



Public Forum on New Multifamily Zoning in Belmont

Sponsored by Belmont MBTA Communities
Advisory Committee

Public Forum #1

June 21, 2023



Agenda

Part 1. Presentation

- I. Project Background
- II. 3A Basics
- III. Setting the Stage

Part 2. Q+ A and Open House

- I. Ground Rules
- II. Questions and Answers
- III. Visioning Activity
 - In-Person Option
 - Virtual Option

An aerial photograph of a city street intersection. The street is paved with asphalt and has white crosswalk markings and yellow double lines. Several cars are visible on the road. In the foreground, a multi-story brick building with a grey roof and large windows is under construction or recently completed. To the left, a parking lot is filled with cars. In the background, a large, single-story brick building with a white roof is visible, surrounded by more parking spaces. The area is bordered by a dense forest of green trees on a hillside under a clear blue sky with a few clouds.

**PART 1:
Presentation**

I. Project Background

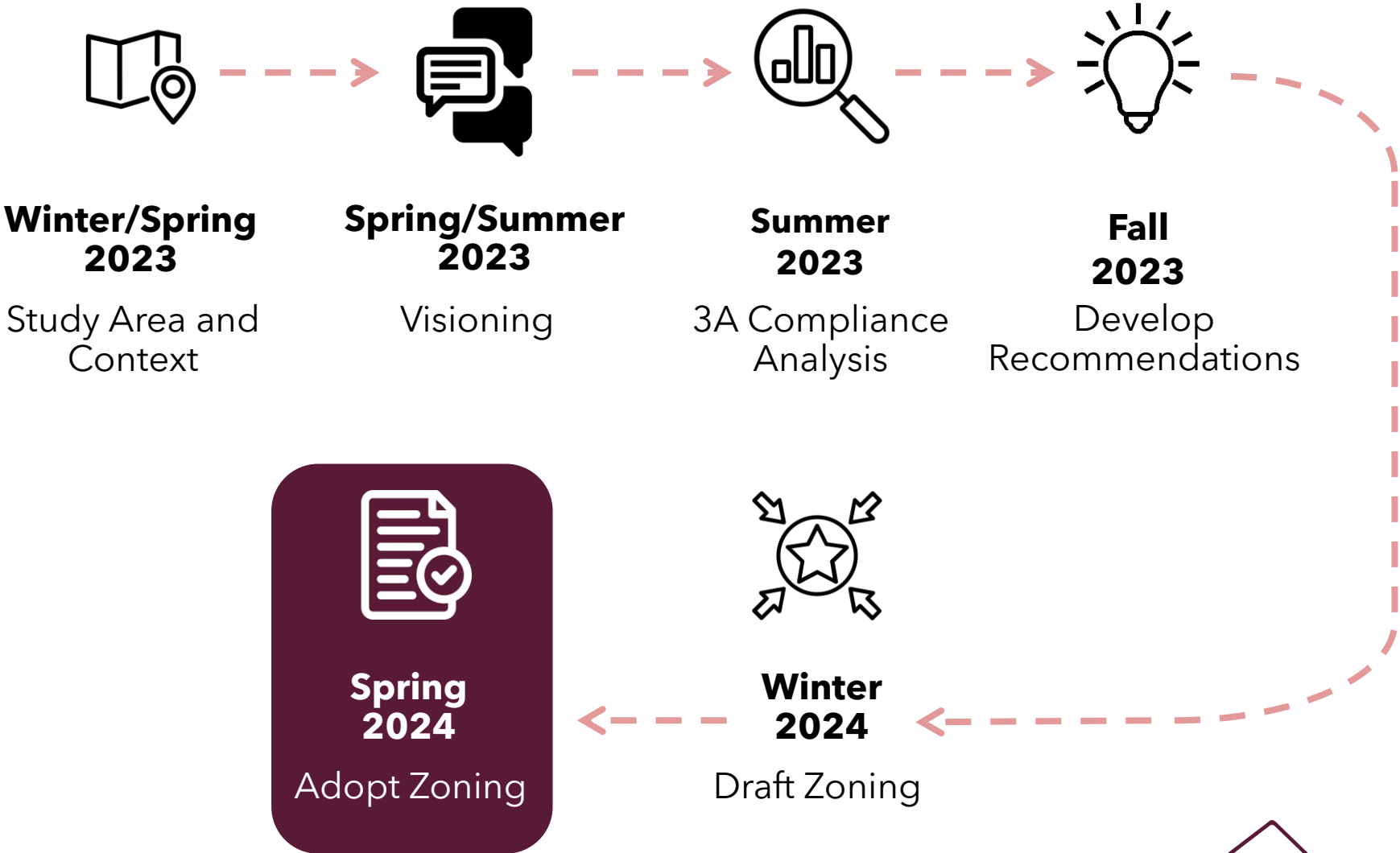
Purpose

Develop *zoning* that facilitates progress towards **community goals**, expanded **housing opportunity**, and **compliance** with the Multifamily Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities under Section 3A of M.G.L. Chapter 40A ("**Section 3A**")

Zoning 101

- A framework that sets rules and expectations for potential property redevelopment
- The Town is divided into various zoning districts
- Each district has allowed uses, dimensional standards (e.g., heights, setbacks), parking requirements, and other regulations
- Zoning **can not:**
 - Force landowners to redevelop their properties
 - Dictate that a certain use occur (e.g., can't force a restaurant to take up a space)

Timeline



Process Team

Town of Belmont

- Gabriel Distler, Staff Planner



Belmont MBTA Communities Advisory Committee

- Rachel Heller, Co-Chair (Housing Trust)
- Roy Epstein, Co-Chair (Select Board)
- Thayer Donham, Clerk (Planning Board)
- Paul Joy (Economic Development Committee)
- Drew Nealon (Historic District Commission)
- Julie Wu (Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Implementation Committee)



Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)

- Chris Kuschel, Principal Land Use Planner
- Sarah Scott, Regional Land Use Planner II
- Najee Nunnally, Community Engagement Specialist



II. 3A Basics

What Is Section 3A?

State legislation that requires municipalities served by the MBTA transit system to have zoning in place that allows **multifamily housing by-right**

Guidelines include:

- minimum unit density
- minimum district size
- district location
- ...and more!

Belmont has until **December 31, 2024**, to adopt a zoning amendment that complies with Section 3A

Why Does 3A Hope to Achieve?



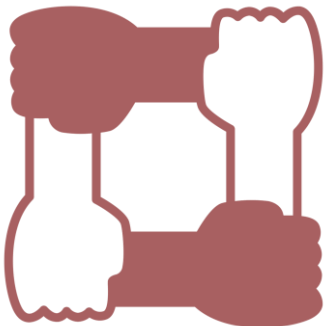
Provide homes for more people

- Estimated shortage of 200,000 housing units in Massachusetts
- Home prices and rents are high and growing rapidly
- Existing housing supply doesn't always meet people's needs



Sustain Economic Growth

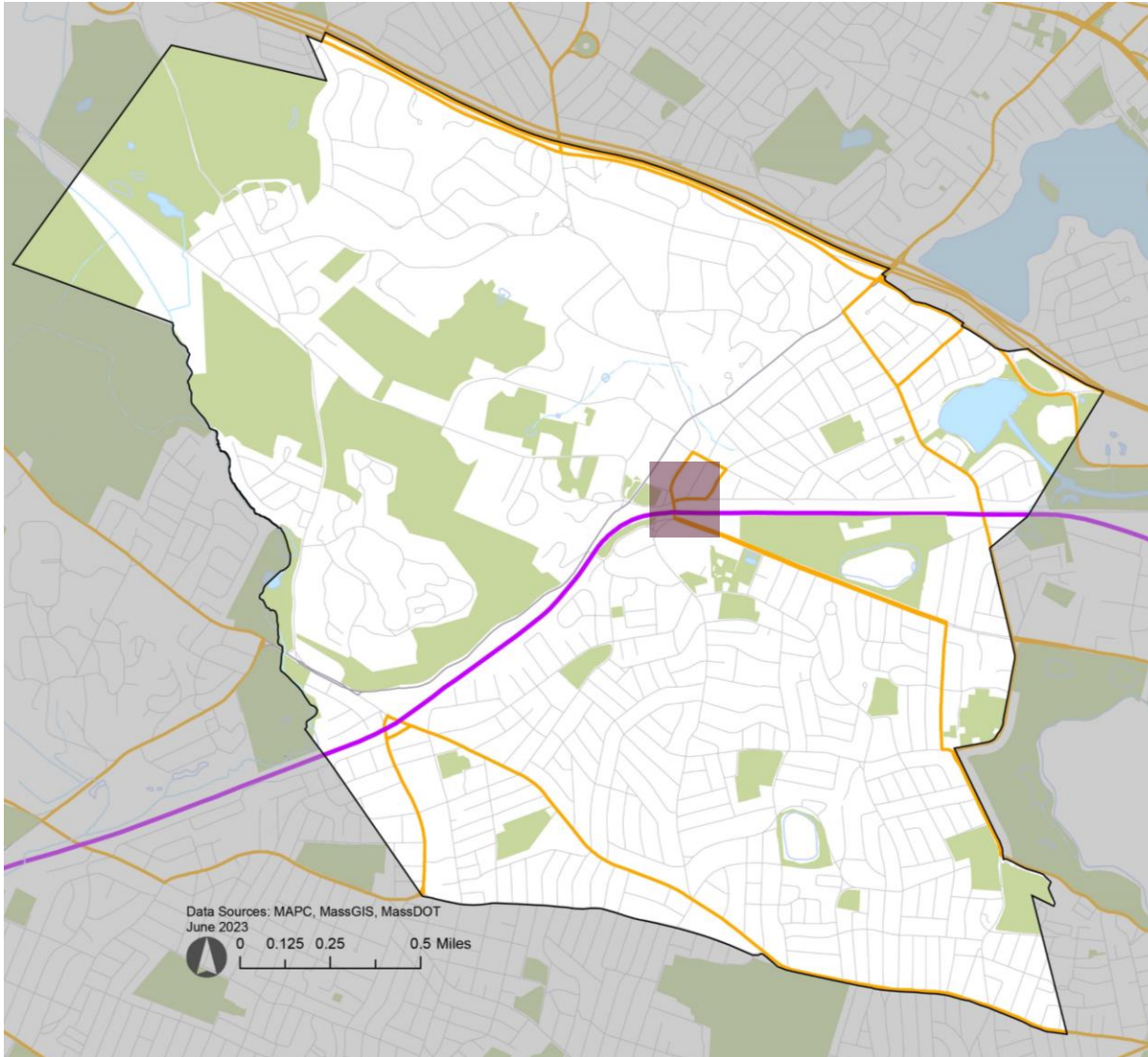
- High housing costs are a disadvantage to employers because they risk losing employees who can't afford to live here
- Increasing the number of housing units can help bring down housing costs



Increase inclusivity

- This zoning can help increase housing options to diversify, both economically and racially.

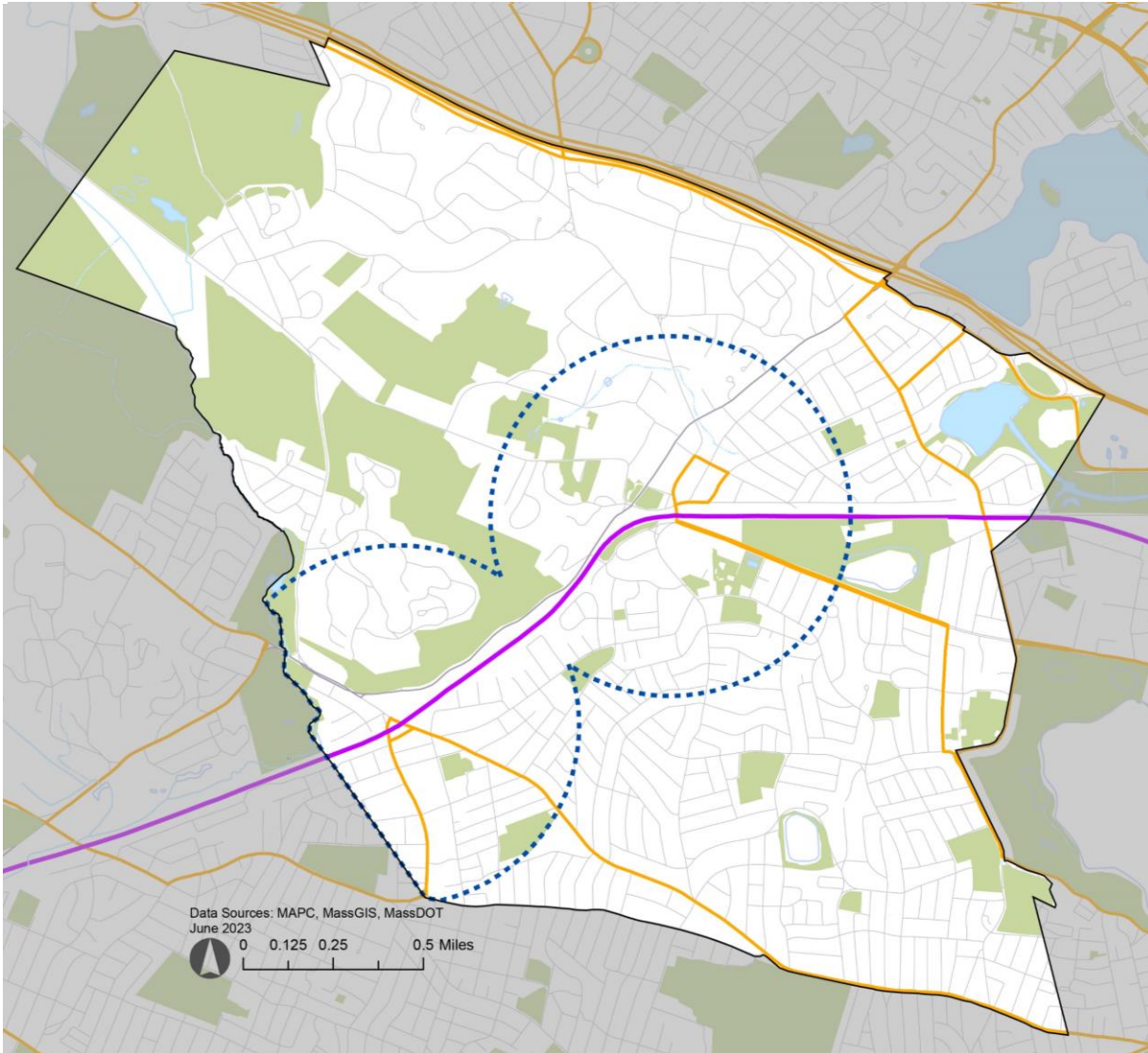
Key 3A District Requirements: Size



The minimum land area is 28 acres*

*This is roughly equivalent to the size of Belmont Center / shaded area

Key 3A District Requirements: Location



50% of the minimum land area must be within 0.5 miles of a Commuter Rail station (See dashed blue circles)

Relationship of Requirements

Minimum

28 acres

15 units/acre

1,632 units

Minimum Land Area + Unit Density

$$\underline{28 \text{ acres}} \times \underline{15 \text{ units/acre}} = 420 \text{ units}$$

*Not
enough
units*

Minimum Land Area + Unit Capacity

$$\underline{28 \text{ acres}} \times \underline{58 \text{ units/acre}} = \underline{1,632 \text{ units}}$$

*Higher
density*

Minimum Unit Density + Unit Capacity

$$110 \text{ acres} \times \underline{15 \text{ units/acre}} = \underline{1,632 \text{ units}}$$

*Lower
density*

Relationship of Requirements

If we want lower density overall, we need to plan for closer to 110 acres, not 28 acres.

We can create areas of different densities to be "context-sensitive"

III. Setting the Stage: Draft District Boundaries

District Boundary Thought Process

First

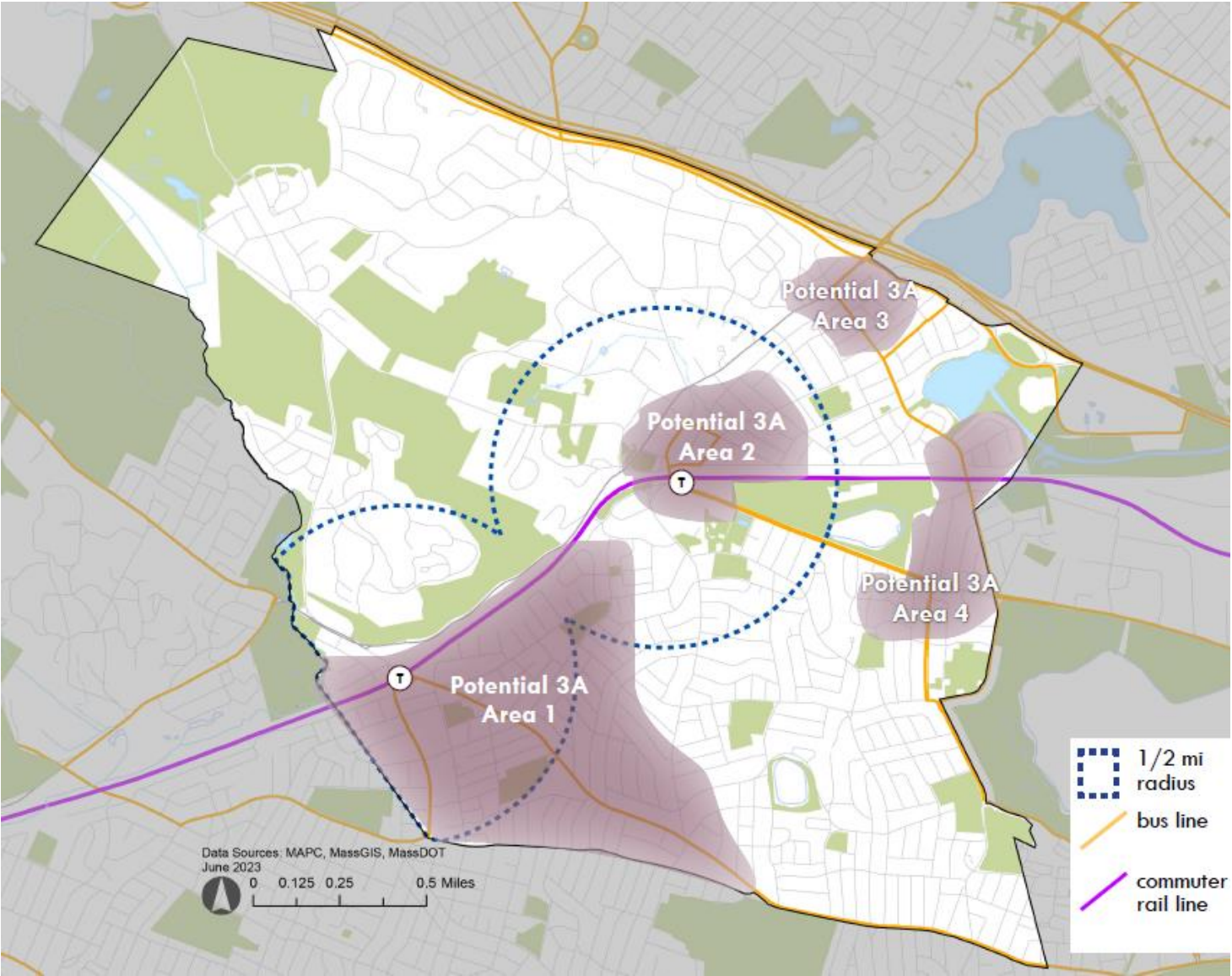
- Proximity to transit
- Environmentally-sensitive land
- Current zoning district boundaries

Informed by site visit, Advisory Committee input, analysis from Housing Production Plan and other relevant data, and focus group with Town staff

Second

- Existing land use
- Proximity to goods & services
- Historic resources
- Redevelopment opportunities

Starting Point 3A District



III. Setting the Stage: Potential Development Options

Picturing Density

Which is denser?



3 Units



350 Units

Picturing Density

Which is denser?



3 Units
16 Units per Acre



350 Units
15 Units per Acre

Picturing Density

Some local examples



25 Wilson Ave

- Units: 3
- Lot (acres): 0.1
- UPA: 31

UPA = Units Per Acre

Picturing Density

Some local examples



375 Acorn Park Dr

- Units: 298
- Lot (acres): 12.9
- UPA: 23

UPA = Units Per Acre

Picturing Density

Some local examples



229 Belmont Street

- Units: 8
- Lot (acres): 0.12
- UPA: 69

UPA = Units Per Acre

Picturing Density

Some local examples



37 Wilson Street

- Units: 3
- Lot (acres): 0.1
- UPA: 31

UPA = Units Per Acre

Picturing Density

Some local examples



300 Trapelo Road

- Units: 22
- Lot (acres): 1.3
- UPA: 17

UPA = Units Per Acre

Picturing Density

Some local examples



493 + 495 Trapelo Rd

- Units: 22
- Lot (acres): 0.4
- UPA: 50

UPA = Units Per Acre

Picturing Density

Key Takeaways

- Density is not a good indication for the type of development
- There is flexibility to achieve the density requirements in a way that is context sensitive
- Tonight we will focus on the types of development and where they belong




- MAPC will synthesize this information and test compliance
- This will be an iterative process with more opportunities to provide feedback

Stay Involved!

Sign up for our **mailing list** to receive project updates and invites to upcoming events: mapc.ma/BelmontZoning.

Reach out with questions or suggestions:

- Chris Kuschel, MAPC Principal Planner
ckuschel@mapc.org
- Sarah Scott, MAPC Regional Planner II
sscott@mapc.org
- Gabriel Distler, Town of Belmont Staff Planner
gdistler@belmont-ma.gov

An aerial photograph of a town street. In the foreground, a grey roof with a white cupola is visible. A street with double yellow lines runs diagonally. On the left, there are brick buildings, one with a green cupola. On the right, a modern building with a flat roof and a brick tower is prominent. The background is a dense forested hill under a blue sky with light clouds.

**PART 2:
Q+A and
Open House**

I. Ground Rules

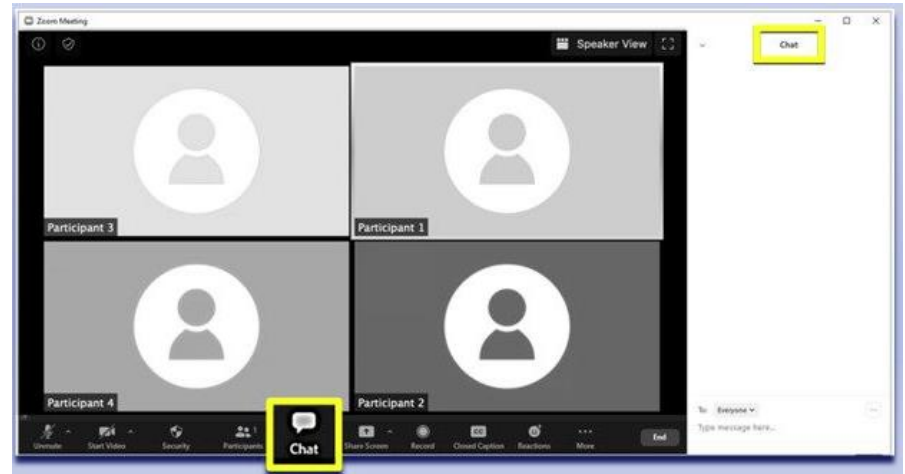
Group Discussion Agreement

By participating, I agree to:

- Use "I" statements
- Take space & make space
- Use accessible language
- Accept & expect lack of closure
- Listen for understanding
- Be an active participant
- Expand your comfort zone

II. Questions

Discussion Time



III. Open House

For In-Person Participants

You can share:

- General comments
- Feedback on proposed district boundaries
- Input on the desired character of each of the potential 3A areas

We also have a station providing additional details on 3A.

Please visit each of the stations!

For Remote Participants

We are hoping to get similar information from virtual participants

- Stay on the Zoom line
- Jamboard: [Belmont 3A June Forum '23 - Google Jamboard](#)
- Allow participants to connect with one another while participating
- Facilitator(s) will help explain how to provide input