#### **Action Plan for MBTA Communities**

1.7b. Email Address

#### **Description Area** Please read the Section 3A Guidelines before attempting to complete this form. Please note: Action Plan Forms must be submitted by a municipal official with authority to act on behalf of the municipality on matters of zoning, such as the municipal CEO or planning director. Section 1: Identification **Description Area** The Section 3A Guidelines establish zoning metrics that apply uniquely to each MBTA community based on its local transit stations, existing housing stock, population, and developable land. This section of the Action Plan helps to identify the transit stations that determined each community's category. Appendix 1 of the Section 3A Guidelines lists each community's category and minimum multi-family unit capacity requirement. Needham 1.1 MBTA Community Name 1.2. Community Category Commuter rail community 1.3. Multifamily Unit Capacity 1784 Requirement 1.4. Does this municipality have any No MBTA rapid transit stations within its boundaries? Yes 1.5. Does this municipality have any MBTA commuter rail stations within its boundaries? 1.5a. Please list MBTA commuter rail MBTA Station at Needham Center, MBTA Station at Needham Heights, stations that are located within the MBTA Station at Needham Junction, and MBTA Station at Hersey. municipal boundaries 1.6. Does this municipality have any No other MBTA transit stations that are located outside of its municipal boundaries that may have "developable station area" within them? 1.7. Please provide the name of the Lee Newman person filling out this form 1.7a. Title Director of Planning and Community Development

Inewman@needhamma.gov

1.7c. Phone Number	(781) 455-7550 ext. 270
1.8 Please provide the name of the municipal CEO	Kate Fitzpatrick
1.8b Mailing address of municipal CEO	Needham Town Hall 1471 Highland Avenue Needham, MA 02492
1.8c Email address of municipal CEO	kfitzpatrick@needhamma.gov
1.9. Please briefly describe other members of the core team developing the multi-family zoning district.	On the municipal staff side key members participating are: Kate Fitzpatrick, Town Manager, Katie King, Assistant Town Manager, Lee Newman, Director of Planning and Community Development, and Karen Sunnarborg, Housing Specialist.  On the Town Board side both the Planning Board and Select Board will be actively involved. Participating from the Planning Board are: Adam Block, Jeanne McKnight, Paul Alpert, Artie Crocker, and Natasha Espada. Participating from the Select Board are: Marianne Cooley, Nelson Marcus, Matthew Borrelli, Kevin Klein and Heidi Frail.
Section 2: Housing Overview	
2.1. Does this municipality have any established housing related goals or strategies from municipal planning documents, such as a Housing Production Plan, Master Plan, or	Yes

**Economic Development Plan?** 

2.1a. Please briefly describe any relevant strategies, goals, or objectives, and the work that has been done to date.

In October 2022, the Needham Planning Board appointed a working group of representatives of local boards and committees as well as three citizens at large to prepare a Housing Plan. The Plan was completed in December 2023. Since the last housing plan was approved in 2007, the Town had made considerable progress in producing affordable housing by adding 894 new units to its Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) and surpassing the state affordability goal of 10%. Despite reaching the 10% threshold, the Town recognized that significant unmet housing needs remained in the community, particularly in the context of unprecedented housing prices.

In addition to progress in producing affordable housing, the Town also adopted a number of zoning bylaws to better promote affordable housing and smart growth development. Notable among these changes was the introduction of Overlay Districts in several commercial areas of town including Needham Center, the Lower Chestnut and Garden Street areas, and Mixed Use Overlay District (MUOD) in the Highland Avenue/Route 128 area. Needham also established an Elder Services District off of Gould Street to serve the community's increasingly aging population. Most of these Districts require the integration of affordable housing equivalent to one unit for properties of less than ten units and 10% of all units for those with ten or more units. The more recent MUOD, Highland Avenue/128 District, and Neighborhood Business District/128 zoning increased the affordability requirement to 12.5% of all units.

The focus of the recently-completed Housing Plan was to analyze updated information on demographic, economic and housing conditions, identify priority needs, and recommend actions to address these needs, also integrating substantial opportunities for community input. The Housing Plan includes 17 major actions and 8 additional recommendations for further study to better promote housing affordability and diversity in the community. Chief among these proposed strategies is compliance with MBTA Communities Guidelines under Section 3A of the Zoning Act as well as other zoning-related recommendations such as better promoting Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), adopting Town-wide inclusionary zoning, and better controlling teardown activity for example. Other key recommendations included support for the Needham Housing Authority's Preservation and Redevelopment Initiative (PRI) to upgrade its aging and antiquated properties with the prospect of expanding the number of units as well. Additionally, the Plan recommended actions to better integrate greater energy efficiencies in housing and build local and regional support and collaboration for housing production and preservation initiatives.

## 2.2. Is this municipality currently working on any other planning for housing?

Yes

### 2.2a. Please briefly describe the housing work underway.

In addition to making ongoing progress in complying with state MBTA Communities Guidelines under Section 3A, the Town is already involved in the implementation of a few of the proposed strategies included in the Housing Plan including amendments to the Accessory Dwelling Unit bylaw. Presently, the Planning Board is preparing an amended Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) bylaw, to eliminate the requirement of occupancy by family members and caregivers and enable owners to obtain additional income, among other benefits, which is particularly helpful to older owners on fixed incomes. Approval of ADUs within single-family units will be changed from special permit to by-right, however, some units in detached structures may be allowed under special permit. The Planning Board plans to have the new zoning in place for the Annual Town Meeting in 2023.

#### **Section 3: Preliminary Zoning Strategies**

- 3.1. To the best of your knowledge, which of the following zoning strategies is this community most likely to use for compliance? (Select all that apply)
  - a. An existing zoning district or districts that might already comply with the Section 3A Guidelines
  - b. An existing zoning district or districts that must be amended to comply with the Section 3A Guidelines

the possibly-compliant district(s), including any characteristics of existing development or transit options that make it suitable for use as this community's 3A-compliant district. **Optional: Attach any supporting** documents.

**3.1a. Please identify and briefly describe** As calculated by DHCD, at least 90% of Needham's zoning districts must be located within ½ mile of transit based on its total developable area of 1,223 acres near transit stations. This translates into Needham's multi-family zoning districts including at least 108 acres at a density of at least 15 units/acre, which would allow for 1,606 units within ½ mile of a commuter rail station. The additional 178 units that Needham must zone for (minimum multi-family unit capacity of 1,784 units minus 1,606) could be in areas outside of the ½ mile limit.

> Needham has one zoning district that permits multi-family housing as-of-right within ½ mile of transit at the minimum DHCD required density standard of 15 units per acre; that is the A-1 Apartment zoning district where the multi-family density standard is set at 18 units per acre. The major dimensional requirements of Apartment A-1 zones include:

- ? Minimum lot area of 20,000 square feet.
- ? Minimum frontage of 120 feet.
- ? Maximum dwelling units per acre of 18 units.
- ? Maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.5, meaning on a 20,000 square foot lot the maximum square footage that can be built is 10,000 square feet.
- ? Minimum setback (front/side/rear) of 20/20/20 feet.
- ? Maximum height of 3 stories or 40 feet.

Needham has three A-1 Apartment districts, namely, Rosemary Lake Apartments and Rosemary Ridge Condominiums (14 acres), the Highlands (4 acres) and Hamilton Highlands (4 acres) within ½ mile of transit for a total of 22 acres. Two of these districts if left as independent entities would fall below the 5-acre minimum land area requirement found in the DHCD regulations and would need to be adjusted. The multi-family build-out density for the 22 acres located in the A-1 Apartment district totals 396 dwelling units. A map showing the ½ mile radius distance around each of Needham's commuter rail stations and the zoning districts located within those radii (including the A-1 District) is attached.

As noted above, DHCD guidelines also allow portions of the multi-family district to be located further away from transit, "provided that such areas are easily accessible to the transit station based on existing street patterns and pedestrian connections". Within this category is the A-1 Apartment district located at 31 Hamlin Lane, where the as-of-right multi-family density standard is set at 18 units per acre. This district comprises the Hamlin Condominium development which contains 6 acres of land with an associated multi-family build-out of 108 units.

In summary, 28 acres of land are currently zoned within the A-1 District with an as-of-right multi-family density standard of 18 units per acre for a total of 504 units leaving an unmet requirement of 1,380 units (minimum multi-family unit capacity of 1,784 units minus 504).

3.1b. Please select the changes that may be necessary for the existing district to comply. Optional: Attach any supporting documents that describe this district.

District boundaries
Use schedule
Dimensional regulations
Parking requirements

#### **Explanation:**

The Needham Housing Plan completed in December of 2022 detailed a group of recommended zoning strategies to achieve compliance with the MBTA Communities Act under Section 3A. It is these recommended strategies as detailed in the Housing Plan which the Town will be pursuing. These recommendations involve rezoning some areas currently zoned for single-family or 2-family residence to Apartment A-1, changing zoning to A-1 provisions in business areas that already allow multi-family housing as well as introducing this use in some business and industrial districts that do not currently permit multi-family residential uses. The major dimensional requirements of Apartment A-1 zones include:

- ? Minimum lot area of 20,000 square feet.
- ? Minimum frontage of 120 feet.
- ? Maximum dwelling units per acre of 18 units.
- ? Maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 0.5, meaning on a 20,000 square foot lot the maximum square footage that can be built is 10,000 square feet.
- ? Minimum setback (front/side/rear) of 20/20/20 feet.
- ? Maximum height of 3 stories or 40 feet.

The recommendations for rezoning are focused largely in the areas along the Highland Avenue to Chestnut Street corridor that are not only near transit but also where higher density development already exists.

Recommendations for specific zoning by-law changes under consideration are listed below. Further study will be required to confirm that the final dimensional limits controlling district density will be able to deliver the gross density (units/acre) required by 3A Guidelines. (Please see attached file which contains annotated zoning maps from the Town's Housing Plan for further review of the proposed zoning changes):

Needham Heights District (Group 1):

Implement Apartment A-1 zoning in certain areas now zoned SRB, or GR, including locations of non-conforming existing multi-family (MF) uses.

Apartment A-1 - rezone parcels within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of Needham Heights station, now zoned SRB:

- 1a. From Hamilton Highlands (Apartment A-1) along Highland Avenue south to Hunnewell Street;
- 1b. Avery Park Condominium and farther south along Highland Avenue to Hunnewell Street and including the Methodist Church at Hunnewell and Highland;
- 1c. Extend existing Apartment A-1 zoning across Hillside Avenue and along the northerly side of Rosemary Street adjacent to the Industrial District and up to the MBTA right-of-way (see item 1g. below) and beyond the ROW to Highland Avenue to include Needham Library (see item 1g. below and Christ Episcopal Church ( see item 1J. and 6b. below);

Apartment A-1 - rezone parcels within ½ mile of Needham Heights station, now zoned GR:

1d. Convert Hillside School and the rear portions of 5 lots of the Industrial district on Crescent Road that abut the Hillside School to Apartment A-1; 1e. Convert Brookline Rug parcel to Apartment A-1, but the current use may remain as a prior non-conforming use. It has connection to both Hunnewell and Crescent Road and can be part of a consolidated MF district with the rest of new Apartment A-1 and the Industrial District that is to be rezoned to allow MF by-right as a use (see item 1f. below);

Amend current Industrial Districts within ½ mile of Needham Heights transit station to allow MF as an additional allowed use with Apartment A-1 dimensional limits with a minimum 10,000 sf lot size.

- 1f. Add Multi-family housing, at A-1 dimensions, to the uses allowed by right in the Industrial District along Crescent Road;
- 1g. Add Multi-family housing, at A-1 dimensions, to the uses allowed by right in the Industrial District between Hillside Avenue and the MBTA right-of-way and between West and Rosemary Streets;

Amend current Hillside Avenue Business District within ½ mile of transit station to allow MF by-right and use Apartment A-1 dimensional limits with a minimum 10,000 sf lot size. Allow mixed-use option by Special Permit.

1h. Hillside Avenue Business from both sides of the Hunnewell intersection south to the south side of West Street;

Amend current Avery Square Business District within 1/2 mile of transit station. Adjust/increase current height and story limits where noted. Changes to limits are to be appropriate to their immediate context within their district.

1i. Avery Square Business - increase height from 35 ft. to 38 ft. for mixed-use MF allowed by special permit;

Expand General Residence over SRB area along the Highland Avenue corridor to allow 2-family and SF conversions to 2-family.

1j. Both sides of Highland Avenue from Rosemary Street to Avery Square Business District (but see item 1c. above and 6B. below related to rezoning Christ Church to Apartment A-1).

Needham Center District (Group 2):

Amend and extend current Business District within ½ mile of transit to allow MF by-right and use Apartment A-1 dimensional limits with a minimum 10,000 sf lot size. Allow, by special permit, mixed-use MF to 48 ft. & 4

stories with 4th floor setback.

2a. Extend Business District north to Rosemary Street to include portion of Sudbury Farms parcel now zoned SRB;

2b. Business District along Highland Avenue from May Street north to Rosemary Street to include all of Sudbury Farms parcel;

Implement Apartment A-1 zoning in certain areas now zoned SRB, GR or Industrial or in locations of non-conforming existing multi-family (MF) uses.

Apartment A-1 - rezone parcels within ½ mile of Needham Center station, now zoned SRB:

- 2c. St. Joseph School strip along May Street;
- 2d. Stephen Palmer former school leased by Town for multi-family housing;
- 2f. YMCA site on Great Plain Avenue next to Greene's Field;
- 2g. 888 Great Plain Avenue (former nursery/garden center);
- 2h. Baptist and Christian Science Church parcels on Great Plain Avenue, near corner of Warren Street;

Apartment A-1 - rezone parcels within ½ mile of Needham Center station, now zoned GR:

2e. Lots on Pickering Place together with a portion of St. Joseph School parcel;

2i. Consolidate a portion of the Denmark Lane MF housing south of the Needham Center Overlay District, currently zoned GR, and combine it with the small Industrial district along the MBTA right-of-way proposed for rezoning to

Apartment A-1 that is also part of the Denmark Lane MF project area (see item 2j. below);

Apartment A-1 - rezone parcels within ½ mile of Needham Center station, now zoned Industrial:

2j. Convert the small Industrial district along the MBTA right-of-way to be combined with the front portion of the parcel being rezoned from GR (see item 2i. above) that is also part of the Denmark Lane housing project area.

Amend current Center Business and Overlay District B and Garden Street Overlay District within ½ mile of transit. Adjust/increase current height and story limits where noted. Changes to limits are to be appropriate to their immediate context within their district.

2k. Increase height limits in Needham Center Overlay District B for mixed-use MF to 48 ft. & 4 stories with 4th floor setback. No stand-alone MF is allowed in the district;

2m. Rezone Garden Street Overlay District by changing stand-alone MF to

be allowed by right, rather than special permit, using the existing dimensional limits.

Needham Junction District Group 3):

Amend current Chestnut Street Business District and Lower Chestnut Street Overlay District within ½ mile of transit to allow stand-alone MF by-right, and mixed-use with MF by special permit. Adjust/increase current height and story limits where noted. Changes to limits are to be appropriate to their immediate context within their district.

3a. Chestnut Street Business and Lower Chestnut Street Overlay District changed to allow stand-alone MF using Apartment A-1 dimensional limits with a minimum 10,000 sf lot size, with 4-story/48 ft. limits allowed by special permit for mixed-use MF in the Lower Chestnut Street Overlay District;

3b. Extend Chestnut Street Business and Lower Chestnut Street Overlay Districts to include Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) property on Lincoln Street;

Implement Apartment A-1 zoning in certain areas now zoned SRB, or Chestnut Street Business Districts or in locations of non-conforming existing non single-family (SF) uses. Use Apartment A-1 dimensional limits.

Apartment A-1 - rezone parcels within ½ mile of Needham Junction station, now zoned Chestnut Street Business, Lower Chestnut Street Overlay District and SRB:

3c. Rezone the Hartney Greymont site (now partly Chestnut Street Business/Lower Chestnut Street Overlay District and partly SRB) to be Apartment A-1 to allow MF without allowing mixed-use, with the current use allowed to remain as a prior non-conforming use.

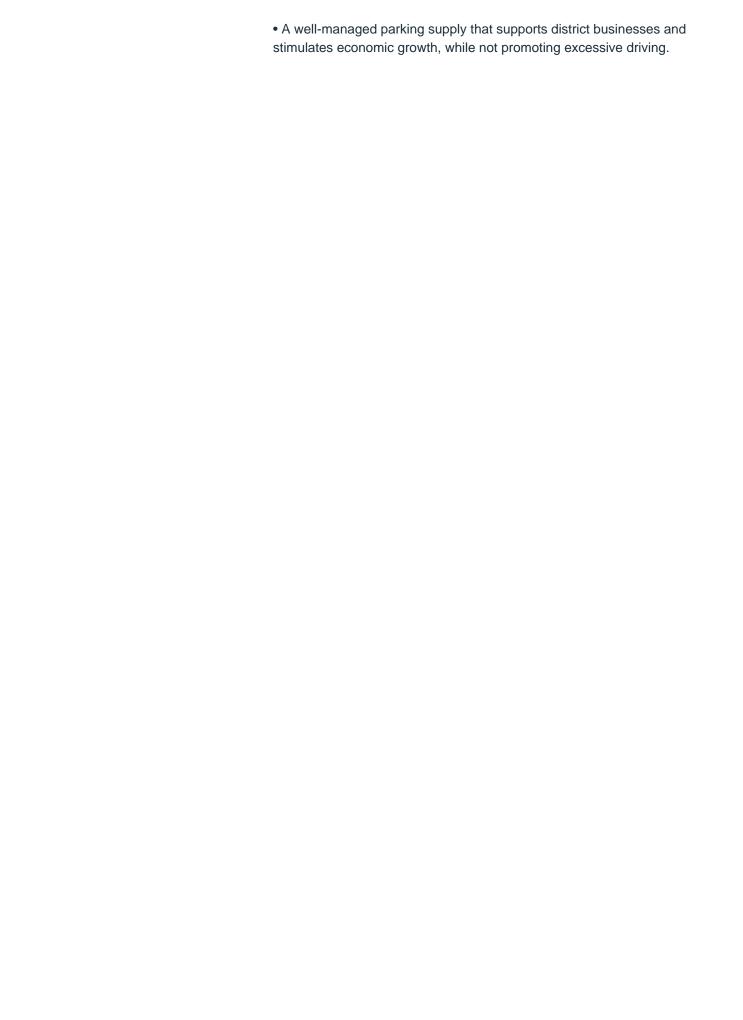
Zoning changes will also reconsider parking ratios for mixed-use and multi-family projects within the overlay districts that are also within ½ mile of transit stations. These changes will be informed by the Parking Study that has been commissioned by the Select Board and is being conducted by Stantec as well as the parking study that is being conducted by the WestMetro HOME Consortium in cooperation with MAPC.

As Needham's site plan review process is currently based on major site plan review/special permit projects, the Town will further revisit these standards to determine appropriate changes given the relevancy of site plan review to projects that will be a result of Section 3A rezoning.

3.2. What non-housing characteristics are important for this community to consider in its 3A zoning district?

The non-housing goals important to the Town of Needham in the implementation of a 3A zoning district are detailed below. The Town's desired development outcome from implementation of a 3A district are as follows:

- A "complete" mixed-use neighborhood that is economically and socially sustainable- providing quality jobs, diverse housing opportunities, and a complementary mix of retail, dining, entertainment, and office uses.
- A public realm comprised of a safe and attractive system of streets, plazas, and park spaces that supports an active pedestrian environment and provides an attractive physical framework that seamlessly integrates a diverse array of existing and future buildings.
- An attractive, well-designed private realm that mixes new and old buildings in a compact pattern and scale of development that creates a well-defined, human-scale public environment and supports a dynamic mix of retail and complementary uses.
- A multi-pronged approach to sustainability that integrates land use, mobility, and design strategies to minimize environmental impact, reduce resource consumption, and prolong economic and social cohesiveness and viability, including policies that: promote compact mixed use development that creates more local jobs and housing within close walking distance; prioritize the creation of a retail district that will reduce residents' need to travel to other communities to meet their shopping needs, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions for local trips; and encourage transit and alternate modes of travel that reduce miles traveled via personal vehicle for those traveling from areas outside the local area to visit shopping destinations. In addition, guidelines and development standards for the district that promote green development strategies for new buildings, "green streets" and low-impact development for public infrastructure, and the reuse of existing buildings that will reduce the consumption of energy.
- A balanced and complete circulation network that accommodates the internal and external transportation needs of the area by promoting walking, biking, and transit while continuing to serve automobile traffic.
- Quality pedestrian facilities and amenities that create a safe and aesthetically pleasing environment that encourages walking and accommodates increased pedestrian activity.
- A bicycle network with safe and efficient connections to major destinations within the district and throughout the Town of Needham.
- Efficient but managed vehicle access in the district.
- Enhanced efficiency and effectiveness of transit in the district.



#### **Section 4: Action Plan Timeline**

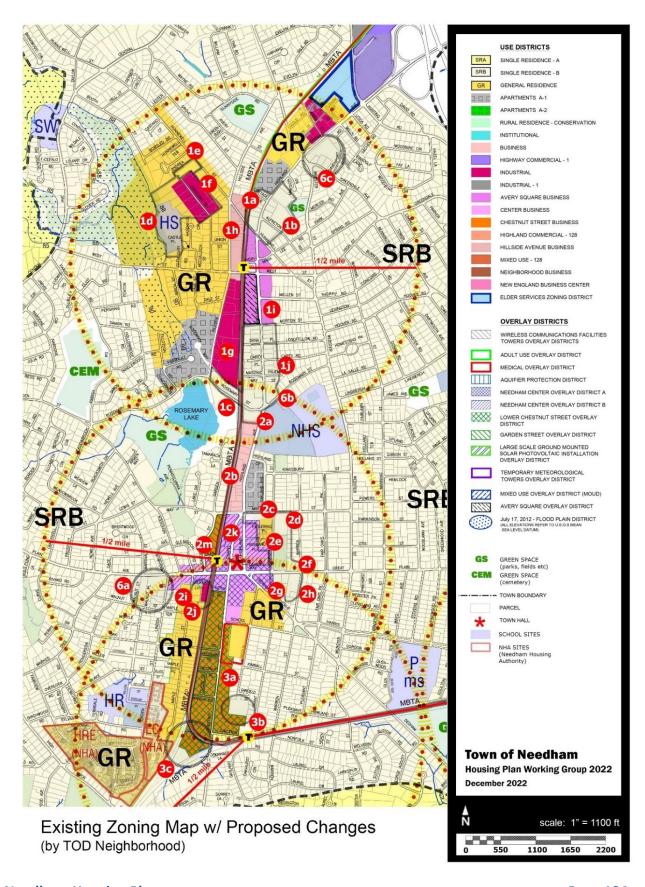
Description Area	This section creates a framework to input preliminary plans for a zoning adoption process. On the table below, please use Column 1 (from the left) to describe a task, Column 2 to input a start date, and Column 3 to input a finish date. Every community must provide a timeline for the below-listed tasks.  Additional space is provided for any other tasks that a community wishes to list. DHCD will review proposed timelines for feasibility before approving an Action Plan. Public outreachDeveloping zoning Applying DHCD's compliance model to test for density and unit capacityHolding planning board hearings Holding legislative sessions and adopt compliant zoning Submit District Compliance application to DHCD
Description Area	Task
Description Area	Start
Description Area	Finish
Short Answer	Conduct Community Workshop #1 to present DHCD requirements and the Planning Board's initial proposal to the community. Obtain public feedback. Staff/consultant to apply an updated proposal through DHCD's compliance model. Staff/consultant to create initial build out projections, an initial fiscal impact analysis (will include school enrollment projections), and a potential traffic study.
	Mar 01, 2023
	Apr 30, 2023
Short Answer	Conduct Community Workshop #2 to present preliminary proposal/options, including the preliminary build-out projections and fiscal impact analysis.  Obtain public feedback. Staff/consultant to run proposal through DHCD compliance model.
	May 01, 2023
	Jun 30, 2023
Short Answer	Staff/consultant to conduct build-out and fiscal impact analyses, including the drafting of zoning language.
	Jul 01, 2023
	Aug 31, 2023
Short Answer	Conduct Community Workshop #3 to present the final proposal and all analyses. Obtain public feedback.
	Sep 01, 2023

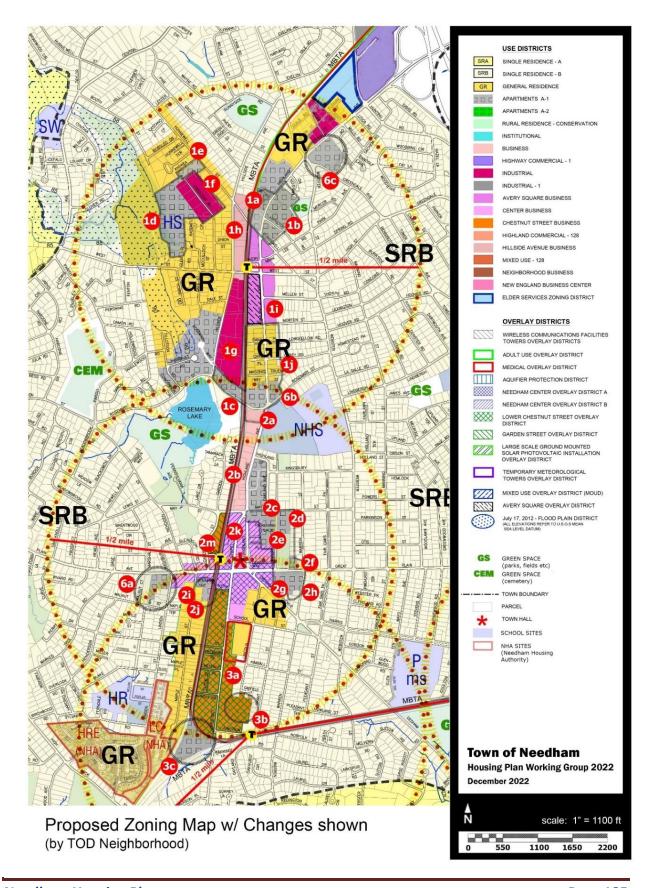
#### Sep 30, 2023

Short Answer	Send proposed zoning to DHCD for review (90-day review period), ideally before hearing needs to be noticed.
	Sep 01, 2023
	Oct 31, 2023
Short Answer	Advertise zoning. Hold Planning Board hearings.
	Jan 01, 2024
	Feb 29, 2024
Short Answer	Town Meeting Sessions to Adopt Zoning.
	May 01, 2024
	Oct 31, 2024
Short Answer	Submit District Compliance Model.
	Nov 01, 2024
	Dec 31, 2024

# Appendix 7.1 Needham Zoning Maps with Proposed Zoning Changes (Maps focused on MBTA Station Neighborhoods)

The following Needham Zoning maps have been created to graphically represent the proposed zoning map changes described in the zoning lists on pages 36-38 as part of complying with MBTA Communities Guidelines. The new maps show that the majority of the zoning reform is concentrated in the Needham neighborhoods geographically located near three of the MBTA transit stations that are part of the Chestnut Street / Highland Avenue north / south corridor. This zone, or "spine", includes the more densely built parts of town with a mix of commercial, institutional, municipal and residential uses with a range of lower to higher density buildings types.

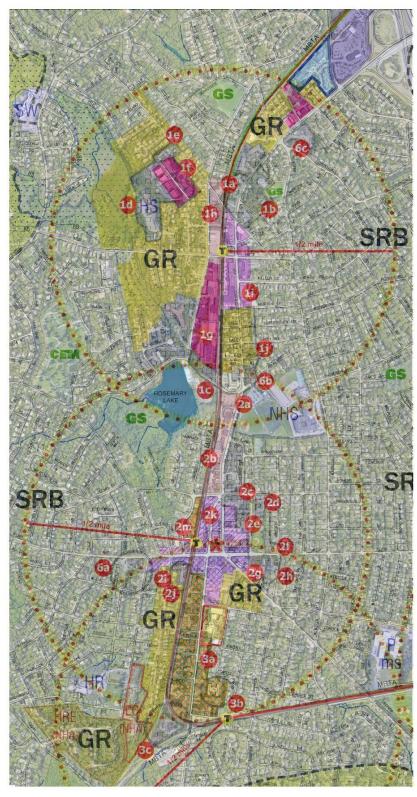






MBTA District study - existing aerial





MBTA District study - existing aerial w zoning overlay



#### Appendix 7.2

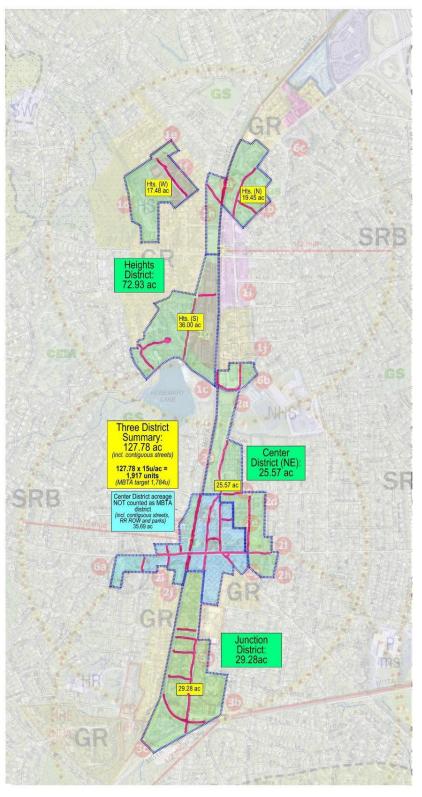
## MBTA District Concept Map of MBTA Station Neighborhoods (Test fit of transit district acreage required in MBTA Guidelines)

The following map reflects a preliminary test fit analysis of possible "contiguous" land area assembly that could meet the criteria for an MBTA District to be created within ½ mile of three of the MBTA Stations along Needham's existing higher density mixed-used "spine", also referred to as the Chestnut Street / Highland Avenue corridor. The "green highlighted" areas illustrate three neighborhoods around the Needham Heights, Needham Center and Needham Junction stations that are closely related to the previous proposed zoning maps, and the zoning lists on pages 36-38, that are organized around the three MBTA stations as:

- **Group 1** (Needham Heights)
- **Group 2** (Needham Center)
- Group 3 (Needham Junction)

A brief description of the MBTA criteria used in creating this test fit include the following requirements to define a compliant transit neighborhood (see MBTA criteria summarized on pages 33-35):

- Implement zoning reform across areas large enough to accommodate by-right housing capable of producing a total number of new mullti-family housing units equal to 15% of the total housing units in Needham (11,891u x .15 = 1,784 units)
- Acreage dedicated to MBTA district zoning must accommodate multi-family housing with a minimum density of 15 units per acre. This translates to approximately 120 acres (1,784U / 15U per acre = 118.9 acres)
- Create multiple MBTA districts that combine to accommodate 90% of the required acreage, or approximately 107 of 120 acres, within ½ mile of a transit station
- Within these transit districts there is a minimum requirement of 25 contiguous acres for a minimum dedicated area of 50 acres. Since these districts are calculated at a density of 15 units per acre, Needham must have 120 acres zoned to meet the transit district requirements, of which 60 acres must be contiguous.



TOD Neighborhood study - MBTA Districts



## Use Districts Within 1/2 Mile of Rail Stations

