

About The Project

The Town of Millis is working with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to comply with new regulations from the state of Massachusetts for MBTA communities and how they zone for multi-family housing. This will allow for a greater diversity of housing options in Millis, while still retaining the New England small-town character that the residents love.

Currently, Millis does not allow for multi-family buildings to be built without a special permit from the planning board. To comply with the new regulations, Millis will have to zone for multi-family to be allowed by right in at least 50 acres of the town, allowing for at least 750 new housing units to be built.

The process will include robust community engagement, including public forums and focus groups, as well as research on best practices for multifamily zoning and careful consideration of the local context in Millis. Based on the community engagement, research, and guidance from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to ensure that the new zoning regulations will both be appropriate for Millis, as well as meet the requirements from the state.

As part of this compliance, the Town of Millis will be preparing an action plan to show the state how the town will comply with the new regulations, as well as receive the zoning from MAPC that will be voted on at town meeting.

Timeline for zoning completion and adoption

August 2022	Begin work on MBTA Zoning requirements in partnership with MAPC.
Fall / Winter 2022 – 2023	Research and engagement with the public, city staff, elected officials and stakeholders.
January 2023	Action plan stating how each MBTA community will comply must be submitted to DHCD.
Winter / Spring 2023	Modeling and draft zoning.
June 2023	Final Zoning delivered to Millis from MAPC.
Spring 2024	Zoning to be considered at Town Meeting.
December 2024	MBTA zoning must be enacted by this date to comply with the requirements from DHCD.

Frequently Asked Questions

- **How long will this planning process take?**

The total planning process will take approximately 10 months, from August 2022 until June of 2023. This will allow the zoning to be considered at Town Meeting in 2024.

- **Does this mean Millis will get a new zoning district?**

Not necessarily, no. Options include new zoning districts, modifying existing zoning districts, or adding an overlay district that allows for the 3A zoning requirements to be achieved within its boundaries.

- **How will it be determined where this new zoning will be applied?**

A combination of input from stakeholders and the public, analysis of existing zoning, and modeling based on the development constraints imposed by DHCD and the land in Millis will determine where the new zoning could go. From those options, best practices in planning will be followed in determining the final zoning location(s).

- **Why does Millis have to comply with these new zoning requirements? What happens if the town chooses not to comply, or the zoning is not passed by Town Meeting by the deadline?**

All MBTA communities are required to comply with these new zoning requirements. If a community does not comply, they will no longer be eligible for a variety of state funding for civic and infrastructure projects, including Massworks and Housing Choice funding. At this point it is not determined in its entirety how many programs a community would no longer be eligible, and the planning team will be working with DHCD to throughout the process to understand what programs will be ineligible to a community who does not comply with 3A. Eliminating those funding options will negatively impact Millis' ability to undertake or fund any such projects.

- **What is an "MBTA Community" Why is Millis one?**

MBTA Communities are those who are served, either directly or adjacently, by the MBTA transit system. That includes buses, the subway, and commuter rail. Millis is classified as an "Adjacent Community" as the town is not directly served by the MBTA, while neighboring communities are. The town's population is high enough that it is not considered an "adjacent small town".

- **Are there requirements around where the 3A Zoning must be located? What about proximity to the closest commuter rail station?**

Millis does not have any requirements of where to place the 3A zoning district within the Town borders as it does not have a commuter rail stop. Walkability to the commuter rail in neighboring communities is not a required factor in the decision-making process. Things that will impact where the 3A zoning can go will be development constraints such as buildable land (not swamp land) and avoiding government and institutional buildings.

- **Who determined what these requirements are?**

The law was passed by the legislature and signed by Governor Baker. It is Section 3A of MGL c. 40A, so sometimes these requirements are referred to as the "3A Zoning requirements".

- **Can we petition to have the requirements changed?**

Draft guidelines were released in December of 2021, followed by an open comment

period that lasted through March of 2022. That was the timeframe for communities to submit comments that would impact the final draft of the requirements. The final requirements were published in August of 2022. DHCD will receive feedback, however it is not expected that any additional changes will be made to these requirements, and they should be considered final.

- **Who is involved in this process?**

This process includes multiple Town departments, multiple town boards (including the planning and select boards), the advisory committee, the economic development committee, various stakeholders, MAPC, and the public. This is in addition to any technical assistance provided by DHCD.

- **Must all cities and comply with these regulations?**

No, only if they are classified as an MBTA community. There are only a handful of such communities in the Metropolitan area that do not have to comply.

- **Where can I learn about these new requirements?**

You can learn more about this from the DHCD website by [clicking here](#). To read the codified law, Section 3A of MGL c. 40A, click [here](#).

- **How will this impact water and sewer capacity?**

At this point it is not clear. Typically concerns around capacity occur when a development is proposed and discussed. Throughout the process, the project team will be discussing all concerns related to all public infrastructure with the department of public works and the town engineers.

- **How many new units will Millis have to zone for?**

Millis will need to zone to allow for 750 new housing units, in addition to the 3,412 that currently exist. This would increase the amount of housing in Millis by 22%, if development occurred that would reach the maximum capacity.

- **Will working group meetings be open to the public?**

The working group will be appointed by the Select Board and as such is subject to public meeting laws. Meeting notices and minutes will be posted for these meetings.

Contact Information

To learn more about this zoning project, contact:

MAPC Contact – [John Cruz](#), Senior Housing and Land Use Planner, MAPC.

Town Contact – [Robert Weiss](#), Planning Director, Town of Millis. rweiss@millisma.gov