

MBTA Communities Messaging: convey your support for the MBTA Communities Act and sway your friends and neighbors!

Increasing Housing Choices

- Our community needs a range of housing options that are appropriate for families in different stages of life. Allowing multi-family housing to be built will allow young families to move back to their hometowns, as well as creating space for empty nesters to downsize in their own communities.

Counter example: Many people are not moved by messaging like “Massachusetts has a housing supply crisis and we all need to do our part to help build more housing!” This makes them feel like the onus is on them to solve a statewide problem, instead of making it clear that MBTA Communities zoning is beneficial for their specific community.

- The MBTA Communities Act is a reasonable, incremental shift towards solving Massachusetts’ housing supply shortage. It is not radical and will not turn small communities into Boston. Instead, it will preserve and expand upon the character of great neighborhoods that include duplexes and triple deckers.

Counter example: Undecided community members are unlikely to be swayed by messaging that the MBTA Communities Act is radical and revolutionary. People who are on the fence may fear that their suburban town is going to suddenly gain multiple new high rise buildings, so don’t say things like “I’m so excited for Wellesley to take on their fair share of the housing crisis and build a 10 story apartment complex!”

Reducing Housing Costs

- The cost of housing in [insert your community here] is prohibitive and this is driven in part by a lack of housing supply. When there is a shortage of housing, wealthier buyers and renters bid up the cost of housing for the few homes that are available.

Counter example: Avoid arguments about whether rezoning will lower property values on community members’ existing homes. Instead, emphasize that having lots of different types of homes is a stabilizing factor for the local economy, and keeps our communities thriving by allowing teachers, nurses, small business owners etc. to remain in our community.

Creating a sustainable future

- The MBTA Communities Act is good for the climate – transit oriented development encourages more people to travel via public transit and decreases dependence on cars. It also preserves green space by focusing new development in already populated areas.

Counter example: Avoid getting into the weeds with people with “chicken and egg” arguments about whether transit oriented development should wait until after the MBTA

is “fixed.” More people living near and utilizing public transit is **good regardless** and signals to our policy-makers that they should continue investing in fixing the MBTA.

Investing in the local economy

- More homes mean new residents, and new residents mean more customers for local businesses. Additionally, retaining employees has been a challenge for many businesses. Building new housing will make it easier for employers to find and retain workers who live nearby.

Counter example: Housing advocates are often put on the defensive by claims that more housing will only lead to negative changes, such as overcrowded schools or more crime. It is important to get ahead of this and emphasize that there are real economic benefits for increasing housing supply. It is ok to play to people’s economic self-interest!

Addressing Systemic Inequalities

- For over 100 years, local zoning codes have been used to intentionally exclude minority communities from certain cities and towns in Massachusetts. Rezoning through the MBTA Communities law gives cities and towns the opportunity to change laws that drive the racial wealth gap and perpetuate *de facto* segregation.

Counter example: While there might be pushback to talking about racial justice, it is necessary because many of the rules that exist today were originally designed to exclude low-income and minority communities. Reforming zoning codes to allow for more housing is a great place to start for those who want to know how they can make a meaningful difference in addressing systemic racism and inequality.

Elevator pitch:

Buying and renting a home has gotten so expensive in Massachusetts because cities and towns across the state have used local zoning codes to prevent enough homes from being built. The MBTA Communities law directly addresses this by having cities and towns served by the MBTA create a zoning district where multi-family housing is allowed. This will tangibly benefit your community in three important ways:

1. **More Affordable Homes:** New homes being built will help moderate prices in the area by balancing out the current mismatch between the current supply of housing and the demand for new housing. This will provide seniors, young people, and workers, such as teachers and first responders the opportunity to live in the communities they grew up in and/or work in.
2. **Stronger Local Economy:** More homes means new residents, and new residents mean more customers for local businesses and increased foot traffic in central business districts. New housing will also make it easier for employers to find and retain workers who live nearby.
3. **Climate-friendly Neighborhoods:** Neighborhoods built around public transportation and walkable town centers are better for the environment because they preserve green space, encourage modes of transportation besides cars, and consume less energy on a per-capita basis

