



Memorandum

To: Zoning & Planning Committee members and Colleagues

From: Chair of Zoning & Planning Committee

Date: February 5, 2021

Dear Zoning & Planning committee members and Colleagues,

Members of our committee have expressed that to move forward more effectively as we reconsider how our zoning ordinances can achieve our stated goals, that we need to make some clear decisions on how we proceed. Specifically, how will we approach the problem solving that needs to be done and which zoning tools we agree to consider?

I agree.

To do this, I ask you first to revisit the 11-page Zoning Reform Group Final Report.

As discussed early last year, this report was published in January 2012.

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument?id=47581> and has guided much of our work since that time.

Please consider each of 10 Themes (#2-11) described therein as you think about the problems our current ordinance presents.

I believe there are two items we need to discuss and resolve:

1. Which of these challenges you think we can solve, if any, independent from the rest of the ordinance, and which if any, require a more comprehensive approach.
2. Are there any zoning "tools of the trade" that we should summarily eliminate from our toolbox? For example, it is routinely suggested by one member that form-based tools will not work, and by others that regulating FAR does not produce the desired result.

The themes in the ZRG report are:

1. Better organize the ordinance for ease of use.
(Revised ordinance adopted in 2015)
2. Simplify and streamline the permitting and review processes
3. Recognize that each village center and commercial corridor is unique
4. Encourage mixed-use residential redevelopment in village centers
5. Create “soft transitions” between village centers and residential neighborhoods
6. Allow moderate, flexible growth on commercial corridors
7. Rationalize and streamline parking regulations
8. Protect neighborhood character and scale
9. Create more diverse housing opportunities
10. Institute a better process for managing change of religious and educational institutions
11. Improve natural resource conservation and sustainability

I propose and open discussion on this matter exclusively.

Depending on where we land, we begin to better plan the calendar together.

See you Monday!