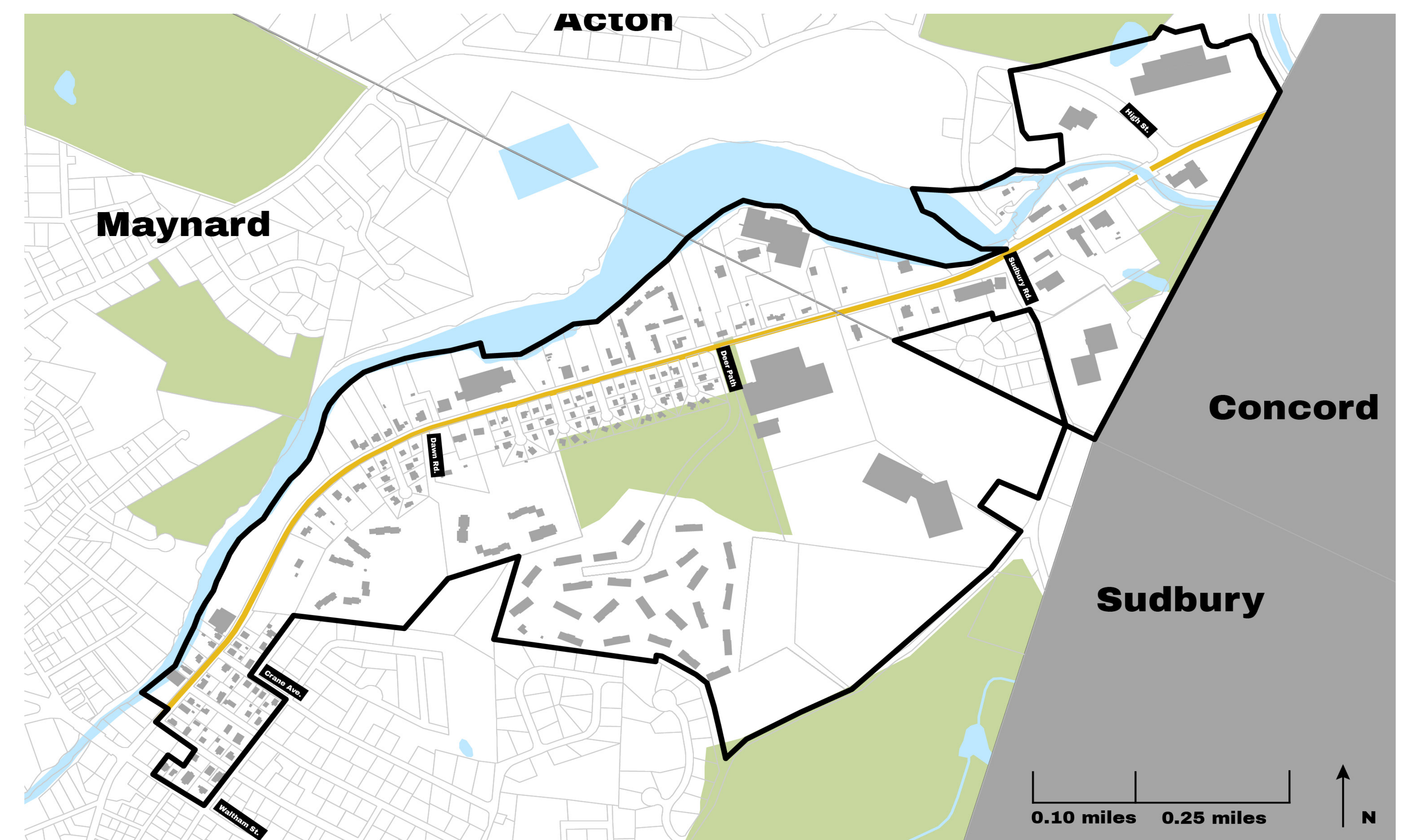


What is the Powder Mill Road Corridor Initiative?

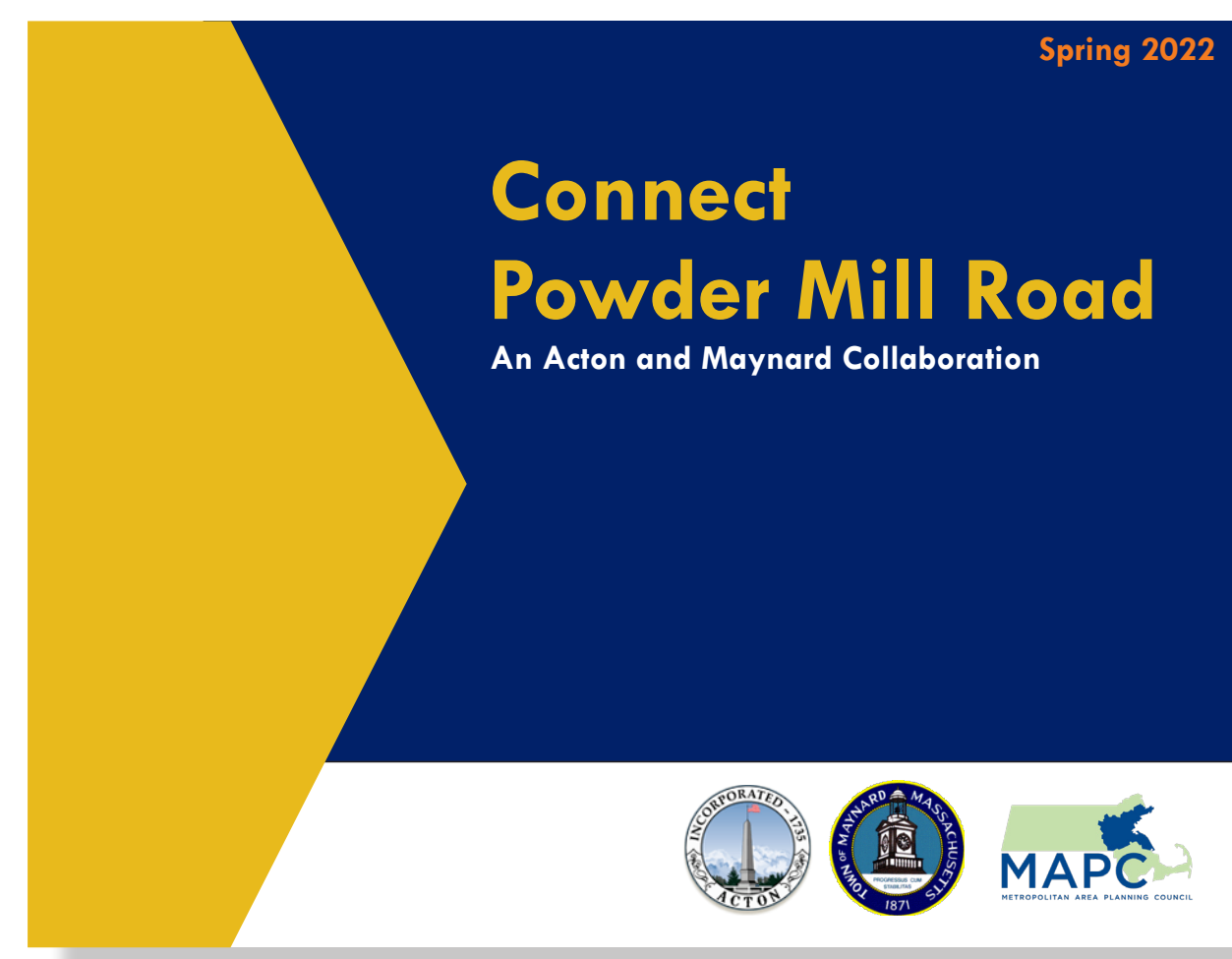
Connecting Maynard, Acton, and West Concord, the Powder Mill Road Corridor consists of approximately one mile in Maynard and a half mile in Acton.

For the past few years, the Town of Acton and the Town of Maynard have worked together with MAPC, the Greater Boston regional planning agency, to create a long-term community-oriented strategy for the corridor to guide how future growth occurs.

Powder Mill Study Area



Phase I



Phase I of the project studied existing conditions along the corridor and sought feedback from residents, business owners, property owners, and town officials about their vision for the future of the corridor. These conversations were incorporated into the report “**Connect Powder Mill Road**,” which was released in Spring 2022. The report recommended that the towns work together to create an optional overlay zoning district that supports walkable, mixed-use developments, advances complete streets transportation options, and expands visual and physical access to the Assabet River.

Project Timeline



Five main themes emerged from public outreach during Phase I



River Access

People are excited to establish more access to the Assabet River. More open space and walkable paths are welcomed by community members in both towns. However, there are concerns about protecting the environment. We heard from the community that they would welcome public space that is adjacent to the Assabet River. Some ideas included riverfront parks, nice open plazas and dog parks. We also heard from the community that protecting the river should be a priority, especially if there is any development along the water.



Streetscapes

There is interest in rethinking streetscape design. Safety is a main concern, and the communities are interested in safer crosswalks, sidewalks and bike lanes. We heard from the community it would be great to see separated bike lanes and enhanced sidewalks on the corridor. We also heard that safety and cleanliness of the corridor was a main concern. People want to feel safe walking to shopping plazas and recreational areas.



Affordability

Affordability is a priority for both Acton and Maynard. This project needs to address how future development will offer new affordable housing options and expanded housing stock. We heard from the community that new housing should address affordability and the future vacuums in the housing market.



Business Growth

There is demand for new types of businesses along the corridor including restaurants and coffee shops. There is consensus that this would not only benefit the larger community but the existing businesses on Powder Mill who would no longer be the “one stop” destination for visitors. We heard that the community is interested in new types of business in the corridor that cater to more unique retail and food businesses. We also heard from business owners that they would welcome businesses that were complimentary to their own services, allowing visitors to the corridor to stay for longer stretches of time.



Support for Small Businesses

Business owners on the corridor are interested in receiving more assistance and support from town hall, similar to the kind of support that Downtown businesses currently receive. We heard from business owners that they would like to feel more supported as a community of small businesses in a unique area of both towns.

Phase II of the project puts those recommendations into action by developing an overlay zoning district for each town that seeks to make Powder Mill Road a more welcoming place for people to live, visit, and spend time.

Why is this project important?

There are currently five zoning districts in Maynard and one zoning district in Acton along the Powder Mill Road corridor.

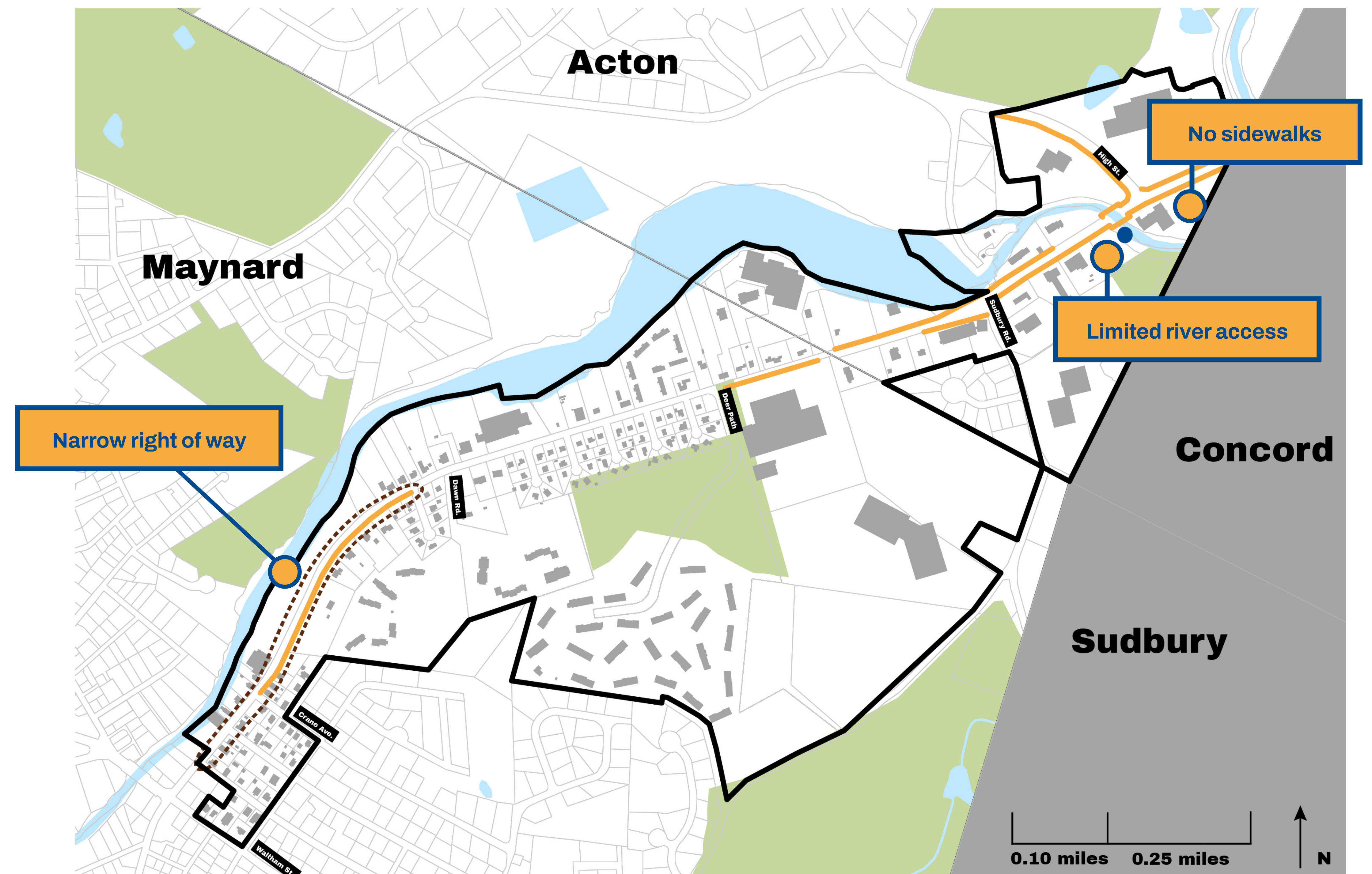
Each zoning district has different goals, allowed uses, and standards for development that don't work together.

As a result, the corridor lacks a sense of place and is seen more as a pass-through area, rather than a destination.

The base zoning along Powder Mill Road also does not reflect community goals for the corridor.

For example, it encourages auto-oriented development that makes it unsafe for people to walk, bike, or roll. In addition, the base zoning limits the type of housing that is allowed in a way that runs counter to the towns' housing production goals. The base zoning also sets rules that make it difficult for existing property owners to improve their properties, such as homeowners adding an addition or businesses looking to expand, because the lot sizes are too small, or "nonconforming."

Powder Mill Needs Analysis



Existing Conditions



Why is this project important?

For all these reasons, it is important to establish new zoning that will guide redevelopment of properties along the corridor in a way that supports community goals.

Without new zoning, redevelopment will continue to occur haphazardly and will not provide concrete community benefits, such as improved connections to the Assabet River and pedestrian safety.

Community Feedback

“I live and work just off the corridor. I won’t bike or walk on it; it feels too unsafe. I would love to be able to walk it, though. I could walk to the grocery store.”

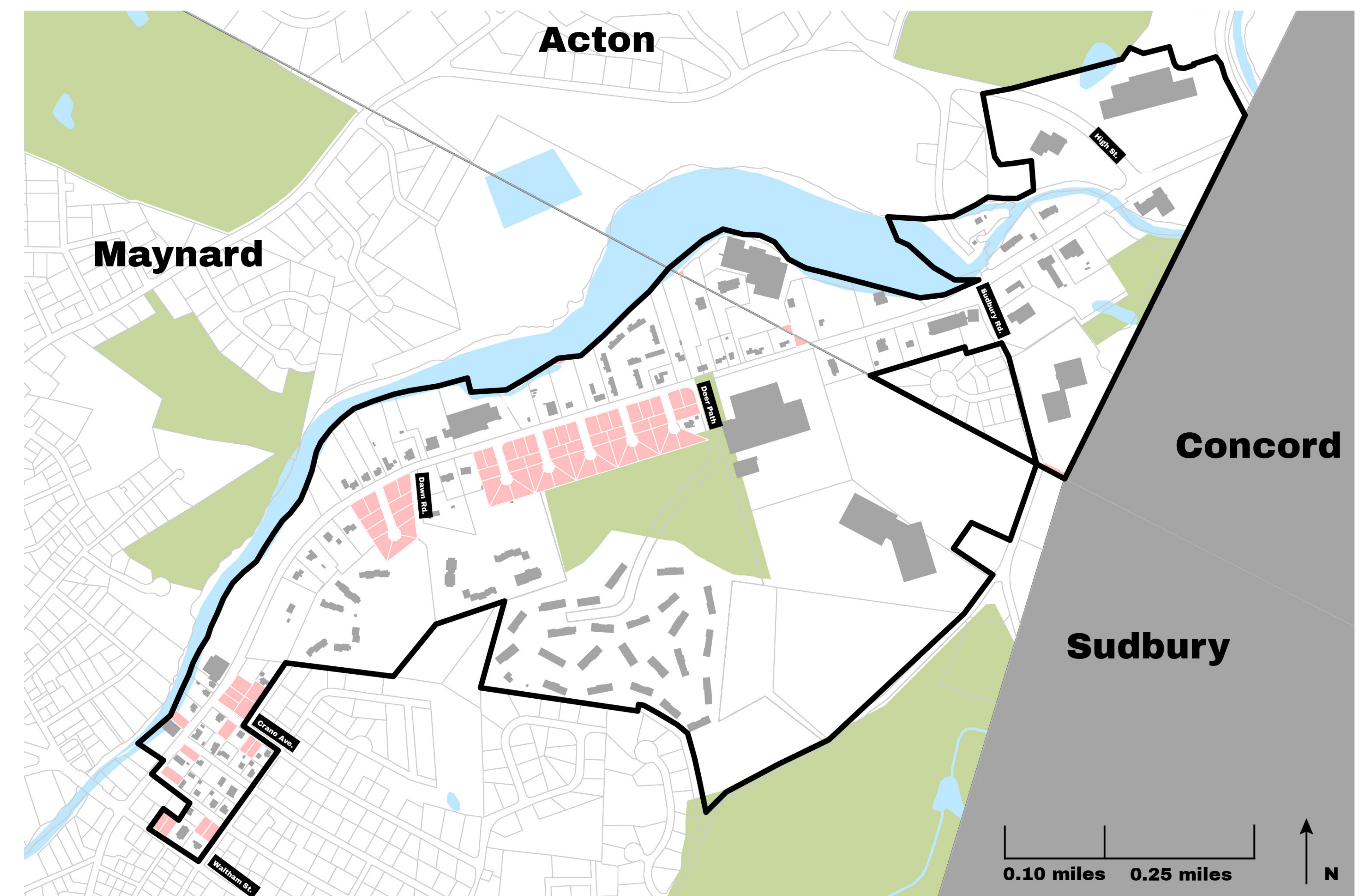
“The current zoning is so restrictive that it makes redevelopment infeasible.”

“[The Assabet River] is an entirely undervalued asset.”

“The development of the riverfront is an important thing to do.”

“The vision is there; the goal isn’t that lofty.”

Powder Mill Nonconforming Lots

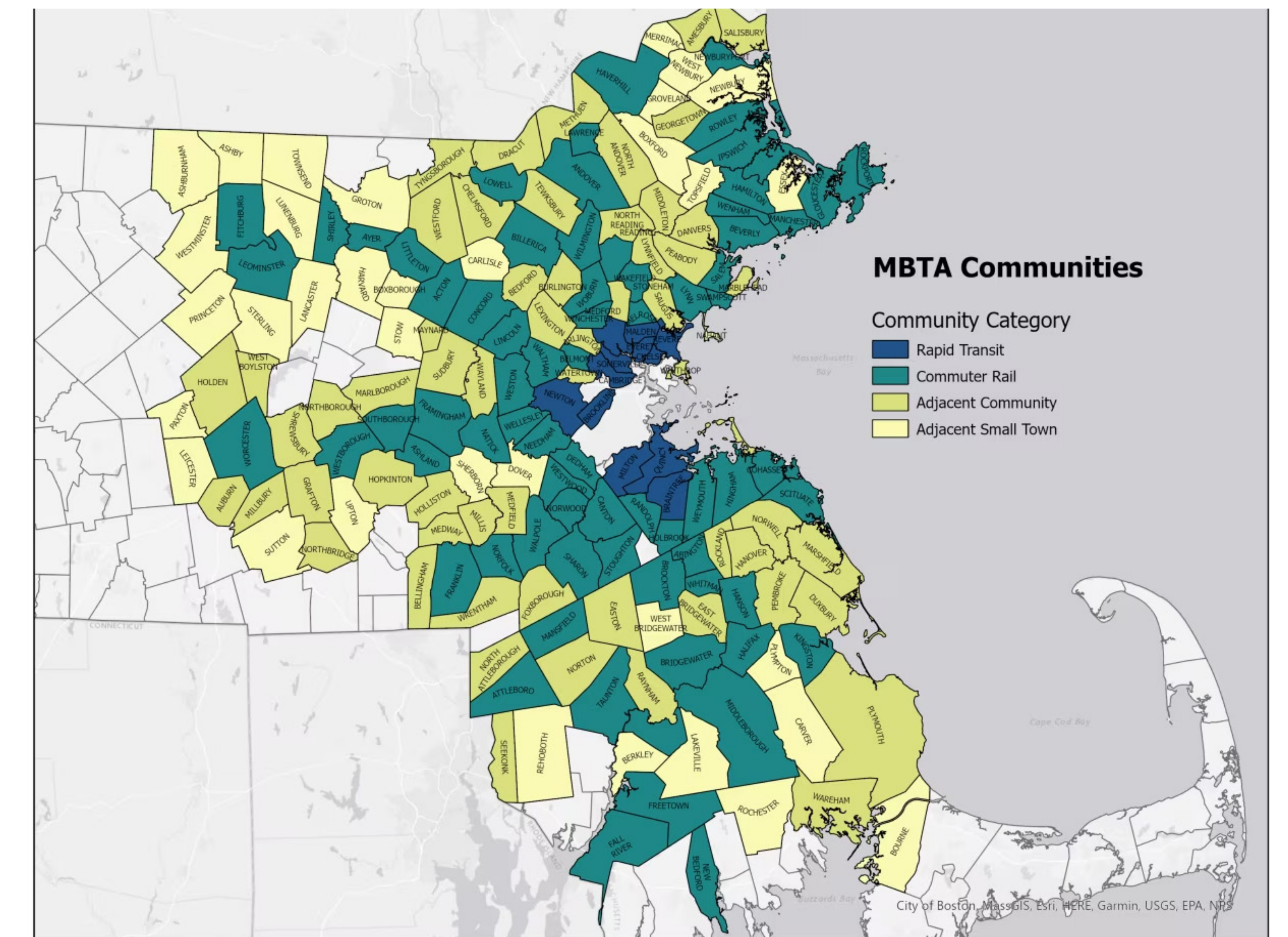


Meeting Housing Goals

In 2021, the Massachusetts Legislature passed a law, Section 3A of the Zoning Act, that requires communities served by MBTA transit to have zoning in place that allows multifamily housing to be built. The purpose of the law is to encourage the creation of more housing options in locations with access to public transit. Both Maynard and Acton have until December 31, 2024, to adopt zoning that complies with Section 3A.

Using zoning to allow more housing is a priority of both Maynard and Acton. Having additional residents living along Powder Mill Road will help support existing and future businesses and could even lead to public transportation improvements. **Here's what some recent plans say about creating more housing opportunities:**

MBTA Communities



The final report from Phase I of this project, **“Connect Powder Mill Road,”** included the recommendation to **“consider increasing the density of mixed-use and multifamily development beyond four units.”** This will be accomplished with the proposed overlay zoning, especially in Subdistricts 1, 3, and 4.

The Maynard Master Plan includes the goal of **“maintaining and encouraging a range of housing options, including those that are accessible to persons and households of various ages, abilities, and economic means.”** Similarly, the Acton Housing Production Plan includes the goal, **“Encourage a mix of housing options to provide homes for a range of household types including families, seniors, young adults, individuals with disabilities, and lower-income households, particularly households with income at or below 50 percent AMI.”** Both goals will be accomplished with the proposed overlay zoning, which will make it easier for existing residents to improve their homes as well as allow new market-rate and affordable housing to be built.

Priority Policy Strategy #3 of the Maynard Housing Production Plan is **“Revitalize the Powder Mill Road Corridor,”** with recommendations including mixed-use housing and a variety of other housing options that help provide greater public access to the Assabet River, promote walkability, and support economic development. The proposed overlay zoning will also accomplish Goal 2 of the plan, **“Create diverse housing opportunities to support the Town’s culture and vibrancy,”** as well as Goal 4, **“Adopt local zoning changes to allow for housing choices & flexible approaches to achieve housing affordability.”**

Goal 5 of the Acton Housing Production Plan states, **“Locate new residential multifamily and mixed-use development in and near existing business centers and village districts to enhance economic vitality, promote walkable, vibrant neighborhoods and ensure environmentally just and sustainable land use practices.”** The proposed overlay zoning will meet this goal by allowing both multifamily and mixed-use development along the Powder Mill Road corridor.

What is zoning?

Zoning is a legal tool that local governments use to control how land is used.

In Massachusetts, the state government sets rules for how cities and towns can structure their zoning by-laws or ordinances. Local governments then write zoning by-laws that are tailored to their community. Zoning only applies to new development. This means that if a town decides to change the zoning, a property owner is only affected if they want to change the use or buildings on their property. Said another way, zoning only sets the rules – property owners decide what to do with their land.

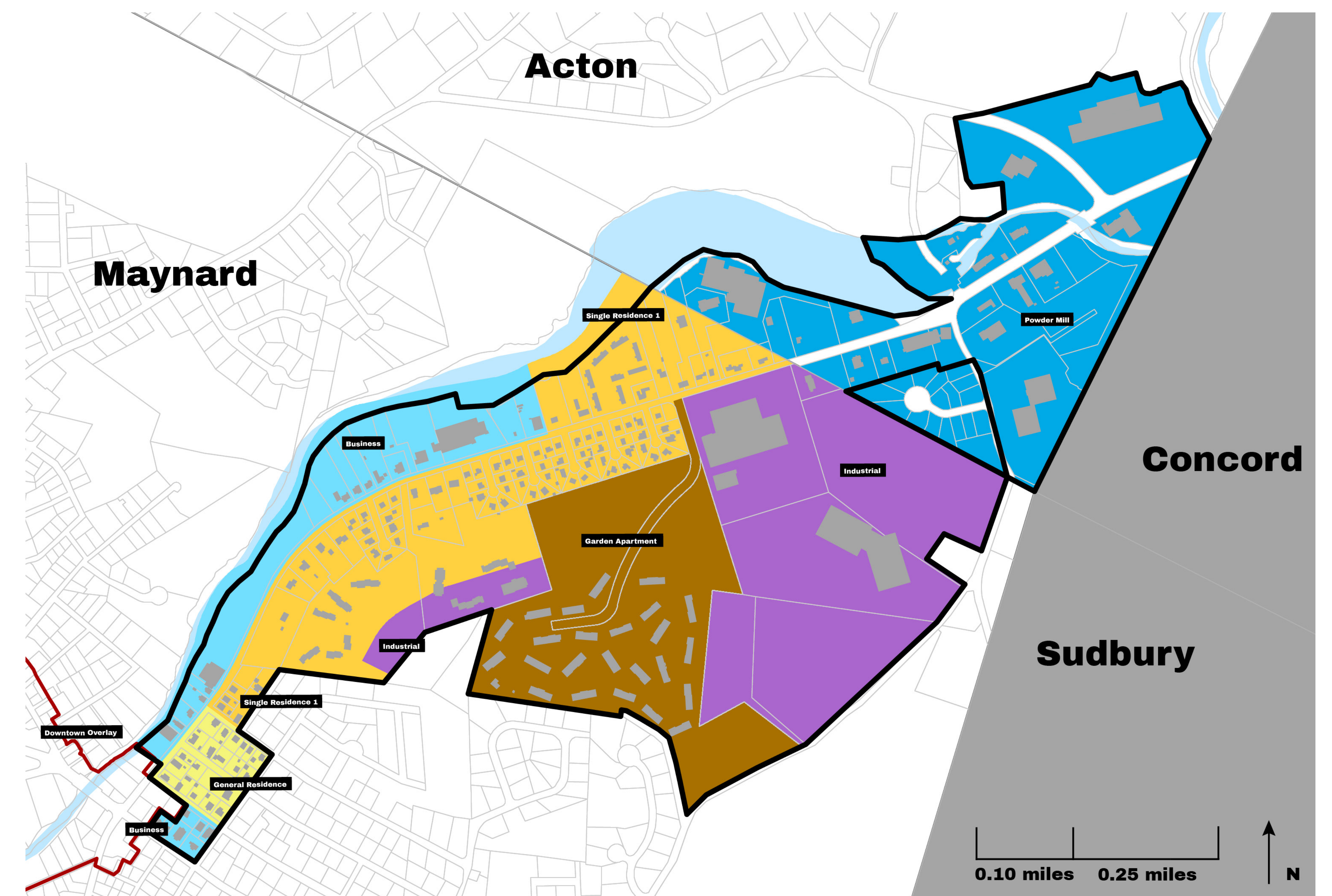
Zoning typically regulates the following:

- Type of use (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial)
- Size and scale of buildings
- Building location on a site
- Open space and lot coverage
- Parking supply, location, and landscaping

Zoning by-laws also lay out the process of getting permits and approvals from the Town to develop a property. There are a few different levels of review:

- Development that is allowed “by-right” is reviewed by Town staff to make sure that it meets the zoning requirements.
- Development that requires site plan review is reviewed by Town staff in addition to a volunteer board of local residents that approves or denies the project. In Maynard, site plan review is conducted by the Planning Board; in Acton, it’s conducted by the Select Board.
- Development that requires a special permit is similar to site plan review, except it has a higher level of review and stricter standards. In both Maynard and Acton, the Planning Board, Board of Appeals, and Select Board review and approve special permits, depending on the specific permit.

Powder Mill Current Zoning



What are zoning districts?

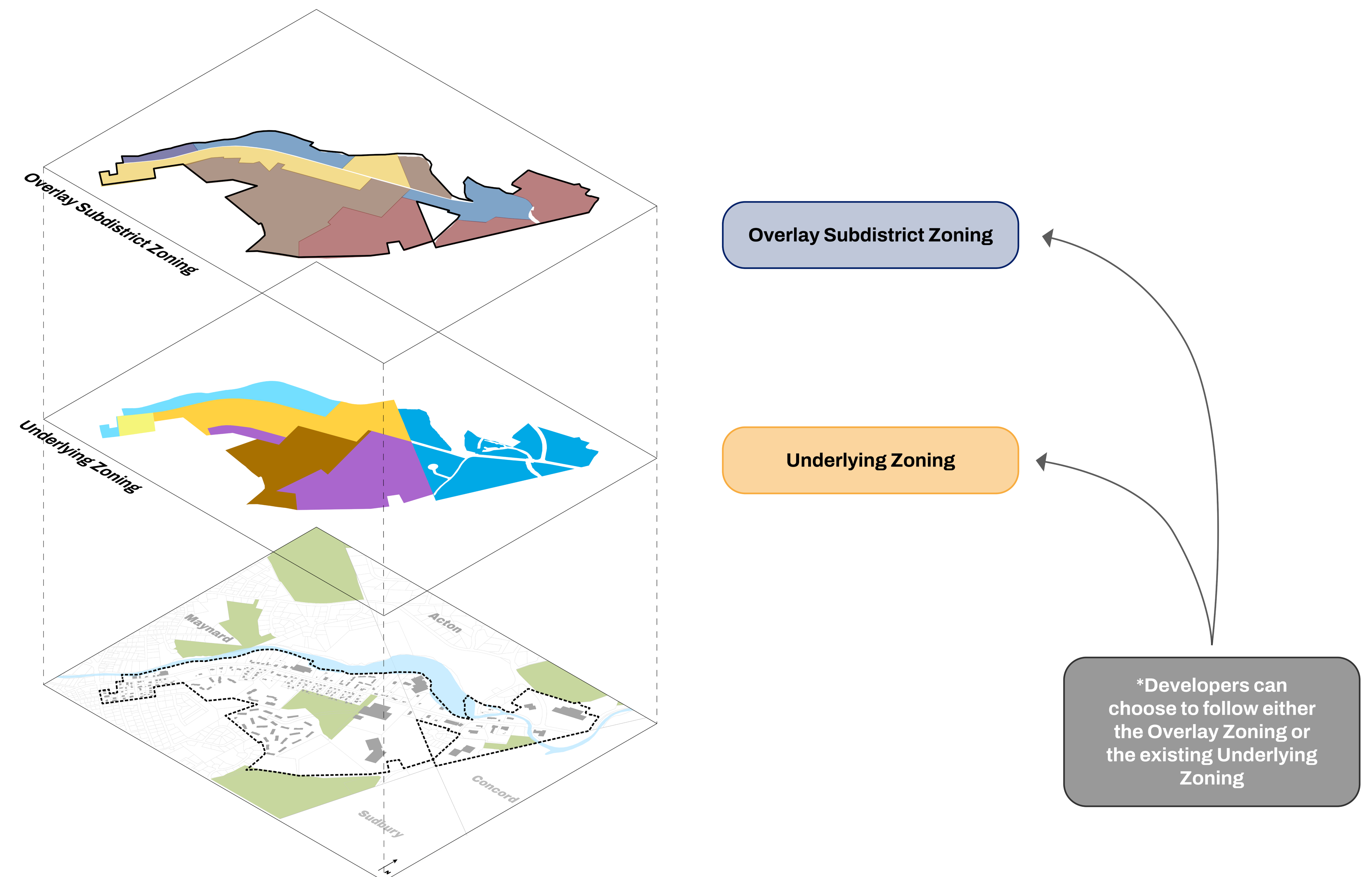
Zoning districts are typically distinguished by their land use character; for example, Residential District 1 may allow small, single-family houses while Residential District 2 may allow larger, two- and three-family houses. Some zoning districts allow a mix of uses, such as residential and retail, within one building, while other districts require uses to be separate.

Both Maynard and Acton have multiple zoning districts that fit together like puzzle pieces to cover the whole town. These zoning districts are called “base” zoning districts because they form the foundation of how land is regulated.

In addition to base zoning districts, cities and towns sometimes also have “overlay” zoning districts.

Overlay zoning districts lie on top of the base zoning districts and offer an alternative set of standards. They are used to tailor standards to a unique neighborhood, such as the Powder Mill Road corridor. **Overlay districts are a more flexible, incentive-based approach to zoning that lift barriers to good development while de-incentivizing bad development.** If an overlay district is optional, property owners can choose to follow the base zoning, or they can choose to follow the overlay zoning; they cannot mix and match. Like base zoning districts, overlay districts only apply to new development.

How Overlay Zoning Works

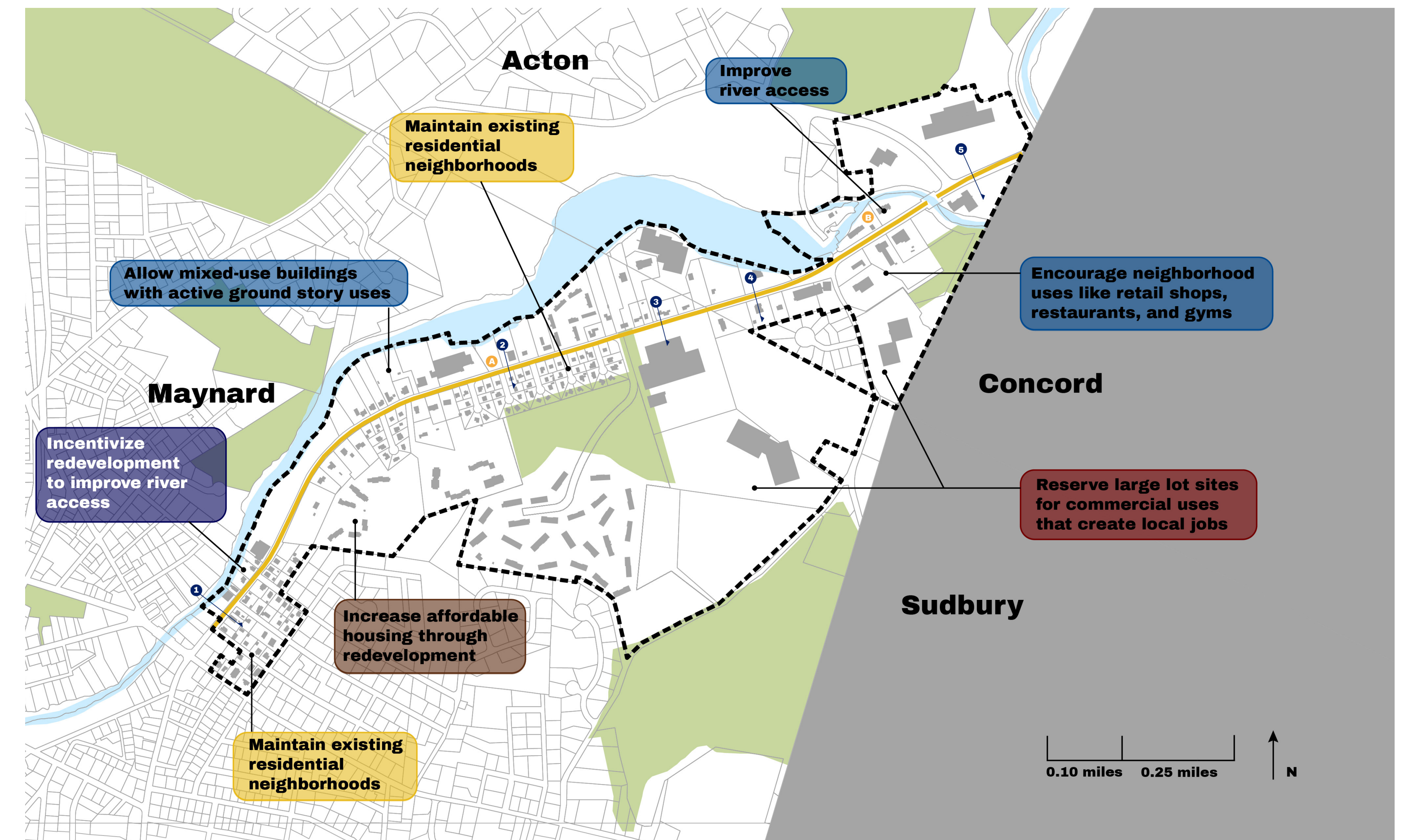


Powder Mill Road Vision

The intent of the proposed overlay zoning district is to guide redevelopment of the Powder Mill Road corridor in a way that implements the recommendations of the Connect Powder Mill redevelopment strategy and aligns with community goals.

To that end, the overlay zoning considers existing development patterns and ensures that new development complements existing buildings and landscapes. Environmental standards in the proposed zoning complement existing wetlands and stormwater regulations and aim to increase the environmental quality of the Assabet River. The overlay zoning also promotes the creation of more diverse housing options and small businesses to meet the needs of current and future residents, business owners, and other stakeholders. In addition, transportation safety and access are prioritized as developments occur, with an emphasis on creating new opportunities to walk, bike, or roll to local destinations.

Powder Mill Road Vision



A



B



How Does this Vision Implement Phase I?

The proposed zoning will implement the five main themes reflected in public outreach during Phase I:



River Access

Redevelopment of properties abutting the Assabet River will lead to increased visual and physical connections with the river and its environment. Open space and setback requirements will lead to less impervious surfaces, which will improve water quality while reducing flooding and hot ambient air temperatures. Green stormwater infrastructure will be encouraged to provide nature-based solutions to stormwater management and improve the quality of the river.



Streetscapes

Building siting and design requirements in the proposed zoning will ensure that new development is more pedestrian friendly. Parking will be behind or to the side of buildings to improve both the look and feel of the streetscape. Both Towns will pursue grant funding to support the design and construction of new sidewalks and separated bike lanes.



Affordability

New multifamily development in Maynard will be required to set aside a certain percentage of units that will be affordable to households that make less than the Area Median Income (AMI); Acton is developing a similar policy for certain multifamily housing developments. Properties owned by the Maynard Housing Authority can add more units of affordable housing under the overlay zoning. Providing more housing overall will help to lower the cost of housing for people who want to live in Maynard and Acton.



Business Growth

Subdistricts 1 and 3 encourage a mix of retail, office, and residential uses that will support existing businesses and provide opportunities for new businesses. Similarly, Subdistrict 5 will allow commercial development that brings more employees to the Powder Mill corridor who will also patronize local businesses.

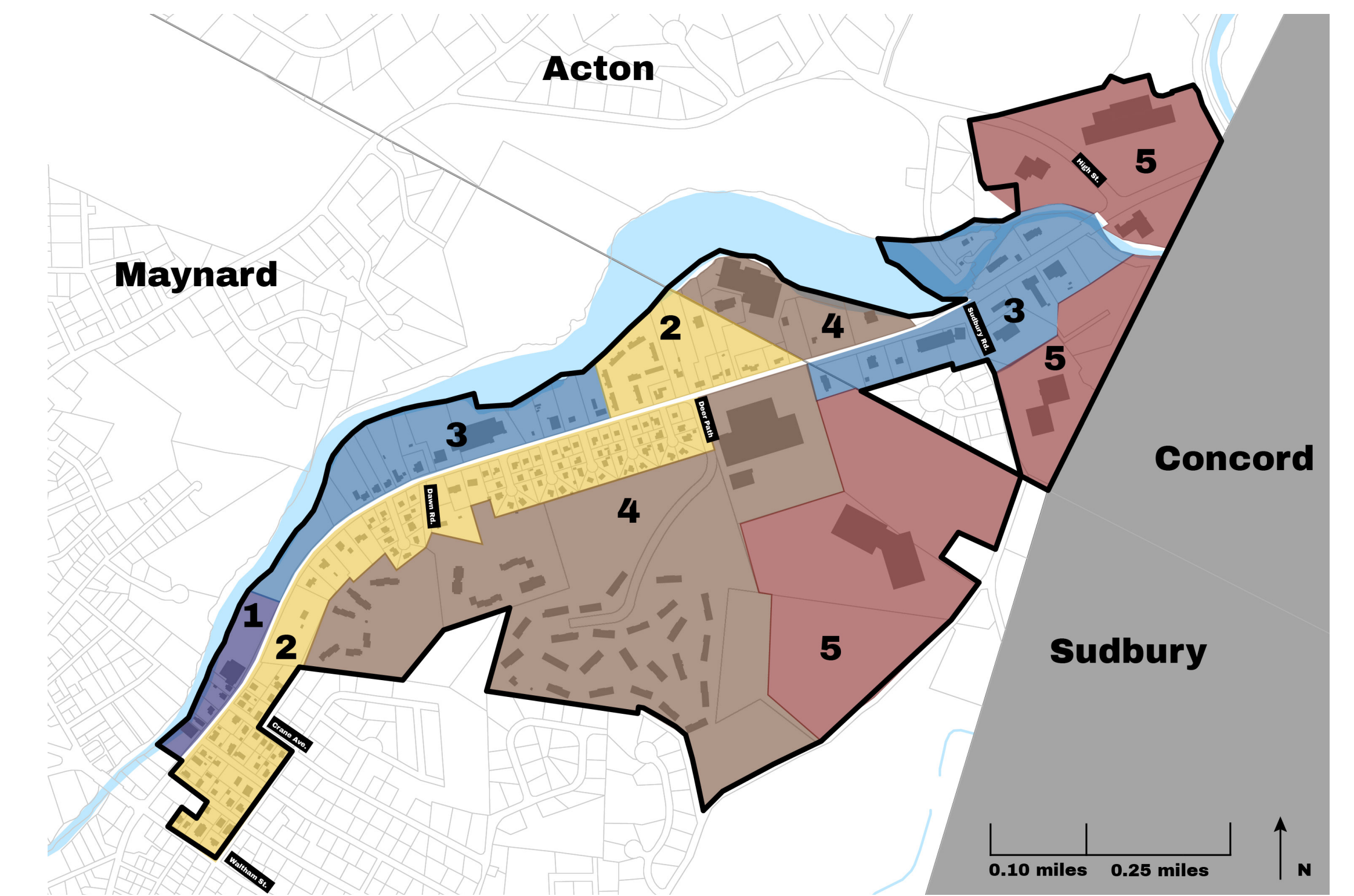


Support for Small Businesses

The combination of uses that are allowed in the overlay zoning district will help make Powder Mill Road more of a destination, rather than a place to travel through. Customers will have a range of businesses to patronize, which will create a supportive micro-economy along the corridor.

Overlay Zoning Subdistricts

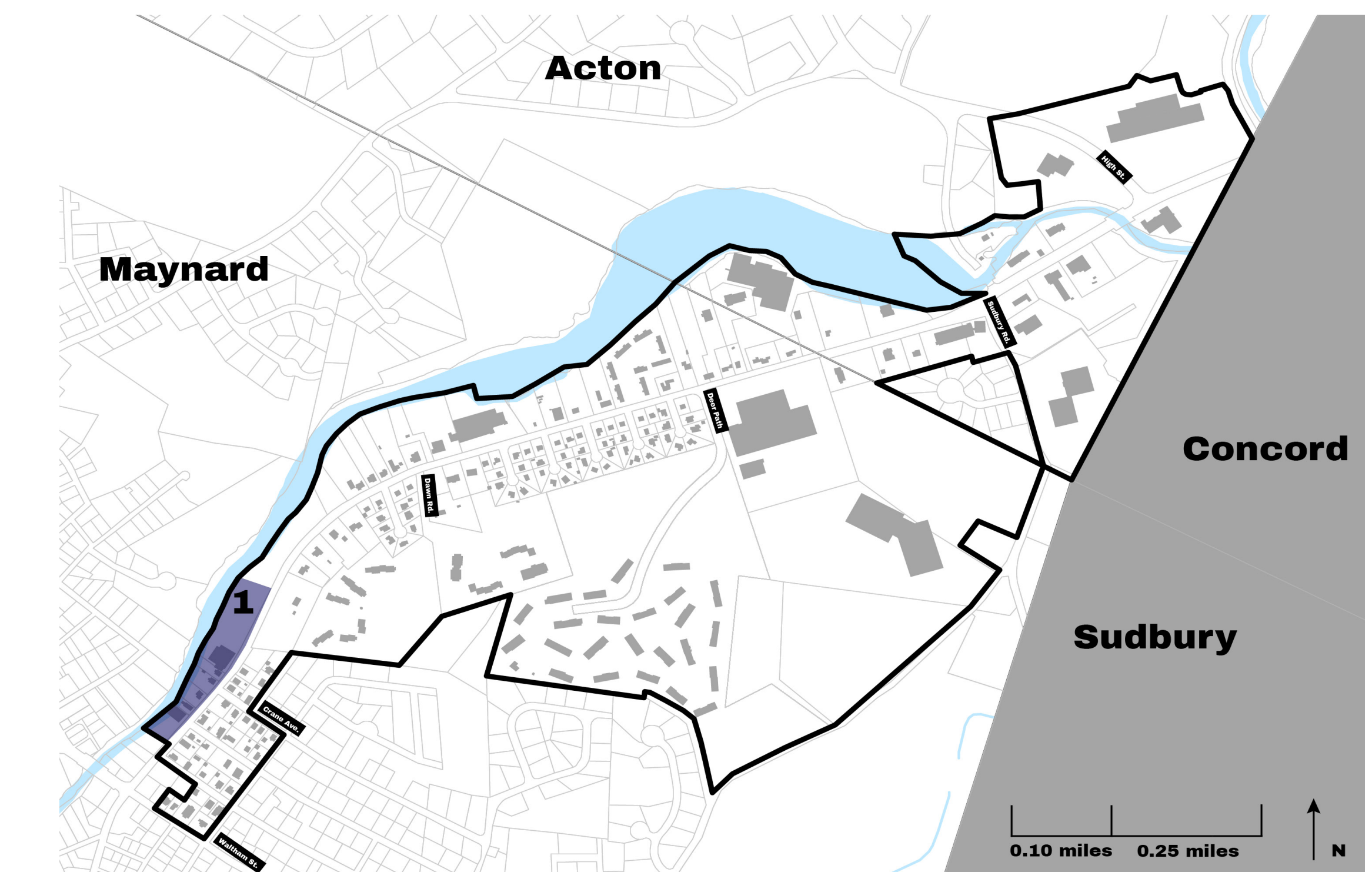
The Powder Mill Road overlay district is divided into five subdistricts, which each shape redevelopment in different, yet coordinated ways. Using subdistricts ensures that the zoning standards are tailored to the unique conditions of the different areas along the corridor. The proposed Powder Mill Road overlay zoning district will be optional, which means that property owners who want to redevelop their property can choose to follow the base zoning, or they can choose to follow the overlay zoning. Like base zoning districts, overlay zoning districts only apply to new development.



Subdistrict 1: Village Center



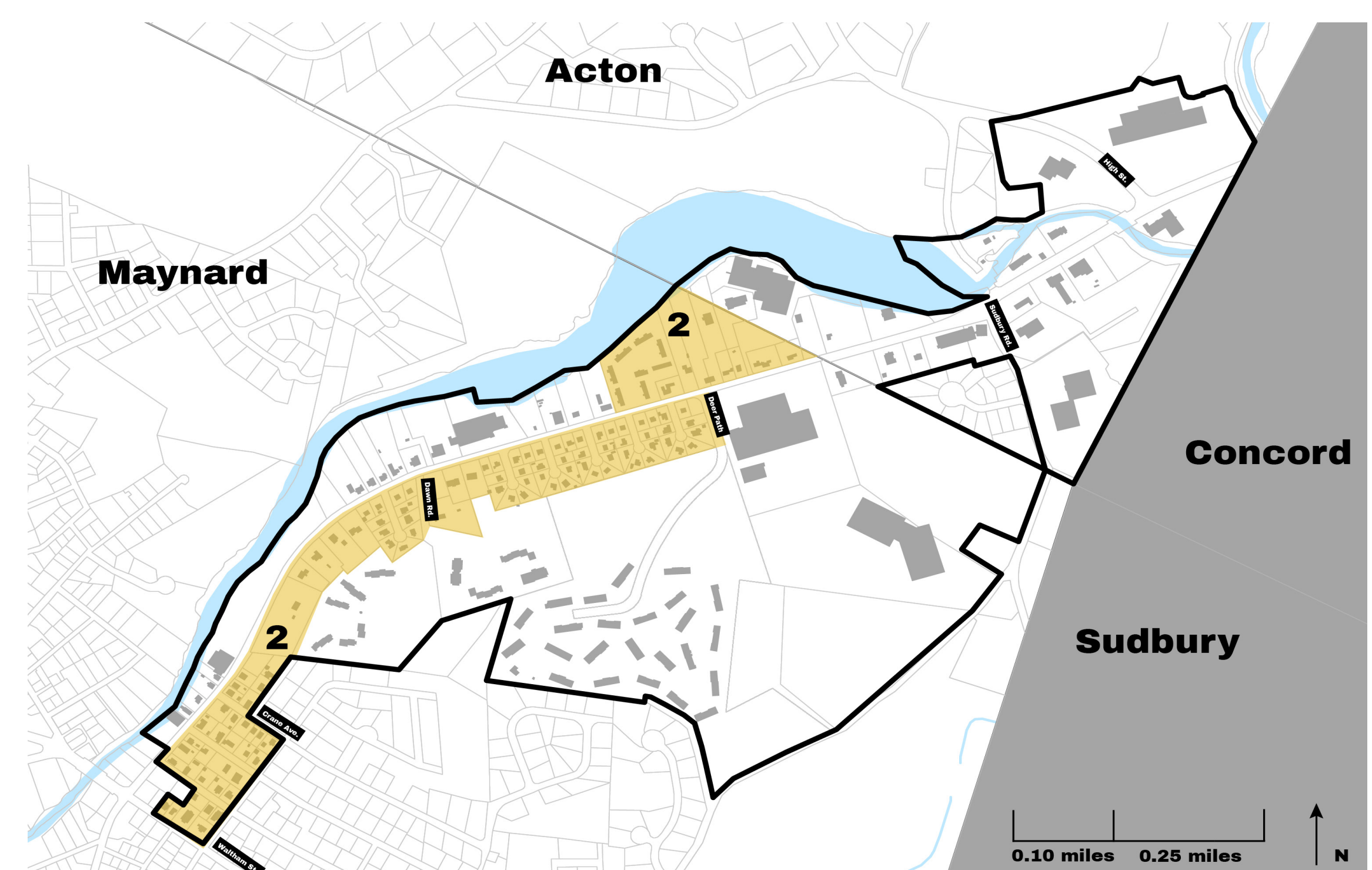
- Provides a gateway to the Powder Mill Road corridor and connects to the Downtown Overlay District
- Promotes compact, mixed-use development on small lots
- Allows compatible commercial uses that encourage foot traffic (e.g., retail, personal services)



Subdistrict 2: Neighborhood Residential



- Brings existing properties into conformity with zoning
- Allows diverse housing types in keeping with existing patterns of smaller-scale residential development
- Maintains residential feel while allowing for home occupations and community amenities

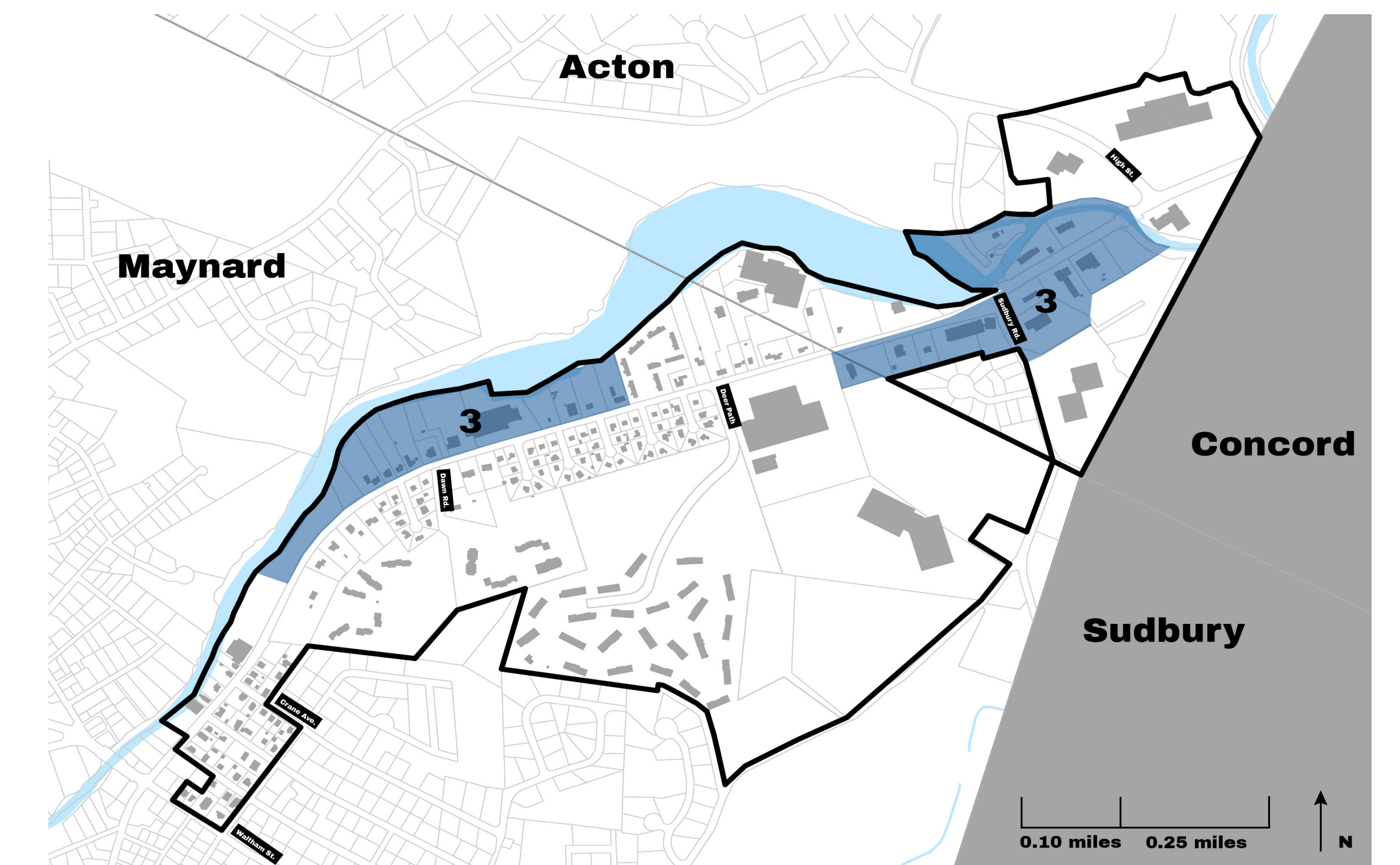


Overlay Zoning Subdistricts

Subdistrict 3: Neighborhood Business



- Fosters smaller-scale mixed use with first-floor commercial to encourage pedestrian activity and connection with the river
- Promotes commercial uses that are compatible with the riverfront
- Incentivizes green infrastructure and environmentally sensitive redevelopment



Subdistrict 4: Multifamily Housing



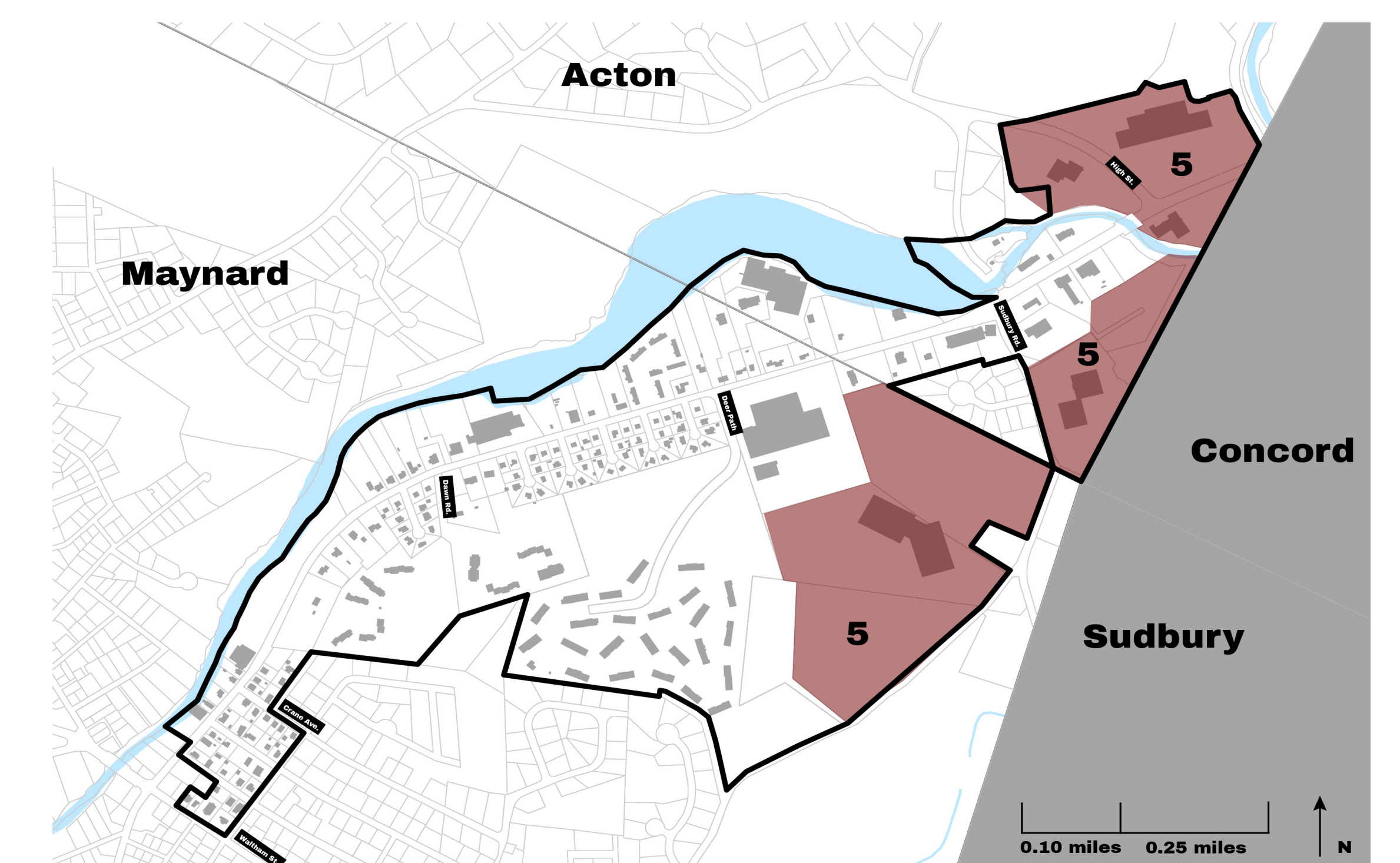
- Leverages redevelopment potential to create sustainable, environmentally sensitive redevelopment
- Allows for higher density residential that engages with street, blends into surrounding neighborhood, and supports commercial activity along corridor
- Ensures compliance with MBTA Communities (“3A”) law



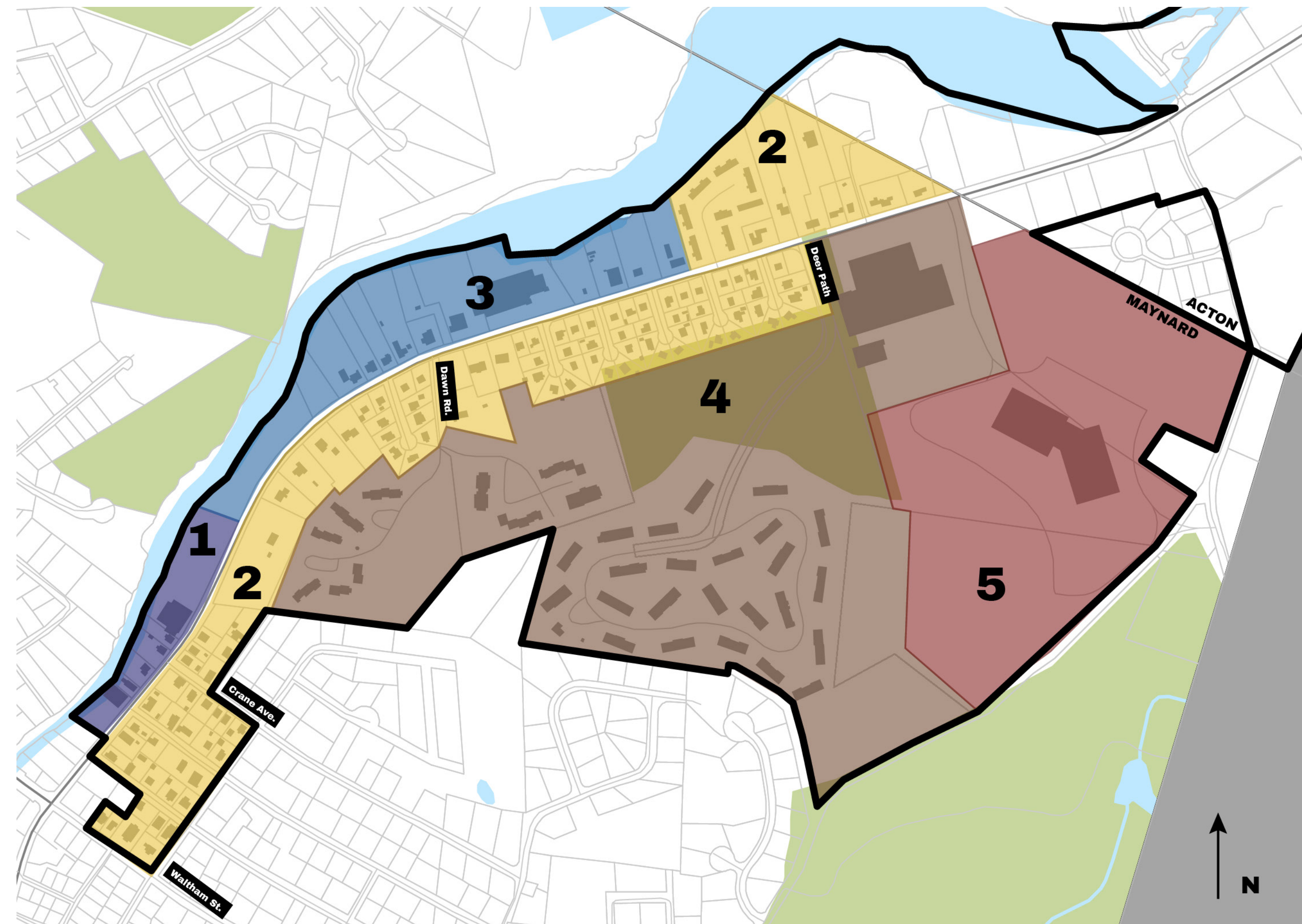
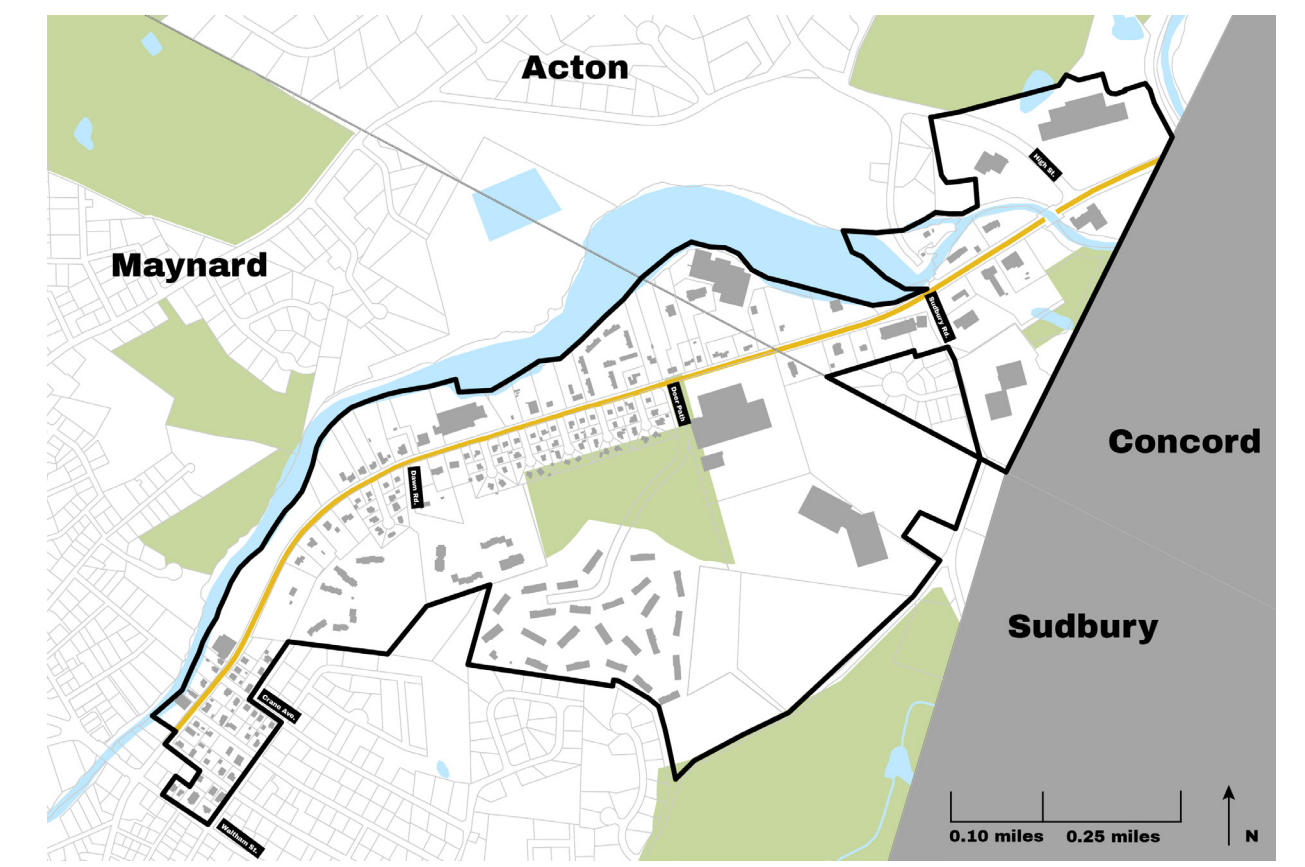
Subdistrict 5: Commercial Center



- Allows commercial buildings with large footprints that incorporate pedestrian-friendly design
- Supports economic development goals for creating sustainable employment opportunities
- Encourages uses that meet needs of Powder Mill residents as well as surrounding neighborhoods



Proposed Maynard Overlay District



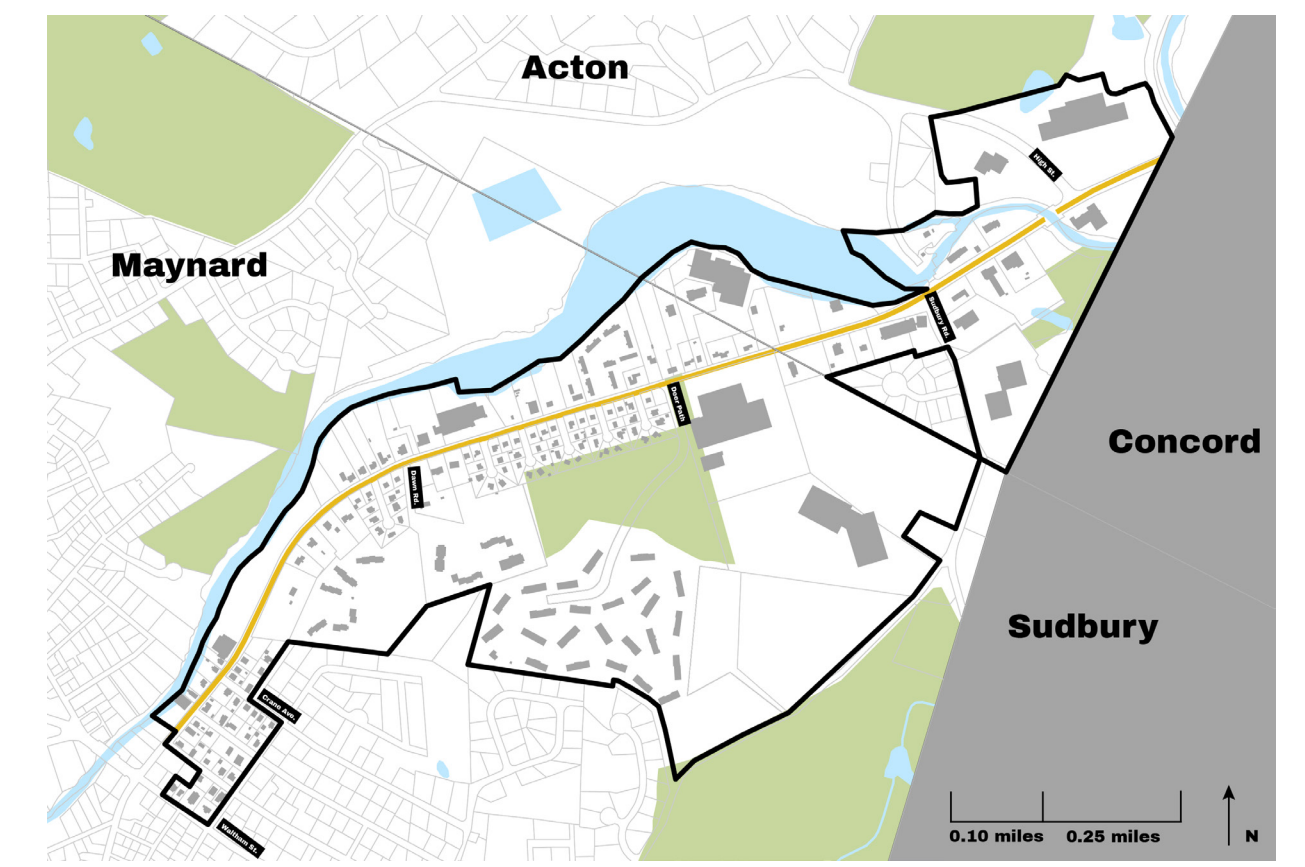
A



Powder Mill Road Corridor Initiative



Proposed Maynard Overlay District



Subdistrict 1

Sample Table of Allowed Uses

By-Right	Special Permit
Two-family, multifamily	Entertainment uses, brewery, distillery
Assorted retail and restaurants	Public market
Personal services (childcare, fitness center, hair salon, dry cleaner, bank)	Veterinarian office
Small grocery store	Funeral home
Small medical office	Adult day care

Key Dimensional Standards

Minimum lot area	3,900 square feet
Minimum open space	10%
Maximum height (flat/pitched roof)	35 feet/40 feet
Maximum building stories (flat/pitched roof)	3/3.5
Setbacks (minimum/maximum)	
Front	0 feet/10 feet
Side	5 feet/none
Rear	0 feet/none

Subdistrict 2

Sample Table of Allowed Uses

By-Right	Special Permit
Single-family, two-family	Assisted living, elderly housing
Garden apartment, multifamily	Adult day care
Childcare	Municipal facilities

Key Dimensional Standards

Minimum lot area	3,900 square feet
Minimum open space	20%
Maximum height (flat/pitched roof)	28 feet/35 feet
Maximum building stories (flat/pitched roof)	2/2.5
Setbacks (minimum/maximum)	
Front	10 feet/15 feet
Side	10 feet/none
Rear	10 feet/none

1

SUBDISTRICT 1: VILLAGE CENTER

SUBDISTRICT 2: NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL

Existing Condition



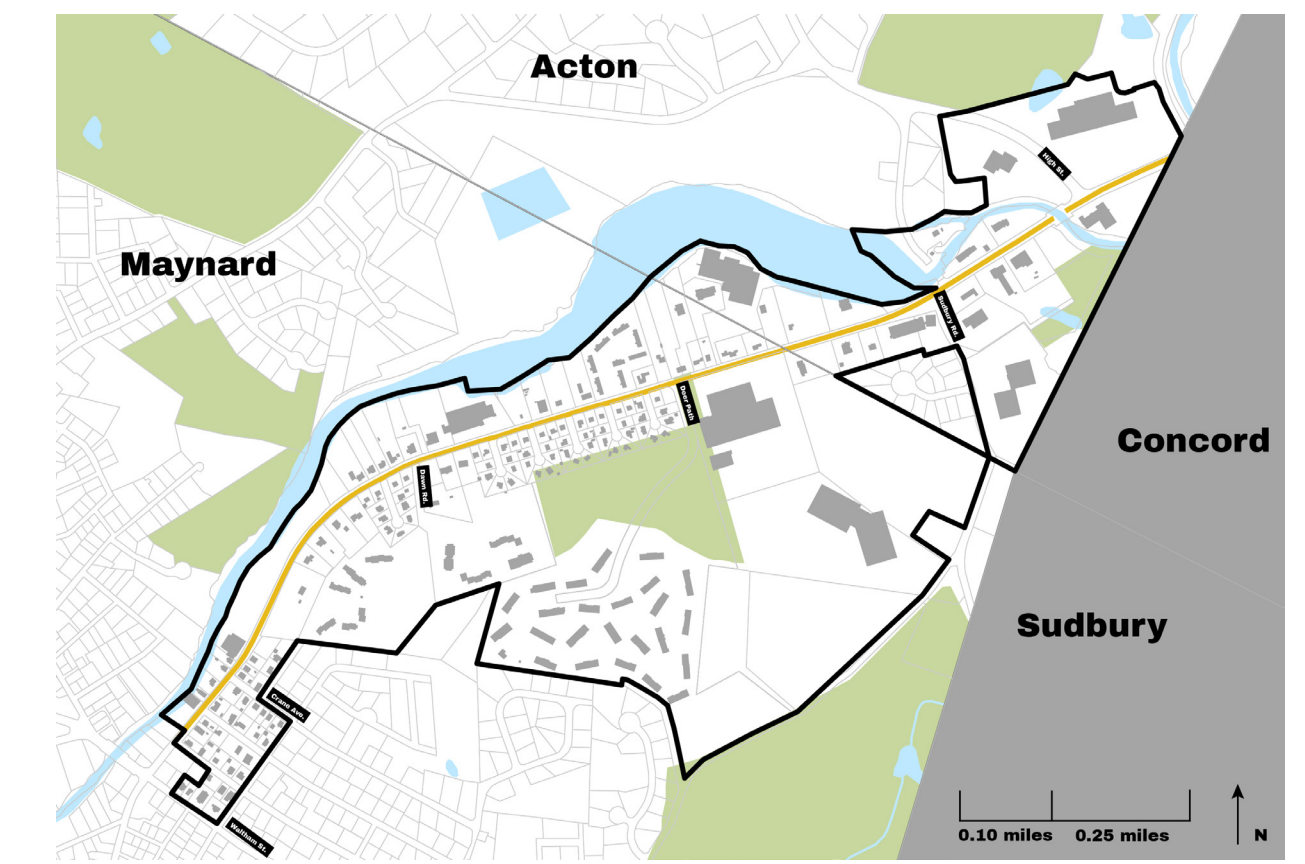
Existing Condition



Powder Mill Road Corridor Initiative



Proposed Maynard Overlay District



Subdistrict 3

Sample Table of Allowed Uses

By-Right	Special Permit
Multifamily, live/work unit	Commercial kennel
Assorted retail and restaurants, small grocery store	Funeral home
Personal services (childcare, fitness center, hair salon, dry cleaner, bank)	Adult day care
Small medical office, veterinarian office	Hotel, motel
Entertainment uses, brewery, distillery	Garden center

Key Dimensional Standards

Minimum lot area	7,000 square feet
Minimum open space	20%
Maximum height (flat/pitched roof)	35 feet/40 feet
Maximum building stories (flat/pitched roof)	3/3.5
Setbacks (minimum/maximum)	
Front	10 feet/20 feet
Side	10 feet/none
Rear	15 feet/none

Subdistrict 2

Sample Table of Allowed Uses

By-Right	Special Permit
Single-family, two-family	Assisted living, elderly housing
Garden apartment, multifamily	Adult day care
Childcare	Municipal facilities

Key Dimensional Standards

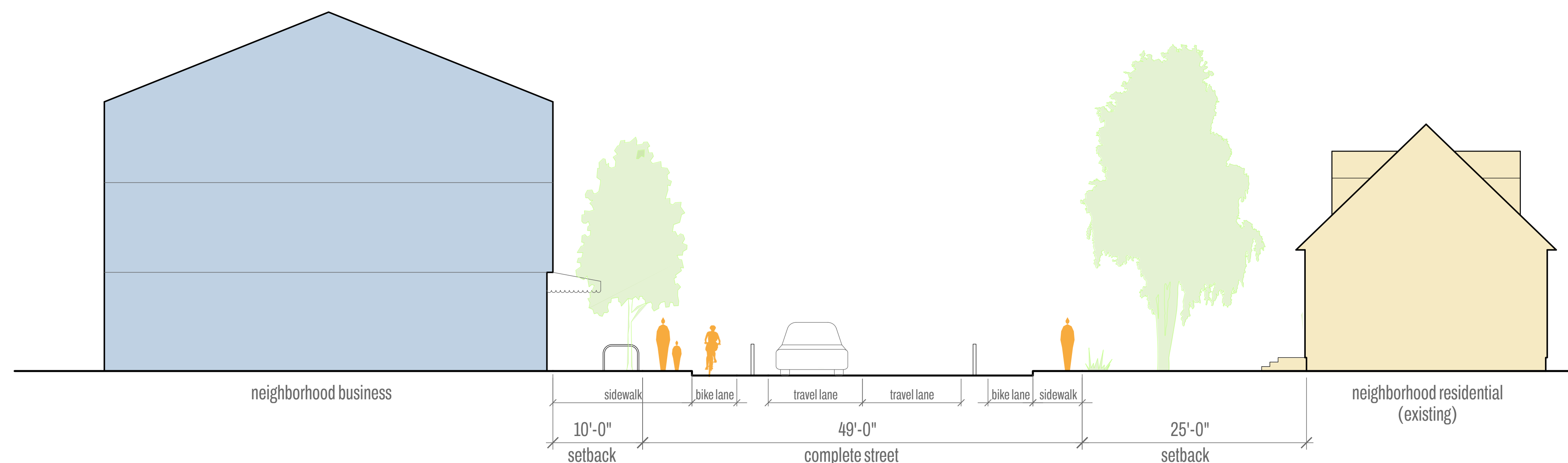
Minimum lot area	3,900 square feet
Minimum open space	20%
Maximum height (flat/pitched roof)	28 feet/35 feet
Maximum building stories (flat/pitched roof)	2/2.5
Setbacks (minimum/maximum)	
Front	10 feet/15 feet
Side	10 feet/none
Rear	10 feet/none

2

SUBDISTRICT 3 : NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS

SUBDISTRICT 2 : NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL

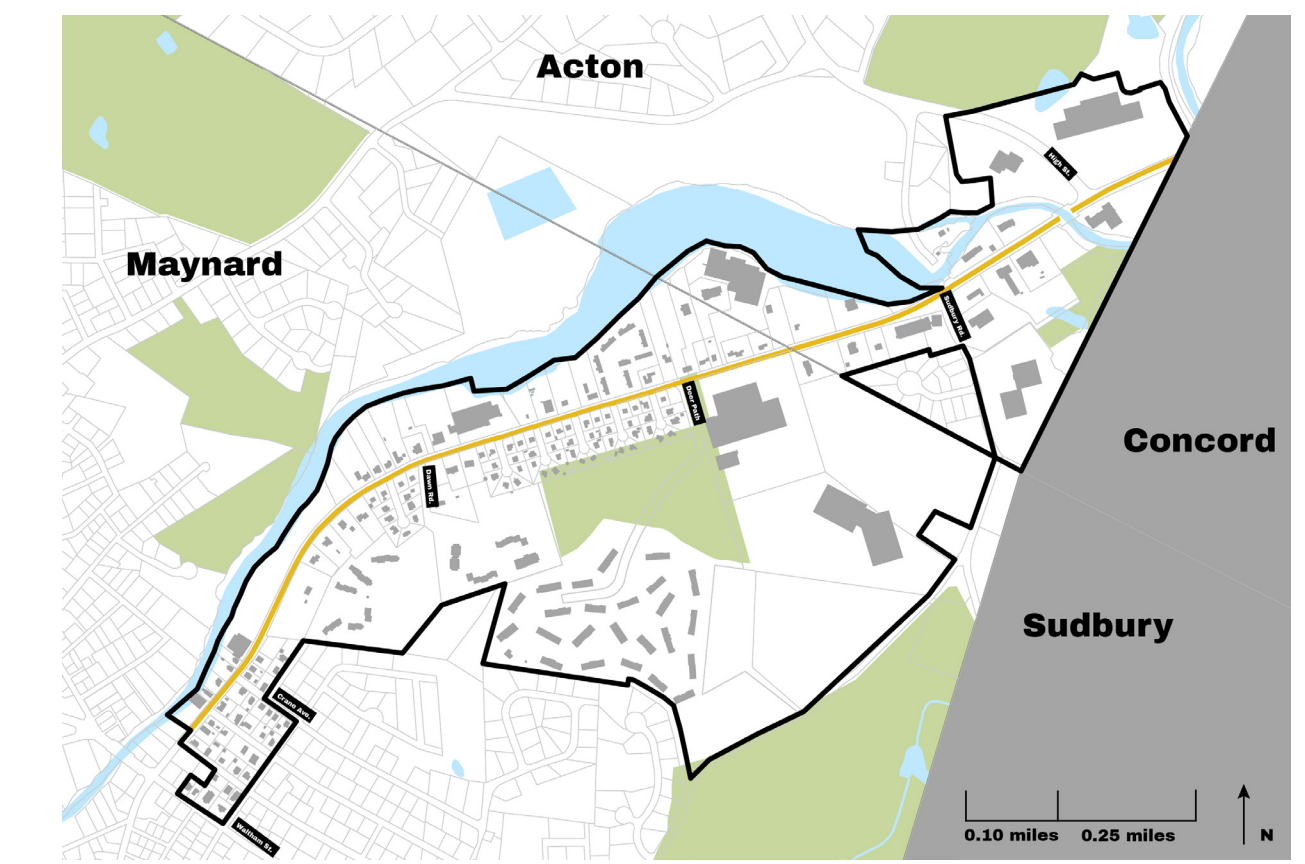
Existing Condition



Existing Condition



Proposed Maynard Overlay District



Subdistrict 2

Sample Table of Allowed Uses

By-Right	Special Permit
Single-family, two-family	Assisted living, elderly housing
Garden apartment, multifamily	Adult day care
Childcare	Municipal facilities

Key Dimensional Standards

Minimum lot area	3,900 square feet
Minimum open space	20%
Maximum height (flat/pitched roof)	28 feet/35 feet
Maximum building stories (flat/pitched roof)	2/2.5
Setbacks (minimum/maximum)	
Front	10 feet/15 feet
Side	10 feet/none
Rear	10 feet/none

Subdistrict 4

Sample Table of Allowed Uses

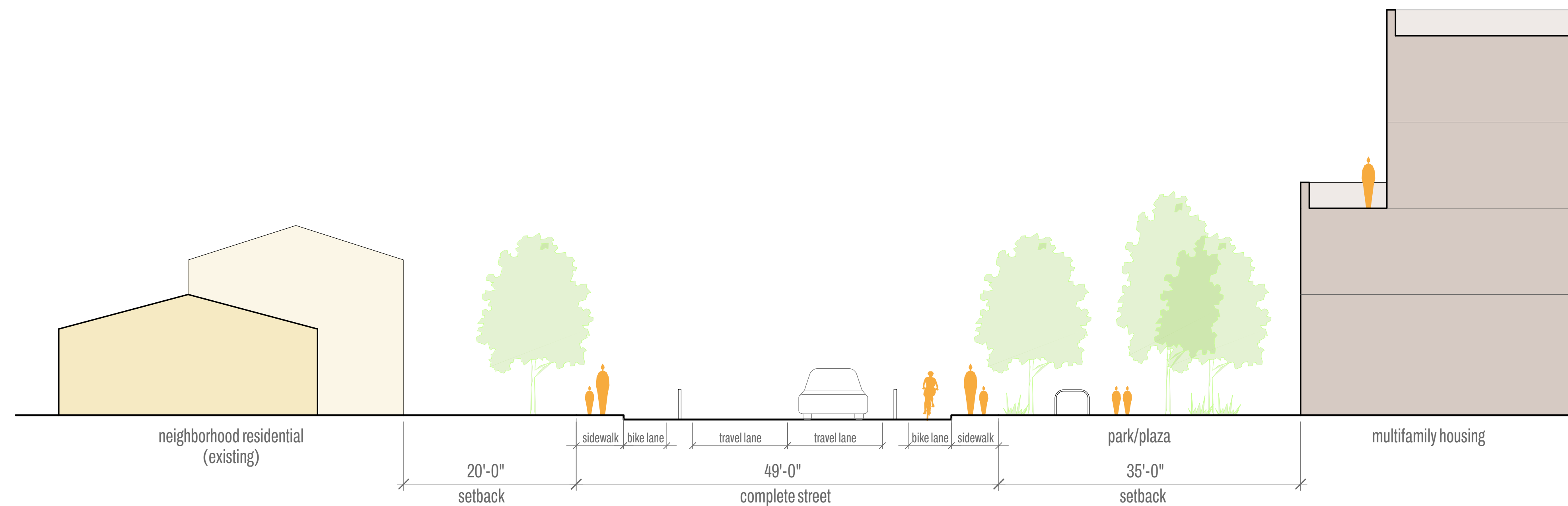
By-Right	Special Permit
Multifamily	Assisted living, elderly housing
Childcare	Nursing home

Key Dimensional Standards

Minimum lot area	43,560 square feet (1 acre)
Minimum open space	40%
Maximum height (flat/pitched roof)	35 feet/40 feet
Maximum building stories (flat/pitched roof)	4/4.5
Setbacks (minimum/maximum)	
Front	35 feet/50 feet
Side	50 feet/none
Rear	25 feet/none

EXISTING CONDITION

Existing Condition

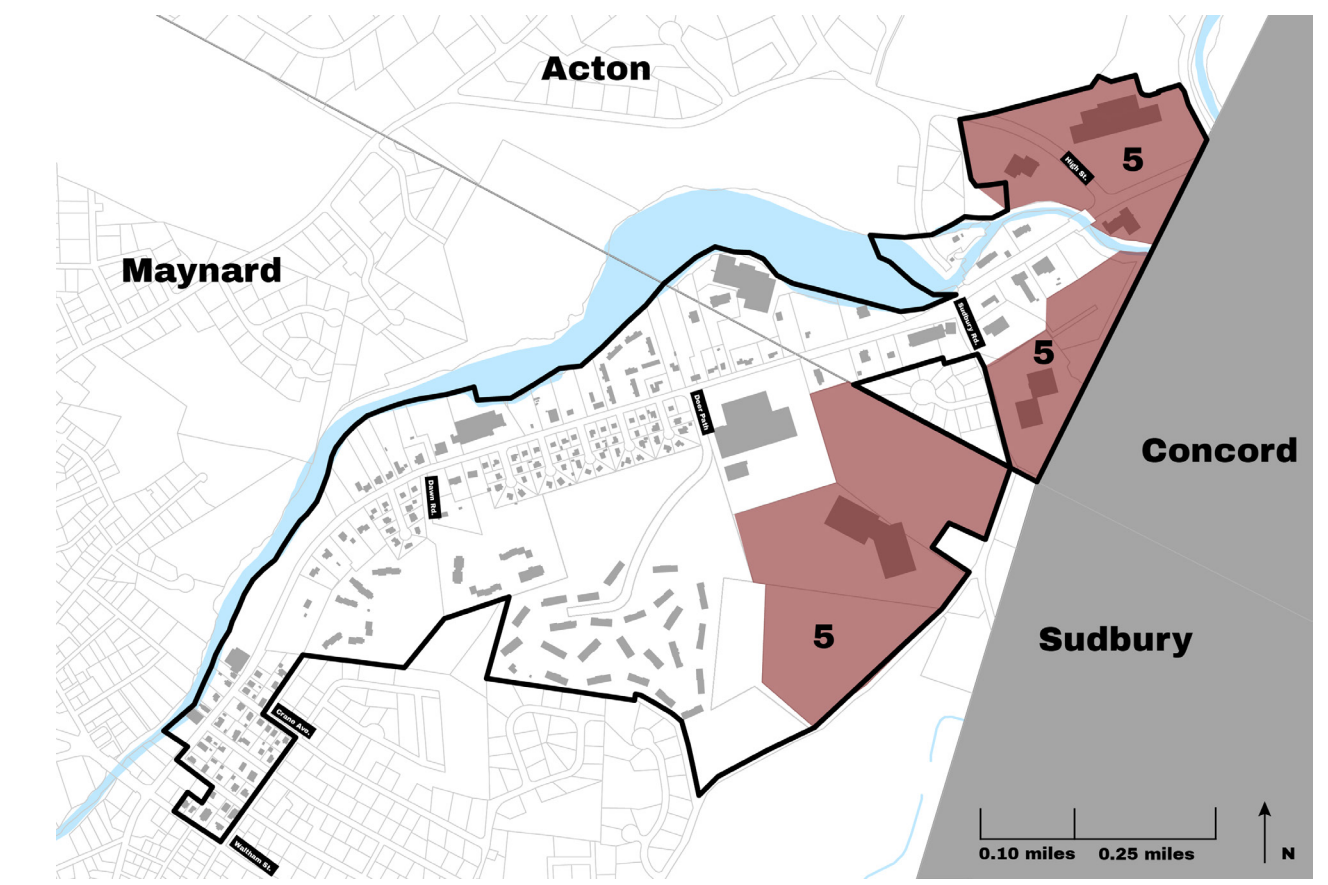


SUBDISTRICT 4: MULTIFAMILY HOUSING

Existing Condition



Proposed Maynard Overlay District



Subdistrict 5

Sample Table of Allowed Uses

By-Right	Special Permit
General office, medical office, healthcare facility	Marijuana product manufacturer
For-profit educational institution	Warehousing
Light manufacturing	Wholesale business
Research laboratories	Hotel, motel

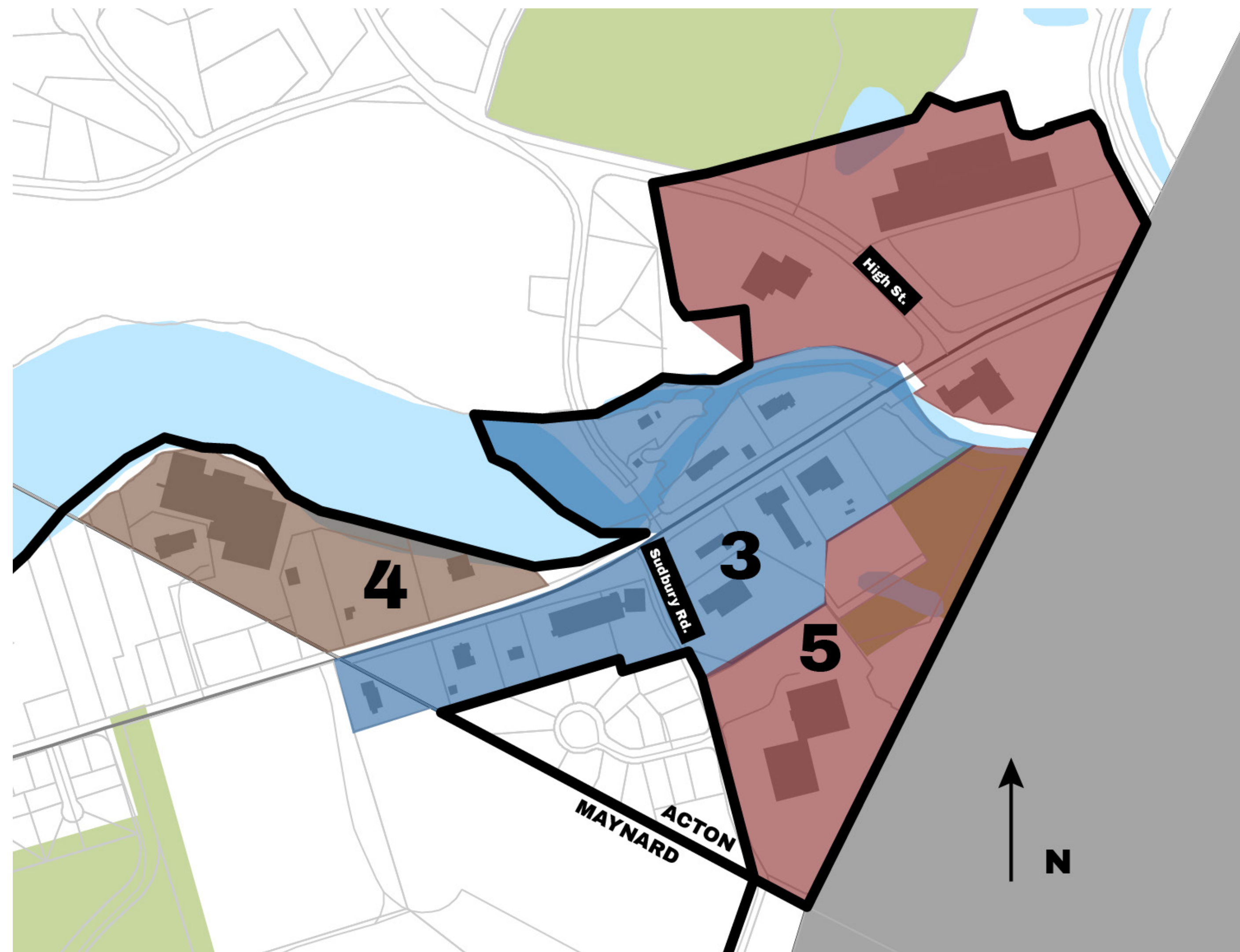
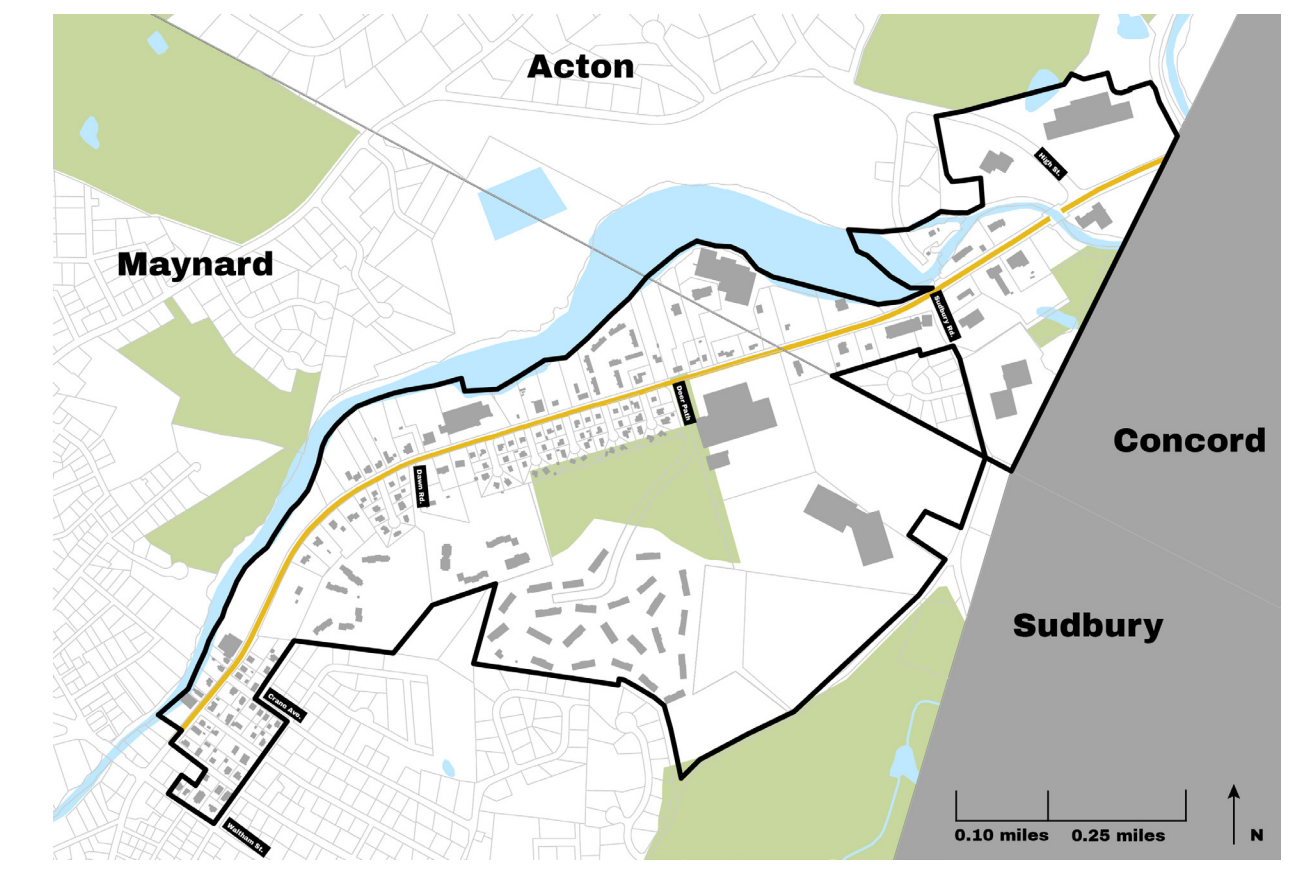
Key Dimensional Standards

Minimum lot area	30,000 square feet
Minimum open space	35%
Maximum height (flat/pitched roof)	40 feet/45 feet
Maximum building stories (flat/pitched roof)	3/3.5
Setbacks (minimum/maximum)	
Front	25 feet/40 feet
Side	25 feet/none
Rear	30 feet/none

Existing Condition



Proposed Acton Overlay District



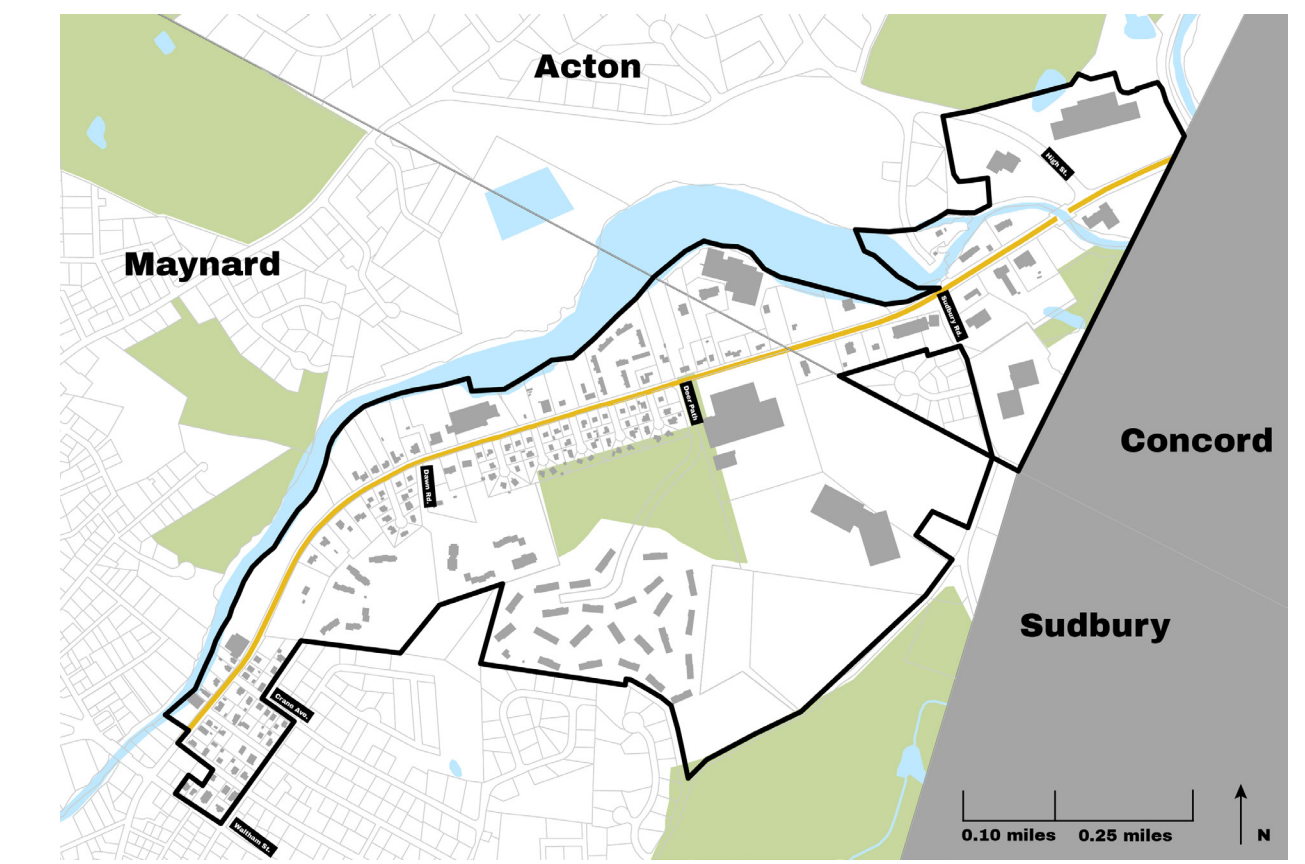
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Powder Mill Road Corridor Initiative



Proposed Acton Overlay District



Subdistrict 4

Sample Table of Allowed Uses

By-Right	Special Permit
Multifamily	Assisted living, retirement community
Childcare	Nursing home

The zoning for Subdistrict 4 in Acton is being developed concurrently with the town-wide 3A planning process.

Key Dimensional Standards

Minimum lot area	43,560 square feet (1 acre)
Minimum open space	40%
Maximum height (flat/pitched roof)	56 feet/62 feet
Maximum building stories (flat/pitched roof)	5/5.5
Setbacks (minimum)	
Front	35 feet
Side	50 feet
Rear	50 feet

Subdistrict 3

Sample Table of Allowed Uses

By-Right	Special Permit
Two-family, multifamily	Animal boarding
Assorted retail and restaurants, small grocery store	Lodge/private club
Personal services (childcare, fitness center, hair salon, dry cleaner, bank)	Large building trade shop
Small office, medical office, veterinarian office	Hotel, motel

Key Dimensional Standards

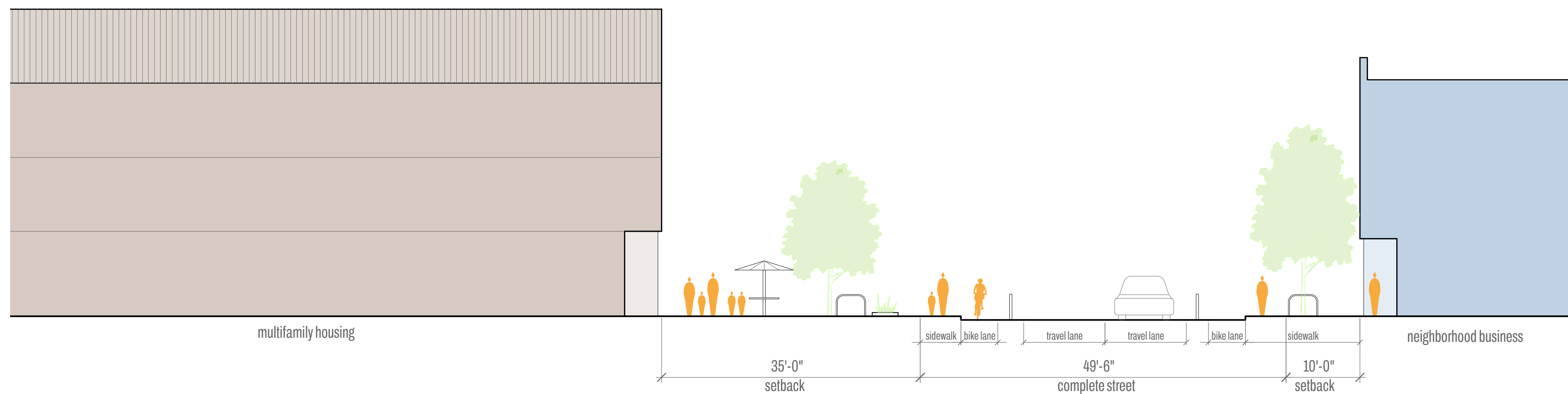
Minimum lot area	7,000 square feet
Minimum open space	20%
Maximum height (flat/pitched roof)	40 feet/45 feet
Maximum building stories (flat/pitched roof)	3/3.5
Setbacks (minimum/maximum)	
Front	10 feet/15 feet
Side	0 feet/none
Rear	5 feet/none

4

SUBDISTRICT 4: MULTIFAMILY HOUSING

SUBDISTRICT 3: NEIGHBORHOOD BUSINESS

Existing Condition



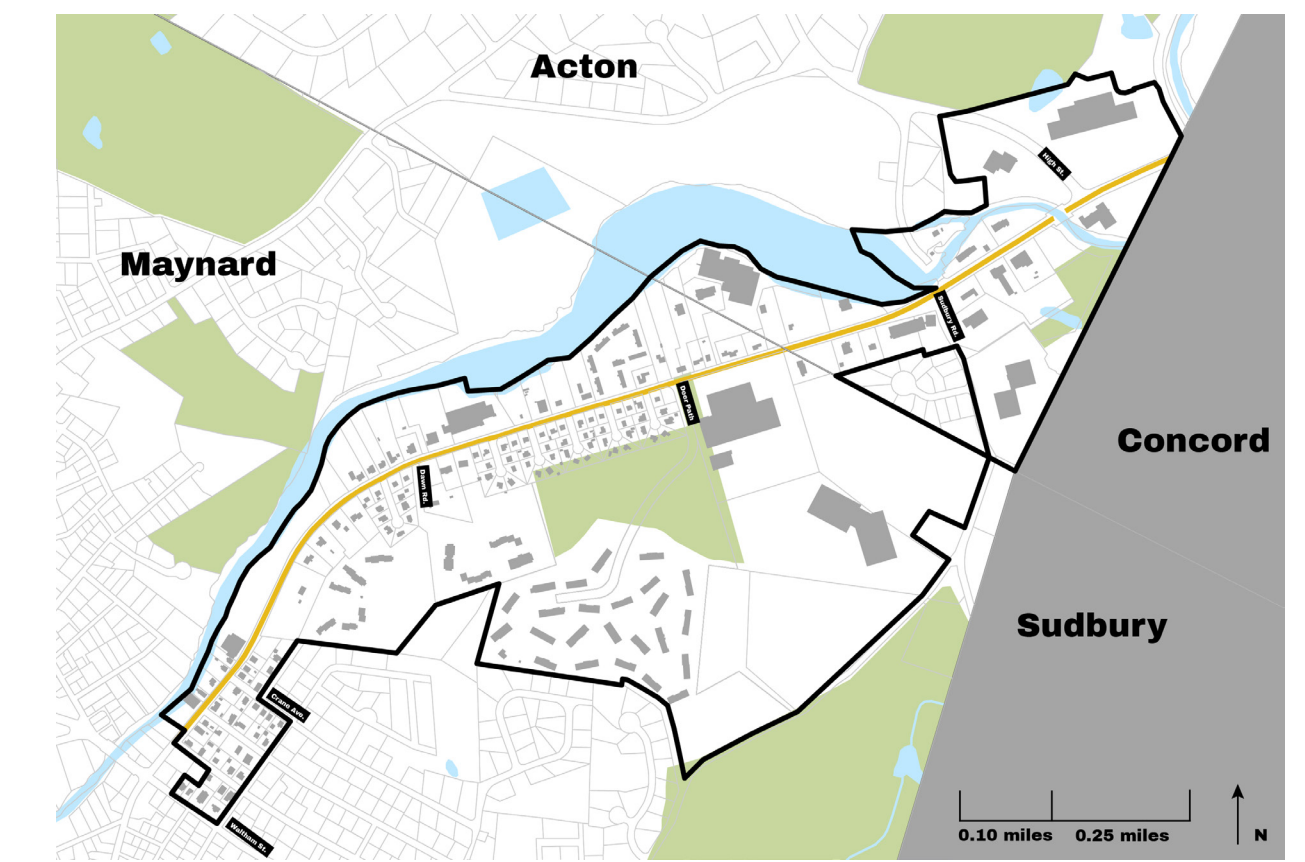
Existing Condition



Powder Mill Road Corridor Initiative



Proposed Acton Overlay District



Subdistrict 5

Sample Table of Allowed Uses

By-Right	Special Permit
General office, scientific office, healthcare facility	Hospital, medical center
Commercial education or instruction	Hotel, motel, conference center
Retail, restaurant	Warehouse, manufacturing
Personal services (childcare, commercial recreation and entertainment, hair salon, dry cleaner, bank)	Nursing home, retirement community, assisted living residence
Veterinary care	Animal boarding

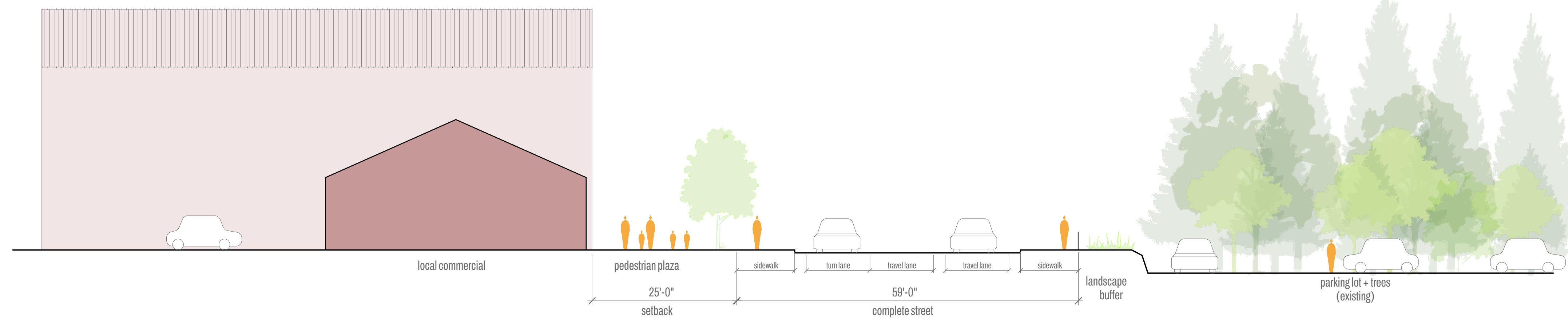
Key Dimensional Standards

Minimum lot area	30,000 square feet
Minimum open space	35%
Maximum height (flat/pitched roof)	56 feet/62 feet
Maximum building stories (flat/pitched roof)	5/5.5
Setbacks (minimum/maximum)	
Front	25 feet/40 feet
Side	25 feet/none
Rear	30 feet/none

5

SUB DISTRICT 5: LOCAL COMMERCIAL

EXISTING CONDITION



Existing Condition



Existing Condition

