Littleton King Street Common Phase 1 Retail Development - Peer Review

December 15, 2025

Review by Utile Architecture and Planning

Contents

This peer review is divided into 2 sections: a review at the **master plan / site-wide scale** followed by a review at the **building-specific scale**. Comments within each section are generally grounded in the respective FBC ordinances (VC and KSC), with the relevant codes cited. Additional comments are based on architectural and urban design best practices, particularly on how the proposed development may best relate to the Littleton Common district and enhance the public realm more broadly.

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Site-Wide Scale Review

Site-Wide Scale Review: **Summary**

The Phase 1 Retail Development does a good job at creating an active and walkable cluster, with ground floor retail fronting the central pedestrian way and “the green”. However, upon close review, we have 3 main areas of concern and recommendations for improvement below. Each are elaborated on the subsequent slides.

1. **Engage and activate King Street:** While the development creates a east-west mid-block pedestrian way, the buildings along King St effectively turn their backs on King Street, its sidewalk, and by extension the Town’s public realm.
2. **Reduce and vary the buildings’ sizes and scales:** While the 5 buildings’ configurations are “farmhouse-like”, most of the critical dimensions of said buildings (i.e., the widths and depths of primary massings) well exceed their maximums, resulting in buildings out of scale with the Littleton Common district.
3. **Reference Littleton’s agrarian history more:** While the design narrative cites several times that the landscape and architecture design is (generically) New England, this project should further highlight Littleton’s farming past, such as with stonewalls, natural materials, (assemblies of) simple barn-like structures, etc.

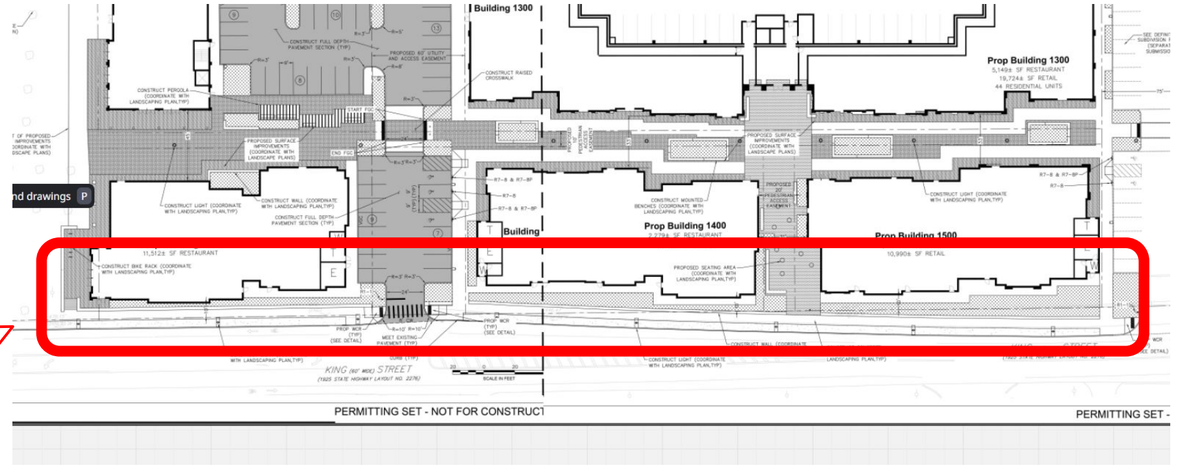
Site-Wide Scale Comment **#1: Engage and activate King Street**

Non-active, uninviting frontage areas along King Street

Creating an east-west mid-block pedestrian way should not come at the expense of creating a non-active, uninviting presence along King Street, its sidewalk, and the public realm.

The frontage area (area between the buildings and King St sidewalk, highlighted in red at right) are rendered as simply suburban front lawns (both in the masterplan and in the recent phase 1 submission). While the phase 1 submission shows a narrow walkway just outside the facades, there are no connections to the sidewalk.

Each building along a public realm is *required* to have a frontage type (e.g., entry plaza, dining patio, etc.) meant to activate their fronts, invite pedestrians, and provide added sidewalk amenities (e.g., seating, bike racks, etc.). (§173-221.N. Frontage Types and §173-222.A.f. Frontage Area Landscape Design)



Non-active, uninviting facades and frontage areas along King St

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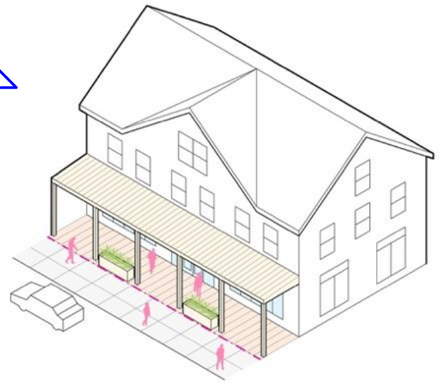
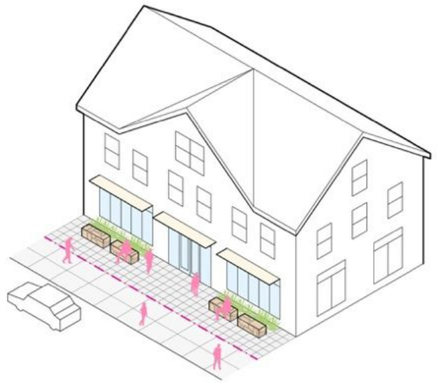
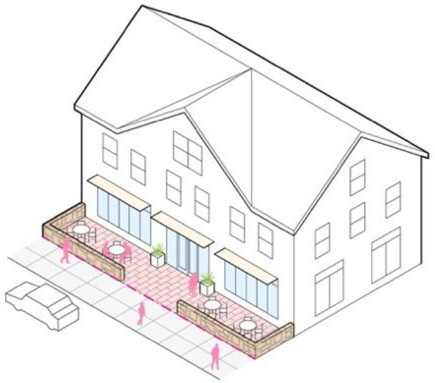
Required frontage type options along King St; see §173-221.N. for details



Gallery



Entry Plaza



Dining Patio

Front Garden

Site-Wide Scale Comment **#1: Engage and activate King Street**

Convert obscured/frosted glass to transparent glass facing King St

The renderings of buildings along King St show transparent glass, but they are in fact listed as *Obscured Glass* in the project submittals, meaning they're translucent / frosted, which signals they're the back of buildings and present an uninviting facade. Additionally, obscure glass does not meet the transparency requirements of fenestration for commercial use facing a primary street. (§173-221.G. Fenestration)

Furthermore, increase the fenestration percent for each of these facades facing King St to meet the 60% minimum. (§173-221.K. General Building Standards)

Use and Features	Required	1100	1200	1300	1400	1500	
Ground Story	Any Use per ~~173-221.J~~ 173-229	Retail/ Restaurant	Retail/ Restaurant	Retail/ Restaurant/ Residential/ Parking	Retail/ Restaurant	Retail/ Restaurant	173-229 of King Street
Upper Story	Any Use per ~~173-221.J~~ 173-229	Retail/ Restaurant	N/A	Residential/ Parking	N/A	N/A	173-229 of King Street
Ground Story Fenestration	60% min (Commercial)***	PW: 83.8%, G: 84.2%	PW: 63.9%, G: 63.3%	PW: 60.3%	PW: 67%	PW: 63%	*** Façade facing the
	15% min / 25% max (Residential)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	
	King Street Fenetration	83.8%	42%****	60.3%	53.6%****	26.1%****	****Obscured Glass
Upper Story Fenestration (min/max)	15% / 25%	45.5%	N/A	24.1%	N/A	N/A	

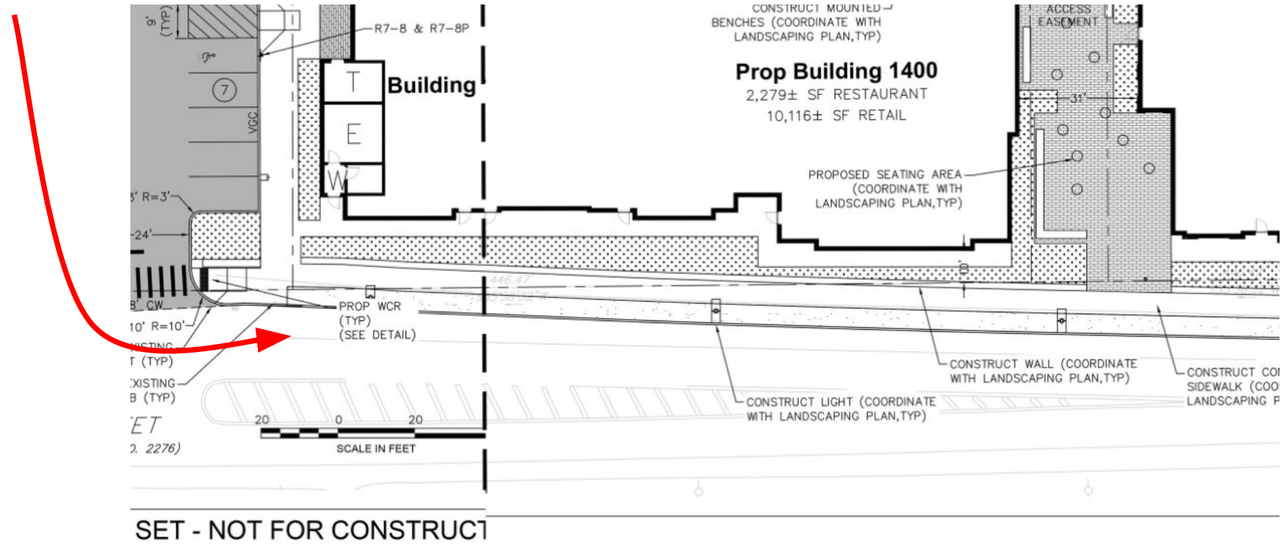
Site-Wide Scale Comment **#1: Engage and activate King Street**

Bring back on-street parking spaces

The previous master plan includes on-street parking spaces along King Street and this appears to be been removed. We strongly recommend bringing them back because they would promote an active “main street” urban environment and signal an invitation to locals and passersby on King Street.

If this is not possible entirely within the ROW, we recommending pushing this into the parcel as needed, much like the Conant General Store down the street on King St.

Parallel parking in front of the Conant store on King St

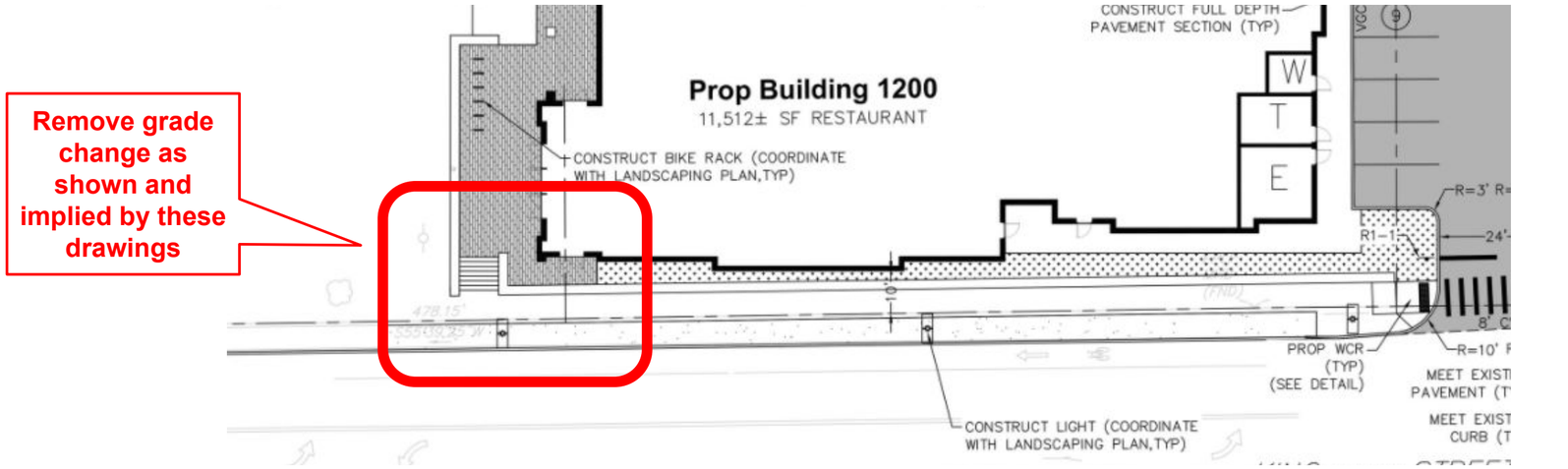


Site-Wide Scale Comment **#1: Engage and activate King Street**

Remove any grade change from King St sidewalk to buildings along King St

The site plan and rendering shows a significant grade change between the King St sidewalk and the floor elevation of buildings along King St (at least Building 1200). This creates an accessibility challenge and further disconnects these buildings from the King St pedestrian realm.

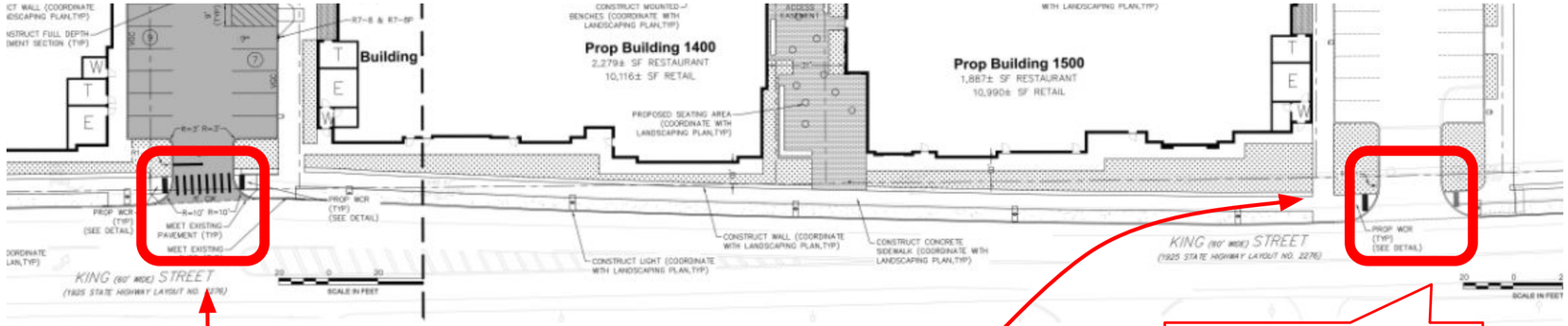
We recommend re-grading the site to remove any grade change between these buildings and the sidewalk, and shifting the grading to “the green” and one layer inward, such as using the depth of the first row of buildings, etc.



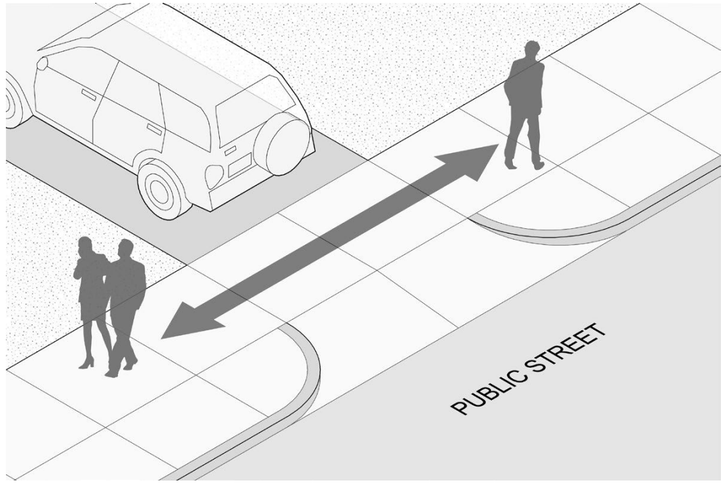
Site-Wide Scale Comment **#1: Engage and activate King Street**

Ensure sidewalk is continuous at curb cuts

To promote a safe and welcoming pedestrian environment along King St, ensure that the sidewalk at the curb cuts along King St are *continuous and co-planar*. In effect, it should imitate the mid-block crossings on axis with the Pedestrian Way in terms of a raised/tabled sidewalk and a ramp that is located only along the furnishing zone. (§173-224.H.c. & d. Sidewalk Curb Cuts)



Sidewalk material, grade, and appearance at curb cuts should be continuous



Sidewalk Continuity at Curb Cuts

Site-Wide Scale Comment **#1: Engage and activate King Street**

Project example that engage and activate the sidewalk & public realm:

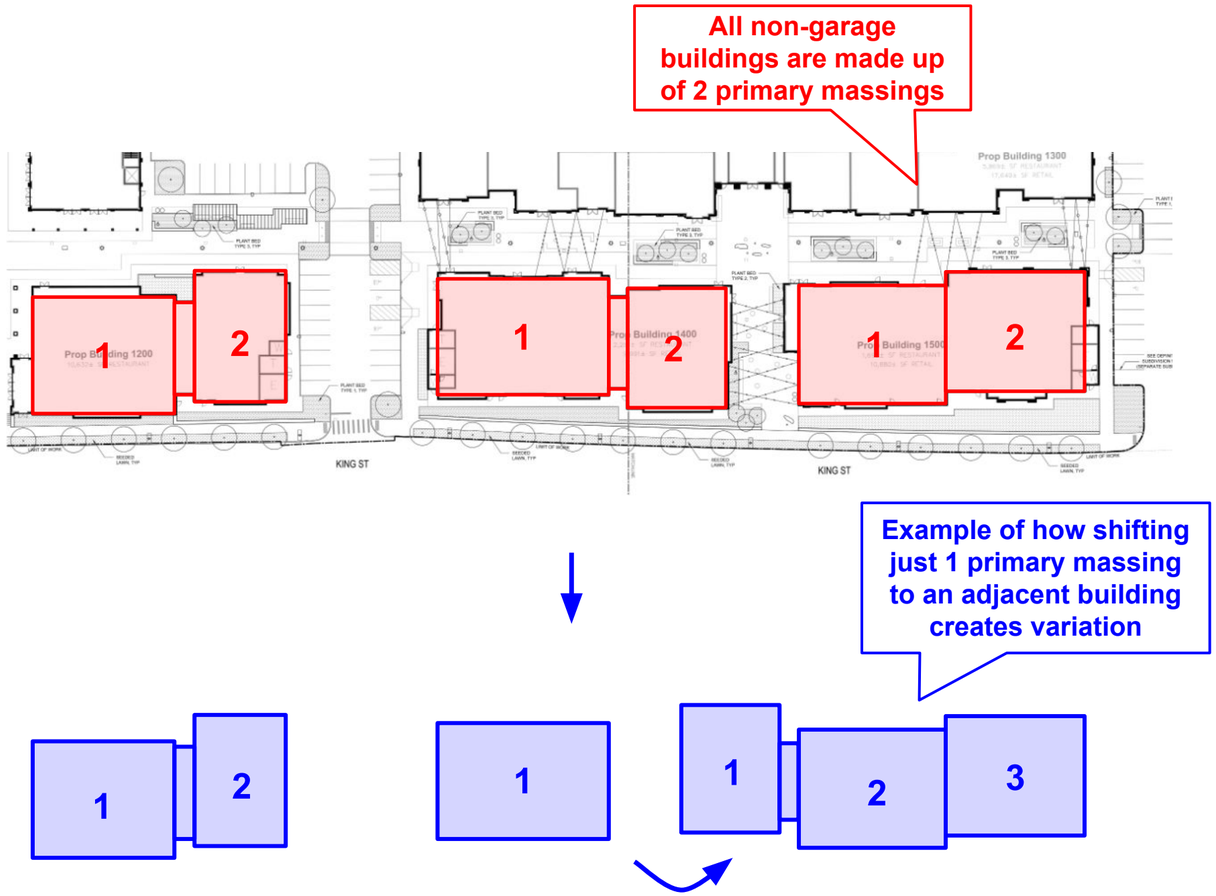
525 Mass Ave, West Acton uses small, contextually-scaled buildings and courtyards along the street to engage and activate it with retail storefronts, outdoor seating, inviting plazas, covered porches, etc. while also hiding the main bulk of the building at the rear.

Site-Wide Scale Comment **#2: Reduce and Vary the Building Size/Scales**

Vary the building primary massing combinations

In the Phase 1 Retail Development, all buildings (except the wrapped-garage building) are composed of exactly 2 primary massings (a few with a connecting side addition). We recommend adding more combination variety to reduce this repetition, especially as perceived from King Street. (§173-222.A.a. Differ Massing Combinations)

Adding building combination variety can still result in a similar total gross square feet. For example, Building 1400 and 1500 can be revised from a pair of two-primary massings building to a pair of three-primary massings building next to a single-primary massing building (see diagram at right). This variety breaks up a potential monotonous urban rhythm and accommodates a range of tenant types and sizes. (§173-221.M. Example Massing Combinations)



IMPORTANT: Most critical dimensions of these buildings well exceed the maximum widths and depths – see next slide and the Building-Specific Scale Review section of this document.

Site-Wide Scale Comment **#2: Reduce and Vary the Building Size/Scales**

Reduce the *perceived* scale of the buildings

As noted above, most of the critical dimensions of the proposed buildings (i.e., widths and depths) *well exceed* the prescribed maximums in the FBC ordinance, resulting in oversized buildings out of scale with the Littleton Common district. (§173-221.K. General Building Standards Primary Massing)

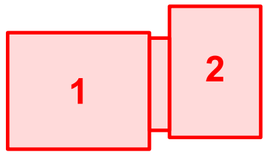
Importantly, in most cases, reducing the *perceived* scale does not necessarily mean a significant reduction in the total building square feet (recognizing that some tenants have minimum area requirements). For example, a building consisting of 2 oversized primary massings can be made smaller in perceived scale (and code compliant) without sacrificing building area by shifting to 3 smaller primary massings and a few added building components. (§173-221.M. Example Massing Combinations)

This section is further elaborated on in the Building-Specific Scale Review section of this document.

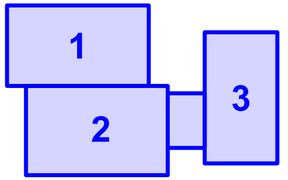
All buildings have critical dimensions that exceed the maximum widths / depths, resulting in buildings that are out of scale with Littleton Common

Building Standards						
Standard	**Required**	**1100**	**1200**	**1300**	**1400**	**1500**
Primary Massing(s)						
Width(s) (max)	45ft (narrow end oriented front)	62'/62'	56'	40'/40'	61'	N/A
	60ft (long side oriented front)	N/A	86'-5"	119'/124'	100'-9"	89'-3"/ 82'-9"
Depth(s) (max)	90ft (narrow end oriented front)	71'/73'	76'	152'-8"/152'-8"	72'	N/A
	45ft (long side oriented front)	N/A	72'	42'-9"/42'-9"	72'	72'/72'

Non-Compliant Primary Massings = Oversized Building



Compliant Primary Massings = Appropriately Scaled Building

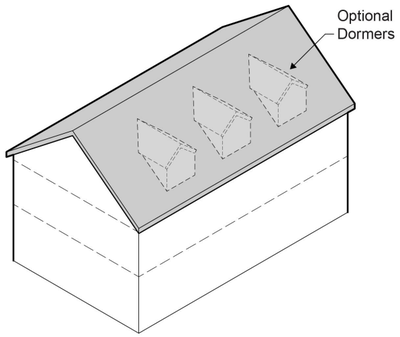


Example of how a building of 2 oversized primary massings can be made smaller in perceived scale without sacrificing building area by shifting to an assembly of 3 smaller zoning-compliant primary massings.

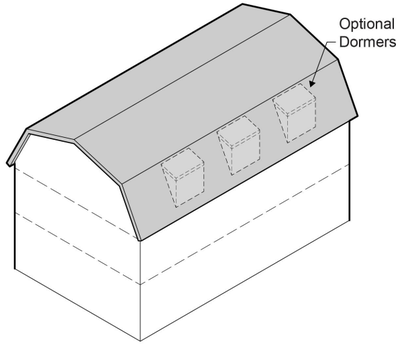
Site-Wide Scale Comment **#2: Reduce and Vary the Building Size/Scales**

Vary roof forms

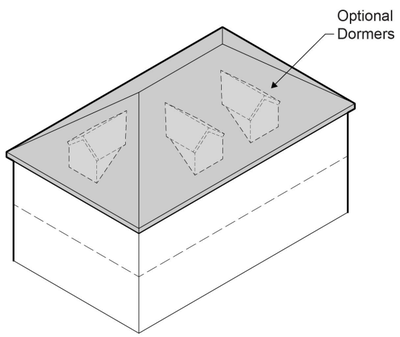
The proposal currently only includes gabled roofs, which, while compliant, misses an opportunity to introduce some roof form variety (can just be a few primary massings). For example, the gambrel roof recalls the Littleton farming history.



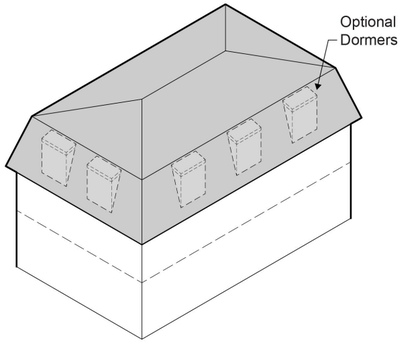
Gable roof



Gambrel roof



Hip roof

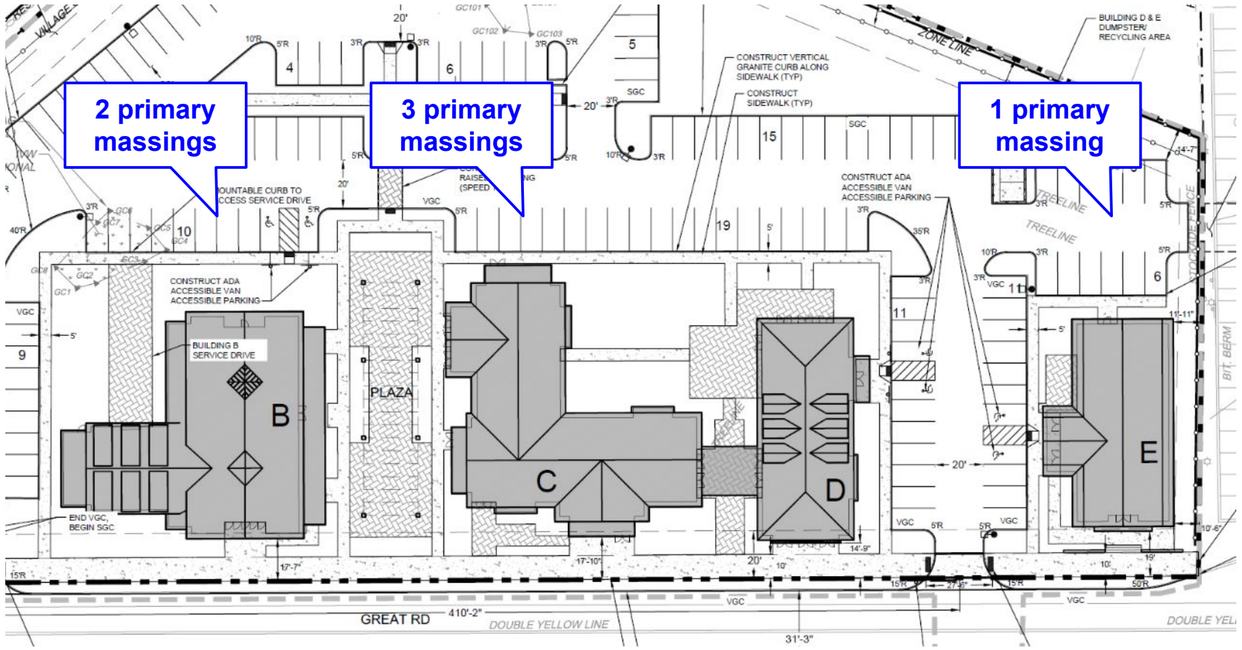


Mansard roof

All roof forms in proposal are gable; project can introduce a few moments of roof form variety

Site-Wide Scale Comment **#2: Reduce and Vary the Building Size/Scales**

Project example that vary the massing combinations and are within the maximum footprints:



The Northern Bank master plan on Great Rd includes building assemblages composed of varying numbers of primary massings (left to right from 2 to 3 to 1). The primary massings are also compliant with the maximum widths and depths.

Site-Wide Scale Comment **#3: Reference Littleton's Agrarian Past More**

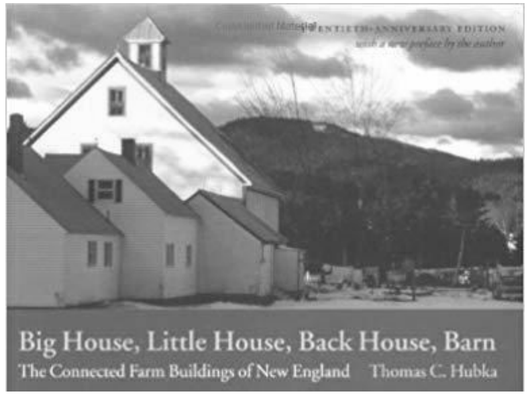
"Emphasize the Town's sense of history as a farming community" (§173-233)

As written in the project narrative, the project is "designed in a distinctly New England architectural language…sloped roofs, predominantly gables, reinforce the New England character…the material palette…all reflect New England's long-established architectural vernacular." We recommend the project revise its landscape and architectural design to go beyond generic New England style and strengthen its references to Littleton's *agrarian history*. (§173-233)

Above all, we recommend simplicity and a down-to-earth natural material palette. In general, there should be a maximum of *3 materials per building*. (§173-222.A.d. Limited Type and Color of Materials)

For example, architecturally, buildings could be (assemblages of) more simple barn-like structures with lean-to porches supported by simple exposed wood columns (i.e., not clad in broad PVC-like boards). Siding can be clapboard-like or board-and-batten. Instead of a brick wall, buildings can rest on stone bases.

And in terms of landscape, open spaces could incorporate more fieldstone walls / steps, exposed (crushed) granite, and non-cultivated vegetation (e.g., hedgerows, grasslands, woodlands), all of which also have sustainability co-benefits. (§173-222.A.g. Agrarian Landscape Design)



Site-Wide Scale Comment **#3: Reference Littleton's Agrarian Past More**

Mixed-use project example whose landscape and architecture leans into the site's farming history

The Summit Farm Roastery is a mixed-use residential-retail masterplan in North Carolina whose landscape design and architectural character is a contemporary interpretation of the farms and simple barns that originally occupied the area. Note the simple barn-like structures, stonewalls, standing-seam roofs, exposed structures, granite plazas, etc.

Building-Specific Scale Review

Building-Specific Scale Review: **Summary**

The Phase 1 Retail Development's 5 buildings are made up of a variety of primary massings and building components, each of which are clearly dimensioned and labeled on the submitted drawings. However, as mentioned earlier, **the main concern is that most of the critical dimensions of these buildings (e.g., widths and depths of primary massings) *well exceed* the maximums, resulting in oversized buildings out of scale with the Common**. Additionally, the facades of buildings along King St do not meet the fenestration and primary entrance requirements.

This section reviews the "typical buildings" first followed by the wrapped-garage building 1300 (since the latter is substantially different). We include in this document the areas of concern and comments we deem the most critical, skipping over those we see as less important areas of non-compliance (e.g., Building 1100's height exceeding the max by 3 ft).

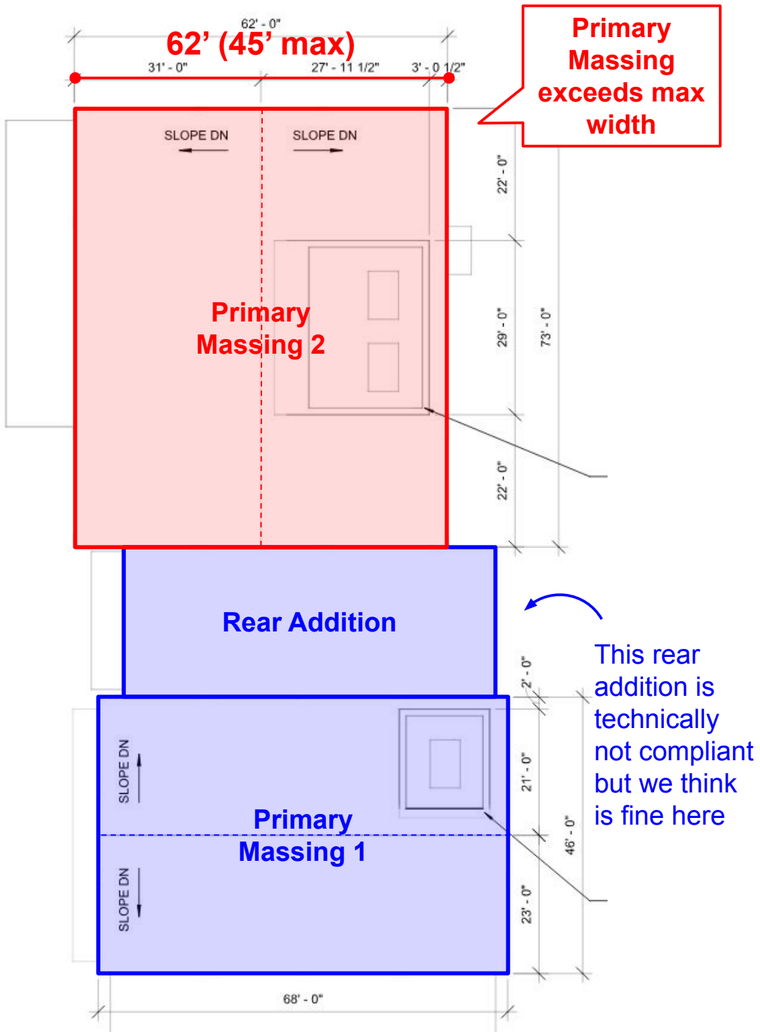
Please note this section should be viewed as *complementary* to the previous section, not superseding it. For example, buildings should *both* vary its assembly configurations *and* ensure they comply with the maximum dimensions.

Building-Specific Scale Comments: **Building 1100**

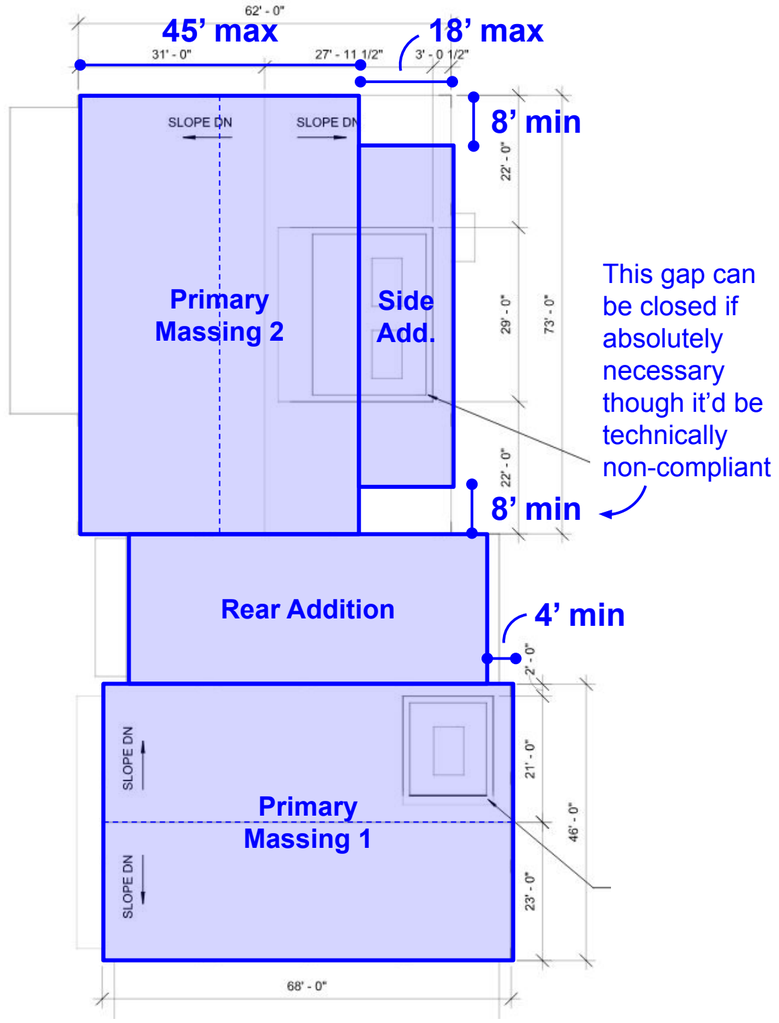
Ensure building is appropriately scaled

Building 1100's north primary massing's width exceeds the maximum (62' vs 45' max). The maximum width is to ensure that buildings do not appear oversized, gable slopes are appropriately pitched (i.e., not too shallow), and the building assembly is a consistent whole. (§173-221.K. General Building Standards Primary Massing)

As mentioned earlier, reducing the perceived building scale does not necessarily mean a significant reduction in the total building area / footprint – there are multiple options to create an assembly out of primary massing(s) and building component(s) that retain most/all of the area (see one example at right). (§173-221.M. Example Massing Combinations)



Proposed assembly plan



Example of compliant assembly plan

NOTE:
Red indicates non-compliant
Blue indicates compliant

Building-Specific Scale Comments: **Building 1200**

Ensure building is appropriately scaled

Building 1200's two primary massings both exceed the maximum allowable dimensions. The east primary massing is 87.5' wide by 76' deep, equalling an area *more than double* the allowable maximum for a single primary massing (65' wide by 45' deep, when the long side is oriented parallel to the ROW), resulting in an oversized building. (§173-221.K. General Building Standards Primary Massing)

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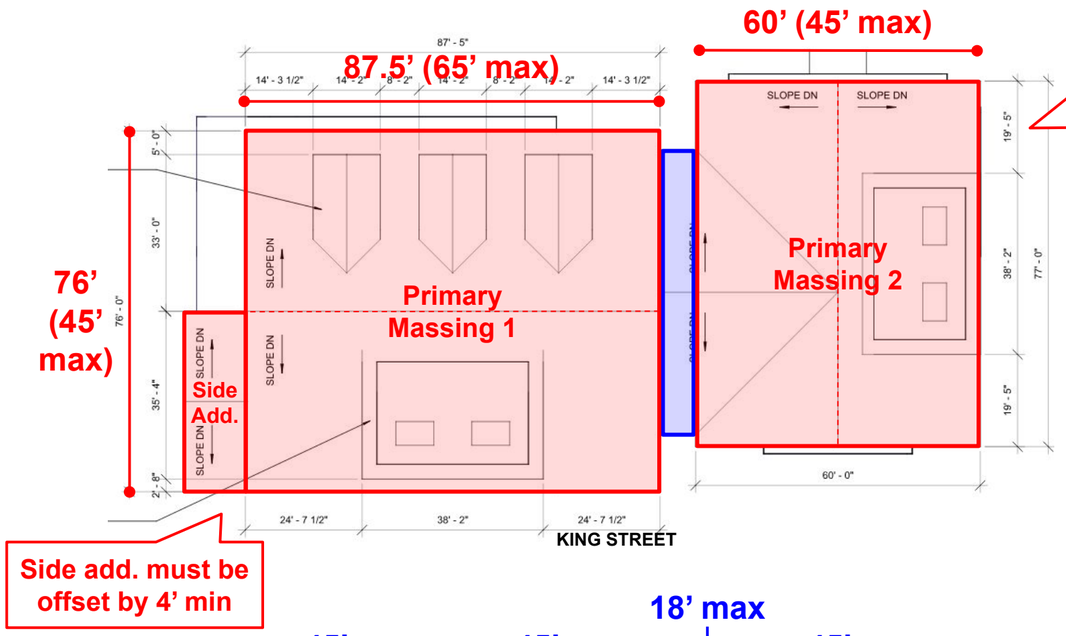
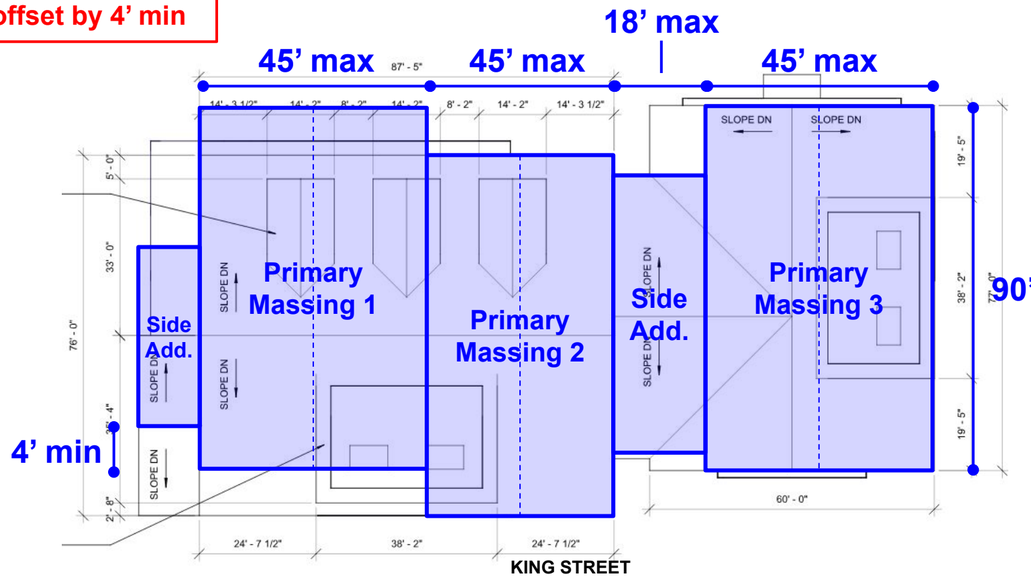


Proposed assembly plan



Example of compliant assembly plan

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Building-Specific Scale Comments: **Building 1200**

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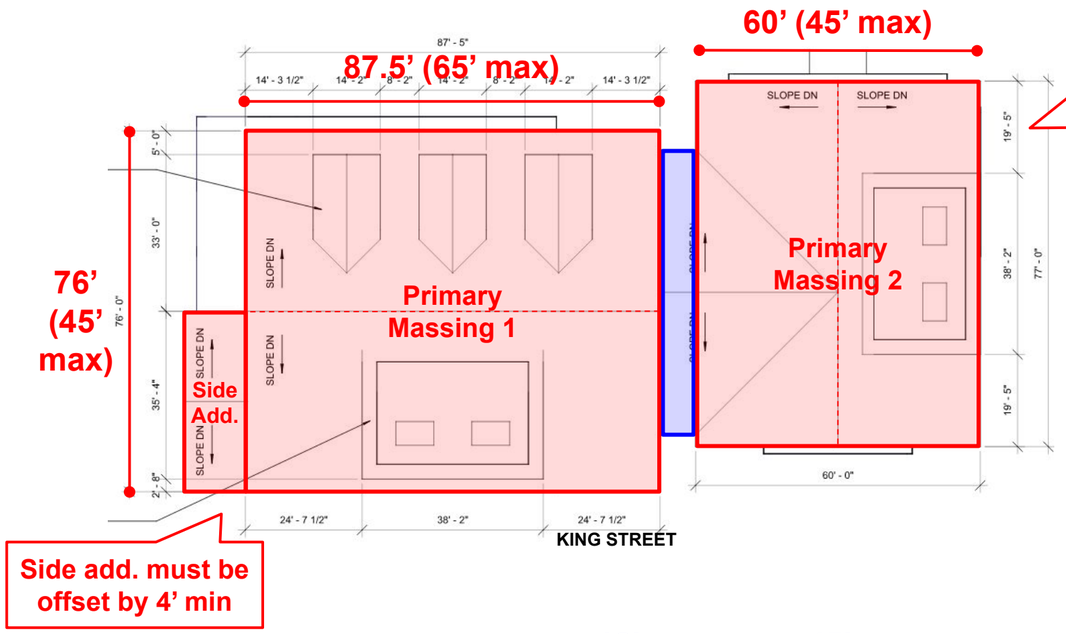
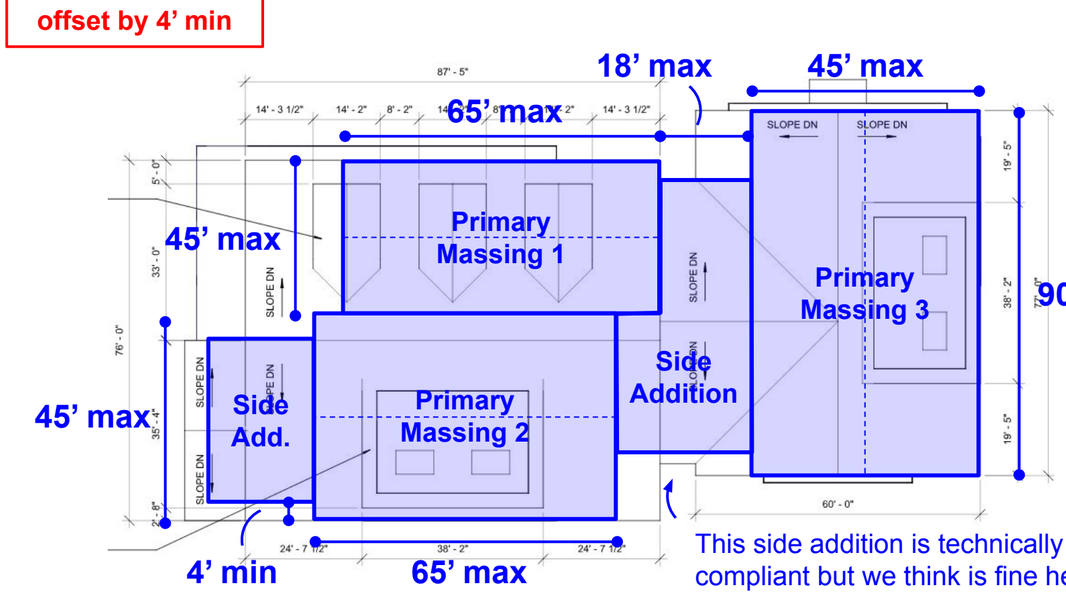


Proposed assembly plan



Example of compliant assembly plan

NOTE:
Red indicates non-compliant
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Building-Specific Scale Comments: **Building 1200**

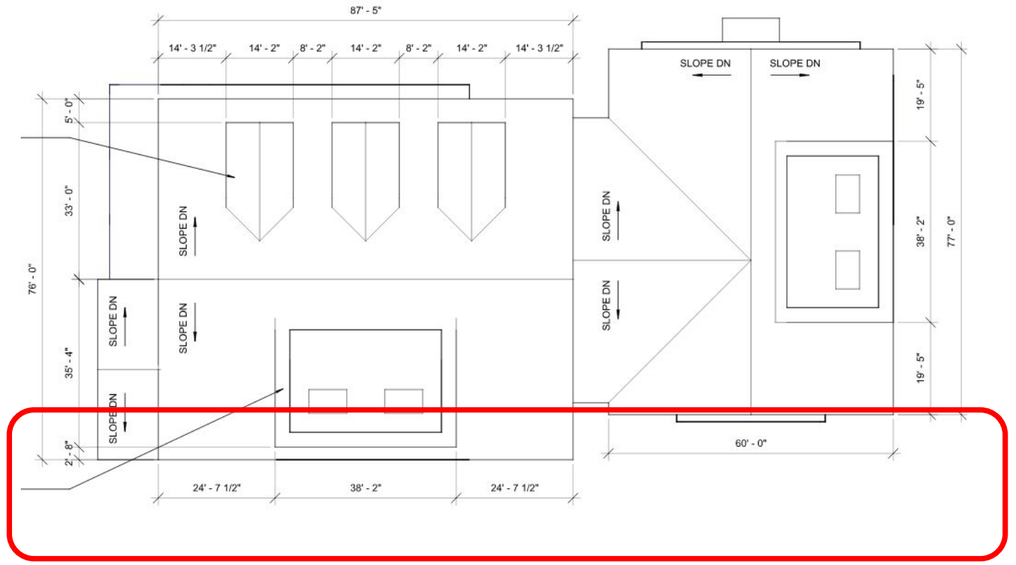
Engage and activate King St

As mentioned earlier, the 3 buildings along King St (1200, 1400, and 1500) have effectively turned their backs onto the public way. To address this:

First, ensure the frontage area is a consistent with one of the *frontage types* that activates the sidewalk (e.g., entry plaza, dining patio, etc.). (§173-221.N. Frontage Types)

Second, ensure that the *fenestration* along King St (aka window transparency percent) is at least 60% and made up of transparent glass, not obscure glass. (§173-221.G. Fenestration)

Lastly, ensure that there are ample *front doors / primary entrances* along King St to invite pedestrians and signal a welcoming and active street environment. (§173-221.J.b. Principal Entrance)



King St

Activate with different public-facing frontage types

Meet the 60% minimum fenestration with transparent glass, not obscure glass

Ensure primary entrances / front doors are also transparent and integrated with storefront glazing system

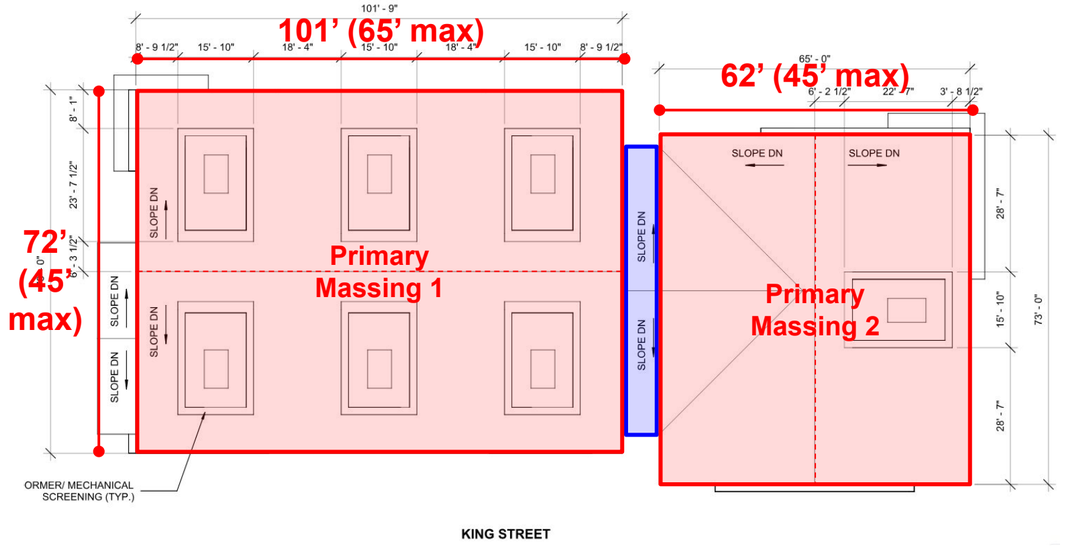
NOTE:
Red indicates non-compliant
Blue indicates compliant

Building-Specific Scale Comments: **Building 1400**

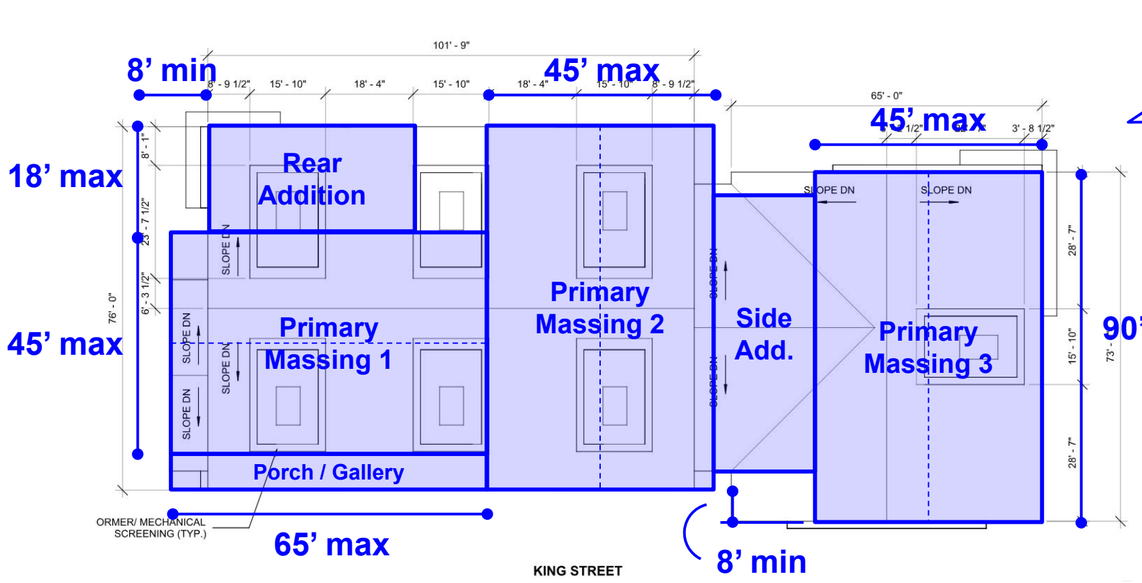
Ensure building is appropriately scaled

Similar to Building 1200, Building 1400's two primary massings both exceed the maximum allowable dimensions. The east primary massing is 101' wide by 72' deep, equalling an area ~*2.5 times* the allowable maximum for a single primary massing (65' wide by 45' deep, when the long side is oriented parallel to the ROW), resulting in an oversized building. (§173-221.K. General Building Standards Primary Massing)

As mentioned earlier, reducing the perceived building scale does not necessarily mean a significant reduction in the total building area / footprint – there are multiple options to create an assembly out of primary massing(s) and building component(s) that retain most/all of the area (see one example at right). (§173-221.M. Example Massing Combinations)



Proposed assembly plan



Example of compliant assembly plan

NOTE:
Red indicates non-compliant
Blue indicates compliant

Building-Specific Scale Comments: **Building 1400**

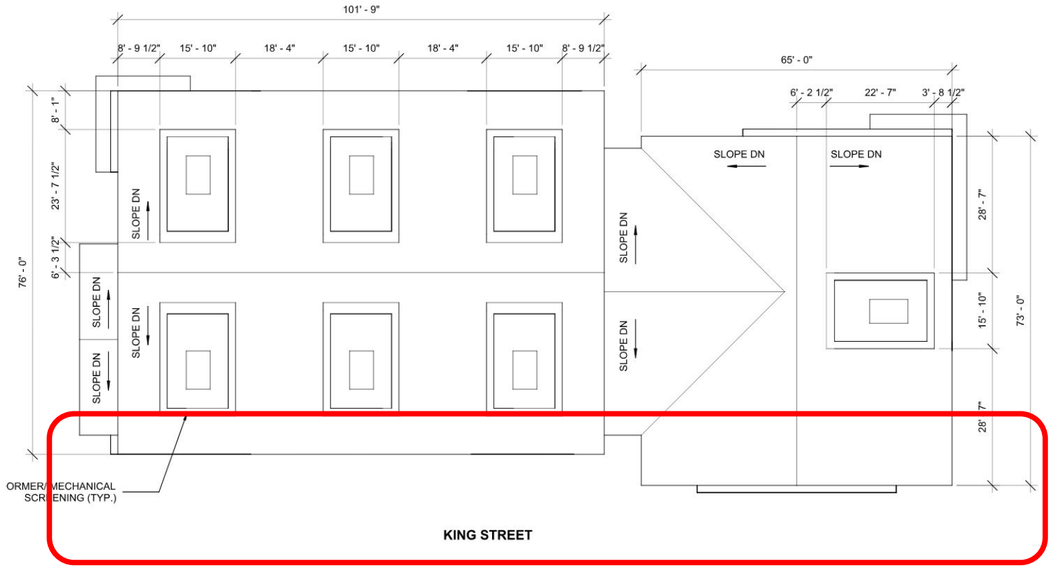
Engage and activate King St

As mentioned earlier, the 3 buildings along King St (1200, 1400, and 1500) have effectively turned their backs onto the public way. To address this:

First, ensure the frontage area is a consistent with one of the *frontage types* that activates the sidewalk (e.g., entry plaza, dining patio, etc.). (§173-221.N. Frontage Types)

Second, ensure that the *fenestration* along King St (aka window transparency percent) is at least 60% and made up of transparent glass, not obscure glass. (§173-221.G. Fenestration)

Lastly, ensure that there are ample *front doors / primary entrances* along King St to invite pedestrians and signal a welcoming and active street environment. (§173-221.J.b. Principal Entrance)



Activate with different public-facing frontage types

Ensure primary entrances / front doors are also transparent and integrated with storefront glazing system

Meet the 60% minimum fenestration with transparent glass, not obscure glass

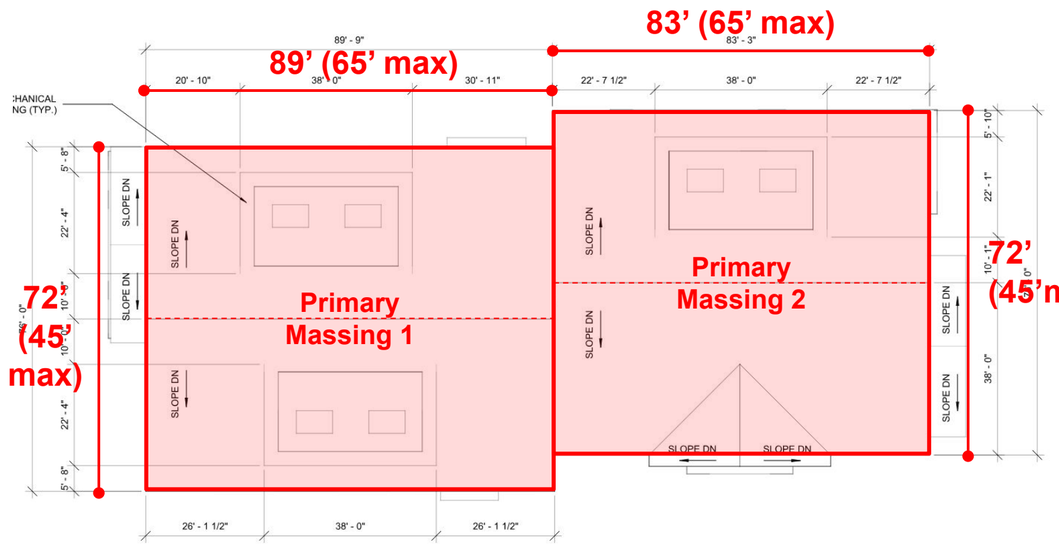
NOTE:
Red indicates non-compliant
Blue indicates compliant

Building-Specific Scale Comments: **Building 1500**

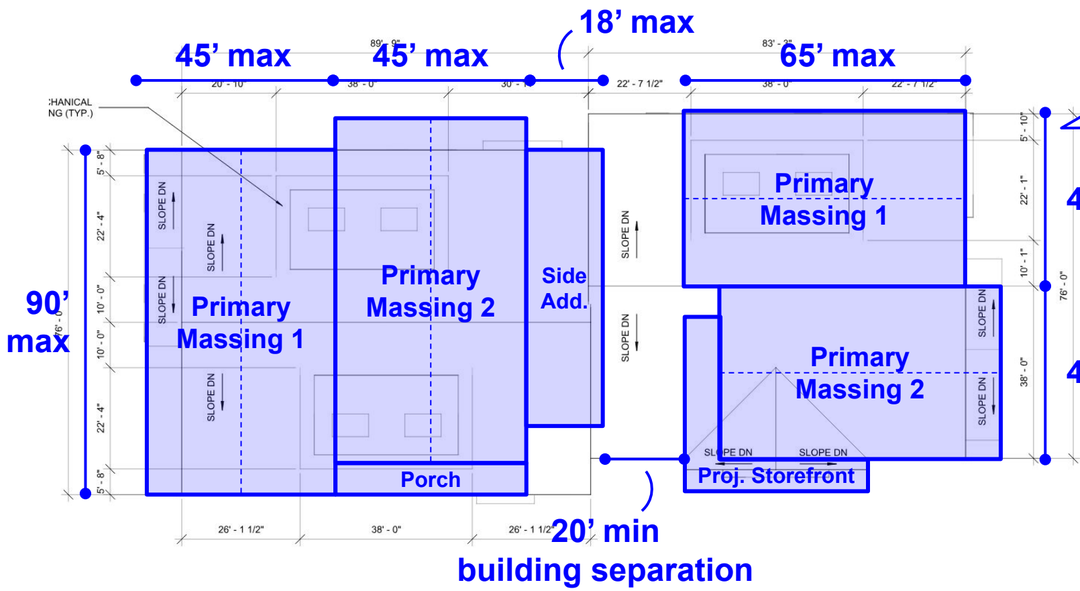
Ensure building is appropriately scaled

Similar to Building 1200 & 1400, Building 1500's two primary massings both exceed the maximum allowable dimensions. The east primary massing is 89' wide by 72' deep, equalling an area *more than double* the allowable maximum for a single primary massing (65' wide by 45' deep, when the long side is oriented parallel to the ROW), resulting in an oversized building. (§173-221.K. General Building Standards Primary Massing)

As mentioned earlier, reducing the perceived building scale does not necessarily mean a significant reduction in the total building area / footprint – there are multiple options to create an assembly out of primary massing(s) and building component(s) that retain most/all of the area (see one example at right). (§173-221.M. Example Massing Combinations)



Proposed assembly plan



Example of compliant assembly plans

NOTE:
Red indicates non-compliant
Blue indicates compliant

Building-Specific Scale Comments: **Building 1500**

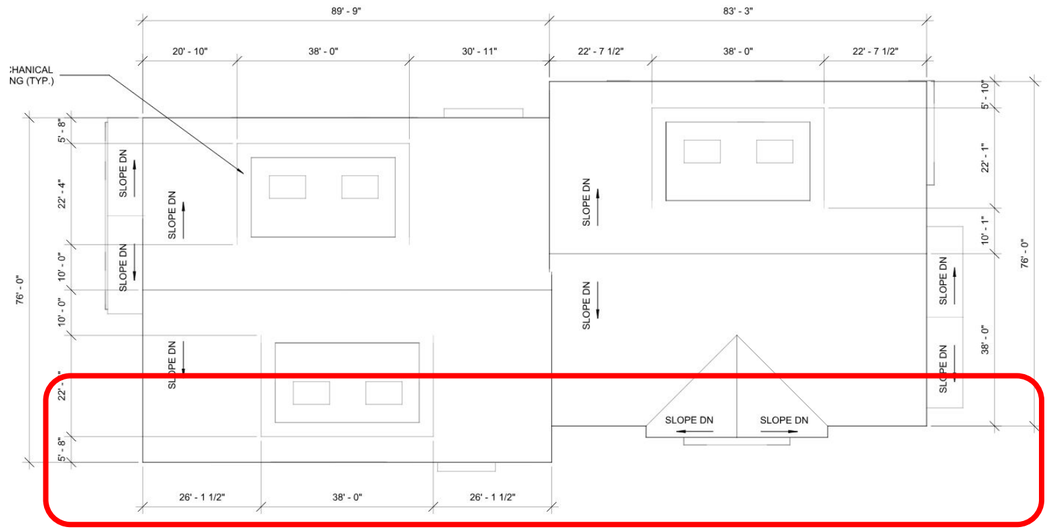
Engage and activate King St

As mentioned earlier, the 3 buildings along King St (1200, 1400, and 1500) have effectively turned their backs onto the public way. To address this:

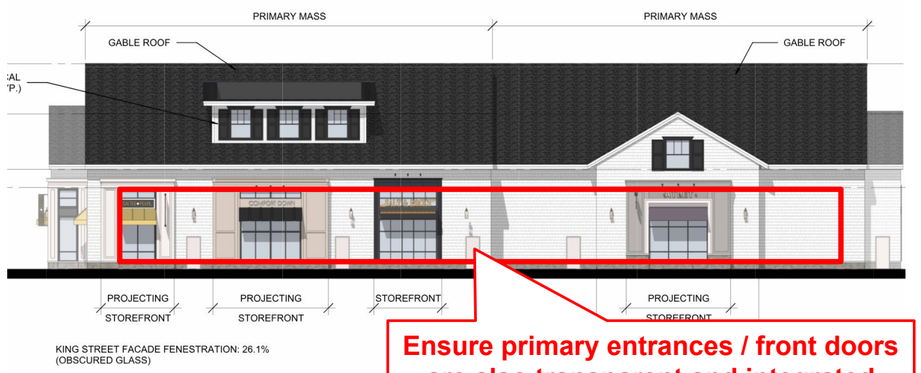
First, ensure the frontage area is a consistent with one of the *frontage types* that activates the sidewalk (e.g., entry plaza, dining patio, etc.). (§173-221.N. Frontage Types)

Second, ensure that the *fenestration* along King St (aka window transparency percent) is at least 60% and made up of transparent glass, not obscure glass. (§173-221.G. Fenestration)

Lastly, ensure that there are ample *front doors / primary entrances* along King St to invite pedestrians and signal a welcoming and active street environment. (§173-221.J.b. Principal Entrance)



Activate with different public-facing frontage types



Ensure primary entrances / front doors are also transparent and integrated with storefront glazing system

Meet the 60% minimum fenestration with transparent glass, not obscure glass

NOTE:
Red indicates non-compliant
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Building-Specific Scale Review: **Building 1300**

Building 1300 Review: **Summary**

While the wrapped-garage building is technically allowed in this part of the King St. Common FBC district, its 400’ x 150’ footprint makes it fundamentally out of scale with the Town Common. The most ideal approach is to convert the garage to a surface lot (by shifting most parking to a another garage behind the 255 ft setback) and replace its residential and commercial program with zoning-compliant buildings.

If this approach is not feasible, Utile recommends the following revisions to help “domesticate” the building’s size and scale, making it more contextual with both the Phase 1 Retail Development and the broader Littleton Common district.

1. **Reduce the parking supply:** The parking calculation is significantly inflated because it is based on the base zoning, not on the new standards set in VC FBC.
2. **Reduce the garage and building widths/heights:** By reducing the parking requirement (in #1 above), there is room to reduce the width and/or height of the garage (and therefore building in general).
3. **Reduce the perceived scale of the building:** Ensure the residential and commercial components comply with the maximums as set in VC FBC.

Building 1300 Comment **#1: Reduce the Parking Supply**

The parking requirement calculation is incorrect

The parking requirement count is largely based on the base zoning and not on the new and reduced standards set in VC FBC. (§173-233.G.) Recalculating the new parking requirements is at the right. The submitted parking requirement is 487 spaces and the corrected parking requirement is 344 spaces, representing a *substantial reduction of 143 spaces*. (§173-224.A.)

While the total parking supply need not be as low as the actual requirement, there is nevertheless *ample room* to reduce the supply, which would reduce the size of the garage–and by extension–the building as a whole.

Submitted parking table (largely based on base zoning):

PARKING TABLE	
REQUIRED PARKING	RETAIL/COMMERCIAL: 40,830 SF X 1 SP/150 SF = 273 SPACES
	RESTAURANT: 31,407 SF X 4 SP/1,000 SF = 126 SPACES
	RESIDENTIAL: 2 SP/1 UNIT = 88 SPACES
	TOTAL REQUIRED PARKING = 487 SPACES
PROPOSED PARKING	STREET PARKING: 64 SPACES
	STRUCTURED PARKING = 487 SPACES
	TOTAL PROPOSED PARKING = 551 SPACES

Corrected parking table (based on VC FBC):

REQUIRED PARKING	Retail / Commercial: 40,830 SF x 4 SP / 1,000 SF	163 SPACES
	Restaurant: 31,407 SF x 4 SP / 1,000 SF =	126 SPACES
	Residential: 1.25 SP / 1 UNIT =	55 SPACES
	TOTAL REQUIRED PARKING =	**344 SPACES**

NOTE:
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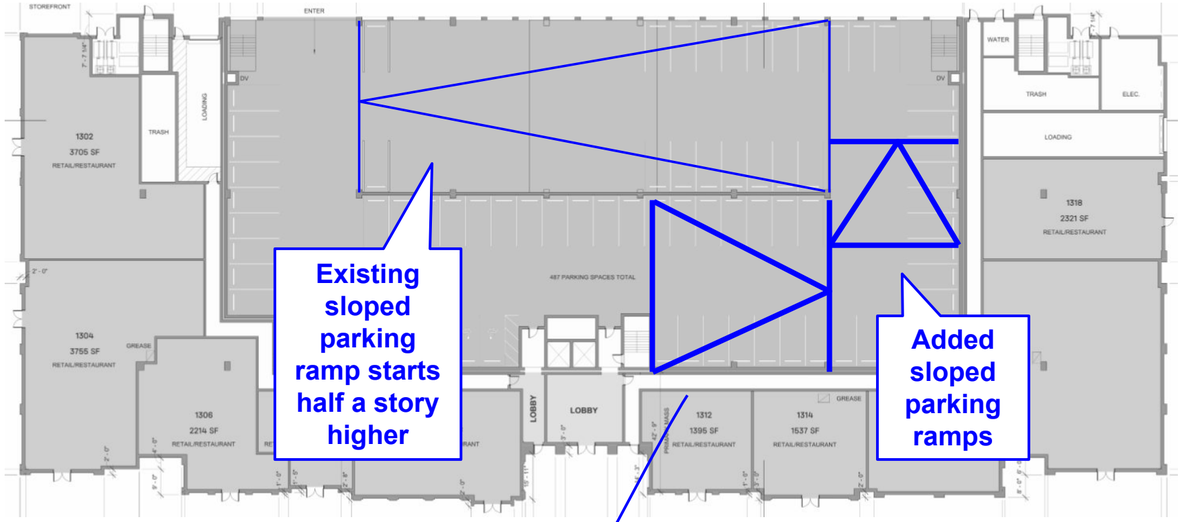
Building 1300 Comment **#2: Reduce the Garage & Building Width / Height**

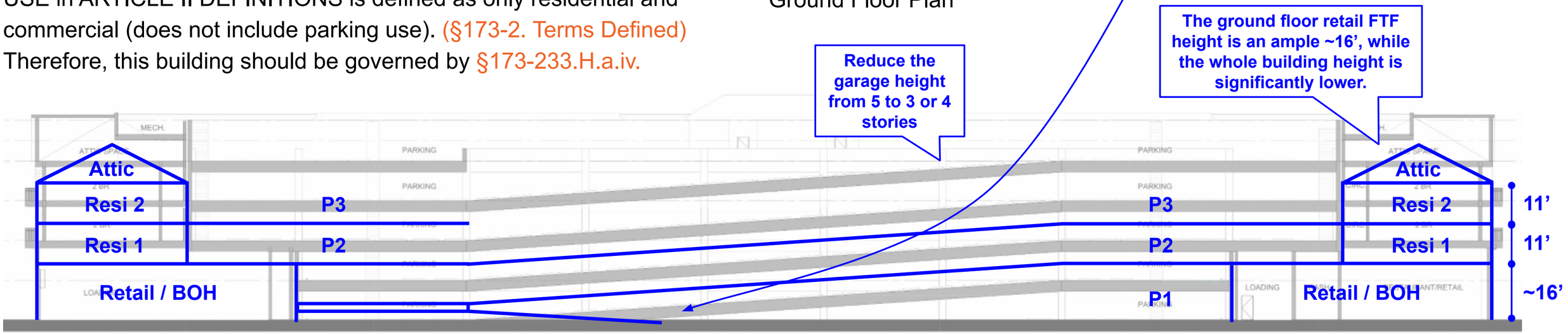
Option 1: Reduce the height of the garage

As demonstrated in Comment #1, there is ample room to reduce the garage parking supply. This option reduces both the garage height (by 1-2 stories) and the mixed-use building height (by half a story) without losing any residential and commercial area. This is accomplished by adding and starting the ramp earlier on the ground floor and aligning the 2nd level of the garage with the 2nd level of the residential program (instead of 2 levels of parking for 1 level of retail).

Importantly, a parking garage in this KSC FBC district is limited to 35 ft (§173-233.H.a. Maximum Height of Buildings), because MIXED USE in ARTICLE II DEFINITIONS is defined as only residential and commercial (does not include parking use). (§173-2. Terms Defined) Therefore, this building should be governed by §173-233.H.a.iv.



Ground Floor Plan



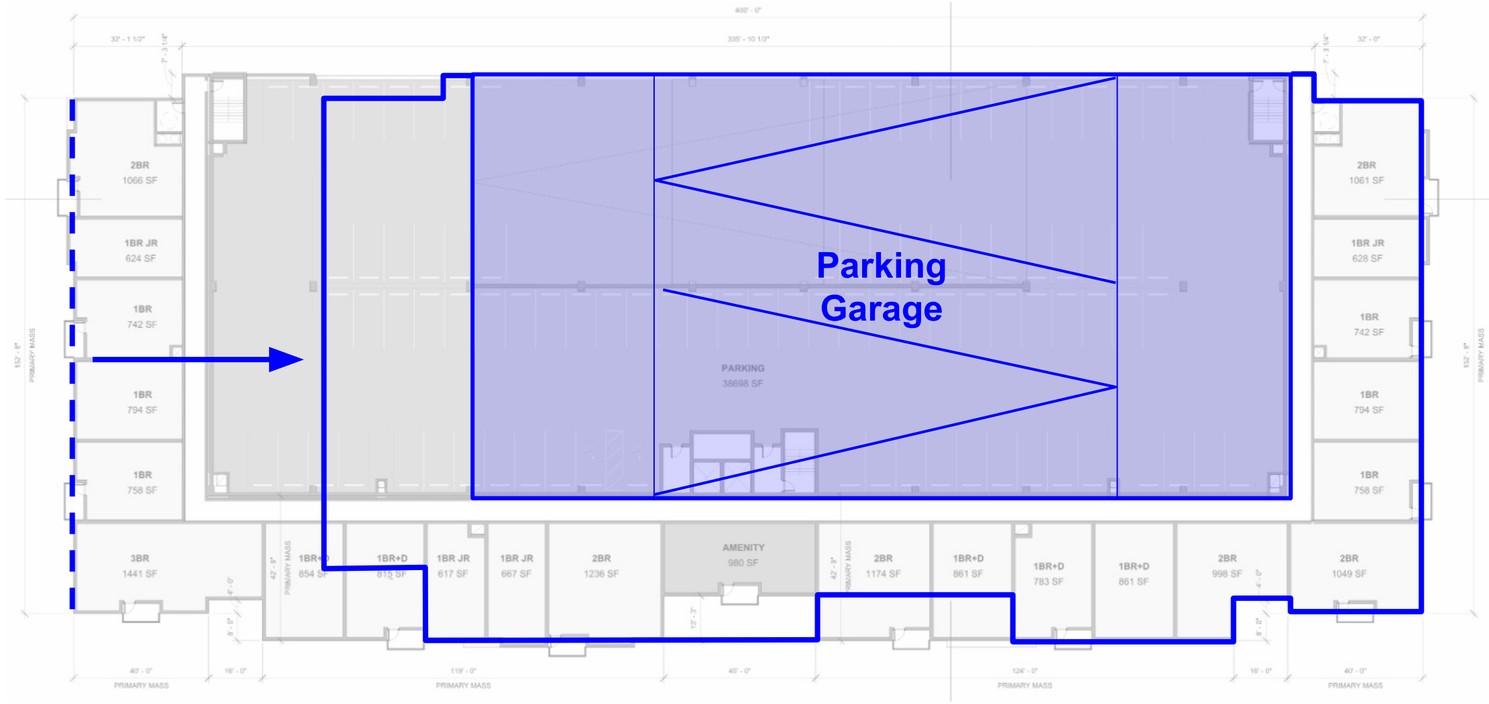
Building 1300 Comment **#2: Reduce the Garage & Building Width / Height**

Option 2: Reduce the width of the garage

An alternate option is to reduce the width of the garage (while keeping the height) such that it is just enough to accommodate the minimum ~344 spaces. This would likely require switchback sloped parking ramps (vs ramp on only one side/bay).

Importantly, this would reduce the width of the whole building (making it more contextual in scale), and the gained open space can be added public space, a surface parking lot, or a another 1-story commercial building.

There is also a potential **Option 3** (not illustrated) that is a combination of Option 1 and 2, reducing both the heights and widths of the garage, though likely to less extent than either options.



NOTE:
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Building 1300 Comment **#3: Reduce the Commercial-Residential Scale**

Reduce the perceived scale of the program components

In addition to Comments #1 and #2, ensure that the program wrapping the garage also complies with the primary massing maximums as set in the VC FBC (similar to the comments for Buildings 1100, 1200, 1400, and 1500).

Currently, the widths and depths of the primary massing *almost double* the allowed respective maximums (e.g., a width of 124 ft vs 65 ft max), resulting in a substantially oversized building. See example at right for how to bring a portion of the building into (relative) compliance. (§173-221.K. General Building Standards Primary Massing)

NOTE:
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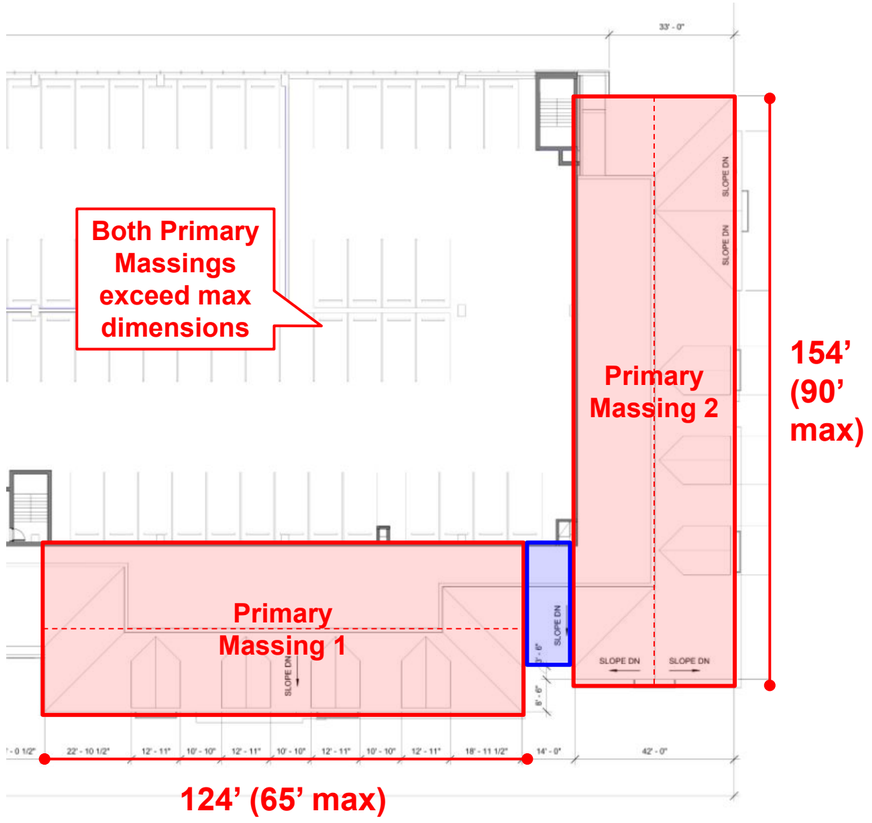
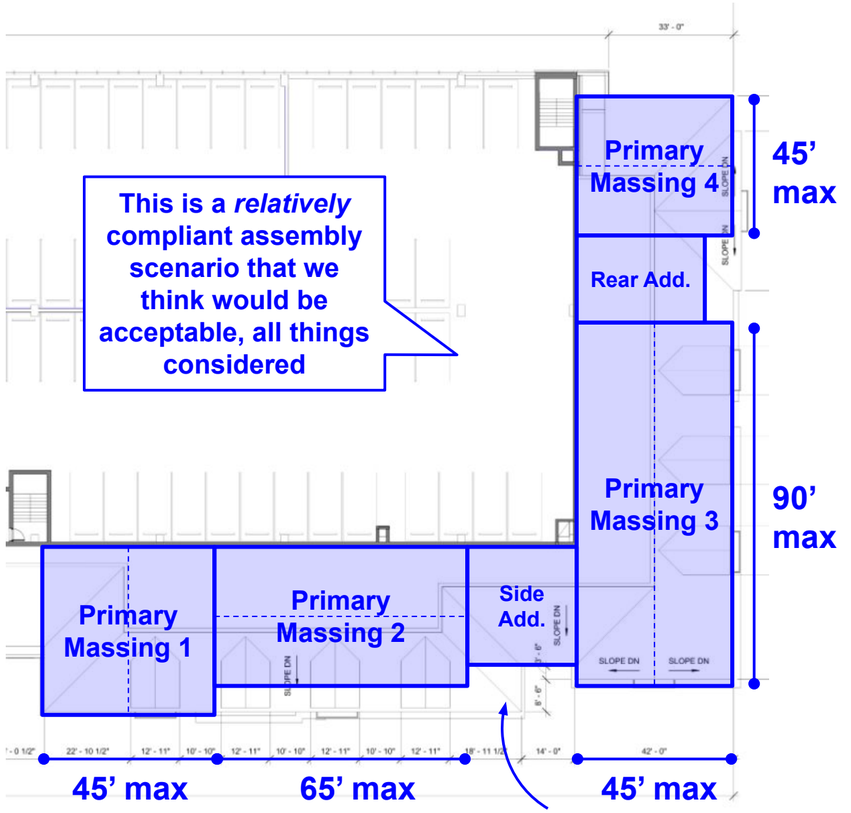


Proposed assembly plan (east half of building)



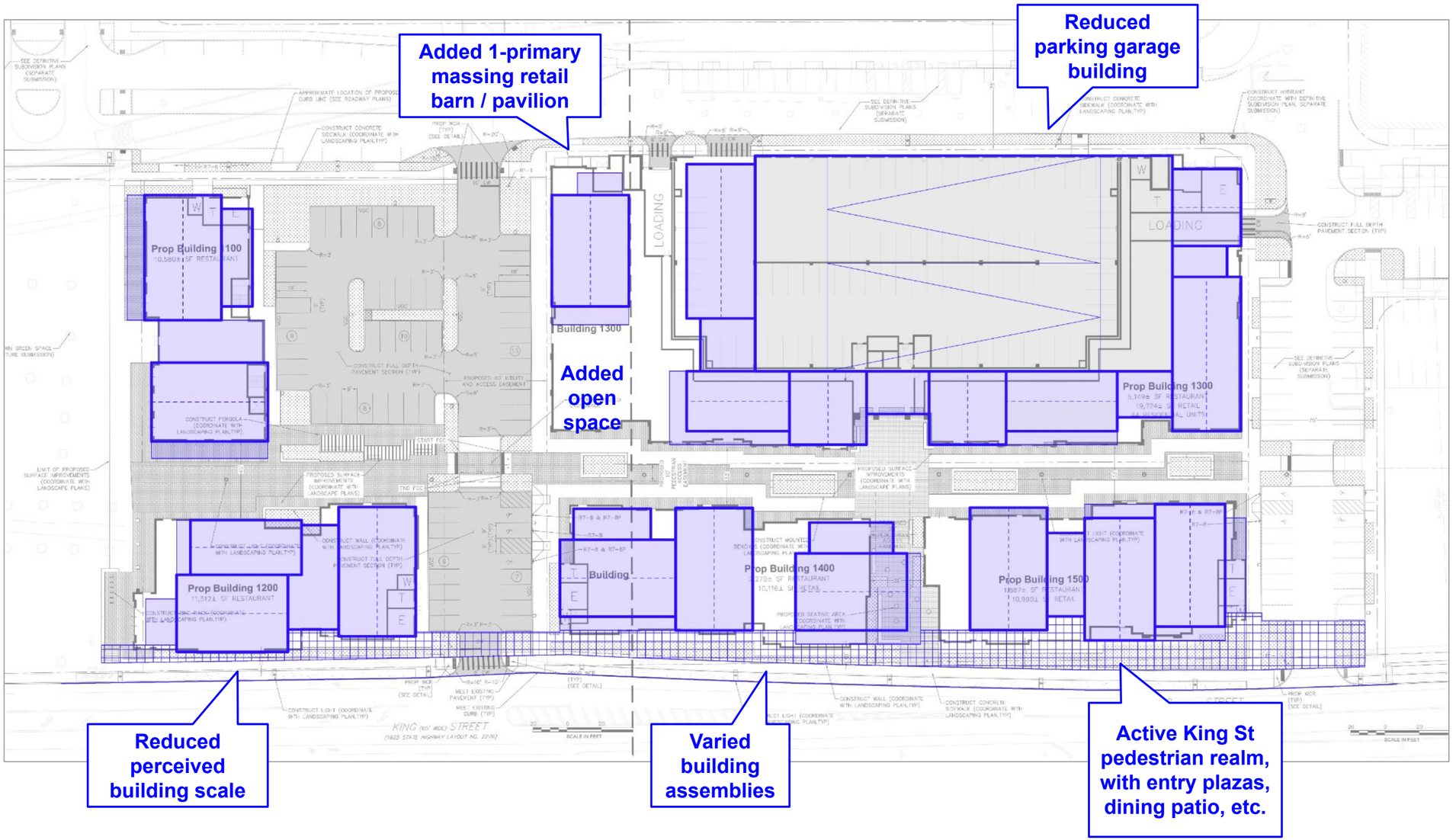
Example of compliant assembly plan

Final Thoughts

Example Revised Site Plan Based on Most Building Comments Above

This is a hypothetical example site plan updated to reflect most of the building comments above, showing:

- Varied building assemblies (i.e., 1-, 2-, and 3-primary-massing assemblies)
- Primary massings (and building components) that are within the max dimensions
- Reduced wrapped-garage building (in this case reduction in width)
- Site comment: frontage area along King St shows an active and walkable public realm



Importance of Right-Sizing the Buildings along King St

Above all, we believe it is *most critical* to get the handful of buildings adjacent King St to be at the right scale with active facades that engage the public way. This is because these buildings will be the most visible public face of the entire master plan *and* needs to provide a scale transition from King St and the rest of the Common to significantly bigger buildings toward the rear of the site, whether the wrapped-garage building, former IBM buildings, or the 6-stories 400+ ft long residential complexes.