

DRAFT DOWNTOWN ZONING AMENDMENT SUMMARY

May 2025

This revised Downtown zoning draft takes important steps to strengthen protections for Downtown’s historic and cultural assets, streamline pathways for adaptive reuse, and enable the essential housing and mixed-use density that Downtown needs to grow as a vibrant and more inclusive neighborhood for generations to come. The zoning and most recent updates to the draft include:

Strengthening Historic Preservation & Adaptive-Reuse

1. **Eliminates existing zoning barriers to maximize opportunities for the conversion, adaptation, and expansion of existing buildings.**
2. **Incentivizes the reuse of existing buildings over demolition** by carefully calibrating dimensional regulations to align with existing buildings.
3. **Preserves the scale and character of sensitive historic areas.** The latest draft expands the SKY-LOW-D district (max. 155’ building height) along Washington St, the Ladder Blocks, around the Old South Meeting House, and at the Park Plaza
4. **Introduces incentives for strategic development and housing that protect and enhance historic buildings and areas.** New limited eligibility for Planned Development Areas (PDAs) for 1-acre sites in the SKY-LOW-D district must include a Landmark, be predominantly residential, and invest in and preserve Landmark(s) and historic buildings.
5. **Extensive design guidelines** focused on sensitive treatments for preservation, adaptation, expansion, conversion, and new development.

Reinforcing City’s Commitment to State Shadow Regulations

1. **Reinforces compliance with State Shadow Regulations**, adding formal references to the state laws that protect the Boston Common and Public Garden from new shadow impacts.

Unlocking Affordable Housing and Reinvestment Downtown

1. **Enables increased density at the center of Boston’s transit network** around sites with some of the best transit access in the City.
2. **Requires all residential projects to be 20% affordable under Inclusionary Zoning**, producing affordable housing at a scale not feasible in other parts of the City.



DOWNTOWN ZONING: FINAL DRAFT MAP

SKY-LOW-D

Prioritizes preservation of existing structures and scale with greater height and form regulations.

- 155' or Shadow Law, whichever is lesser
- Limited eligibility for Planned Development Area (PDAs) for 1-acre sites in the SKY-LOW-D district must include a Landmark, be predominantly residential, and invest in and preserve Landmark(s) and historic buildings.

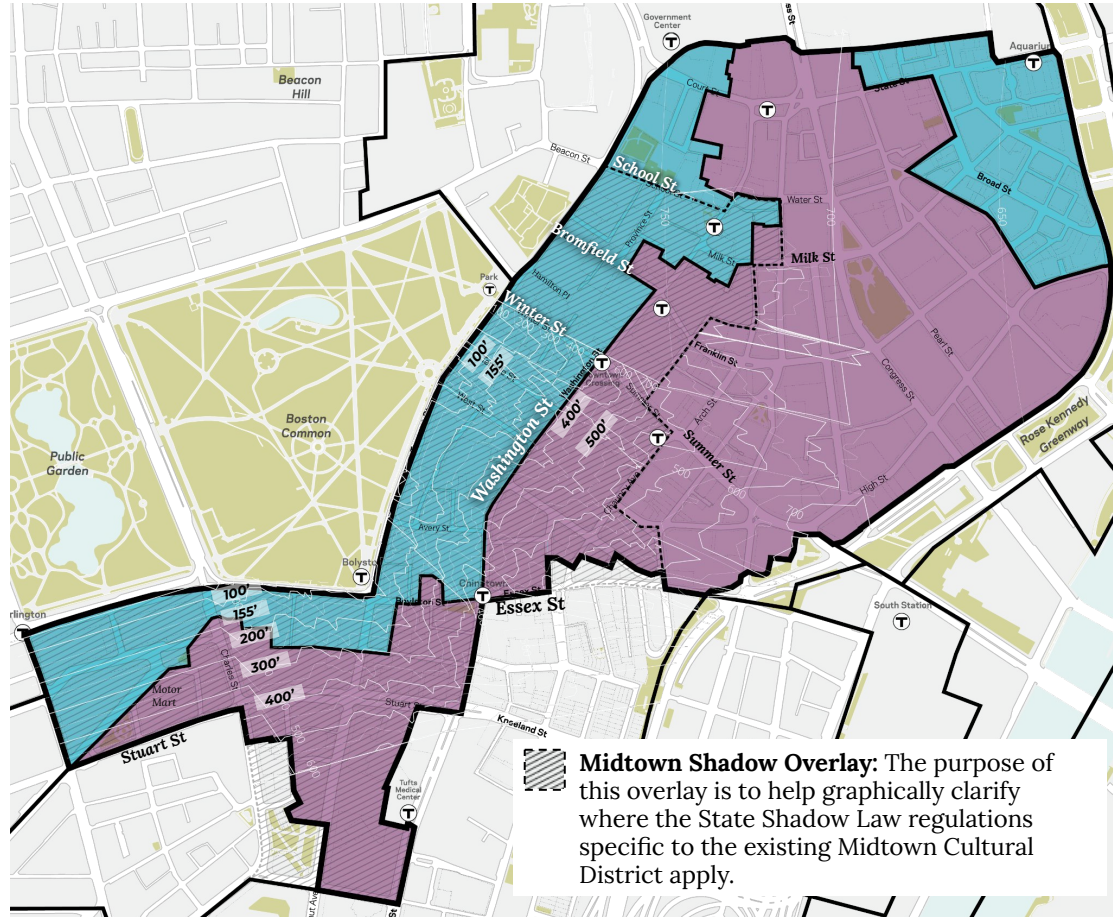
SKY

Maximizes mixed-use development opportunities near major transportation assets.

- Shadow Law Limit/Critical Airspace limit, whichever is lesser

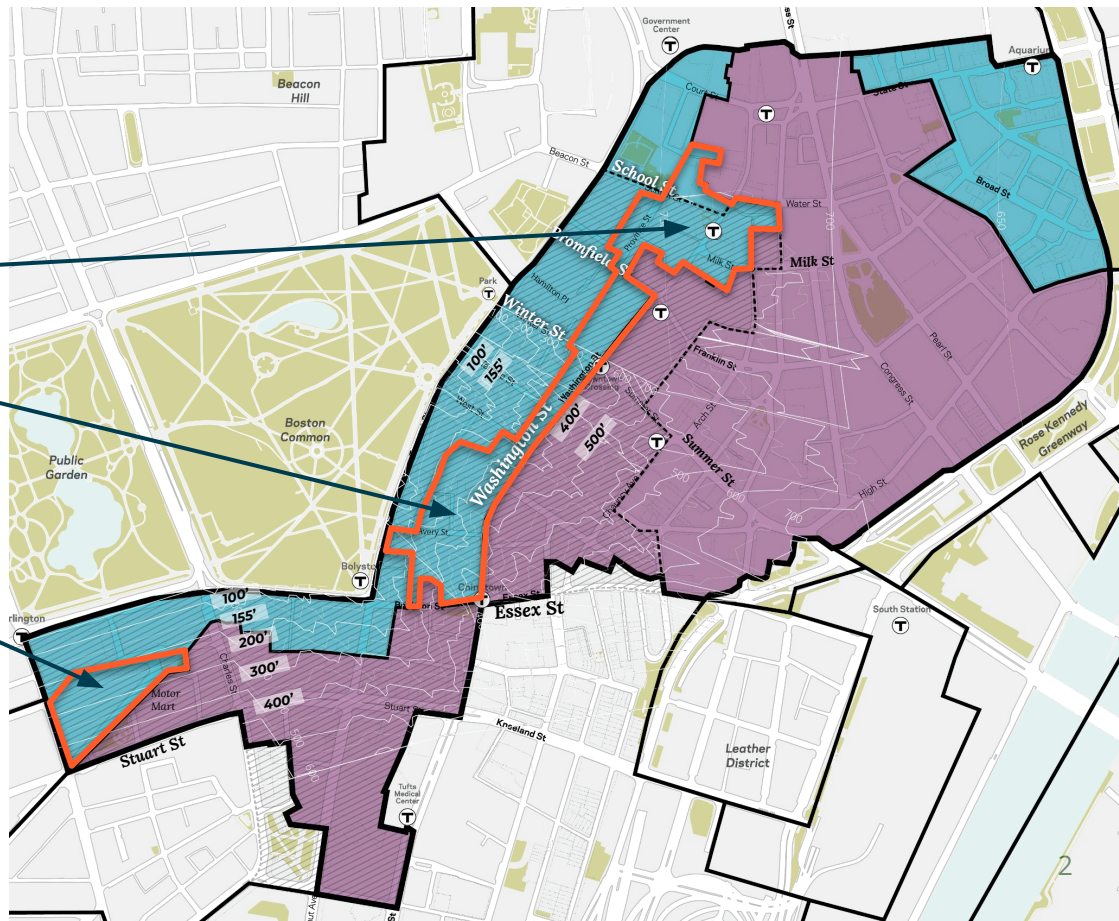
State Shadow Regulations and Critical Airspace height limits supercede zoning

Note: The white contour lines and numbers on the map represent approximate State Shadow Regulation height limits. They are included for reference and will not be on final zoning maps. Height limits can vary even within a parcel, requiring site-by-site shadow analysis.



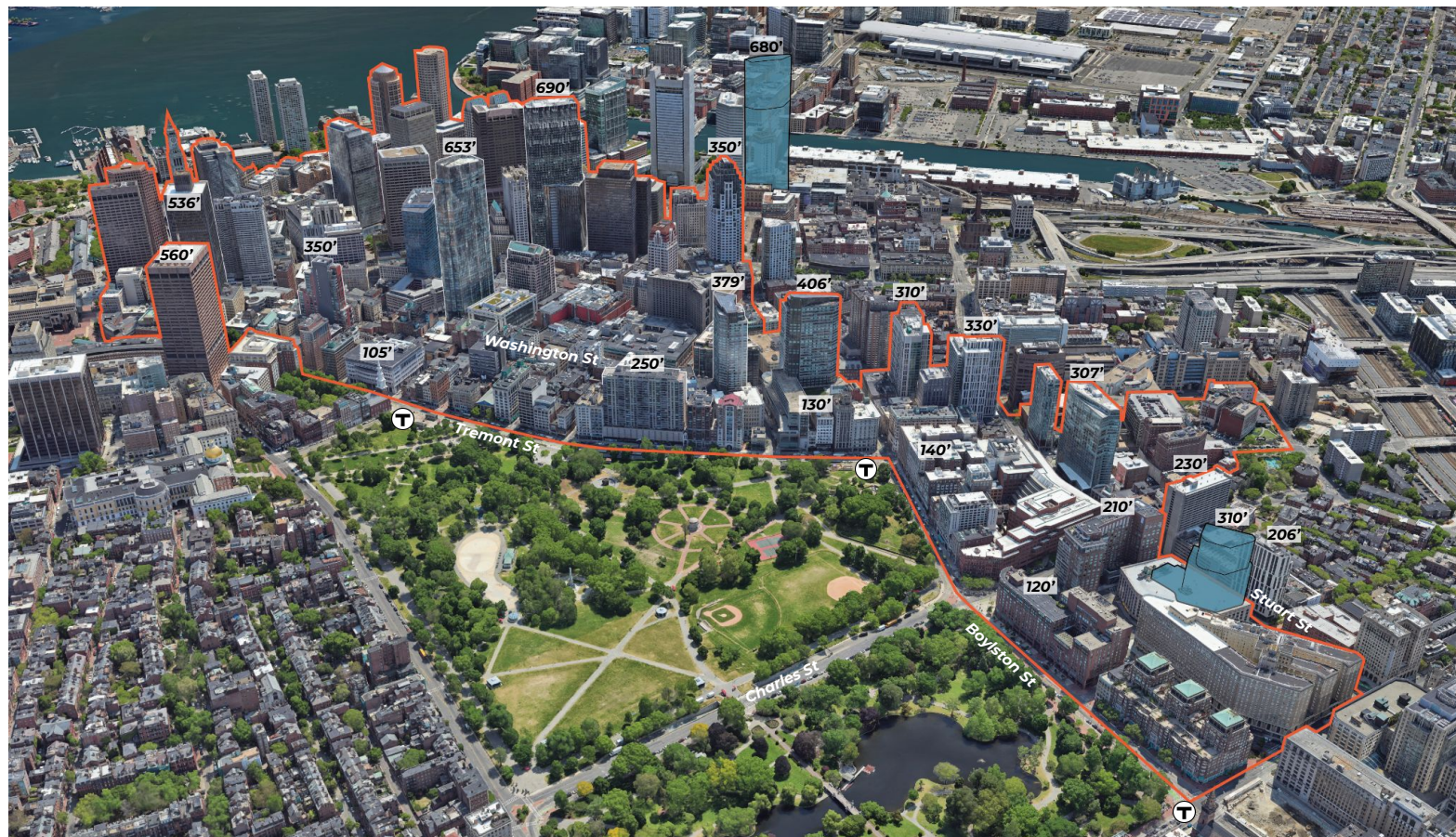
CHANGES FROM JANUARY 8, 2025 DRAFT



1. Eliminates SKY-R District
2. Expands portions of SKY-LOW-D to preserve the scale and character of sensitive historic areas:
 - a. Key historic sites around Reader's Plaza and Old South Meeting House
 - b. Ladder Blocks along Washington St.
 - c. Park Plaza



REFERENCE MATERIALS

DOWNTOWN ZONING INITIATIVE BOUNDARY



-  Approved project
-  Downtown zoning initiative boundary

PLAN: DOWNTOWN: APPROVED DECEMBER 2023

Approved Development Framework Plan and Zoning Considerations

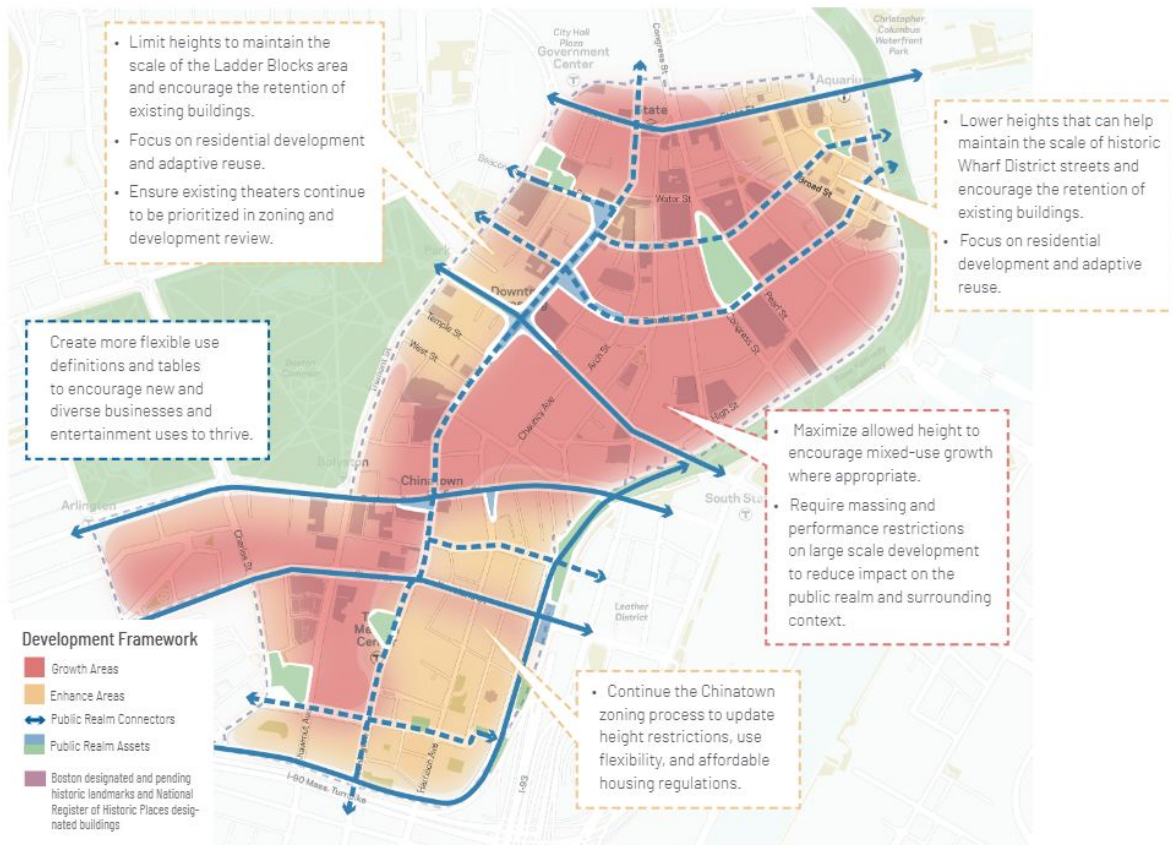
ENHANCE AREAS

Find opportunities to improve and elevate the area while affirming its distinct historic and cultural identity.

GROWTH AREAS

Encourage large-scale mixed-use development opportunities that provide benefits for all of Downtown.

Zoning Considerations



DOWNTOWN ZONING: APRIL 10, 2024 DRAFT

SKY-LOW-D

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- 155' or Shadow Law, whichever is lesser

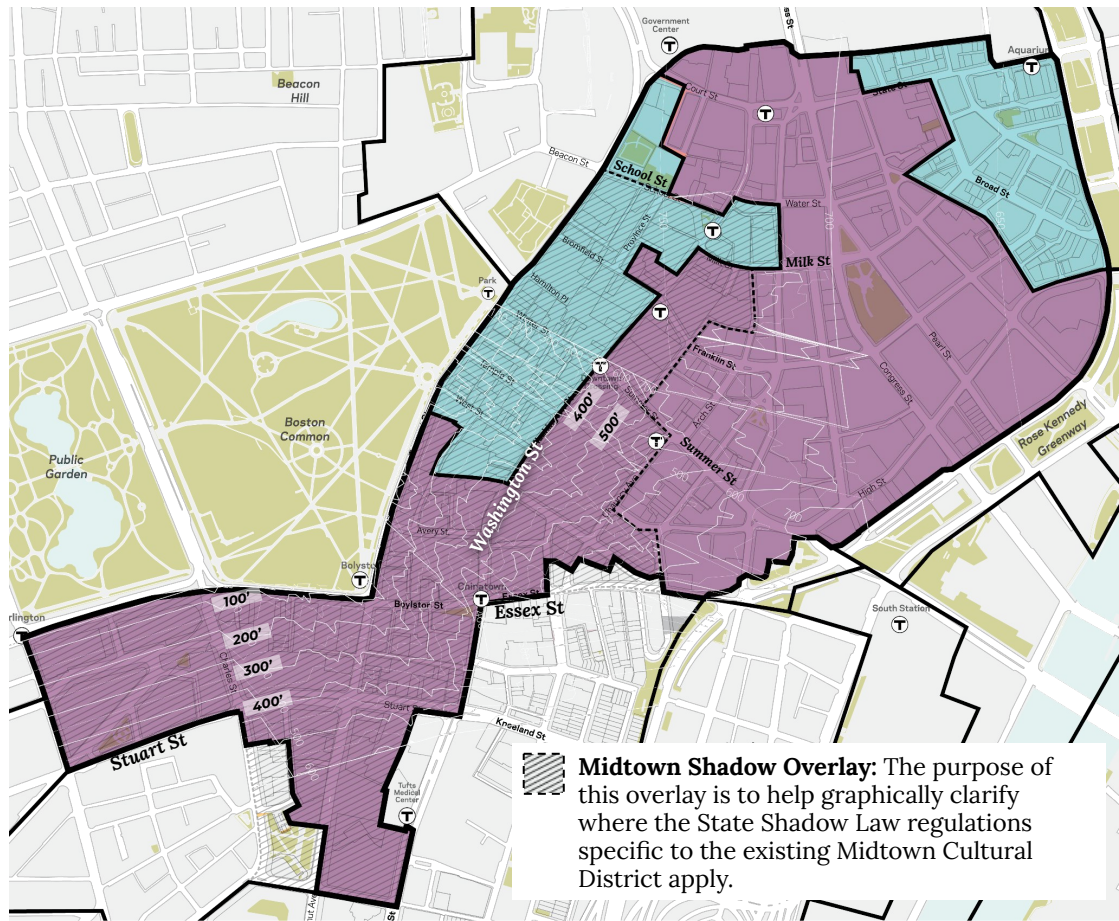
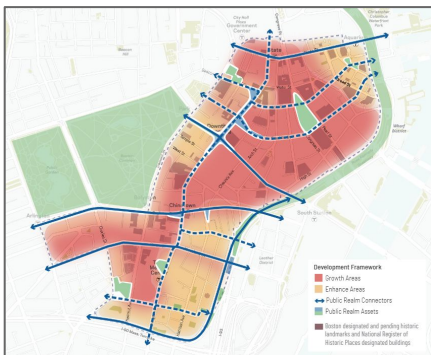
SKY

Maximizes mixed-use development opportunities near major transportation assets.

- Shadow Law Limit/Critical Airspace limit, whichever is lesser

Approved PLAN: Downtown

Development
Framework
(Enhance and
Growth Areas)



DOWNTOWN ZONING: JANUARY 8, 2025 DRAFT

SKY-LOW-D

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- 155' or Shadow Law, whichever is lesser

SKY-R

Incentivizes strategic insertion of residential development to enable reinvestment along key corridors and subsidize preservation and reuse.

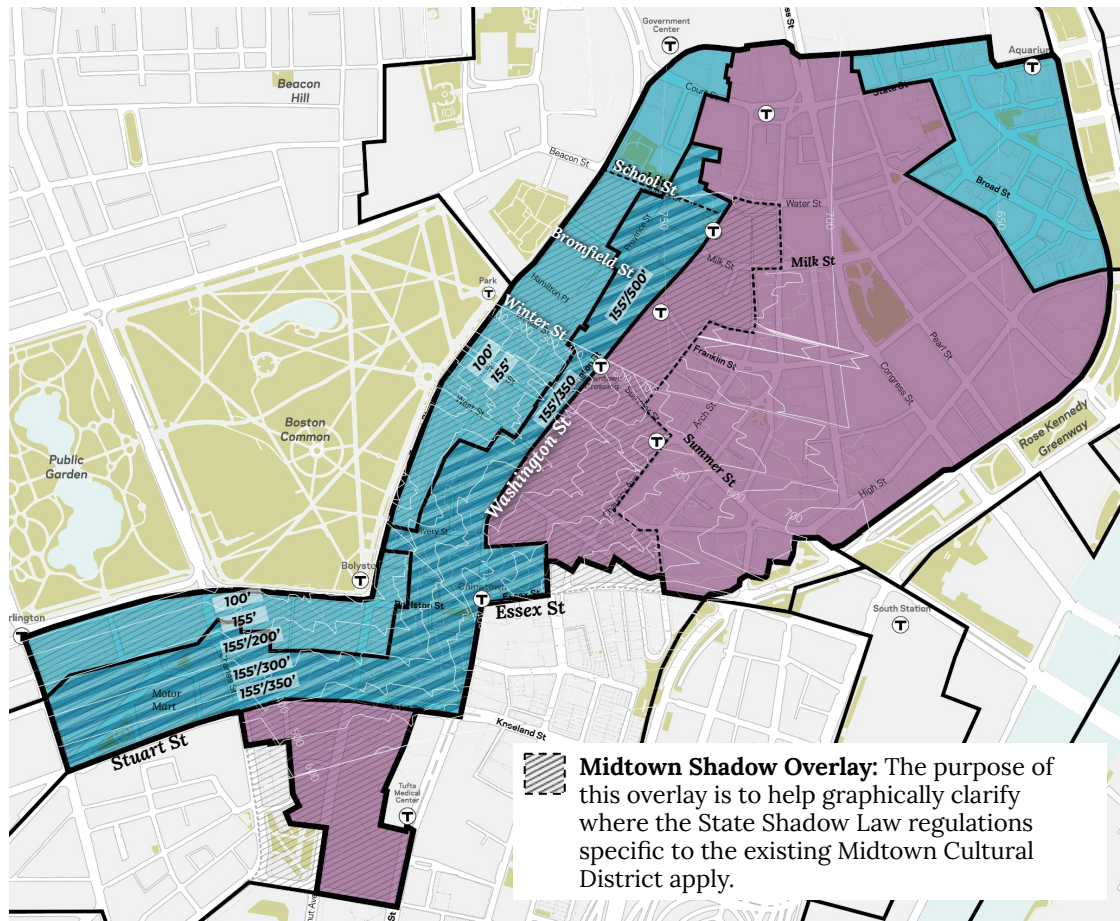
- 155' /
- Incentive for 60% residential: Shadow Law limit until 500'

SKY

Maximizes mixed-use development opportunities near major transportation assets.

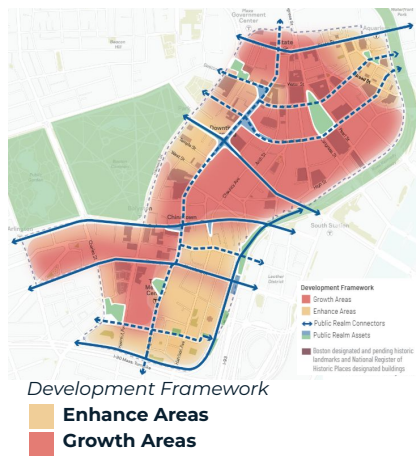
- Shadow Law Limit/Critical Airspace limit, whichever is lesser

State Shadow Regulations and Critical Airspace height limits supercede zoning

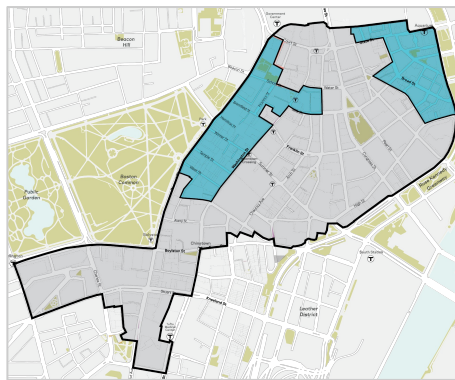


SKY-LOW-D BOUNDARY CHANGES THROUGHOUT PROCESS

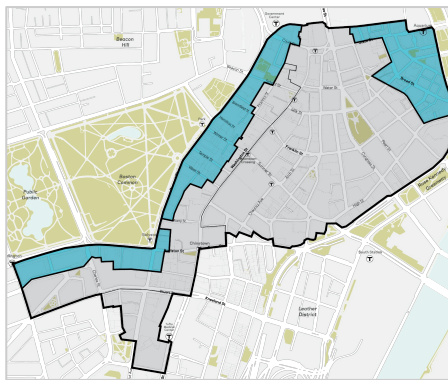
PLAN: Downtown (2023)



April 2024 Draft Zoning



January 2025 Draft Zoning



Final Draft Zoning

