City of Malden
MASSACHUSETTS
www.cityofmalden.org
Gary Christenson, Mayor

April 30, 2026

Malden City Council
215 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Dear Members of the City Council:

Last fall, we engaged the Council in a strategic conversation about boosting economic development within Malden, with a specific focus on our tax base. Following that conversation, the Council requested further study of and recommendations for Commercial Street, given that corridor's low value-per-acre tax base. We are pleased to present the proposed changes that aim to balance economic vitality with sustainable growth by encouraging a more flexible mix of uses, modernizing outdated regulations, and creating pathways for innovation while preserving the corridor's core industrial/commercial function. By doing so, we hope to support existing business expansion, attract new industries, support job creation, and ensure that this critical area remains competitive and resilient. We look forward to working collaboratively with the Council to refine and advance this proposal in a manner that serves Malden's best interests.

Commercial Street Economic/Zoning Analysis

OSPCD engaged economic development consultants, Karl F. Seidman Consulting Services and Levine Planning Strategies this past winter. In collaboration with City staff, the consultant team created a report (Attachment A) that identifies three zoning overlay proposals for the corridor grounded in market reality and informed by local context. All options prioritize expanding the likelihood of productive redevelopment.

OSPCD and other staff refined these recommendations, particularly Concept 3 of the consultant report, and created a zoning overlay proposal for this body's consideration, guided by the project's primary goals of increasing the tax base by encouraging new development, retaining the existing commercial and industrial base, and improving access to the Malden River. It is important to remember that zoning does not dictate development – rather, it creates a framework that embodies a community's priorities and lets market opportunities come to meet them. This is a time of economic challenge. As economic headwinds persist, we must be proactive to ensure Malden remains competitive now and into the near future. This proposal accomplishes that objective.

Recommended Proposal

The resulting overlay proposal is called the Central Business District (CBD) extension into Industrial. This proposal includes two subzones – Central Business District (CBD) overlay and the Industrial overlay. The CBD overlay extends aspects of the existing Central Business District only down to Charles Street, including height allowances. In the Industrial overlay, covering the parcels between Charles Street to the Medford border, we propose adjusted dimensional standards – heights, setbacks, open space requirements – to make the corridor more attractive to the commercial and industrial development we seek to attract.

Key aspects of the Central Business District (CBD) extension into Industrial proposal include:

- Retains active commercial and industrial ground floor throughout;
- Requires public access to and activation of the Malden River;
- Allows hotels by Site Plan Review;
- Reduces off-street parking requirements;
- Introduces residential uses only on upper floors and by special permit; and
- Leverages setbacks along Commercial Street to create opportunity to improve streetscape.

We believe this proposal balances community priorities with zoning allowances that communicate Malden's readiness for business, creating greater opportunity in the industrial core of our City. We look forward to discussion about this overlay proposal and how it integrates into the City's larger economic development vision.

Sincerely,

GARY CHRISTENSON
Mayor, City of Malden

Attachments

Attachment A: Commercial Street Zoning Recommendations

KARL F. SEIDMAN | CONSULTING SERVICES

Commercial Street Zoning Recommendations

Report to the
Malden Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development

Karl F. Seidman Consulting Services
and
Levine Planning Strategies

March 25, 2026

Introduction.

The City of Malden hired Karl F. Seidman Consulting Services and Levine Planning Strategies to prepare recommendations for zoning changes to promote higher value development on Malden's Commercial Street corridor while retaining a strong commercial/industrial presence. This report summarizes our analysis of the development opportunities and issues for Commercial Street, presents three options for new zoning overlay districts and provides recommendations on additional actions to improve the environment for future high value development.

Malden Fiscal Challenges and Need to Expand Tax Base.

Like many cities and towns in Massachusetts, Malden is facing significant challenges and pressures related to funding critical services. While American Rescue Plan funds and reserves have helped the City balance its budget in recent years, these one-time resources do not provide a sustainable revenue source to address ongoing needs. A sustainable solution to funding City services requires expanding Malden's tax base, particularly from new development and investment that allows for property tax growth beyond the 2.5% annual levy limit. Property taxes are Malden's largest revenue source, accounting for almost half of all receipts. The City's tax levy has grown modestly in recent years, averaging 3.6% annually from FY2023 to FY2026, the lowest among nearby communities (see Table 1). Establishing policies that responsibly foster new and higher value development is a key strategy to expand Malden's tax base and establish a sustainable, long-term source of new tax revenue. In late 2025, the City Council requested zoning options to create more opportunities for new growth, with a focus on Commercial Street.

Table 1. Tax Levy Growth for Malden and Nearby Communities, FY23 to FY26

Municipality	Average Annual Tax Levy Growth, FY23 to FY26
Chelsea	6.3%
Everett	5.5%
Medford	6.2%
Malden	**3.6%**
Melrose	3.7%
Revere	5.6%
Somerville	9.7%

Source: Massachusetts Division of Local Services Municipal Data Bank

Commercial Street Opportunity.

Commercial Street is a promising area to host future development and tax base growth. The corridor has some of Malden's lowest assessed values per acre due to its historic pattern of development with single story industrial, office and retail buildings surrounded by large parking lots. Consequently, assessed valuations are low and often driven more by land value than building value. An analysis of 33 parcels along Commercial Street with buildings (based on FY2025 assessor data) found that the average ratio of building square feet to lot square footage is 35.7%. This is quite low for a city where the ratio is usually above .5 for low density neighborhoods and above 2 for mid-density neighborhoods and commercial corridors. The

average building assessed value (AV) is equal to 97% of the land assessment. Moreover, the building valuation was less than 75% of the land AV for almost half (15) of these parcels. The average parcel size is 1.88 acres with 13 parcels larger than two acres and six larger than four acres. Commercial Street also has many large sites with the potential to support large-scale development projects, which present a critical opportunity to introduce new revenue for the City.

The corridor has two important assets that the City can capitalize on to attract new development: proximity to two MBTA stations and the recreative potential of the Malden River. The Malden River is currently under-utilized. However, the first phase of the City's Malden River Works project is nearing completion, with an improved DPW yard and a new waterfront park. With continued improvements, in part catalyzed by new development, the Malden River will be a valuable amenity to attract future tenants, while providing a recreational and environmental benefit for the entire City.

Prior planning studies have recognized the development potential of Commercial Street and recommended strategies and policies to capitalize on this potential. A 2015 Report by an Urban Land Institute Panel focused on strengthening and diversifying Commercial Street's industrial base through manufacturing zoning districts that preserve manufacturing while allowing for new business development and other uses. It also proposed establishing and promoting a Food Innovation District and continued investments to improve pedestrian access to and recreation uses along the Malden River. The Commercial Street Corridor Framework Plan, completed in 2018, presented a four-part strategy to retain existing businesses and attract complementary businesses and uses that would provide well-paying jobs for Malden residents. In addition to recommendations for economic development initiatives, place-making and infrastructure improvements, the framework proposed creating new zoning to foster distinct mixed-use development in three sections of Commercial Street:

1) a high-density retail/restaurant/office district in the downtown section north of Charles Street.
2) an office, research & development and manufacturing district between Charles Street and Medford Street.
3) an Office/R&D or Residential/Retail/Restaurant District south of Medford Street.

The report also recommended streamlining the permitting process to make it easier for businesses to invest in the area. These recommendations have not been implemented to date.

Most recently, in 2025 Malden received a $460,000 state MassWorks grant to redesign Commercial Street's vehicle and pedestrian infrastructure. Through this grant, the City will be preparing a comprehensive improvement plan for the corridor that addresses sidewalks, intersections, traffic signals, lighting, and new tree planting. Once implemented, these improvements will make Commercial Street more attractive and functional for all transportation modes, and supportive of new development.

As recognized in prior studies and to reflect new market conditions and economic trends, new zoning is needed to enable and promote higher value development. The dimensional controls in the existing Industrial I and II zones, particularly height limits and parking and set-back

requirements, limit the scale and density of development projects, and yield the resulting low assessed values observed in the corridor from which more tax revenue can be realized. Most uses require a Special Permit, which introduces additional time, cost, and uncertainty to the development process, which can deter developers. Residential development, including live/work space, is not allowed on most of Commercial Street, apart from the downtown portion that falls under the new Mandatory Mixed Use overlay district (MMUD) and MBTA Communities Multi-Family Overlay District – Oak Grove (MCMOD-OG) overlay districts established to comply state requirements under the MBTA Communities Act.

Market Context[1]

Although the current environment for new real estate development is quite challenging with high interest rates and construction cost inflation, 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.

Office market demand improved in the 3rd quarter of 2025, but historically large levels of vacant space remain. The leasing of new office space is primarily occurring in high quality newly constructed buildings in Boston and Cambridge. Over 46 million square feet (SF) - 24.3% of total space - is available for lease across the region, with almost 1.5 million (27.8%) available in the inner suburban market area. The suburbs experienced negative net absorption and rising vacancies in the third quarter compared to positive net absorption of 633,000 SF in Boston and Cambridge.

Lab market conditions continued to worsen across the Boston region in 2025 with negative absorption of almost 1.6 million SF and the supply of available space growing to 18.5 million SF, or 32.2% of total space. New development continues to exceed demand with many new buildings coming on the market unoccupied. The oversupply of space is particularly high in inner suburban market at 4.3 million SF, or 63% of all space, available for lease. Future growth in the life science industry also faces headwinds with declining venture capital investment in biotechnology firms, reduced federal funding for health-related research, and impacts from federal immigration policies.

The demand/supply balance for industrial space is much better with available space at 12.6% (26.7 million SF), and the Boston/Cambridge/inner suburban market area faring better at 9.6%. Despite negative net absorption of almost 654,000 SF region wide for the first three quarters of 2025, net absorption was positive at almost 100,000 SF in the urban/inner suburban market area. Flex space, a versatile property type that combines light industrial or warehouse area with office, showroom or retail space, appears to be a promising area for new development with little new flex space added to supply over the past five years.

Market opportunities for new multifamily housing development are more favorable with continued household growth outstripping supply, low vacancy rates and strong state policy

[1] Data for the office, lab and industrial markets is from Colliers Greater Boston 2025 3rd Quarter Reports for each market segment.

support for increasing housing supply. According to projections from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the Boston region needs to add at least 121,000 new housing units over the next decade to meet projected population growth.[2] Within Boston's Inner Core communities, which include Malden, communities are tasked with adding 63% of the new units needed each year to meet MAPC's 2030 production target. This supply gap is significant in Malden: the 2019 Housing Needs Assessment projected demand for at least 6,000 new housing units in Malden between 2010 and 2030 but total housing units grew by only 1,256 units between 2010 and 2024, based on American Community Survey data. Malden's rental and homeownership vacancy rates are quite low, at 2.6% and 1.1%, respectively[3]. These rates are below the levels considered necessary for a healthy housing market, 5% to 8% for rental housing and 1 to 2% for ownership units. While high development costs slowed the paced of new housing development regionally in 2025, an estimated 9,920 market rate units[4] were under construction in the Greater Boston region[5] as of the 3rd quarter of 2025 with 1,260 of these units in the inner suburban market area. New construction contributed to higher vacancy rates in Greater Boston, which reached 6.3% in the 3rd quarter of 2025 but demand for apartments remains strong, in part due to the high cost of homeownership, and increasing year-over-year asking rents, albeit at a slower pace (1.1% vs. 2.1% for the prior year)[6].

Beyond market conditions, state policy is actively supporting new housing development. The Affordable Homes Act, enacted in 2024, will provide over $5 billion in state funding over five years to address high housing costs and expand supply, including expanded funding for homeownership, middle income and workforce housing, transit-oriented projects, several new housing tax credits, and increased funding for the Housing Works infrastructure program.

New housing projects can bring improvements and amenities that benefit the broader community and provide a stronger environment for future commercial development. Since building and site amenities can increase market rents and attract tenants, housing developers often seek to include open space and recreational amenities in their projects. Through zoning requirements, Malden can use housing development to leverage open space and streetscape improvements, expanded access to and recreational amenities at the Malden River, and bring more active street-level uses to Commercial Street. These added amenities enhance Commercial Street's attractiveness for follow-on commercial development.

Several nearby projects demonstrate the type of development that can be enabled by revising Commercial Street zoning and the associated growth in property values and tax revenue. Station Landing, adjacent to the Wellington MBTA station in Medford, includes two five-story mixed-use buildings at 50 and 55 Station Landing built in 2006. 50 Station Landing is 200,551 square feet with 114 apartments and 9 retail businesses, and a current assessed value of $61.7 million. The larger 55 Station Landing property has 178 apartments and 13 ground floor retail spaces

[2] https://www.mass.gov/info-details/greater-boston-region-housing-snapshot
[3] From the 2022 five-year American Community Survey.
[4] This figure is for projects with 25 or more units and does not include affordable senior, student and other specialized types of multifamily housing.
[5] The Greater Boston region includes communities within the Interstate 495 belt.
[6] Colliers Multifamily Market Report 3rd Quarter 2025

with a $94.2 million assessed value. Rivers Edge, on the southern border of Commercial Street, includes a large mixed-use building (150 Rivers Edge) built in 2016 with 282 apartments, a restaurant, grocery store with a bakery and cafe, and an underground parking garage. Its current assessed value is $114.7 million. In comparison, the Commercial Street properties with the highest assessed values are in the range of $15 to $17 million and only four of the properties are valued above $10 million.

Precedents in Other Communities

Examples from other communities that have altered zoning in historically industrial districts to foster higher density development provide zoning policies and approaches that inform recommendations for Malden. This section details rezoning adopted for Somerville's Assembly Square and the Hartwell Avenue corridor in Lexington.

Assembly Square. Somerville established new zoning for the Assembly Square Mixed-Use District (ASMD) in 2004 to advance development of a high-density mixed-use district that would create new jobs at a variety of income and skill level, promote accessibility to and within the district, replace vacant, underutilized land, and low-density development with high-density mixed-use development, improve the Mystic River waterfront, create new public open space and increase the supply of affordable housing.

The new zoning increased maximum FARs and height limits and established a special expedited review process for four designated "Priority Permitted Uses":

1. Residential use/development with at least 150 new units and an overall density of at least 50 units/acre for which housing use is no more than 50% of the development's total Gross Floor Area (GFA) and retail uses were no more than 100% of the ground floor GFA.
2. Transit-oriented use with some combination of office, research and development, residential, or institutional uses in which a single building has a minimum of 250,000 GFA, a FAR above 5.0 and is located within 1,000 feet of an MBTA Orange Line station entrance. Additionally, housing uses could be no more than 50% of the development's total Gross Floor Area (GFA) and retail uses are no more than 100% of the ground floor GFA.
3. Retail development that replaces existing retail uses and/or re-tenants vacant space with no new single retail use occupying more than 75,000 SF of GFA and building/construction materials stores and drive-up uses not allowed.
4. A phase of an approved PUD for which a special permit was issued, or a major amendment to a phase of an approved PUD, provided that any proposed retail uses is no larger than 100% of the ground floor GFA.

A special Priority Development Process was created for large mixed-use projects that included a priority use and accompanying use different from the priority use. This process combined site plan review and special permit review within one process with a single application rather than two separate processes. To qualify, the accompanying use needed to be at least 500,000 SF GFA for residential and TOD priority use projects and between 300,000 and 375,000 SF GFA for uses

accompanying a retail priority use project.

A maximum FAR of 10.0 was established for Residential and TOD Priority Permitted Use projects and 4.0 for Priority Permitted Use Projects involving an Approved Mixed-Use PUD.

Maximum buildings heights were set based on distance from the Mystic River or MBTA Orange line entrance: no development within 150 feet of the Mystic River; l70 feet within 150 to 250 feet of the Mystic River; 90 feet for 250 to 350 feet from the river; 250 feet within 1000 feet of the Orange Line entrance; 125 feet elsewhere for priority uses. A requirement that 25% of the lot be devoted to open space was created for all projects except retail Priority Permitted uses for which it was 5%. (See Appendix 2 for dimensional tables in the ASMD zoning.)

ASMD zoning also established four "Use Clusters" with a list of permitted uses under the cluster. An approved use (under the ASMD special permit or priority development process) within a cluster could change to any other use within that cluster without additional review.

The 2004 ASMD zoning was largely left intact when the city zoning ordinance was rewritten in 2019. With city approval of a new Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan this year, revised zoning to implement this plan is being formulated.

Substantial new development has occurred in Assembly Square following the 2004 zoning changes. Assembly Row, built in three phases from 2012 to 2022 includes 1,522 housing units, 800,000 SF of retail, restaurants and other amenties,1.5 million SF of office space and a six-acre riverfront park[7]. Biomed Realty Trust recently completed the first phase of its Assembly Innovation Park with a 498,000 SF lab building leased to TransMedics for their global headquarters. In addition, other land owners in the district have redeveloped their sites, resulting in a major increase in property tax revenue and activity in the area.

Hartwell Avenue is a low-density industrial corridor in Lexington near the MIT Lincoln Lab complex. The Town of Lexington completed a rezoning of the corridor in 2020 to advance several goals: attract new development to generate tax revenue, modernize an area largely built in the 1960 and promote more amenities along the corridor. The new zoning focused on dimensional changes including:

- reducing the minimum lot size from 3 acres to 5,000 SF
- reducing the minimum frontage from 200 to 50 feet
- changing front, side and rear yard requirements, including allowing development up to the sidewalk edge (i.e., no required front yard minimum)
- the maximum non-residential FAR limit of .35 was eliminated with no new FAR established; instead, density was regulated by the parcel dimensional standards and a new 115-foot height limit, designed to permit buildings of up to 6 stories plus a penthouse.

A new requirement was created to devote at least 15% of the lot area to outdoor amenities, such as courtyards, street-side or rooftop terraces, plazas, or passageways for pedestrians or bicycles.

[7] https://properties.federalrealty.com/property/assembly-row/3313943

Minor changes to allowable uses were made to add uses not included in the zoning code, such as brew pubs, expanded uses that could get a liquor license, and allow for more ancillary uses. An existing Transportation Management Overlay District was updated in 2023 to address expected transportation impacts from the new zoning.

The zoning changes have not yet resulted in new development partly due to the timing of their adoption in 2020 during the pandemic and soon before the deterioration of the office and lab markets. However, a new large lab building (336,000 SF) was developed by Trammel Crow at 440 Bedford Street near Hartwell Avenue. A new Hartwell Innovation District (C-HIP) was established in 2021 to allow the greater height limits needed for this project.

Goals for New Zoning

Based on this analysis and information, the primary goals for new zoning in this corridor are as follows:

a. Enable higher value development to increase overall tax base without reducing the commercial/ industrial base.
b. Promote mixed uses with increased active ground floor uses.
c. Retain anchor manufacturing firms and jobs.
d. Add amenities & open space and expand river access.
e. Simplify the permitting process to reduce developer risk.

Zoning Recommendations/Overlay District Options

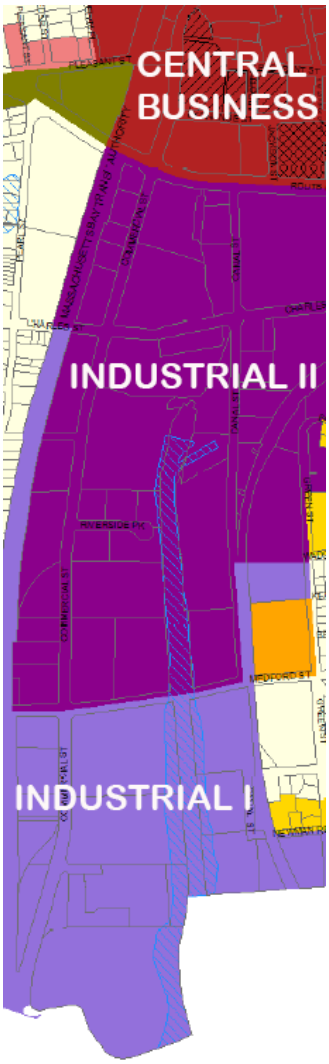
Rather than create new zoning districts, the best approach to achieving these goals in the short-term is to add one or more overlay districts along this corridor. These overlays would apply in addition to the base zoning. Notably, for a project seeking permitting under the overlay zoning, none of the dimensional standards in the base zoning districts would apply and instead would be replaced with those listed in these overlays.

We offer three possible overlay approaches to this corridor. Each one is based on a slightly different concept for future land uses along Commercial Street. However, they would all likely result in additional development opportunities more quickly than under the current zoning.

The boundaries of these overlays would have to be refined to determine if they should begin at the center street line or if one overlay should continue along the facing façade of the street to allow for a unified street character along Charles Street and Medford Street. However, with all three, the general dividing lines are on Charles Street and Medford Street.

Current Zoning

Other than the small portion of the study area in the Central Business District, the zoning is currently entirely industrial. The Industrial I zone in the southern portion allows many retail, commercial and industrial uses, though most are only allowed by Special Permit. Residential uses are not permitted. The Industrial II zone to the north of Medford Street allows almost the same mix of uses, with a few additional uses allowed by right (such as "Research & Development" and "Light Manufacturing", which require a Special Permit in the Industrial I zone) and by Special Permit (such as "Asphalt, Brick, Concrete and Soil Recycling). Again, residential uses are not permitted. Hotels are permitted in both zones, however, by Special Permit.



Current Zoning

In terms of dimensional requirements, both Industrial zones follow the dimensional table in the Malden Zoning Ordinance. Dimensional requirements are generally by use. Allowed uses generally require 50' to 100' of frontage and require at least 10' front and side setbacks and a 20' rear setback. Minimum lot sizes are generally 10,000 to 20,000 sf. Heights are generally limited to 30' and two stories maximum.

The creation of one or more overlay districts in this area would change the zoning while keeping some key elements of the base zones in place. For residential development, rather than minimum building setbacks, build-to lines are proposed in some areas to help build a strong street presence. For non-residential uses that may not be appropriate on the street line, these build-to lines are not required, nor are they for residential in some proposed overlays.

We are outlining three possible overlay scenarios, each of which has its strengths. At the end of this memo we also provide summary use and dimensional tables for these overlays. There will be details to resolve as well, such as how the City's regulation of cannabis products would be applied in these overlays. However, the first step is likely to determine which of these three options the City wants to pursue. After that decision, City staff can start to resolve the details that will be needed to turn overlays into zoning code.

New Definitions

Along with the addition of these overlays, the following definitions should be added to 12.32.060 to clarify the meaning of certain terms that are used in the overlay proposals. Where similar definitions exist within the Malden Zoning Code, as is the case with Light Manufacturing, revisions are proposed.

Usable Open Space: Open space maintained for the use of the general public. Public open space may include parks, plazas, and public seating areas. It may include areas devoted to stormwater management if designed in a fashion that makes it attractive for public use. For properties

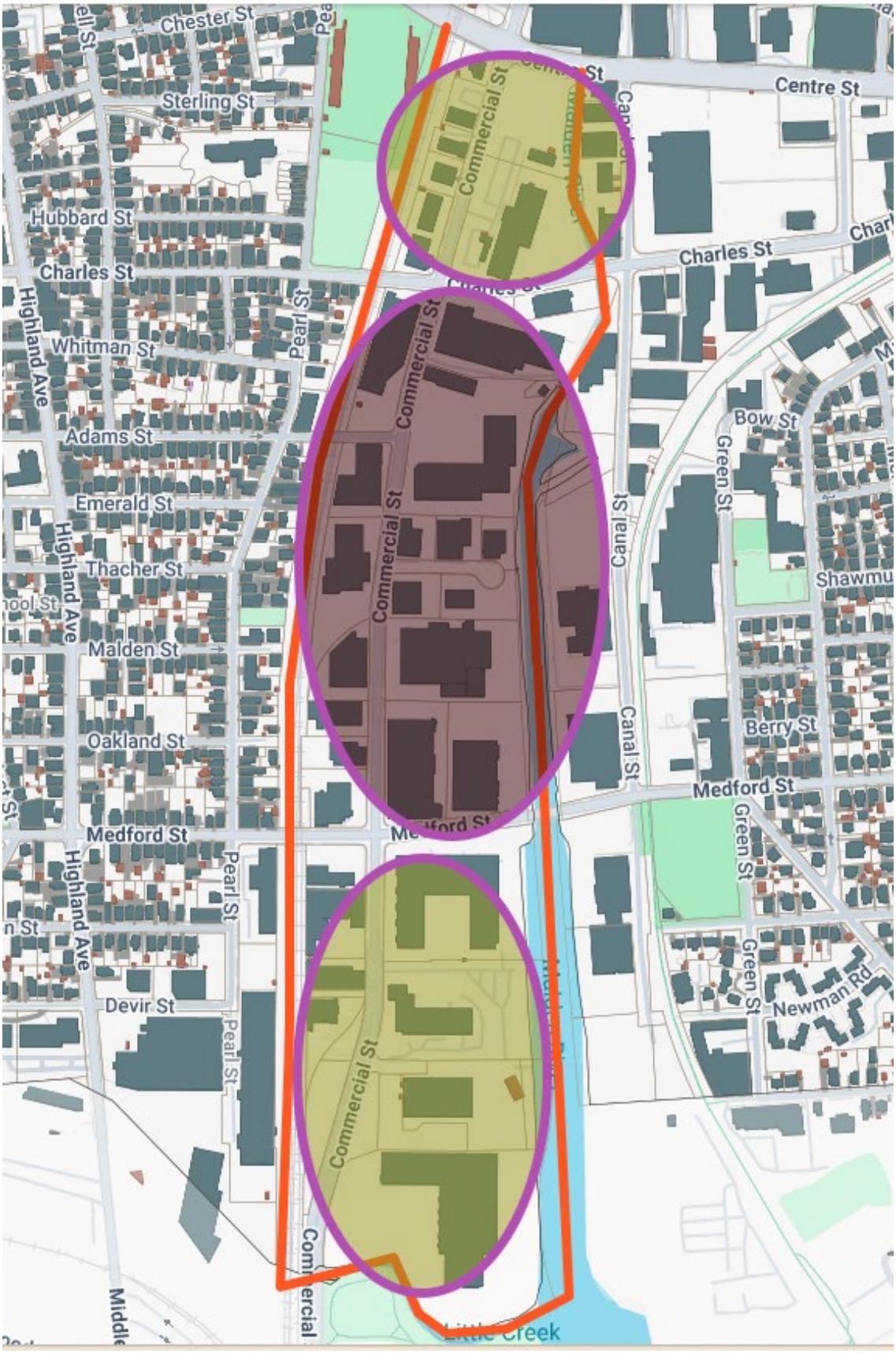
abutting Commercial Street, usable open space shall include a 15' wide easement to the City along Commercial Street to be utilized for transportation and public realm needs. For properties abutting the Malden River, usable open space shall include a 15' wide easement to the City along the Malden River for public access and river restoration. This 15' easement is measured from the point on the bank at the 1% Annual Change Flood Hazard as measured by the most recent applicable FEMA National Hazard Flood Maps.

Live/Work Space: A portion of a building designed for both habitation and vocational use. At least 40% of the space shall be designed for vocational use. No outside employees are permitted to work in Live/Work Spaces. If these spaces are sold, they shall include deed restrictions noting that they are Live/Work Spaces as defined herein, and further that the occupant shall be aware that this space is in an area where there is likely to be ambient noise from industrial, manufacturing, and other nearby uses.

Light Industrial/Manufacturing: Industrial or manufacturing activity involving the manufacturing, packaging, assembly, or distribution of finished or semi-finished products from previously prepared material, where such activities are conducted wholly within an enclosed building. Light Industrial/Manufacturing uses do not include the processing of raw materials or salvaging operations. Light Industrial/Manufacturing uses are generally compatible, due to their size and nature of impact, with residential, commercial and other low impact industrial uses. Flex space that combine light industrial or warehouse area with an accessory office, showroom or retail space, is considered Light Industrial/Manufacturing. Makerspaces, which provide spaces for rent to multiple users to use typical light industrial spaces, are also considered Light Industrial/Manufacturing.

Heavy Industrial: Industrial activity involving manufacturing, packaging, assembly, or distribution of finished or semi-finished products from either raw materials or previously prepared material which, unless properly mitigated, could be incompatible with residential, commercial, and lower-impact industrial uses and sensitive natural areas due to their high generation of traffic, noise levels, emissions, lighting, and odors.

Section 12.12.140 (Site Plan Review) & Section 12.12.20 (Malden River Site Plan Review)
The current Site Plan Review requirements in the Malden Zoning Ordinance in 12.12.140 and 12.12.20 would continue to apply in these overlay districts. In any cases where these requirements come into direct conflict with requirements in these overlays, the requirements in the overlays would apply. For example, the Malden River Site Plan Review section of the Zoning Ordinance currently requires a minimum setback of 100 feet from the Malden River, with limited exceptions for Water Dependent uses. That minimum setback would be replaced by the setback requirements in these overlays. The requirements of 12.12.140 and 12.12.20 that would still apply could be added to the overlay language if doing so would be administratively simpler and clearer.



Overlay Concept #1: "Residential around Industrial"

Overlay Concept #1: "Residential around Industrial"
This overlay concept creates residential areas in the north and south and retains the industrial core, with taller buildings allowed to permit upper story residential or lab space. It would retain some separation of uses by creating two overlay districts. One would apply in the northern and southern ends of the study area, shown in green in the map. The other would apply in the central area, roughly from Adams Street to Medford Street, shown in brown. That overlay would remain industrial in character but relax some use requirements and allow for additional heights. The specific boundaries of these overlays would have to be refined to determine if they should begin at the center street line or if one overlay should continue along the facing façade of the street to allow for a unified street character along Charles Street and Medford Street, but they should likely begin at the center street lines.

Residential/Industrial/Commercial Overlay
In the area shaded in green to the north and south, notwithstanding the base zoning, the following uses would be permitted or changed from requiring a Special Permit to being by right:

- Research & Development (including Lab uses) – by right
- Light Industrial/Manufacturing – by right
- Live/Work Spaces – by right
- Residential above the first floor (ground level can be retail or other permitted uses in the zone) – by right
- Hotels – by right

The following dimensional requirements would apply, superseding the base dimensional requirements:

- Height permitted – Up to 12 stories or 125 feet, 150 feet for lab space[8]
- Setbacks – 10' front minimum for entirely non-residential uses, 10' side & 15' rear minimum, 20' build-to line (maximum) for development that includes a residential component (15' of usable open space and no more than an additional 5')
- Minimum Usable Open Space – 25%, focused on Malden River frontage for abutting parcels.
- Parking – Light Industrial/Manufacturing as market dictates. Minimum of three spaces/1000 sf. of office or R&D/Lab space. Minimum of 0.75 spaces per residential or live/work space with no requirement for retail as a ground floor space. Minimum of 0.75 spaces per hotel room.
- Commercial/Industrial/Retail ground level required – live/work could meet this requirement.

Industrial Overlay

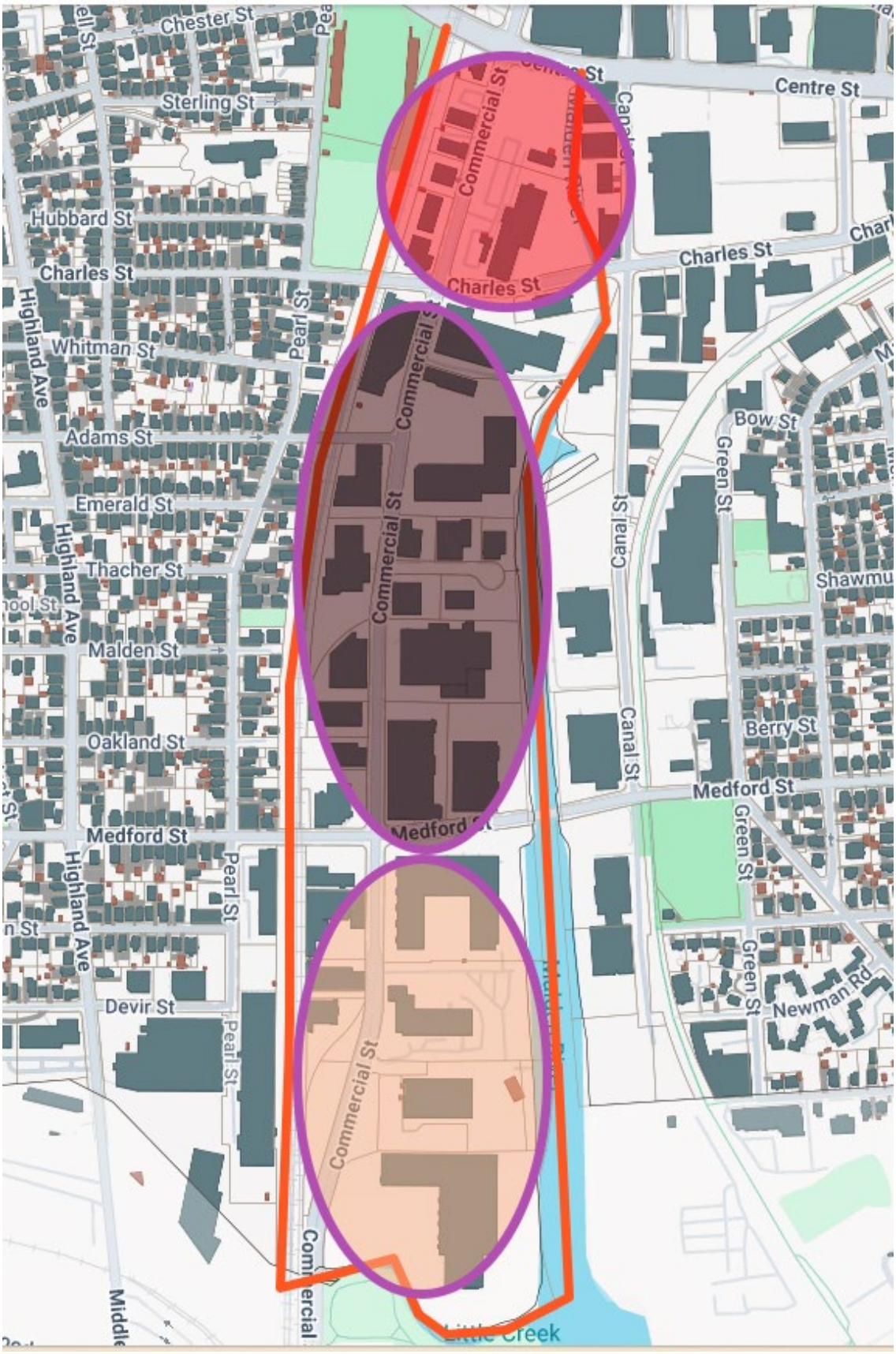
In the middle area shaded brown, the overlay would have the following standards to supersede the base zones, either allowing additional uses or changing a Special Permit requirement to by right:

[8] For all heights in these overlays, both the number of stories and number of feet apply. In most cases the number of stories will be the limiting factor – however, lab space has a much higher floor-to-ceiling so the higher foot maximum is listed as well.

- Research & Development (including Lab uses) – by right
- Light Industrial/Manufacturing – by right
- Heavy Industrial – by Special Permit
- Live/Work Spaces – by Special Permit
- Hotels – by right

The following dimensional requirements would apply, superseding the base dimensional requirements:

- Height permitted – Up to 4 stories or 60 feet, 75 feet for lab space
- Setbacks – 10’ front and side minimum, 15’ rear minimum
- Minimum Usable Open Space – 25%, focused on Malden River frontage for abutting parcels.
- Parking – Light Industrial/Manufacturing/Heavy Industrial as market dictates. Minimum of three spaces/1000 sf. of office space or R&D/Lab space. Minimum of 0.75 spaces per live/work space. Minimum of 0.75 spaces per hotel room.



Overlay Concept #2: "Urban Residential into Industrial into River's Edge"

Overlay Concept #2: "Urban Residential into Industrial into River's Edge"

This overlay concept seeks to extend the downtown zoning in the northern part of the study area, retain the industrial core, and extend the River's Edge pattern to the south. It is similar to Overlay Concept #2, but the one residential/industrial/commercial overlay in that concept becomes two different overlays. The one to the north, in red in the map, is more of an extension of the central business district. The one to the south, in orange, is essentially the same as the residential/industrial/commercial overlay in Overlay Concept #1. Again, the specific boundaries of these overlays would have to be refined to determine if they should begin at the center street line or if one overlay should continue along the facing façade of the street to allow for a unified street character along Charles Street and Medford Street, but they should likely begin at the center street lines.

North Residential Overlay

In the area shaded in red to the north, notwithstanding the base zoning, the following additional uses would be permitted:

- Live/Work Spaces – by right
- Residential above the first floor (ground level can be retail or other permitted uses in the zone) – by right
- Hotels – by right

The following dimensional requirements would apply, superseding the base dimensional requirements:

- Height permitted –Up to 12 stories or 125 feet, 150 feet for lab space
- Setbacks – 10' front minimum for entirely non-residential uses, 10' side & 15' rear minimum, 20' build-to line (maximum) for developments that include a residential component (15' of usable open space and no more than an additional 5')
- Minimum Usable Open Space – 25%, focused on Malden River frontage for abutting parcels.
- Parking – Minimum of three spaces/1000 sf. of office space or R&D/Lab space. Minimum of 0.75 spaces per residential or live/work space with no requirement for retail as a ground floor use. Minimum of 0.75 spaces per hotel room.
- Commercial/Industrial/Retail ground level required – live/work could meet this requirement.

Industrial Overlay

In the middle area shaded brown, the overlay would have the following standards to supersede the base zones, allowing new uses or changing requirements from Special Permit to by right:

- Research & Development (including Lab uses) – by right
- Light Industrial/Manufacturing – by right
- Heavy Industrial- by Special Permit
- Live/Work Spaces – by Special Permit
- Hotels – by right

The following dimensional requirements would apply, superseding the base dimensional requirements:

- Height permitted – Up to 4 stories or 60 feet, 75 feet for lab space
- Setbacks – 10’ front and side minimum, 15’ rear minimum
- Minimum Usable Open Space – 25%, focused on Malden River frontage for abutting parcels.
- Parking – Light Industrial/Manufacturing/Heavy Industrial as market dictates. Minimum of three spaces/1000 sf. of office space or R&D/Lab space. Minimum of 0.75 spaces per live/work space. Minimum of 0.75 spaces per hotel room.

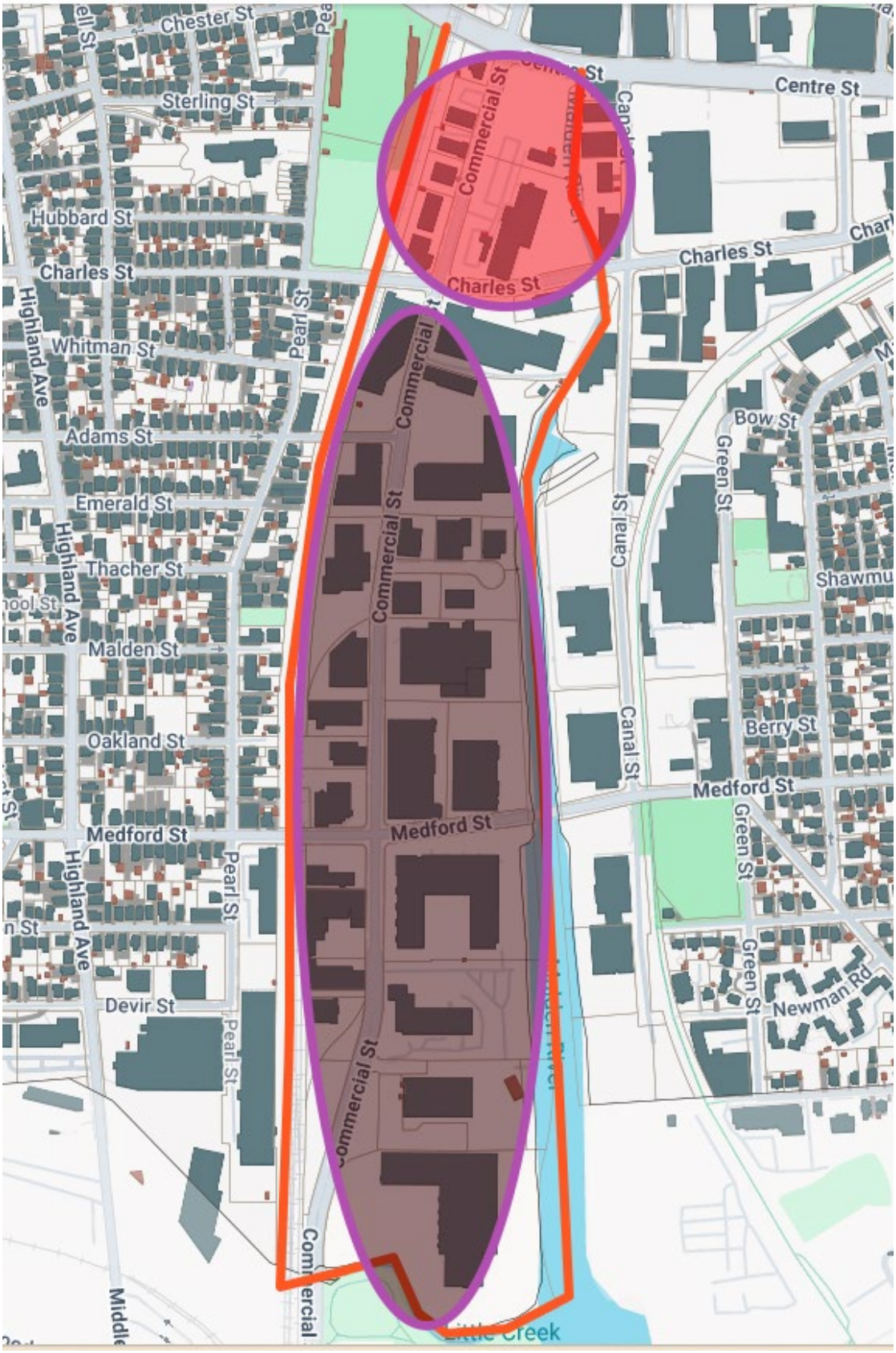
Residential/Industrial/Commercial Overlay

In the area in yellow in the south, notwithstanding the base zoning, the following uses would be permitted or changed from requiring a Special Permit to being by right:

- Research & Development (including Lab uses) – by right
- Light Industrial/Manufacturing – by right
- Live/Work Spaces – by right
- Residential above the first floor (ground level can be retail or other permitted uses in the zone) – by right
- Hotels – by right

The following dimensional requirements would apply, superseding the base dimensional requirements:

- Height permitted – Up to 7 stories or 85 feet, 115 feet for lab space.
- Setbacks – 10’ front and side minimum, 15’ rear minimum, no build-to line
- Minimum Usable Open Space – 25%, focused on Malden River frontage for abutting parcels
- Parking – Light Industrial/Manufacturing as market dictates. Minimum of three spaces/1000 sf. of office space or R&D/Lab space. Minimum of 0.75 spaces per residential or live/work space with no requirement for retail as a ground floor space. Minimum of 0.75 spaces per hotel room.
- Commercial/Industrial/Retail ground level required – live/work could meet this requirement.



Overlay Concept #3: "Downtown Expansion into Industrial"

Overlay Concept #3: "Downtown Expansion into Industrial"

This concept is similar to concept #2 other than the elimination of the southern overlay zone (see Figure 4). That area would be included in the central overlay that retains more of an industrial character. However, in this option, the industrial overlay is slightly more permissive of housing options, allowing them by special permit, since it is a larger area.

North Residential Overlay

In the area shaded in red to the north in Figure 4, notwithstanding the base zoning, the following additional uses would be permitted:

- Live/Work Spaces – by right
- Residential above the first floor (ground level can be retail or other permitted uses in the zone) – by right
- Hotels – by right

The following dimensional requirements would apply, superseding the base dimensional requirements:

- Height permitted – Up to 12 stories or 125 feet, 150 feet for lab space
- Setbacks – 10' front minimum for entirely non-residential uses, 10' side & 15' rear minimum, 20' build-to line (maximum) for development that includes a residential component (15' of usable open space and no more than an additional 5')
- Minimum Usable Open Space – 25%, focused on Malden River frontage for abutting parcels
- Parking – Minimum of three spaces/1000 sf. of office space or R&D/Lab space. Minimum of 0.75 spaces per residential or live/work space with no requirement for retail as a ground floor space. Minimum of 0.75 spaces per hotel room.
- Commercial/Industrial/Retail ground level required – live/work could meet this requirement provided space was for light industrial professions such as fabrication

Industrial Overlay

In the lower area shaded brown, the overlay would have the following standards to supersede the base zones, allowing new uses or changing requirements from Special Permit to by right:

- Research & Development (including Lab uses) – by right
- Light Industrial/Manufacturing – by right
- Heavy Industrial- by Special Permit
- Live/Work Spaces – by Special Permit
- Residential above the first floor (ground level can be retail or other permitted uses in the zone) - by Special Permit
- Hotels – by right

The following dimensional requirements would apply, superseding the base dimensional requirements:

- Height permitted – Up to 4 stories or 60 feet, 75 feet for lab space
- Setbacks – 10' front and side minimum, 15' rear minimum

- Minimum Usable Open Space – 25%, focused on Malden River frontage for abutting parcels
- Parking – Light Industrial/Manufacturing/Heavy Industrial as market dictates. Minimum of three spaces/1000 sf. of office space or R&D/Lab space. Minimum of 0.75 spaces per residential or live/work space with no requirement for retail as a ground floor space. Minimum of 0.75 spaces per hotel room.

Additional Recommendations

Beyond adopting new zoning overlay districts, Malden can take additional steps to foster higher value development on Commercial Street and support the tax base via increased revenues.

The following recommendations are intended to improve the infrastructure and environment on Commercial Street to make new development more attractive and create a more predictable and less cumbersome regulatory system:

- **Use the Commercial Street redesign to improve the pedestrian environment, add streetscape elements, and improve the overall appearance and functionality of the street.** This project provides Malden a special opportunity to address transportation-related barriers to high value development on Commercial Street and create a more attractive environment for future development. A redesign that improves Commercial Street for pedestrian, bike and public transportation can reduce reliance on automobiles and reduce parking requirements to free up land for development. New landscaping, streetscape elements, lightening and signage will make the street and neighborhood more attractive and potentially improve river access—all of which make Commercial Street a more desirable location for residents and businesses, and new development.
- **Work with MBTA and Medford to improve access to Wellington Station from Commercial Street and Rivers Edge Drive**. Properties on the southern portion of Commercial Street are close to Wellington T Station, which provides public transportation access for employees, customers, and residents. While River's Edge Drive does connect under Revere Beach Parkway, the connection is not particularly pedestrian friendly. The connection is especially important for new residential development. For this reason, the City should work with the MBTA and Medford to explore and implement options for more attractive pedestrian access to the station from Rivers Edge Drive.
- **Consider developing a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategy for the corridor**. With two nearby MBTA stations, one of which is also a commuter rail station, there are opportunities to further reduce automobile use through increasing the accessibility of these facilities, as well as providing other ways to increase mobility. The City should consider developing a TDM strategy for Commercial Street that developments could participate in to reduce parking demand and be eligible for further reductions in parking requirements.
- **Use the Comprehensive Plan process and subsequent Zoning Code revisions to reinforce overlay district goals and simplify the development approval process.** The Comprehensive Plan process will likely result in a need to update the Zoning Code in alignment with identified community goals. Updating of the Malden Zoning Code may present an opportunity to ensure that the underlying zoning for Commercial Street aligns with the goals in the proposed overlay districts and yields a more predictable development approval process. This can include explicit development standards that are reviewed by City staff and less reliance on special

permits and other actions that require approval by the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, and City Council.

- **Create a more detailed plan for the Commercial Street corridor** to let developers and property owners know the type and scale of development that the City and community stakeholders want to see and will approve, and demonstrate the City's investment plans for infrastructure, open space and riverfront improvements. This plan will incentivize and encourage higher value development proposals by demonstrating the City's commitment to supporting development along the corridor and increasing developer confidence that proposed projects align with City and community goals and will be approved. Once a plan is completed, zoning along this corridor could potentially be amended from an overlay approach to new zoning districts that are clearly consistent with the new plan. The plan could also determine that the overlay approach is the best long-term zoning strategy for this corridor. At a minimum, the definition of usable open space could be altered to specify that developers have to contribute to the completion of the portion of the plan on their property, which may involve a larger or smaller easement as well as other requirements.

Use Summary for Overlay Concepts	Overlay Subzone	Upper Story Residential	Live/Work	Hotel	Research & Development	Light Industrial /Manufacturing	Heavy Industrial
1: Residential around Industrial	Residential/Industrial/ Commercial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
	Industrial	No	Special Permit	Yes	Yes	Yes	Special Permit
2: Urban Residential into Industrial into River's Edge	North Residential	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
	Industrial	No	Special Permit	Yes	Yes	Yes	Special Permit
	Residential/Industrial/ Commercial	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
3: Downtown Expansion into Industrial	North Residential	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
	Industrial	Special Permit	Special Permit	Yes	Yes	Yes	Special Permit

Dimensional Summary for Overlay Concepts	Overlay Subzone	Maximum Height in Feet[1]	Maximum Height in Stories	Front Commercial/ Industrial Setbacks	Side Setbacks	Rear Setbacks	Maximum Residential Front Setback[2]	Office/Lab Parking	Residential Parking	Hotel Parking	Minimum Usable Open Space
1: Residential around Industrial	Residential/Industrial/ Commercial	125'/150'	12	10'	10'	15'	5' (20' total)	3/1000 sf.	0.75/ unit	0.75/ room	25%
	Industrial	60'/75'	4	10'	10'	15'	NA	3/1000 sf.	0.75/ unit	0.75/ room	25%
2: Urban Residential into Industrial into River's Edge	North Residential	125'/150'	12	10'	10'	15'	5' (20' total)	3/1000 sf.	0.75/ unit	0.75/ room	25%
	Industrial	60'/75'	4	10'	10'	15'	NA	3/1000 sf.	0.75/ unit	0.75/ room	25%
	Residential/Industrial/ Commercial	85'/115'	7	10'	10'	15'	NA	3/1000 sf.	0.75/ unit	0.75/ room	25%
3: Downtown Expansion into Industrial	North Residential	125'/150'	12	10'	10'	15'	5' (20' total)	3/1000 sf.	0.75/ unit	0.75/ room	25%
	Industrial	60'/75'	4	10'	10'	15'	NA	3/1000 sf.	0.75/ unit	0.75/ room	25%

[1] First height number is for all uses other than lap space; second number is for lab space.
[2] The first number is the build-to line to the edge of the required 15' easement and the second number includes the easement.