

PLANNING BOARD

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**TOWN OF DEDHAM
PLANNING BOARD
2025 FALL TOWN MEETING
RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT**

October 31, 2025

This report summarizes the seven (7) Planning Board-sponsored zoning amendments and one (1) Town Meeting member sponsored zoning amendment that appear on the 2025 Fall Town Meeting Warrant and the Planning Board's Recommendations to Town Meeting. The Town Meeting warrant, documents, and information are available on the Fall Town Meeting 2025 website here: www.dedham-ma.gov/2025FallTM

Article 7 Purpose

The purpose of Article 7 is to update the Town's existing Off-Street Parking Requirements (Table 3) to better match minimum required parking with real demand. The revisions will align parking requirements with industry standards and surrounding communities, simplify regulation language, reduce the fiscal and regulatory burden of off-street parking requirements for commercial development, reduce impervious surfaces within the Town, and support the beautification of the Town's commercial corridors (Providence Highway, Washington Street, etc.).

Background Summary

Table 3 of the Zoning Bylaw regulates the required minimum number of off-street parking spaces for specific uses (single family dwellings, office, restaurants, etc.). Table 3 has not been updated since 1978. As such, the requirements for off-street parking spaces have not kept pace with modern standards or surrounding community practices. The result is an oversupply of parking spaces for certain uses and excessive pavement in the Town's commercial corridors.

Proposed Zoning Change

PZNR staff have been working diligently with the Planning Board to develop Article 7 since July 2024. In summary, the Table 3 updates include:

- Clarify existing language while adjusting parking ratios by use type (office, retail, restaurants, etc.);
- Base revisions on a comparative analysis of 12 surrounding communities and data averages acquired by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) parking averages for commercial uses; and
- Maintain ability to provide more than the minimum parking required as needed.

No changes to parking requirements for residential uses (single family dwellings, multi-family dwellings, etc.) are proposed.

Work to Date by the Planning Board:

- Review of existing off-street parking regulations (October 2024)
- Review/discuss revisions/updates to existing off-street parking regulations (December 2024)
- Review/discuss revisions to proposed off-street parking regulations (May 2025)
- Submission of Fall 2025 Town Meeting Article 7

Planning Board Recommendation

The Planning Board held the required public hearing regarding Article 7 on October 8, 2025. On October 22, 2025, the Planning Board voted unanimously (5-0) to recommend approval to Town Meeting.

Article 8 Purpose

Article 8 establishes new definitions for building coverage and lot coverage, as well as “housekeeping” updates to reflect the new definitions. The changes will provide clarity to reduce impervious surfaces (i.e., asphalt) and promote more greenspace in the Town’s commercial corridors.

Background Summary

As part of Article 7’s purpose to update minimum parking requirements for commercial uses, the Planning Board sought to correspondingly increase the amount of greenspace in the Town’s commercial corridors. To achieve this goal, new definitions for building coverage and lot coverage are needed. Building coverage is ratio of the total square footage of building footprints (dwellings, sheds, garages, etc.) as compared to a property size. Lot coverage is the ratio of total square footage of building footprints and impervious surfaces (driveways, walkways, etc.) as compared to a property size. By regulating both building and lot coverages, the Planning Board can set maximum requirements for the amount of coverage on a property (see accompanying Article 9) which as a direct influence on the amount of greenspace needed on a property.

In July 2025, PZNR staff reviewed lot and building coverage definitions of surrounding communities to develop new definitions.

Proposed Zoning Changes

- Establish new definitions for Building Coverage and Lot Coverage (280-10.1);
- Amend the Table of Dimensional Requirements (Table 2) to change Maximum Lot Coverage to Maximum Building Coverage; and
- Replace Lot Coverage with Building Coverage within the Hospitals and Related Facilities (280-6.2), Assisted Living Facilities (280-7.5), and Senior Campus District Facilities (280-7.6).

Planning Board Recommendation

The Planning Board held the required public hearing regarding Article 8 on October 8, 2025. On October 22, 2025, the Planning Board voted unanimously (5-0) to recommend approval to Town Meeting.

Article 9 Purpose

Article 9 will update landscaping regulations to include a new landscaping purpose statement and establish maximum lot coverage requirements to promote more greenspace in the large commercial zoning districts.

Background Summary

Article 9 provides additional regulations to increase greenspace in the Town’s commercial corridors. Section 280-5.2 of the Zoning Bylaw regulates landscaping requirements for any properties that provide more than ten (10) off-street parking spaces, with review by the Planning Board. After reviewing surrounding communities landscaping regulations, the Dedham Zoning Bylaw provides stringent landscaping requirements. However, most communities regulate the amount of lot coverage allowed on a property. Regulating lot coverage on a property is the most effective means to provide more greenspace on a property. As such, Planning Department staff analyzed relevant GIS data for impervious surfaces in Dedham’s large commercial corridors to develop maximum lot coverages for commercial districts.

Proposed Zoning Changes

- Establish new purpose statement to reinforce landscaping as an integral component of site design;
- Add new maximum impervious coverage percentages for RDO, HB, and LMA¹ zoning districts to promote and increase greenspace;
- Enable waivers for lot coverage;
- Require site plans to show lot coverage calculations; and
- “Housekeeping” changes to remove all references to a Site Plan Approval Design Manual from landscaping regulations which does not exist.

Planning Board Recommendation

The Planning Board held the required public hearing regarding Article 9 on October 8, 2025. On October 22, 2025, the Planning Board voted unanimously (5-0) to recommend approval to Town Meeting.

Article 10 Purpose

Article 10 updates Planning Board Site Plan Review application requirements. The changes require the inclusion of all parking infrastructure (number of spaces, type, sizes, signs, aisle widths, etc.) on a site and mandate site plans include lot coverage and building coverages.

¹ Research, Development and Office (RDO), Highway Business (HB), and Light Manufacturing A (LMA)

Background Summary

In May 2025, the Planning Board requested application documents required as part of Site Plan Review be updated to include the location of all compact, standard, and accessible parking spaces within site plans. Materials submitted were inconsistently omitting such parking details to allow the Planning Board to make effective decisions.

Proposed Zoning Changes

The following changes are proposed to be included on Site Plan Review applications per Zoning Bylaw Section 280-9.5(D.):

- Locations of all compact, standard, and accessible parking spaces;
- Identification of all parking signage; and
- Added lot coverage and building coverage to information required.

Planning Board Recommendation

The Planning Board held the required public hearing regarding Article 10 on October 8, 2025. On October 22, 2025, the Planning Board voted unanimously (5-0) to recommend approval to Town Meeting.

Article 11 Purpose

Article 11 will update the regulation of split lots. A “split lot” is a lot located in two (or more) zoning districts. The current split lot regulations are difficult to understand and provide little guidance on use of a split lot property. The changes will provide property owners that have split lots more clarity, predictability, and align with split lot regulations in other communities.

Background Summary

The issue with a "split lot" is that a single property located within two or more zoning districts creates significant challenges for future use of a property in the form of conflicting regulations, potentially limiting the usability of the land and ultimately leading to uncertainty. The majority, if not all, of split lots in Dedham involve a property that has both residential and commercial zoning.

Standard planning practices have zoning district boundary lines follow lot lines, streets, lots, and other natural boundaries in order to avoid split lots. The best solution is a rezoning effort similar to the Bridge Street Corridor Plan, which was overwhelmingly approved at Spring 2025 Town Meeting to eliminate split lots along Bridge Street. Applying a similar approach town wide is a significant undertaking that could take many years. Therefore, in the meantime, changing the current regulation is the most efficient path forward.

Proposed Zoning Changes

- Update split lot regulations to permit the use and dimensional regulations of the zoning district in which the lot has frontage to apply the entire lot. This means properties that have commercial zoning in the front of a property and residential to the rear may elect to have the commercial zoning apply to the property. Currently the only allowance for split lots is the lot area requirements of the zoning district in which principle use (usually the building) is located can apply to the entire lot.

Existing requirements under the Dedham Zoning By-Law will still provide protection to abutting lots, including general building and parking lot setbacks, buffer areas, lot coverage, and landscaping requirements. Furthermore, existing uses will continue to be protected with the proposed change.

Planning Board Recommendation

The Planning Board held the required public hearing regarding Article 11 on October 8, 2025. On October 22, 2025, the Planning Board voted unanimously (5-0) to recommend approval to Town Meeting.

Article 12 Purpose

Article 12 will delete language related to a Mixed-Use Moratorium in the Dedham Zoning By-Law. The moratorium is no longer valid.

Background Summary

In May 2019, Town Meeting adopted a temporary moratorium (Article 19) on issuance of special permits for the use of land or structures for mixed use developments. The intention of the moratorium was to study the future implications and impact of mixed-use developments in Dedham. The moratorium expired on November 30, 2019, and mixed-use developments have since been permitted. The outdated moratorium language remains within the By-Law and Article 12 will delete it.

Proposed Zoning Changes

- Removal of Section 280-7.4 (F.) Mixed Use Moratorium.

Planning Board Recommendation

The Planning Board held the required public hearing regarding Article 12 on October 8, 2025. On October 22, 2025, the Planning Board voted unanimously (5-0) to recommend approval to Town Meeting.

Article 13 Purpose

Article 13 will delete the second sentence of footnote 17 of Planned Commercial Development (PC) in Use Tables of the Dedham Zoning By-Law. The language to be deleted was approved by Fall 2022 Town Meeting (Article 7) by a vote of 184 to 45 to allow life science-style and other technology related campuses on a select group of properties abutting Route 128/95 through a conditional permit by the Planning Board.

Background Summary

Accompanying this report is supplemental information describing the historical context and timeline for the development of Article 7 from Fall 2022 Town Meeting. Also enclosed is a presentation by the Planning Board on October 22 2025, summarizing the motivations for the original (2022) zoning and the current zoning context relative to Article 13. The information shows the Planning Board undertook a transparent and thorough approach toward incentivizing commercial growth of the life science industry in the Town of Dedham.

At the public hearing and during deliberations, Planning Board members raised several questions and concerns about Article 13:

- Article 7 of 2022 was not “spot zoning” (a zoning change solely for the economic benefit of a property owner) and in fact met established legal criteria and was approved by the Attorney General.
- Article 7 of 2022 was intentionally written to create a small, targeted area for life science campus-style developments close to highways and minimize impacts to Dedham’s neighborhoods and traffic patterns.
- The Planning Board is empowered to impose conditions, limitations and safeguards to protect any potential developments under the zoning in question from impacting residential neighborhoods. In fact, the authority of the Planning Board to protect the interests of neighbors and the town at large is greater with a technology campus type project than it would be for several types of projects that could be developed “by-right” in this same area, including educational campuses.
- Article 7 of 2022 was consistent with previous master plan’s and the current Designing Dedham 2035 Master Plan, which discuss increasing the life science/technology industry and expanding the Town’s commercial base, and encouraging local job growth.
- A YES vote on Article 13 by Town Meeting members will not prevent the developer from proposing the preliminary “Campus at 128” development project to the Planning Board. The developer filed preliminary plans on September 26, 2025 with the Planning Board that begin the process to freeze zoning on specific properties for seven years.

Every Planning Board member stated they were committed to a robust and transparent community process should a development be filed with the Planning Board. Multiple Planning Board members stated concerns that a YES vote on Article 13 by Town Meeting members would significantly reduce the ability of the Planning Board to work with a developer to reduce the impacts of a potential project on the community and create a project that best works for the Town of Dedham.

Planning Board Recommendation

The Planning Board held the required public hearing regarding Article 13 on October 8, 2025. On October 22, 2025, the Planning Board voted 3-1 to recommend indefinite postponement to Town Meeting. Vice Chair Porter, Member O’Brien, and Member McGrail all voted in favor, Member Podolski voted opposed, and Chair Bethoney recused himself.