



Public Meeting 01/13/2025

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING ZONING

*We will begin the presentation at 6:05 PM.
Thank you for coming!*



ZOOM CONTROLS TO LISTEN TO INTERPRETERS

(EN) Look for the interpretation icon (**globe**) at the bottom of your screen and select the language you want to hear.

(Caboverdean) Djobe ikune di interpretason (**un globu**) na parti inferior di tela y selesiona bu língua ki bu kre skuta reunion.

(Kreyòl Ayisyen) Chèche ikòn entèpretasyon ki gen fòm (**glòb**) anba ekran ou an epi seleksyone lang ou vle tandè a.

(Español) Busque el ícono de la interpretación (**globo**) en el borde inferior de su pantalla y seleccione el idioma en el que desea escuchar.

(Tiếng Việt) Tìm biểu tượng phiên dịch (**hình quả địa cầu**) ở phía cuối màn hình của bạn và chọn ngôn ngữ bạn muốn nghe.

(简体中文) 查找屏幕底部的翻译图标(**地球仪**)，然后选择您想听到的语言。

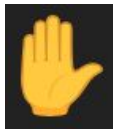
(繁體中文) 查找屏幕底部的翻譯圖標(**地球儀**)，然後選擇您想听到的語言。

ZOOM MEETING INFO + TIPS

- **The Planning Department will be recording this meeting** and posting it on the Planning Department's project webpage. If you do not wish to be recorded during the meeting, please turn off your microphone and camera.
- **Zoom controls are available at the bottom of your screen.** Clicking on these symbols activates different features.
- **Use raise hand function** (dial *9 if joining by phone) **and wait to be called upon to unmute** (dial *6 if joining by phone) before asking your question or providing comment.



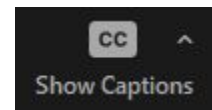
Mute/unmute



Raise hand to get in line to ask a question or provide comment



Turn video on/off



Turn on captions

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM ALL OF YOU!

We would like to make space for as many of you tonight, and engagement and conversations will continue with more opportunities to hear from you throughout the process.



ASK FOR CLARIFICATION IF NEEDED.
ASK QUESTIONS IN THE CHAT ALONG THE WAY



PLEASE KEEP QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS TO 2 MINUTES



RAISE YOUR HAND TO SPEAK AND AVOID INTERRUPTING OTHERS.



SPEAK FROM THE “I” AND BE MINDFUL OF THE DIVERSITY OF EXPERIENCES BOTH IN THE ROOM AND NOT.

MEET THE TEAM



Kathleen Onufer
Deputy Director of Zoning



Andrea Baena
Senior Planner I



Will Cohen
Senior Planner II



Abdul-Razak Zachariah
Planner II



Lorraine Kung
Urban Designer II



Yi Ming Wu
Urban Designer I

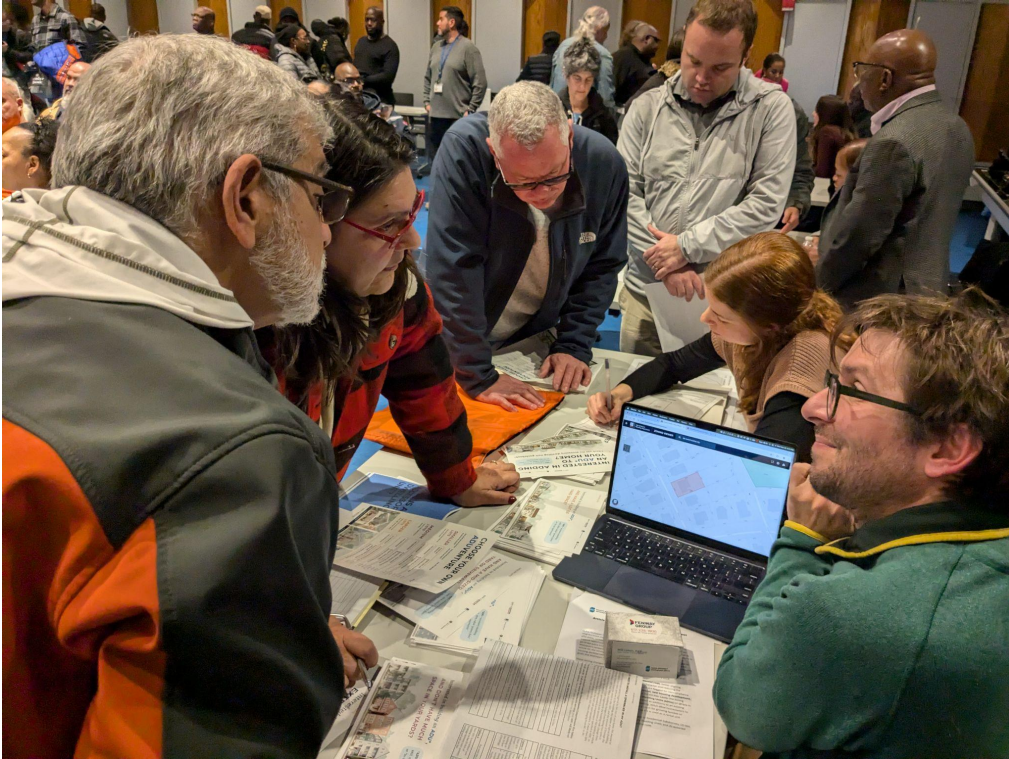
AGENDA

1. Intro
2. Survey Results
3. Phase 1: Areas with predominantly large lots
4. Zoning Considerations
5. Case Studies
6. Next steps



WHY DO WE NEED TO UPDATE ZONING SOON?

Many homeowners are already attempting to build ADUs or make improvements to their homes but are struggling with the lengthy and costly variance process.



“I’m **definitely interested** in moving forward [with an ADU], but I think I’m going to wait until they rezone my area. I’m **not in the mood** or **don’t have the time** to be **back-and-forth with the City** of Boston so I’ll wait for it.”

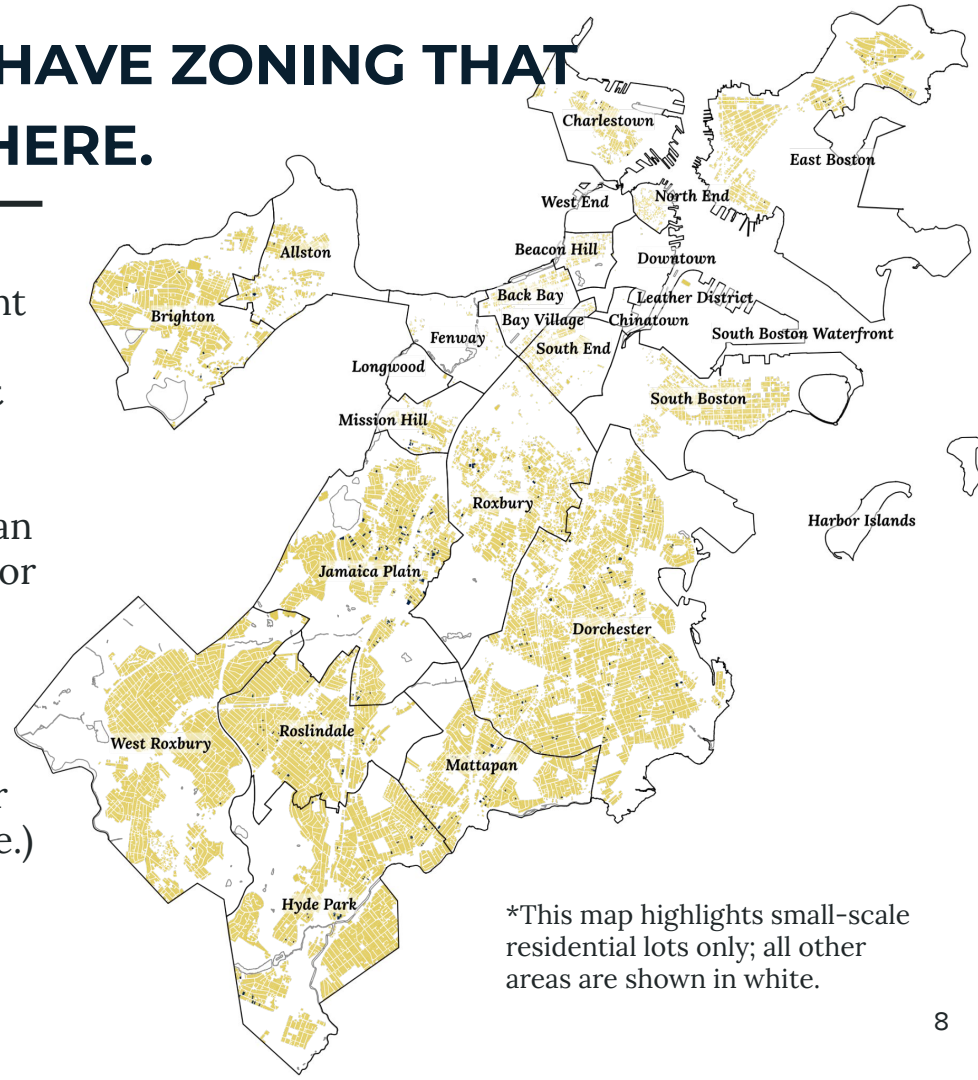
- One resident (not in this photo) to the Neighborhood Zoning team, echoing a commonly expressed sentiment



99% OF RESIDENTIAL LOTS HAVE ZONING THAT FAILS TO MATCH WHAT'S THERE.

Without case-by-case zoning relief, the current zoning code effectively declares that **nothing should be built in Boston that looks like what is currently in Boston.**

This is true whether it is infill on a vacant lot, an ADU, or a simple change like adding a dormer or rebuilding a porch.

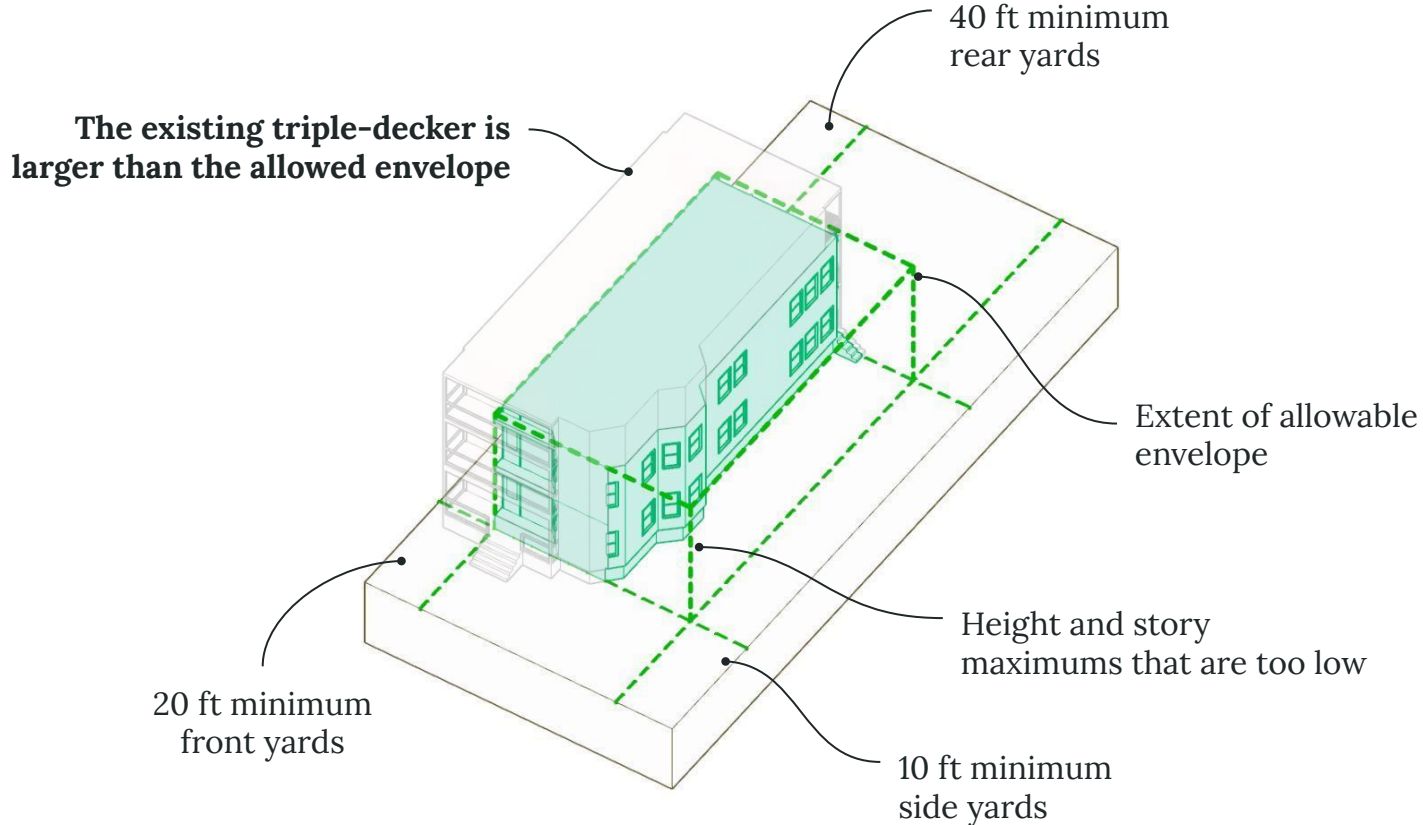
(99% of parcels fail to conform to unit count, lot size, floor area ratio, or yard requirements. This does not account for parking or any other zoning rules that cannot be measured citywide.)



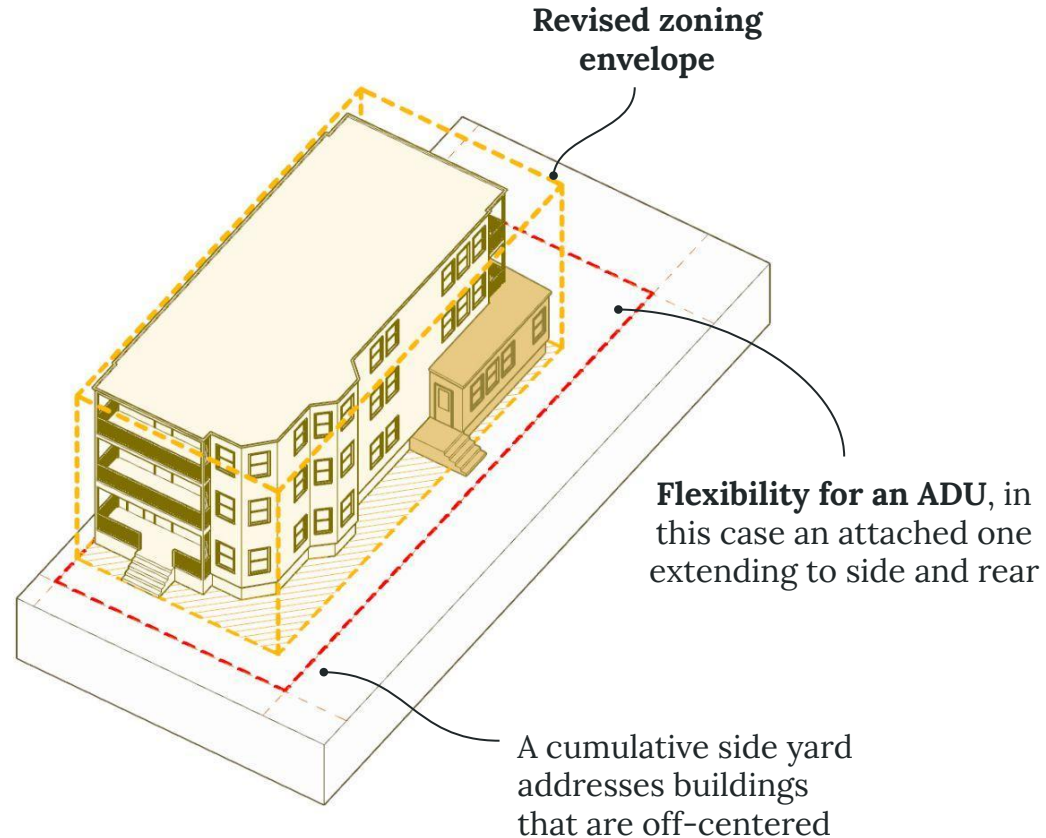
-  Compliant with certain zoning requirements
-  Non-compliant with at least one zoning requirement

*This map highlights small-scale residential lots only; all other areas are shown in white.

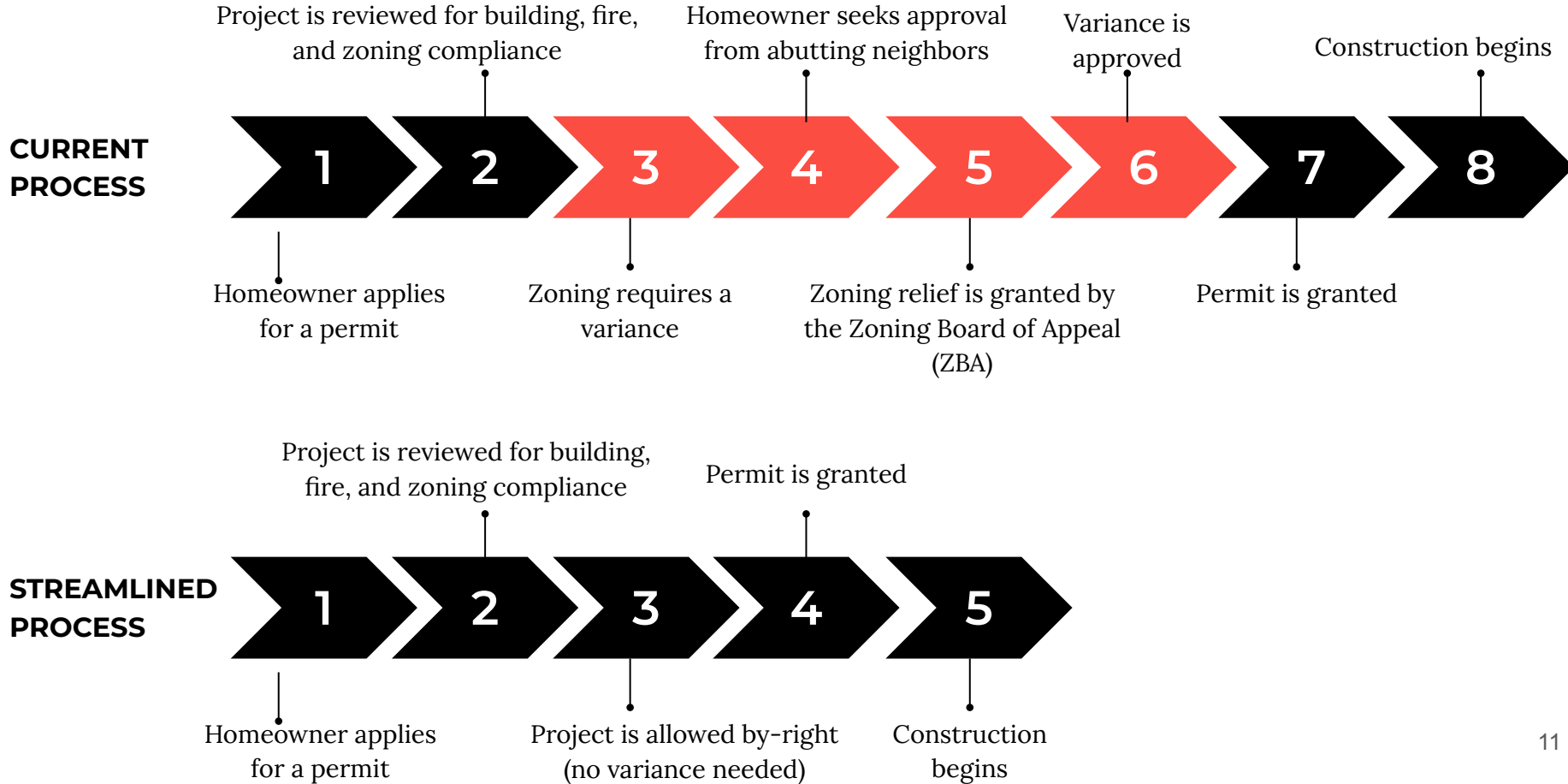
WHY NOT ALLOW ADUS WITHOUT ZONING CHANGES?



WHY NOT ALLOW ADUS WITHOUT ZONING CHANGES?



CURRENT VS. STREAMLINED PROCESS





**WHAT WE'VE HEARD
FROM YOU**

LOSE YOUR
EVENT

OWN

WHY THIS SURVEY?

Department **research into equitable engagement** work (right) has clearly demonstrated that **low-touch engagement** (such as brief surveys) **bring in new voices by reducing barriers to participation.**

We also **are asking questions directly about tradeoffs**, so responses can inform the nuanced decisions that must guide our initial zoning recommendations.

Community Barriers Survey

1,420 responses. Targeting community members who are not currently involved in our processes. We surveyed people by engaging people as they go about their day-to-day lives, collecting responses at T stops, community events, and targeted online outreach.

- **86%** of respondents are **interested in participating** in the BPDA's process.
- Respondents are **unable to participate** when they want to for many reasons, including
 - **39%** - **do not have the time** to attend meetings
 - **13%** - meeting **attendance does not have an impact**, and
 - **12%** - **unwelcoming environments.**
- **10%** of respondents said they are unable to participate because **meetings aren't accessible.** When asked why, respondents shared many accessibility barriers, including timing, awareness, and digital access.



1,420 responses collected in the community at T stops, events, and through targeted online outreach.

Examples of low touch engagement

Public comments survey

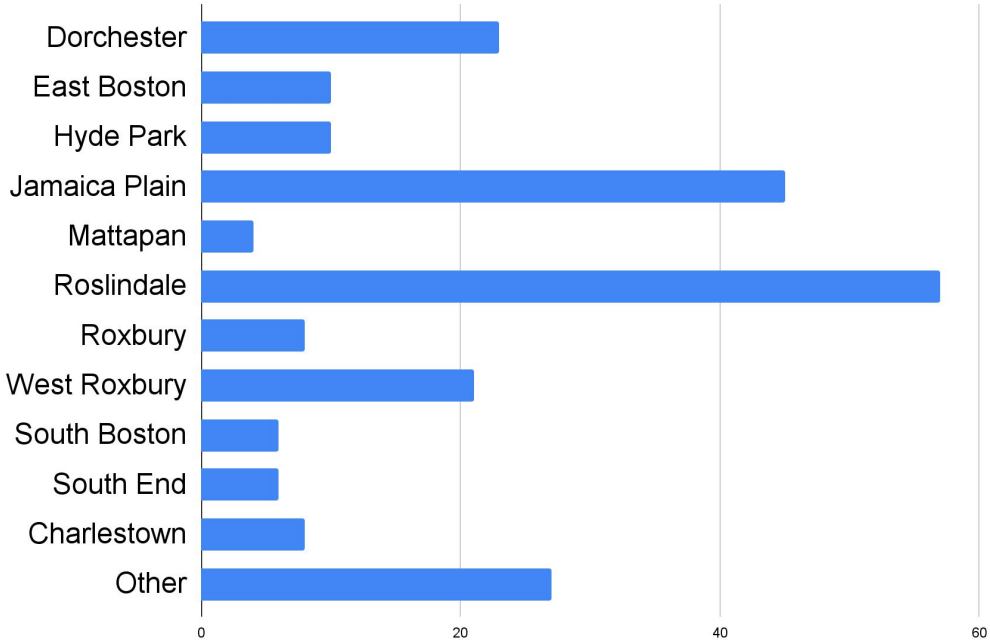
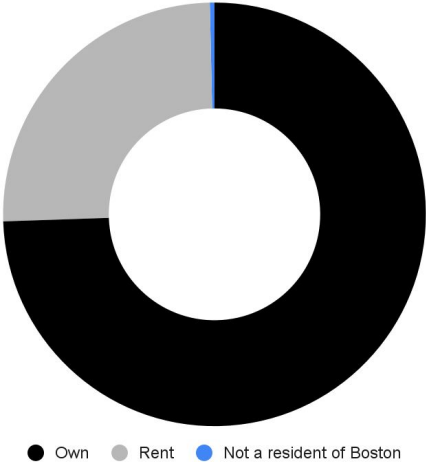
A structured survey that collects quantitative information relevant to a particular stage of project review. It includes a summary of the project to provide context, three to five multiple-choice questions, specific open-ended questions, and collects optional contact and demographic information.

Text-based “quick polls”

A text-based poll to make it very easy for community members to provide quick feedback. It helps the Planning Department quickly assess broad community sentiment. For example, a text poll could ask respondents one or two questions that will help identify priority categories of community benefits.

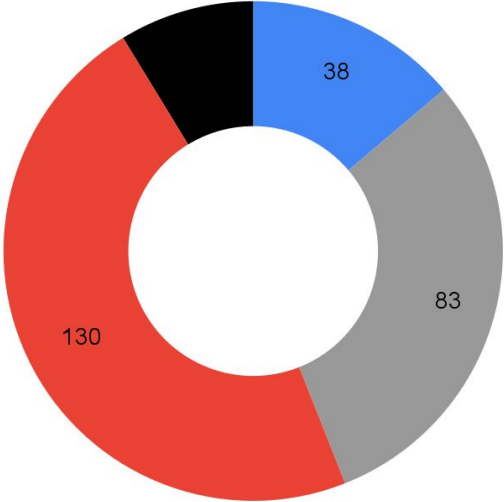
WHO IS TAKING THE SURVEY SO FAR





- 280+ people have taken the survey so far



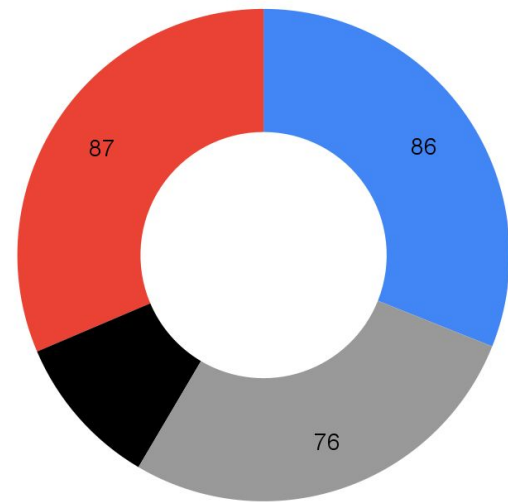
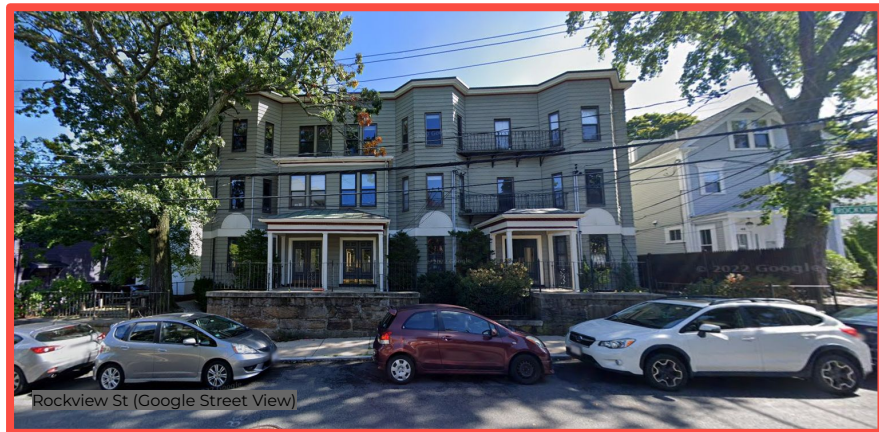
Count of What neighborhood do you live in?





INCREASE HEIGHT OR TAKE OVER YARD?



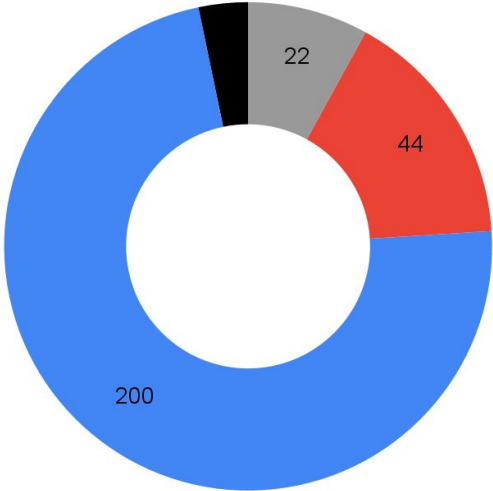
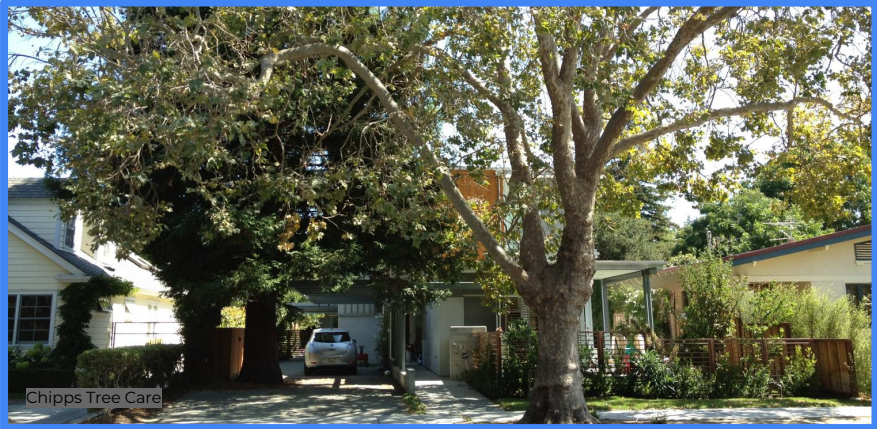
-  Take up some of their yard, which will reduce the amount of permeable surfaces
-  Have someone build on top of their house, which will **increase building height**
-  Neutral
-  Unsure

LARGER BUILDINGS WITH BIG YARDS OR SMALLER BUILDINGS WITH SMALL YARDS?



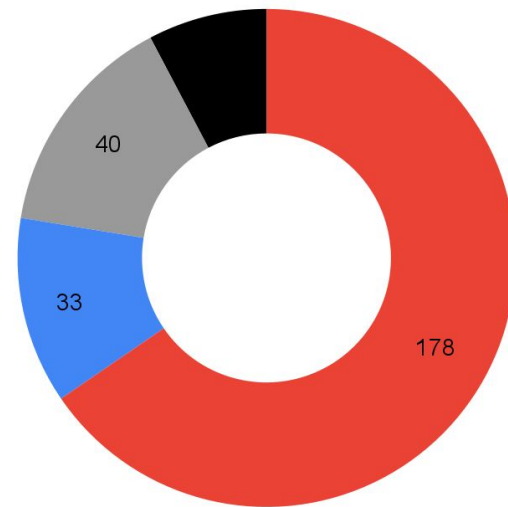
-  Allow homes to be closer together, with smaller buildings
-  Have more space between houses, with larger buildings to provide housing
-  Neutral
-  Unsure

PARKING OR TREES?



- Preserving trees
- Parking spaces for each home
- Neutral
- Unsure

TALLER HOMES WITH MORE YARD OR LOWER HOMES WITH LESS YARD?



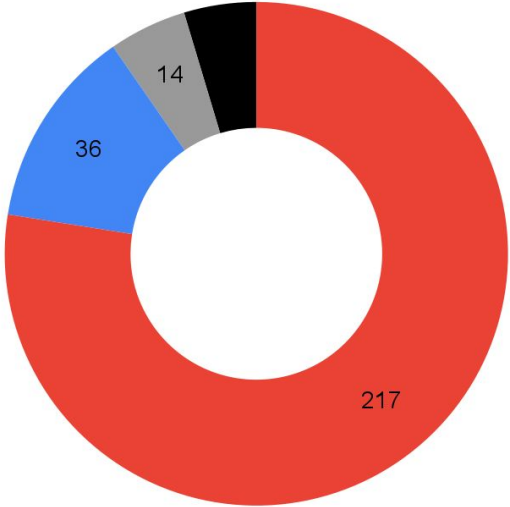
Keep homes lower but with more lot coverage, even if it means **less yard and fewer trees**





Allow taller homes to preserve more trees

Neutral

Unsure

HOMEOWNER FLEXIBILITY OR STRICT RULES?



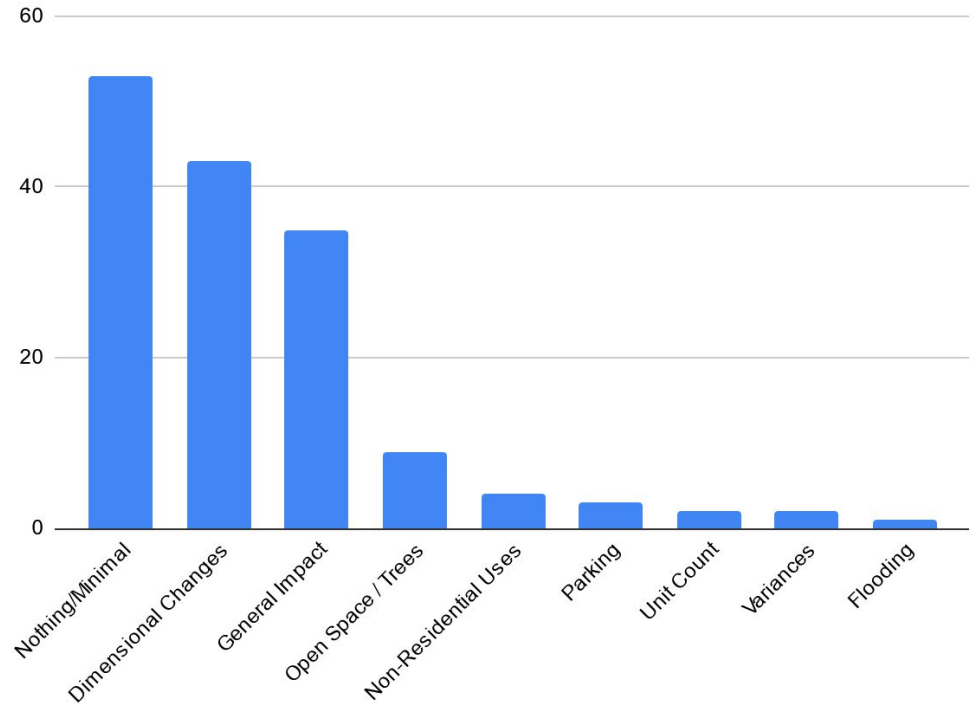
-  Keeping existing architectural features, even if it limits the ability for people to use their attics
-  Allowing more freedom to renovate attic spaces, even if it alters historical features like dormer
-  Neutral
-  Unsure

NEIGHBOR'S INPUT ON YOUR PROJECT

Most common feedback received was to say that neighbors should have **no or minimal feedback** beyond the rules established by zoning.

Second most common feedback was that neighbor input is most important when a proposal changes the **dimensional characteristics** (additions, building height, changes to yards).

Third most common feedback was to say that many **generalized adverse impacts** are important to let neighbors weigh in on, often centered around noise, disruption, or shadows.



PHASE 1



AREAS WITH PREDOMINANTLY LARGE LOTS

In this first phase, we will focus on **areas with mostly large lots** where properties have **up to four units** (portions of Dorchester, Hyde Park, Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, and West Roxbury).



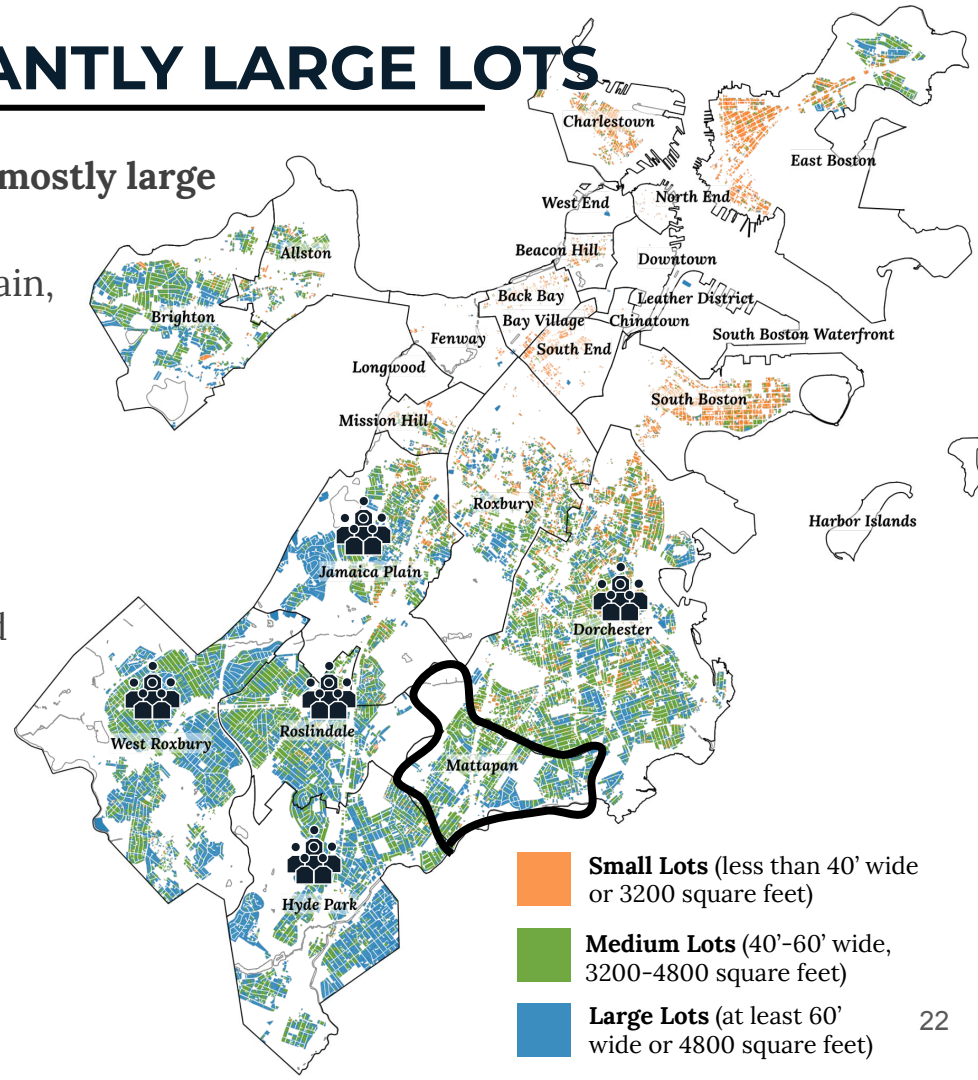
- **Areawide meeting(s)** to discuss citywide considerations,



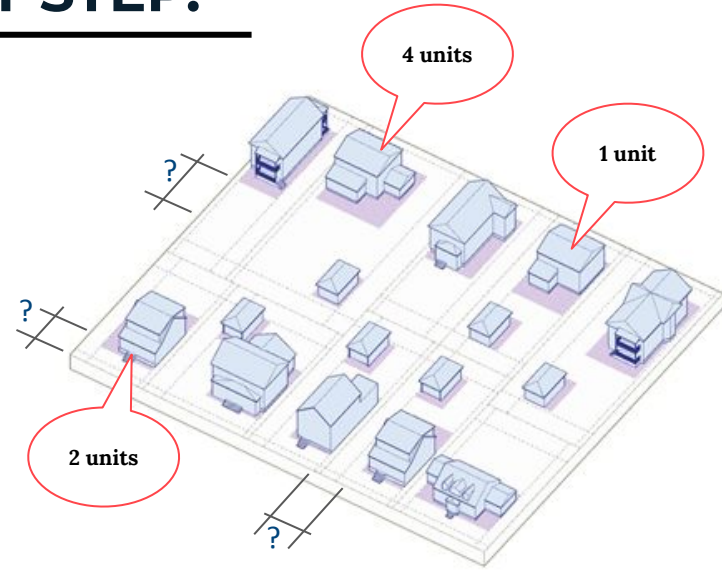
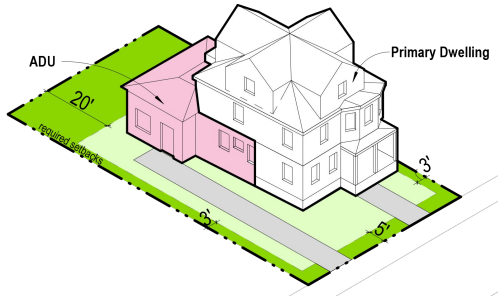
- **Neighborhood public meetings (virtual and in-person)** where we will discuss and adjust the framework to the logic of each neighborhood character, and



- **Smaller meetings** with elected officials, neighborhood organizations, and stakeholders for more individualized feedback.



LARGE LOTS ARE THE LOGICAL NEXT STEP.



Mattapan zoning has already done a big part of the work for large lots!

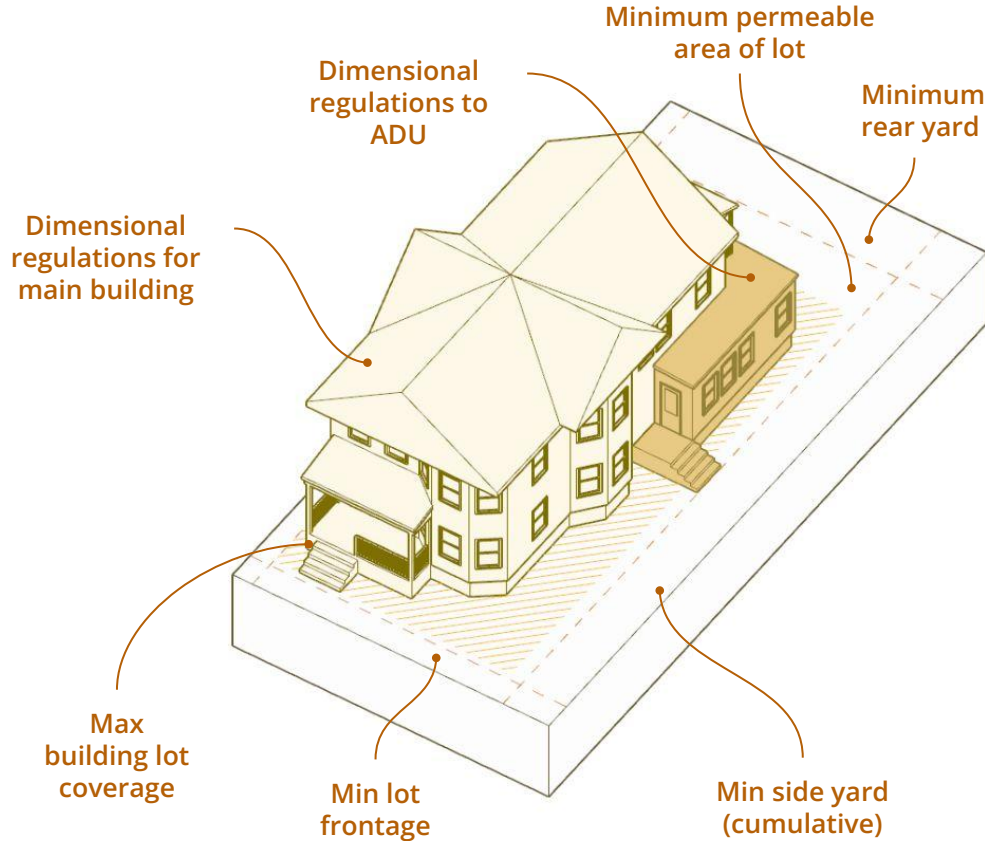
PLAN: Mattapan (2018-2024) successfully piloted new zoning and ADUs on large lots.

Large lots are everywhere!

- Bigger lots can accommodate the widest range of ADUs
- Enable ADUs and decrease the amount of ZBAs
(53% of ZBAs since Sept '23 have been in 1F, 2F and 3F zoning subdistricts)

Apply updated zoning across multiple neighborhoods

BUILDING OFF MATTAPAN'S NEW ZONING



Mattapan's zoning was a substantial **rewrite of Boston's approach to use and dimensional regulations** relative to zoning.

Key innovations include:

- Allowing additional units and floor area for ADUs
- Cumulative side yards
- Lot coverage
- Minimum permeable area of lot

ZONING DOESN'T CREATE CHANGES, PROPERTY OWNERS NEED TO DECIDE TO CREATE THIS CHANGE

Since new residential zoning has gone into place (in March 2024), there has been an incremental increase in by-right permits:

- **2 permits to convert a 1-family residence into a 2-family**
 - 1 was mostly internal, but 1 repurposed attached garage
- **2 permits for ADUs**
 - Both fully internal, would have been allowed through the existing citywide internal ADU zoning
- **1 permit for new construction**
 - Single-family house in Mattapan Residential-2

Townhouses were not contemplated in the Mattapan zoning. This initiative will also look at what are the right dimensions and rules for townhouse development.



An aerial photograph of a residential neighborhood. The houses are densely packed, with a variety of colors including red, green, blue, and white. Many houses have multiple stories and balconies. There are several trees scattered throughout the neighborhood, particularly in the center and foreground. The overall scene is a typical suburban or urban residential area.

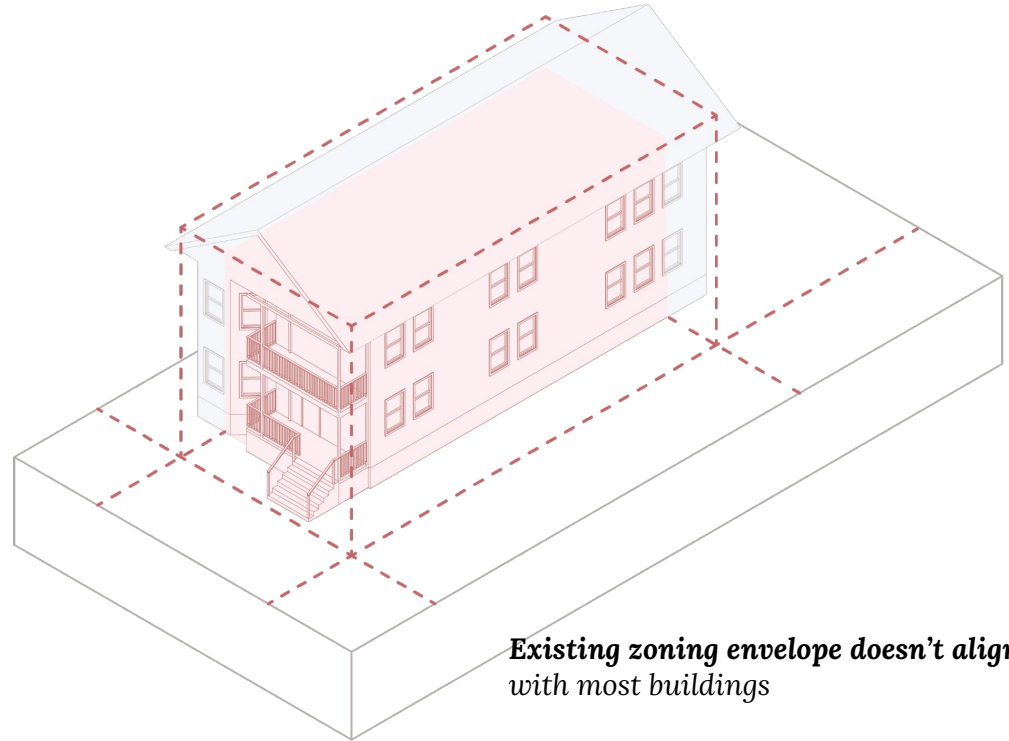
ZONING CONSIDERATIONS

ZONING DIMENSIONS

To **legalize existing buildings and make rules that look like our existing yards** we need to **update yard requirements**.

We also need to allow some **space for ADUs and additions** we will need to leave some **wiggle room**.

Proposed process = right sizing + room for additions

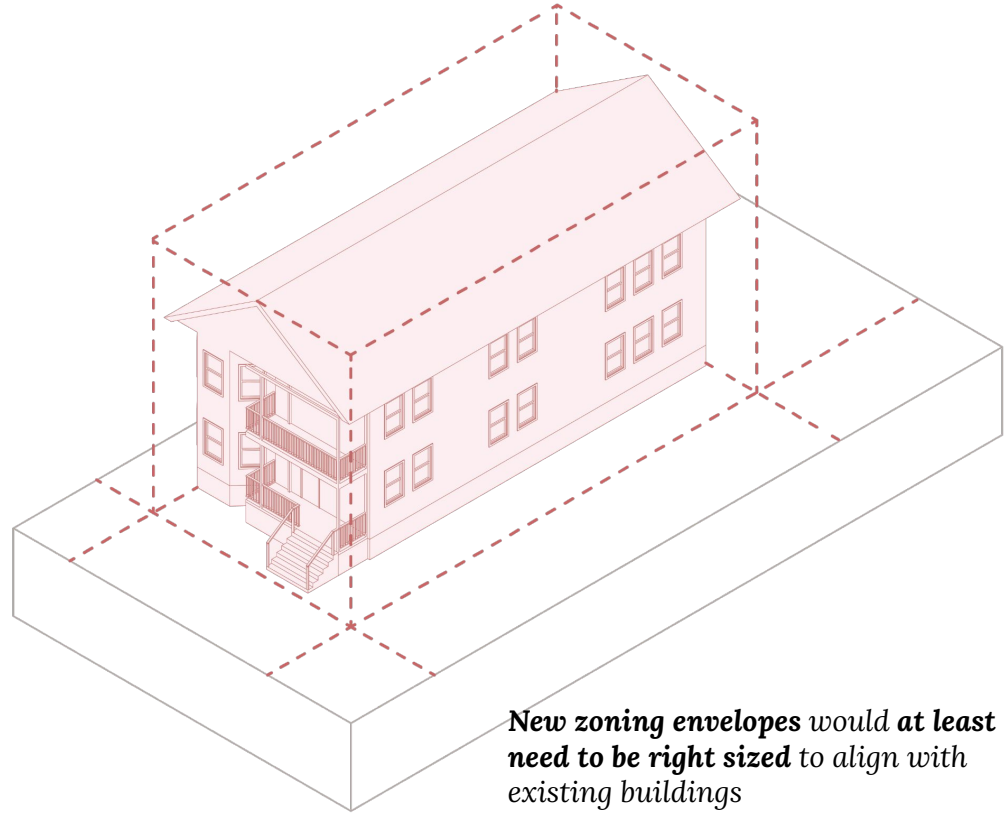


RIGHT-SIZING EXISTING BUILDINGS

To **legalize existing buildings and make rules that look like our existing yards** we need to **update yard requirements.**

We also need to allow some **space for ADUs and additions** we will need to leave some **wiggle room.**

Proposed process = **right sizing** + room for additions



New zoning envelopes would at least need to be right sized to align with existing buildings

MAKE SPACE FOR ADDITIONS AND ADUS

To **legalize existing buildings and make rules that look like our existing yards** we need to **update yard requirements**.

We also need to allow some **space for ADUs and additions** we will need to leave some **wiggle room**.

Proposed process = right sizing + room for additions



New zoning envelopes should then have some wiggle room to allow for additions or ADUs

CUMULATIVE SIDE YARDS

Many of our existing buildings in the Phase 1 residential areas are **located more to one side or another** so they can accommodate a driveway.

That means one side yard is generally much smaller than the other, larger side yard.

Like in Mattapan's zoning, we would **implement a cumulative side yard** measurement to allow more flexibility while still maintaining needed side yard setbacks.



LOT COVERAGE & BUILDING FLOOR PLATE

Lot coverage - or how big a building is in comparison to the its lot - varies across different areas of the city.

Therefore **rules for lot coverage should also vary** depending on existing patterns.

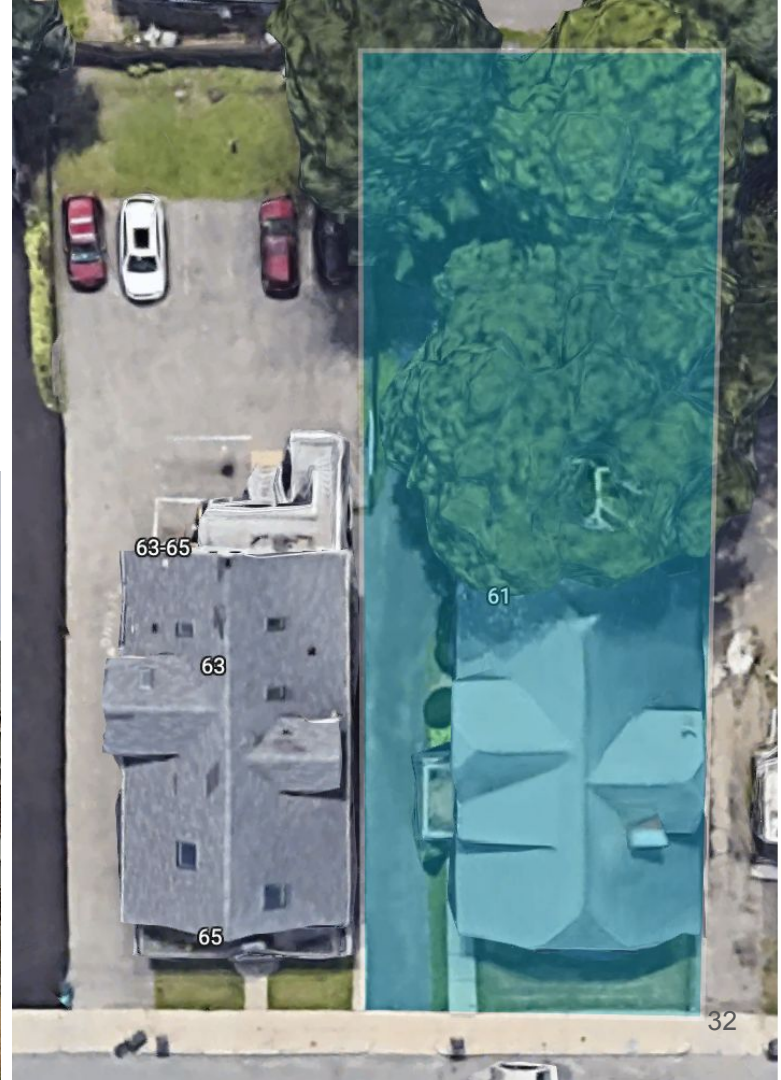
Lot coverage in conjunction with building floor plate size, will allow us to control the **appropriate space between buildings and the total size of buildings.**



PARKING

In many cases people need to replace green space and tear down trees to create off-street parking.

Most survey participants prefer less off street parking, rather than less trees or open space.



HEIGHT

Every neighborhood in Boston has triple deckers. If we want to continue to allow these we need to at least allow 3 stories everywhere.

Boston has many competing policy objectives for housing that have an effect on height.



Dorchester



Jamaica Plain



Roslindale



West Roxbury



Hyde Park



Mattapan

HEIGHT

Allowing the **option for pitched roofs is important**, and so is allowing for **dormers to make attic space livable**.

We will need to **rethink how roofs and height are defined** accordingly, especially since **we have many 3.5-story buildings with desirable architectural features**.

Allowing **four stories in some areas** can enable buildings that have to meet **accessibility requirements**, and can **incentivize the production of inclusionary units**.



DESIGN REVIEW

What are some things that should trigger design review?

- New curb cut
- More parking spaces
- Basement units (adequate egress, floor to ceiling height, window wells, flood risk, etc.)
- Maybe others?



TOWNHOUSES

Update zoning to enable townhouse typologies to be built in appropriate areas. Some of these projects are already exist in different neighborhoods.

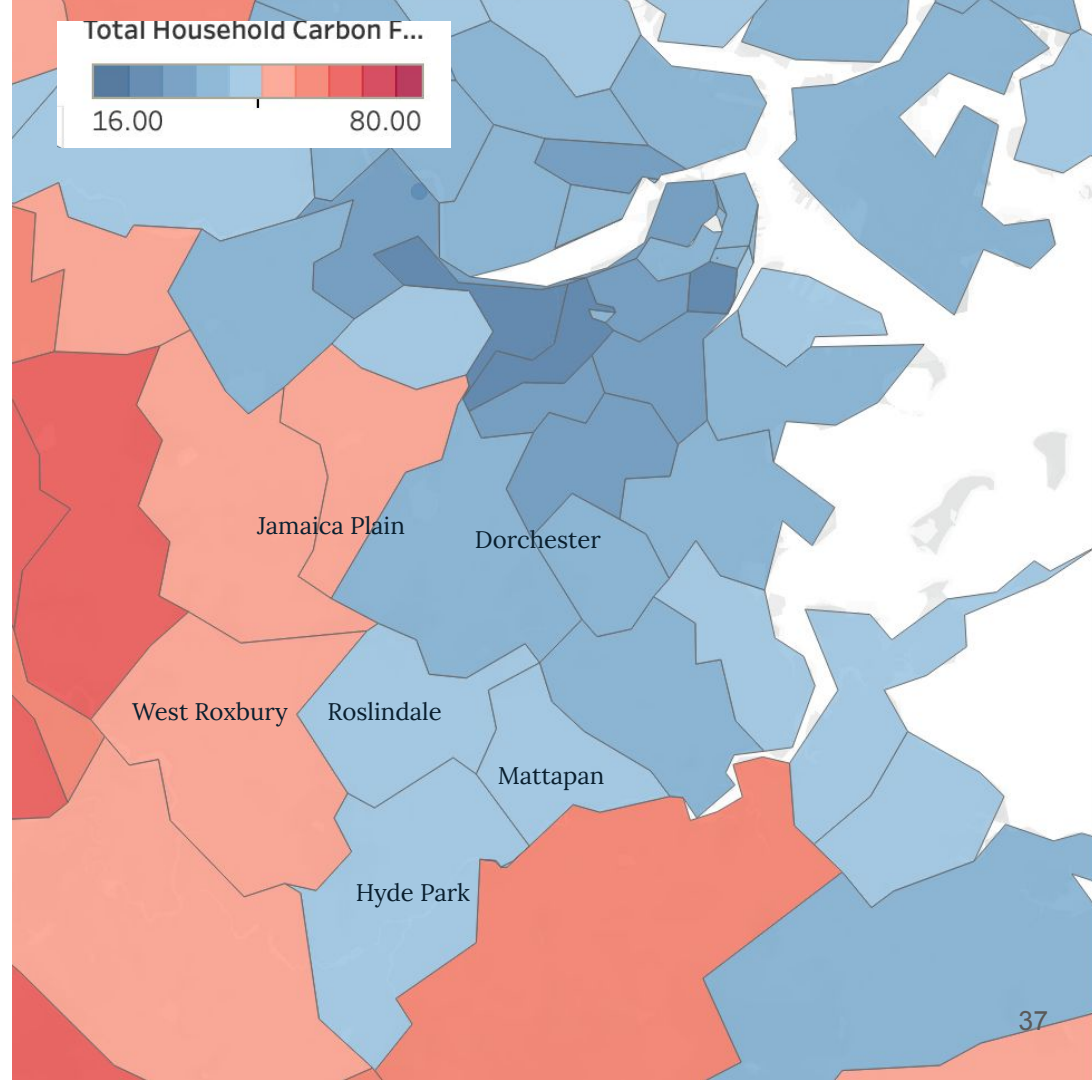
Townhouse clusters in...
Below: Cleary Square.
Right: Jamaica Plain



SUSTAINABLE NEIGHBORHOODS

Carbon footprint is higher for some zip codes than it is for others.

For example West Roxbury generally has a higher carbon footprint than Dorchester.



ACCESSORY HOME OCCUPATIONS + SMALL BUSINESSES

"in general, one should be able to open up a coffee shop, by right, in every Boston neighborhood, as well as a corner store/deli. **I want to be able to stroll over from my home to get a few groceries and a sandwich.**"

"Small businesses that **enhance community living without causing disturbances**, such as home-based services (e.g., tutoring, professional consulting, or small craft shops)."

"perhaps convenience stores, childcare facilities, laundry mats, **what has been identified as needed in the neighborhood** and that would not disrupt the neighborhood"

"Accessory home occupations should be allowed without explicit enumeration **as long as they don't create major safety issues**. Flexible rules **support local businesses** and **help neighborhoods thrive.**"

HOME OCCUPATION

Providing greater flexibility for home occupations (also known as home-based businesses) opens up many opportunities!

- Space for budding entrepreneurs, especially when they don't need or can't afford formal retail space
- Limited to uses commonly needed and desired in residential areas, like child care, home offices, therapy, or small cafés
- Variation in activities **and** in building forms – from a room or garage conversion to a small addition to a home



Image Sources (left to right starting from the top row): [Pink and Balayaged Salon in Rochester, NY](#); [Genelys Family Child Care in Jamaica Plain](#); [The Coach House in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada](#); [Estate House Coffee in West Haven, CT](#) (two photos); [Kevin Browne Architecture in Falmouth, ME](#); [2931 NE Broadway in Portland, OR](#).

CASE STUDIES

HOUSTON: *NO MAJOR CHANGES TO CHARACTER*

- By **reducing the minimum parcel sizes**, city made **family-sized town houses** viable.
- This policy change enabled development of over 34,000 townhouses from 2007 to 2020.
- **Land-use reforms often have only incremental impacts on the physical character** of residential neighborhoods.
- **Only about 0.5% of all single-family parcels had been redeveloped.**
- **New construction can be affordable for middle-class families.** Town houses cost less to build than detached single-family homes, in part because they use less land, which often means that they are also less expensive.



Photo credit: Houston Chronicle via Getty Images

PORTLAND, OR: *MOSTLY HOMEOWNERS*

- Portland doesn't have homeowner occupancy requirements
- Even then, the people developing ADUs are primarily the homeowner and small-scale developers. Due to the high cost of building, ADU construction is mostly happening in the higher value parts of the city
- **With 2010 amendment, number of permit approvals increased to around 500 a year in 2016 and 2017, up from 80 plus in 2010.** Amendment included:
 - Waiving impact fees
 - Increase allowable ADU size
 - Adjust design guidelines to address privacy concerns



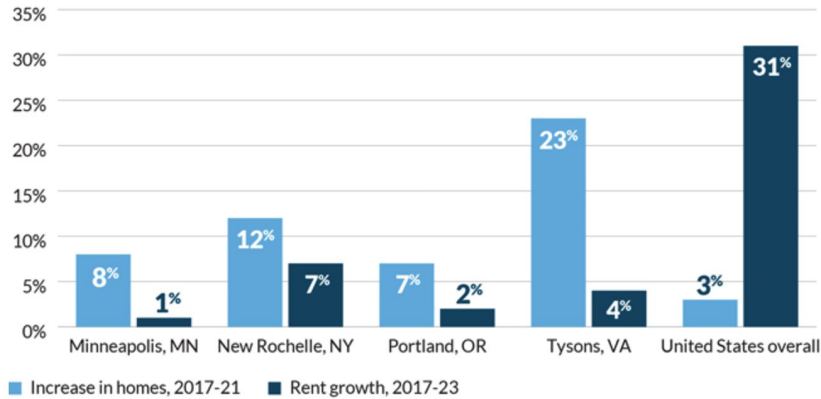
Photo credit: Hammer & Hand

MINNEAPOLIS: *MORE HOUSING = LOWER RENTS*

Figure 1

Rent Growth Proves Much Slower Than Nation in Jurisdictions That Have Allowed More Housing

Percentage change in homes, 2017-21, and median rent estimates, February 2017-February 2023



Note: The U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey data are one-year estimates, except for Tysons, for which only five-year estimates are available. The time frames are determined by data availability.

Sources: Pew's analysis of housing unit data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey and Apartment List Rent Estimate data downloaded on March 22, 2023

© 2023 The Pew Charitable Trusts

Source: [Pew Trusts](#)



Senator Tina Smith
@smith.senate.gov

+ Follow

So proud of the great work happening in Minneapolis, which shows that boosting housing supply helps make homes more affordable.

Minneapolis has built more housing than other Midwestern cities...

Cumulative new dwelling approvals per 1,000 people



...and is reaping the rewards as rents fall relative to inflation

Real-terms change in median rent (Jan 2017 = 100)



*Rents deflated by average incomes

Sources: FT analysis of data from State of the Cities Data Systems, Apartment List, BLS, Census Bureau

FT graphic: John Burn-Murdoch / @burnmurdoch
% FT

MASSACHUSETTS: *IS AHEAD OF BOSTON*

- Massachusetts recently passed a comprehensive housing bond bill commonly known as the **Affordable Homes Act**
- One of its provisions **allows ADUs under 900 square feet by right on single-family lots across the state**, and disallows having requirements of owner occupancy for properties with ADUs.
- The changes from the Affordable Homes Act do not apply to Boston. However, the fact that **ADUs are legal by-right elsewhere in the Commonwealth carries several implications for Boston:**
 - The state has recognized **owner occupancy requirements as a barrier** for ADU production
 - More non-traditional **funding mechanisms will become available** for smaller, less expensive accessory units
 - Easier for banks to offer standardized products



Image source: [Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov)

NEXT STEPS



PHASE 1 TIMELINE: AREAS WITH MOSTLY LARGER LOTS

MOH WORK IN MATTAPAN AND CITYWIDE CONTINUES IN PARALLEL ON GUIDING UP TO 20 ADUS THROUGH CONSTRUCTION

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR
ADUS CITYWIDE

INTRODUCING NEW LOAN PRODUCTS
FOR MATTAPAN ADUS

CONSTRUCTION OF
MATTAPAN ADUS

NOV 2024

ADU Guidebook Launch
and Public Meeting 1

Area-specific meetings and civic association workshops for
areas with large lots and generally 4 units

APR 2025

Public
Meeting 2

MAY 2025

Board

JUN 2025

Zoning
Commission

ADU
GUIDEBOOK

DRAFT MAP + TABLES

PUBLIC
COMMENT
PERIOD

DRAFT
AMENDMENT

APPROVAL
PROCESS

BRIEF
ELECTED
OFFICIALS

BRIEF HOUSING
SUPPORTERS


BRIEF CIVIC
ASSOCIATIONS

We have reached out to 12
Civic Associations so far

More time for engagement for future phases
for areas with medium and small lots

OVERLAPPING WORKSTREAM:
FUTURE PHASES TO BE COMPLETED IN EARLY 2026

NEXT STEPS

- **We will present draft zoning districts by the end of March at our next citywide public meeting. Stay tuned!**
- **Office Hours for additional questions.**
 - If you are interested in office hours please email us at: residentialzoning@boston.gov
- **Learn more: bostonplans.org/neighborhood-housing**
- **Take a look at the guidebook!** 
 - Accessible digital version: <https://bit.ly/ADU-Guidebook>
 - Printed copies are available at all BPL branches





THANK YOU!

