



Squares + Streets

Zoning Recommendations

*Proposed zoning updates for Boston's main streets
+ neighborhood centers*

Public Meeting

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.

(Cabo Verdean) Djobe íkune 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 tande 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。

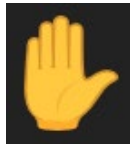
(繁體中文) 查找屏幕底部的翻譯圖標（地球儀），然後選擇您想听到的語言。

Zoom Meeting Info + Tips

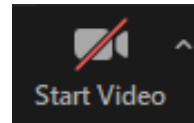
- **The BPDA will be recording this meeting** and posting it on the BPDA's project webpage. If you do not wish to be recorded during the meeting, please turn off your microphone and camera.
- **Zoom controls are available at the bottom of your screen.** Clicking on these symbols activates different features.
- **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.



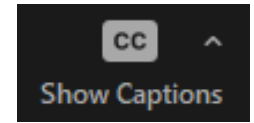
Mute/unmute



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



Turn video on/off



Turn on captions

Please Ask for Clarification!

Ask questions in the chat along the way – our staff are available to answer during the presentation!

Ask for us to clarify any terms or concepts we discuss – we want to make sure that what we cover is accessible to everyone so you can all share your informed feedback!

Squares + Streets Zoning Team

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Agenda

1. Squares + Streets Initiative Overview
2. Zoning for Squares + Streets
3. Land Use Modernization
4. Squares + Streets Zoning Districts
5. What We've Heard From Engagement
6. Next Steps and Future Engagement
7. Q&A and Discussion



What Information Should You Get Out of This?

1

Why Squares + Streets areas are a focus for **citywide zoning reform**

2

How we are **modernizing land uses** for today's needs

3

The **regulations and vision** for Squares + Streets districts

4

The **factors we are considering** as we draft these zoning districts

5

How you can **provide feedback**, stay updated, and help shape this zoning

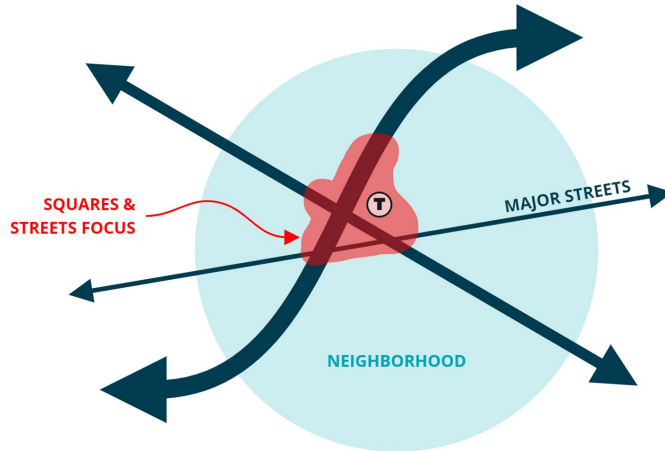
Overview of Squares + Streets



What is the Squares + Streets Initiative?

Squares + Streets is a **planning and zoning initiative** focused on expanding access to and activity in Boston's transit-accessible squares and main streets.

It's also one of the first steps towards **citywide zoning reform** and **comprehensive planning**, aligned with other citywide initiatives and goals.



What are the goals of Squares + Streets?

Squares + Streets – small geographic areas that are **near major transit stops** and **already provide essential goods and services** for local residents, businesses, and visitors.



Set more predictable development standards

Promote plentiful housing diversity and opportunity for a growing population

Reduce time and money spent on transportation

Bring people closer to the benefits of City services and investments

Encourage more patrons, employees, and economic opportunities for local small businesses

What will Squares + Streets deliver?

An opportunity to align planning with **actionable implementation pathways** that can be completed within 10 years including:

- **updated zoning for Squares + Streets**
- public space + streetscape investments
- plans for City-owned parcels
- programs + funding for small businesses, arts, housing, and other local needs



Zoning for Squares + Streets



What is zoning?

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

Article 80 (a chapter of the Boston Zoning Code) provides specific requirements for the review of certain development projects in all of the neighborhoods of Boston.

These are encoded in zoning.



Land Use

Dimensional Regulations

These are enforced at the project level through Article 80 review.



Design Guidelines

Individual Site Design

Land Use Regulations

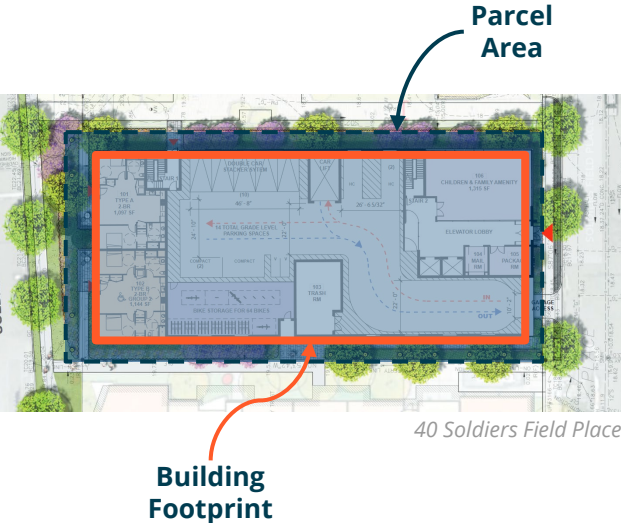
Boston's Zoning Code regulates **how land can be used**

Each land *use* is delegated as **allowed, conditional, or forbidden** in each area of the City

- ***Conditional*** means it requires a conditional use permit, based on set criteria, from the Zoning Board of Appeal

Dimensional Regulations

Building Lot Coverage



40 Soldiers Field Place

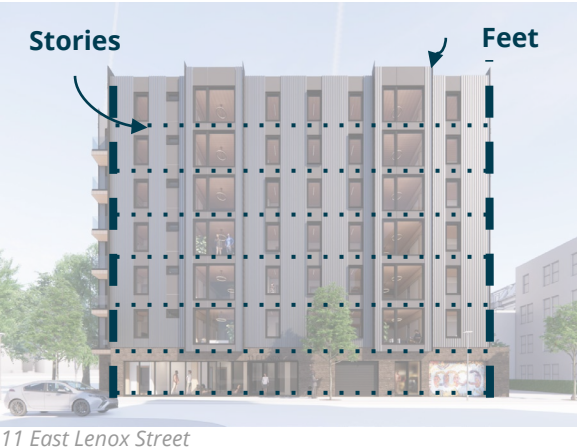
Setbacks



"Zero-lot-line"



Height



11 East Lenox Street

Why rezone?

1

Current zoning regulations do not match what's built, what exists, or the ways we want to grow

2

Updated zoning sets clear standards for what can be built (and makes it harder to rely on variances)

3

Provide pathways for small scale residential and commercial development as well as larger ones

4

Make the zoning code more legible, predictable, and easy to navigate

How do we update zoning?

Zoning text amendment

Change(s) in the **written text** of the Zoning Code that become **new or updated rules** for land use and development that we can apply to specific sections of the City or the City as a whole.

Zoning map amendment

Change(s) in the **geographic location and application of specific zoning rules** on the zoning map of one or more areas within the City.

	One Family (1F)	Two Family (2F)	Three Family (3F)	Conservation Multifamily Residential (MFR)	Community Protection Subdistricts (CPS)	Facilities Subdistricts (CF)
Child care center	€A	€A	€A	€A ⁽²⁾	A	€A

(2) Where designated "A" or "C," provided that such use is located on the ground floor, or in a basement with a separate entrance; otherwise forbidden.



Land Use Modernization

A woman wearing a light green jacket, black pants, and a white headband stands on a sidewalk next to a black bicycle with yellow handlebars. She is positioned in front of a building with a purple facade and a wooden double door. The door has a glass panel with several stickers, including one with the number '264' and another with '369'. The building features ornate black wrought-iron gates and a hanging lantern above the door. To the left, a window displays an ice cream cone decoration. In the foreground, two black metal bollards are visible on the sidewalk.

Challenge

Current Use Regulations:

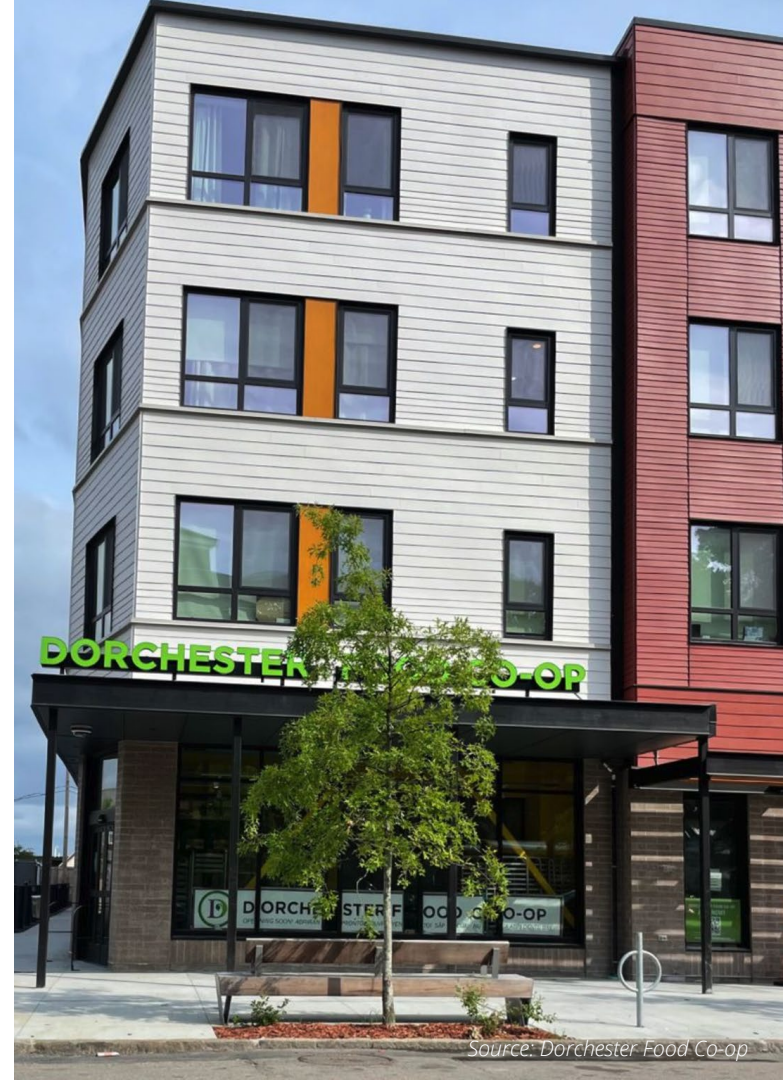
- exist in **many places throughout the code** (each neighborhood article as well as the base code)
- are **difficult to navigate** for both the public and the Inspectional Services Department staff who review building permits.
- are also **outdated** and don't always address current planning goals



Opportunity

New Use Regulations:

- include a **simpler table** with similar uses consolidated and obsolete uses removed
- include **improved definitions**
- include **form and performance standards** where appropriate
- Becomes the basis for **City-wide zoning reform** and singular place where future updates can be made



Inventory of Uses

Automatic teller machine
Bank
Drive-in bank
Post office
Adult education center
community center
day care center
day care center, elderly
library
place of worship
monastery
convent
parish house
Residence for members of religious order
Art gallery
Art Use
Auditorium
Cinema
Concert hall
Museum
Public art, display space
Studio, arts
Studio, production
Theatre
Theater
Ticket sales
Musical instrument repair
Art metal craft shop
Dormitory not accessory to a use
fraternity
Adult bookstore

Bakery
Cannabis Establishment
General retail business
Liquor store
Local retail business
Outdoor sale of garden supplies
Pawnshop
Music store
College or university
Elementary or secondary school
Kindergarten
Professional school
Trade school
Cemetery
Columbarium
Crematory
Funeral home
Mortuary chapel
Cemetery extension
Adult entertainment
Amusement game machines in commercial establishment
Amusement game machines in non-commercial establishment
amusement game machines in noncommercial establishment
Bar
Bar with live entertainment
Restaurant with live entertainment, not operating after 10:30 p.m.
Restaurant with live entertainment, operating after 10:30 p.m.
Bowling alley
Billiard parlor
Dance hall
Drive-in theatre
Fitness center or gymnasium

Private club
Private club not serving alcohol
Private club serving alcohol
Restaurant with entertainment
Social, recreational, or sports center
Concert hall
Clinic
Custodial care facility
Group care residence, general
Group residence, general
Hospital
Nursing or convalescent home
Bed and breakfast
Conference center
Executive suites
Hotel
Motel
Apartment hotel
Cleaning plant
General manufacturing use
Light manufacturing use
Printing plant
Restricted industrial use
Art use
Agency or professional office
General office
Office of wholesale business
back office
Golf driving range
grounds for sport, private
open space
open space recreational building
outdoor place of recreation for profit
Stadium
Automatic telephone exchange
telecommunications data distribution center

Artists' mixed-use
Courthouse
Fire station
Outdoor payphone
Penal institution
Police station
Pumping station
Recycling Facility
Recycling facility (excluding facilities handling toxic waste)
Solid waste transfer station
substation
Sub-station
Telephone exchange
Telephones
Research laboratory
Congregate living complex
Elderly housing
Group residence, limited
Homeless shelter
Lodging house
Mobile home
Mobile home park
Multi-family dwelling
One family detached dwelling
One family semi-attached dwelling
Orphanage
Rowhouse
Temporary dwelling structure
Three family detached dwelling
Townhouse
Transitional housing or homeless shelter
Transitional housing
Two family detached dwelling
Two family semi-attached dwelling
Drive-in restaurant
Restaurant

Take-out restaurant
Animal hospital
Barber or beauty shop
Body art establishment
Caterer's establishment
Check cashing business
Container redemption center
Dry-cleaning shop
Kennel
Laundry, retail service
Laundry, self-service
Photocopying establishment
Shoe repair
Tailor shop
Storage of solid fuel or minerals
Outdoor storage of solid fuel or minerals
Outdoor storage of new materials
Outdoor storage of damaged or disabled vehicles
Outdoor storage of junk and scrap
Outdoor storage of solid fuel or minerals
Storage of flammable liquids and gases
Storage or transfer of toxic waste
Storage of dumpsters not accessory or ancillary to a main use, nor used in conjunction with the ongoing operation of a permitted site with explicit legal use and occupancy as a dumpster repair facility, waste hauling contractor, or site assigned and licensed solid waste management facility
Warehousing
Wrecking yard
Storage of Dumpsters
Storage of certain materials
Carpenter's shop
Electrician's shop

Photographer's studio
Plumber's shop
Radio/television repair
Taxidermist shop
Upholsterer's shop
Welder's shop
Airport
Bus terminal
Garage with dispatch
Helicopter landing facility
Motor freight terminal
Rail freight terminal
Railroad passenger station
Water terminal
Water terminal - freight
Water terminal - passenger
Airport-related remote parking facility
Bus servicing or storage
Carwash
Gasoline station
indoor installation of automotive parts
Indoor sale, with or without installation, of automotive parts, accessories and supplies
Indoor sale of automobiles and trucks
Indoor sale of motor vehicles
Outdoor sale of new and used motor vehicles
Parking garage
Railroad passenger station
Parking lot
Rental agency for cars
Rental agency for trucks
Repair garage
Truck servicing or storage
Wholesale business
Machine shop

Over 250 Individual Uses

Remove Obsolete Uses

Automatic teller machine
Bank
Drive-in bank
Post office
Adult education center
community center
day care center
day care center, elderly
library
place of worship
monastery
convent
parish house
Residence for members of religious order
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back office
Golf driving range
grounds for sport, private
open space
open space recreational building
outdoor place of recreation for profit
Residential
Automatic telephone exchange
telecommunications center

Outdoor Payphone

Artists' mixed-use
Courtthouse
Fire station
Food or drug pharmacy
Penal institution
Police station
Pumping station
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Recycling facility (excluding facilities handling toxic waste)
Solid waste transfer station
substation
Telephone exchange
Telephone exchange
Payphone(s)
Restaurant
Congregate living complex
Elderly housing
Group residence, limited
Homeless shelter
Lodging house
Mobile home
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Railroad passenger station
Water terminal
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Railroad passenger station
Parking lot
Rental agency for cars
Rental agency for trucks
Repair garage
Truck servicing or storage
Wholesale business
Machine shop

Grouping Similar Uses

Guiding questions:

What uses are distinctly unique?

What is the scale and impact of each use?

What non-zoning regulations impact the uses? E.x. liquor licenses

Form and Performance Standards

Examples of considerations and potential standards:

Concerns:

Noise impacts



Standards:

Limit hours of operation

Empty or “unactivated” ground floors



Require retail or other active use on ground floor

Example: “Customer Services”

This use consolidates several current uses in the Code which all involve providing services to customers. Includes:

- Barber, beauty, or body art establishment
- Laundry or location for dry-cleaning drop-off
- Post office or parcel pickup/dropoff location
- Fitness center or gymnasium
- Animal hospital, daycare, grooming, and kennel

Small - Up to 10,000 square feet

Large - 10,000 square feet or more



Linda's Hair Braiding, Dorchester - 2,000 sf



Boston Animal Hospital, Newmarket - 21,753 sf

Example: “Retail Store”

Currently, retail stores are regulated as “general retail” and “local retail.” A distinction between the two was to separate local, small businesses, and larger, big-box stores. The new **“Retail Store” now includes size thresholds to determine scale and impact** rather than a description of the businesses themselves.

Small - Up to 2,500 square feet

Medium - 2,500-10,000 square feet

Large - 10,000-50,000 square feet

Extra Large - Greater than 50,000 square feet

Small



Lily's Market, Mattapan - 2,200 sf

Medium



Walgreens, Central Sq - 9,000 sf

Large



T.J. Maxx, Back Bay - 45,000 sf

Extra Large



Target, Fenway - 160,000 sf

Example: “Grocery Store”

Grocery Store is not currently a use in the zoning code (considered part of retail). “Grocery store” is now included to be able to **allow them explicitly in more places.**

Size distinctions can limit large grocery stores in residential neighborhoods where impacts from customer traffic could be a nuisance.

Small - Up to 15,000 SF

Large - 15,000 SF or more



The Daily, Dorchester - 3,500 sf



Star Market, Copley - 57,000 sf

Example: “Live Entertainment”

Live Entertainment facilities **regularly host live, ticketed events** like theaters, cinemas, concert halls, arenas, and stadiums.

Capacity thresholds are used to allow Live Entertainment in a **range of scales and districts**. For example, a “Small” facility could be accessible to more residential neighborhoods.

Small - Up to 500 people

Medium - 500-2,000 people

Large - 2,000-10,000 people

Extra Large - 10,000 or more people

Small



Brighton Music Hall - 476 people

Medium



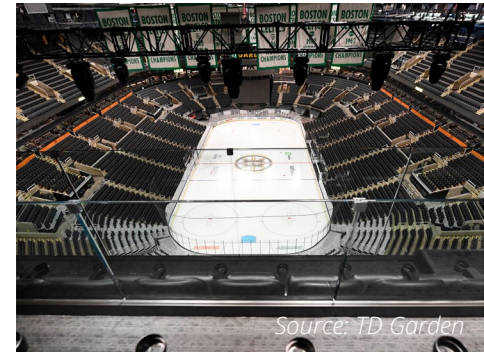
Strand Theatre - 1,400 people

Large



Symphony Hall - 2,371 people

Extra Large



TD Garden - 19,580 people

Example: “Bar or Restaurant” and “Cafe”

A “Cafe” is under 2,500 square feet, does not serve alcohol, and includes places like coffee shops, ice cream parlors, and bakeries.

Today, most restaurants in Boston need to go to the Zoning Board of Appeal to provide a takeout food service. New definitions will include takeout, **anywhere “Bar or Restaurant” and “Cafe” is allowed, takeout will be allowed.**

*Q: Should a restaurant that hosts live entertainment be regulated differently?
Should a restaurant with takeout be regulated differently?*



Cafe JuiceUp, Mattapan - 700 sf

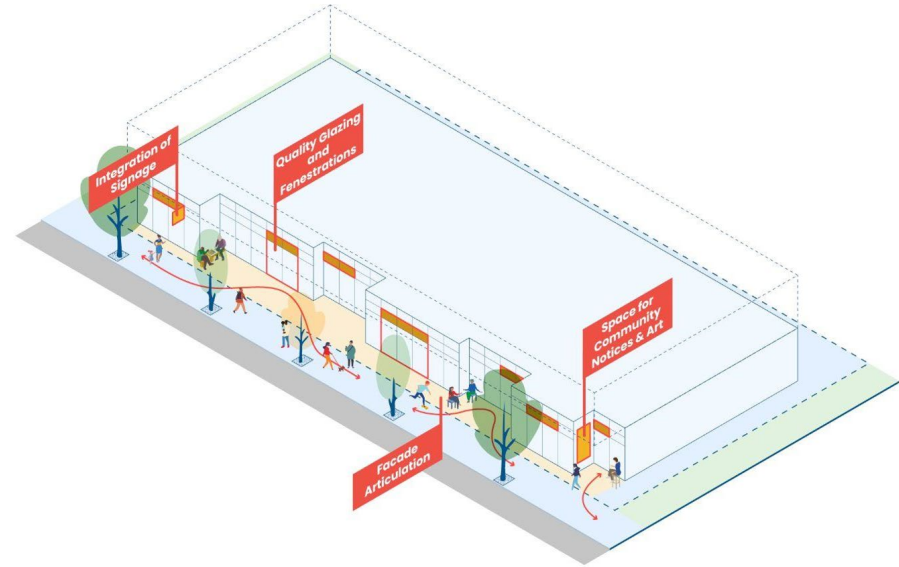


Comfort Kitchen, Dorchester - 1,000 sf

Defining “Active” Ground Floors

Active Ground Floor Uses

- Bar or Restaurant
- Cafe
- Retail Store
- Customer Services
- Event Center
- Grocery Store
- Live Entertainment
- Public lobbies of a Hotel, Office, or Residential use.
- Museum or Art Gallery
- Limited Uses
- Retail Cannabis Establishment
- Community Uses except for Open Space
- Indoor Activities



Q: What should be considered an “active” use?

A photograph of a modern, multi-story residential building with grey and yellow siding, set against a backdrop of older brick buildings and a street with parked cars. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark grey filter. The text "Squares + Streets Draft Zoning Districts" is centered in white, bold, sans-serif font.

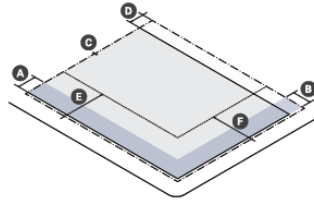
Squares + Streets Draft Zoning Districts

What differentiates each district?



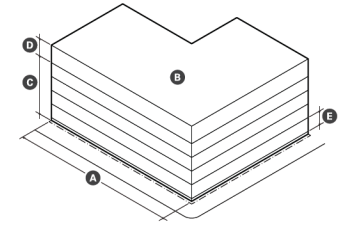
Uses

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



Lot Standards

- Size of front, rear, and side yards
- Maximum floorplate for the building



Building Form

- Maximum building width
- Maximum building height and stories

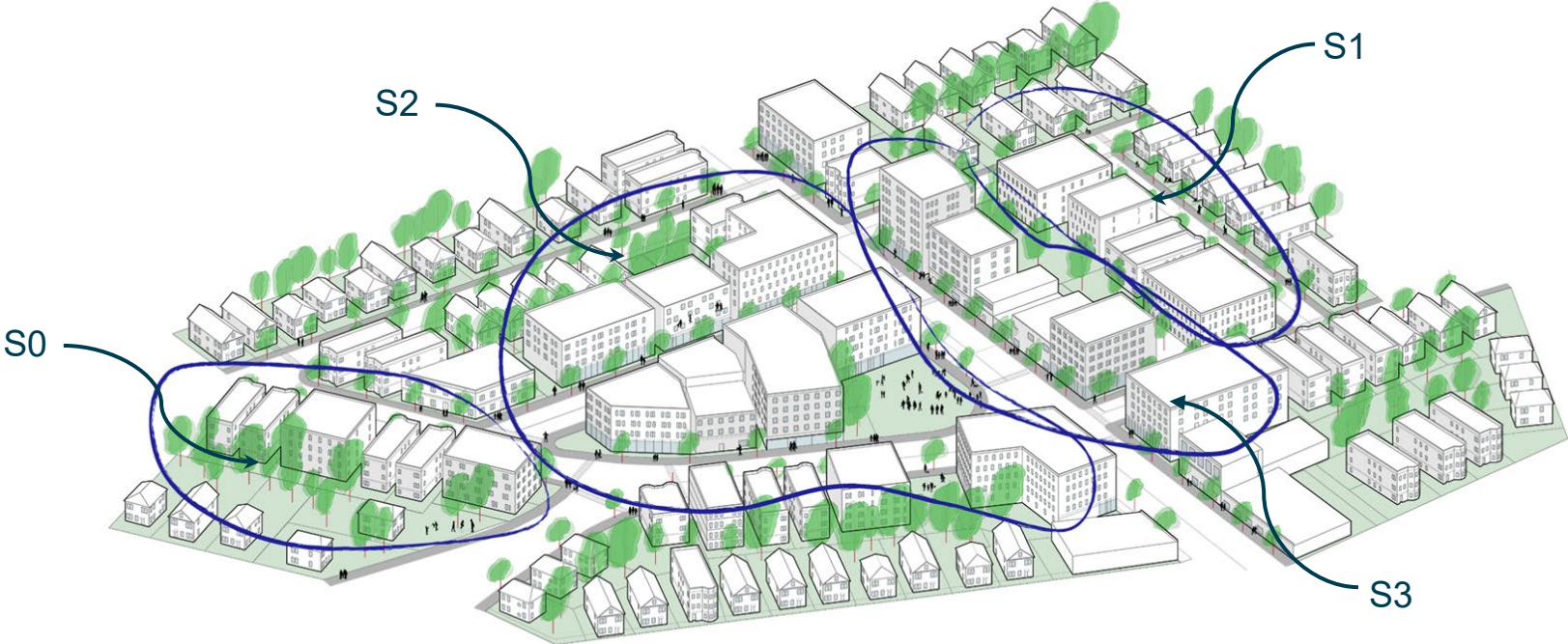
How could districts be mapped?



How could districts be mapped?



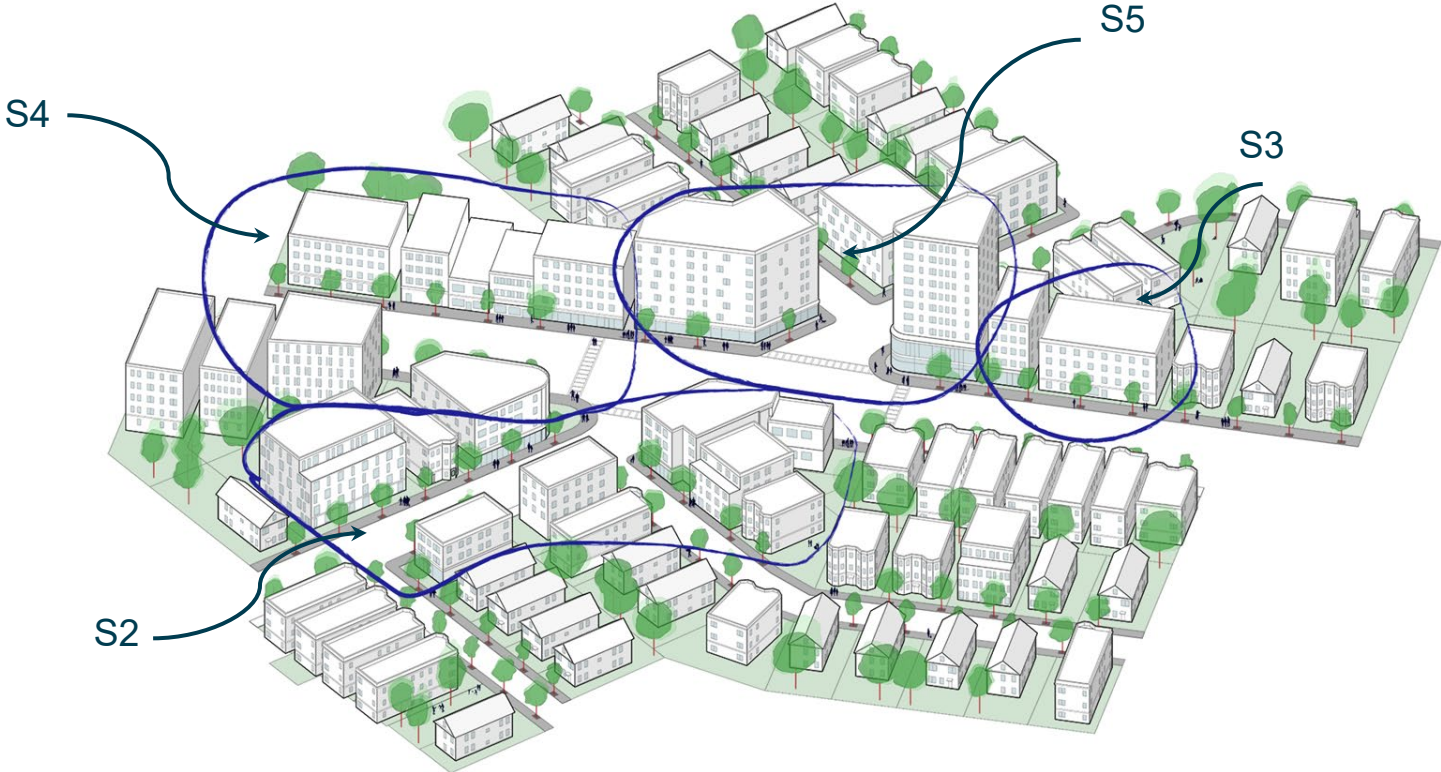
How could districts be mapped?



How could districts be mapped?



How could districts be mapped?



S-0 District: Transition Residential

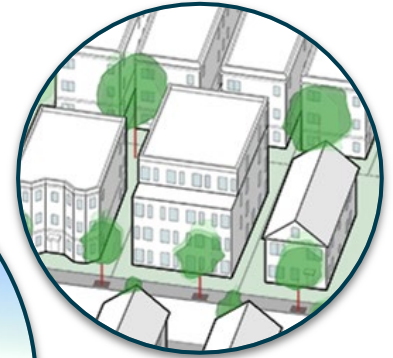
Fine-grained residential district that provides a transition from mixed-use and high activity streets and squares to lower activity residential areas.

Uses

- Only residential uses allowed; limited to sub-Article 80 scale

Form

- Transition “round the corner” to the rest of the neighborhood; only mapped on smaller parcels
- Small maximum building floorplate
- Front and side yard requirements make space for trees, lowest lot coverage and highest permeable area requirements



S-1 District: Main Street Living

Predominantly residential buildings that can also have small-scale storefronts or offices on the ground floor.

Uses

- Small-scale neighborhood retail like cafes, art studios, or small sized grocery stores allowed on the ground floor, although ground floor residential is a common condition
- Residential required on the upper floors

Form

- Small-scale side and front yards to provide more permeable area and a buffer with lower and higher scale areas



S-2 District: Main Street Mixed Use

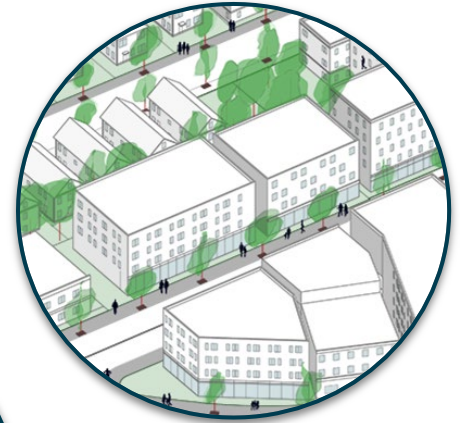
Mainstreet mixed-use buildings where ground-floor-retail and storefronts are a the prevailing condition.

Uses

- Small to medium sized neighborhood uses allowed on the ground floor
- Active ground floor uses are required
- Residential required on the upper floors

Form

- Mid-rise buildings, that can fill the front of the lot (zero-lot-line) to help create a “main street” like streetscape
- Lower lot coverage than larger scale districts to ensure some yard space



Smaller lot coverage to ensure some yard space



S-3 District: Active Main Street

Mainstreet residential and small-scale hospitality buildings in neighborhood mixed-use areas with a wider range of ground floor uses.

Uses

- Accommodates larger-scale ground floor uses that draw people to streets and squares like live entertainment or a large gym
- Active ground floor uses are required
- Residential required on the upper floors

Form

- Taller mid-rise buildings allowed, with mainstreet zero-lot-line conditions
- Higher lot coverage allowed



S-4 District: Active Squares

Mid-rise mixed-use building in neighborhood mixed-use areas with a wide range of active ground floor uses.

Uses

- Mixed-use residential or commercial upper floors
- Wide range of uses allowed on the ground floor, including larger grocery stores,
- Active ground floor uses are required
- Residential uses limited to upper floors

Form

- Taller mid-rise buildings allowed, with mainstreet zero-lot-line conditions
- Larger rear setbacks next to residential districts



S-5 District: Placemaker Squares

Exceptional sites with high-street frontage or notable locations in squares; exceptional uses and transit access

Uses

- Commercial, hospitality, and entertainment uses allowed throughout building (although limited in overall size)
- Active ground floor uses are required
- Residential uses limited to upper floors

Form

- Mid to high-rise buildings, including heavy timber construction
- Smaller lot coverage than S3 and S4 to ensure open space
- Larger rear setbacks next to residential districts



Requirements Across Districts

- 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 (S2-S5)
- **Limit building footprint and building width** to better reflect existing urban design scale
- Create better places to live by requiring square footage for **open space amenities** like balconies, roofdecks, terraces, and ground floor courtyards, streetscapes, and plazas (S2-S5)
- **Set dimensions for yards where they are important**, such as larger rear yards adjacent to residential areas
- **Eliminate minimum parking regulations and modernize loading requirements**

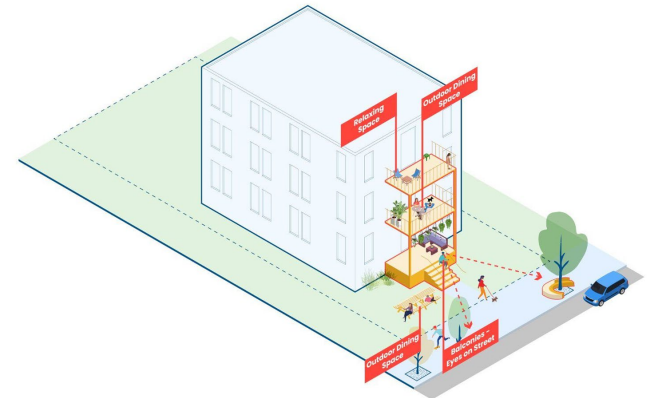
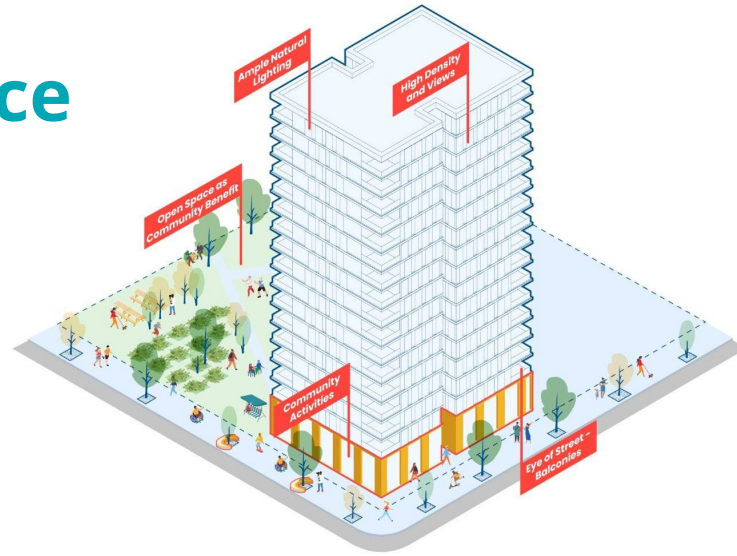


Outdoor Amenity Space

Outdoor space for gathering or recreation for a single dwelling unit, building residents, or the general public.

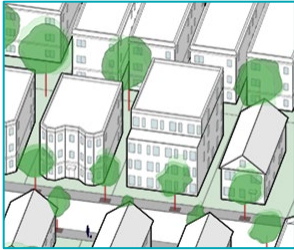
This can include spaces like:

- Private balconies
- Rooftops
- Terraces
- Interior courtyards
- Porches
- Plazas
- Outdoor dining spaces



Squares + Streets Districts

S0



Transition Residential

- Transition between low and high activity streets and squares
- Residential and accessory only
- Context-scale yards

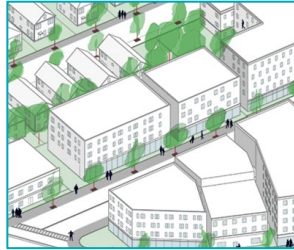
S1



Main Street Living

- Small-scale storefronts allowed on the ground floor with limited uses
- Predominantly residential
- Small scale yards

S2



Main Street Mixed Use

- Mainstreet zero-lot-line, but lower lot coverage to require courtyards, yards, or plazas
- Small to medium active ground floor uses required among mix of uses

S3



Active Main Street

- Mainstreet zero-lot-line
- Residential or small scale hospitality
- Wider range of commercial uses on ground and upper floors

S4



Active Squares

- Wider range of mixed-use upper floors
- Medium to extra large scale ground floor uses
- Lot coverage responds to parcel size

S5



Placemaker Squares

- Mixed-use high-rise buildings
- Medium to extra large scale ground floor uses
- Lot coverage responds to parcel size



What We've Heard on Squares + Streets Zoning So Far

How will updated zoning support Squares + Streets?

- **Diversify amenities and uses** in neighborhood centers to meet local needs.
- **Reduce regulatory obstacles** for active uses and local businesses.
- **Set design and development standards** that support more housing options and encourage housing growth.
- Ensure **sustainable design** and green building standards.
- Make the zoning process **more transparent, predictable, and accessible**, reducing reliance on ZBA



Comments + Feedback on Zoning Analysis So Far

Squares + Streets
Initiative Survey
(Ongoing)

Presentations at Civic
Associations +
Community
Organizations
(Ongoing)

Zoning Analysis
Public Meetings
(10/16 + 10/30)

Focus Groups with
Building and Design
Professionals
(October)

Create defined
**open space +
streetwall
regulations** that
actually produce
usable public
space

Desire for streets
that balance
**activity + open
space**

Any new zoning
must be
**enforced + not
ignored**

**More time
needed** for the
public to review +
provide feedback

Avoid districts
that encourage
**consolidating
small parcels +**
removing
existing
businesses

Maintain clear
buffers between
**strictly
residential
districts + main
streets areas**

Concerns about
**fewer
community
processes** in
small-scale
development

Understand the
level of impact
of specific land
uses on
congestion

Next Steps + Future Engagement



How and when will these updates be made?

Fall 2023

Zoning text amendment to create **new Squares + Streets districts** in the Boston Zoning Code.

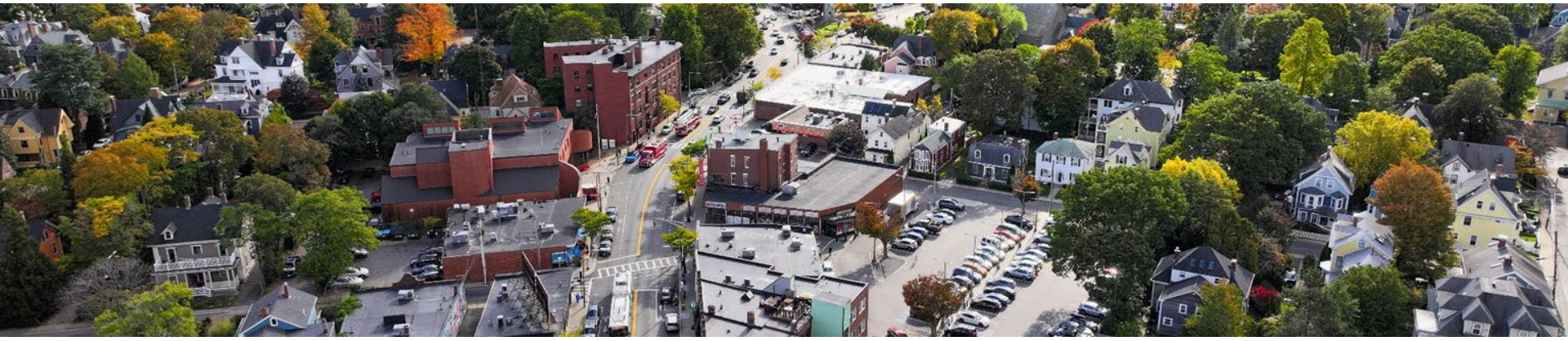
Mapping these new districts in Mattapan based on recent neighborhood plan using zoning map amendments.

Spring 2024

Squares + Streets **Small Area Plans** kickoff in January.

***Small Area Plans** – a series of **6-9 month processes** that focus on individual squares and streets to convene the public and many City departments in cross-topic planning.*

Each small area that receives a plan will have **updated zoning map amendments** that will include the Squares + Streets districts.



Timeline and Next Steps

Oct

Analysis Period

Public meetings and release of zoning analysis

Refining analysis based on stakeholder feedback

Nov-Dec

Drafting + Revision Period

Public meetings on draft zoning recommendations and amendments

Release of citywide Squares + Streets draft zoning text amendment by end of Nov

Release of Mattapan Squares + Streets draft zoning map amendment by end of Nov

Public comment period and revision of zoning amendments based on comments + feedback (early Jan 2024)

Jan-Feb

Adoption Period

Public meeting on final citywide Squares + Streets zoning text amendment (early January)

BPDA Board Meeting (Mid-January)

Zoning Commission Meeting (Mid-February)

We Need Your Help!

- Learn more at: bostonplans.org/squares and sign up for our email list
- Tell us what is important to **YOU** in Squares + Streets!
- Help guide us and give us feedback at our virtual office hours and future public meetings!



Share Your Thoughts with Us!

Come to Our Virtual Office Hours!

Happening 2x week on these weeks (afternoon + evening):

Week of Nov 20

Week of Nov 27

Week of Dec 11

Week of Dec 18

Attend an Upcoming Public Meeting!

Wed, Nov 15: Mattapan Draft Zoning Map Amendment

Tues, Dec. 5: Citywide S+S Draft Zoning Text Amendment Meeting

Early January: Citywide S+S Final Zoning Text Amendment Meeting

Give Us Your Feedback!

Share your thoughts on the zoning amendments on a form that will be shared during the **public comment period from the forthcoming late November draft release until January 2, 2024.**

Key Questions We Need Help Answering

?

What is the **look and feel that you would like to see** on your main street or in your neighborhood square?

?

How do you define an **“active”** storefront or land use on a main street?

?

What **land uses** would you like to see **in your community** and what should we know about the **impact of those uses**?

?

The **factors we should consider** as we draft these zoning districts

?

What **other issues** exist in Boston’s zoning rules that we should address?



FRIES

WINE

LUNCH

Questions?

Hours:
to Saturday
11:00 pm
day
10:00 pm
or 617-420-9045
bargrill@gmail.com



Thank you!

for more information visit: <https://www.bostonplans.org/squares>