MBTA Zoning:
A Solution for Medfield

Proposed Article 31 for the Annual Town Meeting on May 6, 2024

What is MBTA Zoning?

Passed in 2021, the MBTA Communities Act is an attempt by the state to address the housing shortage in Massachusetts. Unlike 40B, this mandate does not require the construction of a single housing unit. Instead, the law requires that certain towns – including Medfield – update their zoning to allow for multi-family housing by-right with a minimum density of 15 units per acre on at least 50 acres.

In response, Article 31 is a proposed zoning bylaw to be voted on at the May 6, 2024 Annual Town Meeting. This new zoning would only allow for the theoretical development of multi-family housing by right within a few areas in town (known as an 'overlay district'). Whether or not any housing is ever built in these areas depends upon a wide range of factors, such as demand, construction costs, financial viability, and site ownership.

What is the proposed overlay district?

Article 31 would designate an overlay district of 51 acres consisting of three areas – the Parc Apartments site, a site in the Maple-Pleasant area, and a portion of Downtown. All three sites are already zoned to meet all of the state's dimensional requirements. Height limitations, setback requirements, lot coverage, and open space requirements will remain the same. The only zoning change would allow multi-family development by-right.

What is 'by-right' development? What does permitting look like?

By-right, or 'as of right,' zoning means a proposed development would not require a special permit, variance, or zoning amendment. Even so, any new proposed multi-family housing in these overlay districts would still require a site plan review process and would still be subject to public hearings and reviews by the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, and others.

Ready to learn more? Scan the QR code to visit our website!

Want to chat?

Join our next Coffee Talk at the Medfield Senior Center on 05/01, 9 am - 11:30 am; or contact our Land Use Director at mdelafuente@medfield.net

Check out our FAQ:

https://bit.ly/MedfieldFAQ

MBTA Zoning: Why It Matters to Us

Failure to comply with the state mandate has serious consequences — some specific to Medfield.

Compliance with the MBTA Zoning Law is mandatory.

The state must approve our new zoning by December 31, 2024. If we are non-compliant at that time the consequences for the town would be significant.

- Medfield will lose an average of $5-10M received annually in grant funding
- Without grant funds, many major initiatives will be funded with property taxes, if funded at all

Without grant funds, the Medfield State Hospital project is not viable.

- The town will resume the $20M liability for the remediation of the contaminated MSH buildings
- The town will lose $675,000 annually in new net tax revenue from a redeveloped MSH

What does existing compliance look like?

Any new housing built in the overlay district would still have to adhere to the town's existing dimensional zoning requirements. Here are two examples of existing housing to demonstrate specific density.



(left) 14 South St
4 units on 0.20 ac
Density of 15 units per acre



(right) 70 North St
8 units on 0.20 ac
Density of 39.71 units per acre