



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 2/10/2016**

**For further information, contact:**

**Nichol Figueiredo, Public Information Officer**  
Memorial Building  
150 Concord Street  
Framingham, MA 01702  
Tel: (508) 532-5437

## **Attorney General Healey Okays Framingham's Plan to Rezone Downtown**

### ***Approval Will Allow Town to Move Forward with Transit-Oriented Development Plans***

**Framingham, Mass. (February 10, 2016)** – Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey today approved plans by the Town of Framingham to rezone its Central Business District, Downtown Framingham. The rezoning plans were approved on October 21, 2015 by Special Town Meeting members. Town officials see the rezoning as critical to encouraging transit-oriented development (TOD) in Downtown Framingham, and will move their efforts forward to encourage this kind of residential development.

“Downtown Framingham is poised to reclaim its title as an important walkable, urban center for economic development in MetroWest and Greater Boston,” said Charlie Sisitsky, Chair of Framingham’s Board of Selectmen. “The Town of Framingham is excited to offer in Metrowest an urban living experience to people who may be attracted to the Town’s small-town atmosphere and convenient proximity to Boston. We anticipate this rezoning will attract new investment, new visitors, and new energy as we advance our transit-oriented development plans.”

On October 21<sup>st</sup>, by overwhelming numbers, Special Town Meeting members voted to support zoning changes to Framingham’s Central Business District with a goal to make Downtown Framingham an attractive, vibrant, diverse center that will be a hub of economic activity for the MetroWest region. Previous zoning laws in the Town of Framingham discouraged developers from creating the kind of new units that appeal to young professionals and others who may otherwise be attracted to Framingham.

“Framingham residents are ready to take the next step in revitalizing Downtown Framingham as an important commercial center for Greater Boston,” said Bob Halpin, Town Manager of the Town of Framingham. “Thank you to the Special Town Meeting members and other residents who were a part of this process. With the Attorney General’s approval, we are eager to move forward.”

The strategy approved by the Town recommended making changes to the existing Central Business District zoning to encourage this development while also maintaining the neighborhood’s distinctive urban

downtown. Working with Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the Town performed a feasibility analysis for new development in Downtown to directly inform what the zoning regulations should specify to preserve the area's character but allow enough growth to make it an attractive place to invest in.

With new residential and commercial development, the rezoning will ultimately increase the Town's overall tax base while not placing an additional burden on Town services. Based on development projections for three hypothetical parcels in the Downtown, the Town and MAPC project new development could accrue up to \$1 million in additional commercial and residential property taxes for the Town of Framingham.

"Framingham's commitment is to make Downtown Framingham an attractive option for developers planning TOD projects, in part by reducing the need for special permits, reducing parking requirements, allowing more flexible uses, and setting clear timelines for site plan review," said Arthur Robert, Director of the Town of Framingham's Community and Economic Development Division. "The zoning changes allow for smaller projects, by right, with minor site plan review. Design standards and guidelines will also contribute to predictability. Development projects will be designed with pedestrians in mind, to promote the area's attractiveness, walkability, and support for transit alternatives."

At the same time, the Town plans to preserve the historic nature of Downtown Framingham by setting controls – use variance prohibitions, height limits near residential districts, and design standards and guidelines – to help ensure that developments make sense for current residents and businesses. Any new structure will require site plan review, which will give the Town an opportunity to work with the developer to ensure appropriate preservation measures. Height limits will be considered where they may impact quality of life, but the Town will allow six story buildings to encourage density where it seems appropriate. The design standards will ensure quality construction and elements that are consistent with or complement existing structures. Furthermore, the Town will utilize federal and state resources to preserve or reuse historic buildings in creative ways.

As part of the rezoning effort, the Special Town Meeting members and the Attorney General also approved revising the Central Business District boundary. The new boundary represents an area within a ten minute walk to the Downtown commuter rail station, providing more TOD project options, and demonstrating the Town's commitment to increasing TOD opportunities for Downtown Framingham. The new boundaries also encompass some of the gateway entrances to the Downtown so as to ensure their consistency with the vision established for the area.

"We are pleased that Attorney General Healey has accepted the changes to Downtown Framingham that the Special Town Meeting members approved," said Mike Gatlin, chair of the Town's Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC). "Residents are ready to make Framingham the next great Massachusetts TOD success story, and we are looking forward to working with developers to make that happen."

For more information, please visit the Framingham Community and Economic Development website (<http://www.framinghamma.gov/103/Community-Economic-Development>) or contact the Division of Community and Economic Development at (508) 532-5455.

###