Dormer & 3-Story Zoning Amendment

Land Use Committee - 4/16/2026

The Problem

- Current dormer rules are onerous, expensive, and less energy efficient
- Current rules are not in keeping with existing dormers throughout the city
- Current rules limit how much living space we can add to the city

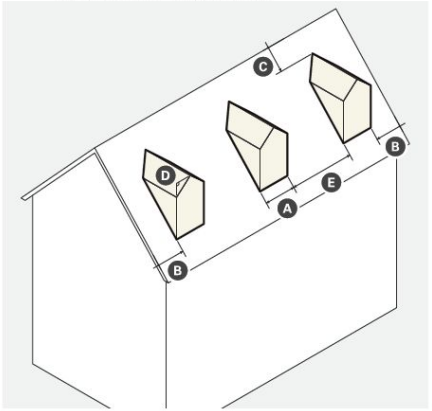
Our amendment lifts most of these restrictions and simplifies the zoning rules

~New (2026) version of the amendment incorporates feedback from PPZ~

Current Zoning

k. Gable Dormer

i. A gable dormer is a window space with a GABLE, HIP, or arched roof that projects perpendicularly from a pitched roof. Dormer windows provide light to the HABITABLE space of a half-STORY.



Dimensions	
A Face Width (max)	window(s) width +18 in
Side Wall SETBACK (min)	--
Roof with eave	0 ft
Roof without eave	1 ft
B Facade & Rear Wall SETBACK (min)	3 ft
C Ridge SETBACK (min)	1 ft
D Dormer Separation (min)	50% of width

ii. Standards

a). The face wall of a gable dormer may not project beyond the exterior wall of the BUILDING and may not interrupt the eave of the roof.

b). Gable dormers may be combined with a shed dormer(s) to create a Nantucket dormer.

c). The cumulative width of a single, multiple, or attached combinations of dormers may equal up to fifty percent (50%) of the eave/ridge length of the roof.

d). Flat roofs are prohibited.

l. Shed Dormer

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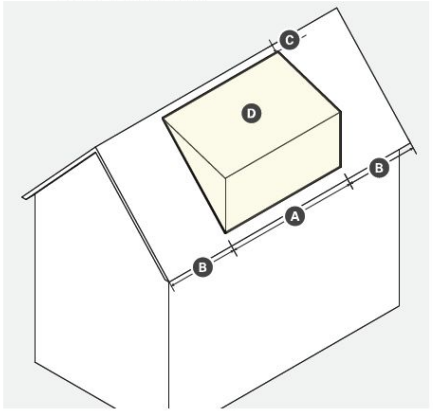

Dimensions	
A Face Width (max)	window(s) width +36 in
Side Wall SETBACK (min)	--
Roof with eave	0 ft
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Face Width

Requires dormers to be mostly windows

- Decreases energy efficiency
  - Even the best window is much worse than an insulated wall
- Causes strange window configurations
  - Meeting the letter of the rule, but probably not the spirit
- Makes it harder to partition the new space
  - Makes interior partition walls difficult, and results in furniture against windows
- Adds significant cost
  - Windows are expensive, especially efficient ones
  - Framing has to be more complex to carry snow loads
- Doesn't match every other floor
  - Zoning requires all floors to have 15% fenestration, which is what we propose for dormers

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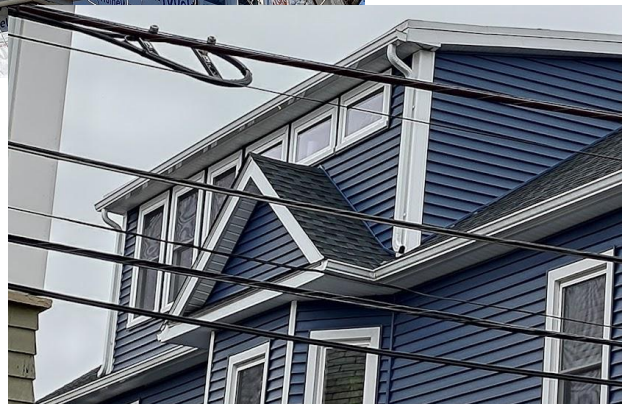
Conforming Examples



Non-Conforming Examples

Setbacks

Purely aesthetic restrictions

- Limit flexibility for our older housing stock
  - 3ft can be the difference between a bedroom and a large closet
- More expensive to build
  - Ridge setbacks require complex framing to handle snow loads
- Don’t match existing dormers

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More Non-Conforming Examples

Cumulative Width

Allows half of each side of the roof to be a dormer

- Greatly limits flexibility
- Many existing dormers are larger
- Doesn’t allow for a full dormer on any side
  - Many homes have these
  - Some even have them on both sides

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ii. Standards
a). The face wall of a shed dormer may not project beyond the exterior wall of the BUILDING and may not interrupt the eave of the roof.
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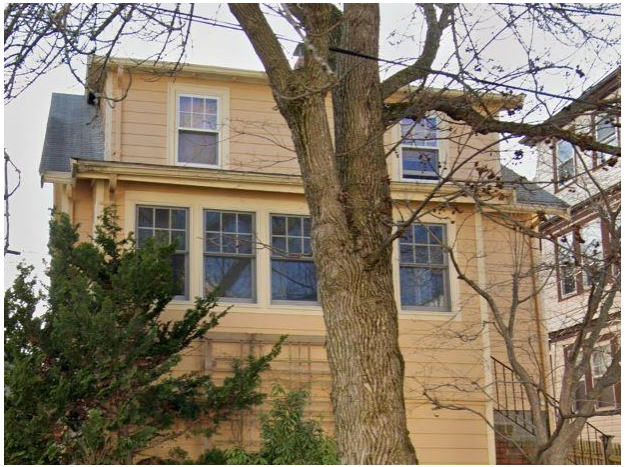
Full Width Examples



Full Width Examples

Our Amendment

- 15% Fenestration instead of “Face Width”
  - In-line with all other floors of buildings
- Remove setback minimums and cumulative width maximums
  - Let building code and house type dictate any needed restrictions
  - Let people build what works for their home
- Allow 3 stories on all NR homes
  - Brings other building types in-line with recently legalized triple deckers
  - Allows easier accessibility (like elevators)

k. Gable Dormer

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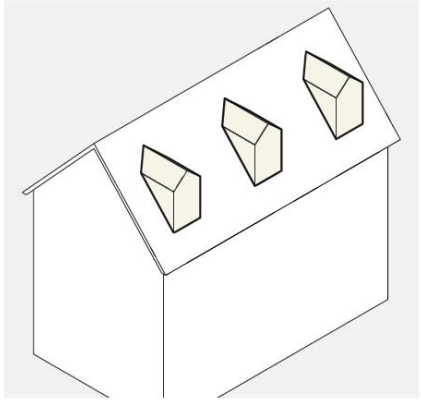

Dimensions	
Fenestration (min)	15%

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c). Gable dormers may interrupt the eave of an existing roof only if the finished floor of the half story is two (2) or more feet below the eave.
d). Gable dormers may project from a Cross Gable or be combined with a shed dormer(s) to create a Nantucket dormer.
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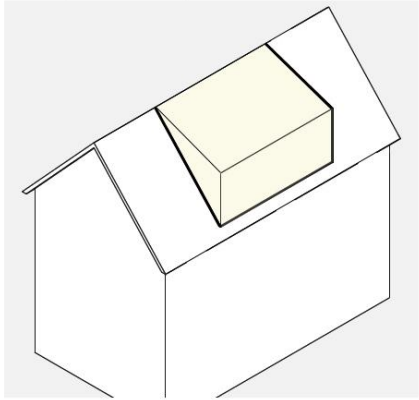

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e). Flat roofs are prohibited.
f). Full-width shed dormers are permitted.

Benefits

- More flexibility with less cost
  - People can expand their homes upward in a way that fits their needs more easily
- Less strain on city resources
  - Fewer projects will need drawn-out ZBA hearings, freeing city staff
- Meets climate goals
  - Fewer mandatory windows allows more insulation and efficiency
- Meets housing goals
  - More space to help growing families stay in their homes
  - More bedrooms for tenants to live in

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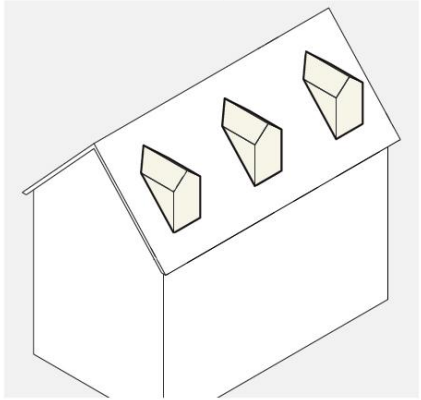

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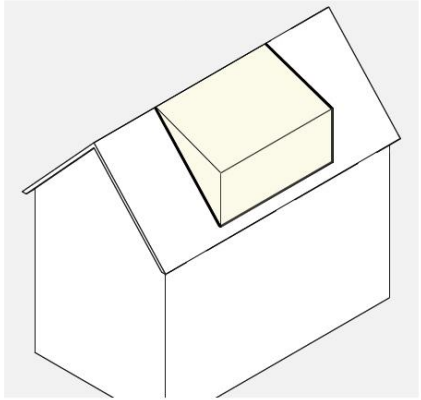

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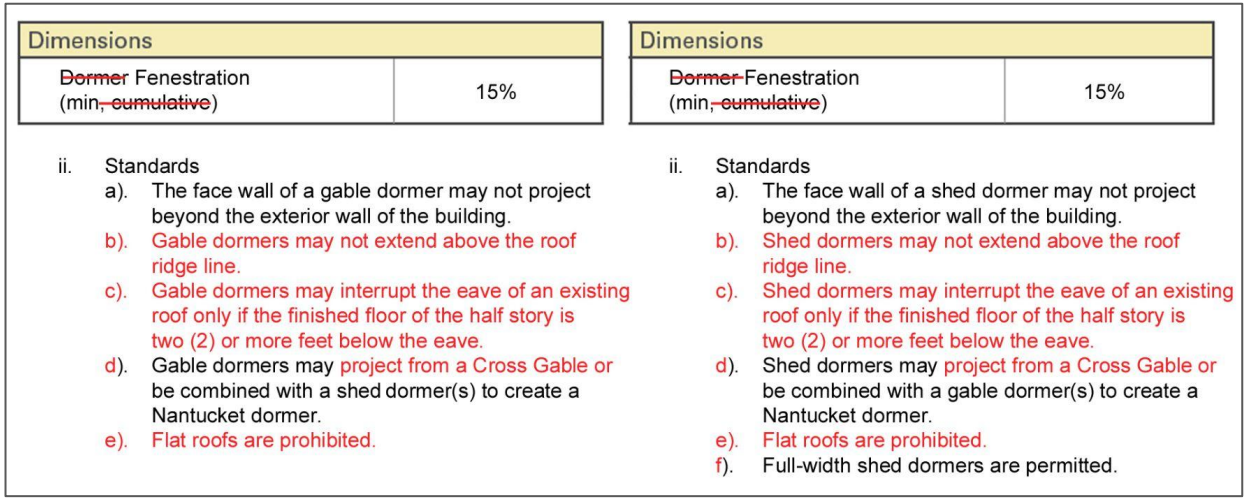
2025 vs 2026

Incorporated language/changes from PPZ

- Simplified fenestration
- Brought back some minor aesthetic rules
- Re-prohibited flat roofs



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Only sticking point is front setbacks

- PPZ proposed a 2ft front setback on side-facing dormers, and no setbacks otherwise
- We feel that a front setback is arbitrary and restricts flexibility
- PPZ's survey on dormer changes showed most people don't really care what dormers look like