



# Suffolk University

## Amendment to the 2008–2018 Institutional Master Plan Map and Text Amendment



**SUFFOLK**  
**UNIVERSITY**  
**BOSTON**

January 12, 2018  
Submitted to: Boston Planning & Development Agency

**INSTITUTIONAL MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT  
TO THE SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL MASTER PLAN**

*Submitted Pursuant to Article 80 of the Boston Zoning Code*

*Submitted to:*

**BOSTON PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT AGENCY**

**One City Hall Square**

**Boston, MA 02201**

*Submitted by:*

**SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY**

**JANUARY 12, 2018**

## **Introduction**

This Institutional Master Plan Amendment is filed with the Boston Planning and Development Agency (the “Agency”) pursuant to Article 80, Sections 80D-5 and 80D-9 of Boston Zoning Code (“Code”) to initiate review of this proposed Amendment to the Suffolk University Institutional Master Plan, as amended (“Suffolk University IMP”) (the “Amendment”). As further required by the Code, this Amendment provides information on the proposed planning process of Suffolk University.

The term of the Suffolk University IMP will expire in July of 2018, and the submission of a new ten year Institutional Master Plan will involve a level of planning for the next term (10 years), beginning with a planning process of working with the Agency and its appointed Task Force. In anticipation, Suffolk University is now entering into an interim phase of its master planning, and as part of this next phase, Suffolk University expects to refine both its ten year outlook for the 2018 – 2028 period, and a longer term strategic vision for Suffolk University through 2050.

## **Mission Statement**

Since its inception, Suffolk University's fundamental mission has been to respond to the evolving needs of society by providing an opportunity for motivated and capable students to obtain a quality education in a challenging yet supportive environment at an affordable cost.

Suffolk University welcomes and remains accessible to people from a wide variety of backgrounds. It is the University's tradition, and remains its practice, to provide academic services for people of various levels of preparation and ability, and programs of sufficient depth and academic quality education at a reasonable cost. To respond to the evolving needs of today's

world, Suffolk furnishes a variety of cross-cultural and international experiences in which diversity and excellence are inextricably interdependent.

Suffolk University places students at the center of its efforts, and emphasizes academic excellence through teaching, based on the application of theory, research to practice, and public service. In keeping with its historic mission of serving a broad constituency, the University offers day and evening programs at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. In addition, the University is strongly committed to continuing education, with day-long and year-round scheduling flexibility, and complete credit equivalency between day, evening, and summer programs.

Suffolk University's mission is to provide quality education at a reasonable cost for students of all ages and backgrounds with strong emphasis on diversity. The University is committed to educating students to become lifelong learners, as well as professionals who lead and serve the communities in which they live and work. The University seeks to prepare students to live in a diverse, global society, appreciating the richness of various cultures.

The University accomplishes its mission by providing educational opportunities through undergraduate study, graduate study, and professional training. Suffolk University is a teaching University, where research and scholarship are interrelated with the unique character of each academic discipline. It does so by means of courses which provide theoretical, experiential, and practical dimensions.

The University supports and encourages diversity in a challenging, supportive environment for motivated and capable students from various backgrounds and cultures.

Suffolk's development of competitive undergraduate and graduate programs in the arts and sciences, business, and law has been the foundation of its ongoing planning process. To continue to be a competitive institution, Suffolk has determined that it must enhance the academic, residential, student life, athletic and cultural resources available to its current and prospective students. Suffolk is making concerted efforts to:

- provide housing for a greater share of its undergraduate students, which is currently low compared to its local peer institutions;
- provide adequate athletic facilities;
- provide the necessary student services;
- provide suitable range of academic course offerings;
- provide academic space promoting effective and efficient education; and
- maximize the efficiency of existing facilities.

Founded on the premise that capable men and women should have the opportunity to study law regardless of background or circumstances, Suffolk University has expanded the University's law educational offerings over time while maintaining the same objective of equality. In addition to its law curriculum, Suffolk's past leaders decided to establish strong but measured undergraduate and graduate programs in the arts and sciences, and in business.

### **Current Status of Institutional Master Plan**

The Suffolk University IMP was established by the following actions of the Agency and the Boston Zoning Commission (“BZC”). In 2002 Suffolk University completed an Institutional Master Plan (“IMP”), effective February 25, 2002. The IMP was subsequently amended by a first amendment, effective April 14, 2005. The initial term of the IMP was for five years, subject to the renewal on or about February 25, 2007. In accordance with Section 80D of the Code, on February 7, 2007, Suffolk University submitted an Institutional Master Plan Notification Form (“IMP NF”) for renewal without change for one year or until such time as a new IMP was effective. The renewal was approved by the Agency Board on April 24, 2007.

In 2007, a comprehensive public process and review framework was started by Suffolk University with the assistance of the Agency to develop the new ten year Institutional Master Plan for the University. The public process included the establishment of a Suffolk University Community Task Force by the Mayor and the Agency which helped guide Suffolk in its planning efforts. The 18 member Task Force involved residents and business leaders from the North End, Downtown, Beacon Hill, West End and Upper Beacon Hill Neighborhood Associations, as well as concerned citizens.

The Task Force commenced its meeting with the first meeting on March 1, 2007 and through May, 2008 held 17 public meetings to provide community input to Suffolk, the Agency and its planner, CKS, in the development of the 10 year Institutional Master Plan. This included reviewing the goals of Suffolk, existing and future student demographics, Suffolk's major program needs in several areas, the existing urban context surrounding the University and the plans for the 10 West Street Residence Hall project. Detailed information was presented to the Task Force regarding Suffolk's needs and goals for academic space, student housing, space for student services and athletic facilities. Various parameters defining the space needs for these program needs were also discussed. In response to this information, the Task Force provided Suffolk with input on suitable locations for meeting its program needs. Working together, the Task Force and Suffolk developed the concept of five clusters or development areas in which the suitability for various uses would be defined.

The Task Force also encouraged Suffolk to respond to the Agency Request for Proposals for redevelopment of the Modern Theatre on Washington Street. Suffolk submitted a proposal to develop a student residence on upper floors and ground floor cultural space on the site that had the support of the community and the Agency selected Suffolk as the developer for the site.

On January 11, 2008 Suffolk submitted an IMPNF for the Master Plan, which included two new institutional projects, the Modern Theatre redevelopment project and the 20 Somerset Street academic building project. On June 24, 2008, the Agency approved the IMP and on July 23, 2008, the Boston Zoning Commission approved the IMP for a ten (10) year term until July 24, 2018.

In accordance with Section 80D of the Code, on November 14, 2017, Suffolk University submitted an Institutional Master Plan Notification Form (“IMPNF”) for Amendment to the 2008-2018 IMP to accommodate a temporary need for student housing at 1047 Commonwealth Avenue in the Allston/Brighton section of Boston. On December 11, 2017, the Agency conducted a duly noticed public meeting to solicit comments from the community regarding the proposed Amendment, and has issued its Scoping Determination requiring the filing of this Amendment.

### **Student Housing Plan**

Suffolk’s Student Housing Plan addresses both the needs of the University and its impact on the surrounding neighborhoods, and includes the following components related to the University: student housing goals, existing student housing, student residence locations, housing policies and plans, and the student behavior plan. It also addressed the University’s plans to mitigate any potential impact from its students on the rental housing market

The Mayor of Boston issued a policy directive to local universities and colleges that they provide housing for 50 percent of their student population. The primary motivation for this directive was to reduce the number of students living in the City’s neighborhoods to relieve impacts on the availability and cost of housing to city residents. Starting in 1996 Suffolk opened its first student

residence building and since that time has made the transition to providing more university-owned housing consistent with City and Agency policy.

Impacts from students living in private housing in abutting neighborhoods have been an important concern of the University. Higher education institutions across the City are responding to the Mayor's directive to increase the percentage of students living in university-owned residential facilities. The completion of the 10 West Street Residence Hall and the addition of the residential units at the Modern Theatre further the University's ability to meet this challenge.

At the same time, the University believes that students within the community create a diverse and culturally rich environment. Students stimulate small local service-oriented business, such as coffee shops, office suppliers, restaurants, and a wide variety of other services. Students also create a more secure environment. By occupying the public realm for longer time periods of the day than the typical office worker or resident, students add to the 'eyes on the street.'

In support of the Mayor's policy of increasing University-owned housing, one of Suffolk's top priorities is increasing its housing for undergraduates. The University has found a greater interest from its student body in living in student residence halls. Therefore, providing additional student housing is essential for Suffolk to satisfy the current demand. Students are interested in university-owned housing because it provides a more integrated college experience and can be more affordable than living in similarly appointed market units.

Within the ten-year term of IMP, the University has committed to a goal of providing approximately 50 percent of its undergraduate students with University-owned housing. As part of this goal, the University has made every effort to locate the additional residence halls needed



to meet this goal. However, for an urban university such as Suffolk, the ultimate acquisition of property for housing—and other uses—is dependent on market opportunities as they arise.

Typically, urban universities do not already own the properties needed to allow them to plan for the future locations of specific buildings and uses as is typical for non-urban universities.

Suffolk University agrees with the generally held view that students who do not live in university-owned housing can have a bigger impact on the surrounding community than those who live in supervised environments such as university-owned residence halls. The benefits of university-owned housing for students are substantial as they gain from the amenities provided and the safety of living in a supervised environment. The abutting neighborhoods benefit from having the vitality and economic activity brought by students living nearby without having to lose precious residential space. As Suffolk strives to provide more University housing, it seeks to disperse housing to prevent an undue negative impact on any one particular area.

In 1996, Suffolk University began to house its students in University-owned residence halls and to identify locations for future facilities. Suffolk University opened its first residence hall at 150 Tremont Street in August 1996 with 420 beds. The Nathan R. Miller residence hall at 10 Somerset Street opened in August 2003 and houses a total of 345 students. The opening of the 10 West Street residence hall in January 2008 added another 274 beds, and provided University-owned housing for 1,039 students or about 22 percent of its 2007-2008 full-time undergraduate enrollment. With the addition of approximately 200 student beds at the Modern Theatre in 2010, the University is more than halfway to the goal of providing housing for 50 percent of its undergraduates.

Since 2014 the number of students living in Boston has increased considerably. This is due to our expanded recruitment efforts which are yielding more students who live beyond the Boston and metro-Boston areas requiring housing close to campus.

Since the 2016-2017 academic year, Suffolk University has partnered with Jumpstart, a national early education organization that provides language, literacy, and social-emotional programming for preschool children from under-resourced communities and promotes quality early learning for all children. Since last year, our students have provided over 300 hours to help preschool children prepare for kindergarten. Currently, six Suffolk students engage in a weekly commitment to Action for Boston Community Development's Allston Brighton Head Start Program.

**Need for an IMP Amendment.**

The University currently offers 1,286 beds in its residence halls. Based upon recent freshman class size, the number who choose to live on campus and the retention into the sophomore year, Suffolk estimates that there is need for at least an additional 400 beds at this time. As evidenced by market forces, a location that offers this range of capacity is not readily accessible in the Downtown core. This demand has caused Suffolk University to retain the services of Colliers International to explore sites and facilities beyond the historic Boston Downtown core of the University.

Suffolk's goal in identifying additional sites for supervised student housing during the term of the Renewal IMP is consistent with Mayor Walsh's housing plan: Housing a Changing City: Boston 2030. Suffolk agrees with Mayor Walsh that the creation of new student dormitories will relieve the pressures on the existing housing stock and will preserve and recapture housing

units for Boston's workforce. As noted in Boston 2030: "An important part of Boston's workforce housing production strategy must include reducing the pressure students create in the rental housing market. Assuming stable enrollments, for every three additional students housed in dorm beds, approximately one unit of rental housing is returned to the workforce housing market. Therefore, student housing creation is a critical relief value for Boston's rental housing market."

The Mayor's goal is also Suffolk's goal and is reflected in its proposal to use on an interim temporary basis the existing student residential facility at 1047 Commonwealth Avenue in the Allston/Brighton neighborhood, as noted below. For example, based on current University statistics, there are approximately 210 Suffolk University students living in the Allston/Brighton neighborhood. The immediate availability of 1047 Commonwealth Avenue will have a positive impact in reducing the number of off-campus student housing units with on-campus housing units, and thus reduce the pressure on workforce housing. Additionally, Suffolk has agreed to offer to its Allston/Brighton residents currently or planning to live in off-campus apartments a preference in the selection of units at 1047 Commonwealth Avenue, which will further reduce the pressure on workforce housing in Boston.

Suffolk University has the potential opportunity of utilizing for an interim period the building at 1047 Commonwealth Avenue in the Allston/Brighton section of Boston, which is presently used for student housing. The University views the 1047 Commonwealth Avenue property as a short-term solution as it undertakes a longer-term housing strategy. As a result, Suffolk University has filed this amendment to amend the existing Suffolk IMP to allow for the temporary use of this facility at 1047 Commonwealth Avenue.

**Amendment: The 1047 Commonwealth Avenue Project.**

Suffolk proposes to lease the residential portions of floors one through six of the building at 1047 Commonwealth Avenue for a term of 2 years (with one (2) year renewal option) to provide temporary housing for up to 350 students. During this time, the building will be managed as part of the Suffolk University residence life program, including resident assistants and 24/7 security at the front door. The property at 1047 Commonwealth Avenue was previously used by Boston University as a temporary student residence hall. The Site is located within a Community Commercial subdistrict (CC-2) of the Allston/Brighton neighborhood and is located within a Greenbelt Protection Overlay District. Variances for height, FAR, dimensional, use, parking, and loading requirements were previously granted to the Site owner to develop the building.

The site contains a six-story, 98,286 square foot structure with commercial uses on the ground floor and residential units on floors one through six. The basement provides parking spaces for 40 vehicle and bicycles. The residential floors include 180 apartment-style units including ten single-occupancy rooms and 170 double-occupancy rooms. Each unit is equipped with a full kitchen and a washer/dryer. Operating as apartment-style student residence, Suffolk University intends to lease the residential portions of floors one through six of the structure for a term beginning in August 2018 and terminating in June 2020. During the lease term, Suffolk University will accommodate up to 350 students including up to ten (10) student Resident Assistants. The non-residential portions of the basement and ground floor of the Site will not be leased by the University.

<b>1047 Commonwealth Avenue</b>	
Location	1047 Commonwealth Avenue
Site Area	20,613 square feet
Existing Use	Temporary Student Residence

Proposed Use	Temporary Student Residence
Proposed Maximum Height	Six Stories (69 feet)
Proposed Maximum Building Area	98,286
Proposed Maximum FAR	4.77
Current Zoning	CC-2

The temporary use of the Site for student housing will have negligible effects on the surrounding community. The Site is well served by transportation infrastructure including the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Agency (“MBTA”) Green Line B, the MBTA Route 57 Bus.

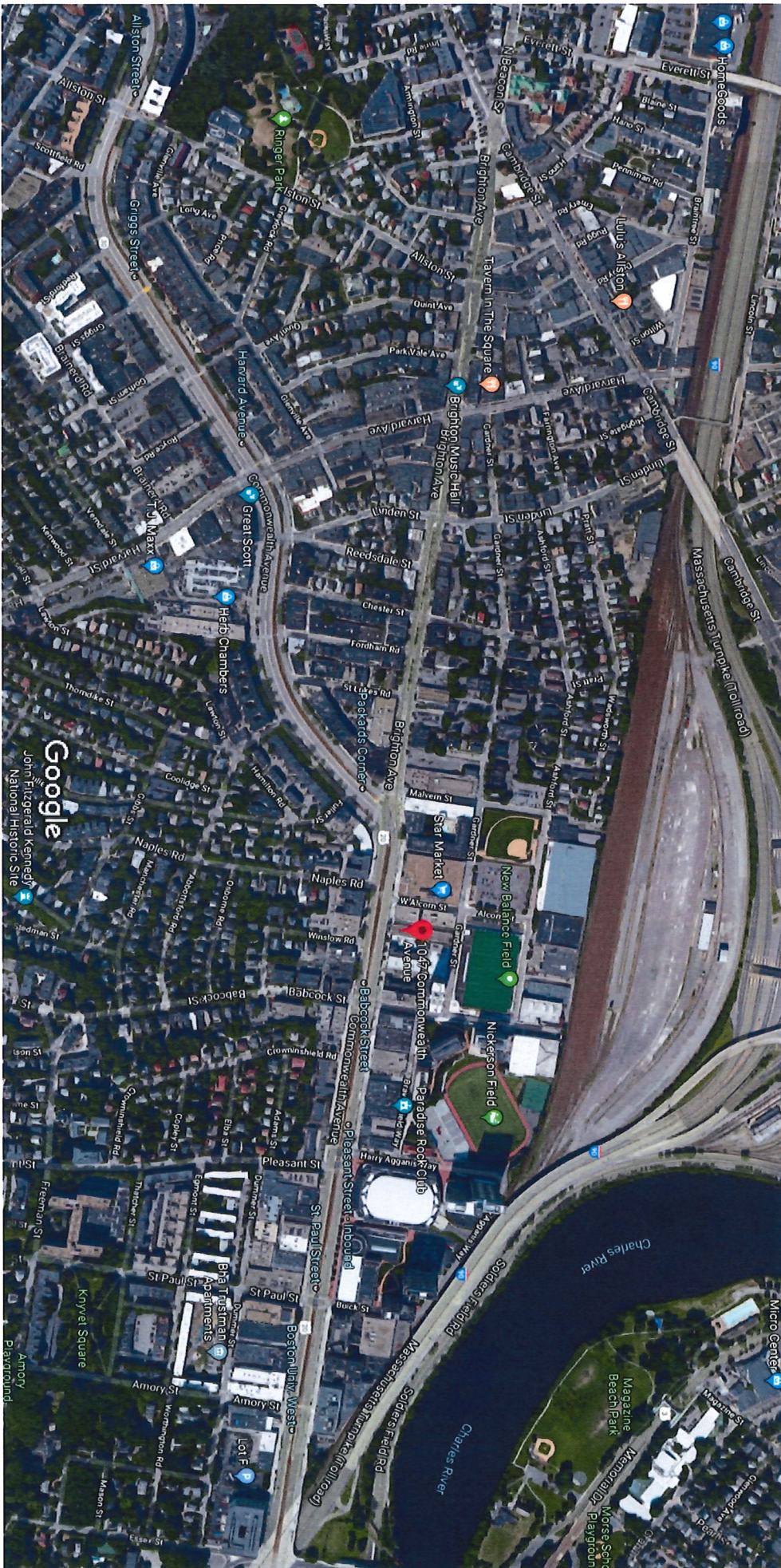
The structure is currently used as a Student Residence and no community residents will be displaced by the University’s lease of the space. The ground floor and basement parking will not be leased by the University. The structure’s interior configuration will not require any alteration in order to be used by the University. The University will use the leased space of the structure as is, requiring only the moving of furniture and wireless internet connections on the residential floors. A security checkpoint for access to the residential floors will be accommodated in the lobby of the building on the ground floor in accordance with the University’s security protocols.

Illustrations of the 1047 Commonwealth Avenue property are attached hereto as exhibits.

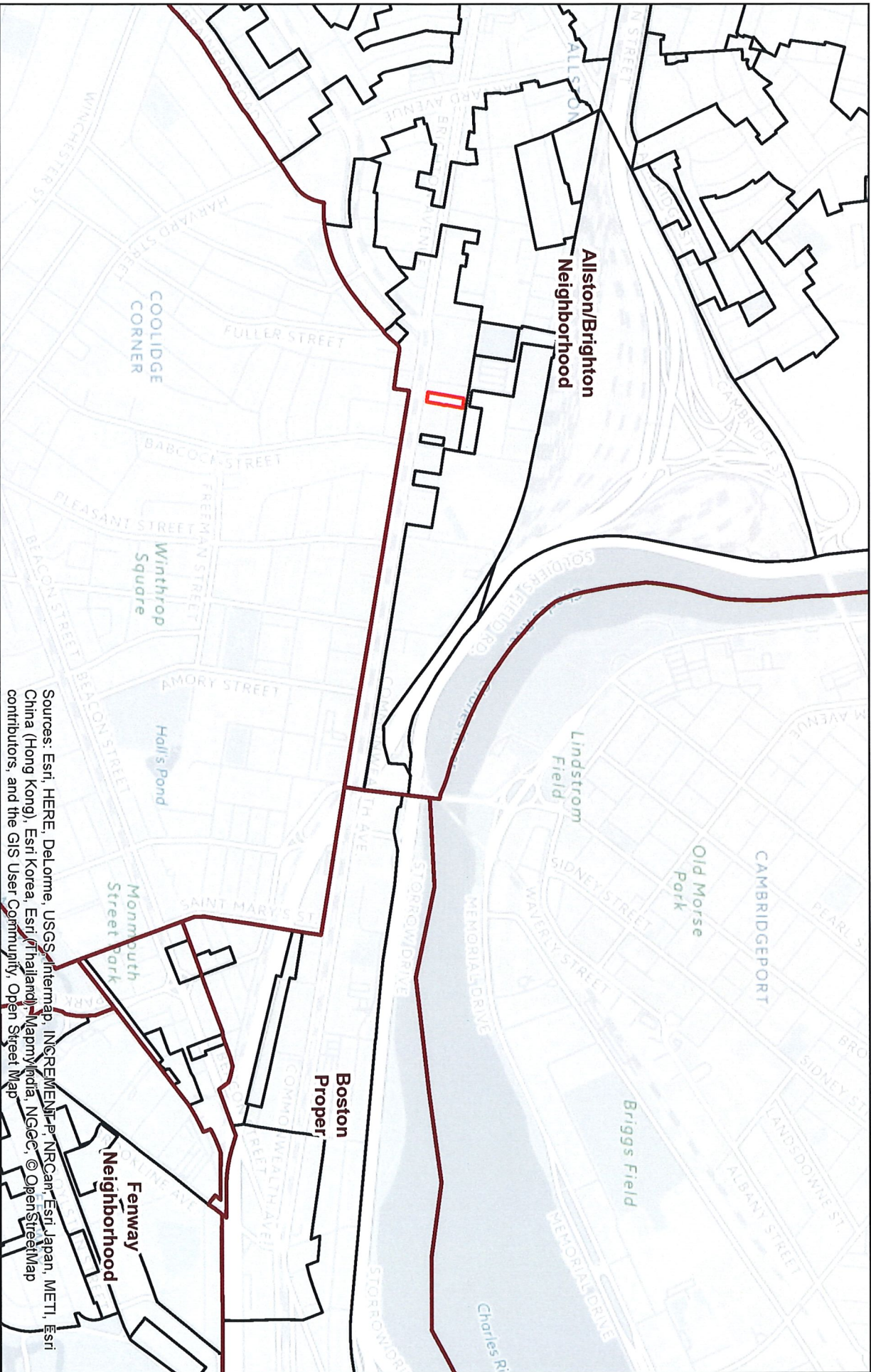
**Requested Action.**

This Amendment meets the requirements of Section 80D-9 and Section 80D-5.4. A sixty (60) day comment period will commence upon the filing of a public notice of the filing of this Amendment pursuant to Section 80D-5.4(b) of the Code.

# Google Maps 1047 Commonwealth Avenue



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- Zoning District
- Zoning Subdistrict

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The Zoning Information reported here may not reflect the most current legislation adopted by the Boston Zoning Commission. The signed Code Maps, enacted by the Boston Zoning Commission and available at the BZCA, together with any amendments, remain the official Zoning documents. If discrepancies exist, the official signed Code Maps shall be considered correct.



Date: 11/8/2017

