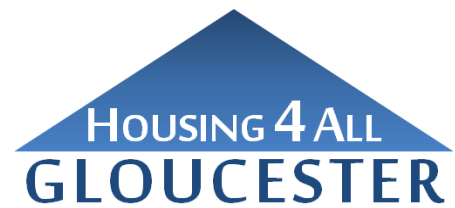


CONSIDERING A WELL-DESIGNED TOD IN COMPLIANCE WITH MA SECTION 3A



Under newly created Section 3A of the Massachusetts Zoning Act, all municipalities that have certain MBTA services are required to have at least one zoning district where multifamily housing will be permitted by right. Housing4All Gloucester (H4AG) believes it is important to consider the potential benefits this may have for a more vibrant and thriving downtown.

For decades the land in and around Gloucester's downtown MBTA commuter rail station has been under-utilized. Empty surface parking lots, vacant and neglected parcels, and unattractive one and two story prefabricated metal buildings dominate the landscape.

Over the past 50 years as Gloucester's (downtown) transit zone has stagnated, a growing recognition of the serious and worsening problem of climate change has emerged across the world. During this same period, an affordable housing crisis has swept the United States – and Massachusetts. Gloucester has been impacted particularly hard by this crisis.

Increasingly, communities across the U.S. with existing public transit infrastructure and a lack of sufficient, decent, safe, affordable housing are now utilizing a design concept known as Transit Oriented Development (TOD) which offers communities a way forward that is less about automobiles and more about mass transit and badly needed housing.

TOD promotes a design approach that utilizes land areas typically close to existing transit nodes, and traditionally blighted from disinvestment, for new and infill development opportunities. It offers communities a way to provide new housing that, with strong and creative efforts, can be located close to amenities, public transportation, and be affordable. The condominium units above the commercial businesses on Railroad Avenue are an example of this.

Compliance affords Gloucester the potential to increase our multifamily housing, and improve our infrastructure downtown and in our transit areas. Noncompliance risks the City's eligibility to receive critical infrastructure funding through MassWorks and the Housing Choice Program, an essential resource for sustaining Gloucester's Housing Authority operational budget at somewhat greater than 11% and thus hurting current residents and existing housing. Communities that have said they will opt out have already been informed of the losses to their housing service's budgets. Local Capital Projects funds will as well be impacted. Opting out is not an option.

H4AG supports the careful examination and creation of well-designed TOD zoning for Gloucester's transit zones – both downtown and West Gloucester, if applicable. However, this **must also include** a way to incentivize new housing so it is genuinely affordable to the average Gloucester family and income. Achieving affordability beyond the stated levels of Section 3A guidelines will not be an easily achieved goal even with Inclusionary Zoning. It will require stronger incentives in order to preserve our existing affordable and multifamily housing and to create new affordable and multifamily housing.

Additionally, we believe TOD offers communities, like Gloucester, an opportunity to create better access to amenities, public transportation, job opportunities, and social connections; and to advance our economic development and climate change efforts. We want to see local efforts that will promote:

1. **More affordable housing!** We support creating incentives in these zones for developers to preserve existing affordable and multifamily housing, and to create new affordable housing. Particularly for households with incomes at or below 60% and 30% AMI but also at 80 % of AMI, the average income of the greatest percentage of Gloucester.
2. New residential **multifamily by-right** and **mixed use** development.

3. **Creative, best use of land** within our existing downtown train station region, which already has housing and a mix of uses, to create additional opportunities for further or redevelopment.
4. **High quality design!** We support zoning for our transit districts that will reward developers who advance thoughtfully designed projects, and which incorporate energy efficient and climate sustainable elements.
5. **Vibrancy!** We support making mass transit services more convenient, and public spaces more pedestrian/bike friendly to reduce car dependency and city parking needs for the people who choose to live, work and shop near our main transit station.

H4AG recognizes that planning and adopting well-designed TOD zoning to comply with Section 3A requires time and thoughtful community engagement. We encourage those who share our commitment to making Section 3A work for Gloucester – those in need of housing, local workers, business owners, civic leaders and others – to speak up, participate in public meetings, and add your advocacy to the discussions. We urge the City to begin the public process soon so that residents have access to factual and accurate information while it works to meet the challenges of complex regulations.