



Zoning Redesign

The City of Newton's project to redesign the zoning code

December Newsletter



We were so pleased to welcome over 500 of you to our 'virtual' engagement events held on December 2nd and 3rd. If you were not able to make it, have no fear of missing out, we have a complete recap for you to review at your leisure. Also, to better assess what topics and formats are of interest to you, we ask you take a couple minutes to complete [this survey](#). Please scroll down to learn more about:

- the [break-out discussions material](#) we now have on the Zoning Redesign website
- the outcomes of the most recent Zoning and Planning (ZAP) Committee meeting
- clarification of Zoning Redesign information in response to a website recently published
- short and sweet language you can share with your community groups, local newsletters, and on your Facebook pages to help get as many Newton community members to fill out [the survey](#) as we can

Break-Out Discussions Material from December 2nd & 3rd

All of the recordings from the break-out discussion rooms of the two virtual community engagement Zoom events of December 2nd & 3rd are posted [on the Zoning Redesign website](#)

[here](#). In the coming weeks, staff will work on synthesizing all the questions and opinions shared during these sessions to create a comprehensive FAQ document – addressing the questions we can answer now and highlighting the questions to consider in future community engagement. We will also incorporate all questions and ideas we receive through [this survey](#), which will be open until the end of January 10th, 2021.

Looking to Next Year: No Planned Vote & Changes to Housing Proposals (from [12.14.20 ZAP Meeting](#))

Following a year’s worth of discussion on proposed zoning for Newton’s residential districts and on the heels of two recent Zoning Redesign community engagement events held on December 2nd and 3rd, the City Council’s Zoning and Planning (ZAP) Committee met this past Monday evening for the last time this calendar year. At the meeting, the ZAP Chair Councilor Crossley initiated a committee discussion around next steps for Zoning Redesign in 2021. Councilor Crossley acknowledged the significant work still to be done and stated that there would not be a vote on the proposed ordinance in calendar year 2021. Councilor Crossley also proposed removing from further consideration the current draft proposals that would allow duplexes in all single-family zones and to allow existing homes of a certain size to be converted to up to six units by-right in all zones. Following discussion, ZAP Committee members agreed to eliminate both allowing by right the duplexes in all single-family zones and the six-unit multi-unit conversion provision, particularly in the areas of the city further from transit and village centers. These ideas may be further considered at some point for areas in close proximity to village centers and transit hubs, but will require additional analysis.

Zoning Redesign Website information

Community interest in zoning redesign has spurred a couple of individuals to create their own websites related to Zoning Redesign. Please note that these websites, including one entitled [newtonrezoning.org](#), are not affiliated with the City of Newton in any capacity. We appreciate the deep level of engagement around zoning but caution you to visit the City’s website ([www.newtonma.gov/zoningredesign](#)) for accurate and up to date information (and we’re working on making this page more informative and user friendly!) or to reach out to Planning staff with questions (zoningredesign@newtonma.gov). A few of the more significant misrepresentations of the City’s current Zoning Redesign proposal are clarified below and will be expanded upon in a forthcoming FAQ on the Zoning Redesign website:

- *What is the review and approval process for Zoning Redesign and has everything been decided already?* The City Council is responsible for approving any changes to zoning and bringing its proposals to public hearing before taking a vote. The Planning Department provides technical analysis and policy recommendations to the City Council and has produced a first draft of the entire ordinance and a number of revisions to Article 3 – Residence Districts. More analysis and discussion are still needed for Article 3, and this process has not yet started for most of the remaining 11 articles. There will be opportunities to provide feedback and shape the ordinance, so if you have questions or concerns regarding specific elements, please stay tuned for future engagement events.
- *How do building types affect my house?* The draft ordinance uses building types, which set a maximum building footprint and number of stories, to control the size of new homes. The Planning Department analyzed existing homes throughout the City to determine which proposed building type would most closely align with Newton’s existing homes (i.e. House Type A, House Type B, Duplex, etc.). These building type determinations were used for analytical purposes only. Property owners looking to modify their existing home, or build a new one, that is different from this proposed building type are allowed to do so by right as long as the project would comply with one of the building types allowed in that district (and with all other zoning and building code regulations). Finally, this building type analysis should not be used to determine if a house is nonconforming.
- *How do zoning changes affect property taxes?* The City of Newton Assessors Department determines a property’s value based upon the current use and characteristics, not what

could be built under zoning. So, a change to the zoning that would allow a larger home or more units to be built on a property would not affect the current property taxes. Similarly, changing the zoning for golf courses from the existing residential zoning to a new recreational zoning district would not impact the property taxes collected.

Help Us Spread Word of the Survey!

Please copy and paste the language below with your neighbors, community groups, in upcoming newsletters, and on your social media to help us have as many Newton community members as possible tell us their questions about Zoning Redesign and give us ideas for community engagement in 2021!:

Zoning Redesign Wants to Hear from You!

Calling all Newton community members! We want to hear what you think and have questions about for the City of Newton's Zoning Redesign project as stakeholders in Newton's future. It's critical that we hear from those who work, live, and/or are growing up here! We invite you to (1) [watch this presentation](#) about what Zoning Redesign is and (2) [fill out this survey](#) to tell us your questions about Zoning Redesign and your ideas for community engagement in 2021. (The survey closes at the end of January 10th.)

For context, zoning law regulates how land is used across the city and shapes buildings, homes, blocks, neighborhoods, and village centers. Zoning Redesign is the City of Newton's multi-year effort to update, clarify and rewrite Newton's Zoning Ordinance so that it reinforces our goals. You can also find this information at the [Zoning Redesign website](#). If you have any questions or additional ideas, reach out to zoningredesign@newtonma.gov or npilipovicwengler@newtonma.gov.

Visit Zoning Redesign on the web

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