



Bridgewater Town Council

Introduced By: Sonya Striggles, Councilor
Date Introduced: 7/15/2025
First Reading: 7/15/2025
Second Reading:
Amendments Adopted:
Third Reading:
Date Adopted:
Date Effective:

Zoning Ordinance Amendment D-FY26-001: MBTA Final Compliance Ordinance for the Town of Bridgewater

ORDERED that pursuant to M.G.L., Chapter 40A, Section 5; the Town Council of the Town of Bridgewater, Massachusetts in Town Council assembled vote to amend the Bridgewater Zoning Ordinance regarding Section 3.1.1.1 (Principal Uses, Applicability of Use Regulations) and Section 9.9.4.2 (MBTA COMMUNITIES OVERLAY DISTRICT (MBTACOD), Requirements) for Final District Compliance with Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) for Section 3A. Currently the Town is Conditional Compliant whereas minor corrections are necessitated to correct issues after review.

These two issues are that of the following:

- The submitted compliance model did not capture the building footprint restriction in Section 9.8.6.5.4 of the Bridgewater Zoning Bylaw or the requirement of only one principal residential structure on a lot in Section 3.1.1.1. Taken together, these restrictions would reduce the estimated unit capacity below the minimum requirement. In discussions with EOHLC, Town staff proposed the solution of allowing more than one principal residential structure on a lot in the District, and EOHLC agrees that this amendment would resolve the issue.
- Section 9.9.4.2 limits residential density to 15 units per acre in the District. This restriction also reduces the District's estimated unit capacity below its minimum requirement. In discussions with EOHLC, Town staff clarified that the intent of this Section was to encourage development at a density of *at least* 15 units per acre, and not to serve as a cap on density. Town staff proposed removing the cap, and EOHLC agrees that its removal would resolve this issue. The following Zoning language are to be amended for full compliance.

Amend 3.1.1.1

NOT FOR ACTION - FIRST READING

3.1 PRINCIPAL USES

3.1.1 Applicability of Use Regulations. Except as provided by law or in this Ordinance, in each district no building, structure, or land shall be used or occupied except for the purposes permitted as set forth in the accompanying Table of Use Regulations. Any use not listed shall be construed to be prohibited.

1. No dwelling shall be erected except on a lot fronting on a street, and there shall be not more than one principal residential **building** on any lot.

becomes

1. No dwelling shall be erected except on a lot fronting on a street, and there shall be not more than one principal residential **use** on any lot

9.9.4 Requirements.

1. Multi-family dwellings shall be permitted by right within both subdistricts of the MBTACOD.
2. Regardless of other standards in the underlying zoning, the allowable residential density for the two MBTACOD districts is 15 units per acre.

becomes

1. Multi-family dwellings shall be permitted by right within both subdistricts of the MBTACOD.
2. Regardless of other standards in the underlying zoning, the allowable residential density for the two MBTACOD districts is **at least 15 units** per acre.

These corrections would allow for multiple multifamily buildings to be allotted on one lot as not to be restricted by one single building per lot as the definition of “Dwelling, Multifamily: A dwelling or building containing three (3) or more separate dwelling units in residential or mixed-use buildings.” already allows for multiple buildings for multifamily uses and would not change.

Additionally, the changes to 9.9.4.2 adding “at least” would resolve the State’s concerns.

Committee Referrals and Dispositions:

Referral(s)	Disposition(s)
•	•
•	•
•	•

Attachments:

None



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING &
LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

Maura T. Healey, Governor ♦ Kimberley Driscoll, Lieutenant Governor ♦ Edward M. Augustus Jr., Secretary

Via Email: brobinson@bridgewaterma.org

April 2, 2025

Blythe Robinson, Acting Town Manager
Town of Bridgewater
66 Central Square
Bridgewater, MA 02324

**Re: Bridgewater –Determination of Conditional Compliance under
Section 3A of the Zoning Act**

Dear Acting Town Manager Robinson:

Congratulations! The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) has reviewed the district compliance application for the Town of Bridgewater's "MBTA Communities Overlay District" (District). After careful review and analysis, EOHLC determined that Bridgewater is **CONDITIONALLY compliant** with Section 3A and 760 CMR 72.00 (the Regulations). EOHLC recognizes the diligent work by the Town of Bridgewater to meet the requirements of the MBTA Communities Law. EOHLC's review of the District identified two issues that the Town has agreed to address in order to remove the condition from this determination.

Please note that this determination of compliance by EOHLC does not qualify Bridgewater for the MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund. You can learn more about this grant program at the [MBTA Communities Catalyst Fund](#) website. This grant program is a part of the [Community One Stop for Growth](#), a single application portal and collaborative review process. Contact EOHLCMBTACommCatalyst@mass.gov with questions. Bridgewater will be eligible for the catalyst fund when it receives a determination of compliance that is not conditional.

Bridgewater is designated as a Commuter Rail Community with 9,342 existing housing units per the 2020 United States Decennial Census. The Town is required to have a district with a minimum land area of 50 acres, and a minimum multi-family unit capacity of 1,401 units. At least twenty percent (20%) of the District's requirements must be met within transit station areas.

EOHLC conducted a thorough review of the application, and made the following preliminary determinations:

1. The District comprises **75.7 acres**.
2. As of right multi-family unit capacity for the District is estimated at **1,902 units**.
3. The gross density of the District is estimated at **27.3 dwelling units per acre**.

4. At least **fifty percent (50%)** of the District is one contiguous land area.
5. **At least twenty percent (20%)** of the required District land area and estimated unit capacity is within transit station areas.
6. There are dimensional zoning requirements not captured by the compliance model that will clearly reduce the District's estimated multi-family unit capacity below its requirement, these requirements require amendment.
7. Taken as a whole, the geography of the District meets the land area, multi-family unit capacity, gross density, and contiguity requirements of Section 3A and the Regulations once the dimensional zoning requirements are amended.

The following table shows the **required** District minimums, the estimates **submitted** in the District application, and estimates as **determined** by EOHLC following its review:

	Required	Submitted	Preliminarily Determined
Land area (acres)	50	75.7	75.7
Multi-family unit capacity (units)	1,401	2,137	1,902
Gross density (units per acre)	15	30.6	27.3
One 50% contiguous area	Yes	Yes	Yes

EOHLC identified the following **discrepancies from the unit capacity and gross density metrics**:

- Unit capacity: Footnote 20 in Bridgewater's Table of Dimensional Requirements requires a minimum amount of open space depending on the size of the lot. The submitted compliance model did not account for this requirement. Accounting for this requirement reduces the estimated unit capacity to 1,902 units from 2,137 units.
- Gross density: Accounting for the adjusted unit capacity in connection with the above reduces the estimated gross density to 27.3 units per acre.

EOHLC identified the following issues that must be resolved:

- The submitted compliance model did not capture the building footprint restriction in Section 9.8.6.5.4 of the Bridgewater Zoning Bylaw or the requirement of only one principal residential structure on a lot in Section 3.1.1.1. Taken together, these restrictions would reduce the estimated unit capacity below the minimum requirement. In discussions with EOHLC, Town staff proposed the solution of allowing more than one principal residential structure on a lot in the District, and EOHLC agrees that this amendment would resolve the issue.
- Section 9.9.4.2 limits residential density to 15 units per acre in the District. This restriction also reduces the District's estimated unit capacity below its minimum requirement. In discussions with EOHLC, Town staff clarified that the intent of this Section was to encourage development at a density of *at least* 15 units per acre, and not to serve as a cap on density. Town staff proposed removing the cap, and EOHLC agrees that its removal would resolve this issue.

EOHLC identified the following **additional factors** that could affect as of right multi-family housing development in the District:

- Bridgewater's Floodplain Overlay District requires a special permit; however the District and the Floodplain Overlay District have minimal overlap and it does not appear to affect the estimated unit capacity.

Please note that continued district compliance is **subject to** the following requirements:

- Bridgewater must submit its amended zoning and an updated compliance model no later than 180 days after the date of this letter.
- EOHLC may establish a system to monitor compliance over time to ensure that approved districts allow multi-family housing in accordance with the criteria under which they were approved.
- EOHLC may rescind a determination of conditional district compliance or require changes to the District to remain in conditional compliance as per Section 72.10 of the Regulations if it becomes aware of additional information not identified in this conditional compliance review that would render the District noncompliant with Section 3A.

EOHLC will consider the Town of Bridgewater's zoning amendments and compliance model if they are received within 180 days after the date of this letter. If you have questions or need further assistance regarding this determination, please contact MBTA Communities Compliance Coordinator Nathan Carlucci, at nathan.carlucci@mass.gov.

Sincerely,



Edward M. Augustus, Jr.
Secretary

cc: Senator William Driscoll, william.driscoll@masenate.gov
Representative Dennis Gallagher, dennis.gallagher@mahouse.gov
Robert Rulli, Town of Bridgewater rrulli@bridgewaterma.org