



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager

FROM: Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for Community Development

DATE: April 6, 2022

RE: MBTA Communities Draft Guidelines

On December 15, 2021, the Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) released "[Draft Compliance Guidelines for Multi-family Districts Under Section 3A of the Zoning Act](#)" and "[MBTA Communities: How to Comply in 2022](#)." These documents and other information are available online at: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/multi-family-zoning-requirement-for-mbta-communities>.

To comply with DHCD's 2022 MBTA Community requirements, City staff have prepared the attached informational presentation on these Draft Guidelines for the Cambridge City Council. Staff will be available to review this information with the City Council on April 11, 2022.

Background

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.

In addition to the above criteria set forth in the statute, the Draft Compliance Guidelines provide additional detail on how to apply the "reasonable size" standard. One standard is that for communities served by rapid transit, a district of "reasonable size" would need to allow a number of multifamily housing units equal to 25% of the community's existing housing stock.

DHCD led a Stakeholder Engagement Process, which ended on March 31, 2022, to discuss the Draft Guidelines. Final Guidelines are expected to be issued in the summer of 2022.

Pending the release of the Final Guidelines, communities are required to complete three tasks no later than May 2, 2022: Present the Draft Guidelines to the City Council, ensure submission of the most up-to-date GIS parcel maps to MassGIS, and submit a basic MBTA Community Information Form to DHCD.

After the release of the Final Guidelines, communities will be required to submit either an “Action Plan” or a “Request for Compliance Determination” to DHCD no later than December 31, 2022. At that time, City staff will perform an evaluation of our compliance according to the Final Guidelines, continue working with DHCD staff to respond to questions, and provide additional updates to the City Council.

Attachments:

- [“Draft Compliance Guidelines for Multi-family Districts Under Section 3A of the Zoning Act”](#)
- Cambridge Staff Presentation for April 11, 2022