



## *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1008

November 15, 2023

Dear President Susan Albright and Newton City Council,

We are writing today to encourage you to include the village of Auburndale in the Village Center Overlay District (VCOD). We understand that there is consideration to exclude seven villages, including Auburndale, from the VCOD because they are not required to comply with the MBTA Communities Act. We urge you to vote to include Auburndale.

As many of you know, the state and federal delegation have been working for over 20 years to upgrade the three Newton commuter rail stations along the Worcester line (Auburndale, Newtonville, and West Newton). Necessary upgrades include making all three stations accessible and adding access to the second track. These upgrades will tremendously enhance public transportation service in Newton. Not only will trains that currently by-pass Newton be able to stop at the three stations, but the stations will be accessible for Newton residents who have disabilities or mobility issues. Additionally, the commuter rail station upgrades would likely help reduce the congestion that we currently experience in Newton and that will likely only worsen when the Massachusetts Turnpike construction begins. Because that project is estimated to take between 6.5 and 10 years to complete, it is imperative that we have a reliable and accessible transportation system in Newton.

If you fail to include Auburndale in the VCOD, it will have far-reaching negative impacts for transportation in Newton because Auburndale will also be excluded from the effort to enhance transit-oriented development. This is hugely problematic given that one of our community's three commuter rail stations is in Auburndale. Excluding Auburndale from the VCOD could in turn impact the Newton commuter rail stations' ability to be upgraded.

As we work to ensure these upgrades to the Newton commuter rail stations become a reality, it is essential that we give the MBTA every reason to include the stations as a top priority in their Capital Investment Plan. Last June, the State Legislature included \$85 million in a transportation bond bill to pay for half the upgrade cost for the three stations. Now, Congressman Auchincloss is trying to match that state money with federal money, in order to fully fund the upgrades. To enable these efforts for funding, and to encourage the MBTA to include the stations in its priorities, Auburndale should be included in the VCOD.

Your vote on zoning is directly related to our efforts to improve the Newton commuter rail stations. We should give the MBTA every reason to prioritize the upgrade of the Newton stations, for the betterment of Newton and its residents.

Thank you for your consideration on this important matter. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Sincerely,



Kay Khan  
State Representative  
11th Middlesex District



John Lawn  
State Representative  
10th Middlesex District