

Excerpts from House Bill 5250, 191st session, An Act Enabling Partnerships for Growth, related to amendments to Chapter 40A, The Zoning Act.

Section 1A of chapter 40A of the General Laws, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the introductory paragraph the following 10 definitions:

"Accessory dwelling unit", a self-contained housing unit, inclusive of sleeping, cooking and sanitary facilities on the same lot as a principal dwelling, subject to otherwise applicable dimensional and parking requirements, that:

- (i) maintains a separate entrance, either directly from the outside or through an entry hall or corridor shared with the principal dwelling sufficient to meet the requirements of the state building code for safe egress;
- (ii) is not larger in floor area than 1/2 the floor area of the principal dwelling or 900 square feet, whichever is smaller; and
- (iii) is subject to such additional restrictions as may be imposed by a municipality, including but not limited to additional size restrictions, owner-occupancy requirements and restrictions or prohibitions on short-term rental of accessory dwelling units.

"As of right", development that may proceed under a zoning ordinance or by-law without the need for a special permit, variance, zoning amendment, waiver or other discretionary zoning approval.

"Eligible locations", areas that by virtue of their infrastructure, transportation access, existing underutilized facilities or location make highly suitable locations for residential or mixed use smart growth zoning districts or starter home zoning districts, including without limitation:

- (i) areas near transit stations, including rapid transit, commuter rail and bus and ferry terminals; or
- (ii) areas of concentrated development, including town and city centers, other existing commercial districts in cities and towns and existing rural village districts.

"Gross density", a units-per-acre density measurement that includes land occupied by public rights-of-way and any recreational, civic, commercial and other nonresidential uses.

"Lot", an area of land with definite boundaries that is used or available for use as the site of a 4 building or buildings.

"MBTA community", a city or town that is:

- (i) one of the 51 cities and towns as defined in section 1 of chapter 161A;
- (ii) one of the 14 cities and towns as defined in said section 1 of said 36 of 101 chapter 161A;

(iii) other served communities as defined in said section 1 of said chapter 161A;
or

(iv) a municipality that has been added to the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority under section 6 of chapter 161A or in accordance with any special law relative to the area constituting the authority.

"Mixed-use development", development containing a mix of residential uses and non-residential uses, including, without limitation, commercial, institutional, industrial or other uses;

"Multi-family housing", a building with 3 or more residential dwelling units or 2 or more buildings on the same lot with more than 1 residential dwelling unit in each building.

"Natural resource protection zoning", zoning ordinances or by-laws enacted principally to protect natural resources by promoting compact patterns of development and concentrating development within a portion of a parcel of land so that a significant majority of the land remains permanently undeveloped and available for agriculture, forestry, recreation, watershed management, carbon sequestration, wildlife habitat or other natural resource values.

"Open space residential development", a residential development in which the buildings and accessory uses are clustered together into 1 or more groups separated from adjacent property and other groups within the development by intervening open land. An open space residential development shall be permitted only on a plot of land of such minimum size as a zoning ordinance or by-law may specify which is divided into building lots with dimensional control, density and use restrictions for such building lots varying from those otherwise permitted by the ordinance or by-law and open land. The open land may be situated to promote and protect maximum solar access within the development. The open land shall either be conveyed to the city or town and accepted by said city or town for park or open space use, or be made subject to a recorded use restriction enforceable by said city or town or a non-profit organization the principal purpose of which is the conservation of open space, providing that such land shall be kept in an open or natural state and not be built for residential use or developed for accessory uses such as parking or roadway.

Said section 1A of said chapter 40A, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out the definition of "Transfer of development rights" and inserting in place thereof the following definition:- "Transfer of development rights", the regulatory procedure whereby the owner of a parcel may convey development rights, extinguishing those rights on the first parcel, and where the owner of another parcel may obtain and exercise those rights in addition to the development rights already existing on that second parcel.

Said chapter 40A is hereby further amended by inserting after section 3 the following section: Section 3A.

(a)(1) An MBTA community shall have a zoning ordinance or by-law that provides for at least 1 district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right; provided, however, that such multi-family housing shall be without age restrictions and shall be suitable for families with children. For the purposes of this section, a district of reasonable size shall:

- (i) have a minimum gross density of 15 units per acre, subject to any further limitations imposed by section 40 of chapter 131 and title 5 of the state environmental code established pursuant to section 13 of chapter 21A; and
- (ii) be located not more than 0.5 miles from a commuter rail station, subway station, ferry terminal or bus station, if applicable.

(b) An MBTA community that fails to comply with this section shall not be eligible for funds from:

- (i) the Housing Choice Initiative as described by the governor in a message to the general court dated December 11, 2017;
- (ii) the Local Capital Projects Fund established in section 2EEEE of chapter 29; or
- (iii) the MassWorks infrastructure program established in section 63 of chapter 23A.

c) The department, in consultation with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, shall promulgate guidelines to determine if an MBTA community is in compliance with this section.

Section 5 of said chapter 40A, as so appearing, is hereby amended by striking out the fifth paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:

Except as provided herein, no zoning ordinance or by-law or amendment thereto shall be adopted or changed except by a two-thirds vote of all the members of the town council, or of the city council where there is a commission form of government or a single branch, or of each branch where there are 2 branches, or by a two-thirds vote of a town meeting; provided, however, that the following shall be adopted by a vote of a simple majority of all members of the town council or of the city council where there is a commission form of government or a single branch or of each branch where there are 2 branches or by a vote of a simple majority of town meeting:

- (1) an amendment to a zoning ordinance or by-law to allow any of the following as of right:
 - (a) multifamily housing or mixed-use development in an eligible location;
 - (b) accessory dwelling units, whether within the principal dwelling or a detached structure on the same lot; or
 - (c) open space residential development;
- (2) an amendment to a zoning ordinance or by-law to allow by special permit:
 - (a) multi-family housing or mixed-use development in an eligible location;

(b) an increase in the permissible density of population or intensity of a particular use in a proposed multi-family or mixed use development pursuant to section 9;

(c) accessory dwelling units in a detached structure on the same lot; or

(d) a diminution in the amount of parking required for residential or mixed-use development pursuant to section 9;

(3) zoning ordinances or by-laws or amendments thereto that:

(a) provide for TDR zoning or natural resource protection zoning in instances where the adoption of such zoning promotes concentration of development in areas that the municipality deems most appropriate for such development, but will not result in a diminution in the maximum number of housing units that could be developed within the municipality; or

(b) modify regulations concerning the bulk and height of structures, yard sizes, lot area, setbacks, open space, parking and building coverage requirements to allow for additional housing units beyond what would otherwise be permitted under the existing zoning ordinance or by-law; and

(4) the adoption of a smart growth zoning district or starter home zoning district in accordance with section 3 of chapter 40R. Any amendment that requires a simple majority vote shall not be combined with an amendment that requires a two-thirds majority vote. If, in a city or town with a council of fewer than 25 members, there is filed with the clerk prior to final action by the council a written protest against a zoning change under this section, stating the reasons duly signed by owners of 50 per cent or more of the area of the land proposed to be included in such change or of the area of the land immediately adjacent extending 300 feet therefrom, no change of any such ordinance shall be adopted except by a two-thirds vote of all members.

Section 9 of said chapter 40A, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the word "interests," in line 34, the following words:- ; provided, however, that nothing herein shall prohibit a zoning ordinance or by-law from allowing transfer of development rights to be permitted as of right, without the need for a special permit or other discretionary zoning approval.

Said section 9 of said chapter 40A, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out, in lines 39 and 43, the word "cluster" each time it appears and inserting in place thereof in each instance the following words:- open space residential.

Said section 9 of said chapter 40A, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by inserting, after the word "control," in line 47, the following words:- ; provided, however, that nothing herein shall prohibit a zoning ordinance or by-law from

allowing open space residential developments to be permitted as of right, without the need for a special permit or other discretionary zoning approval.

Said section 9 of said chapter 40A, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by striking out the seventh paragraph and inserting in place thereof the following paragraph:- Zoning ordinances or by-laws may also provide that special permits may be granted for reduced parking space to residential unit ratio requirements after a finding by the special permit granting authority that the public good would be served and that the area in which the development is located would not suffer a substantial adverse effect from such diminution in parking.

Said section 9 of said chapter 40A, as so appearing, is hereby further amended by inserting after the twelfth paragraph the following paragraph: - A special permit issued by a special permit granting authority shall require a simple majority vote for any of the following:

(a) multifamily housing that is located within 1/2 mile of a commuter rail station, subway station, ferry terminal or bus station; provided, that not less than 10 per cent of the housing shall be affordable to and occupied by households whose annual income is less than 80 per cent of the area wide median income as determined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and affordability is assured for a period of not less than 30 years through the use of an affordable housing restriction as defined in section 31 of chapter 184;

(b) mixed-use development in centers of commercial activity within a municipality, including town and city centers, other commercial districts in cities and towns and rural village districts; provided, that not less than 10 per cent of the housing shall be affordable to and occupied by households whose annual income is less than 80 per cent of the area wide median income as determined by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development and affordability is assured for a period of not less than 30 years through the use of an affordable housing restriction as defined in section 31 of chapter 184; or

(c) a reduced parking space to residential unit ratio requirement, pursuant to this section; provided, that a reduction in the parking requirement will result in the production of additional housing units.

Section 17 of said chapter 40A, as so appearing, is hereby amended by inserting after the second paragraph the following paragraph:- The court, in its discretion, may require a plaintiff in an action under this section appealing a decision to approve a special permit, variance or site plan to post a surety or cash bond in an amount of not more than \$50,000 to secure the payment of costs if the court finds that the harm to the defendant or to the public interest resulting from delays caused by the appeal outweighs the financial burden of the surety or cash bond on the plaintiffs. The court shall consider the relative merits of the appeal and the relative financial means of the plaintiff and the defendant.