

Charlestown Zoning Amendment Fact Sheet

The proposed Zoning Amendments are designed to advance the goals and policy recommendations of the Draft PLAN: Charlestown (PLAN). The zoning amendments codify the land use, design, and dimensional regulations proposed in the PLAN and simplify and streamline the articles so they are more user-friendly. They include changes to Articles 62, the Charlestown Neighborhood Article; 42B, the Harborpark District Charlestown Waterfront Article; and 58, the City Square Neighborhood Article.

For this fact sheet, the recommendations are organized into four categories: Definitions, Rezoning of Sullivan Square and Rutherford Ave Study Area, Zoning to Support Design, and Minor Zoning Modifications. PLAN: Charlestown in Chapter 3: Sullivan Square + Rutherford Ave Planning Framework and Chapter 7: Implementation of the PLAN provide additional insight into the zoning proposals.

Definitions

Introduce two new dimensional regulations to advance the PLAN's climate resiliency and open space goals.

Lot coverage: The percentage of Lot Area covered by the footprints of all Structures on the Lot other than Structures excluded by this definition. The calculation of Lot Coverage excludes retaining walls, fences, and similar structures.

Permeable Area of Lot: The area of a Lot covered by permeable surfaces that capture or absorb water runoff into the ground. Surfaces included in the calculation of Permeable Lot Area include, but are not limited to, vegetative landscapes, permeable pavers, porous asphalt, and stormwater controls such bioswales and rain gardens. The calculation of Permeable Lot Area excludes permeable surfaces located on a roof or elsewhere on or in a Structure.

Rezoning of Sullivan Square and Rutherford Ave

The land within the Sullivan Square and Rutherford Ave Zoning Study Area is currently zoned almost exclusively for Light Industrial uses, with the exception of Bunker Hill Community College (BHCC), which is zoned for 'Community Facilities'. To promote future

growth in this area, address the demand for housing, open space, and a new transportation network, and respond to community feedback for mixed-use development, three new subdistricts are proposed within the area: Mixed-Use, Commercial, and Neighborhood Shopping - 1 Subdistricts. The dimensional and land use parameters of each subdistrict are structured to advance and implement PLAN: Charlestown's ambitious open space, mobility, and climate resilience goals (e.g. Green Loop, new parks, and new streets).

The majority of the study area is comprised of *very large* parcels of land, typically greater than 1 acre. The size of the parcels provides an exciting opportunity for this area to meet the PLAN's goals through coordinated and strategic development proposals. Underlying zoning cannot adequately accommodate and/or anticipate the PLANS' open space and mobility recommendations, particularly given the parcels' size and variability.

Consequently, the proposed dimensions in the underlying zoning are more restrictive than that envisioned in PLAN: Charlestown and therefore incentivize the use of the Planned Development Area (PDA) zoning tool, and the underlying properties are added to districts eligible for a PDA. The PDA is a tool that establishes special zoning controls for parcels over 1 acre, and is frequently used for complex projects, such as multi-building development, and those that deliver significant new open spaces like the Green Loop.

The dimensional and land use parameters of each subdistrict within the zoning study area are detailed below.

Mixed Use Subdistrict

| Mixed-Use Subdistrict | |
|---|--|
| Underlying Zoning | Planned Development Area (PDA) |
| <p>5 Mixed-Use Subdistricts (MU-1, MU-2, MU-3, MU-4, MU-5) differentiated by FAR and height based on PLAN: Charlestown</p> <p>Maximum FAR and height for each Mixed-Use Subdistrict intend to encourage the use of PDAs for the areas with very large parcels (>20,000 sqft)</p> | <p>7 PDAs differentiated by FAR and height based on PLAN: Charlestown</p> <p>Maximum FAR and height for each PDA-eligible area increase density, particularly near transit stops, while remaining sensitive to existing built context</p> <p>Projects containing a residential use within 1,000 feet of a transit station are eligible for a 1.0 increase to their maximum FAR</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Maximum lot coverage and minimum permeable area of lot intend to encourage the use of PDAs for the areas with very large parcels (>20,000 sqft)</p> <p>Blend of residential, commercial, community services, and cultural uses</p> <p>Research and Developments uses (i.e. labs) forbidden to encourage the use of PDAs for developments with lab proposals</p> <p>Front and rear yard setbacks create opportunities for street improvements (e.g. bike lanes and accessible sidewalks)</p> | <p>Minimum permeable area of lot promotes resiliency and open space goals of the PLAN</p> <p>Required public benefit options advance goals of the PLAN</p> |
|---|--|

Commercial Subdistrict

| Commercial Subdistrict | |
|---|--|
| Underlying Zoning | Planned Development Area (PDA) |
| <p>2 Commercial Subdistricts (C-1,C-2) differentiated by FAR and height</p> <p>Maximum FAR and height for each Commercial Subdistrict intend to encourage the use of PDAs for the areas with very large parcels (>1 acre)</p> <p>Restrictive lot coverage and permeable area of lot intend to encourage use of PDAs for the areas with very large parcels (>1 acre)</p> <p>Blend of commercial, community services, and cultural uses</p> <p>Residential uses forbidden</p> | <p>2 PDAs differentiated by FAR and height</p> <p>Maximum FAR and height for each PDA-eligible area intend to increase density, while remaining sensitive to existing built context</p> <p>Minimum permeable area of lot promotes resiliency and open space goals of the PLAN</p> <p>Required public benefit options advance goals of the PLAN</p> |

| Local Industrial - 1 Subdistrict | |
|--|--|
| Underlying Zoning | Planned Development Area |
| <p>1 Local Industrial Subdistricts (LI-1)</p> <p>Restrictive FAR and height for Local Industrial Subdistrict to encourage the use of PDAs for the areas with very large parcels (>1 acre)</p> <p>Restrictive lot coverage and permeable area of lot intend to encourage use of PDAs for the areas with very large parcels (>1 acre)</p> <p>Blend of light industrial, commercial, and community service uses</p> <p>Residential uses forbidden</p> | <p>1 PDA</p> <p>Maximum heights and FARs for each PDA area intend to increase density, while remaining sensitive to existing built context</p> <p>Minimum permeable area of lot promotes resiliency and open space goals of the PLAN</p> |

Neighborhood Shopping - 1

This subdistrict does not have very large parcels so the use of a PDA is not a necessity to support development.

| Neighborhood Shopping - 1 Subdistrict | |
|--|---|
| Underlying Zoning | Planned Development Area (PDA) |
| <p>1 Neighborhood Shopping Subdistrict</p> <p>Maximum FAR, height, and minimum setbacks intend to increase density, while remaining sensitive to adjacent residential neighborhood</p> <p>Maximum lot coverage and minimum permeable area of lot promote resiliency and open space goals of the PLAN</p> <p>Blend of residential, retail, and community service uses</p> <p>Residential uses conditional on ground floor</p> | <p>1 PDA</p> <p>Maximum FAR and height intend to increase density, while remaining sensitive to adjacent residential neighborhood</p> <p>Minimum permeable area of lot promotes resiliency and open space goals of the PLAN</p> |

Minor Zoning Modifications

1. Reduce restrictions on arts, culture, and essential retail uses in Multifamily (MFR) and Neighborhood Shopping (NS) subdistricts. Analysis in Chapter 2 of this PLAN highlights the need for uses like laundromats, gyms, pharmacies, and dining in Charlestown. Current land use regulations hinder these additions.

2. Make residential uses 'Conditional' on ground floor levels of the Neighborhood Shopping (NS) subdistricts. This recommendation, based on the retail and food security analysis from Chapter 2, intends to reduce existing pressure on the real estate market to convert retail spaces into housing units, which has led to the loss of several retail spaces in the neighborhood in recent years.

3. Update the boundaries of the NS districts to better reflect where retail and residential uses actually exist by removing blocks with entirely residential uses from the NS subdistricts. Additionally, consolidate the Local Convenience Subdistrict into the Neighborhood Shopping Subdistrict. This proposed consolidation will make Charlestown's zoning code simpler to use by reducing the number of subdistricts without substantially changing the uses of the areas within the LC subdistricts. Local Convenience and Neighborhood share the same dimensional regulations and very similar use tables.

4. Consolidate the City Square and Charlestown Neighborhood Zoning Districts. This proposed consolidation will make Charlestown's zoning simpler to use by reducing the number of places property owners need to refer to when trying to understand the rules that govern what can happen on their land.

5. Introduce additional dimensional regulations in Charlestown General Industrial Subdistrict and Mystic River Waterfront Manufacturing Subdistrict to promote predictable and contextual growth, and desired public benefits through PDAs.

Zoning to Support Design

1. Limit garage entrances facing public streets. Walking along garage doors is monotonous, can be unsafe due to vehicles crossing the sidewalk, and often requires the removal of trees and the addition of curb cuts. This change to the zoning code would promote garage doors to face alleys or to be concealed from the public street.

2. Remove off-street parking minimums for structures with 6 or fewer housing units. For structures with 7+ units, require one parking space per unit. Building on the recommendation that garage doors be limited, off-street parking minimums should be removed for smaller

structures, where they cause more curb cuts, and make it much more difficult for small homeowners to add units within their building envelope, like in-law apartments. This change will give homeowners more control over their structures, trigger less curb cuts, which take away on-street parking spaces, and discourages vehicular use.

3. Align parking minimums with the Boston Transportation Department's (BTD) parking policy. BTD has developed parking policies that take into account many factors, including quantity and quality of transit service, overall land use mix, and locations of key amenities like grocery stores to establish different zones for parking across the City of Boston. When the BPDA is making other zoning updates, we update parking minimums in zoning to make sure they do not contradict these policies.

4. Simplify the Neighborhood Design Overlay District (NDOD). This recommendation is an opportunity to clean up the Charlestown Neighborhood District's zoning article, and bring it into alignment with the neighborhood's zoning map.

5. Simplify Charlestown's 2F and 3F subdistricts by converting the 2F-3000 and 3F-3000 subdistricts to be 3F-2000 subdistricts. In Charlestown there are three 2- and 3-family zoning subdistricts; however, the 3F-2000 subdistrict covers 95% of that area, and is the most in line with the built urban fabric that residents wish to see preserved and replicated in their neighborhood. This recommendation would bring all of these zones into alignment by making all of the areas 3F-2000 with shared zoning regulation.

6. Update the rear yard setback requirement for Row House subdistricts to be 15 feet. Rear yard requirements for row houses in Charlestown are between 25 and 30 feet, but most existing row houses have a rear yard between 10 and 15 feet. By updating the rear yard requirement to be 15 feet, infill developments and additions will be allowed to replicate the existing Charlestown row house building typology without seeking a rear yard variance, and existing structures would no longer be non-conforming for this zoning dimension.

This fact sheet highlights key changes in the zoning amendment and associated zoning maps. The Draft Articles 62, 42B, and 58 Zoning Amendments were posted on August 18, 2023. A public comment period on draft amendments will be open until September 6, 2023. Revised text amendments may then go to the BPDA Board on September 14, 2023 and then to the Boston Zoning Commission, following an additional 20 day comment period. Questions and comments can be submitted by phone at 617.918.4496 or via email to astrid.walker-stewart@boston.gov.