



# Western Avenue Corridor Study and Rezoning Community Meeting

May 25, 2021



**boston planning &  
development agency**



[bit.ly/westerncorridor](https://bit.ly/westerncorridor)  
[@bostonplans](https://twitter.com/bostonplans)

# Agenda

1. Housekeeping
2. Goals for Tonight's Meeting
3. Financial Feasibility, Benefits, and Trade-offs
  - Income-restricted Housing
4. Proposed Urban Design and Zoning Revisions
  - Height and Density
  - Public Realm and Open Space
5. Discussion and Q&A



# 1

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## Housekeeping

# Team



Gerald Autler  
Project Manager



Rosa Herrero  
Downtown &  
Neighborhood  
Planning



Matt Martin  
Urban Design



Tad Read  
Transportation &  
Infrastructure  
Planning

Additional BPDA staff include: Joe Blankenship, Te-Ming Chang, Meera Deean, Jim Fitzgerald, Jack Halverson, Jeong-Jun Ju, Prataap Patrose

Other departments include: BPDA GIS, Graphics, Research; BTM, Parks.

# Project Website

[bit.ly/westerncorridor](https://bit.ly/westerncorridor)

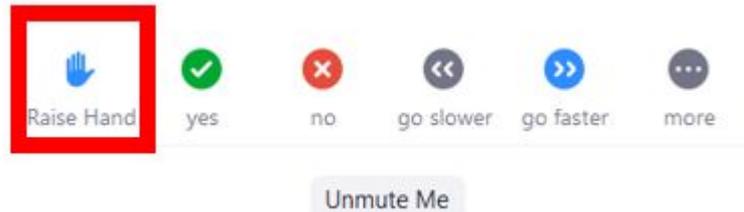
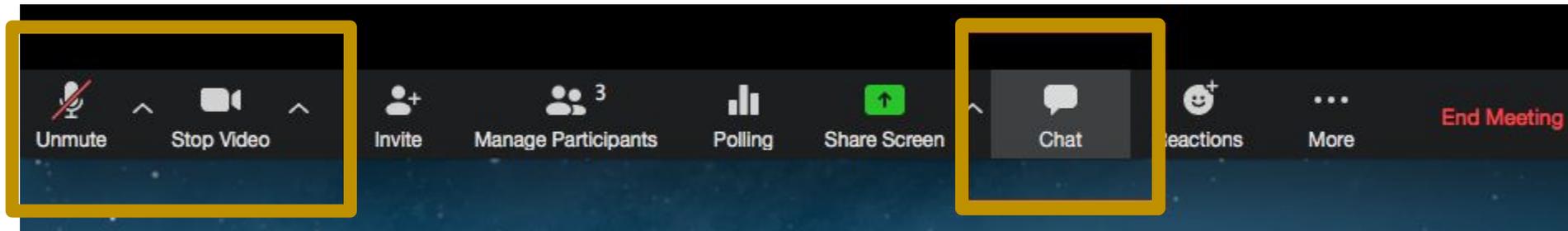
- Presentations (including tonight's!)
- Recordings from virtual meetings
- Additional material as produced
  - E.g. [Transportation analysis technical memo](#)



# Zoom Tips

Your controls should be available at the bottom of the screen.

Clicking on these symbols activates different features:



# Virtual Meeting Protocols

- During the presentation you can ask questions through the chat feature. Depending on the question, we will answer it in writing in the chat box, verbally, or wait until the Q&A period.
- During verbal Q&A, please be respectful of each other's time so that all may participate in the discussion.
- You can always set up a conversation with Gerald Autler, [Gerald.Autler@boston.gov](mailto:Gerald.Autler@boston.gov).

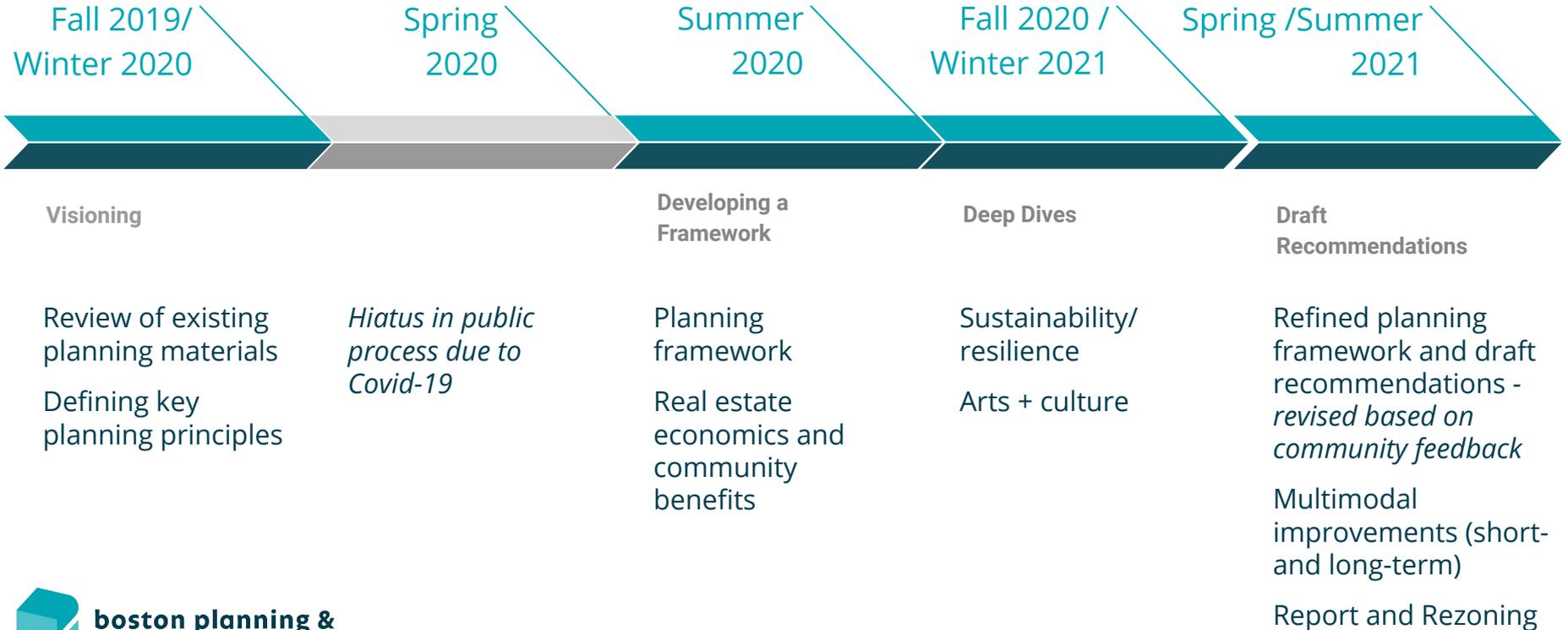


# Meeting Recording

- The BPDA will be recording this meeting and posting it on its website at [bit.ly/WesternCorridor](https://bit.ly/WesternCorridor). The recording will include the presentation, Q&A, and public comments afterwards.
- Also, it is possible that participants may be recording the meeting with their phone cameras or other devices.
- If you do not wish to be recorded during the meeting, please turn off your microphone and camera.



# Timeline



# 2

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## Goals for Tonight's Meeting

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**Respond to feedback** from 3/30 and 4/13 meetings:

- Concern about **height and density**, especially in certain locations
- Questions about **public realm and open space** creation



# Goals for Tonight's Meeting

**Respond to feedback** from 3/30 and 4/13 meetings:

- Concern about **height and density**, especially in certain locations
- Questions about **public realm and open space** creation

For discussion at future meetings:

- Desire for **bolder transportation vision**
- Questions about **implications of zoning** for current uses and users



# Goals for Tonight's Meeting

## Respond to feedback:

- Review planning analysis:
  - Financial feasibility and benefits
  - Open space and public realm
- Propose urban design revisions:
  - Lower maximum building heights along Western Avenue
  - More separation between existing residential subdistricts and taller buildings
- Discuss affordable housing targets



# 3

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## Financial Feasibility, Benefits, and Trade-offs

# Starting Point

The draft recommendations are grounded in:

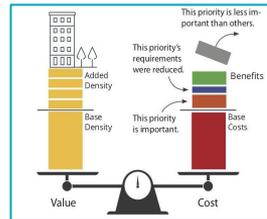
## Community Priorities

How can we deliver the benefits articulated by the community?



## Financial Analysis

What densities are necessary to make redevelopment work and generate those benefits?



## Citywide Policies

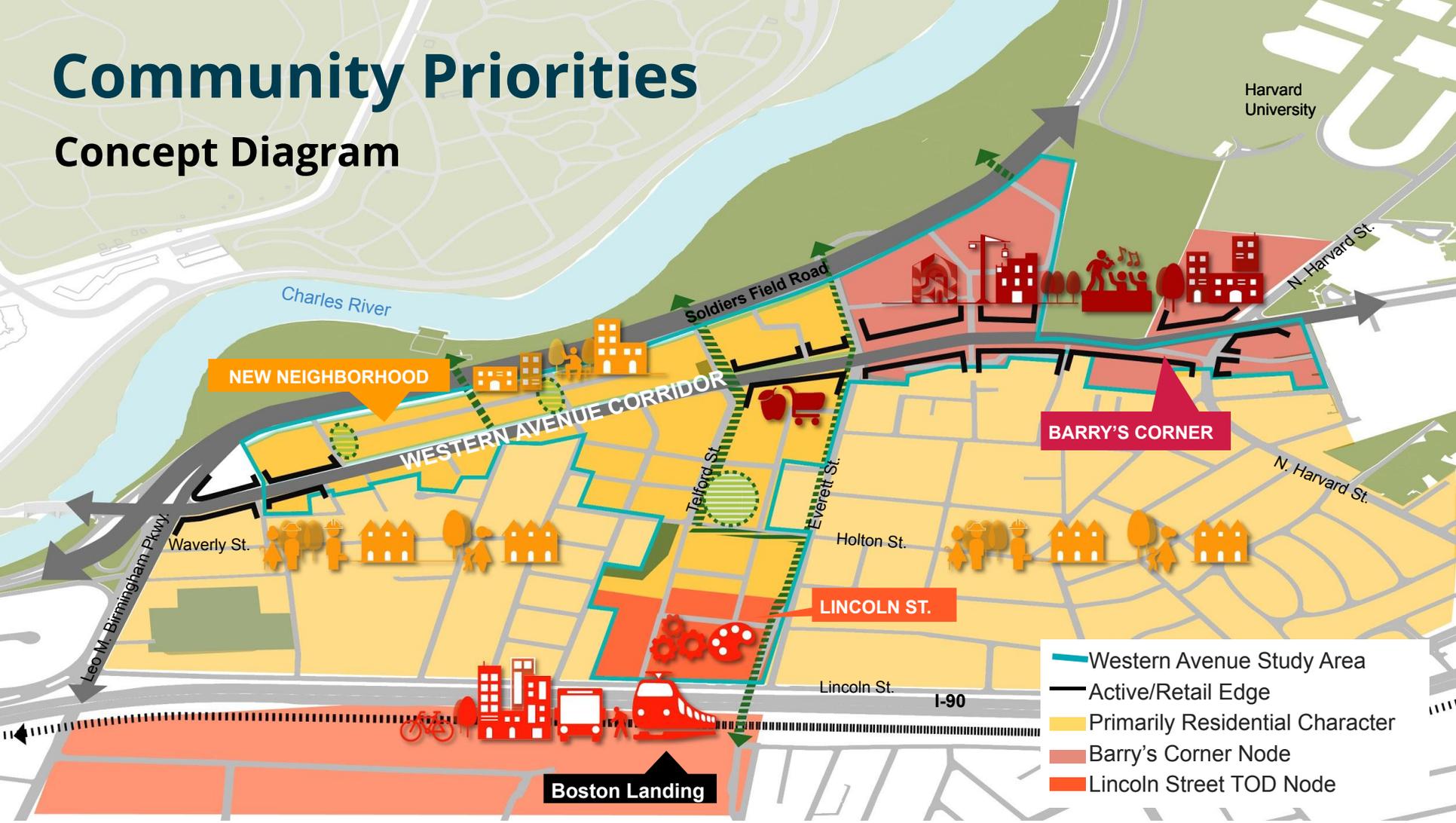
Housing A Changing City (2014, updated 2018)

Imagine Boston 2030 (2017)



# Community Priorities

## Concept Diagram



# Community Priorities - Survey

Working with neighborhood residents, Allston Brighton CDC, Allston Brighton Health Collaborative, and Charlesview distributed a survey to nearly 4,000 households north of I-90.

## Affordable Housing



Survey respondents - both renters and homeowners - prioritized a greater percentage of affordable units in new construction as a high and medium priority.

# Community Priorities - Survey

Working with neighborhood residents, Allston Brighton CDC, Allston Brighton Health Collaborative, and Charlesview distributed a survey to nearly 4,000 households north of I-90.

## Public Realm



**High Priority:** Developing and/or increasing green pathways and safe crossings from N. Allston/N. Brighton to the Charles River.

## Mobility



**High Priority:** Improve public transit frequency/connections and provide safer streets and sidewalks (speed limits, lighting, wider sidewalks).

## Workforce Development



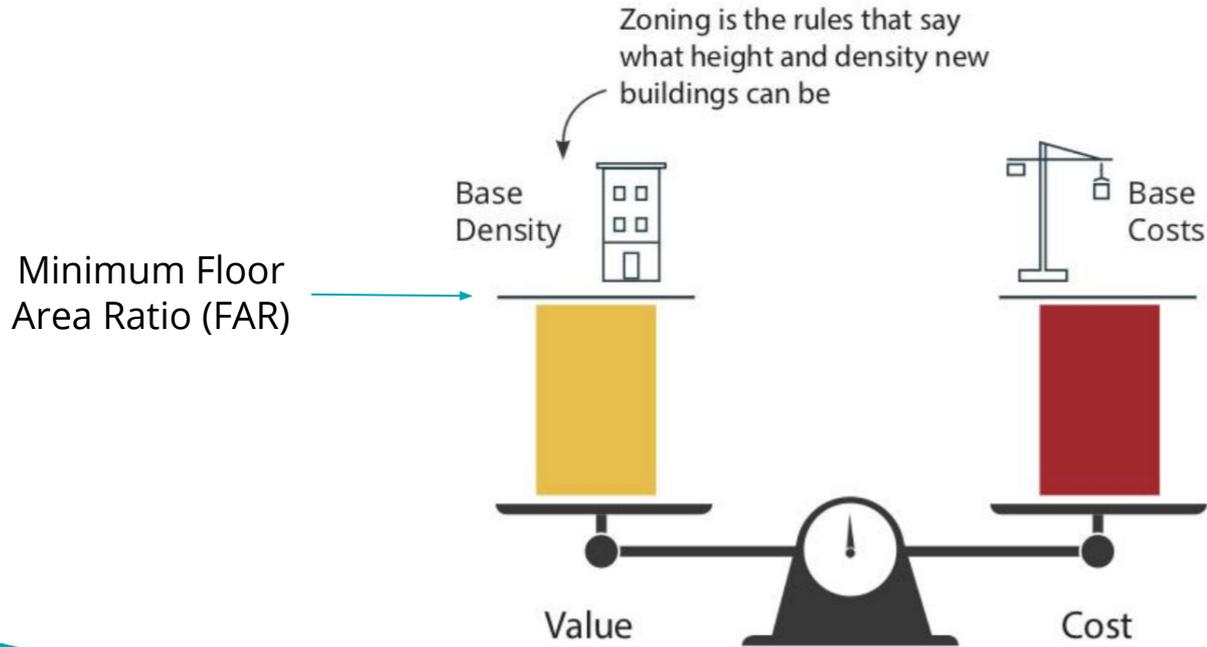
**High Priority:** Living wages for construction jobs, contractors, and workers employed in new development.

## Climate Resiliency

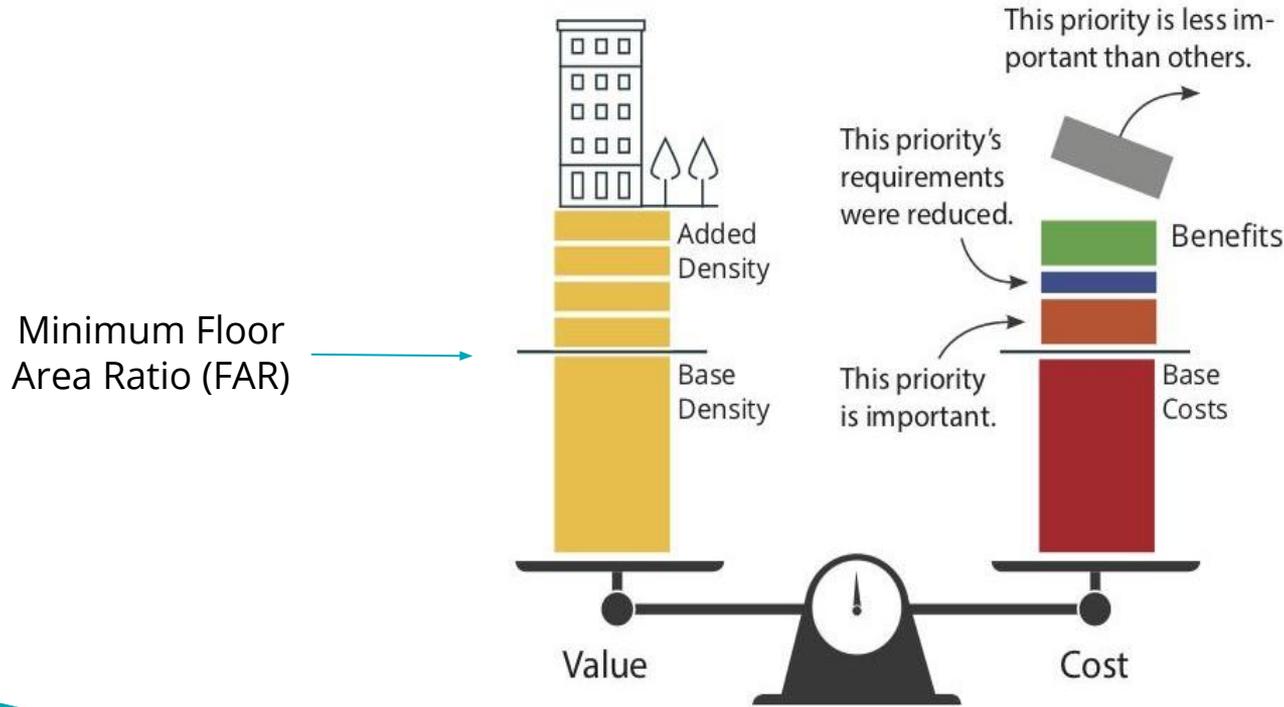


**High Priority:** Green infrastructure" (use of vegetation and landscaping) to manage stormwater, improve water quality, and lower ambient temperatures.

# Financial Feasibility



# Financial Feasibility & Community Priorities



# Financial Analysis: Key Takeaways\*

## Construction costs are high



## Residential is challenging

Increasing the number of affordable units is hard.

FAR = ~2.5 - 4.0



*Radius: ~1 acre, 68' height, 2.6 FAR*

## Lab / R&D are more viable

FAR = ~2.5 - 3.5



*Innovation Square: ~4 acres, 2.0 FAR*

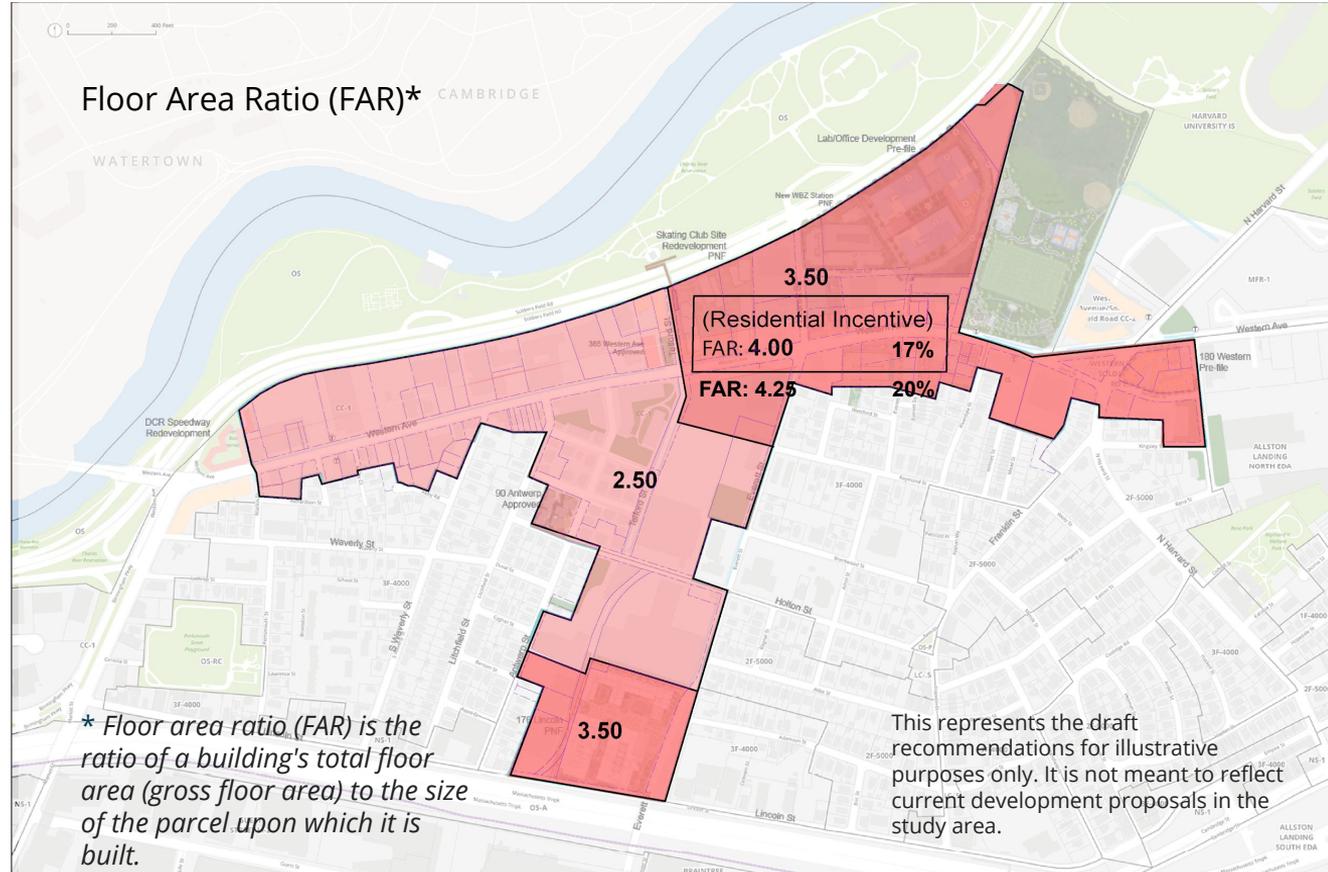
# Density and Affordability: Targets

Revised May 2021

All projects accessing the increased FAR provide at least 15% income-restricted housing.

In the Barry's Corner mixed-use area, a tiered approach to density and income-restricted housing could create greater affordable housing.

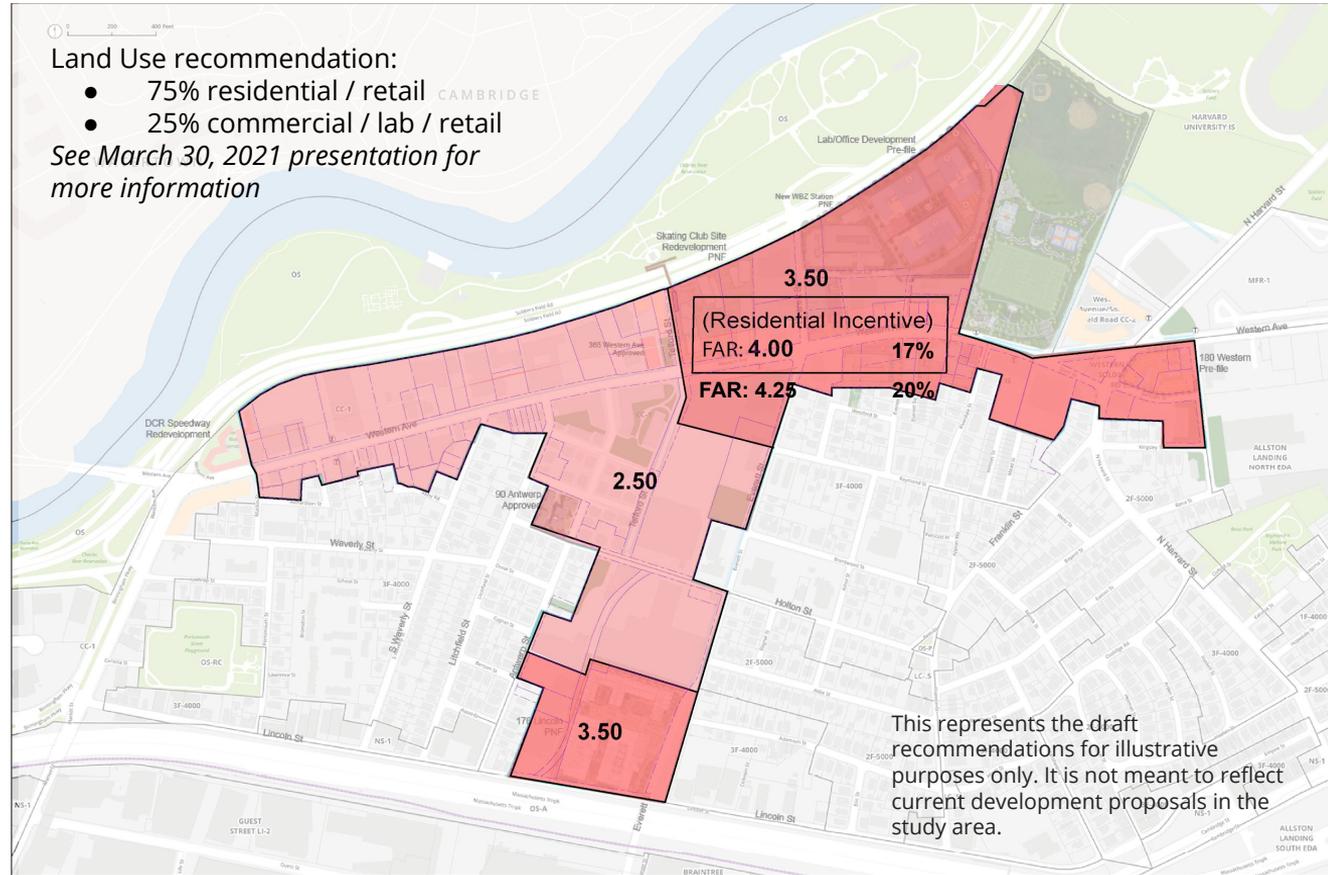
FAR 3.5 = 15%  
FAR 4.0 = 17%  
FAR 4.25 = 20%



# Density and Affordability: Production

Total housing units, est.*	% Income restricted housing	Income-restricted units, est.*
5,500	15%	840
5,800	With 17% in Barry's Corner at FAR 4.00	900
6,000	With 20% In Barry's Corner at FAR 4.25	990

\* This is an estimate of the number of units that could be produced through the plan recommendations long-term (20-30 years) at full build-out. For residential development, this assumes 80% net-to-gross ratio and 900 SF units on average. This estimate assumes that development sites with current non-residential proposals remain non-residential.

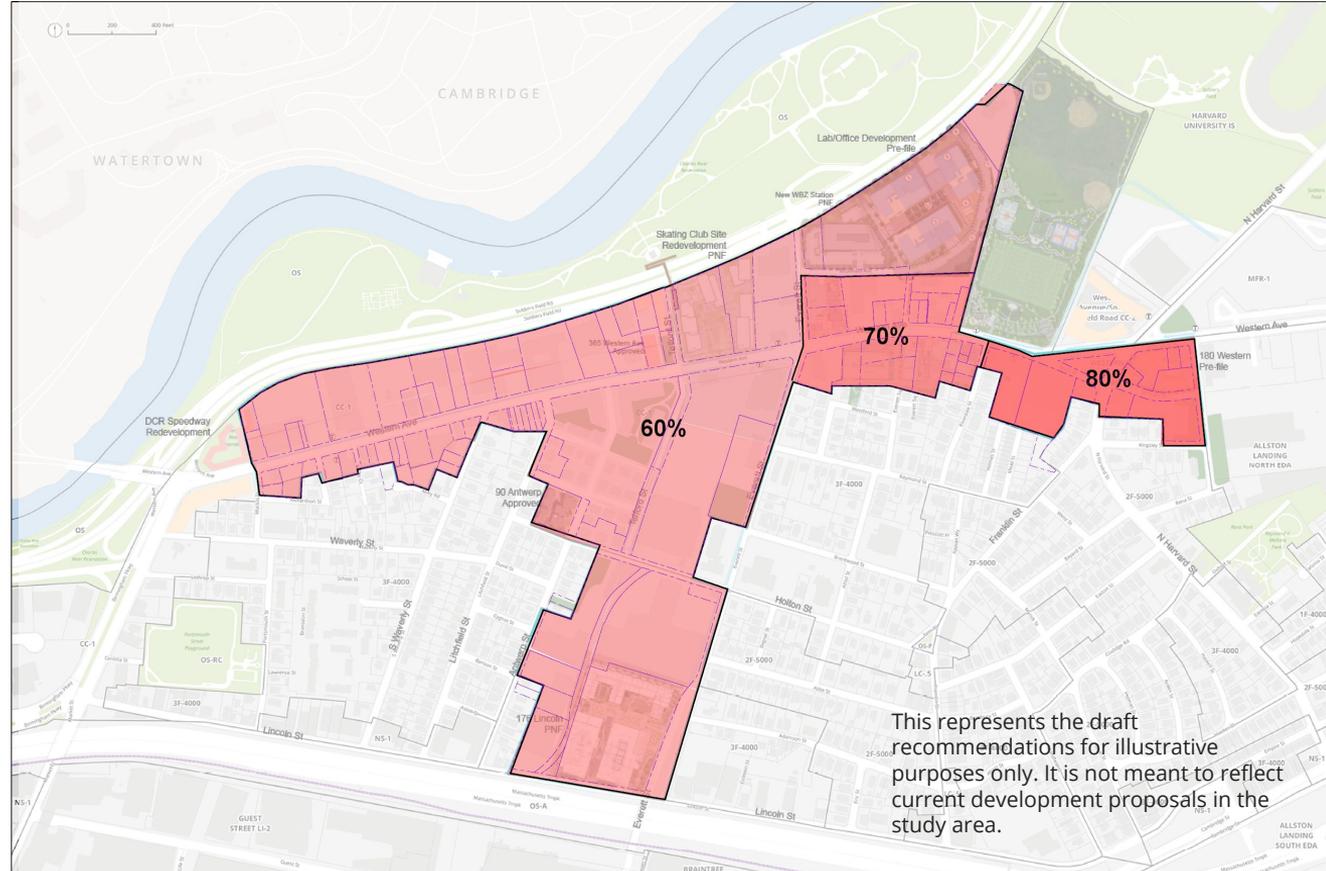


# Lot Coverage

Presented March 30, 2021

Limit lot coverage to ensure that streets and open spaces can be built through new developments.

Allow greater lot coverage near Barry's Corner, where parcels are smaller and greater intensity of activity is desired.



# Trade-Offs

FAR, Height, Lot Coverage

## Hypothetical Site and Zoning

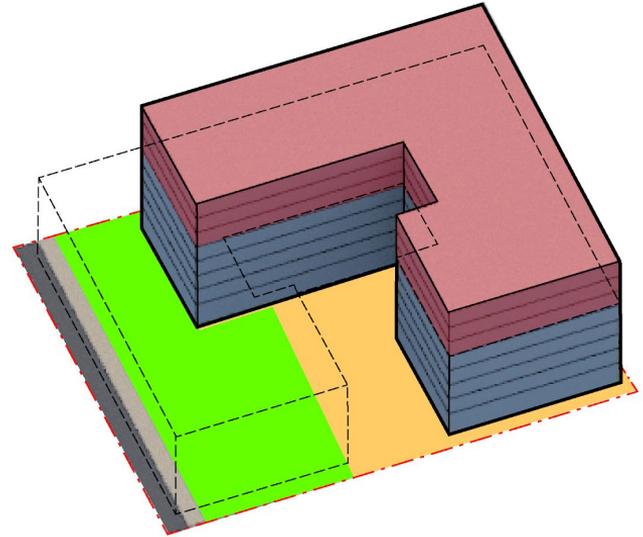
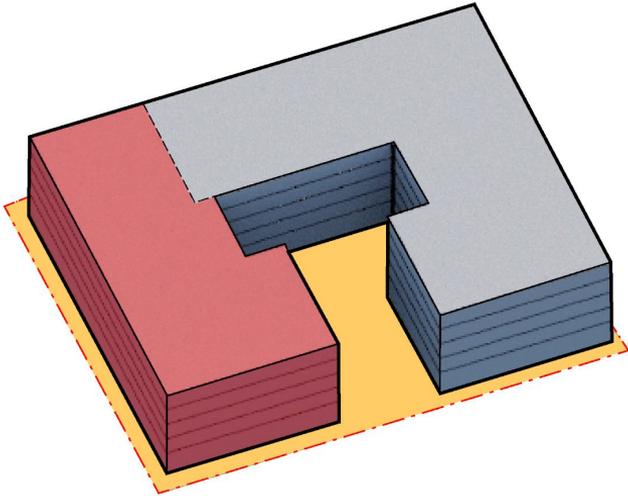
Site Area: 1 Acre

FAR: 3.5

Max. Lot Coverage: 70%

Max. Height: 90'

*The above site and zoning would result in GFA of 152,460 SF.*



# Trade-Offs

## FAR, Height, Lot Coverage

### Hypothetical Site and Zoning

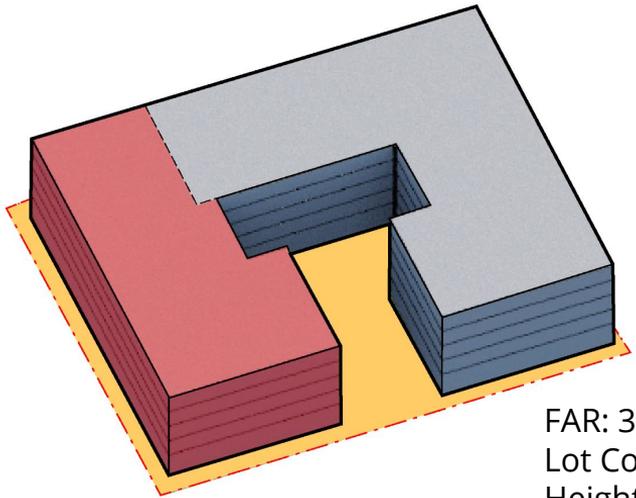
Site Area: 1 Acre

FAR: 3.5

Max. Lot Coverage: 70%

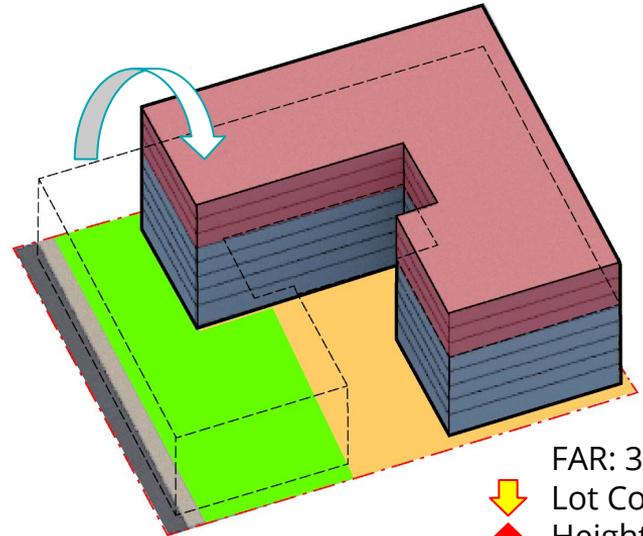
Max. Height: 90'

*The above site and zoning would result in GFA of 152,460 SF.*



FAR: 3.5  
Lot Coverage: **70%**  
Height: **55'**

Private Courtyard



FAR: 3.5  
Lot Coverage: **44%**  
Height: **85'**

Private Courtyard  
New Street/Sidewalk  
New Open Space

# Trade-Offs

FAR, Height, Lot Coverage

## Hypothetical Site and Zoning

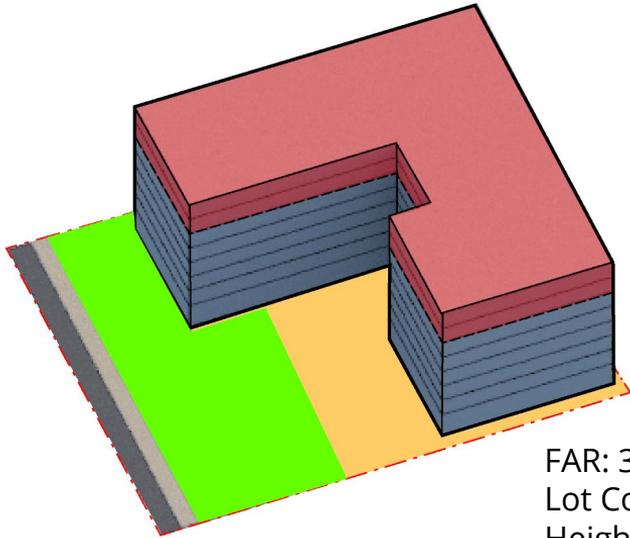
Site Area: 1 Acre

FAR: 3.5

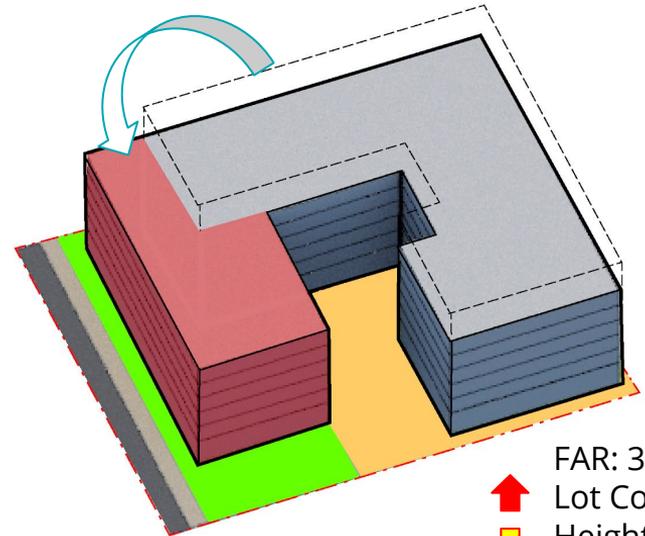
Max. Lot Coverage: 70%

Max. Height: 90'

*The above site and zoning would result in GFA of 152,460 SF.*



- Private Courtyard
- New Street/Sidewalk
- New Open Space



- Private Courtyard
- New Street/Sidewalk
- New Open Space

# Trade-Offs

## FAR, Height, Lot Coverage

### Hypothetical Site and Zoning

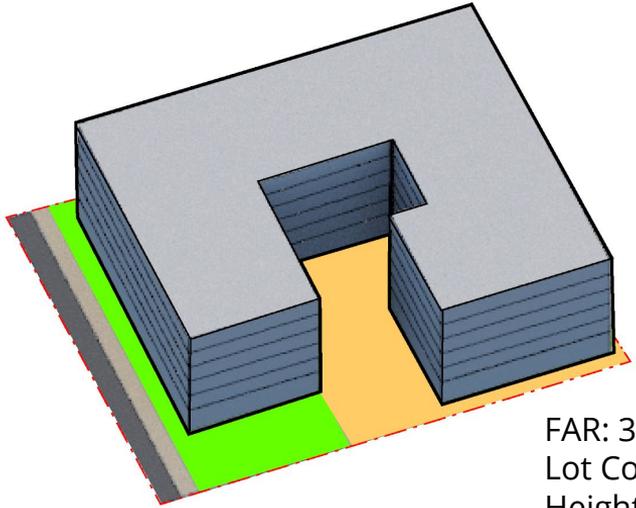
Site Area: 1 Acre

FAR: 3.5

Max. Lot Coverage: 70%

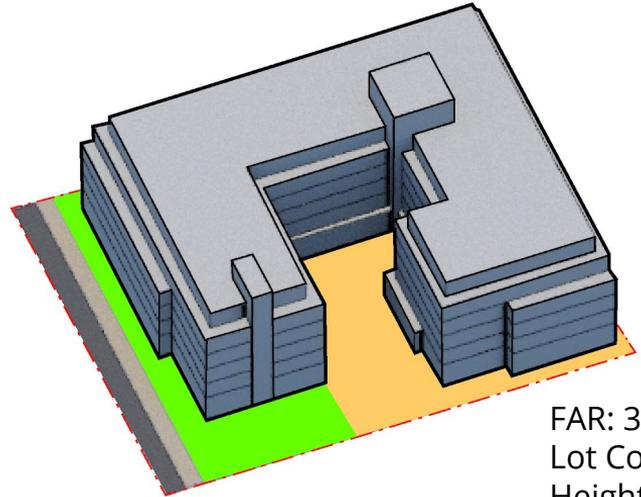
Max. Height: 90'

*The above site and zoning would result in GFA of 152,460 SF.*



FAR: 3.5  
Lot Coverage: 58%  
Height: 65'

**Zoning Envelope  
(Planning)**



FAR: 3.5  
Lot Coverage: 58%  
Height: 65'

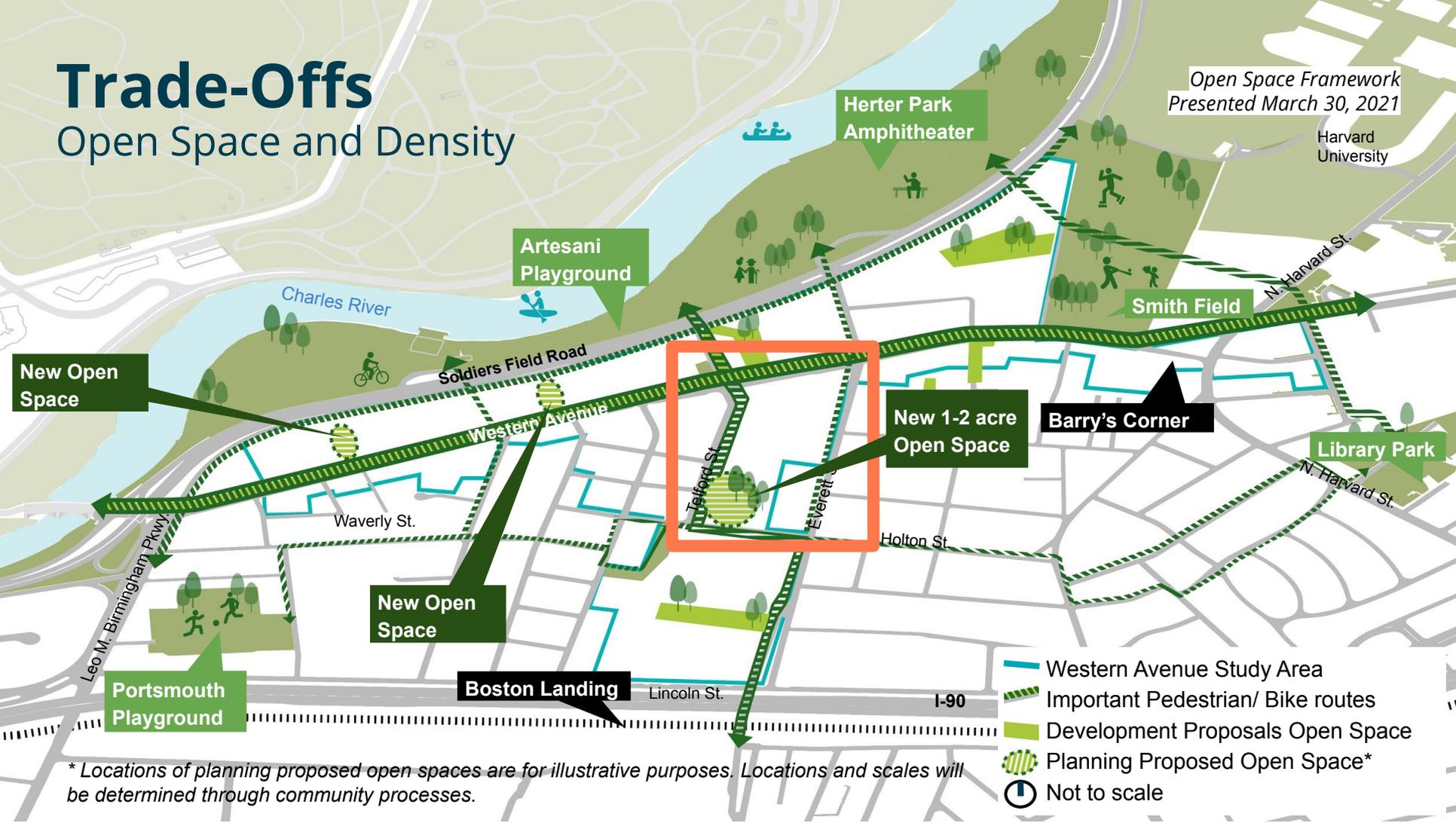
**Sculpt the massing  
(Design Review)**

# Trade-Offs

## Open Space and Density

Open Space Framework  
Presented March 30, 2021

Harvard  
University



- Western Avenue Study Area
- Important Pedestrian/ Bike routes
- Development Proposals Open Space
- Planning Proposed Open Space\*
- Not to scale

\* Locations of planning proposed open spaces are for illustrative purposes. Locations and scales will be determined through community processes.



# Trade-Offs

## Open Space and Density

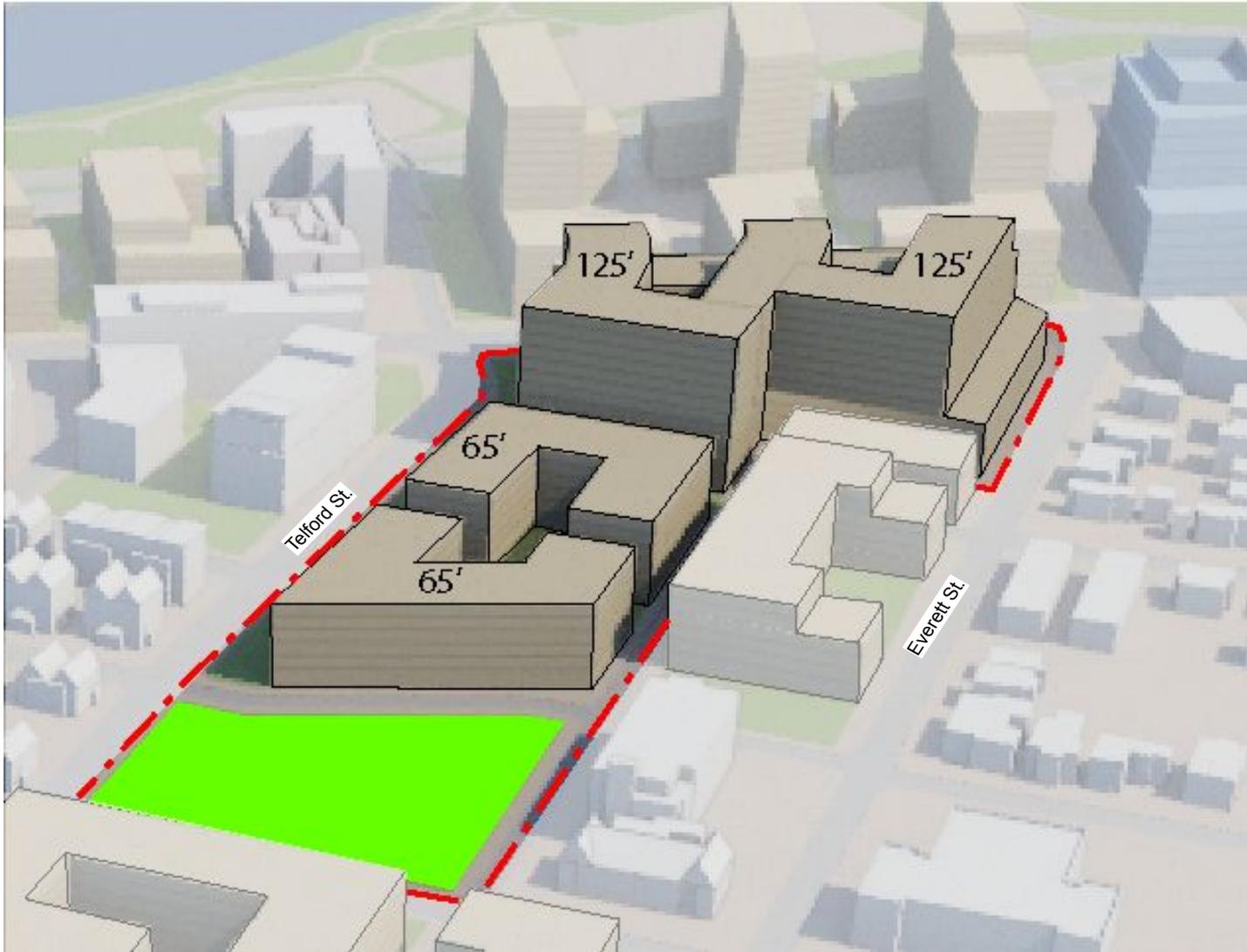
Site Area: 6.85 Acre

FAR: 2.75

Lot Coverage: 46%

Max. Height: 125'

GFA: 818,968 SF

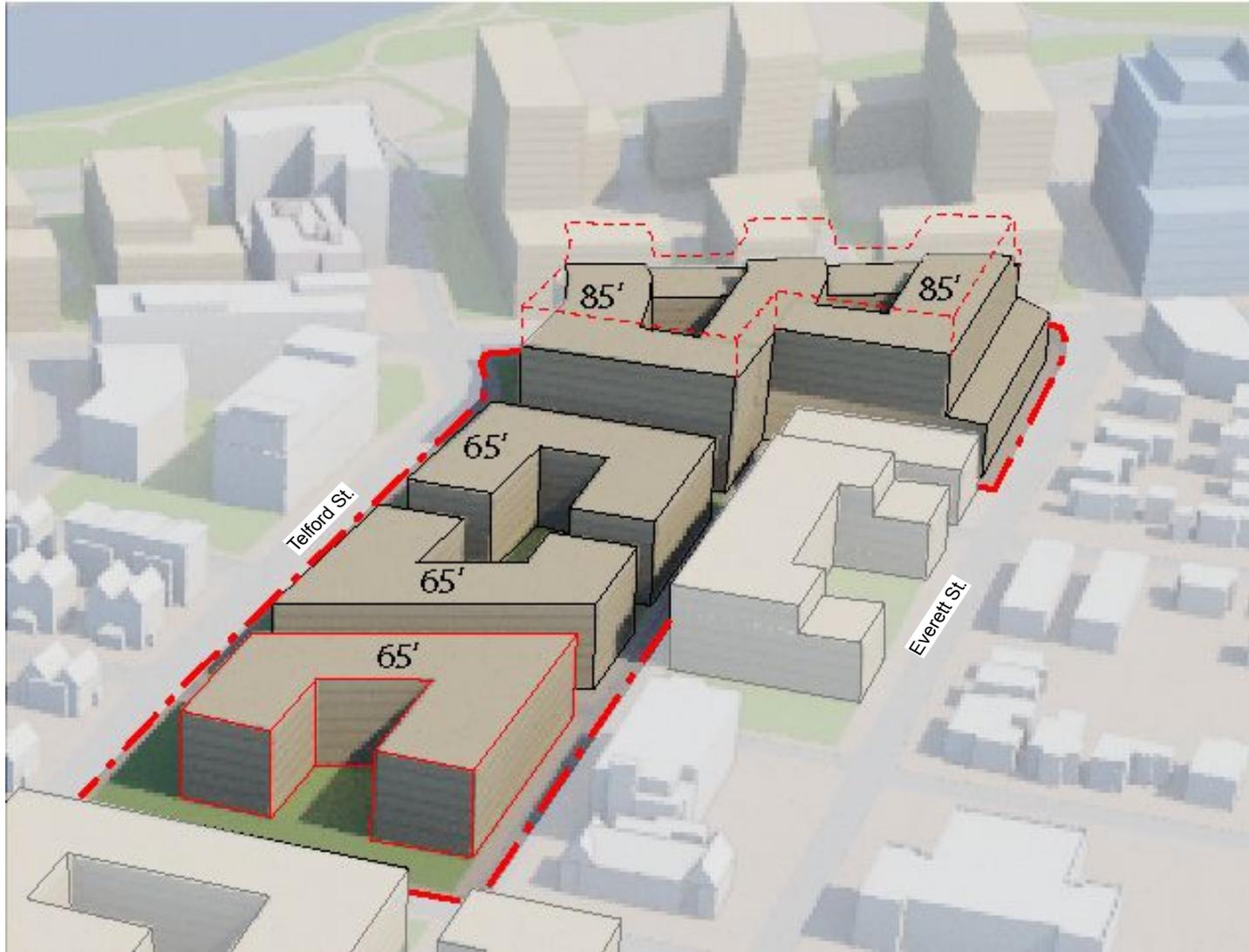


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# Trade-Offs

Open Space  
and Density

Site Area: 6.85 Acre  
FAR: 2.75  
Lot Coverage: 55%  
Max. Height: 85'  
GFA: 818,968 SF



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# 4

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## Proposed Urban Design and Zoning Revisions

# Proposed Urban Design & Zoning Revisions

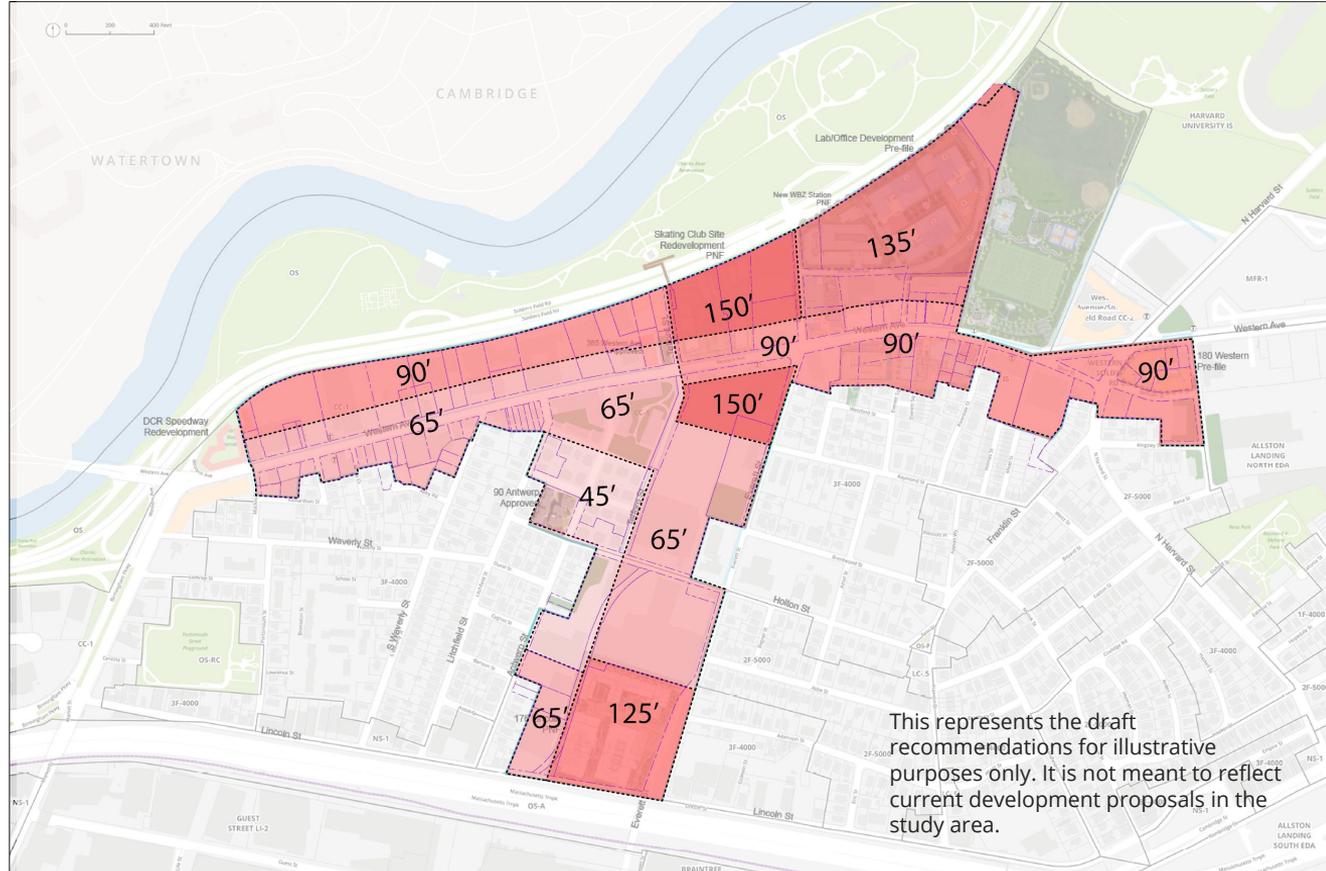
- **Lower maximum building heights** along Western Avenue and create a transition zone near Lincoln Street node
- **More separation** between residential subdistricts and highest building elements
- More **specific affordability targets** based on density bonus



# Heights, Previous

Presented March 30, 2021

Community feedback  
Concern about **height and density**, especially in certain locations



# Heights, Revised

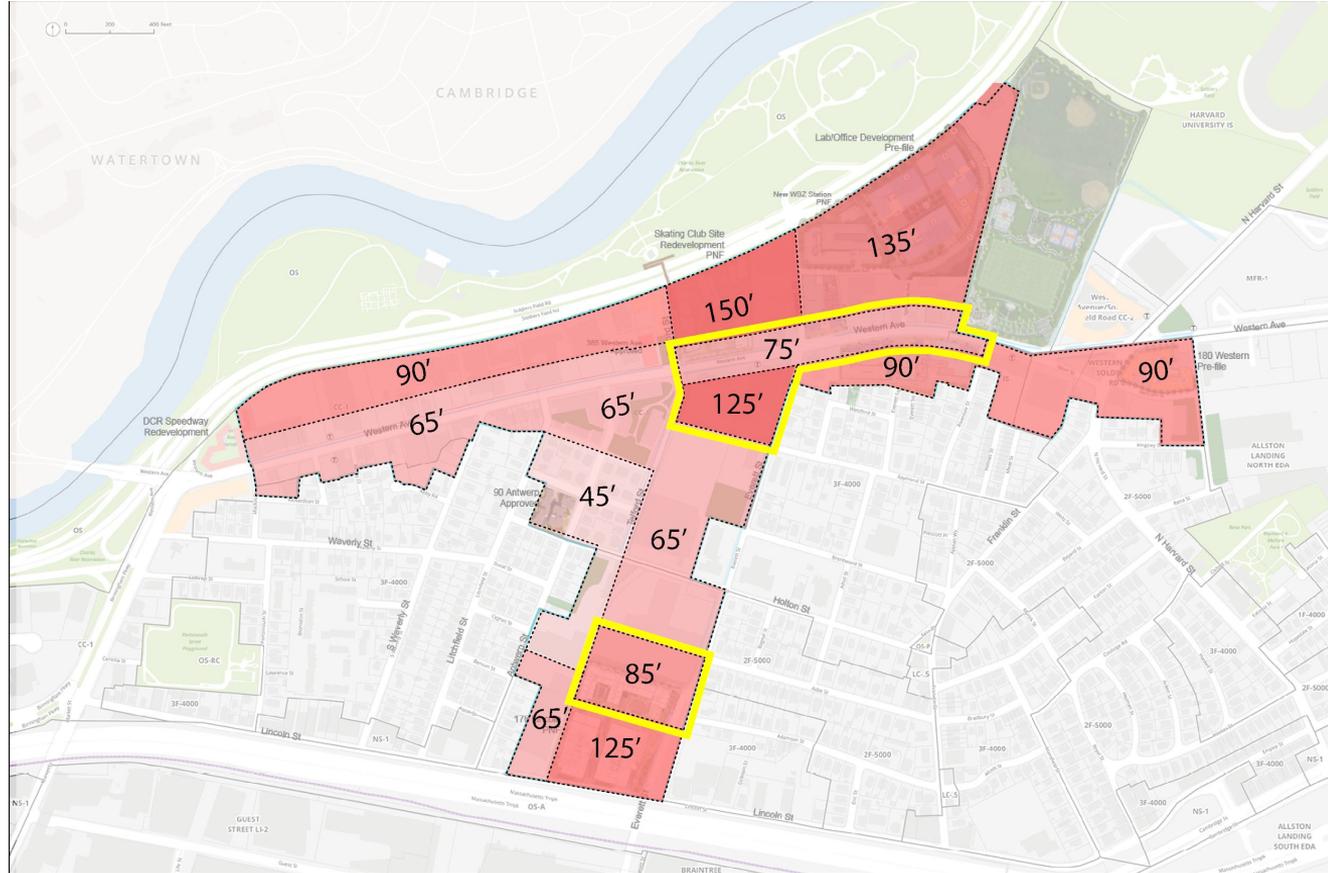
Revised, May 2021

## Community feedback

Concern about **height and density**, especially in certain locations.

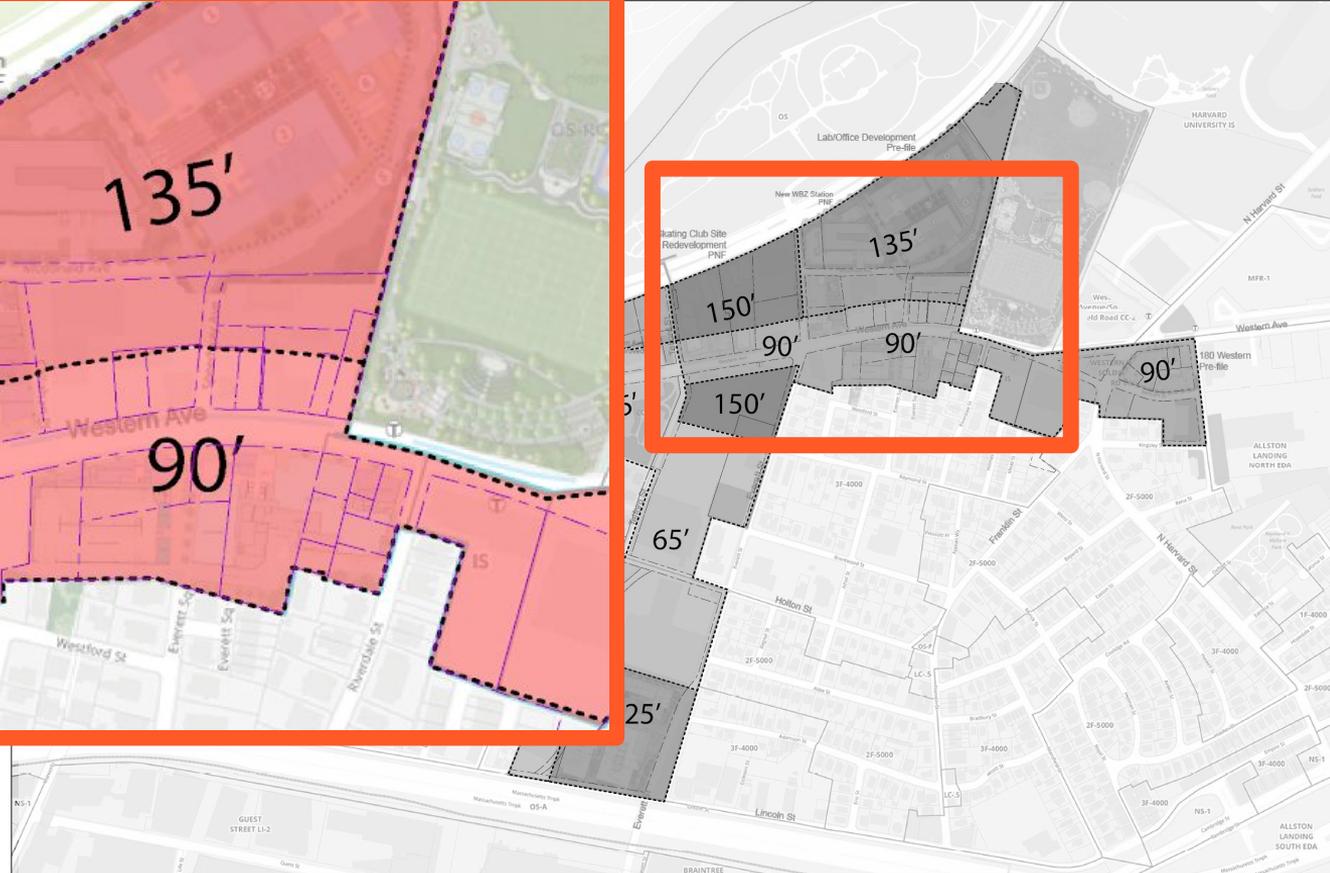
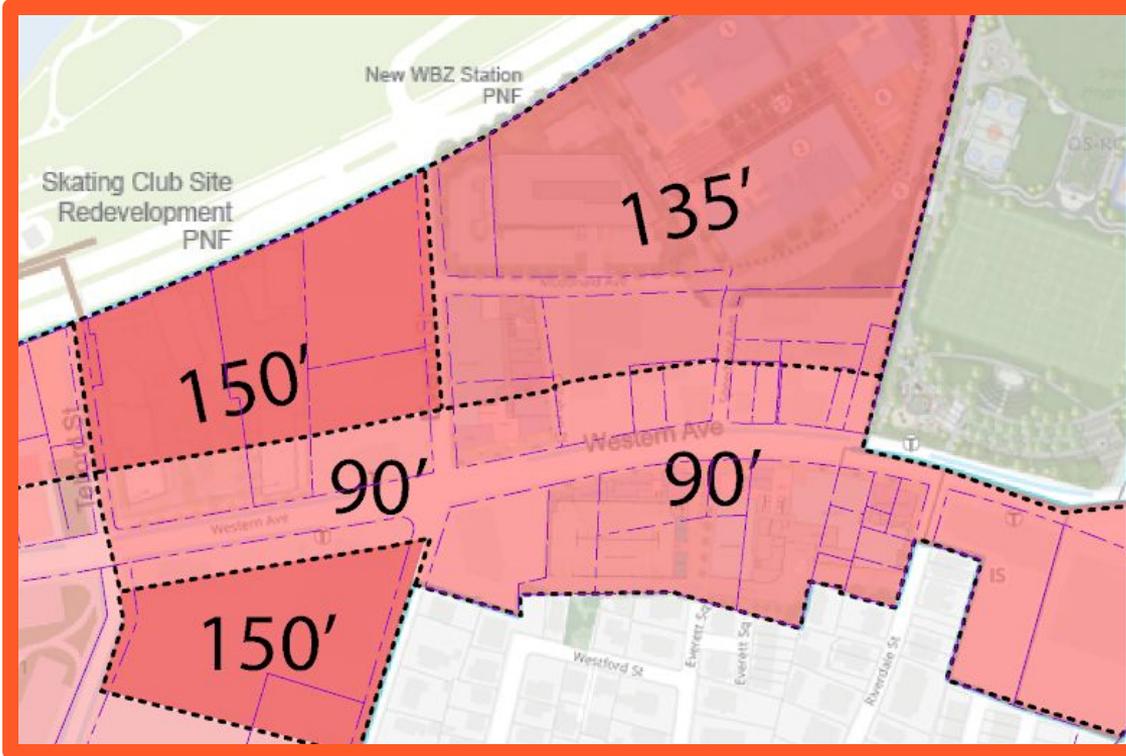
## Revision

Lower Heights along Western Avenue.  
Create a transition zone near Lincoln Street node.



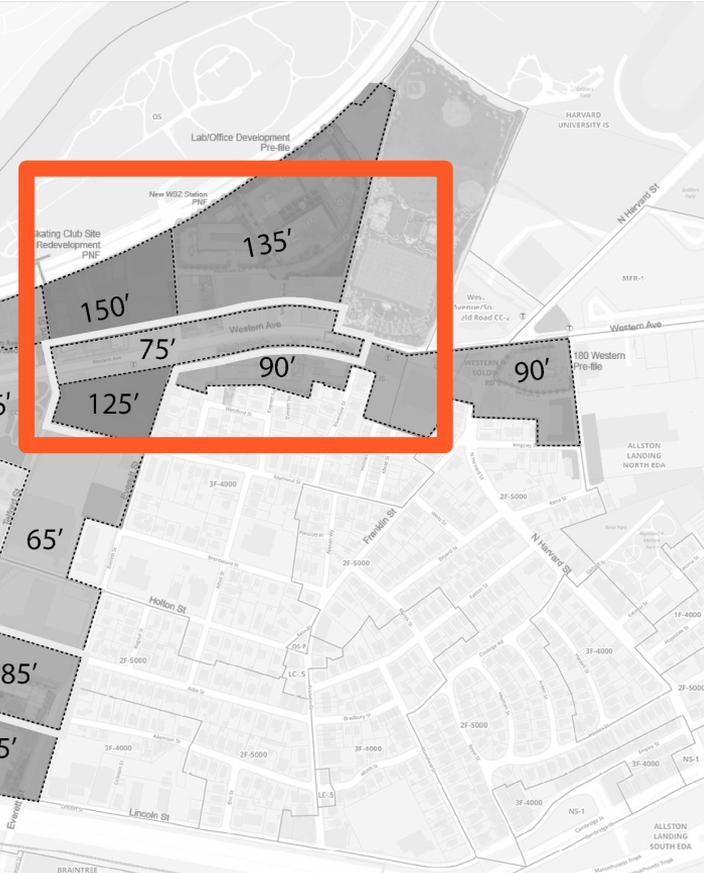
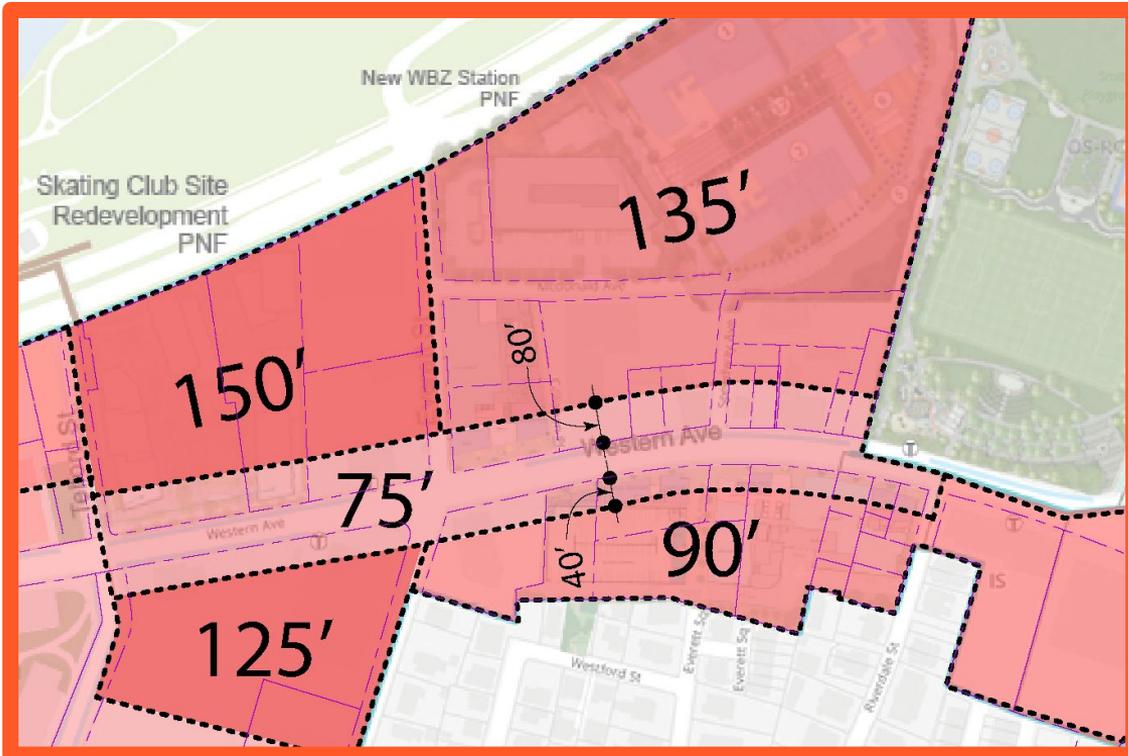
# Heights, Previous

Presented March 30 2021



# Heights, Revised

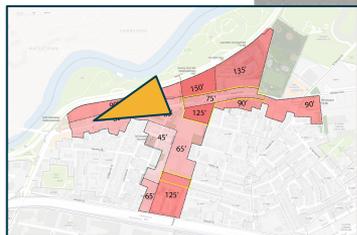
Revised, May 2021



# Western Ave., Looking East

65' zone along Western Ave\*

\*Presented at March 2021 public meeting



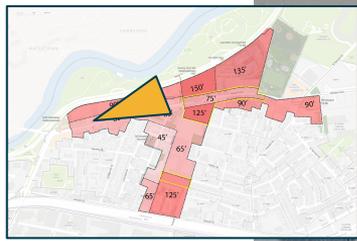
Western Ave., Looking East - near term

**65'** zone along Western Ave

30' Charles River Community Health

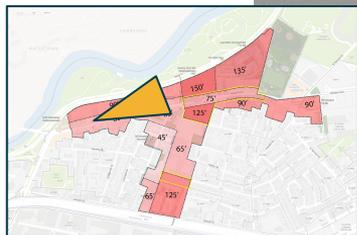
65'

42'



Western Ave.,  
Looking East  
- long term

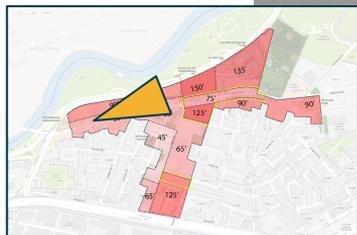
**65'** zone  
along  
Western Ave



Western Ave.,  
Looking East  
- long term

**65'** zone  
along  
Western Ave

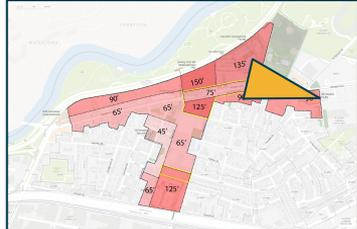
Charles River  
Community Health



# Western Ave., Looking West

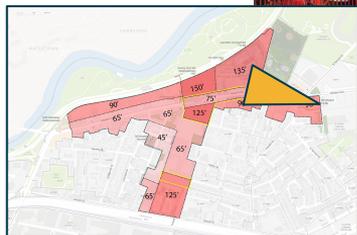
90' zone along Western Ave\*

\*Presented at March 2021 public meeting



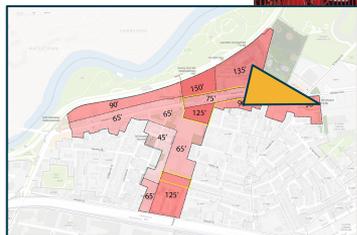
Western Ave., Looking West - **near term**

**75'** zone along Western Ave



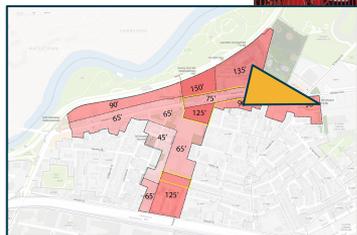
Western Ave., Looking West - **long term**

**75'** zone along Western Ave



Western Ave., Looking West - **long term**

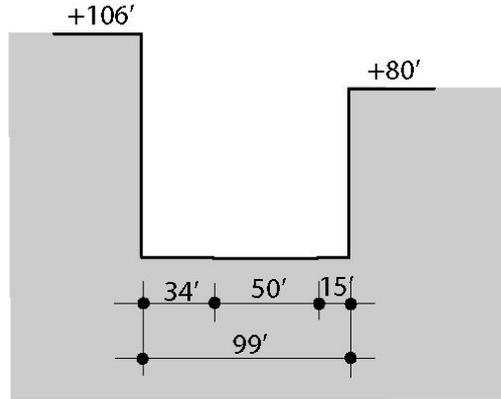
**75'** zone along Western Ave



# Heights

Community feedback:  
Concern about height and density

Revision:  
Lower heights along  
Western Avenue



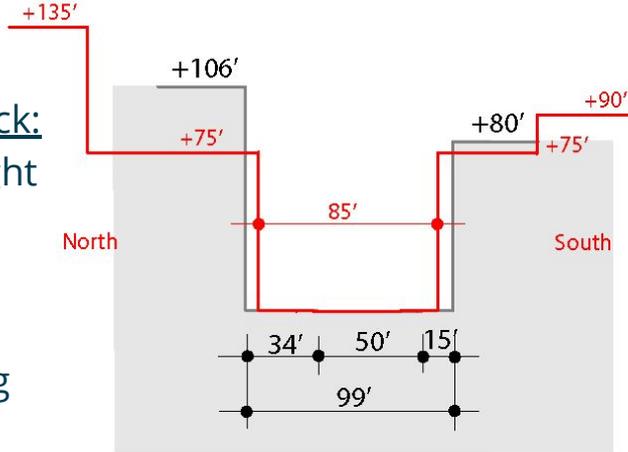
**Boylston Street, Back Bay**  
Width : height ratio = 0.9 : 1.0



# Heights

Community feedback:  
Concern about height and density

Revision:  
Lower heights along  
Western Avenue



## Boylston Street, Back Bay

Width : height ratio = 0.9 : 1.0

## Western Avenue, revised heights (in red)

Width : height ratio = 1.1 : 1.0



Boylston Street, Back Bay

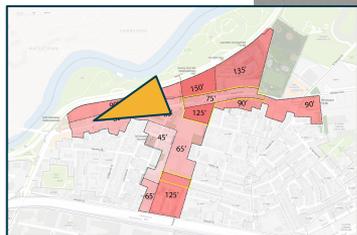
Western Ave.



Western Ave.,  
Looking East  
- long term

**65'** zone  
along  
Western Ave

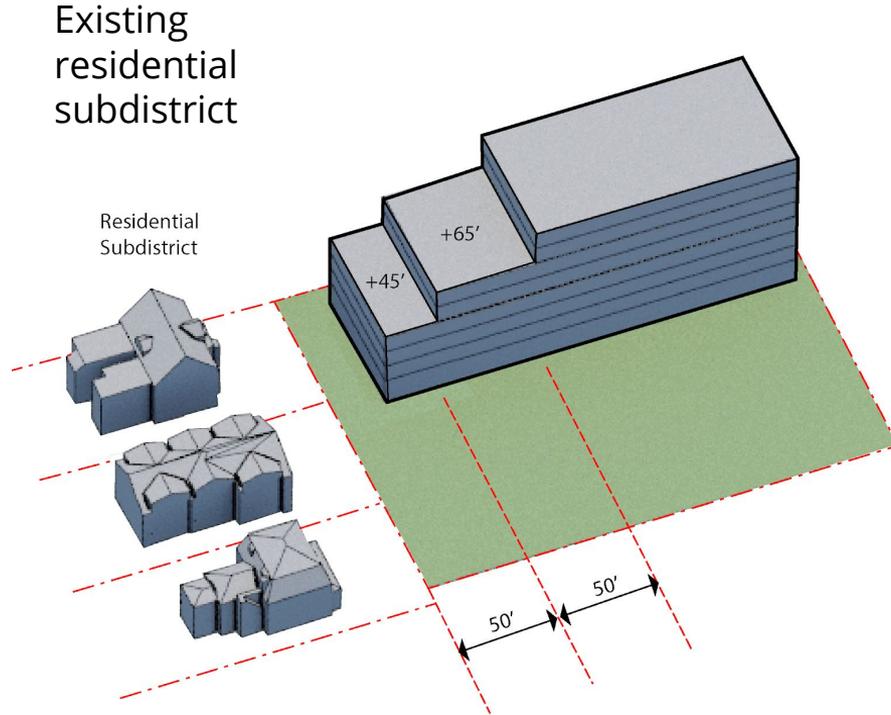
Charles River  
Community Health



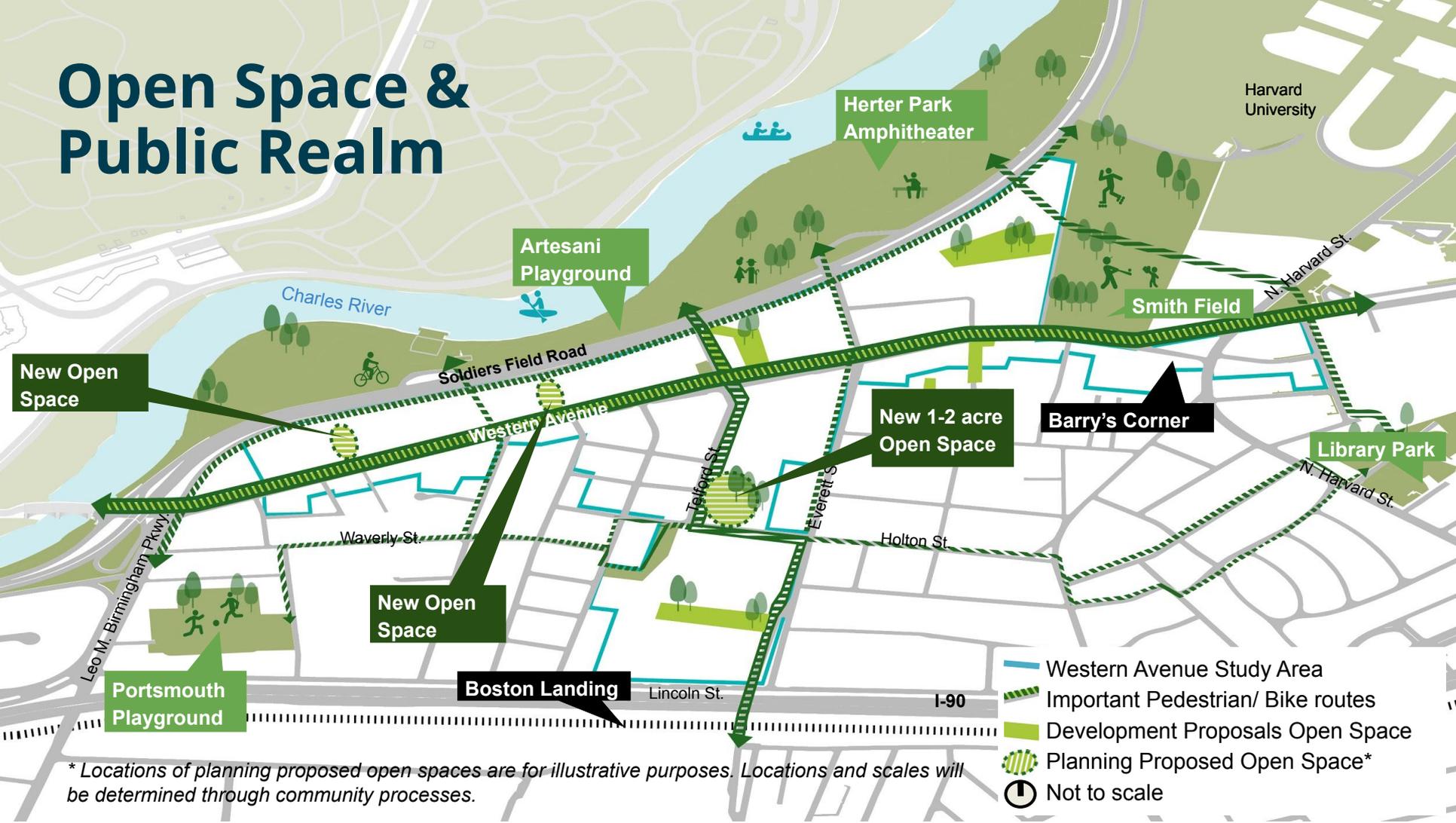
# More Separation

Community feedback:  
Concern about **height and density**, especially as it abuts existing residential

Revision:  
**More separation** between residential subdistricts and highest building elements



# Open Space & Public Realm



Harvard University

Herter Park Amphitheater

Artesani Playground

Smith Field

New Open Space

New 1-2 acre Open Space

Barry's Corner

Library Park

New Open Space

Portsmouth Playground

Boston Landing

- Western Avenue Study Area
- Important Pedestrian/ Bike routes
- Development Proposals Open Space
- Planning Proposed Open Space\*
- Not to scale

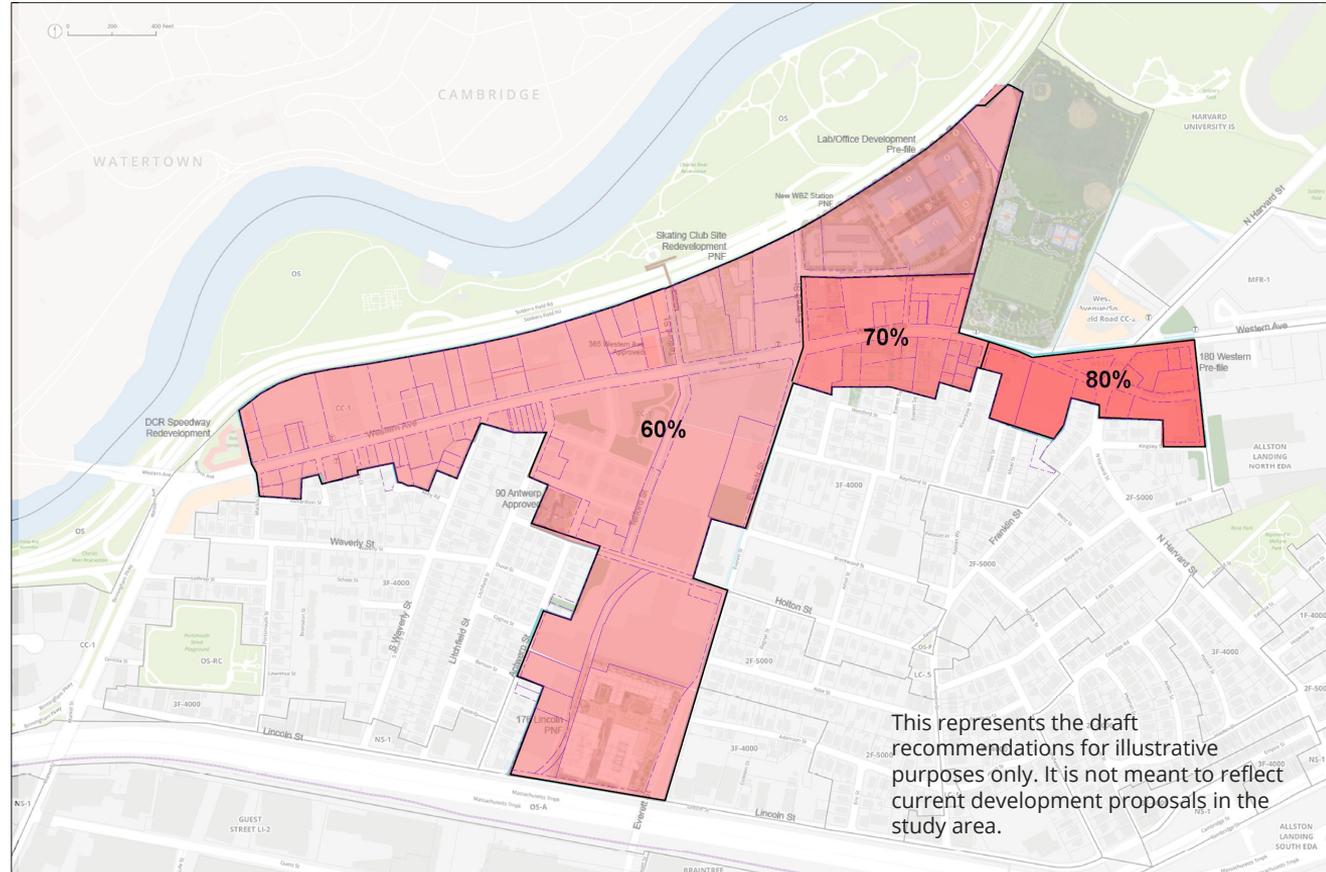
\*Locations of planning proposed open spaces are for illustrative purposes. Locations and scales will be determined through community processes.

# Open Space & Public Realm

Presented March 30, 2021

What are the mechanisms for adding new open space and public realm?

Limit **lot coverage** to ensure that streets and open spaces can be built through new developments.



# Lot Coverage, Per Plan Recommendations

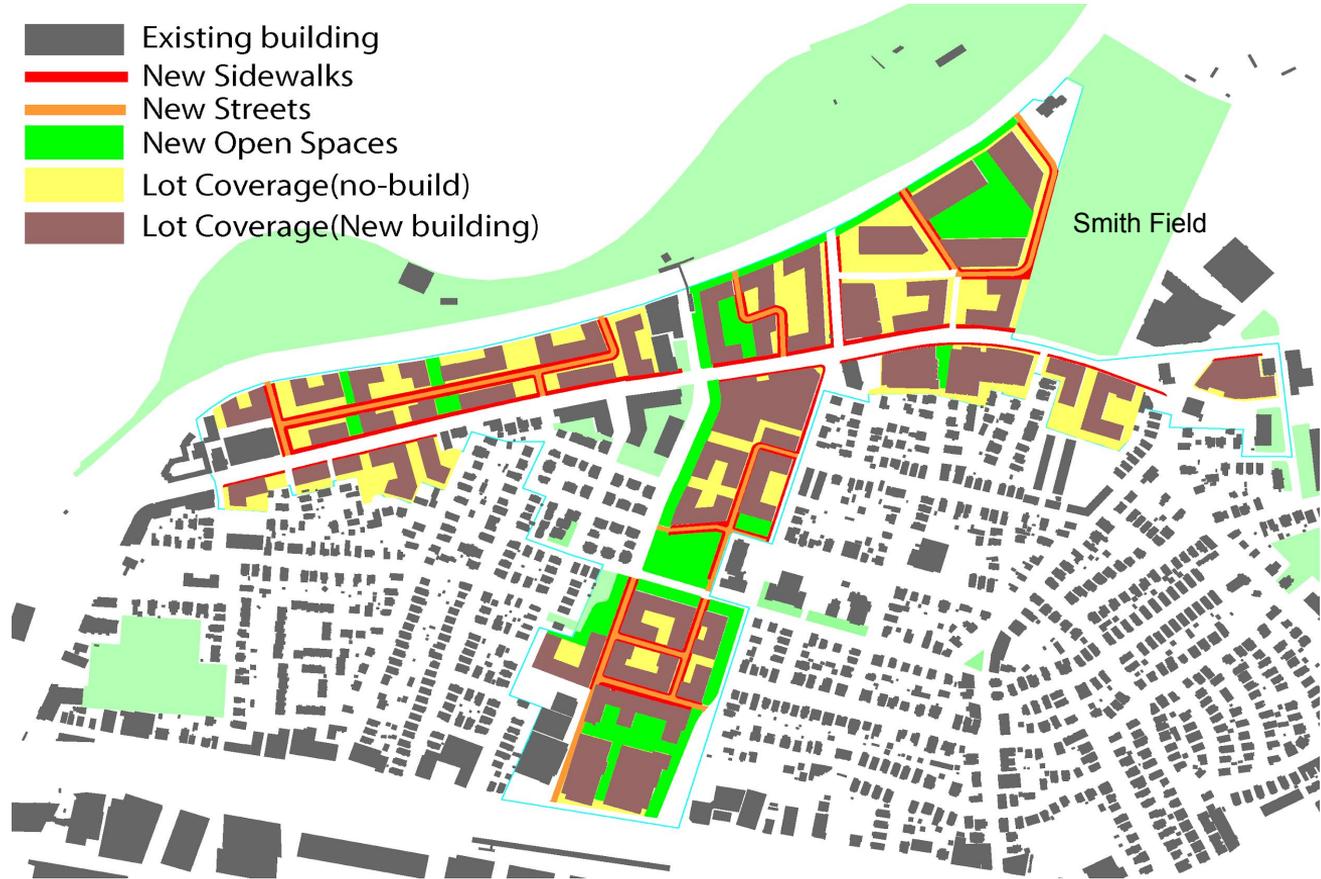
New public realm:  
**18.3** acres Total

 New Open Space:  
**9.7** acres

 New streets/Sidewalks:  
**8.6** acres

No-build area (private green space, plazas, driveway, parking etc.):  
**13.9** acres 

*\*Smith Field, not included in this calculation = 14 acres*



# Proposed Urban Design & Zoning Revisions

- **Lower maximum building heights** along Western Avenue and create a transition zone near Lincoln Street node
- **More separation** between residential subdistricts and highest building elements
- More **specific affordability targets** based on density bonus



# 5

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## Discussion and Q&A