

THE BALLARDVALE GAZETTE

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALLARDVALE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Vol. 21, No. 1 BallardVale, Massachusetts Spring-Summer 2024

Zoning Change for Ballardvale? Q&A with Monica Gregoire

At the Town Meeting on April 29 and 30, residents will have a chance to vote on the creation of a multifamily housing district that would comply with the state's MBTA Communities zoning law, which addresses the state's acute housing shortage. The law requires towns served by the MBTA to create a zoning district of at least 50 acres where multifamily housing, with a minimum density of at least 15 units per acre, is permitted. Andover must create and adopt a compliant zone by December 31, 2024, or lose important state grants and be subject to legal action. Associate Planner Monica Gregoire, of the Andover Department of Community Development and Planning, had answers to some questions about the new Multifamily Zoning Overlay District proposed for Ballardvale.

Where would Andover site this district?

MG: The Town solicited input from residents and a consensus emerged that the community wanted to diversify the locations rather than have a single 50-acre district. The plan now is for the district requirement to be divided among three parts of town served by the MBTA: downtown near the commuter rail station, near the Ballardvale station, and in the MVRTA zone along River Road and I-93. You can see the proposed districts at andoverma.gov/mbtacommunity.

Where is the proposed Ballardvale district?

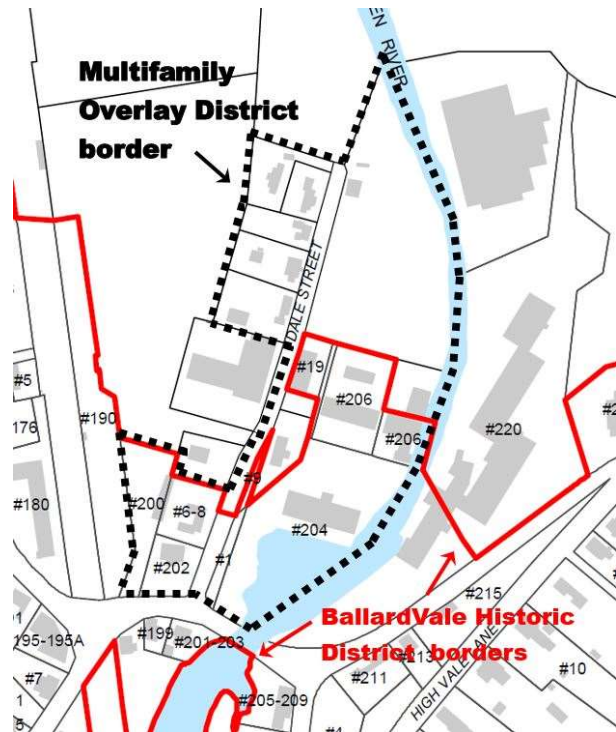
MG: The district would include the historic brick mill building that abuts the millpond, portions of the land behind the mill building along Dale Street, and the service station across Dale Street.

[\[See map showing district borders\]](#)



How big is this proposed Ballardvale district?

MG: It covers an area of approximately 9 acres, with a capacity that's the smallest of the three zones: 119 units (proposed to allow for a gross density of 17 units per acre).



Would the Town have anything to say about how any overlay development might affect traffic and public utilities?

MG: Applicants must comply with Site Plan Review submission regulations. The Planning Board will submit the proposal to relevant departments to review and approve factors like traffic, water and sewer, landscaping, and lighting. Proposals in the Historic District would need to be reviewed by the BVHDC. These reviews happen separately and report back to the Planning Board, which may approve the Site Plan application only if the proposed development meets the provisions of the Zoning Bylaw and will not result in detriment to the town or neighborhood. The Planning Board may require special reports or studies such as drainage, health, water, and safety in association with an application. Also, any development of more than 10 units must abide by Andover's inclusionary zoning rules (i.e., provide some affordable housing).

Would overlay district developers of properties in the Historic District need to comply with requirements of the Ballardvale Historic District?

MG: Yes. All housing is subject to and must comply with Historic District regulations as well as the Wetlands Protection Act. It is very important we maintain Andover's Historic Character. The zoning overlay

requirements are actually similar to those of the base districts, so no new development would look out of place.

Does having an overlay district mean the area will automatically be developed into multifamily housing?

MG: The law does not require construction at all. What the MBTA Law does is provide a property owner with options. The property owner could leave their parcel as is or redevelop it in accordance with the rules set forth in the zoning regulations. The law doesn't require construction of multifamily units. It does mean that a property owner could sell to a developer who could build multifamily units, or the property owner could do that.

If the proposed overlay district passes at Town Meeting, what then?

MG: Our plan would then need to be approved by the state, specifically the attorney general's office and the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities.

Village Food Hub Is Official

Village Food Hub, which rents space at the Ballardvale United Church on Clark Road, became an official 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in February 2023. The Hub manages both the 24-hour, self-serve Community Pantry and Fridge located in the lower church parking lot and a robust food rescue operation. Hub leaders and volunteers keep busy with managing and stocking the pantry, fundraising, forming partnerships with other organizations fighting food insecurity, and continually looking for partnerships for food rescue.

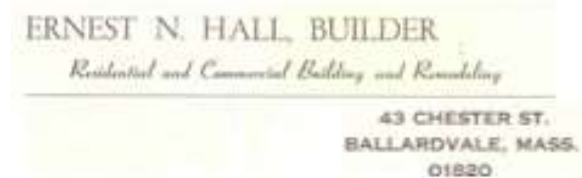


In February the Hub rescued 6,500 pounds of food — by July they hope to reach 8,000 pounds a month. Rescued food helps fill the pantry as well as the Lawrence Community Fridge. In March the Hub also contributed to Neighbors in Need, Bread and Roses, Daybreak Shelter, House of Mercy, MVYMCA in Lawrence's pantry, Greater Lawrence Technical High School's pantry, the Kindness Collaborative's initiative for MV Dream Center, and the People's Pantry in North Andover. The Village Food Hub regularly hosts school and club field trips and volunteer opportunities. A group from Andover's Crest Collaborative works at the Hub weekly to learn vocational skills while volunteering.

People use the food pantry approximately 1,000 times per month. Volunteers fill it two to four times a day depending on volunteer and food availability. Community members also contribute by dropping food off in the pantry and by donating money so volunteers can shop (funds donated to the pantry fund are used only for this purpose). For more information and to volunteer, email s.mcleod@villagefoodhub.org.

Ballardvale, MA 01820

In the 1960s, Ballardvale had something that truly set it apart from the rest of Andover: its own zip code. When zip codes were first implemented in 1963, Ballardvale was assigned 01820. Not surprisingly, when the post office eventually merged Ballardvale with the rest of 01810, the switch caused inconvenience and confusion. Before the change, High Vale Lane was High Street, duplicating one of the main thoroughfares in downtown Andover. After the zip code switch, High Street Ballardvale residents addressed the confusion with the name change. According to River Street resident Audrey Nason, her River Street neighbors didn't want to change their street name, and we still find people looking for River Street in West Andover, and River Road in Ballardvale. As for 01820, you'll now find it on envelopes addressed to Woburn.



Thanks to John McIntyre for this evidence of 01820 in Ballardvale.

Meet Your Neighbor: Pat (Smalley) Brouillard

Pat (Smalley) Brouillard says her earliest memory of living in the Vale is playing in the BallardVale Playground. She figures she was only 5 at the time, but her recall 80 years later is pretty remarkable.

"We would play checkers on four tables the Andover Rec Department had set up down there for us along with some swings and the ball field," recalls Pat, who at 85 years young possesses a great smile and sunny disposition. "There were about 10 of us kids in the BallardVale gang back then and we were all about the same age. We had a lot of fun at that playground."

Years later when the gang got older, Pat says they would walk the three or so miles downtown to go to the movie house on Essex Street. "Not many of our families owned cars. We didn't think twice about walking that far back then."

Pat has so many happy memories of growing up in the Vale and loves to relive them. All you have to do is prompt and her mind takes you back to an earlier and less complicated time when the Vale was still sparsely populated, and Pat says everyone knew each other by name.



She says she has lived here nearly her entire life in the same house, the handsome white colonial with the black shutters and white picket fence that follow steps to the front porch and door. Her well-maintained yard, which is often a gathering spot for the Vale's famous white squirrels, is perched on top of a small hill at 19 Hall Avenue. She says there were only three or four other houses on the street when her family moved there on December 11, 1943, and it would be years before the church on Clark Road was even built.

Pat says there used to be a farm across the way that was owned by a family who boarded horses that could be ridden down a nearby dirt trail for 10 cents.

Again, Pat has so many happy memories of her early neighbors and childhood friends. The gang of kids she hung with included Joan Jedrey, Joan Wilson, Gail Goodwin, and Richard Nolin. (Apologies if any of these names are misspelled). "Like I said there 10 of us kids in Vale that were all about the same age and we went to Bradlee School, named after the former principal there, and then to the Punchard High School together," says Pat, who graduated from Punchard in 1956.

Pat, who's first job was working at Pete's Variety in downtown on Elm Street, alternating between the store's soda fountain and the little store on the other side that sold vegetables and fruit and other grocery items. Most of her professional career was spent in accounting, working for the Andover Companies.

"I had a great childhood in the Vale," Pat says. "It's changed a lot but I still like being here."

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Save the Date

Get ready to celebrate the Vale. The next Ballardvale Day is set for October 19. See you at the Ballardvale Playground!

FAQs

Ask the BallardVale Historic District Commission

We need to repair sections of our fence. Do we need to comply with any Historic District standards? What about installing quality vinyl fencing?

If a repair will be made with the same material and design as the existing fence, approval is not required. If you are replacing a fence with different material or installing one that will be more than a foot high and "visible from a public way," you do need to get approval. This includes stone and retaining walls. Fences more than six feet high also need a building permit. The BVHDC has approved wood and Hardi-plank type of fencing. They would be likely to approve wrought iron fencing as long as it's placed in an appropriate location and with an appropriate style of house. Vinyl (or plastic) fencing is not acceptable in the BVHD.

BVHDC Application Change

In an effort to cut down on paper, the Town has decided that all applications, including those made to the BallardVale Historic District Commission, are now to be completed and submitted electronically. Applications are due five weeks before the meeting at which they will be heard.

Are you interested in serving on the BallardVale Historic District Commission?

Go to TownofAndover.gov and enter "Talent Bank Form" in the search box. Then fill out the Talent bank form and click on the submit button. You will be contacted when there is an opening.

Questions? Suggestions? Feedback?

If you have a question for the BallardVale Historic District Commission or a suggestion for a topic you'd like to see covered in a future issue of the BallardVale Gazette, please contact the editors:

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BallardVale Historic District Commission

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CALENDAR

Wednesday, May 8 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting

Check the Town website for location — 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, June 5 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting

Check the Town website for location — 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday, July 3 BallardVale Historic District Commission Monthly Meeting

Check the Town website for location — 7:00 p.m.

Saturday, October 19 Ballardvale Day

Ballardvale Playground — 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.