Norfolk Town Center  
Zoning Fact Sheet

Introduction
The Town of Norfolk has initiated this study of the B-1 District to encourage the establishment of a vibrant mixed-use Town Center that proactively directs higher density housing and active ground floor uses to the Town Center. Zoning promotes health, safety, and general welfare and defines how a property is used, how much development can occur on a property, and how a property and building will look. The Zoning Bylaw of the Town of Norfolk governs development in the Town Center through Zoning Section I “B-1 District (Town Center).”

Background
The Town of Norfolk worked with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to study zoning recommendations, design guidelines, and other actions to support mixed-use development in Town Center. This work builds upon the vision established for the Town Center through the Town of Norfolk Master Plan and builds on recommendations of a 2018 Townwide Economic Development Plan. The vision for Town Center articulated through these previous plans states, “Norfolk’s citizens would like its Town Center developed into a traditional, pedestrian oriented, New England village with retail, commercial services and mixed uses, including housing, that provides for social and cultural interaction for all age groups.”

Zoning Recommendations
The zoning recommendations are summarized below. Although presented in summary form, the recommendations listed here are the only changes recommended to the zoning and represent the minimum changes that must occur to current zoning to correct issues that are reducing the likelihood of mixed-use development in Town Center.

District Boundary
The B-1 Zone District boundary is shown to the left (dark brown and light brown) and includes properties on Main Street, Rockwood Road, Liberty Lane, and Union Street. The dark brown is the “Business Core” and the light brown is “Outside the Business Core”, the two subdistricts in the existing zone. The boundary of the zone is not changing and the subdistricts remain.

Building Requirements
Building Scale - The current B-1 District zoning language includes building scale requirements that state no building footprint shall exceed 15,000 square feet. This requirement should be removed to allow for flexibility and development that is appropriately scaled to the size of the lot. (Remove I.4.a.1.)

Building Density - The current B-1 District zoning language includes residential density requirements that state residential dwelling units shall not have more than two bedrooms per unit and that residential densities shall not exceed sixteen bedrooms for any single lot. These requirements should be removed to allow development to align with financial feasibility. (Remove 1.4.a.11.)

Building Height - This section defines the requirements for building height that currently allow up to forty-six (46) feet to the peak of the roof by special permit from the Planning Board.
(Continued) Building Height - To allow for more flexibility in the design of the ground floor and roof form, the maximum height by-right should be increased from the current forty (40) feet to forty-six (46) feet measured to the average height between the peak and the eave of the roof. The building height as measured in stories shall increase to a maximum of three and one half (3.5) stories from the current (3) stories. The top half story shall be integrated with the slope of the building’s roof. (Modify I.4.a.6.)

Property/Layout Requirements

Phased Development - This section addresses phased development and should be modified to state a phasing plan shall be required showing anticipated stages of partial completion and the timeframes associated with each stage, multiple buildings that are part of the same development proposal may be phased provided the infrastructure required to support the full project is built in the first phase of the project. (Modify I.4.a.3.)

Residential Buffer - This section defines a buffer to residentially zoned properties currently defined as 50 feet from an adjacent parcel. It is recommended that this buffer be reduced to 30 feet to increase flexibility and clarified as applicable to an abutting property line shared with a residential zoned parcel. (Modify I.4.b.1.A.)

Lot Requirements - This section defines the dimensional requirements (setbacks, lot size, lot coverage, etc.) of the district. The current zoning defines a build-to-line of between six (6) feet and nineteen (19) feet, but no front yard setback. The front yard setback should be defined as six (6) feet to align these two characteristics. The build-to-line should be clarified as applying to the primary building in a multiple building site plan. The minimum lot size of 30,000 square feet should be reduced to 15,000 square feet to allow more parcels in the district to redevelop without having to assemble or subdivide land. These changes apply to the “Business Core” subdistrict only. (Modify I.4.b.2.B.)

Parking - This section defines parking requirements and refers to Section F.7 Parking of the Zoning Bylaw. This section requires 1.5 spaces per dwelling unit and should be reduced for the B-1 District to 1.0 spaces per dwelling unit to encourage a vibrant, walkable, transit-oriented Town Center. (Modify I.6.)

Shared Parking - This section defines shared parking and allows a delay in construction of up to 30% of the parking area. This language should be modified to allow the elimination of up to 30% of the parking area to truly provide the benefit of complementary mixed-uses and associated positive benefits on reducing parking demand. (Modify I.6.a.)

Uses - This section defines the uses permitted and regulated in the B-1 District. This section should add an overall provision that a Town Center project shall be mixed-use comprised of any of the Allowed Uses with the majority (51%) of ground floor street frontage be devoted to active allowed uses as measured by percentage of ground floor building street frontage that is devoted to active allowed uses that will contribute to a vibrant Town Center. Specific uses should be refined to better align with the vision for a vibrant Town Center: “Limited used motor vehicle sales” should be changed from allowed to prohibited, “Gasoline and diesel fuel filling stations” should be changed from special permit to prohibited. Modify “Residential Dwelling Units” allowed use language to remove the requirements that residential uses consist of 65% or less of the total combined square footage and that the ground floor be limited to commercial uses. (Modify I.7.)

Additional Information

Additional background and context for the project, including many of the Town’s recent planning documents, can be found on the Town’s website at http://www.norfolk.ma.us/departments/land-use/
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