

# Squares + Streets Zoning Text Amendment

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

*Zoning Commission*

# Why focus on Squares + Streets?

*Aligning with Affordability, Equity, and Resilience*

With an **ongoing housing crisis** and **anticipated population growth by over 12% to 800,000**, expanding the supply of housing is essential to the **affordability, resilience, and equity** of our City.

When **housing growth** is paired with abundant commercial, civic, cultural, and transportation **resources**, residents and businesses feel **benefits** beyond access to housing.

Squares + Streets is a program focused on **realizing the co-benefits of housing production** in Boston's transit-accessible squares and main-streets.



# Squares + Streets is planning and zoning.

## (1) ZONING OPTIONS

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

Engagement throughout 6-9 months

## (2) *Small Area Plans*

### LISTEN & PREPARE

Connect with community to gather ideas for engagement and hear their experiences in Roslindale Square

### DEVELOP IDEAS

Engage with community to understand goals and needs; collaborate with City departments to generate implementation options in response to feedback

### REVIEW & REFINE IDEAS

Workshop draft recommendations with stakeholders and City partner departments

### DRAFT PLAN

Publish the plan for public review

### TAKE ACTION

Finalize new plan and start to implement recommendations across City departments

## (3) *Mapping Zoning*

Codify zoning recommendations into **zoning map** and start **implementing plan recommendations**

# Pairing New Zoning with Policy Change

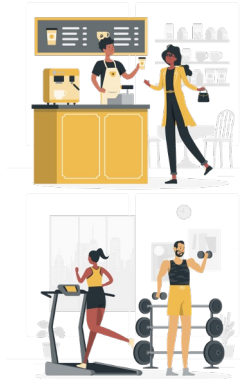
Zoning is a single tool that must work in concert with other policies and programs to advance citywide goals. The planning process has already uncovered need for new policies related to the following topics:

- **Anti-Displacement - (zoning!)** Tailored district dimensions to legalize existing nonconforming housing and encourage the preservation of existing housing stock **(policy!)** Refine and expand existing tools that various City departments employ to mitigate direct and indirect displacement of residents, small businesses and cultural enterprises
  - *Ex. Article 80 is an examination of impacts of a project. How can this tool be utilized to better address concerns of displacement in our neighborhoods?*
- **Affordable Housing - (zoning!)** Supportive Housing is an allowed use in every Squares + Streets District and affordable developments are exempt from the active use requirement. **(policy!)** The City and State are seeking additional ways to expand and leverage funding.
  - *Ex. Explore coordinating disposition of City/BPDA-owned property in alignment with affordability goals named in Squares + Streets plans*
- **Small Businesses - (zoning!)** Differentiate the size of retail uses to protect space for small businesses. **(policy!)** Work to expand the capacity of Main Street organizations
  - *Ex. 1/3 of the businesses that received SPACE grants in the first round needed variances!*



# What is Zoning?

**Zoning** is a set of laws that are used to guide development by dictating the **allowed use, shape, and density of a building or structure** in a given area. Some of what zoning regulates includes:



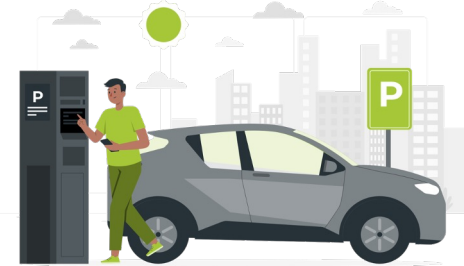
## Land Uses

*the types of activities allowed within a given area*



## Physical Building Dimensions

*how much space a building takes up, its height, and the open space around it*



## Parking Requirements

*the number of parking spaces needed for certain land uses and where they can be located*

# Boston's zoning code is long and complex.

*Squares + Streets is one early but substantial step in simplifying it.*

- Enacted in 1964, the Code draws much of its structure and approach from the original zoning code, adopted in 1924.
- **3,791 pages** across **90 “articles”** (sections).
- To some extent, length is a proxy for complexity, because every page contains distinct regulatory text.
  - The longer the code, the more rules with which property owners must comply.
  - Too many rules usually mean more bureaucratic hurdles, more time, more confusion, and more expense for owners.

# Guiding principles for zoning reform

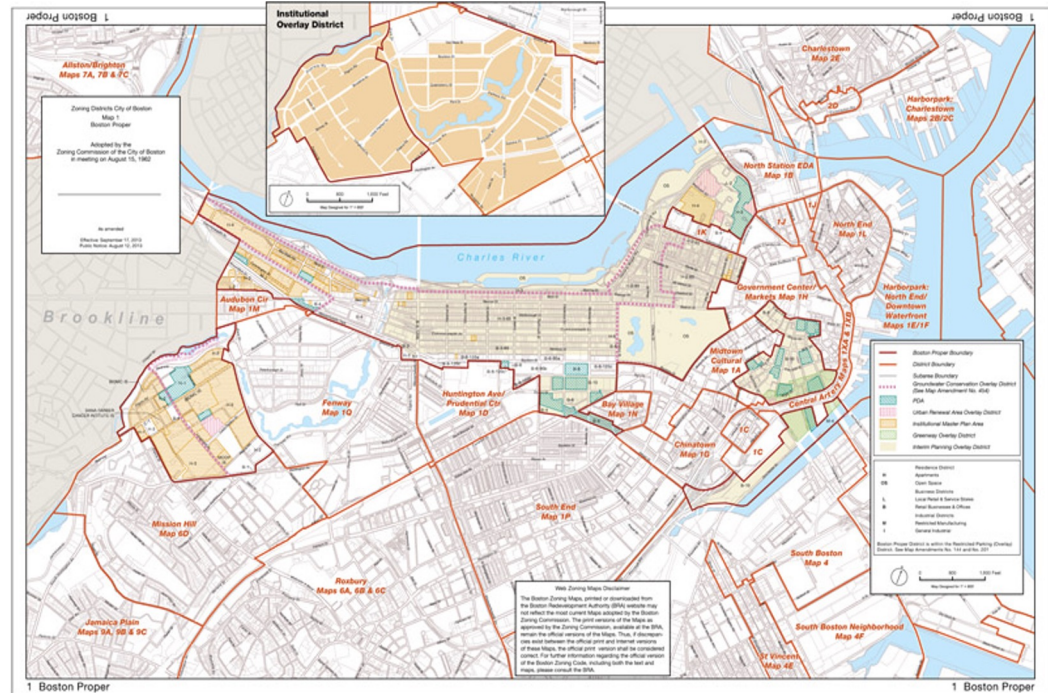
*Squares + Streets is one early but substantial step in simplifying*

## *it.* Resiliency, Affordability, and Equity

- Climate Friendly
- Permits Density and “Legalizes” housing
- Embraces Smart Growth Principles
  - i.e. encourages compact design, fosters a mix of uses, strives for walkable communities, envisions a strong sense of place
- Embraces Tools that Prevent Displacement
- Encourages Good Design
- Equitable

## Functional Principles

- Readability
- Enhances Usability
- Reduces Nonconformities
- Enforceable; Reduces Over-reliance on ZBA
- “Cuts the Red Tape”



# An iterative step toward zoning reform

September 13, 2023: Mayor Announcement

## Wu unveils plans to revamp Boston's decades-old rules for what can be built where

By Catherine Carlock and Andrew Brinker Globe Staff. Updated September 13, 2023, 8:34 p.m.



### Boston Globe:

"For nearly six decades, Boston politicians have avoided a wholesale overhaul of the city's zoning code.... On Wednesday, Boston Mayor Michelle Wu stepped into it.

It's an ambitious objective, and one likely to face **fierce pushback from neighborhood groups, civic associations, and other interests that have long used the lengthy permitting and review process to chisel down, or block entirely, projects they dislike.**

The overhaul will start with shifting... to a **"squares and streets"** model that aims to create mixed-use hubs along main corridors near transit stations... with **approvals by the board of the Boston Planning & Development Agency and the Zoning Commission.**

October 16, 2023: Zoning Process Kickoff

## Why do Squares + Streets need updated zoning?

- Diversify amenities and uses in neighborhood centers to meet local needs.
- Reduce regulatory obstacles for active uses and local businesses.
- Set design and development standards that support more housing options and encourage housing growth.
- Ensure sustainable design and green building standards.
- Make the zoning process more transparent and accessible, reducing reliance on ZBA



## Share Your Thoughts with Us

Come to Our Virtual Office Hours!

Happening 2-4x week on these weeks:

Week of Oct 30  
Week of Nov 6  
Week of Nov 13  
Week of Nov 20  
Week of Nov 27  
Week of Dec 4

Attend a Public Meeting!

Mon, Nov 13: Citywide Draft Zoning Text Amendment  
Tues, Nov 14: East Boston Draft Zoning Map Amendment  
Wed, Nov 15: Mattapan Draft Zoning Map Amendment  
Tues, Dec 5: Citywide Final Zoning Text Amendment

November 13, 2023: Iterations to Zoning

## Comments + Feedback on Zoning Analysis So Far

<p>Squares + Streets Initiative Survey (Ongoing)</p> <p>Presentations at Civic Associations + Community Organizations (Ongoing)</p> <p>Zoning Analysis Public Meetings (10/16 - 10/30)</p> <p>Focus Groups with Building and Design Professionals (October)</p>	<p>Create defined open space + streetwall regulations that actually produce usable public space</p>	<p>Desire for streets that balance activity + open space</p>	<p>Any new zoning must be enforced + not ignored</p>	<p>More time needed for the public to review + provide feedback</p>
<p>Avoid districts that encourage consolidating small parcels + removing existing businesses</p>	<p>Maintain clear buffers between strictly residential districts + main streets areas</p>	<p>Concerns about fewer community processes in small-scale development</p>	<p>Understand the level of impact of specific land uses on congestion</p>	

The BPDA has been listening to feedback, revising, and improving the zoning recommendations since October.

## Meetings + Focus Groups

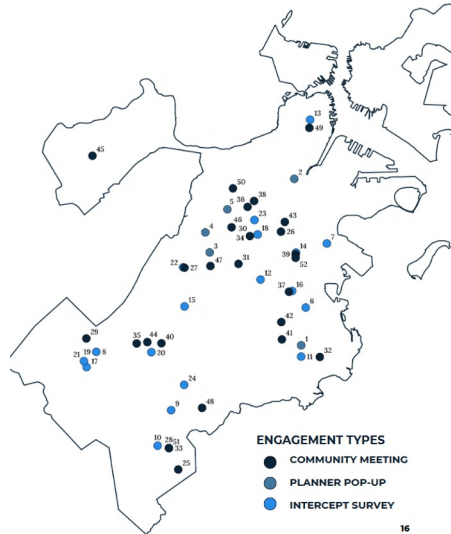
Presented at community meetings held by neighborhood associations + community groups

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

## Community Office Hours

**35 hour-long office hours sessions** weekly in afternoons and evenings between **Nov 1, 2023 and March 6, 2024**

Notes from office hours taken as another opportunity to gather public comments **from about 40 residents**



## Public Comment Form and Submissions

Received written comments **from Dec 5, 2023 thru Feb 2, 2024**

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

**240+ comments** received through public comment form, **35+ public comment letters** sent via email and mail

**EVERY comment received an individual response**

## 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



## Public feedback underscores importance of future planning, discomfort with citywide zoning reform, and discomfort around pace of change.

Approximately **100** comments or letters of **concern or disagreement (40%)**, with common themes:

- Requests for more engagement
- Concerns around development
- Desire to preserve what's there today
- Lack of trust in city government
- Different way of discussing development than what people are used to
- Confusion around zoning as a tool in general

### Comment Letter to BPDA Board:

We have had countless meetings in the community with the Squares and Streets leadership who all seem like good people and they clearly want to engage our community. However, I don't feel like they are getting traction with buy-in with our community because we aren't getting the kinds of answers we need to make any reasonable decisions at this point.

—Scott B, March 13



## Public feedback also underscores frustration with the status quo, urgency for change, and strong focus on housing.

Approximately **170** comments or letters of **general or strong support (60%)**, with common themes:

- Increased housing production
- Affordability
- Predictable outcomes
- Fairness in development processes
- Improved parking and transportation regulations
- Improved neighborhood centers

### Comment Letter to BPDA Board:

**“A supermajority of Boston residents are broadly fine with or even solidly hope for growth and change**, but they do not have the capacity... information access... or incentive... to show up in a time-limited meeting to say so. We note the hard work of BPDA staff since September, who created dozens of opportunities for the public to learn about, engage with, and provide feedback... There has been more than enough public engagement around these **technical code updates** and we urge the BPDA Board... to affirm and adopt them.”

—Dorchester Growing Together,  
March 11

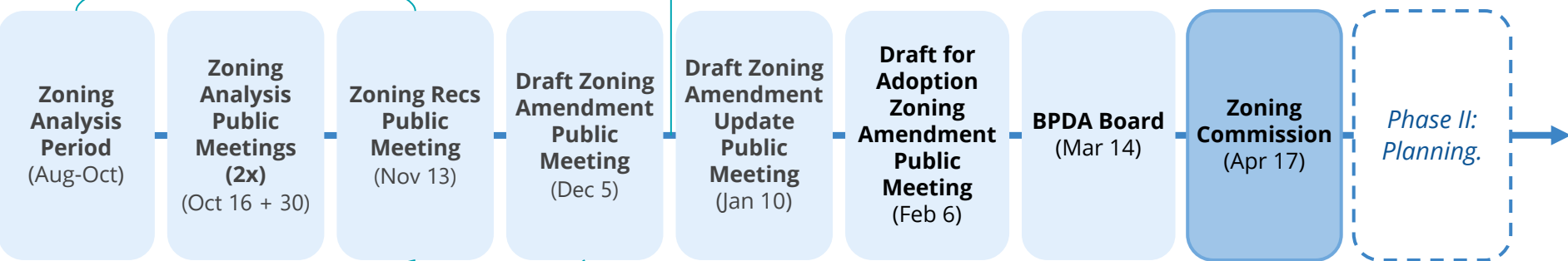
### Comment Letter to BPDA Board:

“I would **much rather participate** in a planning process where we **debate and come to some consensus...** than spend hours on end multiple nights a week for years trying to track each individual project... **No one else speaks for me whether they be other homeowners, seniors, or neighborhood associations.** I have heard some people say there has not been enough or clear community engagement on this proposal. I have been involved as a resident... for several years now and the **Squares+Streets community engagement has been the best BPDA outreach I have seen** in that time.”

—Barbara P, March 13

Complemented by ongoing S+S engagement:  
**29** community meetings with neighborhood associations, Main Streets, and advocacy groups  
**5** planner pop-up events and **19** intercept surveys  
**750** public survey responses  
**2** workshops involving youth engagement

**Extended comment period** to two months



Initial zoning recommendations responding to **analysis and public comment**

Initial **full release** of draft zoning amendment, beginning of **initial public comment** period, **35 hours** of office hours for **detailed discussion**

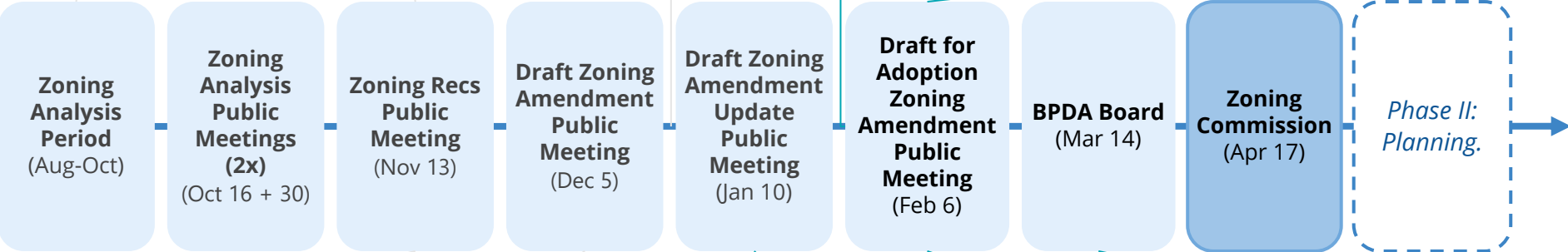


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Extended comment period to two months

**Mayor and BPDA Director** attend neighborhood meeting, **second public comment extension**, affirm need for community process, and **reiterate importance of S+S**

Annotated all changes in revised draft amendment, delayed BPDA board by a month, and scheduled an additional month of office hours.



Initial zoning recommendations responding to analysis and public comment

Initial **full release** of draft zoning amendment, beginning of **initial public comment** period, **35 hours** of office hours for **detailed discussion**

Announced **revisions** to zoning based on common themes from comments to date, clarified **common questions**

Individual responses by BPDA staff to **every** submitted **public comment and letter**, with many changes incorporated into draft

Additional **legal review**

## Squares + Streets Text Amendment

**Primary Additions to Zoning Code:**  
**Article 8 (Land Use Modernization)**  
**Article 26 (New Districts)**  
**Article 2 (New Definitions)**  
**Article 23 (Parking)**

**Other Edits to Preserve Functionality:**  
Article 3 (Establishment of Districts)  
Article 4 (Application of Regulations)  
Article 6 (Conditional Uses)  
Article 10 (Accessory Uses) - deleted  
Article 11 (Signs)  
Article 18 (Front Yards)  
Article 19 (Side Yards)  
Article 22 (Yard Regulations)  
Article 24 (Loading)  
Article 80 (Development Review & Approval)  
Article 89 (Urban Agriculture)

# Land Use Modernization: Article 8

*Article 10 (Accessory Uses - merged into Article 8)  
Article 6 (Conditional Uses)*

# How land may be used

Each land **use** is delegated as **allowed, conditional, or forbidden** in each district of the City in a **use table**

- **Conditional** means it requires a conditional use permit, based on set criteria, from the Zoning Board of Appeal

On our **new use table**, some uses are regulated differently depending on their **size**, or are allowed or conditional only on the **ground floors** of buildings.

**Public Comment:**  
“A simple business, like a yoga studio, shouldn’t have to climb mountains or navigate layers of bureaucracy to open a studio in downtown Boston. **Current code makes it unnecessarily cumbersome and off-putting to do something so basic.**”  
—Rishi, Downtown

**Public Comment:**  
“Zoning districts should allow for the kind of flexibility in use necessary for businesses and spaces.” —Matthew, Brighton

	S0	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Community Center	C	A	A	A	A	A
Grocery Store - Small	C	A	A	A	A	A
Grocery Store - Large	F	F	C	C	A	A
Entertainment/Events - Extra Small	C-G   F	A-G   F	A-G   F	A-G   C	A	A

Multiple sizes

Allowed on the ground floor, conditional above

Conditional on the ground floor, forbidden above

# Land use modernization: Article 8

1. Establish **inventory** of all uses throughout the neighborhood articles: **remove obsolete** uses
2. Write **new definitions** for uses, grouping uses with **similar impacts** together
  - a. Including **size thresholds** and **form and performance standards** where applicable
  - b. Align use definitions to other salient **regulatory requirements** (building code, licensing)
  - c. Align use definitions to **policy goals**
  - d. Ensure ISD has **clear interpretation**



City departments vetted, informed, and revised draft language for uses:

- Disabilities Commission
- Age Strong Commission
- Office of Housing
- Office of Green Infrastructure
- Office of Arts and Culture
- Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion
- Boston Transportation Department
- Operations Cabinet
- Office of Food Justice
- Environment Department
- Parks and Recreation Department
- Boston Public Health Commission
- ISD Permit Leadership & Staff
- License Board

# Land use modernization: Article 8

- **16 pages of new zoning text** that modernizes existing text across the code.
- Carefully **coordinated with ISD** to draft improved use definitions that **add size thresholds** to regulate impact and include **use and performance standards** where appropriate
- 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 the impacts of uses change.

## ARTICLE 8 REGULATION OF USES

### 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.

Unless otherwise specified in this Code, no land or structure shall be erected, used, or arranged or designed to be used, in whole or in part, except in conformity with this Article 8. ~~the following tables or as otherwise provided in regulations pertaining to special purpose overlay district, neighborhood district, downtown district, waterfront service district, waterfront manufacturing district, light manufacturing district, or the Harborpark District.~~

### 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-G | C," "A-G | F," "A," "A-G | C\*," or "A-G | F\*" 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-G | F," "C\*," or "C-G | F\*" 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\*," "A-G | F\*," "C\*," or "C-G | F\*" 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.** An accessory use is a use customarily incident to, and on the same lot as a lawful principal use(s).

Unless otherwise designated as a distinct accessory use in Table A or Table B, any use is allowed as an accessory use customarily incident to, and on the same lot as a lawful principal use(s). Any allowed use is also permitted as an accessory use.

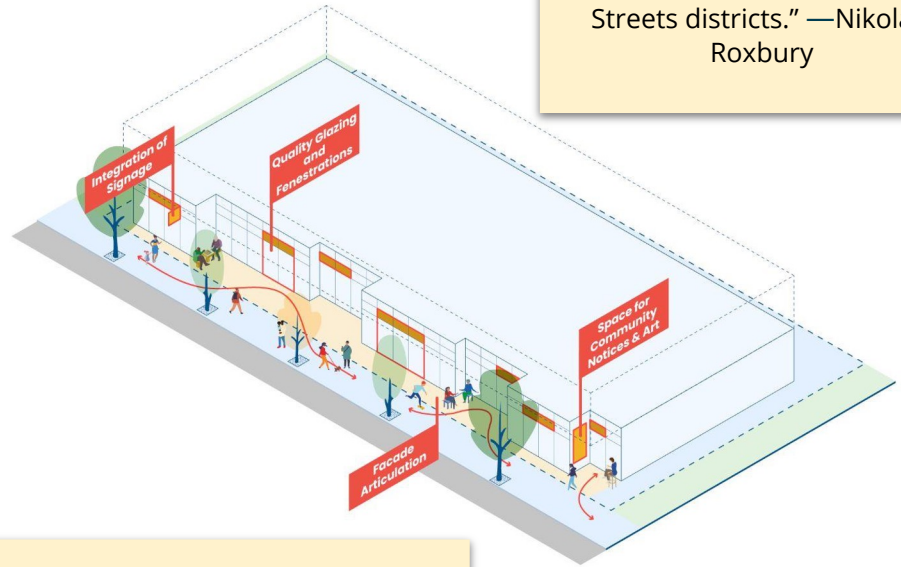
When an accessory use is designated as a distinct accessory use in Table A or Table B with a designation of:

- (i) "A" it is allowed in any applicable district subject to the provisions of Section 8-2.1
- (ii) "C" it is conditional in any applicable district subject to the provisions of Section 8-2.2

# Defining “active” ground floors

## Active Uses

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



**Public Comment:**  
“I like how most active uses are allowed by right or conditionally in Squares and Streets districts.” —Nikolas, Roxbury

## Public Comment:

“The active use ground floor uses and outdoor community [outdoor amenity] spaces are great. I like that the buildings are allowed to be mixed use with higher stories for residential use that bring residents to the community centers and make them vibrant places to live.” —Mary, West Roxbury



# Limitations of zoning dimensional regulations

**Challenge:** Zoning code is mis-aligned with our historic built environment, advancements in energy code or construction, and limits opportunities for new housing and mixed-use growth in our neighborhood centers.

## Opportunity:

- Align zoning with energy, accessibility, and state buildings codes.
- Create dimensional regulations that can support more housing options that are responsive to sustainability and public realm goals.
- A palette of zoning tools that future planning will use to enable as-of-right housing in key areas throughout the city.

### Public Comment:

“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





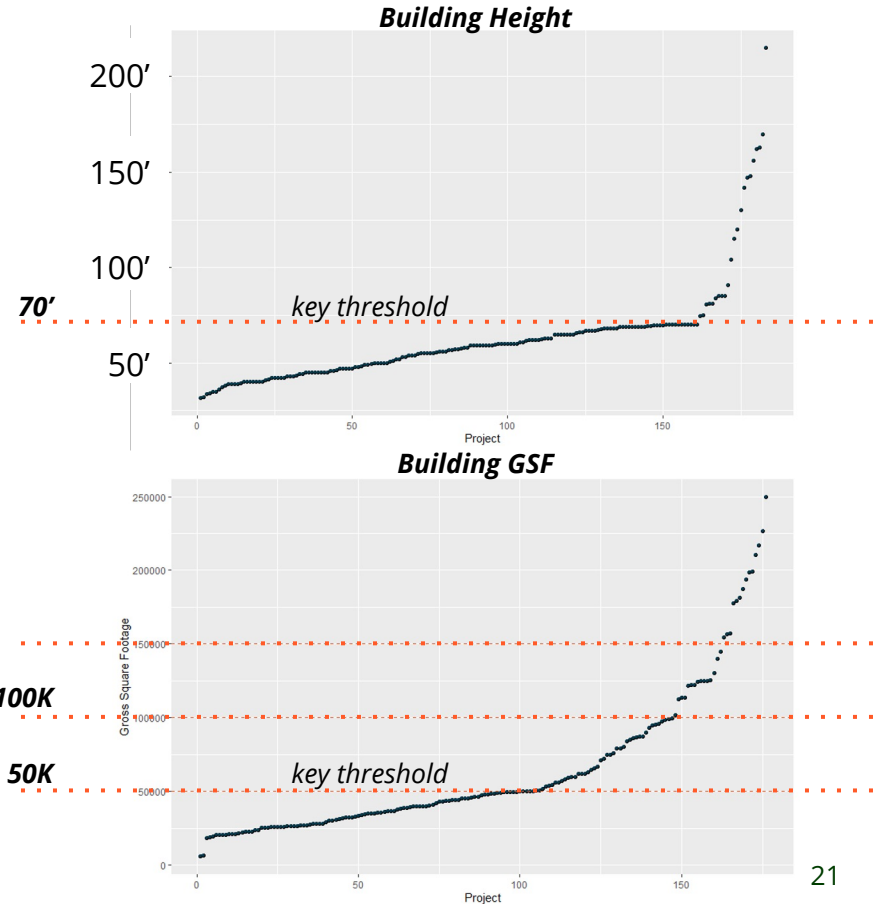
# Basing zoning on building form

To understand what can be built under modern building code, we took qualitative and quantitative measurements of residential development the past five years. We collected data on over 200 precedents, and took deep dives into a sample of about 40.

## Analysis outcomes:

- **Building code and project review thresholds** drive building size more than any other factor.
- **Parcel size** drives building shapes.
- Building types can be categorized based on their **function within the city context**.

**Boston Building Trends**  
(Projects filed within the last 5 years between 3 and 19 stories)



# **Squares + Streets Districts: Art 26**

*Art 2: Definitions (of new form requirements)*

*Art 3: Establishment of Zoning Districts*

*Art 23: Parking*

*Art 24: Loading*

# Squares + Street 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.
- **Includes new definitions** that will be located in Article 2

## 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 increasing intensity.

- The S0 Transition Residential district is a primarily residential district that provides a transition from mixed-use and high-activity Squares + Streets to lower-activity residential areas. S0 also provides some flexibility for other active, commercial, and community serving uses, such as small retail spaces, on the ground floor of buildings. Residential uses are limited to no more than 14 dwelling units. Of the Squares + Streets districts, S0 has the smallest building footprint and lot coverage requirements and the largest yards and Permeable Area of Lot.
- The S1 Main Street Living district is a mixed-use district where buildings generally have principally residential uses. S1 also provides more opportunity for active and commercial uses, such as banks, museums, restaurants, and retail spaces. S1 requires small-scale side and front yards and minimum Permeable Area of Lot.
- The S2 Main Street Mixed Use district is a small- to medium-scale mixed-use district that allows more active and many commercial uses, especially on the ground floor. S2 buildings can fill the width of the lot to help create a continuous and active main street. S2 includes requirements for Outdoor Amenity Space and a maximum for the blank wall of a facade.
- The S3 Active Main Street district is a mixed-use district of medium-scale buildings. In addition to residential, the S3 district allows more commercial and active uses on upper floors, such as hotels and offices. S3 requires Active Uses on the ground floor and prohibits dwelling units on the ground floor primary lot frontage. The district also introduces a more restrictive building lot coverage for large lots.
- The S4 Active Squares district is a mixed-use district characterized by medium to large-scale mixed-use buildings with the widest range of allowed uses among the Squares + Street districts. Commercial, hospitality, and entertainment uses are allowed throughout the building, and Active Uses are required on the ground floor.
- The S5 Placemaker Squares is a mixed use district intended for areas in the heart of high activity squares, closest to transit, with high street frontage, and surrounding density. It is characterized by the largest-scale mixed-use buildings of Squares + Streets districts. S5 allows the same wide range of uses as S4, with ground floor Active Use and higher Outdoor Amenity Space requirements.

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

**A. 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.

### **B. 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.

# Squares + Street 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

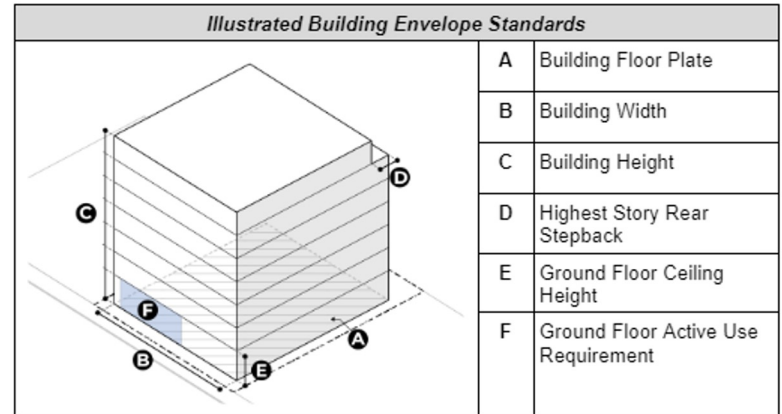
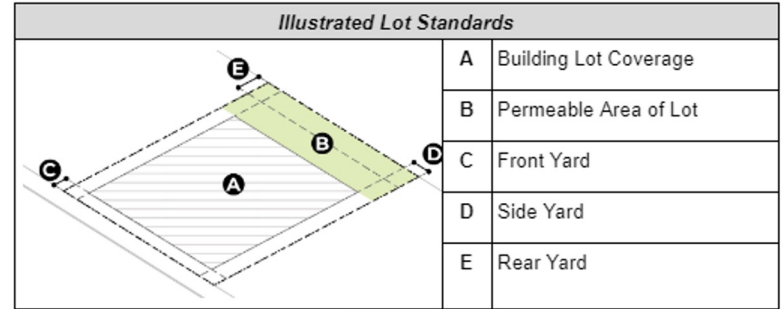
- Widest range of mixed-use uses
- Large buffer with residential areas
- Outdoor amenity space required
- Wide range of ground floor active uses (no residential)
- Lot coverage responds to parcel size

# Land Use and Form-Based Regulations

Squares + Streets districts are distinguished by land uses, lot, and building form standards.

Key regulations that help shape building form are defined and illustrated in the code, moving it a more more form-based code.

FIGURE 1: ILLUSTRATED LOT AND BUILDING ENVELOPE STANDARDS



# What's shared across each district?

- **Limit building footprint and building width** to better reflect existing urban design scale
- Include **maximum building lot coverage** and **minimum permeable area of lot** to shape future development
- **Set dimensions for yards where they are important**, such as larger rear yards adjacent to residential areas
- Give **small projects** the same **parking flexibility as large projects** by removing parking minimums and **modernizing loading requirements** (S0-S5)
- Create better places to live by requiring square footage for **outdoor amenities** like balconies, roofdecks, terraces, and ground floor courtyards, streetscapes, and plazas (S2-S5)
- Create vibrant streetscapes by requiring a certain amount of **active ground floor uses** and limiting the amount of windowless **"blank walls"** on the ground floor (S3-S5)

## Public Comment:

"The **elimination of parking minimums in all Squares + Streets districts is an important reform** that will reduce the cost of housing, support the City's long term commitments to investing in transit and active transportation, and mitigate the impacts of climate change." —Thomas, Roslindale



## Public Comment:

"Appreciate focus on **not encouraging the combining of smaller parcels into larger ones**, as those projects have been much less welcoming and engaging in my neighborhood." —Benjamin, East Boston



# What's shared across each district?

- **No Planned Development Area** allowed
- **Allowed uses** include:
  - Most residential uses
  - Community uses such as schools, places of worship, child care, and publicly accessible open space
  - Accessory parking, shared parking, and accessory EV charging
- **Research labs** and large-scale **industrial and vehicular** uses are forbidden
- Commercial and active uses are **regulated** depending on their **size and impacts**

## Public Comment:

"I like the idea of blending both residential and commercial use to create a village." —Janet, Dorchester

## Public Comment:

"I like the S1 to S4 designations as steps in intensity of use." —Preston, Dorchester

## Public Comment:

"I like the focus on mixed use space, walkability... and public outdoor amenities." —Laila, Roxbury



# S-0 District: Transition Residential

The S0 Transition Residential district is a primarily residential mixed use district that provides a transition from mixed-use and high-activity Squares + Streets to lower-activity residential areas.

Lot Standards	
Building Lot Coverage	60%
Front Yard	8' minimum
Rear Yard	15' minimum
Side Yard	14' cumulative (3' minimum)
Permeable Area of Lot	20%

Building Form Standards	
Floorplate	4,000 square feet max
Height	50' / 4 stories maximum

**Larger rear yard**  
(leaving room for trees and open space)



**Larger front yard space**

**Larger side yard**



**4 stories with 14 unit maximum**



# S-0 District: Transition Residential

## Allowed uses:

- **Mostly residential uses, limited to 14-units / sub-Article 80 scale.**

## Conditionally allowed uses:

- **A few active uses** (community centers, small grocery stores, social clubs), **some restricted to the ground floor** (small restaurant, extra small entertainment/events, small retail, small service establishments)
- Small Offices allowed only on ground floor

*Small grocery stores and community centers are **conditionally** allowed*



# Response to Public Feedback

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

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

In the S-0 use table, conditionally allowed Retail Store - Small in the basement or ground floor.



#### **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!

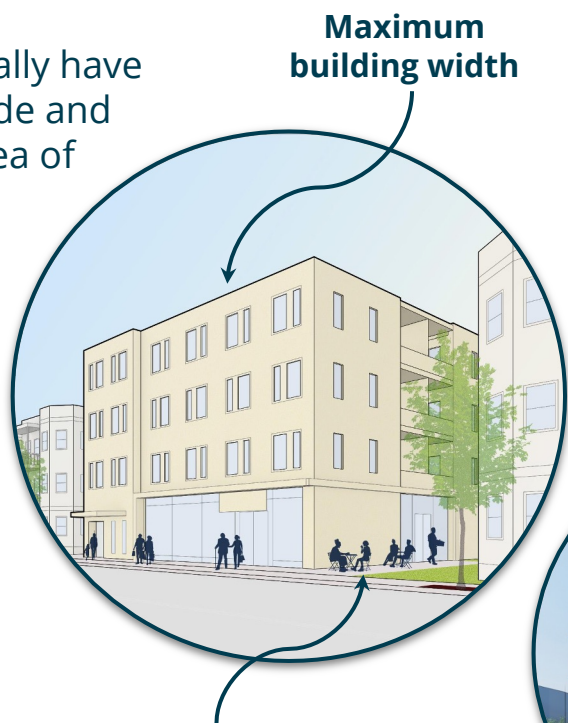
#### **Public Comment:**

"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

# S-1 District: Main Street Living

Mixed-use district where buildings generally have principally residential uses, small-scale side and front yards, and minimum Permeable Area of Lot.

Lot Standards	
Building Lot Coverage	70%
Front Yard	6' minimum
Rear Yard	10'-15' minimum
Side Yard	10'-14' cumulative (3' minimum)
Permeable Area of Lot	15%
Building Form Standards	
Floorplate	8,000 square feet max
Building Width	120' maximum
Height	50' / 4 stories maximum



# S-1 District: Main Street Living

## Allowed uses:

- **Most residential uses**
- **Small active uses** (grocery stores and service establishments), **some restricted to the ground floor** (small retail stores and restaurants, extra small entertainment/events)
- **A few other active uses** (community centers, social clubs, museums, makerspaces)
- **A few commercial and health care uses** (small and medium offices and clinics [on the ground floor] and art studios)



*Some small offices on the ground floor*

*Allowed active uses like small grocery stores, retail, and restaurants*





# S-1 District: Main Street Living

## Conditionally allowed uses:

- **A few additional active uses on the ground floor** (including small entertainment/events, large restaurants, retail cannabis establishments, and medium retail stores)
- Banks [on the ground floor], standalone ATMs, funeral homes, and major transportation facilities



*Large restaurants and medium scale retail*



*Ground floor banks and standalone ATMS*



# S-2 District: Main Street Mixed Use

Small- to medium-scale mixed-use buildings that can fill the width of the lot to help create a continuous and active main street.

Lot Standards	
Building Lot Coverage	70%
Front Yard	2' minimum
Rear Yard	10'-15' minimum
Side Yard	5'-15' minimum (0' party wall)
Permeable Area of Lot	15%

Building Form Standards	
Floorplate	15,000 square feet max
Building Width	150' maximum
Height	65' / 5 stories maximum
Outdoor Amenity Space	20%



**Permeable Area requirement** and lower lot coverage ensure space for **planting and buffering**



Mix of **active and residential uses** on ground floor



**Limit on the amount of "blank wall"**

# S-2 District: Main Street Mixed Use

## Allowed uses:

- **Most residential uses**
- **Small active uses**
- **A few other active uses** (including medium retail stores and small entertainment/events [on the ground floor] and larger restaurants)
- **A few commercial uses**

*Small active  
uses*





# S-2 District: Main Street Mixed Use

## Conditionally allowed uses:

- **Most large active uses** (including service establishments, grocery stores, retail stores)
- **A few commercial uses** (including small hotels)



*Banks*



*Small hotels*



*Large active uses*





# S-3 District: Active Main Street

Mixed-use district of medium-scale buildings that require Active Uses on the ground floor.

Lot Standards	
Building Lot Coverage	90% (70% on large parcels)
Front Yard	2' minimum
Rear Yard	5'-15' minimum
Side Yard	5'-15' minimum (0' party wall)
Permeable Area of Lot	0% (15% on large parcels)
Building Form Standards	
Floorplate	20,000 square feet max
Building Width	150' maximum
Height	85' / 7 stories maximum
Outdoor Amenity Space	20%

Required outdoor amenity space



Active uses required on ground floor and higher-intensity commercial uses allowed



Tighter setbacks and lot standards for **main street continuity**

# S-3 District: Active Main Street

## Uses:

- **Most residential uses** are allowed
- **Most commercial uses** are allowed or conditionally allowed.
- **Most active uses** are allowed, although **some are only allowed on the ground floor.**



*Medium entertainment/events are allowed on the ground floor*



*Medium offices are allowed*



*Clinics are allowed*

# S-4 District: Active Squares

Medium to large-scale mixed-use buildings with the widest range of allowed uses compared to the S-0 to S-3 districts.

Lot Standards	
Building Lot Coverage	90% (70% on large parcels)
Front Yard	2' minimum
Rear Yard	5'-20' minimum
Side Yard	5'-15' minimum (0' party wall)
Permeable Area of Lot	0% (15% on large parcels)

Building Form Standards	
Floorplate	25,000 square feet max
Building Width	200' maximum
Height	85' / 7 stories maximum
Outdoor Amenity Space	25%

Increased outdoor amenity space requirement



Active uses required on the ground floor



More active uses allowed above ground floor



# S-4 District: Active Squares

## Uses:

- **Most residential uses** are allowed.
- **Most commercial uses** are allowed or conditionally allowed.
- **Most active uses** are allowed with **on the ground floor and upper stories.**



*Large entertainment/events are conditionally allowed*



*Extra Large retails stores are conditionally allowed*



# Response to Public Feedback

## S-5 Placemaker

Taller mixed-use buildings that support efficient sustainable building methods such as mass timber alongside greater housing and job growth - limited to highly active areas that can support higher density.

### Lot Standards

Building Lot Coverage	80% (70% on large parcels)
Front Yard	2' minimum
Rear Yard	5'-20' minimum
Side Yard	5'-15' minimum (0' party wall)
Permeable Area of Lot	0% (15% on large parcels)

### Building Form Standards

Floorplate	25,000 square feet max
Building Width	250' maximum
Height	145' maximum
Outdoor Amenity Space	30%

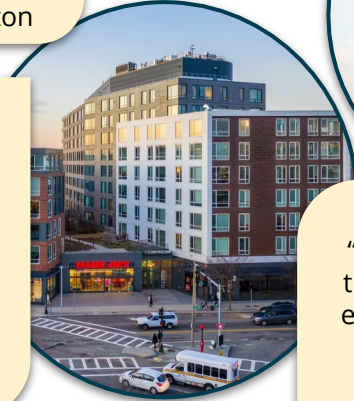


**Public Comment:**  
 “Bring back the S5!  
 We need so much  
 more housing”  
 —Barnabas, Jamaica  
 Plain

**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:**  
 “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



**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

# Squares + Streets Districts

## *Hypothetical Square*

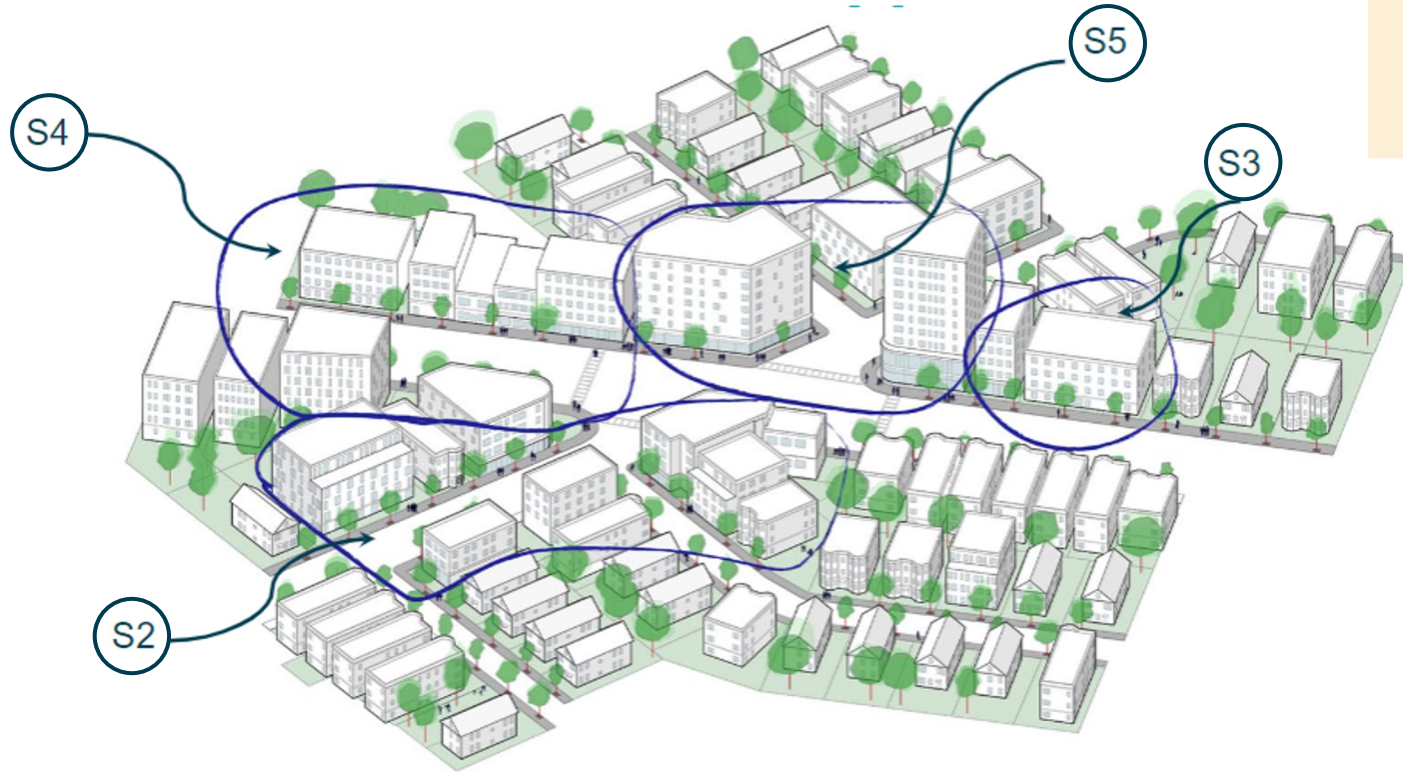


How and which districts are mapped will depend on the Small Area Plan process and engagement



# Squares + Streets Districts

## *Hypothetical Square*



How and which districts are mapped will depend on the Small Area Plan process and engagement



# Squares + Streets Planning and Zoning

**“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



Community members at the Squares + Streets Small Area Plan Open House events that started off the planning processes in Cleary Square (Hyde Park) and Roslindale Square the weekend of February 24/25