WHAT IS A VILLAGE?

- The mixed-use heart of a town
- Presence & integration of residential, commercial, employment, and civic uses
- Public spaces (many types)
- Recognizable activity center
- Variety, but cohesive
WHY VILLAGE ZONING?

Because existing zoning usually bears little if any relationship to the place!
BASIC IDEAS

- Supports compact development
- Promotes mixed uses, vertical & horizontal
- Aligns dimensional regulations with organic development pattern
- Facilitates gradual change in an environment with multiple property owners, each with different needs, goals, and expectations
YOU NEED A PLAN …

Customize to the village

Have a plan!

Goals

Vision

Understanding of opportunities & constraints
VILLAGE CENTER PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Inspired by Massachusetts Smart Growth Toolkit
(a good place to start!)
WHAT IS THE VILLAGE? WHERE IS IT?

- Maps first! Define and understand the village center’s edges
  - Streets
  - Buildings and uses
  - Transitions
  - Areas of influence
  - Relationship to neighborhoods
WHAT IS IT CONNECTED TO? AND HOW?
WHAT IS WALKABLE?
MIXED USES
HOUSING CHOICES
ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY
COMMUNITY-ORIENTED DESIGN
VIBRANT PLACE
ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES WITH VILLAGE CENTER ZONING

Word to the wise: be careful what you zone for!
A FEW CONSIDERATIONS

- Zoning approach (district v overlay)
- Nonconforming uses & structures
- Boilerplate zoning
- Local capacity
- Market
- Zoning isn’t enough …
DISTRICT V OVERLAY

• If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it … but if it’s broke, fix it?

• Overlay approach
  • Often easier to sell
  • Can be tailored to geography that crosses district boundaries
  • Options & incentives
NONCONFORMITIES

- Overlay helps to avoid making existing uses & structures nonconforming
- Need to review (probably update) nonconforming uses section of ZBL/ZO
- But … if existing zoning is the problem, don’t be afraid to fix it!
- Village center zoning should facilitate incremental change
LOCAL CAPACITY

• Professional staff
• Consultants
• Experienced boards/commissions
• Training & technical assistance
• Local developers
MARKET

- Development trends
- Understand the market, but be wary of zoning to market conditions
- Talk to developers, property owners, the banks, the building inspector, the assessor …
WHAT IF ZONING ISN’T ENOUGH?

- Capital plan
- Façade improvement incentives
- Economic development strategy
- The role of housing in village reinvestment & preservation
- Historic preservation planning & incentives
THE VILLAGE AS SOCIAL SPACE
THE VILLAGE AS SOCIAL SPACE
ORGANIZATION OF VILLAGE ZONING BYLAWS

Writing Village Center Zoning
BYLAW ORGANIZATION

1. Purposes
2. Establishment of district
3. Definitions (ideally, add to ZBL Definitions section)
4. Authority
BYLAW ORGANIZATION

• Uses
  • Permitted
  • Special permit
  • Prohibited

Stop! Does the Zoning Bylaw allow the ZBA to grant use variances?
BYLAW ORGANIZATION

- Dimensional Requirements
  - Lot area & frontage
  - Setbacks
  - Building height (stories/feet – both?)
  - Residential & mixed-use: limitations?
  - Illustrations, graphics
- Parking
BYLAW ORGANIZATION

- Design guidelines
- Mixed uses
- Buildings
- Site plan
- Circulation
- Landscaping
- Signs (be careful)
BYLAW ORGANIZATION

- Special Permit
- Incentives & Procedures
  - Eligibility
  - Incentives
  - Decision criteria
BUILDING SUPPORT

- Steering Committee
- Vision & Goals * **MUST DO**
- Photographic Inventory
- Property owner consultation
- Case studies (choose realistic ones)
- Listen to naysayers … you will need them
RECENT HISTORY
(2009/10)

• Worked with MAPC to update zoning for Littleton Common Area.

• 2010 Town Meeting:
  • **Area A:** New Village Common or VC Business District with mixed use by special permit. Problem: Fire Code.
  • **Area B:** Allow additional uses, including retail – supported the vision of development at “The Point”

• 2011 Town Meeting:
  • **Area C:** Zoning amended to support accessory business uses at active farms throughout the entire Town.
Project kickoff meeting dinner June 13, 2016

Master Plan adopted April 20, 2017

Master Plan Implementation Committee
Seated June 2017 - AT THE SAME MEETING
that Master Plan Update Steering Committee
was retired

Priority Master Plan Implementation Item:
Revitalize Littleton Common
LITTLETON COMMON REVITALIZATION ROAD MAP

- EEA Planning Assistance Grant and Town Meeting Appropriations
- Initial idea was to study the economics and propose zoning to allow redevelopment in Littleton Common.
- Process lead the Town to understand that Form-Based Code was better option to explore than traditional "Euclidean" zoning
- Chose consultant, negotiated contract and will kick off FBC work in May 2019
2019 FORM BASED CODE
LITTLETON COMMON REVITALIZATION

- May 16: FBC “Teach-In”
- July 25: DRAFT FBC
- September 5: PB public hearing for Fall 2019 Special Town Meeting
QUESTIONS?

WRITING VILLAGE CENTER BYLAWS