



TOWN OF BELMONT MBTA COMMUNITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Proposal for Map Evaluation Exercise – MBTA Communities Committee

October 19, 2023

The evaluation of the proposed MAPC draft map will be a complex exercise that will require discipline, focus, and patience on the part of member participants. This document serves as a proposed methodology for approaching the exercise with that in mind. We can begin the next meeting to confirm or tweak this process.

MAPC will provide the Committee with a draft parcel map showing each of the identified parcels that have been suggested by Committee members, MAPC, and Planning staff in districts and subdistricts. We will try to overlay the parcels with an address number so parcels can be relatively easily identified for discussion. We will also provide members with aerial photography of all of the designated areas and summary descriptions of the subdistricts and their criteria. This latter is important because members should have a “feel” for how specific subdistricts are intended to be built out and whether this level of development is appropriate for the actual on-the-ground area. Therefore, preliminary discussion in advance of the map exercise “first pass” could be as follows:

STEP 1: Introduction of the Map – Staff will discuss the map’s development with the Committee, showing the various areas selected, specific sites of note, and how the various subdistricts have been distributed and constituted.

STEP 2: Clarification Questions – Members of the Committee will be given an opportunity to ask any clarification questions regarding the map, its elements, and subdistricts, but no specific comments about the appropriateness of specific sites yet.

STEP 3: Explanation of Rationale of the Subdistricts – Staff will explain how the subdistricts have been devised and why they are appropriate for each scale needed for MBTA Communities zoning.

STEP 4: Reiteration of Goals and Principles – MAPC and Staff will make available in written form each of the goals and principles previously distributed.

We will not have detailed results from the Compliance Model as yet during our first map discussion but we may know how closely the initial run comes to meeting requirements for acreage and number of zoned units. It just will not be on a property specific basis yet. Therefore, it is recommended that this first session just be a “first pass” at identifying individual parcels for modification¹ and that this list be prioritized for modification by factors of importance to the Committee such as sensitive lands, important historic or iconic building, inappropriate location based on adjacent land use, excessive sites in one particular area, examine the appropriateness of the proposed density (+/-), etc. Thus, suggested steps for this “first pass” exercise could be as follows:

¹ In this context, modification refers to parcels or groups of parcels that could be removed from the model, or could have their subdistrict classification changed to either upzone or downzone. Additionally, the recommended modification could conceivably be to add a specific parcel or group of parcels.

STEP 5: Round Robin Comments by Members (First Pass) – Each Committee member will be given an opportunity to share any specific parcel(s) that they wish to nominate for modification and provide a specific reason or reasons why. These sites and reasons will be recorded by staff in a master sheet. Members should be able to express their preferences without retort or debate at this stage.

***NOTE:** Modification can be on a parcel, subdistrict, or district basis. For example, you can recommend that an area designated as subdistrict 5 should be downgraded to subdistrict 4. Or you could recommend that a specific parcel be removed. However, it isn't prudent to eliminate parcels located in the middle of districts so non-peripheral parcel removal would likely also include adjacent parcels to be removed out to the perimeter of the district.*

STEP 6: Second Pass Discussion of Selected Sites – In this Second Pass, each selected parcel can be discussed and debated, pro and con, for removal. Each member should be given an opportunity to express an opinion, but do not have to. The Committee can choose to take a vote to formalize a removal recommendation or acknowledge consensus through no further comments offered.

STEP 7: Finalize a Prioritized List – Once the list of properties/sites to modify has been finalized in STEP 4, members should discuss prioritizing parcels for modification. This step is necessary because once the Compliance Model has been run and it is clear how many units and acres the run is in excess or in deficit of the minimum, each site will have a specific number of acres and units associated with it. Modifications should be based on 1) priority and 2) how many acres and units are removed, added, or otherwise modified, so a prioritization is a precursor to a final discussion of sites being formally changed. Once the priority list has been finalized and voted on, the Committee is prepared to engage in a final discussion once the Compliance Model has been run.

At this stage, we will await the completion of the Compliance Model by MAPC. Once this data is available, several elements will become clearer. These are:

- A. How close the specific model run came to meeting MBTA Communities requirements for minimum number of acres and zoned units.
- B. If in excess, how many of one, other, or both need to be reduced by. If too low, how many new acres and units may be needed to meet the requirements.
- C. Acres and units may be reduced (or increased) in one of two ways, or both:
 - 1) By adding or subtracting new parcels to the model
 - 2) For Units: By tweaking density in one or more subdistrict or changing (+/-) the acreage of a subdistrict

At this point, we now have the necessary data to engage in a Second Pass exercise to finalize the parcels to modify:

STEP 8: Select Final Modification List – Working with a specific set of numbers of acres and units to modify, the Committee will be walked through the priority list, with each modification, the new total of acres and units will be noted, until the totals are at the minimum number required, or a little over (10% recommended). This final model will be voted on by the Committee and a new Compliance Model run to verify the alignment.