

# Introduction

## Millis MBTA 3A Zoning Survey



(Millis Town Hall, Veterans Memorial Building. Image courtesy of Wikipedia user Faolin42)



## **Project Partners**

Town of Millis ([MBTA 3A Advisory Committee | Millis MA](#))

Metropolitan Area Planning Council ([www.mapc.org](http://www.mapc.org))

## **Project Overview**

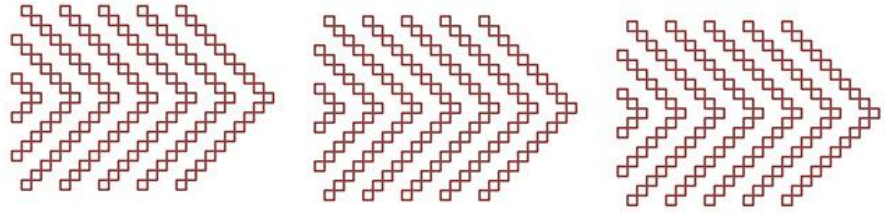
The State of Massachusetts adopted legislation known as "Section 3A" in 2021. The Millis 3A committee has been working on a plan to comply with 3A legislation since August 2022.

See the graphics below and the [project website](#) for more information.



# ABOUT THE PROJECT

## Overview



The Town of Millis hired the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to assist with exploring and drafting a zoning district that meets the requirements enacted by a new state law called M.G.L. (Massachusetts General Law) Chapter 3A. This law is intended to stimulate the creation of more housing options in locations with access to public transit by asking cities and towns to have an efficient process for permitting multi-family housing. **We're at the stage in this process where we are drafting zoning so your input will shape the zoning that is proposed.**

## What is 3A Zoning?

In 2021, the Massachusetts Legislature passed a law that requires communities served by MBTA transit to have a 3A-compliant zoning district. Millis is classified by the state as an adjacent community because it's next to Norfolk, which has commuter rail service.

3A-compliant zoning in Millis must have three core components:

1. Allow development without a special permitting process, but subject to standards set by the town.
2. Have a minimum gross density of 15 dwelling units per acre.
3. Have a minimum land area of 50 acres.

## Who is MAPC?

MAPC is the regional planning agency for Greater Boston, providing technical assistance to 101 cities and towns throughout the region. We're here to help Millis with analyzing development trends, conducting spatial analysis, and engaging with Millis community members like you to explore possibilities for 3A-compliant zoning that aligns with your goals and interests.

## Project Funding

This project is funded through the state's District Local Technical Assistance program and a grant from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development.



# THE 3A PLANNING PROCESS



1

## Analysis - *Fall & Winter 2022*

We evaluate Millis's zoning by-laws, development trends, and development constraints to inform where we should consider adopting 3A-compliant zoning and how this relates to the Town's existing regulations.

2



## Visioning - *Winter & Spring 2023*

We discuss this information with the community to identify possible locations for 3A-zoning and recommendations for how these new regulations should work.



3

## Draft Zoning - *Summer 2023*

We use land use planning expertise, state tools, and public input to draft 3A-compliant zoning that supports the town's vision and goals.

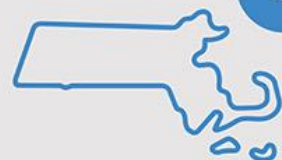
4



## Town Meeting - *Spring 2024*

We build support for 3A-zoning in advance of Town Meeting and ask Millis voters to consider adopting the new zoning.

5



## Submission to State - *Winter 2024*

If adopted by Millis voters, the zoning will be sent to the state for approval. Throughout this process, we'll ensure the zoning that's submitted will comply with state requirements. The deadline for Millis to submit 3A-compliant zoning is December 31, 2024.

Would you like to review Key Terms and Concepts? Prior to starting the survey?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Would you like to review the benefits of 3A zoning?

☐ Yes

☐ No

## Key Terms and Concepts

- **Zoning:** Zoning is a key tool used at the local level to shape a municipality through requirements and incentives for how land is used. It provides the legal framework for what can and cannot be developed on a parcel of land, including the types of uses that are

allowed, size and siting of structures, amount of required parking, open space considerations, and more. It also specifies development processes, including who needs to sign off on different kinds of development. Well-crafted zoning should tell the private sector what kind of development a community wants to see and where.

- **MBTA 3A Zoning:** In 2021, the Massachusetts Legislature passed a law that requires communities served by MBTA transit to have a 3A-compliant zoning district. Millis is classified by the state as an adjacent community because it's next to Norfolk, which has commuter rail service. 3A-compliant zoning in Millis must have three core components: 1. Allow development without a special permitting process, but subject to standards set by the town. 2. Have a minimum gross density of 15 dwelling units per acre. 3. Have a minimum land area of 50 acres.

- **Cost Burden:** Housing is considered affordable when it costs no more than 30% of a household's combined income. If you're spending more than this for housing, it makes it difficult to afford other necessities, and you have less discretionary income. Households spending more than 30% of income on housing are considered cost burdened by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
- **Upper-case A Affordable Housing (AH):** Deed-restricted Affordable Housing, often spelled with an upper-case "A" and "H", is legally required to cost no more than 30% of a household's income and be made available to income-eligible households only. This housing is built by for-profit and non-profit developers and can be required through a Town's zoning by-laws. Affordable Housing can be required through 3A zoning.
- **Naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH):** Housing that tends to be attainable in the

marketplace (30% of household income) or housing that's less expensive due to size, age, or other characteristics. This housing is sometimes referred to as missing middle housing. A greater variety of housing choices increases opportunities for NOAH.

## **The Benefits of 3A Zoning**

**3A zoning can encourage the expansion of the housing stock in Millis to create a broader range of housing options for people at different income levels and life stages.**

**See the graphic below for some of the benefits of 3A zoning:**





## Eligibility for Housing Choice Grants



Funding for studies and capital improvements.

Examples: parks, complete streets, sidewalks, and bikeways.

## Eligibility for MassWorks Grants



Funding for infrastructure that unlocks economic development.

Examples: expanded sewer capacity, upgraded utilities, and site designs.

## Eligibility for Capital Projects Fund



This fund contributes to about 10% of the budget for the Millis Housing Authority, which serves seniors, persons with disabilities, families, and veterans in need.

## Create different housing options



A range of housing choices for people with different needs, preferences, and income levels.

Examples: A townhouse for a first-time homebuyer, an apartment for a young teacher, and a condo for a retired senior that wants to downsize.

# Benefits of 3A Zoning

## Create upper-case A Affordable Housing



Millis can require developers to provide up to 10% of housing units in a development permitted under 3A to be Affordable.

These units should be made indistinguishable from other housing units and fully integrated into the community.

## Support existing Millis businesses



More housing units increase spending power to support Millis businesses.

Examples: Housing above storefronts assures businesses they will always have customers within walking distance.

## Attract new businesses to Millis



More housing units can incentivize businesses to settle in Millis.

Examples: A grocery store, boutique, or restaurant could see Millis as a place to settle if the market is made stronger with additional housing units.

## Support the local workforce



More types of housing and Affordable Housing support public employees, teachers, service industry workers, and all the people essential to the Millis community.

# Project Overview

Simply put, **the State requires Millis to have local zoning regulations that allow for and encourage multifamily development.** Millis is not responsible for building or paying for housing development. The Town just needs to adopt zoning regulations that comply with state law 3A. These regulations give property owners more options for how they choose to use their property, but the decision is up to them.

**Communities that don't comply with 3A may have reduced access to 13 state grants** and programs that support critical infrastructure and community needs.

Would you like to see which state programs are affected by 3A?

☐ Yes

☐ No

**The State has said communities that don't comply with 3A may jeopardize access to the following state grants and programs:**

- Community Planning Grants
- Massachusetts Downtown Initiative
- Urban Agenda
- Rural and Small Town Development Fund
- 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
- Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Planning and Project Grants

This is a list of programs that are known to be affected by 3A compliance. Other programs and funding sources will likely be affected in the future as well.

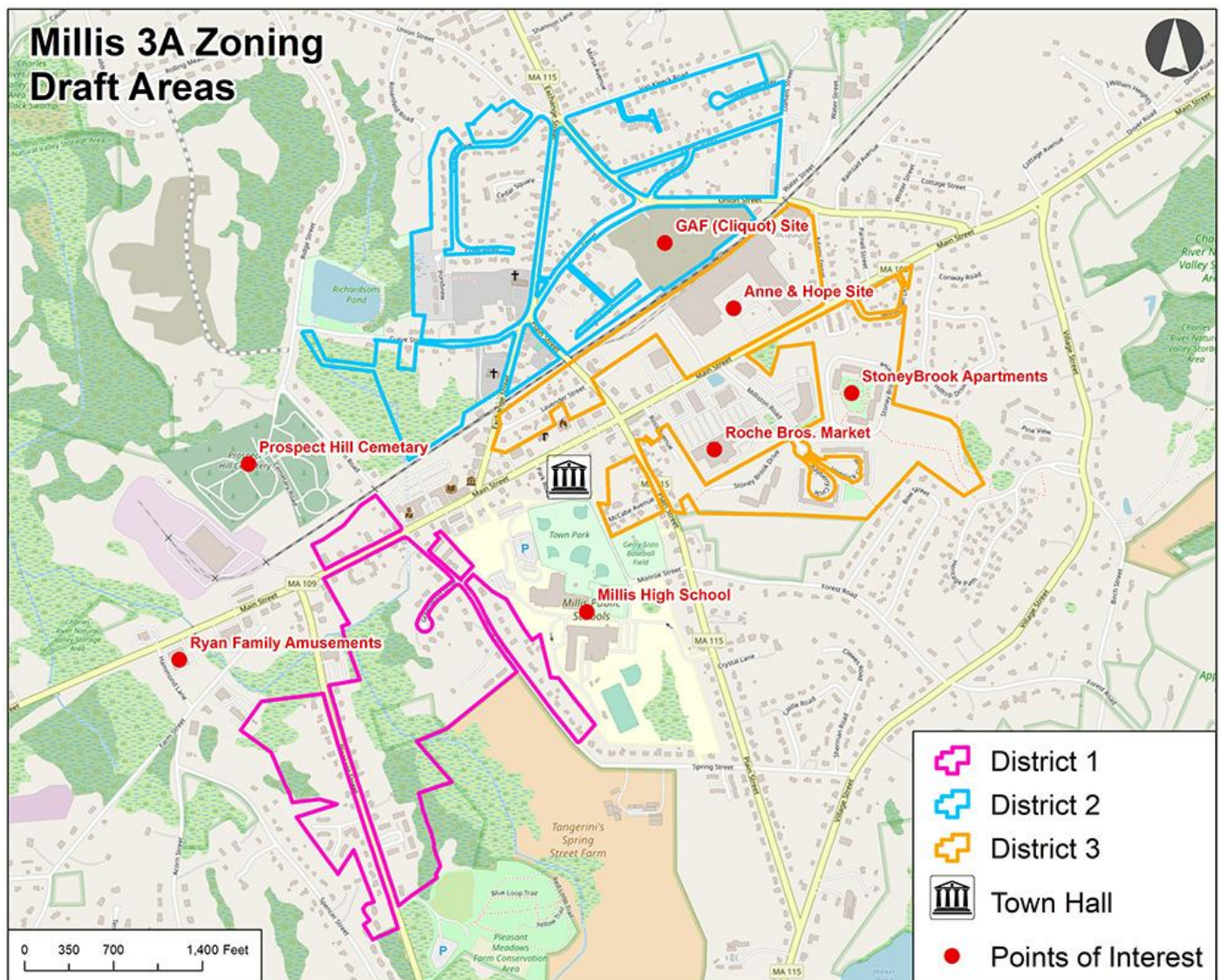
## **The purpose of this survey**

**The Millis 3A committee wants to hear from you to establish 3A zoning that's right for Millis! A public Forum was held at Millis Town Hall on February 21st. The committee used community input from this**



**forum to decide on locations for 3A zoning. This survey will help the committee decide how 3A zoning regulations will work.**

**3A zoning is being considered in the locations identified on the map below:**



**What kind of neighborhood do you want to see?**

## **What kind of neighborhood do you want to see?**

**Overview:** The Millis 3A committee wants to hear from you! Please answer the following questions to **let us know what qualities you want to see in a neighborhood.** We'll use your input to draft zoning regulations that encourage these qualities.

Check all the neighborhood assets you'd like 3A zoning to encourage:

- ☐ A place for me to walk
- ☐ Space for me to gather with family and friends
- ☐ Public greenspace to relax and play
- ☐ Places for me to go shopping
- ☐ A smaller home to downsize into

- ☐ A starter home to buy
- ☐ A home for my family
- ☐ Something else? Let us know below:

Thinking about the scale and layout of the neighborhood,  
which would you rather see?



- 
- The collage illustrates various residential development types:
- Top Left:** A street-level view of a modern, two-story house with a yellow facade and a red roof.
  - Top Right:** A street-level view of a two-story house with a green facade and a red roof.
  - Middle Left:** An aerial view of a housing development with numbers 2 and 3 indicating different unit types. The development is a large, rectangular block of houses arranged in a grid pattern.
  - Middle Right:** Three smaller street-level views of different house styles: a modern house with a green facade, a house with a yellow facade and a red roof, and a house with a dark facade and a red roof.
  - Bottom:** A large aerial view of a housing development with labels: 'Townhouses', 'Carriage Houses', 'Suburban Loft and Garden Flat', and 'Duplexes'. The development is a large, irregular block of houses arranged in a grid pattern.



- Medium to larger-sized buildings within a concentrated area of the town center







How tall should the buildings in the neighborhood be?

Check all the height options that you support.

## ○ 2.5 - 3-story buildings









## ○ 3.5 - 4-story buildings









## ○ 4.5-5-story buildings









The following photo examples show housing with different design and dimensional features. Check the photo examples with aspects that you like.















## **Zoning Scenario Overview**

**Zoning Scenario Overview**  
In the next few pages of this survey,  
we will present three  
different zoning scenarios.

Following this online open house, a single zoning scenario will be refined and put into a zoning bylaw. The final zoning will be an overlay district, which will allow all properties within the district to have two sets of regulations to guide development moving forward (the base zoning district and the optional 3A overlay district). It is not a mandate to property owners, and it does not compel or require them to redevelop their properties. Instead, the zoning bylaw tells property owners within the overlay districts "you now have the ability to do more with your property".

**There are some common themes throughout each zoning scenario that ensure Millis will be in compliance with state law section 3A. All scenarios will:**

- **The same properties** will be included in all three scenarios
- **Parking Mandates:** Assume each development will have appropriate parking.
- **Open space requirements:** Any potential developments must leave most of the land parcel as open space
- **Meet the state-mandated density requirements:** Will have density that equals 15 units per acre when averaged out between all the districts.
- **Legalize multifamily apartments:** Allow multifamily dwellings to be built in a more efficient process, eliminating the need for developers to seek a

special permit to build multifamily. This essentially legalizes multifamily in the areas identified in the following maps.

- **Site plan review:** still require developers to work within the requirements for what can be built, how tall the buildings can be, how the buildings look, and other regulations. Development will still be guided by these regulations and developers will not have free reign to develop whatever they want.

**There are some common themes throughout each zoning scenario that ensure Millis will be in compliance with state law section 3A. All scenarios will:**

- **The same properties** (hover for definition)
- **Parking mandates** (hover for definition)
- **Open space requirements** (hover for definition)
- **Meet the state-mandated density requirements**  
(hover for definition)
- **Legalize multifamily apartments** (hover for definition)
- **Site plan review** (hover for definition)

The following chart shows different building regulations determining what can be built. The town requires anyone building something new, or modifying, an existing structure to follow these regulations. Each of the draft 3A zoning

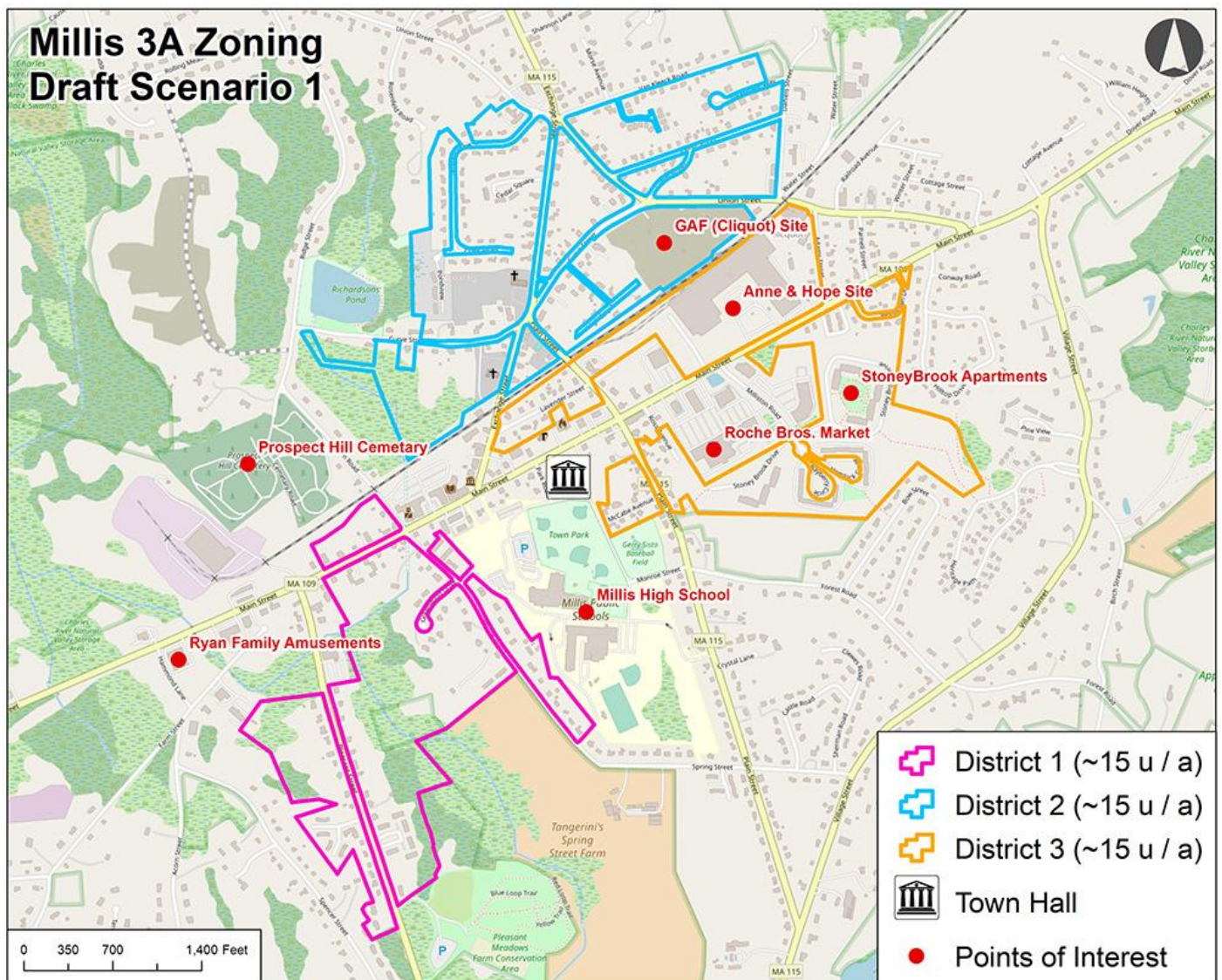
scenarios has a different set of regulations. Although many of the regulations are the same in each draft zoning district, what would be allowed to be built in each district varies. Keep this in mind when you answer the questions on the next few pages of the survey.

	Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
Townhouses	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mixed Use	Optional	Optional	Optional
Small (10-unit apartment buildings)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Medium (20-unit apartment buildings)	Yes	Yes (districts 2,3)	Yes (districts 2,3)
Medium (30-unit apartment buildings)	No	No	Yes (district 3)
Front setback	10ft	10ft	10ft
Side setback	15ft	15ft	15ft
Rear setback	20ft	20ft	20ft

## **Considering Zoning – Scenario 1**

**Consider the following map:**





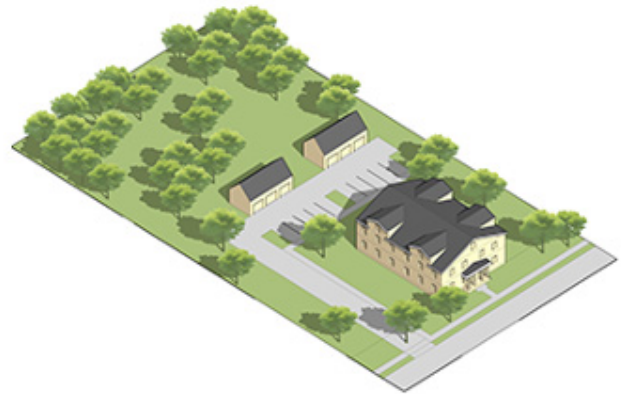
- **Maximum Density:**

- District one: About 15 units per acre
- District two: About 15 units per acre
- District three: About 15 units per acre

- **Allowed Housing Types:**

- Townhouses

- Multifamily buildings no more than 20 apartments each
- Optional Mixed Use



For zoning scenario 1, I:

- ☐ Enthusiastically support this scenario
- ☐ Generally like this scenario
- ☐ Am unsure how I feel about this scenario
- ☐ Generally dislike this scenario
- ☐ Strongly dislike this scenario

I would vote for scenario 1 at Town Meeting:

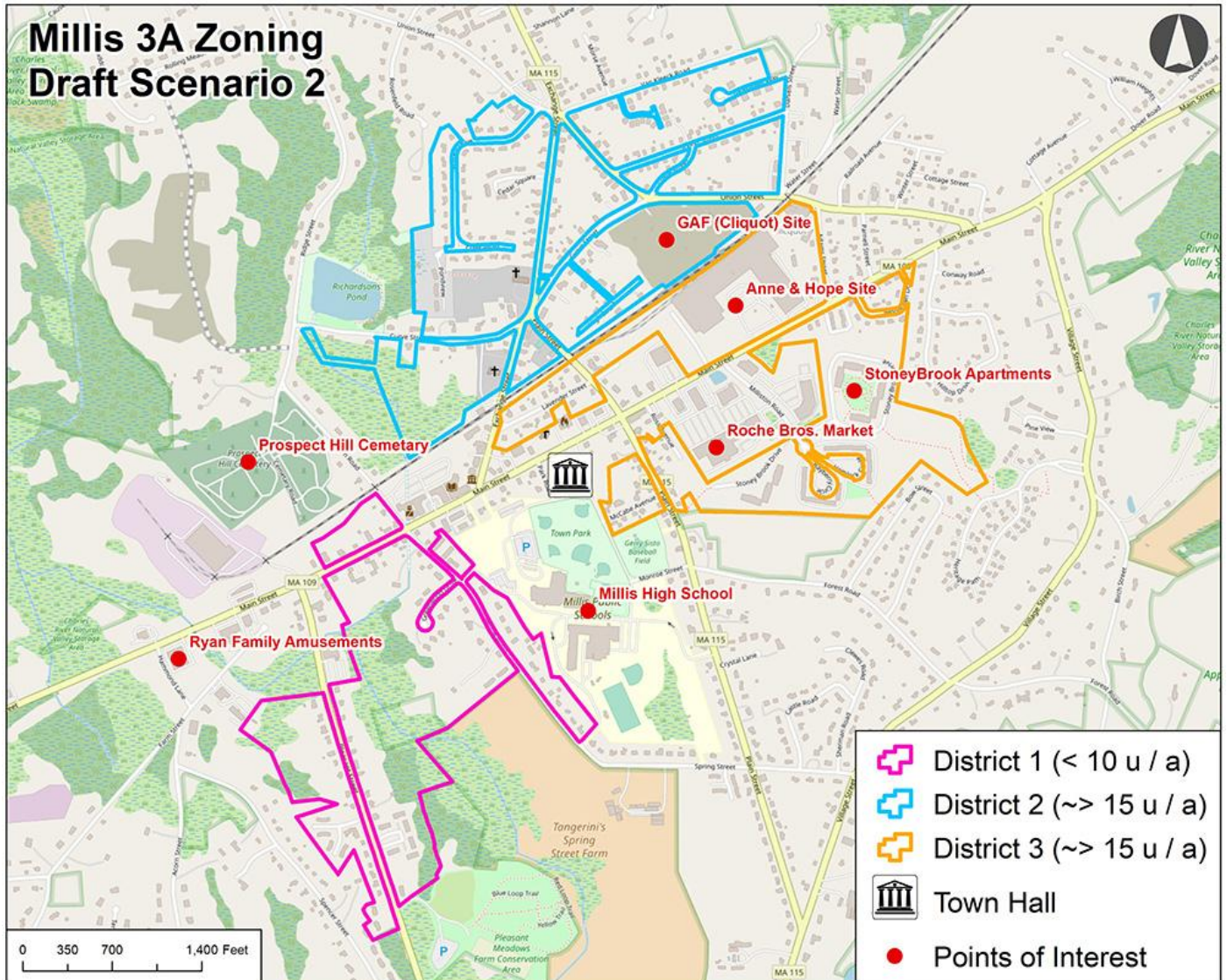
- ☐ As currently presented



- ☐ I would not support this scenario at Town Meeting
- ☐  If these changes were made:
- ☐ Please add any additional thoughts or comments on zoning scenario 1 below
- 

## Considering Zoning – Scenario 2

### Consider the following map:





- Maximum Density:
  - District one: Up to 10 units per acre
  - District two: A little more than 15 units per acre
  - District three: A little more than 15 units per acre
- Allowed Housing Types:
  - Townhouses in all districts
  - Optional mixed-use
  - Multifamily buildings no more than 10 apartments each in district 1
  - Multifamily buildings no more than 20 apartments each in districts 2 and 3





For zoning scenario 2, I:

- ☐ Enthusiastically support this scenario
- ☐ Generally like this scenario
- ☐ Am unsure how I feel about this scenario
- ☐ Generally dislike this scenario
- ☐ Strongly dislike this scenario

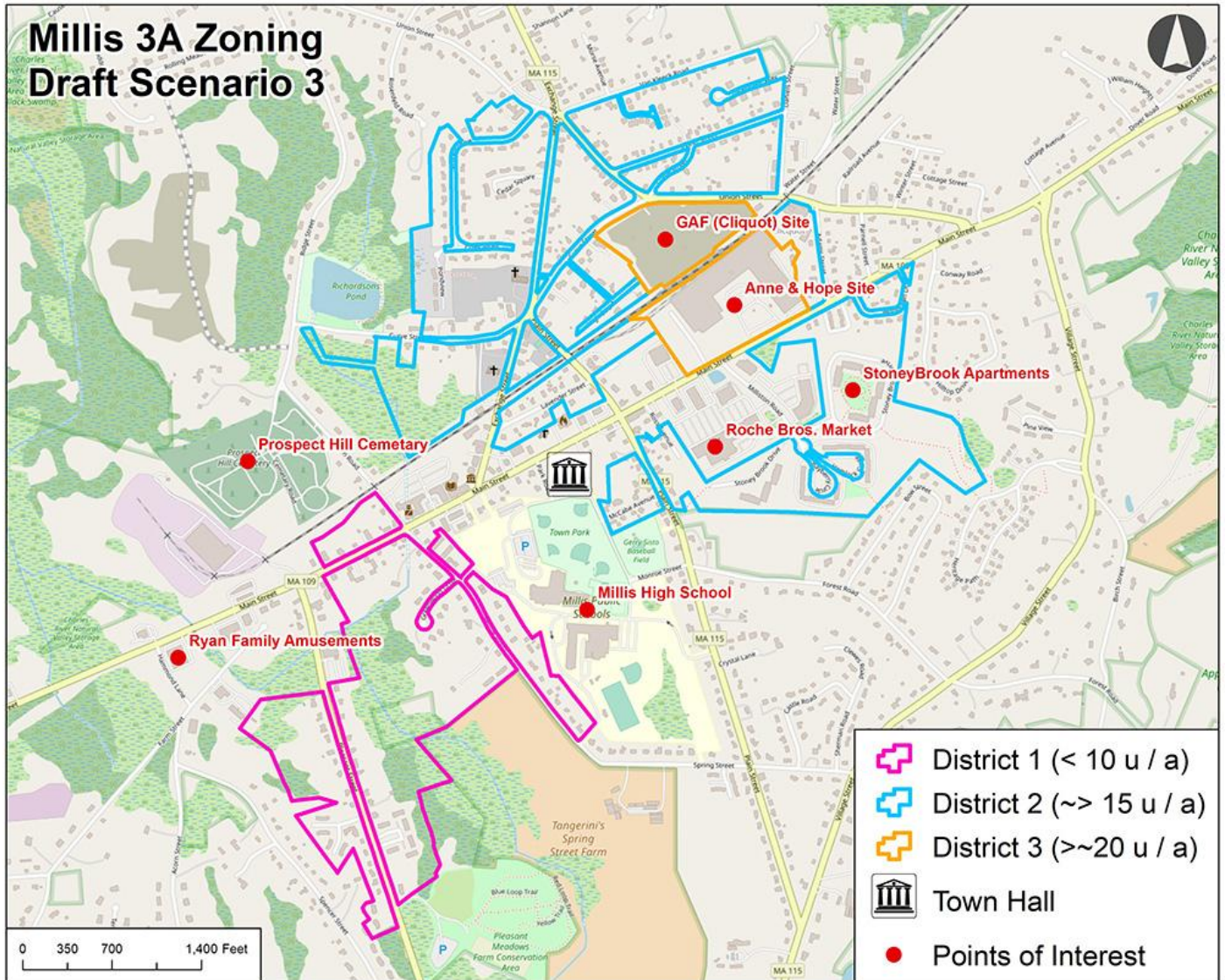
I would vote for scenario 2 at Town Meeting:

- ☐ As currently presented
- ☐ I would not support this scenario at Town Meeting
- ☐  If these changes were made:

- ☐ Please add any additional thoughts or comments on zoning scenario 2 below

# Considering Zoning – Scenario 3

## Consider the following map:



- **Maximum Density:**

- District one: Around 10 units per acre
- District two: Around 15 units per acre
- District three: Around 20 units per acre



- **Allowed Housing Types:**

- Townhouses in all districts
- Multifamily buildings no more than 10 apartments each in district 1
- Multifamily buildings no more than 20 apartments each in district 2
- Multifamily buildings no more than 30 apartments each in district 3
- Optional Mixed Use



For zoning scenario 3, I:

- ☐ Enthusiastically support this scenario
- ☐ Generally like this scenario
- ☐ Am unsure how I feel about this scenario
- ☐ Generally dislike this scenario
- ☐ Strongly dislike this scenario

I would vote for scenario 3 at Town Meeting:

- ☐ As currently presented
- ☐ I would not support this scenario at Town Meeting
- ☐  If these changes were made:
- ☐ Please add any additional thoughts or comments on zoning scenario 3 below

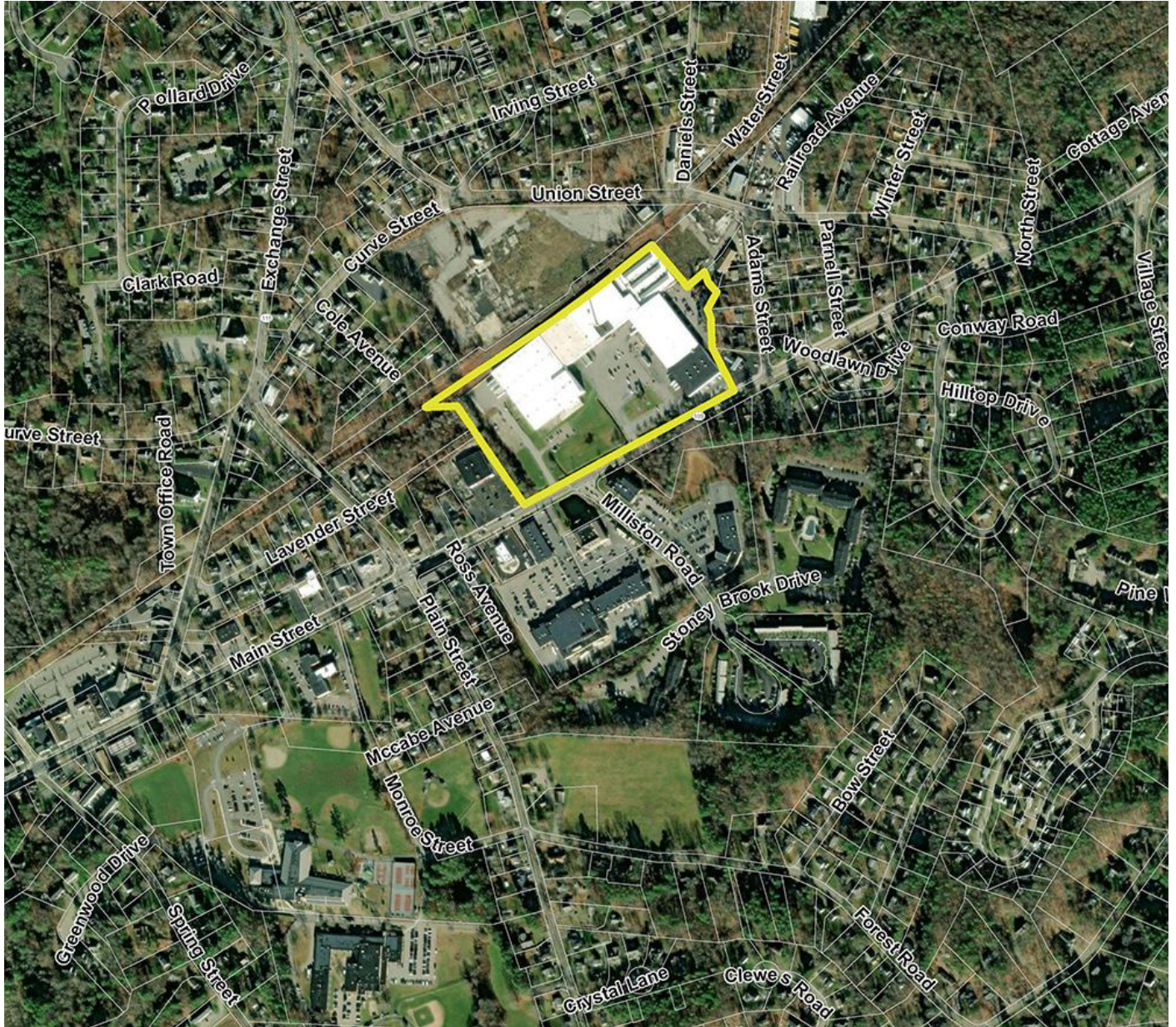
## **The Ann & Hope Site**

# **The Ann & Hope Site**

**Overview: The Ann & Hope site is a 18.2 acre property in the middle of the Town Center. Millis has been trying to**



**encourage commercial development on this site for a long time. We want to hear your thoughts on the possibilities for this site.**







Keep in mind we cannot decide what happens on the Ann & Hope site because it is privately owned, but zoning regulations can encourage what we'd like to see. **What do you think should be possible on the Ann & Hope Site? (check all the possibilities that you support)**

- ☐ A commercial shopping center
- ☐ A commercial shopping center with housing
- ☐ Multifamily housing without a commercial component

- ☐ Mixed-use buildings with commercial on the ground floor and housing above
- ☐ Space for offices
- ☐ Recreational facilities
- ☐ A grocery store
- ☐ Current Uses (light industrial and commercial)
- ☐ Green Space

### **3A Zoning and Affordable Housing**

**Overview:** Millis has the opportunity to bring community benefits from future housing development by requiring Affordable Housing units to be built in 3A zoning districts. Millis can require developers to build Affordable Housing at no cost to the Town.

The Millis Housing Production Plan (2019) identified a need for more Affordable Housing. Here are some of the **key findings:**

- **Millis residents are aging.** The town will need to add housing options for older residents as well as younger households entering the market.
- **Millis residents struggle to afford housing.** An estimated one-third of households in town are cost-burdened, meaning they spend more 30% of their income on housing costs.
- **There is a shortage of Affordable Housing in Millis:** As of 2023, just 3.59% of Millis's housing stock is Affordable. The state requires every community to have at least 10% of its housing stock be affordable. *Source: The Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, 2023).*

How supportive are you of asking developers to build Affordable Housing as a part of 3A zoning?



- ☐ Extremely supportive
- ☐ Very supportive
- ☐ Supportive
- ☐ Not supportive

If Affordable Housing is required through 3A zoning, what is your priority?

- ☐ **Maximize the number of Affordable Housing units:** Require developers to build as many Affordable Housing units as possible (based on financing).
- ☐ **Create Affordable Housing units that are available to more people:** Require developers to build fewer total Affordable Housing units but make the Affordable Housing units accessible for those that need them the most (very low-income households).

## Demographic Questions Block

### Demographics



Tell us about yourself! The following questions help us get a better understanding of who is participating in this survey so that we can ensure that all voices of Millis are heard. All answers are optional and will be kept confidential.

## Demographics



How do you identify your race and ethnicity? Select any that apply:

- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Native American/Indigenous
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Hispanic/Latinx
- ☐ Middle Eastern/North African
- ☐ White
- ☐ Multi-racial

- ☐ Not sure
- ☐ I prefer not to answer

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐  Other
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

What is your age?

- ☐ 18 or younger
- ☐ 19-29
- ☐ 30-39
- ☐ 40-49
- ☐ 50-59
- ☐ 60-69
- ☐ 70-79
- ☐ 80 or older
- ☐ Prefer not to answer



## Demographics



How long have you lived in Millis?

- ☐ 0-5 years
- ☐ 6-10 years
- ☐ 11-15 years
- ☐ 16-20 years
- ☐ 21+ years
- ☐ I don't live in Millis, but I do own a business here
- ☐ I don't live in Millis **or** own a business here
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Do you or any members of your household match the following descriptions? Check all that apply.

- ☐ Child(ren) under 18
- ☐ Senior(s) age 65 or above
- ☐ Person(s) with a disability
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

What describes your housing situation?

- ☐ I own my home
- ☐ I rent my home
- ☐ Neither
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

What is your annual household income?

- ☐ Under \$10,000
- ☐ \$10,000 to \$14,999
- ☐ \$15,000 to \$24,999
- ☐ \$25,000 to \$34,999
- ☐ \$35,000 to \$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000 to \$74,999
- ☐ \$75,000 to \$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000 to \$149,999
- ☐ \$150,000 to \$199,999
- ☐ Over \$200,000
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Interested in updates from MAPC? Leave your name and email here to get updates about the project and future forums.

Name

Email

Town of Millis, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

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