Samantha McDonald Discusses Massachusetts Ballot Question on Residential Lot Sizes

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As Massachusetts voters prepare to consider Ballot Question 7 in November, uncertainties remain about how the proposed zoning change could affect residential development. The measure would reduce the minimum lot size for home construction, setting a statewide minimum residential zoning requirement of 5,000 square feet. To be buildable under the provision, a lot would also need access to public sewer and water and at least 50 feet of frontage on the street, road or public way it faces. The proposal would not apply to Boston, which has its own zoning regulations. If the question fails, existing requirements would remain unchanged.

Samantha McDonald discussed the proposed changes with the *Worcester Business Journal*, noting that voters may benefit from reviewing existing zoning regulations to put the proposal in context.

> Most three-decker apartment buildings are built on 5,000-square-foot lots, she pointed out. Although Question 7 would apply only to single-family homes, that comparison offers a useful reference point for understanding the size of the lots involved.
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> "I think it's maybe caused a little bit more concern than is entirely warranted," she said. "The reality is it's not going to make every relatively small parcel buildable."

Samantha also noted that more than a dozen Worcester County towns lack public water or sewer service, which would automatically exclude them from the law's jurisdiction. In many towns that do have public utilities, service is concentrated in downtown and village areas, where housing is already more densely concentrated.

> "I think it provides an opportunity," she said, but not as big an opportunity as people hope for or fear.

Read the article "Ballot question would reduce house lot sizes" on the *Worcester Business Journal* website (subscription required).

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