



Memorandum

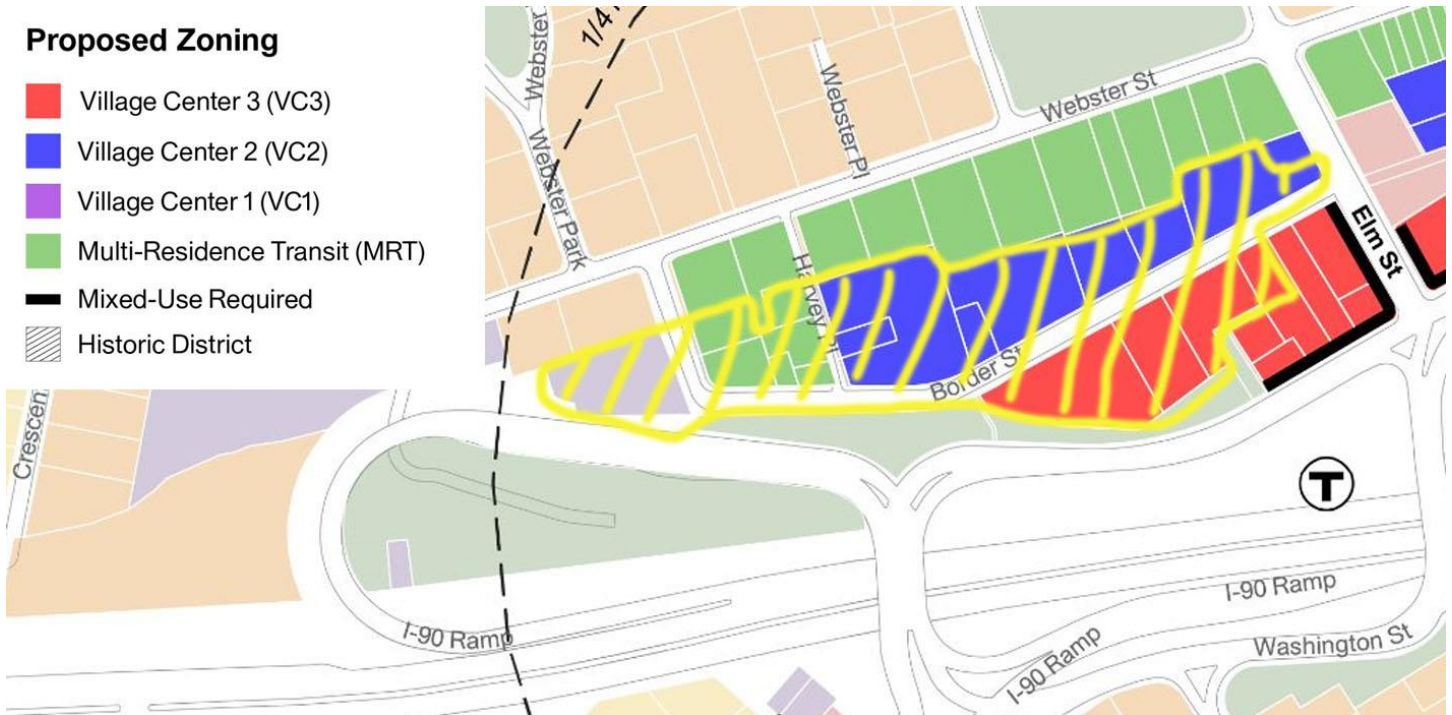
To: Barney S. Heath, Director of Planning and Development;
Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director

From: Councilor Julia Malakie

Re: Amendment to VCOD map for West Newton: retain current zoning for Border Street & Harvey Place Manufacturing zone

Date: August 18, 2023

I am requesting amendments to remove the Border Street and Harvey Pl parcels currently zoned Manufacturing from the proposed Village Center Overlay District. (See map below, and parcel list on following page).



Retain current zoning: Manufacturing

| Number | Street | Current District | Land Use (Assessors Database)/ (current business) | Planning Dept proposed |
|---------------|---------------|-------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| 7 | Border St | Man | Small retail, offices | VC2 |
| 25 | Border St | Man | Auto repair | VC2 |
| 35 | Border St | Man | Comm whse (Felix Doolittle) | VC2 |
| 39-45 | Border St | Man | Comm Whse | VC2 |
| 49 | Border St | Man | Ind office | VC2 |
| 55-67 | Border St | Man | R&D (Automatic Laundry) | VC2 |
| 11 | Harvey Pl | Man | Parking, garage | MRT |
| 17 | Harvey Pl | Man | SF | MRT |
| 21 | Harvey Pl | Man | 2F | MRT |
| 79 | Border St | Man | SF | MRT |
| 83-85 | Border St | Man | Condos | MRT |
| 93 | Border St | Man | Ind factory | |
| 97 | Border St | Man | Retail equip (RP Holmes) | MRT |
| 11-13 | Lucas Ct | Man | Parking lot | VC3 |
| 24 | Border St | Man | Ind whse | VC3 |
| 30 | Border St | Man | Auto repair | VC3 |
| 38 | Border St | Man | Office bldg (Langione Dance Center) | VC3 |
| | | | | |

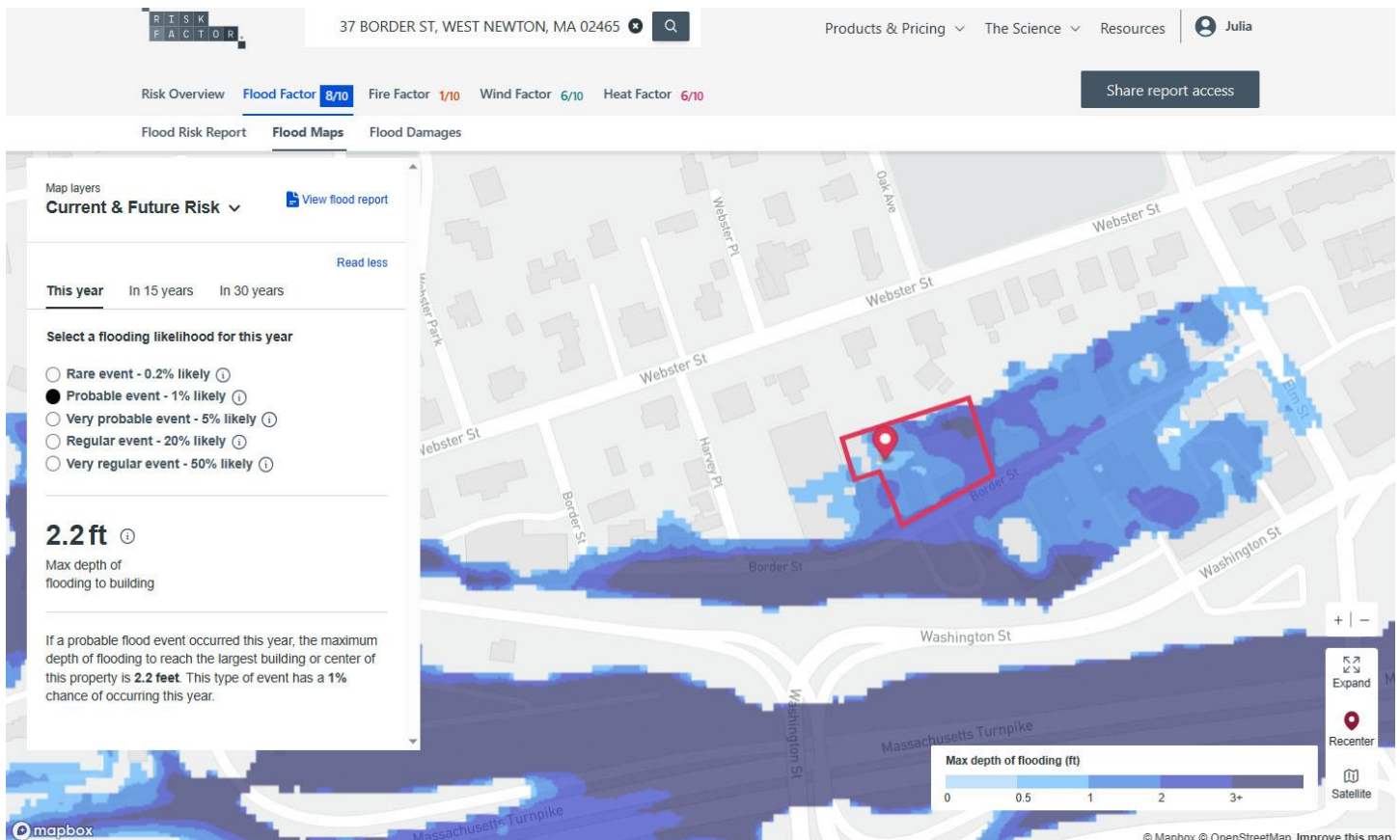
Reason #1:

Border Street is one of the few remaining Manufacturing zones in Newton, part of our shrinking commercial tax base that we should be trying to retain, and home to some very successful businesses. These include:

- [Automatic Laundry](#), a successful and growing family-owned company which supplies and services communal laundry equipment to residential properties, colleges, and businesses around New England and beyond
- [Joanne Langione Dance Center](#), a very busy dance school founded in 1976
- [Felix Doolittle](#), which produces personalized stationery and products, founded by Newton residents, watercolor artist Felix Fu and his wife Loren Sklar in 2003. Their customers are nationwide; one day there I met a couple of customers on vacation from Oregon who'd stopped by to visit.
- [R.P. Holmes](#), a third-generation family-owned plumbing and HVAC company.

Reason #2:

Border Street is an unofficial flood zone – not on the FEMA flood maps, but recognized by First Street Foundation’s riskfactor.com property lookup site:



This is not just a theoretical risk. Flooding has happened four times just since I've been on City Council: in June 2020, August 2021, and July 29 and August 8 this summer.

Border Street really wants to be Cheesecake Brook, which is culverted under the length of the street. Whatever flooding might normally occur in this low-lying area is exacerbated by the fact that at the Elm Street end, the cross sectional area of the culvert is constricted by about half, to accommodate a large MRWA water main running under Elm Street. In past decades, the culvert was apparently big enough to handle rain despite the constriction, but increasingly intense storms in recent years cause the culvert to fill up and flood the street, as I recorded on July 29 <https://youtu.be/sm6HO1wCR78> and August 8 <https://youtu.be/PX22KkCHEeM>

On August 8, when Newton got 2.77 inches of rain, Needham got about 6 inches and Billerica 7 inches, so it's pure luck that our flooding was not worse.

MWRA predictably does not want to move their water main, and DPW has not found a solution.

Border Street is also proposed to be part of the MBTA Communities overlay district. The state's guidelines about location of districts state:

*When choosing the location of a new multi-family zoning district, every MBTA community should consider how much of a proposed district is sensitive land on which permitting requirements and other considerations could make it challenging or inadvisable to construct multi-family housing. For example, **an MBTA community may want to avoid including in a multi-family zoning district areas that are subject to flooding, or are known habitat for rare or threatened species, or have prime agricultural soils in active agricultural use.***

As Councilor Norton has pointed out, "may" really should be "should" in the context of flooding. Newton does not need Border Street to meet our MBTA Communities target, and including it could find future residents getting up in the middle of the night to move their cars to higher ground, or finding their cars totaled like recent Library visitors.

The following pages are a few photos from each of the recent floods.

June 2020 (Automatic Laundry security camera video)



June 2020 (Automatic Laundry - flooding reached equipment area)



August 2021 (provided by Galaxy Auto Body)



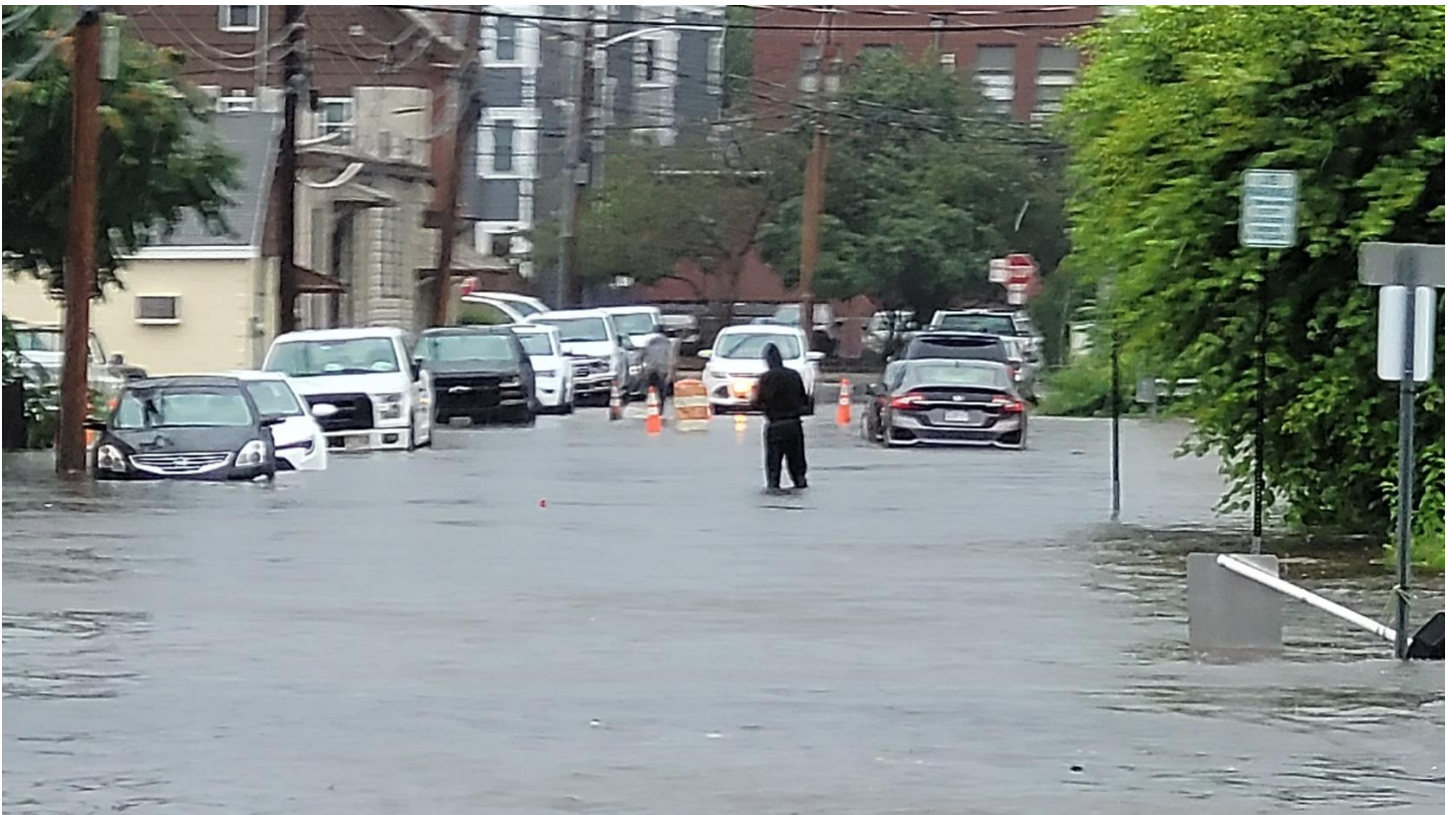
July 29, 2023



August 8, 2023



August 8, 2023



August 8, 2023

