

Chinatown Rezoning: Update Presentation & Workshop

April 18, 2024
6:00PM - 8:00PM

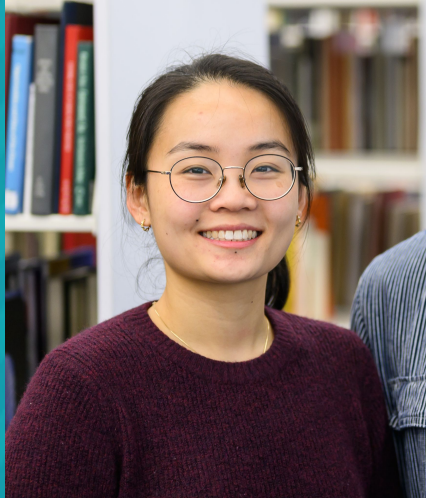


City of Boston
Neighborhood Services

Agenda/Goals for Today

- **What is Zoning?**
- **Presentation**
 - Overview of Engagement
 - Who We've Heard From
 - What We've Heard Thus Far
 - How has this been interpreted (Zoning Considerations)
- **Workshop: Feedback & Clarification**
- **Additional Feedback Opportunity**
- **Wrap-Up & Next Steps**

Introductions: BPDA



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(she/her)

Comprehensive Planner II
*Boston Planning & Development
Agency (BPDA)*



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(she/her)

Zoning Reform Planner I
*Boston Planning & Development
Agency (BPDA)*

What is Zoning?

What is zoning?

Zoning is a set of laws that are used to guide development by dictating the:

1. **Allowed use**
2. **Shape and density of the project** in a given area

These are encoded in zoning.

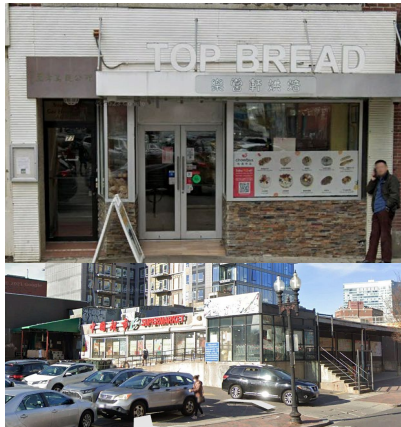
“Use”

Land Use

“Shape”

Dimensional Regulations

“Use” - Land Uses



Retail/Commercial



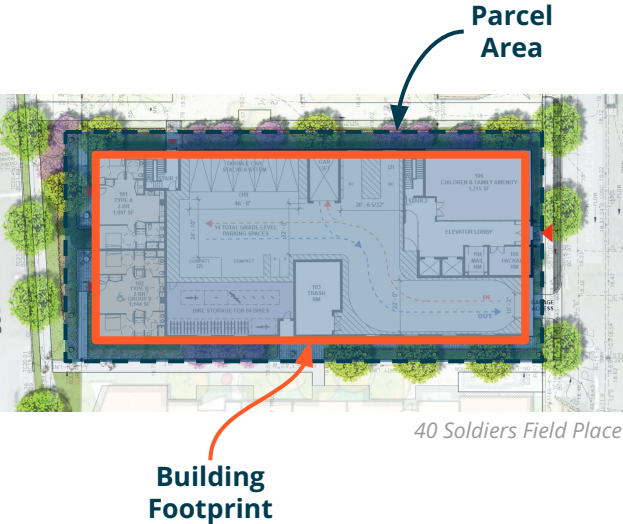
Residential



Educational

"Shape" - Dimensional Regulations

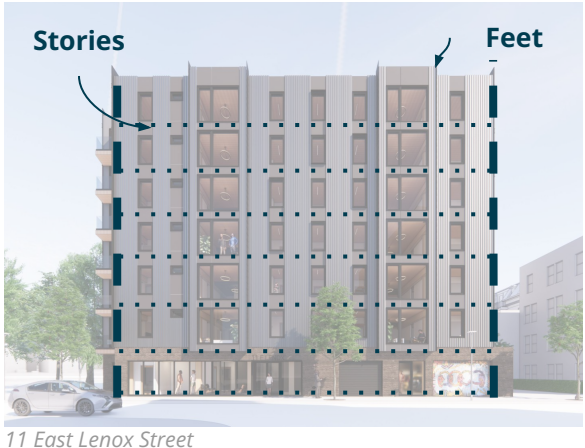
Building Lot Coverage



Setbacks



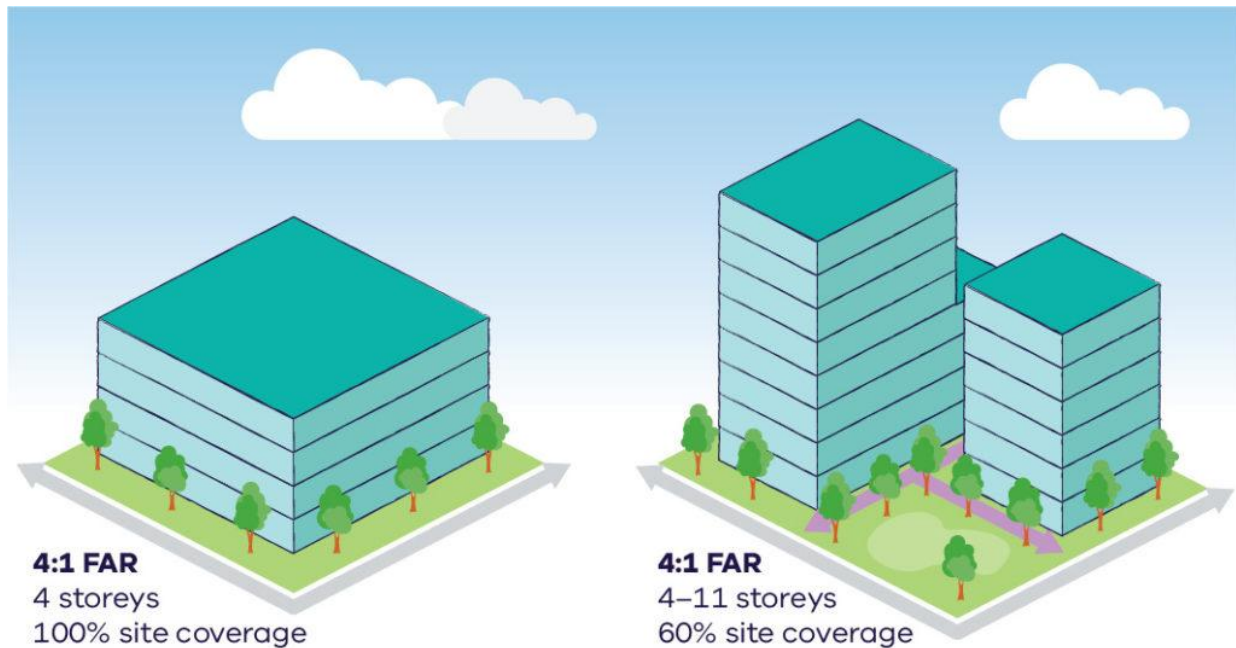
Height



“Shape” - Dimensional Regulations

Floor Area Ratio

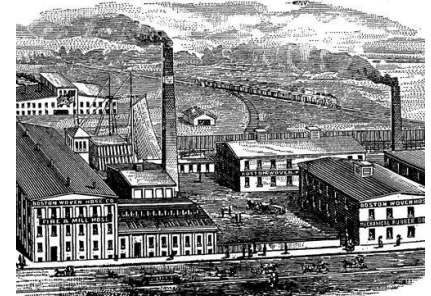
(FAR) is the ratio of the total amount of a building (floor area) to the size of the piece of land upon which it is built



What can zoning *actually* do?

- Zoning is a forward-looking tool
- One of many policy and legal tools cities use
- Zoning is great at saying what you *can't* do in a certain area
- Zoning is also a reflection of the needs of an area at a certain period time, and should be regularly updated
 - Early 20th century: concerns of pollution, overcrowding, health

By THOS. A. DODGE. Treas., J. EDWIN DAVIS. Supt., ROBERT COWI
STON WOVEN HOSE AND RUBBER CO.
275 DEVONSHIRE STREET, BOSTON, MASS.
Manufacturers of Rubber Goods, Hose, Belting and Packing



Factory, Corner Portland and Hampshire Streets, Cambridge.



— OVERCROWDING —
seven beds in room found by TENEMENT HOUSE DEPT. had
ORDERED TO BE REMOVED

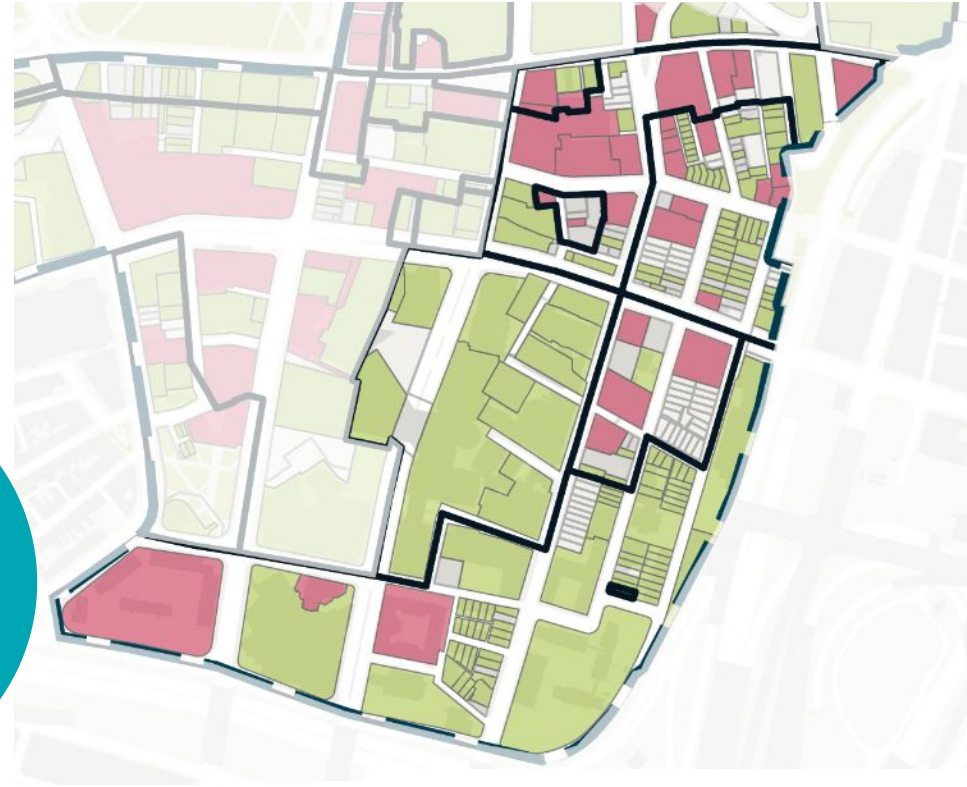
**So in Chinatown,
what are today's challenges...?**

**Chinatown has not had
substantive zoning updates in
34 years**

Chinatown's Existing Zoning Does Not Meet Present Day Needs: "Shape"

- The buildings in red exceed the maximum height regulations of existing Chinatown zoning.

Zoning is too small for
~30
existing buildings



□ N/A
■ Taller than maximum height in zoning
■ Compliant with maximum height in zoning

Chinatown's Existing Zoning Does Not Meet Present Day Needs: "Use"

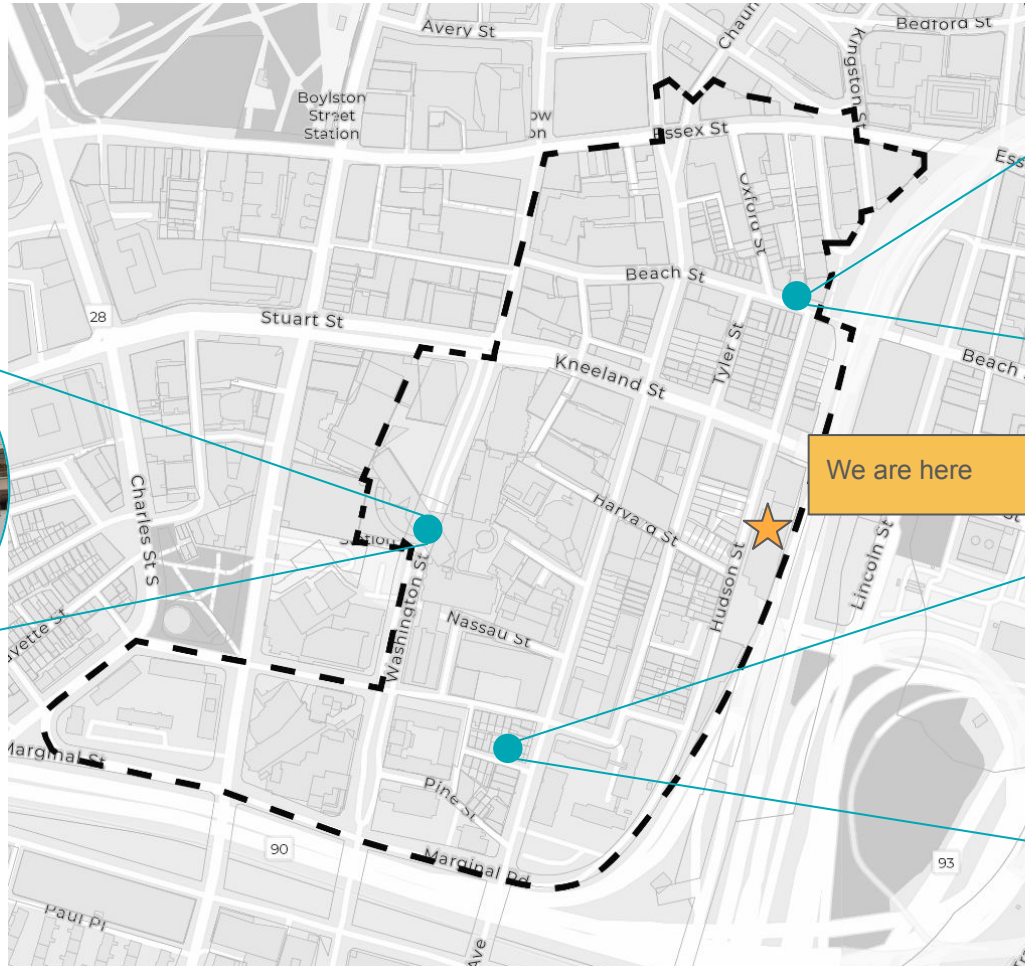
Zoning is out of date
>40%
of zoning variances in Chinatown are due to **USES**



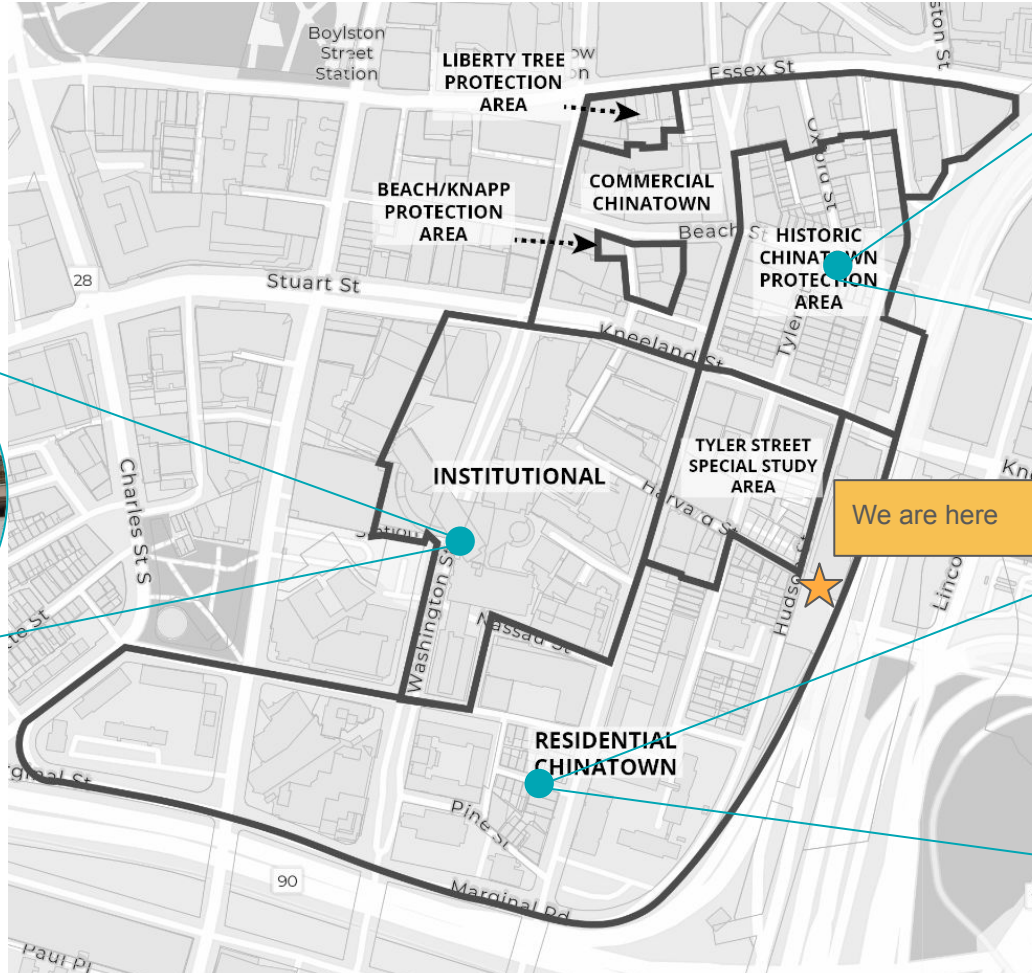
Existing Chinatown Zoning

Understanding How a Planner Thinks

Chinatown Zoning Study Area



Chinatown Zoning - Existing Subdistricts

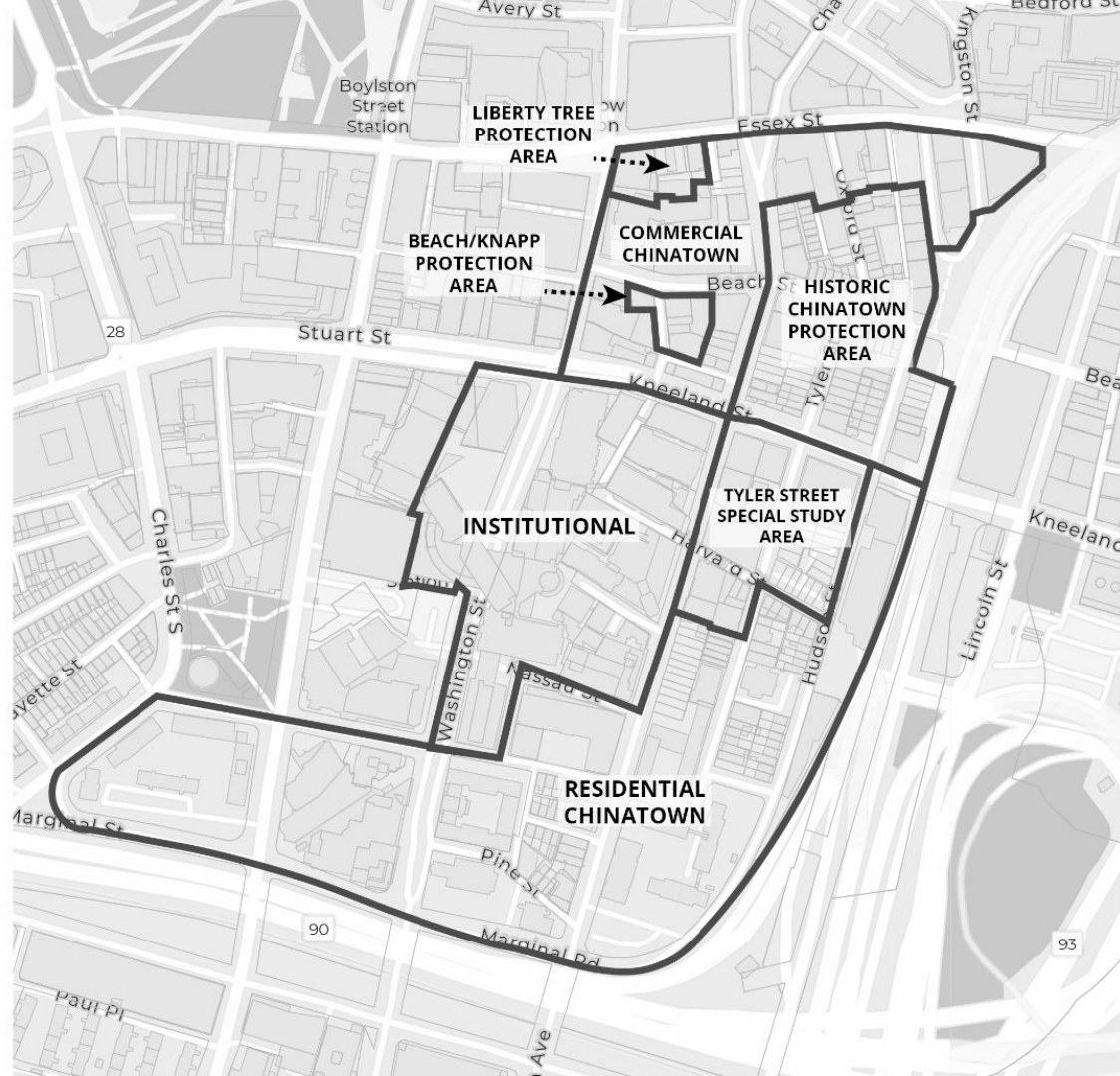


Chinatown Zoning - Existing Subdistricts

The Chinatown zoning study area currently has 7 subdistricts*.

Each subdistrict has its own rules for what “shapes” and “uses” are allowed.

*What is a subdistrict? Geographic areas subject to specific zoning guidelines





“Use”

紐英崙余風采堂
Yee Fung Toy Association of New England

家樂超市 HAPPY FAMILY FOOD MARKET 617.542.1488

良記介紹所
電話 617-699-9029

鮮梅運

Chinatown Zoning - Existing Subdistricts - “Uses”

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

Each land *use* is delegated as **allowed, conditional, or forbidden.**

- ***Conditional*** means it requires a conditional use permit, based on set criteria, from the Zoning Board of Appeal.
- ***Forbidden*** uses require proof of substantial hardship and can only be allowed via the granting of a *variance*

Chinatown has **37 different uses**

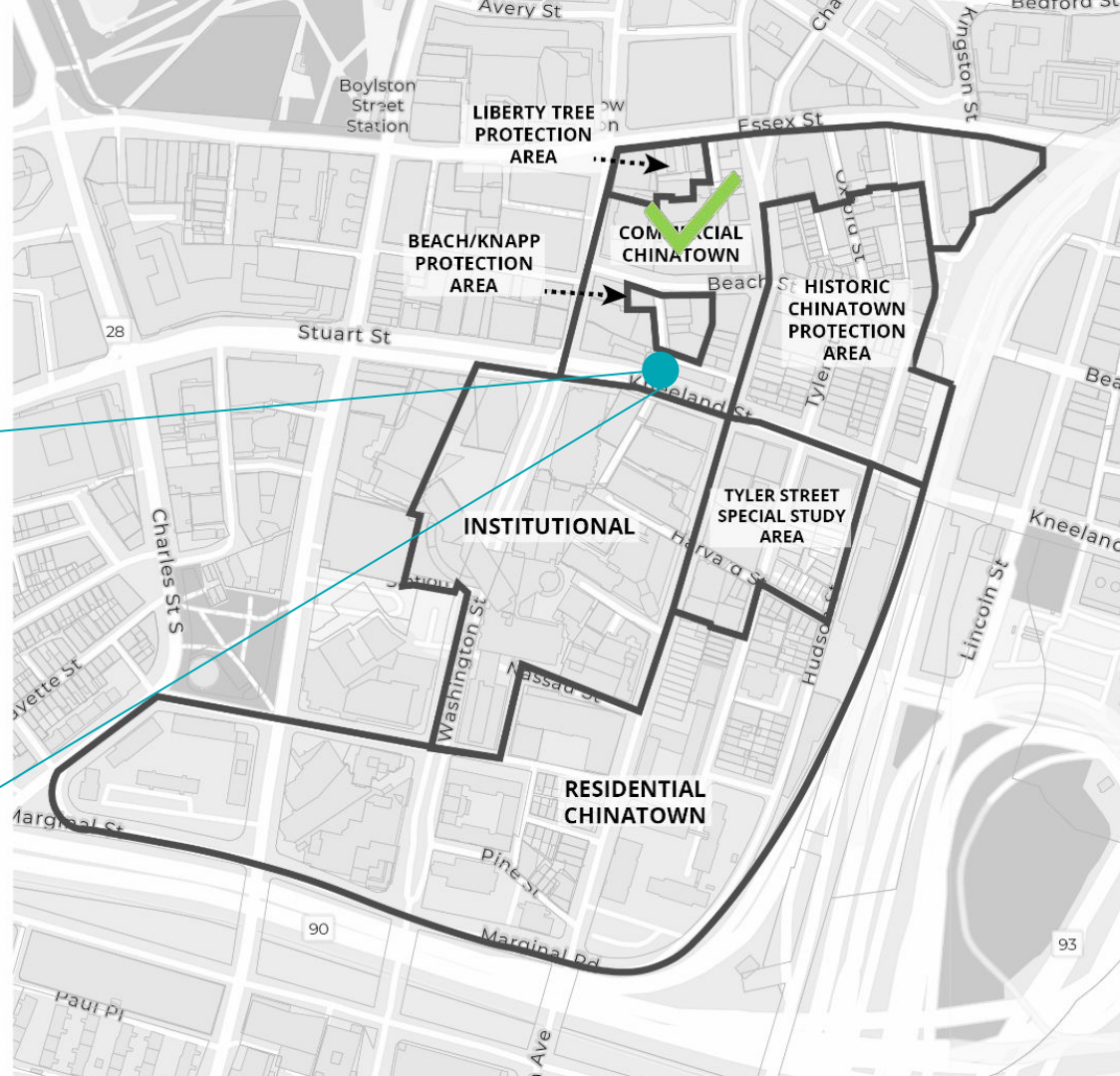
- 15 of which are regulated by floor (1st floor, 2nd floor, and 3rd floor +) and 22 of which are not regulated by floor

Chinatown Zoning - Existing Subdistricts - "Uses"

What is allowed (conditional) in some parts of Chinatown...



Special Service Uses

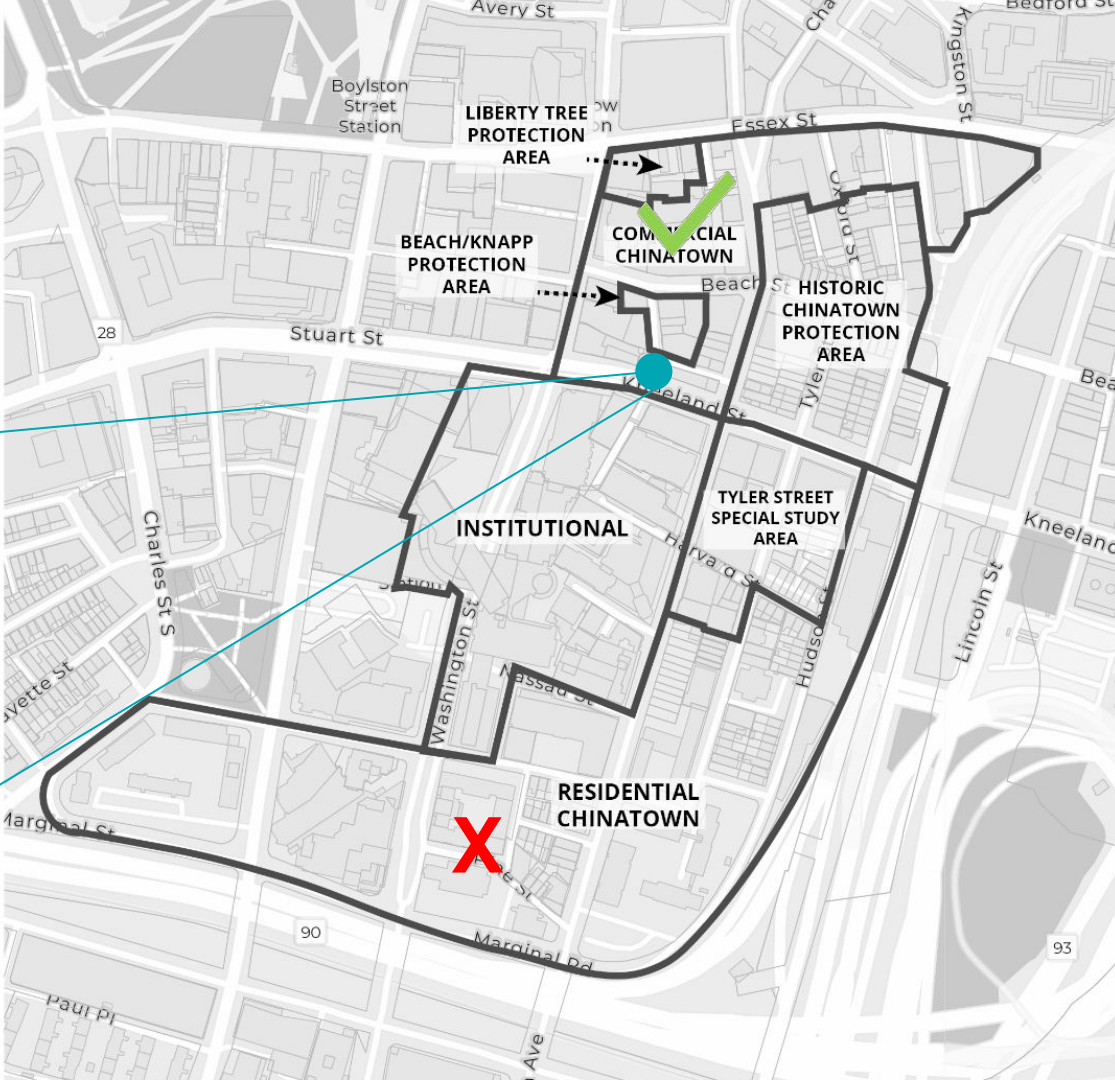


Chinatown Zoning - Existing Subdistricts - "Uses"

... may be forbidden in other parts of the neighborhood.

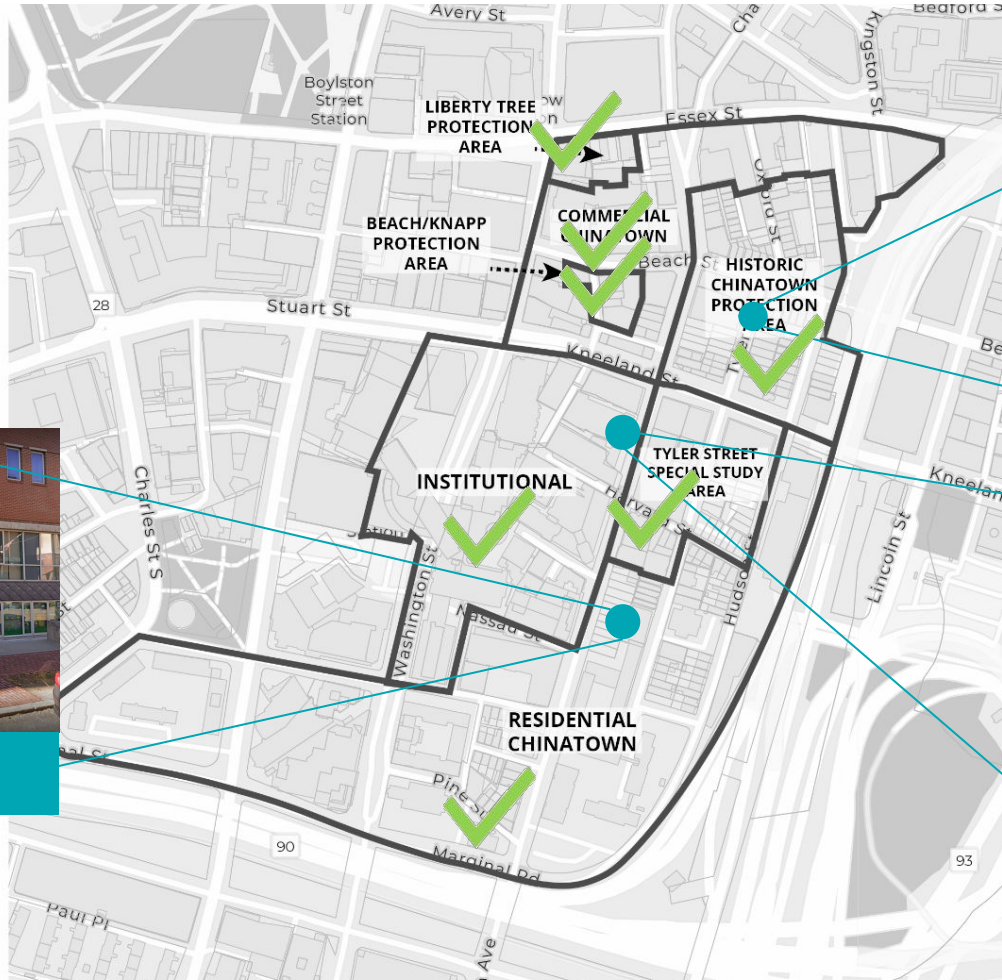


Special Service Uses

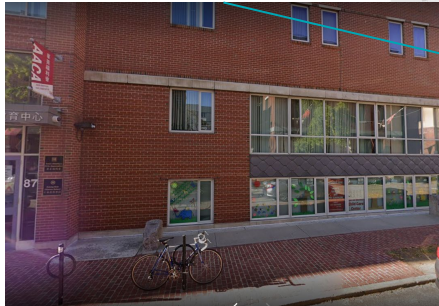


Chinatown Zoning - Existing Subdistricts - "Uses"

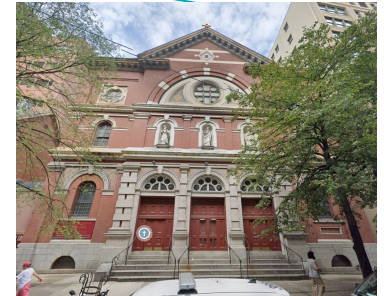
Some types of uses are allowed everywhere...



Residential Uses



Child Care Uses



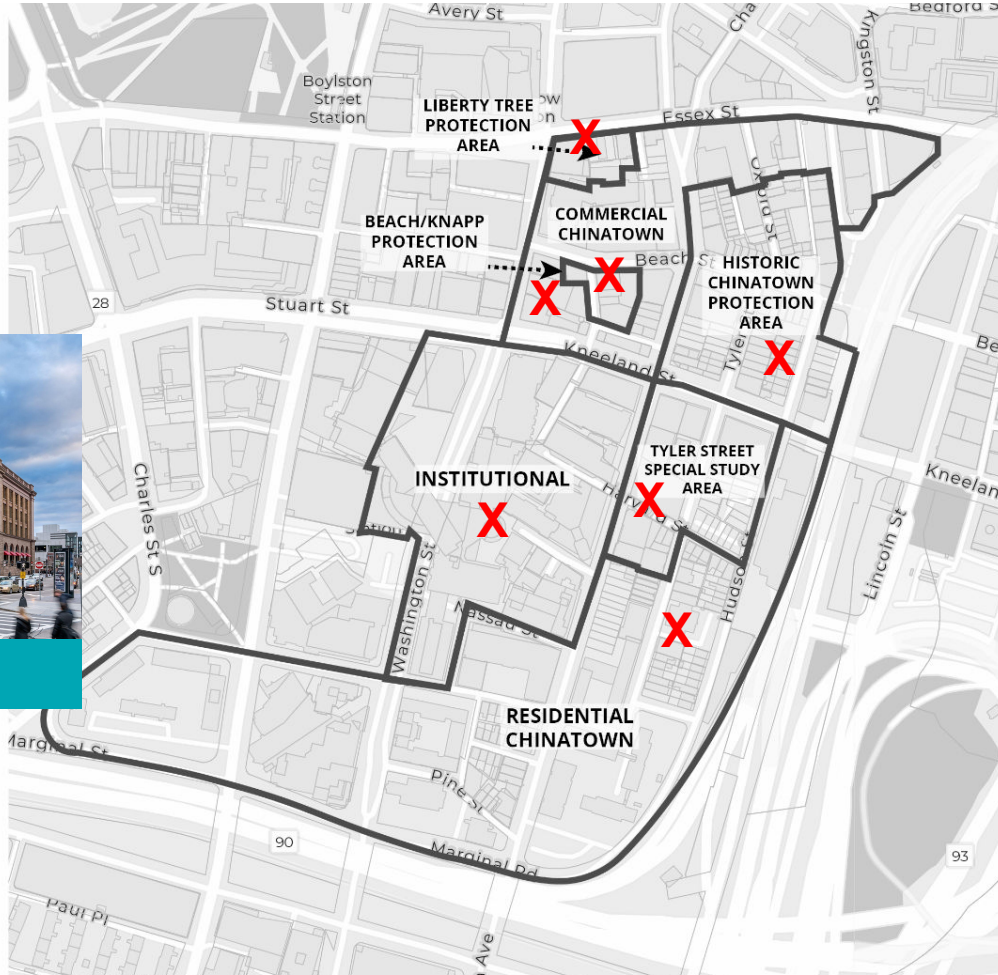
Religious Uses

Chinatown Zoning - Existing Subdistricts - "Uses"

Other uses are forbidden everywhere...



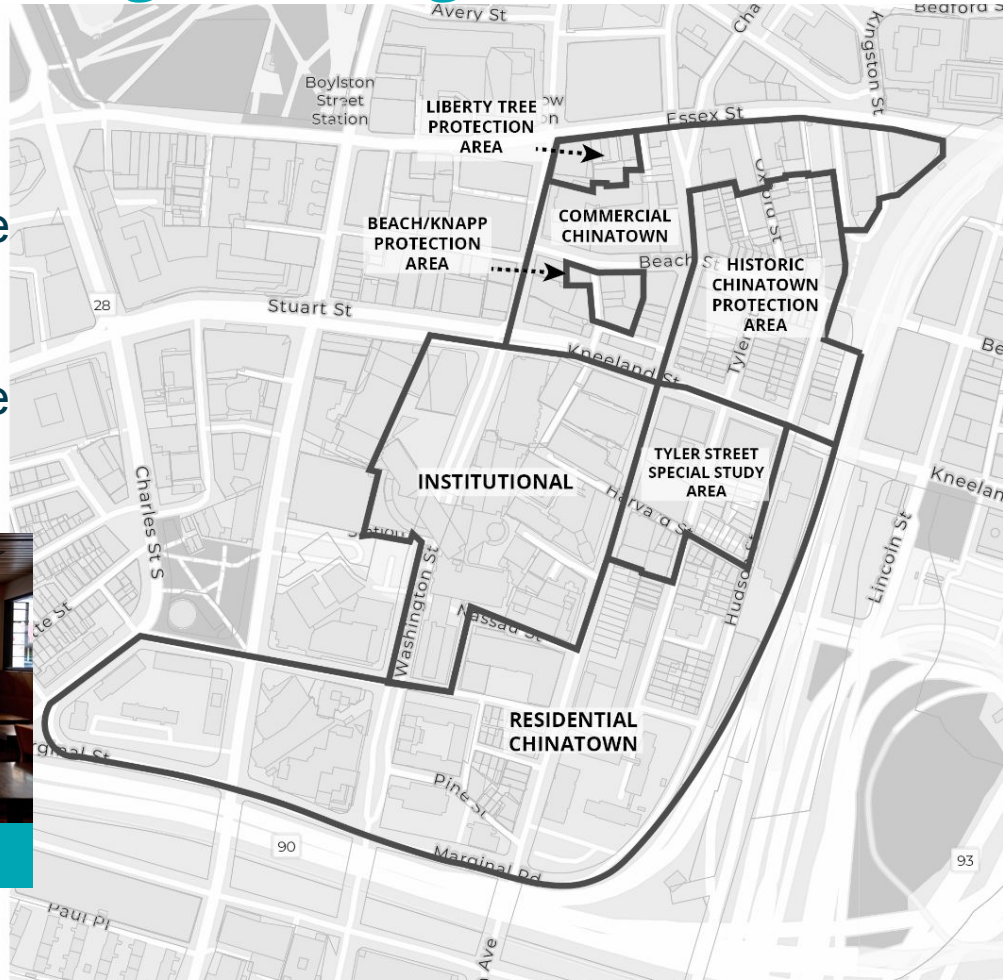
Transportation Uses



Vehicular Uses

Chinatown Zoning - Existing Subdistricts - "Uses"

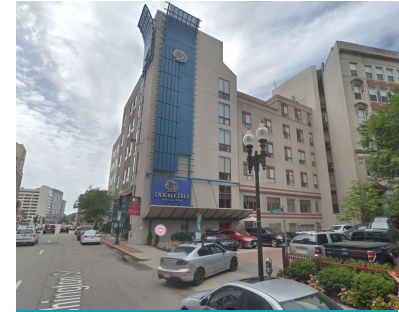
...While other types of buildings may require special permission and more city review, and still may only be allowed in certain parts of the neighborhood



Supermarkets



Takeout



Hotels

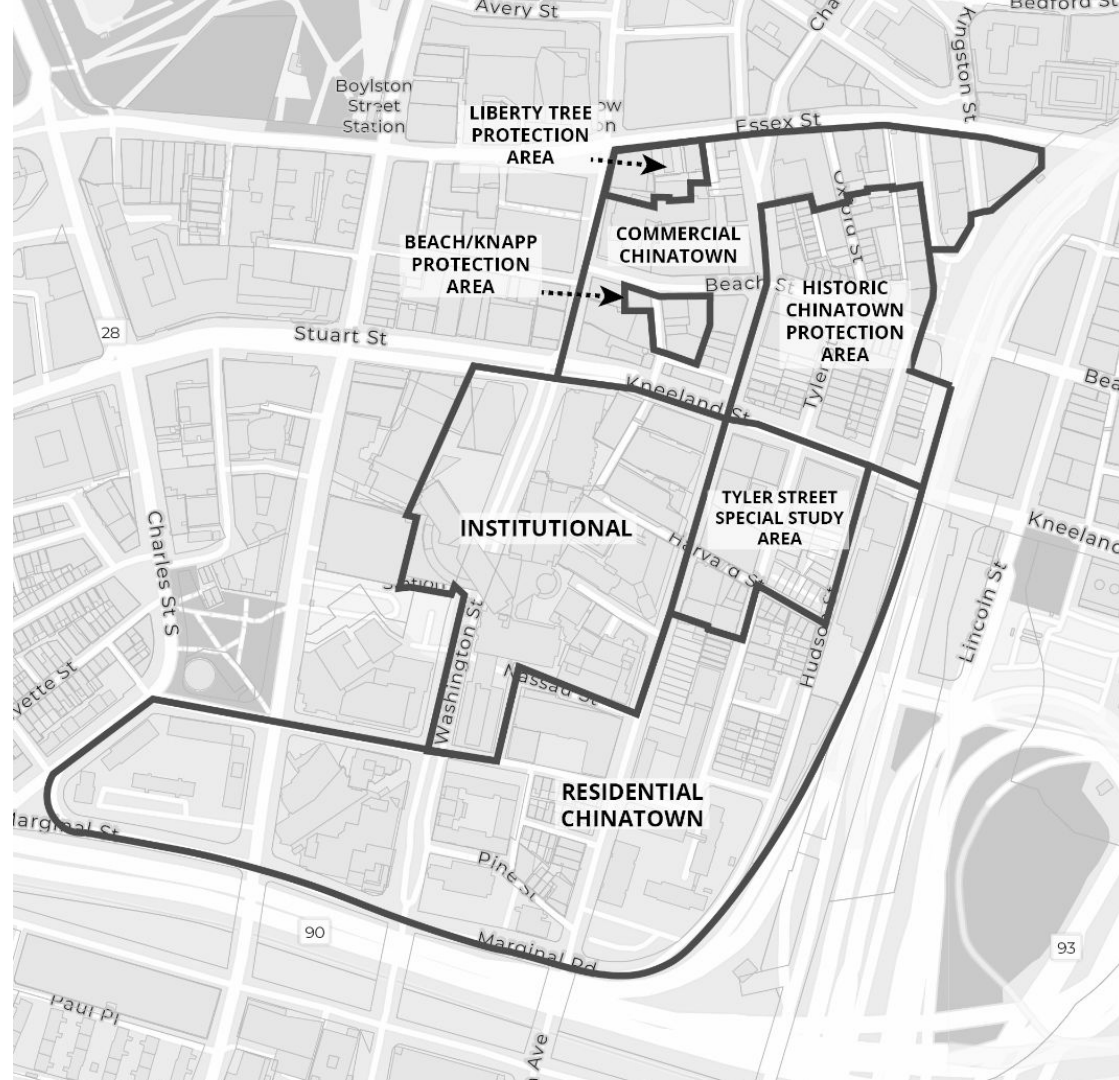


“Shape”

Chinatown
1A 1B 1C
Tourists
Permit
Parking
P
Street Closures
and Block Parties
from 11:00 AM to 1:00 AM
11/15/2015

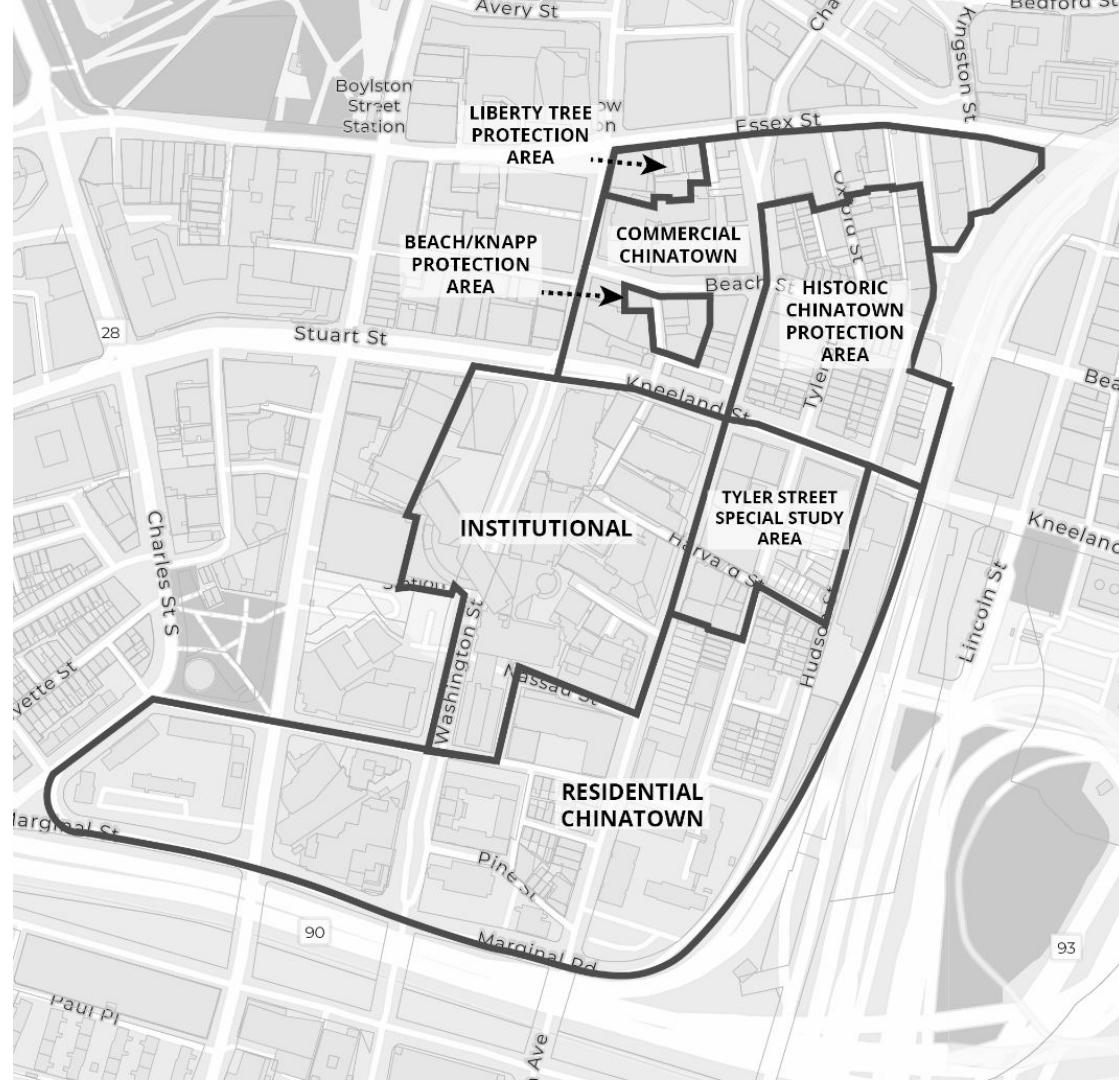
MAPLE

Chinatown Zoning - Existing Subdistricts - Dimensional Regulations - "Shape"



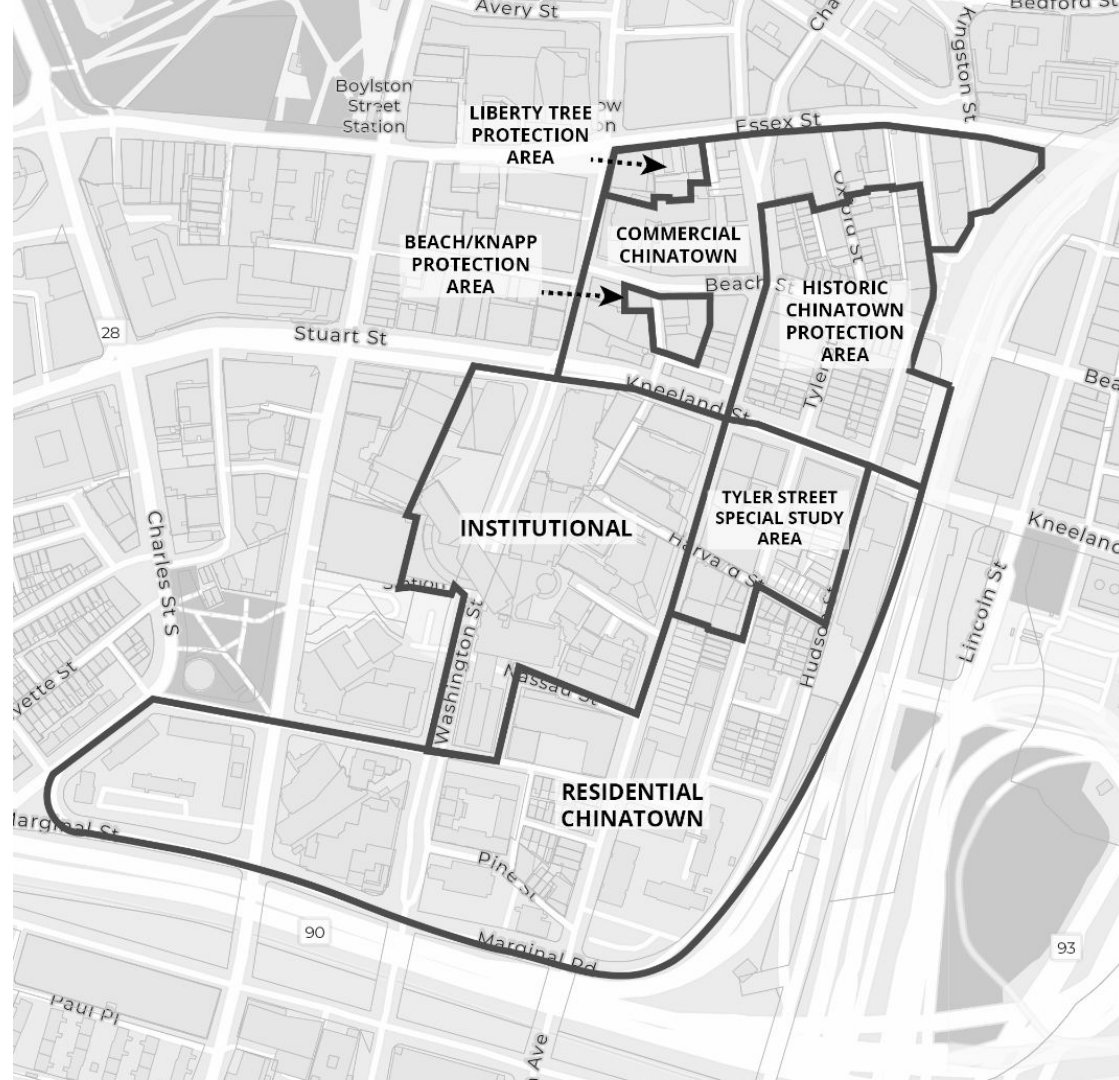
Chinatown Zoning - Existing Subdistricts - Dimensional Regulations - "Shape"

In addition to uses, **each existing subdistrict** has its own zoning that **dictate dimensional regulations** for every building in that subdistrict...



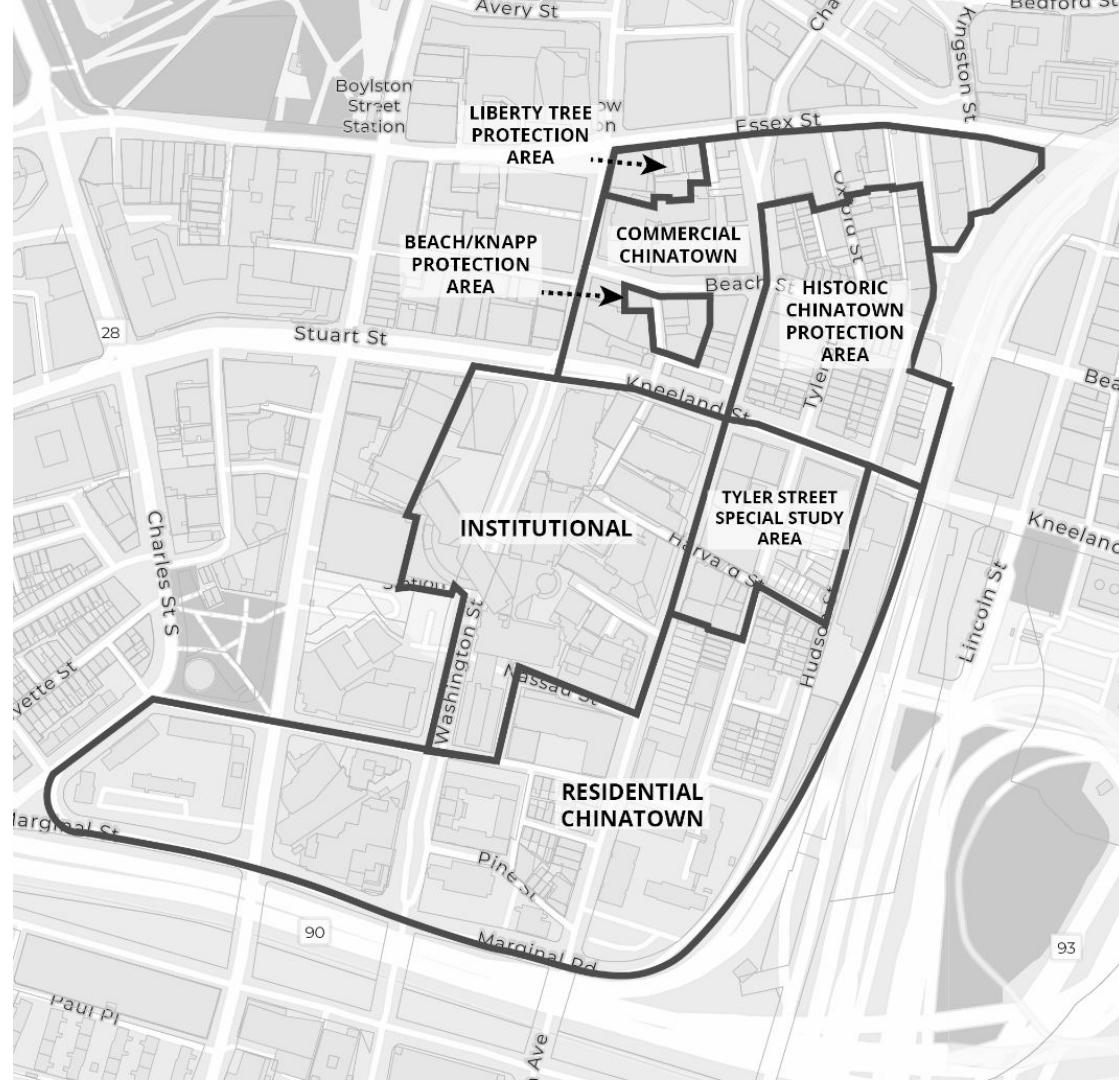
Chinatown Zoning - Existing Subdistricts - Dimensional Regulation - "Shape"

The dimensional regulations in Chinatown are:
height and **Floor Area Ratio (FAR)**



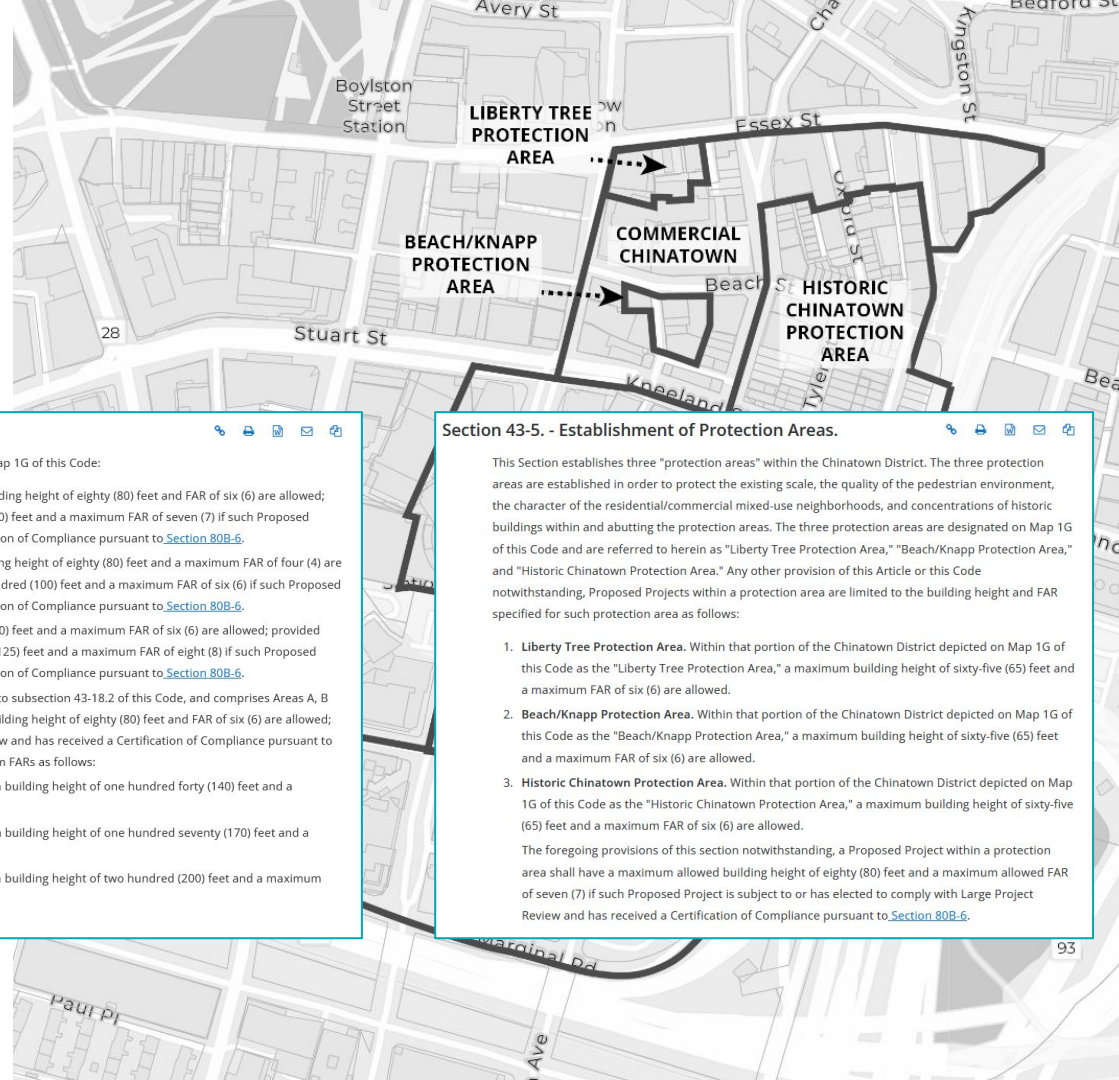
Chinatown Zoning - Existing Subdistricts - Dimensional Regulation - "Shape"

What does this look like in our existing zoning code?



Chinatown Zoning - Existing Subdistricts - Dimensional Regulation - "Shape"

It looks like this...



Section 43-6. - Establishment of Subdistricts.

This Section establishes the following subdistricts within the Chinatown District, each as designated on Map 1G of this Code:

1. **Commercial Chinatown Subdistrict.** Within the Commercial Chinatown Subdistrict, a maximum building height of eighty (80) feet and FAR of six (6) are allowed; provided that any Proposed Project shall be allowed a maximum building height of one hundred (100) feet and a maximum FAR of seven (7) if such Proposed Project is subject to or has elected to comply with Large Project Review and has received a Certification of Compliance pursuant to [Section 80B-6](#).
2. **Residential Chinatown Subdistrict.** Within the Residential Chinatown Subdistrict, a maximum building height of eighty (80) feet and a maximum FAR of four (4) are allowed; provided that any proposed Project shall be allowed a maximum building height of one hundred (100) feet and a maximum FAR of six (6) if such Proposed Project is subject to or has elected to comply with Large Project Review and has received a Certification of Compliance pursuant to [Section 80B-6](#).
3. **Institutional Subdistrict.** Within the Institutional Subdistrict, a maximum building height of eighty (80) feet and a maximum FAR of six (6) are allowed; provided that any Proposed Project shall be allowed a maximum building height of one hundred twenty-five (125) feet and a maximum FAR of eight (8) if such Proposed Project is subject to or has elected to comply with Large Project Review and has received a Certification of Compliance pursuant to [Section 80B-6](#).
4. **Health Sciences Subdistrict.** This Subdistrict constitutes an Institutional Master Plan Area pursuant to subsection 43-18.2 of this Code, and comprises Areas A, B and C, as designated on Map 1G of this Code. Within the Health Sciences Subdistrict, a maximum building height of eighty (80) feet and FAR of six (6) are allowed; provided that, if any Proposed Project is subject to or has elected to comply with Large Project Review and has received a Certification of Compliance pursuant to [Section 80B-6](#), then such Proposed Project shall be allowed maximum building heights and maximum FARs as follows:
 - (a) Within that portion of the Health Sciences Subdistrict depicted on Map 1G as Area A, a maximum building height of one hundred forty (140) feet and a maximum FAR of nine (9).
 - (b) Within that portion of the Health Sciences Subdistrict depicted on Map 1G as Area B, a maximum building height of one hundred seventy (170) feet and a maximum FAR of eleven (11).
 - (c) Within that portion of the Health Sciences Subdistrict depicted on Map 1G as Area C, a maximum building height of two hundred (200) feet and a maximum FAR of fourteen (14).

(As amended on March 6, 1995 and May 9, 1996.)

Section 43-5. - Establishment of Protection Areas.

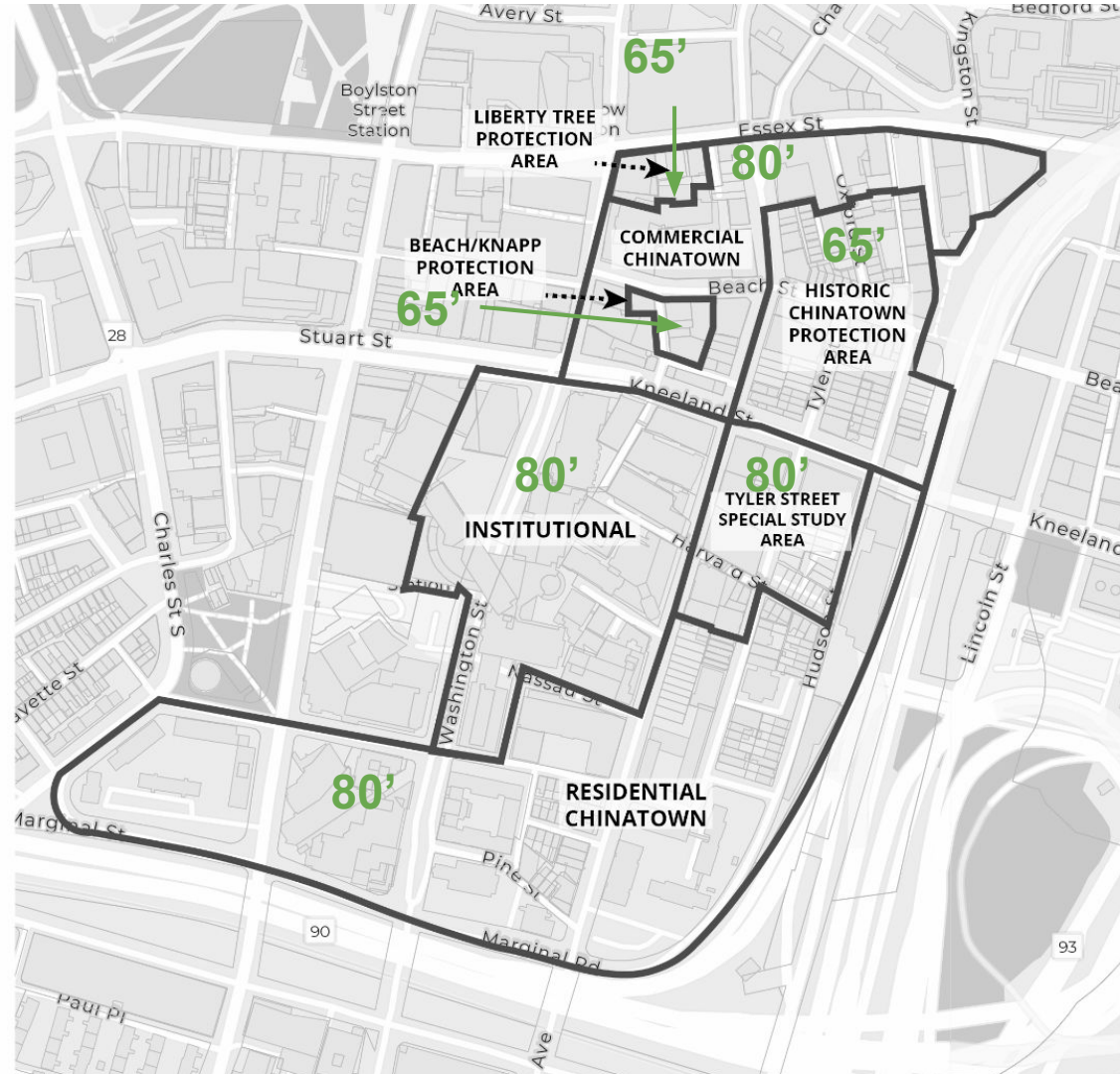
This Section establishes three "protection areas" within the Chinatown District. The three protection areas are established in order to protect the existing scale, the quality of the pedestrian environment, the character of the residential/commercial mixed-use neighborhoods, and concentrations of historic buildings within and abutting the protection areas. The three protection areas are designated on Map 1G of this Code and are referred to herein as "Liberty Tree Protection Area," "Beach/Knapp Protection Area," and "Historic Chinatown Protection Area." Any other provision of this Article or this Code notwithstanding, Proposed Projects within a protection area are limited to the building height and FAR specified for such protection area as follows:

1. **Liberty Tree Protection Area.** Within that portion of the Chinatown District depicted on Map 1G of this Code as the "Liberty Tree Protection Area," a maximum building height of sixty-five (65) feet and a maximum FAR of six (6) are allowed.
2. **Beach/Knapp Protection Area.** Within that portion of the Chinatown District depicted on Map 1G of this Code as the "Beach/Knapp Protection Area," a maximum building height of sixty-five (65) feet and a maximum FAR of six (6) are allowed.
3. **Historic Chinatown Protection Area.** Within that portion of the Chinatown District depicted on Map 1G of this Code as the "Historic Chinatown Protection Area," a maximum building height of sixty-five (65) feet and a maximum FAR of six (6) are allowed.

The foregoing provisions of this section notwithstanding, a Proposed Project within a protection area shall have a maximum allowed building height of eighty (80) feet and a maximum allowed FAR of seven (7) if such Proposed Project is subject to or has elected to comply with Large Project Review and has received a Certification of Compliance pursuant to [Section 80B-6](#).

Chinatown Zoning - Existing Subdistricts - Dimensional Regulation - "Shape"

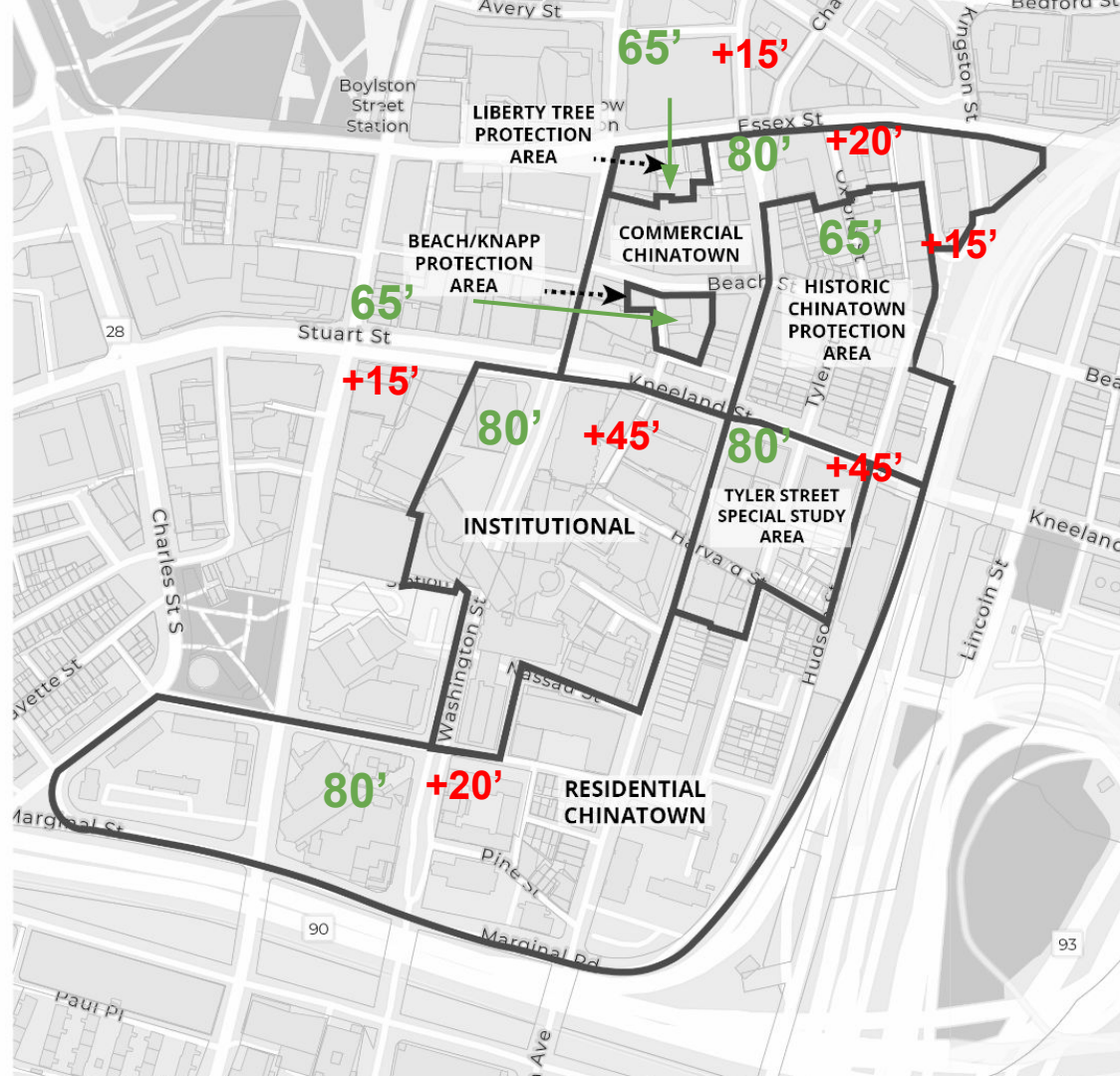
And put into simple terms, it translates to this...



Chinatown Zoning - Existing Subdistricts - Dimensional Regulation - "Shape"

Buildings can be taller and denser (as detailed on map), if they go through more extensive city review...

... And possibly more if they go through Article 80 review



**Now that we have an understanding of “shapes”
and “uses”...**

What We've Heard

Overview of Engagement Thus Far

- Kickoff: February 7th, 2024
- Types of Engagement:
 - Surveys
 - Workshops
 - Focus Groups
 - Office Hours
 - Public Meetings



Chinatown Rezoning Kickoff Meeting
唐人街重新分区启动会议

Learn about how you can help inform the future built environment of Chinatown!
了解您如何帮助宣传唐人街的未来建筑环境!

Wednesday, February 7, 6:00PM - 7:30PM
2月7日星期三, 晚间 6:00 - 7:30 点

Join us **virtually!** 欢迎参加我们**网络虚拟会议!**

Cantonese & Mandarin interpretation will be available
将提供粤语和普通话口语翻译服务

Presentation will be held during the Chinatown Resident Association meeting
演讲将在“波士顿华埠居民会”会议期间举行

Scan This QR Code 请扫码
or go to this website to participate:
或访问网站参加会议:
bit.ly/499auUT

Updated: 1/25/24
更新: 1/25/24

Questions? Please contact 有问题? 请联系:
Lamel.Zhang@boston.gov

Overview of Engagement Thus Far: Surveys

- **59 surveys** received as of 3/14 (Online and paper surveys)
- Survey respondents responded to questions about the priorities for Chinatown, affordable housing opportunities, and land use needs
- First month of survey results available on website



Timestamp: 2/23/2024
Date: 4/5/2024

Name: (Left blank in survey)
Comment:

- "PLAN: Downtown identifies improving housing options, with a focus on affordable housing (new and preserving existing). What are your thoughts on allowing taller building development in Chinatown if those developments were to also provide onsite affordable housing opportunities?"

I think that would be a wonderful idea, as long as displacement does not occur

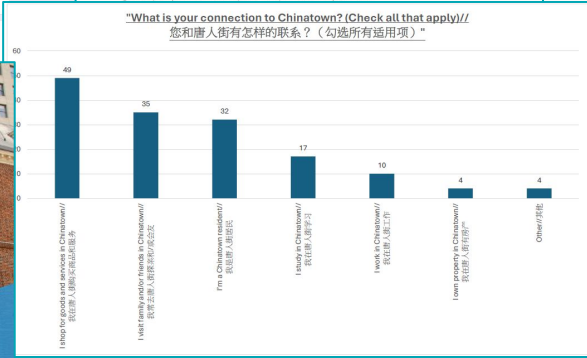
"As part of the Chinatown Rezoning process, the BPDA will also update land uses in Chinatown to better reflect the needs of the community. Land uses regulate what is allowed to be developed in different parts of a neighborhood or city. For instance, land use currently allows for daycares anywhere in Chinatown, but requires other types of businesses or services, like supermarkets, to go through a more rigorous application and review process. Based on this, how do you think current land use can better align with Chinatown's needs? Do you see more of a need for other uses or types of uses (i.e. types of housing, businesses, etc.)?"

More diverse businesses reflecting the needs of every day Chinatown residents

- "Based on what was covered in this survey, what do you think are the priorities for the Chinatown Rezoning process? What would you like to see addressed in the zoning process?"

easier to build housing

- "What makes Chinatown unique compared to the rest of downtown Boston?"



Overview of Engagement Thus Far: Workshops



Overview of Engagement Thus Far:

- Asian Community Development Corporation (ACDC)
- Chinatown Business Association (CBA)
- The Chinatown Coalition
- Chinatown Community Land Trust (CCLT)
- Chinatown Master Plan Committee
- Chinatown/South Cove Neighborhood Council (CNC)
- Chinese Progressive Association (CPA)
- Consolidated Chinese Benevolent Association (CCBA)
- Tufts University and Tufts Medical Center



What Have We Heard Thus Far?

What We've Heard Thus Far:

- **Buildings & Programming**

- More mixed-use
- Greater diversity of businesses
- Food and retail (as) culture
- More opportunities to grow
- Services that support needs of elders



What We've Heard Thus Far:

- **Housing**

- Need more housing; affordable, middle-income, and workforce
- Protect the rowhomes
- Allow greater density if it means more affordable housing

“Allow taller buildings if they provide onsite affordable housing opportunities.”

“I think Chinatown needs more housing in general”

“Workforce housing

“Row houses - small living spaces - should help them stay by relaxing restrictions on expanding living spaces, add a floor or 2”

“Middle-income, workforce housing to help adult kids return to Chinatown”

“If you build affordable housing, the building height can be higher”

What We've Heard Thus Far:

- **"Preserving" Chinatown**
 - Protect Chinatown as a cultural anchor
 - Concerns for displacement

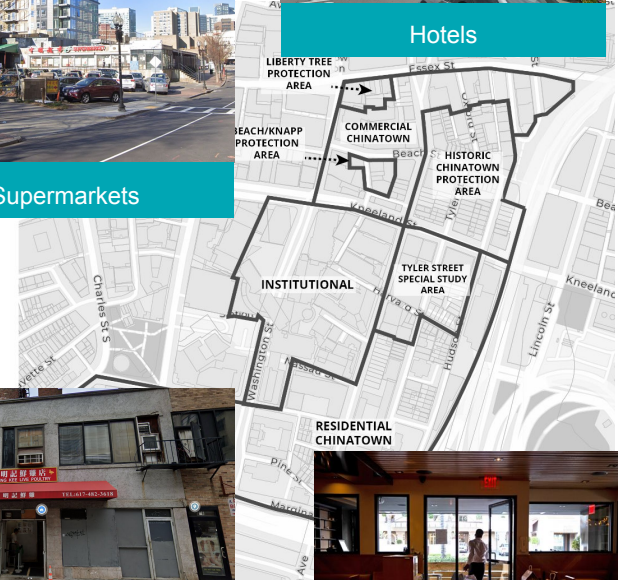
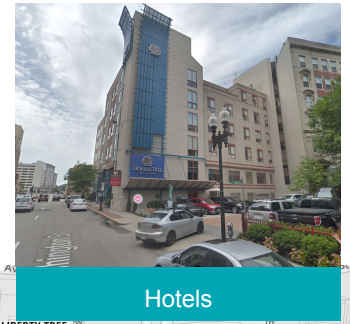


Zoning Considerations:

How has this information been interpreted?

Zoning Consideration #1: Simplify Chinatown's Subdistricts

- **Why?**
 - Recognize and encourage the mixed-use nature of Chinatown
 - Ease zoning restrictions to make it easier for businesses to react to neighborhood need
 - Allow for a greater diversity of businesses
- **How are we thinking of doing this?**
 - Simplify subdistricts to recognize mixed-use character and rowhouses of Chinatown



Zoning Consideration #2: Expand the Types of Uses Allowed Within Buildings

- **Why?**
 - Allow for a greater diversity of businesses
 - Ease zoning restrictions to make it easier for businesses to react to neighborhood need
- **How are we thinking of doing this?**
 - Reassess if regulating uses by floor aligns with current needs; and if so, updating those uses



	Historic Chinatown			Commercial Chinatown, Liberty Tree, Beach/Knapp			Residential Chinatown			Institutional Health Sciences	Tyler Street Special Study	Turnpike Special Study	Gateway Special Study
Floor	1	2	3+	1	2	3+	1	2	3+	All	All	All	All

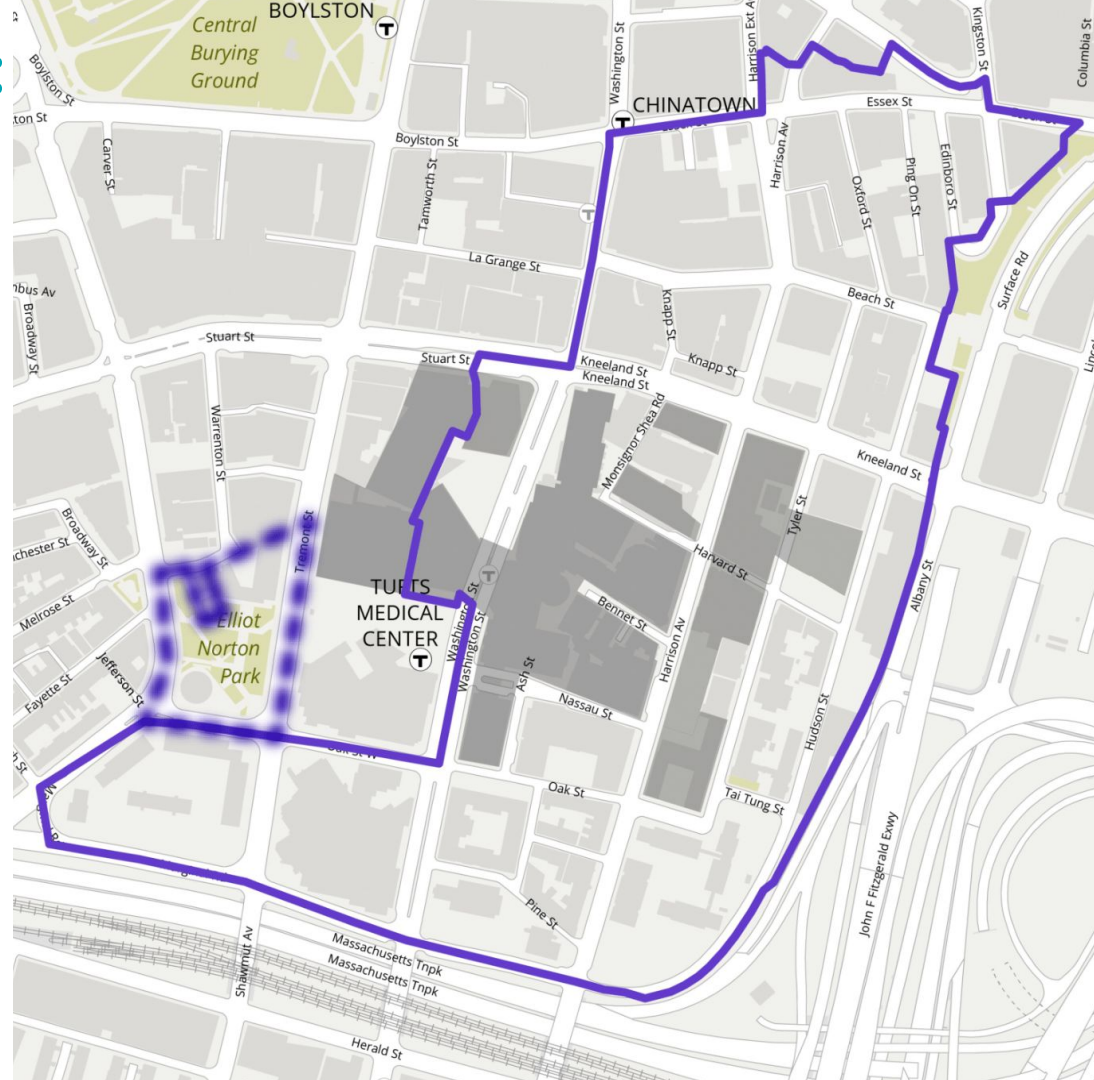
Zoning Consideration #3: Support the preservation of row homes

- **Why?**
 - Preservation of existing affordable housing
 - Row houses represent a history of Chinatown
- **How are we thinking of doing this?**
 - Using zoning to support the preservation of the “shape” of these buildings
 - Creating a row home subdistrict that this zoning would apply to



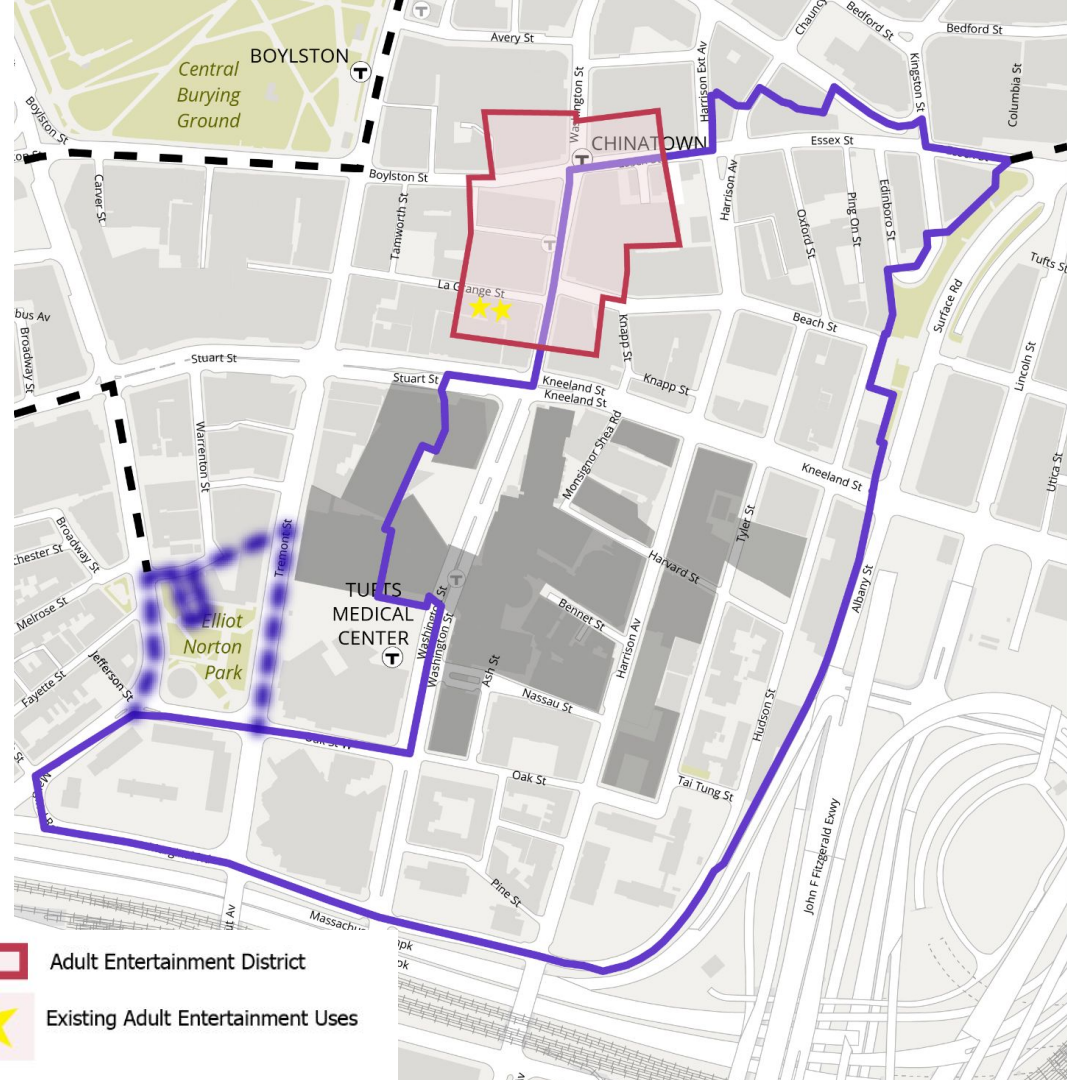
Zoning Consideration#4: Increasing the Rezoning study area

- **Why?**
 - Include areas that Chinatown community members also live in or visit regularly
- **How are we thinking of doing this?**
 - Increasing the Chinatown Rezoning study area to include Elliot Norton Park and South Cove Plaza



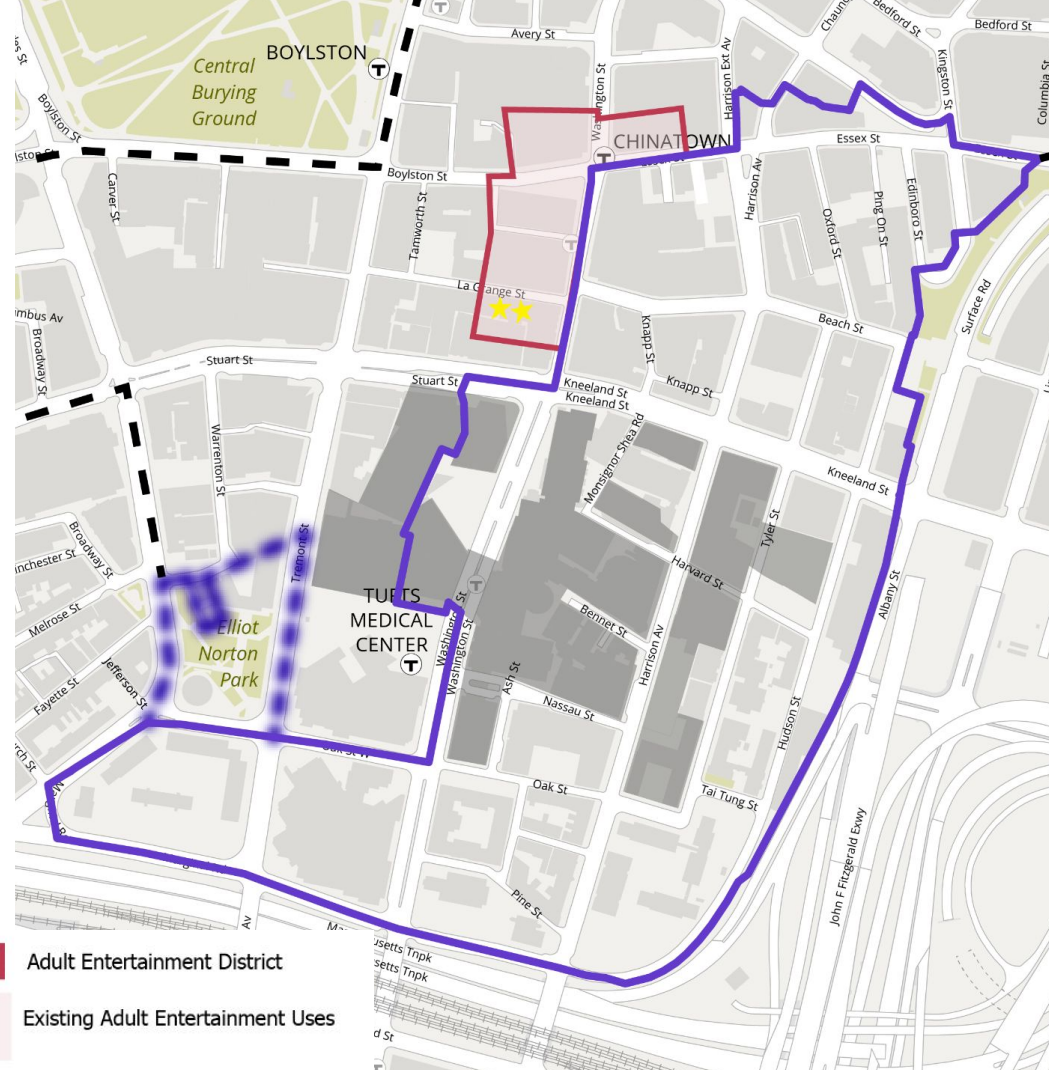
Zoning Consideration #5: Remove the Adult Entertainment District from Chinatown

- **Why?**
 - Recognition of Chinatown as a neighborhood
 - Recognition of Chinatown's history and neighborhood advocacy around the "Combat Zone"
- **How are we thinking of doing this?**
 - Remove the portion of the adult entertainment district from the Chinatown zoning area



Zoning Consideration #5: Remove the Adult Entertainment District from Chinatown

- **Why?**
 - Recognition of Chinatown as a neighborhood
 - Recognition of Chinatown's history and neighborhood advocacy around the "Combat Zone"
- **How are we thinking of doing this?**
 - Remove the portion of the adult entertainment district from the Chinatown zoning area



(break)

Workshop: Feedback & Clarification

Workshop: Feedback & Clarification

- **Purpose:**
 - Gather input from community members through workshop activities as a way to provide a **“gut check”** of our Zoning Considerations
 - Provide community with opportunities to **share feedback, questions, and reactions** from the presentation portion in smaller groups



Workshop: Feedback & Clarification

- **Set up:**
 - Random assignment of groups of 5-6 people
 - We will work together to go through 3 workshop activities; share out between each activity
 - Please designate one person per activity to help report out
 - BPDA staff will walk around during each activity for assistance



Workshop Activity #1

"Shape": Building for the Future

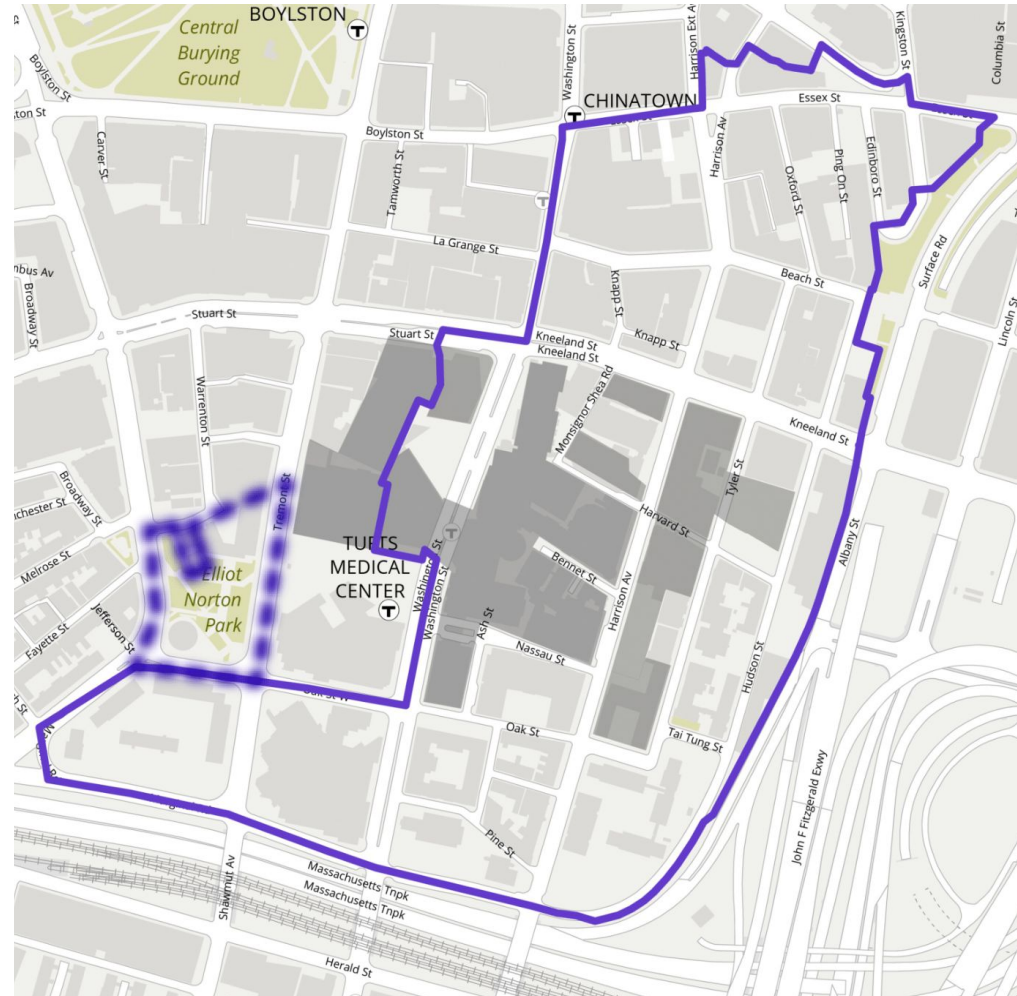
#1: Building for the Future (15 minutes)

Instructions:

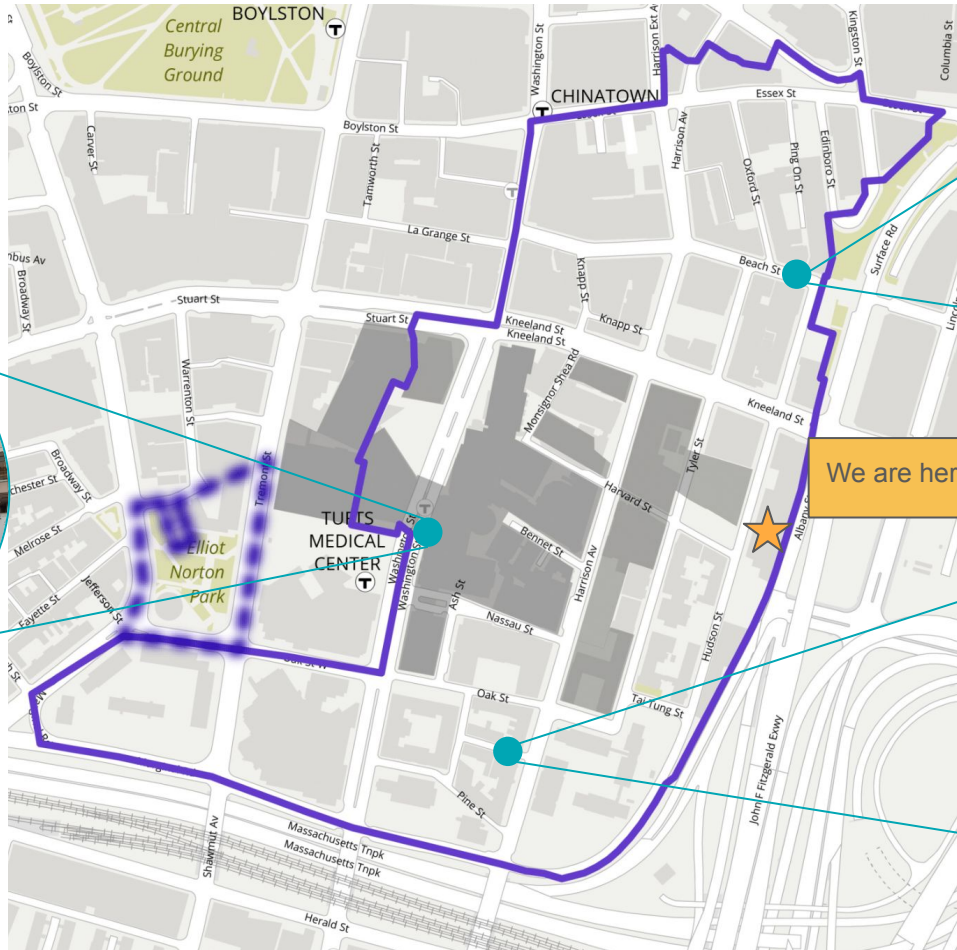
- In small groups, imagine Chinatown 10-20 years from now. With a continued need for housing, businesses, and services, consider if and where there are opportunities in the neighborhood to accommodate this growth

Questions to consider:

- Understanding the “shape” components of zoning, where in the neighborhood would these areas feature this growth?
- What would this growth look like? What do the buildings look like? What is their “shape”? What are their features?



Chinatown Zoning Study Area



Workshop Activity #2

"Use": Future Uses

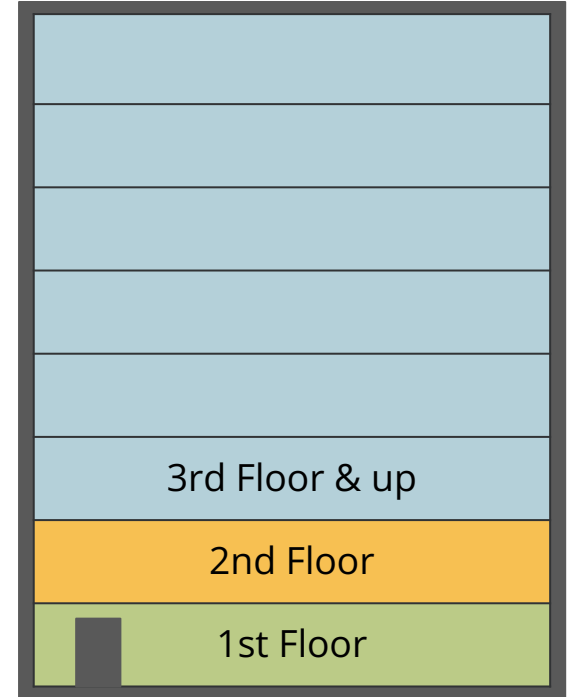
Workshop #2: Future Uses (15 minutes)

Instructions:

- Participants will work in small groups to visualize what kinds of spaces could exist on each floor of a building in Chinatown

Questions to consider:

- Should there be distinctions between floors within the same building? Or should there only be distinctions between the ground floor and above?
- Should some buildings only have residential uses on certain floors? Or above a certain floor?
- Should ground floor spaces ONLY have uses that activate the street?
- Are there uses you don't want to see on specific floors or at all?



~ 40% of uses in Chinatown are regulated by floor

Workshop Activity #3

Rowhouse Preservation

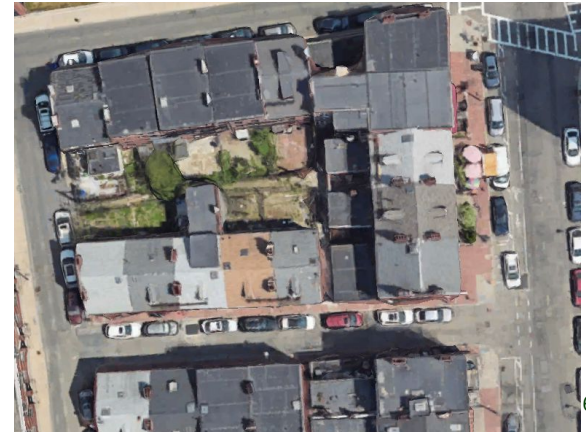
Workshop #3: Rowhouse Preservation (15 minutes)

Instructions:

- Participants will share what they think is appropriate for the preservation of the row houses

Questions to consider:

- Do you think it is important to preserve the existing row house buildings? If so, what do you think is important to preserve - existing height, building size?
- Should these buildings be allowed additional height? If so, by how much?
- How important is it to have a rear yard?



Additional Feedback Opportunity

Wrap Up & Next Steps

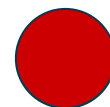
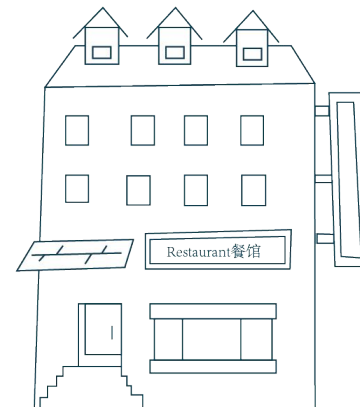
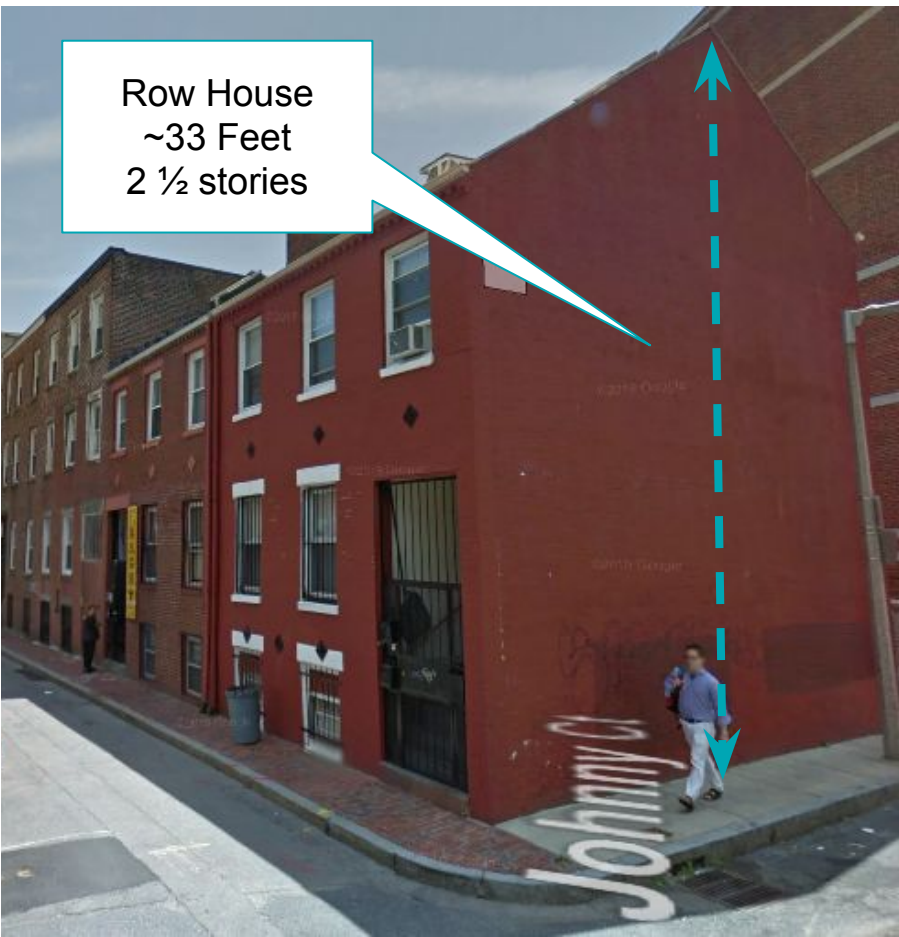
Upcoming:

- **May:**
 - Draft Zoning Release
 - Draft Zoning Release Public Meeting
 - Focus Groups
 - Office Hours
- **Ongoing:** Surveys (close 4/30/24)

Appendix

Understanding Height

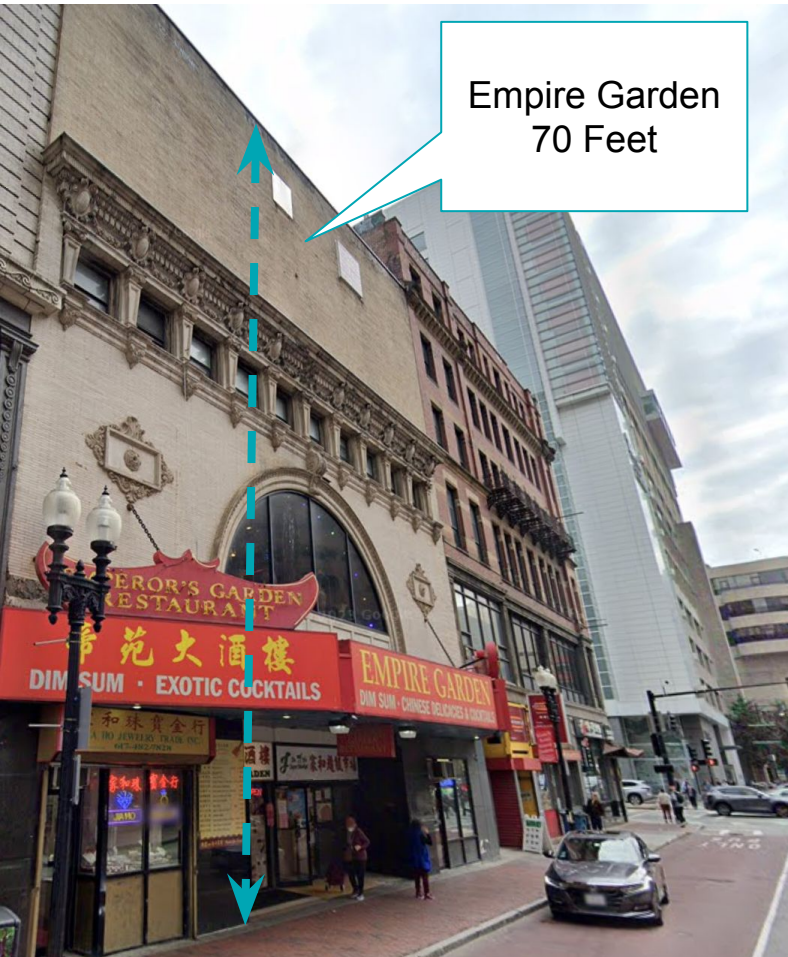
Understanding Height: Low-Rise Buildings



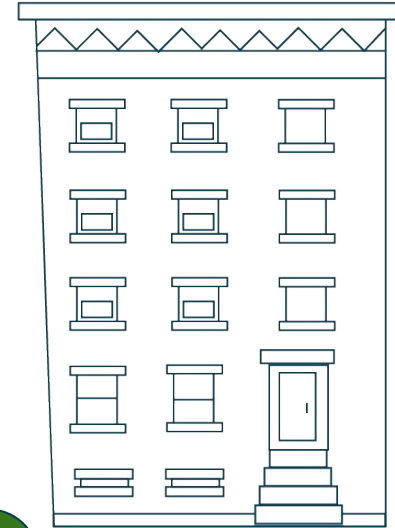
Low-Rise Building
<50 feet



Understanding Height: Low-Mid Rise Buildings



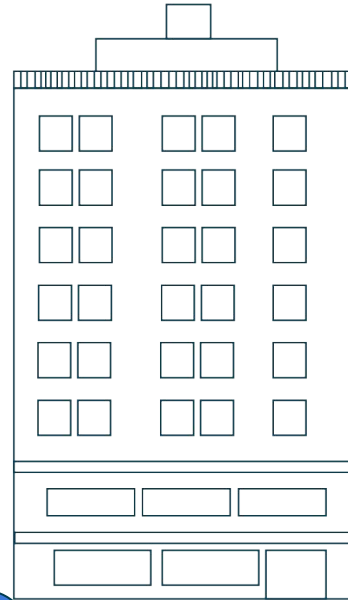
Empire Garden
70 Feet



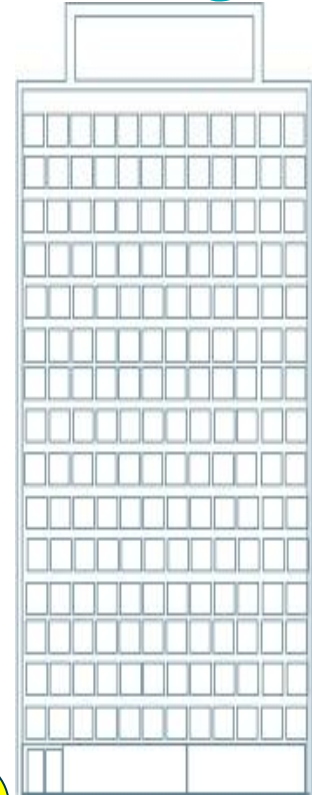
Low-Mid-Rise Building
50-80 feet



Understanding Height — Mid to High Rise Buildings



Mid-Rise Building
80 - 155 feet



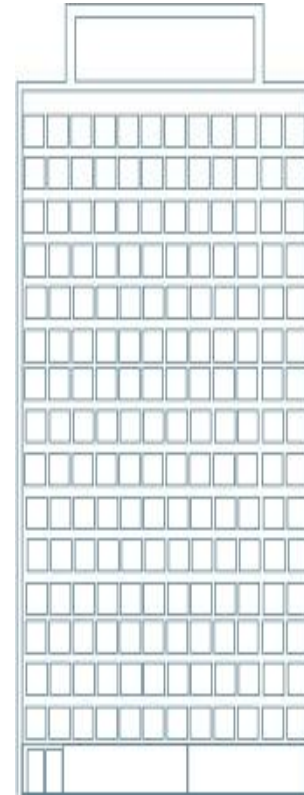
High-Rise Building
>155 feet



Understanding Height — High-Rise Buildings



660
Washington St
~ 300 Feet



High-Rise Building
>155 feet

