

# Proposed Northfield Zoning Bylaw Revisions Spring 2017

## WHY REVISE THE ZONING BYLAWS?

In developing a town vision and goals in the Northfield Master Plan with input from town residents, it was clear that there was a desire and need to review Northfield's Zoning rules to ensure that they align with the town's vision.

The next step was an audit of our current Zoning bylaws to identify obstacles to the Master Plan goals as well as compliance with current state law, clarity and ease of use.

Finally, the proposed new Zoning bylaw package was written, based on professional knowledge of current best practices and extensive citizen input from public presentations and workshops. The public process and development of the new bylaws were accomplished by a committee of Northfield residents working with RKG Associates and Community Circle, the premier zoning and public participation consultants in Massachusetts.

## WHY DOES ZONING MATTER?

Zoning bylaws are the blueprint for the future of a community. They establish rules for controlling certain activities for different areas of our town and therefore guide the future development of Northfield.

Zoning bylaws create rules such as permissible uses for land, how much development is allowed, and how an owner or developer can ask for an exception to the "rules."

Northfield's current bylaws include sections that are sometimes inconsistent with state law or are unclear to interpret. There are also topics and policies that have become standard practice in MA but are not currently addressed.

The proposed bylaws will provide clear, consistent guidelines that support the Northfield Master Plan and are current with Massachusetts laws and current planning practices.

## PROPOSED ZONING DISTRICTS

Northfield currently has two Zoning districts: *Residential-Agricultural (RA)* and *Residential-Agricultural-Forested (RAF)*. Emphasis in these districts will continue to be residential use, with other uses outlined in the bylaws.

### Proposed new districts:

A two-section *Village Center (VC)* district, to promote small-scale commercial activity in two areas of Main Street;

A *Planned Development (PD)* district, intended to provide additional options for developing the former NMH campus including health care facilities, limited business uses, senior housing;

A two-section *Recreational Tourism (RT)* district, intended to promote businesses that complement outdoor recreation, such as small retail, bed & breakfast, or restaurant uses. These zones are proposed near the Northfield Mountain Recreational Area and the Northfield Golf Course.

To see the full proposed bylaws, maps of the Zoning districts, or for latest updates, please check the town website at <http://www.northfieldma.gov/home/news/zoning-revision-proposal>.