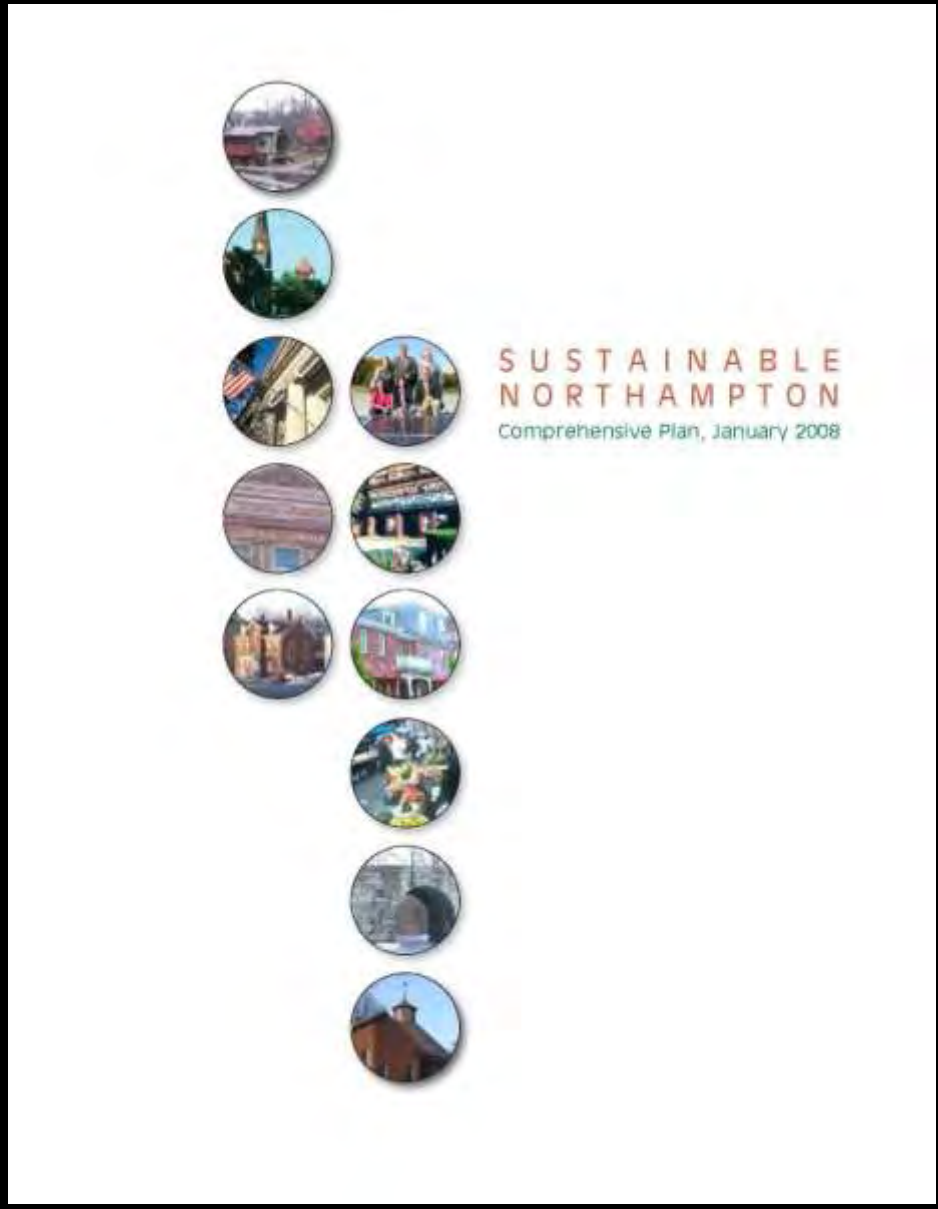
Rezoning Northampton for a Sustainable Future

Rezoning Northampton for a Sustainable Future

Zoning Revisions Committee (ZRC)

Who We Are

- A volunteer committee, appointed by the Planning Board
- Formed to help implement "Sustainable Northampton" (the city's comprehensive master plan adopted in 2008)
- Selected to represent a variety of viewpoints, expertise and neighborhoods.

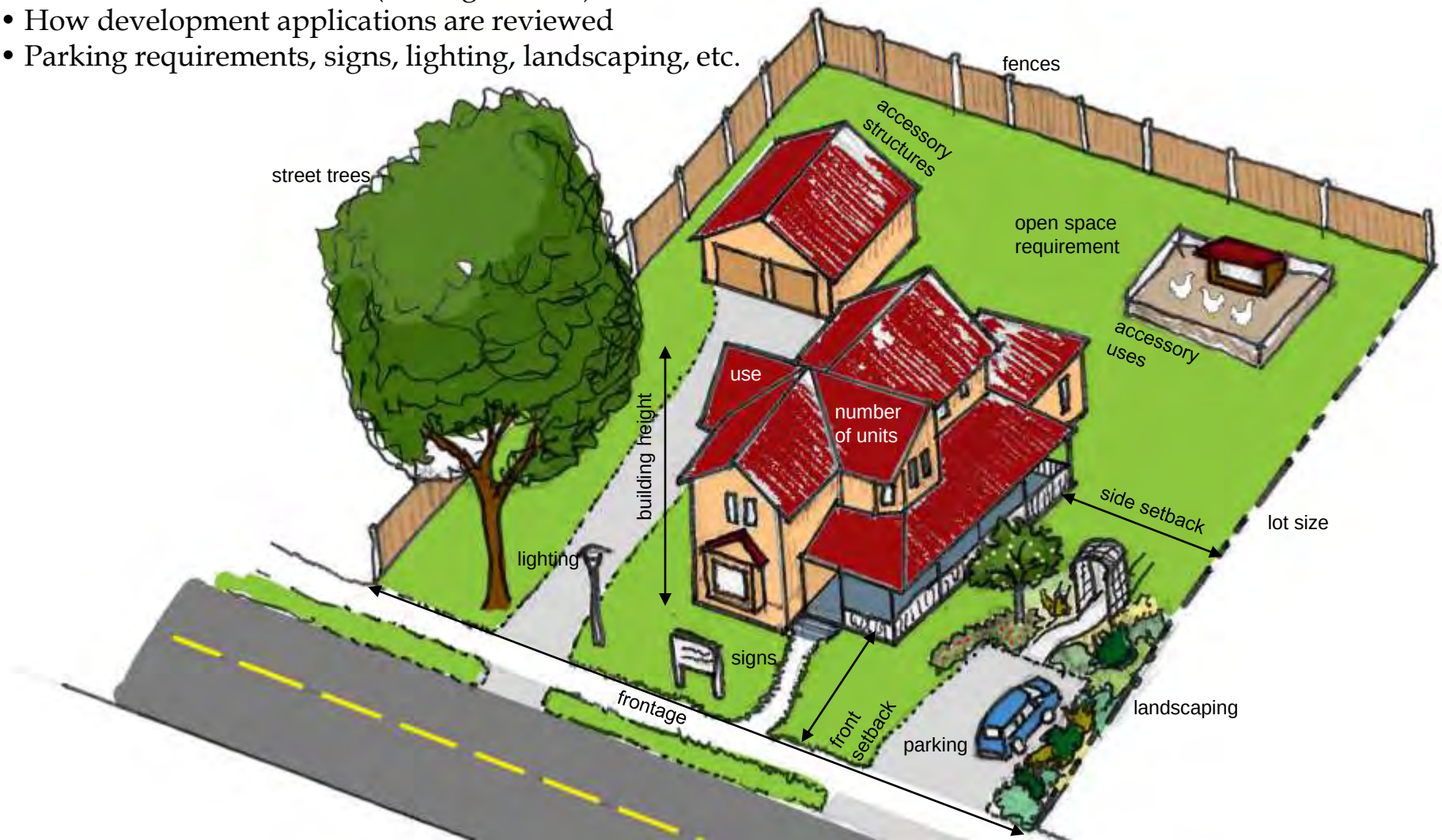


What is Zoning?

Zoning is a local ordinance that regulates development and land use

Zoning establishes the community's development pattern. It controls:

- Lot dimensions and where buildings can be built on a lot (dimensional regulations)
- What land can be used for (use regulations)
- How development applications are reviewed
- Parking requirements, signs, lighting, landscaping, etc.



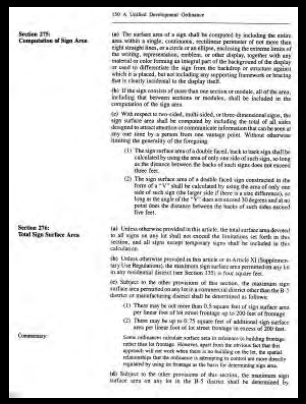
What is Zoning?

Zoning ordinances have a map AND text

- The map divides the city into zones
- The text says what is allowed in these zones

Zoning sets parameters for how land can be used, but it doesn't MAKE development happen. Development will not occur unless there is a market for it.

Good development still requires responsible landowners, enlightened developers and financiers, and skilled architects and builders



Section 276:
Computation of Sign Area

Section 276:
Total Sign Surface Area

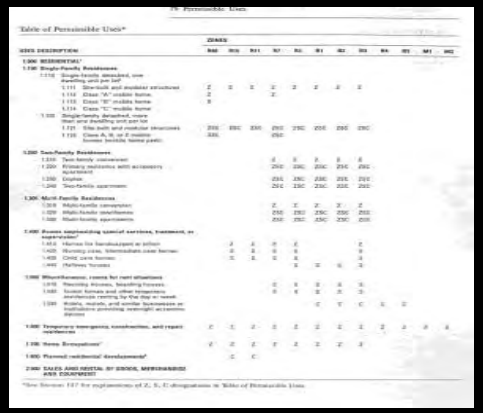
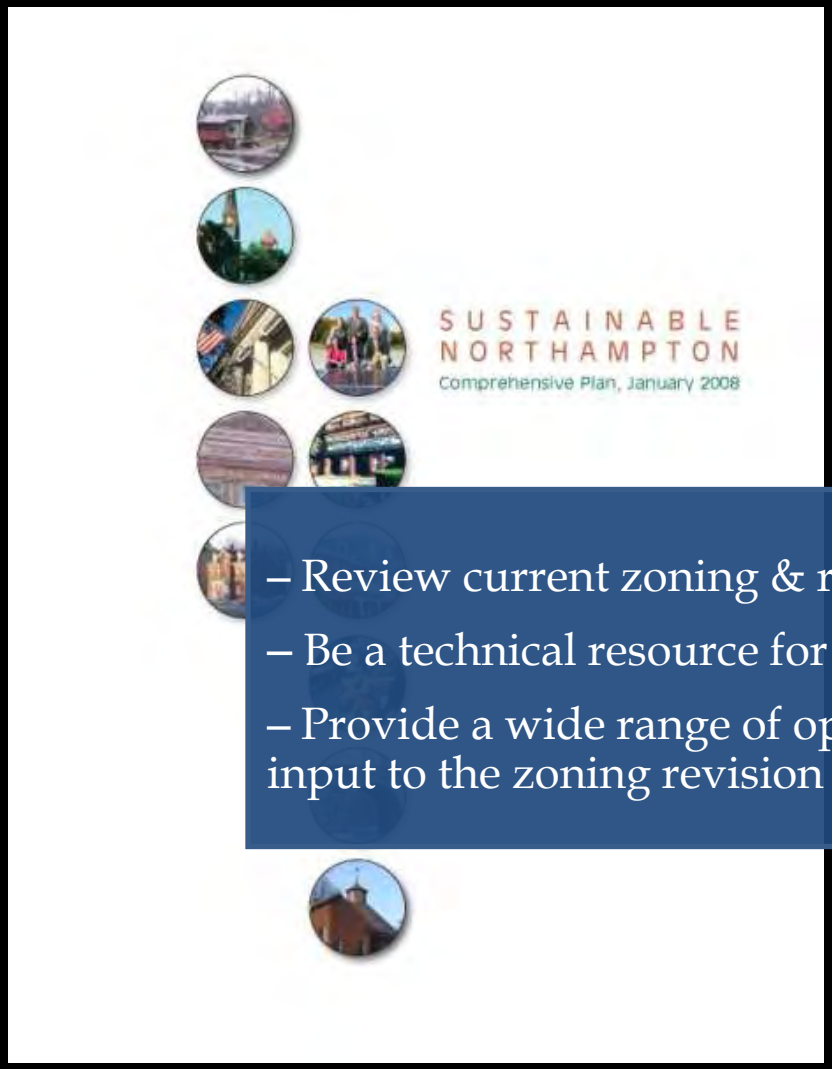


Table of Permissible Uses*

Rezoning Northampton for a Sustainable Future

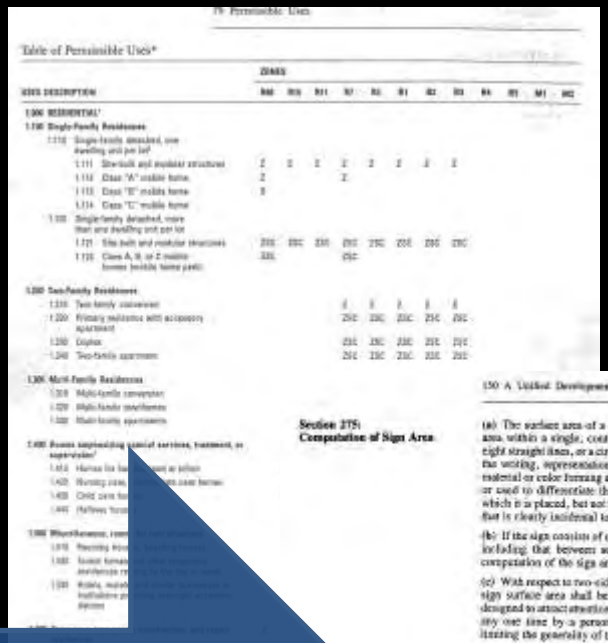
Our Charge: Get Sustainability into Zoning

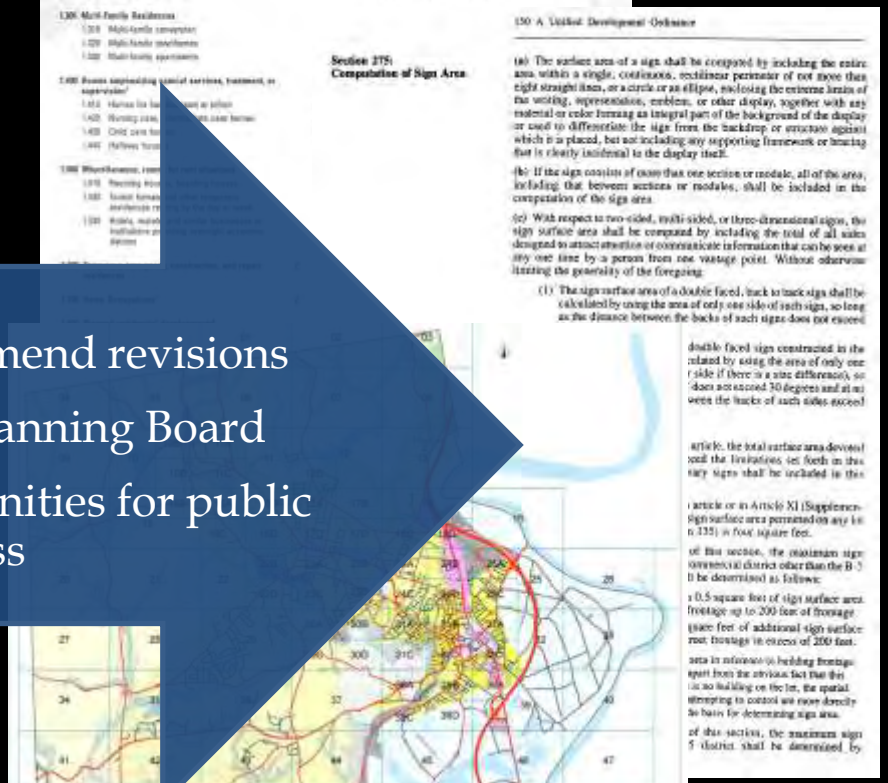


– Review current zoning & recommend revisions

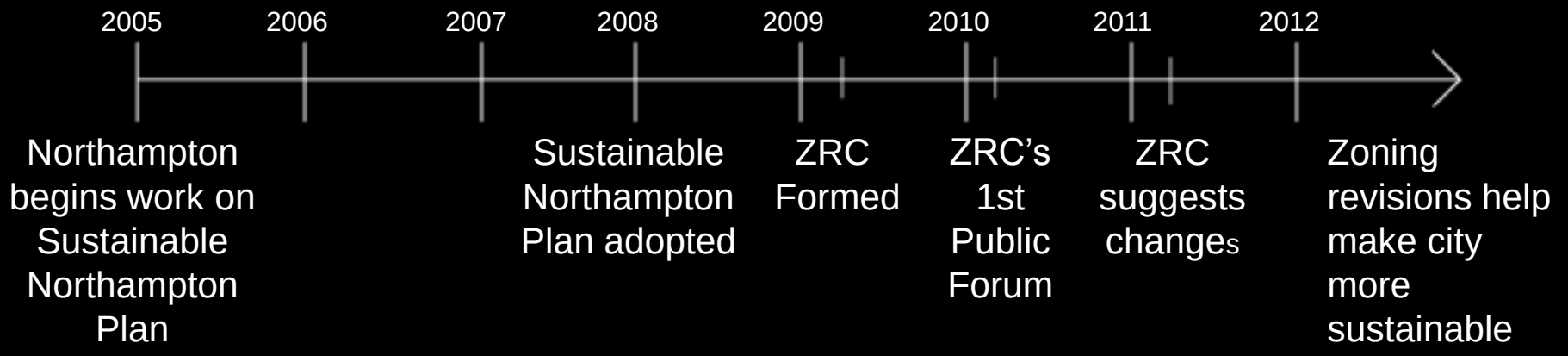
– Be a technical resource for the Planning Board

– Provide a wide range of opportunities for public input to the zoning revision process

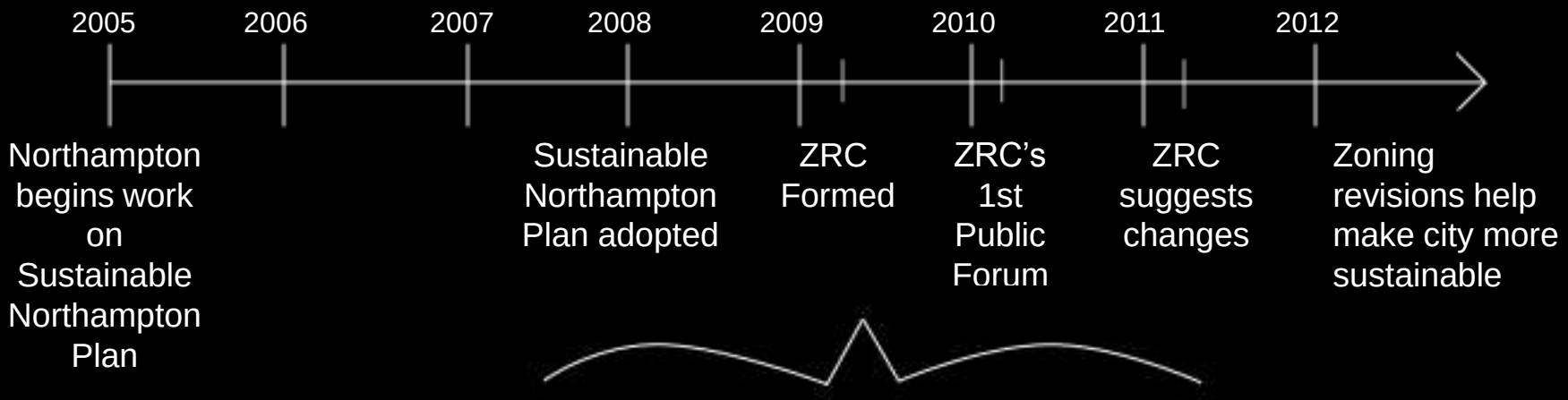




This meeting is part of a long-term planning process



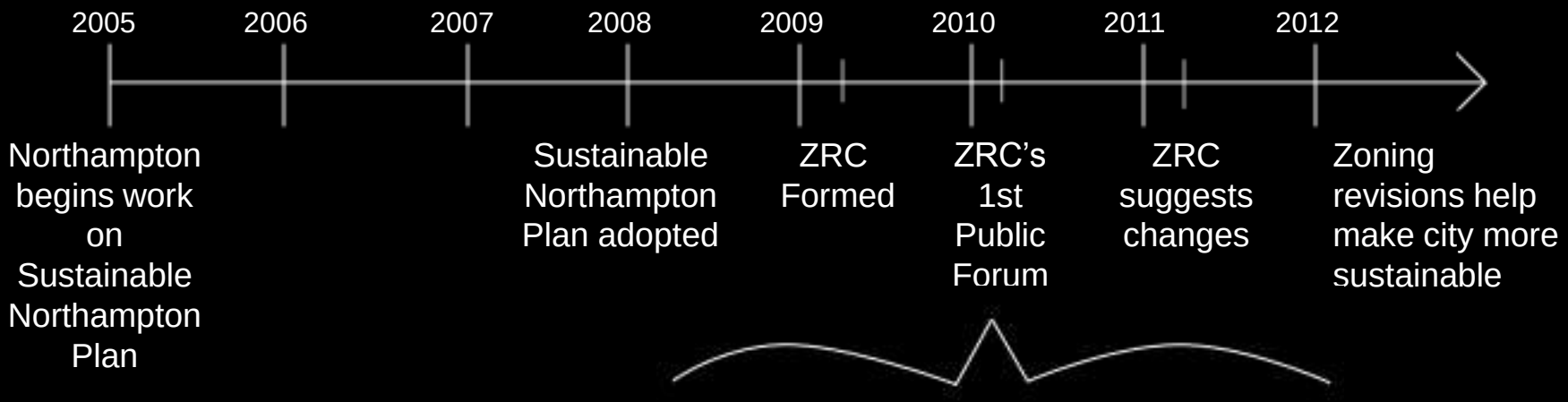
The ZRC's Process



Analysis and Information Gathering

- Learned about the Sustainable Northampton Plan and Zoning Ordinance
- Conducted an analysis comparing the Sustainable Northampton Plan with the current Zoning Ordinance
- Explored Subtopics: Energy, Urban Agriculture, Cluster Development, Housing
- Began discussions with key stakeholders and focus groups
- Developed a process for including public input

The ZRC's Process

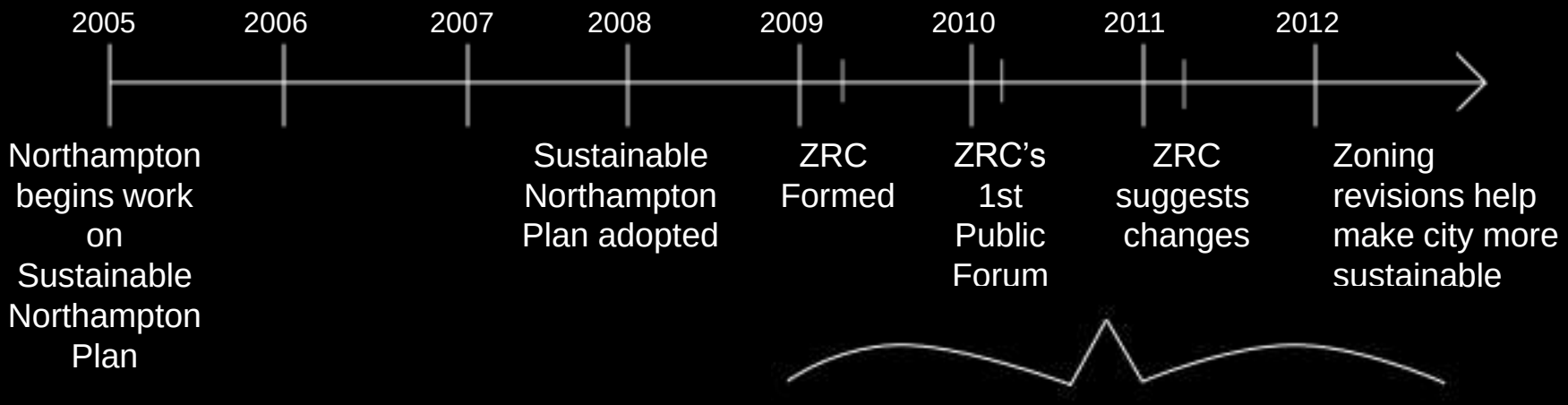


1st Public Forum (We're here!)

Tonight's goals are:

- Share what we've learned about zoning and sustainability
- Gather general input about how zoning could be made more sustainable
- Gather in-depth input about infill (where, how much, what should it look like?)

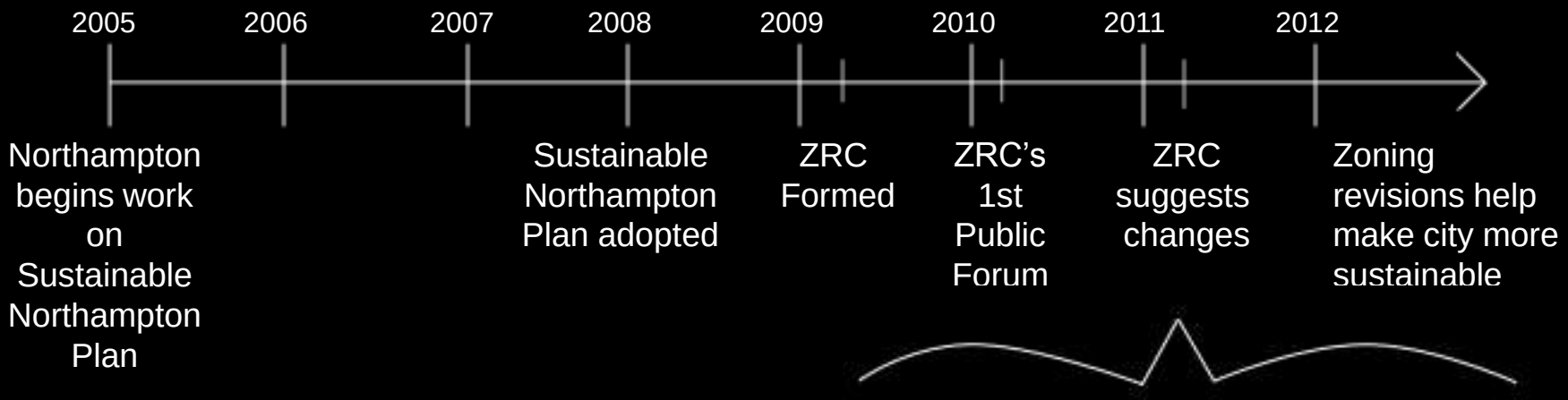
The ZRC's Process



ZRC Makes Recommendations

- Formulate specific recommendations for zoning revisions
- Continue discussions with key stakeholders and focus groups
- Conduct additional public forums
- Refine recommendations
- Present recommendations to Planning Board and get feedback

The ZRC's Process



Implementation

- Planning Department and ZRC write zoning changes and submit to Planning Board
- Planning Board reviews changes and holds public hearings with the City Council Ordinance Committee
- Planning board votes on proposed changes
- City Council votes on proposed changes
- Process continues!

Sustainable Northampton Plan Relevant Guiding Principles

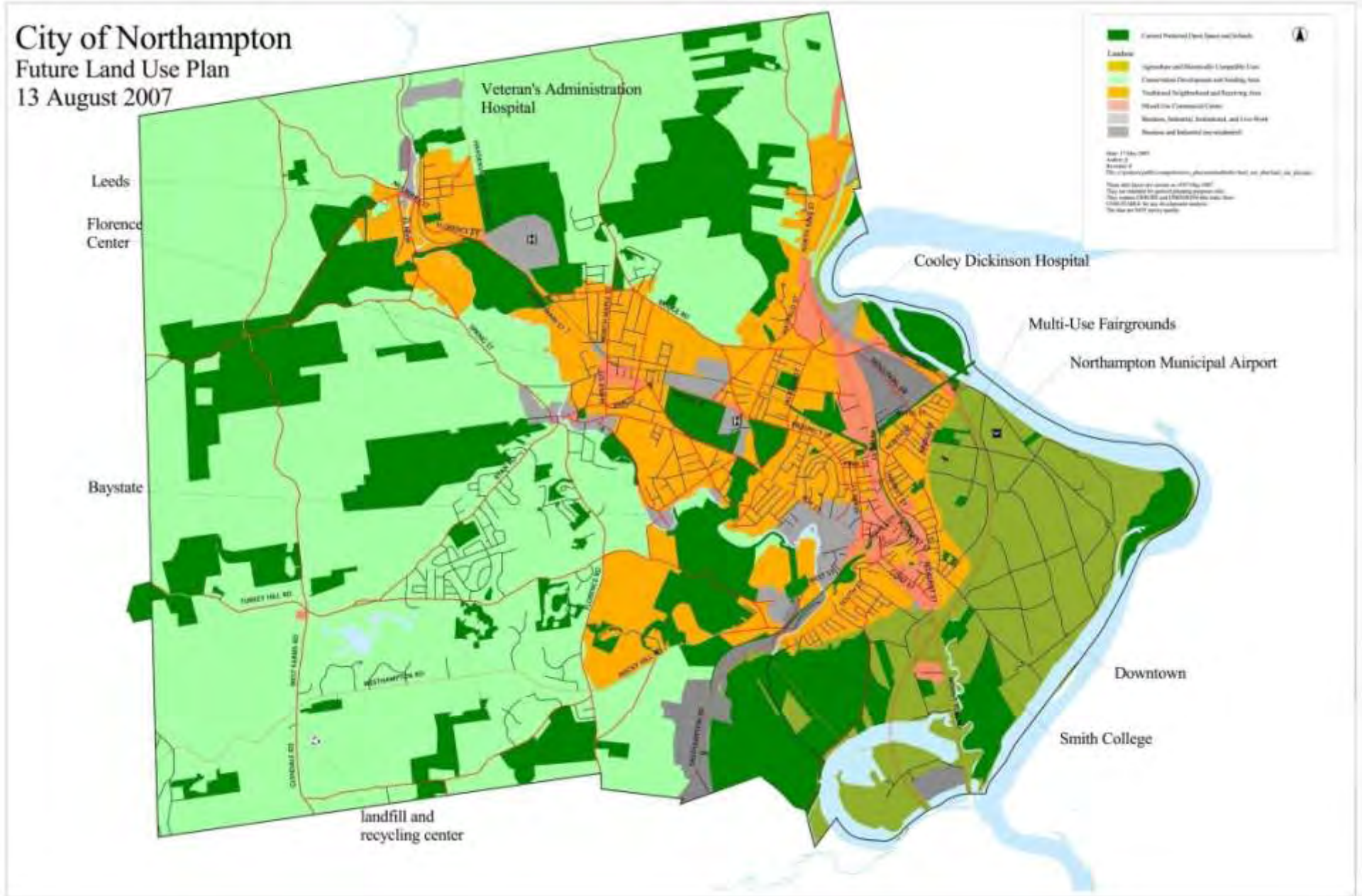
- Sustainability
  - If you keep on doing it, you can keep on doing it (Environment, Economy, Equity)
- Sustainable Land Use
  - Minimize human effects on natural systems; build the kind of places we want to live in
- Sustainable Land Use in Northampton
  - Concentrate development in existing neighborhoods
  - Minimize sprawl/protect open space
  - Promote appropriate economic development
  - Preserve community character
  - Encourage walkability and transit

Translating Sustainability Goals into Zoning Goals

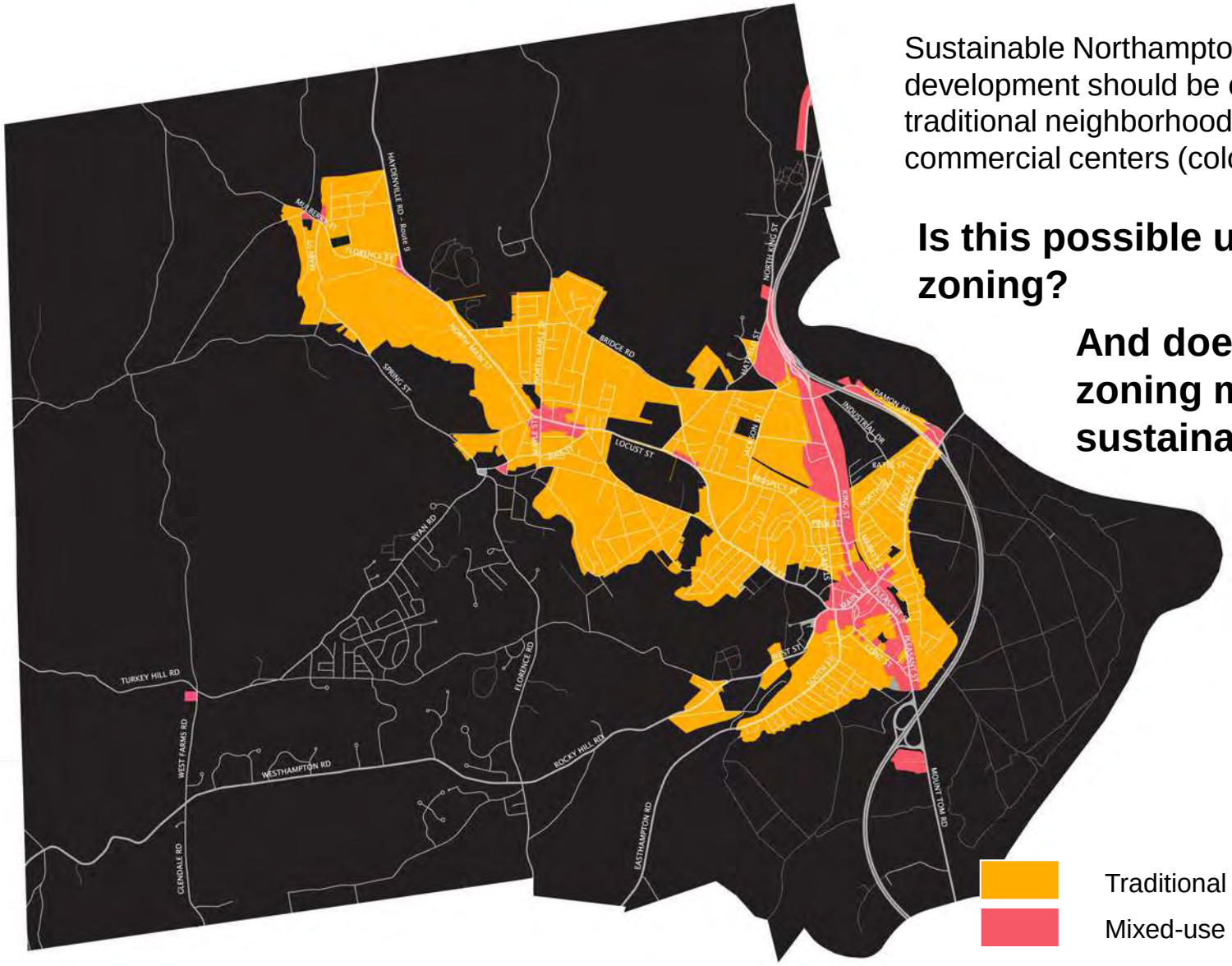
Task: Boil "Future Land Use Map" and 45 pages of goals, objectives and strategies from the Sustainable Northampton Plan into a short set of summary goals that are relevant to zoning.

- Concentrate development and allow for a wide range of housing types and work spaces in walkable, mixed-use neighborhood, village and commercial centers
- Minimize development in areas that lack infrastructure or have significant environmental, open space or agricultural resources
- Promote environmental performance, including energy and resource efficiency
- Make the zoning code more user-friendly and processes more transparent
- Promote design that fits into neighborhoods so that new development makes the city a better place.

Sustainable Northampton's Future Land Use Map



Where should future development happen?



Sustainable Northampton says that development should be concentrated in traditional neighborhoods and mixed-use commercial centers (colored on map).

Is this possible under current zoning?

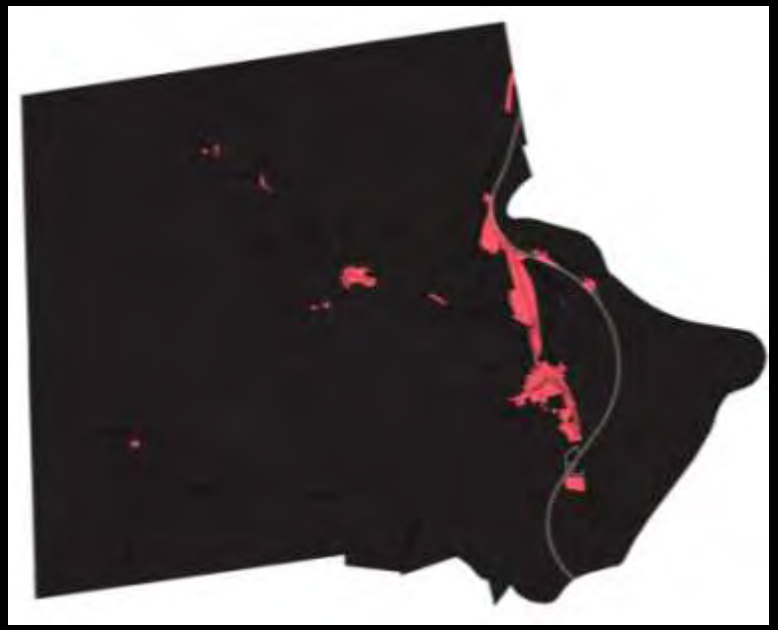
And does current zoning meet sustainability goals?

Traditional Neighborhoods

Mixed-use Commercial Centers

Testing Sustainability of Current Zoning

Example - Mixed-use



Goal:

Concentrate development and allow for a wide range of housing types and work spaces in walkable, mixed-use neighborhood, village and commercial centers

Analysis:

- Only a small portion of the City is zoned for mixed-use neighborhoods
- Use regulations are confusing and limiting
- The lack of mixed-use zoning undermines goals of walkability

Takeaway:

- Allow mixed-uses in more zones
- Rewrite zoning text and tables to facilitate mixed use
- Concentrate on regulating form more than than use

Testing Sustainability of Current Zoning

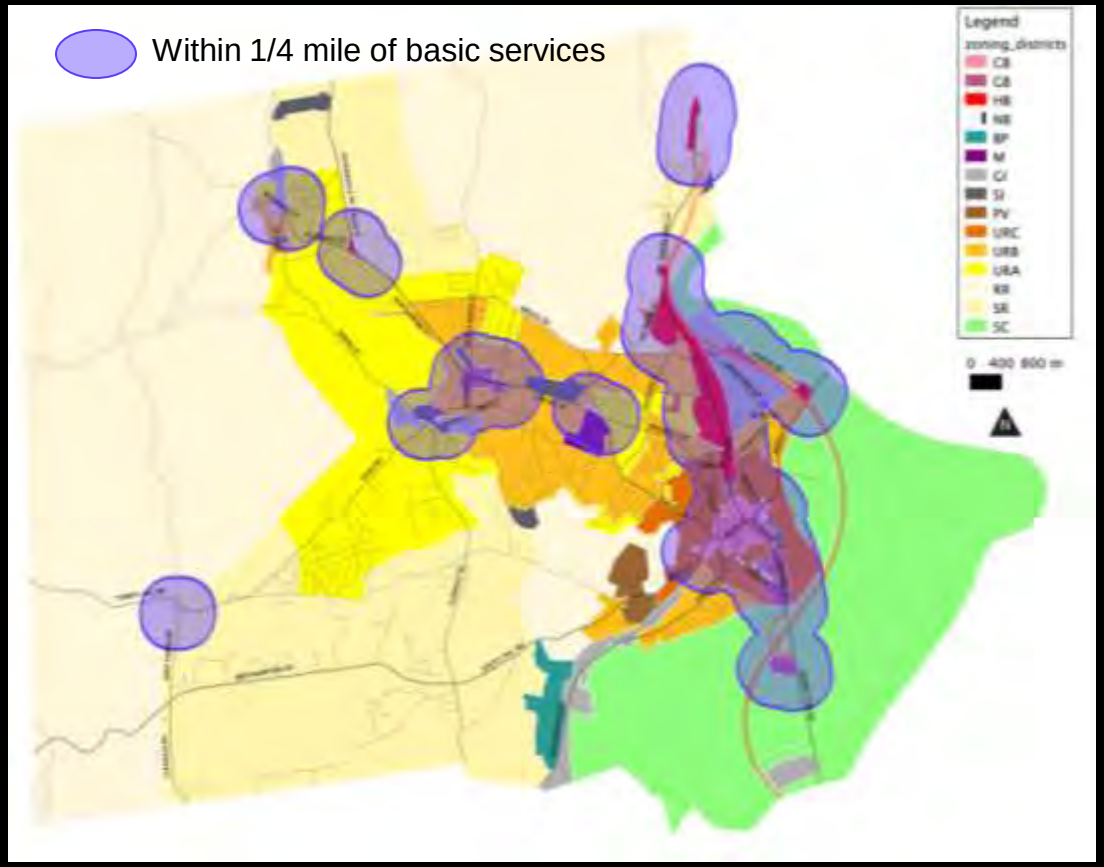
Example - Walkability

Goal:

Concentrate development and allow for a wide range of housing types and work spaces in walkable, mixed-use neighborhood, village and commercial centers

Analysis:

Zoning for most of Northampton does not create walkable neighborhoods



Takeaway:

- Expand areas zoned for mixed use
- Encourage infill so that more residents will be within walking distance of downtown or neighborhood centers.

Testing Sustainability of Current Zoning

Example - Minimize sprawl

Goal:

Minimize development in areas that lack infrastructure or have significant environmental, open space or agricultural resources

Analysis:

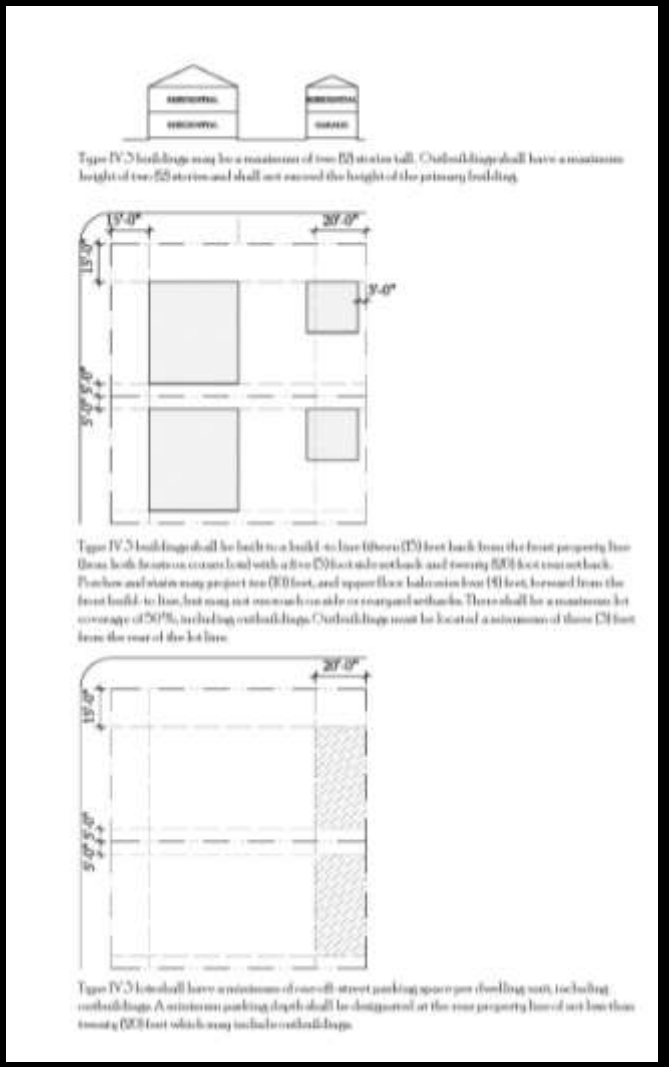
Rural areas are zoned for low-density suburban sprawl

Takeaway:

- Cluster regulations need to more flexible, with clearer definition of the open space that should be protected
- Continue to acquire open space (not part of zoning)
- Reduce density of outlying development

Testing Sustainability of Current Zoning

Example – Design



Goal:

Promote design that fits into neighborhoods so that new development makes the city a better place.

Analysis:

- Lack of design standards to guide development
- Dimensional standards in zoning do not match historic neighborhoods
- Current zoning does not create attracted streetscapes and public spaces

Takeaway:

- Design standards are needed
- Zoning should focus on shaping urban space
- Site plan and architecture should be reviewed together

Testing Sustainability of Current Zoning

A Typical 3-Family Home

Example: 17 Trumbull Road

- Zoned URC
- Lot Size: 4,835 square feet
- Today, would need 18,000 SF (~1/2 acre) to build this home
- Few of the city's 3-family homes conform to lot size requirements

In fact, today, you could not create a buildable lot of this size (6,000 SF required).

Testing Sustainability of Current Zoning

Is an existing 2-family home in a traditional urban neighborhood of the city legal under the current zoning?

Example: 20-22 Elizabeth, Ward 3

- Zoned URB
- Lot Size: 5,183 Square Feet
- Today, would need 12,000 SF to build this home

In fact, today, you could not create a buildable lot of this size (8,000 SF required).

Zoning Out Traditional Neighborhoods

Example: Walnut Street

Traditional Urban Neighborhood
- Sidewalks
- Street Trees
- Small Setbacks
- Walkable

Entire Street Zoned URC
- 6,000 sf min. lot size per unit

Zoning Out Traditional Neighborhoods

Example: Walnut Street – Lots that Do Not Conform to their Zoning (by lot size)

Address	Lot Size (SF)	# Units	Lot / Unit	Conforming
1 Walnut St	2,483	5	497	N
5 Walnut St	2,701	2	1350	N
9 Walnut St	3,311	2	1655	N
11 Walnut St	3,441	4	860	N
13 Walnut St	6,490	2	3245	N
16 Walnut St	12,981	2	6490	Y
17 Walnut St	6,229	3	2076	N
19 Walnut St	7,536	2	3768	N
20 Walnut St	7,405	2	3703	N
24 Walnut St	11,500	2	5750	N
25 Walnut St	6,011	1	6011	Y
29 Walnut St	4,792	0	N/A	N/A
32 Walnut St	14,810	1	14810	Y
33 Walnut St	4,312	1	4312	N
33 Walnut St	4,704	0	N/A	N/A
35 Walnut St	4,617	2	2309	N
38 Walnut St	6,273	2	3136	N
41 Walnut St	4,487	2	2243	N
42 Walnut St	9,278	4	2320	N
45 Walnut St	4,400	1	4400	N
46 Walnut St	6,403	2	3202	N
46 Walnut St	5,881	2	2940	N
48 Walnut St	3,311	1	3311	N
49 Walnut St	4,879	2	2439	N
50 Walnut St	6,403	1	6403	Y
55 Walnut St	4,661	2	2330	N
56 Walnut St	4,269	3	1423	N
60 Walnut St	6,970	2	3485	N

84% could not be built on these lots today!

Zoning Out Traditional Neighborhoods

Example: Walnut Street –Lots that Could Not be Built Today (by lot size)

Median Lot Area per Unit on Street: 3,169 SF.
Compare to requirement of 6,000 SF / Unit

This Analysis Accounted ONLY for Lot Size! Consider:

- **100′ min. frontage**
- **20′ min. front setback**
- **40% min. open space**

In all likelihood, there is not a single fully conforming building on this street.

This story is the same throughout the traditional neighborhoods of our city!!!

If created today, 48% of these lots would not even be buildable

Why Does This Matter?

- Traditional urban neighborhoods that are within walking distance of goods and services create a compact, energy efficient development pattern that enhances quality of life and supports sustainability goals

- Current zoning mandates development that is out of character with our best neighborhoods
  - Lot sizes, frontages, parking requirements, etc. don't match historic precedents

- The city's urban neighborhoods are losing housing units
  - When an existing non-conforming multifamily house is converted to a single family, it can never go back
  - Adding new buildings in developed areas (infill) is discouraged by the zoning code

- Lots that do not conform to their zoning are a hassle to land owners
  - Land owners often can't put additions on their houses or build garages
  - Land owners often can't change the use of a non-conforming lot
  - Land owners need to go through complicated procedures to be granted exceptions

Summary of Zoning Analysis

Comparing the Sustainable Northampton Plan (Zoning Goals) to the Current Zoning Ordinance

- **In most respects, the zoning does not reflect sustainability goals**
- **Many of our best neighborhoods could not be built under current zoning**
- **Emphasis on use-based regulation limits flexibility and mixed-use**
- **Parking requirements discourage infill development and force sprawl**
- **Rural areas are zoned for suburban sprawl**
- **Infill is discouraged in many ways**
- **Design standards to guide development are lacking, especially for infill**
- **The current zoning is very difficult to understand!**

Why Infill?

- *Infill* is new construction or redevelopment that 'fills in' empty lots or adds units or uses in areas that are already developed.

- Infill is an important tool for concentrating development in walkable neighborhoods, rather than sprawling into undeveloped areas.

- Infill is the historic pattern of development in Northampton

HISTORICAL GROWTH: 1800
POPULATION: 2,000

Downtown

HISTORICAL GROWTH: 1850
POPULATION: 6,000

Florence

HISTORICAL GROWTH: 1900
POPULATION: 18,500

Leeds

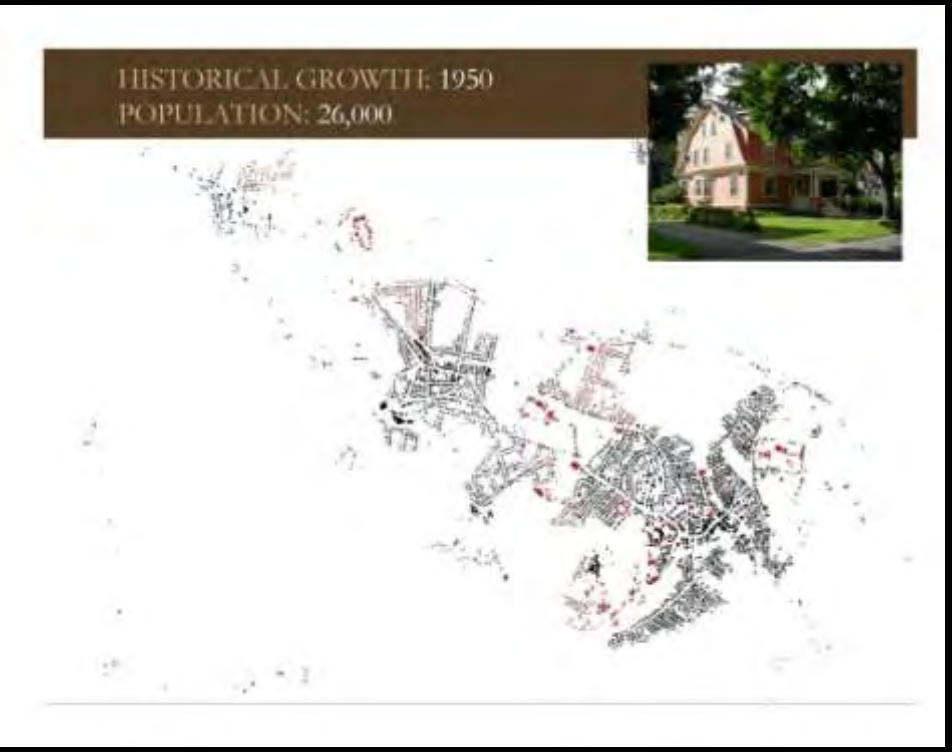
Elm St.
Neighborhoods

Baystate

South St.

HISTORICAL GROWTH: 1950
POPULATION: 26,000

Current Development Pattern=Sprawl



What Future Do We Want?

What is More Sustainable?

Infill and Sustainability

Infill rose to the surface as a critical issue for sustainability

Infill and the "Three E's"

Environment

- Infill reduces the need for new infrastructure
- Infill can be more energy efficient and lower carbon emissions
- Infill is less damaging to natural systems than "greenfield" development

Economy

- Infill can increase the number of shoppers walking to local businesses
- Infill can create more commercial real estate (which leads to more jobs)
- Infill makes public transit more viable

Equity

- Infill can create more housing and work spaces where people want to live and work
- Infill can provide a wide range of housing types that meet peoples' needs

Flavors of Infill

- New development on brown/grayfields
- Building taller/adding stories
- Adding units within existing buildings
- Converting outbuildings to new units
- Filling gaps in existing streets
- Building a larger number of small units on a lot that would currently only allow a single large structure
- Allowing multiple uses within single structures (multipurpose spaces)

Infill and Design

To meet the goals of Sustainable Northampton, traditional neighborhoods, village, and mixed-use commercial centers will need to accommodate additional units (infill).

Infill must be designed in a way that respects its surroundings and creates a "sense of place."

- How can we do infill in a way that makes the city a better place?

- Look at the following examples of infill .
  What do you like? What do you dislike?
  What specific elements of these projects work well?

  - Scale?
  - Materials?
  - Proportions?
  - Relationship to street?
  - Relationship to existing buildings?
  - Detailing (cornices, doorways, roofline)?
  - Color?
  - Green space?
  - Plants/Trees?
  - Parking?
  - Yards?

Infill Examples

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NEW YORK

Infill Examples

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NEW YORK

Infill Examples

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NEW YORK

Infill Examples

BLUE BACK SQUARE, WEST HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Infill Examples

BLUE BACK SQUARE, WEST HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

Infill Examples

MASHPEE COMMONS, MASHPEE, MASSACHUSETTS

Infill Examples

MASHPEE COMMONS, MASHPEE, MASSACHUSETTS

Infill Examples

CHURCHILL NEIGHBORHOOD, HOLYOKE, MASSACHUSETTS

Infill Examples

CHURCHILL NEIGHBORHOOD, HOLYOKE, MASSACHUSETTS

Infill Examples

POCKET NEIGHBORHOOD

Infill Examples – Historic-Style Architecture

PHOENIX HILL, LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

Infill Examples – Modern Architecture

DUTRA BROWN BUILDING, SAN DIEGO

Infill Examples – Contemporary Architecture

PROSPECT, COLORADO

Infill Examples In Northampton – Adaptive Reuse

MAIN STREET & SOUTH STREET

Infill Examples in Northampton - Additions

BRIDGE STREET & POMEROY TERRACE

Infill Examples in Northampton - Conversions

CARRIAGE HOUSE CONVERSION, BUTLER PLACE

Infill Examples in Northampton

STATE STREET – FLY BY NIGHT

Infill Examples in Northampton

STRONG AVENUE

Where Should Future Infill Happen in Northampton?

Where Should Future Infill Happen in Northampton?

What Should Infill Look Like in Northampton? King Street…

SARATOGA SPRINGS → NORTHAMPTON

What Should Infill Look Like in Northampton? King Street…

VISIONING NORTHAMPTON

What Should Infill Look Like in Northampton? King Street…

VISIONING NORTHAMPTON

What Should Infill Look Like in Northampton? King Street…

VISIONING NORTHAMPTON

What Should Infill Look Like? Garage Conversions…

What Should Infill Look Like? Invisible Infill…

Converting existing 2-family homes into 3-family homes …

If this lot were created today, it would not even buildable under current zoning.

The End!

Tonight's Discussion

What are your hopes and concerns for your neighborhood…for the city?

What are the ingredients of effective infill that has occurred in your neighborhood? Other parts of Northampton? What characterizes infill that has not been well done?

Where are the best opportunities for future infill in the City? Are there some in your neighborhood? What kinds of infill would be appropriate?

Considering your vision of a sustainable Northampton, what are the key zoning issues in both your neighborhood and the City as a whole?

- Infill development
- King St. revitalization; Conz and Pleasant Streets
- Walkability and transit
- Attracting business and jobs
- Agriculture; urban, suburban and rural
- Energy use and conservation
- Design and urban form
- Affordable Housing
- Open space preservation