

# MBTA Communities Zoning Requirements

Public Forum  
June 15, 2023



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Milton Department of Planning and Community Development

# Meeting Recording

Please note that tonight's meeting will be recorded and posted on the Milton Access Television and Town websites.



# Meeting Agenda

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Recap of MBTA Communities zoning requirements
- 3) Discussion of survey results
- 4) Update on technical assistance
- 5) Follow-up on survey results, public comments
- 6) Question and Comment period
- 7) Next steps



# Meeting Agenda

Reminder: We have to clear out this room by 8:30, so we'll be ending the meeting at 8:20 sharp.

Our next public forum will be held remotely on July 17, 2023.

Information for logging into that meeting will be posted on the Town website.



# Resources



The screenshot shows the official website of the Town of Milton, Massachusetts. The header features the town's name in a stylized font, a search bar, and a language selection dropdown. The main navigation bar includes links for 'ABOUT', 'DEPARTMENTS', 'BOARDS & COMMITTEES', and 'REPORT A PROBLEM'. A yellow box on the right side of the navigation bar asks 'Where do I go for?'. The left sidebar contains a list of links, with 'MBTA Communities Multi-Family Zoning Requirement' highlighted. The main content area displays the title 'MBTA Communities Multi-Family Zoning Requirement' and a paragraph explaining the 2021 legislative changes. A map of Milton is shown on the right, with a legend for 'MBTA Communities' categories: 'New Town', 'Intermediate Area', 'Medium Density', and 'Apartment Small Town'.

**Milton**  
MASSACHUSETTS

Select Language ▼ Search 🔍 Home 🏠

Powered by Translate

ABOUT ▼ DEPARTMENTS ▼ BOARDS & COMMITTEES ▼ REPORT A PROBLEM

Where do I go for?

MBTA Communities Multi-Family Zoning Requirement

Master Plan Implementation Committee

Milton Zoning Map

Planning Board

Plans and Studies

Sign Review Documents

Transportation Studies & Resources

Home » Departments » Planning and Community Development

## MBTA Communities Multi-Family Zoning Requirement

In January 2021, the Massachusetts Legislature adopted an [Economic Development Bond Bill \(H.5250\)](#) that made changes to the state's Zoning Act. The "Housing Choice" sections of the bill made it easier for municipalities like ours to adopt pro-housing zoning changes and required each municipality in the

**MBTA Communities**

Consistency Category

- New Town
- Intermediate Area
- Medium Density
- Apartment Small Town



# What is the MBTA Communities law?

Enacted as part of the economic development bill in January 2021, new Section 3A of M.G.L. c. 40A (the Zoning Act) requires that an MBTA community shall have at least one zoning district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing (three or more units) is permitted as of right and meets other criteria set forth in the statute:

- Minimum gross density of 15 units per acre
- Not more than ½ miles from a commuter rail station, subway station, ferry terminal or bus station, if applicable.
- No age restrictions
- Suitable for families with children.

Towns that do not comply with the new requirements will be ineligible for **MassWorks**, **Housing Choice**, and **Local Capital Projects** funds.



# Options for Compliance

The DHCD guidelines for compliance give towns flexibility in where zoning districts can go, how large they are, and what their dimensional requirements are.



# Options for Compliance

## Location

- The location and of districts within a  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of transit is determined by how much Developable Area exists in that area. Milton's Developable Area is reduced by the fact that the Mattapan Trolley hugs the Neponset River and the border with Boston; a significant fraction of the  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile radius is either on state property or not in Milton.
  - The DHCD guidelines allow Milton to locate as much as 50 percent of our compliant zoning districts outside of the  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile transit radius

## Subdistricts

- The Town can create multiple subdistricts in different areas, with the following restrictions
  - At least half of the district needs to be contiguous
  - Subdistricts need to be a minimum of five acres



# Options for Compliance

## Dimensional Requirements

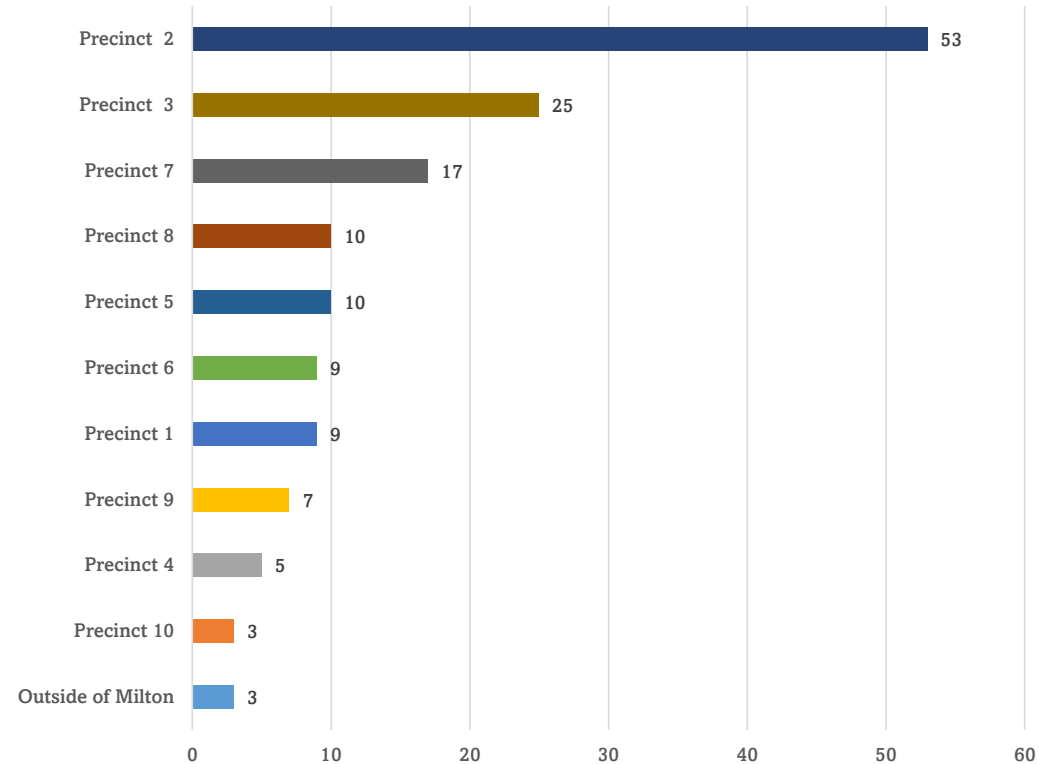
- Dimensional requirements like height, setbacks, and density do not need to be uniform across subdistricts, as long as the average of all the subdistricts meet the law's minimum requirements for density, reasonable size, and by-right permitting.
  - Example: One subdistrict comprising half the total district can have a density of five units per acre, and another district comprising the second half of the total district can have a density of twenty-five units per acre.

The flexibility in DHCD's guidelines can help the Town craft districts that minimize change to the physical character of residential neighborhoods.



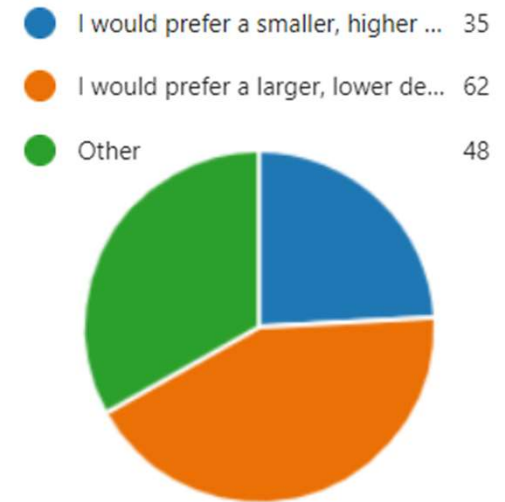
# MBTA Communities Survey

- Survey initially developed in February 2023, with an update in May 2023
- Signs posted physically as well as digitally and announced in public meetings
- Available in English, Spanish, French, and Simplified Chinese
- To date, we've received 161 responses
- Just over 50% of responses from residents in the transit area



# What are we learning?

- A plurality of respondents prefer a larger, lower density district, rather than smaller, higher density district – but there was a lot of nuance
- Areas of town that were suggested by respondents as additional to the transit area included
  - Granite Avenue
  - Blue Hill Avenue
  - Randolph Avenue
  - East Milton



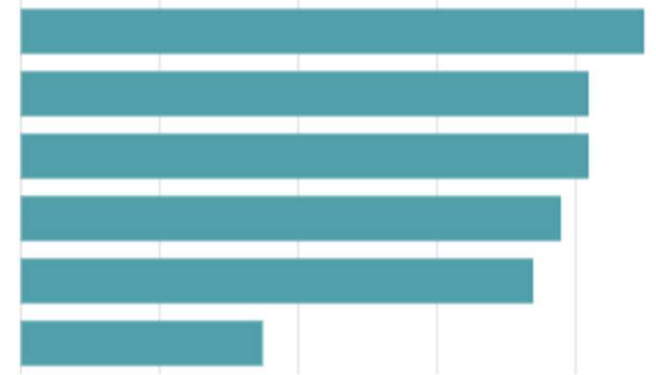
Milton Quincy Central Ave  
 higher density St streets  
 Milton - near Randolph Ave  
 Milton Lower Town  
 MBTA stations Hill Ave  
 Canton side of Milton  
 East Milton  
 Blue Hills  
 ave lot  
 Milton Village Milton Center  
 Hill Parkway  
 areas  
 Granite Ave



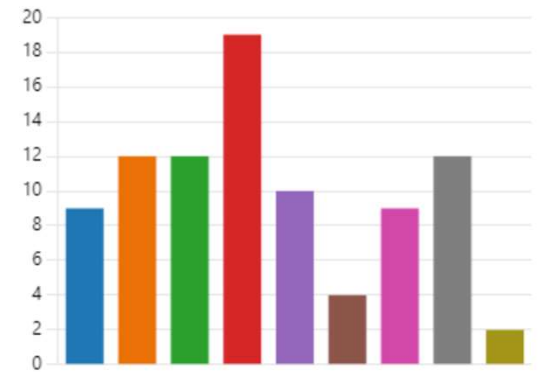
# What are we learning?

- In our May update, we asked additional questions about municipal services and community benefits
- Affordable housing was highlighted as a key community benefit to prioritize, and schools were a major service concern

1	Affordable housing
2	Commercial space
3	Open space
4	Streetscape improvements
5	Preservation of existing structures
6	Other benefits



Utilities & Infrastructure	9
Roads	12
Public Transit	12
Schools	19
Emergency Services	10
Municipal Staff	4
Parking	9
Open Space	12
Other	2



# Update on Technical Assistance

## **Subdistrict testing**

- Planners at the Metropolitan Area Planning Council are testing additional subdistricts throughout Town that will establish a baseline level of compliance

## **Refining the transit area**

- Planners at Utile are proposing adjustments to the transit area district that will reduce our total unit capacity figure and increase our overall density

## **Visualizing buildout**

- Utile is also producing test fit diagrams of the various subdistricts under consideration



# Mattapan Line

Some comments from the public and from elected officials have raised questions about the Mattapan Line's classification as "rapid transit"

- The Planning Board is coordinating with the Select Board on a plan to communicate with the State on this issue
- What do we want as a Town?
  - Relief from zoned capacity requirements?
  - Relief from deadline for rapid transit communities?
  - Pressure the MBTA to ramp up the Mattapan Line Transformation project?



# Mattapan Line

The Mattapan Trolley runs a train every six minutes in the peak commuting times, and every 12 minutes at other times of the day.

- This is comparable to other light rail service on the T, and better than the heavy-rail portion of the Red Line

RED LINE

M

Weekday

peak trains every 7-8 min within trunk, 13-15 min on branches  
off-peak trains every 8 min within trunk, 16 min on branches

M

peak trains every 6 min  
off-peak trains every 12 min

	First	Last
Alewife	5:16 AM	12:30 AM *
Ashmont	5:16 AM	12:30 AM *
Alewife	5:24 AM	12:25 AM
Braintree	5:06 AM	12:06 AM
<div>M</div> Ashmont	5:14 AM	1:05 AM *
<div>M</div> Mattapan	5:02 AM	12:53 AM



# Mattapan Line

The MBTA has provided Spring 2023 boarding data for the Mattapan Line.

- Assuming a 50-person capacity on a PCC car, and 6-minute headways (10 cars an hour), the Mattapan Line has a capacity of 500 riders an hour.
- The highest ridership in Spring 2023 was 279 riders in the outbound direction in the 4PM hour.

**Weekday Time of Day Estimated Boardings**

Hour	Inbound	Outbound	Total
5 AM	57	14	71
6 AM	155	42	197
7 AM	169	99	268
8 AM	179	71	250
9 AM	80	114	194
10 AM	117	70	187
11 AM	113	85	198
12 PM	91	72	163
1 PM	103	108	211
2 PM	109	131	240
3 PM	171	162	333
4 PM	113	279	392
5 PM	122	145	267
6 PM	78	197	275
7 PM	46	100	146
8 PM	32	20	52
9 PM	22	48	70
10 PM	36	61	98
11 PM	13	35	48
12 AM	1	13	14



# Mattapan Line

The next tier of transit service is the Commuter Rail. Frequency is much less on these lines.

KINGSTON

Timetable

Schedule & Maps

Alerts2

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Service Change

On weekdays, through Friday, June 30th, after 7:30 pm, express buses will continue to replace regular train service between Braintree & South Station to allow for track work on the Red Line. Please check the diversion schedule.

Schedule for:  
June 15, 2023

Direction of your trip:  
Inbound → South Station

Stops

Kingston

< Earlier Trains

040

5:30 AM

042

6:30 AM

044

7:25 AM

046

8:37 AM

048

9:52 AM

050

11:07 AM

052

12:22 PM

054

1:37 PM

Later Trains >



# Mattapan Line

The next tier of transit service is the Commuter Rail. Frequency is much less on these lines.

FRANKLIN/FOXBORO

Timetable

Schedule & Maps

Alerts1

Schedule for:  
June 15, 2023

Direction of your trip:  
Inbound → South Station

Stops	Trains							
	<div>&lt; Earlier Trains</div>	700	740	702	742	704	744	Later Trains >
		<div>🚲 🚶 🚶</div>	<div>🚶 🚶</div>	<div>🚶 🚶</div>	<div>🚶 🚶</div>	<div>🚶 🚶</div>	<div>🚶 🚶</div>	<div>🚶 🚶</div>
Forge Park/495	<div>P &amp;</div>	5:09 AM		6:09 AM		7:09 AM		8:12 AM
Franklin	<div>P</div>	5:16 AM		6:16 AM		7:16 AM		8:19 AM
Norfolk	<div>P &amp;</div>	5:23 AM		6:23 AM		7:23 AM		8:26 AM
Foxboro	<div>P &amp;</div>		5:44 AM		6:49 AM		7:49 AM	
Walpole	<div>P</div>	5:30 AM		6:30 AM		7:30 AM		8:33 AM
Windsor Gardens		f 5:34 AM	f 5:57 AM	f 6:34 AM	f 7:02 AM	f 7:34 AM	f 8:02 AM	f 8:37 AM



# Mattapan Line

The next tier of transit service is the Commuter Rail. Frequency is much less on these lines.

FAIRMOUNT

Timetable

Schedule & Maps

Alerts1

Schedule for:  
June 15, 2023

Direction of your trip:  
Inbound → South Station

Stops	Trains									
	< Earlier Trains	900	902	904	906	908	910	912	914	Later Trains >
Readville		4:45 AM	5:45 AM	6:30 AM	7:15 AM	8:00 AM	8:45 AM	9:30 AM	10:15 AM	



# Mattapan Line

The MBTA is currently engaged in a Mattapan Line Transformation Project. According to the MBTA, benefits of the project to riders include:

- Station improvements including benches, canopies, updated lighting, street crossings, walkways, and accessibility improvements
- Larger platforms to accommodate larger ridership volume
- Raised platforms to allow for level boarding onto Type 9 light rail vehicles, eliminating the need for mini high platforms that are on the line currently
- Additional passenger capacity on the Type 9 light rail vehicles
- Once the Type 9 vehicle is introduced, winter operations are anticipated to improve to be similar to that on the Green Line today



# Mattapan Line

Mattapan Line Transformation Project benefits, continued:

- New, modern maintenance facility and yard next to Mattapan Station to maintain the performance and safety of the future Type 9 fleet
- Track safety upgrades
- Improved reliability, safety, and accessibility for riders, with convenient access and connections
- Each station will be evaluated for potential parking and drop-off improvements

The MBTA is holding a public meeting on the Mattapan Line Transformation Project on Tuesday, June 20 at 6:30 PM: <https://www.mbta.com/events/2023-06-20/public-meeting-mattapan-line-transformation-program-virtual>

- We'll be sending this link out to our MBTA Communities email list.



# School Impacts

In our survey, impacts of multifamily zoning on school enrollment has been the top concern of respondents.

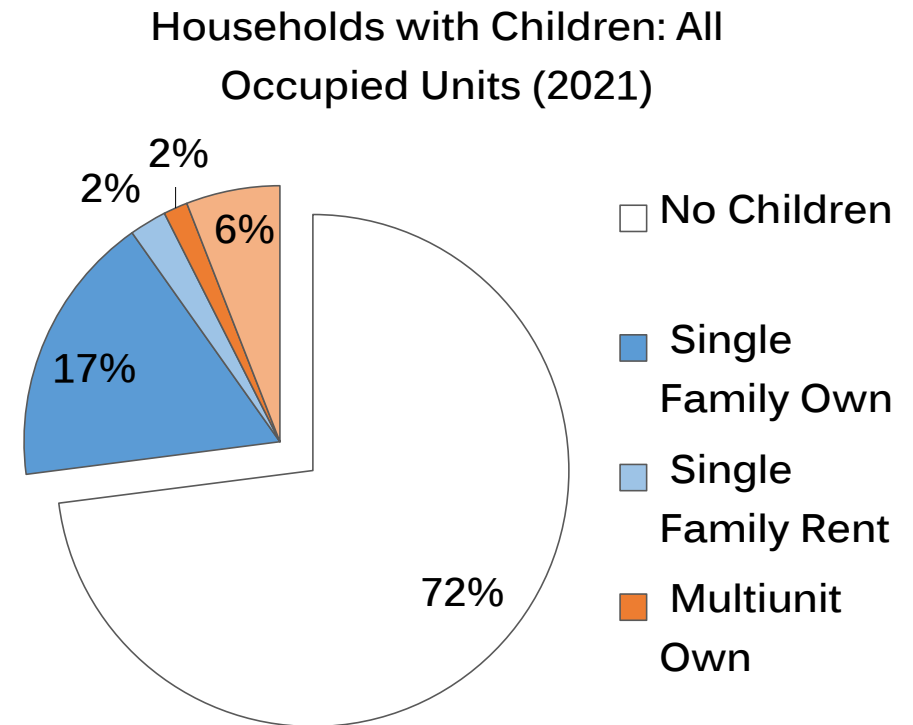
- The Town is engaging with RKG Associates to conduct a fiscal impact analysis of potential new zoning, which will model impacts on school enrollment, town services, and tax revenue.
- Section 3A of Chapter 40A (the MBTA Communities Law) specifically says that multifamily housing enabled under compliant zoning “shall be without age restrictions and shall be suitable for families with children.”
- We do have regional data from the Census, and local data on multifamily housing, that can help us understand potential school enrollment impacts



# School Impacts

In the Boston region, less than a third of all occupied housing units are home to a household with school-age children.

- Of housing units with a household with school-aged children, more than 70 percent are single-family houses



Source: 2021 American Housing Survey (Boston MSA)

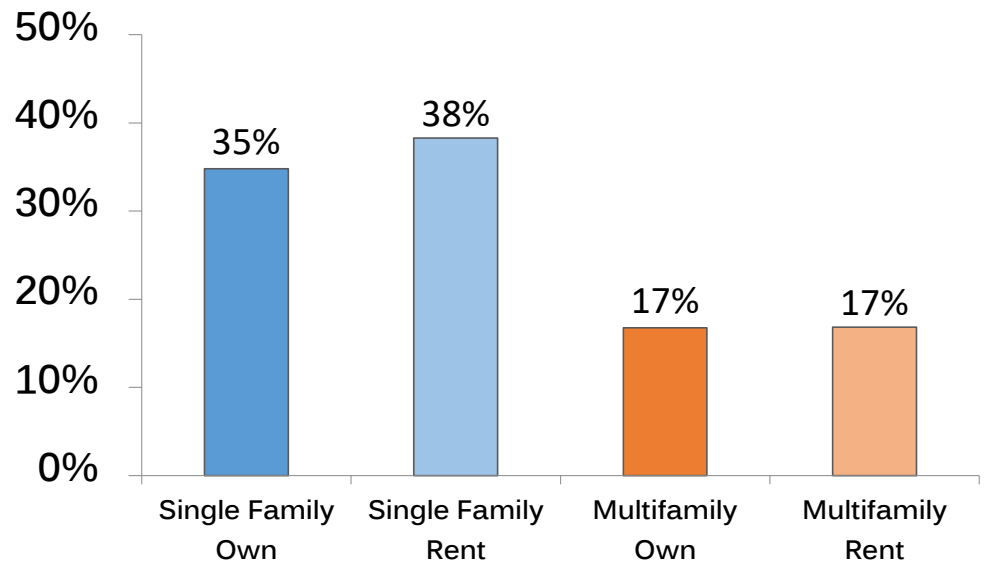


# School Impacts

To put it another way, more than twice as many households with children live in single family houses than in multiunit buildings.

- Note: due to margin of error reporting and overlapping categories, figures add up to more than 100 percent

Households With Children: Share of Total Building and Tenure Type (2021)



Source: 2021 American Housing Survey (Boston MSA)

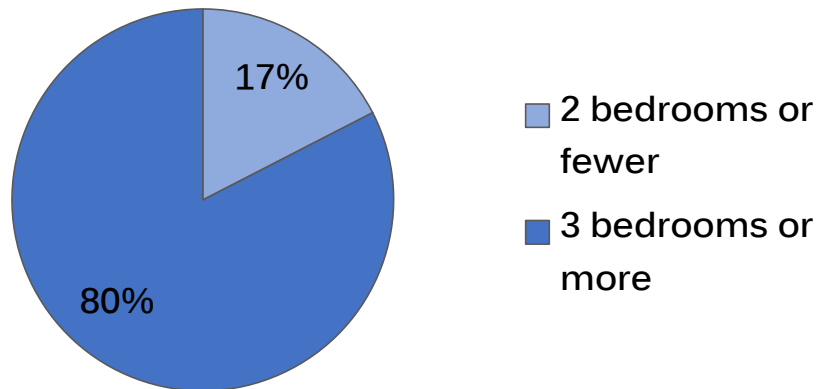


# School Impacts

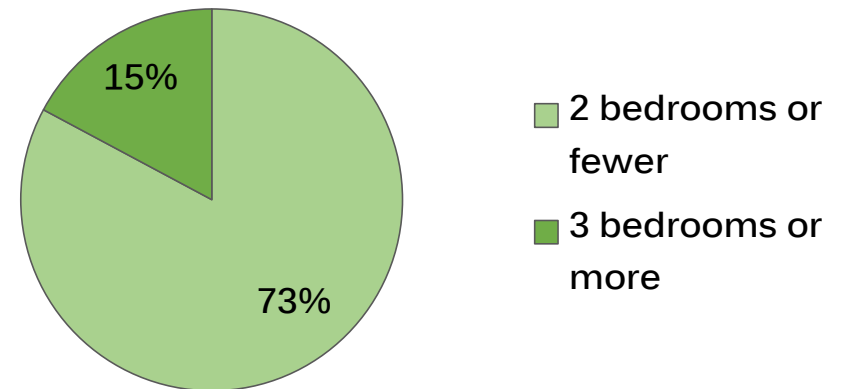
Why is this?

- Bedroom count is one of the leading factors in determining whether a family can live in a given housing unit.
- Rule of thumb: the more bedrooms, the bigger the family

Bedrooms: Single Family Houses (2021)



Bedrooms: Multiunit Buildings (2021)



Source: 2021 American Housing Survey (Boston MSA)



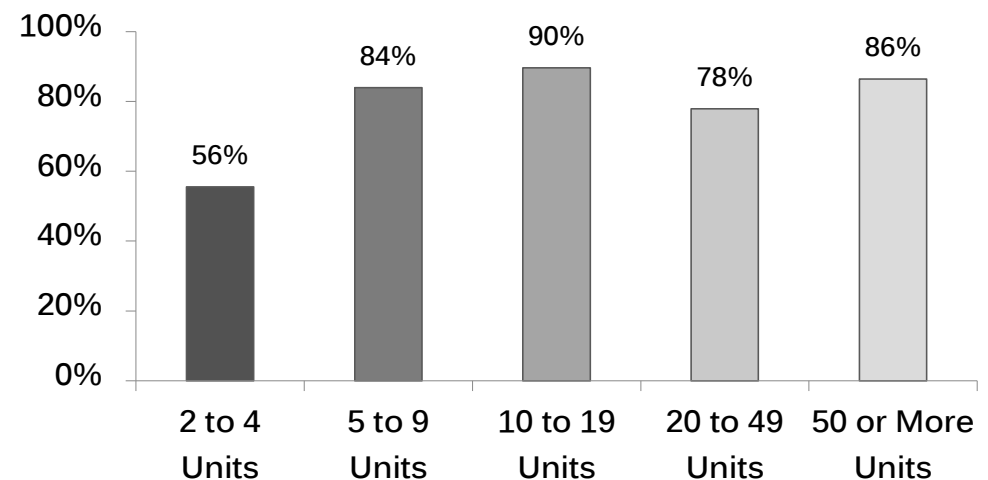
# School Impacts

The overwhelming majority of single-family houses in the region have three or more bedrooms. The inverse is true for multiunit buildings.

- More than half of all multiunit buildings have two or fewer bedrooms
- Once you get past the lowest possible multiunit density, that figure jumps to three-quarters

We can't regulate bedroom count, but the market tends to produce smaller units in multifamily buildings.

Share of Units in Multiunit Buildings with 2 Bedrooms or Fewer (2021)



Source: 2021 American Housing Survey (Boston MSA)



# School Impacts

We have Milton-specific data on how many Milton Public Schools students live in multifamily housing.

- Excluding the various age-restricted developments like Winter Valley and Fuller Village, there are 252 multifamily units in Town.
- Only 27 MPS students lived at multifamily addresses in the most recent school year.

Address	Total Units	1 BR	2 BR	3+BR	MPS Students <sub>1</sub>
175 Milton Street	20	3	10	7	4
333 Brush Hill Road	17	2	5	10	8
36 Central Avenue	18	2	16	0	0
36 Eliot Street	38	20	14	4	6
50 Eliot Street	30	14	16	0	2
88 Wharf Street	73	19	41	13	0
Quisset Brook Road <sub>4</sub>	24	0	20	4	1
Preacher Road <sub>4</sub>	14	0	14	0	1
Farmer Road <sub>4</sub>	8	0	4	4	0
Blacksmith Road <sub>4</sub>	6	0	2	4	0
Powder Mill Road <sub>4</sub>	4	2	1	1	0
Woodmere Road	36	0	16	20	5
Totals	252	62	159	67	27



# School Impacts

Compare to the two most recently completed single-family subdivisions in Town.

- 22 MPS students have addresses on Jill Kathleen Lane and Woodlot Drive.
- Our zoning incentivizes large houses with multiple bedrooms.

Address	Total Units	1 BR	2 BR	3+BR	MPS Students <sub>1</sub>
Jill Kathleen Lane	8			8	5
Woodlot Drive	23			23	17
Total	31	0	0	31	22



# What's Next?

The Department of Planning and Community Development will be hosting monthly public forums like this one, in addition to smaller targeted engagement efforts and continued discussion at Planning Board meetings.

Our next public forum will be Monday, July 17. Please monitor the Planning Department's MBTA Communities page for more information

The screenshot shows the official website of the Town of Milton, Massachusetts, specifically the Planning & Community Development department. The header features the town's name in a stylized font, a language selection dropdown, and a search bar. The navigation menu includes links for 'ABOUT', 'DEPARTMENTS', 'BOARDS & COMMITTEES', and 'REPORT A PROBLEM'. A 'Where do I go for?' button is also present. The left sidebar lists various planning topics, with 'MBTA Communities Multi-Family Zoning Requirement' highlighted by a red circle. The main content area provides information about the department's mission and work, along with a calendar for February 2024.

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28				

All upcoming events



A sepia-toned aerial photograph of a town, likely Milton, Massachusetts. The image shows a dense residential area with many small houses, interspersed with larger industrial buildings and several tall smokestacks. A river or canal winds through the lower left portion of the town. The overall scene depicts a typical early 20th-century industrial town.

# Thank you!

