

Economic Development Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

April 6, 2022

EDC Members:	Councilor Melanie Hamblen, Chair; Councilor Cobi Frongillo, Vice Chair; Councilors Glenn Jones & Patrick Sheridan
Other Members of the Steering Committee:	Greg Rondeau, Planning Board Chair; Beth Wierling, Planning Board Clerk
Absent:	<i>Bruce Hunchard, Zoning Board of Appeals Chair</i>
Town Staff:	Jamie Hellen, Town Administrator; Alecia Alleyne, Assistant to the Town Administrator
Other Participants:	Emma Battaglia & Tim Reardon, MAPC - via Zoom

Chair Hamblen called the meeting to order at 5:39 p.m. and read announcements. Chair Hamblen thanked the (approximately) 600 people who took the Franklin For All survey as well as everyone who attended the March 7th forum and provided feedback, and introduced Emma Battaglia with MAPC.

1. Update: MAPC “Franklin For All” zoning reform project for Franklin Center, including the Downtown Commercial District and surrounding neighborhoods

Presentation “Franklin For All” by Emma Battaglia, MAPC [Presentation Attached]

Ms. Battaglia gave a presentation, highlighting the following topics:

- Online Survey Results (in regard to):
 - Overview - Survey was open from March 7 - April 1. 800+ people accessed it; 682 completed it.
 - Zoning Background - How familiar people consider themselves to be with zoning as a general requirement, and zoning and its impact on new development in Franklin
 - Study Area - How people feel about the study area; if we are capturing the right locations
 - Franklin Center Vision - People were instructed to describe their ideal version of Franklin Center in the future using five words
 - Priorities - How people rank the importance of several different priorities (i.e supporting small businesses, generating revenue for the town, building more affordable housing, etc.)
 - Land Uses (by district: Downtown Commercial, Commercial 1, General Residential 5, Single Family Residential 4, Mixed Business and Innovation) - What housing types and commercial land uses people feel make the most sense for each respective district
 - Look and Feel
 - ◆ Density - How people feel about the density of each zoning district, currently and ideally
 - ◆ Building Design - How people feel new buildings in Franklin Center should look
 - ◆ Parking - How people rank the importance of different factors related to parking
 - ◆ Other - People were asked to comment on the look and feel of Franklin Center
 - Franklin Center Strengths, Challenges & Opportunities - People were asked to comment on the strengths, challenges and opportunities of Franklin Center
 - Communities with Great Downtowns - People were asked to name other communities they perceive to have great downtown centers
 - About You - People were asked to provide information about themselves (i.e. age, racial/ethnic identity, number of years in Franklin, number of people in household, owner/renter/other status, etc.)

This is a meeting of the Franklin Town Council Sub-Committee; under the Open Meeting Law, this subcommittee is a separate "public body" from the Town Council. Therefore, unless the Town Council has separately noticed and posted its own meeting, Councilors who are not members of this subcommittee will not be permitted to speak or otherwise actively participate @ this meeting, although they may attend and observe. This prohibition is necessary to avoid the potential for an Open Meeting Law Violation

- Questions / Discussion regarding the following topics:
 - ◆ Who the survey results are representative of and who participated in focus groups
 - ◆ Parking options for town merchants
- MBTA Communities Analysis - Tim Reardon (MAPC) presented, highlighting the following topics:
 - Overview MBTA Communities Multifamily Zoning Requirements (Section 3A) Draft Guidelines
 - ◆ Minimum unit capacity, which includes existing units
 - ◆ Minimum gross density, how it is calculated, how it varies across subdistricts
 - ◆ Proximity requirements of district in relation to commuter rail stop
 - Methods for Build-out Estimates
 - ◆ Zones - Assign each parcel to a zoning district
 - ◆ Exclude - Exclude ineligible parcels and those smaller than 5,000 square feet
 - ◆ Density - Assign density assumptions for each zone, focusing on C1, DCD, MBI and GR5
 - ◆ Buildable Area - Remove any protected open space or other unbuildable areas
 - ◆ Capacity Estimates - Multiply density by buildable area to produce unit capacity
 - Current zoning
 - Potential rezoning scenarios (3)
 - Questions / Discussion regarding the following topics:
 - ◆ Units requirement
 - splitting the zoning of units between the two separate MBTA areas of town rather than concentrating them all downtown
 - whether the calculation is affected by having 2 MBTA stations rather than 1
 - whether there is a production requirement for the units or only a zoning requirement
 - whether an Affordability requirement can be implemented by the Town
 - ◆ Section 3A related grant programs

Councilor Hamblen adjourned the meeting at 6:53 p.m.



Rezoning Franklin Center for economic growth and diverse housing opportunities



Steering Committee Meeting #3

April 6, 2022

Agenda

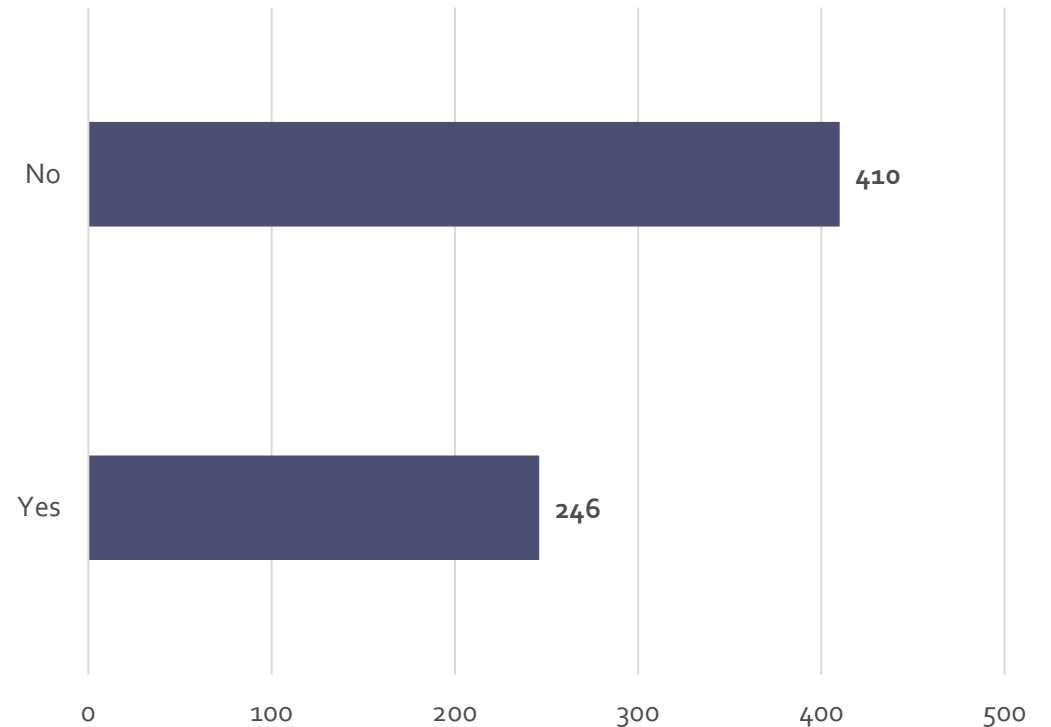
- Online Survey Results
- MBTA Communities Analysis
- Next Steps
- Questions/Comments?

Online Survey Results

Overview

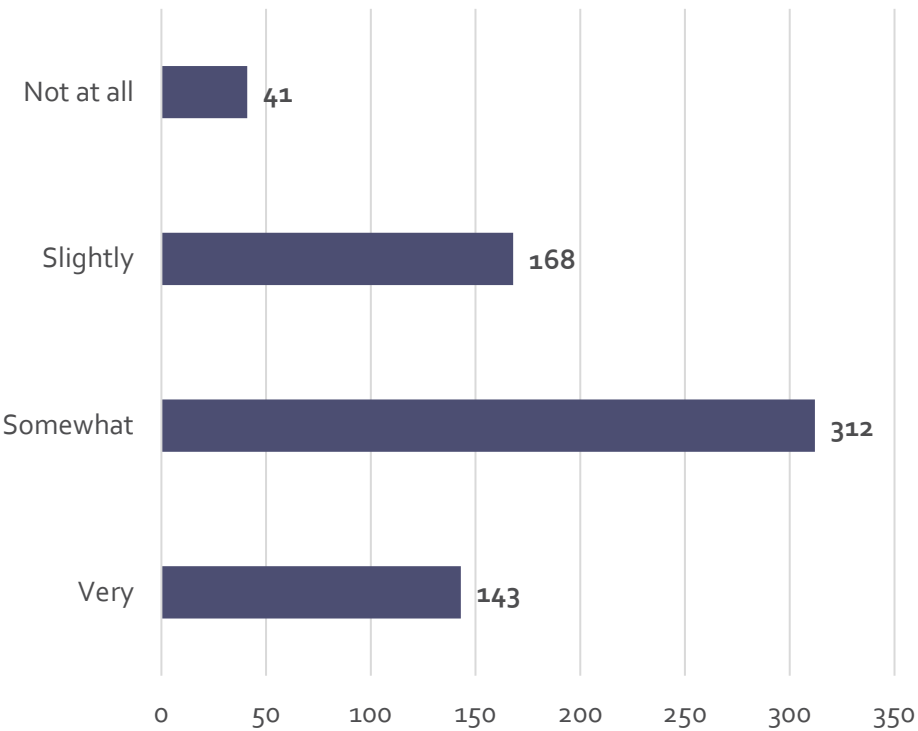
- Online survey was open from Monday, March 7 to Friday, April 1
- Survey was accessed by approximately 800 people
- 682 people submitted results to questions (though not everybody answered every question)

Did you attend the public forum on March 7?

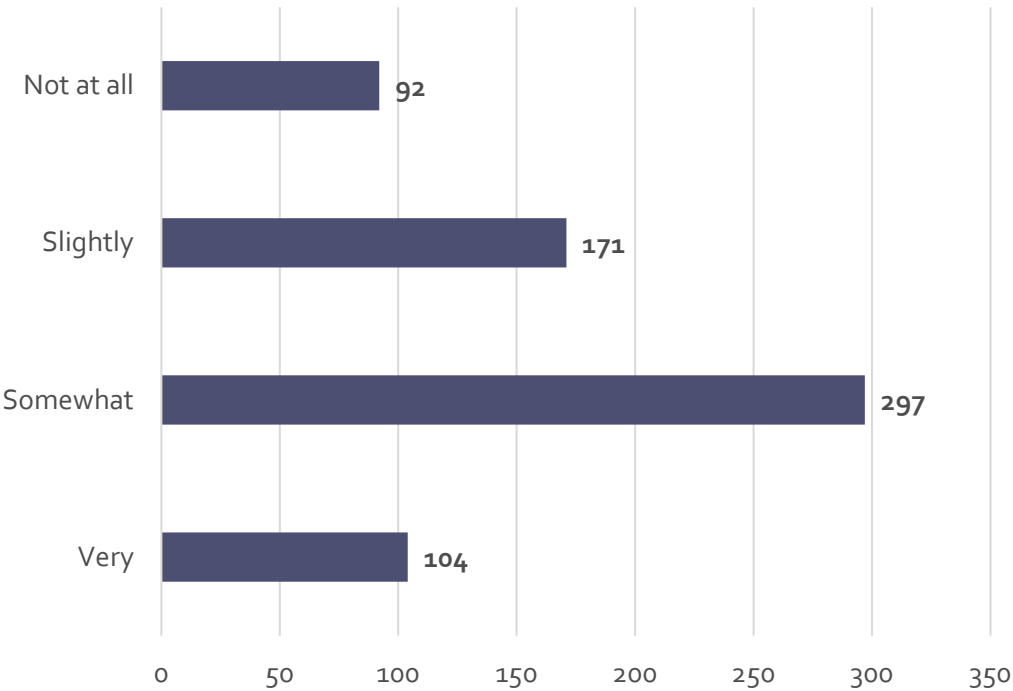


Zoning Background

How familiar are you with zoning as a general concept?

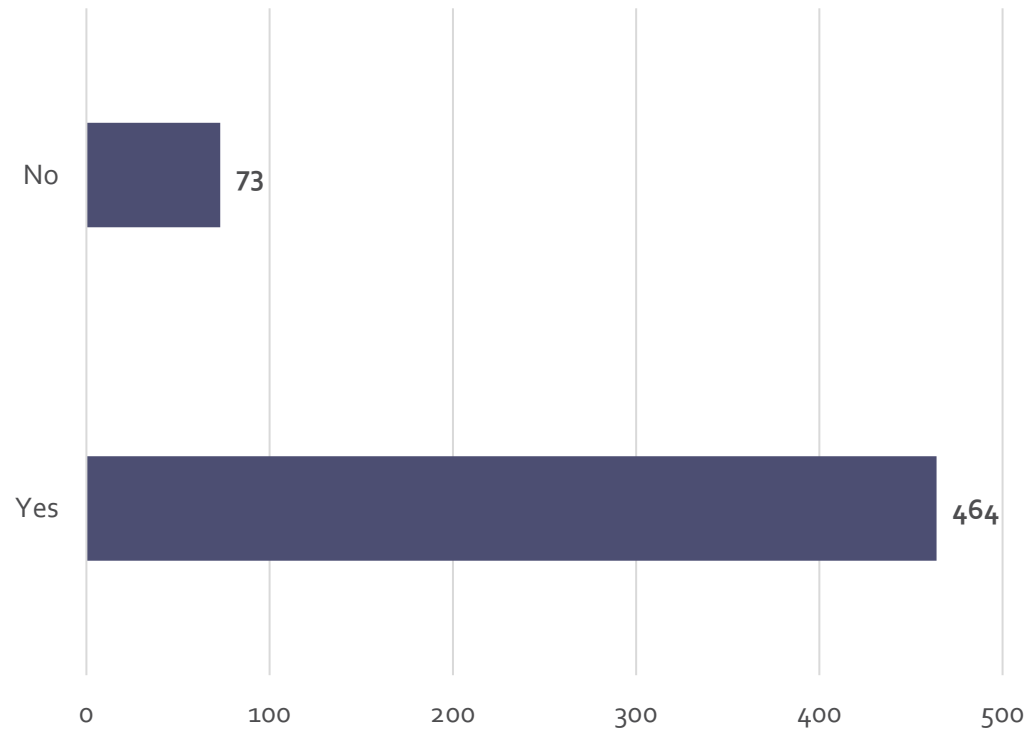


How familiar are you with zoning and its impact on new development in Franklin?



Study Area

Are we capturing the right locations in our study area?



If you answered “no” to the previous question, what would you change? What locations would you want to add or remove from the study area?

- Many of those who selected “no” did not answer the question, rather, they responded about being against anything different changing in the town or promoted misconceptions around the capacity of utilities/services
- Many noted that expanding the area to include East and West Central Street further out would make sense, either to increase density and mixed-use in the commercial districts, or to potentially redevelop strip malls in those areas
- There was a mix of opinions about whether the study area (and eventual zoning changes) should focus entirely on the Downtown Commercial or include the broader area

Franklin Center Vision

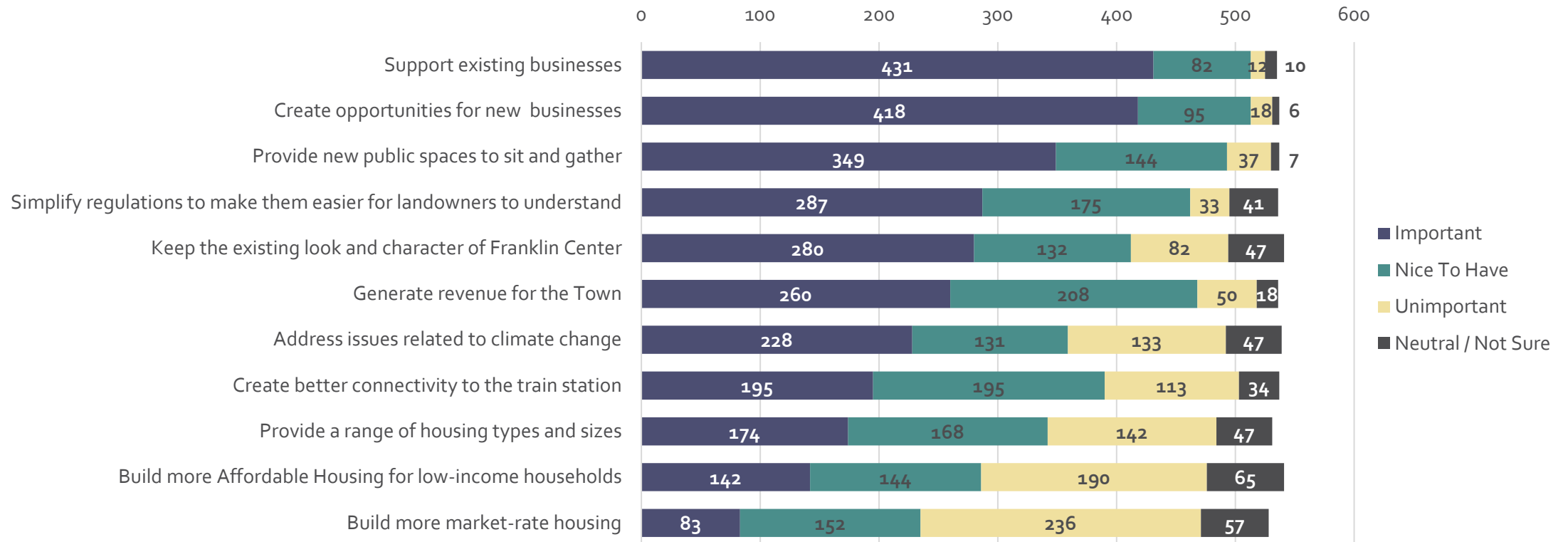
Imagine your ideal version of Franklin Center in the future. Write down five words that describe this future.

- Walkable (143)
- Parking (119)
- Vibrant (101)
- Accessible (76)
- Restaurants (61)
- Diverse (60)
- Safe (56)
- Friendly (47)
- Small (46)
- Shops (42)
- Family (38)
- Clean (37)
- Community (36)
- Inviting (35)



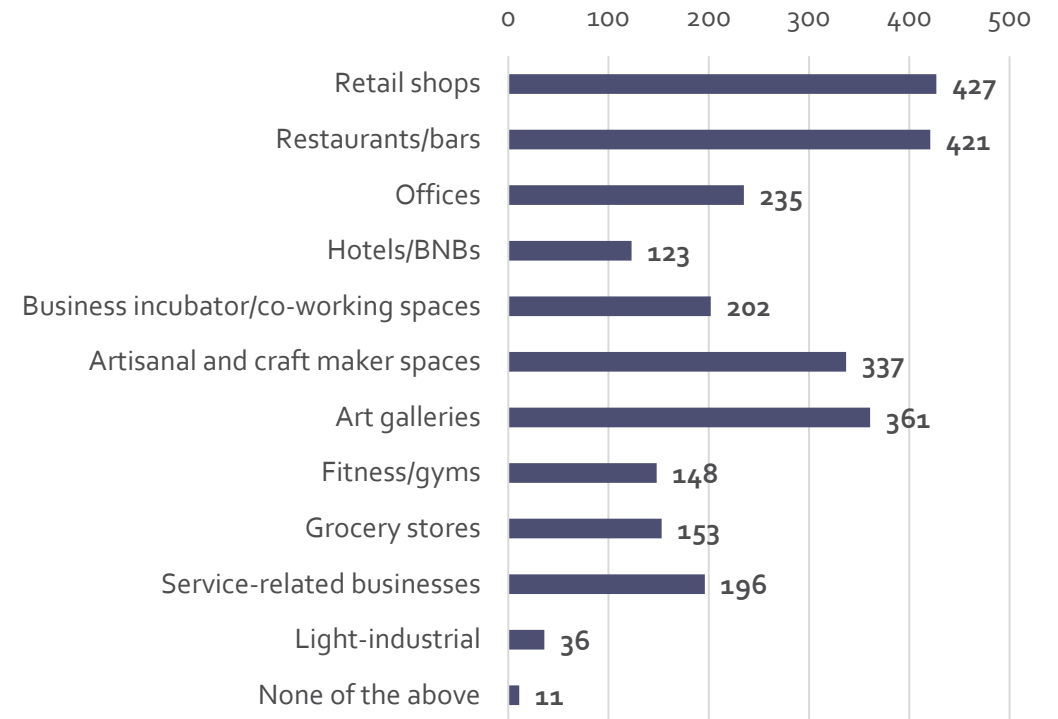
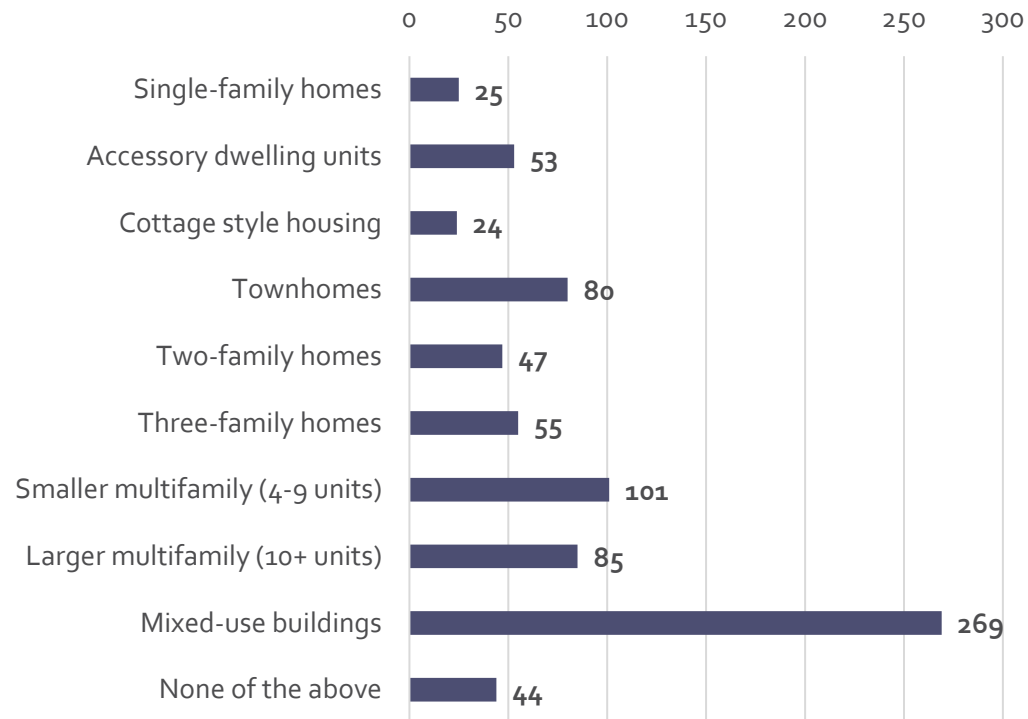
Priorities

Please indicate how important you feel the following priorities are:



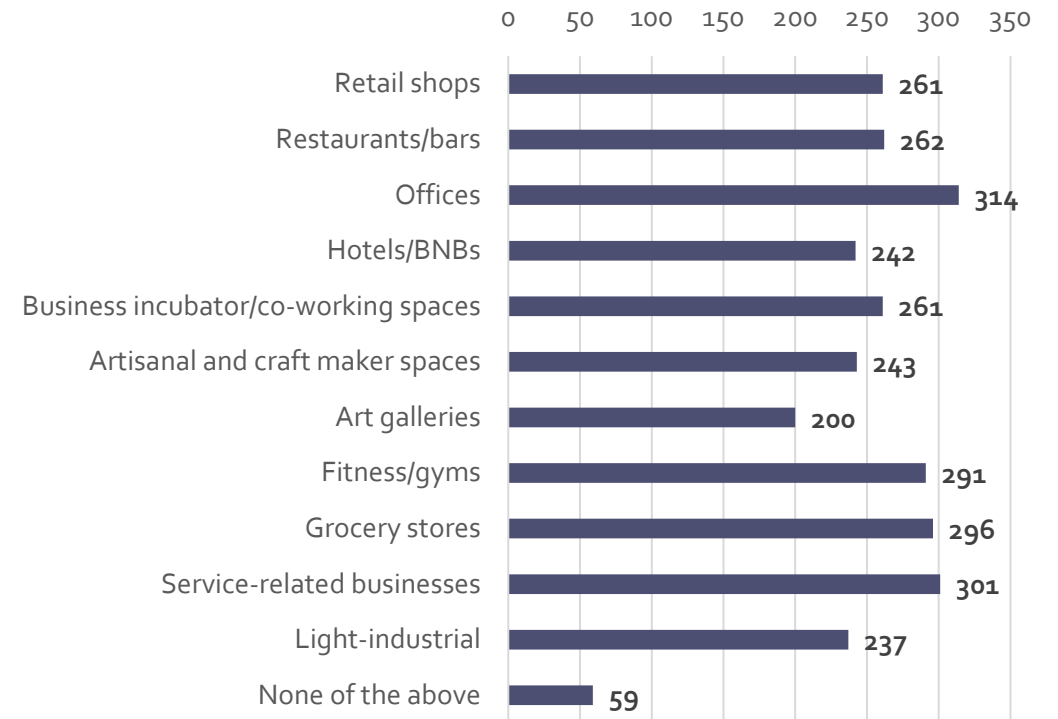
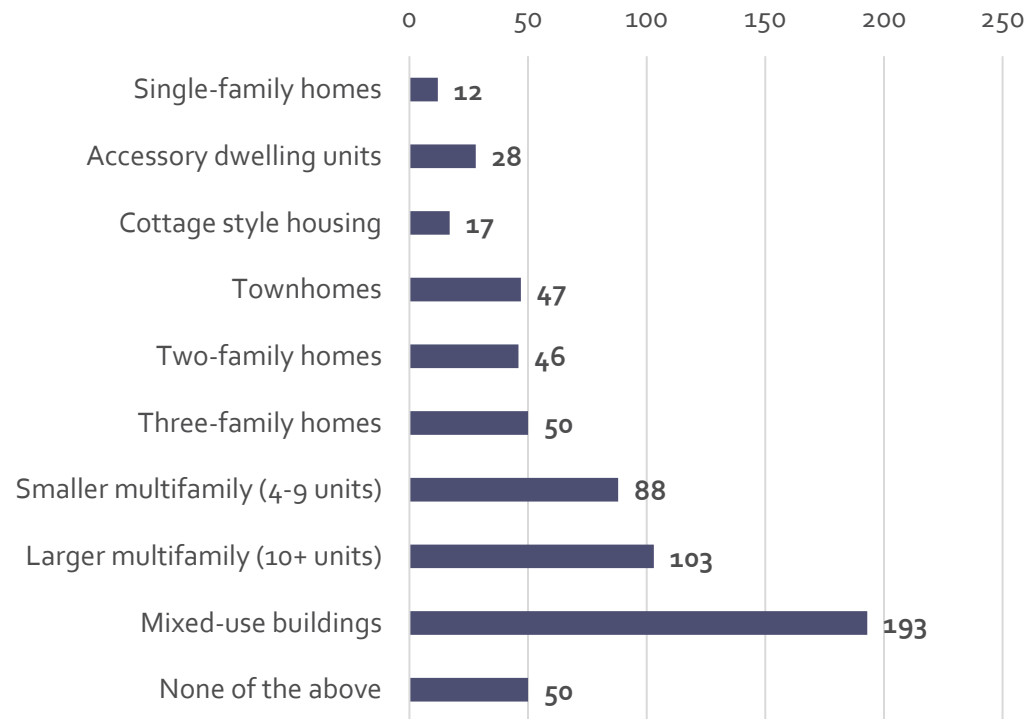
Land Uses – DC District

Which of the following housing types/commercial land uses make the most sense for the **Downtown Commercial** District?



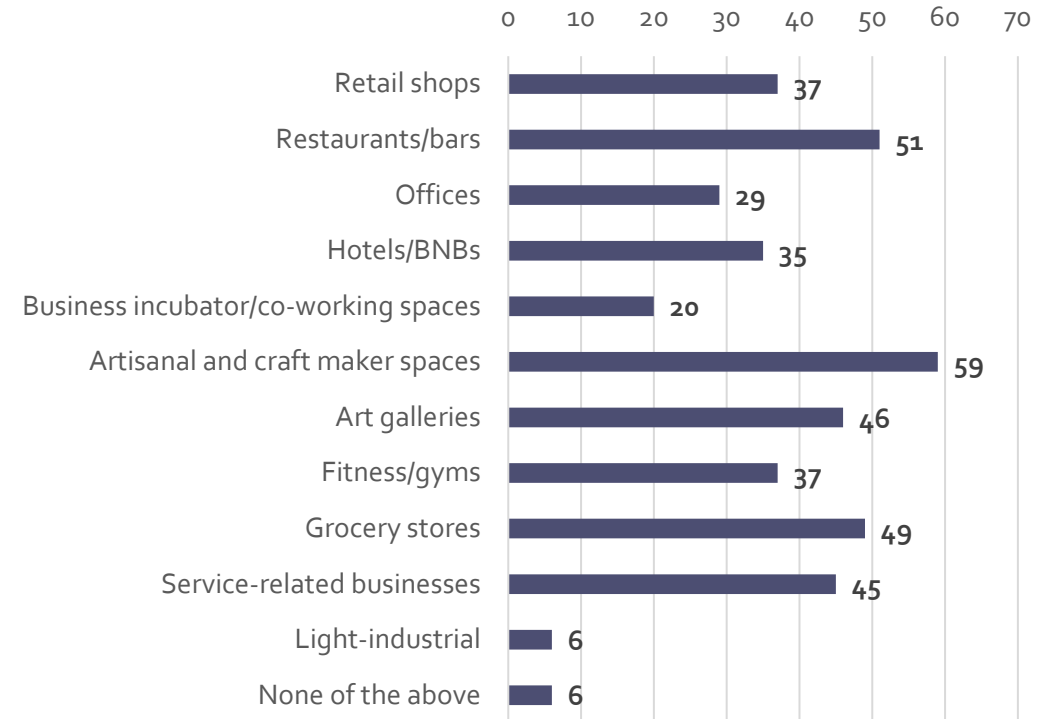
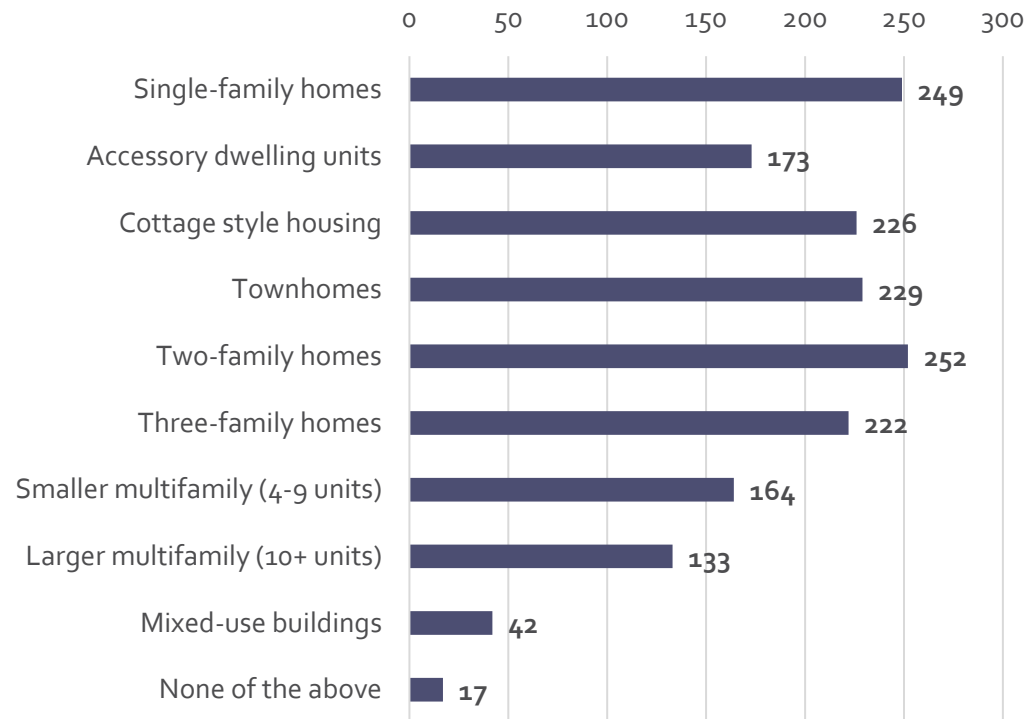
Land Uses – CI District

Which of the following housing types/commercial land uses make the most sense for the **Commercial I** District?



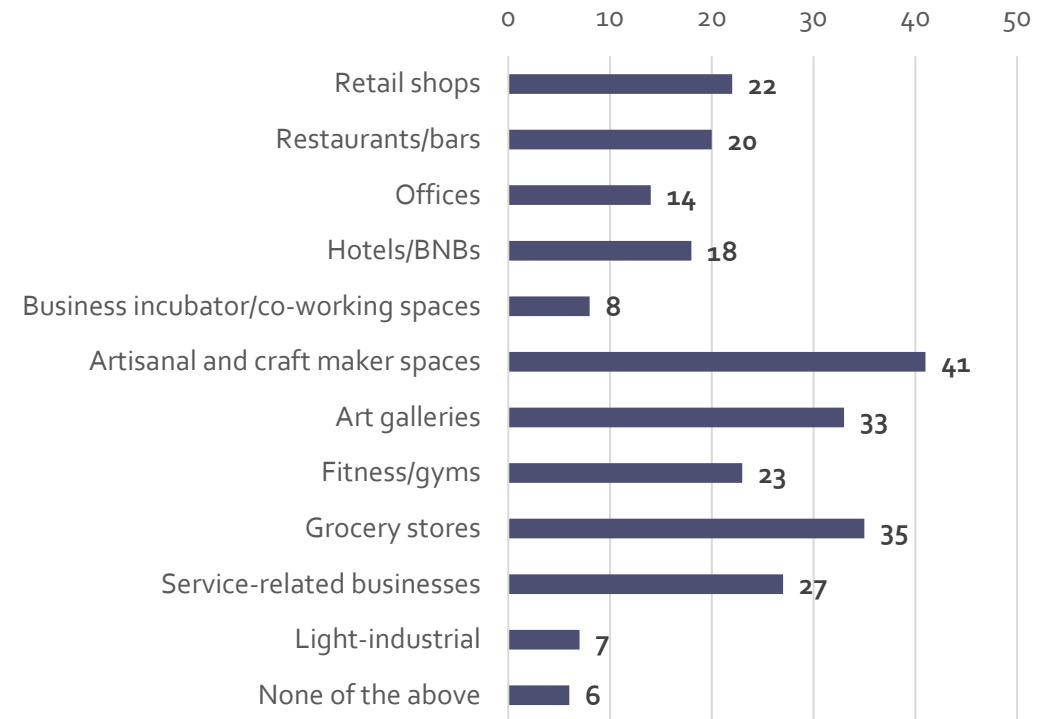
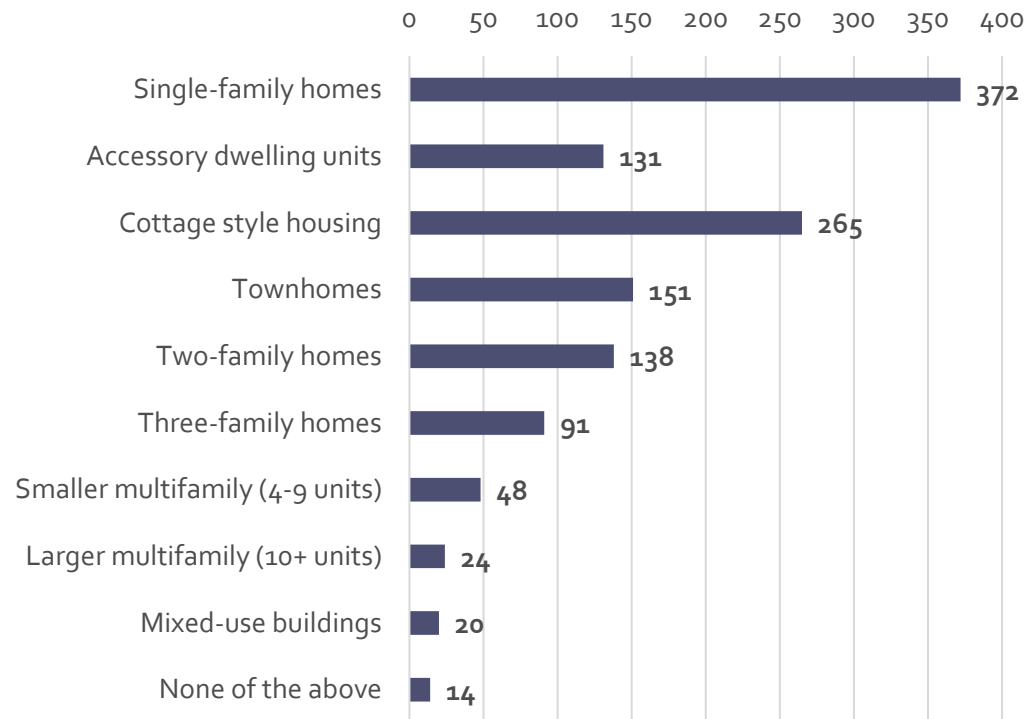
Land Uses – GRV District

Which of the following housing types/commercial land uses make the most sense for the **General Residential V** District?



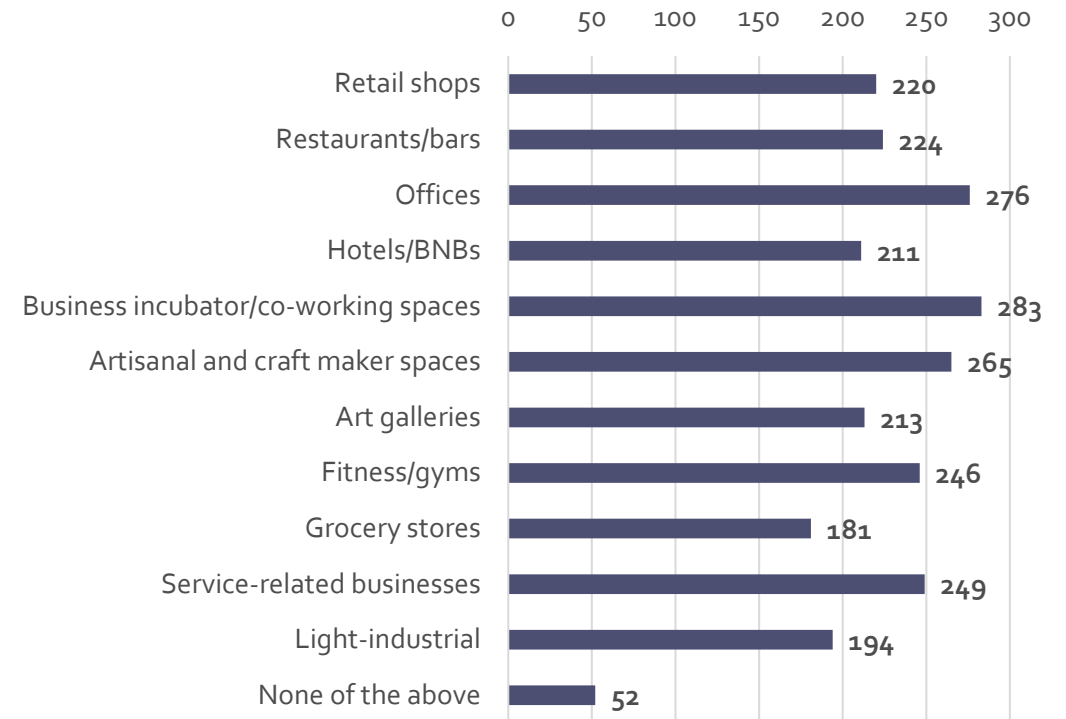
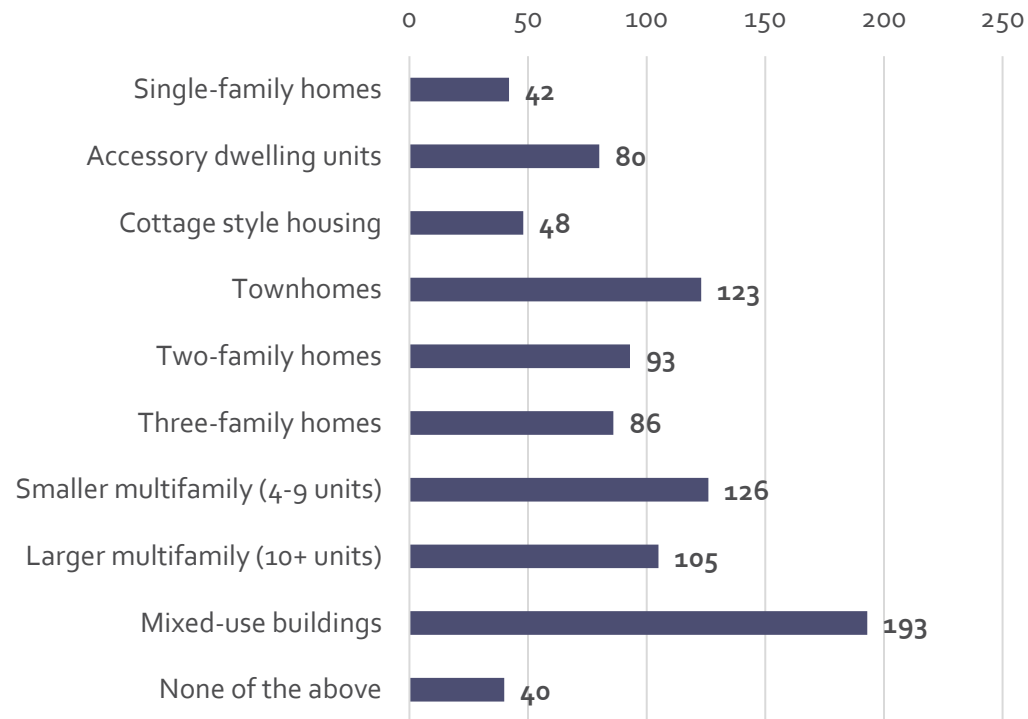
Land Uses – SFRIV District

Which of the following housing types/commercial land uses make the most sense for the **Single-Family Residential IV** District?



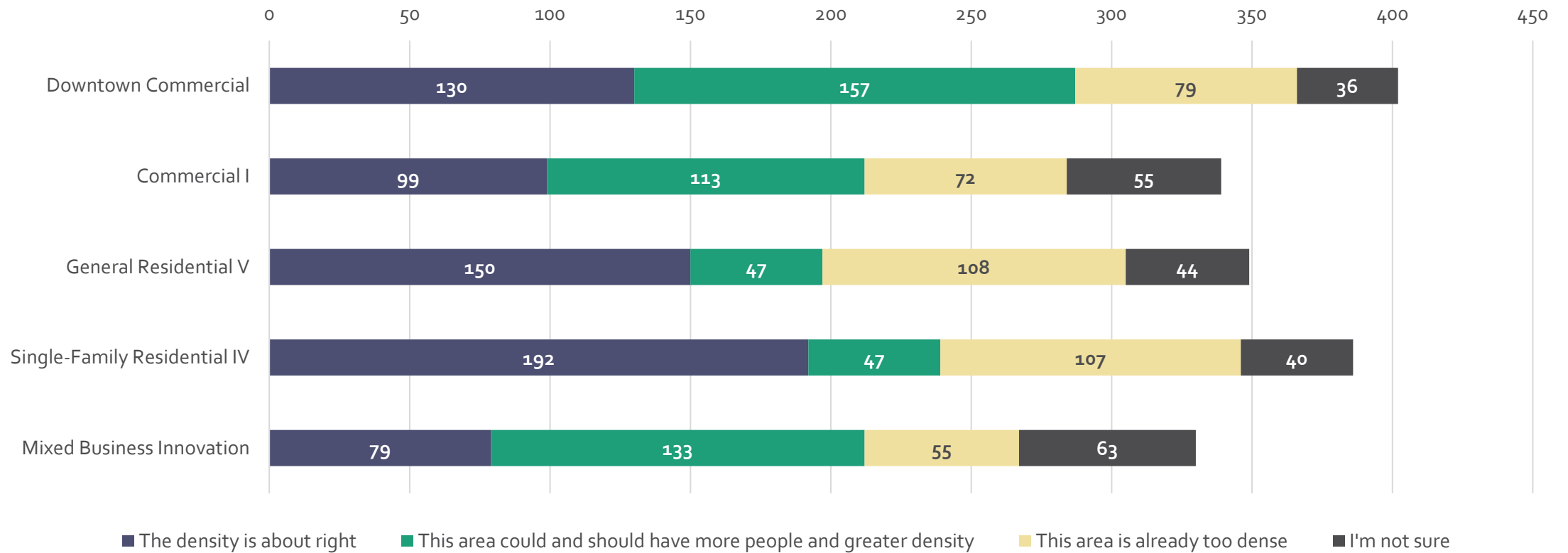
Land Uses – MBI District

Which of the following housing types/commercial land uses make the most sense for the **Mixed Business Innovation District**?



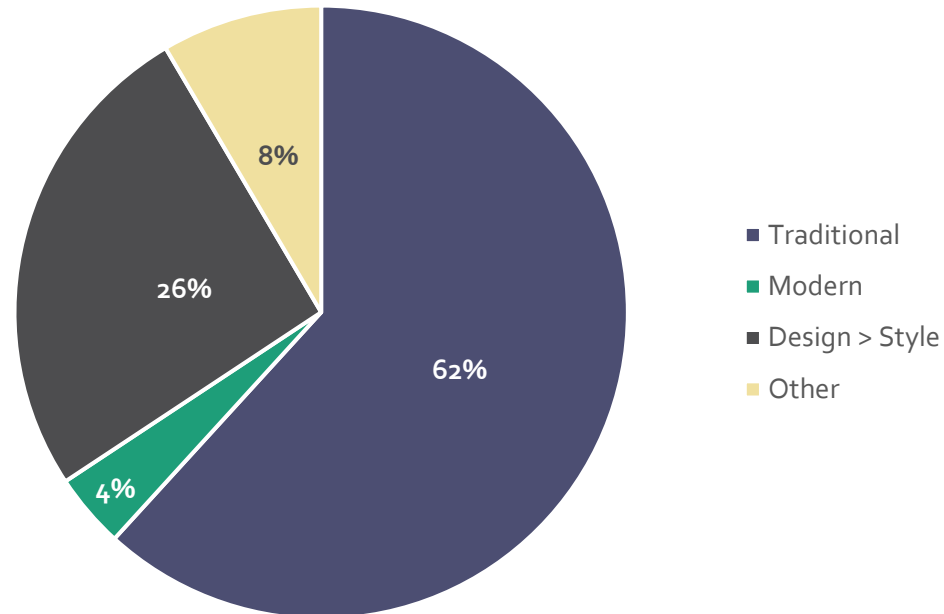
Look and Feel – Density

For each zoning district in the study area, what are your thoughts about density?



Look and Feel – New Buildings

What should new buildings in Franklin Center look like?

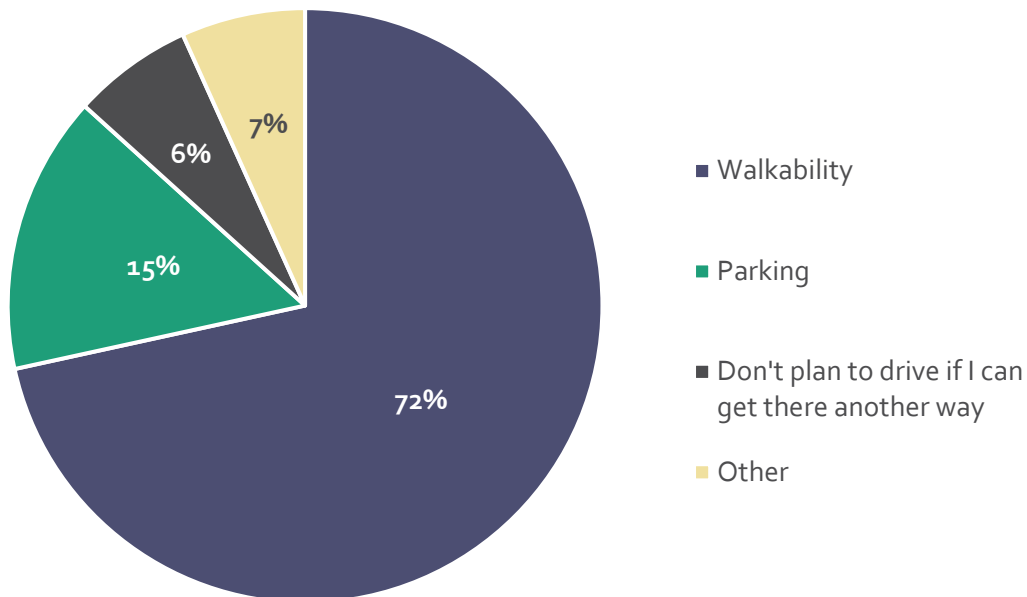


Other Responses:

- Most of the comments were more related to promoting an appropriate form/massing vs. architectural design standards
- Many feel that Franklin has a bit of a mixed architectural style, and would like to see modern and traditional aesthetics blended
- Suggestions included using a mix of setbacks, traditional buildings at the ground level with more modern residential styles above, and new designs that are respectful of the area's historic character and small-town feel
- Comments around the need for sustainability/energy-efficiency to be incorporated into building design

Look and Feel – Parking

What are your priorities when balancing parking and pedestrian experience in Franklin Center?



Other Responses:

- Respondents spoke about their desire to travel freely within the area but feel that there need to be more pedestrian and bike safety improvements
- Many comments about the need for a parking garage in the downtown to support local businesses and allow more people to take the MBTA Commuter Rail
- Comments around the need for ADA accessibility for curbs, parking, and at the MBTA station

Look and Feel – Other

Do you have other comments about the “look and feel” of Franklin Center?

- Many comments reflected responses to other questions
- Prominent theme is a desire for retail/leisure shopping, and dining – residents want to be able to hang out in their downtown and not have to leave the community to participate in these activities
- “People don't often know what they want until they have it! We may not enjoy change but we all enjoy walkable, vibrant places with continuous storefront, interesting buildings, and walk/bike infrastructure.”
- Desire that all new buildings adhere to greener energy standards: entirely electric buildings that hopefully can generate power with solar energy and get rid of oil and gas dependency

Franklin Center Strengths

- Downtown is good size, not too big or small
- Train station
- New England small town feel and historic character
- Cultural events and festivals
- Walkability
- Frequent responses: the Library, Black Box, Irish pub, and Dean College
- Like things the “way they are” and do not want to turn into a “large MetroWest community” or Boston

Franklin Center Challenges

- Lack of parking
- Lack of shops and casual eateries
- Lack of nightlife
- Some describe downtown as run-down and in need of “sprucing up”
- Commercial rents are too high to allow small businesses to move in
- No available affordable housing

Franklin Center Opportunities

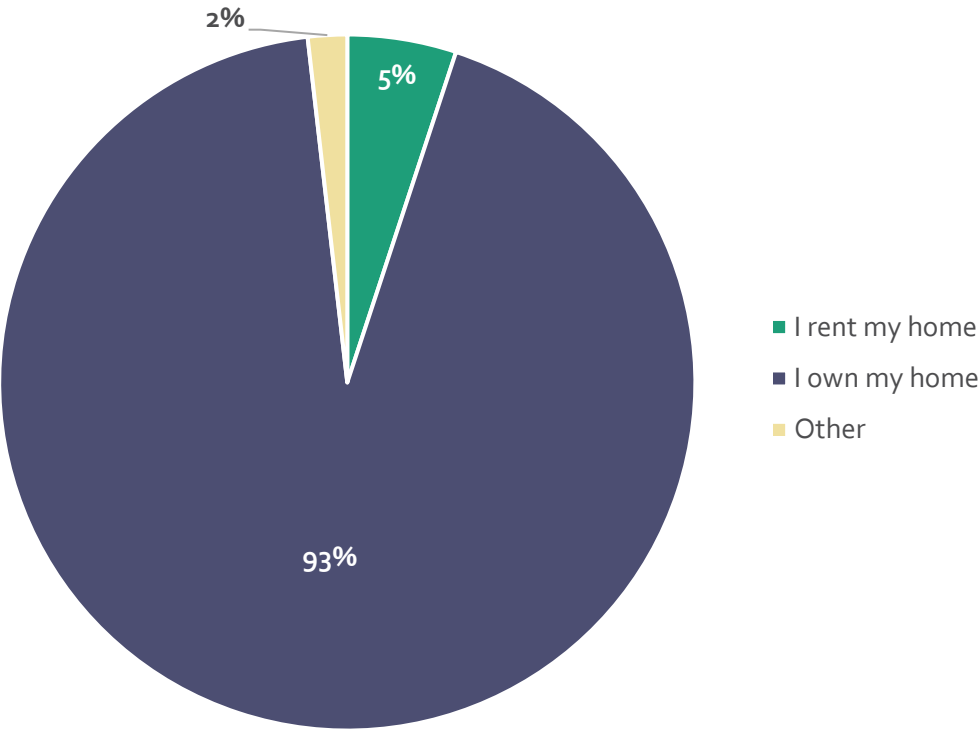
- Dean College – establish greater connectivity with the Town and access to their amenities
- Convert existing downtown businesses to retail and casual dining
- Make use of vacant spaces
- Sustainable features – utilize green infrastructure, bike racks, EV charging stations, etc.
- Diversify business and entertainment options
- Provide greater placemaking options for teens and families

Communities with Great Downtowns

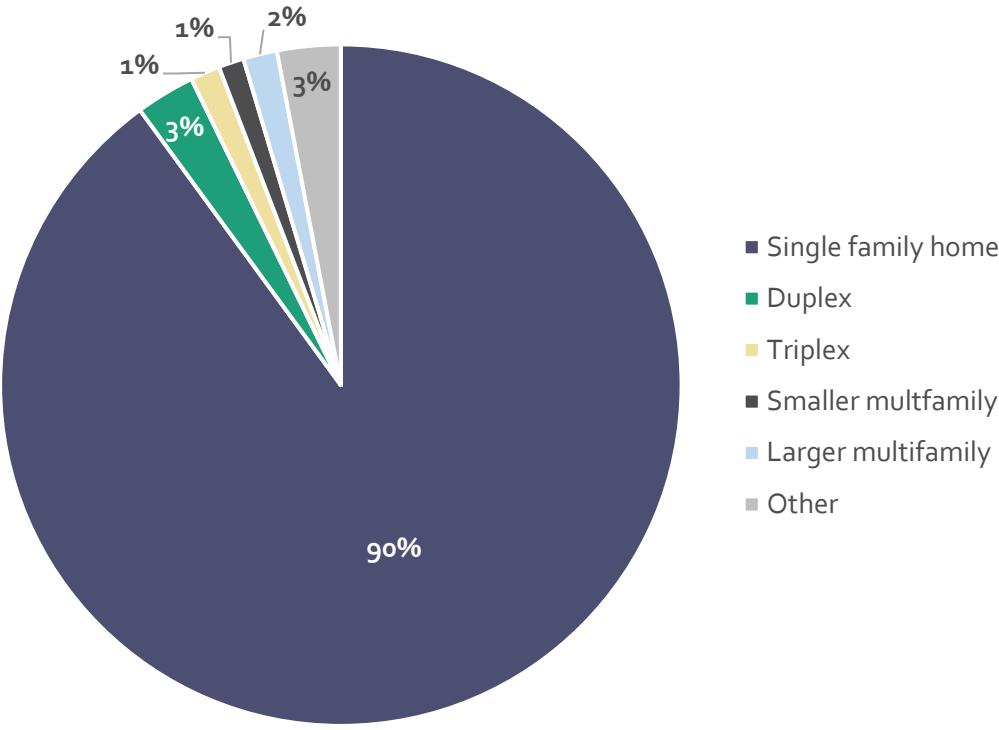
- Hudson, MA (45)
- Wellesley, MA (44)
- Falmouth, MA (28)
- Natick, MA (28)
- Norwood, MA (26)
- Needham, MA (26)
- Concord, MA (25)
- Newburyport, MA (17)
- Medfield, MA (16)
- Salem, MA (16)
- Chatham, MA (15)
- Lexington, MA (12)
- Portsmouth, NH (12)
- Rockport, MA (12)
- Stockbridge, MA (12)
- Holliston, MA (12)
- Hyannis, MA (12)
- Dedham, MA (12)

About You

How would you describe your living situation?

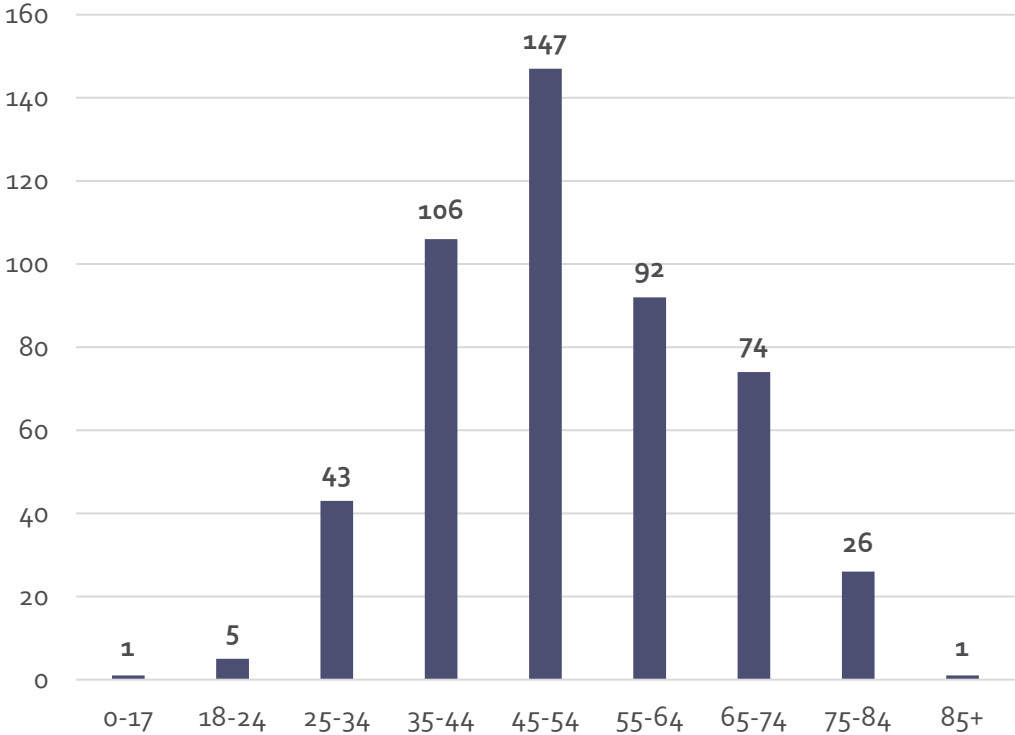


What kind of housing do you live in?

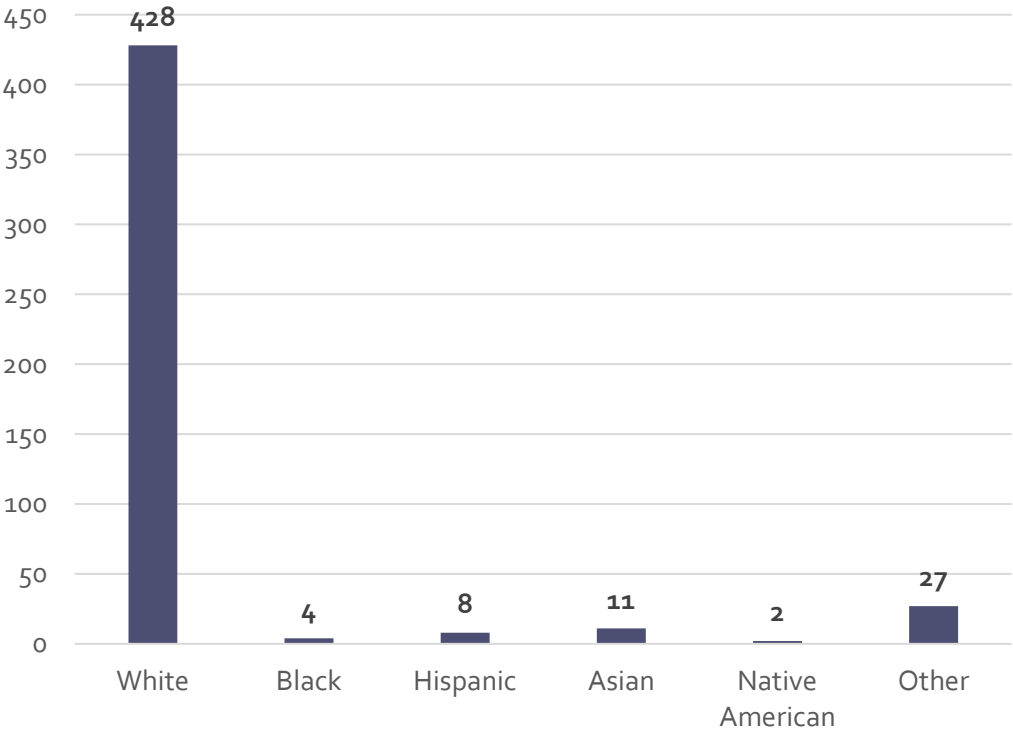


About You

How old are you?

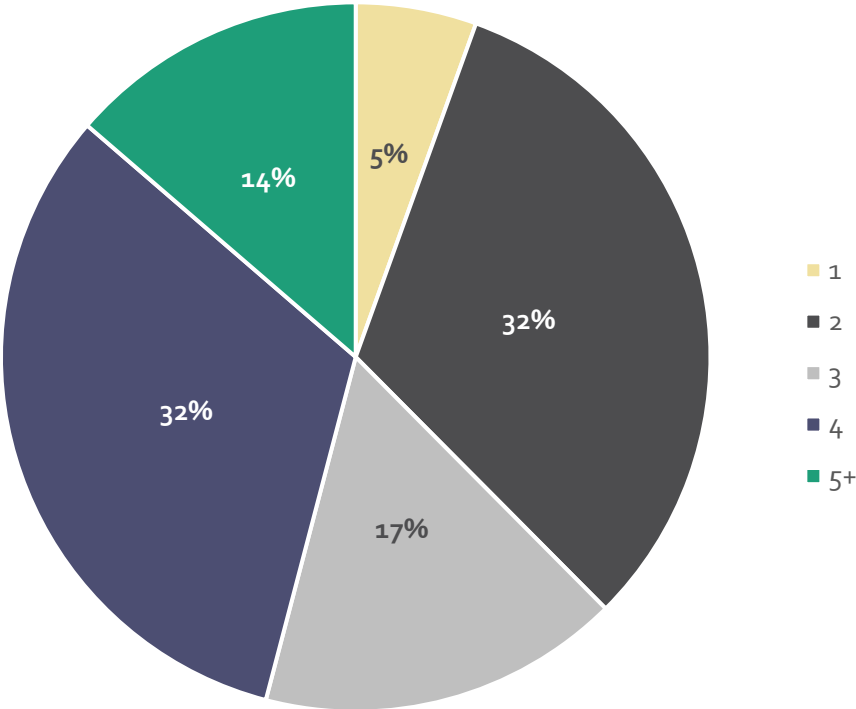


Which categories best describe your racial/ethnic identity?

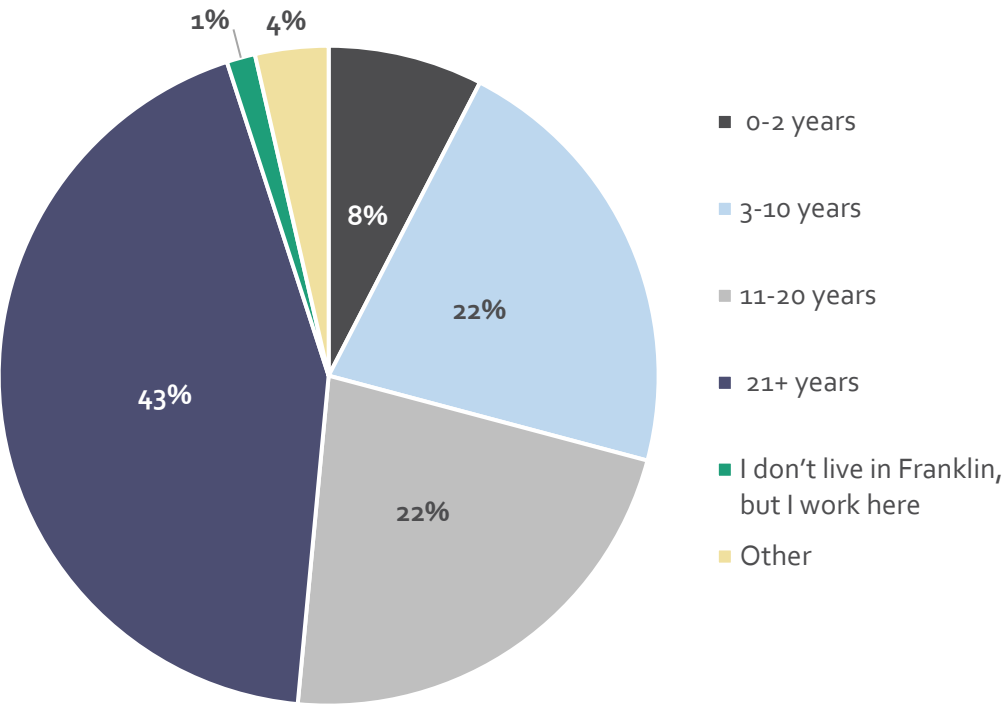


About You

How many people live in your household?

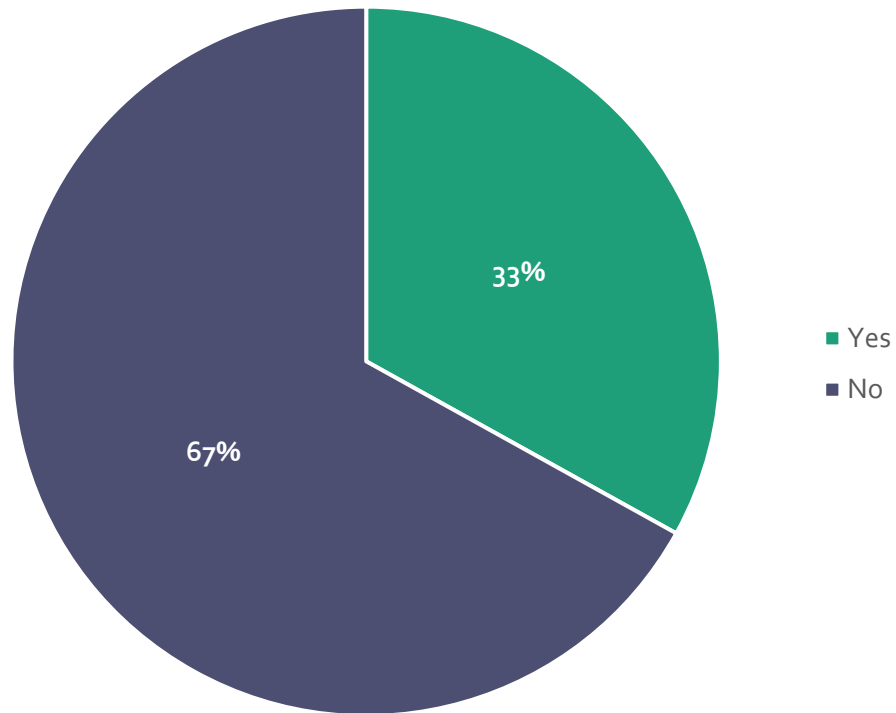


How long have you lived in Franklin?



About You

Do you live in the Franklin Center study area?



MBTA Communities Analysis

Overview

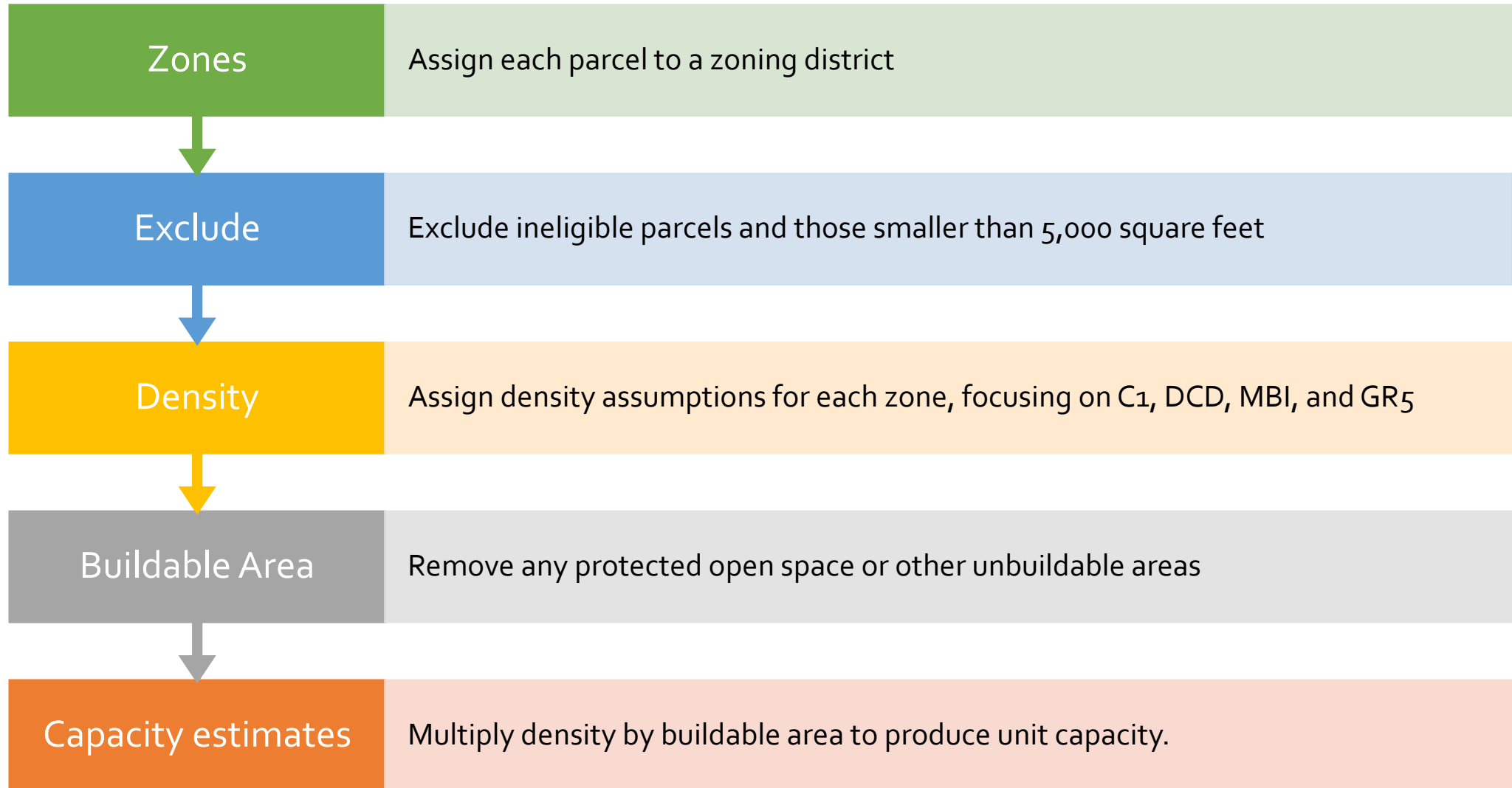
MBTA Communities

Multifamily Zoning Requirement (Section 3A)

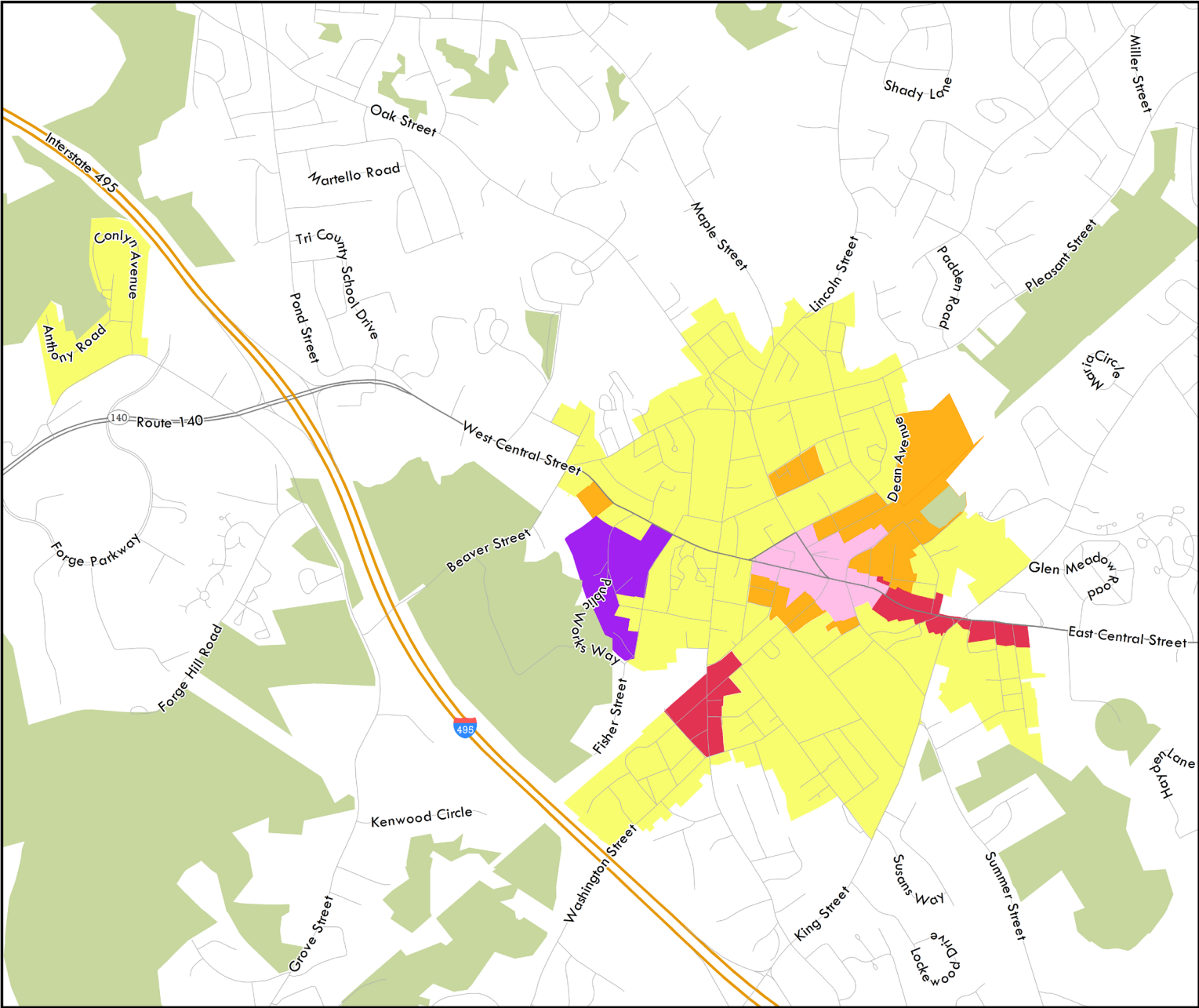
Draft Guidelines*

- Franklin's "Minimum Unit Capacity": 1,883 units (15% of current units)
- Minimum gross density of 15 units/acre
- Gross density is calculated as total units divided by total land area in the district
- Density can vary across subdistricts
- Unit Capacity includes existing units (not net new units possible)
- 50% of district must be within ½ mile of commuter rail stop

Methods for Buildout Estimates



Current Zoning

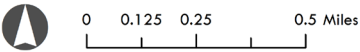
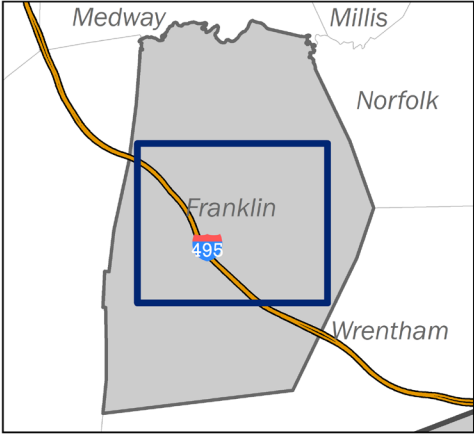


Study Area Zoning

- Commercial I (C1)
- Downtown Commercial District (DCD)
- General Residential V (GR5)
- Mixed Business Innovation (MBI)
- Single Family IV (SF4)
- Franklin Open Space

Roads

- Interstate
- U.S. Highway
- State Route
- Non-numbered route
- Municipalities



Scenario 1:

Equal Density

- Assume same density for all downtown districts

Scenario 2:

Downtown

- Higher density in DCD district, lower densities elsewhere

Scenario 3:

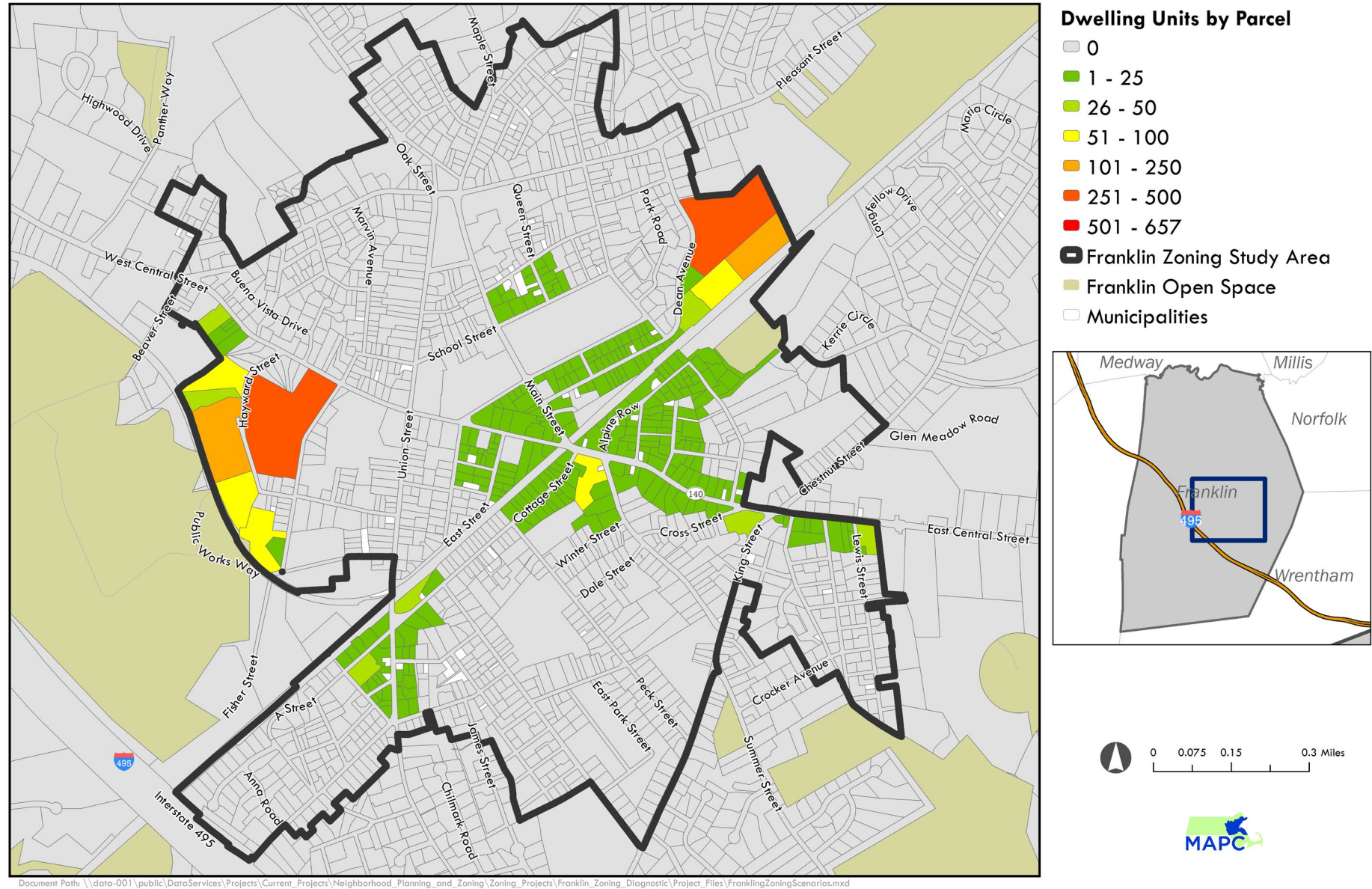
MBI Zone

- Enable transformation of MBI zone for residential/mixed use development

Scenario 1: Equal Density

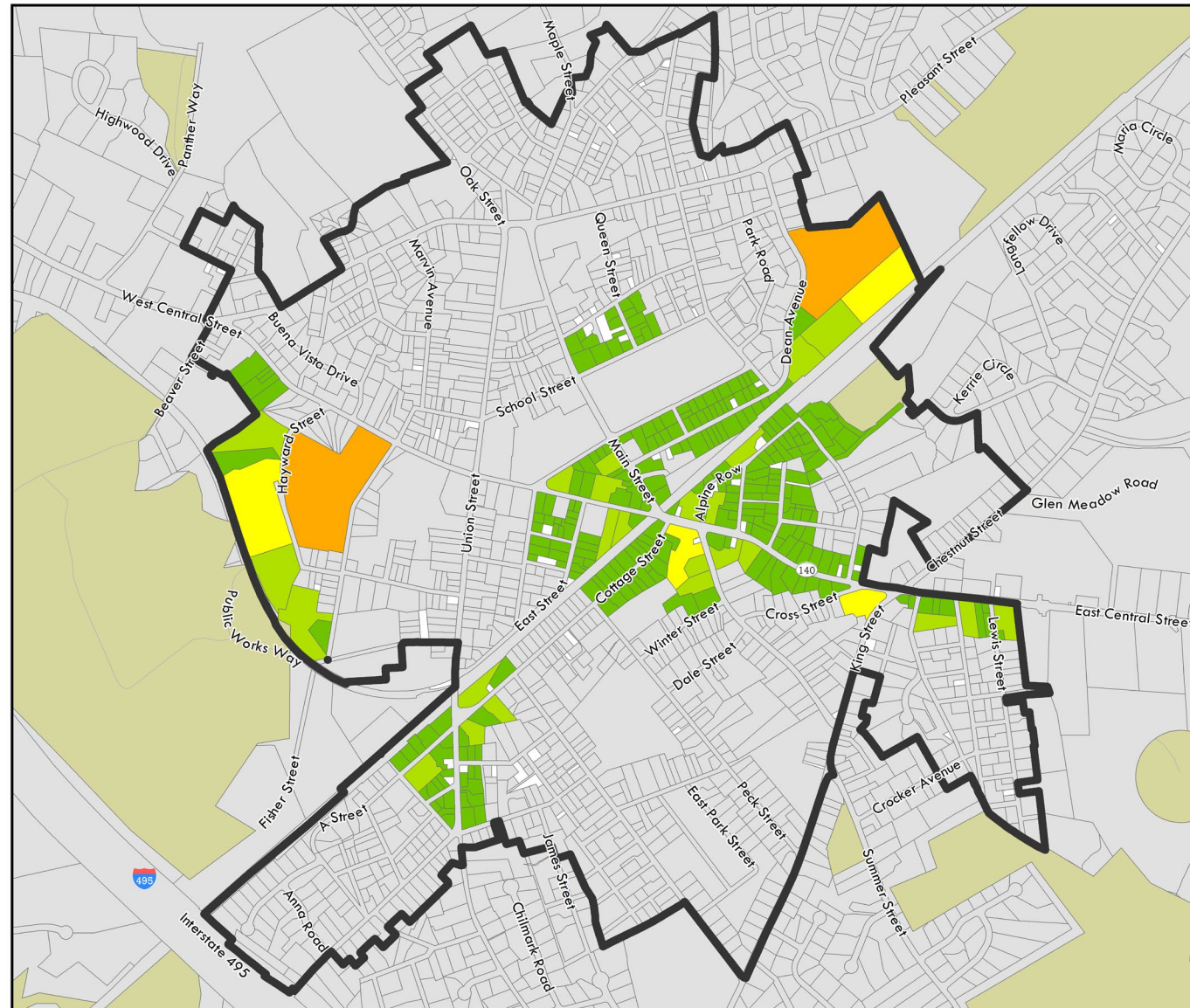
- Assumptions:
 - DCD: 22 DU/acre
 - C1: 22 DU/acre
 - GR5: 22 DU/acre
 - MBI: 22 DU/acre
- Unit capacity: 3,300
- Gross Density: 15.5 units/acre

CI units	594
DC units	531
GRV units	1404
MBI units	768



Scenario 2: Downtown

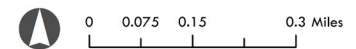
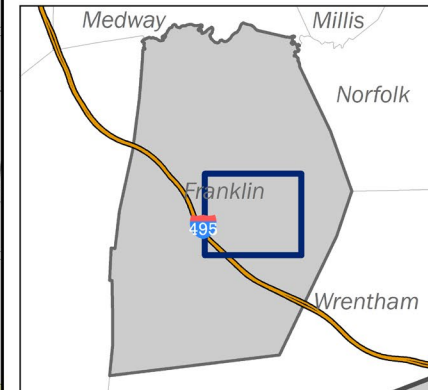
- Assumptions:
 - DCD: 40 DU/acre
 - C1: 35 DU/acre
 - GR5: 15 DU/acre
 - MBI: 10 DU/acre
- Unit capacity: 3,240
- Gross Density: 15.2 units/acre



Dwelling Units by Parcel

- 0
- 1 - 25
- 26 - 50
- 51 - 100
- 101 - 250
- 251 - 500
- 501 - 657

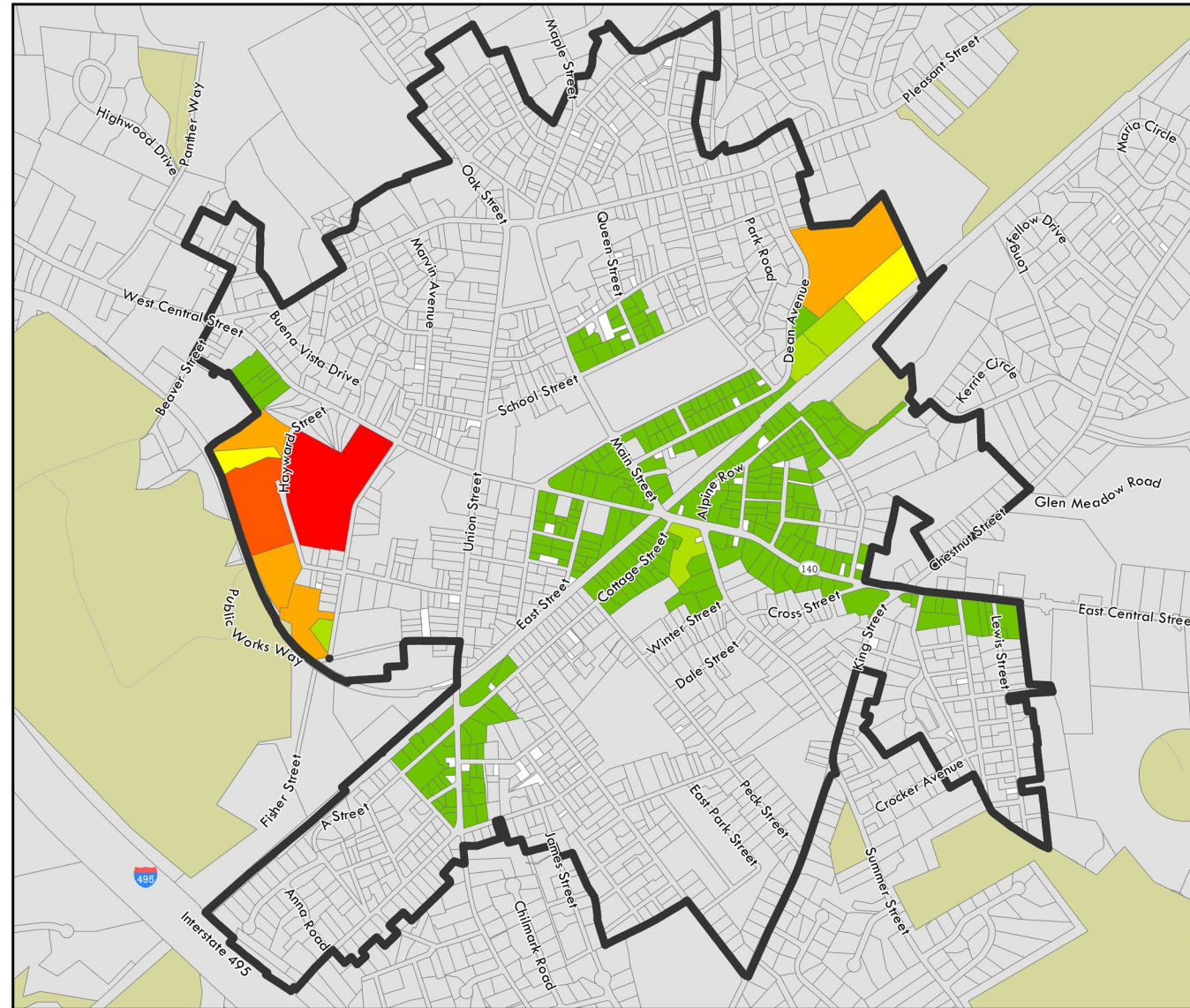
- Franklin Zoning Study Area
- Franklin Open Space
- Municipalities



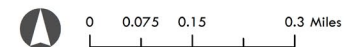
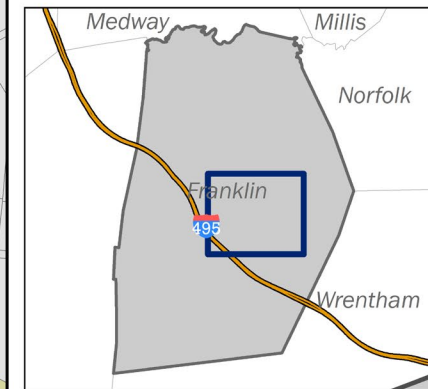
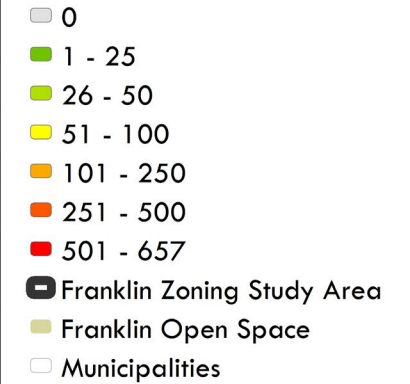
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Scenario 3: MBI Zone

- Assumptions:
 - DCD: 15 DU/acre
 - C1: 15 DU/acre
 - GR5: 15 DU/acre
 - MBI: 45 DU/acre
- Initial capacity: 3,255
- Density: 15.3 units/acre



Dwelling Units by Parcel



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Next Steps

Next Steps

- Working with the project partners, MAPC will:
 - Refine development scenarios and related build-out estimates based on desired dimensional regulations
 - Create massing diagrams for up to three sites in the study area to illustrate build-out scenarios
 - Begin drafting initial zoning recommendations for the public to weigh in
- Next Steering Committee meeting scheduled for May 4
- Next public engagement event planned for mid-May
- Plan to finish up this phase of the project by end of June

Questions/Comments?