

ROWLEY SECTION 3A “MBTA COMMUNITIES” FACT SHEET



WHAT IS SECTION 3A?

Section 3A (MBTA Communities) is a new MA law requiring communities with an MBTA transit stop or bordering communities with an MBTA transit stop to adopt a zoning bylaw that allows multi-family housing by-right in at least one district of reasonable size.

This is a **zoning** mandate, meaning an adopted, compliant 3A district will **allow** for multi-family housing by right.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- Massachusetts has among the highest, and fastest growing, home prices and rents of any state in the nation.
- Rising costs have dramatically increased financial pressures on low- and middle-income families, forcing them to sacrifice other priorities in order to pay housing costs.
- There is an estimated shortage of 200,000 housing units in MA - this law moves the needle on creating zoning that allows for construction of new housing to help close this gap and stabilize costs.



WHAT'S REQUIRED FOR MY COMMUNITY?

- Rowley is classified as a Commuter Rail Community, and needs a minimum land area of 40 acres to comprise a compliant 3A district.
- Rowley is required to zone for a minimum of 601 units in this district, at a minimum density of 15 units per acre. This is **not** a construction requirement.
- The Town has until 12/31/2024 to comply with Section 3A.

HOW CAN I MAKE MY VOICE HEARD?



Learn about Section 3A by attending and participating in community workshops and info sessions.



Spread the word - inform your neighbors and fellow residents about Section 3A.



Attend Town Meeting to vote on district adoption.

A map of the Merrimack Valley region in Massachusetts, showing various towns and cities. The map is color-coded, with some areas in yellow and others in green. A large teal banner is overlaid on the right side of the map.

ROWLEY

SECTION 3A "MBTA COMMUNITIES" FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Does Rowley need to build more housing to comply?

No. The state regulations only require the town create a zoning district that could accommodate the number of units and density required. There is no construction mandate as part of this law.

Are our neighboring communities subject to this law? Are they complying?

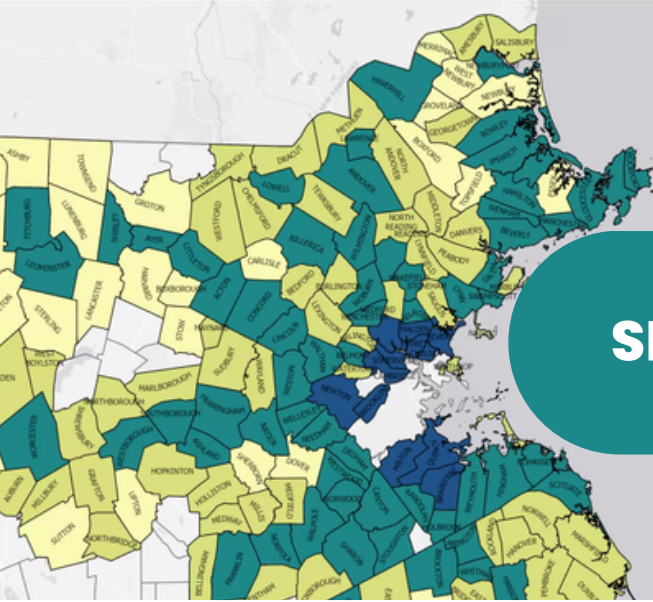
Yes. All cities and towns in the Merrimack Valley are subject to the law, and all have achieved interim compliance. This includes bigger cities like Haverhill and small towns like Boxford. In addition, all of these communities are going through the same process as Rowley is currently - identifying potential districts and soliciting community feedback.

What happens if town meeting decides to not adopt zoning that complies?

If town meeting does not adopt the new regulations, the town will risk losing access to over 12 state grant programs. In the past two years, Rowley has received over \$1 Million in funding from some of these programs. The Attorney General has also stated communities may face litigation from the state if they do not comply.

Will residents have the opportunity for public input and feedback?

Yes. The town will hold multiple public meetings on this topic before Town Meeting in May 2024, where residents will have the opportunity to learn, ask questions, and provide feedback. The bylaw will go through the regular public hearing process that all proposed zoning bylaw amendments are required to go through. Check the town website and follow the town on social media to stay up to date on these meetings and events. *As with any zoning change, the final decision of adopting this bylaw will be up to residents at Town Meeting.*



ROWLEY SECTION 3A “MBTA COMMUNITIES” FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why are there two proposed districts: a Station District and a West District?

The state law requires that at least 20% of the overall zoning district is located near Rowley's Commuter Rail Station, with the ability to zone the rest of the district elsewhere in town. Two districts allows the town to spread out the potential unity capacity and preserve the existing character and integrity of existing residential neighborhoods.

Do the Station and West districts have the same regulations?

Not exactly. While some zoning parameters are proposed to be the same for both districts, such as minimum open space and setbacks, there are more restrictive requirements for the Station district. ***Any potential multi-family development would be limited to a two story height limit in the Station district***, while the West district allows up to three stories with the option for an additional story contingent on Planning Board special permit approval.

Will the MBTA districts eliminate or replace existing zoning?

No. The proposed Station and West districts would be created as an “overlay district” on top of the existing zoning. An overlay zone expands the types of potential development allowed in an area without replacing the existing zoning that is already in place. The new overlay zoning districts do not mandate that multi-family housing must be built, they just create the potential that multi-family housing can be built along with other allowed uses.

What about the marshland and wetland in town?

All the pertinent protections to environmentally sensitive areas—including the Wetlands Protection Act and Title 5 Septic Systems regulations—would still be applied to any prospective multi-family development within the Station and West districts. Any wetland and marshland, including near the MBTA station, will remain protected.