



# City of Somerville Zoning Overhaul

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Zoning Workshop #4

## **Residential Neighborhoods**

(aka Neighborhood Character)

Board of Aldermen – Land Use Committee

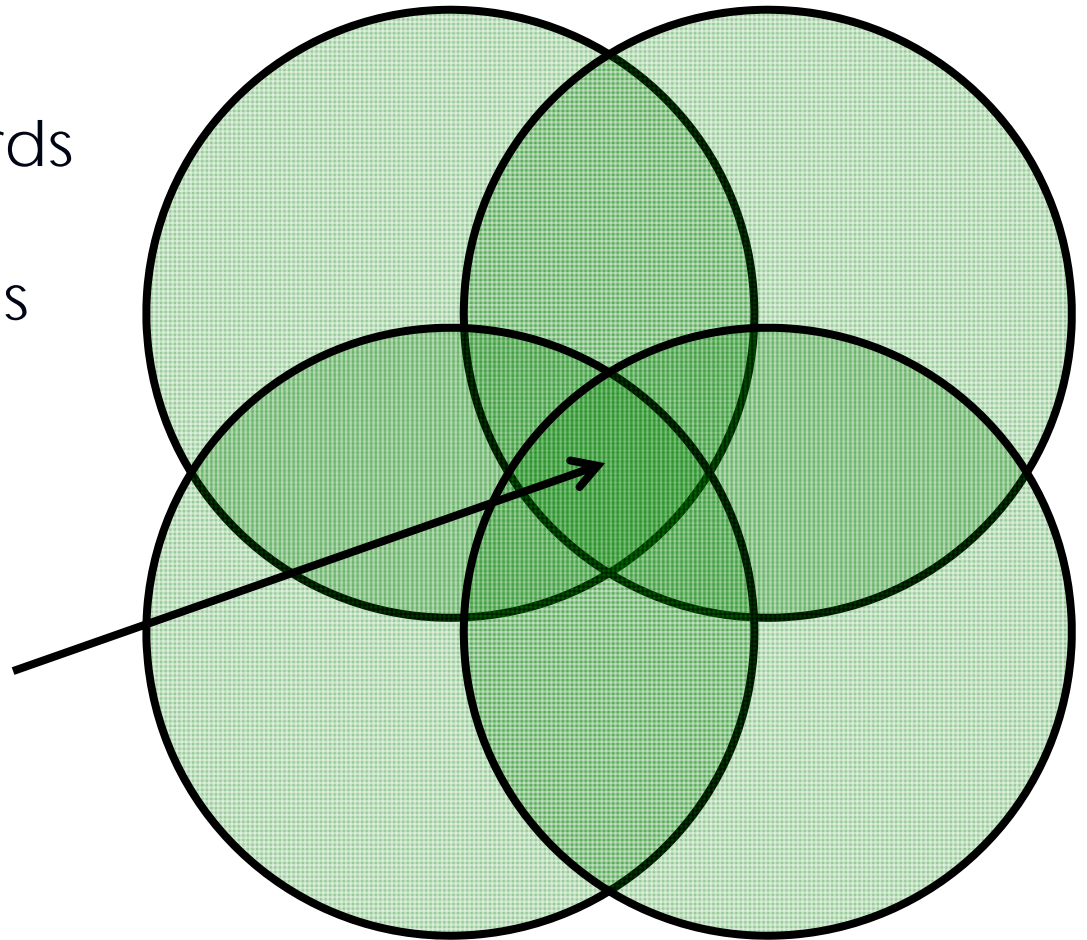
2.23.16

# Best Practices

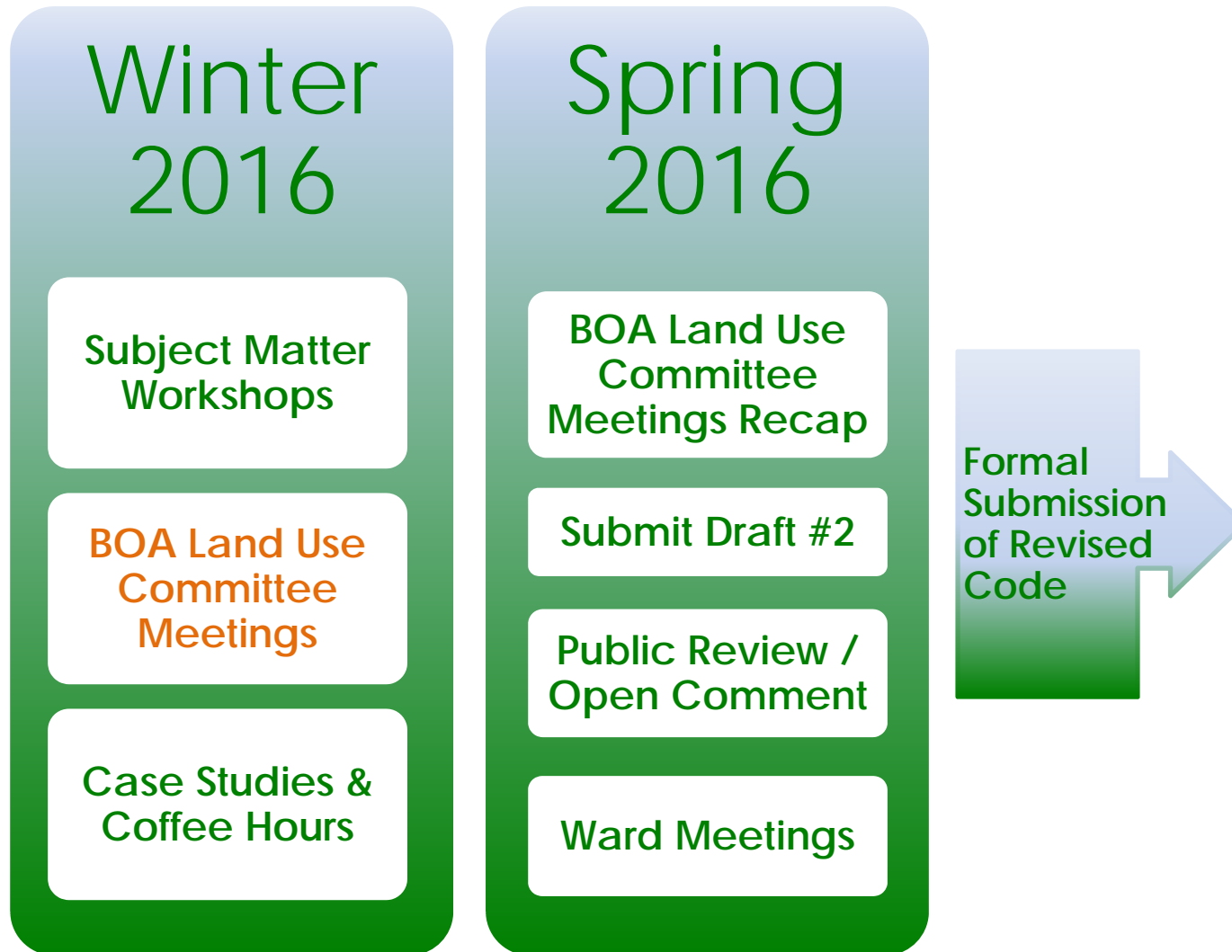
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1. Use Standards
2. Performance Standards
3. Special Districts
4. Form Based Standards

New Somerville  
Zoning Ordinance



# Process



# Process

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## Subject Matter Workshops: UPDATED schedule

- Public Space 11.23.15
- Arts & Creative Economy 12.7.15
- Attainable Housing I 1.11.16
- Residential Neighborhoods 1.25.16
- Mobility 2.22.16
- Process 3.7.16
- Attainable Housing II 3.21.16
- Sustainability TBD
- Economic Development TBD
- Residential Occupancy TBD



# Tonight's Schedule

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## Presentation

- SomerVision Goals
- Neighborhood Research
- A New Proposal
- Policy Implications



# Tonight's Schedule

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## Presentation

- **SomerVision Goals**
- Neighborhood Research
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- Policy Implications



# SomerVision



584  
Goals, Policies & Actions



182  
Implemented through  
Zoning

16  
Neighborhood Character



# SomerVision

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## Neighborhood Character Objectives

### GOALS

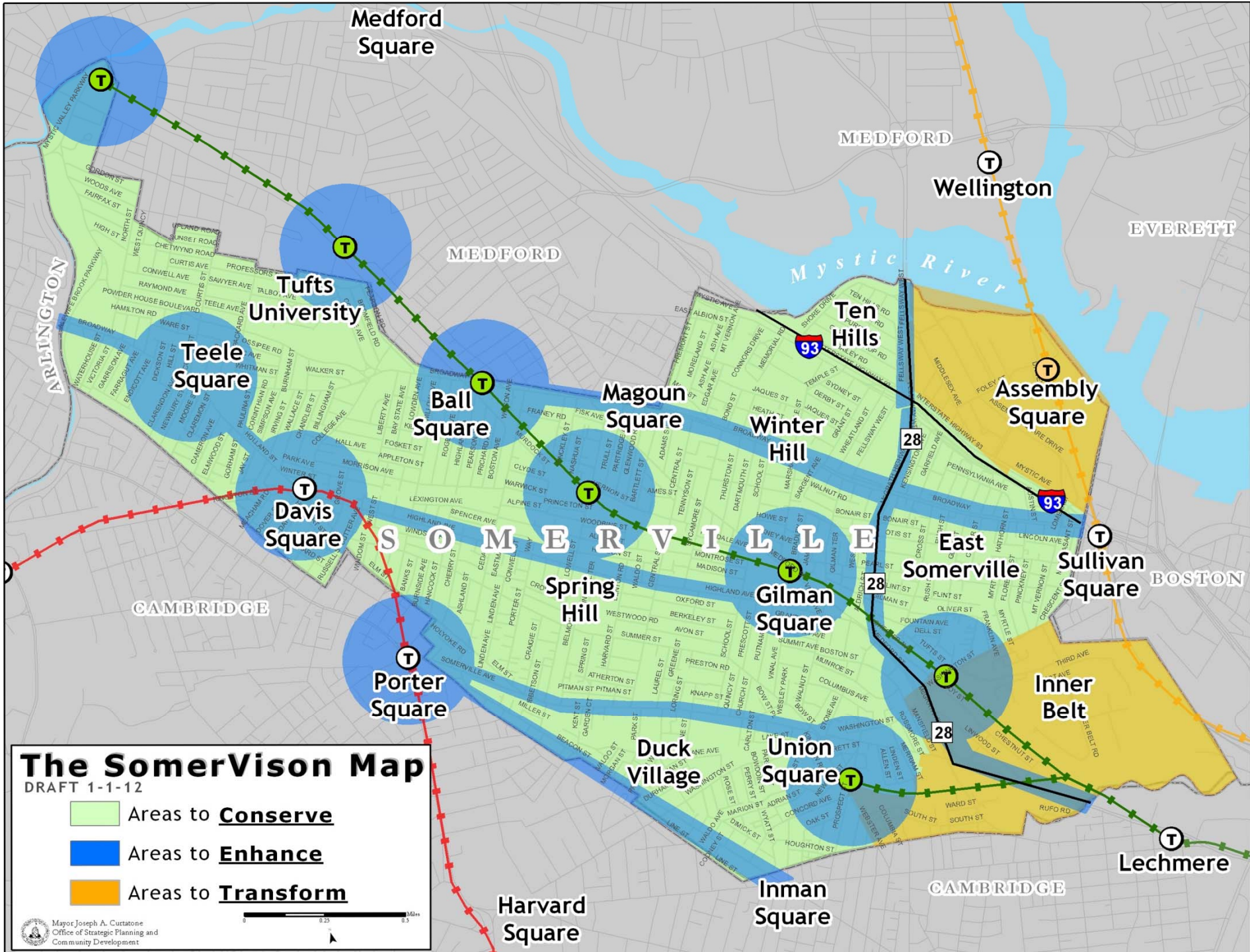
1. Preserve and enhance the character of Somerville's neighborhoods,
2. Enable sensitive, economically feasible maintenance and adaptive reuse of historic buildings,
3. Respect neighborhood form and patterns while expanding Somerville's architectural legacy

### POLICIES

- Protect and preserve the character of neighborhoods composed of single-family, two-family, and three-family homes
- Ensure that neighborhood properties can adapt and change to meet the needs of residents, while respecting the character of the neighborhood
- Provide clear and consistent direction including design standards and guidelines for contextual infill development







**The SomerVison Map**  
 DRAFT 1-1-12

- Areas to **Conserve**
- Areas to **Enhance**
- Areas to **Transform**

Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone  
 Office of Strategic Planning and  
 Community Development

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

# Tonight's Schedule

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- SomerVision Goals
- **Neighborhood Research**
- A New Proposal
- Policy Implications



# Neighborhood Research

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Somerville *by*  
DESIGN

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING &  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
Joseph A. Curtatone, Mayor



## THE RA/RB REPORT

An Analysis and Discussion of Current Residential Zoning Regulation



City of Somerville  
Zoning Overhaul

Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone  
Office of Strategic Planning  
& Community Development

# Neighborhood Research

## RA/RB District Regulations Today

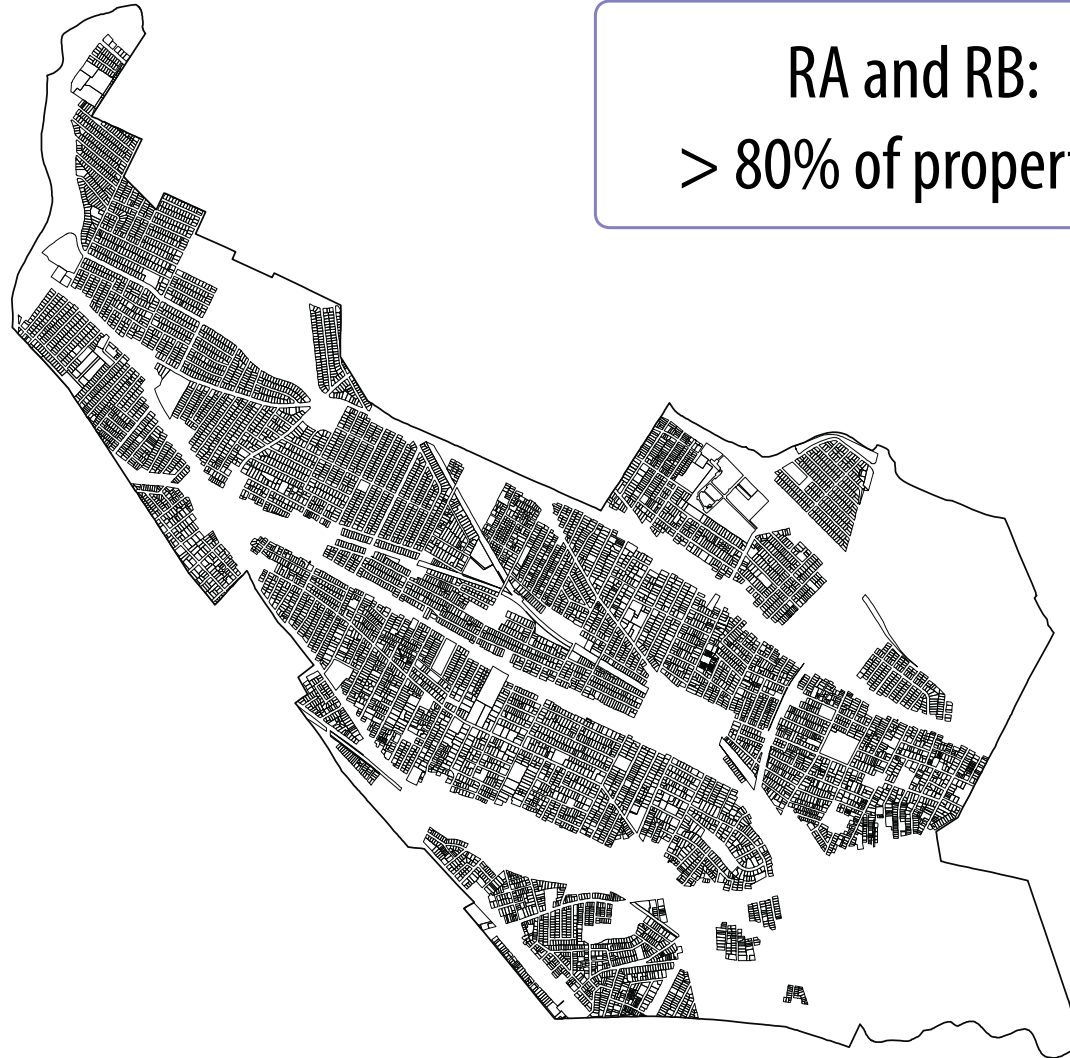
	RA	RB
Lot Size	10,000	7,500
Dwelling Units	Up to 2*	Up to 3*
Lot Space/DU	2250 sf	1500 sf
Height	35	40
FAR	0.75	1.00
Ground Coverage	50%	50%

\* Additional units permitted with affordable housing



# Neighborhood Research

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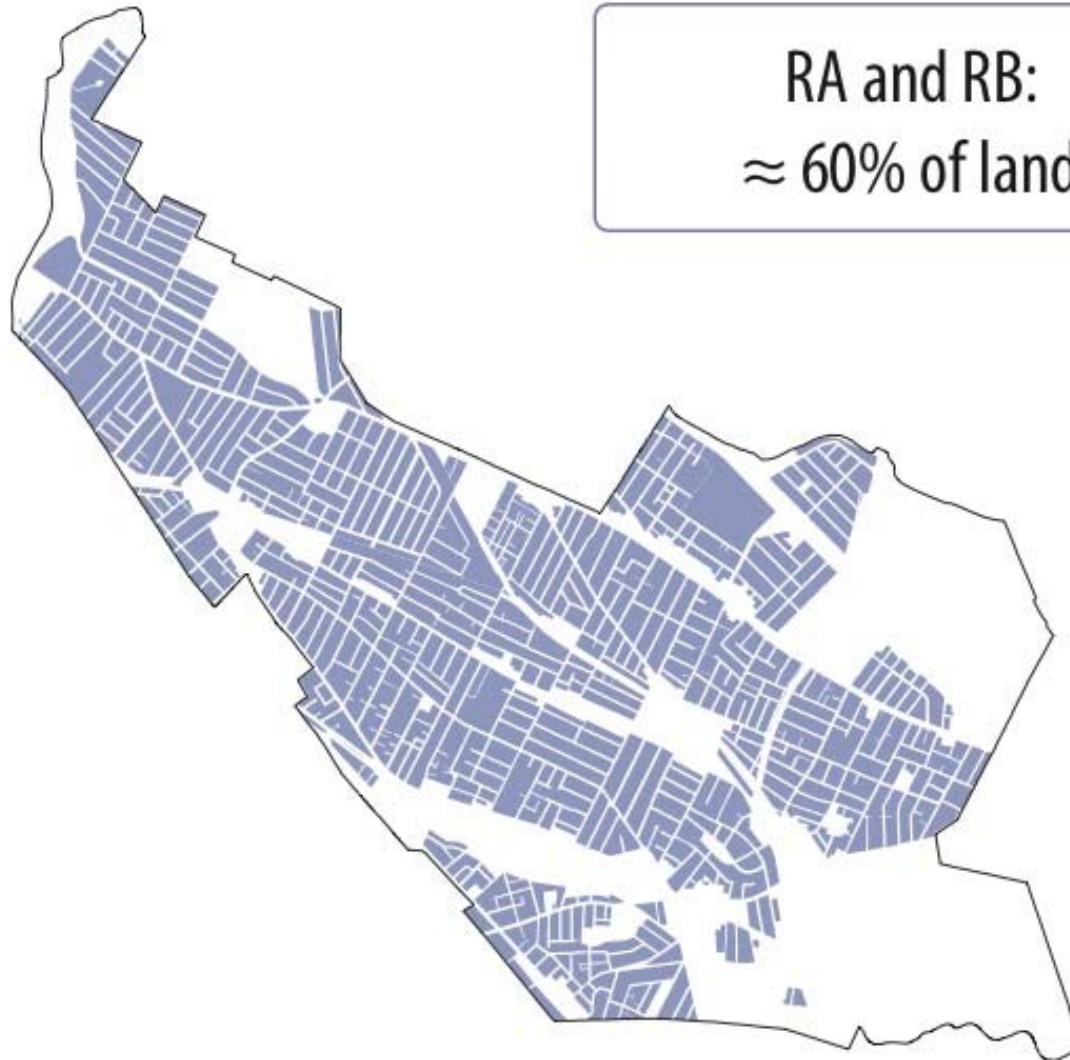


RA and RB:  
> 80% of properties

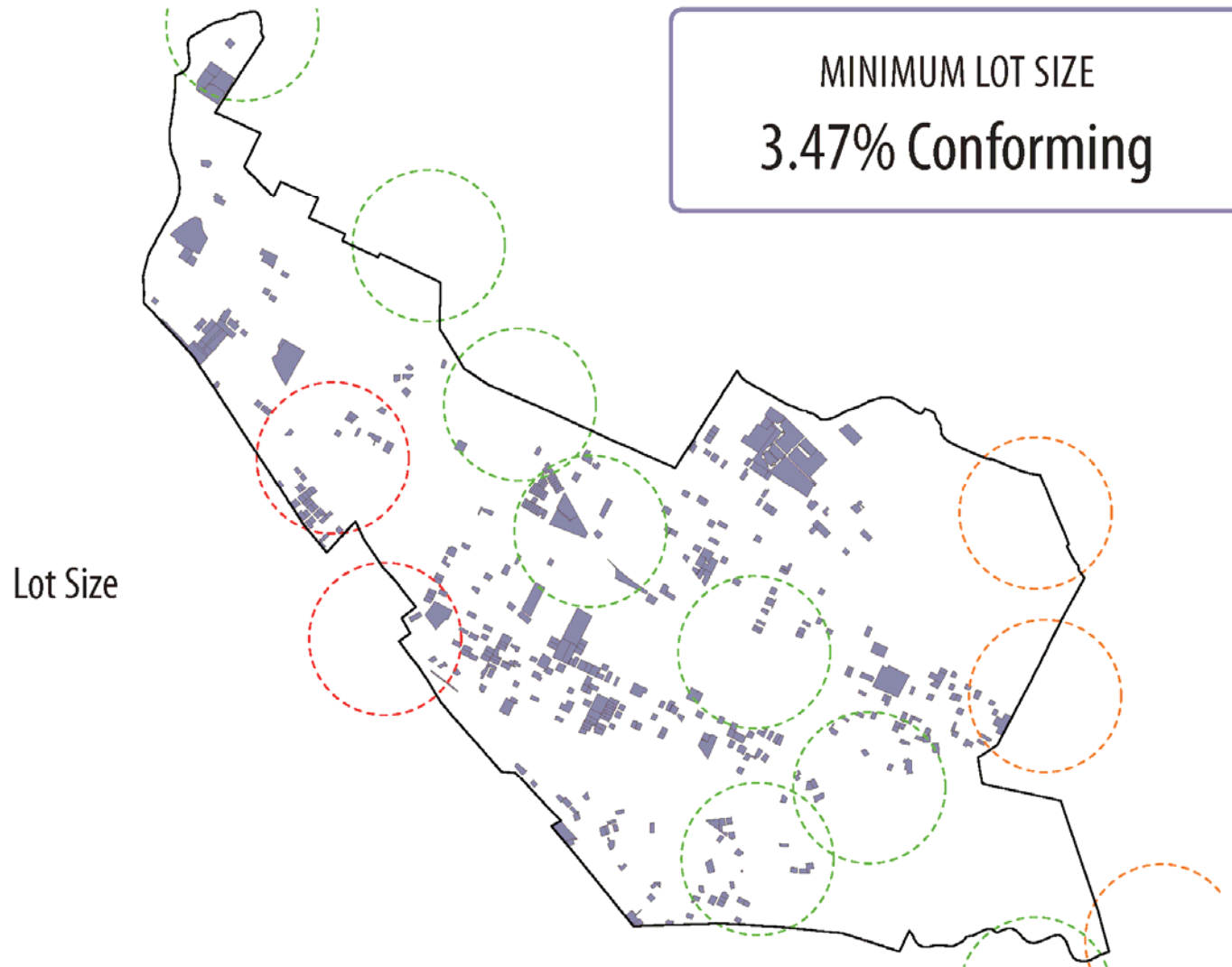


# Neighborhood Research

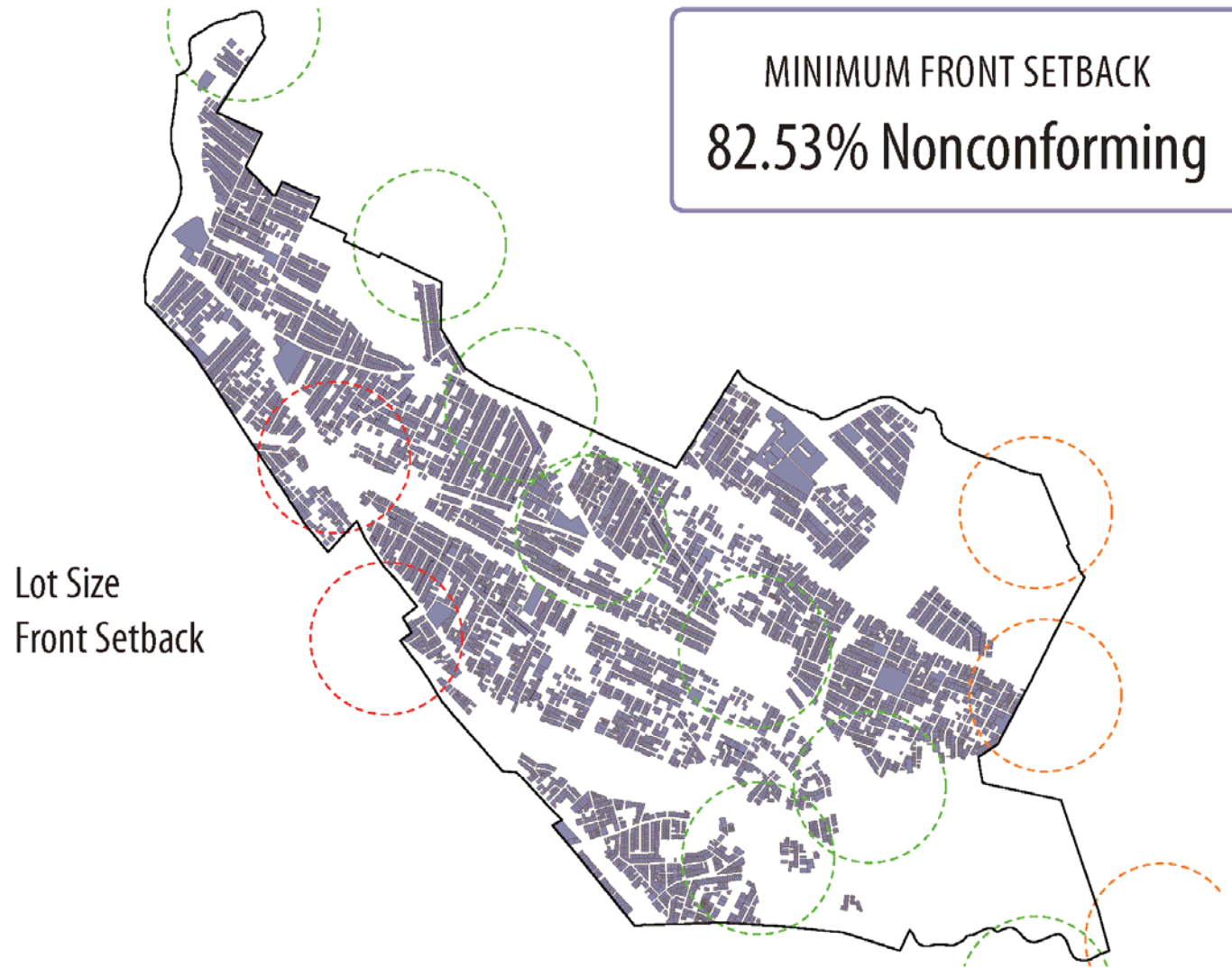
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# Neighborhood Research

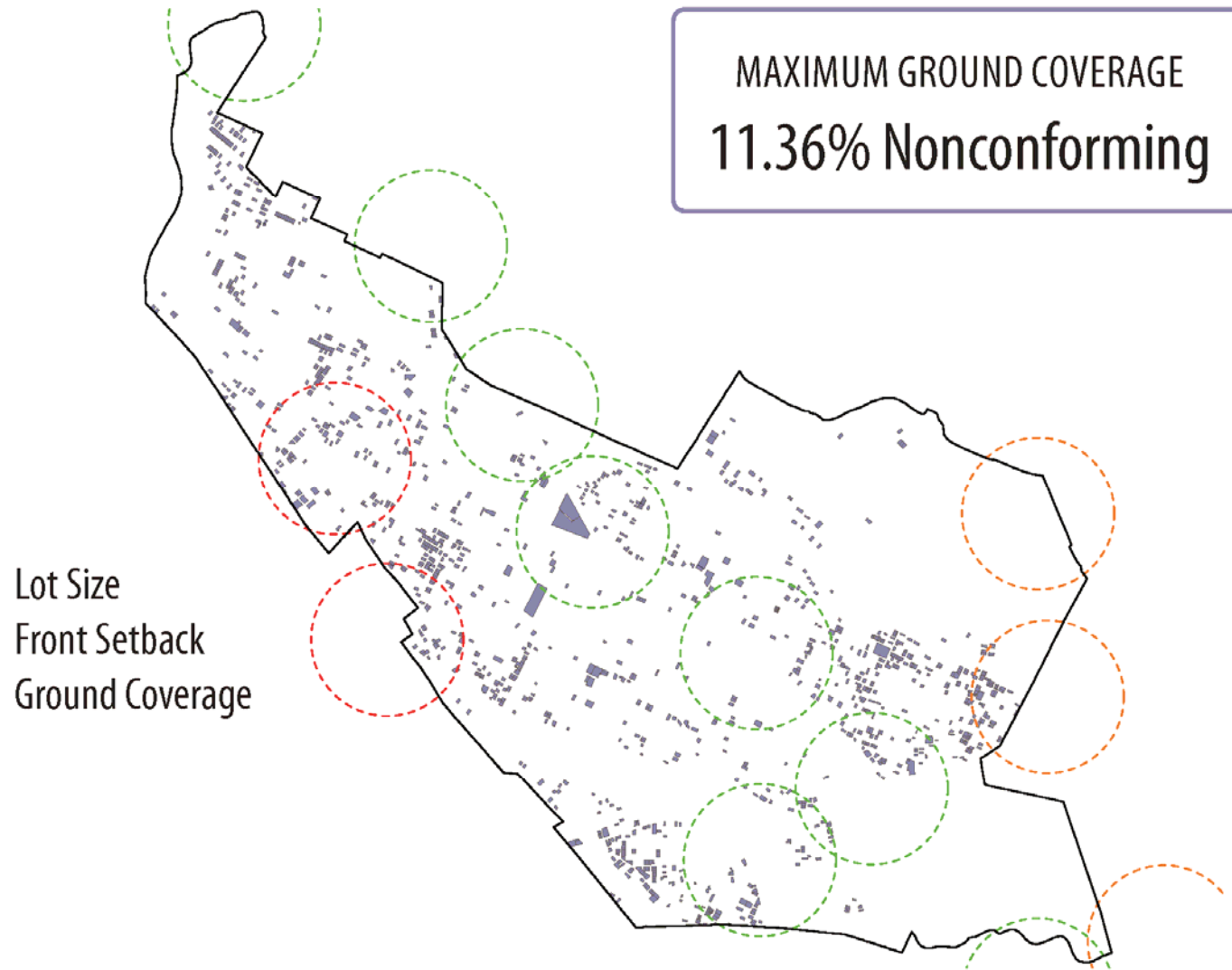


# Neighborhood Research

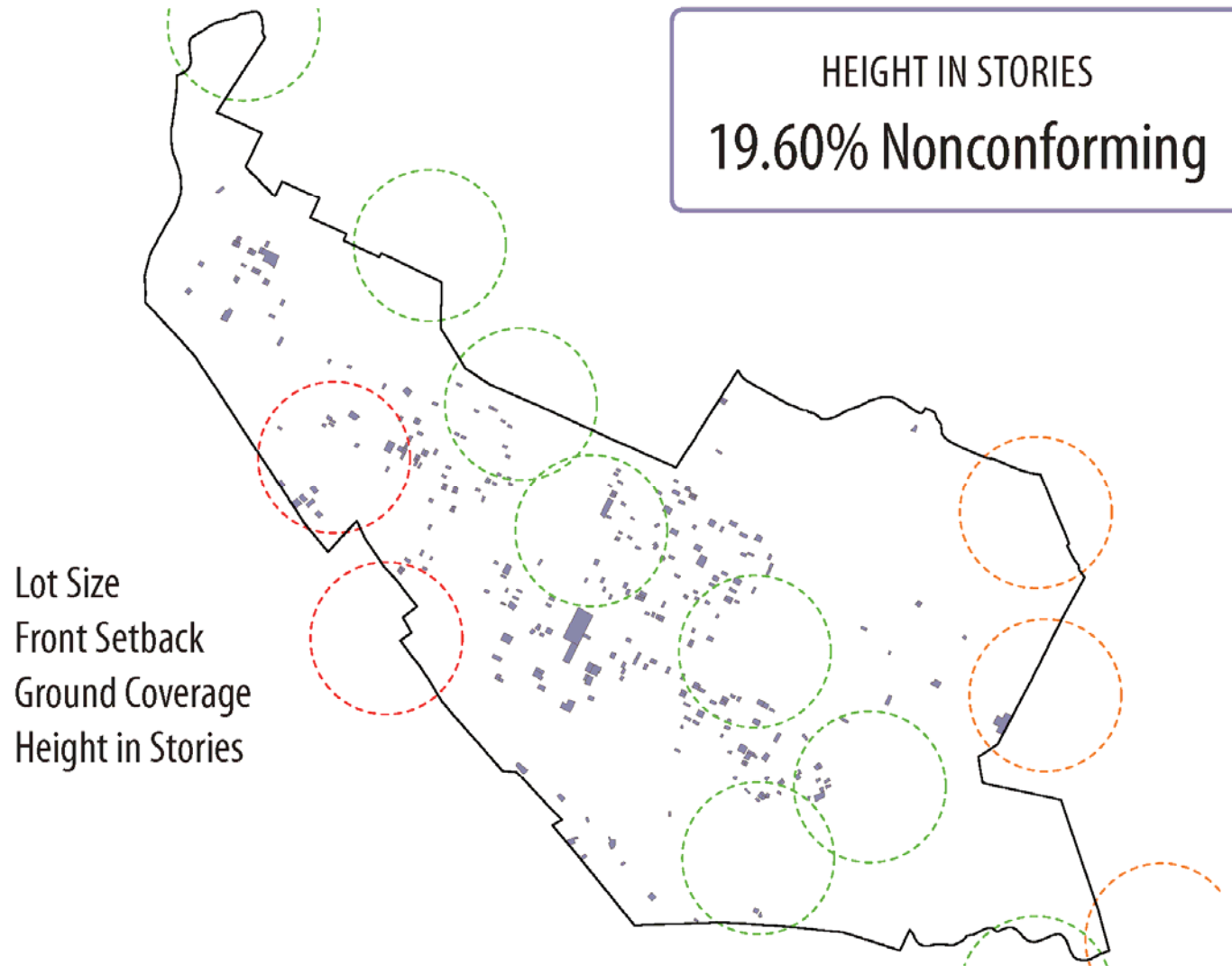




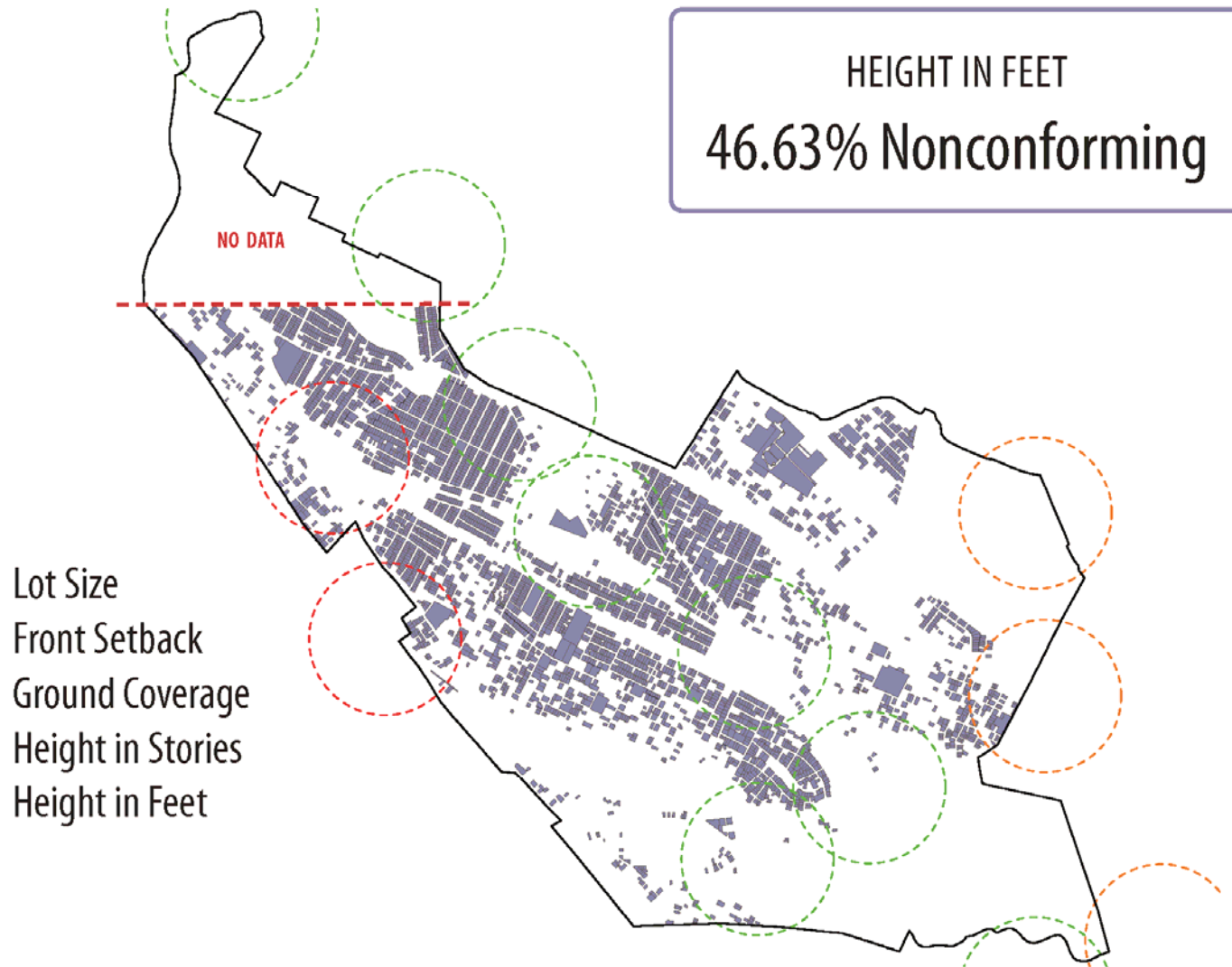
# Neighborhood Research



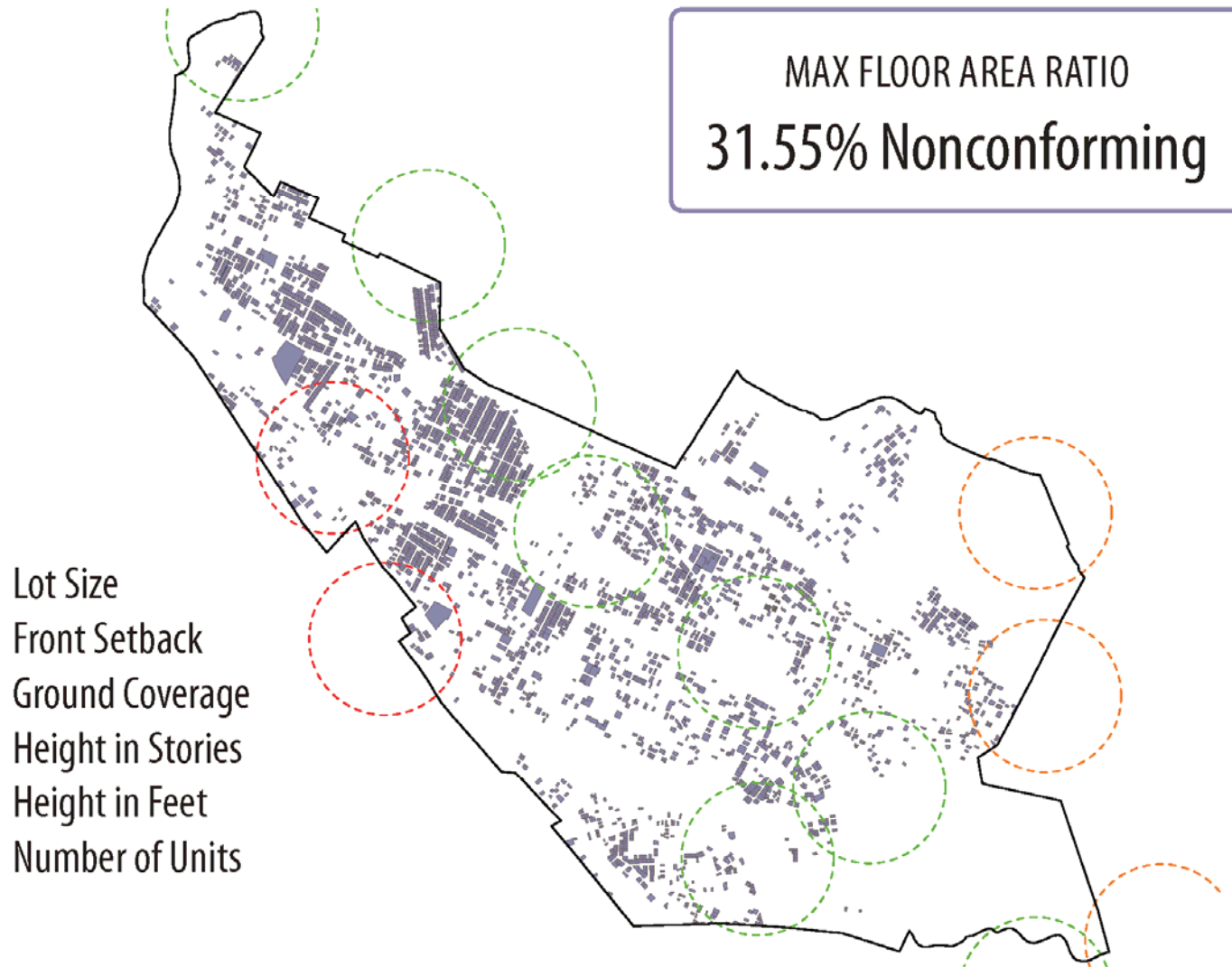
# Neighborhood Research



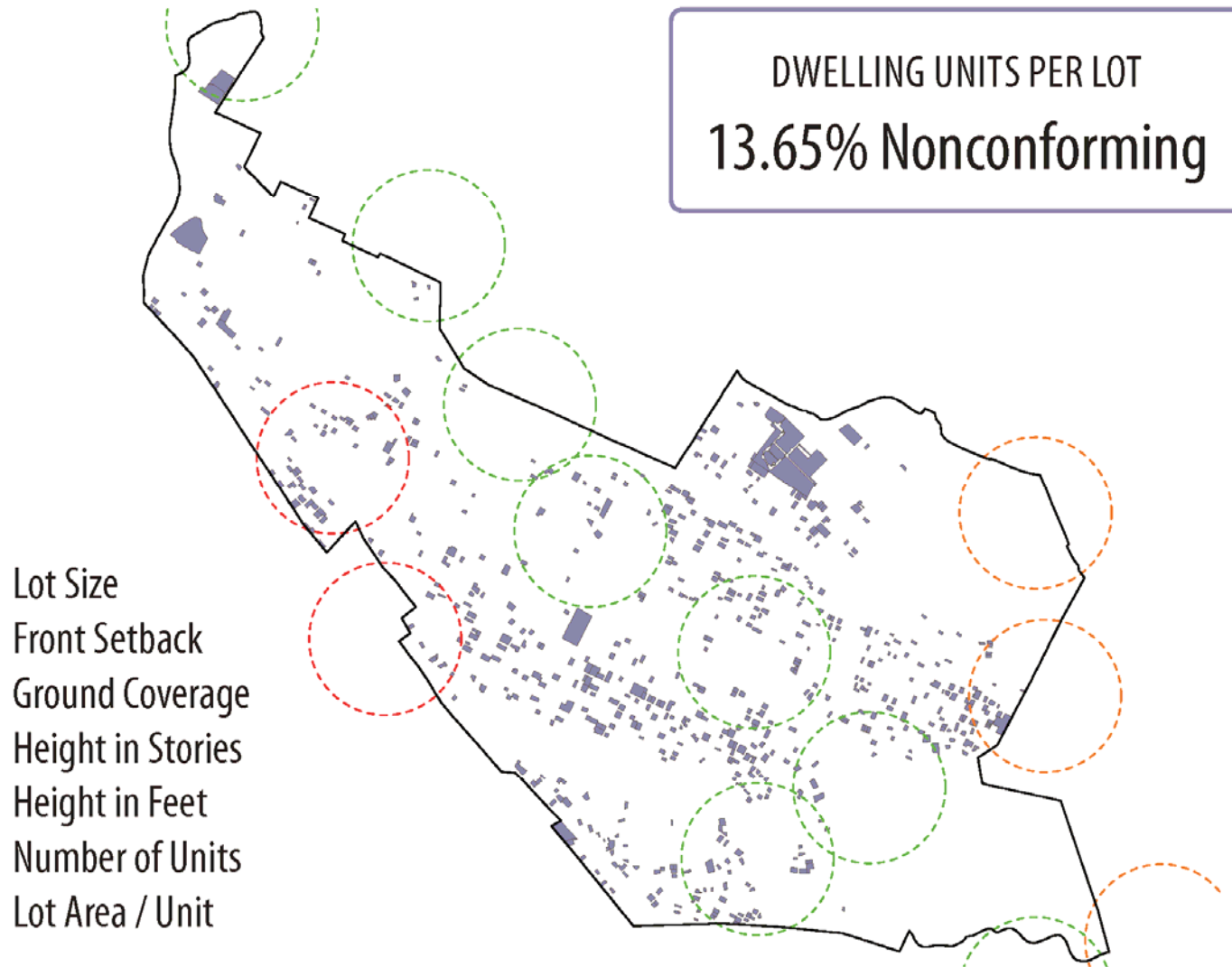
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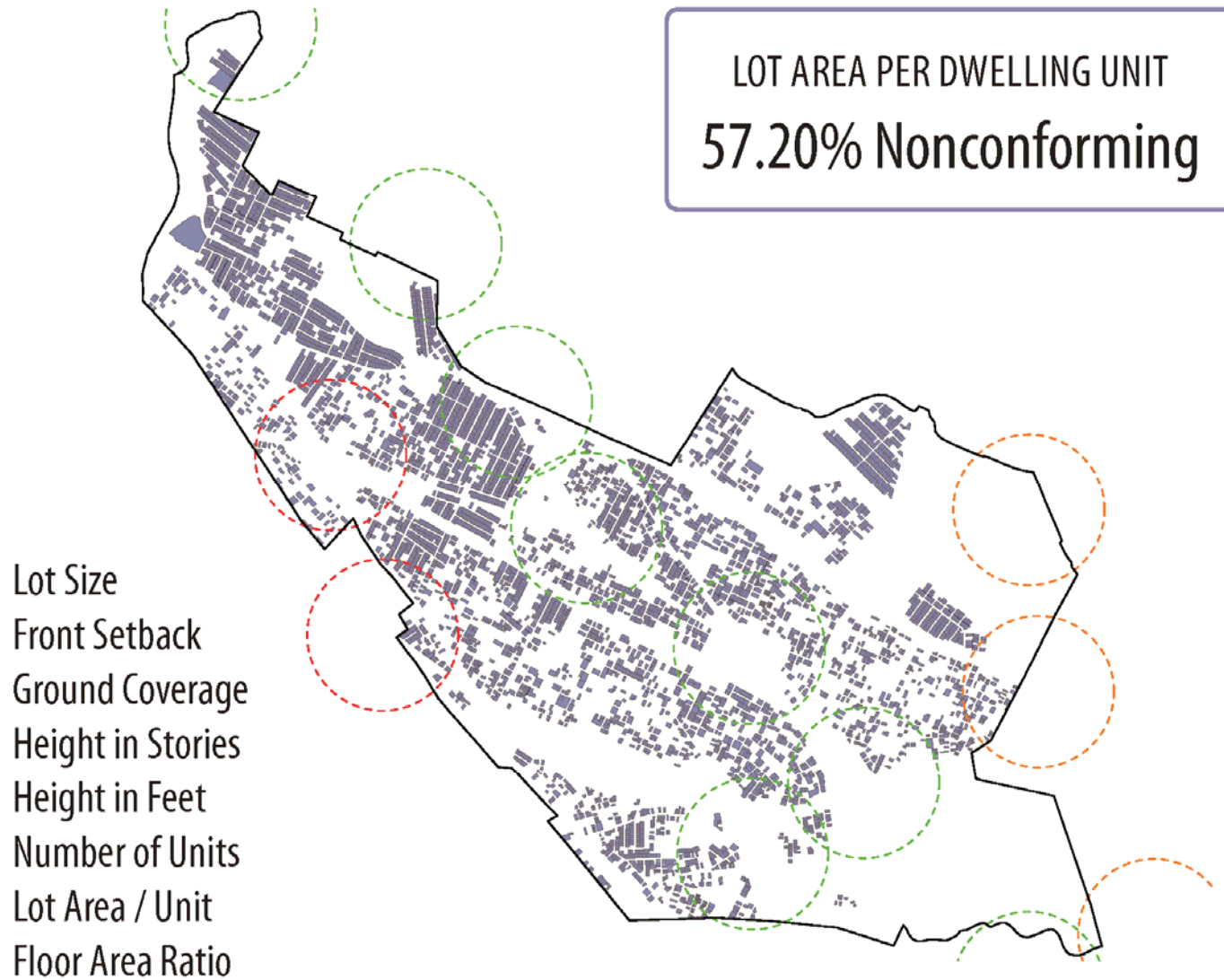
# Neighborhood Research



# Neighborhood Research



# Neighborhood Research

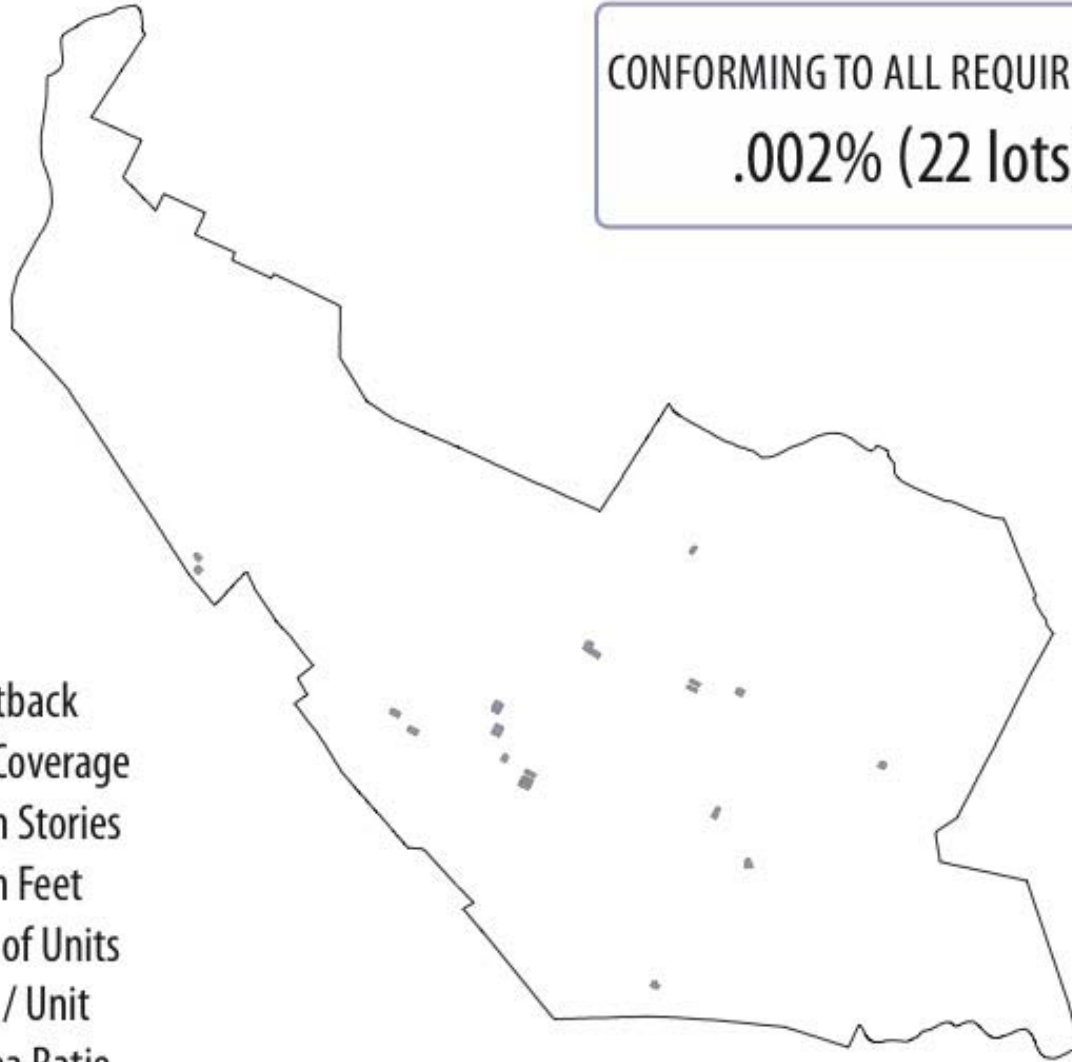


# Neighborhood Research

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CONFORMING TO ALL REQUIREMENTS?  
.002% (22 lots)

- Lot Size
- Front Setback
- Ground Coverage
- Height in Stories
- Height in Feet
- Number of Units
- Lot Area / Unit
- Floor Area Ratio



# Neighborhood Research

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## RA/RB Report: Findings

- More single family houses in RB (1,289) than RA (1,013)
- 72% of RA lots don't have enough lot area/DU
- Average lot size is similar in both districts (4,400 in RA; 4,600 in RB)
- Buildings in RA are taller (39.2 ft) than in RB (36.8) on average
- Ground coverage is similar in both districts on average (36% in RA; 37% in RB)
- Floor area (bulk) is similar in both districts on average (0.72 in RA; 0.78 in RB)





# Neighborhood Research

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## RA/RB Report: Conclusions

Existing lots and buildings in RA and RB are very similar

Why?



# Neighborhood Research

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## RA/RB Report: Conclusions

Existing lots and buildings in RA and RB are very similar

Why?

They were built before zoning that required them to be different (lot size, building bulk, unit count all similar)



# Neighborhood Research

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## RA/RB Report: 3 Problems

1. Zoning doesn't reflect our existing residential character
2. We have similar residential lots and buildings that are zoned differently (RA and RB)
3. Exploits exist that allow development that is out of character with the existing housing



# Tonight's Schedule

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- SomerVision Goals
- Neighborhood Research
- **A New Proposal**
- Policy Implications



# New Proposal

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

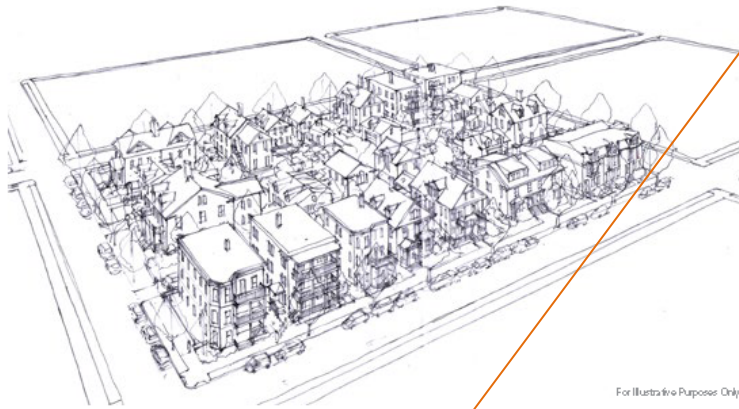


# Proposed Zoning (Jan 2015)

Article 2: Base Districts

Neighborhood Residence (NR)

## A. NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENCE (NR)



### 1. INTENT

- To implement the Neighborhood Residential future land use and context category of Somerville.
- To conserve already established areas of detached and semi-detached residential building types.

### 2. PURPOSE

- To permit the development of one- & two-unit detached and semi-detached residential building types on individual lots.
- To provide for the discretionary review permitting of three-unit detached and semi-detached residential building types on individual lots.
- To permit the adaptive reuse of already existing civic & institutional facilities as arts & creative enterprise uses.
- To permit the adaptive reuse of already existing commercial buildings as neighborhood stores.
- To promote diversity in housing, including unit type, size, bedroom count, and affordability.
- To provide the community with a predictable outcome from development and redevelopment.

### 3. BUILDING STANDARDS

- Permitted Building Types  
The following building types are permitted in the Neighborhood Residence district:

Y	Cottage	L	Shop House
Y	Detached House	L	Neighborhood Store
Y	Semi-Detached House	N	Mixed-Use Building
Y	Duplex	N	Commercial Building
N	Detached Triple Decker	N	Production Building
N	Semi-Detached Triple Decker	N	Fabrication Loft
N	Four Plex		
N	Six Plex		
N	Apartment House		
N	Apartment Building		
N	Row Houses		
Y	by Right		
L	by Right with Limitations		
SDP	by Site Development Plan		
SP	by Special Permit		
N	Not Permitted		

- See Article 9, Building Standards for the standards for each type.

**Y** Cottage

**Y** Detached House

**Y** Semi-Detached House

**Y** Duplex

← 1-2 Units/Lot

<b>N</b>	Detached Triple Decker
<b>N</b>	Semi-Detached Triple Decker
<b>N</b>	Four Plex
<b>N</b>	Six Plex
<b>N</b>	Apartment House
<b>N</b>	Apartment Building
<b>N</b>	Row Houses
<b>Y</b>	by Right
<b>L</b>	by Right with Limitations
<b>SDP</b>	by Site Development Plan
<b>SP</b>	by Special Permit
<b>N</b>	Not Permitted

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SOMERVILLE ZONING ORDINANCE | 9









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Zoning Overhaul

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Office of Strategic Planning  
& Community Development

# New Proposal

**TABLE 3.1** Buildings Types

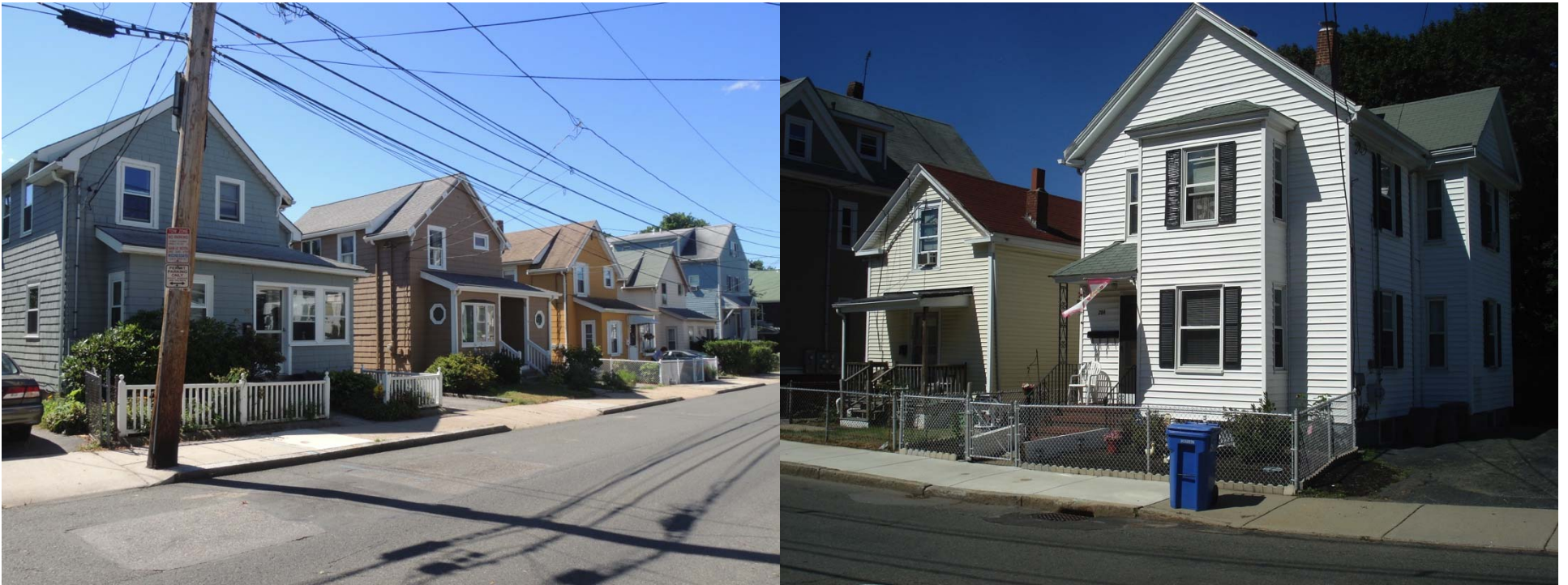
		
<p><b>Cottage</b> A small floor plate, detached, residential building type with one dwelling unit.</p>	<p><b>House</b> A moderate floor plate, detached, residential building type with up to two vertically stacked dwelling units.</p>	<p><b>Paired House</b> A moderate floor plate, semi-detached, residential building type with up to two vertically stacked dwelling units. A paired house is attached on one side to another paired house.</p>
		
<p><b>Duplex</b> A moderate floor plate, detached, residential building type with two side by side dwelling units.</p>	<p><b>Triple Decker</b> A moderate floor plate, detached, residential building type with three vertically stacked dwelling units.</p>	<p><b>Paired Triple Decker</b> A moderate floor plate, semi-detached, residential building type with three vertically stacked dwelling units. A paired triple decker is attached on one side to another paired triple decker.</p>



# Neighborhood Research

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## Cottage (1 Unit)





# Neighborhood Research

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## Detached House (2 Units)



# Neighborhood Research

## Semi-Detached House (2 Units, each side)



# Neighborhood Research

Building Photo



Building Layout



2 Units

Building Photo



Building Layout



2 Units

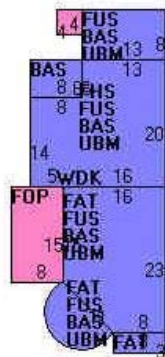


# Neighborhood Research

Building Photo



Building Layout

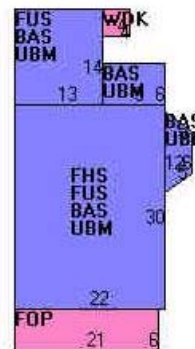


1 Unit

Building Photo



Building Layout



1 Unit



# New Proposal

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## Duplex (2 Units)



# New Proposal

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## Building Photo



### 24 BELMONT ST

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**Location** 24 BELMONT ST

**Mblu** 38/ E/ **38**/ 24/

### 26 BELMONT ST

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**Location** 26 BELMONT ST

**Mblu** 38/ E/ **38**/ 26/



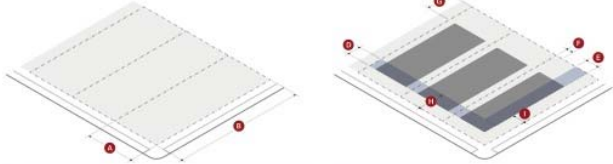
# New Proposal

## Dimensional Standards for Each Type

Article 3. Building Standards Principal Building Types

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

a. Lot Standards b. Placement



LOT DIMENSIONS	
Width (min)	32 feet
Depth (min)	80 feet

BUILDING SETBACKS		
Contextual Front Setback (see § 3.B.2.b)		Required
Primary Front Setback (min/max)	10 feet	20 feet
Secondary Front Setback (min/max)	10 feet	20 feet
Side Setback (min)	5 feet	
Rear Setback (min)	20 feet	

PARKING SETBACKS	
Primary Front Setback (min)	20 feet
Secondary Front Setback (min)	10 feet

**LOT COVERAGE**

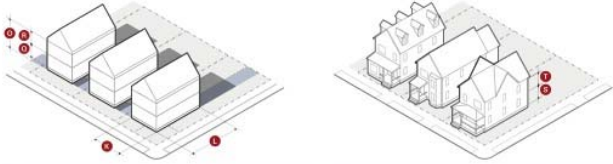
Permeable Surface (min)	35%
Landscape (min)	25%

DRAFT January 22, 2015 SOMERVILLE ZONING ORDINANCE | 41

Principal Building Types Article 3. Building Standards

**HOUSE (cont.)**  
A moderate floor plate, detached, residential building type with up to two vertically stacked dwelling units.

c. Height & Massing d. Uses & Features



MAIN BODY	
Facade Build Out (min)	50%
Width (min/max)	22' min. 28' max.
Depth (min/max)	28' min. 48' max.
Building Height (max)	2.5 stories (28 ft.)
Story Height (min/max)	9 ft.   12 ft.
First Floor Elevation (min)	2 ft.

FACADE COMPOSITION	
Ground Story Fenestration (min/max)	20% min. 50% max.
Upper Story Fenestration (min/max)	20% min. 50% max.

PERMITTED BUILDING FRONTAGE	
Stoop	(1 required) See §3.E.2
Portico	See §3.E.3
Porch, Projecting	See §3.E.4
Porch, Engaged	See §3.E.5

PERMITTED BUILDING COMPONENTS	
Awning	See §3.D.2
Entry Canopy	See §3.D.3
Bay	See §3.D.4
Balcony	See §3.D.5
Deck	See §3.D.6
Dormer Window	See §3.D.8
Cross Gable	See §3.D.9
Side Wing	See §3.D.10
Rear Addition	See §3.D.11

USE & OCCUPANCY	
Use Category	Residential
Dwelling Units (max)	2
Outdoor Amenity Space (min)	1/ Dwelling Unit

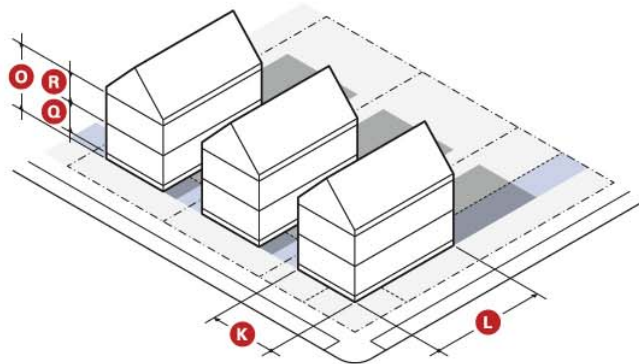
42 | SOMERVILLE ZONING ORDINANCE DRAFT January 22, 2015



# New Proposal

## HOUSE (cont.)

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



### MAIN BODY

<b>J</b> Facade Build Out (min)	50%
<b>K</b> Width (min/max)	22' min. 28' max.
<b>L</b> Depth (min/max)	28' min. 48' max.
<b>N</b> Building Height (max)	2.5 stories (28 ft.)
<b>P</b> Story Height (min/max)	9 ft.   12 ft.
First Floor Elevation (min)	2 ft.

### FACADE COMPOSITION

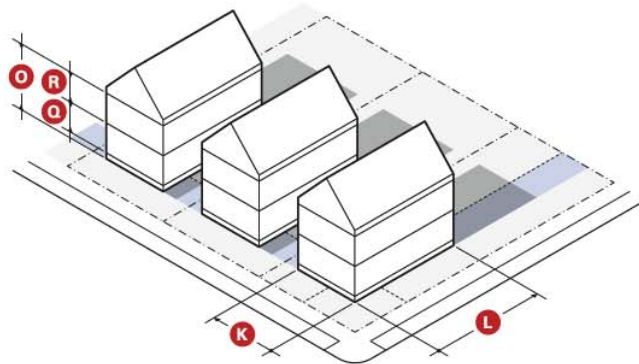
<b>S</b> Ground Story Fenestration (min/max)	20% min. 50% max.
<b>T</b> Upper Story Fenestration (min/max)	20% min. 50% max.





# New Proposal

Floor Area is locked, not variable



### MAIN BODY

J	Facade Build Out (min)	50%
K	Width (min/max)	22' min. 28' max.
L	Depth (min/max)	28' min. 48' max.
N	Building Height (max)	2.5 stories (28 ft.)
P	Story Height (min/max)	9 ft.   12 ft.
	First Floor Elevation (min)	2 ft.



### FACADE COMPOSITION

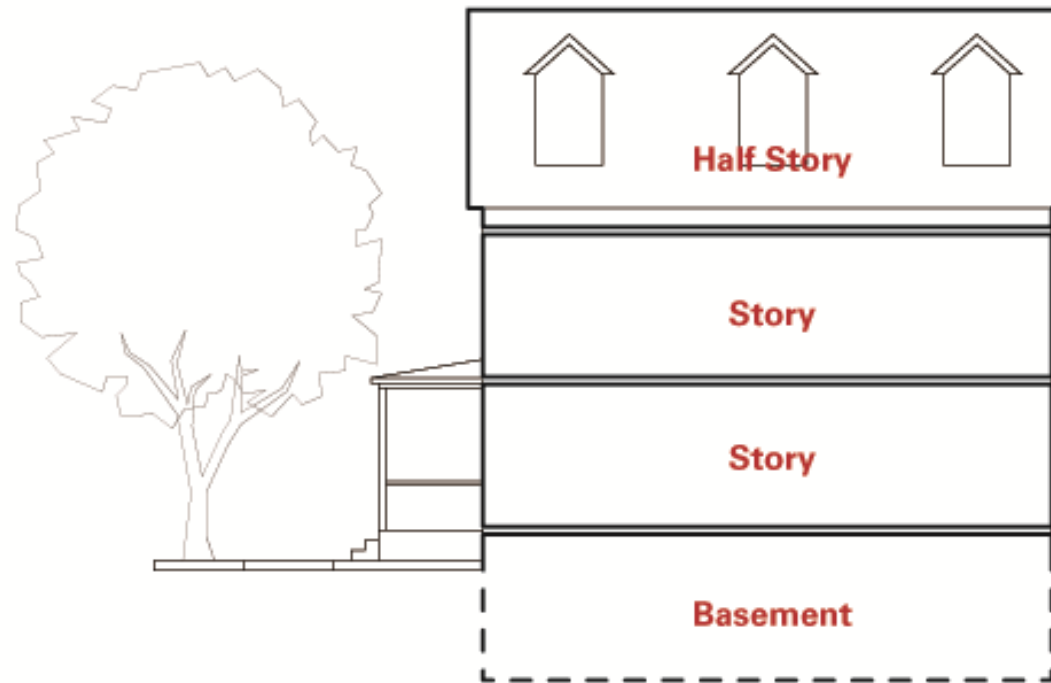
S	Ground Story Fenestration (min/max)	20% min. 50% max.
T	Upper Story Fenestration (min/max)	20% min. 50% max.



# New Proposal

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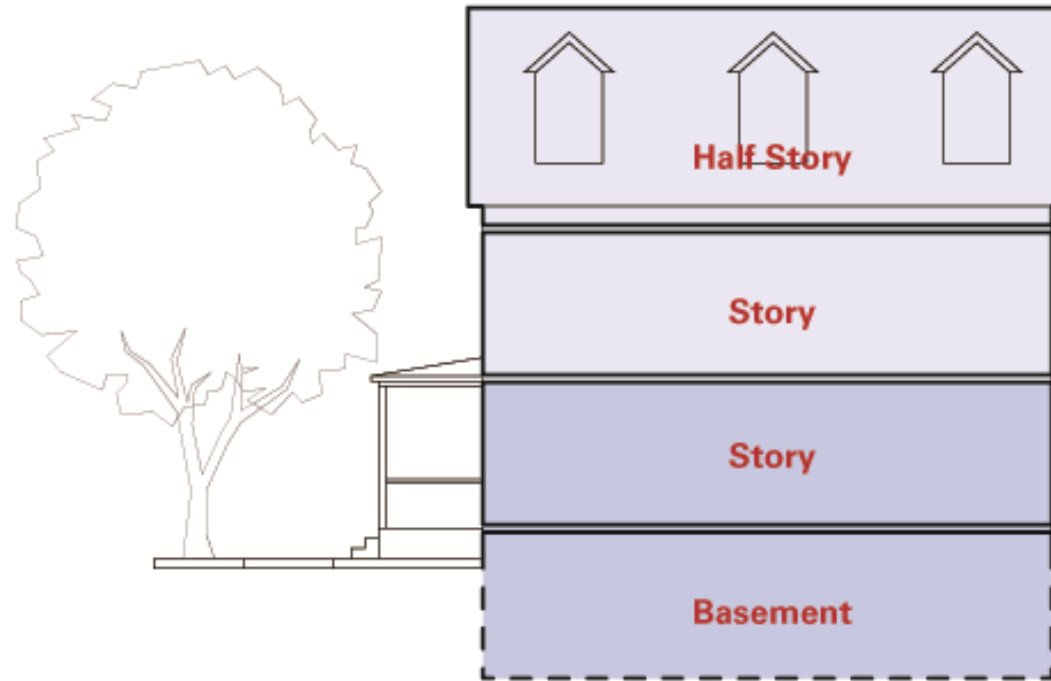
Floor Area is locked, not variable



# New Proposal

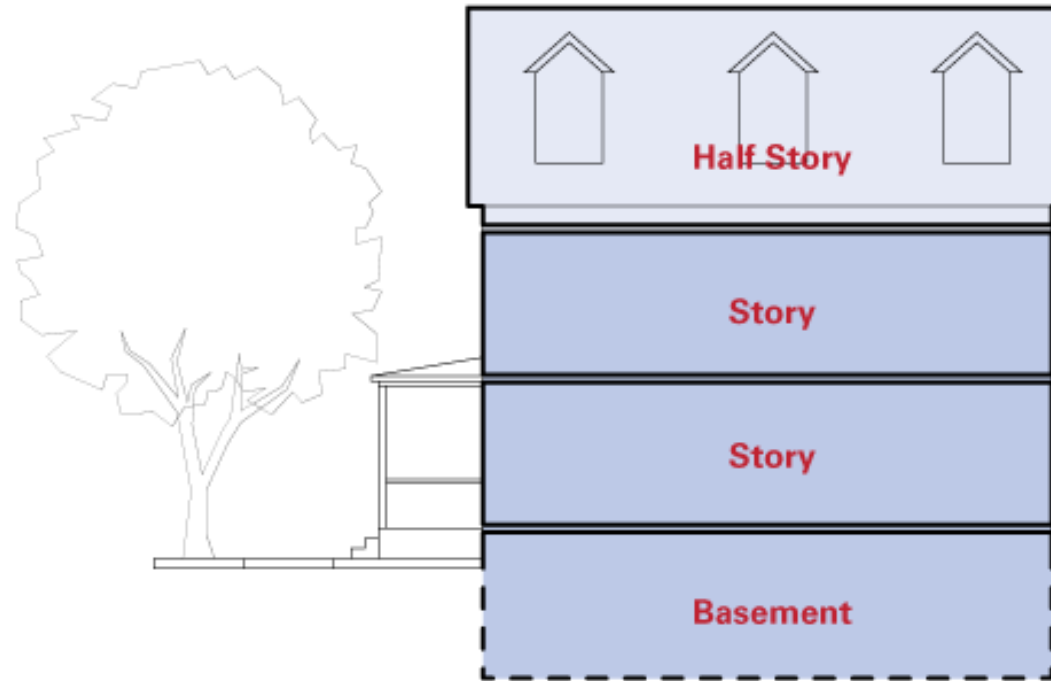
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Interior Diversity, but only 2 Units



# New Proposal

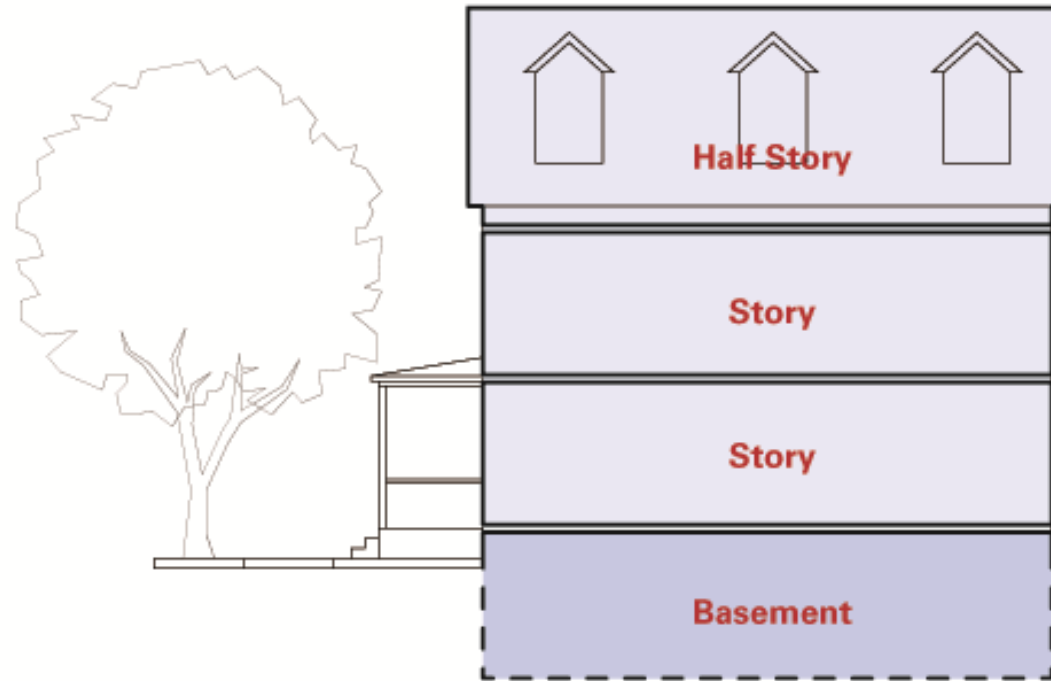
Interior Diversity, but only 2 Units



# New Proposal

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Interior Diversity, but only 2 Units



# New Proposal

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## Strict Standards

### No Special Permits for...

- Other Building Types – Only 4 Permitted
- More than 2 units\* – Density is locked in
- Floor area – Bulk is locked in
- Height – Height is locked in

\* We still must determine if we want the accessory basement unit by Special Permit



# New Proposal

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## Strict Standards

Eliminates:

- Buildings with forms that are not contextual
- Permitting further non-conformities by Special Permit
  - # of units beyond that allowed
  - Floor area beyond that allowed by addition or use of basement
  - Design review of dormer or new construction
- 3 units in RA by Special Residential Conversion
- More than 2 or 3 units per lot
- More than 1 building per lot



# Tonight's Schedule

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# Policy Implications

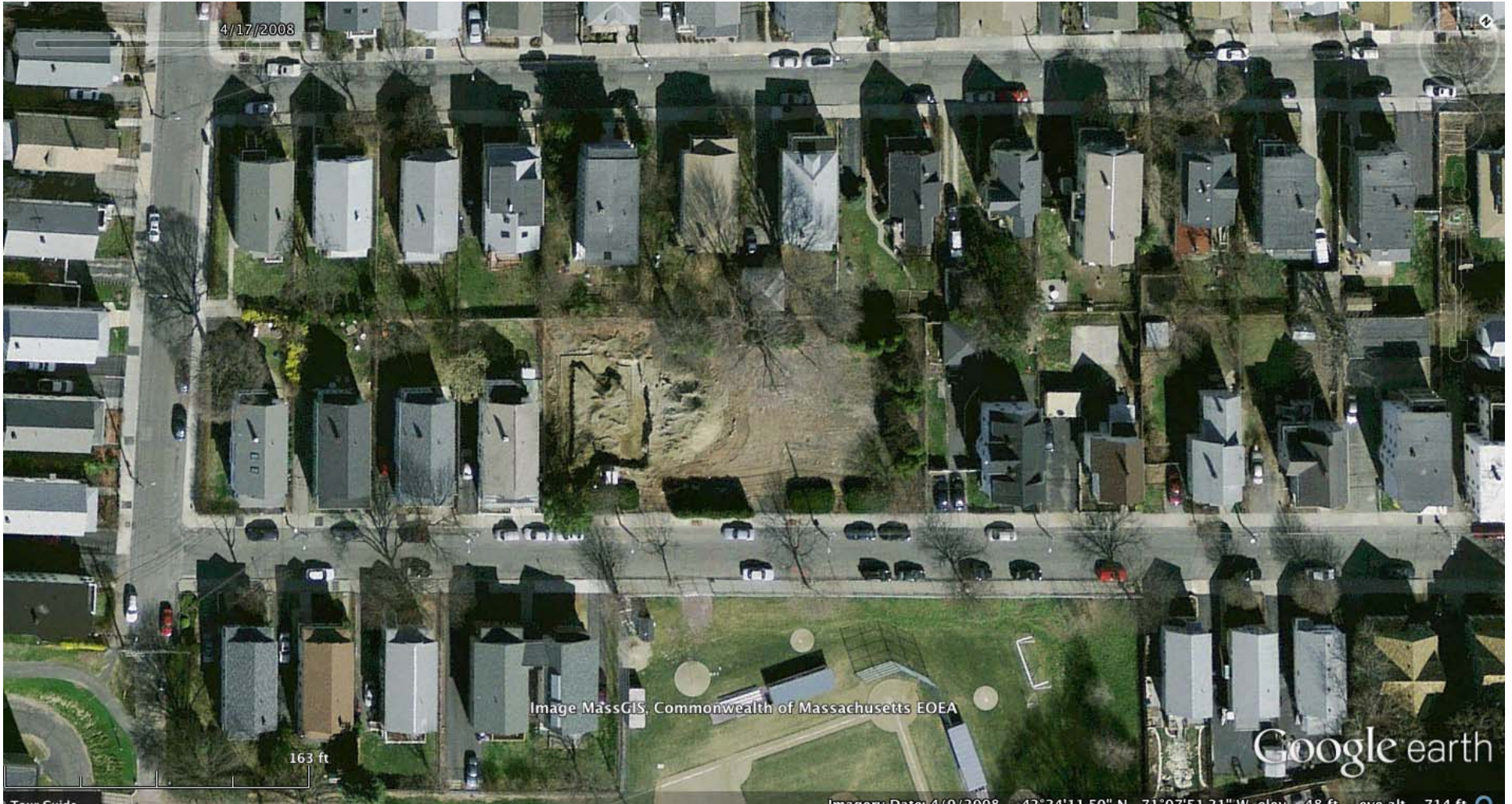
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## Different Types of Projects

- **Vacant Lots**
- Existing Houses
- Side and Rear Yards
- Accessory Units
- Non-conforming Buildings



# Policy Implications



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# Policy Implications



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# Policy Implications

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125'-0"



125'-0"



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# Policy Implications

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Office of Strategic Planning  
& Community Development

# Policy Implications



HOOKER AVENUE

ENDICOTT AVENUE, NORTH ELEVATION

BROADWAY



BROADWAY

ENDICOTT AVENUE, SOUTH ELEVATION

HOOKER AVENUE

\*ADDRESSES FROM 2/1/02 ASSESSORS MAP, MAP B



# Policy Implications



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# Policy Implications

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# Policy Implications



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# Policy Implications

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## Different Types of Projects

- Vacant Lots
- Existing Houses
- Side and Rear Yards
- Accessory Units
- Non-conforming Buildings



# Policy Implications

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## Existing Houses

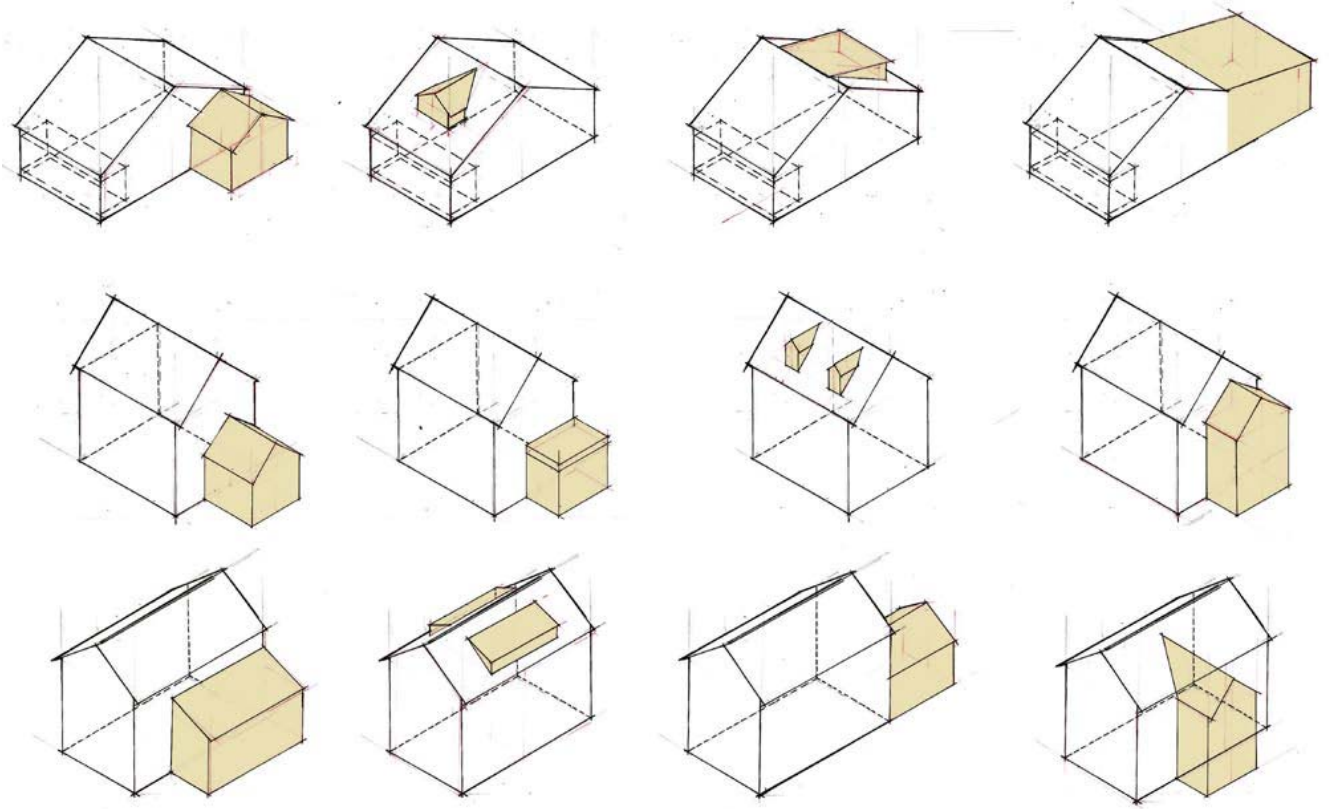
1. Residential buildings may adapt by adding building components



# Policy Implications

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## Components



# Policy Implications

01/21/14 DRAFT

## Building Components

Building components are accessory features that increase square footage beyond the main body of the structure and/or enhance the usefulness of a building type. Components also serve as an indication to outsiders how buildings are used or lived in and can significantly contribute to the pedestrian friendliness of the street.

In the old ordinance, building components are not regulated except through abstract metrics like floor area ratio (FAR) and front, side, and rear setbacks, although nonconformance loopholes often provide the means for non-contextual modifications to structures. The SomervillebyDesign zoning ordinance will correct the way building components are managed by establishing form-based requirements for each type.

Building components do not regulate architectural style and other features common to residential properties such as terraces, patios, and yards are not specifically considered a component of a building.

### Benefits of Building Components:

1. Increases the effectiveness of the code to moderate home additions and modifications by applying standards for each type.
2. Makes the code more responsive to community desires for contextual infill development that reflects existing neighborhood forms and patterns and building facades that engage the street.
3. Increases fairness by applying the same standards to components of the same type, regardless of non-conformance.
4. Increases efficiency by reducing the need for special permits to add components that meet established standards.
5. Provides designers, developers, and homeowners with clear standards on how homes can be adapted - and neighbors with clear expectations about what can happen next door.

#### Entry Canopy

A wall-mounted structure providing shade and weather protection



#### Stoop

A set of stairs leading to the entrance of a building



#### Portico

A covered set of stairs with a landing leading to the entrance of a building



#### Porch

A raised, covered platform with stairs leading to the entrance of a building and providing outdoor amenity space at the front of a building



01/21/14 DRAFT



#### Deck

A raised platform with stairs leading to the entrance of a building

#### Balcony

A platform with a railing projecting from the main body of a building providing outdoor amenity space accessed from a door

#### Dormer Window

A window that projects vertically from a sloped roof

#### Cross Gable

A sloped roof that projects perpendicularly from another sloped roof with rakes structurally integrated into the eave of the main roof

#### Bay

A window assembly extending from the main body of a building to permit increased light, multi-direction views, and articulate a buildings facade

#### Side Wing

Enclosed, roofed interior space extending from the side of the main body of a building

#### Rear Addition

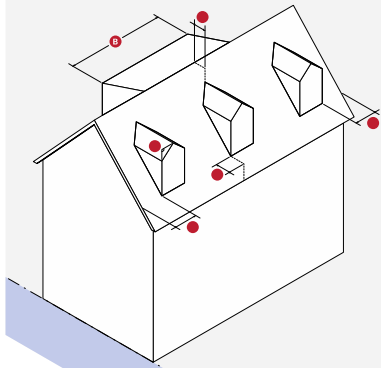
Enclosed, roofed interior space extending from the rear of the main body of a building



# Policy Implications

Article 3. Building Standards Building Components

**8. DORMER WINDOW**  
A window or set of windows that projects vertically from a sloped roof, designed to provide light into and expand the habitable space of a half-story.



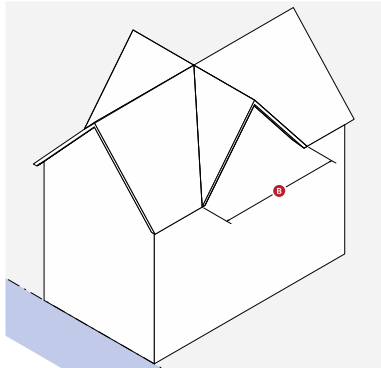
**DIMENSIONS**

Width (max)	24 feet or 50% of the eave length of the main roof (whichever is shorter)
Front & Rear Wall Setback (min)	3 ft. 6 in.
Side Wall Setback (min)	1 ft. 6 in.
Ridge Line Setback (min)	1 foot
Roof Slope (min)	4:12
Fenestration (min)	50%

**STANDARDS**

- Setbacks are strictly enforced regardless of permitted dormer width.
- The maximum permitted width of a dormer applies to single, multiple, or attached combinations of dormers on each side of a roof.

**9. CROSS GABLE**  
A sloped roof that projects perpendicularly from the main roof of a building to significantly increase the habitable space of a half-story.



**DIMENSIONS**

Width (max)	50% of the eave length of the main roof
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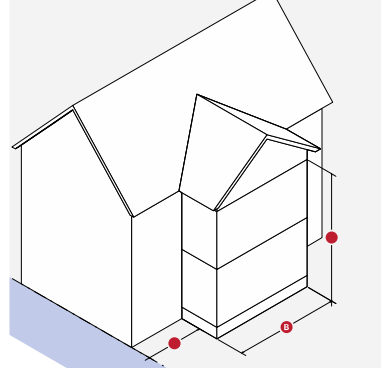
**STANDARDS**

- The rakes of the cross gable roof must be structurally integrated into the eave of the main roof.

DRAFT January 22, 2015 SOMERVILLE ZONING ORDINANCE | 77

Building Components Article 3. Building Standards

**10. SIDE WING**  
A multi-story extension from one or more side walls of the main body of a building.



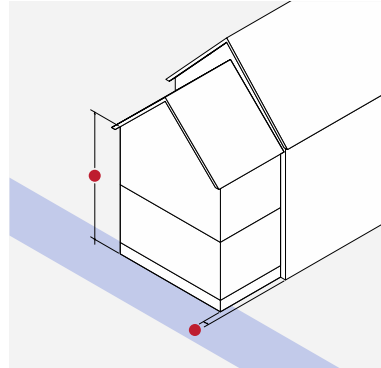
**DIMENSIONS**

Setback from Facade (min)	10 feet
Floor Plate Area (max)	50% of the Floor Plate of Principal Building
Width (max)	--
One (1) Story	1/2 of Main Body Width
Two (2) Stories	1/3 of Main Body Width
Height (min)	Same as Principal Building

**STANDARDS**

- Side wings must include a similarly style roof as the Principal Building.

**11. REAR ADDITION**  
An extension from the rear wall of the main body of a building.



**DIMENSIONS**

Setback from side Elevation (min)	1 foot
Floor Plate Area (max)	50% of the Floor Plate of the Principal Building
Height (max)	2 stories

**STANDARDS**

- The slope of any pitched roof of a rear addition must be equal to or less than slope of the roof of the main body of the building and no less than nine and one-half degrees (9.5'; 2:12).

78 | SOMERVILLE ZONING ORDINANCE DRAFT January 22, 2015



# Policy Implications

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# Proposed Zoning

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## Existing Houses

1. Residential buildings may adapt by adding building components
2. If a lot is big enough, a cottage could transform into a house or a duplex by Special Permit
3. New semi-detached houses can only happen when both sides can be built





# Proposed Zoning

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## Different Types of Projects

- Vacant Lots
- Existing Houses
- **Side and Rear Yards**
- Accessory Units
- Non-conforming Buildings



# Proposed Zoning

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## Side and Rear Yards

- One building permitted per lot
- Rear yards are protected; no houses behind houses
- A wide lot could be split to create two lots, with a permitted building type constructed on each lot



# Proposed Zoning

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## Different Types of Projects

- Vacant Lots
- Existing Houses
- Side and Rear Yards
- **Accessory Units**
- Non-conforming Buildings



# Proposed Zoning

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## Accessory Units

Should accessory units be permitted?

- Limitations in size
- Located in basement
- No more than 2 unrelated persons
- Must be owned by a resident(s) living in another unit on the lot
- Special permit considerations:
  - Quality of the living space
  - Access to light and air circulation
  - Privacy of on-site residents and neighbors
  - Design of any exterior alterations necessary



# Proposed Zoning

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## Different Types of Projects

- Vacant Lots
- Existing Houses
- Side and Rear Yards
- Accessory Units
- Non-conforming Buildings



# Proposed Zoning

## Non-Conforming Buildings



Grandfathered  
Building Types

Triple Decker  
Four-Plex  
Six-Plex  
Apartment Building



May exist in  
perpetuity but no  
new ones  
permitted



City of Somerville  
Zoning Overhaul

Mayor Joseph A Curtatone  
Office of Strategic Planning  
& Community Development

# Proposed Zoning

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## Non-Conforming Buildings



1. Maintain current use
2. Tear down building, and follow rules for vacant lots
3. Use existing building for 'fabrication' type uses



# Proposed Zoning

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## Non-Conforming Buildings



MUSKAT  
STUDIOS



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# City of Somerville Zoning Overhaul

