

## HOW IS REASONABLE SIZE DEFINED?

Section 3A of the Zoning Act (MGL c40A) states that “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.” [Section 5 of the 3A Guidelines](#) provides that reasonable size is measured in two ways.

One way reasonable size is defined is the minimum land area. Most communities have a minimum required land area of 50 acres, and specific land area requirements by municipality can be found [here](#).

### How big is 50 acres?



Fifty acres is 1/10 of area within the ½ mile radius around a transit station, which is called the **transit station area**.



Fifty acres is a small fraction of a community's total land area. In fact, when all of the minimum land area requirements are combined, the total area is less than 1% of developable land area in the MBTA communities.



It takes approximately 20 minutes to walk the perimeter of 50 acres

Reasonable size is also defined through unit capacity, which is a measure of the number of multi-family units that zoning allows in the district. Although some multi-family units may already exist, unit capacity for any given lot may be higher or lower than existing development on a site, depending on what number of units are allowed in the zoning. Learn about what unit capacity is and how a community's unit capacity requirement is determined on the fact sheet “What is Unit Capacity?”

## HOW IS REASONABLE SIZE MEASURED?

A community must use the [Compliance Model](#) to determine if its district(s) meet reasonable size requirements.

### Minimum land area

The map-based portion of the Compliance Model is used to determine the area of the district(s). Some types of land are excluded from the land area measurement, so the Compliance Model must be used to measure area.

### Unit capacity

The Excel-based portion of the Compliance Model is used to determine the unit capacity of the district(s). The Compliance Model takes the zoning requirements into account, as well as other factors such as lot size, parking requirements, excluded land and open space requirements.

More information on how to use the Compliance Model is available in the [Compliance Model User Guide](#) on the MBTA Communities webpage.