

MINOR TEXT UPDATES TO SQUARES + STREETS ZONING

Boston Zoning Commission | Wed, Jan 8, 2025



Planning Department

CITY of **BOSTON**

Summary of the Zoning Updates

These will be described in detail throughout the presentation.



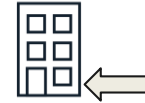
FORMATTING FOR CLARITY

Reformat text and tables to make it easier to read the existing zoning rules and understand when they apply.



GREATER LAND USE FLEXIBILITY

Provide greater flexibility for **certain land use activities commonly found on the ground and upper floors** of buildings in mixed use areas.



S2 DISTRICT UPDATE TO GROUND FLOOR RESIDENTIAL

Make it so residential units on the ground floor of a building along main streets **require special permission.**

Why Propose Updates to Squares + Streets Zoning?



The **Zoning Reform Team** of the City of Boston Planning Department propose these updates to Squares + Streets Districts based on:

Public feedback received from current Squares + Streets Small Area Plan processes in **Roslindale Square + Cleary Square**, including a resident zoning petition submitted by the Hyde Park Neighborhood Association (HPNA)

Questions that have been raised in implementing the Squares + Streets zoning within **Mattapan** when potential development proponents reach out seeking clarity on the rules.



Why Update Squares + Streets Zoning?

The **Zoning Reform Team's** role is to **revise, maintain, and update** the Boston Zoning Code to align with the City's policy goals and plans.



Squares + Streets Districts are part of the **base code**, which means they are **applicable citywide when mapped**.



Updating the Squares + Streets Districts is needed to:

Keep this zoning **aligned** with the goals of PLAN: Mattapan **while also...**



Better **aligning** the rules of this zoning to needs expressed in current, local planning processes so they can be mapped appropriately in the future.



Zoning is a Living Document Always in Need of Maintenance







Rather than leave zoning unchanged until it is no longer applicable to present-day trends, the intent of the **Zoning Reform Team** is to consistently:

Keep track of how the Squares + Streets Districts are understood and implemented,

Take into account trends learned from local planning processes that impact neighborhood mixed-use areas, and

Identify and propose updates to Squares + Streets Districts where appropriate to keep them relevant and effective.

What are the Squares + Streets Zoning Districts?

S0	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
					
<p>Transition Residential</p>	<p>Main Street Living</p>	<p>Main Street Mixed Use</p>	<p>Active Main Street</p>	<p>Active Squares</p>	<p>Placemaker</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 ft / 4 stories max • Transition between low and high activity streets and squares • Residential and accessory only • Large, context-scale yards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50 ft / 4 stories max • Small-scale storefronts allowed on the ground floor with limited uses • Predominantly residential • Small scale yards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 65 ft / 5 stories max • Mixed-use main street • Mainstreet zero-lot-line • Outdoor amenity space required • Lower lot coverage to require yards or plazas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 85 ft / 7 stories max • Residential or small scale hospitality • Mainstreet zero-lot-line • Outdoor amenity space required • Active ground floor uses required • Lot coverage responds to parcel size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 85 ft / 7 stories max • 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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 145 ft max • 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

Squares + Streets in Mattapan

Mattapan is the only neighborhood in Boston where Squares + Streets districts are mapped right now.

S+S subdistricts are mapped for mixed-use and commercial parts of the neighborhood.

The new subdistricts went into effect on May 30, 2024, following recommendations from PLAN: Mattapan.



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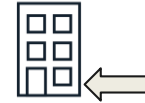
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S2 DISTRICT UPDATE TO GROUND FLOOR RESIDENTIAL

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What part of the zoning is being reformatted?



Active Uses

Some districts (S3-S5) require that a certain portion of the ground floor is occupied by “Active Uses.”

These are uses that make somewhere feel like a “main street.” They are typically open to the public and help make an area feel vibrant and welcoming.

Specifically these uses are:

Community Center, Grocery Store, Entertainment/Events, Makerspace, Museum, Restaurant, Retail Cannabis Establishment, Retail Store, Indoor Recreation, Service Establishment, and Social Club.

Proposed Change

ACTIVE USES						
Community Center	C	A	A	A	A	A
Restaurant - Small	C-G F	A-G F	A-G F	A	A	A
Restaurant - Large	F	C-G F	A	A	A	A
Retail Store - Small	C-G F	A-G F	A-G C	A	A	A

CIVIC USES	S0	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Child Care/Adult Day Health Center	A	A	A	A	A	A
Community Center	C	A	A	A	A	A
Municipal Use	A	A	A	A	A	A

COMMERCIAL USES						
Adult Entertainment	F	F	F	F	F	F
Art Studios	F	A	A	A*	A*	A*
Bank	F	C-G F	C-G F	C*	C*	C*
Check Casher	F	F	F	F	F	F
Restaurant - Small	C-G F	A-G F	A-G F	A	A	A
Restaurant - Large	F	C-G F	A	A	A	A
Retail Store - Small	C-G F	A-G F	A-G C	A	A	A

Table A Definitions

Active Uses. Uses which are open to the public and produce high levels of coming and going by customers, visitors, and users. Active Uses include Community Center, Grocery Store, Entertainment/Events, Makerspace, Museum, Restaurant, Retail Cannabis Establishment, Retail Store, Indoor Recreation, Service Establishment, and Social Club.

Proposed use changes

Changing the land use regulations for the following uses in some of the Squares + Streets districts:

- Entertainment / Events (Extra Small, Small, and Medium)
- Office (Small and Medium)
- Clinic
- Restaurant (Small)
- Grocery Store (Large)
- Service Establishment (Large)
- Indoor Recreation
- Restaurant (Large)



Reasons for change

- Affirm existing land uses as identified through Small Area Plan engagement
- Respond to community desires for more types of commercial and mixed-use development

Proposed use changes

- Increasing flexibility for upper stories
 - Entertainment / Events (Extra Small, Small, and Medium)
 - Office (Small and Medium)
 - Clinic
 - Restaurant (Small)
- Increasing flexibility for the ground level
 - Grocery Store (Large)
 - Service Establishment (Large)
- Increase flexibility through the building
 - Indoor Recreation
- Adding conditional use requirement on upper stories
 - Restaurant (Large)



Events/Entertainment - Extra Small



Office - Medium



Grocery Store - Large



Indoor Recreation

Proposed use changes

UPDATES TO S0

- Office - Office: C (from C-G | F)

UPDATES TO S1

- Entertainment/Events - Extra Small: A-G | C (from A-G | F)
- Entertainment/Events - Small : C (from C-G | F)
- Indoor Recreation: C (from F)
- Office - Small and Medium: A-G | C (from A-G | F)

UPDATES TO S2

- Entertainment/Events - Extra Small: A-G | C (from A-G | F)
- Entertainment/Events - Small: A-G | C (from A-G | F)
- Entertainment/Events - Medium: C (from C-G | F)
- Indoor Recreation: C (from F)
- Office - Small and Medium: A (from A-G | C)
- Restaurant - Small: A-G | C (from A-G | F)
- Restaurant - Large: A-G | C (from A)
- Service Establishment - Large: A-G | C (from C)
- Clinic: A (from A-G | C)

UPDATES TO S3

- Grocery Store - Large: A-G | C (from C)

Key:

A = Allowed

C = Conditional (requires a conditional use permit (based on set criteria) from the Zoning Board of Appeal)

F = Forbidden

When you see rules written like
“A-G | F” or “A-G | C”, that means...

Rules for the ground floor

A-G | F

Rules for the upper floors



Ground Floor Dwelling Units - Current Zoning

Reasons for change:

- Staff have heard concerns from community members in Cleary Square, Roslindale Square, and Mattapan about allowing residential uses on the ground floor along key main streets.

Current Zoning:

In S3, S4, and S5: ground floor dwelling units are on forbidden on primary frontages

In the S2 District (Main Street Mixed Use): ground floor dwelling units are allowed with a 4 foot front yard



On the primary frontage = the side of the building that is faces the main street, as opposed to the sides that face other buildings or any side streets or alleys

Ground Floor Dwelling Units - Proposed Change

Proposed Change:

Make ground floor dwelling units conditional on the primary lot frontages in S2

Keep ground floor dwelling units allowed with a 4 foot front yard on non-primary lot frontages in S2

Conditional in S2



Reasons for change:

- This change would help ensure that the effects of ground floor dwelling units are mitigated in areas where more active and commercial conditions are desired.
- By making dwelling units conditional rather than forbidden, the S2 District (*Main Street Mixed Use*) could still be used in areas with a mix of existing residential and commercial properties (like it's currently mapped in Mattapan).

Recap – These Updates...



DO reformat the text and tables for clarity and readability, including how someone reads for Active Uses and the Ground Floor Active Use Requirement.

DO provide greater flexibility for a variety of land uses common in mixed-use areas.

DO require special permission for ground floor residential units in the S2 District (*Main Street Mixed Use*).

DO NOT change which land uses satisfy the Ground Floor Active Use Requirement.

DO NOT change the boundaries or re-map these districts within Mattapan.

DO NOT map these districts in new areas.

Public Meetings + Opportunities to Provide Feedback



NOTIFY + DISCUSS WITH MATTAPAN RESIDENTS*

Mailed **notices** to Mattapan property owners and residents within existing Squares + Streets Districts
Presented the proposed updates to the **Greater Mattapan Neighborhood Council (GMNC) on Nov 4**
Provided an **annotated summary map** of updates as they relate to Mattapan

CITYWIDE PUBLIC MEETING

Presented and discusses the proposed updates through a **citywide virtual public meeting on Nov 6**
Provided an **executive summary** of proposed updates in addition to the draft zoning text amendment

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Held a **public comment period** with submissions via form and email from **Oct 23 thru Nov 22**
Received seven comments, including two comment letters

VIRTUAL OFFICE HOURS

Held **two virtual office hour sessions**, one in the evening on Nov 12 and one in the afternoon on Nov 14

RESPOND TO PUBLIC COMMENTS

Reviewed **submitted comments** and Zoning Reform Team members **wrote and posted responses** to each comment written

**Because Mattapan is the only area where Squares + Streets Districts are currently mapped.*