



Zoning for Healthy Community Design

Frequently Asked Questions: The Comprehensive Land Use Reform and Partnership Act (CLURPA)

What is CLURPA?

The Comprehensive Land Use Reform and Partnership Act (CLURPA) is Senate Bill 1019, a bill sponsored by State Senator Jamie Eldridge and State Representative Stephen Kulik that aims to update Massachusetts' antiquated planning and zoning laws. These updates will facilitate prompt and predictable permitting for jobs and housing, strong community planning, and protection of the state's natural resources and public health.

CLURPA takes a two-tiered approach to land use and zoning in the Commonwealth – all communities will benefit from statewide reforms, while those communities that choose to “opt in” to the Partnership Communities program will receive incentives to plan and permit to meet economic development, housing, and natural resource protection goals.

Why is CLURPA important now?

- The American Planning Association concluded that Massachusetts has some of the weakest and most outdated land-use laws in the nation.
- Massachusetts is ranked near the bottom – 47th in the nation – in availability of affordable housing.
- The Food Trust reported that Massachusetts has fewer supermarkets per capita than almost any other state.
- Massachusetts has lost a significant amount of farmland, forests, and natural areas to sprawl.
- Our sprawling development patterns have led to long commutes and high transportation and housing costs, which stifle economic competitiveness.

Updated and improved planning and zoning laws can help us overcome these barriers to high quality of life and good public health.

How does CLURPA impact local planning and zoning?

By clarifying existing laws on master planning, CLURPA seeks to ensure that zoning and development reflects community needs and is not haphazard. Each community's master plan will look different. Strong plans will include areas to protect as open space and areas in which to focus commercial and residential development. “Smart growth” development that prevents sprawl while concentrating development in mixed residential-commercial districts can help promote walking and biking, increased community safety, protection of open spaces for recreation, conservation, and agriculture, improved access to healthy food choices, and reduced exposure to pollution. Under CLURPA, local zoning ordinances and by-laws must be consistent with their master plans, ensuring that land use decisions follow local planning goals.

Municipal master planning is already required under current Massachusetts law. The number of required subjects in the master plan would be reduced under CLURPA. Flexibility in how the plan is organized, and the treatment of each subject, would be flexible. Communities without a master plan, or who do not want to update an aging master plan, would be allowed to adopt an existing regional plan developed by the appropriate Regional Planning Agency.

How will CLURPA impact development?

CLURPA would give communities new and improved tools. For instance, the bill would provide explicit authority to require that developers pay impact fees, which could be used to support infrastructure like public transit, sidewalks, bike paths, or parks. The bill would also allow communities to have more oversight of new subdivisions – an area in which current law promotes sprawl and minimizes local input. CLURPA would allow municipalities to require that new subdivisions include parks or playgrounds and provide streets that promote low traffic speed and accommodate pedestrians and cyclists. CLURPA seeks to minimize some local regulations – like requiring large lots for all new housing – that can promote sprawl and contribute to high housing costs.

What is the Partnership Communities Program?

The Partnership Communities Program is the opt-in portion of CLURPA. It provides an option for communities to gain further incentives, such as prioritized state funding and technical assistance, by opting to meet higher performance standards consistent with state health, environmental, housing and economic development goals.

Will CLURPA slow development and cost jobs? Will it be costly to municipalities?

No. CLURPA seeks to promote prompt and predictable permitting and development that balances interests in environmental protection, public health, and housing, with local control and oversight. Strong local planning, zoning, and permitting can improve and speed up development – which improves economic competitiveness, eases pressure on housing costs, and reduces commuting times. Under CLURPA, master planning is streamlined, and the option to adopt a regional plan is allowed. In addition, CLURPA would provide \$11 million in bond funding for technical assistance to support municipal and regional planning.

Is it possible for CLURPA to pass this year?

Yes! There is growing agreement that changes to our zoning and planning statutes are urgently needed and that we can only accomplish these changes through reasonable compromise among a variety of viewpoints and interests. Last year, a version of CLURPA was reported favorably out of legislative committee – a major step toward passage. Now is the prime time to pass CLURPA!

Several other related bills have been filed, including the Land Use Partnership Act (LUPA), which shares very similar goals and a number of identical provisions. We believe that CLURPA represents the strongest and most comprehensive approach.

Who is supporting CLURPA? What can I do to support CLURPA?

Supporters include housing, environmental, smart growth, and public health advocates; regional planning agencies from across the state; and municipal leaders from communities as varied as Saugus, Salem, Burlington, Acton, Boston, Holyoke, Framingham, Easthampton, Belchertown, Beverly, Nantucket, and Hadley.

To increase legislative support for CLURPA, contact your legislators and ask them to endorse the bill. Express how CLURPA will benefit public health in your region. Materials to support your legislative advocacy are available at www.MPHAweb.org/Zoning_Reform.htm or by contacting MPHA.



Learn more and get involved!

For more information, contact Maddie Ribble: 617-524-6696 x111 or mribble@mphaweb.org