Newton Zoning Redesign

Cracking the Code: Understanding Zoning for Homeowners

11. 29. 17
Welcome!

6:35  Zoning 101
6:45  Cracking the Code: Understanding Zoning for Homeowners
7:10  Q&A
7:15  Table-top Sessions
7:50  Report Outs
Zoning 101
Zoning shapes our city. It ensures that buildings and uses of land promote positive outcomes for the community and are consistent with the neighborhood context.

Zoning is the regulation of our built environment: types of buildings, their locations, and their uses.
Central Elements of Zoning

- The Zoning Map
- The Zoning Ordinance
- Dimensional Requirements
- Development and Use Standards
- Decision Making Processes

The Zoning Map divides the city into districts, each of which represents a different set of land uses and scales of building types.
The Zoning Ordinance is the book of rules and regulations for how private property lots are divided, how buildings are constructed on those lots, and how those buildings are used.
Central Elements of Zoning

- The Zoning Map
- The Zoning Ordinance
- Dimensional Requirements
- Development and Use Standards
- Decision Making Processes

Dimensional Requirements control the dimensions of private property lots and the buildings constructed on them, including: width and depth of properties, height and overall scale or mass of buildings, as well as how far buildings are from the street and from neighboring property lines.
Central Elements of Zoning

- The Zoning Map
- The Zoning Ordinance
- Dimensional Requirements
- Development and Use Standards
- Decision Making Processes

Dimensional Requirements control the dimensions of private property lots and the buildings constructed on them, including: width and depth of properties, height and overall scale or mass of buildings, as well as how far buildings are from the street and from neighboring property lines.
Central Elements of Zoning

- The Zoning Map
- The Zoning Ordinance
- Dimensional Requirements
- Development and Use Standards
- Decision Making Processes

For each use
- Define it. State Intent.
- Set standards - Specific application materials, specific site layout standards, specific operations standards
Central Elements of Zoning

- The Zoning Map
- The Zoning Ordinance
- Dimensional Requirements
- Development and Use Standards
- Decision Making Processes

Decision Making Processes for applying the zoning rules are outlined in the ordinance as well.

Who approves? What standards for approval are applied?

City Council
  - *e.g.* Special Permit
  - Zoning Amendments

Zoning Board of Appeals
  - *e.g.* Variance

Inspectional Services Department
  - *e.g.* Building Permit
30-Second History of Zoning in Newton

1922 – First zoning code in Newton
1941 – Add residential zones
1953 – Introduce lot sizes & setbacks
1987 – Major reorganization, and update to commercial zones
2011 – Zoning Reform Group
2015 – Phase One completed
2017 – Phase Two – TODAY!

Current efforts
The Zoning Redesign initiative aims to create a zoning code that is more **flexible**, **predictable**, and **context-based** in order to encourage development / redevelopment within Newton that is in keeping with the city’s celebrated **character** while **directing growth** and economic development to the most appropriate areas.
The Pattern Book

The Pattern Book represents several months of effort collecting first-hand data and analysis. We will be collecting comments on this document through December 8.

Complete draft online at:
www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning
Zoning is our opportunity to shape the future of Newton
Cracking the Code: Understanding Zoning for Homeowners
Objectives for Zoning for Homeowners

1. Easy to use and administer.

2. Clear guidance on what a homeowner can do.

3. Reasonable ability to modify a property to meet the homeowner’s changing needs.

4. Ensure changes to property respect the context of the neighborhood.
Dimensional Controls

- Maximum Building Height
- Side Yard Setback
- Rear Yard Setback
- Maximum Lot Coverage
- Front Yard Setback
- Street
Dimensional Controls: Floor Area Ratio

Floor Area Ratio (FAR)
1:1 Ratio

1 story
(100% lot coverage)

2 stories
(50% lot coverage)

4 stories
(25% lot coverage)
Non-Conforming Homes, Old Lots, & Special Permits

87% Non-Conforming
Flexibility and Predictability

Newton’s Zoning

Flex

Predict
Zoning can...

...provide easy to use rules for making improvements to your property.

...ensure that changes in neighborhoods are in keeping with its scale and character.
Zoning & Homeowners

Lot Types & Context
Regulating dimensions for neighborhood consistency

Dimensional Controls
Options relative to flexibility & predictability
How to handle massing

Garages
Where do they go?

Fences & Retaining Walls
Making good neighbors
Lot Types & Context
Lot Types & Context

Cottage

Multi-Family Building
Lot Types & Context
Lot Types & Context Based Zoning

Goal: Direct development to be consistent with existing and desired context and differentiate rules based on types of building.
Zoning & Homeowners

Dimensional Controls:
- Setbacks – min and max, contextual
- Height – Re-evaluating how this is measured
- FAR -
- Lot Coverage – potentially more prominent role as replacement to FAR.
**Dimensional Controls**

**Floor Area Ratio:**
- Not intuitive or easy to explain
- Not easily verified by outside parties
- Complicates treatment of basements and attics
- Leads to a multitude of unintended outcomes as builders work to maximize building size within the rules
Floor Area Ratio
Alternatives

Set rules for building height, width & depth

- Allow exceedance of these numbers under certain circumstances or within clear guidelines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Body</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facade Build Out (min)</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Width (min/max)</td>
<td>22 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Depth (min/max)</td>
<td>24 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Building Height (max)</td>
<td>2 stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Story Height (min/max)</td>
<td>10 ft 12 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground Floor Elevation (min)</td>
<td>2 ft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roof Type</td>
<td>Flat, Gable, Mansard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Floor Area Ratio
Alternatives

Create a primary building lot coverage max
Floor Area Ratio
Alternatives

Stepback Plane rules

- Used to protect access to sunlight, reduce building massing at edges.
Proposed Dimensional Controls
Policy
Goal: Support more easily interpreted and enforced rules that result in contextually appropriate development.

1. Have min and max setbacks.
3. Replace FAR with some combination of:
   1. Building width & depth rules
   2. Building lot coverage rules
   3. Stepback plane rules
Garages
Garages:
- Address issue of garages dominating streetscape.
- In some districts, establish min garage setback and max garage width
Proposed Garage Policy

Goal: Support strong connection between homes and street and promote welcoming streetscape.

1. Set a minimum front setback for garages behind the front building facade.
2. Set max garage width based on percentage of building width.
3. Vary these rules based on context district.
Fences & Retaining Walls
Proposed Fence Policy

Goal: Ensure consistency of fence ordinance with zoning. Make fence and retaining walls better and improve enforceability of the rules.

1. Move fence ordinance into Zoning.

2. Apply fence rules to vegetation/bushes that effectively serve as fences.

3. Apply retaining wall rules to all retaining walls, not just those in the setbacks.
Stay involved

We’ve only scratched the surface today. Participate in future events and online at:

www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning
City of Newton Zoning Redesign
Event Series: September 2017 - May 2018

Location: Newton Free Library, 330 Homer Street, Druker Auditorium
Time: 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.*
RSVP online at www.courbanize.com/newtonzoning

*All the events will be held at this location and time.
The location of this meeting is wheelchair accessible and reasonable accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities who require assistance.
If you need a reasonable accommodation, please contact the city of Newton's ADA/Sec. 504 Coordinator, Jim Fairley, at least two business days in advance of the meeting: jfairley@newtonma.gov or (617) 796-1233.
The city’s TTY/TDD direct line is: 617-796-1388. For the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), please dial 711.
Thank You!
What do you think?
Zoning & Homeowners

Lot Types & Context
Regulating dimensions for neighborhood consistency

Dimensional Controls
Options relative to flexibility & predictability
How to handle massing

Garages
Where do they go?

Fences & Retaining Walls
Making good neighbors
What do you think?

Lot Types & Context
Regulating dimensions for neighborhood consistency

Dimensional Controls
Options relative to flexibility & predictability
How to handle massing

Garages
Where do they go?

Fences & Retaining Walls
Making good neighbors

What did you like?
What did you not like?
What did we miss?
How should we refine these proposals?