

# Open House:

## A focus on the village core

SOUTH  
ACTION



*Vision & Action Plan*

# Project Overview

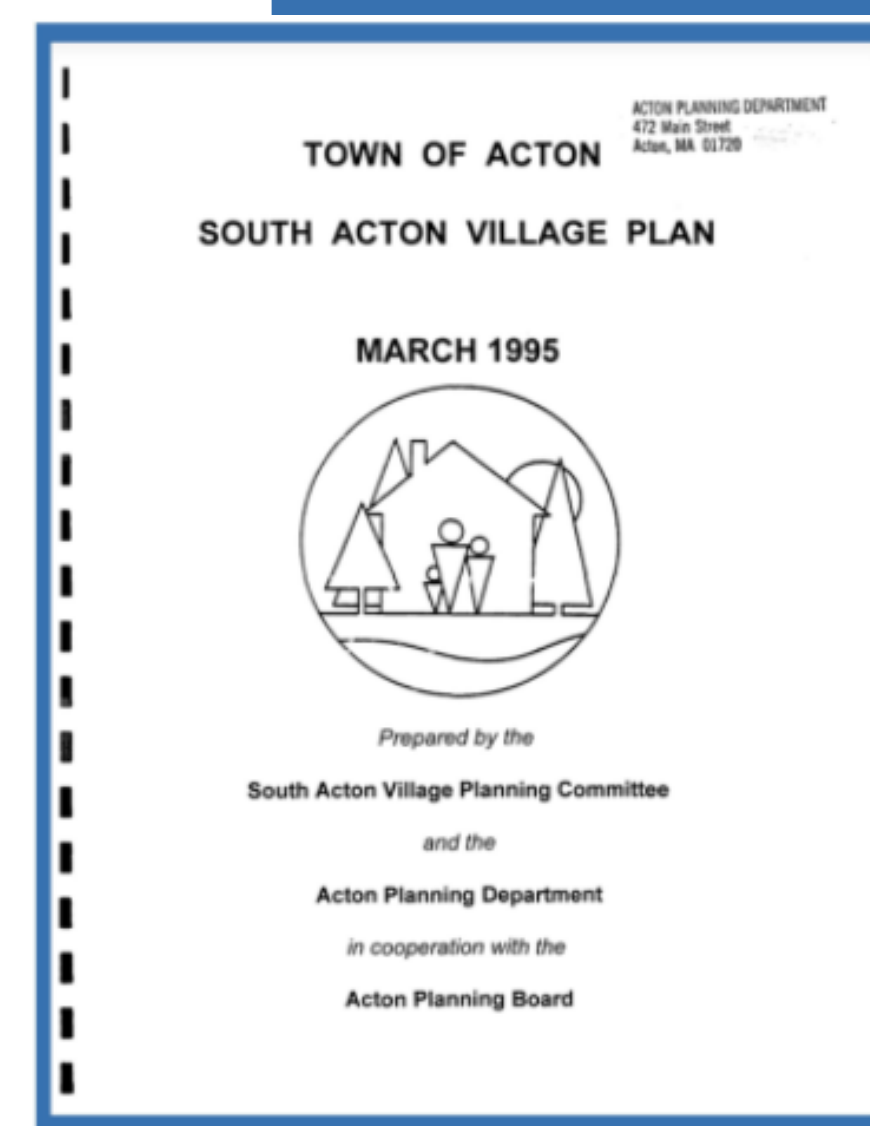


The Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan, completed in 2012, provides a roadmap for guiding growth in town. It identifies five “Key Village Centers,” including South Acton, as locations to where growth should be concentrated. The last time the Town created an area plan for South Acton Village was in 1995. This effort will help to establish an updated vision for South Acton through a public engagement process and create a set of action items on how to achieve those goals.

Although the focus of tonight's Open House is on the Village Core, this project is also evaluating how Acton can comply with the new requirements under Section 3A to allow for the option for multi-family housing by-right in its zoning where is is currently prohibited.

This project will build on South Acton’s existing assets, including the commuter rail station, historic buildings, walkability, and considerable conservation and recreation land, and help to overcome barriers that are holding back achievement of the Town’s vision.

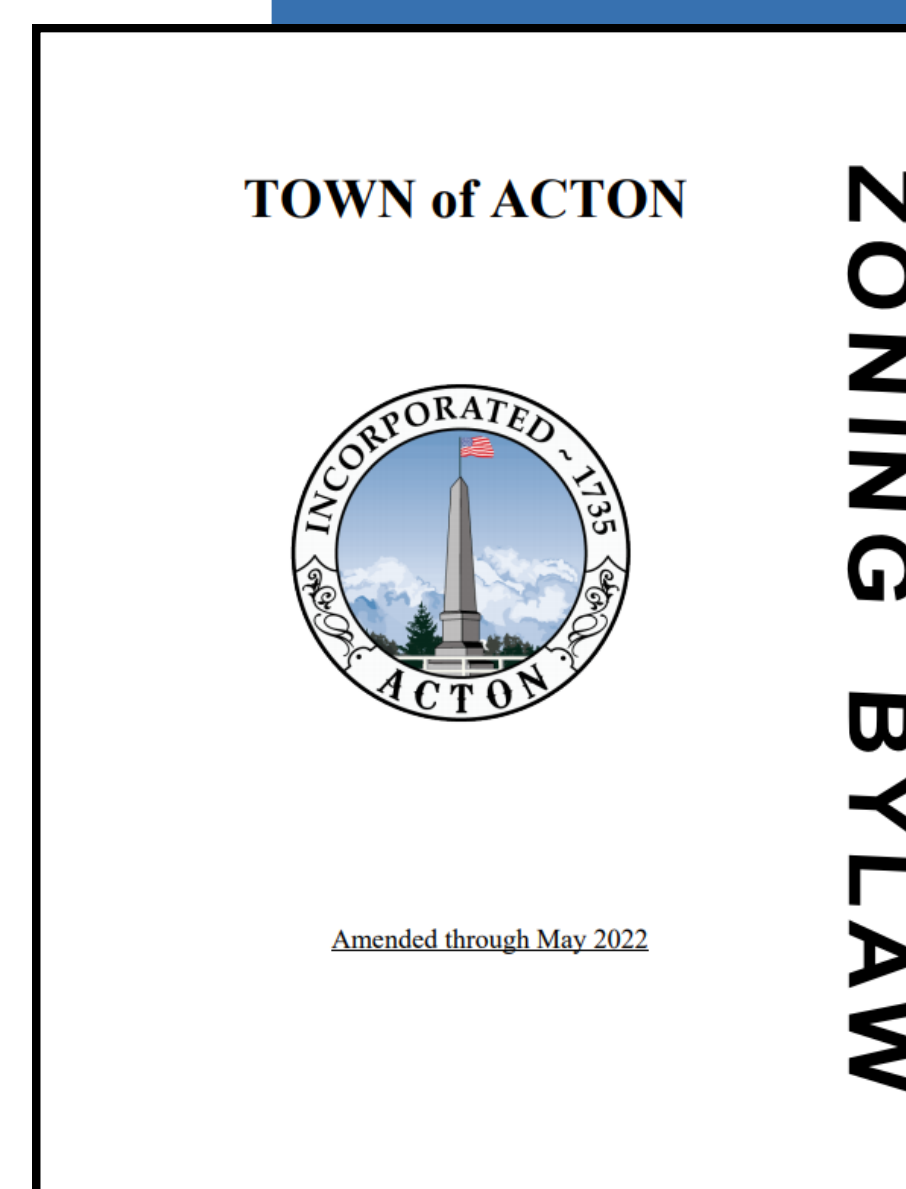
## Visioning: *Where do we want to go?*



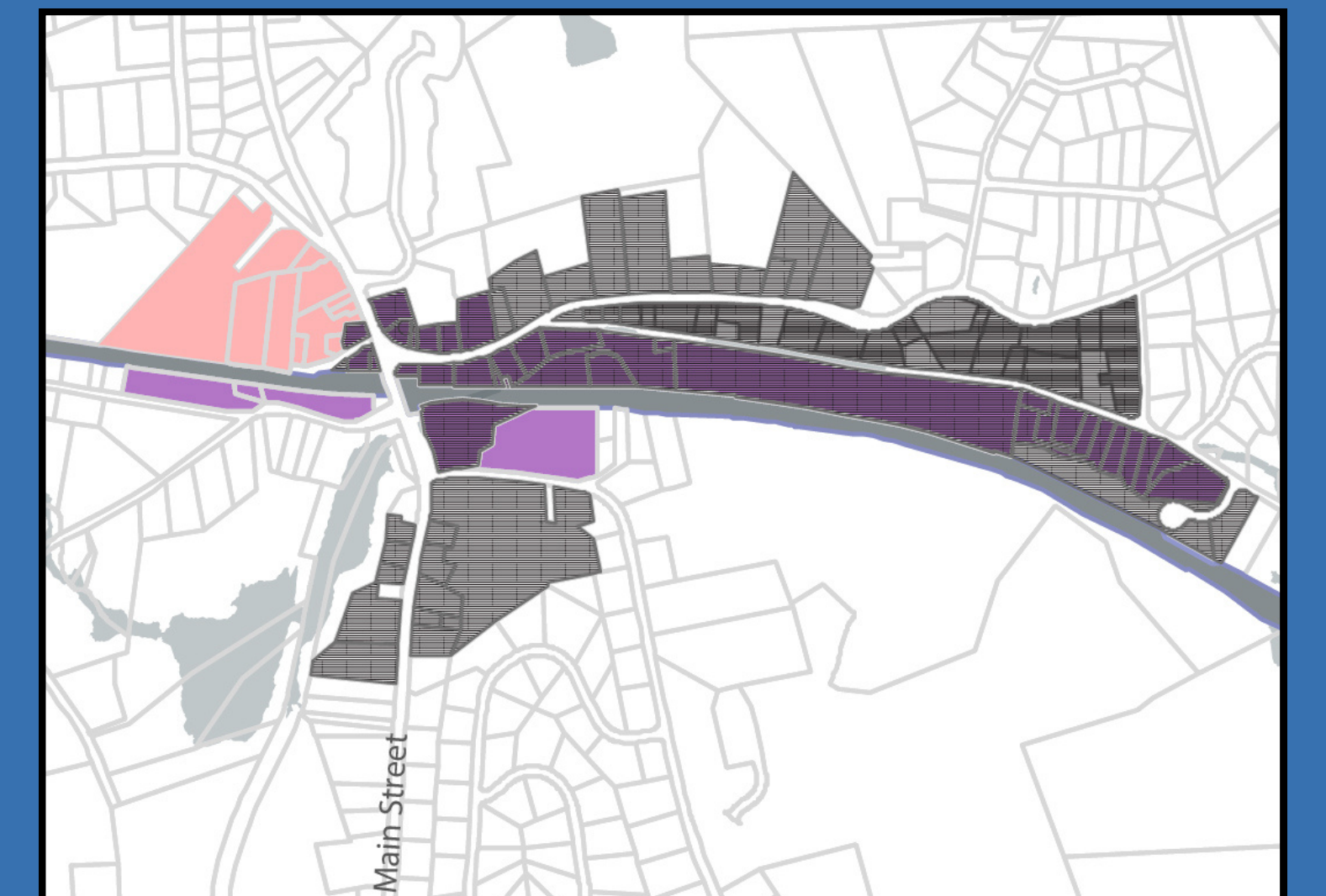
- Gather feedback from the community about goals for the area
- Feedback is analyzed to create a comprehensive framework to achieve goals



## Action: *How do we get there?*



- Proposing **zoning** that aligns with the community vision
- Ensure proposed zoning complies with Massachusetts General Law - Chapter 40A Sec. 3



## What is zoning?

Zoning is a local law that regulates various aspects of how land can be used.

- includes types of uses, such as commercial and residential
- includes dimensional restrictions (height, setback, floor area)

# Public Outreach & Timeline



## Summer 2022

### Project Start-up

- Public Website
- Virtual/hard copy - Town-wide survey (September 2022-November 2022)
- Meeting with stakeholders

## Fall 2022 - Winter 2022/23

### Community visioning process and existing conditions analysis

- In person - South Acton: Past, Present, Future Open House Series (January 2023)

## Spring 2023

### Public Input to review zoning Design, and infrastructure recommendations

- Virtual Webinar - Visioning, Section 3A Compliance, with survey (June 2023)

## Summer 2023

### Public Input to review zoning Design, and infrastructure recommendations

- Tabling and presentations around Town with survey- Visioning, Section 3A Compliance (Train Station, COA, playgrounds, AHA, Town Hall, Library)

## Fall 2023

- In-person open house on Zoning Recommendations for 3A Compliance (October 3, 2023)

### ***In-person open house on Zoning Recommendations for South Acton Village District Core***

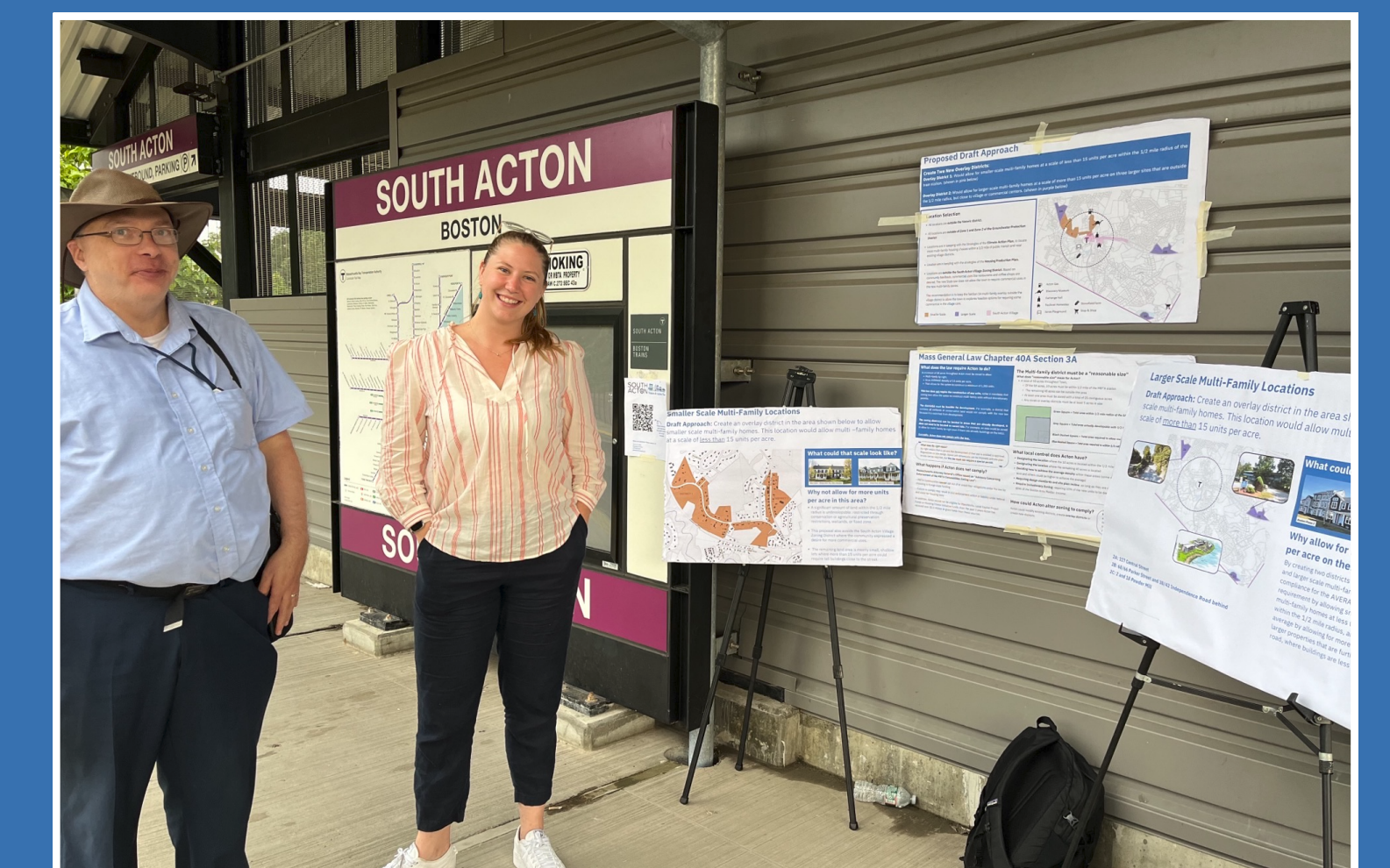
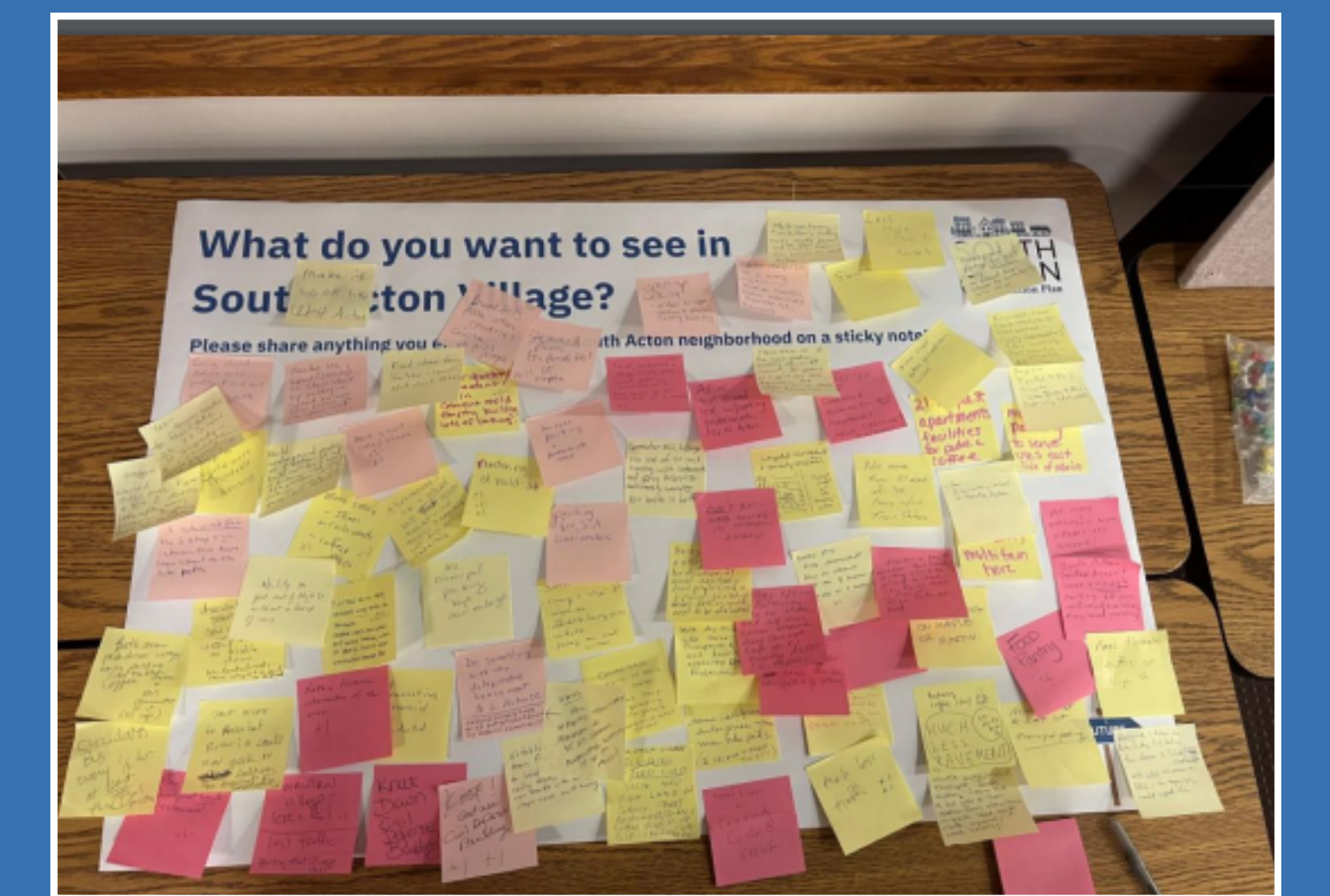
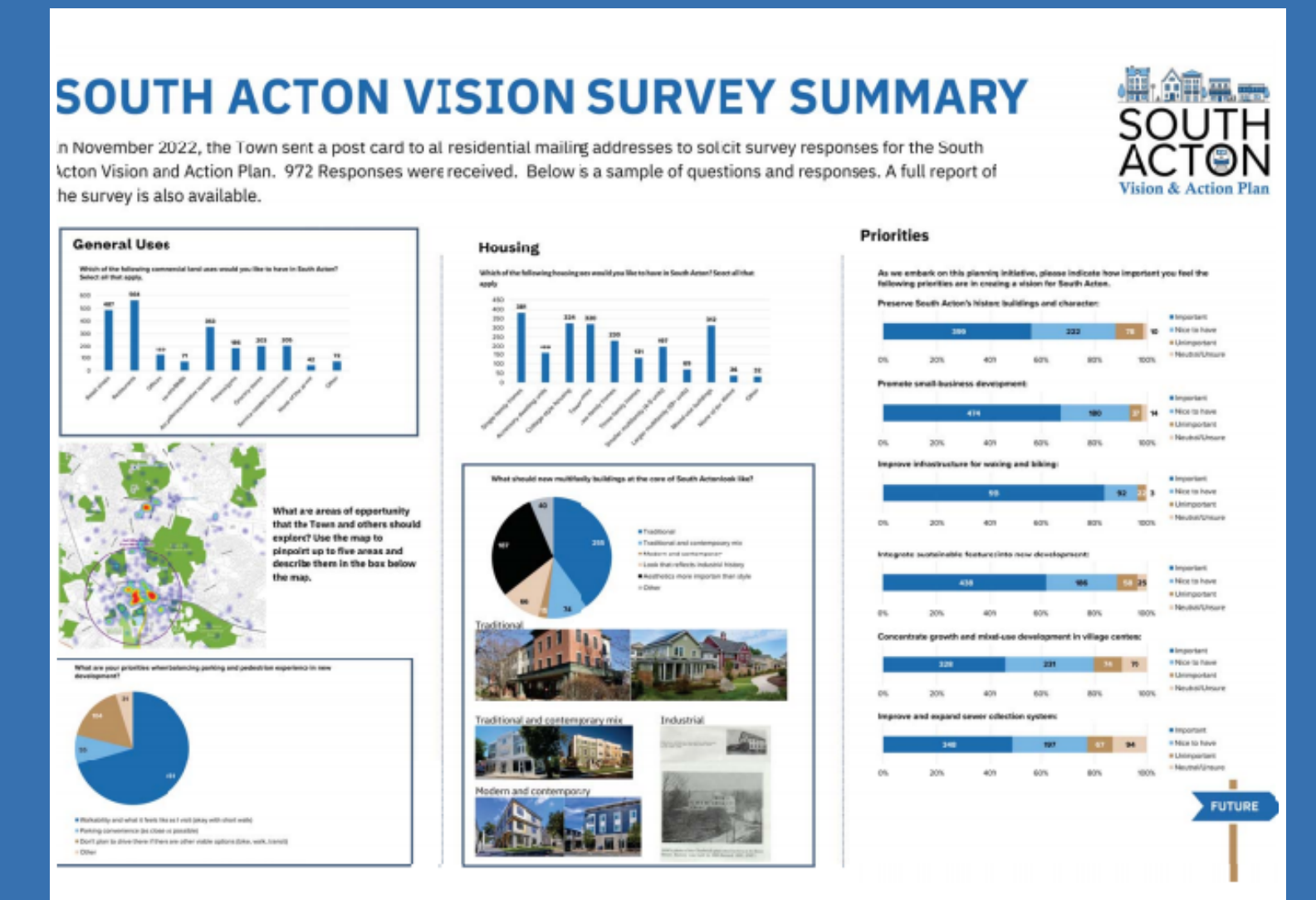
- Meeting with business owners

## Winter 2023/2024

- Final Virtual Workshop on Draft proposals for 3A Compliance and the Village Core
- Planning Board Public Hearing for Zoning Changes

## Spring 2024

- Zoning Proposals Brought to Town Meeting





# Goals & Action Items



## How should we get there?

Action items are tangible steps to help achieve the vision. These action items will direct decision making moving forward, so your feedback is important. Please add one sticky dot to each action item you wanted pursued.

### Diverse housing options for all ages and income levels

Modify dimensional and use standards for the South Acton Village (SAV) District to require mixed-use development (Combined Business & Dwelling), allows up to 3 stories and increases allowed floor area by Site Plan Review. (Action 1.1)

Establish a new zoning district on the land between Main Street and the Commuter Rail Parking lot that requires mixed-use development (Combined Business & Dwelling), allows up to 3.5 stories fronting Main Street and eliminates floor area requirements by Site Plan Review. (Action 1.2)

Make it easier to convert existing single-family dwellings to multifamily dwellings in the SAV District by allowing conversion by right and removing the requirement for owner occupancy. (Action 1.3)

Explore the adoption a town-wide inclusionary zoning policy that requires at least 10% of units in a new development to be Affordable to households earning at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). (Action 1.4)

Study the economic feasibility of a new mixed-use development on the Town-owned land just south of the Commuter Rail Station off Maple Street. (Action 1.5)

Study the economic feasibility of a new mixed-use development on the Town-owned land over the Commuter Rail Station parking lot. (Action 1.6)

Place your dot here!

# Goals & Action Items



## How should we get there?

### Enhanced pedestrian and bike connectivity

Paint fog lines along roadways where curbs are poorly defined or non-existent (School Street, Railroad Street, Central Street) to create visual separation between vehicular and pedestrian areas and to calm traffic. (Action 2.1)

Add in-street pedestrian delineators at non-signalized crosswalks to increase visibility during non-winter months. (Action 2.2)

Evaluate options for on-street parking throughout the South Acton Village District and methods to deter parking on the sidewalk in front of businesses along Main Street, including temporary measures such as planters or painting. (Action 2.3)

Invest in infrastructure for long-term complete streets improvements recommended by the South Acton Village Complete Streets study. (Action 2.4)

Invest in short-term targeted infrastructure repairs identified by the DPW's asset management of existing stormwater, sidewalks and ramps including surface upgrades to concrete sidewalks. (Action 2.5)

Implement a wayfinding system that helps user find available parking and navigate to destinations in South Acton Village including recreation facilities, commercial areas, rail trails and open space. (Action 2.6)

Evaluate options to create pedestrian and bicycle connections from the west end of Rail Road Street to the Commuter Rail parking lot. (Action 2.7)

Place your dot here!

### Strengthen historic assets

Adopt specific design guidelines for the South Acton Historic District to ensure that new development and renovations complement the historic aesthetic of the mill village, while also providing greater predictability for both residents and developers. (Action 5.1)

Work with Iron Work Farm and other private landowners in South Acton Village to obtain funding for building renovations that allow historic sites to expand their programming and community offerings. (Action 5.2)

Work with Iron Work Farm and other private landowners to activate outdoor spaces to create informal gathering spaces and walking paths. (Action 5.3)

# Goals & Action Items



## How should we get there?

### Improved traffic safety and calming

Use paint and plastic flex posts to narrow turning radii at the intersection of Main and School Streets, reduce the pedestrian crossing distance across School Street, and calm traffic. (Action 3.1)

Upgrade the WALK signal cycle to provide more time for pedestrians to cross School Street, reduce the wait time between WALK signals, and make the WALK signal automatic (no push button needed to get a WALK signal). (Action 3.2)

Use paint and plastic flex posts or planter boxes to narrow the right-turning radius from Central Street onto Main Street and calm traffic. (Action 3.3)

Explore intersection safety improvements for the Main and Central Streets intersection as a part of the Complete Streets process. (Action 3.4)

Explore pedestrian safety improvements, including the creation of a new crosswalk, for the intersection of Central Street and the Commuter Rail parking entrance as a part of the Complete Streets process. (Action 3.5)

Study opportunities to remove or convert underutilized driveways along Railroad Street and Main Street into a street network. If a new street network is created, implement a one-way traffic circulation pattern from Railroad Street to Main Street to avoid traffic congestion and maintain space for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. (Action 3.6)

Consider the appropriateness of on-street parking on School and Main Streets to serve the small businesses and provide a buffer between moving vehicles and pedestrians on the sidewalk. (Action 3.7)

Place your dot here!

### Vibrant commercial uses

Work with owners of vacant or underutilized properties in South Acton Village to find temporary tenants to serve as “pop-ups,” activating storefronts until longer-term tenants can be found. (Action 4.1)

Create a wayfinding program for South Acton Village that provides signage and relevant information connecting residents and visitors to various destinations, including commercial establishments, and nearby parking locations. (Action 4.2)

Work with small business owners to relocate parking to underutilized parking lots just behind their buildings on Main Street. (Action 4.3)

# Goals & Action Items



## How should we get there?

### High-quality, sustainable development

Monitor impacts of the Commonwealth's Municipal Fossil Fuel-Free Building Construction and Renovation Demonstration Program, of which Acton has been selected as a Prioritized Community. (Action 6.1)

Create a guide to encourage sustainable renovations of historic buildings. (Action 6.2)

Encourage developers to implement water conservation tactics in new and renovated buildings. (Action 6.3)

Institute parking maximums to encourage developers to limit parking to what the market demands, reducing the amount of asphalt on a property and encouraging sustainable modes of transportation. (Action 6.4)

Place your dot here!

### Adequate infrastructure to support new development

Study options for expansion of Acton's sewer supply system to better accommodate desired commercial uses in South Acton Village. (Action 7.1)

Utilize new development in South Acton Village as an opportunity to upgrade outdated infrastructure and utility systems on a parcel by parcel basis. (Action 7.2)

Evaluate the cost and potential opportunities associated with burying the power lines at the center of South Acton Village. (Action 7.3)

### Investment in public spaces

Continue to invest in the maintenance of existing recreational facilities and conservation land throughout South Acton. (Action 8.1)

Continue to seek funding for the creation of a landscaped park at the 53 River Street dam. (Action 8.2)

Explore the utilization of Town-owned land in South Acton for new opportunities that activate the area and encourage community connections. (Action 8.3)

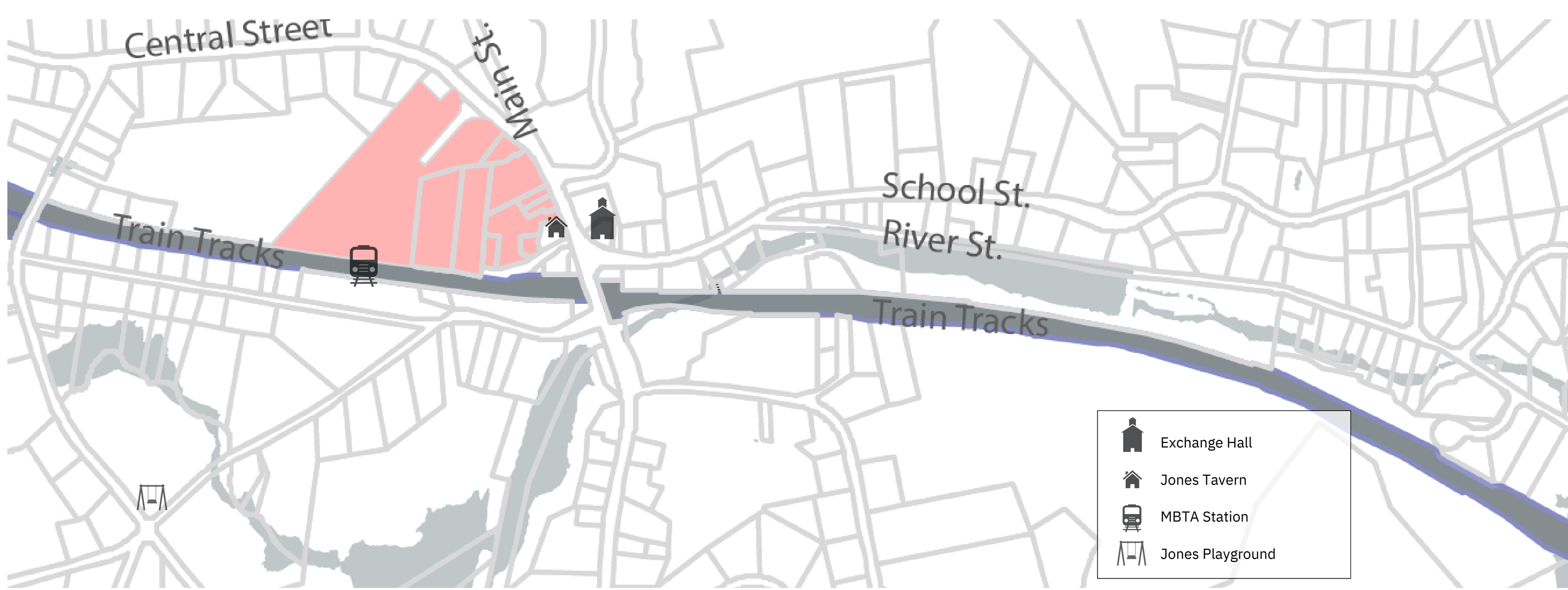


# Creation of a New District



## Main Street North & Rail Road Street Proposed Zoning Changes

Proposed creation of a new base district focused to encourage commercial development



**Recommended Zoning Changes**

**Dimensional standards:**

- Maximum height: 3.5 stories
- Maximum Floor Area Ratio: None
- Side yard setback: None (same as West Acton)

**Parking standards:**

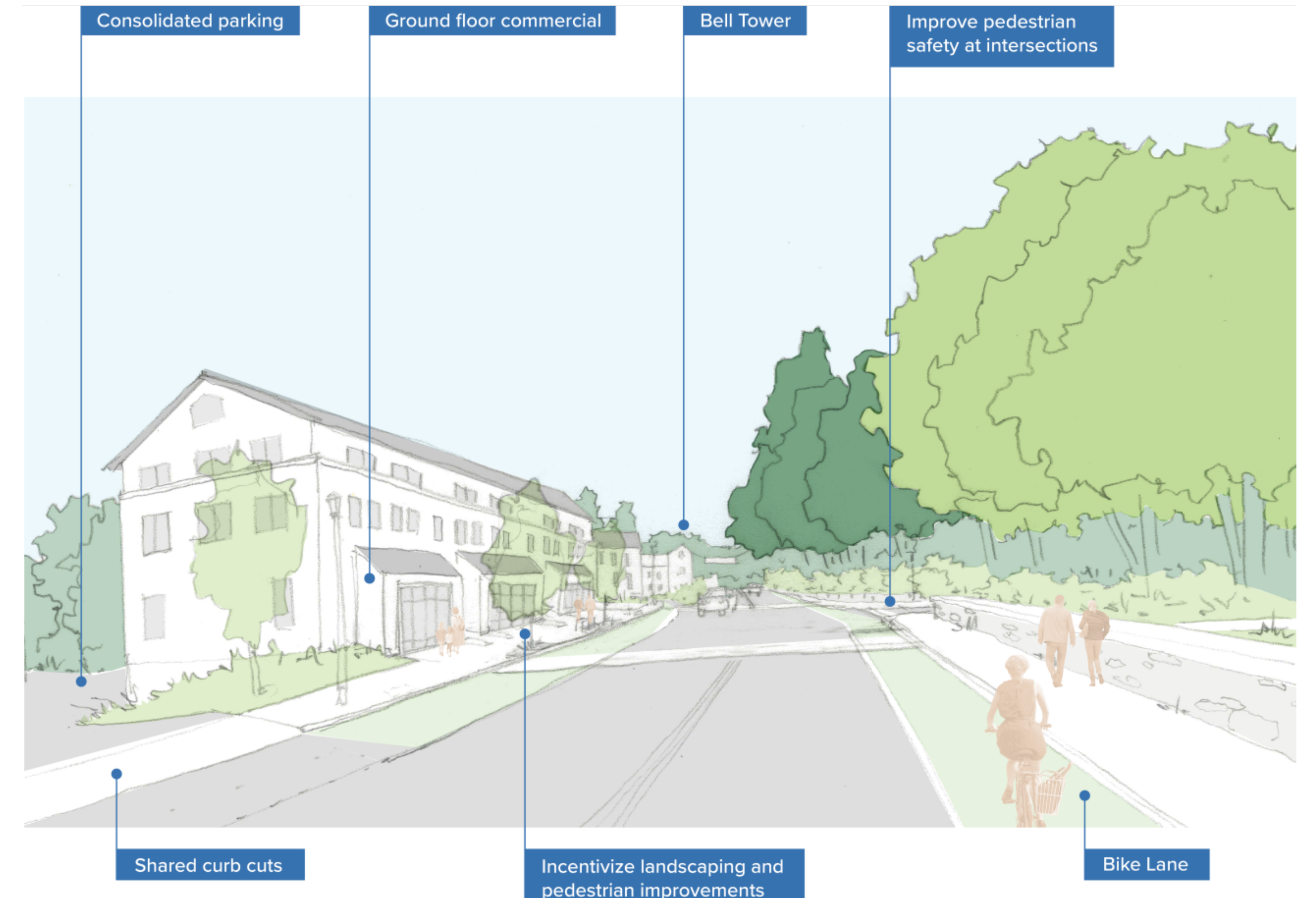
- **Residential**, Maximum - 1.5 parking spaces per dwelling unit (No minimum)
- **Commercial**, Minimum - 60% of commercial requirements

**Design standards to regulate:**

- Facade trims and detailing
- Visual break or articulation above second floor to create pedestrian scale
- Architectural variation in the facade for buildings facing the street
- Shade trees and landscaping

**Use Regulations:**

- Prohibits Manufacturing



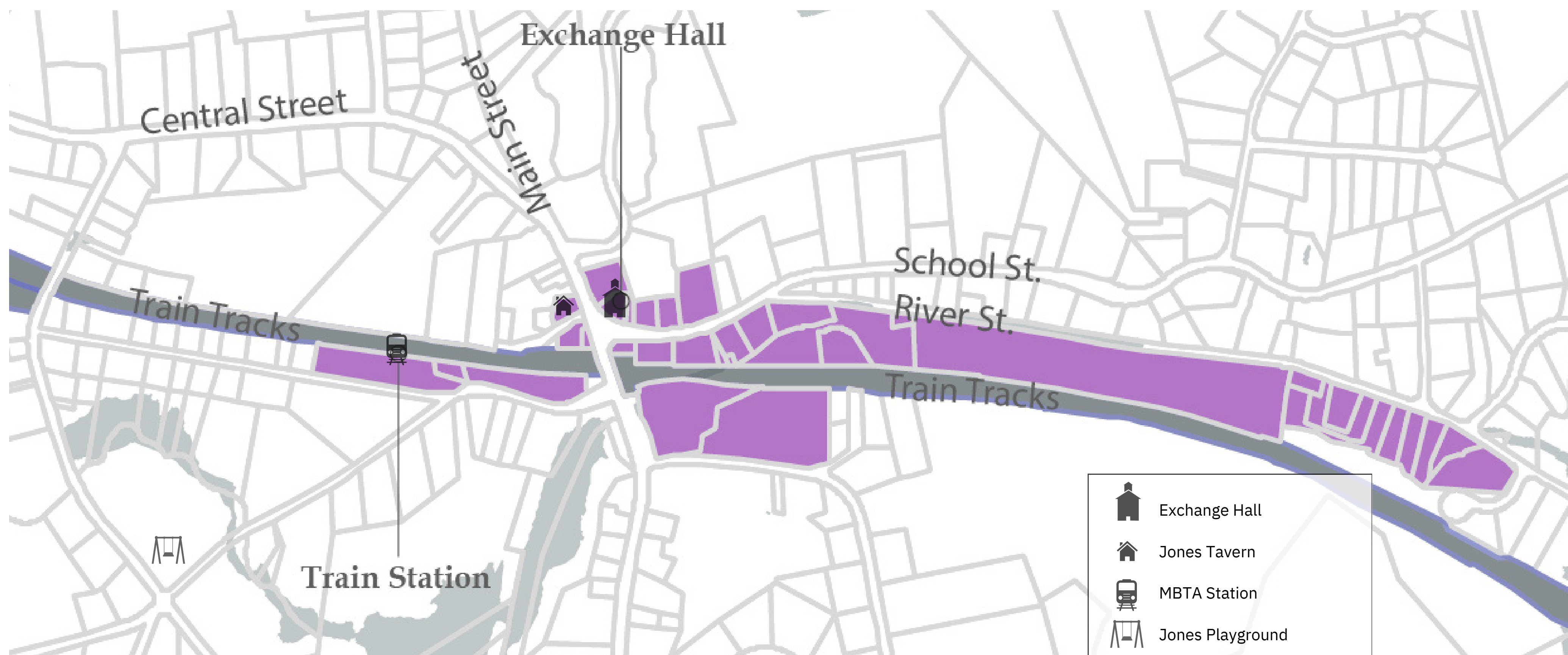
# South Acton Village District Proposed Zoning Changes



Pedestrian Improvements

Bike Lane Improvements

Commercial Use (ex: cafe)



## Recommended Zoning Changes

### Dimensional standards:

- Maximum height: 3 stories
- Maximum Floor Area Ratio:
  - 0.4 if all residential, commercial or a mix
  - If a commercial is included on the ground floor, additional floor area is allowed.

### Parking standards:

- Maximum parking spaces/dwelling unit: 1.5 spaces

### Design standards to regulate:

- Create specific South Acton Village Historic District Design guidelines for properties in the Historic District
- Shade trees and landscaping

### Use Regulations:

- Prohibits Manufacturing
- Allows dwelling conversions by-right, no requirement for owner residency

# Share your thoughts: Creation of a New District

## Main Street North & Rail Road Street Proposed Zoning Changes



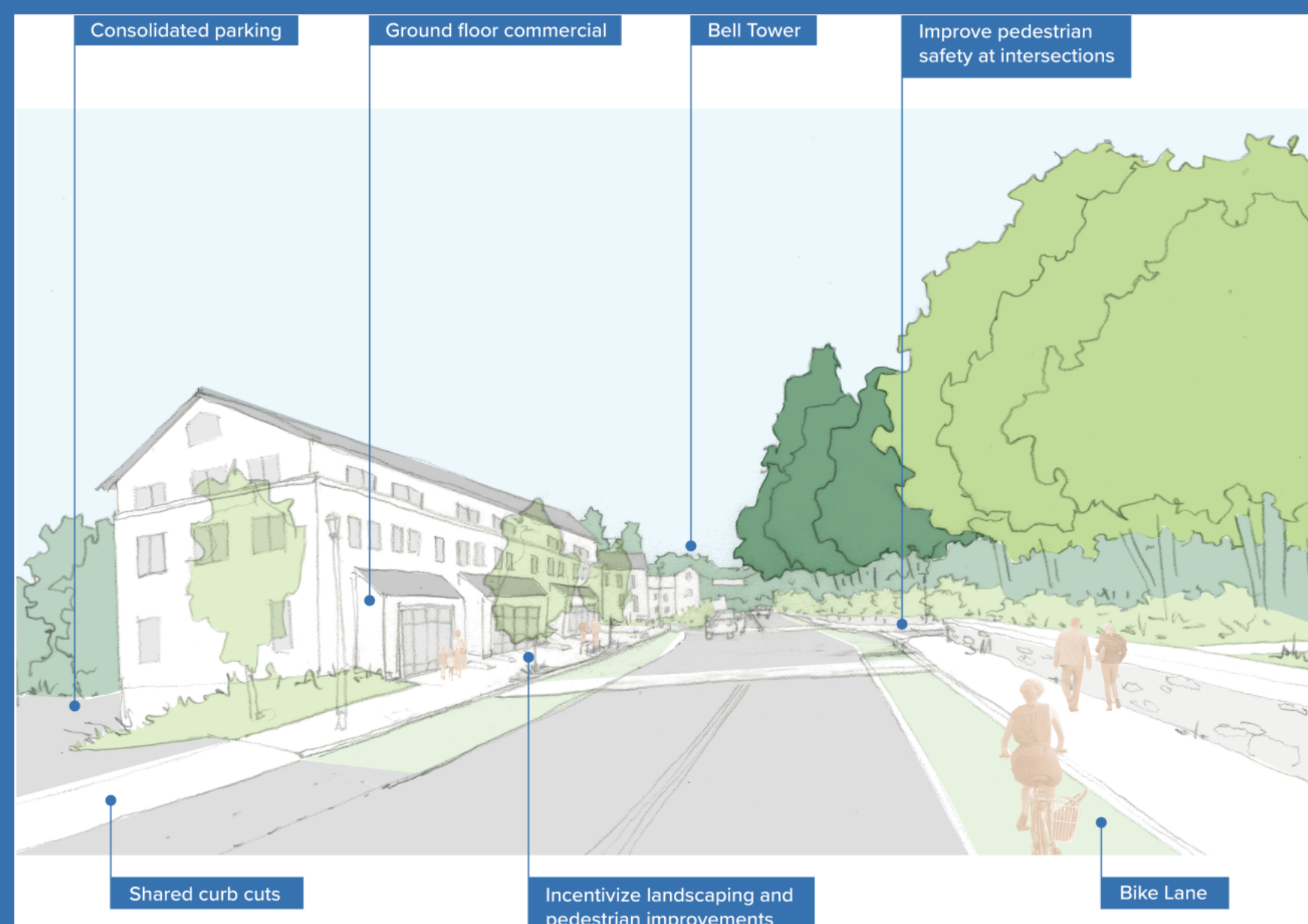
Do you support increased floor area to encourage village scale commercial development (restaurant, retail, etc.)?

Do you like the idea of increased height to encourage more commercial uses (restaurant, retail, etc.) on the ground floor?

Do you support the idea of setting a maximum parking standard for residential uses to reduce the land area used for parking?

YES

NO



### Recommended Zoning Changes

#### Dimensional standards:

- Maximum height: 3.5 stories
- Maximum Floor Area Ratio: None
- Side yard setback: None (same as West Acton)

#### Parking standards:

- **Residential**, Maximum - 1.5 parking spaces per dwelling unit (No minimum)
- **Commercial**, Minimum - 60% of commercial requirements

#### Design standards to regulate:

- Facade trims and detailing
- Visual break or articulation above second floor to create pedestrian scale
- Architectural variation in the facade for buildings facing the street
- Shade trees and landscaping

#### Use Regulations:

- Prohibits Manufacturing

# Share your thoughts: South Acton Village District



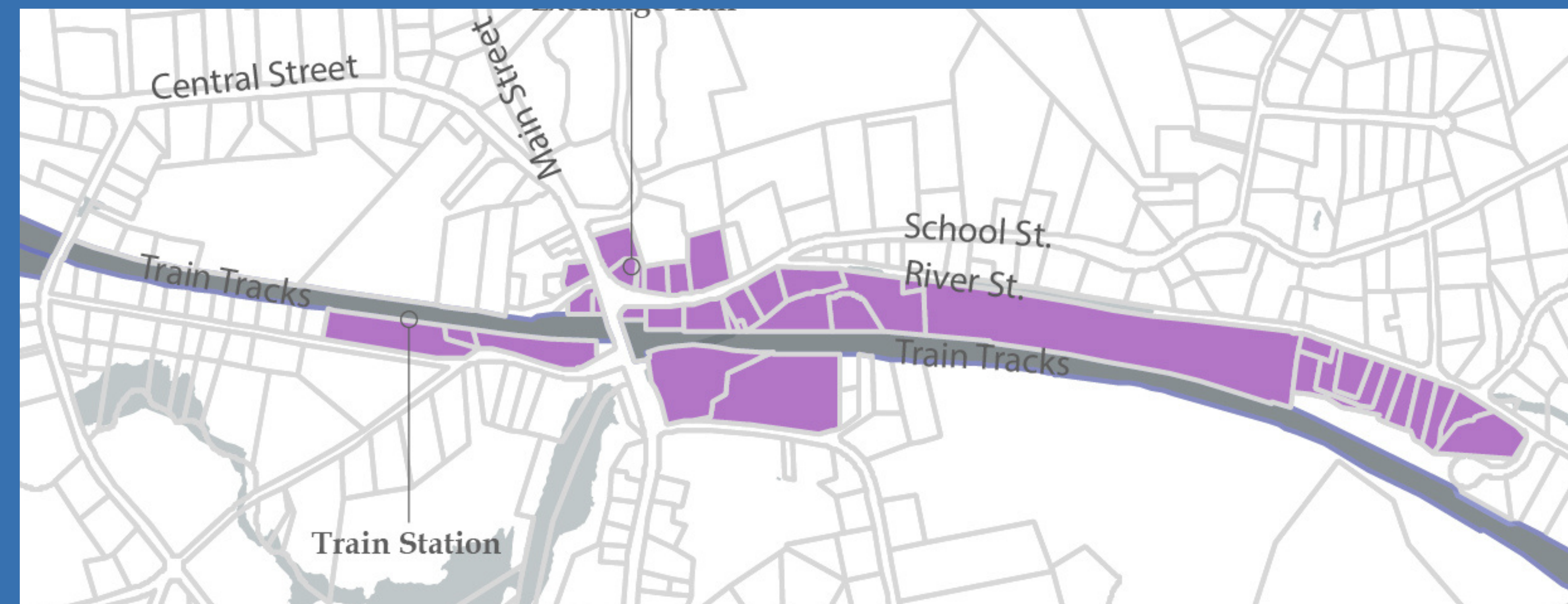
**YES**

**NO**

Do you support the idea of creating an incentive for village scale commercial development on the ground floor by allowing more floor area?

Do you like the idea of allowing 3 instead of 2.5 stories to encourage more commercial uses (restaurant, retail, etc.) on the ground floor?

Do you like the idea of creating specific design guidelines for South Acton Village's Historic District to create greater predicability for new and redevelopment?



**Recommended Zoning Changes**

- Dimensional standards:**
- Maximum height: 3 stories
  - Maximum Floor Area Ratio:
    - 0.4 if all residential, commercial or a mix
    - If a commercial is included on the ground floor, additional floor area is allowed.
- Parking standards:**
- Maximum parking spaces/dwelling unit: 1.5 spaces
- Design standards to regulate:**
- Create specific South Acton Village Historic District Design guidelines for properties in the Historic District
  - Shade trees and landscaping
- Use Regulations:**
- Prohibits Manufacturing
  - Allows dwelling conversions by-right, no requirement for owner residency

# Additional thoughts



**Please share any additional thoughts by writing them down on a sticky note and putting them up here!**