

Compliance with the Requirements of the MBTA Communities Act

Statement unanimously approved by the Boxborough Housing Board in its meeting of May 27, 2025

The Housing Board urges that tracts that could realistically sustain the construction of multi-family homes be zoned for MBTA Communities Act (Section-3A) compliance. Unfortunately, a strategy that is allowed by the provisions of the MBTA Communities Act is “paper compliance.” In paper compliance, regions in which multifamily housing could not be practically built are offered for Section-3A zoning, thereby allowing a town to comply with Section 3A without having to take any further steps to actualize the construction of new multi-family units. The Housing Board believes this to be an obfuscation of the intended impact of the MBTA Communities Act and the dereliction of our duty to faithfully govern our town in accordance with state laws.

If we step back from the limited objective of maintaining our Subsidized Housing Ratio above 10%, lower prices for a wide range of housing types are needed. Young families and downsizers should not have to choose between a two-bedroom condominium that can’t accommodate them and a McMansion that is larger than they need and too expensive. Housing between these extremes is needed and this is one of the stated goals of the MBTA Communities Act. The entire country faces a growing housing crisis in which not nearly enough middle-class housing is available. Boxborough should not intentionally neglect an opportunity to contribute to a feasible solution to this problem. Our primary objective should always be to provide the services, support, and systems that most benefit residents. Zoning areas in town on which multi-family units could earnestly be built, in compliance with the MBTA Communities Act, is one simple way we can fulfill our collective commitment to public service.

The recent decisions of the Annual Town Meeting complicate matters. The Housing Board supported the use of the 70 – 72 Stow Road property for a Fire Station, because we can use the proceeds from the land to preserve our existing affordable housing stock and because we, as Boxborough residents, recognize the pressing need for a new Fire Station. However, the Stow-Road land would also be ideal for Section-3A zoning. If a new Fire Station at Stow Road is not now viable, we will pursue housing opportunities for the tract, such as Section-3A zoning. If hope remains, we wish to coordinate our efforts with other Town entities, i.e., we wish to avoid finding ourselves at cross purposes with other Town efforts.