

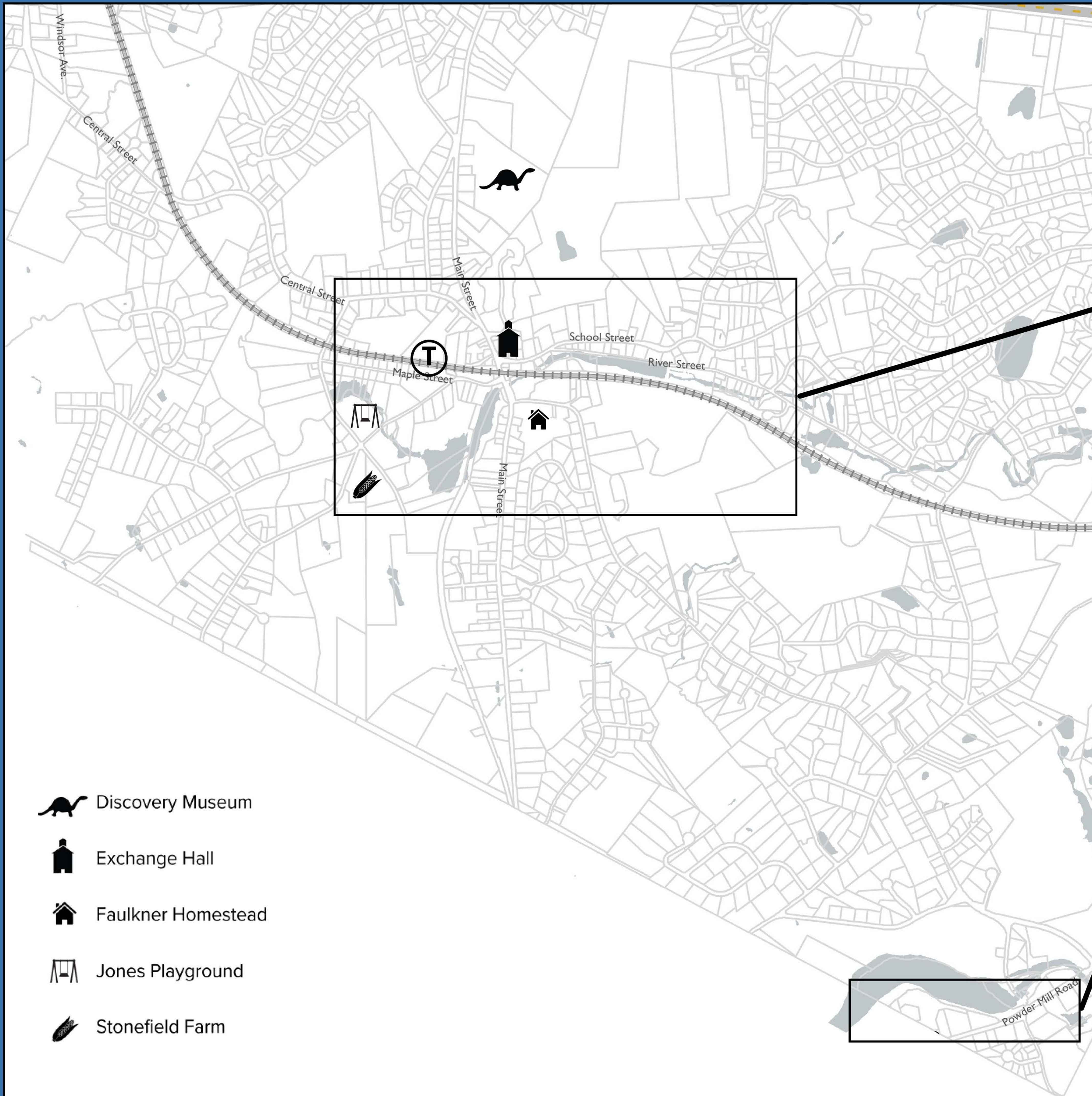
South Acton Vision and Action Plan Recommendations:

*MBTA Zoning Compliance and updates
to the 1995 SAV Plan*

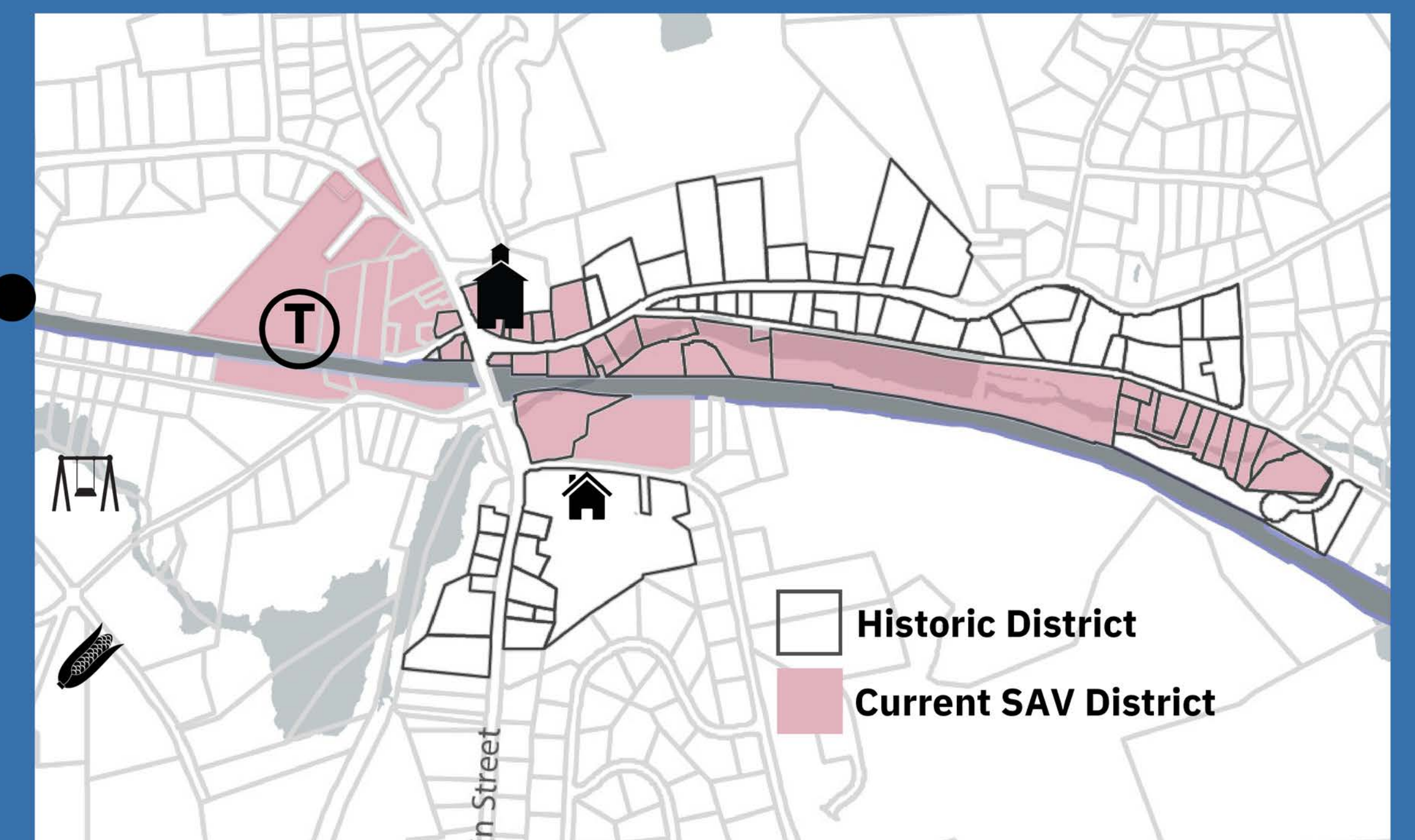


January 23, 2024

South Acton Vision and Action Plan: Study Area



South Acton Village Zoning District and Historic District



Coordination with the Powder Mill Corridor Study

MBTA Communities Zoning Compliance



- A minimum of 50 acres throughout Acton must be zoned to allow:
 - Multi-family by-right,
 - At an AVERAGE density of 15 units per acre,
 - Resulting in the potential to construct a minimum of 1,383 units **if private property owners choose to redevelop all parcels within the proposed districts**
- Allows for 10% inclusionary zoning at 80% AMI
- Allows communities to select the area(s) and set design regulations
- This law **does not require the construction of any units**, rather it mandates that zoning laws allow the option for property owners to construct multi-family units on their land without discretionary permits.
 - The zoning district(s) can be located in areas that are already developed, it does not need to be located on vacant lots.

Alignment with Acton's Plans & Goals



Climate Action Plan

STRATEGY B2: Align Acton's zoning and planning with clean energy and sustainability standards, while also ensuring diverse town housing options are available for people of all means, prioritizing access, affordability, and public health

- Actions to achieve the strategy:
- 1. Pair zoning with sustainability, allowing for **broader and more** multifamily housing choices and flexible approaches to achieve housing affordability and accessibility.
- 2. Explore opportunities for affordable housing and mixeduse development within 1/2 mile of public transit and near existing business centers and village districts.

Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan

Action Item 1.1.1.1: Concentrate growth. Guide as much as possible of any future growth to key town centers, to mixed use infill and redevelopment.

- This includes a focus on Transforming new and redeveloped commercial space to fit each village or town center's character.
- Emphasizing walking, biking, and public transportation.

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

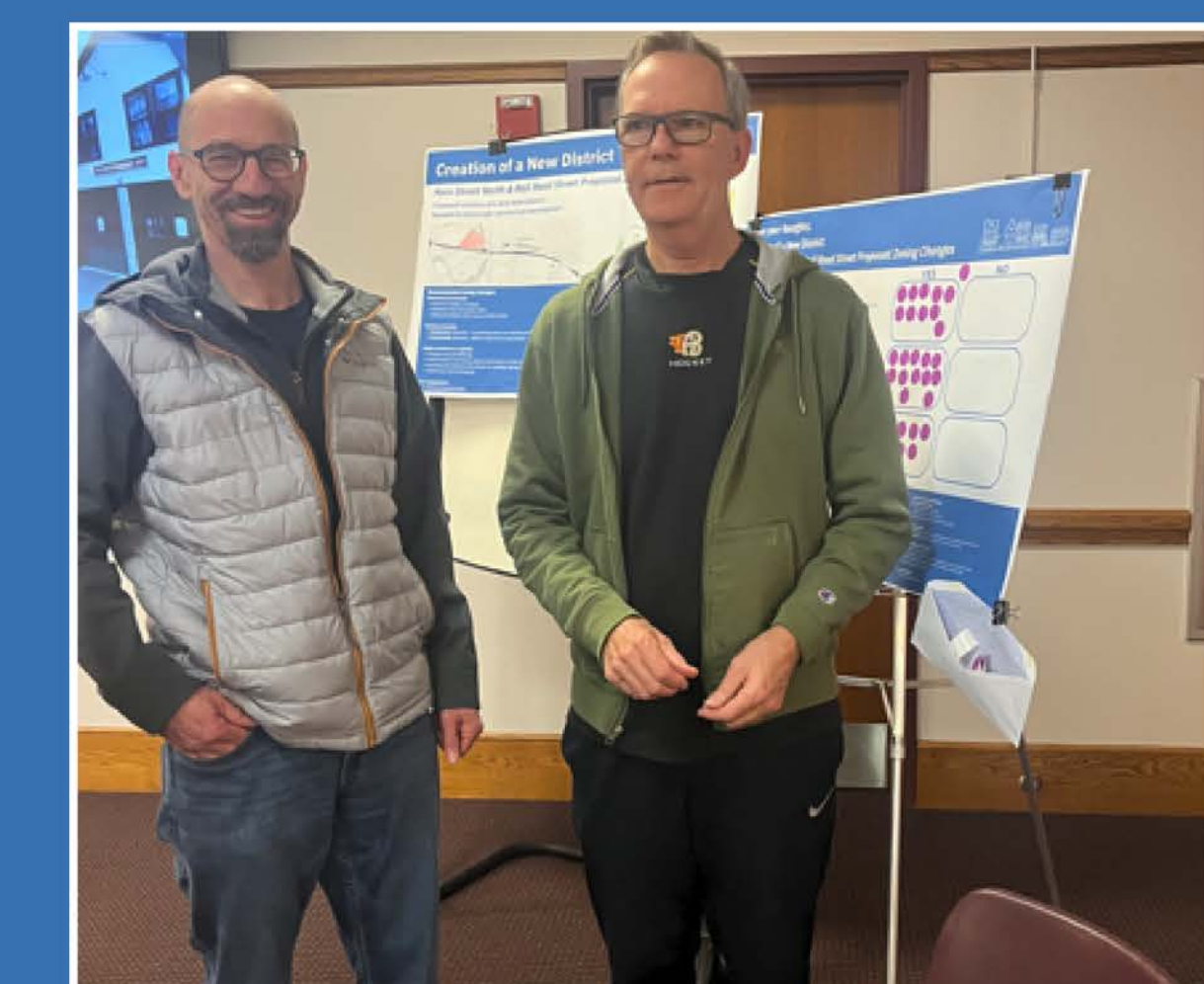
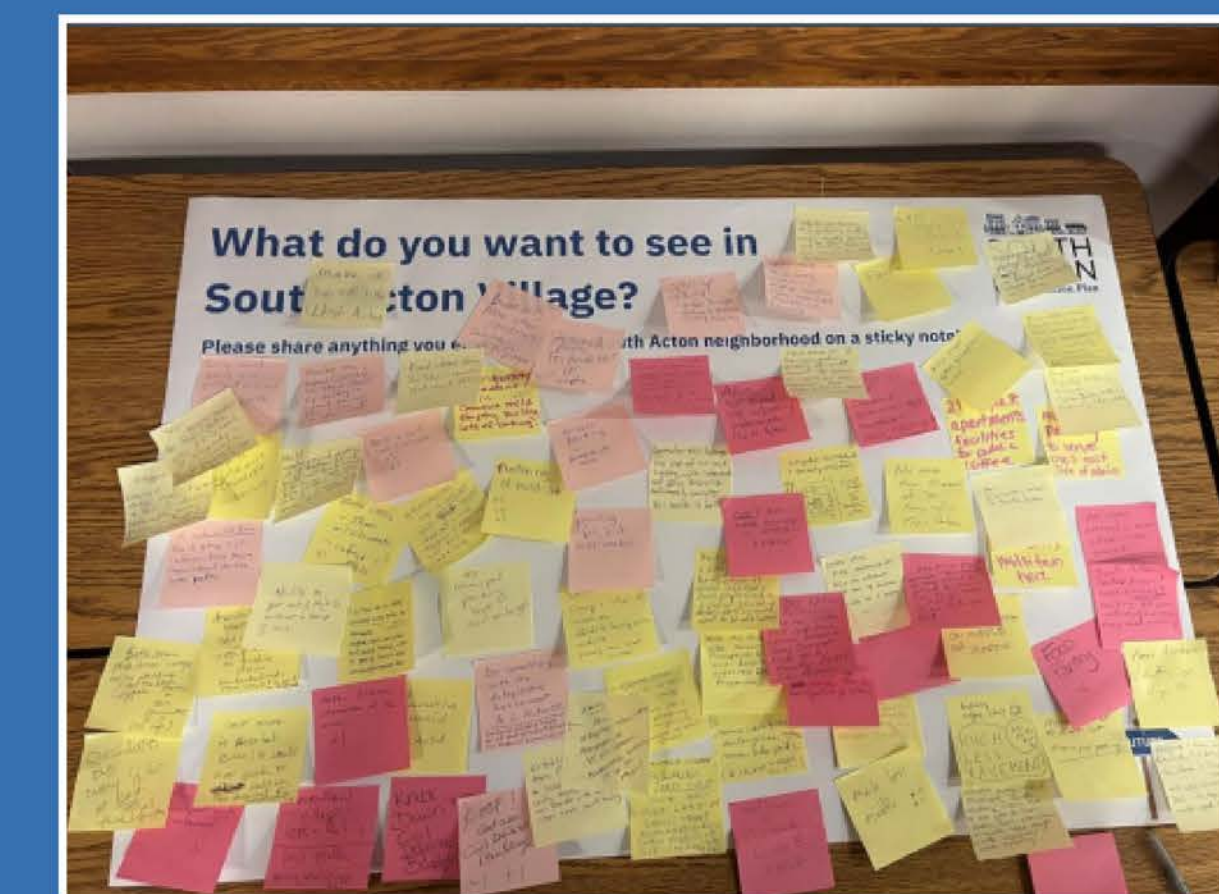
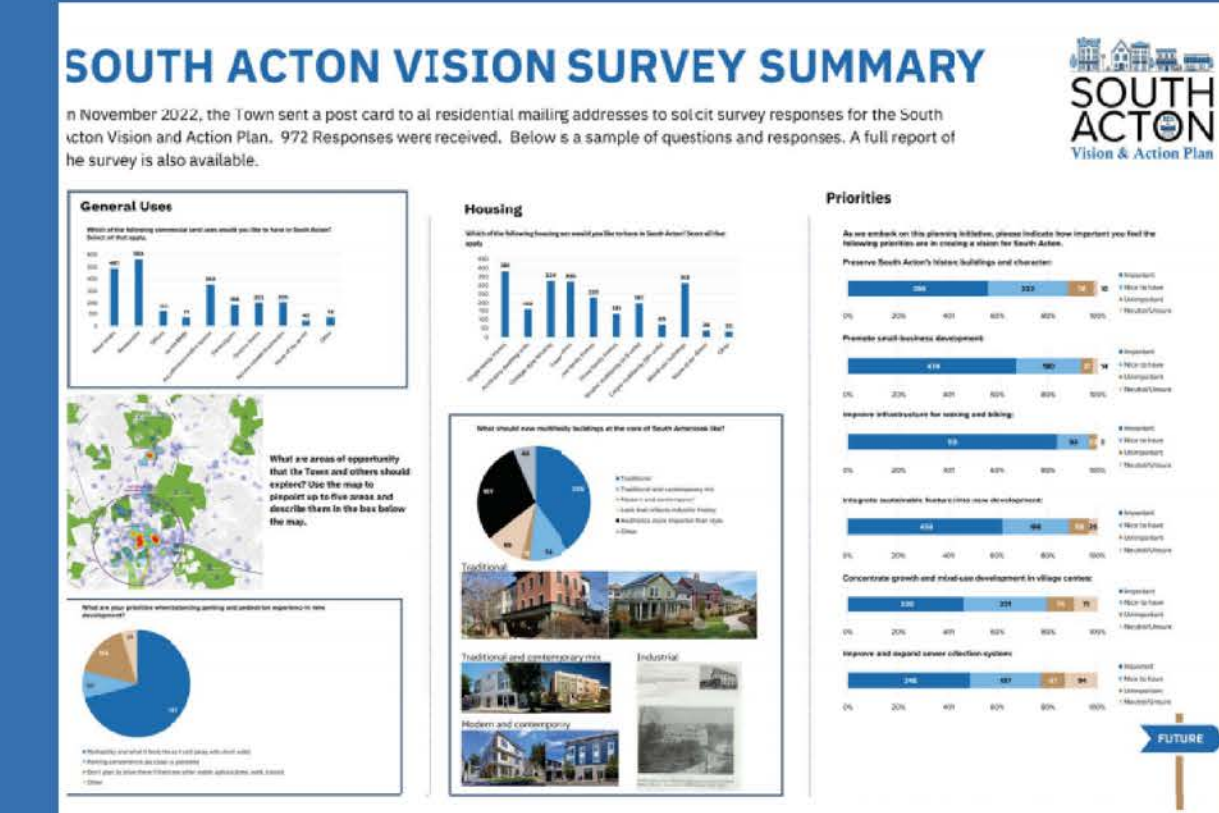
- In-person open house on Zoning Recommendations for 3A Compliance (October 3, 2023)
- In-person open house on Zoning Recommendations for South Acton Village District Core
- Meeting with business owners

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




South Acton Vision and Action Plan

Visioning: MBTA Compliance in the Context of SAV



The South Acton Vision & Action Plan has launched and we want to hear from you!



SOUTH ACTON
Vision & Action Plan

Complete the online survey by Friday, December 2nd to tell us about your vision for South Acton Village and help establish priorities for potential new zoning around the commuter rail station. Visit the link below or scan the QR code to the right: mapc.ma/south-acton-survey

Learn more about this project: mapc.org/south-acton-plan

Please call the Acton Planning Division at 978-929-6631 if you need assistance reading or accessing this information.

यदि आपको इस जानकारी को पढ़ने या उस तक पहुंचने में कठिनाई हो आवश्यकता है, तो कृपया पत्रव्यवस्था एक्सप्लिकेटिव डिवीजन से 978-929-6631 पर संपर्क करें।

如果您需要帮助阅读或访问有关该镇南部的信息，请致电 978-929-6631 联系阿克顿镇规划部门。

Por favor llame a la División de Planificación de Acton al 978-929-6631 si necesita ayuda para leer o acceder a esta información sobre planes para South Acton.

SOUTH ACTON Vision & Action Plan

MEMO: TOWN-WIDE SURVEY RESULTS

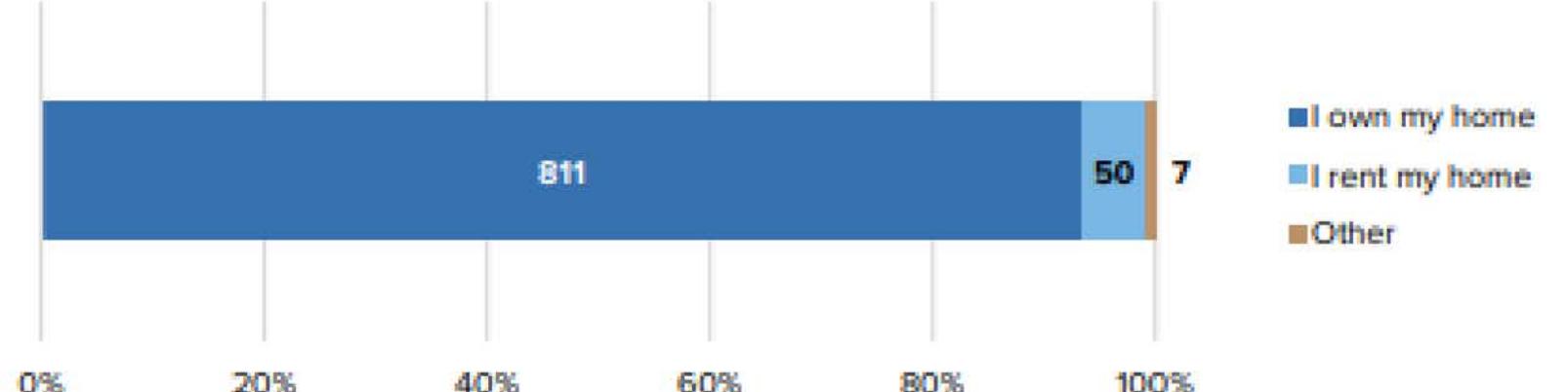
The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) hosted a town-wide survey to help establish a community vision for South Acton. Questions were vetted by the Planning Division and the South Acton Vision & Action Plan Advisory Group. A postcard was mailed through the USPS EDDM Every Door using Direct Mail to assure all registered residential mailing addresses received the postcard regardless of rental or ownership status. The survey was open from November 1 to December 5, 2022, and was completed by 972 residents and others who regularly visit the area. Responses from the survey are described in the following memo. Note: all questions were optional so not every respondent answered every question.

About You

First, respondents answered a few questions about themselves. These questions were asked to give MAPC and the Town of Acton an understanding of whether those engaged throughout this process accurately reflect the demographics of Acton.

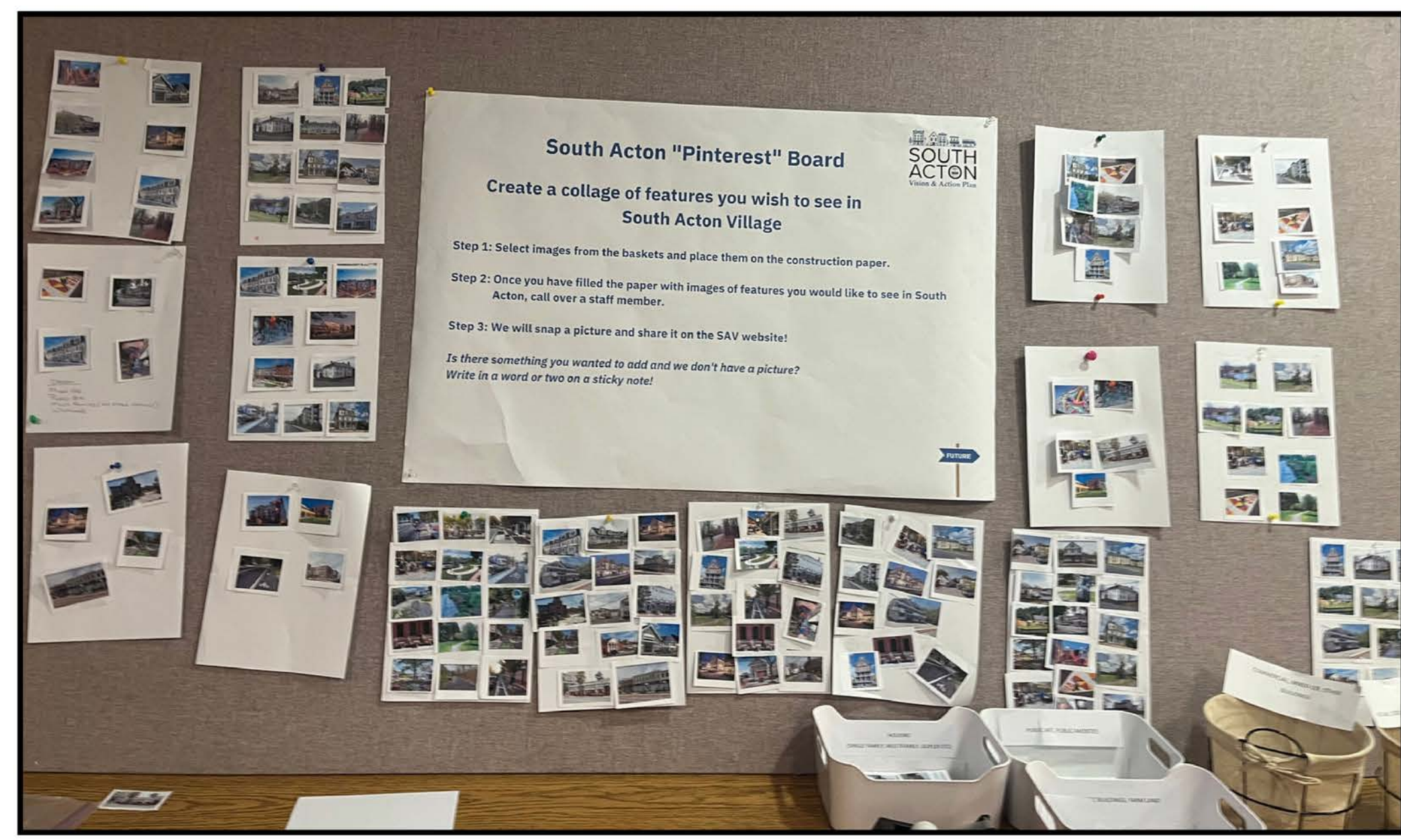
Figure 1 and Figure 2 document the answers to questions about each respondent's living situation. They were asked if they own or rent their home and the type of housing that they live in.

Living Situation of Respondents

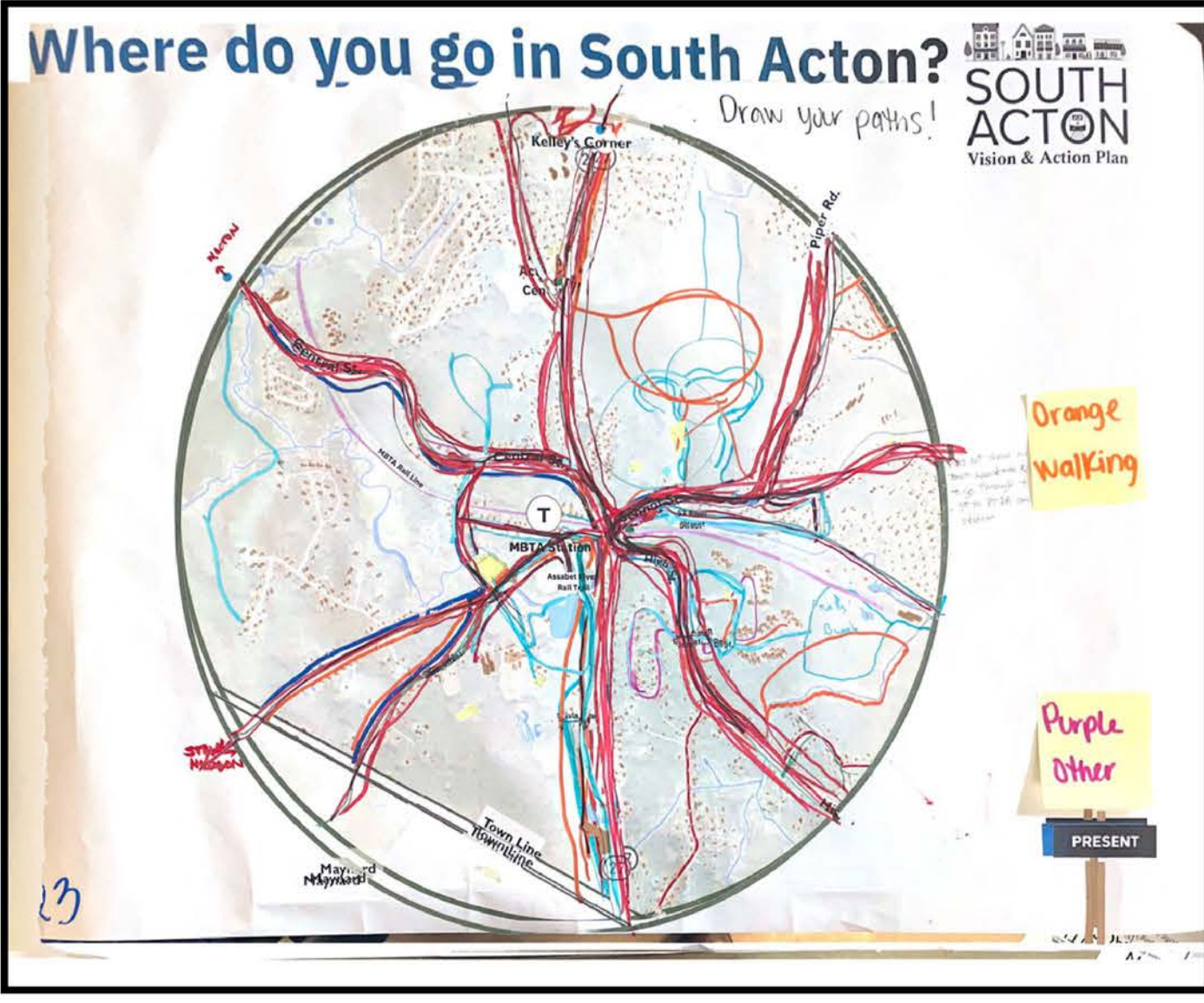


Living Situation	Count
I own my home	811
I rent my home	50
Other	7

Figure 1: How would you describe your living situation?



- The following series of aspirations provide greater detail about the vision of the future:
- Diverse housing options for all ages and income levels
 - Enhanced pedestrian and bike connectivity
 - Improved traffic safety and calming
 - Vibrant commercial uses
 - Strengthened historic assets
 - High-quality, sustainable development
 - Adequate infrastructure to support new development
 - Investment in public spaces



PLAY WITH PARCEL SIZE



PLAY WITH PARCEL SIZE

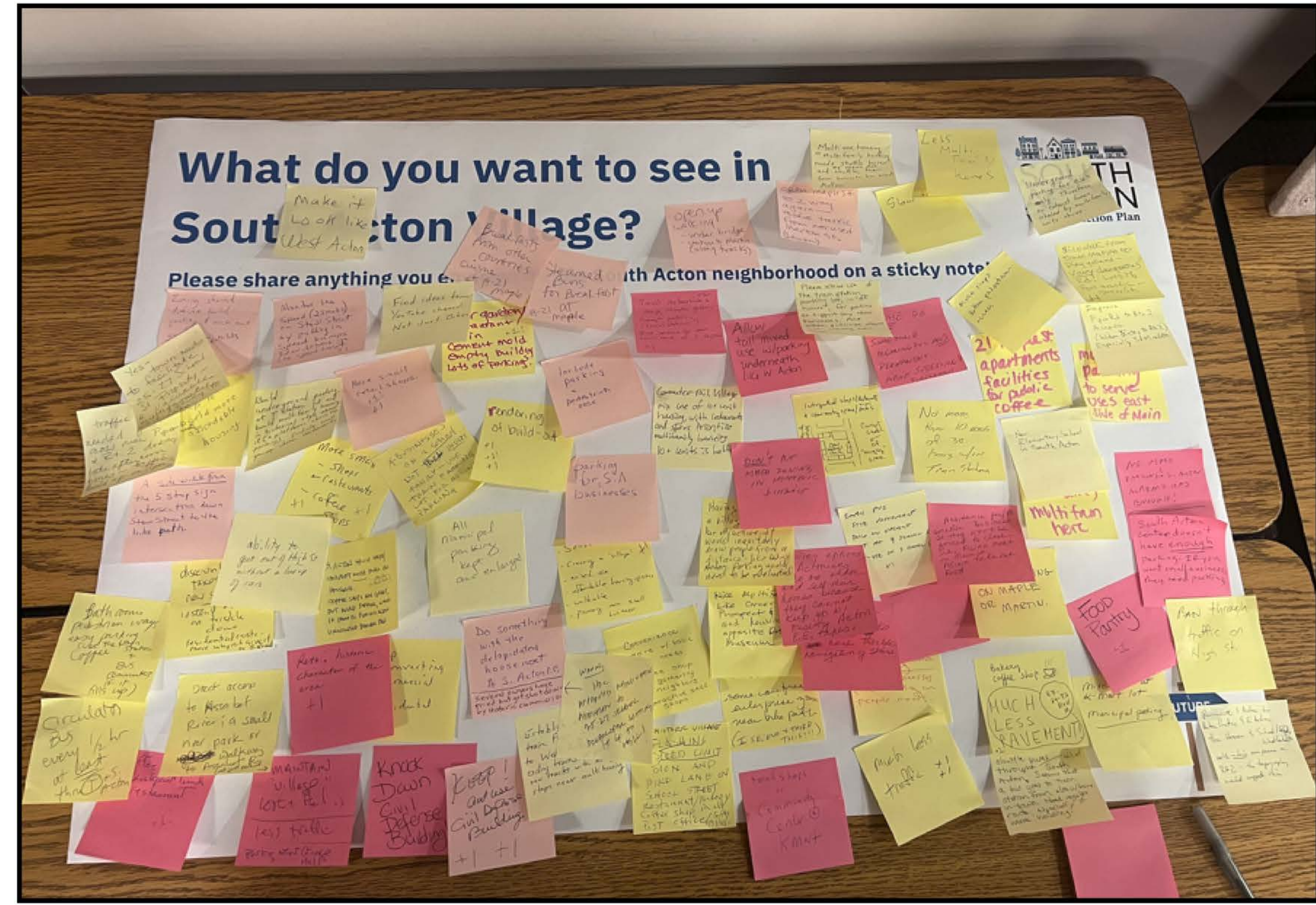
1. There is different sized parcel features available. Use the different average parcel sizes to play around with the map.

2. Make to make all sizes "optimal" for development. This can either directly translate to an increase in density or a decrease in density. Consider the impact of the different parcel sizes on the surrounding area.

3. It does not matter if the parcels are already developed. Focusing on the future use of the parcels is the goal.

4. If you find a location you think multi-family height should be allowed, put one circle marker on the parcel.

Is there another location you like to see multi-family? Please put your own name on the parcel.



South Acton Vision and Action Plan

Goals: MBTA Compliance in the Context of SAV



Vision

In the future, South Acton Village is a thriving, transit-oriented neighborhood that is welcoming to people of all ages and income levels.

The village center has retained its historic, “small town” charm while expanding its diversity of housing and business offerings.

With its convenient Commuter Rail access and location as a connector village between Kelley’s Corner, West Acton, and Downtown Maynard, South Acton draws in visitors to shop, dine, admire the many historic features, and visit recreational facilities such as the Assabet River Rail Trail and Great Hill.

It is safe and easy to travel within South Acton and from South Acton to other parts of Town, no matter the mode of transportation.

Goals

- Diverse housing options for all ages and incomes
- Improved traffic safety and traffic calming
- Vibrant commercial uses
- High quality, sustainable development
- Adequate infrastructure to support new development
- Investment in public spaces
- Strengthen historic assets
- Enhance Pedestrian and bike activity

Existing Conditions in Comparison to Vision and Goals

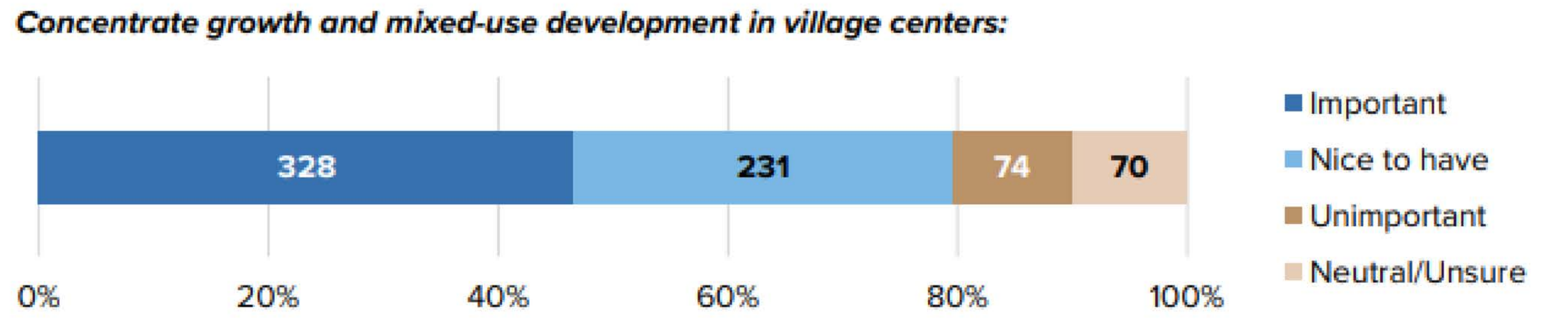
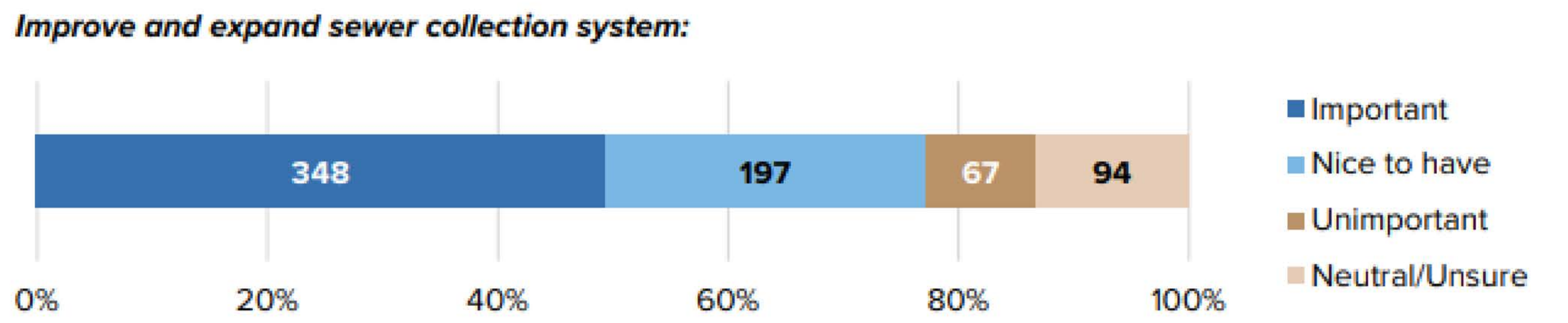
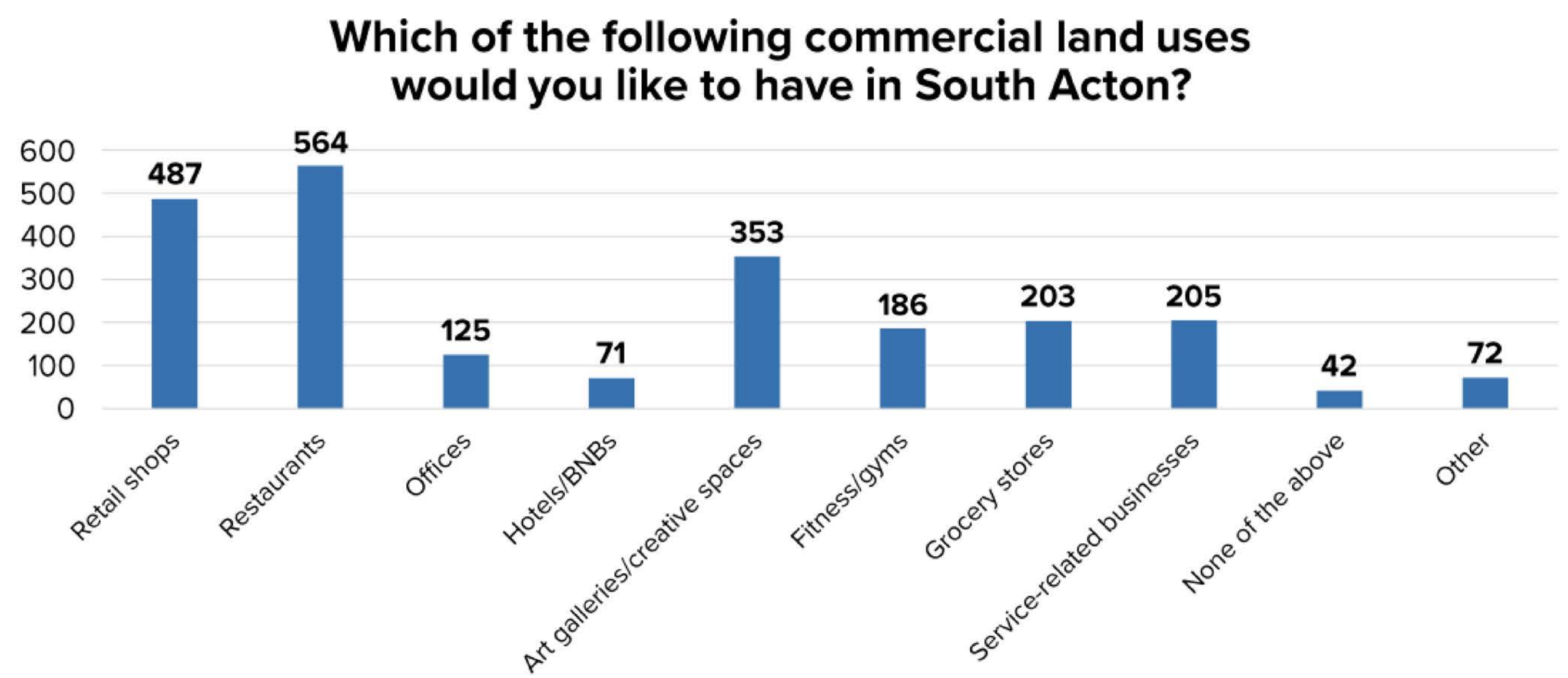


Existing Business Climate



- 1 retail (Erikson's Grain Mill)
- 0 restaurants
- 2 historic nonprofits
- 5 commercial recreation
- 2 services
- 2+/- offices

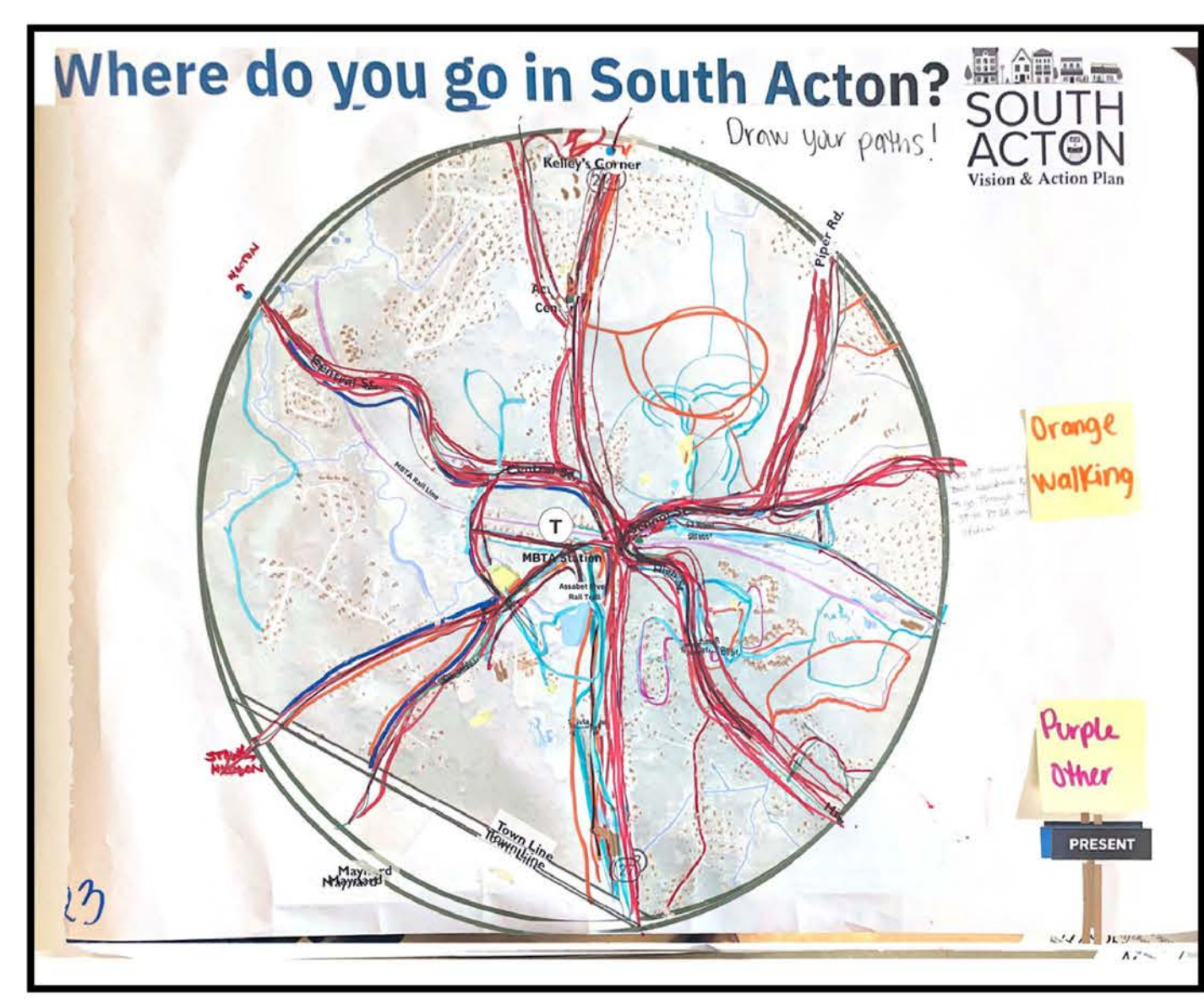
Desired business climate includes restaurants, coffee shops, retail and art galleries



Existing Conditions in Comparison to Vision and Goals

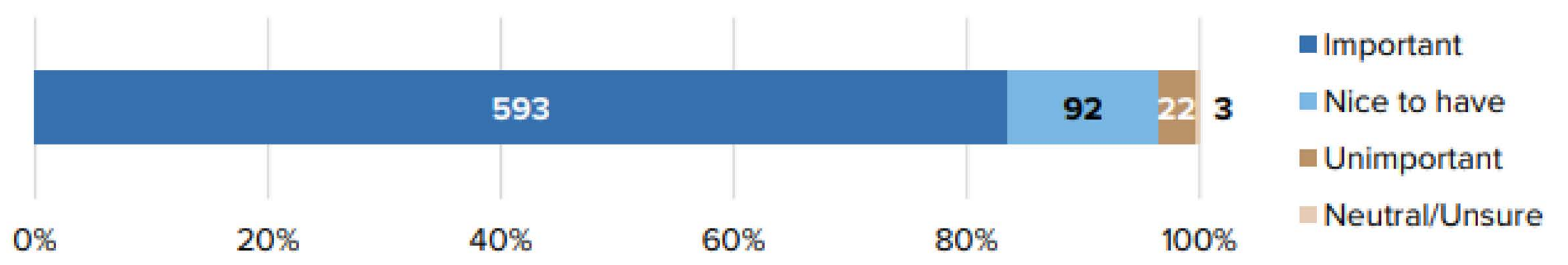


Existing Pedestrian Bike Connectivity; Traffic and Safety



Desired Pedestrian Bike Connectivity; Traffic and Safety

Improve infrastructure for walking and biking:



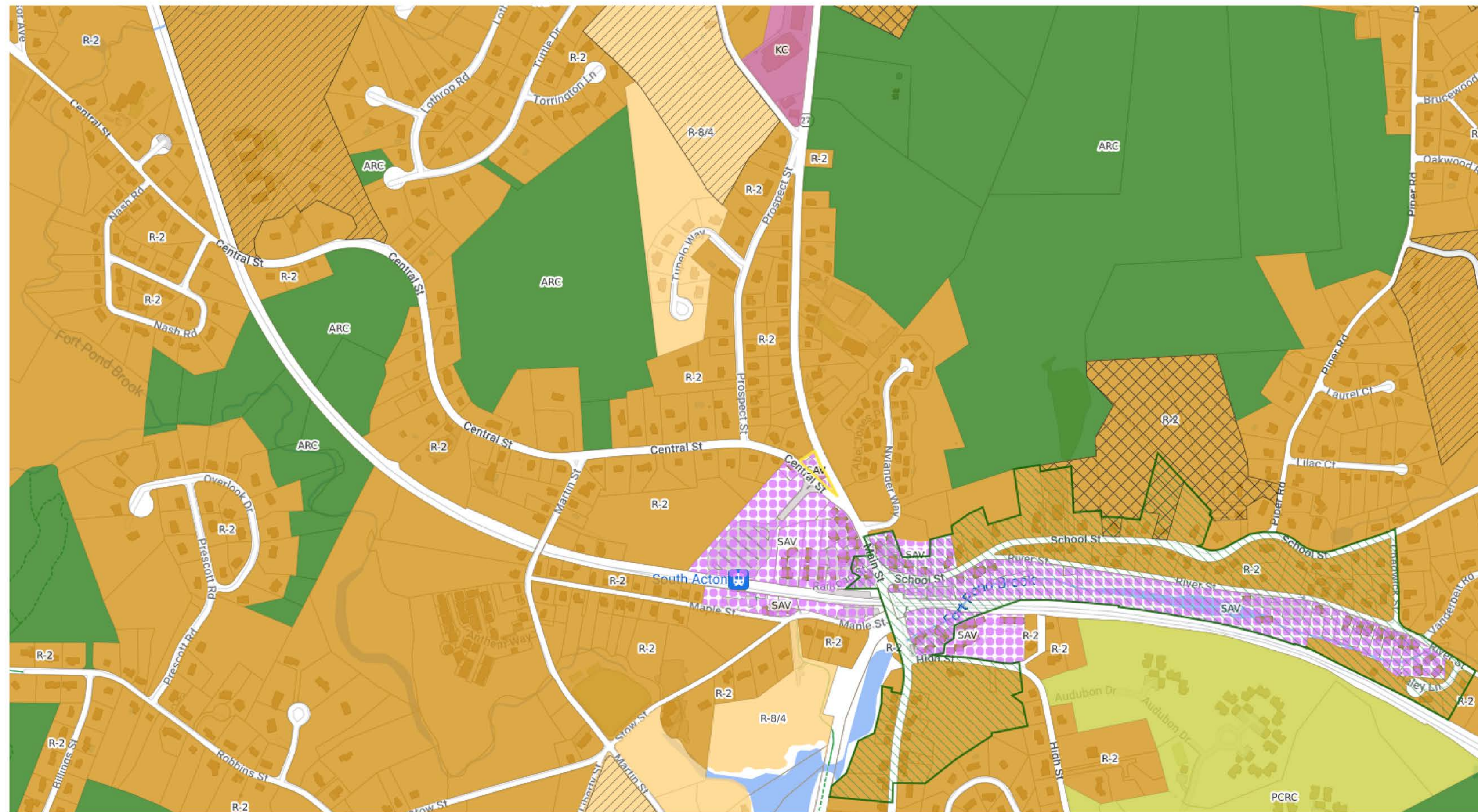
Imagine your ideal version of South Acton in the future. What are 5 words that describe this future?



Existing Conditions in Comparison to Vision and Goals



Existing Housing Options



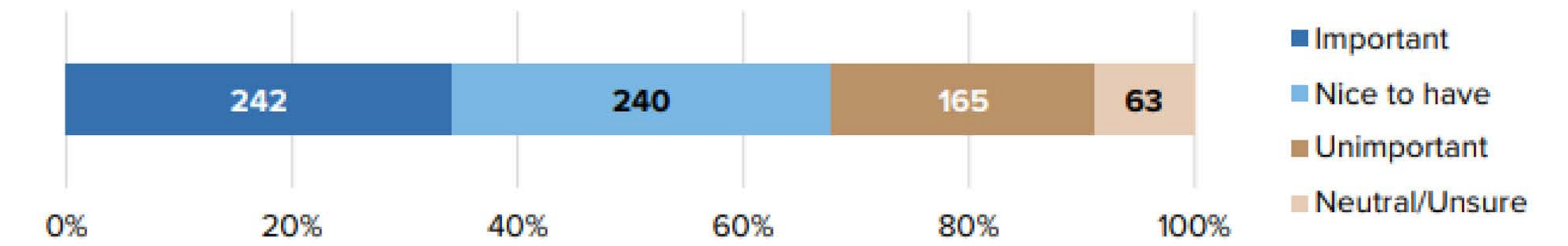
R-2 only allows single family (20,000 sf lots)
Duplexes and multifamily uses are prohibited in R-2

R-8/4 only allows single family (80,000sf lots)
Duplexes and multifamily uses are prohibited in R-8/4

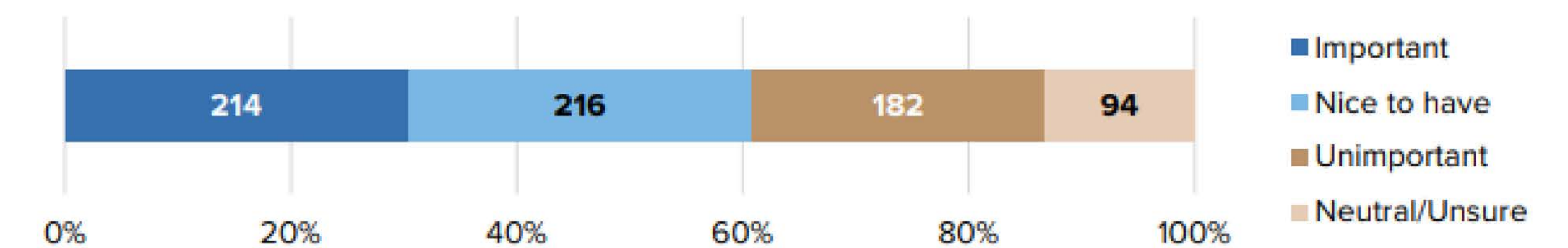
SAV requires a special permit for multi-family site plans and a use special permit for more than 4 units per structure
SAV limits floor area to 0.4 FAR and height of 36 feet

Desired Diversified Housing Options

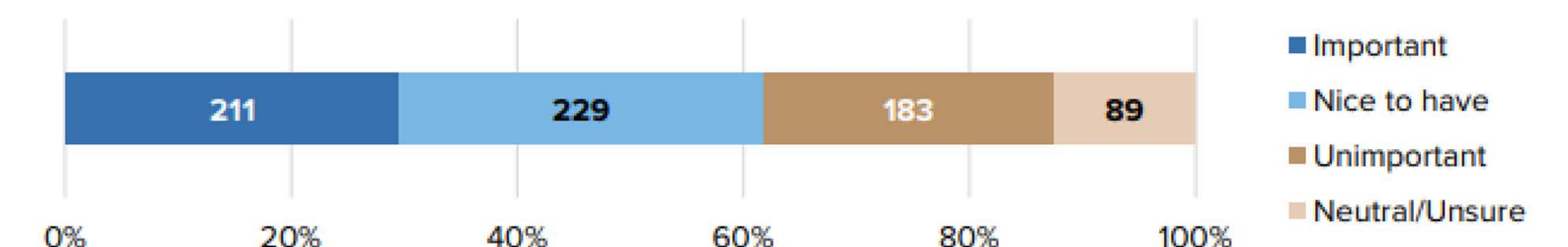
Allow a range of housing types (multi-family, duplexes, single family) and sizes:



Promote Affordable Housing for low-income households near the MBTA station:



Allow multifamily housing near the MBTA station:



Housing Types for South Acton's Needs

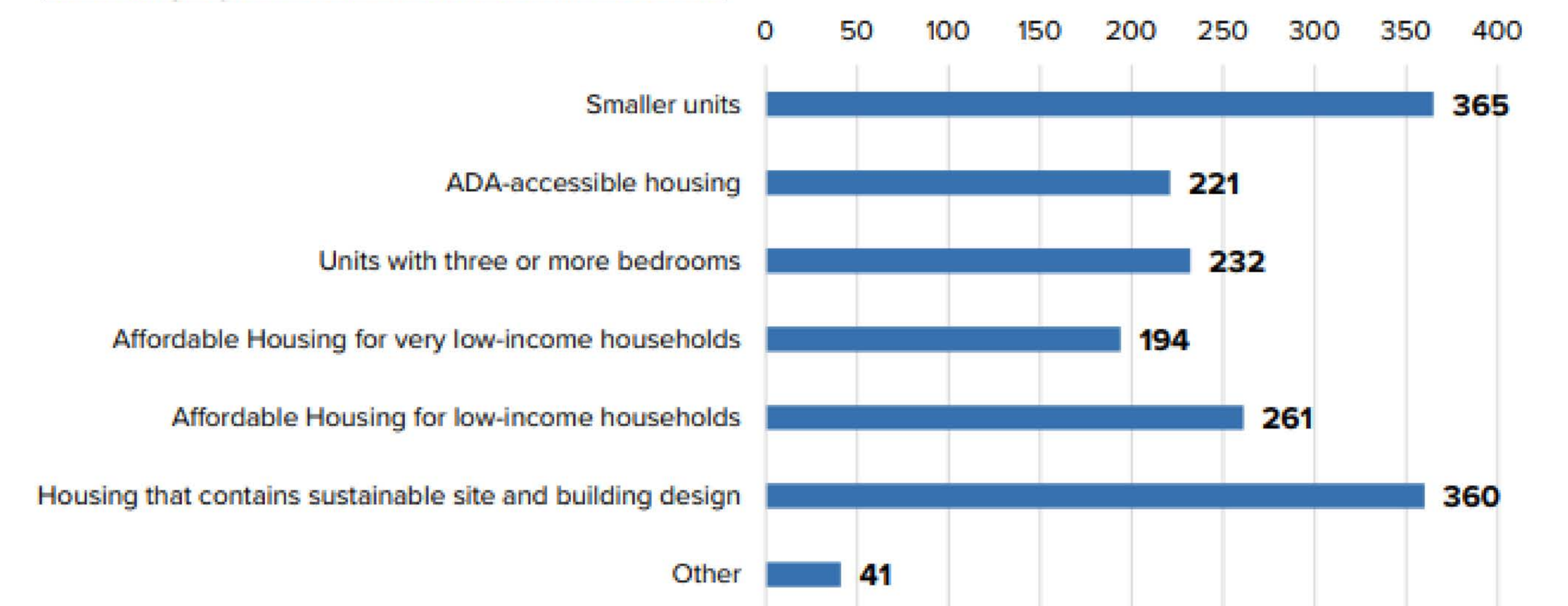


Figure 14: What types of new housing development will meet the biggest need in Acton? Select all that apply.

South Acton Vision and Action Plan

Action Items to Realize Goals



Enhanced pedestrian and bike connectivity

Support efforts to create pedestrian and bike pathway along the MBTA line, connecting under the bridge. (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)

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)

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)

South Acton Vision and Action Plan

Action Items to Realize Goals



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)

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)

South Acton Vision and Action Plan

Action Items to Realize Goals



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)

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)

South Acton Vision and Action Plan

Action Items to Realize Goals



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)

Implementing Action Items

MBTA Communities Concept



Create Two New Overlay Districts with 10% Inclusionary Zoning:

Overlay District 1: Smaller-scale multi-family homes to meet 10 acre requirements within 1/2 mile radius of the train station

- **10 units** per acre
- **36 feet** max height
- **20% minimum open space**
- **10 foot** front, side, rear setback
- Front facade articulations required (porches/entry design)
- Architectural design criteria (ex. pitch roof 9/12)
- *Allows* mixed-use on the ground floor along Main Street connecting SAV to KC

Overlay District 2: Larger-scale multi-family homes

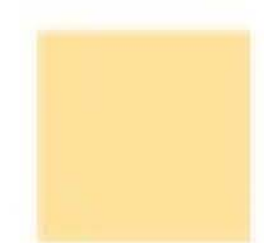
- **25 units** per acre on two larger sites that are outside the 1/2 mile radius, but close to village or commercial centers.
- **55 feet** max height (4.5 stories)
- **40% open space**
- **35 foot** front yard and **50 foot** side and rear setbacks
- Architectural design criteria (ex. pitch roof 6/12, flat must have parapet)
- Landscape, sidewalk and design regulations



Recommendations for MBTA Zoning Compliance Locations



Changes based on public feedback and preliminary disparate impact review locations have been revised



Overlay District 1 (smaller scale multi-family):

- Extends district along Central Street creating a connection corridor between WAV and SAV



Overlay District 2 (larger scale multi-family):

- Removal of 68 Parker Street (Parker Street Apartments)
- Removal of 88 Parker Street and parcels behind (WR Grace North)
- Addition of 113 Central Street (also owned by Dover Heights)



Zoning Recommendations

MBTA Communities Overlay District 1



Zoning Recommendations

Density standards:

- Maximum density: 10 units per acre
- Maximum floor area ratio (FAR): none

Dimensional standards:

- Minimum lot size: 5,000 square feet
- Maximum height: 2.5 stories
- Minimum open space: 20%
- Minimum front yard setback: 10 feet
- Minimum side yard setback: 10 feet
- Minimum rear yard setback: 10 feet
- Minimum frontage: 50 feet

Parking standards:

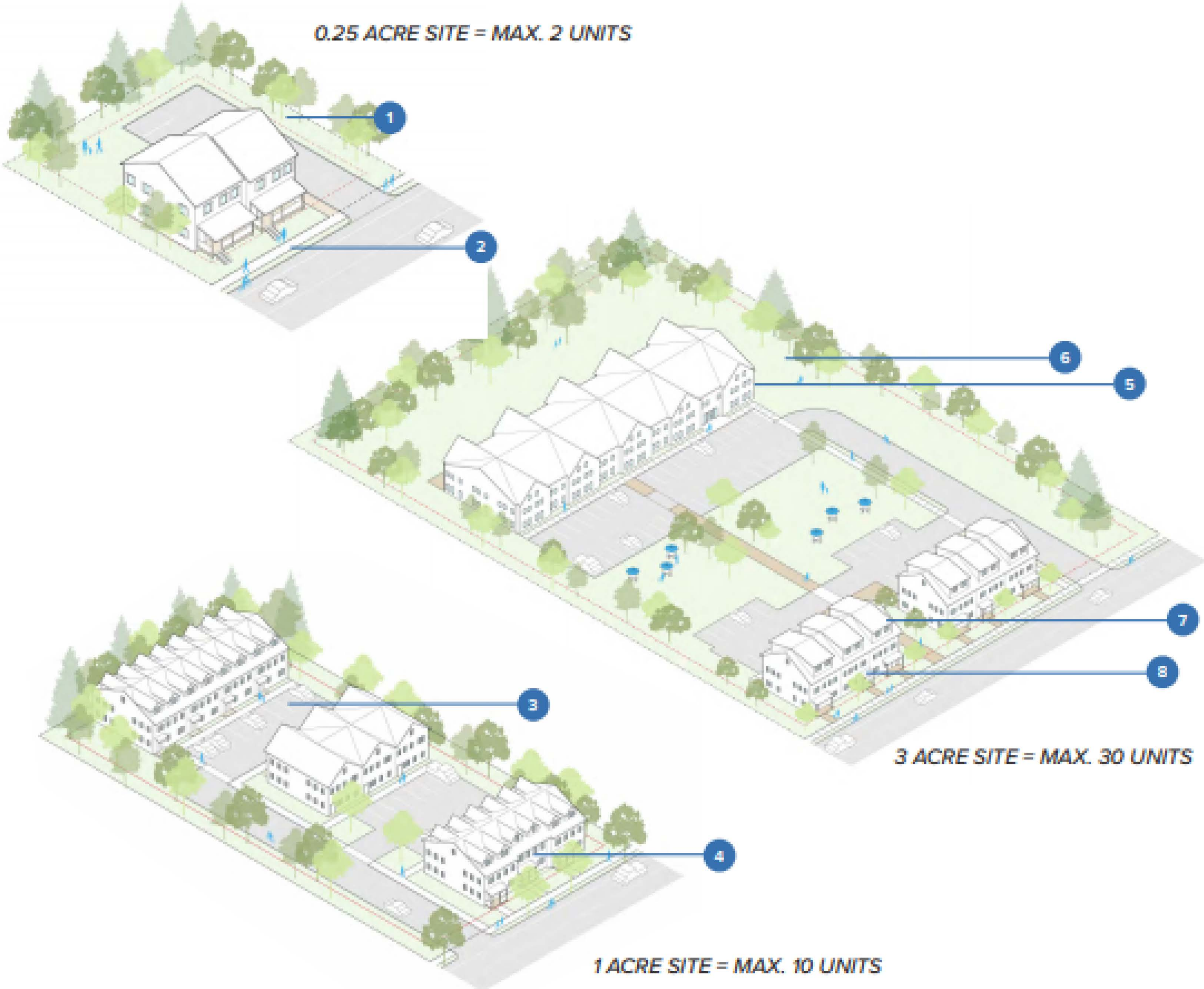
- Maximum parking spaces/dwelling unit: 1.5

Design standards to regulate (examples):

Items are labeled on illustrations to the right

- 1 Landscape screening
- 2 Sidewalk width
- 3 Parking location
- 4 Facade articulation/materials
- 5 Principal entrance design
- 6 Window and door fenestration
- 7 Roof pitch
- 8 Front porch element

What could new housing in this overlay district look like?



Zoning Recommendations

MBTA Communities Overlay District 2



Zoning Recommendations

Density standards:

- Maximum density: 25 units per acre
- Maximum floor area ratio (FAR): none

Dimensional standards:

- Minimum lot size: 43,560 square feet (1 acre)
- Maximum height: 4.5 stories
- Minimum open space: 40%
- Minimum front yard setback: 35 feet
- Minimum side yard setback: 50 feet
- Minimum rear yard setback: 50 feet
- Minimum frontage: 50 feet

Parking standards:

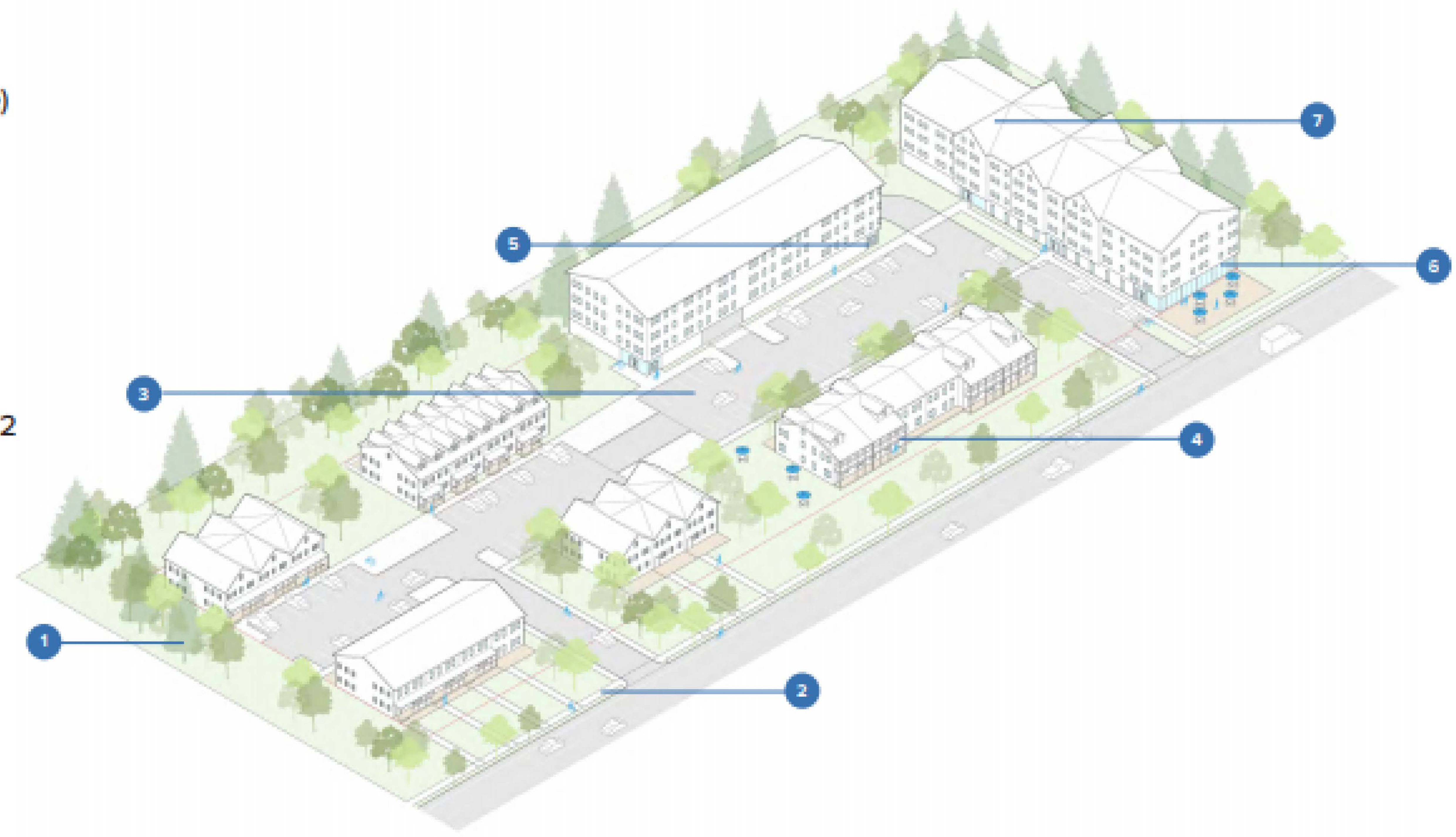
- Maximum parking spaces per dwelling unit: 2

Design standards to regulate (examples):

Items are labeled on illustrations to the right

- 1 Landscape screening
- 2 Sidewalk width
- 3 Parking location
- 4 Facade articulation/materials
- 5 Principal entrance design
- 6 Window and door fenestration
- 7 Roof pitch

What could new housing in this overlay district look like?





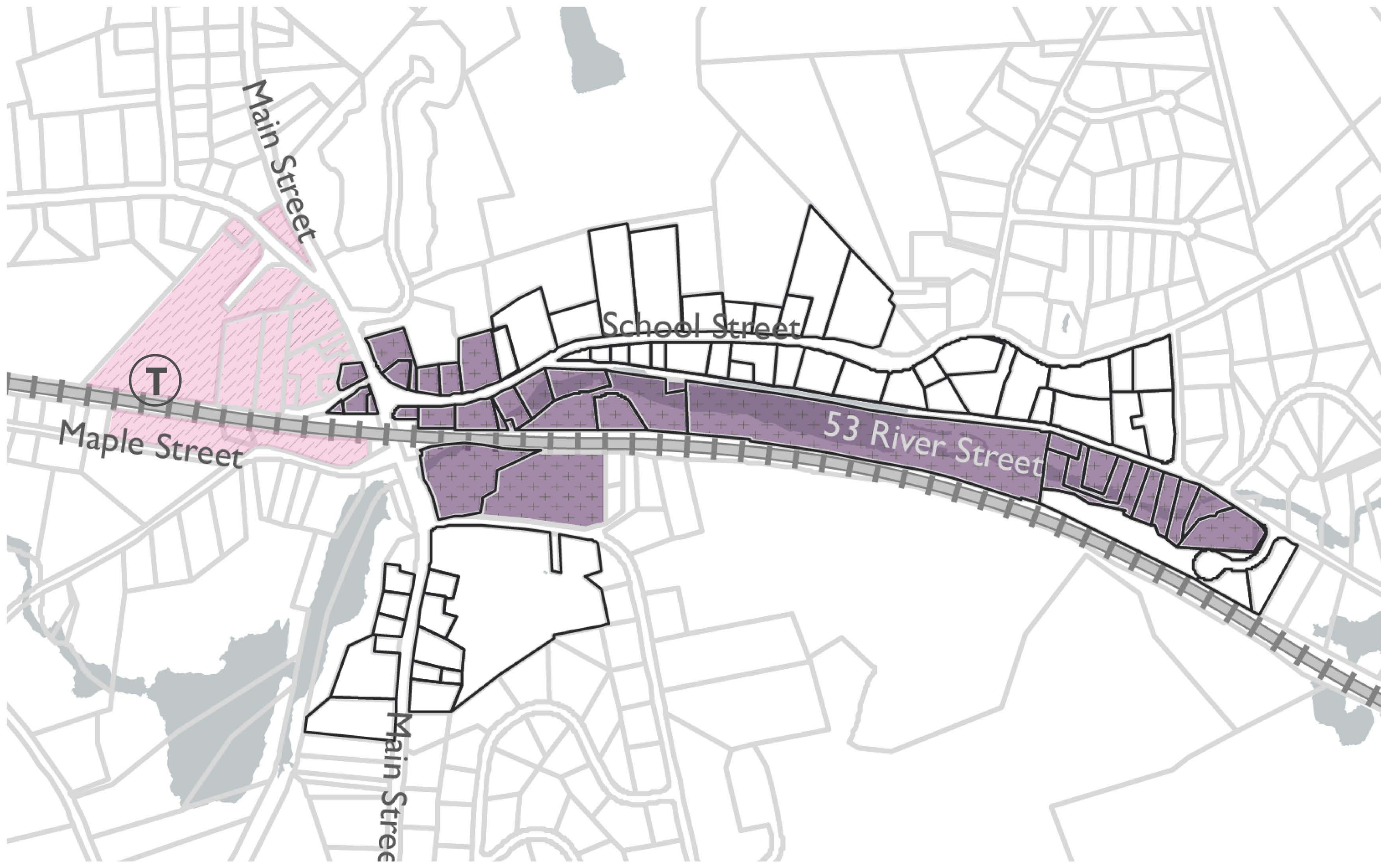
5 ACRE SITE = MAX. 125 UNITS

Implementing Action Items South Acton Village Core



Divide out the South Acton Village Zoning District into two distinct but compatible districts

-  **SAV 1** - *Smaller scale; more contextually sensitive to the historic district*
-  **SAV 2** - *Stronger incentives for commercial amenities and considers proximity to train station and existing parking facilities.*



South Acton Vision and Action Plan

South Acton Village Core Zoning Recommendations

SAV-1



Recommended Zoning Changes

Dimensional standards:

- 5 foot min. front yard setback; 10 foot max. setback same as WAV)
- Maximum height: 3 stories (40 feet)
- Maximum Floor Area Ratio:
 - 0.4 FAR base
 - Allows FAR of 1.0 if commercial on the ground floor fronting the street

Parking standards:

- **Residential:** Minimum 1 parking space per dwelling unit
- **Commercial:** No minimum; no maximum parking for desired uses (restaurant, retail)
- Allows parallel parking in front for “on-street” parking

Design standards to regulate:

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

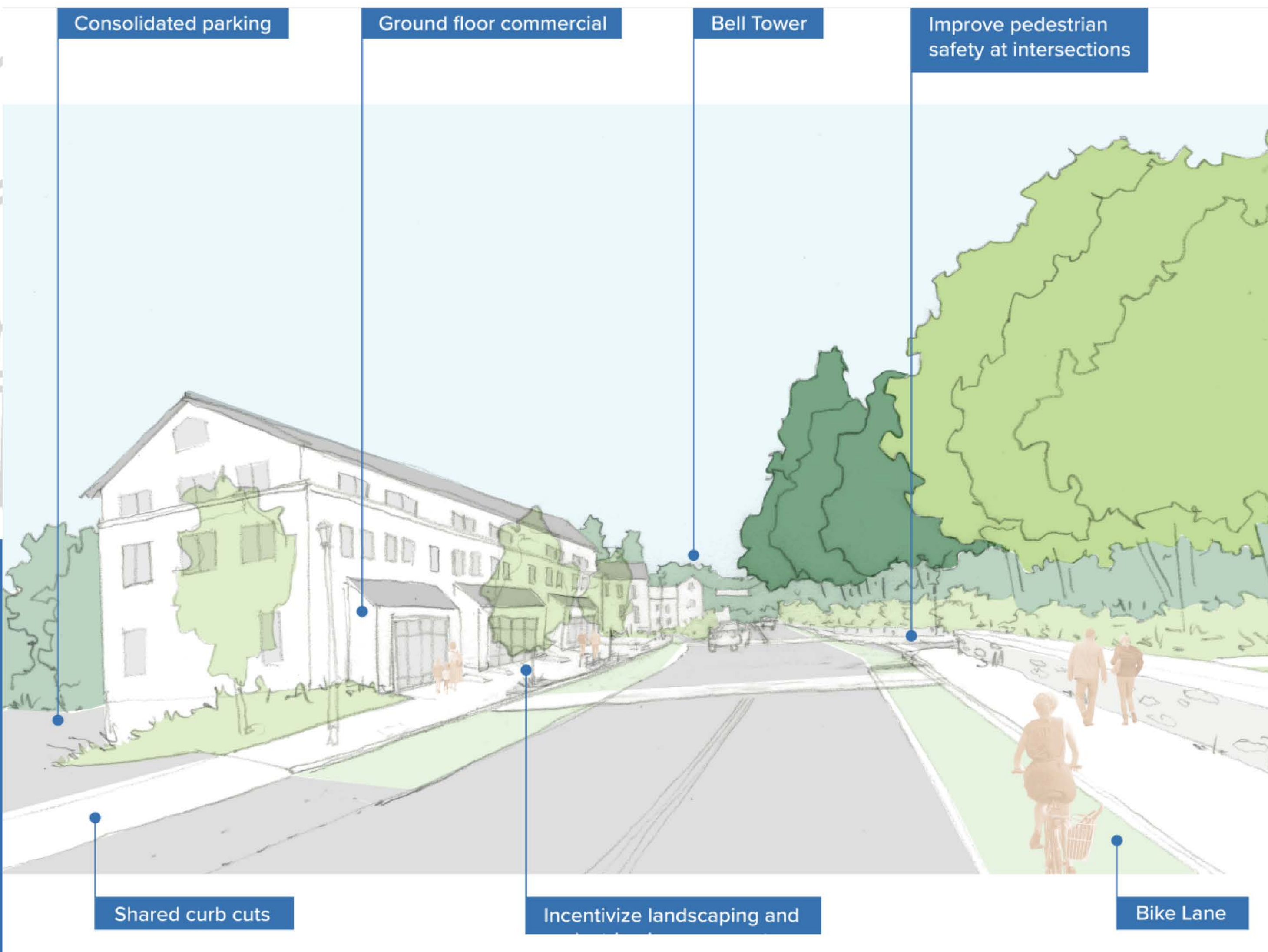
Use Regulations:

- Prohibits Manufacturing and Building Trade Shop
- Removes special permit requirement for more than 4 units per structure
- Dwelling Conversion allowed by-right; no owner occupancy required

South Acton Village Core Zoning Recommendations Details of SAV - 2



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



Recommended Zoning Changes

Dimensional standards:

- Maximum height: 3.5 stories (45 feet)
- Maximum Floor Area Ratio: None / commercial must be on ground floor fronting the street
- Side yard setback: None (same as West Acton)
- Min. 5 foot front setback; maximum 10 foot front yard setback
- Allows parallel parking in front for "on-street" parking

Parking standards:

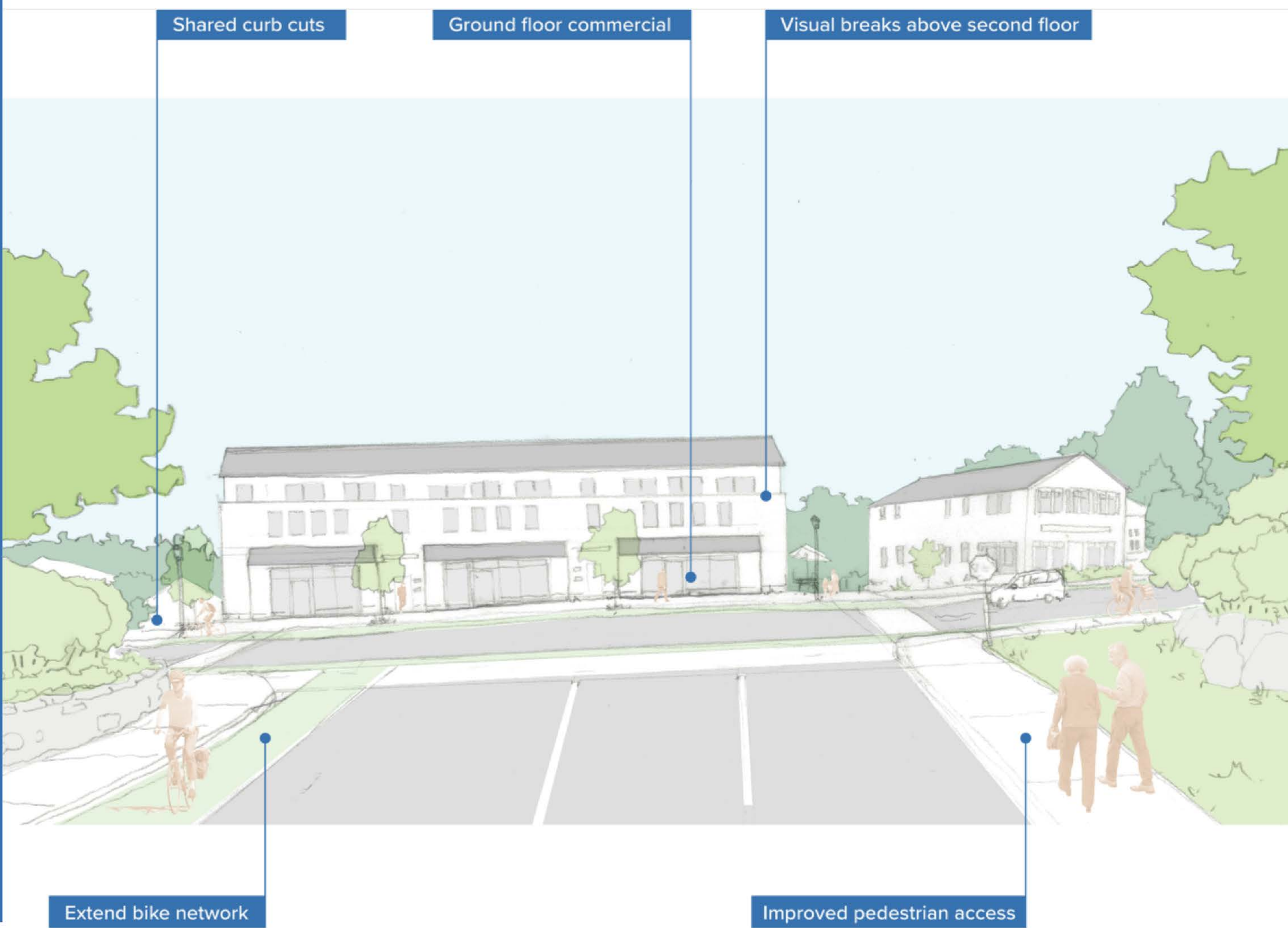
- **Residential** - Minimum 1 parking spaces per dwelling unit
- **Commercial** - No Minimum; Maximum parking for desired uses (restaurant, retail)

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:

- Commercial component must be on the ground floor fronting the street
- Prohibits Manufacturing and Building Trade Shop
- Removes special permit requirement for more than 4 units per structure
- Dwelling Conversion allowed by-right; no owner occupancy required



South Acton Vision and Action Plan

Bringing It All Together



Strengthening Key Villages & Centers with Linkage Zones



West Acton Village

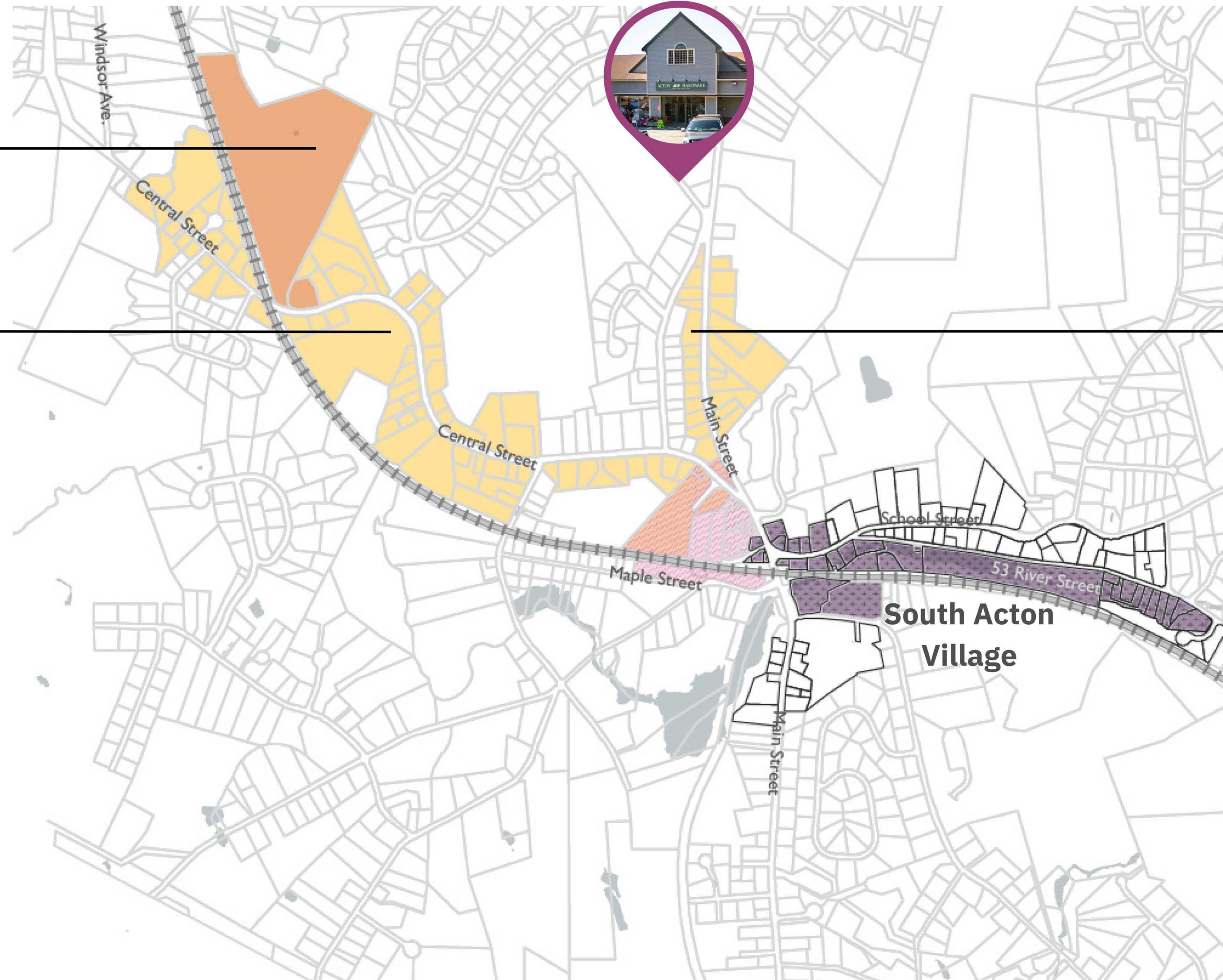


Kelley's Corner



Larger Scale Multi family nestled a 1/2 mile between WAV and SAV

Small scale multi-family a 1/2 mile or less between WAV and SAV; acts as a connector corridor, providing opportunities to live near transit and amenities; residential component supports commercial nearby



Small scale multi-family also allows for commercial on the ground floor, creating a transition zone between Kelley's Corner Zoning and mixed-use South Acton Village



Powder Mill Corridor

