



November 5, 2025

# NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING ZONING AND WEST ROXBURY ANALYSIS

*West Roxbury BCYF Roche Community Center*  
6:00p-7:30p



# MEET THE TEAM

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**Kathleen Onufer**  
Deputy Director of Zoning



**Will Cohen (Presenter)**  
Senior Planner II



**Jein Park (Presenter)**  
Planner I  
West Roxbury Neighborhood Planner



**Lorraine Kung**  
Urban Designer II



**Yi Ming Wu**  
Urban Designer I



**Kenya Beaman**  
Community Engagement Manager



**Jonil Casado**  
Community Engagement Manager



**Grey Black**  
Community Engagement Manager



**Kristiana Lachiusa**  
Deputy Director of  
Community Engagement

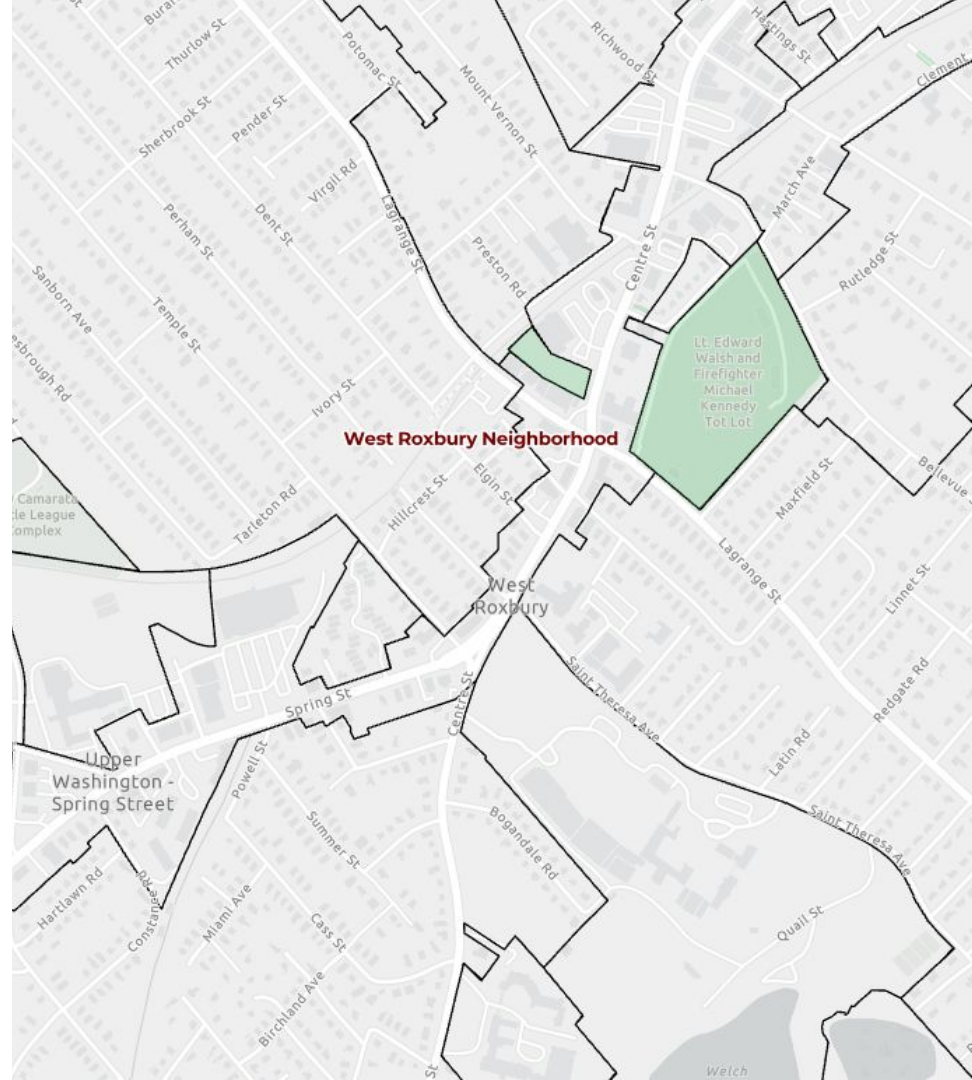
# AGENDA

1. What is Zoning?
2. Existing Conditions in West Roxbury
3. Mattapan: What has happened with updated zoning?
4. Q&A and Discussion





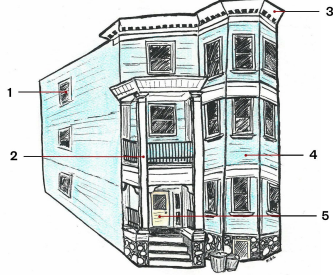
# WHAT IS ZONING?





# ZONING TELLS US HOW OUR CITY SHOULD LOOK.

**Zoning is a set of local laws** that guide how land and buildings can be used and shaped. In residential areas, zoning determines things like **how many homes or units** can be built on a lot, **how tall or large those homes can be**, and **how much open space and parking must be provided**. Some of what zoning regulates includes:



## LAND USES

*the types of activities allowed within a given area (ex: what types and how many homes are allowed)*



## BUILDING DIMENSIONS

*how much space a building takes up, its height, and the open space around it*



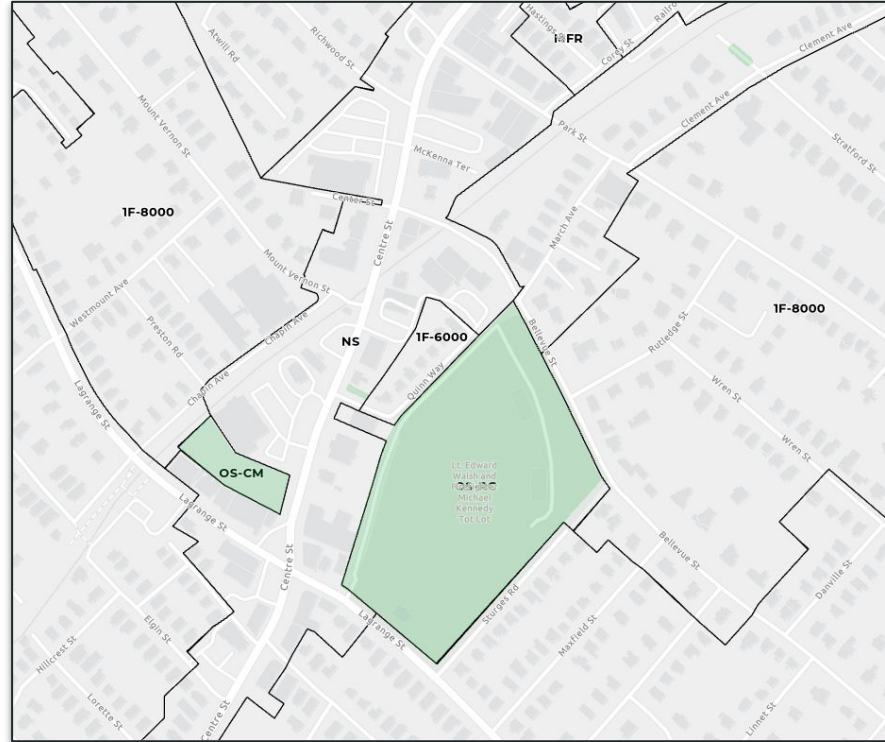
## OTHER REGULATIONS

*parking and driveway requirements, porches or decks, entrances, etc*

**Zoning doesn't build or demolish anything; it acts as guides and limits to what people can build.**

# ZONING DISTRICTS GET PLACED ON A MAP.

- Zoning maps divide and organize land in a city into zoning districts
- Zoning districts determine the **use** of land, **shape** of buildings on land, and **density** of buildings on land
- The same districts can be **used in similar areas throughout the city**. This makes updates to zoning easier and more equitable.



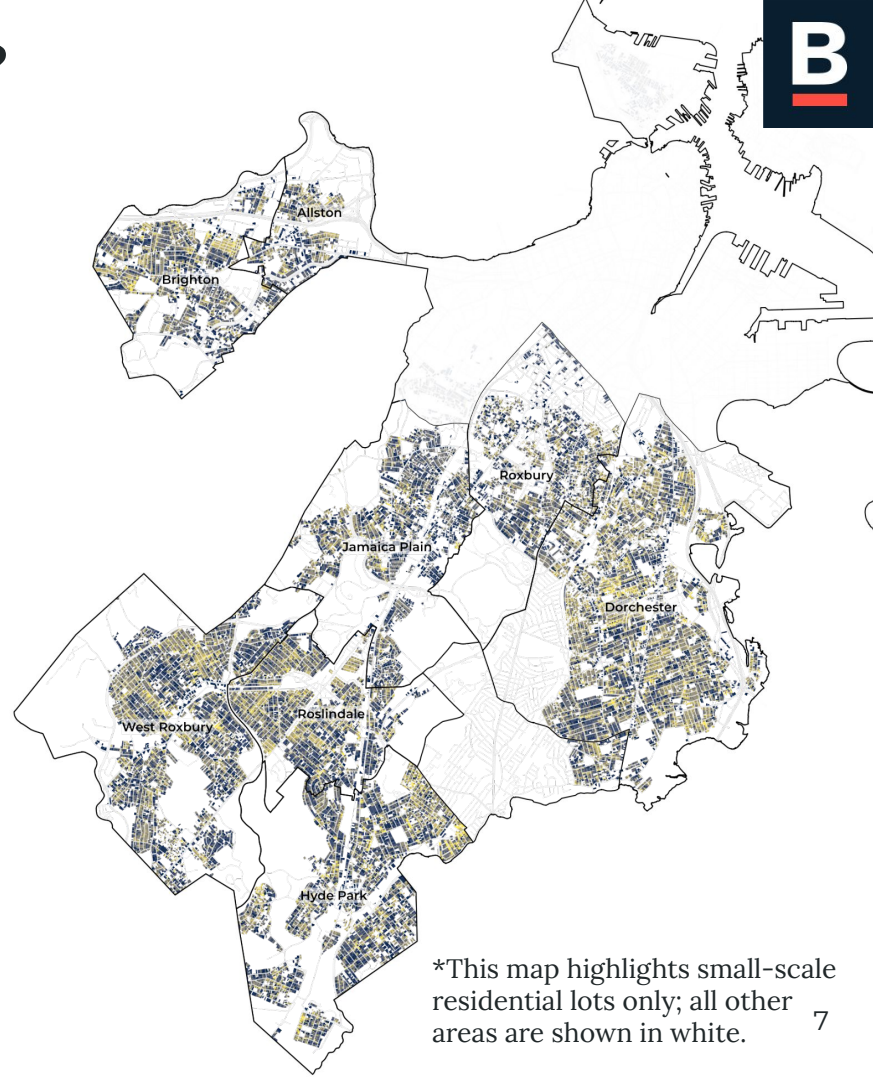
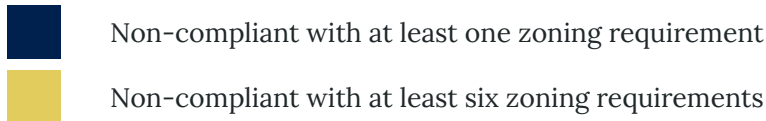
A snapshot of West Roxbury's zoning districts that include portions of commercial, mixed-use, and residential subdistricts.

# WHAT IS RESIDENTIAL ZONING?

Most existing homes in Boston don't comply with current zoning. Making changes to one's home - whether a small renovation or adding an ADU - often requires a costly, time-consuming variance process.

The Neighborhood Housing Initiative will modernize residential zoning for:

- Clear, predictable rules that reflect how neighborhoods look today
- First phase focuses on Roslindale, West Roxbury, and Hyde Park, building on work done in Mattapan





**WHAT'S NOT WORKING  
WITH WEST  
ROXBURY'S CURRENT  
RESIDENTIAL ZONING?**

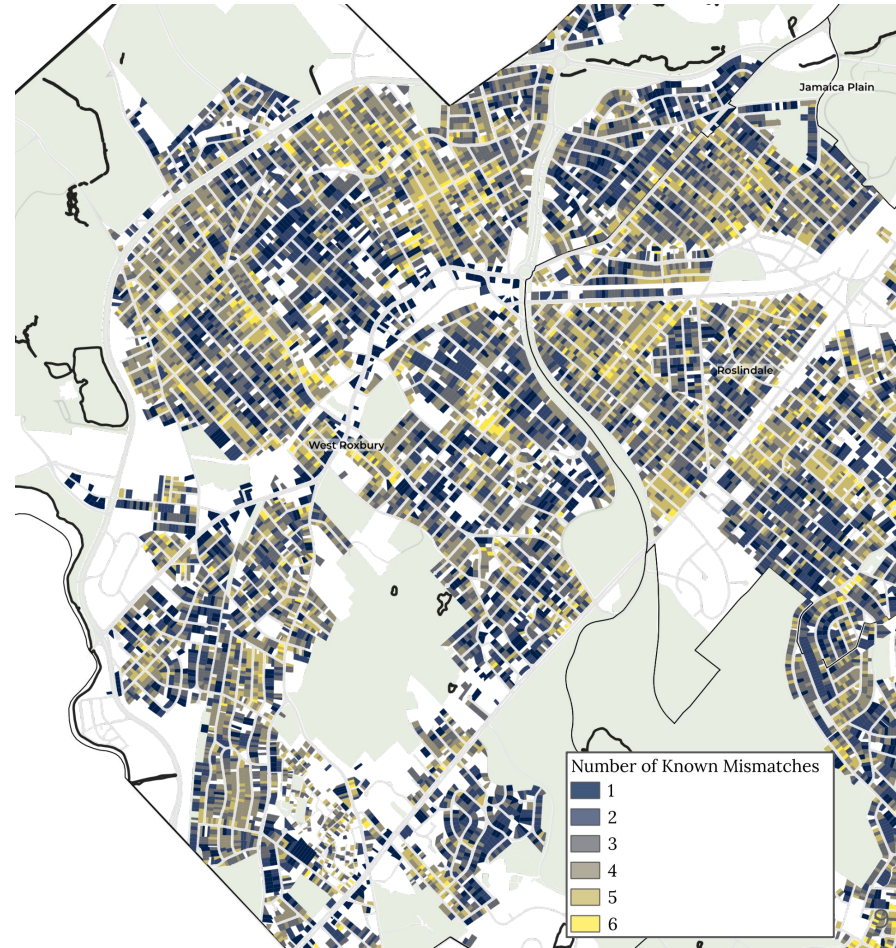


# ZONING MISMATCHES ARE PREVALENT IN WEST ROXBURY

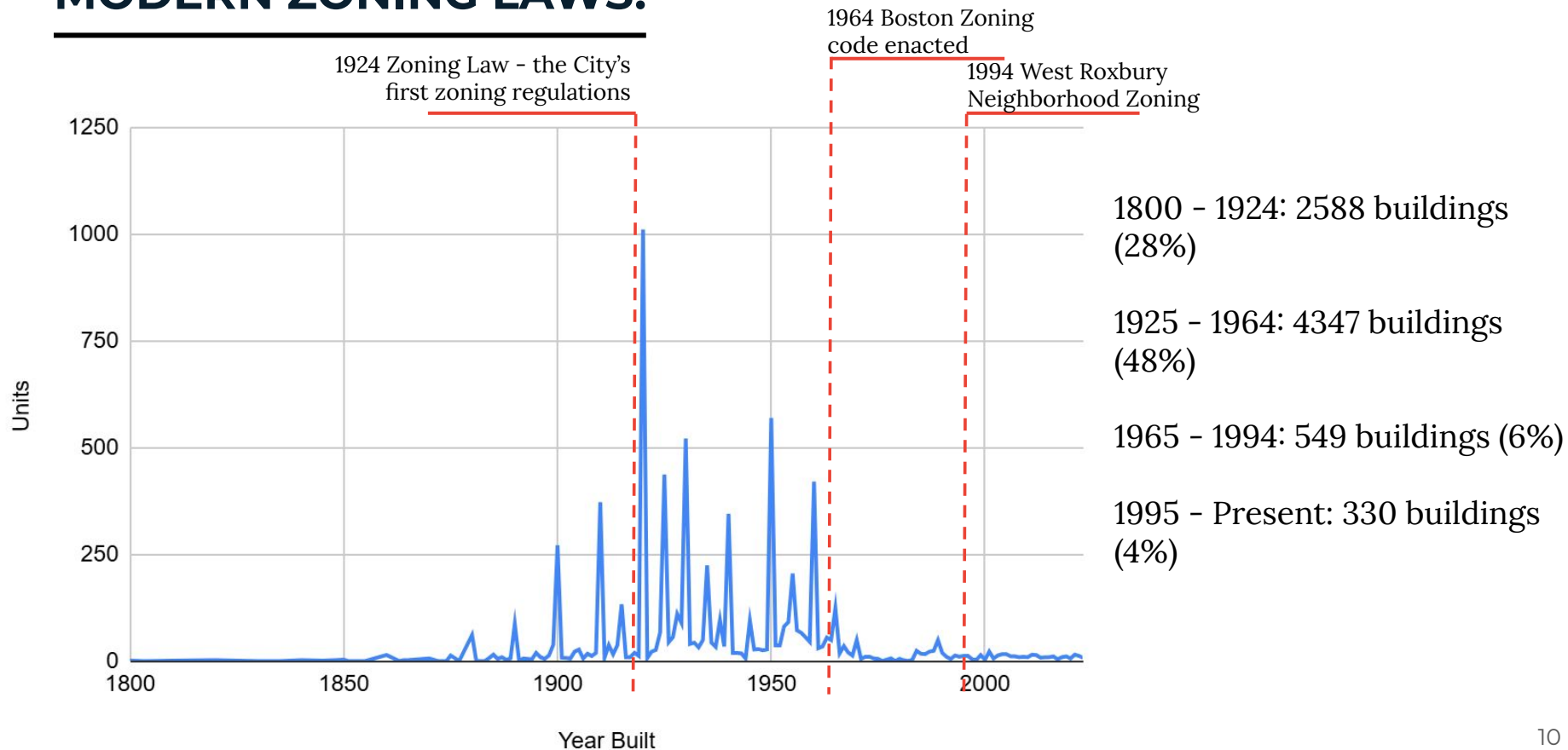
There are 9,761 total lots in West Roxbury. Of those, **9,117 lots have small-scale residential zoning, representing 10,000 homes.**

From dark blue to yellow, this map shows **where residential zoning is smaller than what is already there**, based on 6 easy-to-measure metrics. Under just these 6 metrics, **at least 7,000 lots in West Roxbury (97% of analyzed area) have poorly-suited zoning:**

- Minimum lot size
- FAR (floor area ratio: gross building area / lot size)
- Unit count
- Front yard
- Side yard
- Rear yard

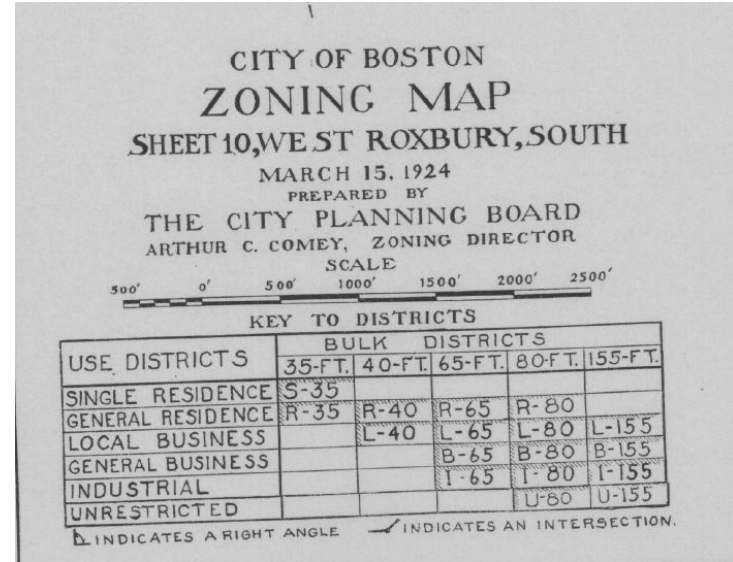


# MOST OF WEST ROXBURY'S SMALL-SCALE HOUSING PREDATES MODERN ZONING LAWS.





# 1924 ZONING RULES WERE MORE FLEXIBLE THAN TODAY'S



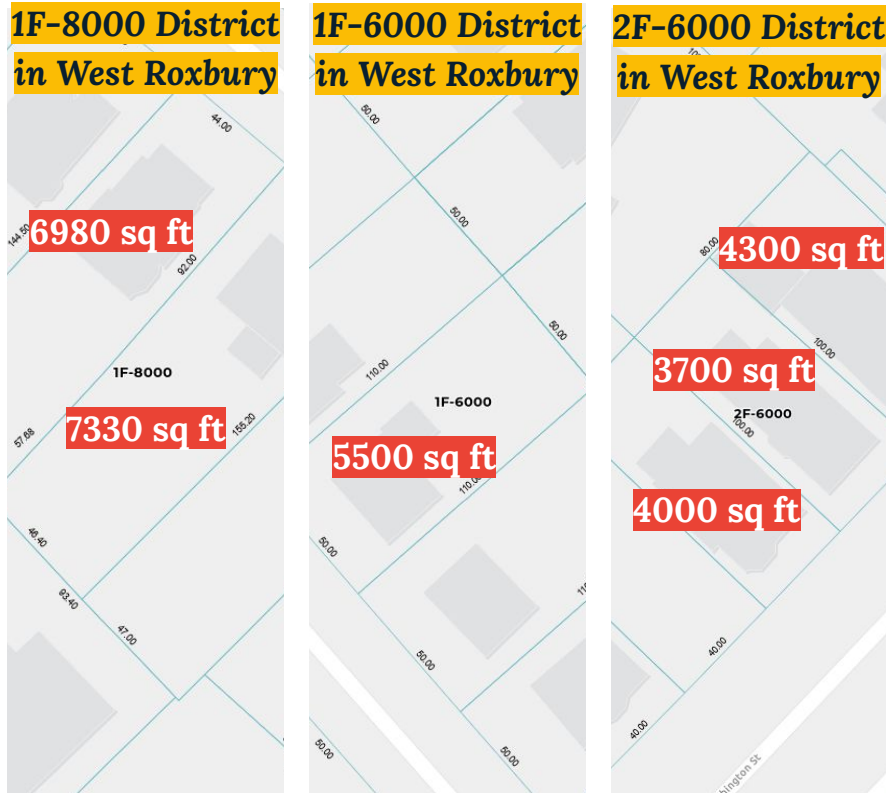
1924 District	Height	Rear Yard	Side Yard	Front Yard
S-35 / R-35	35 ft	25'	6'	10' or 30'
R-40 / L-40	40 ft (3 stories)	20'	6'	10' or 25'

Today's zoning:

35' height maximum

40' min rear  
10' min side  
20-25' min front

# ZONING RULES ARE TOO RESTRICTIVE FOR EXISTING LOTS.



**62% of lots are smaller than the zoning minimum,** yet these homes already exist.

Today's zoning rules don't match the historic neighborhood pattern.

Actual Lot Sizes:

25th percentile: 4700 sf

50th percentile: 5600 sf

75th percentile: 6900 sf

# WEST ROXBURY'S TYPICAL SIDE YARD IS 6 FT, BUT ZONING REQUIRES 10 FT.

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Zoning requires a minimum side yard of 10'.

**78% of lots have side yards smaller** than that in West Roxbury.

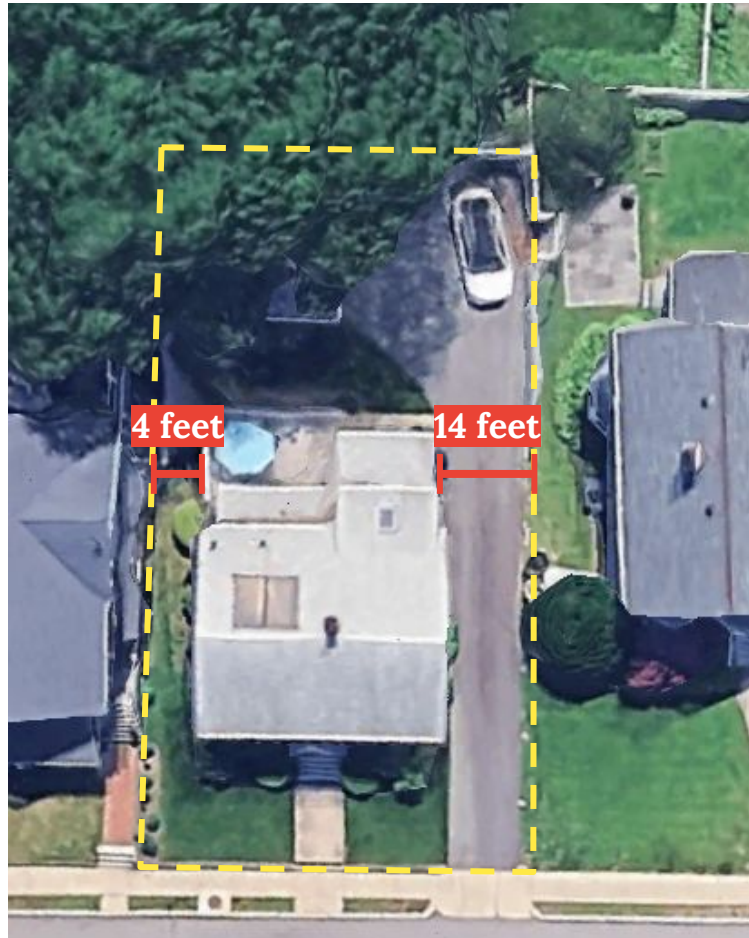
Actual Side Yards:

25th percentile: 4 ft

50th percentile: 6 ft

75th percentile: 8 ft

1924 zoning required ~6'.



215 Park St, West Roxbury



# WEST ROXBURY'S TYPICAL FRONT YARD IS 15 FT, AND ZONING REQUIRES 20 FT.

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Zoning requires a minimum front yard of 20' or 25'.

**62%** of lots in West Roxbury have smaller front yards.

Actual Front Yards:

25th percentile: 12 ft

50th percentile: 15 ft

75th percentile: 23 ft

1924 zoning required ~10'.



9-11 Pender St, West Roxbury

# WEST ROXBURY'S TYPICAL REAR YARD IS 38 FT, AND ZONING REQUIRES 40 FT.

Zoning requires a minimum rear yard of 40'.

39% of lots have smaller rear yards  
These calculations deliberately look only at the main structure, ignoring all garages or sheds.

Actual Rear Yards:

25th percentile: 20 ft

50th percentile: 38 ft

75th percentile: 53 ft

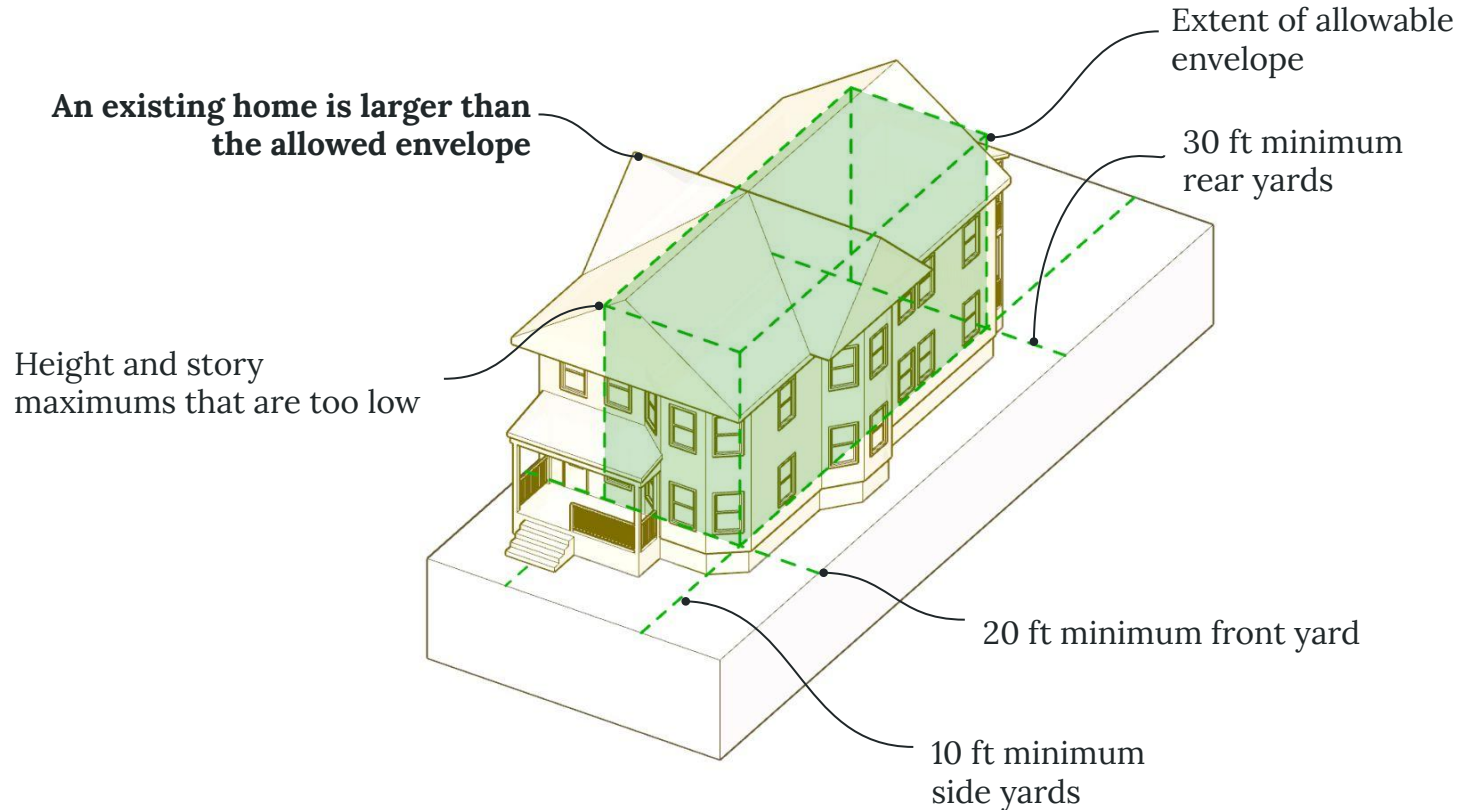
1924 zoning required ~20-25'.



16 and 20 Sherbrook St, West Roxbury

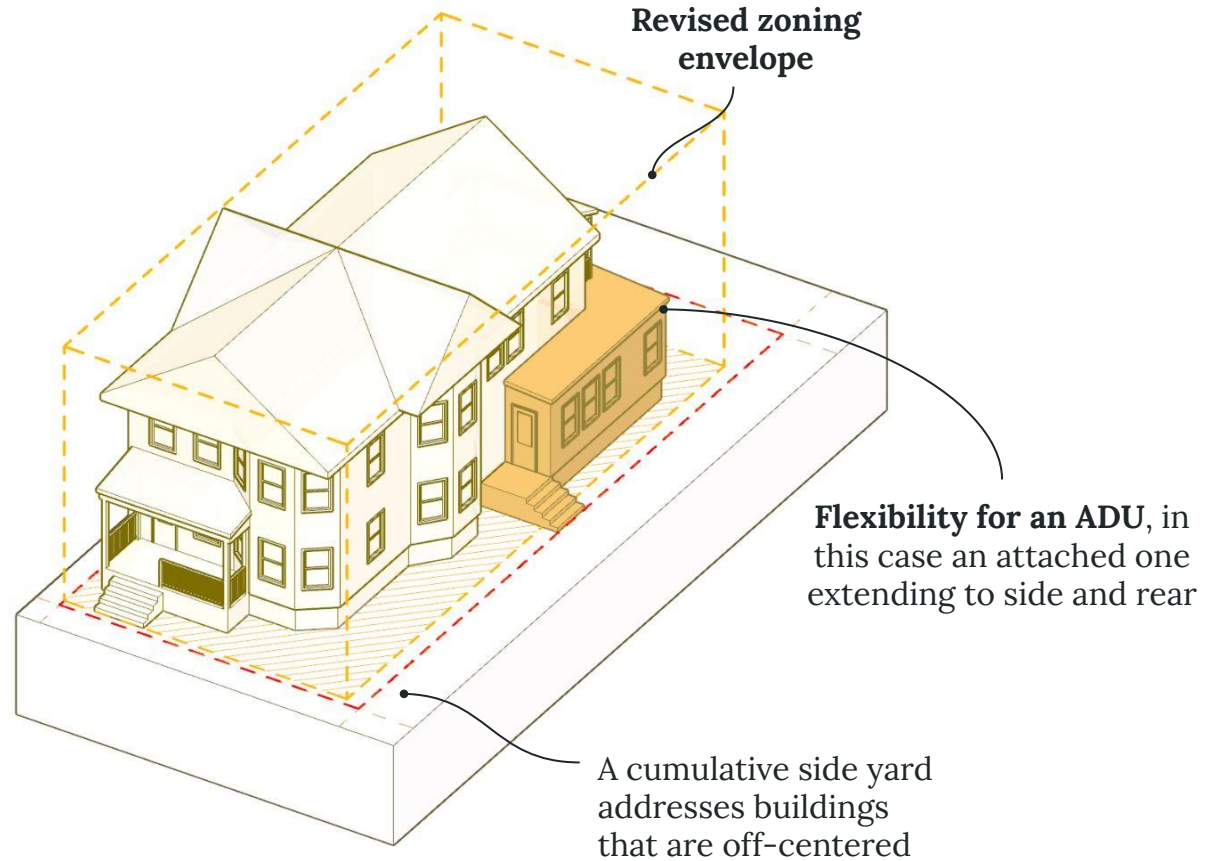
# THESE RULES DISALLOW ALMOST EVERYTHING.

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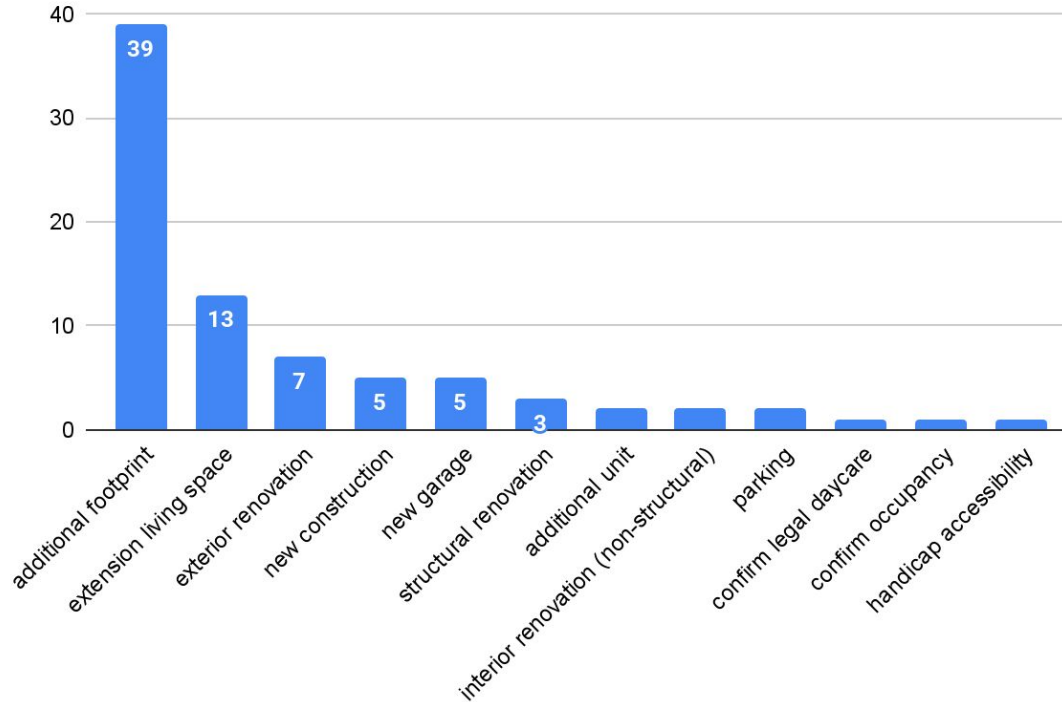




# WE WANT TO UPDATE ZONING TO MATCH WEST ROXBURY



# UPDATED ZONING COULD HAVE STREAMLINED 100+ CASES SINCE 2022 (50 YEARS OF WAITING).



**81** sub-Article 80 projects have been approved by the ZBA since 2022 in West Roxbury's residential subdistricts. **Only 5 of these have been new construction projects.**

If residential zoning allowed for small renovations on existing buildings along with contextual infill development, the **vast majority of these would not have needed zoning relief.**

# APPROVED NEW SMALL-SCALE RESIDENTIAL IN WEST ROXBURY IN PAST 2 YEARS

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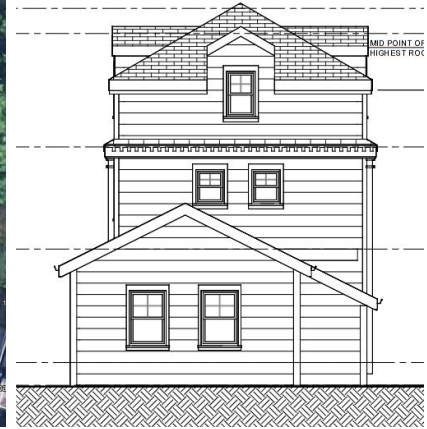




# NEW CONSTRUCTION CASE STUDY: 154 BROOK FARM RD

Project: The proposal would create a new 2.5-story single-unit residential structure.

The proposed structure is similar in size, scale, and design to surrounding properties.



# NEW CONSTRUCTION CASE STUDY: 154 BROOK FARM RD



1F-6000 Zoning Mismatches	Required	Proposed	Surrounding Context
Usable Open Space	1,800 sq ft	N/A	similar
FAR Excessive	0.4	N/A	0.3-0.5
Front Yard Insufficient	20'	18'	11'-25'
Side Yard Insufficient	10'	10', 1'	2'-15'
Rear Yard Insufficient	30'	11'	+/-30'

# EXTEND LIVING SPACE CASE STUDY: 286 PERHAM ST

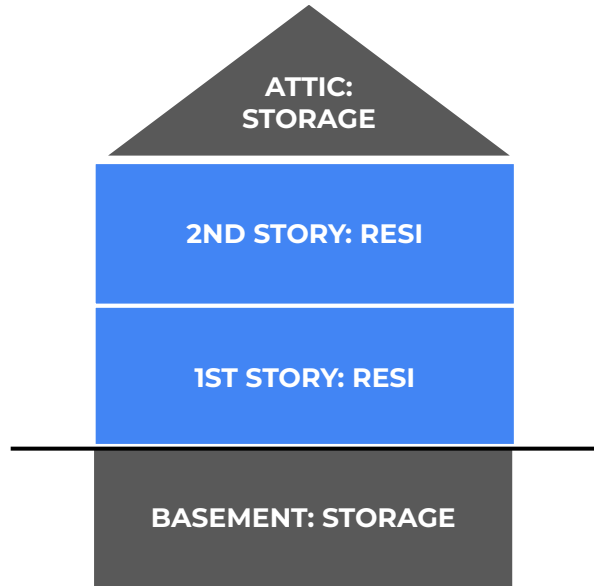
Project: This project would renovate an unfinished basement for more living space, including a family room, bathroom, office, and storage space.



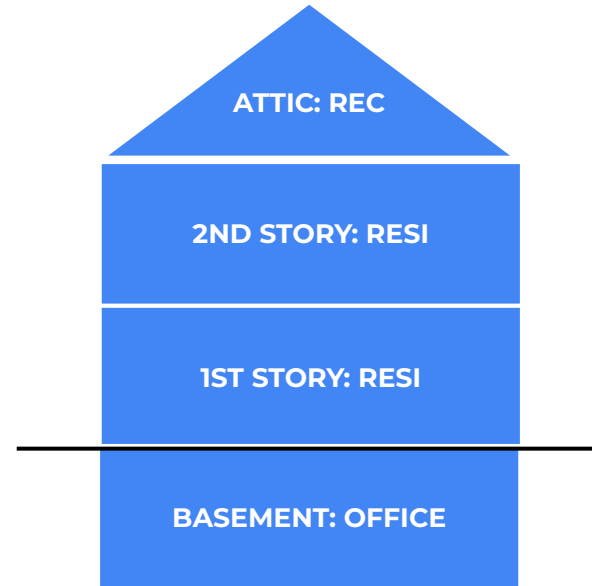
1F-6000 Zoning Mismatches	Required	Proposed	Surrounding Context
Excessive FAR	0.4	0.56	Varied (but next door is 0.55)

# EXTENDING LIVING SPACE IN ONE'S HOME IS CAUGHT IN MORE PROCESSES THAN IT SHOULD BE.

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**COMPLIANT**



**NOT COMPLIANT:**

*Even though the building floorplate did NOT change,  
change of use affects Ground Floor Area calculation*



# ADDITIONAL UNIT CASE STUDY: 19 PINECLIFF ROAD

Project: This project proposed a 3rd unit on the 3rd floor of an existing 2-unit building.



1F-6000 Zoning Mismatches	Required	Proposed	Surrounding Context
Use: Forbidden	1 unit	3 units	1-2 units
FAR Excessive	0.4	0.8+	0.2~0.4

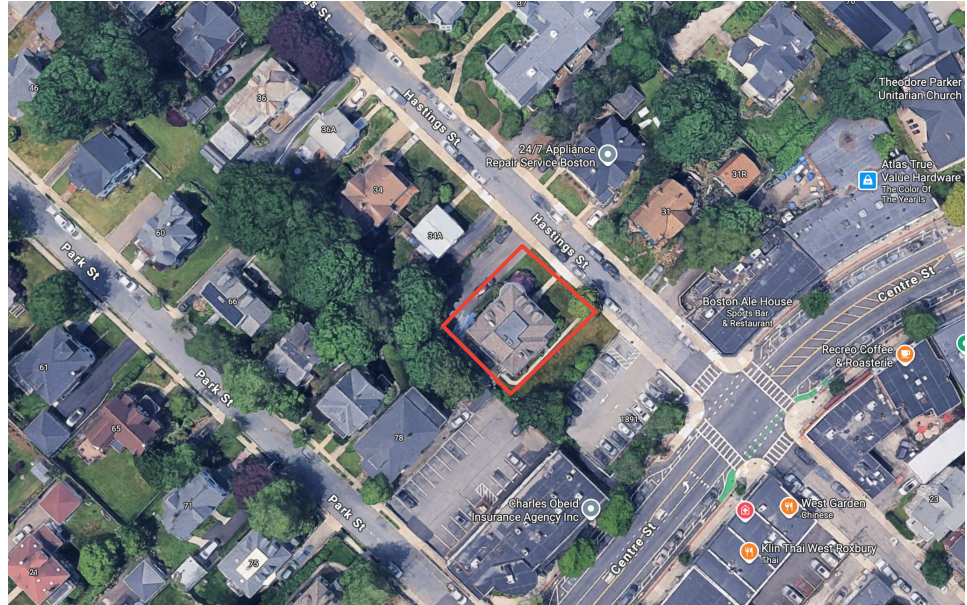
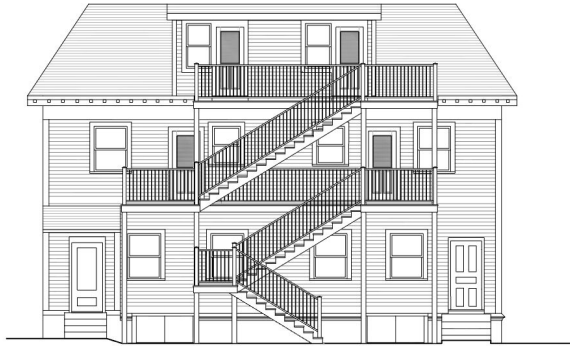
# EXTERIOR CHANGES CASE STUDY: 30-32 HASTINGS ST

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Project: Build new three-story decks behind the house with an outdoor staircase. Each unit's kitchen will get a new door that replaces a window, which opens directly onto the new decks.

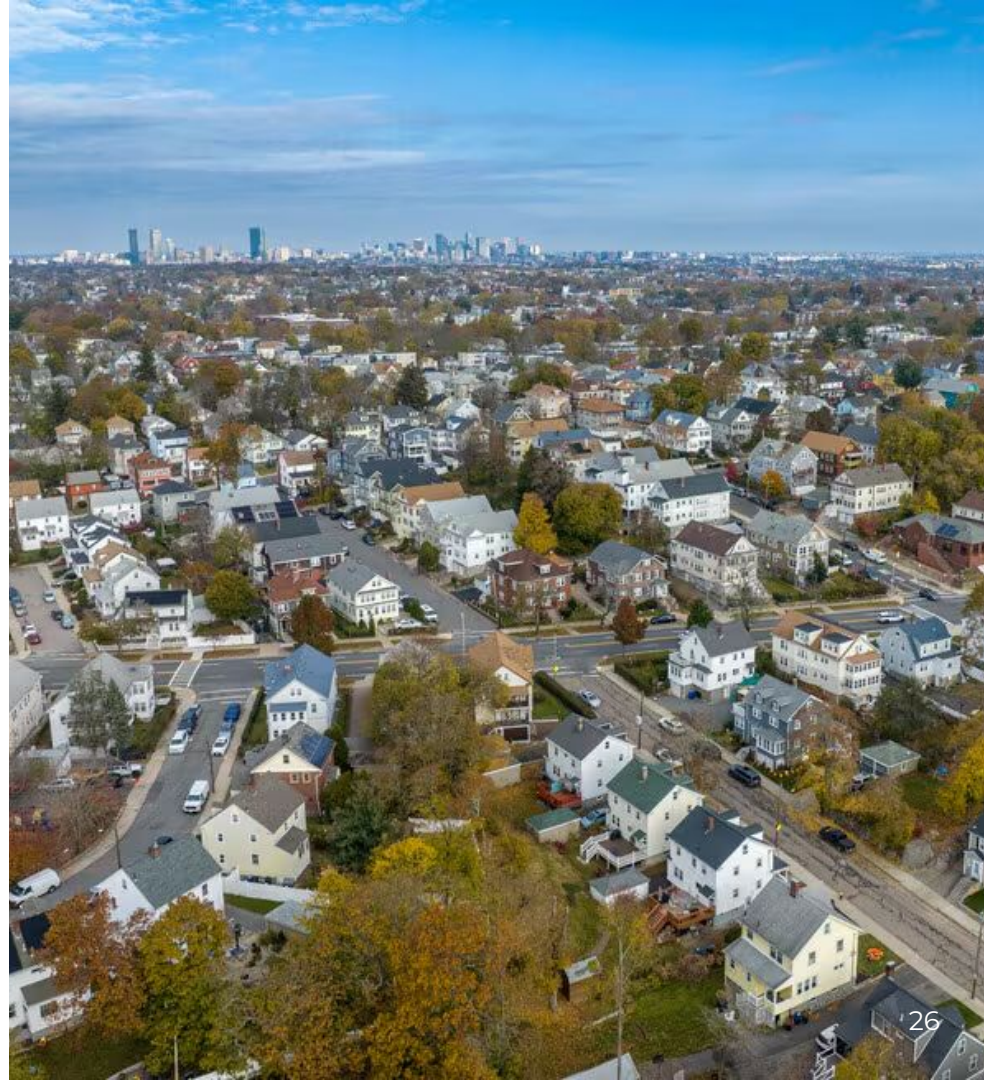
## New Three Story Deck

30-32 Hastings Street  
West Roxbury, MA 02132





# **CASE STUDY: MATTAPAN REZONING**



# PLAN: MATTAPAN

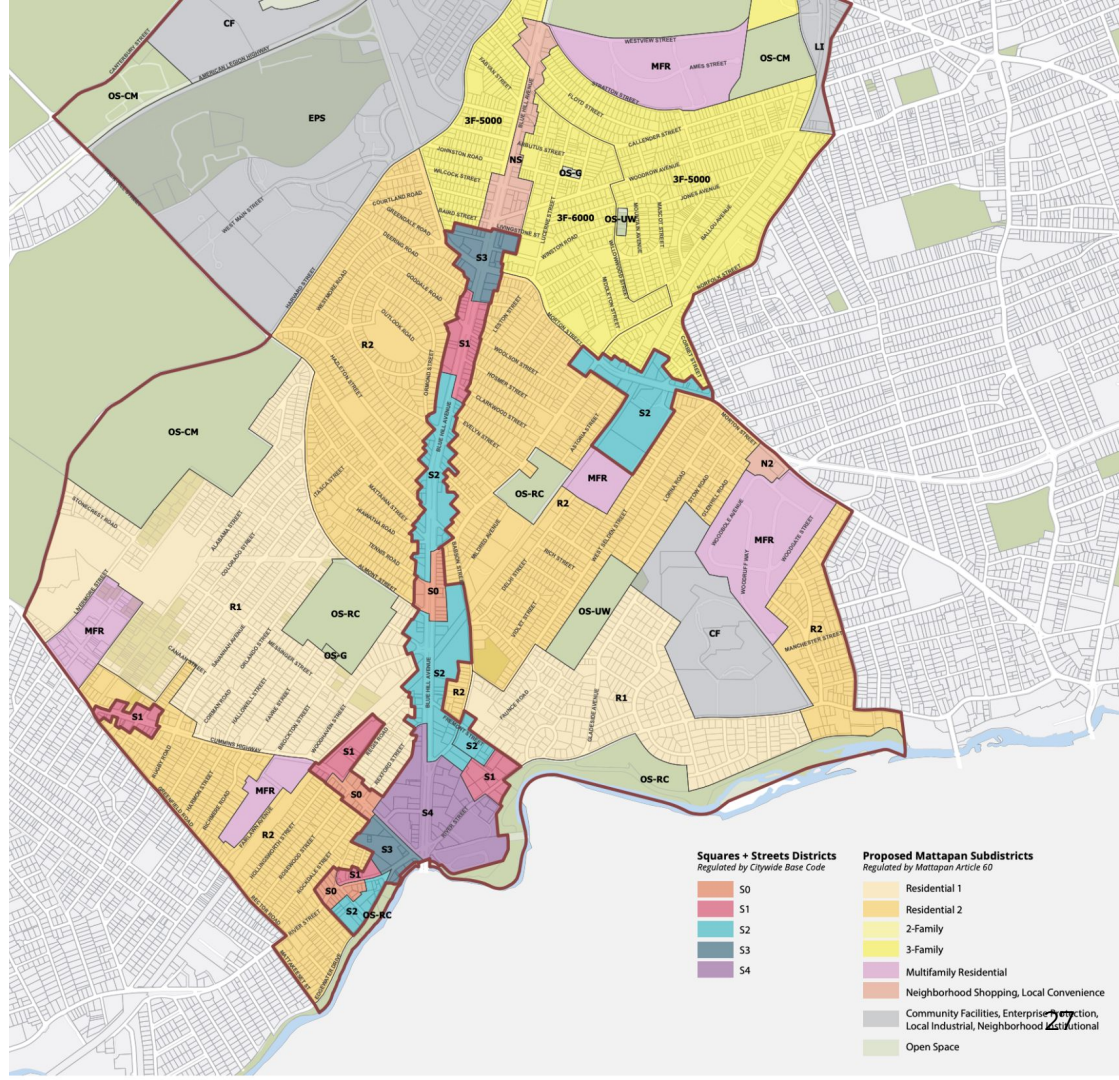
May 11, 2023 – PLAN: Mattapan adopted

February 7, 2024 – New residential zoning in Mattapan adopted

May 30, 2024 – Mattapan Squares + Streets Zoning adopted

## PLAN: Mattapan envisions a future where:

- Existing Mattapan residents are **stable in their homes** and new residents have **affordable housing options**
- Mattapan residents have **safe and reliable transit connections** to jobs, schools, and community spaces in Mattapan and throughout Boston
- Mattapan Square** and other neighborhood nodes are home to **vibrant, thriving local businesses and cultural spaces** that reflect the needs of residents and uphold neighborhood identity

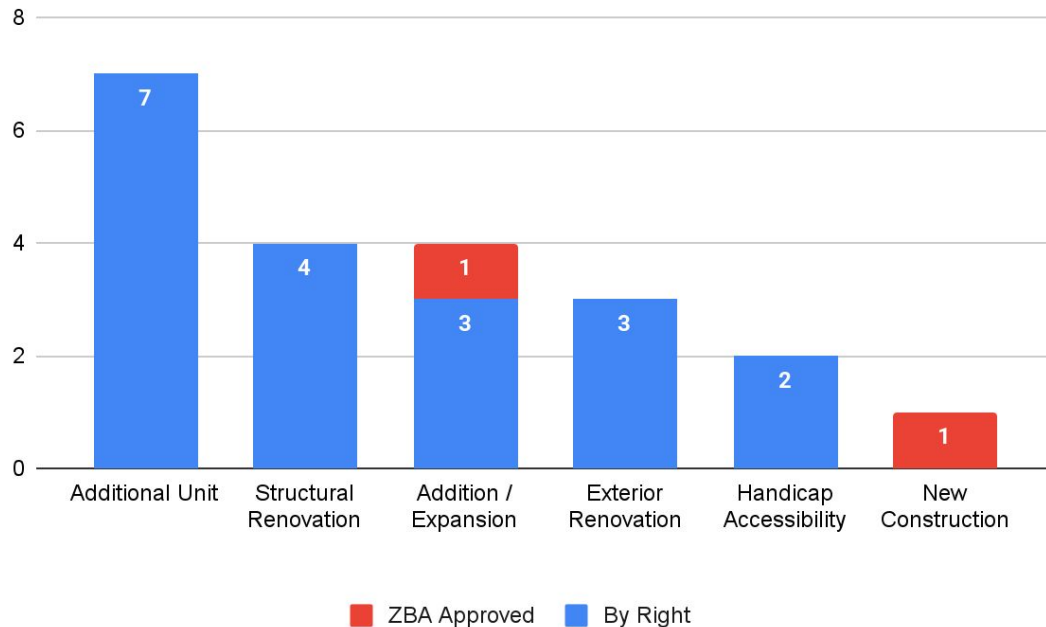




# AFTER REZONING, 90% OF SMALL SCALE RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS ARE ALLOWED, UP FROM 46% PRIOR TO REZONING.

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Projects that have been approved:



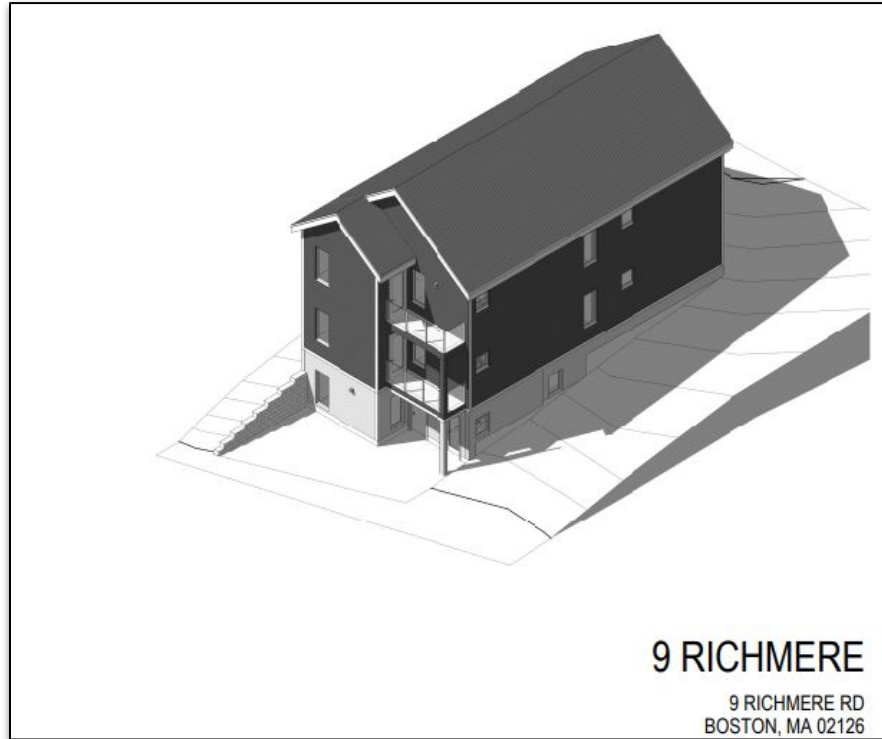
21 total small-scale residential projects with permits issued since 2/7/24

19 by right, 2 through ZBA

*Does not include zoning exempt projects such as fire alarms, solar panels, as well as projects that do not physically alter the building such as subdivision of lots.*

# NEW CONSTRUCTION CASE STUDY: 9 RICHMERE RD (ZBA)

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Project: New construction three-unit dwelling with 2 parking spaces and bike space.

This project went to the ZBA for having tandem parking spaces.



# ADDITIONAL UNIT CASE STUDY:

## 43 GOODALE RD (ALLOWED)



EXISTING FRONT VIEW,  
GOODALE ROAD



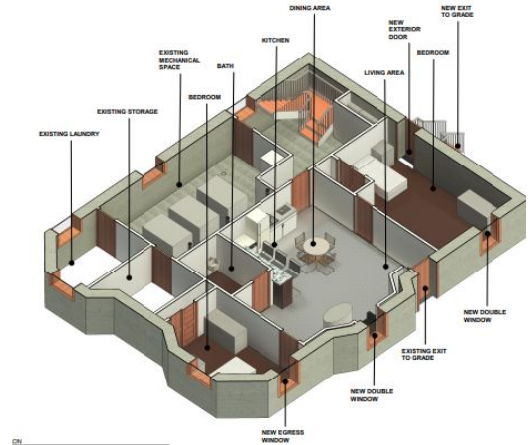
EXISTING FRONT / EAST VIEW



EXISTING REAR / EAST VIEW

To be allowed, below-ground units still have to meet many requirements beyond zoning: building code (appropriate egress and floor heights), fire code, and being outside of a flood-prone area.

This project adds a new unit in the basement to an existing three-unit home, becoming a four-unit home.



# OTHER USES IN WEST ROXBURY RESIDENTIAL AREAS





# SCHOOL, K THROUGH 12

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## definition:

*A facility in which a regular course of public or private educational instruction is given for grades including kindergarten through twelfth grades. For a School offering kindergarten and no higher grades, see Child Care Center.*



**Joyce Kilmer Upper School**  
**140 Russett Rd (West Roxbury)**  
**1F-6000**

# ACCESSORY HOME OCCUPATION

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## definition:

*A facility where one or more persons do professional, administrative, or similar work, including but not limited to coworking spaces and businesses which may meet with clients on an appointment basis, such as insurance brokers and real estate offices. Office does not include a medical office for a medical professional practicing under a medical license.*



**Keane Painting Boston**  
**220 Willow St (West Roxbury)**  
**1F-6000**

# CHILD CARE

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## definition:

*Any facility operated on a regular basis, whether known as a child nursery, nursery school, kindergarten, child playschool, progressive school, child development center, or preschool, or known under any other name, which receives children not of common parentage under seven (7) years of age, or under sixteen (16) years of age if those children have special needs as defined in Massachusetts General Laws, for nonresidential custody and care during part or all of the day separate from their parents. Any facility of this type shall comply with the standards, inspectional requirements, and dimensional regulations as established by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (or a successor agency responsible for the state licensing of home-based child care facilities).*



**Garnet Grove Family Daycare**  
**17 Garnet Rd (West Roxbury)**  
**1F-6000**



# ART STUDIOS

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## definition:

*A facility for the creation of physical art or audiovisual content, where the activities produce little to no vibration, fumes, or other nuisances more typical in industrial or manufacturing uses, including but not limited to arts production space and studios, dance and music rehearsal space, or similar use. Such use may include the sale of art which does not require any permanent and dedicated space and is incidental to the Art Studio use. Any space permanently dedicated to sales shall constitute a Retail Store.*



**Art Lessons with Ellen McGill  
186 Stratford St (West Roxbury)  
1F-8000**



# NEXT STEPS

**Fall 2025:** Collect feedback from you around your priorities for small-scale residential areas

**Winter 2026:** Create first draft of new set of zoning districts, mapped across Roslindale, West Roxbury, and Hyde Park

**Spring/Summer 2026:** Edit, refine, and revise districts and mapping through public process



# OFFICE HOURS

**November 13, 2025, 11:00a-1:00p**

Virtual Office Hours - [Sign Up](#)

**November 18, 2025, 11:00a-1:00p**

Virtual Office Hours - [Sign Up](#)

**November 25, 2025, 11:00a-1:00p**

Virtual Office Hours - [Sign Up](#)

**December 4, 2025, 11:00a-1:00p**

Virtual Office Hours - [Sign Up](#)

**December 11, 2025, 1:00-3:00p**

Virtual Office Hours - [Sign Up](#)

**December 16, 2025, 11:00a-1:00p**

Virtual Office Hours - [Sign Up](#)

Registration required 24 hours in advance, otherwise Office Hours will be cancelled. Email [will.cohen@boston.gov](mailto:will.cohen@boston.gov) or [jein.park@boston.gov](mailto:jein.park@boston.gov) to set up a time if these options do not work.



# Q&A AND DISCUSSION

1. What is important to you as we rethink what zoning should be regulating in West Roxbury?
2. What do you predict will result from potential changes to residential areas?
3. How do you see West Roxbury as similar to and different from your neighboring communities?
4. What are ways you want to be engaged with and involved in this going forward?





# THANK YOU

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We appreciate your time and hope you enjoyed this presentation.

## HAVE QUESTIONS?

**Will Cohen**

[will.cohen@boston.gov](mailto:will.cohen@boston.gov)

**Jein Park**

[jein.park@boston.gov](mailto:jein.park@boston.gov)

**Initiative Team**

[residentialzoning@boston.gov](mailto:residentialzoning@boston.gov)

**OR VISIT:**

[bostonplans.org/neighborhood-housing](https://bostonplans.org/neighborhood-housing)



# CURRENT VS. STREAMLINED PROCESS

