

Warrant Article 12:

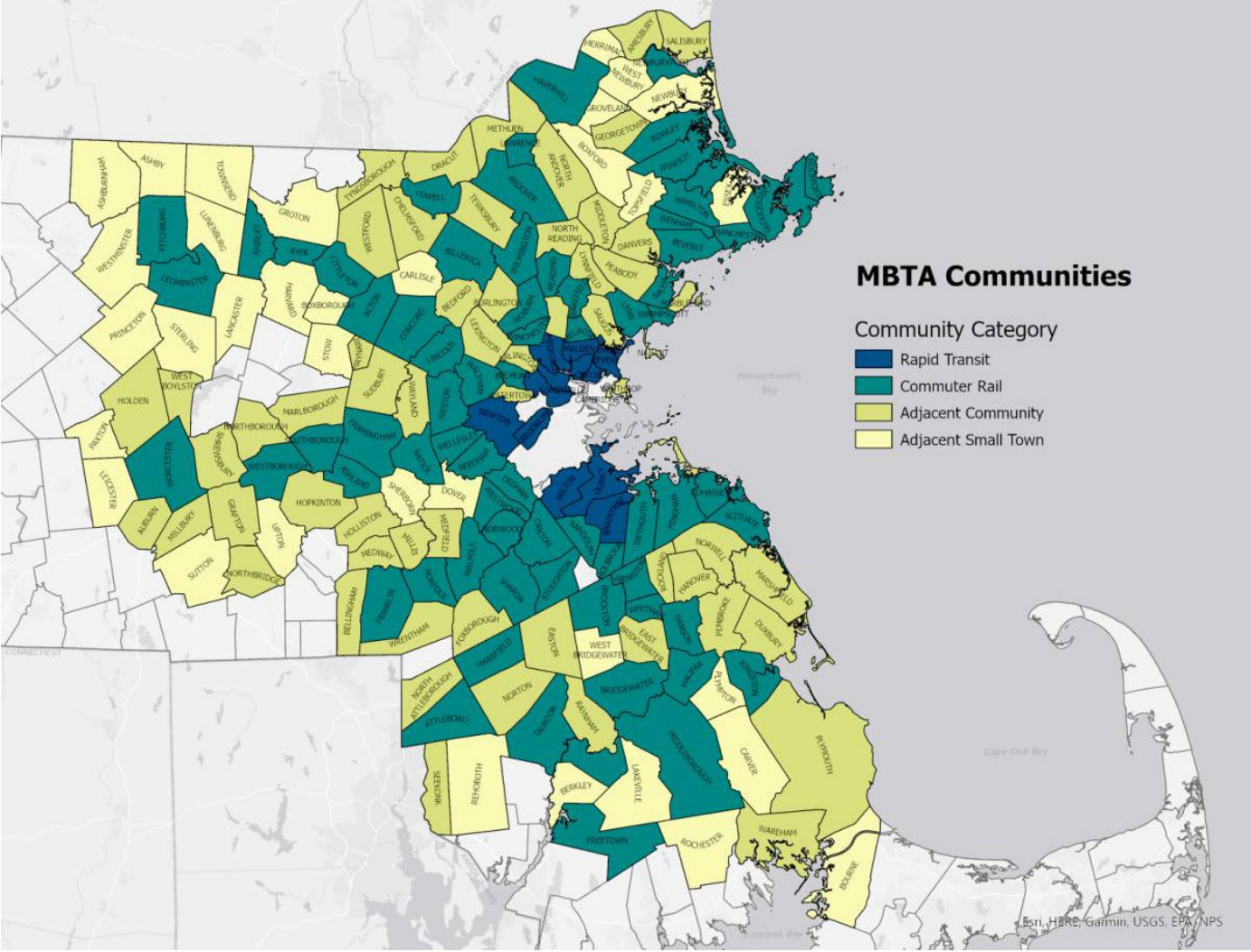
MBTA COMMUNITIES

ZONING FOR MULTIFAMILY HOUSING IN ARLINGTON

Rachel Zsembery, Chair
Arlington Redevelopment Board
Presentation to Town Meeting 10/23/2023

REMINDER: WHAT IS SECTION 3A?

All **177 MBTA Communities** must provide at least one zoning district where multi-family housing (3 or more dwellings) is **allowed by right** and meets additional district requirements*



* Housing is permitted with at least 15 dwelling units per gross acre; housing **cannot be age restricted**, and the district **allows housing that is suitable for families with children**

What does the law say?

At least one district
of reasonable size

Multifamily housing permitted
as of right

No age restrictions; suitable for families with
children

Minimum gross density of 15 units/acre

Not more than ½ miles from a subway station
or bus station, *if applicable*



What does it mean for Arlington?

Minimum 32 acres

Building with 3+ residential
dwelling units

No age restrictions or bedroom
limits in zoning

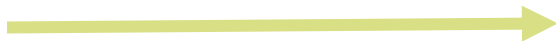
Minimum capacity of 2,046 units







District(s) must be at least 5 contiguous acres;
location unrestricted, but recommended
location along transit corridors and commercial
centers

WHY DOES SECTION 3A MATTER?

By allowing multifamily housing near transit or services, we can accomplish goals laid out in several recent plans*.

The result is



-  Participation in State's fossil fuel free demonstration pilot (approved by 92% of Town Meeting Members)
-  Better access to work, services, and other destinations by increasing mobility and utilization of public transit
-  More housing closer to the places that we go every day, such as local shops, jobs, schools, restaurants, parks, etc.
-  Increased demand for locally-serving retail and transit services in walkable neighborhoods
-  Reducing reliance on single occupancy vehicles, which helps our larger effort to confront the climate crisis
-  Housing choice for empty nesters who want to downsize, adult children who want to live in town, first-time homeowners, etc.

* Master Plan, Housing Production Plan, Net Zero Action Plan, Connect Arlington, Fair Housing Action Plan, Affordable Housing Trust Action Plan



KEY CONCEPTS

Multi-family Zoning in Arlington Today

- Much of our current zoning dates to a major rewrite of our master plan, zoning map and zoning bylaw completed in 1975.
- All multi-family housing (3+ homes) requires a Special Permit.
- Districts that allow multi-family housing are located in pockets.
- Districts are mostly located where multi-family housing existed in 1975.

Other cities and towns around Boston enacted similar restrictions during the same period.

Capacity Modeling

The "Model" is a calculation method developed by the State to estimate the potential unit capacity of an area based on the rules of the zone.

Capacity is a measure of whether a zone is of 'reasonable size'. It is not a measure of how much new housing will be built.

General model formula for capacity:

- $(\text{lot area}) - (\text{parking}) - (\text{open space}) = \text{building area}$
- $(\text{building area}) * (\text{stories}) / 1000 = \text{capacity}$

Capacity is based on what could be built if every lot were redeveloped to the maximum limits, with 1000 square foot apartments.

VISUALIZING DENSITY

Triple Decker
3 units
Gross density: 11-30 du/acre



Fourplex: Stacked
4 units
Gross density: 14-22 du/acre



Multiplex building
5-16 units
Gross density: 10-50 du/acre



Courtyard building
6-25 units
Gross density: 21-56 du/acre



VISUALIZING DENSITY

Downing Square
48 Units
45 Units per Acre

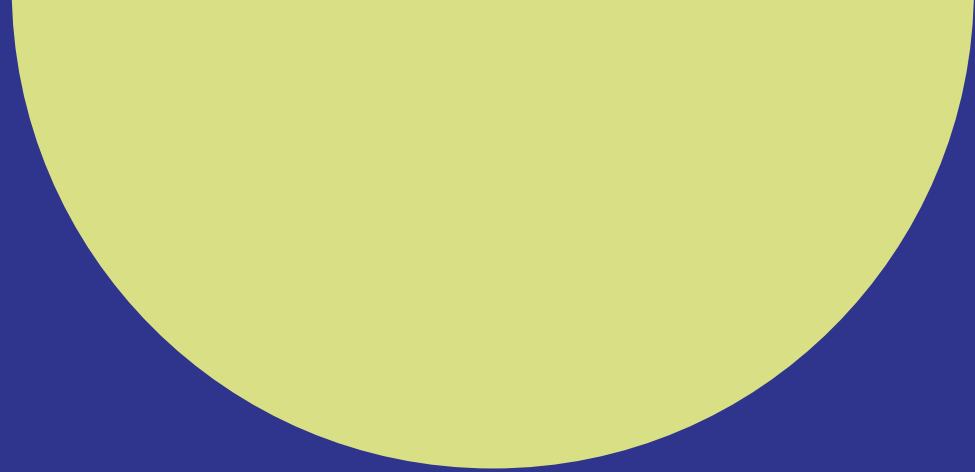


438 Mass Ave
134 Units
49 Units per Acre



389 Mass Ave
29 Units
117 Units per Acre





ENGAGEMENT AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Engagement Activities

Public Meetings

- **November 17, 2022** staff presented an overview of MBTA Communities legislation to describe the basic requirements of MGL Ch. 40A, Section 3A & what it means for Arlington
- **March 9, 2023** Community Visioning Session held online to discuss community goals for neighborhood features, amenities, and potential locations
- **June 8, 2023** An in-person Community Presentation on size and scale of housing on the proposed Draft MBTA District Communities map
- **July 25, 2023** An in-person Community Presentation on size and scale of housing on the proposed Draft MBTA District Communities map
- **September 11, 2023** Presentation of the proposed Draft MBTA District Communities map to the Arlington Redevelopment Board (ARB). Public comments are accepted until October 2nd.

Surveys & Feedback Opportunities

- **March – April 2023 Community Survey** 1033 responses, including 2,325 comments from 506 distinct respondents
- **April – June Visioning Kits**
- **June 8 – July 17th Feedback Form** 213 responses, including 550 comments

Engagement Activities (cont.)

Engaging with the Community

- Resource & Connections Fair
- Farmers Market
- Library Office Hours & Library Table
- Council on Aging Pop-Up
- Arlington EATS Pop-Up
- Collaboration with Housing Corporation of Arlington (HCA)



Conversations & Presentations

- Arlington Chamber of Commerce
- Arlington Public Schools
- Assessors Office
- Interfaith Community
- Housing Corporation of Arlington
- Department of Public Works
- Arlington Police Department
- Historic Districts Commission
- Interfaith Coalition
- Arlington Human Service Network
- Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Division
- Affordable Housing Trust
- Open Space Committee
- Mystic River Watershed Association
- Mothers Out Front
- Residents
- **And more!**



MBTA COMMUNITIES PROPOSAL

Guiding Principles

- Encourage more housing in a variety of sizes and price points,
- Encourage housing located near public transit,
- Encourage housing to provide a customer base in support of local businesses,
- Encourage multi-family housing spread across Arlington, and
- Ensure compliance with MGL c. 40A § 3A (The MBTA Communities Act)

Arlington Proposed 3A Districts

Proposed 3A Districts

- Mass Ave / Broadway Subdistrict
- Neighborhood Multifamily Subdistrict

Existing Context

- Open Space
- Bike Trails / Multi-Use Paths
- Local Historic Districts



District Characteristics

- Capacity of 3,216 units
- Approximately 2,210 existing units
- (capacity - existing units) = approx 1006 units
- Estimate of 50-200 net new units over 10 years

Subdistricts

The properties included in the proposed map can be described in three subdistricts:

1. **Mass Ave:** properties with frontage on Mass Ave (shown in blue)
2. **Broadway:** properties with frontage on Broadway (shown in blue)
3. **Neighborhood:** properties without frontage on Mass Ave or Broadway (shown in gray)

Each of these subdistricts has distinct setback requirements and height limits. In the neighborhood subdistrict, the side setbacks are larger, and the height limit is lower.

The bonus programs for ground floor commercial, increased affordability and sustainable building practices also apply differently between the districts.

By-Right Dimensional Regulations

Table showing the required setbacks and height limits for **by-right** residential development:

Subdistrict:	Minimum Setback (in feet)			Maximum Height	
	Front	Side	Rear	Stories	Feet
Mass Ave (in blue)	15'	5'	20'	4	52'
Broadway (in blue)	15'	5'	20'	4	52'
Neighborhood (in gray)	15'	min 5', total 20'	20'	3	35'

Parking

The parking requirements for the proposal are:

- **Minimum parking:** 1 space/dwelling (subject to existing reductions)
- Developments in the MBMF and NMF Overlay Districts are encouraged to consider providing fewer parking spaces under the provisions of Section 6.1.5.
- **No minimum parking** requirement for commercial uses

Affordable Housing Requirements

Requires economic feasibility analysis and approval by Executive Office of Housing & Livable Communities (EOHLC)

If approved, affordable housing requirements will match Arlington's existing inclusionary zoning policy.

All projects of 6+ units will include **1 in 6 (15%)** affordable units

- Rental: priced at 60% AMI but eligible for households up to 70% AMI
- Ownership: priced at 70% AMI but eligible for households up to 80% AMI

If not approved, affordable housing requirements will be 10% priced at 80% AMI (state limits).

AMI: Area Median Income

<https://www.hud.loans/hud-loans-blog/what-is-area-median-income-ami/>

Bonuses

Table summarizing the proposed bonuses:

Incentives	Mixed-Use	Affordable	Environmental	Max Height	
Mass Ave	+2 stories 0 ft front setback	+1 story for 22.5% affordable +2 stories for 25% affordable	+1 story	78 ft	6 stories
Broadway	+1 story 0 ft front setback	+1 story for 22.5% affordable	+1 story	65 ft	5 stories
Neighborhood	N/A	N/A	N/A	35 ft	3 stories

Existing upper-story step-back requirements apply (7.5 feet above the third floor).

Mixed Use Bonus

Requirements for the mixed-use bonus:

- 60% of the ground floor area devoted to commercial
- 80% of the ground floor frontage devoted to commercial
- Ground floor commercial must be an eating and drinking establishment, businesses service, childcare, or retail.

In return a project may:

- Come to the front lot line
- Add additional stories (1 story on Broadway, 2 stories on Mass Ave)

Affordable Housing Bonus

- Single-story bonus for providing 22.5% affordable units
- Two-story bonus for providing 25% affordable units (Mass Ave only)

Base affordability requirements will apply to all by-right development

- 15% affordable, priced at 60% AMI for rental and 70% AMI for owner-occupied (if state approval given)
- 10% affordable, priced at 80% AMI (if state approval not given)

Environmental Bonus

- One-story bonus for projects that are (minimum) LEED Gold certified
- Other equivalent green building standards may be approved by the Arlington Redevelopment Board



NEXT STEPS

APPROVAL TIMELINE

September

ARB hearings held
Precinct meetings scheduled

November

District Compliance
Application submitted

2023

October

Town Meeting
starts Oct. 17
(Results of State pre-
adoption review due)

December

Target Compliant
District approval

2024

*Statutory deadline
for compliance with
requirements to
participate in the
State Fossil Fuel Free
pilot is **February
2024***

Conclusion

For some time now, the Greater Boston area has had a housing crisis, resulting in:

- Some of the highest and fastest growing home prices and rents in the country.
- Increased financial pressures on low- and middle-income families.
- An economic disadvantage compared to other states.
- The risk of future job growth moving outside of the State due to high housing costs.

The MBTA Communities Act requires communities to amend their zoning to permit greater housing production.



Thank you