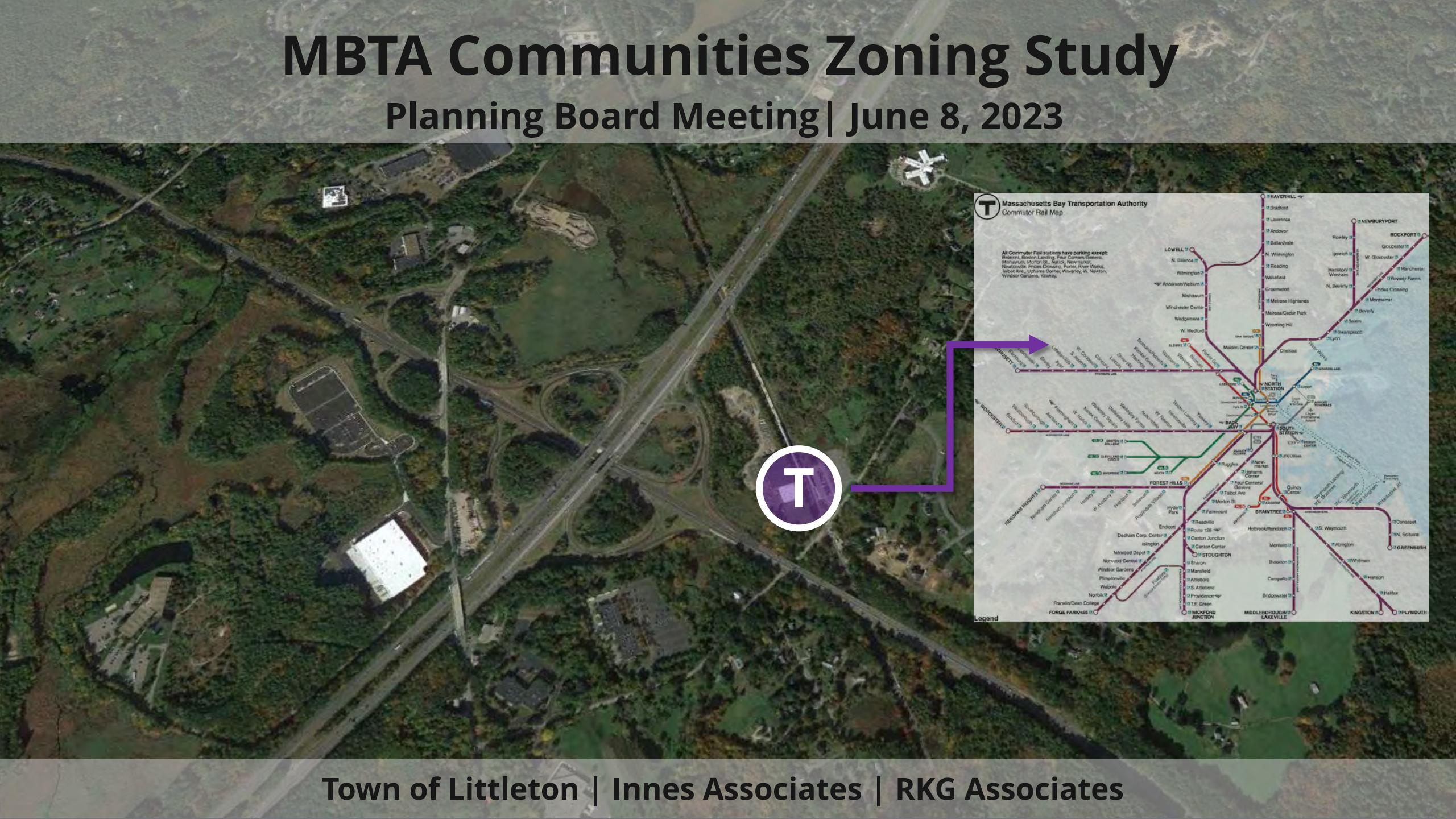


# MBTA Communities Zoning Study

## Planning Board Meeting | June 8, 2023



# AGENDA

Process Overview

The Math of Section 3A

Options for Compliance

Tonight's Tests

Discussion

Next Steps

## Consultant Team



# Planning Process

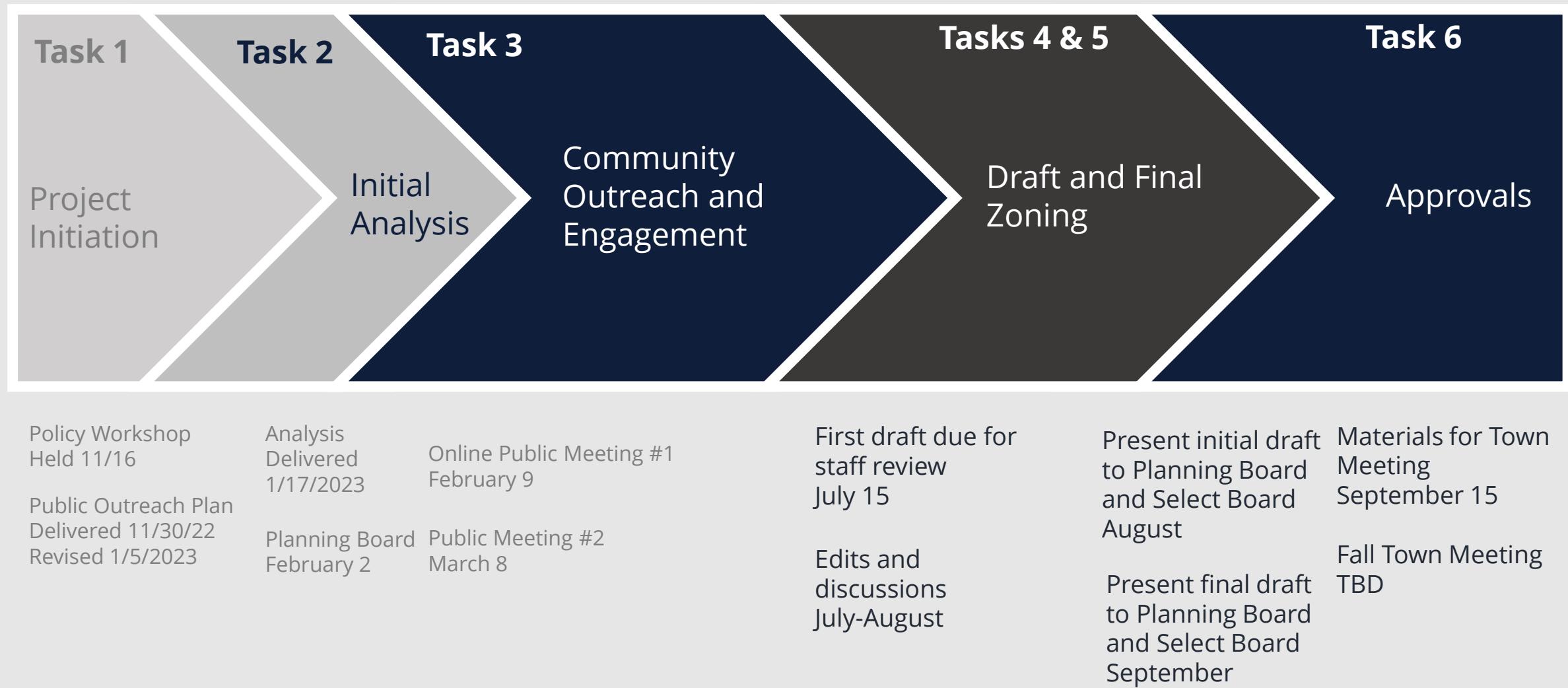
Overview

## PLANNING PROCESS

Evaluate **draft Smart Growth Overlay District** and **approved Village Common Form-Based Code** for compliance with Section 3A of the Zoning Act and the Compliance Guidelines from DHCD.

- 1 Test: Do these districts comply? **No.**
- 2 Test: If not, which zoning changes are required for compliance? **In progress.**
- 3 Test: Which changes will the community support? **In progress.**
- 4 Draft zoning that is compliant for approval at Town Meeting. **July-September.**

# ABOUT THE PROCESS: TIMELINE



# PLANNING PROCESS: FEBRUARY 9

- Reviewed past planning efforts for King Street Common and Littleton Station.
- Summarized the requirements of the MBTA Communities Act.
- Showed the results of the Compliance Model on two possibilities for King Street Common and three subdistricts for Littleton Station.
- Provided an interactive discussion of housing types that meet the “missing middle” multifamily housing in the range of 3-20 units per building.

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## PLANNING PROCESS: MARCH 8

- Showed test scenarios for missing middle housing on lot adjacent to the MBTA platform and along Foster Street.
- Used preferred housing types from February meeting.
- Test scenarios showed a lower, medium, and higher layout and number of units.
- Participants at the meeting preferred a lower number of units on a smaller lot.
- Some participants still unfamiliar with the requirements of Section 3A and the implications for zoning.

# The Math of Section 3A

# THE MATH OF SECTION 3A

1	Community Category	Commuter Rail
	2020 Housing Units (Census PL-94)	3,889
2	Minimum Multifamily Unit Capacity	750
3	Minimum Land Area	50
4	Developable Station Area	244
5	% of district to be located in station area	20%

## Calculations by Community Type

3 **MINIMUM LAND AREA:** (*Guidelines: 5a*) For Littleton, the minimum land area of the multi-family zoning district is 50 acres, or 1.5% of the developable land in an MBTA community, whichever is less. At least half of the area must be contiguous lots of land. No portion may be less than 5 acres of contiguous land.

2 **MINIMUM MULTIFAMILY UNIT CAPACITY:** (*Guidelines: 5b*) The greater of either the required percentage by community type (15% of 2020 housing units for a Commuter Rail community) **or** the minimum gross density of 15 units per acre times the minimum land area. For Littleton:  $3889 * 0.15$  **or**  $15 * 50 = 583$  **or**  $750 = 750$ .

Check: Minimum multifamily unit capacity cannot exceed 25% of total housing units:  $3889 * 0.25 = 778$ .

## Definitions

1 **COMMUTER RAIL COMMUNITY:** An MBTA community that (i) does not meet the criteria for a rapid transit community, and (ii) has within its borders at least 100 acres of developable station area associated with one or more commuter rail stations.

2 **MULTI-FAMILY UNIT CAPACITY:** An estimate of the total number of multi-family housing units that can be developed as of right within a multi-family zoning district, made in accordance with the requirements of section 5.b below.

4 **DEVELOPABLE STATION AREA:** Developable land that is within 0.5 miles of a transit station.

5 **PERCENTAGE OF DISTRICT WITHIN STATION AREA:** (*Guidelines: 8a*) Percentage based on number of acres of developable station area in the community.

**Developable Station Area:** Developable land that is within 0.5 miles of a transit station.

**Developable land:** Land on which multi-family housing can be permitted and constructed. For purposes of these guidelines, developable land consists of: (i) all privately-owned land except lots or portions of lots that meet the definition of excluded land, and (ii) developable public land.

**Excluded land:** Land areas on which it is not possible or practical to construct multi-family housing.

# THE MATH OF SECTION 3A

Key data points:

2020 Housing  
Units

Developable  
Station Area

Minimum  
Land Area

Key calculations:

Minimum  
Multifamily  
Unit Capacity

Percentage of  
District within  
the Station Area

# THE MATH OF SECTION 3A

2020 Housing Units

Developable Station  
Area

Minimum Land Area

Key data points:

**3,889**  
(PL-94, 2020 Census)

**244 acres**  
(DHCD)

**50 acres**  
(DHCD)

Key calculations:

**Minimum  
Multifamily  
Unit Capacity**

**Percentage of  
District within  
the Station Area**

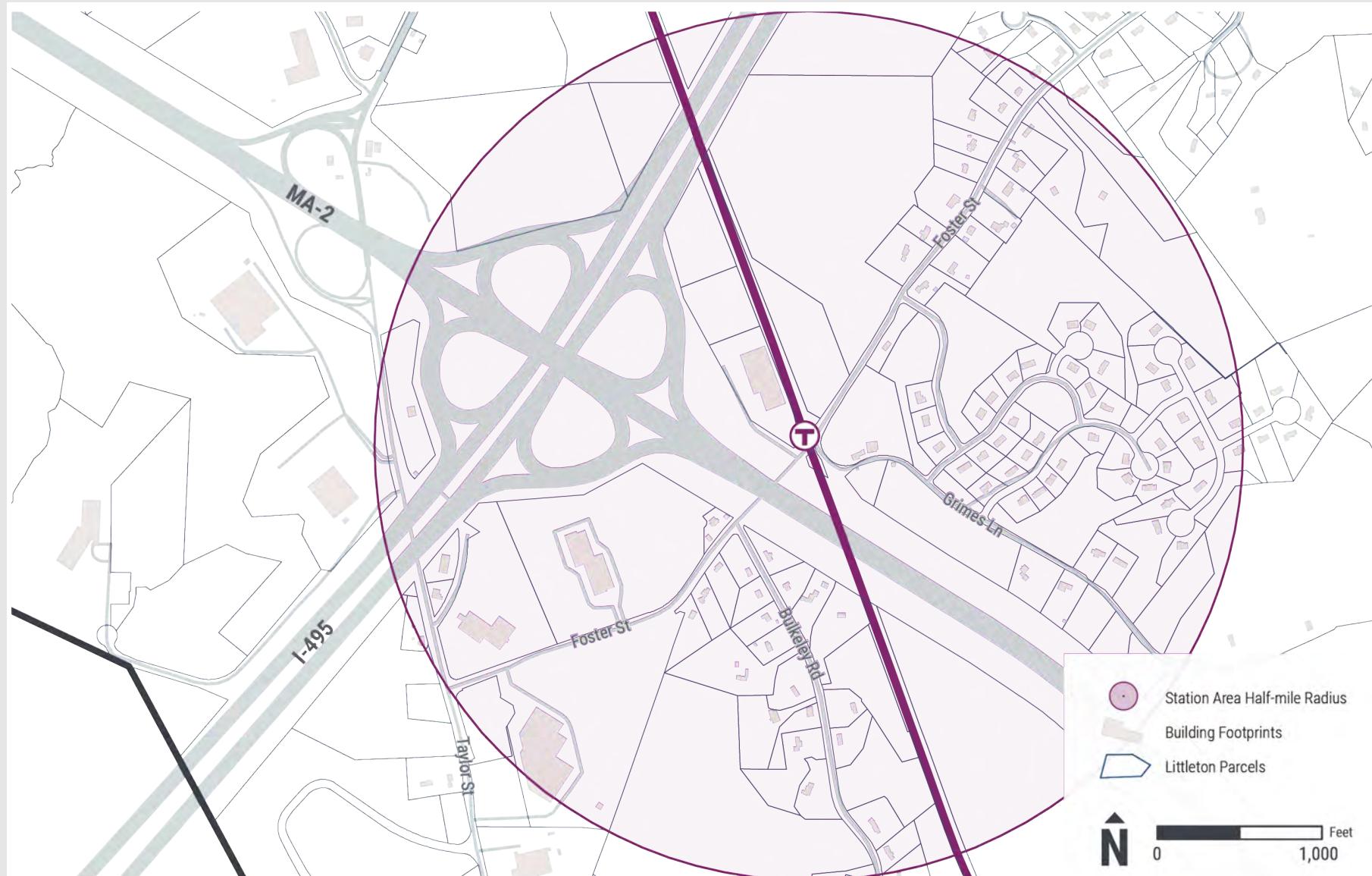
The lesser of 1.5% of the  
Developable land within  
the community or 50  
acres.

# THE MATH OF SECTION 3A

## Developable Station Area

**Developable land** within a  $\frac{1}{2}$ -mile radius around the commuter rail platform

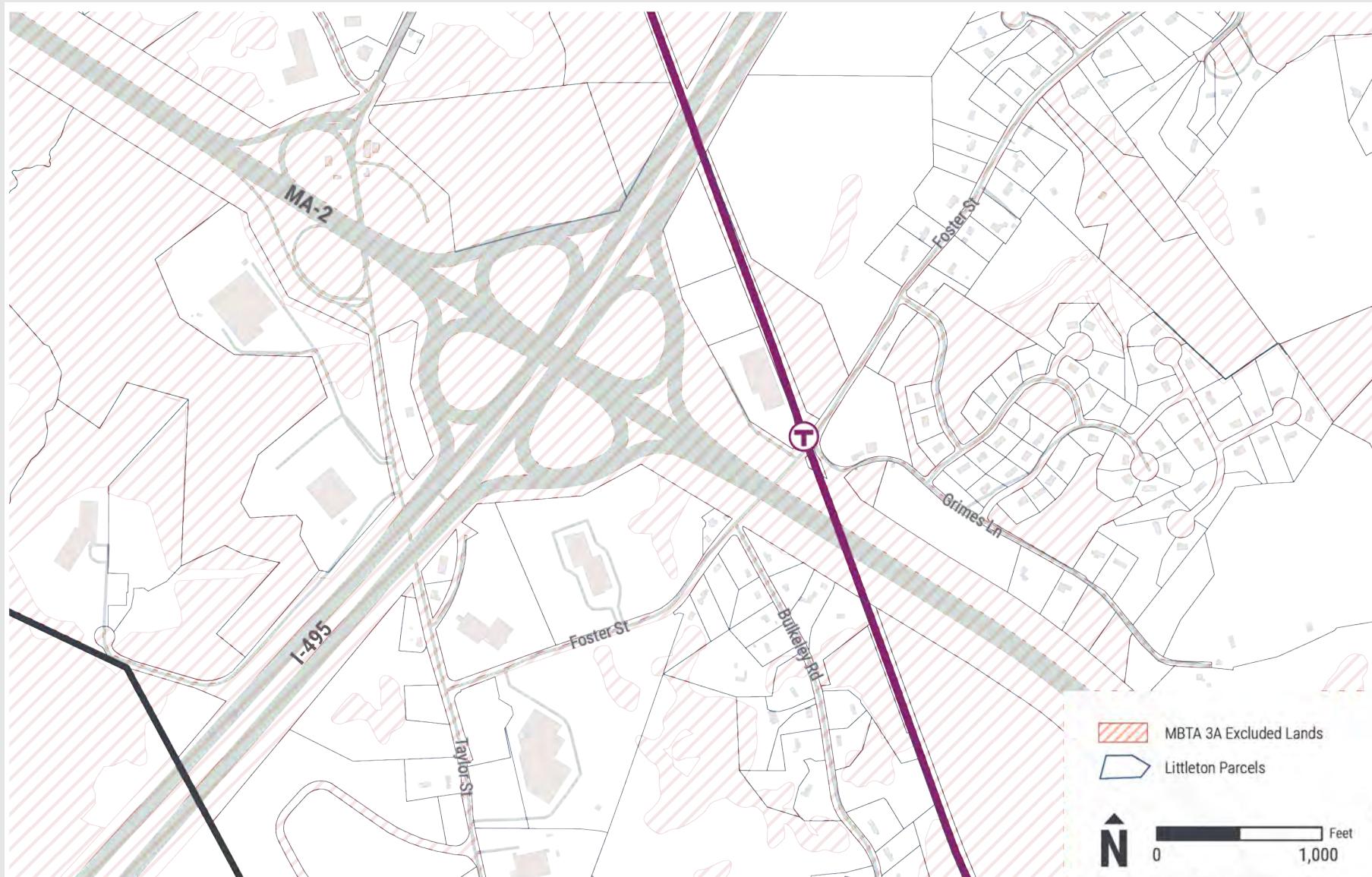
= 244 acres



# THE MATH OF SECTION 3A

## Developable Station Area

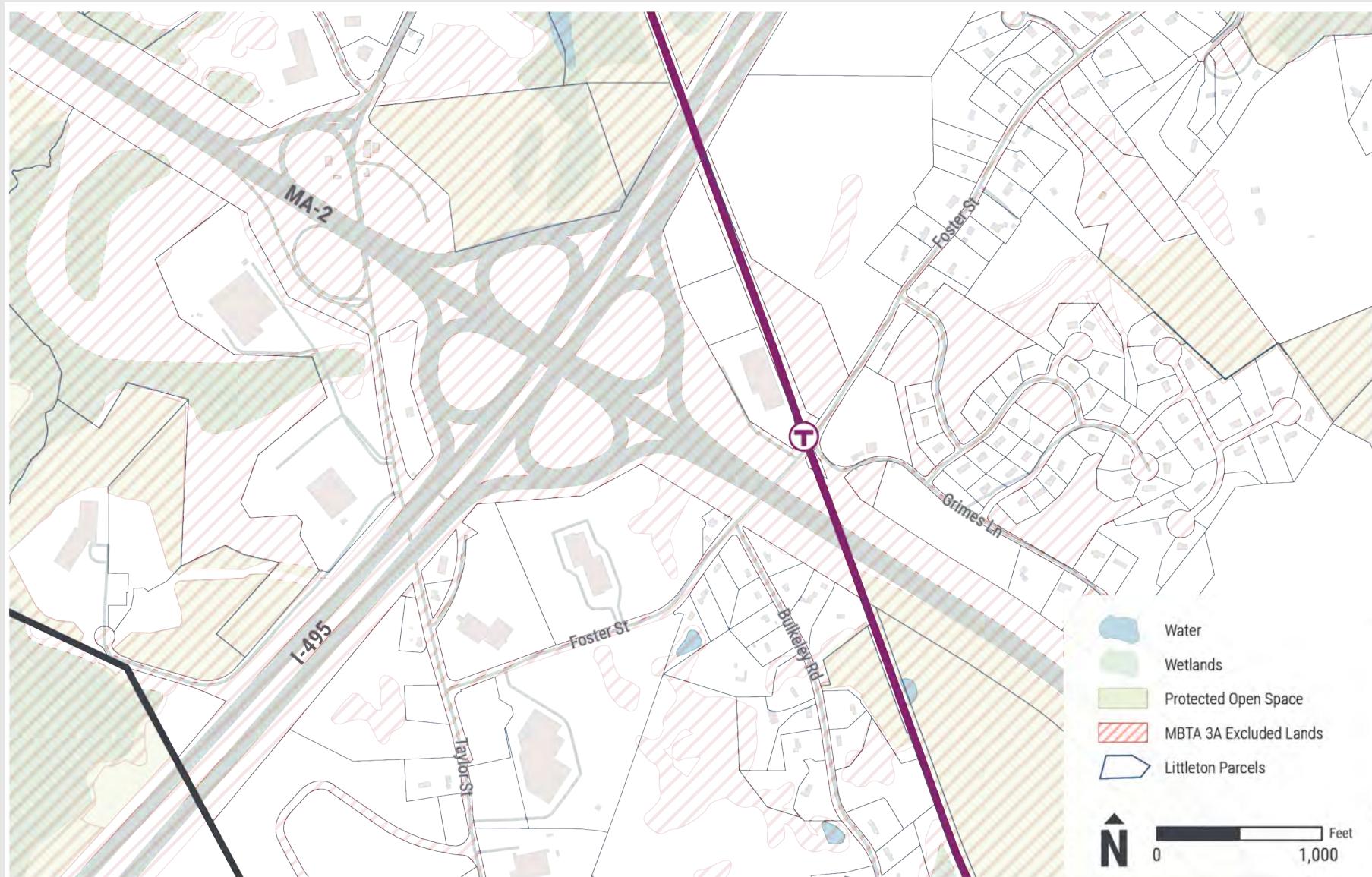
Excluded lands are not part of Developable Land.



# THE MATH OF SECTION 3A

## Developable Station Area

Protected open space is one component of Excluded lands.



# THE MATH OF SECTION 3A

2020 Housing Units	Developable Station Area	Minimum Land Area	Minimum Multifamily Unit Capacity	Percentage of District within the Station Area
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Key data points:

3,889 (PL-94, 2020 Census)	244 acres (DHCD)	50 acres (DHCD)
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Key calculations:

750 dwelling units	20%
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The greater of

$$3,889 * 15\% \\ =583 \text{ units}$$

or

$$50 * 15 \\ =750 \text{ units}$$

50 acres  
divided by  
244 acres

15% = % for a Commuter Rail Community  
15 = minimum required dwelling units/acre  
Check: Minimum multifamily unit capacity cannot exceed 25% of total housing units:  $3889 * 0.25 = 778$ .

# THE MATH OF SECTION 3A

2020 Housing Units

Developable Station Area

Minimum Land Area

Minimum Multifamily Unit Capacity

Percentage of District within the Station Area

Key data points:

3,889  
(PL-94, 2020 Census)

244 acres  
(DHCD)

50 acres  
(DHCD)

Key calculations:

750 dwelling units

20%

20%

Applies to

The number of acres

50

20%

=

10 acres

The number of units

750

20%

=

150 units

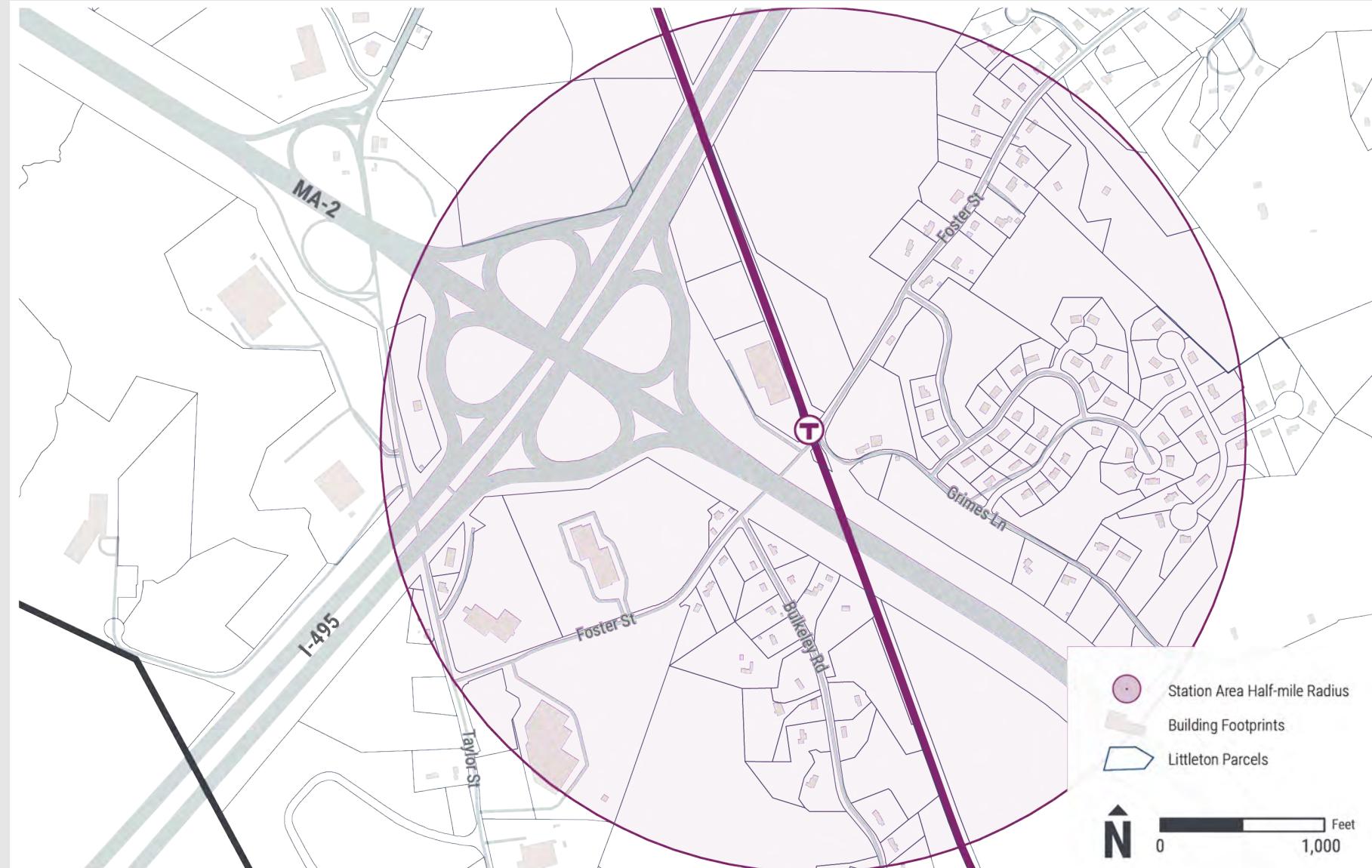
# THE MATH OF SECTION 3A

## Overall, Littleton needs:

- 50 acres
- 750 units
- 15 units/acre

## Within the Developable Station Area, Littleton needs:

- 10 acres
- 150 units
- **By using King Street Common, the Developable Station Area only needs 9-12 units per acre, allowing a lower density for the final zoning district in this area.**



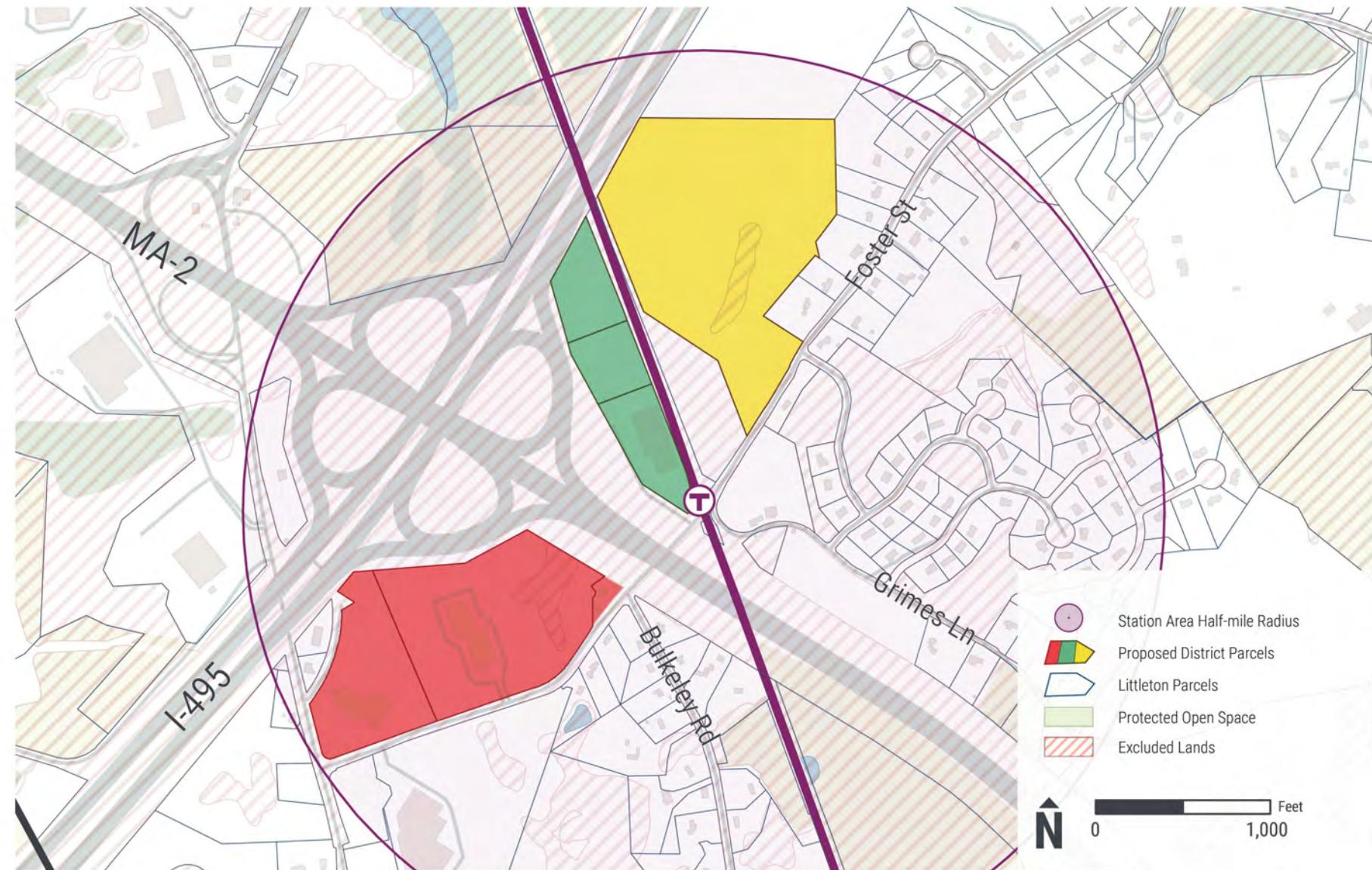
# THE MATH OF SECTION 3A

As shown in the February and March meetings, these test parcels are varied in size.

The parcel size affects the number of units and the achievable units/acre.

The final district will need a minimum of 10 acres, and a minimum of 9-12 dwelling units per acre.

**How many units should the town zone for – and where?**



# Options for Compliance

# OPTIONS FOR COMPLIANCE

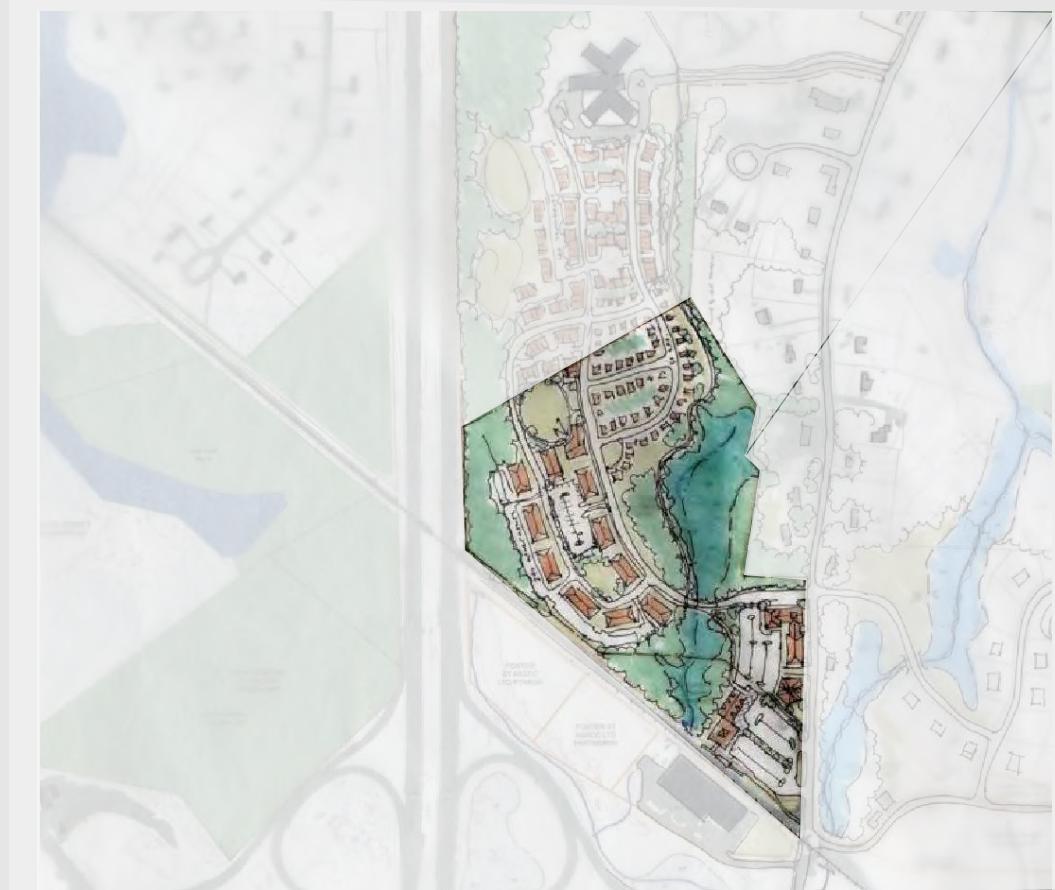
In February, we tested preferred housing types. The participants in that meeting preferred building with lower heights and fewer units.



# OPTIONS FOR COMPLIANCE

In March, we used these preferences to test a fit study for three scenarios of varying density on the SGOD #1 test site.

The chosen site had been part of an earlier planning process for the area and had characteristics that other sites lacked that made it more appropriate for multifamily development in a transit area, including direct access to the platform.



Approximate outline of SGOD #1.

Base image: Littleton Station Village Plan, Presentation to the Littleton Planning Board, July 18, 2019. Consultant team: Barrett Planning Group LLC, Dodson & Flinker, RKG Associates, pp. 19 and 23.

# THE MATH OF SECTION 3A and OPTIONS FOR COMPLIANCE

## SGOD District 1

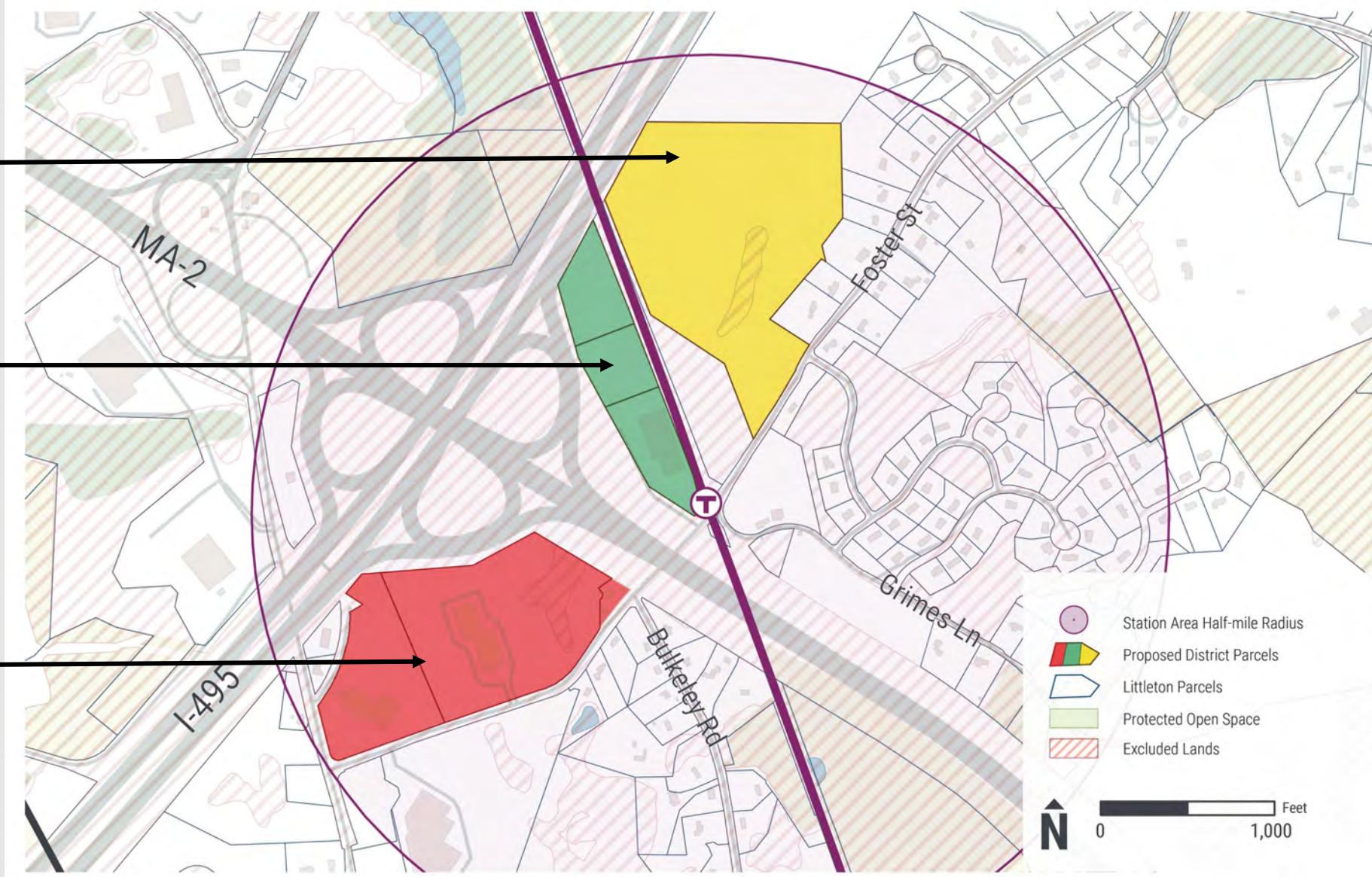
35.3 Acres ✓  
Potential capacity 423 units ✓  
Potential density 12.5 d.u./acre ✓

## SGOD District 2

11.5 Acres ✓  
Potential capacity 138 units X  
Potential density 12 units acre ✓

## SGOD District 3

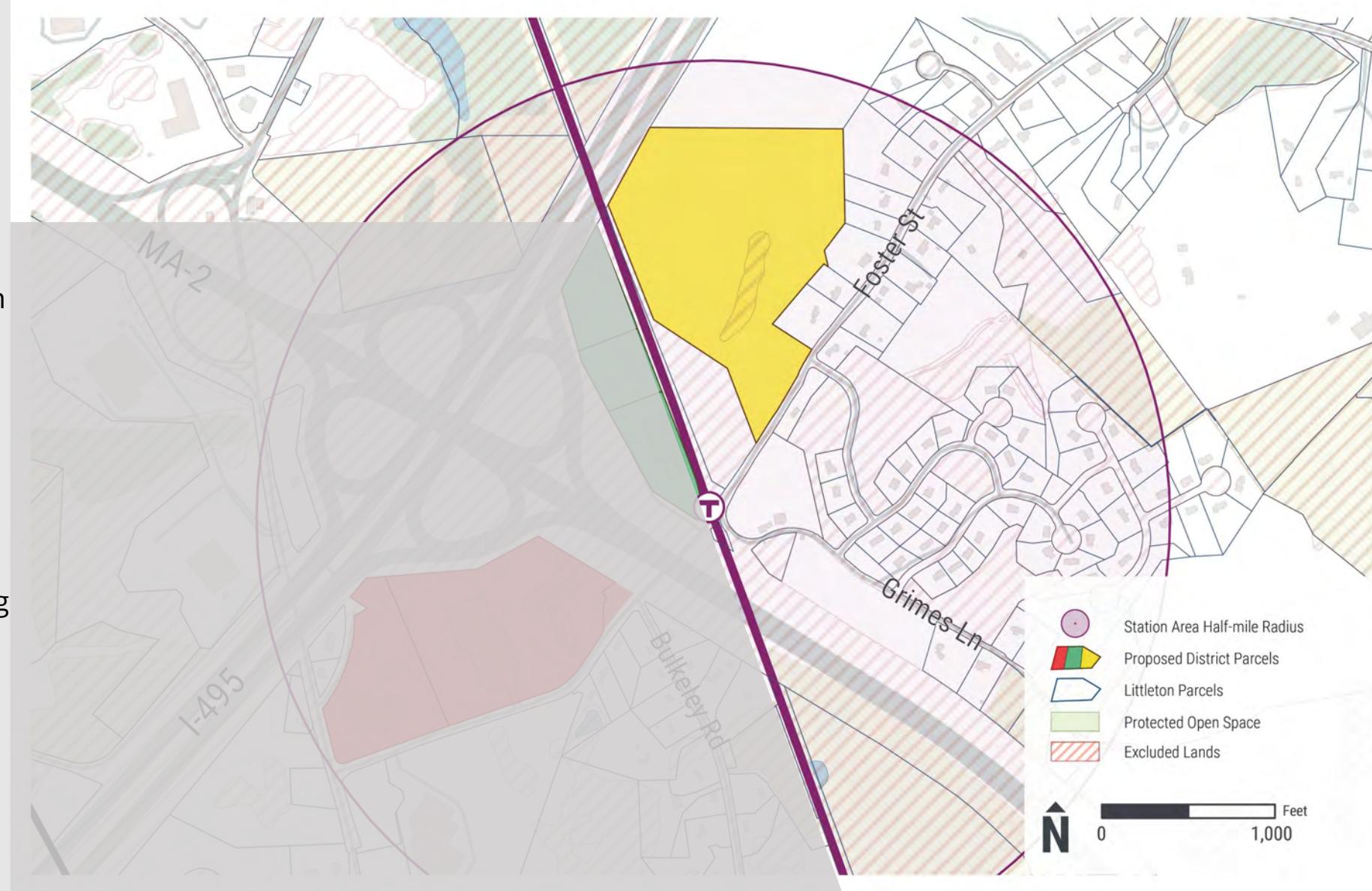
30.7 Acres ✓  
Potential capacity 368 units ✓  
Potential density 12.9 units acre ✓



# OPTIONS FOR COMPLIANCE

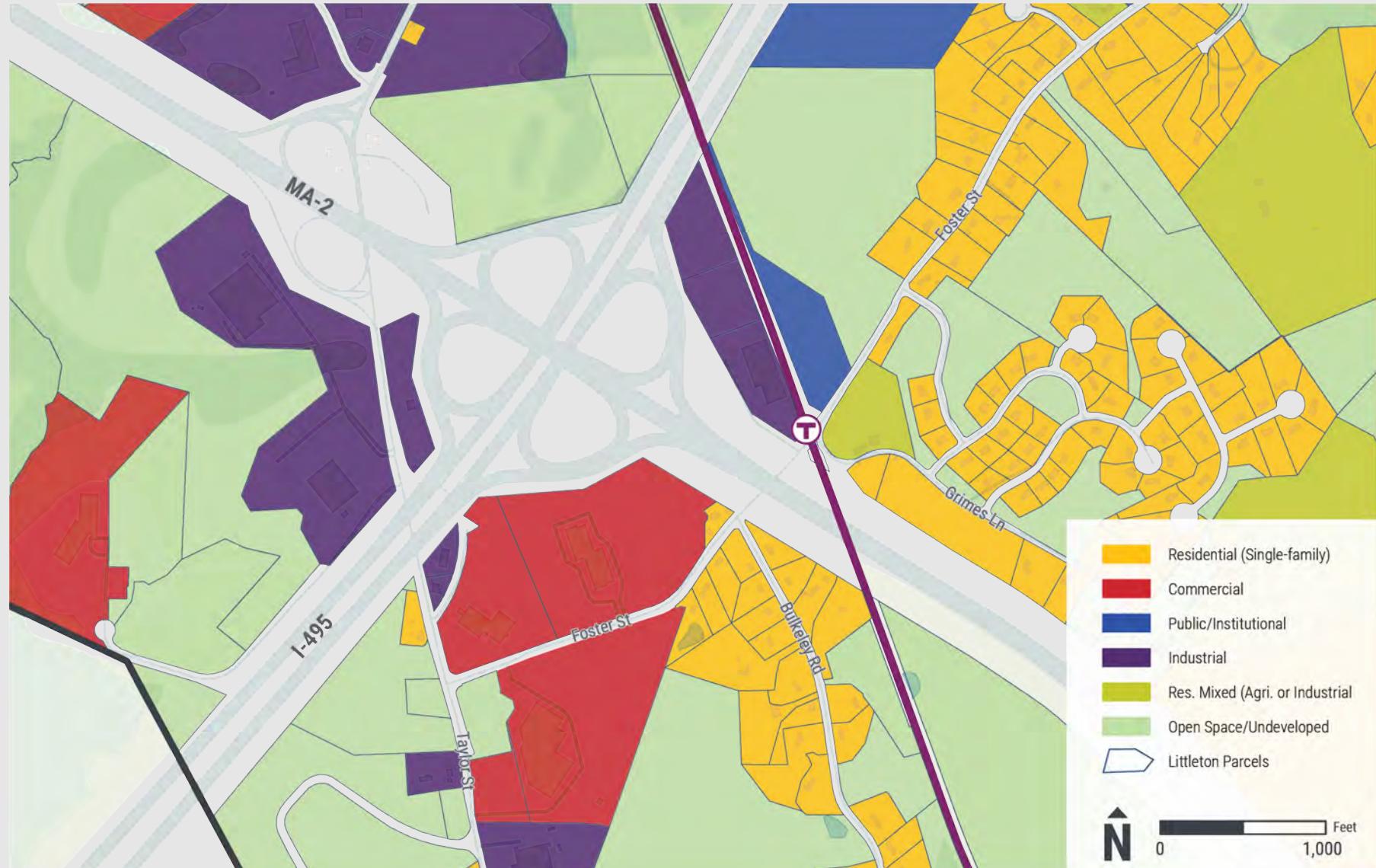
## Why District 1 only?

- Adjacent to MBTA parking lot.
- Access to Foster Street is further from intersection with Grimes Lane.
- Layout of site allows for
  - Significant buffer from existing homes.
  - Walkable access to the train station.
  - Opportunities for low-scale retail/services for neighborhood and commuters.
- Capacity of 428 units is more than is needed to reach the density requirements of 15 units per acre across both existing King Street Common and proposed Littleton Station Districts.
- Also preserves Districts 2 and 3 for future conversations about land use and economic development.
- This site has only 1.54 acres of excluded land.



# OPTIONS FOR COMPLIANCE

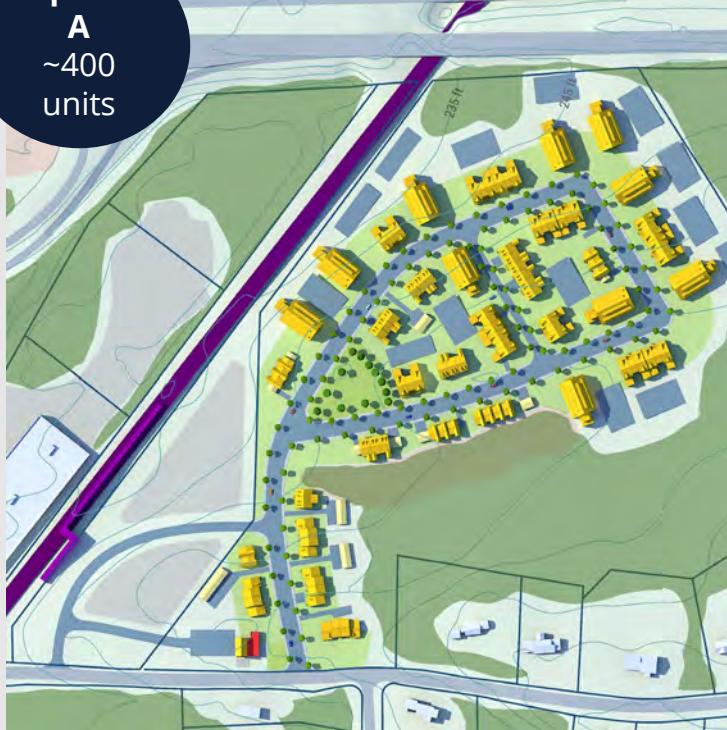
The land uses in the area are mixed, with a combination of commercial, industrial, and residential, publicly owned land, and open space (some protected, and some not protected).



# OPTIONS FOR COMPLIANCE

For illustrative purposes only.

**Option A**  
~400 units



Vehicular access to café/retail and related parking in Options A and B are accessible from the MBTA lot only, not Foster Street.

**Option B**  
~350 units



Buffers from Foster St. are consistent with existing buildings. No parking is allowed in front of the café in Options A and B.

**Option C**  
~300 units



Shorter buildings/buildings with fewer units in Options B and C mean less open space and a smaller buffer with the neighborhood.

In all options, vehicular access to the MBTA parking lot could be closed off with bollards that allow emergency access only. Sidewalks are important for neighborhood connectivity.

## OPTIONS FOR COMPLIANCE

Feedback from the March meeting was that participants wanted as few units as possible, on the smallest possible lot. The consultant team, at the direction of the Planning Board, agreed to test the other parcels to understand how the requirements of Section 3A would apply.

# Tonight's Tests

# THE MATH OF SECTION 3A

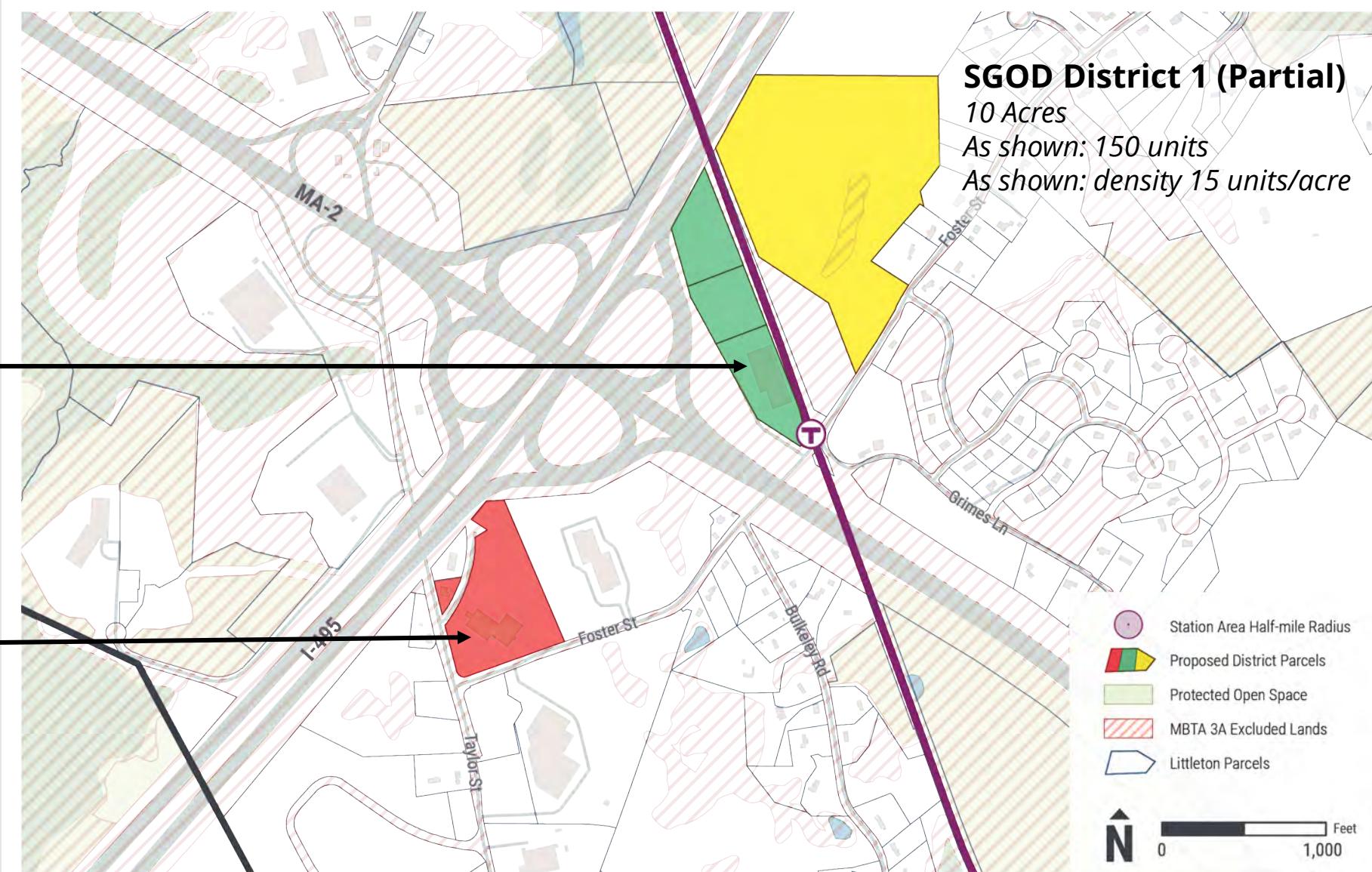
Tonight, we are discussing SGOD #2, a revised SGOD #3, and an option for SGOD #1 that would require a formal subdivision of the parcel.

## SGOD District 2

11.5 Acres ✓  
As shown: 150 units ✓  
As shown: density 13 units/acre ✓

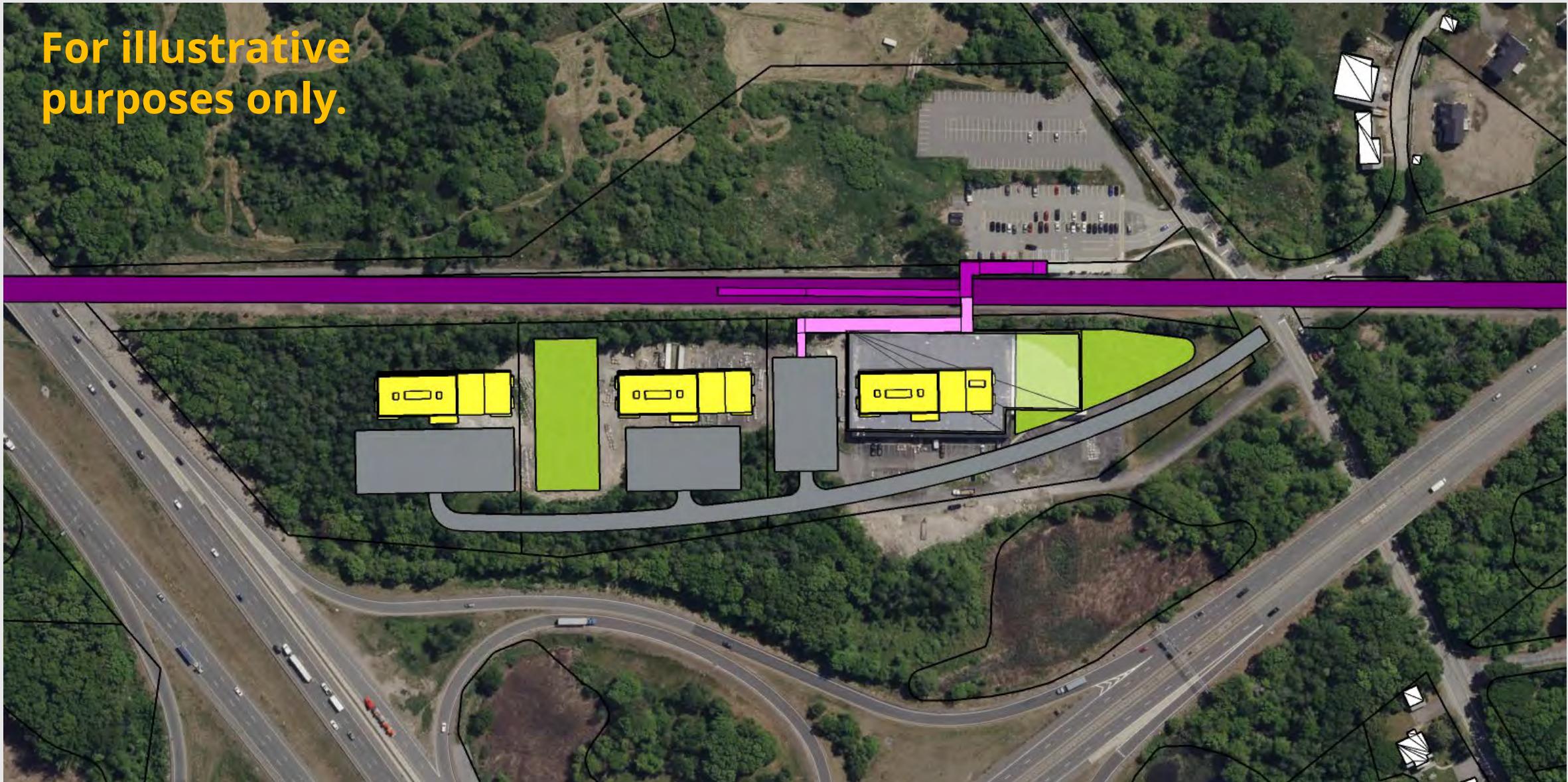
## SGOD District 3 (Revised)

10.39 Acres ✓  
As shown: 150 units ✓  
As shown: density 14.4 units/acre ✓

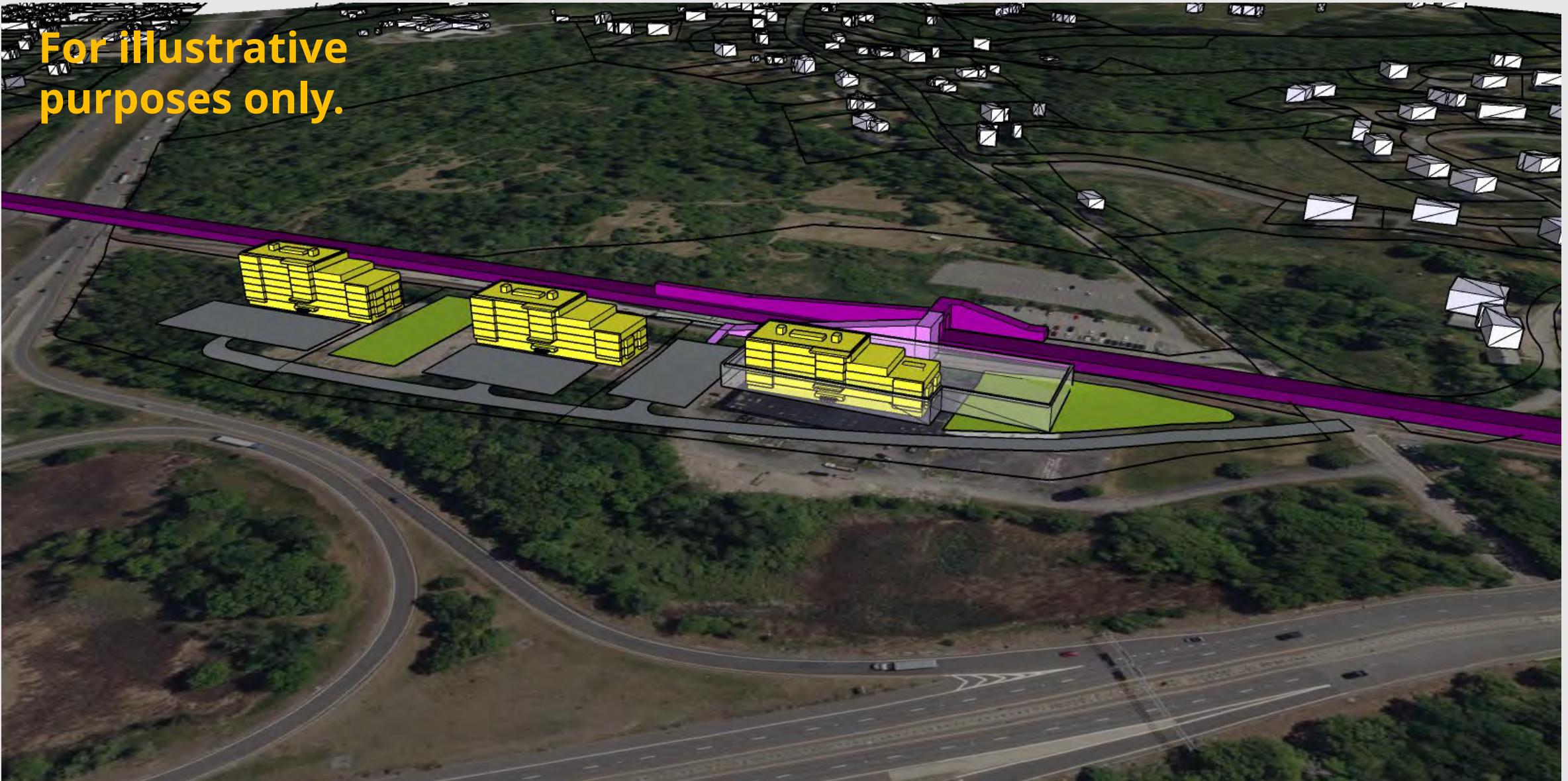


# SGOD #2

For illustrative purposes only.



# SGOD #2

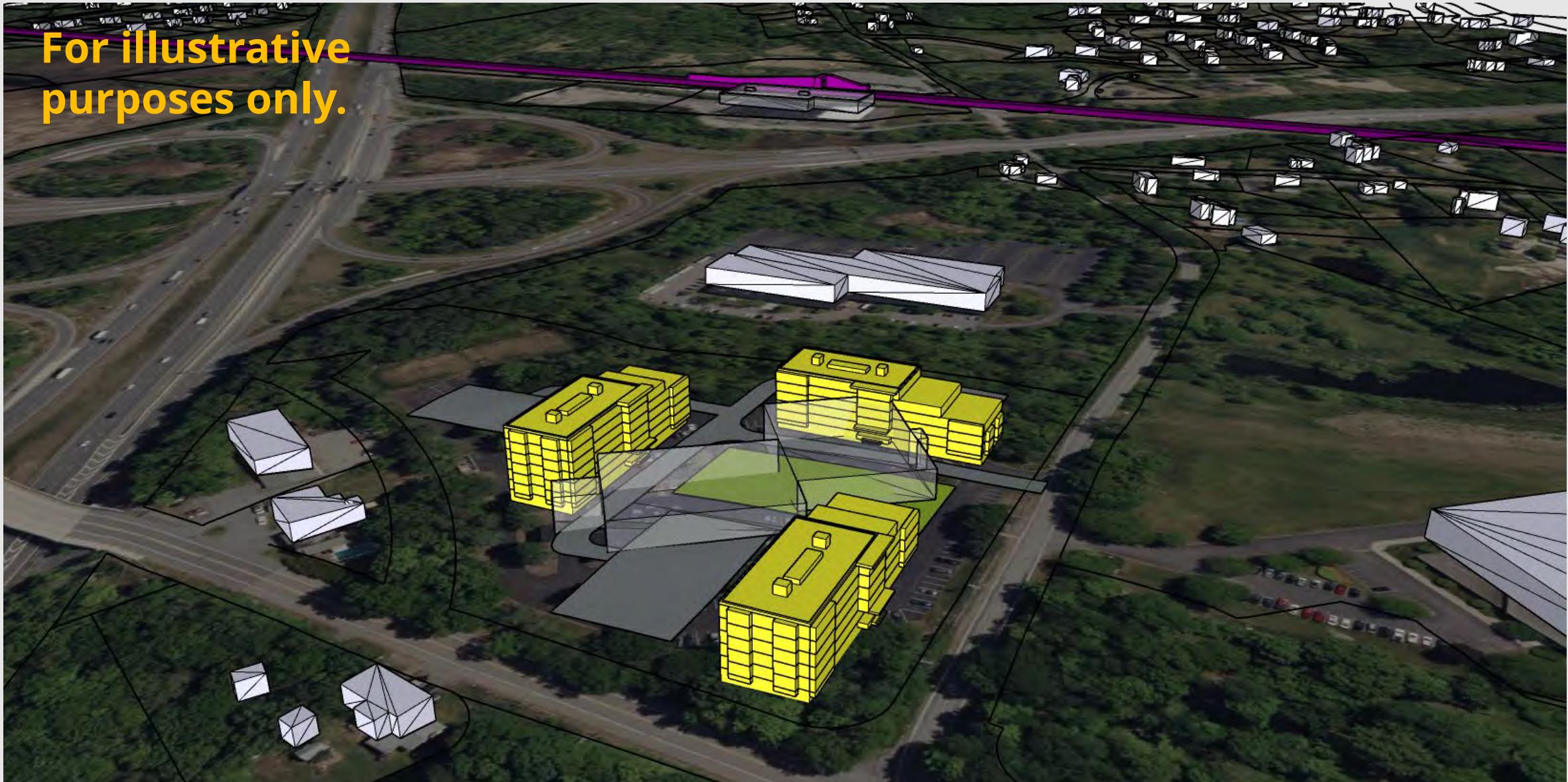


# SGOD #3 - Revised



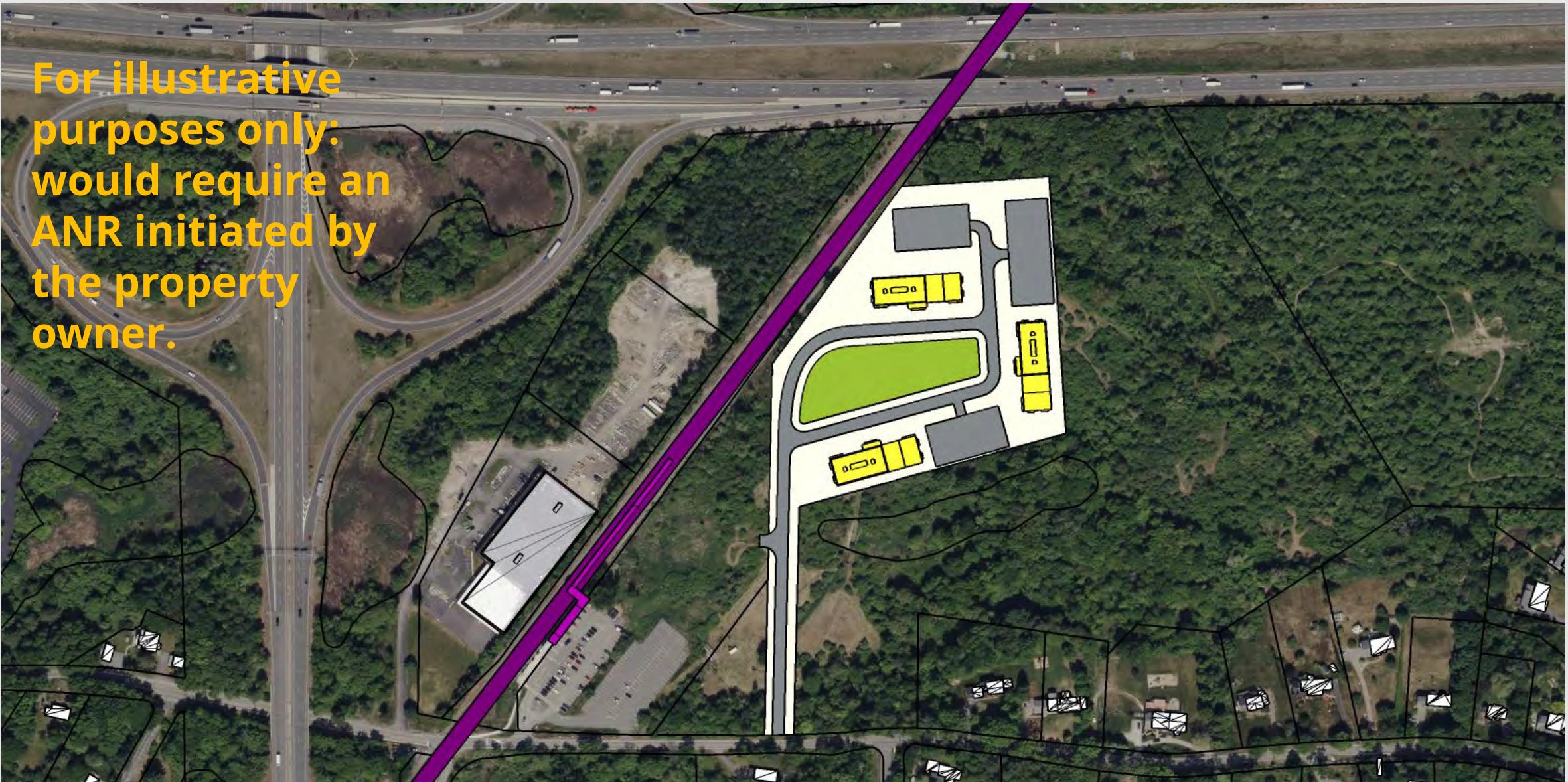
# SGOD #3 - Revised

For illustrative purposes only.



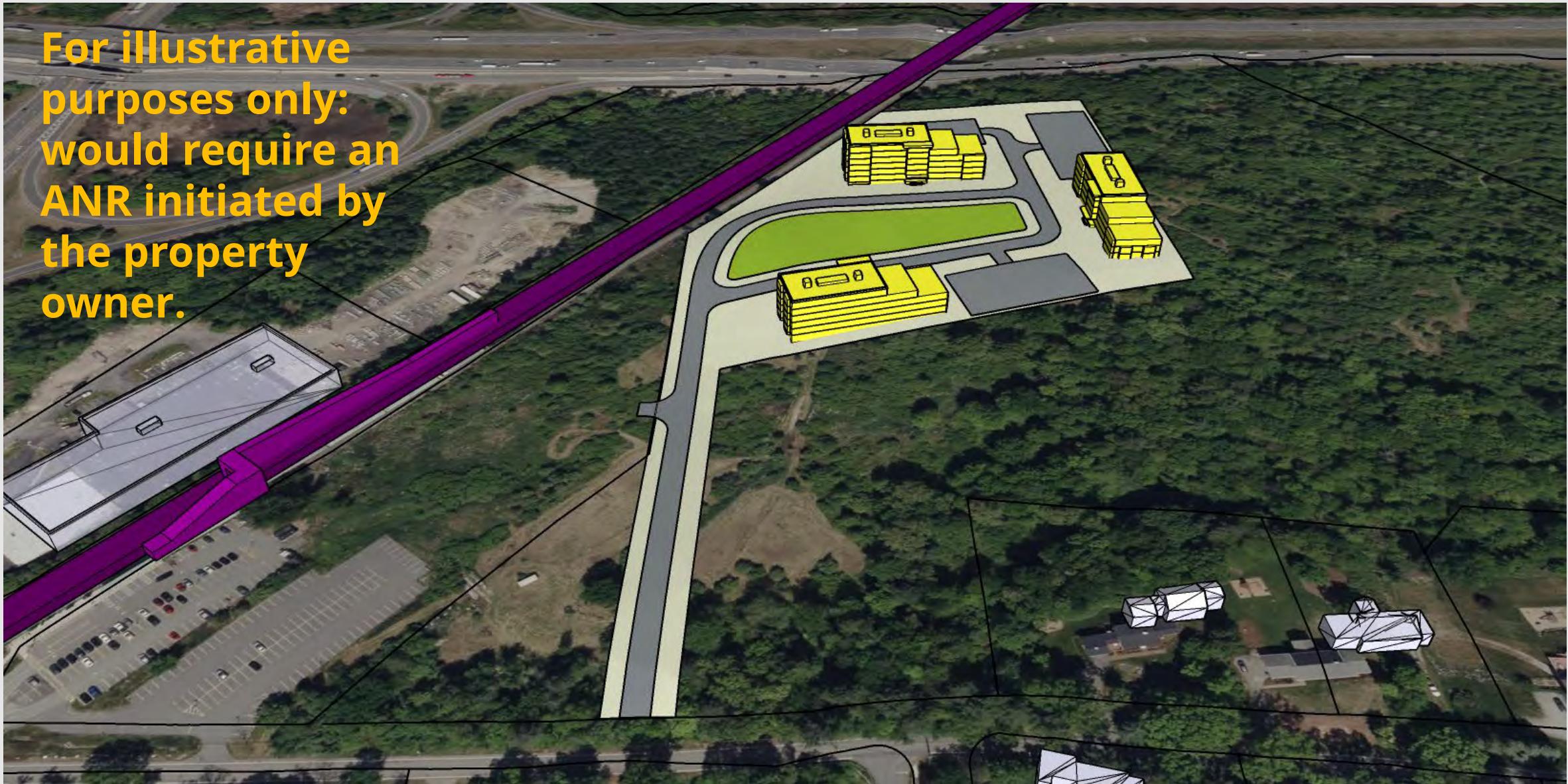
# SGOD #1 - Alternative

For illustrative purposes only:  
would require an ANR initiated by the property owner.



# SGOD #1 - Alternative

**For illustrative purposes only:  
would require an ANR initiated by the property owner.**



## SGOD #2 and Revised SGOD #3

- Height varies from three to five stories; step-backs reduce massing as does the articulation of the façades.
- Significant set-backs from the street and minimum open space requirements could preserve a wooded buffer along Taylor and Foster Streets.
- Land uses could allow (but not require) a café or other small-scale commercial development to provide an amenity for the residential use.
- Development standards could encourage a campus-style development with integrated vehicular access and the use of low-impact design for stormwater management.

# Next Steps

# Discussion

## NEXT STEPS

If you have questions about this process, please email  
Maren Toohill, AICP, Town Planner, at [mtoohill@littletonma.org](mailto:mtoohill@littletonma.org)

## NEXT STEPS

Are you interested in finding out more about this topic?

For a map of Littleton's current residential density, please go to:

<https://residensity.mhp.net/>

For an explanation of the MBTA Communities Act and the requirements, please go to: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/multi-family-zoning-requirement-for-mbta-communities>

For data about Littleton's housing stock and needs, and the ability to compare Littleton to other communities, please go to

<https://mhpcenterforhousingdata.shinyapps.io/DataTown/#>

# MBTA Communities Zoning Study

# Thank you!

