

# Alewife Zoning Working Group

An aerial architectural rendering of a city block. The scene is filled with multi-story buildings in various colors (red, orange, yellow, white) and styles. There are numerous green trees scattered throughout the block, particularly along the streets and in open areas. A small pond or stream is visible in the lower-left quadrant. The overall style is a detailed, colorful sketch or digital painting.

Meeting #6: Draft Zoning Framework & Recommendations  
November 9, 2022

# Today's Meeting

## Agenda:

- Discuss draft zoning framework and recommendations
- Public comment

## Objective:

- Solicit input on zoning framework
- Obtain direction on refining draft zoning approach
- Answer any outstanding zoning questions remaining

# Upcoming Meetings

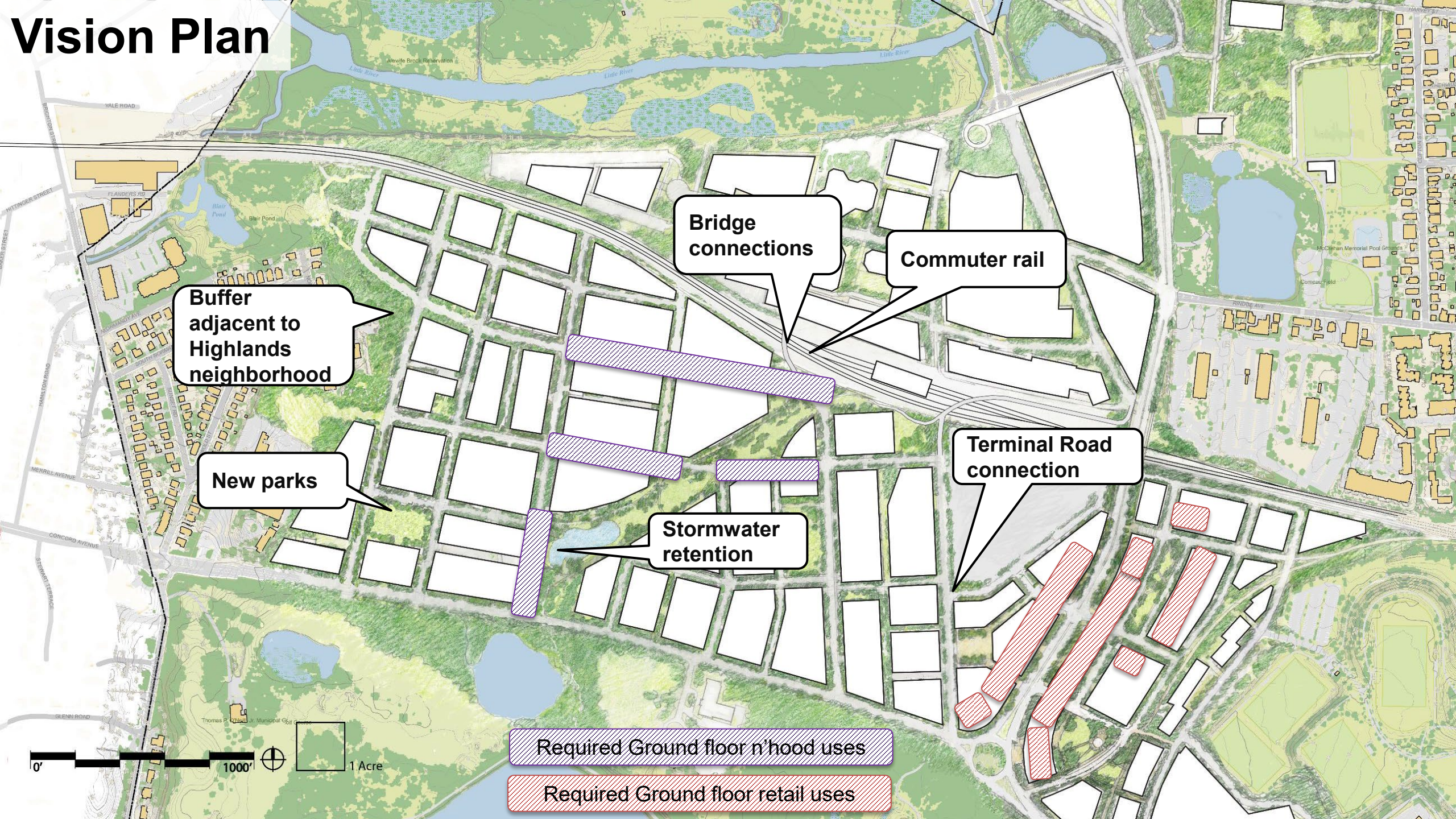
## Working Group Meetings

- **December 14:** Final zoning recommendations

## City Council Update

- **November 30:** Project update and draft zoning principles and framework

# Vision Plan



Buffer adjacent to Highlands neighborhood

New parks

Bridge connections

Commuter rail

Terminal Road connection

Stormwater retention

Required Ground floor n'hood uses

Required Ground floor retail uses

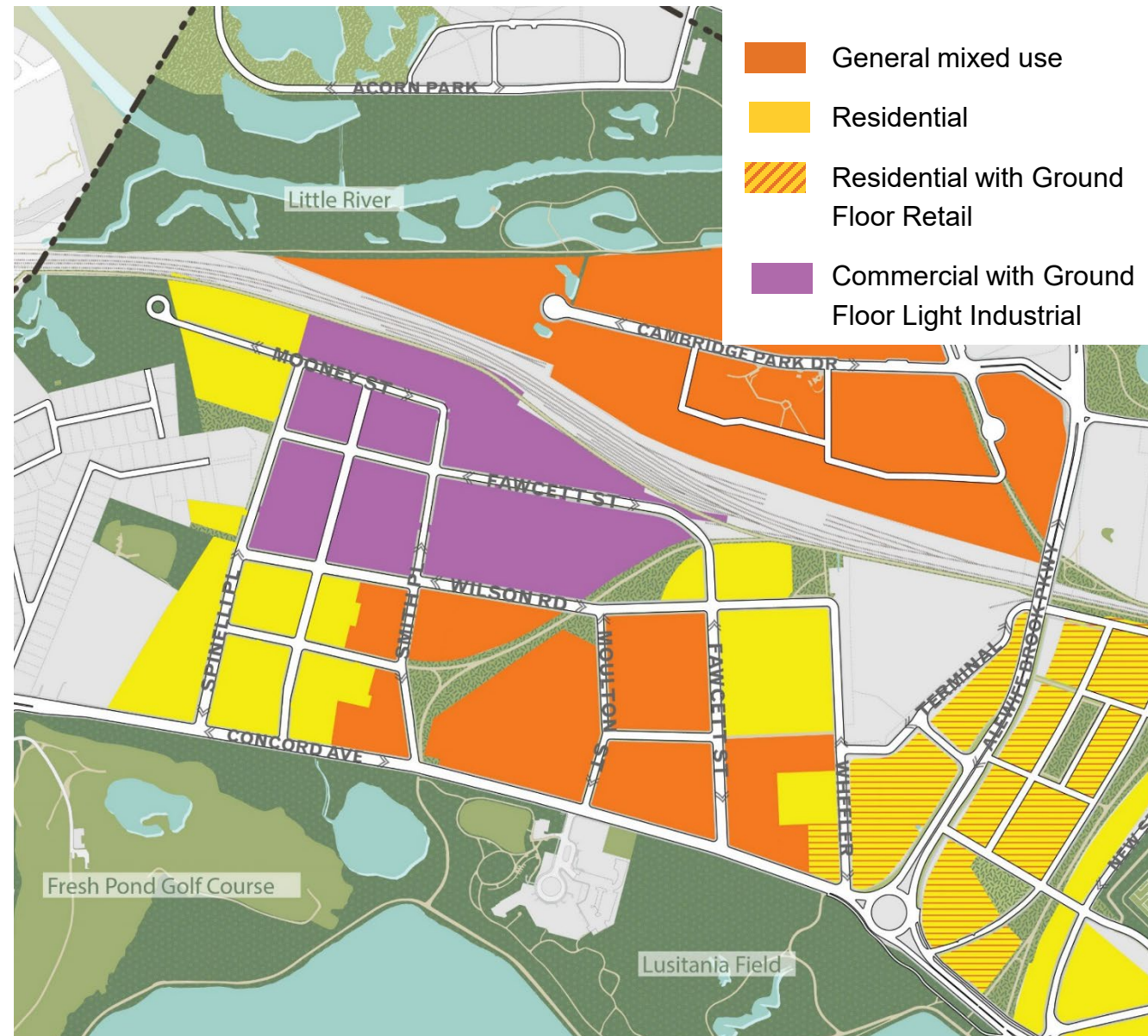


# Zoning Principles: Land Use

## What We Heard

- Desire for mixed-used district
- Would like to see a greater proportion of housing to office/lab uses
  - Importance of affordable housing at various levels of affordability (i.e., inclusionary and all-affordable)
- Desire for a variety of ground floor uses, including but not limited to light industrial
- Support for a “main street” in a defined location, where active uses would be required for both residential and commercial development.
- Active uses could include:
 

○ Arts and culture	○ Retail
○ Residential amenities	○ Daycare uses
○ Light industrial	○ Recreational
○ Civic uses (e.g., libraries)	



In 2019, the community prioritized light industrial uses in the Quad to provide low barrier-to-entry jobs.

# Overview – “3 Tiers” of Zoning Standards

## Base Requirements

Baseline standards for all development

### Requirements:

- Permeable + green open space
- Maximum parking ratios
- Setbacks to match future street network

### Allowed development:

- Low-scale commercial
- Low-scale residential
- Neighborhood uses

### Advisory review process

## Site Special Permit

Increased development on a single building site

### Extra requirements:

- Ground-floor neighborhood uses required in priority areas
- Pocket parks, playgrounds
- Transportation, infrastructure, housing contributions (funds or in-kind)

### Allowed development:

- Medium-scale commercial
- Higher-scale residential
- Neighborhood uses (incentivized at ground floor)

### Planning Board review + approval

## PUD Special Permit

Large, phased development across multiple sites

### Extra requirements:

- Substantial up-front public infrastructure – bridge, other bike/ped connections, facilities
- Large public open space
- Minimum housing
- Minimum neighborhood uses

### Allowed development:

- Higher-scale commercial
- Higher-scale residential
- Neighborhood uses

### Extensive Planning Board review + approval process

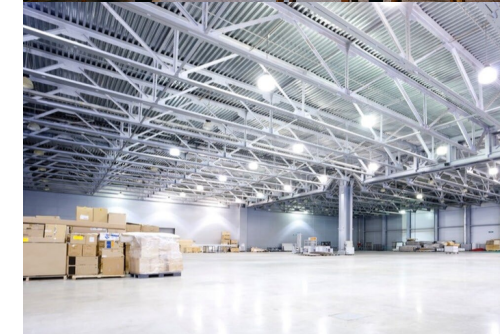
# Base Requirements

These changes would apply district-wide to all new development in the Quadrangle + Shopping Center, regardless of project size or type.



# Base Requirements: Expand Permitted Uses

- **Current Requirements**
  - Any use permitted by base zoning
  - Retail/Consumer Service establishments by Planning Board Special Permit, with additional limitations
  - Parcel Delivery Center/Warehouse by Planning Board Special Permit in IB-2.
- **Proposed Change - Allow by-right:**
  - Multifamily, townhouse, and elderly congregate housing (4.31.d through g)
  - ALL Retail and Consumer Service establishments (4.35)
  - Temporary outdoor retail/consumer service uses (4.36.j)
  - Educational Uses, like daycare centers, schools, etc. (4.33.b)
  - Light Industrial/Maker space (4.37)
  - Civic & Institutional uses – such as libraries, community/gathering spaces, healthcare uses, and municipal facilities (4.33.d through h)





# Base Requirements: Define “Neighborhood Uses”



**Retail & Consumer  
Service establishments  
(4.35)**



**Community  
gathering spaces  
(4.33.e.2)**



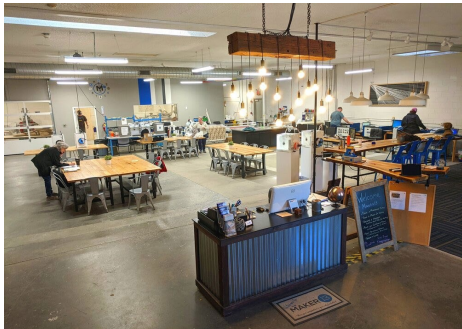
**Libraries  
(4.33.f.3)**



**Daycare centers  
(4.33.b.2)**



**Arts & Cultural  
spaces (4.35.q.2)**



**Light industrial/maker  
space (4.37 a through d)**



**Dentist/Doctor  
office (4.33.b.2)**



**Healthcare facility  
(4.33.d)**



**Any other use subject  
to PB Review and  
Approval**

# Summary of Allowable Heights

	As-of-right
Res.	3 stories
Non-res.	2 stories

	As-of-right
Res.	Varies 3-6 stories
Non-res.	Varies 2-4 stories

	As-of-right
Res.	3 stories
Non-res.	2 stories

	As-of-right
Res.	3 stories
Non-res.	2 stories

Lower Heights Higher Heights

# Base Requirements: Open Space

- **Current Requirements**
  - 15% minimum open space to lot area
  - 25% permeable area
  - Pooled open space
  - Reduction in required open space by Planning Board Special Permit
  
- **Proposed Changes:**
  - 20% minimum open space to lot area (+5%)
  - Maintain 25% permeable area requirement
  - Pooled open space
  - No reduction via special permit

# Base Requirements: Parking & Loading

- **Current Requirements**
  - No minimum off-street parking required (\*\*NEW\*\*)
  - Minimum loading per Article 6
  - Pooled Parking
  - Above ground structured parking can be exempted from GFA by Planning Board Special Permit
- **Proposed Changes:**
  - Introduce parking maximums
  - For larger developments, permit parking as a principal use to enable public parking/district parking solution

Maximum Number of Parking Spaces	
<b>Retail</b>	maximum 1.5 per 1,000 SF
<b>Office</b>	maximum 1.1 per 1,000 SF
<b>R&amp;D</b>	maximum 0.8 per 1,000 SF
<b>Industrial</b>	maximum 0.5 per 1,000 SF
<b>Residential</b>	maximum 0.75 per dwelling unit minimum .25 per dwelling unit



# Base Requirements: Green Building Requirements

- **Current Requirements**
  - Minimum LEED Gold for all development subject to Article 22
  - Green Roofs required for development over 25,000 square feet
- **Proposed Changes:**
  - Exempt GFA for Publicly-Accessible Green Roofs
  - Exempt GFA for sunshades/awnings and other projections that help mitigate heat island effects buildings
  - Require Cool Factor/Green Factor for all development



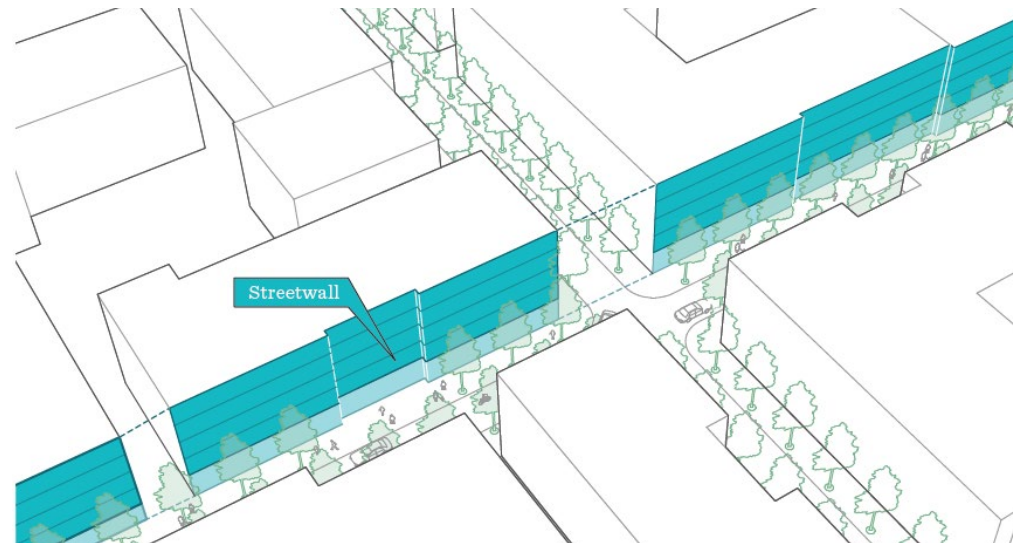
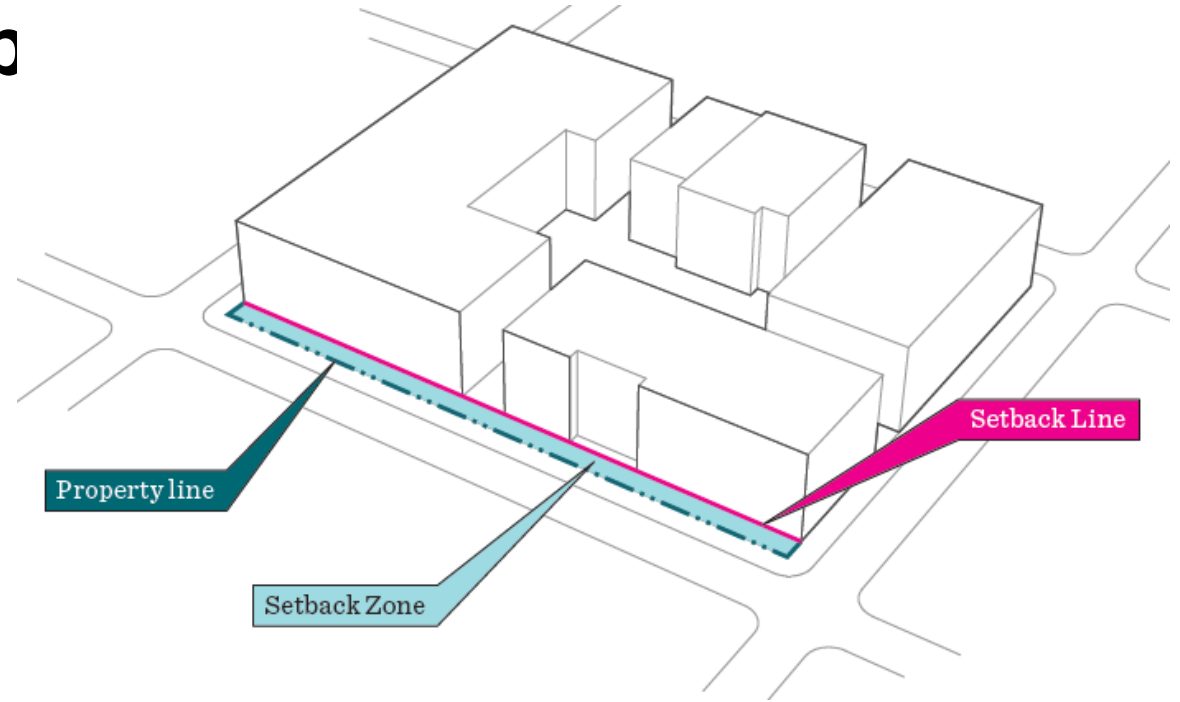
# Base Requirements: Yards/Setb

- **Current Requirements**

- Follows base zoning
- 15' front yard setbacks in the Quadrangle
- 25' abutting a Residential or Open Space district

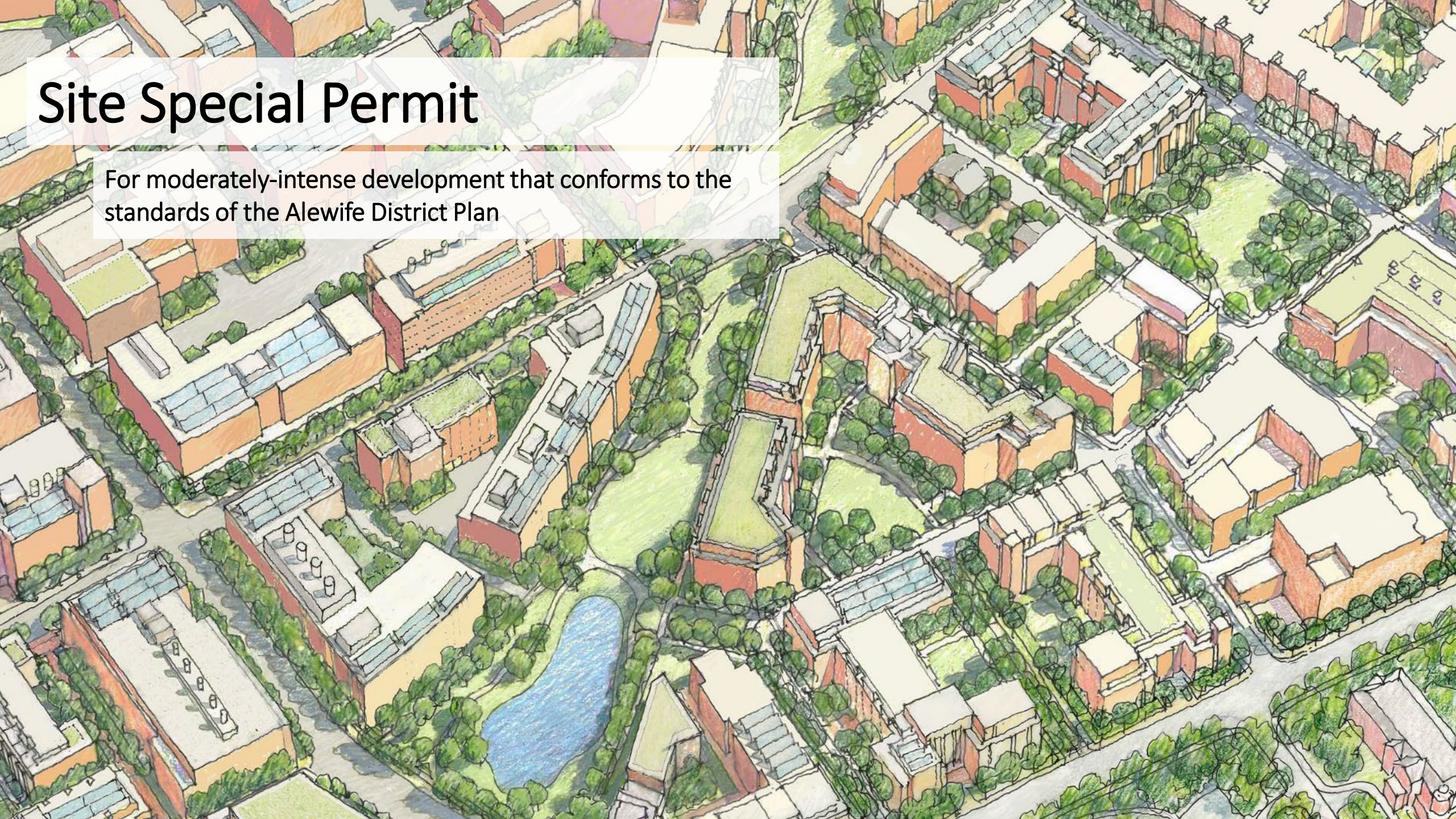
- **Proposed Changes:**

- Build-to line for front yards
- No side or rear yard setback

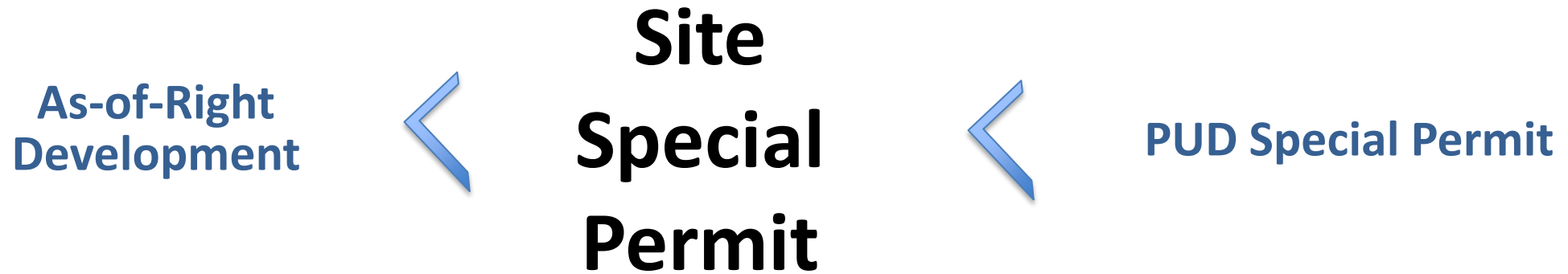


# Site Special Permit

For moderately-intense development that conforms to the standards of the Alewife District Plan



# Site Special Permit: Applicability & Process

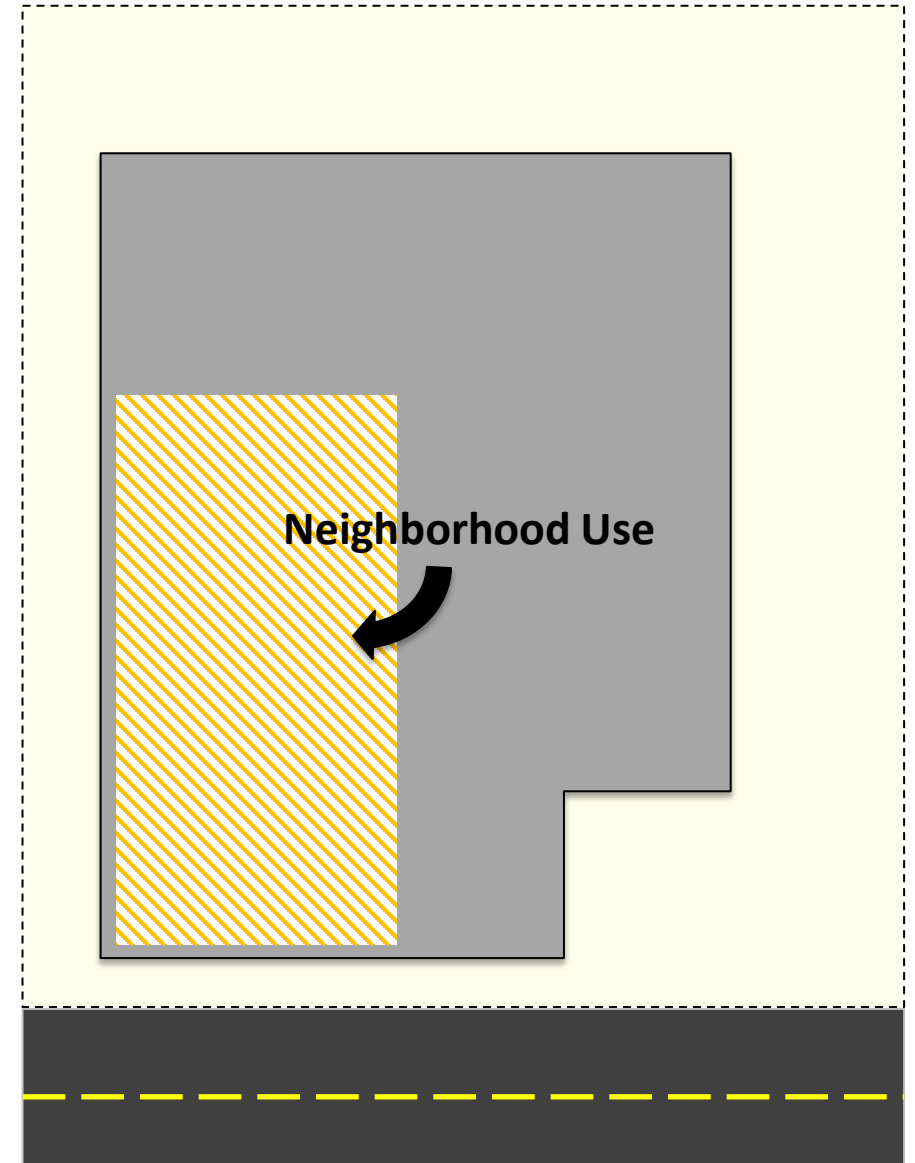


- **Requires Planning Board public hearing and discretionary approval**
- **Required pre-application community engagement per Planning Board rules**
- **Other requirements (Transportation Impact Study and mitigation, approval of PTDM plan, &c) depending on details of proposal**



# Site Special Permit: Uses

- Same as proposed changes in As-of-Right development, PLUS:
  - Any other use, subject to Planning Board review and approval
  - Require minimum square feet or % occupancy of ground story contain “Neighborhood” on specific priority streets; incentivize elsewhere
- **“Neighborhood Uses” = one of the following:**
  - Retail & Consumer Service establishments (4.35)
  - Community/gathering spaces (4.33.e.2)
  - Libraries (4.33.f.3)
  - Daycare centers (4.33.b.2)
  - Light industrial/maker space (4.37 a through d)
  - Dentist/Doctor office (4.33.b.2)
  - Any other use subject to PB Review and Approval







# Summary of Allowable Heights

	As-of-right	Site Special Permit
Res.	3 stories	10-12 stories
Non-res.	2 stories	4 stories or 5 stories w/ n'hood ground floor use

	As-of-right	Site Special Permit
Res.	Varies 3-6 stories	18-20 stories
Non-res.	Varies 2-4 stories	4 stories

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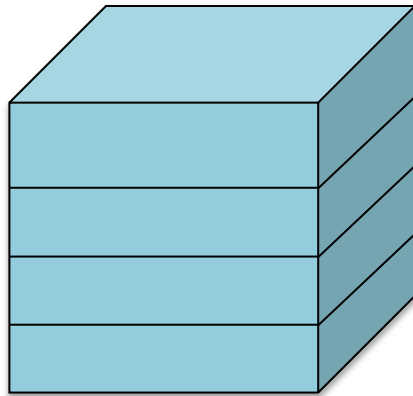
-  Highways
-  Streets - Existing
-  Streets - Proposed
-  Paths - Existing
-  Paths - Proposed



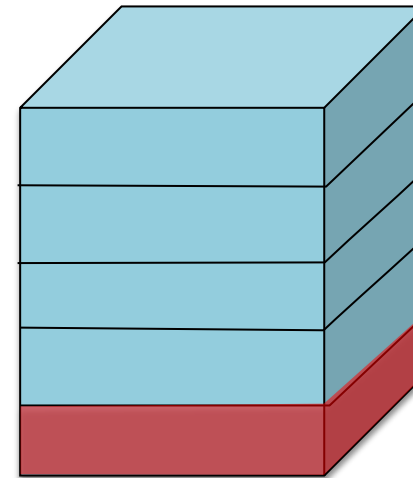
Lower Heights Higher Heights

# Site Special Permit: Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

- Increase Non-residential FAR and Residential FAR to realize increased heights
- On priority streets → permit up to 5 stories and require ground-story Neighborhood Use
- On non-priority streets → permit up to 4 stories OR 5 stories with a ground-story Neighborhood-Supporting Use



***OR***



# Site Special Permit: Public Benefits Bonus

*Option*

**Provision of one or more of the following public benefits:**

- Additional public open space
- District flood storage solution
- Public/community space
- Civic uses (e.g., schools, libraries, DPW facility)
- Light industrial uses
- Completion of ADP recommended street/path segments

*Bonus*

**Additional GFA/FAR proportional to the size of area provided Subject to Planning Board Review + Approval**



# Site Special Permit: Residential Dimensional Standards

- **Consider requiring minimum % of overall development be residential**
- **Currently modeling residential heights/densities to determine a specific set of residential standards**
- **Require a certain % of residential floor area be devoted to family-sized units (3 bedrooms or more)**

# Site Special Permit: Open Space

- Require a certain percentage of open space be publicly-beneficial open space
  - E.g., Plazas, pocket parks, playgrounds, &c.



# Site Special Permit: Parking

- **No parking minimums/low parking maximums**
- **Permit principal use parking as a use (district approach to parking management)**
- **Create ADP-recommended Transportation impact fee, but increase from recommended \$5 / SF to \$X / SF?**

# Planned Unit Development (PUD) Special Permit

Moderate-to-high intensity development in exchange for more substantial public benefits, permitted as a phased multi-site plan





# PUD Special Permit: Overview & Applicability

- **Opportunity for a large, multi-parcel/multi-building development to proceed in a phased way, with more substantial public benefits delivered**
  - Utilized elsewhere in Cambridge (Cambridge Crossing, Volpe, MIT NoMa/SoMa)
- **Minimum acreage of land under common ownership or square feet of development on contiguous *or* non-contiguous lots**



# PUD Special Permit: Overview & Applicability

## Development Benefits

- 1** Flexible development approach (relaxed dimensional standards and customization possible)
- 2** Higher density development potential; taller heights possible
- 3** Consolidated review via PUD approach (single process for multi-site development)

## Public Benefits

- 1** Required % minimum total GFA for housing
- 2** Required public open space
- 3** Required delivery of bicycle/pedestrian bridge connecting the Quad and Triangle
- 4** Ability to take advantage of same public benefit bonuses from Site Special Permit

# PUD Special Permit: Bridge/Commuter Rail Stop Bonus

*Option*

- 1) Delivery of a bicycle/pedestrian bridge connecting Triangle and Quadrangle.
- 2) Delivery of a commuter rail stop in Alewife.



*Bonus*

**Additional FAR; applied to whole lot area**  
**Subject to Planning Board Review + Approval**



# Summary of Allowable Heights

	As-of-right	Site Special Permit	PUD Special Permit
Res.	3 stories	10-12 stories	10-12 stories
Non-res.	2 stories	4 stories or 5 stories w/ active ground floor use	8 stories

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Lower Heights Higher Heights

# General Concept – 3 Tiers of Development Review

	As-of-Right	Site Special Permit	PUD Special Permit
Overview	Limited development, consistent with citywide requirements	Moderately intense development that conforms to area planning standards and urban design analysis	High intensity/large-scale development in exchange for substantial public benefits
Applicability	Development up to as-of-right limitations (generally less than 50,000 square feet)	Development above as-of-right limitations, but below PUD Special Permit threshold.	Min size of land area and/or square feet of development proposed
Review Process	Advisory and/or staff level review, depending on project details.	Requires discretionary approval by the Planning Board through the granting of a “Site Special Permit”	Requires following the PUD submission and approval process in Article 12

# General Concept – 3 Tiers of Development Review

## Criteria for Approval

- **As-of-Right Development**
  - Advisory-only, but provide comments based on Alewife District Plan and Guidelines, Alewife Zoning Working Group Principles & Urban Design Analysis
- **Site Special Permit**
  - Consistency with Alewife Zoning Working Group Principles & Urban Design Analysis
  - Consistency with Goals/Vision of Alewife District Plan & Design Guidelines
  - Consistency with City's Urban Design Objectives
- **PUD Special Permit**
  - Same as Site Special Permit, but also include the inclusion of defined, required public benefits:
    - Minimum % GFA for housing
    - Infrastructure (bridge, district flood solution, commuter rail station)
    - Public open space (% or acreage)
    - Provision of public facilities/civic uses

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Lower Heights Higher Heights

# Base Requirements & Site Special Permit: Review Process

## Base Requirements

- Development subject to applicable advisory review (Small Project Review, Large Project Review, and/or Building & Site Plan Requirements in Article 19.40 and 19.50 prior to building permit)

## Site Special Permit

- Project Review Special Permit process in Article 19.30
- Pre-application community engagement required
- Discretionary review by the Planning Board (minimum 1 public hearing)
- Subject to continuing design review by staff prior to building permit



# PUD Special Permit: Review Process

## Step 1: Development Proposal

- 1<sup>st</sup> required public hearing at Planning Board; issues a “Preliminary Determination” with requests for additional information and suggestions for refinement.

## Step 2: Final Development Plan

- 2<sup>nd</sup> required public hearing at Planning Board; approves special permit with conditions related to phasing, public benefits, and future design review

## Step 3: Individual Design Reviews

- Individual buildings/parks subject to design review approval at the Planning Board

## Step 4: Building Permit + Construction

*Note: Preapplication  
community engagement  
procedures apply*

# The Bottom Line

- Update requirements so all development meets Alewife District Plan recommendations and other standards seen in recent projects in the City:
  - Increased open space
  - Parking maximums
  - Larger range of permitted uses
- Gradate heights so taller heights and densities are achievable along the railroad tracks and further east.
  - To take advantage of increased heights and densities, provide one or more defined public benefits
  - Require ground-story neighborhood uses along priority “main streets”; incentivize elsewhere
  - Minimum residential development required to balance new commercial development; residential development incentivized by taller heights and densities compared to commercial development
- For largest landholders/developers, provide a pathway for a flexible development approach that results in the delivery of specific, prioritized public benefits.

Let's Discuss!

