

# Belmont Multifamily Zoning

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# **I. Welcome and Brief Introduction**

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# Welcome and brief introduction

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## Belmont MBTA Communities Advisory Committee

- Rachel Heller, Co-Chair (Housing Trust)
- Roy Epstein, Co-Chair (Select Board)



# Process Team

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## **Town of Belmont**

- Chris Ryan, Director Office of Planning & Building and Town Planner



## **Belmont MBTA Communities Advisory Committee**

- Rachel Heller, Co-Chair (Housing Trust)
- Roy Epstein, Co-Chair (Select Board)
- Thayer Donham, Clerk (Planning Board)
- Paul Joy (Economic Development Committee)
- Drew Nealon (Historic District Commission)
- Julie Wu (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Implementation Committee)
- Patrick Murphy (Board of Assessors)



## **Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)**

- Josh Fiala AICP AIA LEED AP, Principal Land Use Planner
- Sarah Scott, Regional Land Use Planner II
- Najee Nunnally, Community Engagement Specialist



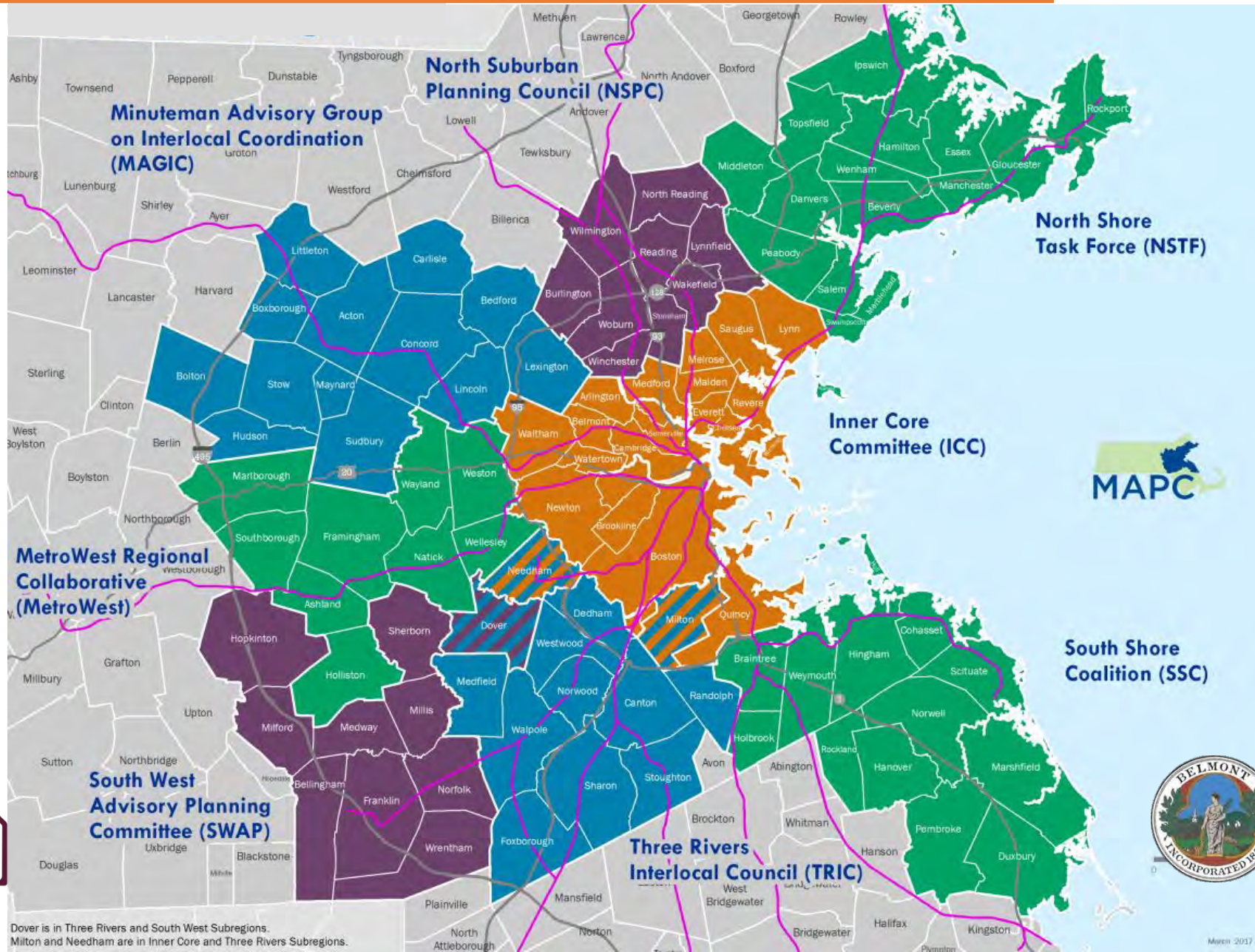
# **Belmont MBTA Communities Advisory Committee**

***The Advisory Committee's charge is to recommend zoning that complies with 3A and works best for Belmont.***

***The recommendations will transition to the Planning Board to advance to Town Meeting.***

***Belmont residents will decide whether to adopt a recommended zoning district at a 2024 Fall Town Meeting.***

## Belmont Multifamily Zoning





# Community Forum Agenda

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- I. Welcome and brief introduction** – MBTA Communities Advisory Committee Co-Chairs (10)
- II. Summary of requirements** – MAPC (25)
- III. Summary of work completed to-date** – MAPC (35)
  - I. Presentation of map iterations and refinement**
  - II. Presentation of subdistricts and characteristics**
- IV. Next Steps** – MAPC & Town (10)
- V. Public participation (questions and comments)** – Town Facilitation (40)
- VI. Post-presentation coffee mixer**



# Community Forum Goals

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- Help attendees understand the new law
- Gather feedback to continue to refine the approach to 3A zoning for Belmont
- Share the process for continuing to develop 3A zoning
- Build a common understanding of the work that has been done
- Encourage attendees to stay involved





# Community Forum Expectations

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- *In scope of meeting:*

- Definitions of the 3A law
- Discussing progress to date
- Discussing potential solutions and refinements
- Providing your feedback

- *Out of scope of meeting:*

- Debating whether Belmont should comply with the law
- Questioning whether Belmont should follow specific 3A requirements



## **II. Summary of Requirements**

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# 3A Alignment with Town Priorities

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**For example,**

- Building Belmont's Future: Housing Production Plan (2023)
- A Vision for Belmont: Mapping a Sustainable Future (2010)
- Waverley Square TAP Report (2022)
- Other Plans, Reports, and Studies





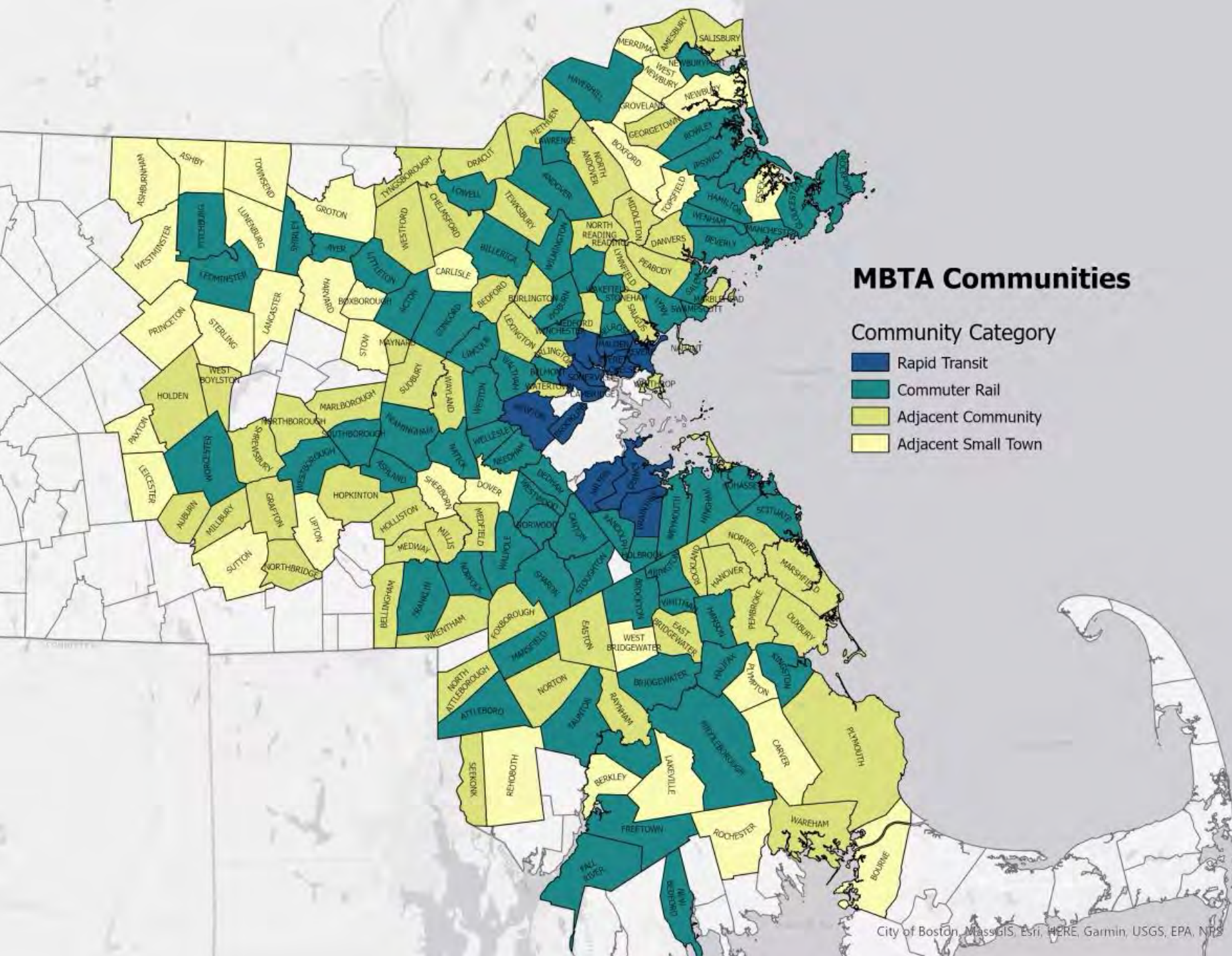
# Purpose

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Develop *zoning* that facilitates progress towards **community goals**, expanded **housing opportunity**, and **compliance** with the Multifamily Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities under Section 3A of M.G.L. Chapter 40A (“**Section 3A**”)

Section 3A requires Zoning Bylaws in 177 MA communities to provide:  
*“...at least one district of reasonable size in which multifamily housing is permitted as of right, with no age restrictions, and is suitable for families with children.”*





## MBTA Communities

### Community Category

- Rapid Transit
- Commuter Rail
- Adjacent Community
- Adjacent Small Town



# MBTA Communities

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## 22 municipalities have now passed 3A zoning:

- Arlington
- Braintree
- Brookline
- Cambridge
- Chelsea
- Everett
- Grafton
- Haverhill\*
- Lexington
- Lowell\*
- Malden
- Medford
- Milton
- Newton
- Northbridge
- Pembroke
- Quincy
- Revere
- Salem\*
- Somerville
- Stoneham
- Wareham

\* Commuter Rail communities

## 2 municipalities have achieved EOHLC compliance:

- Lexington
- Salem





# Section 3A Requirements for Belmont

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- Belmont is classified as a “commuter rail community”
- **Zoning must be adopted and submitted to EOHLC for compliance review by December 31, 2024.**
- Compliance is based on specific requirements defined for each municipality



# Defining Terms

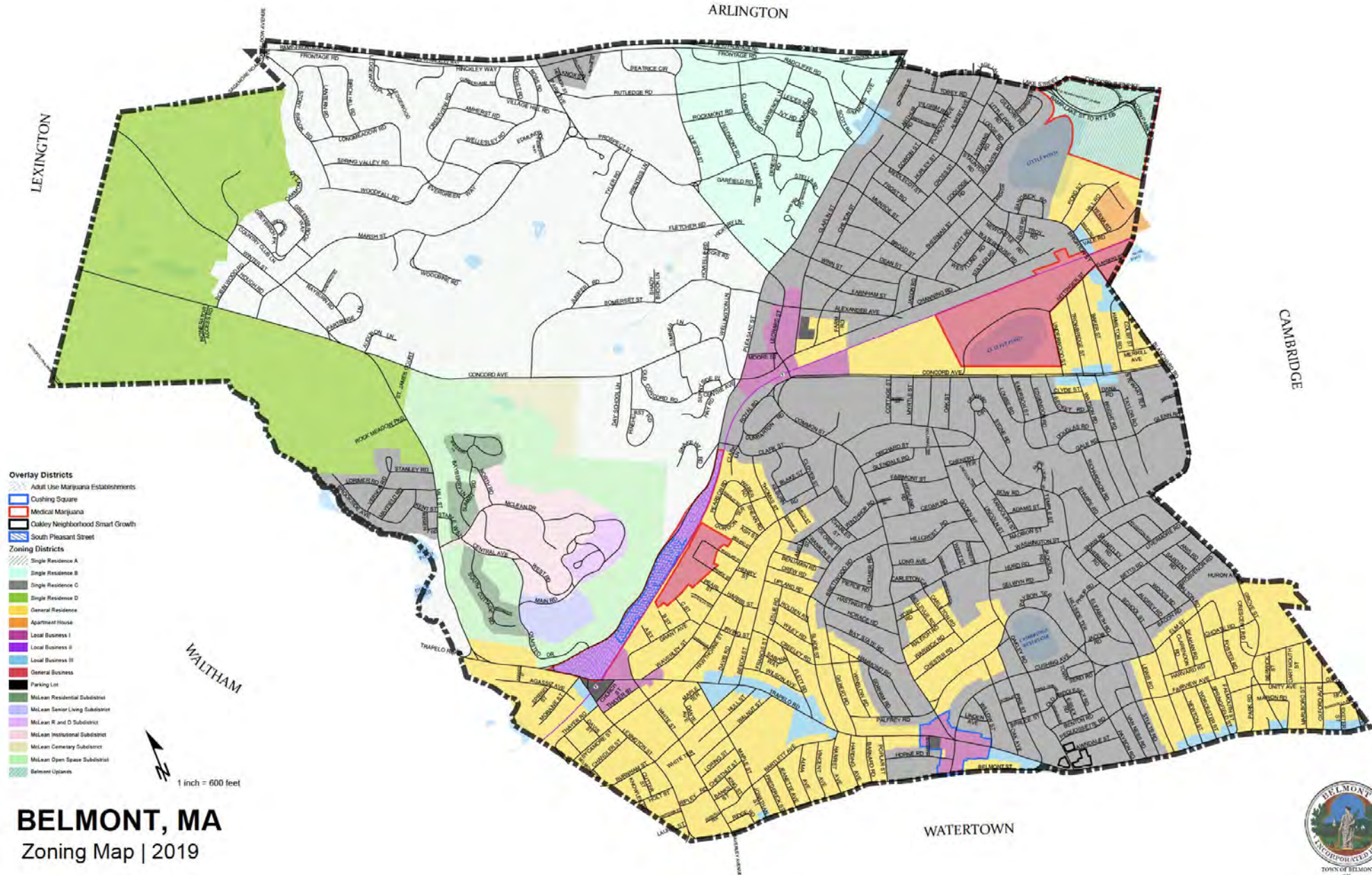
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*At least one district of reasonable size in which multifamily housing is permitted as of right, with no age restrictions, and is suitable for families with children*

- "Reasonable size" is defined (for Belmont) as a minimum of 28 acres
- "Multifamily housing" is defined as 3+ units
- "Permitted as of right" may include site plan review but excludes subjective and discretionary reviews such as special permits
- "No restrictions" for age of residents or who could live there



# Belmont Zoning





# Defining Terms - Zoning

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- Sets the rules for future development, redevelopment, and land use
- Evolves over time with changes approved at Town Meeting
- Topics covered in the Town's Zoning Bylaw:
  - Zoning districts, allowed uses, dimensional standards (e.g. building height, setbacks), parking requirements, and other regulations



# Section 3A Requirements for Belmont

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## *Units*

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Minimum multifamily unit capacity: **1,632**

Minimum transit area unit capacity (50%): **816**

Allowed units from mandatory mixed-use: **408**

## *Area*

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Minimum gross land area (acres): **28**

Minimum transit area (50%) (acres): **14**

## *Other*

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Minimum contiguity (of total proposed area): **50%**

Minimum dwelling units per acre: **15**

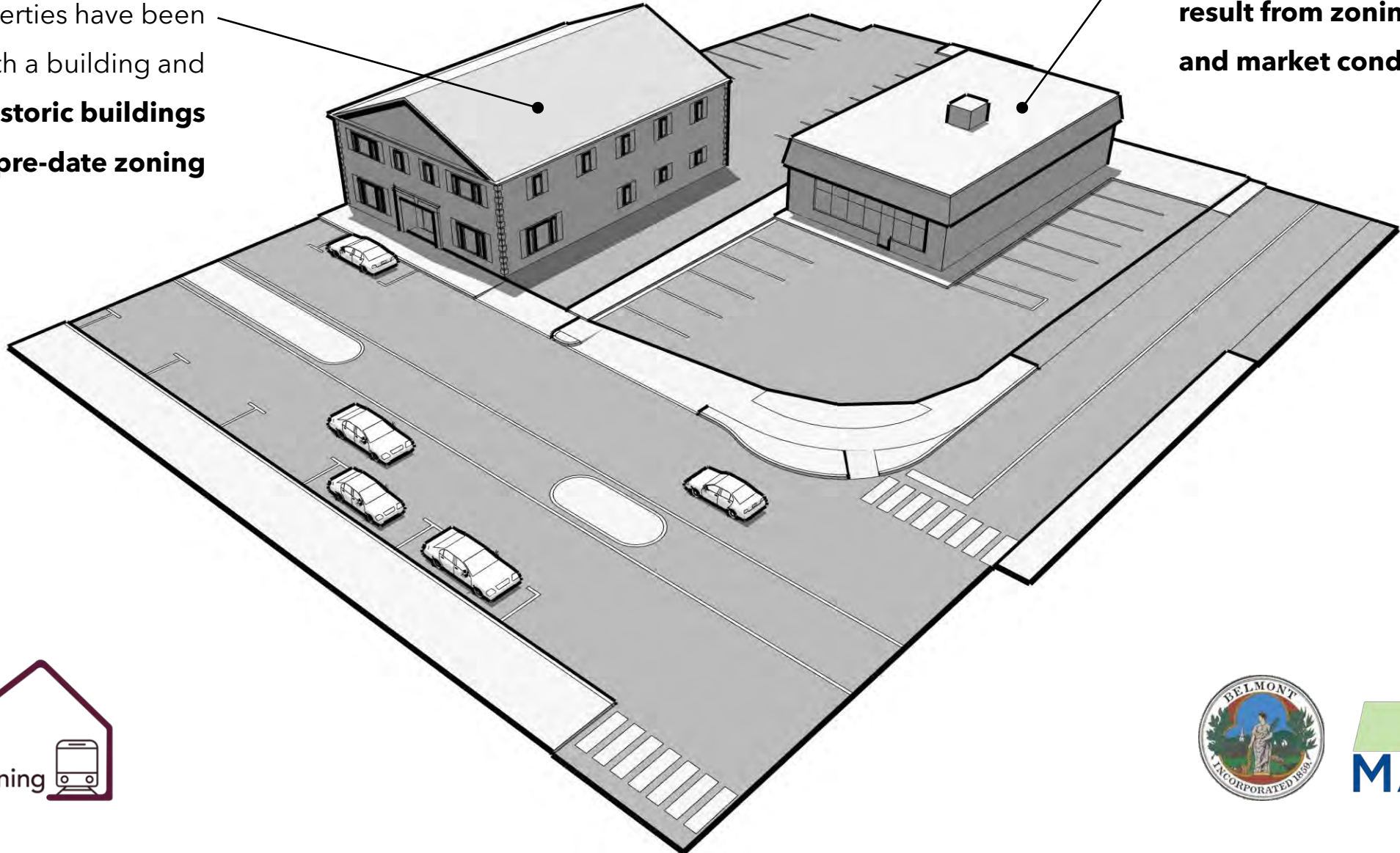
Allowed affordability: **Up to 10%; up to 20% with additional Economic Feasibility Analysis (EFA)**



# Minimum multifamily unit capacity

Many properties have been developed with a building and parking, **some historic buildings may pre-date zoning**

Other properties may have been developed more recently and **result from zoning regulations and market conditions**

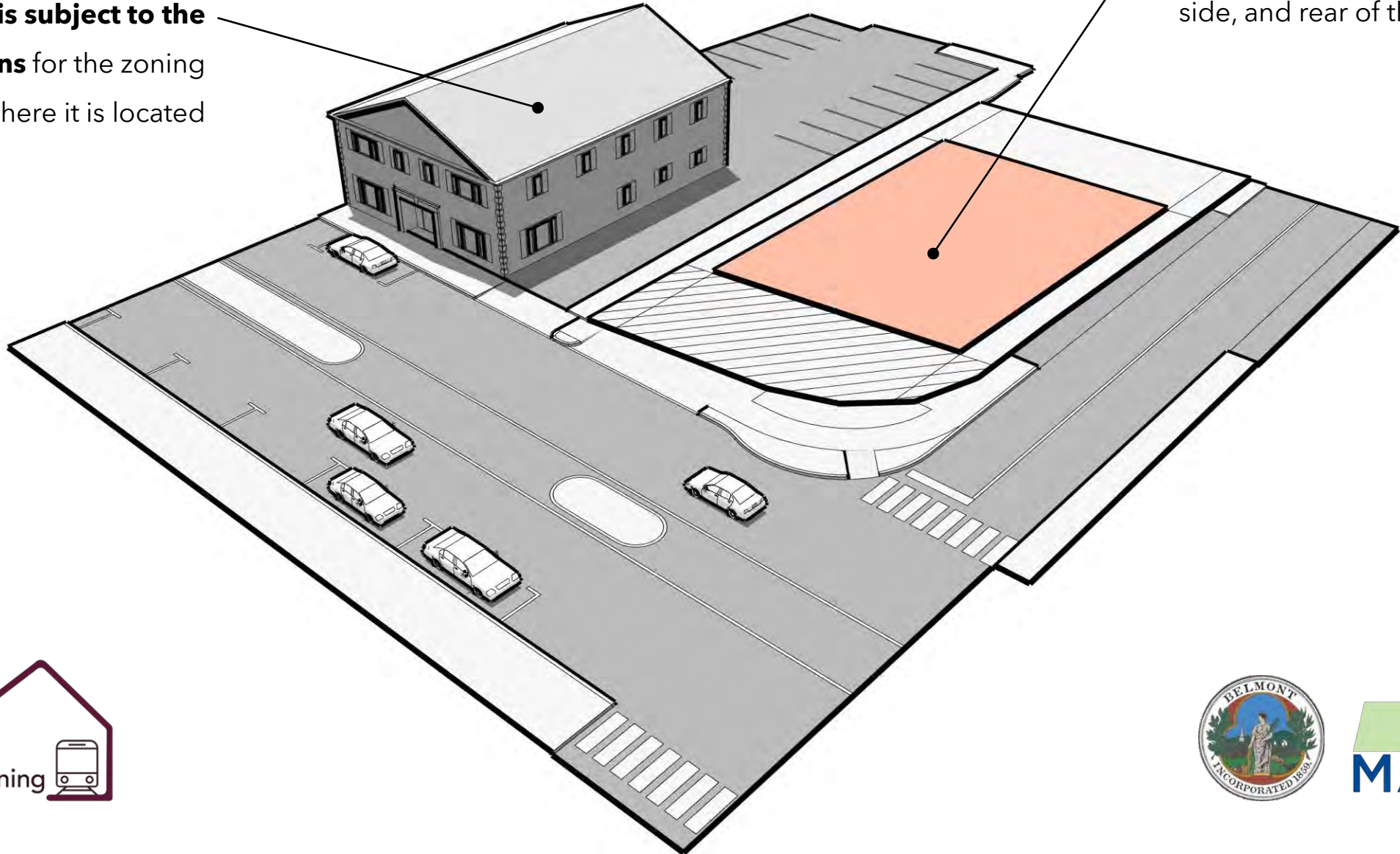




# Minimum multifamily unit capacity

Every property is subject to the zoning regulations for the zoning district where it is located

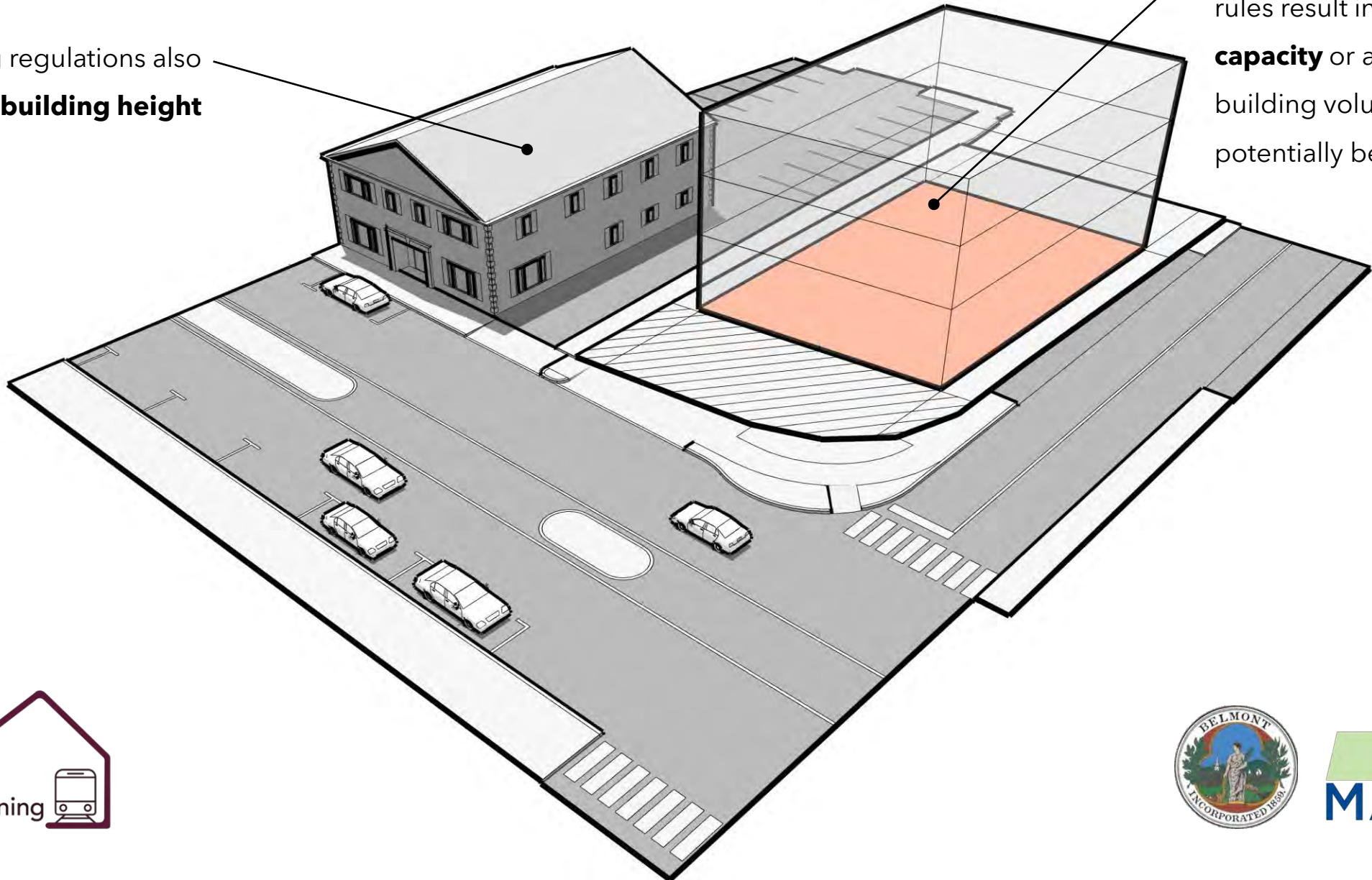
Zoning regulations include rules such as **lot setbacks** at the front, side, and rear of the property



# Minimum multifamily unit capacity

Zoning regulations also include **building height**

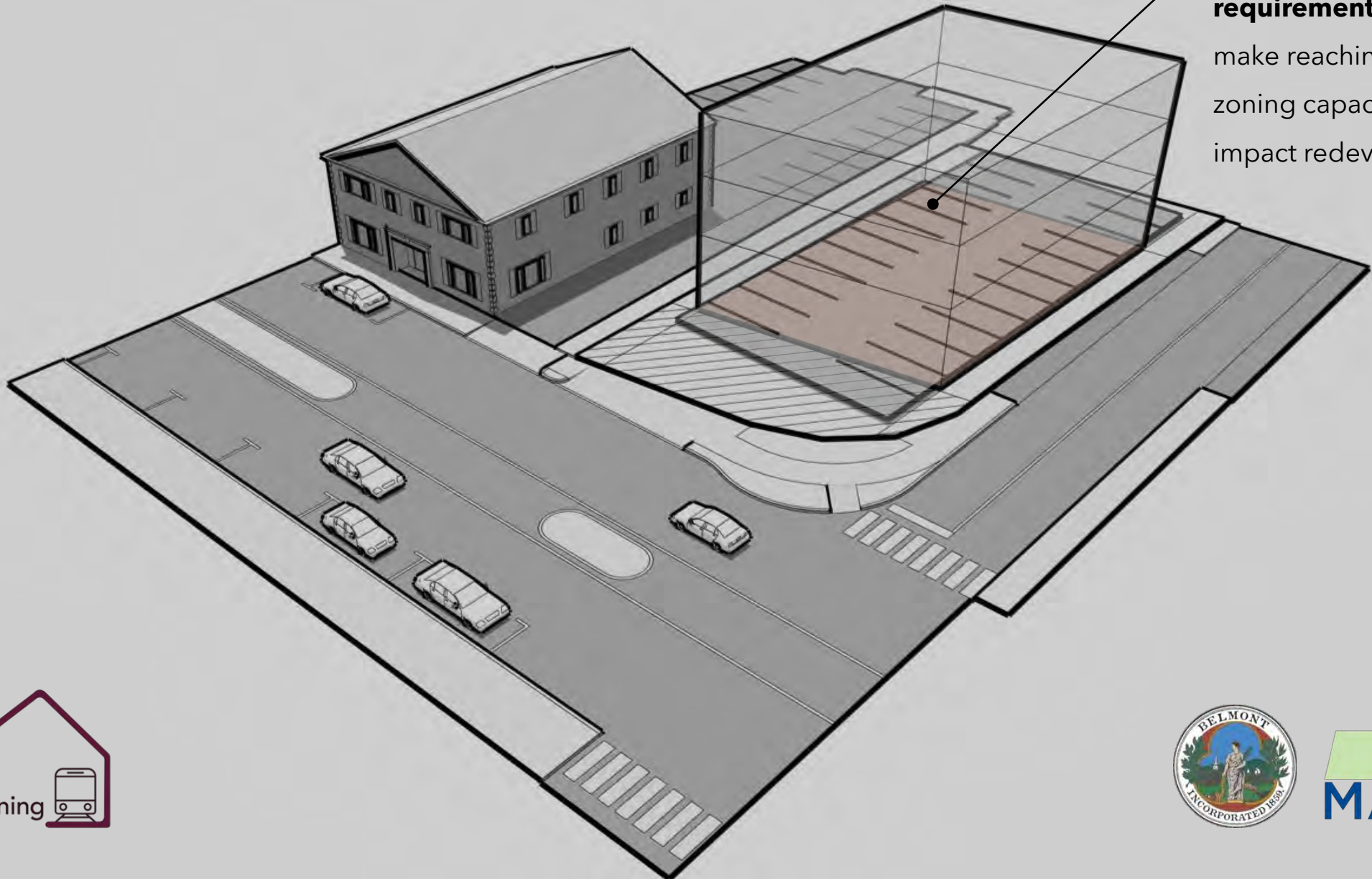
The combination of zoning rules result in a **zoning capacity** or a hypothetical building volume that could potentially be built





# Minimum multifamily unit capacity

Note that **parking requirements** frequently make reaching the full zoning capacity difficult and impact redevelopment



# Minimum multifamily unit capacity

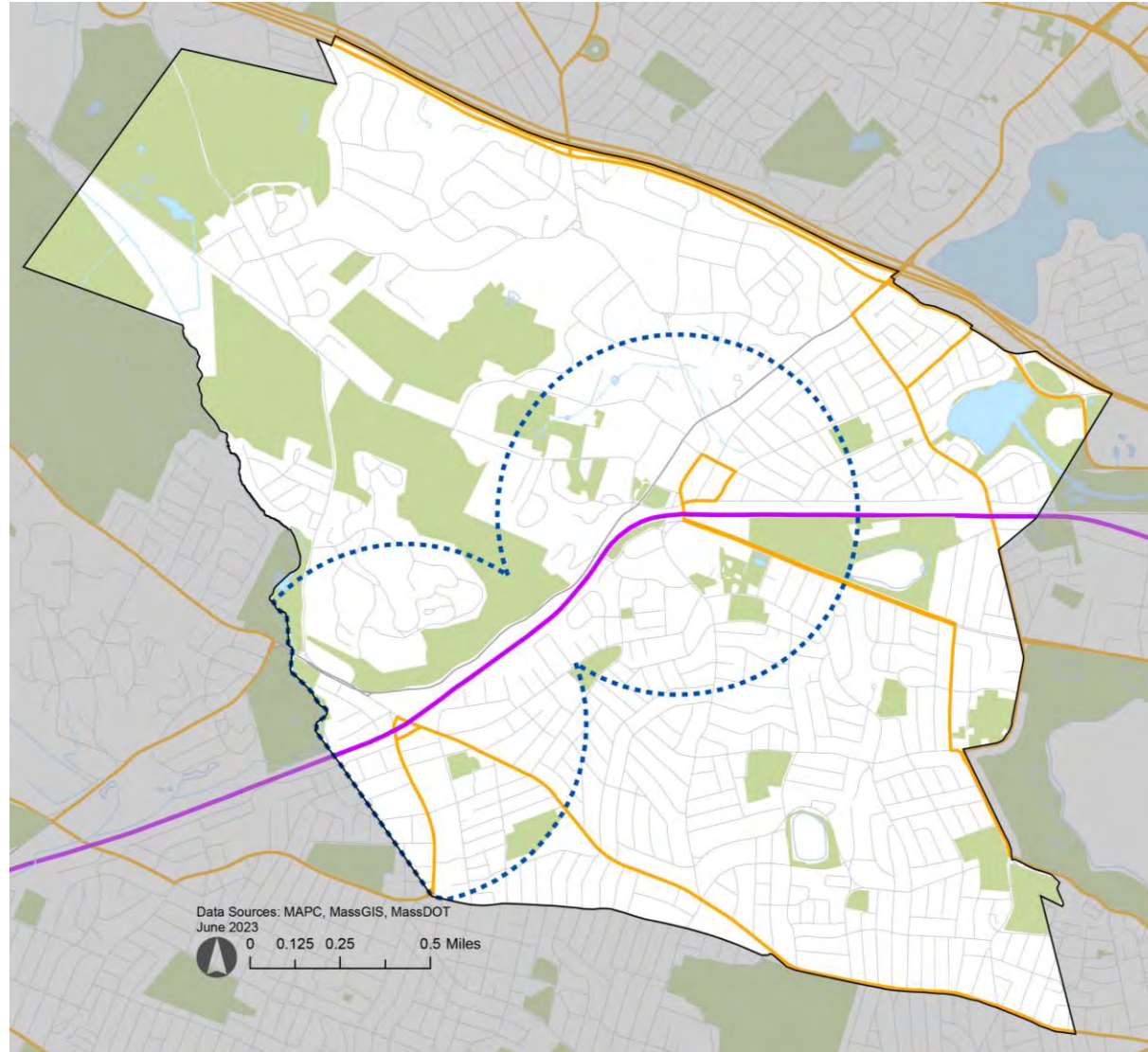
The **multifamily unit capacity** exists for all properties, even properties with an existing building

The compliance model calculates **multifamily unit capacity of X units**. This is the figure used for 3A compliance.

For 3A compliance, it does not matter what is on the property today or what may be built in the future.



# Minimum transit area unit capacity



**50% of the minimum unit capacity must be within 0.5 miles of a Commuter Rail station (See dashed blue circles)**

# Allowed Units from Mandatory Mixed-use

- Mixed-use cannot be required...
- ...except in a "Mandatory Mixed-use District" (MMU) which would count toward the zoned unit capacity (up to 25%) but not count for the acreage required
- For contiguity, MMU is "connective" but not "contributing"
- Conditions for approval of MMU

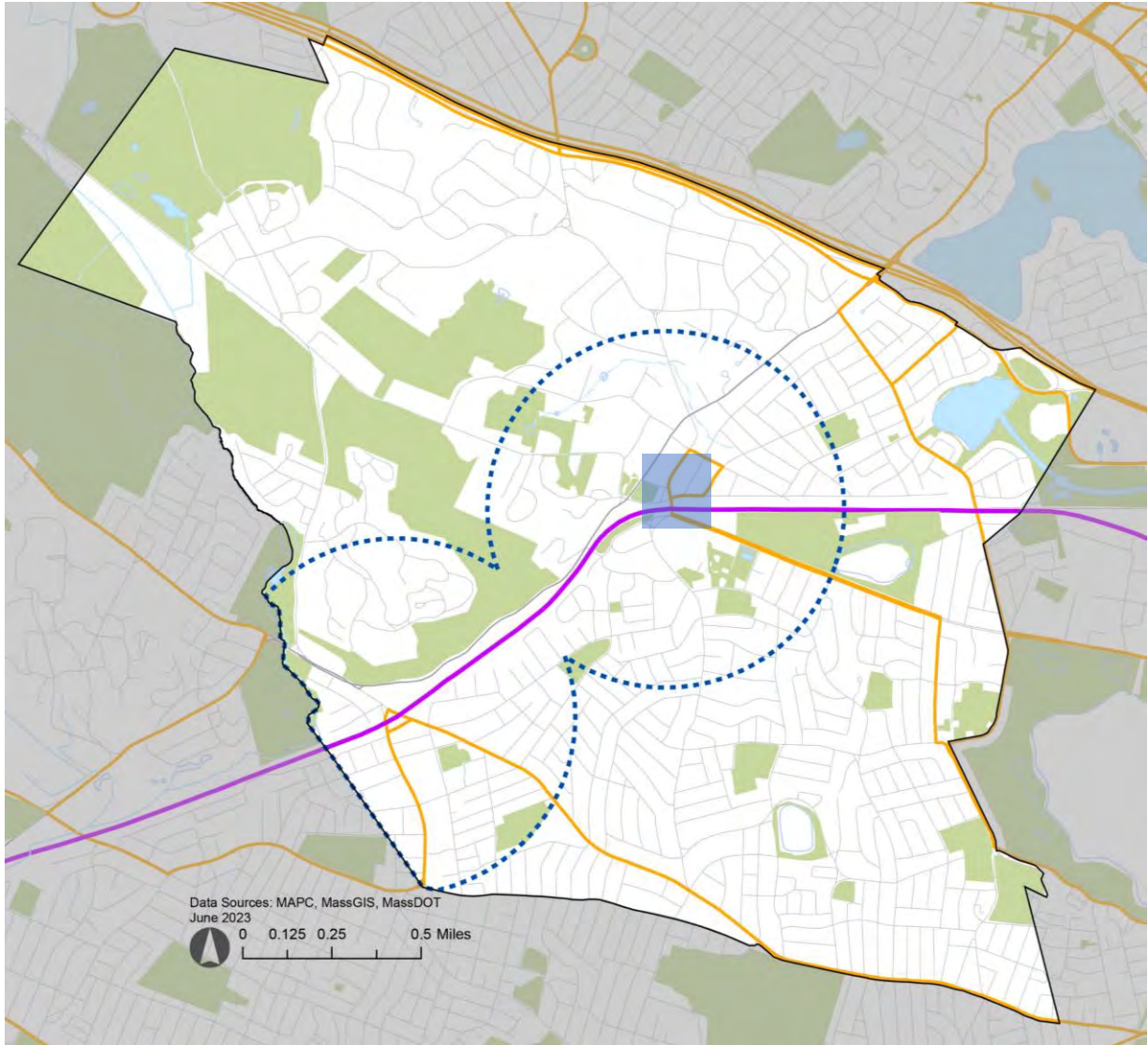


# Minimum Gross Land Area



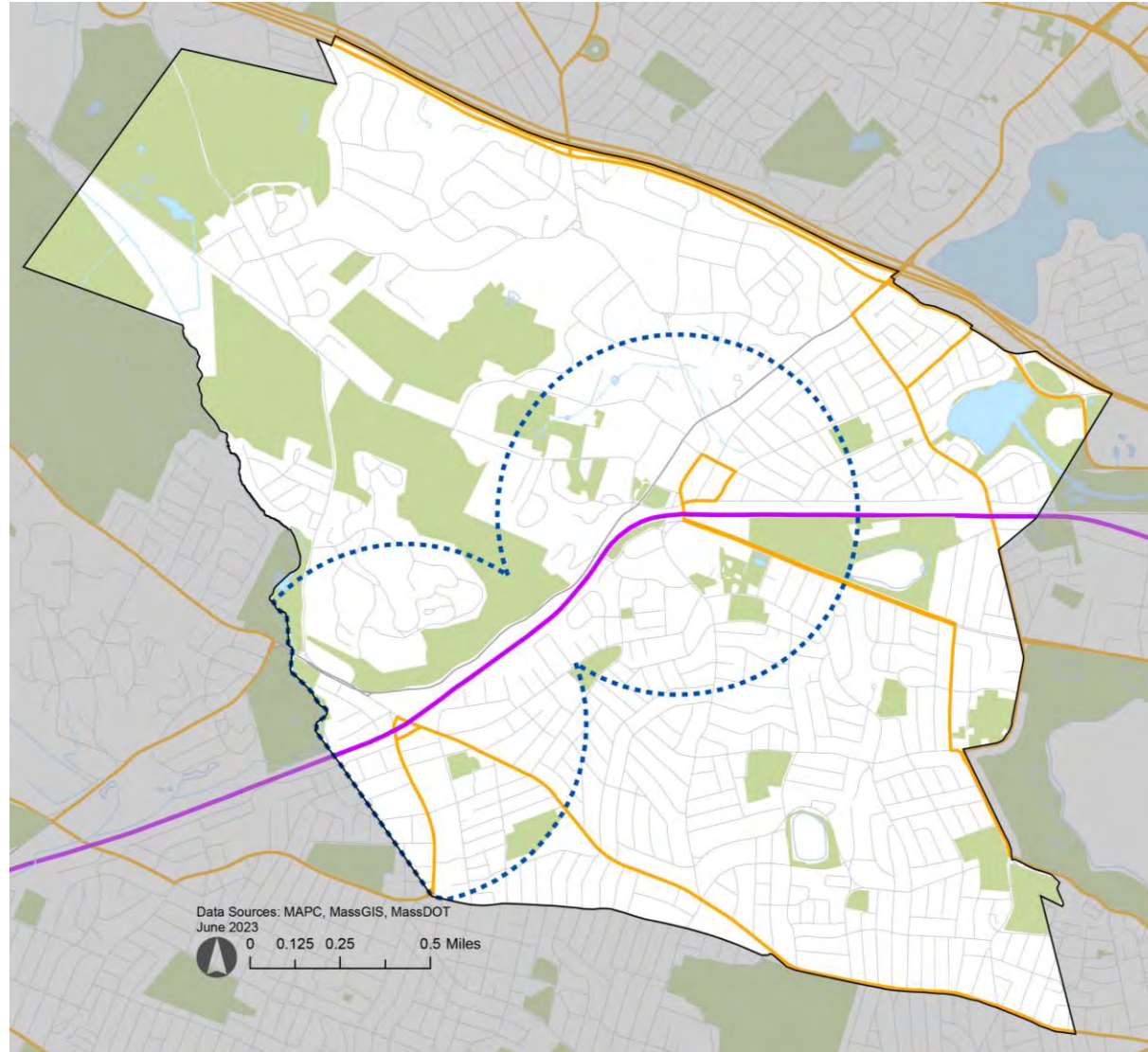
**The minimum land area is 28 acres\***

\*This is roughly equivalent to the size of Belmont Center / shaded area





# Minimum Transit Area



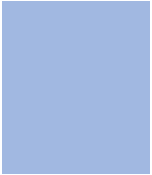
**50% of the minimum land area must be within 0.5 miles of a Commuter Rail station (See dashed blue circles)**



# Minimum Contiguity Defined

## Example

60%



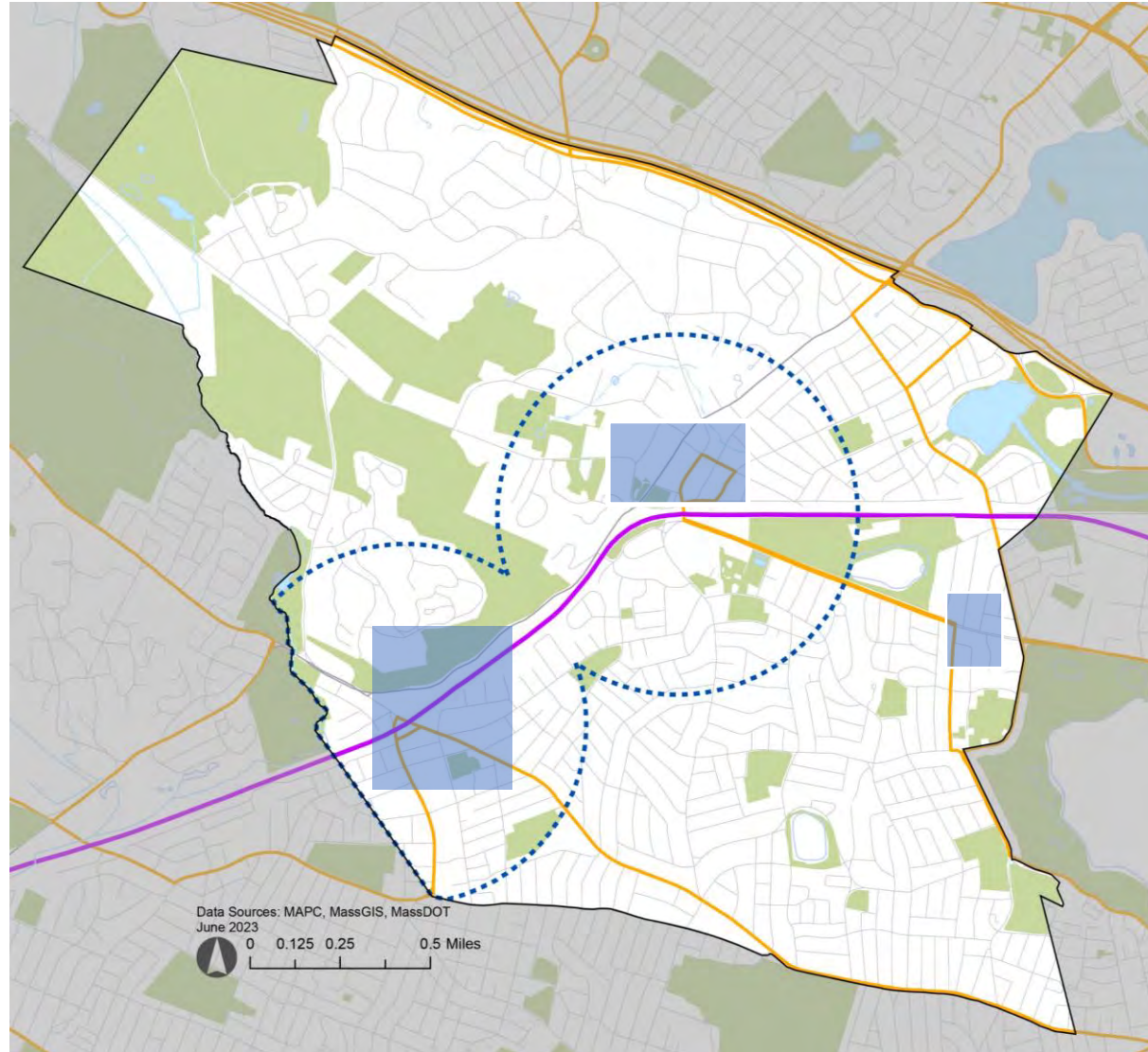
30%



10%



=100%



**50% of the proposed land area must be in one connected district**



# **Minimum dwelling units per acre**



# Allowed Affordability

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- Affordability is not required
- Up to 10% affordability is allowed to be applied without conditions
- Up to 20% is allowed with additional financial feasibility modeling referred to as an Economic Feasibility Assessment (EFA)
- Also, MGL 40R districts can be used for 3A with up to 25% affordability
- However, affordability is one of a set of goals the Committee deemed important in framing their approach and does warrant consideration as a factor impacting strategies.



# Are there any clarifying questions?

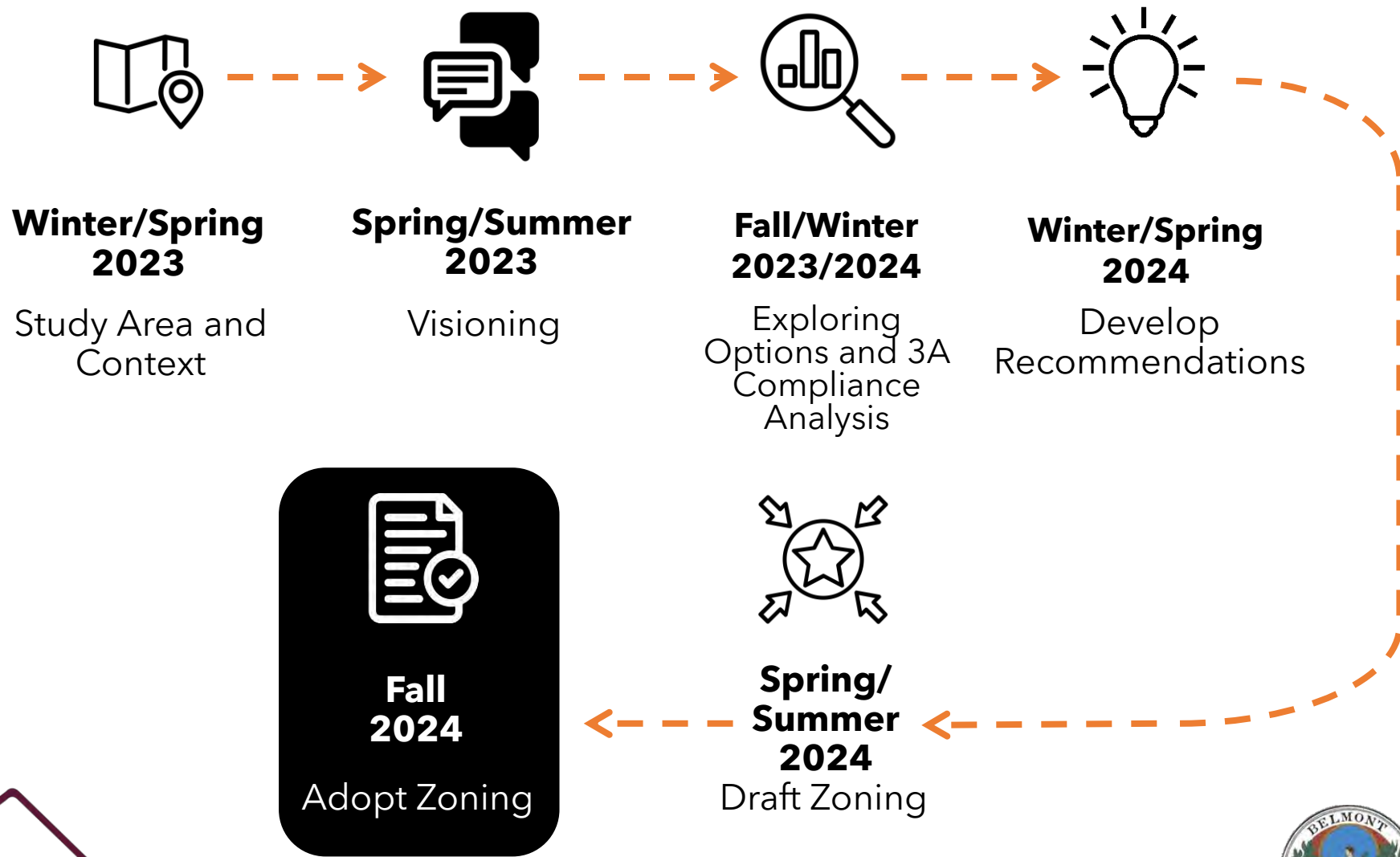




## **II. Summary of work completed to-date**

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# Timeline



Belmont has until **December 31, 2024**, to adopt a zoning amendment that complies with Section 3A



# Belmont 3A Committee Guiding Goals and Principles

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**Goal 1** – Be informed and guided by prior relevant town reports, plans, and studies

**Goal 2** – Be equitable and context sensitive with distribution of sites and unit counts

**Goal 3** – Use good planning principles and best practices

**Goal 4** – Be strategic and flexible in creating a final proposed option

**Goal 5** – Maximize economic development opportunity without compromising other key goals

**Goal 6** – Protect the essential character and scale of Belmont to the extent possible

**Goal 7** – Meet key housing benchmarks and metrics

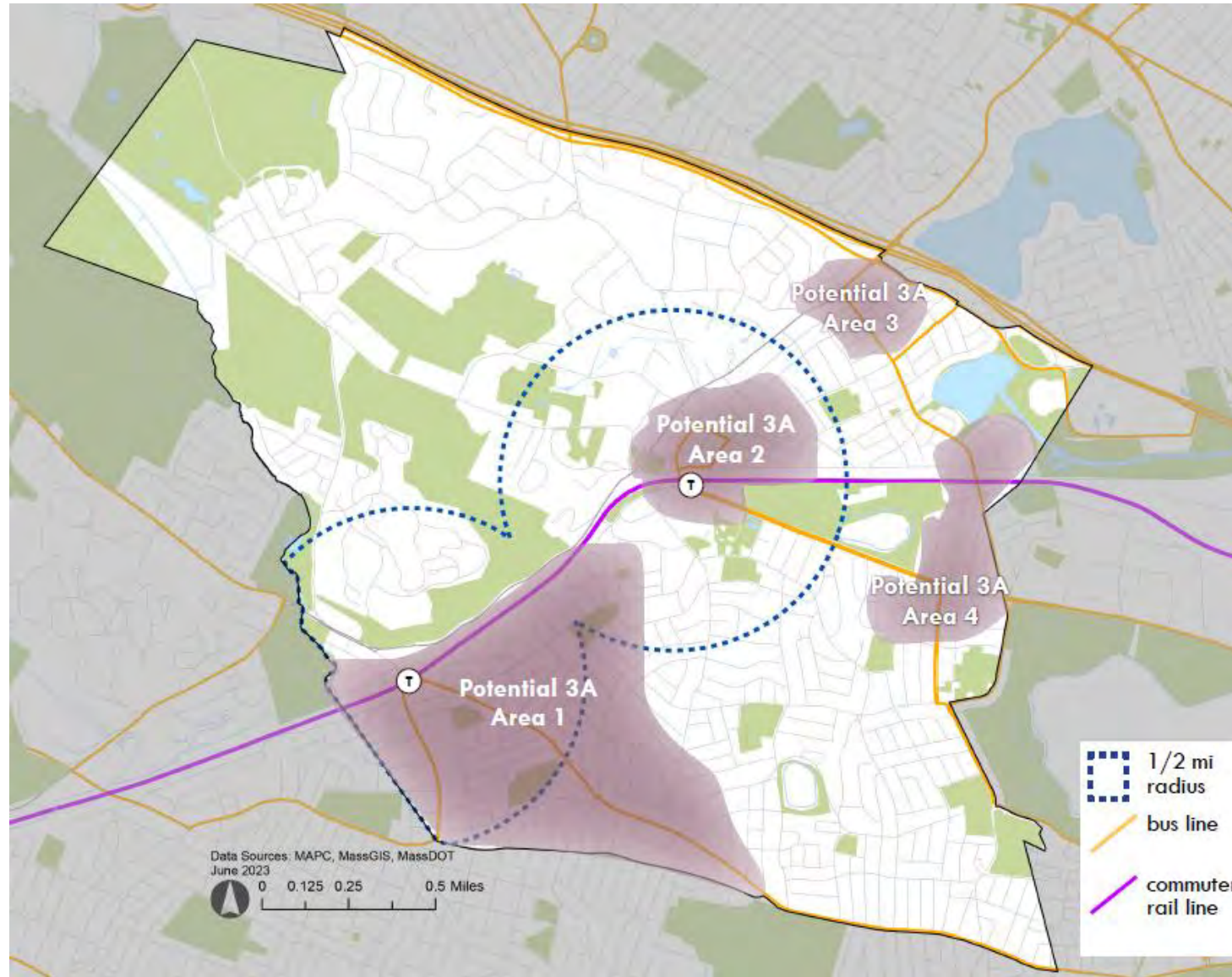
**Goal 8** – Adopt a meeting and communication framework



**Note:** None of these goals are intended to be of greater weight than any other and are intended to be considered comprehensively and together to develop a solution that works best for Belmont. They were developed by consensus by the boards and committees making up the Advisory Committee.



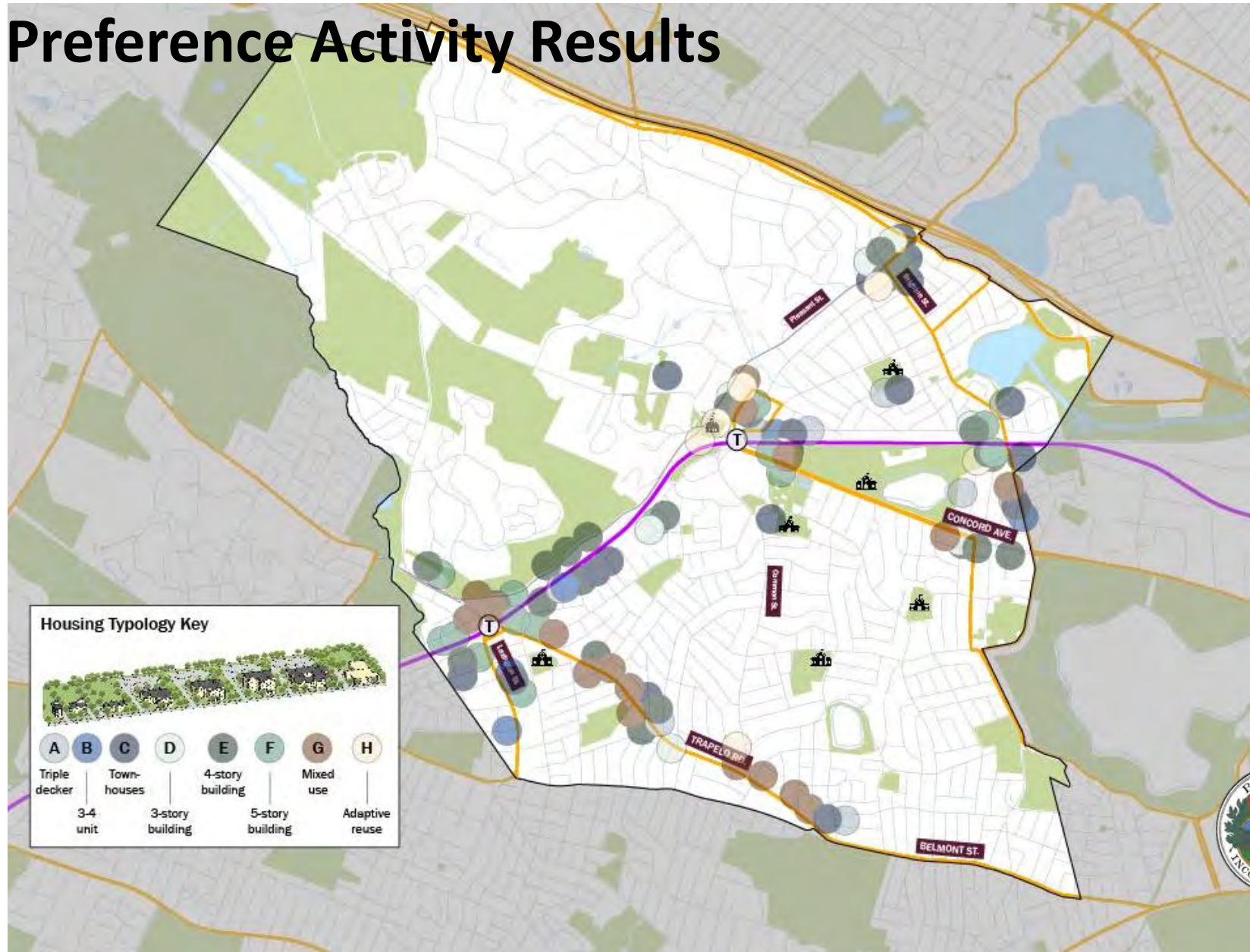
# Community Forum (June 2023)



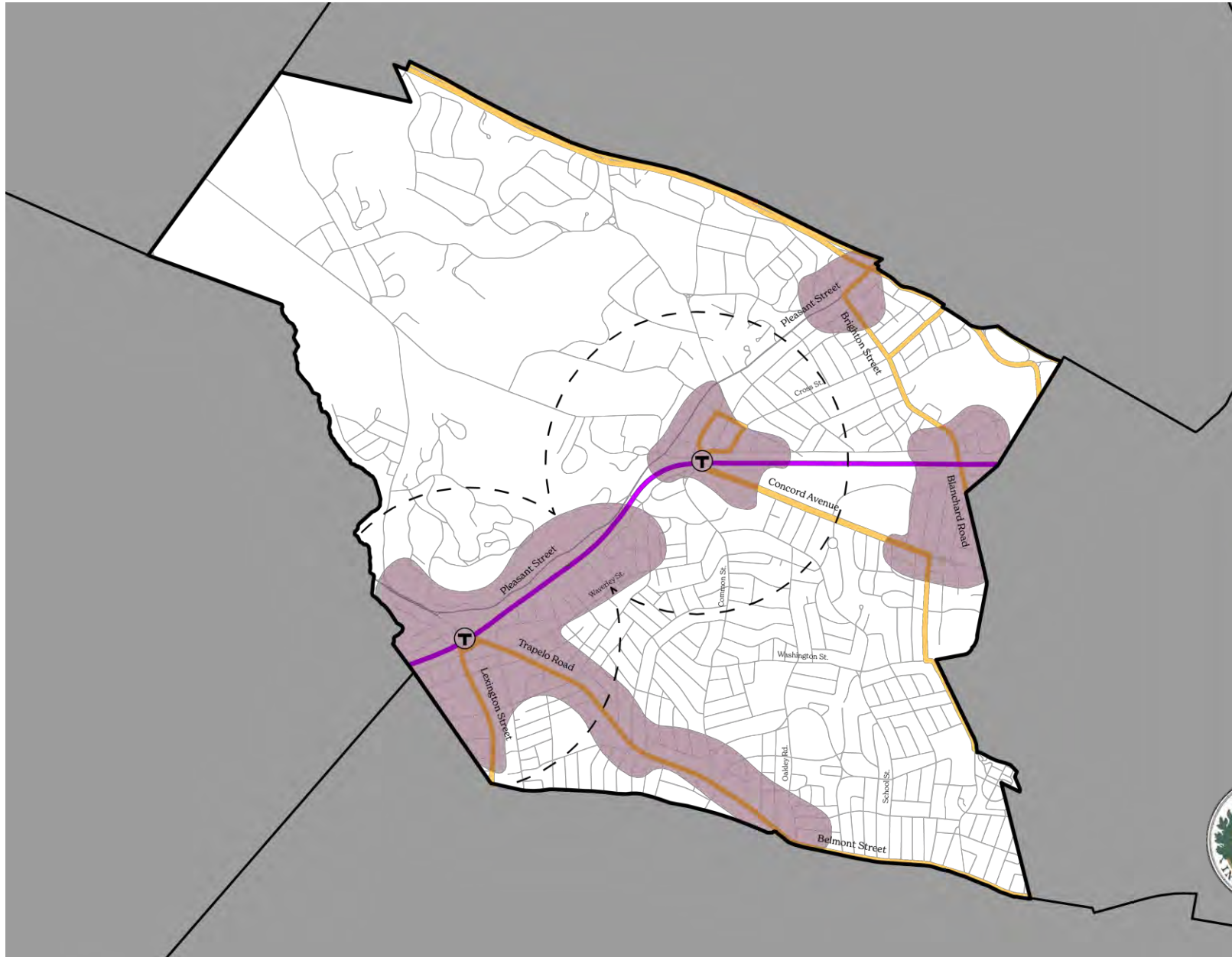


# Community Forum (June 2023)

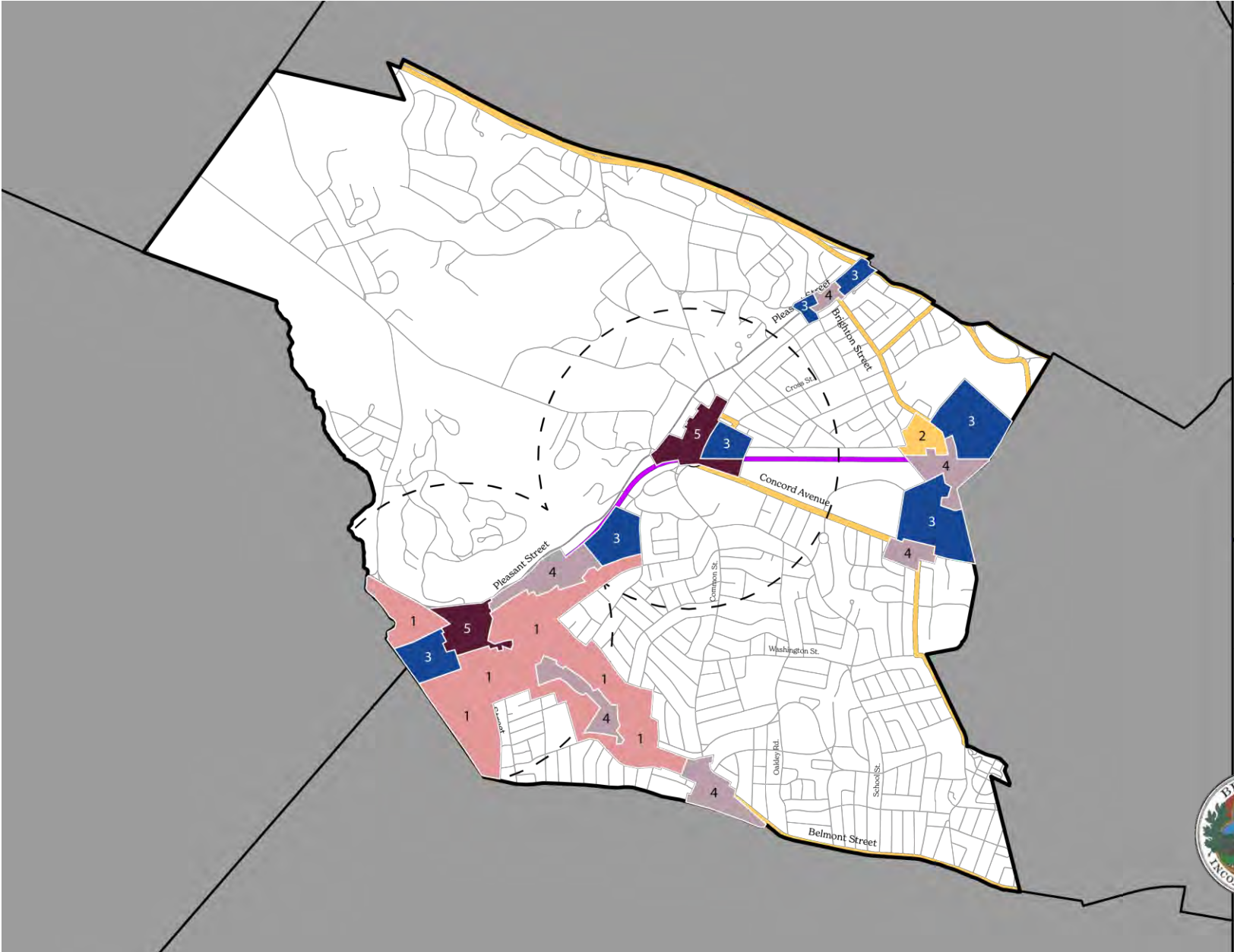
## Visual Preference Activity Results



# Community Feedback (June 2023)



# Working Subdistrict Boundaries (August 2023)





# Working Subdistrict Characteristics

*WORKING DRAFT IN PROGRESS*



## Subdistrict 1

Small-Scale  
Neighborhood  
Residential



## Subdistrict 2

Moderate-Scale  
Neighborhood  
Residential



## Subdistrict 3

Moderate-Scale  
Traditional  
Residential

**3 residential subdistricts that  
respond to the existing context**

**2 mixed-use districts  
of different scales  
and incentives**



## Subdistrict 4

Small-Scale  
Mixed Use



## Subdistrict 5

Moderate-Scale  
Mixed Use



# Compliance Model Inputs

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	<div>Small-Scale Neighborhood Residential</div> <div></div>	<div>Moderate-Scale Neighborhood Residential</div> <div></div>	<div>Moderate-Scale Traditional Residential</div> <div></div>	<div>Small-Scale Mixed Use</div> <div></div>	<div>Moderate-Scale Mixed Use</div> <div></div>
	Subdistrict 1	Subdistrict 2	Subdistrict 3	Subdistrict 4	Subdistrict 5
Min. Lot Size (SF)	2,700	5,000	2,600	0	0
Open Space %	30%	30%	25%	15%	15%
Building height (stories)	2	2	3	2	3
Max. lot coverage %	50%	60%	60%	75%	75%
Parking spaces per unit	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.5	0.5
Mandatory Mixed-use	No	No	No	Yes	No

# Additional Subdistrict Considerations

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## Subdistrict 2A

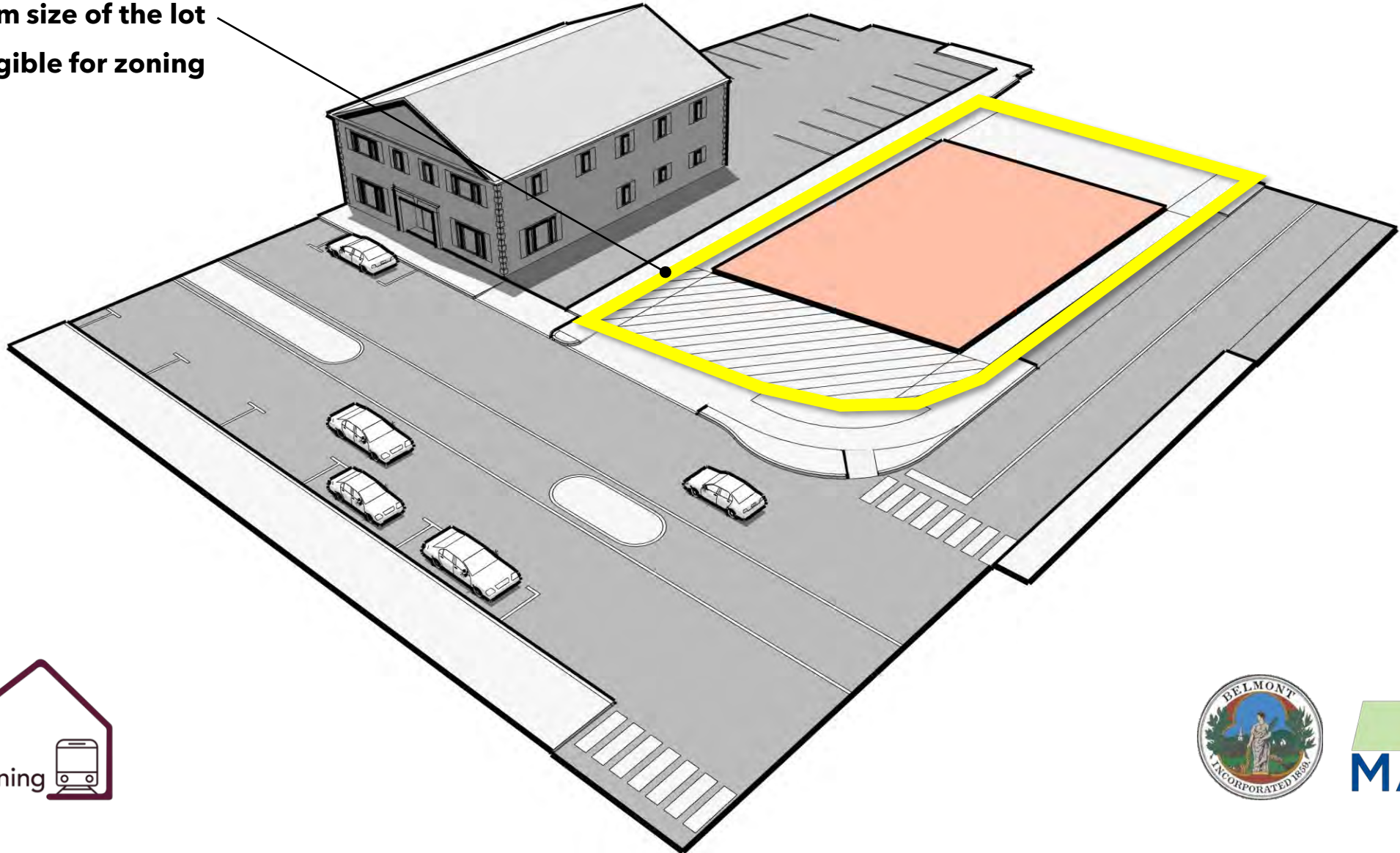
- Incentive Sub-Zone
- 15,000 sf min lot size
- Allow additional height up to 5-story, 60 feet
- Belmont Housing Authority properties
- Additional affordability required

## Incentive Sub-Zone

- Mixed-use incentive with additional height
- Allow up to 5-story
- Require mixed-use
- Approval by Special Permit

# Minimum lot size

Minimum size of the lot  
to be eligible for zoning

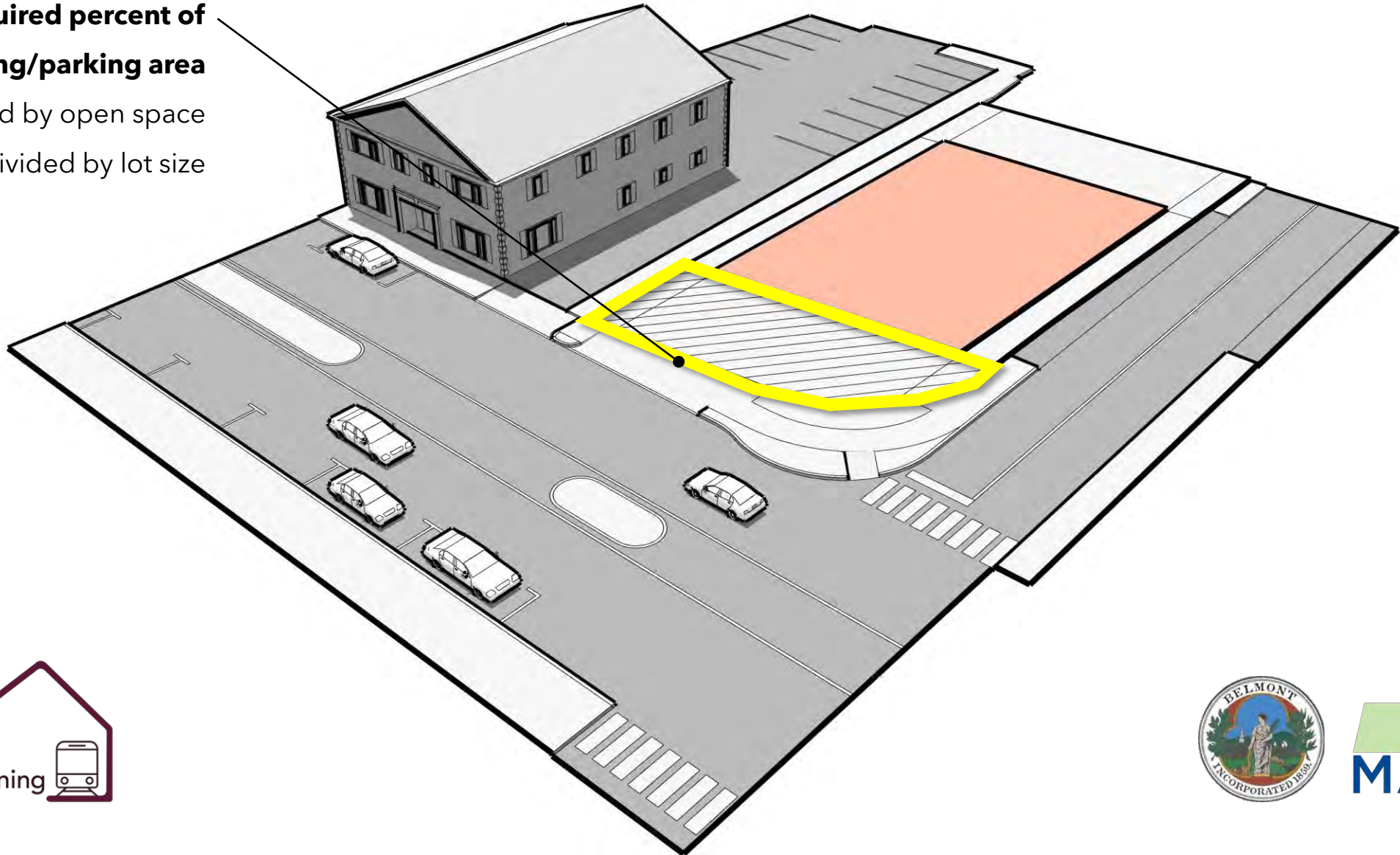




# Open space requirement

## Minimum required percent of non-building/parking area

Calculated by open space  
divided by lot size

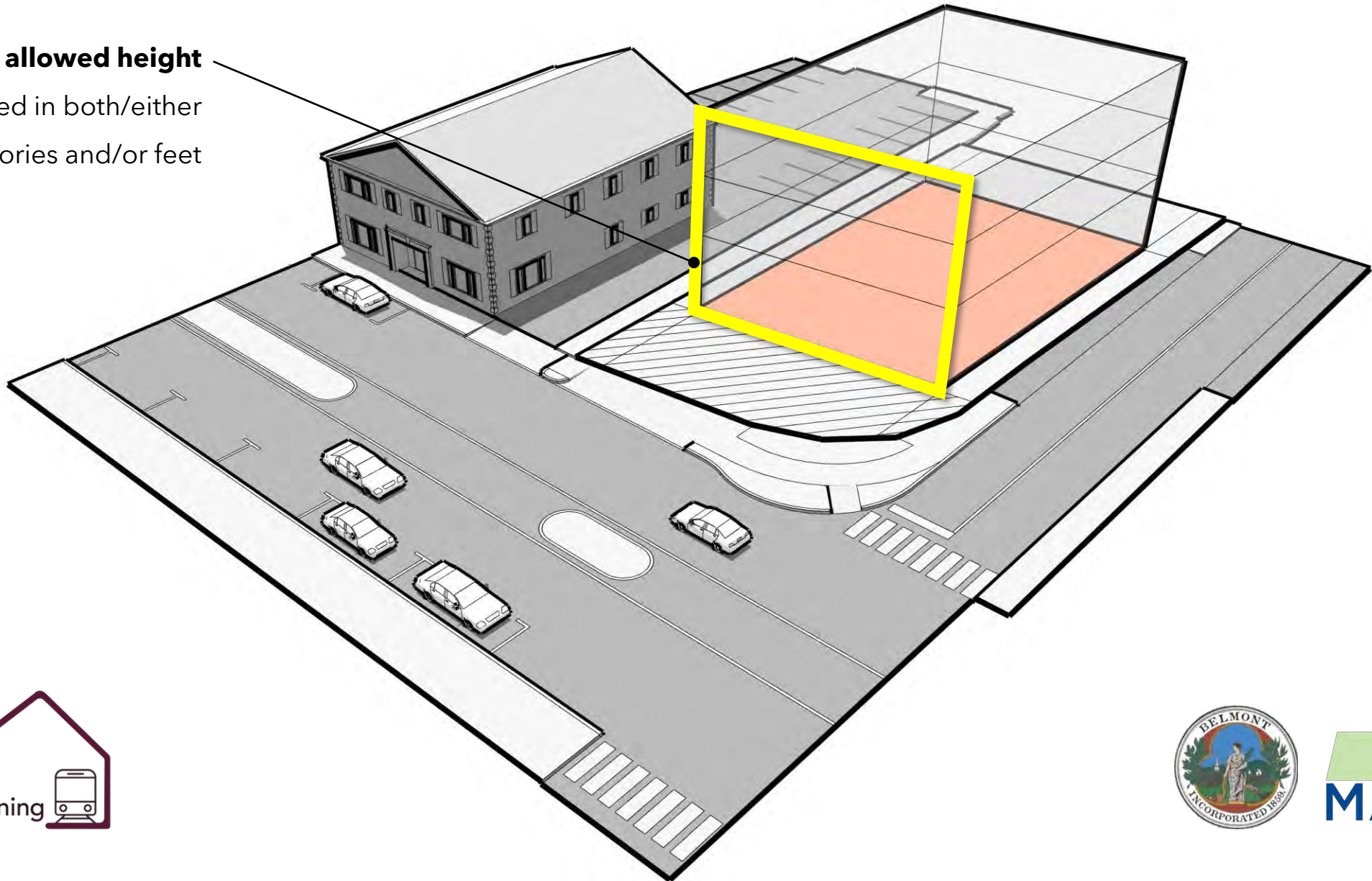




# Building height

## Maximum allowed height

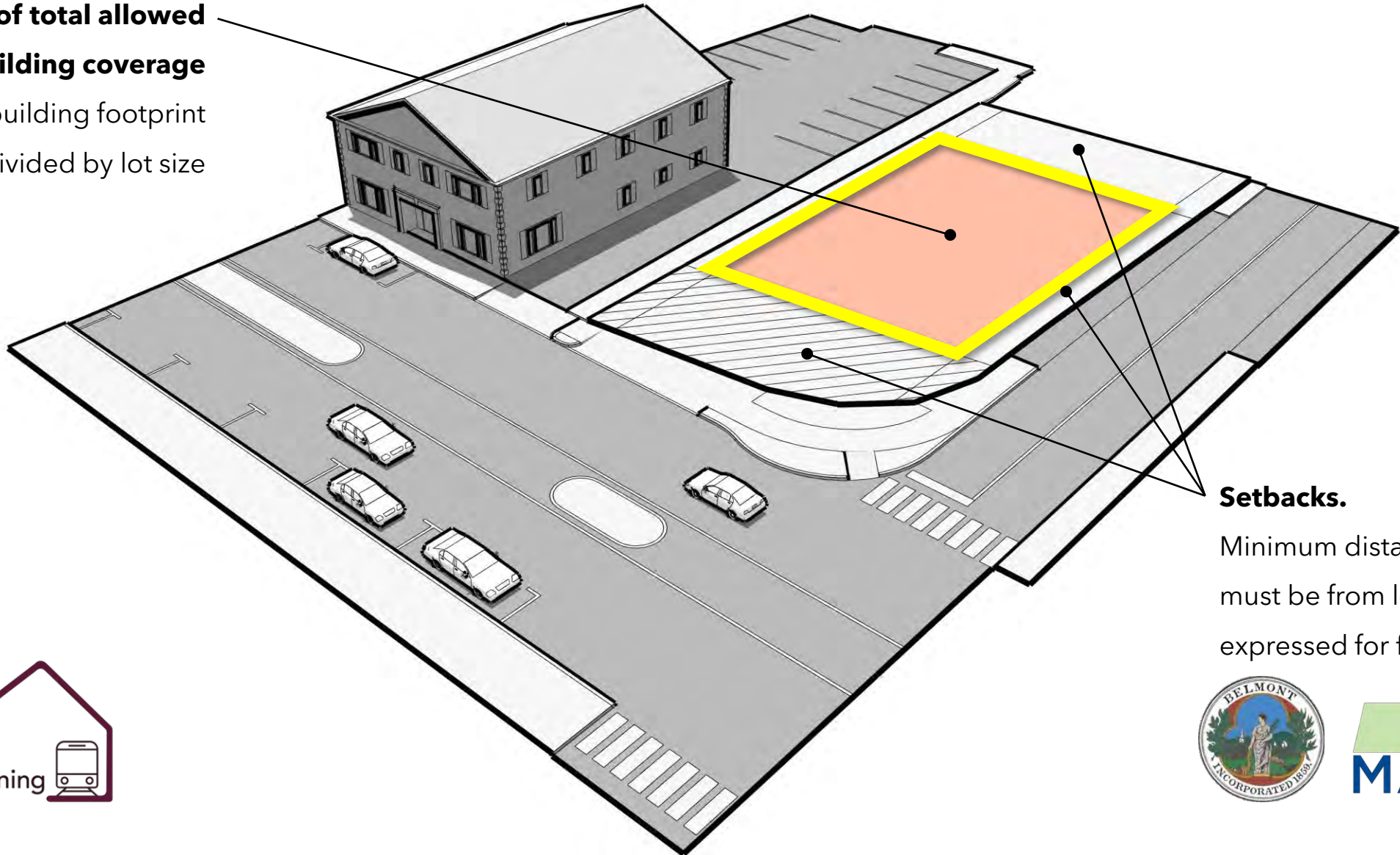
expressed in both/either  
building stories and/or feet



# Maximum lot coverage and setbacks

## Percent of total allowed building coverage

Calculated by building footprint  
divided by lot size



## Setbacks.

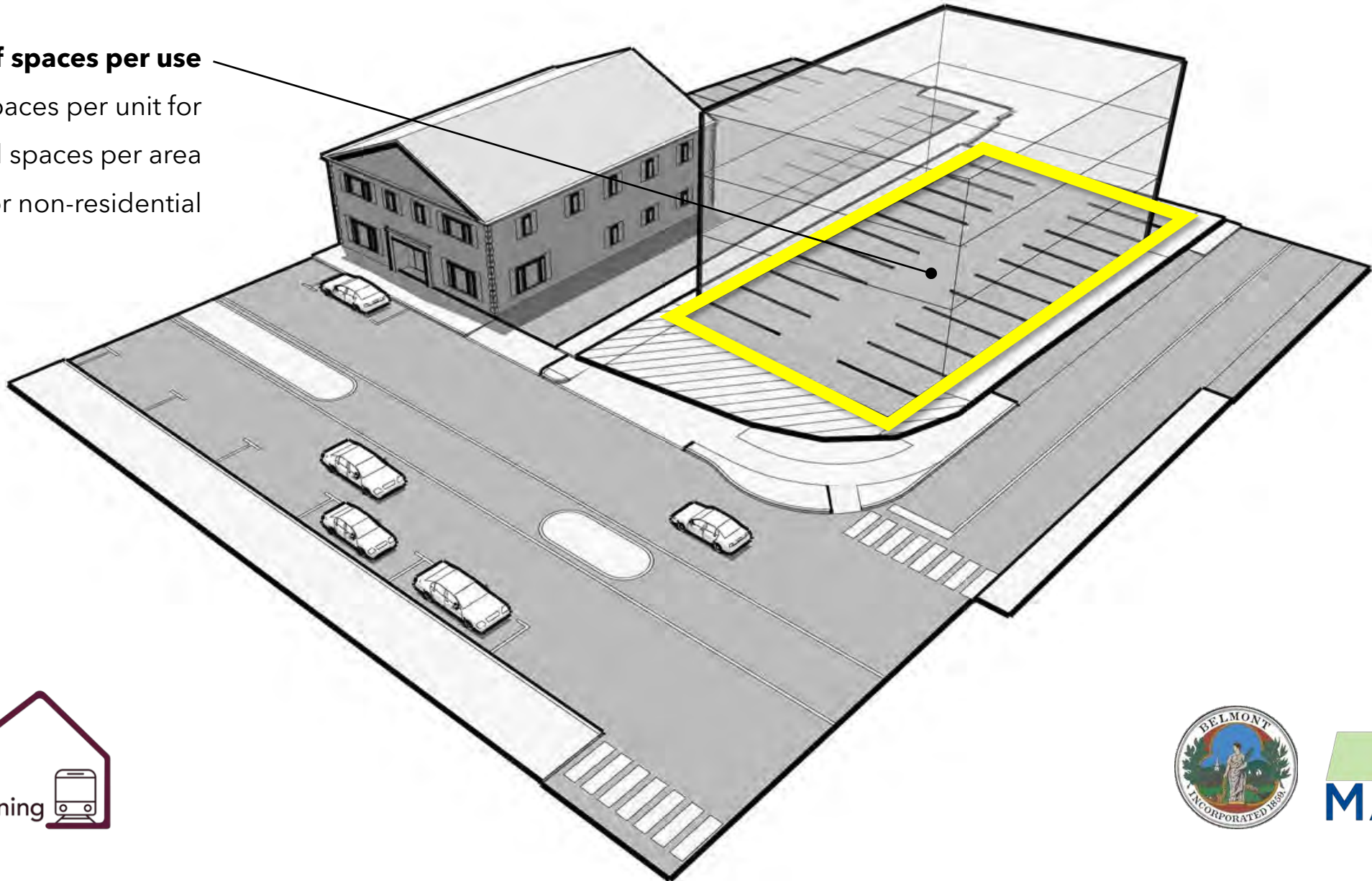
Minimum distance the building  
must be from lot lines, typically  
expressed for front, side, rear



# Parking requirements

## Amount of spaces per use

Typically spaces per unit for residential and spaces per area for non-residential



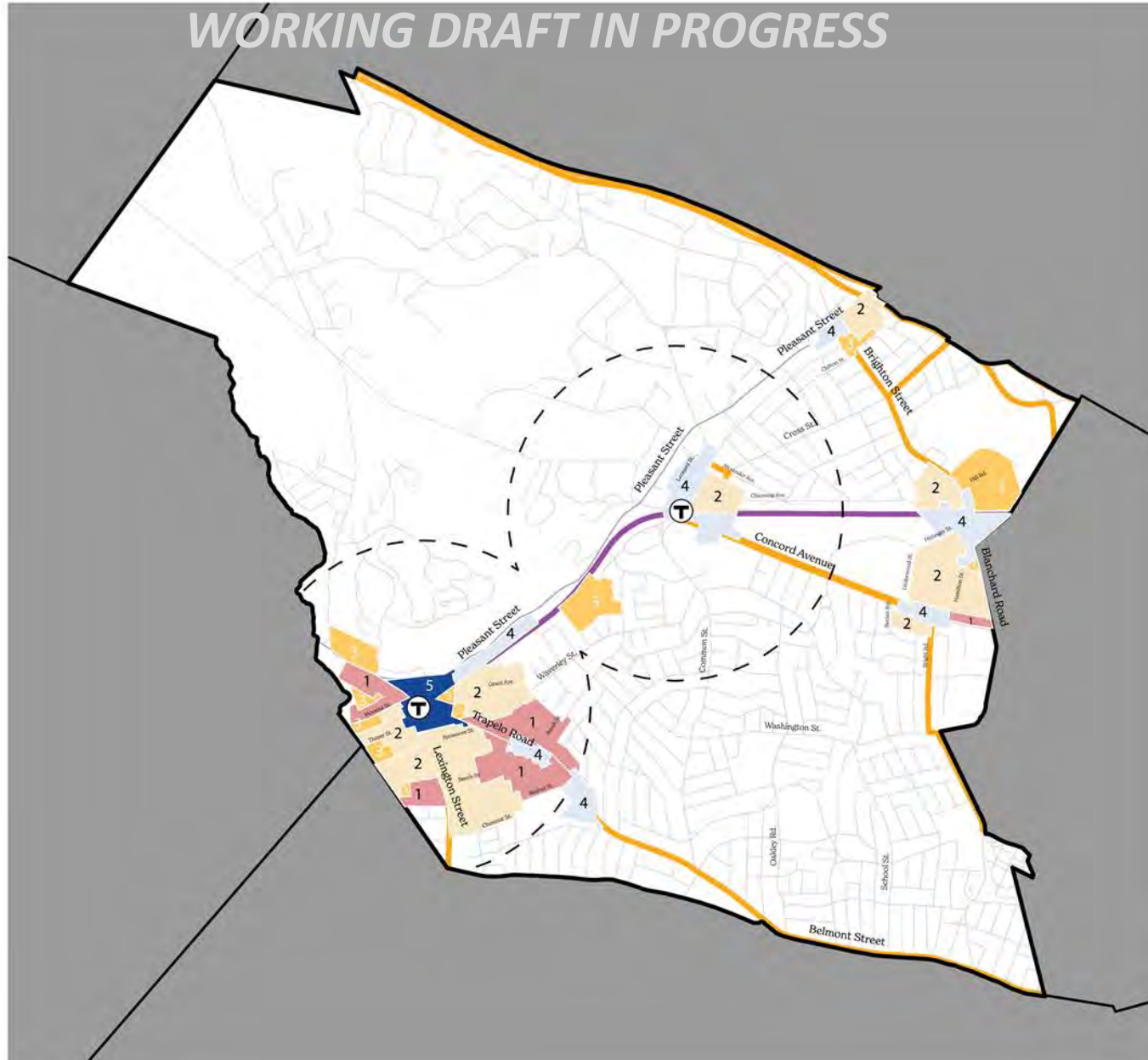


# Working Subdistrict Boundaries (September 2023)

## Progress in this iteration:

- Refining subdistricts
- Beginning to reduce area

*WORKING DRAFT IN PROGRESS*



## BELMONT MULTIFAMILY ZONING Proposed Subdistricts

- 1. Small-Scale Historic Residential
- 2. Small-Scale Neighborhood Residential
- 3. Moderate-Scale Neighborhood Residential
- 4. Small-Scale Mixed-Use
- 5. Moderate-Scale Mixed Use

0 0.25 0.5 miles

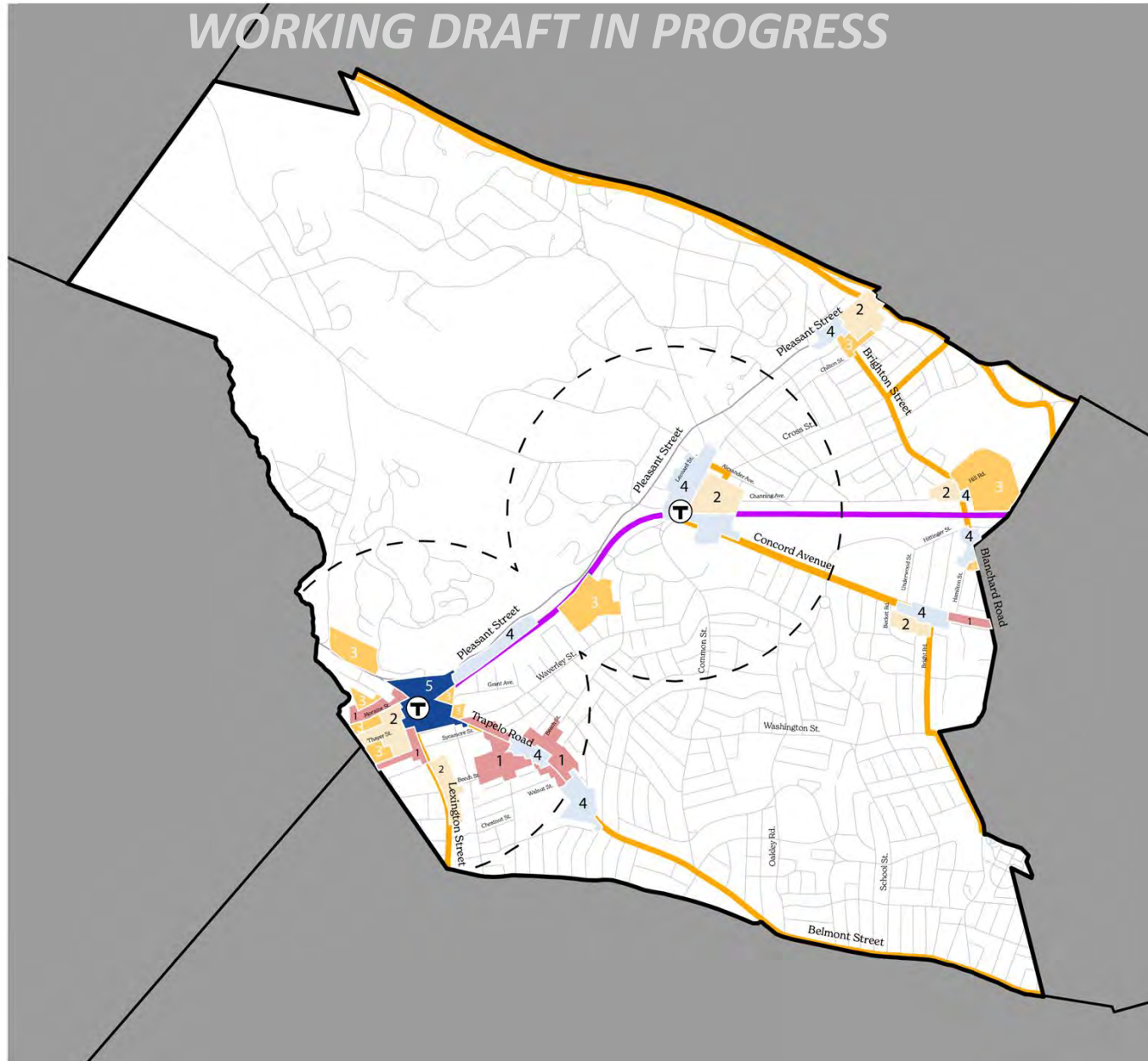


# Working Subdistrict Boundaries (September 2023)

## Progress in this iteration:

- Focusing on main corridors (Trapelo Rd, Concord Ave, Pleasant St)
- Continuing to reduce area

WORKING DRAFT IN PROGRESS



## BELMONT MULTIFAMILY ZONING Proposed Subdistricts

- 1. Small-Scale Historic Residential
- 2. Small-Scale Neighborhood Residential
- 3. Moderate-Scale Neighborhood Residential
- 4. Small-Scale Mixed-Use
- 5. Moderate-Scale Mixed Use

0 0.25 0.5 miles



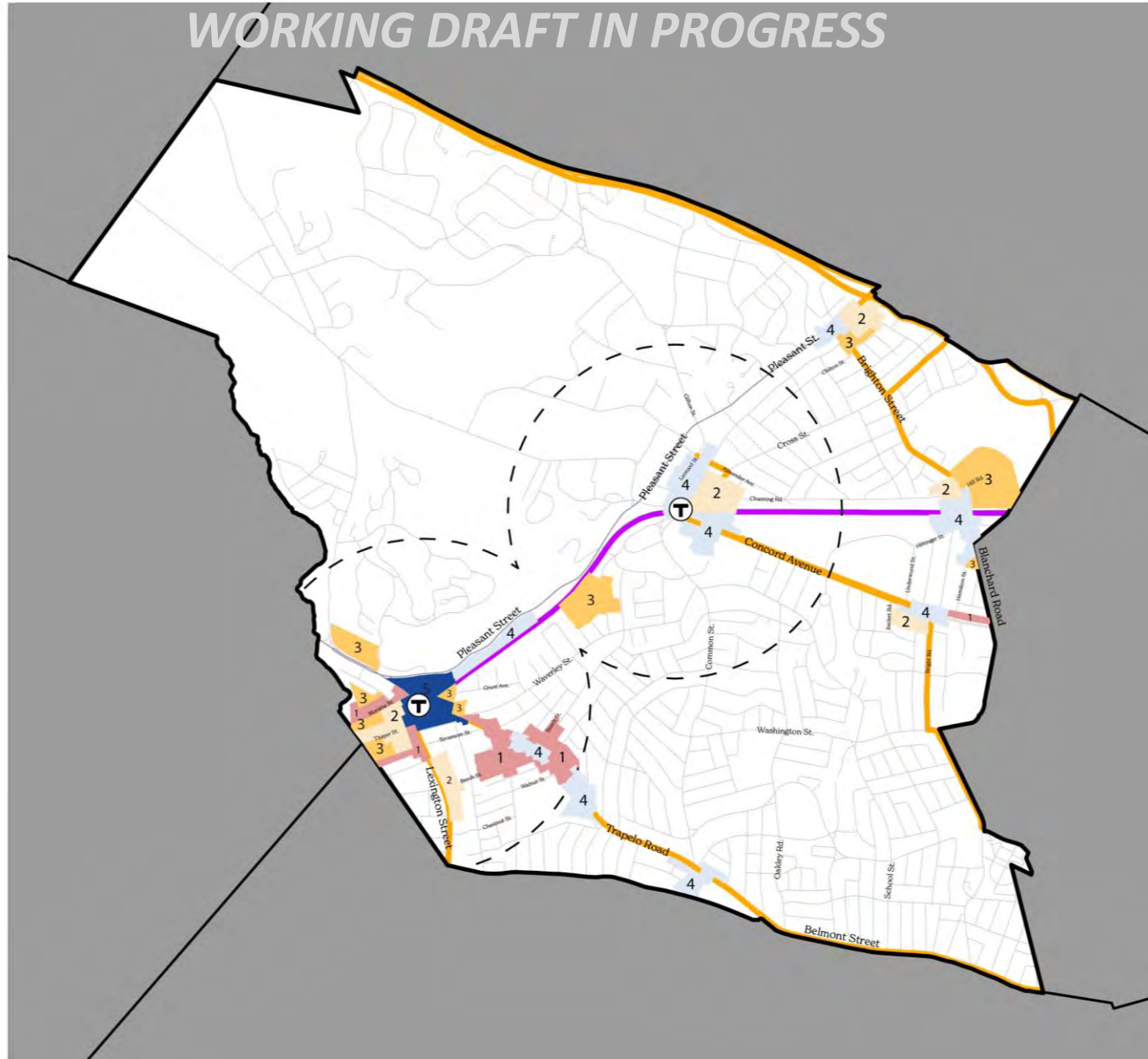


# Working Subdistrict Boundaries (September 2023)

## Progress in this iteration:

- Refining Brighton/Blanchard area
- Adding Cushing Square area

*WORKING DRAFT IN PROGRESS*



## BELMONT MULTIFAMILY ZONING Proposed Subdistricts

- 1. Small-Scale Historic Residential
- 2. Small-Scale Neighborhood Residential
- 3. Moderate-Scale Neighborhood Residential
- 4. Small-Scale Mixed-Use
- 5. Moderate-Scale Mixed Use



# Working Subdistrict Boundaries (October 2023)

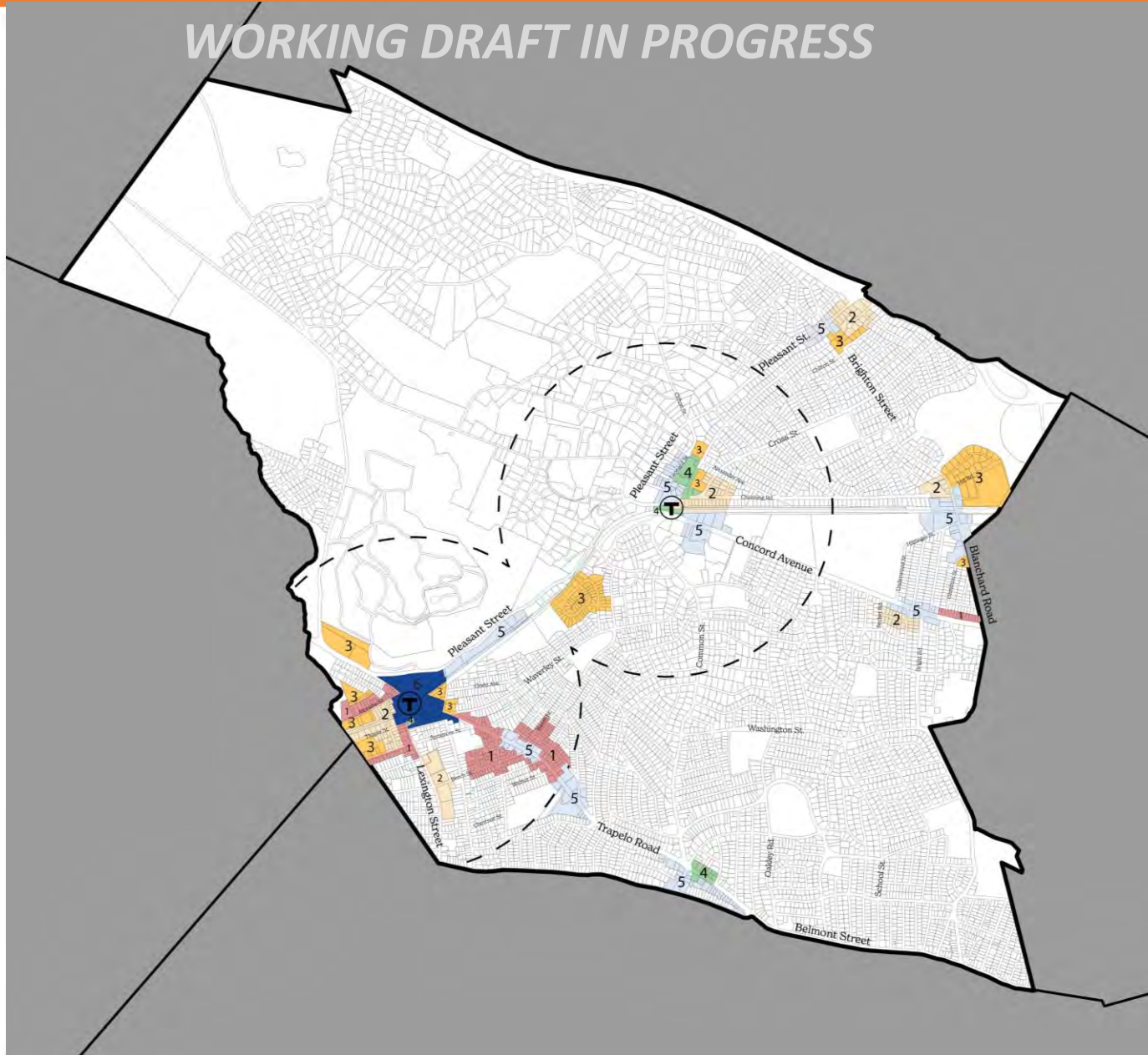
## Progress in this iteration:

- Parcel by parcel review by Committee
- Refinements to subdistricts

*WORKING DRAFT IN PROGRESS*

## BELMONT MULTIFAMILY ZONING Proposed Subdistricts

- 1. Small-Scale Historic Residential
- 2. Small-Scale Neighborhood Residential
- 3. Moderate-Scale Neighborhood Residential
- 4. Small-Scale Mixed-Use
- 5. Moderate-Scale Mixed Use



0 0.25 0.5 miles



Data Sources: MAPC, MassGIS, MassDOT, EOHL



# Compliance Model Results (October 2023)

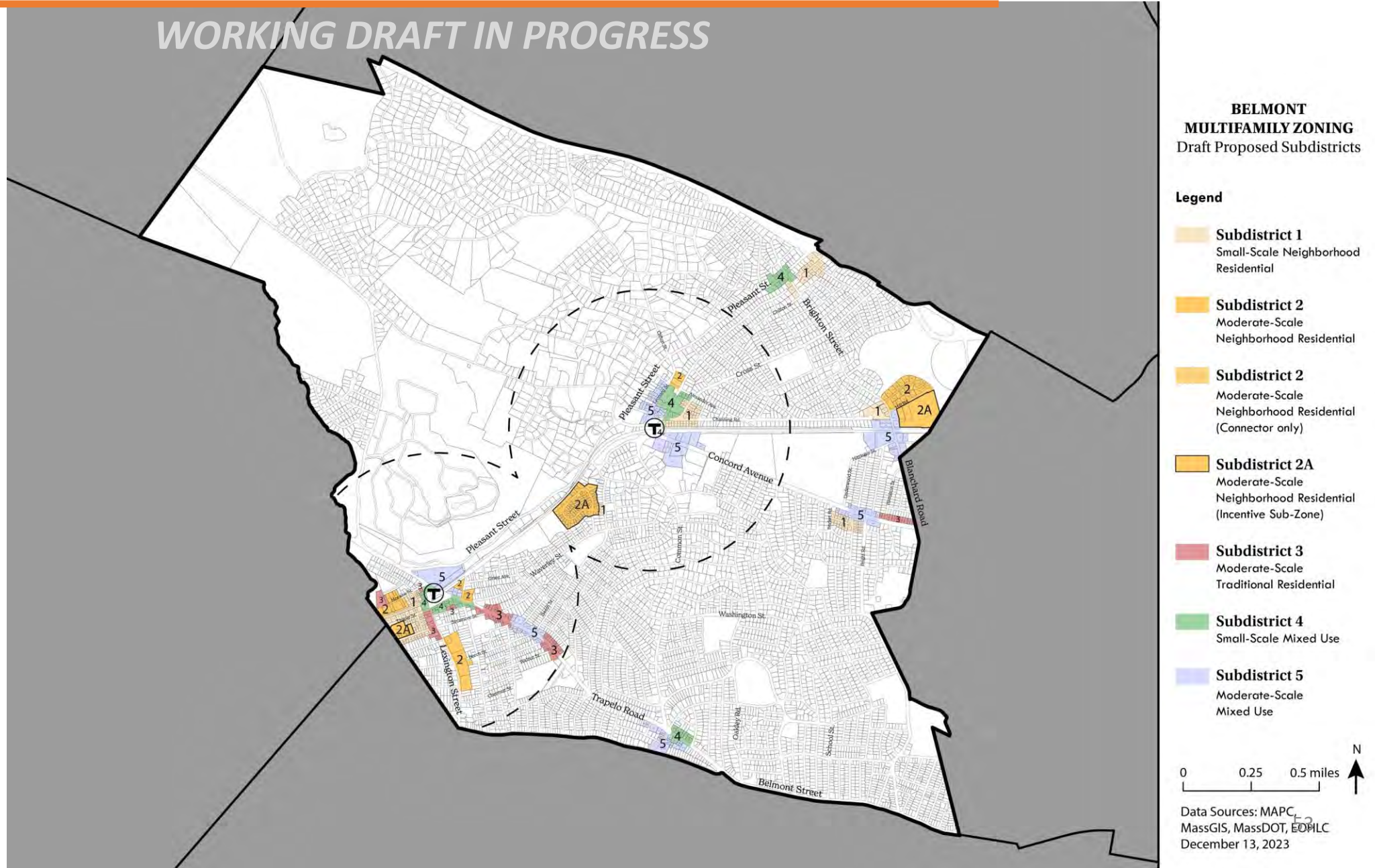
*WORKING DRAFT IN PROGRESS*

	Compliance Standard	Minimum	Modeled	Compliance Result
Units	Multifamily unit capacity	1,632	5,795	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Transit area unit capacity	816		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Max. units from mandatory mixed-use	408	Not applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Area	Gross land area (acres)	28	141	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Transit area (50%) (acres)	14		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	Contiguity (of total proposed area)	50%	-	
	Dwelling units per acre	15	54	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

# Working Subdistrict Boundaries (December 2023)

## Progress in this iteration:

- Removal of Pleasant Street area
- Removal of Olmsted Drive area
- Reductions in Waverley area neighborhoods
- Refinement of subdistricts





# Compliance Model Results (December 2023)

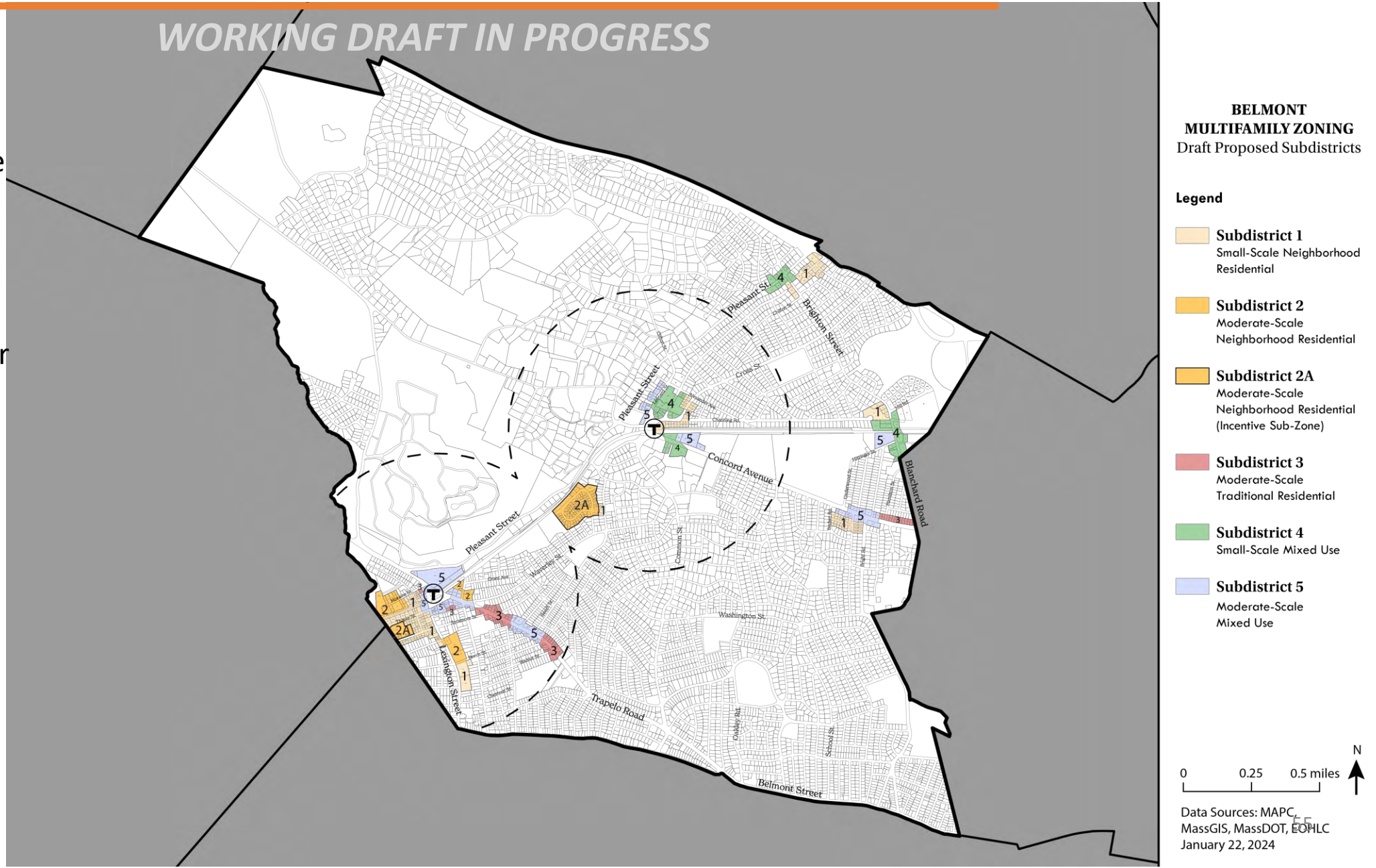
*WORKING DRAFT IN PROGRESS*

	Compliance Standard	Minimum	Modeled	Compliance Result
Units	Multifamily unit capacity	1,632	5,635	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Transit area unit capacity	816	3,211	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Max. units from mandatory mixed-use	408	Not applicable	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Area	Gross land area (acres)	28	133	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Transit area (50%) (acres)	14	79	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other	Contiguity (of total proposed area)	50%	36%	
	Dwelling units per acre	15	43	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

# Working Subdistrict Boundaries (January 2024)

## Progress in this iteration:

- Removal of Cushing Square area
- Removal of Hill Estates area
- Reductions in Belmont Center
- Refinement of subdistricts



# Compliance Model Results (January 2024)

*WORKING DRAFT IN PROGRESS*

	Compliance Standard	Minimum	Modeled	Compliance Result
Units	Multifamily unit capacity	1,632	3,341	☑
	Transit area unit capacity	816	2,295	☑
	Max. units from mandatory mixed-use	408	332	☑
Area	Gross land area (acres)	28	75	☑
	Transit area (50%) (acres)	14	56	☑
Other	Contiguity (of total proposed area)	50%	49%*	☑
	Dwelling units per acre	15	40	☑

\* Compliant based on EOHLC's interpretation for Lexington



# Are there any clarifying questions?



## IV. Next steps

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# Brief Closing

## In-person Community Forum

(Part 2) February 15<sup>th</sup>

7:00 pm



### The Belmont MBTA Communities Advisory Committee Forum

Town of Belmont and MAPC invite you to join us for the second public forum related to the MBTA Communities Act. A community-driven effort that is developing zoning recommendations that facilitate progress towards expanded housing opportunity and compliance with the Multifamily Zoning Requirement of the MBTA Communities Act. Come learn about the process and provide feedback to help shape the future of our community.



Monday, **January 29, 2024** at **7 p.m.**

In-person: **Beech Street Center**  
266 Beech Street

This forum will be the first of a two-part series.

In Part 1, at the 1/29/24 forum a presentation will be given to review requirements of the MBTA Communities Act, the process to date, and the in-progress iterative solutions. Participants will have the opportunity to ask questions, make comments, and discuss with project team members.

In Part 2, scheduled for 2/15/24, a presentation will be given to define the next iteration of options for compliance for the community to provide feedback. **Please also save the date for 2/15/24 at 7 p.m.**

Visit the **project webpage** to learn more about the project and the legislation at:  
<https://www.belmont-ma.gov/mbta-communities-advisory-committee>



# Upcoming Scenarios/Compliance Modeling

Option 1A – Single district compliance (Waverley)

Option 1B – “Lexington” exception (most similar to previous)

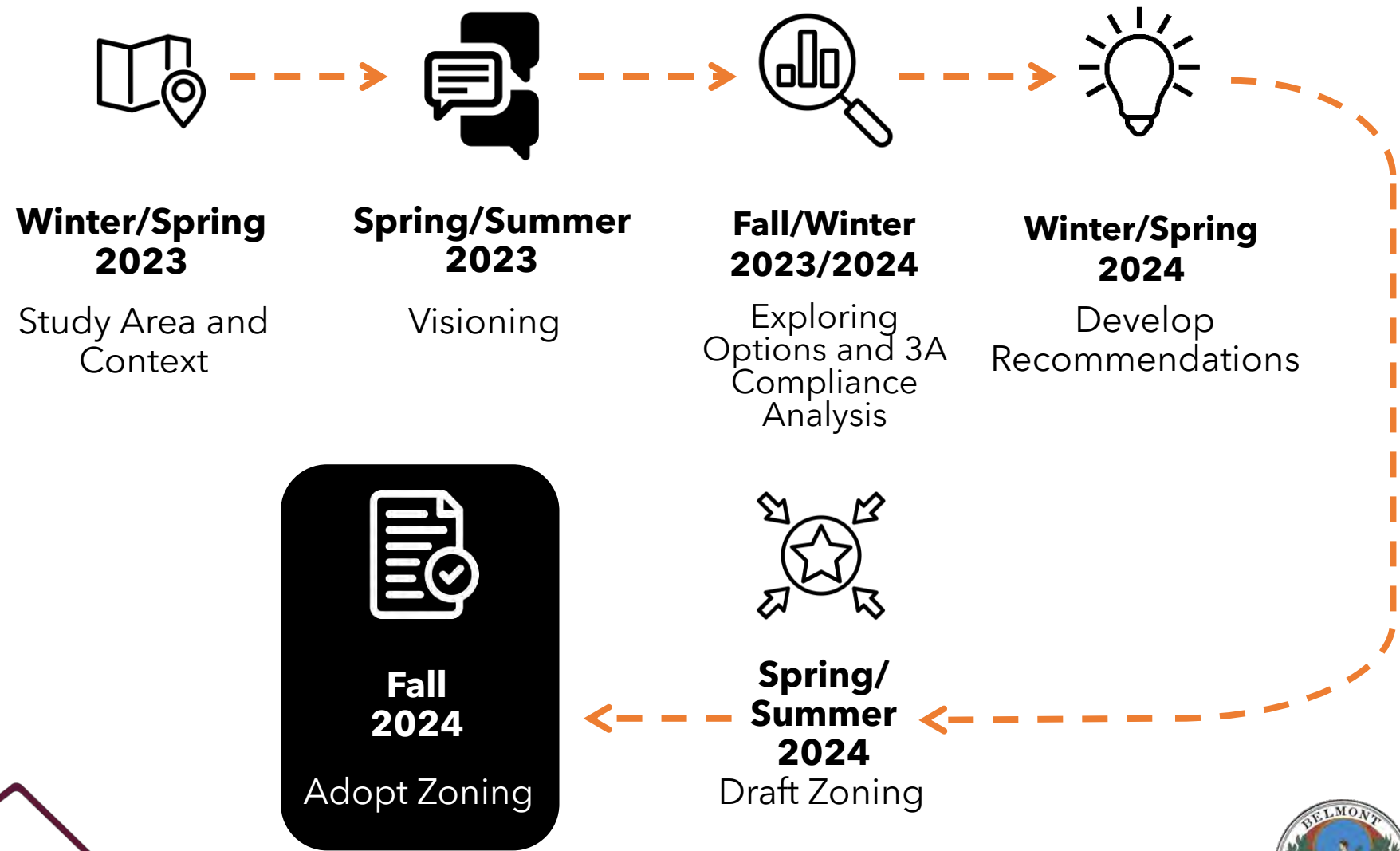
Option 2 – Station areas only (Waverley/Belmont Center)

Option 3 – Distributed approach

Option 4A – Belmont Center plus (Belmont Center/Brighton Blanchard)



# Timeline



Belmont has until **December 31, 2024**, to adopt a zoning amendment that complies with Section 3A



**Visit the Belmont MBTA Communities Advisory Committee website for additional information and updates:**

**<https://www.Belmont-ma.gov/mbta-communities-advisory-committee>**





## **V. Questions and Comments**

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## **VI. Post Presentation Coffee Mixer**

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