



# TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Town Hall Offices • 63 Main Street • Northborough, MA 01532 • 508-393-5040 x7 • 508-393-6996 Fax

---

April 8, 2022

John Coderre, Town Administrator  
Town Hall Offices  
63 Main Street  
Northborough, MA 01532

Dear Mr. Coderre,

At the Board of Selectmen meeting scheduled for April 11, 2022, I plan to provide a short presentation (see attached PowerPoint presentation) on Section 18 of Chapter 358 of the Acts of 2020, which Governor Baker signed into law on January 14, 2021, as well as the draft guidelines for implementing and complying with the new regulations issued by the MA Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) on December 15, 2021. Section 18 added a new section 3A to the Zoning Act (Chapter 40A), which is applicable to 175 Massachusetts communities, including the Town of Northborough. The zoning reforms require MBTA communities, as defined in the guidance, to have at least one zoning district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right and meets other criteria, including:

- Minimum gross density of 15 units per acre
- No age restrictions
- Suitable for families with children
- Not more than ½ mile from a commuter rail station, subway station, ferry terminal or bus station, if applicable, or near an existing downtown, village center or area of underutilized/abandoned structures (i.e. mill building) with redevelopment potential.

Northborough is categorized as an MBTA-adjacent community because the Town does not have a transit station and a transit station is not within ½ mile of its municipal borders.

The guidance specifies a timeline for compliance. A community may receive a determination of interim compliance from DHCD to allow time to plan for and pass a multifamily district with an eye towards achieving full compliance by March 31, 2025. The community must take certain affirmative steps to secure interim compliance including providing notice to DHCD, creating an action plan, implementing the action plan, and adopting a zoning amendment by December 31, 2024.

Failure to comply with the multifamily zoning requirements would make a community ineligible for funds from:

- Housing Choice Grants;
- Local Capital Projects Fund;
- MassWorks Infrastructure Program;
- At their discretion, DHCD may take non-compliance into consideration when making other discretionary grant awards.

Note that while Northborough does not currently meet the criteria for designation as a Housing Choice Community due to the relatively small number of new construction housing starts over the last 5 years and very little information is available about the Local Capital Projects Fund, I perceive the lack of access to the MassWorks Infrastructure Program as a huge loss for the Town of Northborough, especially as the Town embarks on a costly downtown revitalization effort.

The MassWorks Infrastructure Program is a competitive grant program that provides the largest and most flexible source of capital funds to municipalities for public infrastructure projects that support and accelerate housing production, spur private development, and create jobs throughout the Commonwealth. The program places particular emphasis on the production of multi-family housing and job creation in appropriately located walkable, mixed-use districts like Northborough Center. With this in mind, I envision that the MassWorks Grant Program will be the primary funding mechanism for transforming Northborough's vision for a pedestrian-friendly, dynamic downtown into a reality.

I look forward to continuing the conversation on the new multi-family requirements on Monday evening and beyond. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Laurie Connors  
Town Planner