

# Text Updates to Squares + Streets Zoning

October 2025



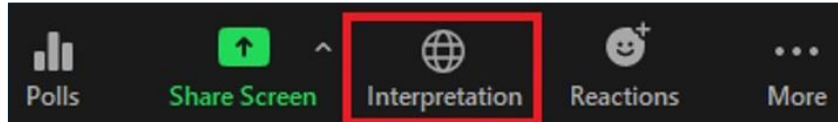
Planning Department

CITY of **BOSTON**

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**(EN)** Look for the interpretation icon (**globe**) at the bottom of your screen and select the language you want to hear.

**(Español)** Busque el ícono de la interpretación (**globo**) en el borde inferior de su pantalla y seleccione el idioma en el que desea escuchar.





## Zoom Meeting Info + Tips

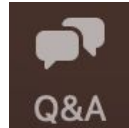
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- If you're joining by phone, **dial \*9 to raise your hand** and wait to be called upon and **dial \*6 to unmute and mute**.
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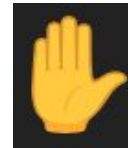
Mute/unmute



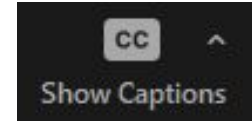
Turn video on/off



Use the Q&A feature for written questions and comments (instead of the chat)



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



Turn on captions

# TEAM MEMBERS

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**Maya Kattler-Gold (Presenter)**

Planner I  
Cleary Square Project Manager



**Kathleen Onufer**

Deputy Director of Zoning  
Reform



**Kenya Beaman**

Community Engagement  
Manager



**Ilana Haimen**

Planner II  
Hyde Park Neighborhood Planner



**Tharika Lecamwasam**

Planning Assistant

## Tonight's meeting:

Proposed Text Updates to Squares +  
Streets Zoning

## Not in tonight's meeting:

- Any proposed mapping changes
  - *These come later as part of each of the S+S planning process*
- Any proposed residential zoning changes
  - *There is a separate Neighborhood Housing zoning initiative, which you can get involved with at [bostonplans.org/neighborhood-housing](https://bostonplans.org/neighborhood-housing)*



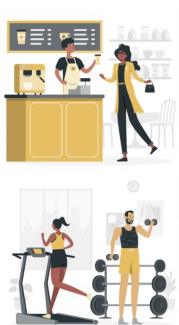
# Background

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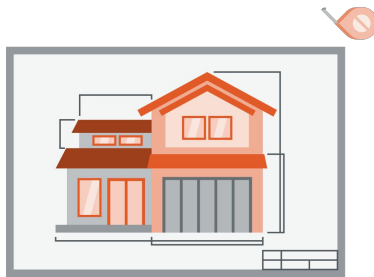
# What is Zoning?

**Zoning is a set of laws** that are used to guide development by dictating the **allowed land use, scale, and density of a building or structure** in a given area. Some of what zoning regulates includes:



## LAND USES

*the types of activities allowed within a given area*



## BUILDING DIMENSIONS

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



## OTHER REGULATIONS

*parking and loading, signage requirements, roof deck allowances, and many more.*

**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.



Squares + Streets districts in Roslindale Square

# Text Updates to Squares + Streets Zoning Summary



## Two new district options

- Six-story version of S3
- New four-story, commercial-oriented districted (SC)



## Other minor use changes in S2, S3, S4, and S5



## Formatting updates

## Hyde Park Residents' Zoning Petition (first submitted Summer 2024)

### Major components included:

Increasing flexibility for many uses in Squares + Streets districts, especially on upper stories.



Addressed with amendment adopted January 2025

Adding new zoning districts to create more options for smaller-scale, mixed-use and commercial areas.



Addressed with this amendment

## Hyde Park Residents' Zoning Petition (first submitted Summer 2024)

- The **Planning Department is putting forward** the Text Updates to Squares + Streets Zoning **in response to the Hyde Park Residents' Petition**
- This approach to addressing to community feedback and the resident zoning petition allows us to:
  - maintain a consistent approach to drafting of the Zoning Code
  - respond to **community feedback from Hyde Park** without contradicting recent **planning and zoning in Roslindale and Mattapan**
  - run a full city-wide community vetting process

# Summary: What are Squares + Streets Zoning Districts?

**Squares + Streets Districts** have 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. **You can read and reference the full zoning rules at:** [bosplans.org/Article8Uses](https://bosplans.org/Article8Uses) a [bosplans.org/Article26SquaresStreets](https://bosplans.org/Article26SquaresStreets)

## ●● S0 - Transitional Residential



- Up to 4 stories maximum
- Up to 14 residential units maximum
- Primarily residential uses
- **Requires residentially-scaled front, side, + rear yards**
- Transition from high activity mixed-use areas to low activity residential areas

## ●● S1 - Main Street Living



- Up to 4 stories maximum
- For parts of a main street that are largely residential but have occasional non-residential uses
- **Requires residentially-scaled front, side, + rear yards**
- Allows more flexibility for small-scale commercial uses

## ●● S2 - Main Street Mixed Use



- Up to 5 stories maximum
- **First of the districts to allow 0 foot side yards for buildings that share a party wall**
- Flexible rules to allow for both mixed use and fully residential multifamily buildings along a main street

## ●●● S3 - Active Main Street



- Up to 7 stories maximum
- Allows a larger mix of small and medium-scale commercial uses that promote activity

## ●●● S4 - Active Squares



- Up to 7 stories maximum
- Allows for wider buildings than S3 and more flexibility for medium- and large-scale uses
- Higher Outdoor Amenity Space requirement than S3

## ●●● S5 - Placemaker Squares



- 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 requirement of the districts

● has a Permeable Area of Lot Requirement on all lots

● has a Permeable Area of Lot Requirement lots >11,000 sf

● has an Outdoor Amenity Space Requirement

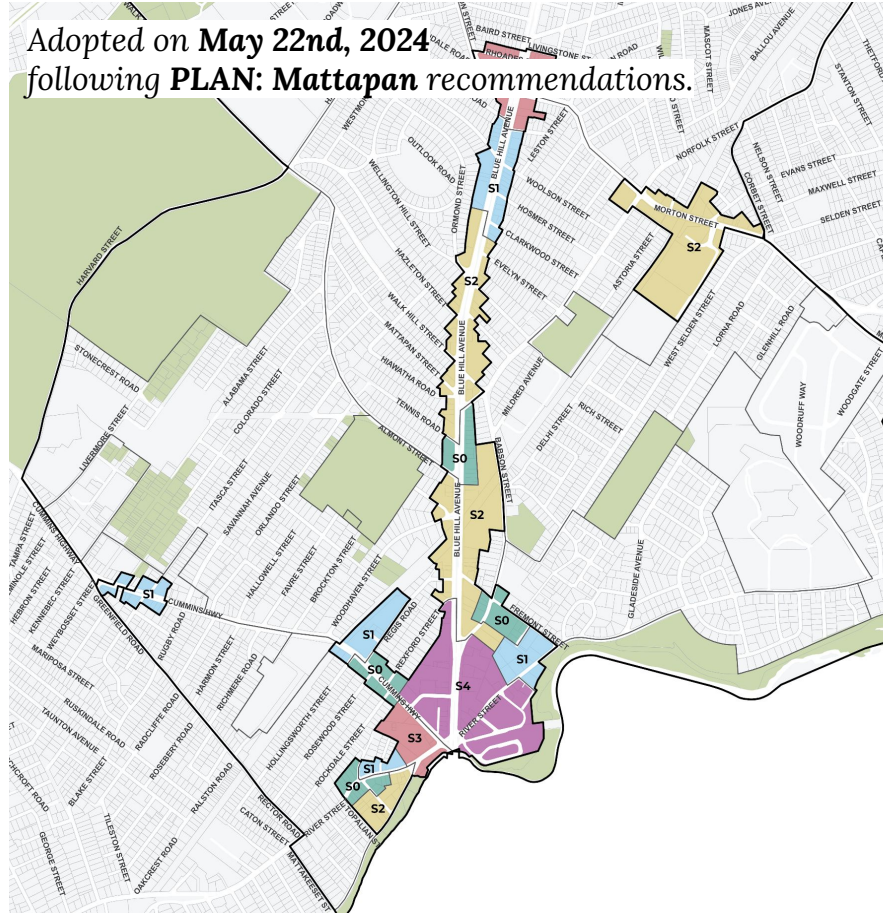
● has a Ground Floor Active Use Requirement

● has residentially-scaled front, side, and rear yards

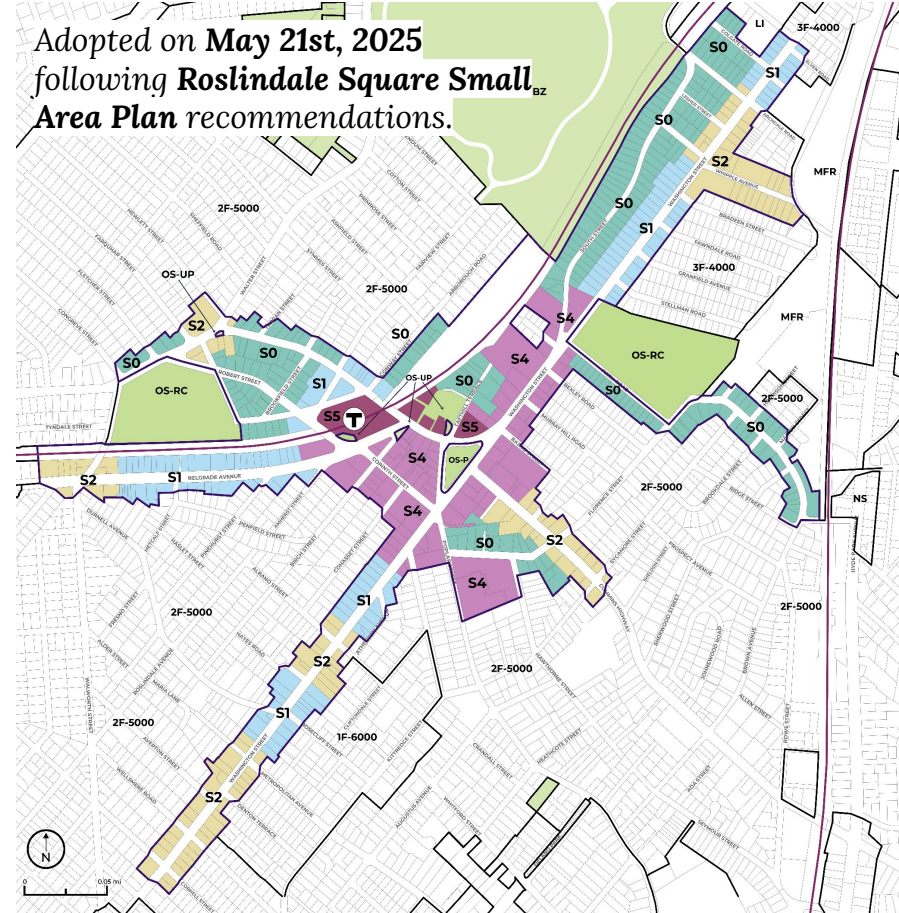


# Mapped Squares + Streets

Adopted on **May 22nd, 2024**  
following **PLAN: Mattapan** recommendations.



Adopted on **May 21st, 2025**  
following **Roslindale Square Small Area Plan** recommendations.

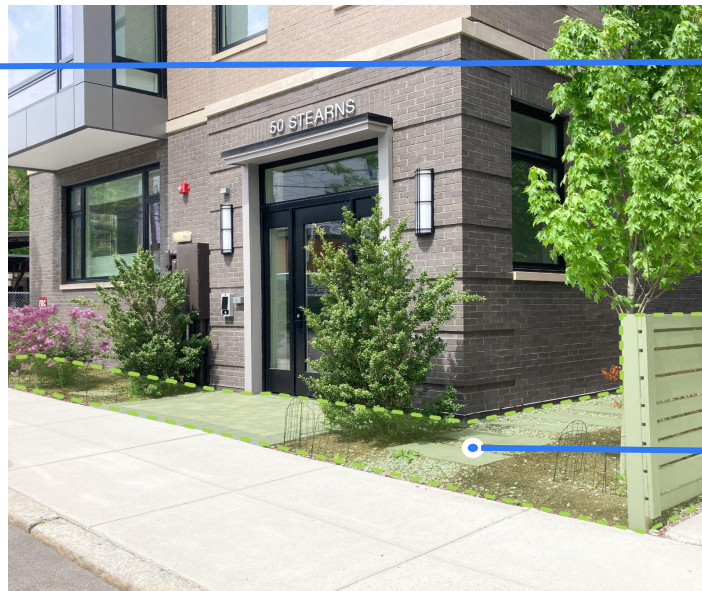




# Squares + Streets Zoning Districts: What can S0 be?



50 Stearns Rd, Brookline MA



View of building entrance

within the height requirement

utilizes required front and side setbacks



## S0 - Transitional Residential



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- Requires front, side, and rear yards
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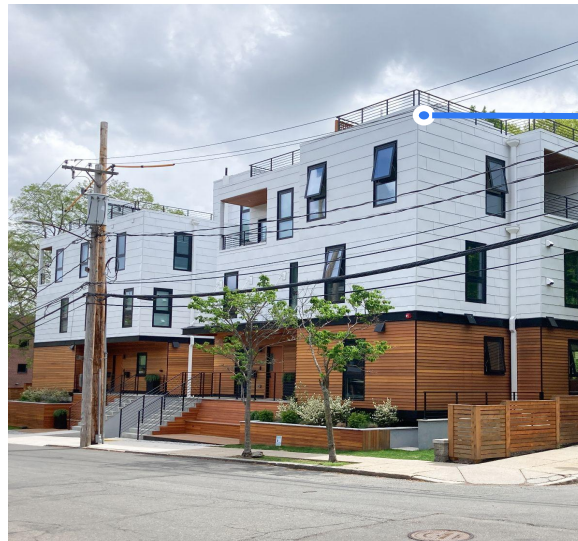
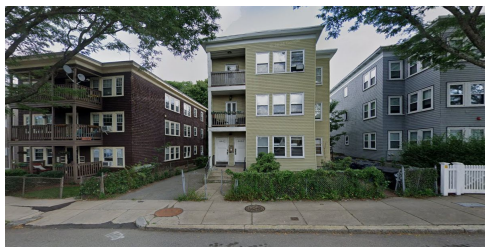
# Existing S0 Transition Residential

Primarily residential mixed-use district that provides a transition from high-activity, mixed-use Squares + Streets to lower-activity, residential areas. Mapped in some fully residential areas + previously residential zoned areas.

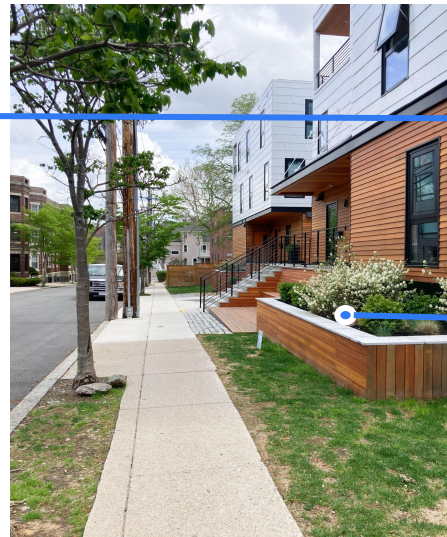




# Squares + Streets Zoning Districts: What can S1 be?



41-45 Stearns Rd, Brookline MA



below the story and height requirement

utilizes required front and side setbacks

public realm at front entrances

## S1 - Main Street Living



- Up to 4 stories maximum
- For parts of a main street that are largely residential but have occasional non-residential uses
- Requires front, side, and rear yards
- Allows more flexibility for small-scale commercial uses

# Existing S1 Main Street Living

The S1 district is a mixed-use district where buildings generally have principally residential uses. Some non-residential uses are Allowed, but are generally limited to the ground floor. Mapped in some fully residential areas + previously residential zoned areas.

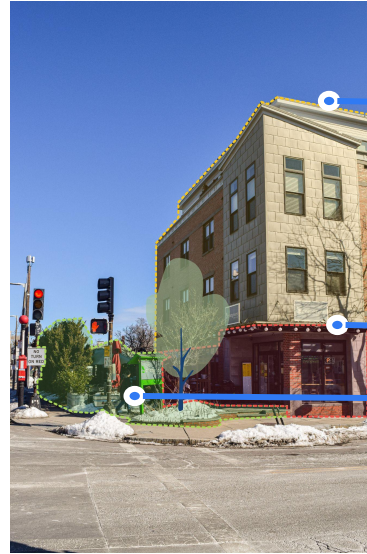




# Squares + Streets Zoning Districts: What can S2 be?



154 Green St, Jamaica Plain



within the  
height/story req.

mixed-use building, with multiple  
commercial tenants  
outdoor dining and public  
realm enhancement

Street Experience, looking north on Green St



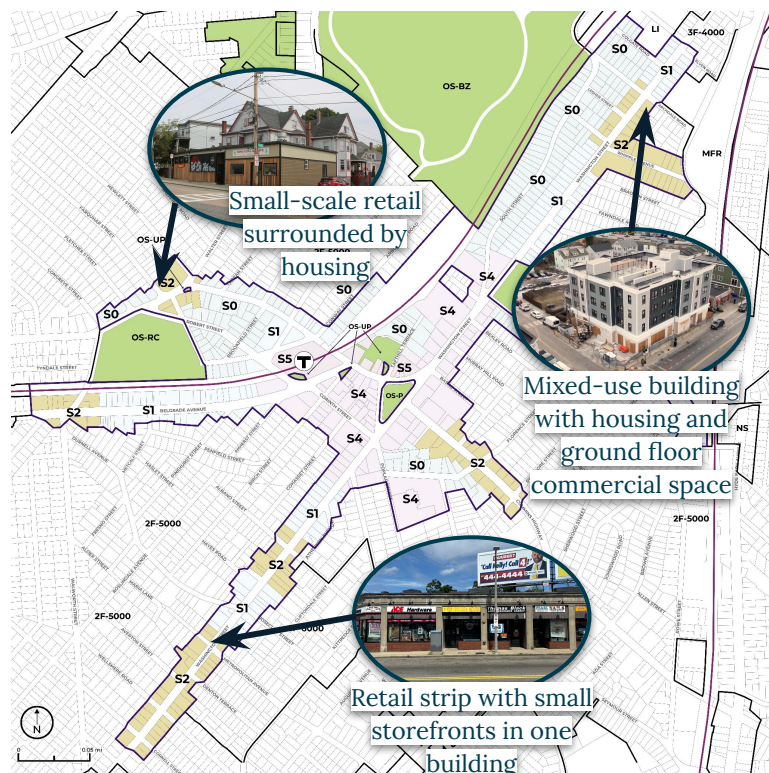
## S2 - Main Street Mixed-Use



- Up to 5 stories maximum
- First of the districts to allow 0 foot side yards for buildings that share a party wall
- Flexible rules to allow for both mixed use and fully residential multifamily buildings along a main street

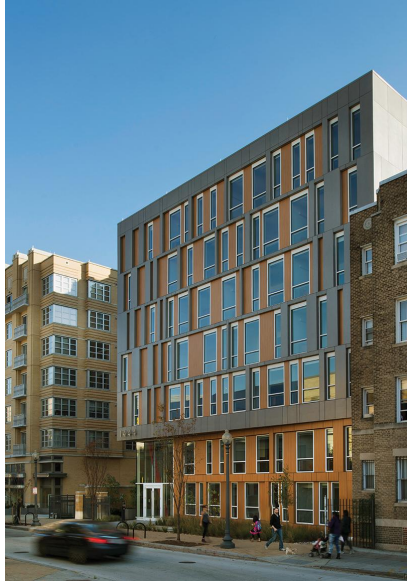
## Existing S2 Main Street Mixed Use

The S2 district is a small- to medium-scale mixed-use district that allows for a wider array of commercial uses. Mapped in some areas with a mix of larger commercial and mixed uses, and sometimes fully residential where those uses are desired in the future.





# Squares + Streets Zoning Districts: What can S3 be?



385 Chestnut Hill Ave, Boston



Street experience, looking NW along Chestnut Hill Ave



## S3 - Active Main Street



- Up to 7 stories maximum
- Allows a larger mix of small and medium-scale commercial uses that promote activity

## Existing S3 Active Main Streets

The S3 district is a medium-scale mixed-use district that requires active uses on the ground floor of buildings, and allows a wide mix of uses. Mapped in areas where this condition exists (on the west side of Mattapan Square) or where it is the goal of future transformation (Blue Hill & Morton Street Node).



Active Ground Floor Uses



691-695 Morton Street  
BPDA Approved: 11/4/24  
Fully Compliant with S3



# Squares + Streets Zoning Districts: What can S4 be?



3521, Washington St, Jamaica Plain



residential above

ground floor,  
commercial uses

public realm  
enhancements

Street Experience, looking north on Washington St



## S4 - Active Squares



- Up to 7 stories maximum
- Allows for wider buildings than S3 and more flexibility for medium- and large-scale uses
- Higher Outdoor Amenity Space requirement than S3

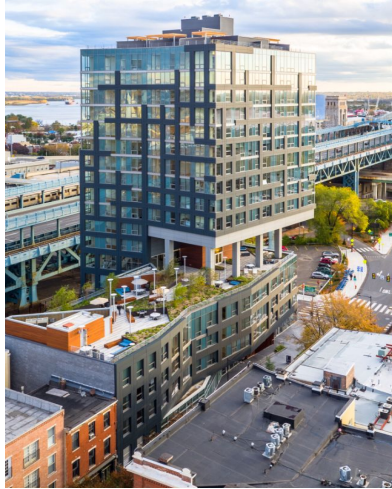


# Existing S4 Active Squares

The S4 district is a medium to large-scale mixed-use district that allows for the widest array of uses, including commercial, hospitality, and entertainment uses throughout the building. Mapped in high activity cores of mixed-use areas, or where that condition is desired in the future (currently Roslindale Square and Mattapan Square).



# Squares + Streets Zoning Districts: What can S5 be?



515 Tremont St, Boston



Plaza experience, Looking NE along Tremont St

residential above that provides usable open space

pedestrian-scaled, active, ground floor commercial uses

large plaza that improves the public realm



## S5 - Placemaker Squares



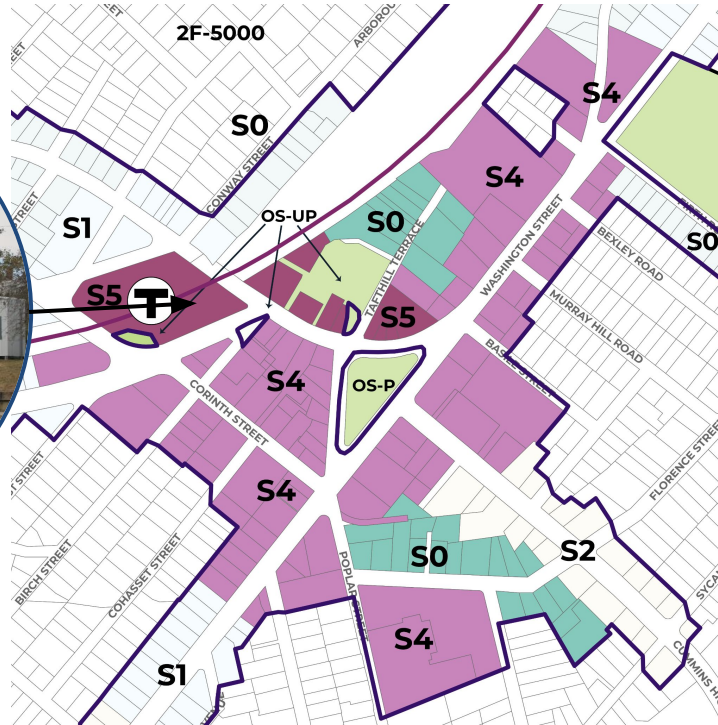
- Up to 145 feet maximum
- Taller and wider mixed-use buildings that allow the most flexibility of ground and upper level uses
- Highest Outdoor Amenity Space requirement of the S+S districts



## Existing S5 Placemaker

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

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# Proposed Amendment

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2

# Text Updates to Squares + Streets Zoning Summary



## Two new district options

- Six-story version of S3
- New four-story, commercial-oriented districted (SC)



## Other use changes in S2, S3, S4, and S5



## Formatting updates

# Text Updates to Squares + Streets Zoning Summary



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## Formatting updates



# S3-6 vs existing S+S districts

6-story version of S3.

- **Dimensions:** same as S3 except height limited to 6 stories and 75'.
- **Uses:** same as S3.
- **Drafting strategy:** adding a footnote to the S3 height regulations. This way, we add the option without adding redundant columns to the tables or changing the existing S3 district.

BUILDING FORM STANDARDS	S0	S1	S2	SC	S3, S3-6	S4	S5
Building Floor Plate (max sf)	4,000	8,000	15,000	15,000	20,000	25,000	25,000
Building Width (max)	-	120'	150'	150'	150'	200'	250'
Building Height in feet (max)	50'	50'	65'	50'	85' <sup>3</sup>	85'	145'
Building Height in stories (max)	4	4	5	4	7 <sup>3</sup>	7	-
Outdoor Amenity Space (min)	-	-	20%	10%	20%	25%	30%
Rear Stepback of Highest Story (min) where the rear yard abuts a residential zoning district	-	-	-	-	7'	7'	7'
Blank Wall of Facade (max)	-	-	15'	15'	15'	15'	15'
Multiple buildings (detached) allowed on lot <sup>2</sup>	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## Footnotes to Table B

1. If a dwelling unit is located on the ground floor abutting a Front Yard, as defined in Article 2 and Section 18-4, the Front Yard must have a minimum depth of 4 feet.
2. In the case of attached buildings, yards are to be measured from the exterior building facade as if it was one structure.
3. Unless the district is established on an official zoning map as "S3-6", in which case the maximum Building Height shall be 75 feet and 6 stories.

## Existing S3 Height is 7 stories or 85'

A typical “5-over-1” building typology may be under 70’ tall, but newly-required electrified mechanicals or rooftop amenity space could take up additional space on the roof and count towards overall building height.

40 Rugg Road, Allston “5-over-1”

30

Potential additional height  
needed in future for  
electrified mechanicals

11'-10"

10'-8"

10'-8"

10'-8"

10'-8"

15'

6 Stories  
70' Tall



# Squares + Streets Zoning Districts: What can S3-6 be?



## S3-6 - Active Main Street

- Allows a large mix of small and medium-scale commercial uses that promote activity
- Requires Active Uses on the ground floor
- Up to 6-stories maximum
- To map in Active Main Street areas where there is sensitivity to height, and where the City is less concerned with the need for rooftop amenity space and/or rooftop-mounted mechanical systems.

## Squares + Streets Zoning Districts: What can SC be?



### SC - Shopping and Commercial Nodes

- Up to 4 stories maximum.
- Allows buildings to fill the width of the lot and has a small requirement for Outdoor Amenity Space.
- Allows a wide range of active and commercial uses, including on upper stories, to encourage commercial growth.
- Dwelling units conditional on ground floor primary lot frontage.



# SC vs existing S+S districts

4-story, commercial-oriented, mixed-use district

- **Dimensions:** Same as S2 except height 4-stories instead of 5 and smaller (10%) outdoor amenity space.
- **Uses:** More commercial uses allowed on upper stories than S2 and S3. Uses overall between S3 and S4.



5-story, S2-like example



4-story, SC-like example

# SC dimensions summary

	S0	S1	S2	SC	S3, S3-6	S4	S5
building lot coverage for lots < 11k sq ft	60%	70%	70%	70%	90%	90%	90%
permeable area of lot for lots < 11k sq ft	20%	15%	15%	15%	-	-	-
building floor plate (sq ft)	4k	8k	15k	15k	20k	25k	25k
height in stories	4	4	5	4	7 <sup>3</sup>	7	-
height in ft	50	50	65	50	85 <sup>3</sup>	85	145
outdoor amenity space	-	-	20%	10%	20%	25%	30%
front yard	8'	6'	2' <sup>1</sup>	2' <sup>1</sup>	2' <sup>1</sup>	2' <sup>1</sup>	2' <sup>1</sup>
side yard with a party wall	-	-	0'	0'	0'	0'	0'
side yard without a party wall	14' cumulative (3' min)	10' cumulative (3' min)	5'	5'	5'	5'	5'



# USE TABLE PART 1

Does not include uses with the same regulations for S2-S4

**Bold + italics = change from current zoning**

	S0	S1	S2	<b>SC</b>	S3, S3-6	S4	S5
<b>COMMERCIAL USES</b>							
Bank	<b>F</b>	C-G - F	C-G - F	<b><i>A-G - C</i></b>	<b><i>A-G - C</i></b>	<b><i>A-G - C</i></b>	<b><i>A-G - C</i></b>
Entertainment/Events - Extra Small	C-G - F	A-G - C	A-G - C	<b>A</b>	A-G - C	A	A
Entertainment/Events - Small	<b>F</b>	<b>C</b>	A-G - C	<b>A</b>	A-G - C	A	A
Entertainment/Events - Medium	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	A-G - C	A	A
Entertainment/Events - Large	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>
Grocery Store - Large	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	A-G - C	A	A
Hotel - Small	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	A	A	A
Hotel - Large	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>
Indoor Recreation	<b>F</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	A-G - C	A	A
Office - Large	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>
Restaurant - Small	C-G - F	A-G - F	A-G - C	<b>A</b>	A	A	A
Restaurant - Large	<b>F</b>	C-G - F	A-G - C	<b>A</b>	A	A	A
Retail Cannabis Establishment	<b>F</b>	C-G - F	C-G - F	<b>C</b>	C-G - F	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>
Retail Store - Small	C-G - F	A-G - F	A-G - C	<b>A</b>	A	A	A
Retail Store - Medium	<b>F</b>	C-G - F	A-G - C	<b>A</b>	A	A	A
Retail Store - Large	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	A-G - C	<b>A</b>	<b>A</b>
Retail Store - Extra Large	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>
Service Establishment - Large	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	A-G - C	<b>A</b>	A	A	A

# USE TABLE PART 2

Does not include uses with the same regulations for S2-S4

**Bold + italics = change from current zoning**

	S0	S1	S2	SC	S3, S3-6	S4	S5
<b>RESIDENTIAL USES</b>							
Lodging House	F	C	C	C	C	A	A
Shelter Facility	F	F	C	C	C	C	C
<b>HIGHER EDUCATION USES</b>							
School, Trade or Professional	F	F	C	A	C	A	A
<b>HEALTH CARE USES</b>							
Hospital Use	F	F	F	F	F	C	C
Nursing Home Use	C	C	C	A	A	A	A
<b>TRANSPORTATION USES</b>							
Motor Vehicle Rentals	F	F	F	C	C	C	C
Standalone Parking Garage	F	F	F	C*	C*	C*	C*
Food and Beverage Production	F	F	F	A*	C*	A*	A*
Light Manufacturing or Trade Establishment	F	F	F	C	F	C	C
<b>ACCESSORY USES</b>							
Accessory Smoking	F	F	F	C	C	C	C

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## Formatting updates



# SHELTER FACILITY



	S0	S1	S2	SC	S3	S4	S5
Shelter Facility	F	F	F C	C	F C	F C	F C

*The amendment will also make Shelter Facilities exempt from the Active Use requirement (similar to Civic Uses, Open Space Uses, and affordable housing)*



*Rosie's Place, Roxbury*

## Reason for change:

- Creates case-by-case review for shelters in neighborhoods.
- Given the importance of the City and State's focus on homelessness and shelters, this allows for these needed uses to move forward after careful review.

# BANK



	S0	S1	S2	SC	S3	S4	S5
Bank	F	C-G - F	C-G - F	A-G - C	<del>€</del> A-G - C	<del>€</del> A-G - C	<del>€</del> A-G - C

*Standalone ATM is a separate use and is C in S1-S5 and F on S0.*



*One United Bank, Dorchester*

Reason for change:

- Allows more types of commercial uses in the S+S districts, including uses already present.
- The active use requirement in S3-S5 ensures they will not be the only ground floor use.

# RETAIL STORE, LARGE



	S0	S1	S2	SC	S3	S4	S5
Retail Store - Large	F	F	C	A	A-G   C	<del>A-G</del>   C A	<del>A-G</del>   C A

Large - Total square footage of 10,001-49,999 square feet.



Source: Google Maps

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

Reason for change:

- Makes it easier to create multi-story retail in the larger-scale districts, which is generally how large retail stores occur in this context.



# MINIMUM COMMERCIAL GROUND FLOOR CEILING HEIGHT



- Currently, S2-S5 requires a minimum ground floor ceiling height for commercial uses.
- This was created to ensure that new buildings can easily accommodate uses that need higher ceiling heights, such as restaurants.
- The proposed amendment removes this requirement.

## Reason for change:

- This will remove a potential barrier for new businesses trying to open in existing buildings with ground floor heights < 14 ft.
- For new buildings, this can also be accounted for in Article 80 design review.

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## Other use changes in S2, S3, S4, and S5



## Formatting updates

# ADDITIONAL USE AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS REFERENCES



- Currently, \*s are used in the use table to indicate that a use has a “Use and Performance Standard” in Article 26
- Some Use and Performance Standards apply to entire groups of uses (such as the limits on ground floor dwelling units)
- This amendment removes \*s used for these whole groups of uses so that they are only used for individual uses that have Use and Performance Standards

## Reason for change:

- This will make it easier to read the table and make the \*s more useful.



# FIXING TYPO IN RESTAURANT DEFINITION



## Table A Definitions

**Restaurant.** An establishment devoted to the preparation, sale, and consumption on premises of food or alcoholic beverages. Such use may include take-out. Drive-through access for a restaurant constitutes a ~~district~~ **distinct** accessory use (see Accessory Drive Through).

Small - Total square footage less than 2,500 square feet.

Large - Total square footage greater than or equal to 2,500 square feet.

### Reason for change:

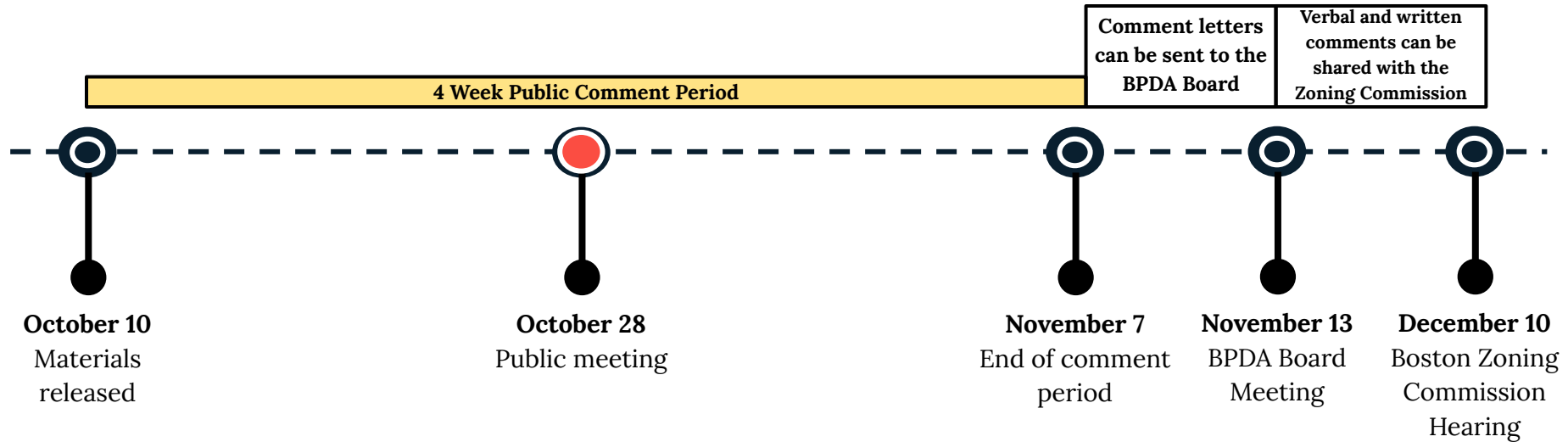
- Fixing a small typo existing in the definition of Restaurant

# Next Steps

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3

# ZONING AMENDMENT TIMELINE AND NEXT STEPS



## Office hours:

Friday, October 17 | 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM  
Monday, October 20 | 10:00 AM - 11:00 AM  
Thursday, October 23 | 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM  
Thursday, October 30 | 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM  
Monday, November 3 | 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM

## Register for office hours and review materials:

[bostonplans.org/zoning4squares](https://bostonplans.org/zoning4squares)

## Send comments and ask questions:

[maya.kattler-gold@boston.gov](mailto:maya.kattler-gold@boston.gov)

# CLEARY SQUARE TIMELINE

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