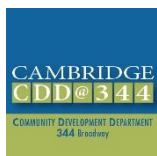


City of Cambridge  
Community Development Department  
Neighborhood Zoning

August 24, 2021

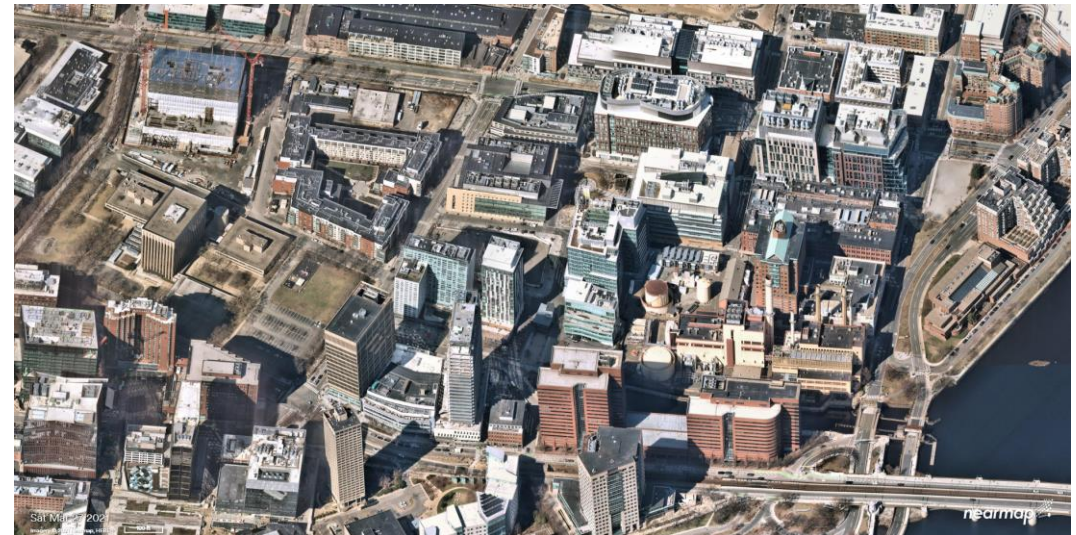
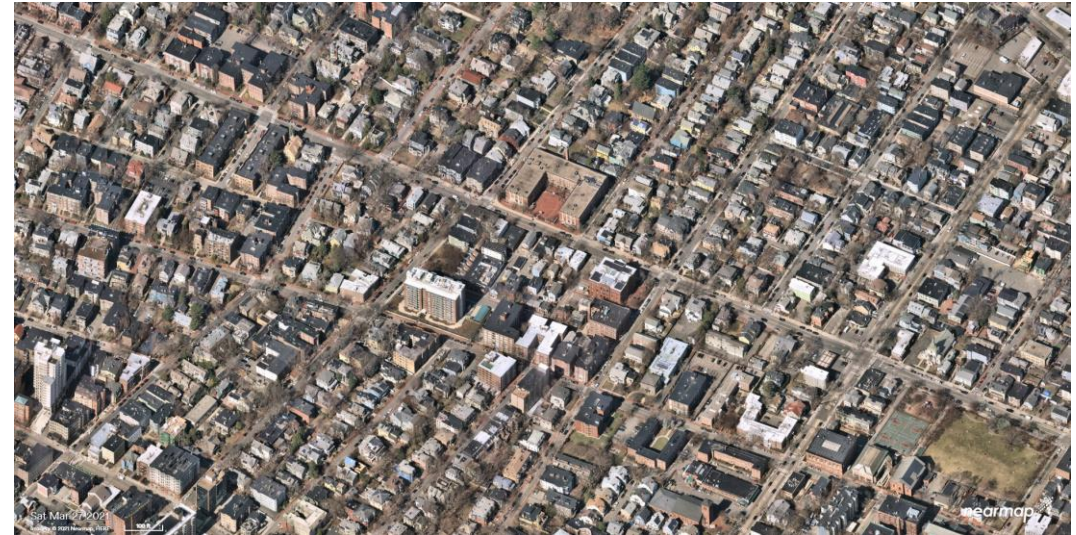




# What we talk about when we talk about **zoning**

“Patterns of Development”

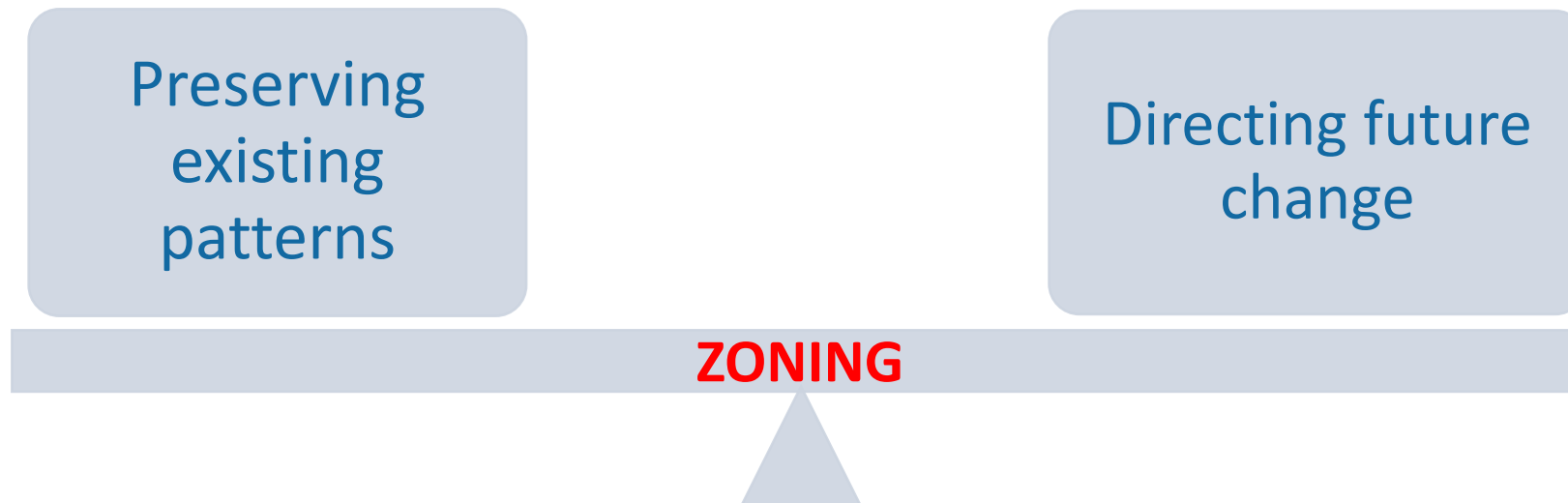
# What we talk about when we talk about **zoning**



# What we talk about when we talk about **zoning**

What aspects of existing patterns of development should be **protected**?

What changes to existing patterns of development should be **allowed** or **encouraged**?





# Massachusetts Zoning Act (1975)

This act is designed to provide standardized procedures for the administration and promulgation of municipal zoning laws. This section is designed to suggest objectives for which zoning might be established which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- to lessen congestion in the streets;
- to conserve health;
- to secure safety from fire, flood, panic and other dangers;
- to provide adequate light and air;
- to prevent overcrowding, of land, to avoid undue concentration of population;
- to encourage housing for persons of all income levels;
- to facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, water supply, drainage, sewerage, schools, parks, open space and other public requirements;
- to conserve the value of land and buildings, including the conservation of natural resources and the prevention of blight and pollution of the environment;
- to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the city or town, including consideration of the recommendations of the master plan, if any, adopted by the planning board and the comprehensive plan, if any, of the regional planning agency;
- and to preserve and increase amenities by the promulgation of regulations to fulfill said objectives.



# Massachusetts Zoning Act (1975)

Said regulations may include but are not limited to restricting, prohibiting, permitting or regulating:

1. **uses of land**, including wetlands and lands deemed subject to seasonal or periodic flooding;
2. **size, height, bulk, location and use of structures**, including buildings and signs except that billboards, signs and other advertising devices are also subject to the provisions of sections twenty-nine through thirty-three, inclusive, of chapter ninety-three, and to chapter ninety-three D;
3. uses of bodies of water, including water courses;
4. noxious uses;
5. **areas and dimensions of land** and bodies of water to be occupied or unoccupied by uses and structures, courts, yards and open spaces;
6. **density of population and intensity of use**;
7. **accessory facilities and uses, such as vehicle parking and loading, landscaping and open space**; and
8. the development of the **natural, scenic and aesthetic** qualities of the community.



# Cambridge Zoning Ordinance – Purpose

[Section 1.30] It shall be the purpose of this Ordinance to

- lessen congestion in the streets;
- conserve health;
- to secure safety from fire, flood, panic and other danger;
- to provide adequate light and air;
- to prevent overcrowding of land;
- to avoid undue concentration of population;
- to encourage housing for persons of all income levels;
- to facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water supply, drainage, sewerage, schools, parks, open space and other public requirements;
- to conserve the value of land and buildings, including the conservation of natural resources and the prevention of blight and pollution of the environment;
- to encourage the most rational use of land throughout the city, including the encouragement of appropriate economic development, the protection of residential neighborhoods from incompatible activities and including the consideration of plans and policies, if any, adopted by the Cambridge Planning Board, and
- to preserve and increase the amenities of the City.



# Two Parts to Zoning Ordinance

- “The Map” (Districting the City)
  - Where district lines are drawn
  - How some areas are zoned relative to others
- “The Ordinance Text” (Regulating Development)
  - What development standards are regulated
  - How those standards differ by district





# Mapping Neighborhood Residence Districts

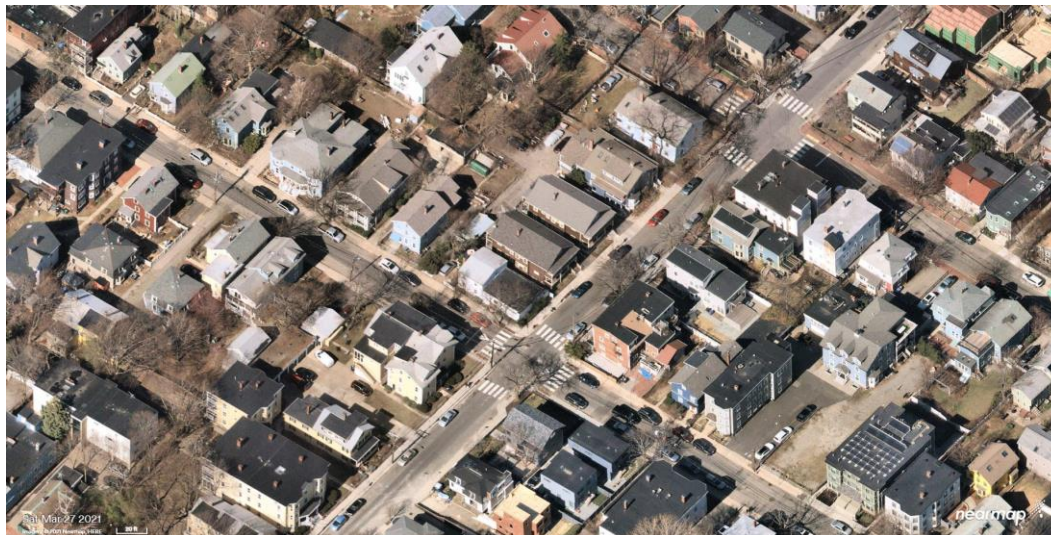
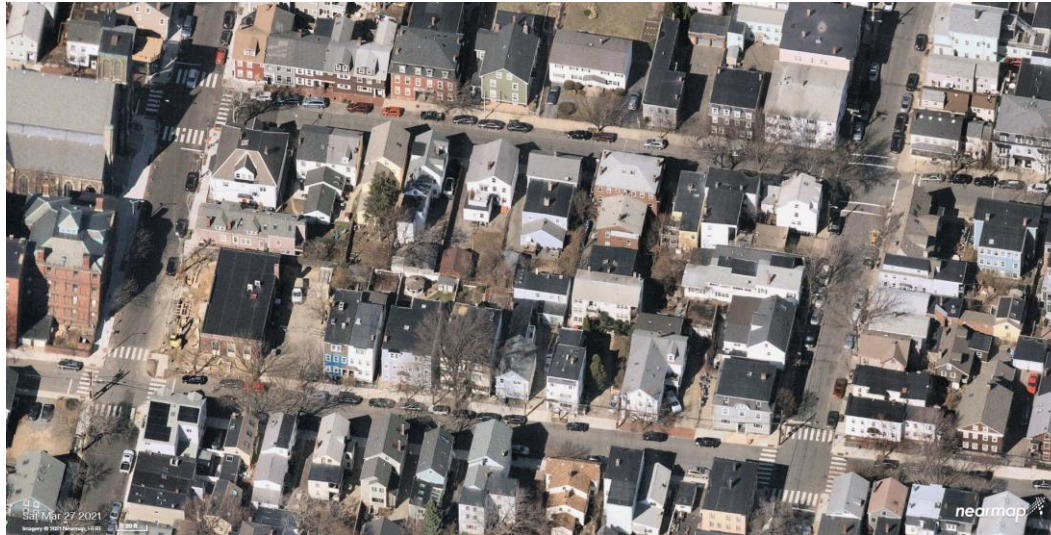


# What do we mean by “Residence District”?

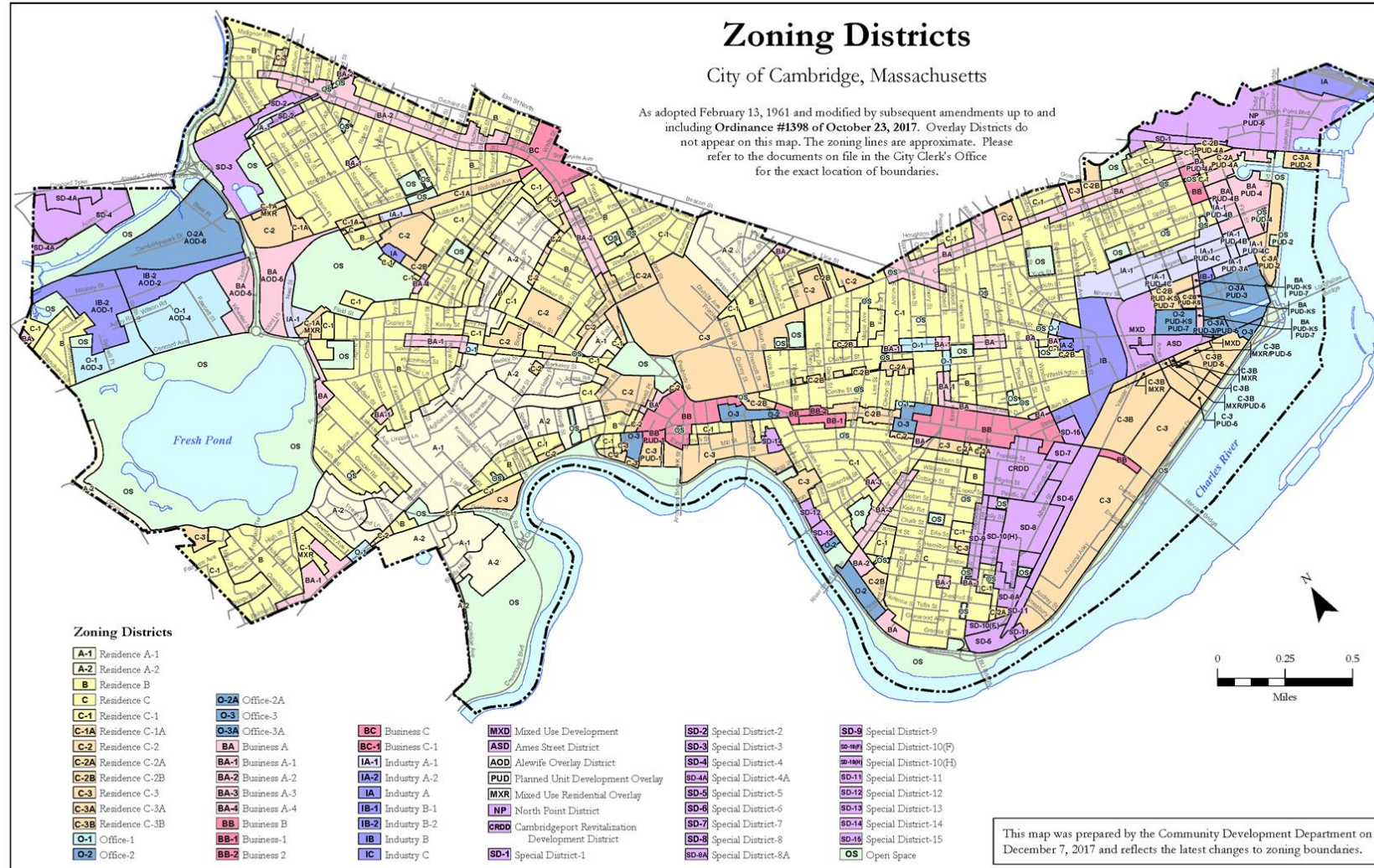
Patterns (in Cambridge):

- Mix of single-family, two-family, three-deckers, apartments, townhouses
- 2½-3 stories typical
- Small-sized lots (+/- 50' width, +/- 100' depth)
- Wood-frame buildings (mostly)
- Varied styles

# What do we mean by “Residence District”?



# Zoning Districts



- Residence A-1, A-2, B, C, C-1
- Height Limit of 35'
- Yellow on the map
- Also “Hybrid” districts: Office-1, Business A-1, A-3, Special Districts SD-2, SD-9, SD-10, SD-14

This map was prepared by the Community Development Department on December 7, 2017 and reflects the latest changes to zoning boundaries.

Map prepared by Brendan Murrice on December 7, 2017. CDD GIS C:\Projects\Zoning\Zoning1.txt17.mxd

# Neighborhood Residence Districts

Map Code	District	Allows
A-1	Residence A-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Single-family (detached) dwellings</li></ul>
A-2	Residence A-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One principal structure on a lot</li></ul>
B	Residence B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Single-family and two-family dwellings</li><li>• Semi-detached townhouse/rowhouse dwellings</li><li>• Multiple principal structures w/75' of street (or by SP)</li></ul>
C	Residence C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Single-family and two-family dwellings</li><li>• Semi-detached townhouse/rowhouse dwellings</li><li>• Multifamily dwellings</li></ul>
C-1	Residence C-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lodging houses and group homes</li><li>• Multiple principal structures</li></ul>



# Brief History

- Most neighborhoods developed ca. 1850s-1930s (some exceptions – e.g., Cambridge Highlands, Linden Park)
- Zoning enacted in 1924, new Ordinance in 1943
- Some areas “downzoned” by resident-led petitions over time
  - E.g., North Cambridge (B), West Cambridge (A-1,A-2,B), Cambridgeport (C), parts of Baldwin (B); small parts of Mid-Cambridge (B), The Port (B)
- Few major changes, many adaptations (rehabilitation, alteration, addition, reconfiguration, condo conversion)
- Economic changes: “downs and ups”

# Neighborhood Residence Districts

- About 10,000 lots
- About half of Cambridge's total housing units

Map Code	District	% Land Area	% Parcels	% Dwelling Units
A-1	Residence A-1	3.4 %	2.6 %	0.7 %
A-2	Residence A-2	5.4 %	1.8 %	0.5 %
B	Residence B	15.2 %	29.9 %	15.9 %
C	Residence C	2.9 %	6.3 %	4.3 %
C-1	Residence C-1	17.1 %	36.1 %	28.9 %

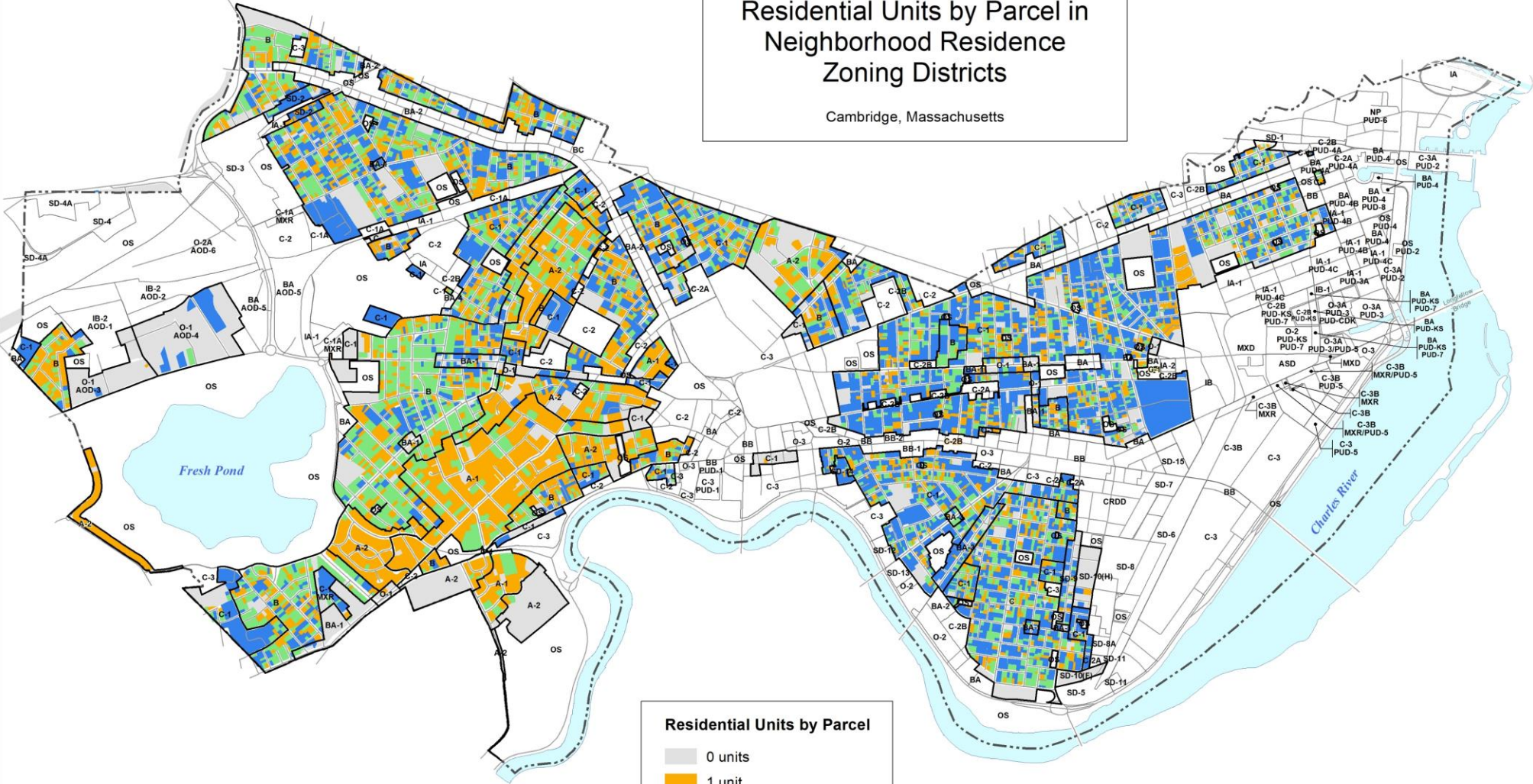
Data source: Cambridge GIS. ALL FIGURES APPROXIMATE.





# Residential Units by Parcel in Neighborhood Residence Zoning Districts

Cambridge, Massachusetts



### Residential Units by Parcel

- 0 units
- 1 unit
- 2 units
- 3 or more units
- Selected Zoning Districts

Data source: July 2020 Land Use data from CDD, based on Assessing data, building permits, and Development Log data.



# Neighborhood Residence Districts

## Questions:

- Do these districts reflect the City's current goals?
- Should there be fewer or more residence district types?
- What areas should be zoned the same as one another?
- What areas should be zoned differently from one another?



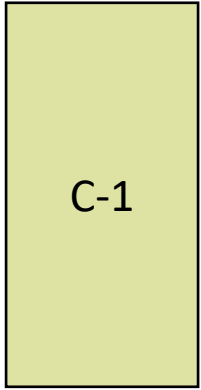
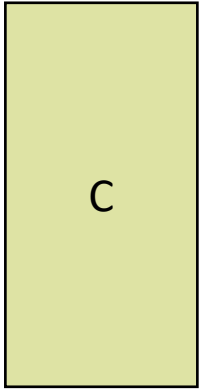
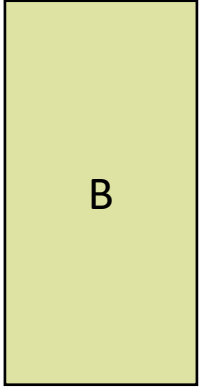
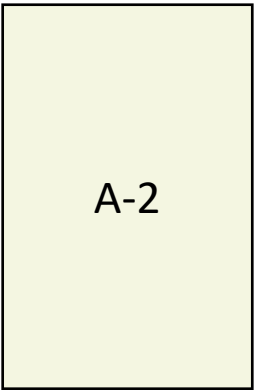
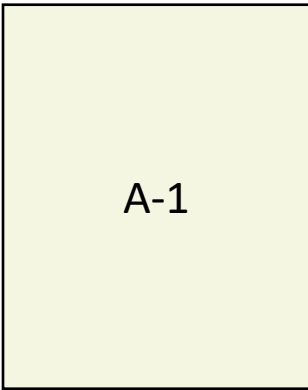
# Neighborhood Residence District Development Standards

# Development Standards

<b>Standard</b>	<b>History in A-1, A-2, B, C, C-1 Districts</b>
<b>Lot size and width</b>	Introduced in 1943, few changes
<b>Housing density (lot area per dwelling unit)</b>	Introduced in 1961, increased in 1990s *Accessory apartments 1981, 2016, 2019
<b>Building size and scale (height, FAR)</b>	Height – 1943, few changes FAR – 1961, *basement exemption 2016
<b>Site layout (yards/setbacks, open space)</b>	Yards – 1943, amended 1961 Open Space – 1978, amended 1990s
<b>Parking and bicycle parking</b>	Parking – 1961, many amendments Bicycle Parking – 1981, amended 2012

# Lot size and width

District	A-1	A-2	B	C	C-1
Min. Lot Size	8,000 SF	6,500 SF	5,000 SF	5,000 SF	5,000 SF
Min. Lot Width	80'	60'	50'	50'	50'
"Standard" Lot Dimensions	80'x100'	65'x100'	50'x100'	50'x100'	50'x100'



# Lot area per dwelling unit (L.A./D.U.)

$$\text{"L. A./D. U."} = \frac{\text{Lot Area}}{\text{Total Number of Dwelling Units}}$$

District	L.A./D.U. (SF)	Results in ...
A-1	6,000 min.	7.2 units/acre (net)
A-2	4,500 min.	9.7 units/acre (net)
B	2,500(+) min.	17.4(-) units/acre (net)
C	1,800 min.	24.2 units/acre (net)
C-1	1,500 min.	29.0 units/acre (net)

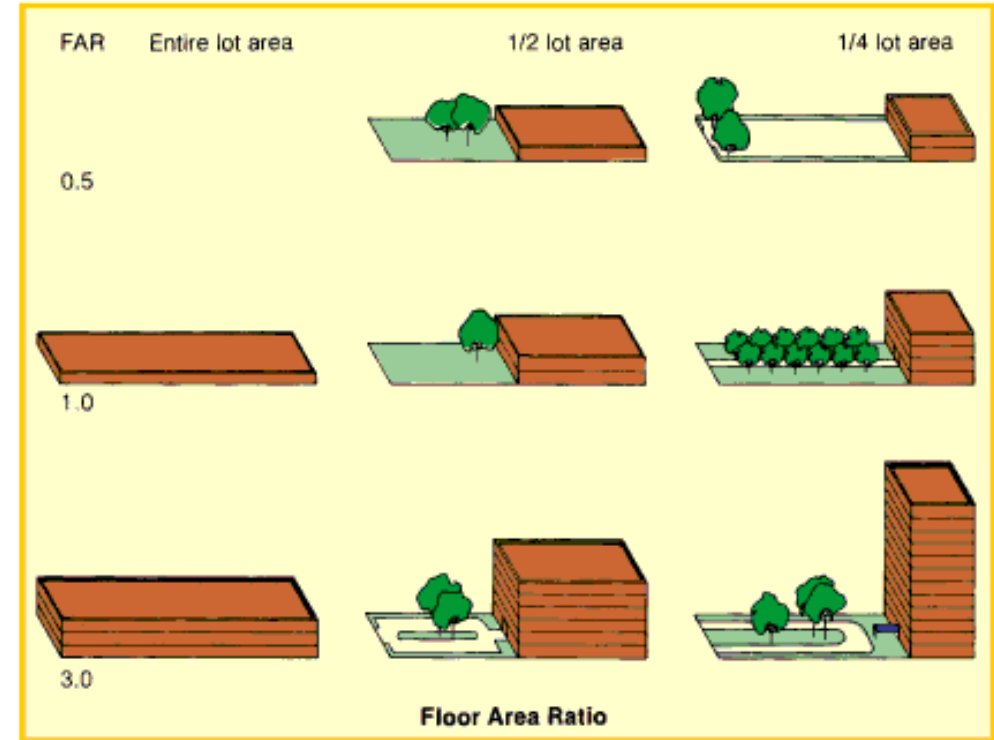
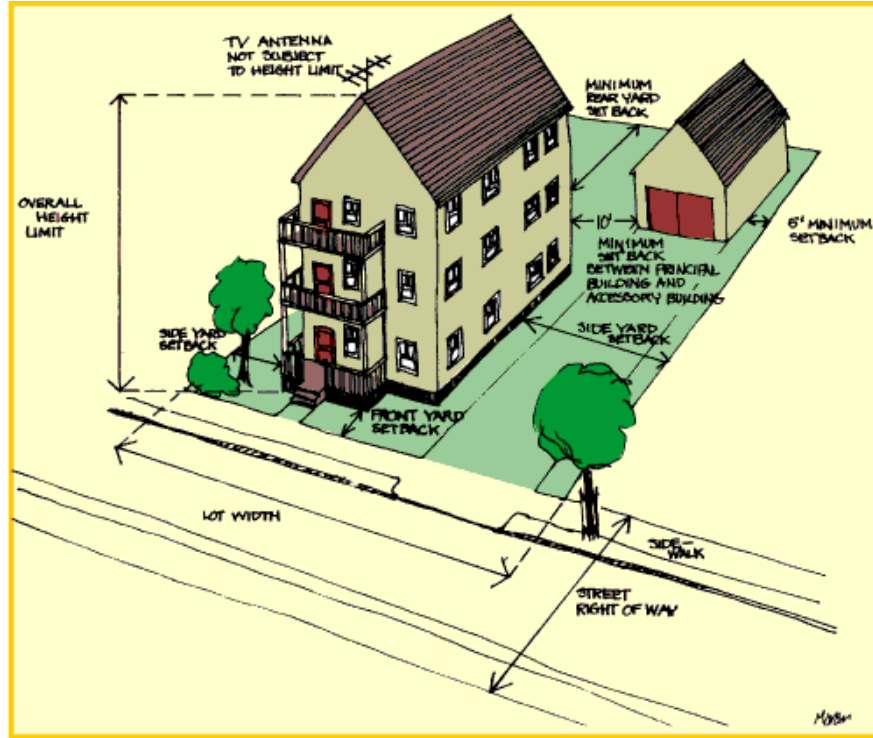
Context: MBTA Communities legislation requires transit-served Massachusetts communities to zone at least one district for a minimum **gross** density of 15 units/acre.

# Maximum allowed dwelling units

District	4,000 SF lot	5,000 SF lot	6,000 SF lot	9,000 SF lot
A-1	0 units	0 units	1 unit*	1 unit*
A-2	0 units	1 unit*	1 unit*	2 units*
B	1 unit*	2 units*	2 units*	3 units
C	2 units*	2 units*	3 units	5 units
C-1	2 units*	3 units	4 units	6 units

\* Accessory Apartments allowed by BZA special permit in single-family and two-family dwellings; not counted for purposes of lot area per dwelling unit (2019 Zoning Amendment).

# Building Scale (Height, FAR)



Building Height  
= Distance from Mean Grade to Highest Point of Roof

$$\text{Floor Area Ratio (FAR)} = \frac{\text{Gross Floor Area (GFA)}}{\text{Lot Area}}$$

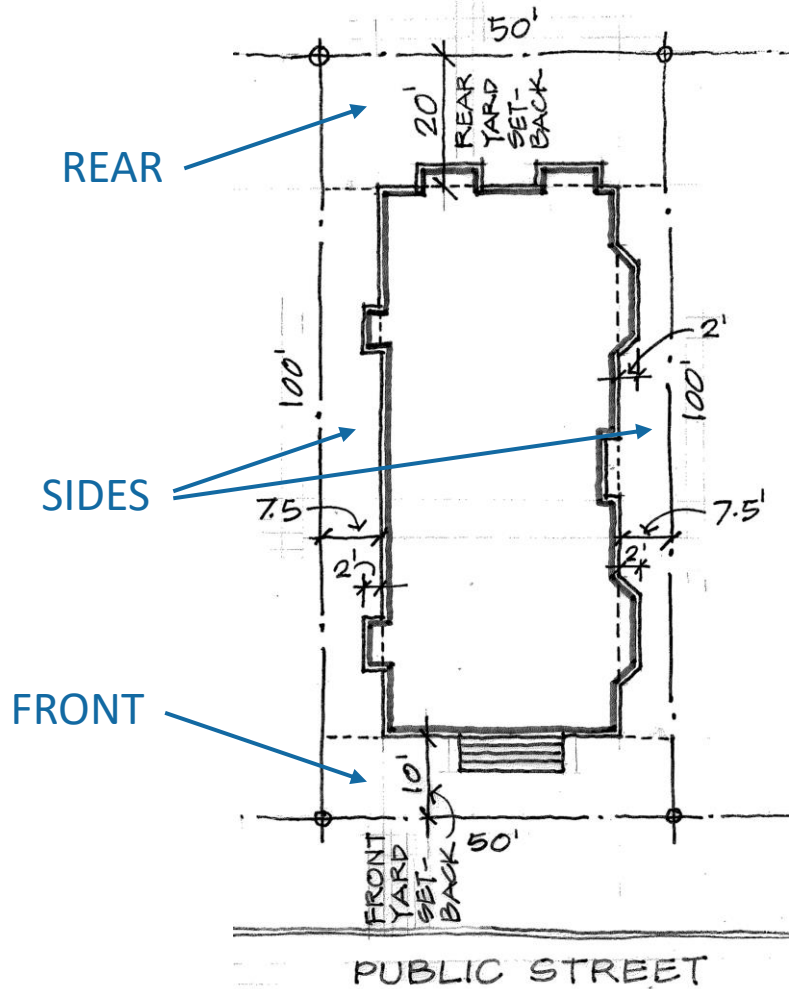


# Building Scale (Height, FAR)

District	Max. Height	Max. FAR	On a “District Standard” lot:
A-1	35'	0.50	1-3 stories, 1 unit, 4,000 SF floor area
A-2	35'	0.50	1-3 stories, 1 unit, 3,250 SF floor area
B	35'	0.50*	1-3 stories, 2 units, 2,500 SF floor area
C	35'	0.60	1-3 stories, 3 units, 3,000 SF floor area
C-1	35'	0.75	1-3 stories, 3 units, 3,750 SF floor area

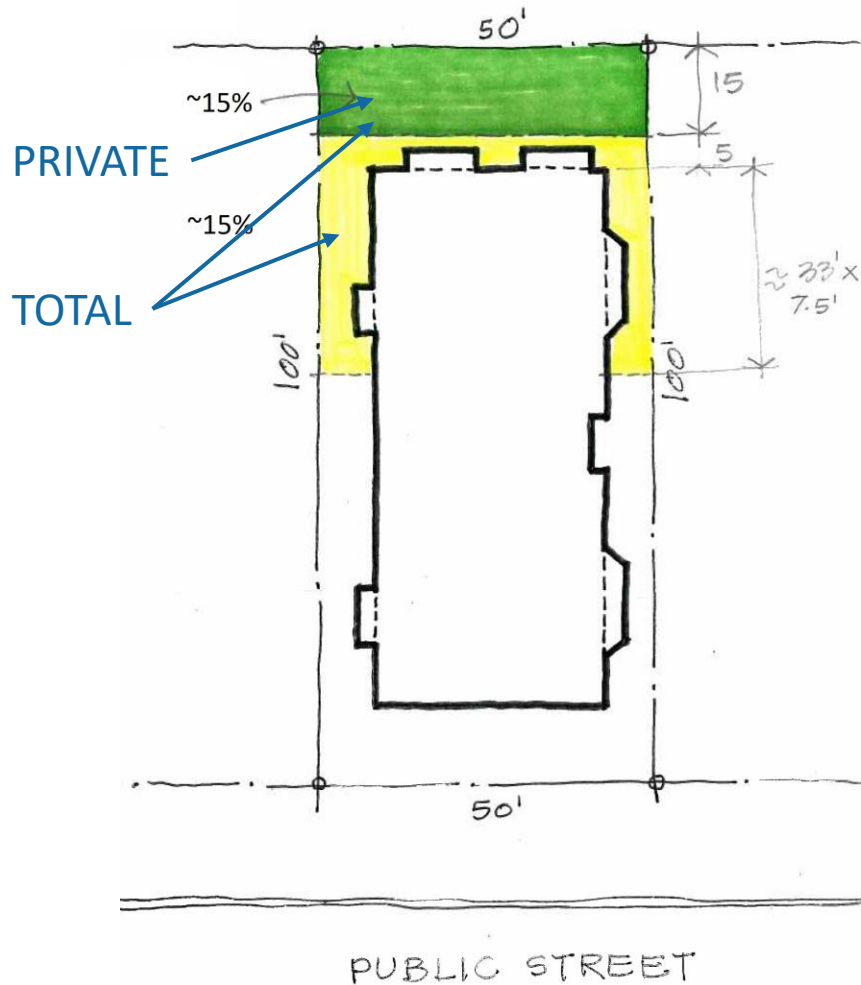
\*0.50 FAR for the first 5,000 SF of lot area,  
0.35 FAR for lot area over 5,000 SF

# Yards (AKA “Setbacks”)



District	Min. Front Yard (building to street)	Min. Side Yards (building to abutting lot, adjacent to street)	Min. Rear Yard (building to abutting lot, opposite street)
<b>A-1</b>	25' -context	15' +sum to 35'	25'-35' (based on depth)
<b>A-2</b>	20' -context	10' +sum to 25'	25'-35' (based on depth)
<b>B</b>	15' -context	7.5' +sum to 20'	25'-35' (based on depth)
<b>C</b>	10' +formula (H+L)/4	7.5' +formula (H+L)/5	20'-30' (based on depth) +formula (H+L)/4
<b>C-1</b>	10' +formula (H+L)/4	7.5' +formula (H+L)/5	20'-30' (based on depth) +formula (H+L)/4

# Private Open Space



District	Min. Total OS (% of lot area)	Min. Private (15' dimension)	Min. Permeable (vegetation or porous)
<b>A-1</b>	50%	25%	25%
<b>A-2</b>	50%	25%	25%
<b>B</b>	40%	20%	20%
<b>C</b>	36%	18%	18%
<b>C-1</b>	30%	15%	15%

Note: Auto parking and driveways are **NOT** open space.

# Parking and Bicycle Parking

Same for all districts:

## Parking Requirements

- One off-street space per unit
- Only required for new units – i.e., if a two-unit building with no off-street parking adds a unit, one new parking space is required
- If parking is provided and required, it must be maintained
- Can be reduced/waived by special permit

## Bicycle Parking

- One long-term space per unit (e.g., locker, bike shed, bike room)
- One short-term space per 10 units (e.g., outdoor rack)
- Not required for buildings with 3 units or fewer
- Not required for changes that do not increase the requirement from existing conditions
- When bicycle parking is required, the full number of required spaces must be provided



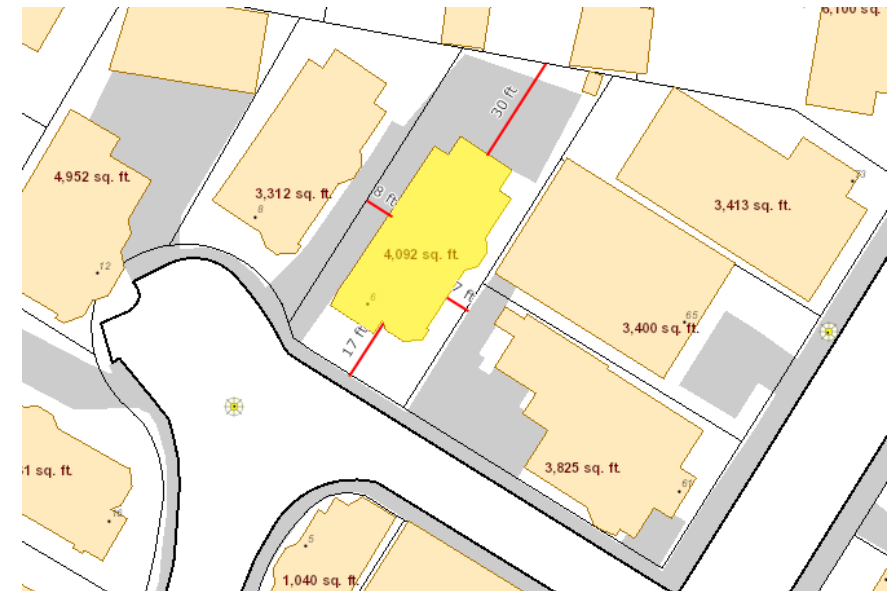
# How does zoning affect existing lots?

- Many lots meet some standards, not all
- Lots must meet all development standards to “conform”
- Nonconformance: Maintenance and some alterations allowed as-of-right, some alterations require special permit (Article 8.000)
- Variance requests are common

# C-1 District

Standard	Required	Existing (appx.)
Units	N/A	3
Building footprint	N/A	25'x55'
Lot dimensions	5,000 SF min.	4,000 SF (40'x100')
Lot area per unit	1,500 SF min.	1,350 SF
FAR	0.75 max.	0.90 (3,600 SF +/-)
Height	35' max.	35' (+/-)
Front yard	10' min	17'
Rear yard	20' min	30'
Side yards	formula: 18' each	About 7'-8' each

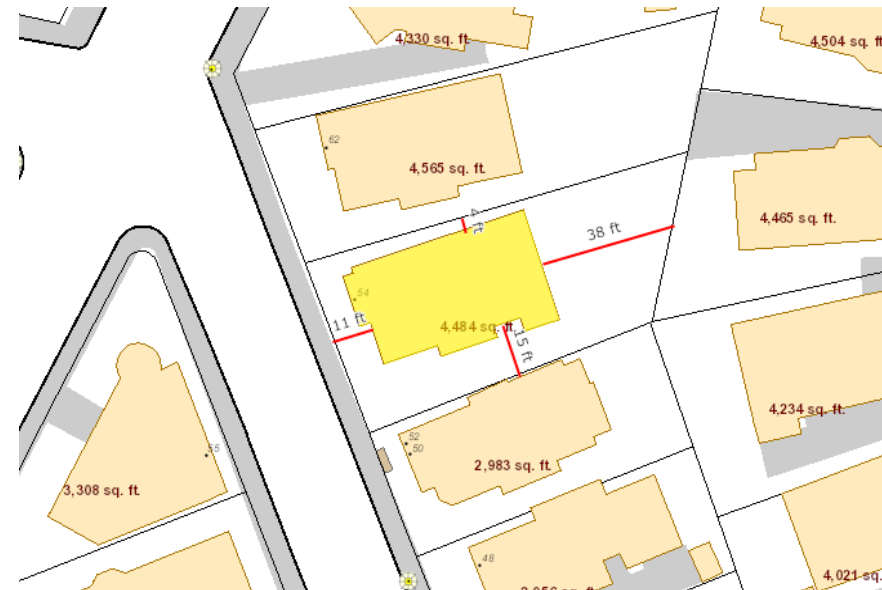
**Note: For discussion purposes only. ALL FIGURES APPROXIMATE.**



# C-1 District

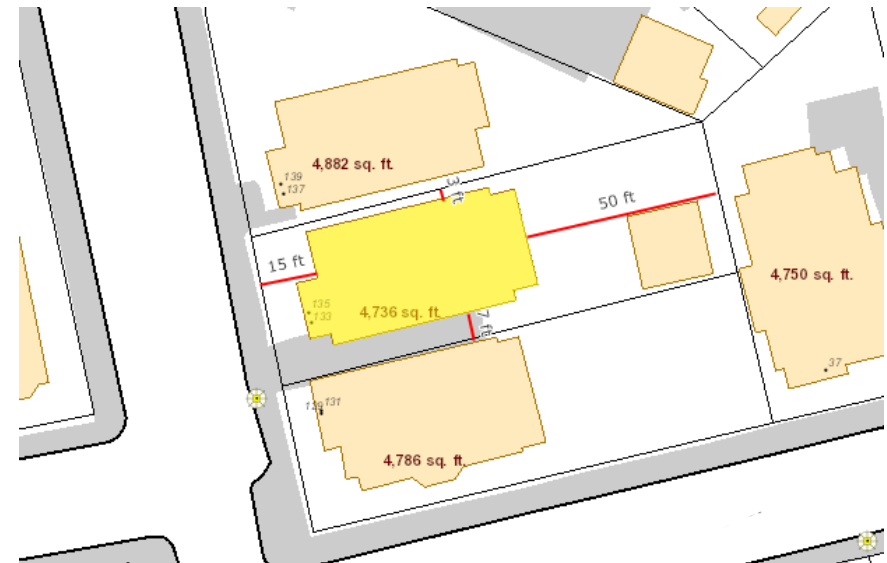
Standard	Required	Existing (appx.)
Units	N/A	3
Building footprint	N/A	30'x50'
Lot dimensions	5,000 SF min.	4,500 SF (45'x100')
Lot area per unit	1,500 SF min.	1,500 SF
FAR (GFA)	0.75 max.	0.78 (3,500 SF +/-)
Height	35' max.	35' (+/-)
Front yard	10' min	11'
Rear yard	20' min	38'
Side yards	formula: 17' each	3'-5', 14'-15'

**Note: For discussion purposes only. ALL FIGURES APPROXIMATE.**



# B District

Standard	Required	Existing (appx.)
Units	N/A	2
Building footprint	N/A	30'x55'
Lot dimensions	5,000 SF min.	4,800 SF (40'x120')
Lot area per unit	2,500 SF min.	2,400 SF
FAR (GFA)	0.50 max.	0.67 (3,200 SF +/-)
Height	35' max.	32' (+/-)
Front yard	15' min	15'
Rear yard	30' min	50' (+/-)
Side yards	7.5' ea., sum to 20'	3', 7'

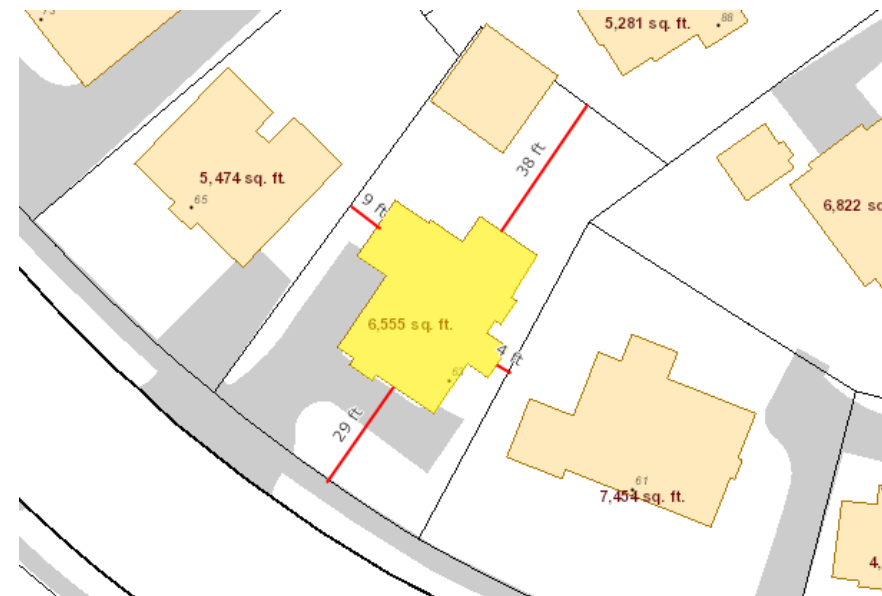


**Note: For discussion purposes only. ALL FIGURES APPROXIMATE.**



# A-2 District

Standard	Required	Existing (appx.)
Units	N/A	1
Building footprint	N/A	30'x40' + additions
Lot dimensions	6,500 SF min.	6,555 SF (57'x115')
Lot area per unit	4,500 SF min.	6,555 SF
FAR (GFA)	0.50 max.	0.49 (3,200 SF +/-)
Height	35' max.	31' (+/-)
Front yard	20' min	29'
Rear yard	28.75' min	38' (+/-)
Side yards	10' ea., sum to 25'	4', 9'



**Note: For discussion purposes only. ALL FIGURES APPROXIMATE.**



# Neighborhood Development Standards

## Questions:

- What aspects of development are most important to control and why?
- When should more flexibility be allowed to accommodate change?
- What standards should be similar across different districts, and what standards should be different?
- What outcomes best serve the City's future goals?

# Recap of Key Questions

## Districts (Map)

- Do these districts reflect the City's current goals?
- Should there be fewer or more residence district types?
- What areas should be zoned the same as one another?
- What areas should be zoned differently from one another?

## Development Standards (Code)

- What aspects of development are most important to control and why?
- When should more flexibility be allowed to accommodate change?
- What standards should be similar across different districts, and what standards should be different?
- What outcomes best serve the City's future goals?

# Appendix: Lots By District and Use Type

District	Single-Family	Two-Family	Multifamily	Mixed-Use or Other Residential	Non-Residential	TOTAL
<b>A-1</b>	287 <small>(29 w/Accessory Apt.)</small>	30	5	0	16	338
<b>A-2</b>	500 <small>(39 w/Accessory Apt.)</small>	66	18	0	36	620
<b>B</b>	1,387 <small>(34 w/Accessory Apt.)</small>	1,508	806	22	131	3,854
<b>C</b>	189 <small>(4 w/Accessory Apt.)</small>	265	328	8	27	817
<b>C-1</b>	1,228 <small>(21 w/Accessory Apt.)</small>	1,188	1,924	69	247	4,656
<b>TOTAL</b>	3,591 <small>(127 w/Accessory Apt.)</small>	3,057	3,081	99	457	10,285

Data source: July 2020 Land Use data from CDD, based on Assessing data, building permits, and Development Log data. **ALL FIGURES APPROXIMATE.**



# Appendix: Lot area per dwelling unit changes

Res. B standards (amended 1995):

- 2,500 SF of lot area for each of first two units
- Each additional unit requires 4,000 SF additional lot area

Res. C standards (created 1987):

- Increased LA/DU from 1,200 SF to 1,800 SF

Res. C-1 standards (amended 1999):

- Increased LA/DU from 1,200 SF to 1,500 SF

Accessory Apartments:

- 1981 – by special permit in A-1, A-2
- 2016-2019 – by special permit in all districts, doesn't count toward LA/DU



# Appendix: Details of Yard Requirements

## Yard variations:

- “-context”: Front yards can be reduced if the average front yards of the two adjacent buildings are less than required, but can’t be reduced to less than 15’ (A-1, A-2) or 10’ (B)
- “+sum to”: Both side yards need to add up to a set number (requiring at least one side yard to be increased)
- “+formula”: Yard must meet a formula based on adding the height (“H”) to the length (“L”) of the building facing that yard and dividing by a given denominator – often more than minimum standard

# Appendix: L.A./D.U. + FAR

District	4,000 SF lot	5,000 SF lot	6,000 SF lot	9,000 SF lot
<b>A-1</b>	0 units 2,000 SF floor area [no units]	0 units 2,500 SF floor area [no units]	1 unit 3,000 SF floor area Avg. 3,000 SF unit size	1 unit 4,500 SF floor area Avg. 4,500 SF unit size
<b>A-2</b>	0 units 2,000 SF floor area [no units]	1 unit 2,500 SF floor area Avg. 2,500 SF unit size	1 unit 3,000 SF floor area Avg. 3,000 SF unit size	2 units 4,500 SF floor area Avg. 2,250 SF unit size
<b>B</b>	1 unit 2,000 SF floor area Avg. 2,000 SF unit size	2 units 2,500 SF floor area Avg. 1,250 SF unit size	2 units 2,800 SF floor area Avg. 1,400 SF unit size	3 units 3,900 SF floor area Avg. 1,300 SF unit size
<b>C</b>	2 units 2,400 SF floor area Avg. 1,200 SF unit size	2 units 3,000 SF floor area Avg. 1,500 SF unit size	3 units 3,600 SF floor area Avg. 1,200 SF unit size	5 units 5,400 SF floor area Avg. 1,080 SF unit size
<b>C-1</b>	2 units 3,000 SF floor area Avg. 1,500 SF unit size	3 units 3,750 SF floor area Avg. 1,250 SF unit size	4 units 4,500 SF floor area Avg. 1,125 SF unit size	6 units 6,750 SF floor area Avg. 1,125 SF unit size

# Appendix: L.A./D.U. + FAR

District	3,999 SF lot	4,999 SF lot	5,999 SF lot	8,999 SF lot
<b>A-1</b>	0 units 1,999 SF floor area [no units]	0 units 2,499 SF floor area [no units]	0 units 2,999 SF floor area [no units]	1 unit 4,499 SF floor area Avg. 4,499 SF unit size
<b>A-2</b>	0 units 1,999 SF floor area [no units]	1 unit 2,499 SF floor area Avg. 2,499 SF unit size	1 unit 2,999 SF floor area Avg. 2,299 SF unit size	1 unit 4,499 SF floor area Avg. 4,499 SF unit size
<b>B</b>	1 unit 1,999 SF floor area Avg. 1,999 SF unit size	1 unit 2,499 SF floor area Avg. 2,499 SF unit size	2 units 2,799 SF floor area Avg. 1,399 SF unit size	2 units 3,899 SF floor area Avg. 1,949 SF unit size
<b>C</b>	2 units 2,399 SF floor area Avg. 1,199 SF unit size	2 units 2,999 SF floor area Avg. 1,499 SF unit size	3 units 3,599 SF floor area Avg. 1,199 SF unit size	4 units 5,399 SF floor area Avg. 1,349 SF unit size
<b>C-1</b>	2 units 2,999 SF floor area Avg. 1,499 SF unit size	3 units 3,749 SF floor area Avg. 1,249 SF unit size	3 units 4,499 SF floor area Avg. 1,499 SF unit size	5 units 6,749 SF floor area Avg. 1,349 SF unit size