

Belmont Multifamily Zoning



MBTA Communities Advisory Committee Meeting

April 12, 2023

Agenda

- I. Project Background**
- II. 3A Basics**
- III. Draft District Boundaries**
- IV. Next Steps**
- V. Discussion**

I. Project Background

Purpose

Establish a **town-wide vision** and develop zoning recommendations that facilitate 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**")

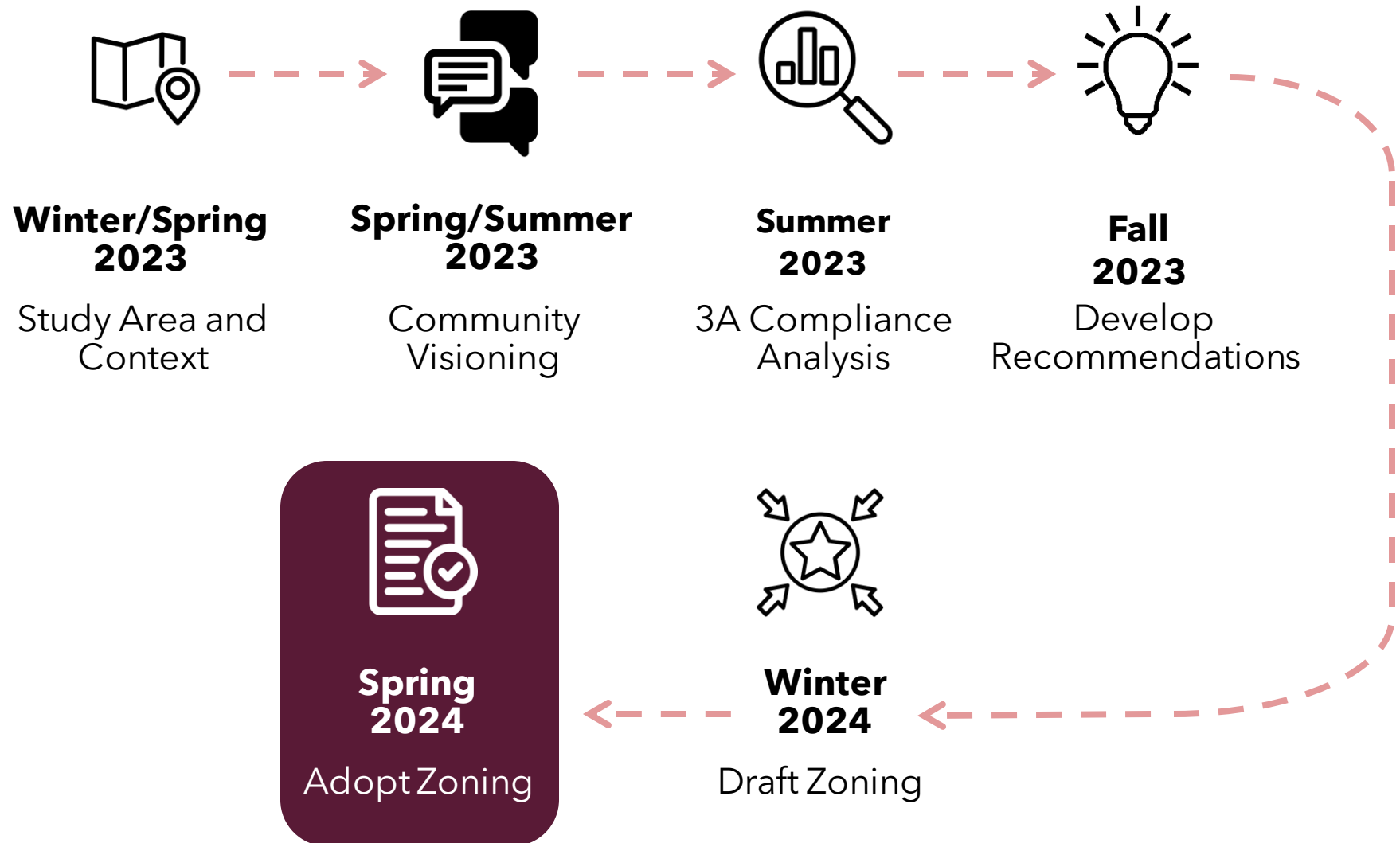
Process

Builds on the Housing Production Plan with further analysis and the **drafting of zoning language** that will comply with Section 3A

Goal is **adoption of the zoning amendment** at Town Meeting and determination of compliance by DHCD

Project is led by the **Town of Belmont**, the Belmont MBTA Communities Advisory Committee, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)

Timeline



Where We're At



**Winter/Spring
2023**
Study Area and
Context

Deliverable

Draft 3A district
boundary

Analyze existing
zoning

Write summary
memo

Timeline

Today!

April 2023

May 2023

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** (not requiring a special permit)

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

Big Picture

"Minimum unit capacity is a measure of whether a multi-family zoning district is of a reasonable size, **not a requirement to produce housing units**. Nothing in Section 3A or these guidelines should be interpreted as a mandate to construct a specified number of housing units, nor as a housing production target. Demonstrating compliance with the minimum multi-family unit capacity requires only that an MBTA community **show that the zoning allows multi-family housing as of right and that a sufficient number of multi-family housing units could be added to or replace existing uses and structures over time** – even though such additions or replacements may be unlikely to occur soon."

Key 3A Concepts - Types of Land

"Developable land" = land on which multi-family housing can be permitted and constructed

"Developable public land" = any publicly-owned land that is used by a local housing authority, has been identified as a site for housing development in a housing production plan approved by DHCD, or has been designated by the public owner for disposition and redevelopment

Key 3A Concepts - Types of Land

"Excluded land" = land areas on which it is not possible or practical to construct multi-family housing

- All publicly-owned land, except for lots or portions of lots determined to be developable public land
- Wetlands and other surface waterbodies (e.g., rivers, ponds)
- Protected open space and recreational land
- Rights-of-way
- Water supply and wellhead protection areas
- Privately-owned land used for educational or institutional uses (e.g., hospital, utilities, private school)

Key 3A Concepts - Types of Land

"Sensitive land" = developable land that has significant conservation values that could be impaired, or vulnerabilities that could be exacerbated, by the development of multi-family housing

- Physical characteristics such as soils, slope, and hydrology
- Flood risk areas
- Extended wetland buffer zones
- Priority habitat for rare or threatened species
- Restricted wellhead protection areas
- Land areas with prime agricultural soils that are in active agricultural use

Answers to Your Questions

Q: Is land owned by a housing authority considered "developable land?"

A: Yes.


" 'Developable public land' " means any publicly-owned land that (i) **is used by a local housing authority**; (ii) has been identified as a site for housing development in a housing production plan approved by DHCD; or (iii) has been designated by the public owner for disposition and redevelopment."

Key 3A Concepts - District Size

"Reasonable size" = land area of the multi-family zoning district + the multi-family zoning district's multi-family unit capacity

→ *Right now, we're just focusing on the first part of that equation*

Key 3A District Requirements

- Minimum land area of the district = 50 acres or 1.5% of the developable land area in a town, whichever is less
  *For Belmont, this is 28 acres*
- Minimum amount of contiguous land area = 50%
- Minimum number of contiguous acres of land = 5
- Percent of district located within a half mile of transit station = 50%

General Guidance on District Location

"When choosing the location of a new multi-family zoning district, every MBTA community should **consider how much of a proposed district is sensitive land** on which permitting requirements and other considerations could make it challenging or inadvisable to construct multi-family housing.

For example, an MBTA community may want to avoid including in a multi-family zoning district **areas that are subject to flooding**, or are **known habitat for rare or threatened species**, or have **prime agricultural soils in active agricultural use**."

Answers to Your Questions

Q: Are subdistricts with different zoning standards allowed within the 3A district?

A: Yes

“To comply with Section 3A’s gross density requirement, an MBTA community **may establish reasonable sub-districts** within a multi-family zoning district, with different density limits for each sub-district, provided that the **gross density for the district as a whole** meets the statutory requirement of not less than **15 multi-family units per acre.**”

Questions?

III. Draft District Boundaries

Thought Process

First

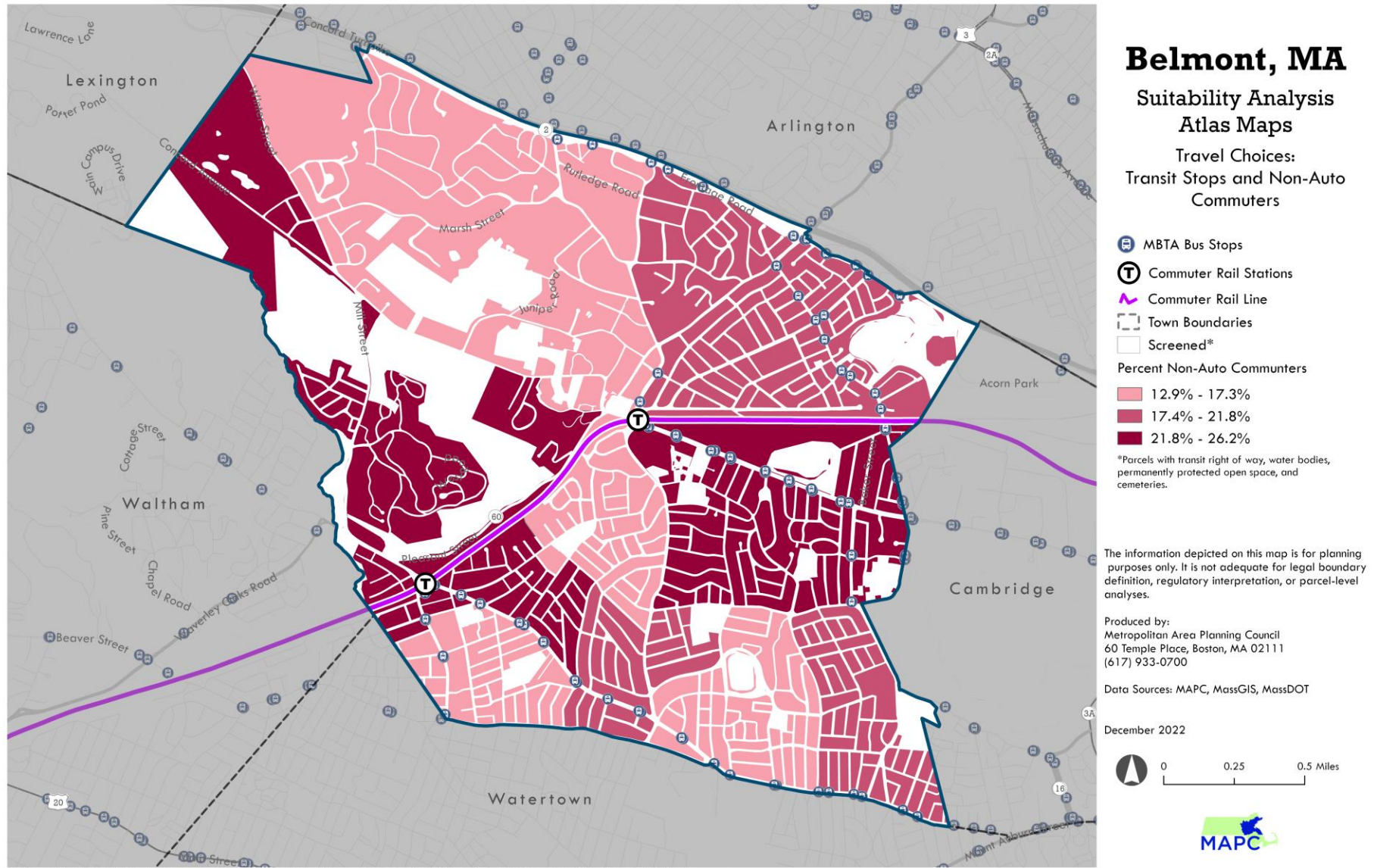
- Proximity to transit
- Excluded & sensitive land
- Current zoning district boundaries

Second

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

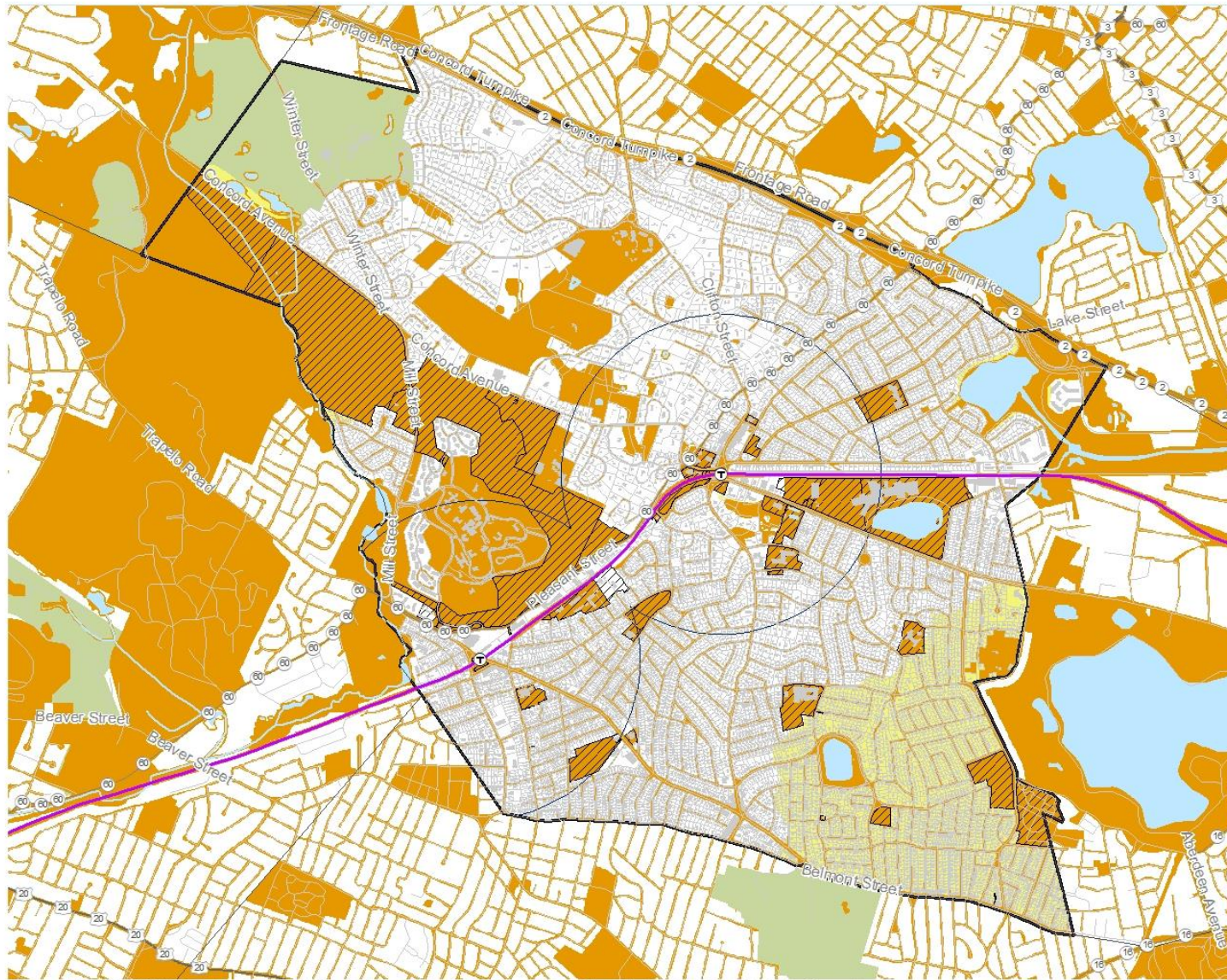
Informed by site visit,
Advisory Committee
input, analysis from
Housing Production Plan
and other relevant data,
and focus group with
Town staff

Proximity to Transit



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Excluded & Sensitive Land



Commuter Rail Radius Excluded Land Analysis

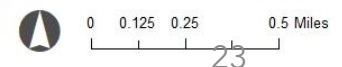
- Commuter Rail Stations
- Commuter Rail Lines
- Half Mile Transit Radius
- Town-Owned Land
- Excluded Land
- Sensitive Land
- Buildings
- Water Bodies
- Open Space

The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. It is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analyses.

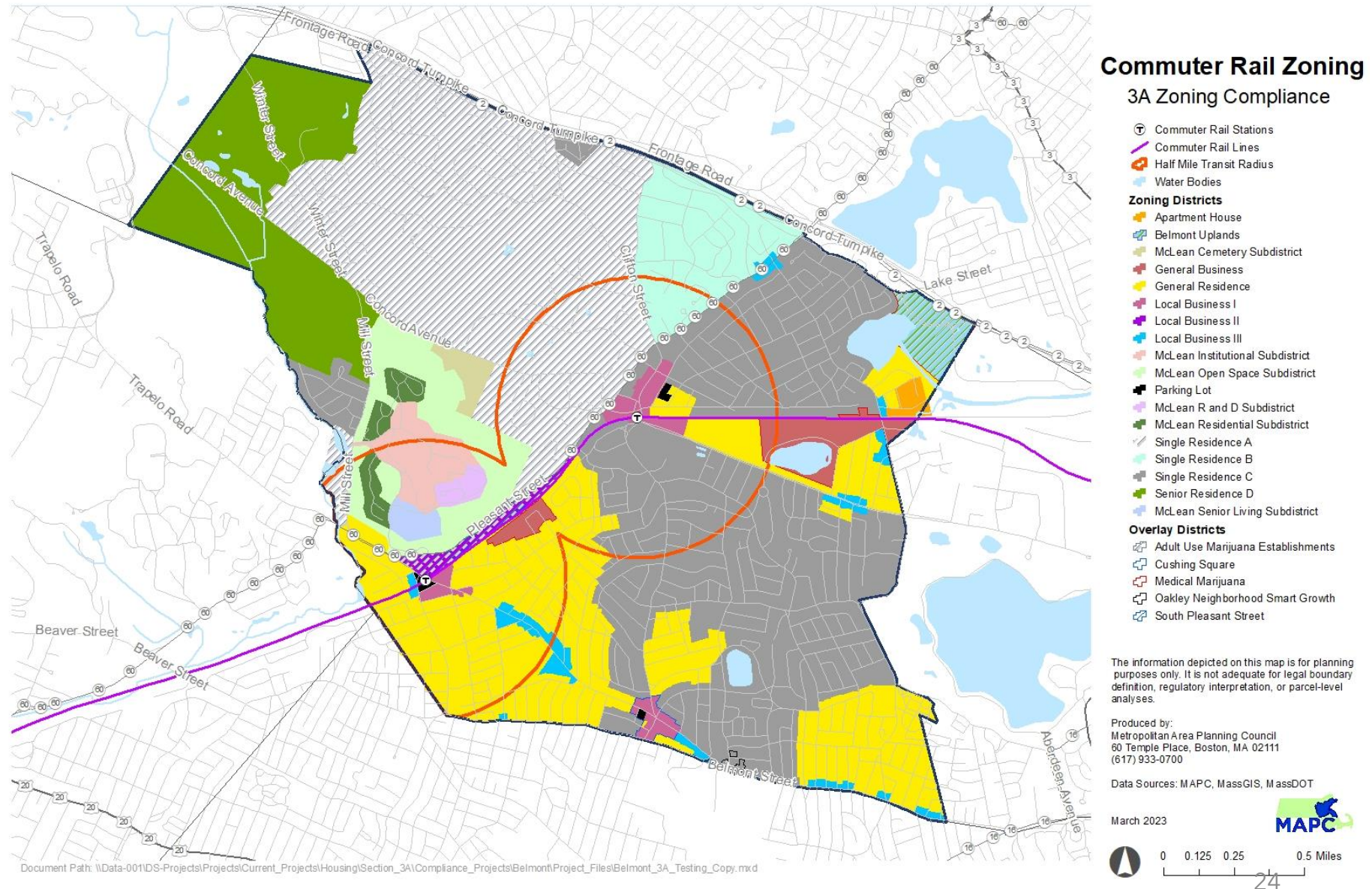
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Data Sources: MAPC, MassGIS, MassDOT

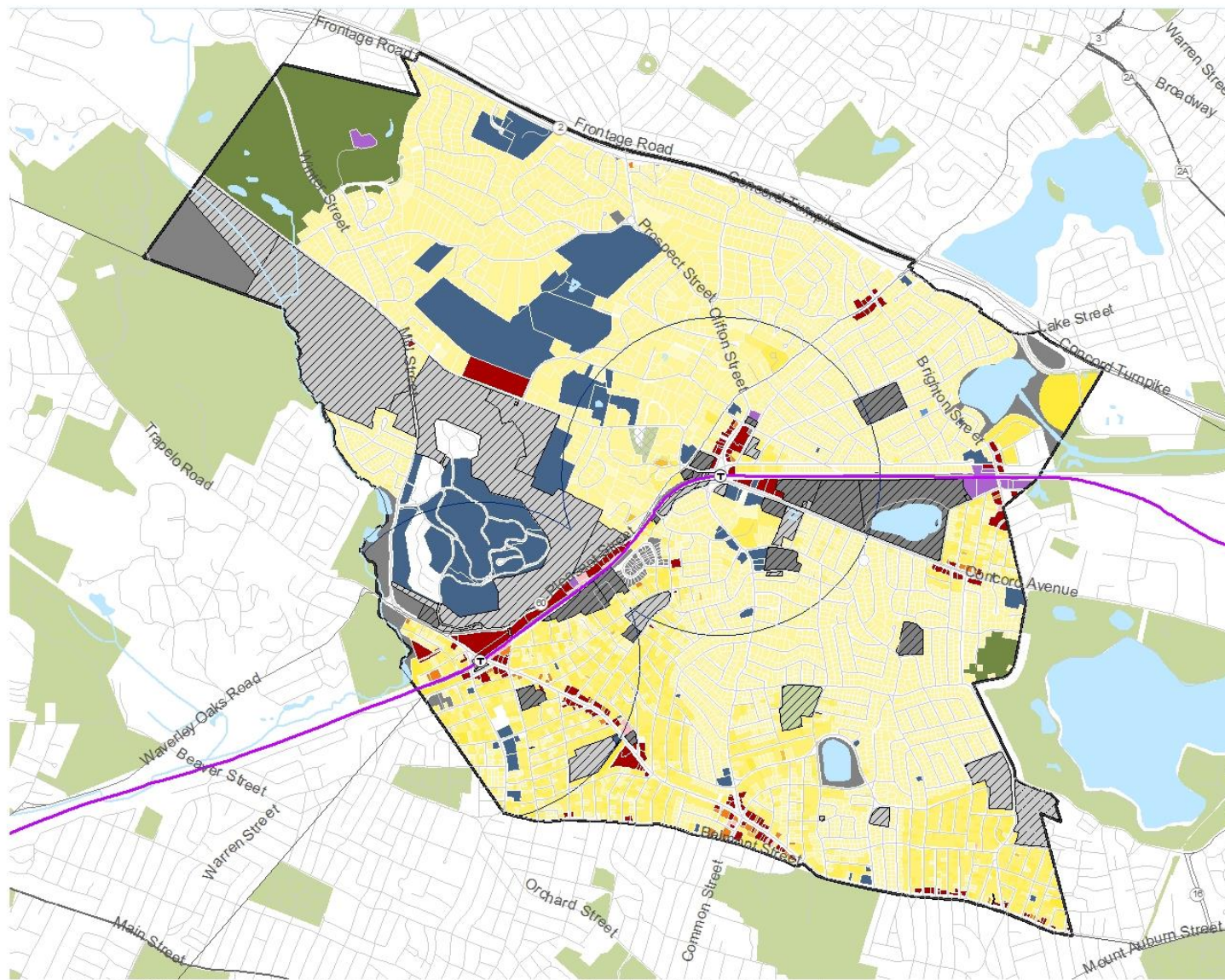
March 2023



Current Zoning District Boundaries



Existing Land Use



Existing Belmont Land Use

- ⓘ Commuter Rail Stations
- ⊞ Half Mile Transit Radius
- ⊞ Town-Owned Land

Land Use

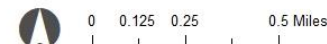
- Residential Vacant
- Single Family Residence
- Two/Three Family Residential
- Condominium
- Apartments 4 or more units
- Group Quarters
- Residential Other
- Mixed Use
- Commercial Vacant
- Commercial
- Industrial Vacant
- Industrial
- Open Space
- Chapter 61, 61A, 61B Property
- Other Agricultural or Recreational
- Municipal Vacant
- Federal, State or Municipal
- Institutional/Exempt Vacant
- Institutional/Exempt
- Tax Exempt Other
- Unknown

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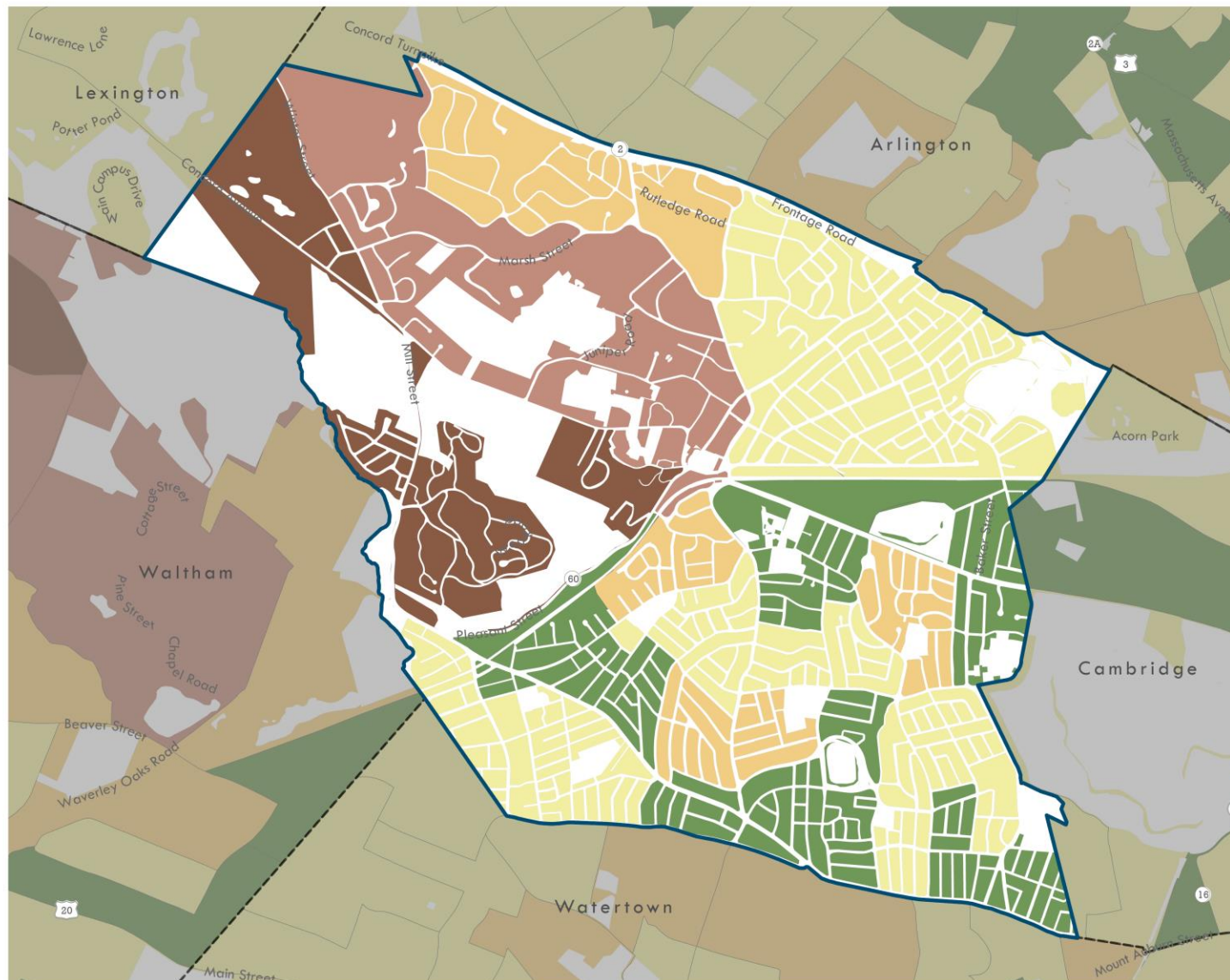
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April 2023



Proximity to Goods & Services



Belmont, MA

Suitability Analysis Atlas Maps

Healthy Communities: Walkability

Town Boundaries

Screened*

Walkability Index†

- 3.3 - 6.6 (least walkable)
- 6.7 - 9.9
- 10.0 - 13.1
- 13.2 - 16.4
- 16.5 - 19.7 (most walkable)

*Parcels with transit right of way, water bodies, permanently protected open space, and cemeteries.

†Based on the following measures of the built environment that affect the probability of whether people walk as a mode of transportation: street intersection density, proximity to transit stops, and diversity of land uses.

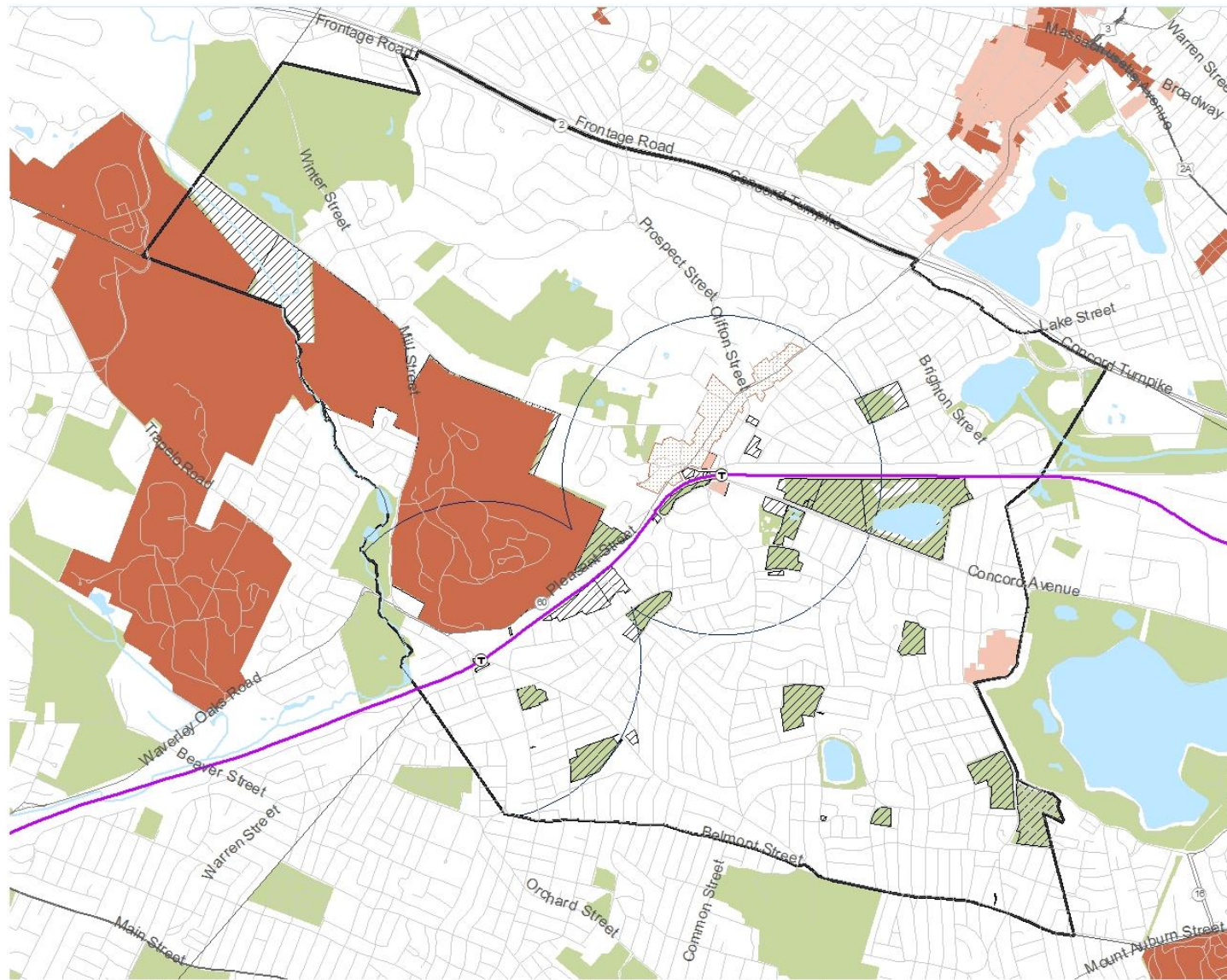
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January 2023



Historic Resources



Designated Historic Resources

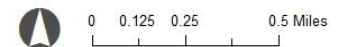
- Commuter Rail Stations
- Half Mile Transit Radius
- Town-Owned Land
- National Register of Historic Places and Local Historic District
- Local Historic District
- National Register of Historic Places
- Preservation Restriction
- Open Space

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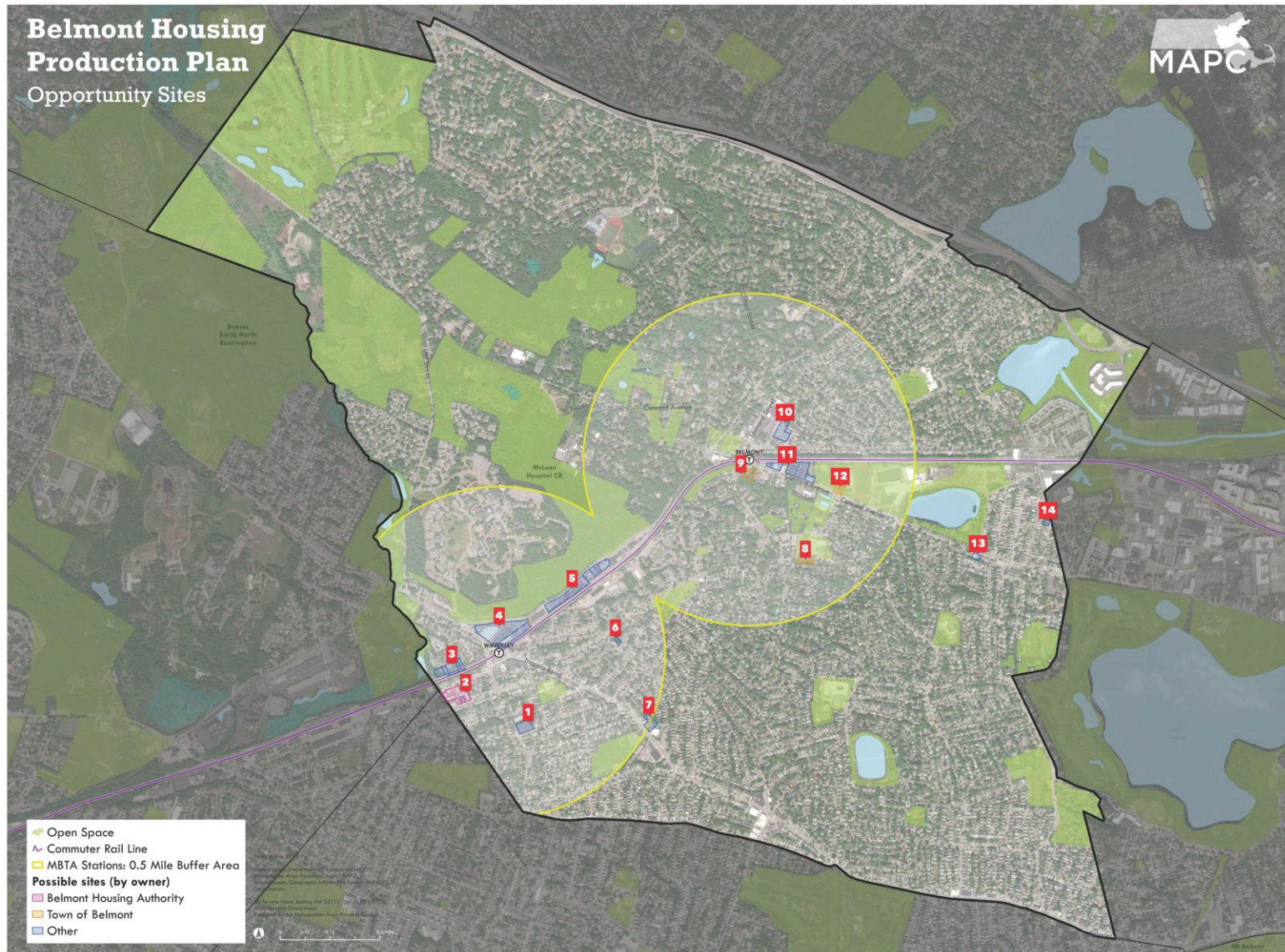
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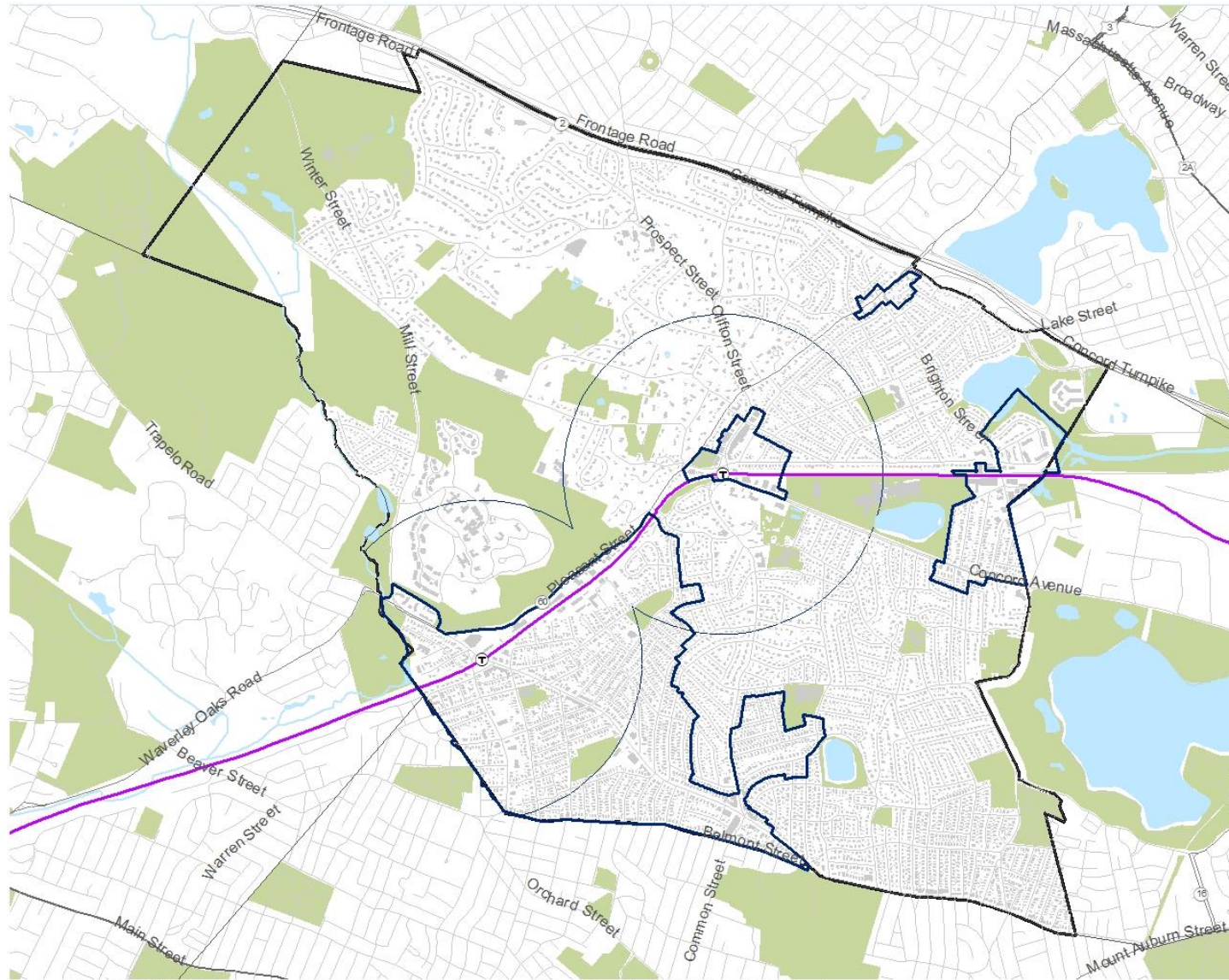
April 2023



Redevelopment Opportunities



Proposed 3A Districts



Draft Proposed 3A Districts

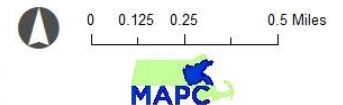
- Ⓣ Commuter Rail Stations
- ⊕ Half Mile Transit Radius
- 3A Districts
- Buildings
- Open Space

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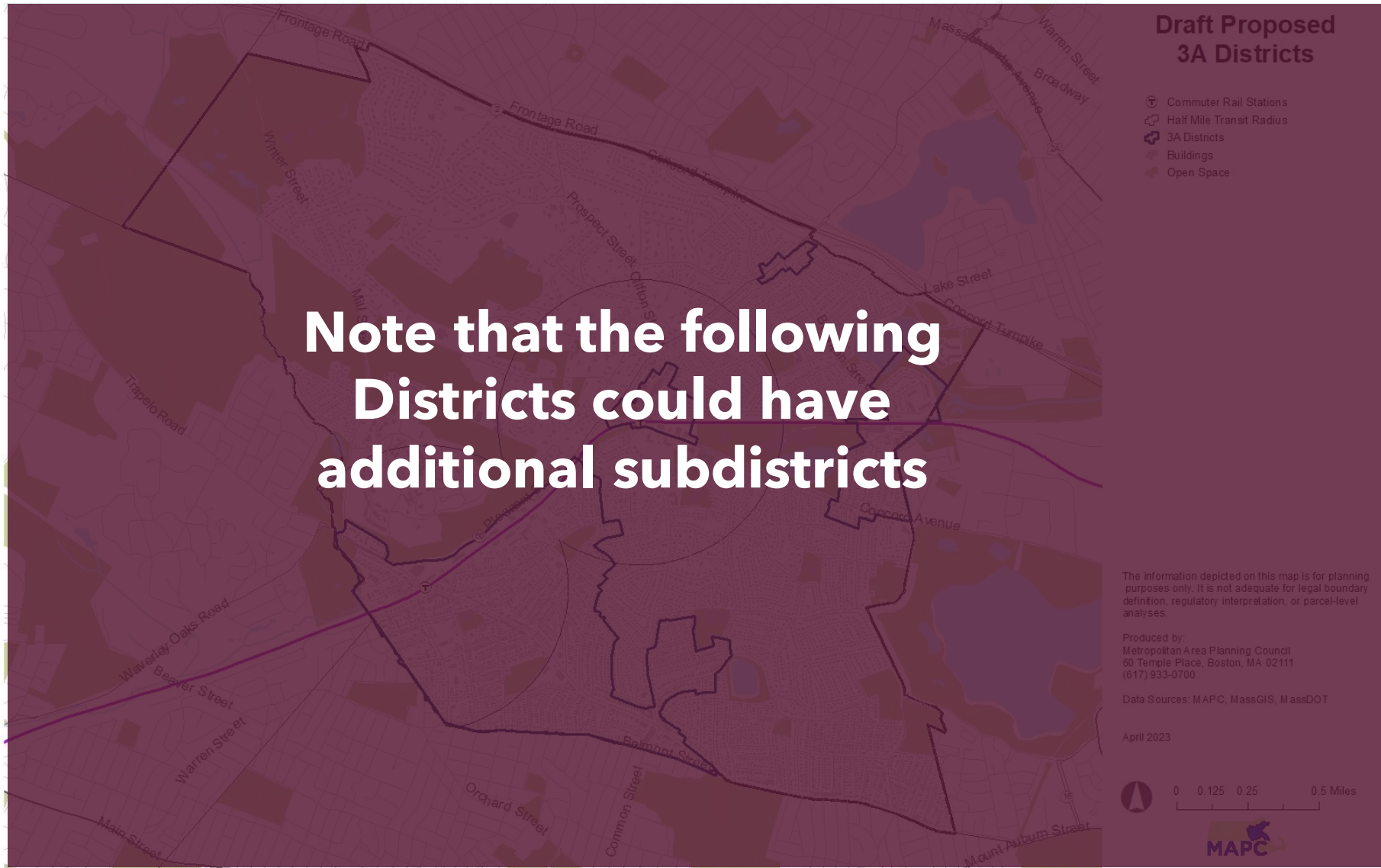
April 2023



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FOR PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION PURPOSES

Proposed 3A Districts

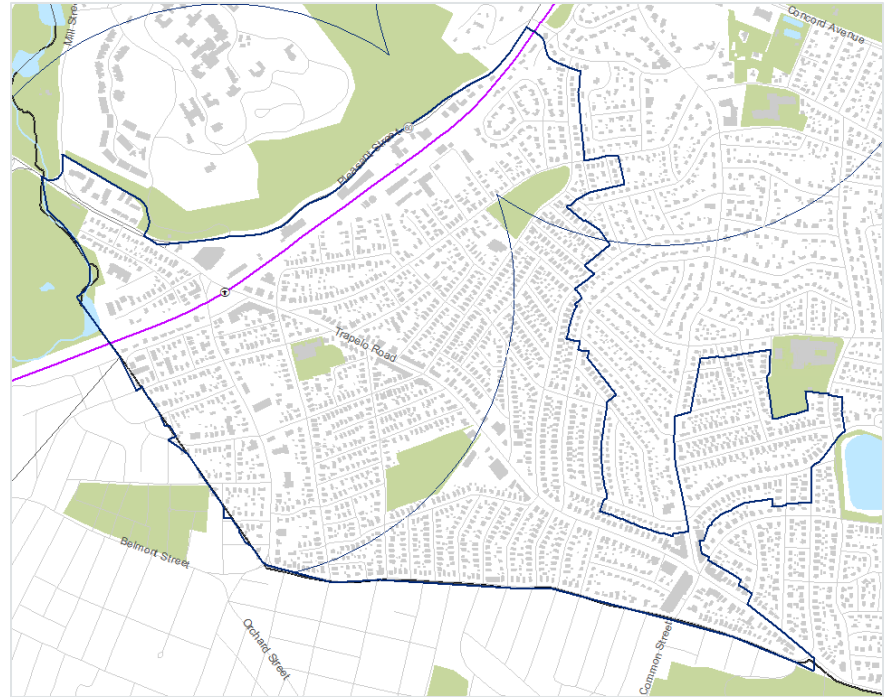


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FOR PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION PURPOSES

District 1: Waverley

- 423 acres
- Includes Waverley and Cushing Squares
- Includes entire half-mile transit buffer (excepting excluded land)
- Access to Waverley commuter rail and 73 and 554 bus routes
- Access to parks, schools, Star Market
- Includes potential redevelopment sites on Moraine, Thayer, Beech, and Trapelo Road corridor
- Mostly General Residence, some Local Business districts, minimal Single Residence C



District 2: Belmont Center

- 29 acres
- Focused on Belmont Center
- Access to Belmont commuter rail and 74 and 75 bus routes
- Access to Leonard St. shopping, Town services, public library, parks, schools
- Includes potential redevelopment sites on Concord Ave. and Claflin Street parking lot
- Mostly Local Business I and General Residence



District 3: Brighton Street

- 77 acres
- Includes Brighton Street commercial corridor and neighboring residential areas
- Outside of half-mile transit buffer
- Access to 74, 75, and 554 bus routes, bike path to Alewife
- Access to parks, schools, Concord Ave. retail, Fresh Pond
- Includes potential redevelopment sites on Brighton and along Concord Ave. corridor
- General Residence, Apartment House, Local Business III, and General Business districts



District 4: Upper Pleasant Street

- 6 acres
- Includes small commercial corridor at Pleasant/Brighton intersection
- Outside of half-mile transit buffer
- Access to 62, 67, 76, and 78 bus routes
- Access to parks, schools, not too far from Belmont Center
- Includes potential redevelopment sites for mixed-use
- Mostly Local Business III, some Single Residence C



Considerations: General

- Zoning districts are a useful starting point, but can be arbitrary
- More land area means more flexibility to set density standards that are context-sensitive
- Multiple districts scattered throughout town present more opportunities to provide a diversity of housing options that meet different residents' needs
- Subdistricts could be used to define residential-only neighborhoods and mixed-use neighborhoods with incentives for ground-story retail

Considerations: District Size

Minimum

28 acres

15 units/acre

1,632 units

Minimum Land Area

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

Minimum Unit Capacity

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

Proposed District Land Area

$535 \text{ acres} \times 15 \text{ units/acre} = 8,025 \text{ units}$

*Not
enough
units*

Considerations: Specific

District 1

- Divide into smaller districts (e.g., Waverley, Trapelo, and Cushing)?
- Include 104 Clark Street (town-owned property)?

District 2

- Include Town-owned parcels on west side of high school/rec complex identified in HPP?
- Expand into Single Residence C areas?

District 3

- Include west side of Brighton Street north of the train tracks?
- Expand south of Concord Avenue?

District 4

- What should the expanded boundaries include?

Questions?

IV. Next Steps

Homework

Advisory Committee

- Review and comment on draft district boundaries

Town

- Review map of Town-owned land and "excluded land"

MAPC

- Conduct zoning analysis
- Start drafting memo
- Brainstorm public engagement activities
- Begin considering zoning options

Next Meeting

Agenda

- Discuss draft district boundaries
- Present results of zoning analysis
- Discuss community engagement approach

Date

- Monday, April 24th @ 4-5 p.m.?
- Monday, May 1st @ 4-5 p.m.?

Project Info + Resources

Website: mapc.ma/BelmontZoning

DHCD 3A Guidelines: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/section-3a-guidelines>

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