



TOWN OF
MONTAGUE
MASSACHUSETTS

TOWN HALL
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Turners Falls, MA 01376

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING &
CONSERVATION
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Selectboard
Walter Ramsey, Town Administrator
Chris Nolan, Assistant Town Administrator
FROM: Maureen Pollock, Director of Planning & Conservation
RE: Planning Board's Petition for Amendments to the Zoning Bylaw and Changes to the
Official Zoning Map (Rezoning Amendments relative to Farren Sites)
DATE: September 4, 2025

REQUEST:

The Planning Board unanimously voted 5-0-0 on August 26, 2025 to recommend the Town of Montague to adopt the following amendments to the Zoning Bylaw and changes to the Official Zoning Map, subject to technical adjustments based on comments from the August 26, 2025 meeting, as proposed by consultants and staff, and as discussed. The Board further requests that the Town initiate zoning amendment petitions to the Selectboard:

- Amend Section 2: Definition
- Amend Section 4.1 Types of Districts
- Add New Section 5.2.10 Village Center Mixed-Use District
- Amend Section 5.3 Multiple Principal Uses
- Amend Section 5.5 Dimensional Requirements
- Amend Section 5.53 Dimensional Relief
- Amend Section 7.2.3 District Parking Requirements
- Amend Section 7.4 Lot Access
- Amend Section 9.1.2 Applicability
- Amend Section 9.1.3 Authority
- Add New Section 6.4 Design District Overlay
- Amend Official Zoning Map

The two new zoning districts will encompass the following parcels in their entirety:

- 330-340 Montague City Rd, Parcel #12-0-044, Owner: Town of Montague
- 0 Montague City Rd, Parcel #12-0-051, Owner: Town of Montague
- 356 Montague City Rd, Parcel #12-0-044A, Owner: Town of Montague
- 0 Montague City Rd, Parcel #12-0-050, Owner: Town of Montague

The Planning Board requests that the Selectboard accept this petition which includes the above listed amendments to the Zoning Bylaw and the changes to the Official Zoning Map; and refer them back to the Planning Board for consideration at a Public Hearing.

Enclosed you may find the following:

- Full draft language to the Zoning Bylaw amendments;
- Existing Zoning Map;
- Proposed Zoning Map showing the boundaries of the two proposed zoning districts.

These materials have been submitted to the Town's legal counsel for review and comment, in preparation of the Planning Board's public hearing.

BACKGROUND:

Starting in April 2023, the Town of Montague initiated a year-long community engagement/visioning process exploring if/how the community re-visions the ~9-acre former Farren Hospital sites (now Town owned) and its surrounding village center of Montague City¹. The Town explored what kind of **uses** and **amenities** the community would like to see here, like housing, commercial uses, community spaces – both indoor and outdoor, explored if a better connection to the Canalside Rail Trail through the Farren site could be provided, and explored whether a feature or space that's in dedication of the Farren Care Center could be provided. With the community's vision for various types of use and amenities, the Town explored **building forms** that promotes a mixed-use neighborhood-style development that is designed to promote walkability and bike-ability for residents and provides possible good/services/activities that is marketable to this area.

Based on this planning process and community engagement, the community's stated vision is: *"Montague City's new Village Center will be a dense, mixed-use hub that unites the surrounding community and unlocks new housing and economic opportunities in Montague. The Village Center will be focused on inclusivity, meeting the needs of all residents and visitors, regardless of age or income. New development within the Village Center will enhance the quality of life and showcase Montague City's commitment to public health, arts and culture, and natural resources."*

A key recommendation from this process was to explore zoning amendments that support these community goals.

Beginning in February 2025, efforts focused on translating this vision into zoning regulations. A working group, comprising residents, business owners, and Town officials, was formed to oversee this work, review draft amendments, and facilitate public outreach. Members include: Colleen & Skip Descavich, Dorinda Bell-Upp, Gregg Garrison, Janel Nockleby, Jeremy Toal, Kristi Bodin, Mary Kay Mattiace, Roberta Potter, Sam Guerin, and Rob Steinberg.

A dedicated project website² and various outreach efforts, including forums via the Town's website, Facebook page, email, and postal notifications, kept residents informed and engaged throughout the process.

Throughout this two year+ process, the Town has held numerous discussions with the Selectboard, Planning Board, working group members, and at public forums to share work to-date and to seek public feedback to help shape the visioning and zoning amendments. These discussions considered a number of factors, some of which are outlined below:

- **Zoning Type:** The existing base zone does not permit the community's envisioned uses. The Board favors establishing a new Village Center Mixed-Use district, replacing the current base zone, and adding a new overlay district to guide transition from single-family homes to higher-density, walkable, mixed-use development. A 40R overlay was considered but deemed less flexible than desired.

¹ Montague City Village Center Market Analysis + Redevelopment Strategy Report, Dated January 2024: https://montague-ma.gov/files/Montague_City_Village_Center_REPORT_2024_0308.pdf

² Montague City Village Center Rezoning Project Dedicated Webpage: <https://montague-ma.gov/p/1568/>

- Boundary: Discussions about including areas on Masonic Avenue and Rod Shop Road were postponed due to time constraints; these areas are not part of the current petition.
- Public Benefits: Considerations included diverse housing (including affordable units), economic development, increased tax revenue, community vibrancy, improved connectivity, and the creation of indoor/outdoor community spaces.
- Parking: Flexible parking requirements were discussed, including utilizing existing parking lots.
- Design Standards: Emphasis on downcast, shielded exterior lighting, native pollinating plant landscaping, and high-quality design to promote sustainability and aesthetics.

PROCESS FOR TOWN MEETING ADOPTION OF THE ZONING MAP & ZONING AMENDMENTS:

1. Selectboard Referral – September 8, 2025
Planning Department staff and project consultant introduce the zoning amendment petitions to Selectboard and answer preliminary questions and request that the zoning amendments be referred to the Planning Board for public hearing.
2. Planning Board Public Hearing –September 23, 2025
Planning Board will open the public hearing to review the zoning amendment petitions. Public comments will be taken. If ready, the Planning Board will close the public hearing and vote to recommend the adoption of proposal at the October 22, 2025 Special Town Meeting.
3. Selectboard Warrant Setting - October 6, 2025
Planning Department staff notify the Selectboard of the Planning Board's vote with submitted Planning Board Report. Selectboard sets warrant for Special Town Meeting scheduled on October 22, 2025.
4. Pre-Special Town Meeting Forum – October 15, 2025
The Planning Department and project consultant will review amendments with Town Meeting members and answer questions.
5. Special Town Meeting– October 22, 2025
At this meeting, Town Meeting members will vote on the zoning amendments.
6. Attorney General's Review/Approval– After October 22, 2025
Post-vote, the amendments will be submitted for state review and approval.