



Setti D. Warren
Mayor

City of Newton, Massachusetts
Department of Planning and Development
1000 Commonwealth Avenue Newton, Massachusetts 02459

Telephone
(617) 796-1120
Telefax
(617) 796-1142
TDD/TTY
(617) 796-1089
www.newtonma.gov

Barney Heath
Director

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 18, 2016

TO: Councilor Ted Hess-Mahan, Chairman
Members of the Zoning and Planning Committee

FROM: Barney Heath, Director, Department of Planning and Development
James Freas, Deputy Director
Lily Canan Reynolds, Community Engagement Manager

RE: Zoning Redesign

CC: City Council
Planning and Development Board
Donnalyn Kahn, City Solicitor
John Lojek, ISD Commissioner



The Zoning Redesign project is well underway and the project team is gathering information for the Pattern Book. Current tasks include reviewing zoning districts and building forms at a planning scale in order to identify typological patterns that can serve as a foundation for discussion around Newton's existing development context.

Pattern Book Information Gathering

Sasaki Associates have spent five days in Newton's neighborhoods observing and collecting data about different development patterns. On Monday November 7 members of City Council and the public were invited to join Sasaki on a Pattern Book Walk. Attendees spent time delving into the methodology of the Pattern Book and sharing observations with the project team. Sasaki has photographed and recorded development character (density, building form, frontages, setbacks, entries and fenestration, building heights, adjacencies, etc.) and the public realm (streets, parking, public spaces, sidewalks, etc.)

Pattern Book Open House will take place on **Saturday, December 3 & Sunday, December 4, 2016** at the Newton Innovation Center, 124 Vernon St., Newton, MA 02458. (Saturday 11am – 5pm; Sunday 12pm – 4pm). Please help us share this invitation with your constituents. City Council's Zoning

Redesign project is hosting a two-day open house about zoning in Newton. Members of City Council and the public are welcome to stop by the open house for an hour or more. The format of the event will consist of several interactive stations. Community members will have the opportunity to:

- Define which elements of the city successfully contribute to Newton’s character.
- Identify desired and undesired development forms throughout Newton.
- Identify desired areas for preservation, enhancement, and transformation throughout Newton.
- Explore existing zoning district boundaries and participate in the definition of new zoning district boundaries based on existing development patterns and redevelopment aspirations.
- Identify and suggest aspirational development character to serve as precedents for the redesigned context-based zoning ordinance.
- Engage with initial Pattern Book findings and historic materials about Newton’s development history.

The Pattern Book Open House will also be mirrored with online opportunities for providing input on the above topics. In early December following the event, these surveys and modules will be made available via the project website. www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning

Community Questions about the Pattern Book

At the Zoning Redesign Kickoff Event on October 5, 2016 attendees were invited to ask questions about zoning and the process of the Zoning Redesign project. The project team has compiled the questions and developed responses. These will be shared in thematic groups throughout November and December on the project website. Below are the questions we received about the Pattern Book:

- 1. HOW WILL THE PATTERN BOOK HELP TO ENSURE THAT FUTURE DEVELOPMENT/REDEVELOPMENT WITHIN NEWTON IS IN SCALE AND IN CHARACTER WITH THE CITY’S EXISTING DEVELOPMENT?**
The pattern book, once completed, will be a catalog of development types within Newton. It will be specific to the unique character and scale of each of the city’s neighborhoods and will serve as a guidebook for new development and redevelopment within Newton. Through the Zoning Redesign’s robust community engagement campaign, members of the Newton community will have a chance to provide input on which observed patterns best represent the community and should be carried forward as models for new development. The Newton community will also be invited to provide feedback on the location of new zoning districts which will provide rules and regulations for new development. In addition to cataloging Newton’s observed patterns of development, the pattern book will also showcase aspirational development patterns carefully selected and curated by the planning team for the consideration of the community. Patterns best representing the desired character of Newton’s neighborhoods and village centers will be included in the final pattern book, which will ultimately inform the redesigned zoning ordinance.
- 2. HOW WILL THE PATTERN BOOK BE DEVELOPED?**
The development of the pattern book will involve several conferences with local officials and stakeholders, community tours, research, documentation, evaluation of properties and building forms, and extensive dialogue with residents about Newton’s character and

aspirations. Following the analysis stage and the launch of the public process involved in the development of the pattern book, Sasaki will begin to categorize built patterns of development around the city and organize these patterns into new zoning districts, which will reflect the existing built landscape throughout the city. New district lines will incorporate findings from the team’s analysis, community feedback and preferences, existing planning initiatives and strategies, and knowledge of best practices in planning and design. Once patterns are understood and new zoning districts are organized to fully and accurately represent Newton’s existing development, each will be defined and illustrated to convey the attributes and character that make it unique. This analysis will include text, diagrams, and dimensional tables that describe the representative features of the city’s development areas.

3. HOW WILL THE PATTERN BOOK BE USED TO INFORM THE REFORMED ZONING ORDINANCE AND TO GUIDE NEW DEVELOPMENT/REDEVELOPMENT WITHIN NEWTON?

A context-based zoning ordinance is different from a traditional zoning ordinance in that it looks to the city’s existing development patterns for guidance on how to steer new development. The first step in understanding the development typologies and patterns that exist throughout the Newton community is analyzing and cataloging these patterns into the pattern book. Once this catalog is established and the Newton community has made decisions on which patterns should serve as models for future development/redevelopment efforts, an ordinance will codify these findings and refer back to the pattern book for the typological standards that will regulate development within specific neighborhoods and zoning districts. The two documents will work in tandem to ensure that the evolution of Newton is in keeping with the city’s unique and celebrated character.

Help us promote Courbanize Website & Online Engagement

Online engagement is a significant aspect of the community outreach for the Zoning Redesign project. In addition to in-person events, the project website www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning is an innovative way for Newtonians to get involved and provide input to the new zoning ordinance. Some of the website features provide project information: people have the opportunity to view project materials, sign up to receive project updates, access the anticipated timeline. An interactive online map provides a way for people to upload comments about Newton directly on a map and share their ideas with others.

The goal of the interactive map is have community members co-create a foundational element of the Pattern Book via the project website. Visitors are prompted with a simple question, what’s great about Newton and what could be even better? Responses are categorized as “great”, “what’s missing”, and “could be better”. Activity has already started on the map. At the October 5 Kickoff Event several attendees signed up at dedicated laptop stations and started entering comments on the spot.

Help spread the word about the Courbanize Website and the interactive mapping tool so more people participate. Councilors who have a listserve, newsletter, or website can post this useful tool and invite more of their constituents to check it out.

The Department has also created a way for community members to upload photos of their neighborhood through social media as part of the Pattern Book. Using Instagram and the hashtag #NewtonPatternBook residents and others can highlight the buildings, streets and areas of their neighborhood they want to highlight.

Thank you to Councilors for Highlighting Places in Newton

We have shared the information you sent us with our project team.