



Central Broadway Corridor Zoning Study

Land Use Committee

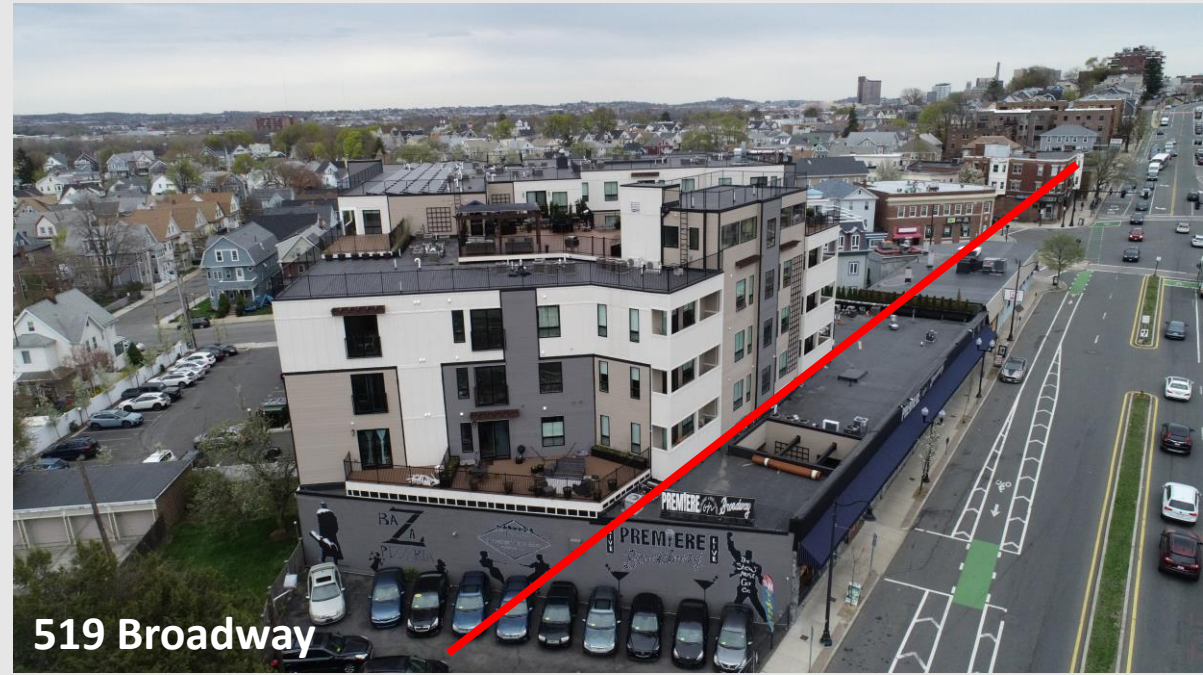
April 2025

BROADWAY CORRIDOR



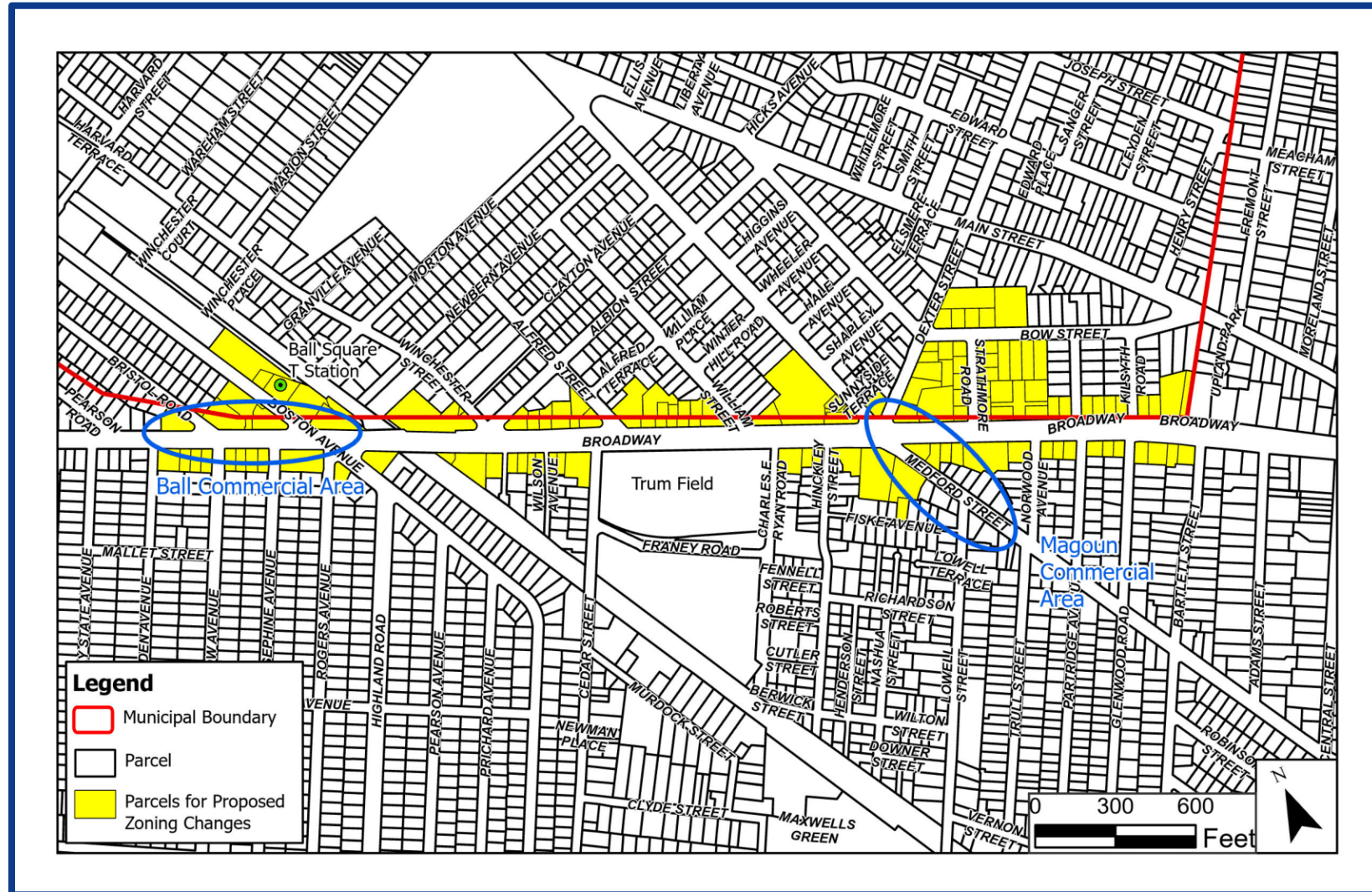
Origin of Study

- MBTA Green Line Extension
- Split Parcels
- Housing Choice Program Grant (2023)

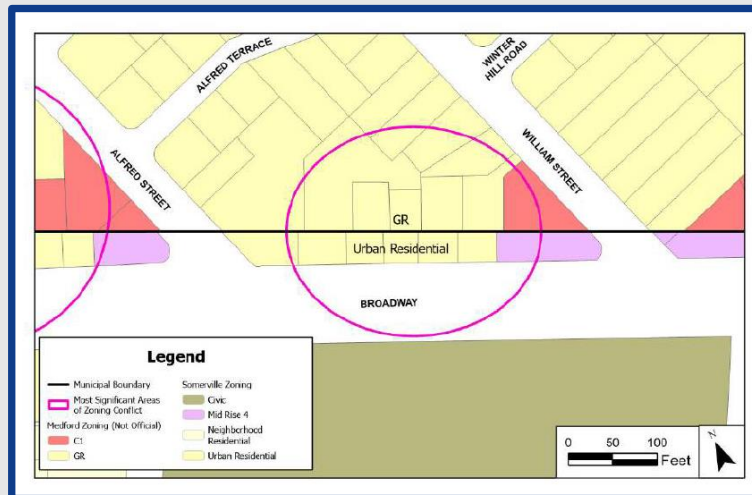
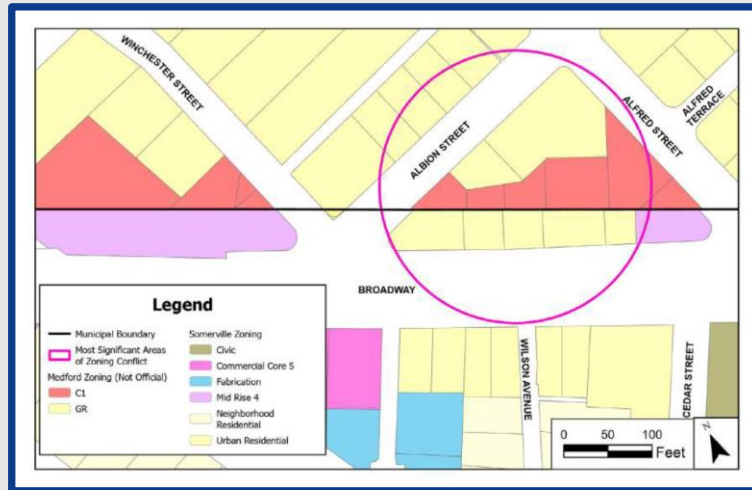


Study Area

- Includes thirty-six (36) split parcels along the north side of Broadway
- Ball Square to Magoun Square



- Research included a block-by-block analysis examining the compatibility & conflict between Somerville and Medford zoning, and specific examples of development on split parcels.



Specific Examples

Several properties were identified as examples of zoning conflicts or other factors that are hindering development that would reach the economic potential envisioned by the regulations. The community-provided feedback (see Chapter 2) has been incorporated into this section.



Figure 25: Premiere on Broadway

519 on Broadway Condominiums

Issues

Built in 2020, this property is one of the few relatively new developments on the corridor. The building height was maximized on the Medford portion of the parcel to the rear but limited to a single story of commercial in the Somerville portion to the front. Even though Somerville's MR4 district allows up to four stories in height, at the time of permitting Medford had no requirement for affordable housing (Medford has since adopted inclusionary zoning). The developer chose not to build any housing on the Somerville side of the municipal boundary to minimize the affordable housing units required. In the end, of the 55 dwellings, Medford successfully negotiated six (6) permanently affordable units (11%). Had Somerville's standards applied to the whole development, 11 dwellings (20%) would have been affordable.

Community Feedback

Most people in the community point to this development as something to avoid in the future – they would rather have seen the whole site developed to its full potential. Harmonizing affordable housing policy and allowed building height will help avoid this elsewhere.

Objectives

The following objectives for the potential redevelopment of the corridor are based on feedback received from the public, stakeholders, and City staff.

1. Facilitate transit-area density

Encourage taller buildings and more density to better take advantage of existing transit, provide more affordable housing opportunities, and support local businesses.

2. Allow increased commercial uses

Support a mix of uses along the entire corridor to better connect the existing commercial nodes at Ball and Magoun Squares.

3. Remove misaligned use and massing standards

Ensure that allowable building heights and uses are aligned on both sides of the municipal boundary so that split lots are not subject to significantly different standards.

4. Coordinate permitting

Ensure that Somerville and Medford staff coordinate discussions and meetings regarding development on split lots.

5. Encourage predictability in built outcome

All the objectives above combine to ensure that property owners, business owners, and residents alike have clear and consistent expectations for what types of development are allowed.

Facilitate transit-area density

Study provides massing diagrams along the corridor – including adjacent to Ball Square Station:



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Allow increased commercial uses.

Study provides two alternatives to current Pedestrian Streets designation:

Alternative A

Alternative A maintains small portions of the corridor as "residential only" with no commercial uses permitted on the ground floor. This includes existing residential properties to the north of Trum Field and to the far west and east of the corridor. Ground floor commercial uses would be required in a more focused and tight area around Ball Square as well as in Magoun Square, primarily down Medford Street. This is a smaller area than is currently designated as "Pedestrian Streets" by the City of Somerville.



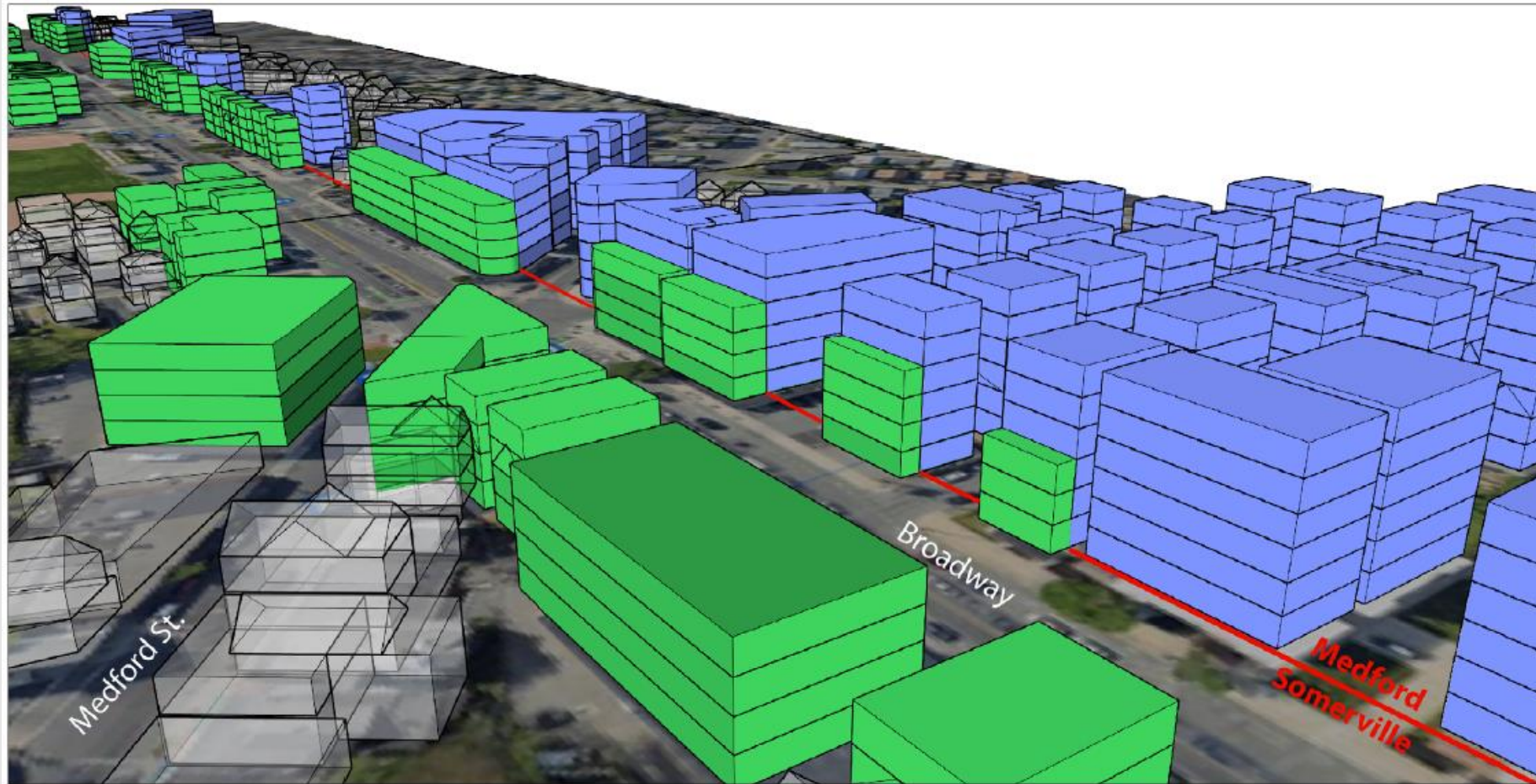
Alternative B

Alternative B keeps the same designated ground floor commercial use requirement as Alternative A and expands the designation to allow commercial uses anywhere along the corridor. This is more consistent with the preferences of the public, most of whom expressed a desire to allow mixed-use along the entire corridor. It is important to note that just because mixed-use is allowed does not mean that it will be built. Many property owners may choose to maintain residential-only buildings, whether 2- or 3-unit dwellings or multi-family. The important issue is expanding the option for mixed use.



Remove misaligned use and massing standards.

Study provides renderings demonstrating the current misalignment in allowed height and provides recommendations on how each municipality can re-zone to harmonize.



Remove misaligned use and massing standards.

Harmonizing the zoning between Somerville and Medford

- Change the Somerville portion of the corridor to the existing zoning district that most closely match both cities' visions, public feedback, and the current height allowances on the Medford side.
- Develop an overlay or new base zoning district on the Medford side that matches the Somerville zoning as closely as Medford is comfortable.

Somerville

- Upzone most of the corridor to MR-6
- Reduce extent of Pedestrian Street designation

Medford

- Establish an overlay over the split lots with standards allowing mixed-use, six-story buildings
- Modify permitted land uses to more closely match Somerville's
- Transit-oriented parking requirements
- Review inclusionary zoning policy

Coordinate permitting.

- Joint Pre-Submittal Meetings – allow both cities to be clear about their processes, which both allows applicants to plan out and move through the process more efficiently and prevents discourages applicants from answer-shopping between the two cities.
- Neighborhood Meetings – ensure neighbors on both sides of the boundary are invited.
- Other Public Meeting and Hearings – cities should proactively invite staff to public meetings or hearings relevant to split lots, and share meeting minutes and recordings as needed.
- Memorandum of Understanding – this would detail the commitments of each municipality in carrying out the above.



Encourage predictability in built outcome.

Study provides visualizations that can be consulted in future upzoning proposals.



Trum Field: four (4) stories with commercial ground floor

Encourage predictability in built outcome.

Study provides visualizations that can be consulted in future upzoning proposals.



Trum Field: six (6) stories with commercial ground floor

Encourage predictability in built outcome.

Study provides visualizations that can be consulted in future upzoning proposals.



Magoun Square: four (4) stories

Encourage predictability in built outcome.

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Magoun Square: six (6) stories with step-back

Encourage predictability in built outcome.

Study provides visualizations that can be consulted in future upzoning proposals.



Magoun Square: six (6) stories with no step-back



Questions?