



**Presentation and discussion  
on the proposed new zoning for our Village Centers**

**FOUR AREA COUNCIL JOINT MEETING  
Saturday September 24<sup>th</sup> 2 - 4 pm**

# Topics to Discuss

## I. Introduction of Zoning Framework for Village Centers

### A. Process Explainer

The City of Newton is updating certain aspects of its Zoning Ordinance - a set of rules that impacts what can be built, and where.

The Newton City Council is currently considering a set of proposed zoning changes for Newton's village center commercial districts.

### B. Feedback Tool Introduction

This current process is intended to collect community input and that input will be collected via the Feedback Tool. The Feedback Tool is available online or at the library. We'll review it after at the end of our zoning presentation. We urge you to participate in that process.

# Newton Zoning History

Today's village centers have developed through the complex interplay of economic shifts, transportation innovations, and ever-changing trends in household lifestyles for nearly 400 years.

Much of Newton's village centers were developed before its first zoning ordinance in 1922 and before World War II.

Transportation options like railroads, streetcars, buses, and automobiles have strongly shaped both the location, development, and redevelopment of Newton's village centers.

# Newton Zoning History (cont.)

1600

1700

1800

1900

## Past and Living Indigenous Histories

Newton sits on Indigenous peoples' land, including but not limited to the Massachusetts tribe, who lived here for over 12,000 years. English settlement in early 1600s led to disease, forced assimilation, and racism. Local Indigenous histories are living today, such as through Newton's Indigenous Peoples Day.

### River mill villages (~1660)

Newton's earliest villages were situated along the Charles River, harnessing its power to operate mills and factories. The first mill opened in Upper Falls in 1688.

### 18th – Early 19th Century Villages

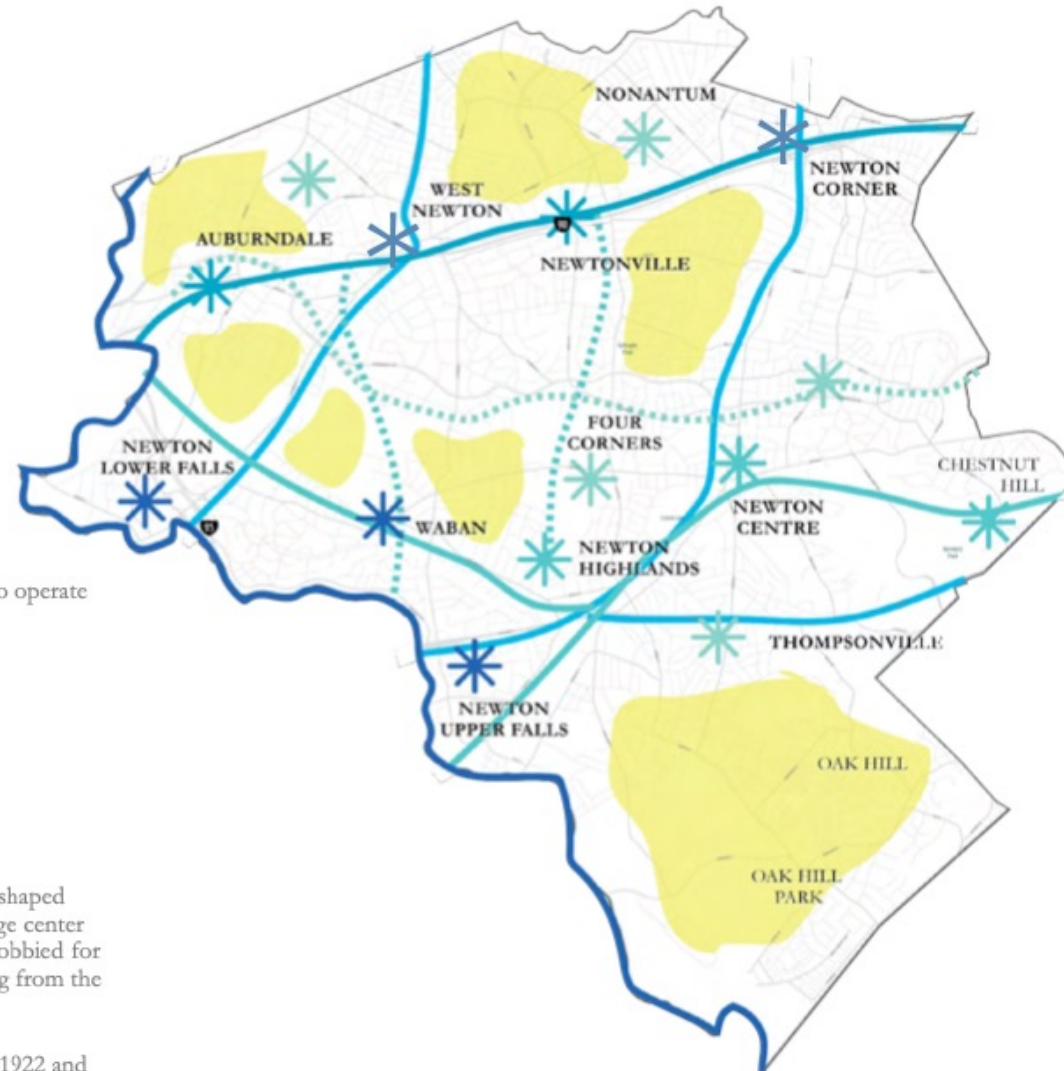
### Railroad Villages (1840s – 1870s)

### Railroad Suburbs (1880s-1920s)

### Streetcar Suburbs (1890s – 1930s)

Transportation options like railroads, streetcars, buses, and automobiles have strongly shaped both the location, development, and redevelopment of Newton's village centers. Village center development was impacted by laborer housing as well. For example, William Jackson lobbied for the railroad that eventually became the commuter rail, anticipating demand for housing from the new suburban commuter.

Much of Newton's village centers were developed before its first zoning ordinance in 1922 and before World War II. As a result, these centers are full of what traditional zoning considers "nonconforming uses," meaning what exists now could not be built under current rules.



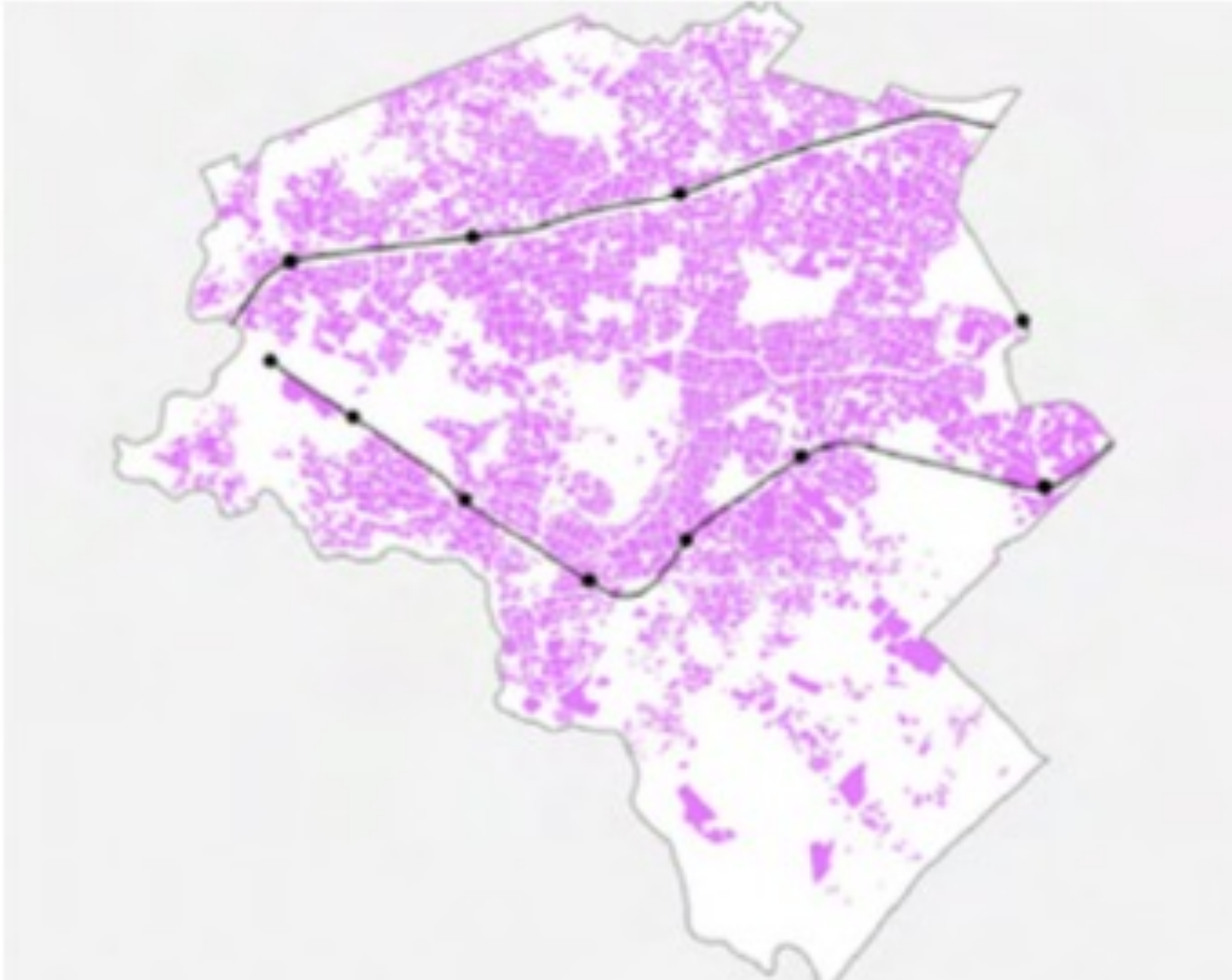
# Newton Zoning History



Newton adopted its first zoning ordinance in 1922 following the City's first comprehensive plan. This early zoning ordinance was designed to essentially hold commercial (including apartment buildings) and industrial development in its present (at that time) locations.

**1921 Map** from the first zoning proposal for Newton that has districts for single residence, general residence, business, 9 commercial and industrial.

# Newton Zoning History



Existing Buildings Built Before 1945

Newton's population nearly doubled from 46,000 to 82,000 between 1922 (when Newton first adopted zoning) and 1950. This rapid growth led to two major zoning overhauls, between 1930 and 1953, to build upon the post-WWII suburban ideal.

# Newton Zoning History



This zoning map of 1938 is broken up into 6 areas. They are zoning districts - an area of the city within which zoning rules control what can be built or redeveloped. So the areas marked brown will only allow buildings used for business. Most of the village centers today sit within 2 types of business districts.

## Legend

	General Residence (apartments)
	Business
	Manufactured
	Unrestricted
	Single Residence
	Private Residence

# Zoning Reform in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

- The last major update to commercial center zoning was in 1987.
- Since 2000, the City of Newton has produced multiple future-looking plans and reports that all highlighted the need to change zoning in village centers in order to achieve stated goals.
- The 2007 Comprehensive Plan highlighted how the zoning ordinance was difficult to read and did not always lead to desirable outcomes. In response, City staff, City Council and community members formed the Zoning Reform Group in 2011. It recommended comprehensively updating the Zoning Ordinance, kicking off the Zoning Redesign project.
- In 2015, the Zoning Ordinance was reorganized to make it more user friendly. In 2016, the City began to develop the Pattern Book to assess existing development patterns in order to better understand Newton's context. Geographic information systems (GIS) data, historical records, regulatory/policy documents, existing conditions measurements, and community input were all used. It was released in 2018.



# Focus on Village Centers

In 2021, the City shifted the focus to updating the zoning districts for Village Centers. Here is the City's step-by-step approach:

## Phase I: Identifying Values (Summer 2021)

### Outcome of Phase I Engagement:

Last year Planning staff undertook an engagement process to hear from the Newton community on their future visions for village centers. In tandem, Utile provided parallel quantitative analyses probing the various metrics of success for vibrant village centers. This foundation of work leads us into Phase 2 of the village center Zoning Redesign effort. As a reminder, the community takeaways from Phase 1 are:

- Create more communal & public space + activation
- Increase accessibility to buildings and infrastructure within village centers
- Incorporate climate resiliency through built structures and green spaces
- Help small businesses to begin, stay and thrive in Village Centers
- Make the permitting process easier, clearer, and multi-tiered
- Add more diverse housing options and encouraging mixed-use projects
- Prioritize safe and accessible routes, especially walking and biking
- Incentivize the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This takeaway was added following the 11/15 Public Info Session and the 12/16 ZAP Meeting

# Zoning Terminology

## Building Size & Massing

**Building Footprint** is defined as the total gross floor area of a building, including all enclosed space” Or as otherwise known as the portion of the building that touches the ground.

A **maximum building footprint** limit is the upper limit of the total gross floor area of a building.

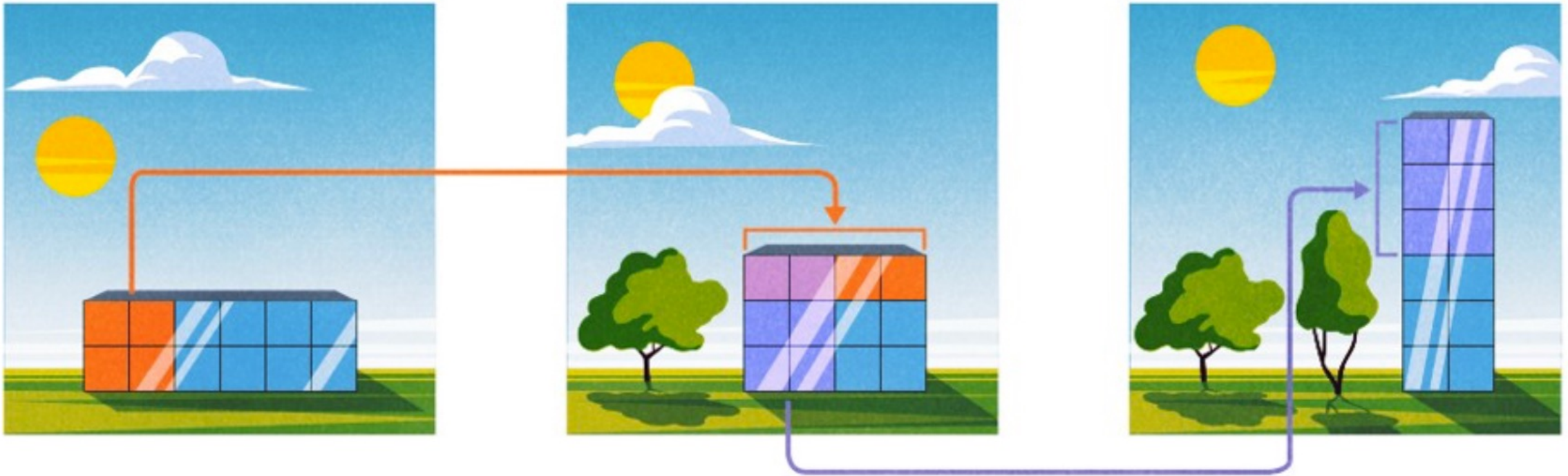
**Building Height** is defined as the vertical distance between the elevations of the average grade plane and the highest point of the roof.

**Setback** is defined as a line equidistant from the lot line which establishes the nearest point to the lot line at which the nearest point of a principal building may be erected.

**As of right** is defined as development that may proceed under a zoning ordinance or by-law without the need for a special permit, variance, zoning amendment, waiver, or other discretionary zoning approval.

A “**lot**” is an area of land with definite boundaries that is used or available for use as the site of a building or buildings.

**Floor area ratio (FAR)**, is the ratio of all building gross floor areas divided by the lot area. It is a metric for regulating the number of square feet that can be developed on a parcel without specifying the exact shape and size of the structure. For example, a **FAR of 2.0** means that a building can be twice as much in gross floor area as the lot area.



**Gross floor area** is the total square feet of all of the floor areas in a building plus other floor areas that are designated to count towards the total.

## Development Standards

**Development standards** determine the overall size, shape, and location of a building, or buildings, that property owners can develop on their lot. **These standards form the nuts and bolts of any zoning code.** To ensure that new and renovated buildings promote positive outcomes for the community, the Zoning Ordinance incorporates these standards.

They are hard and fast rules, applying to all projects in that zoning district in the same way.

These standards typically regulate the overall building height and mass. Zoning does not regulate architectural style. Rather zoning and its standards **create a framework** with specific constraints that the design and creative process must work within.

# Proposed Zoning Framework

## Building *Design*\*

2. Allow for industry standard floor-to-floor height

3. Incentivize varied rooflines with half-story

6. Set maximum building footprint

10/11/12. Allow increased height proportionate to the village center size

## Lot Configuration

4. Eliminate lot area per unit minimum

5. Remove minimum lot size

## Review Process

7. Modify Special Permit thresholds

8. Develop a standard site-plan/design review process

9. Incorporate strong design standards within the Ordinance

## Parking

1. Reduce parking requirements

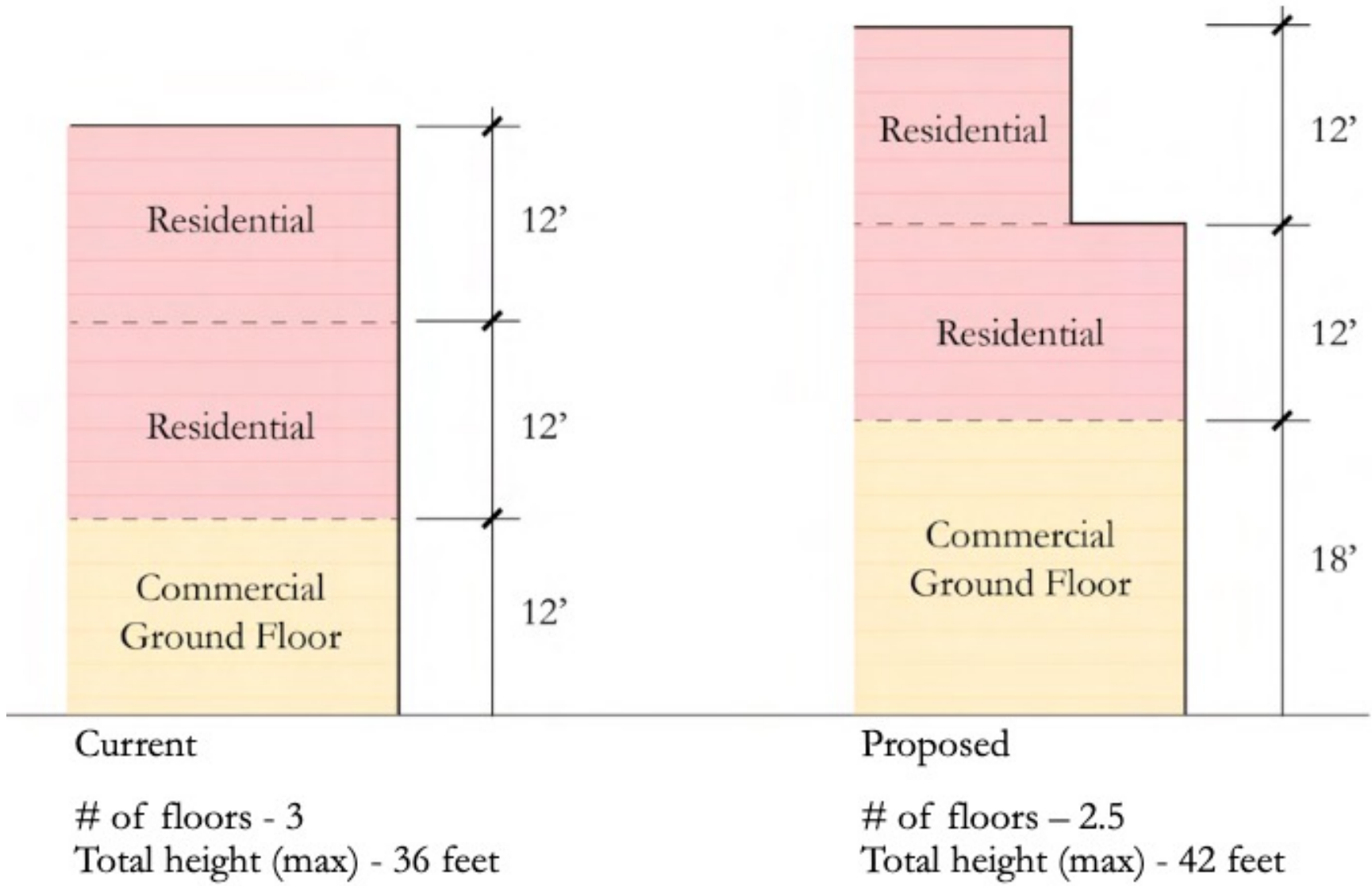
**\*Zoning does not regulate architectural style**  
**Planning Department Slide Deck 062122**

## **Allow Industry Standards for Floor-to-Floor Heights for residential & commercial uses**

**Currently the overall height of a building is tied to 12 feet floor-to-floor heights, regardless of use. The proposal recommends linking the maximum heights to the given use as follows:**

- 12 feet – Residential**
- 13 feet - Commercial (upper floor)**
- 18 feet - Commercial (ground floor)**

Current vs. Proposed Requirements



**Different uses within a building need different design requirements.**

**A ground floor business requires taller ceilings to function properly. Restaurants need additional ceiling space to accommodate certain equipment like exhaust systems and other mechanical equipment.**



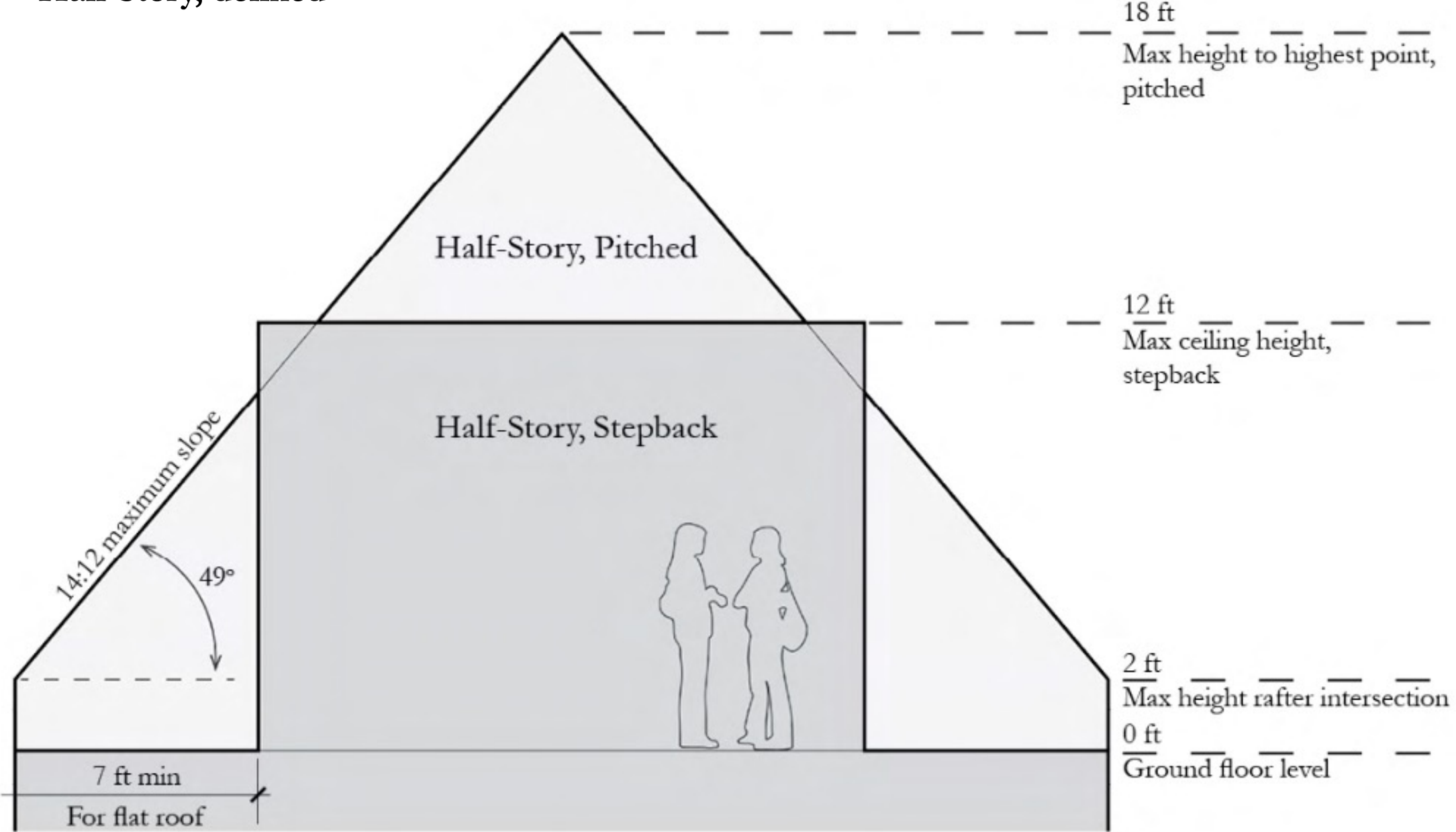


## **Set Maximum By-Right Building Height at a Half-Story**

Currently, most new development in Newton has flat roofs - this is largely because the current rules in Newton's village centers set maximum floors, or stories, at whole numbers - such as, 2 or 3 stories. With the high cost of land, materials, and construction labor, property owners typically need to build as big as zoning allows to make a project financially feasible.

Given this, the proposal suggests setting the maximum number of stories at halves - such as 2.5 or 3.5. For additional flexibility, the proposal defines half stories as either a stepback full height space or as a pitched roof that can be articulated with dormers and other bump outs. Both cases encourage a greater diversity of roofs and buildings that appear smaller for any people walking along the streets below.

# Half-Story, defined



## BU3 Example



**This stepback is a requirement of the village centers proposals.** The resulting structure appears smaller, to allow for more light and air at the street, and creates a usable terrace space on the roof for either apartments or commercial space.

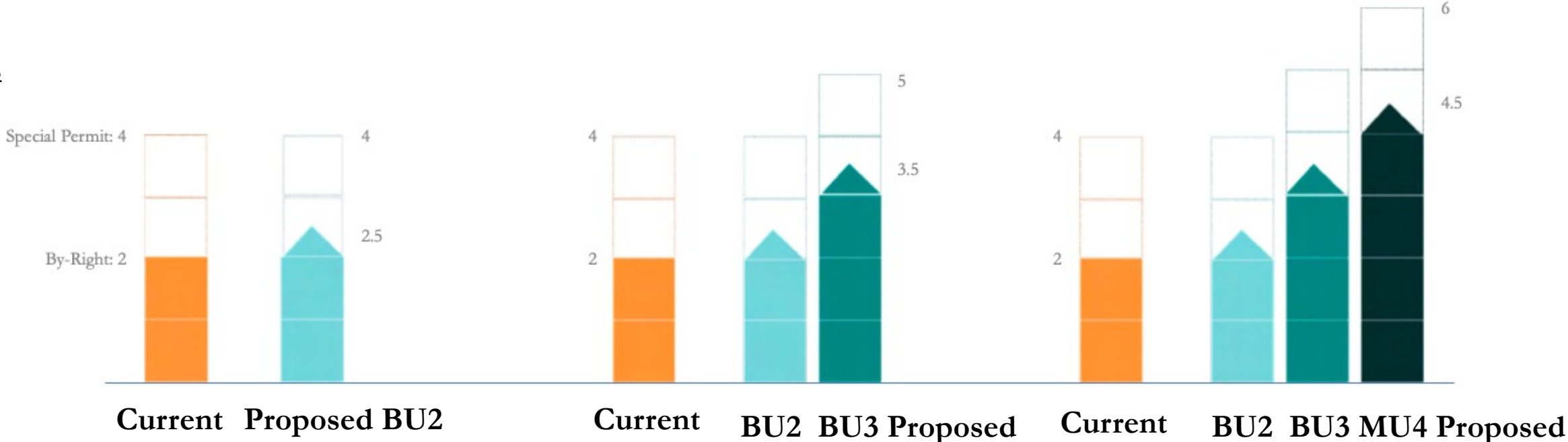
# Increased Height Proportionate to the Village Center Size

Small Village Centers

Medium Village Centers

Large Village Centers

Story Heights



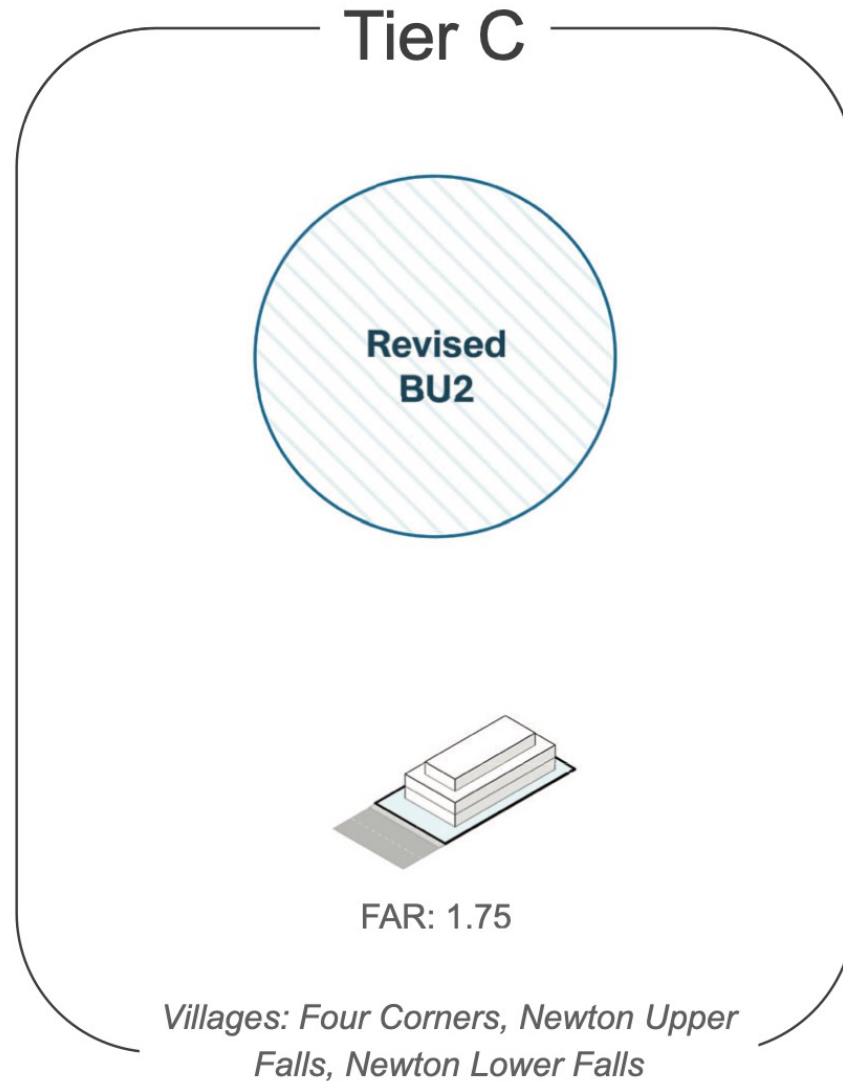
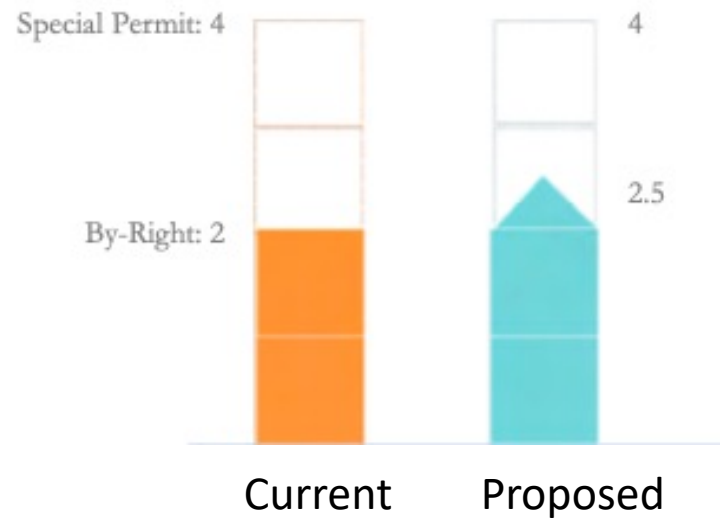
The bar charts (above), illustrates buildings as bars with either a flat or pointed roof. The chart indicates the current village center zoning permits 2 stories by-right (orange bars) In the proposal (blue bars), building height can be increased by 2 stories through the special permit process. The village center designation (BU2 - small, BU3 - medium, and MU4 - large) determines the permitted by right building story height.

**The zoning proposal is to create three new village center zoning districts to establish a zoning framework that allows for small-, medium-, and large-scale development appropriate for the sizes and attributes of each village center.**

**BU2 revised**

Story Height

Small Village Centers



Existing Conditions



Current

Proposed Allowance



By right development of 2.5 stories

## Small-scale zoning district for small village centers

Story  
Height



Special Permit: 4

By-right: 2.5

Building footprint:

5,000 sf



**Illustration:**  
By Right Build of 2.5  
stories with top Half-  
Story, Stepback



**BU2**  
revised



Image description: Title says "small-scale zoning district for small village centers." The graph indicates that the proposed zoning would allow 2.5 story buildings by-right, 4 by special permit, and a maximum building footprint of 5,000 square feet. A sketch shows a block of buildings no taller than 2.5 floors. 5 different, existing Newton buildings exemplify what would be allowed by-right, by-special permit, or not allowed.

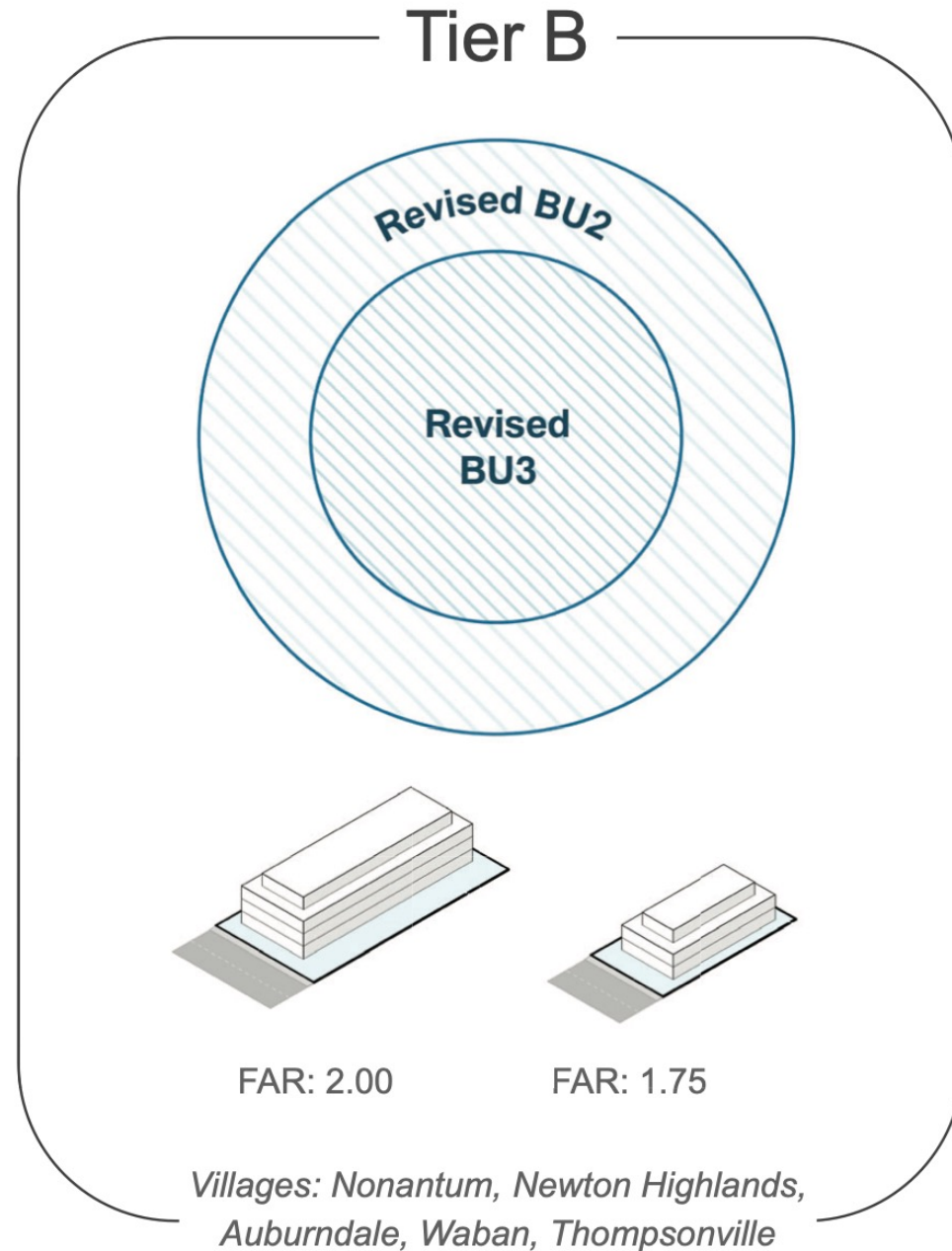
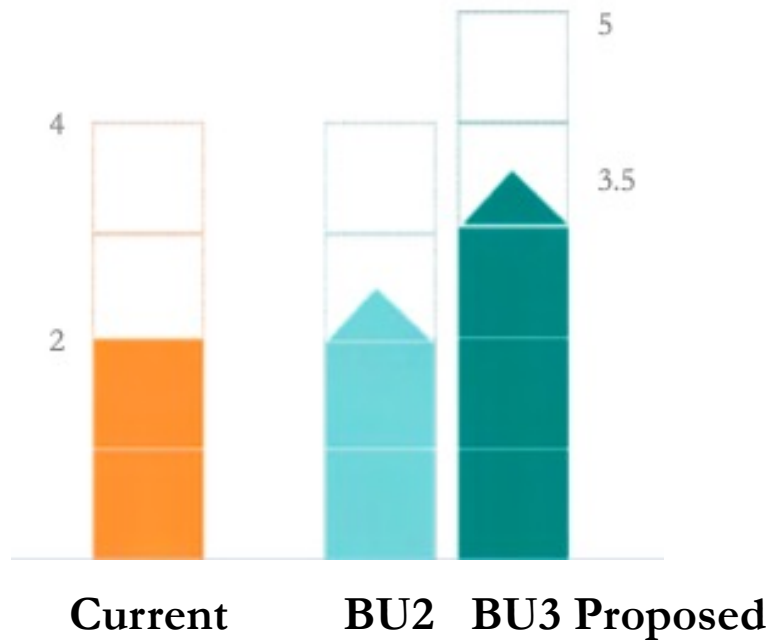
# BU3 revised

## Medium Village Centers

Story  
Height

Special  
Permit

By Right



Existing Conditions



Proposed Allowance



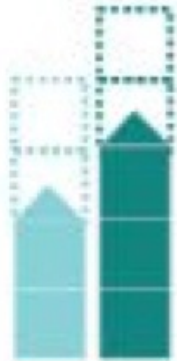
By right development of 2.5 stories



By right development of 3.5 stories

# Medium + small-scale zoning districts for medium village centers

Story  
Height



Special Permit: 5

By-right: 3.5

Building footprint:  
10,000 sf



**Illustration:**  
By Right Build of  
3.5 stories with top  
Half-Story, Stepback

BU3  
revised



**By-Right** 3 floors



**By-Right** 3.5 floors



**Special Permit** 4 floors



**Special Permit** 5 floors

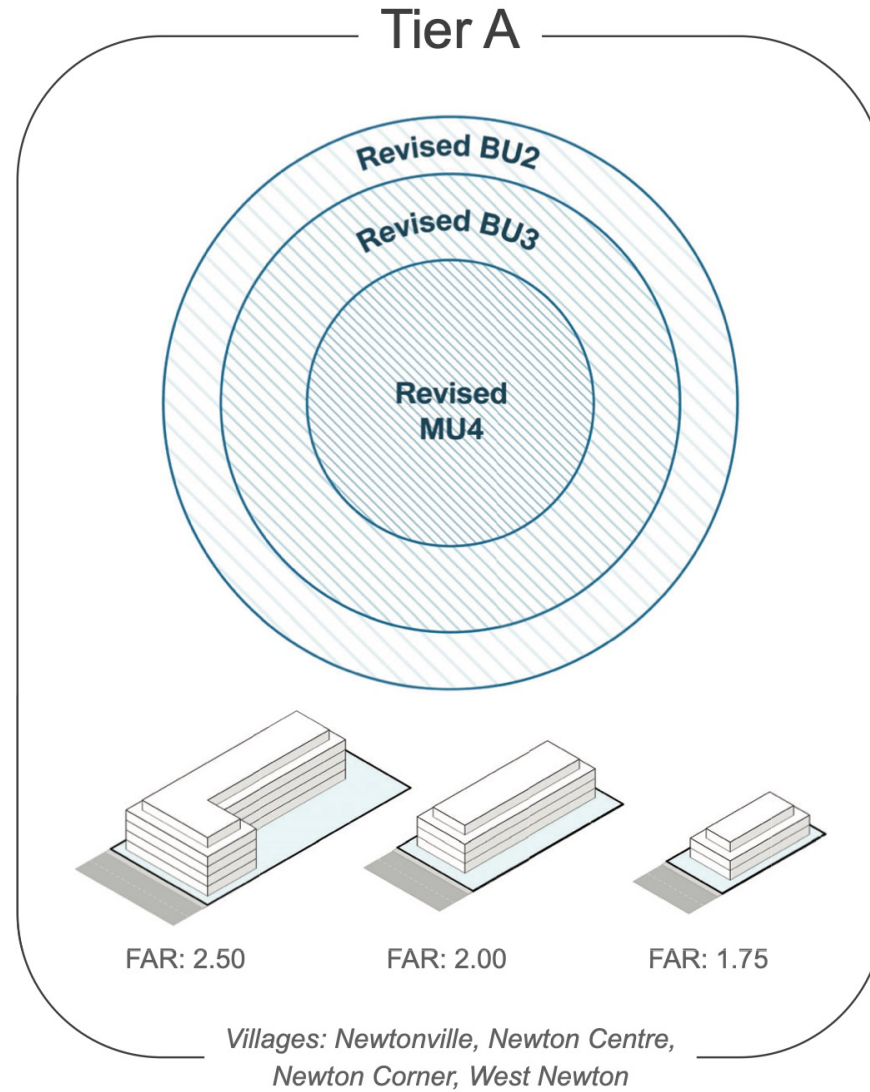
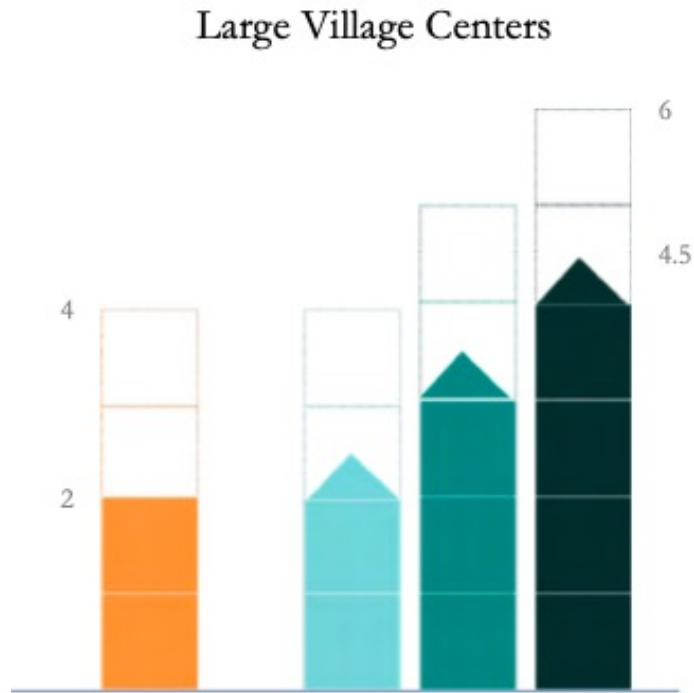
Image Description: Title says "medium and small-scale zoning district for medium village centers." The graph indicates that the proposed zoning would allow 3.5 story buildings by-right, 5 by special permit, and a maximum building footprint of 10,000 square feet. A sketch shows a block of buildings no taller than 3.5 floors. 5 different, existing Newton buildings exemplify what would be allowed by-right, by-special permit, or not allowed.

# MU4 revised

Story  
Height

Special  
Permit

By  
Right



Existing Conditions



Proposed Allowance



**By right development of 2.5 stories**



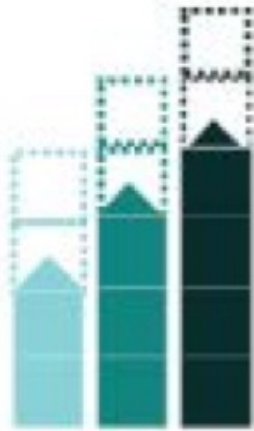
**By right development of 3.5 stories**



**By right development of 4.5 stories**

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

Story  
Height



Special permit: 6

By-right: 4.5

Building footprint:  
15,000 sf

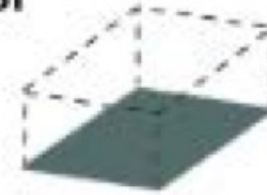


Illustration:  
By Right Build of 4.5  
stories with top Half-  
Story, Stepback



MU4  
revised



Image Description: Title says "large and medium and small-scale zoning district for medium village centers." The graph indicates that the proposed zoning would allow 4.5 story buildings by-right, 6 by special permit, and a maximum building footprint of 15,000 square feet. A sketch shows a block of buildings no taller than 4.5 floors. 5 different, existing Newton buildings exemplify what would be allowed by-right, by-special permit, or not allowed.

# Additional Height Can Reduce the Overall Cost Per Housing Unit

## Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance

This Newton ordinance requires multi-family projects to provide deed restricted affordable units. This number increases with size of the project, meaning buildings with more units require more affordable units.

## Distributing Land Costs

In Newton, land costs are very high, making up a large portion of development costs. Additional height allows more units to be built, distributing the cost of land across more units.

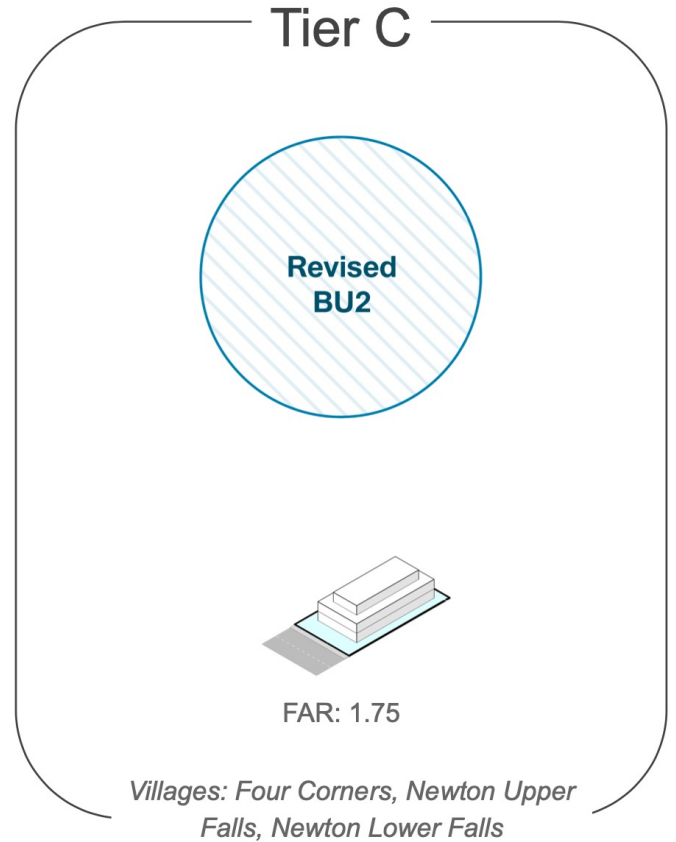
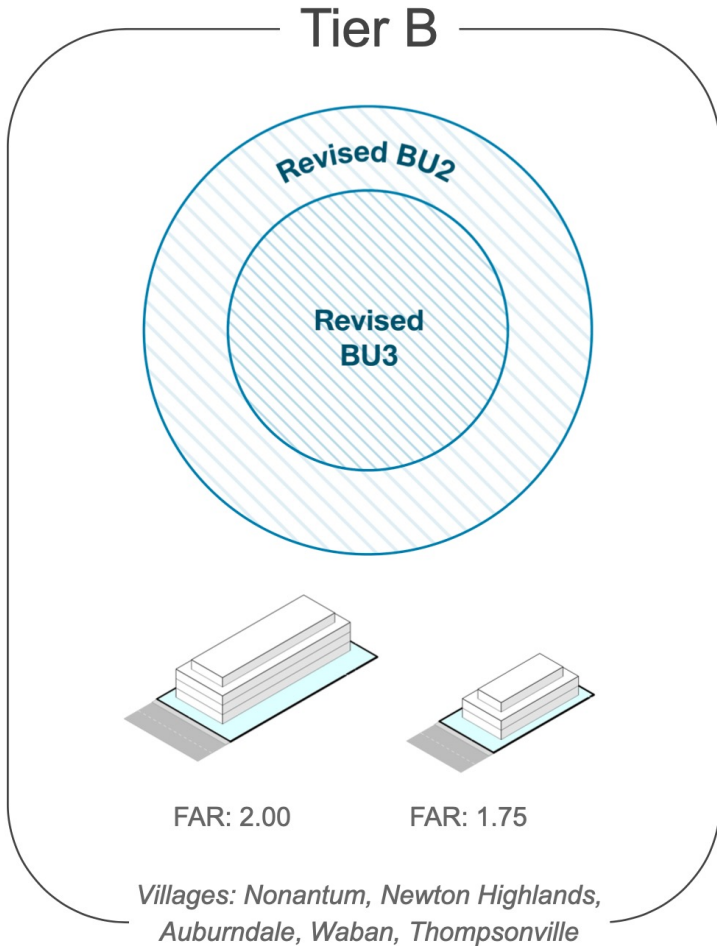
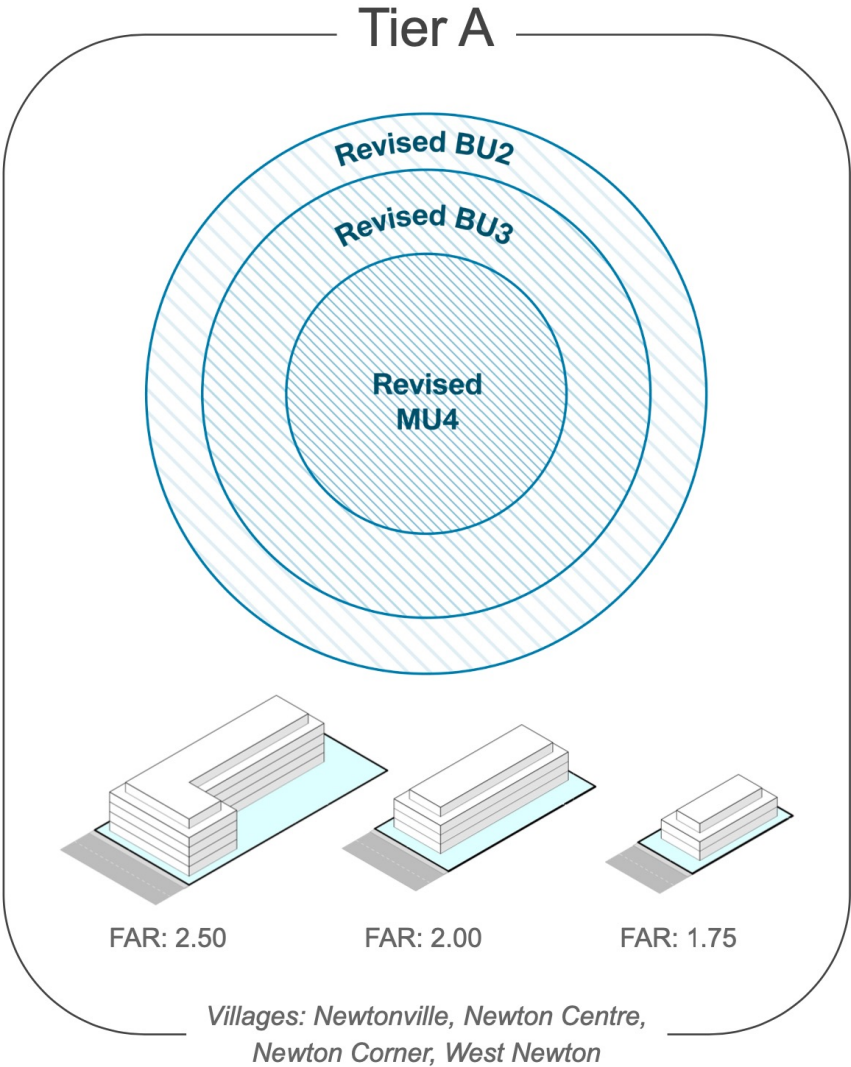


Acres: # of Units: 6



Acres: # of Units: 24

# Tiered Framework applied based on village center



# Building Design - Village Center Core Districts

Large Village Centers  
(modified MU4)



Medium Village Centers  
(modified BU3)



Small Village Centers  
(modified BU2)



Maximums

Existing / Proposed

Existing / Proposed

Existing / Proposed

Building Height  
(# of floors)

3.0 / 4.5

3.0 / 3.5

2 / 2.5

Building  
Footprint

-- / 15,000 sf

-- / 10,000 sf

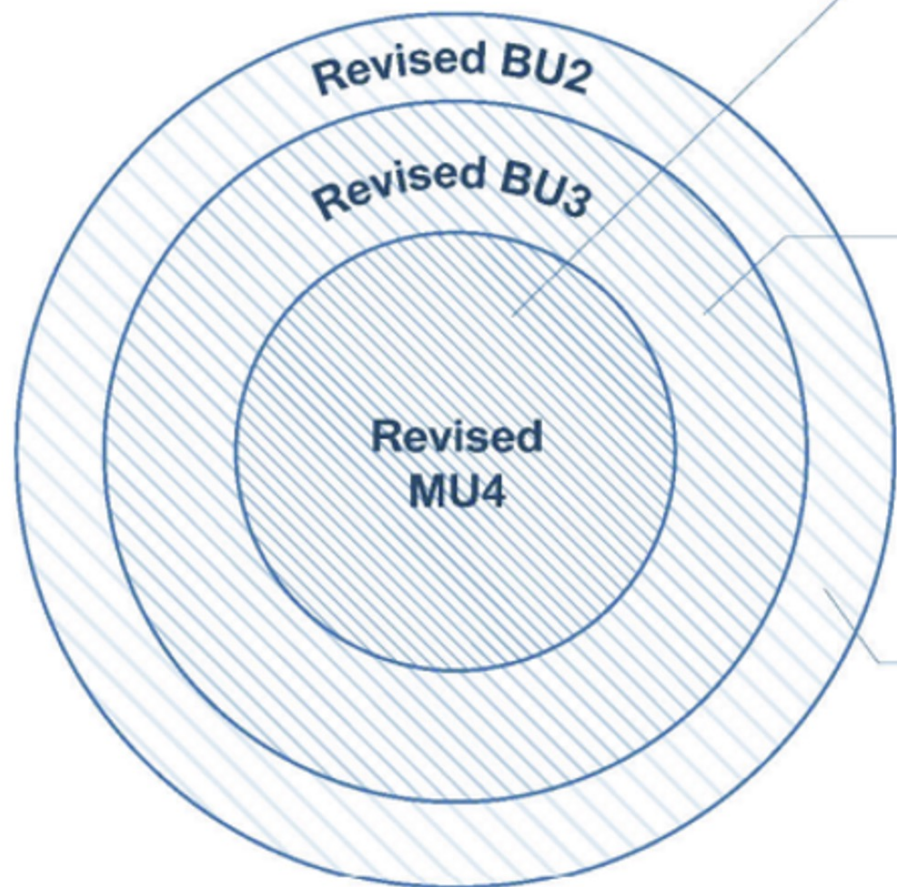
-- / 5,000 sf

FAR

1.5 / 2.5

1.5 / 2.0

1.0 / 1.75



<b>Center</b>	MU4 (Special Permit)	Revised MU4
FAR	2.50	2.50
Height	5 stories; 60'	4.5 stories; 75' commercial, 69' residential
Lot area per unit	--	--
Bldg Footprint	--	15,000 sf max
Parking Ratio		
Retail	1 per 300 sf	Exempt for ground floor commercial
Office	1 per 250 sf	1 per 700 sf
Multi-family	1.25 per unit	1 per unit
Allowed Uses	Retail, Office, Multi-family	Retail, Office, Multi-family

<b>Periphery</b>	BU3 (Special Permit)	Revised BU3
FAR	2.00	2.00
Height	4 stories; 48'	3.5 stories; 62' commercial, 58' residential
Lot area per unit	1,200 sf	--
Bldg Footprint	--	10,000 sf max
Parking Ratio		
Retail	1 per 300 sf	Exempt for ground floor commercial
Office	1 per 250 sf	1 per 700 sf
Multi-family	1.25 per unit	1 per unit
Allowed Uses	Retail, Office	Retail, Office, Multi-family

<b>Edge</b>	BU2 (Special Permit)	Revised BU2
FAR	2.00	1.75
Height	4 stories; 48'	2.5 stories; 49' commercial, 47' residential
Lot area per unit	1,200 sf	--
Bldg Footprint	--	5,000 sf max
Parking Ratio		
Retail	1 per 300 sf	Exempt for ground floor commercial
Office	1 per 250 sf	1 per 700 sf
Multi-family	1.25 per unit	1 per unit
Allowed Uses	Retail, Office	Retail, Office, Multi-family

Promote Smaller Buildings on Smaller Lots

## **Remove Minimum Lot Size**

Minimum lot size is defined as the smallest amount of land allowed for constructing a new building. 54% of existing lots within village centers, as defined by the Pattern Book boundaries, are less than 10,000 square feet. This proposal recommends to remove the minimum lot size requirement entirely. **The total size and appearance of buildings will still be tied to the lot through other dimensional controls like setbacks and facade requirements.**

While lots smaller than the minimum requirement can develop through a special permit, that additional burden typically leads to the aggregation of smaller lots for a bigger development (ex. Trio in Newtonville). **Removing the minimum lot size requirement will allow for smaller projects on smaller lots, which can better fit into the existing village center fabric.**

## Promote Variety of Apartment Sizes **Eliminate Lot Area Per Unit Minimums**

The lot area per unit minimum is a ratio between the size of the lot and the number of units of housing allowed on that lot. It is calculated as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Lot size}}{\text{Lot area per unit}} = \# \text{ of units (max)}$$

Example:

$$\frac{10,000 \text{ sf}}{1,000 \text{ sf}} = 10 \text{ units (max)}$$

This standard controls the interior layout of a building and has no connection to its outward appearance or overall size.

Promote Variety of Apartment Sizes  
**Eliminate Lot Area Per Unit Minimums**

Scale of Village Center	Current	Proposed
Small	1,200 sf / unit	None
Medium	1,200 sf / unit	
Large	1,000 – 1,200 sf / unit	

**Lot area per unit** is one of multiple existing standards that control density. Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is another density control. However, these two density controls are not linked, which leads to a disconnect between the overall size of a building and the number of units it contains



## How the Zoning Rules are Applied and by Whom

### **The Review Process**

#### **By-Right**

This refers to new buildings or uses allowed in a zoning district that complies with zoning regulations and design standards. They cannot be prohibited.

#### **By-Right with Site-Plan Review**

Site Plan Review allows for a limited review of developments that fully comply with all zoning and design standards but are on the upper end of what would be allowed by-right. This limited review is less discretionary than a special permit, but can be used to apply reasonable conditions to a development, primarily focused on design, site layout, safety, and circulation.

#### **Special Permit**

Buildings that do not check off all of the boxes required for by-right development have to get a special permit in order to be built. The application triggers a more involved and lengthy review process, and either be approved or disapproved by the City Council.

# How the Zoning Rules are Applied and by Whom The Review Process

## Modify the Special Permit Thresholds:

Existing > 20,000 sf of gross floor area  
Proposed - Any lot over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an acre

Proposed Review Process		
Lot Size up to 1/2 acre (21,780 sq ft)	Lot Size between 1/2 (21,780 sq ft) and 3/4 acre (32,670 sq ft)	Lot Size over 3/4 acre (32,670 sq ft)
By-Right	By-Right with Site Plan Review by Planning Board	Special Permit by City Council

## Ensure Design Quality and Compatibility

### **Incorporate Strong Design Standards**

**Design standards** define how a development should complement the area around it and achieve quality of design based on public interest purposes or community vision. At their best, design standards provide a menu of options that architects can creatively incorporate into the development designs.

#### **Effective design standards can:**

- Establish clear and consistent criteria applied consistently
- Utilize a common vocabulary of terms and concepts through charts, images, and diagrams
- Provide practical guidance with clear expectation for property owners, designers, or community members

#### **Design standards cannot:**

- Create unreasonable requirements that would prevent by-right development
- Create design solutions specific or unique to an individual project
- Conflict with other applicable laws and regulations

## Ensure Design Quality and Compatibility **Incorporate Strong Design Standards**

**Design standards** mitigate this risk because they are requirements within the zoning. Some design standards would be required for all projects, while others would be required only for larger projects on larger lots.

More importantly, the design standards would represent desired public interests shared last summer and codified in Newton policy documents. This could be **public open space**, similar to the plaza at Austin Street, or **setting back the building enough to accommodate a wider sidewalk**. Finally, establishing design standards should eliminate any surprises and lower the cost for new projects because it is a simpler and more efficient process.

## Design Standard Example: Ground Floor Transparency Requirement:



**Regulation:** Ground floor commercial space must provide high transparency  
**Standard:** A minimum of 60% transparency is required

Ensure Design Quality and Compatibility  
**Incorporate Strong Design Standards**



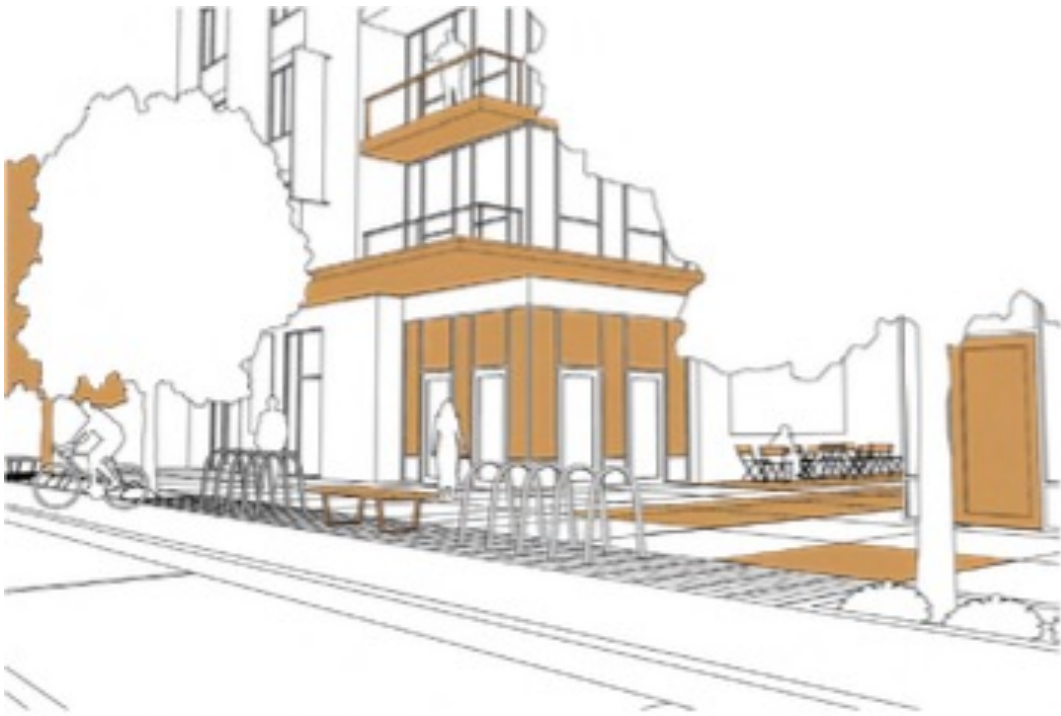
Sustainable Design



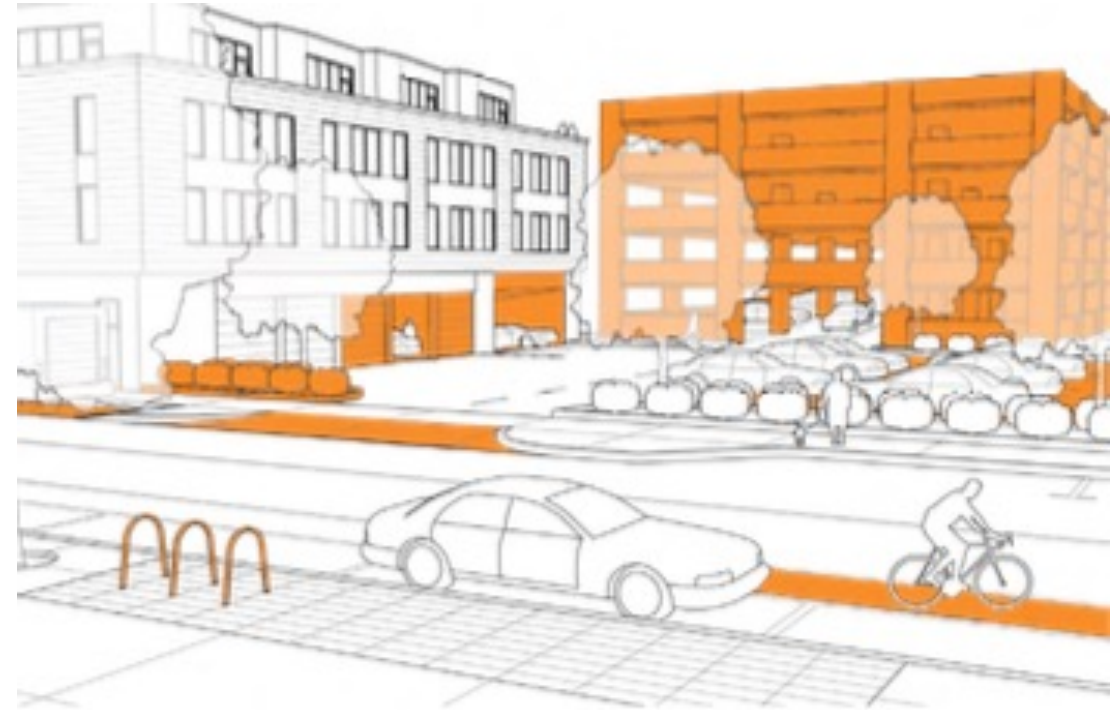
Façade Treatment

**Examples of Watertown Design Standards**

Ensure Design Quality and Compatibility  
**Incorporate Strong Design Standards**



Public Realm and Open Space



Parking and Access

**Examples of Watertown Design Standards**

## Lower Parking Requirements

Parking requirements are local laws that require private businesses and residences to provide at least a certain number of off-street parking spaces. The number of parking spaces required is determined based on the individual use. For example, new apartments require a number of spots for the residents and new businesses for the expected customers and employees.

This proposal looks to reduce the required parking for all uses within village centers and in certain instances eliminate the requirement altogether. These requirements would only apply to the village center zoning districts, not the adjacent residential districts or other areas of Newton.



## Lower Parking Requirements

	Residential	Office	Ground floor commercial
Existing	2 per unit	1 per 250 sf	Retail: 1 per 300 sf + 1 per 3 employees Restaurant: 1 per 3 seats + 1 per 3 employees
Proposed	1 per unit*	1 per 700 sf	Exempt
			Other Commercial
			Retail: 1 per 300 sf + 1 per 3 employees Restaurant: 1 per 3 seats + 1 per 3 employees
			TBD

Use Type	Current – All Floors	Proposed – Ground Floor	Proposed – Upper Floors
Residential, multi-family	2 per unit	1 per unit	1 per unit
Bank	1 per 300 sf + 1 per every 3 employees	Exempt	1.5 per 1,000 sf
Health Club	1 per 150 sf + 1 per every 3 employees	Exempt	1 per 750 sf
Medical Office	1 per 400 sf + 1 per every 3 employees	Exempt	1 per 500 sf
Office, professional	1 per 250 sf up to 20,000 sf	Exempt	1.5 per 1,000 sf
Restaurant	1 per 3 patron seats + 1 per 3 employees	Exempt	4 per 1,000 sf
Retail Store	1 per 300 sf + 1 per every 3 employees	Exempt	1 per 1,500 sf

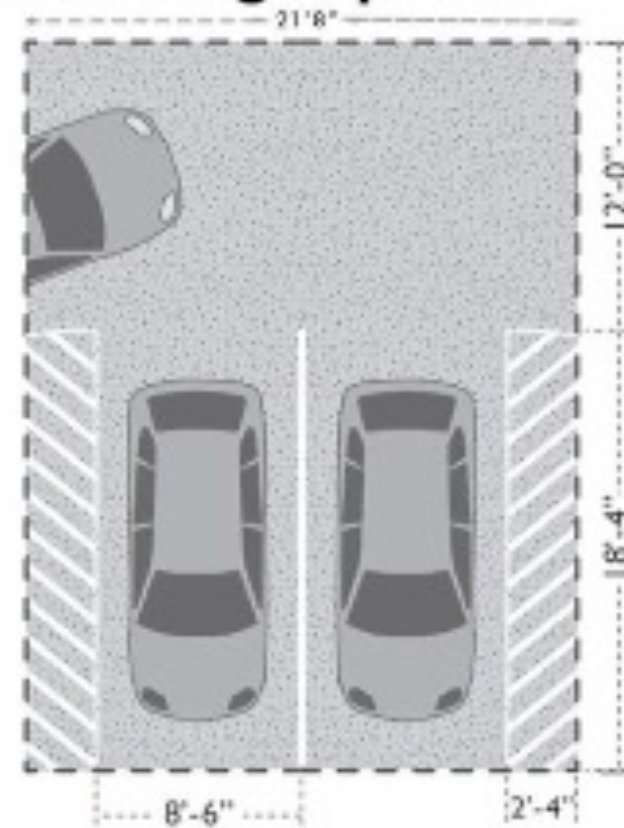
## Where to park?

Common Concern	Mitigating Measures
<p>The people who live in new developments (that have less required parking) will park on the residential streets nearby</p>	<p>Developing buildings with less parking attracts tenants who want to live a car-free or car-lite lifestyle. We have seen this in the recent Newtonville developments (Austin Street and Trio) and older developments (Avalon on Needham Street) with much less parking being utilized than what is provided.</p>
<p>There will not be enough parking for visitors to the village centers, which will negatively impact businesses</p>	<p>Village centers have numerous alternatives to private parking and the City more broadly has numerous alternative transit options to bring visitors to/from village centers (see top right). Or when possible, the City could provide a parking garage.</p>

# Living Space vs. Parking Space



size for 2 bedroom apartment: 675 FT<sup>2</sup>



size for 2 parking spaces: 650 FT<sup>2</sup>

Sources: Transportation Cost and Benefit Analysis II - Parking Costs Victoria Transport Policy Institute ([www.vtpi.org](http://www.vtpi.org))

Graphic Adapted from Graphing Parking (<https://graphingparking.com/2013/07/23/parking-across-cascadia/>)

Where Will the New Rules Apply?

## **Mapping the Village Center Zoning Districts**

**The City's Zoning Map breaks the City up into multiple zoning districts. In addition to the business zones - BU1 and BU2, village centers often have a patchwork of other zoning districts, like manufacturing or residential, on lots that many would consider part of the commercial core.**

**Zoning District** - A defined area delineated on the City's official Zoning Map with specific zoning regulations controlling how the land is used and what can be physically built on each lot.

### **What to Include and What Not to Include in Drafted Boundaries?**

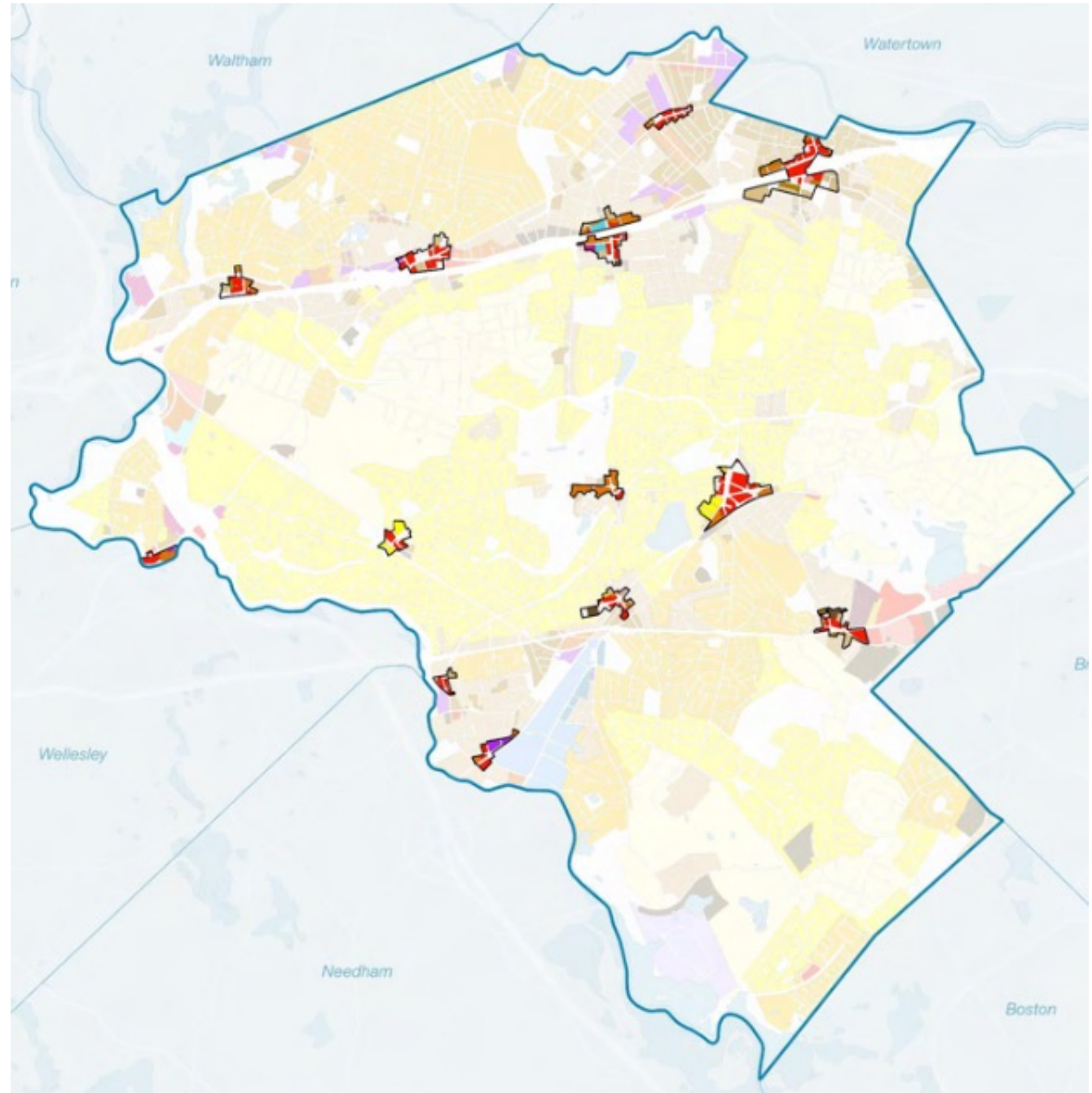
Mapping a new zoning district is a process that has no easy answers. How can the city look to both the past and the future at the same time? The Planning Department will use historical development patterns and what exists on the ground now as a starting point, along with the boundaries established in the Pattern Book and the City's existing zoning map.

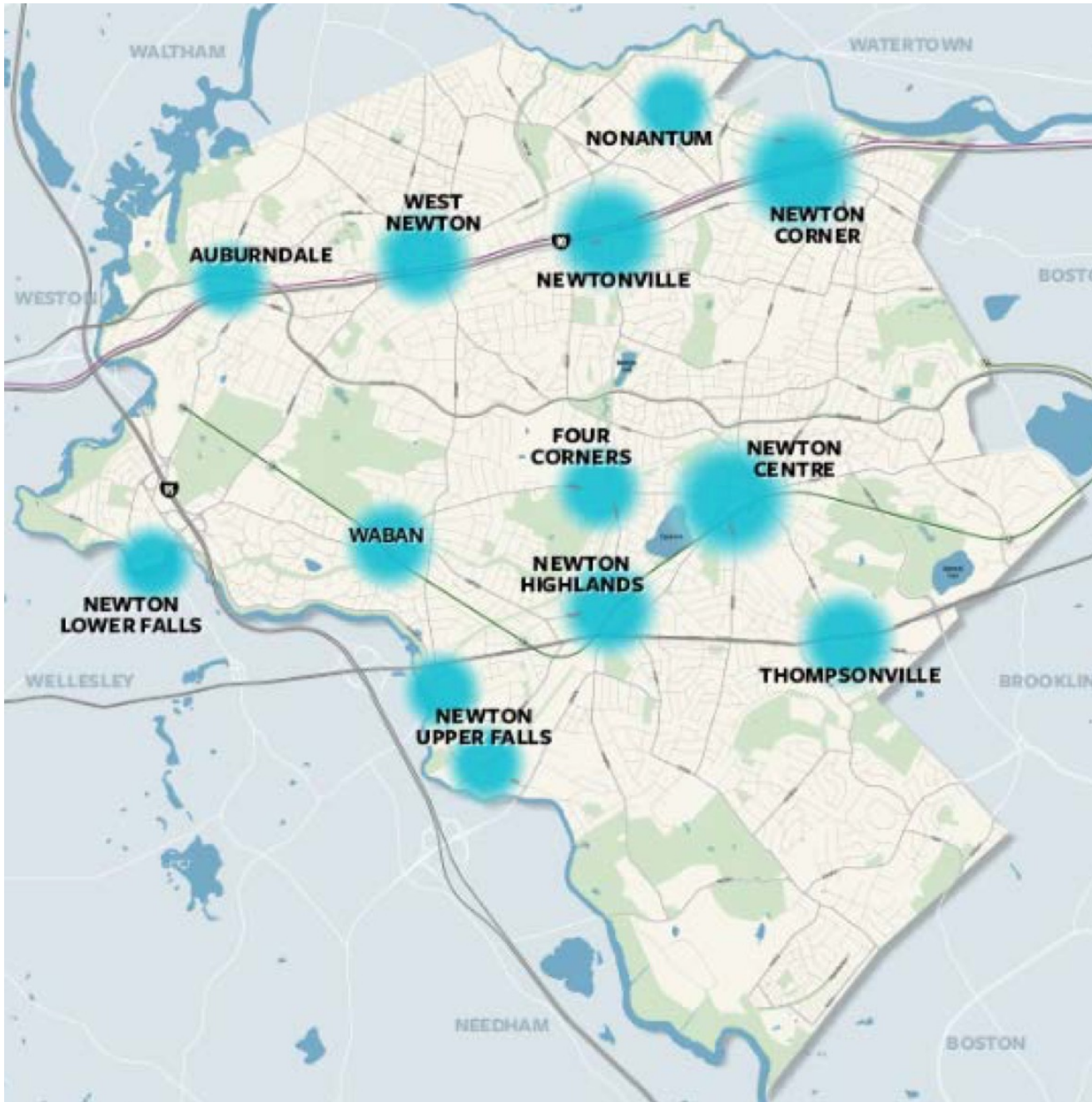
Input from the public will be essential to the updated Zoning Map. No one knows village centers like the people who live, work, and study in Newton. Bringing together the research and community input, Planning staff will bring a draft zoning map, with boundaries for new village center zoning districts, to ZAP for their deliberation.

# Where Will the New Rules Apply? Mapping the Village Center Zoning Districts

Legend (by-right)

-  Business 1 (BU1) 2 stories
-  Business 2 (BU2) 2 stories
-  Business 5 (BU5) 3 stories
-  Village Center Pattern Book Boundaries
-  Multi-Residence 1 (MR1) 2.5 stories
-  Multi-Residence 2 (MR2) 2.5 stories
-  Multi-Residence 3 (MR3) 2.5 stories
-  Mixed-Use 4 (MU4) 3 stories





Village Center - # of lots within boundary

Auburndale - 35 lots

West Newton – 47 lots

Newtonville – 52 lots

Nonantum – 39 lots

Newton Corner – 87 lots

Newton Center – 88 lots

Thompsonville – 30 lots

Four Corners – 22 lots

Newton Highlands – 39 lots

Newton Upper Falls – 33 lots

Waban – 14 lots

Newton Lower Falls – 16 lots

# Mapping the Village Center Zoning Districts



**BU2**

**Current**



Legend

-  BU1 and BU2 (2 stories)
-  Small (2.5 stories)
-  Medium (3.5 stories)
-  Large (4.5 stories)

**2.5 stories  
by right**



# Mapping the Village Center Zoning Districts

BU3



Current



## Legend



BU1 and BU2 (2 stories)



Small (2.5 stories)



Medium (3.5 stories)



Large (4.5 stories)

2.5 stories + 3.5 stories by right

# Mapping the Village Center Zoning Districts

Large Village Centers



Current



Legend

-  BU1 and BU2 (2 stories)
-  Small (2.5 stories)
-  Medium (3.5 stories)
-  Large (4.5 stories)

2.5 + 3.5 +  
4.5 stories  
by right

## Mapping and MBTA Communities Incorporating State Requirements for Allowing Multi-Family Housing

The zoning reforms Governor Baker enacted as a part of the [Economic Development Bill](#) in January 2021 year created a requirement that MBTA communities have at least one zoning district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right and meets other criteria, including:

- Minimum gross density of 15 units per acre
- No age restrictions
- Suitable for families with children
- Not more than 1/2 mile from a commuter rail station, subway station, ferry or terminal or bus station, if applicable

## Mapping and MBTA Communities Incorporating State Requirements for Allowing Multi-Family Housing

The MBTA Communities requirement is notable for being the rare comprehensive zoning mandate by the State, requiring rezoning portions of 175 different communities in Metro Boston.

Newton is classified as a Rapid Transit Community due to the Green Line. Rapid Transit Communities are required to provide zoning that allows multifamily housing to be built by-right near transit, equivalent to 25% of the City's existing housing.

<b>Newton – Rapid Transit Community</b>				
2020 Housing	Minimum Multi-Family Unit Capacity	Minimum Land Area	Developable Station Area	% of District to be Located in a Station Area
33,320 units	8,330 units	50 acres	2,833 acres	90%

## Mapping and MBTA Communities

### Incorporating State Requirements for Allowing Multi-Family Housing

#### Unit Capacity and Timeline

8,330 units may seem like a lot, however the requirement it is not a housing production mandate. There is no requirement to build all of the units, **only adopt zoning that would allow them to be built.**

Similarly, Newton's current zoning allows for many more units than are actually built.

**It is likely that the village center zoning alone will not be enough to fully comply with the MBTA zoning requirements, however it is an important piece of the puzzle as many village centers are located near transit.**

**Zoning & Planning Committee**  
**Agenda**

**City of Newton**  
**In City Council**

**Wednesday, September 28, 2022**

**#39-22**

**Requesting discussion on state guidance for implementing the Housing Choice Bill**

COUNCILOR CROSSLEY on behalf of the Zoning & Planning Committee requesting discussion on state guidance for implementing the Housing Choice element of the MA Economic Development legislation. (formerly #131-21)

**Zoning & Planning Held 8-0 on 09/12/22**

## **MBTA Communities Act Definitions**

**Affordable unit** means a multi-family housing unit that is subject to an affordable housing restriction with a term of no less than 30 years and eligible for inclusion on DHCD's Subsidized Housing Inventory.

**Gross density** means a units-per-acre density measurement that includes land occupied by public rights-of-way and any recreational, civic, commercial, and other nonresidential uses.

**Housing suitable for families** means housing comprised of residential dwelling units that are not age-restricted housing, and for which there are no zoning restriction on the number of bedrooms, the size of bedrooms, or the number of occupants.

**Multi-family housing** means a building with 3 or more residential dwelling units or 2 or more buildings on the same lot with more than 1 residential dwelling unit in each building.

**Multi-family zoning district** means a zoning district, including a base district or an overlay district, in which multi-family housing is allowed as of right; provided that the district shall be in a fixed location or locations, and shown on a map that is part of the zoning ordinance or by-law.

# Next Steps – Feedback Tool

Your feedback is essential!



## Community Input on Village Center Zoning

The City of Newton wants to hear what the Newton community thinks about a set of proposed changes to the zoning rules in the city's village centers. These rules determine what kind of new development can be built and where it can be built.

If you are a Newton community member - including residents (both people who rent and who own homes), workers, business owners, and students - we want to hear from you!

Have some time and want to learn more about each of the zoning proposals? Ways to do this on your own or with a group:

- Visit the library exhibit either in-person or virtually and submit opinions after walking through it. [Click here for visiting details](#). Otherwise, please click the blue 'Next' button below to fill this form out.

This feedback tool will close on October 16th, 2022.

For questions and support:

Contact [zoningredesign@newtonma.gov](mailto:zoningredesign@newtonma.gov) for questions.

If you need a reasonable accommodation: Please contact the City of Newton's ADA/Sec. 504 Coordinator, Jini Fairley, at least two business days in advance of the meeting: [jfairley@newtonma.gov](mailto:jfairley@newtonma.gov) or (617) 796-1253. The city's TTY/TDD direct line is: 617-796-1089.



0%  100%

Next



# Feedback Process

## Focus on Village Centers

In 2021, the City shifted the focus to updating the zoning districts for Village Centers. Here is the City's step-by-step approach:

### I Identifying Values (Summer 2021)



Initial analysis of village centers and community engagement asking, What do you envision for the futures of your village center(s)? This identified a set of values to guide the next step.

### II Getting Technical (Today)



City staff drafted zoning update proposals based on Phase I, and they were workshopped by ZAP between February and June 2022. The resulting proposals are presented for community input.

### III Going to Vote (End of 2022)



**First:** Zoning Ordinance language is drafted, based on Phase II results & ZAP deliberation  
**Second:** ZAP votes on drafted language & proposed updates  
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Phase 1 –  
Summer 2021

# Feedback Process

We are currently  
in Phase 2

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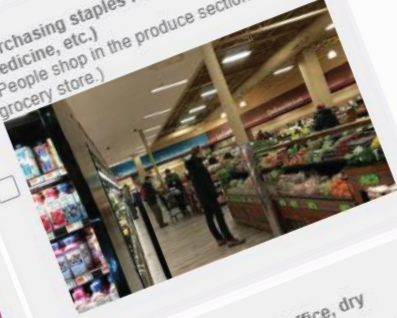
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# What Does the Tool Look Like

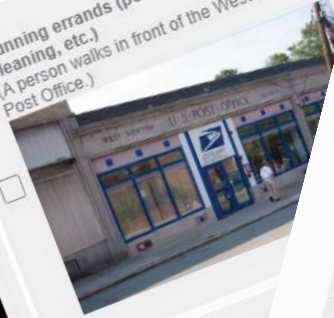
Getting together with friends, family, or coworkers  
(Many people celebrate Holi in Newtonville and have brightly colored powder on their faces and clothes.)



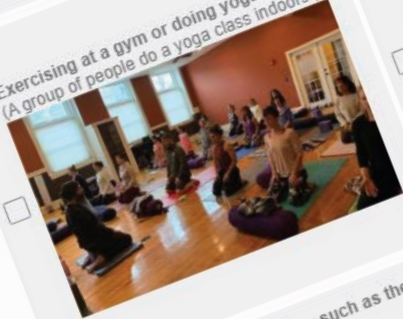
Purchasing staples for home (groceries, medicine, etc.)  
(People shop in the produce section of a grocery store.)



Running errands (post office, dry cleaning, etc.)  
(A person walks in front of the West Newton Post Office.)



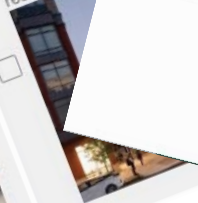
Exercising at a gym or doing yoga  
(A group of people do a yoga class indoors.)



Using community centers, such as the Senior Center  
(3 people pose for a photo while completing a puzzle on a wooden table with bookshelves in the background in the Waban Library.)



Living in an apartment  
(One of the 5-story Newtonville, with a gray evening restaurant with...



Taking public transportation, such as the Green Line  
(Two Green Line MBTA train cars are on the tracks at Waban Station. Several passengers wait to board.)



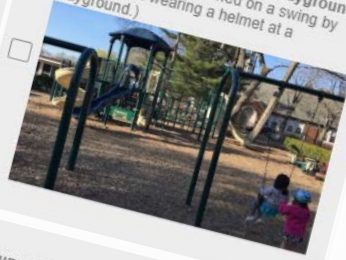
Living in housing with services, such as senior housing  
(A senior center van is parked in front of a brick residential building.)



Biking or walking to or through a village center, such as Blue Bikes  
(A Blue Bikes docking station is full with bicycles outside of a brick building in Nonantum.)



Spending time in a park or a playground  
(One child is being pushed on a swing by another child wearing a helmet at a playground.)



Seeing a movie, theatrical play, or live music  
(A building with a large sign reads 'West Newton Cinema.' Films are listed below on a marquee. Several people are crossing the street for the cinema.)



Supporting local agriculture  
(Two people are selling produce at a farmers market under a tent with a sign that says 'Newton Community Farm'.)



Next

# Featured Topics

- 1.Scaled Zoning Districts
- 2.Allowed Heights
- 3.Reduced Parking Requirements
- 4.Demographics

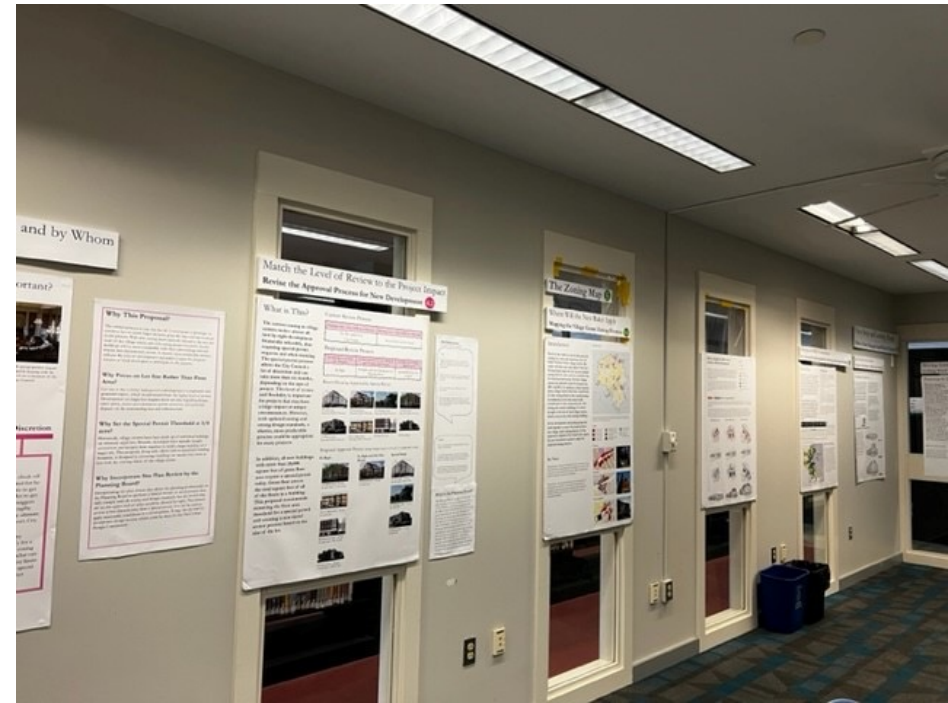
# Questions

1. Topic
2. Definition
3. Image description
4. Councilors' Arguments For and Against
5. Temperature Scale on Appropriateness
6. Free response section

# Library Exhibit



# Library Exhibit







# Library Exhibit – Docent Schedule

**Docent hours available – when city staff will be on hand at the Newton Free Library:**

Time / Day	M, 9.19	W, 9.21	W, 9.28	M, 10.03	Tu, 10.11	W, 10.12	Th, 10.13
<u>Morning</u> 9-11 am	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	
<u>Afternoon</u> 2-4pm		<b>X</b>					<b>X</b>
<u>Evening</u> 5-7 pm					<b>X</b>		

# Participation Deadline

October 16, 2022

# What's Next?

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If you want input on future of zoning in your Village Center, you need to take action.

Take the survey:

<https://tinyurl.com/ZoningFeedbackTool>



City of Newton: Department of Planning & Development

## Shape the Future of Your Village Centers

Give your input on the city's proposed changes to zoning  
Sept 1 to Oct 16



**Second Floor, Room C**

Go past the information desk & study rooms  
Elevator accessible

# More Questions?

All questions: [zoningredesign@newtonma.gov](mailto:zoningredesign@newtonma.gov)

For questions related to the engagement process. Please submit opinions about the zoning proposals through the feedback tool or by emailing or calling your city councilors

To communicate with all City Councilors – [citycouncil@newtonma.gov](mailto:citycouncil@newtonma.gov)

To communicate with the Zoning & Planning Committee Councilors –  
ZAP Clerk Jaclyn Norton, [jnorton@newtonma.gov](mailto:jnorton@newtonma.gov)