

Roslindale Square: Zoning Updates Guide



A guide to explain proposed updates to zoning rules in the Roslindale Square area that will allow for more multifamily housing and mixed-use development.

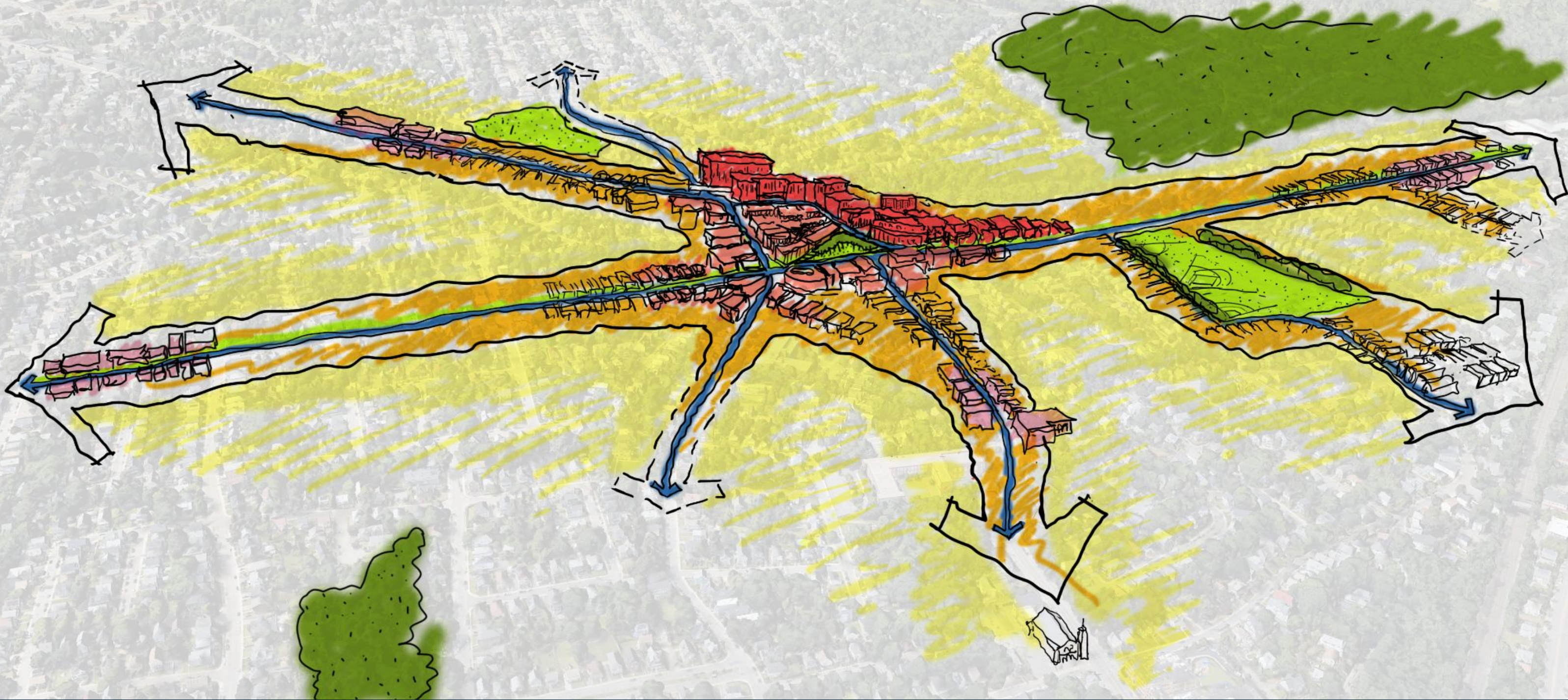


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If reading on your computer, click on the highlighted text to the left to jump to a section in this guide.

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While you're reading this guide, you'll see some terms or phrases that you've maybe heard of before but haven't seen very often.

To help make these terms more accessible, you can check out the section titled [“For Reference: Key Terms and Phrases”](#) that can be used as a tool while reading to define some of the terms that show up throughout the guide.

You can always reach out to us at squaresandstreets@boston.gov if there is a part of the guide that is unclear.

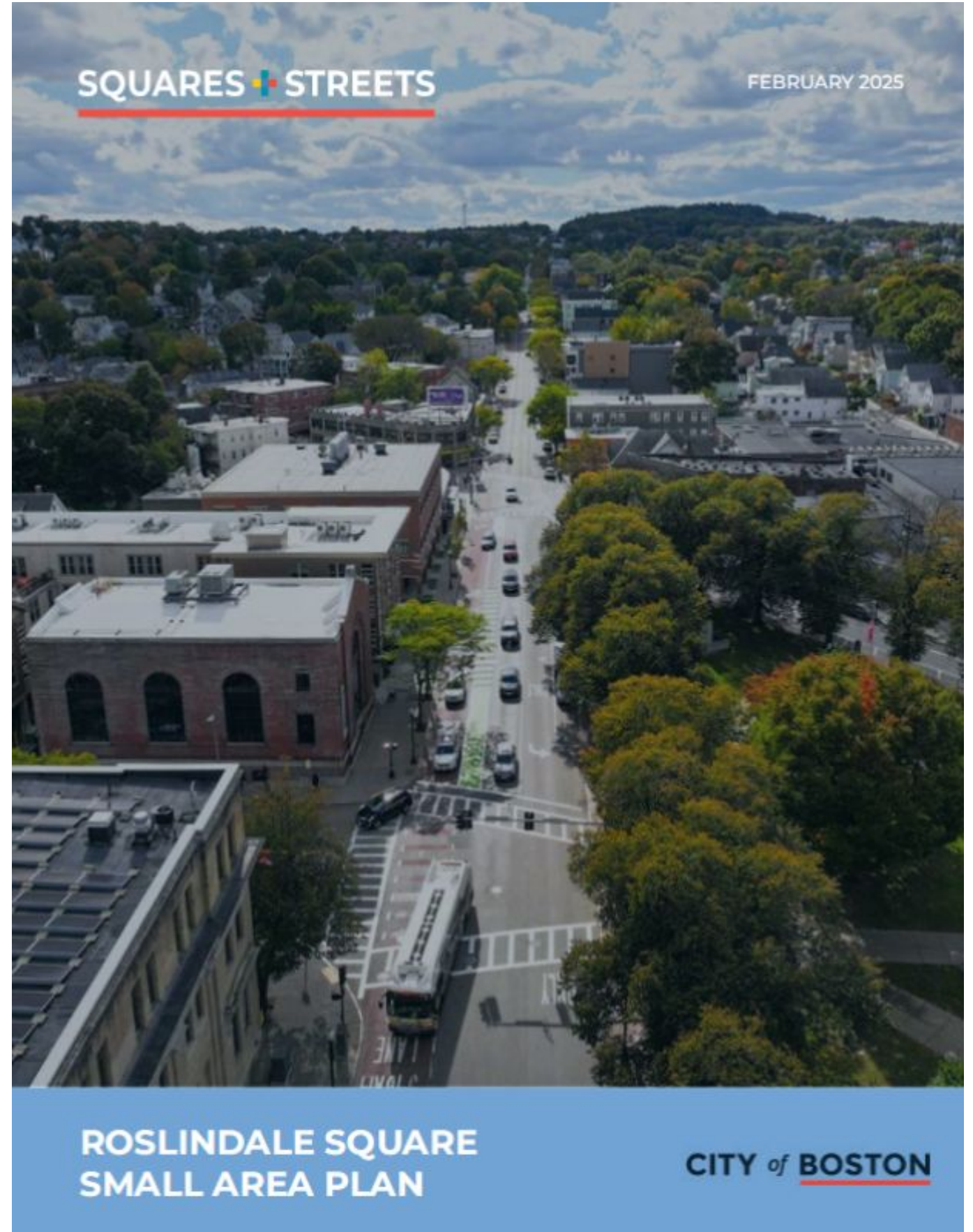
Our team will be happy to clarify a concept to make it easier to understand and engage with this work.

Background: Roslindale Square Small Area Plan



On February 13, 2025, the [Roslindale Square Small Area Plan](#) was adopted by the BPDA Board.

The Small Area Plan sets a vision for future building development and land uses, public investments from city departments, strengthening of the local business areas and housing growth opportunities in Roslindale Square. The City of Boston will use the plan as a guide to provide resources and coordinate projects to meet the goals of that vision.



ROSLINDALE SQUARE | COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

FACILITATING EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION

Roslindale is a linguistically and racially diverse community, and the engagements summarized below encapsulate the team's efforts to reach a more diverse audience during the planning process.

Hosting an equitable process means that participants in Roslindale Square Squares + Streets engagements are representative of the neighborhood and inclusive of groups who historically have not been engaged in planning processes. Traditional meetings with pre-registration tend to attract fewer participants from low-income and BIPOC communities. To address this, staff have intentionally conducted numerous pop-ups, coffee hours, and focus groups at various times of day and days of the week/weekend to engage more diverse groups.

The following engagement activities were targeted to hear from Roslindale's Spanish-speaking communities, low-income households, immigrants, and BIPOC individuals. In order to meet these groups where they are at, staff attended existing community events and coordinated with scheduled programming/classes.

ESL ENGAGEMENT Staff and interpreters attended 4 ESL classes at the Caswell House and AECI, providing an opportunity for primarily Spanish and Italian Creole-speaking residents to learn about Squares + Streets and complete an activity about what they love and want to see improved in the Square.

POP-UPS AND TABLING Pop-ups at Archdale events, the Square School Library, and two unique opportunities to reach to more residents - especially those who speak a language other than English - who cannot attend longer meetings or do not feel comfortable in those spaces. Spanish-speaking staff were present at all of these pop-ups.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SUMMARY

Below is a summary of community feedback on the strengths of the small business environment, diverse population, and community spirit in Roslindale Square as well as challenges related to drawing foot

ROSLINDALE SQUARE | IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

#	GOAL	HOUSING AND REAL ESTATE STRATEGIES	#	GOAL	SMALL BUSINESS STRATEGIES
H-1		Encourage an additional percentage of rental units to be offered to housing voucher holders on new developments subject to Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) requirements (generally residential projects with more than 50,000 square feet).	SB-1		The following commercial uses are desired by the community through new development or adaptive reuse of existing or vacant buildings: affordable and healthy food retailers, cafes, sit-down restaurants, and daytime casual eateries.
H-2		Request a higher proportion of 2+ bedroom units in new residential development.			
H-3		Develop guidelines for parcel acquisition in housing production. This may include identifying buildings or empty lots that the City can acquire and develop.			
H-4		Identify parcels with Southeast Boston CDC for acquisition/preservation of affordable housing.			

ROSLINDALE SQUARE | LAND USE AND DESIGN FRAMEWORK

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

INTERSECTION AT ALEXANDER THE GREAT PARK ON BELGRADE AVE

A POSSIBLE FUTURE FOR ROSLINDALE SQUARE

Current Conditions

Background: Land Use and Design Framework

The Small Area Plan includes a chapter called the **Land Use and Design Framework** that recommends where future building development should happen in local areas, what that development should look like and what land uses are preferred in those areas. The Framework sets a vision for **more multifamily housing and mixed-use development** in and around Roslindale Square to expand housing opportunities near major public transit resources and local small business areas.

It includes a recommendation to **update the zoning rules** in and around Roslindale Square to encode the Plan's goals for multifamily housing and mixed-use development.

This guide provides an overview of proposed updates to the zoning rules of the area, including a walkthrough of each segment of the area that will be updated.

CHAPTER 03
LAND USE AND DESIGN FRAMEWORK

This Plan supports mixed-use growth in the existing commercial core of Roslindale Square and surrounding gateway streets while reserving zoning reform for the majority of lower scale residential fabric for future initiatives.

The Land Use and Design Framework recommends where future development should occur in key local areas, and what that development should look like. The framework can identify where to allow land uses, what the scale of new buildings should be, and what kinds of infrastructure and community improvements should accompany that growth.

This chapter 1) summarizes present-day land use patterns and opportunities; 2) presents the proposed Land Use and Design Framework; and 3) identifies how new development should shape the public realm and built environment.

ROSLINDALE SQUARE | LAND USE AND DESIGN FRAMEWORK

LAND USE AND ZONING

RECOMMENDATION:

LD-1. BASED ON THE LAND USE AND DESIGN FRAMEWORK, UPDATE THE ZONING MAP TO ENCODE THE GOALS FOR MIXED-USE AND MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN AND AROUND ROSLINDALE SQUARE.

- Map Squares + Streets districts, through a Zoning Map Amendment, throughout mixed-use areas of the Square, at key gateways to the Square, and to provide transitions to smaller-scale residential areas.
- Where this Plan envisions continued small-scale residential uses and incremental growth, update residential zoning to reflect existing built patterns, support safe walking routes to Roslindale Square, and enable the development of accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and small multi-unit residential buildings.

ROSLINDALE SQUARE | IMPLEMENTATION

#	GOAL	LAND USE AND DESIGN FRAMEWORK STRATEGY	FUNDING CATEGORY	TIMELINE
LD-1	Based on the Land Use and Design Framework, update the zoning map to encode the goals for mixed-use and multi-family residential development in Roslindale Square.		No additional budget needed	Winter 2025 adoption of zoning map (2025)
LD-2	Incorporate the Land Use and Design Framework into the ongoing review of proposed projects.		No additional budget needed	Ongoing/As part of this Plan updated 2025
LD-3	Complete an Area Form update - including historic structures - for the Roslindale Square Historic Commission (MHC).		Operating/Annual Budget and Grants	2-3 years

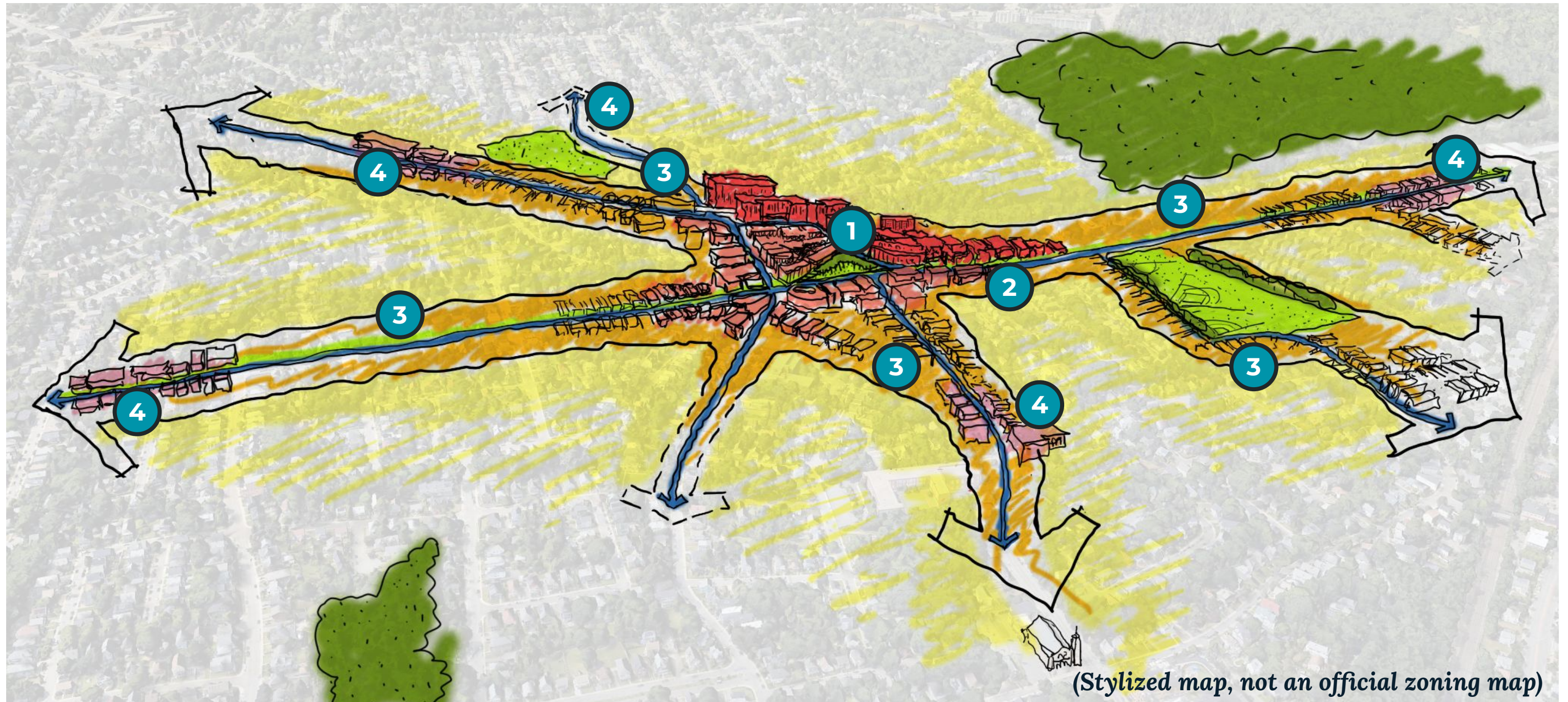
COMMUNITY AND COMMERCIAL CORE

THROUGH BLOCK ON TAFT CT, BETWEEN SOUTH ST AND CORINTH ST

NEW PUBLIC AMENITY SPACES

In the central block bounded by Poplar Street, South Street, and Corinth Street, development should consider meeting their Outdoor Amenity Space and Lot Coverage requirements by dedicating space to the creation of publicly accessible through-block connections, especially between Corinth Street and South Street and between Poplar Street and Taft Hill Court.

Background: Land Use and Design Framework



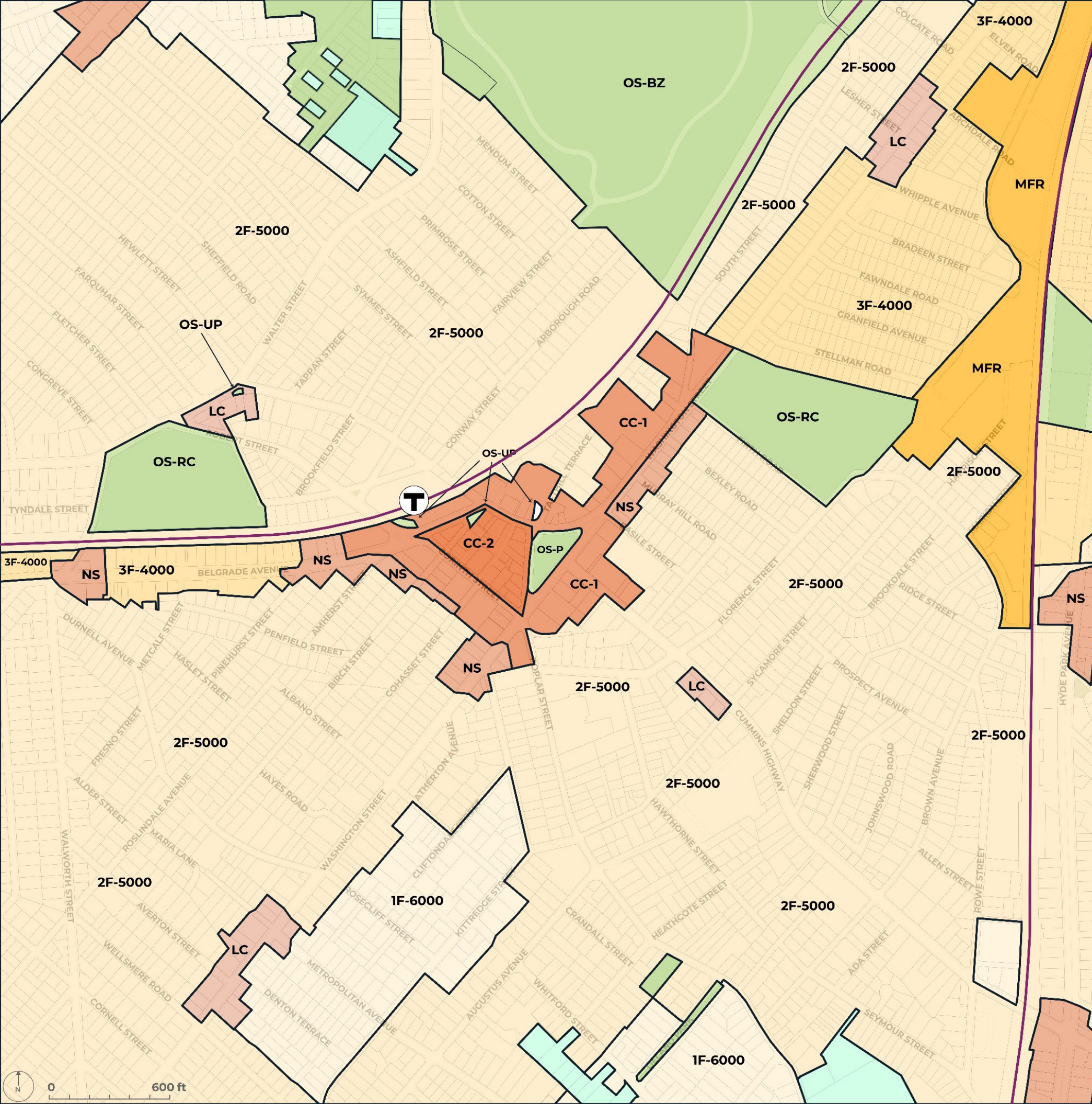
The **Land Use and Design Framework** specifies different types of areas in and around Roslindale Square and makes recommendations for guiding future development. **The specific areas are:**

- 1) A **community and commercial core** centered around Adams Park that serves as the Square's center of activity
- 2) An **active main street** from Adams Park to Healy Field
- 3) **Connecting, transitional streets** between the core area and local gateways
- 4) **Mixed-use gateways** located at existing commercial clusters around the Square

Existing Zoning in Roslindale Square

This map shows the **existing zoning subdistricts** in the Roslindale Square area. The specific rules for land uses and dimensional scale in these subdistricts are written in Article 67 (Roslindale Neighborhood District) of the Boston Zoning Code.

You can check out those rules at: bosplans.org/ZoningCodeArticle67Roslindale



Proposed Zoning: Squares and Streets Districts

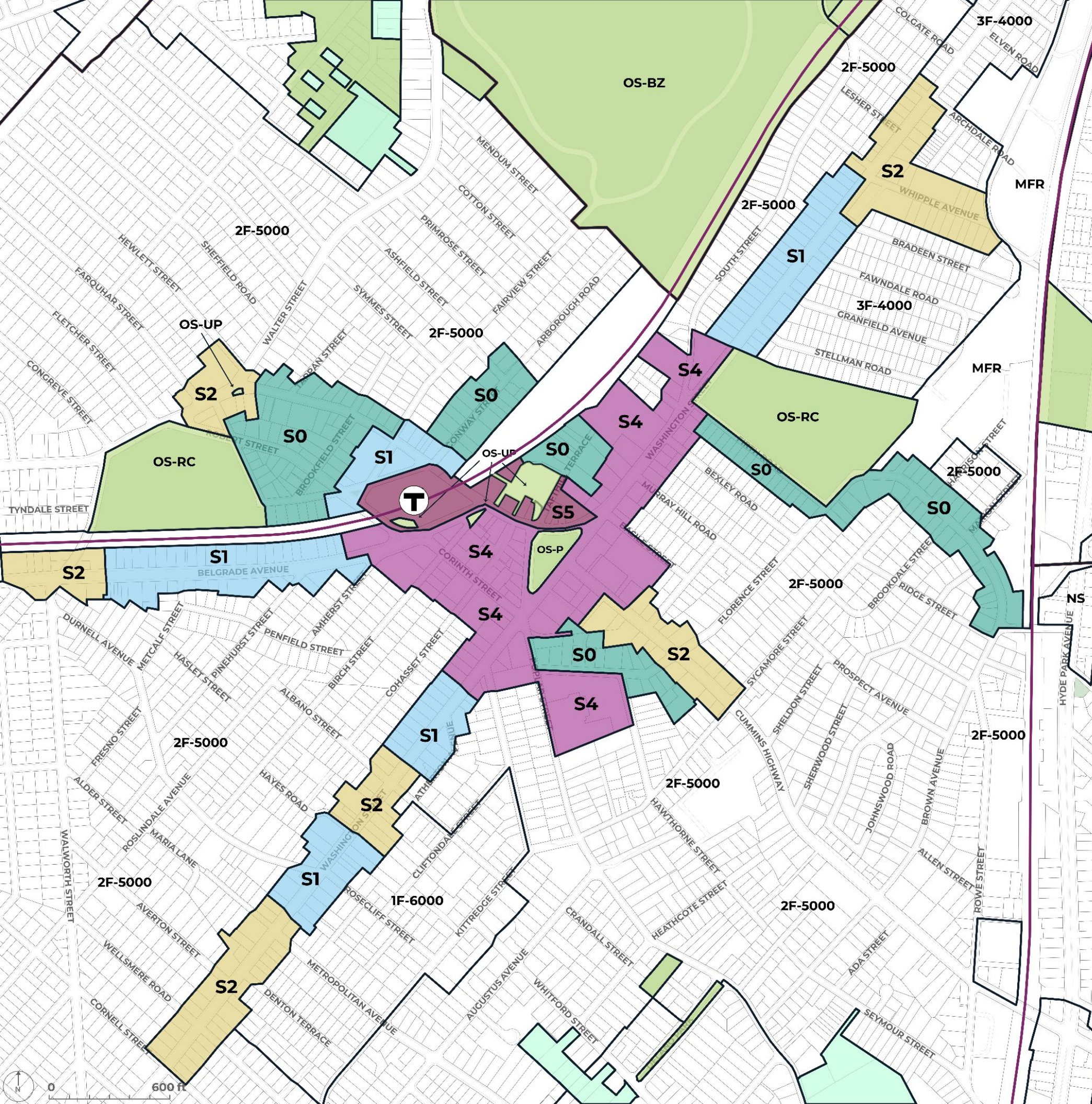
This map shows the **proposed zoning updates** for the Roslindale Square area. These updates will map Squares and Streets Districts, indicated **in color**.

The specific rules for land uses and dimensional scale in these districts are written in Article 8 (Regulation of Uses) and Article 26 (Squares and Streets Districts) of the Boston Zoning Code.

You can check out those rules at:

bosplans.org/Article8Uses

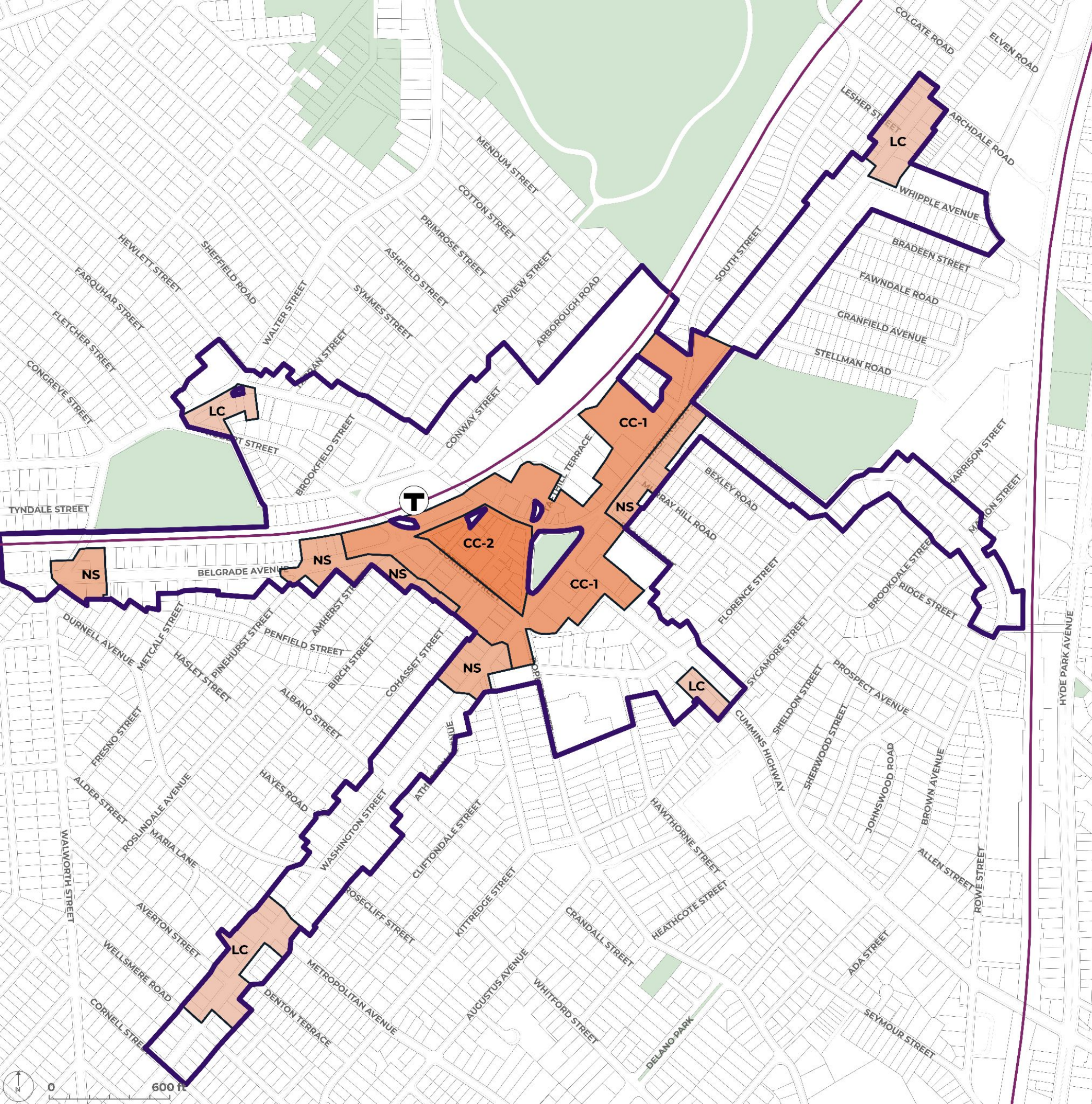
bosplans.org/Article26SquaresStreets



Updated Zoning for Existing Neighborhood Business Areas

All of the existing neighborhood business zoning subdistricts that are within the boundary area for the proposed zoning will be re-mapped with these Squares and Streets zoning districts.

These existing neighborhood business subdistricts are shown on this map **in color** and the area for proposed Squares and Streets zoning is shown using the **thick boundary lines**.

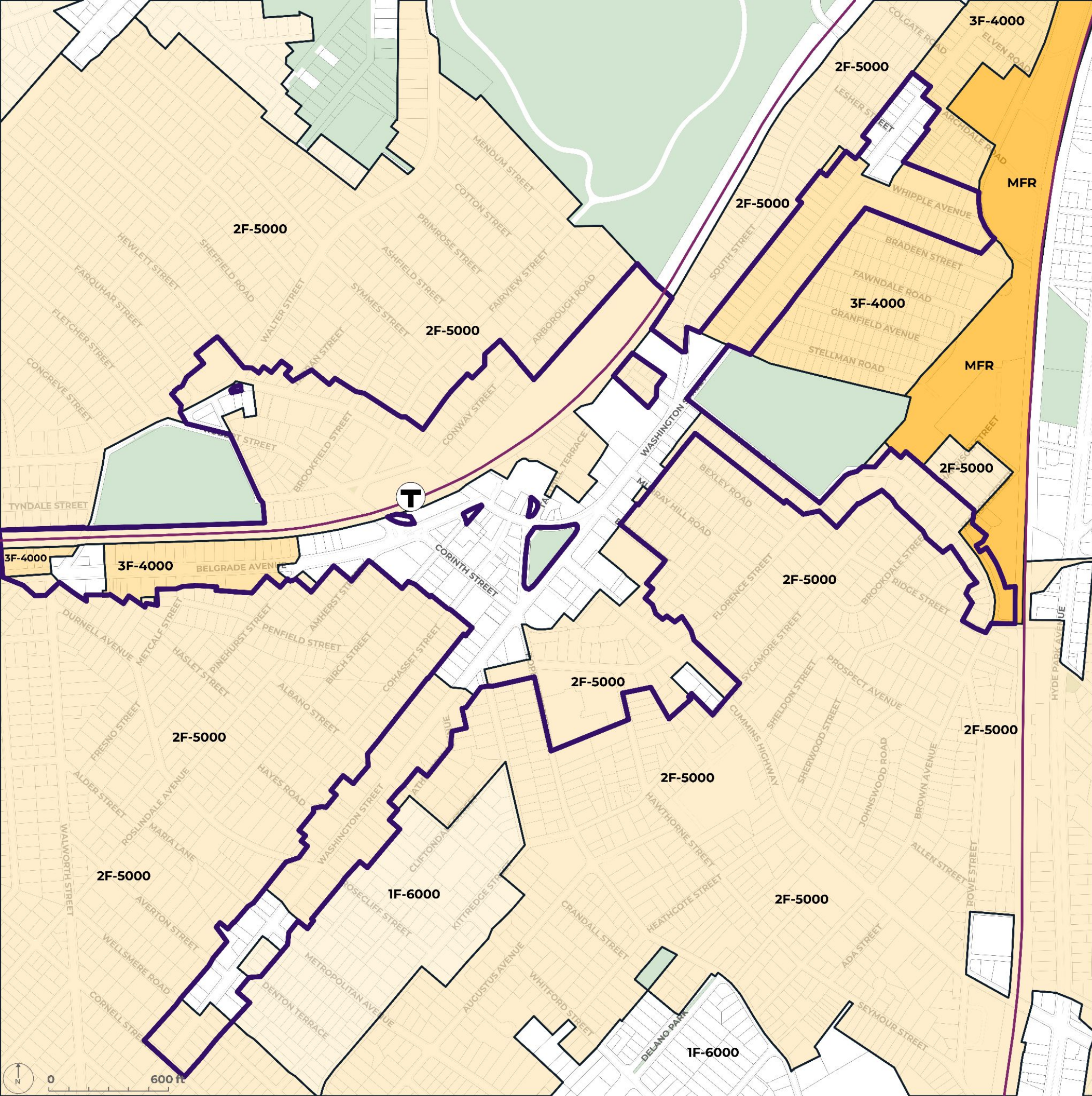


Updated Zoning for Existing Residential Areas on Major Streets

There are some existing residential zoning subdistricts that are within the boundary area for the proposed zoning updates.

These residential areas are typically very close to existing commercial areas, have existing commercial land uses, have existing mixed-use or multifamily buildings, or are on a major street that connects multiple commercial areas to each other.

These existing residential subdistricts are shown on this map **in color** and the area for proposed Squares and Streets zoning is shown using the **thick boundary lines**.
















Summary: What are Squares and Streets Districts?



Squares and Streets Districts are a set of zoning rules that allow for mixed-use development of multifamily housing, commercial spaces, and cultural spaces in neighborhood squares around Boston. They **each have different rules** around the maximum scale of buildings, the yard space surrounding buildings, and land uses.

 = has an **Outdoor Amenity Space Requirement**

 = has a **Ground Floor Active Use Requirement**

	<p>S0 – Transition Residential</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 4 stories maximum • Up to 14 residential units maximum • Primarily residential uses • Transition from high activity mixed-use areas to low activity residential areas 		<p>S3 – Active Main Street  </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 7 stories maximum • Allows a larger mix of small and medium-scale commercial uses that promote activity
	<p>S1 – Main Street Living</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 4 stories maximum • For parts of a main street that are largely residential but have occasional non-residential uses • Allows more flexibility for small-scale commercial uses 		<p>S4 – Active Squares  </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 7 stories maximum • Allows for wider buildings than S3 and more flexibility for medium- and large-scale uses • Higher Outdoor Amenity Space percentage than S3
	<p>S2 – Main Street Mixed Use </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 5 stories maximum • Flexible rules to allow for both mixed use and fully residential multifamily buildings along a main street 		<p>S5 – Placemaker Squares  </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 145 feet maximum • Taller and wider mixed-use buildings that allow the most flexibility of ground and upper level uses • Highest Outdoor Amenity Space percentage of all the districts

S0 Districts

Transition Residential



Multifamily homes with front, side and backyards



Four-story multifamily residential buildings



Child care centers and home-based child care



Small retail uses in residential areas

- Mapped in specific residential areas
- Most are adjacent to the commercial core of Roslindale Square or along main streets
- Encourages small-scale multifamily housing near local businesses and public transit options
- The S0 district has the smallest building footprint and lot coverage requirements, keeping a residential-feeling scale
- Has the largest yard space and Permeable Area of Lot requirements



S1 Districts

Main Street Living

- Mapped along stretches of main streets that are mostly residential
- These areas also have a few mixed-use buildings and non-residential uses
- Also mapped north of the MBTA Commuter Rail Station to affirm existing multifamily and large non-residential buildings
- The S1 district requires small side yards, small front yards, and a minimum Permeable Area of Lot – encouraging a mostly residential feeling



Mostly residential stretch of the main street with occasional small businesses



Multifamily housing with over 14 units



Mixed-use buildings with ground-floor businesses

S2 Districts

Main Street Mixed Use

- Mapped at commercial clusters found along major streets and intersections in Roslindale
- Updated zoning to S2 will affirm many existing multifamily residential and mixed-use properties
- The S2 district provides flexibility for non-residential uses on upper stories
- Expands opportunity for current small businesses to grow and for more small businesses to join the area and increase activity



Small-scale retail surrounded by housing



Mixed-use building (under development) with housing and ground floor commercial space



Retail strip with small storefronts in one building

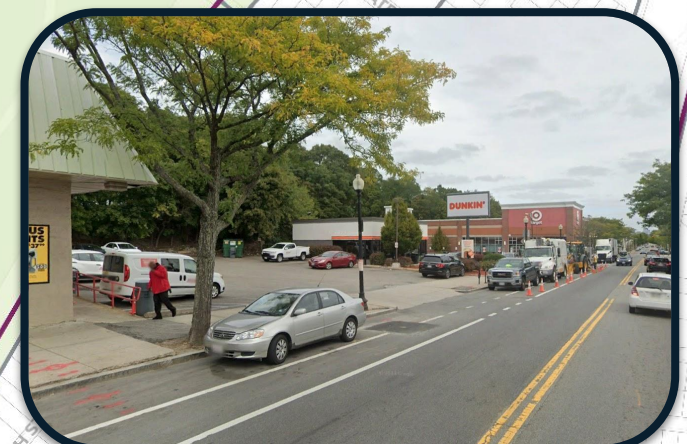


S4 Districts

Active Squares



Consistent, active storefronts with zero-foot side yards (right next to each other)



Large lots holding larger and heavily frequented commercial spaces



Wide buildings that cover most of the lot and hold active and housing uses



Existing mixed-use and multi-story multiple buildings with commercial spaces on the ground floor



Multifamily housing with over 14 units

- The S4 district is mapped in areas with the highest level of existing commercial activity – surrounding Adams Park and along Washington Street
- The Ground Floor Active Use requirement specifically promotes and preserves an active small- and medium-scale commercial feeling in the area that the current zoning does not prioritize
- The Outdoor Amenity Space requirement promotes even more open environment for residents and visitors to spend time in the area



S5 Districts

Placemaker Squares

- The S5 district is mapped in the heart of high activity squares
- Offers the highest flexibility and possibility for future housing growth and mixed-use buildings with a variety of commercial and community-serving spaces
- Promotes the highest amount of Outdoor Amenity Space, which can add to the amount of outdoor space adjacent to Adams Park



Large MBTA-owned parking lot and mobility hub for local commuters



Diversity of active and non-residential uses along the northern edge of Adams Park



OS-UP Subdistrict

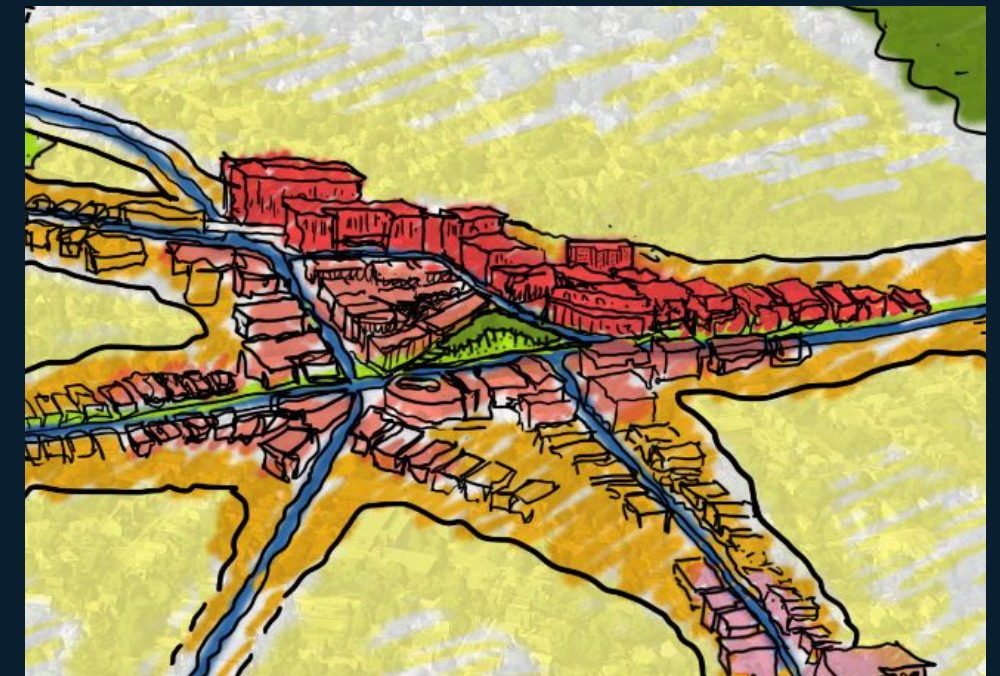
Urban Plaza Open Space

- Updates the Taft Hill Municipal Lot to an Open Space subdistrict
- Affirms the existing and continued use as a major parking amenity
- The parking lot will continue to serve as a community resource that supports access to the local small business ecosystem and community-serving activities, like the recurring Farmers Market



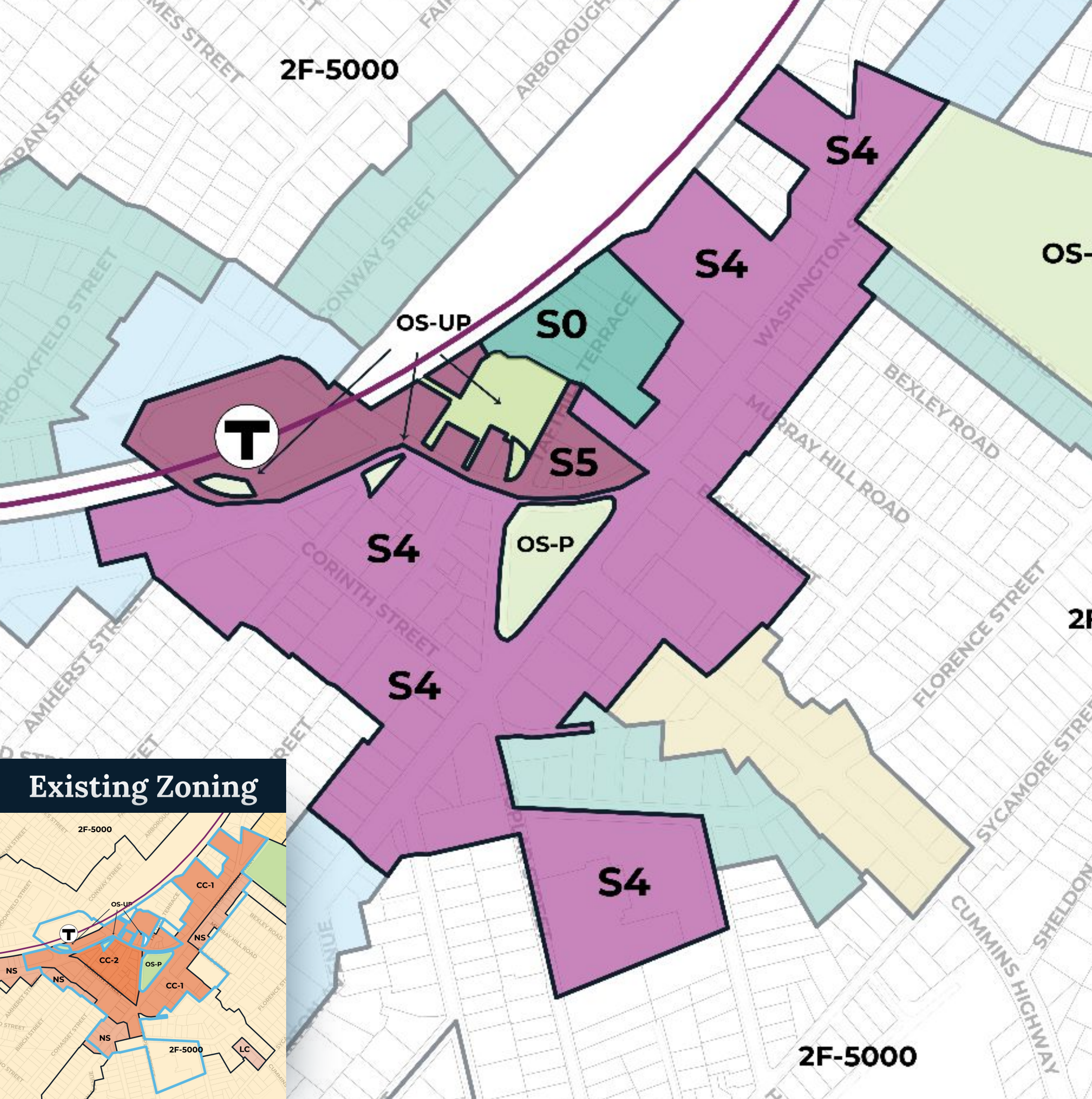
Zooming In: Roslindale Square and Washington Street North | S0, S4, S5

Surrounding Adams Park; Washington Street from Adams Park to Healy Field

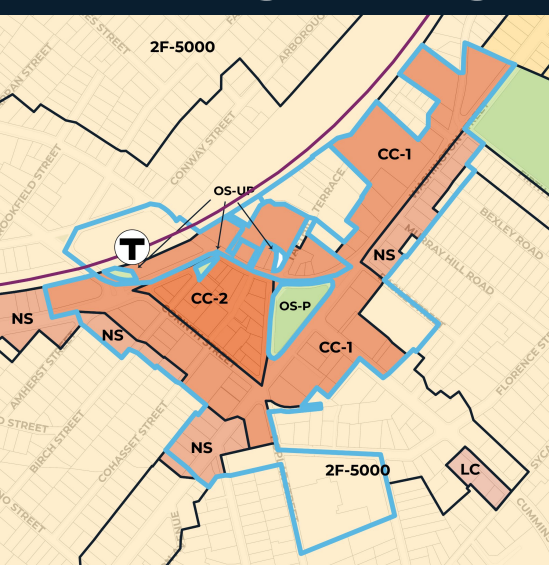


Implementing the vision for this area from Land Use and Design Framework of the Small Area Plan:

- A **community and commercial core** centered around Adams Park that serves as the Square's center of activity
- An **active main street** between Adams Park and Healy Field



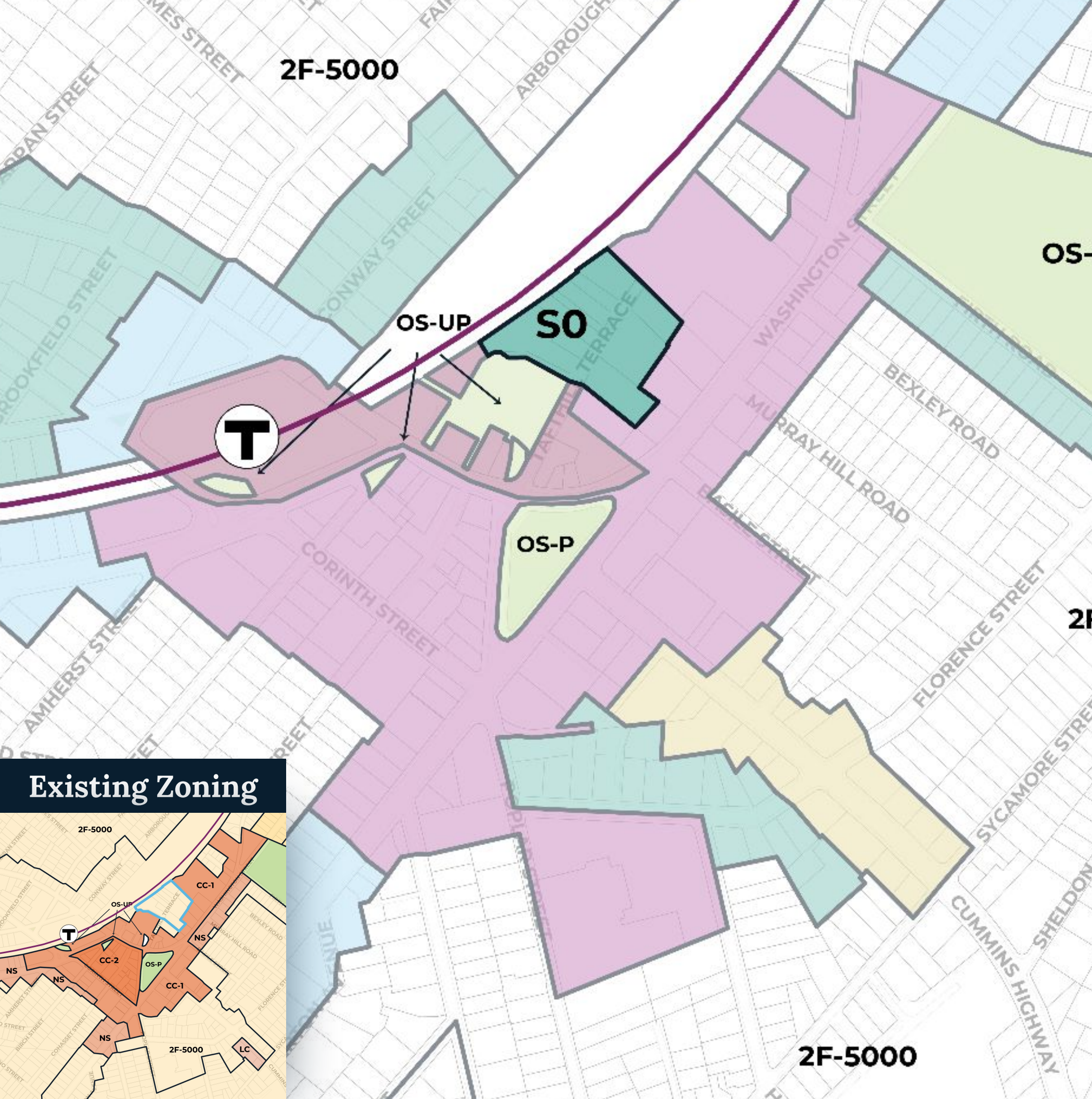
Existing Zoning



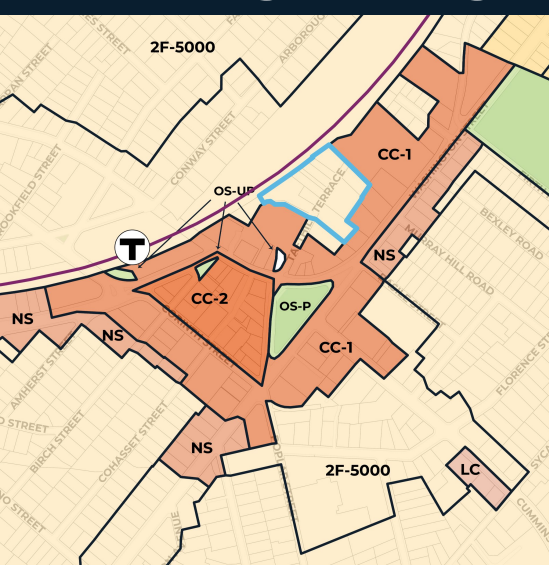
S0 | Roslindale Square and Washington Street North

Taft Hill Terrace contains many existing and newly built buildings that are at or near the scale allowed by the S0 district.

The S0 district **will affirm those buildings** in zoning and provide opportunities for future development that can help further improve the condition of the street.



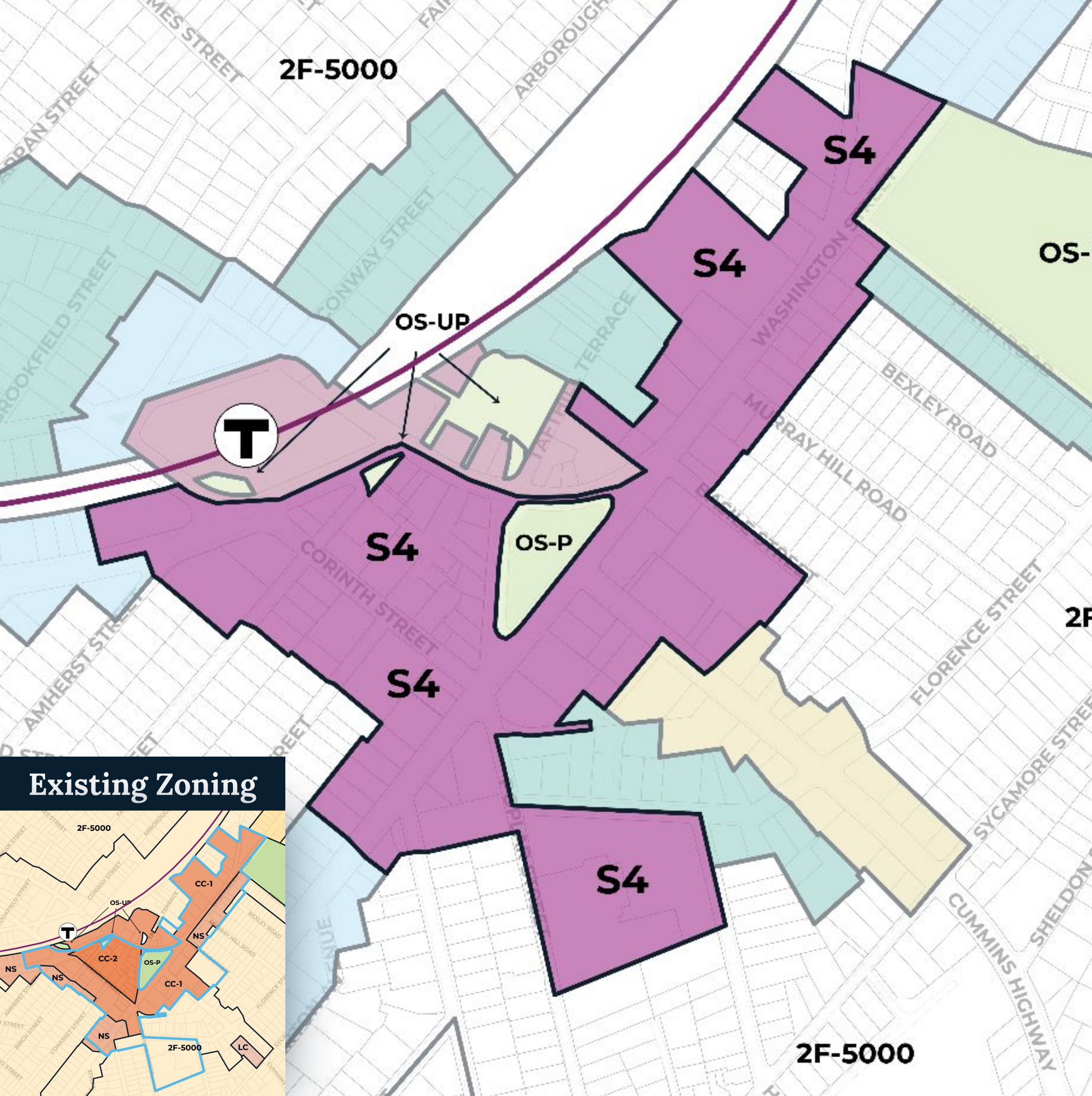
Existing Zoning



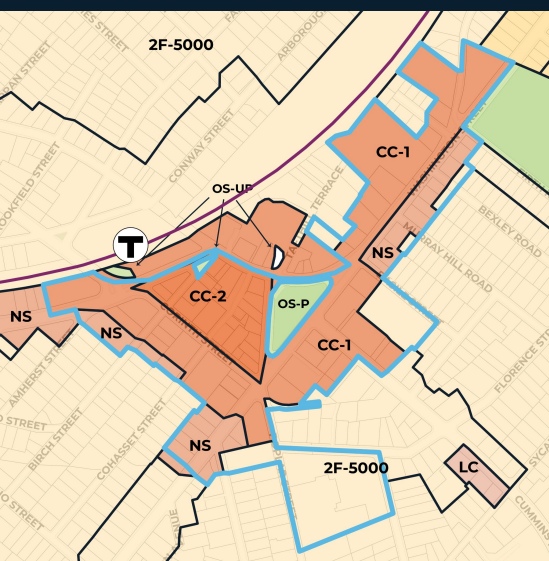
S4 | Roslindale Square and Washington Street North

The Ground Floor Active Use requirement of the S4 district will ensure that this area **remains an active commercial area and prioritizes many existing land uses** like with retail, restaurants, service establishments, and other uses at various sizes.

This district **will also provide opportunities for housing to be developed above existing single-story commercial spaces**, which further supports the goals of maintaining local small business activity while bringing more customers to the area.



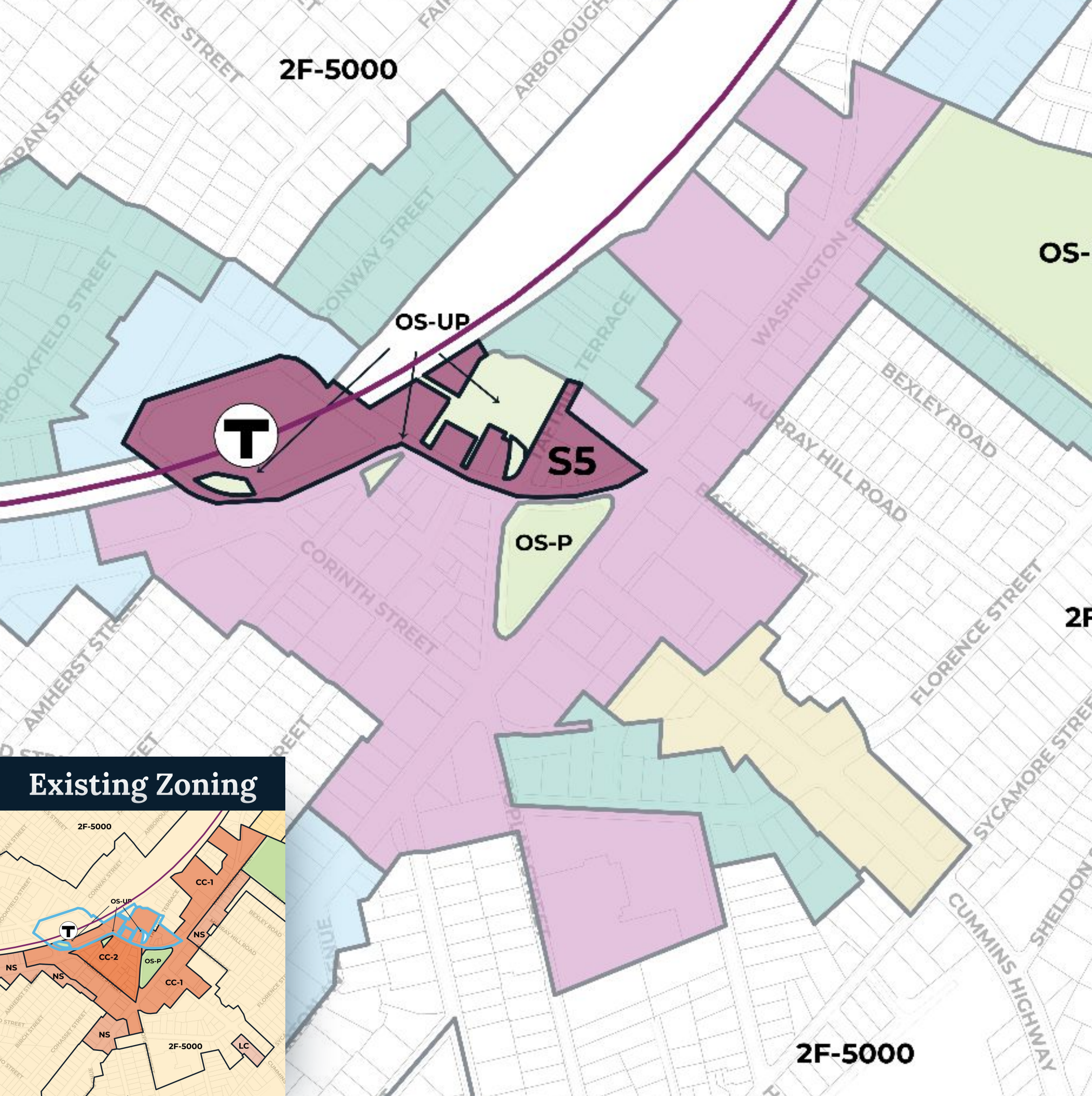
Existing Zoning



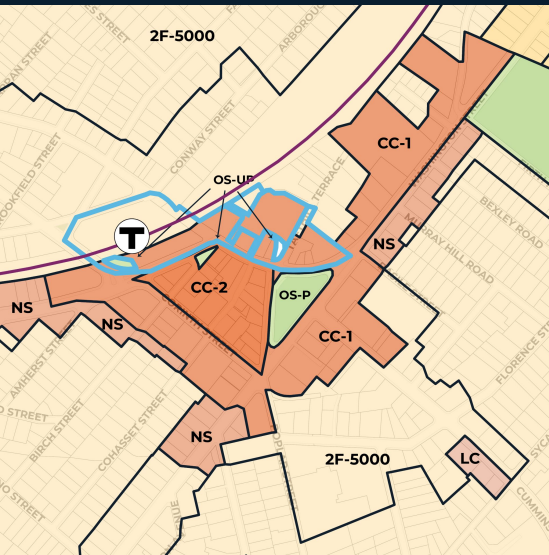
S5, OS-UP | Roslindale Square and Washington Street North

Like S4, the S5 district **will require and prioritize ground floor active uses.** The Outdoor Amenity Space requirement (30% minimum of a lot) **will provide flexibility in the design review process to prioritize outdoor amenities,** like outdoor seating and publicly accessible plazas.

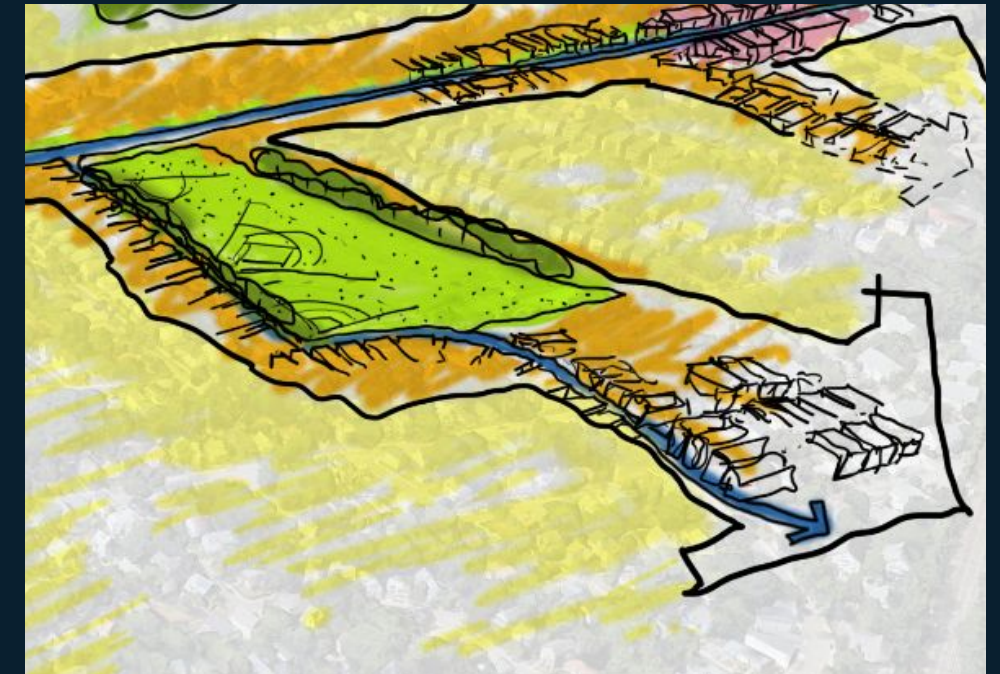
The OS-UP subdistrict **will affirm the existing parking use** of the Taft Hill Municipal Lot and leave flexibility to other creative community uses as an overall open space.



Existing Zoning

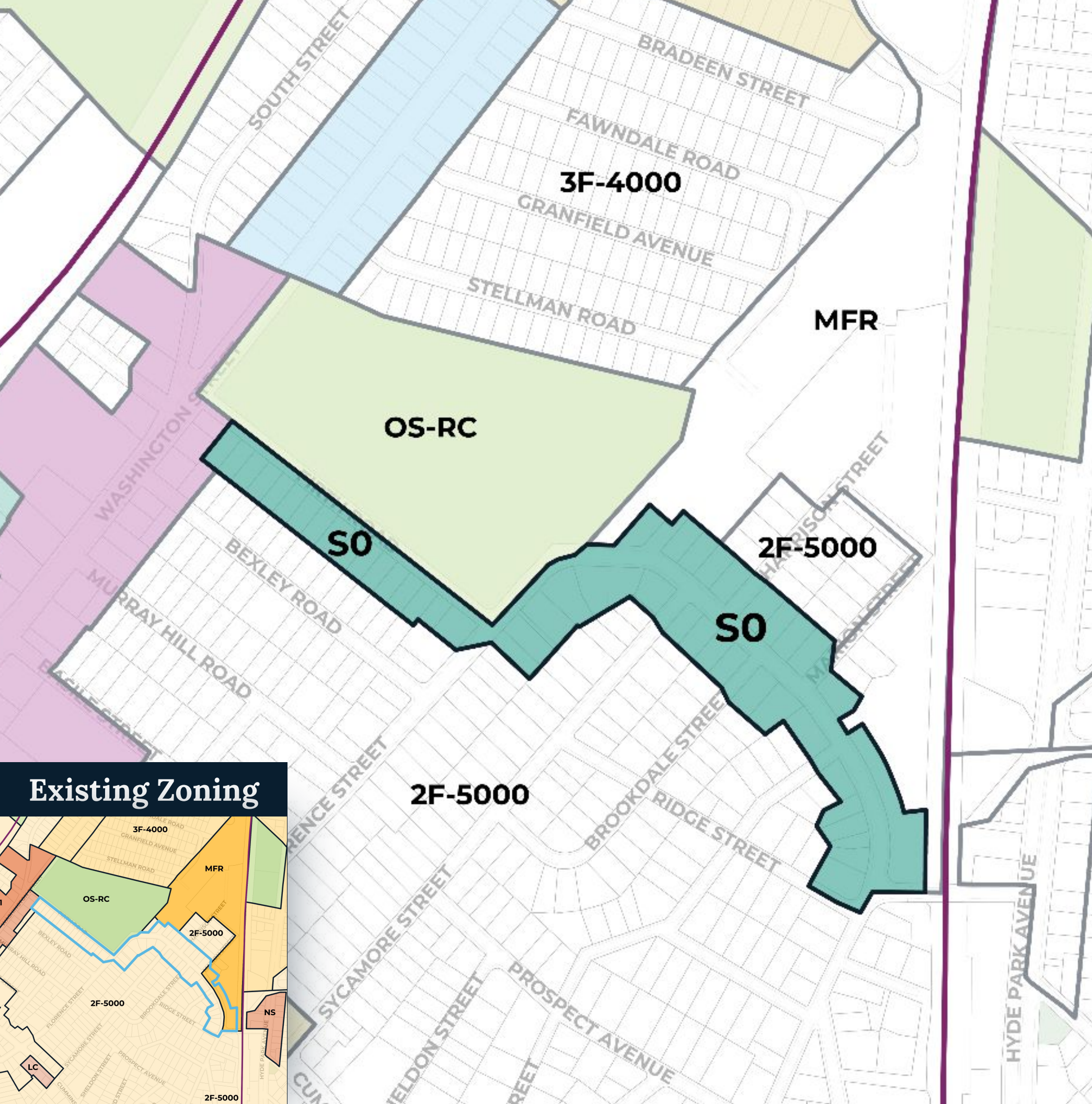


Zooming In: Firth Road and Florence Street | S0



Implementing the vision for this area from Land Use and Design Framework of the Small Area Plan:

- **Connecting, transitional streets** between the core area and local gateways

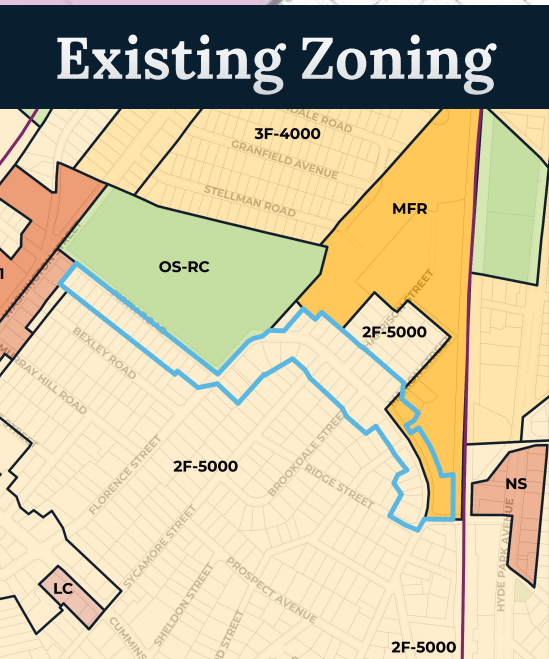
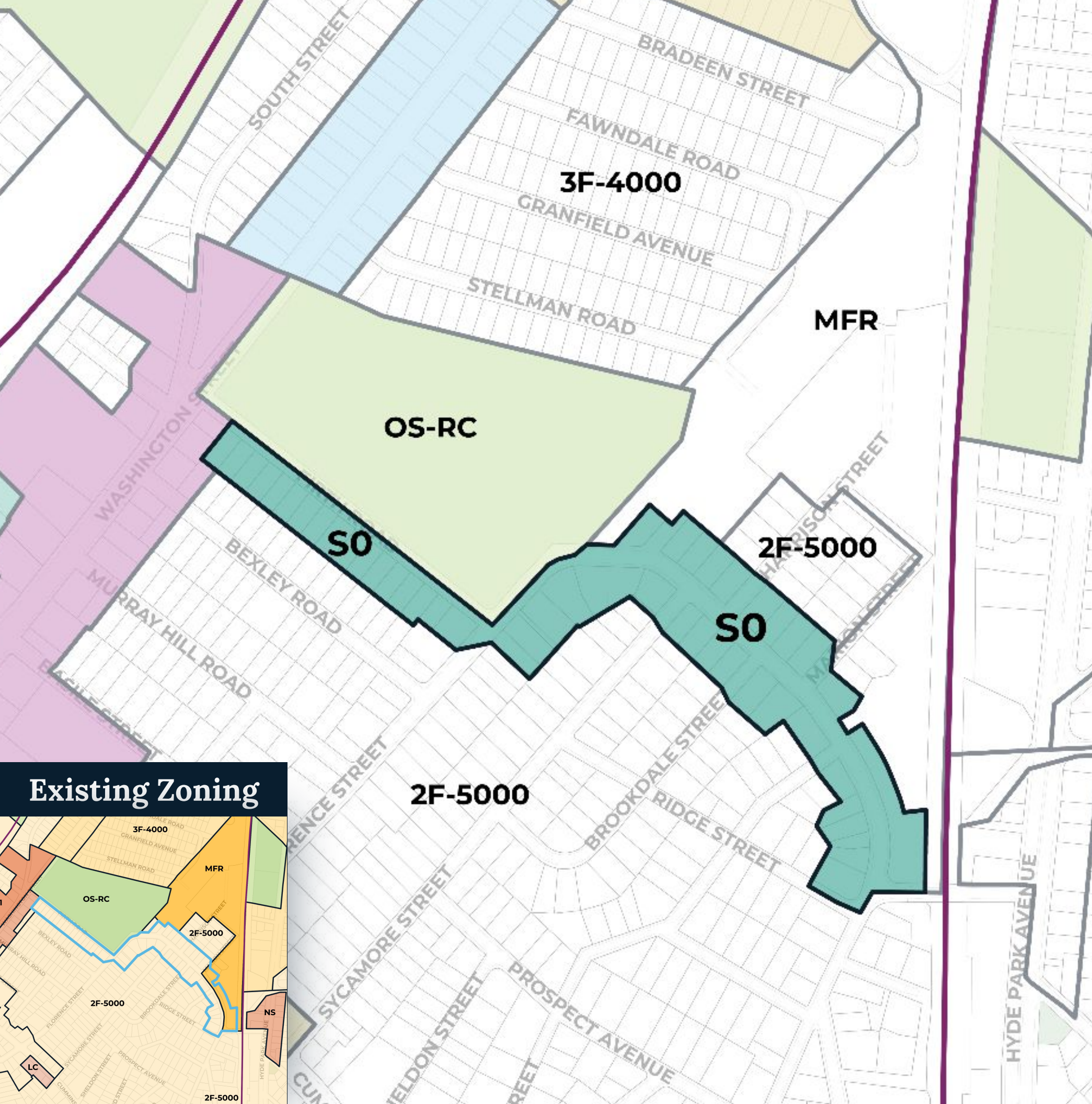


S0 | Firth Road and Florence Street

Being close to Washington Street (to the west), Hyde Park Avenue (to the east), and Healy Field makes this **an important location to offer more housing opportunities.**

The S0 district **will affirm many of the existing three-family and multifamily residential buildings.**

The sizeable yard minimum requirements and the prioritization of residential units of the S0 district **will encourage projects to maintain a residential feeling in scale and use.**



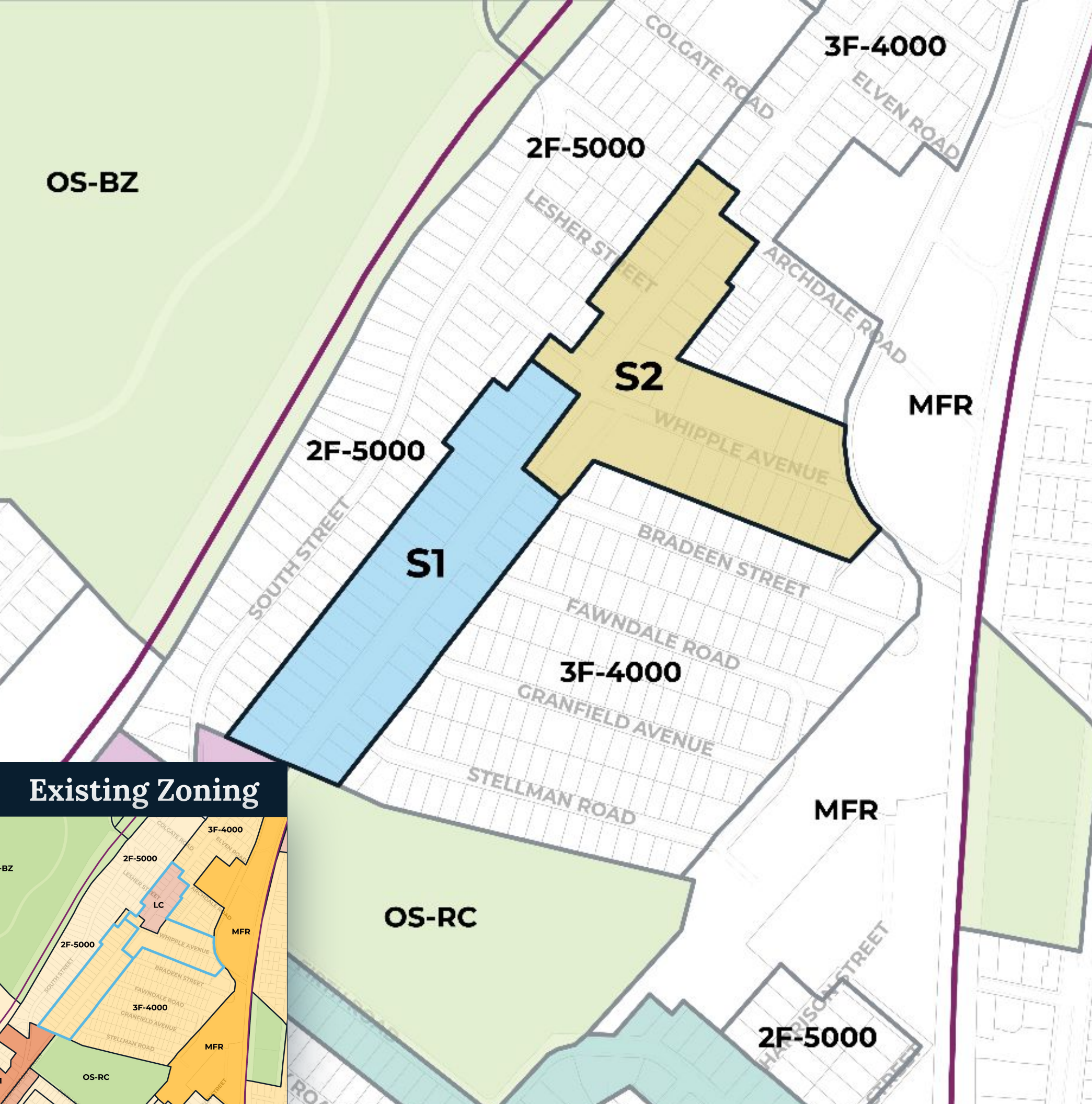
Zooming In: Washington Street North | S1, S2

From Healy Field to Archdale Road

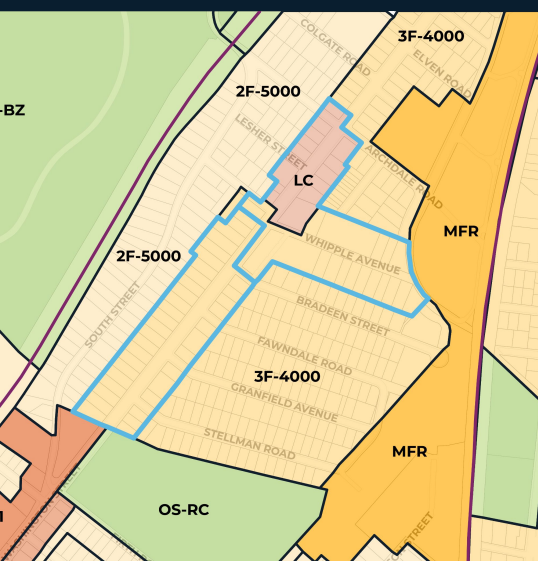


Implementing the vision for this area from Land Use and Design Framework of the Small Area Plan:

- **Connecting, transitional streets** between the core area and local gateways
- **Mixed-use gateways** located at existing commercial clusters around the Square



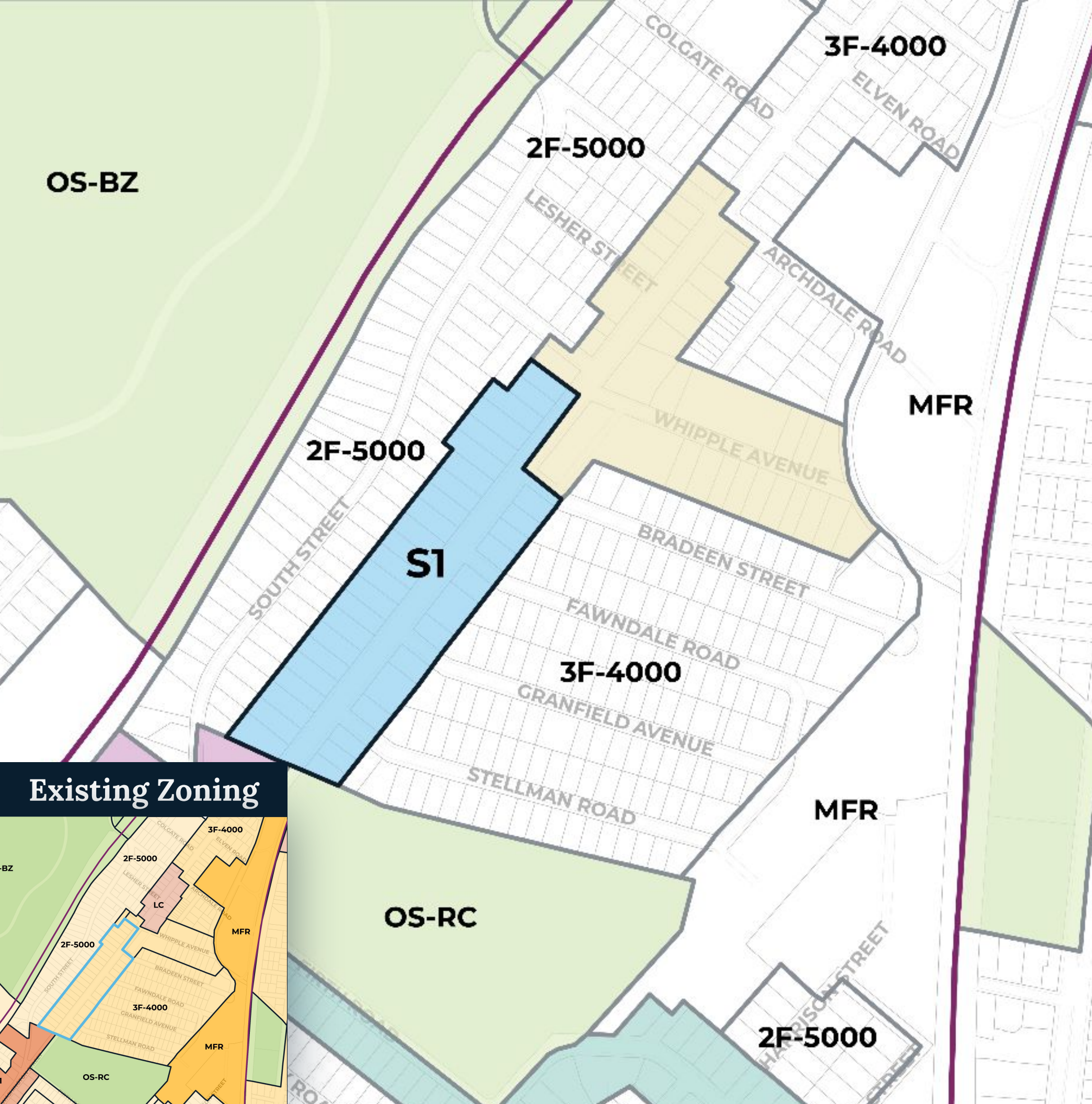
Existing Zoning



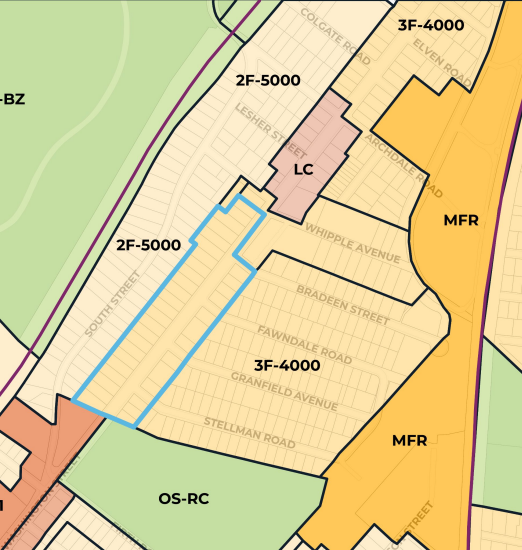
S1 | Washington Street North

The area between Healy Field and Whipple Street has several buildings of similar scale to what is allowed in the S1 district and some multifamily residential buildings – S1 **will further affirm these building scales and uses.**

The S1 district **will also provide greater flexibility for small non-residential uses**, aligning with goals in the Small Area Plan to allow small-scale commercial uses that help create a connective mixed-use feeling between Roslindale Square and the Archdale Road.



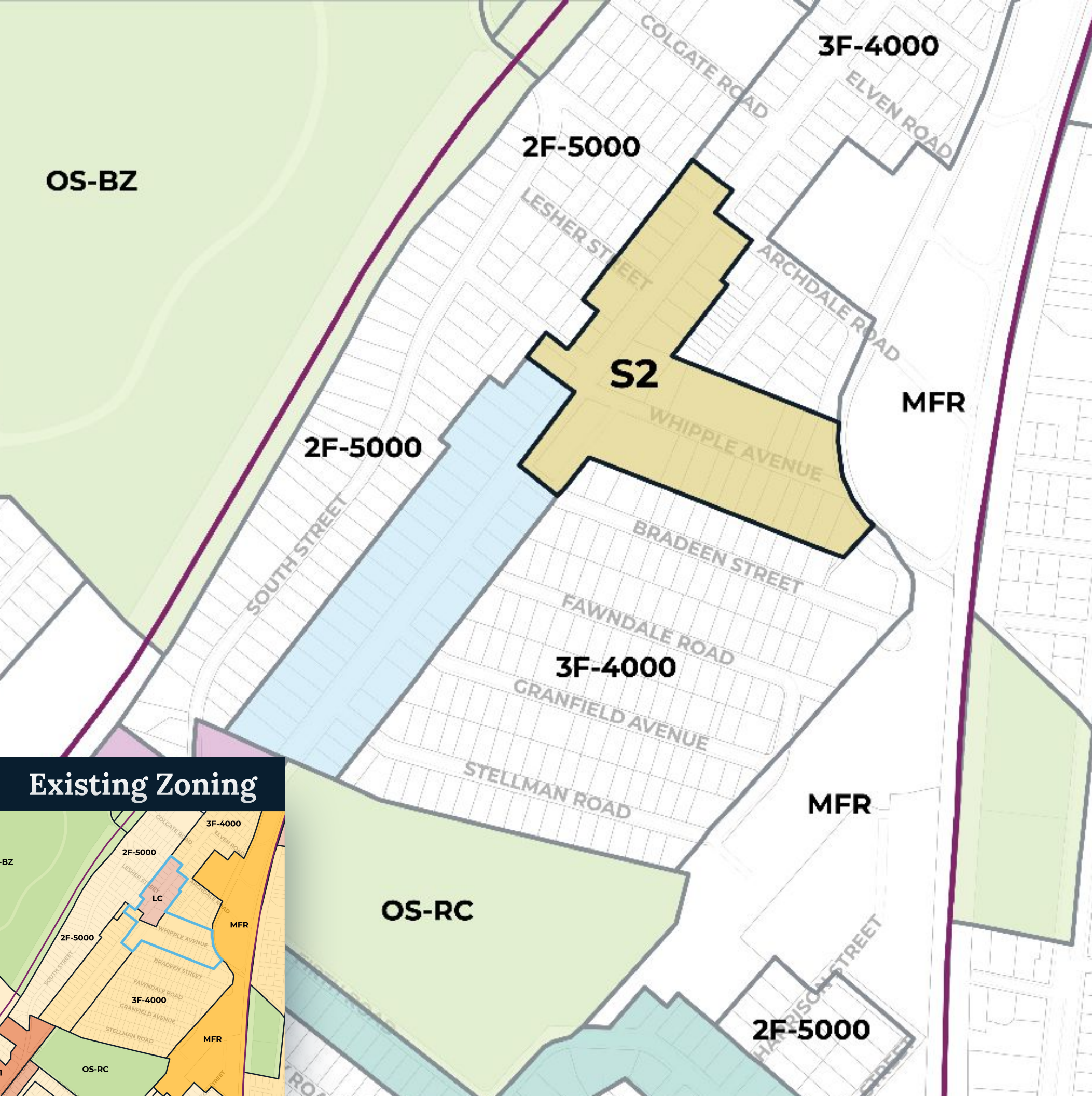
Existing Zoning



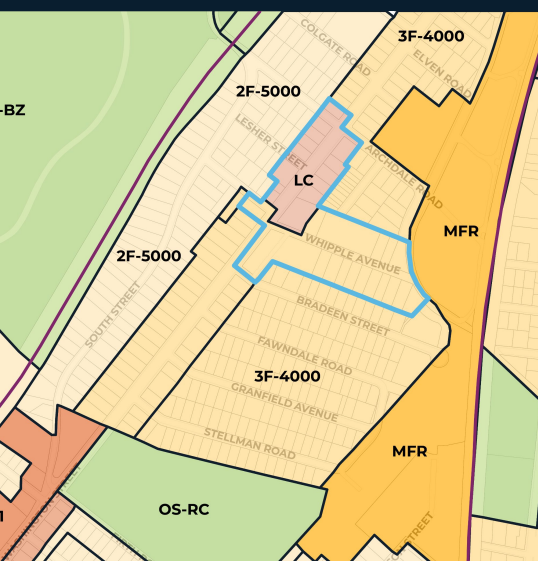
S2 | Washington Street North

The S2 district here will further the goal of creating a connective mixed-use feeling while also **affirming many of the existing small-scale commercial uses** in the area.

The Outdoor Amenity Space requirement of the S2 district **will provide flexibility to prioritize outdoor amenities** that can serve tenants or local businesses, like outdoor dining space, balconies, and gathering areas.

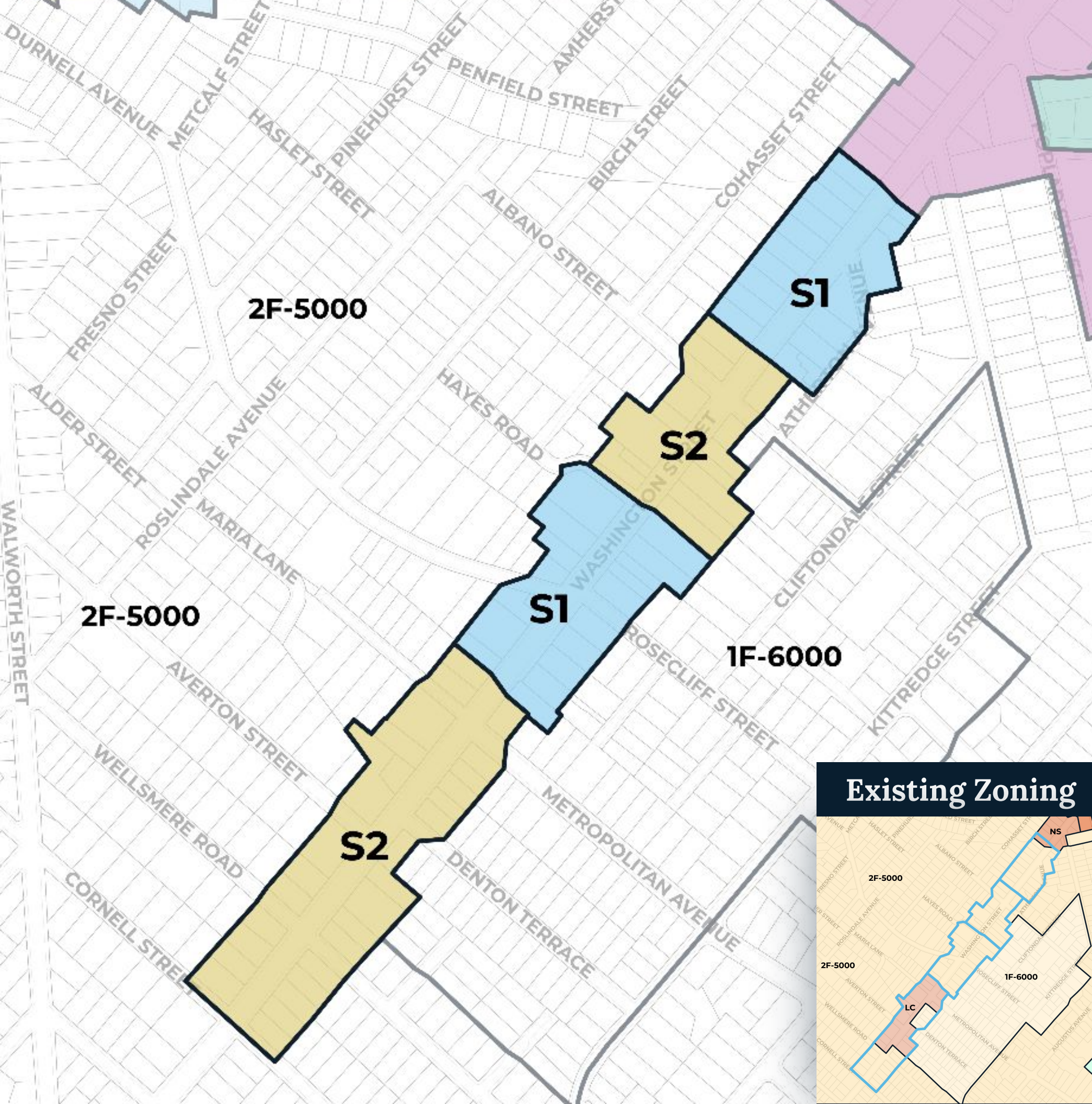


Existing Zoning

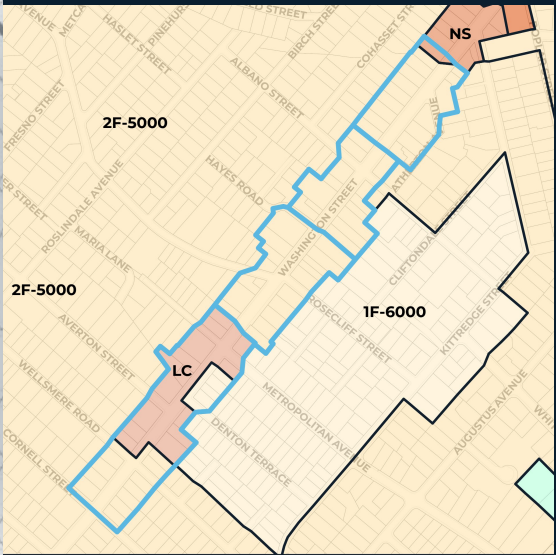


Zooming In: Washington Street South | S1, S2

From Kittredge Street to Cornell Street



Existing Zoning



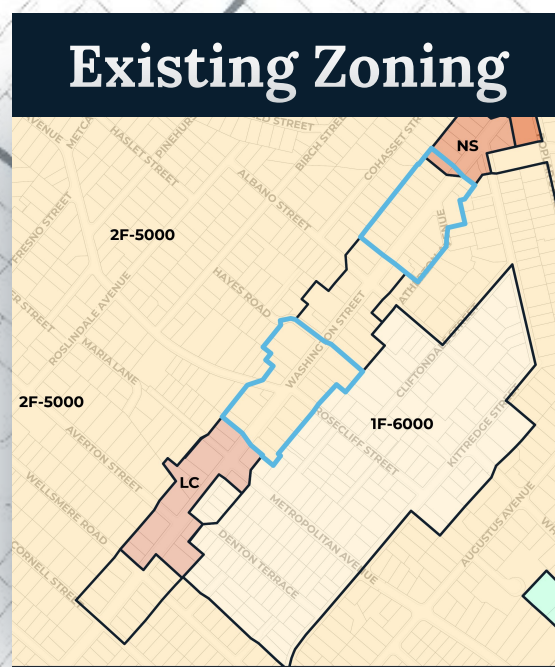
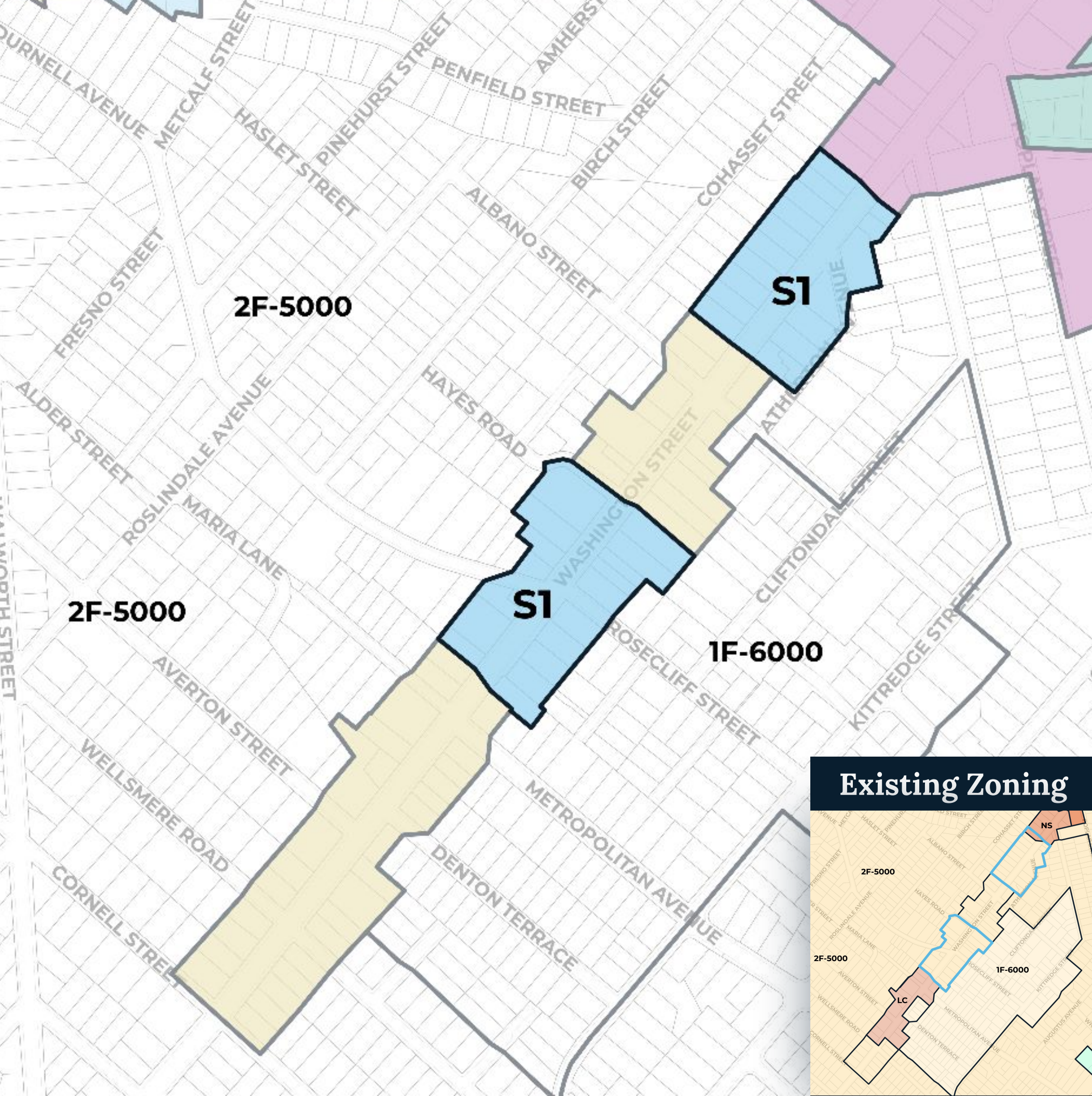
Implementing the vision for this area from Land Use and Design Framework of the Small Area Plan:

- **Connecting, transitional streets** between the core area and local gateways
- **Mixed-use gateways** located at existing commercial clusters around the Square

S1 | Washington Street South

Similar to parts of Washington Street North, these areas have several buildings of similar scale to what is allowed in the S1 district and some multifamily residential buildings – the S1 district **will further affirm these building scales and uses.**

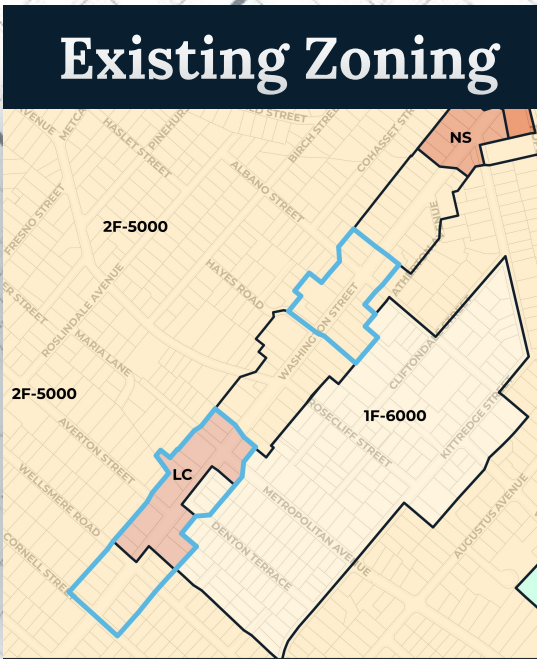
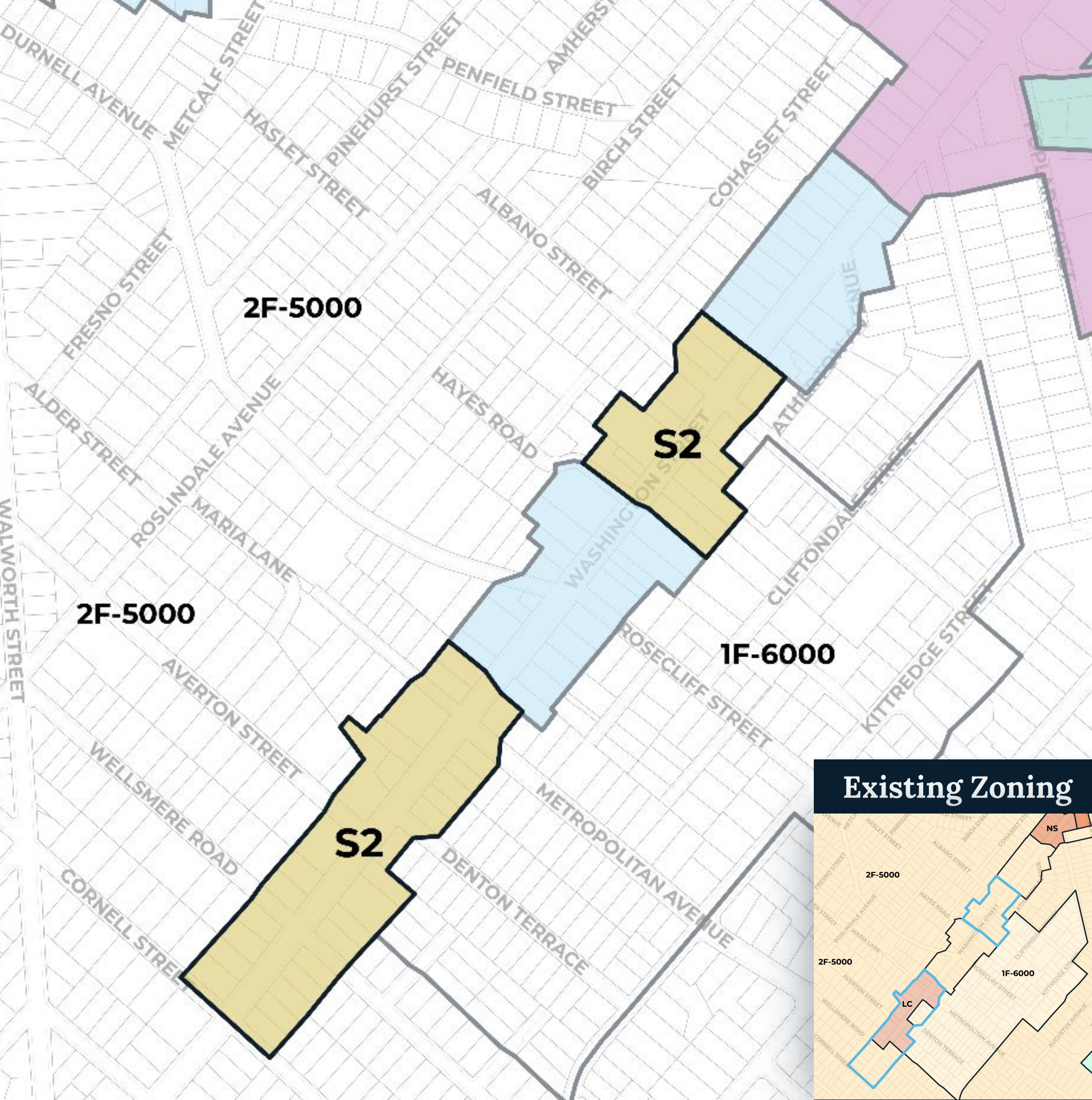
The S1 districts here are distinct in character from the areas with S2 districts because they have about a block of mostly existing residential buildings. The flexibility that the S1 district offers to allow small-scale commercial uses **could encourage a moderate inclusion of mixed-use buildings while maintaining the majority residential feeling.**



S2 | Washington Street South

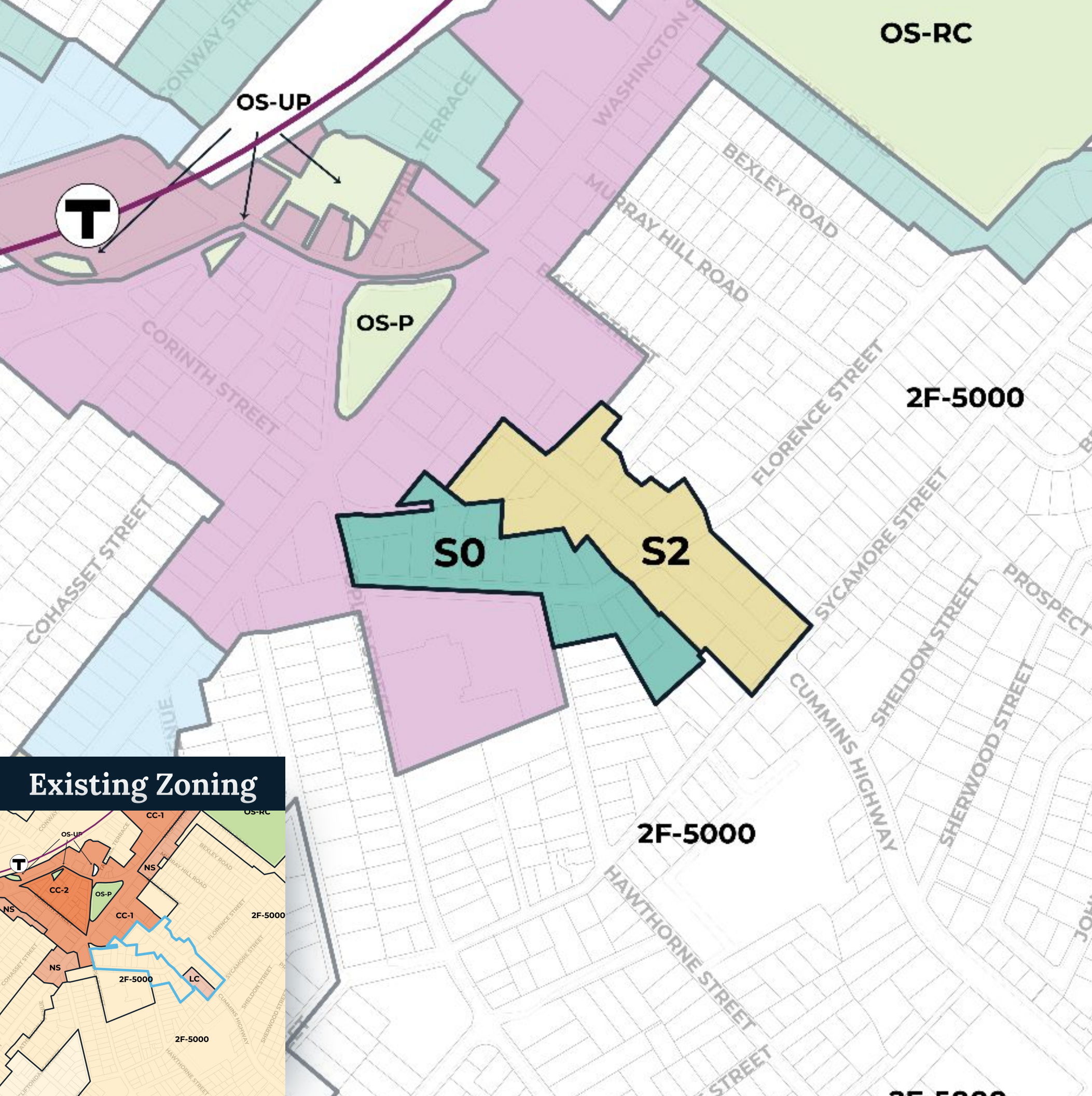
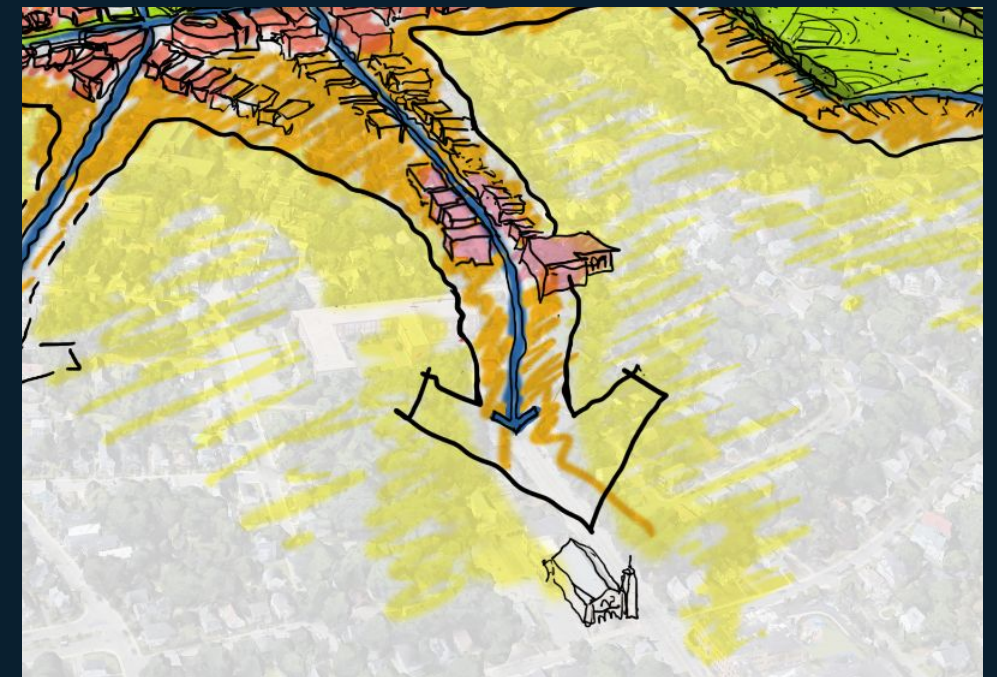
The S2 district **will affirm many of the standalone commercial spaces, retail strip buildings and larger residential buildings** found along these parts of Washington Street.

The mix of yard requirements and Outdoor Amenity Space requirements in the S2 district **will help promote the creation of outdoor spaces for residents and businesses** that create an active streetscape, like seating areas, balconies, decks, and courtyards.

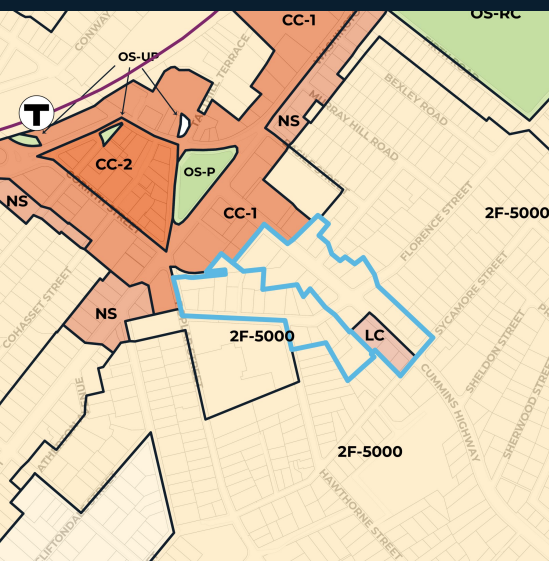


Zooming In: Cummins Highway | S0, S2

From Sumner Avenue to Sycamore Street



Existing Zoning



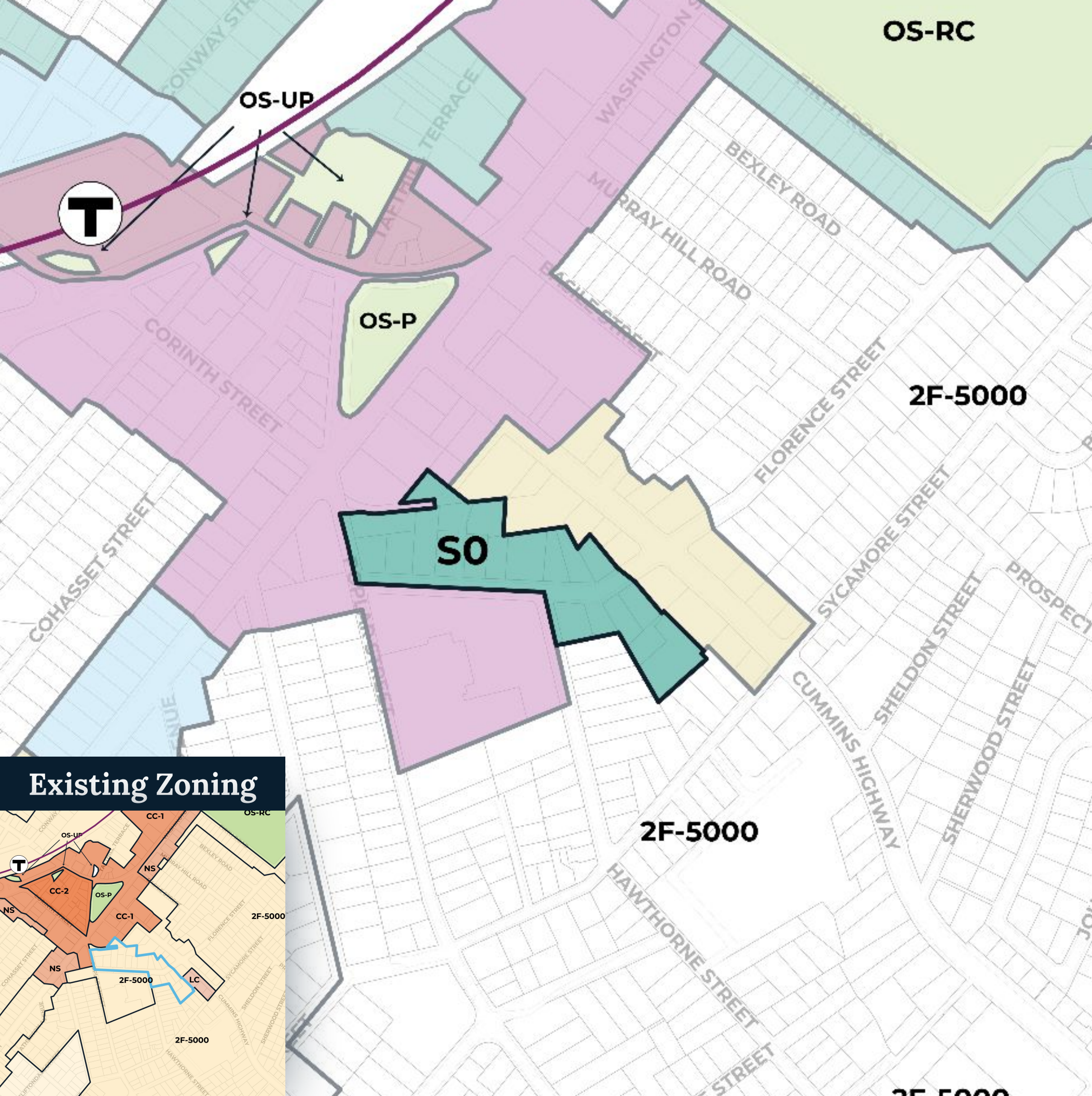
Implementing the vision for this area from Land Use and Design Framework of the Small Area Plan:

- **Connecting, transitional streets** between the core area and local gateways
- **Mixed-use gateways** located at existing commercial clusters around the Square

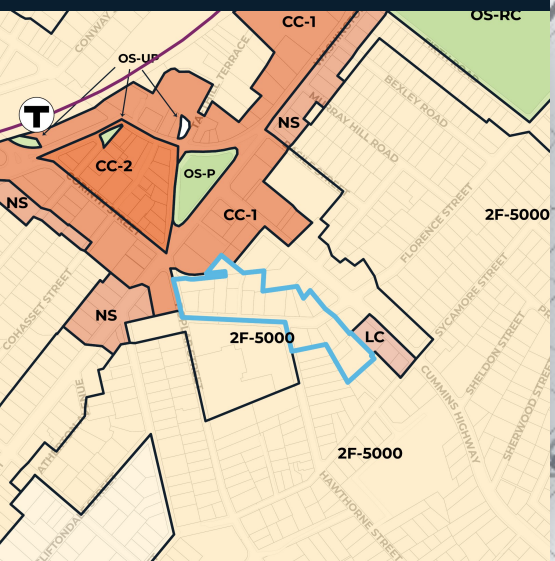
S0 | Cummins Highway

The S0 district here **will provide a buffer between the S4 and S2 districts** that surround it and will provide greater flexibility for residential owners to **make minor or major alterations to their homes, including adding residential units or creating space for a home business.**

Additionally, this segment of Florence Street is a short connection between Washington Street and Cummins Highway that can introduce moderate growth in housing near these major streets.



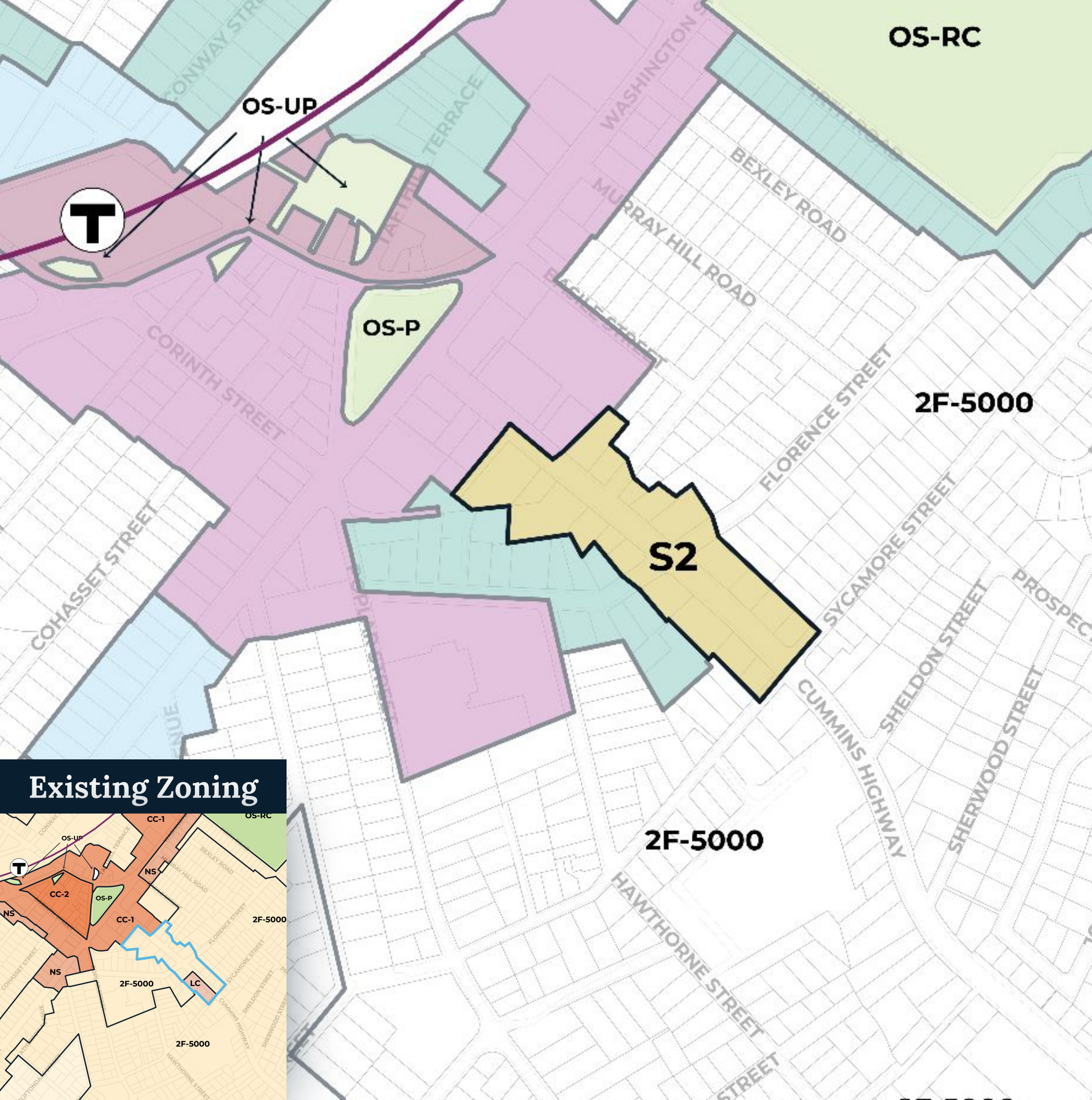
Existing Zoning



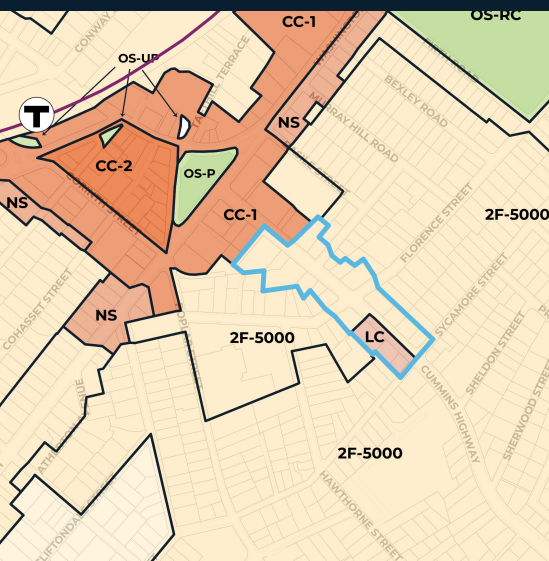
S2 | Cummins Highway

This part of Cummins Highway has a mix of retail, residential, and mixed-use buildings in a variety of scales and styles, thus making the S2 district a good fit because it **will affirm that variety of uses and encourage that continued flexibility** for the types of buildings that are there in the future.

The S2 district **will also allow a greater variety of commercial uses**, helping this area continue to grow as one of Roslindale's small mixed-use gateways.



Existing Zoning

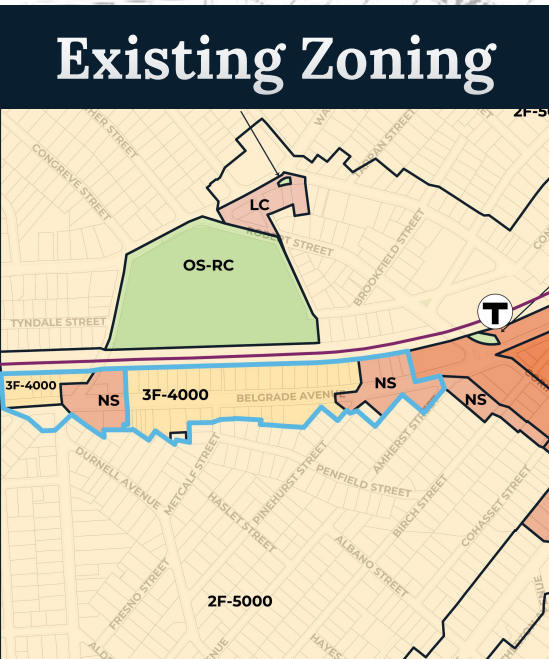
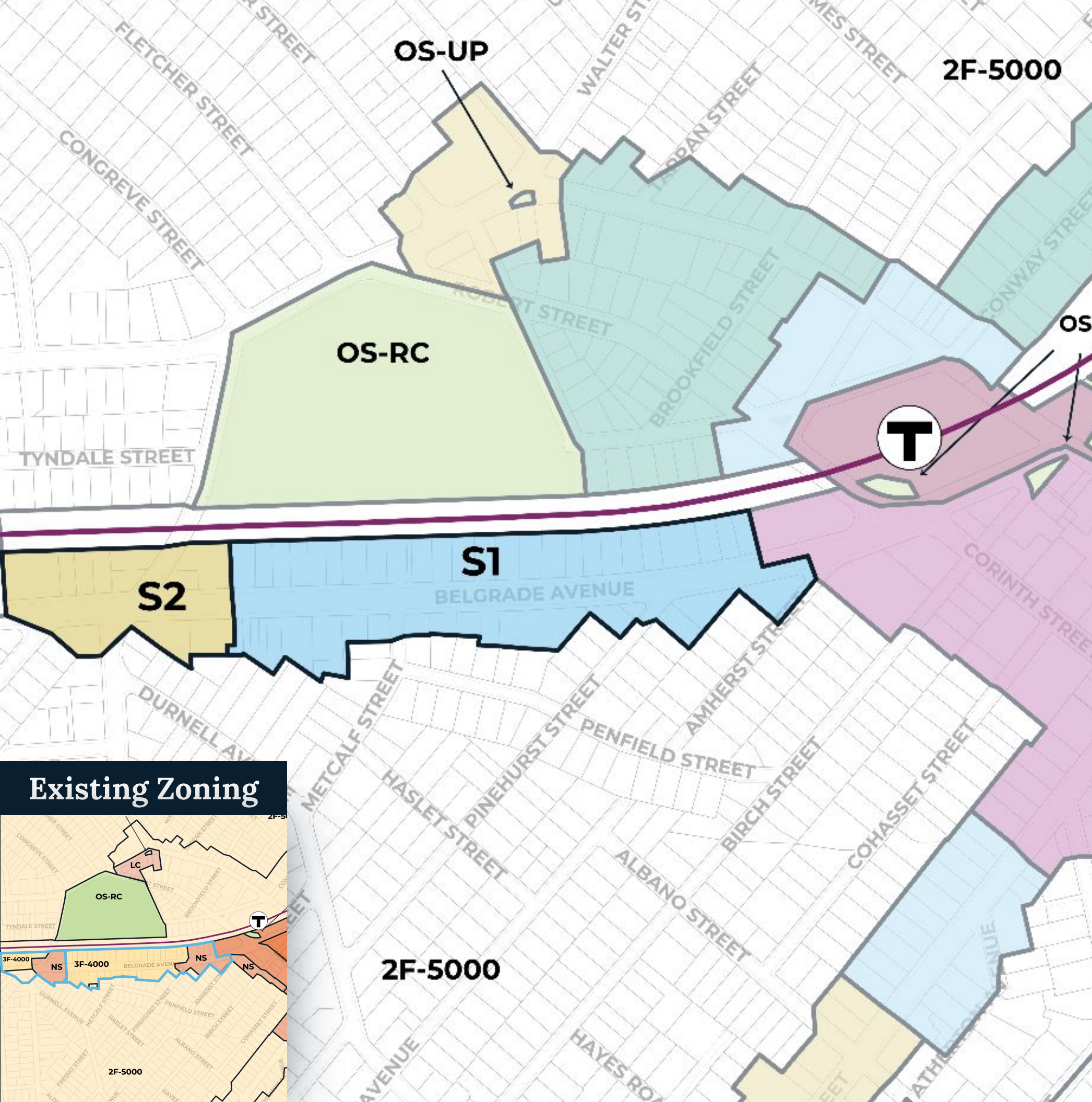


Zooming In: Belgrade Avenue | S1, S2 *From Amherst Street to Newburg Street*



Implementing the vision for this area from Land Use and Design Framework of the Small Area Plan:

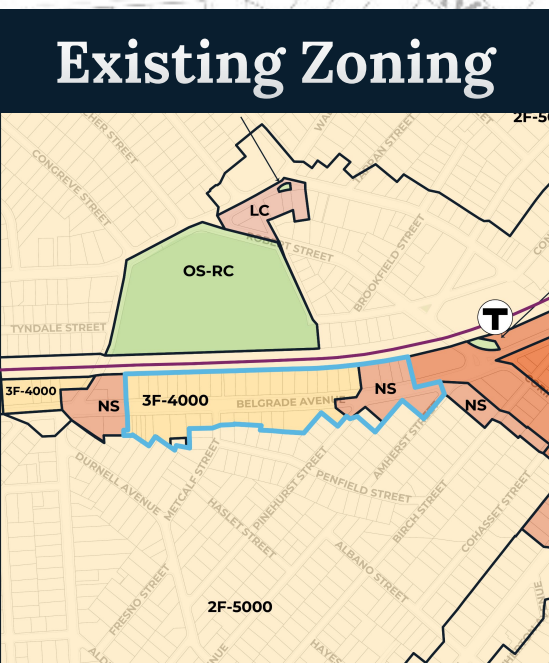
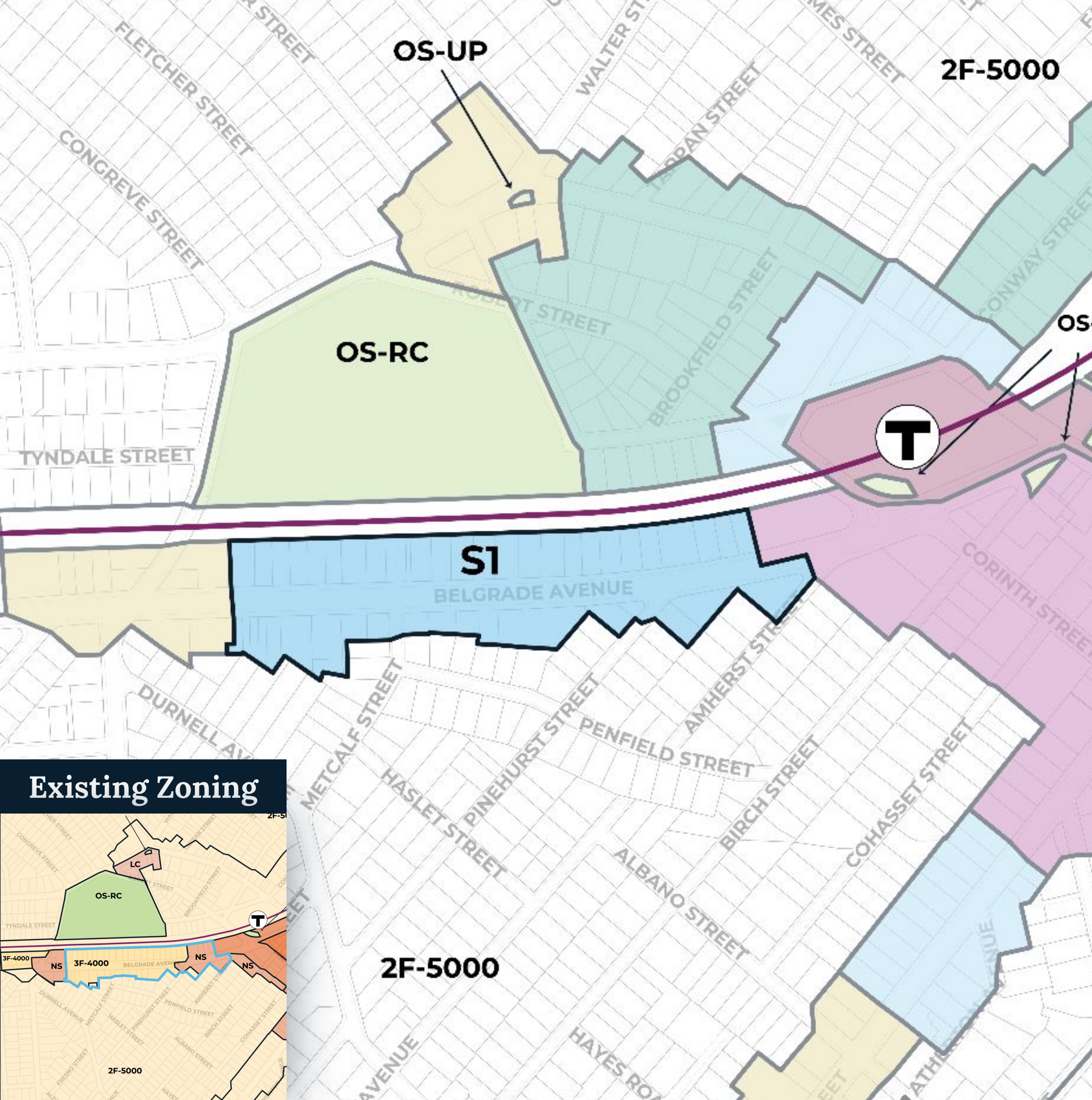
- **Connecting transitional, streets** between the core area and local gateways
- **Mixed-use gateways** located at existing commercial clusters around the Square



S1 | Belgrade Avenue

This part of Belgrade Avenue includes an existing mix of three deckers, multifamily buildings with six or more units, and scattered non-residential and mixed-use buildings.

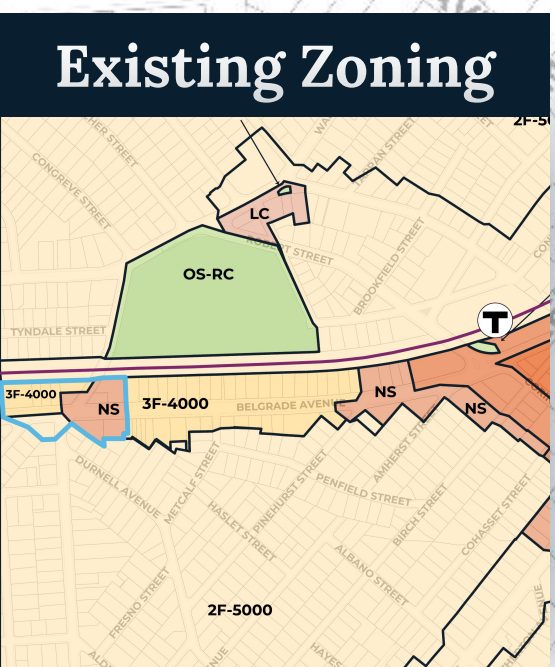
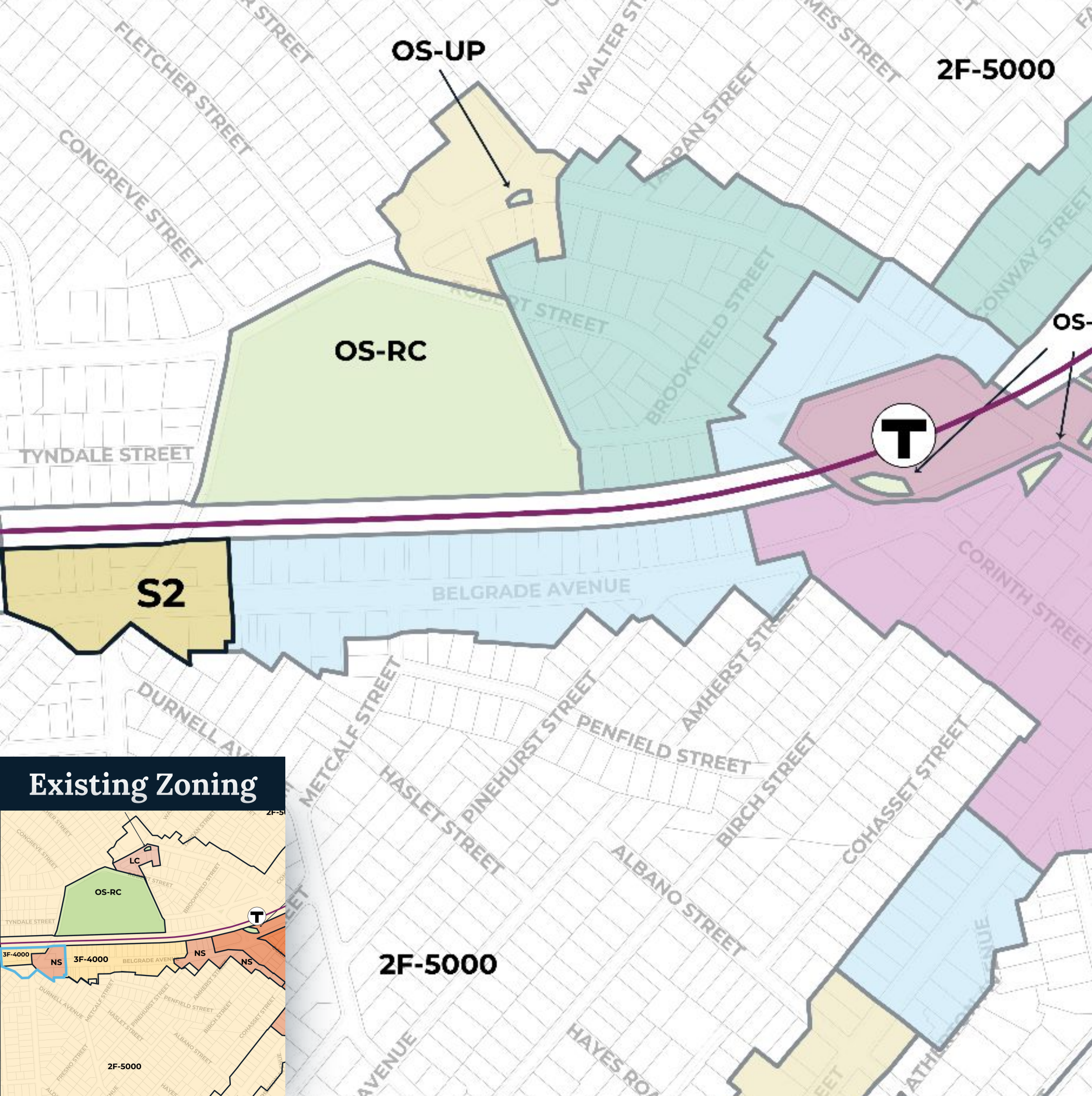
The S1 district like in other areas **will affirm the array of residential buildings** while also **affirming the scale of many existing and upcoming multifamily buildings.**



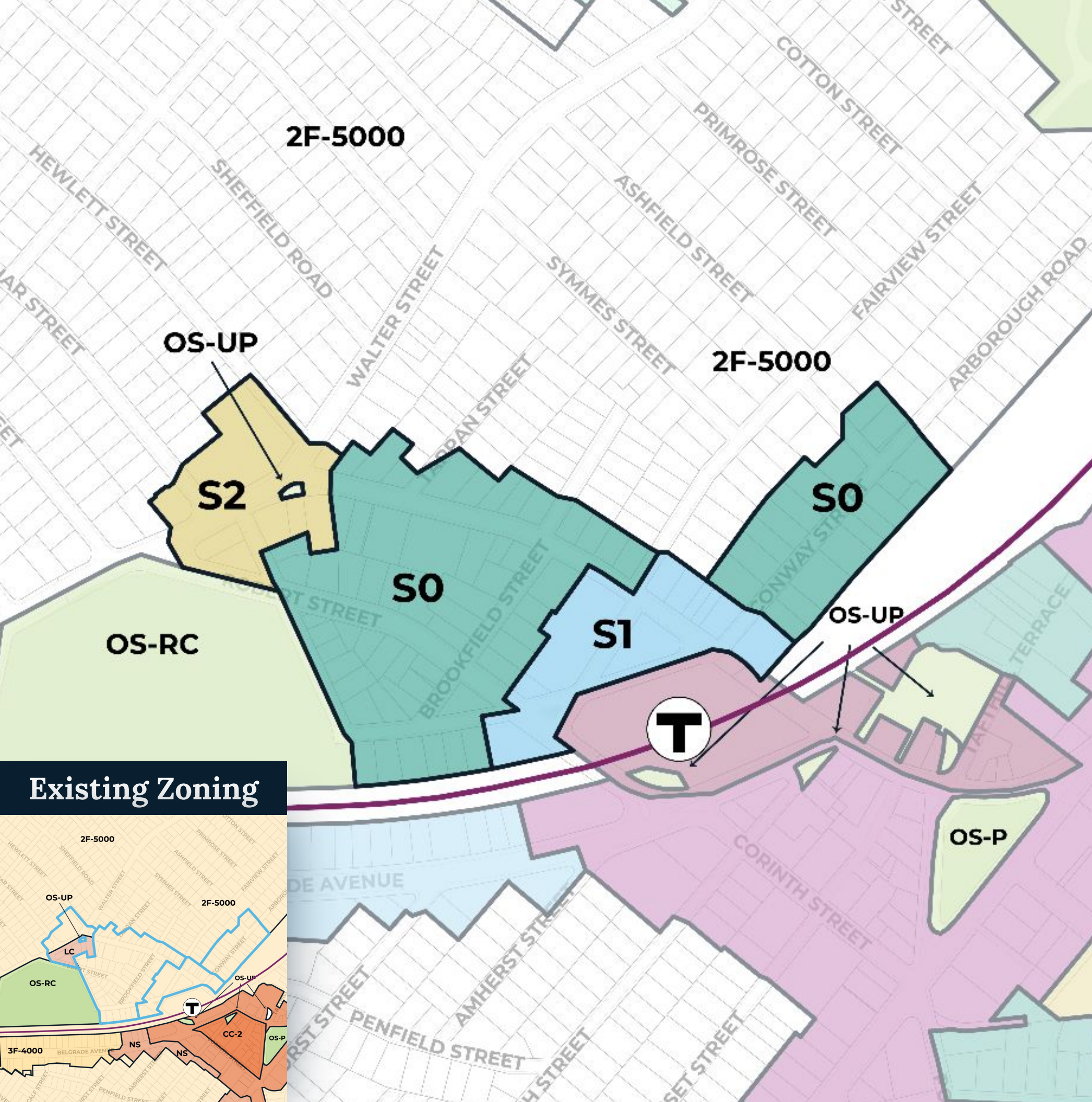
S2 | Belgrade Avenue

The S2 district **will further allow commercial and mixed-use activity** at this cluster of mostly commercial properties. There are some residential buildings within this cluster, so the S2 district is appropriate because **it allows for both fully residential and mixed-use buildings.**

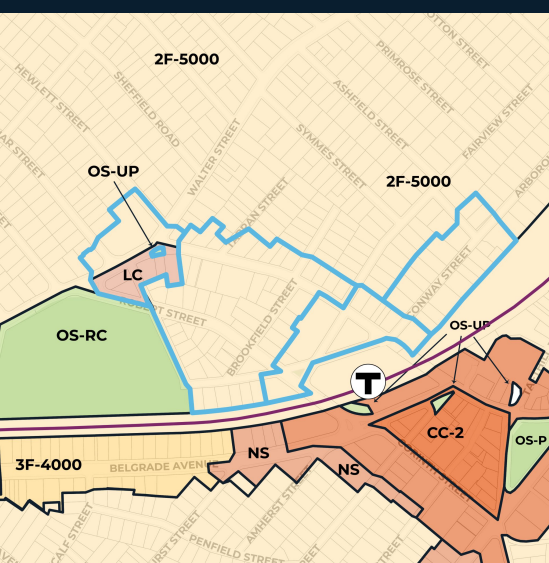
This location near a bus stop on Belgrade Avenue also makes it an important site to increase housing opportunity as it **brings people closer to transit resources and to these businesses** that are further away from the activity of the commercial core.



Zooming In: North of the Roslindale Village MBTA Station | S0, S1, S2



Existing Zoning



Implementing the vision for this area from Land Use and Design Framework of the Small Area Plan:

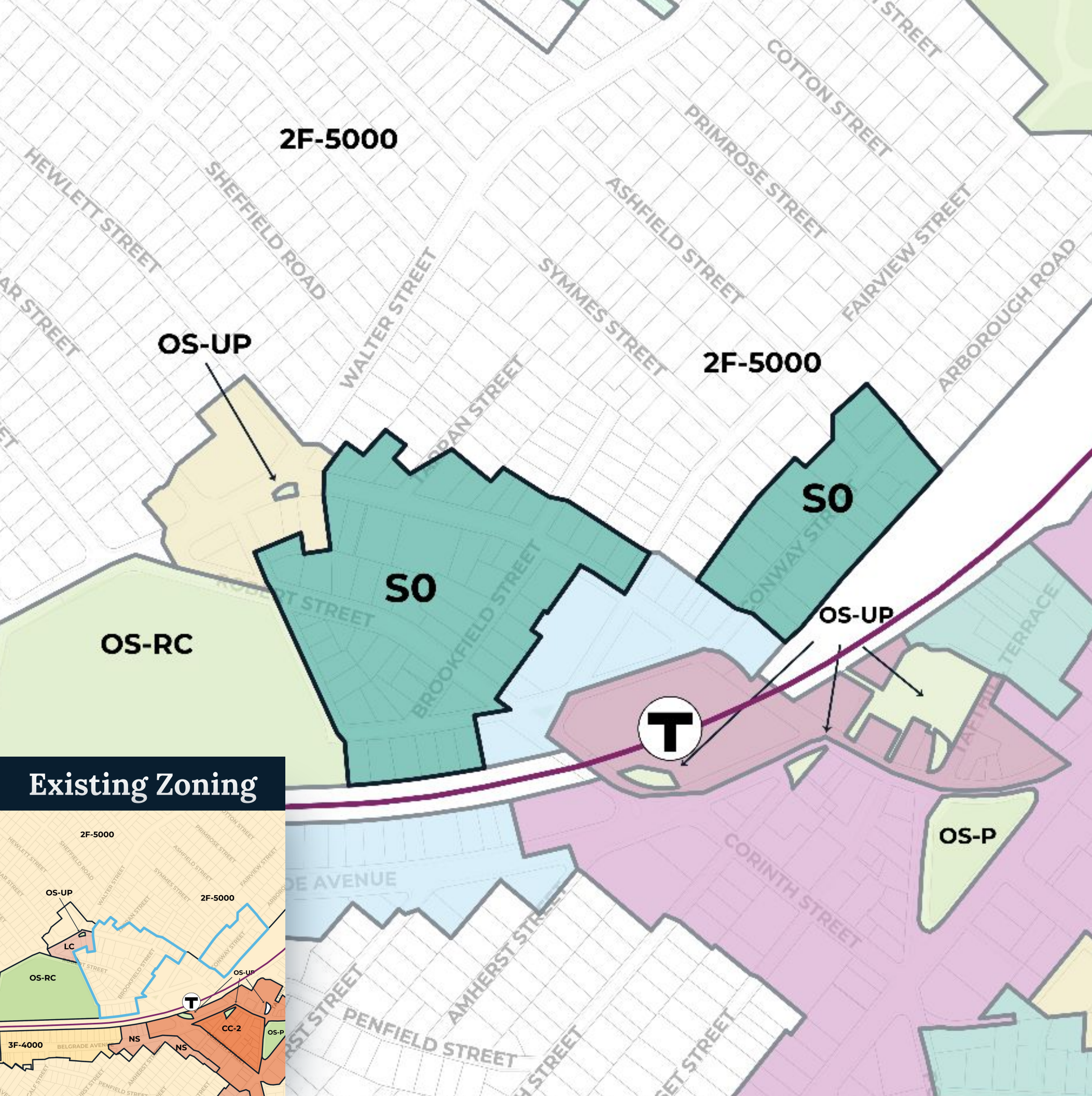
- **Connecting, transitional streets** between the core area and local gateways
- **Mixed-use gateways** located at existing commercial clusters around the Square

S0 | North of the Roslindale Village MBTA Station

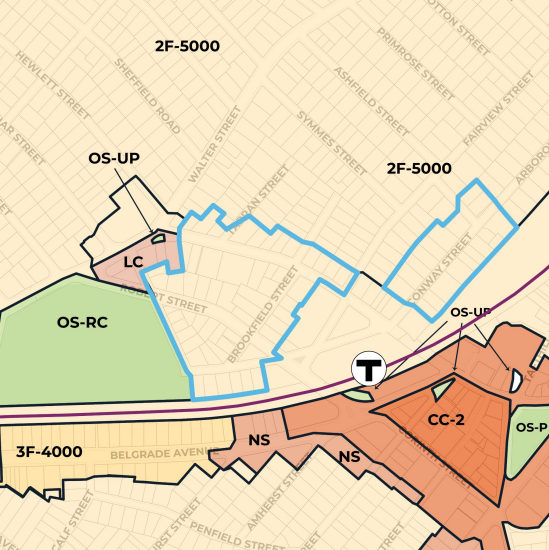
The S0 district **will promote housing immediately near the MBTA station** while limiting the maximum scale for future buildings to one that fits well within the existing residential areas.

S0 also **provides more flexibility for property owners** to make small or large alterations based on their needs.

There are also three-family buildings that **will be affirmed by updated zoning** since they are forbidden under the current zoning for these areas.



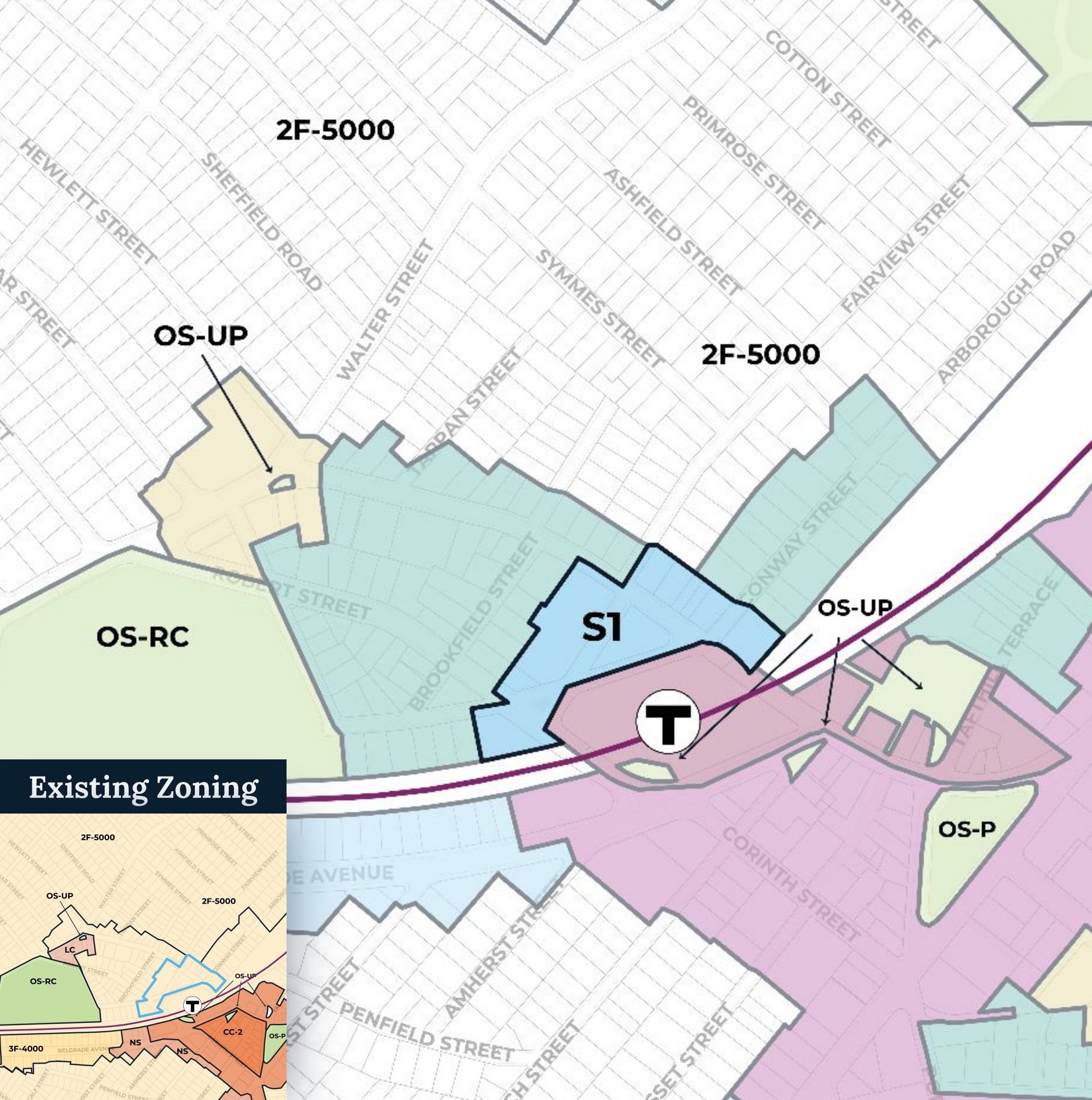
Existing Zoning



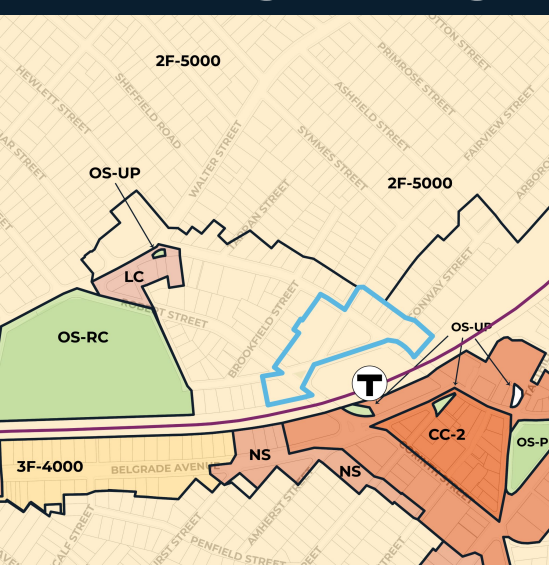
S1 | North of the Roslindale Village MBTA Station

The area immediately north of the MBTA station includes three properties that have multifamily uses as well as a school building that covers most of its lot area.

This mix of uses and this location right next to a major transit resource gives reason to map this with the S1 district because it **will affirm both the uses and the scale of the buildings on those properties** while giving flexibility for more housing growth in the future.



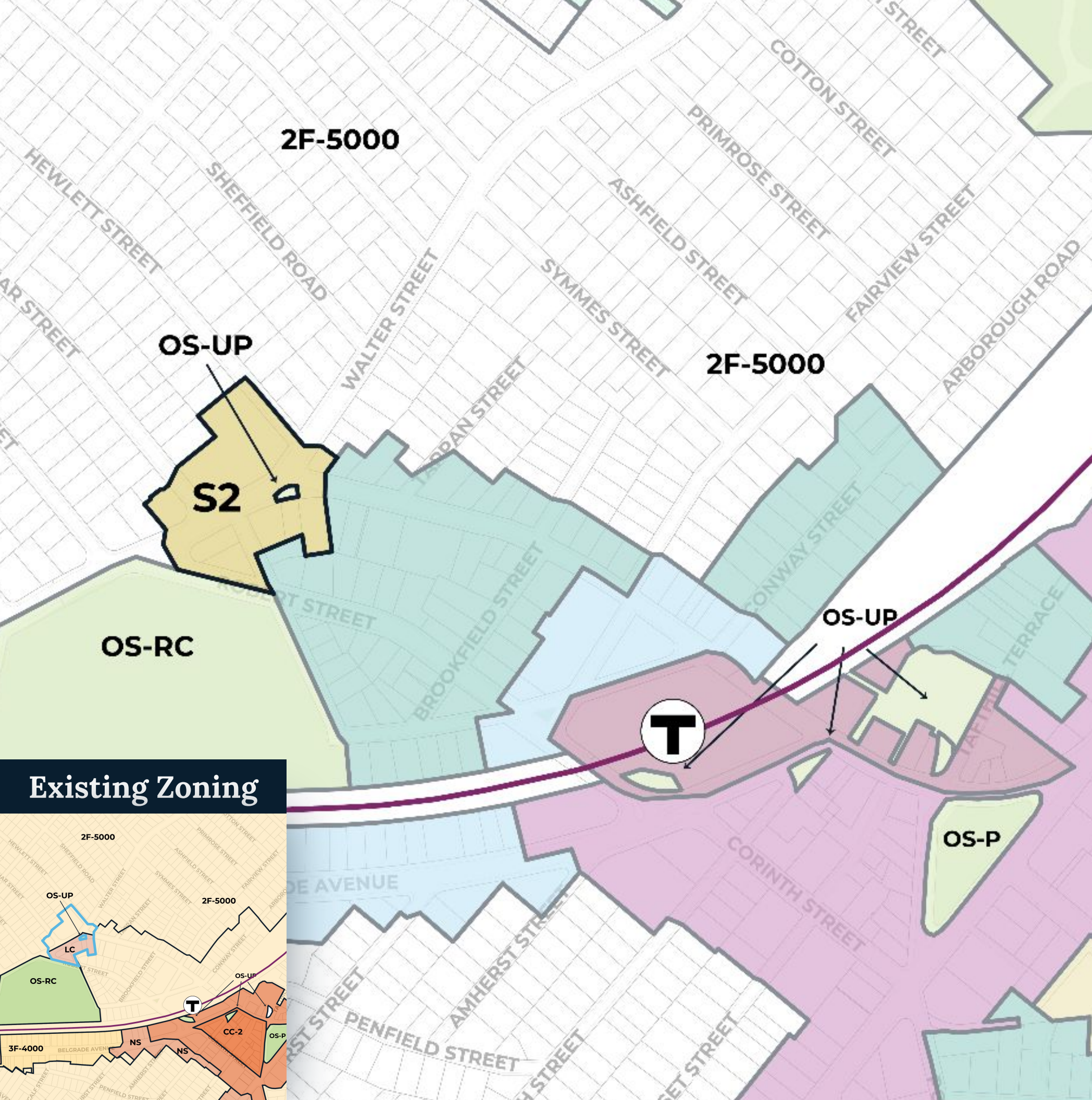
Existing Zoning



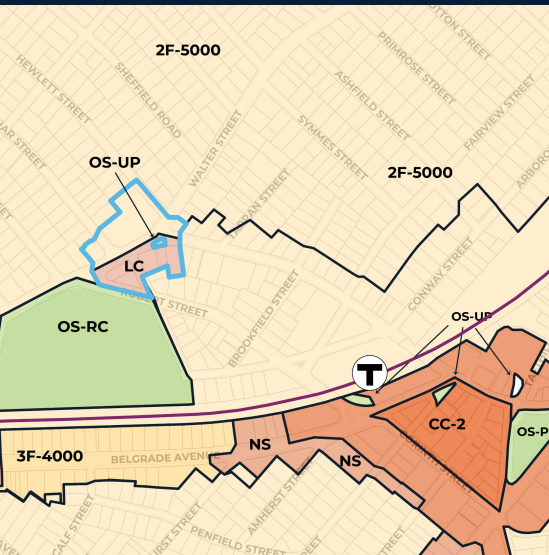
S2 | North of the Roslindale Village MBTA Station

The S2 district here **will affirm some of the existing small businesses and a large multifamily senior housing development** that are currently within a zoning subdistrict that forbids those uses.

The S2 district here **will also further allow this small commercial gateway to moderately grow** through mixed-use buildings that can build above existing single-story retail spaces or through greater flexibility for businesses to expand.



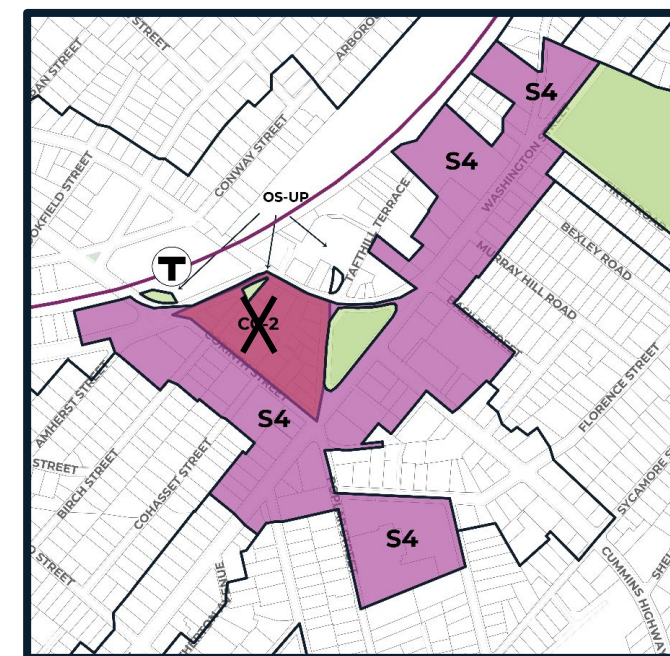
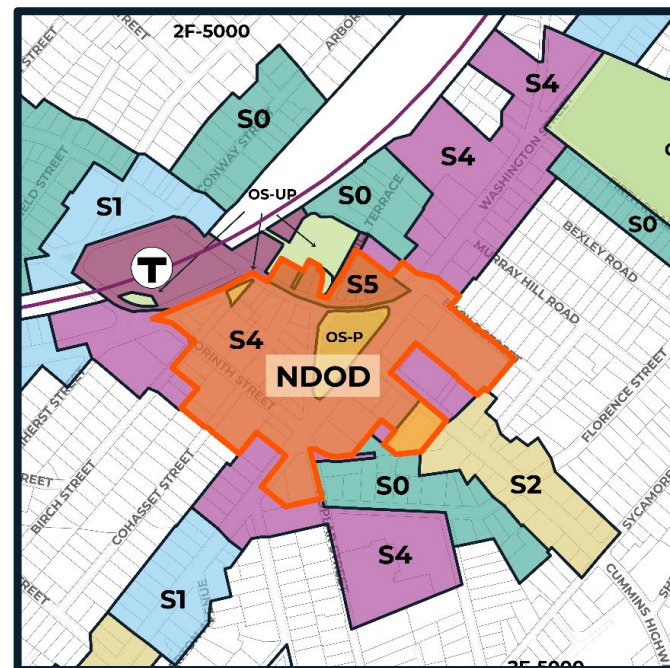
Existing Zoning



Zoning Text Amendment – Article 67 (NDOD, CC-2 Removal)

These zoning updates include two minor updates to Article 67 (Roslindale Neighborhood District) of the Boston Zoning Code:

1. **Update the regulations of the Neighborhood Design Overlay District (NDOD) surrounding Adams Park to make sure that the design review process associated with that overlay district **applies to projects that are in the Squares and Streets districts** of that specific area.**
2. **Remove the CC-2 (Community Commercial-2) subdistrict from Article 67** because the CC-2 is mapped in only one area (west of Adams Park) and the zoning map updates will replace the CC-2 subdistrict with the S4 district. This will remove the CC-2 from all zoning maps of Roslindale, therefore making it necessary to remove mention of it and its regulations from the text of Article 67.

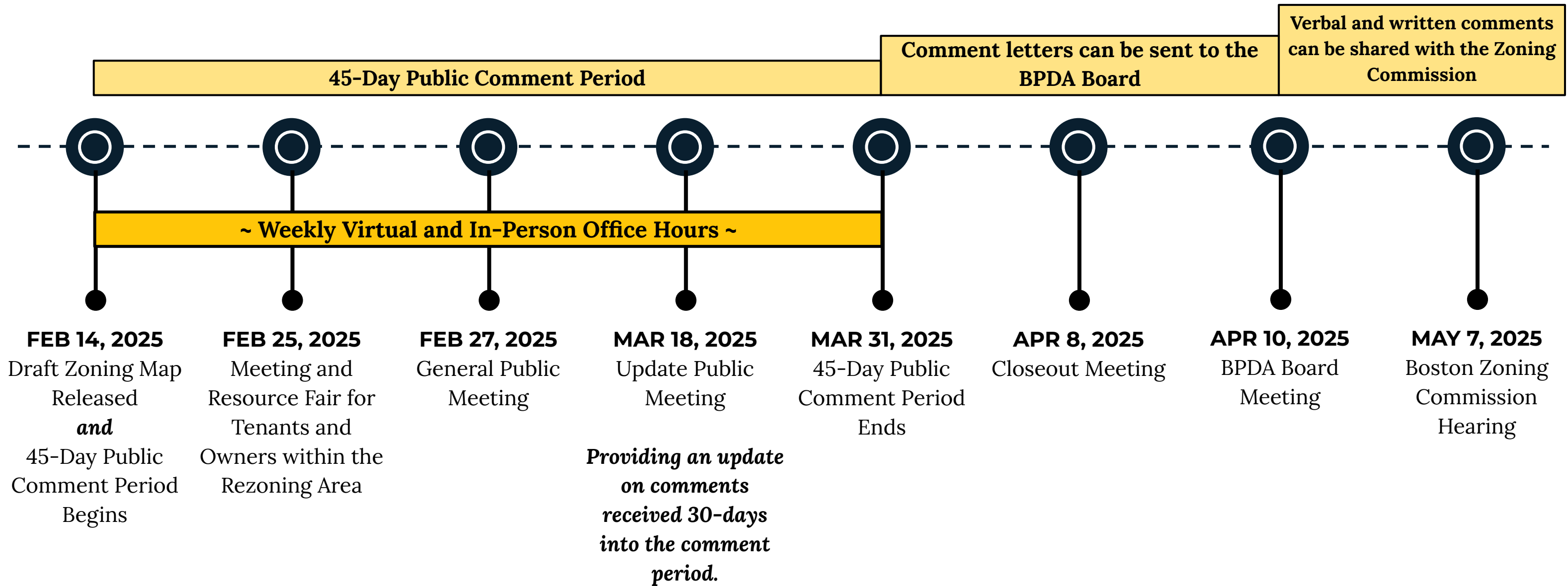


Minor updates like these help to make sure that the Boston Zoning Code remains up-to-date with active zoning regulations, which improves how people can read the Zoning Code and how it is applied in the development process.

Learn More and Share Your Feedback!

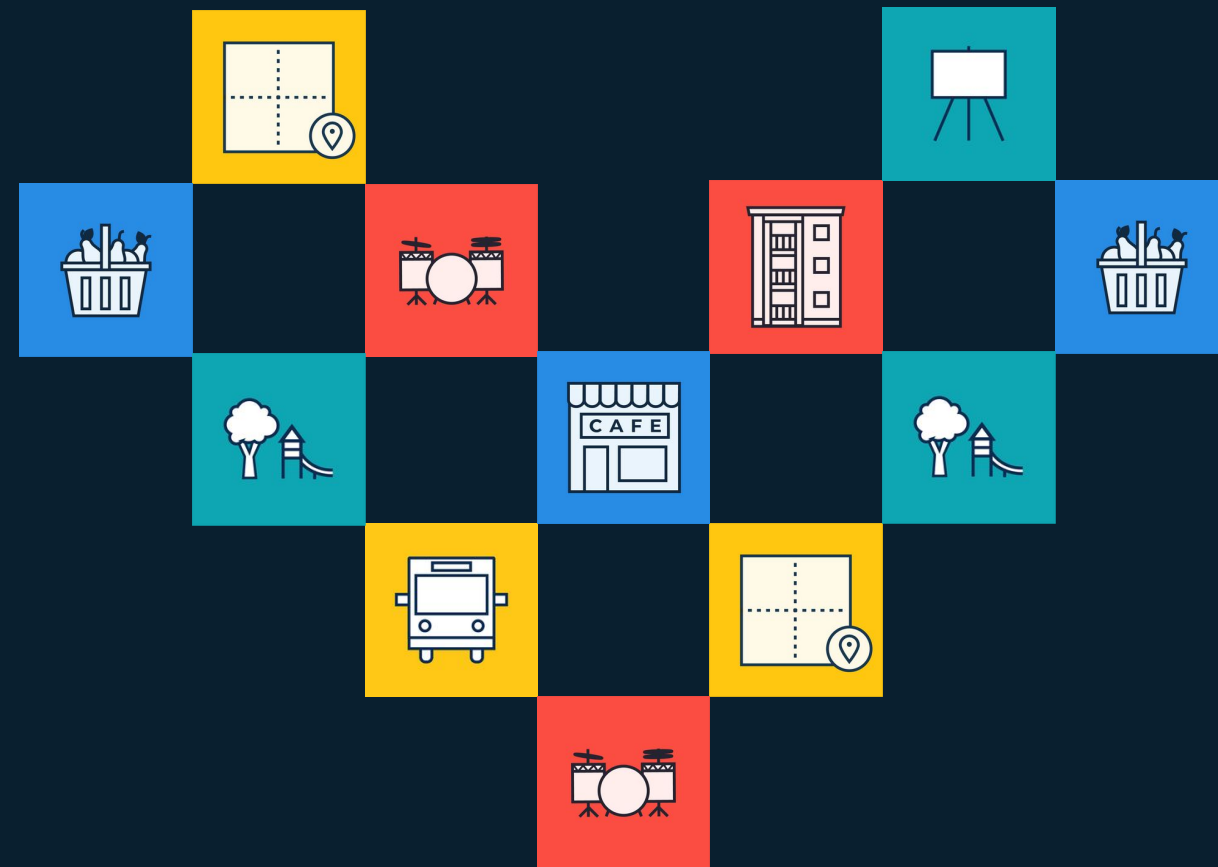


Timeline of the Zoning Engagement and Adoption Process



Review the official draft zoning map and zoning text amendments on the Planning Department Website AND sign up for upcoming events and office hours at: bosplans.org/RoslindaleSquaresAndStreets.

Submit your comments until MARCH 31, 2025 on these zoning updates at: bosplans.org/RoslindaleZoningPublicComments.



Questions?

You can email your questions to squaresandstreets@boston.gov or to Abdul-Razak Zachariah, Planner II – Zoning Reform at abdul-razak.zachariah@boston.gov.

Want to Learn More about the Planning Department's Zoning Reform Work?

Check out the Zoning Reform Team's webpage and our current zoning initiatives at: bosplans.org/ZoningReform.

For Reference: Key Terms and Phrases

“Zoning” – a set of rules that dictates **what and where you can (or can’t) build in a city.**

Zoning uses geographic **“districts”** to organize and apply these rules throughout the City of Boston. Three main features that zoning sets rules for are **use, scale, and space.**

“District”

The geographic area where a specific set of rules around uses, scale, and space apply

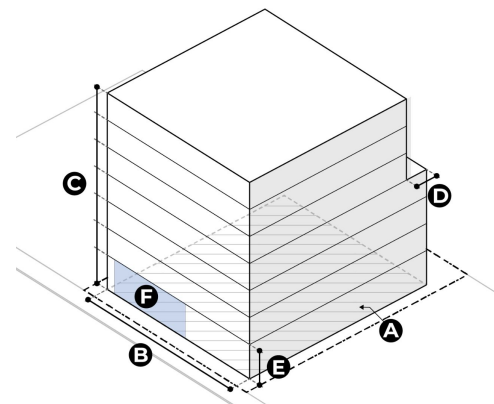
“Use”

The activities that can take place in buildings or on a lot, like retail, housing, and open space



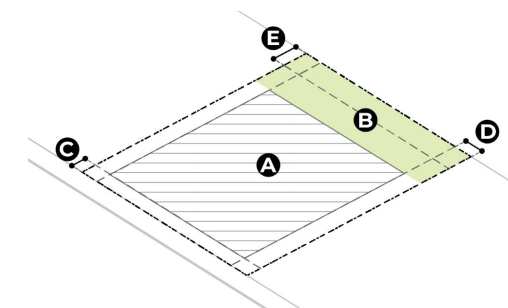
“Scale”

The factors that impact the size of buildings like the height, the width, and how much of the lot a building covers



“Space”

The factors that impact the lot area that surrounds a building, like the amount of yard space or if that yard space is permeable



For Reference: Key Terms and Phrases

“Multifamily housing” – a type of property where there are four or more residential units. Depending on the size of the lot that they are on, they often vary in height, width, the number of units they hold and if they are in a singular building or multiple buildings on the same lot.



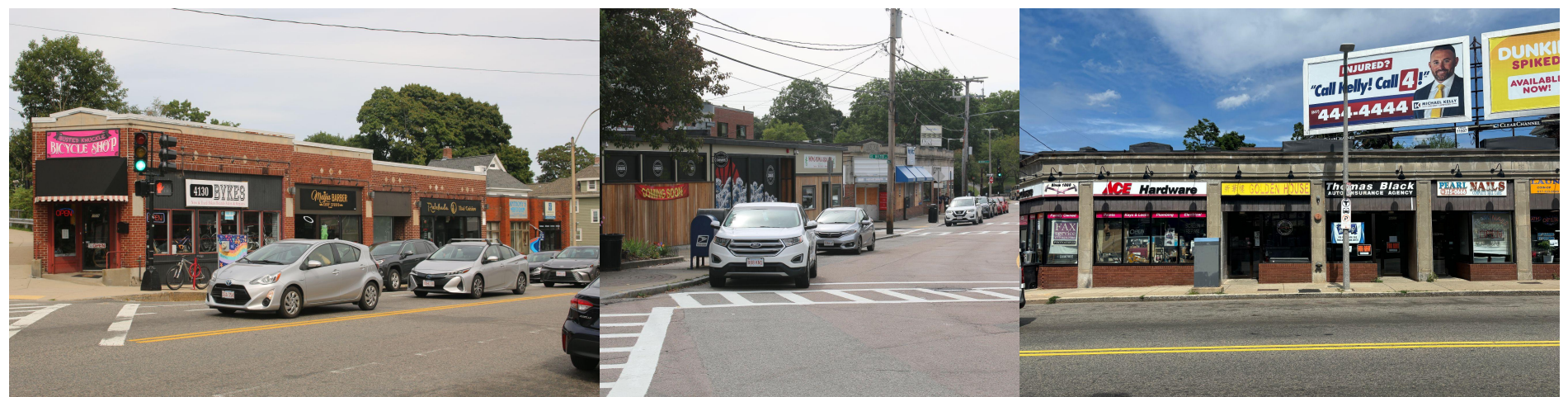
“Mixed-Use Development” – a type of building development in which housing, businesses and/or community services all exist within the same building or the same lot.

While they can vary in the exact uses that are in the building, a common form is seeing businesses or community services on the ground floor of a building and housing on the upper floors.



“Gateways” – this refers to areas that have small clusters of business spaces and/or a mix of uses but are located slightly further away from the center of neighborhood activity.

They are current **and** potential entry points of activity on streets that lead to the center of Roslindale Square.



For Reference: Key Terms and Phrases

“Affirm” – this term is used often in this guide to describe whether the zoning rules allow for and legalize an existing property’s use, scale, or yard space in an area.

- For example, if several buildings each have three residential units but are in a zoning district where you’re forbidden to have more than two units on your property, then that building would be **non-conforming** because the current zoning **does not affirm** that three-family residential land use.
- Alternatively, if the updated zoning did allow that land use, then the updated zoning would be **affirming that use**.

“Boston Zoning Code” – this document holds the City of Boston’s zoning rules that say what can and cannot be built and the specific rules for how land can be used in different areas.

“Zoning Map Amendment” – a proposal to update the geographic locations in Boston where certain zoning rules should apply. Zoning map amendments can include changing the boundaries of existing rules or applying and setting boundaries for new rules.

“Zoning Text Amendment” – a proposal to update the written rules within the text of the Zoning Code. This doesn’t change the boundaries of those rules, but it does change the rules that a property in a specific boundary has to follow.

- It’s like changing a rule that says “everyone standing in a circle has to wear blue” to “everyone standing in a circle has to wear green” – the circle and the people standing in it don’t change, but the rules for what they wear do change.

To simplify reading this guide, we use the terms **“zoning updates”** or **“updated zoning”** to refer to both these changes.

For Reference: Key Terms and Phrases

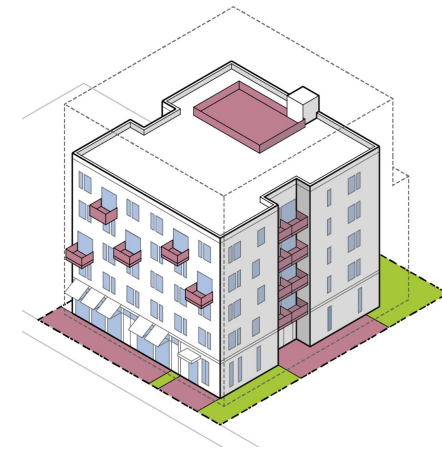
“Permeable Area of Lot,” or “permeable area” – the area on a property that has natural ground cover or any other material/surface on the ground that allows water to pass through it at a similar or higher amount as natural ground cover.

Examples: lawns, trees, clean washed stone, permeable pavers, and rain gardens.



“Outdoor Amenity Space” – outdoor space for gathering or recreation for a single dwelling unit, building residents, or the general public.

Examples: private balconies, rooftops, terraces, interior courtyards, porches, plazas, and outdoor dining spaces.



“Ground Floor Active Use” – Uses which are open to the public and produce high levels of coming and going by customers, visitors, and users.

Squares and Streets Districts require Active Uses to take up 50% of the ground floor width of buildings developed in the S3, S4, and S5 districts.

Examples: Community Center, Restaurant, Retail Store, and Service Establishment.

