

# Newton to gather public feedback on proposed zoning changes for village centers

By [John Hilliard](#) Globe Staff, Updated August 8, 2022, 5:25 p.m.



The intersection of Centre and Beacon Streets in Newton Centre. SUZANNE KREITER/GLOBE STAFF

Newton officials will launch a community engagement effort starting next month to gather public feedback on proposed zoning changes for the city's village centers, according to a statement from city planners.

The changes being considered by city councilors would impact parking, building height

and size, and the creation of new housing in those areas, according to the proposals.

The city will collect opinions on the proposed updates to the Village Center zoning regulations from Sept. 1 through Oct. 16, according to [a Planning & Development Department memo](#).

Based on the community's feedback, the city's staff will present "a more developed iteration" of the proposed zoning changes to the Zoning & Planning Committee in late October, the memo said.

The changes to Newton's Village Center zoning regulations include the following proposals, according to the city.

- Reduce parking requirements for residential and commercial uses.

- Increase the floor-to-floor heights for residential and commercial buildings.

- Require half-stories to be set back a minimum of 10 feet along the entire perimeter of the building, or have a pitched roof.

- Remove the limit on the number of residential units that can be built on a site, allowing for more flexibility in unit size, according to the city.

- Remove the minimum lot size requirement for village centers.

- Set a maximum by-right building footprint.

- Require a special permit for new development on properties greater than three-quarters of an acre. This would replace the current requirement, which applies to projects of at least 20,000 square feet of floor area, according to the city.

- Creation of a new site plan review process by the Planning Board, with design review by the Urban Design Commission. The site plan review process could be used to impose conditions on issues like site layout and pedestrian safety, according to the city.

- Create new design standards that would be enforced through Village Center zoning.

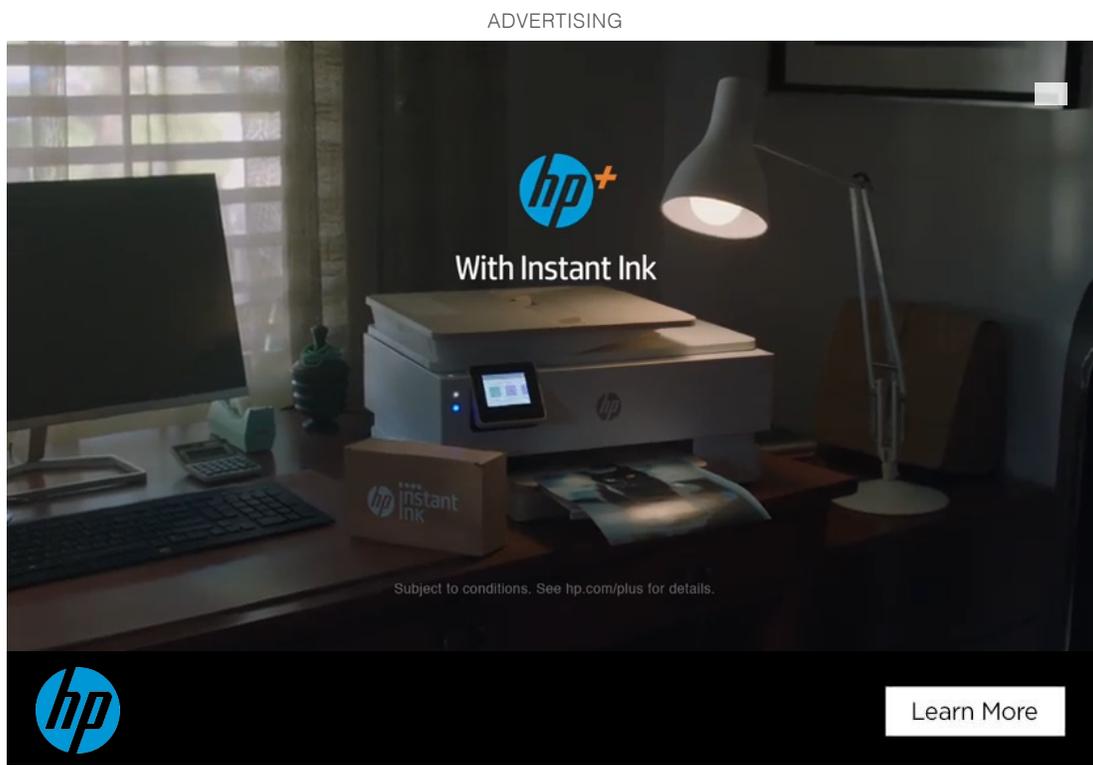
- Revise by-right building dimensional standards in Village Center zoning districts

which would allow for more units to be built, according to the city.

The proposals are “well supported” by more than a decade of city plans and policies, according to the [Newton Planning and Development Department memo](#) posted to the city’s website, newtonma.gov.

They are also intended to align with the state’s “[MBTA Communities” law that mandates new multi-family zones in cities and towns served by the transit agency](#), the memo said.

The changes were proposed by the city’s Planning Department staff and a consultant, and were discussed by the City Council’s Zoning & Planning Committee earlier this year, the memo said. The city has also released feedback from the Zoning & Planning Committee on the proposals [through the city’s website](#).



By Sept. 1, the city said it would provide several ways to collect residents’ opinions on proposed zoning changes, according to the city statement.

Those methods will include a feedback tool that will allow community members to give their feedback using an online survey. The survey will be available through mobile devices, desktop computers, and as a hard copy for people who want to fill it out by hand, according to the statement.

The city will also set up an exhibit at the Newton Free Library to present the zoning proposals and feature a “community engagement” station, according to the statement. A virtual version of the exhibit will also be available for download.

The city is also working with local organizations to develop their own community engagement plans for the proposed zoning, according to the statement.

The city encouraged people to sign up for its [Zoning Redesign newsletter](#) and visit the city’s Village Centers zoning website at [newtonma.gov/government/planning/village-centers](https://newtonma.gov/government/planning/village-centers).

“What City staff are working on... is making these technical proposals accessible to the public, so that more Newton community members can give input on these important changes being considered by the council,” the statement said.

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