

# Great Road District

Amendments to Section 22 of the Zoning Bylaw

Proposed by the Planning Board

November 1, 2021 Special Town Meeting

Article 8

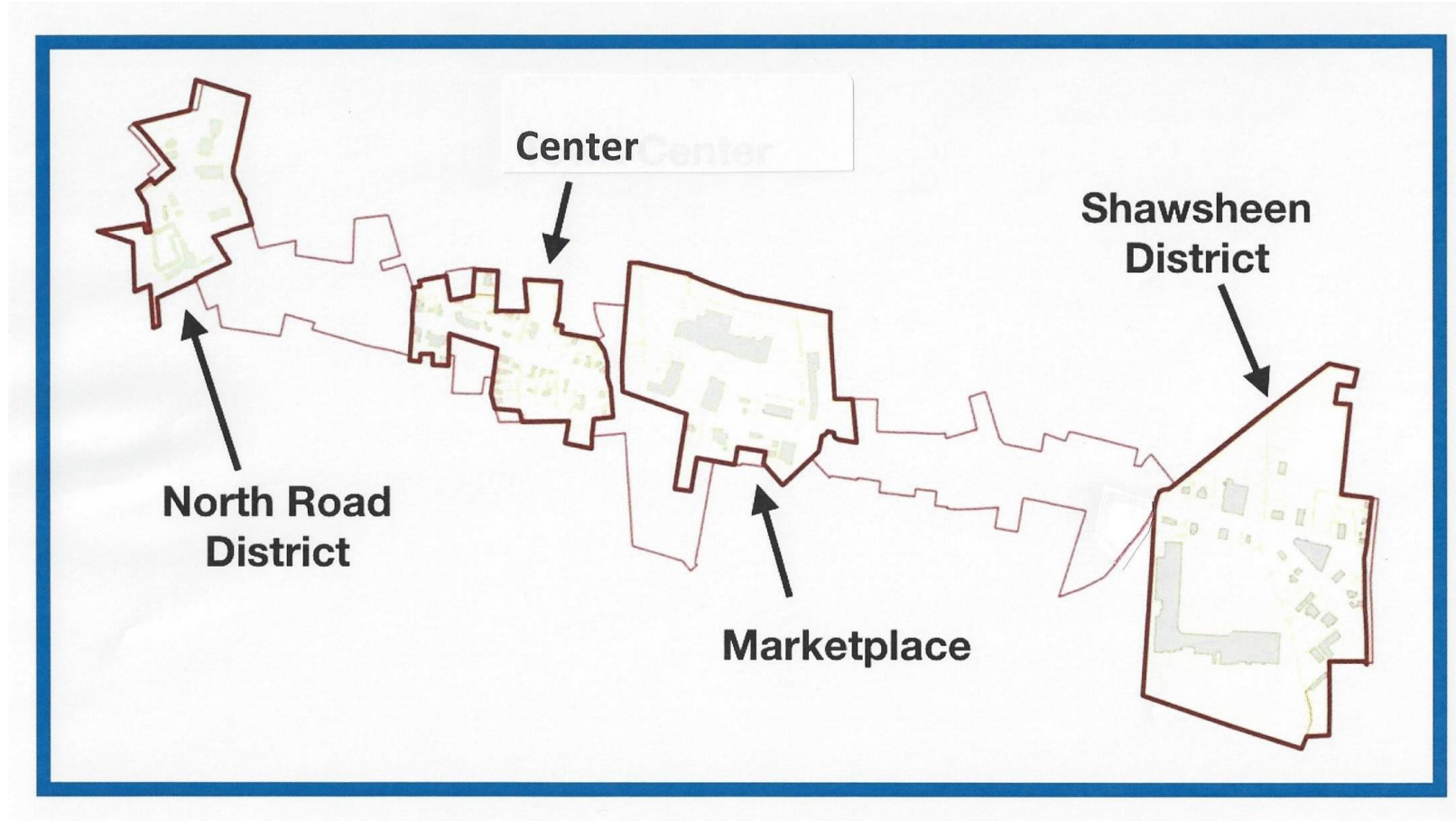
# Article 8 – Great Road District amendments

This Article proposes a series of amendments to Section 22 of the Zoning Bylaw governing the Great Road Districts.

Some of the amendments are substantive while others are administrative or editorial in nature.

The proposed changes are presented in order of policy magnitude rather than in numeric order.

# The Great Road District



# Height limit in the Shawsheen Subdistrict

The ability to allow a fourth story under certain limited conditions in the Shawsheen Subdistrict is reintroduced.

- A special permit would be required.
- A 4<sup>th</sup> story would only be allowed when the subject building is set back on the property behind one or more other buildings.
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> stories can only be residential uses.
- Architectural design controls would apply.

# Height limit in the Shawsheen Subdistrict

Experience to date and professional opinions suggest that a 4<sup>th</sup> story may be needed to incentivize desired types of development. Only two existing lots would support this redevelopment.

- The comparatively shallow depth of most properties suggests that the Mead property at 32 Shawsheen Avenue and the Great Road Shopping Center are the only two properties where a rear building with a fourth story could be proposed, because the side and rear setbacks also increase in relation to height. These two properties are highlighted on the next slide.

This concept achieved majority support at Town Meeting in 2018, but not the required 2/3 majority for adoption.

# Height limit in the Shawsheen Subdistrict



# Expanded special permit authority

Planning Board power to modify certain dimensional criteria by special permit is proposed to be expanded.

Experience with actual redevelopment in the corridor along with preliminary discussions about potential future projects identified that strict compliance with certain dimensional criteria can inhibit redevelopment, especially for owners of smaller properties in the corridor.

In some instances, owners would currently require a separate special permit or variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals to complete the proposed improvements to their property.

This change is intended to allow the property owner to obtain all needed approvals from one board.

# Expanded special permit authority

- In order to grant waivers by special permit, the Planning Board must find that it will better serve the public interest and/or foster better site design in the redevelopment of properties in the four subdistricts that comprise the Great Road District.
- Waivers of the criteria for maximum height and minimum landscaping percentage cannot be granted.



# Horizontal mixed use in the Town Center Subdistrict

Horizontal mixed use is proposed to be allowed in the Town Center Subdistrict. This change is anticipated to help to preserve existing barns and similar outbuildings in that subdistrict.

- During the public hearing, it was brought to the Planning Board's attention that there are properties with multiple existing structures that have historically been used for residential purposes. This change would allow for residential use to be re-established in a mixed-use arrangement. This is also consistent with the other 3 subdistricts.

# Restaurants in mixed-use development

“Restaurant” is proposed to be specified as an allowed use in both vertical and horizontal mixed use.

- It was always intended that dining options be encouraged but this was not explicitly stated in the bylaw definition of mixed use.

# Sidewalk criteria clarified

Clarifications are proposed to create better consistency about interpretation of minimum formal sidewalk width, landscape buffer, and “public realm”.

- 3’ minimum landscape buffer between edge of street and sidewalk
- 5’ minimum sidewalk width (consistent with handicapped accessibility minimum standards)
- 10’ minimum width for “pedestrian realm” between the street and the building façade. This may be landscaping, street furniture, or other public amenities in addition to the formal sidewalk.

# Purpose

The following additional purpose statement related to flexibility in the application of the rules is proposed:

- Enable some flexibility in the application of these requirements to foster continued investment in the development and redevelopment of properties along Bedford's "main street".

# Administrative changes

The remaining changes provide clarification, improve grammar, or correct typographical errors.

- The superscript “1” becomes unnecessary in sections 22.3.4 for Minimum Façade Buildout and 22.3.4 for Maximum Ground Floor Entrance Spacing and Minimum Depth of Common Spaces
- Clarification in 22.4.2 (c) adds “or beside” to help indicate that such signs are not required to be placed on the sidewalk
- Typo in 22.4.2.3 is corrected, for the word “infeasible”
- Grammar is improved in 22.4.3.3
- Typo is corrected in 22.4.8.h by striking the word “with”

# Summary

The Planning Board conducted a public hearing at its meetings of August 24 and September 14, 2021.

The Planning Board reviewed Section 22 in light of experience. It recommends approval of the article and requests your support.