

12/16 Chair and Vice-Chair Letter  
**Zoning Redesign: Village Centers**

Dear Colleagues,

Over the last few months we have been presented with a great deal of work by Planning and Utile on both our community's future vision for village centers – as well as various quantitative analyses probing the metrics of success for vibrant village centers, both in Newton and elsewhere. This was to build a foundation upon which we can improve the regulatory framework within which our village centers can thrive. Now we have to set our priorities for moving ahead. (See “**Homework**” below!!)

Before diving into our work on village center zoning, we will continue to discuss the work from Phase I, which staff synthesized into seven community takeaways:

- Creating more communal & public space + activation
- Increasing accessibility to buildings and infrastructure within village centers
- Incorporating climate resiliency through built structures and green spaces
- Helping small businesses to begin, stay and thrive in Village Centers
- Making the permitting process easier, clearer, and multi-tiered
- Adding more diverse housing options and encouraging mixed-use projects (although to what extent had a spectrum of opinion)
- Prioritizing safe and accessible routes to and through village centers, especially walking and biking

These “takeaways” are what staff and Utile have observed to be the overall consensus. Lessons (from on-the-spot surveys, focus groups, event tabling, vision kits, Polis, and quantitative analysis), can become a framework for both the Committee (via zoning) as well as other city departments to use to further Newton's overall planning efforts for village centers.

These ‘takeaways’ generally align well with the many policy and planning documents that Council has adopted and uses to guide future development. To aid in our ability to compare past and current work, staff synthesized the strategies and goals from these documents relevant to village center zoning into a table saved here:

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/70377/637577264339330000>

**Homework!!**

**At our December 16 meeting we need to discuss how well these takeaways align with our values and future vision for village centers. Your responses to the attached questions, will help guide our discussion on December 16th and help determine and path ahead for the coming year.**

**Please send your responses to the City Clerk, [cmoore@newtonma.gov](mailto:cmoore@newtonma.gov). We will have them available at the December 16 meeting.**

By establishing priorities about what the end result of Newton's village centers should be, we can begin to identify the right zoning tools to achieve those ends. Do we agree that these

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takeaways represent the components that make better village centers? If so, discussions around zoning, development, and density have a common end goal in mind and we can focus on what we need to determine to what degree a zoning proposal can help to achieve that end.

See you all next Thursday!

Deb Crossley, Chair  
Victoria Danberg, Vice Chair

For your convenience, below are links to the relevant material presented to ZAP this fall.

***September 13, 2021 - Quantitative Analysis: Village Center Metrics of Success***

ZAP Memo -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/74058/637668804968330000>

ZAP Presentation -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/77583/637726624712900000>

ZAP Report -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/76259/637704278887530000>

***October 25, 2021 - Community Engagement Results and Key Takeaways***

ZAP Memo -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/76311/637705088696800000>

ZAP Presentation -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/77793/637731840749430000>

ZAP Report -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/77187/637719810822230000>

***November 18, 2021 - Linking Takeaways to Zoning Tools***

ZAP Memo -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/77441/637723271656330000>

ZAP Presentation -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/77793/637731840749430000>

ZAP Report -

<https://www.newtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/78029>

In addition, Planning has posted all the “raw data” collected on their village center webpage here: <https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/village-centers>. If you have any trouble locating a piece of information please reach out to Zachery LeMel, [zlemel@newtonma.gov](mailto:zlemel@newtonma.gov).