

CHARLES RIVER

REGIONAL CHAMBER

Lisle Baker, Chair Zoning and Planning Committee
Newton City Council
1000 Commonwealth Ave,
Newton, MA 02459

Nov. 4, 2025

Dear Councilor Baker,

The Charles River Chamber supports docket items #181-24 (1 and 2), which would eliminate and minimize parking requirements for businesses in our village centers.

As you know, parking minimums rarely produce new parking. However, they do make it harder for businesses to succeed in Newton and for commercial property owners to secure tenants.

For example, a restaurant looking to add a few tables or a few employees often triggers the waiver process. Next, the owner must hire a lawyer, submit plans, and attend multiple hearings, all to prove that they cannot create parking that they don't physically have space for. Yet, almost always, the council wisely recognizes the benefits of granting the request over an empty storefront.

It's a frustrating, time-consuming loop that helps no one and harms Newton's economic vitality and our ability to attract and retain businesses.

The effect goes beyond the individual business. Potential tenants often skip Newton altogether, opting instead for neighboring communities with simpler permitting requirements.

Businesses know how much parking they need and should be given the authority to make their own decisions. The two parking reforms under consideration would accomplish this by eliminating certain parking mandates, making it easier to do business in the city.

The first change would extend the elimination of parking minimums — which already applies in one-third of Newton's village centers (thanks to the VCODs) — to the remaining two-thirds.

The second would standardize and streamline complicated parking standards for businesses outside our central districts, such as along Route 9.

We are not going to solve the village center parking problem one special permit at a time. These outdated requirements do nothing to add parking, while adding an unnecessary wall of bureaucracy for local employers.

We urge the council to move forward both portions of docket item #181-24 and take an important step to streamline our city's permitting processes and ensure the viability of local small businesses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Reibman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Greg" being more prominent than the last name "Reibman".

Greg Reibman
President & CEO
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