

# Roslindale Draft Zoning Map Amendment

## Frequently Asked Questions

The following questions are derived from public comments submitted during the comment period on the draft zoning map and text amendments for Roslindale Square. They reflect questions that were asked often by stakeholders in submitted comments, email inquiries, during office hours sessions, in public meetings, and/or other engagement efforts during the zoning engagement process. The purpose of this document is to make sure that the answers provided for these frequently asked questions are easily accessible to all members of the public, including the individuals who asked these questions.

### **1. Why do the proposed Squares and Streets districts not extend further down Cummins Highway, Belgrade Avenue, and Washington Street?**

These areas are outside the geographic scope of key areas for future development that were identified in the [Roslindale Square Small Area Plan's Land Use and Design Framework](#). Future community processes in those further areas would be more appropriate venues to determine updated zoning regulations that meet the vision and needs identified by stakeholders there.

### **2. Why is the Taft Hill municipal parking lot not rezoned as a Squares and Streets district?**

The Taft Hill municipal parking lot was originally proposed as a candidate for a future disposition process to develop housing and other amenities while maintaining public parking. The decision to remove consideration of this parking lot for disposition in the Roslindale Square Small Area Plan was a response to several public comments throughout the planning process that express the value of the parking lot for supporting the local business district, community events like the farmers market, and other public uses. The proposed zoning map affirms the current utility of the parking lot through designating it as an Urban Plaza – Open Space (OS-UP) zoning subdistrict.

### **3. How is the proposed new zoning related to transportation recommendations in the Roslindale Square Small Area Plan?**

The Boston Transportation Department is leading a continued planning and design process for two key transportation recommendations in the [Roslindale Square Small Area Plan](#). These include exploring the feasibility of restoring the 2-way directionality of Washington Street between South and Poplar streets, and redesigning the Belgrade/Roberts/Corinth

Street intersection. You can sign up for project updates and upcoming opportunities for engagement through the [Roslindale Transportation Action Plan website](#).

#### **4. How does the proposed new zoning help produce affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households?**

Squares + Streets zoning districts allow for more housing to be built as-of-right without the need for zoning relief. However, zoning is just one tool we are using to produce, stabilize, and expand access to housing for all current and future Boston residents.

Proposed Squares + Streets districts in Roslindale Square are large enough to trigger [Inclusionary Zoning](#) (IZ) requirements, which requires that any residential project producing 7 or more units set aside at least 17% of residential square footage as income-restricted, and an additional 3% for housing vouchers holders.

The Small Area Plan also includes a recommendation to leverage local community development corporations (CDCs) and other affordable housing developers to work with the City to identify opportunities for affordable housing through new construction and/or acquisition of affordable housing on the private market (see [Plan](#) page 69).

The City has several funds that are leveraged to fund affordable housing projects, including the [Acquisition Opportunity Program \(AOP\)](#) and the newly-launched [Housing Accelerator Fund](#). These programs work with zoning changes to make housing not only more feasible to build but also more affordable as we build our way out of a long-term citywide and regional housing shortage.

#### **5. The S5 district is mapped on the MBTA commuter rail parking lots, so what does that mean for what could happen there?**

The MBTA is a state authority, so they do not have to follow local zoning regulations. However, mapping the S5 district on the MBTA parking lots in Roslindale Square sets a vision for the potential future of development at that site if the MBTA should ever decide to redevelop the lots.

The S5 district is the largest-scale mixed use district of the Squares and Streets zoning districts. It allows for buildings to be up to 145 ft maximum in height and up to 250 ft maximum in width. It also requires that any redevelopment in the S5 district have a minimum of 30% of the space dedicated to Outdoor Amenity Spaces, which are outdoor spaces for gathering or recreation that can be for a single dwelling unit, building residents, or the general public (ex. private balconies, outdoor dining spaces, interior courtyards, porches, and pedestrian plazas).

Given that the MBTA lots are in the heart of the commercial district in Roslindale Square, the S5 district is appropriate as it is intended for areas in the heart of high activity squares and allows for the largest scale of potential housing and commercial land use flexibility.

The S5 district also requires 50% minimum of a building's ground floor to be dedicated to "Active Uses," which are types of land uses that are typically open to the public and produce high levels of coming and going by customers, visitors, and users. Some examples from the list of active uses include retail stores, restaurants, and service establishments like salons and barbershops.

## **6. What protections are there to mitigate the risk of demolition of existing buildings that are rezoned?**

Several city regulatory processes and resources help protect against demolition. Article 85 of the Boston Zoning Code, Demolition Delay, applies to any building at least 50 years old and/or within a Neighborhood Design Overlay District (NDOD). Most of the core commercial district in Roslindale Square is covered by an NDOD, so demolition delay would automatically apply to any proposed project in this area. The process of demolition delay allows for the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) to meet with project proponents to develop alternative plans to demolition, and to issue a project delay up to 90 days to consider alternatives.

Various historic designations are also useful tools to incentivize preservation and adaptive reuse of historic properties. Among these tools are designation through listing in the National Register of Historic Places, and designation as a Boston Landmark.

The National Register is defined as “the official list of the Nation’s historic places worthy of preservation” by the National Park Service, which administers the program in coordination with each State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The National Register listing provides limited protection from adverse effects resulting from a small subset of construction and improvements projects; namely, those involving federal funding and approvals. Although listing in the National Register does not, in itself, necessarily limit future improvements to a property or even prevent its demolition, it opens up potential opportunities for funding and technical assistance, including historic tax credit incentives.

Designation as a Boston Landmark is a more hands-on preservation strategy, with proposed changes reviewed by the BLC or one of the City’s several Landmark District Commissions. Through the review process, the Commissions and BLC staff work with property owners to develop design solutions that allow evolution and improvements to their buildings in a historically sensitive manner.

Finally, any proposed project in a Squares + Streets district is subject to Planning Department design review if it proposes more than 15 residential units or 20,000 sf or greater, which are the thresholds for [Article 80](#) project review. The design review process takes into account how the proposed project advances the design goals outlined in the Land Use and Design Framework of the Roslindale Square Small Area Plan. Within this Framework is a recommendation to maintain significant, character-defining features of existing buildings through adaptive reuse rather than demolition (see [Plan](#) page 49). Projects that fall below the Article 80 threshold, but are requesting zoning relief, may also be subject to design review as a condition of building permit approval.

## **7. How will new zoning impact existing trees?**

Proposed removal of existing trees in the public right-of-way is regulated by Chapter 87 of the Massachusetts General Law, which requires a hearing hosted by the City Tree Warden. This [review process](#) is public, and applies whether or not a proposed project is as-of-right or must request variances from the Zoning Board of Appeal. Chapter 87 only applies to proposed removal of trees on *public* property, such as a public sidewalk, not trees on *private* property. However, tree protection on private property can be mitigated through planning and design recommendations in the Roslindale Square Small Area Plan. The Plan recommends tree canopy preservation and planting of new trees in the Square, particularly in places that are designated a 'priority zone' in the citywide Urban Forest Plan (see [Plan](#) page 108).

Proposed projects in an S-district must also comply with zoning requirements for permeable area of lot and Outdoor Amenity Space, which may include siting proposed buildings or additions so as to maintain existing on-site tree canopy and green space. Design guidelines in the Plan also prioritize the creation of new open spaces and development that integrates resilient strategies to manage stormwater and mitigate the impacts of urban heat. These strategies may include preservation or planting of street trees (see [Plan](#) page 99). The design review process for Article 80 projects, projects that are below the Article 80 threshold that require design review as a condition of receiving zoning relief, and projects that are proposed within the Roslindale Neighborhood Design Overlay District (NDOD) would incorporate these recommendations into the project's site design.

## **8. What tools does the City's Anti-Displacement Action Plan include that will help tenants - including those in rezoned areas - stay in their current homes or commercial spaces?**

The newly released citywide [Anti-Displacement Action Plan](#) includes over 40 new policy, funding, and regulatory tools aimed at stabilizing and securing displacement protections for residents, commercial, and cultural spaces. These tools are applicable across the whole city, regardless of the current zoning district or how recently rezoning occurred.

Mitigating direct displacement - in which tenants face removal from the physical space they occupy as a resident or commercial tenant - is one of the key outcomes of the Action Plan. The City will expand protections for residents of smaller multi-family buildings through updating the current Condo Conversion Ordinance to include buildings with 2 or more units. Through this ordinance, property owners will be required to notify tenants of buildings being converted to condominiums at least one year in advance (5 years for special populations). Tenants will be entitled to a relocation payment and other support.

For large-scale developments over 20,000 square feet or more than 15 units, the Article 80 Direct Displacement Disclosure will require that developers file a disclosure statement regarding current tenants, notify impacted tenants of the proposed project and their rights and resources, and work with them to develop a Tenant Relocation Plan. This Plan could include relocation assistance or options to return to new units, which would require review by City staff.

Other tools in the Action Plan will be used to improve access to existing affordable housing and commercial spaces. These tools will stabilize residents and business owners looking for a place to live or open a business. One example includes modifying affordable housing lottery preferences for those who've previously been displaced or experience extreme rent burden, paying more than 50% of their household income on rent. The new co-purchasing pilot program will provide financial assistance to households who wish to pool finances to purchase the two- or three-family home they rent. This would allow for more housing units to be taken off the speculative market and continue to house those who already live in the community.

For business owners looking for commercial spaces, the Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion and the Mayor's Office of Arts & Culture are working to bring creative enterprises and small businesses to vacant offices and retail spaces in Downtown Boston and across the City. The Commercial Acquisition Assistance Program (CAAP) will also help business owners acquire property and build long-term wealth.

All of these tools (and more) work in tandem with the city's efforts to rezone and expand opportunities for housing and commercial growth while keeping community assets and households in place.