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Housing Choice Initiative

The Housing Choice Initiative provides incentives, rewards, technical assistance and targeted legislative reform to encourage and empower municipalities to plan and build the diverse housing stock that the Commonwealth needs to continue to thrive

New - Multi-Family Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities

Enacted as part of the [economic development bill](#)

(<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2020/Chapter358>) in January 2021, 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 set forth in the statute. This page includes Draft Guidelines and information on how MBTA Communities can comply in 2022.

Visit the MBTA Communities page

(</info-details/multi-family-zoning-requirement-for-mbta-communities>)

Voting Threshold Guidance

Chapter 358 of the Acts of 2020 (sometimes referred to as the economic development legislation of 2020) made several amendments to Chapter 40A of the General Laws, commonly known as the Zoning Act. Among these amendments are (1) changes to section 5 of the Zoning Act, which reduce the number of votes required to enact certain kinds of zoning ordinances and bylaws from a $\frac{3}{5}$ supermajority to a simple majority; and (2) changes to section 9 of the Zoning Act, making similar changes to the voting thresholds for the issuance of certain kinds of special permits.

Visit the Housing Choice Legislation page

(</info-details/housing-choice-legislation>)

Contact Us



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Who we serve

The Housing Choice Initiative assists local governments to expand housing production by providing new grants, coordinating technical assistance across various housing agencies, and promoting regulatory innovation.

About Housing Choice Initiative

The Baker-Polito Administration has identified inadequate housing production as one of the core challenges facing the Commonwealth's families and economy. Massachusetts home prices have increased at the fastest rate in the nation, and metropolitan Boston rent prices rank among the highest in the country. The Commonwealth must build more diverse housing stock to support our growing economy and to provide our changing population with housing choices. Municipalities are drivers for whether or not housing is built because of their role in zoning and permitting, and cities and towns must be partners if the Commonwealth is to successfully overcome these housing challenges. Municipalities are encouraged to adopt best practices and zoning that supports sustainable housing production that will reinforce our environmental agenda.

State and local governments need to work together to meet this challenge. In order to do this, the Administration has created the Housing Choice Initiative; a multi-pronged effort to align resources and data to create a single point of entry for communities seeking assistance in increasing their supply housing. A crucial part of Housing Choice Initiative is the Housing Choice designation and grant program. The Administration has identified simple, flexible standards that are achievable (yet aspirational) to all municipalities.

Housing Choice Designation

A Housing Choice Designation rewards communities that are producing new housing and have adopted best practices to promote sustainable housing development. Housing Choice designation provides:

1. Exclusive admission to new Housing Choice Capital Grants.
2. Priority access to many Commonwealth grant and capital funding programs such as MassWorks, Complete Streets, MassDOT capital projects, and LAND and PARC grants. Housing Choice Communities receive a 0.5% discount on the interest rate for State Revolving Fund loans.

[Read profiles \(/info-details/2018-housing-choice-communities#housing-choice-community-profiles-\) of certain Housing Choice Communities.](#)

New and better Coordinated Technical Assistance

To assist municipalities to achieve Housing Choice status, DHCD's Housing Choice Program Director coordinates technical assistance and provide "one-stop shopping" for information about technical assistance grants for local governments. Using the "Resources" box below, you can access a database of 14 programs, grants and technical assistance available for communities for housing and planning for housing production.

MassHousing created a \$2 million grant program to provide planning assistance to help cities and towns achieve their affordable housing goals under Chapter 40B called "Planning for Housing Production" program. A link to that program is also available under the "Resources" box below.

Track Progress Toward the Housing Goal

The Housing Choice Initiative will track progress toward a goal of 135,000 new housing units statewide by 2025, or about 17,000 new units per year.

Progress to date: 2018 saw an increase of 17,044 units, 2019 added 17,365 housing units, 2020 added 17,025 units for a total of 51,434 units in three years.

- This goal requires sustaining the level of production over the last three years
- Represents a 26 percent increase in housing production compared to the last eight years
- Keeps pace with projected increases in housing demand
- Closely aligned with the housing production goals required for designation as a Housing Choice community

What would you like to do?