



MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 25, 2024

RE: Northborough Town Hall, Code Triggers

Scott Charpentier  
Town of Northborough  
63 Main Street  
Northborough, MA 01532

Scott,

Below is an explanation of typical existing building/accessibility code triggers for the State of Massachusetts. We categorize them into four areas: accessibility, energy, systems, and building.

**Accessibility:** these code requirements are based on the cost of the project. There is a 36-month window for projects: thus, if you do a roof one year and renovate a conference room the next, the sum total construction cost of those projects must be considered.

- Under \$100,000 – no accessibility work is required.
- Over \$100,000 but less than 30% appraised value of the building – the owner must provide one each of the following: accessible parking space, path, and entrance within 200’ of the building, an accessible toilet room, accessible drinking fountain, and if provided, an accessible telephone.
- Work totaling over 30% of the appraised value of the building – the entire building must be made accessible.

**Energy:** these requirements are town-based. Few towns use the based energy code and less than a dozen have opted-in to the “Specialized” energy code. Most towns, including Northborough, have opted-in to the “Stretch” energy code. The Stretch code is the IECC 2021 with Massachusetts amendments focused being more energy efficient. Changes took effect July 1, 2023, and the requirements are a big jump from IECC 2015, the previous code. For existing buildings:

- Additions and new construction must comply with IECC 2021/Stretch energy code.
- Any alterations to the existing building envelope must be compliant with new construction; however, unaltered envelope, under many circumstances (there are exceptions), can be retained.

**Systems:** typically, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and fire alarm and protection systems have two relatively simple rules:

- For equipment repairs, or any portion of a system under repair, the scope of work needs to be to the current code.
- For new systems of any type, the entire system needs to be built to current code.

**Building:** for existing buildings, these requirements have more malleability and exceptions. These codes involve spatial requirements and clearances, egress, fire separation rules and structural to name a few. The code requirements for existing buildings are based on the percent area of a building and type of work that's being done – finishes or spatial reconfiguration. All Northborough Town Hall projects using existing buildings will be *Level Three* alterations. This will require the following:

- All work within the work area will need to be to code. Because more than 50% of the building will be affected and space will be reconfigured, the existing buildings will be required to meet all structural codes and all fire suppression codes. This will require seismic work for structural and a new fire suppression system.
- If an existing building has an addition, all parts of the addition will be required to meet all current codes.

This is a summary to help understand code and cost implications of a Northborough Town Hall project. There are numerous exceptions and caveats, and it is impossible to cover them all here. If a project were to move forward, a code consultant will be brought on-board, and the Town and Building Committee will have a complete understanding of all requirements.