



Central Broadway Corridor Zoning Study



Mayor Katjana Ballantyne

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About this Study

Broadway (pronounced /Broad Way/) is a major transportation corridor and main street extending from Sullivan Square in Boston to Arlington Center crossing the entire width of Somerville. Thirty-six properties along a portion of the north side of Broadway are split by the municipal boundary between the City of Somerville and the City of Medford. Differences between the zoning regulations and permitting processes of both cities combine to frustrate property owners, neighbors, business owners, and city officials alike.

In 2023, a Housing Choice Program grant was awarded to the City of Somerville, in close partnership with the City of Medford, to commission this study of the impacts caused by this split between two municipalities and to provide recommendations to improve the situation. Financing of this study was made possible by the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), and the Massachusetts Development Finance Agency (MassDevelopment) through the Community One Stop for Growth grant program.

An engineering, design, and environmental consulting firm, The Horsley Witten Group was brought on to conduct research and analysis, engage with the public, provide recommendations in consultation with staff from both Somerville and Medford, and prepare this document. Outreach and engagement with community members on both sides of the municipal boundary was carried out in 2024 both online and in person through a series of meetings.

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An aerial photograph of a city street corner, likely in New York City, showing a mix of residential and commercial buildings, a parking lot, and a road intersection. The image is overlaid with a blue tint. The text "Chapter 1: Background" is prominently displayed in the upper left quadrant.

Chapter 1: Background

History of the Broadway Corridor

Study Area

Existing Conditions

Current Zoning Analysis

Specific Examples

History of the Broadway Corridor

Since colonial times, Broadway has served as a vital conduit for transportation, trade, and inter-community connection. This route originated in the early 17th century in present-day Charlestown as a foot path leading to present-day Medford. During the 18th and early 19th centuries as the area population grew, this path became wider to accommodate more frequent and varied types of traffic; while walking was the most common means of getting from one place to another, horse-drawn carriages and wagons and the use of oxen teams for heavier work came into broader use. It was during the 18th century that this transportation route began to be called Winter Hill Road. By the time the 1852 map of Somerville was published, this road had become known as “Broadway”.

It is key to note that from the time of English settlement of this area in 1628 until 1842, Somerville did not exist. The entirety of today’s city was known as and was a part of Charlestown. Present-day Charlestown is but a fraction of its size when settled by the English in 1628. Its original land mass included the following present-day municipalities: Medford (originally “Mistick”), Somerville, Malden, Melrose, Everett, Woburn, Burlington, Winchester, Wilmington, Stoneham, and portions of Cambridge, Reading, and Wakefield. In 1842, the state legislature incorporated Somerville as a new town, its municipal boundaries remaining unchanged to the present day.

While Somerville was the last community to break away from Charlestown, Medford separated itself early in the colonial period. Two years after Charlestown’s 1628 settlement, Medford became its own town in 1630. Medford’s boundaries would shift over the next century until they became finalized in the mid-1700s. According to the Medford Historical Society, on April 19, 1754¹, the Massachusetts General Court granted Medford 760 acres on the south side of the Mystic River. Included in this acreage was land formerly belonging to Ten Hills Farm², a 600-acre property granted to John Winthrop, the first colonial-era governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. This holding stretched from Craddock Bridge near Medford center, along the Mystic River to Mt. Benedict³, and included all of the land between Broadway to the Powder House in the south and the Mystic River in the North. (**Figs. 1 & 2**).



Figure 1: Governor John Winthrop’s Ten Hills Farm, 1637 Map. Massachusetts Historical Society

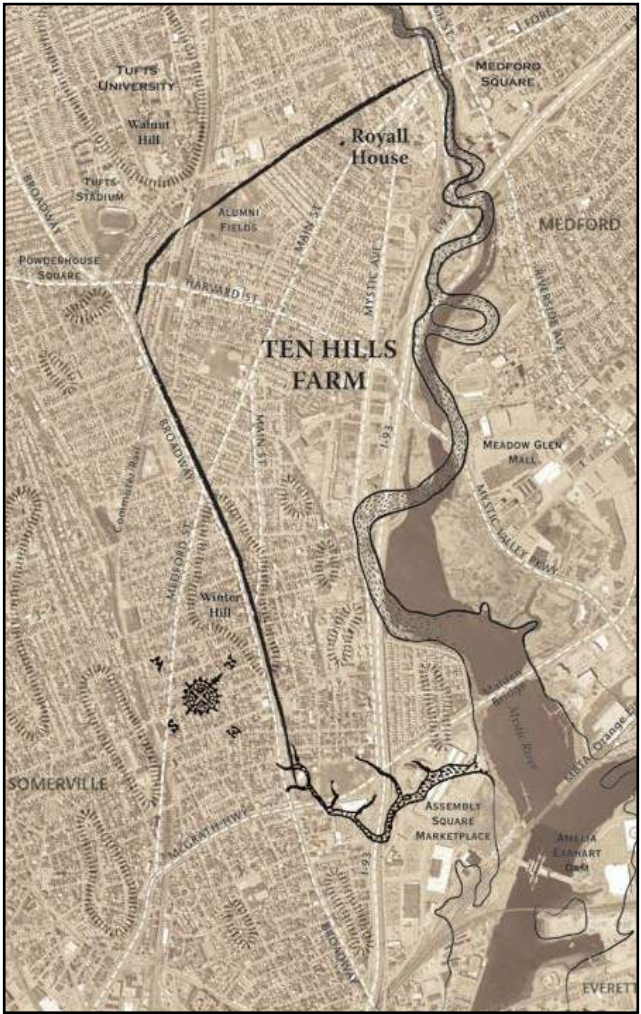


Figure 2: The original boundaries of Ten Hills Farm overlaid on a modern view of Medford and Somerville. Note the extensive frontage along Broadway⁴

¹ See *Medford on the Mystic*, Revs. Carl and Alan Seaburg/ Medford Historical Society, April 1980. <https://www.medfordhistorical.org/medford-history/about-medford/a-quiet-country-town-18th-century-medford/>

² The Somerville neighborhood of Ten Hills derives its name from this farm.

³ Known as Ploughed Hill during the colonial era through the Revolutionary War, then Convent Hill before becoming known as Mt. Benedict.

⁴ http://www.beehivemapping.com/portfolio/BeehivePortfolio_004.html

Also included in the 1754 land grant was an area then-known as “Mistick Field”⁵ which forms today’s South Medford. This area forms part of the Medford – Somerville border along Broadway between Ball Square to Main Street just beyond Magoun Square. It is this boundary line that is splitting parcels along Broadway. While in some instances this boundary line runs through unbuilt land, in more complex cases the boundary line runs through buildings, leaving one building split between two municipalities.

As the 1889 G.H. Walker map (Fig. 3) shows, several buildings in the area of Ball Square that were built over the municipal boundary into Somerville. The reasons for this can be many. Prior to modern zoning and municipal planning, neighborhoods grew organically over time, especially those in more agrarian areas such as this portion of Somerville and Medford. Buildings were constructed for a personal purpose (a barn, dwelling house, shop), but not necessarily in concert with a larger land use plan. While property boundaries would be surveyed to determine where ownership rights began and ended, in the absence of zoning regulations, there was no real need to determine where a building

was constructed on the lot so long as lot boundaries were respected. Interestingly, despite the lack of modern zoning rules, the buildings on this map demonstrate a respect for contextual front setbacks; the (front) façade of the boundary-split buildings are built to form a largely straight street wall. Ultimately, the fact that the boundary line divides buildings and lots is not a condition recently created, but is one that has existed for at least the last two centuries.

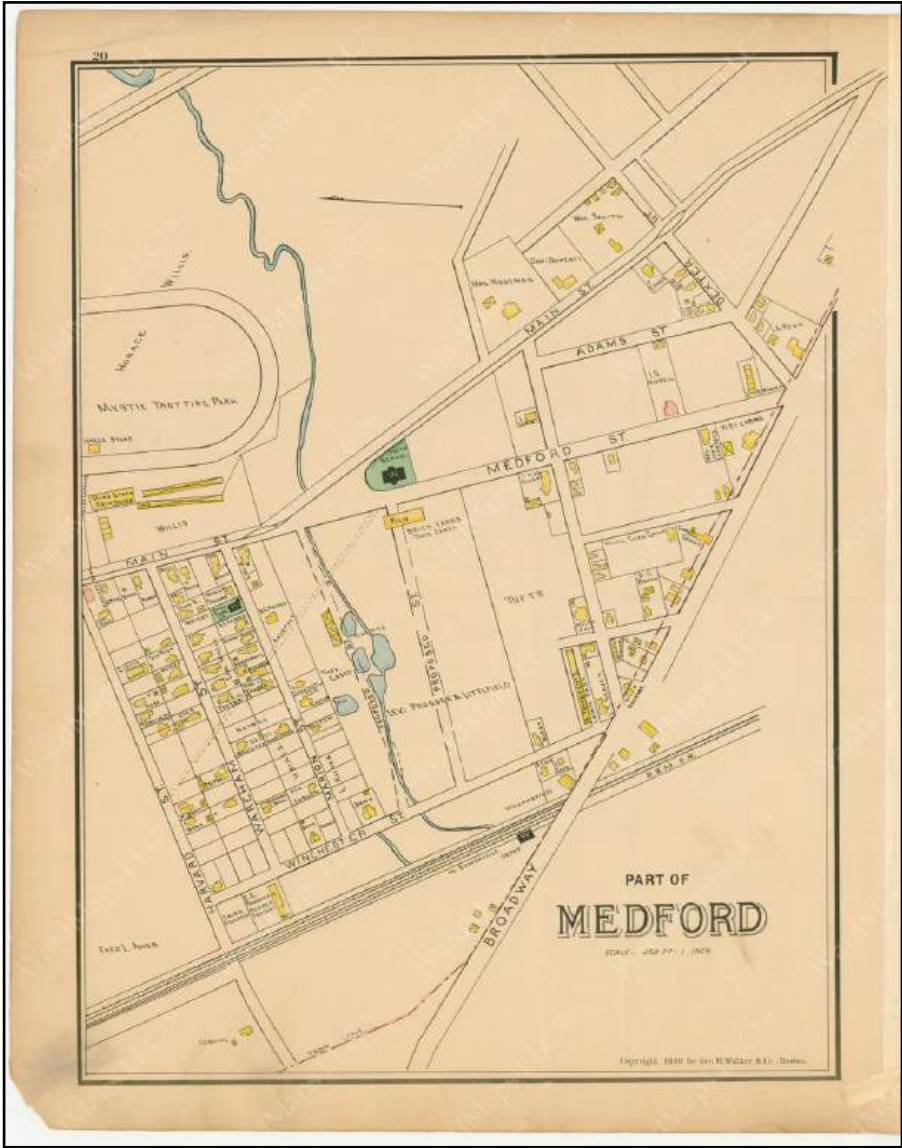


Figure 3: The 1889 H.G. Walker map showing the municipal boundary line bisecting buildings and lots near Ball Square

⁵ History of the Town of Medford. James M. Usher, 1886. <https://www.loc.gov/item/01011512/>

As the 19th century progressed, the advent of passenger rail service to Somerville in the 1830s and 1840s brought land speculators with it. Speculators from Cambridge and Charlestown subdivided former agricultural land in Winter Hill, Spring Hill, and East Somerville into housing lots. Land along Broadway was particularly choice at the crest of the hill as views of Boston could be had from the substantial houses built there.

An influx of residents to these newly constructed, often gracious homes, coupled with a desire for greater mobility, led to the need for increased transportation services along Broadway. The horse-drawn trolleys that were common earlier in the 1800s gave way to the electric trolley in the latter part of that century. In some portions of Broadway, two sets of trolley tracks were laid in the middle of the road parallel to each other, allowing two trolleys to travel at a time, while horseless carriages, and horses and buggies share the remainder of the road (Fig. 4). An 1898 tour brochure of the greater Boston area highlighted the electric trolley service between Charlestown and Medford along Broadway, the original conduit between the two locales:

*The electric car line to Medford proper, or Old Medford, is by way of Main Street, Charlestown... Broadway, Winter Hill; and Main Street from the summit of the hill, direct to Medford Square. The ride becomes most interesting after... the ascent of Winter Hill [has] begun. The jagged mounds on the right as Broadway is fairly entered are relics of Ploughed Hill, afterward Mount Benedict...*⁶

⁶ Walks and Rides in the Country Round About Boston. Edwin M. Bacon, 1898. <https://www.medfordhistorical.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Medford-Walking-Tours-1897.pdf>



Figure 4: Two electric trolleys on parallel tracks travel up Broadway near Main Street in Winter Hill. A horseless carriage (early automobile) maneuvers alongside the trolley while horses and buggies travel on either side of the street. c. late 1890s – early 1910s. Historic New England

Residential development continued the length of Broadway into Magoun and Ball Squares throughout the 19th century. The low-rise masonry buildings seen on both sides of the Square today replaced earlier, mostly residential structures. Colored picture postcards such as the ones below, common at the turn of the last century, can provide valuable insight into a built environment that is no longer extant. The first image below (**Fig. 5**) shows a view of residential buildings of varying styles, sizes and materials running along Broadway toward Main Street while an electric trolley lumbers up Medford Street to the center of the Square. The second image (**Fig. 6**) further emphasizes the more “suburban”, residential nature of the square in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



Figure 5: Magoun Square looking toward Main Street to the left and down Medford Street to the right. c. 1900



Figure 6: Magoun Square looking toward Medford. c.1908

The 20th century brought further transformation to the area. In the early-to-mid 20th century, Ball and Magoun Squares transformed from largely residential areas to commercial ones. These changes in property use transformed the visual appearance of both Squares as well as residential buildings gave way to single- and low-story masonry structures; the streetscape greatly changed (**Fig.7**)



Figure 7: Ball Square c. 1906. Trolley tracks, dirt and cobble streets, horses and buggies/wagons. Locatelli's Ball Square Theatre will be built in the middle of the right block by 1923

The growing popularity of the automobile saw auto-related businesses spring up throughout Somerville from early filling stations in Union Square to numerous businesses between Ball Square and Mystic Avenue. Light commercial enterprises as well as other businesses such as coffee shops, Locatelli's Ball Square Theatre (**Figs. 8, 9**), Rexall Drug, and other stores focused on serving neighborhood needs while also catering to surrounding communities.



Figure 8: Locatelli's Ball Square Theatre opened in April 1923 with 1,248 seats⁷



Figure 9: Locatelli's Ball Square Theatre at night⁸

The rapid growth Somerville experienced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was replicated in countless communities across the country. Coinciding with the uptick in development also came widespread interest in regulating community growth and building standards. In 1916, New York City passed the first zoning ordinance in the U.S. in order to control and Somerville officials began to consider this new tool in the 1920s. Somerville formally adopted its first zoning ordinance in 1925 and Medford in 1925/6.

Somerville’s zoning remained largely unchanged from 1925 until 1960. The next major updates came in 1977 and 1988 with major zoning overhauls in 1990 and 2019. From 1960 until 1988, the Broadway corridor from the hill of Magoun Square to Ball Square was largely zoned commercial with some industrial and a smaller portion of high-density residential. The 1990 zoning code update slightly recalibrated the zoning in this area to allow for both neighborhood-focused businesses that were pedestrian-dependent as well as more intense commercial uses that were vehicle-dependent, two types of uses that seem inherently in conflict. Also remaining in the mix of allowed uses was higher density residential development.

7 <https://cinematreasures.org/theaters/9626/photos>
8 Ibid.



Figure 10: Members of City Council and staff meeting with the public (Photo credit: City of Somerville)

Study Area

The study area includes an estimated one mile stretch of Broadway where properties on the north side of the street are split between Medford and Somerville. The map below shows the municipal boundary in red, and the parcels analyzed for this project highlighted in yellow.

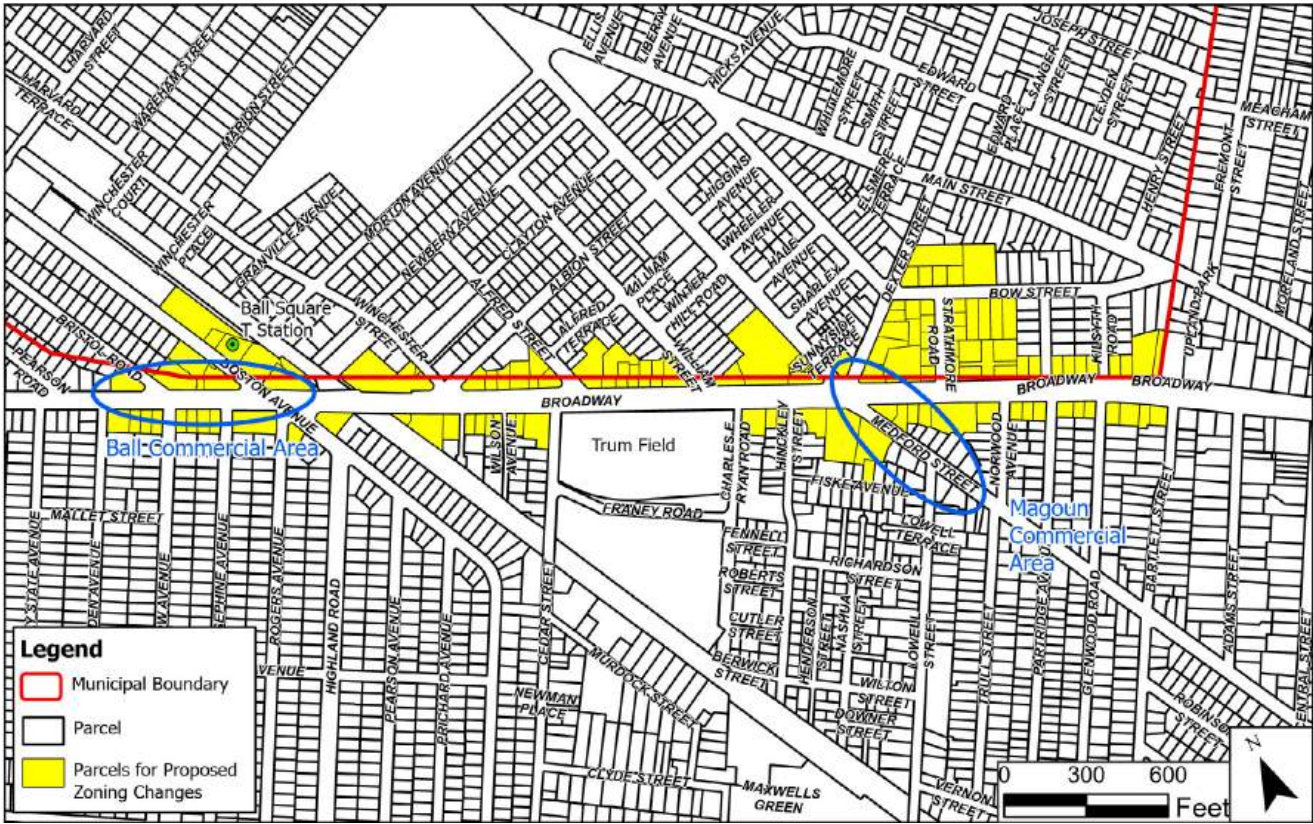


Figure 11: Broadway Corridor Study Area

The study area is anchored by the neighborhood centers of Magoun Square and Ball Square, where commercial activity is generally focused. The Ball Square station on the MBTA Green Line opened in 2022 as part of the Green Line Extension. Trum Field, located on the south side of Broadway, is a key neighborhood recreational asset and community gathering space.

Every parcel in this study area with frontage on the north side of Broadway has a Somerville street address, with the back portion of the parcel situated in Medford. Along the western end of the corridor, the parcels are split roughly evenly between the two cities. Along the eastern end of the corridor, only a sliver of each parcel is in Somerville with the rest located in Medford.



Figure 12: City Staff and consultant team on a walking tour of the corridor (Photo credit: City of Somerville)

Existing Conditions

This section reviews the existing conditions of the built environment along the corridor, including the height and age of existing buildings. It is important to understand what exists today and how that may differ from what is allowed by zoning and what is desired by both cities.

Existing Building Height

Most buildings have fewer stories than the cities currently permit and are significantly shorter than what is envisioned. Most buildings are two or two-and-a-half stories tall, with many of the commercial buildings currently a single story.

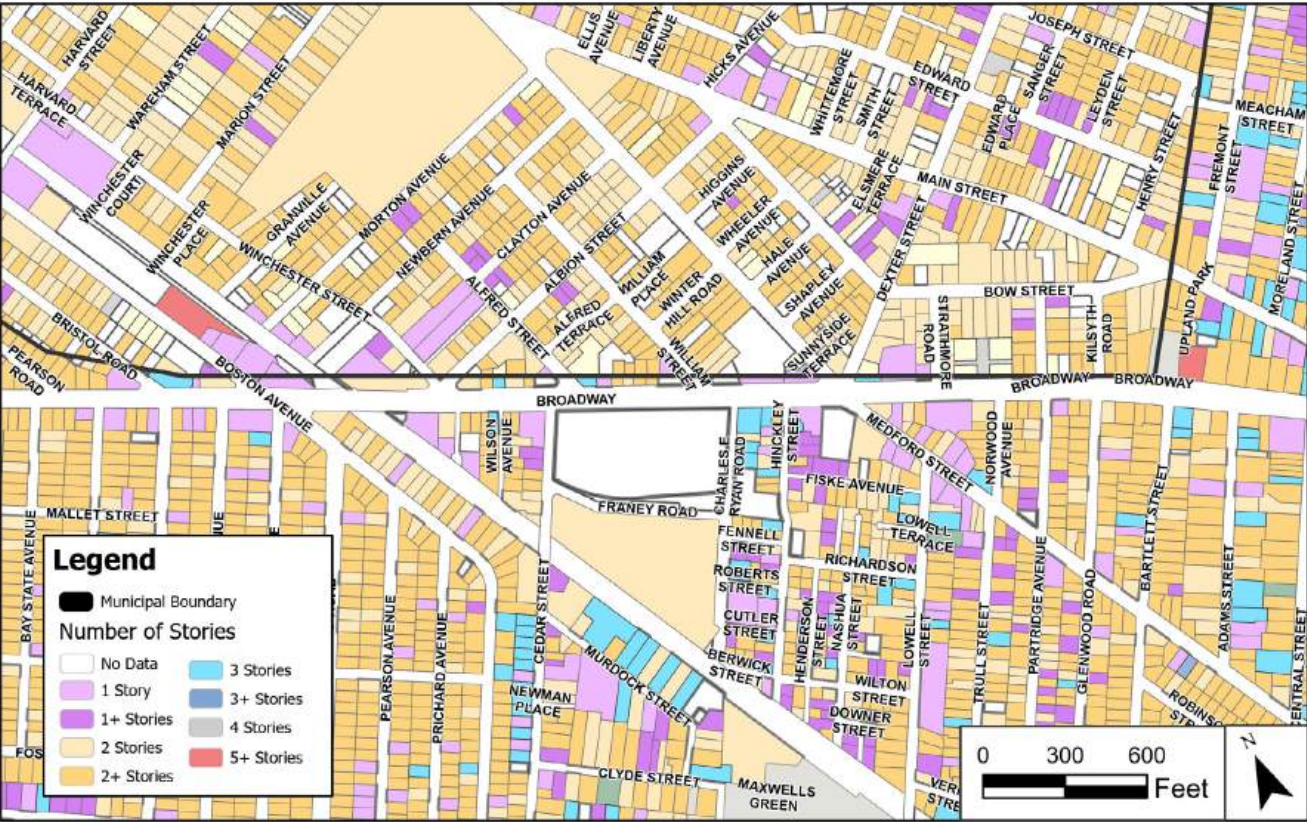


Figure 13: Existing building height

Age of Existing Buildings

Most of the buildings fronting Broadway were built before 1941. Few major developments have occurred in the past 20 years. Given the intense development pressure throughout the region and the community feedback, it is possible that the corridor’s conflicting zoning is among the factors limiting new development and redevelopment as opposed to a lack of demand.

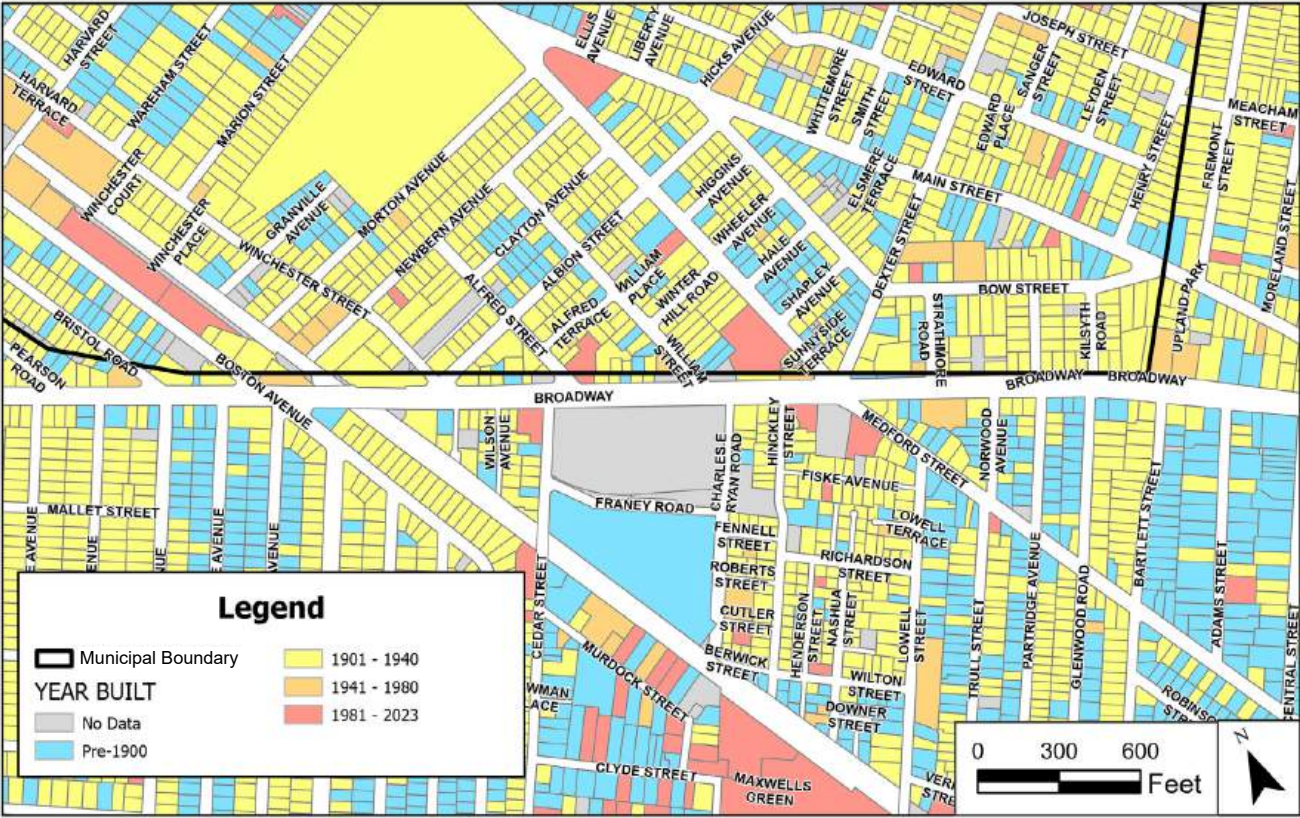


Figure 14: Age of buildings on the corridor



Figure 15: Low-scale development adjacent to the Ball Square T Station



Figure 16: Older residential properties along the corridor; looking west from Glenwood Road.

Current Zoning Analysis

This section analyzes the current zoning ordinances for both Somerville and Medford. It is important to understand how zoning works in each community generally as well as the specific zoning standards that apply to this portion of the Broadway corridor. Below is a map of existing zoning along the corridor.

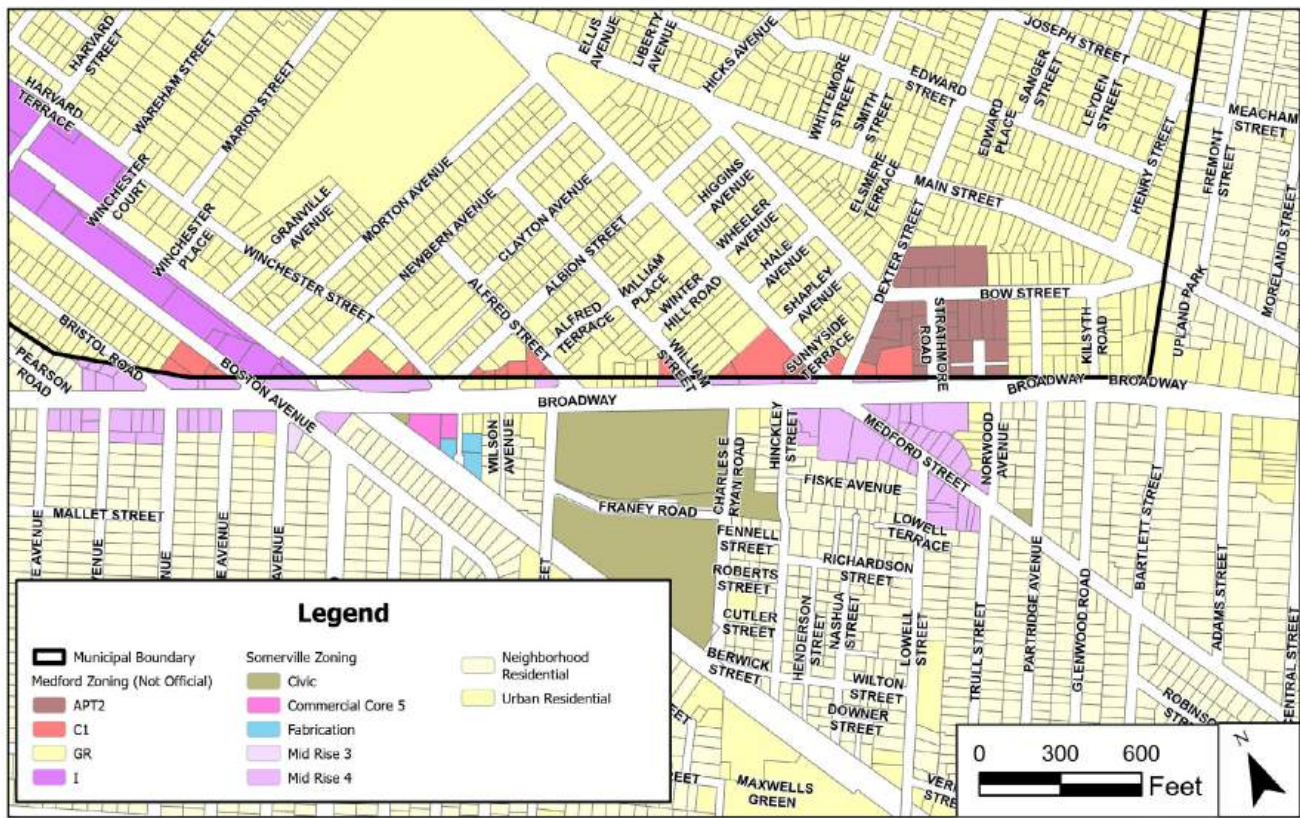


Figure 17: Existing zoning

Somerville's Zoning Ordinance

Somerville completed an extensive, multi-year zoning rewrite recently and adopted a citywide form-based zoning ordinance in December 2019. Each zoning district now has very clear standards and guidance to ensure attractive and compatible development. The code includes a written description of the character, intent, and purpose to be achieved in each zoning district; a range of allowable building types; visual examples of each building type; and dimensional standards (lot dimensions, lot coverage, setbacks, green building standards, massing, façade composition, etc.) for each building type. There are general design standards for building components (stoops, porches, etc.), building setbacks and orientation, and architectural design. Each district also has a traditional table of permitted uses, showing what uses are allowed, permitted by special permit, or prohibited. Finally, each district has specific standards for signs, parking (including for bicycles), and the public realm. The ordinance provides the foundation for the public engagement visioning discussion and the zoning vocabulary and recommendations produced as part of this project.

Medford's Zoning Ordinance

Medford's Zoning Ordinance has not been significantly updated since the 1960s and does not reflect many of the City's current planning goals. The City recently kicked off a process to do a complete zoning overhaul, which will run concurrently with this project but is expected to take much longer. Medford's existing zoning ordinance is more "traditional" in format. There is a Table of Use and Parking Regulations that identifies which uses are permitted, permitted by special permit, or prohibited for each district as well as parking space requirements. There is also a Table of Dimensional Requirements that identifies standards for lot size and dimensions, open space, setbacks, lot coverage, and building height. One "untraditional" aspect of the Table of Dimensional Requirements is that some of the requirements change depending on the type of use. For example, in the C-1 district, allowable height for hotels is 15 stories, assisted living facilities and apartment buildings six stories, and office buildings four stories. City staff noted that they are open to adopting a new overlay district for the Broadway Corridor prior to the completion of their full zoning rewrite. They are open to new zoning approaches that will help them reach the vision for this corridor laid out in the Medford Comprehensive Plan.

Compatibility and Conflict Analysis

At first glance, the building height and uses allowed under the zoning districts that border each other on either side of the municipal boundary are fairly compatible. There are, however, some areas of conflict as well. Figures 18 and 19 below highlight the most notable areas of conflict which are explored in greater detail below.

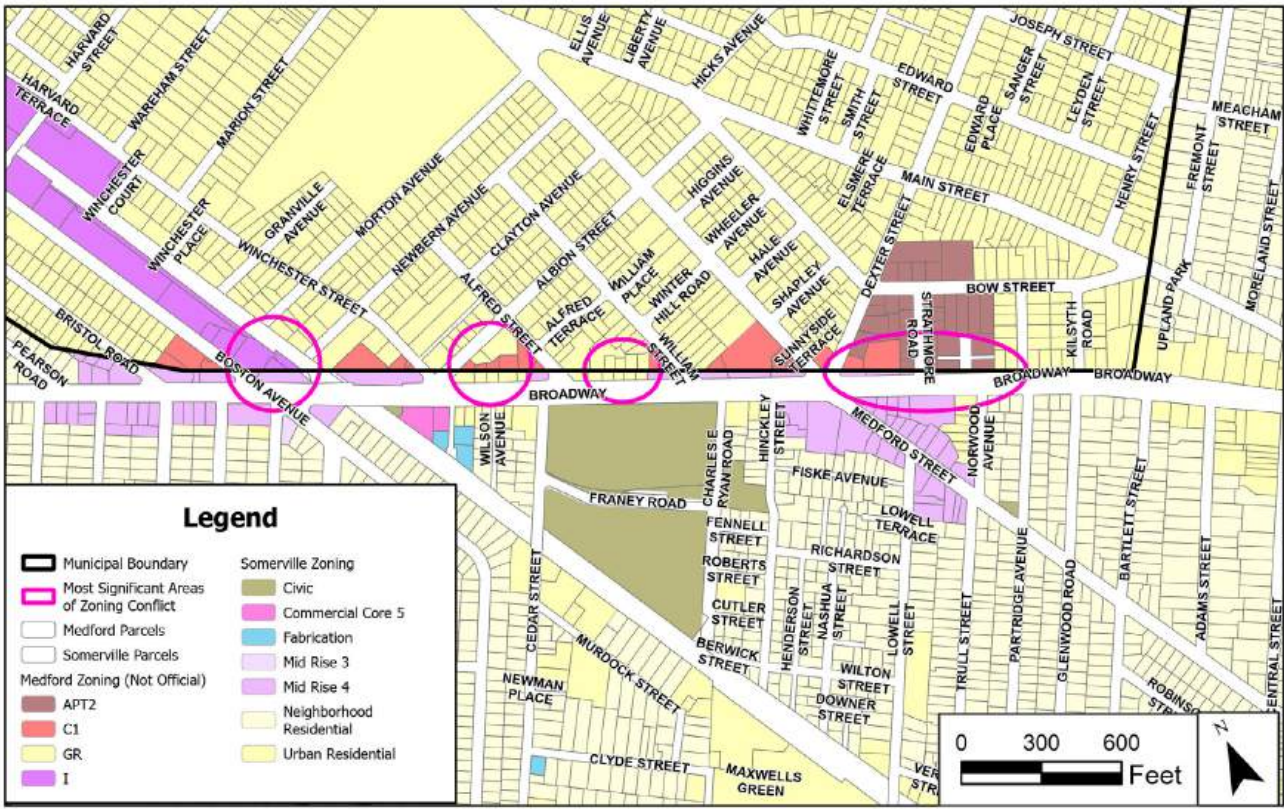


Figure 18: Most significant areas of conflict



Figure 19: Maximum building heights under current zoning

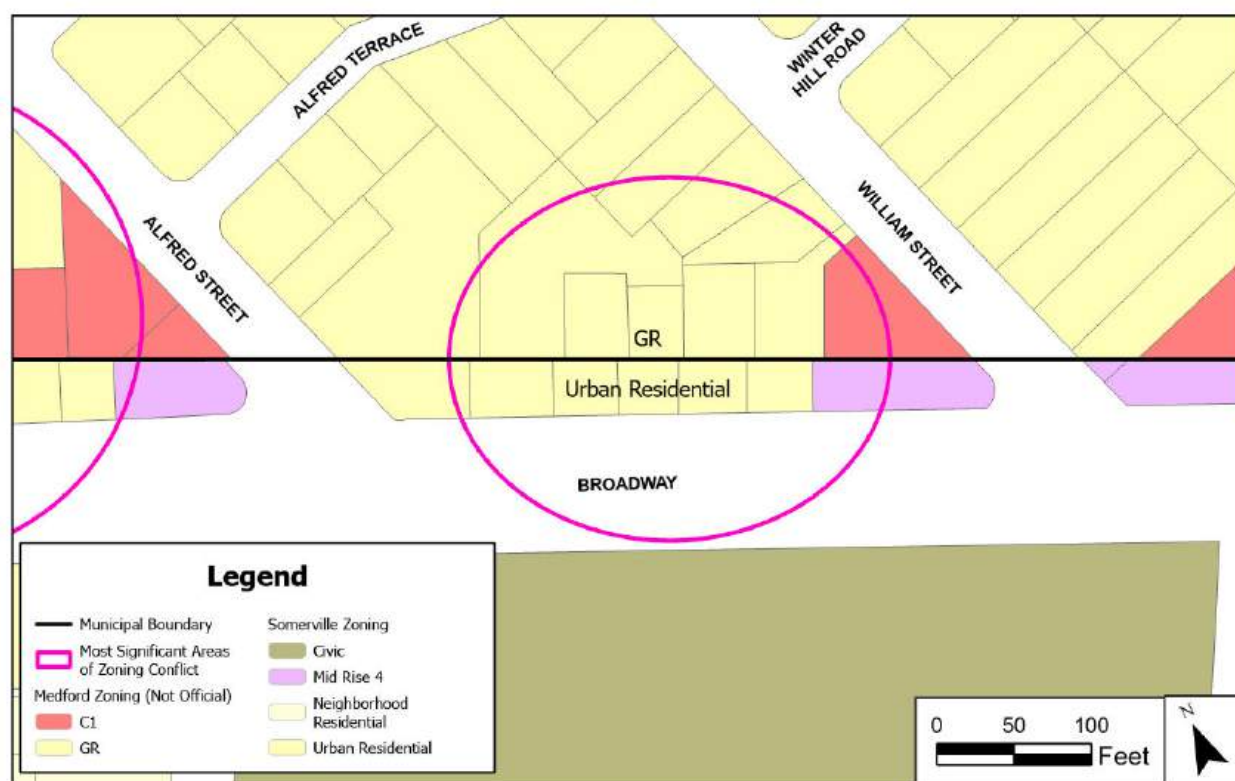


Figure 20: Example of conflict between UR (Somerville) and GR (Medford)

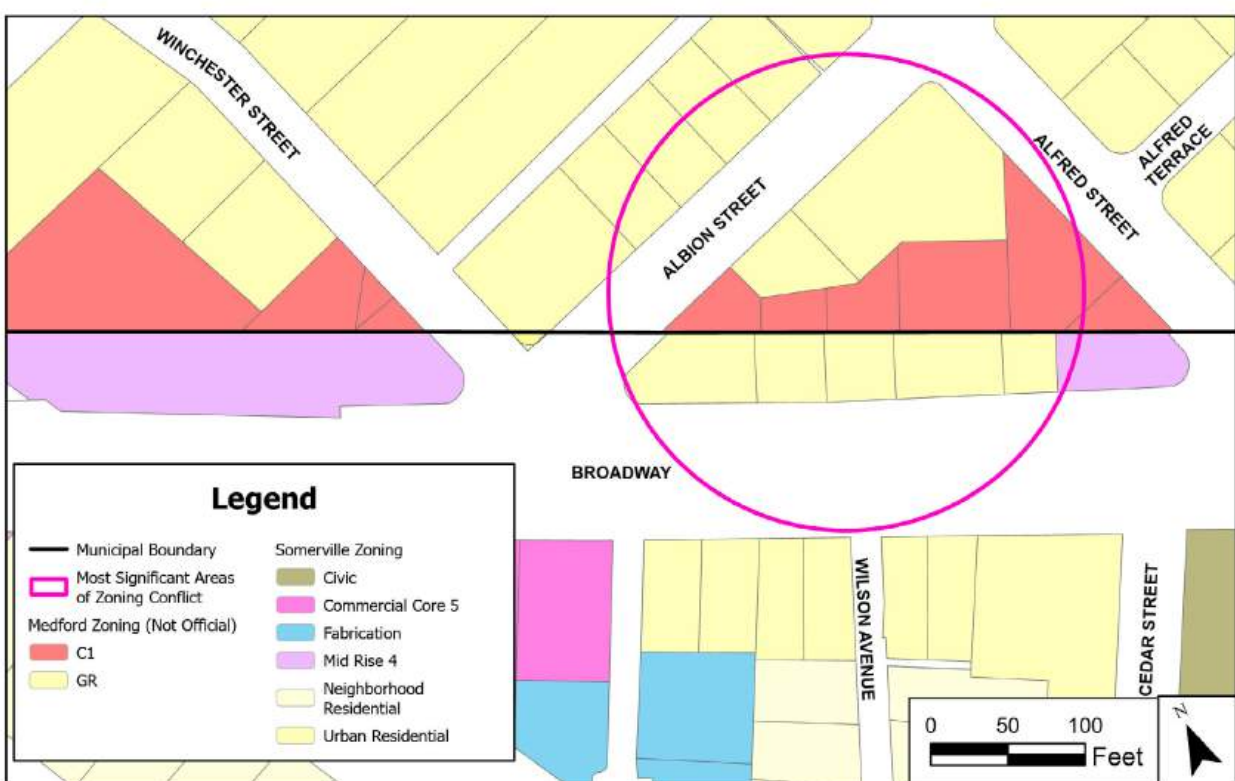


Figure 21: Example of conflict between UR (Somerville) and C-1 (Medford)

Residential Uses

The yellow areas on both sides of the municipal boundary (see Figure 20, above) represent residential zoning districts. The Neighborhood Residential (NR) district in Somerville allows mostly residential uses of largely one to three units (or four units in some cases) up to three stories in height. The Urban Residential (UR) district in Somerville also allows mostly residential uses, but at a greater density, with multi-family structures allowed up to four stories in height. On the Medford side of the boundary, the General Residential (GR) district allows mostly residential uses of one to two units up to three stories in height and is mostly mapped on existing neighborhoods. There is also the APT-2 district which allows mostly residential uses, but at a greater density, with multi-family structures generally allowed up to six stories in height.

With a few small differences, the GR and NR districts are very compatible as are UR and APT-2. Most of the split parcels zoned GR in Medford are zoned NR in Somerville, though some are zoned UR. In general, this means that multi-family development would be allowed on the frontage but not in the rear. Also, parcels across the street from NR zoned parcels (on the south side of Broadway) are mostly zoned NR. One notable conflict is that the parcels zoned APT-2 fronting on Broadway are zoned for mixed-use on the Somerville side of the boundary (more on mixed uses below). Figure 20 above highlights an example of the conflict between UR on the Somerville side and GR on the Medford side.

Mixed Uses

The Mid Rise (MR) districts in Somerville allow a mix of commercial and residential uses. The MR3 district allows up to three stories in height and the MR4 district allows up to four stories. On the Medford side of the boundary, the Commercial 1 (C-1) district allows a mix of commercial and residential uses of generally four to six stories depending on the use. However, as noted above, hotels are potentially allowed to be much taller. Multi-family residential buildings are allowed up to six stories.

Parcels zoned C-1 in Medford are generally zoned MR4 on the Somerville side of the boundary, which is fairly compatible. However, there is a segment between Alfred and Winchester Streets that is zoned C-1 in Medford and UR in Somerville, meaning many commercial uses would not be allowed by the Somerville frontage district that would be allowed to the rear in Medford. See Figure 21 above.

The parcels fronting on Broadway and zoned APT-2 on the Medford side of the boundary are zoned MR3 or MR4 on the Somerville side of the boundary. Most of the commercial uses allowed on the Somerville side of the boundary could not be built, given that the vast majority of the land area of these parcels are in Medford where those commercial uses are not allowed in the APT-2 district. Figure 22 below highlights an example of these conflicts.

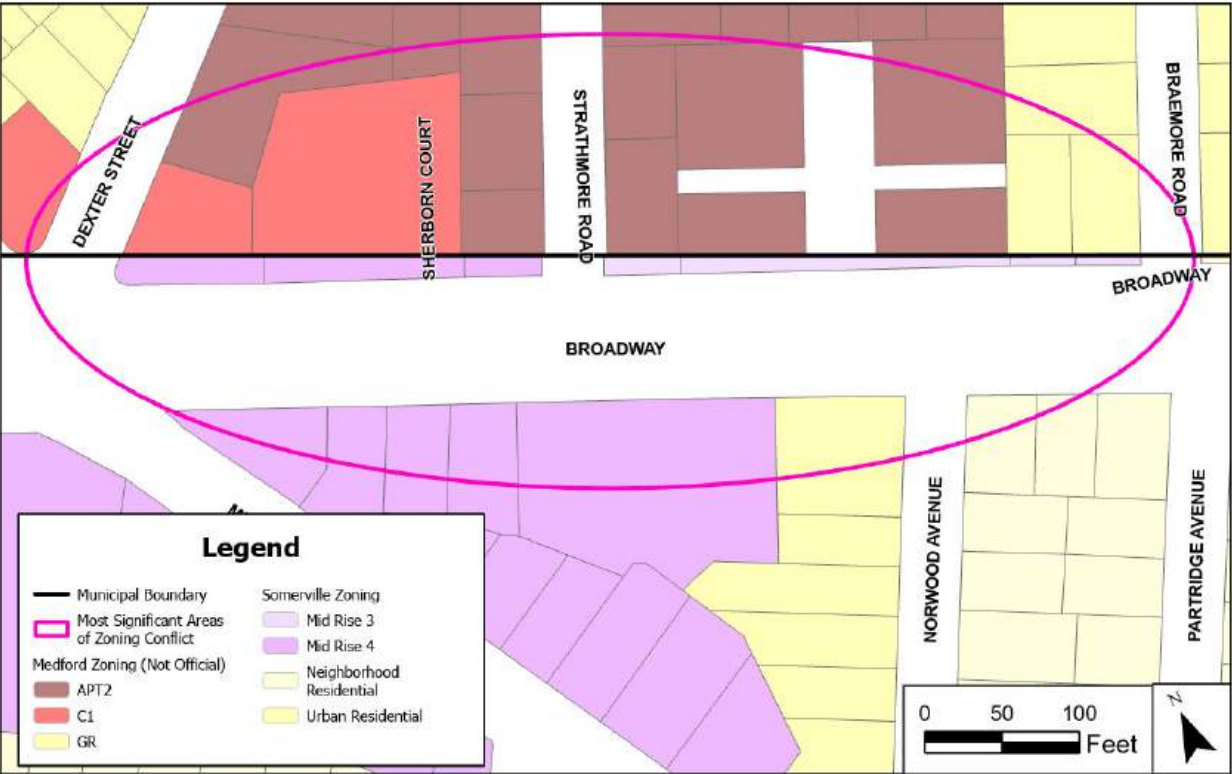


Figure 22: Example of conflict between MR3/MR4 (Somerville) and APT-2 (Medford)

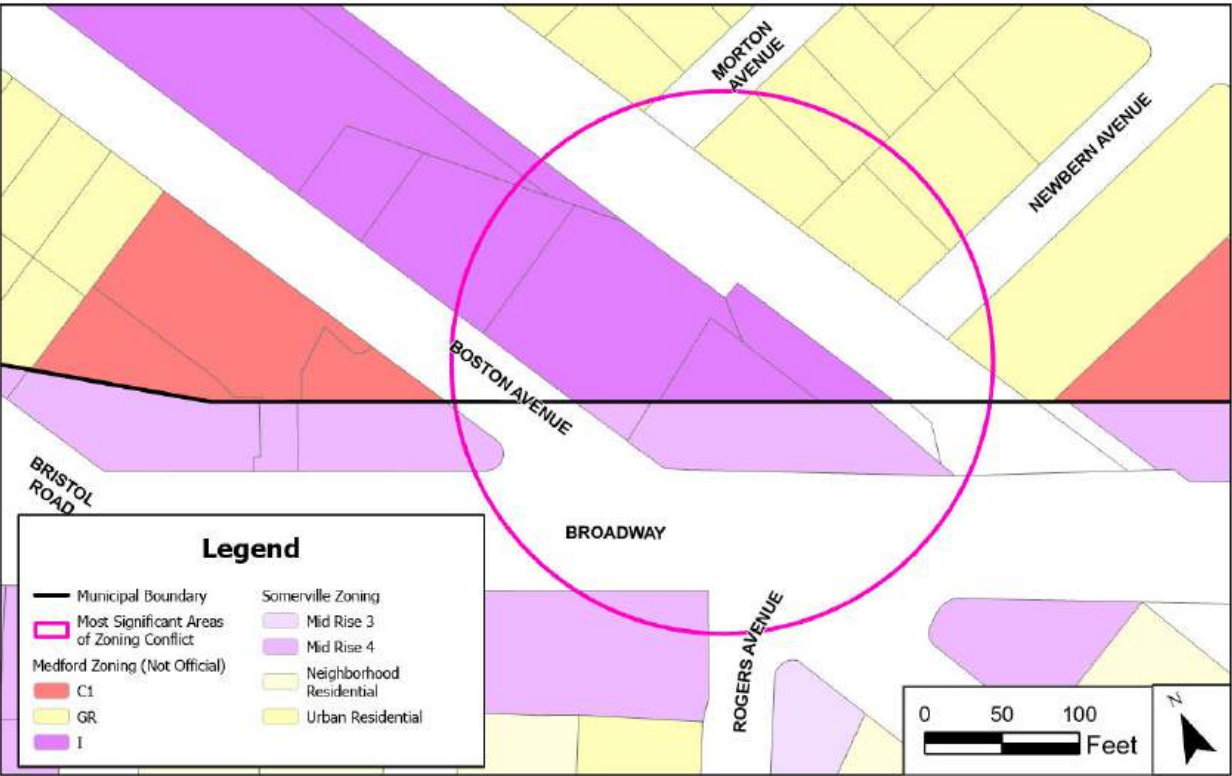


Figure 23: Example of conflict between MR4 (Somerville) and I (Medford)

Other District Types

On the Medford side of the boundary, there is a strip of Industrial (I) zoned land just west of the railroad tracks. There is one parcel in this area that fronts on Broadway, with MR4 zoning on its Somerville side. The I district does not allow for any residential uses, and Medford supports changing the zoning here to allow a mix of residential and commercial uses. As an example of demand and City vision not aligned with the code, a parcel in the I district just north of the Ball Square MBTA Station received a variance to build a multi-family structure with ground floor commercial. Figure 23 above highlights this current industrial zoning.

Summary of Use and Height Standards for Split Parcel Zoning

SOMERVILLE			MEDFORD		
Zone	Uses	Height	Zone	Uses	Height
NR	1-3 (or 4) units residential	3 stories	GR	1-2 units residential	3 stories
UR	Multi-unit residential	4 stories	APT-2	Multi-unit residential	6 stories
MR3	Mixed-use residential/commercial	3 stories	C-1	Mixed-use residential/commercial	6 stories (depending on the use)
MR4	Mixed-use residential/commercial	4 stories			

Inclusionary Zoning

Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) is a mechanism for requiring affordable housing in developments of certain sizes that is currently utilized by both Somerville and Medford. While the exact standards can vary depending on the situation, Somerville generally requires 20% of new housing units to be affordable in projects with four or more units. Medford requires 10-15% depending on the number of units, with an initial trigger of projects with ten or more units. On top of leading to confusion over exactly how much affordable housing is required, this can also incentivize developers to put more housing on the Medford side and less in Somerville in order to maximize the number of developable market rate units.

Off-Street Parking Standards

Somerville currently has a transit-oriented off-street parking policy that eliminates minimum parking requirements for commercial uses within a ¼ mile of a transit area and for residential uses within a ½ mile (however, parking maximums apply in these areas). The entire corridor is within a ½ mile of a transit area, and much is within a ¼ mile, meaning there is no minimum parking requirement for any residential use in the study area (a developer could choose to provide parking). For those parcels approximately east of Alfred Street, beyond ¼ mile from the Ball Square T station, commercial uses would be subject to the minimum standards of the Vehicular Parking Table for the underlying zoning district.

Medford currently has more traditional parking standards, assigning parking requirements to each use in Table A: Table of Use and Parking Regulations. Multiple dwellings require 1.5 parking spots per dwelling, though this can be reduced to 0.8 parking spots per dwelling when located within a ½ mile of high-frequency transit. Parking for commercial uses is generally calculated per square foot. Parking for mixed-use buildings is calculated separately for each use within the building.

Other Somerville Zoning Districts

On the Somerville side of the boundary within the study area, there are three other zoning districts that do not appear on the split lots. While these do not pose compatibility concerns with Medford, Somerville may wish to revisit the future of these sites. There is one parcel zoned Commercial Core 5 (CC5) which allows for mostly commercial uses of up to five stories in height. In addition, there are two parcels behind the CC5 zoned for Fabrication (i.e. light industrial). Finally, Somerville’s civic uses (CIV) district exists on public parkland in the middle of the corridor at Trum Field and the Department of Public Works facilities at 1 Franey Road.



Figure 24: Commercial and mixed uses on Broadway often abruptly transition to residential uses

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.

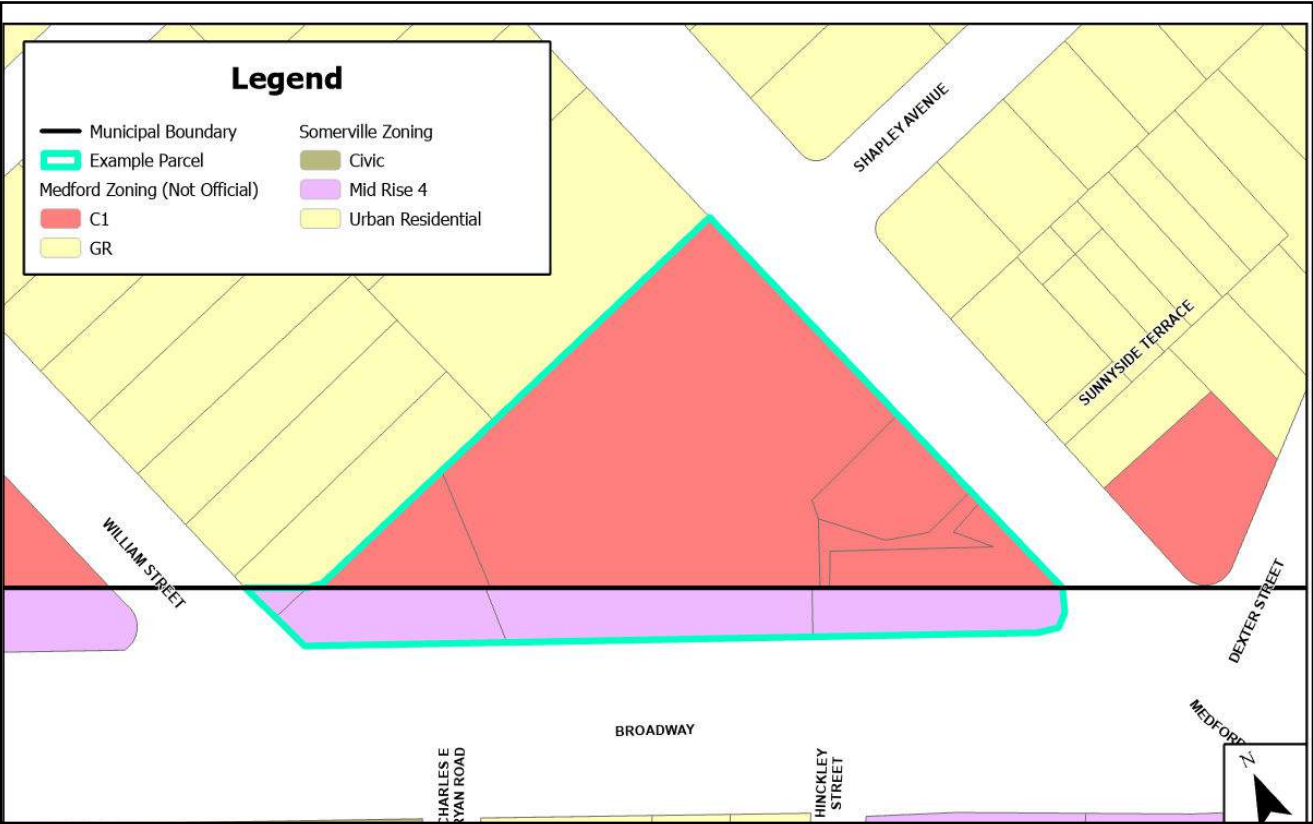


Figure 26: 519 Broadway

600 Block of Broadway

Issues

In this location the uses and building heights allowed in Somerville and Medford do not align. The Somerville frontage allows mostly residential up to four stories, whereas the rear of the parcels (in Medford) allows a variety of commercial and mixed uses, most of which allow four to six stories of building height.

Medford’s zoning envisions commercial mixed-use for this block – for example, a 6-story building with ground floor retail and apartments above - but this is unlikely to occur given the residential zoning on the Somerville side, which largely limits development to the types of buildings and uses on this block today.

Community Feedback

As discussed with the community, there is a strong desire to allow mixed-use and ground floor commercial across most, if not all, of Broadway within this study area. The majority of participants wanted to see mixed-use on this block. The zoning on the Somerville side would need to be changed to accomplish this.

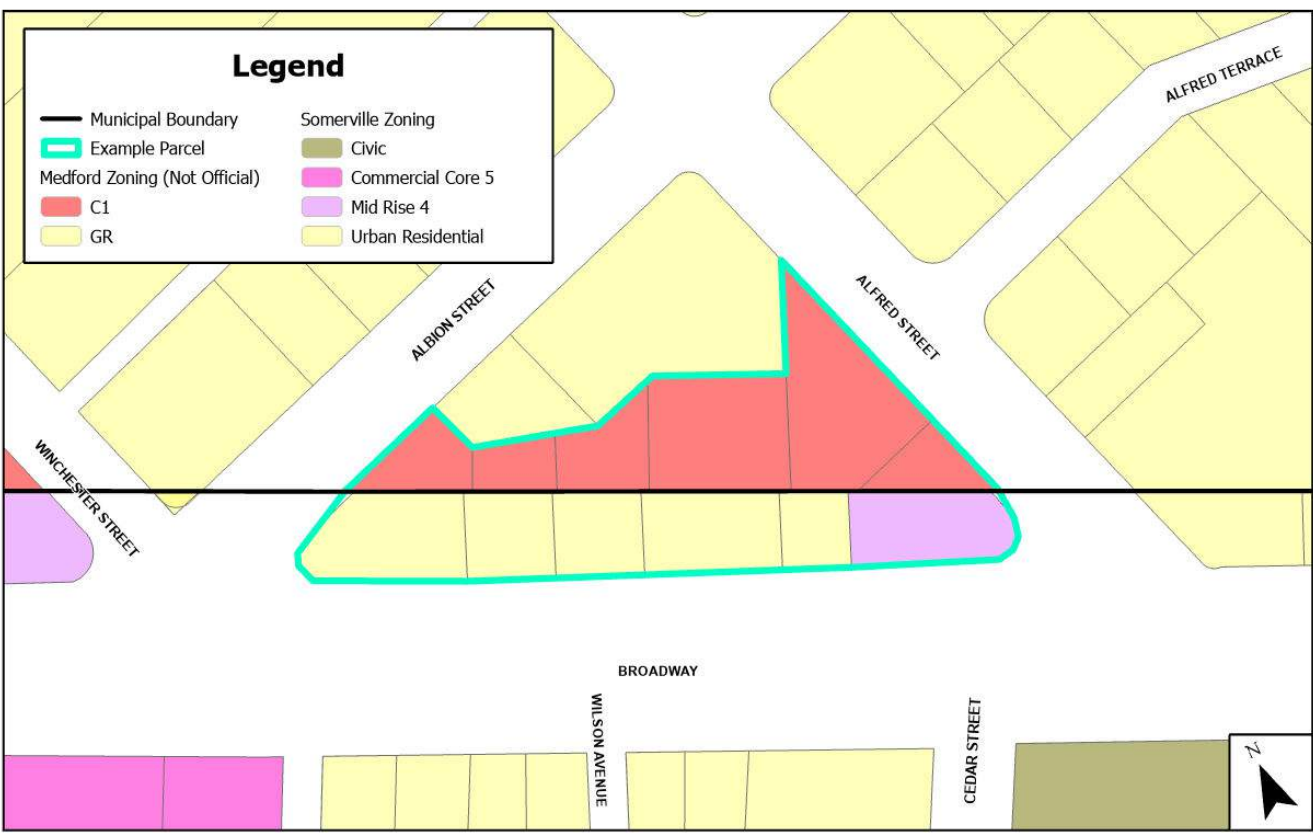


Figure 27: 600 Block of Broadway

Single-Story Commercial Buildings

Issues

On the 700 block of Broadway, the uses and building heights allowed in Somerville and Medford *do* align but the development potential is still not being met. The Somerville frontage and the rear of the parcels (in Medford) both allow a variety of commercial and mixed uses, at least up to four stories in height.

There might be any number of reasons these buildings have remained at one story and have not taken advantage of current zoning. Property owners may be wary of going through two different development processes with both cities. The four-story height limit may not be incentive enough to redevelop. Or perhaps the existing tenants are providing adequate cash flow for the property owner and redevelopment is viewed as a risk. Increasing the allowable height and promoting a spirit of cooperation between the two cities in the permitting process should help.

Community Feedback

The community strongly advocated for taller buildings and mixed uses within the Ball Square area. This block is in a prime location just one block from the Ball Square T station and a good example of where the community suggested such development should occur.

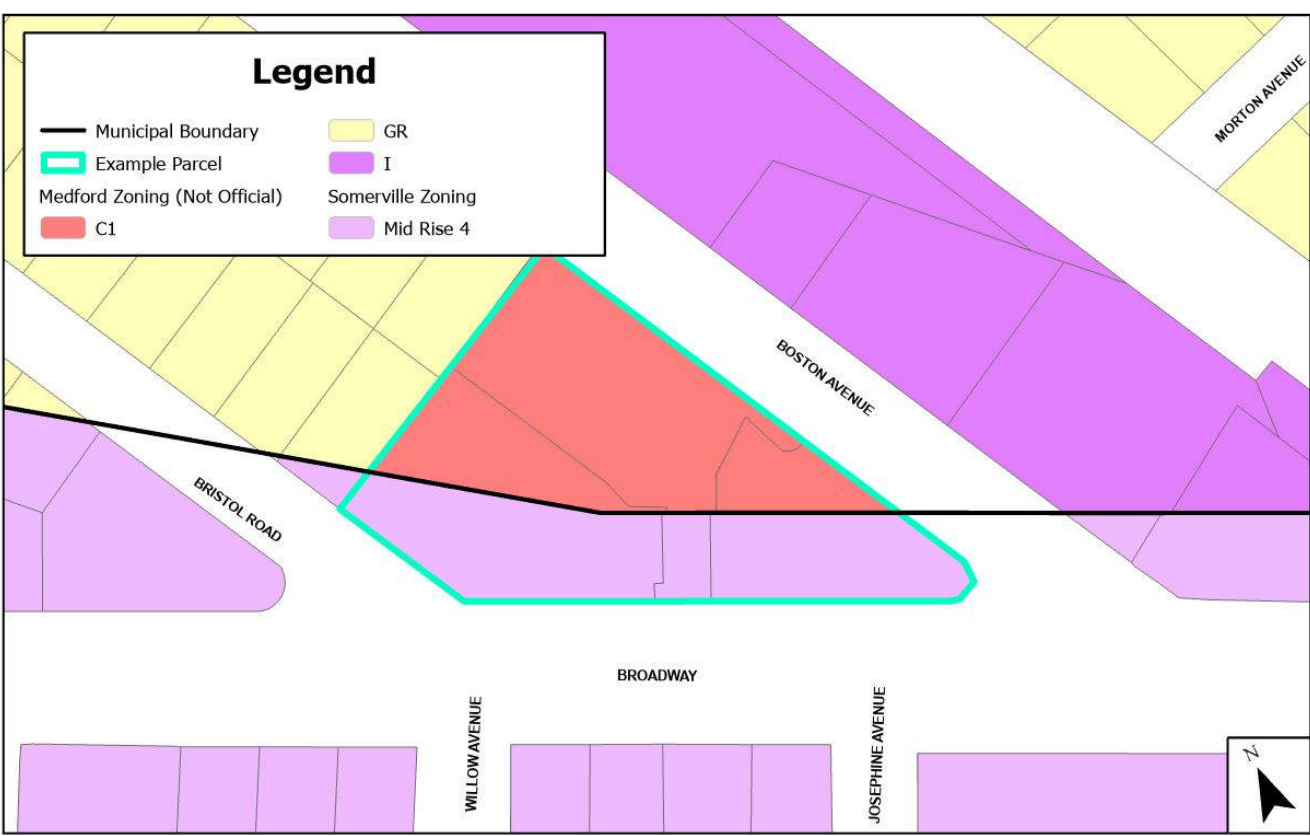


Figure 28: 700 Block of Broadway

Broadway at Strathmore Road

Issues

In this case the uses and building heights allowed in Somerville and Medford are more complicated. The Somerville frontage allows a mix of commercial and residential development of three to four stories. The rear of the parcels (in Medford) allows for up to six stories in height but uses are limited primarily to residential in the APT2 zone.

Most commercial uses are unlikely here without a zoning map amendment, given that only a sliver of the frontage is zoned for mixed use while the rest is zoned largely for residential.

Incidentally, the area zoned APT2 extends beyond the split lots fronting Broadway to lots fronting Strathmore Road, Bow Street, and Dexter Street. Medford may wish to allow ground floor commercial on lots that front Broadway, and continue to allow residential apartment buildings without commercial uses to the rear.

Community Feedback

Again, the community strongly advocated for allowing mixed-use and taller buildings throughout the study area, and especially near Ball Square and Magoun Square.

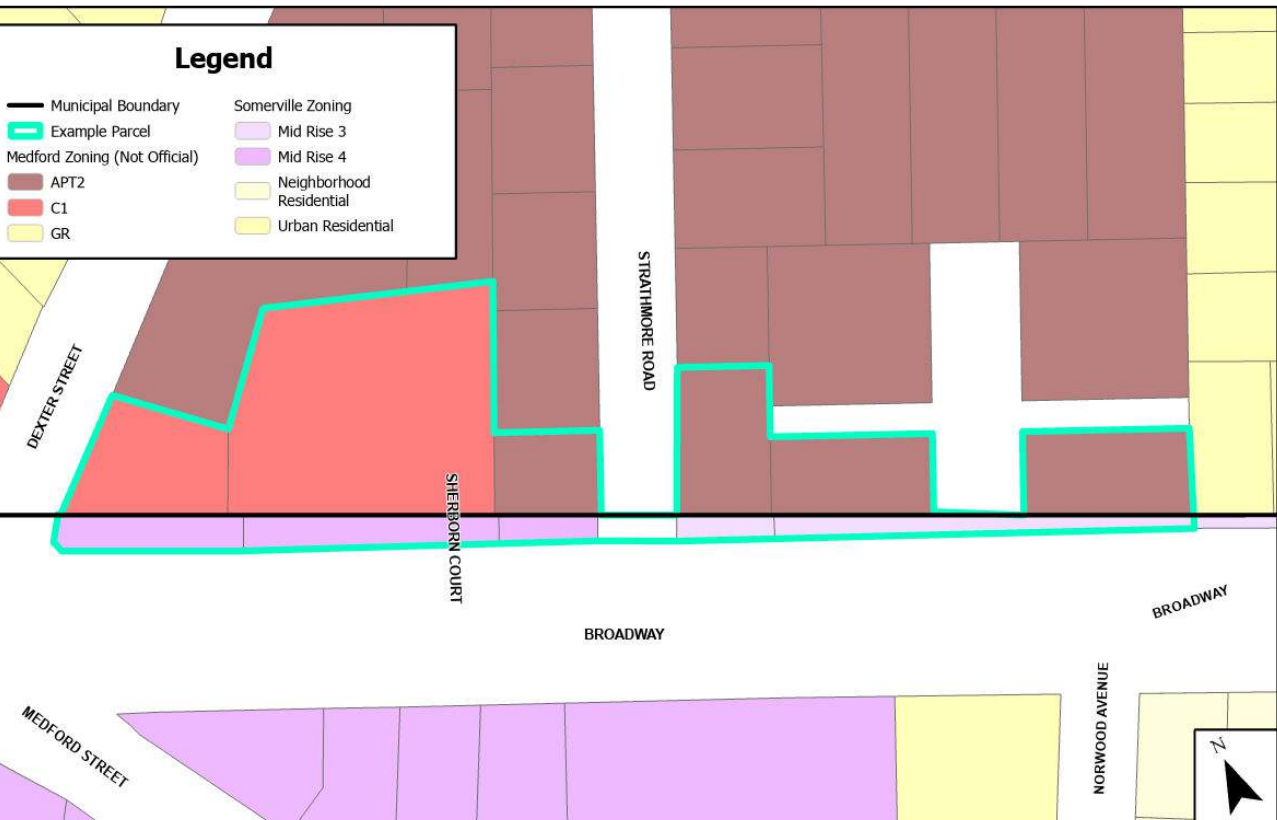


Figure 29: Broadway at Strathmore Road

Permitting Issue: 499 Broadway

Issues

499 Broadway has frontage in both municipalities – along Broadway in Somerville and along Medford Street in Medford – with the municipal boundary splitting it lengthwise. Despite being zoned for greater density, the building has remained single-story since its construction circa 1980, and has been mostly vacant for over three years since the closure of the Dark Horse Public House (the larger of two restaurants in the building) in early 2021.


While there is general alignment between the allowable uses in both municipalities, the complexity of navigating the permitting process in both cities may be preventing redevelopment. If a developer wanted to develop a residential use, on the Somerville side it would require a special permit and site plan approval from the Somerville Planning Board, and, it being located on a designated Pedestrian Street, the ground story would need to be a commercial space. On the Medford side, the same residential use (assuming it would have six or more units and thus qualify as a major project), would require a separate site plan review from the Medford Community Development Board. The ground story commercial space, if it were to also occupy the Medford side of the parcel, could require a further special permit from the Medford Zoning Board of Appeals, depending on the use. All of these site plan approval and special permits would have disparate statutory timeframes, design reviews, and community outreach requirements.

Community Feedback

The parcel is located on the northwest corner of Magoun Square, in a segment of the corridor that the community identified as being appropriate for higher building heights. Nearly 70% of respondents to an online survey felt this segment was appropriate for greater than 4 stories, and at the in-person charette this corner was stickered as appropriate for 4 stories with step back stories above.



Figure 30: 499 Broadway on the northwest corner of Magoun Square



Chapter 2: Public Engagement

Outreach
Design Charette
Objectives

Outreach

This project included a great deal of public engagement. Initial engagement was designed to research existing conditions and the needs and preferences of residents, property owners, and business owners. Outreach ranged from one-on-one meetings with stakeholders along the corridor, to a public meeting, to an online survey.

On January 22, 2024, residents and business owners from Medford and Somerville gathered at the Arthur D. Healey School in Somerville to discuss what aspects of the corridor need to be protected or preserved, strengthened, or transformed. People who couldn't attend the public meeting were able to respond to similar questions online.

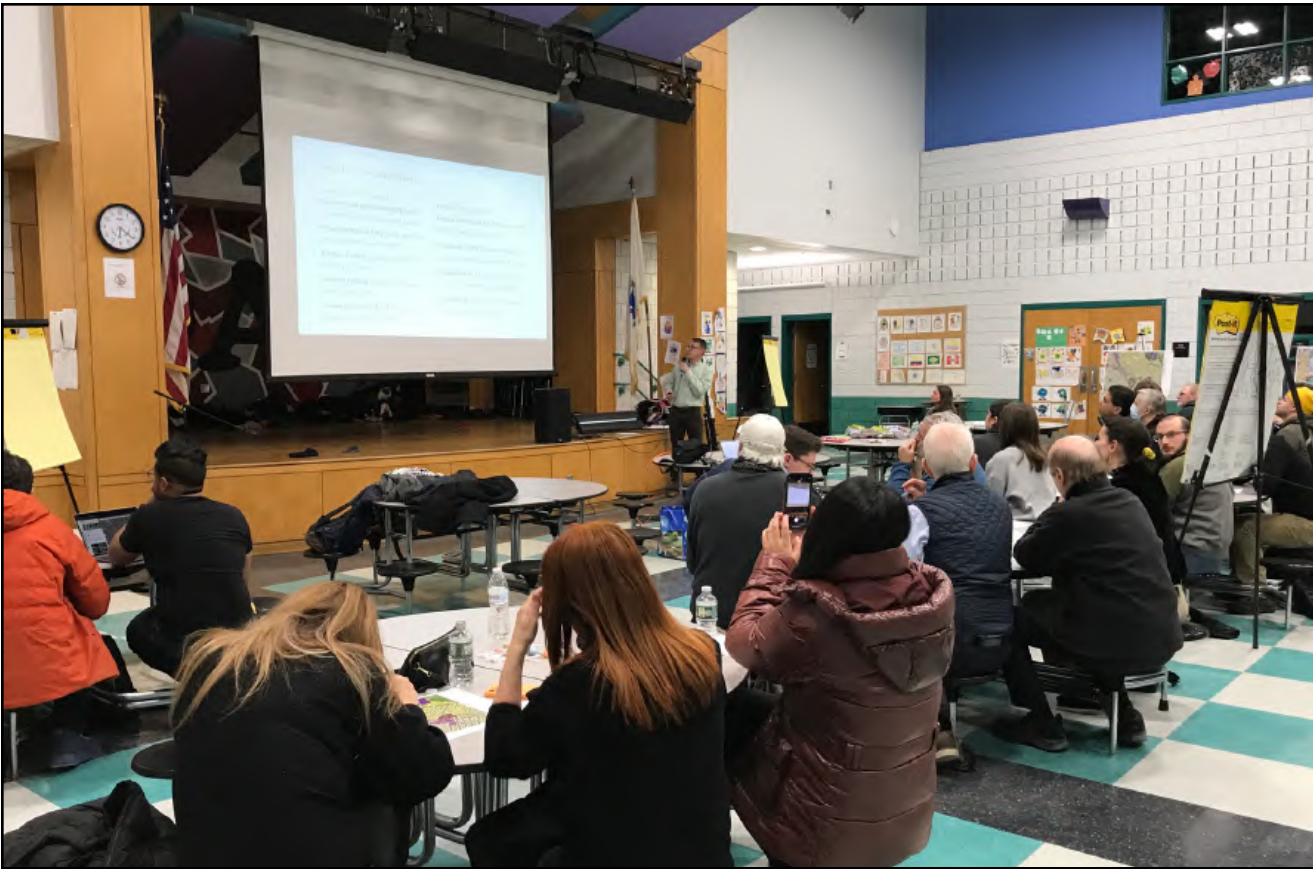


Figure 31: Horsley Witten Group staff present at the Healy School (Photo credit: City of Somerville)

What should be protected or preserved?

- Diversity of backgrounds in the neighborhood, whether cultural, ethnicity, languages spoken, etc.
- Existing, neighborhood-serving, and locally owned businesses.
- Trum Field and other open spaces, as well as the tree canopy.
- Walkability and existing sidewalks and bike lanes.
- Existing municipal parking lots and street parking.
- Facades of historic buildings.
- Mixed uses along the corridor.
- Affordability relative to other parts of the metropolitan area.

What should be strengthened or improved?

- Improve safety for pedestrians, bicyclists and other non-motorized modes, install traffic calming features.
- Redesign the roadway, parking, bus lane, and bike lane configurations to be safer and less interrupted.
- Provide better configuration for loading and deliveries.
- Provide better, more consistent communications between the municipal government and businesses.
- Provide more opportunities for public input before the cities make changes to the public realm.
- Improve infrastructure to accommodate more businesses and residents.
- Improve placemaking and wayfinding between commercial hubs.
- Improve existing open spaces, including more proactive programming of public spaces such as festivals and other community events.

What should be transformed?

- Build taller residential with ground floor commercial, particularly near transit stations. Explore the feasibility of building over the MBTA air rights.
- Encourage redevelopment of vacant and dilapidated spaces.
- Expand where commercial uses are allowed, connect the Ball and Magoun nodes by allowing mixed-use along the entire corridor.
- Increase affordable housing requirements for new development.
- Improve infrastructure
- Attract key services needed to support more population density (grocery stores, day care, etc.).
- Make the public realm greener and more inviting, encourage more outdoor dining, and increase street trees and other plantings.
- Explore places and spaces for pedestrian and bike-only zones and improved civic space, if not on Broadway itself, then on side streets.

Business Owner Interviews

Somerville City staff walked door to door along the corridor interviewing business owners over the course of several days leading up to the kickoff public meeting. Below is a summary of the key takeaways from those conversations.

- Most business owners were happy with current conditions. They felt that Broadway is a good location, with lots of foot traffic, safe, functions well, and business is generally thriving.
- Some business owners feel the area does not have enough visibility or reputation.
- Some business owners feel there is not enough parking in the area. Some would prefer reducing auto travel lanes and others would prefer reducing bike/bus lanes to accommodate more parking.
- Magoun and Ball Squares feel separated, need to better connect them.
- Some business owners would like better communication between the Cities and local businesses.
- Some business owners would like to see more businesses in the area to attract even more people/customers.
- Better sidewalks and a more attractive public realm.
- Few business owners had strong feelings on building height – most were comfortable with 4 or 4+ stories.

City Staff Interviews

Somerville City staff interviewed their colleagues in other departments leading up to the kickoff public meeting. Here are key takeaway:

- Cities are working on a marketing campaign to promote businesses in Ball and Magoun Squares. Somerville might consider a “small business overlay” for the area or a “Main Streets” program.
- Somerville is working on a plan to redesign the public right of way, including: improved traffic flow (signal timing), pedestrian safety, bike lanes, crosswalks, plantings/street trees, ADA accessibility. The goal is to make improvements without diverting traffic to side streets.
- This study includes the results of a city-wide curb study, which will help determine the best curbside uses along the corridor, including resident parking, metered parking, loading zones, bus stops, etc.
- Somerville staff are having ongoing discussions about the future of Trum Field and how it can best serve the neighborhood.
- Somerville staff are also exploring treatments for the Broadway Terrace retaining wall to make it more attractive.



Figure 32: City staff and business owners during canvassing (Photo credit: City of Somerville)

Design Charette

This project included a 3-day vision and design charrette to explore alternatives for the study area. The direction from a majority of participants was clear: amend the zoning to allow mixed-use across the entire corridor and taller building heights.

Somerville and Medford hosted a vision and design charrette from March 25-27, 2024, including an opening night public meeting on Monday, meetings with City staff and public open hours on Tuesday, and a closing public meeting on Wednesday evening. The events on Monday and Tuesday took place at Premiere on Broadway, a building on the corridor split between Somerville and Medford. The Wednesday evening meeting was held at the Missituk School in Medford. People who couldn't attend the public meeting were able to respond to similar questions online.

On Monday evening, attendees and online survey takers were asked to discuss two topics:

- What maximum building heights are most appropriate at different parts of the corridor?
- What ground floor uses should be allowed or required? More specifically, where should ground floor commercial uses be required, where should mixed-use be allowed, and where, if anywhere, should ground floor commercial uses be prohibited?



Figure 33: City staff discussion at the charrette at Premiere on Broadway (Photo credit: City of Somerville)

Summary of Results: Building Height

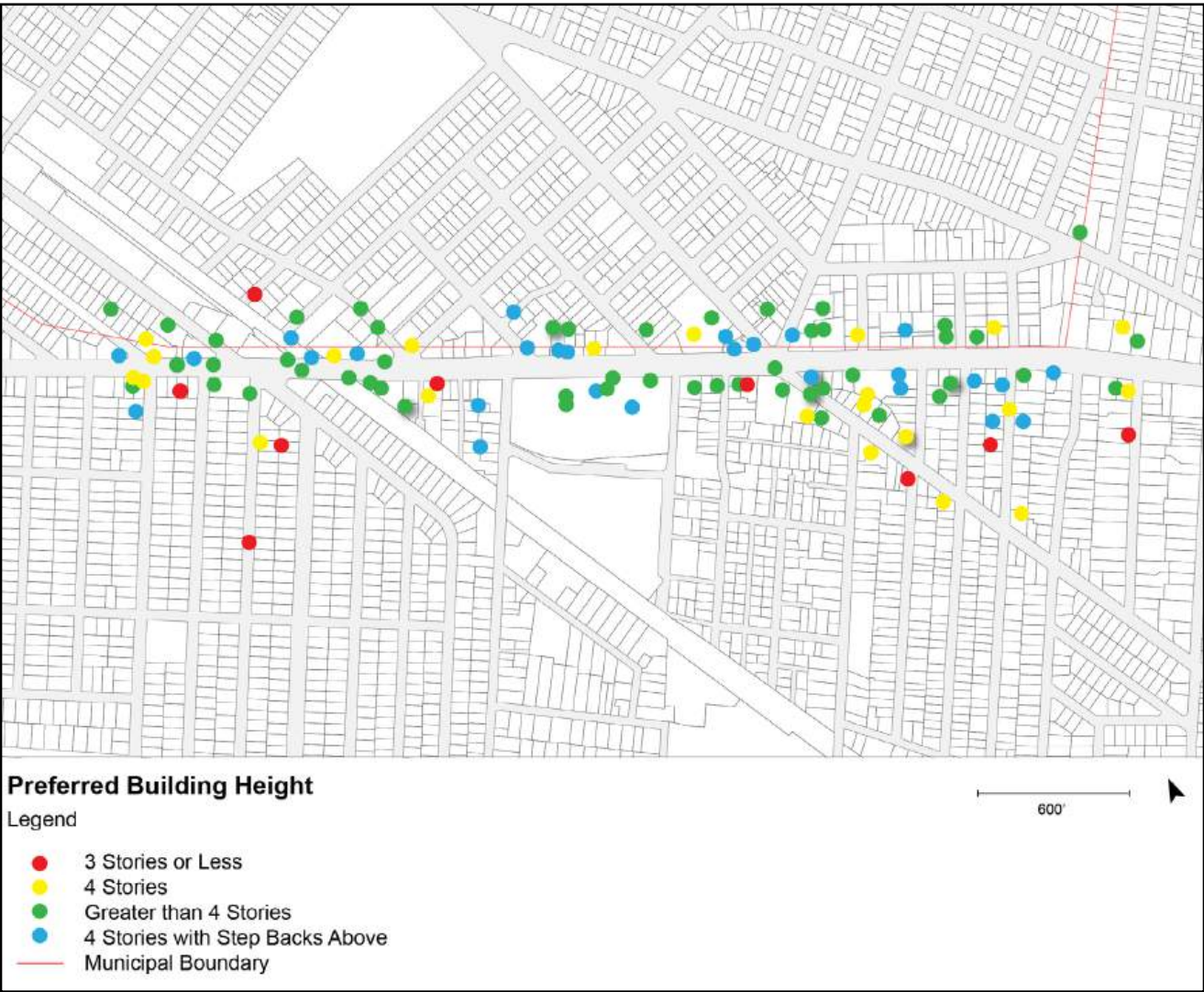


Figure 34: Building height input from the public meeting on March 25, 2024

As can be seen, the public is in favor of building heights mostly above four stories along the Broadway corridor. Major areas to focus density include Ball and Magoun Squares, near transportation hubs, and across from Trum Field. Many participants supported even taller buildings of six or more stories. Where participants supported

a maximum of three stories, these areas tended to be along residential side streets. Many participants hoped that by increasing heights, the Cities could also increase opportunities to build more affordable housing and increase the customer base to support local businesses.

Summary of Results: Ground Floor Uses



Figure 35: Ground floor uses input from the public meeting on March 25, 2024

Generally, the public expressed support for allowing mixed-use along the entire corridor, acknowledging that some buildings, particularly outside Ball Square and Magoun Square would choose to remain residential-only. Most people were supportive of commercial on the ground floor with residential on upper stories. Focused areas to encourage active ground floor use include Ball and Magoun Squares, near transportation hubs, and across from Trum Field.

Participants did express a few concerns, especially related to ground floor commercial requirements that could lead to empty storefronts. Further discussion included incentivizing the types of businesses most needed in the community.

Summary of Results from the Online Survey

Building Height

Across all five segments of the corridor (see Figure 54 on page 62 for graphic showing the corridor segments), respondents had a strong desire to see taller buildings. Below are the responses per segment that supported a maximum building height of greater than four stories. As can be seen, approximately 2/3 of respondents are supportive of buildings taller than four stories throughout the corridor. Several respondents also commented that they would be happy to see even taller (6+ story) buildings in the corridor. Below is a summary of the responses to the question, “What building heights are most appropriate along this segment of the corridor?”

% OF RESPONDENTS SUPPORTIVE OF MAXIMUM BUILDING HEIGHT OF GREATER THAN 4 STORIES	
Segment 1	66.5%
Segment 2	69.0%
Segment 3	64.9%
Segment 4	69.2%
Segment 5	63.6%

Ground Floor Uses

As with the in-person responses, online survey respondents strongly favored allowing, but not requiring, mixed-use along the entire corridor. This was followed by respondents who wanted to require ground floor commercial uses. Note that support for required ground floor commercial uses was highest in the segments mostly closely aligning with Ball Square and Magoun Square. Only a very small minority of respondents were in favor of residential-only or other zoning. Below is a summary of the responses to the question, “What ground floor uses should be required or allowed along this segment of the corridor?”

GROUND FLOOR USES	MIXED-USE	REQUIRED GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL
Segment 1	58.0%	41.5%
Segment 2	71.4%	24.3%
Segment 3	74.9%	23.0%
Segment 4	61.9%	37.0%
Segment 5	77.1%	16.0%

City Planning Feedback

Somerville

The Somerville team was pleasantly surprised to learn that the neighborhood is in support of six stories and possibly taller in select areas. From an urban design perspective, the width of the Broadway Corridor can definitely support higher buildings than the currently zoned four stories and perhaps permitting greater height will provide the economic incentive for this area to develop.

One of the concerns that will need to be studied carefully is the potential for commercial uses on the ground floor of mixed-use buildings. Requiring commercial (retail or specific active uses), versus simply allowing the market to dictate the need, could create vacant storefronts or even hamper much needed residential development. Further discussion will be needed as zoning recommendations are developed.

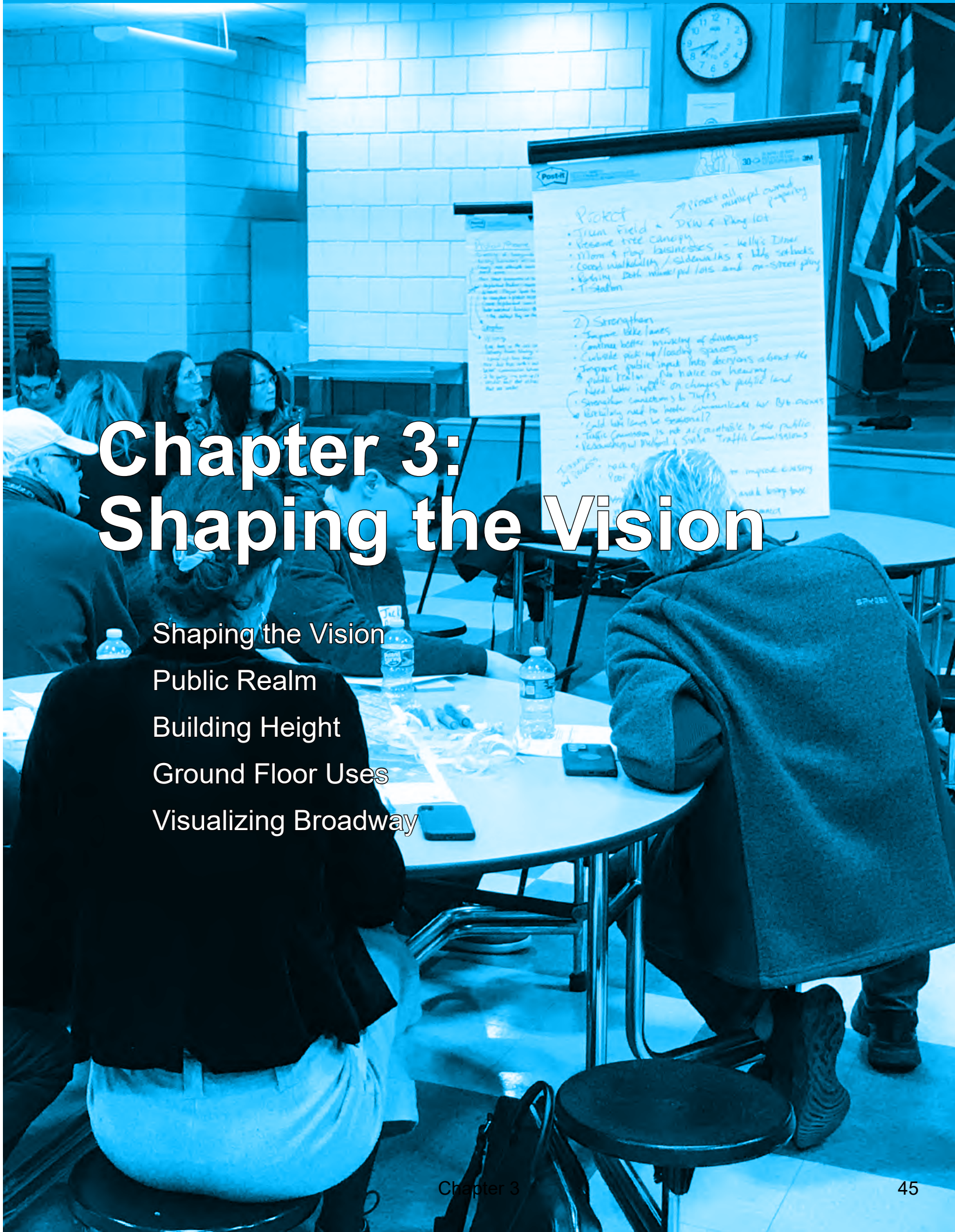
Medford

Medford planning staff were not surprised by the public feedback. There has been a longstanding expectation that buildings should be taller across the Broadway corridor. However, while Medford's zoning technically allows for six-story buildings in the C1 and APT2 zoning districts, other dimensional requirements can make it difficult if not impossible to actually achieve six stories. Medford's zoning ordinance was written with citywide standards. The assumption at the time was that any taller building would be in a more suburban context, on larger lots with plenty of room for deep setbacks, buffers, etc. This suburban approach works elsewhere in the City but is not a good match for the more urban context of Broadway. Medford realizes that in order to accommodate six-story buildings, more urban dimensional standards are needed.

As Medford continues the process of revamping its zoning ordinance, it will be working to establish dimensional requirements specific to different contexts. The Broadway corridor will be a good test case for that effort.

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.



Chapter 3: Shaping the Vision

- Shaping the Vision
- Public Realm
- Building Height
- Ground Floor Uses
- Visualizing Broadway

Shaping the Vision

The following chapter explores the alternatives and visualizations that emerged based on the public engagement.

Note that the public realm components explored below are illustrative of the public feedback and, to a preliminary level, necessary to inform the zoning and land use recommendations. The City of Somerville will be conducting a related public engagement effort in the future to develop more specific public realm and public right-of-way improvements for the corridor.



Figure 36: City staff facilitate at Premiere on Broadway (Photo credit: City of Somerville)

Though this zoning study does not include public realm design recommendations, input received during the public engagement process was captured and future public realm investment was considered and coordinated with the zoning recommendations in Chapter 5. For example, it is recommended that new small civic spaces be added to the Broadway public realm coordinated with mobility, land use, and the zoning recommendations. Small parklets with trees and benches could be included as part of intersection improvements at Ball Square and Magoun Square and aligned with increased density and ground floor commercial locations. Corridor-wide investment in shade trees including proper soil volume to support maturity will provide tremendous value for shade, aesthetics, and sustainability, and could also include redesign of the interface of Trum Field with the Broadway public realm.

Public Realm

Somerville currently plans future reconstruction of Broadway under the City's Pavement and Sidewalk Management Program, which will include a comprehensive community engagement process. It is expected that future public realm investments within the corridor will address goals to improve safety, enhance walkability, and support more vibrant streetscape conditions. Additional studies of mobility alternatives within the right-of-way -- such as urban trails, bicycle infrastructure, and safe and pleasant walkability connectivity to the new T stations -- can encourage a shift to non-motorized modes and reduce the impacts of vehicular congestion and parking demand over time. These mode shifts and the reduction of parking demand could encourage the private investment envisioned by the proposed zoning recommendations.

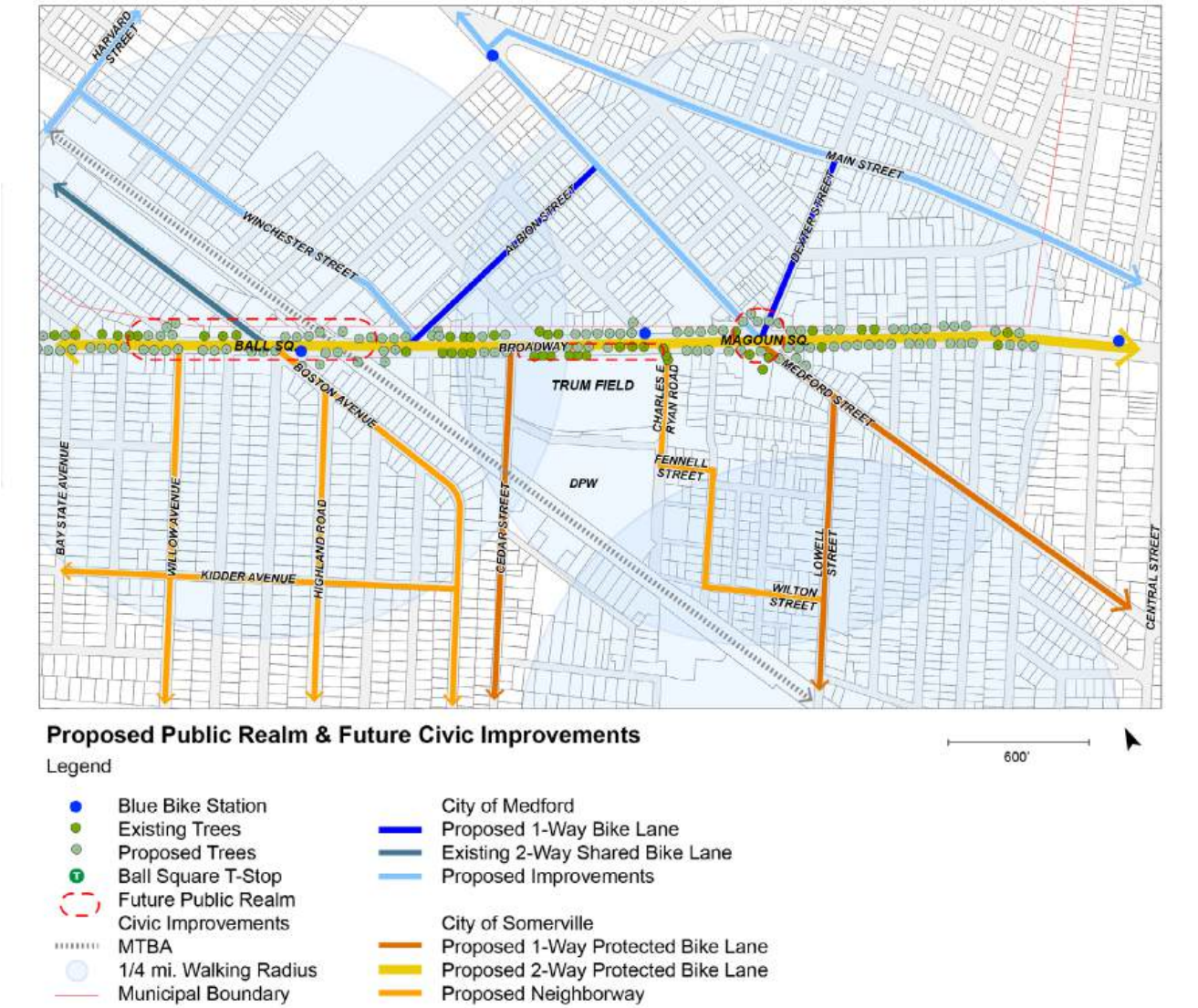


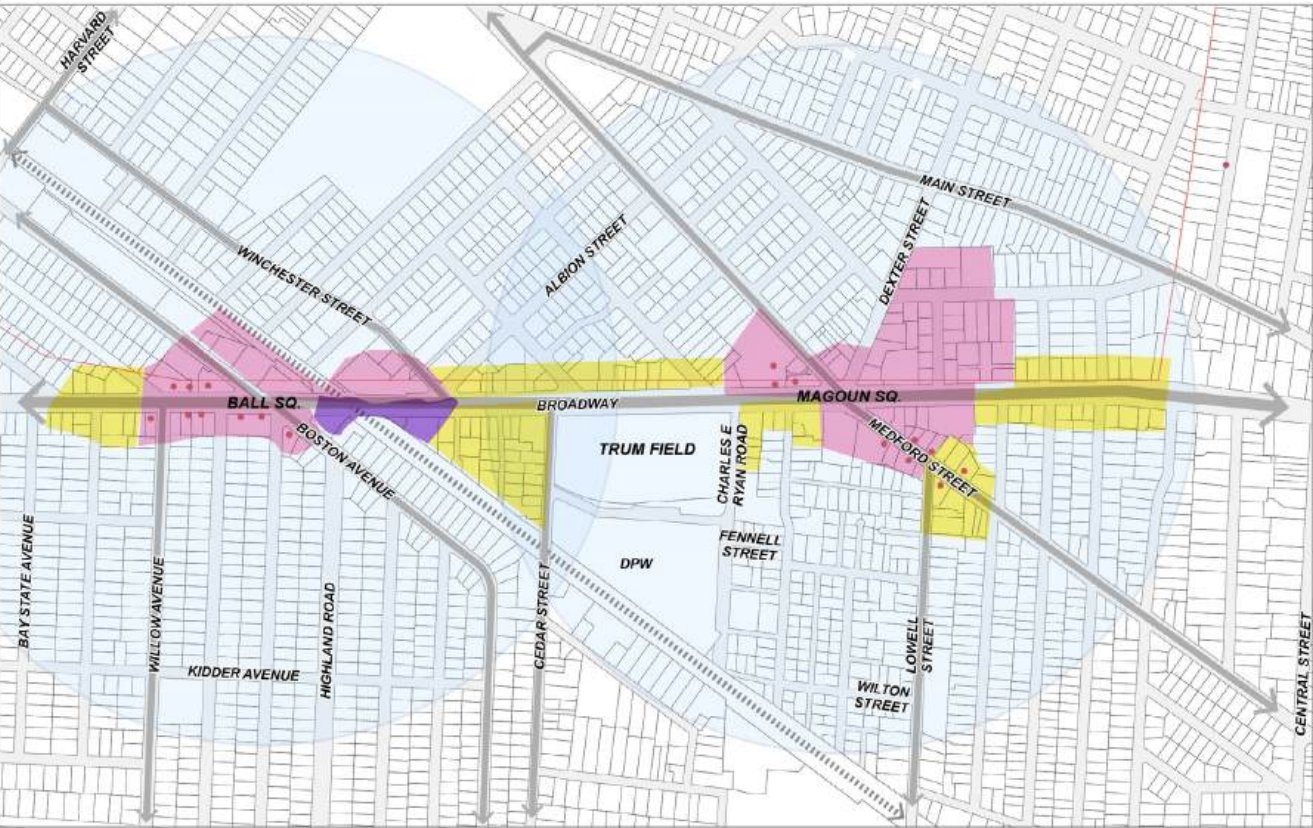
Figure 37: Proposed public realm and future civic improvements

Building Height

Two building height alternatives were developed based on the preferences expressed by the public (see Chapter 2 - Public Engagement for a description of the planning charrette held). Both show taller buildings around the two squares and assume at least 4-story heights throughout the study area. Public responses to these two alternatives were then used to inform the final zoning recommendations in Chapter 5.

Alternative A

Alternative A suggests that the areas that today are predominantly residential and lower-scale (one-, two-, and three-unit homes, small apartment buildings, and some lower-scale commercial buildings) be changed to a maximum building height of four stories. Most of the commercial hubs around Ball Square and Magoun Square are designated for four to six stories, and a small area on the south side of Broadway on either side of the railroad tracks is designated for six or more stories.



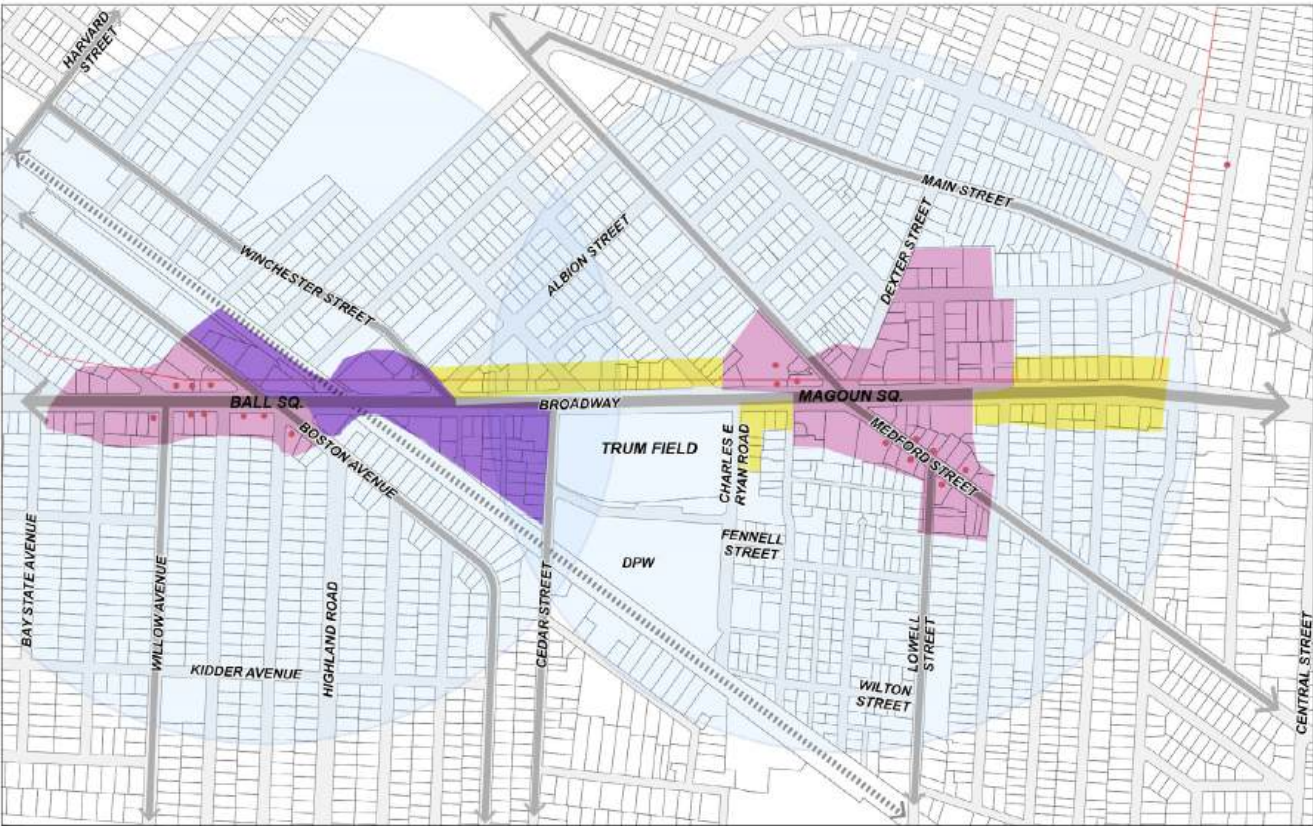
Proposed Building Heights: Alternative A

- Legend
- Restaurants
 - 4-Story Designation
 - 4-6 Story Designation
 - 6+ Story Designation
 - Street Network
 - MTBA
 - 1/4 mi. Walking Radius
 - Municipal Boundary

Figure 38: Building height, Alternative A

Alternative B

Alternative B proposed a maximum building height of four stories to the lots to the north and immediately east of Trum Field, as well as on the far east end of the corridor where building anything taller than four stories may be physically challenging. The entire west end of Ball Square was designated for four to six stories, as was most of the Magoun Square area. The specific area around the Ball Square T station was shown as six or more stories, including the triangle south of Broadway, east of the railroad tracks, and west of Trum Field.



Proposed Building Heights: Alternative B

- Legend
- Restaurants
 - 4-Story Designation
 - 4-6 Story Designation
 - 6+ Story Designation
 - Street Network
 - MTBA
 - 1/4 mi. Walking Radius
 - Municipal Boundary

Figure 39: Building height, Alternative B

Ground Floor Uses

Two ground floor use alternatives were generated in response to public comment during the public engagement process and with consideration for the City of Somerville's "Pedestrian Streets" designations along the corridor. Pedestrian Streets are designated on the City of Somerville's Official Zoning Map and have special standards (see Figure 33 below). Any building fronting a Pedestrian Street must provide one or more ground story commercial spaces fronting the primary facade for 100% of the total width of the building. In other words, a residential-only apartment building would not be allowed to front a Pedestrian Street.

Broadway is designated a Pedestrian Street from Bay State Avenue to the railroad tracks and again from William Street to approximately Norwood Avenue. Medford Street is also designated a Pedestrian Street from Broadway to Norwood Avenue. Discussions around ground floor uses were meant to determine where ground floor commercial should be required (for example, if the Pedestrian Streets designations should be adjusted in the study area), where they should be allowed, and where, if anywhere, residential-only buildings could be permitted.

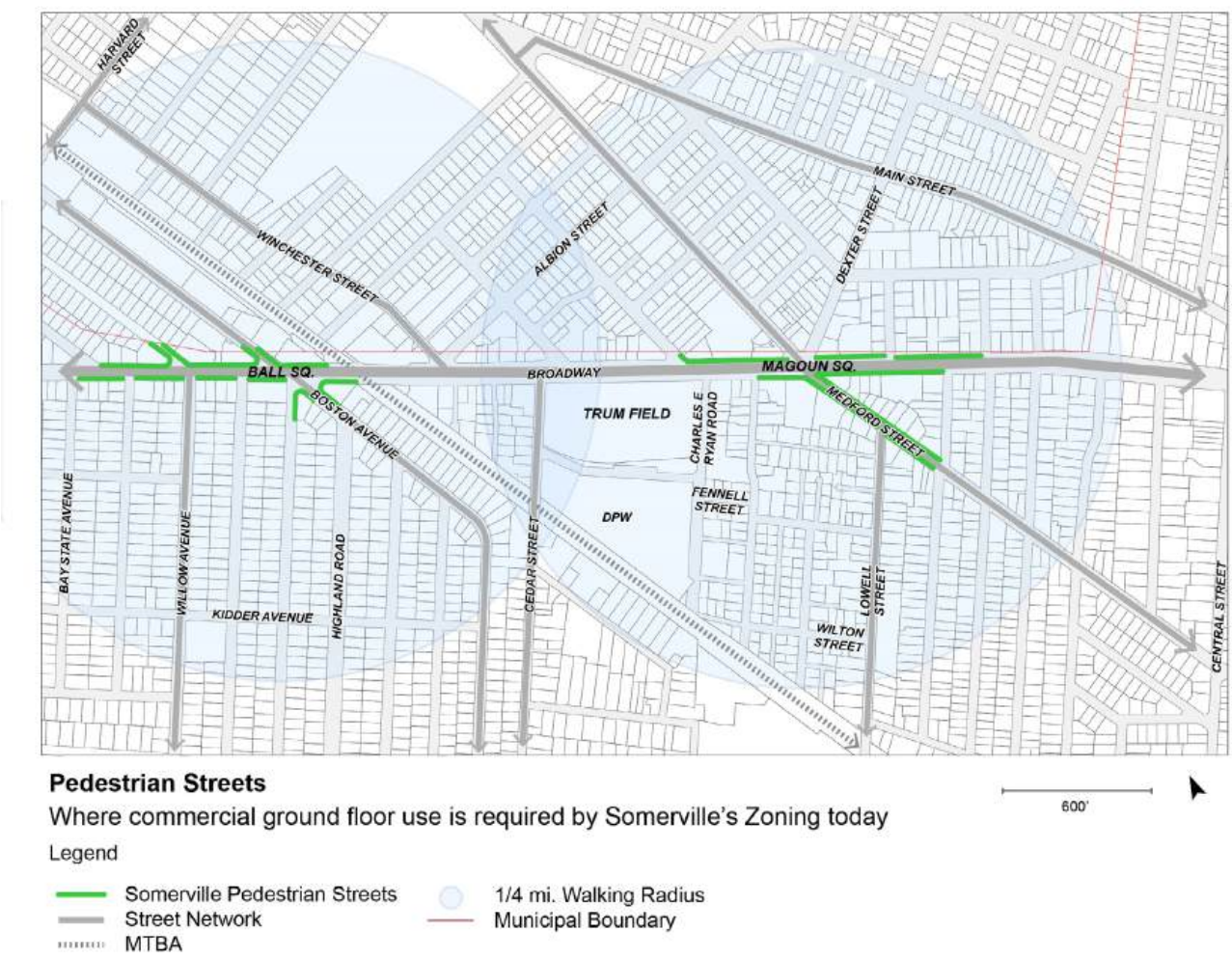


Figure 40: Somerville's current "pedestrian streets" designations along Broadway

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.

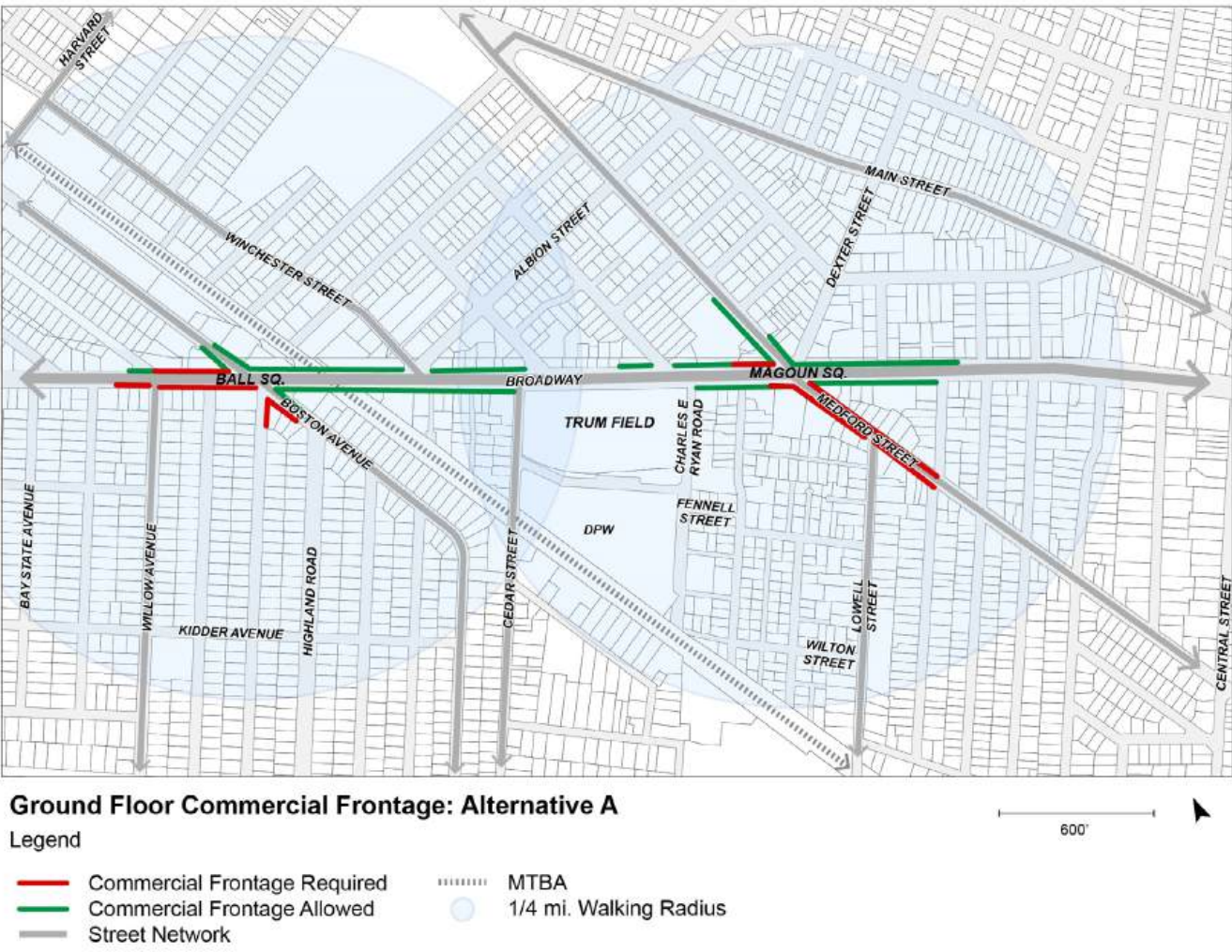


Figure 41: Ground floor uses, Alternative A

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.

Visualizing Broadway

Perspective renderings help visualize how the streetscape would feel by a pedestrian on the sidewalk with various building heights. Based on public and City input, Ball Square, Magoun Square, and the area across from Trum Field were identified as important areas and selected for visualizations.

Ball Square

Changes in building height and massing are already starting to occur in this location, with the recently approved four-story building design at 722 Broadway (the Lyndell's Bakery site). The viewpoint for the sketches is in front of 731 Broadway (currently Home Décor Group) looking southeast down the corridor towards Magoun Square. The street elements, such as travel and bike lanes, represented are consistent with existing conditions rather than potential future mobility scenarios. The public realm width from building face to building face is approximately 75 feet in this area.

Three scenarios were developed: one to visualize what the square could look like if buildings took full advantage of the allowed building heights today, and two to visualize even taller buildings as requested by many in the community:

- Four story buildings
- Six story buildings with the sixth story stepped back
- Six story buildings

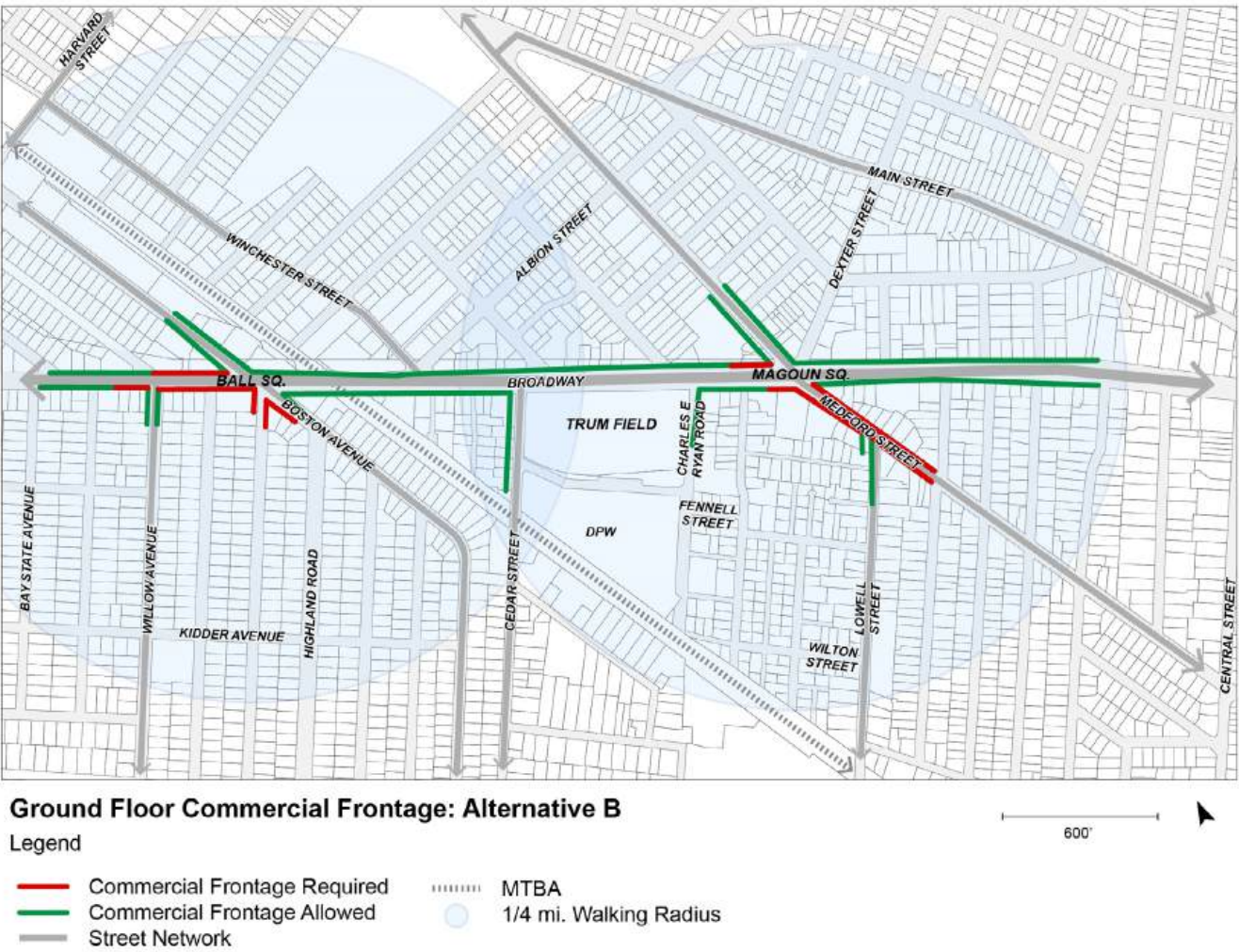


Figure 42: Ground floor uses, Alternative B



Figure 43: Ball Square looking west



Figure 44: Ball Square Visualization - four stories



Figure 46: Ball Square visualization - six stories



Figure 45: Ball Square visualization - six stories with step back

Trum Field

The area across from Trum Field was identified as an important location based on public feedback. The width of the street from the back of the Trum Field sidewalk to the opposite building face is approximately 90 feet, with the southern side open to Trum Field. According to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, three basic “building types” are allowed in Mid-Rise (MR) districts: Apartment Buildings (residential-only, which are not allowed on Pedestrian Streets), General Buildings (which can have a mix of uses, including commercial and residential), and Commercial Buildings (which can have a mix of commercial uses – such as ground floor retail with offices above). These renderings assume General Buildings with ground floor commercial and residential above. The perspective is taken from the sidewalk adjacent to Trum Field looking northwest past 541 Broadway (currently the Sunoco gas station) towards Ball Square.

As buildings taller than six stories seem unfeasible and less appropriate here, given the location outside the transit-oriented development hubs of Ball Square and Magoun Square, only two scenarios were developed:

- Four story buildings
- Six story buildings



Figure 47: Broadway adjacent ot Trum Field, looking east



Figure 48: Trum Field - four story commercial ground floor use



Figure 49: Trum Field - six story commercial ground floor use

Magoun Square

Magoun Square has a different feel compared to other areas of the corridor, including the large intersection with Medford Street. The width of the street from building face to face is wider than Ball Square and ranges from approximately 95' to 140' or more. The visualization point is in front of 545 Broadway (currently Metropolitan School of Real Estate) looking northwest down the corridor toward Ball Square into the middle of the intersection and beyond. For the purposes of this study, the street items, such as travel and bike lanes, mainly remain the same as existing.

As with Ball Square, three scenarios were developed:

- Four story buildings
- Six story buildings with the sixth story stepped back
- Six story buildings



Figure 50: Magoun Square looking east



Figure 51: Magoun Square visualization - four stories



Figure 52: Magoun Square visualization - six stories with step back



Figure 53: Magoun Square visualization - six stories



Chapter 4: Massing Alternatives

Building Scenarios

Building Scenarios

Based on initial research and analysis, a series of 3D graphic representations of building massing and use along the corridor were developed, showing:

- The existing height of buildings along the corridor.
- What existing zoning could allow -- heights and uses.
- What it might look like to build taller than what zoning currently allows.

This exercise was utilized to review preferred building height and basic uses along the corridor. There are many other zoning requirements that shape the ultimate massing of a building, such as setbacks, lot coverage, and open space. There are also differences in the heights and uses allowed in Medford versus Somerville and these differences are reflected in the sketches. As noted, Medford's zoning currently allows different heights for different uses in the same zoning district. For example, in the C-1 district, hotels may be up to 15 stories, apartment buildings may be up to six stories, and an office building may be up to four stories.

The corridor was split into five sections. These have no significance other than representing some natural breaks in the corridor, such as the railroad tracks, Trum Field, and the area to the east that is strictly residential, as shown in Figure 54 below.

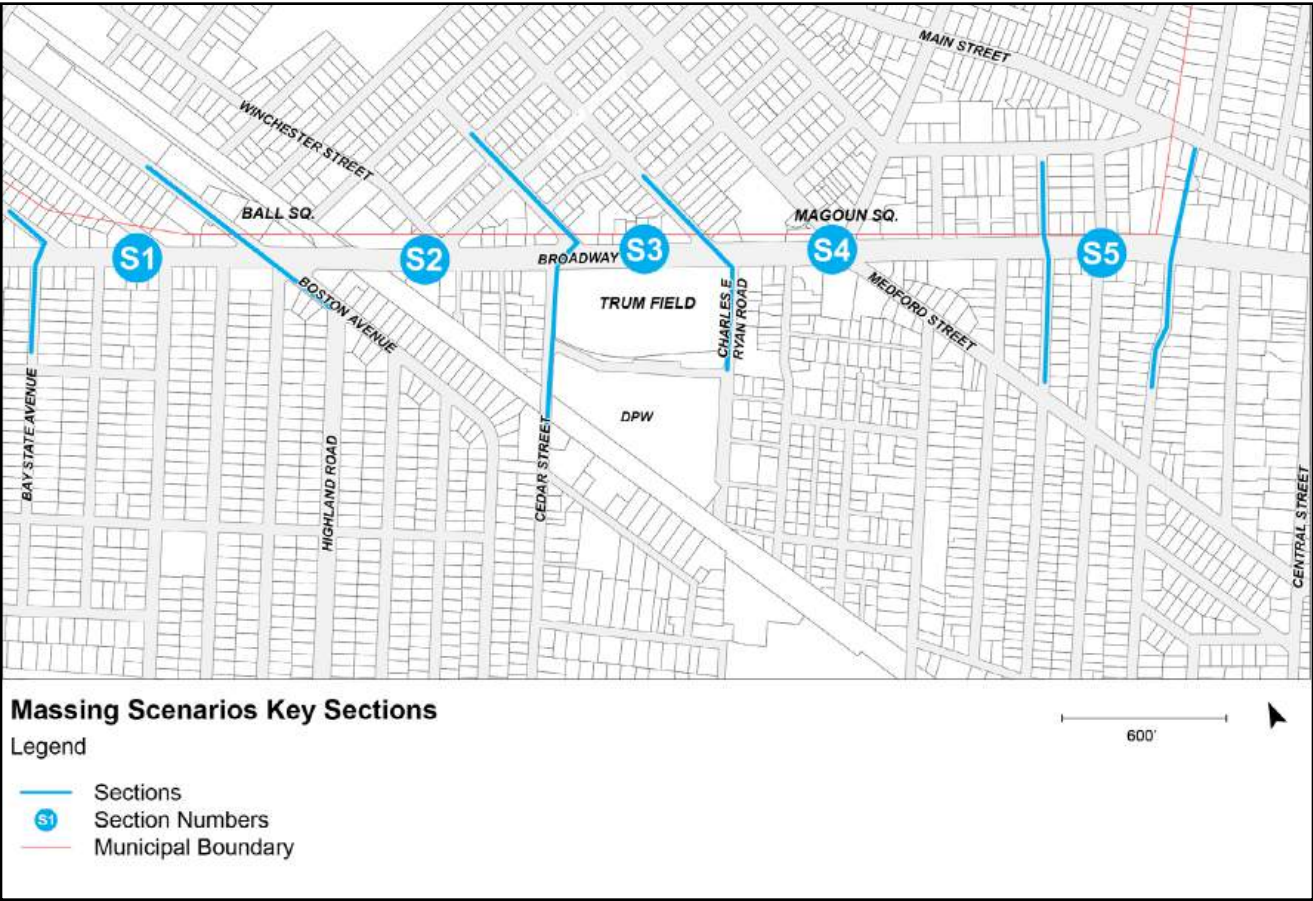


Figure 54: Corridor sections



Figure 55: Horsley Witten Group staff facilitate at the Healey School (Photo credit: City of Somerville)

Section 1

This westernmost portion of the corridor runs from Bay State Avenue to Boston Avenue.

Existing Conditions

Section 1 includes much of the Ball Square commercial area which is defined by mostly lower scale, one- or two-story, commercial and mixed-use buildings as well as some 2- and 3-family residential buildings.



Section 1: Existing Conditions
Legend
Existing Building Heights
Mixed Use
Industrial
Adjacent Context

Figure 56: Section 1 - Existing conditions massing

Current Zoning

Most of this section is zoned for mixed use. The images below show the building heights that could be achieved under existing zoning in both Somerville and Medford. Additional stories have been added above the existing conditions to demonstrate what this height might look like. As can be seen, buildings on the Medford side could be allowed up to six stories. All the buildings fronting Broadway in this section are shorter than currently allowed.



Section 1: Current Zoning Allows
Legend
Existing Building Heights
Current Zoning Allows
Mixed Use
Industrial
Adjacent Context

Figure 57: Section 1 - Allowed by current zoning

Potential Massing

The figure below shows the potential for taller, 6-story buildings closer to the Ball Square T station. This scenario is closer to the heights desired by the community, given the proximity to transit.



Section 1: Potential Zoning Scenario
Legend
Existing Building Heights Current Zoning Allows Potential Zoning
Mixed Use
Industrial
Adjacent Context

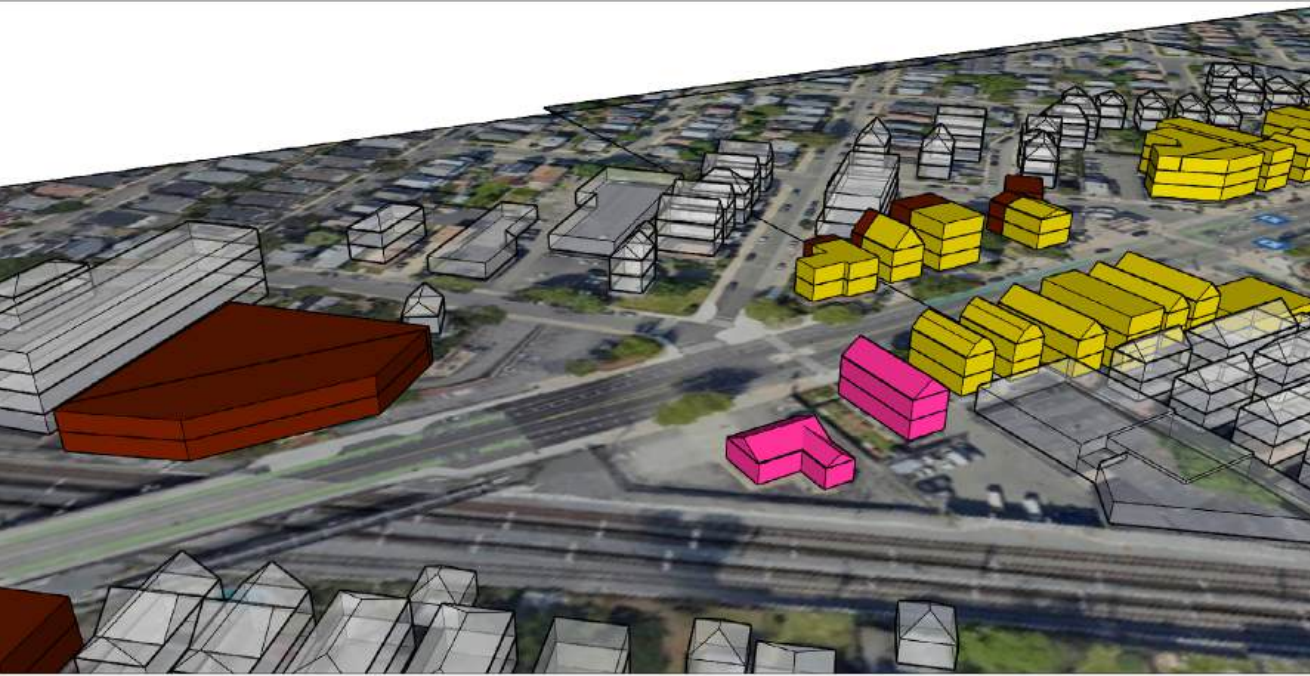
Figure 58: Section 1 - Potential zoning scenario

Section 2

This portion of the corridor runs from Boston Avenue to Trum Field.

Existing Conditions

Section 2 is currently more residential in character than Ball Square, though it includes a mix of non-residential uses such as the Ball Square T station, a dialysis clinic, a sewer and drain cleaning business, offices, a couple gas stations, and a convenience store. Residential buildings are mostly 2- and 3-family homes, with a couple small apartment buildings.

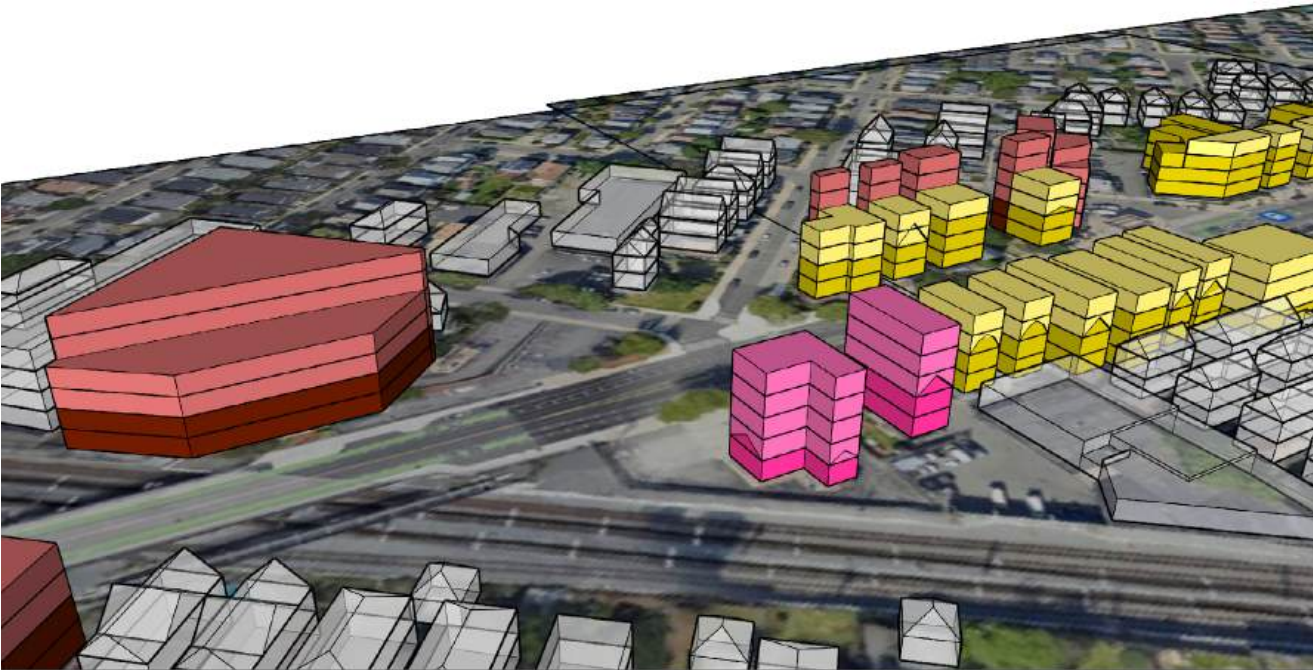


Section 2: Existing Conditions
Legend Existing Building Heights
Mixed Use
Commercial
Residential
Adjacent Context

Figure 59: Section 2 - Existing conditions massing

Current Zoning

Most of the existing residential buildings in this section are zoned for residential use on the Somerville side and mixed use on the Medford side. The images below show the building heights that could be achieved under existing zoning in both Somerville and Medford. Additional stories have been added above the existing conditions to demonstrate what this height might look like. As can be seen, buildings on the Medford side could be allowed up to six stories. All the current buildings fronting Broadway in this section are shorter than currently possible.



Section 1: Current Zoning Allows

Legend

Existing Building Heights

Mixed Use

Commercial

Residential

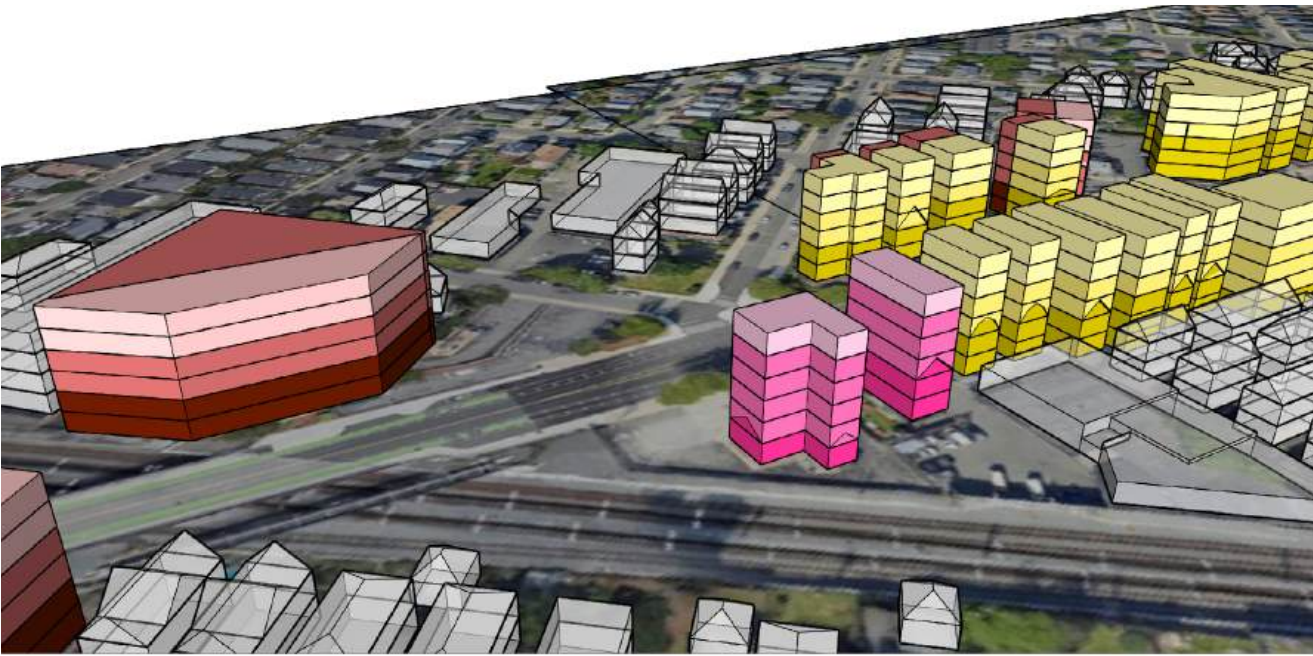
Adjacent Context

Current Zoning Allows

Figure 60: Section 2 - Allowed by current zoning

Potential Massing

The figure below shows the potential for taller, 6-story buildings in this section. Some buildings are shown at four stories. It is important to note that if six stories are allowed, not every property is likely to max out at this height, but it would provide better harmonization at the municipal boundary. It should also be noted that six stories may be physically infeasible for some smaller parcels.



Section 2: Potential Zoning Scenario

Legend

Existing Building Heights

Mixed Use

Commercial

Residential

Adjacent Context

Current Zoning Allows

Potential Zoning

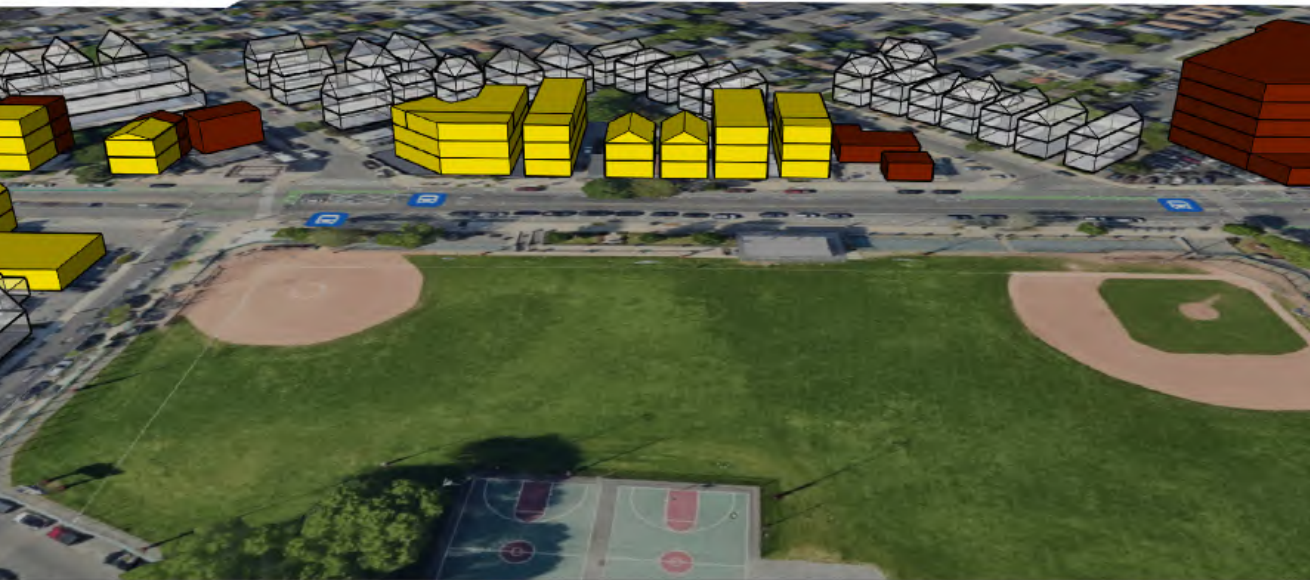
Figure 61: Section 2 - Potential zoning scenario

Section 3

This portion of the corridor runs the length of Trum Field.

Existing Conditions

Section 3 consists of Trum Field to the south and a series of 3-story residential buildings to the north, bookended by a mixed-use building with a ground floor tavern to the west and a gas station to the east.



Section 3: Existing Conditions

Legend	Existing Building Heights
Mixed Use	<div></div>
Residential	<div></div>
Adjacent Context	<div></div>

Figure 62: Section 3 - Existing conditions massing

Current Zoning

Most of this section is zoned residential on both the Somerville and Medford sides. The images below show the building heights that could be achieved under existing zoning in both Somerville and Medford. Additional stories have been added above the existing conditions to demonstrate what this height might look like. The buildings in this section are generally closer to what is allowed in the existing zoning than Sections 1, 2, and 4.



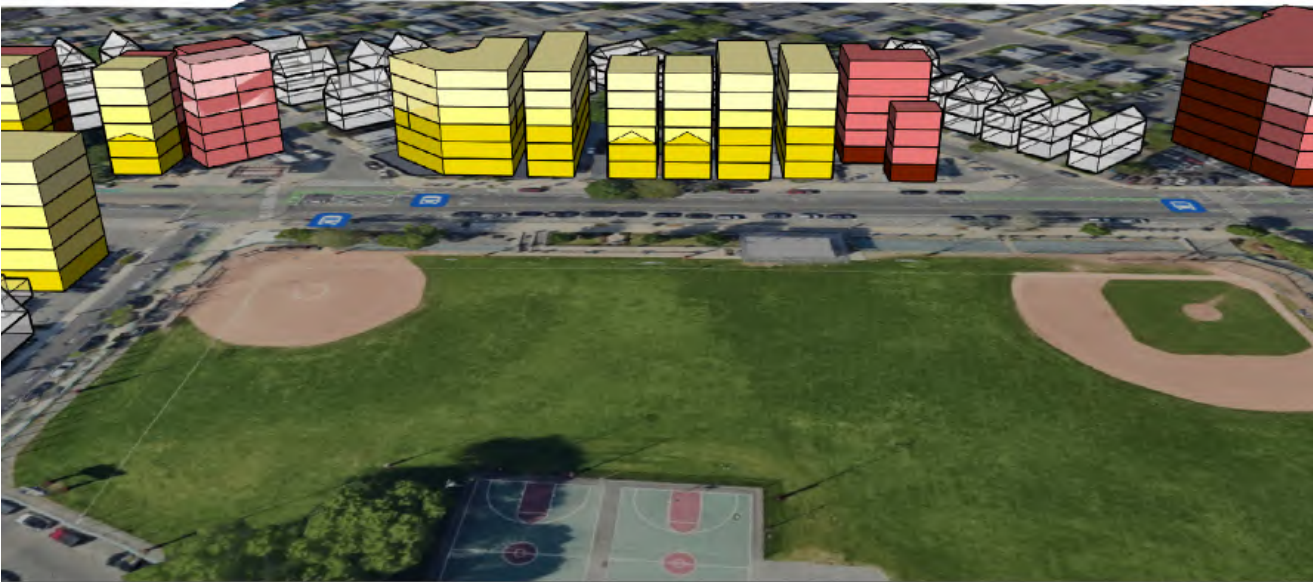
Section 3: Current Zoning Allows

Legend	Existing Building Heights	Current Zoning Allows
Mixed Use	<div></div>	<div></div>
Residential	<div></div>	<div></div>
Adjacent Context	<div></div>	<div></div>

Figure 63: Section 3 - Allowed by current zoning

Potential Massing

The figure below shows the potential for taller, 6-story buildings in this section. Some buildings are shown at four or five stories. It is important to note that even if six stories are allowed, not every property is likely to redevelop to this maximum height. Six stories may be more feasible if some small lots are merged. That said, the residential lots in this section are relatively deep and could potentially accommodate taller buildings more easily than some narrow and shallower parcels.



Section 3: Potential Zoning Scenario

Legend	Existing Building Heights	Current Zoning Allows	Potential Zoning
Mixed Use	Dark Brown	Red	Light Pink
Residential	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Adjacent Context	White		

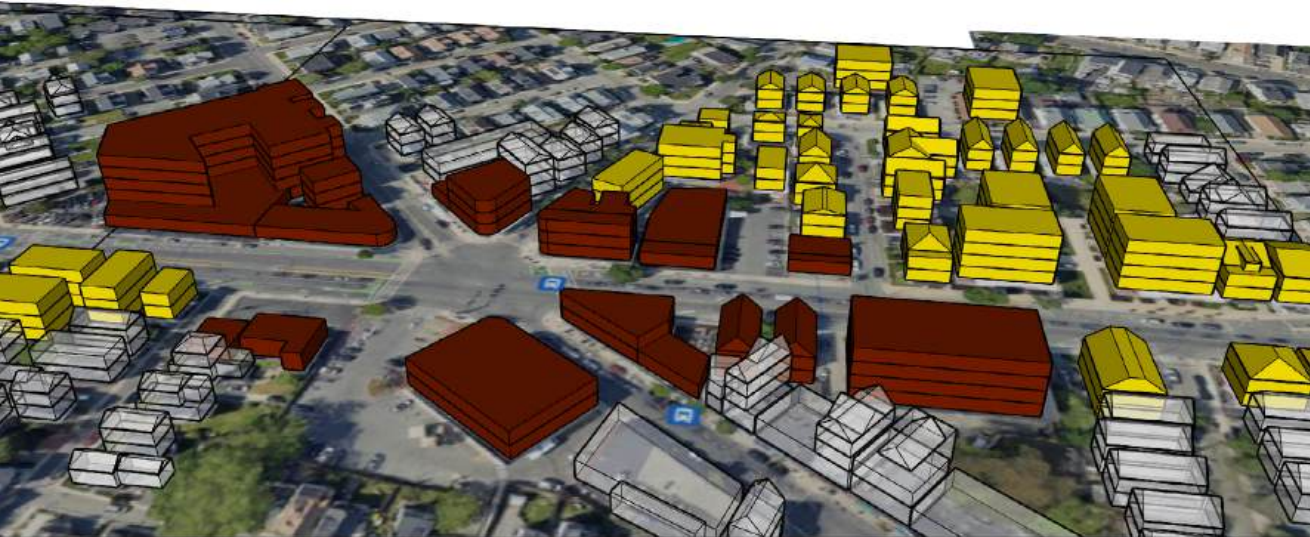
Figure 64: Section 3 - Potential zoning scenario

Section 4

This portion of the corridor runs from Trum Field to Norwood Avenue/Braemore Road.

Existing Conditions

Section 4 includes the Magoun Square commercial area which is defined by mostly lower scale commercial and mixed-use buildings as well as some apartment buildings and 2- and 3-family residential buildings. Most of the commercial/mixed-use buildings in this section are only one or two stories tall, including along Medford Street which serves as the commercial “main street” for Magoun Square.



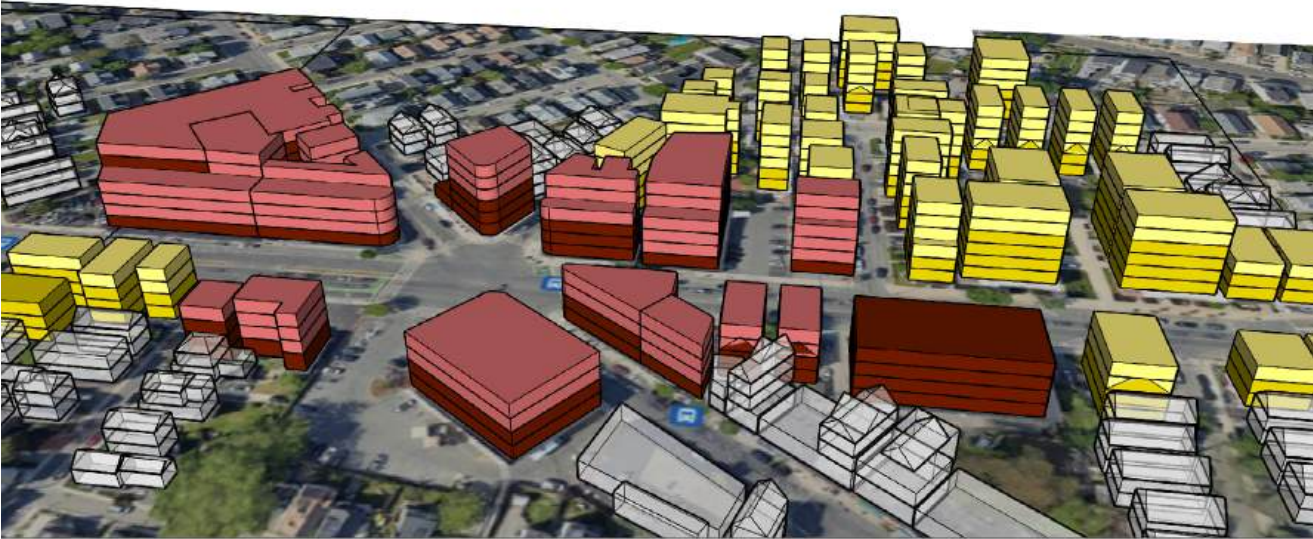
Section 4: Existing Conditions

Legend	Existing Building Heights
Mixed Use	Dark Brown
Residential	Yellow
Adjacent Context	White

Figure 65: Section 4 - Existing conditions massing

Current Zoning

Most of this section is zoned for mixed use, although the block due east of Trum Field is zoned residential as are the parcels fronting Norwood Avenue. Much of the Medford side is zoned for mixed use or multi-family residential. The images below show the building heights that could be achieved under existing zoning in both Somerville and Medford. Additional stories have been added above the existing conditions to demonstrate what this height might look like, including up to four stories in Somerville and six stories on the Medford side of the municipal boundary.



Section 4: Current Zoning Allows

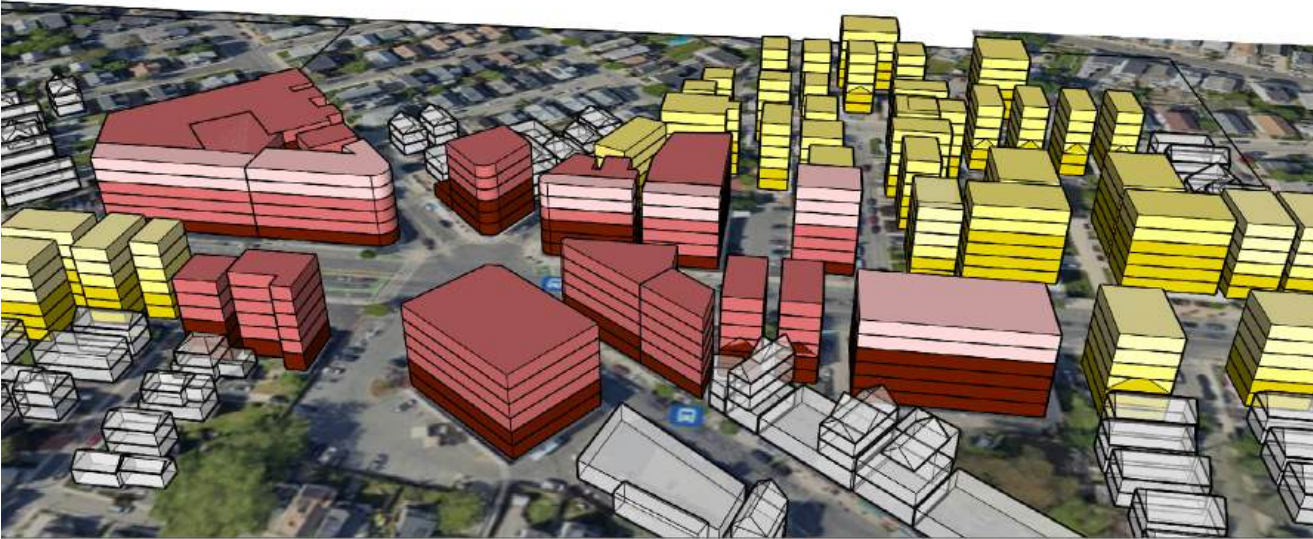
Legend	Existing Building Heights	Current Zoning Allows
Mixed Use	Red	Red
Residential	Yellow	Yellow
Adjacent Context	White	White

Figure 66: Section 4 - Allowed by current zoning

Potential Massing

The figure below shows the potential for taller, 6-story buildings in this section. This section could potentially accommodate much taller buildings than it does today.

Note that while not included in the graphic below, the lower-scale commercial buildings along Medford Street in Magoun Square could also be rezoned to accommodate taller, mixed-use buildings.



Section 4: Potential Zoning Scenario

Legend	Existing Building Heights	Current Zoning Allows	Potential Zoning
Mixed Use	Red	Red	Red
Residential	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Adjacent Context	White	White	White

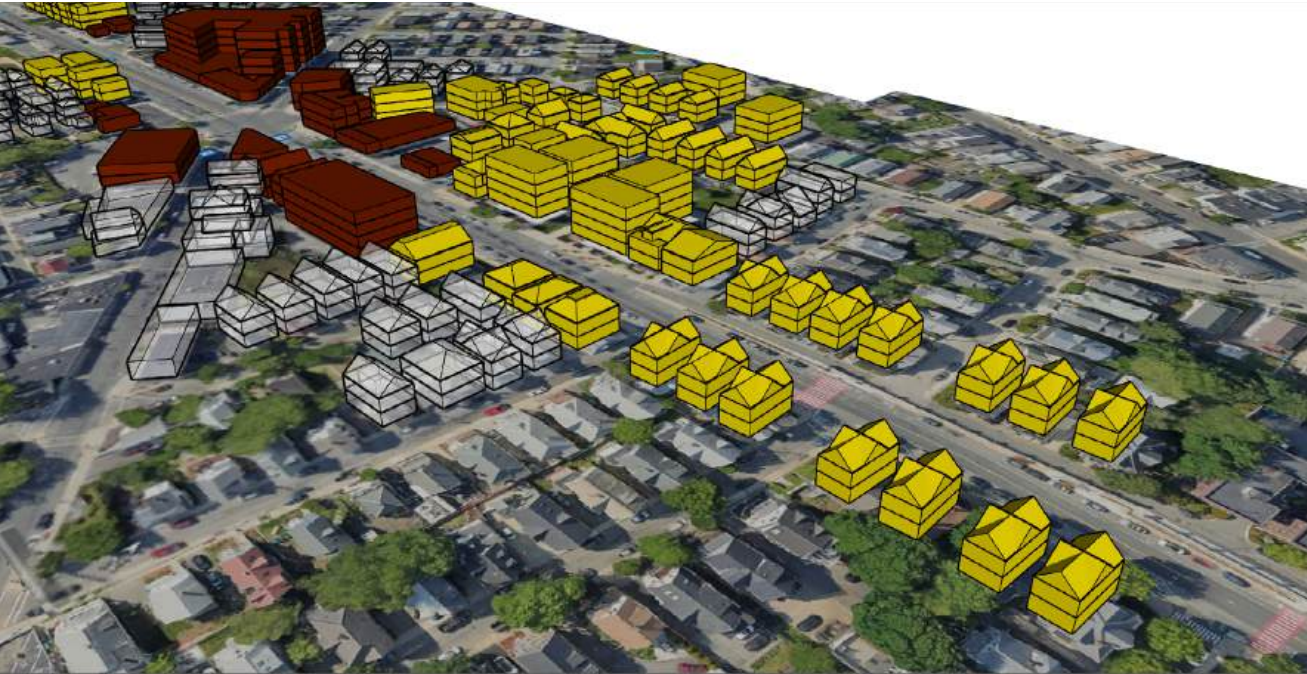
Figure 67: Section 4 - Potential zoning scenario

Section 5

This portion of the corridor runs from Norwood Avenue/Braemore Road to where the municipal boundary jogs north just before Bartlett Street.

Existing Conditions

Section 5 consists strictly of residential buildings today – primarily 2- and 3-unit dwellings. This section also includes a portion of Broadway Terrace, elevated above Broadway proper by a retaining wall and accessed by stairs.



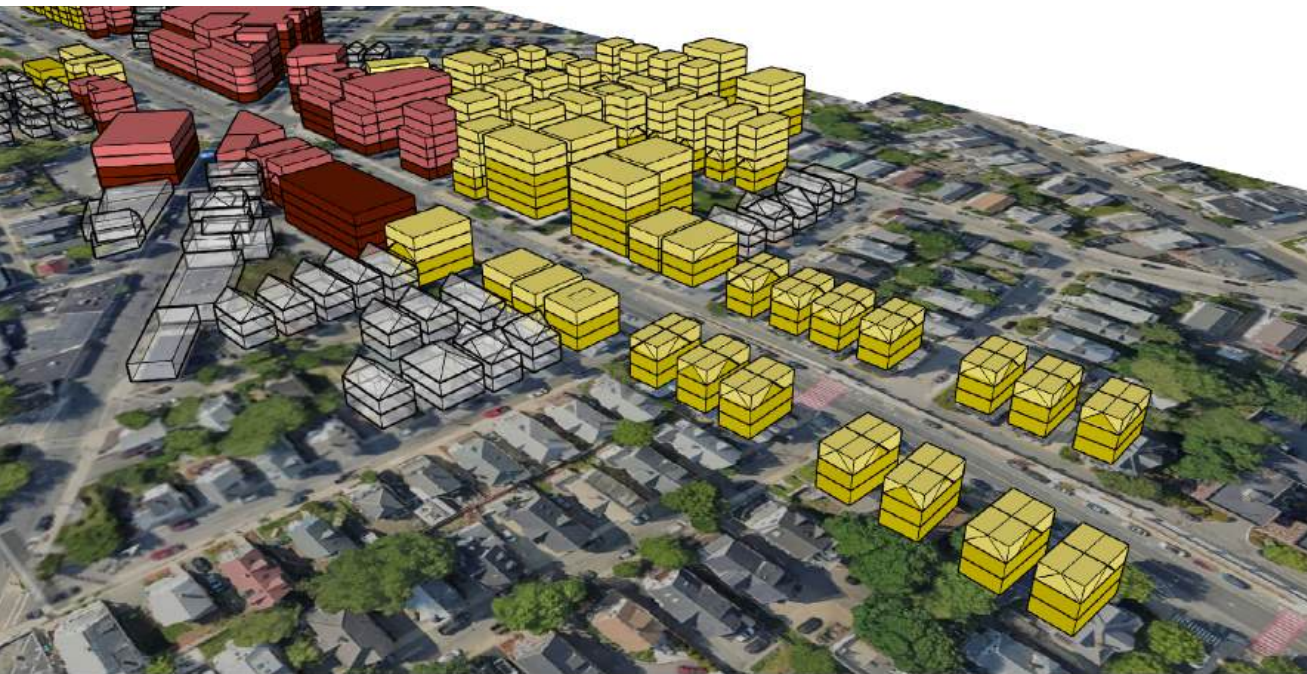
Section 5: Existing Conditions

Legend	Existing Building Heights
Mixed Use	<div></div>
Residential	<div></div>
Adjacent Context	<div></div>

Figure 68: Section 5 - Existing conditions massing

Current Zoning

All of this section is zoned for residential use in both Somerville and Medford. Many of the existing buildings are already at or close to the current height limits.



Section 5: Current Zoning Allows

Legend	Existing Building Heights	Current Zoning Allows
Mixed Use	<div></div>	<div></div>
Residential	<div></div>	<div></div>
Adjacent Context	<div></div>	

Figure 69: Section 5 - Allowed by current zoning

Potential Massing

While the cities could agree to allow taller buildings here, it might make more sense to keep a cap of 3-4 stories as this area transitions to the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Many of the parcels (as shown below) could also be too small to make six stories physically or economically feasible.



Section 5: Potential Zoning Scenario

Legend	Existing Building Heights	Current Zoning Allows	Potential Zoning
Mixed Use	Dark Blue	Light Blue	Light Blue
Residential	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Adjacent Context	White	White	White

Figure 70: Section 5 - Potential zoning scenario

Chapter 5: Zoning Recommendations

- Zoning Recommendations
- Harmonizing Zoning Between the Two Cities
- Coordination During the Permitting Process
- Other Ongoing Coordination Needs

Zoning Recommendations

There was much discussion about possibilities and varied recommendations for zoning changes in both Somerville and Medford that will harmonize what is allowed on both sides of the border. The recommendations should also formalize more consistent coordination between the two cities in the permitting review process and unlock the potential for development along the corridor that will match the visions expressed in the cities' comprehensive plans and what was heard during the public engagement for this effort.

The recommendations below are divided into two categories: those related to zoning standards and those related to the permitting process.



Figure 71: Horsley Witten Group staff presents at Premiere on Broadway (Photo credit: City of Somerville)

Harmonizing Zoning Between the Two Cities

As described in the Current Zoning Analysis at the beginning of this report, there are aspects of the cities' zoning standards that are fairly consistent across the municipal border, as well as areas of conflict. Understanding and suggesting corrections to these inconsistencies is a key component of these recommendations. Recommendations also aim to unlock the development potential of these parcels, largely by increasing the height and density allowances where development has not achieved the potential under current zoning.

The major questions are what changes both cities are willing to make to the existing zoning and which bulk regulations or process improvement would the cities be comfortable applying to the corridor.

The City of Somerville's zoning ordinance has a solid set of zoning districts that can be utilized to meet the goals of this report, including increasing building heights and mix of uses, but would require a map amendment. Medford, on the other hand, is currently in the process of a complete overhaul to its zoning ordinance which provides an opportunity to incorporate the recommendations of this study.

In the shorter term, the Cities might consider adoption of an overlay zone for this portion of the Broadway Corridor. Then, if it makes sense in the context of other changes adopted through the full zoning overhaul process, the cities could adopt the standards of the overlay into a base zoning district.

Building Heights: As discussed thoroughly above, building height allowances will need to be aligned on both sides of the municipal border and increased to 6 stories.

Use Allowances: The extent of required and allowed ground floor uses requires City direction, as well as update of the list of allowable uses across both cities.

Setbacks and Other Dimensional Standards: Harmonizing dimensional standards is important to help avoid oddly shaped buildings or staggered massing and provide consistency and predictability to developers. Medford might consider adopting the full set of building component standards, façade design standards, and architectural design guidelines specified in Somerville's form-based Zoning Ordinance, or simply harmonizing standards such as basic setbacks, lot size, lot coverage, and so forth to help ensure consistent and rational building designs.

Parking requirements: Both Cities should have one set of standards for determining the number of parking spaces required for a given development. Otherwise, developers may try to site uses where they will generate the fewest required parking spaces, leading to awkward designs. This would also help avoid confusion where the city boundary cuts through the middle of a residential unit.

Inclusionary zoning requirements: Somerville generally requires 20% of new housing units to be affordable in projects with four or more units. Medford requires 10-15% depending on the number of units, with an initial trigger of projects with ten or more units. There should be a single standard for affordable housing along the corridor to encourage development of much needed housing units.



Figure 72: Residents' input at the charette at Premiere on Broadway (Photo credit: City of Somerville)

Approaches to Reform

Given the issues identified above, three options to zoning reform are possible:

1. Develop a new set of zoning standards that would apply on both sides of the municipal border, whether adopted jointly or separately by each city.
2. Each city develops the zoning they think works best for their portion of the corridor, Somerville likely choosing from its existing zoning districts and Medford developing new zoning in tandem with its ongoing zoning overhaul. Any discrepancies in zoning standards across the border would be mitigated in the permitting review process.
3. Change the Somerville portion of the corridor to the existing zoning districts that most closely match both cities' visions, public feedback, and the current height allowances on the Medford side. Then develop an overlay or new base zoning district on the Medford side that matches the Somerville zoning as closely as Medford is comfortable.

Option #1 does not appear to be reasonable. In the 2019 zoning overhaul, Somerville documented building types across the entire city and would be uncomfortable with isolated district regulations. Medford has uncertainty at this time regarding a shift towards a more form-based approach to zoning. A solution that creates new standards that meet in the middle might leave both sides feeling compromised and unsatisfied.

Option #2 would be the simplest solution – essentially both cities can continue to do what they think is best but would agree to better and more formalized communication throughout the development process. However, this approach would defeat the purpose of trying to harmonize zoning to the greatest extent possible.

Given the desired outcomes for this project and the political realities of how zoning functions in both cities today, Option #3 appears to be the best choice.

Proposed parcels for zoning changes are shown in the figures below. The first image is a map of the full corridor followed by close ups of sections the corridor to see greater detail.

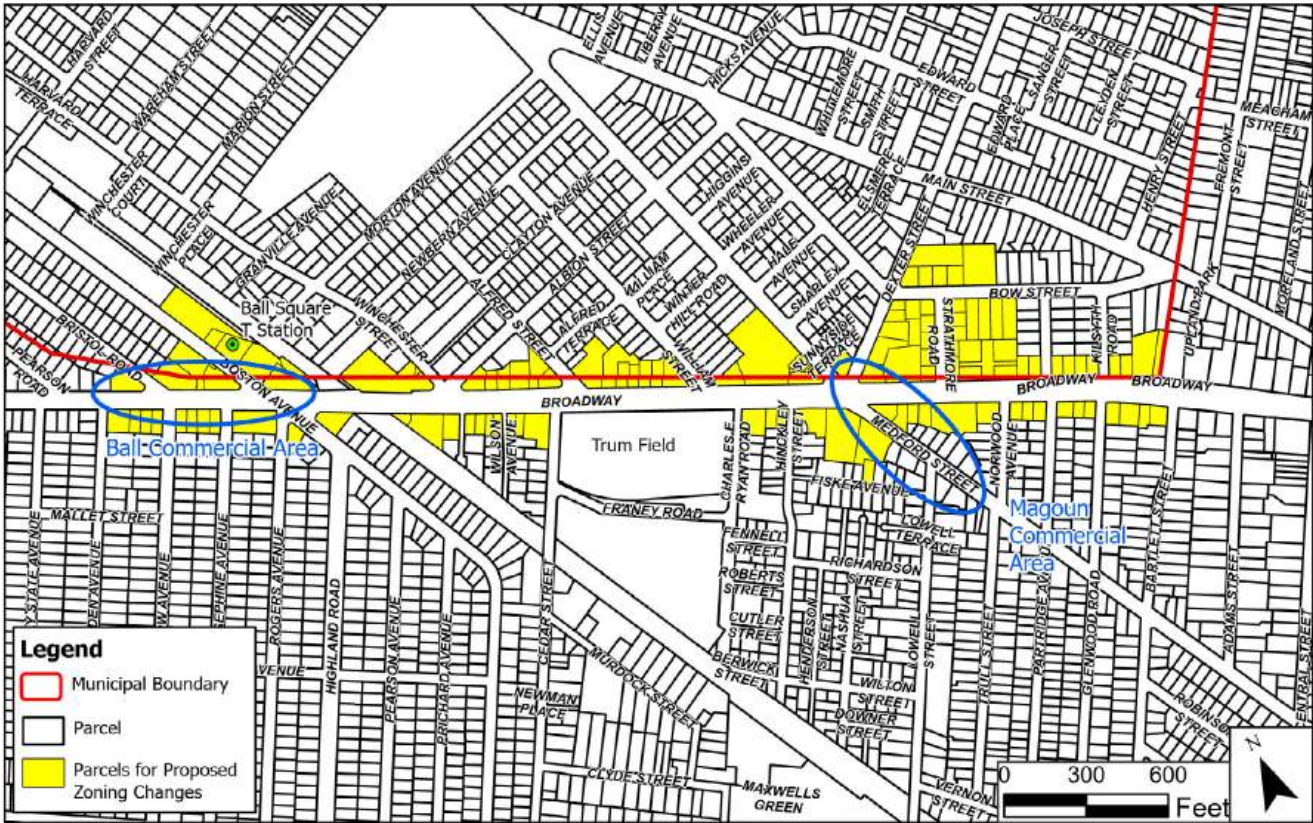


Figure 73: Full Broadway Corridor Area



Figure 74: Proposed Broadway Corridor Zoning: Section 1

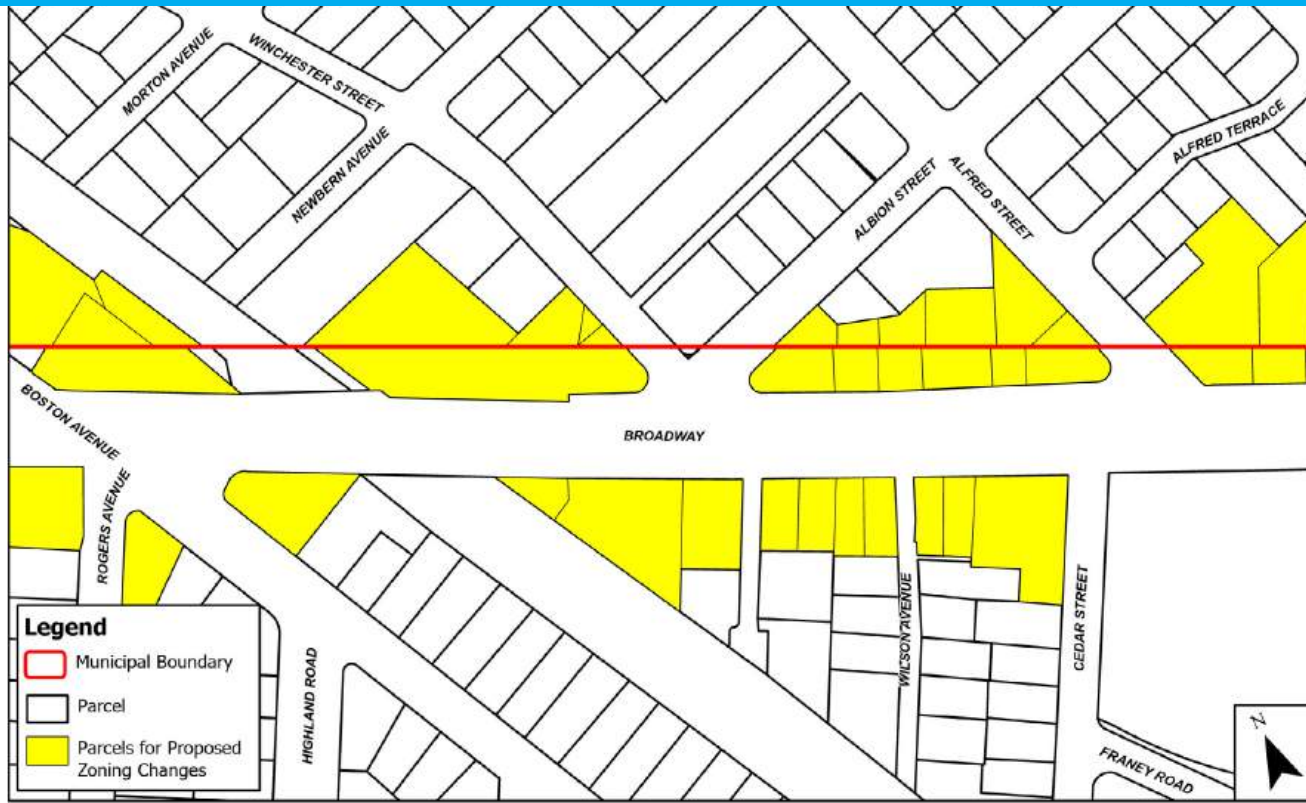


Figure 75: Proposed Broadway Corridor Zoning: Section 2

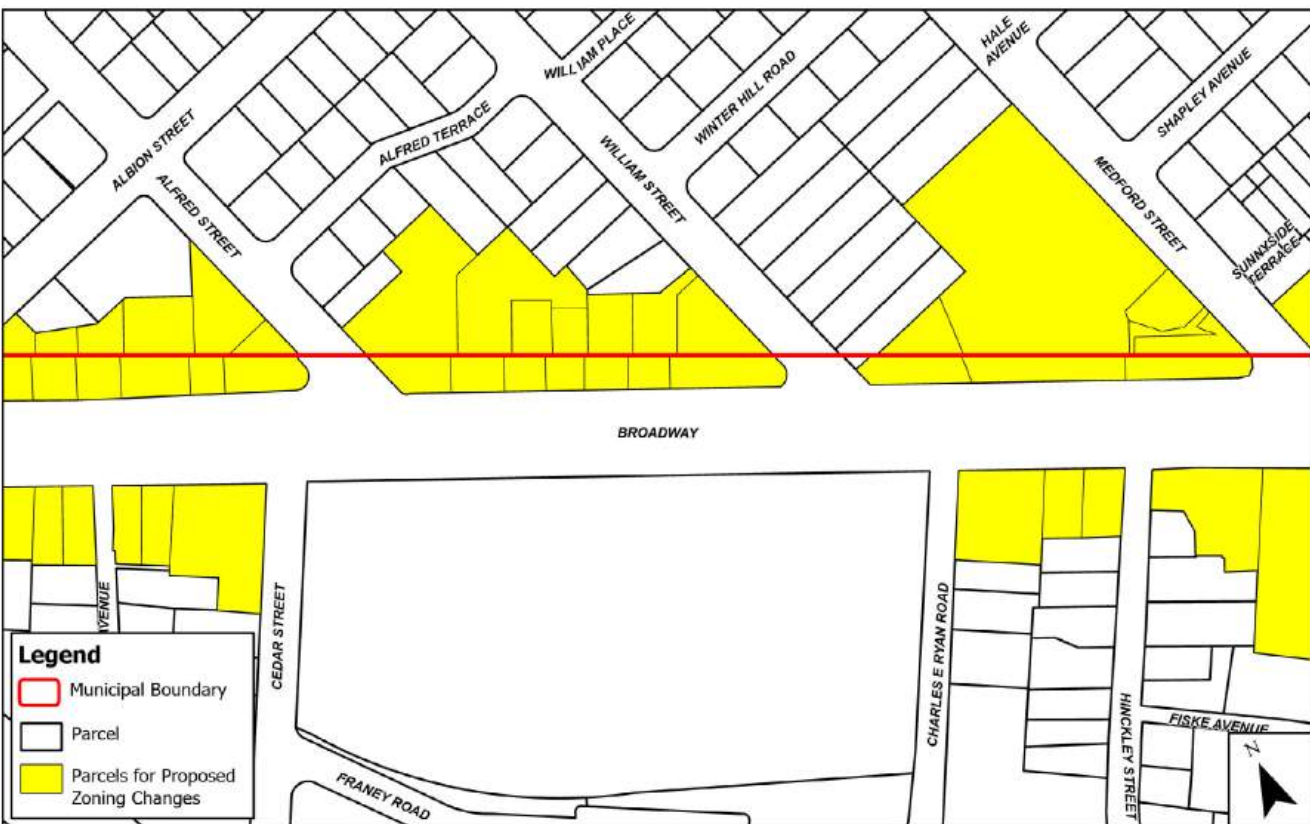


Figure 76: Proposed Broadway Corridor Zoning: Section 3

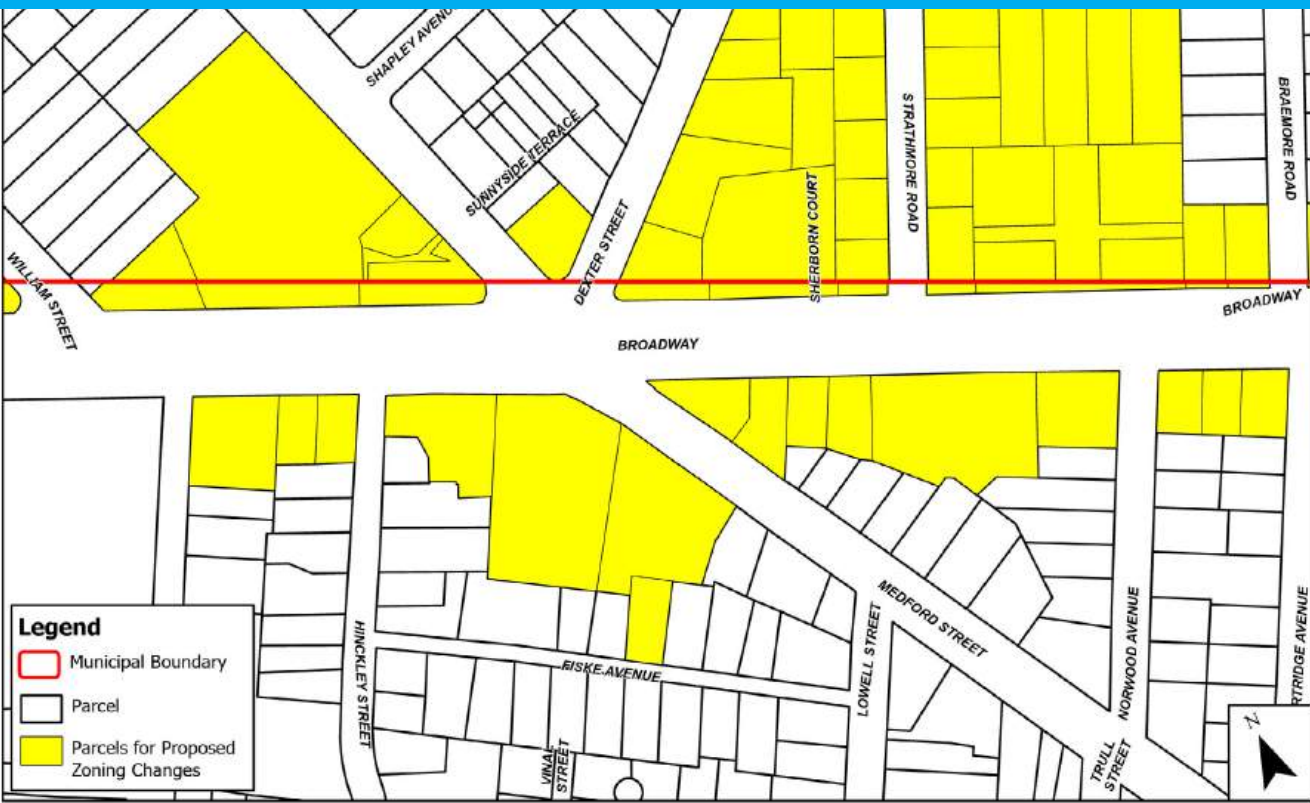


Figure 77: Proposed Broadway Corridor Zoning: Section 4



Figure 78: Proposed Broadway Corridor Zoning: Section 5

Rezoning the Somerville Side of the Corridor

Starting with the Somerville side, given the strong desire from the public to allow ground floor commercial across the entire corridor, it is recommended that most of the corridor be upzoned to the Mid Rise 6 (MR6) zoning district.

MR6 is the most suitable of Somerville's existing zoning districts for this corridor given the relatively small lot sizes and the quick transition from taller buildings along the corridor to lower-scale one-, two-, and three-unit structures in the surrounding UR and NR zoning districts. MR6 allows for development of up to six stories to match what is currently allowed for apartment buildings or mixed-use residential/commercial buildings in the C1 and APT-2 districts on the Medford side of the municipal boundary. In addition, allowing six stories instead of three or four stories may serve as a better incentive for property owners to redevelop existing buildings, providing them with a potentially higher return on investment while also accommodating more housing on the corridor – a major priority for the public. In addition, the MR6 district provides the option of ground floor commercial across the corridor.

While many in the community advocated for allowing buildings taller than six stories, accommodating this on existing lots would be challenging from a parcel size perspective, without a significant merger of lots. Six-story buildings may not even be feasible on some of the smaller lots, but the option would be available so long as other zoning requirements can be met.

The extent of the "Pedestrian Streets" designated by Somerville should be reviewed and adjusted. Apartment Buildings are not allowed on Pedestrian Streets, with the intention of requiring active ground floor uses

in buildings that front them. Currently, the portion of Broadway within this study area is designated as a Pedestrian Street from Bay State Avenue to the railroad tracks, and then from William Street to approximately Norwood Avenue. Medford Street is also designated from Broadway to Norwood Avenue. Somerville may certainly choose to keep these designations as-is. However, given the current high demand for residential and the relatively low demand for commercial, the recommendation is to reduce the extent of the corridor designated as Pedestrian Streets per Alternative B for Ground Floor Uses (see Figure 42 on page 52). This alternative tightens the area where ground floor commercial is required in the hopes of avoiding vacant storefronts.

What does a change to MR6 mean for individual property owners?

For parcels currently zoned NR or UR, property owners would have significantly different development opportunities under MR6. While owners can certainly continue to maintain the 1-, 2-, and 3-family residential homes and smaller scale apartment buildings currently on the corridor, new development would be expected to match the dimensional standards and building types of MR6, allowing a mix of uses and buildings between three and six stories in height. The changes would be less significant for properties currently zoned MR3 and MR4. Obviously, buildings could be up to six stories in height rather than three or four but the economics may not make the increase feasible. A mix of commercial and residential uses would still be allowed – the list of permitted uses would remain virtually the same.

Harmonizing the Medford Side of the Corridor

In discussions with staff, the City of Medford would be comfortable harmonizing basic dimensional standards and use allowances to match Somerville’s Zoning Ordinance so long as Somerville allows for the taller buildings and mixed-use desired along the corridor. The first step is to establish an overlay zoning district in Medford on its split lots with standards that allow mixed-use, six-story buildings across the corridor as described below. Note that the recommendations below are geared only towards the parcels that front Broadway and are split between Medford and Somerville. The proposed zoning maps above include parcels that do not front on Broadway and are not split with Somerville. Medford will continue to allow apartments of up to 6 stories on these lots and will allow only limited if any commercial uses.

Dimensional Requirements

Coordinating the dimensional requirements is somewhat complicated by the fact that Somerville has slightly different dimensional standards for apartment buildings versus mixed-use and commercial buildings. For example, mixed-use and commercial buildings can be taller (in feet, not in stories)

and allow greater front setbacks than residential apartment buildings to accomodate varied uses. Medford could adopt the greater of these dimensions and Somerville should consider allowing apartment buildings to meet the dimensional standards for mixed-use and commercial buildings on split lots in order to harmonize with Medford. Somerville also has varied side and rear setbacks depending on the abutting lot, though these can be easily adjusted to apply in Medford where the side or rear abuts a property in the GR district.

Medford should consider adopting zoning language that states that Sec. 94-4.0 Dimensional Regulations continues to apply in the overlay district except that when in conflict with the standards in the table below, the standards in this table shall apply. Note that this would include the stipulation in Sec. 94-4.2.6 that puts a height limit of 4 stories/50 feet on any building within 100 feet of a GR district. The table below would allow, for example, up to 6 stories with a 30-foot side or rear yard setback when abutting a parcel in the GR district.

While this will not correspond to every detail in Somerville’s Zoning Ordinance, it should harmonize the most important aspects of building placement and massing.

	LOT WIDTH (MIN)	LOT COVER (MAX)	OPEN SPACE (MIN)	FRONT SETBACK (MIN/MAX)	SIDE SETBACK (MIN)	REAR SETBACK (MIN)	HEIGHT (IN FEET)
MR6	30 ft	100%	15%	2 ft/15 ft	0 ft 10 ft if 3 story or less abutting GR 30 ft if 4 story+ abutting GR	0 ft 20 ft if 3 story or less abutting GR 30 ft if 4 story+ and abutting GR	4 stories /55 feet

Use Allowances

The Use Table for each municipality is different in format but not largely different in content. In general, Medford has a more traditional use table that lists specific detailed uses within a category, whereas Somerville has tried to simplify the list by broadening the definitions within each category. Much of the difference is predicated on the different approaches of each ordinance – one conventional zoning and one form-based. For example, Somerville has one Residential Housing use, however the types of housing that are listed separately in the Medford use table are included in the broadened definition (within Article 9) and, to some degree, addressed via the permitted Building Types within a district. At the category level, Somerville has a separate listing for Arts & Creative Enterprises and Cannabis Establishments, while Medford incorporates these uses in the Retail and Service Uses or Commercial Uses categories.

The most noticeable difference between the two use tables is in the Auto-Oriented (Somerville) and Motor Vehicle Related (Medford) -- see the table to the right. Medford has more areas of the city that require more attention to auto uses, such as vehicle repairs or drive-throughs, and the accessory parking that is necessary or allowed to accompany such uses. Parking in Somerville is treated as a separate land use, rather than an accessory use.

As the split parcels of this study have a primary frontage on, and therefore access from, Broadway within Somerville, the recommendation for land uses for Medford’s regulation is to more closely match Somerville. Further coordination will be required between the two cities as the Medford zoning overhaul proceeds to consider the allowed uses in this area. Rather than divide a property or building across the municipal boundary, if there are specific uses that are expressly prohibited in Medford, then Somerville could make a zoning adjustment to the uses permitted in this area.

SOMERVILLE	MEDFORD
Arts & Creative Enterprise Categories	
Artisanal Production	
Arts Exhibition	
Arts Sales or Services	
Co-Working	
Design Services	
Shared Workspaces or Arts Education	
Work/Live Creative Studio	
Auto-Oriented Categories	H. MOTOR VEHICLE RELATED USES
	I. MISCELLANEOUS COMMERCIAL USES
Commercial Vehicle Repair or Maintenance	2. Motor vehicle repair establishment
	12. Heavy repair operations
Dispatch Service (except as follows)	
Towing Service	
Gasoline Station	1. Fuel and ice sales
Motor Vehicle Parking (as noted below)	1. Parking area or garage not accessory to permitted principal use:
	Residential
	Nonresidential
	2. Parking area or garage accessory to a principal use which is on the same lot as a conforming principal use
	4. Parking area or garage accessory to a principal use which is on the same lot as a nonconforming principal use
Off-Site Accessory Parking	3. Parking area or garage accessory to a principal use which is within 500 feet of a conforming principal use but not necessarily in the same district
	5. Parking area or garage accessory to a principal use which is within 500 feet of a conforming principal use in the same MUZ district ³
Personal Vehicle Repair or Maintenance	1. Motor vehicle light service station
Recharging Station	
Vehicle Sales	3. Motor vehicle sales or rental of new vehicles only, accessory storage entirely within enclosed structure
	4. Outdoor motor vehicle sales and storage accessory to H.3
	5. Motor vehicle sales and storage, outdoors
	6. Class II used motor vehicle sales
	7. Motor vehicle wash within enclosed structure

Parking Requirements

Ideally both cities should have one set of parking standards. Eliminating parking minimums near transit is a great way to encourage transit-oriented development and ensure that parking is only built to the extent a developer thinks is necessary, and it is a recommended approach for both cities. Medford may wish to include transit-oriented parking requirements in the zoning overhaul.

Inclusionary Zoning Requirements

As noted, Somerville generally requires 20% affordable housing while Medford requires up to 15%. This difference has discouraged residential development on the Somerville side of split lots with developers opting for the more lenient requirements on the Medford side. It is likely that since Somerville has been able to attract development near other transit stations while requiring 20% affordable housing, the Broadway Corridor can likely support this as well.

Medford has expressed concern about increasing its affordability requirements without first conducting an economic feasibility study to ensure that the market is strong enough to support a higher level of affordability without discouraging development. Balancing this discrepancy should help avoid awkward development massing without depressing development overall.

Embracing Form-Based Code

The City of Medford may consider going beyond the steps outlined above and opt to create a form-based overlay district similar to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.

The inclusive community engagement process that took place for this study provides a clear vision to set parameters for development. An overlay need not be as complex as the Somerville Zoning Ordinance but should contain specific requirements for building placement and building frontages that will provide predictable physical outcomes and shape the public realm.

Many of the elements could be adapted from the Somerville MR6 district standards to ensure that a project is consistent across the municipal boundary. The overlay could include:

- Intent/Purpose/Applicability
- Character Description
- Building Types & Components
- Façade Design & Architectural Design Guidelines

While some modifications for cross references to other sections of the Medford Zoning Ordinance, references to applicable development review processes, and additional definitions would be necessary, Medford could closely match Somerville’s standards. While this would require cooperation by staff and the city’s Community Development Board, it could be a good way to test a form-based code in the community.

Coordination During the Permitting Process

Process Issues to Address

At the start of this work effort, development of a joint application and review process for development on split lotes was considered. City staff did extensive research into examples of agreements between and among other Massachusetts municipalities on development within shared geographies. Dozens of examples were reviewed including communities that established joint planning boards with common zoning ordinances and application forms and processes specific to a shared geography. However, this approach was dismissed as cumbersome and impractical by both cities given the limited number of parcels (36) that would be covered by this separate process.

Both cities are committed to their current review processes. Instead, the cities asked for an exploration of less complicated forms of coordination that could flag potential problems early on, provide a platform for joint problem solving, and ensure that both cities are communicating the same messages to developers.

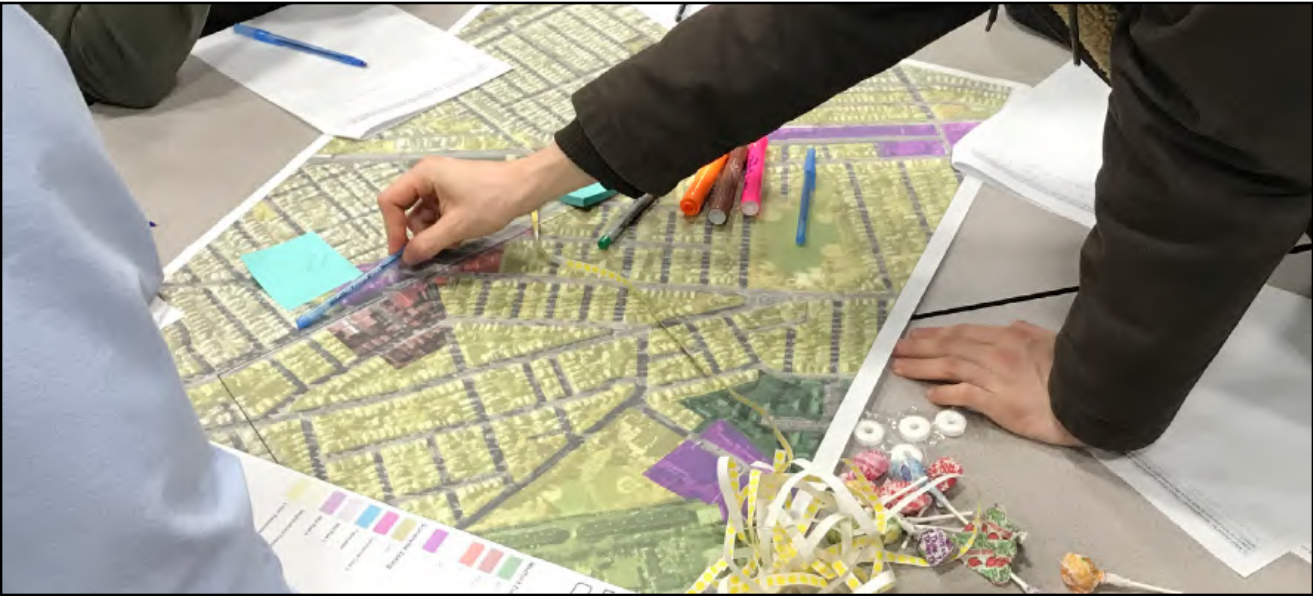


Figure 79: Residents provide input at the Healey School (Photo credit: City of Somerville)

Process Recommendations

1. Joint Pre-Submittal Meetings:

Any pre-submittal meetings with an applicant should be required to be held jointly with staff from both Cities. That way, staff from Medford and Somerville can explain their processes together and take note of any proposal that might have red flags. This will demonstrate to applicants that both Cities are on the same team and cannot be played against each other.

2. Neighborhood Meetings:

Both Cities are likely to maintain their own triggers and processes to determine when an applicant must host a meeting with neighborhood residents and abutting property owners. Both Cities require applicants to reach out to all addresses within the required notice area, whether in Medford or Somerville, so that neighbors on both sides are informed of each opportunity to participate in the review process. If both communities require a neighborhood meeting for the same project, the Cities should agree to let a single meeting on either side of the municipal boundary count toward the requirement, so long as case planners and neighbors on both sides have reasonable access.

3. Other Public Meetings and Hearings:

The Cities should agree to proactively invite staff from the neighboring city to each public meeting or hearing relevant to a proposed development on a split lot. Medford would invite Somerville staff to attend any relevant meetings of the Community Development Board and Somerville would invite Medford staff to any relevant meeting of the Planning Board or any other body such as the Zoning Board of Appeals or the City Council. If staff from the other City are unable to attend, they should be provided with any relevant meeting minutes or recordings and be allowed to provide written comments to be read into the record.

4. Memorandum of Understanding:

These three steps can be informally followed by current staff. To ensure that this process does not rely on personal relationships among specific staff members, both Cities should execute a Memorandum of Understanding detailing the commitments above.

Other Ongoing Coordination Needs

While this project is focused on zoning and the parcels split by the municipal boundary, discussions among City staff in Medford and Somerville revealed many items the two cities will need to closely coordinate into the future. On top of the ongoing public realm and public right-of-way coordination discussed earlier in this report, some highlights include:

On-Street Parking

Both communities have different policies for overnight on-street parking for residents, business owners, employees, and visitors. For example, on-street overnight parking is not an option in Medford, so for many people (whose homes are largely on the Medford side of the line but who have a Somerville street address), their on-street parking options are limited. These policies also limit where local business owners and their staff may park. There may be value in exploring a joint overnight parking policy for residents and a joint parking policy for local businesses.

Electric Utilities

Somerville’s electrical service is provided by Eversource and Medford is supplied by National Grid. Depending on the intensity of additional development along the Broadway Corridor, a new substation may be required to support the growth.

Additionally, getting new development connected to the grid can take a long time – there are often backups related to finding qualified contractors, supply chains, and lack of transmission capacity. While this is currently a nationwide problem, closer coordination between the four entities could be streamlined.

Water & Sewer

Most of Broadway is served by Somerville’s water and sewer lines, but some areas are served by Medford. Water pressure is currently adequate; the sewer system is more complicated. Only Ball Square has separated sanitary and stormwater sewers at this time. Unfortunately, most of the corridor still has combined sewers and the area is not currently high on the list for sewer separation funding.

Economic Development

The public would like to see more support for local businesses in the corridor, so Medford and Somerville are partnering on a number of efforts. There is ongoing work to create a “Shop Local” Marketing Plan for the corridor. Somerville is preparing for an upcoming Placemaking Study to improve and activate the public realm, celebrate local culture and history, and make it easier to get around. There is an active “Main Street” Program in several other neighborhoods in the region, and the Ball Square/Magoun Square/Winter Hill area could be a strong candidate for a new Main Street organization. Finally, both Cities will continue to do direct outreach and technical assistance to local businesses, with the goals of understanding who they are, how to reach them, and what they need to thrive.

Others

Both Cities should continue to coordinate efforts to activate the corridor with events, programs, and cultural activities, including in Trum Field. The Cities also have opportunities to partner on other issues such as waste management, electric vehicle charging, solar codes, and much more. These should all continue to be ongoing conversations.

