

CHAPTER 40R - SMART GROWTH DISTRICTS



Former Holyoke Catholic High School

What is a Smart Growth District?

This is a district in which the community has decided it would like to encourage housing and mixed use (residential and office or retail uses together in one area). Usually these districts are located in or near town centers and help to maintain the character of the community's 'downtown'. At least 20% of the housing units created in this district will have to be affordable to families who make approximately \$50,000 per household annually.

Why do we need Smart Growth Districts?

Well-designed residential, commercial and mixed use development can be a valuable addition to a

community's tax base, a source of jobs, and an attractive component of the character of the community center(s). Adopting a Smart Growth Zoning District can:

- Create a range of housing and transportation options for residents;
- Foster a sense of place by encouraging distinctive and attractive neighborhoods & centers;
- Take advantage of the quality of life improvements that can be gained by mixing housing, commercial activities, access to open space, and transportation options;
- Preserve farmland and critical environmental areas by directing growth to areas with existing infrastructure; and
- Earn the community priority for state funding programs that are part of the state's Commonwealth Capital program.

Also, the municipality will be eligible for an incentive payment of between \$10,000 and \$600,000 depending on the number of new units that this district allows. These funds are unrestricted and may be used to meet the community's needs.

How does this strategy work?

In its zoning ordinance or bylaw, a municipality may adopt a smart growth zoning overlay district in an eligible location, as defined by the Chapter 40R enabling legislation. Within this district, a city or town shall zone for primary residential use as of right and may also permit business, commercial or other uses by right or by limited site plan review. The minimum density requirements within a Smart Growth District are 8 units/acre for single family homes, 12 units/acre for two and three family homes, and 20 units/acre for multifamily units. The community also develops design standards for this district to assure that the required density is achieved in a way that preserves and reflects the existing character in the town's district.

DID YOU KNOW...

Chapter 40S is additional state funding that is directed to cities and towns that establish a 40R district, to cover the costs of educating any school-age children who move into such districts. This legislation was in response to the common concern that new housing was costly in terms of municipal finances, given the imbalance of tax revenues and service costs. Qualifying communities will be reimbursed for the net cost of educating students living in new housing in smart growth districts.

EXAMPLES FROM THE PIONEER VALLEY

Sub-regional Smart Growth Zoning Districts Approach

Easthampton, Holyoke and Westfield applied together and were awarded Priority Development Funds to create Smart Growth Zoning Districts and are working with Pioneer Valley Planning Commission staff to achieve this.

In the first stage of the process, areas that could be eligible for smart growth districts were mapped based on the 40R eligibility criteria and draft smart growth overlay ordinances and design standards are being developed. In the next stage of the process an advisory committee from each community will review the potential smart growth district maps and draft bylaw for their city. There will be a public outreach effort in all three communities prior to the adoption of a 40R Smart Growth District or the submission of a 40R application to the Department of Housing and Community Development.

Communities in Massachusetts that have adopted a Smart Growth District

Amesbury
Chelsea
Dartmouth
Haverhill
Lakeville
Lunenburg
North Reading
Norwood

As part of the 40R application to DHCD, housing needs assessments are being completed and/or updated and community housing goals and strategies are being developed.

[MODEL CHAPTER 40R SMART GROWTH BYLAW \(DHCD\)](#)



8 Units Per Acre



12 Units Per Acre



20 Units Per Acre



Source: Massachusetts Smart Growth Toolkit