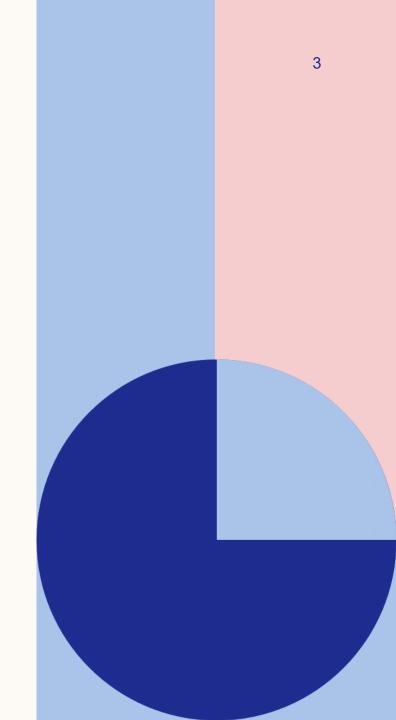This meeting will be recorded and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) may choose to retain and distribute the video, still images, audio, and/or the chat transcript. By continuing with this virtual meeting, you are consenting to participate in a recorded event. The recordings and chat transcript will be considered a public record. If you do not feel comfortable being recorded, please turn off your camera and/or mute your microphone, or leave the meeting.

MBTA COMMUNITIES (SECTION 3A)

DISTRICT SUITABILITY ANALYSIS TOOL

MAPC
METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING COUNCIL

Webinar | February 27, 2024

AGENDA

- Welcome & Introductions

- MBTA Communities Law Overview

- District Suitability Analysis Tool Demo

- Tool Q&A

- Practical Applications

- Applicability Q&A

Rachel Bowers

Data Analyst II

Emma Battaglia

Senior Housing & Land Use Planner

Andrea Harris-Long

Manager of Housing & Neighborhood Development

Lily Perkins-High

Analytical Services Manager

Casey Williams

Regional Housing & Land Use Planner II

Who is in the room today? Please identify your role within the Section 3A planning process.

o Municipal staff member

o Local board/committee member

o Interested resident

o State agency staff member

o RPA staff member

o Other

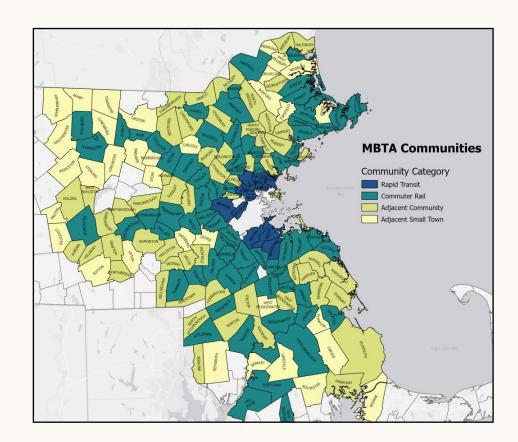# What stage in the Section 3A planning process is your municipality at?

o Reviewing existing plans, study area, and context

o Engaging community through visioning

o Conducting compliance analysis

o Developing recommendations

o Drafting and adopting local zoning

o Other

o I'm not sure

DISTRICT SUITABILITY

MBTA COMMUNITIES LAW OVERVIEW

- All MBTA Communities must have at least one zoning district that permits multifamily housing by-right

- Mandates a minimum gross density of 15 units/acre (can vary by subdistrict)

- Part of zoning district must be located with a half-mile of the transit station (if applicable)

- District must be a "reasonable size"

MBTA Communities

Community Category
- Rapid Transit
- Commuter Rail
- Adjacent Community
- Adjacent Small Town

- Zoning district must be feasible for development: land that is not suitable, such as wetlands or conservation land, is excluded from minimum district size

- District must meet a minimum unit capacity set by EOHLC (measures the total number of units that could be built under zoning; not a production mandate)

- Cannot contain age restrictions

- Must be suitable for families with children (no bedroom limits)

- Site plan review and design standards are allowed

- Inclusionary zoning is allowed: can require up to 10% of units to be deed-restricted affordable to incomes at 80% AMI (option for more affordability if financial feasibility analysis provided)

Detached Single-Family Houses

Duplex: Side-By-Side + Stacked

Fourplex: Stacked

Courtyard Building

Cottage Court

Townhouse

Multiplex: Medium

Triplex: Stacked

Live-Work

Mid-Rise

Missing Middle Housing

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OPTICOS

|	
Background	Good district siting is paramount to positive outcomes from Section 3A rezoning, and Section 3A Guidelines provide flexibility on location.
Goals	> Create a decision-support tool that uses data to help MBTA municipalities identify locations for 3A zoning districts that advance regional goals. > Highlight areas where increased housing density will best advance equity and sustainability.
Considerations	Evaluate locations based on a set of criteria related to transportation, accessibility, development feasibility, residential capacity, and climate risk
Output	Suitability analysis where, based on considerations above, for every MBTA community in MAPC, each parcel receives a score from 0 (least suitable for 3A district siting) to 100 (most suitable for 3A district siting).
Limitations	Not meant to replace community knowledge, robust and equitable planning processes. Does not build considerations of equity into analysis itself.

DISTRICT SUITABILITY
TOOL DEMO

DISTRICT SUITABILITY
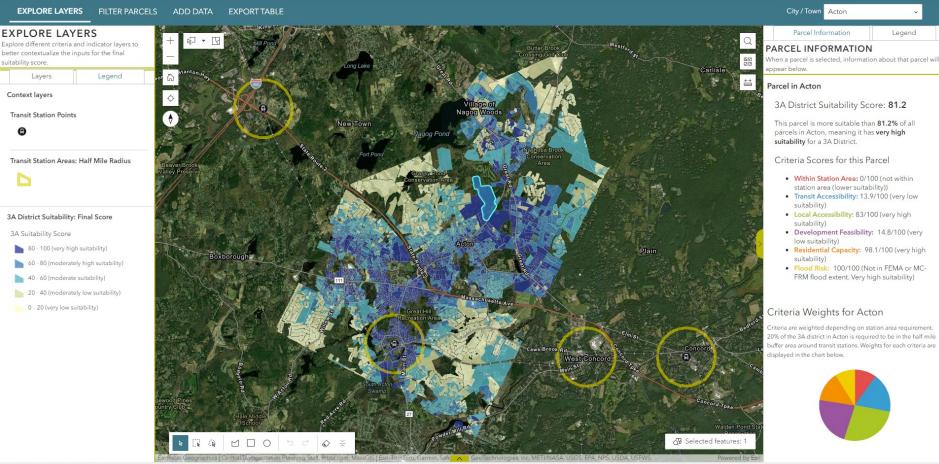
Deliverable

Interactive, public web app that shows the results of a district suitability analysis.

For every MBTA community in MAPC, each parcel receives a score from 0 (least suitable) to 100 (most suitable).

Clusters of parcels/sites with higher scores are strong candidates for 3A zoning districts.

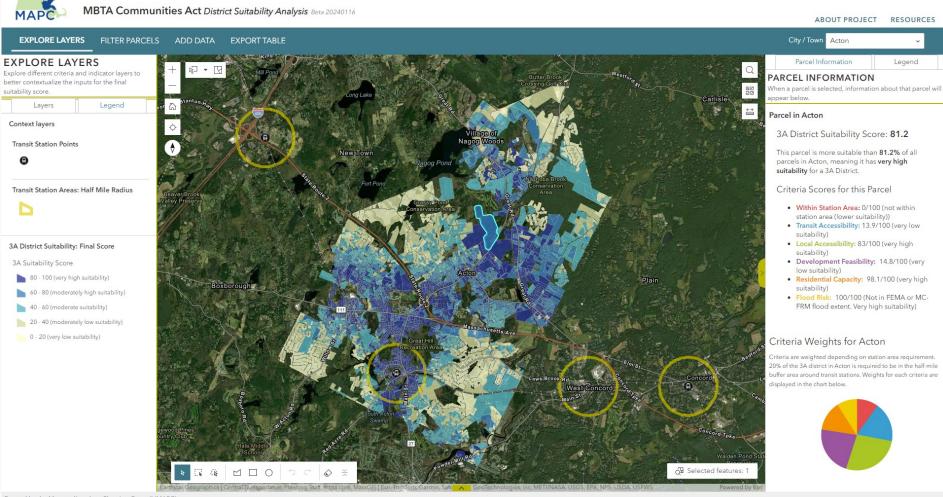Created by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

...but how did we get here?

DISTRICT SUITABILITY

DEFINING TERMS

Suitability analysis is a way of evaluating and comparing sites for a particular use or purpose. Suitability analyses typically seek to answer a question like, "*Where is the best location for ___?*"
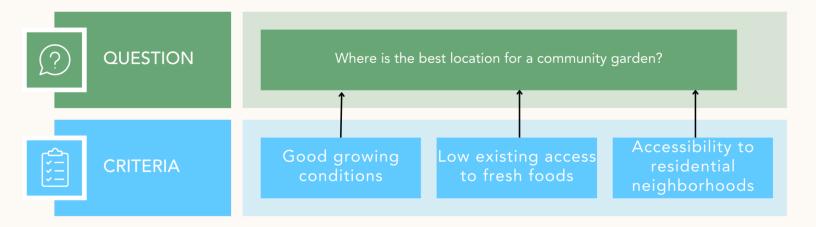
Examples include finding the best location for:
- A new solar farm
- A community garden
- A multifamily zoning district

The results of a suitability analysis are often displayed on a map that is used to highlight areas from high to low suitability.

| ? | QUESTION | Where is the best location for a community garden? |

CRITERIA

Criteria are the various physical, cultural, or economic factors that are important for determining suitability. They are the broader principles by which the sites are evaluated. Criteria seek to answer a question like, "*What qualities will our preferred location for this use possess?*"
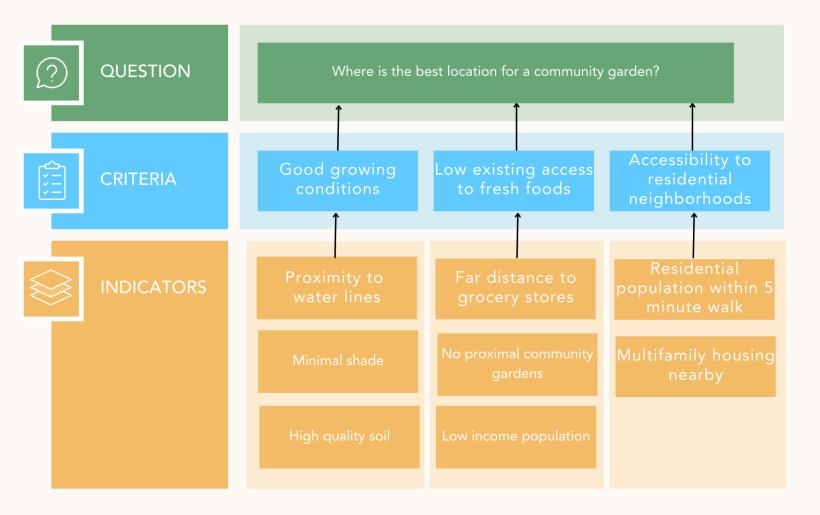
Criteria are established at the beginning of the suitability analysis and are derived from many sources, including academic literature and planning documents.
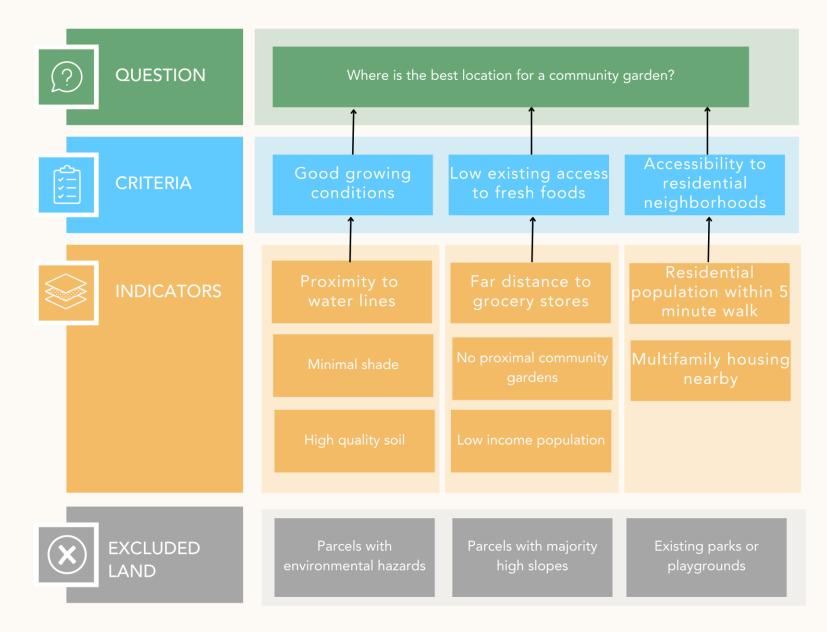
QUESTION	Where is the best location for a community garden?		
CRITERIA	Good growing conditions	Low existing access to fresh foods	Accessibility to residential neighborhoods

INDICATORS

Indicators are the different data layers that are selected to represent the chosen criteria. Indicators are the response to the question: *How will we know the location fulfills the established criteria?*

Indicators may be physical characteristics of the site – such as exceeding a certain size or having steep slopes – or other qualities – such as land value, presence within a historic district, or distance to certain amenities.

Criteria scores are derived from indicator scores, often as a sum or weighted average.

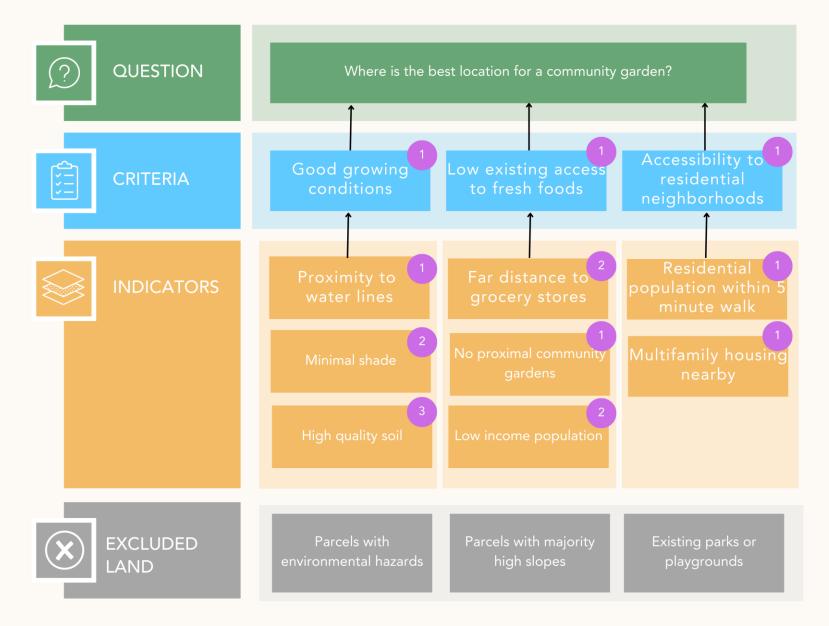| QUESTION	Where is the best location for a community garden?		
CRITERIA	Good growing conditions	Low existing access to fresh foods	Accessibility to residential neighborhoods
INDICATORS	Proximity to water lines	Far distance to grocery stores	Residential population within 5 minute walk
	Minimal shade	No proximal community gardens	Multifamily housing nearby
	High quality soil	Low income population	

SCREENED LAND

Some analyses will include criteria describing where the use should never be located, regardless of how many other positive characteristics are present. Sites possessing these qualities are referred to as **screened** or **excluded**.

QUESTION	Where is the best location for a community garden?		
CRITERIA	Good growing conditions	Low existing access to fresh foods	Accessibility to residential neighborhoods
INDICATORS	Proximity to water lines	Far distance to grocery stores	Residential population within 5 minute walk
	Minimal shade	No proximal community gardens	Multifamily housing nearby
	High quality soil	Low income population	
EXCLUDED LAND	Parcels with environmental hazards	Parcels with majority high slopes	Existing parks or playgrounds

WEIGHTING

The relative importance of criteria and their supporting indicators is established through **weighting**.

Equal weighting across all criteria and all indicators means every data layer in the analysis is equally important; higher weights assigned to certain criteria or indicators means these parameters are more important to identifying preferred sites than others.
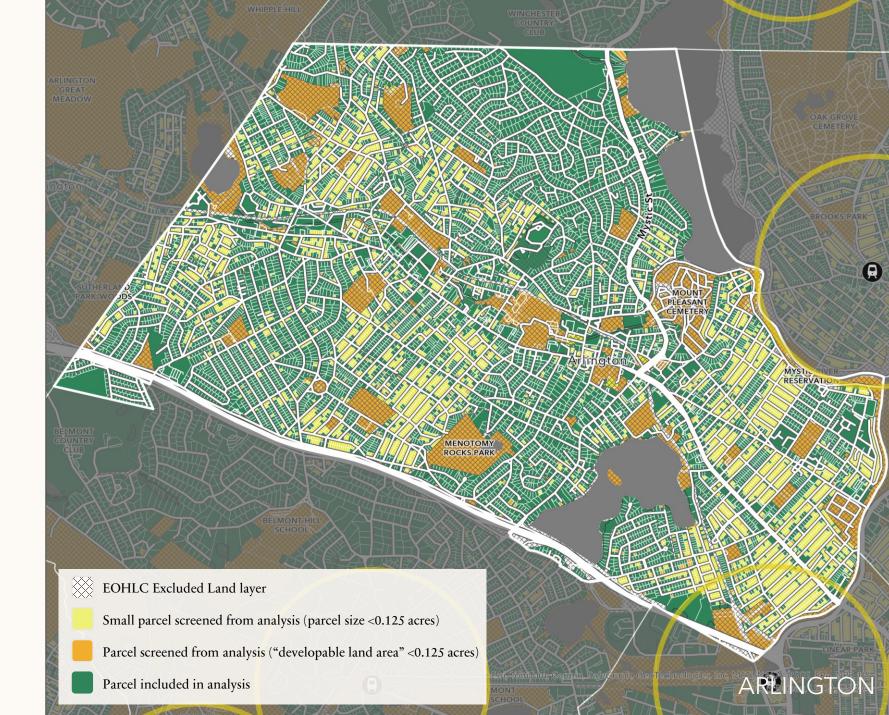
DISTRICT SUITABILITY

CRITERIA

SCREENED PARCELS

In the District Suitability Analysis, all **parcels smaller than ⅛ (0.125) acre in size or with developable area less than ⅛ acre in size** are screened from the analysis.

Developable area on each parcel was calculated by subtracting EOHLC's *Excluded Land* layer* from the total parcel area. This definition of excluded land is from the Section 3A District Compliance Guidelines.

The Excluded Land layer represents hydrography, additional wetlands, Title V and Surface Water Protection Zone A, and Wellhead Zone 1, undevelopable public land, protected open space and recreational land, rights of way, and institutionally-owned land.

Legend:

▨ EOHLC Excluded Land layer

▨ Small parcel screened from analysis (parcel size <0.125 acres)

▨ Parcel screened from analysis ("developable land area" <0.125 acres)

▨ Parcel included in analysis

ARLINGTON

CRITERIA

| Criteria	Definition
In Station Area *	Locations are within the half-mile radius around a transit station (as required by Section 3A compliance)
Transit Accessibility	Locations have access to transit options, so current and/or future residents could rely less on personal vehicles.
Local Accessibility	Locations are in more pedestrian-friendly areas, so current and/or future residents would require fewer trips in personal vehicles for access to jobs and amenities.
Flood Risk	Locations are less exposed to flood risk, so current and/or future residents would be less exposed.
Development Feasibility	Locations have fewer barriers to develop or redevelop as housing, so would be more likely to see actual housing construction.
Net Residential Capacity	Locations would yield more housing units if developed or redeveloped as housing.

Note: this criteria only applies to municipalities that have a requirement to have a defined portion of their district within the transit station area.

SCORING CRITERIA

For all parcels in **each municipality**:

1. Calculate individual metrics for each indicator and rescale to 0-1

2. Calculate a **weighted average** of the criterion's indicator values

3. Use weighted averages to calculate a percentile ranking, assigning each parcel a value of **0 to 1**

   - For each criterion, parcels are scored relative to one another within the municipality

Criteria Score	Interpretation
0 – 0.2	Lowest suitability
0.2 - 0.4	Moderately low suitability
0.4 - 0.6	Moderate suitability
0.6 - 0.8	Moderately high suitability
0.8 - 1	Highest suitability

TRANSIT STATION AREA

Locations are within the half-mile radius around a transit station.
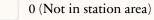
Note: this criteria only applies to municipalities that have a requirement to have a defined portion of their district within the transit station area.

Indicators
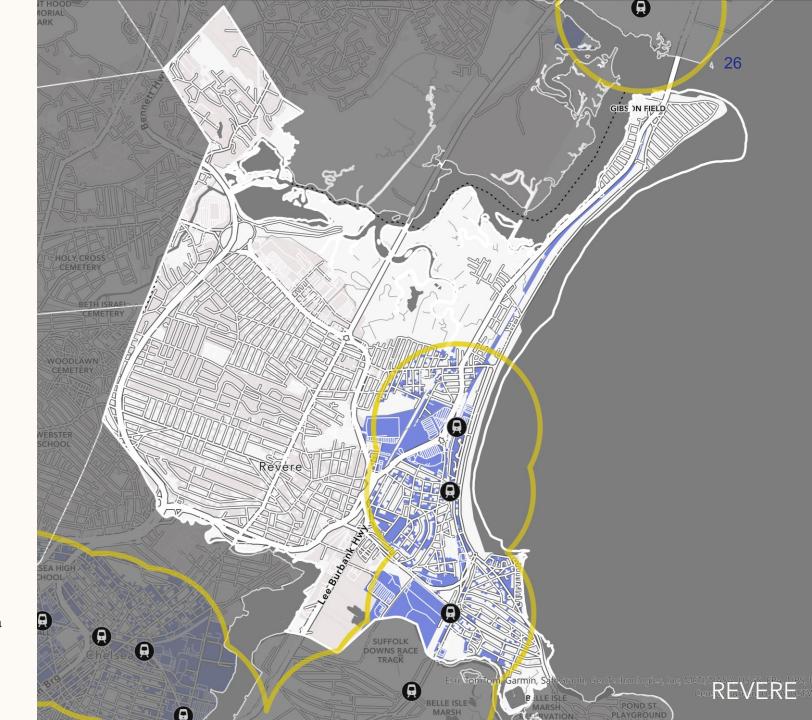
Parcels receive higher scores when they:

1. Are within the transit station area (½ buffer around transit stations)

Criteria Score | **Transit Station Area**

☐ 0 (Not in station area)

☐ 1 (In station area)

REVERE

TRANSIT ACCESSIBILITY

Locations nearer to transit, so current and/or future residents could rely less on personal vehicles.

Indicators
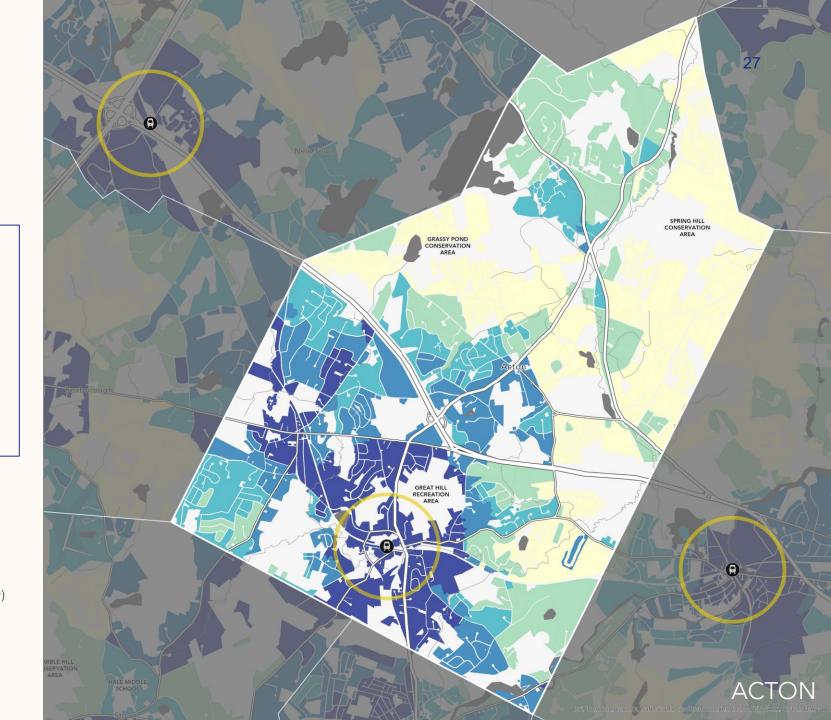
Parcels receive higher scores when they:

1. Are nearer to transit stations or bus stops, up to 1 mile

2. Are in a half mile walkshed from commuter rail stations

3. Have a larger number of jobs within 45 minutes by transit

4. Have a higher share of non-auto commuters

Criteria Score | **Transit Accessibility**

- 0.8 – 1.0 (Highest suitability)
- 0.6 – 0.8 (Moderately high suitability)
- 0.4 – 0.6 (Moderate suitability)
- 0.2 – 0.4 (Moderately low suitability)
- 0 – 0.2 (Lowest suitability)

ACTON

LOCAL ACCESSIBILITY

Locations are in denser, more pedestrian-friendly areas, so current and/or future residents would require fewer trips in personal vehicles.

Indicators

Parcels receive higher scores when they:
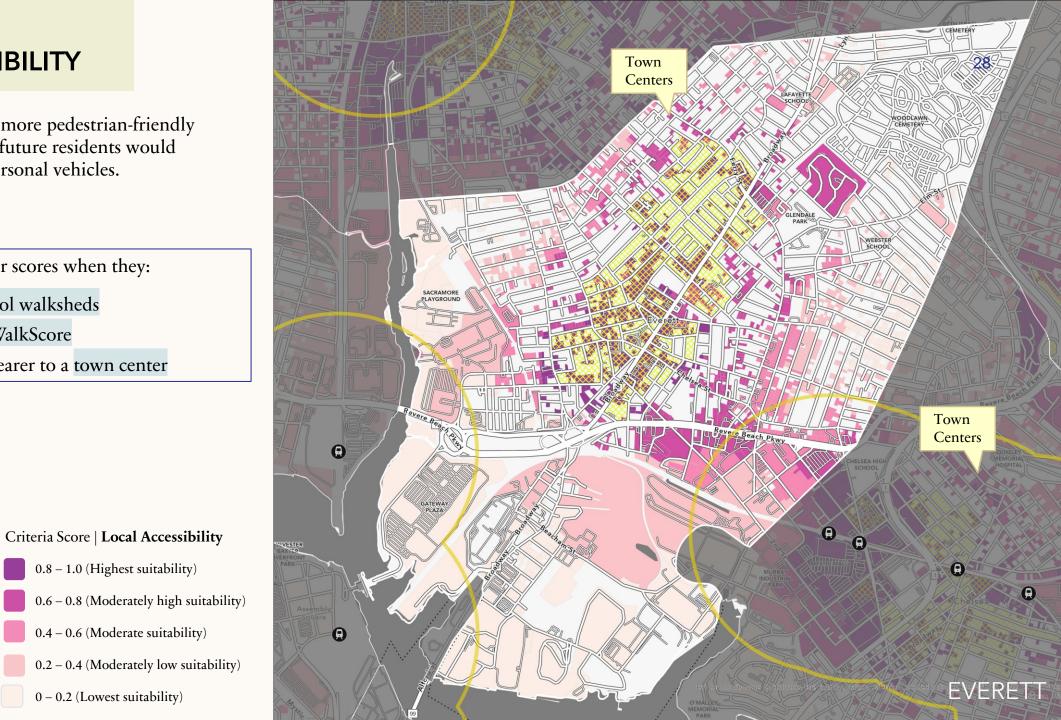
1. Are within school walksheds

2. Have a higher WalkScore

3. Are within or nearer to a town center

Criteria Score | **Local Accessibility**

■ 0.8 – 1.0 (Highest suitability)

■ 0.6 – 0.8 (Moderately high suitability)

■ 0.4 – 0.6 (Moderate suitability)

■ 0.2 – 0.4 (Moderately low suitability)

□ 0 – 0.2 (Lowest suitability)

EVERETT

FLOOD RISK

Locations are less exposed to flood risk, so current and/or future residents would be less vulnerable.

Indicators

Parcels receive higher scores when they:

1. Are **not** in FEMA 1% or 0.2% chance flood zones

2. Are **not** in flood extents of the MA Coastal Flood Risk Model

Criteria Score | **Flood Risk**

- 1 (not in FEMA or MCFRM flood extent)
- 0.5 (in either FEMA flood zone or MCFRM flood extent)
- 0 (in FEMA flood zone *and* MCFRM flood extent)
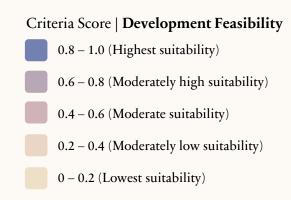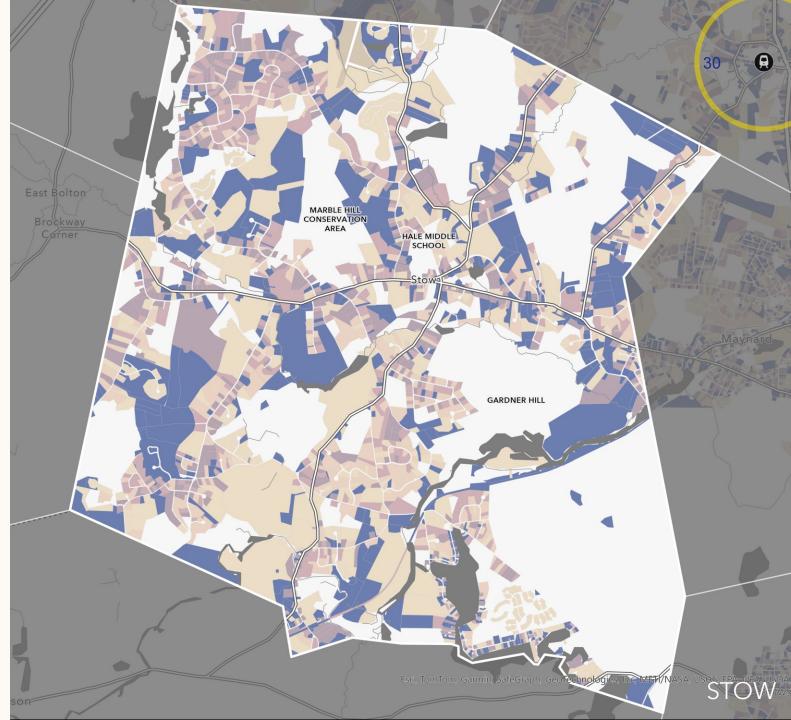
SALEM

DEVELOPMENT FEASIBILITY

Locations have fewer barriers to develop or redevelop as housing, so would be more likely to see actual housing construction.

Indicators

Parcels receive higher scores when they:

1. Have a lower ratio of improvement to land value
2. Have a low building value per square foot
3. Do **not** have a historic site located on them
4. Were **not** recently built (2000)
5. Are **not** a condominium
6. Are vacant
7. Are a retail strip with high redevelopment potential (MAPC analysis)
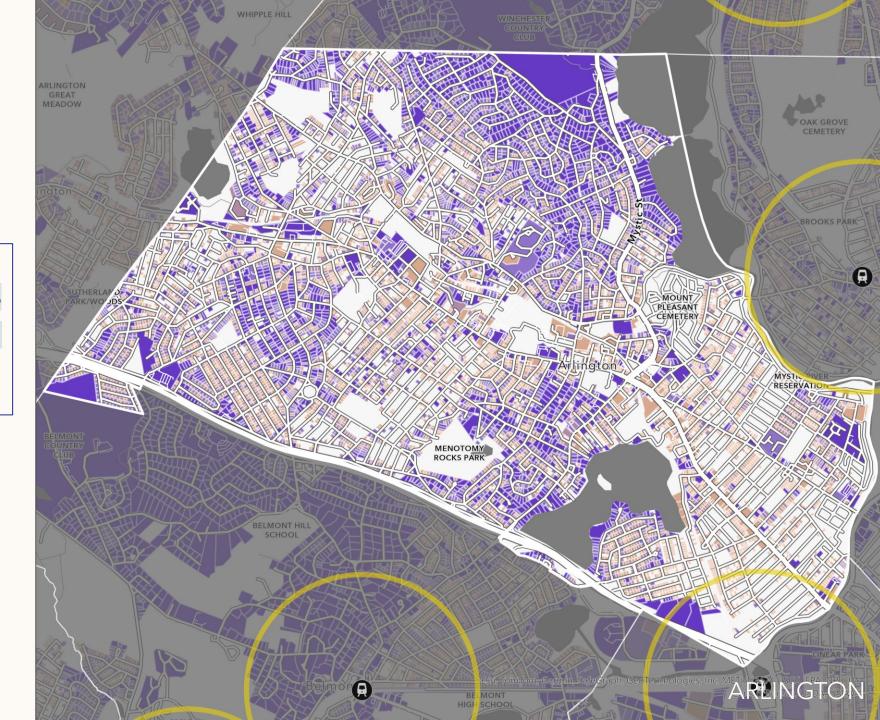
Criteria Score | **Development Feasibility**

- 0.8 – 1.0 (Highest suitability)
- 0.6 – 0.8 (Moderately high suitability)
- 0.4 – 0.6 (Moderate suitability)
- 0.2 – 0.4 (Moderately low suitability)
- 0 – 0.2 (Lowest suitability)

NET RESIDENTIAL CAPACITY

Locations would yield more housing units if developed or redeveloped as housing.

Indicators

> Parcels receive higher scores when they:
>
> 1. Have a smaller existing Floor Area Ratio
>
> 2. Have fewer existing Development Units per Acre
>
> 3. Are larger (unconstrained land area)
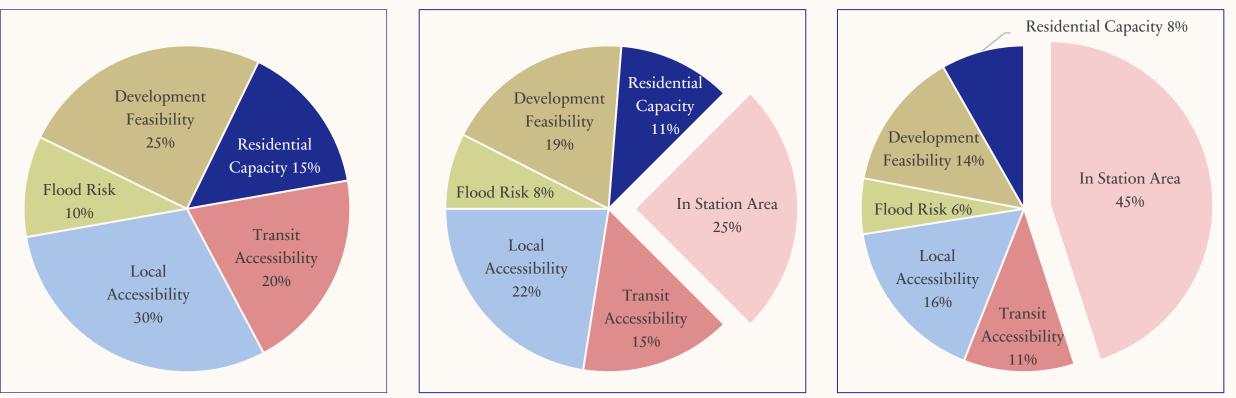
Criteria Score | **Residential Capacity**

- 0.8 – 1.0 (Highest suitability)
- 0.6 – 0.8 (Moderately high suitability)
- 0.4 – 0.6 (Moderate suitability)
- 0.2 – 0.4 (Moderately low suitability)
- 0 – 0.2 (Lowest suitability)

DISTRICT SUITABILITY

ANALYSIS

CRITERIA WEIGHTING

The weighting scheme for the District Suitability Model is **dynamic,** reflecting each municipality's unique Station Area Requirement for the portion of the district that must be within a transit station area.
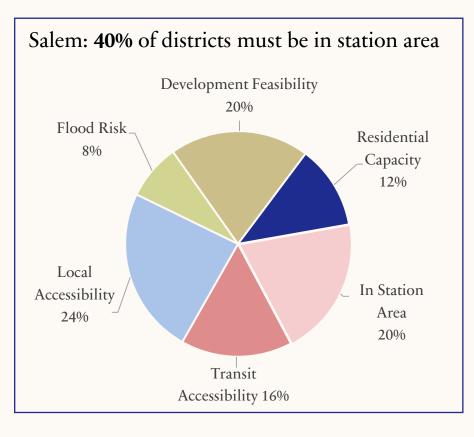
Scenario 1 | Muni with 0% station area requirement
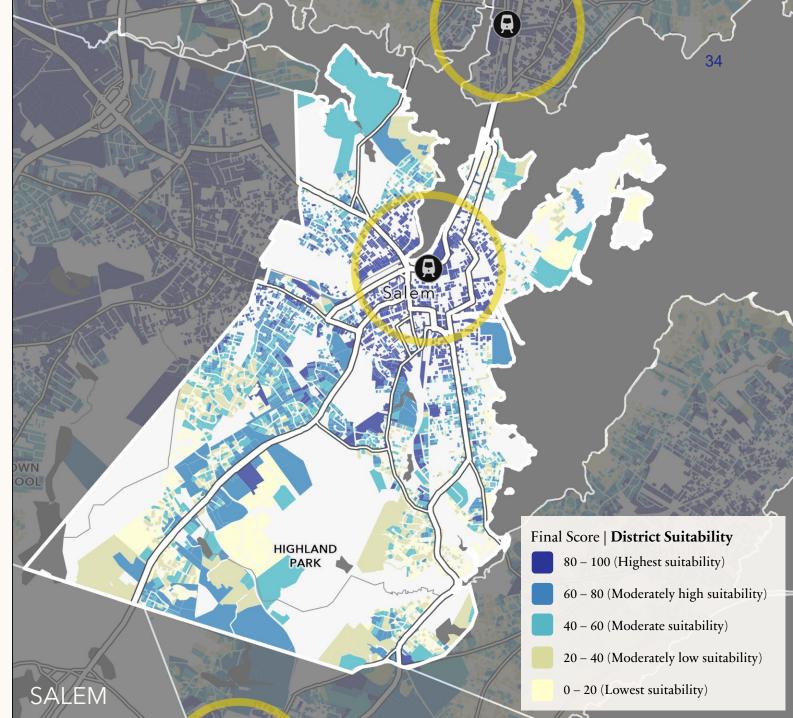
Scenario 2 | Muni with 50% station area requirement

Scenario 3 | Muni with 90% station area requirement

FINAL SCORE

Based on criteria, each land parcel receives a score from 0 (least suitable) to 100 (most suitable). Clusters of parcels/sites with higher scores are strong candidates for 3A zoning districts.

Salem: **40%** of districts must be in station area

Development Feasibility
20%

Flood Risk
8%

Residential Capacity
12%

Local Accessibility
24%

In Station Area
20%

Transit Accessibility 16%

SALEM

HIGHLAND PARK

Final Score | **District Suitability**

- 80 – 100 (Highest suitability)
- 60 – 80 (Moderately high suitability)
- 40 – 60 (Moderate suitability)
- 20 – 40 (Moderately low suitability)
- 0 – 20 (Lowest suitability)
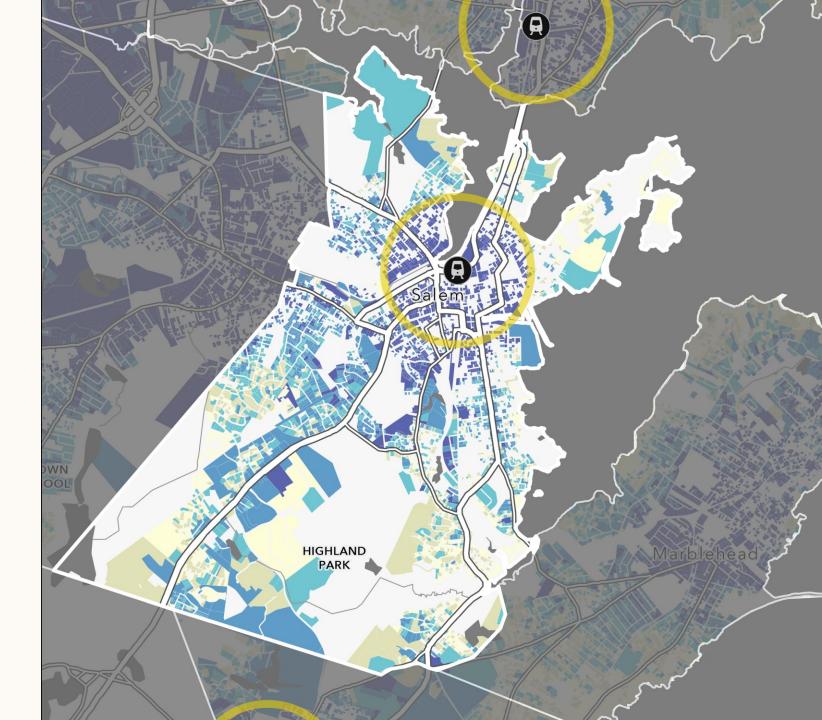
DATA LIMITATIONS

Analysis visually represents the combination of ~13 regional or statewide datasets
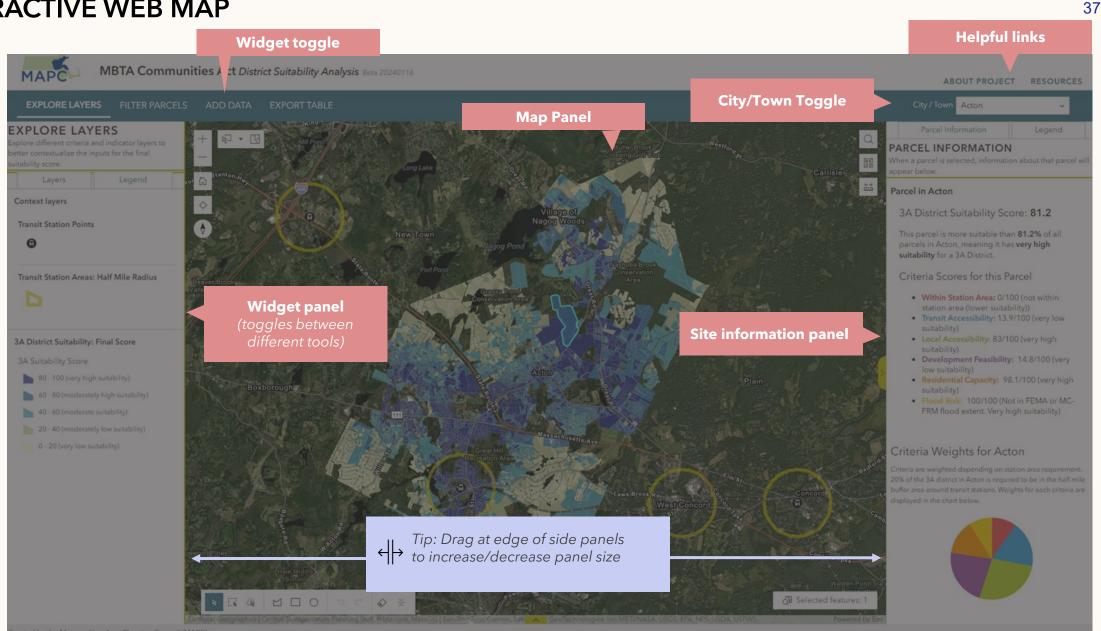
- Offers insight into spatial trends across a community
- But…only as good as underlying, input datasets
  - Intended to complement on-the-ground experience, knowledge
  - Best used as one input of many for district siting

DISTRICT SUITABILITY

ONLINE TOOL

INTERACTIVE WEB MAP

Widget toggle

Helpful links

City/Town Toggle

Map Panel

Widget panel
(toggles between different tools)

Site information panel

Tip: Drag at edge of side panels to increase/decrease panel size

DISTRICT SUITABILITY

TOOL Q&A

DISTRICT SUITABILITY

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

The District Suitability Tool is intended to complement stakeholder-driven processes to plan for more housing through new 3A-compliant zoning districts.

The following slides show how the tool can be referenced at different points in the 3A planning process and beyond to help facilitate conversations around areas suitable for new housing production.

Elements of a typical 3A planning process:

1. Review existing plans, study area, and context

2. Engage community through visioning

3. Conduct compliance analysis

4. Develop recommendations

5. Draft and adopt local zoning
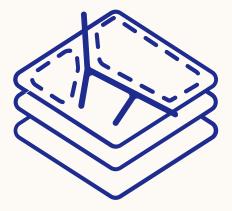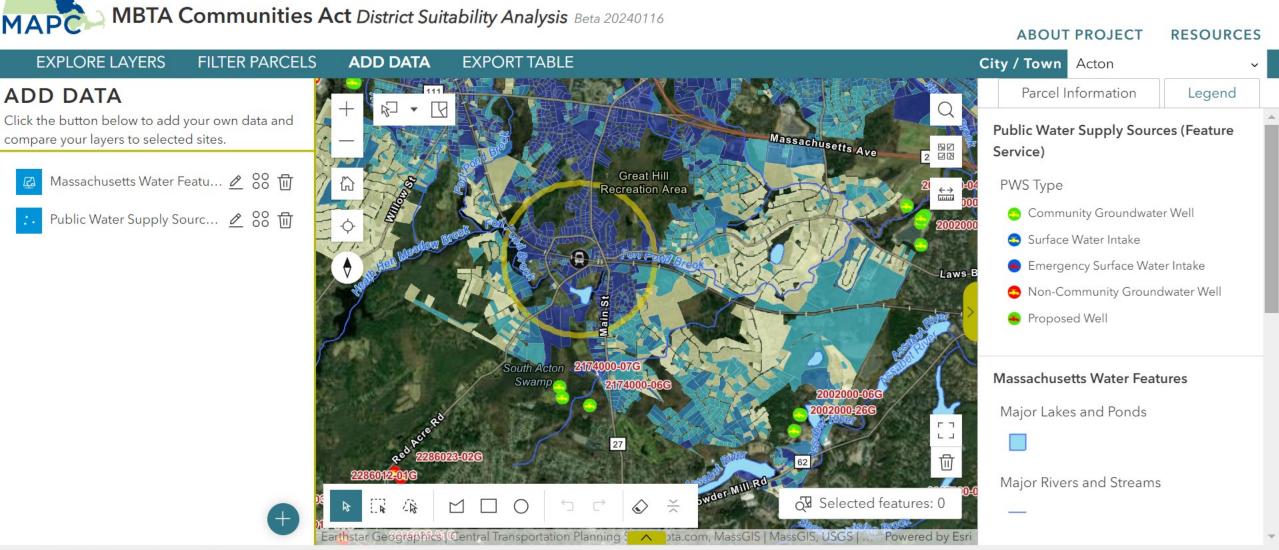
Review existing plans, study area, and context:

- Review adopted plans such as master plans, housing production plans, neighborhood plans, etc. to establish a baseline of where a community has been anticipating or planning for more growth

- Review past plans and opportunities for 3A zoning to implement local housing, transportation, economic development, and environment goals

- Identify key sites that offer redevelopment opportunities

District Suitability Tool

Maps data layers that enhance understanding of current transportation, economic, housing, and climate conditions
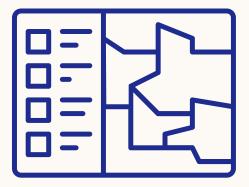
Engage community through visioning:
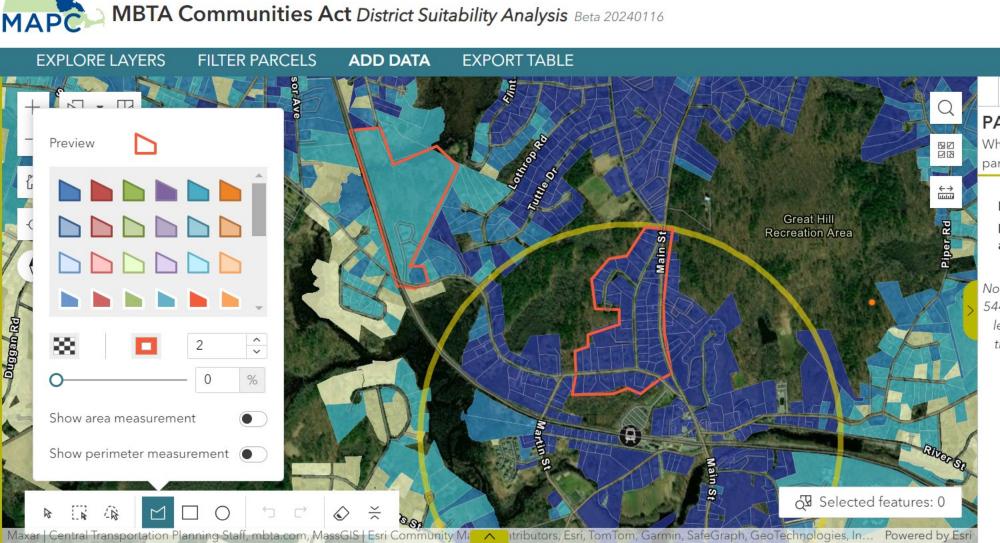
- Engage with members of the community to see where more housing can support neighborhood goals and housing needs

- Seek feedback about the different types of housing to help determine dimensional standards like height, minimum lot size, setbacks, etc.

- Using findings from Phase 1, present different scenarios for locating 3A districts

District Suitability Tool

Provides an interactive, adaptive tool to quickly visualize potential locations and support discussion

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS
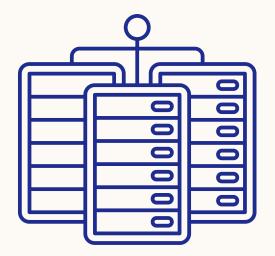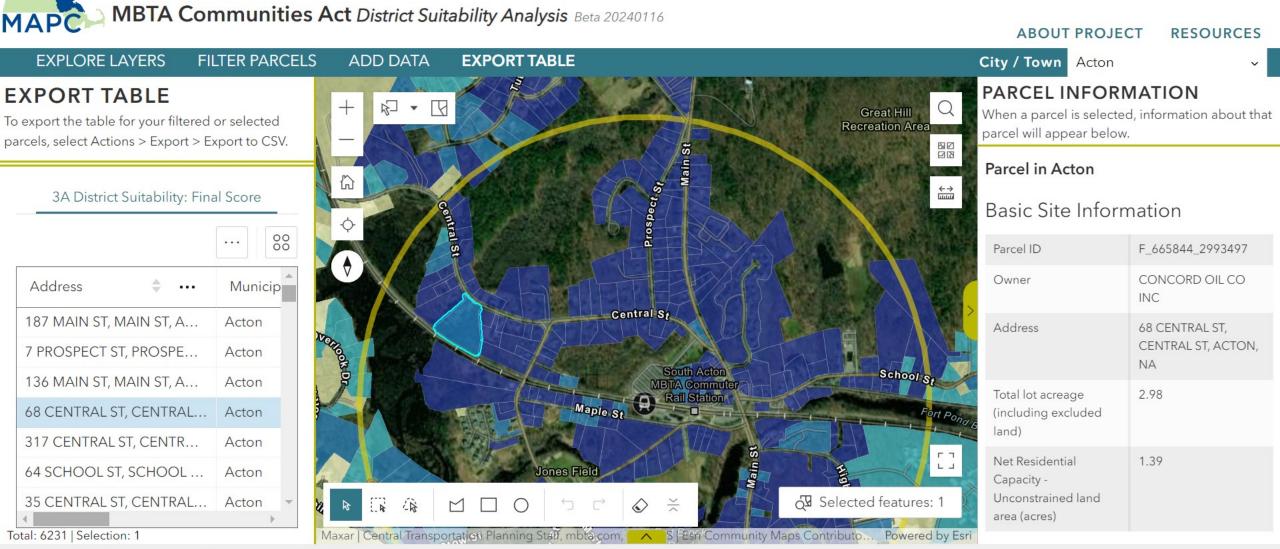
Conduct compliance analysis:

- Test existing zoning and preferred alternatives for new 3A zoning against metrics established by the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) to demonstrate compliance

District Suitability Tool

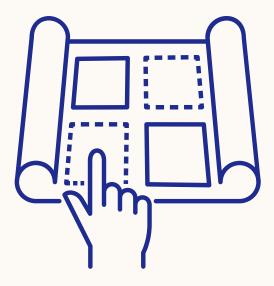Contains robust, centralized parcel data that enables more efficient compliance calculations
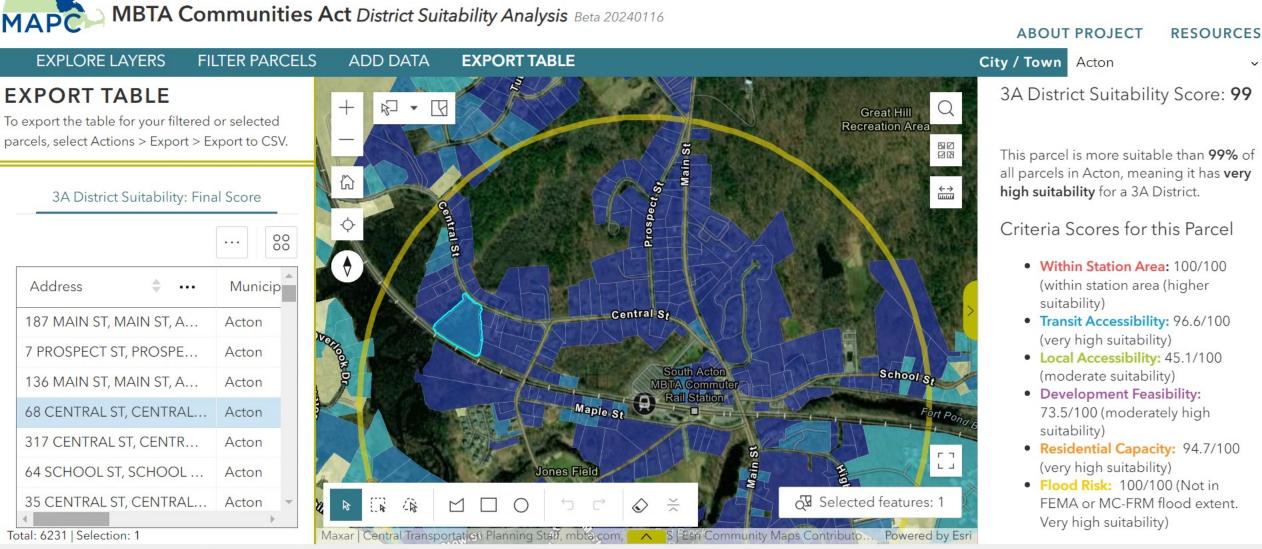
PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Develop recommendations:

- Based on findings from Phase 2 and 3, develop recommendations for updating zoning and share with the public

- Explain how recommendations implement local and regional goals around housing, transportation, economic development, and environment

District Suitability Tool

Provides data indicators to support ultimate district determination

Draft and adopt zoning:

- Hold public hearings and board/committee meetings to finalize zoning amendments
- Prepare for Council or Town Meeting by engaging public about recommended changes and associated benefits and opportunities
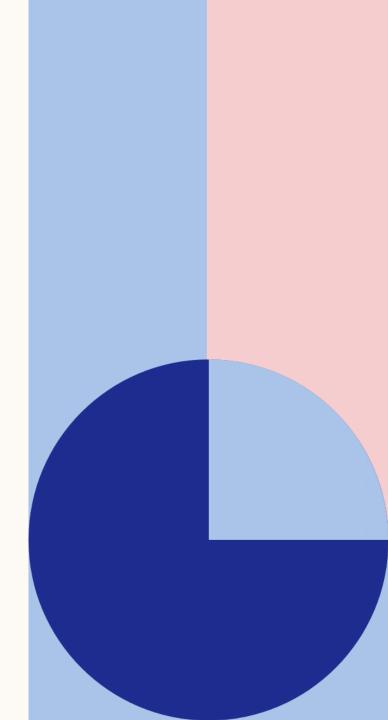
District Suitability Tool

Once zoning is adopted, the tool can be referenced to inform further policies to support housing production under 3A

How can the District Suitability Analysis Tool be utilized beyond 3A planning?

- Identifying potential development locations to include in local Housing Production Plans

- Identifying potential sites to acquire/dispose of for Affordable Housing purposes

- Identifying areas where residents may be at risk of displacement

POLL #3

How likely are you to use the District Suitability Analysis Tool for your Section 3A planning process?
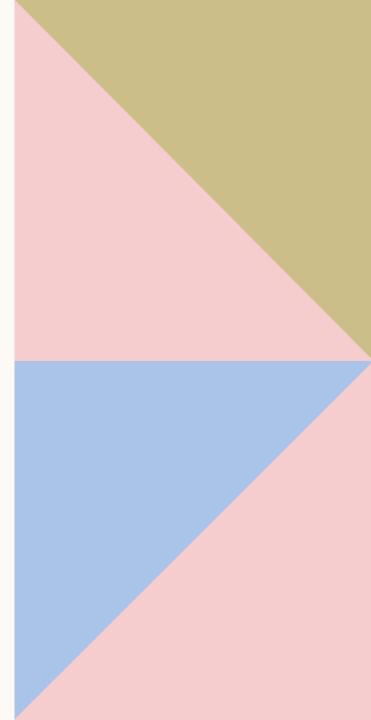
o   Very likely

o   Likely

o   Unlikely

o   Very unlikely

DISTRICT SUITABILITY

APPLICABILITY
Q&A

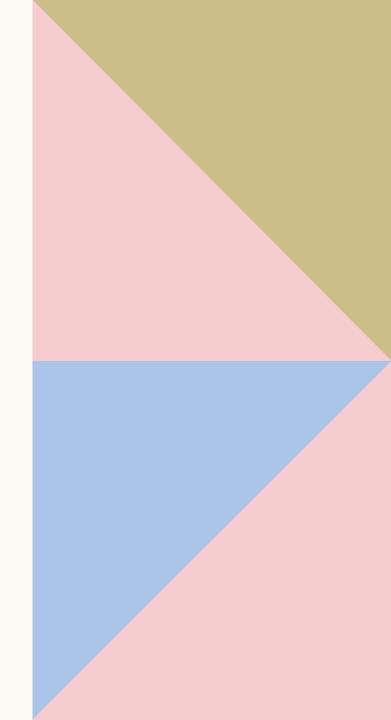DISTRICT SUITABILITY

NEXT STEPS

Access the District Suitability Analysis Tool at:
mapc.ma/3a-district-suitability

Visit **www.mapc.org/mbta-multifamily-zoning** to access explainers about the tool, learn how MAPC is helping municipalities comply with Section 3A, find opportunities for technical assistance, read through FAQs about Section 3A, and more!

Questions about the data tool? Contact:
dataservices@mapc.org

Questions about how to use this in your 3A planning processes? Contact Emma Battaglia, Senior Housing & Land Use Planner, at:
ebattaglia@mapc.org

DISTRICT SUITABILITY

THANK YOU!