



The City of
WORCESTER

Division of Planning & Regulatory Services

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Michelle M. Smith, Assistant Chief Development Officer
City Hall, 455 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01608
P | 508-799-1400 F | 508-799-1406
planning@worcesterma.gov

Memorandum

To: Albert LaValley, Chair – Worcester Planning Board

CC: Planning Board Members

From: Victor Panak, *Chief Planner*

Date: February 7, 2024

Re: 342 West Boylston Street – Establish CCOD-E – Zoning Map Amendment

Proposed Zone Change

342 West Boylston LLC seeks to amend the City of Worcester Zoning Map by establishing the Commercial Corridors Overlay District – Elsewhere parking subarea (CCOD-E) overlay zoning district on the property at 342 West Boylston Street. The petitioner does not propose any changes to the underlying zoning district.

The property located at 342 West Boylston Street (MBL 12-007-00009) is presently located entirely in the BL-1.0 (Business, Limited) zoning district, and not located within any overlay zoning districts.

The property is owned by the petitioner and, according to Assessor's records, was most recently used as a fast-food establishment. The property is currently vacant.

Recommendation

The Planning Board's role in this matter is to make a recommendation to the City Council with respect to the proposed zone change. In doing so, the Board should consider how development is shaped under the current and the proposed zoning district and determine whether the proposed changes would further development in a manner consistent with community objectives and compatible with the neighborhood.

The proposal would establish the CCOD-E overlay district over 342 West Boylston Street in its entirety.

Location



Analysis

The proposed map amendment would affect approximately 0.69 acres (or 29,927 SF) of land, on the eastern side of West Boylston Street. The subject property is at the corner of West Boylston Street and Andover Street. Presently, the property is underutilized with a vacant building and associated surface parking lot.

West Boylston Street is a busy commercial thoroughfare, with primarily vehicular-focused commercial uses, including retail, bank, food-service uses in the vicinity of the subject property in a narrow BL-1.0 zone. To the east, is a large RG-5 district developed predominantly with three- and multi-family uses, with single- and two-family uses interspersed. To the west, is the St. Gobain complex, zoned MG-1.0.

The petitioner seeks to establish a new node of the CCOD-E in the area. While most occurrences of the CCOD are located near the City’s downtown and commercial corridors that extend from the downtown core, the Purpose of the CCOD is to “*encourage compact, pedestrian friendly development that is physically and functionally integrated through site design, dimensional and parking standards that limit parking, provide flexibility for development initiatives and provide incentives for mixed-use development.*”

In general the CCOD does prohibit a few low-density and vehicle-centric uses that would otherwise be permitted in the BL-1.0 district, but would also enable new residential uses for the property via special permit. Establishing a CCOD-E node would also provide a variety of dimensional benefits and subject any new development to a variety of design standards and relax parking requirements.

Permitted Uses: The chart below compares uses that would be available to the property owner under the BL-1.0 district without the CCOD-E overlay and uses that would be (un)available to the property owner should the CCOD-E overlay be established at this property.

	BL-1.0 without CCOD-E	BL-1.0 with CCOD-E
<u>Residential</u>		
Single-family detached dwelling; two-family detached dwelling	Y	N
Multi-family dwellings, high-rise	N	SP
Mixed-use development with residential/creative entrepreneur space component	<i>Depends on the mix of uses</i>	<i>SP (if not allowed by right in underlying district)</i>
<u>General and Business</u>		
Automobile refueling station; motor vehicle service, repair, garage, display	SP	N <i>(SP in cases of buildings originally designed for this)</i>
Motor vehicle/trailer/boat sales	SP	N
Drive-through facilities and services	SP	SP <i>(with new limitations)</i>

Dimensional requirements:

The CCOD-E district relaxes the dimensional requirements of the underlying zoning district in a variety of ways enabling increases in density - including reductions to front yard setback, frontage, lot area and parking requirements and increases in floor area ratio and height limitations. Finally, developments in the CCOD-E are subject to a variety of design requirements related to building orientation and active façade intended to promote visual interest and the pedestrian experience.

Front Yard Setbacks: The BL-1.0 zoning district has a minimum front yard setback of 10 feet for all uses. The CCOD-E would reduce that requirement to a minimum setback of 5 feet - for buildings with ground-floor residences or buildings with adjacent sidewalks of less than 8 feet in width - and eliminate a minimum setback for all other buildings. The CCOD-E also imposes a new maximum front setback of 15 feet for buildings with ground-floor residences or buildings with adjacent sidewalks of less than 8 feet in width. All other uses are subject to a maximum front setback of 10 feet. Front yard areas are also required to be landscaped or hardscaped for active uses like dining, recreation, or plazas in the CCOD-E.

Floor Area Ratio: The BL-1.0 zoning district has a maximum of FAR of 1 to 1. The CCOD-E increases that maximum FAR to 2 to 1. Furthermore, for mixed-use developments that include both residential and non-residential uses on the ground floor and include an active façade, the maximum FAR is eliminated.

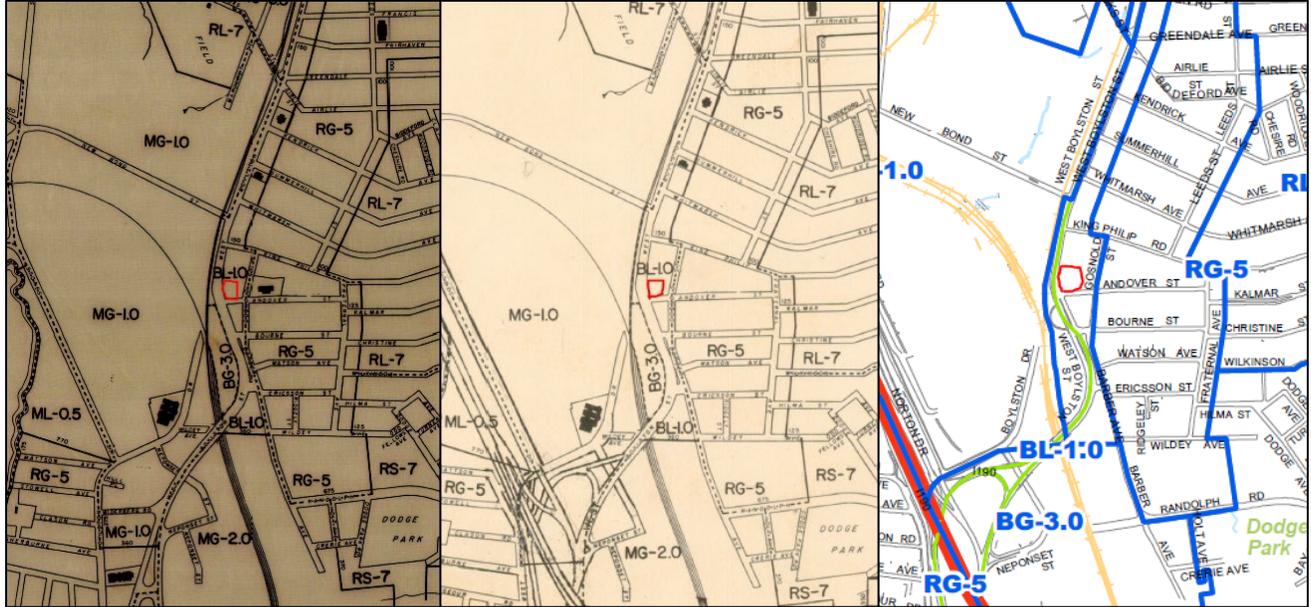
Height: The BL-1.0 zoning district limits buildings to a height of 40 feet while the CCOD-E allows 50 feet. Both districts limit height to 3+ stories.

Frontage and Lot Area Requirements: In the BL-1.0 zoning district, residential uses are subject to a minimum lot area requirement of 5,000 square feet and a frontage requirement of 40 feet per dwelling unit, up to 200 feet. In the CCOD-E, there is no minimum lot size requirement for multifamily residential uses and the frontage requirement for such uses is reduced to 40 feet.

Minimum Parking Requirements: In the CCOD-E, the minimum parking requirement is reduced by 25-50% of what is required elsewhere, new reductions in minimum parking are available via provisions for bicycle parking and compatible mixed-use projects, and new parking maximums are imposed. For example, residential uses in the BL-1.0 require a 2 spaces per unit minimum (with no maximum) while residential uses in the CCOD-E require 1 space per unit and a maximum of 2 spaces per unit. Office/retail uses in the BL-1.0 require 1 space per 300 square feet of gross floor area while the CCOD-E requires 1 space per 500 square feet of gross floor area. Food service/lounge/nightclubs in the BL-1.0 require 1 space per 2 persons for rated occupancy while CCOD-E requires only 1 space per 4 persons rated occupancy.

Zoning History

The oldest City of Worcester zoning map available (1971) indicates that the subject property was originally zoned BL-1.0 as it is today, and subsequent zoning maps indicate it has remained in the BL1.0 to this day. However, the zoning districts in the vicinity have changed somewhat over the years, with the most notable change being the shift in the area to the south from an MG-2.0 district to a BG-3.0 district, likely to accommodate the former Greendale Mall. The change occurred between 1987 and 1991. The zoning changes can be seen below.



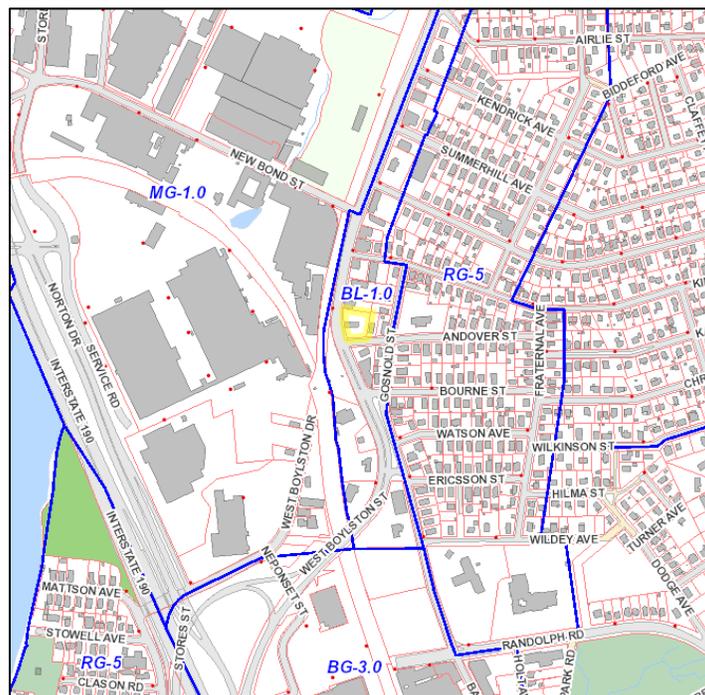
1971 Zoning Map

1983 Zoning Map

2007 Zoning Map

Approximate boundaries of the subject property are in red.

Current Zoning



2024 Zoning Map

Approximate boundaries of the subject property are in yellow.

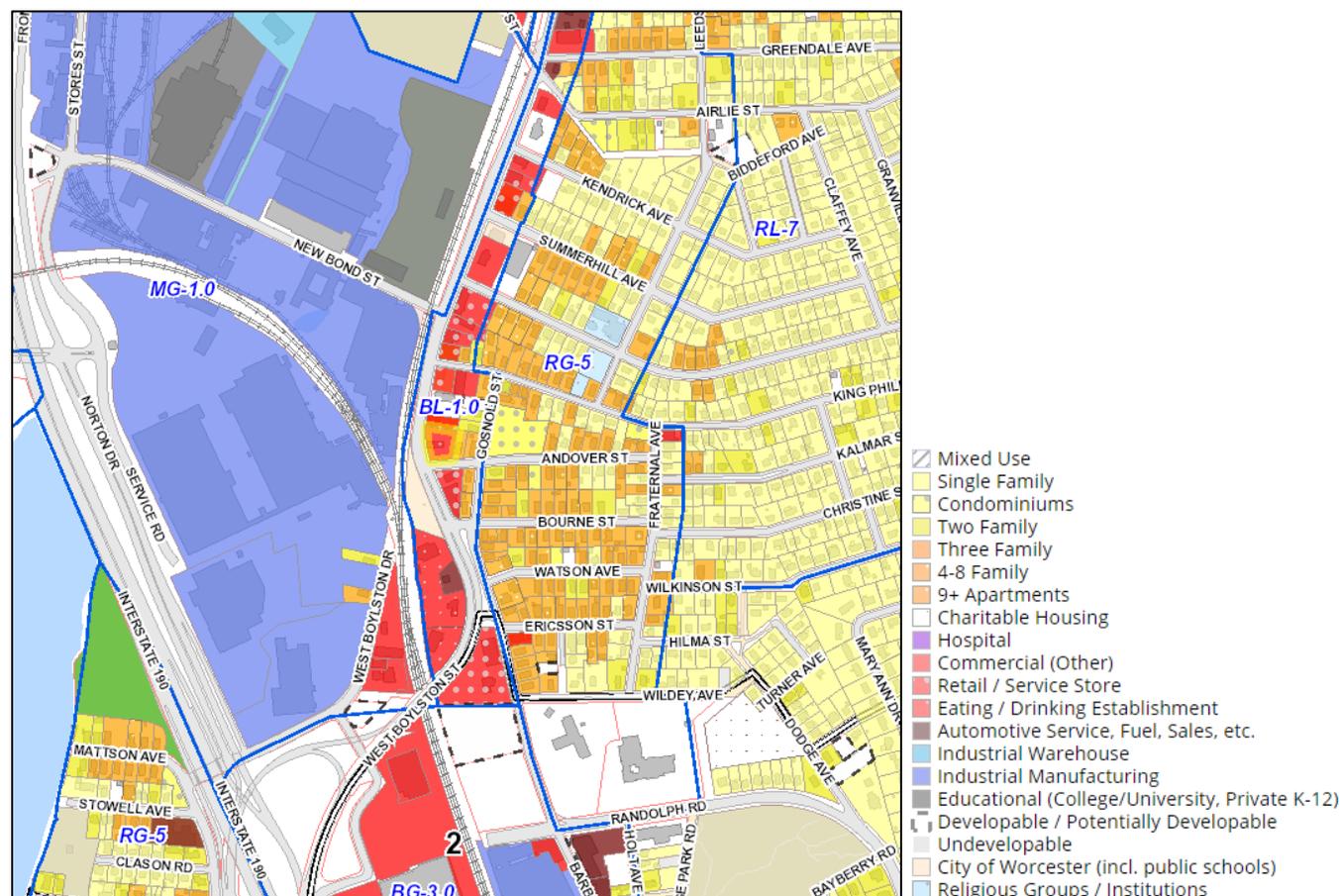
Neighborhood Land Use

The subject parcel is located on the east side of West Boylston Street, a primarily commercial corridor featuring a variety of commercial uses mostly oriented to vehicular users with generous off-street parking available. The auto-centric and commercial nature of West Boylston Street increases the further north one goes.

To the east of west Boylston Street is a large long-standing dense residential neighborhood with all types of housing (with the exception of high-rise multifamily, despite it being allowed by-right today). The businesses on West Boylston Street are accessible to residents of this neighborhood via existing sidewalks and several of the businesses seem to cater to those residents.

To the west of West Boylston Street, divided by active rail lines, is the St. Gobain (formerly Norton Co.) industrial complex which is, in part, actively being redeveloped by the Worcester Business Development Corporation – the use is not expected to change from the current industrial character.

To the south of the subject property (in the nearby BG-3.0 district) is a large commercial area including medical offices and the former Greendale Mall site, which is anticipated to become a distribution center.



Assessor's Land Use Classifications Map

Former Land Uses

According to the city's assessing records and records from the Worcester District Registry of Deeds, the subject property has been used as a fast-food sandwich shop since at least 1978.

There are no records of any previous zoning relief granted for this property.

List of Exhibits

Exhibit A: Petition – Mark Borenstein; referred to Planning Board

Exhibit B: Map of Proposed CCOD-E district at 342 West Boylston Street

T&G Publication Dates: January 24, 2024 & January 31, 2024