

Greater Newburyport Housing Choice Coalition Meeting

Thursday 3/21/24 at 6:00pm

Amesbury Senior Center (Hybrid)

1. Welcome and introduce agenda

- Review ground rules, goals, and expectations of meeting

2. Rick Taintor (Chair of the Newburyport Planning Board) -- MBTA Communities Presentation

We get local zoning authority through the state (not the other way around). He reviewed Mass General Laws, Ch. 40A, 40B, 40R, & **MBTA Law (Ch. 40A, Section 3A)** for Multi-family (3 or more units, zoning as-of-right), 15 dwelling units/gross acre. This affects 177 communities in MA. It has to be without age-restrictions, and suitable for families with children.

It's proportional to the size of the community. **There's no requirement on affordability, it simply encourages production.** But local zoning **can** require affordability standards. Things like wetlands & sewer capacity could affect the development of housing. If you don't have the sewer capacity, it's on the developer to build that capacity out.

"It is a common practice in many cities and towns to require affordable units in a multi-family project that requires a special permit, or as a condition for building at greater densities than the zoning otherwise would allow. These inclusionary zoning requirements serve the policy goal of increasing affordable housing production. If affordability requirements are excessive, however, they can make it economically infeasible to construct new multi-family housing." <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/section-3a-guidelines>

The state law is designed to provide enough development that it has a positive effect on affordability, but affordability is not required. The state has focused on PRODUCTION. Many old shopping centers are being changed into multi-family housing. Towns & cities CAN require 10-20% affordable units. There's also a state bond bill being considered to increase support for affordable housing developments.

GNHCC supports this law, and individuals may also advocate for affordable housing.

If you have a lot of land excluded (ex., wetlands), then your density may have to increase in the allowable land areas. We have commuter rail communities (Nbpt.), Adjacent Communities (Ames. & Sal.), and Adjacent Small Towns (who have the longest timelines for compliance – Newbury & W. Newbury) here in the northeast.

Examples of density size -- in Nbpt. — River's Edge Condominiums & the Foundry on Merrimac St. are both currently 15 units/acre. Boston Way is currently 38 units/acre, with some affordable units (in the high range of affordability). Each community can & does zone differently.

Minneapolis has worked a lot on more multi-family housing, ADU's, etc. starting 10 yrs. ago, & housing prices have gone down there.

The state has to approve the final plan for each city/town after a 90-day review, & the statutory zoning process can then proceed. Nbpt. is behind on the timeline, cutting it very close.

Table 3.

Transit Category (# of municipalities)	Deadline to Submit Action Plan	Deadline to Submit District Compliance Application
Rapid transit community (12)	January 31, 2023	December 31, 2023
Commuter rail community (71)	January 31, 2023	December 31, 2024
Adjacent community (58)	January 31, 2023	December 31, 2024
Adjacent small town (34)	January 31, 2023	December 31, 2025

An excellent resource for more info. is <https://www.abundanthousingma.org/resources/mbta-communities-toolkit/>

4. **Next steps** – this state law will need public support from residents in order to be accepted at Town Meetings & by City Councils (Nbpt. & Ames.) –

- talking to your friends & neighbors,
- writing emails to Planning Boards, City Council members, and letters to the Newburyport Daily News & on social media
- speaking up at Town meetings & City Council meetings in support of this

Free coaching & resources are being offered for any or all of this by GNHCC members. Send request to Jaclyn -- jmeers@ywcaneburyport.org

- Upcoming Town meetings
 - W. Newbury-Mon., 4/29, 7 pm
 - Newbury-Tu., 4/30-7:00 pm Triton High School Auditorium, 112 Elm Street
 - Salisbury-Mon., 5/20

Next Gr. Newburyport Housing Choice Coalition Meeting will be Th., April 18, 6 pm, Newbury Public Lib. Featured speaker will be Fr. Jarred Mercer from St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Nbpt. to talk about Refugee Resettlement and housing challenges in this area.