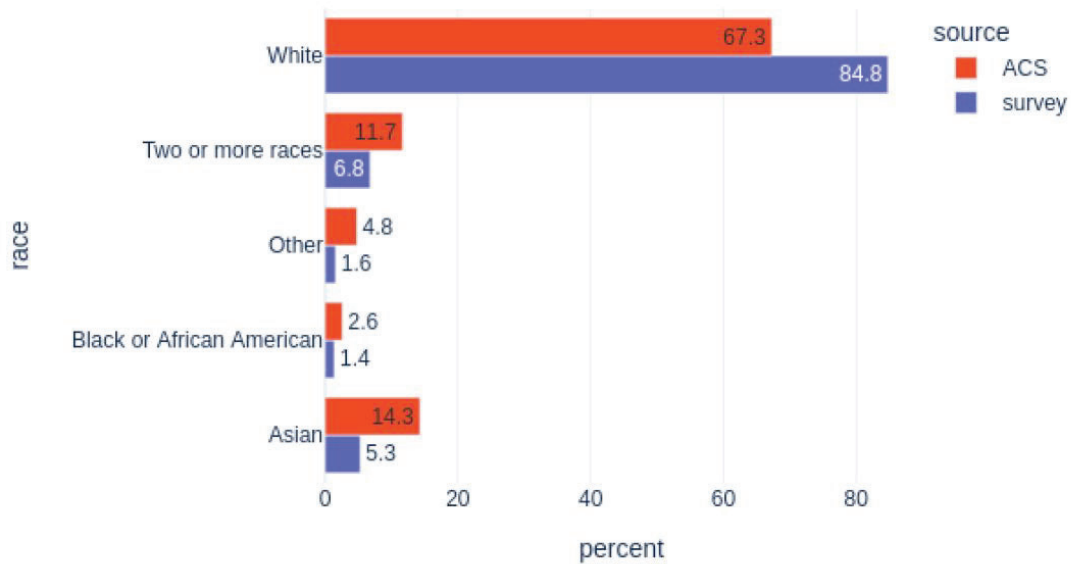
Zoning framework engagement_demographics _age



Zoning framework engagement_demographics _house ownership



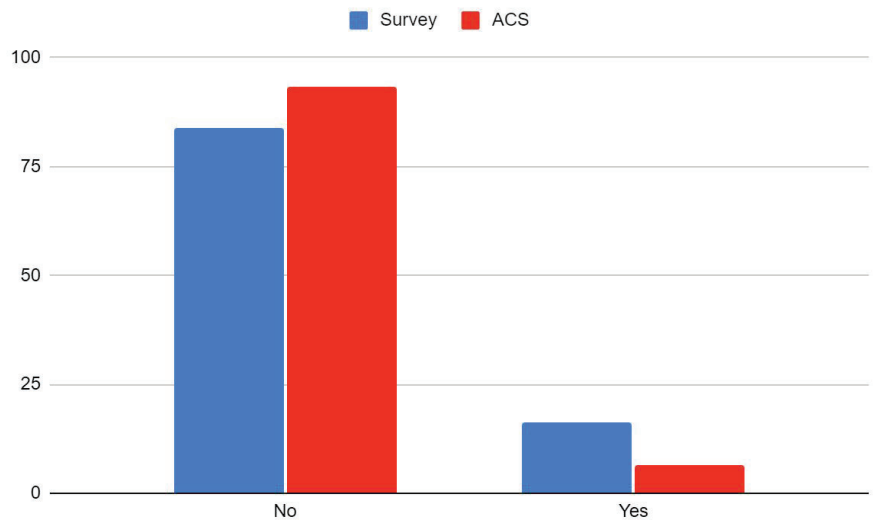
Zoning framework engagement_demographics _race



Zoning framework engagement_demographics _disabilitiy

Question: Do you, or does someone you live with or care for in Newton, currently have a disability?

**This was followed by a definition provided by the ADA of what 'people with disabilities' includes.*

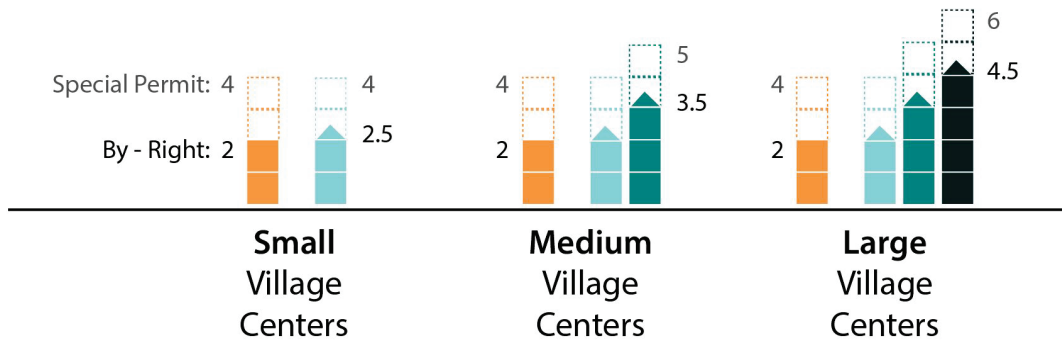


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Zoning framework engagement_demographics

As a result of the disproportionate demographic representation, Stanford Crowdsourced Democracy Team conducted 'adjustments' of feedback tool results so that "responses from groups with relatively low participation are weighed up." (p. 1). They 'adjusted' for age and home ownership.

Takeaways_proposed variety of VC zoning districts



Open-ended responses show that people also chose:

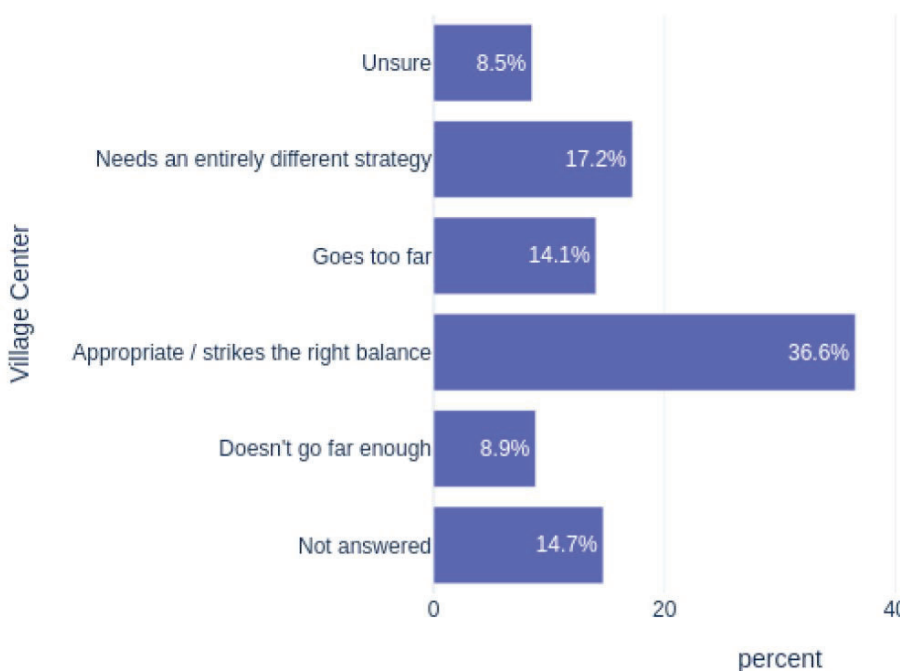
'Goes too far' to highlight a want for no changes from current zoning (or to require less than 2 floors by-right)

'Doesn't go far enough' to highlight a want for higher density proposals)

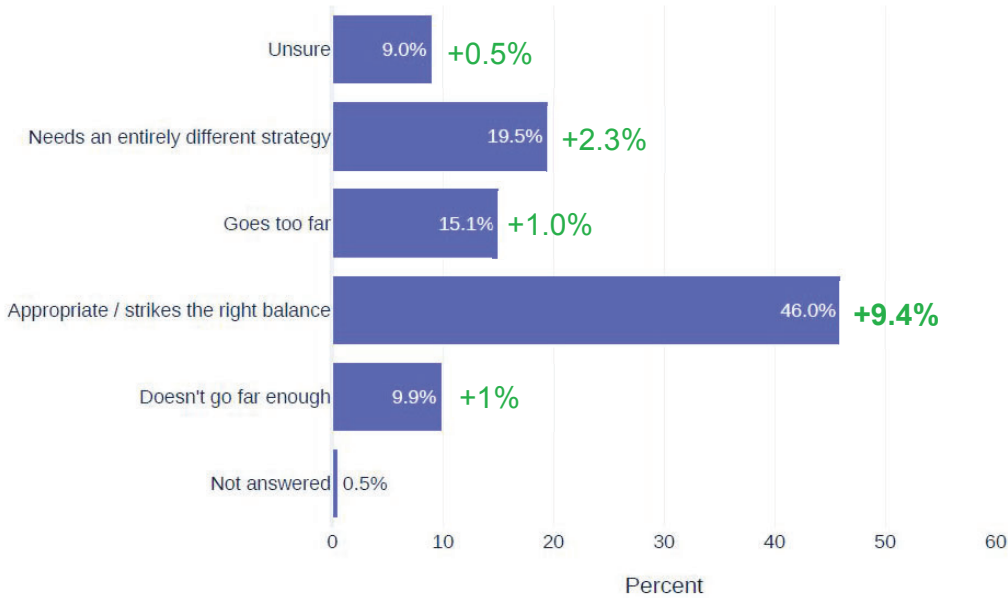
Question: **Do you think there should be a variety of zoning districts for the variety of village centers?**

- Doesn't go far enough - there should be more variety of scales
- Appropriate/ strikes the right balance
- Goes too far - there should be fewer variety of scales
- Needs an entirely different strategy
- Unsure

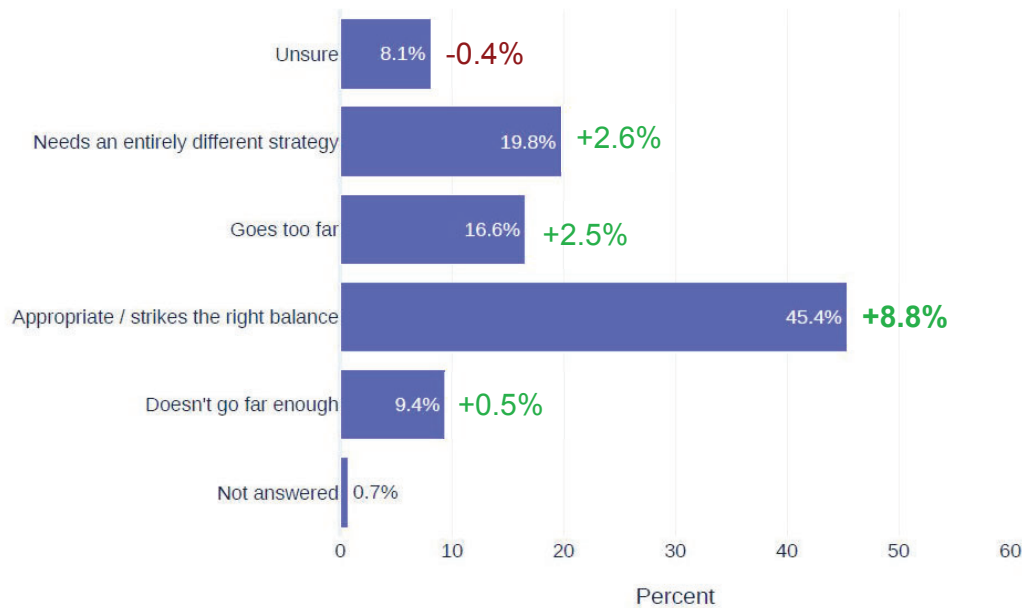
Takeaways_proposed variety of VC zoning districts



Takeaways proposed variety of VC zoning districts adjusted for age



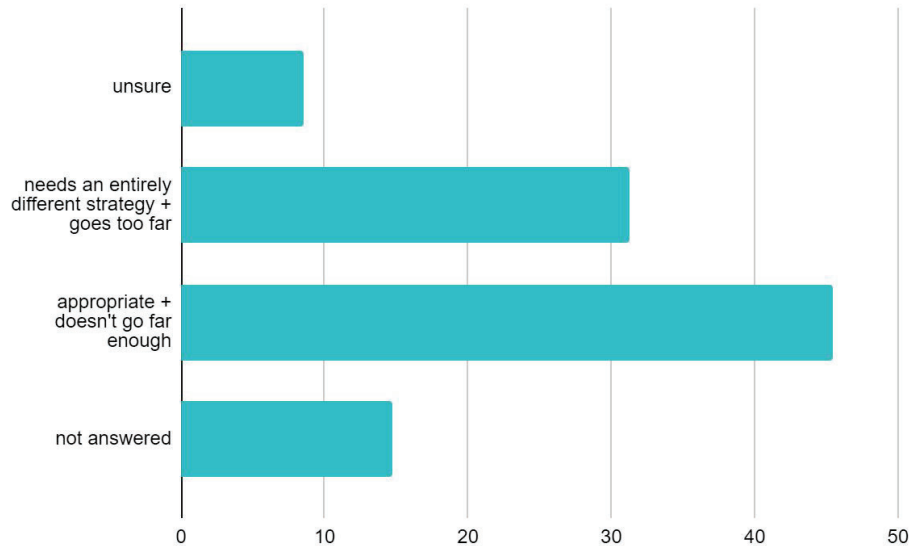
Takeaways proposed variety of VC zoning districts adjusted for home ownership



Takeaways_proposed variety of VC zoning districts _staff takeaways

Shows respondents slightly favoring the proposed variety of zoning districts, especially when 'pro' and 'against' categories are grouped together

Focus groups also had general support



Original feedback tool results for 'scale' question, grouped together

Takeaways_mapping (possible heights for each VC)

Question: The previous question asked, do you think there should be different zoning districts for differently sized village centers? This question asks, what heights should those new zoning districts allow, and for which village centers?

| | Small scale (2.5 floor by-right, 4 by special permit) | Small scale + medium scale (3.5 floors by right, 5 by special permit) | Small scale + medium scale + large scale (4.5 floors by-right, 6 by special permit) | No opinion |
|------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------|
| Auburndale | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Four Corners | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lower Falls | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Newton Centre | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Newton Corner | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Newton Highlands | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Newtonville | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Nonantum | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Thompsonville | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Upper Falls | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Waban | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| West Newton | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Small-scale zoning district for small village centers



Medium + small-scale zoning districts for medium village centers

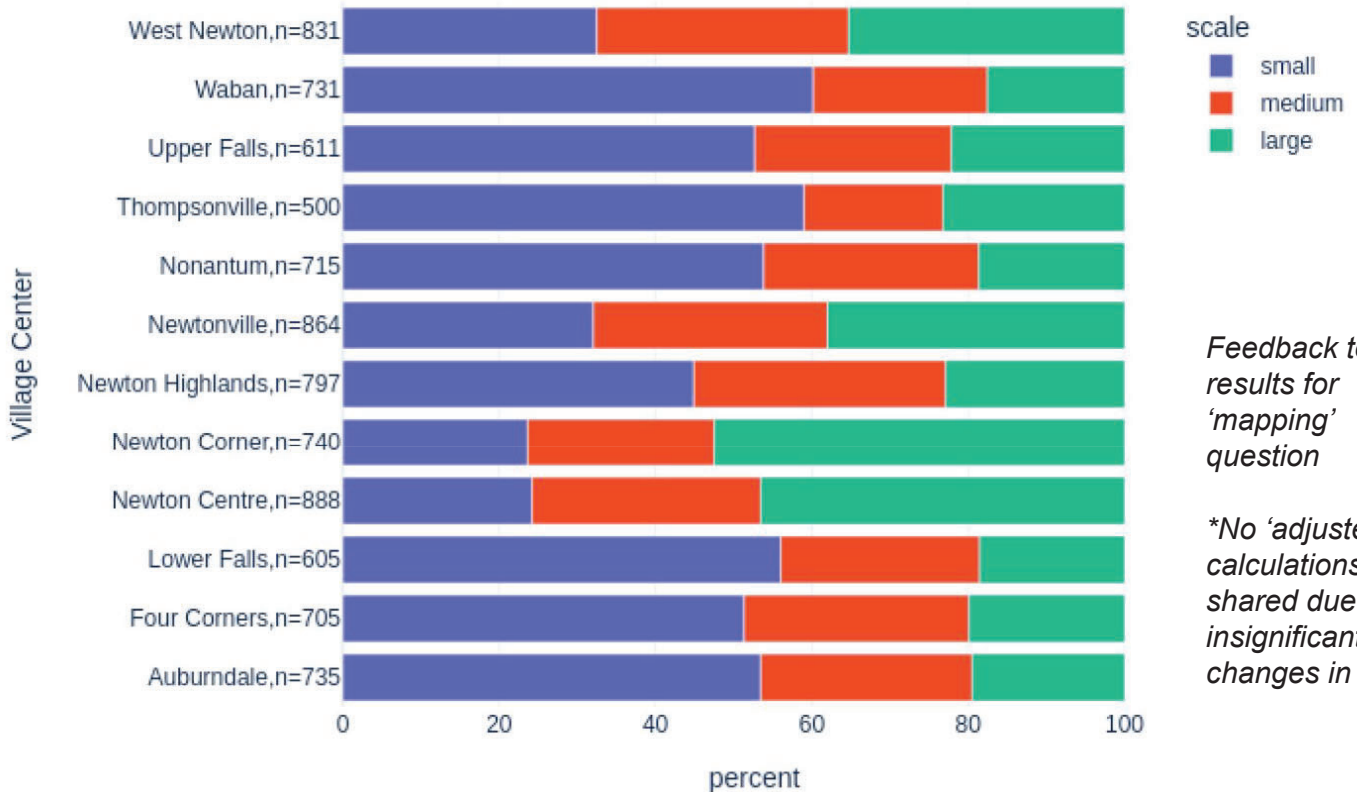


Large + medium + small-scale zoning districts for large village centers



Images presented in feedback tool of existing buildings in Newton that correspond with proposed by-right, special permit, and 'not allowed' heights

Takeaways_mapping (possible heights for each VC)



Takeaways_mapping (possible heights for each VC) _staff takeaways

Shows respondents a mix of interest in all 3 scales of zoning districts for every village center

Reveals slightly more interest in having only small-scale districts in half of the village centers and having medium/and or large districts in the other half

Focus groups showed a mix of support of increasing density (resonating with the mixed responses of the feedback tool)

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Takeaways_mapping (possible heights for each VC)

Insert some contextual text here

| Stronger support for only small-scale zoning district | Stronger support for medium-scale zoning district or mixed support for all options | Stronger support for large-scale zoning district |
|---|--|--|
| Waban | Newton Highlands | Newton Corner |
| Thompsonville | West Newton | Newton Centre |
| Lower Falls | Newton Corner | |
| Auburndale | Newton Centre | |
| Upper Falls | Newtonville | |

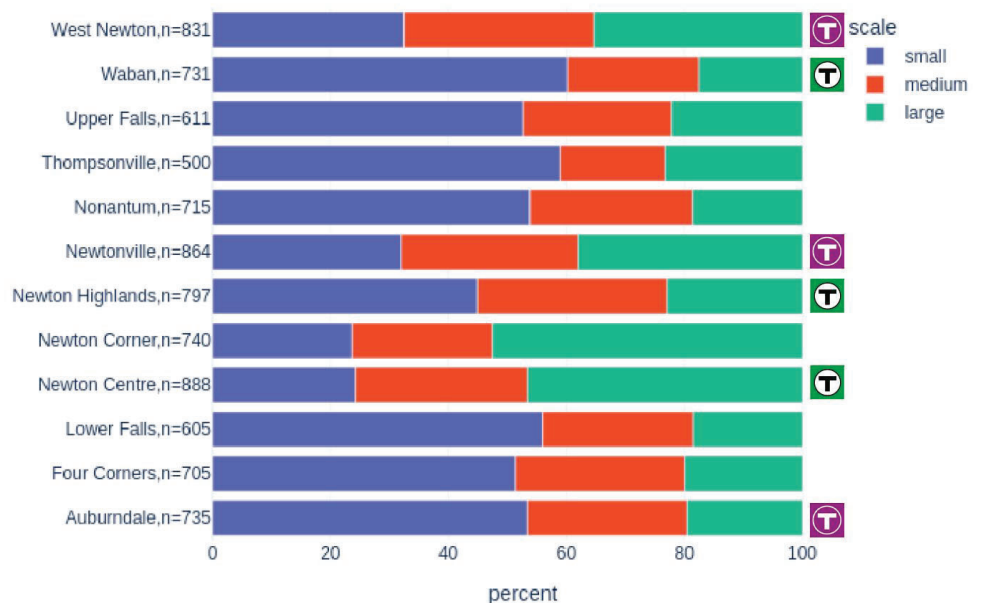
32

Takeaways_mapping (possible heights for each VC) _staff takeaways

Main takeaway 1: Defining whether village centers are ‘small, medium or large’ may have been useful for staff in the beginning, but turned out to ultimately not be a helpful framework. Instead, it is more useful and appropriate to focus on the scale of the zoning districts themselves - and where they go within each village center.

Takeaways_mapping (possible heights for each VC) _staff takeaways

Main takeaway 2: The open-ended responses revealed a strong interest in making public transportation, in particular the Green Line, a main determinant of where medium and/or large-scale zoning districts go



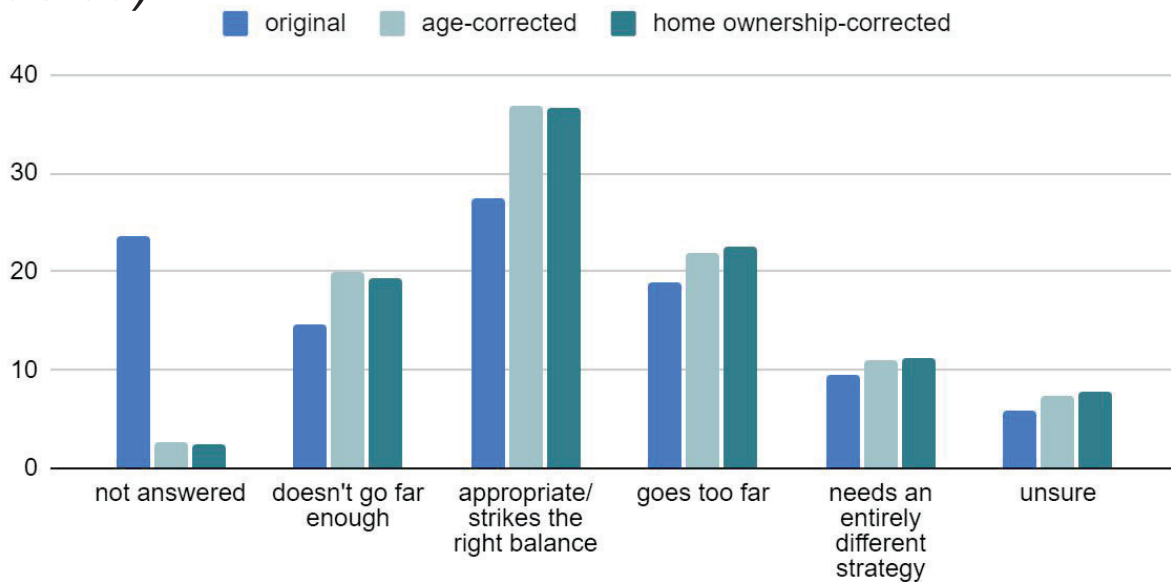
Takeaways_parking requirements

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

| | Residential | Retail | Office |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Doesn't go far enough (there should be lower parking requirements or eliminated entirely) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Appropriate/ strikes the right balance | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Goes too far (the current requirements work) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wrong direction (there should be more new parking spots required) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Unsure | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

35

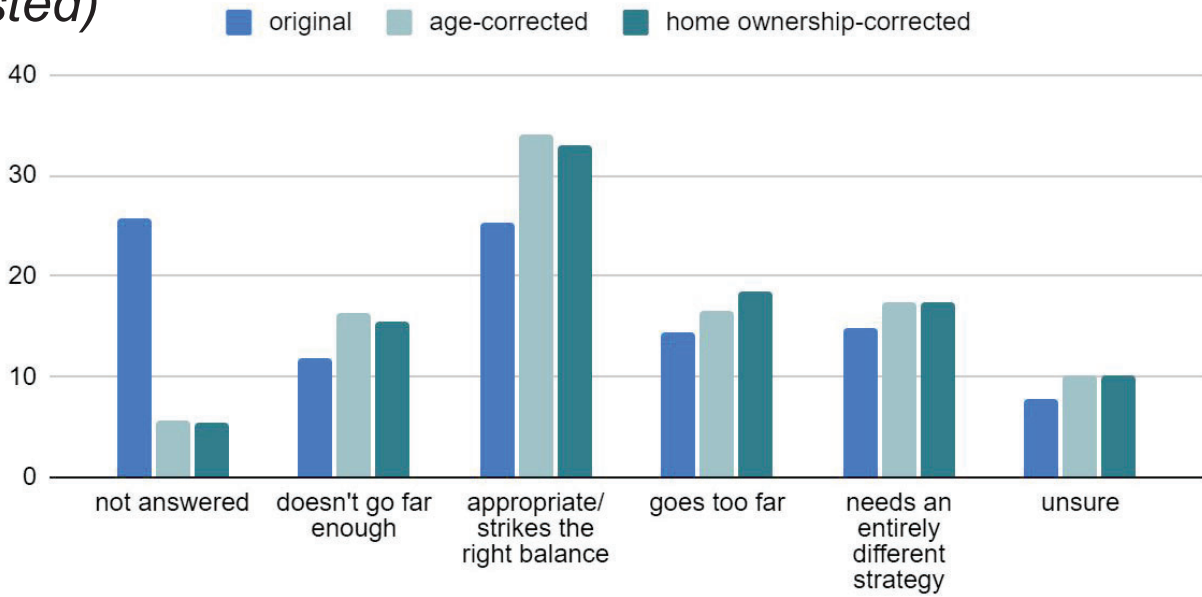
Takeaways_parking requirements_residential (original + adjusted)



residential

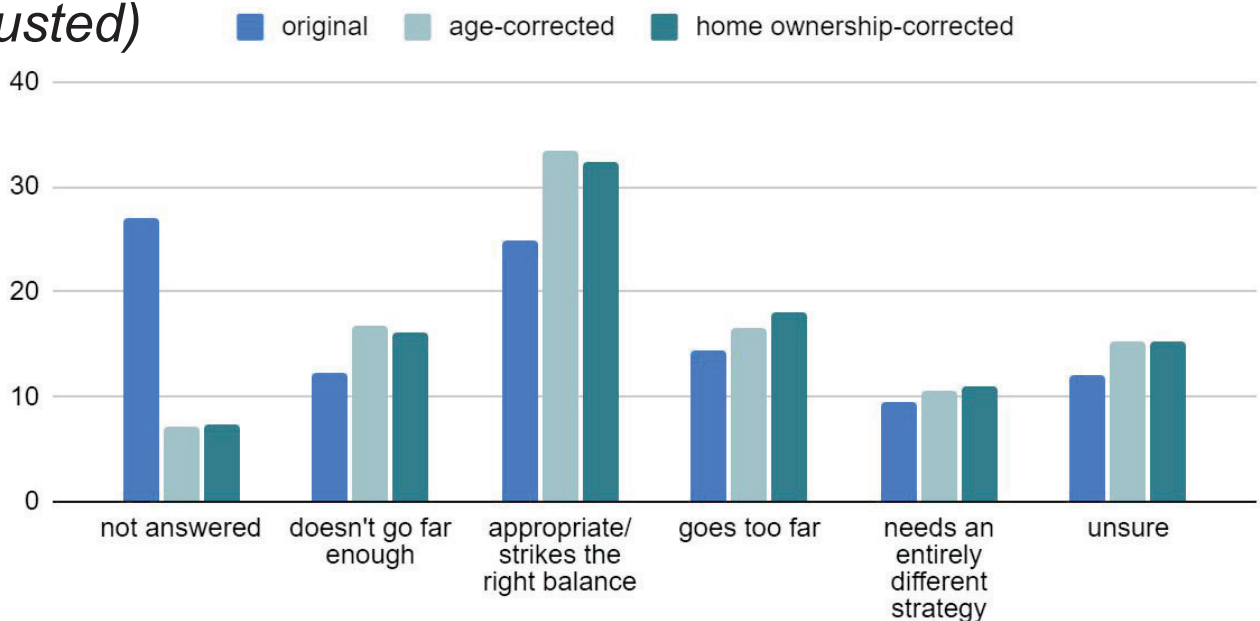
36

Takeaways_parking requirements_retail (original + adjusted)



retail

Takeaways_parking requirements_office (original + adjusted)



office

Takeaways_parking requirements

Results show slightly more support for the proposals for all 3 uses.

Number of responses decreased from residential, to retail, to office - possibly showing more investment in residential or retail, or more comfort to express opinion on these uses, or survey fatigue by this last question

Within the focus groups, there was a mix of responses, ranging from general to none. The most frequent opposing argument against the proposal was concerns about accessibility and fear that if parking requirements were reduced, this would disproportionately negatively impact Newton residents with disabilities, especially if the City maintains the same level of car usage

Takeaways_parking requirements

| Stronger patterns of community sentiments | Staff questions for future VC zoning iterations |
|---|--|
| Reducing parking requirements will negatively impact the disability community access to ADA parking spots | Is there a way to determine new retail parking is sourced completely or partially for ADA? |
| Reducing parking requirements will have harsher impacts on village centers without public transportation / parking requirements should be unique to each village center | Should there be different parking requirements for the village centers with varied access to public transportation? |
| General concerns about parking access community members brought up, regardless of the extent to which it was directed with the zoning proposal | Which area most addresses community members' opinions about parking: zoning regulations and/or parking management? (This extends to public parking, overnight parking, parking for people who work in village centers, etc.) |
| Electric vehicles should be considered in the proposals | Can electric car charging stations be required in zoning? |

Learnings for civic processes + equity

👥 Received over double the goal of feedback tool submissions

🏠 Library exhibit was very labor intensive yet also successful (was it worth it?)

💬 Widespread & equitable engagement around more technical phases of planning projects is important

💻 Working with Stanford Crowdsourced Democracy Team for pro-bono was an incredible addition to the engagement resources

🚩 The Network was an exciting civic experiment - many lessons learned and, in the same breath, majority of Network members want to see it happen again in the future (perhaps with more focus on equitable democracy guiding the space)

🔍 The extent to which renters, ages younger than 45, and people of color are underrepresented in the feedback tool reveals that the City - *at-large, not just the Planning Dept* - **needs to seriously prioritize engaging these communities and to do so through increased resources**. Do the Councilors have recommendations on how to do so?

Next steps: Draft text + maps incorporate results

November 28th ZAP meeting: review draft zoning ordinance text, that incorporates these engagement results



Until end of year: Draft map engagement

- Virtual info + input sessions on village center draft maps, with priority to hear from property owners and businesses in the respective village centers
- Input collected through online form (open-ended responses - open until end of 2022)
- Can visit the City Hall exhibit of the maps (first floor, open until December 23)
- Future mapping drafts will consider this input



Where to find all information for zoning framework engagement:

<https://newtonma.gov/zoningredesign/vc>

For questions, email:

npilipovicwengler@newtonma.gov

zoningredesign@newtonma.gov



Where to find all engagement information

<https://newtonma.gov/zoningredesign/vc>

Email with questions:

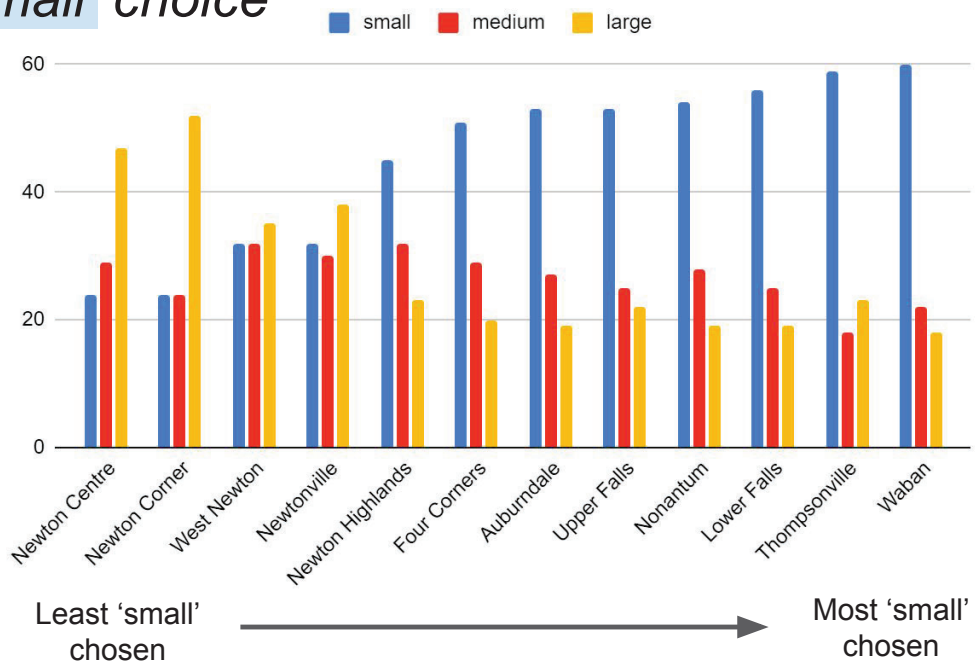
npilipovicwengler@newtonma.gov

zoningredesign@newtonma.gov

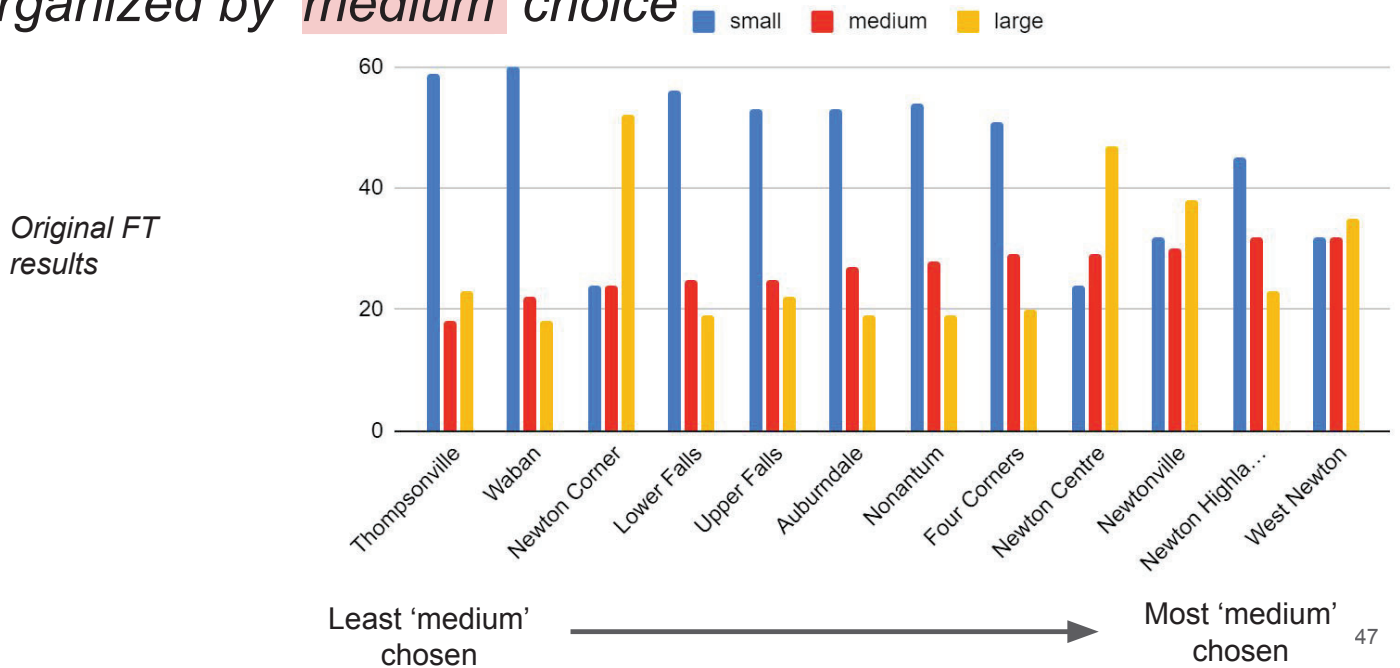
BACK UP SLIDES

Takeaways_mapping (possible heights for each VC) _organized by 'small' choice

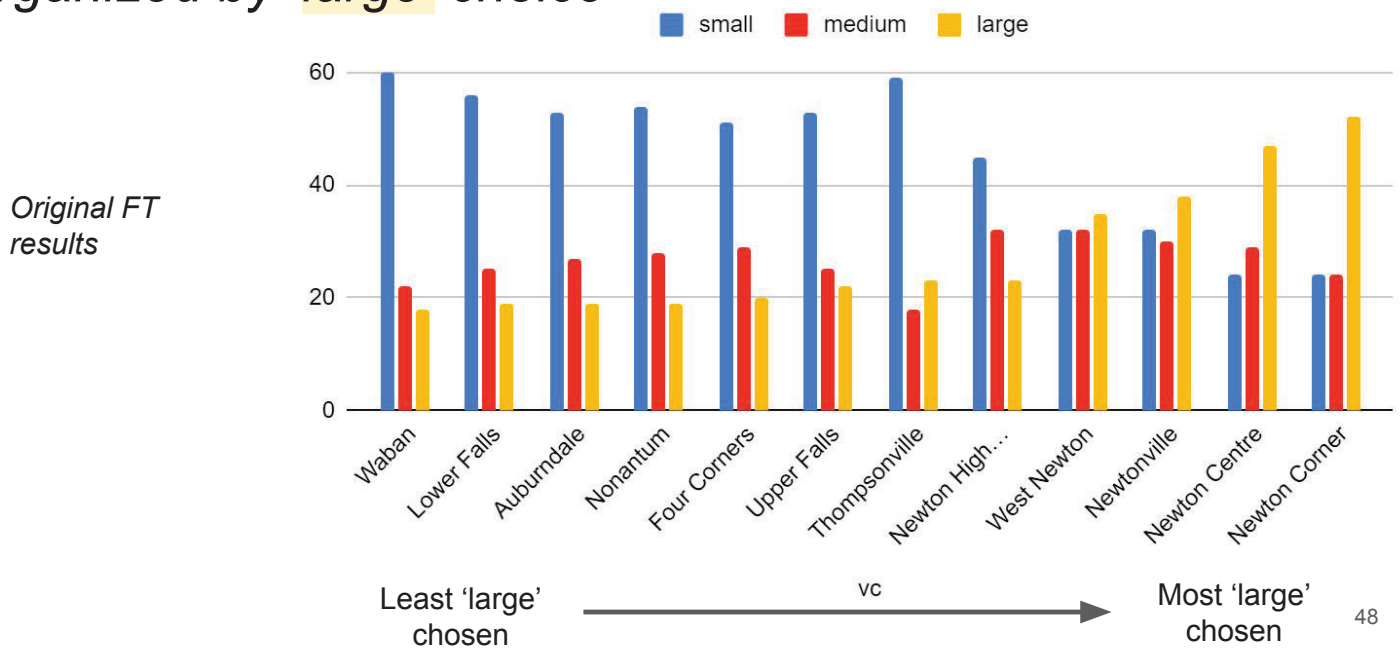
Original FT results



Takeaways_mapping (possible heights for each VC) _organized by 'medium' choice



Takeaways_mapping (possible heights for each VC) _organized by 'large' choice



Takeaways_mapping (possible heights for each VC) _staff takeaways

Main takeaway 2: The open-ended responses revealed a strong interest in making public transportation, in particular the Green Line, a main determinant of where medium and/or large-scale zoning districts go

| Stronger support for only small-scale zoning district | Stronger support for medium-scale zoning district or mixed support for all options | Stronger support for large-scale zoning district |
|---|--|--|
| Waban | Newton Highlands | Newton Corner |
| Thompsonville | West Newton | Newton Centre |
| Lower Falls | Newton Corner | |
| Auburndale | Newton Centre | |
| Upper Falls | Newtonville | |