

## Glossary of Housing Terms

### **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**

An **Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)** refers to a habitable living unit added to, created within, or detached from a primary single-family dwelling, which together constitute a single interest in real estate. These units are often commonly referred to as accessory or in-law apartments.

### **Affordable Housing**

A subjective term, but as used in this Plan, refers to housing that is available to a household earning no more than 80% of area median income at a cost that is no more than 30% of total household income. These units are also eligible for inclusion in the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) and sometimes referred to as the “A” affordable units. This is in contrast to the “a” affordable units which may be occupied by a household which meets the incomes requirements but are part of the private market housing without affordability restrictions.

### **Area Median Income (AMI)**

The estimated median income, adjusted for family size, by metropolitan area (or county in nonmetropolitan areas) that is adjusted by HUD annually and used as the basis of eligibility for most housing assistance programs. Sometimes referred to as “MFI” or median family income.

### **As-of-right or By-right Development**

As-of-right or by-right development involves **a use that is permitted in a zoning district and is therefore not subject to special review and approval by a local government.**

### **Chapter 40B**

The state’s comprehensive permit law, enacted in 1969, established an affordable housing goal of 10% for every community. In communities below the 10% goal, developers of low- and moderate-income housing can seek an expedited local review under the comprehensive permit process and can request a limited waiver of local zoning and other restrictions, which hamper construction of affordable housing. Developers can appeal to the state if their application is denied or approved with conditions that render it uneconomic, and the state can overturn the local decision if it finds it unreasonable in light of the need for affordable housing.

### **Chapter 40R/40S**

State legislation that provides cash incentives to municipalities that adopt smart growth overlay districts that also increase housing production, including affordable housing (see Appendix 4 for details).

### **Chapter 44B**

The Community Preservation Act Enabling Legislation that allows communities, at local option, to establish a Community Preservation Fund to preserve open space, historic resources and community housing, by imposing a surcharge of up to 3% on local property taxes. The state provides matching funds from its own Community Preservation Trust Fund, generated from an increase in certain Registry of Deeds’ fees.

**Cluster Development**

A site planning technique that concentrates buildings in specific areas on the site to allow the remaining land to be used for other uses, most typically open space preservation. Some provisions allow density bonuses for certain conditions of development, including affordable housing.

**Comprehensive Permit**

Expedited permitting process for developers building affordable housing under Chapter 40B “anti-snob zoning” law. A comprehensive permit, rather than multiple individual permits from various local boards, is issued by the local zoning boards of appeals to qualifying developers (see Appendix 4 for details).

**Conservation Development**

A project that conserves open space, protects site features and provides flexibility in the siting of structures, services and infrastructure.

**Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)**

DHCD is the state’s lead agency for housing and community development programs and policy. It oversees state-funded public housing, administers rental assistance programs, provides funds for municipal assistance, and funds a variety of programs to stimulate the development of affordable housing.

**Density**

With respect to housing, density means the number of units per any defined area of land. The greater the density, the greater the potential economies of scale and typically reduced individual units costs.

**Design Guidelines**

A set of discretionary standards, including design and performance criteria, developed as a public policy to guide the planning and land development.

**Easements**

The right to use property for specific purposes or to gain access to another property.

**Energy Star**

A voluntary labeling program of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the US Department of Energy that identifies energy efficient products.

**Enhanced Single Room Occupancy (ESRO)**

A single person room with a private bath and/or kitchen rather than shared facilities.

**Expedited Permitting**

The state’s Chapter 43D Program allows a community to gain state incentives for projects meeting certain criteria and permitted within a 180-day regulatory process.

**Fair Housing Act**

Federal legislation, first enacted in 1968, that provides the Secretary of HUD with investigation and enforcement responsibilities for fair housing practices. It prohibits discrimination in housing and lending based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, handicap, or familial status. There is also a Massachusetts Fair Housing Act, which extends the prohibition against discrimination to sexual orientation, marital status, ancestry, veteran status, children, and age. The state law also prohibits

discrimination against families receiving public assistance or rental subsidies, or because of any requirement of these programs.

### **Form-based Zoning**

Zoning regulations that define desired building and site characteristics but do not strictly regulate the uses.

### **Green Building**

A term used to describe buildings that have been designed or retrofitted to reduce energy consumption.

### **Inclusionary Zoning**

Inclusionary zoning is a zoning ordinance or bylaw that requires a developer to include affordable housing as part of a development or contribute to a fund for such housing.

### **Infill Development**

Infill development is the practice of building on vacant or undeveloped parcels in dense areas, especially urban and inner suburban neighborhoods. Such development promotes compact development, which in turn allows undeveloped land to remain open and green.

### **Jobs/Housing Balance**

A measure of the harmony between available jobs and housing in a specific area.

### **LEED**

Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is a voluntary standard for developing high performance, sustainable buildings that significantly reduce energy consumption. There are various standards, including silver, gold and platinum, which are awarded to particular properties through a certification process.

### **Local Initiative Program (LIP)**

LIP is a state program under which communities may use local resources and DHCD technical assistance to develop affordable housing that is eligible for inclusion on the state Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). LIP is not a financing program, but the DHCD technical assistance qualifies as a subsidy and enables locally supported developments that do not require other financial subsidies to use the comprehensive permit process. At least 25% of the units must be set-aside as affordable to households earning less than 80% of area median income (see Appendix 4 for more details).

### **MassHousing (formerly the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency, MHFA)**

MassHousing is a quasi-public agency created in 1966 to help finance affordable housing programs. MassHousing sells both tax-exempt and taxable bonds to finance its many single-family and multi-family programs.

### **Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)**

The term, MSA, is also used for CMSAs (consolidated metropolitan statistical areas) and PMSAs (primary metropolitan statistical areas) that are geographic units used for defining urban areas that are based largely on commuting patterns. The federal Office of Management and Budget defines these areas for statistical purposes only, but many federal agencies use them for programmatic purposes, including allocating federal funds and determining program eligibility. HUD uses MSAs as its basis for setting income guidelines and fair market rents.

**Mixed-Income Housing Development**

Mixed-income development includes housing for various income levels.

**Mixed-Use Development**

Mixed-use projects combine different types of development such as residential, commercial, office, industrial and institutional into one project.

**Multi-family Housing**

Multi-family housing or development could be considered structure with more than a single unit although generally refers to those with three or more units.

**Overlay Zoning**

A zoning district, applied over one or more other districts that contains additional provisions for special features or conditions, such as historic buildings, affordable housing, or wetlands.

**Planned Development**

A district or project designed to provide an alternative to the conventional suburban development standards that promote a number of important public policy benefits, often including a variety of housing, including affordable housing, and creative site design alternatives.

**Public Housing Agency (PHA)**

A public entity that operates housing programs: includes state housing agencies (including DHCD), housing finance agencies and local housing authorities. This is a HUD definition that is used to describe the entities that are permitted to receive funds or administer a wide range of HUD programs including public housing and Section 8 rental assistance.

**Regional Non-profit Housing Organizations**

Regional non-profit housing organizations include nine private, non-profit housing agencies, which administer the Section 8 Program on a statewide basis, under contract with DHCD. Each agency serves a wide geographic region. Collectively, they cover the entire state and administer over 15,000 Section 8 vouchers. In addition to administering Section 8 subsidies, they administer state-funded rental assistance (MRVP) in communities without participating local housing authorities. They also develop affordable housing and run housing rehabilitation and weatherization programs, operate homeless shelters, run homeless prevention and first-time homebuyer programs, and offer technical assistance and training programs for communities.

**Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs)**

These are public agencies that coordinate planning in each of thirteen regions of the state. They are empowered to undertake studies of resources, problems, and needs of their districts. They provide professional expertise to communities in areas such as master planning, affordable housing and open space planning, and traffic impact studies. With the exception of the Cape Cod and Nantucket Commissions, however, which are land use regulatory agencies as well as planning agencies, the RPAs serve in an advisory capacity only. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) serves as Needham's Regional Planning Agency.

**Request for Proposals (RFP)**

A process for soliciting applications for funding when funds are awarded competitively or soliciting proposals from developers as an alternative to lowest-bidder competitive bidding.

**Section 8**

Refers to the major federal (HUD) program – actually a collection of programs – providing rental assistance to low-income households to help them pay for housing. Participating tenants pay 30% of their income (some pay more) for housing (rent and basic utilities) and the federal subsidy pays the balance of the rent. The Program is now officially called the Housing Choice Voucher Program.

**Single Room Occupancy (SRO)**

A single room occupancy (more commonly SRO, sometimes called single resident occupancy) is a multiple tenant building that houses one or two people in individual rooms (sometimes two rooms, or two rooms with a bathroom or half bathroom), or to the single room dwelling itself. SRO tenants typically share bathrooms and /or kitchens, while some SRO rooms may include kitchenettes, bathrooms, or half-baths. Although many are former hotels, SROs are primarily rented as permanent residences.

**Smart Growth**

The term used to refer to a rapidly growing and widespread movement that calls for a more coordinated, environmentally sensitive approach to planning and development. A response to the problems associated with unplanned, unlimited suburban development – or sprawl – smart growth principles call for more efficient land use, compact development patterns, less dependence on the automobile, a range of housing opportunities and choices, and improved jobs/housing balance.

**Subsidy**

Typically refers to financial assistance that fills the gap between the costs of any affordable housing development and what the occupants can afford based on program eligibility requirements. Many times, multiple subsidies from various funding sources are required, often referred to as the “layering” of subsidies, to make a project feasible. In the state’s Local Initiative Program (LIP), DHCD’s technical assistance qualifies as a subsidy and enables locally supported developments that do not require other financial subsidies to use the comprehensive permit process. Also, “internal subsidies” refers to those developments that do not have an external source(s) of funding for affordable housing, but use the value of the market units to “cross subsidize” the affordable ones.

**Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)**

This is the official list of units, by municipality, that count toward a community’s 10% goal as prescribed by Chapter 40B comprehensive permit law.

**Sustainability**

Development that includes a balanced set of integrated principles such as social equity, environmental respect, and economic viability, which preserves a high quality of life for current occupants and future generations.

**Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)**

A program that coordinates the relocation of development from environmentally sensitive areas that should be preserved as open space to areas that can accommodate higher densities.

**Transit Oriented Development (TOD)**

Development that occurs within walking distance of public transportation, usually bus or trains, to reduce the reliance on the automobile and typically accommodate mixed uses and higher densities.

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**

The primary federal agency for regulating housing, including fair housing and housing finance. It is also the major federal funding source for affordable housing programs.