

MEETING REPORT NO. 14

PROJECT: **Town of Needham Downtown Study**

DATE: 23 May 2007

LOCATION: Town Hall

PRESENT: Downtown Study Committee (DSC)

Kate Fitzpatrick	Town Manager
Jack Cogswell	Board of Selectmen
Jerry Wasserman	Chairman, Board of Selectmen
Bob Smart	Cochair, DSC Committee
Moe Handel	Cochair, Planning Board
Lee Newman	Planning Director
Nicole Bourassa	Assistant Planner
Joyce Moss	Economic Development Officer
Mark Gluesing	Design Review Board
Peter Fugere	Needham Housing Authority
Kathy Lewis	Needham Business Association
Paul Good	Chair, Needham Community Revitalization Committee
John Edgar	Economic Development Advisory Committee
Jeanne McKnight	Planning Board & League of Women Voters
John J. McQuillan	Business Owner
Bob Hentschel	Property Owner
Peter Friedenber	Citizen at Large
Martin Batt	Citizen at Large

DiNisco Design Partnership (DDP)

Kenneth DiNisco
Jon Oxman

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. The purpose of this meeting was to review preliminary height and density guidelines and continue review of alternative development scenarios. See attached presentation and markups.

2. MAXIMUM HEIGHT / DENSITY GUIDELINES

- 2.1. Maximum Height and Density Plans comparing existing to proposed were presented. There was a general consensus on the following height / density guidelines in principal:
- 3+1 Stories for Center Business District / Town Hall Cornice Line – Height Guidelines for the Center Business District should be 3 stories plus an additional story to be allowed if setback or with sloped architectural roof. The cornice height of Town Hall should be established as a height limit to three stories, at least immediately surrounding Town Common as shown in the Town Common cross sections.
 - 2+1 Stories for Chestnut Street Business District – There are two separate areas that comprise this district:
 - Chestnut Street Business District to the West of the Center Business District – This area is between the MBTA commuter rail line and Garden Street. All but one parcel in this area fronts Garden Street, which is residential in character.
 - Chestnut Street Business District to the South of the Center Business District – With the exception of the Medical Overlay District, which is currently zoned for 4 Stories.
 - Density On Either Side Of A Street – Density guidelines should provide for complementary densities across streets so that for example a small residential scale is not across the street from a larger “downtown scale”.
 - Transition Zones – There should be transition zones with reduced density and form guidelines which respond to the smaller scale at the edges of the study area which are adjacent to residential districts. Existing zoning of the three sub-study areas requires a 50 FT buffer zone from the residential district boundary except for those lots in the Chestnut Street Business District that are adjacent to the MBTA Commuter Railroad right of way.
- 2.2. Minimum Requirements – Moe Handel raised as a question if there should be minimum requirements with regards to the height of buildings around Town Common and if such a requirement would be detrimental to redevelopment.
- 2.3. Center Business District – East – West Edges of Downtown at Great Plain Avenue – There was discussion on where the appropriate edge of higher density should be at both the east and west edges of Downtown on Great Plain Avenue. See attached markups of presentation.
- 2.4. Highland Ave Business District – A cross section was presented through Highland Avenue at Memorial Park. There was discussion regarding where building height should be measured from those sites that are sloping. It was generally agreed that height should be measured from the sidewalk as the height in relationship to Highland Avenue is the most important height in this case.

- 2.5. Parking – Parking requirements will significantly impact density. A range of options for parking requirements in the Center Business District were discussed including: No requirements; Reduced requirements from existing zoning; Alternative compliance (Such as paying into a parking garage fund); and Incentives for underground parking.
- 2.6. Typical Building Cross Section – The question was raised if 37 FT as shown is enough for three stories. This was felt to be adequate, not including roof top equipment and parapets.

3. ECONOMIC INCENTIVES FOR REDEVELOPMENT

- 3.1. There was a general consensus on the goal of unlocking additional value in Downtown property by allowing higher density for the purpose of encouraging desired development.
- 3.2. Economic Impediments to Redevelopment – Several DSC members raised the question, that if higher density is allowed, would properties be redeveloped? In particular this question was raised regarding the following two areas:
 - Chestnut Street Business District – Lots to the West of Chestnut Street – Potential impediments to redevelopment include small lot sizes and the difficulty developers have in assembling parcels. Also non-conforming uses of some lots here have an inherent value because of the rarity of locations for these uses such as the car dealership on Chestnut Street.
 - Highland Avenue Business District – Lots to the West of Highland Avenue – This area has larger lots and existing zoning allows for higher density here than has been built to date.

4. NEW ZONING REGULATIONS

- 4.1. There was a preliminary discussion of the approach to implementing new zoning regulations which will be continued in upcoming DSC meetings. Issues to address with the DSC before preparing new zoning regulations for Downtown include:
 - Transparent, Straightforward Process – A simplified approval process that does not impede development is desirable to encourage more development, as long as the new regulations protect the interests of the Town in general and impacted property owners near Downtown in particular.
 - By Right vs. Special Permit – How much should be allowed by right versus what requires a special permit required?
 - Existing Zoning Districts – Should the new zoning regulations strictly be constrained within the three existing zoning districts that define the study?
 - Form of New Regulations – What approach should the new zoning take – an overlay district or amending existing use district regulations? How should density be controlled – using FAR (Floor Area Ratio) maximums or by form-based regulations with height, coverage, minimum open space, etc. requirements.

5. ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

5.1. Junction Station – Representatives of the YMCA, Petrini Corporation and the VFW met with the architect and Planning Department to evaluate the potential opportunity for a project involving the development of a YMCA facility at the southern end of the Chestnut Street Business District. The location in question includes the MBTA Junction Station and adjacent parcels including the new Petrini office building, the existing YMCA, Roche parking lot and the VFW. See Meeting Report #13. Comments from the DSC included the following:

- It would be highly desirable for a project here to provide 143 displaced parking spaces from the Needham Heights station if a residential development occurs at Needham Heights.
- It was pointed out that Junction Street, which runs through the MBTA parcel is not a public way and could be rerouted or closed, although it provides a valuable east-west traffic connection. Grant Street could be closed where it runs into Junction Street, but would require a cul-de-sac.

6. NEXT MEETINGS

6.1. The next DSC meeting has been rescheduled to 8:00 AM on Friday 08 June, location TBD.

The discussions of this meeting are recorded as understood by the writer. Please advise the writer of any omissions or corrections.



Jon Oxman AIA
DiNISCO DESIGN

JAO/

cc: DSC
Kenneth DiNisco
Richard Rice

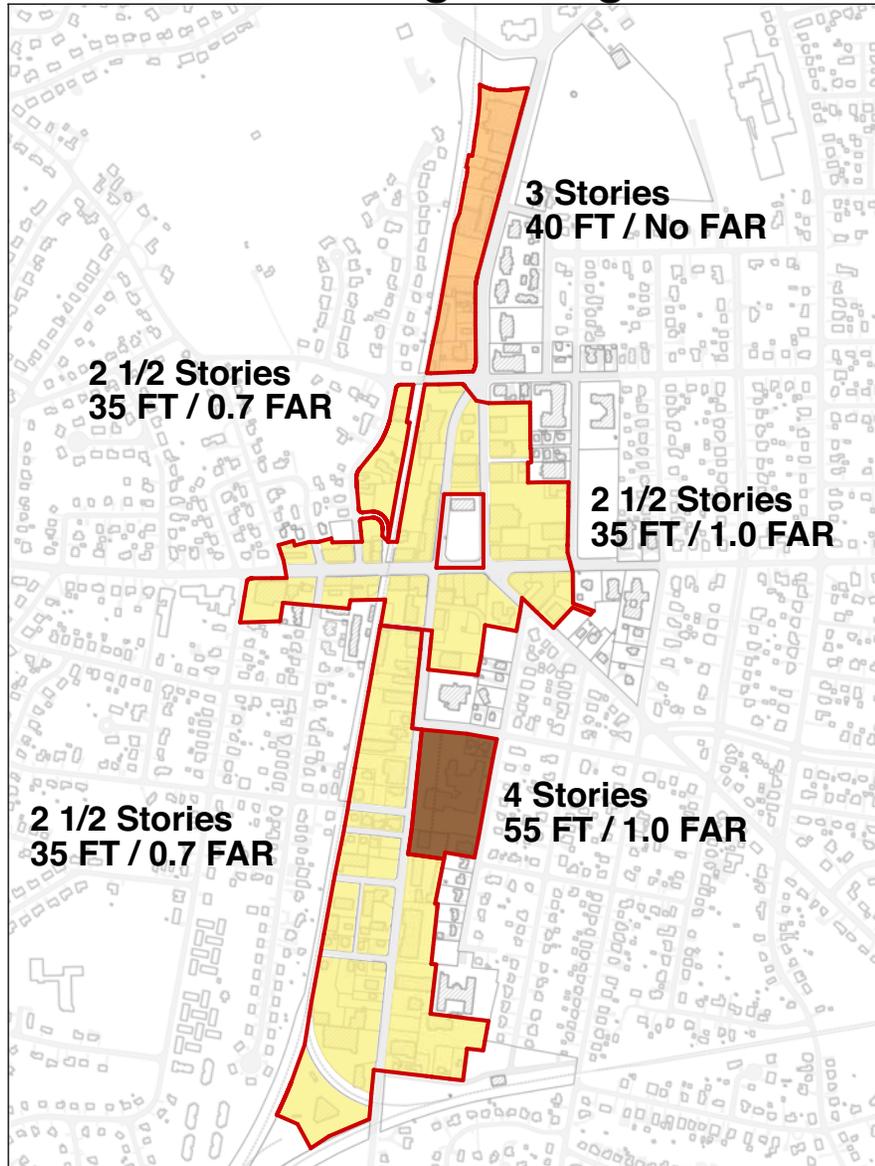
Enclosure: 1. Presentation: DSC Meeting (05/23/07) including markups.

**Needham
Downtown Study
Committee Meeting**

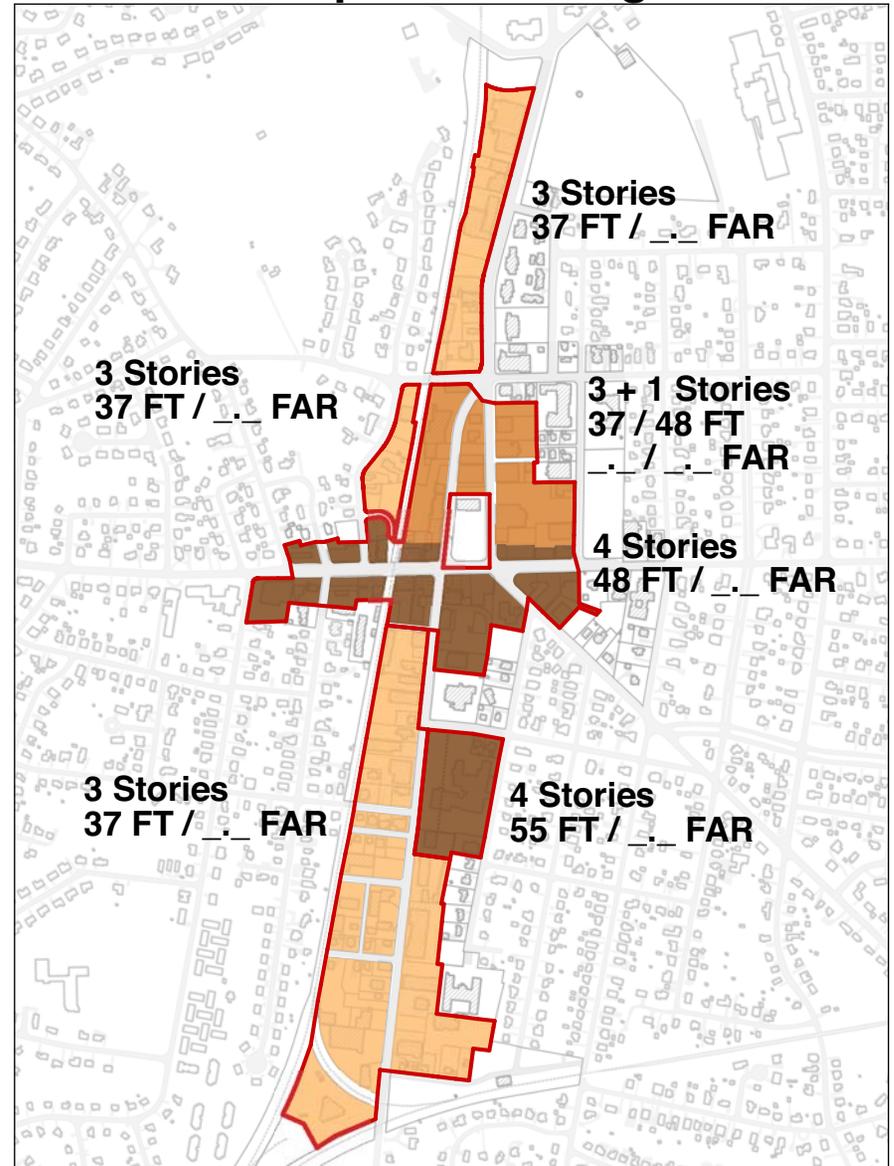
23 May 2007

MAX HEIGHT / DENSITY

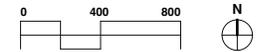
Existing Zoning



Proposed Zoning

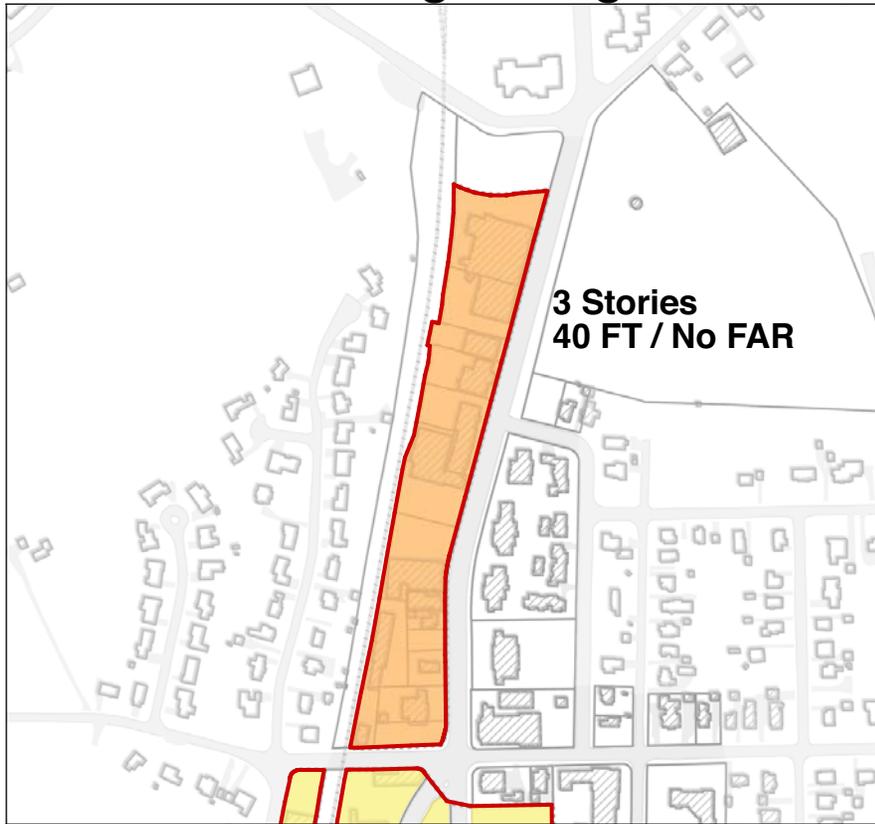


 2 1/2 Stories  3 Stories  3+1 Stories  4 Stories  Zoning District Boundaries

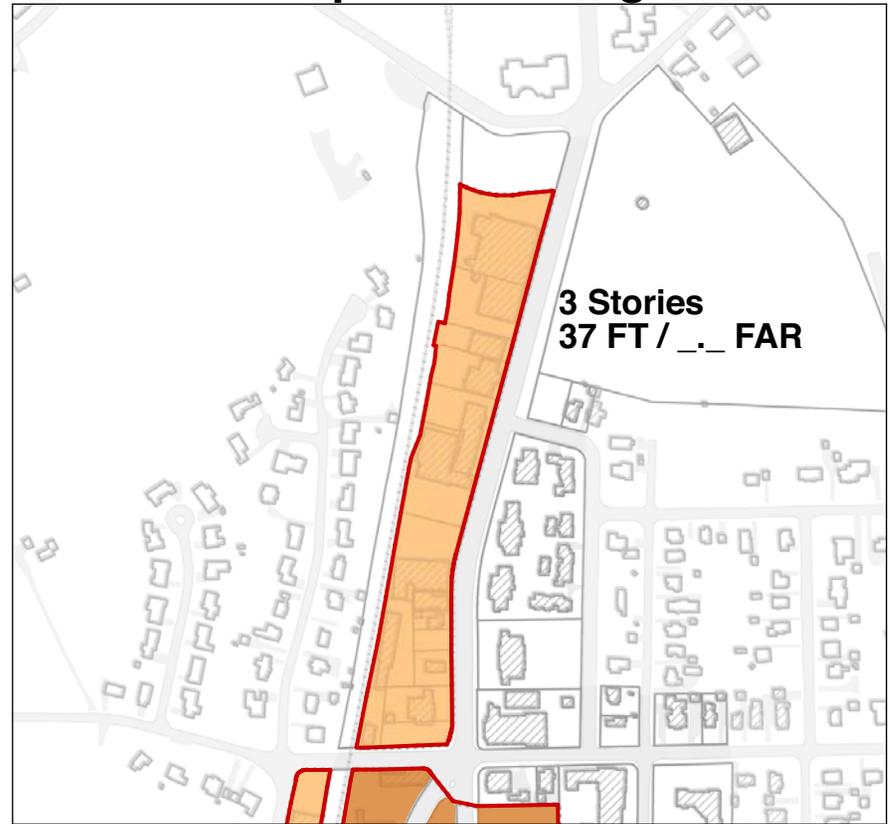


MAX HEIGHT / DENSITY Highland Ave Business District

Existing Zoning

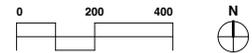


Proposed Zoning



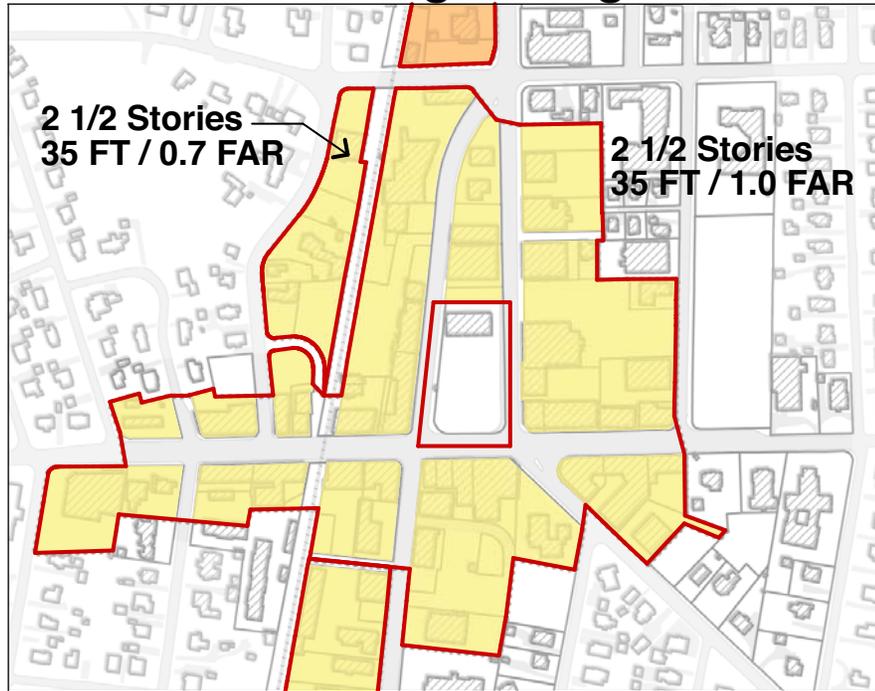
- 2 1/2 Stories
- 3 Stories
- 3+1 Stories
- 4 Stories

Zoning District Boundaries

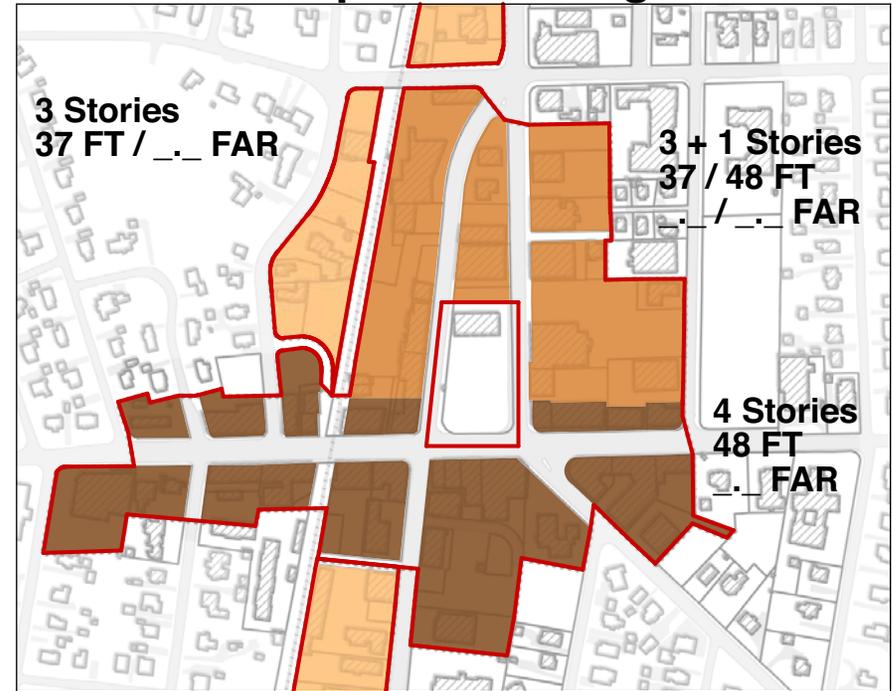


MAX HEIGHT / DENSITY Center Business District

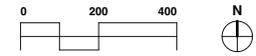
Existing Zoning



Proposed Zoning

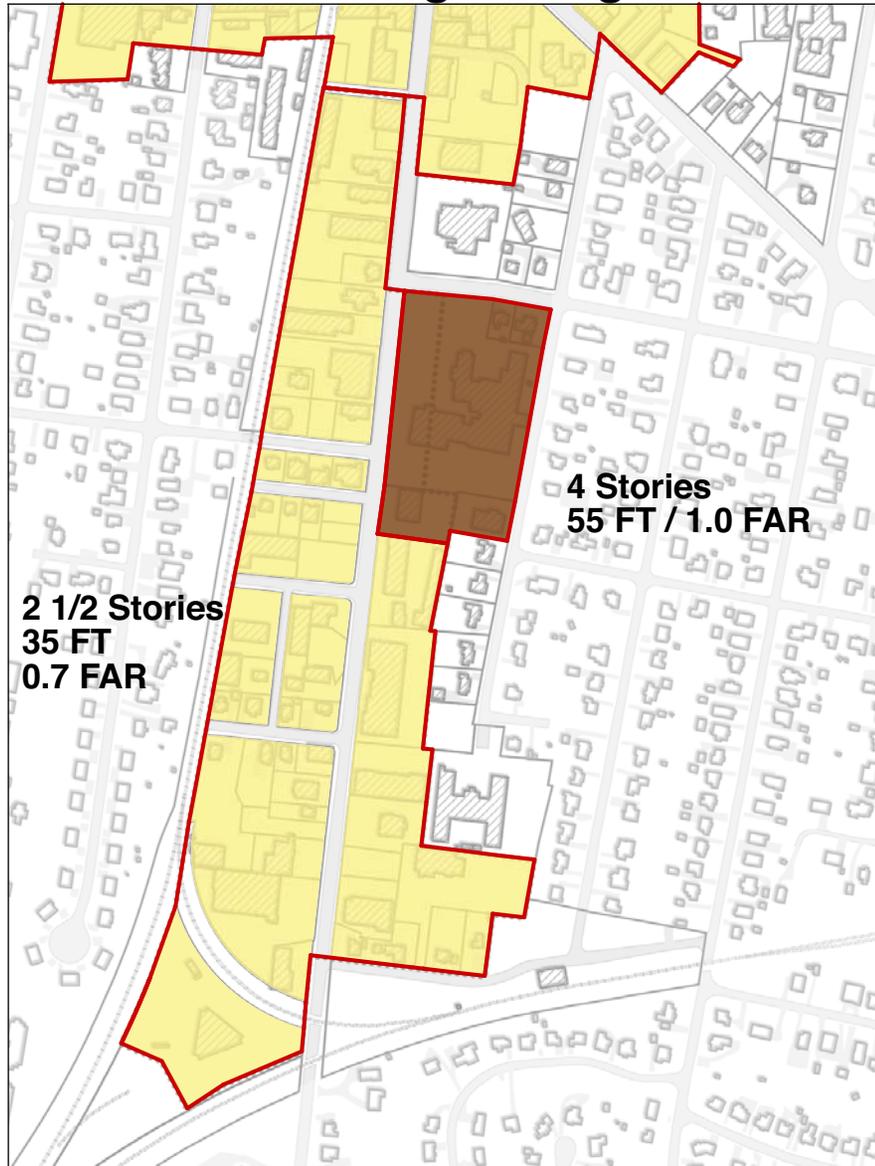


 2 1/2 Stories  3 Stories  3+1 Stories  4 Stories  Zoning District Boundaries

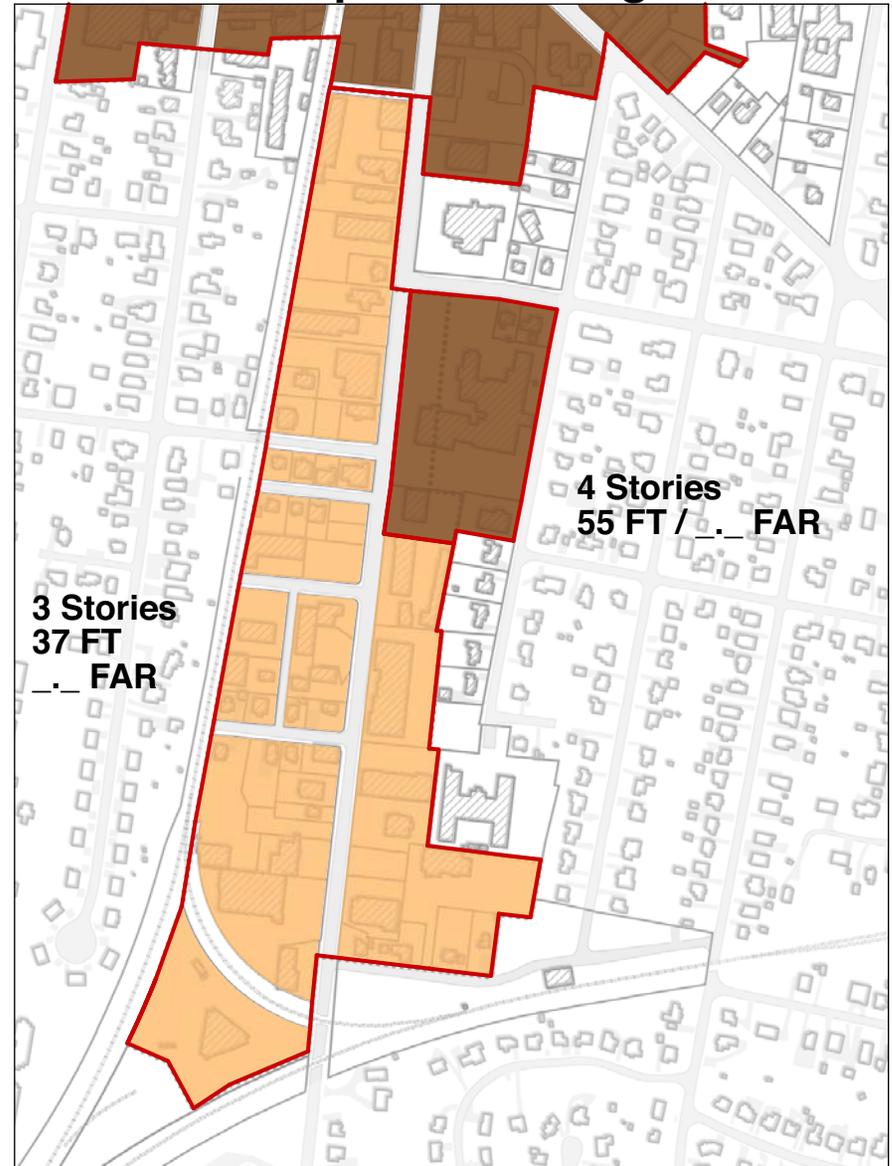


MAX HEIGHT / DENSITY Chestnut St Business District

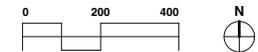
Existing Zoning



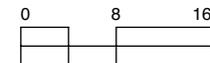
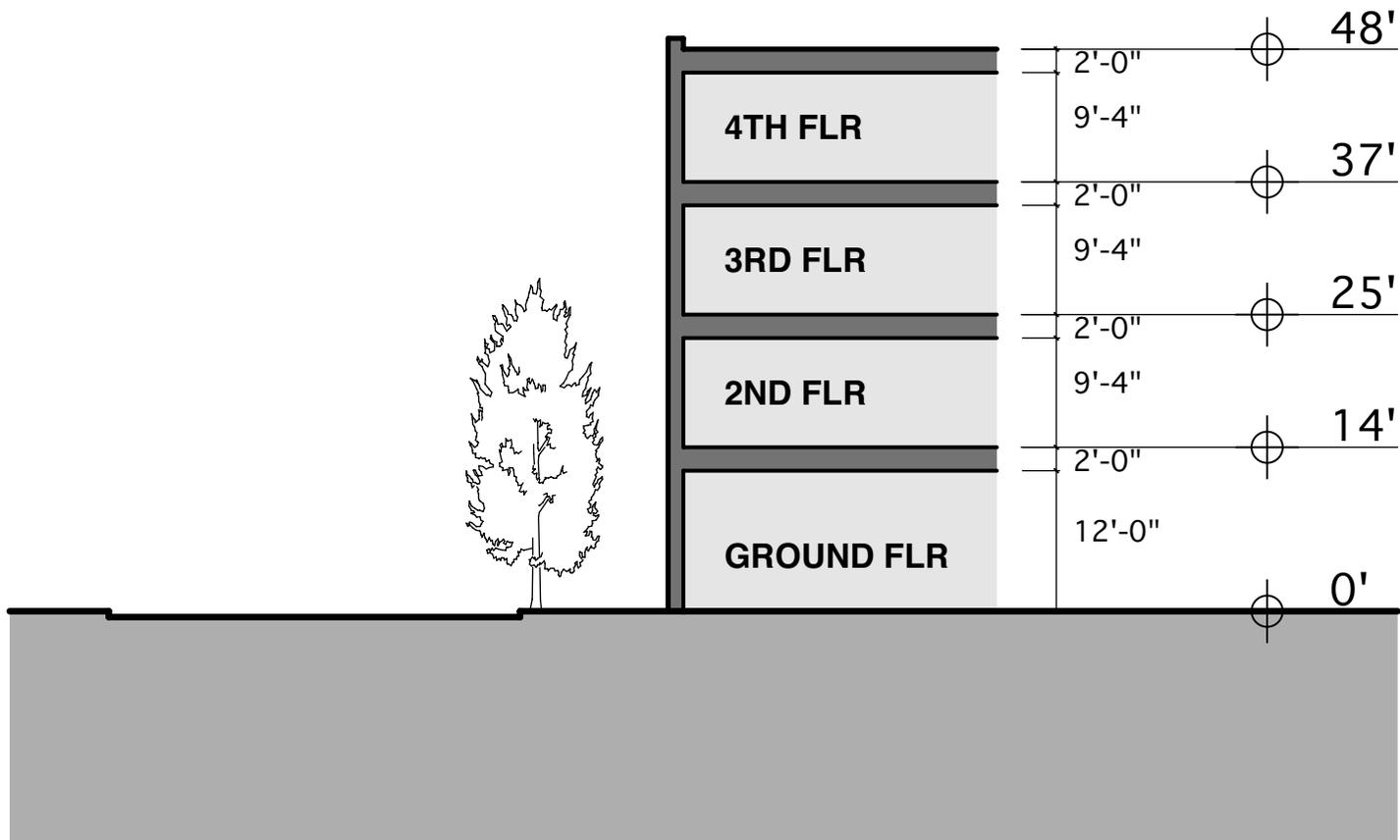
Proposed Zoning



2 1/2 Stories 3 Stories 3+1 Stories 4 Stories Zoning District Boundaries



MAXIMUM STORIES / HEIGHT - 4 Stories



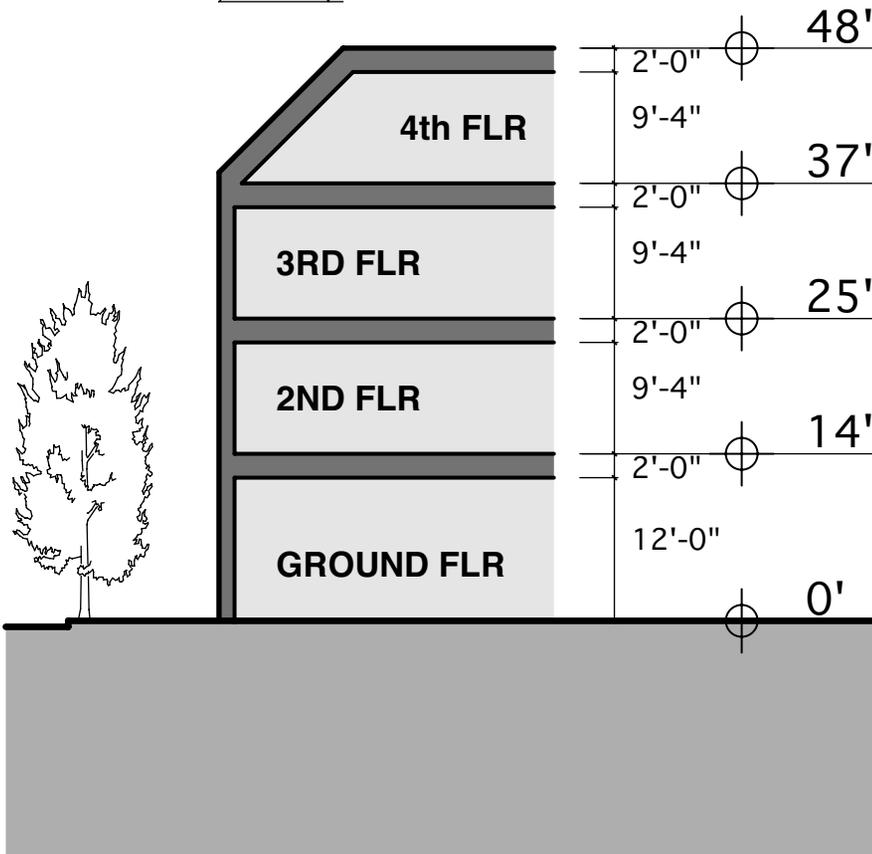
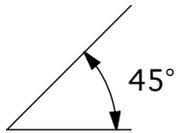
MAXIMUM STORIES / HEIGHT - 3+1 Stories

Pitched Roof

OR

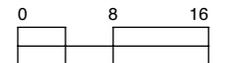
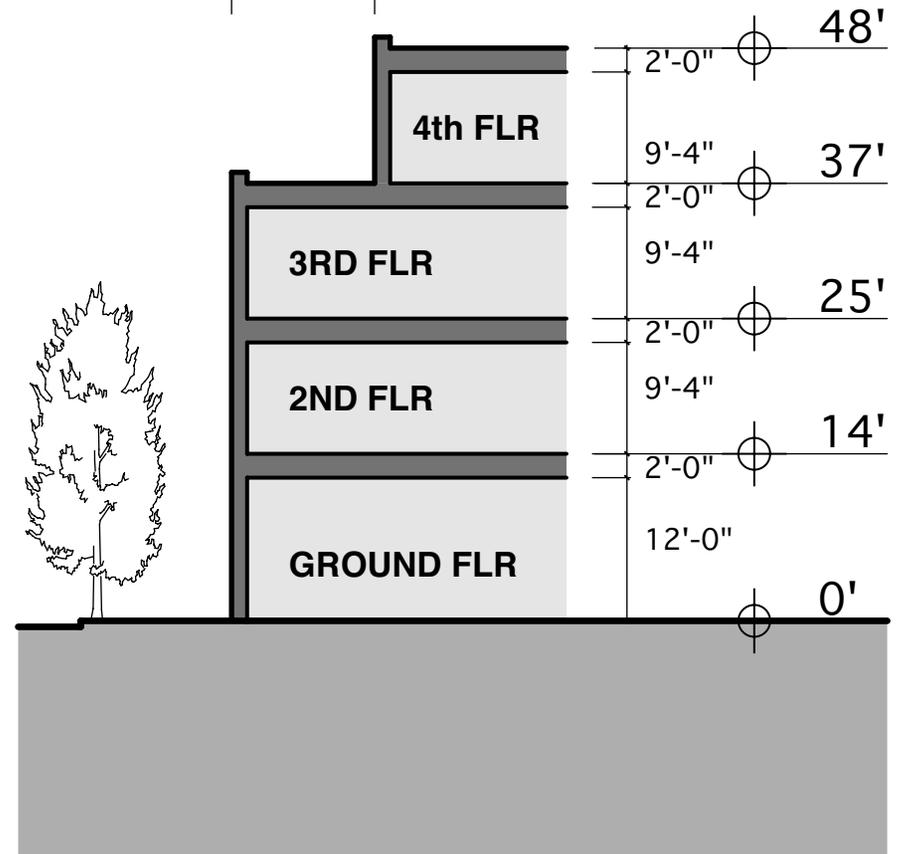
Setback

MAXIMUM
ROOF PITCH

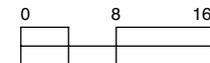
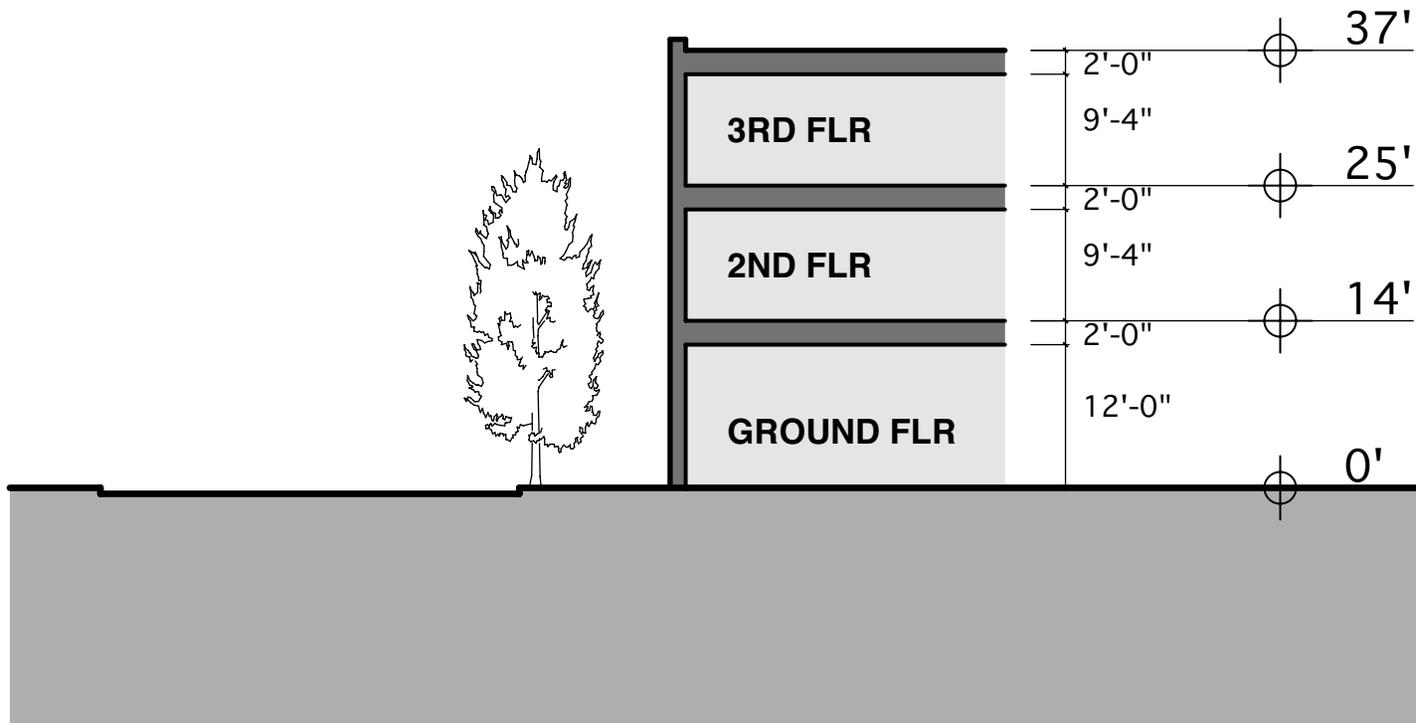


MINIMUM
SETBACK

12'-0"

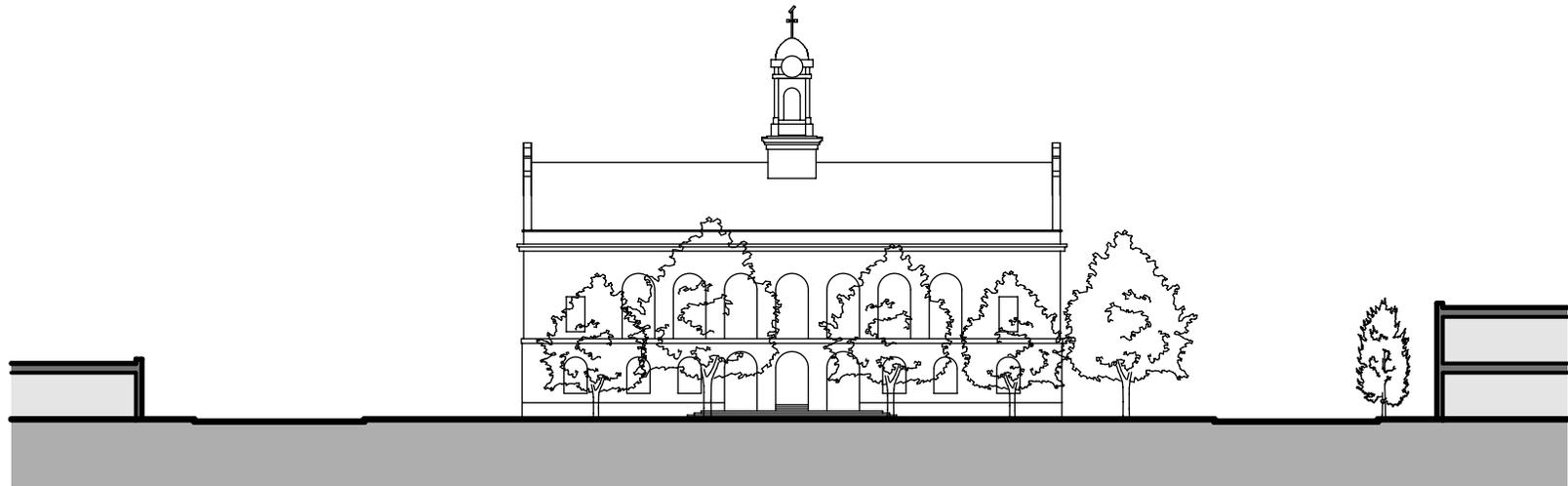


MAXIMUM STORIES / HEIGHT - 3 Stories

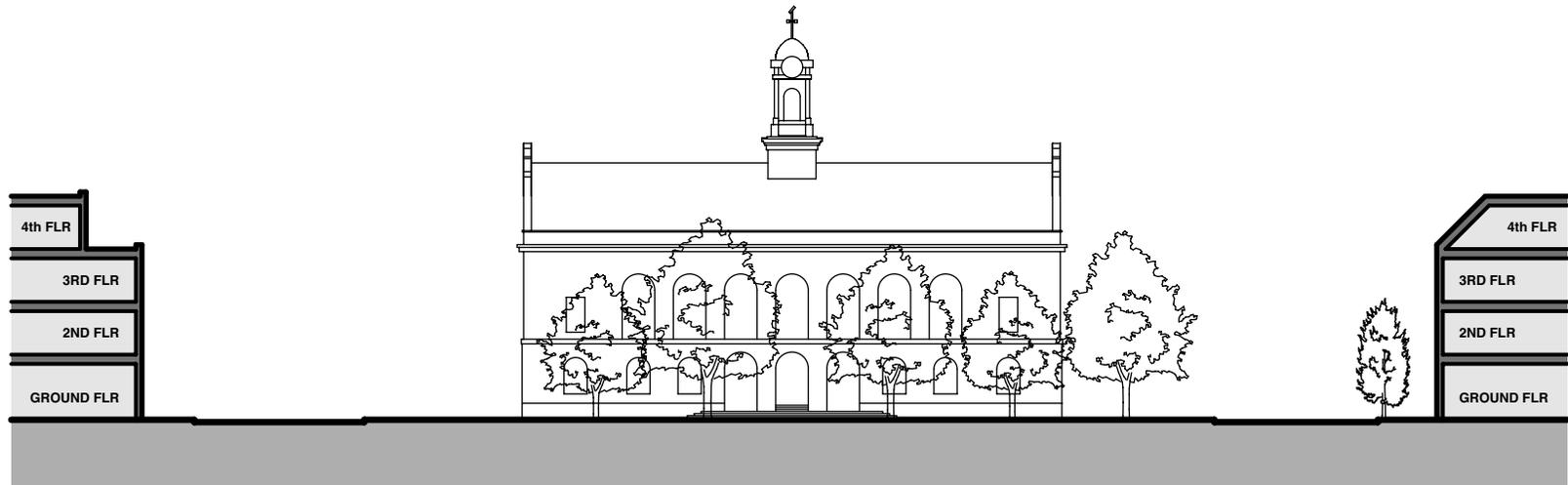


MAXIMUM STORIES / HEIGHT - Town Common Cross Sections

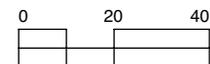
East - West Cross Section Looking North



Existing

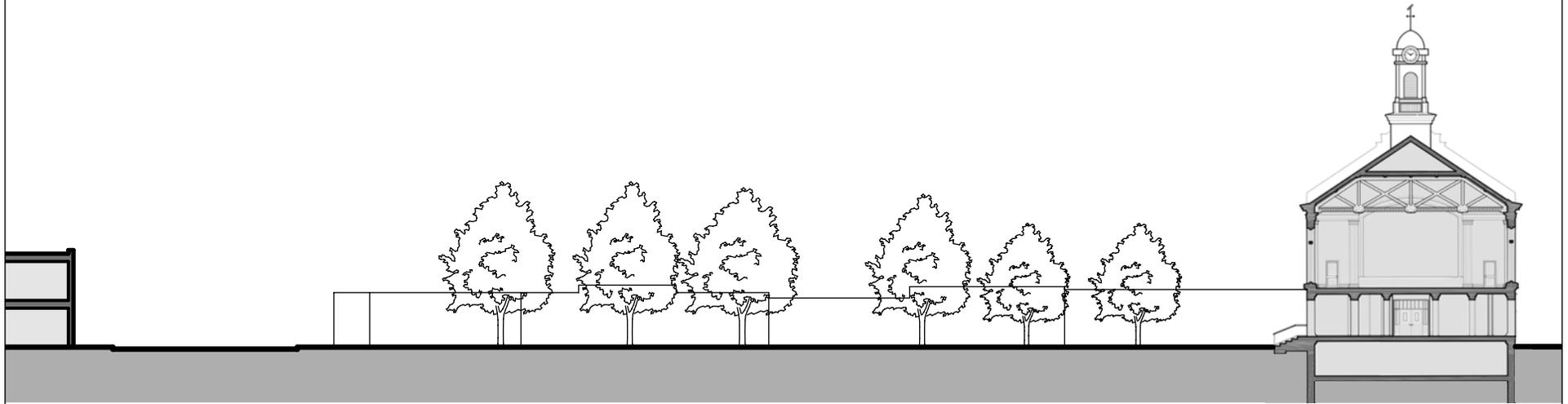


Proposed

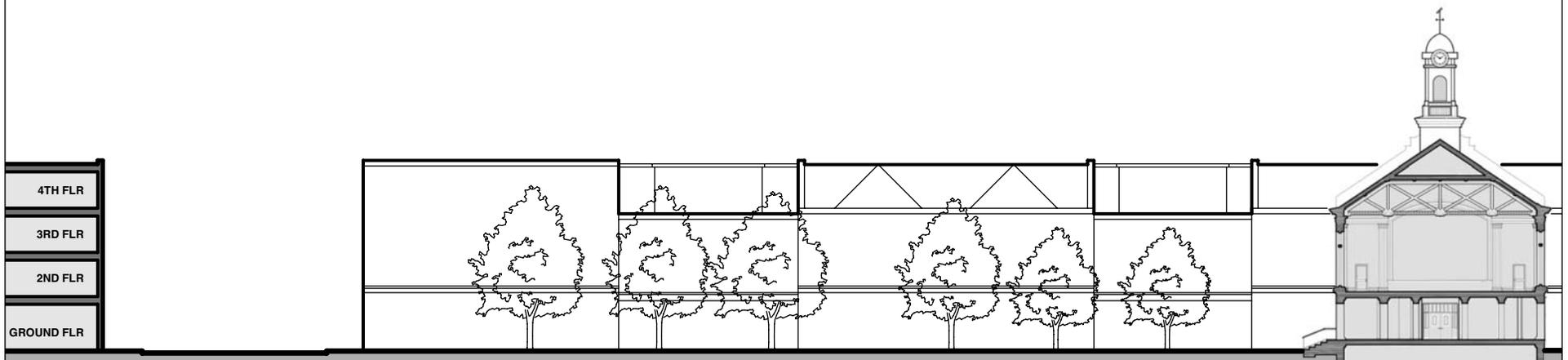


MAXIMUM STORIES / HEIGHT - Town Common Cross Sections

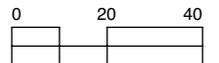
North - South Cross Section Looking West



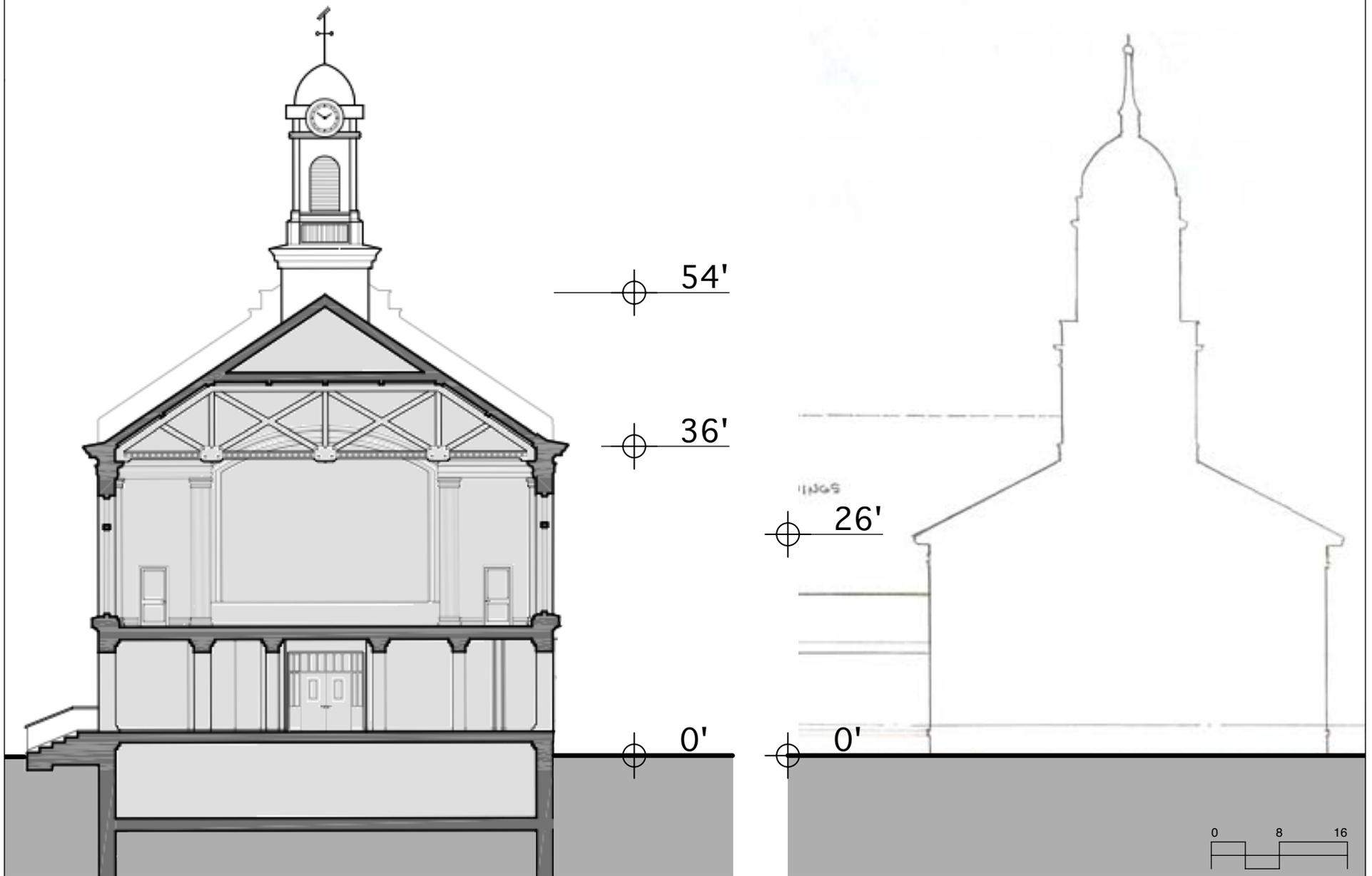
Existing



Proposed

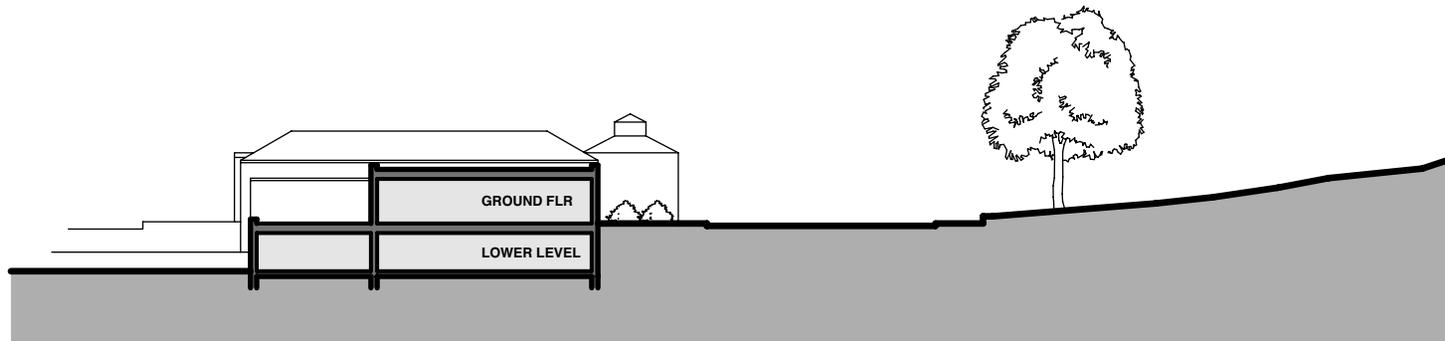


MAXIMUM STORIES / HEIGHT - First Parish & Town Hall

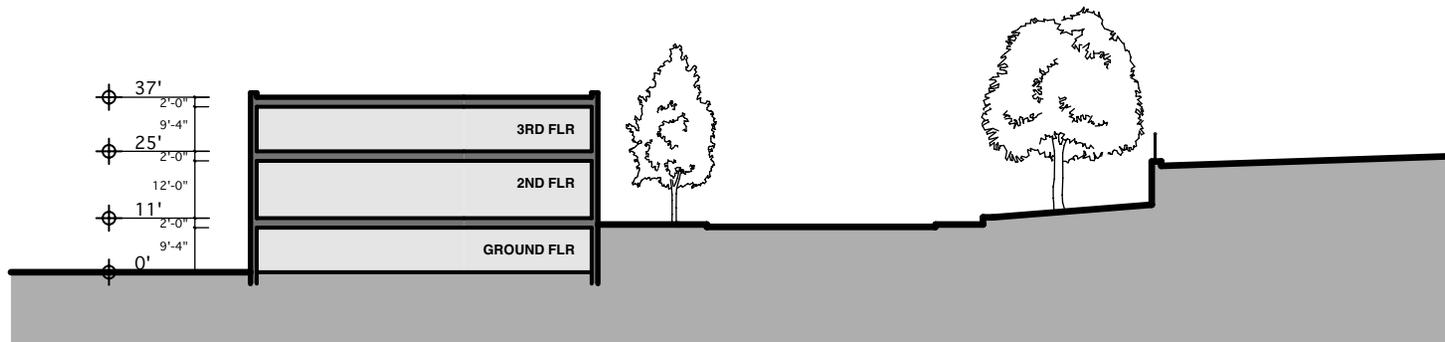


MAXIMUM STORIES / HEIGHT - Highland Ave Cross Sections

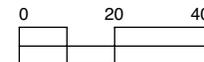
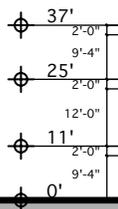
East - West Cross Section Looking North



Existing



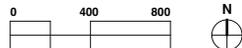
Proposed



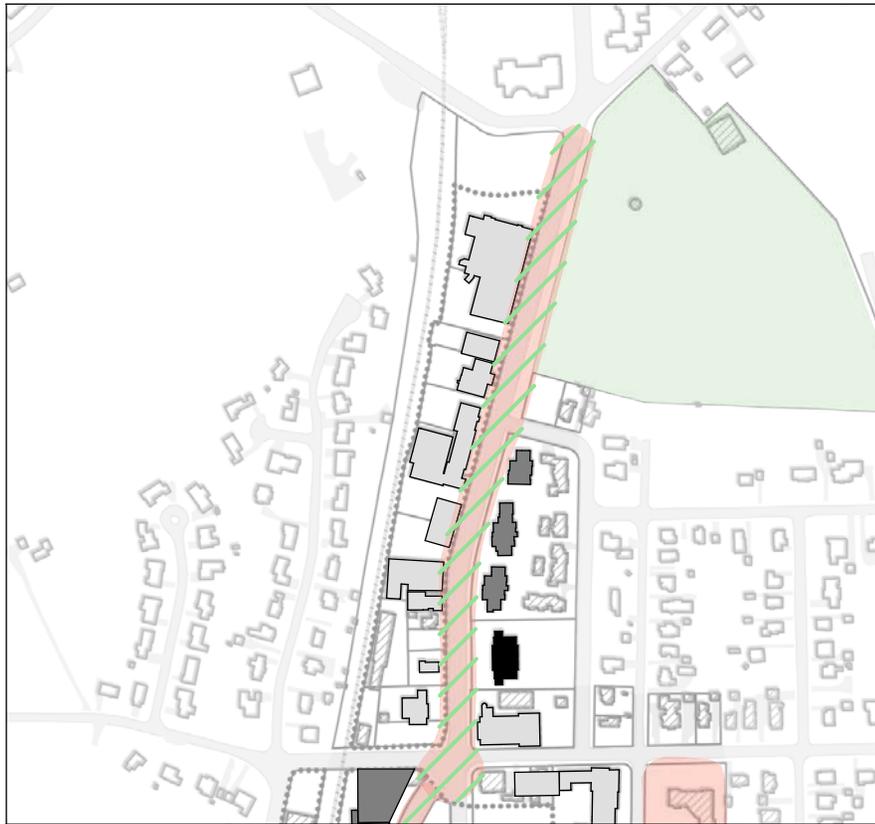
POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT



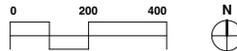
-  1 Story
-  2 Stories
-  3 Stories
-  4 Stories
-  Open Space
-  Areas of Potential Development
-  Streetscape / Infrastructure Improvements
-  Pedestrian Link



POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT Highland Ave Business District



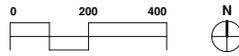
- 1 Story
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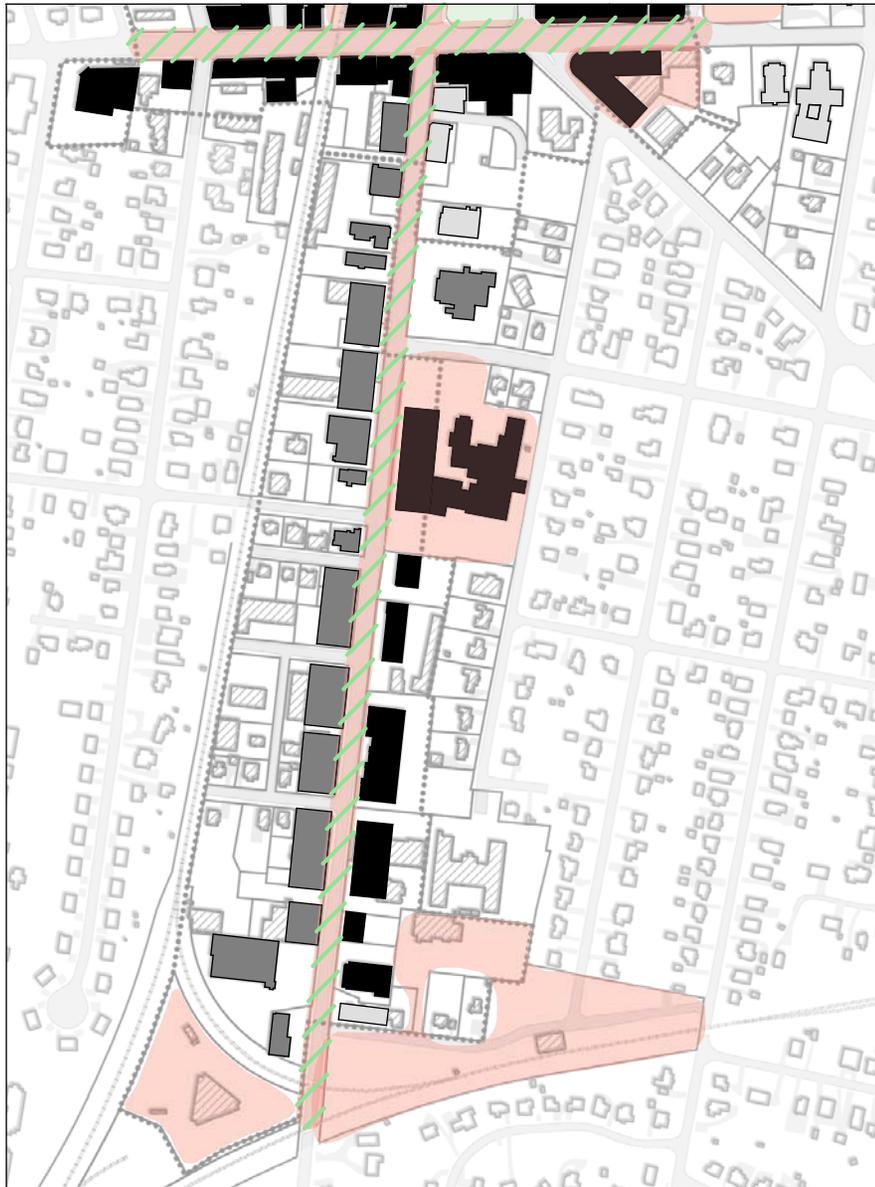
POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT Center Business District



-  1 Story
-  2 Stories
-  3 Stories
-  4 Stories
-  Open Space
-  Areas of Potential Development
-  Streetscape / Infrastructure Improvements
-  Pedestrian Link



POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT Chestnut St Business District



- 1 Story
- 2 Stories
- 3 Stories
- 4 Stories
- Open Space
- Areas of Potential Development
- Streetscape / Infrastructure Improvements
- Pedestrian Link

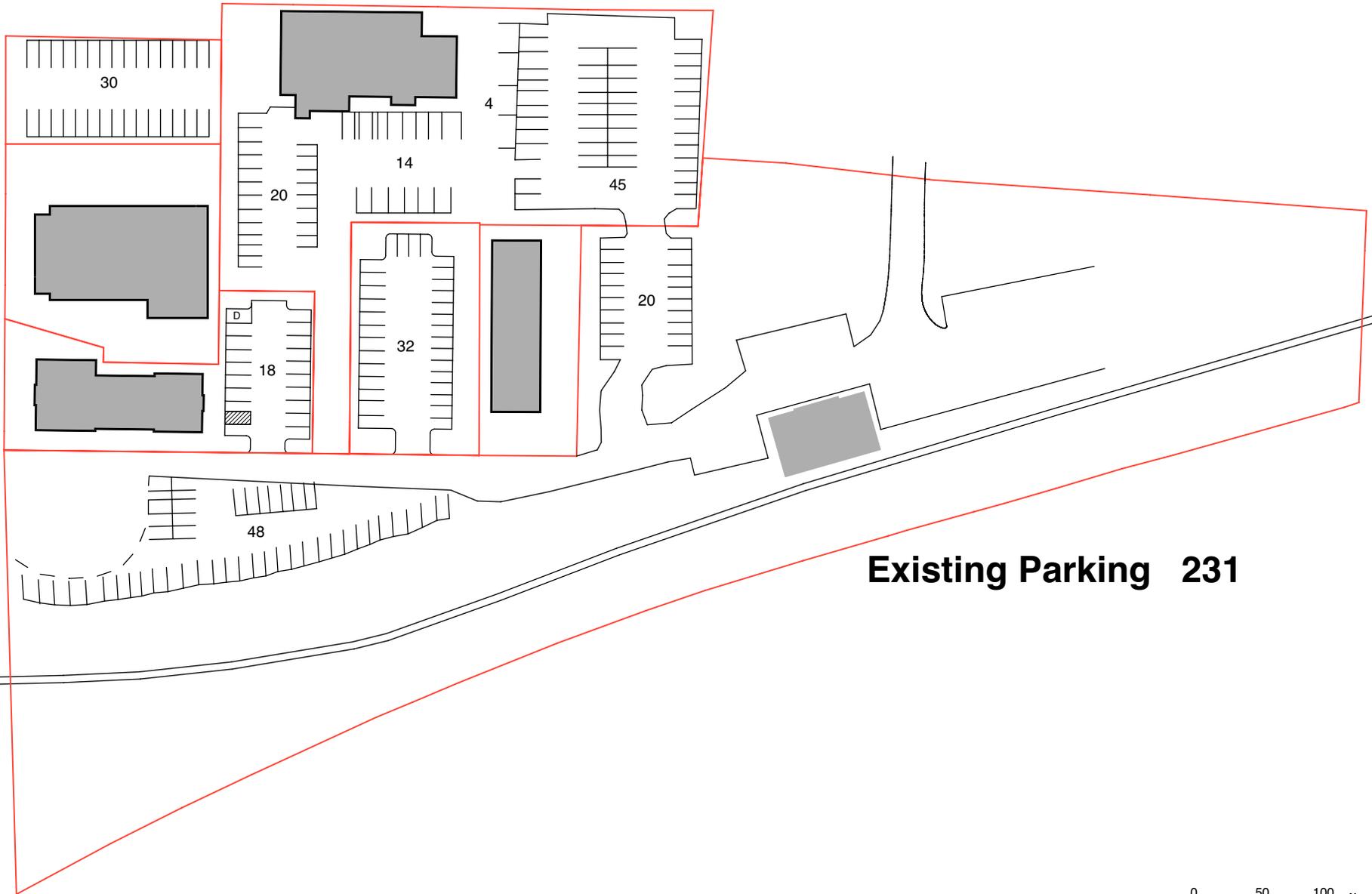
Conceptual Development Plan Alternative Development Scenarios

Roadway Infrastructure	
Highland Avenue	
1 	Develop streetscape for Highland Ave as Boulevard leading into Downtown.
Junction Station	
2	Parking Structure for displaced spaces at Needham Heights YMCA/MBTA/VFW Joint Venture
Chestnut Street	
3 	Hypothetical Development - West Side – Housing and Office or Medical Related Use - 2 stories (Mixed Use and Singular Use Alternatives)
4 	Hypothetical Development - West Side – Housing and Office or Medical Related Use - 3 stories (Mixed Use and Singular Use Alternatives)
5 	Hypothetical Development - East Side - Office or Medical Related Use - 2 stories
6 	Hypothetical Development - East Side - Office or Medical Related Use - 3 stories
Theatre Block	
7 	Mixed Use Development
Chapel St - Mixed Use	
8	MBTA / Town / Private Sector
Chapel St - Parking	
9	Surface Parking
10	Parking Structure
Walgreen's Parking Lot	
11	Consolidation / Improvements
12	Mixed Use Development
	Pedestrian Link
13	Center Station to Greene's Field
Needham Service Center (Gas Station at Highland / Chapel / May)	
14	***Future Consideration***

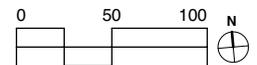
YMCA / JUNCTION STATION - Existing



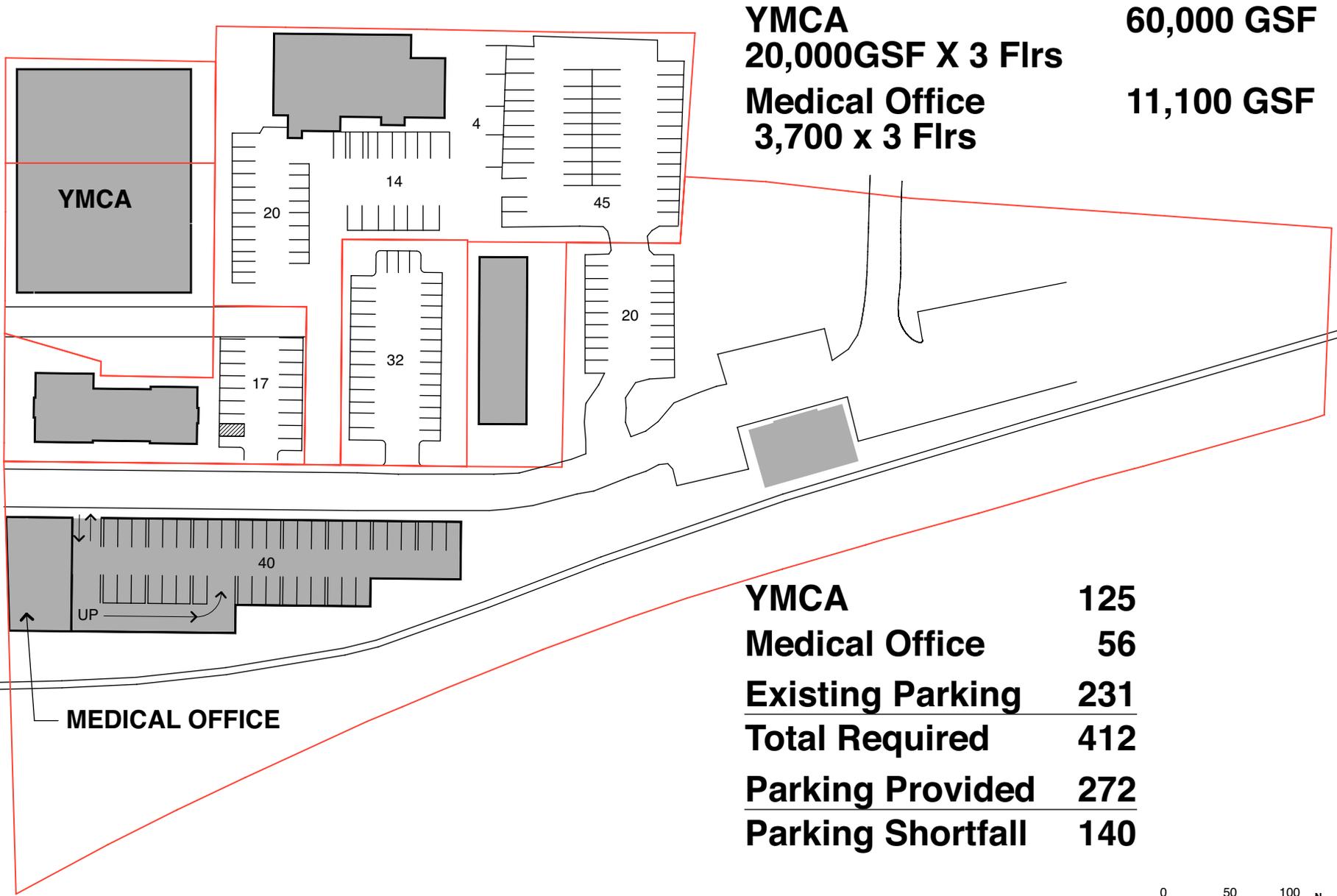
YMCA / JUNCTION STATION - Existing



Ground Floor



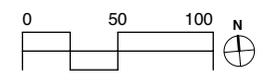
YMCA / JUNCTION STATION - Proposed



YMCA 60,000 GSF
 20,000GSF X 3 Flrs
Medical Office 11,100 GSF
 3,700 x 3 Flrs

YMCA	125
Medical Office	56
Existing Parking	231
Total Required	412
Parking Provided	272
Parking Shortfall	140

Ground Floor

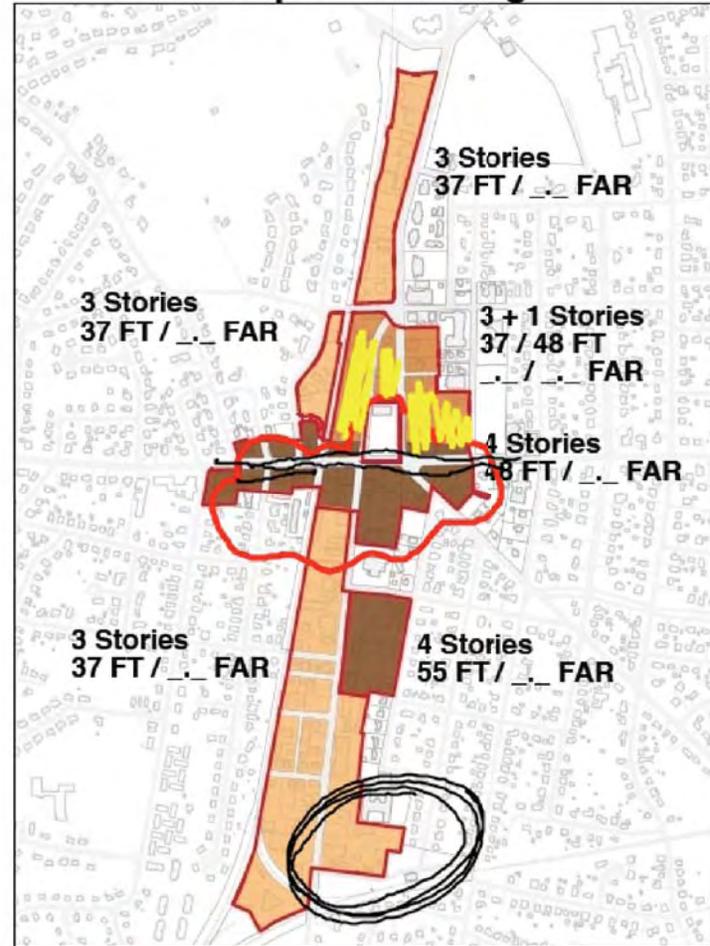


MAX HEIGHT / DENSITY

Existing Zoning

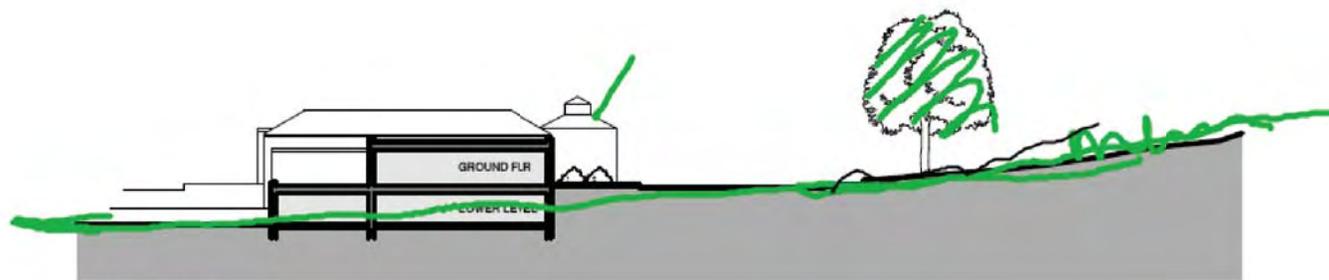


Proposed Zoning

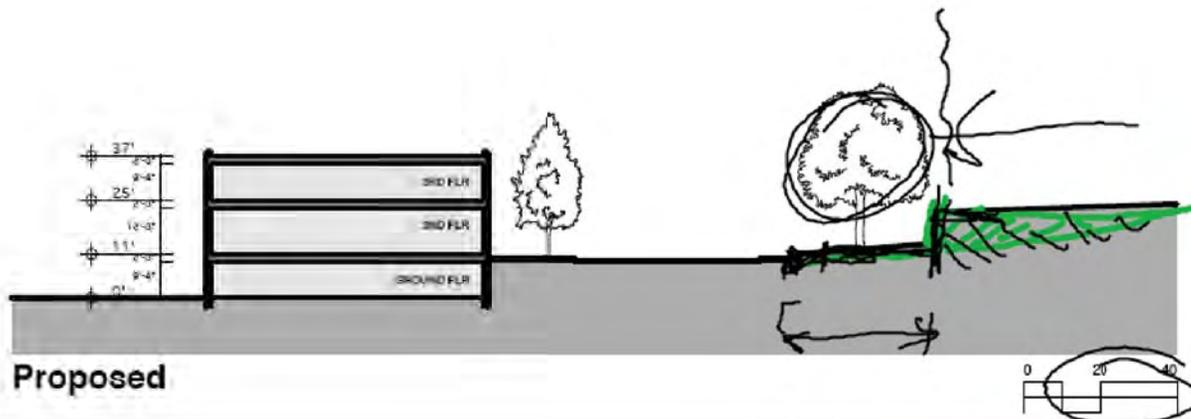


MAXIMUM STORIES / HEIGHT - Highland Ave Cross Sections

East - West Cross Section Looking North



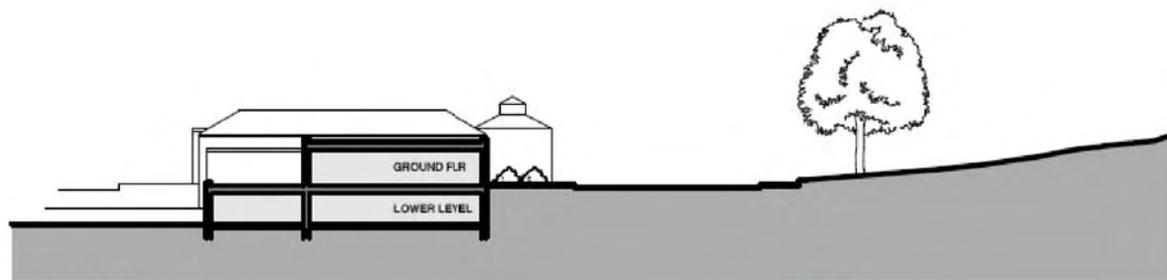
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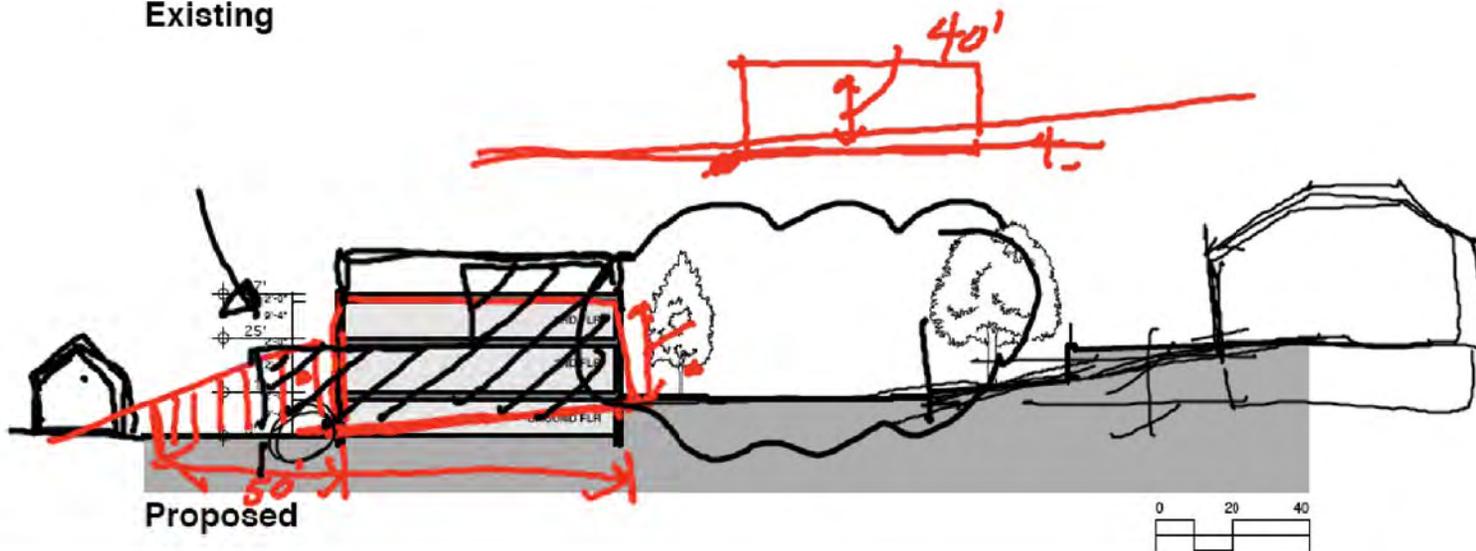
Proposed

MAXIMUM STORIES / HEIGHT - Highland Ave Cross Sections

East - West Cross Section Looking North



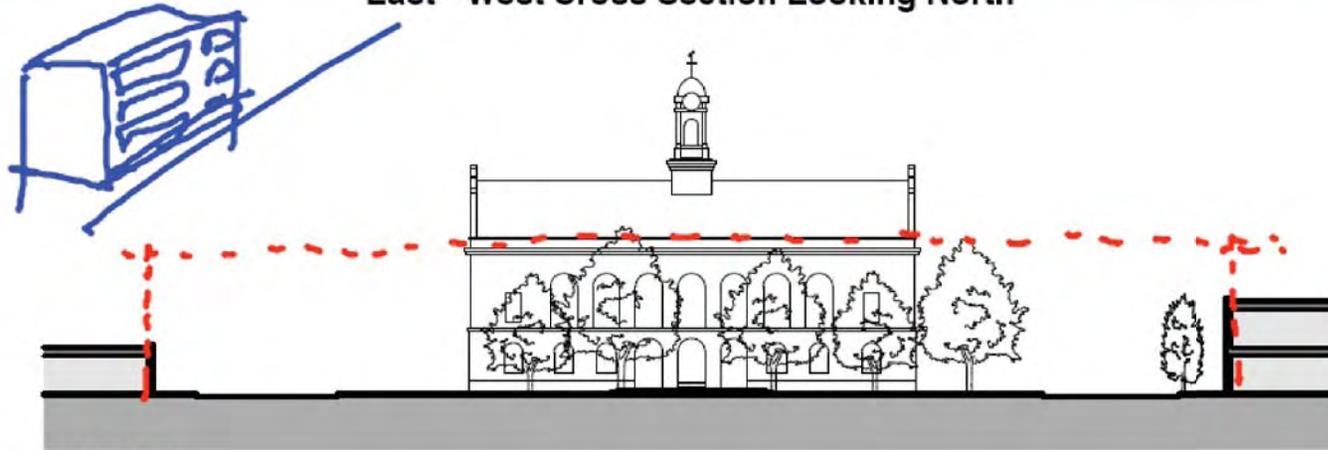
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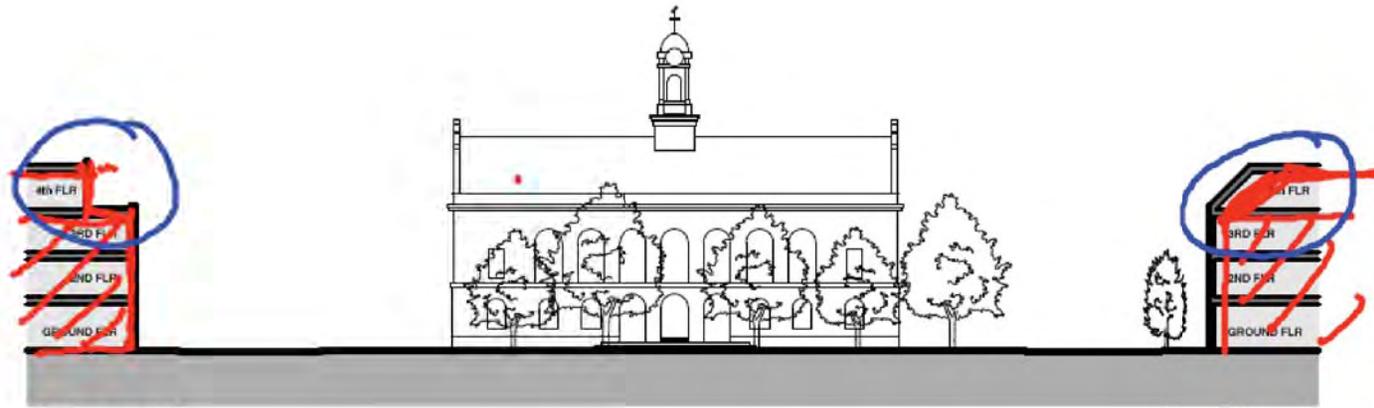
Proposed

MAXIMUM STORIES / HEIGHT - Town Common Cross Sections

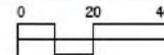
East - West Cross Section Looking North



Existing



Proposed

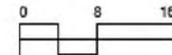
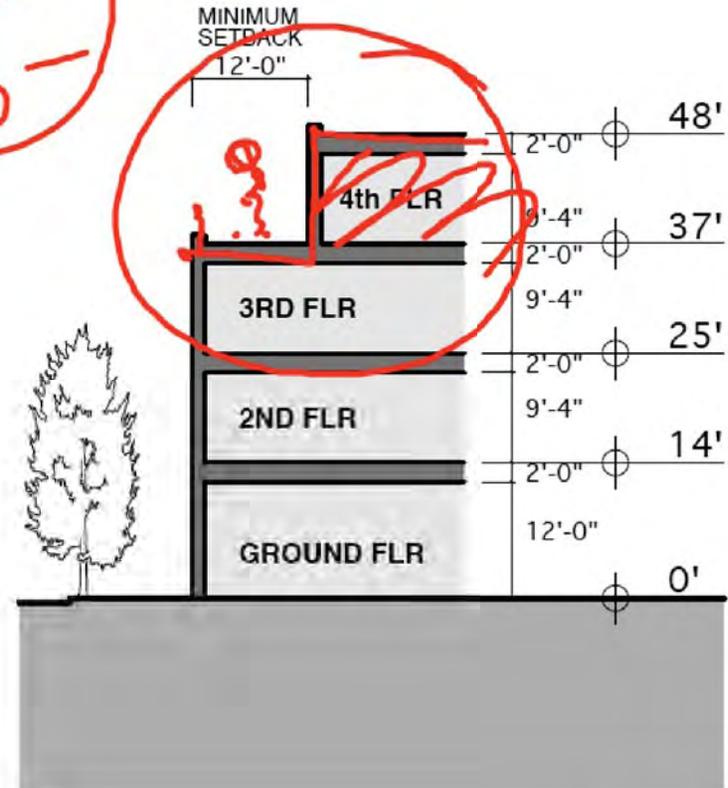
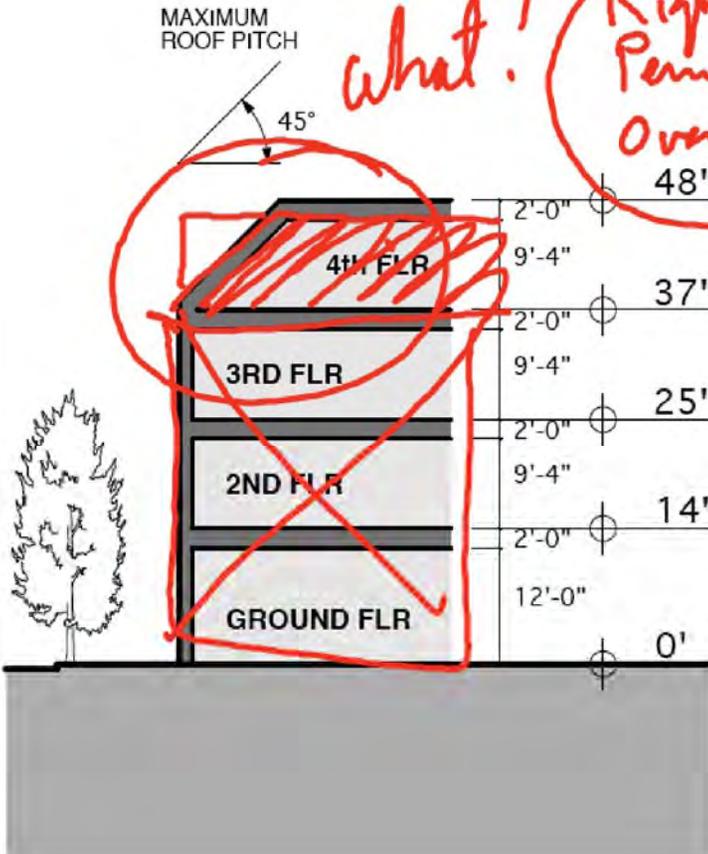


MAXIMUM STORIES / HEIGHT - 3+1 Stories

Pitched Roof

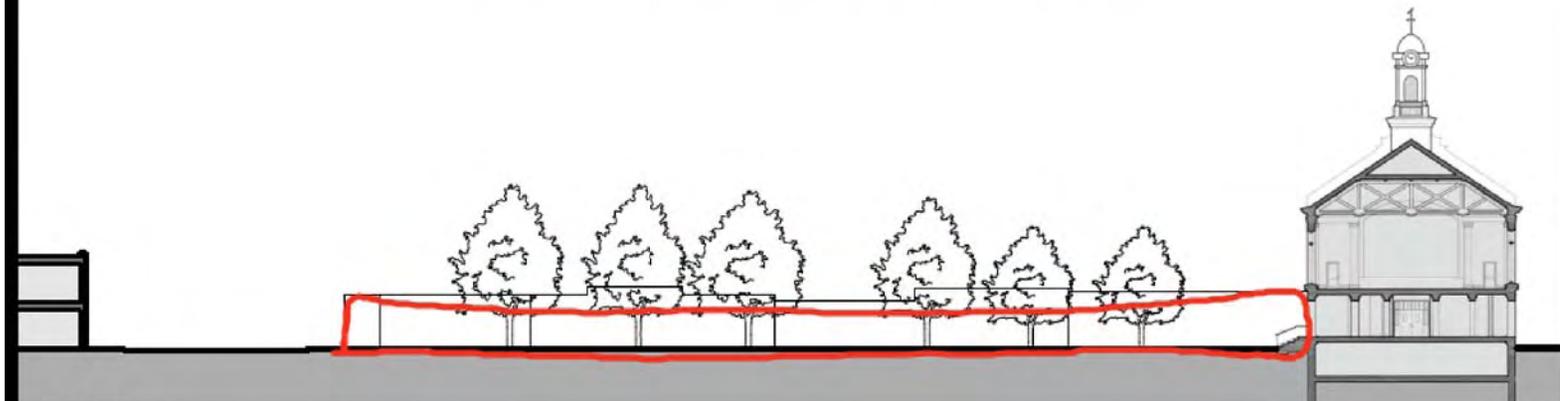
OR

Setback

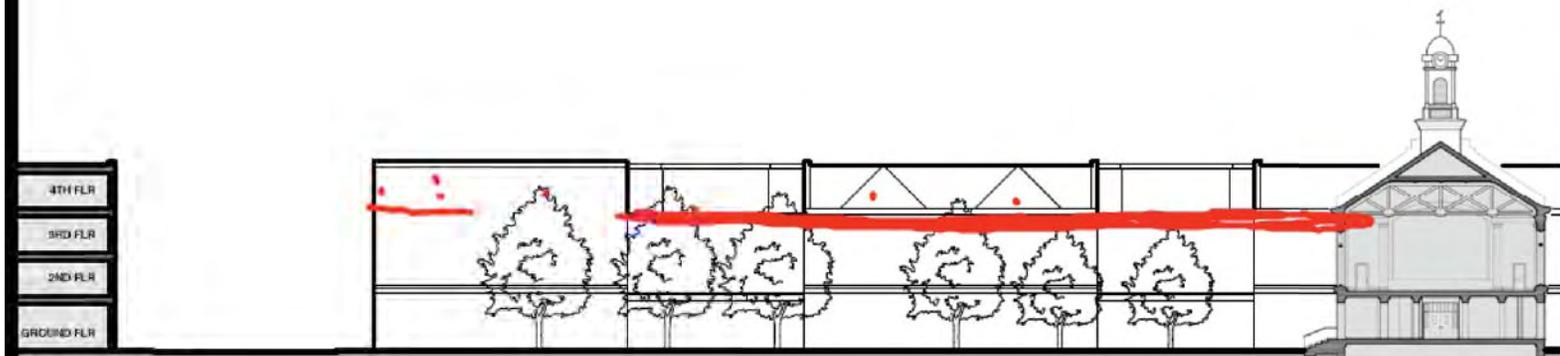


MAXIMUM STORIES / HEIGHT - Town Common Cross Sections

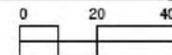
North - South Cross Section Looking West



Existing



Proposed

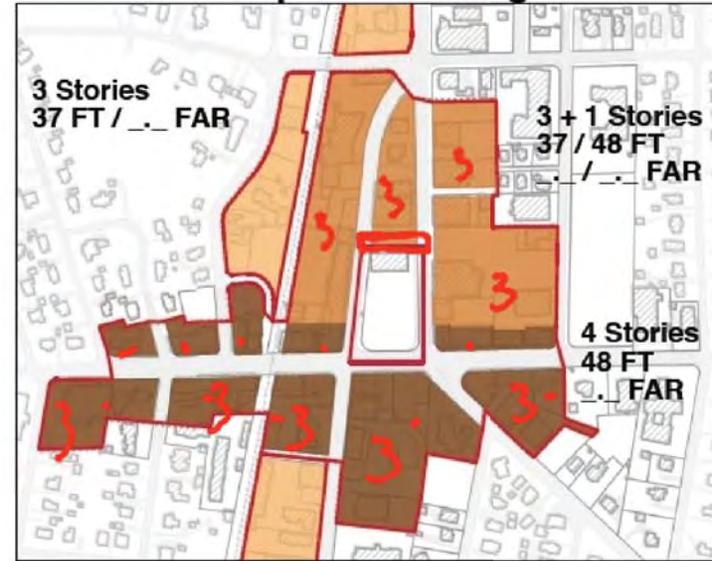


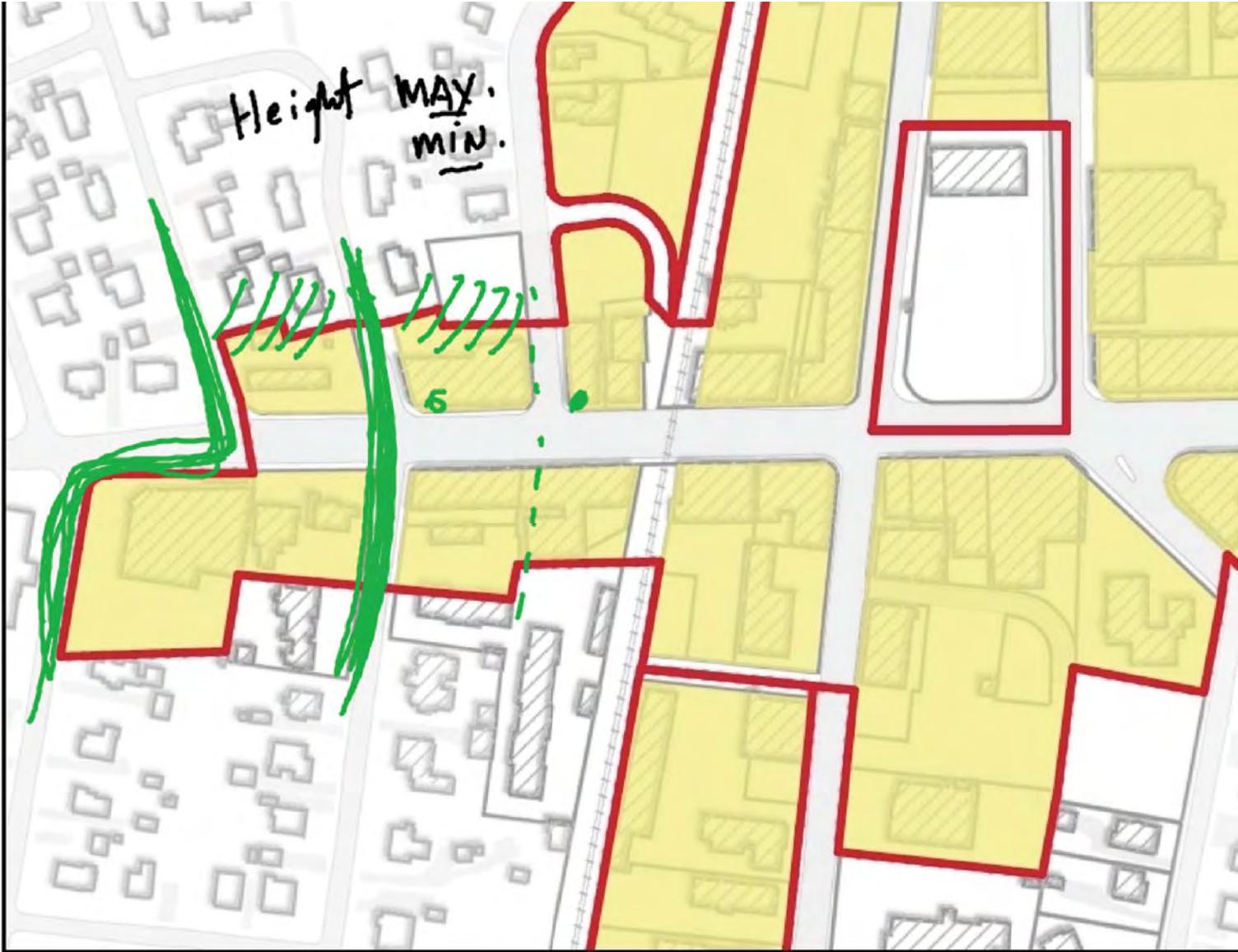
MAX HEIGHT / DENSITY Center Business District

Existing Zoning

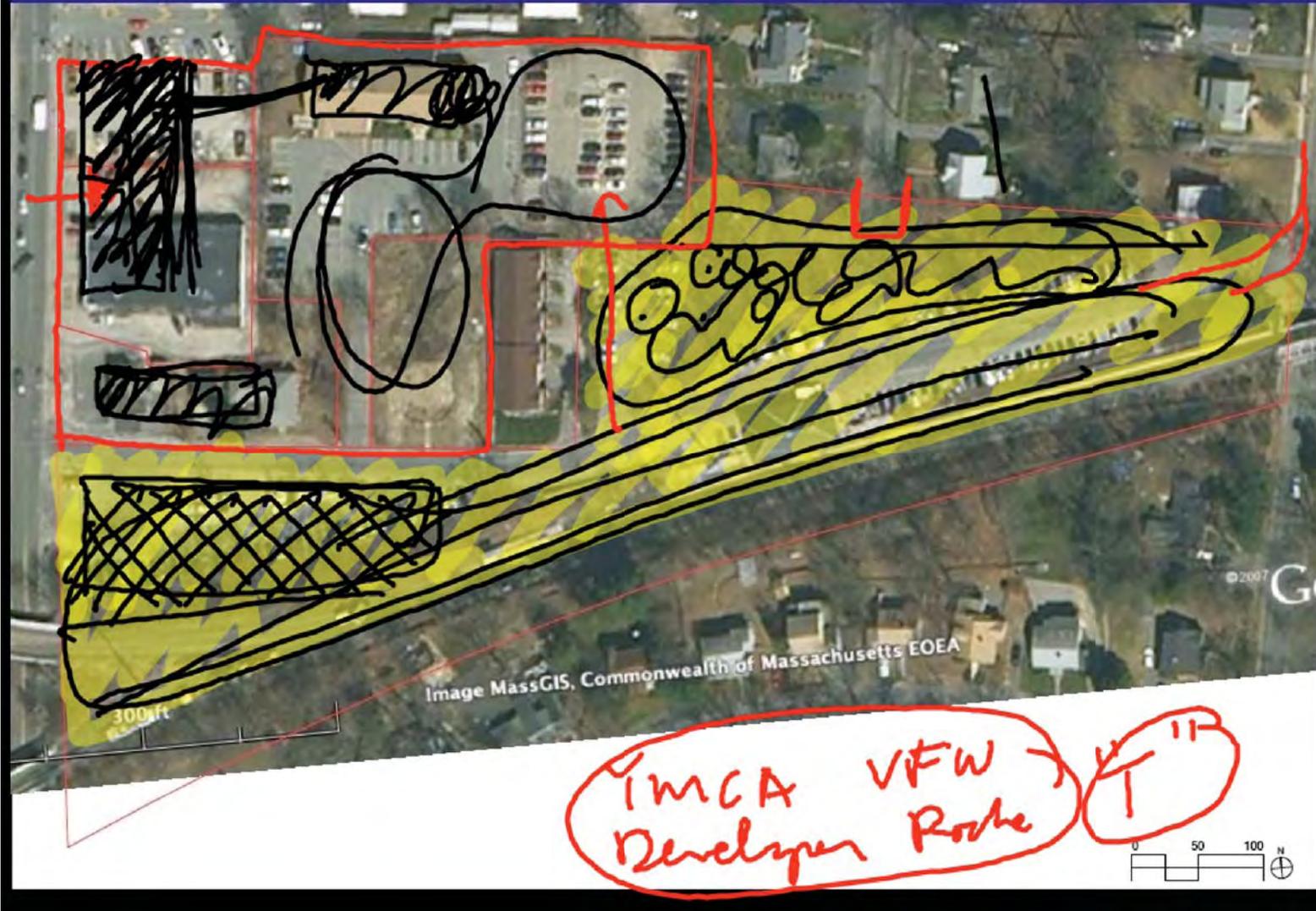


Proposed Zoning





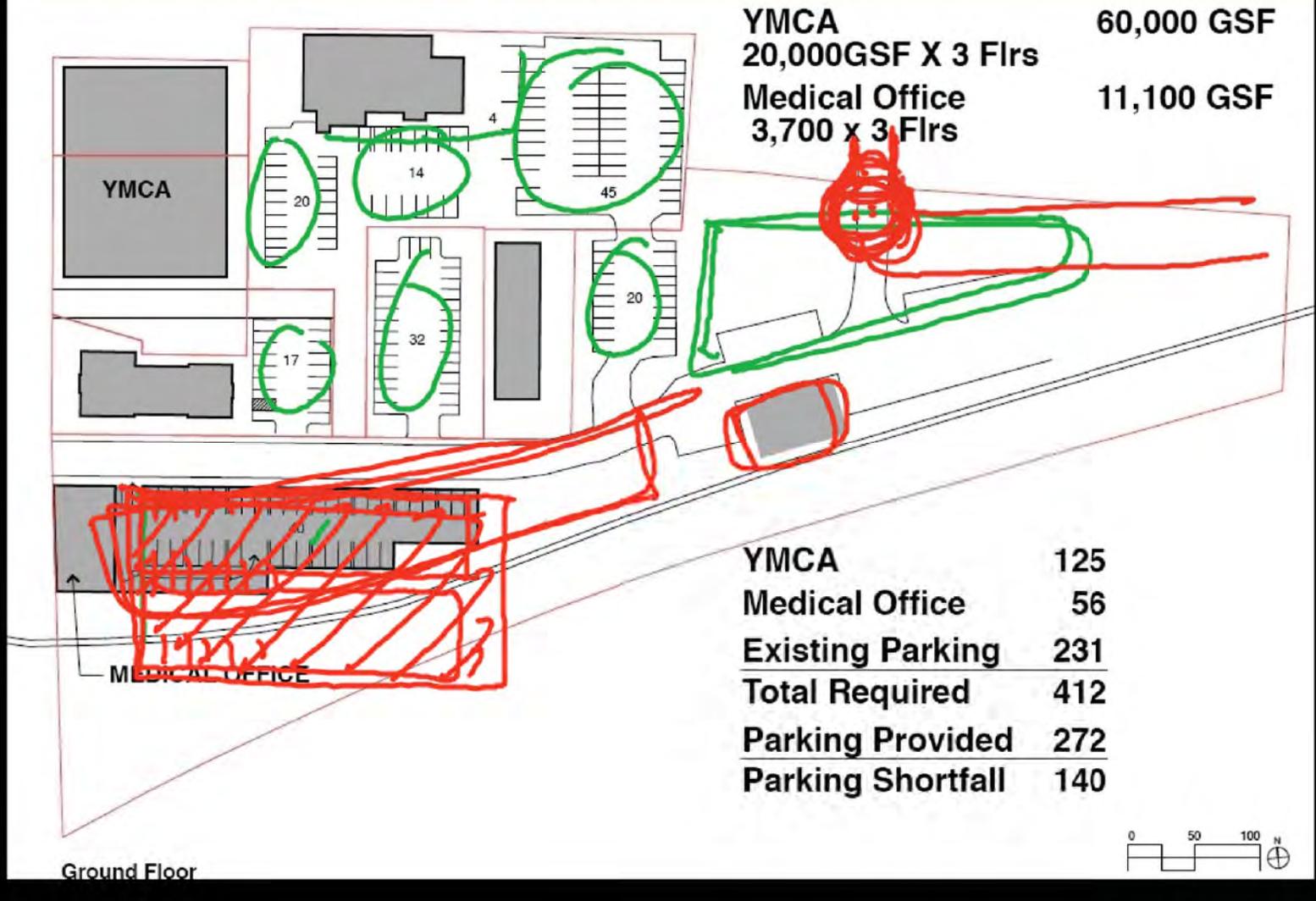
YMCA / JUNCTION STATION - Existing



YMCA / JUNCTION STATION - Existing



YMCA / JUNCTION STATION - Proposed



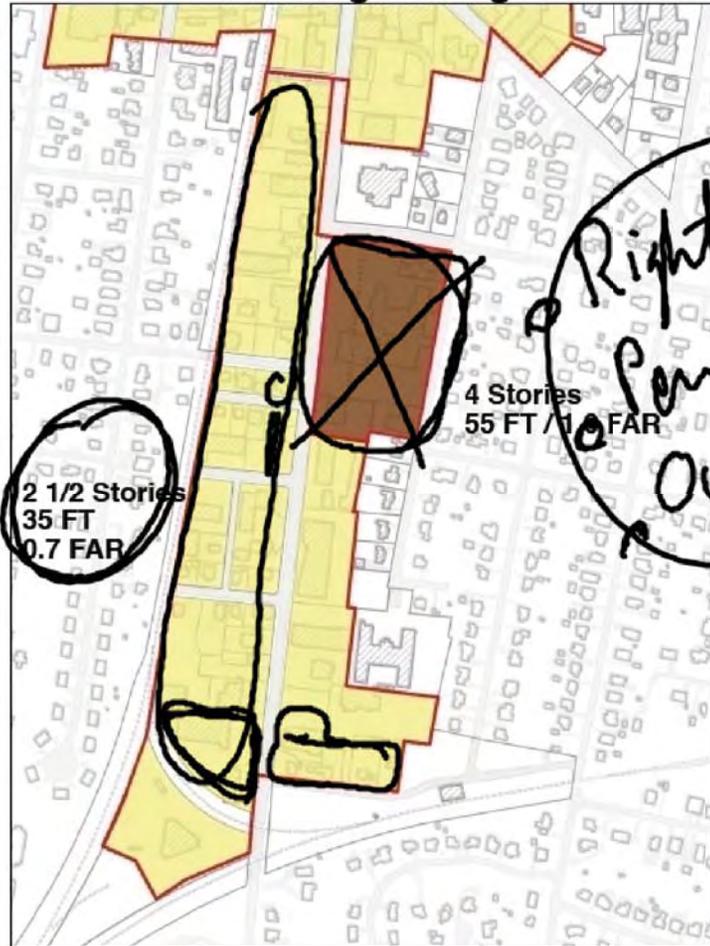
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Parking Shortfall	140

Ground Floor

MAX HEIGHT / DENSITY Chestnut St Business District

Existing Zoning



Proposed Zoning



2 1/2 Stories 3 Stories 3+1 Stories 4 Stories Zoning District Boundaries

