

Question	Answer(s)
Are there any discussions on incentives to building long term or deed restricted housing to improve affordability? (Beyond the set asides on large projects)	This should be directed to Newton Housing Partnership
How will the proposed changes address the issue of the declining middle class?	The proposal is designed to provide a diverse range of house types and sizes. This in turn provides housing at a range of different price points which offers opportunity for households of a varying income levels to enter the housing market in Newton. The proposal also would makes it easier for homeowners to create additional units through multi-unit conversions, internal Accessory Apartments and a less-onerous permitting process for creating detached ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Unit). This easing up of the code will allow homeowners to sell or rent a newly created unit, thereby helping people afford to stay in their homes longer should they desire to do so. It also provides an avenue for homeowners be part of the missing middle housing solution we so desperately need.
When single family houses are converted to condos, the condos are not affordable to middle and lower income people. Why do we think this will change in the future with the new zoning?	Market rate housing is always going to be expensive in Newton but real estate prices are subject to supply and demand. If there are enough condos available in Newton the price will reflect their availability. Another path to creating more moderately priced homes is to reduce the size of the units created. Reducing the size will reduce the cost and building more units per lot will allow the land costs, the single biggest driver in housing costs in Newton, to be shared among more units. Small homes on shared lots is another strategy for moderately priced housing options. The proposed code offers incentives for developing units that are built sustainably and that are priced to meet legally affordable levels.
I thought the reason for rezoning was to provide housing for lower income people and people of color. So how does the goal of social justice come in with the proposal for zoning change?	Fortunately the goal of social justice aligns quite well with the other goals of increasing and diversifying our housing stock, reducing the City's carbon footprint and focusing growth around our villages and mass transit. Attaining any of these goals in turn will help provide a more equitable housing market in Newton.
What is the rate of single family conversion to multi-family during the last 10 years vs. prior to the last 10 years. Is this type of conversion becoming more common?	This is a question for the planning department. Multi-unit conversions are not common because they can be challenging, not just because of the current zoning restrictions but because they must meet life safety regulations in the state building code. That means separate means of egress and fire rated construction. As such we are unlikely to see large numbers of multi-unit conversions of single family homes in Newton.
What makes you believe that a builder can buy a small house for the land (800 thousand to one million) and then build another smallish house and make a profit?	They probably can't do that, but that is not bad because it will help preserve the existing housing stock. In the case of a small home it is likely more cost effective to keep the house and upgrade it, or add on to it. The proposed zoning seeks to reduce the opportunity for developers to raze smaller homes to build much larger ones, The proposed code, a Form Based Code is guided by the existing housing stock and attempts to keep new construction in scale with what we have and like.
Isn't it cheaper to tear down and build new construction than to add on or renovate older construction? Developers will continue to build new, only now they can build multiple homes on large lots. Our historic homes will not be protected from demolition by developers.	Developers will not tear down our historic homes if they cannot build substantially bigger houses to replace them. The proposed zoning limits the size of the new construction. By doing so it helps protect our existing housing stock. Even though the proposal would allow multifamily units in some areas that are now zoned single family only, the new multifamily buildings will be restricted to the size, height and scale of the surrounding homes so the the context of the neighborhood is retained. Furthermore the idea proposed is to require keeping the house- to preserve the streetscape - if converting to more than two units. The idea it to encourage preservation.
If single family houses are able to be converted to multi family, won't developers be able to outbid individuals who wish to keep a given house as a single family unit. Or, will the size limitations on each multi family unit not produce incentives for developers?	see line #6 answer about multi-unit conversions.
Will there be building code restrictions when a large home becomes a multi-family homes. I've seen some odd constructions.	Yes, the building code makes multi-unit conversions very difficult and expensive. The 'weird ones you may have seen around town are often low budget retro-fits that are illegal.

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Why is the voting on this issue limited to the city council members and not to all the residents?	Rules around changes to zoning regulations are made by the Commonwealth. Those rules include requiring public hearings and opportunity for public review and input.
Like you mentioned, this will take a long time to pass. Any guesses at how long? The restrictions now at things like just building a deck are tough with all the layers, like you said so look forward to an easier process- whether projects approved or not!	One of the goals of the redesign is to simplify the permitting process, make more home improvements by-right and reduce the need for Special Permits. Also provide a new Special Permit granting authority for small residential projects. As to guessing when this might come to a vote before City Council my guess is perhaps mid-2022.
A document on the city website encourages boarding houses and rooming houses. What is that about?	That is a question for the Planning Department.
Will there be a way to change or update zoning on a regular basis? For example, we saw a map that suggested alignment with MBTA bus routes. On the south side, bus service has shrunk over the years, and fixing it is beyond the city's control.	An excellent point. The ZRG Report specifically calls for a year of monitoring and assessment... I think there is some consensus that whatever the final product of the rezoning effort is it will need to be scrutinized to see if it is working or there are unintended consequences. So, I do foresee some sort of ongoing review process so that we can update the code as needed on a regular basis. One of the reasons that this process is so cumbersome right now is that it has not been done for 70 years. More municipalities are changing their schedules of reviewing zoning documents to a rolling 5-year cycle so that they are never so far out of date and the update process is not so disruptive.
I want to know if the incentive [for the zoning ] is to support or not a particular political party, socio-economic class and racial group.	The Zoning Code is designed to serve all City residents regardless of political party, class or race. The purpose of the rezoning is to align the zoning regulations with the goals of the City as described in various policy documents including the Comprehensive Plan, Climate Action Plan, Housing Strategy, Economic strategy. These are all policies that have been vetted through the Council and /or the Mayor's office.
How do the expected cut backs in MBTA service impact the proposed density focused redesign?	Nobody knows how COVID will effect mass transit over the long run but I don't see it impacting the plan for more density around the commuter rail or Green line stops. Remember these transit stops also coincide with our village centers and we want to encourage growth in these areas. The zoning redesign planning process is looking carefully to support our local commercial base and reduce car dependence, particularly around these vital areas.
I live in West Newton. I don't mind more people, but I do mind more cars - A LOT MORE CARS! It is fine if the cars are parked off street. It is the traffic on the street that is hard to tolerate. Even if one doesn't own a car, there is Uber and Lyft traffic. I cannot even drive on Webster Street because cars park along one side making it, essentially, a one way street.	I think traffic has been a problem since the car was first introduced in Newton. What the zoning can do is direct our growth to minimize the dependence on car trips by directing building close to village centers. The proposed zoning does reduce the on site parking requirements. The thinking is that builders and homeowners will provide the amount of on-site parking they need without being required to do so. The City does have to work through the the issues around on-street parking and the winter parking ban.
The condos being built on what was a small single family site, have removed all of the grass, trees and set-back. Now one sees just a mass of building and pavement. The streets are not drivable - it is not the increase in people, it is the great increase in traffic. Even people without cars take Uber and Lyft. Webster Street was two-way, now it is only drivable (for most of the day) in one direction. Zoning needs to address the streets as well as the lots.	See answer above on line #17
What protections will be in place to assure developers do not demolish older homes on large lots and build apartment buildings in their place?	see answer on line #8

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Where has this type of form based zoning methodology been employed successfully?	I would refer you to the FBZI (Form Based Zoning Institute ) website <a href="http://formbasedcodes.org">formbasedcodes.org</a> However you aren't going to find a City exactly like Newton. We are unique in size, housing stock, multiple village centers, etc. This is why the planning Department, City Council and the community interest groups are developing a hybrid form based code for Newton. I don't think there will be another code exactly like it anywhere however it could become a model for communities like ourselves. Cities and towns of all sizes, all over the country are grappling with the very same issues we are here in Newton and are undertaking zoning redesign studies. Access to moderately priced housing, climate change and outdated codes are driving this movement.
Rear lot developments add enormous mass to neighborhoods—how would new zoning treat them?	I am not sure what you mean by 'enormous mass' . The proposal would amend 'rear lot' development to require a much smaller home on the second (normlly rear) lot. Although the current redesign doesn't address it we hope to revise the existing rear lot development standards to encourage it near villages and transit. It provide a good opportunity to add density while maintaining the existing housing stock and streetscape. I am fairly confidant that if the Planning Department proposes easing the restrictions around rear lot development the Council will require a Special Permit.
Thank you so much. This is very informative.  Can Jay speak to the relationship between the new zoning plan and a comprehensive transportation plan that moves the city toward less car dependency? What is the plan for a significantly more bike-friendly Newton? What happens to current off-street and overnight parking regulations? How will parking density be addressed?	The emphasis on directing growth toward village centers and transit points is to lessen car dependency. I can't speak to bikes directly other than to note that multi-unit buildings will required to provide bike storage. For the parking issues refer to line item #17
How will new set-back regulations be applied to multi-family construction?	Side and rear setback minimums are generally more restrictive, that is larger, in residential zones for both single family and multi-family buildings. This is in response to the public input about houses being too close together. Of course in the districts allowing smaller lots the setbacks are reduced.
I support the idea of including paved surfaces in the calculation of building footprint. However, that pushes garages to the street. That's not conducive to walking and interaction with neighbors. It creates a barrier from pedestrians. In addition, my 1886 house like most others of that period, has its garage in the far rear and hence there's a long driveway along the side lot line. There should be some way to encourage that pattern to continue while expanding the existing homes.	There is a dilemma within the zoning around lot coverage definition and discouraging front yard parking. It has yet to be resolved however I think it will be controlled in the garage ordinance section. This is as well an issue of accessibility. Unfortunately, as an architect I can attest to the fact people don't want their garages tucked into the back corner of their lots. They want them attached to the house.
Does 2 family zoning actually extend so far up Park St? I believe it ends halfway up at 115.	The MR district does end in the middle of Park St., moving south 123 is the last MR lot but that is the point. It is a seamless transition between single and multifamily zones because the houses are all the same scale whether they be single or two family inside.
Can you point to communities in the US that have successfully made this kind of zoning change, w/ form-based zoning and elimination of SF zoning?	refer to line #20.
Limiting the size of housing--what will be the limit in square feet?	It depends on the 'house type' but generally the new regulations will allow houses to be built by-right that are 20-30% smaller than our current housing stock. Go to the Planning Department website for the most current size charts for house types.

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<p>Will eliminating or reducing single family residence zones discourage tear downs replaced by oversized buildings? if so, why?</p>	<p>There is no proposal to eliminate single family zones. What is on the table is allowing 2 and maybe 3 family units in areas with zones currently limited to single family homes only. The proposed zoning will discourage tear-downs because developers would not be able to build significantly larger homes, to replace the homes they demolish.</p>
<p>If we eliminate or reduce single family residence zones, why does that not encourage a spec builder to take down a single family home, and replace it with a 4-6 unit building? Deb Crossley has said that won't happen, but I don't understand why not.</p>	<p>The proposed zoning does not eliminate single family residential zones. It does call for two or three multifamily homes to be built in some some areas now zoned for single family only. A new 4-6 unit building would not be allowed in R1-,R2, or Rs residential zones. A builder would be allowed to convert an existing home in those zoning into 4-6 unit building. However, to accommodate 4-6 units the house would need to be between 6,000 and 8,000 sf on a lot that is at least 13,000 sf. A house that big would only be allowed in R1 and it would be limited to 7,500 sf. max. Most houses that are that big on lots that big are too expensive to buy and convert for a developer to make his margin. I think that is Councillor Crossley's rational.</p>
<p>How could Newton create zoning that encourages smaller multifamily buildings like older 2 families and triple-deckers that have around 1000-1700 square feet per unit and don't fill up the lot to the maximum? Instead we seem to get 3000 sq ft plus townhouses - big structures that fill up the lot and sell for over a million dollars.</p>	<p>The proposed zoning limits the size of two &amp; three family buildings to about 2,000sf/unit. This is a based on the size of the two &amp; three families currently in Newton. I agree that Townhouses are too big and more urban. In the current proposal they are only allowed in the 'N' district immediately around the village centers.</p>
<p>What's the vision for single family homes in the city? What steps are being taken to curb the growth of oversized new homes in the city? Is the Planning Committee at all concerned about reasonably sized houses being torn down to build significantly larger homes which sell in the multiples of millions? Doesn't this impact the affordability of homes in the City? If the city expands the zoning for multi-family homes, what prevents these homes from being sold for high prices?</p>	<p>Newton is perceived as a single family home community and that is not going to change. The proposed zoning only allows building in residential neighborhoods that are of a similar scale to what is there now. The proposed zoning limits the size of houses to approximately 75-80% of the size of comparable house types that current exist in Newton. Furthermore the new, more restrictive setbacks and lot coverage requirements will further constrain the size of new houses. The proposal incentivizes preserving our current housing stock in a number of ways. By providing more diverse housing types the City will provide more opportunity for buyers at a range of incomes to get into the Newton housing market.</p>