



Chapter Four

Preserving Community Character, Neighborhoods, and Downtown

Introduction

Newton-North Newton is two cities, each with unique history, people, physical features, and sense of place. Together they embody the notion of “two cities, one community.” The citizens of this combined community want to preserve their connections to its past. People value the historical built environment dating to when Newton was a bustling city in the 1910s thanks to the rail stations of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe and Missouri Pacific railroads. In addition to the railroad activity, Newton had local manufacturing, agricultural-production industries, two colleges (Bethel College [Mennonite] and the Evangelical Lutheran [Congregational]), 24 daily passenger trains, the Carnegie public library, a hospital, public schools, waterworks and sewer system, electric light plant, and 17 churches*.

Preserving Community Character

It’s this personal attachment to, and identification with, the community’s historical character, sense of connectedness, friendliness, caring attitude, and religious, social, and ethnic heritage that people want to preserve in the face of community growth and change. The threshold issue of the ReNewton 2030 plan is how we grow as a community. The pursuit of an economic development agenda cannot result in the loss of community character, sense of place, and emphasis on “community friendliness.”

* Source: “Kansas: A Cyclopedia of State History, Embracing Events, Institutions, Industries, Counties, Cities, Towns, Prominent Persons, Etc., 1912.”

Preserving Community Character

- Goal: Build a city that people want to call “home.”
- Goal: Promote progress while balancing care for all citizens.
- Goal: Preserve the current community feeling in order to attract people desiring a healthier pace.
- Goal: Improve opportunities for social interaction, cooperation, and information-sharing within the community.

Existing Areas of Concern

The following are viewed as important long-term community-character planning issues. Many of these concerns were identified by the public in various community retreats or forums.

Established Neighborhoods

Visual character, gridiron, curvilinear, or cul-de-sac street patterns, basic layout of lots and blocks, mature trees, neighborhood schools, local churches, pedestrian mobility, and traffic accessibility are the physical elements worthy of protecting.

Mobility and Scale

The pleasure of walking and biking from home to nearby places in a safe and secure environment is important, especially for children. As we look to the future, it will be advantageous to recreate neighborhoods that enable and encourage people to walk during daily living. This requires residential or commercial redevelopment with a sense of scale to human proportions, along with manageable walking distances and amenities along the way (benches, hydration stations, dog pick-up stations, and links to public transit).

Relationships

The intangible elements of friendliness, looking after one another, helping and supporting neighbors, and welcoming visitors are the personal rewards of living in a neighborhood where people share a common bond of place, family, and community.

Community Events and Celebrations

Community events, fairs, farmers' markets, sporting activities, music, art, and dance all contribute to defining, creating, and maintaining community character.

Civic Spaces, Community Gardens, and Parks

Building new spaces while preserving existing ones where people can gather contributes to socialization and a sense of community and neighborhood. Public parks and community gardens that serve people of all ages and abilities help people connect to nature, healthy living, and other people. Benches or small downtown gathering places to converse, watch people, enjoy a coffee, or eat lunch play a key role in building vitality and a sense of community.

Public Institutions

Traditional public institutions of schools, public library, recreation center, teen center, civic auditorium, and local museums should continue to play an integral role in creating and maintaining a sense of community. The future will require re-envisioning of the senior center/recreation center to accommodate the active lifestyles of aging baby boomers. How the public library serves the community in the digital age is being defined, and the school district has been dealing with accommodating adaptive uses of older elementary schools. The upshot is that each of these traditional public institutions will continue

to evolve to meet the changing needs of the community, but their role in offering public or civic environments must be maintained and supported.

Future Strategies & Policies

Historic Neighborhood Associations

Homeowners in older, established neighborhoods should be encouraged to create neighborhood associations focused on preserving the architectural character of the neighborhood and individual homes. These associations can also organize neighborhood block parties, clean-up activities, neighborhood watches, and so forth. They can also become effective ways to improve communication between City Hall and citizens.

Residential Historic Overlay District

The intent behind a residential historic overlay district is for citizens and the Newton-North Newton Historic Preservation Commission to identify groupings of homes or structures noteworthy for their age, architectural integrity, or aesthetic unity. The McKinley Residential Historic District used this strategy, and in 2008 was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In general, residential historic overlay district guidelines are a set of additional zoning regulations intended to protect neighborhood character, development patterns, and historic structures.

Traditional Neighborhood Development Overlay District

This strategy is similar to a historic overlay district; however, the emphasis is less on preserving historic structures and more about ensuring infill development and re-use of existing structures in harmony with the established character of setbacks, scale, lot coverage, orientation, and architectural design.

Community Gathering Places

The preservation and development of community gathering places such as the Senior Center, city parks, neighborhood schools, and playgrounds is a priority. This strategy also involves encouraging “third spaces” within private businesses, such as coffee shops, local bistros, or bars to attract young talent and knowledge-based businesses. Third spaces are “gathering places for people to share ideas, discuss issues, and rub shoulders with people.”

Source: “Live First, Work Second,” Rebecca Ryan

Volunteerism and Civic Engagement

Citizen volunteerism has always been a reliable community value. Newtonians have a long tradition of volunteering in public schools, contributing to faith-based initiatives, helping neighbors, and supporting social service programs. Peter Drucker, writing in “The Community of the Future,” states, “The nonprofit organizations also are the only ones that can satisfy the second need of the city, the need for effective citizenship for its members, and especially for educated professional people. Only the nonprofit social sector institution can provide opportunities to be a volunteer and thus can enable individuals to have both a sphere in which they are in control and a sphere in which they make a difference.”

The Newton community has many established churches and nonprofit organizations with a tradition of community support and involvement. The challenges in the decades ahead are to continue active community participation along with sufficient funding, as well as to recruit effective leadership, meet new community needs, and offer opportunities for young people to become engaged in leadership positions.

Community Preservation Policies

Community Physical Character

- Policy 1. Support the creation of new neighborhood associations.
- Policy 2. Support the Newton-North Newton Historic Preservation Commission in preserving the cultural, historical, and architectural heritage of the community.
- Policy 3. Adopt and implement traditional neighborhood development overlay district zoning regulations.
- Policy 4. Adopt and implement historic district (residential and commercial) design standards and guidelines to preserve the character of the community.

Community Pride and Spirit

- Policy 1. Encourage local volunteerism, local recognition, and community-based organizations, services, programs, and events.
- Policy 2. Collaborate with the Chamber of Commerce and other organizations to organize community events.
- Policy 3. Promote interest in events, people, traditions, museums, and historic structures and places to help educate visitors and local citizens about the history of the community.

Community Relations

- Policy 1. Improve community cooperation, coordination, and communication through City Hall newsletters, technology interface, and community forums.
- Policy 2. Resolve the issue of construction of the community recreation center.
- Policy 3. Create and support a “collaborative leadership council” to improve coordination and communication in local issues of transportation, social service delivery, health care, education, and housing.

Housing and Neighborhoods

What we think of today in 2010 as Newton’s “established” neighborhoods can be traced back to a town plat created in 1887. Practically all of Newton’s settlement pattern of streets, blocks, and housing lots are reflective of pre-automobile town-planning practices. This is seen in the gridiron street pattern, standardized blocks, small lots (50’ x 150’), and the use of alleys. Of course, many changes have occurred in how Newton actually developed as compared to how some areas were platted to accommodate town growth at the turn of the 19th century. The most influential change was the construction of U.S. Interstate I-135, on the east edge of town, and Highway US-50, on the south edge of town.

One of the challenges for today’s community leadership is to ensure that the physical fabric of Newton established over 120 years ago is capable of meeting the needs of citizens and businesses in the 21st century. The street pattern, and block and lot design, are not anticipated to change substantially during the life of this town plan. The older housing stock and public infrastructure, however, are facing maintenance and rehabilitation needs. In addition, readapting the older housing stock to improve energy efficiency, incorporating new technological advancements, and making housing modifications for the elderly will become citywide issues for local officials, homeowners, and private utilities.

Housing and Neighborhoods

- Goal: Provide quality housing in safe, clean, and attractive neighborhoods.
- Goal: Offer a broad choice of housing options to meet the needs of present and future citizens, regardless of age or income.
- Goal: Maintain, rehabilitate, and improve older housing stock to provide a source of affordable housing and preserve the established character of neighborhoods.

Existing Areas of Concern

Several areas of concern with existing housing stock and established neighborhoods were identified by the citizen participants in the ReNewton Project. The following are viewed as important long-term housing planning issues.

Maintenance of Older Housing Stock

The improvement of aging or substandard housing is vital to preserve the existing housing stock. Preserving existing housing contributes to neighborhood character, property values, and affordable housing. Approximately 55% of North Newton housing stock and 83% of Newton housing stock (based on 2000 census) is over 40 years old.

Aging in Place for Senior Citizens

An important future community issue will be ensuring that the growing population of elderly couples and individuals are able to age in their own homes, until they decide to move. This means elderly people will have a support network to assist them with home maintenance, transportation, and personal security and safety. While not a traditional local government function, the need to coordinate housing, transportation, and health care for a growing elderly population will be a new reality for communities. City leadership can play a vital role in convening stakeholders from the fields of health care, public health, housing, public transportation, social services, and welfare to encourage collaboration and coordination.

Multi-Generation Housing and Neighborhoods

Maintaining multi-generation neighborhoods is beneficial to both old and young. Senior citizens can often provide day care and general stability in keeping an eye out for the neighborhood, while young people can often be of great assistance to seniors. While most multi-generation mixing occurs naturally within a neighborhood, it may take planning to ensure that new residential areas do not prevent opportunities for generations to mix. Zoning laws can also become a barrier that prevents parents from retiring or living with their children. One option is to consider allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and senior-friendly housing in R-1 single-family districts, provided regulations help ensure the single-family characteristics of the neighborhood. (Accessory dwelling units are private and complete housing units in or adjacent to single-family homes.)

Future Strategies & Policies

Infill Development

Residential infill development can play an important role in revitalizing a neighborhood or providing new housing choices. To stimulate infill development, a density bonus, which allows an increase in permitted housing density, can encourage affordable housing at suitable locations. Infill development also achieves the goal of developing areas with existing infrastructure.

Successful infill maintains, restores, or respects the following:

- Neighborhood character
- Streetscapes
- Historic structures
- Architectural character
- Neighboring building scale, setbacks, orientation, materials, and height

Property Maintenance Code Enforcement

The adoption of the 2009 International Property Maintenance Code would help city staff better address and resolve housing maintenance issues. This International Code Council (ICC) code focuses on maintenance requirements for existing residential and non-residential buildings. The code also provides stipulations for condemnation and demolition of substandard or unsafe structures.

The success of an effective code enforcement program relies on adequate staffing and resources. City leadership should identify objectives and measurement standards for a citywide property maintenance program, or decide to rely on complaint-based enforcement, and then determine staffing needs and funding based on that choice. Working with the Newton Area Board of Realtors, landlords, and property managers to assist in property maintenance initiatives is also part of a long-term solution.

Rental Inspection or Rental Registration Program

A rental inspection or registration program requires that a landlord or property owner register a rental unit which must pass inspection before it can be occupied. The city should explore creating a task force to design a suitable program. Generally, the city would issue a rental certificate of occupancy after a rental unit has met the standards in the 2009 International Property Maintenance Code.

Housing Improvement Programs

The Kansas Housing Resources Corporation administers a homeowner rehabilitation program, funded through the federal HOME Investment Partnerships Program. Local governments compete for program funds,

which are used to help low-income homeowners repair and rehabilitate their homes.

Nonprofit organizations and faith-based groups can also be a community resource offering home rehabilitation assistance. They can help elderly or low-income homeowners facing home modifications to adapt or repair their homes.

Promote Affordable Housing

An important concern facing Newton is the ability to meet the housing needs of the current and future workforce. The potential of 400 new jobs coming to Newton (with the arrival of Tindall Corporation) highlights the housing needs of a growing workforce. City leaders, working with developers and builders, need to facilitate new home construction that is affordable for “middle-income” households. This can include reducing minimum lot sizes, building setbacks for smaller-sized homes, or creating innovative housing solutions.

LEED Certified Home Renovation and Construction

The U.S. Green Building Council created an internationally recognized green building certification system. The construction standards and strategies advanced through the LEED program (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) are intended to improve energy and water efficiencies, enhance indoor air quality, and promote good stewardship of resources. The LEED certification rating system demonstrates compliance with best practices in green design and construction. The City could endorse LEED certification or equivalent approaches in public buildings, and encourage it in private construction.

Market and Promote Retirement Living

The Newton-North Newton community is already a leader in providing continuum-care housing for senior citizens. The leadership of the City and Chamber of Commerce should work with local senior housing providers to market and promote retirement living options in the community.

Housing & Neighborhood Policies

Established Neighborhoods

- Policy 1. Encourage the improvement and maintenance of older housing stock.
- Policy 2. Encourage landlords and developers to invest in and increase the inventory of rental units and apartments.
- Policy 3. Invest in maintaining and upgrading the infrastructure in older neighborhoods.

- Policy 4. Promote the use of city codes, rental inspection/registration, and rental standards to help at-risk neighborhoods.
- Policy 5. Preserve neighborhood character while supporting new development or redevelopment efforts that contribute to neighborhood desirability.
- Policy 6. Provide maintenance or rehabilitation assistance to homeowners meeting low- and moderate-income guidelines.
- Policy 7. Encourage homeowners, faith-based groups, and neighborhood organizations involved in improving housing and enhancing neighborhood character.
- Policy 8. Support the removal of visual blight and substandard housing.
- Policy 9. Support multi-generational housing.
- Policy 10. Support incentives for infill development in established neighborhoods.
- Policy 11. Adopt infill guidelines to ensure that infill development is compatible with the established neighborhood character.
- Policy 12. Preserve historic structures, sites, and districts. Incentivize the adaptive reuse of historic buildings.
- Policy 13. Seek state and federal funding sources to fund home repair and weatherization, as well as modifications for senior citizens.

Newton Downtown District

Downtown Newton is the heart of the community. Downtown serves as an important hub of commerce, middle school education, and government activities; it also binds the past to the present. The historic buildings tell the story of Newton’s history with the railroads, and of a time and place before retail was dominated by corporate marketing and national franchises. Downtown Newton offers people an enjoyable outdoor shopping environment, welcoming people to enjoy a stroll and imagine the past.

Looking toward 2030, the hopes and vision of Downtown Newton extend beyond the traditional focus on retail goods and services. Expectations for the future hinge on bringing together people of all ages and interests to enliven and celebrate downtown as a civic space for shopping, relaxing, entertainment, and (most importantly) housing. A vibrant downtown district is critically important for maintaining a sense of place in the quest for uniqueness in Newton-North Newton. Creating a new vision for downtown involves preserving core historic buildings in the Main Street Historic District, allowing for strategic new development of mixed uses and housing, and strengthening the visual character of civic space with improvements in pedestrian connectivity and walkability, streetscapes, parking, and green spaces. Success will depend on private marketplace initiatives, as well as public investments – and equally important is a vision and plan outlining the steps and ingredients necessary to transform what must be changed and to protect those elements that define a sense of place.

A revitalized downtown also impacts nearby residential areas. A successful downtown strengthens the market attractiveness of nearby neighborhoods. People value the opportunity to walk or bike to civic activities, shopping, or job centers. A synergy between downtown and neighborhood revitalization can occur when the community views this potential partnership as a united undertaking of public initiatives and private reinvestment.

Newton Downtown District

- Goal: Create an award-winning, revitalized downtown district.
- Goal: Preserve the historic architecture and visual character of the Newton Main Street Historic District.
- Goal: Create a mixed-use environment with retail, office, housing, and open spaces functioning as the center of cultural activities and community life.
- Goal: Increase the vitality of downtown and nearby neighborhoods by implementing the Master Plan for Newton Downtown Redevelopment District.
- Goal: Provide strong connections to the surrounding neighborhoods to enhance pedestrian accessibility.

Plan for Newton Downtown Redevelopment District

The 2009 Master Plan for Newton Downtown Redevelopment District advances the planning principle of creating a critical mass of activities to bring people downtown. The intent is to make downtown the social center of the community. To accomplish this vision of large groups of people interacting downtown, the plan promotes existing and proposed “activators” — places that attract people to visit. One of the basic premises is to ensure a complementary clustering of retail goods and services where similar types of downtown businesses help each other attract customers, even while competing individually. City and county government offices, Santa Fe 5/6 Center, Newton Recreation Center, and the Newton Public Library are the traditional activators bringing people downtown, and all should remain there.

Proposed activators recommended in the plan include a “downtown farmer’s market” and a “downtown theater” venue to capitalize on the restored Fox Theater. The introduction of residential mixed-use infill is also recommended. The idea is to encourage housing on second and above stories along with office/retail uses on the main floors. Housing opportunities downtown strengthen the objectives of bringing people there and sustaining businesses. Finally, existing green spaces and new civic spaces allow people to gather, relax, or be active. Public spaces contribute to a livable downtown that attracts people for shopping, strolling, playing, dining, and entertainment. The

proposed and existing activators are all essential for bringing vitality to downtown.

Downtown Newton's uniqueness and character are brought forth in the plan by taking advantage of existing opportunities to create or enhance civic spaces. The redevelopment plan encourages the highlighting of Newton's Rail Depot environs, proposed Railway Park, the Roundhouse, the grain elevators, the old mill, the Warkentin House, and the Bike Centennial trail. The intent is to take advantage of these assets to provide the contextual experience that defines the uniqueness of Newton's downtown district.

The Master Plan for Newton Downtown Redevelopment District provides an extensive set of planning principles, recommendations, and design guidelines. Ensuring downtown remains the heart of the community is a guiding principle of The ReNewton Project; therefore, the Master Plan for Newton Downtown Redevelopment District needs to be implemented. The Master Plan for Newton Downtown Redevelopment District should be used in conjunction with the ReNewton 2030 Comprehensive Plan. All downtown development projects must clearly show a linkage to the Master Plan for Newton Downtown Redevelopment District.

Future Strategies & Policies

Creating Community Identity

The community's identity will be strengthened when local citizens, as well as residents of Wichita, rediscover Newton. A revitalized downtown district can become the focal point for the community and the new marketing strategy. A series of integrated strategies will support a new vision of downtown. Private investments are required in storefront renovations, second-story housing spaces, offices, and retail or entertainment establishments. Public investment in the downtown streetscape, civic spaces, and public parking facilities will also be a necessity. The use of public-private partnerships to achieve these objectives should also be supported, so that private investments are supported by public dollars in necessary infrastructure improvements.

Downtown Newton is a diamond in the rough waiting to be re-discovered and then re-invented to become a shining jewel that Newtonians and visitors alike enjoy as a place to shop, dine, live, work, and visit.

Community Development Corporation

The continued financial support of the Community Development Corporation (CDC) to carry out the recommendations of the Master Plan for Newton Downtown Redevelopment District is vital. The CDC is planning to leverage funds from private donations, foundation

support, and grants to achieve their goals of building rehabilitation, façade improvements, development of events, and other programming or physical elements.

Restoration of Historic Structures

The Community Development Corporation, Historic Preservation Commission, and Certified Local Government staff must continue their collaborative partnership to assist owners of historic structures to obtain grants, tax credits, or other financial assistance to restore historic downtown structures.

Downtown Business Incubator District

A downtown business incubator district will create vibrancy and business success. The idea is to create a district within downtown to support new retail, dining, entertainment, and small business ventures. This type of business incubator approach is a program, not a space within an incubator center or building. The program would be available to for-profit businesses new to the downtown district. Depending on how the program is designed, a business could receive assistance through subsidized rent, marketing, human resources, financial management, product development, and so forth. This program could establish a partnership with the Department of Business and Economics at Bethel College.

An incubator center or building downtown designed to provide space for young-professional start-up businesses is another option. The Community Development Corporation could manage the center.

Funding for either incubator strategy will rely on finding a mix of funding sources and partnerships among City Hall, Bethel College, and the private sector.

Streetscape

The Master Plan for Newton Downtown Redevelopment District identifies a series of initiatives to improve and enhance the streetscape of downtown. The next step involves preparation of design documents and landscape plans for the streetscape. A design team will facilitate a participatory-design process and create the streetscape design. A key factor is whether the Kansas Department of Transportation will accept pedestrian bulb-outs at key intersections, as well as potential new parking arrangements. At the end of the design process, the streetscape plans will (ideally) be accepted by merchants, property owners, the Community Development Corporation, Planning Commission, and ultimately, the City Commission. Most importantly, the design plans provide the community with a vision of what a new streetscape with the amenities suggested in the Master Plan for Newton Downtown Redevelopment District would look like. Elected officials would also have a project cost estimate, allowing city leaders to strategize how to fund the streetscape plan.

Downtown Form-Based Zoning

Form-based zoning is a zoning technique that focuses on building configuration, relationships to sidewalks/streetscape (public realm), and the existing built environment. These codes seek to protect the existing historic/urban fabric. In downtown, there would be a zero front lot line or “build-to” requirement to ensure compatibility with the character of Main Street. Standards for building elements ensure preservation of the downtown historic district.

Form-based codes commonly include the following elements:

- **Regulating Plan.** A plan or map of the regulated area designating the locations where different building form standards apply, based on clear community intentions regarding the physical character of the area.
- **Public Space Standards.** Specifications for the elements within the public realm (e.g., sidewalks, travel lanes, on-street parking, street trees, street furniture).
- **Building Form Standards.** Regulations controlling the configuration, features, and functions of buildings that define and shape the public realm.
- **Administration.** A clearly defined application and project review process.
- **Definitions.** A glossary to ensure the precise use of technical terms.
- **Architectural Standards.** Regulations controlling external architectural materials and quality.
- **Signage Standards.** Regulations controlling allowable signage sizes, materials, illumination, and placement.

Source: Form-Based Codes Institute

Downtown Business Association

A private downtown association or organization, whether independent or attached to the Newton Area Chamber of Commerce, is important for leadership and a strong public-private partnership. The Newton Central Business District Program, which is part of the Chamber of Commerce, is currently responsible for the development, promotion, and coordination of marketing activities and events downtown. This program provides effective representation of the Chamber of Commerce and City of Newton, as well as the Promotions Committee.

A critical concern is whether this organizational framework fosters support and coordination from the merchants and property owners in downtown. What appears to be lacking is the opportunity for anyone who’s interested in a revitalized downtown to join a targeted organization or association. City and Chamber leaders should evaluate how to expand participation and involvement of merchants, property owners, or interested citizens in creating an organization that builds consensus and cooperation among downtown stakeholders.

Bicycle Lane Connecting Downtown and Bethel College

An idea identified during the ReNewton Project was to create bike lanes connecting downtown with Bethel College. The vision for downtown includes public and private gathering places for young people and college students to invigorate shopping, dining, and entertainment. The Kansas Department of Transportation would need to approve the idea and devise a safe method for pavement markings, since Main Street is a state highway.

Downtown Farmers' Market

The idea of a downtown farmers' market was included in the Master Plan for Newton Downtown Redevelopment District, and was endorsed by the public during the preparation of this plan. This idea could become an early success story for downtown revitalization and the ReNewton Project. This is a low-cost, attainable community goal if the city leaders can identify the "right players" to implement this project. There are numerous Kansas communities that provide a model for choosing an operational plan and suitable location.

Downtown Park and Third Spaces

This idea was generated from citizen input, specifically by a young mother expressing how wonderfully a small playground in the heart of downtown would complement the vision for revitalization. A downtown park, however, should be multi-generational to accommodate people of all ages. While the biggest challenge is finding a suitable parcel of undeveloped land, it's an idea worth identifying in the long-range plan.

"Third spaces," a term used to describe gathering places within private businesses and zones, are intended to contribute to the social and economic vitality of downtown. Their development by private enterprise is part of the overall revitalization vision.

Commercial and Residential Design Guidelines

One of the key elements of a successful downtown revitalization effort is creating harmony with architectural character. "Historic commercial design guidelines" help preserve original facades within the downtown historic district. They help recreate the historic alignment of architectural features with other buildings on the block, contributing to visual continuity and a coherent visual context. The guidelines can also cover building colors, awnings, exterior lighting, and signage. Since not all properties in downtown are within the historic district, it is also appropriate to adopt commercial and residential guidelines for new construction or rehabilitation projects. The focus is on respecting the traditional qualities that make downtown unique. Design considerations include massing, scale, proportion, uses of storefront detailing, and choice of materials. As with the historic guidelines, they

can also address building colors, awnings, exterior lighting, and signage.

Support for Fox Theater Revitalization

The Fox Theater revitalization and operation need the continued support of City Hall. Community events, music, or theater productions, along with independent or art movies, all contribute to bringing people back downtown.

Wayfinding Signage to Downtown

This program would encourage travelers on I-135 to visit downtown and provide directional signage from the various exits and entry points into the community. In addition, as new people move to the community, it is crucial to help them find and discover downtown. This can include wayfinding via the Internet on electronic devices (smart phones, car navigation systems, and laptop or notebook computers).

LEED Certified Renovation

The U.S. Green Building Council created an internationally recognized green building certification system. The construction standards and strategies advanced through the LEED program (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) are intended to improve energy and water efficiencies, indoor air quality, and stewardship of resources. The LEED certification rating system demonstrates compliance with best practices in green design and construction. The City should endorse LEED certification or equivalent construction standards when commercial properties are renovated in downtown.

Downtown District Policies

- Policy 1. Support and implement the Master Plan for Newton Downtown Redevelopment District.
- Policy 2. Promote the relocation of the rail switching and maintenance activities out of the downtown area.
- Policy 3. Investigate the implementation of a business incubator district or incubator center.
- Policy 4. Initiate the implementation of a wireless Internet zone downtown.
- Policy 5. Support the preparation of streetscape design documents and landscape plans for Main Street.
- Policy 6. Investigate the implementation of downtown form-based zoning.