

Shirley Avenue District Public Realm Guidelines Revere, MA

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Summary

The Shirley Avenue District Public Realm Guidelines demonstrate a vision for future growth by combining streetscape improvements with guidelines for new development to enhance this vibrant mixed-use main street.



Our efforts have worked and development is coming

Shirley Ave. is at a pivotal moment in its growth and development. Through combined efforts of the City and its partners (both in the public and private sectors) the neighborhood has attracted key investments in the last few years. New development at 43 Nahant Ave, 525 Beach Street, 19 Dehon Street,; a \$2 million MassWorks Infrastructure Award for public realm improvements; and several storefront improvements are among recent successes in the district. The designation of a TDI District (Transformative Development Initiative) around Shirley Ave. and subsequent technical assistance from MassDevelopment has played a strong role in catalyzing this revitalization.

As these coordinated planning efforts are paying off, the market is also catching up to make it favorable for private developers to independently seek out redevelopment opportunities. Unlike in many other market-ready communities, zoning in the district is generally favorable for developing 3-5 story buildings (with the notable exception of parking requirements that impact project feasibility.) Therefore, this is the right time for the City and its partners to advance the vision of Shirley Ave. as a transit accessible. walkable, mixed-use main street and enable positive change.

Small business retention and growth is a priority

Central to what makes the district desirable for residents and businesses is its character as a vibrant retail corridor. This is enabled by Revere's many multi-cultural specialty food businesses. The district is home to about 25 retail establishments, a majority of them food and beverage stores or restaurants and bakeries. Along its quarter mile stretch, there are 16 languages spoken and many international cultures represented by district merchants. The City and its partners who are invested in the future of Shirley Ave. recognize this. As the district continues to attract private development, it must do so with a strong focus on retaining and enhancing the businesses that make up its core.

realm, real estate development opportunities, and existing small business together as thoughtfully integrated parts of the same ecosystem.

As such, this plan illustrates a vision for new development that can fill in the gaps on the main street, add much-needed new housing and affordable commercial spaces, and utilize these development opportunities to create a robust, continuous street wall. Threading this together is a vision for the public right-of-way, sidewalks, and key open spaces that is integral to enhancing a sense of place on Shirley Ave.

Additional density can enable a greater variety of housing choices

Shirley Ave. has long been home to a diverse community of residents. It has been the first home for



There is a strategic alignment between these two objectives

The best way to encourage a more robust small business and retail sector on Shirley Ave. is to ensure that these businesses have enough nearby households to be their customers, and localized density can provide that customer base. This idea of mixed-use development is already ingrained on Shirley Ave. The existing urban fabric includes mixed-use buildings of 2-5 stories along the corridor and smaller multi-family buildings in the neighborhood. However, there are some vacant or underutilized parcels which create "missing teeth" along the corridor. Successfully advocating for district revitalization requires crafting a narrative that strategically imagines its public

new Americans from the Jewish diaspora, Eastern and Southern Europe, Latin and South America, North Africa, and Cambodia. Many of these residents share a preference for multi-generational households. This includes multi-generational families who often live in unconventional household types and are attuned to a lifestyle centered around community and sharing.

Layered onto this (and also a trend that is seen at a citywide scale), Revere is primed to see an influx of younger residents looking for alternatives to Boston, particularly given its proximity to the employment engine of downtown Boston. On the other hand, many of Revere's existing households headed by Baby Boomers are becoming increasingly free to enjoy a lifestyle without the

constraints of needing the space for a large house with a yard. The combined effect of these trends positions a mixed-use, transit accessible corridor like Shirley Ave. as a particularly strategic location to explore strategies for co-living with a greater emphasis on the design of shared spaces and amenities.

The vision presented in this report recognizes this trend. As such, the development test fits represent a "shell" with vertical circulation while leaving the floor plate flexible to be subdivided into any number of configurations.

This study ties in with ongoing efforts and is integrated into the citywide plan

The goal of this study is to identify opportunities for catalytic development in the district and articulate those aspects of new development which impact the public realm. As such, the development concepts present here are associated with types of parcels (rather than exact parcels themselves) and can be applied across the district with greater flexibility.

It ties into the citywide plan "Next Stop, Revere" as an example of studying and planning for main streets. Many of the recommendations align with the Shirley Ave. Community Action Plan and will be explored at a greater level of specificity through future City initiatives for planning, regulation, funding, or strategic partnerships.

These vision articulated here will underpin future initiatives by the City and its partners

This report captures a consensus-driven vision for the main street and should serve as a guide for the City and its partners as they continue the incremental improvement of the district. The issues identified in the report point to a few clear and actionable next steps. At the outset, a parking demand and management study would be hugely beneficial to assess the feasibility of a zero-parking development approach. The City should also assess the feasibility of a zoning overlay, which may require additional outreach and political buy-in before it can be initiated. In order to comprehensively integrate these efforts, it is recommended that Shirley Ave. establish a district management entity with a clear mandate and operating budget. Formalizing such an entity would provide the Ave. the stewardship needed to fully realize benefits of a captive market in a transit-accessible location and truly enhance its unique character.

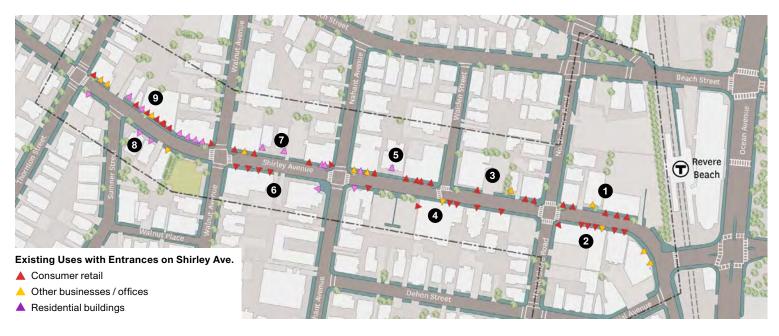
This vision for Shirley Ave. is centered around four goals

- Guide new development to integrate with the distinct character of existing businesses and streetscape.
- Create an urban design vision which ties together new development, retention and growth of existing businesses, affordable commercial development, and strategies for a continuous public realm.
- Facilitate discussions with businesses, landowners and interested developers by highlighting the potential for existing businesses to relocate within the District or steering development site plans to enhance its unique character.
- Improve the existing condition of the streetscape while enhancing opportunities for creative programming and placemaking.





Enhancing the Sense of Place on Shirley Ave.



Activating the street edge is key to maintaining the vibrancy of Shirley Ave.

The types of businesses located here contain a mix of neighborhood amenities and specialty retail. They support the neighborhoods around them by providing needed community amenities like laundromats and convenience stores. The specialty retail on the other hand attracts visitors from the rest of the city and region. Keeping this balance is important to ensure that the street is used throughout the week and at all times of the day.

Conversely, these diverse business can only thrive because of the density of residents and visitors. It is not only the co-location of these uses that enables the street's vitality, but also the way these uses come together in the public realm—the way the district's buildings meet its streets and the design of those spaces. Retail establishments fronting the street, front porches, and building entrances are all elements that have a role in activating the sidewalk and public realm on Shirley Ave.

1

Ocean Liquors HK Beauty Salon & Spa Revere Dry Cleaners 4 Season Boba Tea

2

Bagel Bin Deli Cellphone shop Beauty on the Beach Salon Hamouda Barber Shop 7-Eleven

3

Ocean Mac Inc. (Seafood wholesale / retail)

4

Shoreside Laundromat Seaside Pharmacy Revere Beach Food Mart Ocean Plaza Angkor Thom Mart Valsos Table and Bar

5

Jay's Cut & Curl
Tobie's Jewelers
Orange Grove Market
Thmor Da
Super Convenience Store

6

Buster Bar Lupita Bakery Las Vegas Café Bellissima's Salon 7

Battambang Market Two Brothers' Market Revere Computer Shirley Ave. Laundromat

8

Exito multi-service Shirley Ave.Variety Costa Park

9

Cafeteria Las Delicias Zakaria's Barber Shop Kelly's Salon Cellphone repair

Existing businesses on Shirley Ave.









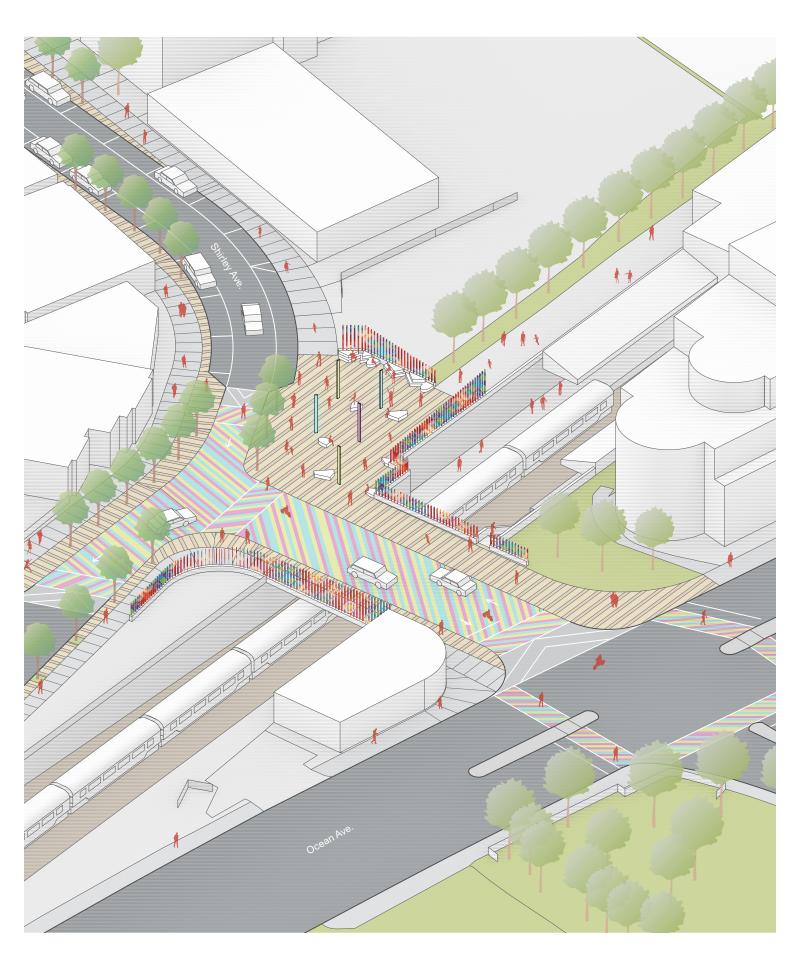












Streetscape and Public Realm

Summary of issues

The existing street wall is a patchwork of storefronts that is broken up by uninviting features like chain link fences and vacant lots. Curb cuts and loading bays impede the flow of pedestrians and can be a visual nuisance and safety issue. In addition, except for Costa Park, there is a general lack of landscaping and seating which are key features for making a streetscape safe and walkable. Trees are sparse and poorly maintained, and plantings on the bulbouts provide little functional or aesthetic value.

goals for Transportation and Public Health identified in the citywide plan.

The principles underlying both these approaches are the same. The existing travel lane is excessively wide considering the amount of traffic on Shirley Ave. Both options, therefore, propose to reduce the travel lane to a standard dimension and reclaim the additional right-of-way for expanding sidewalks on either side of the street. The reconfigured sidewalk can accommodate outdoor seating, planting, and other features that can support adjacent businesses and residential uses.



Redesigning the streetscape can maximize the potential of the Ave.

A strategic realignment of the street and sidewalks, targeted investments in key open spaces, and regulations that enable tactical uses in the public right-of-way can help bolster the commercial corridor and attract new mixed-use development.

The following pages outline two different spatial ideas for reconfiguring the streetscape, the Meander and the Oases. These options provide alternative approaches to reconfiguring a pedestrian-friendly Shirley Ave. and, while doing so, address a number of

Both options also include improvements to open spaces that anchor and animate the district at key locations. Sandler Square, Flaherty Square, Orr Square, and the municipal lot are reimagined as inviting gateways into Shirley Ave. that can accommodate larger gatherings and public programming.

At present, the City is considering a combination of these improvements and implementing them using the MassWorks Infrastructure Program.

Existing Landscape

There are only 15 planted trees on both sides of Shirley Ave. along its 1,600' length. A standard neighborhood street has one street trees spaced every 20-30 feet. By this standard, Shirley Ave. would need four times as many trees.

The Meander

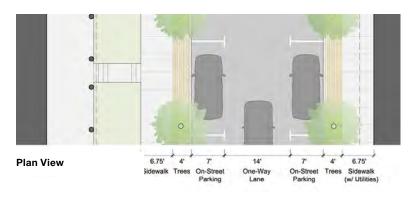
This concept reclaims some of the ambiguous spaces in the current one-way travel lane and concentrates them along a slightly angled scheme. Everything in yellow represented added public space. The existing sidewalk is left as is.

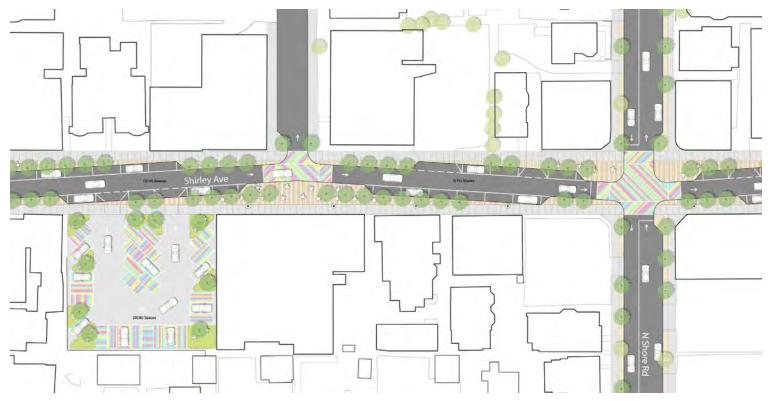


Concept Diagram



Street Section

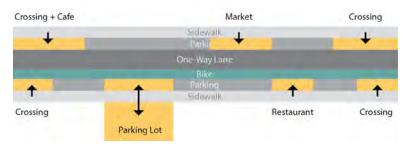




Plan View of Key Intersections

The Oases

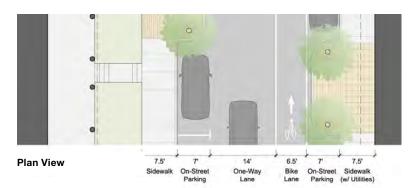
This concept uses a tactical approach to displace select parallel parking spaces to accommodate added trees and public space.



Concept Diagram

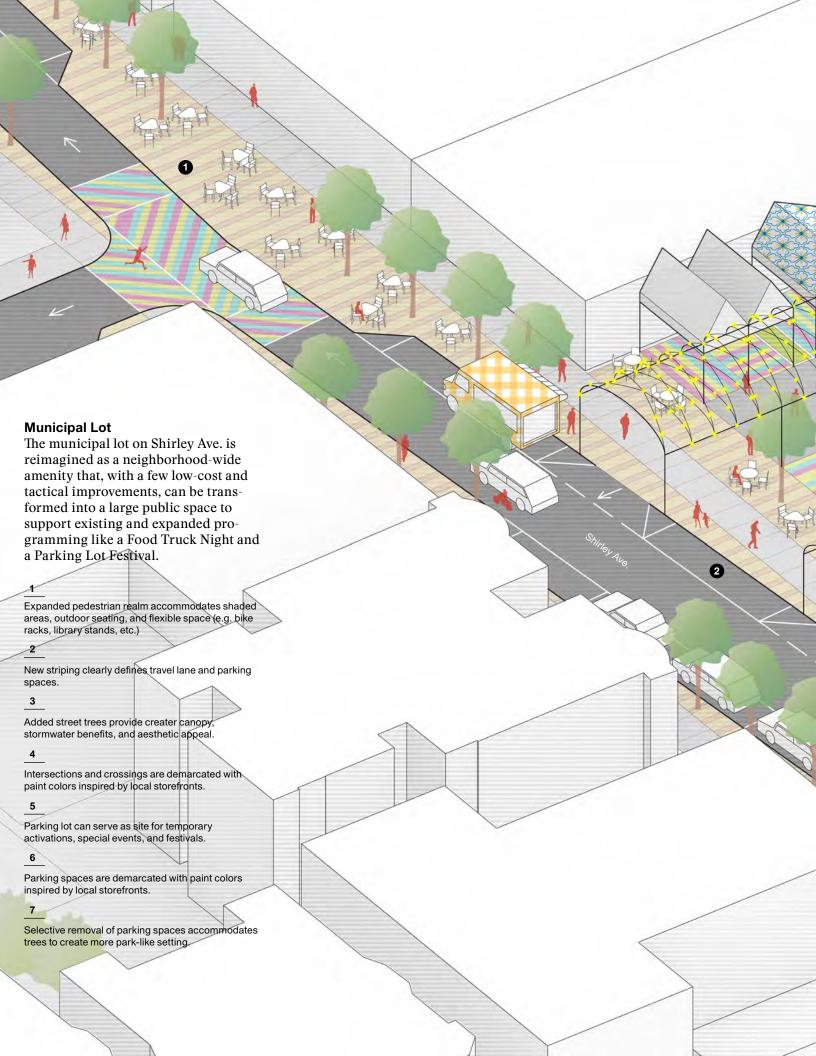


Street Section





Plan View of Key Intersections







Sandler Square

Sandler Square (along with Flaherty Square to the north) have the potential to be reimagined as anchors that expand the pedestrian realm and connect Shirley Ave. with the neighborhood along a north-south axis. Here, accessible public space is maximized without removing any existing parking so that the street and open space can be used as a cohesive public plaza for larger gatherings and events.

1

Streetscape improvements create a safe and pedestrian-friendly connection to Shirley Ave.

2

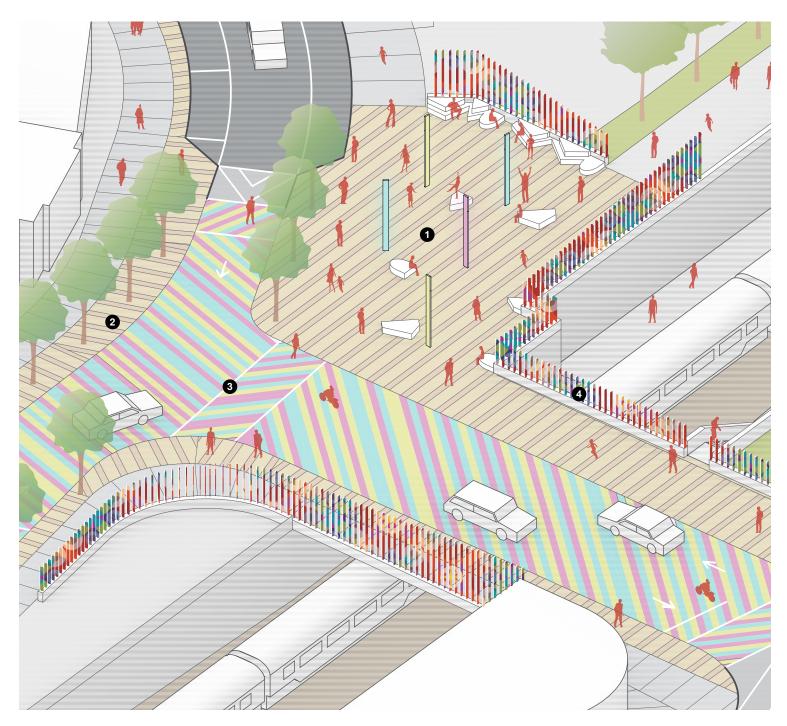
Parallel parking maximizes public space.

3

Open square accommodates range of temporary public programs

4

Curbless design incorporates parallel parking to park design and can easily be transformed for events



Orr Square

Orr Square defines a gateway into Shirley Ave. using murals, expanded sidewalks, painted crosswalks, lighting, and seating. It creates a sense of arrival into the main street from Revere Beach, the MBTA stop, and Ocean Ave.

1 Open plaza expands sense of gateway onto Shirley

Ave. **2**

Expanded street trees and sidewalk.

3

Expanded sidewalk and curbless streets.

4

Defined entry street with accented crosswalks and public art/murals.

Precedents: Prioritizing the pedestrian experience in street improvement projects





Above and top right: Broad Street Reconstruction, Downtown Boston, Utile with Richard Burck Associates.









Broad Museum, LA, Carlos Cruz Diez.

Precedents: Creating new and low-cost public spaces through incremental or reversible strategies





Birch Street Tactical Plaza, Roslindale, Boston, Merrit Chase.

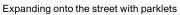


Tontine Crescent Tactical Plaza, Downtown Boston, Ground, Inc.



 ${\it Grays Ferry Triangle Plaza, Philadelphia.}$







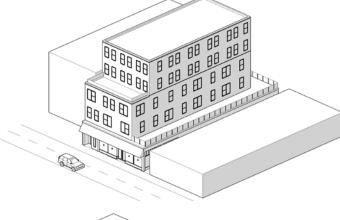
Mixed-use Infill Development

Development concept

In order to articulate the design principles for future growth in the district and have it be applicable across a range of parcel sizes and ownership conditions, we took a typological approach to study potential development sites. Parcels in the district can be broken down into three types. Each parcel type corresponds with a development prototype that can accommodate new housing, retail, and affordable commercial space.

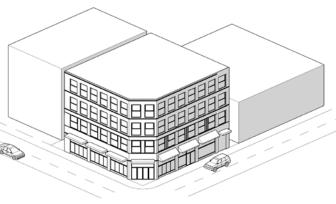
The following pages demonstrate how these prototypes for infill development tie into the streetscape and public realm improvements, fill in gaps in the main street, while adding density

and accommodating a broad mix of housing units. Each site has different characteristics that guide its relationship to the street, retail frontage, parking availability, building setbacks, and housing density. As such, each prototype is accompanied by a perspective view, a ground floor plan, a typical upper floor plan, and a summary table of metrics that shows a range of unit and area counts depending on the number of stories. Many of these are permissable under the existing General Business zoning district. Any instances of exceeding or conflict with existing zoning, are called out at the end of this section.



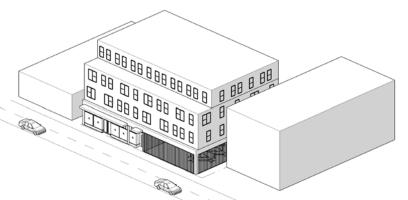


Infill Sites: These lots are proportionally deep and situated mid-block between existing buildings. (e.g., Battambang Market parking lot.) These sites have the potential for a mid-rise mixed-use structure with an active retail edge. New development would have stepped setbacks to match the scale of existing buildings along street



2

Corner Sites: These lots are situated on block corners and have two main street-facing facades. Development on these lots allows for maximum ground floor frontage. If planned together, corner sites on opposite sides of the street provide an opportunity to create gateway conditions.



3

Anchor Sites: The lots tend to be large and are located either on the corner or mid-block. They are defined by their scale and their prominence along Shirley Ave. and are large enough to support anchor tenants and be feasible as individual development projects. Because of the size, projects on these sites will play a key role in determining the future character of Shirley Ave. Some parcels are also large enough to explore shared parking solutions for the district.



Existing Parcel Ownership

Within the Shirley Ave. district, there are 106 parcels with 92 distinct owners. This makes it challenging to estimate when and how new development will take place. Without much City-controlled land (except for the municipal parking lot) it is also hard to plan catalytic projects.



Existing Gaps in the Street Wall

Presently, there are a number of vacant lots used for surface parking that create gaps in the street wall and break up the pedestrian main-street experience. Thoughtful and contextual development on some of these lots can fill in these "missing teeth" while creating additional spaces for affordable local retail.

Defining the Storefront Zone

Shirley Ave. hosts a wide variety of retailers from grocers to laundromats to cafes. Over time, each of these businesses have modified their storefronts to meet their respective needs for signage, seating, planting, and window displays. These features give Shirley Ave. its distinct and eclectic visual character.

Planning for new development presents an opportunity to be intentional about enhancing this character as the district evolves. Naming this as the "Storefront Zone" helps to create a shared understanding of this space as an asset on Shirley

Ave. It also allows the City to regulate features in this zone separately from the remaining development, thereby emphasizing it further.

The Storefront Zone is the area that is roughly 12 feet tall and 3-5 feet deep from the lot line. Additional development along this corridor should extend the storefront zone and provide ground floor retail to not only fill in existing gaps in the street wall but to add to the street's consistent character. It should be articulated by a variety of storefront features including bay windows, awnings, displays, plantings, furniture, signage, etc.



STOREFRONT ZONE -5.00

Pop out window displays

Plan View

1

Restricting awnings and signage to the top 5' of the Storefront Zone will maintain a consistent visual datum that can tie the street together.

2

Standards for maximum frontage can enable larger developments on a single parcel to be broken up at street level.

3

For corner lots, requiring the primary building entrance to be on Shirley Ave. to encourage mixing of residents and visitors.

4

Regulating the percentage of transparency and bulkhead height can maximize the storefronts as a visual amenity for pedestrians.

5

Establishing design and permitting guidelines for active sidewalks and parklets will help to expand the pedestrian realm.

Precedents: Storefront zones designed to accommodate a range of activities and features.





Miera Street, Riga, Latvia, Fine Young Urbanists.





Storefront for Art and Architecture, New York.



The Studio Museum, New York.



Development prototype for the Infill Lot

Infill sites are defined by relatively deep parcel sizes. This proportion results in narrower street-facing facades and deeper floor plates pushed towards the rear of the site. Infill sites also abut neighboring properties and could employ building setbacks to be sensitive to the existing fabric. This development scenario continues the "storefront zone" and tests a nominal setback above the ground floor and an additional front setback after three stories. These setbacks also function as outdoor living spaces for the residential units above. With these guidelines, a maximum FAR of 2.5 over five stories can be accommodated.

1

The "Storefront Zone" can encompass guidelines for a range of street-activating features including awnings, signage, and seating.

2

The "Storefront Zone" can be regulated for transparency and act as a visual amenity for passes by.

3

Multi-family housing on upper floors can accommodate various unit types and explore forms of co-living.

4

Step backs above the third floor allow new massing to

5

Thoughtfully designed infill development can set the datum for future zoning.

Development metrics

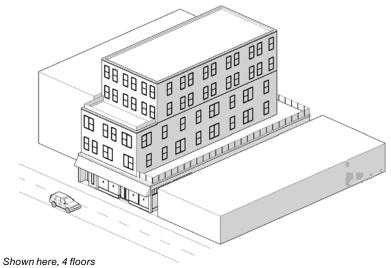
Building footprint	~ 2,845 SF
Retail GSF	~ 2,490 SF
Typical residential floorplate	~ 2,840 SF
Total residential GSF	~ 5,250 to 14,000 SF
Total no. of floors	3 to 5 floors
No. of residential floors	2 to 4 floors
On-site parking	_
FAR	1.5 to 2.5

Options for upper floor layouts

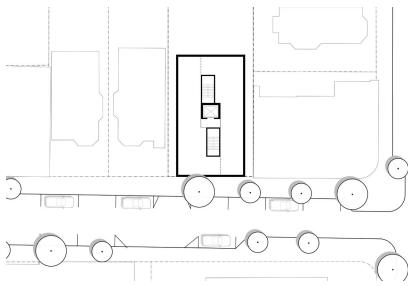
Per floor 4 x studios or 2 x three-beds

Total number of units

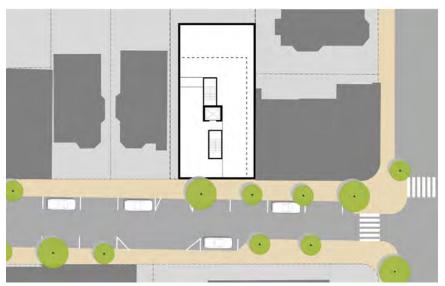
2 resi floors with step-backs	8 x studios	or	4 x three-beds
4 resi floors with no step-backs	16 x studios	or	8 x three-beds



Shown here, 4 floors with no step-backs



Typical upper floor plan



Ground floor plan



Development prototype for the Corner Lot

Corner sites are defined by two street-facing facades. This allows for maximum retail frontage. Corner sites provide visbility for ground floor programming and also offer an opportunity to define an intersection. This development scenario continues the "storefront zone" on the ground floor by wrapping around the corner, provides tuck-under shared parking, and tests three floors of residential development. Because of the high visibility of these sites, there is also the potential for second floor commercial uses. With these guidelines, a maximum FAR of 1.9 over four stories can be accommodated.

1

Large developments can be broken down into smaller facades within the "Storefront Zone" creating greater variety in the street wall.

2

Supportive housing functions such as lobbies, community rooms can activate non-retail spaces on the ground floor.

3

A form-based code can allow for flexibility of use, such as shared workspaces or community centers on the upper floors.

4

Existing commercial businesses with passive ground-floor uses can introduce a small retail component to supplement street activation.

Development metrics

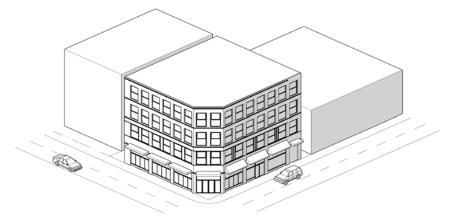
Building footprint	~ 4,645 SF
Retail GSF	~ 1,700 SF
Typical residential floorplate	~ 3,775 SF
Total residential GSF	~ 6,590 to 11,325 SF
Total no. of floors	3 to 4 floors
No. of residential floors	2 to 3 floors
On-site parking	6 shared spaces
FAR	1.2 to 1.9

Options for upper floor layouts

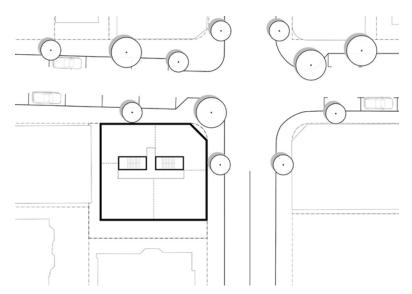
Per floor	2 x 1-bed	or	3 x studios
	2 x 2-beds		1 x three-bed

Total number of units

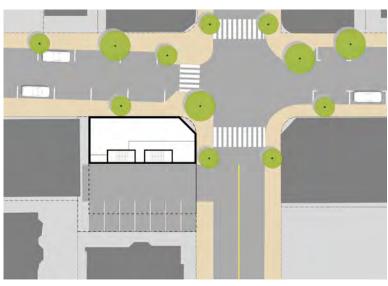
2 resi floors with step-backs	4 x 1-beds 4 x 2-beds	or	6 x studios 2 x three-beds
3 resi floors with no step-backs	6 x 1-beds 6 x 2-beds	or	9 x studios 3 x three-beds



Shown here, 4 floors with no step-backs



Typical upper floor plan



Ground floor plan



Development prototype for the Anchor Lot

Anchor sites are defined by large, square parcels located either on street corners or mid-block. Anchor parcels differ from corner parcels because of their prominent position along Shirley Ave. Anchor parcels not only provide visbility for ground floor programming but also offer the opporunity to fill in key gaps in the street wall and to define adjacent development. This scenario continues the ground floor "storefront zone," provides tuck-under shared parking with screening, and tests a range of two to three floors of housing above. With these guidelines, a maximum FAR of 2.1 over four stories can be accommodated.

1

Shared parking could be linked with residential leasing agreements and support a lower parking ratio throughout the district.

2

Screening ideas for ground floor parking can integrate public art, landscape, and signage and wayfinding.

3

New development and retail can help catalyze street activation in conjunction with ongoing sidewalk and infrastructure improvements

4

Existing commercial businesses with passive ground-floor uses can introduce a small retail component to supplement street activation.

Development metrics

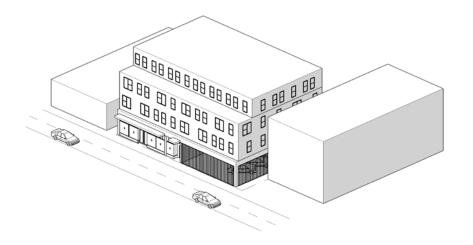
Building footprint	~ 3,660 SF
Retail GSF	~ 970 SF
Typical residential floorplate	~ 3,110 SF
Total residential GSF	~ 5,360 to 9,330 SF
Total no. of floors	3 to 4 floors
No. of residential floors	2 to 3 floors
On-site parking	7 shared spaces
FAR	1.3 to 2.1

Options for upper floor layouts

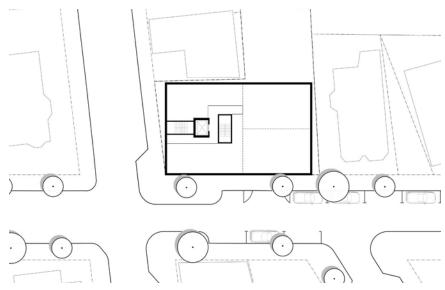
Per floor	2 x 1-bed	or	3 x studios
	2 x 2-beds		2 x one-bed

Total number of units

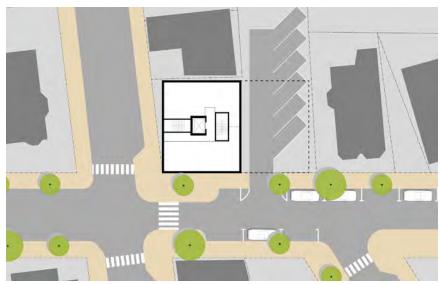
2 resi floors with step-backs	4 x 1-beds 4 x 2-beds	or	6 x studios 4 x one-beds
3 resi floors with no step-backs	6 x 1-beds 6 x 2-beds	or	9 x studios 6 x one-beds



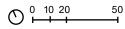
Shown here, 4 floors with no step-backs



Typical upper floor plan



Ground floor plan



Zoning implications

The Shirley Avenue TDI District lies within the General Business District. Under current zoning regulations, the General Business District allows up to five stories and 50' of building height and a maximum FAR of 1.5. Current regulations also stipulate side and rear setbacks of 20' and parking ratios of 2 spaces per dwelling unit and 1 space per 200 GSF of general retail. The development prototypes add greater housing density above ground floor retail and would therefore exceed the existing zoning.

In order to accommodate strategic infill development, modifications would include eliminating front and side setback requirements and increasing allowable FAR up to 3.0. Additional zoning changes might include specifications for building setbacks above a certain height or number of stories as well as flexibility for projections or other storefront regulations within the Storefront Zone on the ground floor. These could be explored through an Overlay District that captures parcels fronting Shirley Ave. in order to continue build on the street's distinct character.

In order to realize the desired density on Shirley Ave.'s infill lots, the parking requirements for all uses would need to be significantly reduced, or ideally, eliminated. The district's adjacency to the Revere Beach MBTA station make it an ideal location to think creatively about this issue and pilot new solutions. A visual comparison of transit-adjacent main streets in the region (included in the appendix) suggest that Shirley Ave. could meet its parking demand using a combination of on-street parking and shared parking strategies. However a comprehensive parking demand management study would be needed to accurately identify the districts needs and capacity.

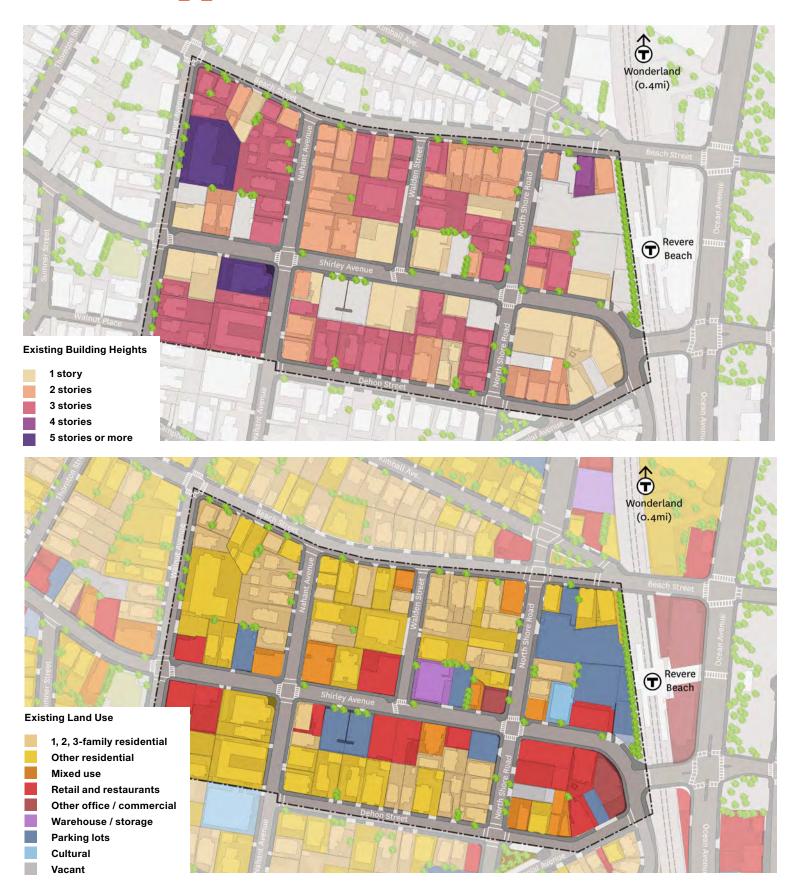
	Existing Zoning	Required Revisions
Max height	50' (5 Stories)	50' (5 Stories)
Max FAR	1.5	Up to 3.0
Front setback	0'	0'; Storefront Zone is variable between 0'-5'
Open space	No on-site open space required	No on-site open space required
Side and rear setbacks	20'	0,
Parking ratios	Apartment: 2.0 / du General Retail: 1/ 200 GSF	Apartment: 0 / du General Retail: 0 / GSF



Existing Zoning Districts



Appendix

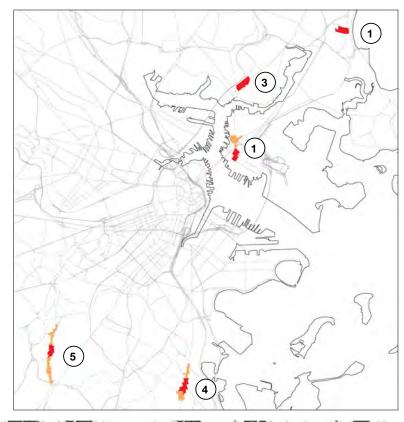






Main street parking comparisons

- Study Area
 Main Street Districts
- 1. Shirley Ave., Revere
- 2. Maverick Square, East Boston
- 3. Broadway, Chelsea
- 4. Dorchester Ave. (Field's Corner), Dorchester
- 5. Centre Street, Jamaica Plain



Maverick Square, East Boston

On-street	125
Off-street	25
Side On-&Off-streets	215
Total	365



Broadway, Chelsea

On-street	101
Off-street	67
Side On-&Off-streets	191
Total	359





Shirley Ave, Revere

On-Street,	99
Off-Street	130
Side On and Off Street	174
Total	403



Fields Corner, Dorchester

On-street	94
Off-street	453
Side On-&Off-streets1	54
Total	701



Centre St, JP

On-street	79
Off-street	180
Side On-&Off-streets120	
Total	

379