



City of Somerville

**ZONING OVERHAUL**

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[www.somervillezoning.com](http://www.somervillezoning.com)

# Upcoming Meetings

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January 31, 2018

## Document Basics

Presentation Slides & Video at [somerillezoning.com](http://somerillezoning.com)

Today, Tuesday, February 13, 2018

## Planning Director's Policy Overview of the Proposed Ordinance

Tuesday, March 13, 2018

## Public Testimony



February 13, 2018

# POLICY OVERVIEW

# AGENDA TOPICS

1. SomerVision & Neighborhood Plans
2. Why This Code, Why Right Now
3. 2015 v 2018 Code

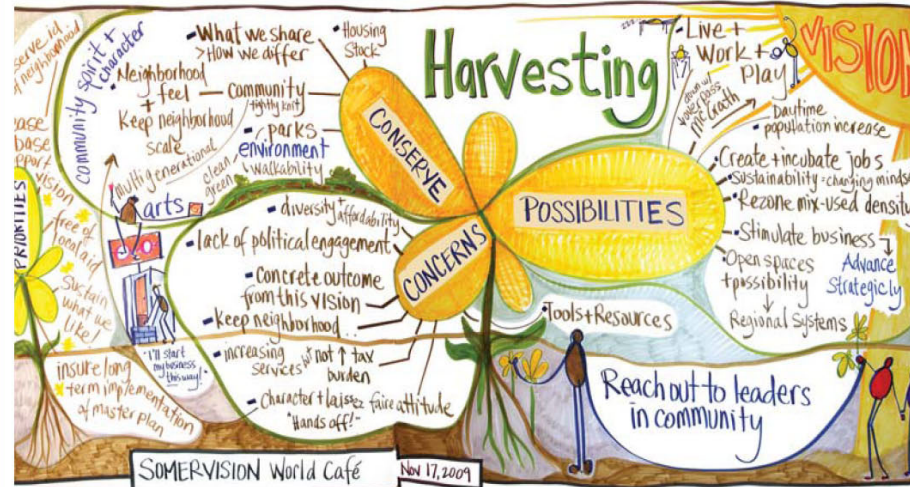
# 1. SOMERVISION & NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS





# Somerville Vision

City of Somerville, Massachusetts  
Comprehensive Plan | 2010-2030



Endorsed by the  
Somerville Board of Aldermen  
April 12th, 2012

Adopted by the  
Somerville Planning Board  
April 19th, 2012

*Somerville: an Exceptional Place to  
Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family*



# 587 Goals, Policies, & Actions

- 182 Directly Related to Zoning (31%)
- 5 Call for Neighborhood Planning
- 6 Assume those plans are written, adopted, and followed



## 4. SomerVision Goals



Page 18

The SomerVision Goal Statements were written by the sixty Somerville residents serving on the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. They were reviewed with the public during a series of workshops in 2011, as well as through an online survey. They are intended to guide the Comprehensive Plan's recommended Policies and Actions. For a complete list of Policies and Actions, see Appendix 1.

### A. Neighborhoods

- I. **Engage** community members in civic life and decision-making, seeking diverse representation and participation.
- II. **Strengthen** and support neighborhood commercial centers that integrate residential uses, offer lively destinations and contribute to Somerville's unique identity.
- III. **Protect** and promote a diverse, interesting mix of small-scale businesses in Somerville's neighborhoods.
- IV. **Preserve** and enhance the character of Somerville's neighborhoods, enable sensitive, economically feasible maintenance and adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and respect neighborhood form and patterns while expanding Somerville's architectural legacy.
- V. **Facilitate** transit-oriented, neighborhood infill development when it enhances the lively, human-scaled and walkable character of Somerville blocks and neighborhoods.
- VI. **Improve** our shared neighborhood environmental quality.
- VII. **Foster** vital, healthy, inclusive and distinctive urban neighborhoods that are the best possible places to live, work, play, do business, learn and serve.

*Somerville: an Exceptional Place to Live, Work, Play, and Raise a Family*



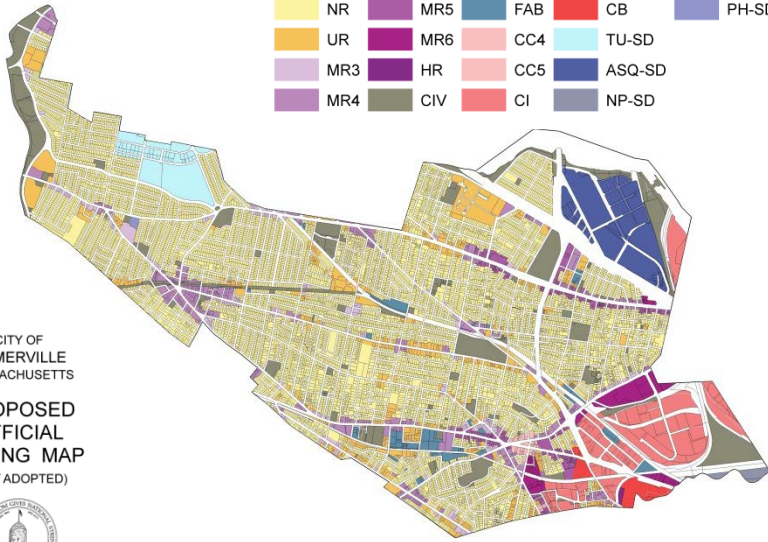
CITY OF  
SOMERVILLE  
MASSACHUSETTS

PROPOSED  
OFFICIAL  
ZONING MAP  
(NOT ADOPTED)

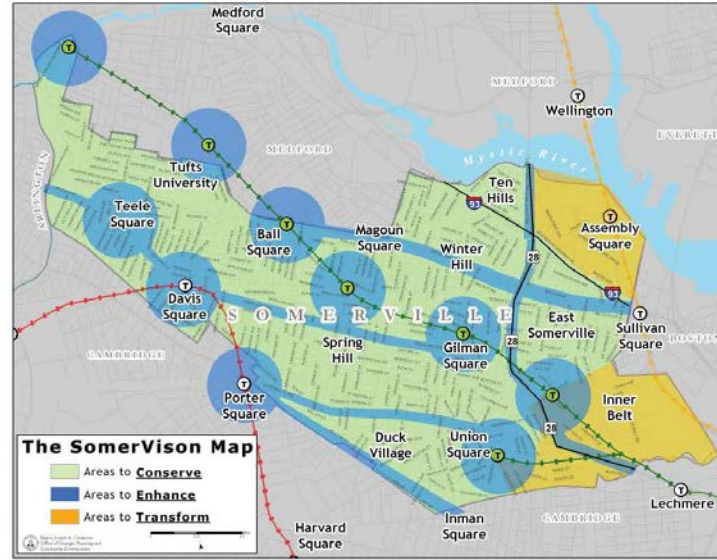


DATE: January 9, 2018

	NR		MR5		FAB		CB		PH-SD
	UR		MR6		CC4		TU-SD		
	MR3		HR		CC5		ASQ-SD		
	MR4		CIV		CI		NP-SD		



## Our Vision: The SomerVision Map



SomerVision - Somerville's Comprehensive Plan

The SomerVision Map illustrates our Vision for the community to:

**Conserve**  
our great residential neighborhoods

**Enhance**  
our funky squares and commercial corridors

**Transform**  
opportunity areas on the eastern and southern edges of Somerville.



Photo: Juhette Melton



## Appendix 2

# The Numbers and the Maps: The SomerVision Numbers

### Aspirational Targets

*What's it all about?*

Comprehensive Plans allow communities to take into account all their priorities. Based on our shared values, and using the SomerVision Map, the SomerVision Numbers are our achievable but aspirational targets. SomerVision seeks to achieve the goals on this page by 2030.

### By 2030, Somerville will achieve:



**30,000 New Jobs** as part of a responsible plan to create opportunity for all Somerville workers and entrepreneurs.



**125 New Acres of Publicly-Accessible Open Space** as part of our realistic plan to provide high-quality and well-programmed community spaces.



**6,000 New Housing Units - 1,200 Permanently Affordable** as part of a sensitive plan to attract and retain Somerville's best asset: its people.



**50% of New Trips via Transit, Bike, or Walking** as part of an equitable plan for access and circulation to and through the City.



**85% of New Development in Transformative Areas** as part of a predictable land use plan that protects neighborhood character.

*The SomerVision Numbers cannot be separated into parts and cannot be separated from the SomerVision Map in order to advocate for a specific action by the City. They must be viewed in the context of entire Comprehensive Plan including the backup information in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.*



# SomerVision Numbers

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- 30,000** New Jobs
- 125** New Acres of Open Space
- 6,000** New Units of Housing  
(of which 1,200 affordable)
- 50%** of New Trips via Walk, Bike,  
Transit
- 85%** of New Development in  
Transformational Areas

# SomerVision Numbers

**30,000**

New Jobs



**125**

New Acres of Open Space

**6,000**

New Units of Housing  
(of which 1,200 affordable)

**50%**

of New Trips via Walk, Bike,  
Transit

**85%**

of New Development in  
Transformational Areas

- Four commercial only zoning districts
- Requires a minimum amount of commercial buildout in Overlay Districts
- Preserves transformational areas without Neighborhood Plans as Commercial Industry
- New format allows for easy addition of new overlay districts after neighborhood planning

# SomerVision Numbers

**30,000** New Jobs

**125** New Acres of Open Space



**6,000** New Units of Housing  
(of which 1,200 affordable)

**50%** of New Trips via Walk, Bike,  
Transit

**85%** of New Development in  
Transformational Areas

- Civic District
- Civic Space types
- Overlay & Special Districts

# SomerVision Numbers

**30,000** New Jobs

**125** New Acres of Open Space

**6,000** New Units of Housing  
(of which 1,200 affordable)

**50%** of New Trips via Walk, Bike,  
Transit

**85%** of New Development in  
Transformational Areas

- Continued potential in Assembly Square, Northpoint, Union Square, Union Square East, and Boynton Yards
- New format allows for easy addition of new overlay districts after neighborhood planning
- 20% affordable requirement
- Density Factor adjustment for 100% affordable developments

# SomerVision Numbers

**30,000**

New Jobs

**125**

New Acres of Open Space

**6,000**

New Units of Housing  
(of which 1,200 affordable)

**50%**

of New Trips via Walk, Bike,  
Transit



**85%**

of New Development in  
Transformational Areas

- Transit Areas Designation
- Parking Requirements matched to transportation goals
- Bike Parking requirements developed with Somerville Bike Committee

# SomerVision Numbers

**30,000**

New Jobs

**125**

New Acres of Open Space

**6,000**

New Units of Housing  
(of which 1,200 affordable)

**50%**

of New Trips via Walk, Bike,  
Transit

**85%**

of New Development in  
Transformational Areas



- Neighborhood Residence District
- Continued potential in Assembly Square, Northpoint, Union Square, Union Square East, and Boynton Yards
- New format allows for easy addition of new overlay districts after neighborhood planning

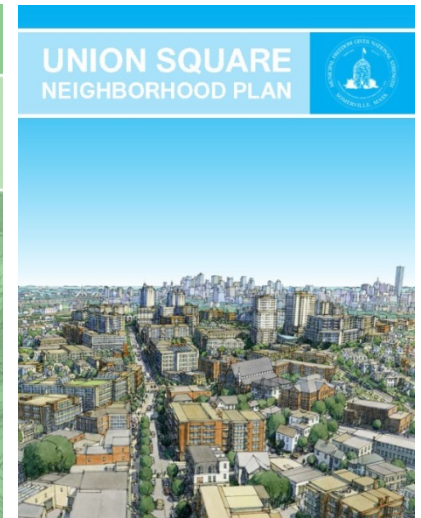
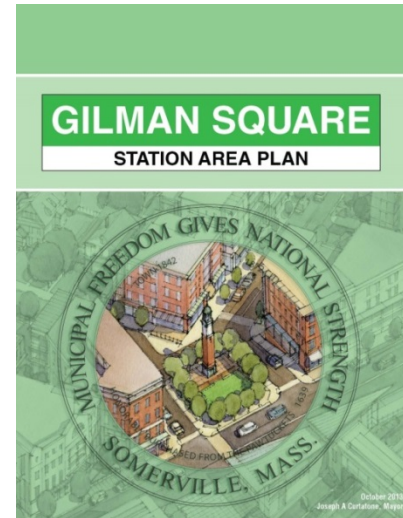


# Neighborhood Plans

Each is an amendment and implementation appendix to SomerVision

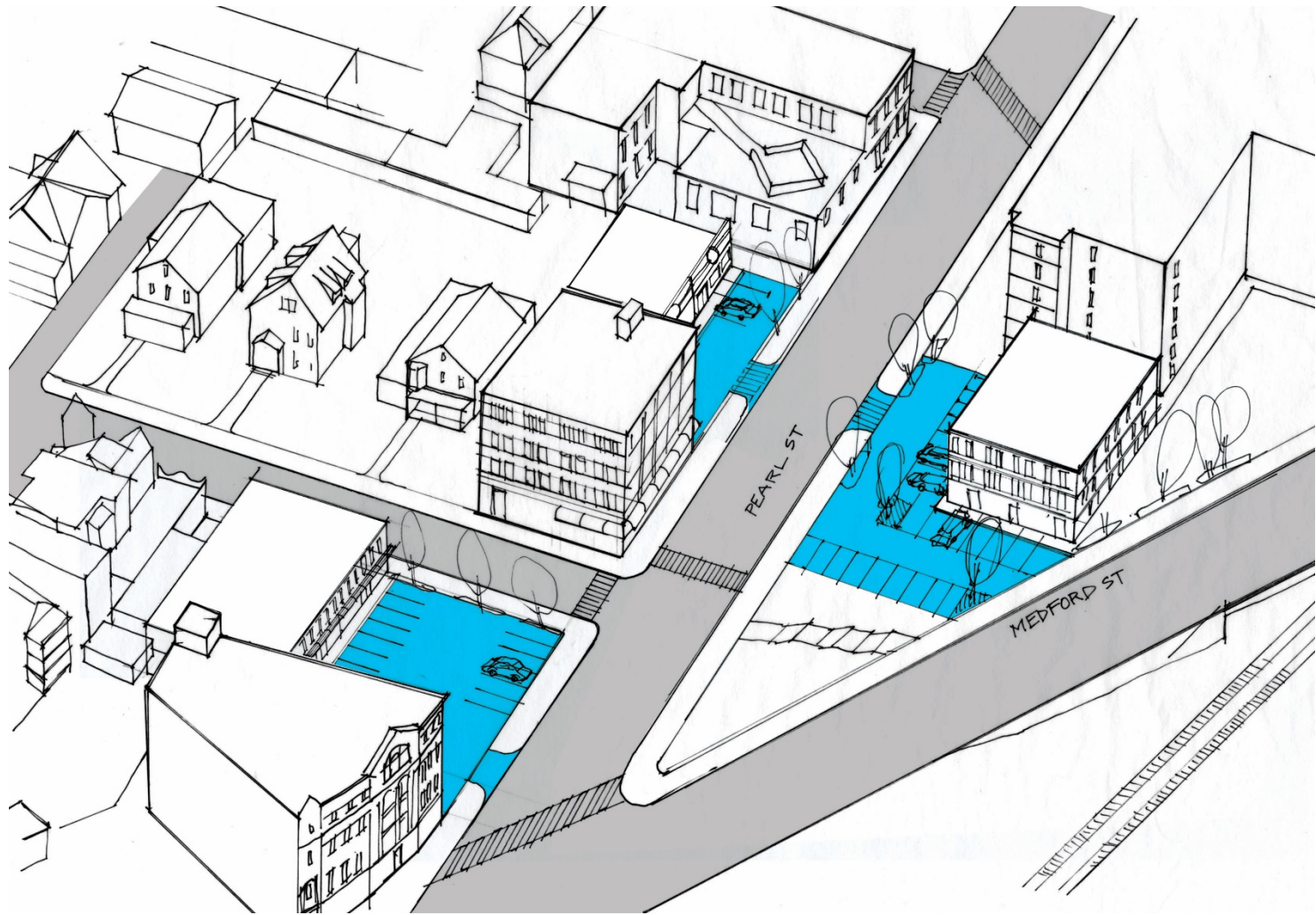
Provides direction of how each neighborhood can help to achieve SomerVision's objectives

Includes proposed Zoning Map changes to implement each plan

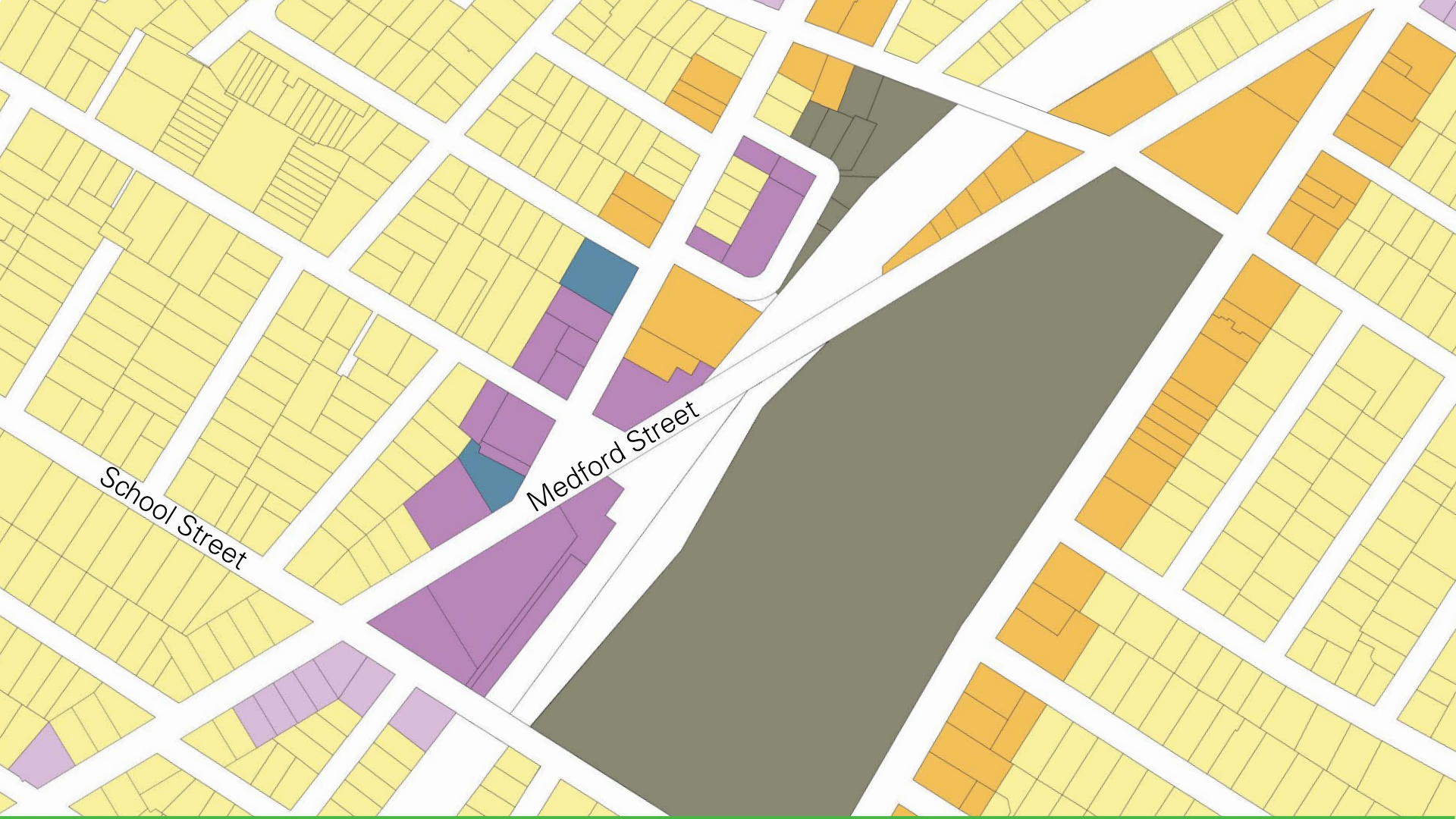












School Street

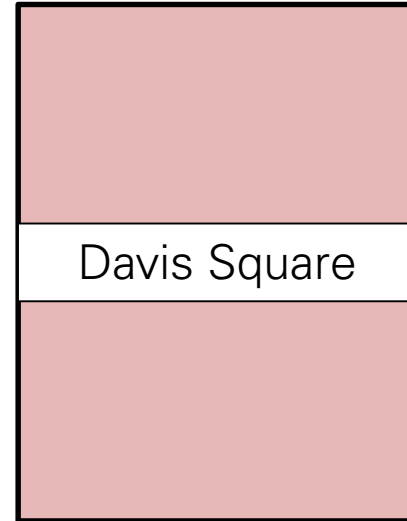
Medford Street



# Future Plans

Davis Square – In process

Additional Overlay Districts



# 2. WHY THIS CODE, WHY RIGHT NOW



# Current Operating System



# Proposed Operating System





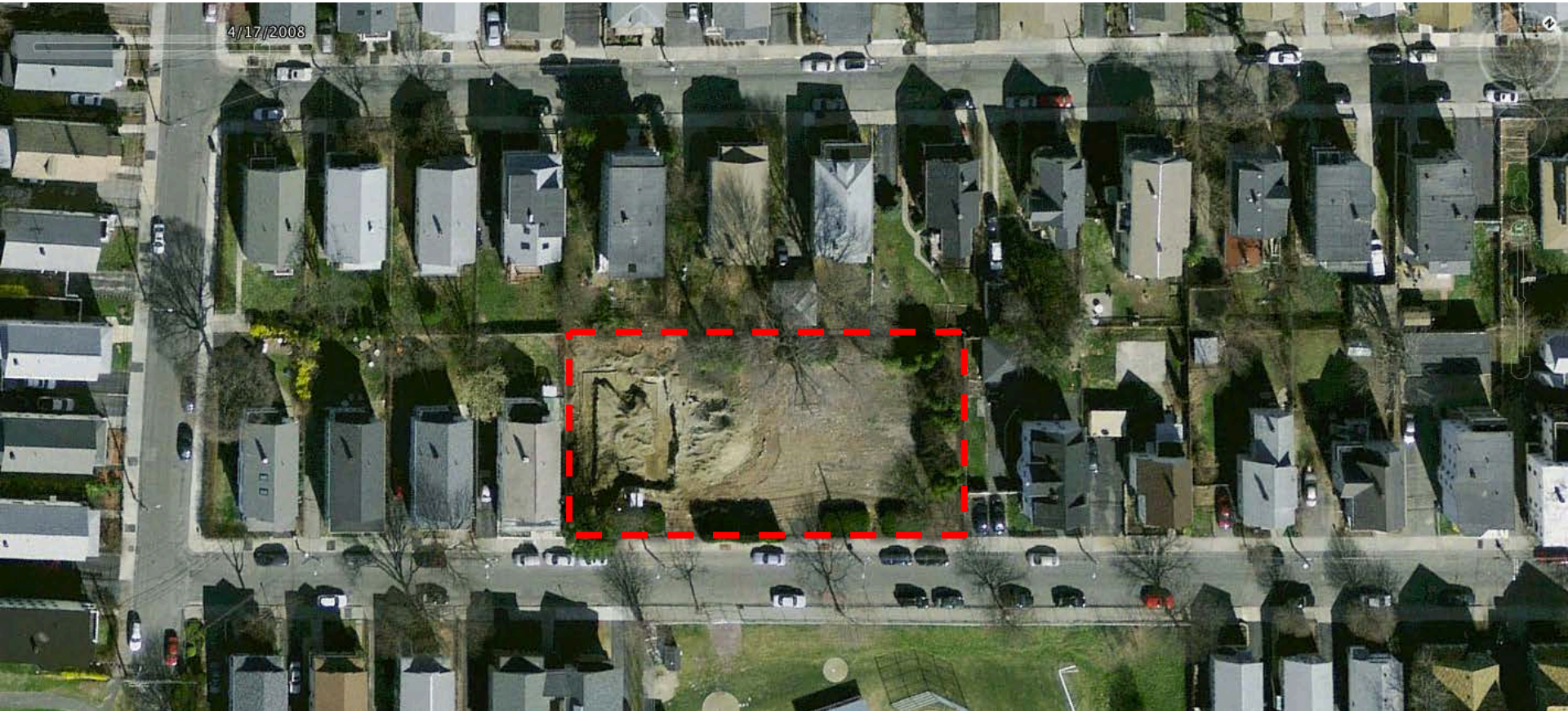
# Proposed Operating System



## Available Programs

- Building Type
- Special Districts
- Overlay Districts
- Green Area Ratio
- Sustainability
- Subdivision & Thoroughfare Standards
- etc

# What the Existing Code allows in Neighborhoods



# What the Existing Code allows in Neighborhoods



# What Residents want in Neighborhoods



# What Residents want in Neighborhoods



# Examples

## DIFFERENCES IN THE EXISTING & PROPOSED ZONING CODE IN RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS



### FOUR CASE STUDIES OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

This guide is intended to illustrate the differences in development currently allowed by-right (which means without zoning relief) in the Residential A and Residential B zoning districts to the proposed by-right improvements allowed in the NR district in the zoning overhaul.



<https://www.somervillezoning.com/about-the-zoning-overhaul/zoning-technical-reports/>





# WHAT DO THESE PROJECTS HAVE IN COMMON?





# EXISTING CODE REQUIRES A SPECIAL PERMIT FOR EVERYTHING





# Alterations to Existing Structures

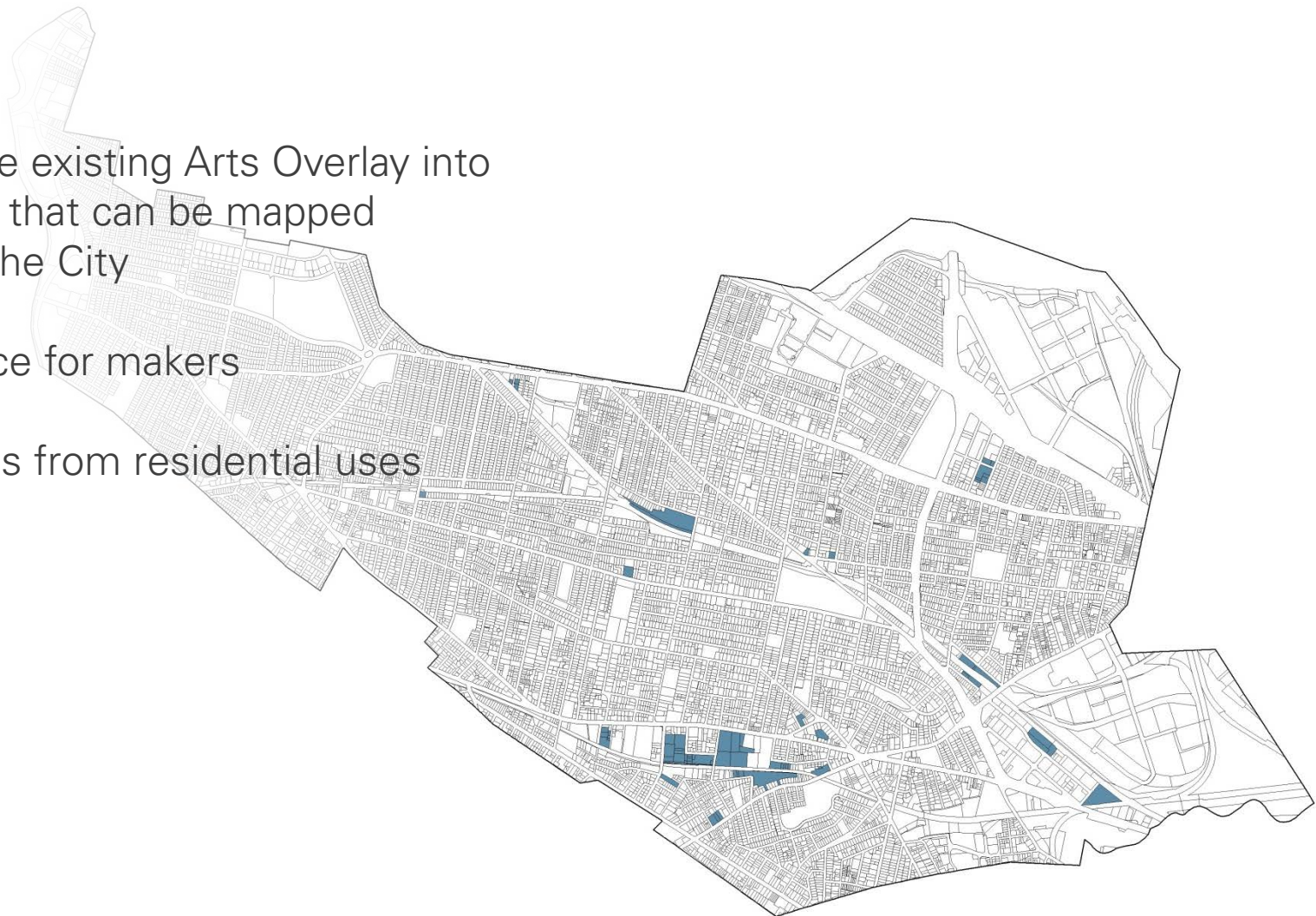


Proposal is to allow modest alterations by-right

Because all additions have specific dimensional standards that must be met...no more FAR.

# Fabrication

- Converting the existing Arts Overlay into a new district that can be mapped anywhere in the City
- Preserve space for makers
- Protect spaces from residential uses



# A New Board

## Design Review Committee (DRC)

becomes the

## Urban Design Commission (UDC)

### 5. HIGH-RISE DISTRICTS

High-Rise (HR)

scale of a building.

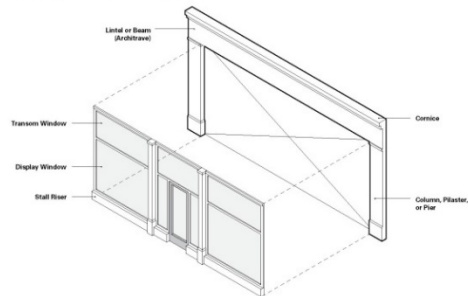
#### iii. Materials

- a. The palette of wall materials and colors used for a building should be kept to a minimum, preferably three. Similar wall materials as found on adjacent or nearby buildings should be used to strengthen district character and provide continuity and unity between buildings of divergent size, scale, and architectural styles.
- b. Acceptable wall materials include architectural concrete or pre-cast concrete panels, natural or cast stone, curtain wall and heavy gage metal panel, and brick. Value added materials such as natural or cast stone, concrete, glazed or unglazed architectural terracotta, and brick should be used as wall materials where pedestrians closely encounter and interact with buildings.
- c. Exterior Insulation and Finish Systems (EIFS) should never be used for the base of a building.
- d. Horizontal or vertical board siding and shingles,

whether wood, metal plastic (vinyl), masonry or composite materials, should be used only for smaller scale apartment buildings.

- e. Two or more wall materials should be combined only one above the other. Wall materials appearing heavier in weight should be used below wall materials appearing lighter in weight.
- f. Building wall materials that are lighter in color, tint, or shade should be used for the lower floors of a building, with materials darker in color, tint, or shade used above.
- g. If a building's massing and pattern of fenestration is complex, simple or flat wall materials should be used; if a building's massing and pattern of fenestration is simple, walls should include additional texture and surface relief.
- h. Side and rear building elevations that are visible from the public realm should have a level of trim and finish that is compatible with the facade of the building.

FIGURE 5.1 (b) Elements of a Storefront



### 5. HIGH-RISE DISTRICTS

High-Rise (HR)

- ii. Balconies should have either metal railing or glass guardrail systems.

#### iv. Storefronts

- a. The design of storefronts should invite interaction, enliven the pedestrian environment, and provide a secondary, more intimate source of lighting at night.
- b. Monotonous and repetitive storefronts sign types, and sign designs should be avoided.
- c. Where a pedestrian street intersects with a side street, commercial spaces should wrap the corner and include at least one storefront on the side street.
- d. A paneled or rendered stairwell at least one (1) foot in height should be included below display windows.
- e. Where height permits, transom windows should be included above storefront doors and display windows to allow additional natural daylight to penetrate into the interior space.
- f. Awnings are encouraged for each storefront to provide weather protection for pedestrians and reduce glare for storefront display areas. Awnings should be open-ended, and operable.
- g. Bi-fold glass windows and doors and other storefront systems that open to permit a flow of customers between interior and exterior space are encouraged.

#### v. Entrances

- a. Principal entrances should be optimally located, well defined, clearly visible, and universally accessible from the adjacent sidewalk.
- b. Each ground floor use should have an individual entrance with direct access onto a sidewalk.
- c. Storefront doors should not obstruct pedestrians walking past or alongside a building.
- d. Lobby entrances required for upper story uses should be limited in width (frontage) and separate from the entrance for any ground floor uses.
- e. Features such as a double-height ceiling, distinctive doorway, decorative lighting, recessed facade, or a change in paving material within the setback area should be used to make lobbies for upper story commercial uses distinctive while preserving floor space for other ground floor uses.

#### vi. Details

- a. Architectural details, ornamentation, and articulations should be used with building fenestration to create a harmonious composition that is consistent throughout the building, so that the building appears as

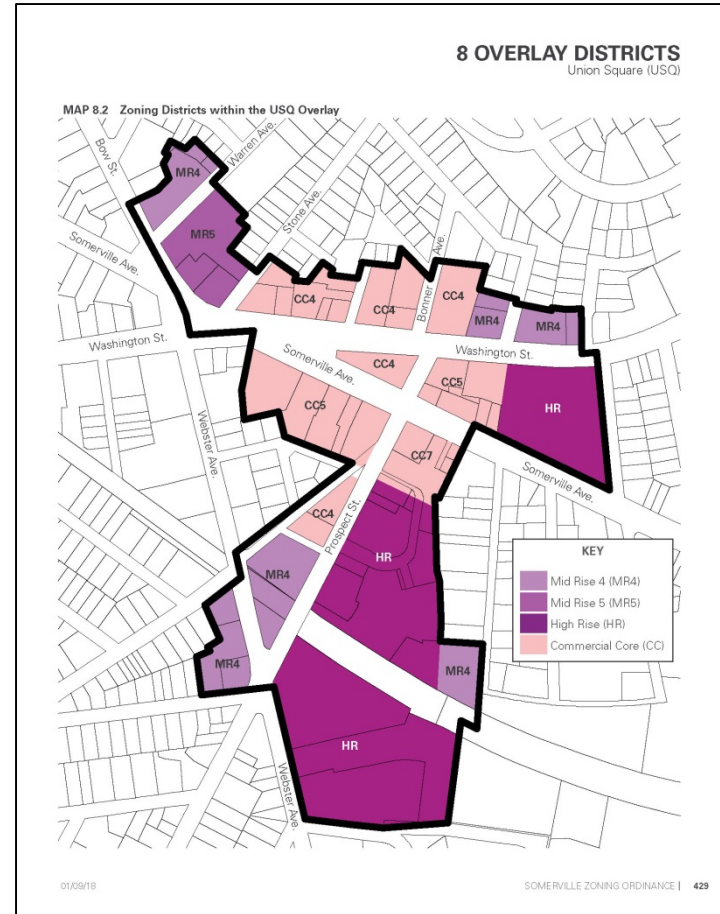
a unified whole and not as a collection of unrelated parts that adds to the impression of bulk.

- b. Exterior lighting (building, storefront, and landscape) should be integrated into the design of the building, create a sense of safety, and encourage pedestrian activity at night through layers of light that contribute to the nighttime experience.
- c. Exterior lighting should relate to pedestrians and accentuate major architectural or landscape features, but should be shielded to reduce glare and eliminate light being cast onto the night sky.
- d. The upper portions of buildings, especially high-rise buildings, should provide visual interest and a variety in detail and texture to the skyline.
- e. Mechanical and utility equipment should be integrated into the architectural design of the building or screened from public view. Penthouses should be integrated with the building's architecture, and not appear as foreign structures unrelated to the building they serve.
- f. Ventilation intakes/exhausts should be located to minimize adverse effects on pedestrian comfort along the sidewalk and within outdoor spaces.
- g. Buildings at terminated vistas should be articulated with design features that function as focal points to create memorable views that add to the character and enhance the aesthetics of the neighborhood.



# Coding for Commercial Space (New Jobs)

- Each overlay district has minimum amount of square feet that must be commercial
- Development in total must meet a commercial to residential ratio
- Development can never provide a dwelling unit without providing 325 SF of commercial
- Adjustments can be made to future overlays to match changing conditions



# Civic Space

- A % of land area in every Overlay District must be provided as one or more Civic Space Types
- Standards for new Parks, Commons, & Plazas (11 different types in total)
- Standards for Civic Uses
- Civic Space Types and Civic Uses work just like Building Types and Land Uses



# Sustainability

- Green Area Ratio
- Larger projects require LEED Silver or Gold certifiable
- Sustainable & Resilient Buildings application questionnaire similar to Boston and Cambridge
- Permits sustainable energy systems (solar panels, etc.)
- Incentivizes green roofs
- More being researched...

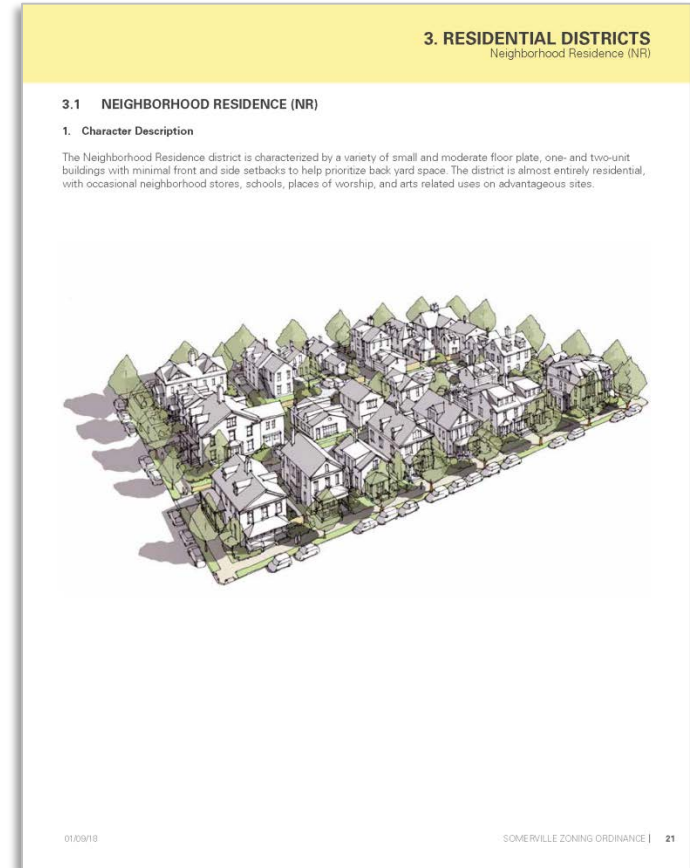


# 3. 2015 CODE v. 2018 CODE



# A Complete Re-Write

- Organized by District
  - *Repeats information but makes easier-to-understand document for user*
- Uses color coordination to relate to zoning map
- Has hundreds of photos and graphics (compared to 27 in the existing code)
- The code is written, where possible, to ditch the legal wonk





# Technical Reports

- Housing Needs Assessment
- The Economic Impact of the Proposed Zoning Code
- The Fiscal Impact of the Proposed Zoning Code
  - *Cost of Land Uses Study*
- Market Rate Housing Study



October 9, 2015, Revised October 28, 2015

## Somerville Housing Needs Assessment



Somerville Community Corp. – St. Polycarp Village

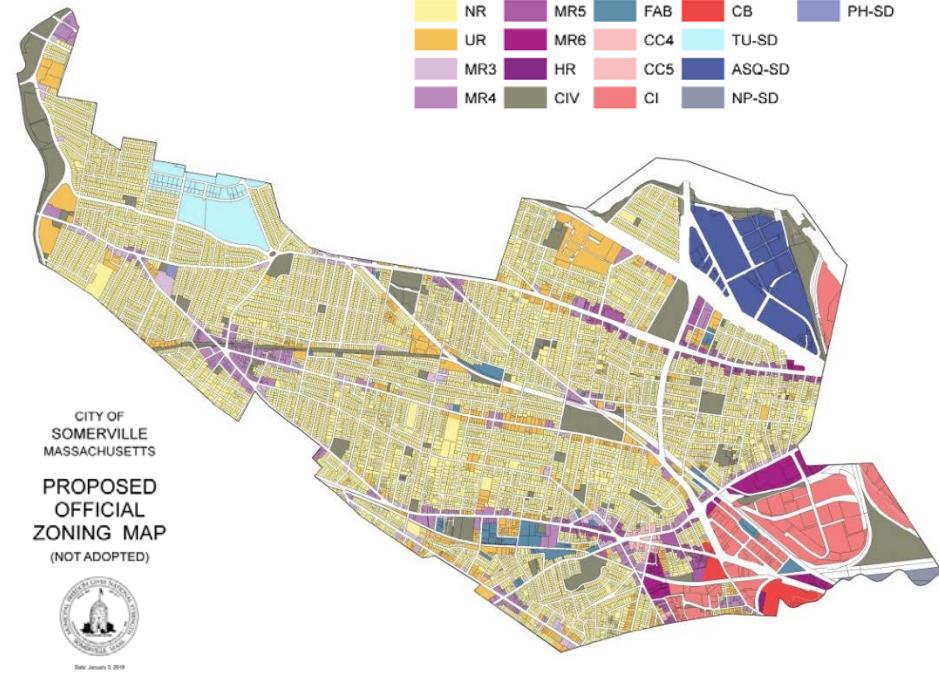
Prepared For:  
**City of Somerville**

Prepared By:  
**Lynne D. Sweet**  
**LDS Consulting Group, LLC**  
**233 Needham Street**  
**Newton, MA 02464**  
**617-454-1144**



# Zoning Map

- Removed IB/BB and Twin City Special Districts until further neighborhood planning
- Considered all zoning map change request forms from 2015
- Considered all map amendments since 2015
- Created Commercial Business District



# Neighborhood Residence Density

2015 Community Meeting Followed by BoA Presentation

## New Proposal

1. **Down zone** RB and merge with RA for a single district
2. Provide equal protection because all these properties are so similar



## New Proposal

TABLE 3.1 Buildings Types



**Cottage**  
A small floor plate, detached, residential building type with one dwelling unit.



**House**  
A moderate floor plate, detached, residential building type with up to two vertically stacked dwelling units.



**Paired House**  
A moderate floor plate, semi-detached, residential building type with up to two vertically stacked dwelling units. A paired house is attached on one side to another paired house.



**Duplex**  
A moderate floor plate, detached, residential building type with two side-by-side dwelling units.



**Triple Decker**  
A moderate floor plate, detached, residential building type with three vertically stacked dwelling units.



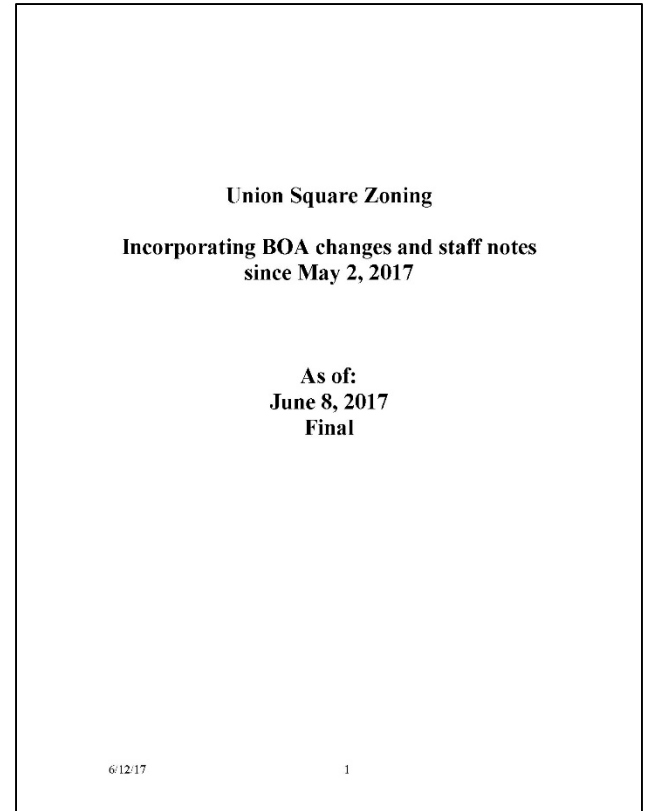
**Paired Triple Decker**  
A moderate floor plate, semi-detached, residential building type with three vertically stacked dwelling units. A paired triple decker is attached on one side to another paired triple decker.

# Union Square

Some of the hard work has already been done!

This overlay is an early implementation of some Zoning Districts in the Overhaul:

- Mid Rise 4
- Mid Rise 5
- High Rise
- Commercial Core



# Affordable Housing

Increased to 20% after registered voter submission in 2016.

## 2018 Follow Up

Study of 20% housing requirements including total housing permitted, units created (homeownership and rental), and under-built projects to avoid inclusionary housing regulations.

# 20%



# Four Unrelated

Residential occupancy of a building or residential portion of a building in rooming units...; in dwelling units by more than four (4) unrelated persons; ...

**TABLE 9.1 Permitted Uses**

Use Category Specific Use	NR	UR	MR3	MR4	MR5	MR6	HR	FAB	CC	CI	CB	CIV	Use Specific Standards
<b>Residential</b>													
Household Living	P	P	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	N	N	N	N	N	§9.2.9.a
Group Living (except as follows)	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	SP	N	N	N	N	N	§9.2.9.b

P - Permitted

SP - Special Permit Required

N - Not Permitted

Allowed by Special Permit



City of Somerville

**ZONING OVERHAUL**

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