

Proposed Zoning Change

To be considered at a Special Town Meeting
May 23rd, 2005

For the Arlington Housing Authority
State-Aided Development
Menotomy Manor 200-2



The Arlington Housing Authority owns and manages 176 low-income family housing units at the Menotomy Manor development, located at Freemont and Gardner Streets and Sunnyside Avenue near the East Arlington line.



The development is made up of two and three-bedroom townhouses built around 1950. 126 of the units are in brick row buildings of four, six and eight units. This section, called Menotomy Manor 200-1, is zoned Residence-5 or R-5.



The remaining 50 units are in 25 two-family dwellings. This adjacent section of the site, Menotomy Manor 200-2, is zoned Residence 2 or R-2 and is the subject of this proposed zoning change.

The apartments at Menotomy Manor are badly in need of modernization and this work is now in design. All of the apartments are going to get new kitchens, new bathrooms, and all new electrical service. The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, DHCD, is giving Arlington the money to pay for this project, currently budgeted at a construction cost of \$6.9 million.





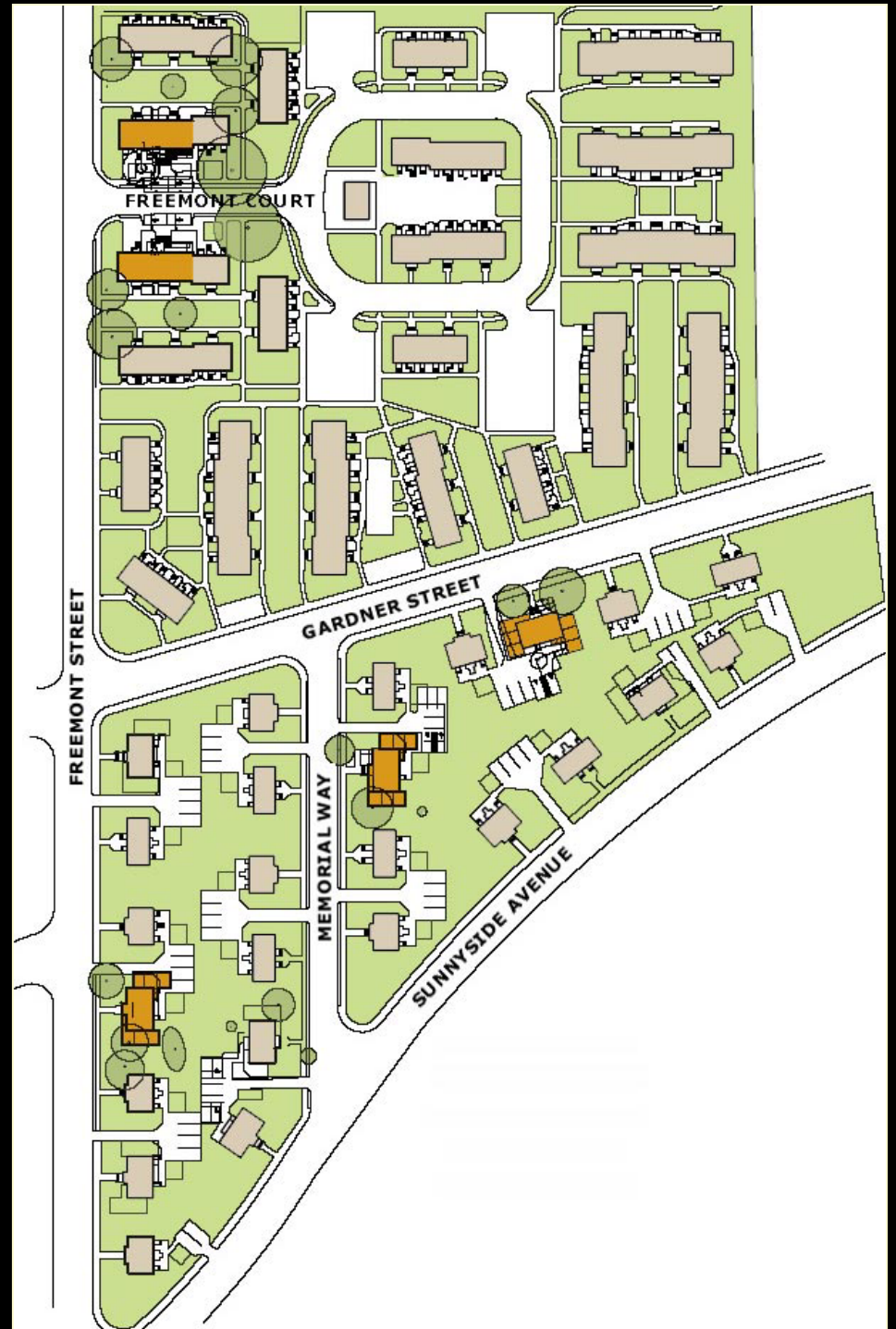
The substantial cost of this modernization project imposes a requirement that Menotomy Manor be brought into compliance with the State handicap accessibility laws. These regulations, known as 521CMR, have been developed by the Massachusetts Architectural Access Board, or MAAB.



Most importantly, 521CMR requires that at least 5% of the units at Menotomy Manor – a minimum of nine units – be fully accessible. This is architecturally challenging because all of the apartments are walk-up two story townhouses, and will need to be significantly altered to be made accessible.

521CMR also requires that the accessible units be distributed in size and location to roughly mirror the distribution in the whole development, mixing two-bedroom units with three-bedroom units, brick side units with wood side units.

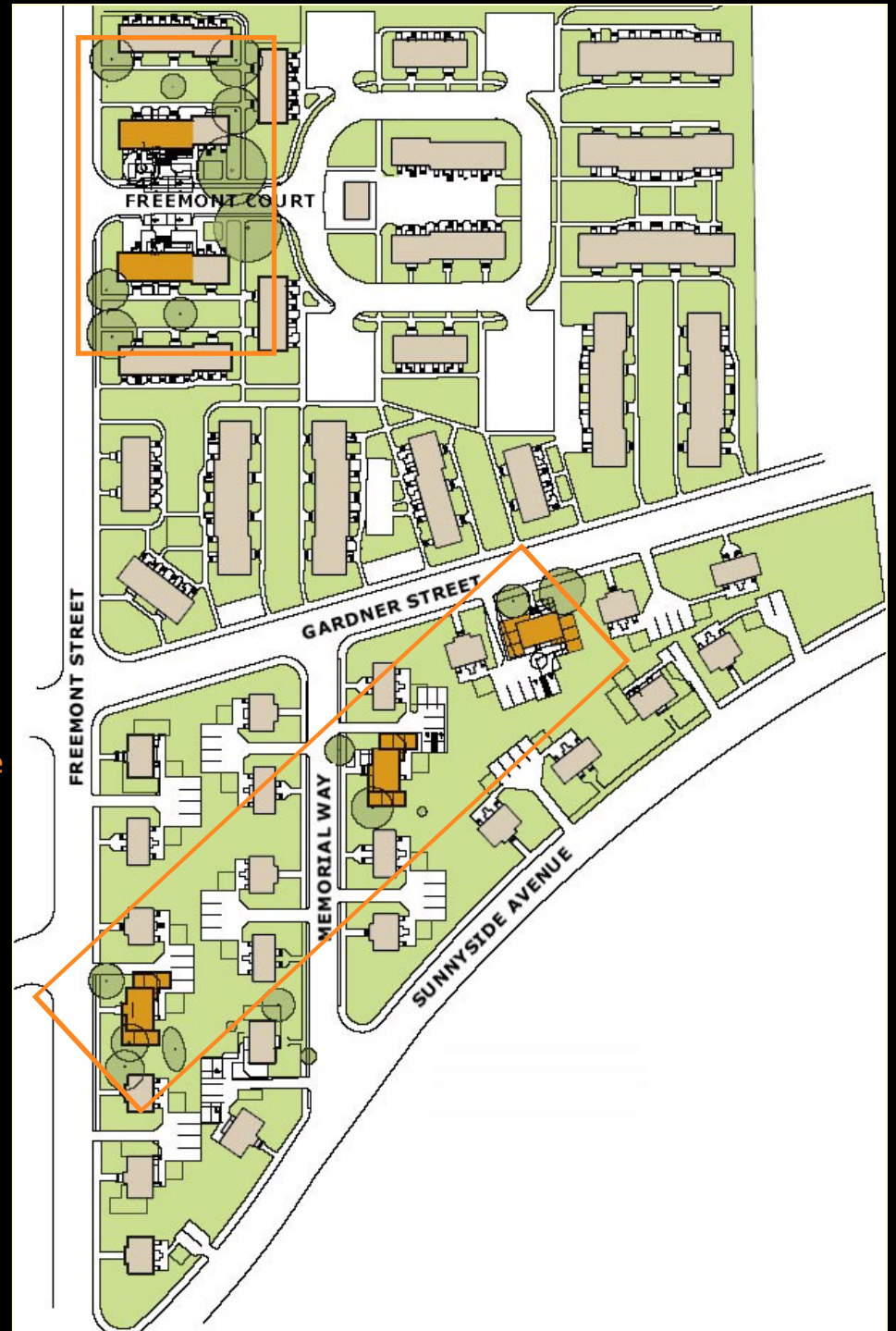
The project team for the Menotomy Manor modernization includes the Executive Director and facilities managers from the Housing Authority, the Project Manager, Project Architect and Project Engineer from DHCD, and the consulting architects and engineers. Over a number of months this team has developed and analyzed a series of approaches to the project design. From these options a Concept Design was developed, submitted, and approved by DHCD for its programmatic strength and cost efficiency.

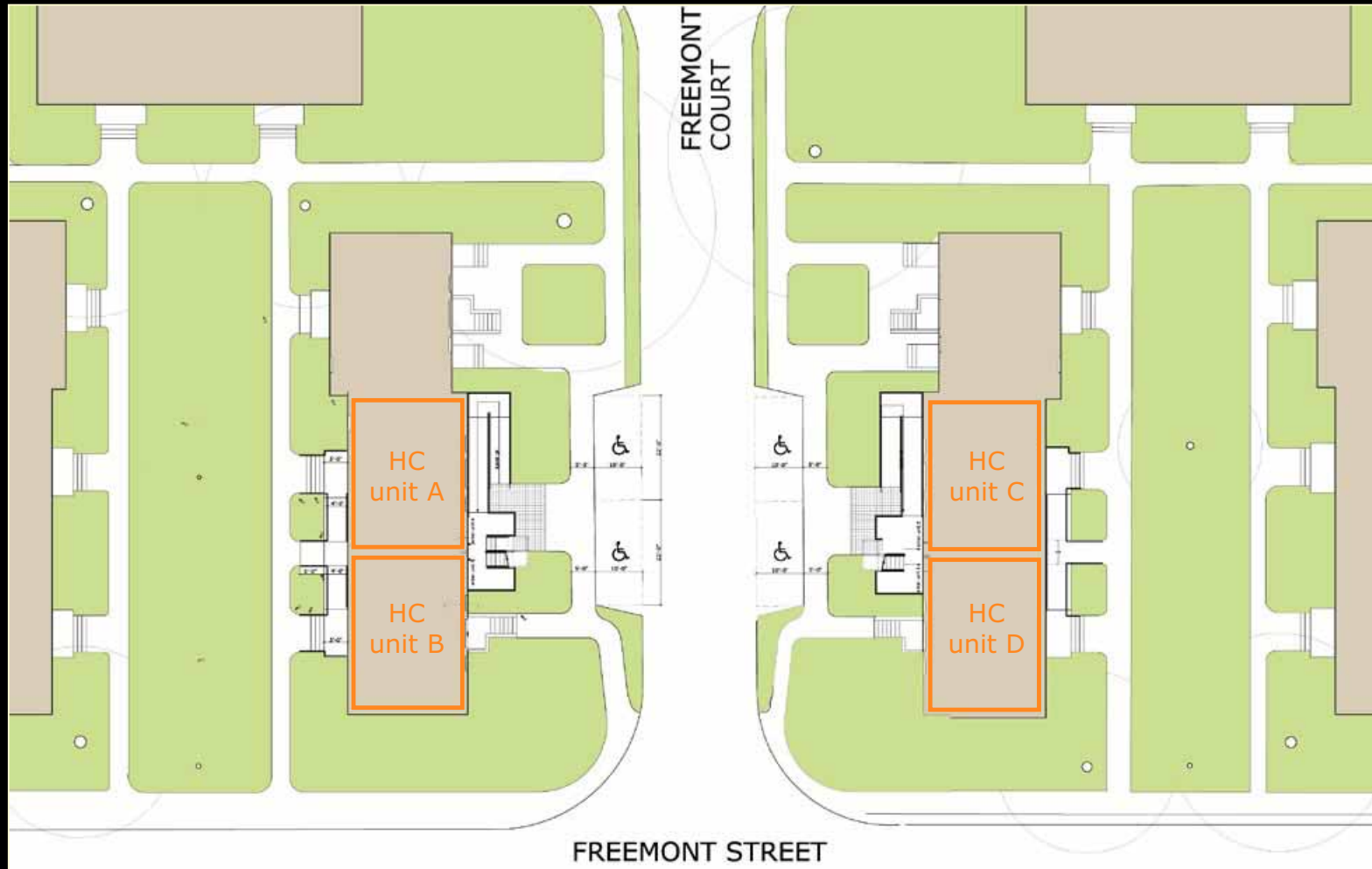


The approved Concept Design includes ten accessible units, configured in pairs and located as shown on this site plan.

Brick Side

Wood Side



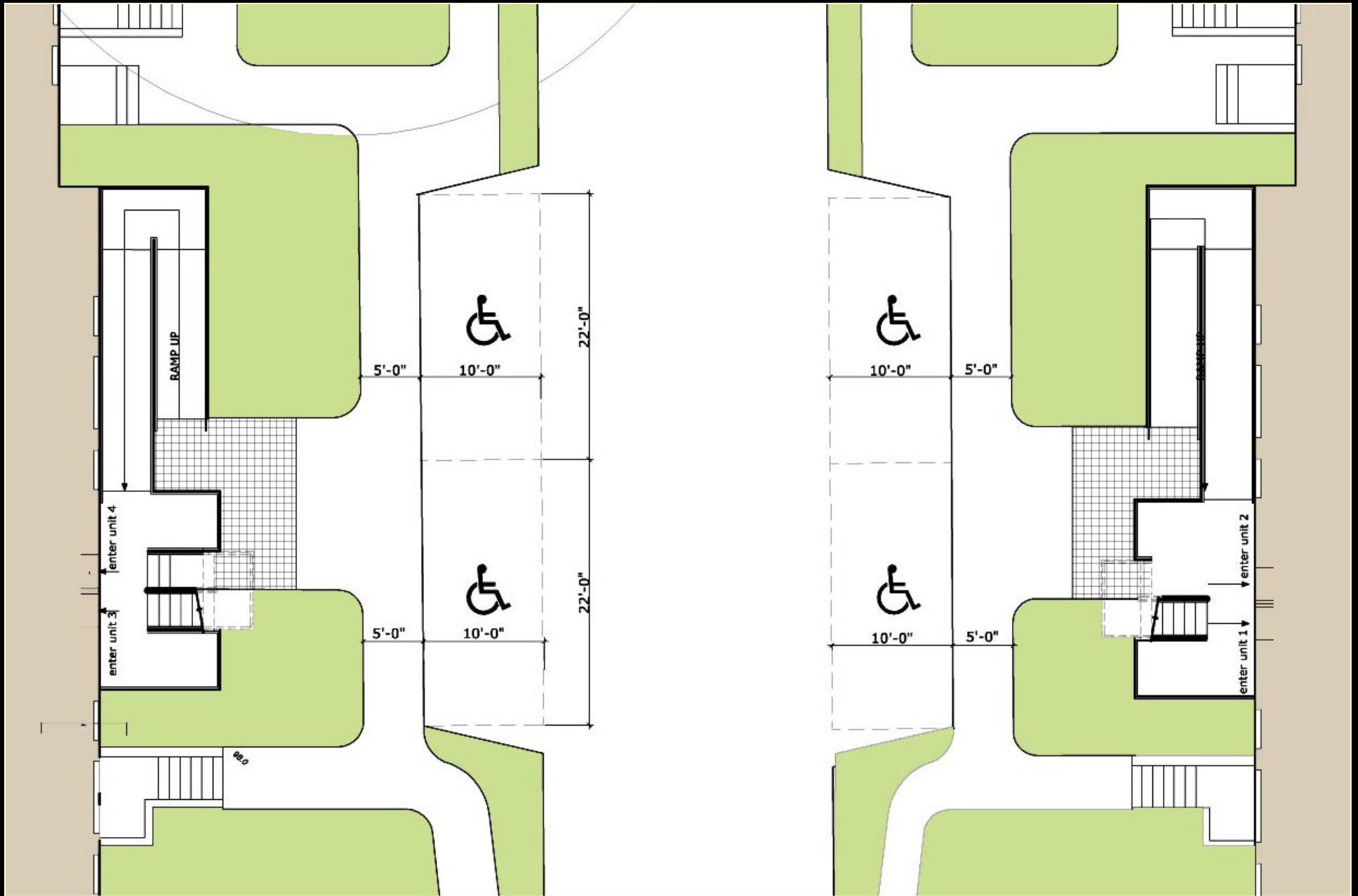


Four accessible units are planned for the brick side in the two buildings flanking the entrance to the development off Fremont Street.

All of the existing brick townhouses are built in pairs with a brick fire wall dividing each pair from the next. Four of these pairs are being rearranged so that, instead of two units side-by-side, they will be made into stacked flats. The bottom four units will be fully accessible and the upper four units will be walk-ups.



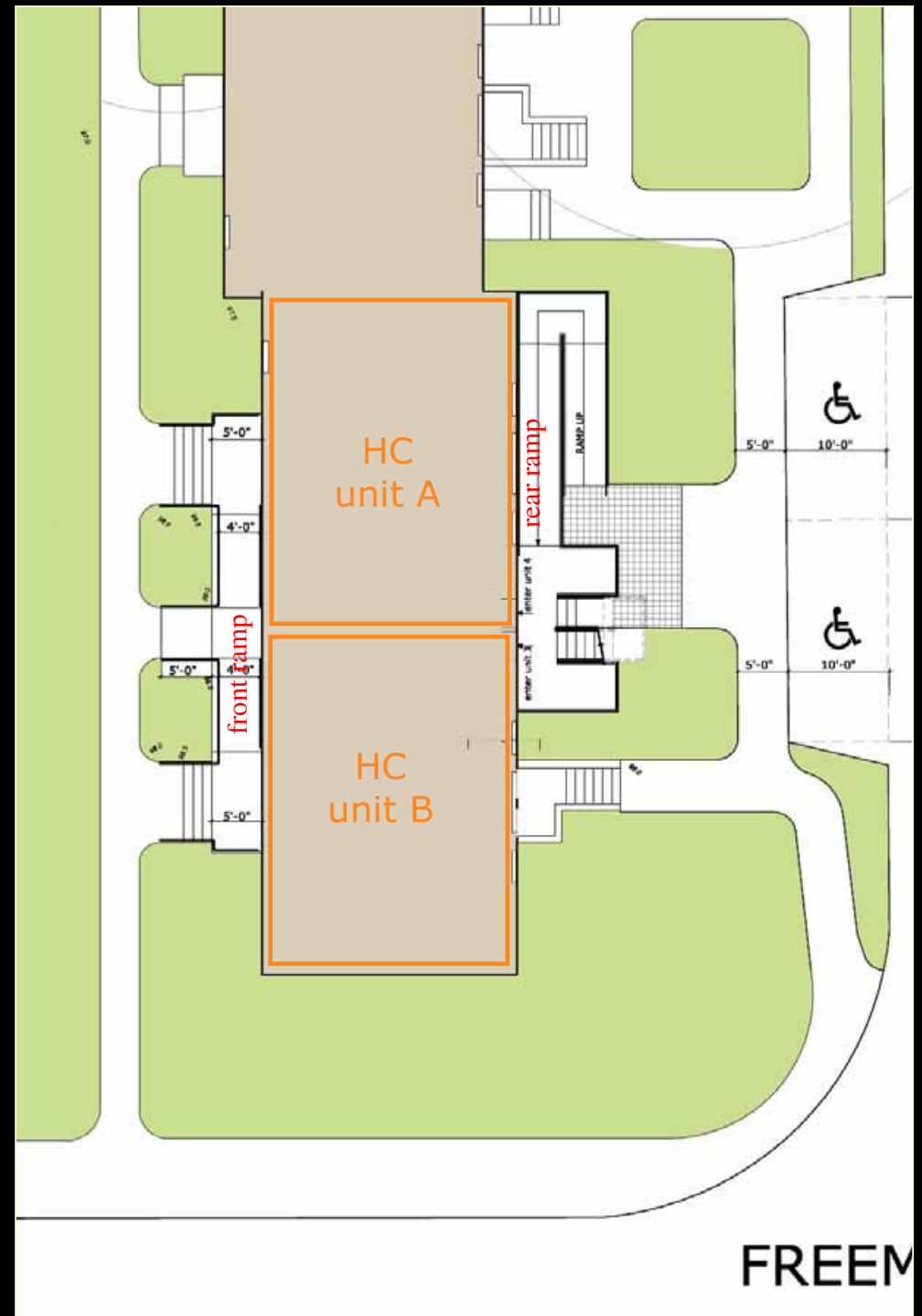
The second floor walk-ups will each have their own front door with a private interior stair at the front. At the back each pair of upper units will share a new outdoor stair, shown here. These two new stairs, facing each other across Fremont Court, will visually enhance the main entrance to the neighborhood.



Four additional parking spaces will be made in front of these units, adding much needed capacity to the available parking at 200-1.

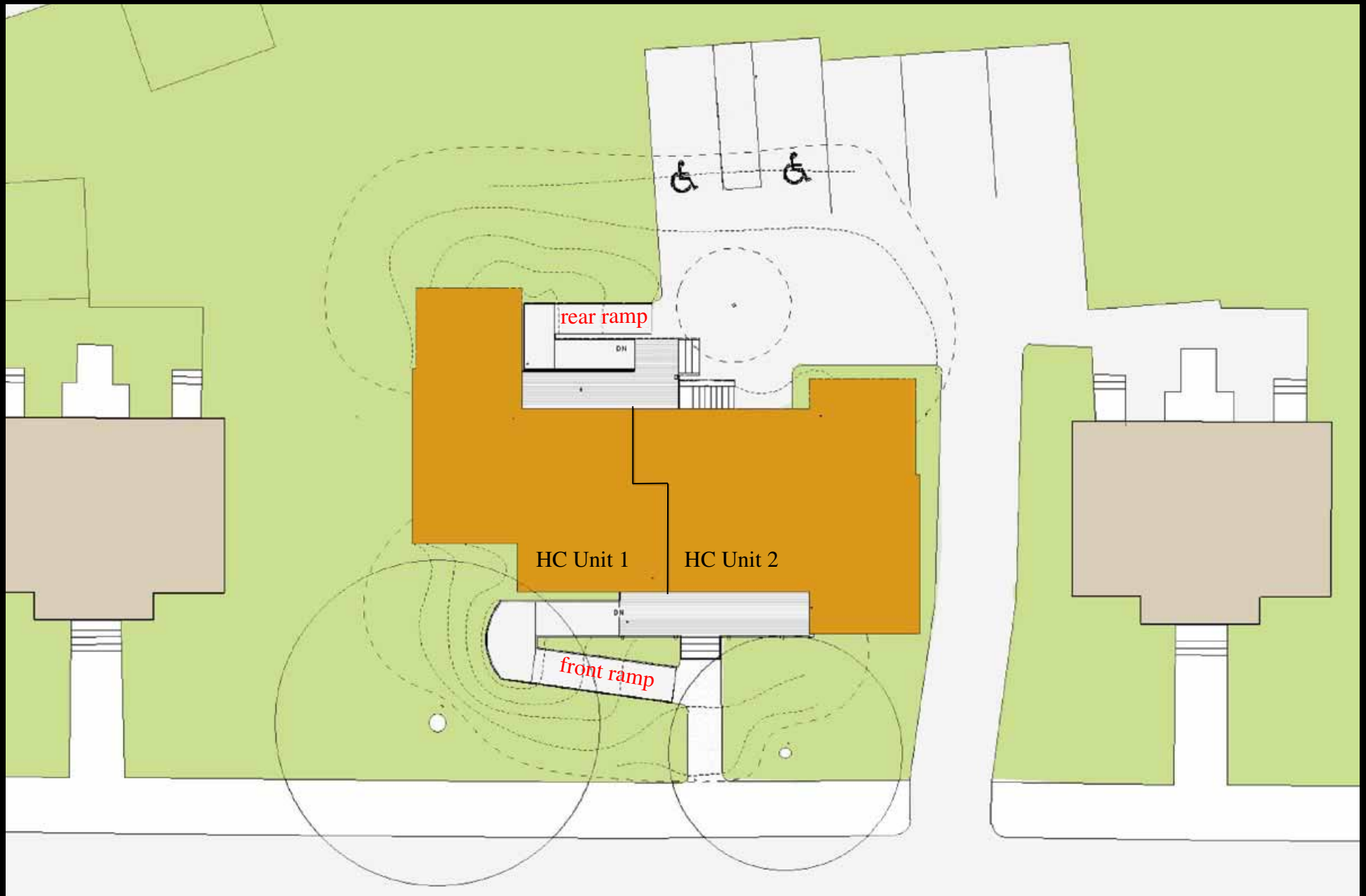
The MAAB requires accessible entrances at both the back and front doors of accessible dwelling units. These ramps, constructed with concrete foundation walls and finished steel guardrails and handrails, take up a lot of space and cost a lot of money.

In order to minimize their cost as well as visual and spatial impact, each ramp serves two units – one ramp at the front and one at the back of each building.





Six accessible dwelling units are planned for 200-2, the wood side of Menotomy Manor. In order to minimize the impact of this part of the project, these units will be paired so that only three of the existing buildings need to be reconfigured.

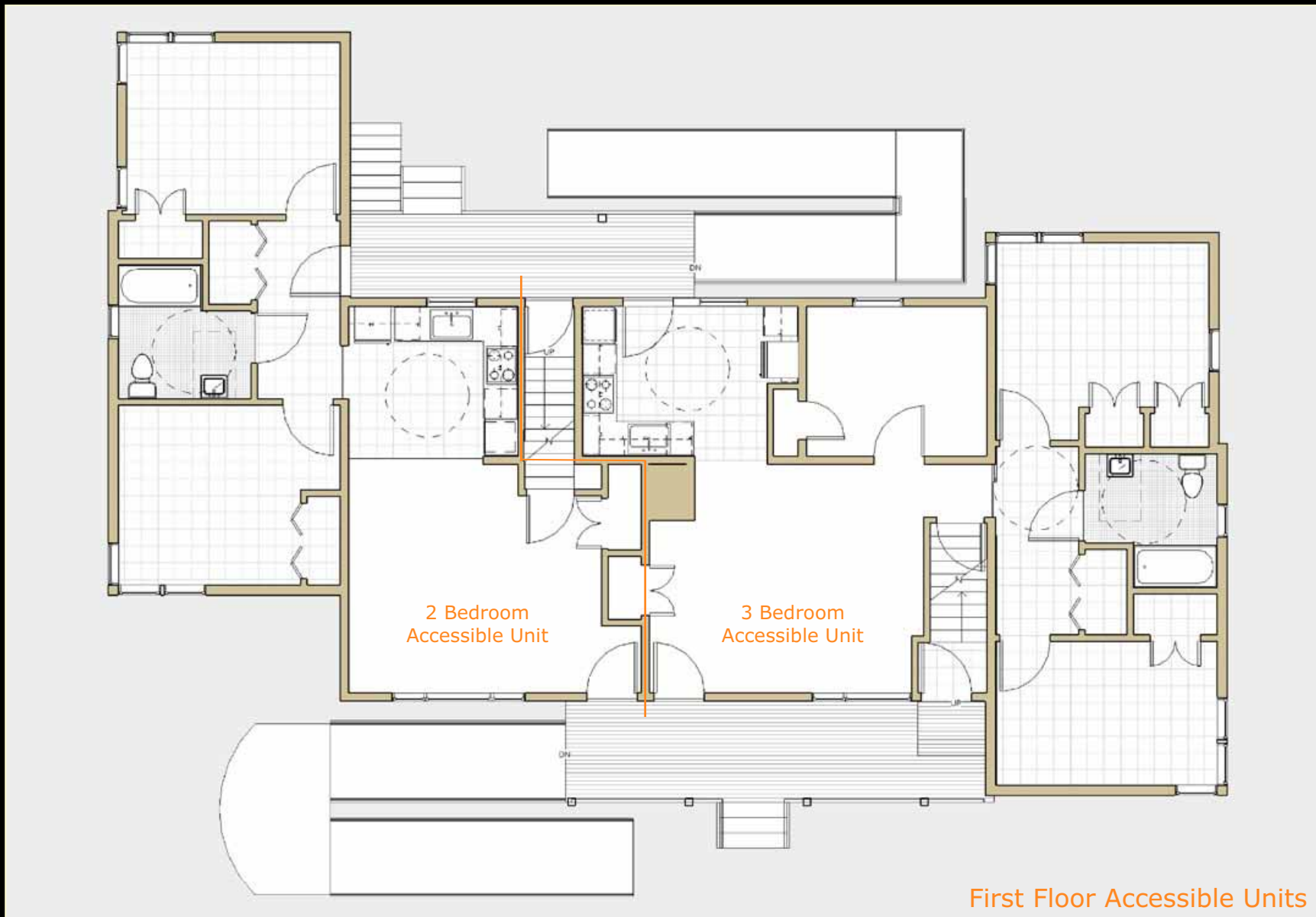


Like at the brick side, the design provides two shared ramps per building, which serve both units. Parking will be provided to meet both zoning and accessibility codes.

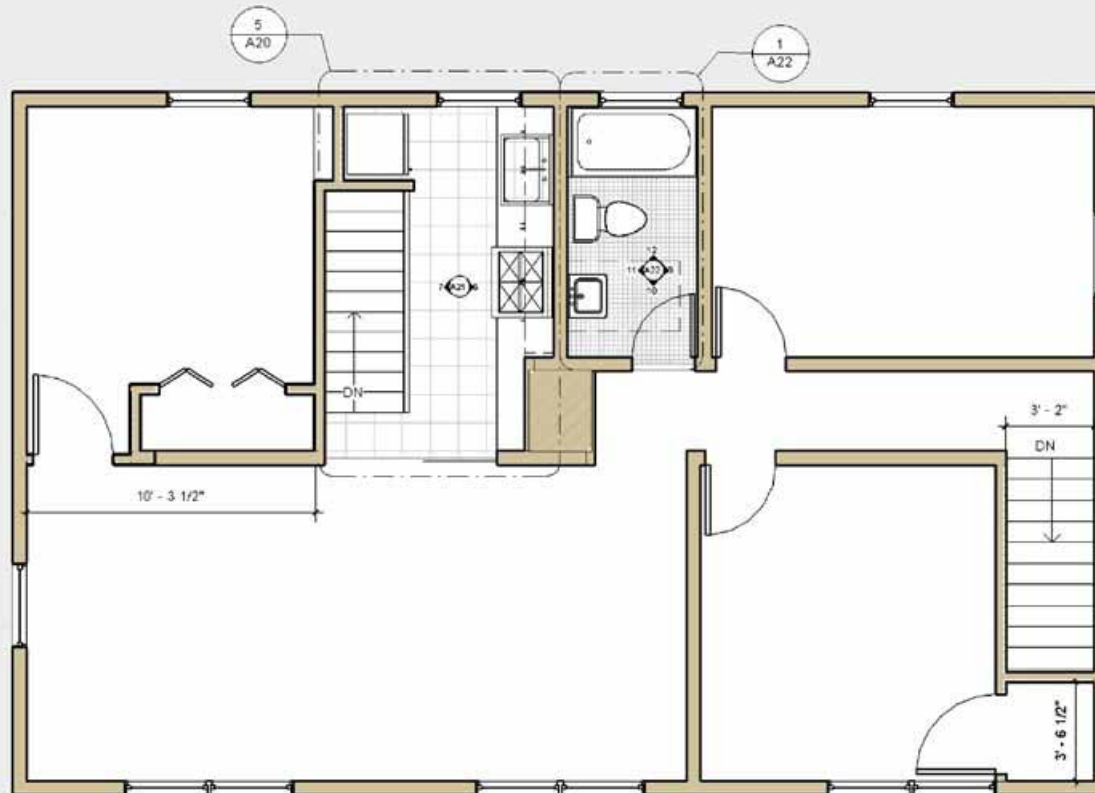


Building that is too close to the street

The existing wood two-families have three different layouts. Only one is adaptable to provide three-bedroom accessible units. Of the eight buildings of this type, three are best suited to this project because of site conditions. The other five are too close to other buildings or to the street, or are built on poor soils.



The approved concept design provides a two-bedroom and a three-bedroom accessible unit in each of the three buildings. The upper floor of the building, currently the bedrooms and bathrooms for the two units, cannot be included in the accessible units. This space will be renovated as a third non-accessible walk-up unit.

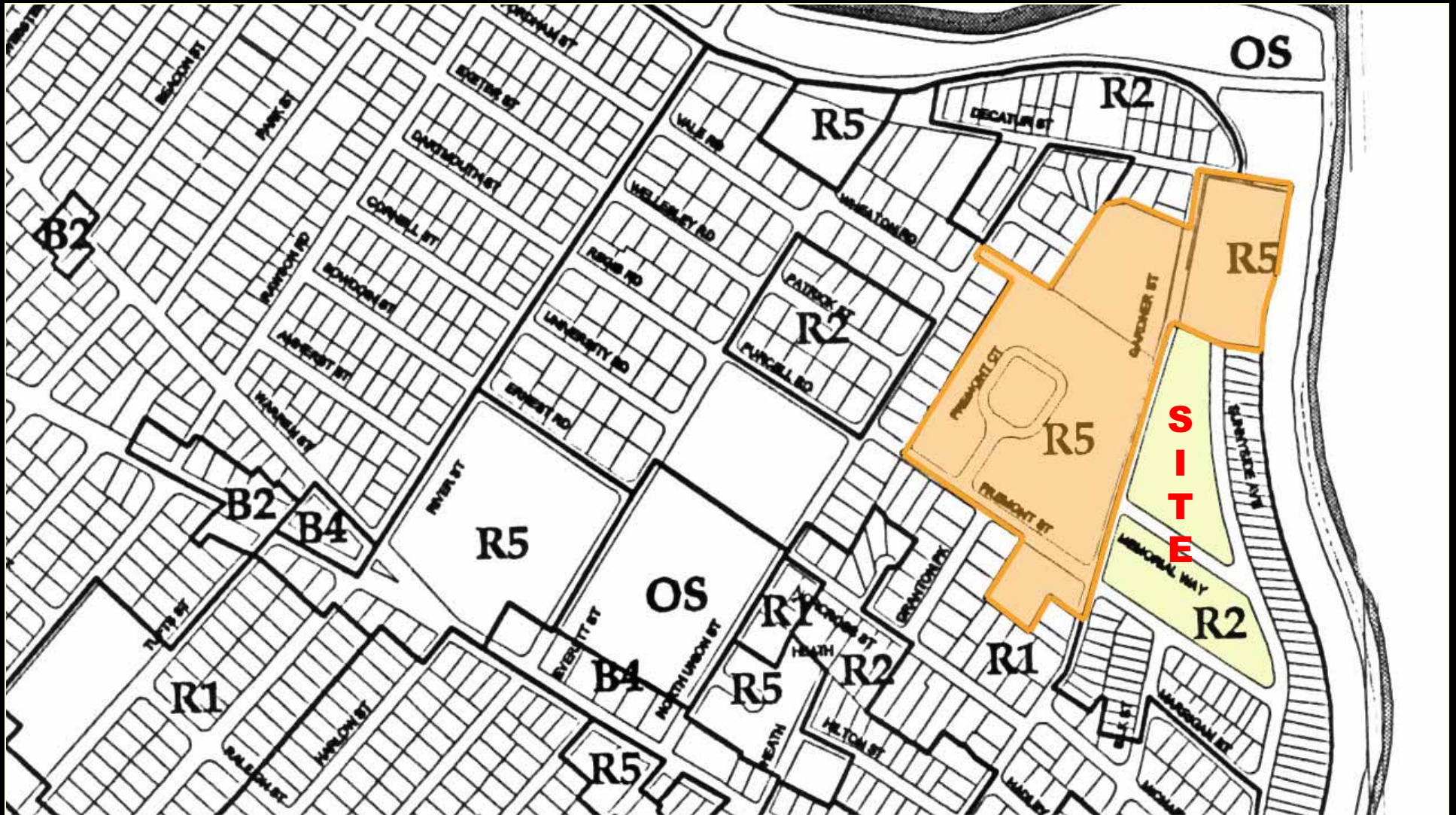


Second Floor Walk-up Flat

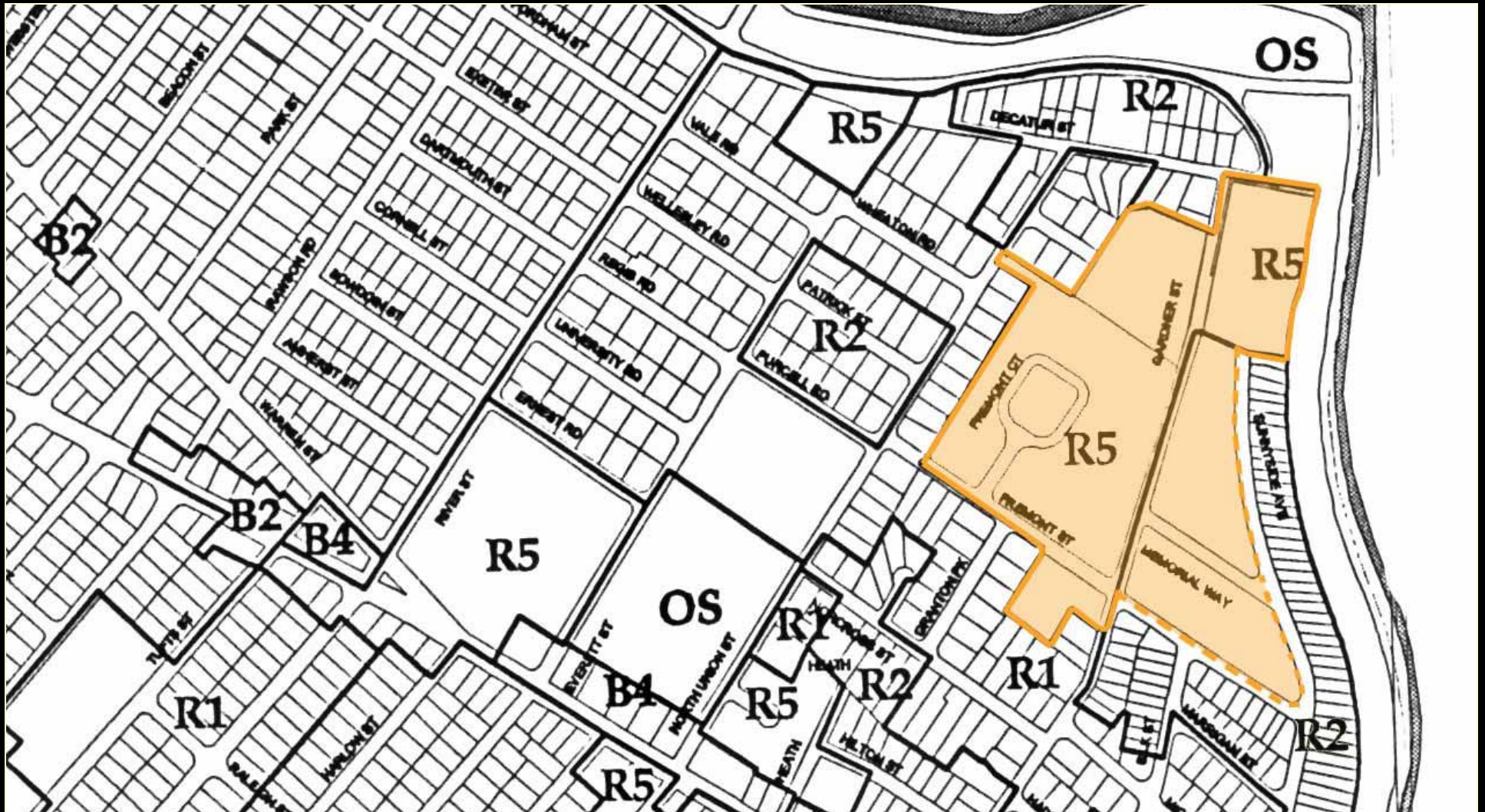
The three new walk-up units will add to the inventory of available affordable housing in Arlington. There are currently over 100 eligible families waiting for housing to become available at Menotomy Manor.



The proposed concept design will be attractive and contextually appropriate. A particular benefit will be the addition of front porches which will help these buildings fit into the neighborhood.



The issue that brings us to the Community Planning Board and the Town Meeting is that three-family houses are not an allowed use in the R-2 district. They are allowed in the adjacent R-5 district. The Arlington Town Council and Town Planner have determined that the correct course of action to make it possible to build these six accessible units is to adjust the location of the line dividing the R-2 and R-5 districts to include the 200-2 site in the R-5 district.



This change will then allow three-family dwellings on the 200-2 site by Special Permit. Once the rezoning is accomplished there will need to be an additional application and hearing before the Community Planning Board to review the specifics of this design for Special Permit. The details of that application will be the same as presented here. The design will comply with the dimensional requirements of the Arlington Zoning Bylaw, including setbacks, building height, density, and required parking.



These three new housing units proposed for the 176 unit Menotomy Manor neighborhood are part of a legally required accessibility project which is in turn made necessary because of the substantial size of the \$7 million DHCD grant for modernization. The alternative would be to abandon the already developed 2nd floor spaces in these buildings and not gain the benefit of the three additional units.



No other expansion is planned for Menotomy Manor. The Special Permit requirement provides a check on any potential project. In addition, there is a specific state law (MGL Section 121B-31) that prohibits the construction of new buildings at Menotomy Manor because the development has more than 100 family housing units. Because of this law the AHA could not propose a redevelopment of the rezoned property with any other kind of multi-family buildings.



In summary, this zoning change is being requested to enable the construction of state mandated accessible units at Menotomy Manor. The law requires distribution of these units throughout the development, and the approved concept is the most economical and least intrusive because it alters only three buildings to provide the six accessible units. And this zoning change will not open the door to any other additions of new housing at Menotomy Manor.