

Statement from the Charles River Chamber President & CEO Greg Reibman about Newton's adoption of zoning designed to comply with the MBTA Communities Law

We would have liked Newton to have followed the lead of Lexington, Arlington, Brookline and other communities that rose to the challenge of confronting our region's housing crisis by approving zoning plans that went beyond what the MBTA Communities Law required.

But we still celebrate this achievement tonight.

And given a 70-year-history of exclusionary zoning and the sad fact that housing has been the third rail of Newton politics for decades, this it is an achievement

Six of Newton's villages -- Newton Centre, Newton Highlands, Waban, West Newton, Newtonville and Auburndale -- will benefit from the opportunities to welcome young adults, young families, and seniors looking to downsize, into smaller homes near transit, shops and restaurants. Our businesses will greatly benefit too from the foot traffic and the ability to attract and retain workers to jobs in all sectors.

We're disappointed for the businesses in Nonantum, Newton Corner, Chestnut Hill, Upper Falls, Lower Falls and Thompsonville that won't benefit from these upgrades now. Once we start seeing the benefits in the villages that are allowed to evolve, we hope there will be momentum to welcome improvements city wide.

We do have some concerns that some of the reductions in building height and other changes to the original plan may eliminate some economic feasibility. There may be projects that won't pencil out at the reduced height. We're also concerned that the state may not approve some elements of this since it has been scaled back and may ask the city to reopen the process in order to be in compliance.

But overall, Newton will be a better, more welcoming and more economically vibrant city thanks to the hard work and advocacy of many.

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