

Kathy Pillsbury on Current Newton Zoning Ordinance and Why We Need a New One
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Get Involved in Newton's Zoning Code Changes. In February, the Zoning and Planning Committee restarted the zoning redesign discussions. The process including public meetings had been going on during 2017 and 2018 but were paused for a year.

The current zoning code doesn't work. It's hard to understand and it **allows the kind of development that so many dislike**—either McMansions because developers don't want to risk a special permit and are maxing out what they can do by right under our current code. On the other hand, we only seem to get really large projects by developers who can afford to go through a multi-year process for a special permit. **What about any other options for homes in Newton? Something needs to change. The question is what.**

I urge you to find out more about what is being proposed and then provide feedback to your city councilors, Mayor Fuller, and the Planning Dept.

Below are what I understand to be some of the changes and questions being considered for residential areas—some are smaller changes, some are larger. The areas where the large developments are happening or could happen will be discussed later when the Zoning and Planning Committee get to that section of the zoning code.

Should it still be illegal to have multi-family homes in most parts of Newton? What could be done to allow more multi-family homes? These are some of the ways that I have heard being considered:

- **Can single family homes be converted** into a two family like along Lincoln Street in Newton Highlands? If the existing house is very large, could it be converted to hold three units? **If there are clear rules about what could be done, could these kinds of changes be allowed by right or by an administrative process** instead of the current special permit process?
- **Could it be made easier to add an accessory apartment in your home**—for an aging parent or your adult child who needs to save some money? Could the accessory apartment help with the expense of your house? Could it be a smaller unit that you could live in as you aged instead of having to move away?
- If there were clear (and more understandable) rules about size limits, **could a new home be built with one or two units if the house were the same size in each case?** Should this be allowed by right or by an administrative process?
- **Are there some areas where there could be three family houses?** Are there some areas where there could be **four units** or **small buildings with more units?**
- **Can the types of homes that are allowed in Newton help with reducing climate change?** Could there be smaller homes or houses with more than one family that use

less energy and cause less carbon pollution? Can Newton be made more walkable? Could there be more places people call home within walking distance of our villages or the T or train?

- **Should multi-family homes only be allowed near transit or is it more fair to say that multi-family homes should be allowed across Newton** (a lot of Newton is actually near transit of some kind)?

There is going to be an updated draft of the residential section of the zoning code in the next week or so. You can find out more at the Newton Zoning Redesign webpage or you can listen into the Zoning and Planning Committee meetings on Zoom. Then contact your Councilors with your thoughts on these questions.