

Housing Needham (HONE) Advisory Group

Thursday, February 29, 2024

7:00 p.m.

Charles River Room

Public Services Administration Building, 500 Dedham Avenue

AND

Virtual Meeting using Zoom

Meeting ID:

834 7583 6726

(Instructions for accessing below)

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Direct Link to meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83475836726>

- I. Welcome and Meeting Goals, *Heidi Frail and Natasha Espada, Co-Chairs*
- II. Overview of Site Plan Review and Special Permit regulatory framework. *Christopher Heep, Town Counsel*
- III. Presentation, selection and approval of final base scenario, *Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates*
- IV. Presentation, selection and approval of final add-on scenario for MBTA Communities Compliance, *Eric Halvorsen, RKG Associates*
- V. Next Steps

Housing Needham (HONE) Advisory Group

Heidi Frail	Select Board (co-chair)
Natasha Espada	Planning Board (co-chair)
Kevin Keane	Select Board
Jeanne McKnight	Planning Board
Joshua Levy	Finance Committee
Ronald Ruth	Land Use Attorney
William Lovett	Real Estate Developer
Liz Kaponya	Renter
Michael Diener	Citizen at Large

Housing Needham (HONE) Advisory Group Meeting

Town of Needham, Massachusetts

February 29, 2024

INFORMATION PACKET



HOUSING NEEDHAM (HONE)

TOWN VISIONING FOR MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING

This packet contains the background information on the existing zoning, overlay district zoning, the Base Scenario and an Alternative Base Scenario, and the Bonus Scenario. The information in this packet will provide you with the key zoning parameters that the MBTA Compliance Model utilizes and a map (where applicable) to better understand the extents of each zoning district.

Existing Zoning Parameters

	Apartment A-1	Business	Avery Square Business	Chestnut Street District	Center Business	Hillside Avenue Business	General Residence	Industrial
Max Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Lot Size	20,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Height (Stories)	3 (40 feet)	3 (40 feet)	2.5 (35 feet)	2.5 (35 Feet)	2.5 (35 feet)	2.5 (35 feet)	2.5 (35 feet)	3 (40 feet)
FAR	0.5	N/A	0.7	0.7	1.0	0.7	N/A	N/A
Max Blg Coverage	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Max Lot Coverage	N/A	25%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	30% - 35%	60%
Minimum Open Space (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Open Space per Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Front Setback	25	10 or 20	10 to 15	10 or 20	3 or Avg. of Setbacks	20	20	10 or 20
Rear Setback	20	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	20	N/A
Side Setbacks	20	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	14	N/A
Residential Parking per Unit	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maximum Dwelling Units per Acre	18	N/A	18	18	18	18	8	N/A
Maximum Dwelling Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

***Note that multifamily housing is not permitted in the Business and Industrial Districts under existing zoning.**

Existing Zoning Modeled Capacity

The Consultant Team was asked to model the zoning capacity of the existing zoning districts that align with the boundaries in Scenario A to better understand the number of units that the zoning could support today.

To do this, the Consultant Team (in consultation with Town Staff) made the following assumptions in the MBTA Compliance Model:

- Models the base zoning parameters for Avery Square, Apartment A-1, and Hillside Avenue.
- Models the overlay zoning parameters for Chestnut Hill Business Overlay.
- Does not model Business or Industrial as they do not currently allow multifamily housing at all.
- Uses a parking ratio of 1.5 as this is what the existing zoning requires.

Summary Table

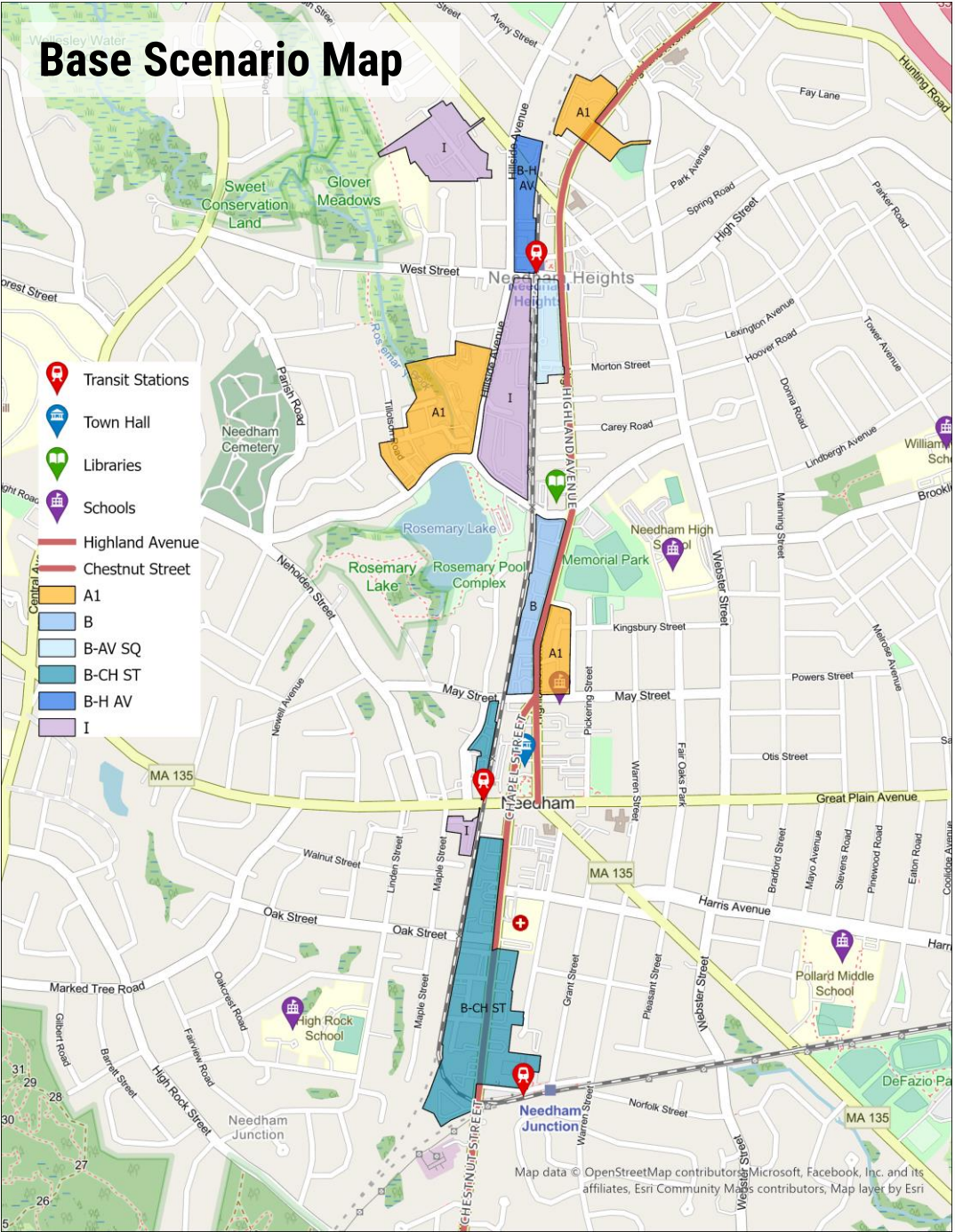
Data Metric	District 1	District 2	District 3	District 4	District 5	Totals
District Name	A1	A-1 Avery Hamilton	B-AV SQ	B-CH ST	B-H-AV	
District Acreage <i>(see note)</i>	23.1	6.6	4.3	34.3	7.1	75.3
District Density Denominator <i>(see note)</i>	20.8	6.6	4.3	34.3	7.1	73.0
Final Unit Capacity per District	433	103	77	1,112	46	1,771
DU/AC	20.8	15.6	17.9	32.5	6.5	24.3

Overlay District Zoning Parameters

	Avery Square Overlay	Lower Chestnut Street Overlay	Garden Street Overlay	Needham Center Overlay A	Needham Center Overlay B
Max Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Lot Size	10,000	15,000	15,000	10,000	10,000
Height (Stories)	Up to 4 Stories by SP, limited to 35% of total roof area.	3 or 3+1	2+1 (37 feet)	3 or 3+1	2+1 (37 feet)
FAR		1.5 or 2 by SP	1.0 to 1.2	2.0 or 3.0	2.0 or 3.0
Max Blg Coverage	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Max Lot Coverage	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Open Space (%)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Open Space per Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Front Setback	10 to 15	5	10	0	0
Rear Setback	N/A	25' if abutting MBTA ROW	10	50' if abutting residential district	50' if abutting residential district
Side Setbacks	N/A	25' if abutting MBTA ROW	10	50' if abutting residential district	50' if abutting residential district
ResidentialParking per Unit	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maximum Dwelling Units per Acre	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maximum Dwelling Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Base Scenario Map

Metric	Number
Gross Acres	96.2
DDD Acres	93.9
Units	1,703
DU/AC	18.1



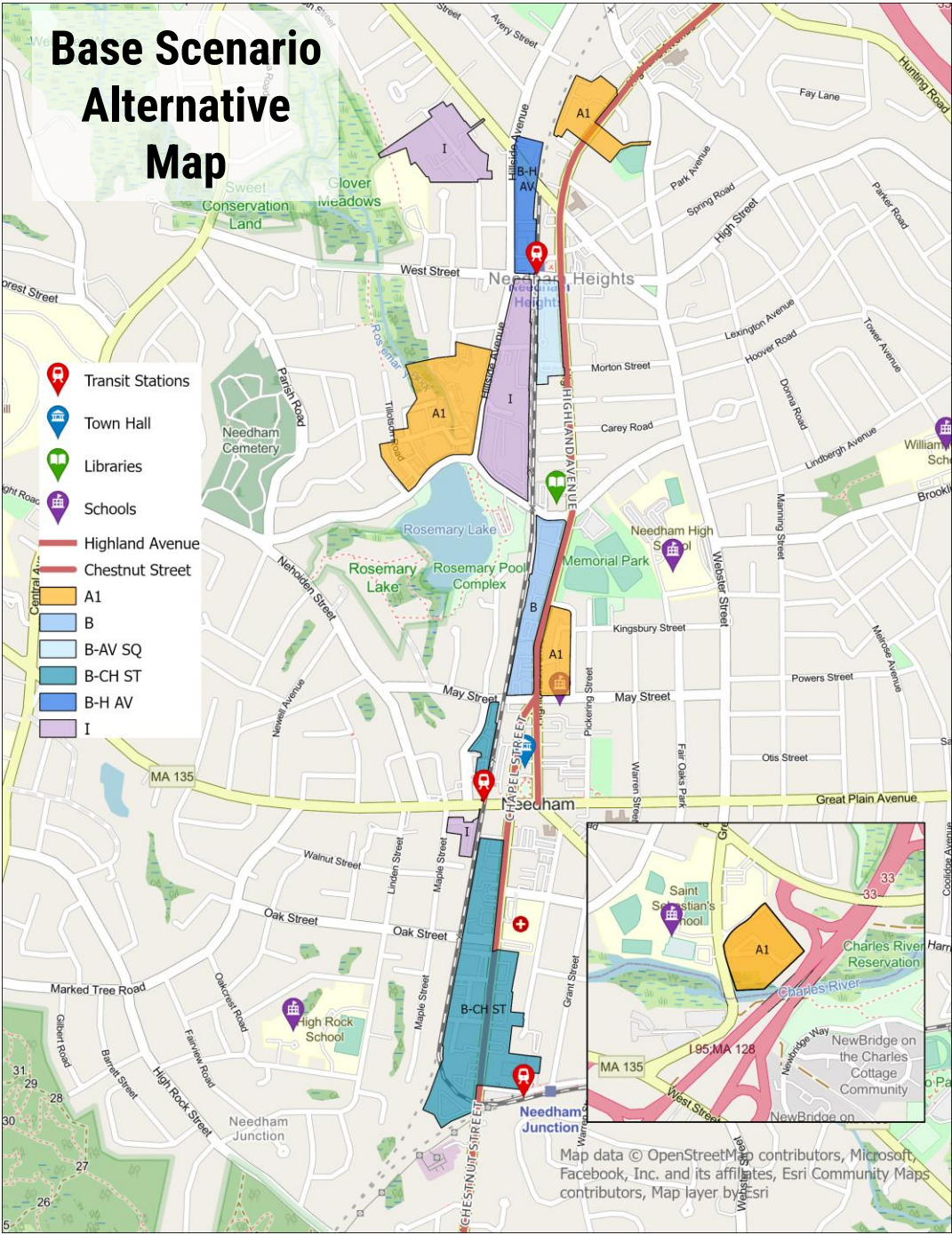
Base Scenario Zoning Parameters

	Apartment A-1	Business	Avery Square Business	Chestnut Street Business	Hillside Avenue Business	Industrial
Max Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Lot Size	20000	10000	10,000	10000	10000	10000
Height (Stories)	3	3	3	3	3	3
FAR	0.5	N/A	1.0	0.7	0.5	0.5
Max Blg Coverage	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Max Lot Coverage	N/A	25%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Open Space (%) - MBTA Model Requirement	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
Open Space per Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Front Setback	25	10	10	25	25	25
Rear Setback	20	N/A	0	20	20	20
Side Setbacks	20	N/A	0	20	20	20
ResidentialParking per Unit	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maximum Dwelling Units per Acre	18	N/A	N/A	18	N/A	N/A
Maximum Dwelling Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Base Scenario Alternative Map

This map adds in the Charles Court Apartment A-1 district.

Metric	Number
Gross Acres	104.0
DDD Acres	100.4
Units	1,844
DU/AC	18.4



Base Scenario Alternative Zoning Parameters

	Apartment A-1	Business	Avery Square Business	Chestnut Street Business	Hillside Avenue Business	Industrial
Max Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Lot Size	20,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Height (Stories)	3	3	3	3	3	3
FAR	0.5	N/A	1.0	0.7	0.5	0.5
Max Blg Coverage	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Max Lot Coverage	N/A	25%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Open Space (%) - MBTA Model Requirement	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
Open Space per Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Front Setback	25	10	10	25	25	25
Rear Setback	20	N/A	0	20	20	20
Side Setbacks	20	N/A	0	20	20	20
Residential Parking per Unit	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maximum Dwelling Units per Acre	18	N/A	N/A	18	N/A	N/A
Maximum Dwelling Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Base Scenario Options Compared

Base Scenario Results

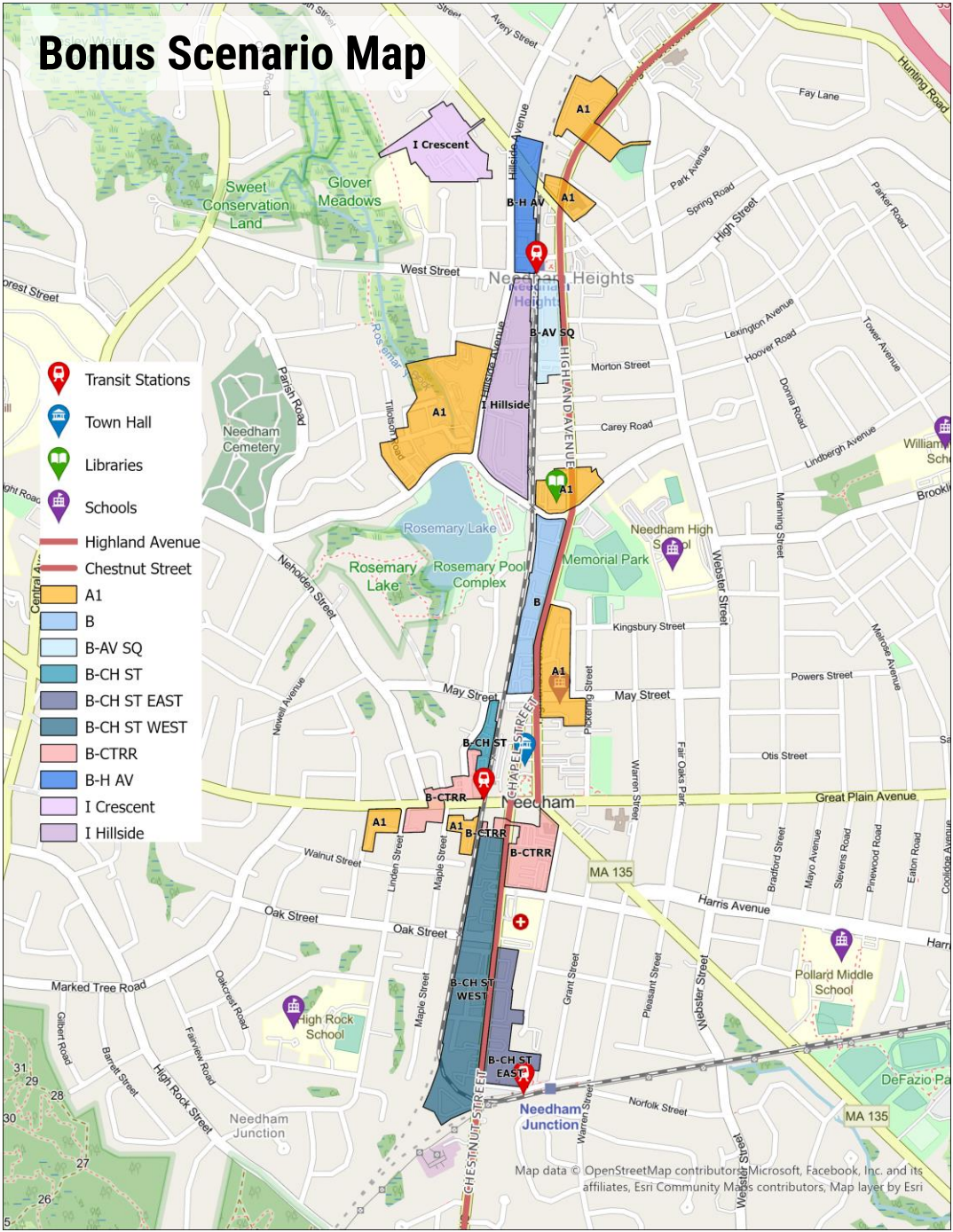
Model Outputs	Apartment 1	Business	Avery Square Business	Chestnut Street Business	Hillside Ave	Industrial	Total
Gross Acreage	26.84	7.12	4.28	28.36	5.50	24.10	96.20
DDD Acreage	24.54	7.12	4.28	28.36	5.50	24.10	93.90
Unit Capacity	385	210	187	370	56	495	1,703
DU/AC	15.7	29.5	43.7	13.0	10.2	20.5	18.1

Base Scenario Alternative Results

Model Outputs	Apartment 1	Business	Avery Square Business	Chestnut Street Business	Hillside Ave	Industrial	Charles Court A-1	Total
Gross Acreage	26.84	7.12	4.28	28.36	5.50	24.10	7.80	104.00
DDD Acreage	24.54	7.12	4.28	28.36	5.50	24.10	6.49	100.39
Unit Capacity	385	210	187	370	56	495	141	1,844
DU/AC	15.7	29.5	43.7	13.0	10.2	20.5	21.7	18.4

Metric	Existing Zoning	Base Scenario	Base Scenario Alt
Gross Acres	75.3	96.20	104.00
DDD Acres	73	93.90	100.39
Units	1,771	1,703	1,844
DU/AC	24.3	18.1	18.4

Metric	Number
Gross Acres	114.87
DDD Acres	112.49
Units	4,160
DU/AC	37.0



Bonus Scenario Zoning Parameters

	Apartment A-1	Business	Avery Square Business	Chestnut Street East Business	Chestnut Street West Business	Chestnut Street/Garden Street	Center Business – Residential	Hillside Avenue Business	Industrial – Crescent	Industrial - Hillside
Max Units per Lot	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Lot Size	20,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Height (Stories)	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	3	3	4
FAR	1.0	2.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	0.75	1.0
Max Blg Coverage	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Max Lot Coverage	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Minimum Open Space (%) - MBTA Model Requirement	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%	20%
Open Space per Dwelling Unit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Front Setback	25	10	10	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Rear Setback	20	0	0	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
Side Setbacks	20	0	0	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD
ResidentialParking per Unit	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Maximum Dwelling Units per Acre	36	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	24	24	36

Setback requirements to be worked out as zoning discussion progresses.

Bonus Scenario Results

Model Outputs	Apartment 1	Business	Avery Square Business	Chestnut Street East Business	Chestnut Street West Business	Chestnut Street Business/Garden Street Overlay	B-CTRR	Hillside Ave Business	Industrial - Crescent	Industrial - Hillside	TOTALS
Gross Acreage	38.42	7.12	4.29	7.30	17.77	1.85	9.95	5.50	8.70	13.97	114.87
DDD Acreage	36.12	7.12	4.29	7.30	17.77	1.85	9.95	5.50	8.62	13.97	112.49
Unit Capacity	1,089	485	187	412	912	75	264	62	184	490	4,160
DU/AC	30.1	68.1	43.6	56.4	51.3	40.5	26.5	11.3	21.3	35.1	37.0

To: HONE

I am writing to express my concern with the rezoning of the Avery Square Business District after watching the video of the February 15 2024 meeting of HONE and reviewing the meeting packet. I believe that HONE is making a mistake by even proposing a rezoning of this parcel given recent history, the current status of the parcel and zoning, and comments/actions by the developer and their attorneys.

For those not familiar, the Needham Observer provides a quick refresher:

<https://needhamobserver.com/former-carters-building-lies-dormant-amid-stalled-negotiations/>

- The town has already rezoned the district at the request of the previous developer. The developer did not deliver on a new project without a satisfactory explanation why not.
- With the same ownership, a new entity took over development and requested a permit change under a new, yet similar proposal. This was opposed by many in the community. I was not initially opposed to this change as long as concessions could be extracted from the developer (\$2 million for affordable housing). I changed my opinion after watching the relevant Select Board and Planning Board hearings.
- Thus, on no less than two separate occasions did a developer indicate the financial feasibility of converting the current structure to a new use under current zoning. I therefore see no reason why the parcel should receive yet more permissive zoning.
- There were to be 155 units under the previous permit as recently as May 2021. For reference, the smallest (700 ft²) 1-bedroom apartments at Charles River Landing currently start at \$2,800. One can start evaluating the kind of revenue this parcel could generate as currently zoned.

Regarding a rezoning to allow 1st floor commercial in order to support a four-story building: The building and parcel are very large and there is no need for that much 1st floor commercial space of the kind that benefits from proximity to residential/retail areas. As many are aware, across the street on the corner of the intersection is a Starbucks which, despite being constructed, operated, and with an established customer base, *does not even open* from time to time due to a lack of commercial incentive. While the future could include some limited 1st floor commercial space for the building, there is simply far too much area on the parcel to warrant a rezoning based on a need for 1st floor commercial.

At 18:50 in the February 15 meeting recording, there are comments that the town and town counsel have had contact with the developer over the property and there are plans to demolish the building. I was disappointed to not hear more questions as to why this was an acceptable outcome. I also did not agree with the tenor of the meeting which included the idea of introducing incentives via new zoning for the parcel. I believe the building can be developed just fine under current zoning and have yet to even hear any evidence as to why it cannot be.

The developer can read the news and see public comments, as evidenced by the letters from their attorneys. Since it is apparent that 100 West St. is on the list to be rezoned under the MBTA Communities law and there is strong public support for more permissive zoning, **they have zero reason to move forward with a development until new zoning is finalized.** The HONE committee and town government may have not considered that the developer faces little cost relative to the value of the parcel to simply wait and see what happens.

I have read the developer's attorneys' letter that the building is "antiquated" – but just a year ago they were ready to do a full renovation for 150 living units and make a \$2 million payment for the right to do so – something doesn't add up. Under HONE's proposal, the developer will get a full fourth floor, potential new uses for 1st floor commercial space, reduced or no restrictions on affordable housing or age restrictions, and possibly more just by waiting. The attorneys have gone as far to suggest more permissive height restrictions, lower affordable housing requirements, new parking requirements, etc. To remind, the owner of the property is Welltower Inc, one of the largest healthcare REITs in the country. The fourth quarter 2023 results show the company has significant liquidity and anticipates strong demand for senior living units.

In the February 15 2024 meeting, a proposed FAR of 1.4 is mentioned. Where did this figure come from? The current FAR of the ASOD under special permit is 1.1 for a three-story structure with 35% coverage for a fourth floor. This implies that FAR for a structure with a full fourth floor would only need to be 1.3. This is further supported by Scenario C offering an FAR of 1.5 for a five-story structure. The only reference I see to 1.4 FAR is the suggestion by the attorneys, which is very concerning to me.

I would anticipate significant opposition to this parcel being rezoned beyond what Town Meeting approved in 2020, thereby facilitating the demolition of the building, foregoing the \$2 million offered by the developer, and essentially rewarding the owner and developers for inaction. I think you will find many people who are ardent supporters of the MBTA Communities Act, including myself, who will be conflicted once they understand how HONE is handling this zone.

In the Needham Heights area, the other parcels should receive new zoning. Those lots are largely parking lots or single-story structures, and it would be a much more desirable outcome to see those parcels developed. To me, *this* is the philosophy behind the MBTA Communities law, not new zoning to give Fortune 500 REITs the right to build a few dozen luxury condos in downtown Needham by demolishing a large existing and functional structure. Given the possibilities expressed in Scenarios B and C, HONE can easily reach the target of 1,784 units without including new zoning for 100 West St.

I support Jeanne McKnight's comments regarding the current desirable look of the parcel, historical relevance, and effort to craft zoning to encourage a renovation of the building largely as is rather than demolition. The Planning Board agenda packet of August 11 2020 provides a clear design plan.

The future for 100 West St. remains an unresolved issue. Requiring Town Meeting and members of the community to approve more permissive zoning for this parcel or risk a lawsuit from the Attorney General and millions in state grant funding is the wrong way to handle this. While circumstances may change in the future, HONE should make it clear at the earliest opportunity that more permissive zoning (increased height, FAR, multi-family, etc.) is not part of the plan for 100 West. at this time.

Best,

Joe Matthews

From: [Peter Cohenno](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: Hartney Greymont property (433 Chestnut Street)
Date: Wednesday, February 21, 2024 12:24:36 PM

Good afternoon!

I am a former Town Meeting member who got involved in town government following the failed attempt to develop a 6-story apartment complex on the current Hartney Greymont property (433 Chestnut Street).

Having first-hand experience with the disastrous presentation by then Planning Board member Ted Owens, I believe I am justifiably skeptical about any future development on that property. I hope that the current Planning Board will share my skepticism as the new zoning options are considered. (I vividly remember Mr. Crocker making a statement at Town Meeting that captured the frustration and anger that we all shared at that time.)

The reality is that the Hartney Greymont property falls in a largely residential area. It should be zoned and treated as such.

I am open to future development on that property but I believe it needs to happen with close oversight and Town Meeting approval.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Pete Cohenno
481 Chestnut Street

From: [William Lenahan](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: Zoning changes for MBTA
Date: Thursday, February 22, 2024 8:43:00 AM

To whom it may concern: Please be advised that I am opposed to any rezoning that would increase the density of residences in Needham. If each additional housing unit does not come with a corresponding real estate tax bill, then the occupants of that housing unit are not paying their share of the cost of living in Needham. The real estate taxes paid by their landlords is not enough to match the cost of additional residents in Needham who will expect to receive all the benefits of living here that the tax payers are entitled to in consideration for their tax payment. The Town can not afford an increase in density that will necessitate an increase in Town services.

Nor do I see the actual need for as much train service as we suffer with today. Most trains come in empty after 7pm. That is a huge waste of money serving no one. What statistical proof do we have that the occupants of apartments in Needham will actually use the train service to commute to work. This is a false proposition.

Thanks

William P. Lenahan, Esq.
189 Nehoiden Street
Needham, MA. 02492
Phone: 781-444-9845
Cell: 617-640-1060
Fax: 781-559-3176
Wpl2@rcn.com

From: [Dan Matthews](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Cc: [Lee Newman](#); [Kate Fitzpatrick](#); [Katie King](#); [Alexandra Cleo](#)
Subject: MBTA Communities Zoning and HONE Scenarios A and B
Date: Sunday, February 25, 2024 6:56:23 PM

To: Members of the Housing Needham (HONE) Committee
cc: Select Board, Planning Board, Planning Staff, Town Manager
Re: MBTA Communities Zoning and HONE Scenarios A and B

Based on following the MBTA Communities process through the HONE committee's meeting of February 15, I'm writing to offer some comments and suggestions.

1. SCENARIO A –

- a. **Framework** – The two scenario plan is a sound approach- **Scenario A** to achieve **base** MBTA Communities **compliance**, and **Scenario B** to present **additional** housing and other zoning **recommendations** to frame issues for Town Meeting to decide.
- b. **Scenario Focus:** HONE's **Scenario A should be focused on** its stated purpose of **base compliance** without additional elements. The only extension of that approach should be including moderate numerical overages (of as of right units, density, area, etc) to be clearly compliant with the Act and Guidelines.
- c. **By right development only.** Scenario A provisions should not include optional provisions not by right, requiring special permits, which are not countable under the Act.
- d. **Hersey Area:** HONE should consider including the **Charles Court East/Hamlin Lane A-1** area in Scenario A. This is for two reasons: 1. to improve the Scenario's marginal count, as the subject area is already compliant, and 2. because it is in walking distance of Hersey Station, which is otherwise not included in Scenario A. Although outside of the half mile station radius, this A-1 area could be part of 10% of countable area allowed beyond the radius.
- e. **Current Capacity:** On February 15, HONE's consultant, RKG, reported the current zoned unit capacity of the Scenario A areas as 1771 units, and "not that far off" from the target capacity of 1784 countable units.

But in the context of actual conditions, **the 1771 figure is greatly overstated**, and minimizes degree of change contained in Scenario A. Except for areas that are already zoned A-1, almost all the current capacity is subject to special permit and related requirements. That capacity is not countable for compliance, and the practical effect of the regulatory burdens is demonstrated by the very small number of units built during all the years the current zoning has been in place.

The **current countable capacity of the Scenario A area is in the low hundreds of units**. The purpose of **Scenario A is to increase to countable unit capacity to at least 1784**, chiefly by expanding multifamily development as of right.

- f. **Site Plan Review:** Scenario A should address the issue of the **scope of site plan review** by incorporating the standard provided in the MBTA Act

Guidelines into Needham's Zoning Bylaw.

In summary, that standard is: **Site plan review shall not unreasonably delay a project or impose conditions that make it infeasible or impractical to proceed with a project that is allowed as of right and complies with applicable dimensional regulations.**

Establishing such a standard is important to minimize misunderstanding and future disputes as development proceeds, and clearly confirm the town's commitment to work within the parameters of the Act.

2. SCENARIO B

- a. **Scenario B** can be a vehicle for a mix of provisions for additional units, either countable, non-countable, or both. The main tests for these additional provisions should be whether HONE believes they will help the town and whether HONE believes they can earn support of Town Meeting in October.
- b. The term "**Compliance**" has been used in some conflated contexts. Additional zoned units aren't "**non-compliant**" simply because they are **non-countable** under the guidelines- they just don't count toward compliance. Compliance is to be established by Scenario A. Countability shouldn't be a primary consideration under Scenario B. As a general principle, proposals should be considered for inclusion in Scenario B based on their merits, whether the units are countable or not.
- c. **Example:** on February 15, HONE considered A-1 zoning for a group of parcels including 888 Great Plain Avenue, but took those out of Scenario B because they're not part of a contiguous 5 acre area. Without being in a five acre area, the units wouldn't be countable, but if HONE believes that A-1 zoning for those parcels would be a benefit to the town, it should include that area in Scenario B.
- d. **Questions of Law:** HONE may want to consult town counsel as questions of law arise affecting its work. It may be helpful in some instances for counsel to seek clarification from EOHLC as this process proceeds.
- e. **Town Meeting Process:** Scenario B may become complex and unwieldy, at risk of failing at Town Meeting if presented as a single article. HONE may consider recommending some elements as separate articles, or defer some for further consideration and decision next year.

Thank you for your consideration of this and your involvement in this important project.
Sincerely

Dan Matthews
31 Rosemary Street
339-225-1677

From: [James Goldstein](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Cc: [Lee Newman](#); [Heidi Frail](#); [Katie King](#)
Subject: For HONE: NHC MBTA Working Group comments on Base Scenario Alternative & Neighborhood Housing Scenario/Bonus Scenario
Date: Tuesday, February 27, 2024 10:13:10 AM
Attachments: [NHC MBTA Working Group 22624 memo to HONE.pdf](#)
[NHC map+comments-Neighborhood Housing Plan 02-26-24.pdf](#)

HONE Advisory Group,

Attached please find comments and suggestions from the Needham Housing Coalition's MBTA Working Group on the Base Scenario Alternative and the Neighborhood Housing Scenario/Bonus Scenario as presented in the HONE meeting packet for the February 29, 2024 meeting. Also included is a map reflecting our suggestions for the Neighborhood Housing Scenario/Bonus Scenario.

We appreciate the considerable work the HONE Advisory Group has completed to date and the opportunity to provide our feedback and suggestions.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if HONE would like more information or to discuss any of our suggestions.

James Goldstein
For the NHC MBTA Working Group

From: Needham Housing Coalition, MBTA Working Group*
To: HONE Advisory Group
RE: MBTA “Base Scenario Alternative” and Neighborhood Housing Plan (“Bonus Scenario”)
Date: February 26, 2024

The Needham Housing Coalition (NHC) is grateful for the work that the HONE Advisory Group has done to craft two zoning plans to comply with the MBTA Communities Act. We understand that the details of the plans are approaching their final versions and that the model now shows the Base Plan as non-compliant (with only 1,703 units).

The HONE packet for the February 29 meeting suggests a Base Scenario Alternative that is compliant by adding Charles Court A-1 (141 units). While this may be a feasible option for meeting the letter of the MBTA Communities Law, it is not consistent with the purpose of the law or the recommendations in the December 2022 Needham Housing Plan, since these units would not be proximate to the commuter rail (or bus line) or any of the town’s commercial districts.

Rather than adding Charles Court A-1 in the Base Scenario Alternative, we suggest changing the Chestnut Street Business District from 18 DU/AC to 24 DU/AC in the model. This is one of the strategies considered in Lee Newman’s 2/23/24 email to HONE. We understand this results in a total of 1,832 units or 48 more than is required by the MBTA Communities Law. We recognize this is a different density standard than the current zoning for the Needham Center District (18 DU/AC), but do not see this as problematic. We firmly believe that consistency across zones is less important than utilizing site-specific adjustments to achieve the desired zoning results (even if this requires creation of a new zoning district, such as HONE has done with the splitting of the Industrial Zone into Crescent and Hillside).

Another potential minor change to the Base Scenario Alternative that HONE may want to consider is a minor change in the FAR in the Industrial District from 0.50 to 0.60. This is also a strategy mentioned in Lee Newman’s 2/23/24 email to HONE. We understand that this would result in 1,801 units, 17 more than the MBTA Communities Law requires.

Finally, if HONE is concerned that the Base Scenario Alternative does not create an adequate cushion in case EOHLC disallows certain elements of the plan, HONE may want to consider adding the (B-CTRR and A-1) areas on the west side of Great Plain Avenue that are currently in the “Neighborhood Housing Scenario” (NHC’s preferred name, rather than “Bonus Scenario”) to the Base Scenario Alternative.

In addition to the changes identified above for the Base Scenario Alternative, we offer the following suggestions on the Neighborhood Housing Scenario/Bonus Scenario:

- Adjust the Great Plain Avenue blocks in the B-CTRR and A-1 zones as follows:
 - Keep Needham Bank and Comella’s blocks as ground-floor commercial MXU.
 - Keep the UU Church parcel (corner of Great Plain and Dedham Avenues) as ground-floor commercial MXU.
 - Reduce the height of the stand-alone residential to 3 stories / MXU 3.5 stories for the block between Glendoon and Nehoiden on the north side and the blocks west of Maple on the south side, up to and including the Congregational Church.
- For the “Business” zone, set a Maximum Dwelling Units per Acre (DU/AC) of between 48-56.
- Divide the Industrial-Hillside zone into Industrial-Hillside North and Industrial-Hillside South so that the height of Industrial-Hillside South can be increased to 4-4.5 stories.

Attached is a Neighborhood Housing Plan Map reflecting these proposed changes.

Thank you for considering our input.

***NHC MBTA Working Group**

Paula Dickerman

Jim Flanagan

James Goldstein

Cathy Mertz

Oscar Mertz

Henry Ragin

Jan Soma

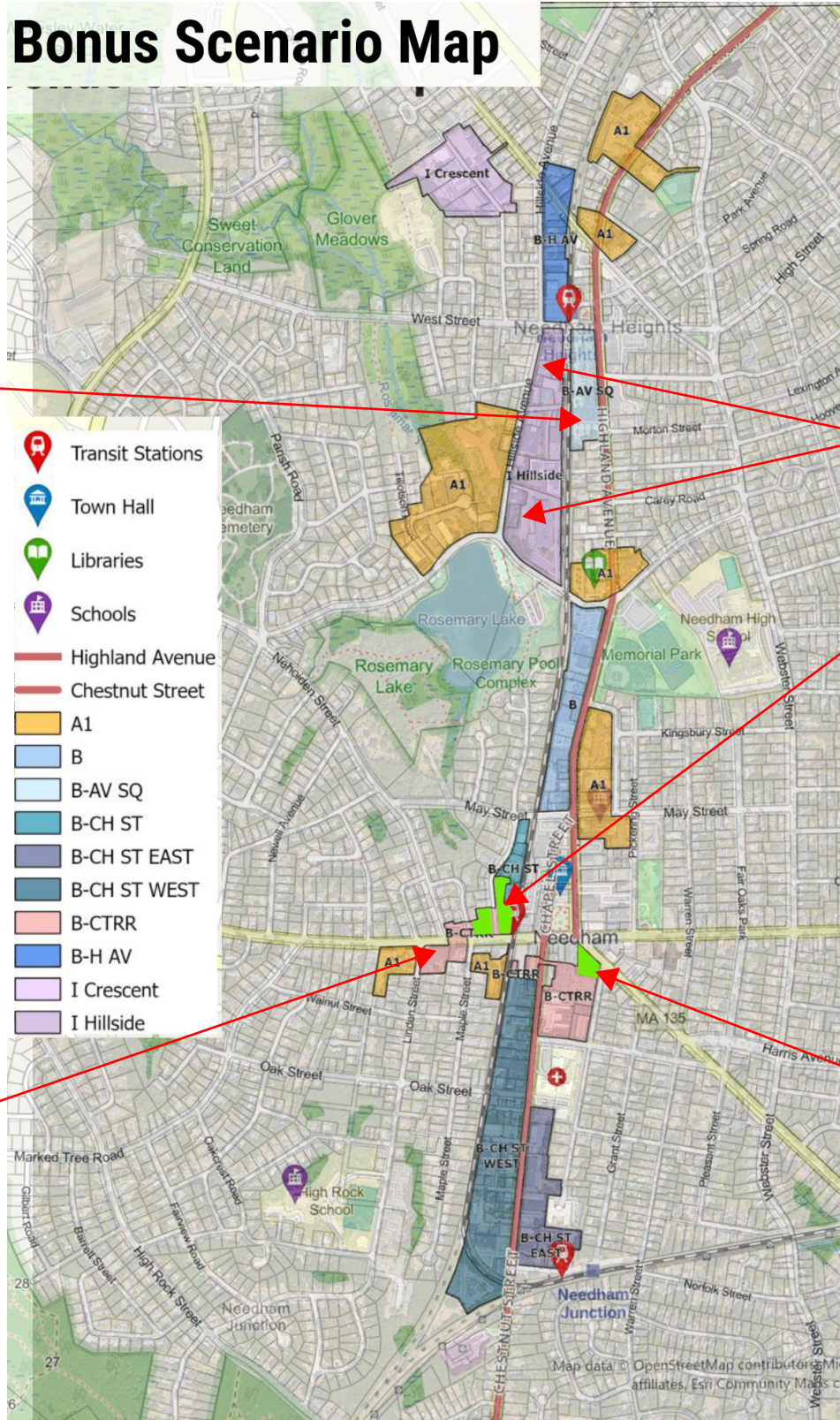
NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING PLAN: (HONE Bonus Plan)

Bonus Scenario Map

NHC comments
submitted 02.26.2024

Scenario Overview

Consider incentive to allow 100 West as 4 stories stand-alone residential if building is preserved and added to vs tearing it down This would be a better environmental solution.



Add height and density to Hillside Industrial district:
to 3.5 stories and 36u/ac (north)
to 4.5 stories and 45u/ac (south)

Remove Needham Bank and Comella's blocks from MBTA district and preserve them for ground floor commercial MXU as part of downtown overlay Stand-alone

Stand-alone MF west of Maple St / Glendon Rd (Comella's block) including: Congreg. Church, PO and commercial parcels.

Reduce the max. allowable bldg ht in these western parcels from 4 st to 3 st (stand-alone) or 3.5 st (MXU)

Remove UU Church parcel as part of this stand-alone residential district. Keep UU Church in the downtown ground floor commercial MXU overlay district.

From: [Paula Dickerman](#)
To: [Planning](#); [Lee Newman](#); [Katie King](#); [Heidi Frail](#); [N. Espada](#)
Cc: [Oscar Mertz](#); [James Goldstein](#)
Subject: MBTA Act Development Potential
Date: Tuesday, February 27, 2024 10:23:18 AM
Attachments: [Needham_HONE 2.29.24 Bonus Development Potential.pdf](#)

To: The HONE Advisory Group
From: The Needham Housing Coalition MBTA Working Group
Re: Development Potential from MBTA-CA rezoning

In reaction to the current unit capacity number in HONE's current "Bonus Scenario Map", we have assessed the potential for realistic parcel development. (See Attached Map.) We have taken a conservative approach in evaluating what each parcel's potential is for development.

- "Very Unlikely" means that the parcel is either town-owned (e.g., CATH), has a civic use, or has been recently renovated, all of which have high value to remain as is (e.g., Roche Brothers or Carter School Condos).
- "Possible" means it is reasonable to consider that the parcel may be developed for multi-family housing over a long period of time.

We encourage you to ask your consultants to input this information into their parcel model to assess how many units could reasonably be removed from the current 4160 unit capacity.

Thank you for your consideration.

NCH MBTA Working Group

Paula Dickerman

Jim Flanagan

James Goldstein

Cathy Mertz

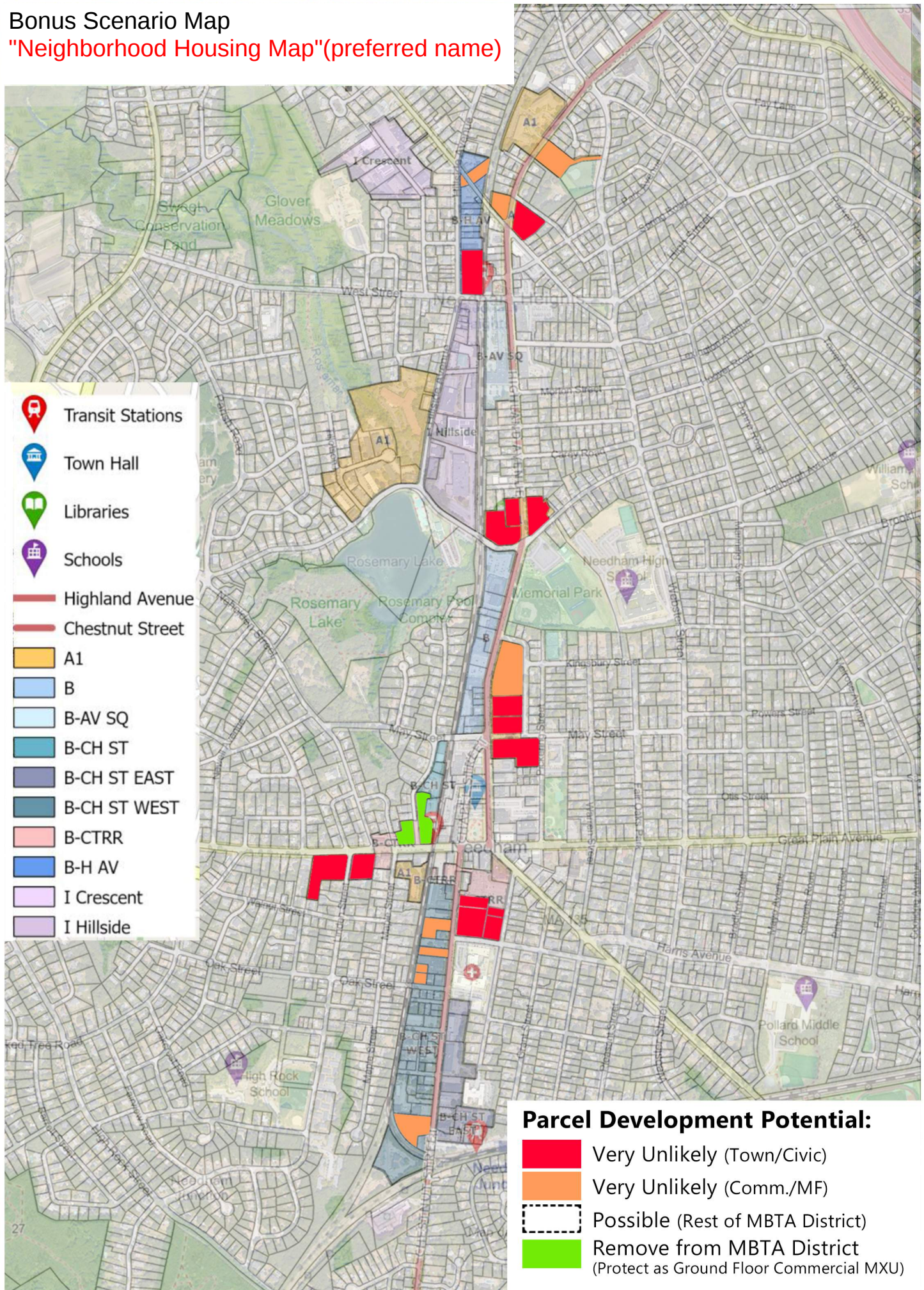
Oscar Mertz

Henry Ragin

Jan Soma

Bonus Scenario Map

"Neighborhood Housing Map"(preferred name)



From: [Ken Buckley](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Cc: [Gary Ajamian](#); [Barbara Buckley](#)
Subject: HONE New Zoning Analysis
Date: Tuesday, February 27, 2024 6:16:48 PM

To HONE Advisory Group

I'm writing to support the need to commission a study of the impact of the proposed zoning changes.

People choose to live in a place like Needham for reasons - a number of reasons - like the charm of the center, the close knit nature of the houses in the neighborhoods, the diversity and vibrancy of the religious communities, to name just a few.

Zoning is an attempt by a community to preserve what the citizens love about their community, and give them a say in how their community exists and grows. People expect those rules to change slowly and with careful consideration and consent by the community at large.

Wholesale changes to zoning, considered first only by a small handful of people, followed by rapid adoption without broad, informed consent, I think contains the faint odor of tyranny.

I believe there hasn't been enough information on how changes to Needham's zoning will affect the character of the town.

Sincerely,
Kenneth G Buckley
Barbara A Buckley
221 Warren Street (30 year Needham resident)

From: [Rob Winchester](#)
To: [Planning](#)
Subject: MBTA Zoning
Date: Thursday, February 29, 2024 12:48:14 AM

I wanted to write in about the political initiative about “MBTA zoning”

I hope, if you do nothing else, you do not do anything until every single town has completed filing their own decision. This is about real estate and a prudent move in any transaction is to hold out for the best deal possible. Private property rights make towns viable we count on town government to turn away any unnecessary burdens. The MBTA is an incompetent bloated embarrassment that brings shame on the wonderful citizens of Needham and every single citizen of Massachusetts. While I do use the T to get to downtown Boston, Needham is part of Route 128 and you can see first hand what government actions did to the once major 128 technology corridor - they crushed it with incompetence and renamed the highway now they are coming for the towns.

To end this humorously - Maybe just a reply with language they understand. How about a reply of “Service is delayed” and do exactly what the Mbta has done for years *nothing* I bet they don’t like being left out in the cold

Thanks,
Rob Winchester
Needham, MA
857-243-0725

From: Needham For Sensible Zoning (NFSZ)

To: HONE

Re: Proposed rezoning of Needham

We are a group of concerned Needhamites in the Kingsbury, Oakland, Pickering, and May Streets Community, specifically the St. Joe's and Highland Court area, who want you to know of our concerns about the rezoning of Needham that you are proposing. We are immediately concerned about the rezoning of our part of the community that you are proposing, specifically the rezoning of our neighborhood in scenarios B and C, as well as the overall rezoning plans in discussion.

We are in the process of reaching out to our neighbors as well as to other residents of Needham who we believe have similar worries about your proceedings:

To be succinct, we have 5 basic concerns:

1) Your proposed "Scenario A" which would add 1784 new housing units would fulfill the MBTA's requirements, while Scenarios B and C (now renamed "Bonus") creates the possibility of 2630 and 4782 units respectively.

We feel that the addition of large numbers of multi-family units, well beyond what the MBTA requires would result in a significant increase in density in our already congested area. This would mean further problems in traffic and parking, infrastructure costs, as well as a dramatic change in the feel of the Needham community.

2) The significant enlargement of areas of rezoning would make it much easier for developers to bypass the usual processes by which large building projects are approved, with much less control over the impact on the community.

3) The large number of potential units to be built throughout Needham could well result in heightened expenses for essential services, including firemen, police, and schools with the need for higher real estate taxes.

4) The efforts by HONE to inform Needham residents may have met a minimum requirement but have largely failed to educate people sufficiently about the pros and cons of the proposed changes. In talking to residents of our own neighborhood, it's clear that many people had no idea of what has been happening and the rapidity with which this process is proceeding. For instance, there is a HONE meeting on Feb. 29th, which states they will vote on a "final" base scenario, even though an open public meeting is not scheduled until March 28th. Also, there are no minutes available from the HONE meetings since Jan 15th.

5) Other towns (Milton, Wrentham, Holden) have pushed back against meeting even the minimum state mandated housing requirements. In contrast, Needham is proceeding far beyond them.

In view of the above, and other concerns, we propose that HONE proceed only with meeting the minimum MBTA requirement (Scenario A) at this time rather than piggybacking upon this much more far-reaching plan that could negatively affect our part of Needham and Needham as a whole. More time is required to inform residents of the proposed zoning changes. To allow the MBTA requirement to unnecessarily rushed timetable of extensive rezoning would be ill-advised, and even foolish.

Barbara McDonald & Bill McDonald, 147 Pickering St. oaklangley@gmail.com

Lee Betcher & William Betcher, 38 Oakland Ave. leehopeb@gmail.com

Jim Handershan & Ginny Handershan, 29 Oakland Ave.

Tom Hayes & Carol Hayes, 68 Oakland Ave.

Paul & Marilyn Glasheen 47 Oakland Ave.

Doug McCarthy, 81 May St.

Note: As a reminder, our neighborhood, including Greene's field, was one of the final proposed sites for the Needham Senior Center. For all the above stated reasons, the St. Joseph's neighborhood was removed from the short list.