

Paxton MBTA Zoning

November 21, 2023



Central Massachusetts
Regional Planning Commission

Agenda



- What is Zoning, and why is it important?
- What are the goals of the Housing Chapter of the Paxton Master Plan?
- MBTA Communities
- What is MBTA Zoning?
- What does it mean for Paxton?
- What happens if we don't comply?
- Multifamily housing
- Timeline
- Summary

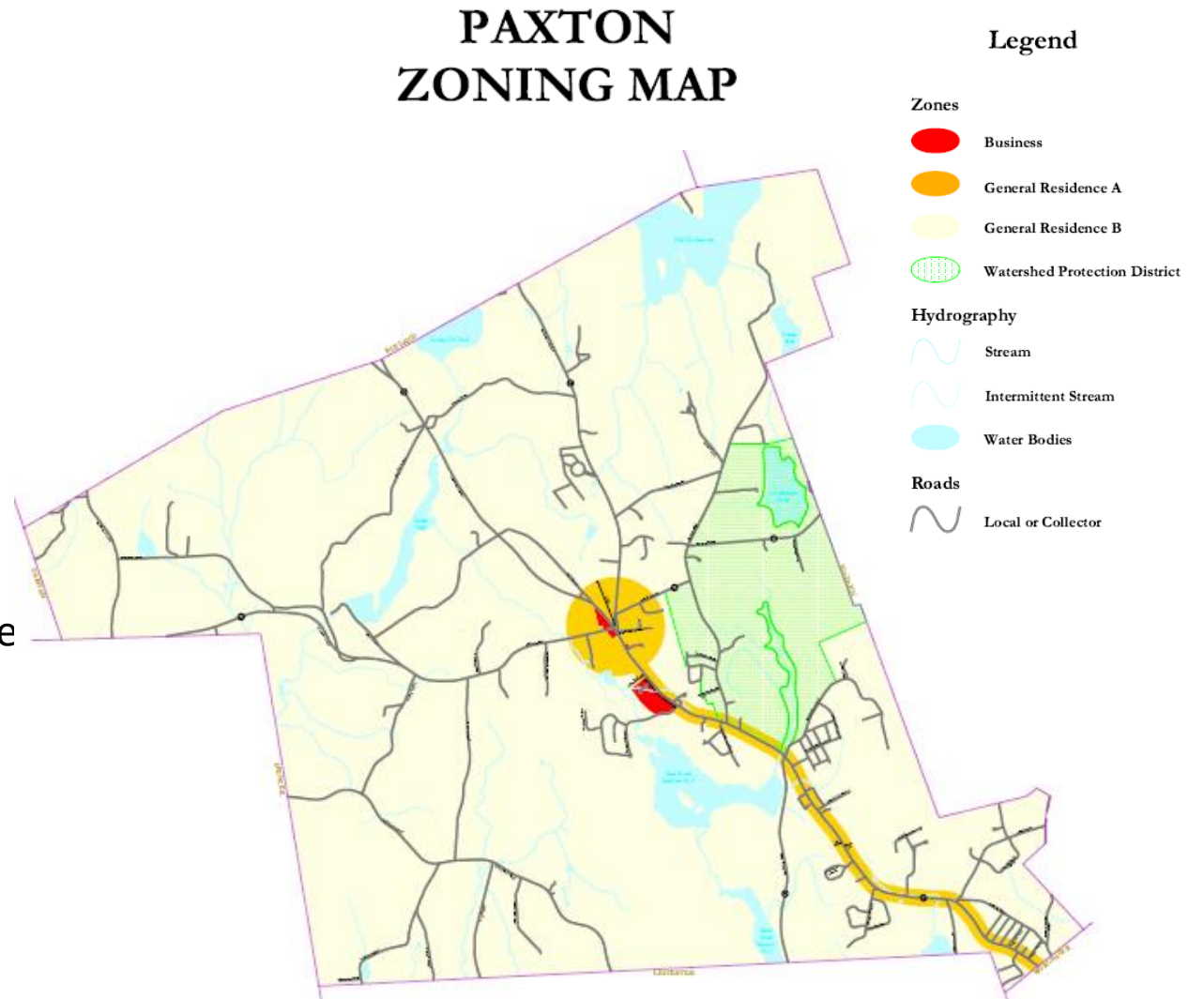
What is Zoning?

Bylaws that regulate what types of uses can be used in different areas of a town:

- Residential – single-family or multifamily
- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Industrial

Zoning also regulates how land can be used to regulate:

- How close someone can build from a property line
- How tall a building can be
- How much parking is needed
- How much open space is needed



Why is zoning important?

Paxton has 3 zoning districts:

- General Residence District B (GRB) also includes Watershed Protection District
- General Residence District A (GRA)
- Business District (B)

- Zoning intends to promote the public's health, safety, and general welfare.
- To lessen congestion
- To encourage housing for all income levels
- To provide clean water, storm-water drainage, sewerage disposal, parks, schools, open space and conservation

Community Master Plan

Housing Goal and Objectives

Housing – Goal

Provide housing opportunities while ensuring that new residential development is created in a controlled and well-planned manner that is consistent with the preservation of Paxton's rural small-town character.

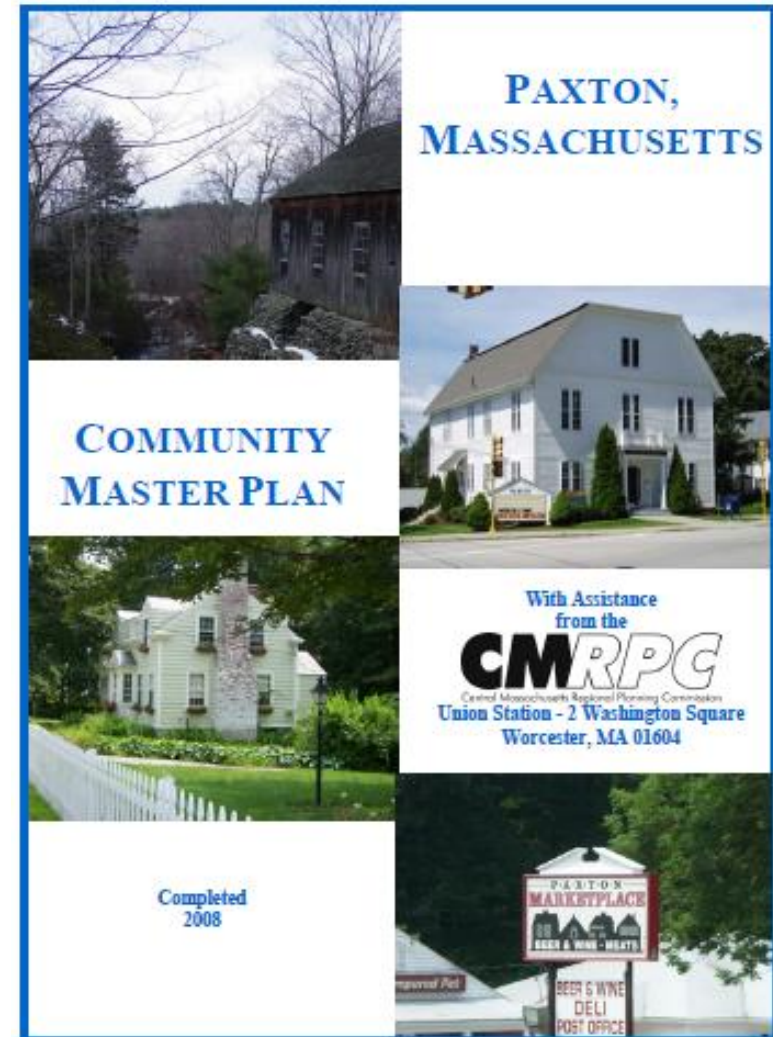
Housing – Objectives

- Provide housing opportunities that will allow residents to remain in Paxton through all stages of life and allow children of residents to establish families in Town.
- Require developers to incorporate open space provisions into new housing projects.
- Ensure that housing regulations and bylaws are kept current to address changing concerns and legal precedents.
- Encourage the use of environmentally sensitive development strategies, including Low Impact Development techniques.

PAXTON, MASSACHUSETTS
2008 COMMUNITY MASTER PLAN

CHAPTER 3

HOUSING



MBTA Communities

MBTA – Massachusetts Bay
Transportation Authority

The Legislation is referred to
as “Section 3A of the Zoning
Act” or “MBTA 3A.”

The Commonwealth of
Massachusetts passed legislation
that requires communities that
are served by, or are adjacent to,
communities with MBTA stations
to have land that is zoned for
multifamily use by right.

MBTA Communities

- 177 communities are included
- Paxton is classified as an Adjacent Small Town

Category	Percentage of total Housing units
Rapid transit community	25%
Community rail community	15%
Adjacent community	10%
Adjacent small town	5%

What does it mean for Paxton?

- As an Adjacent Small Town, Paxton must zone for 5% of the total number of existing housing units as multifamily zoning.
- With 1,689 existing housing units, Paxton is required to provide zoning to support 84 multifamily dwelling units.
- At the required density of 15 dwelling units per acre, this means that a minimum of 5.66 acres will need to be zoning for multifamily by right.
- The district can be located anywhere in town and can be more than one district.

Multifamily can take on many forms



A paraphrase of the definition of multifamily according to the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) is:

- More than 3 units in one building or 2 units in more than 2 buildings.

Benefits of multifamily housing

Provide housing for the “missing middle.”

New growth could lower taxes

1

Older adults can downsize & stay in the community

2

College kids can come home & rent

3

Small businesses can retain employees

4

Create some affordable housing units

5

Grandparents can stay close to their grandchildren



What happens if Paxton does not comply?

Failure to comply with the law results in a loss of eligibility for certain state funding programs

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Planning & Projects	Mass Works Infrastructure Program	Local Capital Projects Fund	Housing Choice Initiative
Rural and Small-Town Development Fund	Massachusetts Downtown Initiative	Urban Agenda	Community Planning Grants
Brownfields Redevelopment Fund	Site Readiness Program	Underutilized Properties Program	Collaborative Workspace Program
Real Estate Services Technical Assistance	Commonwealth Places Programs	Land use Planning Grants	Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity Grants

Timeline

- Deadline for Compliance is December 2025
- Public information session about MBTA requirements
- Evaluate potential MBTA district sites
- Develop a draft plan
- Finalize plan based on community input
- Schedule public hearing
- Schedule for Town Meeting

Summary

- We have established that we need to go through this exercise to see how it might impact and/or benefit the town
- The more input we get, the more we can work to develop something that could work for Paxton
- We have the ability as we craft our zoning to choose the locations, set dimensional controls (lot size, setbacks, lot coverage, etc.), provide design guidelines, parking requirements, and more
- Town Meeting will decide ultimately

Thank you!

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<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/multi-family-zoning-requirement-for-mbta-communities>

