Housing Needham (HONE) Advisory Group

Thursday, February 29, 2024
7:00 p.m.

Charles River Room
Public Services Administration Building, 500 Dedham Avenue
AND
Virtual Meeting using Zoom
Meeting ID:
834 7583 6726
(Instructions for accessing below)

To view and participate in this virtual meeting on your phone, download the "Zoom Cloud Meetings" app in any app store or at www.zoom.us. At the above date and time, click on "Join a Meeting" and enter the following Meeting ID: 834 7583 6726

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Direct Link to meeting: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83475836726

I. Welcome and Meeting Goals, *Heidi Frail and Natasha Espada, Co-Chairs*

II. Overview of Site Plan Review and Special Permit regulatory framework. *Christopher Heep, Town Counsel*

III. Presentation, selection and approval of final base scenario, *Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates*

IV. Presentation, selection and approval of final add-on scenario for MBTA Communities Compliance, *Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates*

V. Next Steps

Housing Needham (HONE) Advisory Group	
Heidi Frail	Select Board (co-chair)
Natasha Espada	Planning Board (co-chair)
Kevin Keane	Select Board
Jeanne McKnight	Planning Board
Joshua Levy	Finance Committee
Ronald Ruth	Land Use Attorney
William Lovett	Real Estate Developer
Liz Kaponya	Renter
Michael Diener	Citizen at Large

Housing Needham (HONE) Advisory Group Meeting

Town of Needham, Massachusetts

February 29, 2024

INFORMATION PACKET

HOUSING NEEDHAM (HONE)

TOWN VISIONING FOR MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING

Overview

This packet contains the background information on the existing zoning, overlay district zoning, the Base Scenario and an Alternative Base Scenario, and the Bonus Scenario. The information in this packet will provide you with the key zoning parameters that the MBTA Compliance Model utilizes and a map (where applicable) to better understand the extents of each zoning district.

Existing Zoning Parameters

	Apartment A-1	Business	Avery Square Business	Chestnut Street District	Center Business	Hillside Avenue Business	General Residence	Industrial
Max Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Lot Size	20,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Height (Stories)	3 (40 feet)	3 (40 feet)	2.5 (35 feet)	2.5 (35 Feet)	2.5 (35 feet)	2.5 (35 feet)	2.5 (35 feet)	3 (40 feet)
FAR	0.5	N/A	0.7	0.7	1.0	0.7	N/A	N/A
Max Blg Coverage	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Max Lot Coverage	N/A	25%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	30% - 35%	60%
Minimum Open Space (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Open Space per Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Front Setback	25	10 or 20	10 to 15	10 or 20	3 or Avg. of Setbacks	20	20	10 or 20
Rear Setback	20	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	20	N/A
Side Setbacks	20	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	14	N/A
ResidentialParking per Unit	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maximum Dwelling Units per Acre	18	N/A	18	18	18	18	8	N/A
Maximum Dwelling Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

***Note that multifamily housing is not permitted in the Business and Industrial Districts under existing zoning.**

Existing Zoning Modeled Capacity

The Consultant Team was asked to model the zoning capacity of the existing zoning districts that align with the boundaries in Scenario A to better understand the number of units that the zoning could support today.

To do this, the Consultant Team (in consultation with Town Staff) made the following assumptions in the MBTA Compliance Model:

- Models the base zoning parameters for Avery Square, Apartment A-1, and Hillside Avenue.
- Models the overlay zoning parameters for Chestnut Hill Business Overlay.
- Does not model Business or Industrial as they do not currently allow multifamily housing at all.
- Uses a parking ratio of 1.5 as this is what the existing zoning requires.

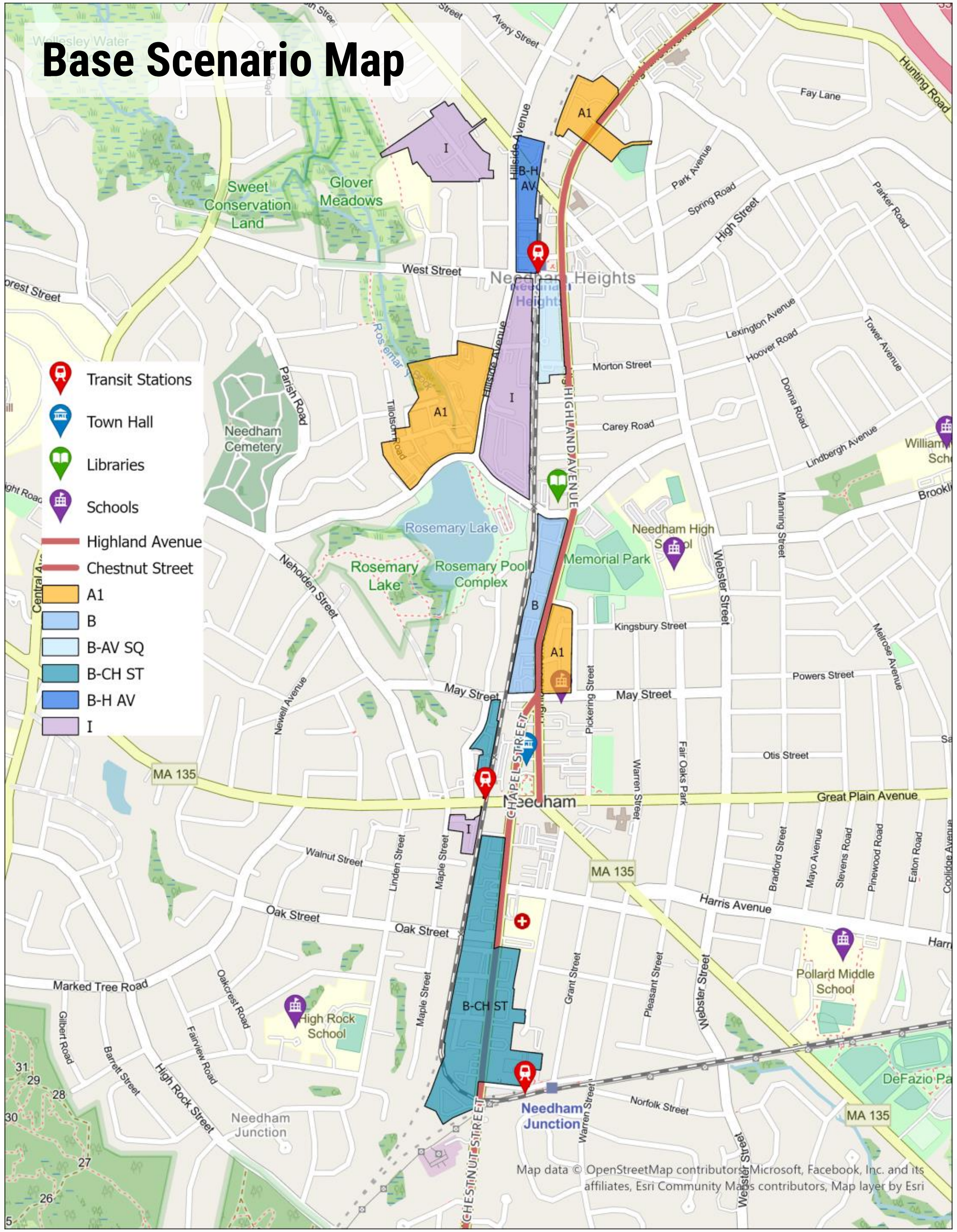
Summary Table

Data Metric	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5	Totals
District Name	A1	A-1 Avery Hamilton	B-AV SQ	B-CH ST	B-H-AV	
District Acreage *(see note)*	23.1	6.6	4.3	34.3	7.1	**75.3**
District Density Denominator *(see note)*	20.8	6.6	4.3	34.3	7.1	**73.0**
Final Unit Capacity per District	**433**	**103**	**77**	**1,112**	**46**	**1,771**
DU/AC	**20.8**	**15.6**	**17.9**	**32.5**	**6.5**	**24.3**

Overlay District Zoning Parameters

	Avery Square Overlay	Lower Chestnut Street Overlay	Garden Street Overlay	Needham Center Overlay A	Needham Center Overlay B
Max Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Lot Size	10,000	15,000	15,000	10,000	10,000
Height (Stories)	Up to 4 Stories by SP, limited to 35% of total roof area.	3 or 3+1	2+1 (37 feet)	3 or 3+1	2+1 (37 feet)
FAR	1.1	1.5 or 2 by SP	1.0 to 1.2	2.0 or 3.0	2.0 or 3.0
Max Blg Coverage	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Max Lot Coverage	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Open Space (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Open Space per Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Front Setback	10 to 15	5	10	0	0
Rear Setback	N/A	25' if abutting MBTA ROW	10	50' if abutting residential district	50' if abutting residential district
Side Setbacks	N/A	25' if abutting MBTA ROW	10	50' if abutting residential district	50' if abutting residential district
ResidentialParking per Unit	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maximum Dwelling Units per Acre	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maximum Dwelling Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Base Scenario Map



Metric	Number
Gross Acres	96.2
DDD Acres	93.9
Units	1,703
DU/AC	18.1

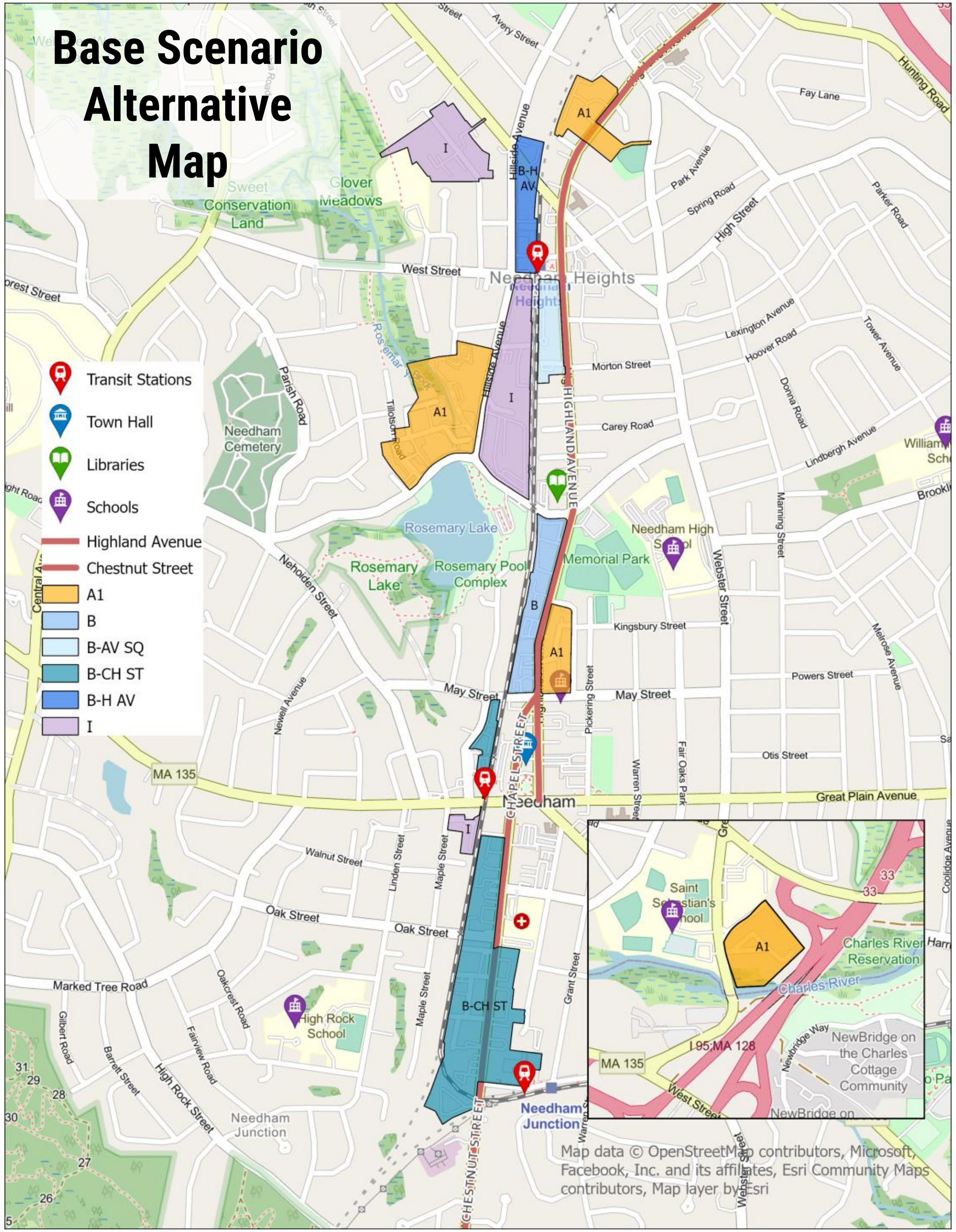
Base Scenario Zoning Parameters

	Apartment A-1	Business	Avery Square Business	Chestnut Street Business	Hillside Avenue Business	Industrial
Max Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Lot Size	20000	10000	10,000	10000	10000	10000
Height (Stories)	3	3	3	3	3	3
FAR	0.5	N/A	1.0	0.7	0.5	0.5
Max Blg Coverage	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Max Lot Coverage	N/A	25%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Open Space (%) - MBTA Model Requirement	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
Open Space per Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Front Setback	25	10	10	25	25	25
Rear Setback	20	N/A	0	20	20	20
Side Setbacks	20	N/A	0	20	20	20
ResidentialParking per Unit	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maximum Dwelling Units per Acre	18	N/A	N/A	18	N/A	N/A
Maximum Dwelling Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Base Scenario Alternative Map

This map adds in the Charles Court Apartment A-1 district.

Metric	Number
Gross Acres	104.0
DDD Acres	100.4
Units	1,844
DU/AC	18.4



Base Scenario Alternative Zoning Parameters

	Apartment A-1	Business	Avery Square Business	Chestnut Street Business	Hillside Avenue Business	Industrial
Max Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Lot Size	20,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Height (Stories)	3	3	3	3	3	3
FAR	0.5	N/A	1.0	0.7	0.5	0.5
Max Blg Coverage	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Max Lot Coverage	N/A	25%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Open Space (%) - MBTA Model Requirement	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
Open Space per Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Front Setback	25	10	10	25	25	25
Rear Setback	20	N/A	0	20	20	20
Side Setbacks	20	N/A	0	20	20	20
ResidentialParking per Unit	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maximum Dwelling Units per Acre	18	N/A	N/A	18	N/A	N/A
Maximum Dwelling Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Base Scenario Options Compared

Base Scenario Results

Model Outputs	Apartment 1	Business	Avery Square Business	Chestnut Street Business	Hillside Ave	Industrial	Total
Gross Acreage	26.84	7.12	4.28	28.36	5.50	24.10	**96.20**
DDD Acreage	24.54	7.12	4.28	28.36	5.50	24.10	**93.90**
Unit Capacity	385	210	187	370	56	495	**1,703**
DU/AC	15.7	29.5	43.7	13.0	10.2	20.5	**18.1**

Base Scenario Alternative Results

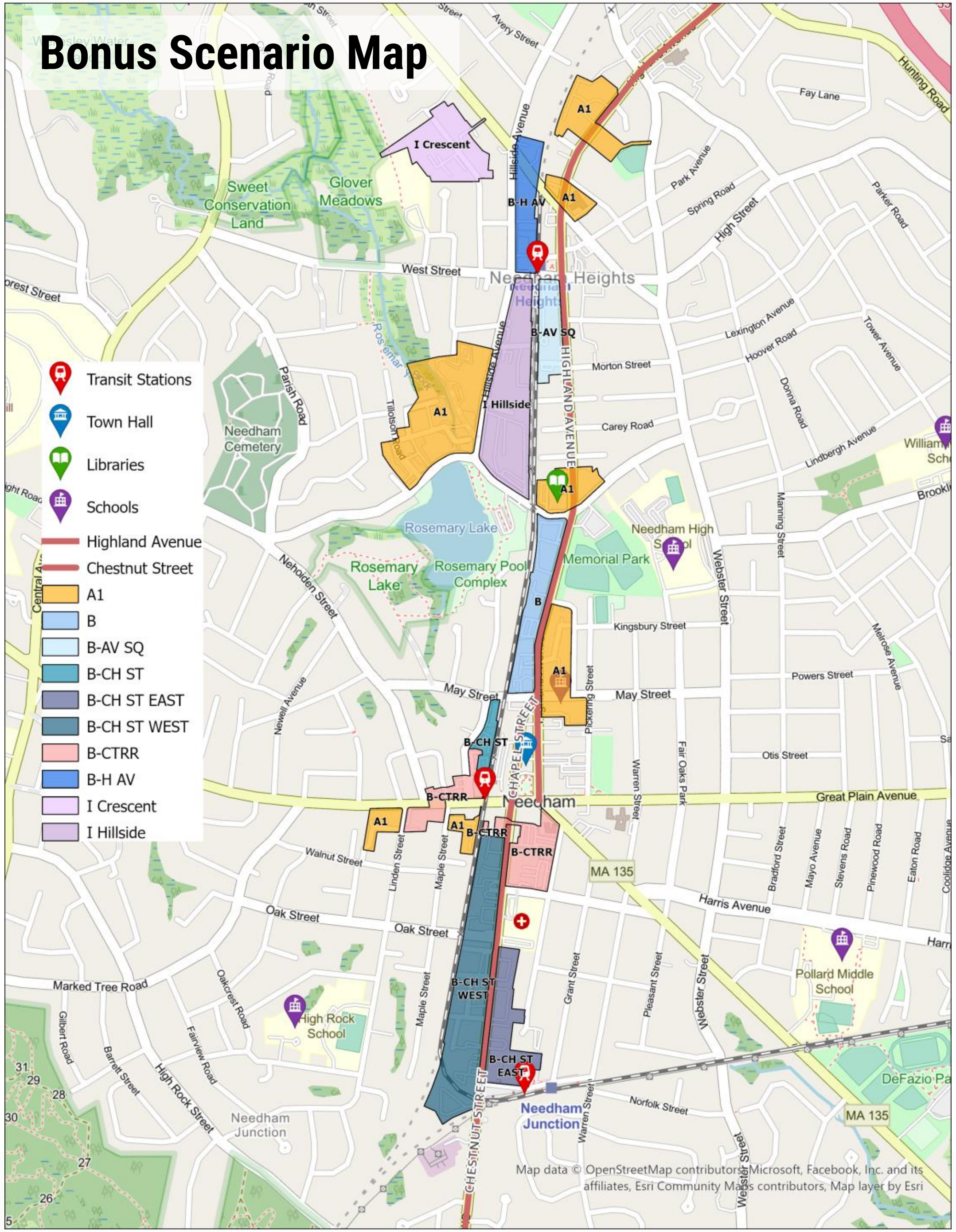
Model Outputs	Apartment 1	Business	Avery Square Business	Chestnut Street Business	Hillside Ave	Industrial	Charles Court A-1	Total
Gross Acreage	26.84	7.12	4.28	28.36	5.50	24.10	7.80	**104.00**
DDD Acreage	24.54	7.12	4.28	28.36	5.50	24.10	6.49	**100.39**
Unit Capacity	385	210	187	370	56	495	141	**1,844**
DU/AC	15.7	29.5	43.7	13.0	10.2	20.5	21.7	**18.4**

Existing Zoning and Base Scenario Options Compared

Metric	Existing Zoning	Base Scenario	Base Scenario Alt
Gross Acres	75.3	96.20	104.00
DDD Acres	73	93.90	100.39
Units	1,771	1,703	1,844
DU/AC	24.3	18.1	18.4

Bonus Scenario Map

Metric	Number
Gross Acres	114.87
DDD Acres	112.49
Units	4,160
DU/AC	37.0



Bonus Scenario Zoning Parameters

	Apartment A-1	Business	Avery Square Business	Chestnut Street East Business	Chestnut Street West Business	Chestnut Street/Garden Street	Center Business – Residential	Hillside Avenue Business	Industrial – Crescent	Industrial - Hillside
Max Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Lot Size	20,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Height (Stories)	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	3
FAR	1.0	2.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	0.75	1.0
Max Blg Coverage	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Max Lot Coverage	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Open Space (%) - MBTA Model Requirement	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
Open Space per Dwelling Unit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Front Setback	25	10	10	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Rear Setback	20	0	0	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Side Setbacks	20	0	0	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
ResidentialParking per Unit	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Maximum Dwelling Units per Acre	36	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	24	24	36

Setback requirements to be worked out as zoning discussion progresses.

Bonus Scenario Results

Bonus Scenario Results

Model Outputs	Apartment 1	Business	Avery Square Business	Chestnut Street East Business	Chestnut Street West Business	Chestnut Street Business/Garden Street Overlay	B-CTRR	Hillside Ave Business	Industrial - Crescent	Industrial - Hillside	TOTALS
Gross Acreage	38.42	7.12	4.29	7.30	17.77	1.85	9.95	5.50	8.70	13.97	**114.87**
DDD Acreage	36.12	7.12	4.29	7.30	17.77	1.85	9.95	5.50	8.62	13.97	**112.49**
Unit Capacity	1,089	485	187	412	912	75	264	62	184	490	**4,160**
DU/AC	30.1	68.1	43.6	56.4	51.3	40.5	26.5	11.3	21.3	35.1	**37.0**

To: HONE

I am writing to express my concern with the rezoning of the Avery Square Business District after watching the video of the February 15 2024 meeting of HONE and reviewing the meeting packet. I believe that HONE is making a mistake by even proposing a rezoning of this parcel given recent history, the current status of the parcel and zoning, and comments/actions by the developer and their attorneys.

For those not familiar, the Needham Observer provides a quick refresher:
https://needhamobserver.com/former-carters-building-lies-dormant-amid-stalled-negotiations/

- The town has already rezoned the district at the request of the previous developer. The developer did not deliver on a new project without a satisfactory explanation why not.
- With the same ownership, a new entity took over development and requested a permit change under a new, yet similar proposal. This was opposed by many in the community. I was not initially opposed to this change as long as concessions could be extracted from the developer ($2 million for affordable housing). I changed my opinion after watching the relevant Select Board and Planning Board hearings.
- Thus, on no less than two separate occasions did a developer indicate the financial feasibility of converting the current structure to a new use under current zoning. I therefore see no reason why the parcel should receive yet more permissive zoning.
- There were to be 155 units under the previous permit as recently as May 2021. For reference, the smallest (700 ft^2) 1-bedroom apartments at Charles River Landing currently start at $2,800. One can start evaluating the kind of revenue this parcel could generate as currently zoned.

Regarding a rezoning to allow 1st floor commercial in order to support a four-story building: The building and parcel are very large and there is no need for that much 1st floor commercial space of the kind that benefits from proximity to residential/retail areas. As many are aware, across the street on the corner of the intersection is a Starbucks which, despite being constructed, operated, and with an established customer base, *does not even open* from time to time due to a lack of commercial incentive. While the future could include some limited 1st floor commercial space for the building, there is simply far too much area on the parcel to warrant a rezoning based on a need for 1st floor commercial.

At 18:50 in the February 15 meeting recording, there are comments that the town and town counsel have had contact with the developer over the property and there are plans to demolish the building. I was disappointed to not hear more questions as to why this was an acceptable outcome. I also did not agree with the tenor of the meeting which included the idea of introducing incentives via new zoning for the parcel. I believe the building can be developed just fine under current zoning and have yet to even hear any evidence as to why it cannot be.

The developer can read the news and see public comments, as evidenced by the letters from their attorneys. Since it is apparent that 100 West St. is on the list to be rezoned under the MBTA Communities law and there is strong public support for more permissive zoning, **they have zero reason to move forward with a development until new zoning is finalized.** The HONE committee and town government may have not considered that the developer faces little cost relative to the value of the parcel to simply wait and see what happens.

I have read the developer's attorneys' letter that the building is "antiquated" – but just a year ago they were ready to do a full renovation for 150 living units and make a $2 million payment for the right to do so – something doesn't add up. Under HONE's proposal, the developer will get a full fourth four, potential new uses for 1st floor commercial space, reduced or no restrictions on affordable housing or age restrictions, and possibly more just by waiting. The attorneys have gone as far to suggest more permissive height restrictions, lower affordable housing requirements, new parking requirements, etc. To remind, the owner of the property is Welltower Inc, one of the largest healthcare REITs in the country. The fourth quarter 2023 results show the company has significant liquidity and anticipates strong demand for senior living units.

In the February 15 2024 meeting, a proposed FAR of 1.4 is mentioned. Where did this figure come from? The current FAR of the ASOD under special permit is 1.1 for a three-story structure with 35% coverage for a fourth floor. This implies that FAR for a structure with a full fourth floor would only need to be 1.3. This is further supported by Scenario C offering an FAR of 1.5 for a five-story structure. The only reference I see to 1.4 FAR is the suggestion by the attorneys, which is very concerning to me.

I would anticipate significant opposition to this parcel being rezoned beyond what Town Meeting approved in 2020, thereby facilitating the demolition of the building, foregoing the $2 million offered by the developer, and essentially rewarding the owner and developers for inaction. I think you will find many people who are ardent supporters of the MBTA Communities Act, including myself, who will be conflicted once they understand how HONE is handling this zone.

In the Needham Heights area, the other parcels should receive new zoning. Those lots are largely parking lots or single-story structures, and it would be a much more desirable outcome to see those parcels developed. To me, *this* is the philosophy behind the MBTA Communities law, not new zoning to give Fortune 500 REITs the right to build a few dozen luxury condos in downtown Needham by demolishing a large existing and functional structure. Given the possibilities expressed in Scenarios B and C, HONE can easily reach the target of 1,784 units without including new zoning for 100 West St.

I support Jeanne McKnight's comments regarding the current desirable look of the parcel, historical relevance, and effort to craft zoning to encourage a renovation of the building largely as is rather than demolition. The Planning Board agenda packet of August 11 2020 provides a clear design plan.

The future for 100 West St. remains an unresolved issue. Requiring Town Meeting and members of the community to approve more permissive zoning for this parcel or risk a lawsuit from the Attorney General and millions in state grant funding is the wrong way to handle this. While circumstances may change in the future, HONE should make it clear at the earliest opportunity that more permissive zoning (increased height, FAR, multi-family, etc.) is not part of the plan for 100 West. at this time.

Best,

Joe Matthews

From:	Peter Cohenno
To:	Planning
Subject:	Hartney Greymont property (433 Chestnut Street)
Date:	Wednesday, February 21, 2024 12:24:36 PM

Good afternoon!

I am a former Town Meeting member who got involved in town government following the failed attempt to develop a 6-story apartment complex on the current Hartney Greymont property (433 Chestnut Street).

Having first-hand experience with the disastrous presentation by then Planning Board member Ted Owens, I believe I am justifiably skeptical about any future development on that property. I hope that the current Planning Board will share my skepticism as the new zoning options are considered. (I vividly remember Mr. Crocker making a statement at Town Meeting that captured the frustration and anger that we all shared at that time.)

The reality is that the Hartney Greymont property falls in a largely residential area. It should be zoned and treated as such.

I am open to future development on that property but I believe it needs to happen with close oversight and Town Meeting approval.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Pete Cohenno
481 Chestnut Street

From:	William Lenahan
To:	Planning
Subject:	Zoning changes for MBTA
Date:	Thursday, February 22, 2024 8:43:00 AM

To whom it may concern: Please be advised that I am opposed to any rezoning that would increase the density of residences in Needham. If each additional housing unit does not come with a corresponding real estate tax bill, then the occupants of that housing unit are not paying their share of the cost of living in Needham.   The real estate taxes paid by their landlords is not enough to match the cost of additional residents in Needham who will expect to receive all the benefits of living here that the tax payers are entitled to in consideration for their tax payment. The Town can not afford an increase in density that will necessitate an increase in Town services.

Nor do I see the actual need for as much train service as we suffer with today. Most trains come in empty after 7pm. That is a huge waste of money serving no one. What statistical proof do we have that the occupants of apartments in Needham will actually use the train service to commute to work.   This is a false proposition.

Thanks

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