



TOWN OF  
**READING**  
MASSACHUSETTS

# MBTA COMMUNITIES & READING

CPDC Public Hearing: 12/18/23



# Agenda:

## Overview Presentation

- Law & Concepts
- Proposed Zoning Map & Concept

## Review Zoning amendments

## General Q&A

We ask all attendees to remember that there are a range of views on housing in Reading and to keep in mind that these hearings are part of the iterative proposal process we have been working through with residents over the last 6 months.

We do ask that the focus of questions and comments be on the proposal. Whether or not we should comply will be decided by Town Meeting.

# What is the MBTA Communities law?

The MBTA Communities law (3A), was passed in 2021 at the state level. The state is requiring municipalities to remove barriers to development within their zoning in order to make future development of denser housing close to transit to be possible.

Reading is classified as a **commuter rail community** which means at least half of our zoning district must be within a 1/2-mile of the Reading train depot downtown.

By December 2024, Reading must confirm to the State that we have a district with by-right zoned capacity for 1,493 units of multi-family housing (3+ units) at a density of 15 units per acre across a district that is a minimum of 43 total acres.\*



\*For the specific details on how these numbers were calculated by the State please see our project webpage.







# Why are we changing our zoning?

Reading does not currently have any zoning districts that meet the requirements of the law.

In order to comply, we have to propose a new zoning district that we can use for compliance. We are allowed to choose how we comply, as long as our numbers meet the state's requirements.

We kicked off our public process in June with a survey to provide staff with an initial direction for the scale of buildings and general locations that were preferable. In our series of public events from September through November we've presented and refined the overall concept and map through an iterative process, which continues through this public hearing process.



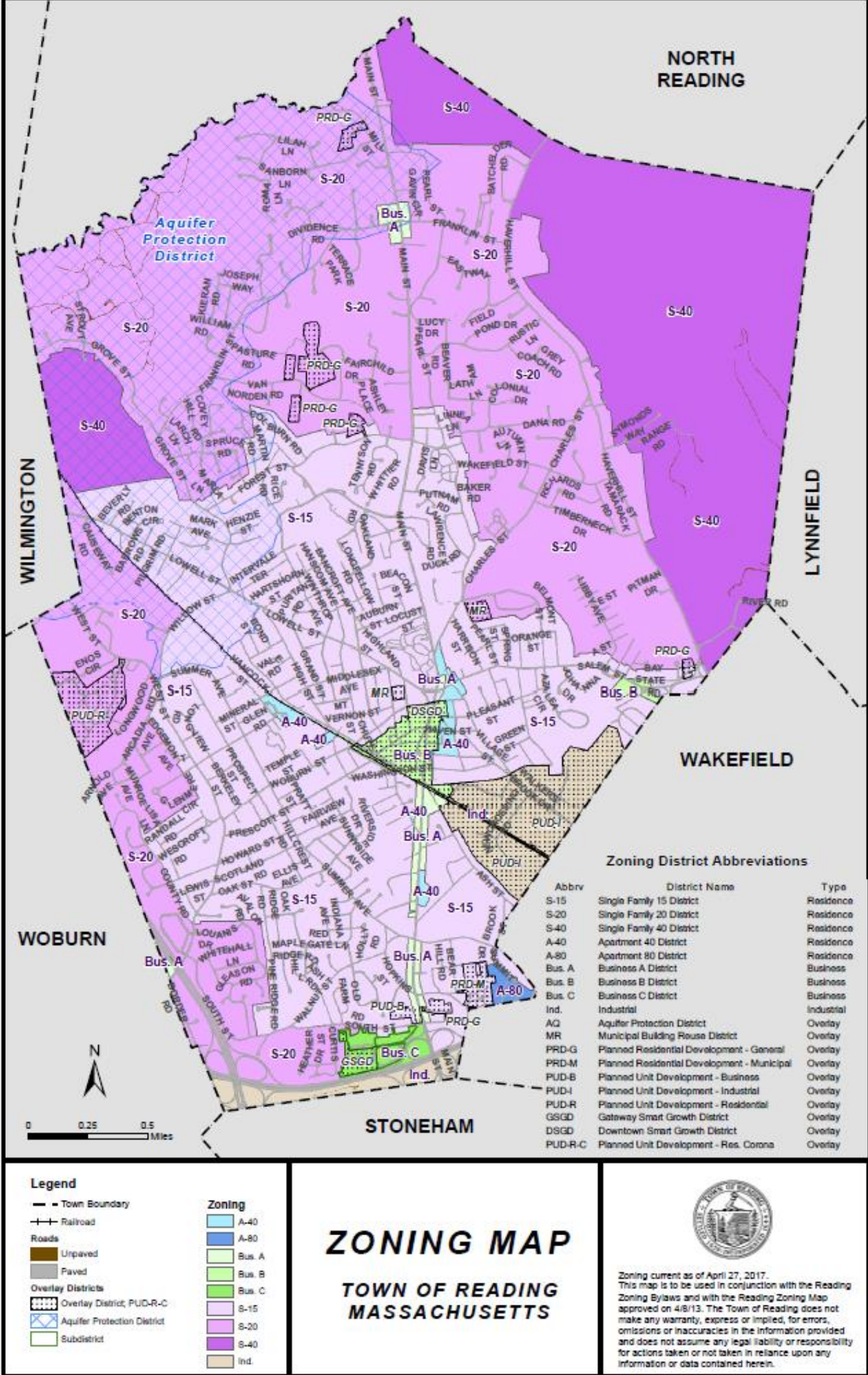


# Existing Conditions

94% of the land in Reading is zoned for single-family homes only

1% of our residentially zoned land allows multi-family housing

5% of the land is zoned for commercial uses



## What else informs the zoning changes being proposed?

### Reading's Housing Goals

- Reading will provide a variety of housing types for a diverse population.
- Elderly, renters, first-time homebuyers, empty nesters, and others will be able to find housing to match their needs.
- Providing these housing types will be accomplished by improving the Town's regulations to more easily allow certain types of housing such as multi-family housing.

### Reading's Housing & Census Data

- The median price of a home in Reading is \$815,000. Median household income is \$133,300.
- 12% of Reading residents are disabled and 73% of those that are disabled are ages 65+.
- Reading has 9,374 households. 3,346 (37%) households have children under 18. 4,285 (45%) households are 60+.
- Population projections show an increase in elderly households and young adults aged 20-35

Creating housing options for both an aging population as well as “starter home” options for young families should be our top priority.



Multi-family housing is any housing with at least 3 units on one lot





## What is by-right development?

By-right, or as-of-right development means that a project will require no waivers, special permits, or any other discretionary approvals. By-right development is a requirement of the law.

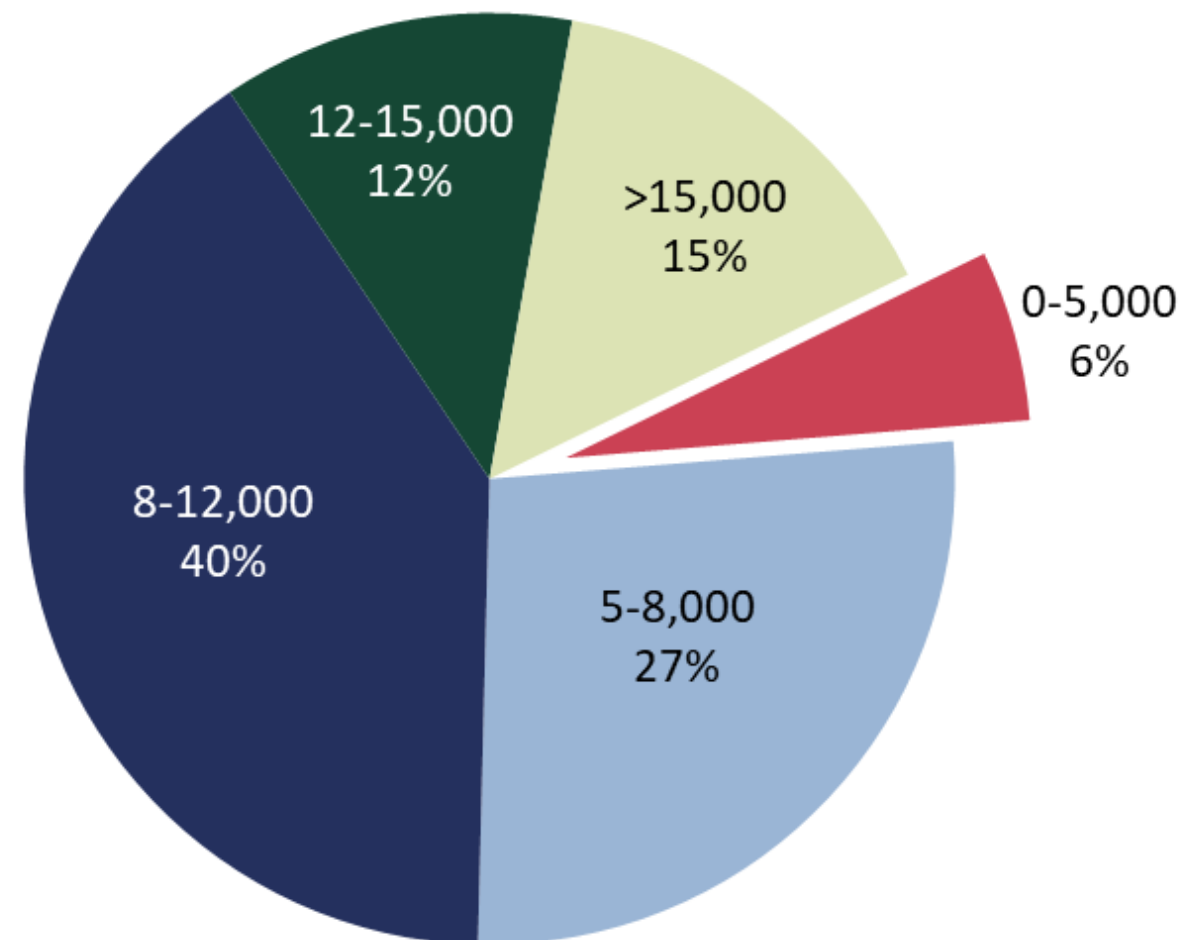
Projects are still required to go through the Town's approval processes like Site Plan Review.

### Why is this important?

If a lot cannot be developed by-right, it doesn't count within the compliance model. In order for a lot to be developed by-right it must meet the lot size and frontage requirements for the district.

A number of the proposed changes to our district are simply to allow most of the lots to be developed by-right.

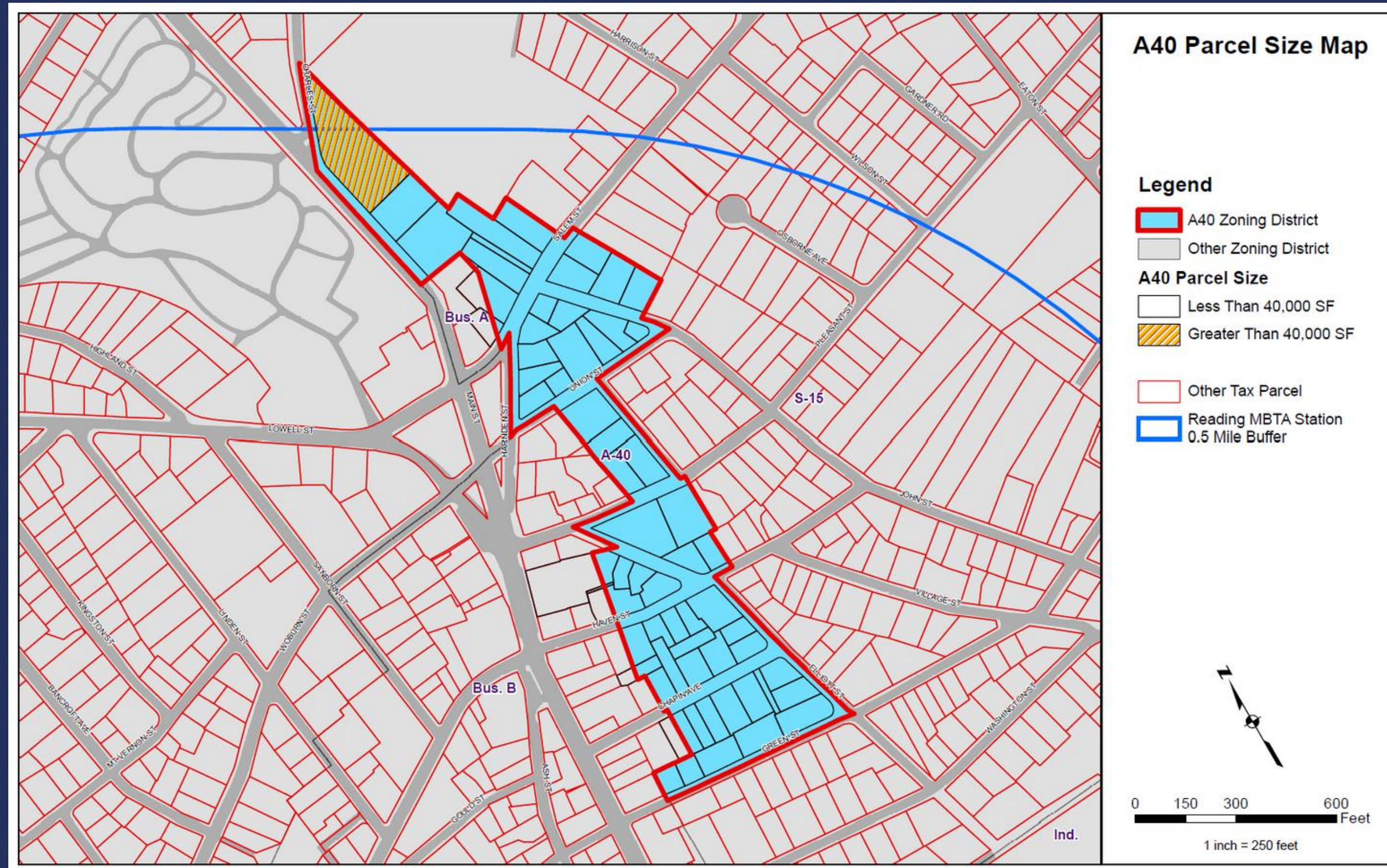
Existing Parcels within our New District,  
by Lot Size in Square Feet





# Why would development NOT be by-right?

The lot or use doesn't meet the current standards of the zone





## What are the unit numbers I keep hearing about?

The law only requires zoning compliance, not construction. No construction is required. Zoning does not impact what is currently built, it only impacts future development.

The number of units the state requires us to zone for is in zoning capacity. Zoning capacity considers each parcel and the developable acreage as empty and asks what could be built on it today under zoning allowances. To determine “zoning capacity” you add up how many housing units could hypothetically maximally be built on every existing parcel in a district, based on what the zoning allows, regardless of what exists on each parcel.

Zoning capacity is not a build-out number. It is a metric used by the State to ensure zoning requirements are not overly restrictive.

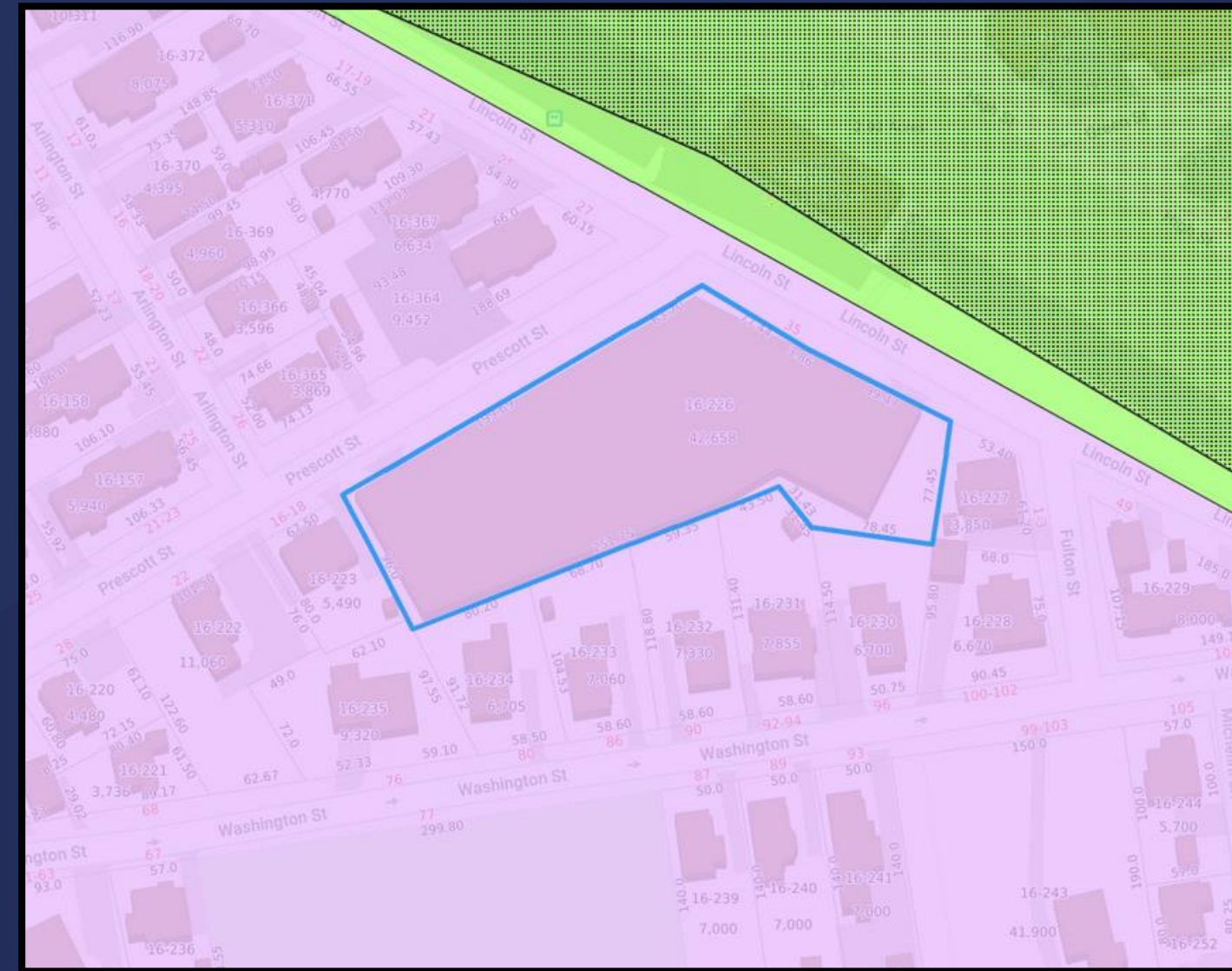




# Zoning Capacity in the real world



Reading Village (The Metropolitan) has 68 units.  
This building is a 40B development.



The lot it sits on is currently zoned S-15.  
Under current zoning capacity this counts as 1.  
Under our proposed zoning this counts as about 22 units.

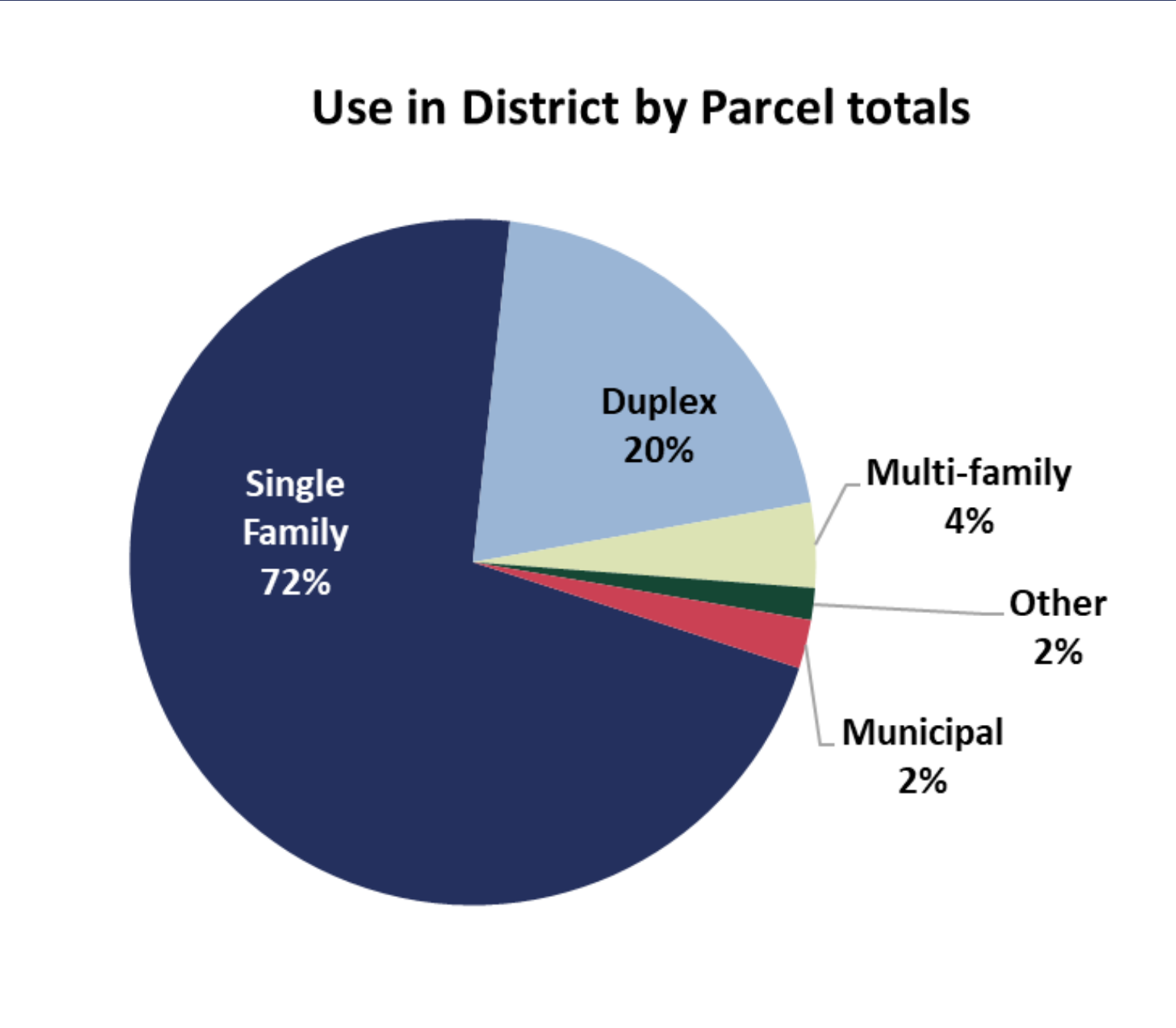


The new zoning district is built off the concept of lower density multi-family over a larger area. We propose smaller-scale multi-family housing, in a new district made up of our existing multi-family (A-40) and single-family zoning (S-15), encircling downtown with gentle density.





The name **Mixed Residential** acknowledges the existing reality that our district contains a mix of uses and the continuation of that mix in our zoning and in potential future construction.



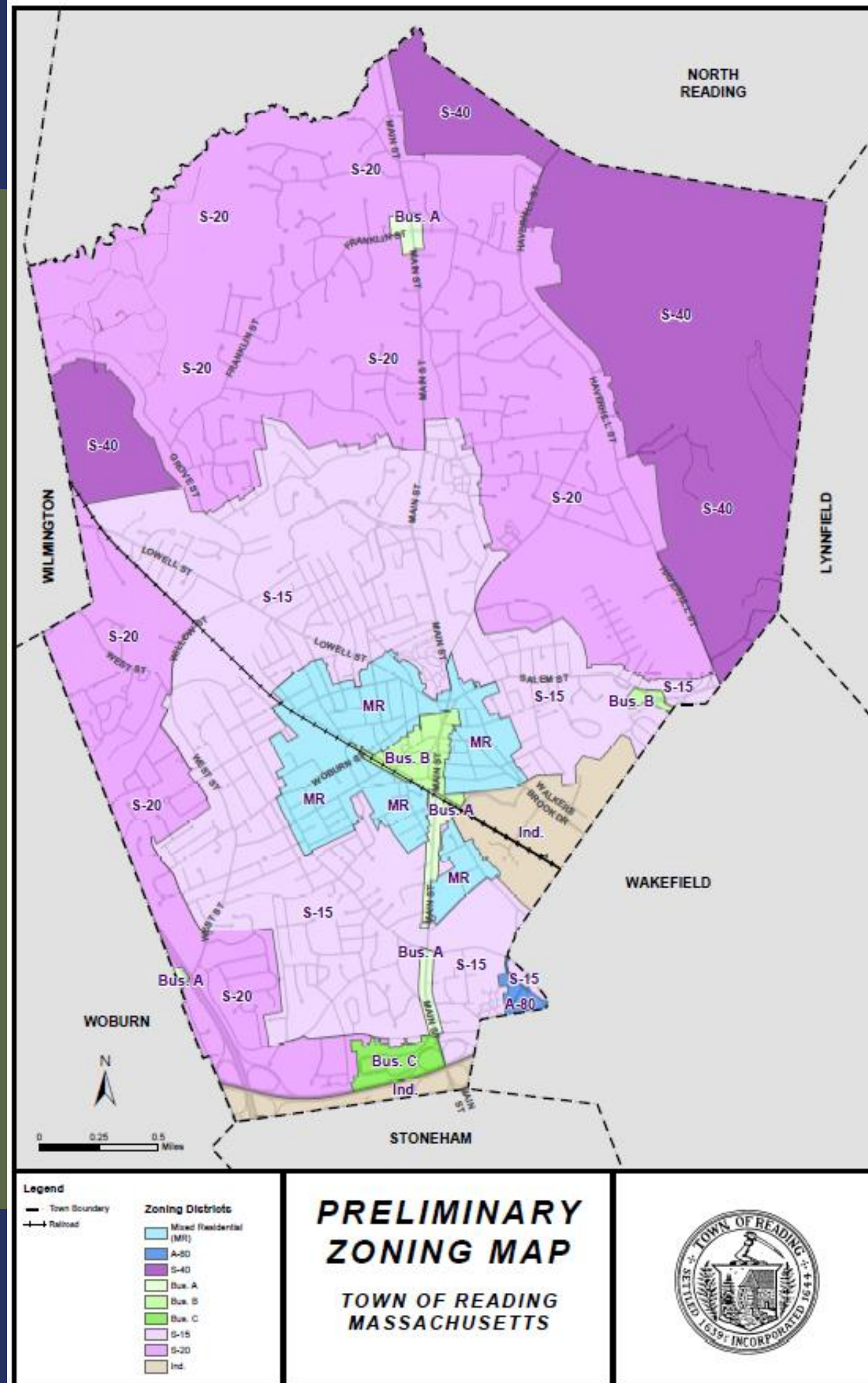


# Proposed Zoning Map

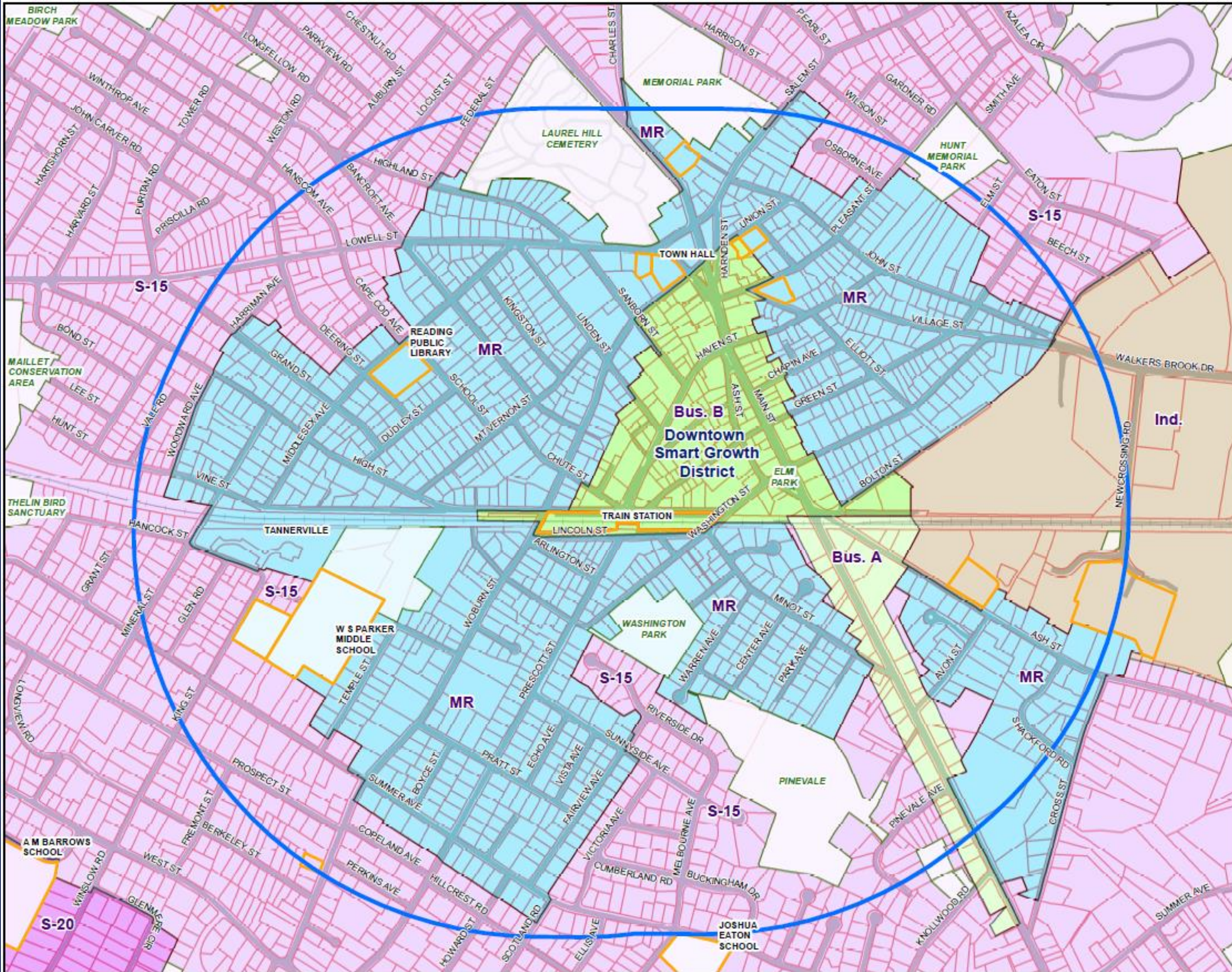
362 acres are proposed to be rezoned, out of a total of 6,393 acres in Town. We are proposing rezoning 5.7% of the total land in Reading.

The percentage of residential land zoned to allow multi-family housing in addition to single-family will increase by 5%, from 1% up to 6% of total land. The percentage of residential land zoned for single-family homes only will be reduced by 5%.

If the proposed map at left is adopted, 89% of all the land in Reading will remain zoned for single-family homes only.





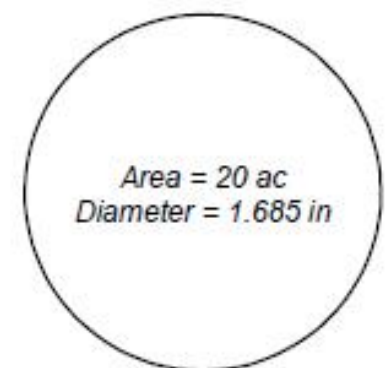


### Legend

- Reading MBTA Station 0.5 Mile Buffer
- Municipal Building Lot
- Open Space
- Reading MBTA Station Parcel
- Tax Parcel
- Railroad

### Zoning Districts

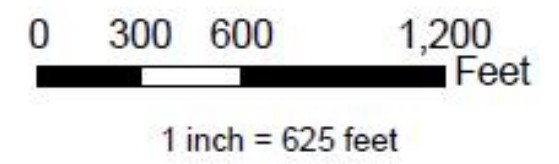
- Mixed Residential (MR)
- Bus. A
- Bus. B
- Bus. C
- S-15
- S-20
- Ind.



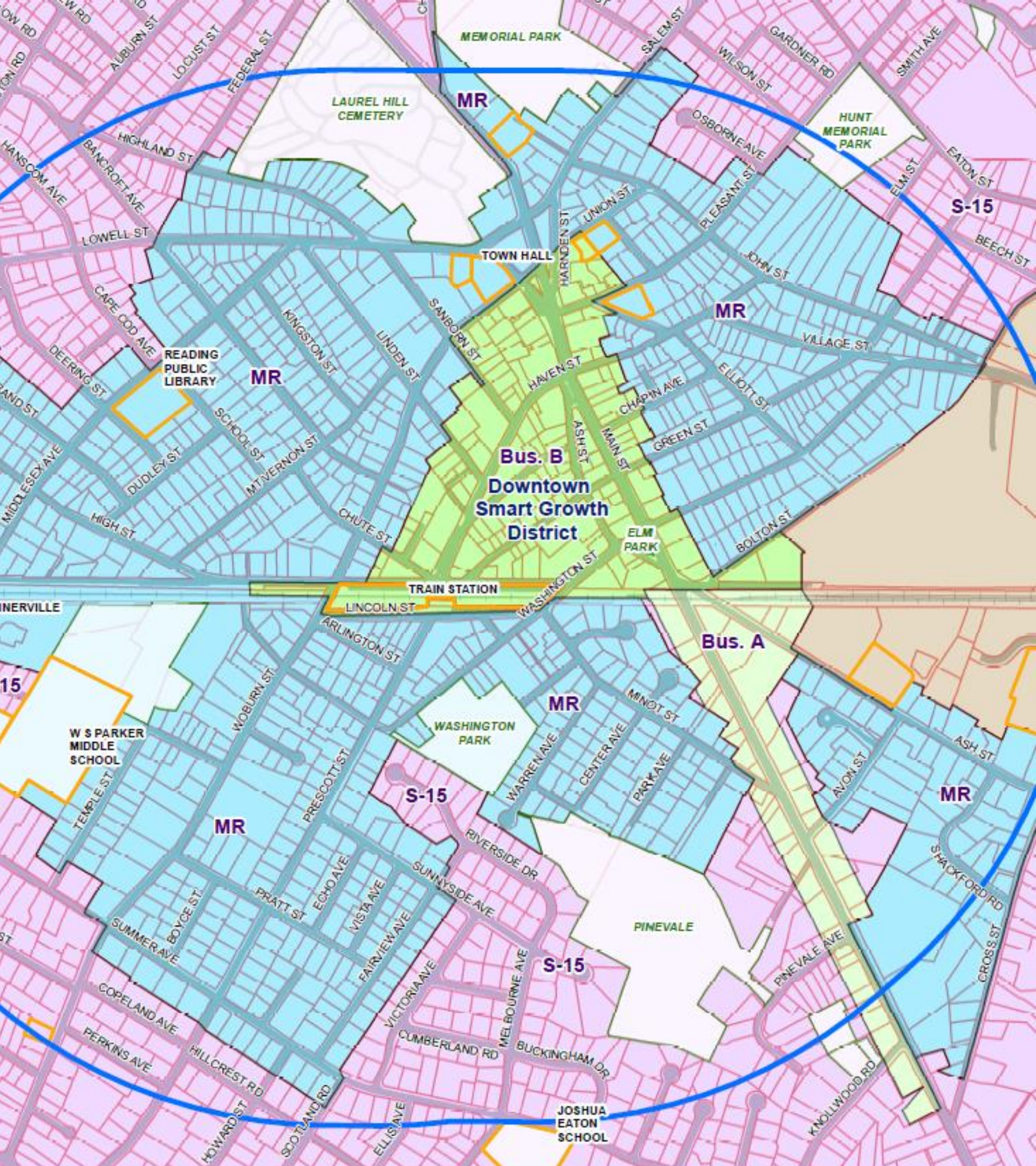
0.5 Mile Buffer Area = 660.57 Acres

Zoning	Total Area (acres)	Buffer Area (acres)	Area Converted to MR (acres)
A-40	30.79	28.00	30.79
S-15	2,134.78	538.46	327.3
MR	361.55	350.47	N/A

Projected Developable Land in MR (acres)				
Total MR Area	Municipal & Church Parcels Removed	ROWs Removed	Wetlands Removed	Total Developable MR Area
361.55	-33.82	-65.75	-7.85	254.13







## How was this current map created?

Our survey results indicated that future multi-family housing should be located near transit, commercial areas, & pedestrian-friendly areas. This directed us to place our entire district within the 1/2 mile area.

The specific feedback we received in our public events included:

- Focusing on walking distance to amenities
- Taking into account the current built environment of streets
- Including the lots on both sides of streets
- We've heard from residents advocating for both a larger and smaller map



# How will we meet the state's requirements but keep strong controls?

	Current S-15	New District Proposed
Minimum Lot Size (square feet)	15,000	5,000
Minimum Frontage (ft)	100	60
Required front yard (ft)	20	10
Required side yard (ft)	15	10
Required rear yard (ft)	20	15
Maximum Coverage % of Lot	25%	30%
Maximum Building Height (ft)	35	35
Maximum Density	N/A	22 units/acre
Multi-family Parking minimum req'd spaces/unit	1.5 spaces/unit	1.25 spaces/unit

These two numbers come from the existing parcels and the need to bring ~90% into compliance for by-right development.

Existing setbacks were too restrictive on small lots, we propose lowering minimums

→ Slight increase for compliance

→ Remains the same

→ New!

→ Slight lowering for compliance

The above proposed dimensional controls will allow our new district to meet the requirements of the law.



12,400SF Lot with 27% lot coverage



7,900SF Lot with 25% lot coverage





# New zoning component - Max density per acre

Setting a maximum density in our new district of **22 units per acre** allows the number of units to scale with the size of the lot.

The majority of our lots are 10,000SF or less, meaning most lots will be allowed to put 3-5 units on a lot by-right.

Because of how the state calculates density within the compliance model, setting a 22 units/acre maximum on our lots delivers a compliance density just above the required 15 units/acre, because land like roads is included in the calculation.

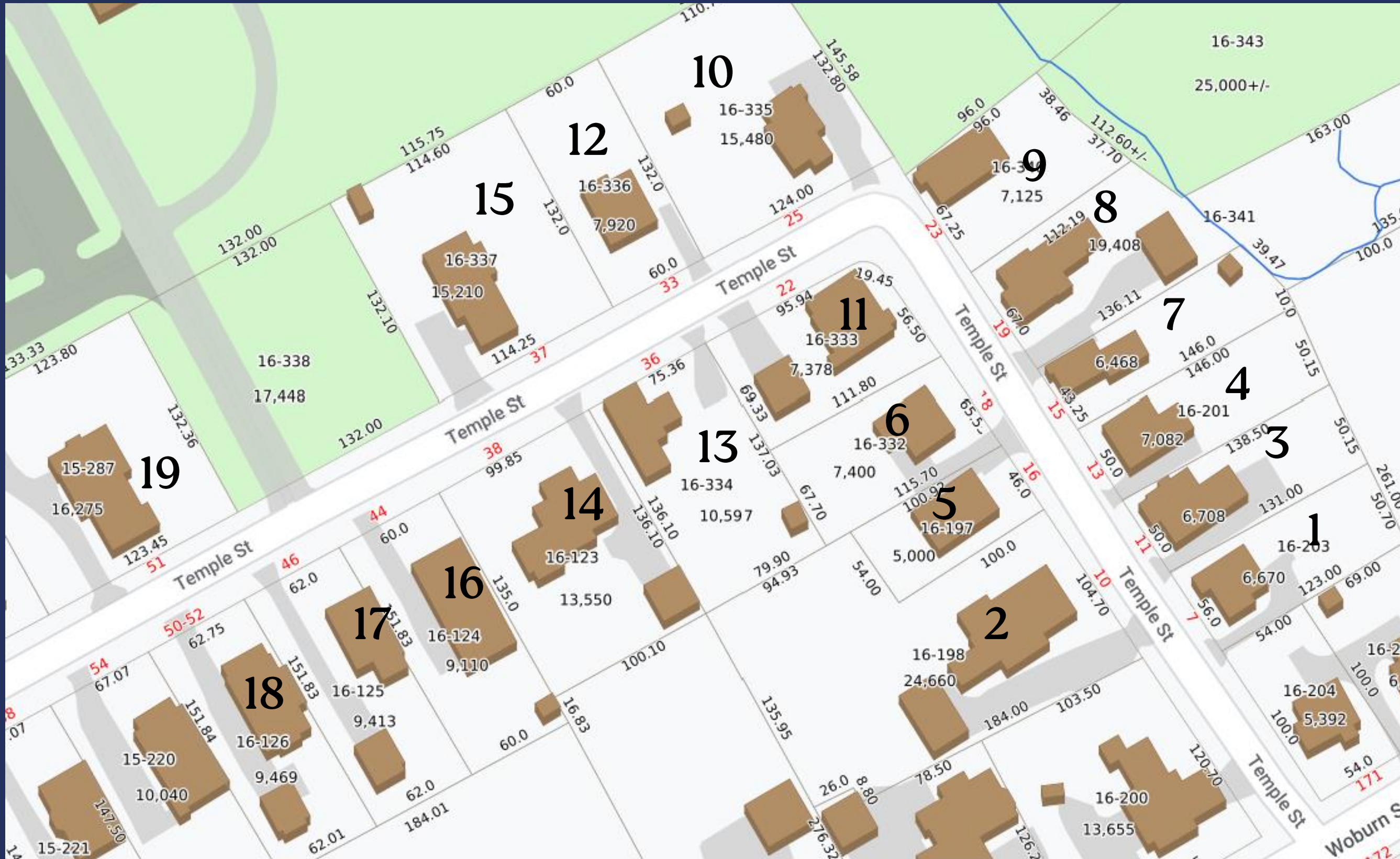
## 22 units per acre maximum

Lot Area Square Feet	Max units	Lot Area Acres	Est. Max Footprint
5,000	3	0.11	1,500
8,000	4	0.18	2,400
10,000	5	0.23	3,000
12,000	6	0.28	3,600
15,000	8	0.34	4,500
20,000	10	0.46	6,000
25,000	13	0.57	7,500
30,000	15	0.69	9,000
35,000	18	0.80	10,500
40,000	20	0.92	12,000
45,000	23	1.03	13,500

85% of our existing lots fall here



# Existing lot front setbacks vary greatly



1: 10-15ft

2: 20+ft

3: <10ft

4: <10ft

5: 20+ft

6: 20+ft

7: 4.6ft

8: <10ft

9: 5.1ft

10: 15-20ft

11: <10ft

12: 20+ft

13: <10ft

14: 20+ft

15: 10-15ft

16-18: 20+ft

19: 10-15ft



New Proposed  
Parking  
Minimum

1.25 spaces/unit

Minimum Required  
Parking Spaces

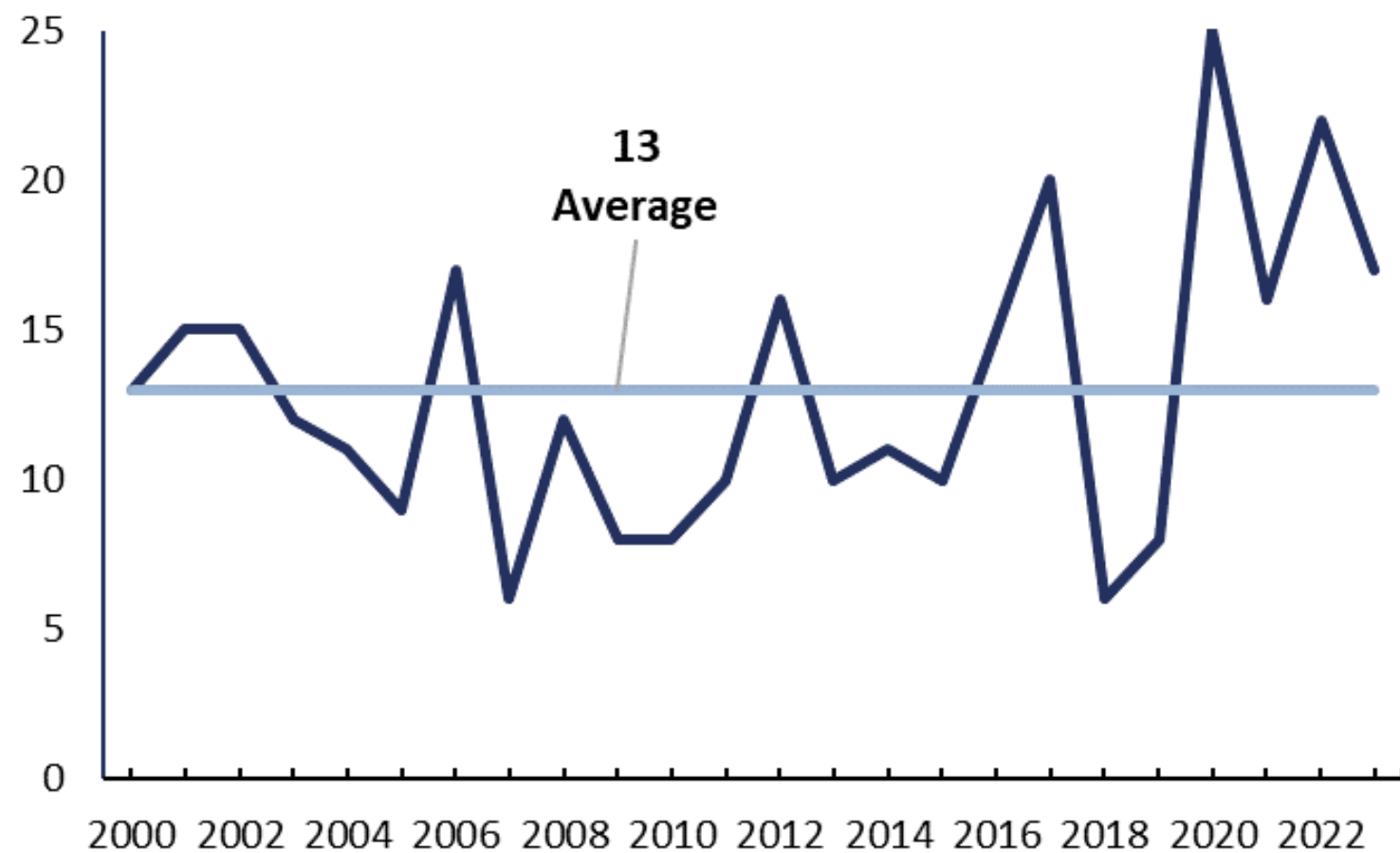
Units	Current	Proposed
	1.5	1.25
3	5	4
4	6	5
5	8	6
6	9	8
7	11	9
8	12	10

**9.1.1.7** Off-street parking areas, or loading and unloading areas shall be provided in the amounts set forth in the following table. Where the computation of required spaces results in a fractional number, a fraction of one-half or more shall be counted as one. In the event of a conflict of interpretation as to the category of the principal use, the Board of Appeals shall determine the proper interpretation.



# Build-Out Projections

Single-Family Parcels  
Redeveloped per Year in Reading  
(Permitting Data)



## What is a reasonable assumption for a rate of parcel redevelopment?

We analyzed the Town's permitting data from 2000-present to see at what rate single-family lots have been redeveloped over the last 24 years. Our yearly average is 13 parcels per year.

This is a town-wide 10-year parcel redevelopment rate of 1.9%. In other words, the town has seen just under 2% of single-family lots have projects on them over any 10-year span.



# How many units would we anticipate being built over 10 years?

<b>Redevelopment Scenarios over 10 years</b> 981 Parcels in Proposed New District			
	Reading's Single-Family Permitting Average	Closer to 40R rate	Extreme Scenario
Redevelopment Rate	<b>1.9%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>10%</b>
Number of Parcels Redeveloped over 10 yrs (981 x rate)	19	49	98
Projected Units Using Median lot size of 5 units (5 x number of parcels)	95	245	490



# Why are there so many zoning amendments being discussed?

Our zoning bylaw is structured by topic, not by district, so to change one district, requires editing all of the relevant sections.

There are three types of changes being made:

- Updating definitions and terms for consistency and to comply with the new law
- Removing existing district A-40 and adding our new district MR
- Introduction of new concepts
  - Maximum density
  - Affordable Housing

## Sections to be amended

2.0 - Definitions

3.0 - Establishment of Districts

5.0 - Use Regulations

- 5.3.2 - Table of Uses for Residence Districts

- 5.7 (NEW) - Inclusionary Zoning Regulations

6.0 - Intensity Regulations

- 6.3 - Table of Dimensional Controls

9.0 - Parking

Zoning Map




# Proposed Affordable Housing Language for inclusion

## 5.7.2.1 Mixed Residential Zoning District

Affordable Units shall be provided in projects located in the Mixed Residential Zone, as follows:


- Ten percent (10%) of all Dwelling Units constructed in a project of 10 or more units shall be Affordable Units, whether rental or ownership units.
- Any required Affordable Units shall be made affordable to households earning at or below 80% of the Area Median Income, as determined annually by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).



**This section means that if you build 10 or more units, you are REQUIRED to have 10% of units be deed-restricted Affordable units**

Proposed developments may provide additional Affordable Units, or deeper and broader Affordable Units, at the following rates, in exchange for additional flexibility in dimensional controls as prescribed below:

- Projects that provide 15% of all Dwelling Units constructed in a project as Affordable Units available to households earning at or below 80% of the Area Median Income will be allowed up to a maximum of 40% Lot Coverage.
- Projects that provide 10% of all Dwelling Units constructed in a project as Affordable Units available to households earning at or below 50% of the Area Median Income will be allowed up to a maximum of 40% Lot Coverage.



**This section provides incentives for adding Affordable units into any size project. The tradeoff for Affordable units is larger buildings.**



# Open items we are still working on with our partners

## **Department of Public Works**

Infrastructure projections (sewer)  
Future pedestrian improvements

## **Police Department**

Parking regulations/enforcement  
Overall level of service

## **Fire Department**

Design of lots  
Public safety access

## **School Committee**

Future potential enrollment impacts  
and evaluation of needs

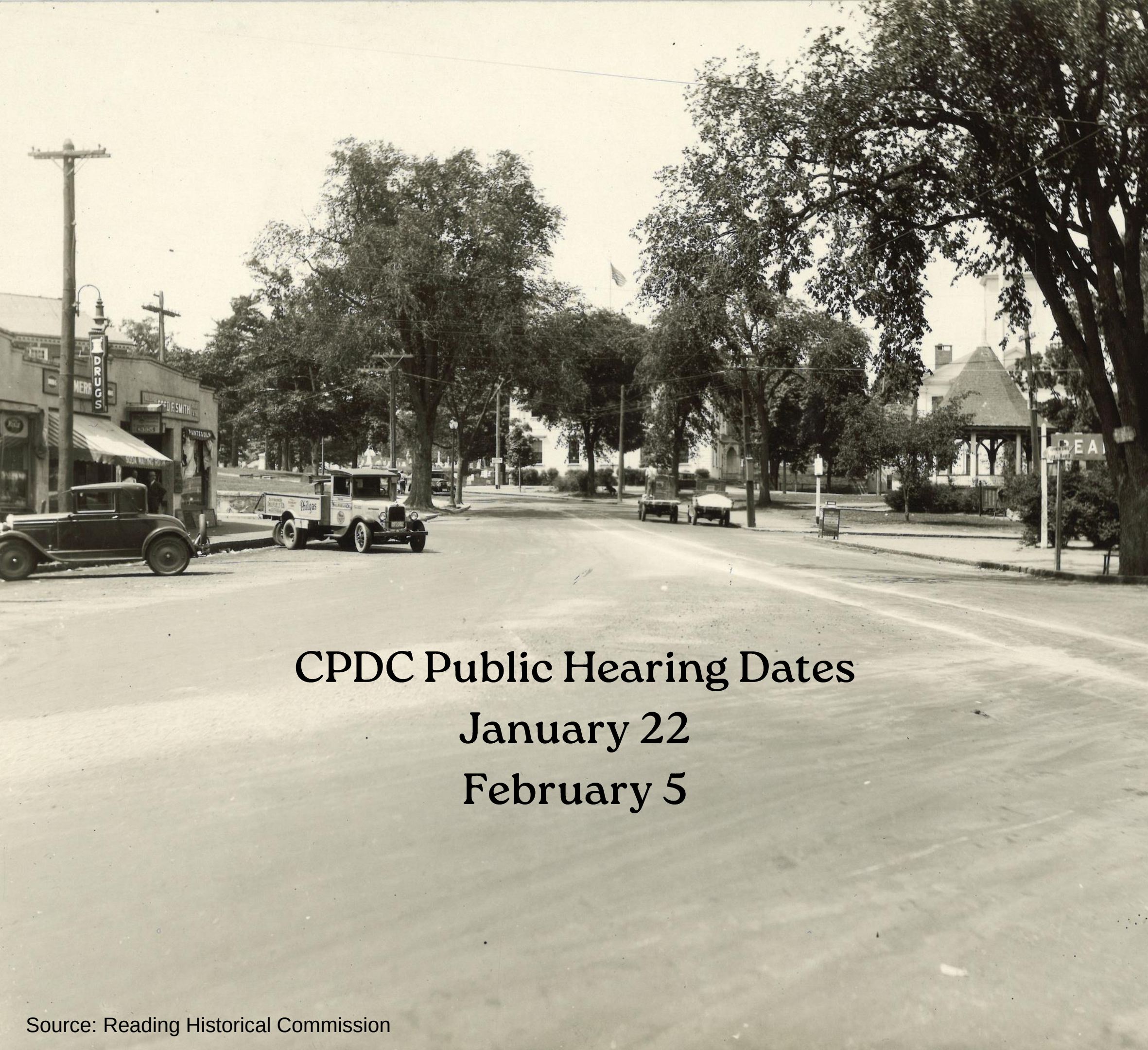
## **Historical District & Commission**

Discussions of protections in the  
district and assessment of historic  
properties

## **CPDC**

Specifics of administration





## CPDC Public Hearing Dates

January 22

February 5

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