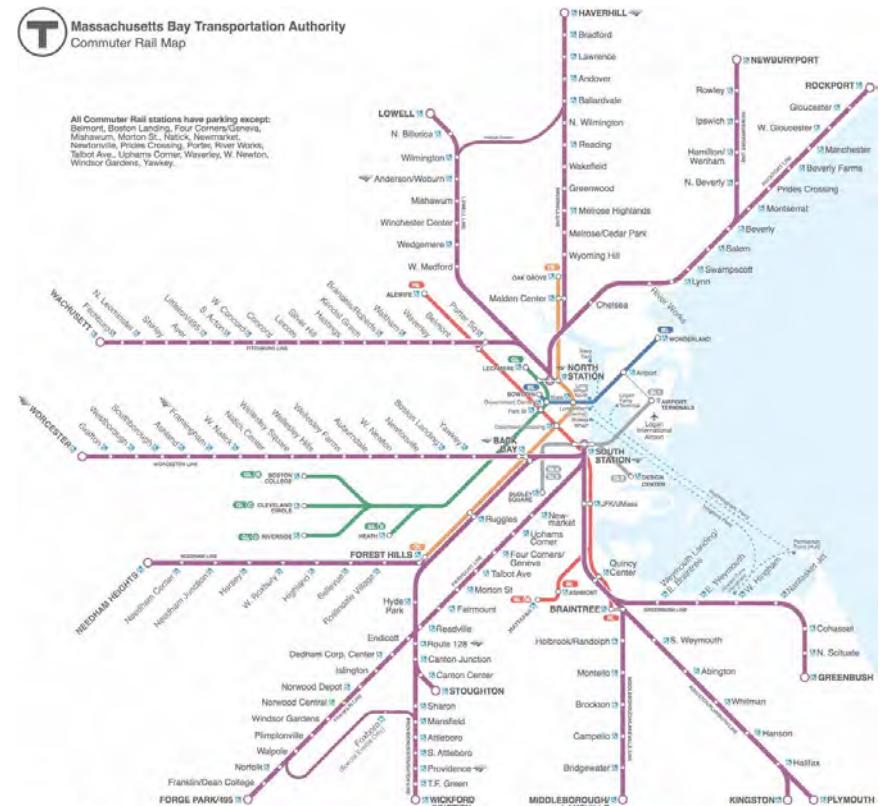


# Comprehensive Zoning Bylaw Update and Zoning for MBTA Communities

## City of Methuen

**City Council Presentation**  
**October 21, 2024**



# Agenda

- Overview of Section 3A
- Why is Compliance Important?
- What was the City's Process for Identifying a Compliant District?
- Three Compliant Options, One Recommendation
- Next Steps for the Council's Consideration

# **Overview of Section 3A (the MBTA Communities Act)**

# Overview of Section 3A

## What is MGL c. 40A Section 3A (the MBTA Communities Act)?

This **law** – passed in **2021** – established a requirement that each of the 177 designated MBTA Communities (MGL c. 161A Section 1) must have **zoning** that:

1. Provides for at least 1 district of reasonable size in which multifamily housing is permitted as of right.
2. Cannot have age-restrictions and shall be suitable for families with children.
3. Must have a minimum gross density of 15 dwelling units per acre.
4. Part of the district must be located within 0.5 miles from a commuter rail, subway, ferry, or bus station, as applicable.

## What is the purpose behind the law?

1. Massachusetts has a **housing shortage**, and we need to produce more housing.
2. The amount of housing that is **financially attainable** to most households **does not meet the demand**.
3. The Commonwealth is at a **disadvantage in competing** for businesses, jobs, and talent.
4. Placing housing near transit is **good** housing, economic, transportation, and climate **policy**.  
*(MeVa provides bus service throughout the city and connects to commuter rail stations nearby in Lawrence and Haverhill.)*

# Overview of Section 3A

## What the Section 3A is **NOT**.



**A mandate to build housing.**



**A housing production target.**



**Restricted to affordable housing.**



**The only housing tool a community has.**

**Zoning provides options for a landowner, but it does not require them to change the use on their property.**

**No one – private or public – is required to meet the unit capacity number.**

**Any housing developed will be primarily market rate. Affordability is a local option and is limited.**

**Towns have many options to address housing needs – this is only one tool.**

# Overview of Section 3A

## What is the definition of multi-family housing?

“Multi-family housing” is defined as **a building with 3 or more residential dwelling units** or 2 or more buildings on the same lot with more than 1 residential dwelling unit in each building.



Image Source: Opticos

# Overview of Section 3A

## Key Terms:

### Geographic Area

The number of acres within a district, **no fewer than 50 acres**.

### Unit Capacity

The number of units that the model calculates could be built under the proposed zoning, assuming a blank piece of land, **no fewer than 2,019 units**.

### Density

The unit capacity divided by the number of acres in the district, **no lower than 15 units per acre**.

# Why is Compliance Important?

# Why is Compliance Important?

What are the implications if Methuen does **not** comply?

## Grants the city would be ineligible for:

- ▶ Housing Choice Community Grants
- ▶ Local Capital Projects Fund
- ▶ MassWorks Infrastructure Fund
- ▶ HousingWorks Infrastructure Fund
- ▶ MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund

## Current Grants at Risk

- ▶ Green Communities (MA Dept. of Energy Resources) – energy efficiency projects
- ▶ Shared Streets (MassDOT)-Lower Broadway streetscape
- ▶ MassWorks Infrastructure (Exec Office of Economic Development) - Charles St. wall
- ▶ Brownfields (MVPC funding from USEPA) – Battye property Phase II Assessment
- ▶ Electric Vehicle Incentive Program (MassDEP) – Pelham St. Park & Ride
- ▶ Mass. Small Cities CDBG (Exec Office of Housing & Livable Communities)

## Grants the city would be less competitive applying for versus a compliant community:

- ▶ Green Communities (MA Dept. of Energy Resources) – energy efficiency projects
- ▶ Clean Water State Revolving Fund (MassDEP) – Phase 2, Arlington Neighborhood Water/Sewer Improvements (**application submitted**)
- ▶ MassWorks Infrastructure (EOED) – future phases 3 & 4 of Arlington Neighborhood Water/Sewer
- ▶ Mass. Brownfields Redevelopment Program (MassDEP/MassDevelopment) – potential source for environmental site cleanup & redevelopment (Searles Estate, Battye site, others)
- ▶ Cultural Facilities Fund (Mass. Cultural Council/MassDevelopment) – potential Searles Estate capital improvement project funding source
- ▶ Planning & Survey Grant (Mass. Historical Commission) – potential source of Searles Estate historic preservation planning
- ▶ Mass. Preservation Projects Fund (MHC) – potential source of funding historic/cultural resource restoration activities
- ▶ Safe Routes to Schools (MassDOT) – potential source of ped/biking infrastructure improvements
- ▶ Safe Streets & Roads for All/Merrimack Valley Vision Zero (MVPC) – potential source of intersection safety upgrades
- ▶ Housing Development Incentive Program (EOHLC)
- ▶ Green Communities Competitive Grant (DOER)
- ▶ Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Grants (EOEEA)
- ▶ Municipal ADA Grant (Mass. Office of Disability) – potential funding source for municipal facility accessibility improvements
- ▶ Future funding rounds of Small Cities CDBG

# **What was the City's Process for Identifying a Compliant District?**

# What was the Process?

## Housing Working Group Members

- ▶ **Matthew D'Agostino**, Zoning Board of Appeals
- ▶ **Stephen F. DeFeo**, Community Development Board (Central District)
- ▶ **Neal Hunter**, Community Development Board (West District)
- ▶ **Christine Metzemaekers**, Council on Aging
- ▶ **Ann-Marie Moglia**, Methuen Housing Authority
- ▶ **Heather Plunkett**, Community Development Board (Central District)
- ▶ **Linda Soucy**, Methuen Arlington Neighborhood, Inc.
- ▶ **Laura Walta**, Zoning Board of Appeals
- ▶ **Joel Faretra**, City Council, Chair

## City Staff Members

- ▶ **Jack Wilson**, Director of Economic and Community Development
- ▶ **Kathleen Bradley-Colwell**, Planning Division Director
- ▶ **Joe Cosgrove**, Energy Manager and Environmental Planner
- ▶ **Caeli Tegan Zampach**, Director of Health, Human Services and Inspections
- ▶ **Jazmin Nunez**, Community Health Worker
- ▶ **Nina Schulze**, Second Assistant City Solicitor
- ▶ **Kenneth Rossetti, Esq.**, City Solicitor

# What was the Process?

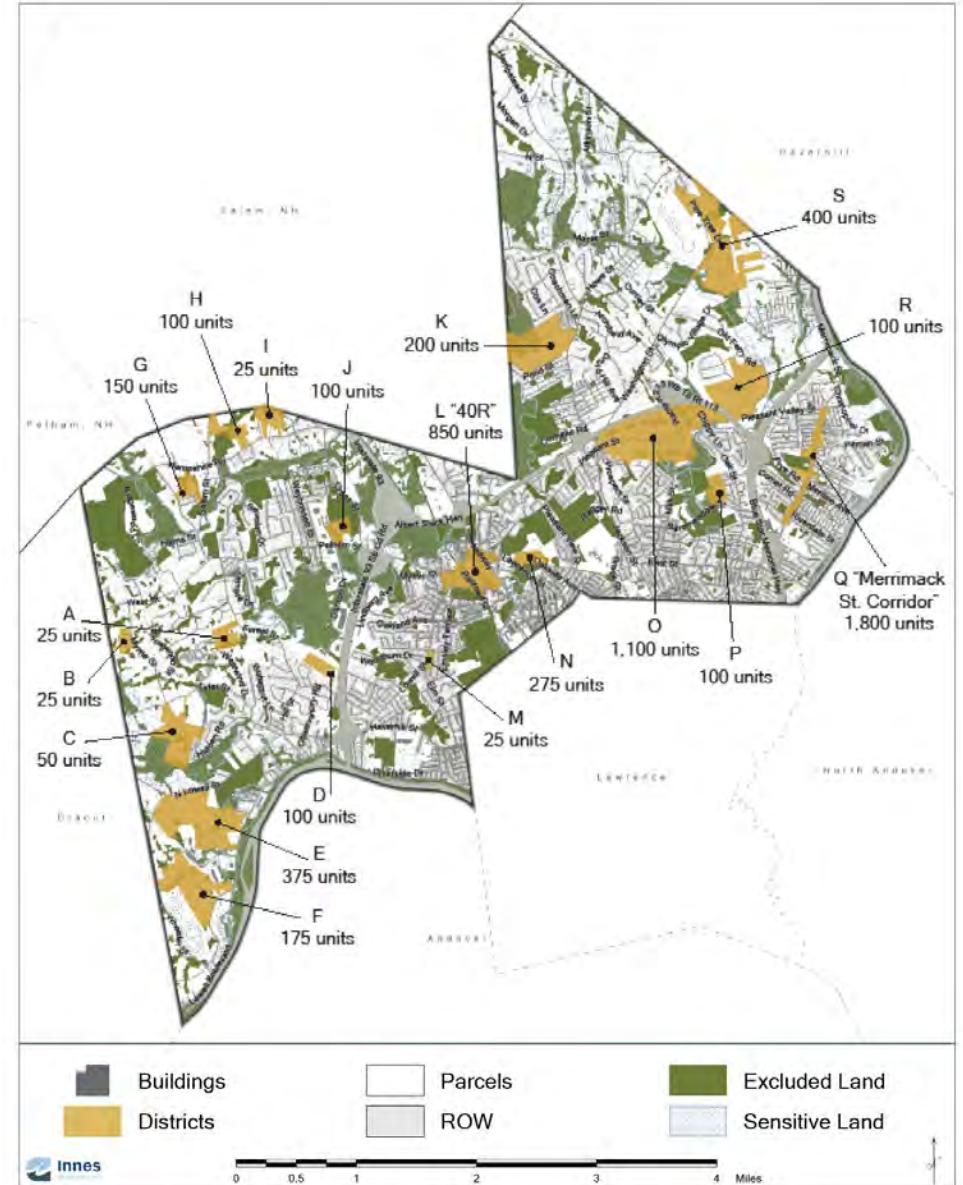
## Phase 1 (2023-2024)



# Workshop Results: November 2023

This map indicates the number of units “distributed” to each area by workshop participants.

These results indicate additional possibilities for tests in Phase 2 of this process.



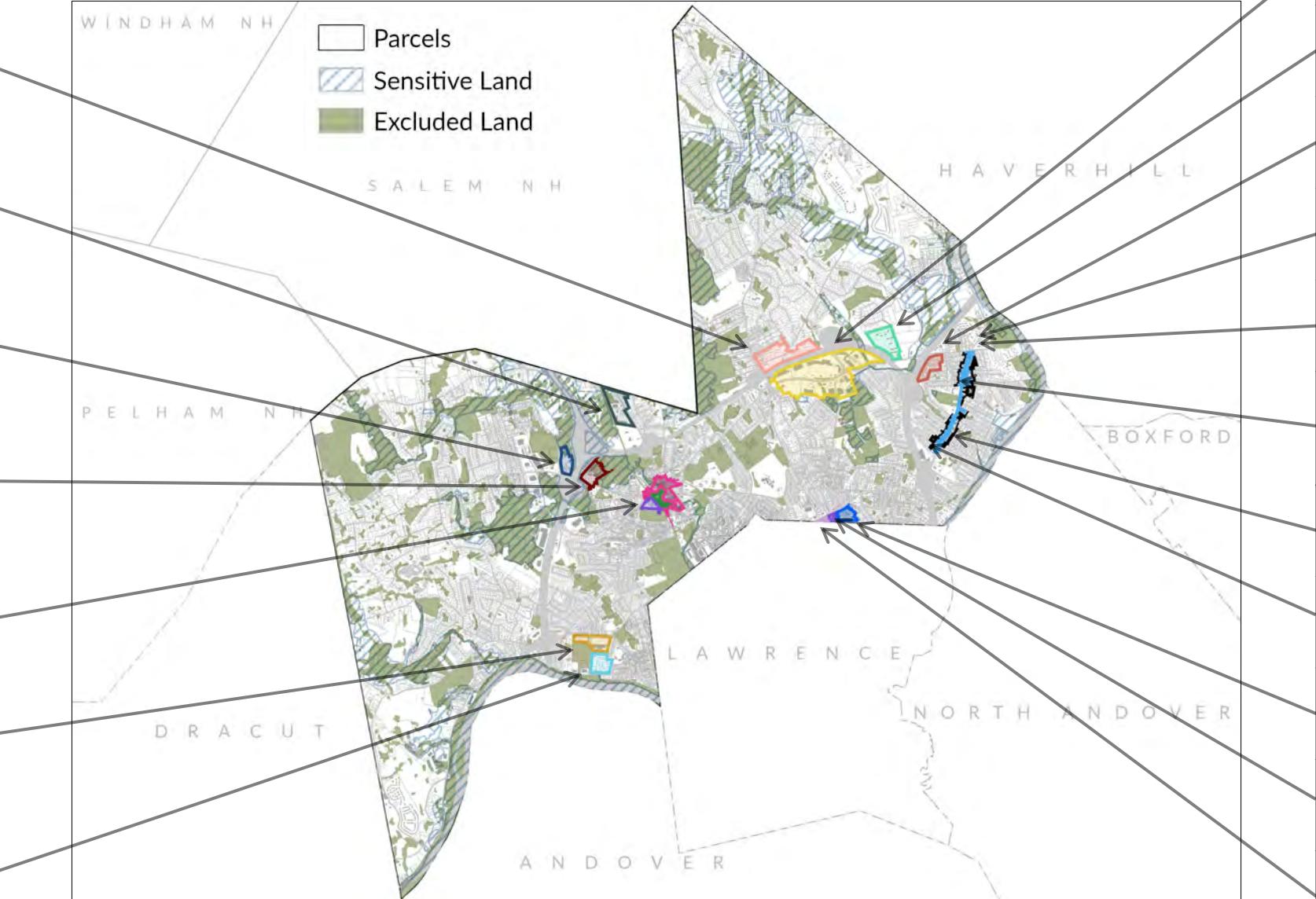
# What was the Process?

## Phase 2 (2024)



# April 22 City Council: Districts for Discussion

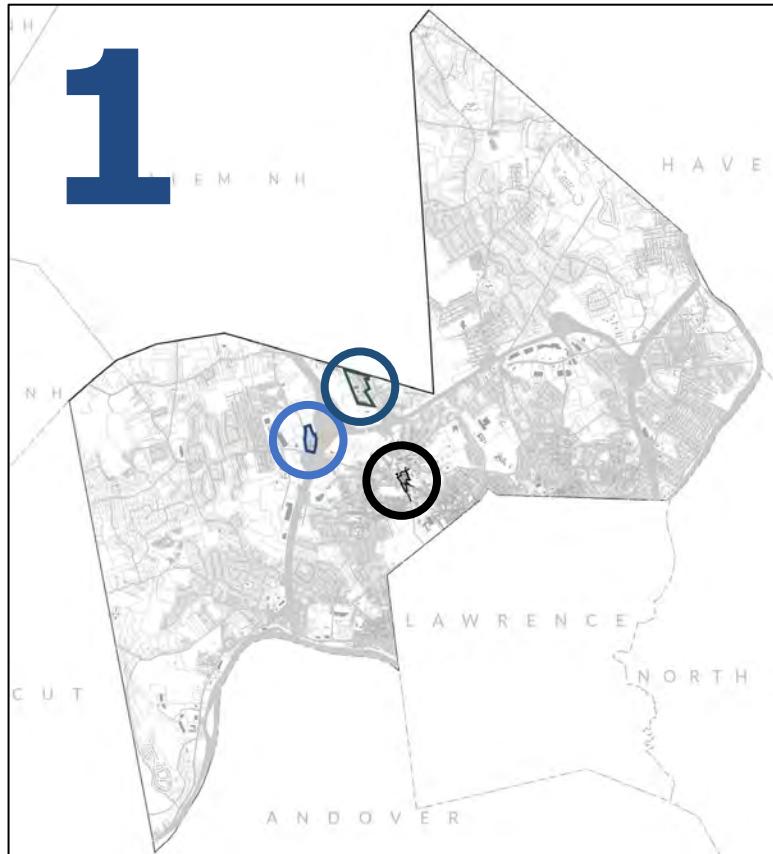
<b>Washington St</b> 67.1 acres
<b>North Broadway</b> 46.4 acres
<b>Cross &amp; Pelham</b> 21.4 acres
<b>Mystic &amp; Pelham</b> 30.1 acres
<b>Downtown (40R)</b> 71 acres
<b>Burnham Rd</b> 32.1 acres
<b>Riverside Dr</b> 27.4 acres



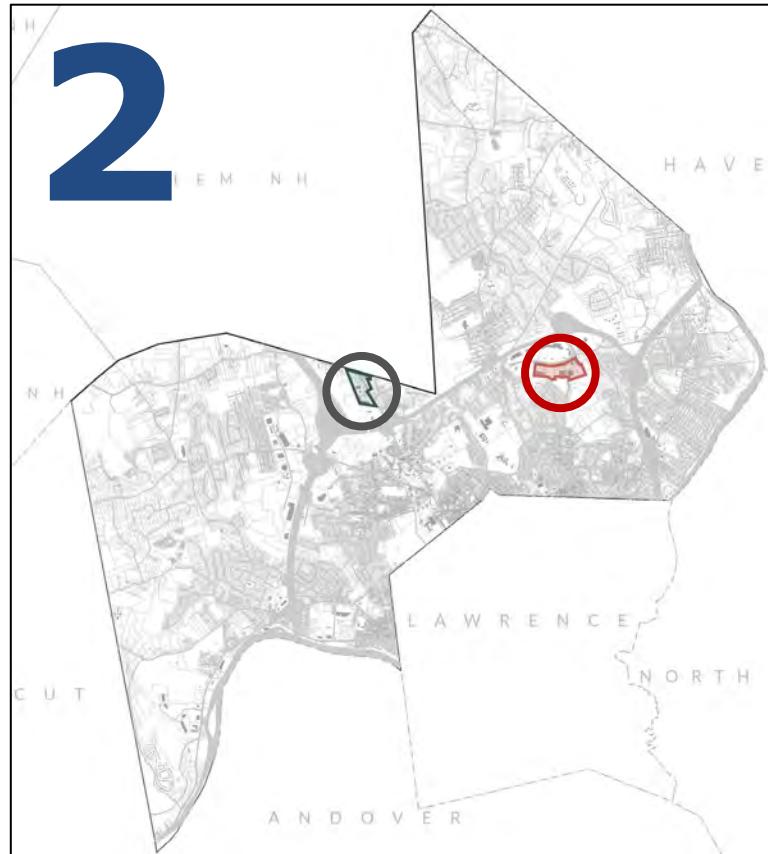
<b>The Loop</b> 211.8 acres
<b>Summit Place</b> 44.5 acres
<b>Colonial Village</b> 26.1 acres
<b>Merrimack NW</b> 5.7 acres
<b>Merrimack NE</b> 16 acres
<b>Merrimack St Corridor</b> 41 acres
<b>Merrimack SE</b> 9.3 acres
<b>Merrimack SW</b> 8.9 acres
<b>Upper Swan</b> 17.6 acres
<b>Middle Swan</b> 4.4 acres
<b>Lower Swan</b> 3.1 acres

**Three Compliant Options,  
One Recommendation**

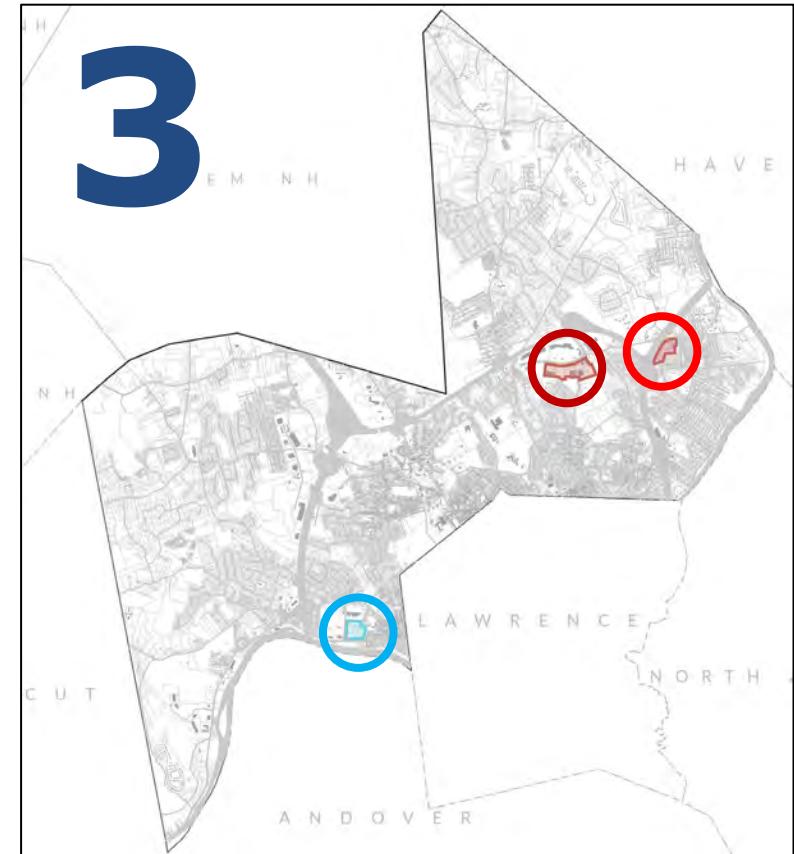
# Options



**81** acres  
**2,031** units  
**31** du/ac

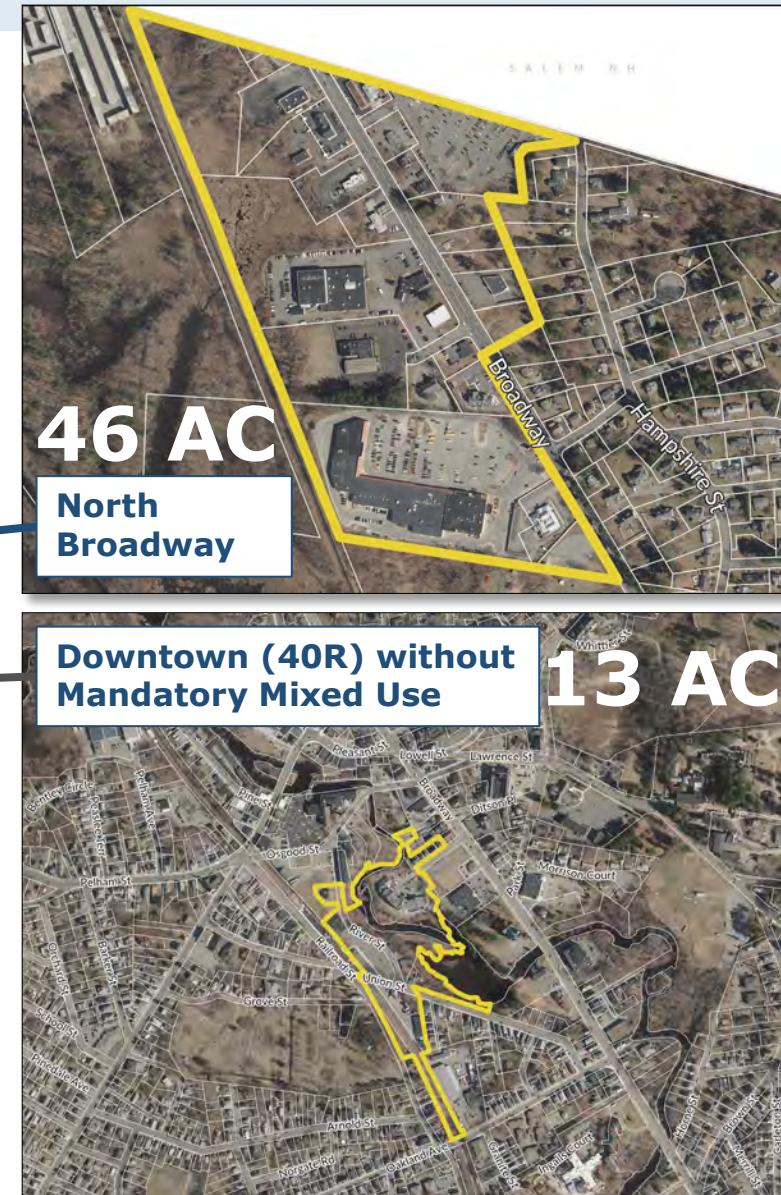
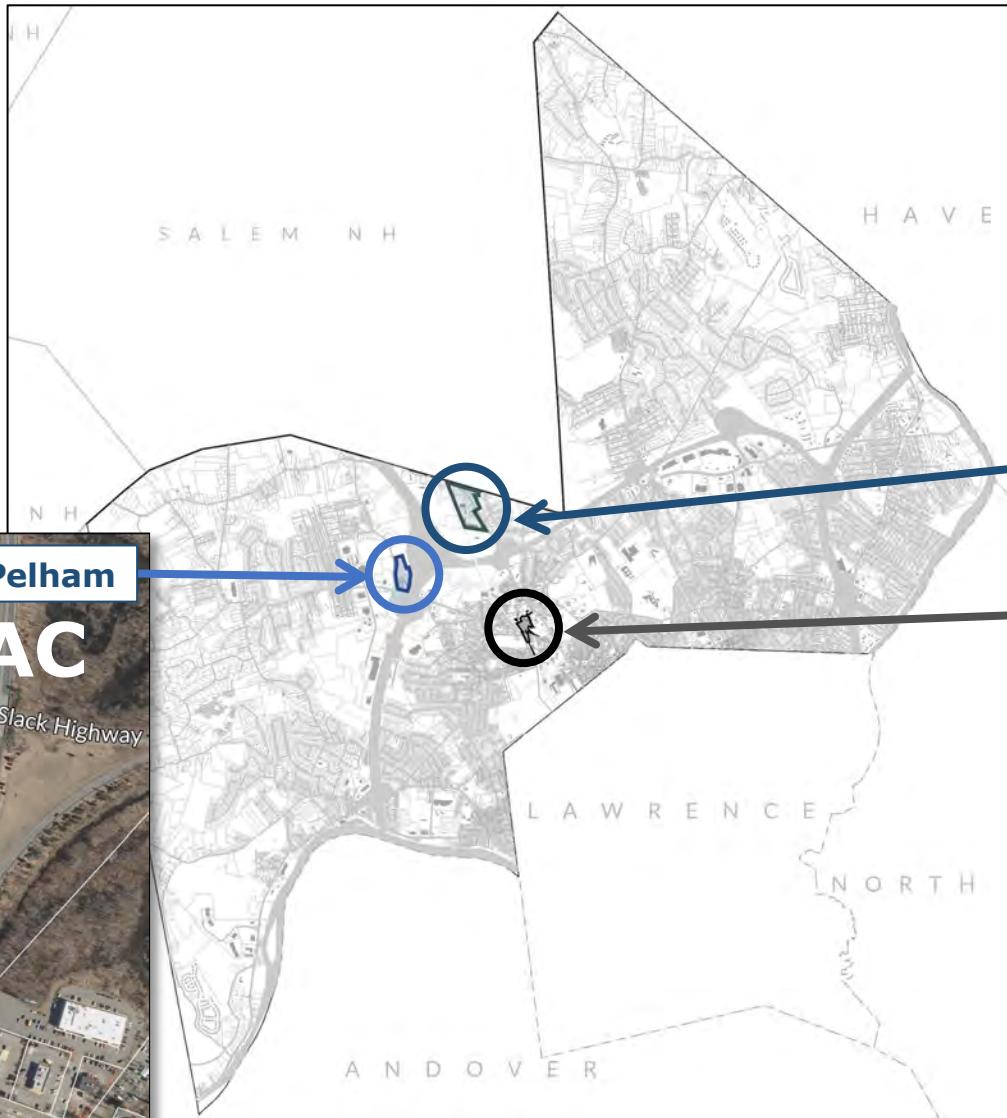


**104** acres  
**2,038** units  
**23** du/ac



**111** acres  
**2,241** units  
**22** du/ac

# Option 1



# Option 1

## Goals

Captures existing multifamily housing in the downtown.

Adds new housing and a mix of residential and commercial uses near highway access (Cross & Pelham; North Broadway).

## Pros

Addresses City's need for other housing types for seniors and young professionals.

Could contribute more affordable housing in the City.

Places new housing close to existing amenities, highway access points, and along heavily traveled roads to avoid traffic through existing neighborhoods.

## Cons

Not fully distributed throughout the City.

Does not address potential concerns about retaining auto-oriented uses on North Broadway (gas stations, drive-thru restaurants).

Proposed new multi-family housing could replace existing commercial uses in some locations.

## Option 2



# Option 2

## Goals

Adds new housing and a mix of residential and commercial uses near highway access (North Broadway).

Adds new housing to support existing retail and businesses at the Loop.

Does not include the downtown, which already has a multi-family zoning strategy.

## Pros

Addresses City's need for other housing types for seniors and young professionals.

Could contribute more affordable housing in the City.

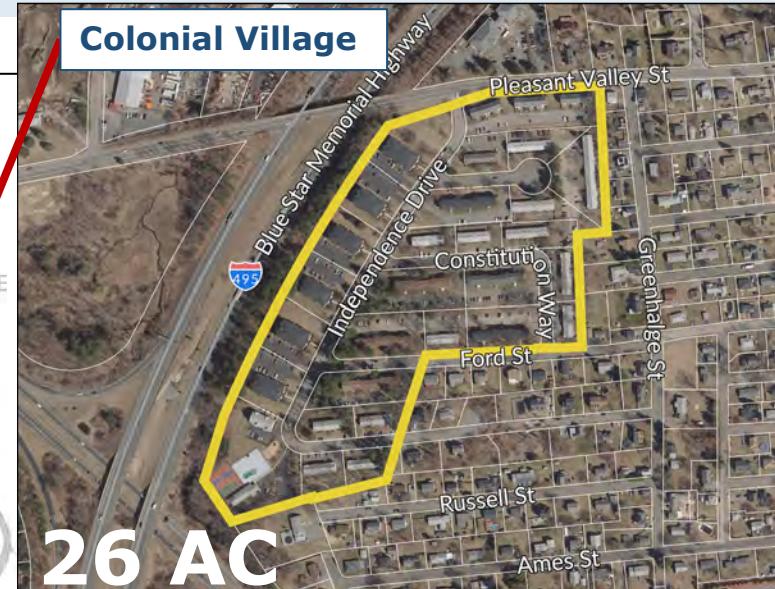
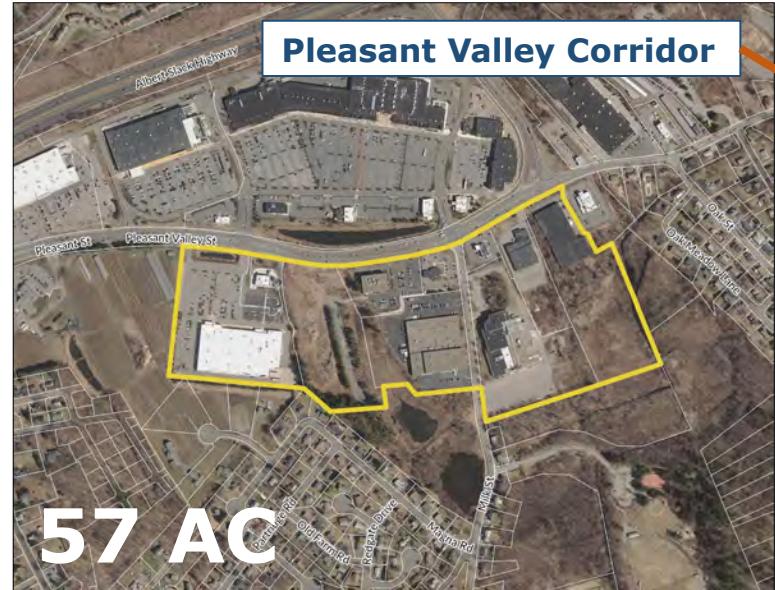
Places new housing close to existing amenities and highway access points to avoid traffic through existing neighborhoods.

## Cons

Does not address potential concerns about retaining auto-oriented uses on North Broadway (gas stations, drive-thru restaurants).

Proposed new multi-family housing could replace existing commercial uses in some locations.

# Option 3



# Option 3

## Goals

Captures existing multifamily housing in all three areas.

Creates areas for multi-family housing outside of the downtown which already allows multi-family housing.

Better geographic balance of the districts.

## Pros

Addresses City's need for other housing types for seniors and young professionals.

Could contribute more affordable housing in the City.

Allows for reinvestment in existing low-scale multi-family housing (the missing middle).

Places new housing close to existing amenities, highway access points, and along heavily traveled roads to avoid traffic through existing neighborhoods.

## Cons

New housing – and associated amenities – at Pleasant Valley Corridor would be slow to develop because of existing uses.

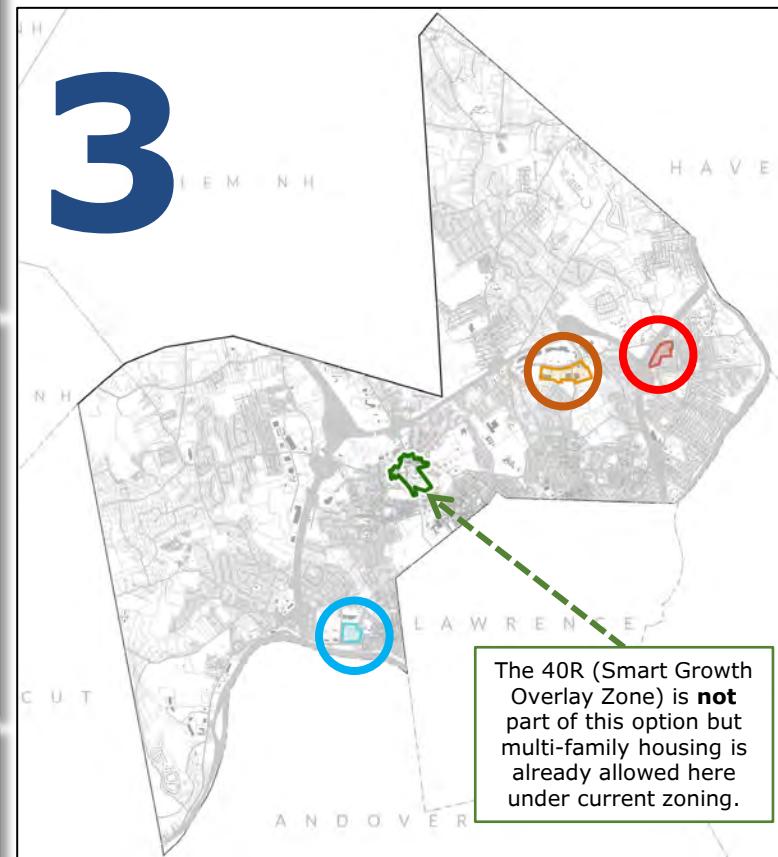
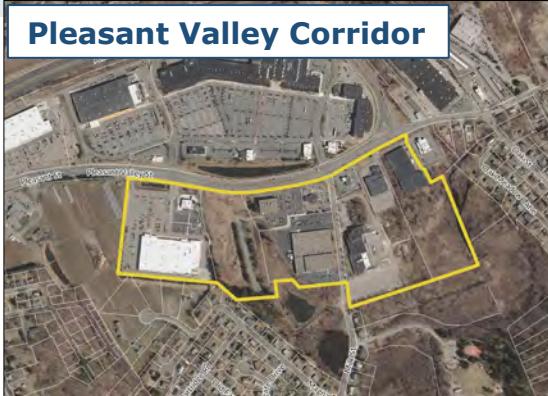
Reinvestment strategy in existing housing would take time.

Proposed new multi-family housing could replace existing commercial uses in some locations.

# Recommendation

## The members of the Housing Working Group recommend Option 3.

- ▶ Spread out geographically.
- ▶ Situated on major roads close to highway access points and served by MeVa bus routes #1 and #5.
- ▶ Close to existing amenities.
- ▶ Unlikely to increase traffic on local neighborhood roads.
- ▶ Adds multi-family housing where it already exists in the community.
- ▶ Will provide a slow roll out of new and/or renovated housing over time.
- ▶ Will help existing property owners update their property as the zoning ordinance will match what's built on the ground.
- ▶ Provides the "missing housing" for seniors and young professionals.
- ▶ Can contribute some affordable housing.



**111** acres  
**2,241** units  
**22** du/ac

# Recommendation: Option 3

## Housing Types



Pleasant Valley Corridor,  
Existing Housing Type



Colonial Village,  
Existing Housing Type



Pleasant Valley Corridor,  
Proposed Housing Type



Riverside Drive,  
Existing Housing Type



Riverside Drive,  
Existing Housing Type



Colonial Village/Riverside Drive,  
Proposed Housing Type

All images, source: Google Streetview

# Next Steps for the Council's Consideration

# Next Steps for Consideration

## Review Process for City Council Vote and EOHLC Review and Approval



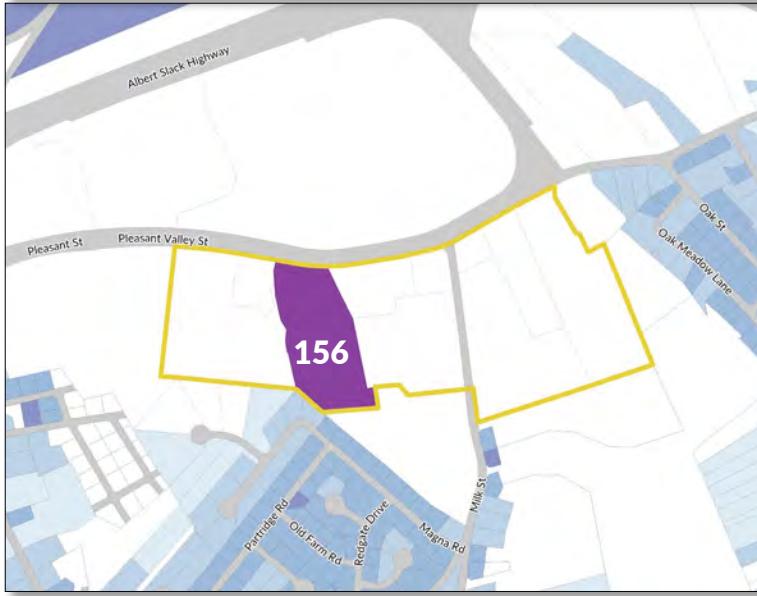
# Appendix: Unit Capacity Maps

# Pleasant Valley Corridor

Aerial Image of District



Existing Residential Density



The numbers on the map indicate the units per parcel.

Zoning District: BH - Highway Business

## Pleasant Valley Corridor

57 acres

Comparison of Existing Units to Modeled Unit Capacity

Existing Residential Units

(Calculated from Methuen's FY 2023 Assessor's Data)

156

Potential Units Allowed from Existing Zoning

(Modeled Unit Capacity)

0

Potential Units Allowed from 30 DU/AC Maximum

(Modeled Unit Capacity)

1,515

Comparison of Existing Density to Modeled Density

Existing Residential Density

(Calculated from Methuen's FY 2023 Assessor's Data)

3 DU/AC

Potential Density Allowed from Existing Zoning

(Modeled Density)

0 DU/AC

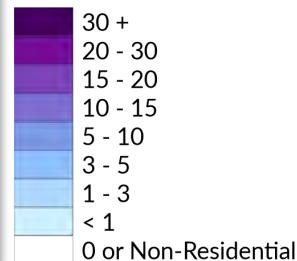
Potential Density Allowed from 30 DU/AC Maximum

(Modeled Density)

31 DU/AC

 BH - Highway Business currently prohibits multi-family development.

Parcel Density (Units per Acre)



# Colonial Village

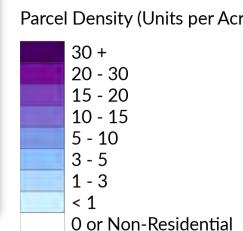
## Aerial Image of District



## Existing Residential Density



The numbers on the map indicate the units per parcel.



Zoning District: MB - Multifamily

## Colonial Village

**26 acres**

### Comparison of Existing Units to Modeled Unit Capacity

Existing Residential Units

(Calculated from Methuen's FY 2023 Assessor's Data)

**375**

Potential Units Allowed from Existing Zoning

(Modeled Unit Capacity)

**32**

Potential Units Allowed from 19 DU/AC Maximum

(Modeled Unit Capacity)

**397**

### Comparison of Existing Density to Modeled Density

Existing Residential Density

(Calculated from Methuen's FY 2023 Assessor's Data)

**14 DU/AC**

Potential Density Allowed from Existing Zoning

(Modeled Density)

**1 DU/AC**

Potential Density Allowed from 19 DU/AC Maximum &

20,000 SF minimum lot size

**15 DU/AC**



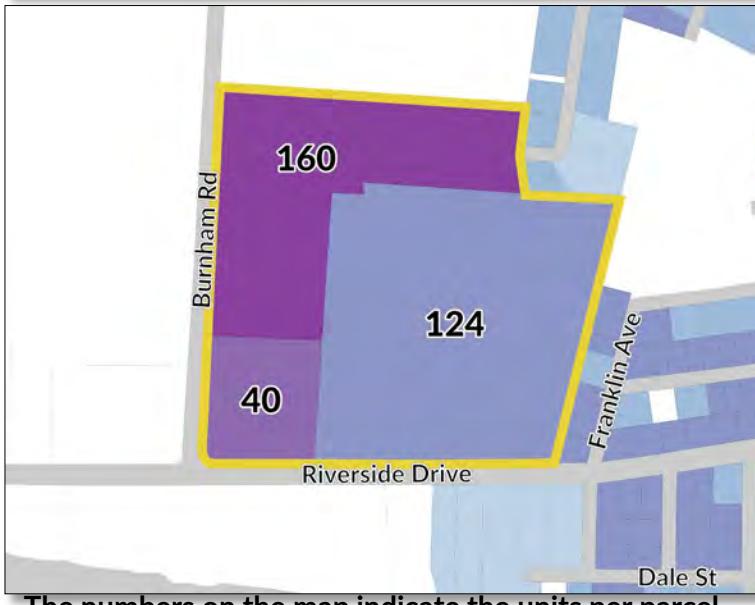
MB - Multi-Family currently **allows** multi-family development by **Special Permit only**.  
*(This is not compliant with Section 3A of MGL c. 40A).*

# Riverside Dr

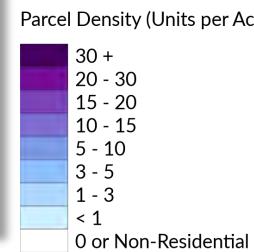
Aerial Image of District



Existing Residential Density



The numbers on the map indicate the units per parcel.



Zoning District: MB – Multi-Family

## Riverside Dr

27 acres

### Comparison of Existing Units to Modeled Unit Capacity

Existing Residential Units

(Calculated from Methuen's FY 2023 Assessor's Data)

324

Potential Units Allowed from Existing Zoning

(Modeled Unit Capacity)

110

Potential Units Allowed from 12 DU/AC Maximum

(Modeled Unit Capacity)

329

### Comparison of Existing Density to Modeled Density

Existing Residential Density

(Calculated from Methuen's FY 2023 Assessor's Data)

12 DU/AC

Potential Density Allowed from Existing Zoning

(Modeled Density)

4 DU/AC

Potential Density Allowed from 12 DU/AC Maximum

(Modeled Density)

12 DU/AC



MB – Multi-Family currently allows multi-family development by **Special Permit only**.  
(*This is not compliant with Section 3A of MGL c. 40A*).

