

# Town of Easton, Massachusetts 2022 Housing Production Plan



**Old Colony Planning Council**

June 2022



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of Easton began work on this Housing Production Plan (HPP) Update in the fall of 2021. The HPP has been led by the Town through the Department of Planning & Economic Development and members of the Affordable Housing Trust.

The HPP process started with a comprehensive needs assessment investigating various data sources ranging from the US Census to the Easton Building and Assessors Departments. This Housing Production Plan (HPP) has been prepared in accordance with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development guidelines and provides a framework and strategy to increase the production of affordable housing in Easton. The Plan includes a comprehensive housing needs assessment and details housing production goals and strategies aimed at meeting these needs over the next five years (2022-2027).

This report will demonstrate a need to affordably house the increase in the senior population as well as create affordable housing to attract and retain the family aged population. In recent years Easton has made some progress towards these goals with several zoning overlay efforts and Affordable Housing Trust projects and programs. In light of the number of rental units added recently, the community would like to focus on more diverse housing types – including single-family housing – and creative communities and neighborhoods.

Starting in 2020 the housing market ballooned; past practices should be looked at for recalibration and future initiatives planned to provide some stability during the ebbs and flows of the housing market. Twenty percent of the U.S. population will be

65 or older by the year 2030. Match this with a declining “family aged” cohort (-44.89 percent for under 5 years of age, and -30.10 percent for 35-44 years of age).

The Executive Summary lays out a myriad of important housing data. The amount of housing units in Easton has risen by 16.11 percent over the last decade (2010-2020) and is projected to rise by another 17.75 percent in the next twenty years. The affordability of housing in the Commonwealth is a large hurdle to jump. In order to afford a modest two-bedroom unit in Massachusetts, a fulltime worker needs to make \$36.24/hr. this when the minimum wage as of January 2022 is \$14.25/hr. Match this with the steep price of a home in Easton (\$596,000 as of February 2022), a 72.25 percent increase in the last 9 years. The concerns of the Easton community are in line with these numbers. When surveyed, over 50 percent of respondents considered housing affordability an issue. Additionally, respondents said the groups that need the most help are: first time home buyers, young families, and the aged 55+ population.

This plan will provide a summary of key demographic, housing stock, and housing affordability data from the comprehensive housing needs assessment, as well as an overview of the Plan’s goals and strategies.

Please note that the data in this Plan is from the U.S. Census Bureau’s 1990, 2000, 2010 & 2020 Census, the 2011-2019 American Community Survey, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, MassDOT, The Warren Group, MassGIS, UMass Donahue Institute, and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

# KEY FINDINGS

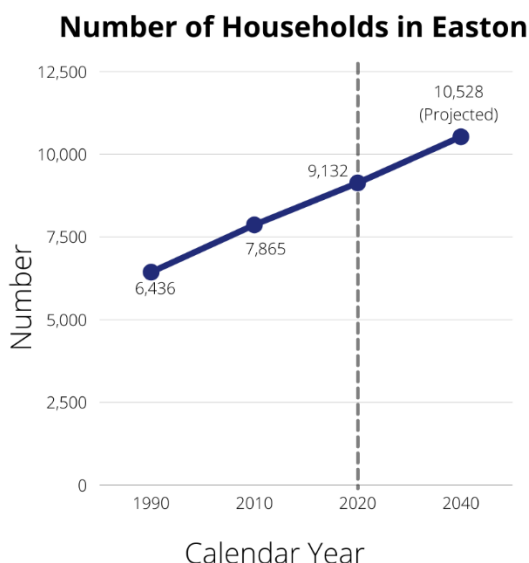
## Households

Total population and average household size determine the number of households in a municipality. In Massachusetts overall, and in 96 percent of Massachusetts municipalities with population growth since 2000, the number of households increased faster than population because of declines in average household size. This trend is expected to continue as seniors make up a greater share of householders and younger householders wait longer to form families that are smaller on average than their predecessors.

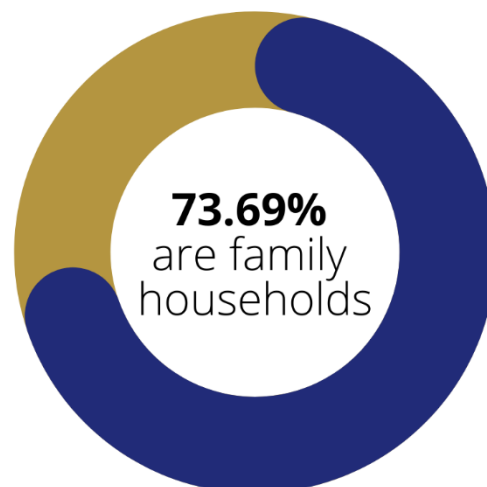
- The number of households in Easton increased 22.2 percent (630 households) from 6,436 households in 1990 to 7,865 households in 2010. The 2020 U.S. Census redistricting data estimates Easton households at 9,132, resulting

in an estimated increase of 1,267 households from 2010 to 2020 (16.11 percent).

- The total households in Easton are projected to increase by 1,396 through 2040, an increase of 17.75 percent from 2020.
- The large majority (73.69 percent) of Easton's households are family households. Family households with children under the age of 18 years makeup 32.83 percent of Easton households.
- The average household size in Easton decreased from 2.74 in 2000 to 2.52 in 2019.
- According to the 2010 Census, of the owner-occupied households, 17.7 percent are single person households. Of the renter-occupied households, 46.2 percent are single person households.



## Type of Households in Easton



# Housing Demand

Housing demand is a function not only of population, but also the number and type of households that the population forms. As years pass, some households form, move into the community, or grow larger, while others grow smaller, seek different housing options, or move out. Net housing demand is the number of units needed to accommodate additional households and maintain healthy vacancy rates among owner and renter-occupied housing units.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the regional planning agency for Metro Boston, has prepared population and housing demand projections for 164 cities and towns in Metropolitan Boston, and the University of Massachusetts Donahue Institute has prepared population projections for the balance of the cities and towns in the state. Both sets of projections include two scenarios: a Status Quo scenario based on continuation of recent trends in migration, housing occupancy, and location preference; and a Stronger Region scenario that assumes increased attraction and retention of young workers and slightly increased preference for urban settings and multi-family housing. The Status Quo scenario found that continuation of current levels of in-migration and housing production would lead to a declining workforce and economic stagnation over the coming decades. In contrast, the increased migration rates of the Stronger Region scenario could fuel job growth of 7 percent between 2010 and 2040. As a result, MAPC recommends use of the Stronger Region scenario as the basis for housing planning, and the assumptions and outputs of that work have been incorporated into the Commonwealth's multi-family housing production goals of 10,000 multi-family units per year and have been adopted by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation as the basis for long-term transportation planning.

This section looks at the current distribution of household types in Easton, projected household changes, and net housing unit demand through 2040.

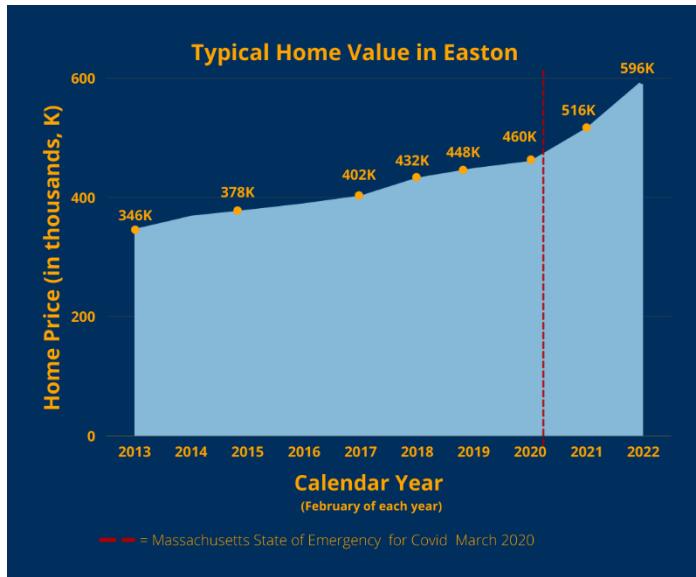
- According to MassDOT Population Projections, the net housing unit demand will be 1,396 new housing units from 2010 through 2040.
- To address unmet housing needs, based on the 2020 Census counting 9,132 year-round housing units, Easton will need an additional 79 SHI (Subsidized Housing Inventory) housing units to achieve the MGL Chapter 40B requirement of 10 percent of the year-round housing inventory designated for households earning at or below 80 percent AMI (Area Median Income).
- Across Massachusetts, there is a shortage of rental homes affordable and available to extremely low-income households (ELI), whose incomes are at or below the poverty guideline or 30 percent of their area median income (AMI). According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, there is a drastic need for ELI housing. Many of these households are severely cost burdened, spending more than half of their income on housing. Severely cost burdened poor households are more likely than other renters to sacrifice other necessities like healthy food and healthcare to pay the rent, and to experience unstable housing situations like evictions.

- Since the beginning of the pandemic (2020), home prices have risen by **29.56%** in a two year period.
- The % increase from 2018-2020 was **6.48%**
- Since 2013 the price of a home has risen by **72.25%**

- Alongside demand the price of a home has skyrocketed over the last few years. According to Zillow.com, a home valued at \$346,000 in 2013

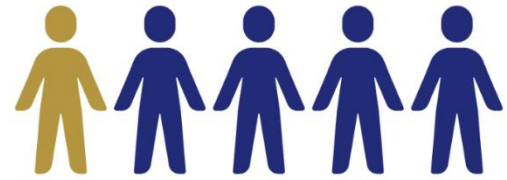
costs \$596,000 today. Since 2013 the price of a home has risen by 72.25 percent.

- Since the beginning of the COVID-19 Pandemic (2020), home prices have risen most acutely, by 29.56 percent in a two-year period. Compared with the previous two-year period, the percent increase from 2018-2020 was 6.48 percent.



## Population

The population of the United States is rapidly aging. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, one of every five people in the U.S. will be 65 or older by the year 2030. By 2035, the number of adults older than 65 will be greater than the number of children under 18. In Easton, census data show the trend to be the same. The continuous increase in Easton's median population age illustrates these changes. In 1980, Easton's median age was 28.4 years. By 2010, the median age had increased to 39.5 years; by 2019, to about 41.3. According to state-wide projections made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, this trend will continue to intensify over the next decade.<sup>1</sup>



**One of every five** people in the U.S. will be **65 or older** by **2030**.

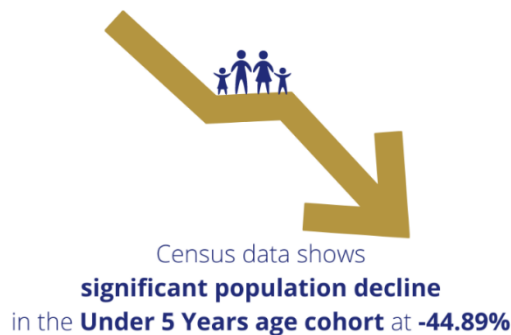
By **2035**, the number of adults **older than 65** will be **greater** than the number of **children under 18**.

- According to the US Census Bureau, the population of Easton increased from 19,807 residents in 1990 to 25,058 as reflected in the 2020 Census. The population increased 14.3 percent from 1990 to 2010.
- Population increased by 8.42 percent from 2010 to 2020, a faster rate than Massachusetts as a whole (7.4percent).
- About 52.5 percent of Easton's population is female (2019 estimates).
- The MassDOT Population Projections estimate the population of Easton to increase to 25,000 for the year 2040, which according to the 2020 Census, Easton has already surpassed.
- According to 2019 estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, 15 percent of Easton's population was aged 65 or older, up from 12 percent in 2010.
- In 1980, the median age was 28.4 years. By 2010, the median age had increased to 39.5 years and by 2019, the median age was 41.3. According to state-wide projections made by Metropolitan Area Planning Council, this trend will intensify over the next decade, reflecting the national trend.
- The US Census data shows significant population decline in the Under 5 Years age

<sup>1</sup> Easton Age Friendly Action Plan, 2021

cohort, with a decrease in population of 654 children, (-44.89percent).

- The data also shows decreases in the 5 to 9 Years age cohort of -9.89 percent, the 25 to 34 Years age cohort of -2.50 percent, and the 35 to 44 Years age cohort of -30.10 percent.



The data also shows **decreases** in the  
**5 to 9 Years age cohort** of **-9.89%**

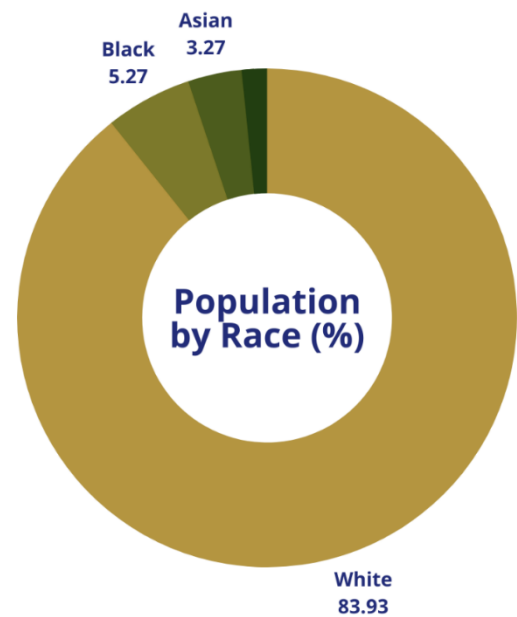
The **25 to 34 Years age cohort** of **-2.50%**

The **35 to 44 Years age cohort** of **-30.10%**.

- The US Census data shows significant increases in population of all age groups above 45 years of age, with the highest percentage increases to the 60 to 64 Years age cohort at 92.28 percent. Population increases continue through the 65 to 74 Years age cohort with an 80.60 percent population increase and the 75 to 84 Years age cohort with an 81.34 percent increase in population of these older citizens.

residents of Easton 21,033 self-identified as White, 83.93 percent of the total population of Easton.

- The Asian population experienced steady growth during the 2000-2020 period, with 309 residents identifying as Asian (1.4percent) in 2000, 563 residents in 2010 (2.4percent) and 819 in 2020. The Asian community represents 3.27 percent of the total population of Easton.
- The African American population of Easton increased significantly by 273.2 percent between 2000 and 2020 having increased from 354 residents in 2000 to 745 residents in 2010. The African American population then increased to 1,321 in 2020, an increase to 5.27 percent of total population.



## Population by Race

- Between 2000 and 2020, the racial and ethnic composition of Easton evolved into a more diverse population. In 2010, 21,144 (91.5 percent) of residents self-identified as White, a slight decrease from 20,501 (91.9 percent) in 2000. In 2020, of the

## Educational Enrollment and Attainment

- During the 2021-2022 school year, enrollment at the six Easton public schools served a student population of 3,418 students in grades Pre-K through 12. During the 2021-2022 school year, enrollment at the six Easton public schools served a student population of 3,418 students in grades Pre-K through 12, compared to enrollment



numbers of 3,410 in 2020-2021 and 3,579 in 2019-2020.

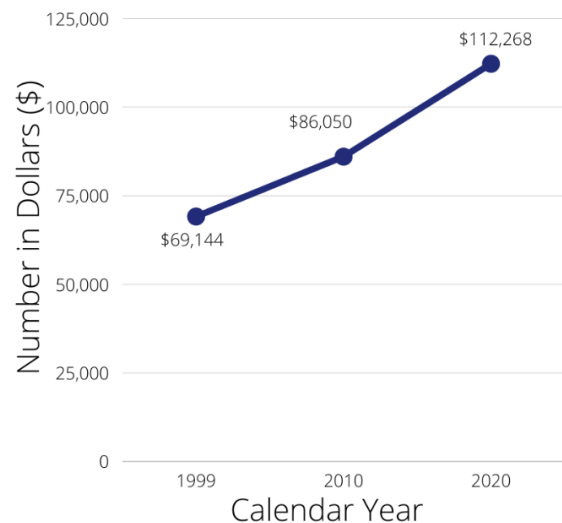
- Of the Easton student population, 7 percent are African American, and 78 percent of the student population are white.
- According to the 2019 ACS, of the residents of Easton, 21.0 percent of the population age 25 years and over have obtained a high school diploma, and 10.0 percent of that age cohort have obtained an associate degree or higher. The population of Easton over the age of 25 with a bachelor's degree is 28.9 percent, while the population over the age of 25 with a Graduate or Professional degree is 20.2 percent. This is 4.2 percent higher than the state average of population over the age of 25 with a bachelor's degree (24.7 percent) and slightly less than the state percentage of population over the age of 25 with a Graduate or Professional degree (20.3 percent).

## Residents with Disabilities

- According to the 2019 American Community Survey, approximately 8.9 percent (2,177) of the total residents in Easton reported having some type of disability.
- Of the residents in Easton that experience some type of disability, the highest percentage reporting a disability are of the 75+ years age group with 42.6 percent reporting a disability followed by the 65 to 74 years age group, of which 22.2 percent report having a disability. Of the total estimated population with a disability, the most common disability reported was an ambulatory disability by 4 percent of the total population of Easton, which is a disability that involves serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs. The next most common disabilities are

cognitive difficulties (3.8 percent) and difficulties with living independently (3 percent).

### Median Household Income in Easton



## Income

- The 2019 Median Household Income for Easton was \$112,268, increased from \$86,050 in 2010 and \$69,144 in 1999.
- Easton has a relatively low rate of individuals below the federal poverty level, which was \$12,140 for a household of one in 2019. Easton households with annual incomes less than \$25,000 were 3.8 percent<sup>2</sup> of the total population.
- Eight percent of Easton households reported annual incomes greater than \$50,000.
- The median household income increased 62.4 percent between 1999 and 2019.
- Of the households in Easton, 69 percent reported annual incomes greater than \$75,000 and 55.8 percent of households reported annual income greater than \$100,000.
- The distribution of income across Easton households has changed significantly since 1999. In Easton, the number of households earning more

<sup>2</sup> 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates S1901



than \$150,000 per year increased by more than 2,811 percent.

- Since 1999 the number of Easton households earning more than \$200,000 per year increased by 5,946 percent.

The distribution of income across Easton households has changed significantly **since 1999**. The number of **households earning more than \$200,000 per year** increased by more than

**5,946%**

- The 2019 ACS indicates that Easton had a median household income of \$112,268 which is more than most of the regional municipalities except for Hanover, which had a median household income of \$127,981 and Duxbury which has the highest median household income in the region with its residents earning \$128,173.
- The median household income in Easton for 2019 was \$112,268, significantly more than the median household income for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts of \$81,215 and the median income for Bristol County at \$70,402.

## Industry and Employment

- Of the full-time, year-round civilian employed population 16 years and over (8,949) the industries that employ the most Easton residents are the educational services,

healthcare, and social assistance industries (2,426) and the professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services (1,231) followed by retail trade (834).

- The unemployment rate in Easton for 2019 was 4.5 percent.
- Working at the minimum wage of \$13.50 per hour in Massachusetts, a weekly minimum wage is \$540 for a 40-hour week and a yearly minimum wage is \$28,080 per year. Future minimum wage increases are as follows: January 1, 2023 - \$15.00.
- A 2021 National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) report indicated that to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment at fair market rent in Massachusetts, full-time workers need to earn \$36.24 per hour.<sup>3</sup>

A 2021 National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) report indicated that **to afford a modest two-bedroom apartment** at fair market rent in Massachusetts, **full-time workers need to earn:**

**\$36.24/hr**

- Compared to the rest of the United States, Massachusetts is the third least affordable state for renters.

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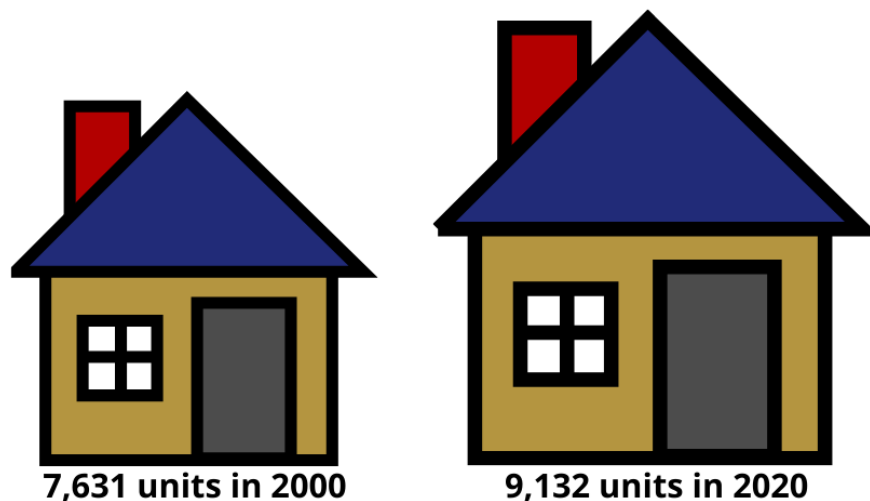
<sup>3</sup> <https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/massachusetts>

- Working at the minimum wage, wage earner must have 2.3 full-time jobs or work 91 hours per week to afford a modest one-bedroom apartment and work 2.8 full-time jobs or work 113 hours per week to afford a two-bedroom apartment.
- The federal minimum wage has remained at \$7.25 an hour without an increase since 2009, not keeping with the high cost of rental housing. In no state, even those where the minimum wage is set above the federal standard, can a minimum wage renter working a 40-hour work week afford a modest two-bedroom rental unit at the average fair market rent.
- The typical renter in Massachusetts earns \$20.72, which is \$13.09 less than the hourly wage needed to afford a modest rental home.
- According to the 2019 ACS, of the 5,532 total occupied housing units in Easton, 65.3 percent reside within single-family detached structures.
- The housing stock in Easton is somewhat older, with approximately 28.4 percent of the housing units being constructed prior to 1959.
- According to the 2019 ACS, most Easton residents own their own home as 6,551 of the total occupied housing units in Easton are owner-occupied housing units and 1,926 are renter-occupied housing units.
- With 835 units on the SHI, Easton exceeds the units necessary to achieve the M.G.L. Chapter 40B requirement of 10 percent of the year-round housing inventory designated for households earning at or below 80 percent of the AMI based on the 2010 Census count of 8,105 year-round housing units. Easton will need an additional 79 units to meet the requirement once the 2020 Census count of 9,132 year-round housing units is finalized.

## Housing Stock Analysis

- The number of housing units in Easton increased 19.67 percent from 7,631 housing units in 2000 to 9,132 housing units according to the 2020 Census.

**From 2000 to 2020  
the number of housing units  
increased 19.67%**





*Ames Shovel Works Apartments | Source: Town of Easton*

## SUMMARY OF HPP STRATEGIES

### Housing Goals<sup>4</sup>

**Goal #1:** Locate new residential multi-family and mixed-use development in and near existing business centers, transportation hubs, and village districts to enhance economic vitality, promote walkable, vibrant neighborhoods and ensure environmentally just and sustainable land use practices.

**Goal #2:** The variety of housing units is maintained & expanded to exceed the 10 percent state standard for affordable housing.

**Goal #3:** New housing in Easton is strategically distributed in a manner that is

harmonious with the community vision to ensure new housing options are compatible in scale, siting & design.

**Goal #4:** New affordable housing construction and rehabilitation is encouraged through adaptive reuse of buildings and town owned properties that incorporate sustainability standards.

**Goal #5:** A more equitable community is promoted through housing options that provide for people of diverse socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds while meeting the needs of both young families and an aging population.

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<sup>4</sup> The goals of this plan are consistent with the Comprehensive Permit Regulations (760 CMR 56) as required by DHCD for Housing Production Plans:

- a) A mix of types of housing, consistent with local and regional needs and feasible within the housing market in which they will be situated, including rental, homeownership, and other occupancy arrangements, if any, for families, individuals, persons with special needs, and the elderly.
- b) A numerical goal for annual housing production, pursuant to which there is an increase in the municipality's number of SHI Eligible Housing units by at least 0.50 percent of its total units (as determined in

accordance with 760 CMR 56.03(3)(a)) during every calendar year included in the HPP, until the overall percentage exceeds the Statutory Minimum set forth in 760 CMR 56.03(3)(a).

Comprehensive Permit applications could be used for the development of affordable single-family houses at 10 Morse Road and at 26 Poquanticut Avenue, both currently owned by the Affordable Housing Trust. The Town also is considering a Comprehensive Permit application for the prospective Blackledge development of 108 rental units at 91 Union Street.

Easton is by far one of the more advanced communities in the region and the state when it comes to addressing the housing needs of its residents. Easton is one of the roughly 22 percent of cities and towns in Massachusetts that has met the 10 percent affordability goal. Easton previously developed Housing Production Plans in 2005, 2011 & 2017. Over the past five years, the Town has facilitated the creation of 47 units that are eligible to be counted toward the 10 percent threshold. Most notably, the Town committed over \$7 million in Community Preservation funds to facilitate the award-winning Ames Shovel Works adaptive reuse project, which resulted in a mixed income rental community with 30 affordable apartments (out of a total of 113 units constructed). Other mixed income rental developments, including Queset Commons, Washington Place, and Avalon Easton, have added 422 units to Easton's SHI. In addition, a number of recent Chapter 40B subdivisions have contributed a combined 18 affordable home ownership units.

The mission of Easton's 2014 Housing Action Plan was: Respond to changing housing needs through production of affordable rental and homeownership units, provide housing assistance to Easton residents in need, and promote a wider diversity of housing choice. While much of the discussion surrounds home ownership and access to ownership, addressing the current needs of the renter population is important in creating a more equitable community.

The population of the United States is rapidly aging. According to the U.S. Census Bureau,

one of every five people in the U.S. will be 65 or older by the year 2030. By 2035, the number of adults older than 65 will be greater than the number of children under 18. In Easton, census data show the trend to be the same. The continuous increase in Easton's median population age illustrates these changes. In 1980, Easton's median age was 28.4 years. By 2010, the median age had increased to 39.5 years; by 2019, to about 41.3. According to state-wide projections made by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, this trend will continue to intensify over the next decade.

The Town of Easton is committed to including people of all ages and abilities in planning and civic processes and strives to meet the needs of all residents – children and older adults alike. The town is committed to providing services and programs that enhance quality of life and enable older adults to live with dignity while maintaining their health and independence. To that end, the town has joined the global movement of age-friendly communities.

Easton's recently adopted Age Friendly Action Plan had a set of goals which complement this HPP. The goals were:

1. Ensure that Easton residents living at home relate to the affordable, quality support they may need to live independently.
2. Ensure that Easton's housing stock is diverse enough to accommodate the needs of all older residents, including those who may want to downsize, move into a more affordable home, or

need a home designed to be accessible for all abilities.

3. Ensure that a strong partnership exists between the Town of Easton and Easton Housing Authority.

## Implementation Strategies

Achieving the community's five-year goals will require a variety of regulatory, programmatic, and policy strategies. These strategies, described in detail in Chapter 2, are intended to offer multiple ways that the

community can work to achieve its goals. Many of these strategies are contingent on factors beyond the Town's control, including market opportunities and funding availability. All strategies will require local approvals in accordance with all applicable laws and regulations. The strategies are organized in three categories and are in no order:

- Planning, Policies, and Zoning Strategies.
- Local Initiatives and Programmatic Strategies.
- Capacity, Education, and Coordination.





Main Street. Source: [https://www.trulia.com/pictures/thumbs\\_5/zillowstatic/fp/dc59be398e98d9820e946f0b171a82ce-full.jpg](https://www.trulia.com/pictures/thumbs_5/zillowstatic/fp/dc59be398e98d9820e946f0b171a82ce-full.jpg)

## CHAPTER: 1 INTRODUCTION

From the time of its founding, Easton has always maintained some form of housing support for its poorest residents as dictated by custom and state law. For most of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, Easton provided financial support to needy households and housed individuals at the Town Alms House. Prior to that, the poor were supported by the town through the practice of “bidding out” individuals and families to board with other residents. Over the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, social policies shifted to reliance on funding from the State and Federal governments, and increasingly onto the non-

profit sector and for-profit developers, resulting in significant unmet needs.

The population served by subsidized housing in Easton has also shifted, as the cost of housing has become out of reach for many workforce households, as well as retirees and young adults.

Historically, workforce housing was often provided directly by employers such as the Ames Shovel Factory or working individuals could commonly find rooms for rent as boarders. practices that are no longer widely available. Later in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century, the

Federal government generously subsidized loans for veterans and middle-income households to become homeowners in suburban communities, sparking a proliferation of construction of modestly sized homes in Easton. In recent decades, a variety of regulatory and market constraints have contracted the availability of housing for moderate income residents.

Reflecting the changing needs and standards for subsidized housing, a Massachusetts law went into effect in 1969 (widely known as the “Comprehensive Permit” law or “Chapter 40B”) that established a mandate for all communities in Massachusetts to have a minimum of 10 percent of their housing stock be affordable to middle- and lower-income households. To count toward this 10 percent, affordable housing units must have a permanent or long-term deed restriction requiring the unit to be sold or rented to households earning less than 80 percent of the median income in the local area (Area Median Income or AMI). The 10 percent minimum is based on the total number of year-round housing units reported in the most recent decennial census: for Easton, this currently means that 811 units out of a total of 8,105 must be deed restricted as ‘affordable’ (Census 2010). When the 2020 Census is finalized, Easton will need 914 units out of a provisional total of 9,132.

The intent of Chapter 40B is to provide a fair-share distribution of affordable workforce housing throughout the Commonwealth. To address zoning and permitting barriers that

make it too expensive and/or prohibit the development of a diverse housing stock and the construction of housing affordable to low- and moderate-income households, Chapter 40B supersedes zoning and many other local regulations and authorizes the Zoning Board of Appeals to grant a comprehensive permit to qualified affordable housing developers.

A comprehensive permit is a single permit that replaces the approvals otherwise required from separate city or town permitting authorities. The Zoning Board of Appeals may approve, conditionally approve, or deny a comprehensive permit, but in communities that do not meet the 10 percent minimum, developers may appeal to the state Housing Appeals Committee (HAC). Although comprehensive permits may still be granted after a town achieves the 10 percent minimum, the HAC no longer has authority to overturn a local board's decision.

Comprehensive Permit applications could be used for the development of affordable single-family houses at 10 Morse Road and at 26 Poquanticut Avenue, both currently owned by the Affordable Housing Trust. The Town also is considering a Comprehensive Permit application for the prospective Blackledge development of 108 rental units at 91 Union Street.

As revised in 2008, Chapter 40B encourages communities to be proactive in guiding the



development of affordable housing to meet local needs through Housing Certification.

To become certified, communities must prepare a Housing Production Plan that promulgates proactive strategies toward meeting the 10 percent threshold, which may include affordable homeownership units, and which includes all rental units that are part of an eligible mixed income development. Where communities have Housing Production Plans approved by the

Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and implement strategies which result in the creation of affordable housing units equal to 0.5 percent of their year-round housing units in a calendar year, communities can deny unfavorable Comprehensive Permit projects for a period of one year. If the number of affordable units created in a year is equal to 1 percent of year-round housing units, the Certification lasts for 2 years.

## HPP UPDATE PURPOSE

A Housing Production Plan (HPP), defined in regulations at 760 CMR 56.03 and administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), is a proactive strategy for planning and developing affordable housing. The HPP identifies the housing needs of a community and the goals and strategies it will use to identify and achieve or maintain the 10 percent threshold mandated by M.G.L. Chapter 40B.

This Housing Production Plan (HPP) is a state-recognized planning tool that, under certain circumstances, permits municipalities to influence the location, type, and pace of affordable housing development. This HPP establishes a strategic plan for production of affordable housing development and mixed-income housing that is based upon a comprehensive

housing needs assessment and provides a detailed analysis of development constraints due to infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, protected open space, and regulatory barriers.

This HPP Update has been prepared in accordance with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) requirements and describes how the Town of Easton plans to create and preserve affordable and mixed-income housing as well as create more housing options in the community. This HPP Program enables the Town of Easton to develop strategies to produce housing units in accordance with the Plan and demonstrate progress towards their affordable housing needs.

When an HPP is certified by DHCD, then a denial of a Comprehensive Permit will be

upheld – if the application is not consistent with local needs, as outlined in this plan. The Town’s status relating to this 10 percent threshold is documented on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), also administered by DHCD.

As of August 5, 2021, 835 units in Easton were included on the Massachusetts Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), which is about 10.3 percent of Easton’s total year-round housing units (8,105 according to the 2010 Census). The Town exceeds the 10 percent affordability requirement. As Easton is over the 10 percent threshold this plan will provide a framework to maintain the statutory minimum in accordance with local needs and community goals. When the 2020 Census is finalized, Easton will need 914 units out of a provisional total of 9,132.

The Town of Easton places great importance on planning for affordable housing through the HPP process, and this HPP renews the prior 2017 Housing Production Plan.

Housing Production Plans are certified by the following process, as identified in the regulations:

- Prepare the HPP: In accordance with the with the regulations, write the plan, include a public process, and have the plan adopted by the Select Board and the Planning Board.
- Approve the HPP: DHCD approves the plan.
- Certify the HPP: Create affordable units equal to 0.5 percent of the total

number of housing units in Easton (46) in one year, or 1.0 percent (23) in two years, or confirm 10 percent compliance, and petition DHCD for certification.

- Renew the HPP: The term of the HPP is five years from approval.

Easton currently has a certified HPP, providing a ‘Safe Harbor’ until January 31, 2022. Easton has chosen to prepare a Housing Production Plan for two reasons:

1. The 2017 HPP requires renewal per the regulations, and this update is being undertaken to retain that approval status.
2. Many of the strategies defined in the 2017 HPP have been implemented, and it is time to set future strategic goals and objectives with broad community input.

This project started in October 2021 with a compilation of available information and the initiation of an on-line survey which was offered to residents and advertised in local media from November 2021 to March 2022. In total 407 responses were recorded. The AHT held a community listening session on September 15, 2021 and again on May 19, 2022 to discern housing goals and strategies, which were further explored and detailed. This 9-month effort concludes with the review and adoption of the Town of Easton 2022 Housing Production Plan.

The Housing Production Plan was reviewed and adopted by the Planning Board on May 23, 2022 and the Select Board on June 13, 2022.

# CURRENT M.G.L. CHAPTER 40B

## SUBSIDIZED HOUSING INVENTORY

According to M.G.L. Chapter 40B, affordable housing is defined as housing that is developed or operated by a public or private entity and is reserved by deed restriction for income-eligible households at or below 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). The regulation encourages communities to achieve the statutory minimum of 10 percent of their total year-round housing units on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). In addition, all marketing and placement efforts follow Affirmative Fair Housing Marketing guidelines per the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). These units are also deed restricted units.

Housing that meets these requirements, if approved by DHCD, is added to the subsidized housing inventory (SHI). Chapter 40B allows developers of low-and moderate-income housing to obtain a comprehensive permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals to override local zoning and other restrictions if less than 10 percent of a community's housing is included on the SHI.

A community's SHI fluctuates with new development of both affordable and market-rate housing. The SHI percentage is

determined by dividing the number of DHCD-approved affordable units by the total number of year-round housing units in the most recent decennial Census.

As of August 2021, the Town of Easton has 10.3 percent on the Subsidized Housing Inventory with 835 SHI units out of 8,105 year-round housing units (2010 Census). It is important to note that the total number of units in Easton, which is used as the denominator when calculating Easton's SHI percentage, will change following the 2020 Census. The 2020 Census housing units preliminary data was recently released although not yet finalized at the time of this Plan. That preliminary 2020 Census year-round housing unit count is 9,132, meaning Easton's estimated 10 percent target through 2030 is 911. Subtracting the current 835 SHI units, Easton will need 79 additional units to remain in compliance once the 2020 Census is finalized.

It is important to note that due to state eligibility policies under M.G.L. 40B, the actual number of affordable units in Easton or any community is much lower than the inventory indicates. In ownership developments that have an affordable component, only the affordable ownership

units are included on the SHI. However, in rental developments, 100 percent of the units (regardless of the cost of rent) are counted if a minimum of 20 percent of units are affordable to households at 50 percent or below AMI, or 25 percent of units are affordable to households at 80 percent or below AMI.

If a community is below the 10 percent SHI requirement it can request relief from unwanted Comprehensive Permit projects for 1 year by producing 0.5 percent of total units as SHI units, or for 2 years by producing 1 percent of total units as SHI units.

As the town continues to grow, Easton should ensure that new housing developments include units that can be added to the SHI, so the Town can keep pace with the Commonwealth's Chapter 40B requirement.

It would be prudent for the Town to have a higher production target as Easton could lose SHI units if DMH group homes close or short-term affordability restrictions expire. Also, if a rental development where all the units are counted is converted to condo ownership, the market-rate units would drop off the SHI leaving only the restricted-affordable units eligible for inclusion.

# HOUSING NEEDS SUMMARY

Given the substantial numbers of residents who are paying too much for their housing and growing affordability gaps, there is a pressing need to produce more subsidized housing units in Easton. The major obstacle to meeting these underserved needs is the gap between the level of need and the resources available, which is further exacerbated by increasing housing process in tandem with limited local, state, and federal subsidies.

The Town will continue to work with public and private sector stakeholders to devise and implement strategies that preserve and produce additional community housing options, directing development to appropriate locations and target populations. It should be noted that specific strategies and production goals to meet priority needs will be detailed in this Housing Production Plan that will incorporate this Housing Needs Assessment.

Based on input from a wide variety of sources including census data, market information, and interviews with local and regional stakeholders, community meetings and a survey, as well as prior planning efforts, the following housing needs have been identified:

## *Rental housing is the most significant need*

Both rental and ownership housing are needed to encourage a mix of housing types

in response to diverse populations and household needs. There is, however, a more compelling case for rental units based on the following important considerations:

- ❖ Target the needs of the community's most vulnerable residents with very limited financial means as rental housing is typically more affordable and requires less up-front cash.
- ❖ Promote greater housing diversity as most of the more recent development has largely involved single-family homes that are primarily directed to those who can afford market prices. More housing options are necessary to meet the needs of local workers who are priced out of the housing market, people who grew up in Easton and want to raise their own families locally, and empty nesters, for example.
- ❖ Provide more appropriately sized units for increasing numbers of small households.
- ❖ Provide opportunities for some seniors who are "over-housed" and spending far too much on their housing to relocate to more affordable and less isolated settings, opening their homes to families requiring more space.
- ❖ Leverage state and federal resources directed to rental housing development, family rentals.
- ❖ Enhance the ability to qualify occupants for housing subsidies as state requirements for including units on the SHI make it very difficult for long-term

homeowners to be eligible for subsidized housing.

- ❖ Provide opportunities for mixed-income housing where several different income tiers can be accommodated within the same project.

## Indicators of Need for Rental Housing

*Limited Incomes* – Almost 7.7 percent (654) of all households in Easton earned less than \$25,000 per year. Of those households, 4 percent (264) were owner-occupied households and 20.2 percent (390) were renter occupied households. These households can afford no more than about \$500 per month, including utility costs, making it extremely difficult if not impossible to find affordable market rentals without spending too much on housing.

*High-Cost Burdens* – Easton’s renters are in fact spending too much for their housing with about 69.2 percent of all renter households earning at or below 80 percent AMI including 36.75 percent who were spending more than 50 percent of their income on housing costs (with severe cost burdens).

*High Rents* –The estimated gross median rent for a studio apartment would require an income of almost \$50,000, assuming \$175 per month in utility bills and housing expenses of no more than 30 percent of the

household’s income. Market rents are typically higher and tend to be beyond the reach of lower wage earners. The HUD Fair Market Rent for Easton-Raynham, MA HMFA in Bristol County for:

- studio apartments is \$1,199,
- one-bedroom apartments \$1,240,
- two-bedroom apartments \$1,634,
- three-bedroom apartments \$2,130-, and
- four-bedrooms apartments \$2,444.<sup>5</sup>

*High Up-Front Cash Requirements* – Many apartments require first and last month’s rent plus a security deposit. For a \$2,300 apartment, that totals as much as \$3,900, an amount that many prospective tenants do not have available to them. Additionally, realtors indicate that most of Easton’s rental opportunities are not advertised.

*Recent Population Growth* – About 17 percent of Easton’s population is aged 60+ and this age group is expected to grow significantly over the next few years. Population growth is depicted in most age cohorts over the age of 45. The highest percentage of population increase is within the 60 to 64 and 75 to 84 age cohorts, an increase of 658 residents (92.28percent) and 510 residents (81.34percent) respectively.

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<sup>5</sup> HUD FY21 Final Schedule of Metropolitan & Non-Metropolitan Fair Market Rents

# Development

## Constraints

Land development in Easton is becoming increasingly difficult due to a lack of large tracts of available land that are not significantly encumbered by environmental constraints and/or contamination issues. The opportunities for large-scale housing development are diminishing and the construction of future housing is more likely to occur as infill development and redevelopment projects rather than as large stand-alone subdivisions and apartment complexes. Land constraints are driving continued development of high-end market rate housing, in part due to high development costs, despite the overwhelming demand for mid-priced homes.

In the past, the Town of Easton has explored the source development constraints across multiple different plans including but not limited to their 2014 Envision Easton Master Plan, 2017 Housing Production Plan, and 2017 Open Space & Recreation Plan.

In the 2014 Envision Easton Plan, the Town found that while there are many opportunities to improve upon the economic base in Easton, there are also regulatory and environmental conditions which constrain development. In terms of physical constraints, the presence of wetlands, aquifers, and other ecologically sensitive areas curtails the developable area on many sites; rendering some undevelopable. For

lands that are unconstrained by environmental concerns, regulatory issues pertaining to building setbacks, lot coverage, building heights, and excessive parking requirements create challenges in the development of suitable structures for economic activity. Additionally, the 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan states that: the Town also maintains a significant percentage of undeveloped areas (over 50percent) due to environmental constraints and local and State conservation efforts. Further constraining development is the lack of available infrastructure, particularly with respect to wastewater infrastructure for all types of development and highway infrastructure for manufacturing facilities.

In the 2017 Housing Production Plan the discussion revealed that opportunities for large scale housing development are diminishing, and the construction of future housing is more likely to occur as infill development and redevelopment projects rather than as large stand-alone subdivisions and apartment complexes. Land constraints are driving continued development of high-end market rate housing, in part due to high development costs, despite the overwhelming demand for mid-priced homes. Recent changes to Easton's Zoning Bylaw have increased opportunities to construct new housing in the Village Business District and the Queset Commercial District; although those districts are primarily commercial districts, the flexibility of dimensional requirements and



uses should create opportunities for new residential units on mixed use sites.

However, most of the town is zoned Residential (R) or Residential 1 (R1), placing severe limitations on the amount of housing that can be produced in Easton. The R and R1 districts have the same dimensional requirements for minimum lot size and frontage for single family homes as for industrial uses. Further, multi-family housing is not allowed in these districts unless they are part of a “Flexible Development”. The multi-family use regulations for Flexible Developments include requirements for each unit to have their own separate entrance (which eliminates the viability of any buildings with elevators – a style of housing that may better serve the needs of elderly or disabled residents with mobility challenges, as well as

more traditional housing types such as duplex and triple-deckers). The requirements also limit the number of bedrooms in any given building to ten. Although the Town has made great strides in updating its zoning to allow the flexibility necessary to enable appropriate development in upcoming years, the current Table of Dimensional Requirements largely does not reflect the existing conditions of the built environment, making it difficult for infill development to “fit in” to a neighborhood context and hinders opportunities for smaller scale development that would be significantly less intensive than larger complexes.



*Easton Town Center, Source: <https://www.visitingnewengland.com/scenesofnewengland21.html>*

## CHAPTER 2: HOUSING GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Easton is not unique in its struggles to provide a diverse housing stock including affordable housing, nor is this struggle new to Easton. Easton is one of the roughly 15 percent of cities and towns in Massachusetts that has met the 10 percent affordability goal. Easton previously developed Housing Production Plans in 2005, 2011 and 2017. Over the past five years, the Town has facilitated the creation of 47 units that are eligible to be counted toward its 10 percent Subsidized Housing Unit target; 18 more SHI units are expected in 2022. Most notable,

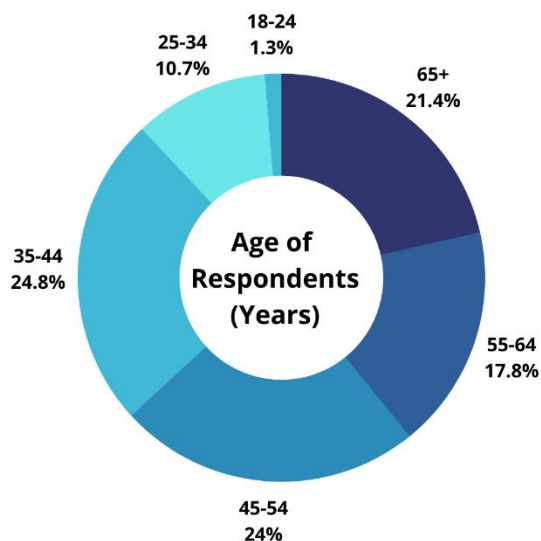
the Town committed over \$7.5 million in Community Preservation funds to facilitate the Shovel Works adaptive reuse project, which resulted in a mixed income rental community with 30 affordable apartments (out of a total 113 units constructed). Including the Town-supported Queset Commons, Washington Place, and Avalon Easton sites, Easton has added 535 rental units to its SHI since 2014. In addition, several recent Chapter 40B subdivisions have contributed 18 affordable home ownership units.

# SURVEY RESULTS

This project started in October 2021 with a compilation of available information and the initiation of an on-line survey which was offered to residents and advertised in local media from November 2021 to March 2022. In total 407 responses were recorded.

The survey was conducted online via Survey Monkey. Respondents were asked 18 questions and the following is the summation of the answers.

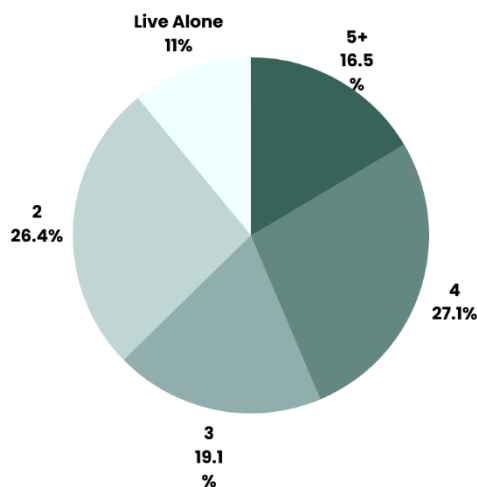
- When asked about being a resident: 97.3 percent of respondents indicated they were Easton residents.



- When asked of their age: 0 percent of respondents were 18 years old or younger, 1.3 percent were 18-24, 10.7 percent were 25-34, 24.8 percent were 35-44, 24 percent were 45-54, 17.8 percent were 55-64, and 21.4 percent were 65 and over.
- When asked how many people lived in their home (including themselves): 10.97 percent said they live alone, 26.37

percent live with 2, 19.06 percent live with 3, 27.15 percent live with 4, and 16.45 percent live with 5 or more.

**When asked for the number of people in a household. 62.66% of respondents had 3+ persons in their household.**



- When asked if any children under 18 live in the home: 50.7 percent said no and 49.3 said yes.
- When asked if any adults aged 65 and over live in the home: 68.9 percent said no and 31.1 percent said yes.
- When asked: Do you or does someone who lives with you have any disability, handicap, or chronic disease that keeps you/them from participating fully in work, school, housework, or other activities? 79.9 percent said no and 20.1 percent said yes.
- When asked on owning/renting/leasing their residence or other: 85.59 percent owned their home, 12.71 percent rented, 1.69 percent either leased, were in a 40B, in a mobile home, lived with relatives, or co-owned.
- When asked: Is housing affordability an issue for you or anyone you know who lives in Easton? 52.69 percent said yes and 47.31 percent said no. When asked

to elaborate responses varied from: concerns over aging towards retirement and maintaining the home, currently retired and cannot afford to downsize in the current market, housing (to own or to rent) not being affordable to low income residents, and more.

**52.69% of respondents said YES housing affordability is an issue for them or someone they know who lives in Easton.**

**People mentioned the barriers to purchase/rent on a fixed income or the fears of maintenance costs/downsizing costs as the aged.**

- When asked: About what percent of your household's income is spent on housing costs (rent or mortgage plus property tax, insurance, and utilities)? 17.97 percent spent 50 percent or more, 51.3 percent spent between 30 and 49 percent, and 30.72 percent spent less than 30 percent.
- When asked: What is your annual household income before taxes? The top three categories were: Over \$150K (27.43 percent), Preferred not to answer (20.57 percent), and \$100-\$150K (20 percent).
- When asked: Does your home meet your current living needs? 70.17 percent said yes and 29.83 percent said no.
  - Of the no's 47.46 percent cited high mortgages, rents, or maintenance

costs and 44.92 percent said they needed more room.

- When asked: Who in our community, if anyone, do you think has the greatest need for suitable housing in Easton? (Multiple answers were chosen per respondent) The top three answers were: First-time homebuyers (51.94 percent), Young families (46.87 percent), and those aged 55+ (42.69 percent).
- When asked: Which of the following types of housing would you support in Easton? The top three choices were: Converted use buildings (e.g., turning existing non-residential buildings into housing units), Smaller single-family houses (1,800 square feet or less), and Age-restricted housing for those 55+.
- When asked: Overall, how satisfied, or dissatisfied are you with the direction our community is headed in providing quality housing to a broad spectrum of residents? Most respondents said they were somewhat satisfied.
- When asked: Which of the following town-led actions would you support? The top three responses were: Use Community Preservation Act funds to create supportive housing (transitional, veterans, disabled, etc.), Continue to use Community Preservation Act funds to partner with nonprofits to create family housing, and Use Community Preservation Act funds to convert existing non-residential buildings into units that include housing.
- A full breakdown of responses can be found in the Appendix.

# HOUSING

## GOALS

Easton's housing goals address more than just the minimum requirement of producing housing units that are eligible for inclusion on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). Members of the Easton community have needs that extend beyond housing affordability, including increasing the number of accessible homes, and providing options for a variety of household types and income levels, from young adults and families to seniors and others with more accessibility needs.

The following housing goals are based on input from the community engagement conducted as part of the process of updating this Housing Production Plan including a community forum and an online survey. These goals seek to balance the need for additional affordable housing units with other local priorities, including conservation of open space and redevelopment of underutilized properties. In addition, the goals of this plan are consistent with the Comprehensive Permit Regulations (760 CMR 56) as required for Housing Production Plans.

*As explained in detail below, this plan includes the following five goals:*

**Goal #1:** Locate new residential multi-family and mixed-use development in and near existing business centers, transportation hubs, and village districts to enhance economic vitality, promote walkable, vibrant neighborhoods and ensure environmentally just and sustainable land use practices.

**Goal #2:** The variety of housing units is maintained & expanded to exceed the 10 percent state standard for affordable housing.

**Goal #3:** New housing in Easton is strategically distributed in a manner that is harmonious with the community vision to ensure new housing options are compatible in scale, siting & design.

**Goal #4:** New affordable housing construction and rehabilitation is encouraged through adaptive reuse of buildings and redevelopment of underutilized sites and surplus Town-owned properties that incorporate sustainability standards.

**Goal #5:** A more equitable community is promoted through housing options that provide for people of diverse socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds while meeting the needs of both young families and an aging population.

## Goals and Strategies Matrix

Type	#	Strategy	Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5	Responsible Entities
	1	Consider rezoning areas with vacant/under-utilized commercial space, industrial, or institutional buildings to allow by-right redevelopment for multi-family or mixed-use housing.	X		X	X		AHT, PB, ZBA
	2	Consider collaborating with the CPC and the Conservation Commission to encourage set-aside land for context-sensitive affordable or mixed-income housing development that is well integrated into a conservation setting.		X	X			CPC, AHT
	3	Consider adopting widespread Inclusionary Zoning Provisions		X	X		X	AHT, PB, ZBA
	4	Consider allowing more flexibility to create Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)	X	X	X		X	PB, ZBA, AHT
	5	Consider ways to allow Co-Living Space and Community Housing more explicitly.	X				X	PB, ZBA, AHT
	6	Promote a diversity of housing options in Easton to meet the needs of a changing and aging population and promote socio-economically diverse population through increased multi-generational housing options, and progressive senior facilities.	X				X	AHT, PB, ZBA, SB



	7	Encourage Smaller Housing Units		X	X			AHT, PB
	8	Conduct screening analysis of town-owned land to create affordable housing units through adaptive reuse of existing buildings and town owned properties.	X	X		X		AHT, BOA
	9	Plan for safe pedestrian and bicycle access to recreational resources and local amenities in existing and proposed residential developments.	X		X	X	X	PB, AHT, ZBA
Local Initiative and Programmatic Strategies	10	Create an inventory of private land suitable for redevelopment or new construction of diverse housing options particularly in areas with sidewalk access to nearby amenities and services and coordinate with developers to plan Local Initiative Program projects that provide affordable housing that includes local preferences.	X	X	X			PB, BOA, ZBA
	11	Review private properties for housing opportunities.	X	X	X			SB, AHT, BOA, ZBA, PB



Capacity, Education & Coordination Strategies Implementation	12	Collaborate with organizations supporting disabled individuals and Easton community members to biannually evaluate the demand and specific needs related to accessible housing options, including group homes and independent living opportunities.				X	X	AHT
	13	Perform an annual review of Housing Production Plan goals and strategies and include on a Select Board meeting agenda each year, with participation by the Planning board, Affordable Housing Trust, Housing Authority and other relevant boards and staff	X	X	X	X	X	AHT, SB
	14	Maintain Easton's status as a Housing Choice Community, to ensure enhanced access to state funding, by reapplying every two years and striving to continue to meet the requirements for designation through a combination of housing production and best practices		X				AHT, PB, SB
	15	Schedule annual meetings that promote inter-municipal coordination, including conversations between the Affordable Housing Trust, all land-use board discussions and trainings, and an annual housing forum to discuss progress towards housing goals.		X	X		X	AHT, SB, HA, OSC, PB, ZBA
	16	Maintain and develop partnerships with regional and local non-profit housing developers, including Habitat for Humanity,		X			X	AHT, PB, ZBA

		to identify opportunities to provide funding as well as to tap them for their expertise and advice on potential zoning amendments to encourage development of housing options.						
	17	Maintain funding for the Easton Affordable Housing Trust.		X			X	CPC, AHT, SB, BOA
	18	Encourage local housing initiatives and continue local planning education to promote achievement of state-mandated affordable housing goals.	X	X			X	SB, AHT, CPC, PB, ZBA, BOA
	19	Encourage initiatives to improve access to public transportation and transit-oriented development.	X				X	SB, AHT, PB, ZBA



*Image Source: Vitae*

## IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

To implement the goals identified previously, strategies to address the housing needs of the community have been developed. These strategies are designed to increase and improve housing opportunities in Easton for all income groups. These strategies outlined below should be considered as suggestions and not directives.

### Planning, Policies & Zoning Strategies

The Town's authority to update zoning regulations can have powerful effects to encourage private responses to address local housing needs with minimal local expenditure. The following strategies incorporate recommendations for both local

planning initiatives and zoning amendments:

1. Consider rezoning areas with vacant/underutilized commercial space, industrial, or institutional buildings to allow by-right redevelopment for multi-family or mixed-use housing.
2. Consider collaborating with the CPC and the Conservation Commission to encourage set-aside land for context-sensitive affordable or mixed-income housing development that is well integrated into a conservation setting.
3. Consider adopting widespread Inclusionary Zoning Provisions.
4. Consider allowing more flexibility to create Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).

5. Consider ways to allow Co-Living Spaces and Community Housing more explicitly.
6. Promote a diversity of housing options in Easton to meet the needs of a changing and aging population and promote socio-economically diverse population through increased multi-generational housing options, and progressive senior facilities.
7. Encourage Smaller Housing Units.
8. Conduct screening analysis of town-owned land to create affordable housing units through adaptive reuse of existing buildings and town owned properties.
9. Plan for safe pedestrian and bicycle access to recreational resources and local amenities in existing and proposed residential developments.

## Local Initiative & Programmatic Strategies

Local initiative strategies refer to recommendations that the Town can undertake to foster the creation of more housing options, especially affordable housing. These initiatives are not regulatory in nature- they deal with allocation of Town resources including staff time, funding, and property:

10. Create an inventory of private land suitable for redevelopment or new construction of diverse housing options, particularly in areas with sidewalk access to nearby amenities and services

and coordinate with developers to plan Local Initiative Program projects that provide affordable housing that includes local preferences.

11. Review private properties for housing opportunities.

## Capacity, Education & Coordination Strategies

The following strategies are recommendations for expanding the Town's capacity to implement housing initiatives, promote education, and to coordinate housing initiatives with other local or regional entities:

12. Collaborate with organizations supporting disabled individuals and Easton community members to biannually evaluate the demand and specific needs related to accessible housing options, including group homes and independent living opportunities.
13. Perform an annual review of Housing Production Plan goals and strategies and include on a Select Board meeting agenda each year, with participation by the Planning board, Affordable Housing Trust and other relevant boards and staff.
14. Maintain Easton's status as a Housing Choice Community, to ensure enhanced access to state funding, by reapplying every two years and striving to continue to meet the requirements for designation

through a combination of housing production and best practices.

15. Schedule annual meetings that promote inter-municipal coordination, including conversations between the Affordable Housing Trust, all land-use board discussions and trainings, and an annual housing forum to discuss progress towards housing goals.
16. Maintain and develop partnerships with regional and local non-profit housing developers, including Habitat for Humanity, to identify opportunities to provide funding as well as to tap them

## PLANNING, POLICIES & ZONING STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

**Strategy 1.** Consider rezoning areas with vacant/underutilized commercial space, industrial, or institutional buildings to allow by-right redevelopment for multi-family or mixed-use housing.

Vacant or underutilized offices, industrial, or institutional buildings that could be considered for rezoning to allow by-right development for multi-family residential or mixed-use development. This would provide an option for property owners to respond to market demand and to provide additional opportunities to help Easton meet or exceed local housing demand.

for their expertise and advice on potential zoning amendments to encourage development of housing options.

17. Maintain funding for the Easton Affordable Housing Trust.
18. Encourage local housing initiatives and continue local planning education to promote achievement of state-mandated affordable housing goals.
19. Encourage initiatives to improve access to public transportation and transit-oriented development.

Existing offices and industrial buildings could be converted or redeveloped to multi-family housing, or a mix of uses, including housing, and are within walking distance to existing amenities.

*Timeframe:* Years 1-3 | *Responsible Entities:* Affordable Housing Trust, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals

**Strategy 2.** Consider collaborating with the CPC and the Conservation Commission to encourage set-aside land for context-sensitive affordable or mixed-income housing development that is well integrated into a conservation setting.

When Easton undertakes open space conservation projects using CPA funds, a portion of the land could be used for context-sensitive affordable housing.

*Timeframe:* Years 3-5 | *Responsible Entity:* Community Preservation Committee, Affordable Housing Trust.

### Strategy 3. Consider adopting widespread Inclusionary Zoning Provisions

Although Easton boasts some aspects of inclusionary zoning, more extensively than the surrounding communities, it doesn't have a dedicated, stand-alone, inclusionary zoning bylaw. It shows up as a provision within certain bylaws:

- ❖ §235-37(I): The flexible development bylaw, "a minimum of 10 percent of the Basic Maximum Number of Dwelling Units (without inclusion of any density bonus) shall be restricted in perpetuity or for the longest period allowed by law."
- ❖ §235-42(F)(7): The residential compound bylaw, "Promote housing affordable to persons or families of low or moderate income, as defined by the standards and criteria of the Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development."
- ❖ §235-48: The Queset Commercial overlay district; and
- ❖ §235-51.2(G): The Furnace Village overlay district, "any development with 10 or more residential units shall include affordable units...in the amount of a minimum of 10 percent of the total residential units."

Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) provisions tie the development of market-rate housing with affordable housing units to help increase a community's supply of deed-restricted affordable units. Well-designed IZ can increase affordable housing without disrupting the market, it is sometimes perceived as controversial and requires town officials to assess economic feasibility and engage the community for buy-in.

IZ programs include a range of local policies that can help a community maintain or increase its percentage of housing units that are eligible for the SHI. According to the MACP Inclusionary Zoning and Payment in Lieu of Units Analysis<sup>6</sup>, there are over 300 communities in the state that have enacted IZ provisions.

**Effective IZ is tailored to local market conditions and can set standards that do not overburden new development or negatively impact the pace of development, while also resulting in meaningful increases in affordable units.**

Inclusionary zoning (IZ) is a strategy to ensure that the benefits of new investment and development are shared more equitably among households of different income levels. The creation and preservation of affordable housing in asset-rich neighborhoods with access to quality schools, public services, and better jobs is

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<sup>6</sup> MAPC, *Inclusionary Zoning and Payment in Lieu of Units Analysis*,

[https://www.rhsohousing.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf421/f/uploads/final\\_report\\_-\\_rhso\\_07.18.18.pdf](https://www.rhsohousing.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf421/f/uploads/final_report_-_rhso_07.18.18.pdf)

one of the few proven strategies for increasing opportunity for a range of residents.

IZ asks developers to share the responsibility of creating affordable housing without creating uneconomic conditions that deter future housing development. These costs are usually absorbed by modest declines in land prices and reductions in developer profits instead of being passed on to tenants and homebuyers, as unit prices must continue to be competitive with the local real estate market.

***Recommended Actions:***

- Consider options for inclusionary Zoning (IZ) for Easton that would require that residential developments above a certain number of units or size include a minimum percentage of affordable units.
- ***Mandatory or Voluntary.*** Consider using the special permit process authorized by Section 9 of the Zoning Act to relax zoning requirements in exchange for providing a certain number of affordable housing units in a residential development. In general, mandatory programs generate far more affordable units. Voluntary programs generate the most units when they either offer substantial subsidies to developers, or they function as mandatory programs where discretionary permits are denied without a robust affordable housing component included in the project.
- ***Geographic Targeting.*** Consider the extent of the geography that will be covered by the IZ. Some programs cover the entire extent of a municipality, while others apply the requirements to targeted neighborhoods. Programs that only target specific areas of a community may be more complex to design and administer and could lead to developers foregoing development in IZ neighborhoods. Community-wide IZ programs can compensate neighborhood market conditions through incentives that balance costs and profit of development.
- ***Required Set-Aside.*** An economic feasibility analysis can provide town officials with a set-aside percent that makes sense for the Town of Easton's market conditions. The Town may also incentivize that a certain number of affordable housing set-aside meet specific local housing needs. There may also be more reliance on PILU fees in lower-density areas because of smaller-scale development that will result in fewer affordable units per project.
- ***Partnerships.*** The Town can further leverage the local IZ units by partnering with the Affordable Housing Trust and Housing Authority to reach deeper levels of affordability by matching low-income households with housing choice vouchers (HCV) and moderately affordable rental units. For rental projects, the Town may seek to reach those with the most acute housing needs (less than 50 percent of AMI), the



program may allow for the option of providing a fewer number of units at a deeper level of affordability.

- **Measuring Impact.** The Affordable Housing Trust or other municipal entity should seek to measure and document the program’s impact on meeting local needs by tracking demographic information, sales prices, and rents across successive occupants. A standard annual report can summarize the number of units produced, number of households served, household income levels, amount of PILU fees collected and their use, and make recommendations on future policy. Carefully crafted decisions with clear conditions, effective

monitoring, and detailed record keeping supporting long-term affordability are key elements of a successful program. Responsible and effective administration, monitoring, and enforcement are critical factors, and require a significant investment in staffing and training to oversee the development process and steward the units after they are built.

Below is an example of an IZ provision which require affordable housing units for any development or division of land that results in the creation of six or more units per the following schedule

Table 1: Example Inclusionary Zoning Provision

Number of dwelling units	Number of affordable units
6 to10	1 affordable unit
11 to 18 units	2 affordable units
19 to 24 units	3 affordable units
25 to 30 units	4 affordable units
over 30 units	15 percent of the proposed project units rounded up to the nearest whole number

Many variations of inclusionary zoning bylaws have been adopted throughout the Commonwealth with varying degrees of success. It is important that Easton craft a bylaw that is custom to the community to ensure its success.

- Consider adopting inclusionary zoning to ensure that any new residential development in Easton provides a percentage of affordable units.
- The Town zoning regulations could be amended to require that any new subdivisions with 4 or more housing units located in the R40 zoning districts be required to have 25 percent of the units designated as permanently affordable (1 of every 4 units must be affordable).
- The Planning Board should review an Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw proposal. After detailed review and analysis with public comment, the Planning Board could bring

an Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw to the Annual Town Meeting for acceptance.

**Timeframe:** Years 1-3 | **Responsible entity:** The Affordable Housing Trust will work with the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals to write an Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw. The Town Meeting will have to vote the bylaw into law.

**Strategy 4.** Consider allowing more flexibility to create Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).

An ADU is an apartment within or on the property with a single-family dwelling. The property appears from the street to be a single-family, not a two-family house. As stated by AARP at its *All About Accessory Dwelling Units* website,

*As small houses or apartments that exist on the same property lot as a single-family residence, ADUs play a major role in serving a national housing need. This traditional home type is re-emerging as an affordable and flexible housing option that meets the needs of older adults and young families alike.*

Accessory apartments, either as an alteration to a single-family dwelling or a conversion of a detached accessory building (garage, barn, or gate house) can help diversify a community's housing stock by providing smaller rental units for increasing numbers of smaller households. They are also typically more affordable and can provide income to cost-burdened owners.

The Town of Easton Zoning By-Law **Section 8.8 In-Law Apartments** stipulates an In-Law Apartment must be constructed within or attached to an existing or new owner-occupied single-family dwelling, the by-law is restrictive.

**Consider allowing more flexibility for property owners to create ADUs with the following zoning amendments:**

- Consider allowing ADUs as of right within the principal dwelling or an existing detached structure on the same property.
- Revise provision to switch from allowing “in-law apartments” restricted to relatives of the homeowners to allowing ADUs that can be rented out without restricting who the residents can be.
- Consider increasing the square footage of the ADU up to 1,200 sf within a single-family dwelling, and up to 1,500 sf for ADUs in detached structures.

**Timeframe:** Years 1-3 **Responsible Entities:** Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals

**Strategy 5.** Consider ways to allow Co-Living Spaces and Community Housing more explicitly.

Shared living arrangements are not a new idea but have made a resurgence to help respond to the need for more affordable housing options. From millennials to seniors, shared living arrangements are in demand.

Co-Living is a type of “intention community” in which people make a conscious choice to live together as a group. A way of living with many other people in one space that

encourages its residents to interact and work together. Co-Living is a new kind of modern housing arrangement where residents with shared interests, intentions, and values share a living space where they are almost like a big family. Residents will usually have their own bedroom and bathroom but will share common areas like cooking and living spaces. On a practical level, the expenses are shared between all the residents and is a means of affordable living for both young and elderly residents.

Seniors living in cohousing always have people around to keep them company or give them a hand with chores. Also, those who live in special senior cohousing can hire one caregiver to tend to their medical needs, instead of each paying for their own. This makes it easier for seniors to continue living on their own as they age rather than having to move into an expensive assisted-living community.

One example of shared living are contemporary co-living spaces that provide group living opportunities where residents share common areas and amenities. Community housing is another shared living environment designed to integrate the housing and services needs of elders and disabled individuals. Community housing will often house up to 16 people and can be a housing choice which accommodates later life-stages for an older population and provides supportive housing for individuals with disabilities. There are many different types of cohousing communities, from urban to rural.

Nearly all cohousing arrangements have certain features in common.

- ***The Common House.*** The common house is the “living room” of a cohousing community – the place where residents gather for group meals, meetings, parties, and other activities.
- ***Clustered Housing.*** Grouped closely around the common house are smaller individual homes. Depending on the location, these can be condominiums, townhouses, single-family homes, duplexes, or even tiny houses. Each one is a complete home with bedrooms, bathrooms, and a kitchen.
- ***Outdoor Space.*** Along with the common house, cohousing residents share outdoor spaces, such as parking areas, walkways, lawns, and gardens.

Being part of a cohousing community offers many benefits. It makes it possible to enjoy a home with more amenities than you could afford on your own; it helps you protect the environment by sharing resources with the group; and it gives the resident a chance to be part of a caring community where neighbors look out for each other.

***Timeframe:*** Years 3-5 | ***Responsible Entities:*** Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Affordable Housing Trust

**Strategy 6:** Promote a diversity of housing options in Easton to meet the needs of a changing and aging population and promote socio-economically diverse population through increased multi-generational housing options, and progressive senior facilities.

The community's housing needs are diverse, yet most stock consists of single-family homes. Solutions need to be found to enable children who grew up in town to return to raise their own families here, to offer town employees the opportunity to live in the community in which they work, to provide housing alternatives to elderly residents who have spent much of their lives in town but now require alternatives to their large single-family homes, and to offer families the flexibility of moving to larger homes as their families grow.

Housing Diversity refers to the range of housing options available to residents of Massachusetts. Each community should provide opportunities for all types of housing through their zoning ordinances. Offering a diverse mix of housing, in cost, unit types, and neighborhood settings is important to meet the needs and preferences of all residents. Encouraging Housing Diversity offers the following benefits:

**Economic Stability:** Housing that is affordable to the workforce is critical to the local economy, and directly impacts the ability of employers to recruit and retain staff.

**Commuting and Traffic Advantages:** The shortage of affordable housing causes young professionals and families to locate in

outlying areas, requiring lengthy commutes to and from their jobs.

**Accommodating our Aging Population:** The growing population of seniors living longer, healthier lives, suggests that demands for diverse housing options will increase. Housing that addresses the spectrum of income levels and lifestyle choices or limitations will allow seniors to remain in their homes and contribute to their communities.

**Sustaining Families:** Diverse, affordable housing is critically important to the health and well being of children and families. When housing needs are appropriately met, children are more likely to be healthy and perform well in school, and parents are more likely to be productive members of a strong workforce.

**Diversify Housing Options:** Maximize existing community resources to enable seniors to continue living in the housing of their choice and provide education about a range of housing options. Provide multi-generational community housing opportunities that give priority to residents, veterans, town employees, and families of students enrolled in the town public schools.

**Timeframe:** Years 1-3 | **Responsible Parties:** Affordable Housing Trust, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Select Board

**Strategy 7.** Encourage Smaller Housing Units.

A noticeable trend in Easton is the increase in the size of single-family homes. Homes built from 2000 to 2020 are significantly larger than homes built from 1950-1975, the post WWII

era. Home builders stand to earn a larger profit by building larger homes. However, this trend is ignoring demographic forces that favor construction of smaller units. Easton has many empty-nesters and active adults who raised families in single family homes and now wish to down-size into smaller units. Recent graduates and younger people without children or beginning families are unable to find starter homes that they can afford. And of course, lower- and moderate-income residents are unable to afford a home in Easton without a subsidy.

Consider the following:

- Create more zones of smaller lot sizes / compact neighborhoods.
- Explore community housing and co-housing, the form of single family detached, with more than one dwelling unit allowed per lot.
- Leverage existing historical housing stock to allow historical village creation featuring smaller lots and homes in a compact neighborhood setting.
- Take advantage of neighborhoods with large expanses of vacant land due to lot geometry to create infill compact neighborhoods where appropriate.
- Focus on creating compact neighborhoods near the three town centers, with a focus on Furnace Village and Washington Street to enhance the potential for walkable neighborhoods.
- Leverage the existing residents on appropriate boards and town employees in relevant departments to investigate and create a list of locations for the initiatives listed above.

*Timeframe:* 1-3 years | *Responsible Parties:* Planning Board, Affordable Housing Trust

**Strategy 8.** Conduct screening analysis of town-owned land to create affordable housing units through adaptive reuse of existing buildings and town owned properties.

Create affordable housing opportunities through adaptive reuse of existing buildings, including preservation of historic buildings and redevelopment of previously developed properties to utilize existing infrastructure, capitalize on the embodied energy of existing and underutilized sites and preserve open space. Easton can support multiple community goals for historic preservation and economic revitalization in addition to affordable housing.

In the future, Easton may have municipal structures that become abandoned, underutilized, or functionally obsolete. There may be opportunities to convert town-owned property to accommodate some affordable housing. Future tax title property may also provide the community with opportunities to construct affordable housing for its residents. Additionally, privately owned properties (for example, a farmhouse) might be converted to multi-unit dwellings that would include affordable units.

- Prioritize affordable housing on abandoned and vacant properties.
- Identify potential funding and grant options.

- Target development projects to Town-owned properties where feasible to take advantage of parcels that will have discounted or nominal acquisition costs to make affordable housing more financially feasible.
- The Town can explore whether any Town-owned parcels or buildings could be developed as affordable.
- Consider streamlining the permitting process.
- Consider discounting permitting fees for development of affordable housing units.

**Recommended Action:** The Select Board and The Affordable Housing Trust will study municipal land holdings to determine if any are appropriate for affordable housing. The Town will study the potential for re-using structures as the need arises. Reusing properties as housing is a strategy that enables the community to accommodate growth in established locations instead of on green space and at the same time preserve or restore the architectural fabric of the community.

In the future, whenever the community analyzes property for future municipal uses, affordable housing potential will be taken into consideration. If any parcel is determined to have potential, land planners or other consultants could be hired to conduct a more rigorous analysis of the property. If a property is deemed appropriate for the construction of affordable housing, the town will work with a not-for-profit developer and target the disposition of the property for the specific purpose of creating affordable housing. The town will retain control over the review

process and will structure the deed in such a way as to protect the community and public interest.

The Town of Easton will conduct screening analysis of Town-owned land to target other opportunities for developing affordable housing. Many parcels of Town land are dedicated to park and conservation purposes, and thus are not available for development (Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution requires, that to withdraw conservation land for other purposes, the Conservation Commission must give its unanimous consent, Town Meeting must provide a 2/3 vote and the State legislature must also provide a 2/3 vote). Land that is not otherwise committed to a specific purpose may be suitable for affordable housing development. The screening analysis will filter out properties that are not suitable; factors to consider include environmental constraints, slope, soils, road access, and neighborhood compatibility. If one or more properties offer promise, the Board will propose engaging professionals to perform a feasibility study, including soil testing to estimate septic capacity and installing test wells to judge the quantity and quality of ground water. For those sites with high development suitability, the Planning Board will reach out to the neighborhood and collaborate with other boards to seek to develop a consensus on a preferred housing concept.

**Timeframe:** Years 1-3 | **Responsible Entity:** The Affordable Housing Trust should work with the Assessor's Office to study opportunities for adaptive reuse for housing



on town owned property and tax title property.

**Strategy 9.** Plan for safe pedestrian and bicycle access to recreational resources and local amenities in existing and proposed residential developments.

Consider implementing complete streets and similar policy for all large-scale multifamily dwellings to provide safe access to local resources or provide usable access to open space within the bounds of the development.

***Timeframe:*** Years 1-3 | ***Responsible Entity:*** Planning Board, Affordable Housing Trust, Zoning Board of Appeals.

## LOCAL INITIATIVES, PROGRAMS & MONITORING IMPLEMENTATION

**Strategy 10.** Create an inventory of private land suitable for redevelopment or new construction of diverse housing options, particularly in areas with sidewalk access to nearby amenities and services and coordinate with developers to plan Local Initiative Program projects that provide affordable housing that includes local preferences.

To further the work of this HPP, the Planning Department is encouraged to conduct a thorough GIS analysis to identify parcels that are vacant or have high potential to be redeveloped for affordable housing. This analysis will consider environmental and regulatory constraints, such as groundwater, wetlands, flood zones, and protected open space, as well as infrastructure capacity, including sewer treatment, and drinking water capacity, and prioritize parcels near village centers, public transit, and other commercial areas and amenities.

Based on the results of this analysis, the Town will work with property owners and developers to explore opportunities to create more affordable housing opportunities, particularly rental properties for Very Low-Income households that provide accessible or

adaptable housing options for seniors and residents with disabilities.

**Timeframe:** Years 1-3 | **Responsible Parties:** Planning Board, Board of Assessors, Zoning Board of Appeals

**Strategy 11.** Review private properties for housing opportunities.

The Town should review private parcels for affordable housing development when the opportunity arises. Some private properties of interest include Chapter 61 (Forestry), Chapter 61A (Agriculture) and 61B (Recreation) property. These properties are under special designated tax status to the benefit of both the Town and the landowners. Many of the parcels enrolled in this program are of interest for preservation of open space and conservation. Some parcels would also be suitable for a small number of housing units in addition to the larger open space use. These are explored in detail when those properties are sold or converted, and the Town considers exercising its Right of First Refusal. The Town will review any property under Chapter 61, 61A or 61B for suitability for affordable housing, when the Town considers exercising its Right of First Refusal.

**Timeframe:** Years 1-3 | **Responsible Entities:** The Select Board and The Affordable Housing Trust will work with the Board of Assessors, Zoning Board of Appeals, Planning Board and other appropriate board and committees to coordinate the review of properties under Chapter 61 to determine which properties are suitable for the construction of affordable

housing when those properties become eligible for sale.

## CAPACITY, EDUCATION & COORDINATION STRATEGIES IMPLEMENTATION

**Strategy 12.** Collaborate with organizations supporting disabled individuals and Easton community members to biannually evaluate the demand and specific needs related to accessible housing options, including group homes and independent living opportunities.

The Town should organize discussion between local and regional organizations supporting people with disabilities to understand how well their housing needs are being met. Local demand should be evaluated against the current stock of accessible units in both public and private housing, and critical gaps and housing barriers should be considered as the Town implements and updates the checklist.

As the Town works with housing developers on public and private land, the development of housing that can accommodate alternate living arrangements such as group home and independent living facilities should be considered, where appropriate.

**Timeframe:** Years 3-5 | **Responsible Parties:** Affordable Housing Trust.

**Strategy 13.** Perform an annual review of Housing Production Plan goals and strategies and include on a Select Board meeting agenda each year, with participation by the Planning Board, Affordable Housing Trust Housing Authority and other relevant boards and staff.

Sharing updates on successes and setbacks related to this plan's goals and strategies is an effective way to promote discussion between Town staff, boards, the Easton Housing Authority regarding housing production in Easton. Numerical goals should be set, and methods of measurement established so that progress can be evaluated against them. This review should be established as an annual agenda item for the Select Board's meeting each May.

The progress review should cover housing developments completed over the past year, as well as proposed developments in the pipeline, the status of the Subsidized Housing Inventory, and other objectives and coordination efforts for the year ahead that will help ensure that housing production continues to meet the needs of the community. The results of these discussions should be summarized in a report and provided to relevant boards, committees, and staff.

**Timeframe:** Years 3-5 | **Responsible Parties:** Affordable Housing Trust, Select Board

**Strategy 14.** Maintain Easton’s status as a Housing Choice Community, to ensure enhanced access to state funding, by reapplying every two years and striving to continue to meet the requirements for designation through a combination of housing production and best practices.

This designation provides access to new financial resources including Housing choice Community Capital Grants and preferential treatment for many state grant opportunities and capital funding programs including State Revolving Fund for Water and Sewer infrastructure, MassWorks, Complete Streets, MassDOT capital projects, and PARC and LAND grants.

Town of Easton Housing Choice Criteria:

- Permitted new units: 470.
- Housing Choice Criteria: 5 percent Demonstrated increase in housing stock by at least 5 percent or 500 units over the last 5 years.
- Latest Designation year: 2020.
- Grant Amount: \$225,000.
- Project Description: Funding covers design and engineering plans for Phase II of the Five Corners Sewer project which will extend the sewer further into Easton serving commercial and residential properties and benefit ongoing and planned housing growth.
- FY21 Grant Amount: \$225,000.
- FY21 Project Description: The Town of Easton will direct funding toward complete streets improvements

(pedestrian, bicycle, and transit accommodations), intersection upgrades, replacement of 3 culverts, and new storm water infrastructure for approximately 1.3 miles of Foundry Street.

The Town of Easton was designated as a Housing Choice Community in 2018 and 2020, the designation lasts for 2 years. There are two minimum threshold qualifications to apply:

1. Must have current ADA Self-Evaluation Plan and ADA Transition Plan or agree to achieve these plans within 5 years.
2. May not have a housing moratorium or restrictions that limit new housing growth to less than 5 percent per year.

The designation also requires that the community produce 5 percent net new housing units over 2010 year-round housing units and/or increase of 500 or more units or a 3 percent increase with implementation of at least seven (of fourteen) best practices with at least two affordable best practices. DHCD’s best practices as of 2021 can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2021-housing-choice-best-practices/download>

**Timeframe:** Years 1-3 | **Responsible Parties:** Affordable Housing Trust, Planning Board, Select Board

**Strategy 15.** Schedule annual meetings that promote inter-municipal coordination, including conversations between the Affordable Housing Trust, all land-use board discussions and trainings, and an annual housing forum to discuss progress towards housing goals.

Formalized regular communication between local boards and commissions can promote greater coordination of policies and approaches to affordable housing opportunities and development. This effort can be modelled after housing and land use groups in other municipalities, and can include training on state and federal regulations, including fair housing laws, as well as sources of funding for affordable housing production.

Boards and Committees should create / revise systems to better administer the zoning that is already in place. In addition said entities should work together to streamline permitting process so that proposed projects that meet the objectives of Easton's policies can get substantially faster approvals.

The Easton Affordable Housing Trust should maintain a dialogue and coordinate planning efforts to identify public and private land that would be suitable for these projects. Potential sites should be considered in conjunction with the priorities established by both groups, ensuring that key natural resources are conserved while setting aside land for development of context-appropriate housing that provides opportunities for low-and moderate-income households. Sources of matching funds should also be identified and described in joint project proposals submitted to the Community Preservation Committee.

These proposals should also emphasize the co-benefits of incorporating both open space and housing elements on selected sites. If Easton

identifies priority areas for acquisition that overlap with potential sites for housing, the Affordable Housing Trust should be provided an opportunity to comment and explore options to incorporate or preserve housing as part of the land purchase. Similarly, the Affordable Housing Trust should consider how open space conservation can best be incorporated into affordable housing development proposals.

To keep the community informed and engaged on housing development in Easton, the Town should host an annual housing forum. The Planning Department and the Affordable Housing Trust should prepare a short summary of progress towards achieving the housing goals outlined in this plan and share success stories from recent developments that address local housing needs. The event should also provide community members with the opportunity to provide feedback on recent housing development and share their own stories of how the availability of new housing options has benefitted them, as well as additional efforts that may be needed to address ongoing emerging housing needs.

***Timeframe:*** Years 1-3 | ***Responsible Parties:*** Affordable Housing Trust, Select Board, Housing Authority, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals

**Strategy 16.** Maintain and develop partnerships with regional and local non-profit housing developers, including Habitat for Humanity, to identify opportunities to provide funding as well as to tap them for their expertise and advice on potential zoning amendments to encourage development of housing options.

The Town should build on relationships already established with local and regional non-profit housing developers and identify new partners who are seeking funding or applying for grants that will help fund the expansion of housing options in Easton. Recent projects with Habitat for Humanity have shown the success of these relationships and indicate that housing developed with non-profit organizations may garner more community support than private developments. The organizations can also provide an outside perspective and other examples from throughout the region on zoning amendments and expediting permitting that could help expand options for housing to a broader range of household types and income levels.

**Timeframe:** Years 1-3 | **Responsible Parties:** Affordable Housing Trust, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals.

**Strategy 17.** Maintain funding for the Easton Affordable Housing Trust.

Maintain regular, predictable revenue streams to the housing trust. CPC and Trust

membership could overlap to increase regular communication and collaboration.

Continue paying for, reducing, or eliminating permitting fees for AHT-sponsored projects. Explore ways for the Town to reduce, eliminate, or pay for permitting fees for the development of other affordable units.

**Timeframe:** Years 1-5 | **Responsible Parties:** Community Preservation Committee, Affordable Housing Trust, Select Board, Planning Board, Town Administrator, Building Inspector.

**Strategy 18.** Encourage local housing initiatives and continue local planning education to promote achievement of state-mandated affordable housing goals.

Education of the community at large, as well as members of specific boards, will be an important component of successfully meeting the goals of this plan.

- Increase resident awareness of unmet housing needs and demand and the meaning of affordable housing. Town wide, there may be concerns about the impacts of developing additional affordable housing.
- The Town should promote dialogue on this issue to promote the exchange of ideas and concerns.
- Engage the local real estate community and property owners to increase understanding of and foster



development/redevelopment opportunities.

- Provide and encourage affordable and fair housing education/training opportunities to Town Boards, Committee members and staff, to take advantage of ongoing training and educational programs related to affordable housing and ensure compliance with the Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other legal housing requirements.

Specific learning opportunities include the University of Massachusetts Extension's Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC) offers classes periodically throughout the year and may provide customized training sessions to individual communities. The Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) conducts the annual Massachusetts Housing Institute "a workshop that actively engages participants in discussion and problem solving around issues related to the development of affordable housing". Other organizations, such as Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Citizens Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), and the Community Preservation Coalition (CPC) also provide conferences, training sessions and publications on a wide variety of housing issues. If fees are involved, funding should be made available. This training should also be accessed on an ongoing basis as membership of these boards and committees turns over. Specialized training should also be made available to professional staff persons to keep them up to date on the new regulations and best practices.

**Timeframe:** Years 1-5 | **Responsible Entities:**

The Select Board should encourage members of appropriate committees to attend statewide and regional training sessions on housing-related issues, Affordable Housing Trust, Community Preservation Committee, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Board of Assessors.

**Strategy 19.** Encourage initiatives to improve access to public transportation and transit-oriented development.

It is suggested that Easton build on or establish relationships with regional public transit authorities such as MassDOT, BAT & GATRA and identify new opportunities for transit hubs/corridors and seek funding for the expansion of public transit and transit-oriented development. The South Coast rail project has proposed two station stops for Easton: North Easton (on the Easton/Stoughton border) and Easton Village (adjacent to the Shovel Works apartments). The town commented in March of 2018 in a statement: South Coast Rail DSEIR Town of Easton Comment Letter. The Selectboard previously voted against the Stoughton alternative altogether while expressing support for the Middleboro alternative which the letter reiterated. Housing priority areas should consider the possibility of future train station stops should the South Coast rail build out the Stoughton route.

Additionally, working with the Brockton Area Transit Authority, BAT and Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority, GATRA,

to expand a bus route to one of the aforementioned South Coast rail locations and/or the Town center would make connections currently void of dedicated public transit routes. The town has worked with BAT to conduct potential ridership studies although the results did not show enough ridership opportunity to bring bus routes to Easton. The town should keep these conversations ongoing. 2015 Census data shows the need to own one or more vehicles in most suburban locations disproportionately burdens lower-income households. While 27 percent of Very Low-Income households (30 percent-50 percent of Area Median Income) in urban areas can live without a car, only 11 percent of such households in suburban areas can do so, creating severe financial constraints and mobility limitations.

The elder population in Easton has para-transit services through DAIL-A-BAT, offered by BAT. DIAL-A-BAT serves the elderly and disabled population in Brockton, Abington, Avon, Bridgewater, West Bridgewater, East Bridgewater, Stoughton, Whitman and parts of Easton, Hanson and Rockland. Eligible persons include:

- ADA – Anyone, regardless of age, who by reason of physical or developmental disability is unable to ride a fixed route BAT bus will be eligible upon acquiring an ADA pass.
- Seniors – Anyone 65 years or older will be eligible with proof of age and residency

presented to the Customer Service office at 10 Commercial Street (BAT Centre).<sup>7</sup>

### **MBTA Communities:**

Enacted as part of the economic development bill in January 2021, the new Section 3A of M.G.L. c. 40A (the Zoning Act) requires that an MBTA Community shall have at least one zoning district of reasonable size in which multi-family housing is permitted as of right and meets other criteria outlined in the statute:

- Minimum gross density of 15 units per acre
- Not more than ½ miles from a commuter rail station, subway station, ferry terminal or bus station, if applicable.
- No age restrictions
- Suitable for families with children.

The public comment period for possible amendments to the law ended March 31, 2022 so the guidance is subject to change.

As of the date of this Housing Production Plan, Easton is actively planning for how to leverage the MBTA Communities zoning requirements to support its ongoing work to support and create walkable mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhoods in several strategic locations.

***Timeframe:*** Years 1-5 | ***Responsible Entities:***

The Select Board, Affordable Housing Trust, Community Preservation Committee, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.ridebat.com/dial-a-bat/>

# APPENDIX

## AVAILABLE HOUSING RESOURCES & PROGRAMS

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).** HUD's mission is to create strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all. HUD is working to strengthen the housing market to bolster the economy and protect consumers; meet the need for quality affordable rental homes; utilize housing as a platform for improving quality of life; build inclusive and sustainable communities free from discrimination and transform the way HUD does business. Additional information can be found at <https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD>

**Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).** DHCD's mission is to strengthen cities, towns, and neighborhoods to enhance the quality of life of Massachusetts residents. DHCD provides leadership, professional assistance, and financial resources to promote safe, decent affordable housing opportunities, economic vitality of communities and sound municipal management. Additional information can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/hed/housing/>

**Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA).** The Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) is a non-profit umbrella organization for affordable housing and community development activities in Massachusetts. Established in 1967, CHAPA's mission is to encourage the production and preservation of housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income families and individuals and to foster diverse and sustainable communities through planning and community development.

CHAPA pursues its goals through advocacy with local, state, and federal officials; research on affordable housing issues; education and training for organizations and individuals; programs to expand rental and homeownership opportunities; and coalition building among a broad array of interests in the housing and community development field. Additional information can be found on CHAPA's website at <https://www.chapa.org/>

**Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP).** The Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) is a statewide public non-profit affordable housing organization that works in concert with the Governor and the state Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to help increase the supply of affordable housing in Massachusetts.

MHP was established in 1985 to increase the state's overall rate of housing production and work with cities and towns to demonstrate new and better ways of meeting the need for affordable housing. The MHP focuses its efforts in three main areas: community assistance, rental

development, and homeownership. Additional information can be found on MHPs website at <http://www.mhp.net/>

**South Shore Habitat for Humanity.** Habitat for Humanity is a global nonprofit housing organization working in nearly 1,400 communities across the United States and in approximately 70 countries around the world. Habitat's vision is of a world where everyone has a decent place to live. Habitat works toward their vision by building strength, stability, and self-reliance in partnership with people and families in need of a decent and affordable home.

The South Shore Chapter of Habitat for Humanity was founded in 1986 and covers 35 cities and towns south and southwest of Boston. In the 30 years since its inception, South Shore Habitat for Humanity has built 56 homes in 21 communities, helping more than 99 adults and 194 children build a place to call home. Additional information can be found on the Chapter's website at <https://sshabitat.org/>

**Housing Solutions for Southeastern Massachusetts.** Housing Solutions for Southeastern Massachusetts – formerly known as South Shore Housing – is a regional nonprofit organization focused on providing housing services and developing affordable housing in Plymouth and Bristol counties. Its mission is to help low- and moderate-income families and individuals secure affordable housing and use that housing as a foundation for improving their economic stability and wellbeing.

This is accomplished through a wide variety of programs and resources, including: housing for homeless families, homeless prevention initiatives, training and support for homebuyers and owners, the effective administration of 2,200 rental subsidies, the development and management of affordable housing, technical assistance to help cities and towns increase the supply of affordable housing, and through partnerships with service providers to address the housing needs of individuals with mental illness and developmental disabilities. Additional information can be found at <http://housingsolutionssema.org/>

**NeighborWorks Southern Mass.** NeighborWorks Southern Mass is non-profit corporation that believes affordable housing and stable neighborhoods help individuals and families realize their full dignity and potential. NeighborWorks Southern Mass consists of a partnership of residents, businesses, and local governments. Its mission is to help people have a safe and affordable place to live. They accomplish this by developing and managing affordable housing, educating, and assisting homeowners and homebuyers, and helping homeowners repair and maintain their homes. Additional information can be found at <http://nwsoma.org/>

**MassHousing.** MassHousing is an independent public authority that provides financing for the construction and preservation of affordable rental housing, and for affordable first and second mortgages for homebuyers and homeowners. MassHousing is a self-supporting not-for-profit public agency that raises capital by selling bonds and then lending the proceeds to low- and

moderate-income homebuyers and homeowners, and to developers who build or preserve affordable and/or mixed-income rental housing. Additional information can be found at <http://masshousing.com>

**Community Preservation Act (CPA).** The Community Preservation Act (CPA) was signed into law in Massachusetts in 2000 and allows communities to create a local Community Preservation Fund through a real estate tax surcharge of no more than 3 percent that can be used for open space protection, historic preservation, affordable housing, and outdoor recreation. The funds earned by a community are matched each year by a state trust fund, which varies from year to year.

To adopt the CPA, Town Meeting must first vote by simple majority to place the CPA on the ballot for the next town election, where it then needs a simple majority approval from town voters to pass. Communities can choose to place certain exemptions on the tax surcharge to lessen the burden on residents, such as exempting low-income residents from paying the surcharge, or exempting the first \$100,000 of a property's assessed value. Each year at least 10 percent of the funds earned must be spent or set aside for open space, historic preservation, and community housing. The remaining funds can be used for any of these areas and outdoor recreation. The CPA requires that a local Community Preservation Committee be created that makes recommendations to the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting on how to use the funds. To date, 172 municipalities (49 percent of the municipalities in Massachusetts) have adopted the CPA, including the local communities of Abington, Bridgewater, Easton, Hanson, Hanover, Rockland, and West Bridgewater. Additional information can be found at <http://www.communitypreservation.org/>

**Local Initiative Program (LIP).** The Local Initiative Program (LIP) is a state program that encourages the creation of affordable housing by providing technical assistance to communities and developers who are working together to create affordable rental opportunities for low- and moderate-income households. Unlike conventional housing subsidy programs, in which a state or federal agency must approve every aspect of financing, design and construction, the LIP allows most of these decisions to be made by the municipality. LIP regulations and guidelines address those program components that must be reviewed and approved by DHCD. For example, incomes of households served, fair marketing, profit limitation and establishing long-term affordability for the units which are built. Eligible applicants include both for-profit and non-profit developers working in concert with a city or town, as the municipality and developer jointly submit the application. Additional information can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/hed/housing/affordable-own/local-initiative-program-lip.html>

**HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME).** HOME is a federally funded program that assists in the production and preservation of affordable housing for low and moderate-income families and individuals. HOME funds can be used for the acquisition and/or rehabilitation of existing structures for sale to income-eligible first-time homebuyers, including distressed or failed properties, or for the new construction of homeownership projects. Projects seeking HOME

funds must include a minimum of 3 HOME-assisted ownership units, the sites for which must be secured with a signed Purchase & Sale Agreement at the time of application. Eligible applicants include for-profit developers; non-profit developers; non-profit organizations designated as Community Housing Development Organizations (CHDOs) and municipalities in cooperation with any of the above. Additional information can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/hed/housing/affordable-own/home-investment-partnerships-program.html>

**Housing Stabilization Fund.** The Housing Stabilization Fund (HSF) is a state funded bond program that assists in the production and preservation of affordable housing for low-income families and individuals. HSF monies may be used for the acquisition and/or rehabilitation of existing structures for sale to income-eligible first-time homebuyers, including distressed or failed properties, or the new construction of homeownership projects. Projects seeking HSF must have a minimum of 3 HSF-assisted ownership units, which must be secured with, at a minimum, a signed Purchase & Sale Agreement at the time of application. Eligible applicants include for-profit developers, non-profit developers, local housing authorities and municipalities in cooperation with for-profit or non-profit developers. Additional information can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/hed/housing/affordable-own/housing-stabilization-fund.html>

**The Massachusetts Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF).** The AHTF is designed to provide resources to create or preserve affordable housing throughout the state for households whose incomes are not more than 110 percent of median income. AHTF funds are focused on those activities that create, preserve, or acquire housing throughout the state for the benefit of those households. AHTF funds may also be used for permanent or transitional housing for homeless families and individuals, and for the modernization, rehabilitation, and repair of public housing. Eligible applicants include governmental subdivisions, community development corporations, local housing authorities, community action agencies, community-based or neighborhood-based non-profit housing organizations, other nonprofit organizations, for-profit entities, and private employers. Additional information can be found on the AHTFs website at <http://www.mass.gov/hed/housing/affordable-rent/ahtf.html>

**Community Development Block Grants (CDBG).** The Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant Program is a federally funded, competitive grant program designed to help small cities and towns meet a broad range of community development needs. Assistance is provided to qualifying cities and towns for housing, community, and economic development projects that assist low and moderate-income residents, or by revitalizing areas of slum or blight. Municipalities with a population of under 50,000 that do not receive CDBG funds directly from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are eligible for CDBG funding.

Eligible CDBG projects include but are not limited to housing rehabilitation or development, micro-enterprise or other business assistance, infrastructure, community/public facilities, public social services, planning, removal of architectural barriers to allow access by persons with



disabilities, and downtown or area revitalization. Additional information can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/community-development-block-grant-cdbg.html>

**Federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC).** The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) was created by Congress in 1986 to promote the construction and rehabilitation of housing for low-income persons. The tax credit provides a means by which developers may raise capital for the construction or acquisition and substantial rehabilitation of housing for low-income persons. Both for-profit and nonprofit developers are eligible to take advantage of the tax credit. At least 20 percent of the units must be reserved for persons with incomes at/or below 50 percent of the area median income adjusted for family size; or at least 40 percent of the units must be made affordable for persons with incomes at/or below 60 percent of the area median income adjusted for family size. In addition, the project must be retained as low-income housing for at least 30 years. Additional information can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/hed/housing/affordable-rent/low-income-housing-tax-credit-lihtc.html>

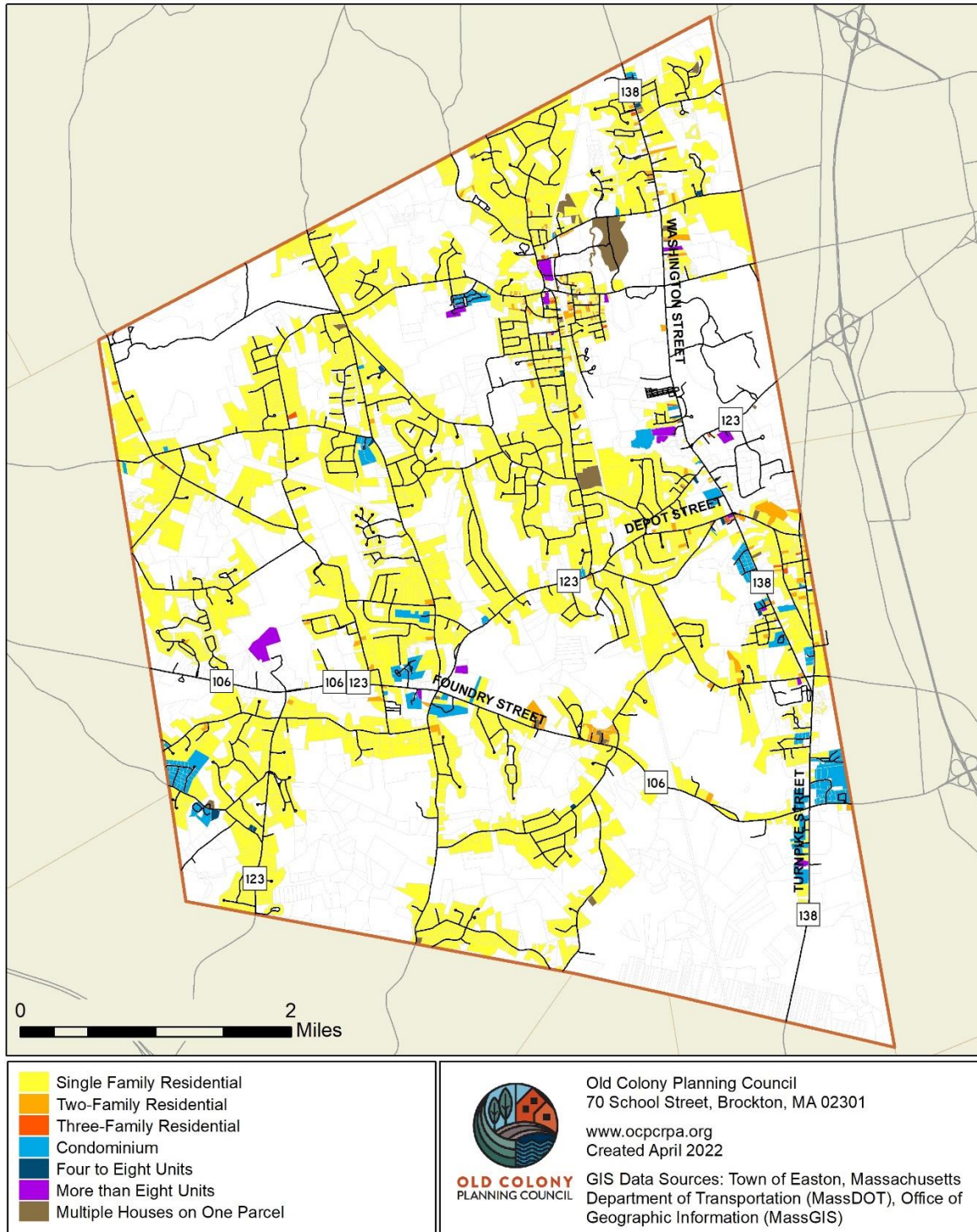
**Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC).** CEDAC is a public-private community development finance institution that provides financial resources and technical expertise for community-based and other non-profit organizations engaged in effective community development in Massachusetts. CEDAC's work supports three key building blocks of community development: affordable housing, workforce development, and early care and education. In terms of housing programs, CEDAC helps community development corporations and other non-profit developers by providing them early-stage capital financing and technical assistance throughout the development process. CEDAC Housing's financing options, which include predevelopment, acquisition, and bridge lending, provide developers with the patient capital to acquire property, hire a team of professional consultants that are needed for moving a development forward, and assemble financing packages to complete the projects. Additional information can be found at <https://cedac.org/>

**MassWorks Infrastructure Program.** The MassWorks Infrastructure Program provides a one-stop shop for municipalities and other eligible public entities seeking public infrastructure funding to support economic development, multi-family housing opportunities, community revitalization, and job creation. The Program represents an administrative consolidation of the following six former grant programs: Public Works Economic Development (PWED), Community Action Development Grant (CDAG), Growth Districts Initiative (GDI), Massachusetts Opportunity Relocation and Expansion Program (MORE), Small Town Rural Assistance Program (STRAP), and the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Program. Additional information can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/hed/economic/eohed/pro/infrastructure/massworks/>

# HOUSING MAPS

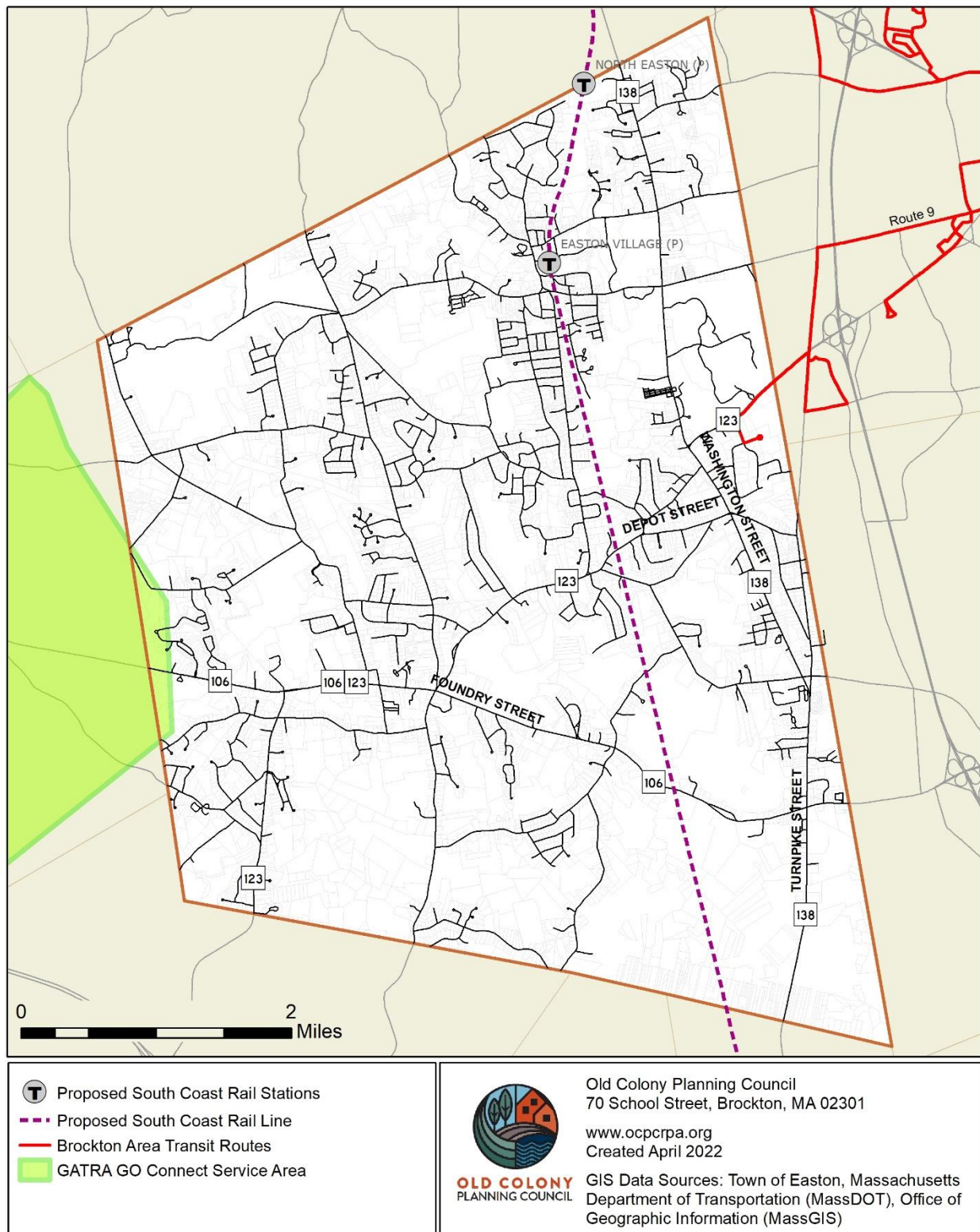
## Housing By Dwelling Type

### Housing by Dwelling Type



# Connections to transit

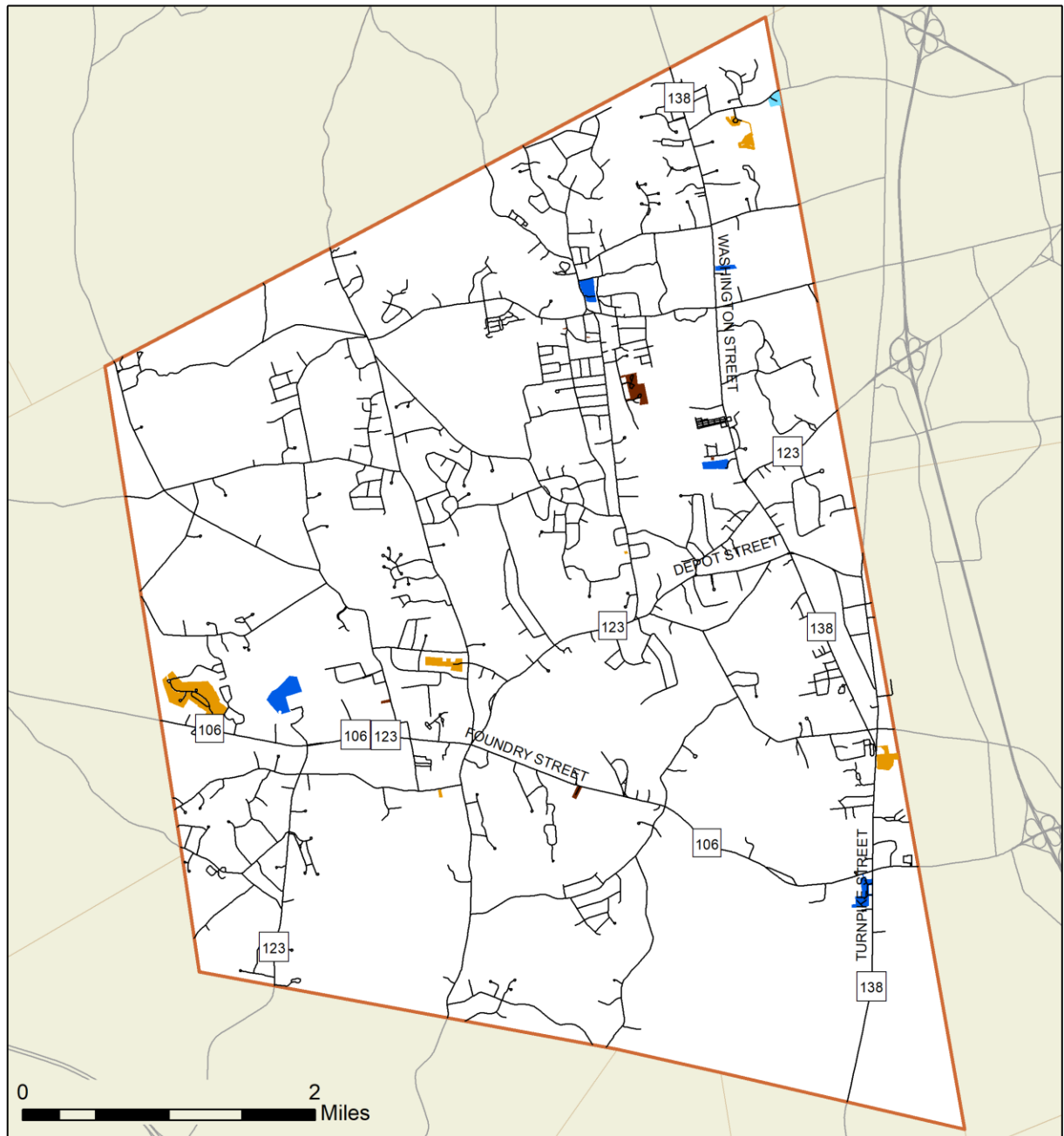
## Connections to Transit





# Affordable Housing Units

## Affordable Housing Units



- Easton Housing Authority
- Affordable Housing Units
- Affordable Rental Units
- Affordable Rental Units (Proposed)



OLD COLONY  
PLANNING COUNCIL

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