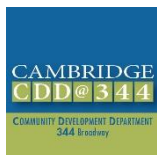


City of Cambridge
Community Development Department

MBTA Communities Draft Guidelines

April 11, 2022





MBTA Communities Legislation: Mutli-Family Zoning Requirements



Multi-Family Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities

Enacted as part of the economic development bill in January 2021, new Section 3A of M.G.L. c. 40A (the Zoning Act) requires that an MBTA community shall have at least one zoning district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right and meets other criteria set forth in the statute:

- Minimum gross density of 15 units per acre.
- Not more than ½ miles from a commuter rail station, subway station, ferry terminal or bus station, if applicable.
- No age restrictions.
- Suitable for families with children.



MGL Chapter 40A, Section 3A

(a) (1) An MBTA community shall have a zoning ordinance or by-law that provides for at least 1 district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right; provided, however, that such multi-family housing shall be without age restrictions and shall be suitable for families with children. For the purposes of this section, a district of reasonable size shall:

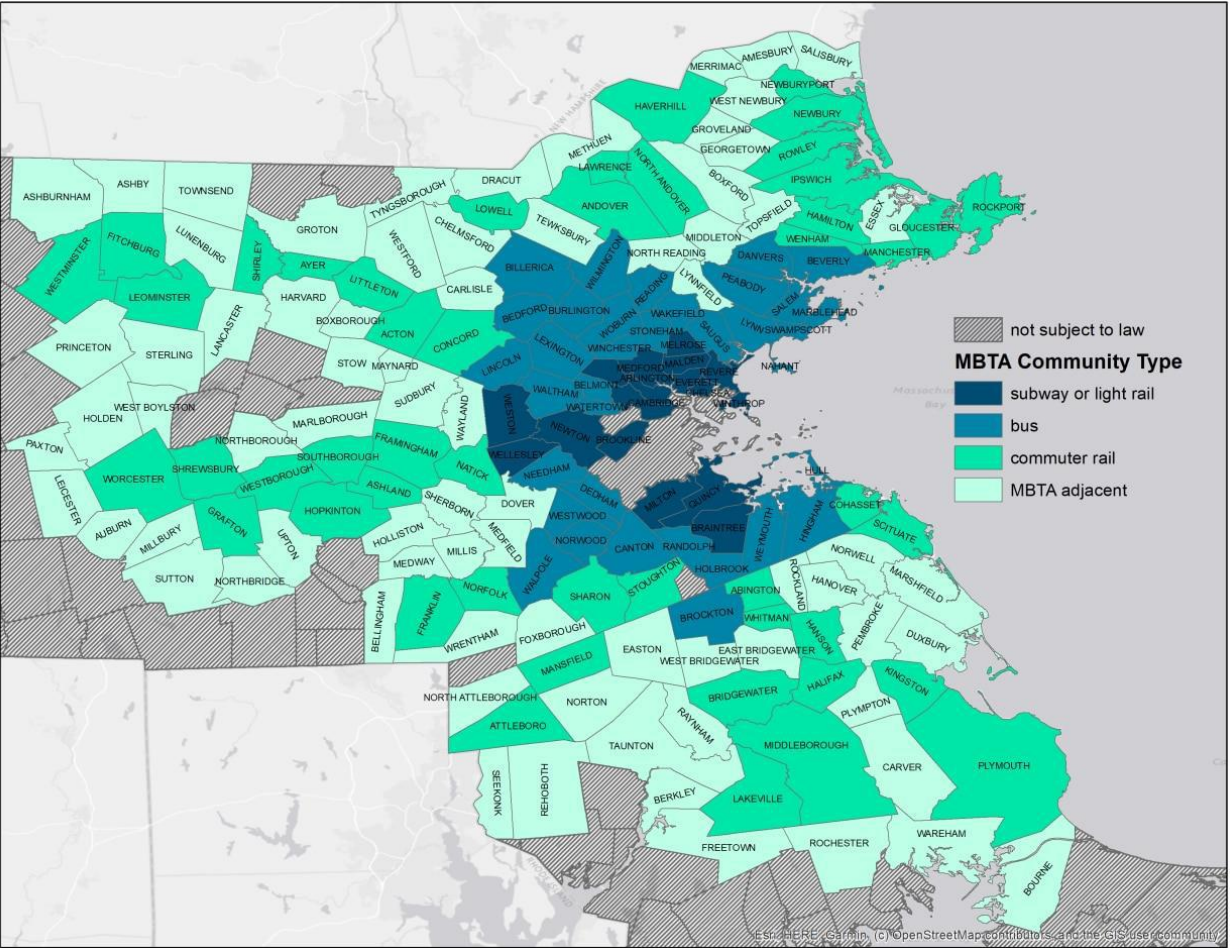
- (i) have a minimum gross density of 15 units per acre, subject to any further limitations imposed by section 40 of chapter 131 and title 5 of the state environmental code established pursuant to section 13 of chapter 21A; and
- (ii) (be located not more than 0.5 miles from a commuter rail station, subway station, ferry terminal or bus station, if applicable.

(b) An MBTA community that fails to comply with this section shall not be eligible for funds from:

- (i) the Housing Choice Initiative as described by the governor in a message to the general court dated December 11, 2017;
- (ii) the Local Capital Projects Fund established in section 2EEEE of chapter 29; or
- (iii) (the MassWorks infrastructure program established in section 63 of chapter 23A.

(c) The department, in consultation with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, shall promulgate guidelines to determine if an MBTA community is in compliance with this section.

MBTA Communities



- “MBTA community” is defined by reference to G.L. c. 161A, sec. 1.
- Including Cambridge, there are 175 municipalities* subject to this new law

**Note, Boston is not subject to the Zoning Act (c.40A) including section 3A.*

Map by Community Opportunities Group, Inc. Data Source: City of Cambridge, CDD. Basemap & Encoding: Google Maps. Last Updated: 6/28/2019.



Draft Guidelines

Pursuant to the requirement in section M.G.L. c.40A, §3A, DHCD has prepared Draft Guidelines to be used to determine compliance with Section 3A.

DHCD requested public comments by March 31st, and is now reviewing the comments. DHCD will promulgate final Guidelines in the Summer of 2022.

DHCD requires that City staff present this information about the Draft Guidelines to the City Council by May 2, 2022.

Reasonable Size: Land Area & Unit Capacity

The draft guidelines outline a two part test to determine reasonable size:

1. Minimum Land Area: multi family districts must comprise at least 50 acres of land or approximately 1/10 of the land area within 0.5 mile of a transit station with a minimum gross density of 15 units per acre, subject to any further limitations imposed by relevant aspects of the state environmental code.

2. Minimum Multi Family Unit Capacity: The multi family unit capacity is a number of units based on a percentage of total housing units within the community. This represents the number of multi family housing units that can be developed as of right within the multi family district. That percentage varies by access to transit:

Service Type/Category	Minimum Multi-Family % of Total Housing Stock	# of communities
Subway or light rail communities	25%	17
MBTA bus communities	20%	35
Commuter rail communities	15%	48
“Adjacent” communities, no MBTA transit service	10%	75

Cambridge Minimum Multi-Family District Unit Capacity Requirement

Municipality	MBTA Community Type	2020 Housing Units (Census PL-94)	Minimum multifamily district unit capacity requirement
Cambridge	subway or light rail	53,907	13,477

Showing 1 to 1 of 1 entries (filtered from 175 total entries)

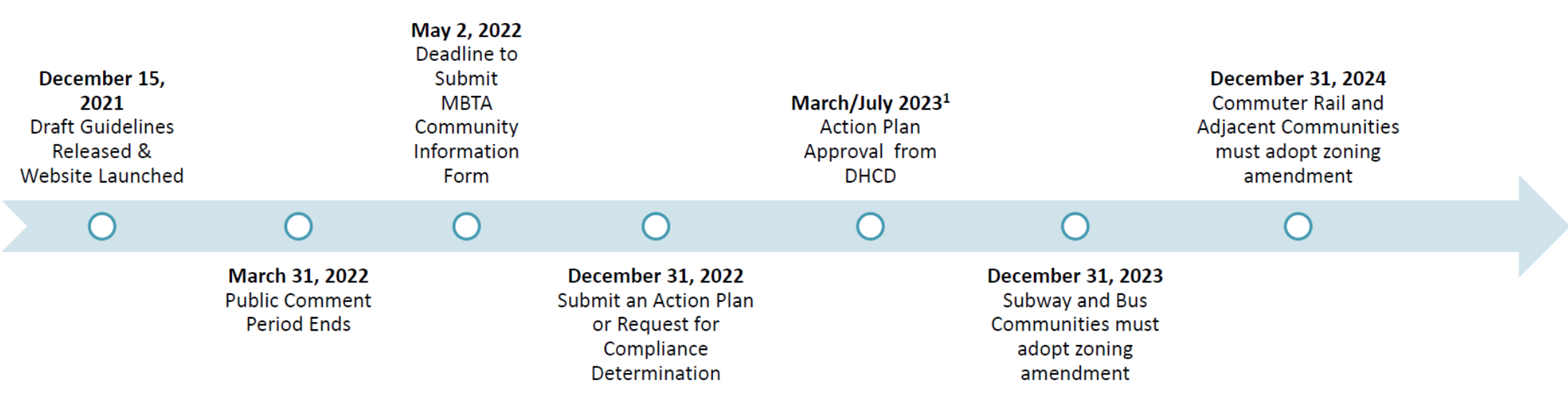
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* MBTA communities with a unit capacity lower than 750 units are noted as having a unit capacity of 750. This is the fewest number of multi-family units needed to meet the gross density requirement of 15 units per acre (i.e. 50 acres x 15 units per acre).

MBTA Communities Draft Timeline



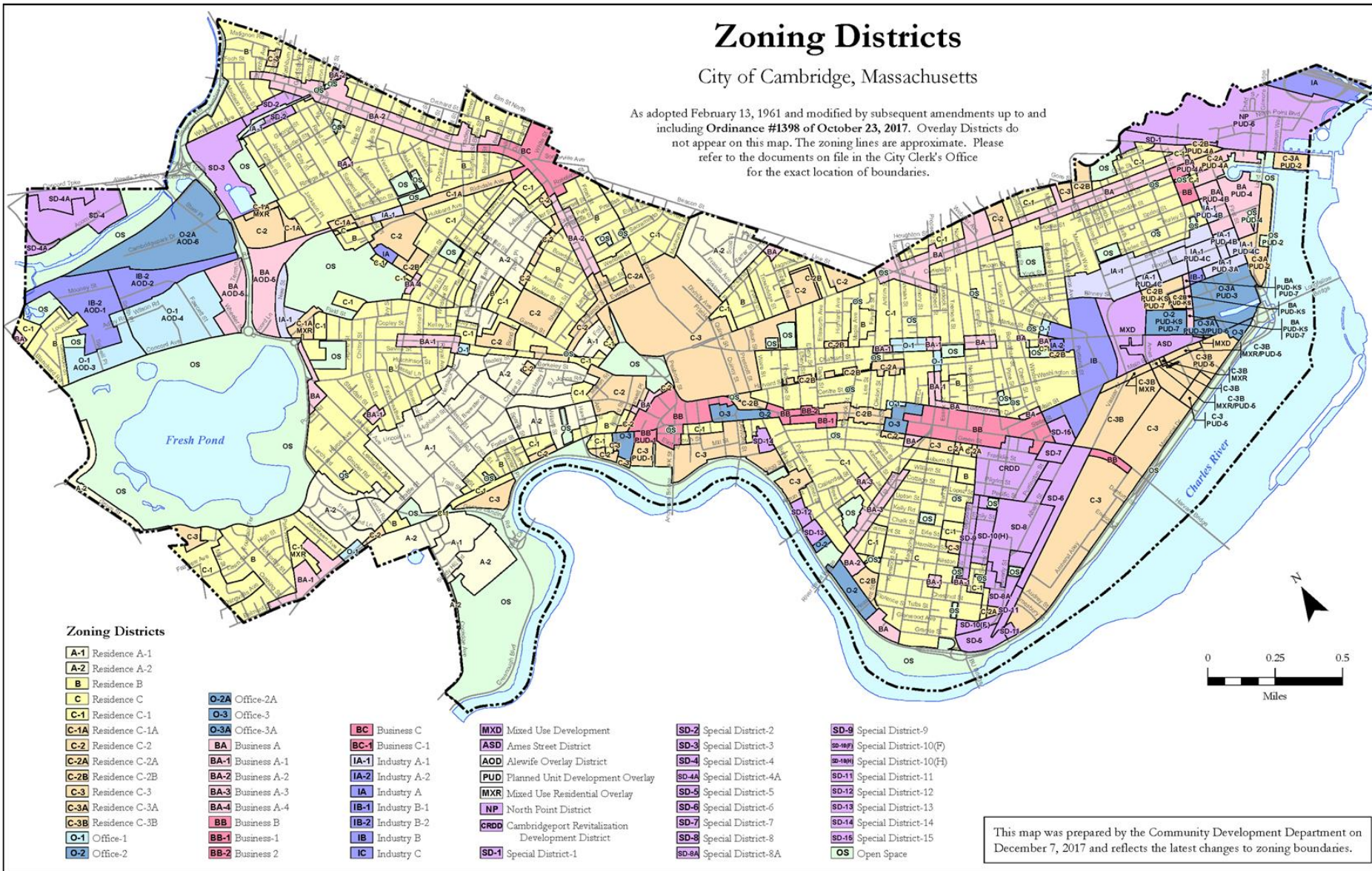


Cambridge Zoning

Zoning Districts

City of Cambridge, Massachusetts

As adopted February 13, 1961 and modified by subsequent amendments up to and including Ordinance #1398 of October 23, 2017. Overlay Districts do not appear on this map. The zoning lines are approximate. Please refer to the documents on file in the City Clerk's Office for the exact location of boundaries.



This map was prepared by the Community Development Department on December 7, 2017 and reflects the latest changes to zoning boundaries.

Map prepared by Brendan Morrow on December 7, 2017. CDD GIS. C:\Projects\Zoning\Zoning1x17.mxd

Districts	Min. Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	Net Unit Density Range (approx.)*	Gross Unit Density Range (approx.)*
A-1	6,000 SF	4-7 units/acre	3-5 units/acre
A-2	4,500 SF	5-10 units/acre	3-7 units/acre
B	2,500(+) SF	9-17(-) units/acre	6-12 units/acre
C	1,800 SF	12-24 units/acre	8-17 units/acre
C-1, BA-3	1,500 SF	16-29 units/acre	10-20 units/acre
O-1, BA-1, IB-2	1,200 SF	18-36 units/acre	13-25 units/acre
C-1A	1,000 SF	22-44 units/acre	15-30 units/acre
IA-1	700 SF	31-62 units/acre	22-44 units/acre
C-2, C-2B, O-2, O-2A, BA-2, BA-4	600 SF	36-73 units/acre	25-51 units/acre
BC	500 SF	44-87 units/acre	30-61 units/acre
C-2A, C-3, C-3A, C-3B, BB, BB-1, BB-2	300 SF	73-145 units/acre	51-102 units/acre
IA-2, IA, IB-1, IB	no minimum	TBD	TBD

***NOTE: ALL FIGURES APPROXIMATE. Further analysis needed to determine exact unit density figures.**



Cambridge Considerations

- Many districts permit more than 15 units/acre
- No single district likely meets minimum size threshold based on 13,477-unit capacity – have to consider multiple districts
- Location to transit – more than one station?
- How to consider requirements related to affordable housing – inclusionary bonus, family-sized units, Affordable Housing Overlay



Discussion