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the screen →



Squares + Streets Zoning Workshop

Guiding Development in Cleary Square

March 18th, 2023

Engagement Events in Cleary Square

**Planning Kick-Off
and Open House**
2/25/24
YMCA

**Zoning
Workshop**
3/18/24
YMCA

**Community
Walking Tour**
3/24/24
Hyde Park Ave
and River St

**Housing +
Small
Business
Workshop**
3/25/24
YMCA

**Visioning
Workshops**
IN-PERSON - 4/8/24
LOCATION TBD
VIRTUAL - 4/16/24
ZOOM

A series of **conversational and educational workshops** to engage residents in discussions about what they hope to uplift and support in the area. Discussions will also cover the range of existing tools that inform how the City works to support community goals as an entry point to discussing creative or new approaches towards meeting those goals.

Office Hours - Ongoing



Drop-in sessions to ask questions, share ideas and feedback, and hear updates on the planning process. This is a great opportunity to catch up on information if you missed a previous event or help us understand more of the conversation

Workshops meant to begin formulating community visions that will inform policy and programmatic recommendations in the planning process.



Focus of Today's Workshop

Presentation

- **What is Zoning?**
- **Case studies** of mixed-use development projects

Activity

- A **scenario-based activity** to think about zoning when applied to hypothetical community development projects, followed by a group share out

Presentation

- Introduction to **Squares + Streets Zoning Districts**

This **presentation** will provide a baseline of information about zoning. We'll refer to that information for the **activity** to discuss how zoning impacts what can be built in towards community development goals.

Beyond this workshop: This is just our **first of many opportunities** to talk about zoning here in Cleary Square! Conversations on cross-cutting community goals and how zoning should be mapped to support them will continue throughout this process.



Agenda

1. Getting Settled
2. What is Zoning?
3. Case Studies of Zoning + Mixed Use Development
4. Community Development Vision Zone-a-thon
5. Squares + Streets Zoning Districts
6. Share Out, Key Themes + Ongoing Engagement

Presenters

Maya Kattler-Gold – BPDA Zoning Reform Team

Taylor Mayes – BPDA Comprehensive Planning Team



1

Getting Settled

Who's in the Room?

Think to yourself about **one word** that you think describes your personal experience of Cleary Square. It can be a noun, verb, adjective – just a word that comes to mind for you.

After a moment, turn to someone sitting next to or near you (preferably someone you haven't met before!) and **ask them**:

- What is your name and preferred pronouns?
- What was the one word you chose?
- Why did that one word come to mind when thinking about Cleary Square?

Quick Show of Hands

Raise your hand if...

...you're a resident in the neighborhood

...you're a business owner in Cleary Square

...you rent your home

...you live with family or friends

...you're between the ages of 30 and 50

...you have a child/children living with you

...you're an employee in Cleary Square

...you visit Cleary Square from another neighborhood

...you own your home

...you're over the age of 50

...you're under the age of 30

...you mainly speak a language other than English

Where Have We Been?

1. **15** Community Organizations and Leaders
 - Menino Arts Center, Rosebery Ruskindale Road Neighborhood Association, Hyde Park Board of Trade, Boston Renaissance Charter School, Keep Hyde Park Beautiful, Hyde Park Main Streets
2. The Cleary Square Kick-Off Event at the Local YMCA on 2/25 with about **100** Attendees
3. **3** On-Site Coffee Hours in Partnership with the Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS)
4. **2** Planner Pop-up Events and the Muni and YMCA
5. **104** Survey Responses



What We've Heard From You about Zoning

This is some of what we've heard from Cleary Square residents when they talk about goals for land use development:

Price
There needs to be
more family housing
Shop with studios

Zoning around
ADUs and other
multi generational
housing options

Please Bring
A Small Retail
Chain - Walmart
has A "market"
Brand. Or
even A Target

We Should
Encourage
Cultural
Use
Especially
LIVE MUSIC

Commercial
+
Retail
Restaurant Use
Should Not Be
Conditional on
Zoning

More bar/lounges
+ restaurants
A. GOOD. BAGEL

More Retail
- Family Restaurants
- Book Stores
NO Dollar
Stores!!

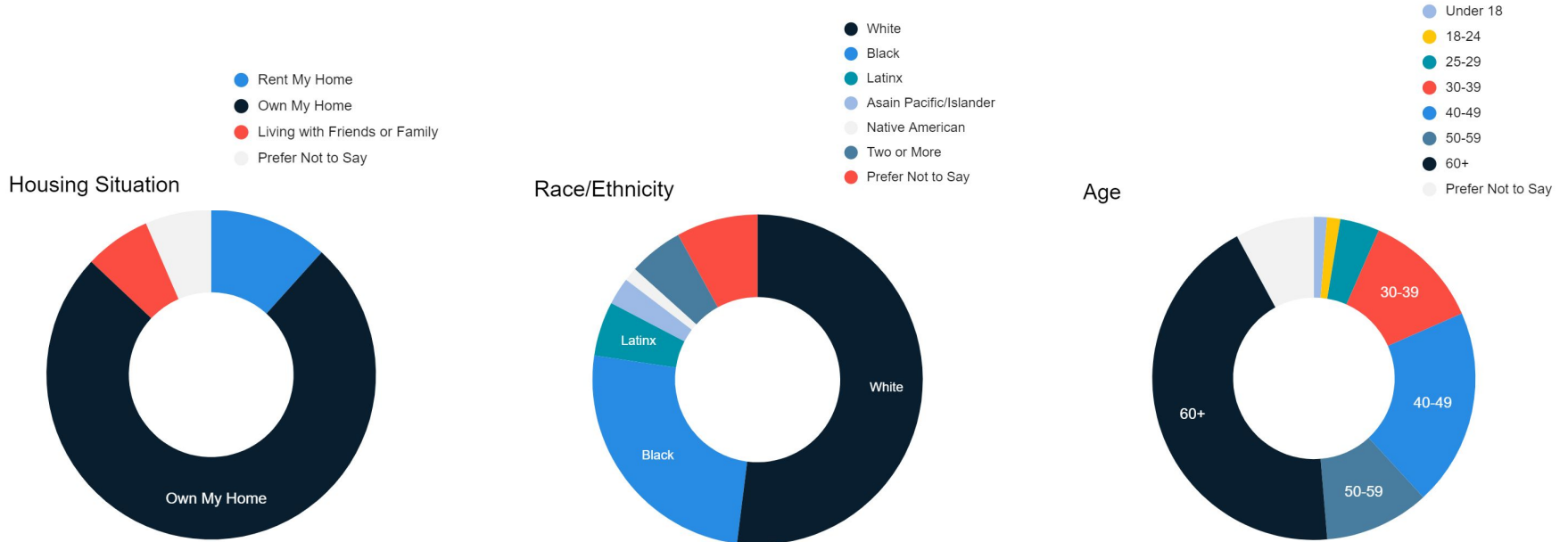
Cafes,
Child care centers

Proper mixed use
Zoning

CURRENT
ZONING
PROTOCOLS

NEED holistic
Planning

Who Did We Talk to at the Cleary Square Kick-Off Event?



Continuing Our Outreach + Engagement

As this process continues, we aim to engage with the diversity of residents and people who visit Cleary Square, including those who may not be able to always attend events like this.

Some groups that we aim to engage more directly in this process:

- Youth
- Public Housing Residents
- Renters
- Small Business Owners
- Spanish Speakers
- The Black/Haitian Creole Community
- Environmental Groups
- ***Who else???***

How We Want to Engage with Each Other

What's Said Here
Stays Here, What's
Learned Here
Leaves Here

Speak from the "I"

Step-up, Step Back

Ask for Help Along
the Way

Honor Who is In
the Room and
Who is Not

Do you have any additional community guidelines that you'd like to bring into the space for today's workshop?

2

What is Zoning?

Key Components in Cleary Square and in the
Squares + Streets Initiative



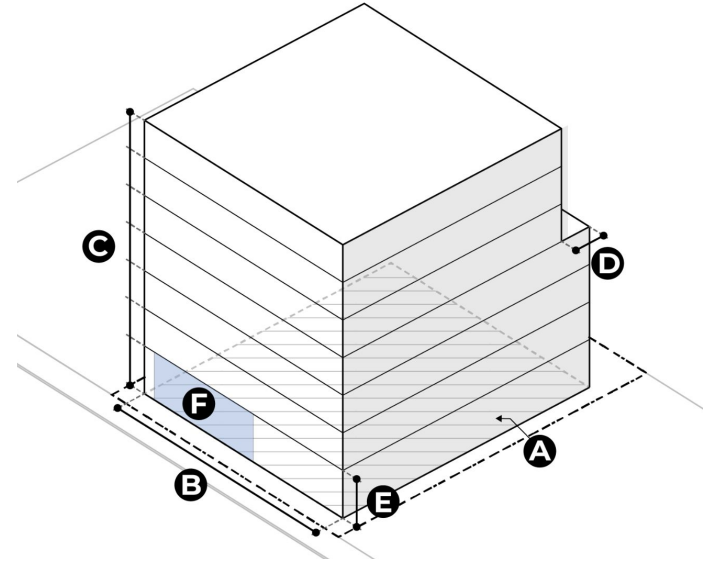
boston planning &
development agency

CITY of **BOSTON**

What is Zoning?

Zoning is a set of laws that are used to guide development by telling us the **allowed use, shape, and density of development** in a given area.

Zoning is also **a reflection of community needs at a certain period of time** and should be **regularly updated** so that the broader goals of the community and city can be achieved, especially as policy and economic conditions change.



What is Regulated by Zoning?

ZONING DISTRICTS

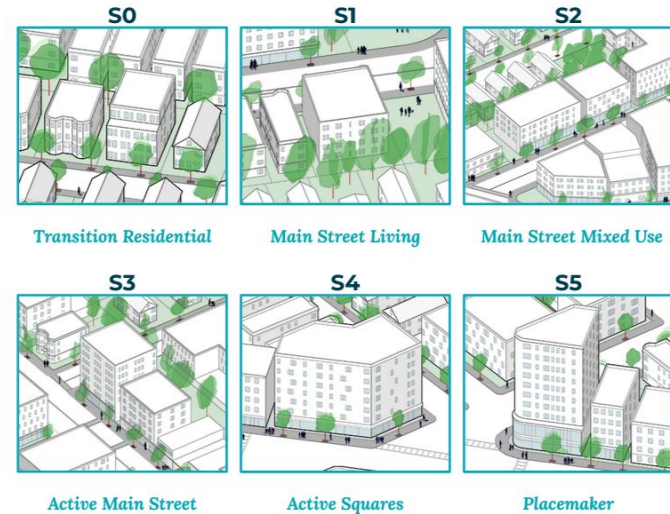
The BPDA has proposed **Squares + Streets Zoning Districts** to set new citywide regulations that promote **mixed-use development with the attention to housing growth** within Boston's neighborhood squares.

The **urban form and activities** that are promoted by the regulations in Squares + Streets Zoning Districts include:

- Commercial, cultural and service spaces near housing
- Adaptive reuse and small-scale additions on existing properties plus infill development for housing growth
- Land uses that pair well with high levels of walkability and access to transit service, like places to eat, hang out, and pick up necessities

SQUARES + STREETS

Zoning Districts



What is Regulated by Zoning?

LAND USES

Land Uses = how land can be used for various types of activities

Within a zoning district, each land use is designated as **allowed, conditional, or forbidden.**

- **Conditional** means it requires a conditional use permit from the Zoning Board of Appeal

Current zoning has **over 250 uses**, many that are outdated and difficult to interpret by the public and the Inspectional Services Department.



What is Regulated by Zoning?

LAND USES

The proposed **Squares + Streets Zoning Districts** include a modernized set of land use regulations in their **land use table**.

They include the new **“Active Uses”** category that promotes certain ground-floor level activities that encourage people to visit and spend time in a local area, like **grocery and retail storefronts, community centers, restaurants, and entertainment spaces**.

Beyond that, this modernization included:

- Improved and new definitions aligned citywide policy goals (e.g., allowing takeout for all restaurants, and adding “makerspaces”!)
- Size thresholds and performance standards to regulate impact
- Vetting by Inspectional Services Department (ISD) to ensure clear interpretation and building code alignment

	S0	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Grocery Store - Small	C	A	A	A	A	A
Grocery Store - Large	F	F	C	C	A	A
Entertainment/Events - Extra Small	C-G F	A-G F	A-G F	A-G C	A	A

Multiple sizes

Allowed on the ground floor, conditional above

Conditional on the ground floor, forbidden above

What is Regulated by Zoning?

DIMENSIONAL REGULATIONS (BUILDINGS + LOTS)

Dimensional Regulations = the scale and physical mass of structures allowed in an area and the parcels they're on

Some dimensional regulations in our current zoning include:

- **Setbacks/Yard Depth** = the distance between buildings and the property line, which can create yards
- **Building Height** = how tall the building is in stories and/or feet
- **Floor-Area-Ratio (FAR)** = the ratio of gross floor area of a structure to the total area of the lot (*with "gross floor area" having particularities about what does and doesn't count as part of a structure*)

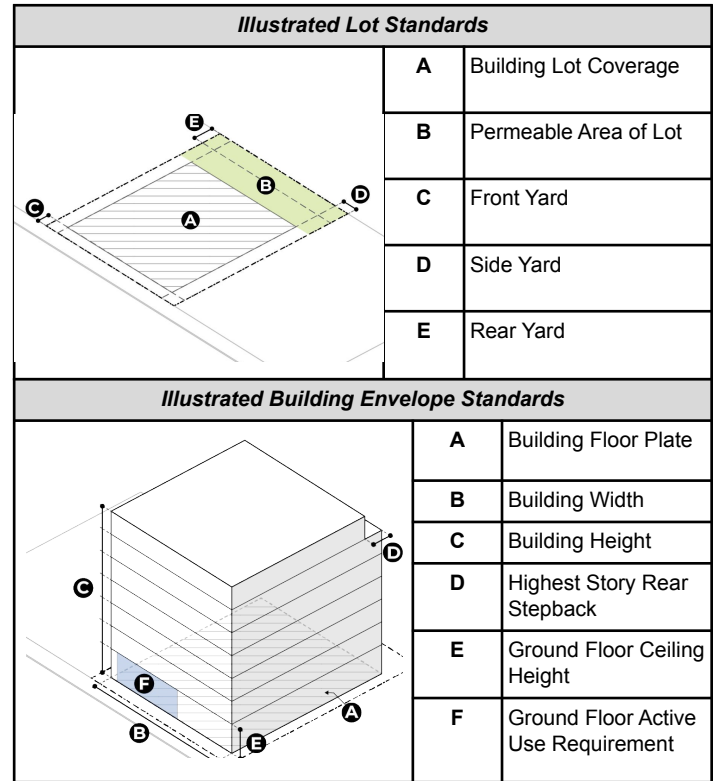
In Cleary Square and many other areas of Boston, dimensional regulations like yard requirements and FAR maximums are **often misaligned with what's actually built** in an area and can be difficult to interpret.

What is Regulated by Zoning?

DIMENSIONAL REGULATIONS (BUILDINGS + LOTS)

The **Squares + Streets Zoning Districts** will add new dimensional standards to better define the **overall zoning envelope*** allowed in each district and make more existing built structures legal within zoning. Some of those standards include:

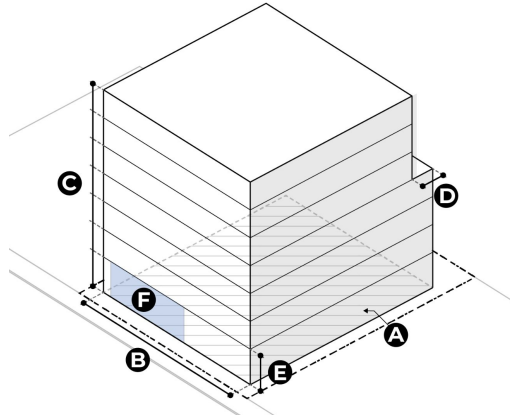
- **Building Floor Plate** = total floor area of a single story within a building
- **Building Lot Coverage** = the maximum percentage (%) of lot area that is allowed to be covered by the building floor plate of each building on the lot
- **Permeable Area of Lot** = the lot area that must be covered by natural ground cover **or** any material/surface on the ground that allows water to pass through similar to natural ground cover (aligned with citywide climate resilience and green infrastructure goals!)



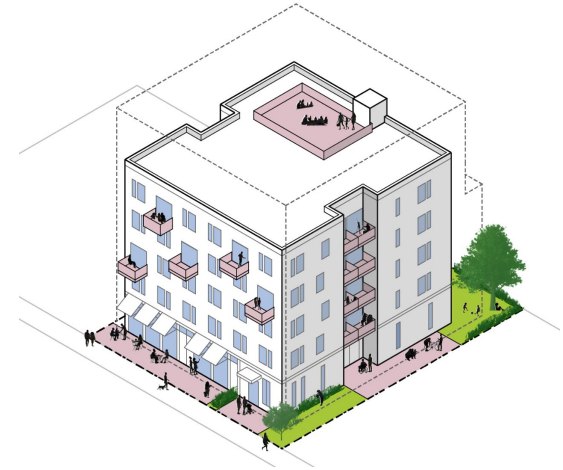
Connection between Urban Design + Zoning

Zoning regulations create a **maximum zoning envelope** for a building to develop within, but tools such as **the Boston Design Vision, community process, and BPDA Design Review** shape the project to reflect the character and needs of the local context.

Zoning
Envelope



Resulting
Built
Project



Through Design Review, BPDA urban designers consider what makes an area unique and **how a project's built form supports the sense of place** while meeting growing needs like housing – all while **upholding consistent zoning standards and considering the possibilities within those standards.**

3

Case Studies of Zoning + Mixed-Use Development

Case Study #1: Arts + Mixed-Income Housing

Project Goal and Characteristics

Affordable housing developers proposed the adaptive reuse of an historic building to create a **mixed-use, mixed-income development** with units for artists and **retail and arts amenity spaces**.

Site: Located on a main street full of retail buildings and bordering multi-family housing in a residential area; close to a commuter rail stop and served by multiple bus routes.

- ~86,000 square foot building; six story tall addition to the back of the historic building
- **48 residential units** – a mix of one-, two-, and three-bedrooms with mostly two-bedroom units
 - All residential units are income restricted /affordable at varying Area Median Income (AMI) between 30% and 80% AMI with artist live/work units
 - Seeking housing vouchers for at least 16 units
- Arts amenity space (~2,000 square feet) and below-market rate civic, arts, and commercial space (~4,500 square feet)
- 19 parking spaces

Zoning

- **Zoning District: Neighborhood Shopping (NS)**
 - Partially in a Neighborhood Design Overlay District for the historic portion of the site
- Land uses proposed:
 - **“Multi-family Dwelling”**
 - **“Artists’ Mixed Use”** (artist live-work)
 - **“Art Use”**
 - **Various Commercial Uses**
 - **“Accessory Parking”**
- This project needed dimensional and land use-related zoning relief for:
 - Excessive Floor Area Ratio and building height
 - Conditional uses: Artists’ Mixed Use, Art Use
- The zoning regulations as-is **did not encourage artists’ live-work space or the building form** needed to for a varied arts and culture-centered land use program that this development could produce and add to the area.

Case Study #2: Affordable Housing + Grocery

Project Goal and Characteristics

Local affordable housing developer created a mixed-use development with a **ground-floor retail space** and **affordable housing units** on a merged City-owned vacant lot and privately-owned lot.

Site: Located on the corner intersection of a main street and a residential street; close to a commuter rail stop, subway stop, and served by multiple bus routes.

- ~50,000 square foot building; four stories tall
- **41 residential units** – a mix of one-, two-, and three-bedrooms with mostly two-bedroom units
 - All residential units are income restricted /affordable at varying Area Median Income (AMI) between 30% and 60% AMI with some units set aside for houseless residents
- **~6,000 square feet of retail space**
- 46 parking spaces
- Community meeting space (~900 square feet) and Open outdoor plaza (~3,500 square feet)

Zoning

- **Zoning District: Local Convenience (LC)**
 - Next to a Three-Family Residential District
- Land uses proposed:
 - **“Multi-family Dwelling”**
 - **“Local Retail Business”** (grocery store)
 - **“Accessory Parking”**
- This project needed dimensional and land use-related zoning relief for:
 - Excessive Floor Area Ratio and building height
 - Insufficient front and rear yards
 - Conditional uses: Multi-family residential, accessory parking
 - Insufficient off-street parking and loading
- The zoning regulations as-is **did not encourage this kind of multi-family development or the building form** needed to for that kind of land use activity, despite the project producing housing, retail, and community resources.

4

Community Development Vision Zone-a-thon

What We've Heard From You about Zoning

This is some of what we've heard from Cleary Square residents when they talk about goals for land use development:

Price
There needs to be more family housing! Shop with studios

Zoning around ADUs and other multi generational housing options

Please Bring A Small Retail Chain - Walmart has A "market" Brand. Or even A Target

We Should Encourage Cultural Use Especially LIVE MUSIC

Commercial + Retail Restaurant Use Should Not Be Conditional on Zoning

More bar/lounges + restaurants
A. GOOD. BAGEL

More Retail
- Family Restaurants
- Book Stores
NO Dollar Stores!!

Cafes,
Child care centers

Proper mixed use zoning

CURRENT ZONING PROTOCOLS

NEED holistic Planning

Zone-a-thon Challenge + Instructions

Challenge/Task: In small groups, propose a community development project and manage the tradeoffs of making that project possible in the context of existing zoning regulations.

Focus/Goal: To engage in discussions on the priorities that come up for each of us when thinking about the kinds of development that serve community needs and how zoning plays a role in guiding development towards doing that work.

Format:

- Participants will work together in small groups
- A BPDA/City of Boston staff member will serve as a facilitator for each group
 - Facilitators will answer questions as well as ask questions to the group to encourage conversation on the feasibility and impact of their project ideas
- Instructions, written materials, and visual guides will be provided to help move through the activity
- Time is dedicated at the end for sharing out the conversations and project ideas that each group developed together!

Share Out + Key Themes

- What were your final project ideas?
- How did your group change your ideas from their original form once you were given your zoning conditions/regulations?
- What zoning district(s) would be appropriate for you to make this project possible?
- Were there any parts of your project that felt like they were important but possibly outside of what zoning would regulate?

5

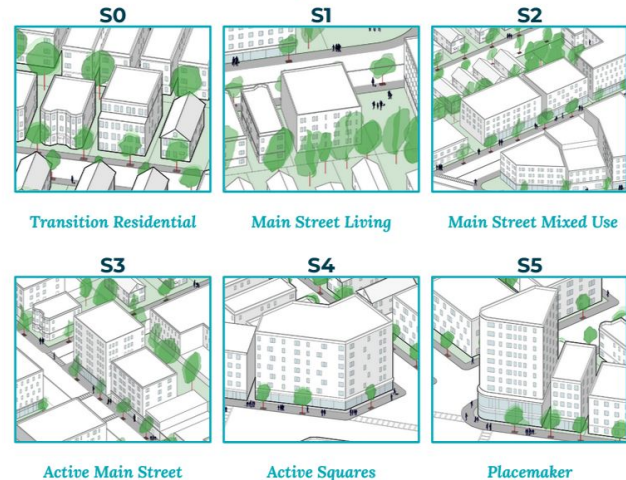
Squares + Streets Zoning Districts

Deeper Dive – Promoting Housing Growth and Mixed Use Activity in Transit-Oriented, Commercial Areas

Squares + Streets Zoning Districts

- A **toolbox of six varying zoning options** created to promote mixed-use development of housing, commercial and cultural development in neighborhood squares across Boston
- Establish new dimensional regulations for buildings that **promote housing growth, climate resiliency, and better consideration of relationship of buildings** to their surrounding area
- **Based on analysis of:**
 - Existing zoning across the City
 - Zoning Board of Appeal cases
 - Article 80-scale development projects
 - Modern building, energy, and accessibility codes
 - Feasibility of using the zoning determined by ISD, local small-scale and affordable housing developers, and designers

SQUARES + STREETS Zoning Districts



Squares + Streets Zoning Districts

Shared Characteristics

- **Limit building footprint and building width** to better reflect existing urban design scale
- Include **maximum building lot coverage** and **minimum permeable area of lot** to shape future development
- **Set dimensions for yards where they are important**, such as larger rear yards adjacent to residential areas
- Give **smaller projects** the same **parking flexibility as large projects** by removing parking minimums and **modernize loading requirements** (S0-S5)
- Create better places to live by requiring square footage for **outdoor amenities** like balconies, roof decks, terraces, and ground floor courtyards, streetscapes, and plazas (S2-S5)
- Create vibrant streetscapes by requiring a certain amount of **active ground floor uses** and limiting the amount of windowless **“blank walls”** on the ground floor (S3-S5)

Squares + Streets Zoning Districts

Shared Characteristics

- **Allowed uses** include:
 - Most residential uses
 - Community uses such as schools, places of worship, child care, and publicly accessible open space
 - Accessory parking, shared parking, and accessory EV charging
- Most **industrial and vehicular** uses are forbidden
- Commercial/active uses are **regulated** depending on their **size and impacts**

Squares + Streets Zoning Districts

Land Uses – Incremental Activity, Sizes + Standards

ACTIVE USES						
Community Center	C	A	A	A	A	A
Social Club	C	A	A	A	A	A
Grocery Store - Small	C	A	A	A	A	A
Service Establishment - Small	C-G F	A	A	A	A	A
Retail Store - Small	C-G F	A-G F	A-G C	A	A	A
Restaurant - Small	C-G F	A-G F	A-G F	A	A	A
Entertainment/Events - Extra Small	C-G F	A-G F	A-G F	A-G C	A	A
Makerspace	F	A	A	A	A	A
Museum	F	A	A	A	A	A
Restaurant - Large	F	C-G F	A	A	A	A
Retail Store - Medium	F	C-G F	A-G C	A	A	A
Entertainment/Events - Small	F	C-G F	A-G F	A-G C	A-G C	A
Retail Cannabis Establishment	F	C-G F	C-G F	C-G F	C	C
Entertainment/Events - Medium	F	F	C-G F	A-G C	A	A
Service Establishment - Large	F	F	C	A	A	A
Grocery Store - Large	F	F	C	C	A	A
Retail Store - Large	F	F	C	A-G C	A-G C	A-G
Indoor Recreation	F	F	F	A-G C	A	A
Entertainment/Events - Large	F	F	F	C	C	C
Retail Store - Extra Large	F	F	F	F	C	C
Entertainment/Events - Extra Large	F	F	F	F	F	F

- Creation of the “**Active Uses**” category and a ground floor **Active Use** requirement in S3 thru S5 zoning districts for a percentage of any building’s ground floor space (e.g., A-G, C-G)
- **Land use sizes and intensity increase with larger scale zoning districts**, aligning with common sizes and performance impacts of certain land uses

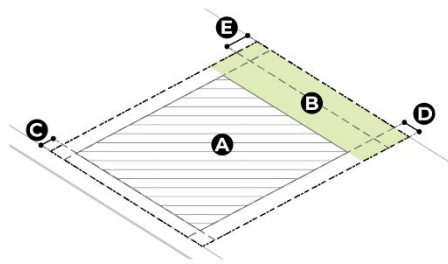
Squares + Streets Zoning Districts

Different Characteristics



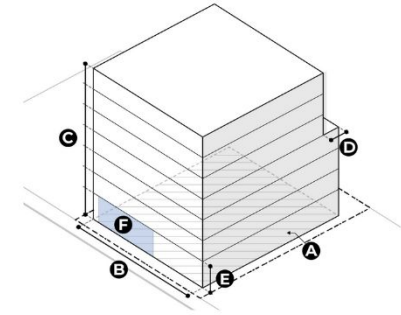
Uses

- Ground floor vs. upper floor uses (or max size overall)
- Whether active uses are required on the ground floor



Lot Standards

- Building lot coverage percentages
- Size of front, rear, and side yard minimums
- Permeable area of lot minimums





Building Form

- Building floor plate
- Maximum building width
- Maximum building height + stories
- Rear setbacks

Squares + Streets Zoning Districts

Residential-to-Main Street Urban Form

The S0 and S1 zoning districts are broadly defined by their **transitional feeling from residential areas to the more active portions of a main street** – a “round the corner” type of urban form with larger setback requirements for noticeable front and side yard spaces.

	<p>Building Lot Coverage = 60%</p> <p>Building Floorplate = 4,000 sqft max</p> <p>Height = 50' / 4 stories max</p>	<p>Permeable Area of Lot = 20%</p> <p>Front Yard = 8' min</p> <p>Rear Yard = 15' min</p> <p>Side Yard = 14' cumulative (3' min)</p>		<p>Building Lot Coverage = 70%</p> <p>Building Floorplate = 8,000 sqft max</p> <p>Building Width = 120' max</p> <p>Height = 50' / 4 stories max</p>	<p>Permeable Area of Lot = 15%</p> <p>Front Yard = 6' min</p> <p>Rear Yard = 10-15' min</p> <p>Side Yard = 14' cumulative (3' min)</p>
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S0: Residential-to-commercial zoning district that provides a transition from lower activity residential areas.

S1: Mixed-use district with majority residential uses and small to moderate square footage on individual floors of buildings.

Squares + Streets Zoning Districts

Active, Diverse Main Street Urban Form

The S2 thru S5 zoning districts are broadly defined by their promotion of a **major main street feeling that accommodates mixed uses and housing**, and incorporates incremental requirements for outdoor amenities, active land uses, and restrictions on blank walls.



Building Lot Coverage = 70%

Building Floorplate = 15,000 sqft max

Building Width = 150' max

Height = 60' / 5 stories max

Permeable Area of Lot = 15%

Front Yard = 2' min

Rear Yard = 10'-15' min

Side Yard = 5'-15' min (0' party wall)

Outdoor Amenity Space = 20%



Building Lot Coverage = 90% (70% on large parcels)

Building Floorplate = 20,000 sqft max

Building Width = 150' max

Height = 85' / 7 stories max

Active Use Requirement

Permeable Area of Lot = 15%

Front Yard = 2' min

Rear Yard = 5'-15' min

Side Yard = 5'-15' min (0' party wall)

Outdoor Amenity Space = 20%



S2: Main street mixed-use buildings where ground-floor-retail and storefronts are the prevailing condition.

S3: Main street residential and small-scale hospitality buildings in neighborhood mixed-use areas with a wider range of ground floor uses

Squares + Streets Zoning Districts

Active, Diverse Main Street Urban Form

The S2 thru S5 zoning districts are broadly defined by their promotion of a **major main street feeling that accommodates mixed uses and housing**, and incorporates incremental requirements for outdoor amenities, active land uses, and restrictions on blank walls.

	<p>Building Lot Coverage = 90%</p> <p>Building Floorplate = 25,000 sqft max</p> <p>Building Width = 200' max</p> <p>Height = 85' / 7 stories max</p> <p>Active Use Requirement</p>	<p>Permeable Area of Lot = 15% on large parcels</p> <p>Front Yard = 2' min</p> <p>Rear Yard = 5'-20' min</p> <p>Side Yard = 5'-15' min (0' party wall)</p> <p>Outdoor Amenity Space = 25%</p>		<p>Building Lot Coverage = 80% (70% on large parcels)</p> <p>Building Floorplate = 25,000 sqft max</p> <p>Building Width = 250' max</p> <p>Height = 145'</p> <p>Active Use Requirement</p>	<p>Permeable Area of Lot = 15% on large parcels</p> <p>Front Yard = 2' min</p> <p>Rear Yard = 5'-20' min</p> <p>Side Yard = 5'-15' min (0' party wall)</p> <p>Outdoor Amenity Space = 30%</p>
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S4: Medium-scale, mixed-use building in mixed-use areas with a wide range of active ground floor uses.

S5: Taller mixed-use buildings with many active uses limited to highly active areas that can support higher density housing and job growth.

6

Share Out, Key Themes + Ongoing Engagement



Questions?

Reach out to Maya Kattler-Gold at maya.kattler-gold@boston.gov or squaresandstreets@boston.gov with any questions!

Please come to upcoming Cleary Square project team **office hours**, which take place weekly on **Friday from 9am - 1pm at the Starbucks on River St.**

Be sure to join us at next Monday's educational workshop on Housing and Small Business at the same time and same place!

Thank you!

Maya Kattler-Gold - maya.kattler-gold@boston.gov

squaresandstreets@boston.gov

bit.ly/cleary-sq

Resources to learn more about zoning:

- [Bronin Report](#)
- [BPDA ZR initiatives](#)

