



HOUSING CHOICE DESIGNATION

2025 Designation Criteria and Best Practices



A community must demonstrate the Required Implemented Policies and must meet one of the following criteria to be considered for Housing Choice Community designation:

1. **At least 7% increase or 700 new units*** permitted over the previous 5 years.
2. **At least 5% increase or 500 new units*** permitted over the previous 5 years **AND** 6 of 21 best practices implemented, two of which must be affordable.
3. **At least 3% increase or 300 new units*** permitted over the previous 5 years **AND** 10 of 21 best practices implemented, four of which must be affordable.
4. **At least 1.5% increase or 150 new units*** permitted over the previous 5 years **AND** 14 of 21 best practices implemented, six of which must be affordable.

*2025 Pilot: previously vacant properties that have been rehabilitated and brought back online can count as a “new unit” for purposes of the Housing Choice Community Designation.

The following Required Implemented Policies and Best Practices that support housing are used to evaluate applicants seeking designation as a Housing Choice Community and as scoring criteria in the Housing Choice Grant Program.

Required Implemented Policies

- ✱ **Multi-Family Zoning:** Have at least one multi-family zoning district that allows for multi-family housing as of right (in addition to any 40R district/s) that does not restrict development by age of occupant or number of bedrooms.
- ✱ **Property Tax Relief/Community Impact Fee:** Adopted local option property tax relief programs for income-eligible seniors as provided for by statute (MGL c. 59 section 5) or through a home rule petition; OR adopted a Community Impact Fee for short term rentals (MGL c. 64G, section 3D) where the community has committed in writing to using a portion of such revenues for affordable housing.

Housing Choice Best Practices

Affordable Best Practices

- 1) **Inclusionary Zoning:** Have Inclusionary Zoning with density bonuses that provides for reasonable density increases so that housing is not unreasonably precluded.
- 2) **40R/40Y District:** Have an approved 40R Smart Growth or 40Y Starter Home district that remains in compliance with programs. Communities that repeal but do not replace a district do not qualify for this best practice.
- 3) **Transit-Oriented Development:** Have created new districts, changed zoning, or dedicated local resources to incentivize transit-oriented development in the last 5 years.
- 4) **Housing Rehab Funding:** Have designated local resources to owners/developers of vacant and dilapidated properties to rehab and bring properties online in the last 5 years, such as spending local

funding, putting forth staff resources, allocating a significant portion of municipal funds (such as but not limited to CPA/CDBG/HOME) to housing rehab projects, or providing technical assistance.

- 5) **Local Rehab Collaboration:** Demonstrated at least two of the following in the last 5 years:
 - Participated in a Housing Rehab Training Program for municipal rehabilitation staff,
 - Promoted home efficiency or rehab programs such as MassSaves, the Neighborhood HUB, Habitat for Humanity, or statewide housing rehabilitation programs, or
 - Worked with local organizations and home builders to complete rehabilitation projects.
- 6) **40B Approval:** Have a demonstrated pattern of accepting 40B projects without imposing conditions that render projects uneconomic or unfeasible. 40B projects that result from having a local comprehensive permit decision overturned by the Housing Appeals Committee (HAC) do not count towards this best practice.
- 7) **SHI at/above 10%:** Have units currently eligible for inclusion in the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) that equal or exceed 10% of total year-round housing stock according to the EOHLC subsidized housing inventory, where reaching such 10% threshold was not the result of having a local comprehensive permit decision overturned by the Housing Appeals Committee (HAC).
- 8) **SHI Increase of at Least 2.5%:** Increased your community's SHI by at least 2.5% points in the last 5 years where such increase was not the result of having a local comprehensive permit decision overturned by the Housing Appeals Committee (HAC).
- 9) **Local Actions that Support Housing:** Demonstrate at least two of the following local resources for housing:
 - Established an Affordable Housing Trust,
 - Re-used or redeveloped donated or surplus land for housing in the last 5 years, or
 - Spent at least 25% of all Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds for housing in the last 5 years.

Other Best Practices

- 10) **City/Town-Wide Multi-Family Zoning:** Have city or town-wide multi-family zoning that permits at least 2-family homes as of right.
- 11) **Mixed-Use Zoning:** Have at least one zoning district that allows residential/mixed-use development as of right that is not part of a 40R district.
- 12) **Cluster Development:** Have at least one zoning district that allows Cluster or Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) as of right.
- 13) **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU):** Have local zoning bylaws that are more permissive than MGL c. 40A section 3 and 760 CMR 71.000, such as reduced parking requirements, reduced dimensional standards, or expedited permitting.
- 14) **Zoning Incentives:** Demonstrate at least two policies that incentivize housing production by removing zoning barriers to housing, such as:
 - Reduced parking requirements for multi-family units,
 - No requirements for more than one parking space per unit for multi-family units,
 - Reduced minimum lot sizes and set-back rules, or
 - Allow for greater building height and density.
- 15) **Resilient Buildings:** Have development standards or programs that incentivize decarbonization, including energy efficiency for new construction and/or rehabilitation, such as low-impact development (LID) practices, Stretch Code, Opt-in Specialized Stretch Code, renewable energy integration, or participation in the Energy Star program.

- 16) Climate Resiliency Planning:** Have a climate resiliency plan that includes a vulnerability assessment, adaptation strategies, mitigation actions, governance and coordination strategies, and monitoring and evaluation processes.
- 17) EOHLC Housing Programs:** Participation in at least one of the following in the last 5 years:
- Housing Development Incentive Program (HDIP),
 - Have an Urban Center Housing Tax Increment Financing (UCH-TIF) district,
 - Have an approved District Improvement Financing (DIF) related to housing, or
 - Adopted or recently updated an Urban Renewal Plan that includes a significant housing production element.
- 18) Housing Production Plan:** Have a Housing Production Plan (HPP) certified by EOHLC the time of designation application and that aligns with goals and priorities defined in the Statewide Housing Plan.
- 19) Housing Plan Implementation:** Demonstrated implementation within the last 5 years of at least 25% of identified strategies from a Housing Production Plan, housing component of a Master Plan, Housing Needs Assessment, or other housing-related plan or analysis. Note that the adoption of best practices listed here does not count toward the 25% of implemented strategies.
- 20) Land Use Board Training:** Have provided education and training in the last 5 years for all members on a land use board (Planning Board, Board of Appeals, Select Board, and/or City Council) from:
- Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC),
 - Massachusetts Housing Partnership's Housing Institute,
 - Community Development Partnership's Lower Cape Housing Institute, or
 - Urban Land Institute's (ULI's) Urban Plan Public Leadership Institute.
- 21) Regional Collaboration:** Collaborated with neighboring municipalities and/or Regional Planning Agencies in the last 5 years to develop and implement housing plans and strategies that address housing needs regionally.

For more information about the Housing Choice Initiative, see www.mass.gov/housingchoice.