



Commercial Street Zoning Proposal

May 18, 2026

Alex Pratt, OSPCD Director
Zachery Lemel, Deputy Director, OSPCD
Elena Eimert, Senior Planner, OSPCD

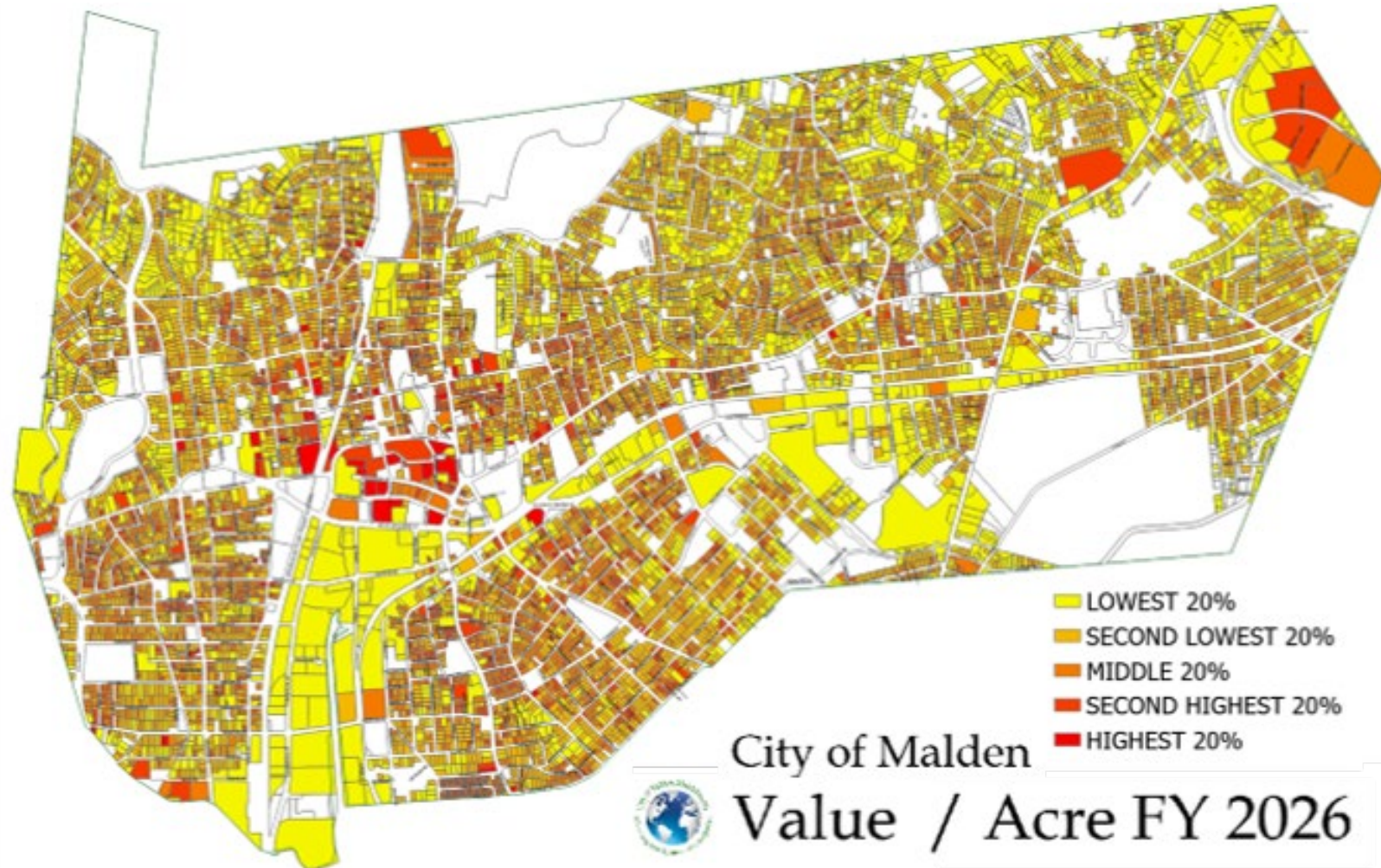
Agenda

- Project Background & Priorities
- Market Context
- Zoning Concept
- Questions and discussion



Project Background

- Staff brief City Council on property values per acre during October 2025 meeting on new growth and economic development.
- Council requests zoning options to increase Commercial St tax base faster than typical 10-15 year development window.
- City staff engage economic consultant to conduct market analysis and develop zoning proposals for the Council.
- Staff refine proposals.



Commercial Street's Underrealized Potential

Commercial St hosts **Malden's lowest assessed values per acre.**

Current Condition:

- Lowest property values per acre (bottom 20% citywide)
- Current values driven by land value more than building value
- Parcels feature single story industrial, office, and retail buildings with large surface parking lots



Future Potential:

- Greatest impact on improving City's tax base
- Lower acquisition costs for new development
- Large parcels allow greater flexibility

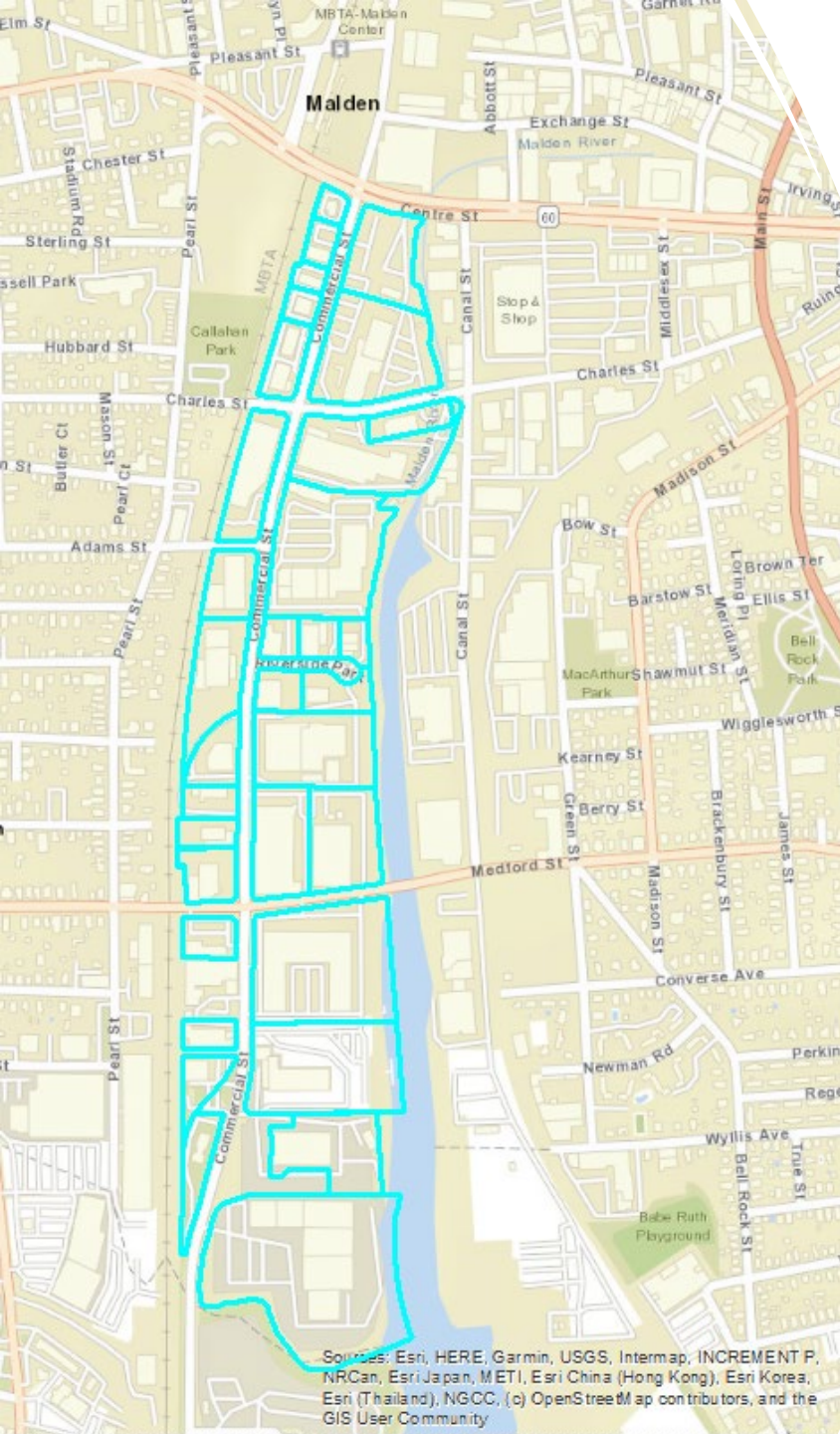


Project priorities

- **Increase tax base** by encouraging new development
- **Retain existing commercial and industrial base** while allowing new economically feasible projects
- **Improve access** to the Malden River



Image: Looking south along Commercial Street, along National Grid property.
Credit: City of Malden, 2025.

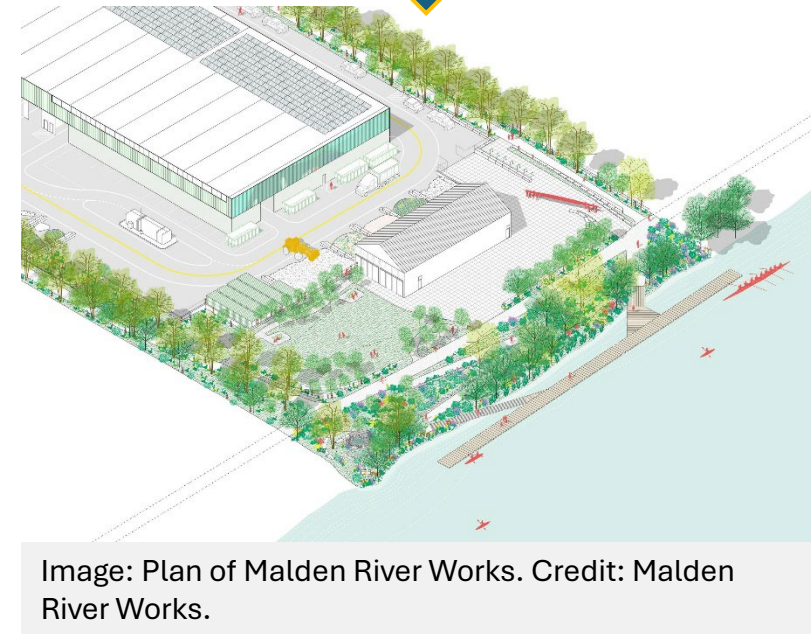
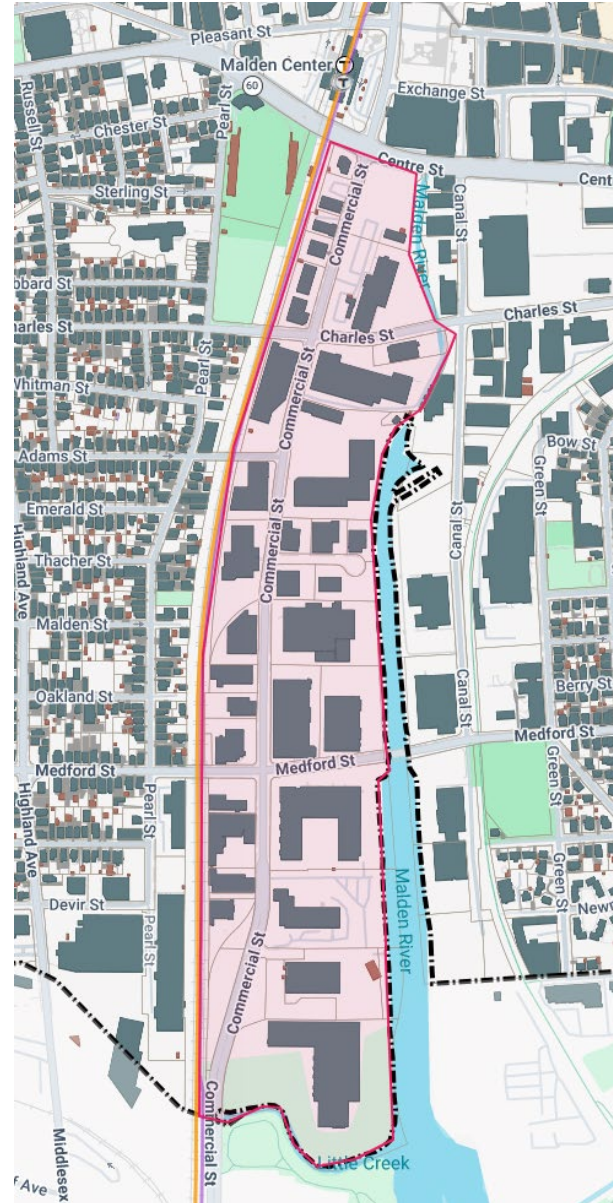


Existing Conditions

- **Project area:**
Centre Street to the north, Medford city line to the south, MBTA rail line to the west.
- **Notable landowners in the corridor:**
National Grid, Combined Properties, City of Malden.
- **Notable businesses and employers:**
Piantedosi Baking Company, National Grid, Old Town Trolley, Dom's Sausage Co Inc.
- **Ongoing Projects:**
2025 MassWorks grant to redesign Commercial Street's vehicle and pedestrian infrastructure.

Features Attractive to Development

- Proximity to:
 - Malden River
 - Malden River Works Park
 - River's Edge
 - Transit options, Rt. 16
- Large property owners in corridor (ex. Combined)
- Large parcels, average of 1.88 acres.



Current limitations on redevelopment:



National
Private

Local Control

- Market constraints

- Contamination

- Restrictive dimensional standards (ex. height, min lot size, setbacks)

- Limited by-right options

- Malden River Site Plan Review

Market Conditions

“... market conditions **favor new multifamily housing and industrial development** over the next decade. **Extremely weak market conditions for office and lab development limit the near to medium term opportunities** for their development in Malden and the inner suburban market area.”

*Karl F. Seidman Consulting Services and
Levine Planning Strategies*

Commercial Real Estate

Office, lab vacancies remain stubbornly high in Greater Boston

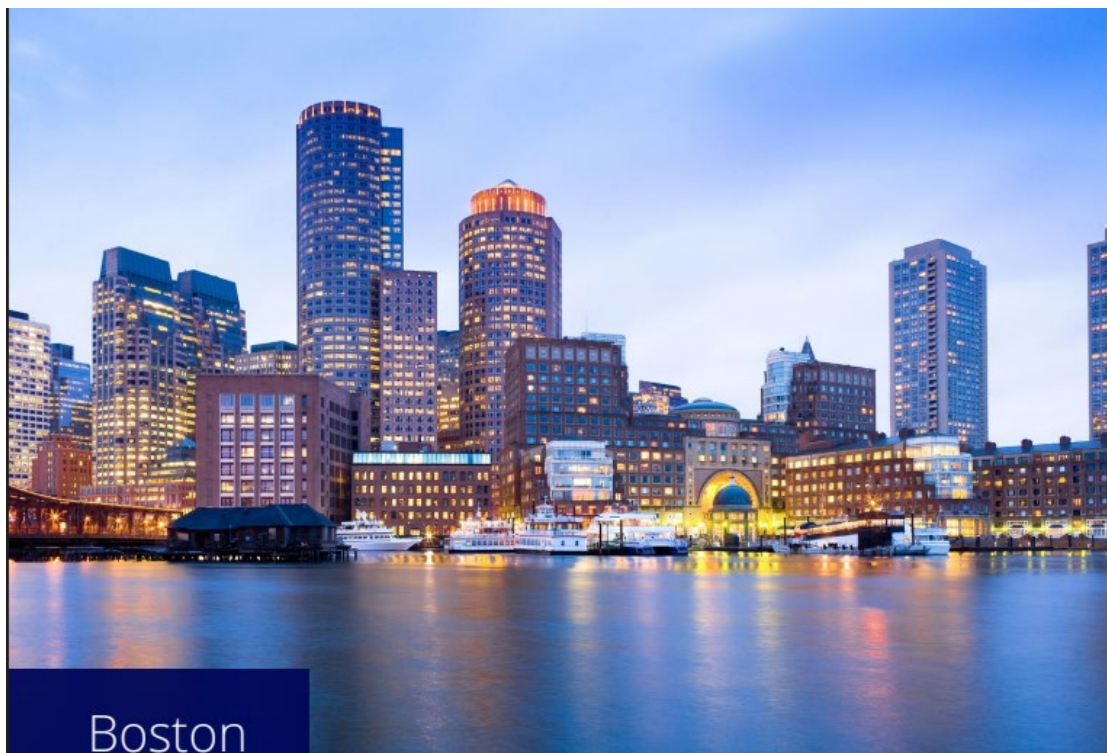
[✉](#) [f](#) [in](#) [X](#) [🖨](#) [📄](#) | [🔗 Unlock URL](#) [📄 Order Reprints](#) [📁 Gift this Article](#)



Office, lab vacancies remain stubbornly high in Greater Boston. Boston's office towers are nearly one-fourth empty on average starting 2026.

GARY HIGGINS / BOSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

Market Conditions: Lab and Life Sciences



Due to added supply since 2019, and falling rents as a result,”... developers have paused or shelved numerous projects or, in some cases, even sold development sites.”



Source: Colliers Q4 2025 Life Sciences Report | Greater Boston

Market Conditions: Office and Lab

Market analysis performed by OSPCD's economic consultant:

- **Viability of office and lab space in Malden is not strong.**
 - Significant vacancy in office space across Boston region.
 - Lab market conditions worsening across the region - supply of available (unleased) space growing to 18.5 million SF.
 - Vacancy growing fastest outside of inner core (Boston and Cambridge)

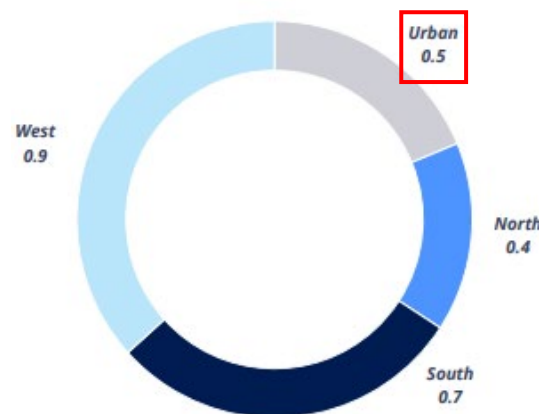
**24% of office space in
region vacant**

**32% lab space in
region vacant**

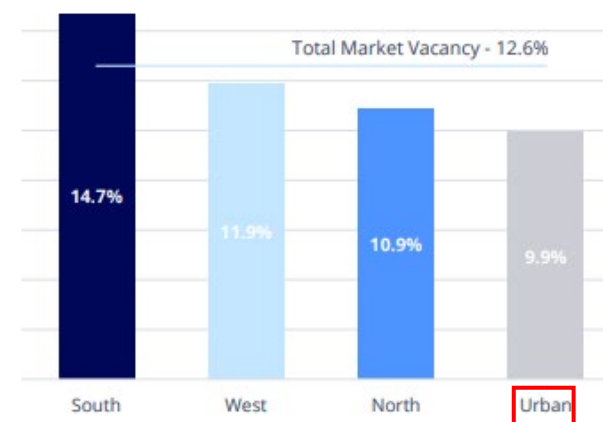
Market Conditions: Industrial

“While manufacturing space in Greater Boston has grown by 5% in the last five years, **flex space** has grown by less than 2%, signaling limited supply. As tenant profiles shift toward innovation-driven industries, **demand for these specialized spaces is likely to tighten.**”

Space Underway By Market (MSF)



Vacancy By Market



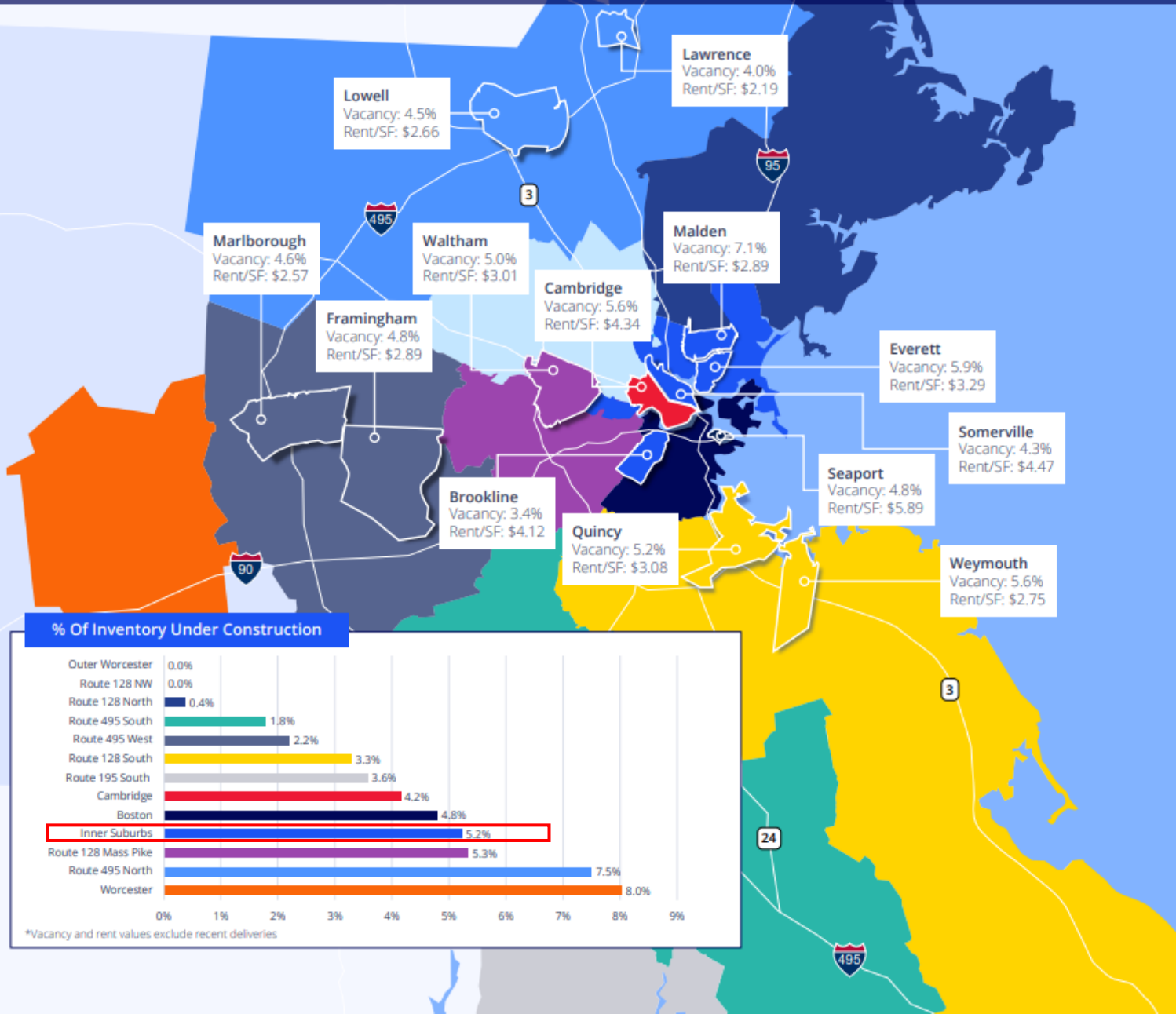
Source: Colliers Q4 2025 Industrial Report | Greater Boston

Market Conditions: Industrial

- Industrial space in the Boston region reports healthy vacancy of 12.6%.
 - **Malden can be competitive here** – Commercial corridor already zoned Industrial.
- Very little new SF of flex space (light industrial with office, retail, or showroom space) produced in past 5 years.

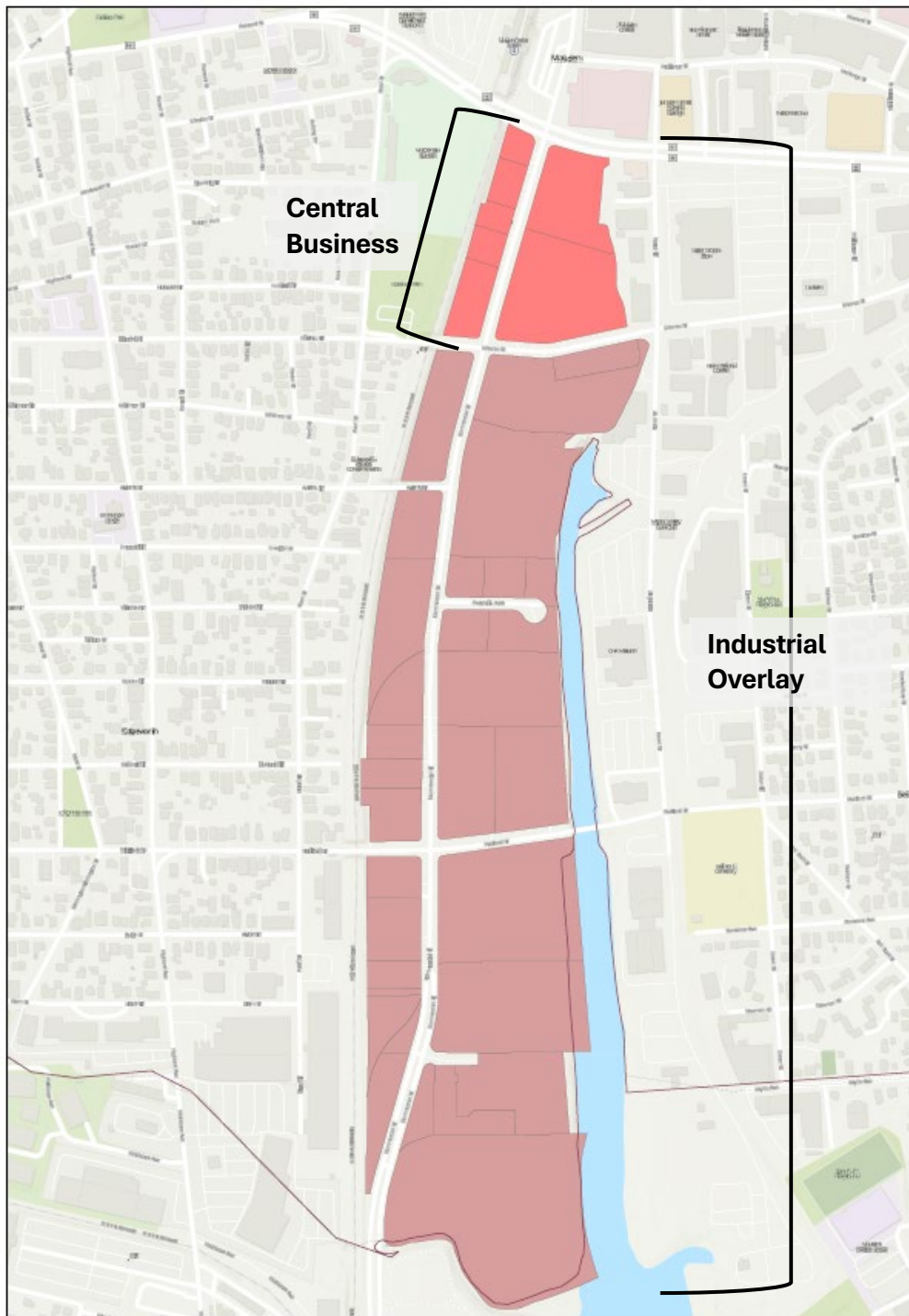
“Revitalization of American industry is nationally acknowledged as critical to the country's economic strength, building a middle class, and equalizing wage disparities.”

From MAPC's “Land, Economy, Opportunity: Industrial Land Supply and Demand in Greater Boston” 2023.



Market Conditions: Multifamily

- Market opportunities favorable for multifamily housing.
- Context:
 - Household growth outstripping supply.
 - Low residential vacancy rates.
 - Strong state support (including financial incentives).

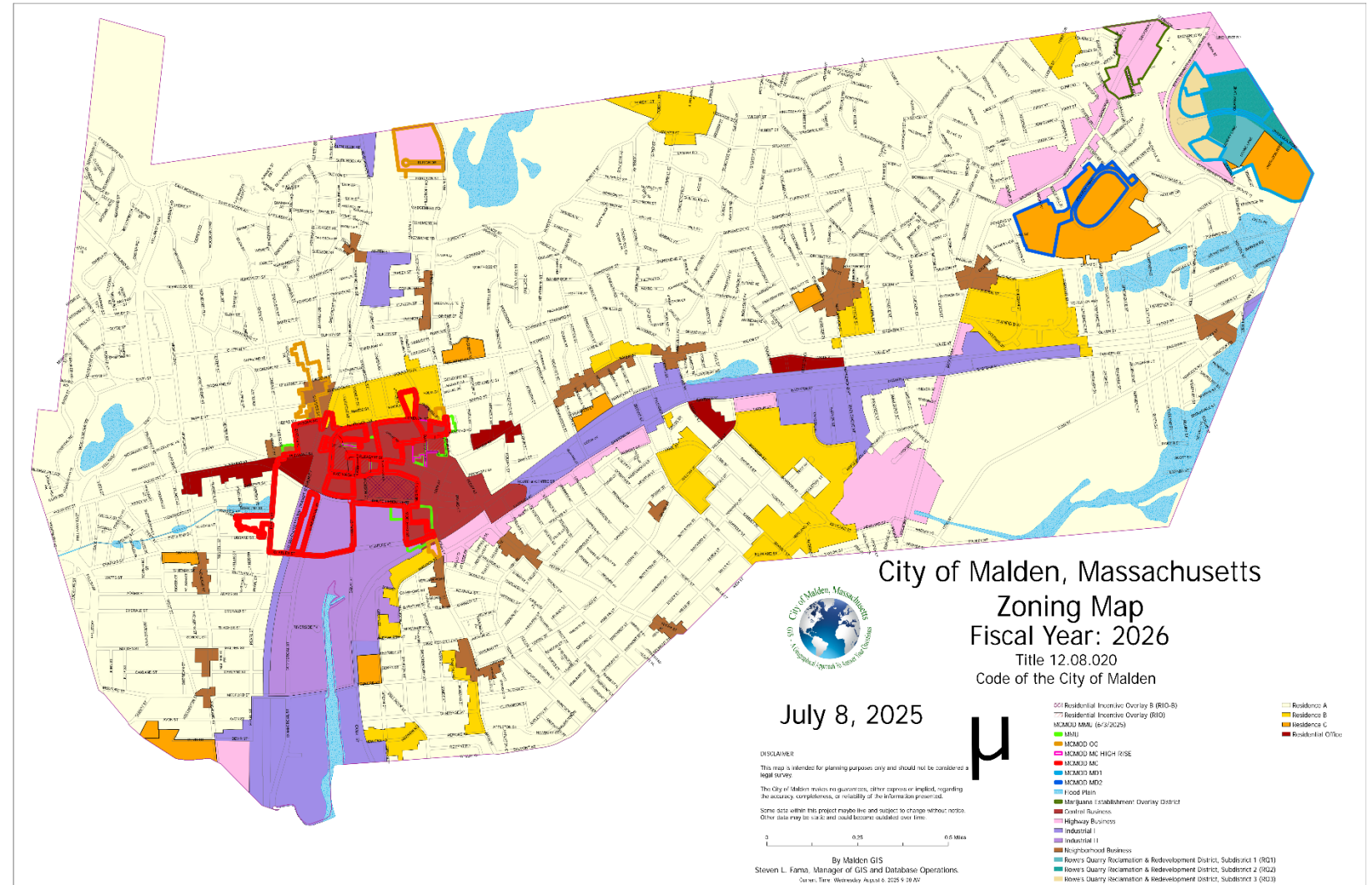


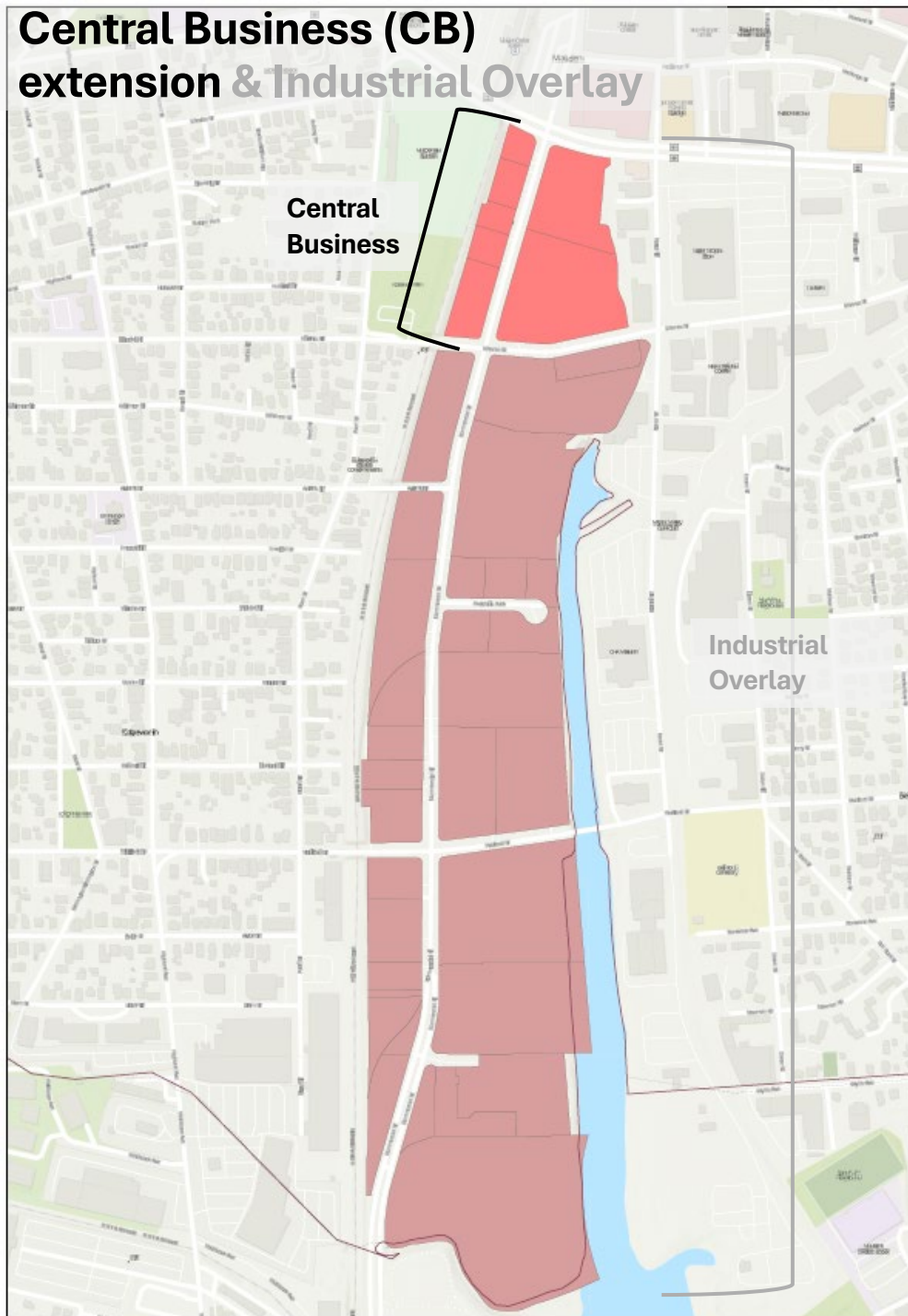
Zoning Concept: Central Business (CB) extension & Industrial Overlay

- Relaxed dimensional standards for key commercial and industrial uses;
- Residential **only on upper floors** and **by special permit** in CB;
- Activation of the Malden River (supersede or amend Malden River SPR);
- Reduced off-street parking requirements;
- Leverage setbacks along Commercial Street for opportunity to improve streetscape.

Refresher on Zoning Overlays

- Flexibility via expanded allowed uses and dimensional standards.
- Base zoning remains.
- Expands development possibilities in a defined area.
- City of Malden existing overlay districts:
 - Residential Incentive Overlays (RIOs)
 - MBTA 3A Zoning



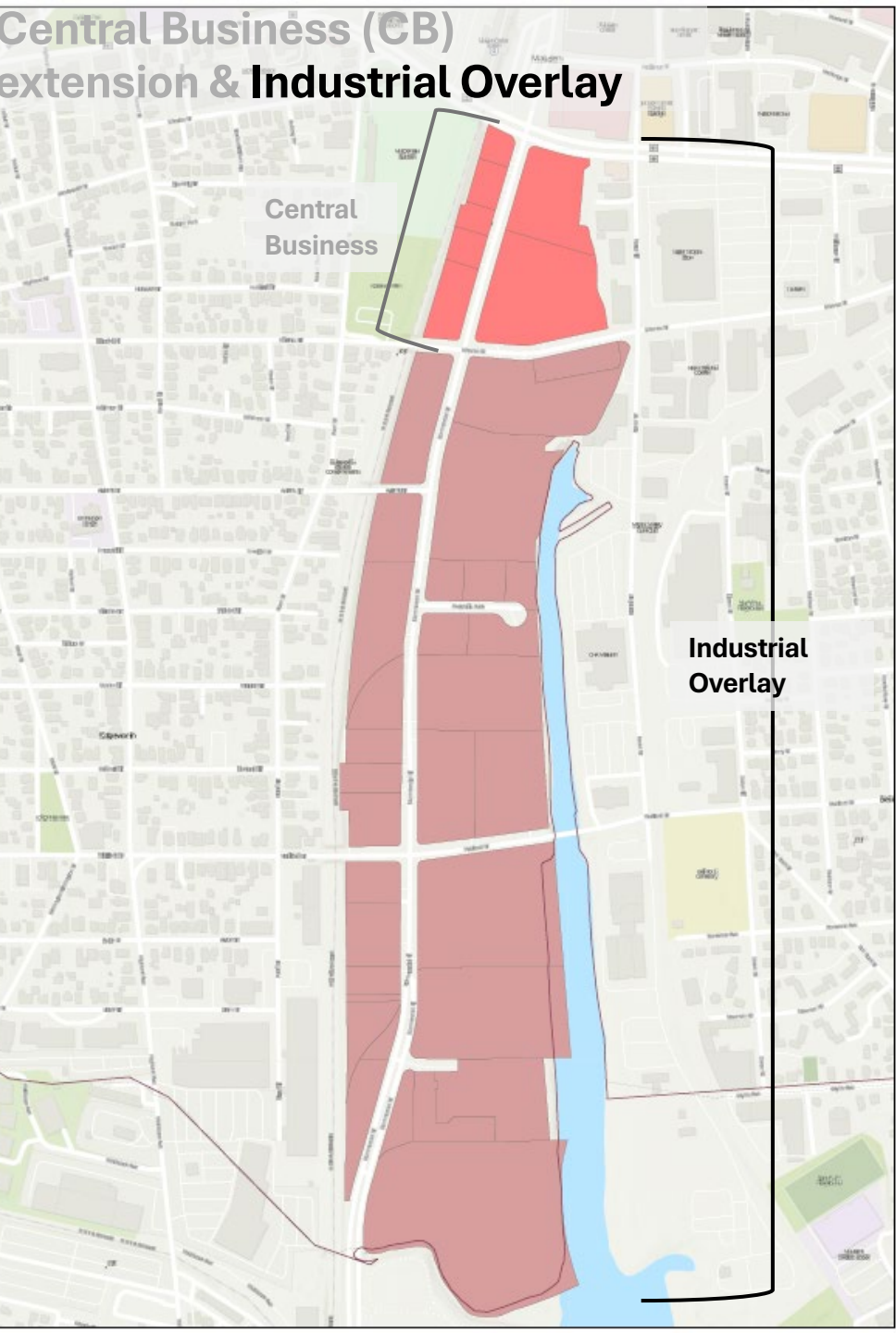


Rezone parcels between Centre and Charles Street from Industrial II to Central Business, given proximity to downtown core.

Use Allowance changes if base zoning changed	
Greater allowance	Reduced allowance
✓ Residential (SP) ✓ Hospital ✓ Business School ✓ Funeral Home ✓ Nursing Home (SP) ✓ Restaurant* ✓ Convenience Store* ✓ Supermarket* ✓ Public Service Corporation	✗ Adult uses (theatre/store) ✗ Substance Abuse Treatment Center ✗ Body Art* ✗ Marijuana Treatment Center ✗ Marijuana related businesses ✗ Building Construction & Contracting ✗ Manufacturing and Repair ✗ Marina ✗ Motor Vehicle Services/Repair ✗ Wholesale & Distribution ✗ Asphalt, Brick, Concrete, and Soil recycling ✗ Adult Day Health Center*

**Subject to change under proposed EcDev amendment.*

Central Business (CB)
extension & Industrial Overlay



	Use Allowance	Minimum Setbacks	Minimum Open Space	Minimum Parking Requirements
Industrial				
Residential				
Upper Story Residential	No			
Base Zoning	No			
Commercial				
Hotel	SPR	10' front & side, 15' rear	25%	Reduced or eliminated*
Base Zoning	SP*	20' all		1.2 / unit
Office, general	Yes	10' front & side, 15' rear	25%	Reduced or eliminated*
Base Zoning	Yes	10' front & side, 20' rear		4 / 1000 sf
Industrial				
Research & Development	Yes	10' front & side, 15' rear	25%	Reduced or eliminated*
Base Zoning	Yes	10' front, 15' side & rear		1.2 / 1000 sf
Light Manufacturing	Yes	10' front & side, 15' rear	25%	None
Base Zoning	Yes	10' front & side, 20' rear		1.2 / 1000 sf
*Subject to elimination under proposed EcDev amendment.				

Height Allowance – Exisiting (stories and feet)		Height Allowance – Proposed (stories and feet)	
4**		4**	
3		3	
2		2	
1		1	
** Max. height is 50'		** Max. height is 60' (above), or 75' for lab space	

Possible Future Development

Intent: Expand opportunities to attract commercial, industrial, and flex space to Commercial Street.

599 Somerville Ave, Somerville – Flex space



100 Chestnut St, Somerville – Commercial and Lab



1130 Eastern Ave, Malden – Industrial and Office



200 Boston Ave, Medford – Lab and Office





**Questions and
discussion**