Traffic and parking go hand in hand. “There’s too much traffic” and “there’s not enough parking” are two of the most common comments about new development, and they contradict each other. Creating abundant parking is one of the most effective ways to incentivize driving and doing so typically detracts from the pleasantness of otherwise walkable destinations. Is there a middle ground – a parking lot just big enough to be convenient and small enough to keep traffic in check and support a walkable village?

People experience frustration when they search for parking in busy villages like Newton Centre. On street parking in the core is often full, meanwhile drivers pass by empty parking lots owned by retailers and places of worship. Large empty parking lots detract from the streetscape, make the pedestrian experience less enjoyable, have a harmful impact on the environment (heat island effect and stormwater), and are an inefficient use of land.

SMART PARKING MANAGEMENT
Creating a parking lot “for Goldilocks” requires being strategic about parking management and design. The dream of every driver is to find a convenient parking space at their destination and there are tools beyond sheer number of spaces to make that convenience a reality. Communities successful in managing parking treat their commercial centers as park-once-and-walk districts and encourage parking efficiencies across property lines - they set parking maximums instead of minimums, and encourage or require shared and interconnected parking lots.

After parking, every driver suddenly becomes a pedestrian, and good site design standards should be in place to make the walk from parking to destinations safe and pleasant.

TECHNOLOGICAL SHIFTS IN TRANSPORTATION
Already, elements of our transportation future are available to the general public. You can call an Uber/Lyft and be driven door-to-door on demand. Electric vehicles need charging spaces instead of gas stations. Biking and electric-assist biking is becoming more and more popular each year. Experts on autonomous vehicles predict they’ll be commonplace by 2025, just 7 years from now, while new buildings are expected to last 25-150 years. So now is the time to think about the transportation future!