Littleton Common Form-Based Code

Public Teach-in, May 16, 2019
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Littleton Master Plan and Littleton Common FBC

- Evaluate Littleton Common Sewer Strategic Plan
- Update the Aquifer and Water Resource Protection District
- Littleton Common Revitalization Roadmap (2018)
- Update the Complete Streets Prioritization Plan
- Etc…

- Littleton Common Form-Based Code (2019)
- Prioritize Green Infrastructure
- Implement new Crosswalks and Bike Lanes
- Research Traffic Calming Strategies
- Etc…
Littleton Master Plan and Littleton Common FBC

Littleton Master Plan (2017)

- Evaluate Littleton Common Sewer Strategic Plan
- Update the Aquifer and Water Resource Protection District
- Littleton Common Revitalization Roadmap (2018)
  - Update the Complete Streets Prioritization Plan
  - Etc…

Village Common District (2010)

- Prioritize Green Infrastructure
- Implement new Crosswalks and Bike Lanes
- Littleton Common Form-Based Code (2019)
  - Research Traffic Calming Strategies
  - Etc…
Littleton Common Revitalization
Selected Scenario
Recent News: Smart Sewer Project Approved

The recently approved **Smart Sewer Project** will allow a greater variety of uses within the Littleton Common Area, including cafes, restaurants, hotels, and other uses with greater Gallon Per Day (GPD) usage.
Existing Land Use

Exact FBC District boundary line can be adjusted depending on existing land use and other criteria.

- Commercial
- Multi-Family Residential
- High-Density Residential
- Medium-Density Residential
- Low-Density Residential
- Forest
- Pasture
- Cropland
- Institutional
- Potential FBC District
“Soft Sites” deemed more likely for Redevelopment

Soft Sites Based on:

- Building Density
- Historic Buildings & Districts
- Building Age
- Underutilization
- Ownership

Renovation Sites
Appropriate for reuse through renovation

Soft Sites

Potential FBC District
“Soft Sites” Examples

- **Under Developed Sites**
- **Gas Stations**
  > May be difficult to incent development
- **Banks & Narrow Sites Along Great Road**
- **Sites with Excess Parking**

- **Sites Dedicated to Parking**
  > Potential for district parking strategy
- **Sites with Deferred Maintenance**
- **Sites Potential for Parcel Aggregation**
  > Independently, this parcel is well utilized
- **Auto-dependent Uses**
  > May be difficult to incent development
Selected Scenario

- **Diverse roofscapes**
- **Office over retail use**
- **3 stories multifamily**
- **Office in historic reuse buildings**
- **4 stories allowed only if commercial use at ground floor**
- **Office next to retail use**

**Map Key**
- Retail
- Residential
- Office
- Parcel Line
- Bldg Setback Line
Selected Scenario changes based on Public Survey

- Residential buildings to have retail at ground floor facing street / public way
- Pervious paving encouraged to minimize impervious lot coverage
- 3 Stories Max, and only with commercial use at ground floor facing street / public way
- 3 Story all residential use building allowed only behind building with commercial facing street / public way
- Residential buildings to have retail at ground floor facing street / public way
- Pervious paving encouraged to minimize impervious lot coverage
- 3 Stories Max, and only with commercial use at ground floor facing street / public way
- 3 Story all residential use building allowed only behind building with commercial facing street / public way

Map Key:
- Retail
- Residential
- Office
- Parcel Line
- Bldg Setback Line
Example of Potential Development Time Horizon

1. Existing
2. ~10-15 years
3. ~15-30 years
4. ~30+ years
Form-Based Codes
Form-Based Codes

Coding Experience:
- Massachusetts
- Connecticut
- Michigan
- Utah
- California
- Mississippi
- Georgia
Existing Zoning

“Use-Based”

Format & organization of the code is based on Land Use
Existing Zoning

“Use-Based”

Format & organization of the code is based on Land Use

1. Land Use Zones: “the Town of Littleton is hereby divided into the following types of zoning districts”
   - Residential
   - Business
   - Industrial A
   - Industrial B
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   - Industrial A
   - Industrial B
   - **Village Common**
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   - Residential
   - Business
   - Industrial A
   - Village Common

\[\text{§ 173-26. Use Regulations Schedule. [Amended 5-3-10 STM, Art. 4.]}\]

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Uses & R & VC & B & IA & IB \\
\hline
AGRICULTURAL USES & & & & & \\
Farm, greenhouses & Y & Y & Y & Y & Y \\
\hline
RESIDENTIAL USES & & & & & \\
Single-family dwelling & Y & Y & Y & N & N \\
2-family dwelling (new) & N & N & N & N & N \\
Multifamily dwelling & N & N & N & N & N \\
Nursing home & A & Y & Y & N & N \\
Lodging house & Y & Y & Y & N & N \\
Mobile home park & N & N & N & N & N \\
\hline
COMMERCIAL USES [Amended 5-9-1988, Art. 12, 11-4-2013 STM, Art.10] & & & & & \\
Major commercial use (Article XVIII) & N & P & P & P & P \\
If not a major commercial use: Office, bank, data-processing center & N & Y & Y & Y & Y \\
Theater or cinema & N & P & P & N & P \\
Retail sales, service & N & Y & Y & N & Y \\
Motel, hotel, conference center & N & N & N & P & N \\
Vehicular Retail Sales & N & N & p10 & p10 & p10 \\
\hline
Uses [Amended 11-4-2013 STM, Art.10] & & & & & \\
Motor vehicle service station & N & N & A10 & A10 & A10 \\
Restaurant & N & y4 & y4 & y4 & y4 \\
Adult use establishments & N & N & N & P & N \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
Village Common District

Boundary drawn to match existing lot lines

- Village Common
- Industrial A
- Industrial B
- Littleton Village Overlay District West
  - Beaver Brook Area
- Potential FBC District
Natural Resources Overlay Districts
Littleton Common Form-Based Code

Existing Zoning

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1. Land Use Zones: “the Town of Littleton is hereby divided into the following types of zoning districts”
   - Residential
   - Business
   - Industrial A
   - Industrial B
   - Village Common
   - Aquifer/Water Resource Overlay
   - Village Overlay – Beaver Brook Overlay
   - Marijuana Dispensary Overlay

CODE OF THE TOWN OF LITTLETON, MASSACHUSETTS, v45
PART II, GENERAL LEGISLATION
Chapter 173, ZONING

OFFICIALS OF THE TOWN OF LITTLETON Town Offices

Map 3.3
Zoning

LITTLETON, MASSACHUSETTS
Base Zoning October 2015
Residential District (R)
Business District (B)
Village Common District (VC)
Industrial A District (IA)
Industrial B District (IB)
Aquifer
Water Resource
Beaver Brook
Overlay District
Littleton Common Form-Based Code

Existing Zoning

“Use-Based”

Format & organization of the code is based on Land Use

1. Land Use Zones
2. “Intensity of Use Schedule” aka: Dimensional Standards

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Existing Zoning

“Use-Based”

Format & organization of the code is based on Land Use

1. Land Use Zones
2. “Intensity of Use Schedule”
   aka: Dimensional Standards
   - Lot Area
   - Lot Frontage
   - Front, Side, & Rear Setbacks
   - Building Height
   - Lot Coverage

   - Floor Area Ratio
     (Lot Area \times X = \text{Floor Area})
Littleton Common Form-Based Code

Existing Zoning

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173.20. Special Design Provisions for the Village Common District. [Added 5-3-2010 STM, Art. 4]

The Planning Board shall consider the following additional design criteria in conducting Site Plan Review for projects in the Village Common zoning district. The Planning Board may adopt additional Design Guidelines to advance the goals of the Village Common.

A. Design Goals. Buildings and renovations shall be of a design similar to or compatible with traditional architecture in the Town of Littleton in terms of scale, massing, roof shape, spacing and exterior materials. The design standards are intended to promote walkable, development consistent with the Town’s sense of history, human scale, and community.

B. Building Scale. The size and detailing of moderate-scale structures that resemble buildings shall relate to the pedestrian scale.

- Including appropriate architectural detail.
- Articulate base, middle, and top stories or other similar features.
- Continuity of facades and setbacks shall be permitted.

Buildings shall not be greater than:

- Two stories in height.

C. Roof Form. New construction, including substantial alterations, shall incorporate gable roofs consistent with the historic architecture of the Village Common.

- Mechanical equipment located on roofs shall not appear to be a major feature.

D. Entrances. All primary commercial and institutional entrances shall be located on the street.

- Doors shall not extend beyond the exterior sidewalk.

E. External Materials and Appearance. Points of contact shall be consistent on all facades with any other buildings.

- Awnings and canopies shall be compatible patterns used for awnings and canopies of adjacent buildings.

Except for minor trim, the building shall avoid the appearance of reflective materials such as porcelain enamel or sheet metal. Window panes shall not be non-reflective.

Ground floor commercial building facades facing streets, squares, or other significant pedestrian spaces shall contain transparent windows encompassing a minimum of 40 percent of the facade surface.

Wherever possible, existing historic structures on the site shall be preserved and renovated for use as part of the development.

Any alteration of or addition to an existing historic structure shall employ materials, colors and textures as well as massing, size, scale and architectural features that are compatible with the original structure. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.

F. Landscaping. To the maximum extent possible projects in the Common Area shall provide pedestrian-friendly amenities, such as sidewalks, pathways, outdoor seating, patios, porches or courtyards. Site landscaping shall be maximized.

- New sidewalks designed to connect parking areas and adjacent developments are encouraged to further the goal of providing safe pedestrian access between businesses within the Littleton Common.

G. Service Areas, Utilities and Equipment. Service and loading areas and mechanical equipment and utilities shall be unobtrusively tucked away so that they are not visible from streets or primary public open spaces and shall incorporate effective techniques for noise buffering from adjacent uses. Waste disposal areas shall follow all relevant requirements of the current Littleton zoning by-law.

H. Sustainable Building Design. It is desirable that new buildings constructed in the Littleton Common Area comply with the current Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) criteria, as promulgated by the U.S. Green Building Council to the maximum extent feasible.

I. Vehicle and Pedestrian Features. Vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle facilities shall be designed to provide a network of pathways, and promote walking within the Littleton Common area. Curb cuts shall be minimized.

J. Parking. To maintain a pedestrian-friendly environment, motor vehicle parking spaces shall be located behind or beside buildings whenever possible. Parking located directly between the building and the street alignment shall be discouraged.

K. Bicycle Parking. Bicycle parking shall be provided for all new development, shall be at least 50 percent sheltered from the elements, and shall be located as close as possible to the building entrance(s). Any property required to have bicycle parking may establish a shared bicycle parking facility with any other property owner within the same block.

L. Appointment of Design Advisory Team (DAT). The Planning Board may, at its option, appoint a Design Advisory Team to assist in the review of any project in the Littleton Village Common zone that requires Site Plan Review pursuant to Section 173-20. Members of the DAT shall include: one or more Planning Board member(s); professional architect(s); landscape architect(s) or design related professional(s); Historical Commission member(s); business owner(s).
Existing Zoning – What’s not working?

Example Site

Conant General Store, built 1840

Example Site: New Oriental Market, Electronics Plus, Vinyl Vault
Existing Zoning – What’s not working?

Existing Site Conditions

- New Oriental Market
  - Electronic Plus, Vinyl Vault
- Conant Store (Mixed-Use, 1.5 FAR)
- 10’ Setback
  - Covered Porch
  - On-Street Parking
- 25’ Setback Line (Current Zoning)
  - Parcel Line
  - Bike Lane
- Historic House
Existing Zoning – What’s not working?

Constraints under Existing Zoning
Existing Zoning – What’s not working?

Max Redevelopment under Existing Zoning

- Conant Store (Mixed-Use, 1.5 FAR)
- 10’ Setback
- Covered Porch
- On-Street Parking
- 25’ Setback Line (Current Zoning)
- Parcel Line
- Bike Lane
- Max Retail GSF
- 20 Parking Spaces (1 per 150 Retail SF)
- Historic House
Existing Zoning – What’s not working?

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1. Land Use Zones
2. “Intensity of Use Schedule” aka: Dimensional Standards

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Existing Zoning – What’s not working?

“Use-Based”

Format & organization of the code is based on Land Use

1. Land Use Zones
2. “Intensity of Use Schedule” aka: Dimensional Standards

Generic “Intensity of Use” Dimensional Standards undermine the intent behind the Special Design Provisions for the VC District.
Illustrating Form-Based Improvements

Principles and Goals

- Consider allowing additional height for residential use to incentivize redevelopment
- Reduce parking ratios for retail, office, residential
- Encourage shared parking and access at side or behind buildings
- Allow greater impervious surface ratio (up to 80%)
- Allow expansions and/or extensions of historic buildings
- Encourage retail at street front
- Encourage on-street parking
- Reduce setback from 25’ to 10’ or 0’
- Encourage aggregate parcels

Conant Store (Mixed-Use, 1.5 FAR)

Match context where appropriate

Encourage retail at street front

Encourage on-street parking

Reduce setback from 25’ to 10’ or 0’

Encourage aggregate parcels
New Zoning Techniques

“Form-Based”

Format & organization of the code is based on building & site design

1. Building Form-Based Standards
New Zoning Techniques

“Form-Based”

Format & organization of the code is based on building & site design

1. Building Form-Based Standards
2. Parking Form-Based Standards
New Zoning Techniques

“Form-Based”

Format & organization of the code is based on building & site design
1. Building Form-Based Standards
2. Parking Form-Based Standards
3. Storm Water Management Site Design Standards
An Example

**Higgins Beach** – Before (Use-Based Code w/ FAR)
An Example

Higgins Beach – After (Form-Based Code)
The Code:
A set of illustrations showing **use and dimensional regulations** on private properties.

The Map:
A **geographic boundary** in the Littleton Common area showing to which parcels the Code applies to.
FBC Precedents Inventory from historic Town Centers

- West Acton
- Groton
- Ayer
- Concord
- West Concord
- Stoughton
- Lexington
- Stockbridge
- Maynard
Precedent: Concord

Mixed-Use commercial, different owners, shared rear parking
Precedent: West Concord (built 2013)

2 stories retail with rear parking

Street View

Top View

130’ 60’
Precedent: West Acton

75% retail, 25% residential

Top View

Street View
Precedent: Ayer

2 levels office over 1 level retail

Top View

Street View
Precedent: Concord, example 2 (built 1985)

2 stories retail with side & rear parking
Precedent: West Acton, example 2 (built 2014)

Mixed-use commercial development with on-street and basement parking (bldg under construction)
Incorporating FBC into the existing Zoning Ordinance
Incorporating FBC into the Zoning Ordinance

Boundary drawn to match existing lot lines (e.g., IBM)

Aligning the **FBC district** with the **VC district** may facilitate incorporating the new codes into the existing ordinance.
Incorporating FBC into the Zoning Ordinance

Existing major zoning articles that regulate use and dimension in the VC District.

New FBC article that combines use and dimensional regulations into one place and also modifies conflicting language in the existing document.
Next Steps

Outline, Draft, and Test the Code based on the expressed goals of the Town for the Common Area:

- Walkable
- Mixed-Use
- Sustainable
- Connected

...by redesigning zoning regulations, such as:

- Allowing parking and floor-to-floor height relief
- Reducing setbacks and setting build-to-lines
- Locating parking to the side and rear
- Ensuring retail engages the sidewalk
- Reducing impervious lot coverage
- Increasing allowed density
Next Public Meetings

Presentation of the draft Code  
Thursday, July 25th, 2019  
See and discuss first drafts of the types and appearances of buildings and developments for the Littleton Common.

Public Hearing for the approval of the Code  
Thursday, September 5th, 2019  
Come to the formal presentation of the final Form-Based Code to the Planning Board for approval.