

An aerial photograph of a commercial area. In the center is a large, dark-roofed building with a large parking lot in front of it, filled with many cars. To the left of the building is a residential area with several houses and a swimming pool. To the right of the building is a wooded area with a pond. The text "Proposed Zoning Bylaw: Lower Village Business District" is overlaid on the bottom half of the image in a large, black, sans-serif font.

Proposed Zoning Bylaw: Lower Village Business District

March 22, 2023

Purpose

- To direct the long-term revitalization of Lower Village
- To give greater control to the Planning Board and Stow residents over:
 - How Lower Village looks
 - How walkable the district is
 - What type of development is allowed

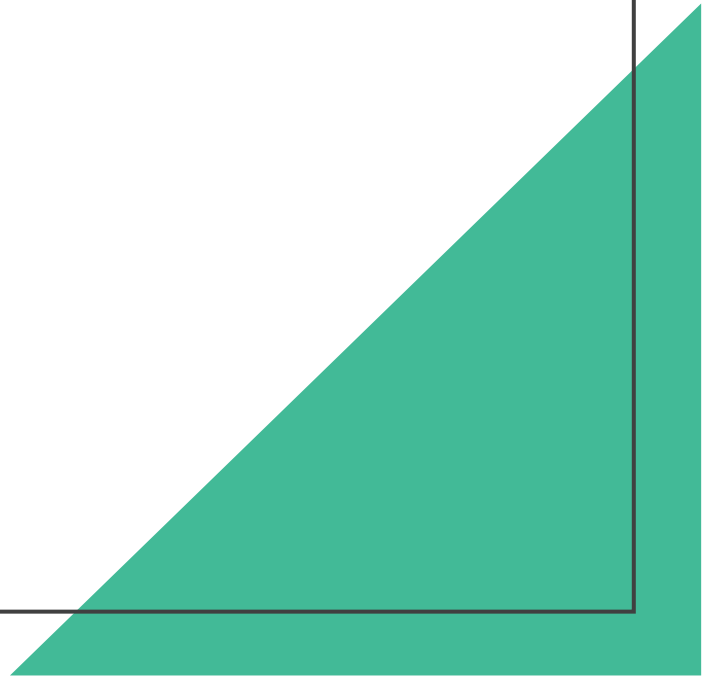


FAQs

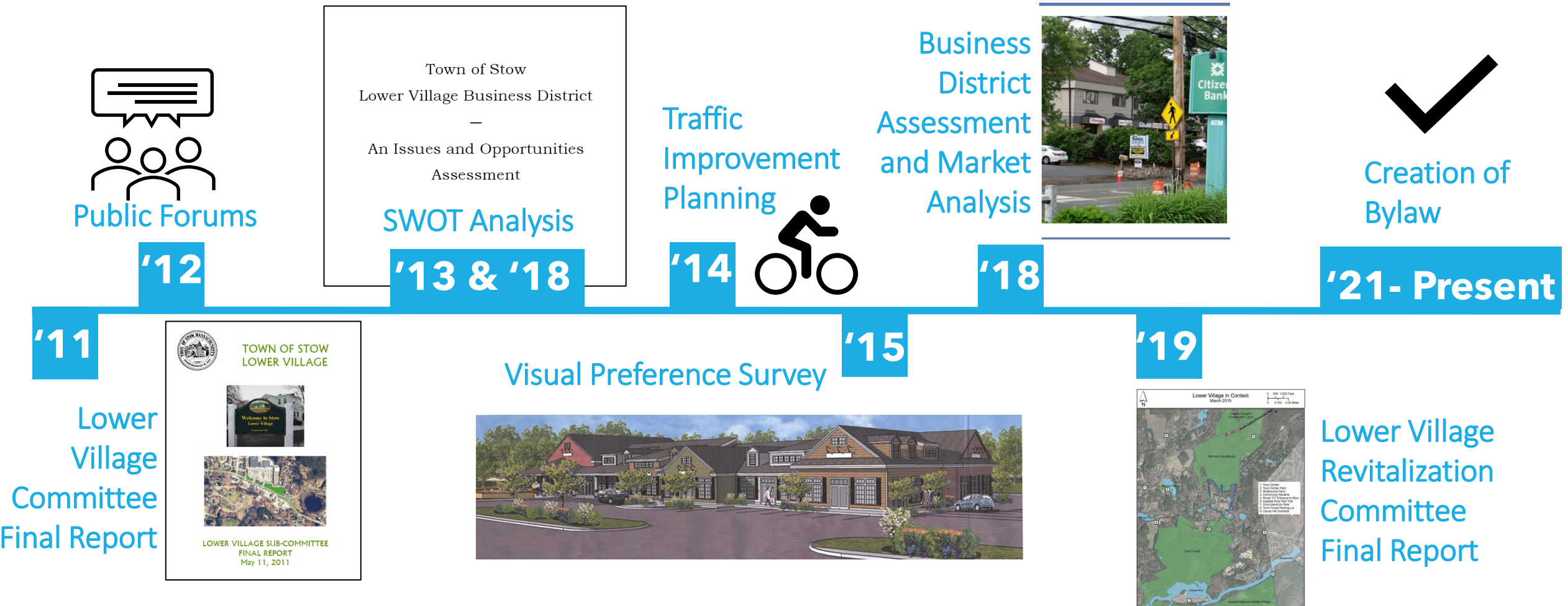
1. What About Water?
2. Will the Proposed Zoning Help Businesses?
3. I live in Lower Village. How will the zoning changes impact me?

Presentation Outline

1. (Brief) History of Planning Efforts
2. Vision for Lower Village
3. Case Study: West Acton Village
4. Why Adopt New Zoning?
5. Proposed Zoning Amendments
6. Review of Feedback Received



History of Lower Village Planning Efforts



Vision Statement

*Lower Village will be an **attractive gateway** to Stow, developed in the tradition of a **New England village**, where residents and visitors can **safely and conveniently live, work, shop, dine and recreate**. As the primary gateway into town, Lower Village will project the history and character of Stow through the **architectural compatibility** of its buildings and streetscape, providing residents and visitors with a defined **sense of place**. Lower Village will be a place to **meet and connect**, with civic spaces for gathering, and wayfinding to attractions, including farms, orchards, conservation areas and the Assabet River Rail Trail. **Businesses will thrive** in Stow's revitalized hub, attracting people of all ages to services, shopping and entertainment opportunities **accessible** by all modes of transportation.*

Proposed Zoning changes are
intended to make realization of this
vision possible

A Vision of Traditional Village Design

Exemplified in 5 distinct ways:

- Walkability
- Strong Mix of Uses
- Housing Opportunities
- Accessible by car, bike, and by foot
- Distinct Sense of Place





Case Study: West Acton Village

West Acton Village Center

- Architecture
 - Design, scale, and massing of building
- Courtyard
- Sidewalks
- Outdoor Dining



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West Acton Village Center

- Parking behind the building
 - Including covered parking with solar panels
- Outdoor gathering spaces
- Pedestrian friendly



West Acton Village Center

- Landscaping
- Strong mix of uses
- Outdoor gathering spaces



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Why Adopt New Lower Village Zoning?

Auto-dominated District

Persistent vacancies

Unsatisfactory mix of businesses

Lacks a sense of place

Time is of the essence!

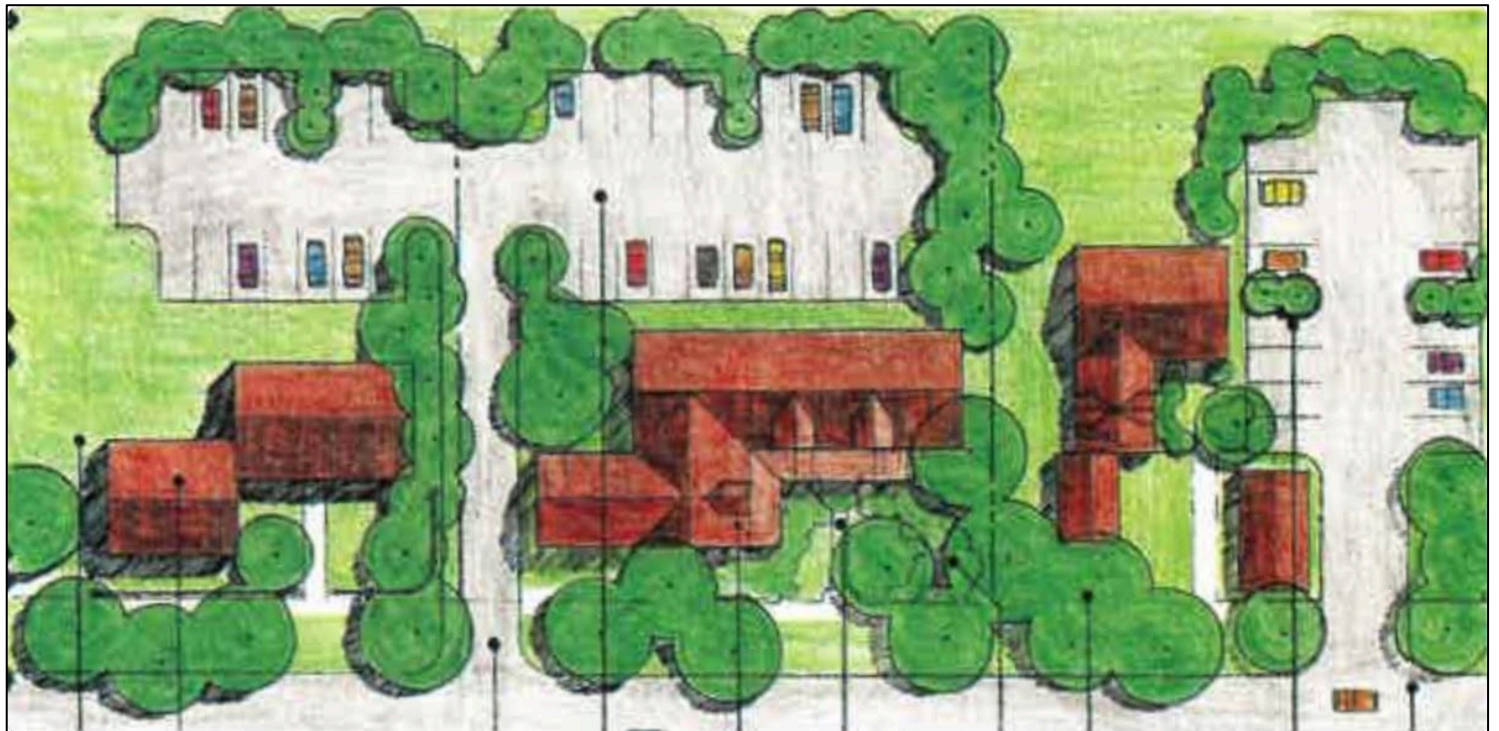
Problem: Automobile Oriented District

- High Parking Requirements
- Sparse Landscaping
- Buildings Line Parking Lots



Solution: Pedestrian-Oriented Neighborhood

- Lower Parking Requirements
- Decentralized Parking
- Landscaping
- Sidewalks
- Accessibility



Problem: Persistent Vacancies

- Lack of public water and sewer infrastructure
- Lack of opportunities for redevelopment or reconfiguration
- Business and Commercial Property owners list aesthetics and physical appearance among top locational disadvantages
- Damage appeal and draw of a business district



Solution: Flexibility + Aesthetics

- Allow New Uses
- Mixed-Use Development
- Flexible Site Planning
- Look and Feel of the District



Problem: Current Business Mix

- Office and Retail Establishments
- Few restaurants
- Limited opportunities for gathering



Solution: More Business Options

- Add New Allowed Uses
- Mixed Use Development to Increase Vibrancy
- Provide Community Gathering Spaces
- Outdoor Dining



Problem: Lack of a Sense of Place

- Lack of connection to nearby recreational opportunities
- Lower Common offers only space for public gathering
- Architectural and site design provides low aesthetic appeal



Solution: Connection & Design

- Play, Stay, and Shop
- Gateway to Stow



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Proposed Zoning Amendments

- Bylaw leads with Design
- Architectural and Design Standards rather than strict dimensional requirements

Proposed Zoning Amendments

- Parking
- Sidewalks and pedestrian-only streets
- Interior Streetscapes and Lot Connections
- Parcel Dimensional Requirements
- Allowed Uses
- Functional Open Spaces
- Architectural and Design Standards

Proposed Zoning Amendments

- Special Permit and/or Site Plan Approval Process
 - Work with Applicant to develop plan in accordance with vision
 - Public Hearing required
 - Ability to hear resident feedback on site plans
 - Place conditions of approval

Proposed Bylaw Supports Businesses:

- ✓ Addition of residential units will bring vibrancy to the district
- ✓ Improved customer accessibility both to and within district
- ✓ Visually appealing district will draw businesses to Stow
- ✓ Property Owners may further develop their sites, increasing the number of tenant spaces



Proposed Bylaw Supports Businesses:

- ✓ New Allowed Uses will diversify the business mix
- ✓ Outdoor Dining, Pop-up Markets, Food Trucks, Community Gathering spaces will all draw customers in
- ✓ Special Permit process through Planning Board, rather than ZBA



What About Water and Sewer Infrastructure?

- Infrastructure is key to revitalization
 - Lack of infrastructure restricts development on sites in Lower Village, except for the Linear Shopping Plaza
- Timing: Paramount to have zoning in place before any potential infrastructure improvements so that design aligns with the Town's vision

THIS



NOT THAT



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Questions



