

Powder Mill Road Corridor Initiative



Joint Planning Board Meeting | Towns of Acton and Maynard
Tuesday, September 13, 2022

Presenter: Andrea Harris-Long, AICP - Metropolitan Area Planning Council



Agenda

- Project Team Introductions
- Recap: Phase I - Powder Mill Road Redevelopment Strategy
- Phase II Project Overview
- Discussion: Overlay Zoning District
- Next Steps

Project Team

Town of Acton

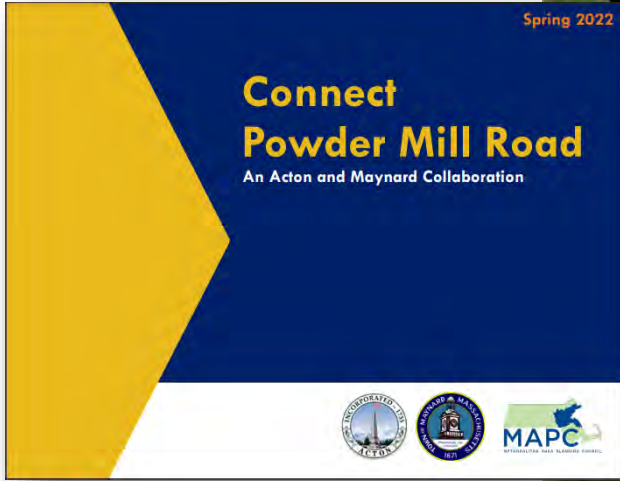
- Kristen Guichard, Planning Director
- Kaila Sauer, Assistant Planner
- Nora Masler, Assistant Planner

Town of Maynard

- Bill Nemser, Planning Director
- Julia Flanary, Assistant Town Planner & Conservation Agent

MAPC

- Andrea Harris-Long, Project Manager & Senior Planner
- Emma Battaglia, Senior Housing Planner
- Adi Nochur, Senior Transportation Planner



Phase I Redevelopment Strategy





Redevelopment Strategy (Phase I)

Market Analysis

- Slightly lower retail & industrial market rents, but higher office rents
- High commercial vacancy rates (35% retail and 73% office) but very low industrial vacancy rate
- Retail Opportunity Gap Analysis

Zoning Analysis

- Multiple districts with different intents result in lacking sense of place
- Limited housing types are allowed
- Parking and other zoning requirements encourage auto-oriented development
- Non-conforming parcels

Community Engagement

- More access to Assabet River
- Safety improvements (crosswalks, sidewalks, bike lanes)
- Affordable housing options
- Support for new and existing businesses

Read the full plan and see
Phase I materials here:
mapc.ma/powdermillcorridor

Recommendations



Create an **overlay zoning district** to shape future development



Improve access to and environmental quality of the **Assabet River**



Incorporate “**Complete Streets**” features to make Powder Mill Road safer



Design **future transportation projects** to advance safety and environmental goals

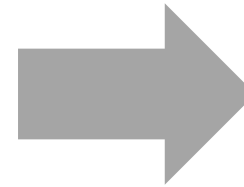
Phase II - Implementation

Technical Assistance Grants awarded from Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)

**Overlay Zoning District
(Draft Bylaw)**

**Streetscape
Design Guidance**

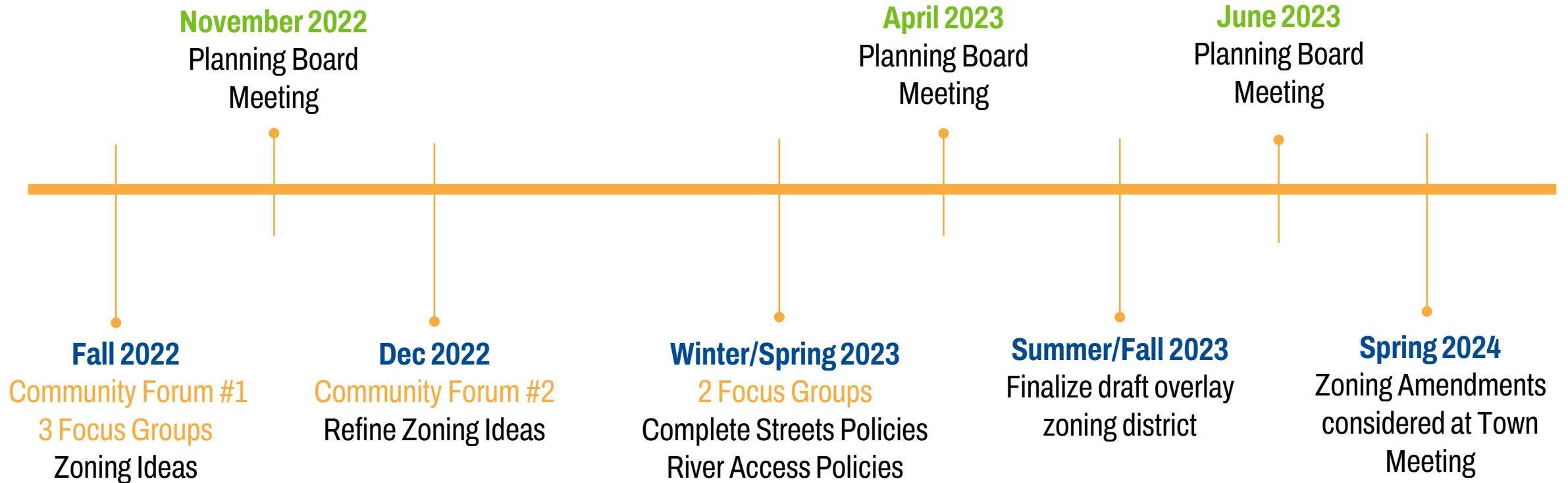
**River Access
Design Guidance**



Create a more walkable, safe Powder Mill Road neighborhood where people want to live, visit, work, and spend time



Project Overview



Upcoming Engagement



Virtual Community Forum

Wednesday, Sept. 28 from 7-8:30 PM

Hear feedback on

- Types of development residents would like to see
- Where streetscape and river access improvements are most needed



3 Focus Groups

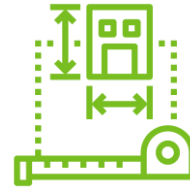
Held in October, likely virtual

- Powder Mill Road business owners and residents
- Developers/real estate community
- Renters, seniors, people with lower incomes, people of color

Overlay Zoning District



Use Regulations



Dimensional Standards



Housing



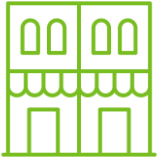
Design Guidelines



Parking

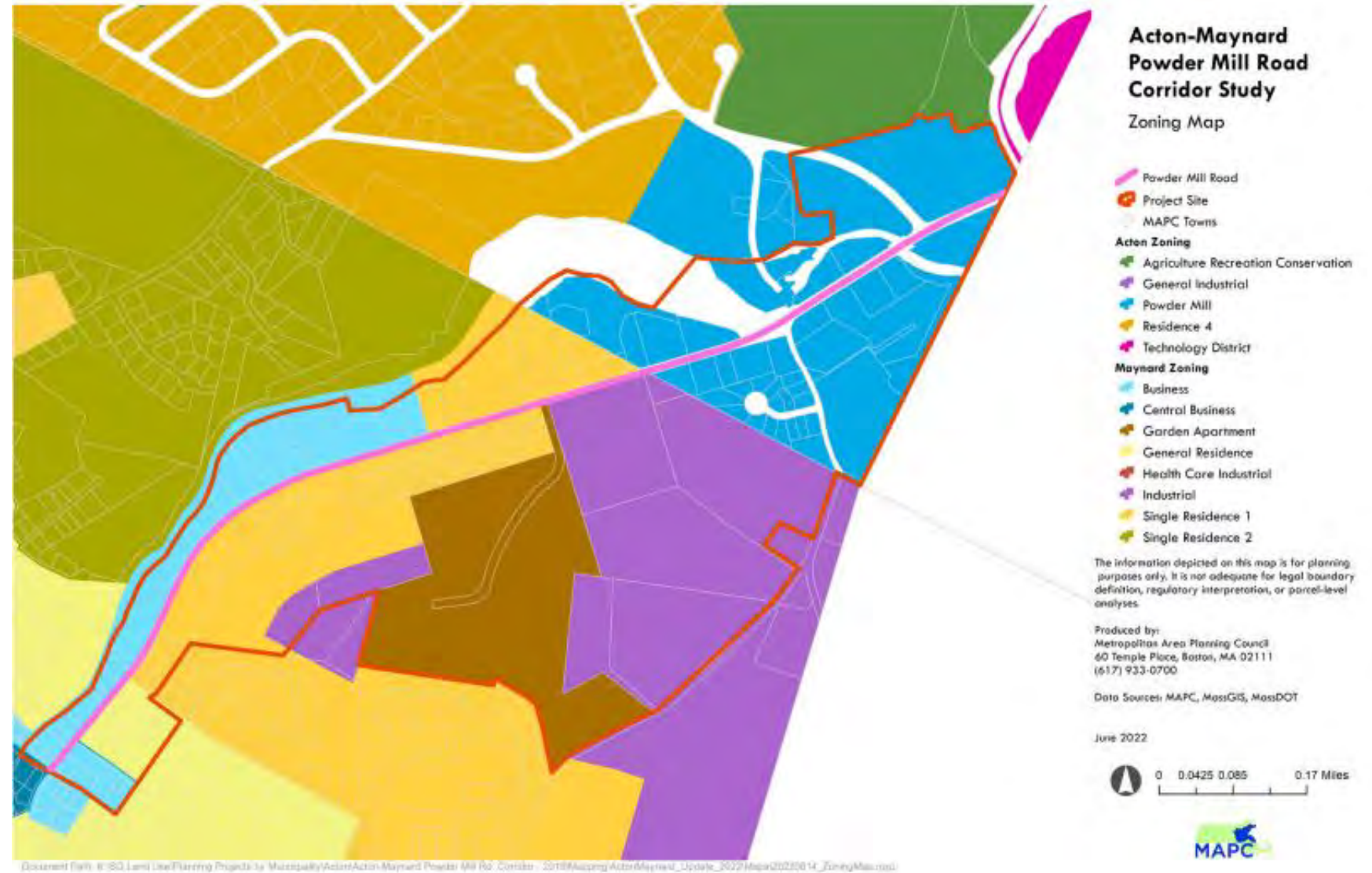


Landscaping, buffers, and screening



Use Regulations

- 7 different districts in the study area
- Very specific uses currently allowed
- Review by-right vs. by Special Permit uses
- Consider incentivizing pedestrian-oriented uses





Housing

- Implement Housing Production Plans by allowing multi-family and mixed-use developments
- Inclusionary zoning + additional incentives can **increase share of Affordable housing**
- Increasing and diversifying housing options can **expand affordability** for all and **create a built-in customer base** to support businesses along Powder Mill Road
- Updated zoning can provide certainty in the permitting process and flexibility in site design

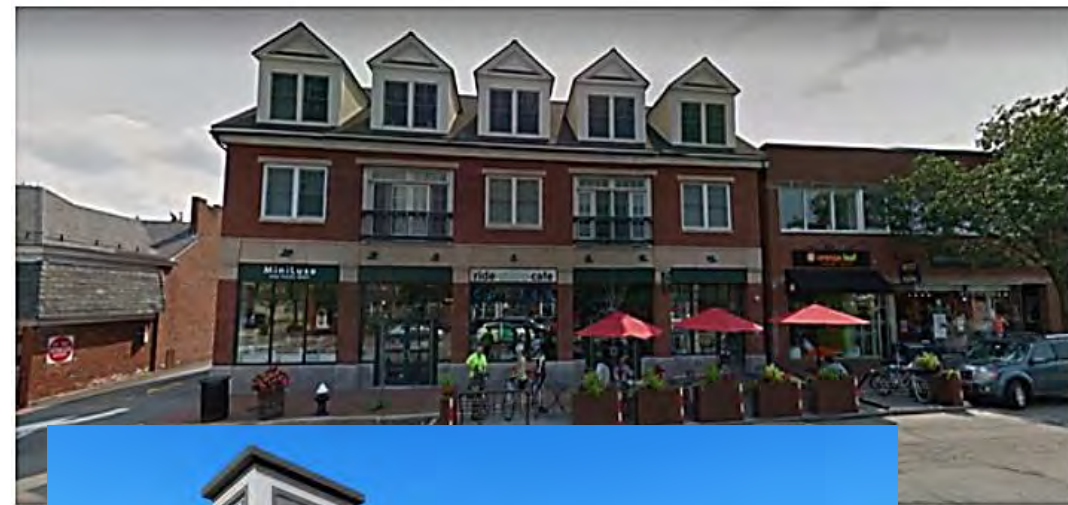


Photo credit: Nolan Sheehan Patton LLP

Photo credit: BCD Network





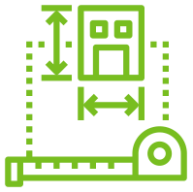
Parking

- Review parking ratios and minimums
- Consider flexibility for mixed-use developments
- Require parking alongside or in the rear of buildings
 - Limit parking adjacent to Assabet River
- Require landscaping buffers, especially when adjacent to sidewalks or bike lanes
- Address stormwater mitigation (e.g., permeable pavement, bioswales, tree canopies, etc.) and incentivize green infrastructure

Eco-friendly

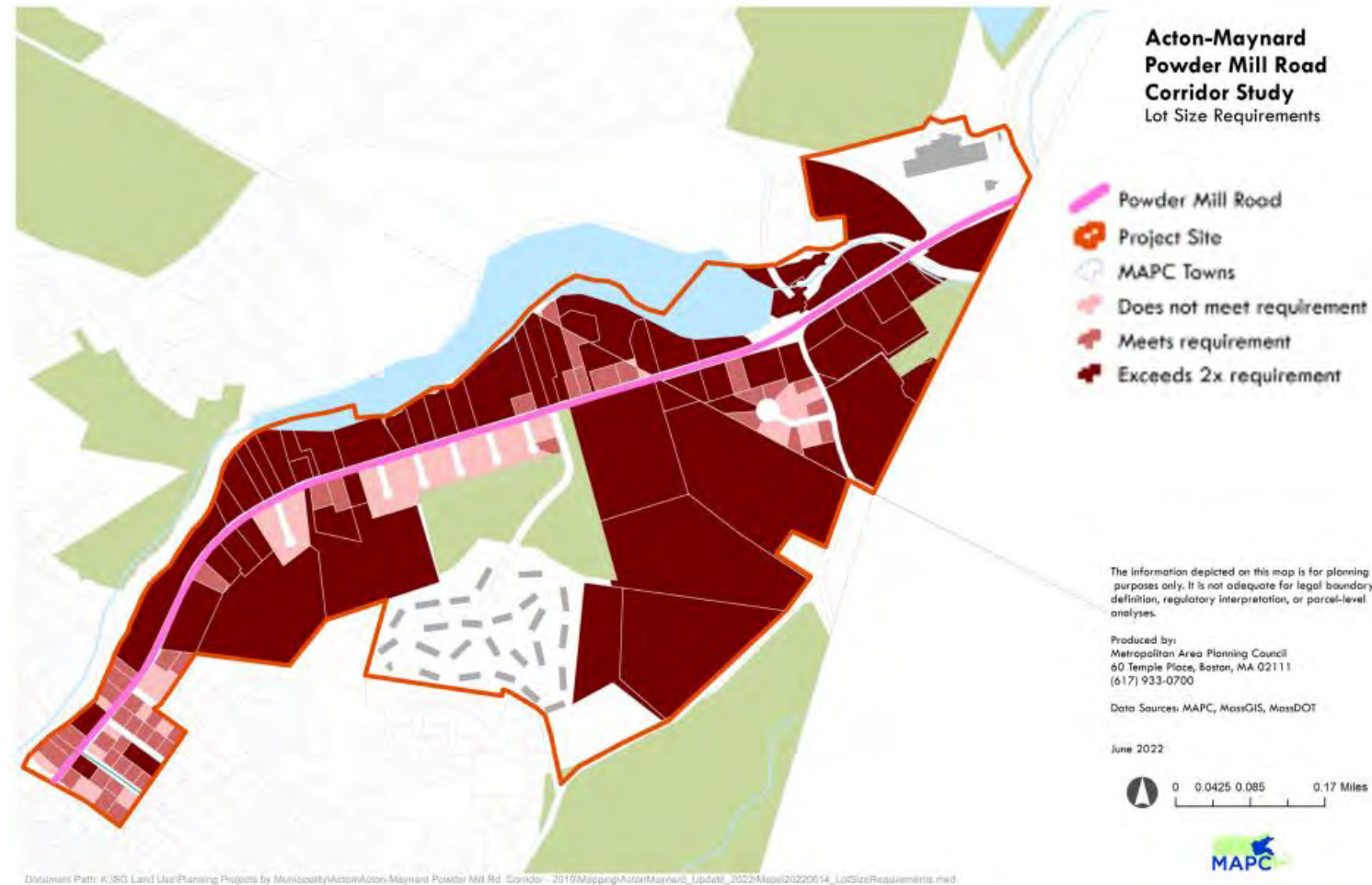


People-friendly



Dimensional Standards

- Establish consistent **minimum lot sizes** across corridor
- Consider **build-to lines** to promote pedestrian-oriented buildings
- Consider where **building height** could be increased to 45 ft. in some areas
- Decrease **minimum lot frontage** to 50 feet to unlock future development





Design Guidelines

- Address neighborhood scale, particularly for larger developments
- Encourage pedestrian-oriented storefronts
- Design guidance for:
 - Incorporating sidewalks, bike lanes, and other complete street features
 - Expanding access to the Assabet River



Photo credit: Gaithersburg, MD



Photo credit: Nolan Sheehan Patton



Landscaping, buffers, and screening

- Increase compatibility between differing land uses
- Screen less sightly business necessities (e.g., dumpsters, loading areas, etc.)
- Increase native vegetation, especially near Assabet River
- More enjoyable for walking and biking

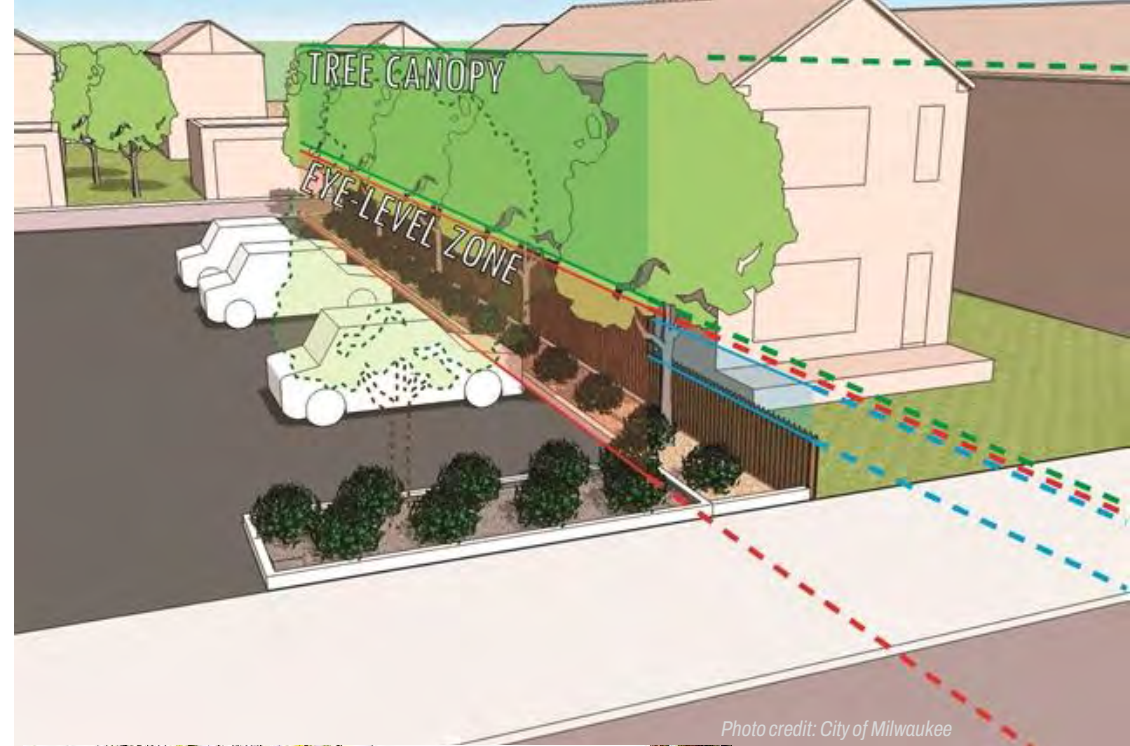


Photo credit: City of Milwaukee

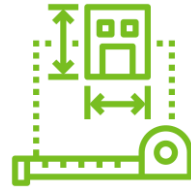


Discussion:

What do you want to see in the overlay zoning district?



Use Regulations



Dimensional Standards



Housing



Design Guidelines



Parking



Landscaping, buffers, and screening

Next Steps

- Community Forum: Wednesday, September 28 from 7-8:30pm
- Focus Groups in October
- November Joint Planning Board Meeting
 - Share feedback from forum and focus groups
 - Review proposed zoning ideas

Thank you!

Andrea Harris-Long, AICP

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mapc.ma/powdermillcorridor