

Economic Development Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

January 5, 2022

EDC Members:	Councilor Melanie Hamblen, Chair; Councilor Cobi Frongillo, Vice Chair; Councilors Glenn Jones & Brian Chandler
Other Members of the Steering Committee:	Bruce Hunchard, Zoning Board Chair (via Zoom); Greg Rondeau, Planning Board Chair; Beth Wierling, Planning Board Clerk
Town Staff:	Jamie Hellen, Town Administrator; Alecia Alleyne, Assistant to the Town Administrator;
Other Participants:	Emma Battaglia, Sasha Padrodi & John Cruz with MAPC - via Zoom

Chair Hamblen called the meeting to order at 5:47 p.m. and announced that this meeting is an EDC Plus meeting which includes the Steering Committee for Franklin For All. Chair Hamblen introduced meeting members and read announcements.

1. 1. EDC + Steering Committee: Franklin For All

a. Presentation and Discussion from MAPC about the “Franklin For All” zoning reform project for Downtown Commercial zoning district and C-1 zoning district (Franklin Crossing).

Town Administrator Jamie Hellen (TA Hellen) introduced the meeting as the kickoff to the Downtown Zoning Project public process, then introduced Emma Battaglia with MAPC.

Presentation “Franklin For All” by Emma Battaglia, MAPC [Presentation Attached]

Ms. Battaglia gave a presentation on the rezoning project, highlighting the following topics:

- Steering Committee
- Role of MAPC
- Project Overview
 - Project Background
 - Project Partners
 - Advisory Committee
 - Project Timeline
 - Community Engagement
 - Logo & Branding
- Zoning Diagnostic
 - Role of Zoning
 - Study Area: Zoning Districts
 - Dimensional Regulations
 - Parking Regulations
 - Use Regulations
 - Land Use Policy
 - Potential Rezoning Directions
- Next Steps
- Q&A / Discussion - Questions and discussion surrounding many topics were covered, including but not limited to
 - Defining “Franklin Center”
 - Incorporating design into this project, keeping it separate from the permitting process
 - How this project can encourage use of alternative methods of transportation (discussion of Complete Streets Plan, Rail Trail extension, walking & bike lanes, etc)
 - The size of the area being considered for rezoning

- How to strengthen communication and get information out to people about what is in Franklin Center
- Working together with business owners and Dean College as a partnership with a shared vision for Franklin Center
- Commercial 1 Zoning efforts that have occurred in town
- How factors such as the pandemic and economic uncertainty have potential to create fear among business owners
- Looking at other areas for rezoning further down the road such as the Forge Park area, near the train
- Zoning for residential areas and more affordable housing as well as for commercial areas and businesses
- How to incorporate engagement of potential future residents
- Concern over too much development in town, and the need to have a lot of discussion as we move forward; followed by the acknowledgement that the purpose of public forums is to encourage discussion.

Chair Hamblen adjourned the meeting at 6:49 p.m.



Rezoning Franklin Center for economic growth and diverse housing opportunities



Steering Committee Meeting #1

January 5, 2022

Agenda

- Welcome & Introductions
- Project Overview
- Zoning Diagnostic
- Next Steps
- Discussion

EDC+ Franklin For All Steering Committee

Economic Development Committee:

- Melanie Hamblen
- Glenn Jones
- Cobi Frongillo
- Patrick Sheridan

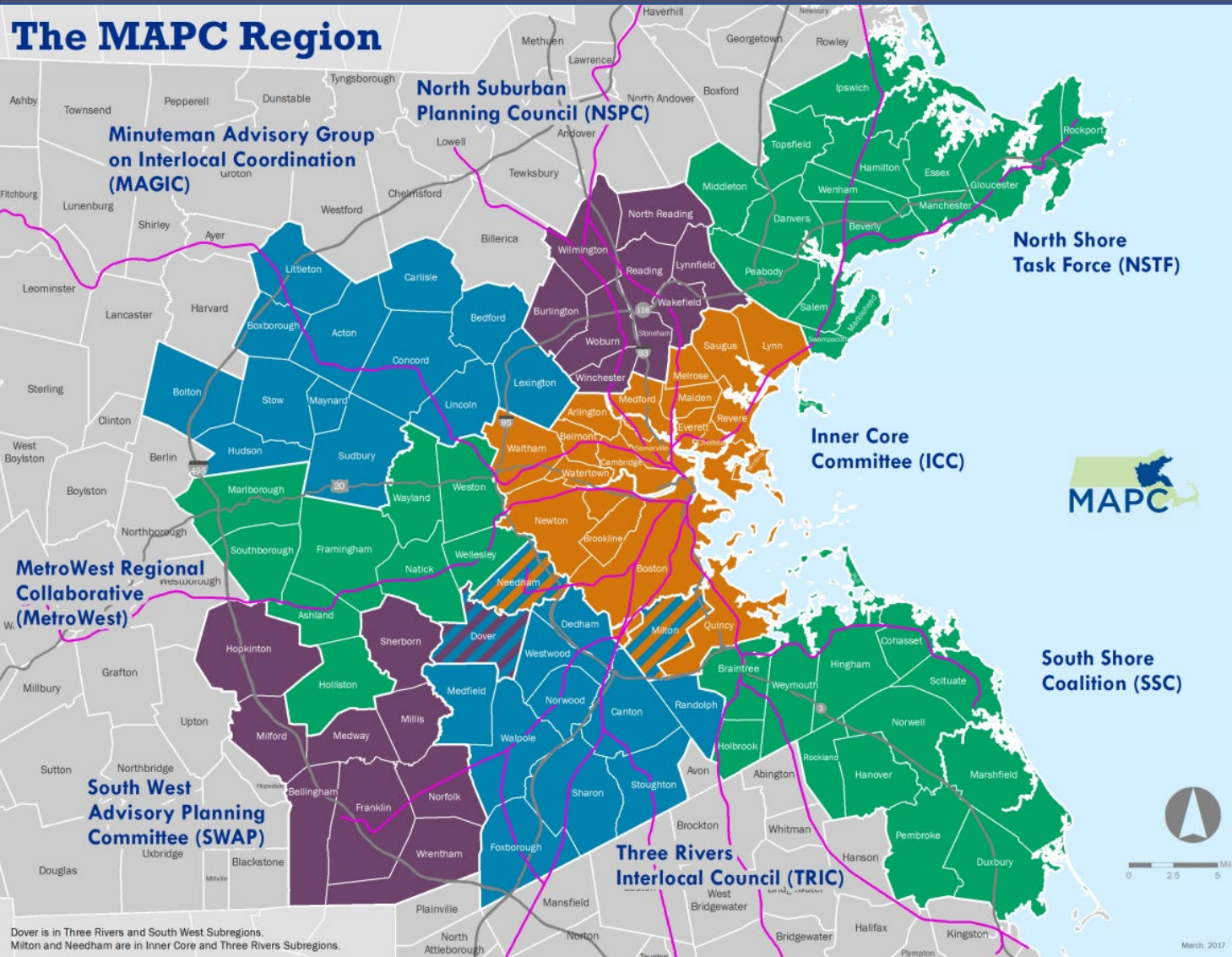
Zoning Board of Appeals:

- Bruce Hunchard

Planning Board:

- Gregory Rondeau
- Beth Wierling

Role of MAPC



- Mission-driven
- Focus on smart growth, equity, and sustainability
- Regional perspective

Project Manager:
Emma Battaglia, Senior
Housing & Land Use
Planner at MAPC

Project Overview

Background

- MAPC was hired by the Town of Franklin to lead a community-driven process to establish a vision for Franklin Center and make recommendations for rezoning the area to best achieve the vision
- Overall purpose of project is to **unlock development** that will:
 - Promote economic growth
 - Support local business
 - Expand housing choices
 - Take advantage of new infrastructure
 - Provide community benefits
 - Foster vibrant mixed-use neighborhoods

Background Continued

- This project builds on considerable past planning work, including the recent Housing Production Plan, 2019 Economic Development/Market Study, 2013 Master Plan, 2008 Downtown Parking Study, and 2003 Franklin Center Plan
- Significant time and resources have also been devoted to enhancing the area with a focus on improving vehicular circulation and safety, improving roadways, fostering a pedestrian environment, improving the overall appearance of downtown, and stimulating private sector investment



Looking to build on Franklin Center's existing assets and overcome barriers that are preventing the area from fully realizing its potential as a vibrant, mixed-use destination

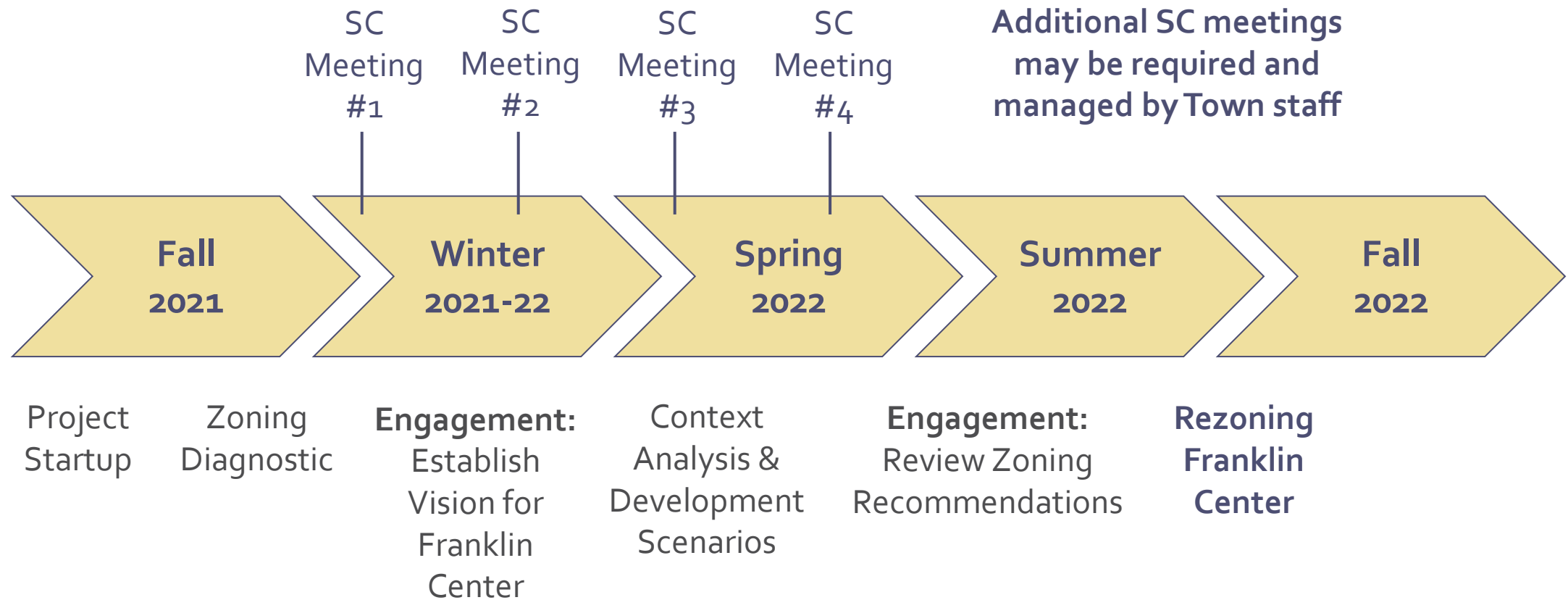
Project Partners

- MAPC and Town staff to lead project
- Steering Committee to build support and advise throughout project
- Franklin community to provide input on vision and recommendations for Franklin Center
- Town Council and Planning Board to consider zoning recommendations
- Town Council to vote to approve zoning amendments
- Planning Board and ZBA to review development projects under new zoning laws

Role of Advisory Committee

- **Committing to actively participate in the project**
- Providing input on the design of public events
- Promoting public events through reaching out to your networks, posting on social media, flyering, and other means
- Attending and helping with public events
- Talking knowledgeably about the plan with others to raise awareness and increase understanding
- Sharing local knowledge and perspectives
- Reviewing and discussing plan content and other materials

Project Timeline



Community Engagement

- Steering Committee meetings
- Engagement with Town staff and leadership
- Focus group meetings
- Public forums
- Project webpage
- Communications materials
- Potential for additional engagement opportunities

Logo & Branding

LOGO & BRANDING FRANKLIN FOR ALL



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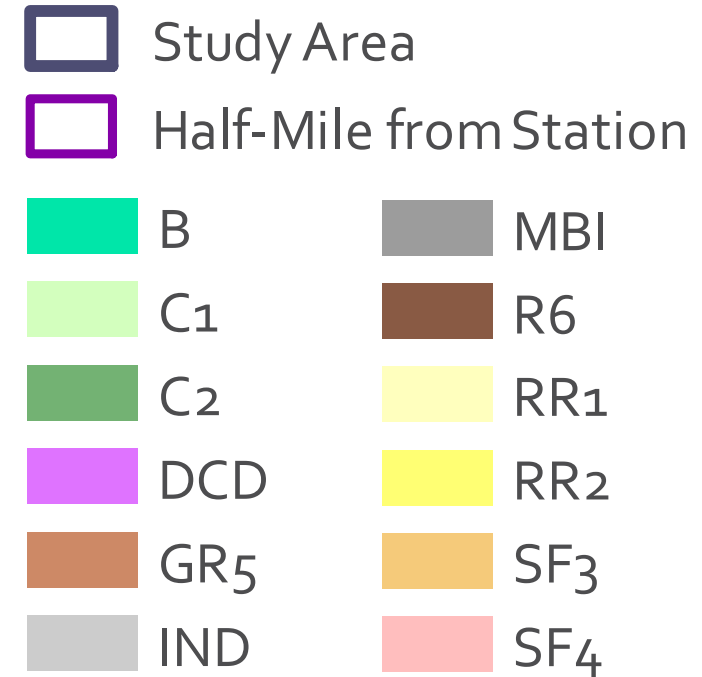
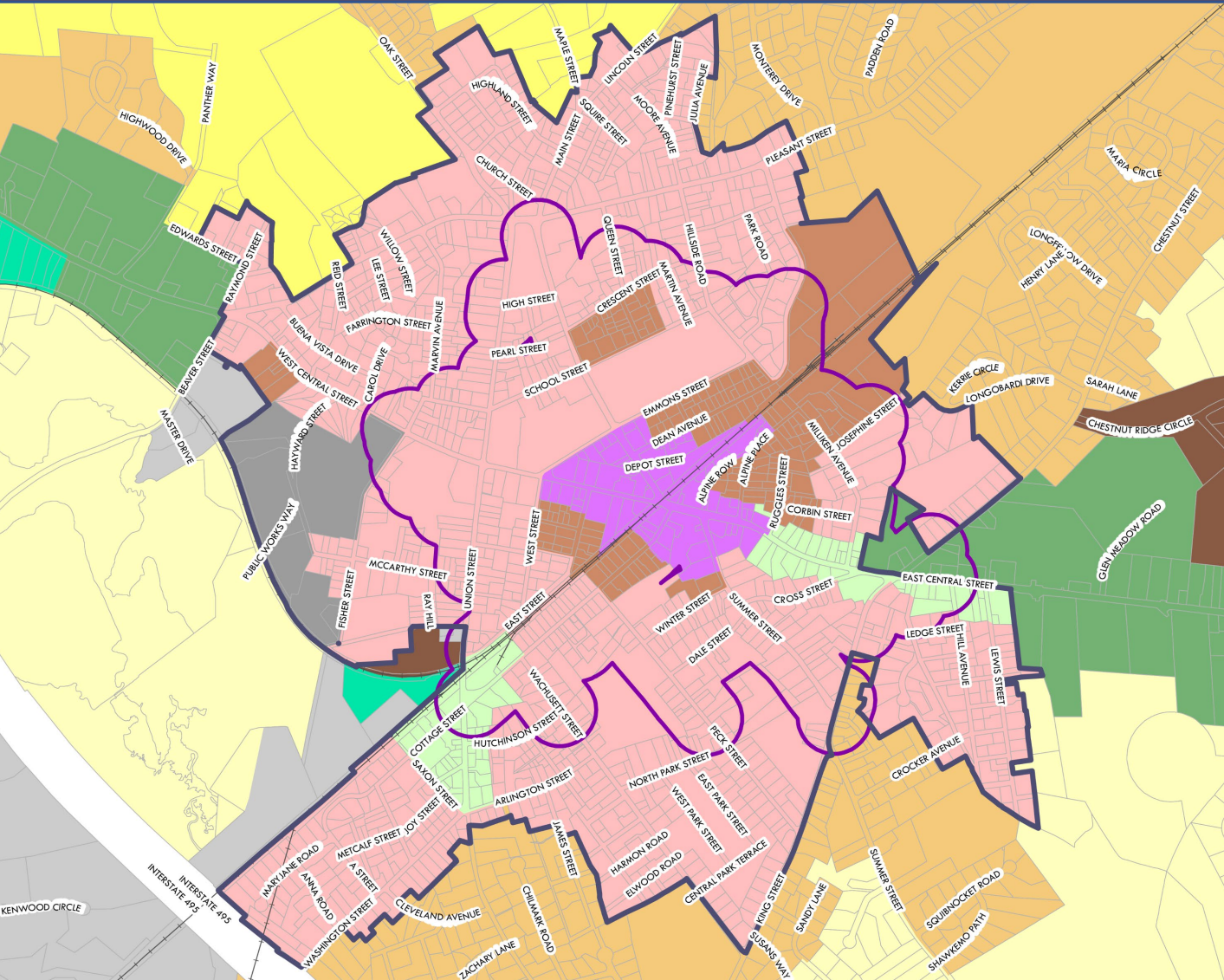
- Developed consistent/visible brand
- Allows community to easily recognize engagement efforts

Zoning Diagnostic

Role of Zoning in Shaping a Municipality

- Zoning sets requirements/incentives for land use and provides the legal framework for what can and cannot be developed on a parcel
- Well-crafted zoning should tell the private sector about what kind of development the Town wants to see and where
- Desired uses and building typologies should be allowed by-right or with limited approvals to stimulate the development process
- Needing a Variance or Special Permit introduces uncertainty into the development review process and may discourage investment

Study Area: Zoning Districts



Dimensional Regulations

- Dimensional regulations are generally restrictive for a downtown area where multifamily and mixed-use development are desired
- Based on conversations with developers, requirements around building height appear to be a barrier to new development
- Large minimum lot size, frontage, and setback requirements conflict with historic development patterns which current zoning would not allow but which contribute to overall vibrancy
- Requirements make small infill developments difficult and would restrict existing parcels from redevelopment

Parking Regulations

- Developers identify high parking requirements as a barrier to redevelopment
- Minimum parking requirements is one of the more common places zoning relief is sought
- Business owners concerned about a lack of parking in the downtown area
- Important to strike the right balance to not overload on-street parking while also reflecting the transit-oriented nature of the area

District	Residential Uses	Nonresidential Uses
DC	1.5 spaces per unit for mixed-use properties	1 space per 500 SF GFA
CI	1.5 spaces per unit	1 space per 500 SF GFA
Other Districts	2 spaces per unit	Varies by use

Use Regulations

- Multifamily defined as everything over two units
- Lot area restrictions associated with multifamily uses are overly prohibitive in downtown core and may be restricting development
- Zoning Bylaw does not include a definition for mixed-use
- Town should consider creating a specific definition of mixed-use and then determine what districts it should be allowed in
- Should be easier to build if that is what the Town wants to see

Land Use Policy

- Land use policy seems to be reactive to developer requests rather than proactively advancing a vision for the area
- Town should zone for what it wants to see and then let developers build that
- Importance of creating a vision through a public process
- Based on the vision, zoning should be modified to allow those desired uses and densities by right or at least with fewer approvals
- Boards should have consensus about how they can work together to support high-quality projects in good locations

Potential Rezoning Directions

- Inclusionary Zoning
- Chapter 40R Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District
- Local Zoning Overlay District
- DIF/TIF
- Urban Renewal Plan through Redevelopment Authority

Next Steps

Next Steps

- MAPC to:
 - Hold focus group meetings in late January/early February
 - Produce communications materials
 - Engage with Town staff and leadership
 - Start on MBTA Communities compliance analysis, context analysis, and development scenarios
- Steering Committee and Town staff to promote forum and process
- Next Steering Committee meeting in February
- **Public forum on Monday, March 7 at 7PM**

Discussion

Questions for Discussion

- What do you hope to get out of the rezoning process?
- What opposition do you expect to hear about this process? How can we use messaging and educational materials to tell the public about this work and why it is important?
- Are we capturing the right locations in our study area? Expand into more commercial/industrial districts?
- What are some of the strengths of Franklin Center that we should build on during this rezoning process?
- What are some barriers that the area faces?
- What kinds of residential and commercial uses do you think are most needed in Franklin Center? At what densities?