

Public Comments on Mattapan Squares + Streets Zoning

A draft zoning amendment for the Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Article 60 and draft Zoning Maps 6B/C were released for the public on December 5th, 2023. This draft zoning amendment proposes new Squares + Streets Zoning Districts to be mapped in Mattapan following recommendations from PLAN: Mattapan (adopted in May of 2023).

The nearly two month public comment period for this draft zoning extended from December 5th, 2023 to January 28th, 2024. The public submitted official comment letters via email and through an online survey. Additional public comments were received through 10 engagement opportunities including 4 virtual public meetings, 1 in-person meeting, 4 virtual office hours, and 1 Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council Meeting. Because of the high level of engagement and Q&A during public meetings compared to written comments, comments and questions brought up during these virtual meetings are being shared publicly.

A compilation of these public comments includes responses from BPDA Staff and are separated into two categories:

- → Written comments (letters and survey responses)
- → Meeting comments (zoom chat questions and staff notes from public meetings)

	WF	RITTEN COMMENTS (SURVEY RESPONSES AND COMME	ENT LETTERS)
Name / Commentor	Comment Source	Comment	BPDA Response
Nadine	Survey	Do not change the zoning laws for Mattapan. Mattapan should remain residential with the existing zone laws, we have too many apartment buildings already. Mattapan is special as it is its mostly residential, with large percentage of home owners that actually live in their own. Please, do not turn it into a high dense area with multi decked homes like Dorchester. Leave Mattapan's zoning ALONE.	Thank you for bringing this to our attention; the survey was promptly updated after receiving this response to fix the technical error of requiring all languages to be completed.
		Go to west roxbury with your plans, leave mattapan alone. Faulty survey doesn't allow you to submit without completing all languages.	
		If you don't know how to use google forms, why use it? Faulty survey doesnt allow you to submit without filling all slots	
		Faulty survey how much are they paying employees thats a simple survey cant be made correctly?	
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	Survey	All responses have been written and sent in an email to the Planning team. The GMNC Board, its residents and businesses desire a cohesively designed community that reflects and incorporates the natural environment from its water and open spaces; Particularly in the Streets and Squares district to require developers when proposing large developments (a) to increase in sidewalk sizes where there is increase in building mass in S-3, S-4; (b) Robust Storm water Management and Bio-Filtration Planters; and (c) Street Tree Planting and maintenance.	Article 80 Small and Large projects are required to follow a review process with the community and City of Boston staff. Through the review process, Article 80 proponents may be asked to provide additional setbacks, green infrastructure, street trees, and other improvements that mitigate the impact of the development and advance PLAN: Mattapan, exactly as you have identified.

WRITTEN COMMENTS (SURVEY RESPONSES AND COMMENT LETTERS)			
Name / Commentor	Comment Source	Comment	BPDA Response
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	After reviewing the new and the revised articles and their supporting documentation these comments and recommendations were compiled from residents and business owners from January 8th through January 28th. They were received at the GMNC monthly meeting, in-person meetings and emailed comments. They are specifically directed to the described Squares and Streets in Mattapan and the supporting articles. As the majority of Squares and Streets District applies to Blue Hill Avenue, and its arterial streets, many of the comments and recommendations were given with that in mind. The comments are made in light of the approved PLAN: Mattapan, the need to understand the existing topography throughout our city, and the significant proposed changes on existing major nodes and corridors that are within the Greater Mattapan boundaries; to ignore these realities is to make these proposed changes inadvertently cause displacement of current residents and businesses. Example - there is a history in our neighborhood where those who have fought for many years for improvements in transit access, and are low-income, are displaced by private equity companies using the very mechanisms which were thought to protect them.	Thank you for your collective work in compiling these comments and participating throughout PLAN: Mattapan and the rezoning process.
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	Overall support so long as there is designated parking for small businesses on the entirety of the Blue Hill Ave.	Curbside regulations and public right of way design for Blue Hill Ave will be coordinated through Boston Transportation Department's ongoing Blue Hill Ave Transportation Action Plan.
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	Overall questions on defined loading zones and traffic enforcement. There were suggestions of including language to integrate ISD language into code to force the ZBA to trigger enforcement; many asked how to hold developers accountable during development. Questions on how to make this a requirement upfront, especially those not involved in the Article 80 process.	Off-street loading bays are currently required in Article 60 for any project between 15,000 and 50,000 square feet; any project larger than 50,000 square feet will have its off-street loading determined through Article 8 Large Project Review, as the number and location of bays can vary considerably based on use and location The Squares + Streets Districts are subject to these off-street loading requirements listed in Article 24: Off-Street Loading.

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Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	Requirements for more significant landscaping by developers. The lack of any significant landscaping creates a very harsh " look and feel" There have been numerous mentions of using small trees - examples dwarf red maple trees, cherry blossoms, or dogwoods to help provide "some variety in look and feel" in front of developments. Remarks included that it is important to have this on streets where there are no street trees. We have heard in various other meetings the creation of rain gardens may significantly " improve the look in areas where there are no trees, but a lot of utility poles."	Article 80 Small and Large projects are required to follow a review process with the community and City of Boston staff. Through the review process, Article 80 proponents may be asked to provide additional setbacks, green infrastructure, street trees, and other improvements that mitigate the impact of the development and advance PLAN: Mattapan. PLAN: Mattapan specifically called for additional greening throughout the neighborhood and improvements to the public realm, highlighting how important landscaping in as a part of site plan and desing review.	
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	Emphasis placed on providing artist living-work spaces; not only left to places like the South End. Asked if it could be marketed first to current Greater Mattapan residents and then others afterwards. We have heard from many who live here and are working artists that Boston has become completely unaffordable.	Currently, Artists' mixed-use is allowed in the Neighborhood Business Subdistricts in Mattapan only on the second floor and above; Artists' Live-Work is proposed to be an allowed use in every Squares + Streets District so this will expand the opportunities for this type of development. The Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture (MOAC) facilitates the Artist Housing Certification process that allows artists to qualify for affordable artist housing. As defined in the proposed Article 8 amendment, MOAC must also approve any Artists' Live-Work units that are constructed.	
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	There should be a process that includes artists to create tactile art - tiles, motifs which are integrated into curbs, sidewalks, buildings - create a cohesive look to different districts in all neighborhoods.	Capital projects through the Boston Transportation Department and Public Works Department can incorporate collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture.	
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	There was a statement echoed about including in the zoning code a requirement to address the increase in property taxes through upfront zoning mechanisms, that are not reflected in the residential tax abatement process. This was brought up at two separate meetings.	We will continue to work with our colleagues in Assessing, Mayor's Office of Housing, and the Statehouse to understand what is possible to implement.	

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Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	S-0: Request to increase the amount of frontage required when transitioning to residential areas. Require significant landscaping all year round.	The S0 District is mapped in areas transitioning between purely residential and more commercial or mixed-use. As such, the minimum yards, building lot coverage, and permeable area of lot requirements are set to reflect this transition zone and require more significant space that can be used for landscaping.
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	S-1: Many like the definition provided for this type. Remarks here to require significant landscaping.	Any projects in the S1 District that trigger Article 80 review will undergo a review process with the community and City of Boston staff. Through that process, they may be asked to provide additional setbacks, street trees, landscaping, or other improvements to mitigate the impact of the development and continue advancing goals identified in PLAN: Mattapan.
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	S-2: Require all to have an active first floor that is not related to one of these business types - convenience, cannabis, tobacco, hair, nail, fast food or dollar stores. There were many comments that " Mattapan has too many liquor stores, convenience stores, hair salons, nail salons and fast food places." Ideas that were listed as examples were locally owned ice cream shops, bookstores, e-sports". Ideas that we don't already have here.	Components of the licensing process, outside of zoning, provide opportunities to weigh in on individual businesses, their operations, and how they satisfy community needs. Cannabis is the exception; in addition to specific license process through the Cannabis Board, zoning requires that cannabis establishments be located a certain distance from other cannabis establishments.
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	S-3: For buildings that have "zero-lot-line conditions" require that street trees be established.	Any projects in the S3 District that trigger Article 80 review will undergo a review process with the community and City of Boston staff. Through that process, they may be asked to provide additional setbacks, street trees, landscaping, or other improvements to mitigate the impact of the development and continue advancing goals identified in PLAN: Mattapan. Street trees are located on public property, and require the approval of the Public Improvement Commission that it's a safe location (sightlines) and possible to plant a tree (underground utilities or other infrastructure).

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Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	S-4: Residents want to see places for local talent shows, plays, music that could be at different price points. This type of building may offer the most diversity.	The S4 district is the most permissive of the districts proposed for Mattapan in terms of uses; Entertainment/Events Extra Small, Small, and Medium are all allowed, and Entertainment/Events Large is conditionally allowed. All of these could host the desired uses.
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	Article 60: GREATER MATTAPAN NEIGHBORHOOD DISTRICT Additional Dwelling Units: Many think it important that this be restricted to owner occupied homes. They point to former landlord occupants who have moved out to the suburbs and are renting basements to many unrelated persons. They like the limit to 4 maximum units on the entirety of the property. They like the open space requirements	The residential zoning amendment for Mattapan that was adopted by the Boston Zoning Commission on January 10th, 2024, includes a provision in Section 60-3 that requires an Accessory Dwelling Unit to be built on an owner occupied home, limits total dwelling units to 3 in the R1 and 4 in the R2, and includes permeable area of lot and yard requirements for open space.
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	Article 8: Use Regulations Require Conditional Use Abutting R-1 or R-2. Allowing the building of development above nine (9) units - directly abutting existing R-1 or R-2 homes will more than likely end up where residents will sue the City, the developer and contractors for property damages. Recommendation of placing conditional (C) use language that requires the developer to add the direct abutting properties to their insurance to cover possible damages during excavation and or construction period. Many homeowners do not know that their own existing homeowners insurance will NOT cover damages to their foundations from projects.	This is an important, larger question about the enforcement of construction management plans and how that process is carried out. It may not be the number of units that are allowed contributing to the issues mentioned here, but rather the type of construction itself as well as the construction management procedures being adhered to. Thank you for flagging this as requiring further work and investigation.
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	Article 11: Signs Signage inconsistent with Existing State Laws. The current billboards on buildings in Mattapan Square do not conform to State regulations regarding spacing. How can this be addressed in the codes?	Pursuant to Article 11 Section 6, billboards are not allowed in Squares + Streets Districts. Billboards that currently exist in Mattapan are nonconforming; in any case where billboards are seen by the Zoning Board of Appeal (ZBA) for an extension of the nonconformity, BPDA staff recommends denial to the ZBA as a matter of policy.

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Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	Article 18: Conformity with Existing Building Alignment A few residents questioned how this will improve the look and feel of Mattapan Square without requiring conformity. They asked for more clarity of language.	The current provision of requiring conformity with existing building alignment can often contradict goals of increased landscaping and trees. The required yard setbacks, building lot coverage, and permeable area of lot can ensure a more predictable outcome in what is built. Additionally, projects that trigger Article 80 Review will be shaped by community input and City of Boston staff to yield a project that advances PLAN: Mattapan and improves the look and feel of Mattapan Square.
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	Article 23: Off-Street Parking Provide designated parking zones for small businesses. Example - unlike small businesses located on Centre St in Jamaica Plain, in Greater Mattapan, there is not adequate parking for customers of small businesses. Many of our small businesses are frequented by those who do not live in Boston, but they consider it worth their time to travel from fairly long distances weekly - Framingham, Marlborough, and Providence, RI noted. At the January 24th meeting of small businesses in Mattapan, most noted that they had not understood the changes on Blue Hill Ave and the connection between the proposed new S+S District. Additionally the lack of parking at current small grocers effectively brings Blue Hill Ave down to one travel lane in front of a few businesses.	
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	On about every corner of Blue Hill Ave, where there is no off-street parking, there is double-parking as well as parking directly in front of the corner crosswalk. It is not clear how this is addressed in the zoning. Is there a design that discourages this from happening? Examples - River St @ Blue Hill Ave, Tennis Rd @ Blue Hill Ave; Evelyn St @ Blue Hill Ave; Fessenden St @ Blue Hill Ave	Curbside regulations and any modifications to the Public Right of Way are managed by the Boston Transportation Department and Public Works Department, and not subject to regulations in zoning. However, with Squares + Streets zoning, private property owners are conditionally allowed to build parking lots and parking garages, and are allowed to build shared parking facilities intended for the use of multiple properties.

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Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	Residents liked the required accessible parking spaces. There were a few questions if there could be a requirement to have at least one in all buildings. If not in the building then at least one outside on the street.	We've heard through this engagement process the need for more designated handicap parking spaces along the curb within the Public Right of Way. Those curbside regulations are managed by the Boston Transportation Department and Public Works Department, and not subject to regulations in zoning. For private property, the currently drafted Article 23: Off-Street Parking amendment aligns accessible parking space requirements in the zoning code with the State standards set forth in Title 521 CMR 23 in the Massachusetts Code.	
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	Finally, an idea to require at all locations a requirement for the developers to offer more than what is now required by developers in the Transportation Demand Management Strategy requirements. Consistently there is only the offer of baseline requirements. There is nothing offered in the impact of elective categories. These can be offered as counterbalancing amenities. The GMNC encourages the City to promote these ideas within Greater Mattapan.	Article 80 Small and Large projects are required to follow a review process with the community and City of Boston staff. Through the review process, Article 80 proponents may be asked to provide transportation demand management strategies, and other improvements that mitigate the impact of the development and advance PLAN: Mattapan.	
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	Article 24: Off-Streets Loading Regulations Provide designated loading zones for small businesses. In the proposed area within Greater Mattapan, specifically on Blue Hill Avenue, daily there are congestion issues related to there not being designated off-street loading for businesses. The current lack of designated parking for small businesses fails to address these needs.	Curbside regulations and any modifications to the Public Right of Way are managed by the Boston Transportation Department and Public Works Department, and not subject to regulations in zoning.	
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	Residential Uses: Fraternity or Sorority, Student Housing, Temporary Shelter Facility; these uses are forbidden and or conditional uses in Mattapan. Question as to why they are listed [in Article 24].'	All of the uses in the proposed Table A of Article 8 are also listed in Article 24: Off-Street Loading. The use allowances in Article 8 govern where uses will be allowed, conditional, or forbidden, while Article 24 designates the off-street loading requirements for each use. If and when a use is permitted anywhere in the City subject to base code, then Article 24 governs the off-street loading requirements.	

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Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council	1/28/24 Email	Article 26: Squares & Streets Districts - Dimensional Requirements	This provision is applicable in the S2, S3, S4, and S5 Districts, which are of a scale that could reach Article 80 Review. Projects that are subject to Article 80
		Setback Requirements for ground floor dwelling units - Table B: The GMNC recommends that the setback requirements be increased from 4' to 8' minimum and to	Review must undergo design review and provide a landscaping plan.
		require landscaping to ensure that those residents enjoy a minimum standard of privacy. Landscaped screening is an adequate counterbalancing amenity in cases where privacy is a concern. Proponents intending to offer screening as a counterbalancing amenity must provide a landscaping plan as part of their submission for zoning relief.	Rear and side yard setbacks are also still required in these districts, and an increase in the front yard setbacks would lessen the feasibility of adequate screening and outdoor amenity space in the rear of a project.

	MEETING COMMENTS (ZOOM CHAT QUESTIONS AND STAFF NOTES FROM PUBLIC MEETINGS)			
Meeting	Comment Source	Comment	BPDA Response	
1/22/24 Office Hours	Staff Notes	Concern about parking requirements limiting what one can do with their property.	There are no parking minimums in Squares + Streets Districts, so properties in a Squares + Streets District will not violate zoning if they do not provide parking. Parking is an added cost to projects that can inhibit affordable housing feasibility and take up additional space on the lot that could instead be used for permeable open space.	
1/9/24 Office Hours	Staff Notes	How can design regulations help with parking issues and pick-up/drop-off?	Curbside regulations and any modifications to the Public Right of Way are managed by the Boston Transportation Department and Public Works Department, and not subject to regulations in zoning.	
1/9/24 Office Hours	Staff Notes	Can you build parking underground and have it available for the public?	In some cases, yes; where parking is allowed, it can be constructed underground and made available to the public if negotiated through the Article 80 Process, or if the developer/property owner wants to provide it. There are no parking minimums in Squares + Streets Districts, but property owners can still build parking. We have a created a new use for this type of public parking, called shared parking, to allow it in Squares + Streets areas.	
1/9/24 Office Hours	Staff Notes	How does an S2 district interact next to an R1 or R2 subdistrict?	There is a 15' required rear yard setback within an S2 district if it abuts a residential subdistrict.	
1/9/24 Office Hours	Staff Notes	Does zoning address what happens on the sidewalk?	Zoning only regulates what happens within the private property line, but can require setbacks from the front lot line where it meets the sidewalk.	
1/9/24 Office Hours	Staff Notes	Could there be a building that would be 5-7 stories and have different businesses occupying it?	Yes, assuming the land uses within that building are allowed or granted conditional approval under the proposed zoning.	
11/15/23 Virtual Public Meeting	Zoom Chat	How does the new zoning address the proliferation of auto repair shops and its related businesses that take over large parts of the sidewalks/streets as extensions of their businesses? This occurs in NS-2 areas (Blue Hill Ave in particular)	"Vehicular Services" are a forbidden use in each of the Squares + Streets Districts, meaning no new vehicular service uses can be built as-of-right. This does not limit the current operation of these types of uses within all existing laws, but prevents a future expansion of them.	
11/15/23 Virtual Public Meeting	Zoom Chat	In the timeline, it looks like it is slated to go before the BPDA Zoning Commission in early January. Can the comment period be extended to January 10th instead?	Comment period extended to January 28th, 2024. There is also a public comment period and opportunity for public testimony at the Boston Zoning Commission.	

	MEETING CO	OMMENTS (ZOOM CHAT QUESTIONS AND STAFF NOT	TES FROM PUBLIC MEETINGS)
Meeting	Comment Source	Comment	BPDA Response
11/15/23 Virtual Public Meeting	Zoom Chat	As a potential future business owner in Mattapan Square would loveti open an Eye clinic & optical shop (professional service).	"Clinic" is an allowed use in the S1, S2, S3, and S4 Districts, all of which are proposed to be mapped in and around Mattapan Square.
11/15/23 Virtual Public Meeting	Zoom Chat	Is there a potential to use build public parking in the new developments.	New developments will continue to be allowed to build parking, but are no longer required to in Squares + Streets Districts. Parking can be made available to the public if negotiated through the Article 80 Process, or if the developer/property owner wants to provide it. Additionally, a new use of "Shared Parking" is allowed in all S+S Districts, which can be shared by several different properties.
11/15/23 Virtual Public Meeting	Staff Notes	What about sight lines in the FAR calculations? How is parking getting addressed?	Mattapan has varied topography that can change how tall buildings look from various perspectives. This current draft zoning process is intended to determine appropriate heights for each district and where they get mapped in Mattapan. There are no parking minimums as part of Squares + Streets districts. However, property owners can still provide parking on their lots, including shared parking between multiple properties/businesses.
11/15/23 Virtual Public Meeting	Staff Notes	By not requiring parking, you also can't assume that everyone is going to be walking.	Squares + Streets Districts promote mixed-use areas, meaning a combination of residential, commercial, and other types of land uses. Mixed-use development encourages the production of housing near commercial areas, and can produce more walkability when goods and services are closer to where people live. Property owners are still allowed to build parking under Squares + Streets zoning, so if they deem it necessary and receive the appropriate approvals through the zoning process, they can build parking.
11/15/23 Virtual Public Meeting	Staff Notes	Is the rezoning for open lots only or for existing buildings?	This new zoning won't require changes to an existing building, but it will change what someone is able to do on a parcel of land with an existing building in the future.

	MEETING COMMENTS (ZOOM CHAT QUESTIONS AND STAFF NOTES FROM PUBLIC MEETINGS)			
Meeting	Comment Source	Comment	BPDA Response	
12/06/23 Virtual Public Meeting	Zoom Chat	Why have the Neighborhood Business Subdistricts been removed for most of what is coming under PLAN: Mattapan zoning? And the removal of listing all open spaces? Did it go to another location?	Yes - the open spaces are shown in the zoning map as OS, and regulated as part of Article 33 (Open Space District). The neighborhood business subdistricts are proposed to be rezoned to Squares + Streets zoning districts.	
12/06/23 Virtual Public Meeting	Staff Notes	Can you build residential on top of existing commercial?	Yes, as long as the project follows the zoning regulations. The project would still need to go through the Article 80 review process if it is larger than 20,000sf or 15 units of housing.	
12/06/23 Virtual Public Meeting	Staff Notes	Have you thought about sending out mailers?	Each property within the proposed zoning districts was mailed a postcard at the beginning of January.	
12/06/23 Virtual Public Meeting	Staff Notes	In the process of development, why aren't they looking at including Mattapan residents as part of their development teams, just like they're required to do with anything else? If they want to develop in Mattapan, they should require residents participation on the team.	We can create provisions for this when using City-owned land and City resources, but are more limited for private property. As part of Article 80 Large Project Review under the DEI in Development Policy, the BPDA requests that proponents disclose plans to include economic participation, employment, and management roles for people of color, women, and certified Minority and Women Owned Businesses within their project.	
01/17/24 Virtual Public Meeting	Zoom Chat	What vehicular uses would be forbidden in the squares & streets, versus outside of the defined area?	Some vehicular uses that are forbidden in all Squares + Streets districts include "Vehicular Services" (servicing and repair of motor vehicles, automotive parts, parts installation, carwash, or similar use), Motor Vehicle Sales and Rentals, Gas Stations, and Airport-Related Remote Parking Facilities. The Draft Greenlined Article 60 document lays out use allowances for other zoning subdistricts in Mattapan that are <i>not</i> Squares + Streets.	
01/17/24 Virtual Public Meeting	Zoom Chat	The S5 I thought we are not considering because most of the feedback and reactions not to include the 10 stories that that height would be.	Correct; PLAN: Mattapan did not recommend heights of 10 stories in the neighborhood, so the S5 option was not considered in the draft zoning proposals.	

	MEETING CO	OMMENTS (ZOOM CHAT QUESTIONS AND STAFF NO	TES FROM PUBLIC MEETINGS)
Meeting	Comment Source	Comment	BPDA Response
01/17/24 Virtual Public Meeting	Zoom Chat	Is there anywhere in the new code that would prevent the concentration of specific businesses?	Components of the licensing process, outside of zoning, provide opportunities to weigh in on individual businesses, their operations, and how they satisfy community needs. Cannabis is the exception; there is a radius requirement of cannabis establishments from each other.
01/17/24 Virtual Public Meeting	Zoom Chat	Is there any way that some sort of artistic designs can be built into the major corridors - Blue Hill Ave and Cummins Hwy? Everything is so sterile.	Capital projects through the Boston Transportation Department and Public Works Department can incorporate collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture.
01/17/24 Virtual Public Meeting	Staff Notes	Are you saying that someone can come into the community, build a 4 or 5 story residential building, and not be required to build parking for those residents?	Yes; parking is an added cost to projects that can inhibit affordable housing feasibility and take up additional space on the lot that could instead be used for permeable open space. Projects may still be allowed to build parking, they just aren't required to.