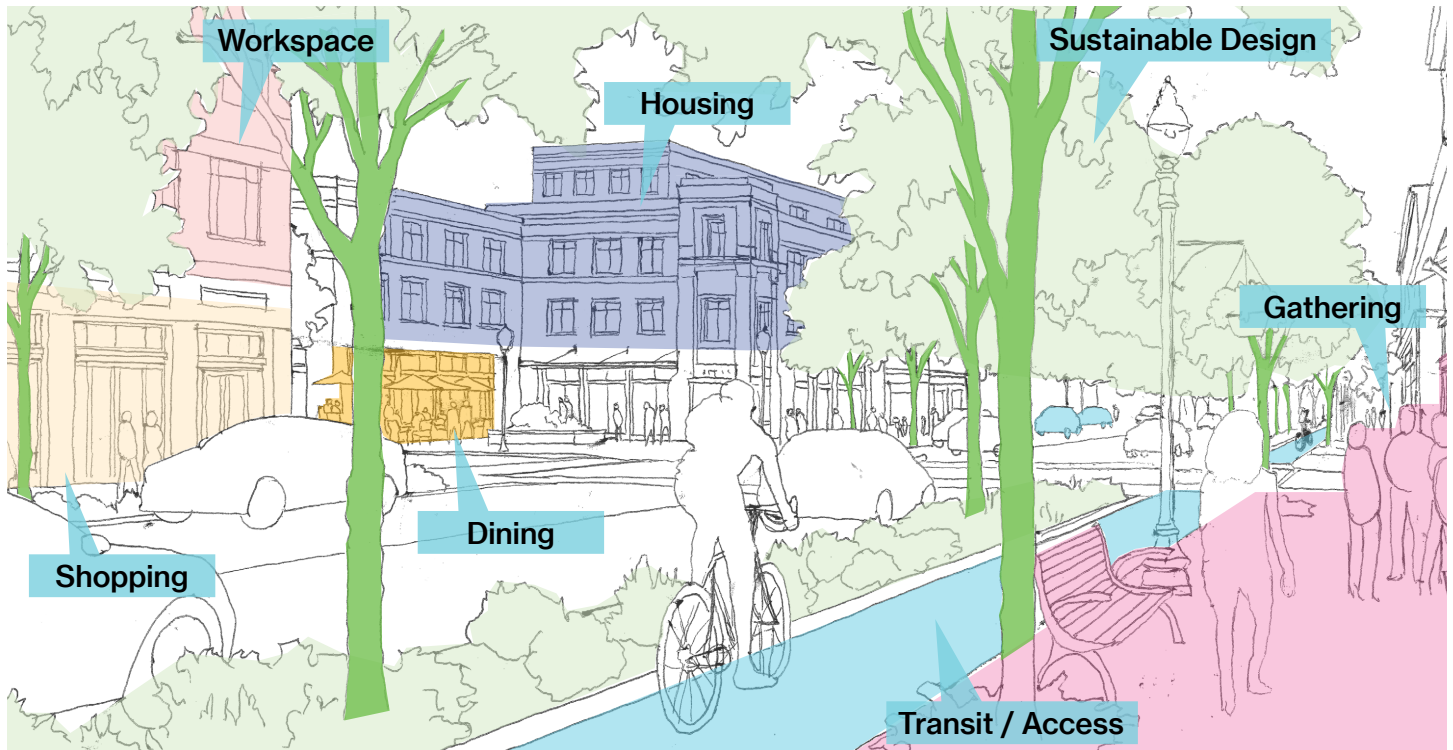


# Creating Vibrant Village Centers

## Overview - Village Center Overlay District (VCOD)

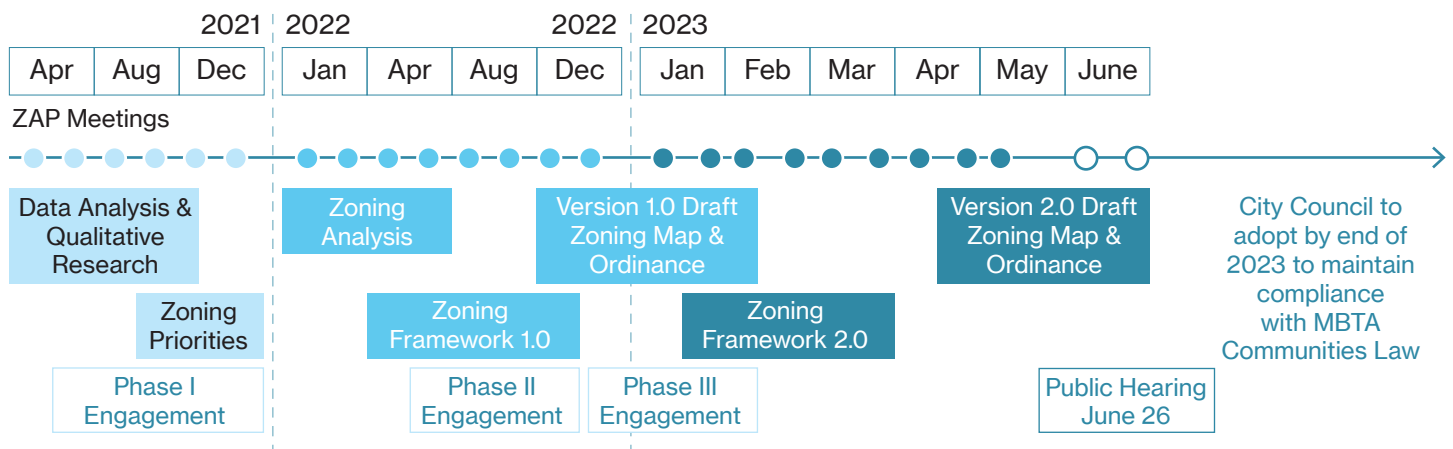


Village Center Zoning will help create vibrant spaces with ample sidewalks, bike lanes, plazas, seating, safe driving, and landscaping. This zoning can generate a mix of uses, a built-in customer base for local businesses, and safe and accessible transit to and from the centers. (Model illustration)

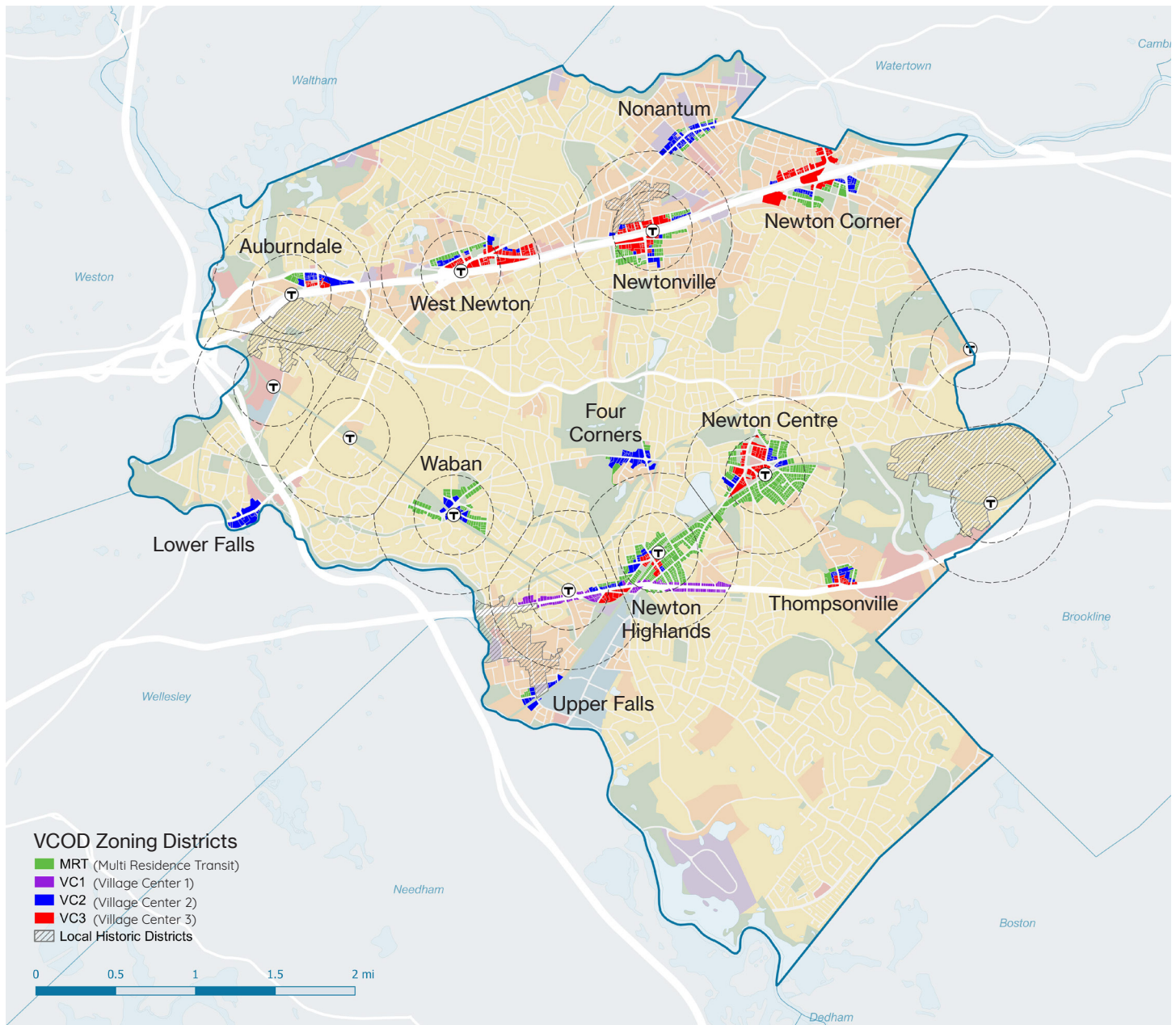
**Village centers act as the heart of Newton, providing services, entertainment, shopping, housing, jobs, and places to gather. Despite this, they could not be built under today’s existing zoning.** The Village Center Overlay District (VCOD) is a proposed set of zoning regulations for the commercial centers and immediately surrounding residential areas of

12 of Newton’s village centers. It includes four sub-districts with maximum building heights between 2.5 and 4.5 stories, applied to each village center uniquely, unlike the current zoning, which has the same set of requirements for all village centers. The VCOD zoning is consistent with city-wide goals to increase housing options, support local businesses, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and create more market rate, affordable and accessible housing.

### How We Got Here and Where We are Going



# Proposed Village Center Overlay District (VCOD) Zoning Map



The four VCOD sub-districts, shown here over the existing zoning, comprise only 3.4% of all parcel area within the city.

**An overlay district is a geographic zoning district layered on top of existing zoning districts.** A property owner may choose to build under the existing zoning or opt into the VCOD, which allows more housing to be built by-right and comes with stricter design standards. The overlay zoning permits mixed-use growth, including potentially higher levels of affordable housing, strategically located within Newton's existing village centers.

Property owners within the VCOD would have clarity about what they can build and gain additional options.

Additional benefits for Newton include:

- Tailored solutions for each village center
- Greater design control for future development

# Expanding Housing Choices for All

## Housing - Village Center Overlay District (VCOD)



Multi Residence Transit (MRT)



Village Center 1 (VC1)



Village Center 2 (VC2)



Village Center 3 (VC3)

The VCOD zoning guides the creation of diverse housing options, rental, and ownership, within walking distance of shopping, restaurants, businesses, transit, parks, and plazas. Such housing creates a welcoming City for all, offering inclusive housing for young families, seniors looking to downsize, returning college students using the Green Line to get to work, and others.

Housing of all types and price points is needed. The VCOD framework provides two main housing pathways through larger mixed-use and residential buildings in the VC zones and then smaller buildings in the multi residence transit (MRT) zone.

Smaller projects in the MRT zone allow for truly “missing middle” housing with typical unit sizes of 1,000-1,500 sf. This is compared to the typical new construction of large units in one- and two-family homes. For example, newly constructed (2015-present) units sold between May 2022-2023 averaged 3,000 sf in size and \$1.6 million in price.

The price and size of previously created typical units do not offer affordable or equitable options to those who wish to be part of our community. New VCOD zoning, in contrast, would offer more affordable options and cultivate a more diverse City.

### VCOD Affordability Requirements

50 Unit Housing Affordability Bonus Example Project		
Requirements	Affordable Units (#)	Affordable Units (%)
Base Condition	9	17.5%
Bonus, Option 1*	13	25%
Bonus Option 2**	15	30%
Required AMI for Affordable Units (avg)	65% (rental), 80% (ownership)	

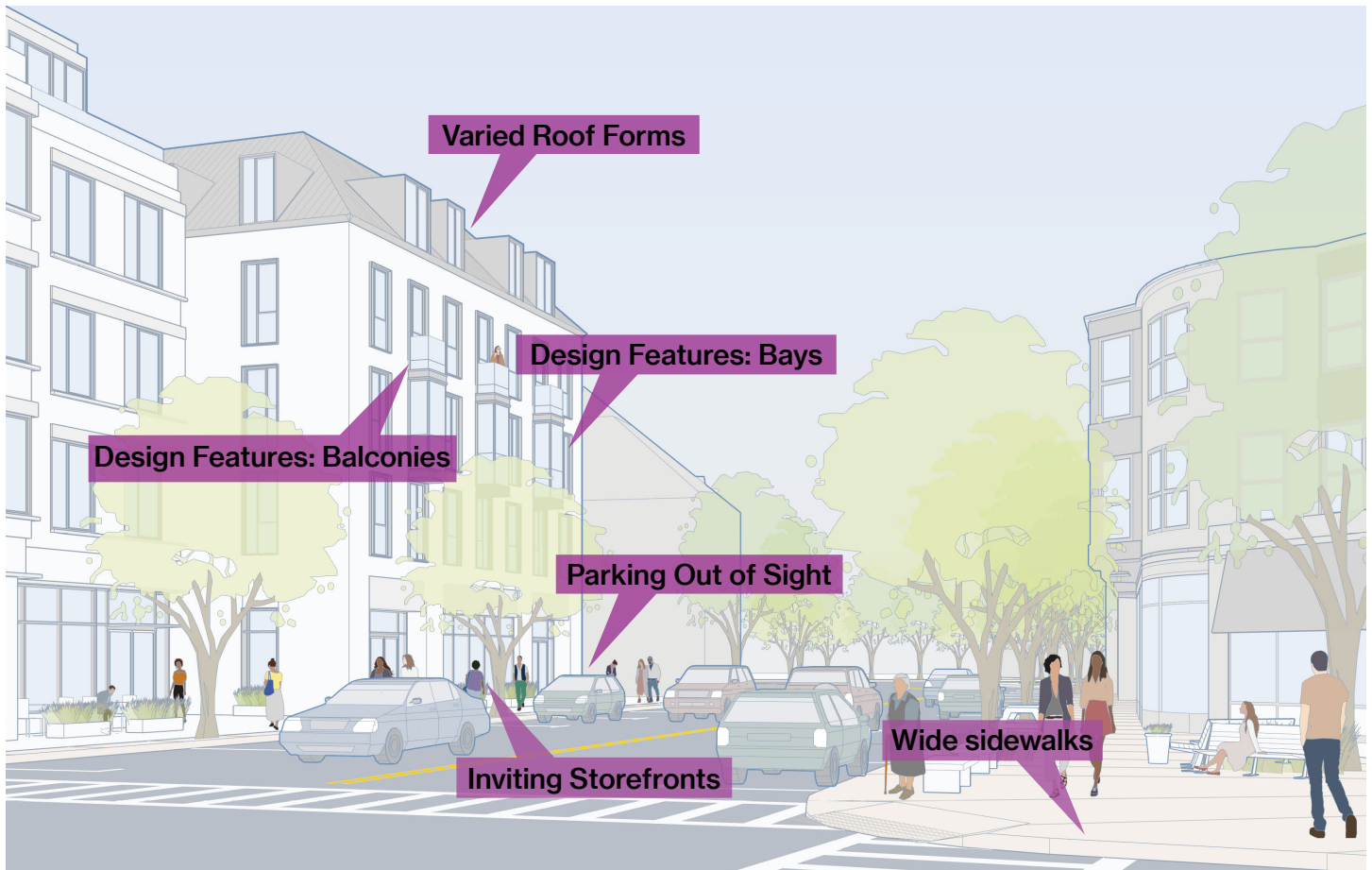
\*Bonus Option 1 allows 1 extra story plus additional 2,500 sf footprint

\*\*Bonus Option 2 allows 2 extra stories plus additional 2,500 sf footprint

\*\*\*Bonus options only allowed in VC2 and VC3; Option 2 only allowed in limited VC3 locations

# Ensuring Quality Design

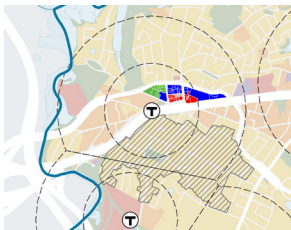
## Design Requirements - Village Center Overlay District (VCOD)



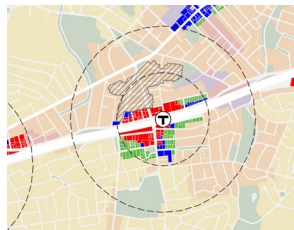
This image depicts what a hypothetical building on Lincoln Street in Newton Highlands might resemble under proposed VC3 zoning.

### Caring for Village Center History

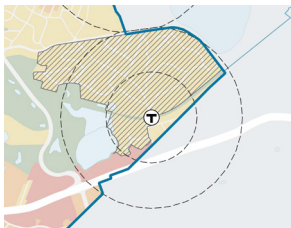
Auburndale



Newtonville



Chestnut Hill



Upper Falls



Newton's local historic districts, shown as hatched areas in the maps above, are excluded from the VCOD.

**The Village Center Overlay District is designed to encourage incremental growth while maintaining the history, character, and charm of Newton's village centers through design standards such as:**

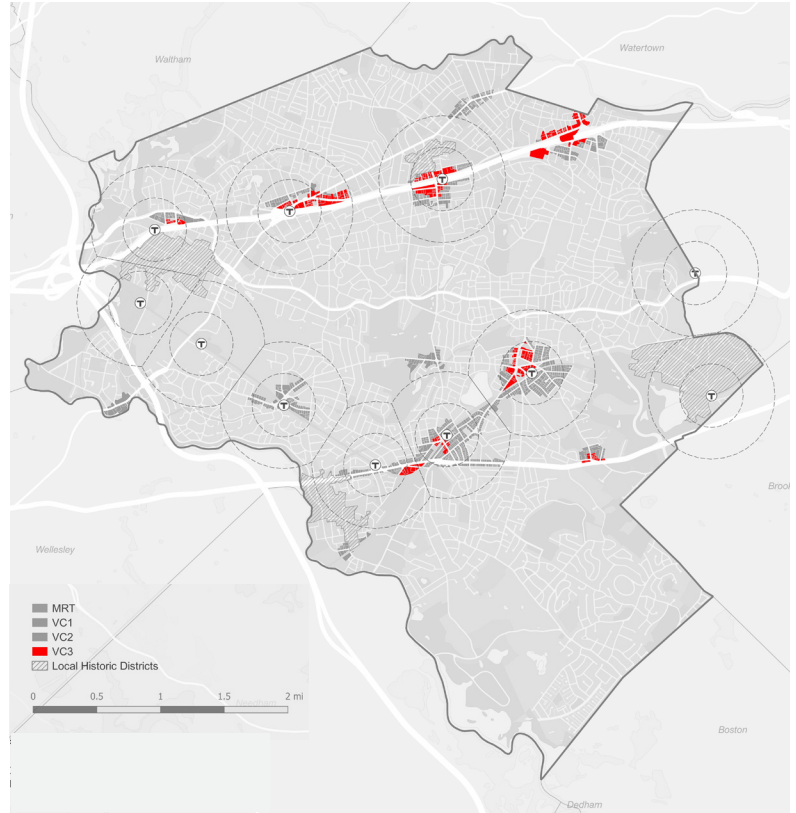
- Size constraints for building footprints
- Wider sidewalks
- Parking located within or behind buildings
- Limits on the location and number of curb cuts
- Public plazas and open space
- Transparent storefronts
- Lower building heights adjacent to residential zones
- Bicycle storage
- Screening for parking and dumpsters

# Village Center 3 (VC3)

## Dimensional Standards - Village Center Overlay District (VCOD)



Hypothetical VC3 building.



VC3 zoning, highlighted in red, represents 0.8% of Newton's parcels.

### Requirements for New Buildings in VC3

<b>Special Permit</b>	Lots greater than 30,000 sf
<b>Site Plan Review</b>	Lots between 20,000-29,999 sf
<b>Height, max. (mixed-use)*</b>	4.5 stories; 66' (flat) 72' (pitched)
<b>Height, max. (R adjacent)**</b>	3.5 stories; 54' (flat) 60' (pitched)
<b>Building Footprint, max.</b>	15,000 sf
<b>Facade Length, min.</b>	75%, or Lot Width within side setbacks minus 15', whichever is less
<b>Setback: Front</b>	0' min (12' min. sidewalk required)
<b>Setback: Side, min.</b>	None, Unless Abutting an R-District, then 15'
<b>Setback: Rear, min.</b>	If abutting a non-R district, then 5' ; If abutting an R district, then 15'
<b>Allowable Uses</b>	Multi-family, Retail, Office

\* Max height assumes a mixed-use building with residential units on the upper floors.

\*\*Height reduction required within 50' of lot line.

Note: There are additional design standards for VC2 zoning

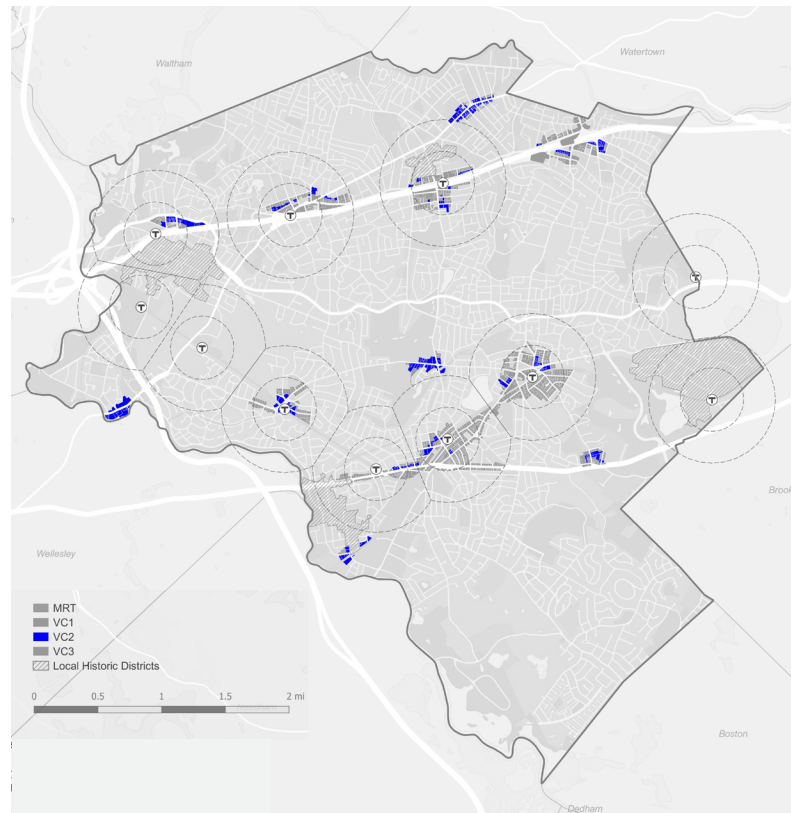
**The VC3 district facilitates mixed-use buildings of moderate- and large-scale.** This district serves as the core commercial zone of certain larger village centers, particularly those with access to mass transit. Buildings are typically set close to the sidewalk to create a defined street “wall” that makes pedestrian activity more enjoyable and creates a sense of place. Ground story active uses address the needs of residents and employees in the immediate neighborhood as well as the larger Newton community.

# Village Center 2 (VC2)

## Dimensional Standards - Village Center Overlay District (VCOD)



Hypothetical VC2 building.



VC2 zoning, highlighted in blue, represents 0.8% of Newton's parcels.

### Requirements for New Buildings in VC2

<b>Special Permit</b>	Lots greater than 30,000 sf
<b>Site Plan Review</b>	Lots between 20,000-29,999 sf
<b>Height, max. (mixed-use)*</b>	3.5 stories; 54' (flat) 60' (pitched)
<b>Building Footprint, max.</b>	10,000 sf
<b>Facade Length, min.</b>	75%, or Lot Width within side setbacks minus 15', whichever is less
<b>Setback: Front</b>	0' min. (12' min. sidewalk required)
<b>Setback: Side, min.</b>	None, Unless Abutting an R-District, then 15'
<b>Setback: Rear, min.</b>	If abutting a non-R district, then 5' ; If abutting an R district, then 15'
<b>Allowable Uses</b>	Multi-family, Retail, Office

\* Max height assumes a mixed-use building with residential units on

\*\*Height reduction required within 50' of lot line.

Note: There are additional design standards for VC2 zoning

### The VC2 district facilitates mixed-use and residential buildings of moderate scale.

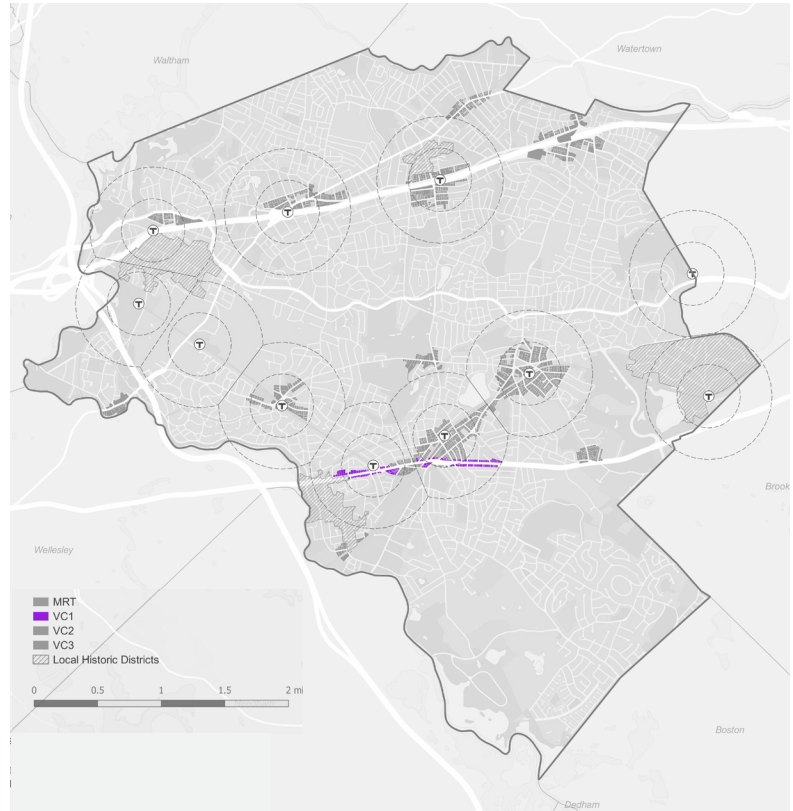
This district serves as the core of some village centers and as a transition district for other, larger village centers. Buildings are typically set close to the sidewalk to create a defined street "wall" that makes pedestrian activity more enjoyable and creates a sense of place. Ground story active uses address the needs of residents and employees in the immediate neighborhood as well as the larger Newton community.

# Village Center 1 (VC1)

## Dimensional Standards - Village Center Overlay District (VCOD)



Hypothetical VC1 building.



VC1 zoning, highlighted in purple, represents 0.2% of Newton's parcels.

### Requirements for New Buildings in VC1

<b>Special Permit</b>	Lots greater than 30,000 sf
<b>Site Plan Review</b>	Lots between 20,000-29,999 sf
<b>Height, max. *</b>	2.5 stories, 39' (flat) 45' (pitched)
<b>Building Footprint, max.</b>	4,000 sf
<b>Facade Length, min.</b>	75%, or Lot Width within side setbacks minus 15', whichever is less
<b>Setback: Front</b>	10' or average (12' min. sidewalk required)
<b>Setback: Side, min.</b>	Abutting a building without a party wall in a non-R district, then 10'; Abutting an R-District, then 15'
<b>Setback: Rear, min.</b>	15'
<b>Allowable Uses</b>	Mutli-family, Limited Retail

\* Max height assumes a mixed-use building with residential units on

\*\* Only Residential use is allowed.

Note: There are additional design standards for VC1 zoning

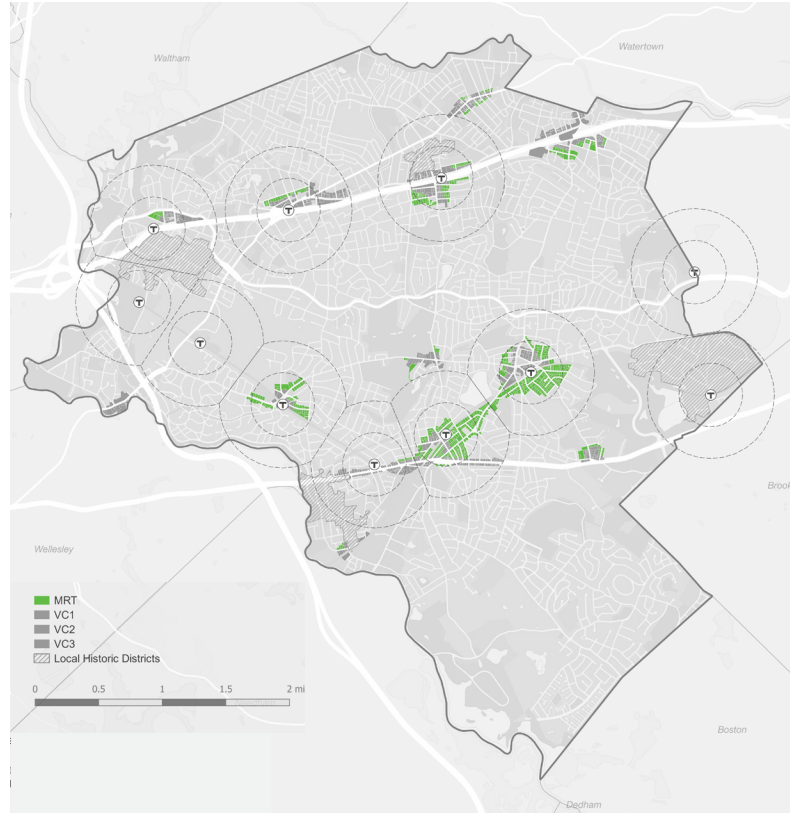
**The VC1 district facilitates small-to medium-scale multi-family buildings given its location along Route 9 and proximity to shopping, parks, plazas, mixture of uses, and transit options found in Newton's village centers.** This district acts to link certain village centers and allow for neighborhoods to serve retail along key corridors and intersections.

# Multi Residence Transit (MRT)

## Dimensional Standards - Village Center Overlay District (VCOD)



Existing 4-unit building in Newtonville.



MRT zoning, highlighted in green, represents 1.6% of Newton's parcels.

### Requirements for New Buildings and Conversion of Existing Buildings in MRT

<b>Special Permit</b>	Lots greater than 30,000 sf
<b>Site Plan Review</b>	Lots between 20,000-29,999 sf
<b>Height, max. (pitched roof) **</b>	2.5 stories; 45'
<b>Height, max. (flat roof) **</b>	2.0 stories; 27'
<b>Building Footprint, max. (New Building)</b>	1,500 sf
<b>Building Footprint, max. (Conversion)</b>	Existing footprint +50% addition
<b>Number of units, min. / max. (New Building)</b>	3/4
<b>Number of units, min. / max. (Conversion)</b>	3/6
<b>Setback: Front</b>	10' or average (12' min. sidewalk required)
<b>Setback: Side, min.</b>	7.5'
<b>Setback: Rear, min.</b>	15'
<b>Allowable Uses</b>	Multi-family

\* Max height assumes a mixed-use building with residential units on the upper floors.

\*\* Only Residential use is allowed.

Note: There are additional design standards for MRT zoning

**The MRT district facilitates new small-scale multi-family housing similar in size to the surrounding residential neighborhoods and the preservation of existing homes through conversion to multiple apartments or condos.** This district acts as a transition between the mixed-use cores of village centers and surrounding residential neighborhoods.



# Creating a Sense of Place Supports Businesses Economic Development - Village Center Overlay District (VCOD)



Part of Bram Way in Newtonville now serves as a plaza that draws people together informally and hosts occasional community events, like outdoor concerts. (Credit: Newton Community Pride)

## Historically, village centers functioned as the original live/work/play neighborhoods.

Emphasizing these great places and spaces for people to live and work, Newton's village centers can attract new people to support existing businesses and encourage new business ideas from Newton's entrepreneurial ecosystem. The flexible framework within the VCOD zoning allows any future buildings to meet community needs within the changing business environment.

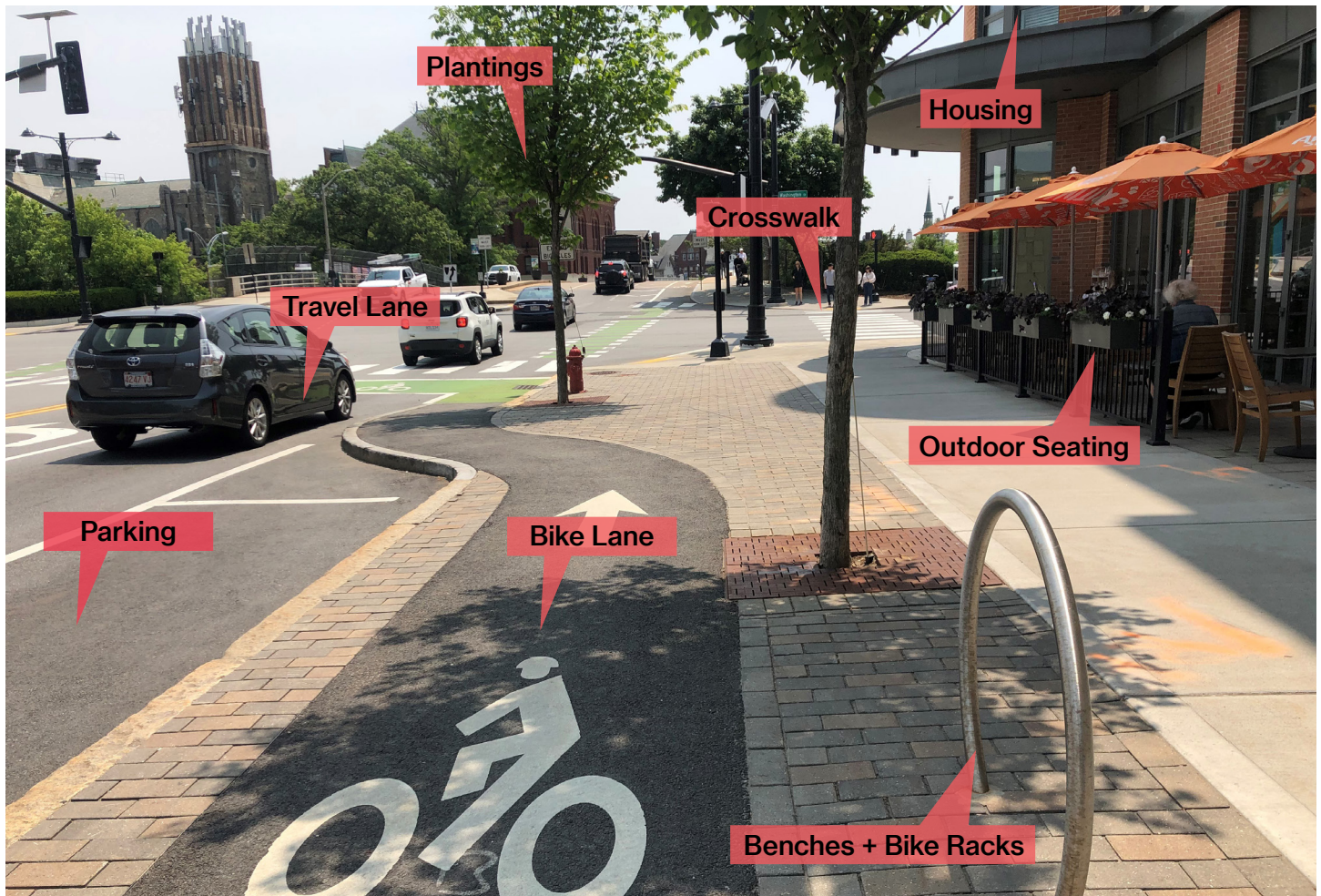
The VCOD zoning eliminates the burden of time and cost on retailers to request waivers to provide on-site parking, allowing new businesses to locate or to expand. It also provides wider sidewalks for outdoor dining and new plazas at larger developments.



In 2021, O'Hara's in Newton Highlands utilized a nearby open parking lot for al fresco seating. It was a popular place to meet in the warmer months. (Credit: Newton Vision Kit)

# Enhancing Safety and Equity for All Street Users

## Transportation - Village Center Overlay District (VCOD)



The Walnut Street improvements beautify Newtonville Village through wider sidewalks, traffic calming bump outs, 78 new trees and planters, sidewalk furniture, new streetlights, updated traffic signals, and simplified intersections.

### The VCOD zoning focuses new, smaller housing near existing businesses, plazas, and transit.

Locating multi-family housing in village centers and near transit results in less driving and lower car ownership. The VCOD zoning removes minimum parking requirements since a recent MAPC study found that 50% of the parking in Newton's multi-family buildings goes unused. This reduces expensive, unused parking that increases housing costs, while allowing parking to still be built if the project needs it to attract residents.

VCOD development is oriented to support and improve community quality of life through wider sidewalks, seating, landscaping, good lighting, bike parking, and more. In addition, new developments will be fully accessible, complying with all Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

### Multiple Transit Options in Village Centers



Bluebikes available at the Newton Highlands T Stop.

# Addressing Climate Change

## Climate and Sustainability - Village Center Overlay District (VCOD)

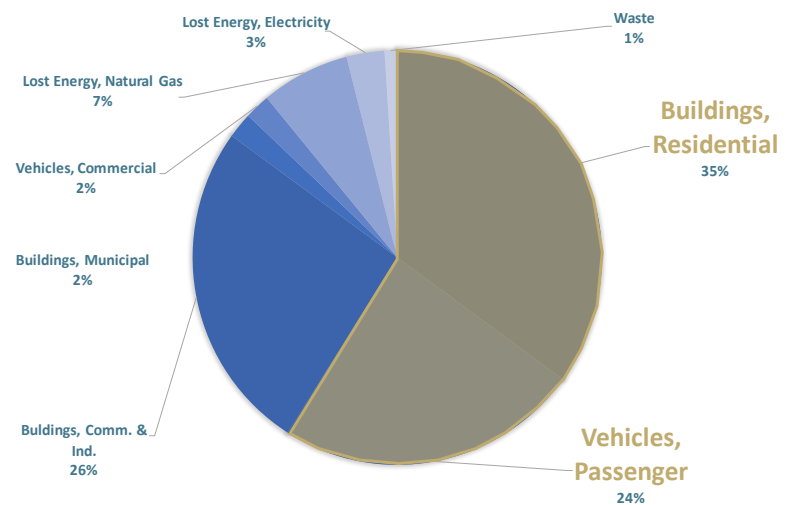


Union Street is already a vibrant area located right at the Newton Centre T stop with shops, offices, and apartments. The VCOD allows people to live near the T and shopping, restaurants, parks, and plazas which reduces car trips.

**New construction and rehabilitation of buildings within village centers will lead to cleaner and more efficient energy use and a higher quality of life for residents and visitors.** Beyond individual buildings, vibrant, walkable village centers will offer local goods and services that can meet community needs without people always needing a vehicle. Overall, VCOD zoning will help reduce Newton's carbon footprint from the two largest sources, buildings and transportation.

Statistics show that people who live in multi-family housing in areas similar to village centers drive less and consume fewer resources, such as water and electricity per household than single family homes. Newton has also adopted recent updates to the building code which will require new buildings to be far more energy efficient and incorporate EV chargers, solar panels, and most multi-family buildings will need to meet sustainable Passive House energy standards.

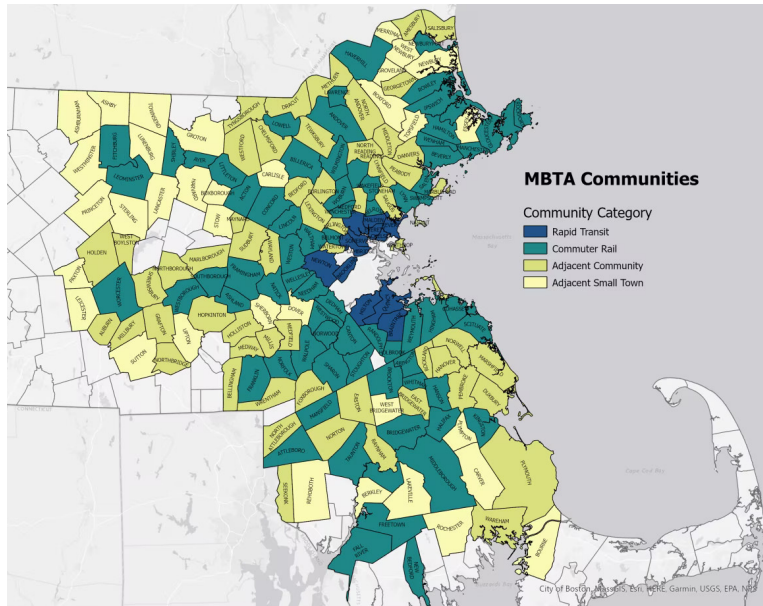
### Newton's Top GHG Emitters



Newton's Green House Gas (GHG) emissions inventory shows that buildings and transportation are the largest contributors to the City's carbon footprint. 35% of emissions come from residential buildings and 24% come from passenger vehicles. This accounts for 59% of Newton's GHG emissions. Locating housing in village centers near transit and shopping, restaurants, parks, and plazas requires less vehicle trips, and other carbon producing resources. (Credit: Newton Climate Action Plan, 2013)

# VCOD Meets State Law Requirements

## MBTA Communities - Village Center Overlay District (VCOD)



(Credit: DHCD)

Community	Minimum Multi-Family Unit Capacity
Cambridge	13,477
Worcester	12,642
Quincy	11,752
Somerville	9,067
<b>Newton</b>	<b>8,330</b>
Brookline	6,990
Malden	6,930
Lowell	6,522
Medford	6,443
Revere	6,135

(Credit: DHCD)

**Newton, one of 177 MBTA communities, must adopt zoning by December 31, 2023 which provides zoning capacity for a minimum of 8,330 multi-family units (multi-family is defined as 3 or more units on a site).** The law does not require that

these units be built, just that the zoning allows for them to be built by-right and without a special permit. An MBTA community is one that is within a half-mile of MBTA T line stations or Commuter Rail stations. If adopted, the village center overlay district (VCOD) zoning brings Newton into compliance with state law at just the right time.

### MBTA Communities Law Requirements

Requirement	Metric (min.)	VCOD Compliant
Newton's Unit Capacity	8,330 units	YES
% of Contiguous Land for Multi-Family Zoning District(s)	50%	YES
% of District within Station Area	90%	YES
Aggregate Gross Density	15 units/acre	YES

### Terms Defined

**Unit Capacity:** Newton must create one zone that allows for 8,330 multi-family units. The law requires amending zoning, but it does not require construction of any units.

**% of District within Station Area:** Multi-family units must be located no more than 0.5 miles from a Commuter Rail or Green Line station to count towards compliance.

**Total Land Area and Aggregate Gross Density:** As a Rapid Transit community, the minimum land area for the zone is 50 acres with a minimum density of 15 units / acre

# Providing Options for Property Owners

## Development Options - Village Center Overlay District (VCOD)



Multi-Residence Transit (MRT)



Village Center 1 (VC1)



Village Center 2 (VC2)



Village Center 3 (VC3)

Property owners within the VCOD have clarity about what they can build and gain additional options through this proposal. If and when a property owner decides to build or redevelop their parcel, their project can utilize the underlying zoning district or the overlay district.

**Interested in learning more about what the VCOD zoning means for you? Follow these steps:**

Find out your property's VCOD Zone:

<https://gis2.ci.newton.ma.us/vczoningcompare.html>

Review VCOD facts

[www.newtonma.gov/zoningredesign/vc](http://www.newtonma.gov/zoningredesign/vc)

Reach out to Planning staff

Email: [zoningredesign@newtonma.gov](mailto:zoningredesign@newtonma.gov)

Phone: 617-796-1120

The images (left) show typical building sizes and forms for each of the VCOD zones.