

City of Newton
Committee of the Whole

Village Center Rezoning Phase 4: Version 2.0 Draft Zoning

June 20, 2023

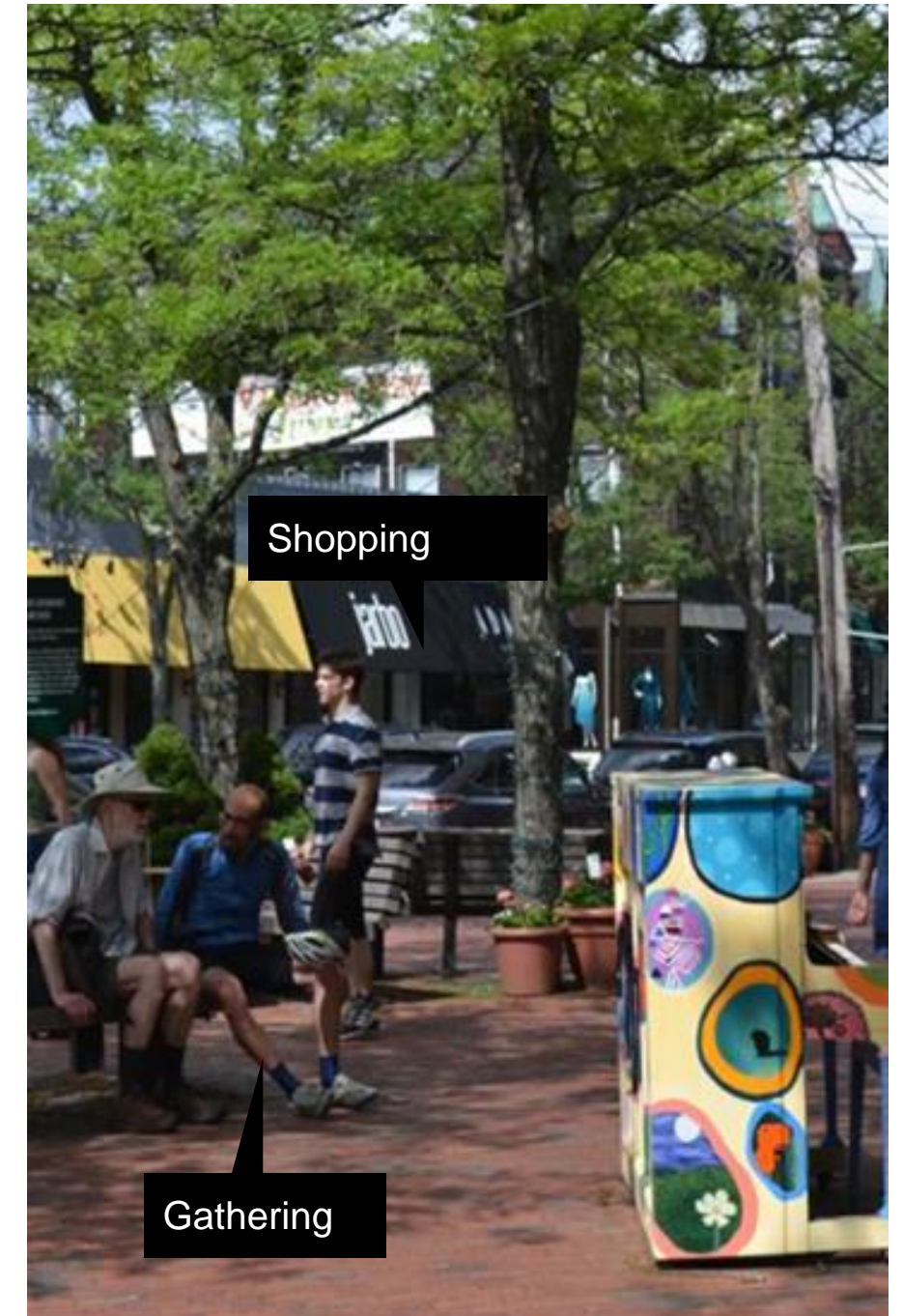
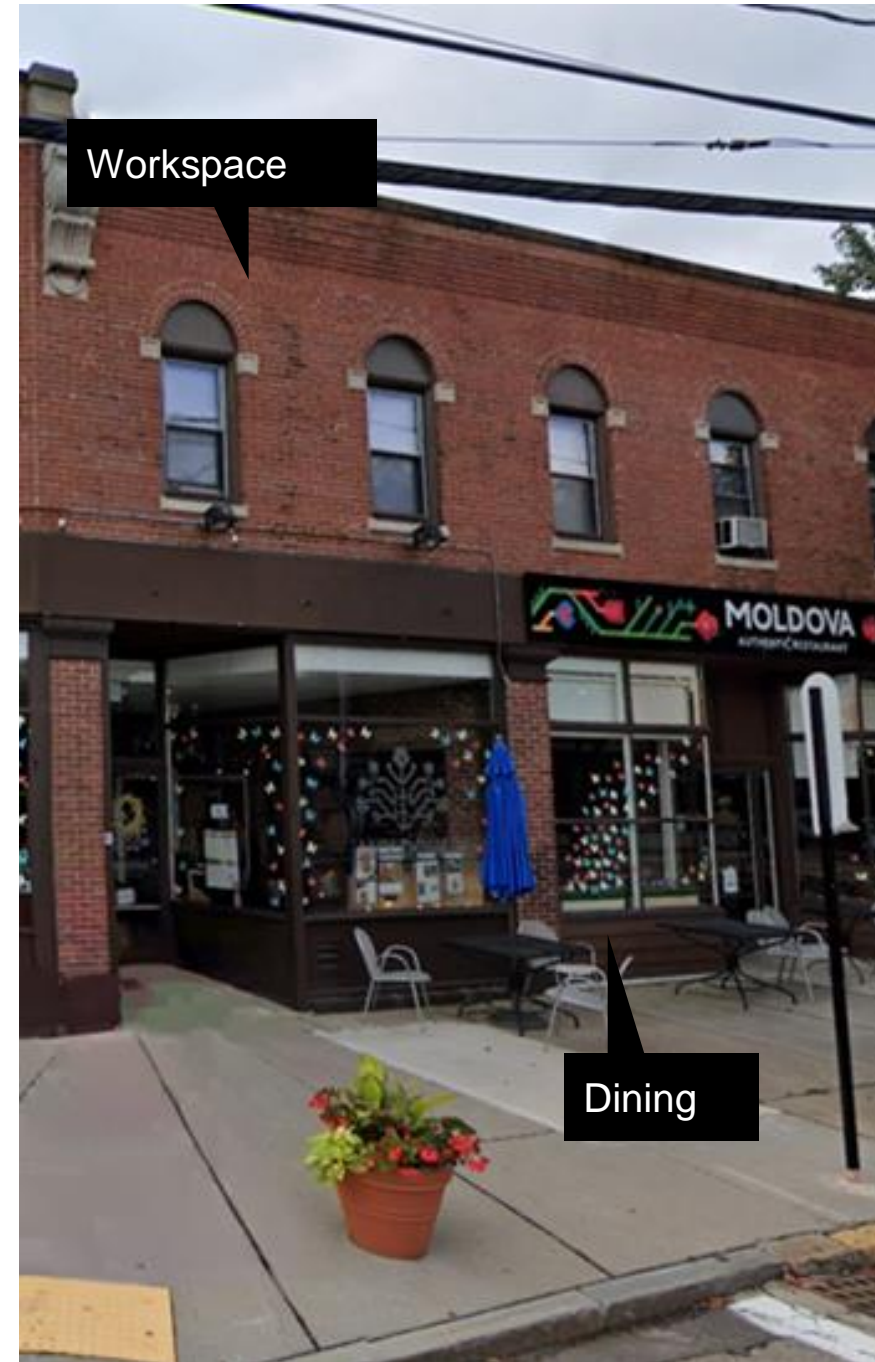


Agenda

- 1. Introduction**
 - a. Village center goals
 - b. Challenges facing Newton
 - c. Purpose of village center rezoning
- 2. Village Center Overlay District (VCOD) Zoning Proposal**
 - a. Overview
 - b. Development and design standards
- 3. MBTA Communities and VCOD**
 - a. General requirements
 - b. Newton requirements and VCOD compliance
 - c. Deadline for compliance
- 4. Expected Outcomes to VCOD Zoning**
 - a. Benefits to the City
- 5. Engagement and Outreach**
- 6. Conclusion**
 - a. Timeline and next steps

Village Center goals

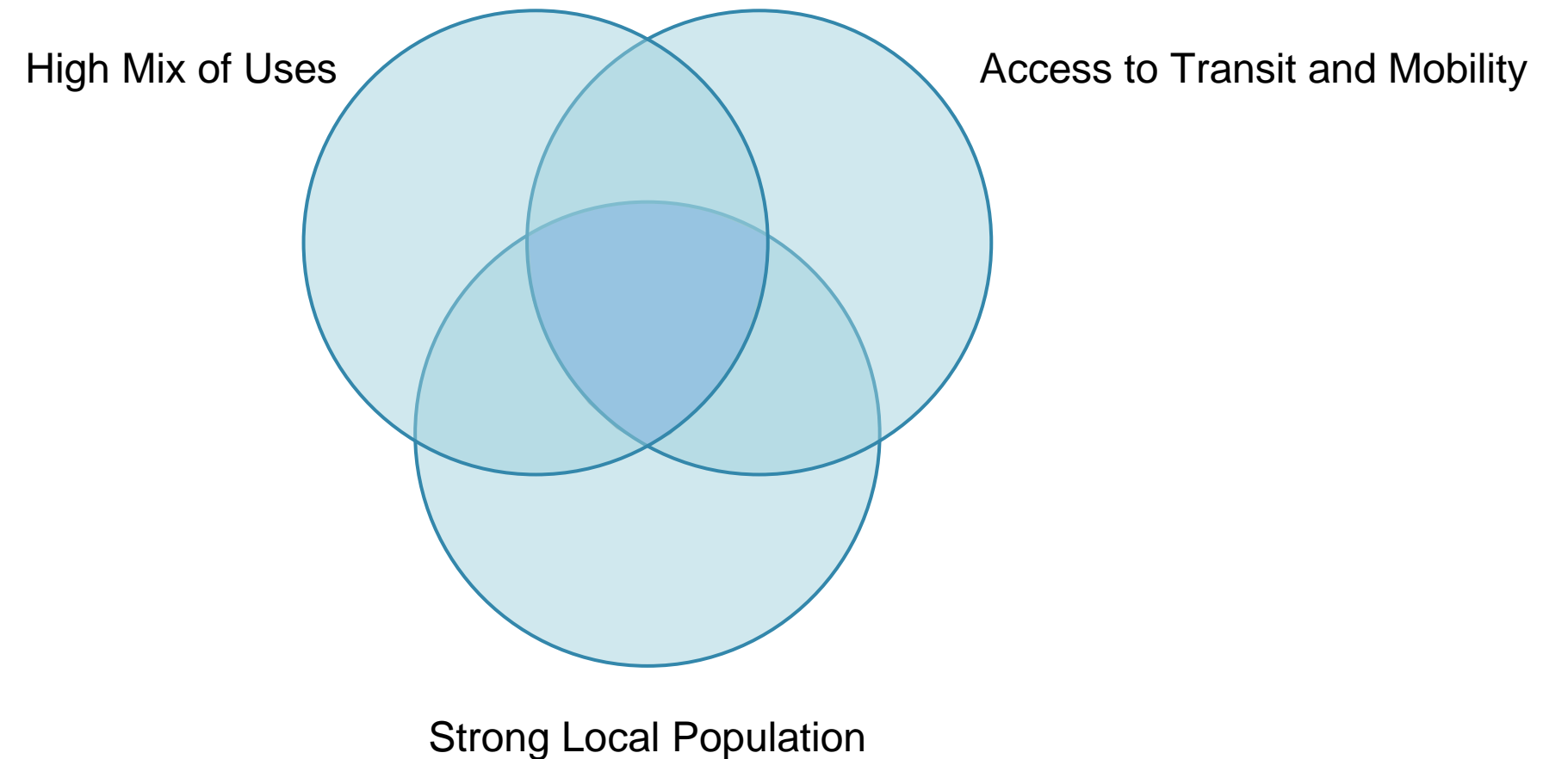
Build upon existing successes and strengths to create vibrant village centers



Village Centers can Address Challenges Facing Newton

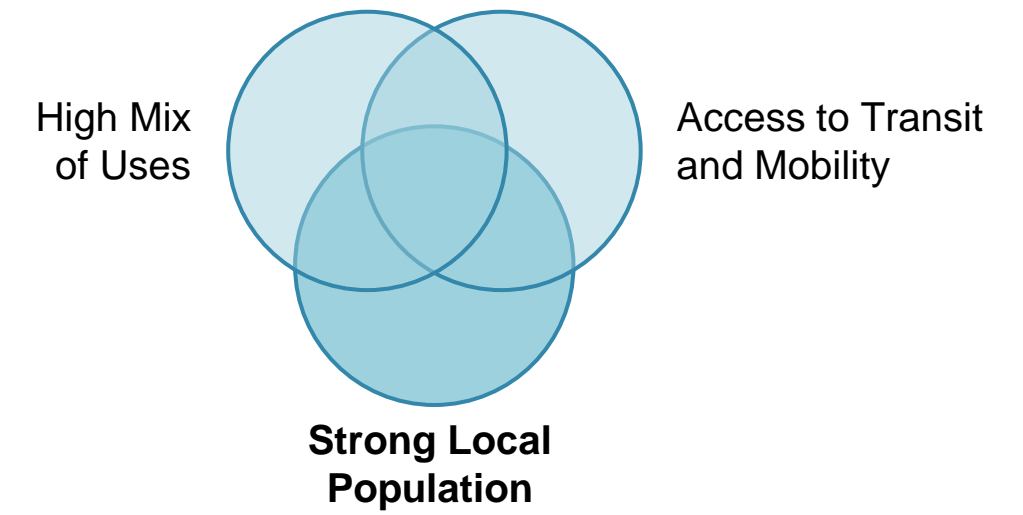
1. Lack of housing options
(size, price point, and accessibility)
2. Struggling local business trying to compete with online retail
3. Climate change
4. Transportation and traffic issues
5. Aging in place / welcoming new families
6. Lack of space to gather and socialize

Metrics for Successful Village Centers



Why Updates are Needed

Multi-family housing is difficult to build or not allowed



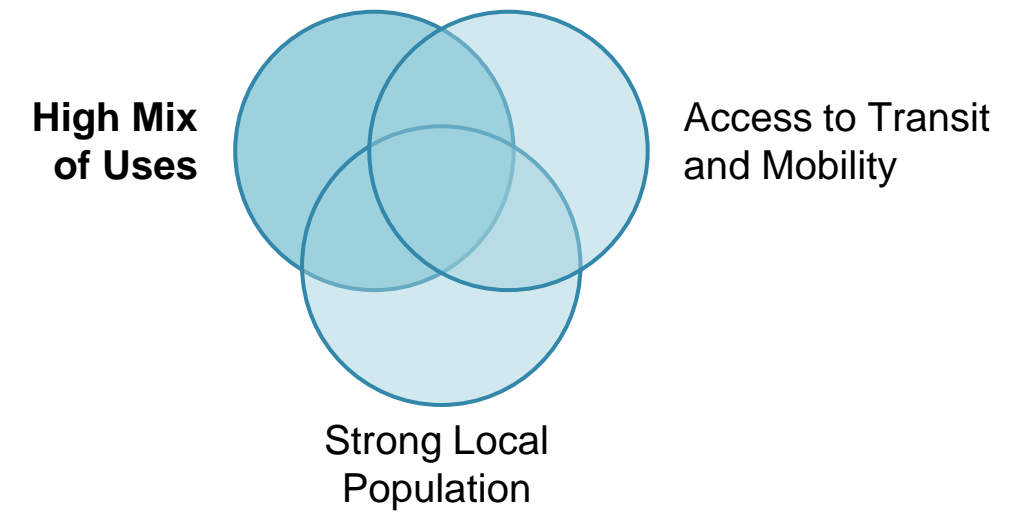
One and two-story retail in Newton Centre

Vision Kit submission of housing above retail

Source: Community Vision Kit Submissions

Why Updates are Needed

Restrictions make it difficult for businesses to open and grow



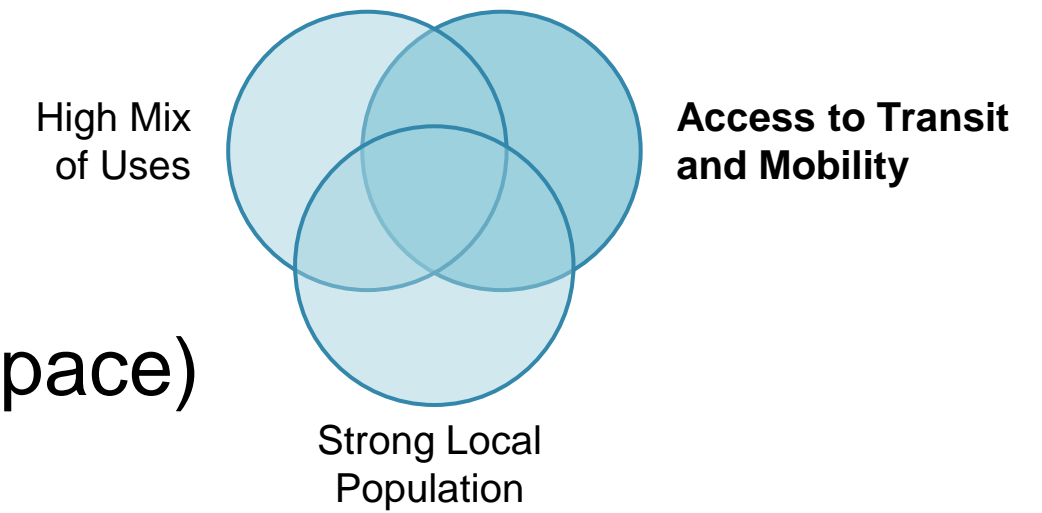
Vacant commercial spaces

Pop-up Commercial Space in Newton Highlands

Source: EDC 2020 COVID Recovery Plan, Project Pop-Up, Boston Globe

Why Updates are Needed

Parking requirements prevents quality design (buildings, streetscape, open space)

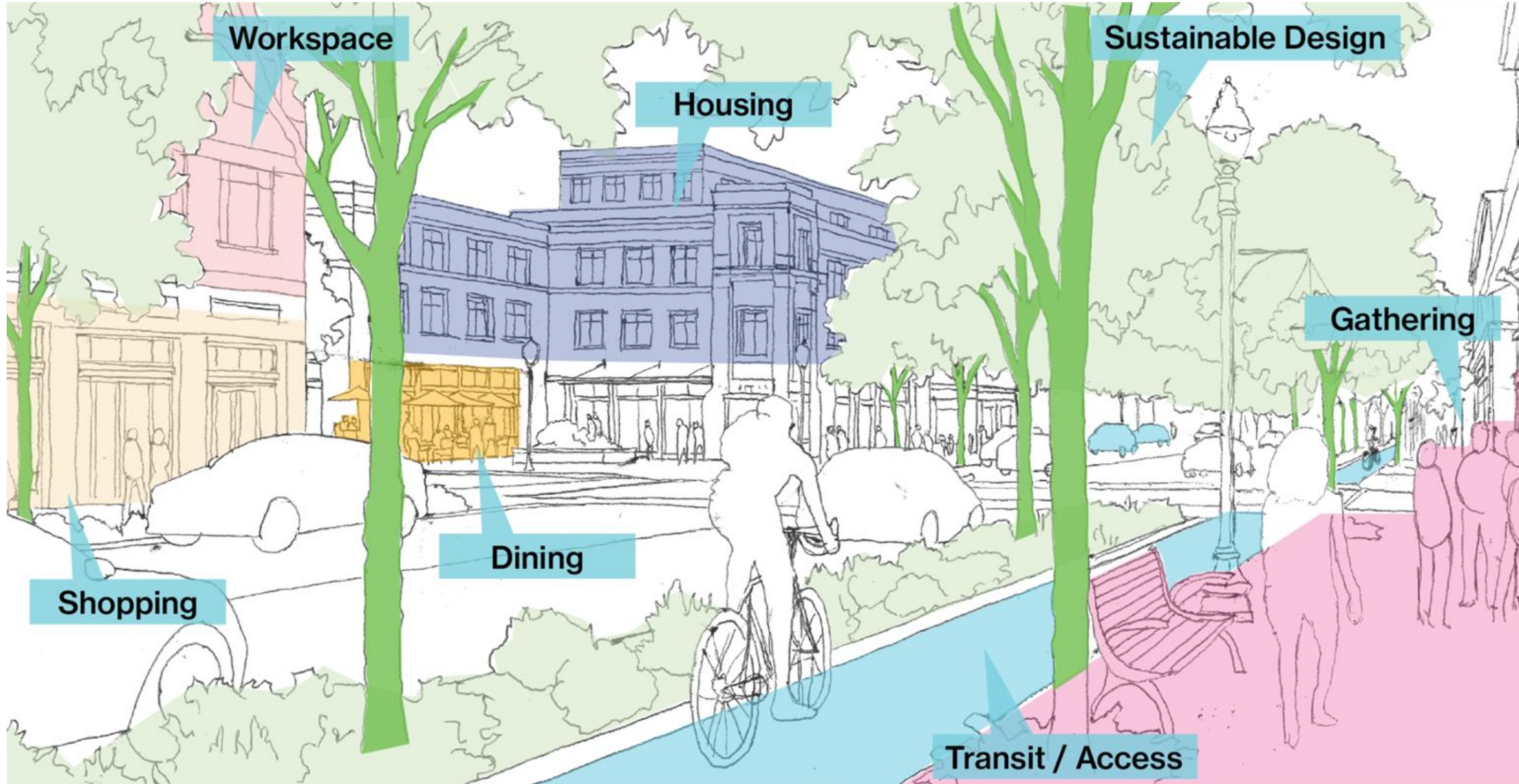


Austin Street parking lot, pre-development

Bram Way Plaza hosting live music

Source: City of Newton, Newton Community Pride

Intended Outcomes - Achieving the Community Vision



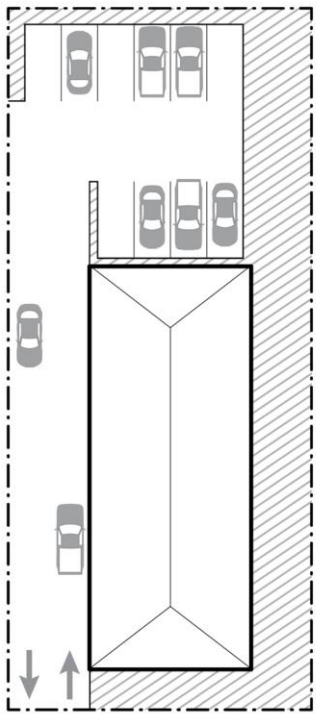
VCOD Zoning Proposal

- Zoning approach
- Development and design standards

This code regulates urban form through the following principal mechanisms:

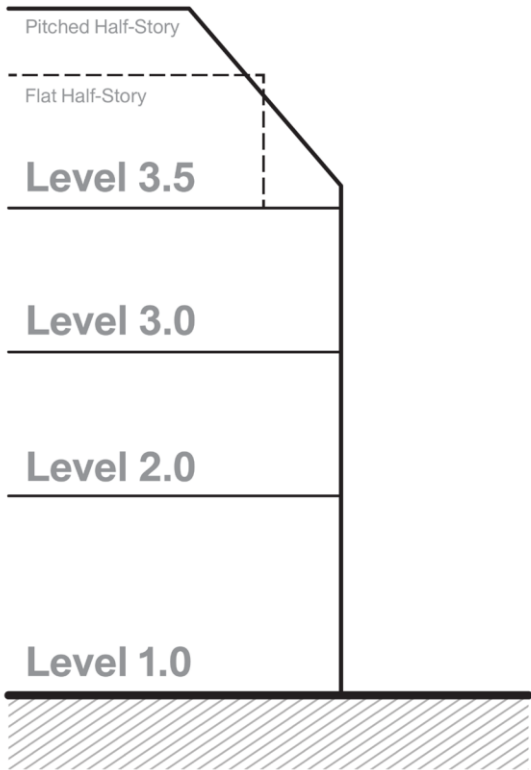
1 Building Footprint

Sets the maximum area per story



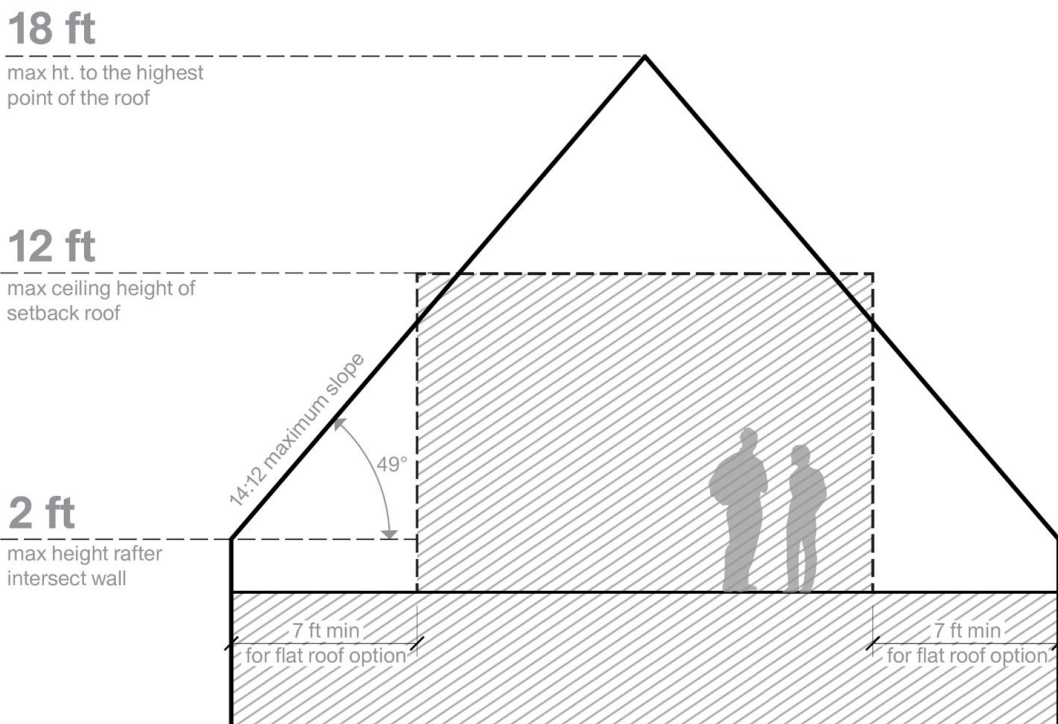
2 Building Height

Sets the maximum height in stories/feet



3 Roof Form

Provides options for a flat or pitched roof half-story



Zoning Approach

**The figures below represent proposed by-right zoning allowances for new construction*

MRT*

2.5 Stories
40 Feet tall, max.
1,500 SF, max. Footprint

Residential development allowed



VC1

2.5 Stories
45 Feet tall, max.
4,000 SF, max. footprint

Residential & Limited Retail development allowed



VC2

3.5 Stories
62 Feet tall, max.
10,000 SF, max. footprint

Mixed Use/Commercial, & Residential development allowed



VC3

4.5 Stories
75 Feet tall, max.
15,000 SF, max. footprint

Mixed Use/Commercial, & Residential development allowed



* MRT metrics may be revised based on financial feasibility and urban form studies

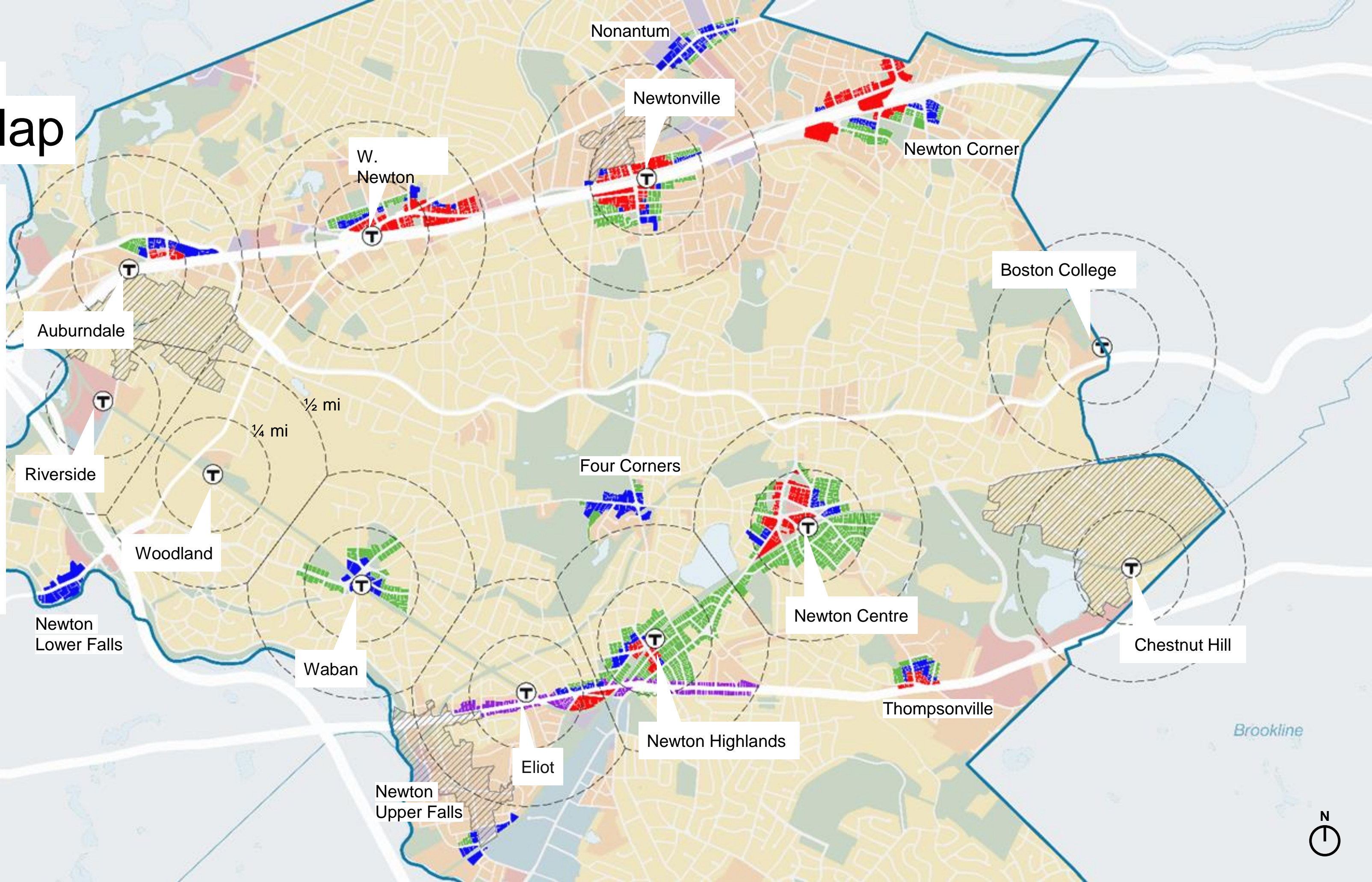
Citywide Map

Existing Zoning

- Business (BU)
- Manufacturing (LM, M)
- Multi-Residence (MR)
- Single Residence (SR)
- Mixed Use (MU)
- Public Use & Open Space (PU, OS/R)

Proposed Zoning

- Village Center 3 (VC3)
- Village Center 2 (VC2)
- Village Center 1 (VC1)
- Multi-Residence Transit (MRT)
- Mixed-Use Required
- Historic District



3.4%
of City land area

Design Requirements Ensure Quality Buildings

Shaping the Building

Building Footprint (area in square feet)

Building Height (number of stories*)

Half-Story

- Height, max. (in feet)
- Stepback (7', min.)

Pitched Roof Slope (max. pitch 14:12)

Ground Story Height, min./max. (in feet)

Ground Story Active Uses

- Front Elevation width (100%)
- Fenestration (% of Front Elevation area)
- Glazing Standards (% VLT, % VLR)

Facade Articulation (max. continuous facade length)

Architectural Features, controlled by dim. standards

- Awnings
- Canopies
- Bays
- Balconies

Building Entrances (number, location, and articulation)

Roof Features (list of allowed features)

Mechanical Equipment

- Roof Screening and Setbacks (10', min.)
- Location of wall-mounted equipment

*max height capped in feet

Building Placement

Building Setbacks (distance in feet)

Building Separation (distance in feet)

Building Placement

- Facade Build-Out Ratio, min. (% of lot width)
- Sidewalk width (12', min.)

Site Standards

Usable Open Space, lots greater than 30k sf (% of lot)

Parking Placement

- Parking Setbacks (distance in feet)
- Access (allowed location)

Curb Cuts and Driveways

- Access (allowed location)
- Width, max. (in feet)
- Number per street frontage
- Distance from intersection (in feet)

Surface Parking Lot Design

- Landscaped strip, controlled by dimensional standards
- Screening requirements

Loading

- Access (allowed location)
- Screening requirements

Service Areas

- Location
- Screening requirements

Walnut St, Newtonville: Existing



Existing Street View

Existing Context

Uses: single-story small retail; two-story bank; three-story function hall with ground story retail



Walnut St, Newtonville: Potential Development

Design Standards

1. Building Placement:

When development occurs on any lot abutting a sidewalk that is <12' in total width, inclusive of the Furnishing Zone, buildings must be set back an additional distance such that a paved area meeting City sidewalk standards of at least 12' width is provided, inclusive of the Furnishing Zone.

1. Building Entrances:

Principal entrances must either be recessed from the plane of the facade, or have a projecting Awning or Canopy, to signal building entry and provide adequate protection from the elements.

1. Architectural Features: Canopy

A wall-mounted structure that provides shade and weather protection over a storefront or building entrance.

1. Fenestration:

For ground story fenestration, glazing must have a min. 60% Visible Light Transmittance (VLT) and no more than 15% Visible Light Reflectance (VLR) as indicated by the manufacturer.

1. Number of Stories:

A pitched roof may be composed of roof planes with different slopes. The slope of any pitch must not be greater than 14:12 (49 degrees). The roof rafters must intersect the wall plate or top of wall frame of the exterior walls at a height no more than 2' above the finished floor of the half-story.

1. Half-Story Step-Back:

A required distance that certain upper stories of a building must be recessed from the plane of the facade of the stories below.

1. Parking Lot Access:

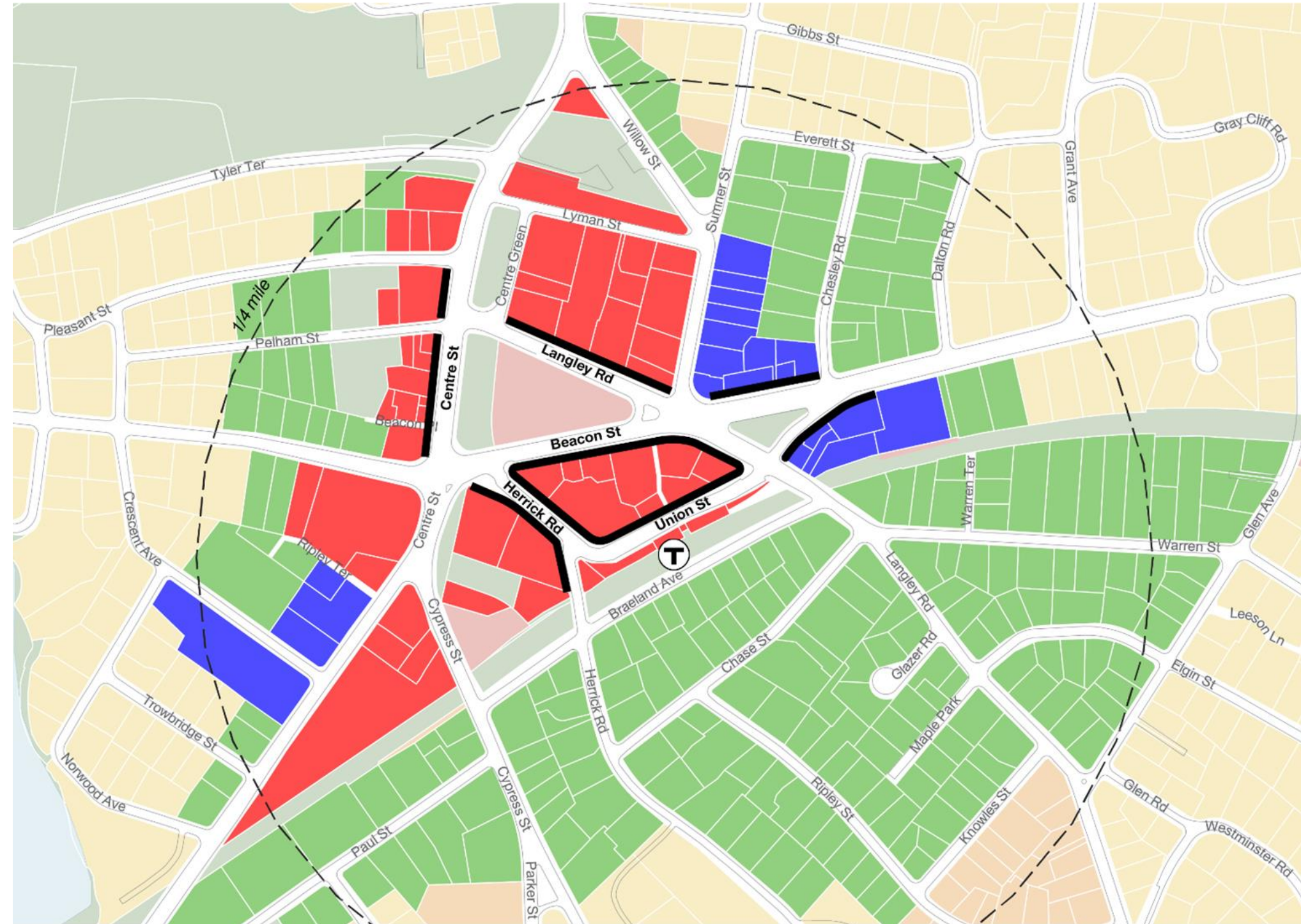
Access to parking lots and structures parallel to the Front Elevation is prohibited when access along another lot line is available.



Mixed Use Required

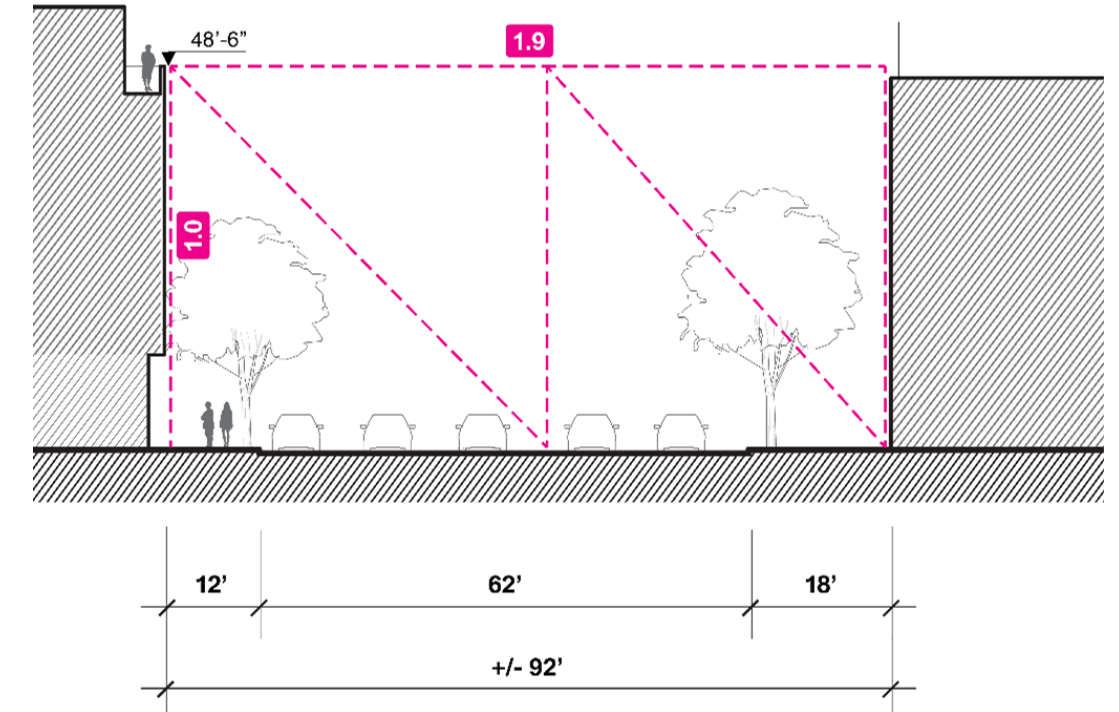
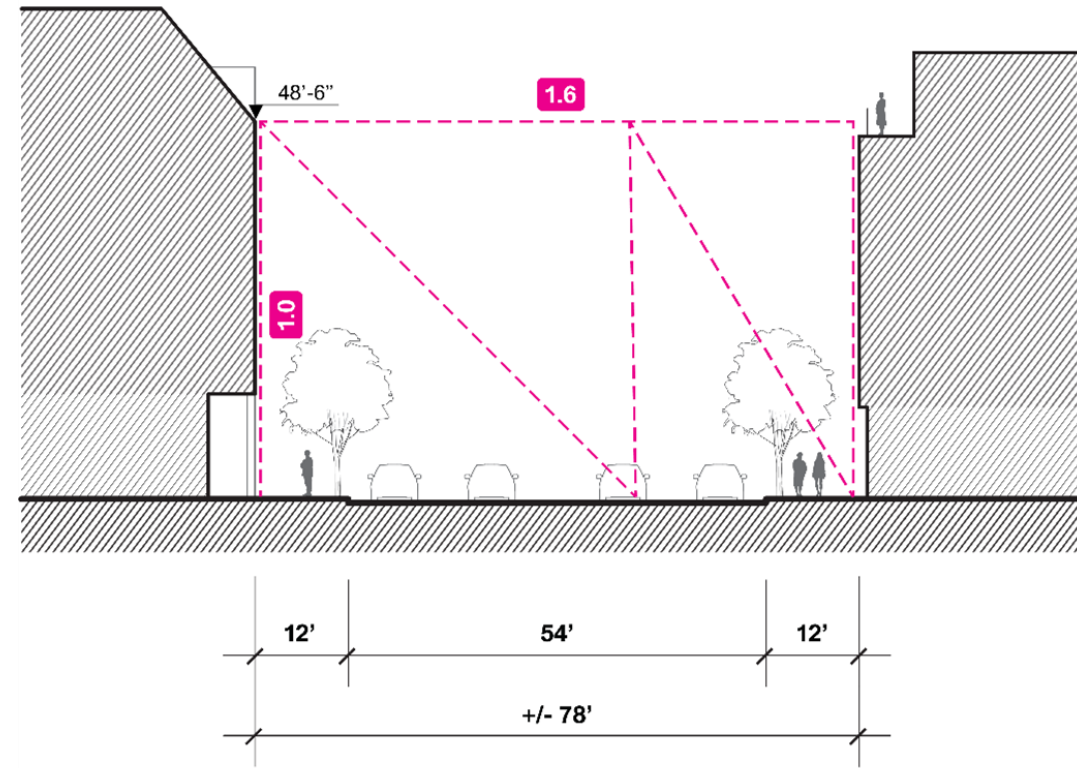
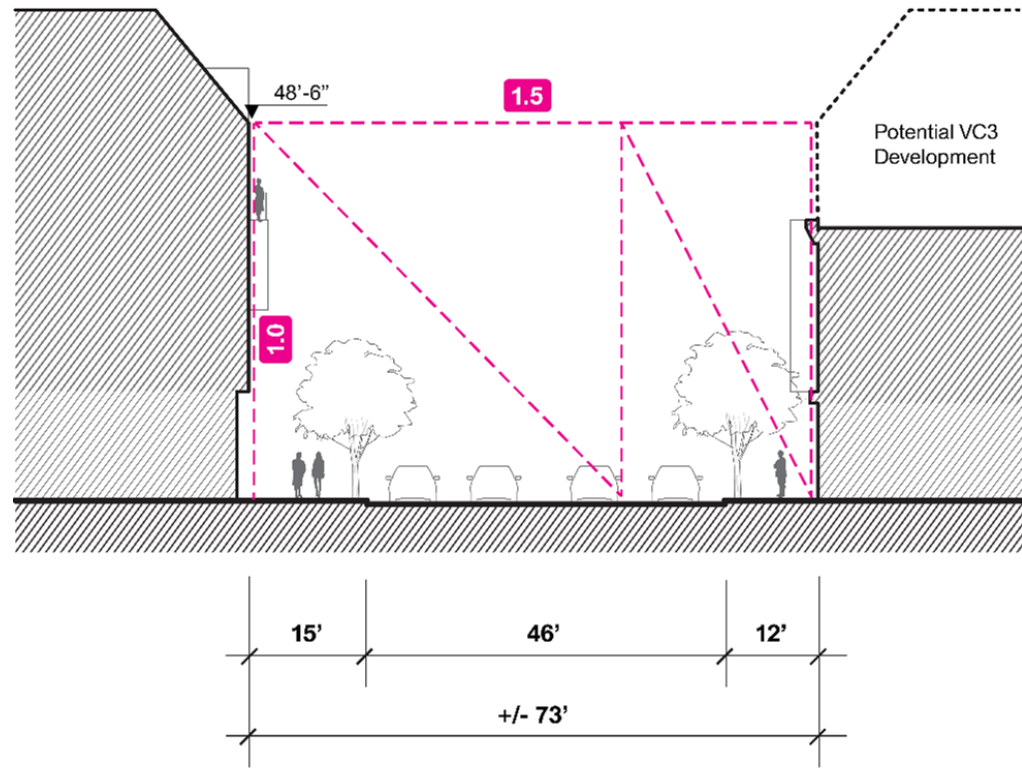
Promote vibrancy and placemaking in village centers

- Lots with Mixed Use Priority Street frontage must provide ground story Active Use space for 100% of the total width of the building
- Lots with Mixed Use Priority Street frontage must provide Active Use space at a minimum depth of 25'
- Only VC2 and VC3 lots are considered for Mixed-Use Priority Streets



Newton Centre Mixed-Use Priority Streets map

Potential Development in Different VCs



Lincoln St, Newton Highlands



Walnut St, Newtonville



Washington St, Newton Corner

Alignment with Newton's Historical Development Patterns



Newtonville



Newtonville



Upper Falls



West Newton



Newton Corner



Newton Corner



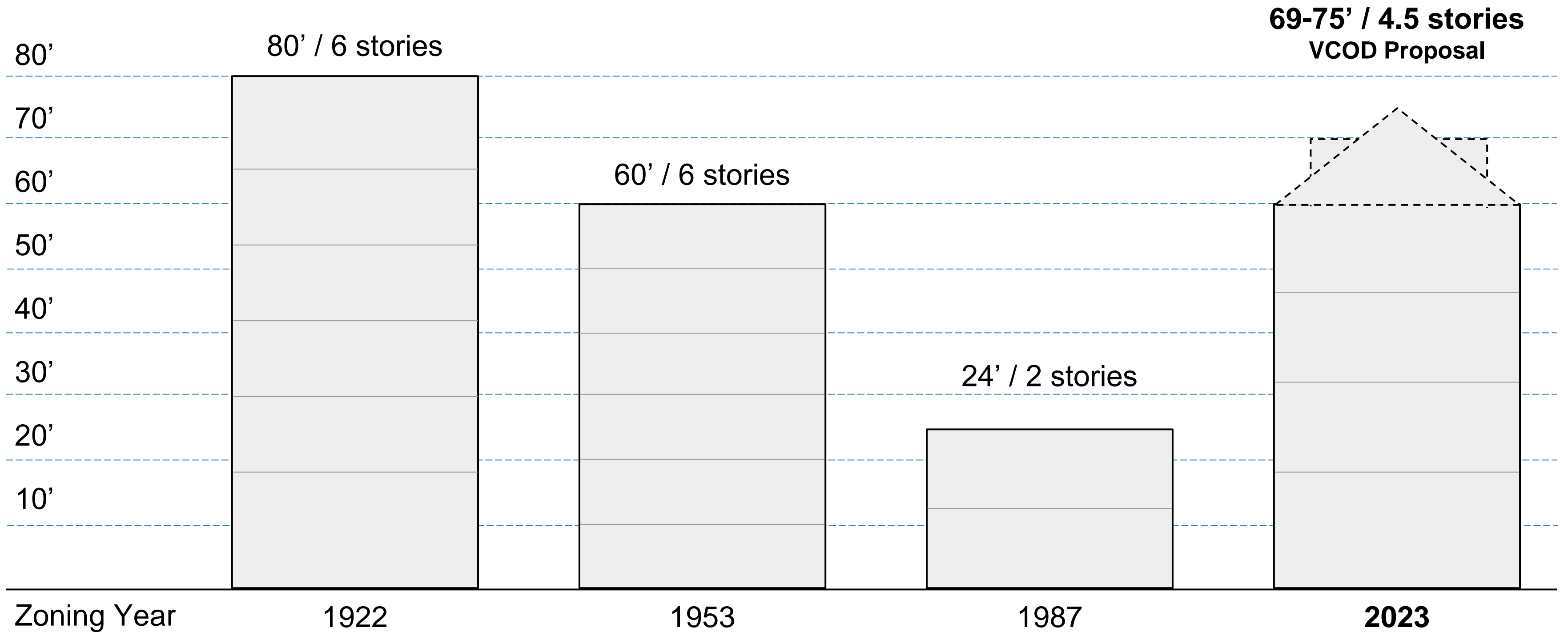
Newton Centre



Thompsonville

Alignment with Newton's Historical Development Patterns

Maximum By-Right Building Heights Allowed in Village Centers

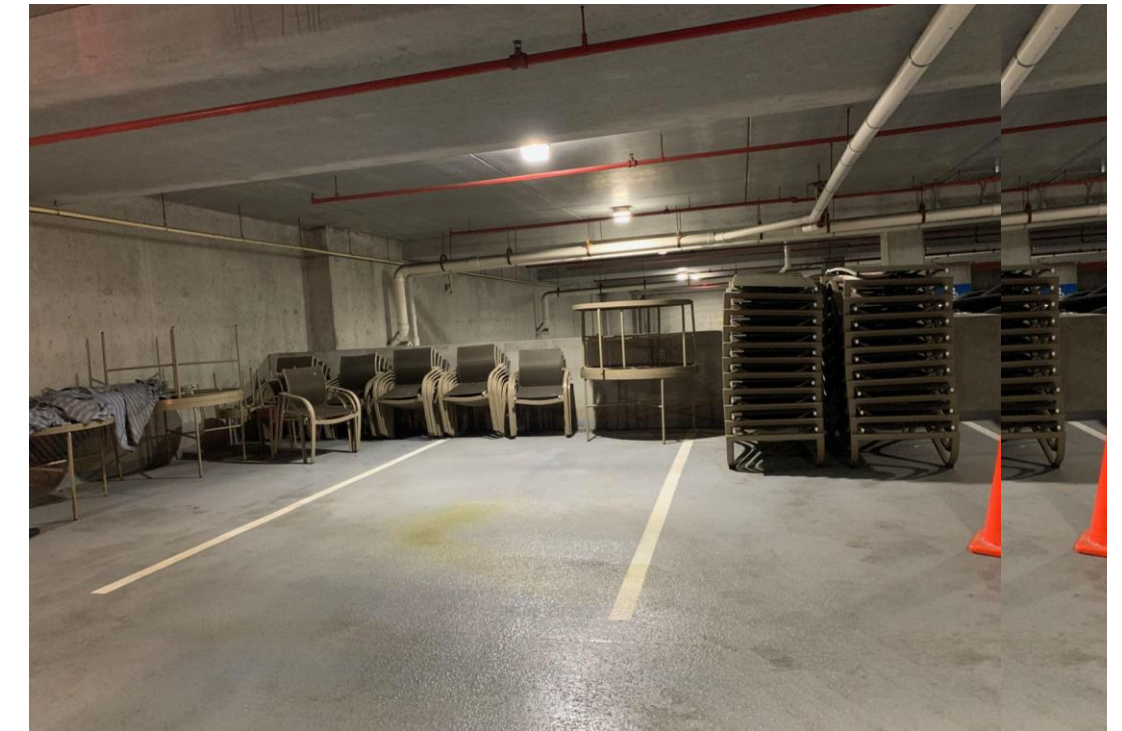


Parking Requirements, Allowed but not Required



No curb cuts or garage entryways along Main Street - Brattleboro, VT

- Not requiring parking improves:
 - Streetscape/pedestrian experience
 - Environment
 - Traffic congestion
 - Cost of construction
- Half of existing multifamily parking sits empty



Unused parking from Newton multi-family housing

More Affordable Housing Provided

		Current Zoning	Proposed Zoning*	
		Base Conditions	Option 1 (VC2 and VC3)	Option 2 (VC3 only)**
Allows For	Height Bonus (stories)	N/A	+1	+2
	Building Footprint Bonus (sq ft)	N/A	+2,500	+2,500
	Required Affordable Units (min)	17.5%	25%	30%
Must Provide+	Required AMI for Affordable Units**	50-80% Rental / 80% Ownership		

- More opportunities for base requirements:
 - Applies to all 7+ unit projects
- Bonus option for more and deeper levels of affordable housing

* Bonus cannot be used within 50 feet of a lot line abutting a MRT or residential district.
 ** VC3 lots abutting a VC1, MRT, or residential district cannot opt in.
 + Both options has been analyzed for financial feasibility with no additional City funding/resources
 ++ The average AMI can be no more than 65% AMI for a rental development

MBTA Communities and VCOD

- General requirements
- Newton requirements and VCOD compliance
- Deadline for compliance

Introduction to the Statute

- Also known as “Section 3A” (*Mass. General Laws c.40A §3A*)

- Requires communities with MBTA access to have at least one zoning district which permits **multi-**
3+ units ← **family** development **as of right** →

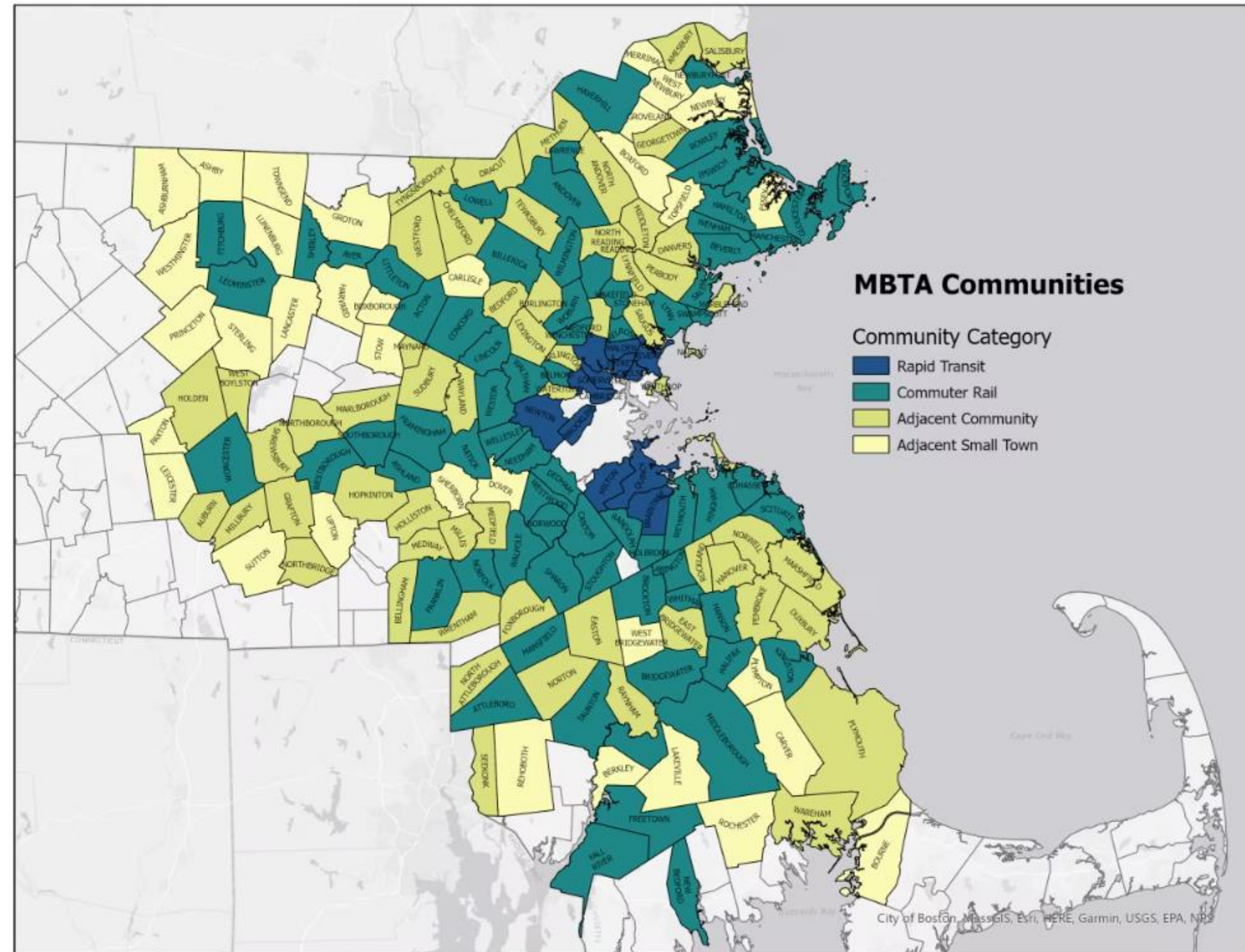
“development may proceed without the need for a special permit, variance, amendment, waiver, or other discretionary approval”

- Site plan review may be required ... within the parameters established by the applicable case law. Site plan approval may regulate matters such as vehicular access and circulation on a site, architectural design of a building, and screening of adjacent properties. Site plan review should not unreasonably delay a project nor impose conditions that make it infeasible or impractical to proceed with a project that is allowed as of right and complies with applicable dimensional regulations.
(<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/section-3a-guidelines>)

Newton is One of 177 MBTA Communities

Appendix I: MBTA Community Categories and Requirements (top 20 communities)

Community	Community category	Minimum multi-family unit capacity*
Cambridge	Rapid Transit	13,477
Worcester	Commuter Rail	12,642
Quincy	Rapid Transit	11,752
Somerville	Rapid Transit	9,067
Newton	Rapid Transit	8,330
Brookline	Rapid Transit	6,990
Malden	Rapid Transit	6,930
Lowell	Commuter Rail	6,522
Medford	Rapid Transit	6,443
Revere	Rapid Transit	6,135
Brockton	Commuter Rail	5,596
Lynn	Commuter Rail	5,517
Everett	Rapid Transit	4,552
Lawrence	Commuter Rail	4,501
Framingham	Commuter Rail	4,355
Haverhill	Commuter Rail	4,189
Waltham	Commuter Rail	3,982
Weymouth	Commuter Rail	3,813
Braintree	Rapid Transit	3,769
Taunton	Commuter Rail	3,745



The total unit capacity across all MBTA Communities is over 280,000 residential units

Criteria for compliance

1A. District Shape, Size, and Density

- Contiguity standards- 50% of land area in one contiguous district, all districts at least 5 acres
- Minimum district(s) area
- Gross Density requirement

1B. Zoning Standards

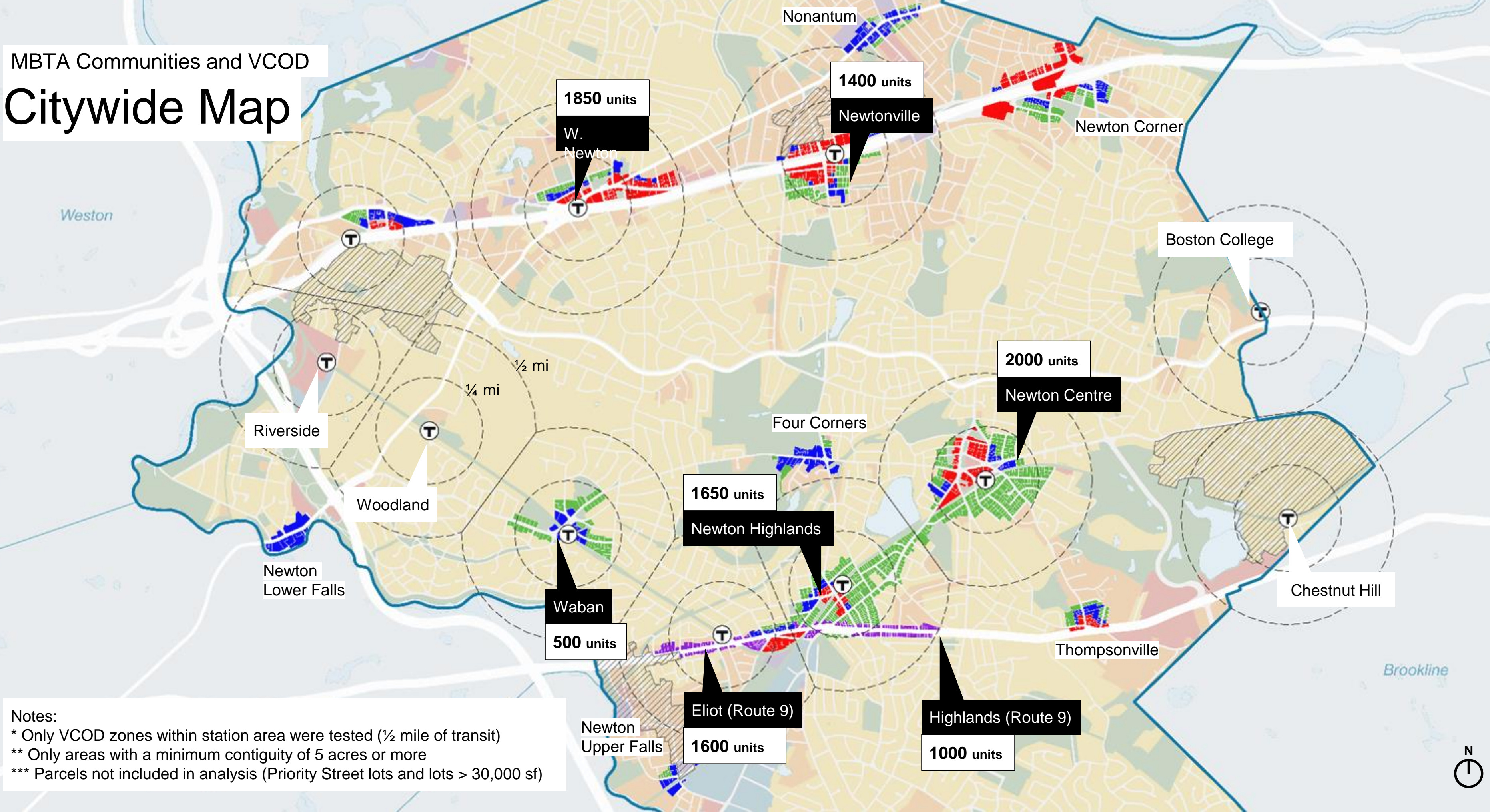
- Setbacks, height limits, parking requirements, etc. allowed
- No age restrictions
- No *required* ground floor commercial
- No restrictions on # of bedrooms, size of bedrooms, # of occupants

2. Multi-Family Unit Capacity

8,330 unit capacity

This is simply a zoning capacity - not a requirement to *build* a certain number of units

MBTA Communities and VCOD
Citywide Map



Notes:
 * Only VCOD zones within station area were tested (1/2 mile of transit)
 ** Only areas with a minimum contiguity of 5 acres or more
 *** Parcels not included in analysis (Priority Street lots and lots > 30,000 sf)

Version 2.0 VCOD Meets MBTA Compliance

MBTA Compliance Summary (rounded)

	MBTA Requirements (min.)	Version 2.0 VCOD Results	MBTA Compliant
Unit Capacity	8,330 units	10,000 units	YES
Aggregate Gross Density	15 units/acre	35 units/acre	YES
Total Land Area	50 acres	288	YES
% of District to be Located in Station Area	90%	100%*	YES
% of Contiguous Land for Multi-Family Zoning District(s)	50%	69%	YES

Notes:

* Only VCOD zones within station area were tested

** Parcels not included in analysis (Priority Street lots and lots greater than 30,000 sf)

*** **Assumes no minimum parking requirements**

Must meet every requirement to reach compliance by December 31, 2023 deadline

Expected Outcomes to VCOD Zoning

Benefits to the City

Benefits to the City



New housing options

New housing will provide options at sizes and price points that currently do not exist in Newton

Opportunities for older adults to downsize

Less expensive options for young adults and families

New affordable and accessible housing

New housing will be energy efficient



Support for businesses

Increased customer base

Less onerous requirements

Greater height for first floor uses

Wider sidewalks



Sufficient city services

New housing would be near transit and in walkable village centers, reducing congestion

Limited number of new students living in recent mixed use buildings

Opportunities to coordinate with schools and other city services

Increased tax revenue

Engagement and Outreach

Community engagement efforts to date

Community Groups Engaged

Neighborhood Area Councils Councilors

- 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

- 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

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

- 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

Engagement Process

Phase 1: Visioning

Quantitative and Qualitative Research (April 2021 - April 2022)

- **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
- **On-the-spot surveying:** over 500 engaged in person

Phase 2: Workshopping

Zoning Framework (May - Oct 2022)

- **Library exhibit:** up from Sept 1 - Oct 17
- **Feedback tool**
- **Focus groups:** 3 total
- **Community Engagement Network:** 90 members

Phase 3: Refining

Version 1.0 Zoning Text and Map (Nov 2022 - Jan 2023)

- **Info sessions:** 7 to discuss Version 1.0 maps
- **Postcards mailed to owners within VCOD**
- **ZAP meetings:** 2 meetings opened up to feedback from community groups

Phase 4: Finalizing

Public Hearing and Beyond (Feb 2023 - Present)

- **Public Hearing:** opens June 26
- **Postcards mailed to owners/occupants within VCOD and abutters:** 6,039
- **Zoning and Planning Committee:** discussed at 40 ZAP meetings



NHA & NHN in Newton Centre



NHA & NHN in Newtonville



Newton Public Library Exhibit



Planning intern at Festa in Nonantum

Conclusion

Timeline and next steps

Timeline: Where we are

Next Steps

