

# Watertown Square Area Plan



## Project Update

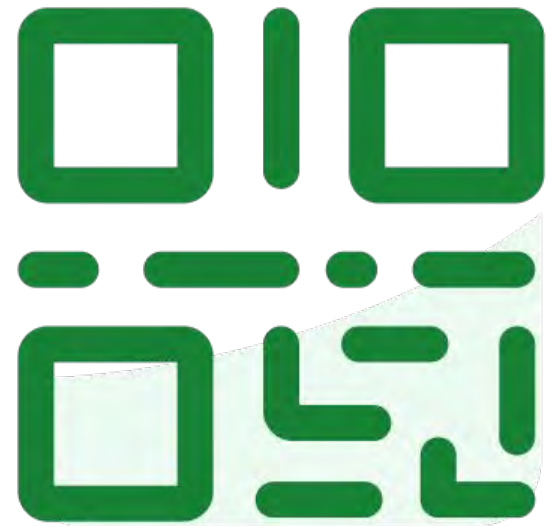
Thursday, April 04, 2024



# Contents

- 1. Introduction ~15 min**
  - a. Recap of Project Goals/Process
  - b. Recap of Public Engagement
  
- 2. Urban Design and MBTA Communities Zoning ~15 min**
  - a. MBTA Communities Compliance
  - b. Zoning Recommendations
  
- 3. Streetscape Design ~15 min**
  - a. Public Realm
  - b. High-level Traffic Analysis
  
- 4. Q+A Panel ~60 min**

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How do you relate to Watertown Square?



# Introduction to Tonight's Meeting

First, a few questions to answer:

- Why are we doing this plan?
- What have we done so far?
- What are we doing today?
- What are we doing next?

# Introduction to Tonight's Meeting

- **Why are we doing this plan?**
- What have we done so far?
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# Watertown Comprehensive Plan

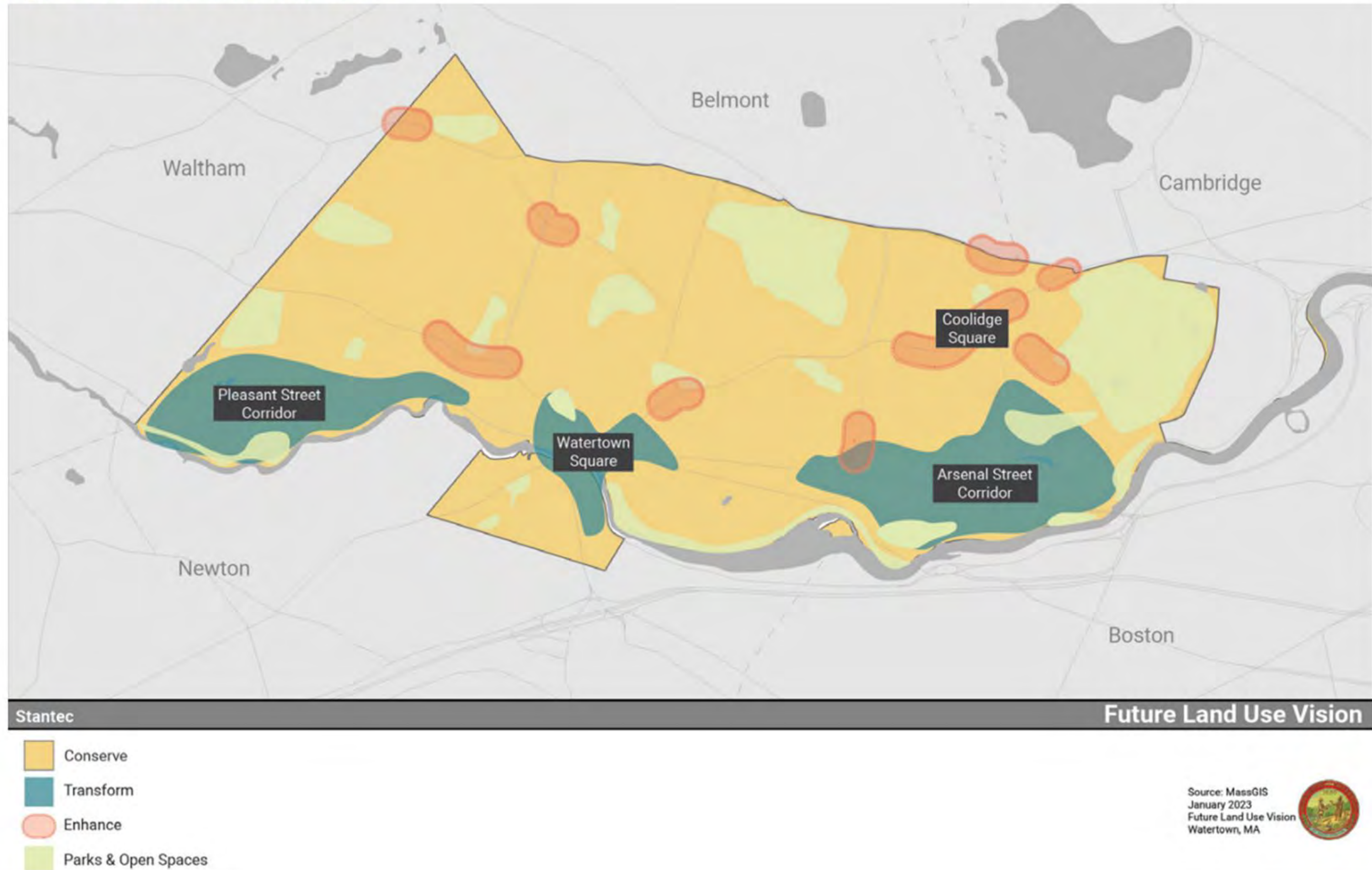
ADOPTED



September 2023



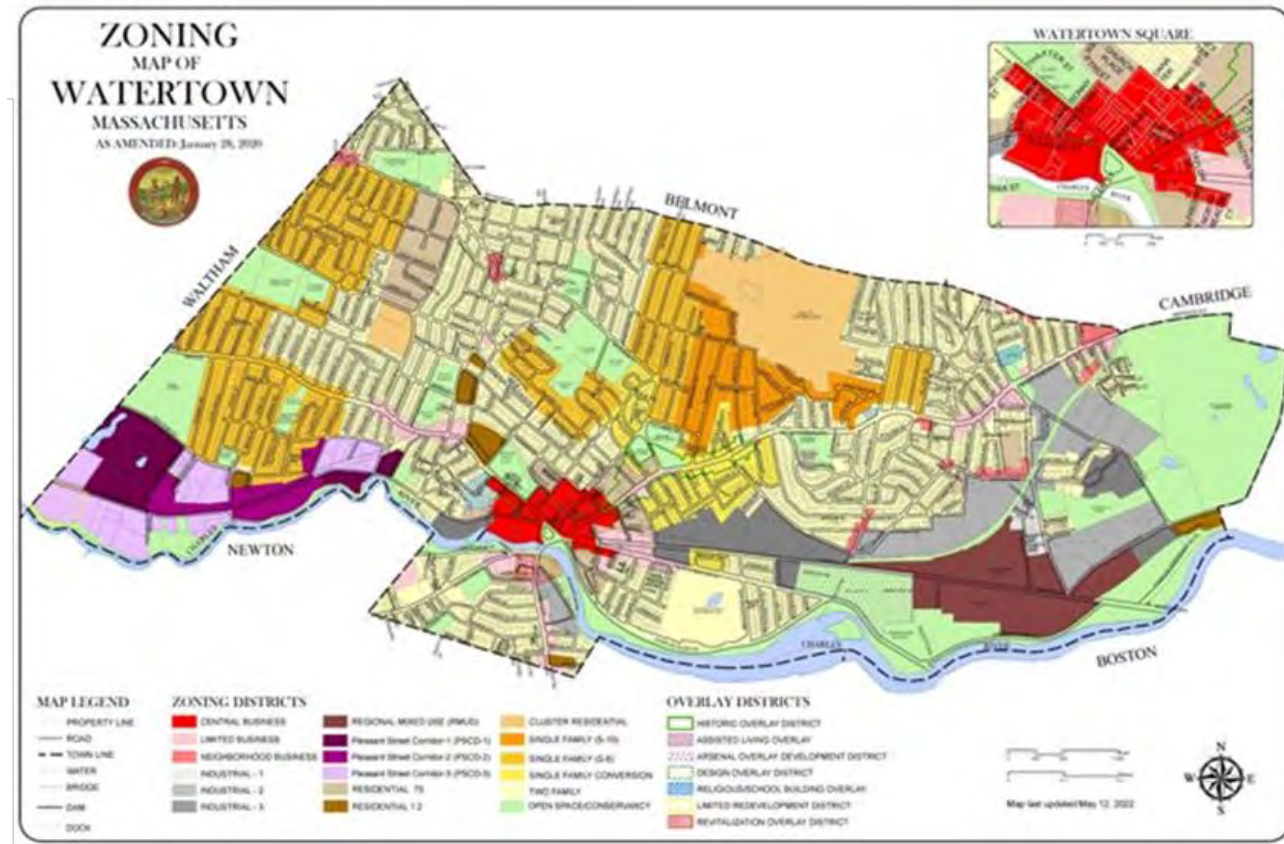
Figure 3: Future Land Use Vision







# Watertown Square Area Plan



# The completed plan will:

1. **Evaluate zoning** to comply with requirements of the “MBTA Communities” legislation (Section 3A of MGL c. 40A) by allowing multi-family housing by-right near transit.
2. Study redevelopment opportunities for **City-owned properties**.
3. Study transportation in Watertown Square to identify achievable strategies to prioritize safety for all users **and improve pedestrian and bicycle conditions while managing traffic congestion**.
4. Explore options for **reinforcing Watertown Square as a destination**, building on anchors like the Watertown Free Public Library and City Hall. Look at options for additional anchor(s) that could include restaurants, music/entertainment, institutional, educational, or other cultural uses.
5. Study **infrastructure** and utility improvements needed to support Watertown Square

- Why are we doing this plan?
- **What have we done so far?**
- What are we doing today?
- What are we doing next?



# This process has been different





# This process has been different

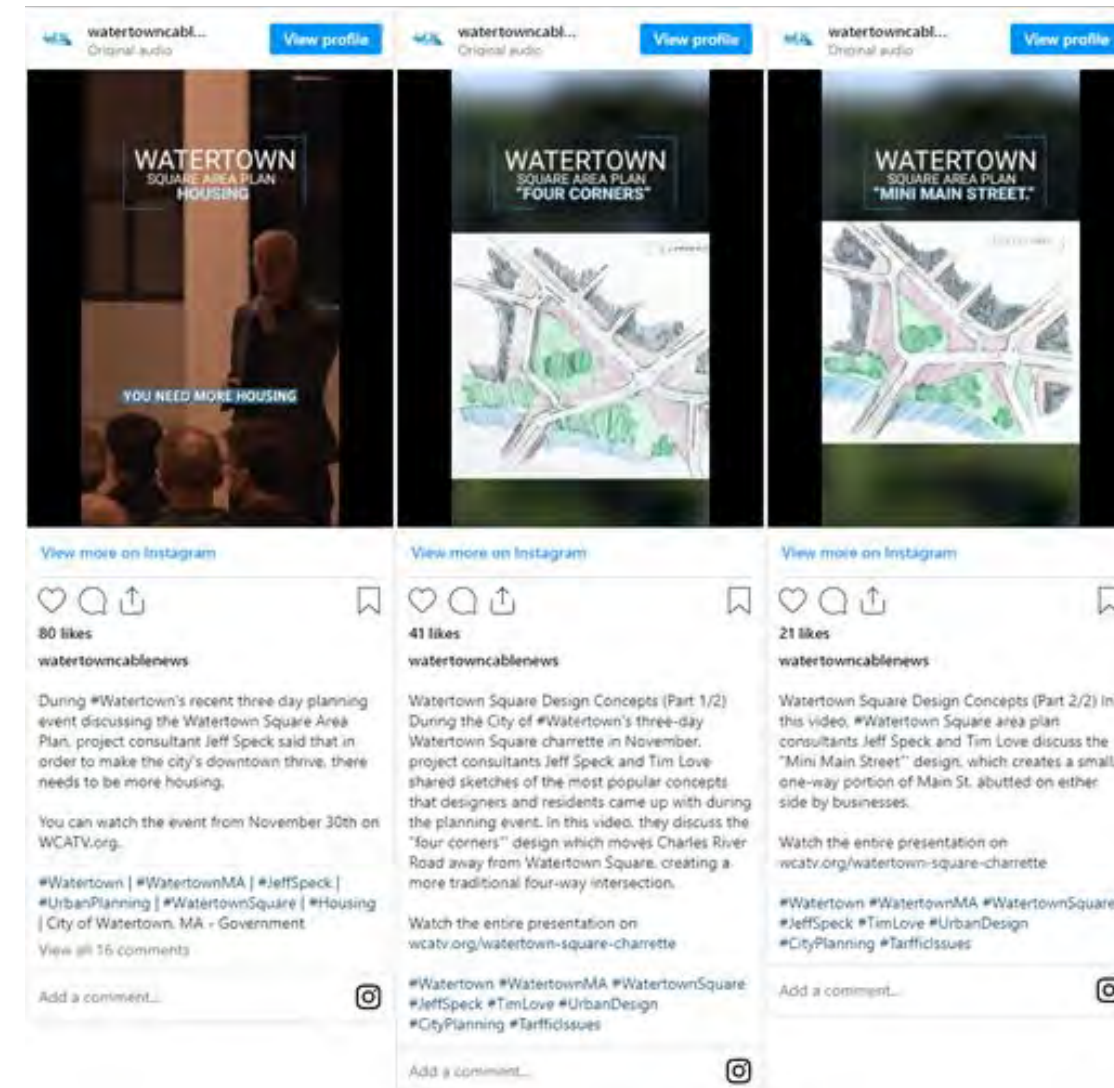
- Many planning processes work under a strategy that I've come to call "Decide, Announce, Defend"
- A typical local government doing a plan for a street would do the first meeting by showing their preferred alternative, or maybe two
- Many communities doing 3A zoning will tweak existing special permit zoning by making a few use table changes and presenting it to the community
- Instead, we've worked with the community to seek solutions from the beginning of this process

# So far...

- We introduced the Area Plan with a **kick-off event** in October
- We spent **three days** doing in-person design work in November
- On February 29th:
  - We presented two plans for the **streetscape**
  - We presented two ideas for **zoning**
- Throughout this process we have done **in-person and post-meeting surveys and exercises** to supplement our on-site discussions and incorporate input from a variety of perspectives

# How did we get here?

- Project Website
- October Meeting
- Post-October Meeting Feedback Form
- Kitchen Table Conversations
- Charrette (any session)
- Online Videos
- POLIS Engagement Tool
- 2/29 Meeting
- Post-February Feedback Form
- In-Meeting Live Polling



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**What ways have you participated in for this process so far? Check all that apply.**

# In our meetings so far...

We have found some general agreement:

- Watertown Square has some great buildings but lacks character
- The intersection is not safe and not popular

We have found a majority support for:

- Making the square more walkable
- Incentives for affordable housing
- Future development of parking areas
- The square needs more green space and better river access

There is very mixed feedback on:

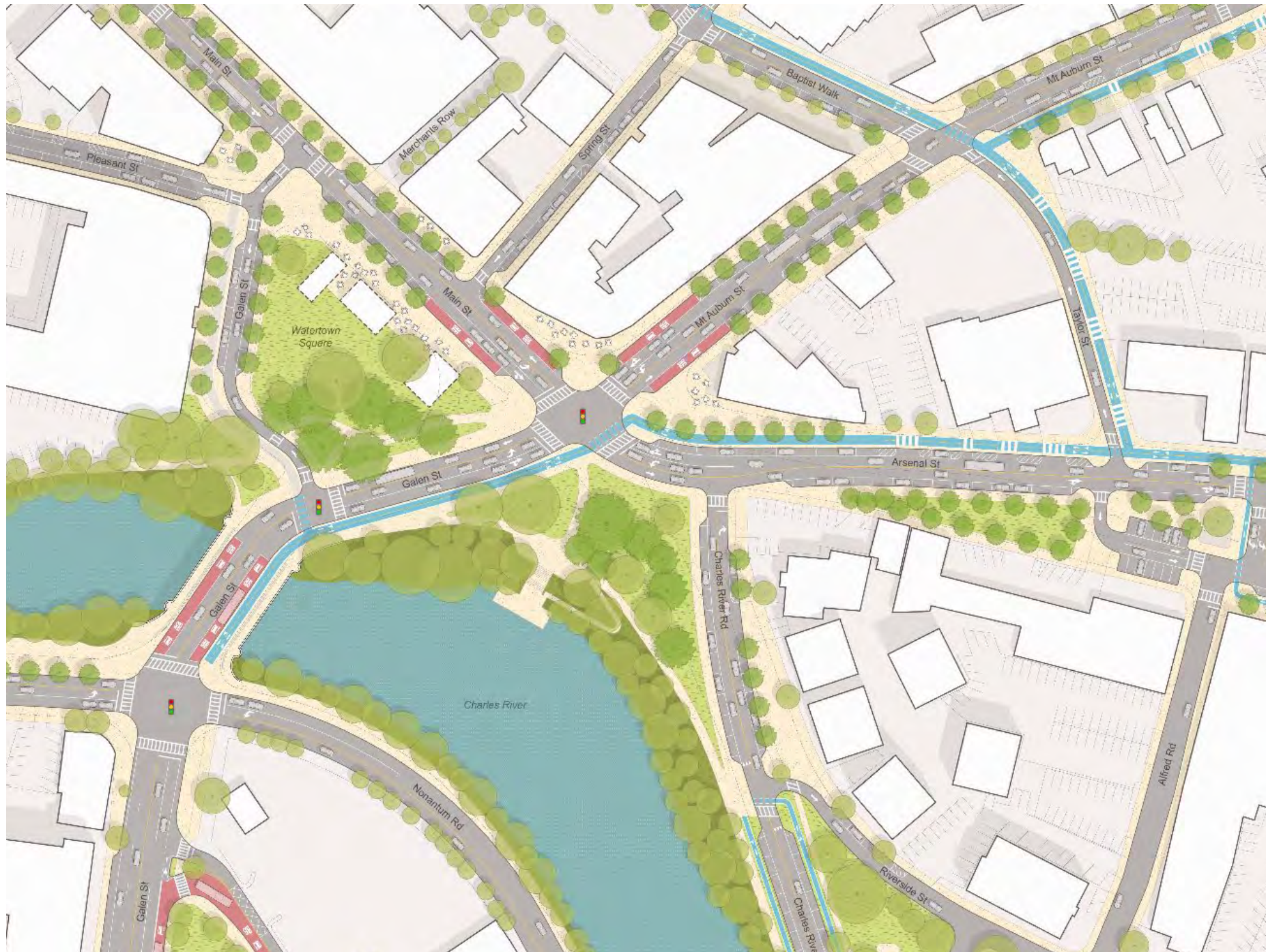
- Building heights
- How to allow by-right development under the MBTA Communities law
- Which of the two streetscape plans to pick

# When we last met...

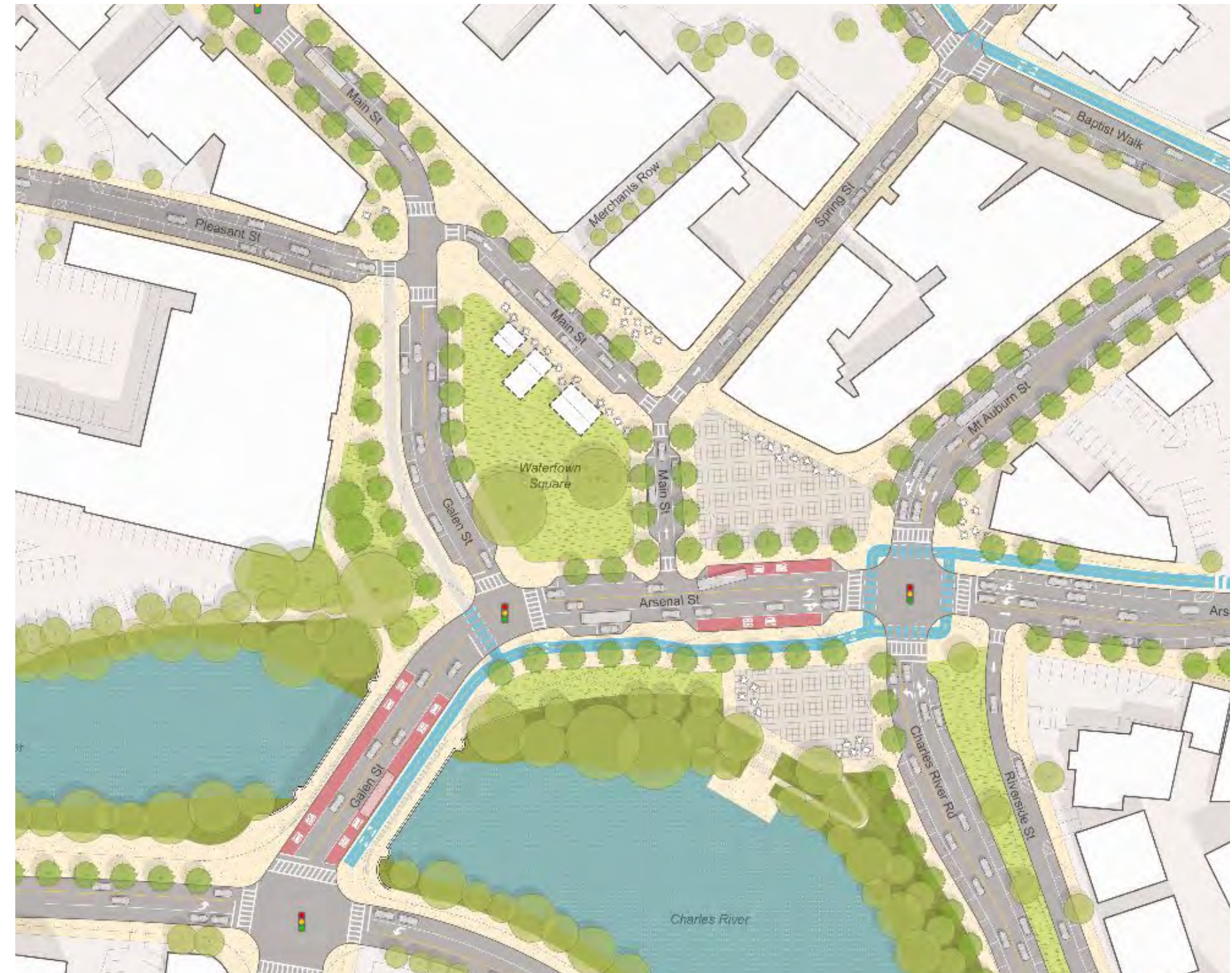
- We had two proposals for a new intersection design in the core of the Square
- We discussed the benefit of creating significant new public open space with better connections to the river
- We considered the advantages of additional sidewalk space, street trees, on-street parking and a more robust bicycle network that links our existing shared-use path behind Main Street into to the rest of our off-street path network.



## Four Corners



## Mini Main Street





# When we last met...

- We introduced design strategies for new buildings, along with two zoning proposals:
- Both proposals would:
  - Change zoning in the entire study area
  - Replace underlying zoning with a form-based code
  - Provide more design standards in the code than we have today
  - Maintain all existing process/rules for historic commission and conservation commission
  - Establish maximum heights for lots at one of three different levels
  - Require site plan review for each project before the planning board, with opportunity for public comment and opportunity to place conditions on a project approval
- But:
  - One proposal would require special permits for housing in a part of the study area and allow zoning without special permits for housing in the remainder of the study area
  - The other proposal removed the special permit step to build housing in the entire study area







- Why are we doing this plan?
- What have we done so far?
- **What are we doing today?**
- What are we doing next?

# What are we doing today?

- One street design:
  - A refined version of “Four Corners” plan
- One proposal for future development:
  - A plan to allow new housing, retail and office space, to have more people living and working above stores in Watertown Square, and to make the square a better community destination
- Another chance for feedback:
  - We are using a single feedback form for those in-person, on-line and those who watch the video of the meeting in the coming days. We will use this to refine this plan for submittal to the city council.

# What are we doing today?

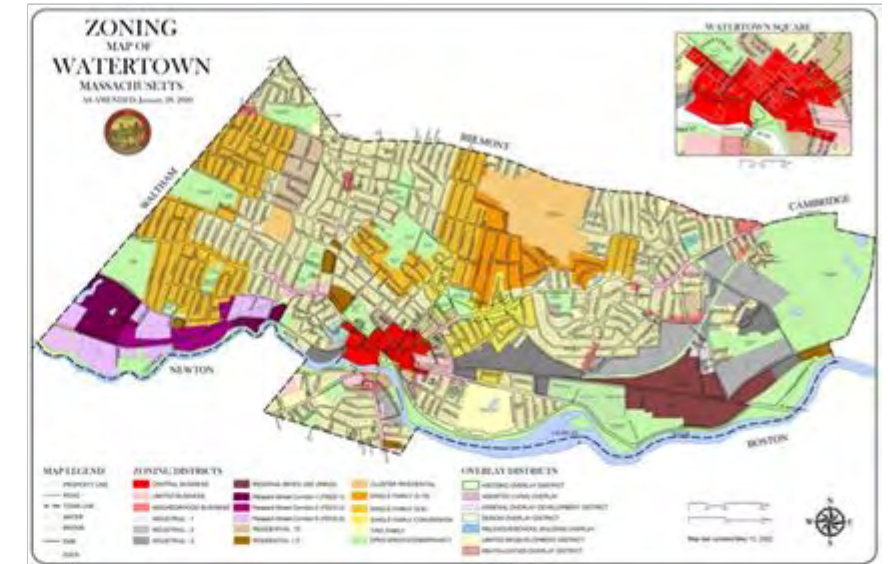
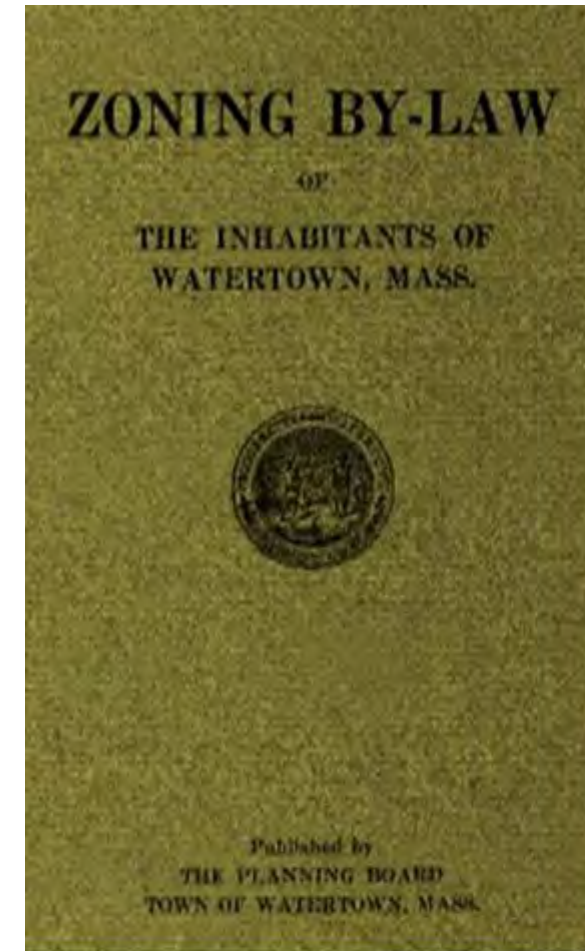
- One street design:
  - A refined version of “Four Corners” plan
- One proposal for future zoning:
  - A form-based code to implement the plan’s goals, replace underlying zoning, strengthen design standards and review, and provide a portion of the district that meets the MBTA law and allows by-right housing
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# What Exactly IS Zoning?

The public regulation of land use, bulk, density and dimensions as well as the administrative processes for enforcement.



# How do we regulate land development?

- Zoning
- State and local wetlands laws
- Historic preservation regulations
- Health codes
- Building codes
- Fire codes
- Etc.

# Before we get any further...

- This MBTA Communities Law:
  - Passed in 2021, required Watertown (and 176 other communities) to create by right multifamily zoning near transit.
  - To comply, each community must have such a zoning district with a multifamily unit capacity equal to or greater than the assigned minimum.
  - Watertown's requirement is 1,701 units.
  - Therefore, Watertown, as an “adjacent” community to rail transit, must create **by-right zoning** that can, under the law, provide a **unit capacity** of a minimum of 1,701 new units



# Before we get any further...

- What is Unit Capacity?
- What is By-Right Zoning?

# What is a “unit capacity”?

Minimum unit capacity is a measure of whether a multi-family zoning district is of a reasonable size, not a requirement to produce housing units. **Nothing in Section 3A or the guidelines should be interpreted as a mandate to construct a specified number of housing units**, nor as a housing production target.

# What is a “by-right”?

By-right means there is no special permit required

# What is a special permit?

- Special permits are the ‘in between’ of zoning. Something allowed by special permit is allowed . . . But not guaranteed.
- The special permit is the solution when a community isn’t sure that they have captured everything they want to require in a zoning code itself.
- The special permit has become a way to ensure community input, create more public benefits and include extra conditions and requirements.

# Special Permit Findings in Watertown

- The specific site is an appropriate location for such a use, structure or condition
- The use as developed will not adversely affect the neighborhood
- There will be no nuisance or serious hazard to vehicles or pedestrians
- Adequate and appropriate facilities will be provided for the proper operation of the proposed use

# Cities and towns like special permits

- They can account for any mistake made in the initial drafting of zoning, by requiring something be done by condition of project approval
- They can ask for additional benefits, including lots of money for related (and sometimes unrelated) things
  - The unrelated benefits are not legal, but communities often get them anyway
- At it's best, a special permit helps a project become better

# State leadership is concerned about special permits for new housing

- A lack of housing is the most significant impediment to economic development in eastern Massachusetts
- Development review takes too long
- Many projects get smaller and more expensive with special permits
- Many communities use special permit reviews to make sure housing never gets built at all

# Wait... What's the most significant impediment to economic development in MA?

A lack of housing...

- Massachusetts Economic Development Plan:  
“The perception that Massachusetts is one of the more expensive states in the country is supported by data: We have some of the **highest and fastest growing rental costs and home prices** in the nation, a **housing shortage** of an estimated 200,000 units at a time when other major metros are producing new housing at much higher rates . . .”

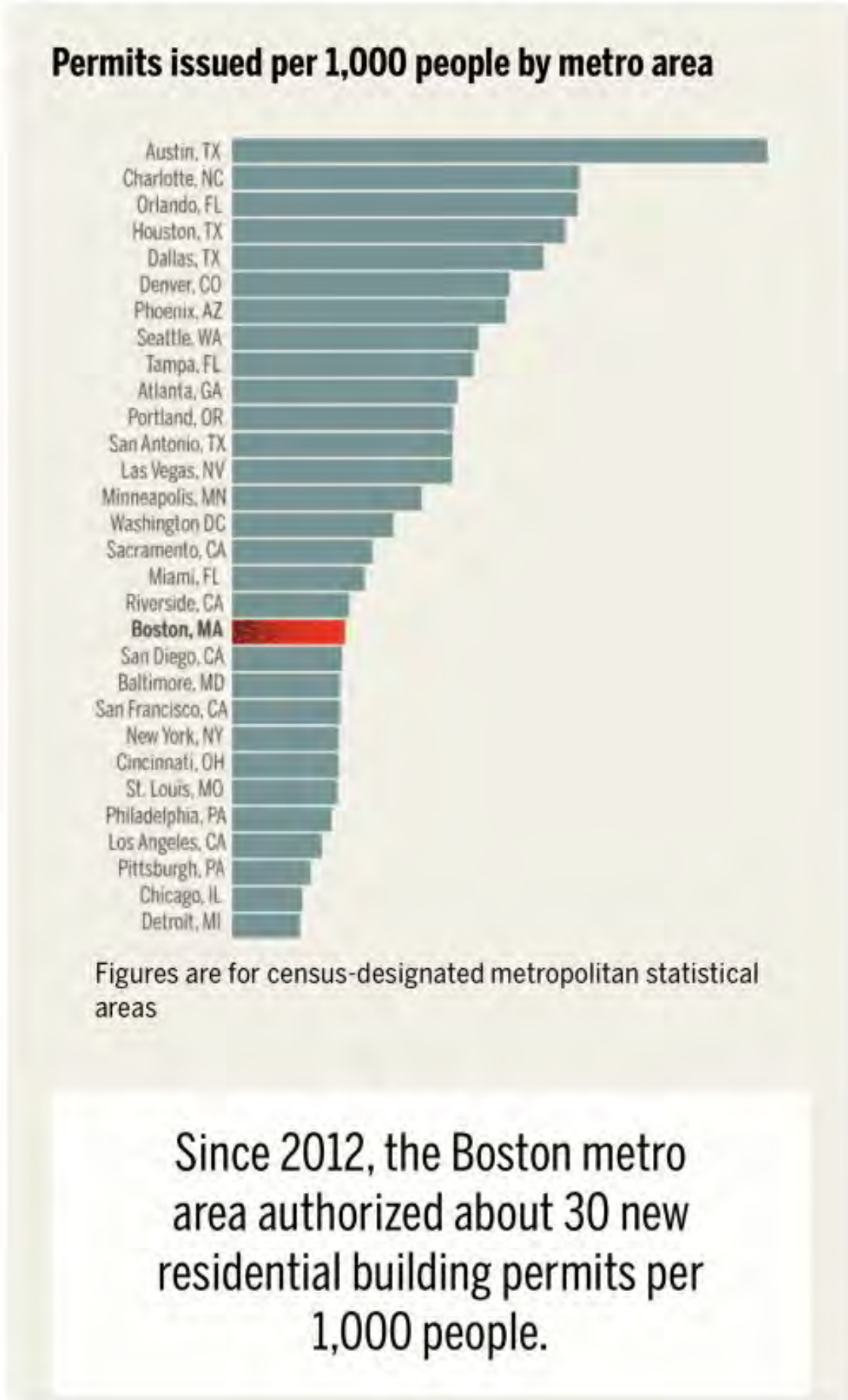


 **Boston Globe** Spotlight Team   

EXPLORE ▼

# BEYOND THE GILDED GATE

People in and around Boston are being challenged, in ways never before, to address the region's unprecedented housing crisis. The Globe Spotlight Team probed this question and found yet another crisis: One of consensus and will.



# JUE Insight: City-wide effects of new housing supply: Evidence from moving chains ☆

[Cristina Bratu](#)<sup>a</sup> ✉, [Oskari Harjunen](#)<sup>b</sup> ✉, [Tuukka Saarimaa](#)<sup>c</sup> 👤 ✉

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jue.2022.103528> ↗

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## Abstract

We study the city-wide effects of new, centrally-located market-rate housing supply using geocoded population-wide register data from the

## Does Building New Housing Cause Displacement?: The Supply and Demand Effects of Construction in San Francisco\*

Kate Pennington<sup>1</sup>

August 9, 2021

### Abstract

This paper identifies the causal impact of new construction on nearby rents, displacement, and gentrification in San Francisco by exploiting random variation in construction location induced by serious building fires. I combine parcel-level data on fires and construction with an original dataset of historic Craigslist rents and a panel of individual migration histories that allow me to introduce new, separate measures of displacement at the renter level and gentrification at the parcel level. I find that rents and displacement fall differentially near new market rate projects, while gentrification increases. In contrast, affordable housing does not have spillover effects.

**Keywords:** Displacement, Gentrification, Housing Supply, Spatial Econometrics

**JEL Codes:** R130, R230, R310, J11, J60

\*I would like to thank Brian Asquith and the Upjohn Institute for Employment Research for providing me with a fellowship to use the Infator data, as well as invaluable discussion. Many thanks to Meredith Fowle, Jeremy Magruder, Reed Walker, and my PhD cohort for their thoughtful feedback. I am grateful for comments from seminar participants at the NBER Summer Institute in Real Estate and Urban Economics, UC Berkeley's Real Estate and Environmental and Resource Economics seminars, the Online Spatial and Urban Seminar (OSUS) series, the Urban Economics PhD Workshop, and the Urban Economics Association meetings. Robert Collins of the San Francisco Rent Board provided crucial data and information about evictions in San Francisco and Michael Webster of the City Planning Department provided data and context on San Francisco parcel histories. A warm thank you to Pedro Peterson and Joshua Swirsky of the Planning Department for sparking this research agenda and for many conversations. This research has been supported by the San Francisco City Planning Department, Fisher Center for Real Estate and Urban Economics, the Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, and the Institute for Research on Labor and Employment at UC Berkeley.

<sup>1</sup>Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of California, Berkeley, [kate.pennington@berkeley.edu](mailto:kate.pennington@berkeley.edu)

## Supply Skepticism Revisited

*NYU Law and Economics Research Paper No. 24-12*

66 Pages

Posted: 13 Nov 2023

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New York University (NYU) - Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service

[Katherine M. O'Regan](#)

New York University (NYU) - Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service

Date Written: November 10, 2023

## Abstract

Although “supply skeptics” claim that new housing supply does not slow growth in rents, we show that rigorous recent studies demonstrate that: 1) Increases in housing supply slow the growth in rents in the region; 2) In some circumstances, new construction

# Yes, building more housing does lower rents, study says

*Researchers says 'supply skeptics' have it wrong*



by MICHAEL JONAS

December 7, 2023





# Do we currently allow housing in Watertown without special permits?

- Not very often:
  - Single and two-family homes
  - A few three-families in limited districts
  - A small portion of the Pleasant Street corridor
  - In mixed-use projects around Watertown Square
- None of these circumstances bring us into compliance with the state's MBTA Communities Law



# So... what do we do?

- Allow for more housing – but not only housing – in our best transit-centered neighborhood (Watertown Square)
- Use a form-based code
- Put the right districts in the right place
- Do by-right housing where it makes sense
- Make sure we at least meet the minimum unit capacity
- Provide incentives and priorities for affordable housing

# So... what do we do?

- Allow for more housing – but not only housing – in our best transit-centered neighborhood (Watertown Square)
- **Use a form-based code**
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# The Form-Based Code

## Conventional Zoning



## Form-based Codes



**Use**

**Management**

**Form**



# The Form-Based Code

- Primarily works to define and create a “place”
- Greater attention to streetscape, design, public realm and role of individual buildings in shaping public realm
- Up-front public participation during creation of the code limits the need for discretionary individual project review

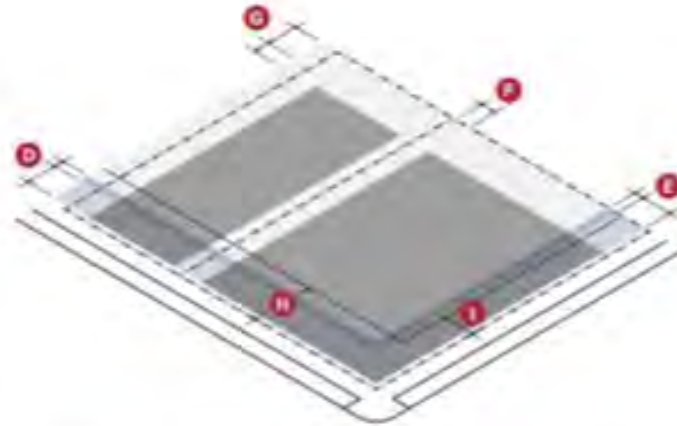
**15. COMMERCIAL BUILDING**

A multi-story building type limited to commercial uses.

a. Lot Standards



b. Placement



**LOT DIMENSIONS**

<b>A</b> Width (min/max)		
3MU, 4MU, FAB, CI	30 ft	150 ft.
5MU - 10MU	30 ft.	200 ft.
<b>B</b> Depth (min)		
3MU, 4MU, & FAB	40 ft.	
5MU - 10MU	100 ft.	
<b>C</b> Area (max)		
3MU & FAB	20,000 sq. ft.	
4MU & CI	28,000 sq. ft.	
5MU	40,000 sq. ft.	
7MU & 10MU	45,000 sq. ft.	

**LOT COVERAGE**

Permeable Surface	10%
-------------------	-----

**BUILDING SETBACKS**

Contextual Front Setback (see § 3.B.2.b)	Required:
<b>B</b> Primary & Secondary Front Setback	
3MU & 4MU (min/max)	2 feet - 12 feet
5MU - 10MU (min/max)	2 feet - 15 feet
FAB & CI (min/max)	2 feet - 12 feet
<b>F</b> Side Setback (min)	0 ft.
Side Setback Abutting NR (min)	5 ft.
<b>G</b> Rear Setback (min)	10 ft.
Rear Setback Abutting NR (min)	15 ft.

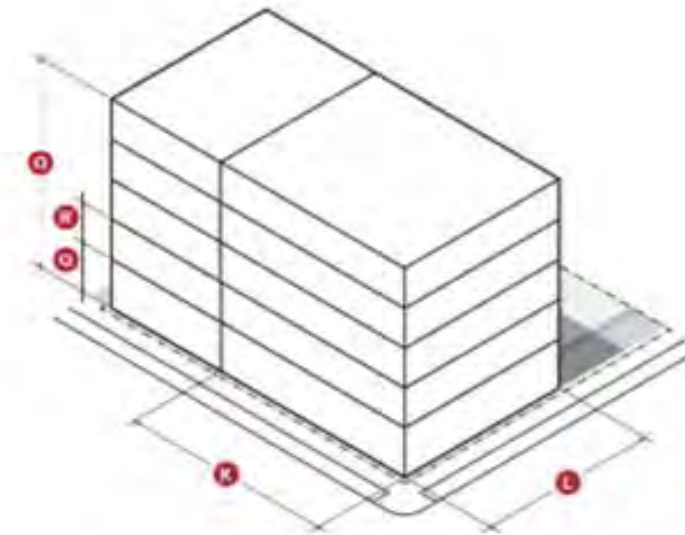
**PARKING SETBACKS**

<b>H</b> Primary Front Setback (min)	
3MU & FAB	20 feet
4MU - 10MU, CI	30 feet

**COMMERCIAL Building (cont.)**

A multi-story building type limited to commercial uses.

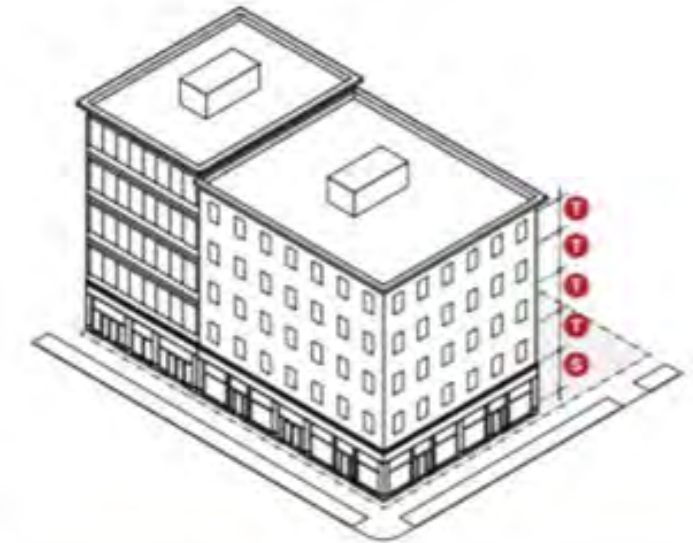
c. Height & Massing



**MAIN BODY**

<b>A</b> Facade Build Out (min)	80%
<b>M</b> Floor Plate (max)	
3MU & FAB	15,000 sq. ft.
4MU & CI	22,000 sq. ft.
5MU	30,000 sq. ft.
7MU & 10MU	
Up to 5 stories	36,000 sq. ft.
Above 5 stories	20,000 sq. ft.
<b>N</b> Building Height (min)	
3MU - 10MU	2 stories
<b>O</b> Building Height (max)	
3MU & FAB	3 stories (45 ft.)
4MU & CI	4 stories (55 ft.)
5MU	5 stories (70 ft.)

d. Uses & Features



**FACADE COMPOSITION**

<b>A</b> Ground Story Fenestration (min)	
3MU, 4MU, FAB, & CI	60%
5MU - 10MU	70%
<b>B</b> Upper Story Fenestration (min/max)	20% min - 50% max.
Blank Wall (max)	20 ft.

**PERMITTED BUILDING FRONTAGE**

	(1) required:
Forecourt	See § 3.E.7
Lobby Entrance	See § 3.E.8
Storefront	See § 3.E.9
Terrace	See § 3.E.10
Lightwell	See § 3.E.11

**PEDESTRIAN ACCESS**

- Why are we doing this plan?
- What have we done so far?
- What are we doing today?
- **What are we doing next?**



# Three more feedback loops

- First:
  - Tonight (and through the end of next week) we will collect feedback about the streetscape, urban design and zoning, to inform us as the consulting team writes the draft of the plan.
- Next:
  - The Planning Board and City Council will review the draft Watertown Square Area Plan. This is a **public hearing**.
- Then:
  - We bring zoning, reflecting the final plan, to the Planning Board and City Council for review and ask them to approve a version of the zoning. This will also be a **public hearing**.
  -

# A deep dive into zoning...

- Also:
  - As we move forward with this process, I'm going to work with our staff to do a more in-depth presentation on zoning, form-based codes, and land regulation strategies and outcomes.
- I hope to schedule this in May of 2024, before the plan document and zoning are heard by the City Council and Planning Board.

# Next up: An update on design, development and zoning...

For that, I'll turn things over to our consulting team now...



# Urban Design & MBTA Communities Zoning

MBTA Communities Compliance  
Zoning Recommendations

# Creating the “By-Right” Collar

Three key questions:

1. Should this lot allow by-right housing?
2. What is the right height for development (of any type) on this lot?
3. What are the form-based dimensions and rules for the entire district?

# Areas of Watertown Square that we believe should be by-right

- The existing buildings are not consistent with a future Watertown Square as a walkable community destination
- The area is publicly owned today, where - if they are developed - there would first be a significant community and city council involvement in any disposition and development of that lot
  - Note that the publicly owned lots are not counted toward the total “unit capacity” under the MBTA zoning law





# Areas of Watertown Square that we believe should require special permit

- The core of Watertown Square, where changes to meaningful buildings deserve additional care in project review
- Areas that are adjacent to existing residential one-and two-family neighborhoods, where lot-line impacts are best addressed on a case-by-case basis

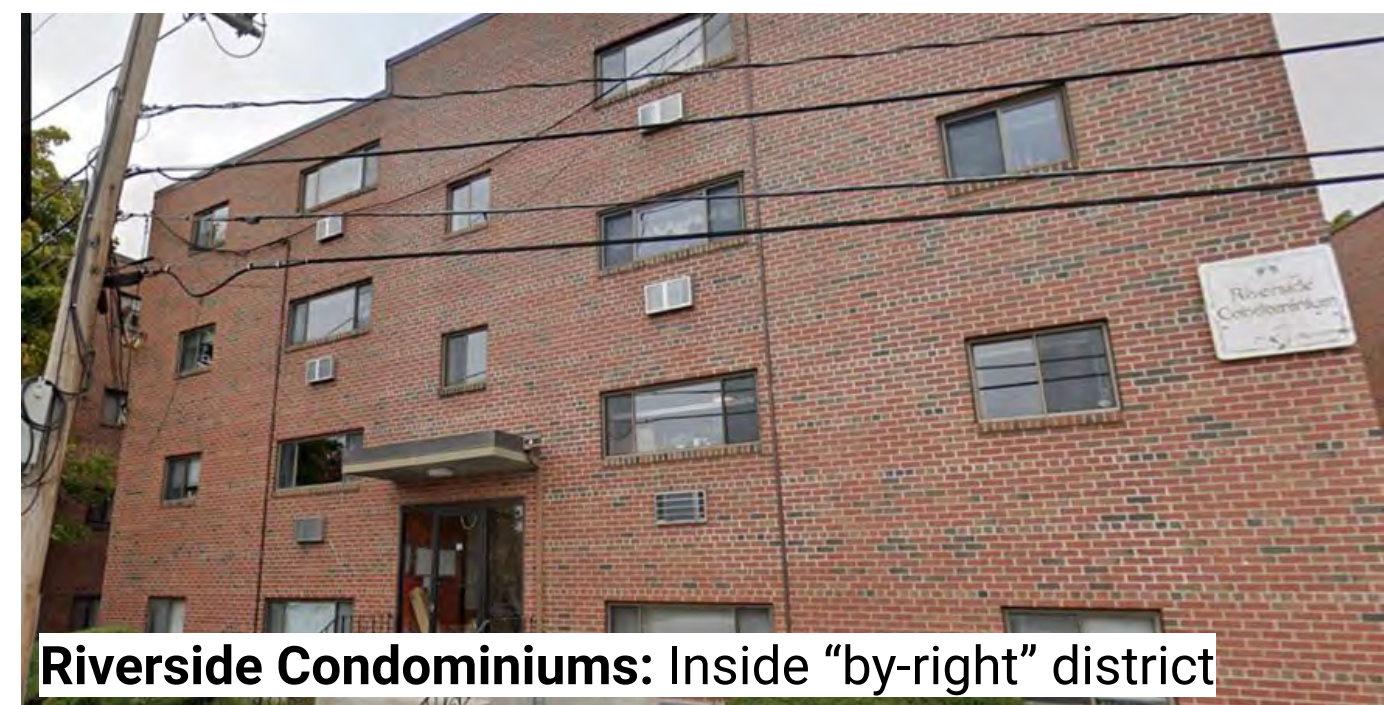




# Areas of Watertown Square that have existing buildings that are not likely to change

- Some of these sites which are adjacent to areas within the by-right collar are included in the by-right area for simplicity of the boundary
  - Note that these parcels do contribute to the “unit capacity” although they are not likely to be redeveloped
- Additional sites within the boundary that are not adjacent to the by-right collar are left out of the by-right collar

**Note:**  
Neither of these sites are likely to change



# Lots that should not be rezoned at all

- Sites of existing and currently approved biotechnology research labs
  - As we will recommend that lab uses are not allowed in the new zones, this will ensure these key economic development sites do not become non-conforming under new zoning
- A few lots at the edges of the area plan have been excluded from the new zoning district
- We recommend putting the existing historic church on Mt. Auburn Street into the overlay that will permit it to be converted partially or fully to residential use - but not to change underlying zoning on this parcel



# Criteria for Compliance

MBTA Communities

## 1A. District Shape, Size, and Density

- Contiguity standards- 50% of land area in one contiguous district, all districts at least 5 acres
- Minimum district(s) area
- Gross Density requirement
- Mandatory mixed-use districts are limited to 25% of the required multi-family unit capacity

## 1B. Zoning Standards

- Setbacks, height limits, parking requirements, etc. allowed
- No age restrictions
- No restrictions on # of bedrooms, size of bedrooms, # of occupants

## 2. Multi-Family Unit Capacity

1,701 unit capacity

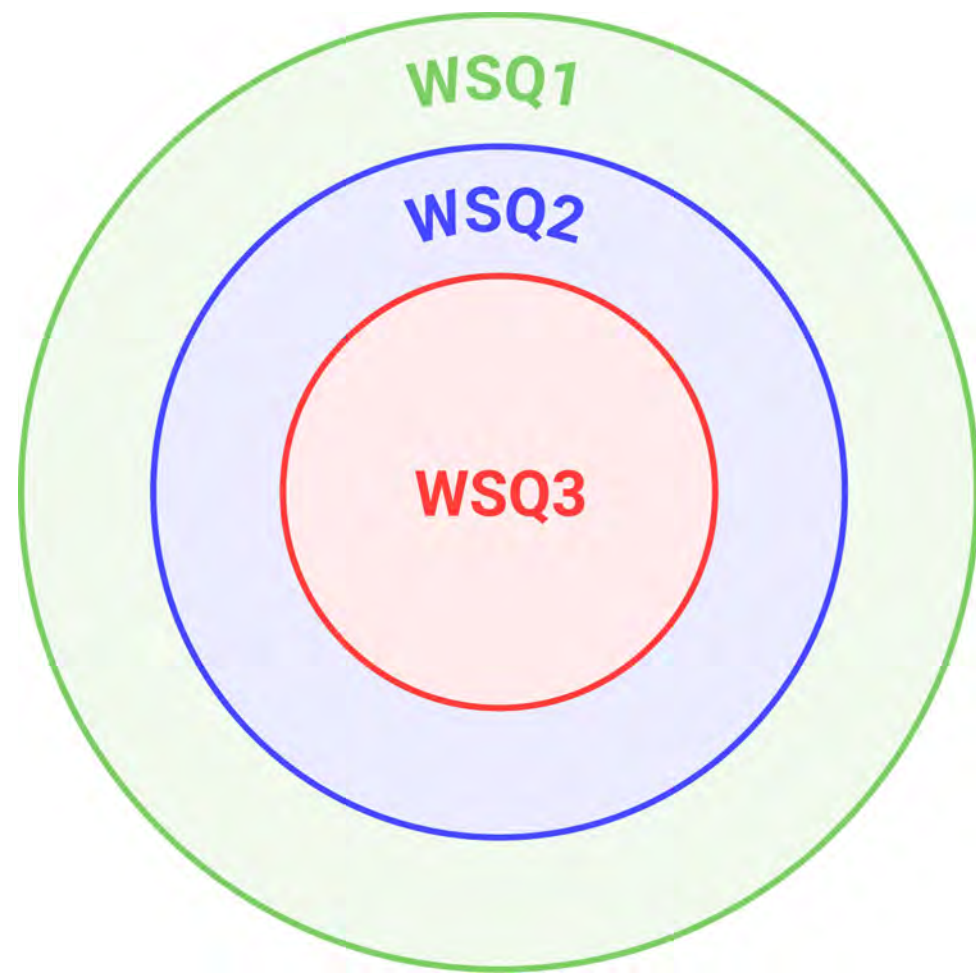
**Compliance Deadline:**  
December 31, 2024

**This is simply a zoning capacity - not a requirement to *build* a certain number of units**

# Zoning Recommendations

Tiered Zoning Approach

The proposed code uses a **tiered zoning approach**: Higher density zones are concentrated around a central commercial area and lower density zones transition to smaller-scale residential areas.



**WSQ3:**  
**5+ stories**



**WSQ2:**  
**4+ stories**



**WSQ1:**  
**3+ stories**

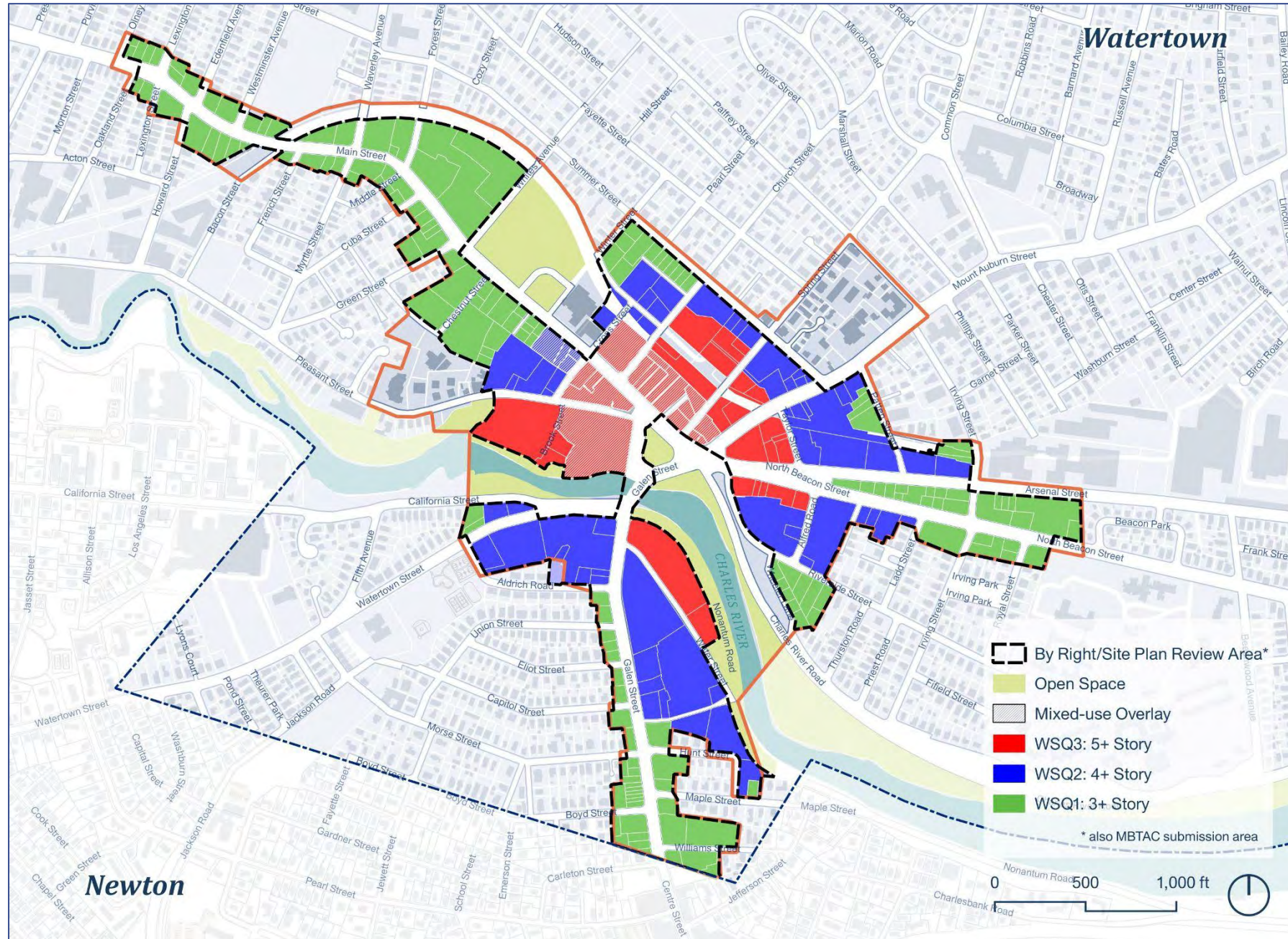
**Note:**  
The "+" floor is an occupiable penthouse



# Developing Zoning Options

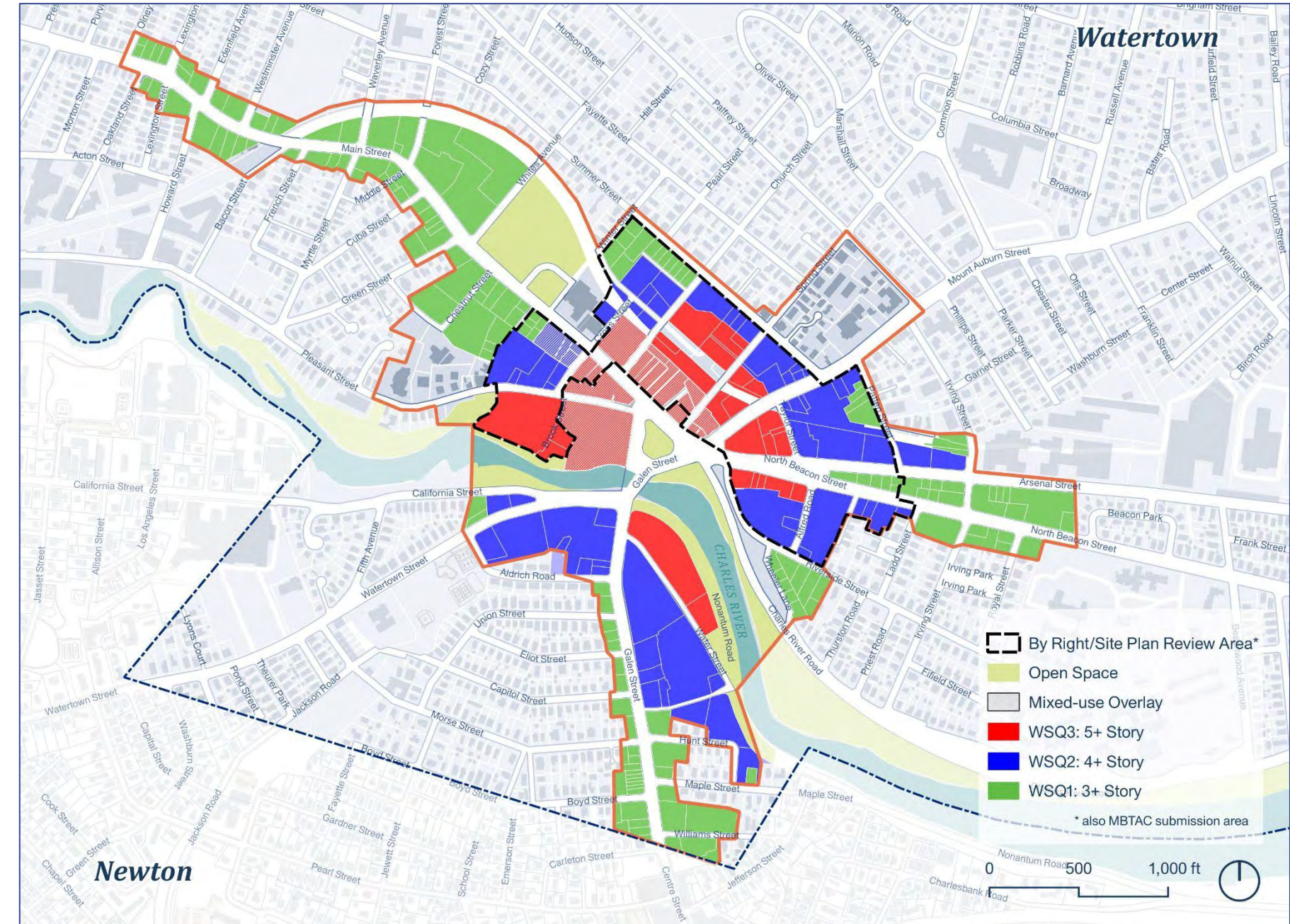
Unit Capacity Analysis from 2/29 Meeting

### Option 1: Entire Study Area Zoned By-Right



Total unit capacity:  
**6,320 (4,619 units beyond requirement)**

### Option 2: Partial Study Area Zoned By-Right



Total unit capacity:  
**2,631 (930 units beyond requirement)**



# Proposed Zoning

Partial Study Area Zoned By-Right

Unit Capacity:

# 3,133 units

(1,432 units beyond requirement)

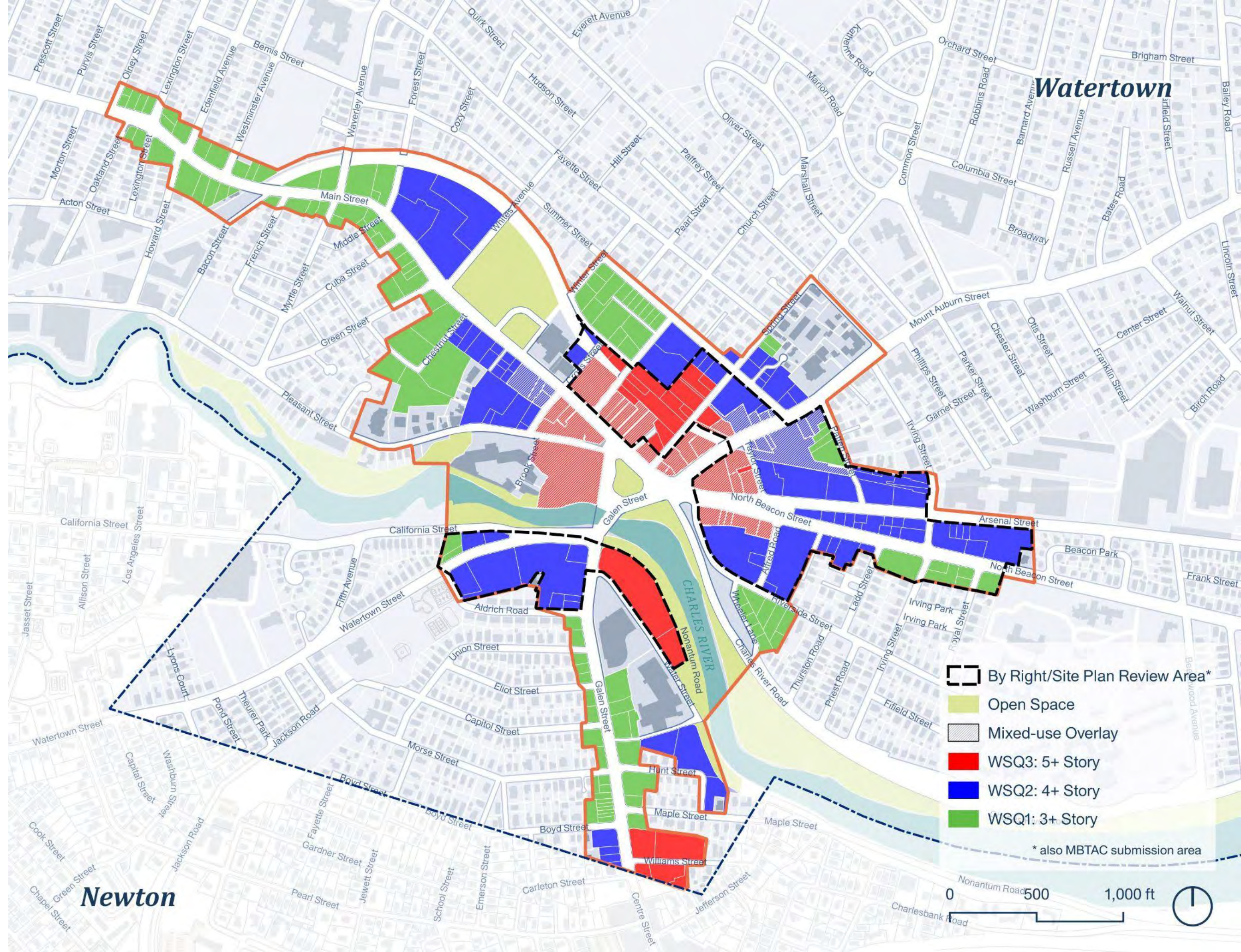
The by-right boundary represents the parcels that will be submitted toward MBTA Communities.

**Parcels within this boundary are by-right and subject to Site Plan Review.**

**All re-zoned parcels outside this boundary are Special Permit.** These include historic buildings and extended mixed-use required areas.

### Notes:

- Only zones within the submission boundary were tested
- Assumes 0.5 parking spaces/unit
- Includes unit capacity of Mixed-Use parcels
- Publicly owned parcels do not count toward the unit capacity



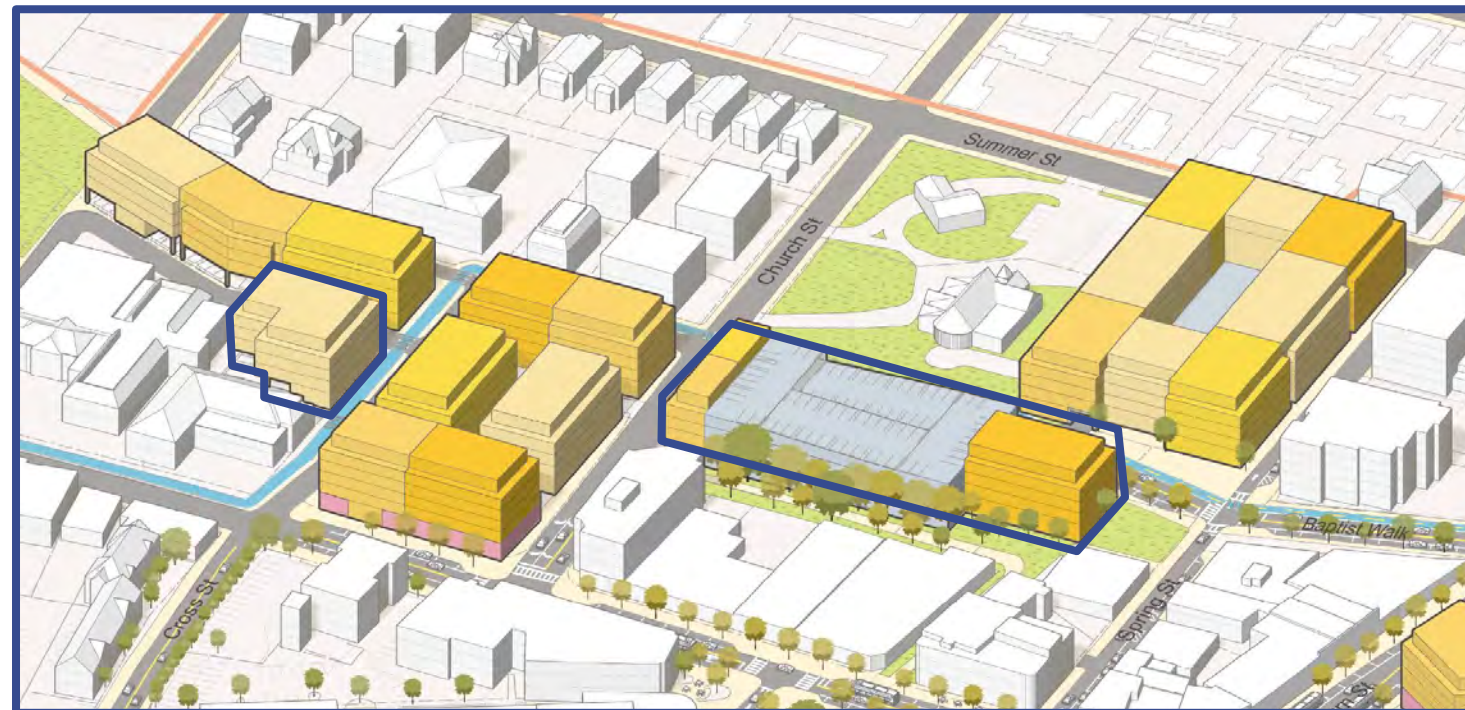


# Proposed Zoning

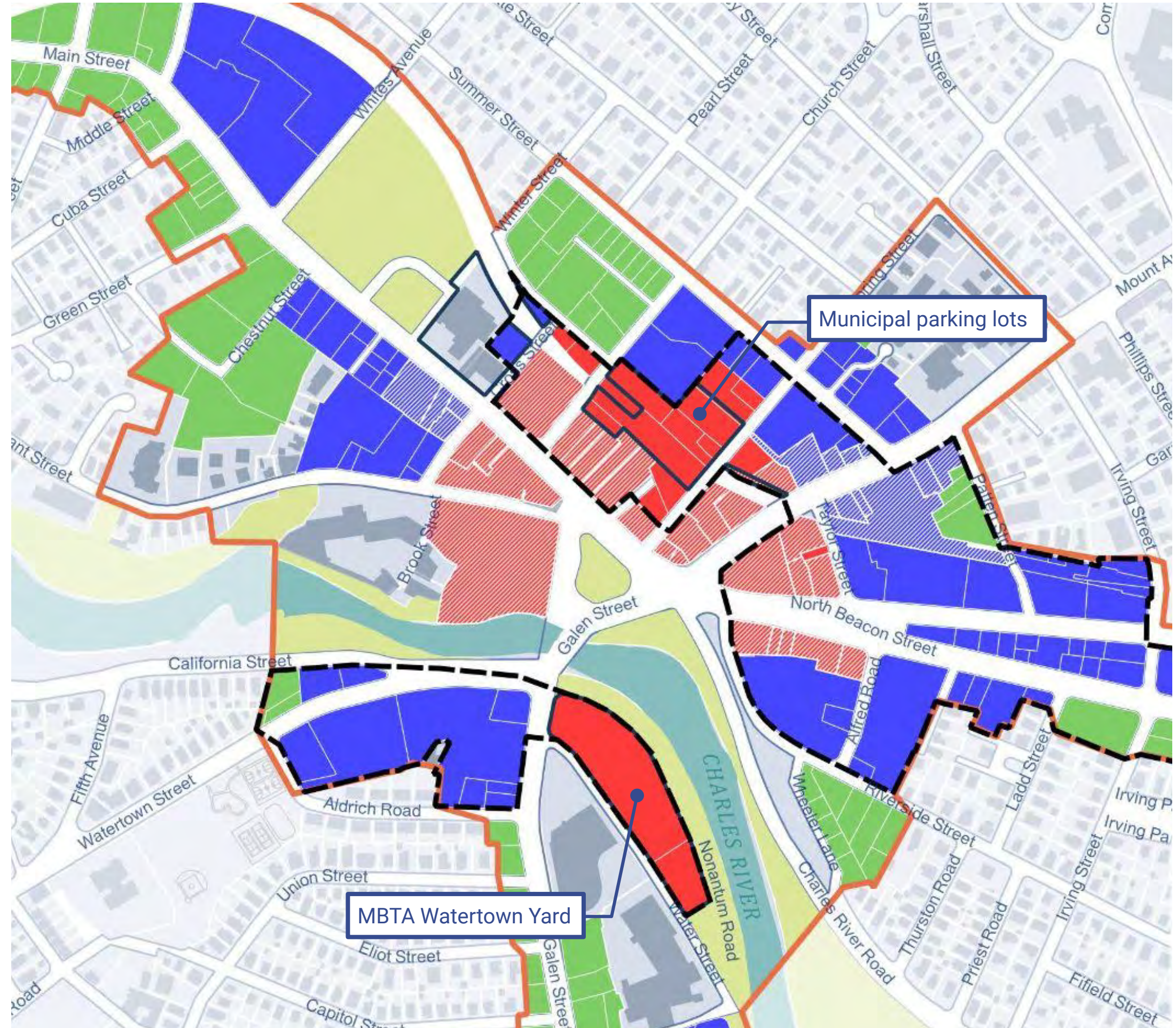
## By-Right Public Parcels

Several publicly owned parcels are proposed to be rezoned as by-right with site plan review. These parcels would involve a **public process to consolidate parcels, find a developer partner, and build a plan.**

However, these public parcels do not meet the criteria to count towards MBTA Communities unit capacity requirements.



Municipal Parking Lots





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**What are your feelings about the by-right district proposed in this plan?**



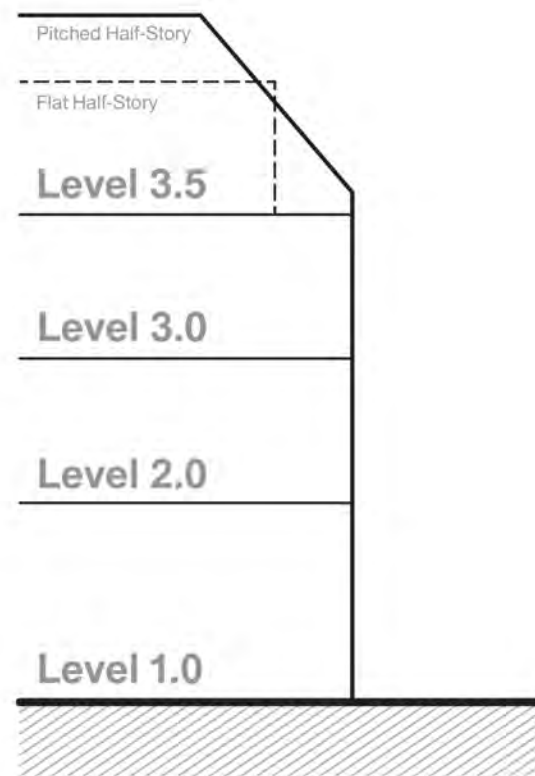
# Zoning Approach

Form-based code “light”

We propose a zoning code that regulates urban form through the following principal mechanisms:

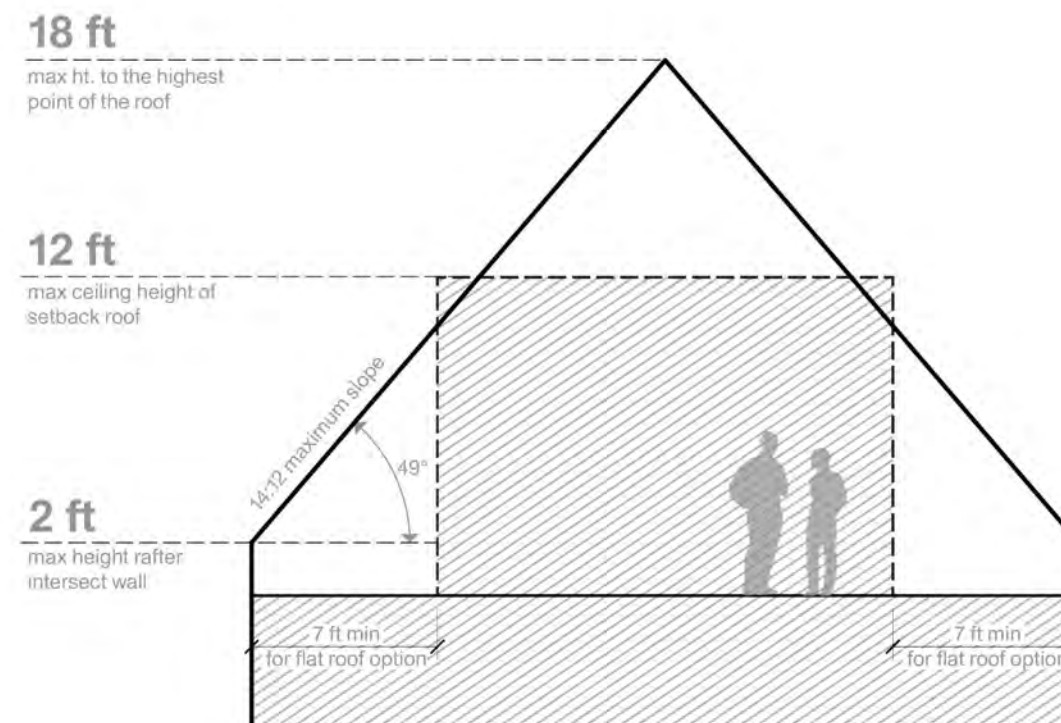
## 1 Building Height

Sets the maximum height in stories/feet



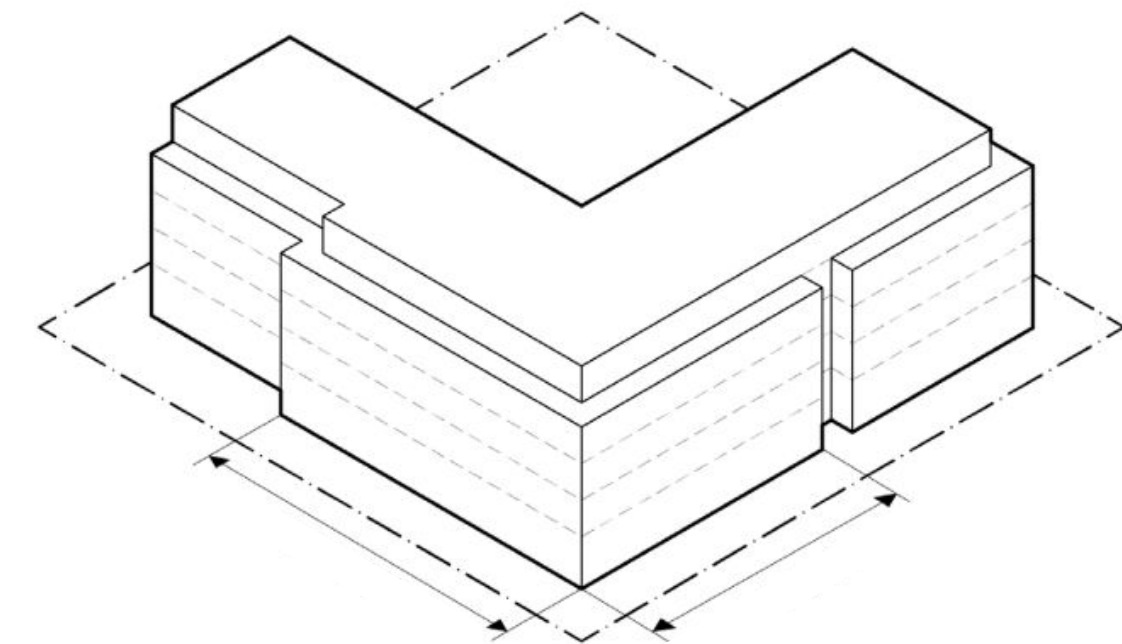
## 2 Roof Form

Provides options for a flat or pitched roof half-story



## 3 Facade Articulation

Provides options to break down building massing and diversify facades

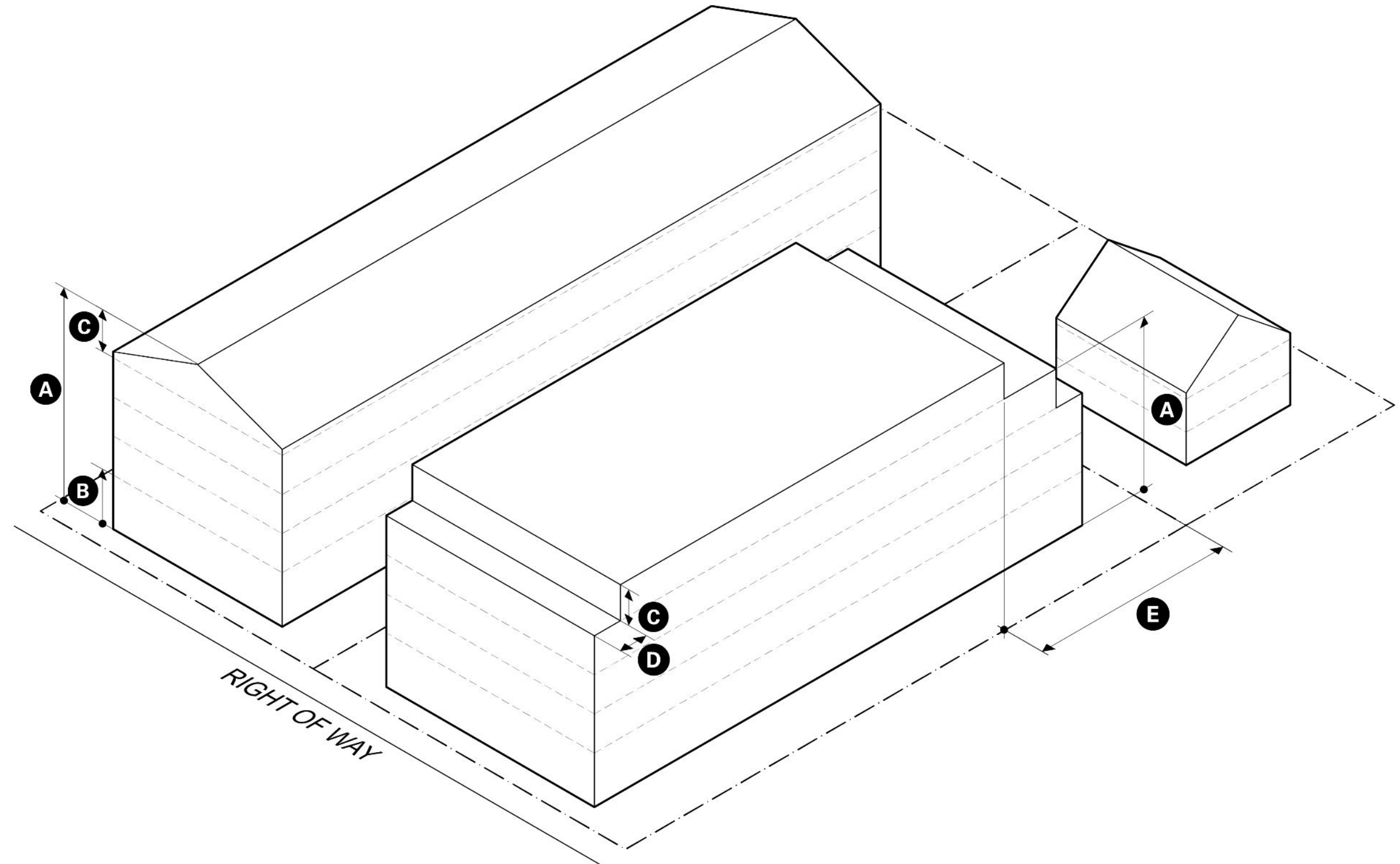


# Building/Story Height

## Design Standards

Standards include:

- **Maximum building height in feet and stories**, with separate standards for pitched and flat roof buildings
- **Minimum ground story height**, with separate standards for lots on mixed-use required streets and lots on all other streets.
- **Transition to R-districts**, with maximum building height limited to 3+ stories within a certain distance of one and two-family residential districts.



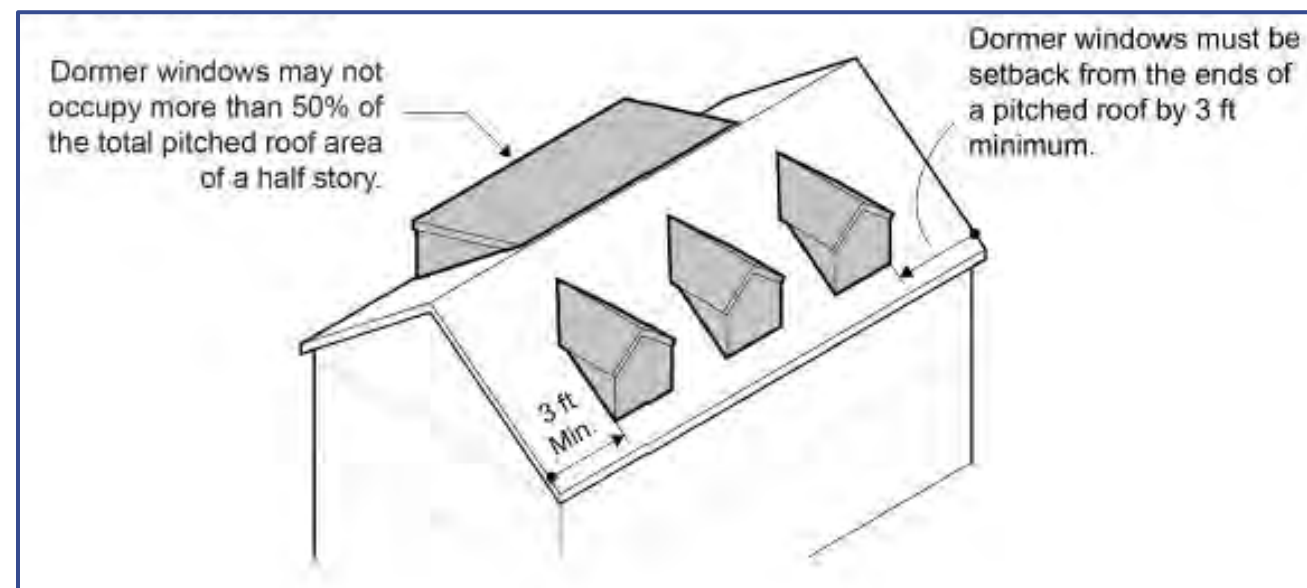
# Roof Form

## Design Standards

Development in any of the districts can have either a pitched roof or a flat roof.

Standards include:

- **Pitched Roof:**
  - Maximum slope for roof pitch
  - Maximum height for the knee wall
  - Dormer requirements
- **Flat Roof:**
  - Minimum step-back for top floor



## Dormer Rules

18 ft

*Pitched Roof: Max height to the top of highest roof beam above*

12 ft

*Flat Roof: Max height to the top of highest roof beam above*

2 ft

*max height rafter intersect wall*

0 ft

*Floor Level*

14:12 maximum slope

49°

7 ft min  
for flat roof option

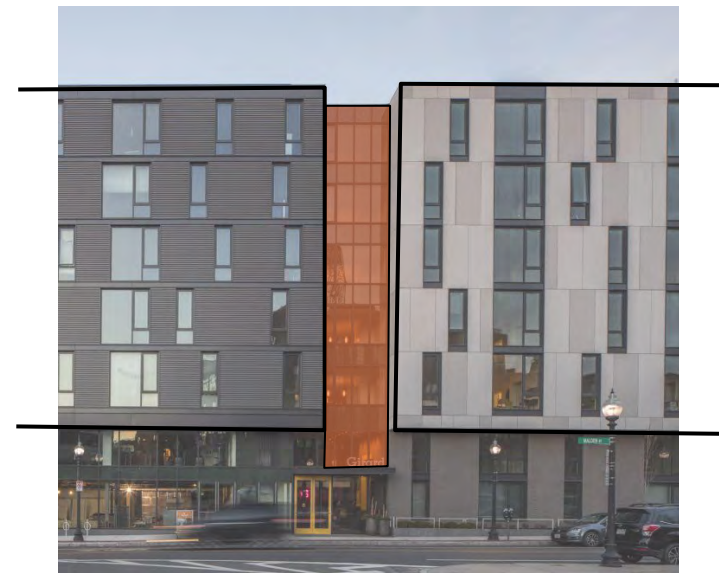
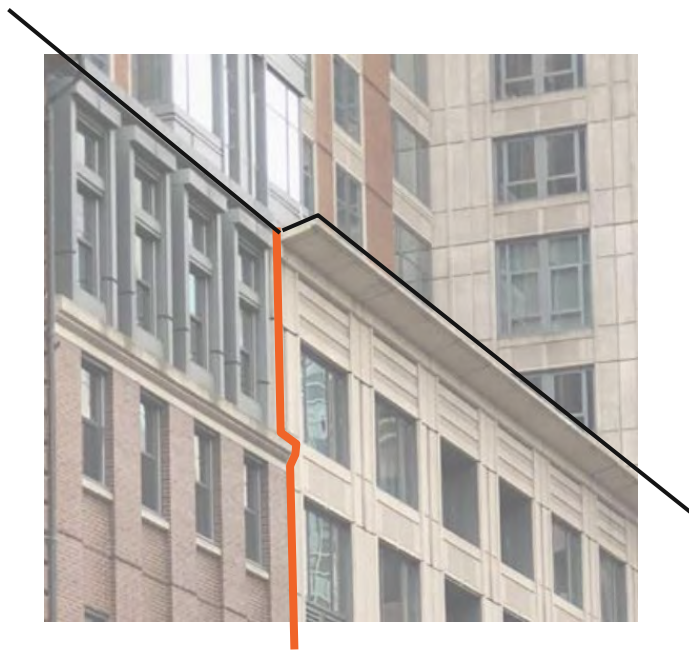
7 ft min  
for flat roof option



# Breaking up Larger Buildings

## Facade Articulation

Facades may be no longer than 100' without having a facade demise line or facade recess/offset.



**Demise Line**

**Recess / Offset**



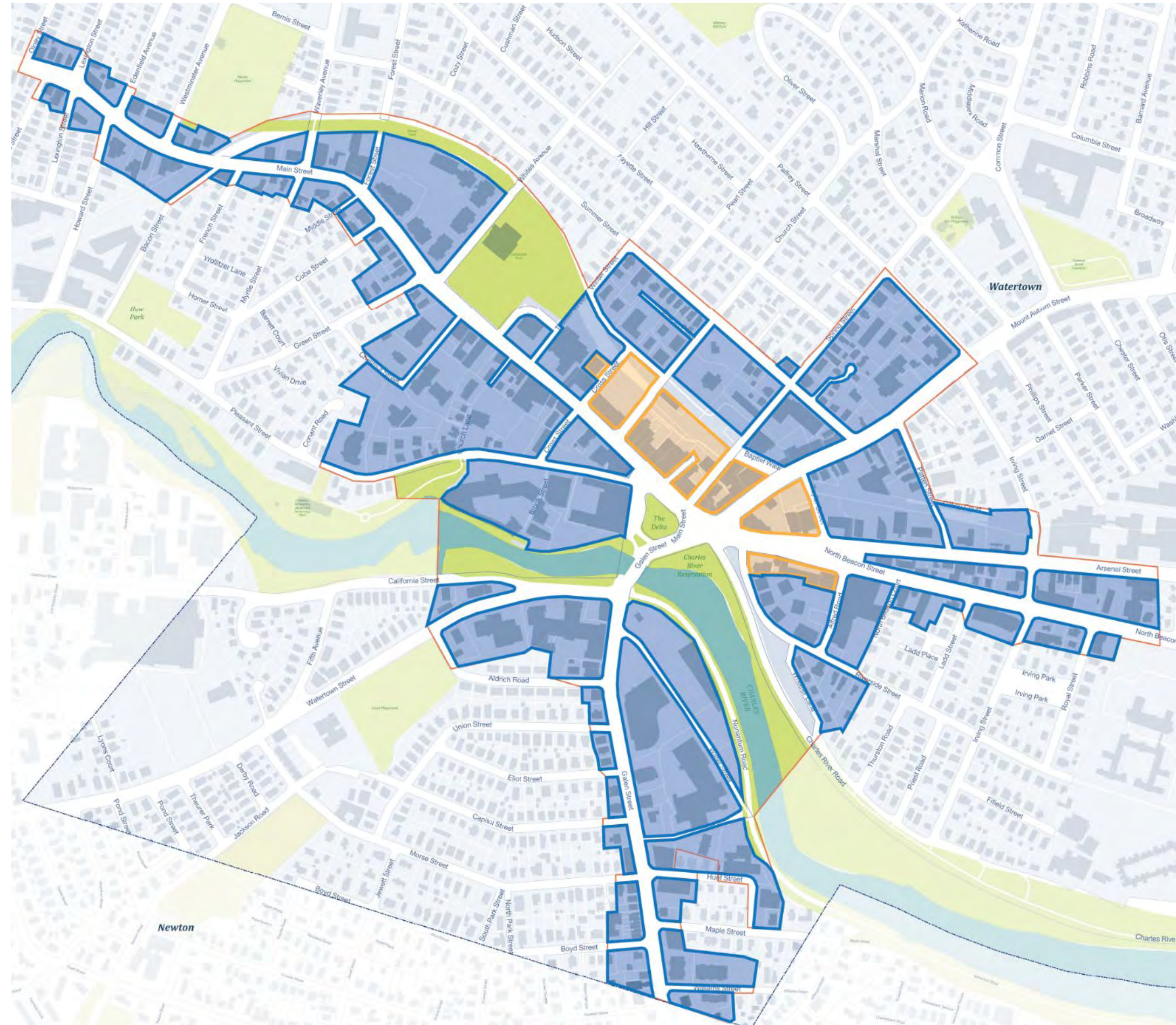
Required

Not Required



Required

Required

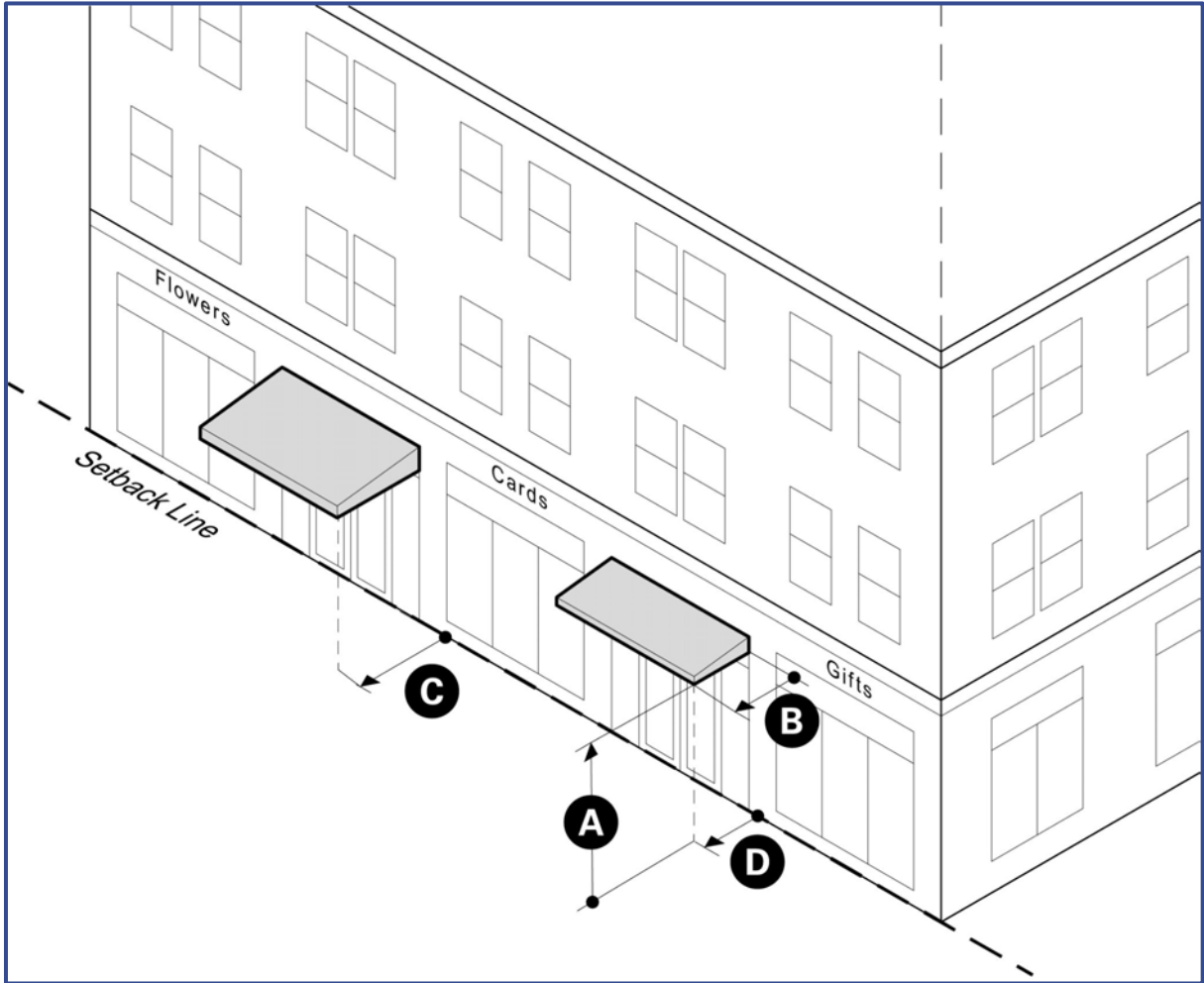




# Architectural Features

## Design Standards

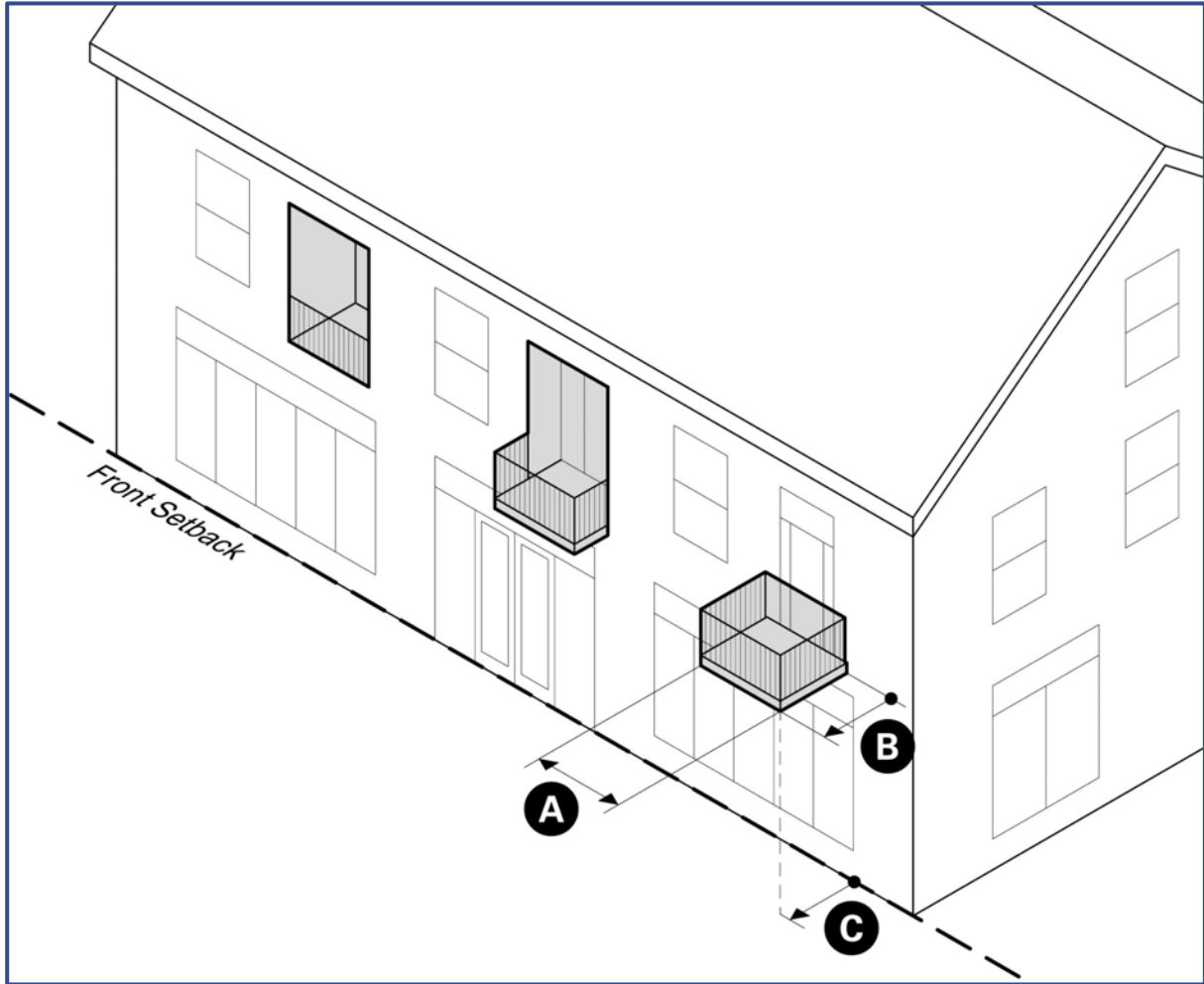
### Awnings



Standards include:

- Width and depth
- Clearance above grade
- Extension into the right of way

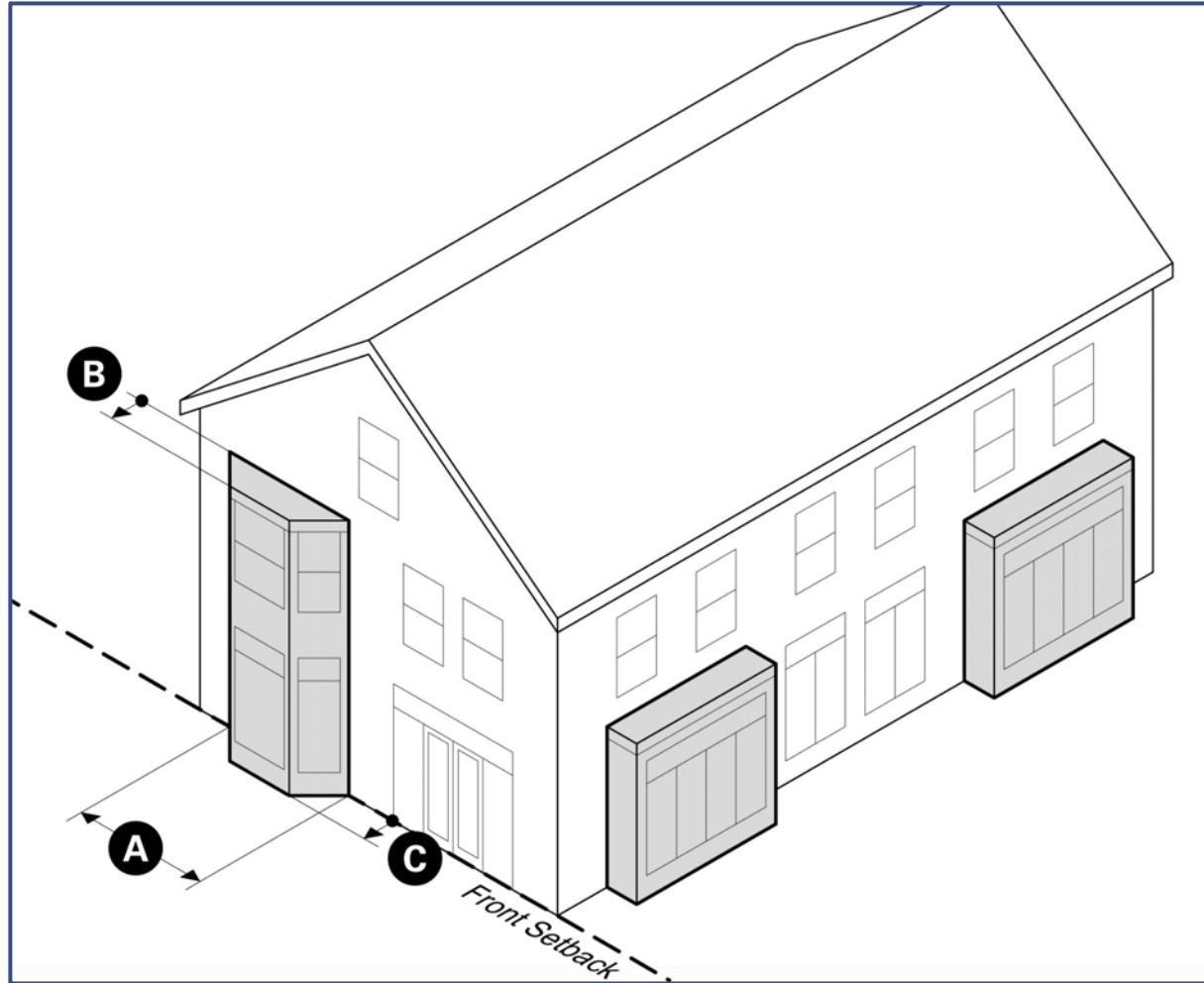
### Balconies



Standards include:

- Width and depth
- Clearance above grade
- Extension into the right of way
- Setback encroachment

### Bay Windows



Standards include:

- Width and depth
- Setback encroachment at ground story
- Fenestration %
- Clearance above grade within right of way
- Extension into the right of way

# Parking Requirements

## Design Standards

### Parking Minimum

(can be reduced by Special Permit):

**0.5 spaces / residential unit**

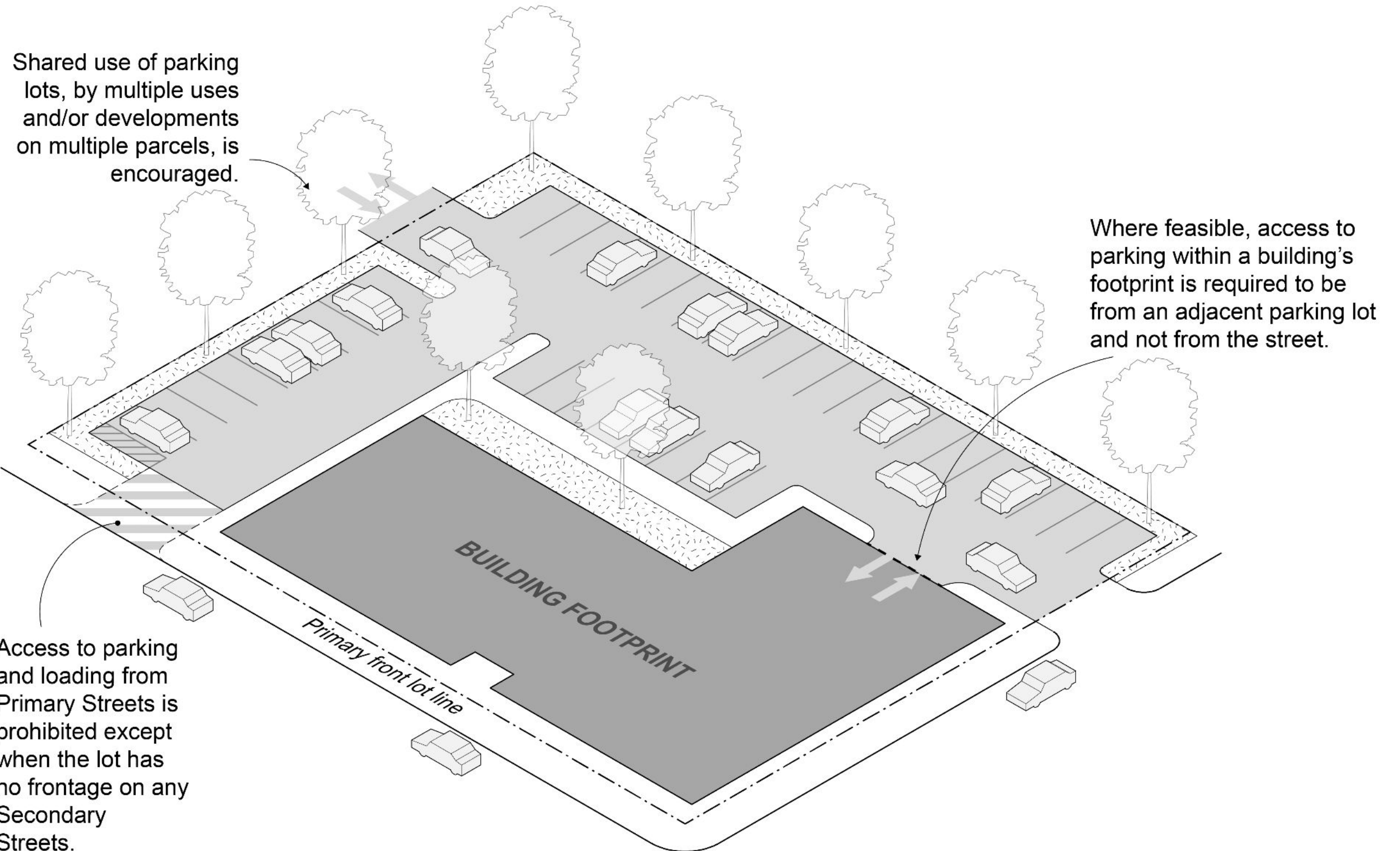
### Parking Maximum

(can be increased for developments providing public/shared parking):

**1.0 spaces / residential unit**

Standards include:

- Parking access location requirements
- Curb cut dimensions and location requirements
- Parking placement and screening requirements
- Bicycle parking requirements





# Affordable Housing Bonus

## Design Standards

To incentivize a greater supply of affordable housing, the zoning proposes an affordable housing bonus for developments with at least 50% permanently affordable units.

The bonus would be granted by **special permit**, and allows the following standards:

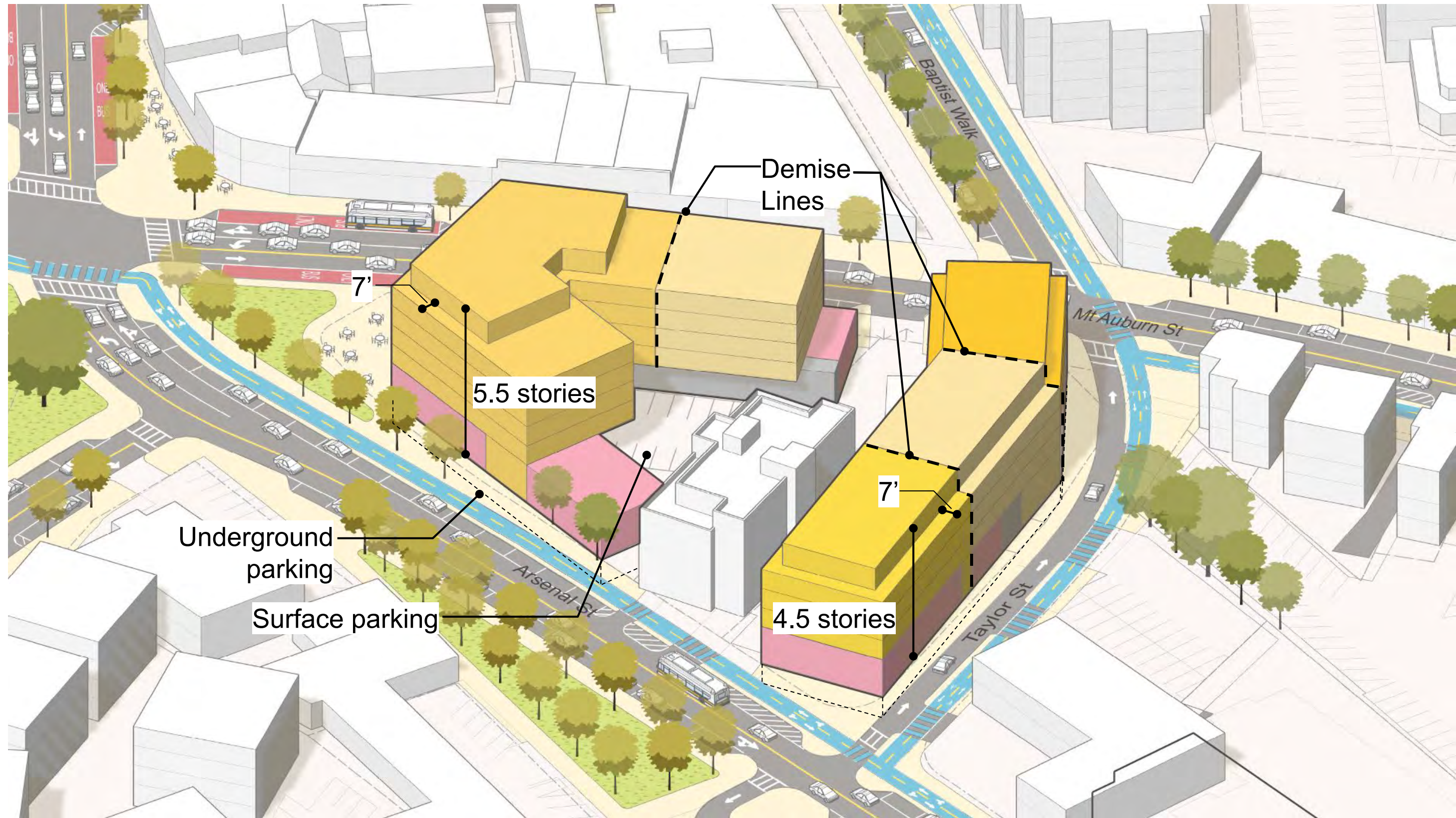
- **Height**
  - **Maximum increase of 1 level**  
(No height increases allowed within a certain distance of one or two-family residential districts)
- **Parking**
  - Reduced minimum parking requirement of 0.25 spaces/residential unit, with further reduction by special permit


Number of Affordable Housing Units Required		
	Rental	Ownership
Tier 1 (% of units)	50%	50%
Area Median Income (AMI)	Less than or equal to 80%	Less than or equal to 100%



# Testing Zoning Parameters

Zoning Parameters	
Front Setbacks	0'
Maximum Building Height	5.5 stories
Top Level Stepback	7' min.
Facade Articulation	Demise Line Required Every 100'



<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:yellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> Residential	
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightcoral; border:1px solid black;"></span> Retail	



# Zoning Approach

Perspective Using Example Design Standards



Existing Street View

## Existing Context

Uses: single-story small retail; two-story bank; three-story function hall with ground story retail





# Zoning Approach

## Perspective Using Example Design Standards

### Design Standards

- 1. Building Placement:**  
When development occurs on any lot abutting a sidewalk that is <12' in total width, inclusive of the Furnishing Zone, buildings must be set back an additional distance such that a paved area meeting City sidewalk standards of at least 12' width is provided, inclusive of the Furnishing Zone.
- 2. Building Entrances:**  
Principal entrances must either be recessed from the plane of the facade, or have a projecting Awning or Canopy, to signal building entry and provide adequate protection from the elements.
- 3. Architectural Features: Canopy**  
A wall-mounted structure that provides shade and weather protection over a storefront or building entrance.
- 4. Fenestration:**  
For ground story fenestration, glazing must have a min. 60% Visible Light Transmittance (VLT) and no more than 15% Visible Light Reflectance (VLR) as indicated by the manufacturer.
- 5. Number of Stories:**  
A pitched roof may be composed of roof planes with different slopes. The slope of any pitch must not be greater than 14:12 (49 degrees). The roof rafters must intersect the wall plate or top of wall frame of the exterior walls at a height no more than 2' above the finished floor of the half-story.
- 6. Half-Story Step-Back:**  
A required distance that certain upper stories of a building must be recessed from the plane of the facade of the stories below.
- 7. Parking Lot Access:**  
Access to parking lots and structures parallel to the Front Elevation is prohibited when access along another lot line is available.





# slido



**What are your feelings about the development proposed in this plan?**

# Streetscape Design

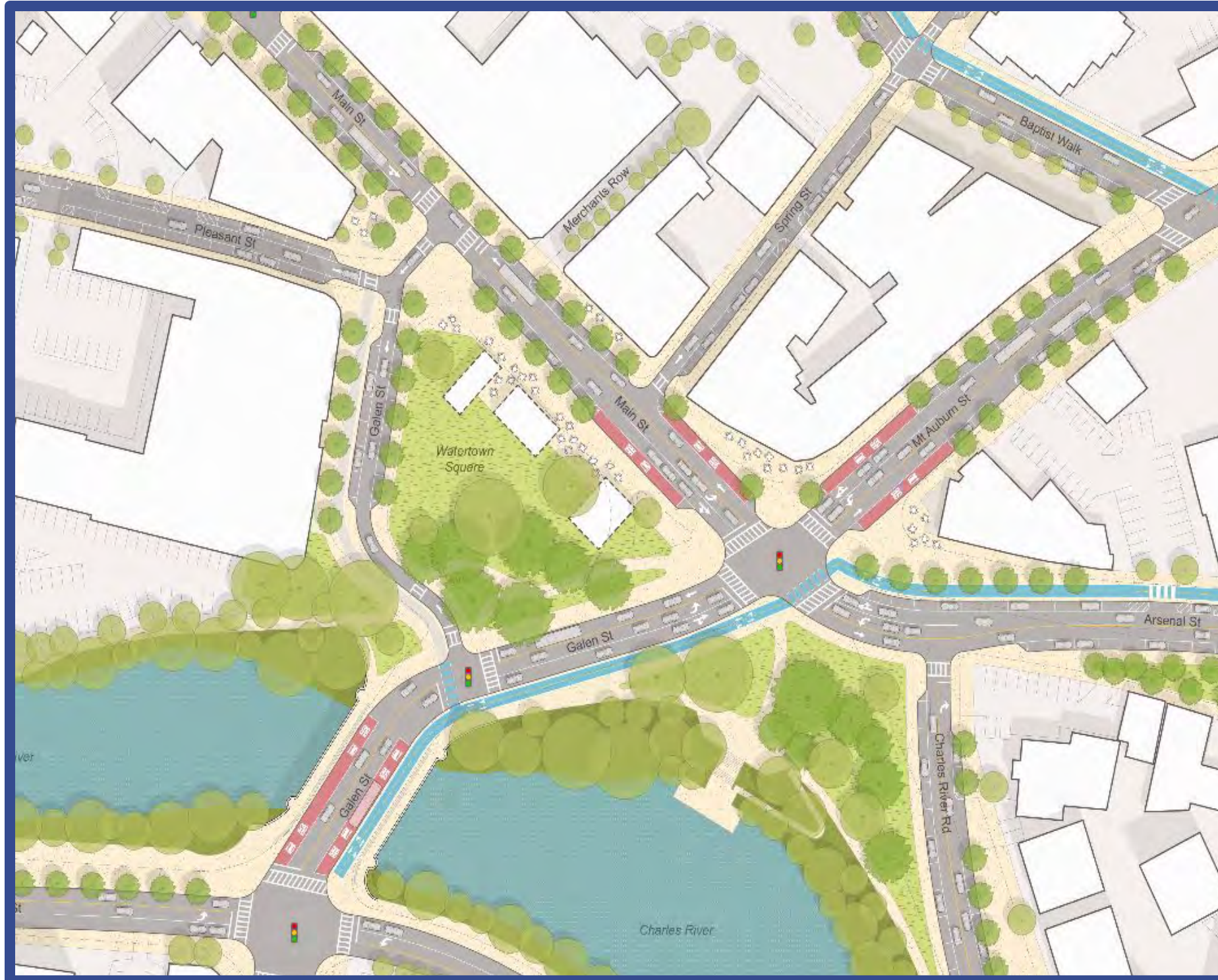
Public Realm

High-level Traffic Analysis

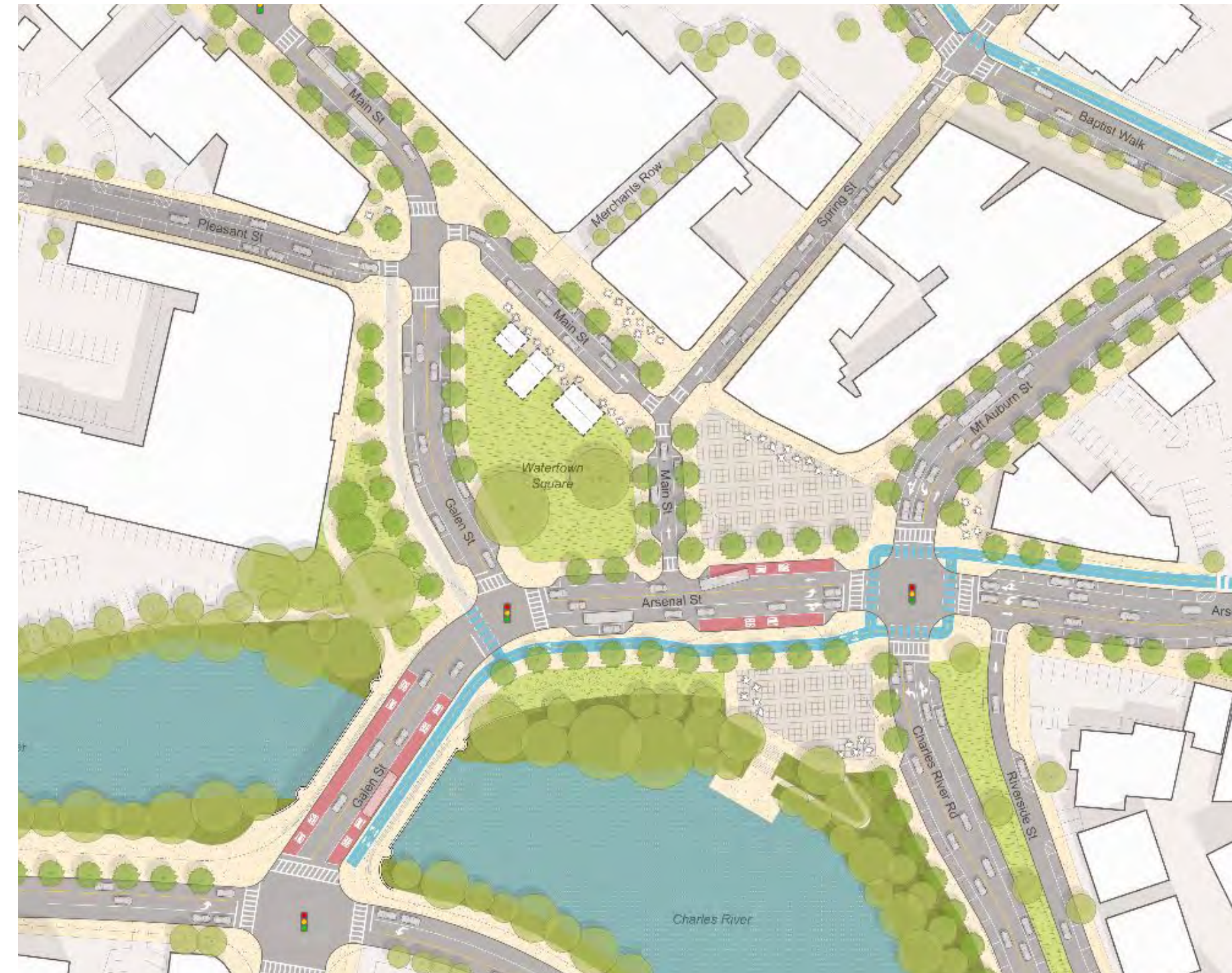


# Developing Preferred Schemes

## Four Corners



## Mini Main Street





# Existing Condition

Current Plan





# 4 Corners

Concept Plan





# 4 Corners

Area Reclaimed for Public Realm

**150,840 SF**

Gained Space

**11,105 SF**

Lost Space

**139,735 SF**

(3.21 AC)

Net Gained Space





# Retail Pavilions

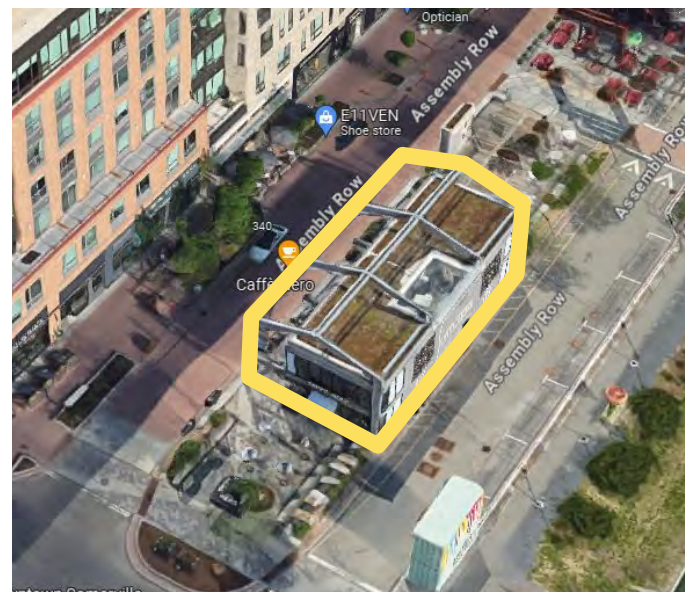
## Local Retail Pavilion Examples



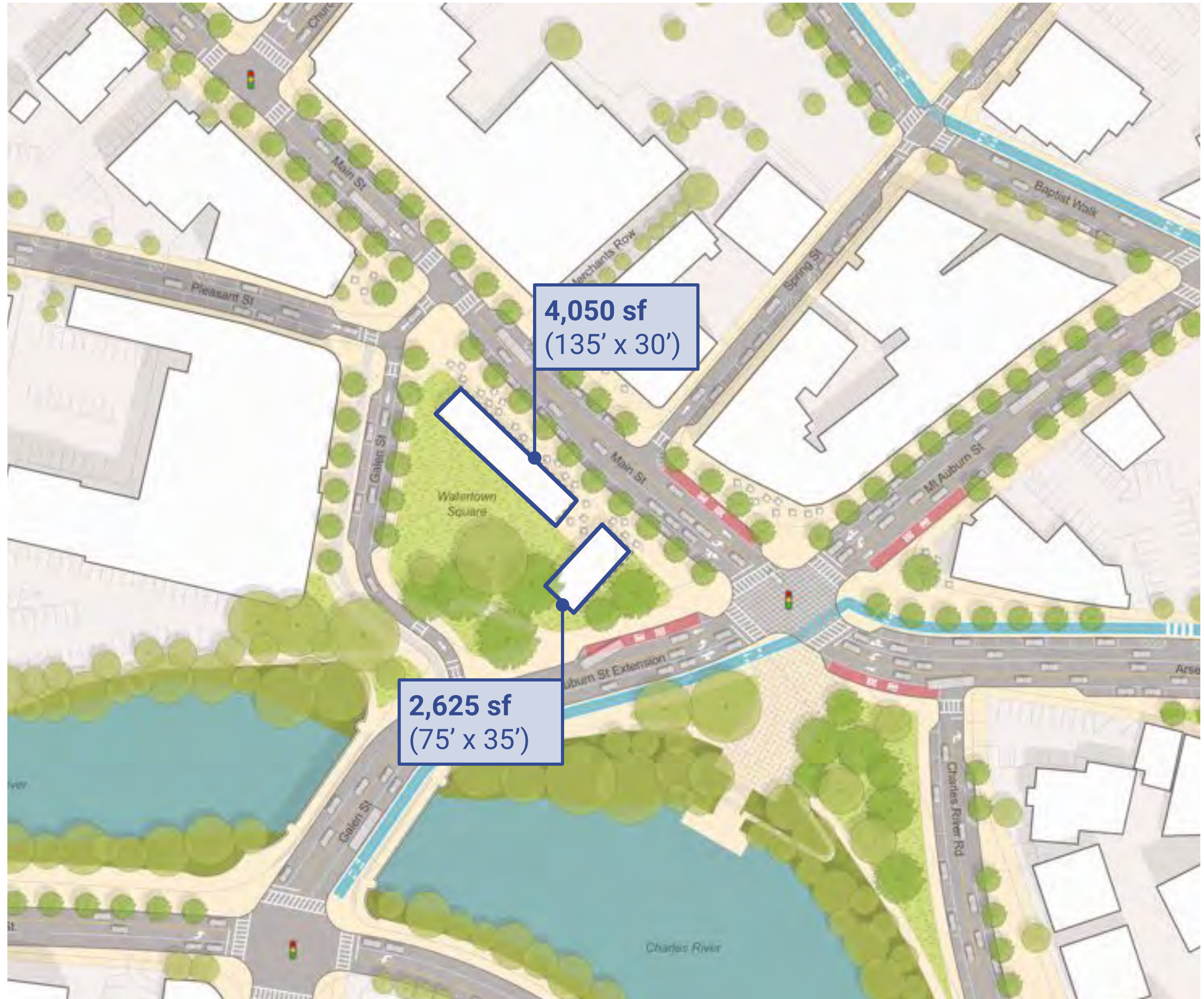
Ben and Jerry's, Arsenal Yards: **2,400 sf**



JP Licks, Assembly Row  
**4,050 sf**



Caffe Nero, Assembly Row  
**2,625 sf**





# High Line





# Transit-Oriented Public Space





# Placemaking Pavilions

Opportunities for Public Art

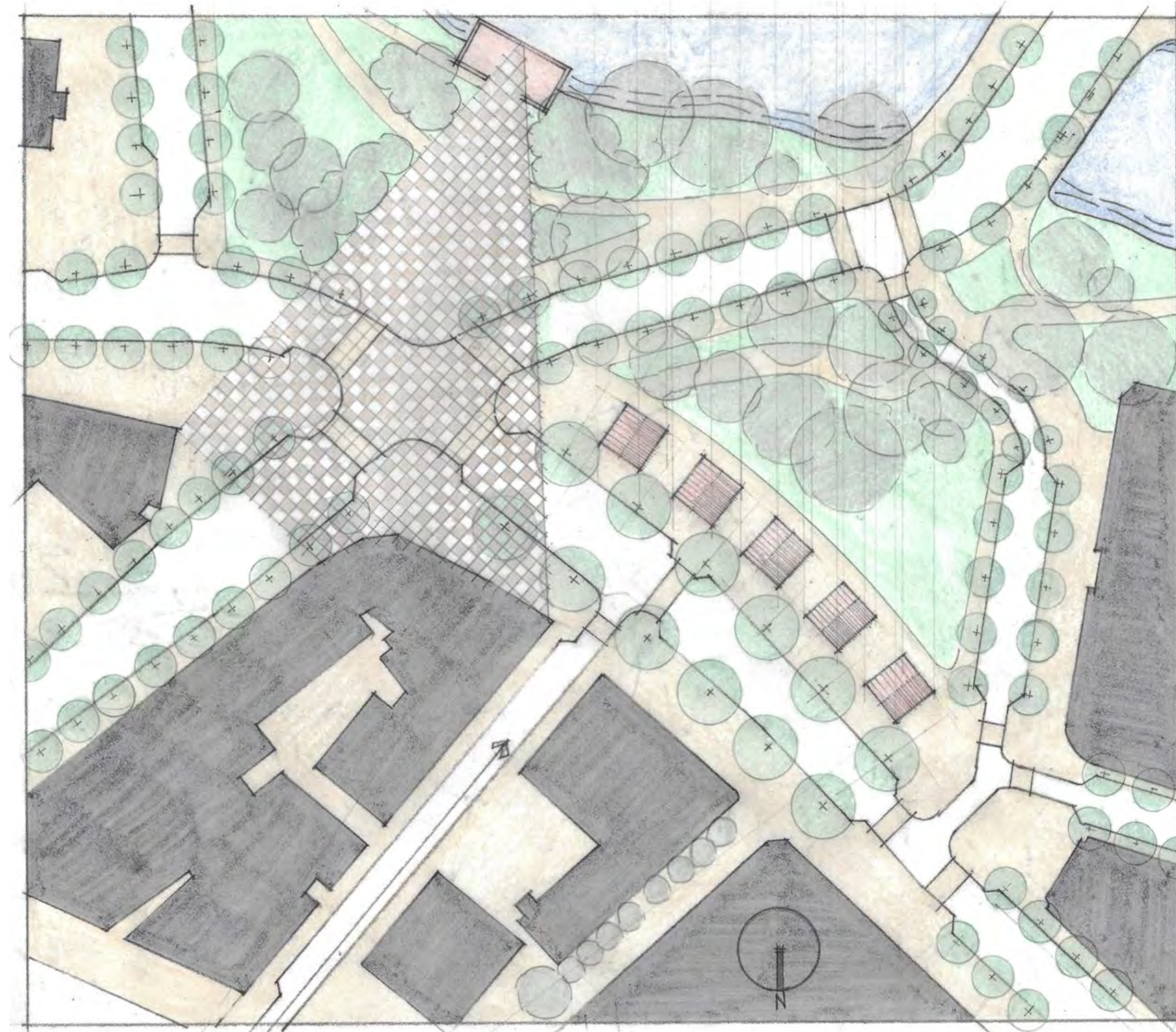


MARKET PAVILIONS · W6Q · APRIL, 2024 · J. SPECK FAICP



# Placemaking Pavilions

Opportunities for Public Art





# Placemaking Pavilions

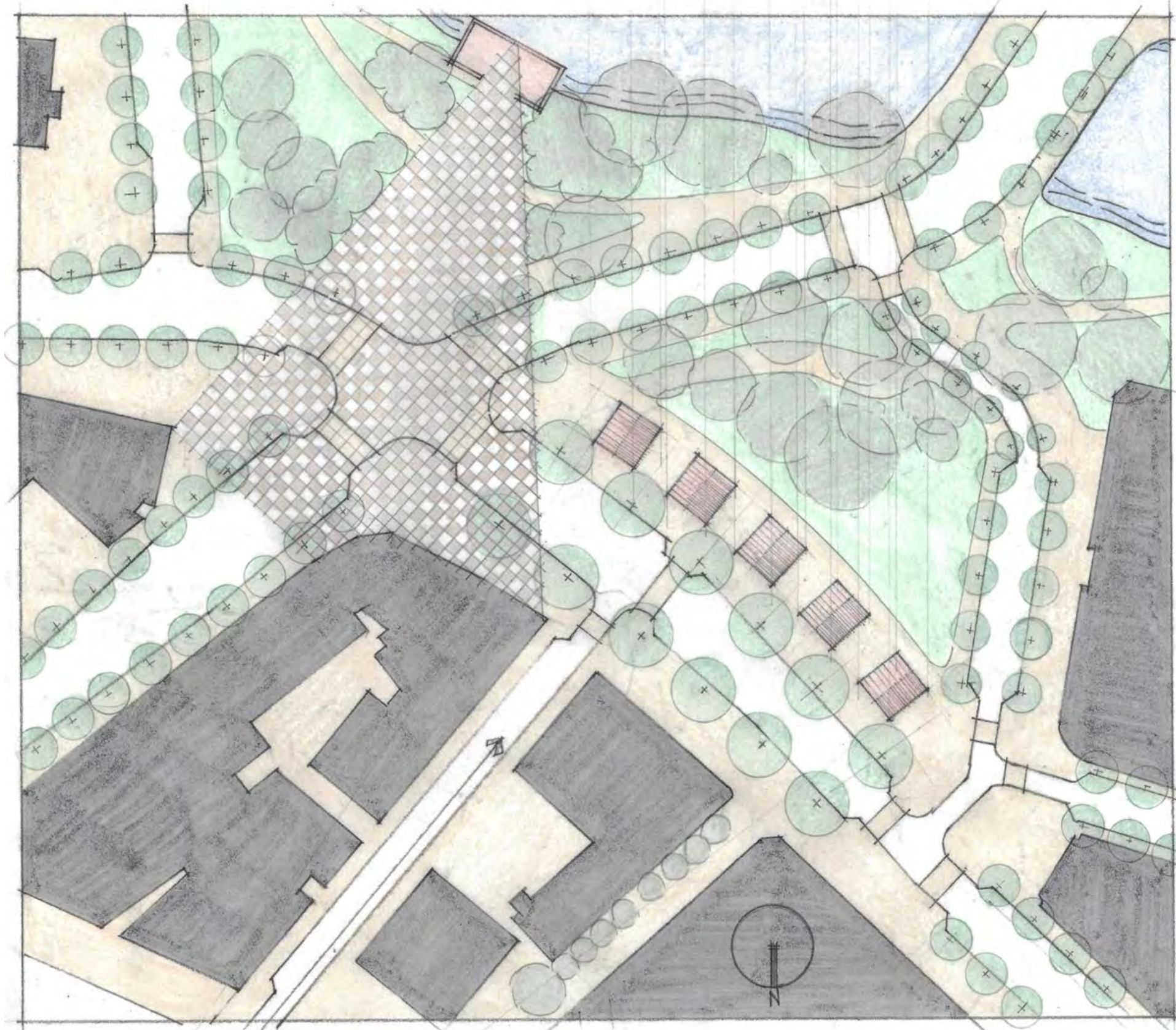
Opportunities for Public Art





# Placemaking Pavilions

Opportunities for Public Art





# Placemaking Pavilions

Opportunities for Public Art





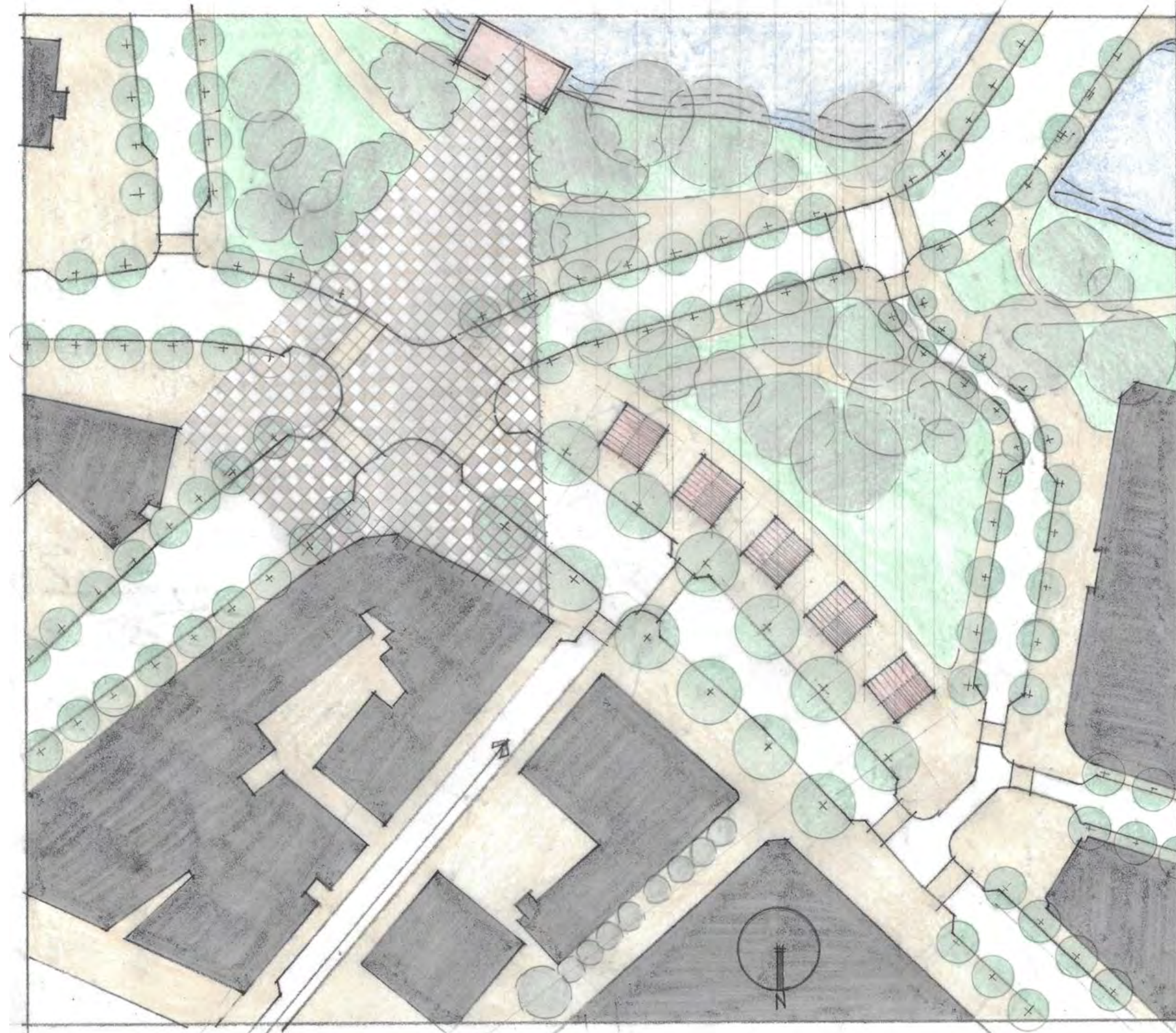
# View from the River





# Placemaking Pavilions

Opportunities for Public Art





# 4 Corners

## Concept Plan

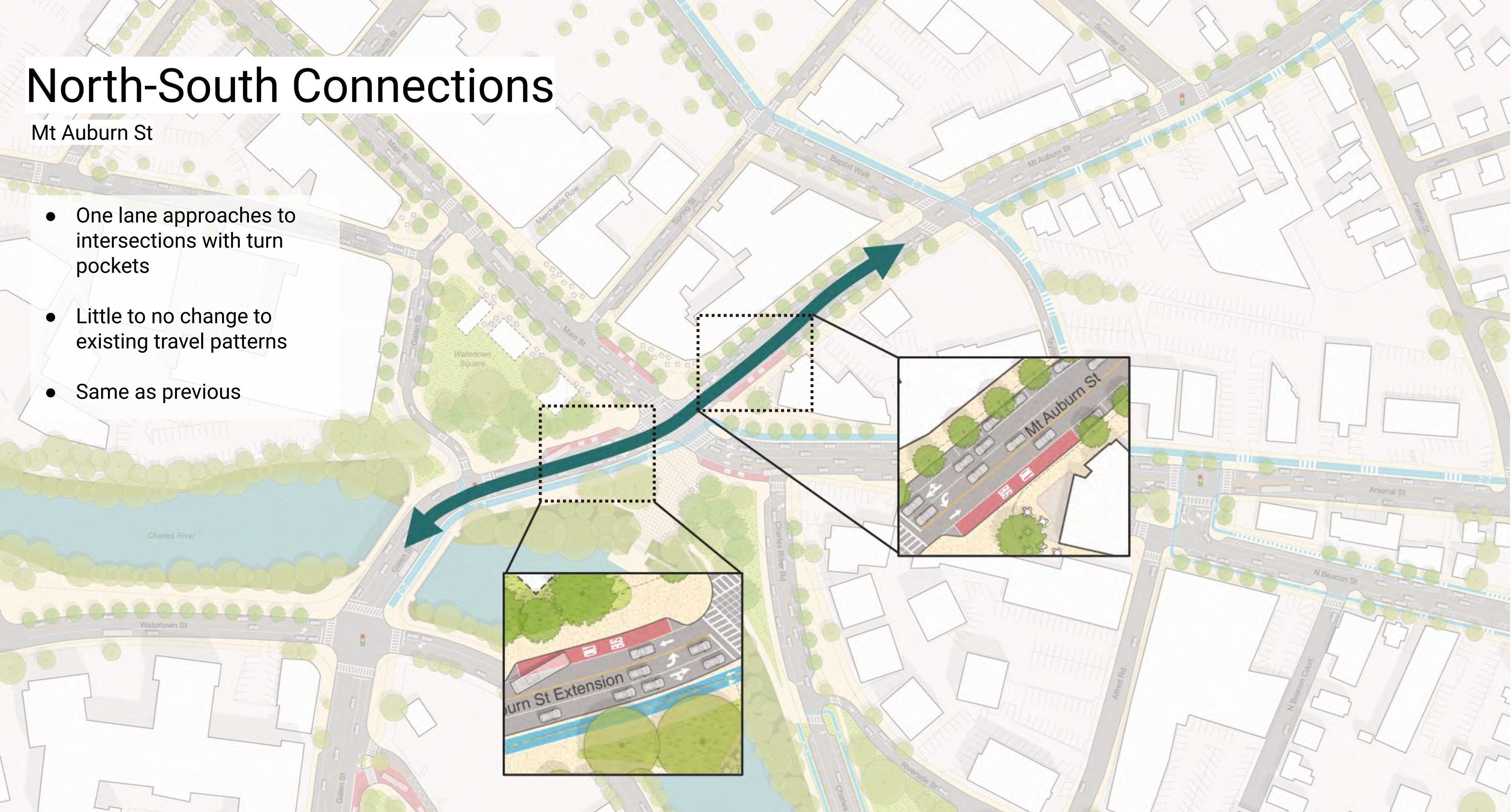




# North-South Connections

## Mt Auburn St

- One lane approaches to intersections with turn pockets
- Little to no change to existing travel patterns
- Same as previous

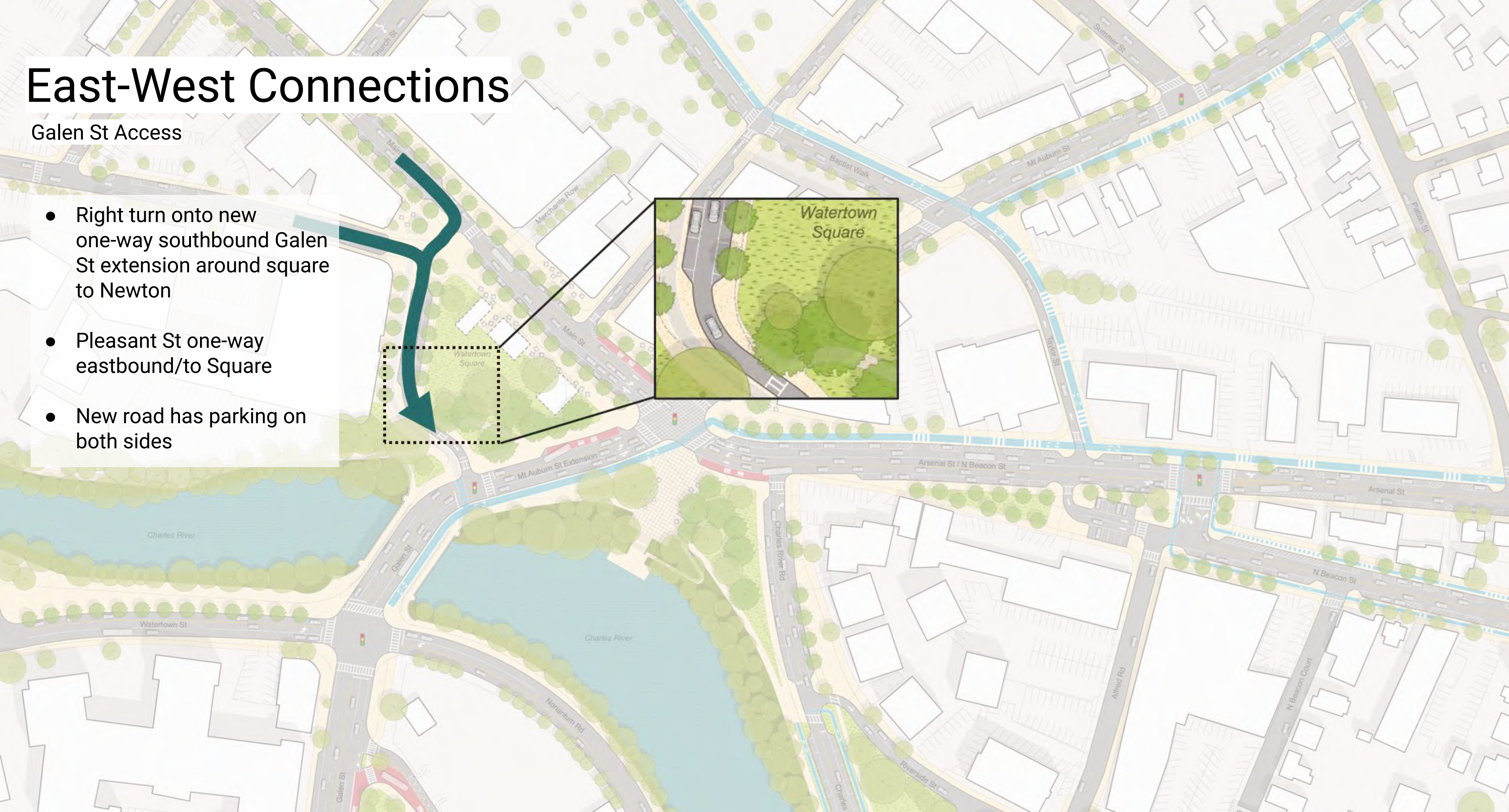




# East-West Connections

## Galen St Access

- Right turn onto new one-way southbound Galen St extension around square to Newton
- Pleasant St one-way eastbound/to Square
- New road has parking on both sides

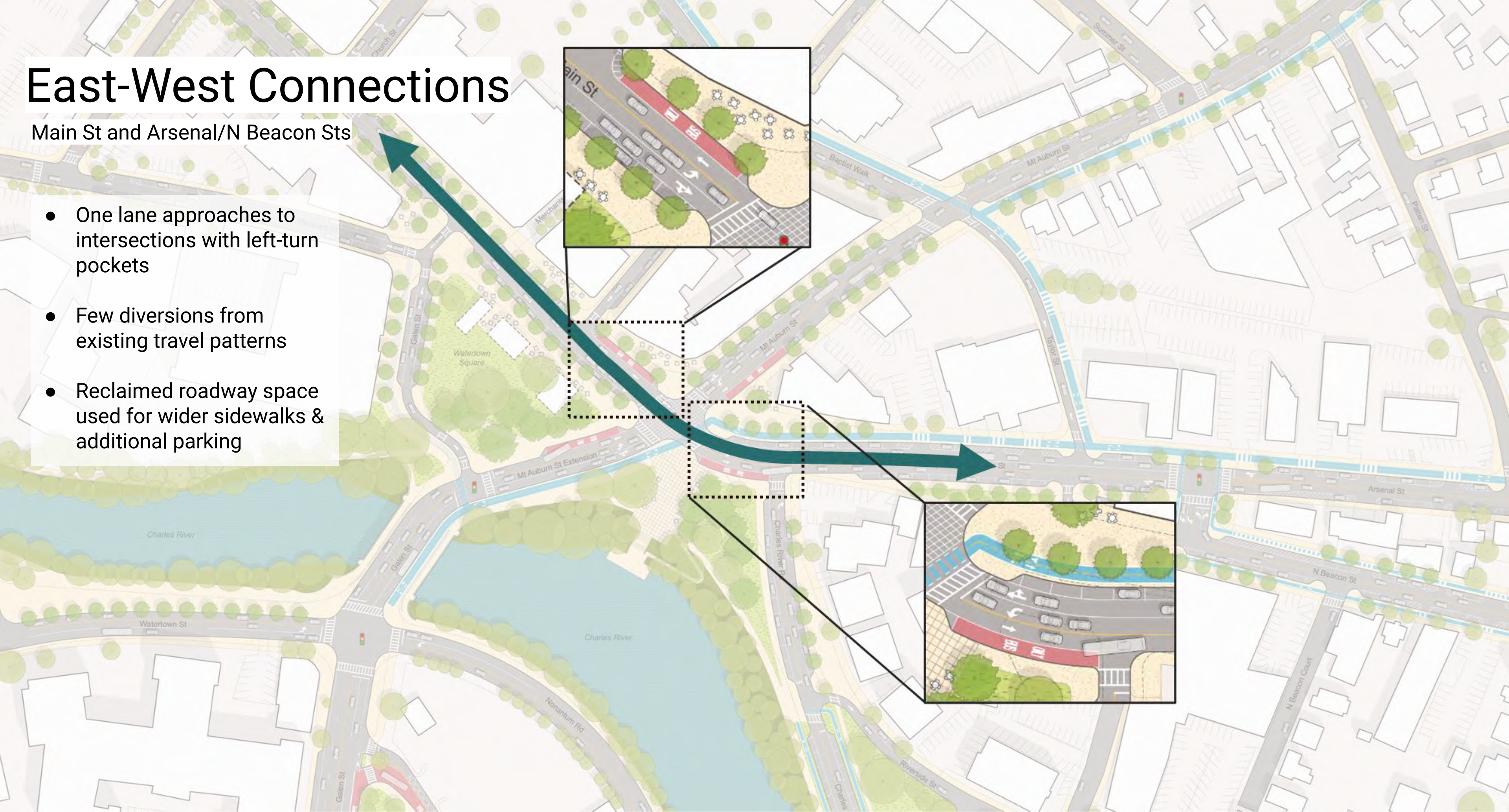




# East-West Connections

Main St and Arsenal/N Beacon Sts

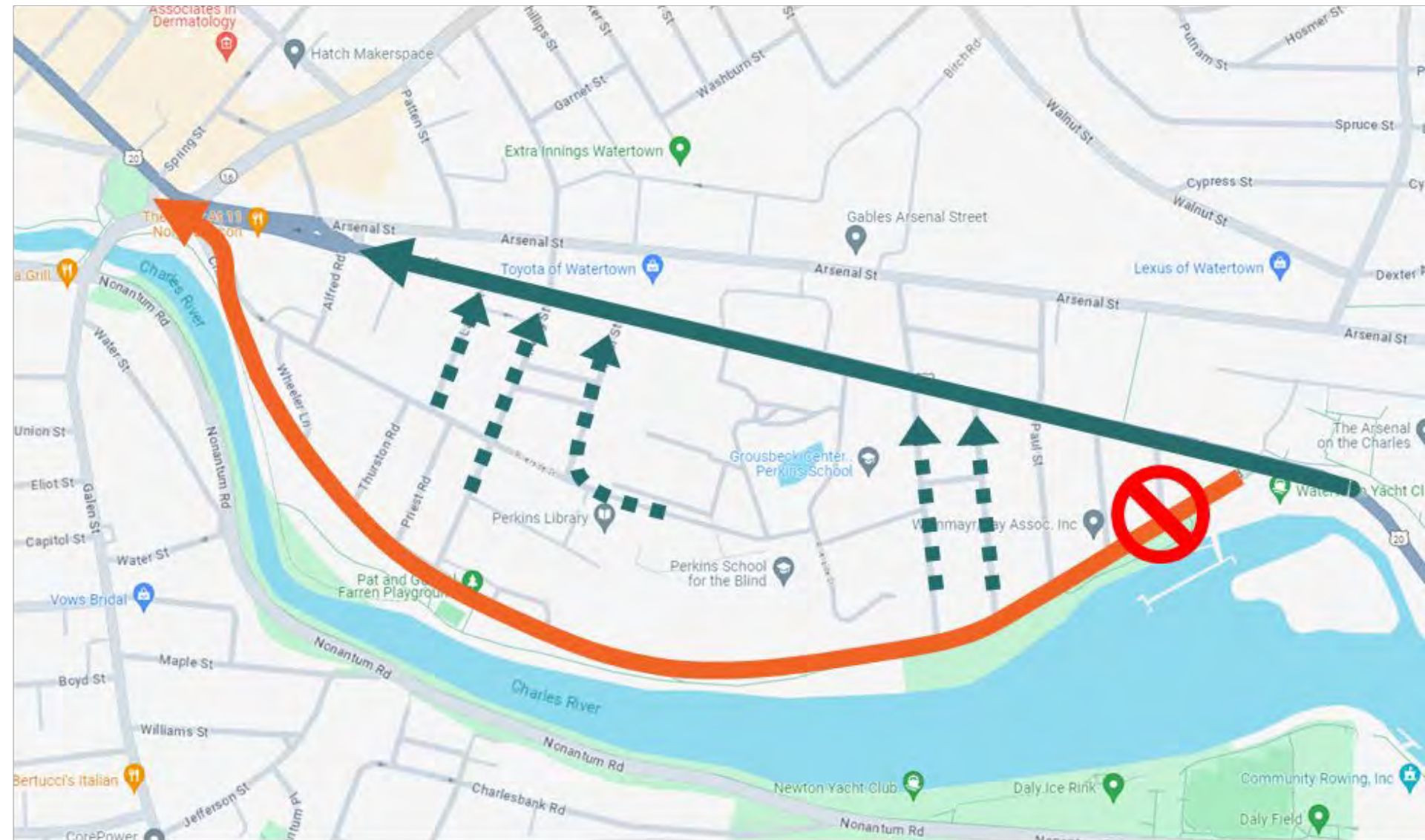
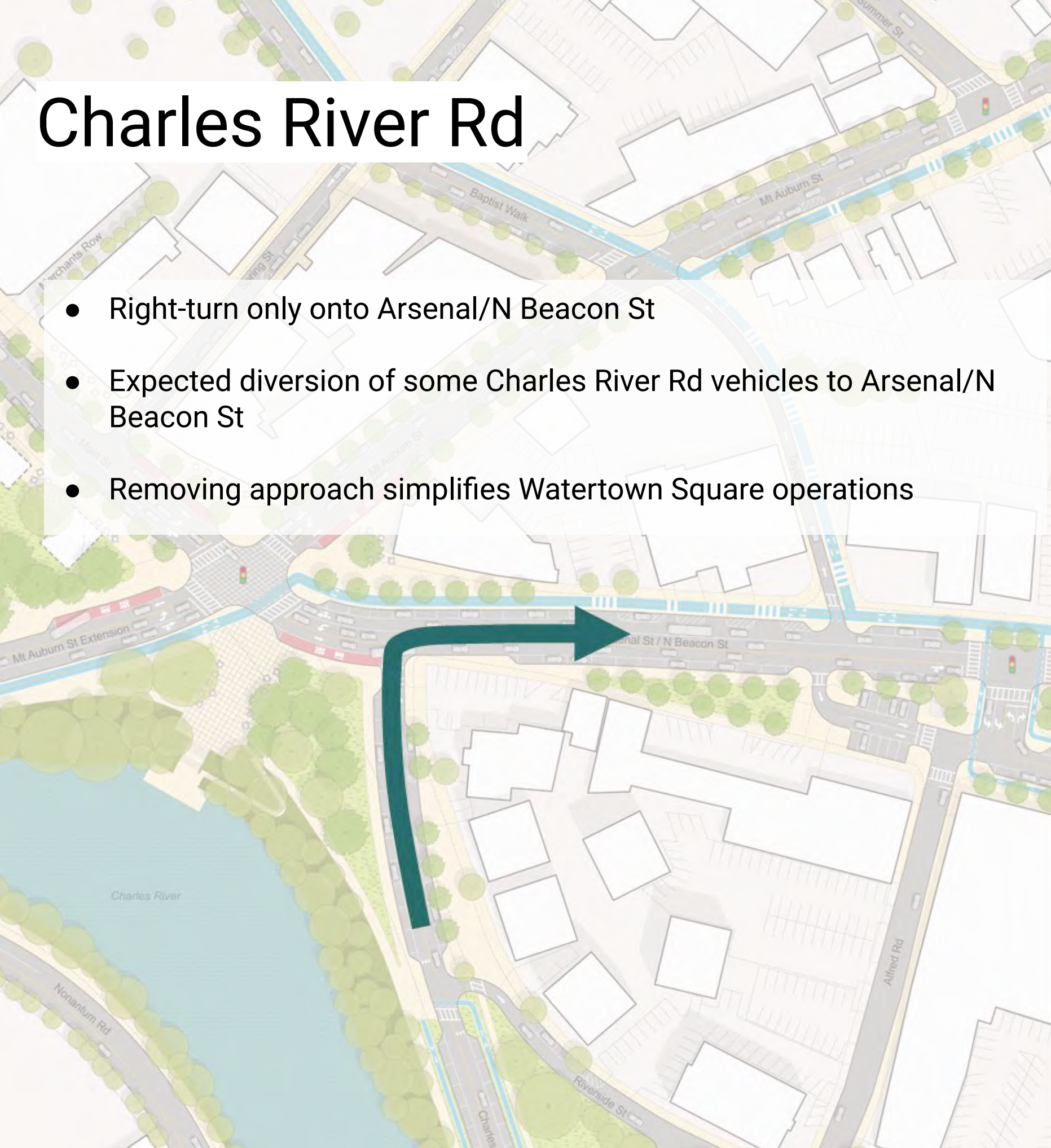
- One lane approaches to intersections with left-turn pockets
- Few diversions from existing travel patterns
- Reclaimed roadway space used for wider sidewalks & additional parking





# Charles River Rd

- Right-turn only onto Arsenal/N Beacon St
- Expected diversion of some Charles River Rd vehicles to Arsenal/N Beacon St
- Removing approach simplifies Watertown Square operations





# Curbside Use / Parking

## Area Reclaimed

- Opportunities for on-street parking directly adjacent to the Square
- Additional parking along Pleasant St, Mt Auburn St, Arsenal/N Beacon St, Charles River Rd

 New Space for Curbside Uses

 Existing Space for Curbside Uses



# Pedestrian Improvements

- Shorter crossings throughout the Square
- Improved pedestrian visibility
- Closing Main St slip lane and Riverside St reduces number of crossings needed
- Added crosswalks improve connectivity

 **New Crosswalks**

 **Shortened Existing Crosswalks**





# Bicycle Improvements

- Arsenal St cycle track extended to connect to the river and Charles River Greenway
- Improved bicycle connections via N Beacon St and Mt Auburn St
- Taylor St cycle track extended north via Baptist Wk as part of Community Path

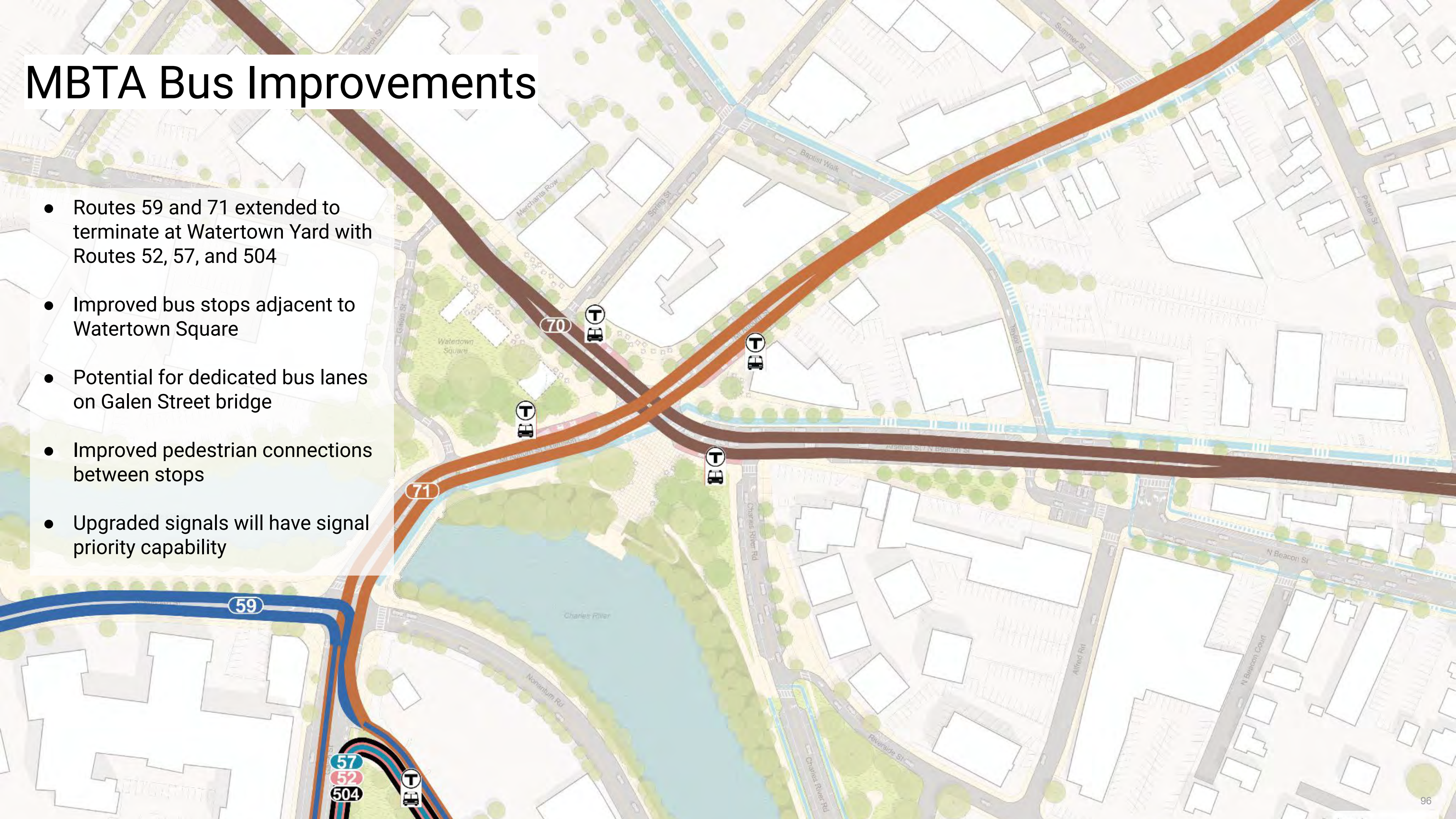
 New Bicycle Routes

 Existing Bicycle Paths



# MBTA Bus Improvements

- Routes 59 and 71 extended to terminate at Watertown Yard with Routes 52, 57, and 504
- Improved bus stops adjacent to Watertown Square
- Potential for dedicated bus lanes on Galen Street bridge
- Improved pedestrian connections between stops
- Upgraded signals will have signal priority capability





# Operations Summary

Operations & queues at primary intersection are comparable to existing operations

Delays at Galen St NB may be improved with various signal/pedestrian phasing (concurrent)

Removing Charles River Rd simplifies signal operations



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How do you feel about the streetscape plan proposal?



# Existing Conditions

Under-utilized surface parking lots

Opportunity for denser, context-sensitive mixed-use developments

Riverfront area feels disconnected from the rest of the neighborhood

Narrow sidewalks and lack of activated outdoor spaces

Low tree canopy coverage



# Four Corners

Concept Axonometric

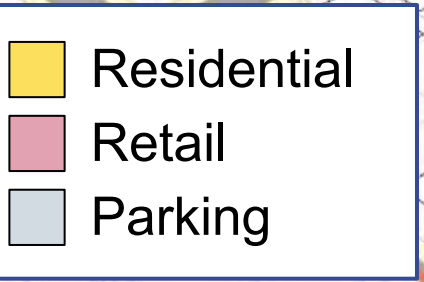
- Residential
- Retail
- Parking





# Four Corners

Key Urban Design Moments



- Residential
- Retail
- Parking

Redistribution of existing off-street surface parking spaces to on-street parking and centralized parking structure

Denser, context-sensitive mixed-use developments

Redeveloped municipal parking lot sites

Increased residential developments

Pedestrian-friendly path

Activated street wall framing the Square

Increased retail frontage and public realm spaces



# Four Corners

Key Urban Design Moments

Programmed event spaces on expanded central green

Widened sidewalk and activated outdoor spaces

Expanded tree canopy coverage

Reclaimed open space and enhanced views/access to riverfront



**TOWARDS  
A WALKABLE  
WATERTOWN  
SQUARE**

**OCTOBER 17, 2023**

**JEFF SPECK** AICP CNU-A LEED-ND Hon. ASLA



**THE  
WALKABLE  
CITY**

*How to  
do it.*



**HOW DO YOU GET PEOPLE TO WALK?**



# **HOW DO YOU GET PEOPLE TO WALK?**

- **A REASON TO WALK**



# **HOW DO YOU GET PEOPLE TO WALK?**

- **A REASON TO WALK**

- **A SAFE WALK**



# **HOW DO YOU GET PEOPLE TO WALK?**

- **A REASON TO WALK**
- **A SAFE WALK**
- **A COMFORTABLE WALK**



# **HOW DO YOU GET PEOPLE TO WALK?**

- **A REASON TO WALK**
- **A SAFE WALK**
- **A COMFORTABLE WALK**
- **AN INTERESTING WALK**



# **HOW DO YOU GET PEOPLE TO WALK?**

- **A REASON TO WALK**





***“YOU CAN’T  
RELY ON  
BRINGING  
PEOPLE  
DOWNTOWN.***

***YOU HAVE  
TO PUT  
THEM  
THERE.”***



# Proposed Zoning

Partial Study Area Zoned By-Right

Unit Capacity:

# 3,133 units

(1,432 units beyond requirement)

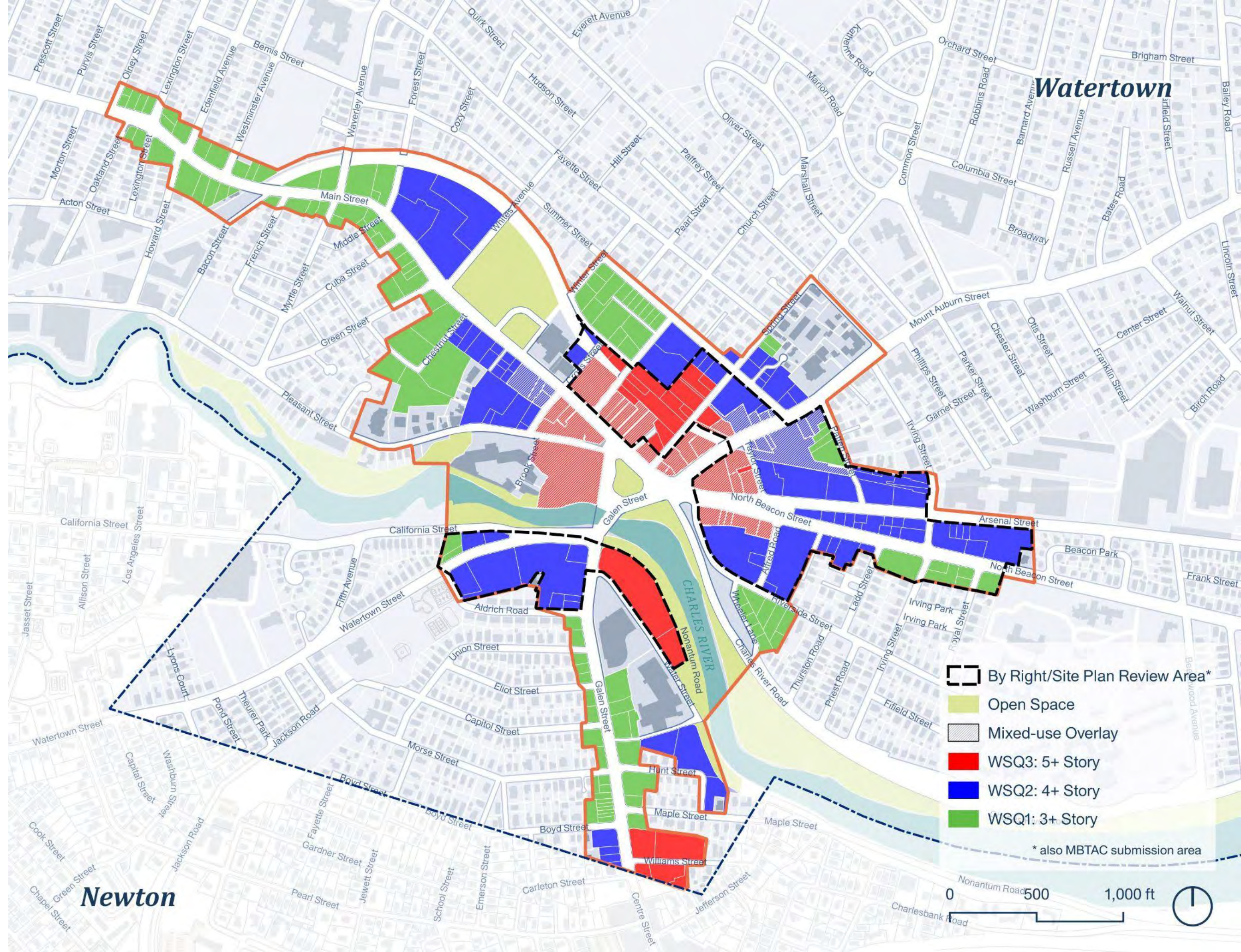
The by-right boundary represents the parcels that will be submitted toward MBTA Communities.

**Parcels within this boundary are by-right and subject to Site Plan Review.**

**All re-zoned parcels outside this boundary are Special Permit.** These include historic buildings and extended mixed-use required areas.

### Notes:

- Only zones within the submission boundary were tested
- Assumes 0.5 parking spaces/unit
- Includes unit capacity of Mixed-Use parcels
- Publicly owned parcels do not count toward the unit capacity









# **HOW DO YOU GET PEOPLE TO WALK?**

- **A REASON TO WALK**

- **A SAFE WALK**



Hit by a vehicle traveling at

SPEED  
**20**  
MPH



9 out of 10 pedestrians survive

SPEED  
**30**  
MPH



5 out of 10 pedestrians survive

SPEED  
**40**  
MPH



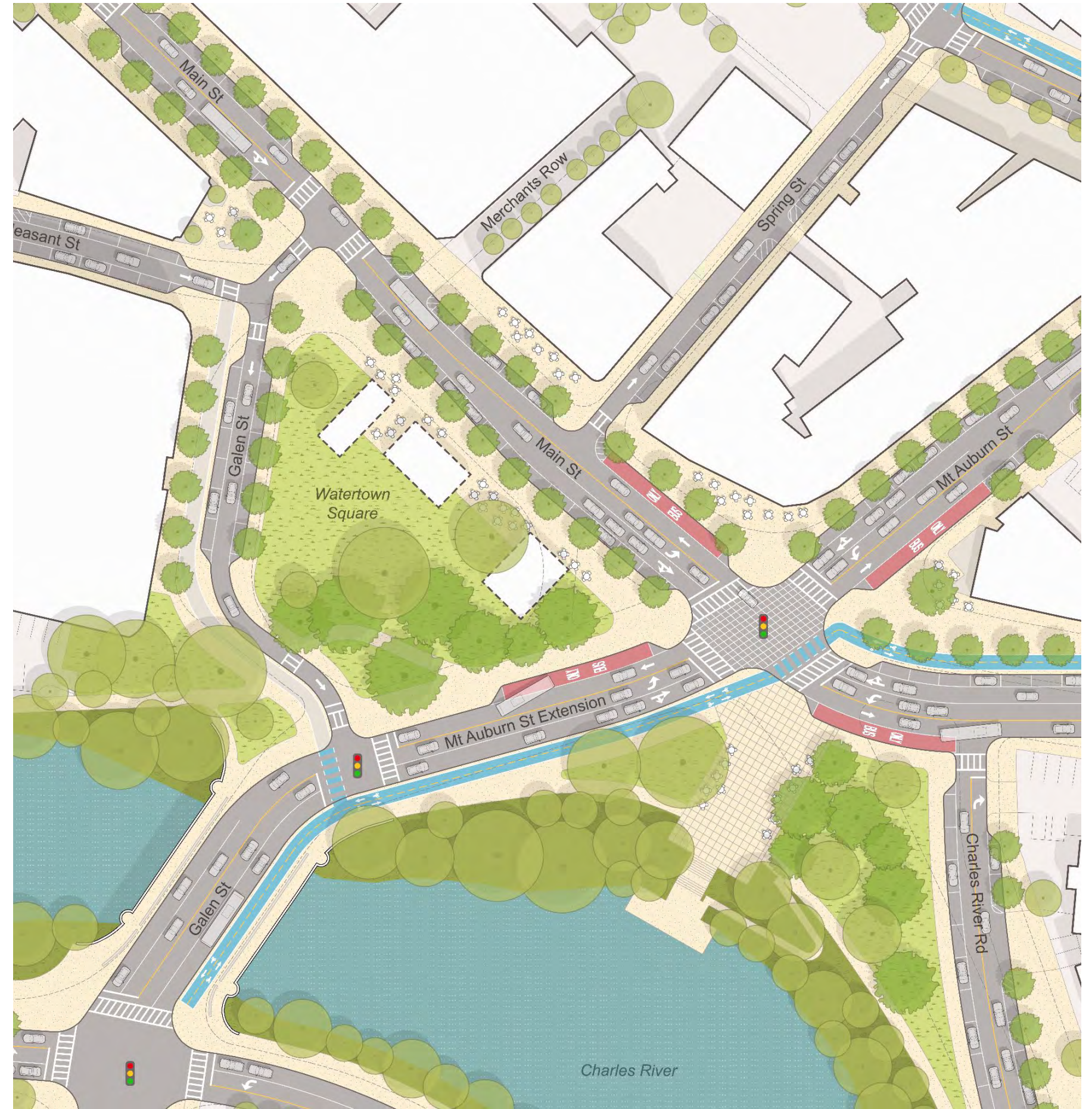
1 out of 10 pedestrians survive



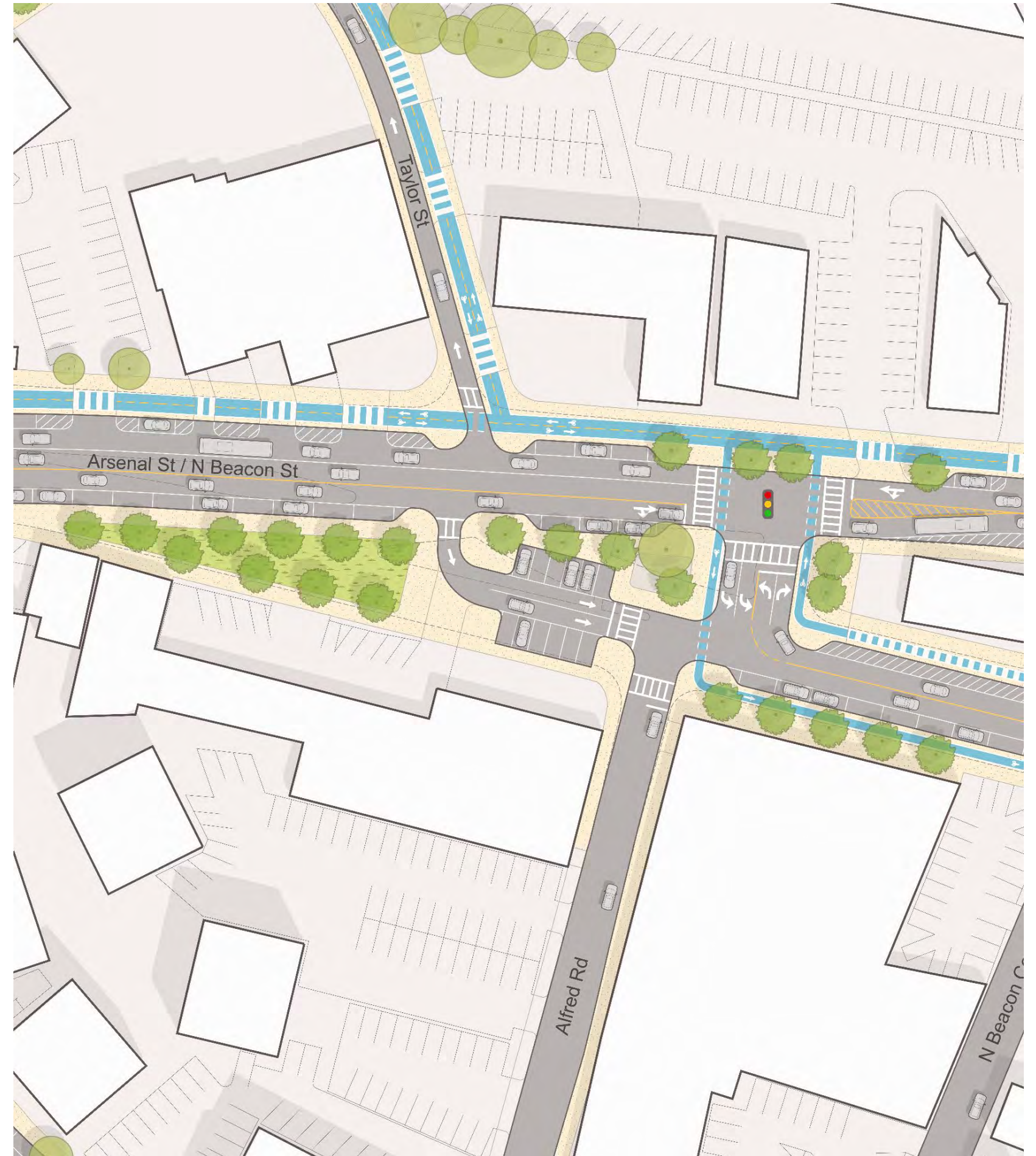
## **WHAT REDUCES SPEEDING?:**

- **RIGHT-SIZING THE NUMBER OF LANES.** ✓
- **RIGHT-SIZING THE LANES THEMSELVES.** ✓
- **PARALLEL PARKING AND STREET TREES.** ✓
- **AVOIDING HIGHWAY GEOMETRIES.** ✓
- **GOOD CROSSWALKS.** ✓
- **LOW-STRESS BIKE ROUTES.** ✓









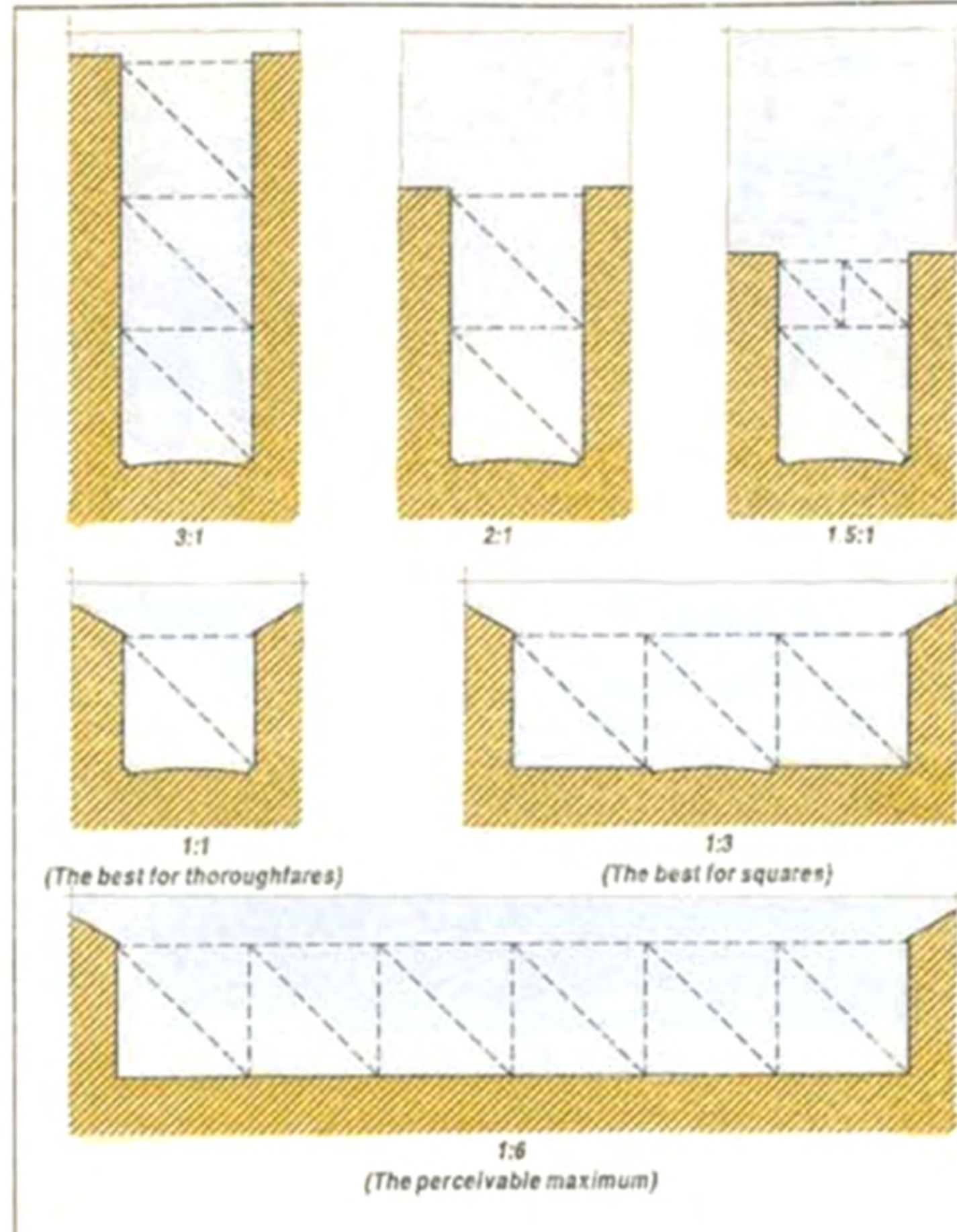


# **HOW DO YOU GET PEOPLE TO WALK?**

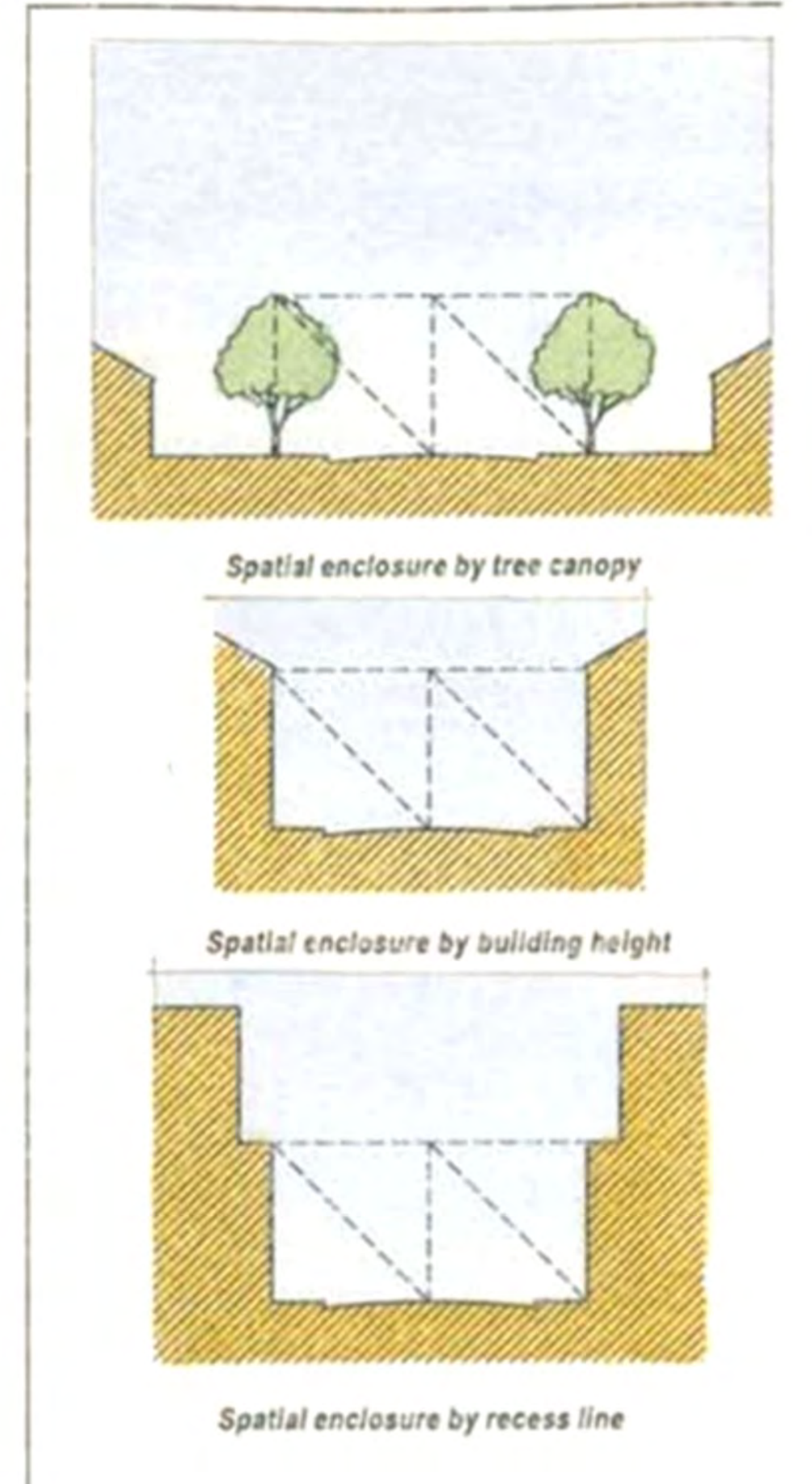
- **A REASON TO WALK**
- **A SAFE WALK**
- **A COMFORTABLE WALK**



SPATIAL DEFINITION BY HEIGHT-TO-WIDTH RATIO



SPATIAL DEFINITION IN SECTION





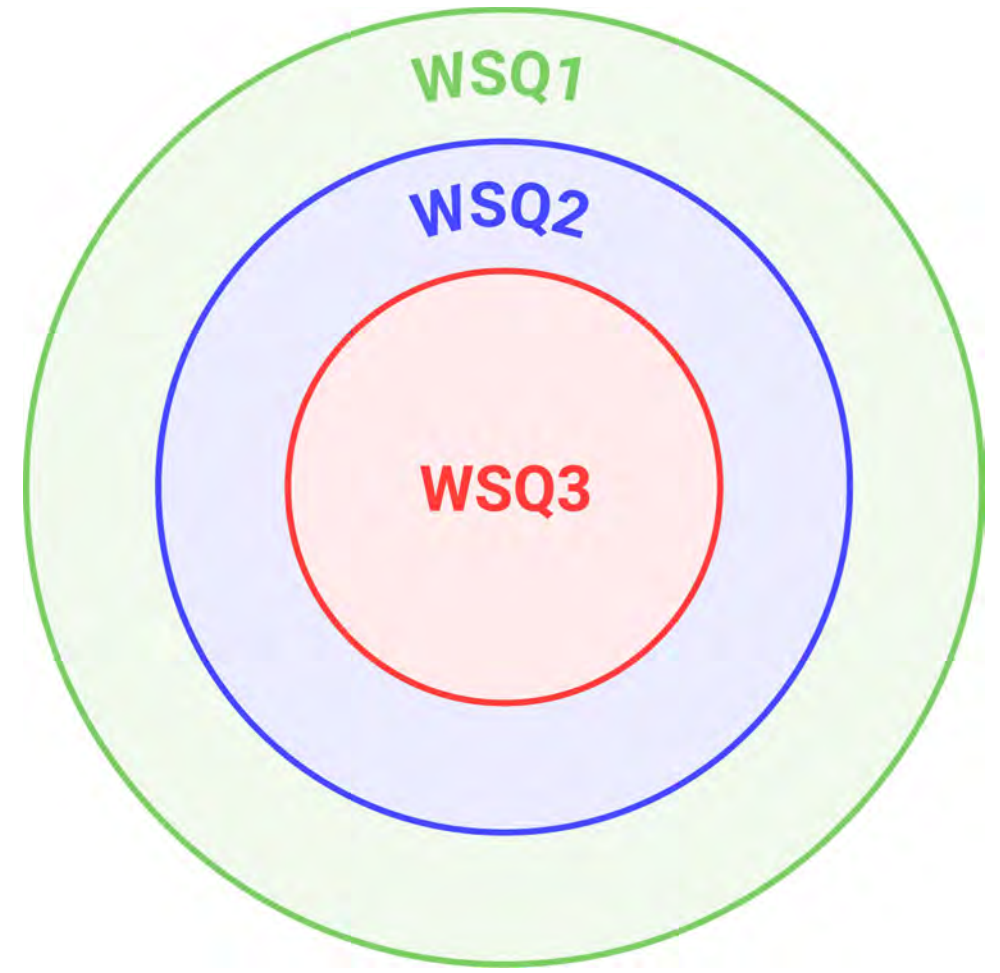




# Zoning Recommendations

Tiered Zoning Approach

The proposed code uses a **tiered zoning approach**: Higher density zones are concentrated around a central commercial area and lower density zones transition to smaller-scale residential areas.



**WSQ3:**  
**5+ stories**



**WSQ2:**  
**4+ stories**



**WSQ1:**  
**3+ stories**

**Note:**  
The "+" floor is an occupiable penthouse



# HOW DO YOU GET PEOPLE TO WALK?

- **A REASON TO WALK** ✓
- **A SAFE WALK** ✓
- **A COMFORTABLE WALK** ✓
- **AN INTERESTING WALK**





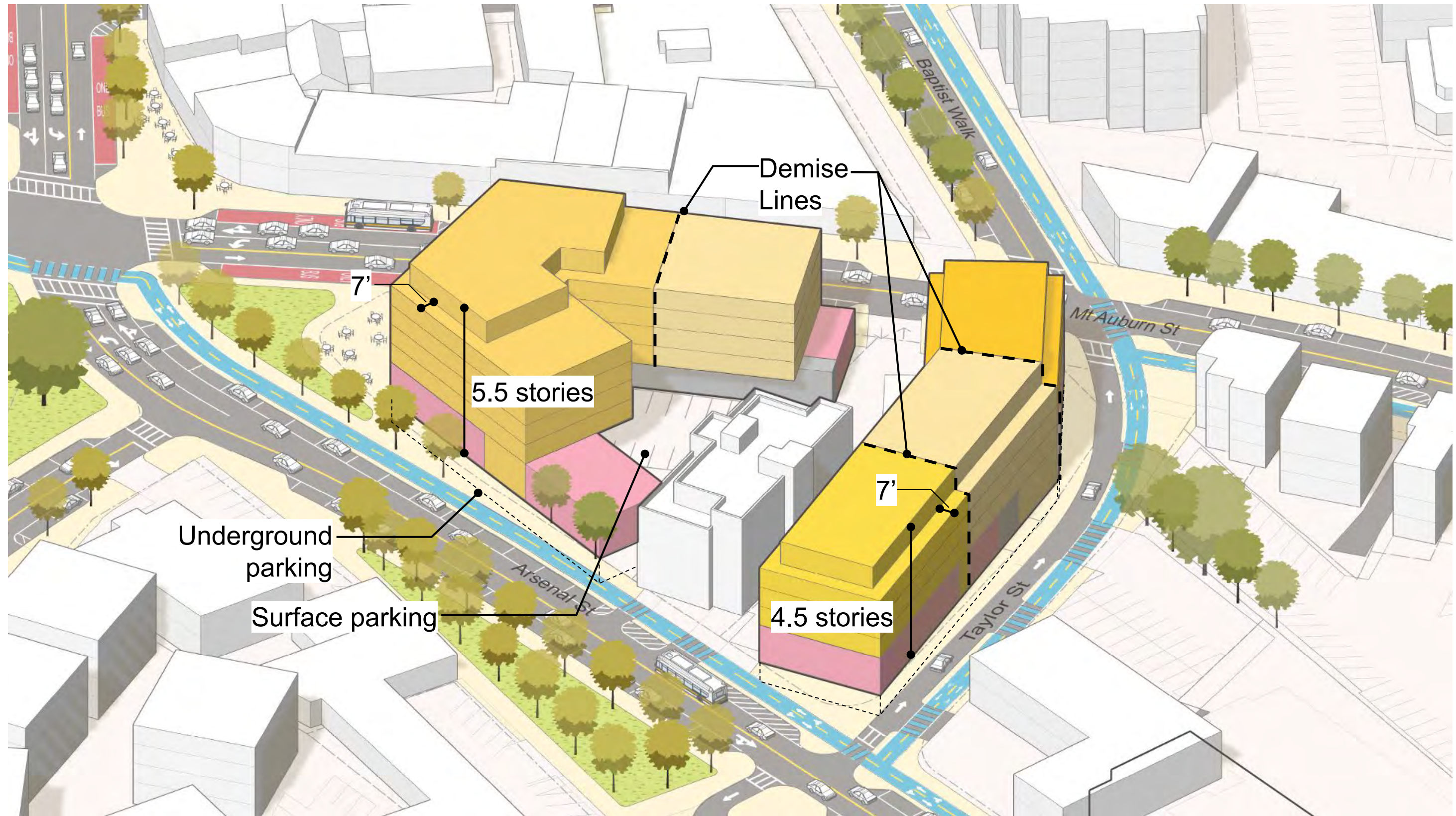






# Testing Zoning Parameters

Zoning Parameters	
Front Setbacks	0'
Maximum Building Height	5.5 stories
Top Level Stepback	7' min.
Facade Articulation	Demise Line Required Every 100'



<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:yellow; border:1px solid black;"></span> Residential	
<span style="display:inline-block; width:15px; height:15px; background-color:lightcoral; border:1px solid black;"></span> Retail	



# HOW DO YOU GET PEOPLE TO WALK?

- **A REASON TO WALK** ✓
- **A SAFE WALK** ✓
- **A COMFORTABLE WALK** ✓
- **AN INTERESTING WALK** ✓



# Four Corners

Concept Axonometric

- Residential
- Retail
- Parking





# Next Steps

Join us now for a Q+A panel with members of the City and consultant teams.



# slido



## Audience Q&A Session



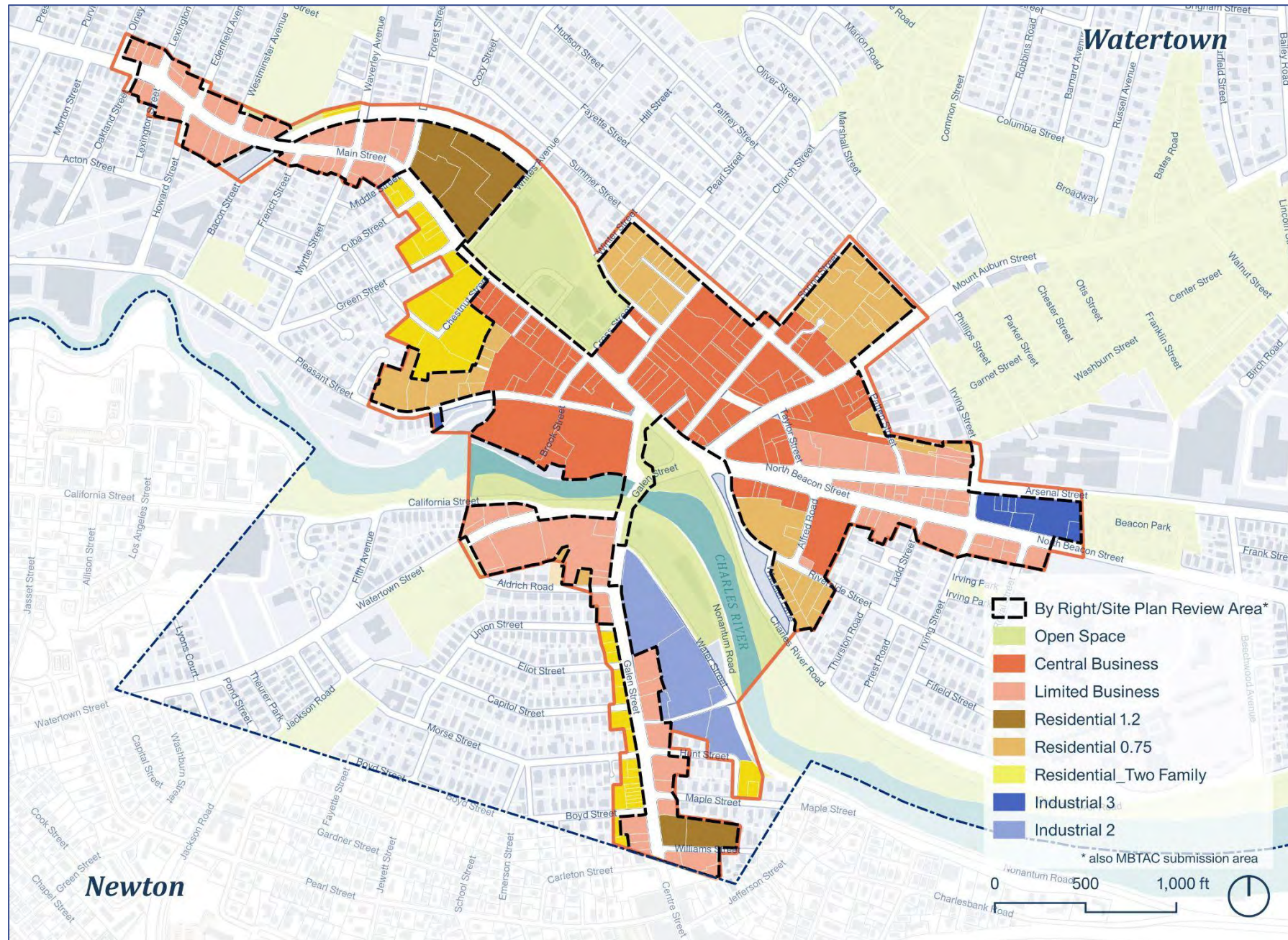
# Appendix



# Zoning Capacity Comparison

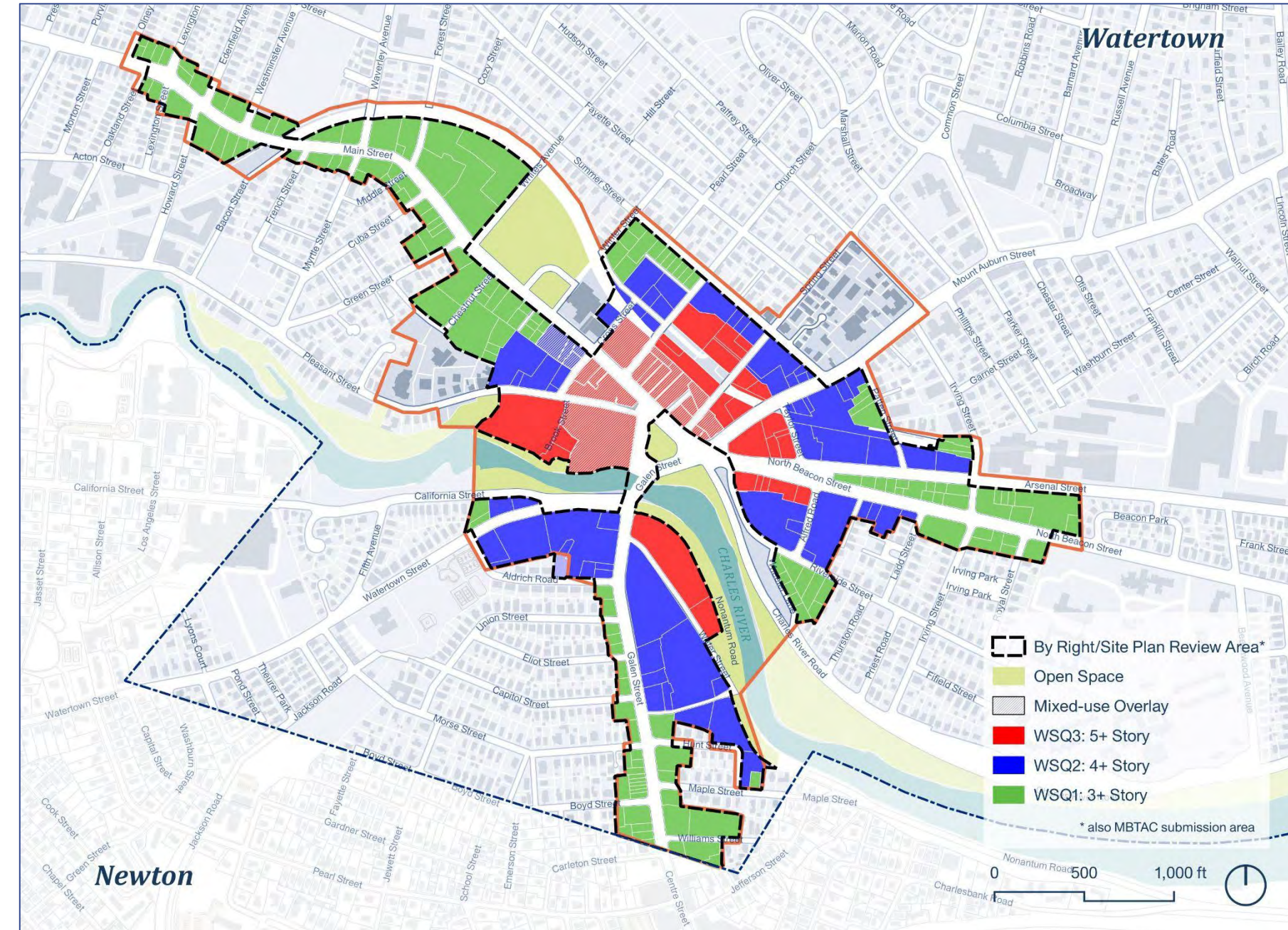
Unit Capacity Analysis - Entire Study Area Zoned By-Right

Existing Zoning: Entire Study Area



Total unit capacity:  
**4,420**

Previously Proposed Zoning: Entire Study Area



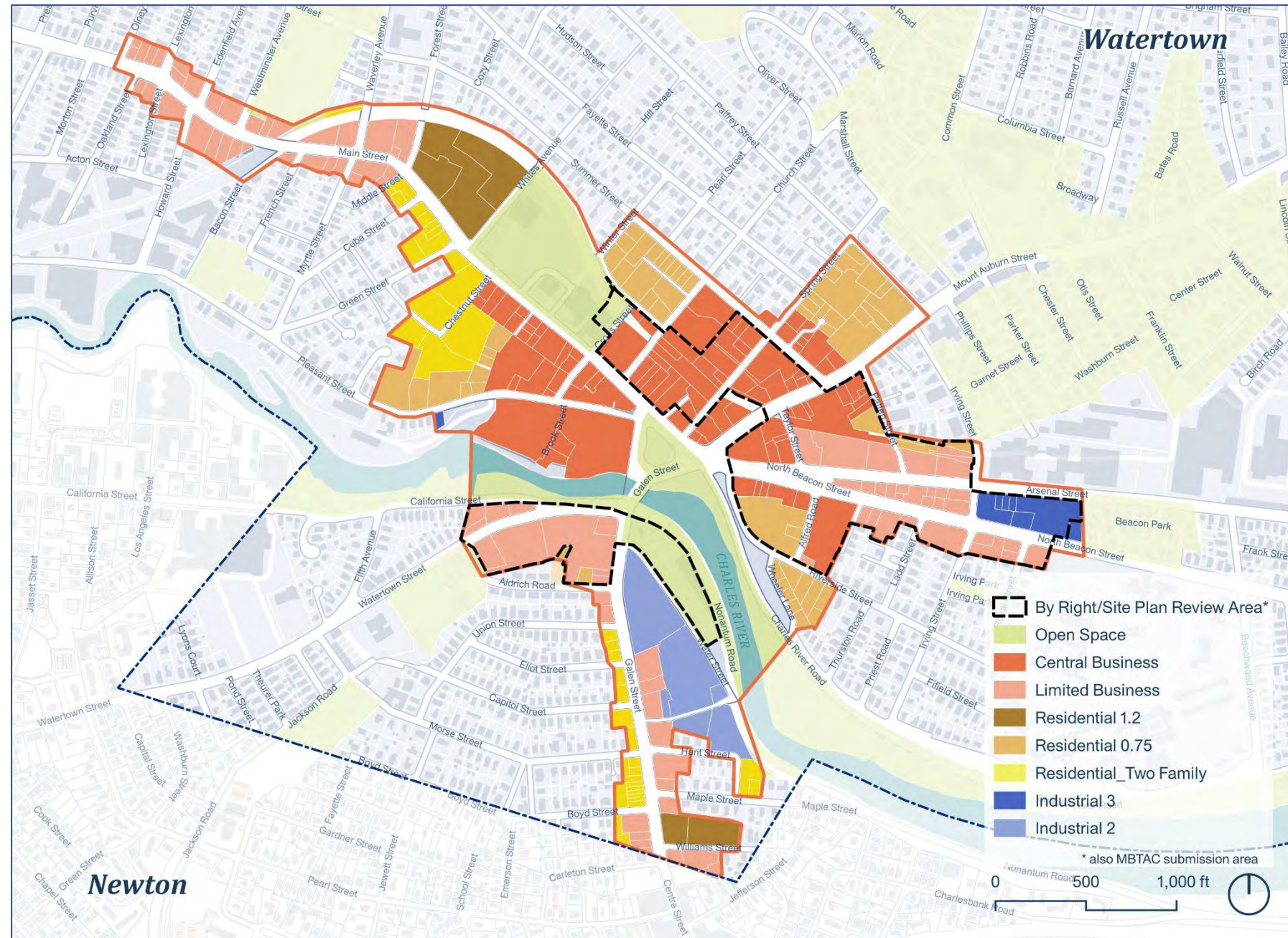
Total unit capacity:  
**6,320 (4,619 units beyond requirement)**



# Zoning Capacity Comparison

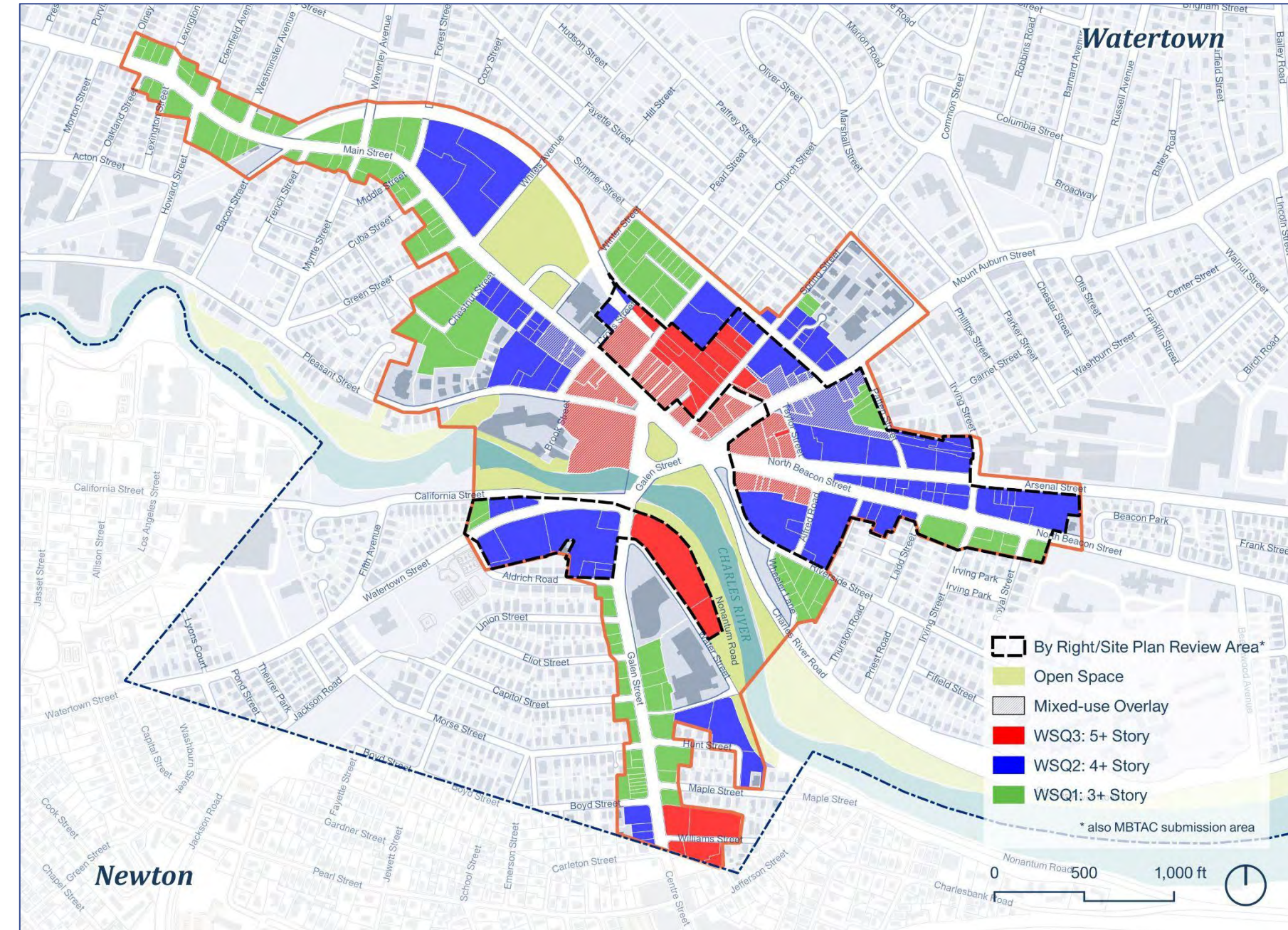
Unit Capacity Analysis - Partial Study Area Zoned By-Right

## Existing Zoning: Partial Study Area



Total unit capacity:  
**1,888**

## Currently Proposed Zoning: Partial Study Area



Total unit capacity:  
**3,133 (1,432 units beyond requirement)**