



# Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF HOUSING & LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

Maura T. Healey, Governor ♦ Kimberley Driscoll, Lieutenant Governor ♦ Edward M. Augustus Jr., Secretary

### Attachment A

#### Vacant Unit Design Guidance

EOHLC's Vacant Unit Design Guidance is intended to enhance LHA focus on rapid re-occupancy, particularly when performing vacancy turnovers with capital funds. These guidelines will:

- Ensure consistent approach to scope, speeding up design;
- Appropriately prioritize scope toward re-occupancy, rather than comprehensive rehab;
- Require unit condition is safe and sanitary and that project uses low-maintenance materials.

When undertaking vacant unit projects, LHAs, RCATs, and HLC AEs should develop concise scopes of work that prioritize rapid re-occupancy, rather than cosmetic upgrades that could be undertaken at a later date. The planning documents should limit scope to what is needed to re-occupy the unit, while addressing the requirements of the [MA State Sanitary Code](#), and any other applicable codes and/or minimum standards of occupancy.

Additionally, LHAs should consider making low-cost accessibility improvements during unit turnovers in c.667 developments, as detailed in the [Aging in Place Turnover Guidelines](#).

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Please review/adjust scopes of work related to vacant unit turnover and verify:

- Is the projected work required to meet the [MA State Sanitary Code](#), any other applicable codes, and any minimum standards of occupancy?
- Could any of the proposed work be postponed or performed in the future as part of a larger modernization project, allowing for an expedited occupancy? *For example: roofing, siding, windows, full kitchen rehab, full bathroom rehab, ASHP installation, electrical upgrades.*

We encourage LHAs and designers to assess components using a "Repair vs. Replace" model and when doing so, consider the severity of the component condition, the cost and time to repair vs. the cost and time to replace, and the remaining useful component life.

- Are there opportunities to reduce the scope of work and expedite occupancy by making selective repairs versus wholesale component replacement?
- Will the proposed scope of work unnecessarily slow down re-occupancy?

- Do all the specified materials meet [EOHLC Design Guidelines and Construction Standards](#)?
- What is the useful life of the specified materials?
- Are specified materials low maintenance?

EOHLC staff are here to assist:

- Determining project scope related to vacancy turnover:
  - If the unit requires significant repair and your LHA is seeking capital funds, please contact your assigned Construction Adviser (CA);
  - If utilizing operating funds and conducting a routine turnover with maintenance staff, please contact your Facilities Management Specialist (FMS);
  - If you are unsure, feel free to contact both.

*Budget exemptions are available on a limited basis for LHAs that struggle with routine turnovers due to higher-than-usual vacancies or staffing issues. LHAs with high vacancy rates and operating reserves below 35% should contact their HMS to discuss a budget exemption.*

- For assistance with maintenance operations and vacancy turnover standards and practices, please contact your assigned FMS;
- For assistance with reporting a vacancy or requesting a waiver: please contact your assigned Housing Management Specialist (HMS);
- For information on available vacant unit capital funds or capital project status: please contact your EOHLC Project Manager (PM).

## RESOURCES

[MA State Sanitary Code](#)

[MA Building Code](#)

[MA Fire Code](#)

[EOHLC Design Guidelines](#)

[PMR Requirements for Vacant Unit Turnover](#)

[Property Maintenance Guide](#)

[Training Resources for LHAs](#)