



# METHUEN MBTA COMMUNITIES

Housing Working Group Meeting #2  
October 18, 2023

All Commuter Rail stations have parking except:  
Belmont, Boston Landing, Four Corners/Geneva,  
Mishawum, Morton St., Natick, Newmarket,  
Newtonville, Prides Crossing, Porter, River Works,  
Talbot Ave., Uphams Corner, Waverley, W. Newton,  
Windsor Gardens, Yawkey.



Legend

# Content

Process

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Test: Merrimack Street Corridor

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# **Test: Methuen Center Smart Growth Overlay District (MCSGOD)**

# Compliance Requirements

The City of Methuen is classified as an Adjacent Community, meaning there are no transit stations within the city's boundaries but there is at least one station in one or more of the adjacent communities.

Methuen is not obligated to comply with the Unit Capacity, Land Area, Density, and Percentage of Units and Land within the Transit Area requirements.

Metrics	Requirements
Category	Adjacent Community
2020 Housing Units	20,194
Minimum Multi-Family Unit Capacity	2,019
Minimum Land Area for District(s)	50 Acres
Percent of District Located in Station Area	0%
Percent of Unit Capacity Located in Station Area	0%
Minimum Gross Density for District(s)	15 DU/AC

# District Overview

To run the MBTA Compliance Model for Methuen we must identify one or more districts that will be designated as the town's MBTA district(s) where multi-family will be allowed as-of-right. The district(s) must total 50 acres in size with 50% (25 acres) comprising contiguous land. No single district can be smaller than 5 acres in size.

The focus of this test are two scenarios based on the **Methuen Center Smart Growth Overlay District** (MCSGOD or the 40R District).

**Scenario 1** – An expanded MCSGOD 40R district comprising the existing MCSGOD district plus additional parcels extending down Lowell Street to Grove Street.

**Scenario 2** – The expanded district with three subdistricts that allow for different levels of density.

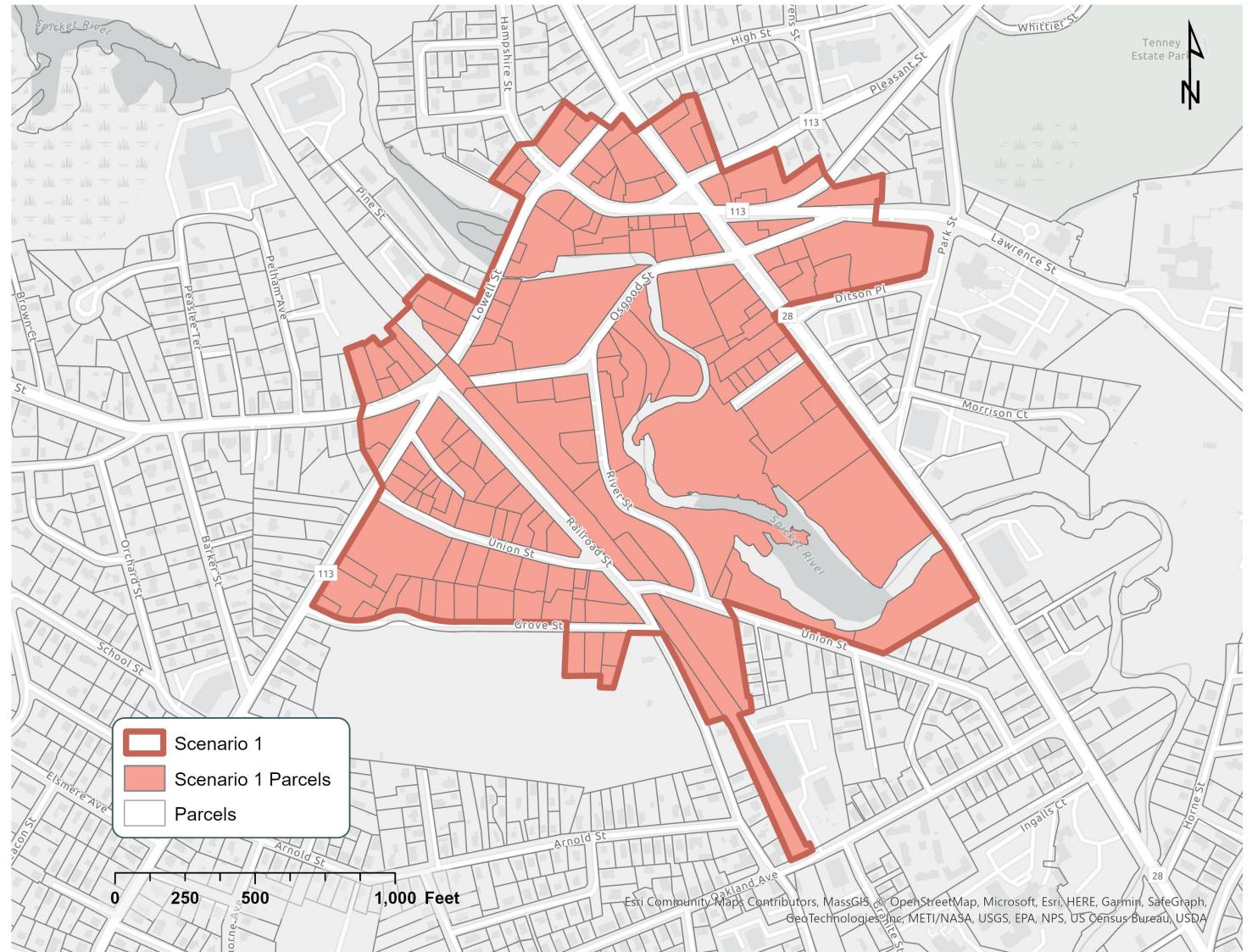
# Compliance Requirements

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## Scenario 1: MCSGOD Expanded Boundaries

71.2 Gross Acres

This district expands the boundaries of the current MCSGOD district to the southwest encompassing parcels around Union St and Grove St.



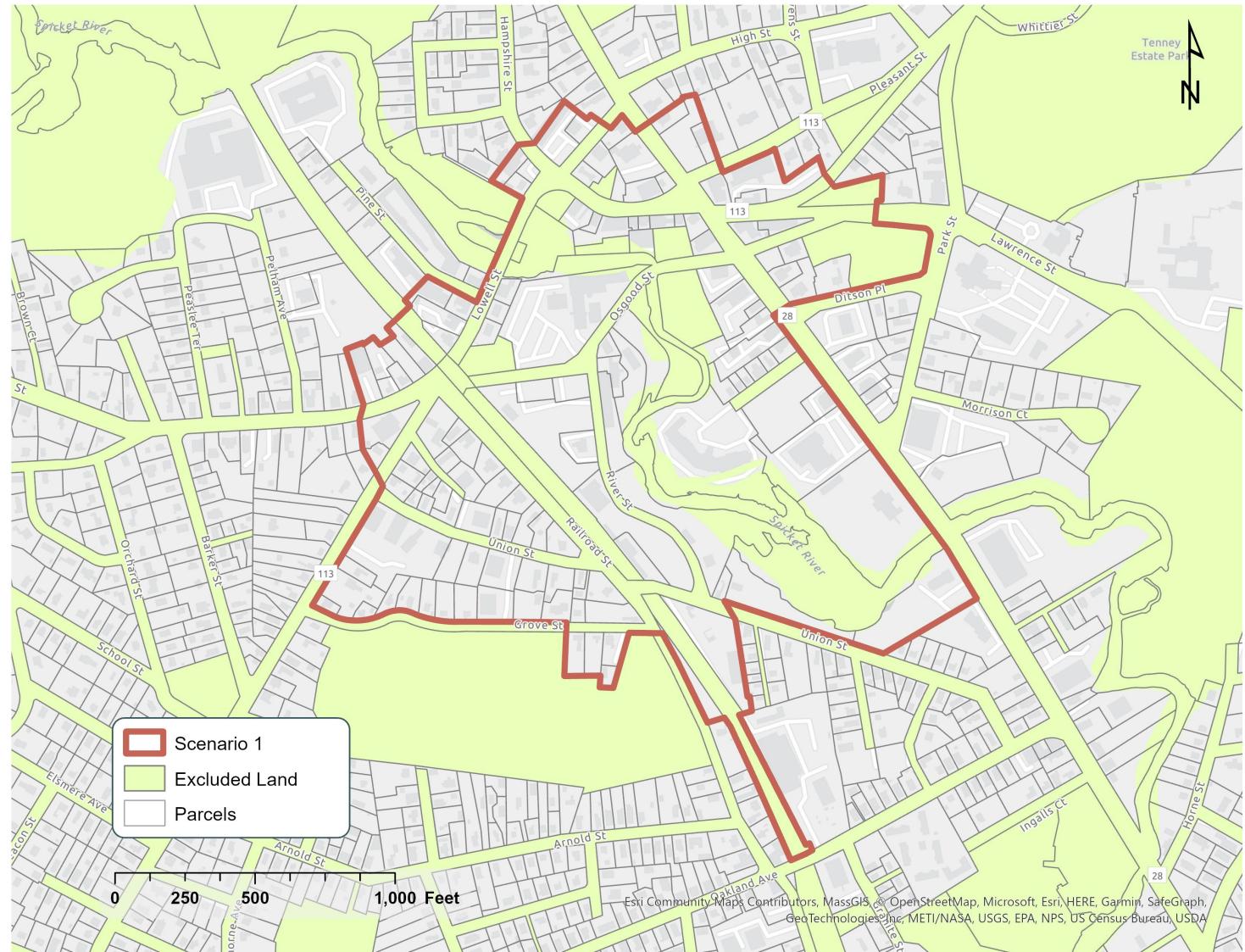
# Compliance Requirements

## Scenario 1: MCSGOD Expanded Boundaries

71.2 Gross Acres

### Excluded Land

- **CANNOT** be modeled for **unit capacity**.
- Includes the following:
  - Hydrological features
  - Protected/restricted open space
  - Wellhead Protection Areas (Zone I only)
  - Title 5 setbacks and Surface Water Protection Zone A
  - Rights of way
  - Most public land, except certain types



# Compliance Requirements

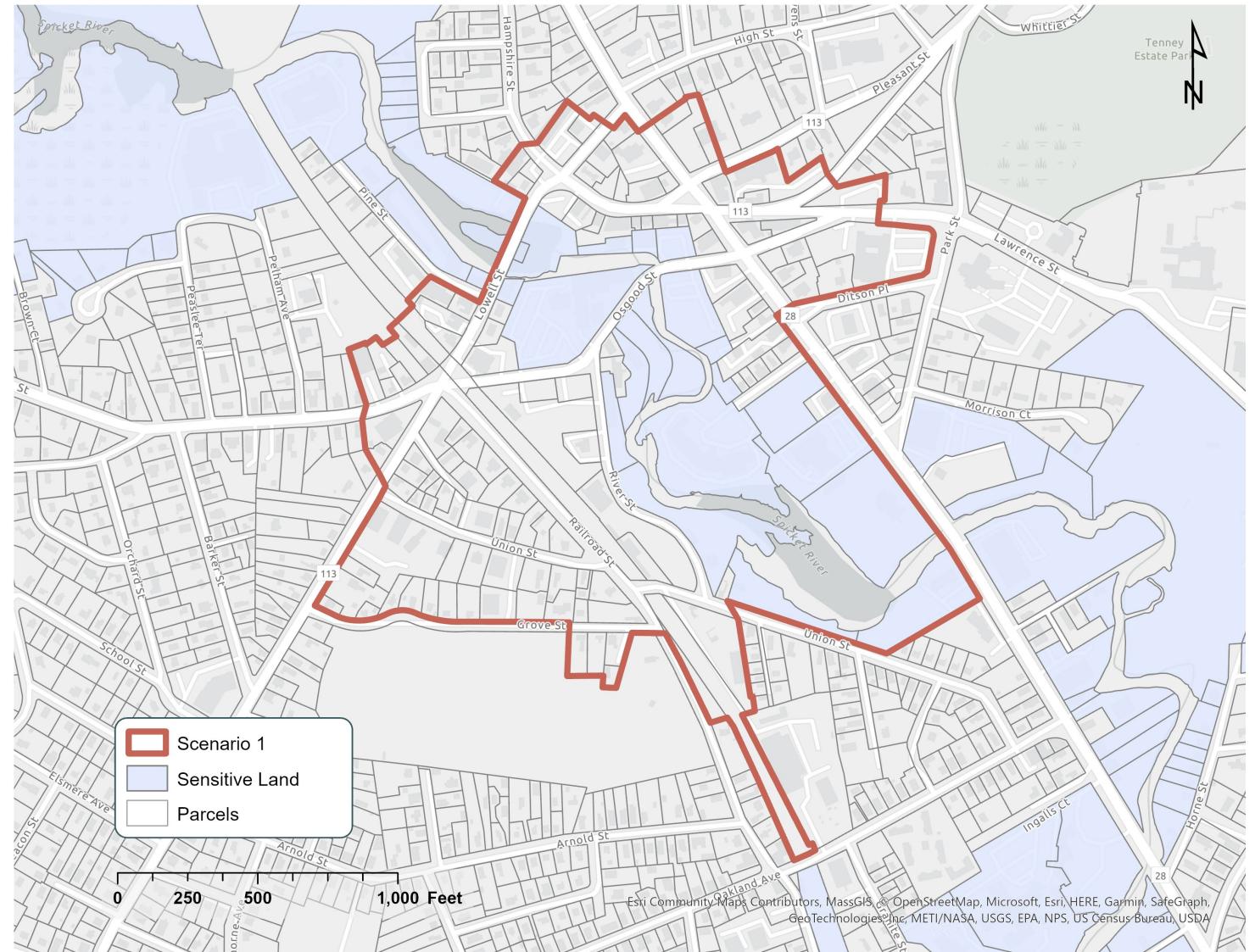
8

## Scenario 1: MCSGOD Expanded Boundaries

71.2 Gross Acres

### Sensitive Land

- CAN be modeled for unit capacity.
- Includes the following:
  - Wellhead Protection Areas (Zone II and Interim Wellhead Protection Areas)
  - Special Flood Hazard Areas (A or V flood zones)
  - Active Farmland
  - Priority Habitats of Rare Species
  - Surface Water Protection Zones B & C



# Compliance Requirements

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## Scenario 2: Subdistrict Test

71.2 Gross Acres

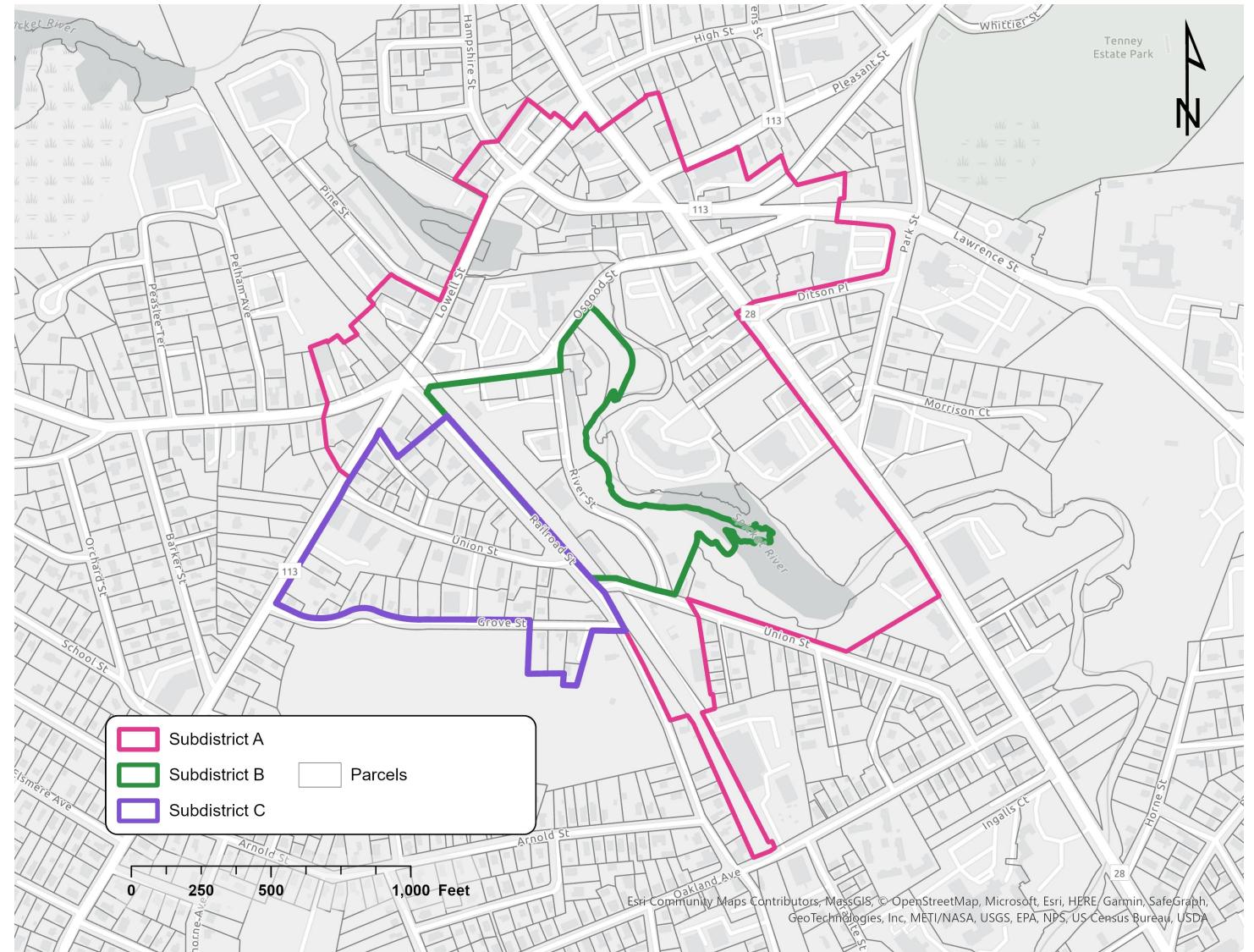
Subdistrict A: 48.75 Gross Acres

Subdistrict B: 9.5 Gross Acres

Subdistrict C: 12.9 Gross Acres

Subdistricts can be used to establish different density limits within the overall multi-family zoning district providing the total acreage exceeds the minimum requirement for 50 acres.

This map shows the 3 Subdistricts within the boundary of the expanded MCSGOD (Scenario 1).



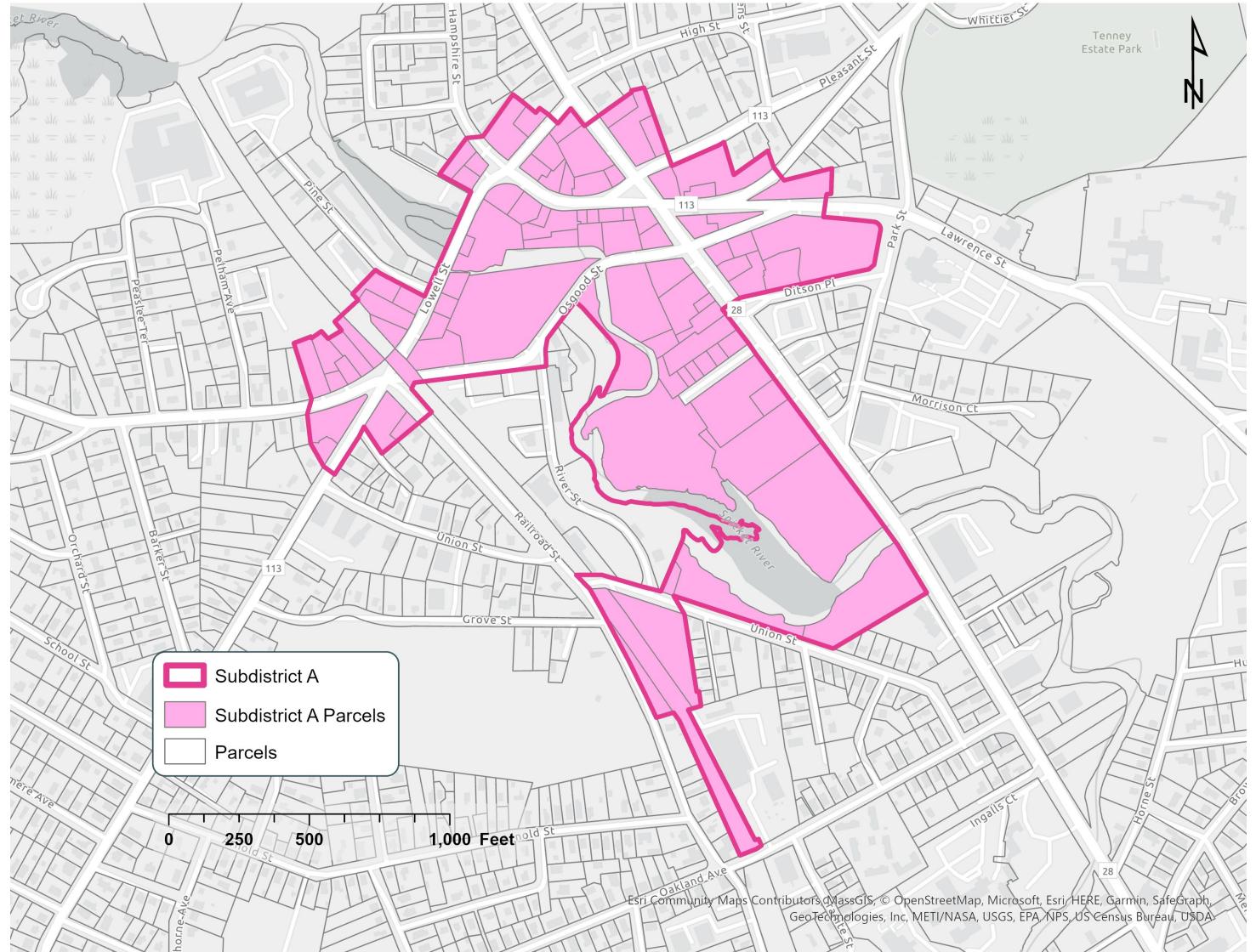
# Compliance Requirements

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## Scenario 2: Subdistrict A (4 stories)

48.75 Gross Acres

This Subdistrict is comprised of the parcels in the current MCGSOD district except for those around River St which will comprise a new 5-story Subdistrict.

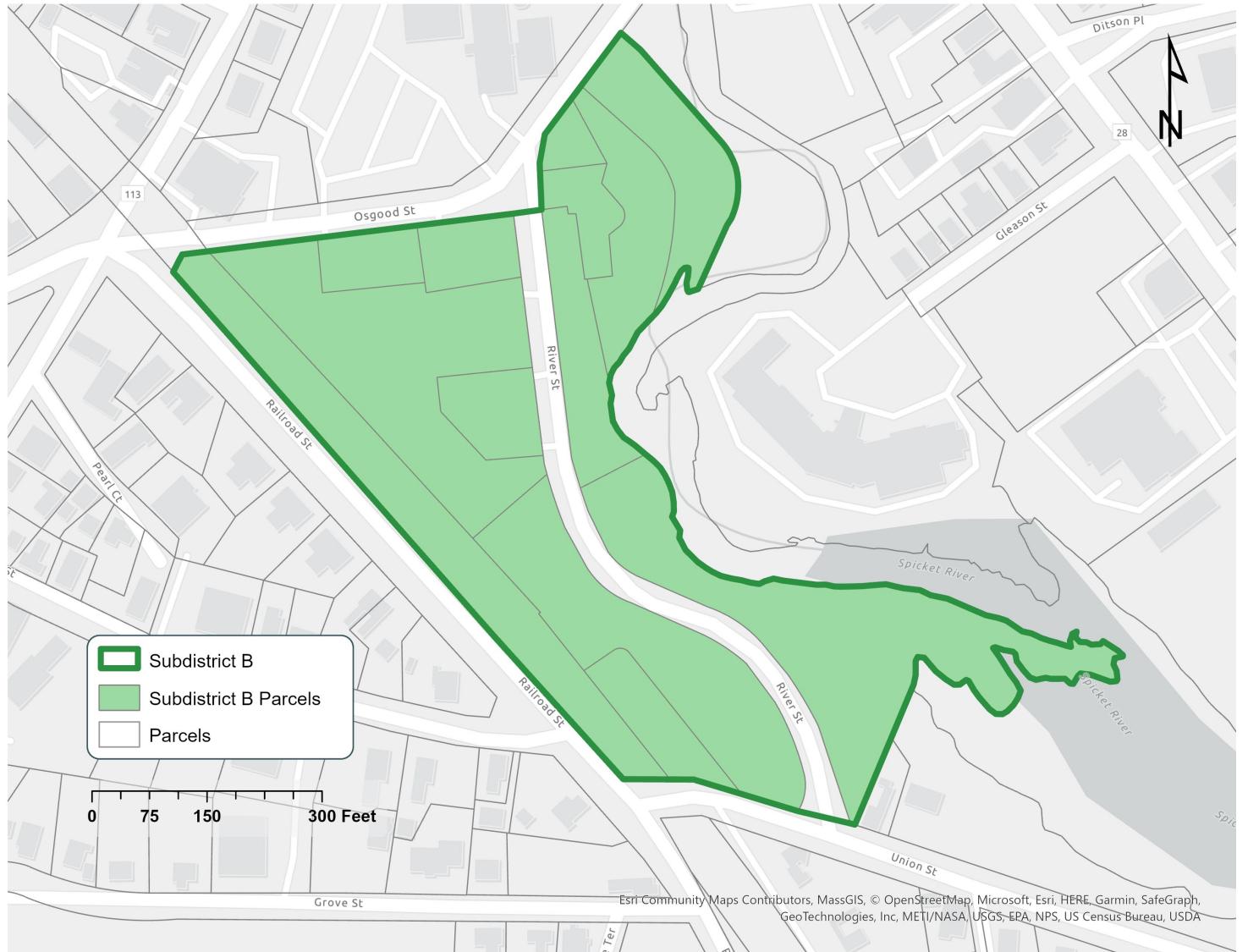


# Compliance Requirements

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## Scenario 2: Subdistrict B (5 stories) 9.5 Gross Acres

This Subdistrict is comprised of the parcels in the current MCGOD district around River St which will comprise a new 5-story Subdistrict with a dwelling units per acre of either 50 or 60.



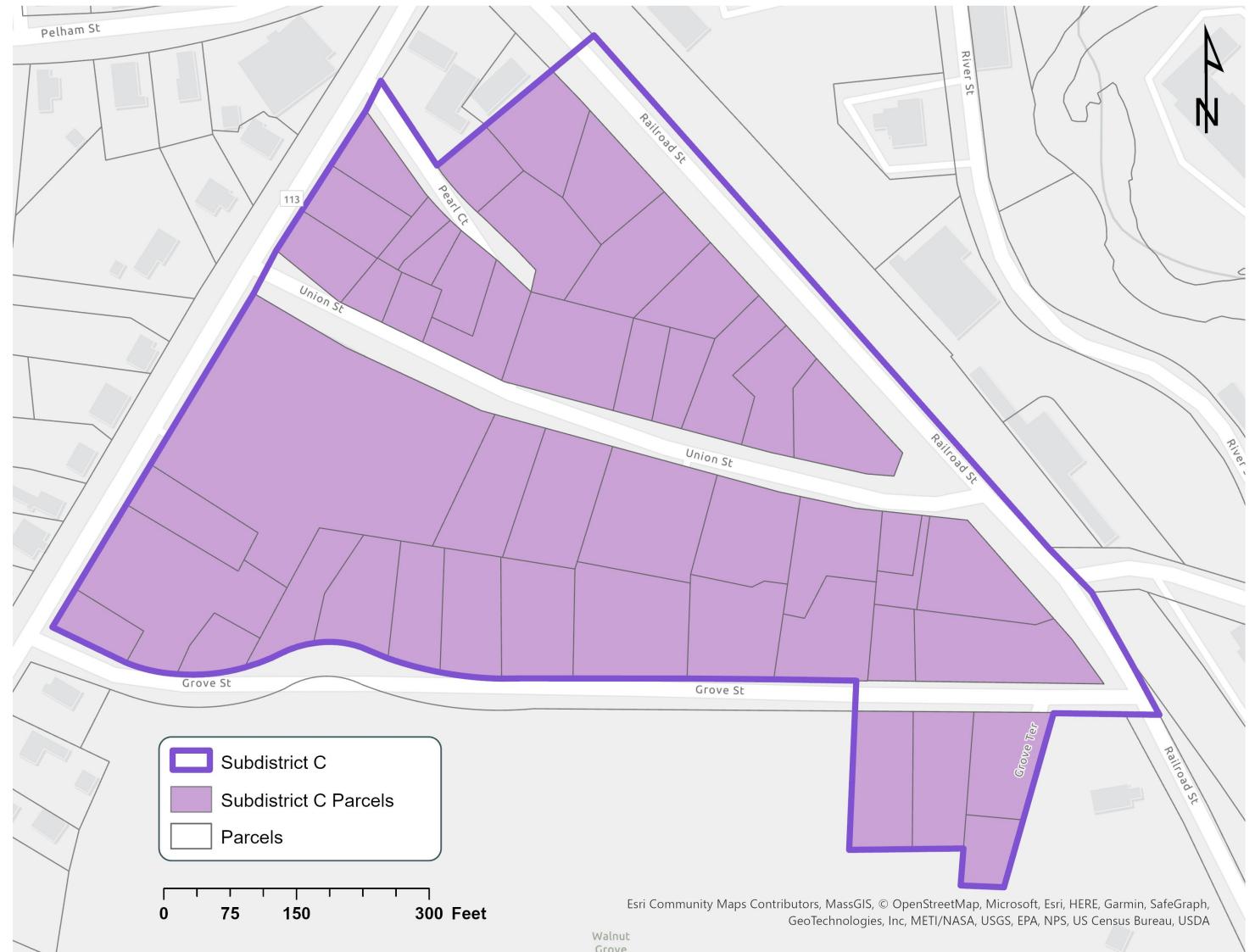
# Compliance Requirements

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## Scenario 2: Subdistrict C: 4 stories

12.9 Gross Acres

This Subdistrict is comprised of parcels around Union Street and Grove Street that are contiguous with but outside the current MCSGOD district.



# District Overview

## Area Requirements

The MCSGOD and MCSGOD expansion district meet the minimum requirement for 50 acres.

Subdistricts can be used to establish different density limits within the overall multi-family zoning district providing the total acreage exceeds the minimum requirement for 50 acres and the average density is 15 units per acre.

District Name	Gross Acres	Meets 5 Acre Area Req't?	Meets 50 Acre Area Req't?
Existing MCSGOD	58	Y	Y
MCSGOD Expansion	71.2	Y	Y
4 Story Subdistrict	48.7	Y	N
5 Story Subdistrict	9.5	Y	N
4 Story Subdistrict Extension	12.9	Y	N

# Model Results and Summary

## Unit Capacity Test – Variations

The unit capacity test was run for each proposed district using the criteria outlined in the table.

The criteria is from the existing MCSGOD. Scenarios 3 and increase the number of stories from 4 to 5 and the number of dwelling units/acre to 50 and 60 respectively.

Zoning Parameters	Scenario 1: MCSGOD Ext	Scenario 2: Subdistricts
Minimum Lot Size	0 SF	0 SF
Building Height	4 stories	4 stories in A and C; 5 stories in B
Lot Coverage	70%	70%
Open Space Requirement	30%	30%
Setbacks	0F, 10S, 10R	0F, 10S, 10R
Parking Spaces per Unit	1.2 Spaces per Unit	1.2 Spaces per Unit
DU/AC Maximum	30	30
Lot Area per DU	0 SF	0 SF

# Model Results and Summary

## Unit Capacity Test Scenarios

At the dimensional standards tested, Scenarios 1 and 2 would each provide a little over half the total number of units needed. Each scenario meets the test for district acreage and gross density. Note that adding a fifth story to Subdistrict B does not add that many units. This is because **the limiting factor is the current 30 units per acre limitation in the existing 40R**.

### Methuen District Model Results

Compliance Metrics	Requirements	Scenario 1: MCSGOD Exp	Scenario 2: Subdistricts
District Acreage	50 Acres	71.2	71.2
Density Denominator Acreage		61.2	61.2
Acreage within Transit Area		N/A	N/A
Unit Capacity	2,019 units	1,323	1,335
Units within Transit Area		N/A	
DU/AC (Gross density)	15 DU/AC	21.6	21.8

# Test: Merrimack Street Corridor

# Compliance Requirements

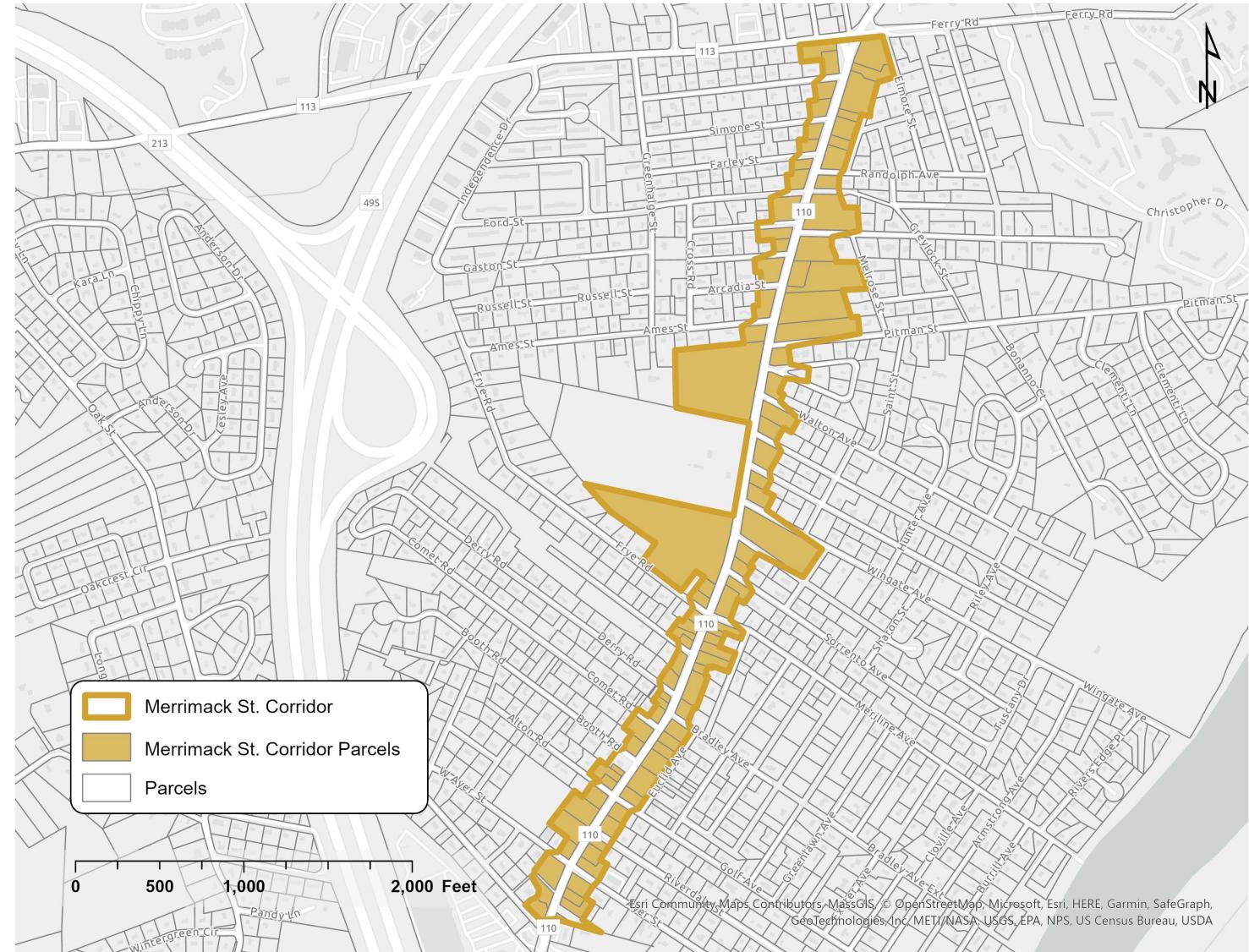
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## Merrimack Street Corridor Scenario 1

~53 Gross Acres

EOHLC requires that the district include whole parcels; the existing district splits parcels. This boundary only includes whole parcels.

The line is drawn to the parcel boundary rather than the center line of the street. The current MCGOD uses the center line of the street.



# Compliance Requirements

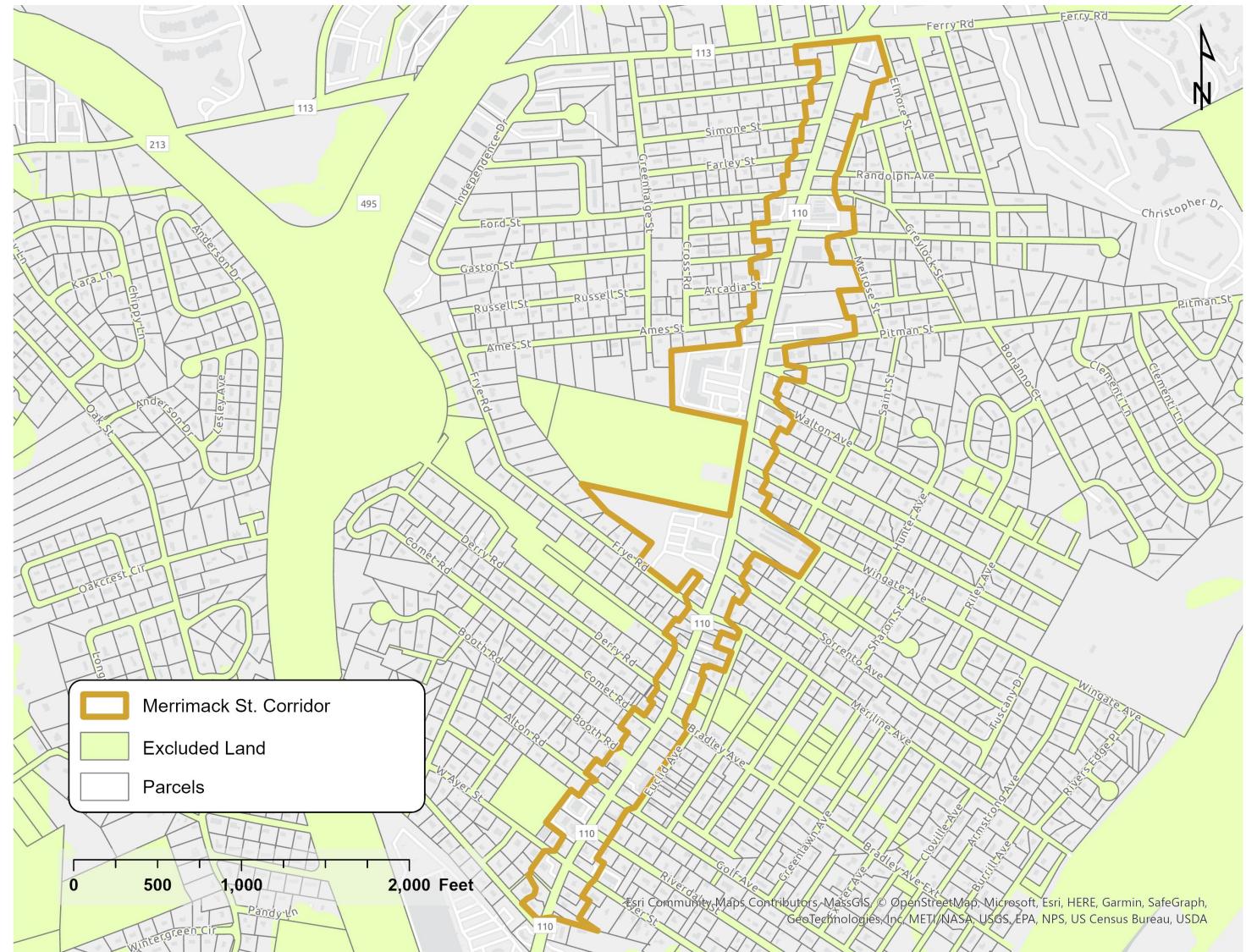
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## Merrimack Street Corridor Scenario 1

~53 Gross Acres

### Excluded Land

- **CANNOT** be modeled for **unit capacity**.
- Includes the following:
  - Hydrological features
  - Protected/restricted open space
  - Wellhead Protection Areas (Zone I only)
  - Title 5 setbacks and Surface Water Protection Zone A
  - Rights of way
  - Most public land, except certain types



# Compliance Requirements

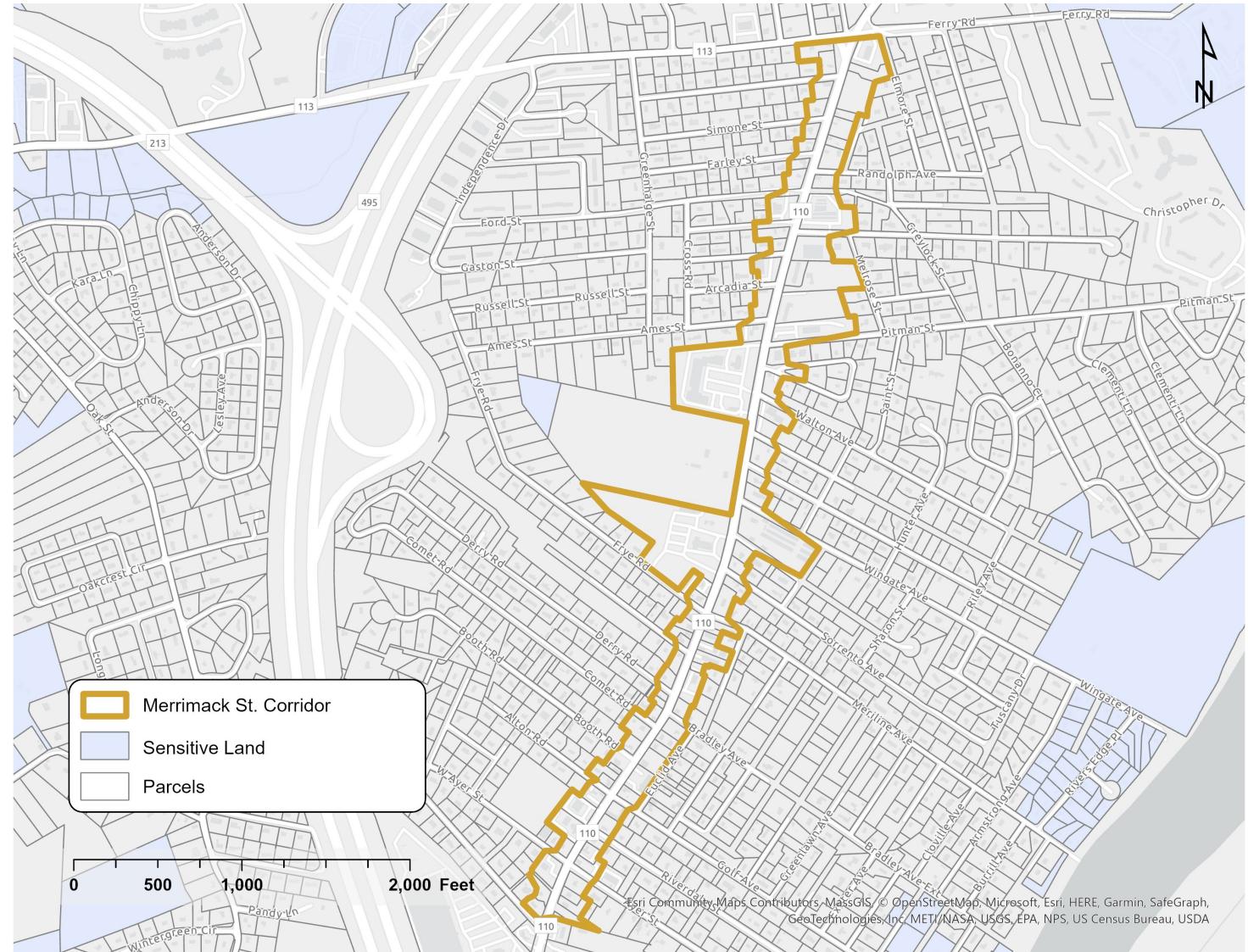
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## Merrimack Street Corridor Scenario 1

~53 Gross Acres

### Sensitive Land

- **CAN** be modeled for **unit capacity**.
- Includes the following:
  - Wellhead Protection Areas (Zone II and Interim Wellhead Protection Areas)
  - Special Flood Hazard Areas (A or V flood zones)
  - Active Farmland
  - Priority Habitats of Rare Species
  - Surface Water Protection Zones B & C



# Model Results and Summary

## Unit Capacity Test – Variations

The unit capacity test was run for each proposed district using the criteria outlined in the table. This is based on the BN district, which does not currently allow multifamily as-of-right, but is the predominant zoning district along the corridor.

Zoning Parameters	Merrimack St Corridor
Minimum Lot Size	10,000 SF
Building Height	3 stories
Lot Coverage	25%
Open Space Requirement	20%
Setbacks	25F, 15S, 30R
Parking Spaces per Unit	1.2 Spaces per Unit
DU/AC Maximum	0
Lot Area per DU	0 SF

# Model Results and Summary

## Merrimack St Corridor Capacity Test

Using the MBTA Communities Compliance Model to test the districts' location, size, and zoning parameters we found that with the current zoning the Merrimack St Corridor district would provide Methuen with the land area and density and over 50% of the required unit capacity to meet the requirements of Section 3A.

### Methuen District Model Results

Compliance Metrics	Requirements	Merrimack St Corridor
District Acreage	50 Acres	53.03
Density Denominator Acreage		52.95
Acreage within Transit Area		N/A
Unit Capacity	2,019 units	1,146 units
Units within Transit Area		N/A
DU/AC (Gross density)	15 DU/AC	21.6 DU/AC

# Options

# Options

Option 1: Meet the requirements using both the 40R District and the entire Merrimack Street Corridor.

Option 2: Meet the requirements with the 40R District only.

Option 3: Meet the requirements with the 40R District and a portion of the Merrimack Street Corridor.

# Option 1

**Meet the requirements using both the 40R District and the entire Merrimack Street Corridor.**

## Pro

- Distributes multifamily housing in other areas of town.
- Allows housing to support commercial in both areas.
- Density requirements could be varied to meet the needs and respond to existing housing types in both areas.

## Con

- Without careful consideration of location (and depending on the market), multifamily could replace commercial uses in some areas.
- Levels of affordability may be an issue.
- Some parts of both districts may not be likely to change in the near future; this may mean that desired market-rate and affordable units are not produced in the short-term.
- If we use both districts, we will need to consider requirements for contiguity.

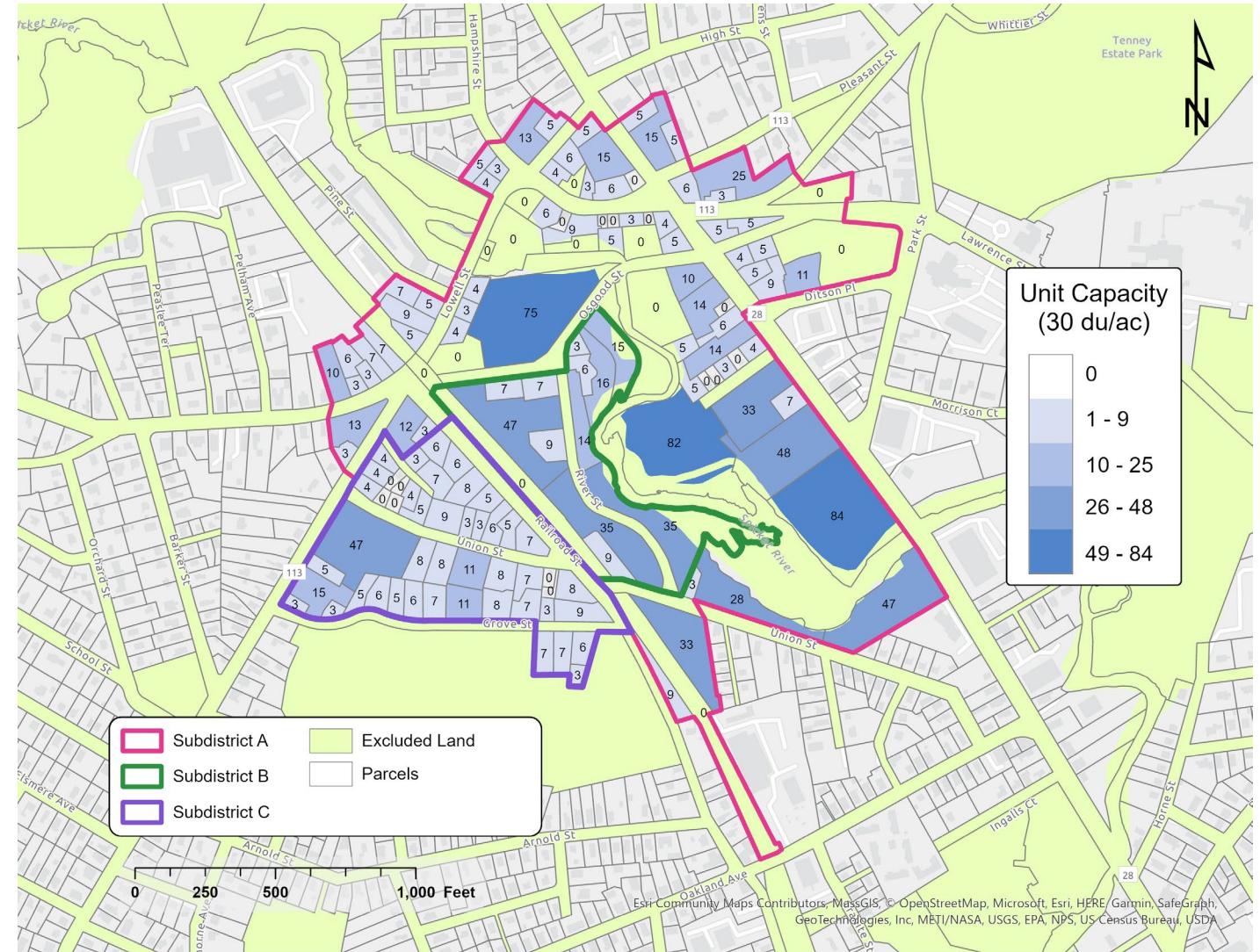
# Option 1

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Option 2: Scenario 2 Unit Capacity  
(30 units per acre)

## Methuen District Model Results

Compliance Metrics	Scenario 2: Subdistricts
District Acreage	71.2
Density Denominator Acreage	61.2
Acreage within Transit Area	N/A
Unit Capacity	1,335
Units within Transit Area	
DU/AC (Gross density)	21.8



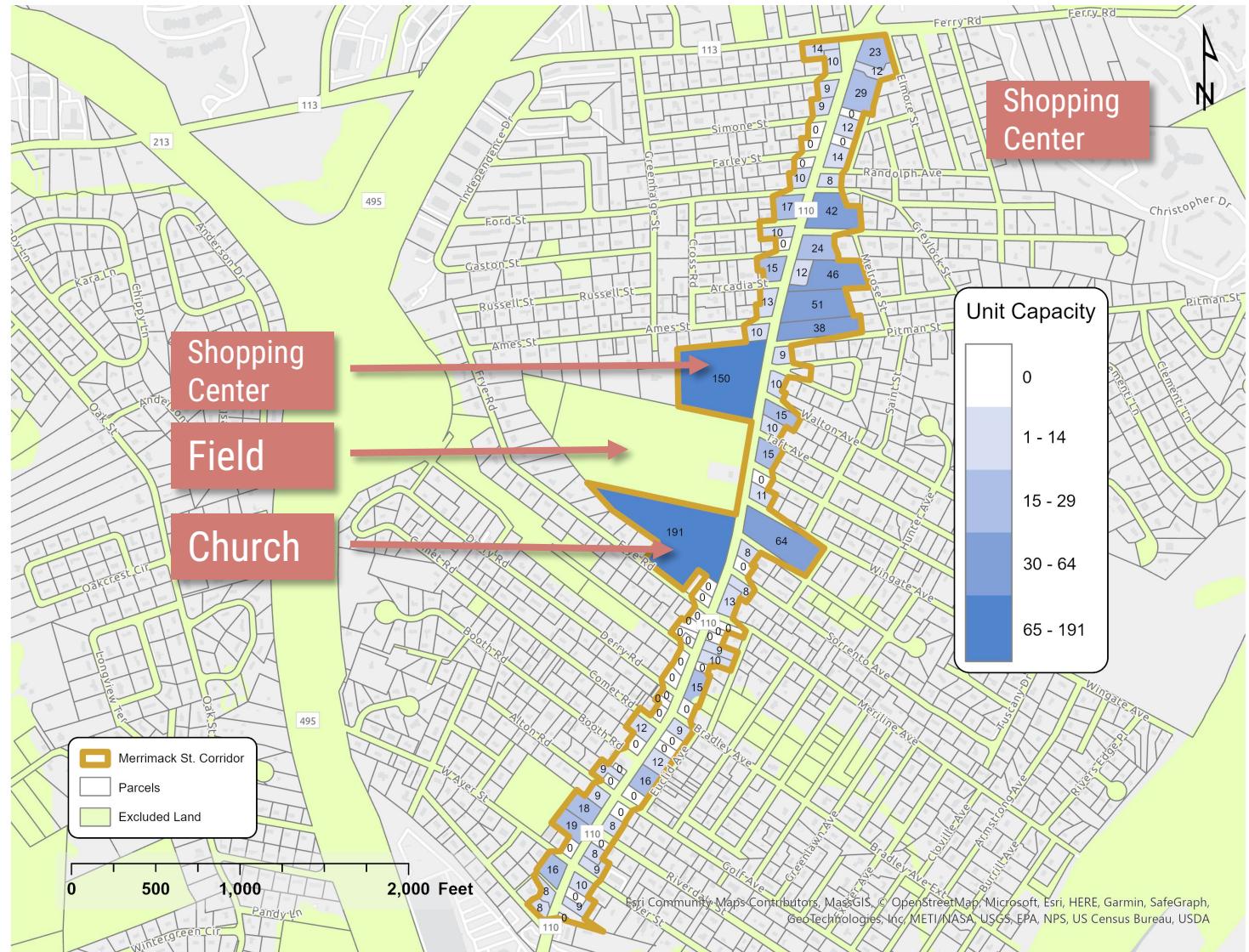
# Option 1

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## Parcel Contributions to District Unit Capacity: Merrimack Street Corridor

This heat map shows the model final unit capacity by parcel across the Merrimack Street Corridor district.

Darker blue indicates a higher density of units per acre by parcel, lighter blue indicates a lower density of units per acre by parcel.



# Option 2

## Meet the requirements with the 40R District only.

### Pro

- Concentrates multifamily in downtown area, nearest to goods and services.
- Allows City to take advantage of existing 40R and its affordability requirements.
- Most likely area to support height, which may make the production of needed housing more likely.

### Con

- Need to adjust the mandatory ground floor commercial along certain streets.
- Levels of affordability may still be an issue – will need to discuss current levels with EOHLC.
- Impact may lead to contiguity issues and is a reduction in the number of units that can be modeled.

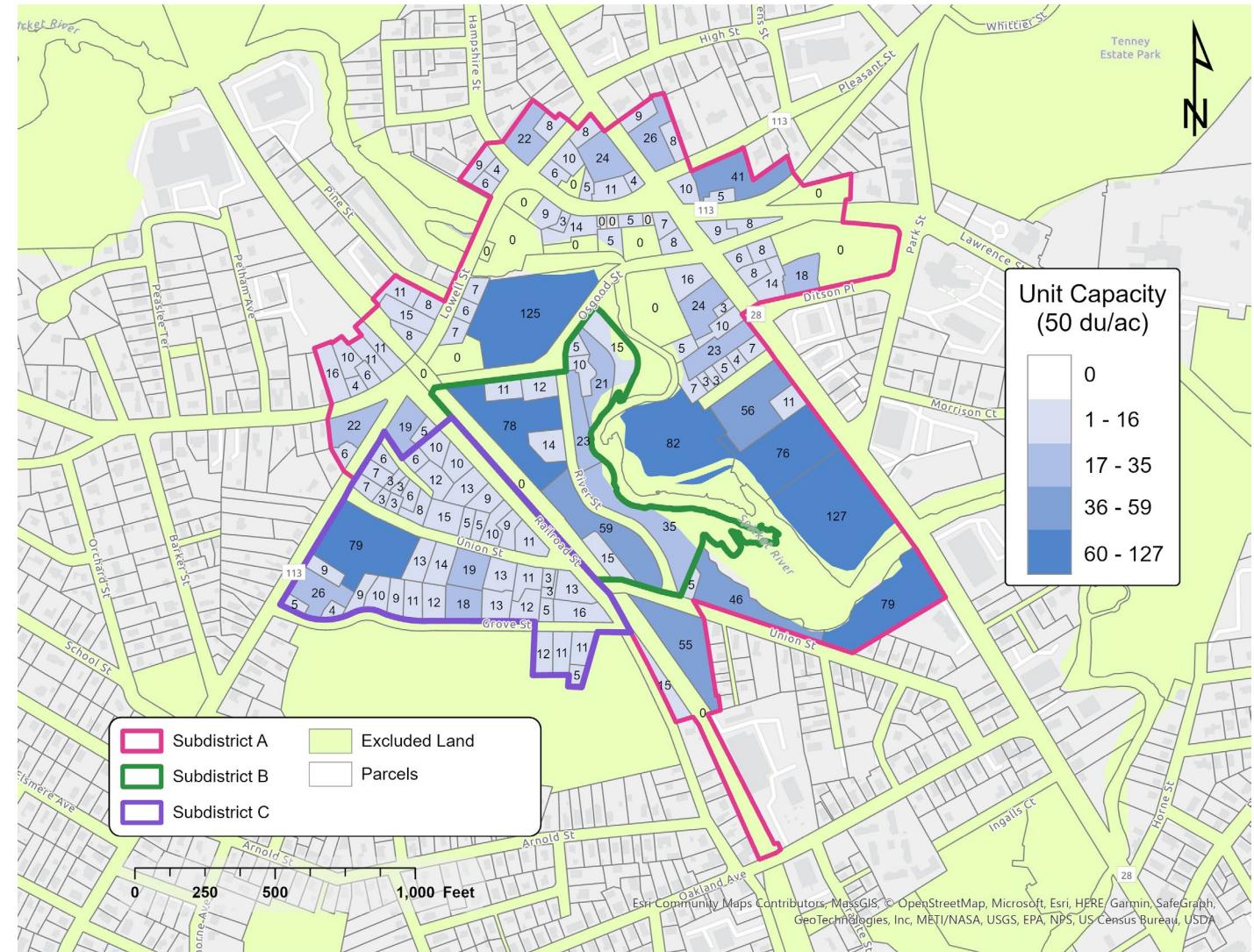
# Option 2

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## Option 2: Scenario 2 Unit Capacity (50 units per acre)

## Methuen District Model Results

Compliance Metrics		Scenario 2: Subdistricts
District Acreage		71.2
Density Denominator Acreage		61.2
Acreage within Transit Area		N/A
Unit Capacity		2,141
Units within Transit Area		N/A
DU/AC (Gross density)		35 (34.98)

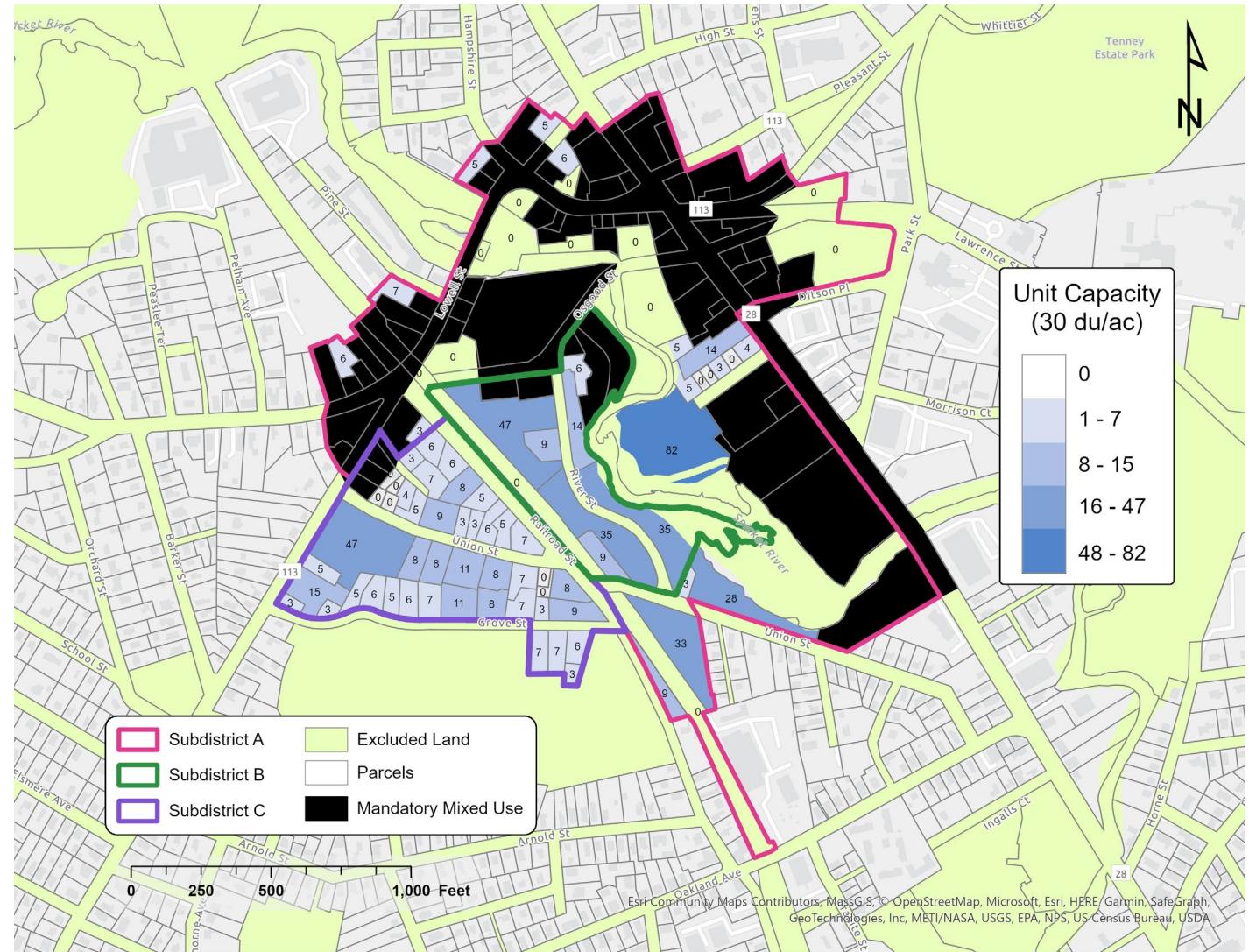


# Option 2

## Option 2: Impact of Mandatory Ground Floor Commercial on the 40R (30 units per acre)

8) b) Subject to the limitations on non-residential use contained in Subsection 6.b above, **all buildings located along the frontage of lots along Broadway, Hampshire, Osgood, Lowell and Pelham Streets shall be Mixed Use...**

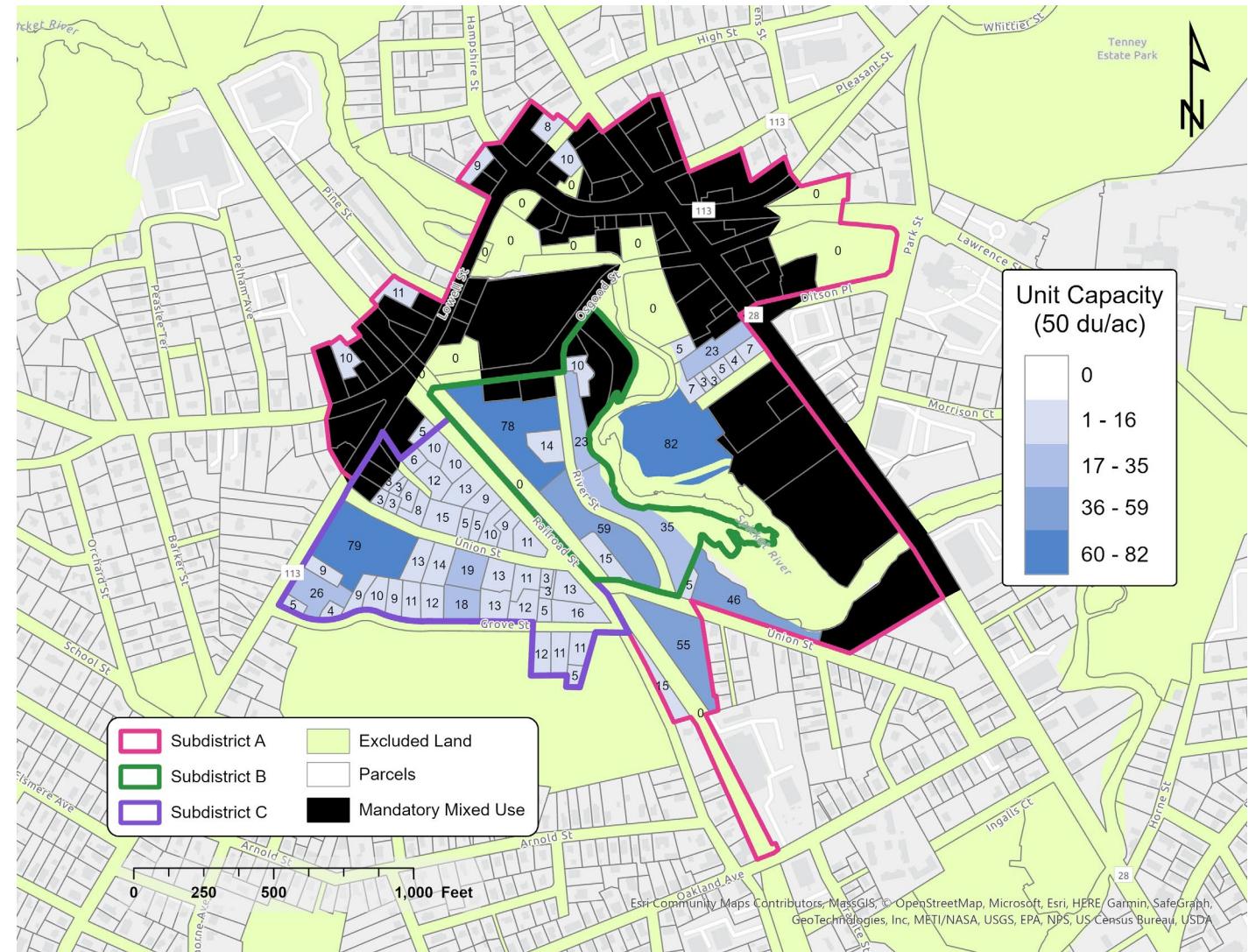
...  
**If more than one (1) building is proposed on a lot as part of a Mixed Use Project, only the building(s) with direct frontage on and access to one of the aforesaid Streets shall be required to include ground-floor nonresidential use(s). Other buildings located in or alongside yards or toward the rear of these lots, and building(s) without direct frontage on or access to said Street(s), may be used as Multifamily Dwellings.**



## Option 2: Impact of Mandatory Ground Floor Commercial (50 units per acre)

### Note

- Depending on how this is modeled, contiguity requirements and minimum district size may become an issue.



# Option 3

## Meet the requirements with the 40R District and a portion of the Merrimack Street Corridor.

### Pro

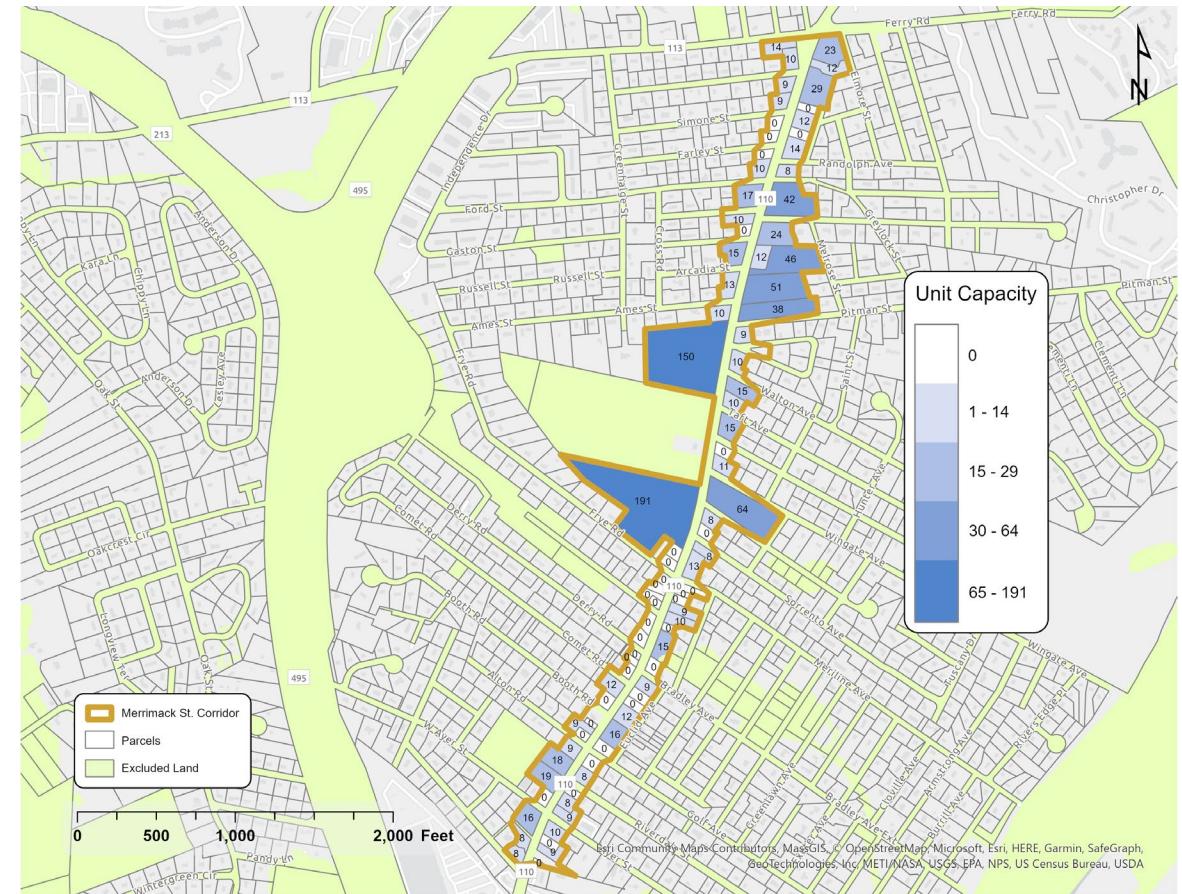
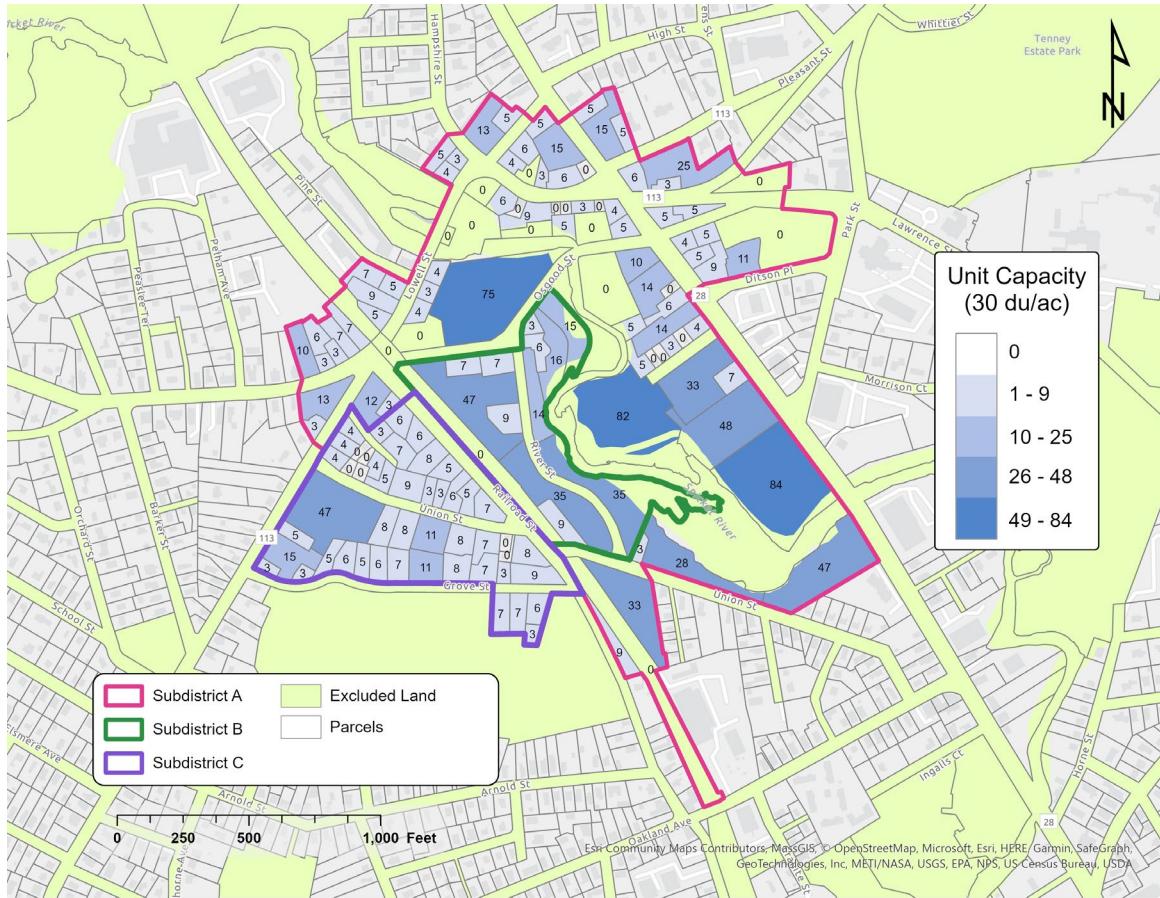
- Although the most difficult to plan for, may allow the City to consider specific areas where they want to preserve commercial or mixed-uses.

### Con

- Affordability requirements may require additional study (Economic Feasibility Analysis).

# Option 3

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# Discussion and Questions

# Next Steps

# Schedule

	August	September	October	November
Meetings	Kick-off with Housing Working Group	Meeting with City staff to discuss options September 6	Meeting with City staff to discuss revised options October 4 at 2 pm	<b>Workshop with City Council/Land Use Boards</b> November 14 6:30 pm
Deliverables	Introduction to the MBTA Communities Act.	Show test scenarios. Discuss options.	Show and discuss refined scenarios and implications.	Draft and final report.

