

# Squares + Streets

## Final Meeting on Zoning Text Amendment

*Proposed zoning updates for Boston's main streets +  
neighborhood centers*

**Public Meeting**

# Zoom Controls to Listen to Interpreters

**(EN)** Look for the interpretation icon (**globe**) at the bottom of your screen and select the language you want to hear.

**(Caboverdean)** Djobe íkune di interpretason (**un globu**) na parti inferior di tela y sesiona bu língua ki bu kre skuta reunion.

**(Kreyòl Ayisyen)** Chèche ikòn entèpretasyon ki gen fòm (**glòb**) anba ekran ou an epi seleksyone lang ou vle tandè a.

**(Español)** Busque el ícono de la interpretación (**globo**) en el borde inferior de su pantalla y seleccione el idioma en el que desea escuchar.

**(Tiếng Việt)** Tìm biểu tượng phiên dịch (**hình quả địa cầu**) ở phía cuối màn hình của bạn và chọn ngôn ngữ bạn muốn nghe.

**(简体中文)** 查找屏幕底部的翻译图标 (地球仪) , 然后选择您想听到的语言。

**(繁體中文)** 查找屏幕底部的翻譯圖標 (地球儀) , 然後選擇您想听到的語言。



# Zoom Meeting Info + Tips

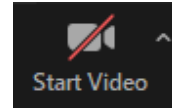
- **The BPDA will be recording this meeting** and posting it on the BPDA's project webpage. If you do not wish to be recorded during the meeting, please turn off your microphone and camera.
- **Zoom controls are available at the bottom of your screen.** Clicking on these symbols activates different features.
- **Use raise hand function** (dial \*9 if joining by phone) **and wait to be called upon to unmute** (dial \*6 if joining by phone) before asking your question or providing comment.



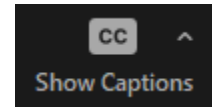
Mute/unmute



Raise hand to get in line to ask a question or provide comment



Turn video on/off



Turn on captions

# Please Ask for Clarification!

## Ask questions in the chat along the way!

Our staff are available to answer during the presentation.

## Ask for us to clarify any terms or concepts we discuss!

We want to make sure that what we cover is accessible to everyone so you can all share your informed feedback.



# Squares + Streets Zoning Team

**Will Cohen**, Senior Planner II

**Jack Halverson**, Planner II

**Adam Johnson**, Urban Designer

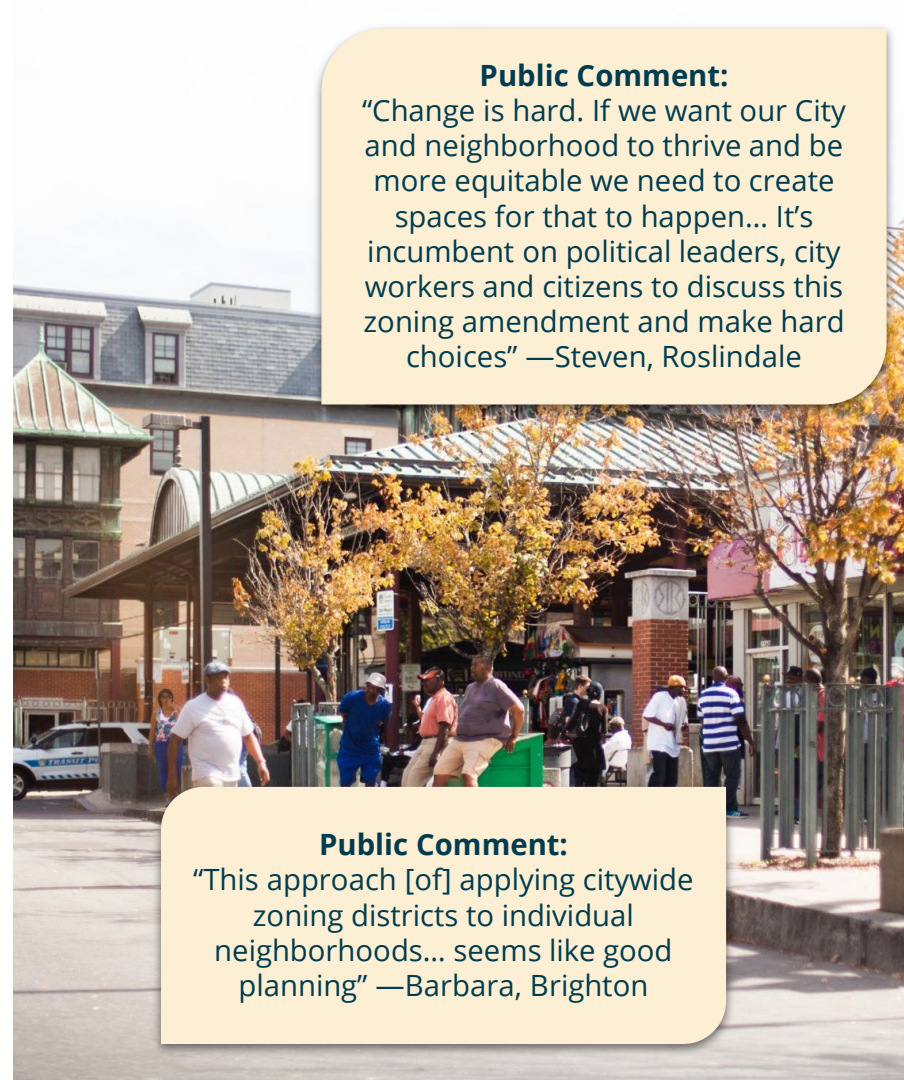
**Maya Kattler-Gold**, Planner I

**Eileen Michaud**, Planner II

**Andrew Nahmias**, Senior Planner II

**Abdul-Razak Zachariah**, Planner I

**Kathleen Onufer**, Deputy Director of Zoning



## **Public Comment:**

“Change is hard. If we want our City and neighborhood to thrive and be more equitable we need to create spaces for that to happen... It’s incumbent on political leaders, city workers and citizens to discuss this zoning amendment and make hard choices” —Steven, Roslindale

## **Public Comment:**

“This approach [of] applying citywide zoning districts to individual neighborhoods... seems like good planning” —Barbara, Brighton

# Agenda

## Presentation of Updates to the Squares + Streets Zoning Text Amendment (45 min)

1. Process: Where We Are Today
2. What is Coming in the Small Area Plan Process
  - a. Beyond Zoning w/ Mattapan Examples
3. Specific Changes Made to the Draft
4. Next Steps
5. **Questions and Comments (75 min)**



### Public Comment:

“I would like to buy a home in Boston one day.” —Charlie, Jamaica Plain

### Public Comment:

“This will allow existing residents to stay in their community and for new folks to join! A true win-win for Boston” —Michael, Fenway

# Timeline for S+S Zoning Phase 1

**“The first step, to...be able to talk about each neighborhood, is to put these building blocks into the zoning code”**

— Mayor Wu, at Hyde Park Neighborhood Association Meeting on 1/29/24, in discussion about advancing Phase 1 of Squares + Streets

**Public Comment:**  
“I hope this process is not slowed down”  
— Stefan, Brighton

**Public Comment:**  
“It is unclear to me why the BPDA is rushing to enact this zoning amendment as a necessary precondition for local planning.”  
— James, Hyde Park

**Public Comment:**  
“Please I need more time to comprehend the amendment.”  
— Anne, Hyde Park

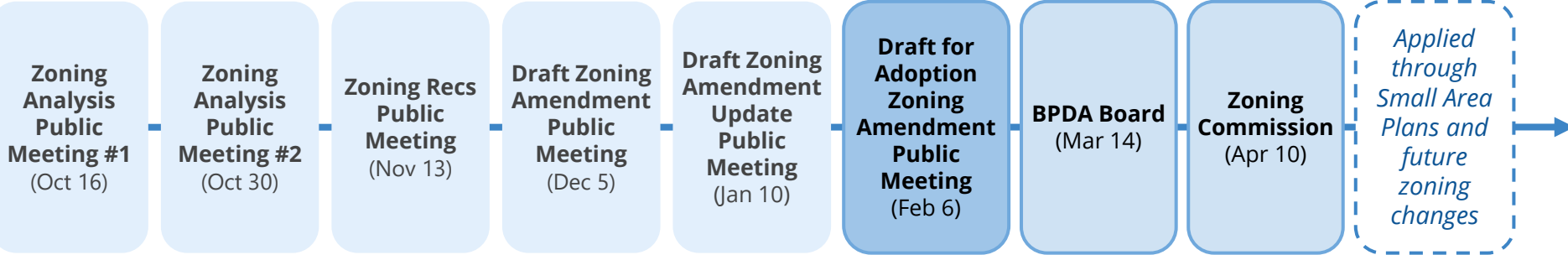
**Public Comment:**  
“I sincerely hope these processes will indeed move quickly as planned.”  
— Ben, Roslindale

**Public Comment:**  
“The process is being rushed to fruition with little to no consideration of residents concerns.”  
— Jeanne, West Roxbury

**Public Comment:**  
“What is the hurry? We need at least 90 days, a reasonable time to inform our neighbors, to work with you, to do outreach...”  
— Mimi, Hyde Park

# Squares + Streets Zoning Timeline

Where we  
are today



- This week we will be releasing:
  - an **updated draft, with changes annotated** this week.
  - all of the public comment received during the **comment period, with responses**, this week.
- We have **scheduled additional office hours** over the next month to provide further opportunities to explain the proposed zoning, including responding to detailed questions.
- We will not be making major revisions or creating a new comment period during this time.
- Public comment is of course always collected for the BPDA Board and the Zoning Commission.
- The Zoning Commission includes a public hearing, where anyone can give 2 min testimony.





# Squares + Streets Districts: Article 26

- **6 pages of new zoning text** for 6 new districts.
- **Use regulations** are in Article 8, with district-specific use and performance standards in this Article.
- **Dimensional regulations** include lot standards and building form standards.
- **Included new definitions** that will be located in Article 2

color code key: **new district**, **all other changes**

## ARTICLE 26 - SQUARES + STREETS DISTRICTS

### Section 26-1 Purpose of Squares + Streets Districts

Squares + Streets Districts are areas characterized by a mix of uses, significant transit service, and high levels of pedestrian activity. The purpose of these districts is to support and increase the mix of uses, support walkability, encourage adaptive reuse, and designate areas as appropriate for infill development and housing supply growth, to be delivered as the result of coordinated City planning and investment. These district types and their purposes are listed here in order of intensity:

- The S-0 Transition Residential district is primarily a residential district that provides a transition from mixed-use and high activity squares and streets to lower activity residential areas. Transition Residential offers some flexibility in use but articulates the edges of the higher density growth areas. Residential uses are limited to no more than 14 dwelling units and have lot coverage, yard, and permeable area of lot dimensional requirements.
- The S-1 Main Street Living district is a mixed-use district with majority residential uses and small to moderate square footage on individual floors of buildings. Buildings may include small-scale storefronts or offices on the ground floor in addition to residential uses. Small-scale side and front yards provide a buffer with lower and higher scale areas.
- The S-2 Main Street Mixed Use district allows for medium-scale buildings with facades that fill the front of the lot to help create a continuous and active main street.
- The S-3 Active Main Street district includes Main Street mixed-use buildings that allow residential, hospitality, and commercial uses on upper floors. The district accommodates larger-scale ground floor destinations and introduces requirements for active uses on the ground floor. Medium-scale buildings are allowed in the district, with zero-lot-line conditions.
- The S-4 Active Squares district is characterized by medium-scale mixed-use buildings with a wide range of active ground floor uses. Upper floors in this district can be residential or commercial, but dwelling units are not allowed on the ground floor primary street frontage.
- The S-5 Placemaker Squares district is intended for areas in the heart of business corridors or closest to transit. With high street frontages, this district punctuates density and/or urban design. Commercial, hospitality, and entertainment uses are allowed throughout the building and active uses are required on the ground floor.

### Section 26-2. - Establishment of Squares + Streets Districts

- This Section 26-2, taken with Section 3-1 (Establishment of Zoning Districts) establishes six Squares + Streets districts (S0, S1, S2, S3, S4, and S5).** A Squares + Streets District is indicated by any abbreviation "S0", "S1", "S2", "S3", "S4", or "S5" on any official zoning map of the City of Boston. The provisions of this Article and the remainder of the Code constitute the zoning regulations in a Squares + Streets District. Where conflicts exist between a provision of this Article and the remainder of the Code, the provision of this Article shall govern, unless this Article specifically indicates otherwise.
- Use Regulations Applicable in Squares + Streets Districts**  
Use regulations for Squares + Streets districts are set forth in Article 8 of this code. Additional use and performance standards are set forth in Table A of this Article.
- Dimensional Regulations Applicable in Squares + Streets Districts**  
Dimensional Regulations for Squares + Streets districts are set forth in Table B of this Article.

# Land Use Modernization: Article 8

- **17 pages of new zoning text** that modernizes existing text across the code.
- Our **long-term vision** is this will be the only use table in the code.
- With one use table, we can make **timely amendments** as new uses that need to be regulated arise or change.
- Other minor changes include deleting districts and a use (payphone exchange) that no longer exist.

color code key: **new district**, **removed ground floor restrictions**, **all other changes**

*Portions of the current Zoning Code have been rearranged to improve the Code's structure. Notes explaining this draft's relationship to the current Code are found in brackets above each section.*

## ARTICLE 8 REGULATION OF USES

*[current Section 8-1 and beginning of Section 8-7]*

### Section 8-1. Uses Regulated by Districts.

In each district the use of land and structures is hereby regulated as provided in the following sections.

No land or structure shall be erected, used, or arranged or designed to be used, in whole or in part, except in conformity with the following tables and provisions or as otherwise provided in regulations pertaining to **a district or a special purpose overlay district within this Code**, **special purpose overlay district**, **neighborhood district**, **downtown district**, **waterfront service district**, **waterfront manufacturing district**, **light manufacturing district**, or the **Harborport District**.

*[current Section 8-2, Section 8-3, Section 8-4, Section 8-5, and Section 10-1 and 10-3]*

### Section 8-2. General Use Provisions.

- 1. Allowed Uses.** In any applicable district, land or structures may be used for specific purposes where such use is allowed and designated "A," "A\*," "A-G," or "A-G\*" in Table A or Table B of Article 8.
- 2. Conditional Uses.** In any applicable district, land or structures may be used for specific purposes where such use is conditional and designated "C," "C\*," "C-G," or "C-G\*" in Table A or Table B of Article 8, upon receipt of a conditional use permit from the Board of Appeal. The procedures and conditions required for receiving such permit can be found in Article 6. The continued right to a conditional use is dependent upon maintaining the character and extent of operations and structures.
- 3. Forbidden Uses.** In any applicable district, no land or structure may be used for specific purposes where such use is forbidden and designated "F" in Table A and Table B of Article 8, unless such land or structure is allowed as a nonconforming use under the provisions of Article 9.
- 4. Uses Subject to Other Regulations.** Allowed and conditional uses shall be subject to dimensional regulations, provisions for off-street parking and loading, and to such other provisions as are specified in other sections of this code. Uses designated in Table A of this Article 8 as "A\*," "A-G\*," "C-G\*," or "C\*" are subject to any applicable Use and Performance Standards provisions identified in the corresponding district article.
- 5. Accessory Uses.** The following provisions apply to any Accessory Use.
  - a) General Accessory Use Provisions.** Unless otherwise defined as a distinct accessory use in Table A, any use that is allowed as a principal use in a District in Table A is also allowed as an accessory use in such district. For each District in Table A, an accessory use ordinarily incident to a lawful principal use is allowed, subject to the provisions of Section 8-3 unless such use is:
    - (i)** defined as a distinct accessory use in Table A; and

# Other Amendments

- Include **existing zoning text** that is unchanged alongside insertions for **full transparency**: this is why the amendment is long.
- **Clerical changes**: adding S+S districts to those subject to sign regulations, parking standards, administrative rules of the code, etc.
- Where existing text has errors (past omissions, provisions that do not match city/state requirements) we have updated them.

**ARTICLE 2**

**Adj. Abutting.** To be next to or share a common boundary with a building or an area of land such as a lot, street, or zoning district.

**Adj. Blank wall of facade.** The continuous width of a portion of the ground floor building facade that fronts a Primary Lot Frontage which does not have windows or entrances that pedestrians can pass through.

**Amend. Story, First.** The lowest story of which sixty-five percent (65%) or more of the height is above grade. See also Ground Floor.

**Adj. Ground Floor.** The lowest story of which sixty-five percent (65%) or more of the height is above grade. See also Story, First.

**Adj. Ground Floor Active Use Depth.** The depth of interior space devoted to an Active Use, as defined in Article 8, Table A, on the ground floor of a building, measured as the distance from the building facade towards the interior of the building.

**Adj. Outdoor amenity space.** A space open to the outdoor all directly accessed from the ground floor or upper stories of a building and/or a pedestrian accessway, that is intended to be used for active or passive recreational use such as playing, gathering, and seating by building occupants and/or the public. Overhead structures that provide shade or protection from the elements, but are otherwise open to the outdoor air, such as pergolas and canopies, may be included as part of outdoor amenity space.

Types of spaces that shall count towards outdoor amenity space include:

1. Publicly Accessible Open Space, as defined in Article 8; or
2. New portions of public sidewalks created within the lot line; or
3. Outdoor space for tenants or customers, including restaurant, or cafe seating or outdoor event and performance areas; or
4. Publicly accessible through-block pedestrian connections of a width not less than ten (10) feet, or
5. Private amenity space intended to be used primarily by the building occupants, such as porches, interior courtyards, shared gardens, playgrounds, shared terraces, and/or programmed or landscaped yards, provided that such spaces have an unobstructed

5

horizontal parapet, the top of said parapet.

- (c) A permanent non-illuminated sign on the inside of the glass of a window, provided that the total area of the sign does not exceed thirty percent of the total glass area of windows appurtenant to the use to which the sign is accessory, and provided that signs on ground floor windows be included in calculating the total area of signs on a sign frontage.
- (d) A sign attached at right angles to a building, provided that such sign has no more than two faces and
  - (i) there is no more than one such sign for each entrance door to a business establishment;
  - (ii) it projects no more than six feet, plus a reasonable allowance for field fastening, from the building;
  - (iii) the sign advertises a use which occupies at least 15 feet of sign frontage;
  - (iv) the bottom of the sign is at least ten feet from grade and its top is no higher than whichever of the following is lowest: twenty-five feet above grade; the top of the sills of the first level of windows above the first story; or the lowest point of the roof surface, except in the case of a one-story building with a continuous horizontal parapet, the top of said parapet;
  - (v) the area of the sign shall not exceed twenty-four square feet on either side, excepting that an additional ten square feet on each face is allowed for a sign which incorporates a public service message device such as a time and temperature sign;
  - (vi) there are no exposed guy wires or turnbuckles.
- (e) One free standing sign, except in a B-2, B-3-65, B-4, B-6-90a, B-6-90b, B-8, B-9-120a, B-9-120b, B-120c, B-10, S0, S1, S2, S3, S4, or S5 district, or the Harborpark District, provided that such sign has no more than two faces and
  - (i) if there is one use, as defined by Article 8, on the lot, the area of each face does not exceed sixty-five square feet and the top of such sign is no higher than twenty-five feet above grade; or
  - (ii) if there are two or more such uses on the lot, the area of each face does not exceed one hundred twenty-five square feet and the top of such sign does not exceed thirty feet above grade; excepting, however, that a lot with a street line or lines of two hundred or more feet may have two free standing signs, or a single sign which is two times the area otherwise permitted.

## Article 11

(f) **Neighborhood Districts**  
See **Appendix A to this article for a list of Neighborhood Districts.**

Allston-Brighton Neighborhood District	Hyde Park Neighborhood District
Audubon Circle Neighborhood District	Jamaica Plain Neighborhood District
Bay Village Neighborhood District	Massachusetts College of Pharmacy Institutional District
Beth Israel Hospital Institutional District	Mission Hill Neighborhood District
Charlestown Neighborhood District	New England Deaconess Hospital Institutional District
<b>City Square Neighborhood District</b>	<b>Newmarket 21st Century Industrial District</b>
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute Institutional District	North End Neighborhood District
Dorchester Avenue Neighborhood District	Roslindale Neighborhood District
Dorchester Neighborhood District	Roxbury Neighborhood District
East Boston Neighborhood District	Saint Vincent Neighborhood District
Fenway Neighborhood District	South End Neighborhood District
Greater Mattapan Neighborhood District	West Roxbury Neighborhood District

(e) **Harborpark District**  
(h) **Special District**  
Central Artery Special District

## Article 3

**Section 23-9. Design.**

All off-street parking facilities provided to comply with this Article shall meet the following specifications:

- (a) For parking facilities serving residential uses, curb cuts for access to said parking facilities shall not exceed 12 feet in width for two-way traffic with fewer than 50 spaces, and shall not exceed 24 feet in width for parking facilities with 50 or greater spaces.
- (b) For parking facilities serving non-residential uses, curb cuts for access to said parking facilities shall not exceed 12 feet in width for one-way driveways, and shall not exceed 24 feet in width for two-way driveways.
- (c) Such facilities shall have car spaces to the number specified by this Article, maneuvering areas and appropriate means of vehicular access to a street, and shall be so designed as not to constitute a nuisance or a hazard or unreasonable impediment to traffic, and all lighting shall be so arranged as to shine downward and away from streets and residences.
- (d) Such facilities, whether open or enclosed in a structure, shall be so graded, surfaced, drained and maintained as to prevent water and dust therefrom going upon any street or another lot.
- (e) Such facilities shall not be used for automobile sales, dead storage, or repair work, dismantling or servicing of any kind.
- (f) Each car space shall be located entirely on the lot. The dimensional requirements for parking spaces, not inclusive of Required Accessible Parking Spaces, are provided as follows:

Parking Angle	Maximum Width of Parking Space	Maximum Depth of Parking Space	Maximum Width of Drive Aisle for One-Way Traffic	Maximum Width of Drive Aisle for Two-Way Traffic
90 degrees	8'	20'	11'	20'
60°	8.5'	19'	10'	20'
30°	9.5'	18'	20'	24'

The following provisions shall only apply to Squares + Streets Districts.

- (a) Parking shall not immediately abut the public right of way, and is not allowed within the front yard.

## Article 23

# Tracking the Changes Made in Response to Public Comment

Changes to the 12/05 draft text amendment are annotated and highlighted in the following colors:

New district (S-5)

Removed ground floor use restrictions

All other changes

color code key: new district, removed ground floor restrictions, all other changes

Grocery Store - Large	F	F	C	C* <del>G</del>	A*	A*
Entertainment/Events - Extra Small	C-G	A-G	A-G	A-G*	A*	A*
Entertainment/Events - Small	F	A-G	A-G	A-G*	A*	A*
Entertainment/Events - Medium	F	F	C-G	A-G*	A*	A*
Entertainment/Events - Large	F	F	F	C*	C*	C*
Entertainment/Events - Extra Large	F	F	F	F	F	F
Makerspace	F	A <del>G</del>	A <del>G</del>	A* <del>G</del>	A*	A*
Museum or Art Gallery	F	A <del>G</del>	A <del>G</del>	A*	A*	A*
Restaurant - Small	C-G	A-G	A-G	A*	A*	A*

# How We've Gathered Feedback on the Zoning Text Amendment

## Additional Meetings + Focus Groups

Presented at community meetings held by neighborhood associations + community groups

**5 focus groups** with designers, small-scale developers, affordable housing developers

**2 workshops with** the Mayor's Youth Council and Office of Youth Engagement and Advancement's Community Council

## Community Office Hours

**22 hour-long office hours sessions** weekly in afternoons and evenings from week of Dec 5 through week of Jan 25

Notes from office hours taken as another opportunity to gather public comments **from over 35 residents**

## Public Comment Form and Submissions

Received written comments **from Dec 5 thru Feb 2**

Public comments are **shared weekly** in BPDA's Zoning Notices & Updates Newsletter

**200+ comments** received so far through the public comment form

**35 public comment letters** sent via email and mail

## Meetings + Office Hours with Other City Departments

### Including but not limited to:

- Inspectional Services Department
- Disabilities Commission
- Mayor's Office of Arts & Culture
- Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion
- Mayor's Office of Housing
- Licensing Board
- Boston Transportation Department
- Office of Green Infrastructure

# What We've Heard

**Over 200 comments** via the public comment form  
**35 comment letters** emailed or mailed in

## *Common themes:*

- 1. Comments on Squares + Streets zoning process and Small Area Plans:**
  - Concerns about the engagement and approval timeline
  - How will the zoning amendment apply to Small Area Plans and mapped to each area?
- 2. Comments on draft zoning text amendment:**
  - Land use and dimensional definitions
  - Regulation of uses in each district
  - Dimensional regulations
  - Need for an additional district (S-5)
  - Parking regulations
  - And more...

### **Public Comment:**

"Who decides whether or not to apply a certain overlay zoning district to a neighborhood? Is it the BPDA Board? Is it the neighborhood residents, and if so by what process?"

— James, Hyde Park

### **Public Comment:**

"[Need] strong protections and incentives for lacking cultural infrastructure, such as grocery stores in areas that lack them and protection for the hurting arts scene." —

Justin, Brighton

### **Public Comment:**

"Why are we requiring private outdoor amenities in S2-S4?"

— Joshua, Allston

An aerial photograph of a city street scene. The street is lined with buildings, including a prominent red brick building on the right. There are several cars and a yellow school bus on the road. The surrounding area is densely packed with trees, many of which have turned yellow and orange, indicating autumn. In the background, more city buildings and distant hills are visible under a blue sky with scattered clouds. A semi-transparent dark blue horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing white text.

# 1. Squares + Streets Zoning and Small Area Plan Process

# Zoning & Small Area Plans Process

We are here



## (1) ZONING OPTIONS

“Add tools to the toolbox”:  
Create options in citywide zoning to support Squares + Streets areas through a **zoning text amendment**.



## (2) SMALL AREA PLANS

Conduct **6-9 month planning processes (Small Area Plans)** that focus on individual squares and streets to convene the public and many City departments in cross-topic goal setting.



## IMPLEMENTATION

- **Map zoning:** Codify zoning recommendations into zoning map amendments.
- **Implement recommendations across City departments**



# Small Area Plan Process and Engagement

Small Area Plans will be **6-9 month processes** focused on community engagement with various stakeholders, education on key topics, conversations on technical analysis of these topics, and the generation of implementable recommendations including updated zoning and capital & program investments.

<b>MONTH 1</b>	<b>LISTEN &amp; PREPARE</b>	Connect with community to gather ideas for engagement and hear their experiences in the area
<b>MONTH 2-3</b>	<b>DEVELOP IDEAS</b>	Engage with community to understand goals and needs; collaborate with City departments to generate implementation options in response to feedback
<b>MONTH 4-5</b>	<b>REVIEW &amp; REFINE IDEAS</b>	Workshop draft recommendations with stakeholders and City partner departments
<b>MONTH 6</b>	<b>DRAFT PLAN</b>	Publish the plan for public review
<b>MONTH 7-9</b>	<b>TAKE ACTION</b>	Finalize new plan and start to implement recommendations across City departments

## Public Comment:

“Community engagement - the city needs to be open, honest and direct and acknowledge there are many opinions and voices in the city...”  
— Nia, Roslindale

## Public Comment:

“Because that engagement work has not yet concluded, the Squares and Streets process *\*must\** identify objective criteria for use in Small Area Plans.”  
— Stefanie, South Boston

## Public Comment:

“Existing small businesses need to be supported and engaged in planning review.”  
— Keoki, Roslindale

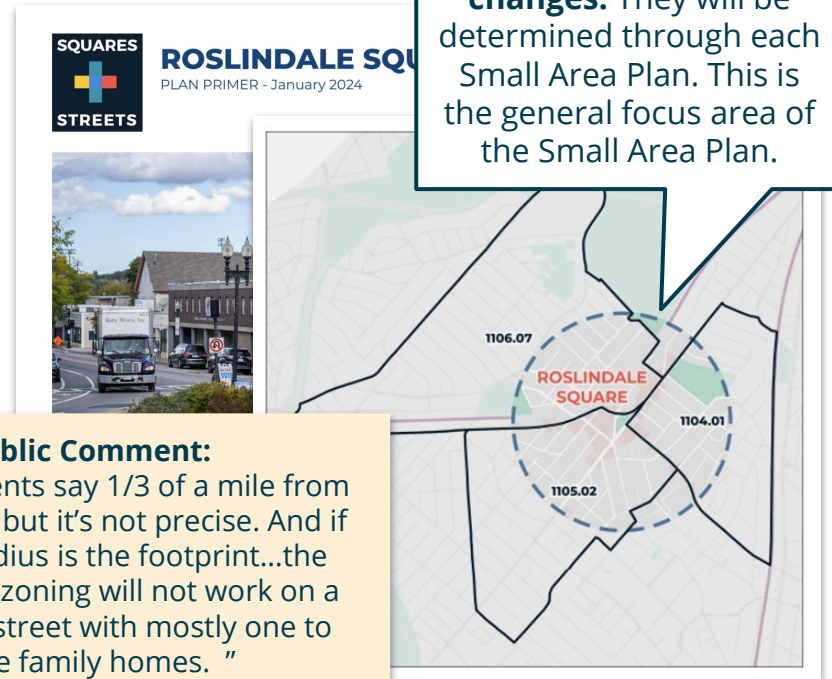
# How and where will zoning be applied in the Small Area Plan process?

Squares + Streets zoning districts will only be mapped to portions of each Small Area Plan focus area.

How, where, and which zoning districts are mapped will be based on public input and an analysis of:

- community needs
- the size and spatial characteristics of existing parcels and buildings, and current uses
- review of existing zoning, recent variances, and Article 80 projects

*Plan Primer:*



**This is not the boundary of future zoning changes.** They will be determined through each Small Area Plan. This is the general focus area of the Small Area Plan.

## **Public Comment:**

“The documents say 1/3 of a mile from the squares, but it’s not precise. And if 1/3 mile radius is the footprint...the form-based zoning will not work on a residential street with mostly one to three family homes. ”

— Jay, Hyde Park

# Example Squares + Streets Zoning in Mattapan

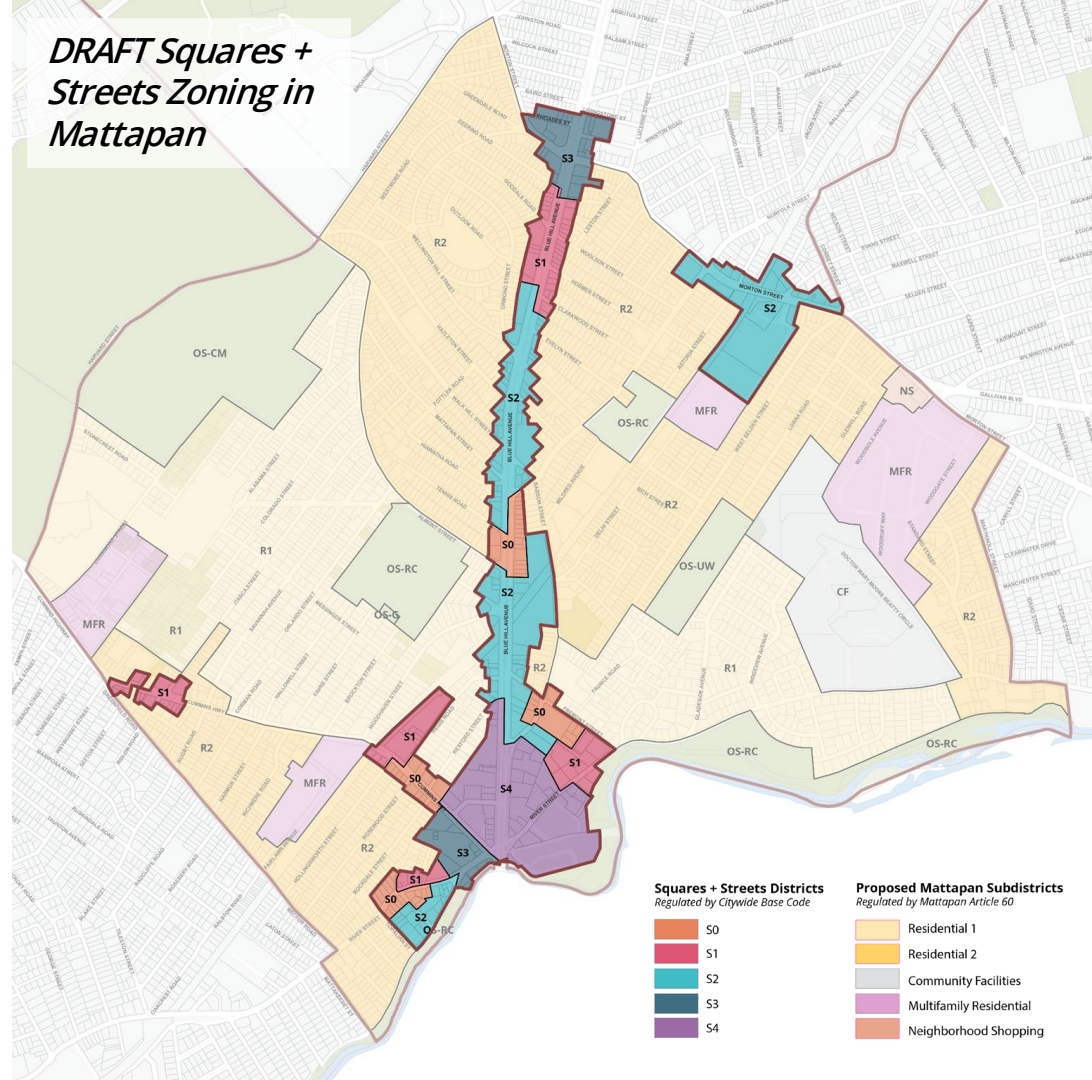
PLAN: Mattapan was **adopted in May 2023**.

The PLAN included **recommendations for new mixed-use and commercial zoning**.

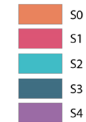
**Squares + Streets Zoning is the tool** for implementing those zoning recommendations.

For more information, visit [bit.ly/PLAN-Mattapan](https://bit.ly/PLAN-Mattapan)

## *DRAFT Squares + Streets Zoning in Mattapan*



**Squares + Streets Districts**  
Regulated by Citywide Base Code



**Proposed Mattapan Subdistricts**  
Regulated by Mattapan Article 60



A photograph of a city street scene. On the left, a white and yellow bus is stopped at a bus stop. A woman in a green jacket and black bag is walking on the sidewalk. In the background, there are various street signs, including a yellow diamond-shaped pedestrian crossing sign and a yellow rectangular sign with a black arrow pointing left. A man in a dark jacket is standing near a fire hydrant on the sidewalk. The sky is overcast.

## 2. Changes to the Draft Text Amendment

# Overall Changes We've Made to the Draft

- **Reintroduced S-5 District** - Placemaker Square (*Article 26*)
- **Refined dimensional regulations and related definitions** such as outdoor amenity space and upper story setback (*Article 2, Article 26*)
- **Updated use definitions** to add clarity where needed (*Article 8*)
- **Refined use table** based on feedback on what should be allowed, conditional, or forbidden in each district and restricted to ground floors (*Article 8*)
- **Parking design and regulations** (*Article 23*)
- **Additional smaller changes** that add clarity and ensure consistency

## Public Comment:

"I would...like to see more uses permitted in S0, and in all S districts - I noticed that small retail is forbidden in S0, which is contrary to the many convenience stores and small shops existing in residential neighborhoods today."  
— Matthew, Brighton

## Public Comment:

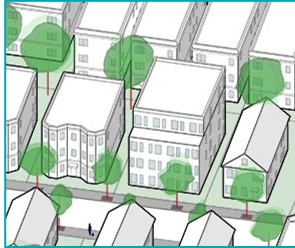
"I think more uses could be made as of right, particularly small-scale craft / industry / retail uses.."  
—Ben, East Boston

## Public Comment:

"I'm disappointed that S5 Placemakers district was removed; with the pressing need for housing the city should have denser as-by-right districts in its toolbox."  
—Ben, Dorchester

# Squares + Streets Districts

S0



## Transition Residential

- Transition between low and high activity streets and squares
- Residential and accessory only
- Large, context-scale yards

S1



## Main Street Living

- Small-scale storefronts allowed on the ground floor with limited uses
- Predominantly residential
- Small scale yards

S2



## Main Street Mixed Use

- Mixed-use main street
- Mainstreet zero-lot-line
- Outdoor amenity space required
- Lower lot coverage to require yards or plazas

S3



## Active Main Street

- Residential or small scale hospitality
- Mainstreet zero-lot-line
- Outdoor amenity space required
- Active ground floor uses required
- Lot coverage responds to parcel size

S4



## Active Squares

- Wider range of upper floors uses
- Large buffer with residential areas
- Outdoor amenity space required
- Medium to extra large scale ground floor active uses
- Lot coverage responds to parcel size

S5



## Placemaker

- Widest range of mixed-use uses
- Large buffer with residential areas
- Outdoor amenity space required
- Wide range of ground floor active uses (no residential)
- Lot coverage responds to parcel size

# Response to Public Feedback

## Reintroducing S-5

Taller mixed-use buildings with many active uses limited to highly active areas that can support higher density housing and job growth.

### Key dimensional differences from S-4:

- Increased height, to align with new building code standards
- Larger building width
- Lower building lot coverage
- Increased outdoor amenity space required

**Uses:** Same as S-4

#### Public Comment:

**"We need options that allow for more density than S4.**

We should allow for more than 7 stories / 85 feet of height and without stepback requirements."

—Chris, Jamaica Plain

#### Public Comment:

**"If anything, height limits should be increased... We need to be doing anything and everything to increase... housing supply."**

—Prashant, Brighton



**Public Comment:**  
**"Bring back the S5!**  
We need so much more housing"  
—Barnabas, Jamaica Plain

**Mixed-use center** to the neighborhood along side key transit destinations and hubs

**Retail and commercial anchor that supports the neighborhood and more housing density**

# Response to Public Feedback

## Reintroducing S-5

S-5 is an opportunity to align with new building code standards and support efficient sustainable building methods such as mass timber alongside greater housing and job growth.



Mixed-use mass timber  
12-story building in  
Portland



Lot Standards	
Building Lot Coverage	80% (70% on large parcels)
Front Yard	2' minimum
Rear Yard	5' minimum (15' if abutting residential zoning district)
Side Yard	5' minimum (0' if abutting party wall)
Permeable Area of Lot	15%
Building Form Standards	
Floorplate	25,000 square feet max
Building Width	250' maximum
Height	145' maximum
Outdoor Amenity Space	30%

### Public Comment:

"I like the readdition of the S-5 district! This will enable high densities of housing and services that can reduce car dependency and bring more people closer to small businesses." – Nikolas, Roxbury

### Public Comment:

"The BPDA should be stocking its toolbox [with] as many tools as possible to create more homes & invigorate all our neighborhoods." – Zack, Jamaica Plain

### Public Comment:

"I am very glad S-5 was added back. Placemaker buildings on prominent corners and locations add much needed density and also act as visual anchors to an area." – Charles, South End



# Response to Public Feedback

## Reintroducing S-5: Setting maximum height in feet

Height is limited by “feet” in S-5 not “feet and stories” to encourage a greater mix of uses in the district.

Floor-to-floor heights vary between residential versus commercial uses and different construction types. Setting a maximum height in feet allows more flexibility in the number and mix of floors for each use and can even mean an extra residential story depending on the construction method.

BUILDING FORM STANDARDS	S0	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Building Floor Plate (max sf)	4,000	8,000	15,000	20,000	25,000	25,000
Building width (max)	-	120'	150'	150'	200'	250'
Maximum Building Height (in feet) <sup>2</sup>	50'	50'	65'	85'	85'	145
Maximum Building Height (in stories) <sup>2</sup>	4	4	5	7	7	!



### Public Comment:

“Additionally, where height limits are given in feet, it can be counterproductive to also artificially limit them by number of stories as well. With new construction typologies (mass timber, CLT, DLT, hybrid construction, etc.) room for an extra story can often be found within the historic heights of buildings built over the last century.” – Andrew, Allston

# Response to Interdepartmental Feedback

## Changes to Outdoor Amenity Space Definition

### Definition *(added requirements)*

Added language that specifies outdoor requirements for counting as Outdoor Amenity Space

### Performance Space *(clarification)*

Added explicit reference to outdoor space for outdoor event and performance areas

### Outdoor Retail Space *(clarification)*

Added explicit reference to outdoor space for customers, including restaurant seating

*Add:* Outdoor amenity space: **A space open to the outdoor air** directly accessed from the ground floor or upper stories of a building and/or a pedestrian accessway, that is intended to be used for active or passive recreational use such as playing, gathering, and seating by building occupants and/or the public. **Overhead structures that provide shade or protection from the elements, but are otherwise open to the outdoor air, such as pergolas and canopies, may be included as part of outdoor amenity space.**

Types of spaces that shall count towards outdoor amenity space include:

1. Publicly Accessible Open Space, as defined in Article 8; or
2. New portions of public sidewalks created within the lot line; or
3. **Outdoor space for tenants or customers, including restaurant, or cafe seating or outdoor event and performance areas; or**
4. **Publicly accessible** through-block pedestrian connections of a width not less than ten (10) feet; or
5. Private amenity space intended to be used primarily by the building occupants, such as porches, interior courtyards, shared gardens, playgrounds, shared terraces, and/or programmed or landscaped yards, provided that such spaces have an unobstructed length of not less than ten (10) feet and an unobstructed depth of not less than ten (10) feet; or
6. Private amenity space dedicated for use by a single dwelling unit, and that is directly accessible from that dwelling unit, such as fenced/walled patios, private terraces, and balconies, provided that such a space has an unobstructed length of not less than five (5) feet, an unobstructed depth of not less than five (5) feet, and an overall area of not less than thirty (30) square feet; or
7. ~~Roofdecks~~, occupiable vegetative roofs, and other programmed recreational spaces on rooftops that are accessible by building occupants **or the public** through common circulation.

# Response to Feedback from Designers

## Changes to other dimensional definitions

### Upper Story Stepback Requirement

*(modified threshold)*

Modified to only apply to the highest story, based on feedback from designers about buildability, energy efficiency, and usability

### Party Wall Definition *(changed definition)*

Updated to align more closely with building code definition

### Maximum Building Height Definition

*(clarified definition)* Clarified that both maximum stories and feet requirements must be met.

A	Building Floor Plate
B	Building Width
C	Building Height
D	Highest Story Rear Stepback
E	Ground Floor Ceiling Height
F	Ground Floor Active Use Requirement

**Add:** Party Wall: Any wall located on a lot line between adjacent buildings, which is used or adapted for joint service between the two buildings.

**Amend:** Maximum Building Height. Where the applicable zoning specifies a maximum Building Height, whether in number of stories or feet, no building or part of a building shall exceed that height. **When both stories and feet are specified, both requirements must be met.**

# Response to Public Feedback

## Changes to Article 8

### Hotel Thresholds *(additional threshold)*

Added threshold of under 50 rooms for small, and 50+ rooms for large, in addition to square footage. Also changed Hotel - Large from Forbidden to Conditional in S3.

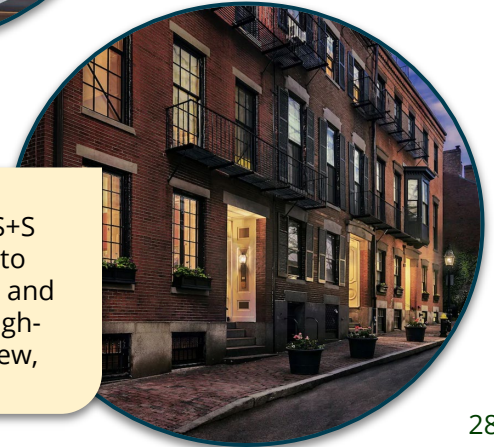
### Lodging House Definition *(clarification and allowance change)*

New definition which aligns with state licensing. Becomes a clearer pathway for SRO/coliving models. Now Conditional in S1 and S2 rather than Forbidden.



#### Public Comment:

As we have seen in recent years, hotels with compact rooms and little amenity space are quite popular... change the definition of "small hotel" from 50k sq ft or less to 50 rooms or less...



#### Public Comment:

"These should be allowed in all S+S districts. It doesn't make sense to categorically ban student housing and lodging houses when these fill high-density housing needs." – Matthew, Brighton

# Response to Public Feedback

## Changes to Article 8

### Office Definition *(clarification)*

Includes coworking, insurance brokers, and real estate.

### Ground Floor Restrictions *(allowance change)*

Removed restriction from grocery store, makerspace, museum, large restaurant, large retail store, and art studio in all districts and from medium retail store in S3.

**Public Comment:**  
“What could possibly be the downside of having an art studio on the second floor of a building? Or a restaurant having a second floor? Or a maker space or an art gallery?” - Evan, Roslindale



# Response to Public Feedback

## Changes to S-0: Conditional Ground Floor Retail

### S-0 Use Table *(allowance change)*

In the S-0 use table, changed allowance for Retail Store - Small from Forbidden to Conditional in basement or on ground floor.



	S0	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Retail Store - Small	E-C-G	A-G	A-G	A-G*	A*	A*

#### Public Comment:

"S0 is the transition zone to residential - it's not a residential-only district, nor should it be." - Matthew, Brighton

#### Public Comment:

"S0 and S1 should allow for small-scale commercial and active uses as of right." - Preston, Dorchester

#### Public Comment:

Small retail should be allowed conditionally in S0. Give people the ability to have a little corner store in their building in a neighborhood if they so choose!

#### Public Comment:

"I'd really like to see ground floor retail added as a conditional use for S0 districts, and not just on corner parcels. It'll make for more interesting, walkable neighborhoods, and increase the number of lower-cost retail opportunities for small businesses." - Nate, Roslindale

# Response to Interdepartmental Feedback

## Changes to Article 8

### Parking Uses *(allowance change)*

Parking Garages now conditional in S3 (from forbidden)  
and Parking Lots now conditional in S2 (from forbidden).

### Food Pantries *(clarification)*

Food Pantries now included in “Grocery Store”  
definition.

### Supportive Housing *(clarification)*

Changed “group living” to “supportive housing” to better  
reflect the use.

### ATM Definition *(clarification)*

Replaced “accessory ATM” with “standalone ATM”



# Response to Interdepartmental Feedback

## Changes to Article 8

### Art Gallery *(modification)*

Made Art gallery included as type of retail store.

### Art Studio *(modification)*

Added that incidental sales are allowed in art studios.

### Extra Small Entertainment/Events *(additional threshold)*

Added extra small entertainment/events category (up to 250 people)

### Adult Entertainment *(clarification)*

Modified “adult entertainment” to clarify that art exhibits with nudity are not included.



#### Public Comment:

“I read the letter from the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture, and I strongly support all their suggested changes to the draft text and their concerns.” – Barbara, Brighton



# Response to Interdepartmental Feedback

## Changes to Article 23

### Curb Cut Guidelines *(additions)*

Curb cut maximums are now different for residential vs. non-residential uses, to account for frequency of vehicle traffic.

### Parking Dimensions *(added requirements)*

Added parking space width and depths and drive aisle widths for standard parking spaces (exclusive of Accessible Parking Spaces)

### Parking within Front Yard *(changed applicability)*

Parking restricted within front yard only applicable in Squares + Streets Districts.

#### Section 23-9. Design.

All off-street parking facilities ~~provided to comply with this Article~~ shall meet the following specifications:

- (a) For parking facilities serving residential uses, curb cuts for access to such parking facilities shall not exceed 12 feet in width for parking facilities with fewer than 50 spaces; and shall not exceed 24 feet in width for parking facilities with 50 or greater spaces.
- (b) For parking facilities serving non-residential uses, curb cuts for access to such parking facilities shall not exceed 12 feet in width for one-way driveways; and shall not exceed 24 feet in width for two-way driveways.
- (c) Such facilities shall have car spaces to the number specified by this Article, maneuvering areas and appropriate means of vehicular access to a street, and shall be so designed as not to constitute a nuisance or a hazard or unreasonable impediment to traffic and pedestrians; and all lighting shall be so arranged as to shine downward and away from streets and residences.
- (d) Such facilities, whether open or enclosed in a structure, shall be so graded, surfaced, drained and maintained as to prevent water and dust therefrom going upon any street or another lot.
- (e) Such facilities shall not be used for automobile sales, dead storage, or repair work, dismantling or servicing of any kind.
- (f) Each car space shall be located entirely on the lot. The dimensional requirements for parking spaces, not inclusive of Required Accessible Parking Spaces, are provided as follows:

Parking Angle	Maximum Width of Parking Space	Maximum Depth of Parking Space	Maximum Width of Drive Aisle for One-Way Traffic	Maximum Width of Drive Aisle for Two-Way Traffic
0° (Parallel)	8'	20'	11'	16'
60°	8.5'	19'	16'	20'
90°	8.5'	18'	24'	24'

The following provisions shall only apply to Squares + Streets Districts:

- (a) Parking shall not immediately abut the public right of way, and is not allowed within the front yard.

# 3. Next Steps

A photograph of a city street scene. On the left, a white and yellow bus is stopped at a bus stop. A woman in a green jacket and black bag is walking on the sidewalk. In the background, there are several cars and a pedestrian crossing sign. The text "3. Next Steps" is overlaid in the center of the image.

# Squares + Streets Office Hours

BPDA Zoning Reform staff will hold office hours (15 sessions in total) to answer questions on the zoning text amendment for the next month.

## Afternoon Sessions (12:30 PM – 1:30 PM)

Tues, Feb 13

Thurs, Feb 15

Tues, Feb 20

Thurs, Feb 22

Tues, Feb 27

Thurs, Feb 29

Tues, Mar 5

## Evening Sessions (6:00 PM – 7:00 PM)

Mon, Feb 12

Wed, Feb 14

Tues, Feb 20

Thurs, Feb 22

Tues, Feb 27

Thurs, Feb 29

Tues, Mar 5

Wed, Mar 6

# First Round of Small Area Plans: Kick-Off Events

## CLEARY SQUARE

Cleary Square is a commercial area located in Hyde Park. It retains a number of historic buildings and has a diverse retail mix of restaurants, and shops, as well as considerable opportunity for commercial and residential enhancement.

This area is serviced by the Hyde Park station as part of the MBTA Commuter Rail.



### Event Details:

**When:**  
**Sunday, February**  
**25th from 10:30 am -**  
**1 pm**

**Where:**  
**Menino YMCA (1137**  
**River St, Hyde Park)**

**On-site childcare,**  
**interpretation**  
**services, and light**  
**refreshments will be**  
**provided**

## ROSLINDALE SQUARE

Roslindale Square is a historic commercial area in the heart of Roslindale. It retains many historic buildings and has a diverse mix of local restaurants, shops, and civic spaces such as a library branch and the Roslindale Substation. There is a great opportunity for bringing new housing and residents to support the commercial core of Roslindale.

This area is serviced by the Roslindale Village station as part of the MBTA Commuter Rail, as well as several MBTA bus routes.



### Event Details:

**When:**  
**Saturday, February**  
**24th from 10:30 am -**  
**12:30 pm**

**Where:**  
**The Substation (4228**  
**Washington Street,**  
**Roslindale)**

**On-site childcare,**  
**interpretation**  
**services, and light**  
**refreshments will be**  
**provided**

**Project Manager:** Catherine Neill  
[catherine.neill@boston.gov](mailto:catherine.neill@boston.gov)

**Project Manager:** Eileen Michaud  
[eileen.michaud@boston.gov](mailto:eileen.michaud@boston.gov)

# Zoning Notices & Updates Newsletter

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# Stay Involved in Zoning Reform (2024's version)

- ADU Pattern Book and Citywide **Zoning for ADUs** - *launching this month, continuing through the year*
- **Zero Net Carbon** Zoning (Art 37) - *releasing draft in March*
- New Zoning to Implement **PLAN: Downtown** - *Spring*
- Comprehensive Updates to Article 23 for **Greening Parking Design & Standards**
- Modernize the **Sign Code** (Art 11) - *Summer*
- Comprehensive modernization of **Dimensional Definitions** - *Summer*



# Questions and Comments

Hours:  
to Saturday  
11:00 pm  
day  
10:00 pm  
or 617-420-9045  
bargrill@gmail.com

# Thank you!

***For more information:***

***<https://www.bostonplans.org/zoning4squares>***

***Questions? Email us: [squaresandstreets@boston.gov](mailto:squaresandstreets@boston.gov)***