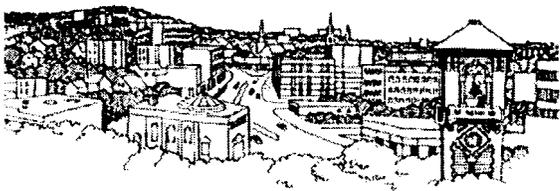

HOUSING



DRAFT
updated 2/28/01



BROOKLINE
PLAN 2000 - 2010

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 300 years, Brookline has evolved from an agricultural community and streetcar suburb to an incredibly diverse community that provides a wide-range of housing types and lifestyle choices from the mixed use, transit-oriented neighborhoods near Coolidge Corner, Brookline Village, and Washington Square to the suburban neighborhoods of South Brookline.

Brookline offers a high quality of life to its residents. This, in combination with its close proximity and transit connections to Boston and Cambridge, creates an exceptionally desirable community to live in. Brookline, which consists of roughly six square miles of land, is home to approximately 54,700 people of diverse backgrounds, incomes, and lifestyles, including families, young professionals, and elderly.

This report explores the current state of housing in Brookline and defines preliminary issues and opportunities related to our housing stock, policies, and programs. The report also provides a brief background on housing in Brookline to foster an understanding of where we have come from, in terms of evolution of overall development, as well as the various programs and regulations related to housing.

Background of Brookline Housing Development

Brookline, which began as an agricultural community in the 17th century, became a streetcar suburb of Boston during the mid-19th century. At this time, Brookline's development opportunities were enhanced by the provision of strong public transit with direct linkages to Boston.

By 1900, most of the remaining farmland, particularly in North Brookline, had been subdivided into residential developments with density that was supported by the existing mass transit linkages. The early 20th century was marked by the growth of corridors that were directly served by mass transit, such as the Beacon Street, Harvard Street, Washington Street, Boylston Street (Route 9) and Commonwealth Avenue corridors.

In the early 20th century, Brookline began regulating the use of land with its first Zoning By-law, adopted in 1922. Brookline's early zoning created districts for residential and business uses, and established simple dimensional requirements such as minimum yard setbacks, maximum height, and building coverage (coverage of building footprint on lot).

By the mid-20th century, Brookline's citizens recognized the need to compensate for the lack of diverse housing that the market was providing by establishing the Brookline Housing Authority (BHA) in 1948. The BHA initially focused on the need for housing

for veterans after World War II. As the BHA continued to develop housing, it added developments targeted to elderly housing to the mix.

From the late 1950s to the 70s, Brookline engaged in urban renewal of the "Farm" and "Marsh" areas of Brookline Village (on Route 9), adding approximately 1300 units including Brooke House, and public and privately subsidized housing. In 1970, Town Meeting adopted rent control, which at one point regulated approximately 11,000 rental units. In 1991, Town Meeting passed legislation to phased out rent control, and, in 1994, the enactment of State Referendum Question Nine eliminated rent control in Massachusetts.

Today, Brookline's mix of housing types and densities creates a development pattern with defined and distinct neighborhoods. Figure 1 displays Brookline's residential land use pattern and illustrates the variety and pattern of housing densities throughout the town, with most of the multi-family housing located in North Brookline and most single-family housing concentrations located in South Brookline. Many of the mixed-density neighborhoods are within close walking distance to the MBTA's Green Line and Brookline's main commercial areas.



Fuller Street, 2000

EXISTING RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

FIGURE 1

LEGEND

- Street Center Lines
- Single Family* (100)
- Two and Three Family (10A, 10B)
- 4-8 Multi-Family (11)
- >8 Multi-Family (112, 121, 122, 123, 30A, 307, 309)

DATA SOURCES

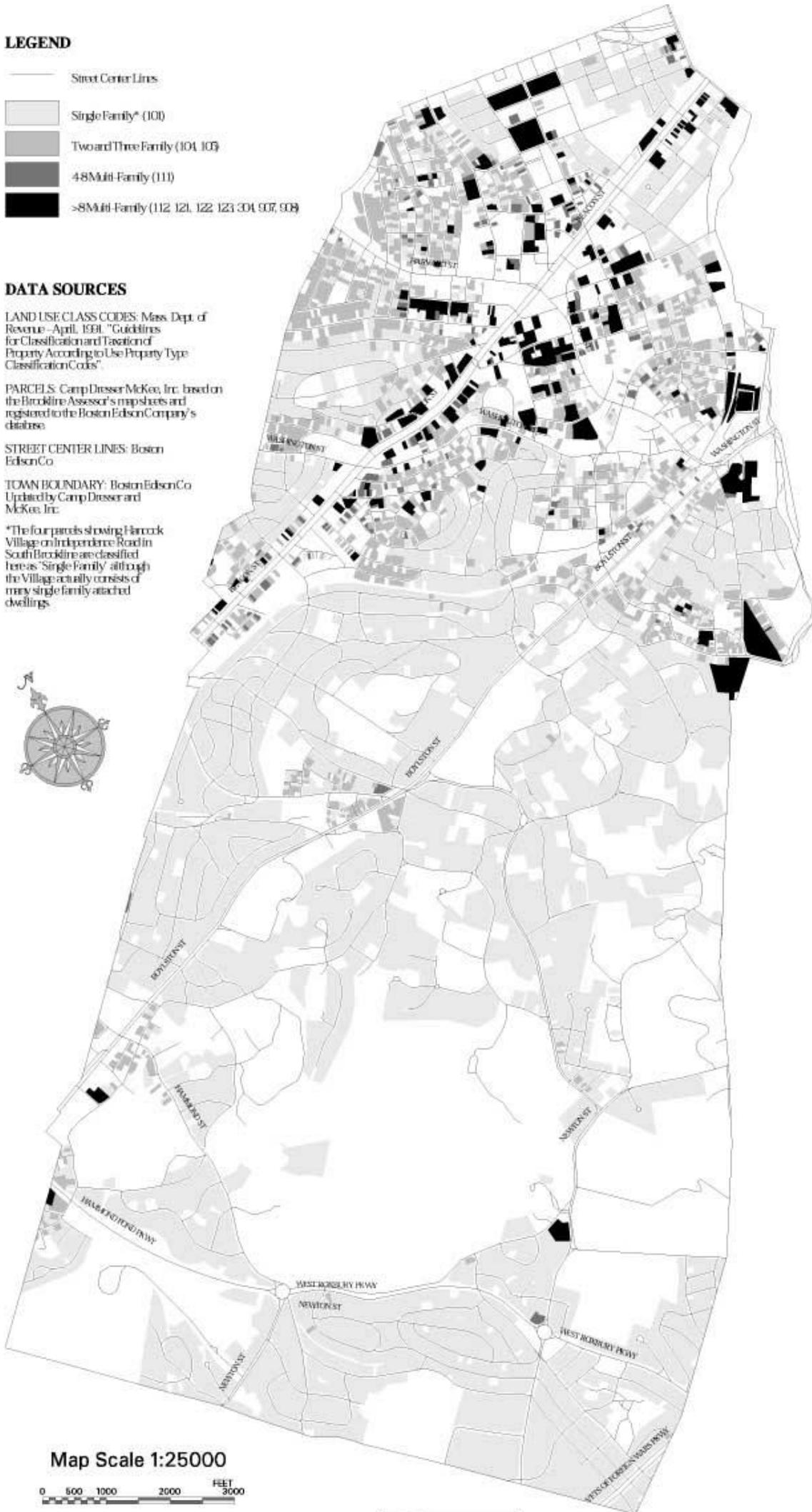
LAND USE CLASS CODES: Mass Dept. of Revenue - April, 1991. "Guidelines for Classification and Taxation of Property According to Use Property Type Classification Codes".

PARCELS: Camp Dresser McKee, Inc. based on the Brookline Assessor's map sheets and registered to the Boston Edison Company's database.

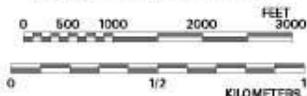
STREET CENTER LINES: Boston Edison Co.

TOWN BOUNDARY: Boston Edison Co. Updated by Camp Dresser and McKee, Inc.

*The four parcels showing Hancock Village on Independence Road in South Brookline are classified here as "Single Family" although the Village actually consists of many single family attached dwellings.



Map Scale 1:25000



Map created by Town of Brookline GIS on 12/11/2000.
Map printed on 02/05/01. Map AML: SUAML_plotuse_tuaml.

EXISTING HOUSING

TRENDS IN POPULATION AND HOUSING

According to the U.S. Census, there were approximately 54,700 residents in Brookline in 1990. While the total population was no greater than in 1960, there was a 29% increase in housing units and a reduction in the average household size from 2.76 to 2.17.

The greatest increases in the housing stock were made between 1960 and 1970, with more modest increases through 2000. A conservative estimate based on US Census data and Brookline Building Department records, indicates that an average of approximately 50 units per year have been added to our housing stock over the last decade (including new construction, as well as additions and conversions).

In 1990, Brookline continued to be a diverse community. The number of foreign born persons, which comprised 20% of the population in 1960, was up to 21% in 1990. In fact, in the 1990's, the Brookline public schools were serving children from at least 63 different countries; 50 distinct languages were spoken in their households.

Brookline's non-white population during this period increased from .5% to 12.6% (or 14.8%, if including the Hispanic population). During the 1970's and 1980's, there appeared to have been a redistribution of population, with a decrease in several age groups, including senior citizens (to slightly over 15% of the population), while adults between 25 and 44, and children under five, had increased. Forty eight percent of all households were classified as families; 39% were persons living alone; and 13% were households which included unrelated individuals.

The diversity of Brookline's population has reflected both its mix of housing type and tenure. In 1960, 67% of all units were occupied by renters. The modest growth of rental units between 1960 and 1990 - from 12,757 to 14,853 - reflected both the construction of many mid- and high-rise affordable and market rate rental buildings,

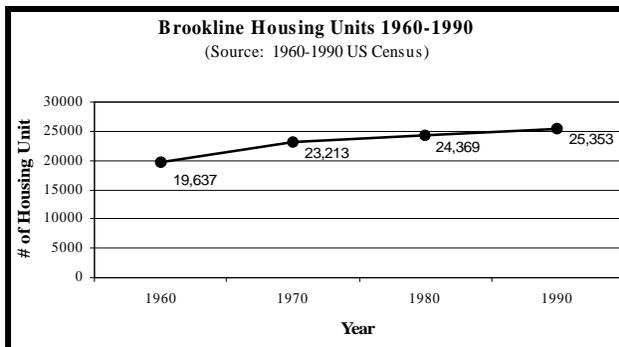


CHART 1

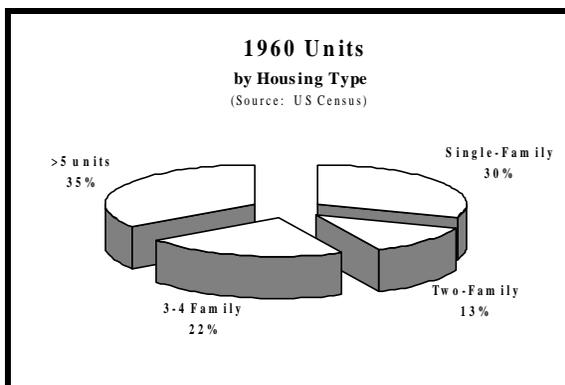


CHART 2

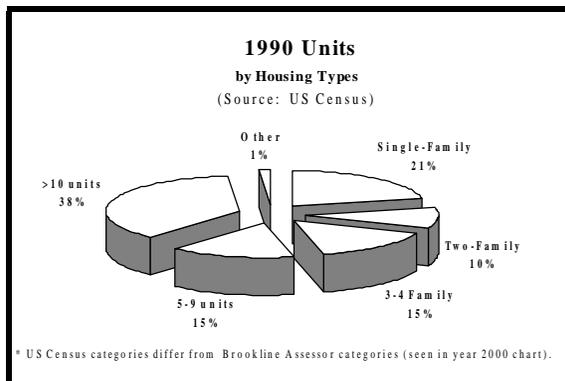


CHART 3

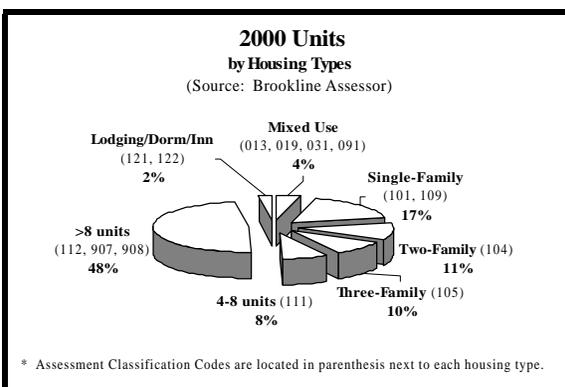


CHART 4

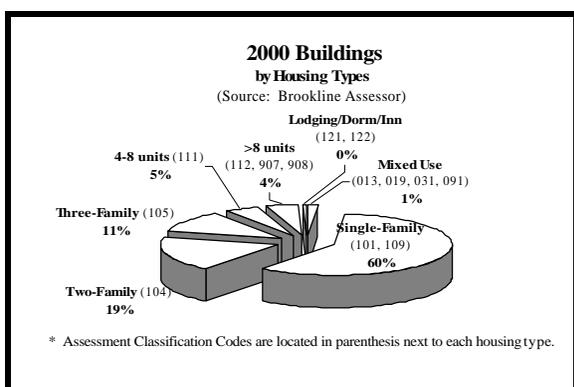


CHART 5

balanced by the inception of condominium ownership and the development of condominiums, principally through the conversion of rental properties. Condominium units, which numbered 2,074 in 1980 and 6,299 in 1990, increased at a slower rate during the past decade to 7,743 in 2000. By 1990, the percentage of renters to total households had fallen to 57%, a proportion which appears to be holding steady, despite the continued conversion of units. That the proportion of renters is still as high as it is may be explained by the rate at which condominiums, themselves, are used for rental. In 1990, 31% of condominiums were rented, and these households represented 14% of all renters.

The distinction between ownership and rental inventory is an important one, as rental units traditionally have housed smaller households of lower income. For example, while in 1990, median income in Brookline was 123% of the state average, there was a great difference between the incomes of owners and renters. At a time when about 13% of the rental stock was subsidized and a good portion of the balance was still subject to rent control, the median income of renters was \$38,817 compared to the median income of owners, at \$96,710. And, not surprisingly, because rental units tend to be smaller, the median number of household members was 1.6 in renter households, compared to 2.2 among owner occupants. When the 2000 census is available, the most dramatic changes in Brookline's demographic profile are likely to be noted in the renter population.

Charts 2, 3 and 4 show the changing makeup of the Town's housing stock. Between 1960 and 1990, according to the U.S. Census, the Town's housing units in one through four unit buildings had declined by about 1100 units or 8%. In 1960, these small structures contained 65 percent of the Town's units; in 1990, they comprised only 46 percent.

According to Assessing Department records 48% of the Town's housing units are now in buildings of nine or more units.

LAND USE PATTERNS

Charts 5 and 6 show that single-family houses still comprise 60% of the Town's residential buildings, and our single family zoning districts occupy 71% of the Town's land. In fact, 75 % of all the land zoned for residential use is zoned for single-family residences. According to Brookline Assessor's data checked against staff field observations, approximately 2% of land in Brookline is considered vacant (meaning undeveloped parcels that are not parks, conservation areas, or recreation facilities).

Figure 2 shows the overall densities allowed by the Zoning By-law in terms of lot size for single and two family districts, and floor area ratio for all other districts (multi-family and business districts). Figure 3 shows the proximity of multi-family and business districts to the MBTA transit lines. There is a strong correlation between Brookline's higher density zones (multi-family and business districts) and the availability of transit.

NEW DEVELOPMENT

Figure 4 shows the location and overall size of new residential development in Brookline since

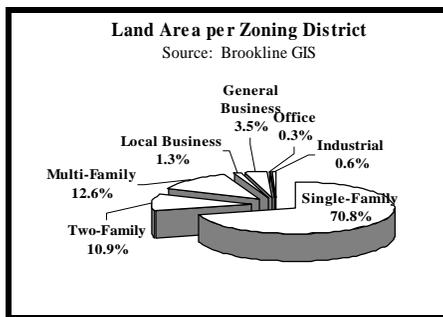


CHART 6

MARKET PRICE TRENDS

Brookline's strong housing market reflects both regional trends and the particular attractions of the Town. In 1996, when the last systematic study of

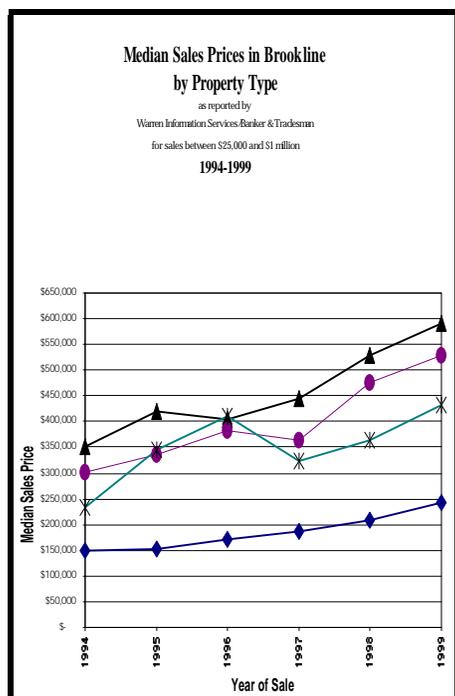


CHART 7

1991. According to Brookline GIS data, approximately 320 dwelling units were added to the housing stock as a result of new construction in the past 10 years (not including additions to existing buildings and not adjusting for demolitions). New residential development was generally scattered throughout the town.

rents was done by the Brookline Housing Authority, a two-bedroom apartment rented for \$1,154 per month. Anecdotally, a typical two bedroom apartment now rents between \$1600 and \$3000 per month, and units do not remain vacant. Sales information from Warren Information Services, Banker & Tradesman (Chart 7) provides a clearer picture of market trends. During the five-year period between 1994 and 1999, the median sales price of condominiums priced under \$1 million increased 62%, a single-family home, 69%; a two-family home, 75%; and a three-family building, 86%.

Affordable Housing

Brookline has long supported the development of affordable housing. Through the 1970's, this was achieved on the initiative of the Town mainly through the use of urban renewal and the construction of public housing; and on the initiative of private investors, through the development of publicly subsidized private-owned housing. Because of changes in both Federal programs and market conditions, and because the debate over rent control dominated discussion around affordable housing, there were few substantial initiatives by the Town during the eighties. In addition to providing home purchase and rehabilitation assistance, by the end of the eighties, the Town embraced inclusionary zoning as a tool for affordable housing.

CURRENT INVENTORY

Brookline currently has an inventory of 1810 affordable units controlled through regulation on the rentals or resale of units. Not included are about 120 households which, as of May, 2000, were renting privately-owned apartments with the help of federal Section 8 certificates administered by the Brookline Housing Authority, and 31 homeowners who purchased their units with Town assistance.

An affordable unit is one which is financed in such a way as to reduce occupancy costs, so that typical residents are paying no more than approximately 30% of their income on gross housing costs. Affordable

units are targeted to households who meet specific eligibility guidelines. Income eligibility is scaled to the median income of the metropolitan area, a standard which is updated annually by the U.S.

Department of Housing and Urban Development. Affordable units make up between 7% and 8% of the Town's housing stock. However, because almost half of the inventory lacks permanent affordability restrictions, at the current pace of affordable housing development - approximately 15 units per year - the inventory of affordable units could decrease to 5% of all units within the next 20 years.

The largest category of affordable housing is the inventory owned and mainly operated by the Brookline Housing Authority (BHA), which is governed by an independent public board. The BHA currently administers 921 units, subsidized by either the State or the Federal government. Half of these units - 458 - are in seven mid- and high-rise buildings which serve the elderly, as well as some handicapped residents. Another 432 units are in "family" developments. Thirty-one units are located in three small residences which are operated by private non-profits for special need populations.

While housing developments owned by public housing authorities have the greatest expectation of "permanent" affordability, and are expected to depend upon their respective sources for funding for operat-

ing subsidies and modernization, these sources often are not adequate. The Town has a history of partnering with the BHA by contributing Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to capital improvements, principally for landscaping, but also for energy efficiency and wheelchair accessibility.

The second largest category of affordable housing is the inventory of privately-owned, publicly-subsidized housing owned by for-profits and non-profits, and totalling 878 units. Most of these are located in six large developments built between 1965 and 1977, and these include the so called "expiring use projects". There already has been an attrition of 278 units at four developments which were originally offered at below market rents.

More recently, units with affordability restrictions have been added through small developments, including the acquisition and renovation of lodging houses by non-profit and for-profit developers, yielding 93 units. Finally, there are 40 units developed or under development under the Town inclusionary zoning (Section 4.40). These include 11 condominiums, 17 assisted living units, and 12 rental units. Despite the addition of about 158 newly affordable units between 1990 and 2000, there has been a net loss of 120 affordable units.

BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

Town Meeting established the Housing Advisory Board (HAB) in 1987 as successor to the Town's Affordable Housing Committee. The HAB consists of seven members and is charged with addressing affordable housing issues and opportunities in Brookline, including recommendations with regard to use of Federal funding, implementation of the Town's inclusionary Zoning, and use of the Housing Trust.

In 1995, the Town's first Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) and Officer were appointed to promote economic growth and support existing

businesses. In 1997, following the report of a Moderator's Committee on Housing, the development of affordable housing was added to the EDAB mission, and the position of Housing Development Officer was created to encourage the development of new, and preservation of existing affordable housing opportunities.

In June 2000, the Board of Selectmen established a Housing Opportunities Task Force with a goal to seek out resources for affordable housing- properties, funding and development capacity - to achieve new affordable housing development. A Preservation Committee was also established to seek ways to preserve existing affordable housing.

FUNDING/PROGRAMS

The Town's major current sources of funding for affordable housing come from the federal HOME program, through which the Town receives approximately \$360,000 per year, the Housing Trust (see below), and repayments of loans to a revolving fund initially funded through CDBG monies. As stated previously, the CDBG program also has been used to support capital improvements at BHA developments.

Town housing programs have recently been redesigned in order to assure that the investment of Town money achieves the greatest leverage, and that funding promotes the longest period of affordability appropriate to the use of the funds. The housing programs include home-buyer assistance, which has assisted two to five home buyers a year, emergency rehabilitation and lead paint abatement, and housing development by which the Town assists non-profits and for-profits to develop affordable units. The Town also works closely with developers who are subject to Section 4.40 to encourage the development of on-site affordable units, to structure the rental and sales prices and agreements, and to assure outreach to eligible Town residents most at risk of displacement.

Zoning

Brookline's Zoning By-law affects the development of housing by establishing regulations that control the following elements:

1. location of uses through various types of zoning districts (residential, business, office, and industrial),
2. development density through limits on number of units on a lot, lot sizes, and floor area ratios (ratio of building size to lot size),
3. placement of buildings and parking on a lot through various dimensional regulations, particularly yard setbacks, open space, and parking requirements,
4. and the appearance of buildings through dimensional regulations (such as maximum height) and design review.

Figures 5-7 compare the actual residential land use and densities to that allowed by zoning. These figures show where the number of units per lot is more or less than allowed (Figure 5), where lot sizes are both smaller than allowed (Figure 6), and where lot sizes are larger than allowed (Figure 7).

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The Zoning By-law also includes a variety of mechanisms intended to facilitate the creation of affordable housing, such as the Public Benefit Incentives and Affordable Housing Requirements. Adopted in 1962 and subsequently amended at least eight times,

Section 5.21 currently allows for increases in the maximum allowed floor area ratio for projects that provide certain specified public benefits, including affordable housing, open space, public parking, and street improvements.

In 1987, the Town of Brookline adopted Section 4.40 of its Zoning By-law, implementing inclusionary zoning. There have been changes to the By-law since that time, including a reduction of the threshold for required contribution from 10 to 6 units and increased emphasis on the provision of units on-site.

During the 15 years between 1987 and 2002, inclusionary zoning is expected to result in an estimated 55 units: 31 affordable units are currently occupied; five units are under construction; four units are permitted; and about 15 potential units are in the pipeline. The inclusionary zoning requirements also are expected to generate approximately \$3.6 million in payments of cash made in lieu of providing units. The Housing Trust received its first payment at the end of 1999; about \$1.8 million has been received to date. The first allocation of Housing Trust funds was made to an affordable housing project in January, 2001 - a bridge loan against federal HOME dollars to permit the local non-profit Brookline Improvement Coalition to purchase the building.

LEGEND*

Zoning Districts and FAR** Regulations

-  S-40 District
-  S-25 or S-15 Districts
-  S-40 SC-40 S-7 SC-7 Districts
-  T-5 or T-6 Districts
-  FAR 0.5 and L0
-  FAR 1.5 and FAR L75
-  FAR 2.0 and FAR 25



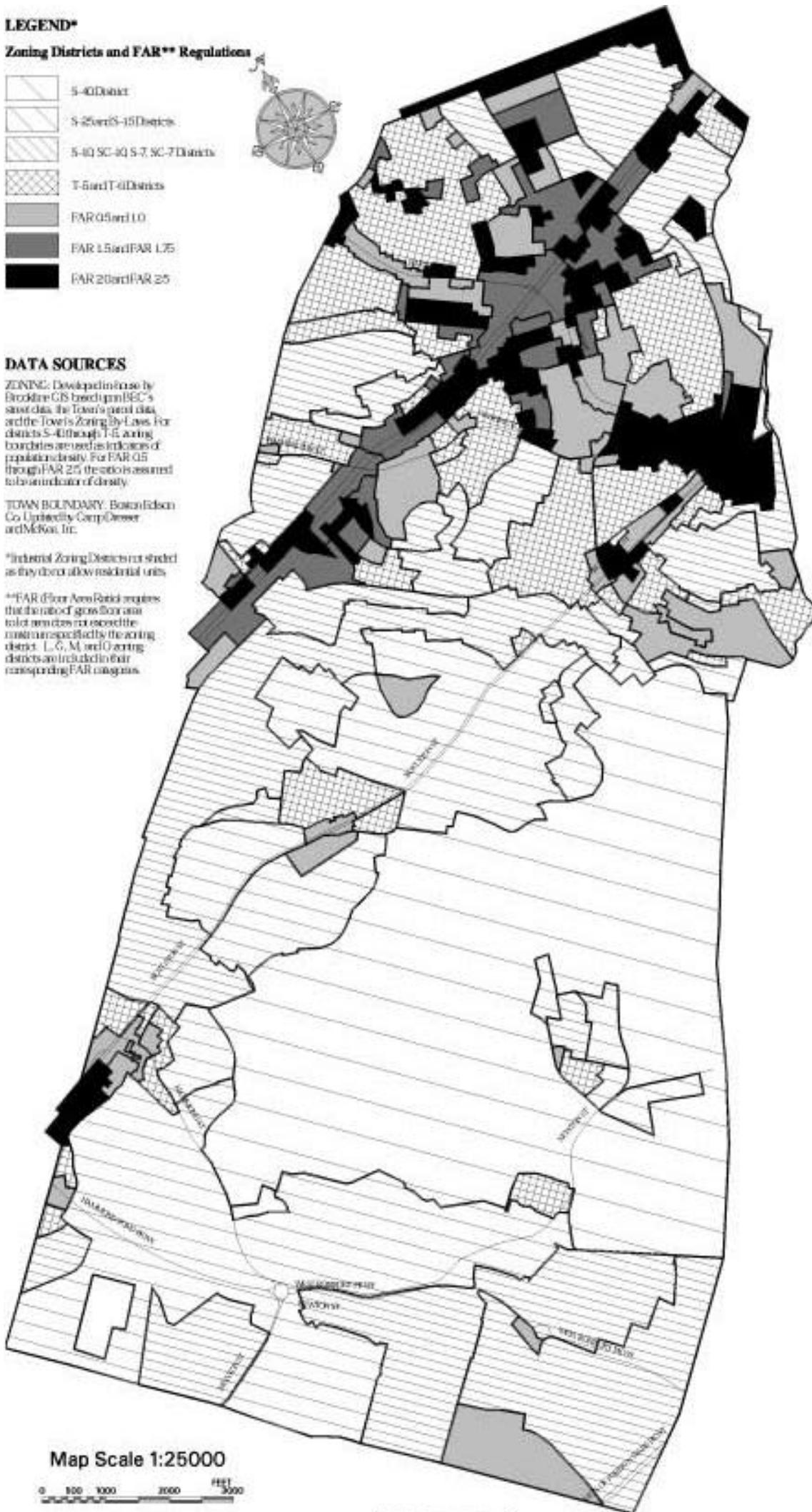
DATA SOURCES

ZONING: Developed in-house by Brookline GIS based on ISC's street data, the Town's parcel data, and the Town's Zoning By-Laws. For districts S-40 through T-6, zoning boundaries are used as indicators of population density. For FAR 0.5 through FAR 2.5 the ratio is assumed to be an indicator of density.

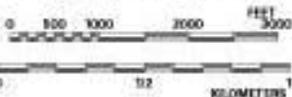
TOWN BOUNDARY: Boston Edison Co. Utility City Corp./Dewar and McKee, Inc.

*Industrial Zoning Districts not shaded as they do not allow residential units.

**FAR (Floor Area Ratio) requires that the total gross floor area total area does not exceed the ratio in any specific zoning district. L, G, M, and O zoning districts are included in their corresponding FAR categories.



Map Scale 1:25000



Map created by Town of Brookline GIS on 12/11/2003
Map printed on 02/05/04. Map AML: SLAML_plotnse_zonc.a1d

TRANSIT LINES & ZONING



LEGEND

- Multi-Family (>3) Developments since 1980
- One and Two Family Developments since 1980*
- ★ Approved New Development
- * Proposed New Development

DATA SOURCES

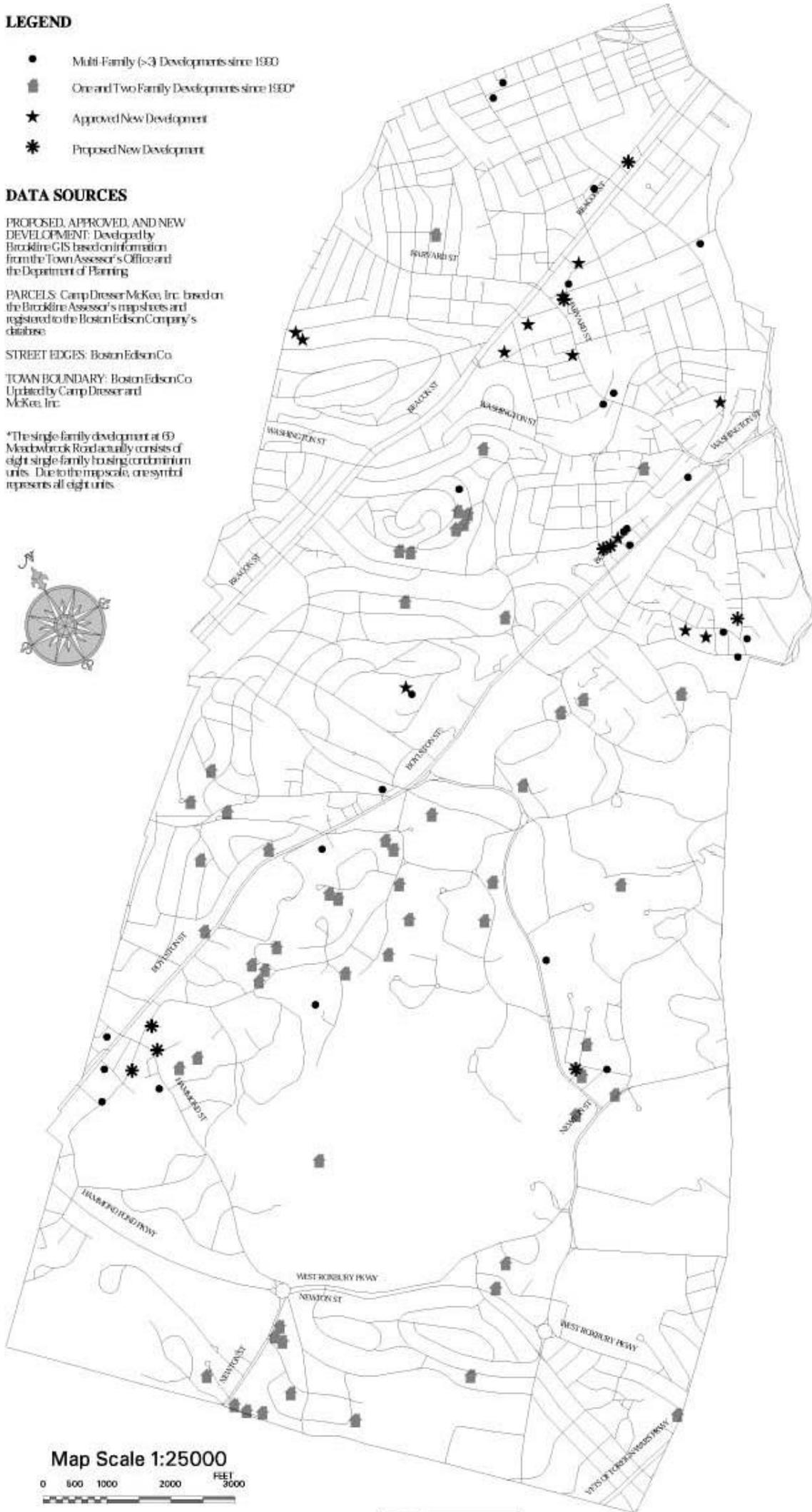
PROPOSED, APPROVED, AND NEW DEVELOPMENT: Developed by Brookline GIS based on information from the Town Assessor's Office and the Department of Planning

PARCELS: Camp Dresser McKee, Inc. based on the Brookline Assessor's maps sheets and registered to the Boston Edison Company's database

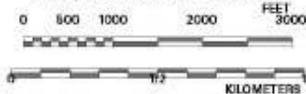
STREET EDGES: Boston Edison Co.

TOWN BOUNDARY: Boston Edison Co
Updated by Camp Dresser and McKee, Inc.

*The single family development at 69 Meadowbrook Road actually consists of eight single-family housing condominium units. Due to the map scale, one symbol represents all eight units.

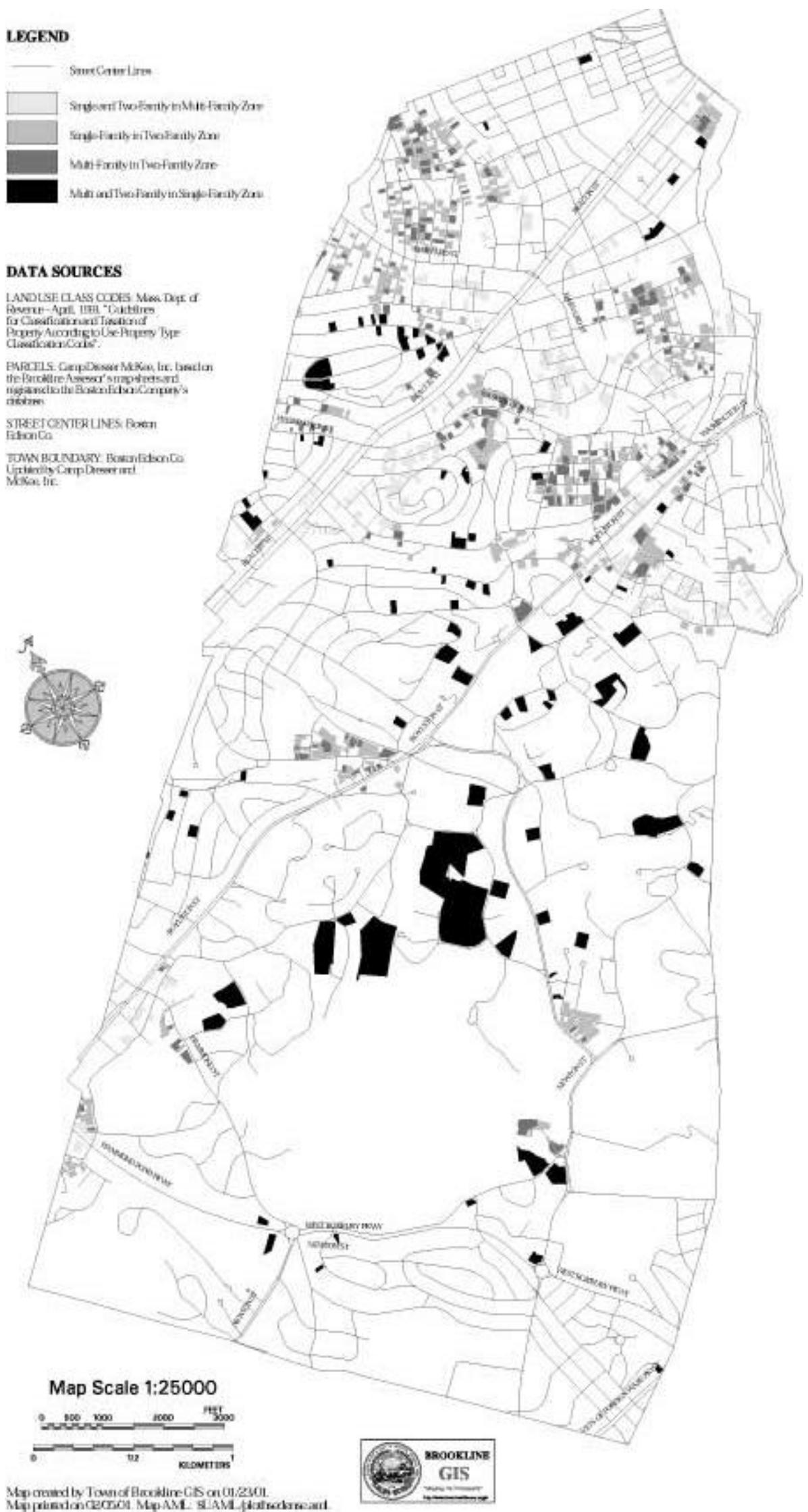


Map Scale 1:25000



Map created by Town of Brookline GIS on 1/16/01.
Map printed on 02/05/01. Map AML: SUAML.plt@senew.aml

ACTUAL VS. ZONED RESIDENTIAL USES



LOTS BELOW ZONED LOTSIZE

FIGURE 6

LEGEND

-  Street Center Lines
-  Lots Below Minimum Lot Size in Single and Two-Family Zones*

* Multi-Family and Business districts are not included in this analysis because their density requirements are based on Floor Area Ratio rather than lot size. Data is not available to determine the Floor Area Ratio of each lot in these districts.

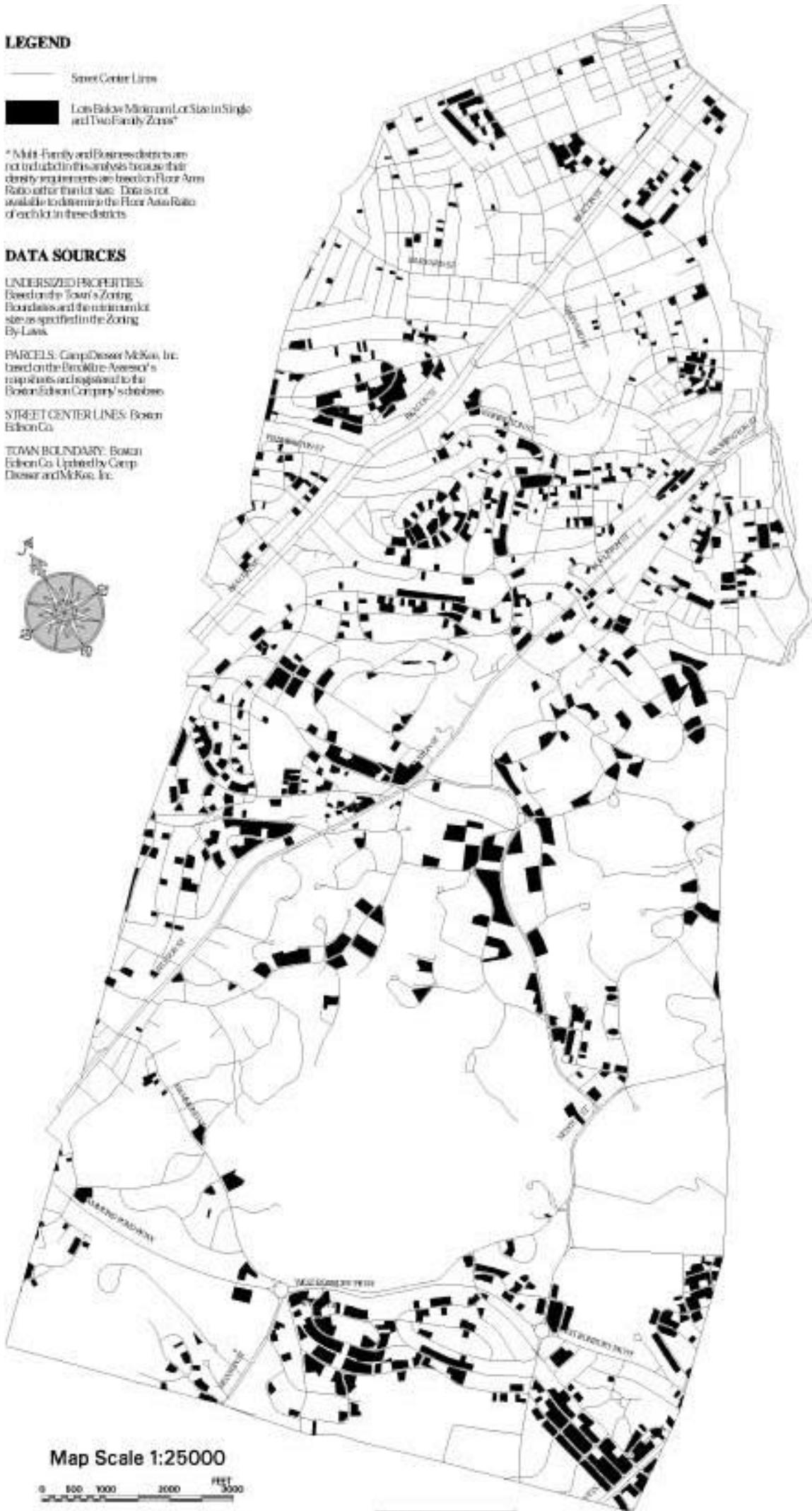
DATA SOURCES

UNDERSIZED PARCELS: Based on the Town's Zoning Board rules and the minimum lot size as specified in the Zoning By-Laws.

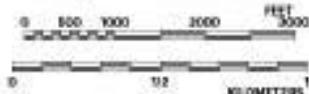
PARCELS: Corp/Dessor McKee, Inc. based on the Brookline-Alexandria's map of lots and registered to the Brookline Company's subscribers.

STREET CENTER LINES: Boston Edison Co.

TOWN BOUNDARY: Boston Edison Co. Updated by Corp/Dessor and McKee, Inc.



Map Scale 1:25000



Map created by Town of Brookline GIS on 01/23/01.
Map printed on 02/05/01. Map AML: SUAML.plt(undersized).aml

POTENTIALLY SUBDIVIDABLE PARCELS

LEGEND

-  Street Center Lines
-  Potentially Subdivisible Properties

* A complete zoning analysis has not been applied to the subdivisible properties shown here. Therefore, there may be additional circumstances which would prevent or limit subdivision of these properties.

DATA SOURCES

SUBDIVIDABLE PROPERTIES: Based on the Town's Zoning Boundaries and the minimum lot size as specified in the Zoning By-Laws.

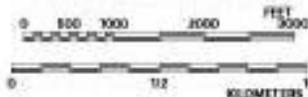
PARCELS: CompDossier McKee, Inc. based on the Brookline Assessor's map sheets and registered to the Boston Edison Company's database.

STREET CENTER LINES: Boston Edison Co.

TOWN BOUNDARY: Boston Edison Co. Updated by CompDossier and McKee, Inc.



Map Scale 1:25000



Map created by Town of Brookline GIS on 01/25/01.
Map printed on GECCO1. Map AML: SLAML.plotsubdivisib.ard

ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

The residential make-up of an area, more than any other component of the built environment, determines the character of the community. The variety of residential landscapes, the location, the type, and the cost of an area's housing stock will ultimately determine who lives there, how they interact, and if it is, in fact, a "community".

Diversity & Affordability

1

An urban community located within minutes of the central city, Brookline's diversity has long been one of its most valued characteristics. From bricklayers to bankers, cooks to corporate executives, the diversity of the Town's population has reflected its varied housing stock, from modest triple-decker flats to glorious mansions. In its schools, which have launched generations of immigrants, students have learned not only their ABC's, but an appreciation for other classes and cultures. The Town's ability to draw from its own population to patrol its streets, to teach its children, and to operate its commercial establishments has made Brookline more than just a suburb, it has made it a community.

Brookline's strength has become its Achilles heel: a well-managed Town with an attractive housing stock, a diverse population, a strong sense of community, and a convenient proximity to downtown has fueled a real estate market which is putting these very qualities at risk.

In addition, Brookline's historic diversity has been eroded by the loss of rental units through condominium conversion and the end of rent control. Finally, since half of the Town's affordable housing stock is owned by private investors, the expiration of controls on that housing will significantly erode the inventory over the next 20 years.

Despite the lack of current information on income trends, the change in the composition of Brookline's population can be inferred by changes in buying power over the past decade. This is illustrated in Chart 8, using the ability to purchase a condominium in Brookline as a gauge for affordability in the market as a whole. Between 1991 and 2000, the median price of a condominium in Brookline increased by 120% (from \$133,000 to \$292,000) while the median income in the Boston metropolitan area for a 3 person family increased by 30% (from \$45,000 to \$59,000).

Looked at from a different perspective, in 1991, a family of 3 with the median metro area income (\$45,000) could afford to pay \$116,000 for a condo in Brookline, or 88% of the median price (\$133,000). The family would have needed \$52,000 to purchase a median priced condominium. In 2000, a family of three with the current median metro area income (\$59,000) could afford to pay \$148,000 for a condominium in Brookline, 51% of the median price (\$292,000). The

family would have needed an income between \$90,000 and \$100,000 to purchase a median priced condominium.

While information is less available for rental housing, if rentals for two bedroom units tend to be within the range of \$1600 to \$3000 (including utility bills, etc.), the incomes required to lease these are \$68,000 to \$124,000; and move-in costs - from two to four months rent - would range from \$3,200 to \$12,000. Anecdotal information is that families and the elderly are increasingly being priced out of the private rental market, and replaced by households of unrelated young persons.

At this rate, Brookline will continue to become a very different community than it is today. Displacement of lower-, moderate-, and middle-income renters will continue. And many of the existing lower- and middle-income home owners are likely to be replaced by households with considerably higher incomes and assets than the sellers had when they moved to Brookline. Families are justifiably concerned about the ability of their children to live in the community where they grew up, and older renters are concerned with being able to age in their own community.

The Town's housing policy is directed to preserving existing regulated affordable housing. It also aims at identifying existing rentals which come on the market

and which may be acquired with the intention of achieving affordable or mixed-income housing. To date, this effort has focused on lodging houses, but, in the future, could include larger, conventional rental properties as well.

The scarcity of land available and suitable for development or redevelopment is a particular opportunity: it challenges the Town to identify publicly-owned properties and begin the public discussion concerning alternate compatible uses; to identify privately-owned properties and work with property owners and potential developers towards the goal of mixed-income housing. It also challenges the Town to make maximum

use of its zoning powers to shape the use of land in the public interest, which includes maintaining the diversity of the community.

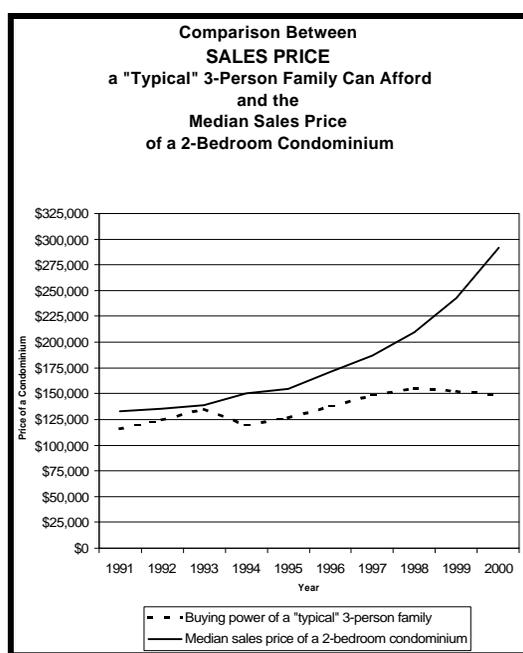


CHART 8

An appropriate density of strategically-located housing can strengthen the livability of our community in many ways. Compact residential development located within walking distance of our commercial centers supports those areas, and, in turn, supports the diversity of services available to all residents. Residential development near mass transit lines fosters transit ridership, and this, in combination with walkable and bikable commercial areas, can reduce automobile dependency - lessening traffic congestion and environmental pollution.

Ultimately, in communities with high land costs and housing prices, density is a critical tool to achieve affordability. Increasing density (to the extent that it is not implemented across the board and thus capitalized into land costs) results in lower land cost per unit. It also contributes to greater economies of scale, both through savings in construction costs and development overhead. Projects of greater scale can become more feasible and require fewer public subsidies with income from market units to help underwrite the cost of providing the affordable units.

While discussions of density often raise difficult issues, particularly in relation to neighborhood scale, this need not be the case. Indeed, in many parts of

Brookline, the current level of density varies from the density permitted through the Zoning By-law (see Figures 5 & 6). This could provide an opportunity to create effective zoning incentives for various public benefits, including affordable housing (see #5 Zoning to follow).

Furthermore, “density by design”, as the current trend has been called, seeks to achieve density in ways that reinforce historic development patterns and, where appropriate, encourage open space and other public amenities. There are many opportunities in Brookline to provide additional housing:

1. Convert historic buildings to housing, such as St. Mark’s Church on Park Street which was converted to 43 units in 1979;
2. Convert accessory structures, such as carriage houses, to housing;
3. Convert existing attics and basements to new units
3. Utilize appropriate vacant lots for infill development;
4. Investigate subdividable lots for appropriate development sites;
5. Research potential redevelopment opportunities, such as the recently approved proposal at 20 Cameron Street to replace industrial uses with a 14 unit residential building.

The phrase “transit-oriented development” describes a type of development that has a reciprocal relationship: it is development that both supports and is supported by mass transit. Although this is a fairly new term, promoted by architect Peter Calthorpe to describe the development of newly planned communities, it is based on the traditional concept of streetcar suburbs.

Brookline was one of the Boston area’s first streetcar suburbs. The density of development that occurred here in the mid to late 19th century and throughout the 20th century would not have been possible without reliance on mass transit. In fact, the most dense development patterns in Brookline have occurred in North Brookline where three of the MBTA’s green lines provide direct connections to downtown Boston (see Figures 1 & 3).

With the prevalence of automobiles in our lives, these transit connections to Boston are no longer as strongly relied upon, particularly with reverse commutes (that is, Brookline resident’s working in outer suburbs as opposed to downtown) becoming more common than in the past. However, Brookline is one of six inner core communities considered part of the urban ring corridor. According to the *Urban Ring Major Investment Study*, March 2000, this corridor is growing faster than the regional average, and will contain over 250,000 residents and over 240,000 jobs by the year 2020. Therefore, it is clear that mass transit

availability in Brookline will continue to have a strong reciprocal relationship with development.

Encouraging the continuance of transit-oriented development is an important opportunity for

Brookline to preserve its historic patterns of development, enhance the diversity of housing and lifestyle choices, as well as to lessen reliance on automobiles, thereby reducing traffic congestion and environmental pollution, and increasing our sustainability.



Credit: Brookline Public Library Collection
Coolidge Corner, ca 1910

According to *Creating Transit Supportive Land-Use Regulations*, PAS Report #468, the maintenance and creation of transit-oriented development relies on four basic concepts:

1. ensuring pedestrian and bicycle-friendly site and streetscape design;
2. balancing the need to accommodate automobile parking with the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users;
3. encouraging mixed-use development;
4. fostering appropriate development densities.

Brookline has the opportunity to review its development policies and land use regulations to encourage the continuance of our historic patterns of development by fostering transit-oriented development.

Combining the themes of transit-oriented development and density by design, as well as the benefits of additional foot traffic as related to the health of local commercial centers, mixed-use neighborhoods and buildings can strengthen a community's livability. Many of Brookline's neighborhoods already exemplify the ideals of mixed-use. Further mixed-use opportunities exist, particularly with our single-story commercial buildings. These buildings, of which there are approximately 180 in Brookline, can provide valuable development opportunities that not only increase housing opportunities, but also contribute to the continuance of Brookline's historic mixed-use and transit-oriented development patterns.



Mixed-Use Building
Corner of Beacon Street and Winchester Ave, 2000



Single-Story Commercial Building
Washington Street, 2000

Adding additional stories on existing single-story commercial

buildings raises several issues related to parking, historic preservation, building code and structural capacities, and potential coordination by multiple owners of contiguous buildings. Encouragement of building-up in support of affordable housing also requires appropriate incentives and controls which may differ from the Town's standard inclusionary zoning requirements.

A "build-out" study regarding this issue could assist the Town in analyzing alternative incentives and provisions to encourage this mixed-use development. It could target appropriate blocks of Beacon, Boylston, Harvard and Washington Street, and address permitted and potential density where such buildings exist, as well as issues related to context, design and parking.

Zoning

Traditionally, zoning has been used as a tool to separate different land uses and to delineate the density of development within neighborhoods. Brookline's land use pattern consists of mixed uses and mixed densities. One can walk down a street, such as Fuller Street, and see various but compatible uses, from the commercial uses at JFK Crossing to residential uses, and various densities, from single-family houses to multi-family buildings, existing side-by-side. This variety is valued as an important and unique component of Brookline's livability.

Brookline Zoning has attempted to make sense of this pattern by creating various districts and regulating allowed uses and densities. However, actual land uses and densities often do not comply with the standards that our zoning sets forth (see Figures 5&6). In order to preserve the diversity of densities and the strength of mixed use neighborhoods, it is important to analyze the impact of our Zoning regulations, and to make adjustments where necessary to preserve the defining elements of existing neighborhoods in terms of allowed uses, densities, open space, and the placement of buildings on lots.

PUBLIC BENEFIT INCENTIVES

Although Brookline's Zoning By-law creates public benefit incentives by allowing bonuses in FAR (Section 5.21), this section of the By-law is rarely used to create additional affordable housing, due to the minimum lot size requirement of 20,000 s.f. as well as limit on the aggregate bonus allowed. These issues present an opportunity to re-think the structure of the By-law to include zoning tools which are more flexible and which will more effectively increase our affordable housing supply. According to Marya Morris *Incentive Zoning*, PAS Report 494, the zoning incentives (bonuses) offered by a community should be proportionate to the cost to the developer of providing the desired amenity (such as affordable housing). There are numerous standard evaluation meth-

ods that can be used to appropriately calibrate the bonuses. They can include increased FAR and height allowances; modified open space, lot size, and parking requirements; as well as a predictable development review process. The Housing Advisory Board and Zoning By-law Commission are currently focusing on the portions of the zoning by-law which directly impact affordable housing, and most importantly Section 4.40. There is a clear interest in improving the effectiveness of the by-law to encourage affordable housing. In doing so, it is important to consider the feasibility of incorporating bonuses that produce public benefits without increasing land values.

Finally, Brookline can consider following the lead of other communities and invite the "friendly" use of Chapter 40B to achieve development at a density which exceeds that allowed by right, yet is designed within a neighborhood context. "Chapter 40B" refers to a state law enacted in 1969 which provides incentives to developers of affordable and mixed income housing by:

1. requiring a community-coordinated "comprehensive permit" process, potentially including waivers to zoning and other local regulations;
- 2) in communities where less than 10 % of the housing stock is already dedicated to low and moderate income households, establishing a State Housing Appeals process by which the State can review an adverse local decision. A minimum of 20% to 25% of the resulting units must be affordable.

Thus, despite the scarcity and cost of land, the Town can use a combination of a strong real estate market and all available local and State land use tools to maximize the development of affordable housing. The Town's Housing Trust Fund by itself, and to the extent that its use can leverage State funds, can provide additional incentives to willing developers to exceed the minimum affordability requirements under those laws.

Public & Comprehensive Plan Committee Comments, Report 5

- Some potentially subdividable parcels on the map look wrong.
- A 20,000 s.f. lot minimum seems like a high threshold to qualify for public benefits.
- It's a burden on the schools to increase housing, especially if we are taking taxable property to reuse for housing. We should focus new development on providing smaller housing for people who no longer need their big houses (such as elderly).
- Transit and housing link is important. How do we reconcile needs for housing and commercial development. The answers might be mixed-use and transit-oriented development.
- Building on single-story commercial buildings are good opportunities, especially for supporting transit-oriented areas. We can change the parking requirement to enable this type of development.
- There is no demand for units that have no parking.
- But that would naturally make the units more affordable than ones with parking. Plus, they would be great for senior housing, especially if they are within walking distance of services and transit.
- There are building code issues with retrofitting an existing single-story building for mixed use. We need to look at the realism of this. If changes are greater than 25%, then whole building needs to be brought up to code. But, a demolition and replacement could work, although there would be large start-up costs.
- How real is this 10% goal for affordable housing?
- The goal is based on a State goal for all communities in Massachusetts.
- Housing solutions need to fit-in with the solutions to other issues too. It's important to know the age demographics linked to the geography of the Town, and also to know ethnic backgrounds. Also, it would be interesting to know if people come from other places or from Brookline.
- What are the tools to facilitate transit-oriented development? We need incentives to facilitate this.
- We need parking to drive development. But, if we agree that the concept of transit-oriented development is good, then maybe we don't need to require parking in transit areas.
- Units with no parking are very difficult to sell. Even seniors need vehicles or at least parking for care-givers.
- There is a possibility of making concessions for mixed-use and donating funds to a trust to develop off-site, centralized, shared parking.
- We should take another look at the development study that was done about 10 years ago to see what its recommendations were.
- The shared-car concept is good too. The Zip-car company has grown considerable and is very popular. Also, mixed use can provide the opportunity for shared parking.
- There used to be some parking garages for people to use in Coolidge Corner near Waldo Street.
- Mixed-use idea is being used all over the country. We should embrace this concept.
- Level of owner occupancy is decreasing. Lower-income households have greater need for vehicles. MBTA routes are not adequate, especially in South Brookline.
- Even housing with no parking is desirable in Brookline.
- But if we only build units with no parking, then we need to address the parking need in another way.
- We need to address housing for people with disabilities, too. Single room occupancy (SRO) is also needed. When a family grows and children move out, the couple should be able to rent their large house to provide group housing. Is there money available to subsidize that type of arrangement?
- Meeting the 10% affordable housing requirement could mean a big increase in our housing stock. Also, if we add that much housing, then parking needs will increase.
- Some people do need cars and some don't. You can't generalize. We need to look at conversions and using our existing stock for affordable housing - it doesn't have to be just about building new. We should also add tax incentives and relief: they could be used for owners to rent at more affordable rates. Also, we should allow the creation of in-law apartments.
- In-law apartments are a good way of providing more housing.
- Why should we be held to the same 10% standard as other towns with more undeveloped land than us?
- State restrictions make the tax program you suggested very difficult. We'd have to file a home rule petition.
- What is the impact on rents from the residential exemption? Response: It probably affects it, but market demand is determining the rental price more than the residential exemption.
- Will part of the Comprehensive Plan include calculations of growth impacts on town services? Response: A fiscal impact analysis is not part of the Comprehensive Plan, but we do need to take a look at the costs of our strategies.
- We need to be prepared to pay for affordable housing. We need to understand what these costs are.
- Affordable housing is the hardest problem the Town has to deal with. The plan should have a strong statement on the need for this. Also, the Town's affordable housing should be more fairly distributed among the Town.
- One point of 40B is to cut down on public input. Response: That's not true, especially for a friendly 40B project that the Town would be a partner in and negotiate with developers to attract the right kind of project that would fit into Brookline.

- The report understandably concentrates on the issue of affordability and the provision of affordable housing - and this may well be a justifiable priority in the comprehensive plan. But "comprehensiveness" calls for perhaps a bit more attention to other housing opportunities also. If Brookline is to respond in anyway to its regional position and, for example, try in some way to play a role in preventing metropolitan sprawl, then it may need to think about the renewal and expansion of its housing stock more generally.

- The report outlines a whole series of options for providing affordable housing which lead to some optimism of its being increased in a variety of creative ways. But what the plans to assess and decide on these options so that they can be pursued as urgently as the situation warrants?

- Three of the Board referred to in this report seem to have overlapping responsibilities on affordable housing. How are their separate responsibilities identified and is there adequate interaction and communication between them?