

Dear Friends,

On Friday, the Newton Planning Department released a new draft of the residential section of the proposed new zoning code. The proposed changes are a major departure from our current zoning code and will impact almost every part of Newton. Key changes to our zoning code in the Planning Department's proposal include:

- **Allowing most existing single family houses (all but bungalow or cape-style houses) throughout Newton to be converted “by right” into buildings which can have up to six residential units** *(See pages 5-6 of the Planning Department's memorandum and Section 3.5.2 of the proposed draft code – link provided below).*
 - By right” means that a developer (or other landowner) has the right to build something without any city approvals other than ordinary construction permits. Currently, such conversions are allowed only with a special permit approved and provided by the City Council. While I favor making it easier to convert certain existing single family structures (such as old Victorian houses on large lots) into multi-family housing, we should do so with appropriate checks and balances in place.
- **Allowing two family housing “by right” in the entire city** *(See page 4 of the Planning Department's memorandum).*
 - This is a major departure from our existing zoning policy and is a more profound change than the ones originally presented at the Zoning and Planning Committee meeting in June. This proposed change would allow a developer (or other landowner) by right to convert or even tear down any single family home anywhere in the city (except if landmarked or in a historic district) and construct a two family house as long as it does not exceed the new allowed maximum building footprint and meets the proposed minimum setback and maximum lot coverage requirements.
- **Eliminating parking requirements for one and two family homes in the entire city** *(See Section 3.7.1 of the proposed draft code).*
 - The proposal removes requirements to provide on-site parking for one and two family buildings. I expect this will lead to more regular parking on city streets, especially if ongoing efforts in the City Council to abolish the winter overnight parking ban are successful.

[Click here to review our current zoning code](#)

[Click here to review the Planning Department's August 7, 2020 memorandum and the proposed draft code *](#)

**Please note that the draft code includes redlines to show changes from a prior draft that was prepared earlier this year.*

On August 13 and August 31, 2020, the Zoning and Planning Committee will be discussing this proposal (with additional sessions likely thereafter), with a straw vote on the proposed new residential rules this fall. The City Council intends to have a final-binding vote on an entirely new zoning code in the fall of 2021.

The City Council's zoning work is extremely important, with far-reaching and long-term implications for every resident of our city. While the current proposal includes some ways in which we can and should improve our zoning ordinance, we must proceed thoughtfully, carefully, and with full community input.

We need to hear your thoughts on this proposed code! Here are some ways you can get involved

- **Email the City Council and the Mayor with your thoughts concerning the residential proposals and other future proposals.**
 - You can send emails to the City Council at citycouncil@newtonma.gov and to Mayor Fuller at rfuller@newtonma.gov)
- **Attend and speak at public hearings.**
- **Share your views with your friends and neighbors and encourage them to follow our work and communicate with us.**
- **Follow the work of the Zoning and Planning Committee by attending meetings via Zoom and/or reading materials on the City Council's website**
 - You can find current zoom links and reading materials (updated every Friday) on the City Council's website at <http://www.newtonma.gov/gov/aldermen/fridaypack.asp>

I can't emphasize enough how important public participation is on this zoning work. Please get involved!

As always, I welcome your thoughts, questions, comments and criticisms!

Thanks,

Marc