



Proposed Zoning Bylaw:  
Lower Village Business District

March 22, 2023

# Purpose

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- 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



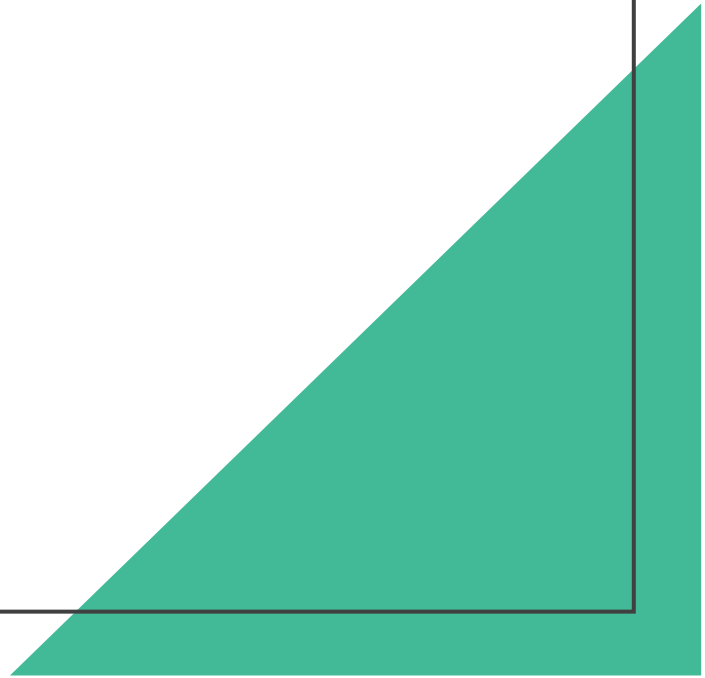
# FAQs

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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



Public Forums

'12

Town of Stow  
Lower Village Business District  
—  
An Issues and Opportunities  
Assessment

SWOT Analysis

'13 & '18

Traffic  
Improvement  
Planning



'14

Business  
District  
Assessment  
and Market  
Analysis



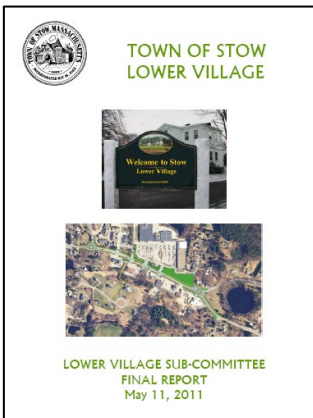
'18

Creation of  
Bylaw

'21- Present

'11

Lower  
Village  
Committee  
Final Report



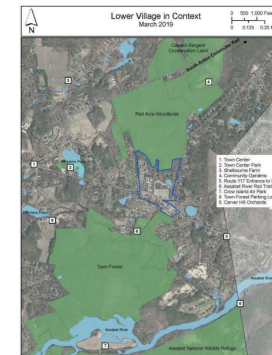
Visual Preference Survey

'15



'19

Lower Village  
Revitalization  
Committee  
Final Report



# 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

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# 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



# A Vision of Traditional Village Design

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# Why Adopt New Lower Village Zoning?

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Auto-dominated District

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Persistent vacancies

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Unsatisfactory mix of businesses

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Lacks a sense of place

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Time is of the essence!



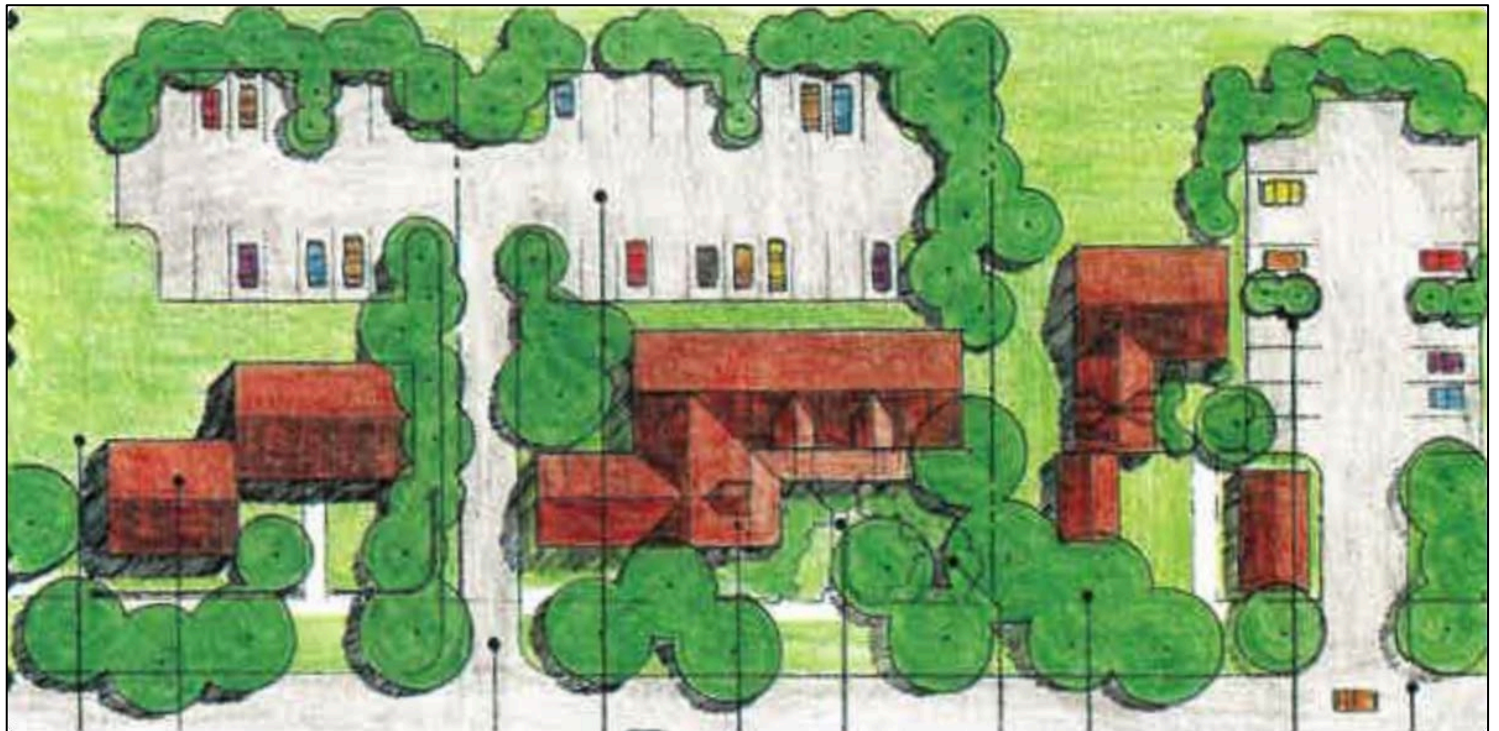
Problem:  
Automobile Oriented  
District

- 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 Business Property owners list aesthetics and physical appearance among top locational disadvantages
- Damage appeal and draw



# Solution: Flexibility + Aesthetics

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



# Problem: Current Business Mix

- Office and Service 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



An aerial photograph of a commercial site. The site features several large parking lots filled with cars and trucks. There are several buildings, including a large one with a grey roof and another with a blue roof. A road with yellow markings runs through the site. The surrounding area has some trees and a mix of green and brown vegetation.

## 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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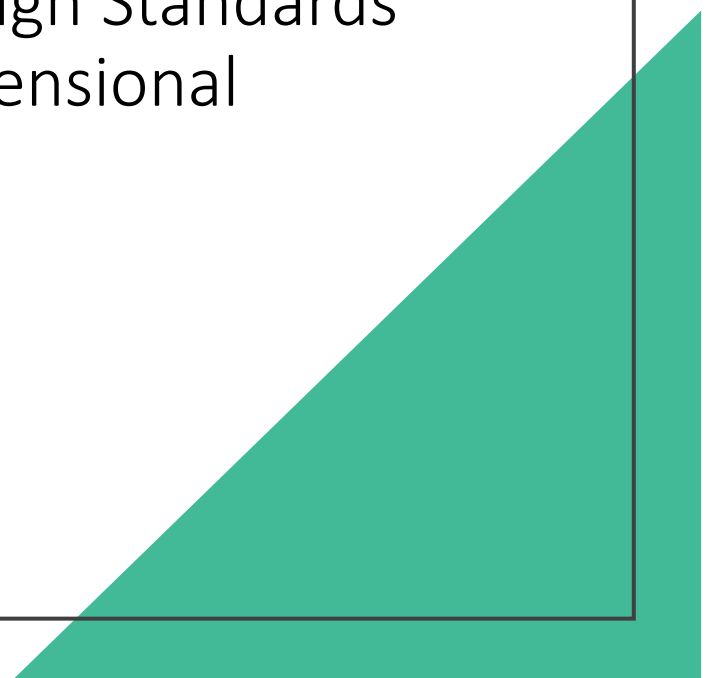
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# Proposed Zoning Amendments

- 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:

- ✓ 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
- ✓ Addition of residential units will bring vibrancy to the district



# Proposed Bylaw Supports Businesses:

- ✓ New Allowed Uses will diversify the business mix
- ✓ Draw Customers In:
  - ✓ Outdoor Dining
  - ✓ Pop-up Markets
  - ✓ Food Trucks
  - ✓ Community Gathering



# 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



# A Vision of Traditional Village Design

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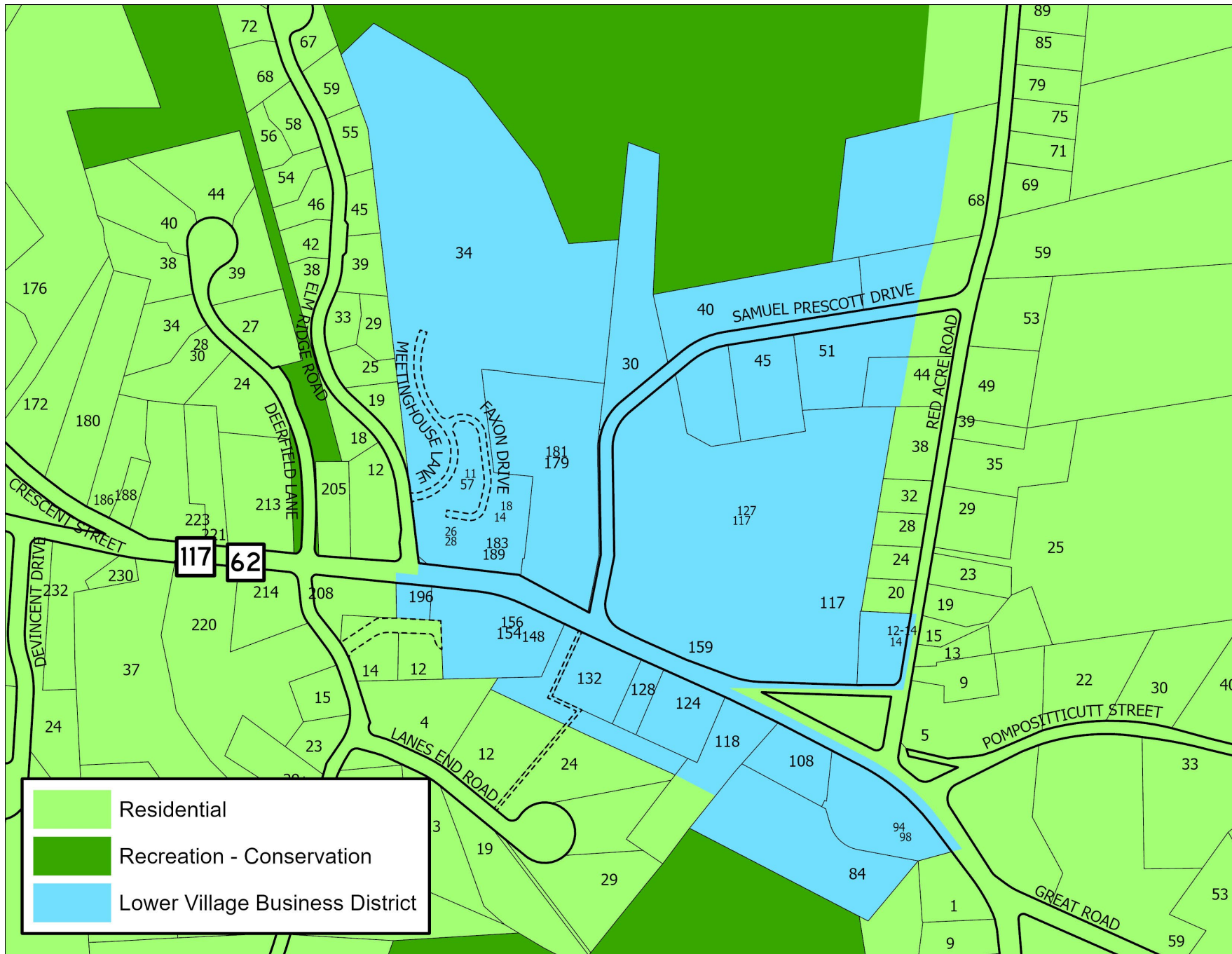
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# Questions





- Residential
- Recreation - Conservation
- Lower Village Business District