

Warrant Article Questionnaire Non-Standard Town Agency Articles

Section III – Questions with Response Boxes – To Be Completed By Petition Sponsor

Article # 24	Date Form Completed: 03.30.2023
Article Title: Establish Center Gateway Zoning District	
Sponsor Name: Planning Board	Email: aloomis@natickma.org

Question	Question
1	Provide the article motion exactly as it will appear in the Finance Committee Recommendation Book and presented to Town Meeting for action.
Response	Please see attachment for full motion.
2	At a summary level and very clearly, what is the proposed purpose and objective of this Warrant Article and the accompanying Motion?
Response	<p>The Center Gateway (CG) Zoning District is being proposed to promote the redevelopment of and reinvestment in private property so as to establish a transition from abutting zoning districts into Natick Center along a major transportation corridor.</p> <p>The properties that will be rezoned as CG are presently zoned as Residential (RG) and Administrative and Professional (AP). The CG accomplishes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow multi-family (site plan review) and residential mixed-use (special permit) by a majority vote of the permitting authority. • Create opportunities for the development of affordable housing in a walkable area within close proximity to public transportation and amenities. • Increase in opportunity for currently non-conforming properties or constrained properties by re-establishing the intensity regulations to allow developers to better utilize land through best practices. • Expansion to allow uses that are commonly seen along corridors entering into a center or downtown area. Example, in RG and AP retail stores and restaurants are currently not allowed, which would be allowed in the CG District.
3	Has this article or one of a very similar scope and substance been on a previous Warrant Article and what have been the actions taken by the Finance Committee, other Boards or Committees and Town Meeting?
Response	Under the title “East Central/Union Street Intersection (southern side)”, this article was originally heard as <u>2022 Fall Town Meeting Article 24</u> . After the public hearing process ended, the Planning Board identified flaws in the article’s language and requested it be referred to the Sponsor (Planning Board).

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	<p>The <u>current Article 24</u> was assigned the same number on the 2023 SATM warrant as the earlier iteration. The current Article 24 has been updated to correct and update issues previously identified.</p>														
	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Warrant Period</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Other Committees</th> <th style="text-align: left;">FinCom Action</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Town Meeting</th> </tr> <tr> <td>Ex: 2021 SATM</td> <td>Ex: Planning Bd refer</td> <td>Ex: Referral</td> <td>Ex: Referral</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022 Fall Annual TM</td> <td>Planning Board refer to sponsor</td> <td></td> <td>Consent agenda, refer to Planning Board</td> </tr> </table>	Warrant Period	Other Committees	FinCom Action	Town Meeting	Ex: 2021 SATM	Ex: Planning Bd refer	Ex: Referral	Ex: Referral	2022 Fall Annual TM	Planning Board refer to sponsor		Consent agenda, refer to Planning Board		
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Ex: 2021 SATM	Ex: Planning Bd refer	Ex: Referral	Ex: Referral												
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4	<p>Why is it required for the Town of Natick and for the Town Agency sponsor(s)?</p>														
Response	<p>The area identified for rezoning has the potential to offer significant development opportunities for the Town.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reinvestment in parcels along a commercial corridor may not happen without such amendment. Current zoning has significant setbacks and dimensional requirements that make redevelopment unlikely without getting dimensional relief and increasing the nonconformity. 2. Further limitations include uses that are allowed in the RG and AP Districts are limited and prohibit uses that would support a transition into Natick Center (ex. retail stores and restaurants). 3. The new district encourages the distribution of affordable housing opportunities in key areas throughout the town, while encouraging the development of Residential Mixed-Use Developments to retain existing commercial space. 4. Increase in tax base associated with redevelopment. 														
5	<p>Does this article require funding, how much, from what source of funds and under whose authority will the appropriation be managed and spent?</p>														
Response	<p>Funding is not required for Article 24; rather, it is expected that revenue will be generated through private redevelopment of properties within the proposed CG Zoning District. All work associated with this article was conducted by Town staff, members of the Planning Board, and members of the Natick community who volunteered their time.</p>														
6	<p>Does this article act in any way in concert with, in support of, or to extend any prior action of Natick Town Meeting, Massachusetts General Laws or CMR's or other such legislation or actions?</p> <p>Does this article seek to amend, rescind or otherwise change any prior action of Natick Town Meeting?</p>														
Response	<p>Article 24 does not seek to amend, rescind or otherwise change any prior actions of a previous Town Meeting.</p>														

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	Article 24, would allow residential mixed-use by a majority vote of a special permit, in addition to multi-family by site plan review, which are allowed under the MBTA Communities Act.
7	How does the proposed motion (and implementation) fit with the relevant Town Bylaws, financial and capital plan, comprehensive Master Plan, and community values as well as relevant state laws and regulations?
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natick 2030+ Master Plan, Chapter 3, R5.1 includes an Action Step: Develop a <i>“Transitional Mixed Use Zone” with uses similar to the existing DM Zone, but with lower densities compatible with adjacent residential development: South side of Central Street from Lincoln Street to Union Street.</i> • Natick 2030+ Master Plan, 1-5 Years: <i>There also are several locations where gateways into Natick Center could serve as transition zones from the adjacent RG residential neighborhoods. It is recommended that a “Transitional Mixed Use” Zone be considered that allows uses similar to the DM zone, but with lower densities compatible with adjacent residential development. This new district should be considered for the south side of Central Street from Lincoln Street to Union Street (currently zoned RG) and the north side of Middlesex Avenue from Spring Street to Washington Avenue. The zone is designated as DM-Transition on the Proposed Zoning Changes Diagram on page 3.37.</i> • Clear and transparent permitting of development projects. Through the development of Rules and Regulations specific to the Center Gateway, developers will understand the clear expectations for development.
8	Who are the critical participants in executing the effort envisioned by the article motion?
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natick Planning Board • Community and Economic Development staff • Landowners and parties of interest
9	What steps and communication has the sponsor attempted to assure that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interested parties were notified in a timely way and had a chance to participate in the process • Appropriate Town Boards & Committees were consulted • Required public hearings were held
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal ad for the opening public hearing, scheduled for February 15, 2023, was published in the Metro West Daily Newspaper on February 1, 2023 and February 8, 2023 • Legal mailers were sent to the abutting communities and required parties of interest prior to February 2, 2023

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal mailers were sent to landowners in and within 300’ of the Center Gateway Zoning District • Public hearings for Article 24 was held on February 15, March 1, March 15, and March 29, 2023
10	Since submitting the article have you identified issues that weren’t initially considered in the development of the proposal?
Response	<p>The MBTA Communities was recently approved in 2021 to aid the Commonwealth in its housing shortage, in addition to an update to MGL c. 40A. Since such time, there has been the release of Design Regulations associated with the MBTA Communities, in addition to a change in leadership at the State level. Over the next several months, further clarification on the MBTA Communities will be released to hopefully resolve some of the issues recently raised by several communities in the Commonwealth.</p> <p>For Natick to be compliant with the MBTA Communities Act, the Town needs to create an area(s) that can accommodate fifteen (15) units per acre within a ½ mile of the Natick Center and West Natick Commuter Rail Stations (Natick can divide the area between the two (2) stations) which would be a maximum of approximately 156.8 acres.</p> <p>Natick requires a special permit for properties within the Aquifer Protection District (APD). The CG District is located in an APD Recharge Area. Therefore, requiring all projects within the CG District to obtain a special permit is inconsistent with the by-right requirements of the MBTA Communities for multi-family.</p> <p>Natick has until December 2024 to comply with the requirements of the MBTA Communities. Within such time the Town will be looking into efforts to ensure compliance and, therefore, in the future, will bring forth further amendments to the Zoning Bylaw over the next two years to ensure compliance.</p> <p>At this time, Natick has an opportunity to see the redevelopment of a key entrance into Natick Center. Therefore, the Planning Board voted to continue to move Article 24 forward. As drafted, Article 24 requires a special permit for Residential Mixed-use Developments (permitted by a majority vote) and mixed-use developments while allowing multi-family by site plan review.</p>
11	If this Warrant Article is not approved by Town Meeting what are the consequences to the Town and to the sponsor(s)? Please be specific on both financial and other consequences?
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Town would expect to see little redevelopment of the parcels within the proposed Center Gateway Zoning District. Any development within this area would be limited to existing restrictive dimensional and limited use options.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of potential tax revenue and building permit fees that are associated with new development or redevelopment.