

HOW SHOULD MBTA COMMUNITIES ZONING RELATE TO OUR COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS?

Changing our zoning to comply with the MBTA Communities law has the potential to result in additional housing in Arlington. More housing means more new residents to patronize local stores and restaurants, to join Arlington's workforce, and even to start new businesses.

Arlington has existing Commercial and Industrial districts. These generally follow the Mass Ave and Broadway corridors and, on average, have larger parcels than the residential neighborhoods.

How should MBTA Communities zoning relate to our Commercial and Industrial districts?

Some information to consider:

- The results from the initial MBTA Communities survey indicated significant support for locating multi-family housing within walking distance of commercial areas. This would allow people to patronize local businesses without necessarily needing to drive to every destination.
- Allowing development of multi-family housing in certain parcels currently zoned Commercial or Industrial could allow for larger multi-family developments close to services, amenities, and transit. What are your thoughts about this? Are there specific areas / locations where this might be desirable?
- If we want to avoid housing development in Commercial and Industrial districts, multi-family housing could be located on side streets. Consider opportunities for multi-family housing of various sizes and heights on side streets in the neighborhoods abutting the Mass Ave and Broadway corridors. What are your thoughts about this? Are there specific locations where this type of development would be desirable / feasible? Do you have recommendations about the size and scale of such multi-family housing?
- It is possible to incentivize development that has commercial usage on the ground floor and residential usage on the floors above. An example incentive would be to allow a height bonus allowing a developer to build one or two additional stories. Are there specific areas on the map where this strategy of mixed-use development would be desirable?

With your tablemates, discuss your thoughts. We encourage you to make notes on the large-format map, which will be collected at the end of the activity. Your table facilitator / scribe will help to record your ideas to share back to the MBTA Communities Working Group.

WHAT SIZE / SCALE OF BUILDINGS?

Per the MBTA Communities law, Arlington must create a zoning district of at least 32 acres where 10% of Arlington's current housing stock, or 2,046 units, could be built by right in three-family or larger homes.

What size / scale buildings are right for us? And where should we allow for these different sized buildings?

Some information to consider:

- Arlington's inclusionary zoning (IZ) takes effect in developments of six units (at 15%) or more. Developers are required to include one affordable unit (affordable meaning at 60% AMI or less) per six units. Larger buildings produce more affordable housing. (Note, so far, we've seen IZ affordable units in larger buildings of twelve or more units.)
- The Specialized Stretch Energy Code passed at this April's Town Meeting applies to multi-family buildings > 12,000 square feet, requiring higher energy efficiency and other sustainability practices for these larger, multi-family buildings compared to smaller buildings. (Note, assuming 1,000-1,500 square feet / dwelling, this aspect of the Specialized Code would likely impact developments of eight to twelve units.)
- Buildings four-stories or higher will require an elevator, which may increase accessibility for aging residents.

Other things to consider:

- While the legislation allows us to zone for three-family homes, our consultant Utile's advice is that developments of that size will not be cost-effective, given the cost of land in Arlington and the stringent building code requirements for multi-family buildings.
- We don't have to have all the districts be zoned for the same size buildings; one size doesn't have to fit all. So, as you look at the map, consider what size buildings you think would be appropriate in each district.

With your tablemates, discuss your thoughts regarding what size buildings would be right for Arlington. We encourage you to note on the large-format map where you think we could zone for buildings of certain sizes. The map will be collected at the end of the activity. Your table facilitator / scribe will help to record your ideas to share back to the MBTA Communities Working Group.