

Housing Needs Workbook

ASSESSING COMMUNITY HOUSING NEEDS



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THE HOUSING NEEDS WORKBOOK:
ASSESSING COMMUNITY HOUSING NEEDS
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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| How to Use the Workbook | 1 |
| Getting Started | 1 |
| Defining Housing Need | 1 |
| Information Sources | 2 |
| Moving from Information to Action | 2 |
| GETTING STARTED | 3 |
| Accessing U.S. Census Information for Your Community | 3 |
| Collecting Local Market Information | 3 |
| RENTAL HOUSING | 4 |
| Characteristics of Supply | 4 |
| Profile of Renters and Rental Demand | 5 |
| Indicators of Need | 7 |
| Some Indicators of Renter Housing Need | 10 |
| ACCESS TO OWNERSHIP | 11 |
| Baseline Information Needed | 11 |
| Characteristics of Supply | 11 |
| Profile of First-time Buying Power | 12 |
| Affordable Ownership | 13 |
| Some Indicators of Ownership Housing Need | 13 |
| SENIOR HOUSING NEEDS | 14 |
| Characteristics of Supply | 14 |
| Profile of the Community's Senior Households | 15 |
| Senior Housing Need | 15 |
| Some Indicators of Senior Housing Need | 16 |
| SPECIAL NEEDS HOUSING | 17 |
| Characteristics of Supply | 18 |
| Profile of the Special Needs Population | 18 |
| Indicators of Need for Special Needs Housing | 18 |
| MOVING FROM INFORMATION TO ACTION | 19 |

List of Appendices & Templates

APPENDIX A. INFORMATION SOURCES

| | | |
|---------|---|----|
| Table 1 | Accessing the U.S. Census | 21 |
| Table 2 | Using Department of Employment & Training Data | 23 |

APPENDIX B. WORKBOOK TEMPLATES

| | | |
|------------|--|----|
| Template 1 | Inventory of Community Housing | 24 |
| Template 2 | Local Waiting List Information | 25 |
| Template 3 | Local Market Rents | 26 |
| Template 4 | Local Ownership Housing Conditions | 27 |

APPENDIX C. RESOURCES AND PUBLICATIONS

28



About MHP

The Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) is a public agency financed by the banking industry. MHP supports affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization across the Commonwealth. MHP assists municipalities, community groups, local housing committees, and non-profit and for-profit developers with information, technical assistance and below-market financing to create affordable rental housing and homeownership opportunities.

Supporting local housing partnerships throughout Massachusetts is important to MHP. Over the years, the agency has worked with scores of local partnerships to determine the housing needs in their communities and to develop programs targeted to meeting those local needs. Economic, demographic, and market conditions are always changing, making it essential that communities identify those changes and understand how they effect housing need.

Information is available about MHP and MHP programs on the MHP website www.mhp.net. For additional assistance or questions with the *Housing Needs Workbook*, contact the MHP Community Assistance Program staff at: MHP, 2 Oliver St., Boston, MA 02109, 617-338-7868.

Introduction



The *Housing Needs Workbook* is intended to assist community groups in determining the need for affordable housing in their city or town. This Workbook focuses on the need for:

- Rental housing
- Housing for low and moderate income buyers
- Housing for seniors
- Special needs housing

This workbook is a tool for collecting, organizing and analyzing information specific to individual communities. Identifying any outstanding gaps or needs for housing is a first step in planning how, when and where to address local housing issues. Once the existing situation is understood, goals and priorities can be set, resources identified and strategies chosen.

Often a community or housing group finds itself engaged in a dialogue within the community over the nature of housing needs. This may reflect initiatives generated by the group or by others within the community. A community may be considering a specific development project or initiative. Does that project address a real need in the community? Is that type of housing a priority?

This workbook assists in developing the tools and understanding to answer questions about local housing needs. Community members can use it to identify housing opportunities within the community and evaluate how these opportunities match with the need for a particular type of housing. It can assist in evaluating the merit of these opportunities. In each context, the *Housing Needs Workbook* can provide meaningful information and a structure for supporting the user's efforts.

How to Use the Workbook

The *Housing Needs Workbook* is designed for use by people with varying backgrounds, including citizens who may have little or no prior experience in the housing field, as well as town staff or other professionals. You may complete it in its entirety or skip to the sections that are of interest or use to you. The format is set up as a series of questions. These are the questions most commonly asked by communities to determine housing need and to identify the “affordability gap” between what residents can afford and the actual cost of available housing.

Getting Started

This section provides guidance for collecting basic demographic, economic, and local market information. Many of the answers to workbook questions are found in the *Federal 2000 Census* and the specific census tables are referenced for those questions. When the data are to be found from sources other than the census, they are identified for you. When local research questions or specific calculations are involved, a template has been set up for you to use.

Do not hesitate to add questions of your own. You are encouraged to expand upon or modify the information to tell the housing story in your community.

Defining Housing Need

The definition of housing need varies from community to community. Each community and housing organization frames a way to

understand housing need based on the community's unique characteristics. To clarify its definition, the community or housing organization typically poses questions such as:

- Who can and cannot afford to live in this community?
- In what direction is our community headed in providing quality housing to a broad spectrum of residents?
- Can our children afford to remain in, or return to, the community as they form their own households?
- Are special needs populations given adequate housing options?
- Are there substandard, overcrowded, or other undesirable living conditions that should be addressed?
- Do our elderly residents have adequate alternatives for remaining in the community as they age?
- Do we provide the type of housing that promotes local economic development?

Most communities consider it a positive when many of its residents are able to live their whole lives in the same community. This often means living in different types of housing at different stages of one's life. Often a useful starting point in defining housing need is to reflect on how achievable that is in your own community.

Information Sources

You will find where to locate most of the data needed to answer the questions presented in the *Housing Needs Workbook* in **Appendices** at the back of this book. Most of the information you will need is available for free on the web. Some data may require local interviews. **Workbook Templates** provides a format for conducting these local interviews and recording the information obtained.

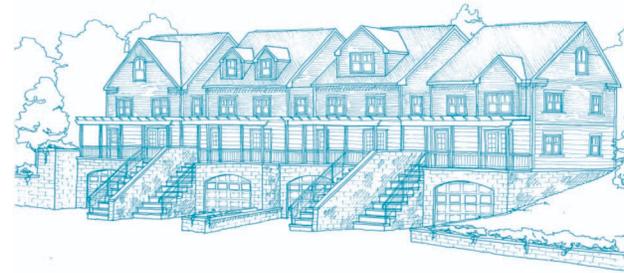
Your Regional Planning Agency (RPA) is an important source of local and regional information. There may be a fee for data reports, depending on how your RPA is organized and what services they provide. A listing of Massachusetts **Regional Planning Agencies** is available at:

www.umass.edu/masscptc/resources.html

Moving from Information to Action

The final section of the workbook, *Moving from Information to Action*, provides a number of suggestions for shaping specific actions from your analysis of housing need. **Appendix C: Resources and Publications** gives sources for finding descriptions of noteworthy efforts by Massachusetts communities to address their specific housing needs. This section also identifies how to obtain additional information on strategies and resources. Note that web links in this report can change over time and may need to be updated.

Getting Started



Accessing U.S. Census Information for Your Community

The **2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing** provides a wealth of statistical information about the people, housing and economic conditions of your community. We suggest it as a starting point for looking at community housing conditions. To get started, **Table 1. Accessing the U.S. Census** provides step-by-step directions for downloading a number of key data tables from the website of the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Collecting Local Market Information

After collecting some basic demographic and economic information about the community, most housing committees assess their local and regional conditions by asking some additional questions that must be answered locally:

- What subsidized and affordable housing options already exist in the community?
- Is there a waiting list for this housing?
- What is the current rental housing market like?
- What is the current homeownership market like?

When this information is not already at hand, you may turn to local resources including the municipality's Department of Planning and Community Development, local public or regional housing authority, the local assessor, real estate agents, and private developers for some of these answers.

The **Templates** provide guidance for collecting information about subsidized and affordable housing, waiting lists, the private market for rental housing, and the current ownership market in your community. Together with the demographic and economic information, this local data provide the resource tools to assist your assessment of housing needs. In order to perform the analysis sections of the workbook fully, you will need the information provided by these templates.

TEMPLATE 1

Inventory of Community Housing Options

TEMPLATE 2

Local Waiting List information

TEMPLATE 3

Current Market Rents

TEMPLATE 4

Current Homeownership Market



Rental Housing

This section assists with analyzing state and local information from the U.S. Census and Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training (DET) data tables.

The following section asks some basic questions about rental housing availability, and helps locate information for answering those questions.

Characteristics of Supply

1. How much rental housing already exists?

Census Table H7. Tenure allows you to identify the total number of occupied housing units, the total number of rental housing units, and therefore rental units as percentage of total units. How does this compare with your County and with surrounding communities? (*Use the same data table for these other geographic locations.*)

For comparison: In 2000, 38.3% of all housing in Massachusetts was renter occupied (35% for communities other than Boston).

2. How much of the community's rental housing is subsidized?

Subsidized Housing Inventory provides the framework for developing a current inventory of subsidized and affordable rental housing units in your community. The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) maintains the Subsidized Housing Inventory that is used in association with Chapter 40B housing production. For a quick summary of the community's total subsidized units, look on the web-site of the MA Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) <http://www.state.ma.us/dhcd/components/hac/HsInvRev.pdf>. In order to get a listing of the specific projects within a city or town that comprise that municipality's inventory, you must contact DHCD (617-727-7765) and ask to speak to the Policy Office.

3. What kind of housing is rented? ⁿ

Census Table H32. Tenure by Units in Structure describes how much of the community's rental stock is in buildings of different sizes. Since single-family homes often represent the most expensive rental housing, a high percentage of single-family rentals may be an indicator of limited affordable supply, or in some instances may indicate a pattern of neighborhood divestment by home owners.

For comparison: In 2000, 9.6% of all rental housing in Massachusetts was located in single-family homes.

4. How new is the community's rental housing?

Census Table H36. Tenure by Year Structure Built allows you to look at age of the rental housing stock and at the level of rental production over the last 10 to 20 years. How does this compare with the number of owner-occupied homes built during the same period? The lack of rental housing production in the past decade is one of the key sources of the housing problems that many communities now face. A community dependent on older rental housing stock will typically experience more deteriorated properties which are more likely to have lead paint, code violations and sub-standard conditions. The following shows rental units by the year built in the state as a whole:

For comparison: Massachusetts state-wide information:

| 1990- Mar 2000 | 1980- 1989 | 1970- 1979 | 1960- 1969 | 1950- 1959 | Pre- 1950 |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| 4% | 9% | 15% | 12% | 11% | 49% |

Profile of Renters and Rental Demand

The following tables and template information provide a profile of the community's renters and indicators of rental demand.

5. How much income do renters earn?

Census Table H73. Household Income in 1999 by Gross Rent as a Percentage of Income provides a basis for recording renter income distribution. It also provides a key statistic for understanding rental-housing need. A local supply of rental units at a range of cost provides residents with choices within the local housing market. This table also allows you to calculate what percentage and number of all renters are paying more than 30% of their income for rent. Thirty percent of gross income

is typically considered the maximum expenditure for housing cost to be affordable. The table also allows you to see the income levels of those households who are carrying this cost burden. The number of lower-income renters paying more than 30% of their income for rent is one potential benchmark for assessing rental housing need.

For comparison: In 2000, 36.4% of all renters in Massachusetts and 58.5% of all renters earning less than \$35,000 paid at least 30% of their gross household income for rent and utilities.

6. How much rent do renters pay?

Census Table H63 gives you the median gross rent (includes heat and other utilities if these are included with the rent) for all apartments in your community in 2000. It may be interesting to compare this number to surrounding communities and to the county and state as a whole. **Census Table H67** provides a distribution of gross rent for rental units of various bedroom sizes. **Template 3. Current Market Rents** provides a list of questions to ask of local housing professionals.

This will augment the census figures and provide an estimate of the changes in the community's market rents by bedroom size since 2000. Current market rents are typically significantly higher than the census data for several reasons. There may be price escalation over time. Census rents also include representation from subsidized rentals. Finally, when professionals think of market rents, they almost always think in terms of what is being made available for rent now. These rents reflect the current market but generally do not reflect the rents paid by those who live in the same rental unit long-term and often pay rents well below those charged to new residents.

For comparison: the median gross rent in Massachusetts in 2000 was \$684/ month, with the following rent medians by bedroom size:

| Studio | 1 Bedroom | 2 Bedrooms | 3+ Bedrooms |
|--------|-----------|------------|-------------|
| \$567 | \$578 | \$745 | \$760 |

7. What is the distribution of renter household size?

- **Census H17. Tenure by Household Size** accounts for the number of individuals living in rental housing units.
- **Census Table H42. Tenure by Bedrooms** describes the mix of studios, one, two, three and four or more bedroom rental units

Combined with the information collected from subsidized housing providers and from local rental agents (see **Templates 1 and 2**), this information helps gauge the

size of homes and apartments needed. In general, you will want to make sure there is a range of housing options for different sized households.

8. How long have renters lived at their current address?

Census Table H38. Tenure by Year Householder Moved Into Unit gives a picture of how much turnover occurs in the community's rental property. A lower turnover rate may indicate a market that will support additional rental housing (except in communities on the Cape and Islands, where renters often move to make way for vacationers in summer, yet there is still a great unmet need for additional affordable housing).

For comparison: In Massachusetts, 29.5% of renters had moved in the past year.

9. How old are renters?

Census Table H14. Tenure by Age of Householder describes the age distribution of renter households based on the age of the householder. It may be worthwhile to compare age distribution to past census years to identifying trends and future needs.

For comparison: In Massachusetts, 19% of all rental housing is rented by householders 65 and over. Statewide 31.8% of all householders 65 and over live in rental housing.

Indicators of Need

10. What is the rental vacancy rate?

Census Table H8. Vacancy Status provides a total of "Vacant for Rent" units in April 2000, the date census data was collected. To get a rental vacancy rate for the community first add Vacant for Rent (H8) to Occupied Rental Units (H7), then divide the Vacant for Rent Units by the total Occupied and Vacant for Rent Units. In general, a rental vacancy rate below 5% is considered a condition where renters are subject to limited choice and increasing rental costs. A vacancy rate below 5% is another potential benchmark of the need for additional rental housing. **Template 3. Current Market Rents** asks local housing professionals to estimate changes in the community's rental vacancy rate since the census.

For comparison: In 2000, the overall rental vacancy rate in Massachusetts was 3.7%.

11. How long is the local waiting list for existing subsidized housing?

Template 2. Local Waiting List Information will allow you to estimate by type of housing, hometown of applicant, and size of household, the size of your current waiting list for subsidized and affordable housing in the community. Your local or regional Housing Authority, or manager of privately owned subsidized housing, may make this information available to you upon request. Be aware that Information identifying applicants is confidential and cannot be provided. It is important to check how recently these waiting lists have been updated and to ask if the waiting list is “closed” to new applicants. An old or closed waiting list may understate need. The potential for names to be duplicated on several waiting lists may conversely overstate the need indicated by the waiting list.

12. How many renters pay in excess of 30% of their income for rent?

Census Tables H71 and H73 (see Question 5 above) record how many renters pay in excess of 30% of their income for rent. This is one key indicator of a mismatch between rental costs and renter household incomes. As Census Table H73 also shows the rent burden in terms of household income, it is possible to estimate how many of these financially burdened households would be income-eligible for subsidized housing if it were available.

For comparison: In 2000, 36.3% of all renter households in Massachusetts paid 30% or more of gross household income for rent. This included 44.4% of renters over 65 years old and 34.0% of renters under 65.

13. What is the relationship of rent to local wages?

Another interesting set of questions to look at how affordable it is for someone working in the community to live in the community. These questions include:

- What could a typical worker (for example: teacher, nurse, retail clerk) in the community afford to pay for rent?
- How much would they have to earn to afford the median rent?
- How many average workers' wages does it take to afford the median rent in the community?

DET Data Table 1 Using Department of Employment & Training Data gathers the average wage earned by all workers and by typical jobs in the community. (Note: It is also possible to get pay scales for municipal workers for this exercise). Dividing that average annual wage by 12 gives you an average monthly income; multiplying

that monthly income x 30% (.30) gives the maximum affordable rent, including utilities, for that worker.) It is then possible to determine using **Template 3 Local Market Rate Rental Housing Conditions** current market rents and compute how many of these average workers would it take (or alternatively how much a worker would have to earn) to rent the median priced studio through four bedroom rental.

Formula:
$$\left(\frac{\text{MEDIAN GROSS RENT} \times 12}{.30} \right) \div \text{AVERAGE WAGE} = \text{NUMBER OF WORKERS NEEDED}$$

Is there a gap for key jobs between what an average worker can afford and what current rents cost? How much is that gap? Also, for those current renter households earning less than \$10,000 or \$20,000 or \$35,000/ year, how much is their gap? How many renter households fall into these income categories?

Determining affordable rent levels for a community

STEP 1. Use the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) area median incomes (www.huduser.org/dataset/fmr/FMR2003F_County) to determine area median income (AMI),

OR

Use as a baseline to compute the affordable rent for households at 80% of median or any other income group you are interested in serving.

The median income given by HUD is for a family of 4 and is the norm usually used for calculations.

EXAMPLE:

Median income for a family of 4 in Fiction County is \$57,000.

\$57,000 x .80 = \$45,600

\$45,600/12 = \$3,800
for **monthly income**

\$3,800 x .30 = \$1,140
for amount available for **monthly housing cost**

\$1,140 - \$300 = \$840
per month for **heat, hot water and electric**

\$840 is affordable rent for family of 4 earning 80% of area median income.

STEP 2. Divide the *annual* household income by 12 to get the *monthly* gross income.

STEP 3 Multiply by .30 for amount of income available for monthly housing cost (includes rent and utilities).

STEP 4. Subtract an estimate of monthly utility costs and the remainder is the affordable rent.

Some Indicators of Renter Housing Need

The following represent some typical indicators that a community is experiencing rental housing need:

- A vacancy rate below 5% or limited rental availability as indicated by local agents
- A closed waiting list or a long waiting period for subsidized rental housing
- Little or no multi-family rental housing production in the last decade
- Rental housing that constitutes less than 30% of the community's housing stock
- More than 30% of renters paying more than 30% of their income for rent
- More than 15% of renters paying more than 50% of their income for rent
- Increased incidence of homelessness
- More than 20% of renters living in single family homes (this may indicate a limited multi-family options)
- Compare the community's DET average wage for local jobs to that of the state. Then compare the Census 2000 Median Gross Rent to that of the state. Which is higher? Does the community have comparatively higher paying jobs or higher rents? If the latter, it may indicate that local workers are less able to afford to live in the community.
- Change in typical rents over last two years
- Estimated vacancy rate today
- Change in vacancy rate over last two years
- Any other significant changes in market over last two years
- Increased incidence of homelessness

(Note: this workbook does not attempt to deal with the larger issue of homelessness or give methods for measuring local and area homelessness. Although it is recognized as a serious housing issue it is beyond the scope of this workbook.)

Access to Ownership

The next set of questions allows you to use the Census and DET employment data and local market information to look more closely at your community's access to ownership, especially for moderate-income, first-time homebuyers.



Baseline Information Needed

The following represent the key sources of information needed to answer the questions listed below:

- **Template 4: Local Ownership Housing Conditions** provides the basis for updated market information about housing costs in your community and is the key information source for this section of the analysis
- **Census Table H73: Median Renter Household Income**
- **Census Table H76: Median Sales Price** (updated in **Template 4**)
- **Census Table H75: 2000 Value of Homes in the Lowest Quartile of Housing** (updated in **Template 4**)
- For Mortgage Rate Calculator visit the Fannie Mae web site and use the calculator to compute mortgage loan amounts and mortgage payment amounts (www.fmcals.com/tools-tcc/fanniemae/calculator.html). Other mortgage calculation programs are available in addition to this example. Feel free to explore the Web to find one that suits your needs.

Characteristics of Supply

1. What does ownership housing in the community cost?

Census Tables H75 and H76 provides a distribution of ownership housing prices for the community in 2000.

Template 4: Local Ownership Housing Conditions provides the basis for updated market information about housing costs in the community, including the current price range (including lower quartile and median) for both new and existing single family homes, condominiums, and other housing options by bedroom size.

Template 4 also looks at the change in price of typical starter home over last two years and the change in sales activity over last two years.

Profile of First-time Buying Power

The following provides a methodology for determining how much purchasing power prospective first-time buyers renting in the community have.

2. How much buying power do local renter households have?

Median Renter Household Income (derived from **Census Table H73**)/12 months = monthly income.

Note: this calculation can be done using the HUD Area Median Income for households at or below 80% of median income to compute an affordable sales price.

Monthly Income x .30 = total income available for paying principal, interest, property taxes, insurance (and condominium fees where applicable)

Deduct for monthly insurance, any condo fees, and property taxes (from **Template 4 Current Ownership Market**) = amount available for mortgage payment

Determine Maximum Amount of Mortgage given current interest rates (www.fmcals.com/tools-tcc/fanniemaec/calculator.html).

If the median renter can put 10% down payment on a house (after closing costs which may be approximately 3–5% of the purchase price), how much total buying power does that renter have?

EXAMPLE

Median renter household income (MA 2000 est.) =
\$2,580 per month

Income available for monthly payments =
\$775 per month

Principal and interest (\$105,000 for 30 yrs @ 6.0%) =
\$615 per month

Taxes and insurance (.015%/month of purchase price) =
\$160 per month

Down payment (10% of mortgage amount) = **\$10,500**

Maximum purchase price = \$115,500

Affordable Ownership

3. How affordable is local housing?

- If the median renter could make a 10% down-payment, what priced home could they afford (Formula: Mortgage amount/.90)? What percentage of homes in the community are currently priced at this level? (The Warren Group is a source of current home sales prices www.thewarrengroup.com).
- How much of a down payment would the median income renter need to afford the monthly payments on the median priced home using 30% of their income? On the lowest quartile of housing?
- How much of a home price could a household earning 80% of the Area Median Afford? 100%? How does this compare to price of housing in the community?

Some Indicators of Ownership Housing Need

The following represent some typical indicators that a community is experiencing ownership housing need:

- The 2000 estimated median renter household income for the community is not enough to purchase a local home in the lowest quartile of housing prices
- 150% of the average local wage (provides for 1.5 average workers per household) is not enough to purchase a local home in the lowest quartile of housing prices
- Lack of housing for single person households affordable at 100% of average local wage
- The number of residents working in town (see Census Table P17 Place of Workers-Place Level) fills less than half of the local jobs in the community



Senior Housing Needs

Senior Housing was the focus of affordable housing development activity for many communities over the past three decades. Roughly half of the housing units produced under Chapter 40B statewide are reserved for seniors, a group who constitute roughly 16% of the overall population. In some communities this has resulted in an over-supply of subsidized senior housing disproportionate to local need. Demographic trends in income and longevity have changed some of the characteristics of senior housing need over the past decade. There are increased numbers of seniors proportionate to the population and many have income and assets that do not qualify them for traditional subsidized senior housing. Today's seniors are more likely to own their own home than seniors of previous decades. Perhaps most significantly, more seniors are living longer and need assistance in conducting certain daily living activities for an extended period of their lives.

The following questions provide an opportunity to check on how seniors in your community compare with the housing options available to them.

Characteristics of Supply

1. How much subsidized, independent senior housing exists in the community?

Once completed, **Template 1. Subsidized Housing Inventory** provides information about senior housing developments in your community. Key issues to consider include: the age, quality and location of these developments; any services they provide residents; the accessibility of units; the percentage of non-elderly handicapped residents; and any vacancies or marketing difficulties they may face.

2. Are there any ownership options designed for the housing needs of seniors?

A full inventory of senior housing supply (see **Template 4**) should include any ownership housing options specifically designed for seniors regardless of income. These may include 55 and over communities; condominiums designed and marketed for seniors; life care communities, and senior-only trailer parks.

Profile of the Community's Senior Households

3. What is the age distribution of the community's senior households?

Census Table P8. Sex by Age provides a distribution of seniors and non-seniors by age. Typically, the median age of residents in subsidized independent senior housing projects is over 75 years and 80 years for Assisted Living Facilities.

4. How many seniors live in rental housing? Ownership housing?

Census Table H14. Tenure by Age of Householder totals the number of both renting and owning senior households in the community by age.

5. How many seniors in the community have mobility or daily living limitations?

Census Table P41. Age by Types of Disability provides a record of the number and percentage of both seniors and non-seniors who have disabilities that affect their daily living activities

6. How many seniors in the community already live in subsidized rental housing and in market rate rental housing?

Template 1. Subsidized Housing Inventory provides information on the number of residents already living in some form of senior housing in the community. Deducting these renters from the total senior renters (from Question 5) provides a total of seniors renting market rate housing.

Senior Housing Need

7. How many renting seniors in the community would qualify for the subsidized rental housing?

A reasonable approximation of how many additional senior renter households would qualify for subsidized housing if it existed is to look at the number of senior renters paying more than 30% of the gross income for rent (Census Table H71). Since existing subsidized housing projects almost universally base rents on 30% of adjusted income (thereby lower than gross income), few of these senior rental households will be living in subsidized housing. A significant percent of these senior renters would likely qualify for subsidized housing.

8. How long is the waiting list for subsidized elderly housing?

Template 2 Local Waiting List Information provides some key information on the current status of waiting lists for subsidized senior housing in the community. Key questions to check include: How recently was that list updated? How many of those on the waiting list live in the community? How much has the size of that list changed in the past two years?

9. Is there a need for affordable ownership opportunities for moderate-income seniors designed to meet their physical and other needs?

Template 4 Current Homeownership Market asks about the availability of housing in the community especially designed for seniors.

Some Indicators of Senior Housing Need

The following represent some typical indicators that a community is experiencing senior housing need:

- The number of older seniors (age 75 and over) who earn less than \$30,000 (see **Census Table P55** Age of Householder by Household Income) is more than twice the number of subsidized senior housing units in the community.
- The number of older resident renters (age 55 and over) who pay more than 30% of their income for rent (see **Census Table H71** Age of Householder by Household Income) is more than twice the number of subsidized senior housing units in the community.
- In many communities, the issue is less the total number of subsidized senior housing units, but the age and quality of those that do exist. It is important to interview the management of senior housing developments to determine what housing improvements they recommend to serve the existing demand for senior housing.
- Another senior housing issue is the ability to provide a diversity of types of rental housing for older residents who do not qualify for subsidized housing programs. Encouraging market rentals and lower cost condominium developments that meet the needs of older residents may also contribute to meeting senior housing needs.

Special Needs Housing



MENTAL RETARDATION and MENTAL HEALTH POPULATIONS

Special needs housing is a general term used to cover a wide range of special housing needs, but it is most commonly used in reference to people with mental retardation or mental health disabilities. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts provides services, funds housing and advocates for these populations through the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) and the Department of Mental Health (DMH). These populations are protected under both Federal and State Fair Housing Laws, and the development of group housing to meet their needs is explicitly treated the same as single family residences under local zoning (Ch. 40A, Sec. 3).

HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBILITY and HOUSING

Special needs housing can also refer to housing for people who need specialized housing because of physical needs or programmatic needs. People with physical disabilities need handicapped accessible housing. Often the existing housing stock in a community does not provide an adequate supply of handicapped accessible housing. In planning and designing the construction of new housing, or in the substantial renovation of an existing property, the inclusion of handicapped accessible units and adaptive units (units that can be easily converted to full accessibility) may not add much to overall project costs but may provide a valuable community housing resource. In some cases handicapped accessible units may be required by law to be included as a portion of the total units. You can contact your regional Independent Living center for additional information about the local housing needs of people with disabilities. A listing of Massachusetts Independent Living Centers is available through the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commissions Independent Living Division www.state.ma.us/mrc/il/il.htm.

The Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council www.state.ma.us/mddc estimates that there are 108,000 Massachusetts residents with developmental disabilities.

OTHER SPECIAL NEEDS

Communities may identify other special needs populations according to local needs, concerns, and availability of service providers. Some communities have developed housing for the following populations: parenting grandparents; the HIV/AIDS population; people in alcohol or drug recovery; victims of domestic violence; and others with particular short or long-term housing needs requiring specialized physical design or professional services. You may want to contact local and regional social service providers for your area to find out more about the local specialized housing needs of underserved populations.

Characteristics of Supply

1. What Special Needs housing already exists in the community?

Your community's Department of Planning and Community Development will typically be able to provide information on the existence of special needs housing in the community. For smaller communities, you may contact the Massachusetts Departments of Mental Retardation (DMR) www.dmr.state.ma.us and Mental Health (DMH) www.state.ma.us/dmh for information on existing special needs housing.

Profile of Special Needs Population

2. How large a special needs population lives in the community?

A community may contact the DMR and DMH to find out how many people are currently housed and the level of demand for additional housing units that they estimate on a local and regional basis. However, because of confidentiality protections, the locations of the current special needs housing may not be able to be disclosed.

The Accessible Housing Registry provides an inventory of available accessible units in your community including location, rent and vacancy status www.massaccesshousingregistry.org

Indicators of Need for Special Needs Housing

Indicators of housing need can include:

- Number of disabled people, including non-elderly, in the community as indicated by the Census (**Census Tables P119-P125**), see Table 1 of this Manual, Accessing the Census.
- Anecdotal information from Independent Living Centers and area service providers
- Number of handicapped accessible units owned or managed by the local or regional housing authority
- Number of people served by DMR or DMH in your area

Moving from Information to Action

The collection and analysis of housing needs data is an important step, but it is just the first step. The purpose of assessing needs is to enable community members to take concrete steps toward meeting its local housing needs.

A housing needs assessment is intended to be a useful foundation on which to build a housing plan that articulates specific local goals and activities that preserve and promote affordable housing. The completion and adoption of a Housing Action Plan, a Housing Strategic Plan, or a housing component of a larger master planning effort, will involve discussion and input from a broad cross section of community members.

These planning documents may be prepared by housing committee members, and municipal staff or consultants where resources are available for professional assistance.

Executive Order 418, administered by DHCD, has made funds available for municipal planning that includes a housing plan as a component. These or other funds may be available to you for completing a local housing plan.

A local housing plan should cover both long and short-term projections and goals. It should project the number of new housing starts, both rental and homeownership, that will be needed to address local needs. It should identify areas of the community where the housing will be developed; identify actions requiring zoning or other regulatory reforms; and begin to identify programmatic and funding resources that might be available at the local, state and federal level to assist in the effort.

Some strategies for implementing the plan can include activities such as:

- Form a local housing partnership or housing committee
- Community education on the issues; forums, workshops, media coverage, and printed materials targeted for local residents
- Participation in local affordable housing project review
- Homebuyer counseling
- Support and advocacy of proposed affordable housing developments
- Inventory of town land for use for affordable housing
- Request for Proposal (RFP) for transfer of property to local housing authority or for sale or transfer to other development entity
- Propose zoning changes
- Adoption of the Community Preservation Program (CPA)
- Participate in the Soft Second mortgage program

There are many possible strategies and activities that have proven successful locally. Communities can learn from each other as they share their stories. Massachusetts has the benefit of being served by a number of organizations working state-wide on affordable housing. They offer many publications giving examples of action steps, profiling community activities, and identifying resources.

Appendix C: Resources & Publications provides additional organizations, reference materials and other housing related information and publications that you may find useful to your assessment of local housing needs and strategies.

Sample Action Plan Outline

- I. Purpose of Plan/Mission Statement
- II. Identification of Participants in Plan
- III. Summary Profile of Housing Characteristics
- IV. Identification of Problems and Issues
- V. Identification of Local Opportunities and Resources to Address these Problems
- VI. Action Plan Goals
 - A. Short Term Goals (≤ 1 year)
 - B. Medium Term Goals (1–5 years)
 - C. Long Term Goals (5–10 years)
 - D. Identification of Timeline, Funding Sources and Responsibility for Implementation
 - E. Identification of Key Challenges to Accomplishing Action Plan
- VII. Next Steps

Tables

Table 1. Accessing the U.S. Census

The following provides step-by-step directions for downloading a number of key data tables from the website of the Bureau of the Census.

1. Enter the URL **http://factfinder.census.gov**
2. You will find a text box entitled Data Sets; click on **2000 Summary File 3**
3. A new screen will appear; click on **Detailed Tables** in the right hand column
4. A new screen will appear; click on the up/down arrow in the box titled **State** and select **County Subdivision**
5. The screen will refresh; click on the up/down arrow in the box titled – **select a state** – and select **Massachusetts**
6. A new screen will appear; click on the up/down arrow in the box titled – **select a county** – and select your county
7. A new screen will appear listing all of the cities and towns in your county in a box on the lower left side of the screen; select your geographic area and click 'Add;' then click the tab **Next** at the bottom of the screen
8. You are now ready to request specific tables and click 'Add.' The list that follows at the end of this section includes a listing of recommended Tables [remember to click "Add" after selecting each table].
9. When you have completed selecting tables click on the tab **Show Table** at the bottom of the screen
10. Print or download the tables
11. You may collect the same information for adjoining communities, the county or the state by clicking on the blue highlighted box **Change Selections** and selecting **Geography**; this will return you to the instruction #4 above where you select either **State**, **County** or **County subdivision** from the geographic type. Once you have identified the geography you want to compare click "Add" [you may want to remove your previous selection as it still appears in the **Add/Remove** box]. The full list of Tables will appear for the new geographic area when you click **Show Table**.
12. You may collect a time series including comparable 1990 Census data by clicking on the blue highlighted box **Change Selections** and selecting **Data Sets**. From the new screen, select **1990 Summary Tape File 3 (STF 3) – Sample Data**, and click on **Next**. You begin the selection process again. Please note that the corresponding information for the 1990 Census uses different table numbers from the 2000 Census; these numbers are listed in Table 1-1 List of Significant Census Tables.

Note: you can download the tables from the website into excel. Mouse-over "print/download" at the top of the screen, click on "download" and select "comma delimited" then click "OK". This may save time and energy if you want to manipulate the data or incorporate it into another document.

Table 1-1. List of Significant Census Tables

| 2000 | CENSUS | 1990 |
|-------------|--|-------------|
| P01. | Persons | P001 |
| P27. | Place of Work | P046 |
| P41. | Age by Types of Disability | n/a |
| P52. | Household Income | P080 |
| P53. | Median Household Income | P080A |
| P55. | Age of Householder by Household Income | P086 |
| P119. | Imputation of Disability | |
| P120. | Imputation of Sensory Disability | |
| P121. | Imputation of Physical Disability | |
| P122. | Imputation of Mental Disability | |
| P123. | Imputation of Self-Care Disability | |
| P124. | Imputation of Go-Outside-Home Disability | |
| P125. | Imputation of Employment Disability | |
| H7. | Tenure | H008 |
| H8. | Vacancy Status | H006 |
| H14. | Tenure by Age of Householder | H013 |
| H17. | Tenure by Household Size | H016 |
| H32. | Tenure by Units in Structure | H022 |
| H36. | Tenure by Year Structure Built | H027 |
| H38. | Tenure by Year Householder Moved Into Unit | H029 |
| H42. | Tenure by Bedrooms | H033 |
| H62. | Gross Rent | H043 |
| H63. | Median Gross Rent | H043A |
| H67. | Bedrooms by Gross Rent | H034 |
| H69. | Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income | n/a |
| H71. | Age of Householder by Gross Rent as a Percentage... | H051 |
| H73. | Household Income in 1999 by Gross Rent as a Percentage... | H055 |
| H74. | Value of Specified Owner-Occupied Housing Units | H061 |
| H75. | Lower Value Quartile (Dollars) | n/a |
| H76. | Median Value of Specified Owner-Occupied Housing Units | H061A |
| H97. | Household Income by ... Owner Costs as a Percentage... | H059 |

Table 2. Using Department of Employment & Training Data

The Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training (DET) provides a web site (www.detma.org) with a range of important information about resident employment, jobs and wages. This information is regularly updated and allows an assessment of housing need to profile more carefully those who work in the community. The following provides step-by-step directions for downloading key Economic Data for that source.

1. Enter <http://www.detma.org>
2. Click “**Economic Data**” box
3. Click “**Mass stats**” box
4. Review directions then click “**Get Mass stats Data**” box
5. Choose the **Go** button to enter the database
6. Follow directions to choose your community
7. Click on any of the highlighted buttons to retrieve information

Some suggestions for information to retrieve include:

Area Profile: provides current and projected population and income information; gives average weekly wage for jobs in the community; lists the all industry classifications (by SIC) by the number of employed workers in the community and (under “industry details”) lists the average weekly wage for all industrial classifications.

Population: projects the overall population through 2010.

Templates

Template 1 Inventory of Community Housing Options

Types of Housing

- Rental
 Ownership
 Seniors *(including Assisted Living Facilities)*
 Special Needs Housing

Information Headings

Name of Project _____

Address _____

Contact Name and # _____

Date Built _____ Type of Project _____
(i.e. Mix of Family and Elderly, Assisted Living Facility)

Funding Source _____
(i.e. HUD Section 8/ Chapter 667)

Total # of Units _____ Total # of Below Market Units _____

Bedroom Size Distribution:

| Total | # at Market Rate | # at Below Market |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------|
| ___ Studio | ___ Studio | ___ Studio |
| ___ 1 Bedroom | ___ 1 Bedroom | ___ 1 Bedroom |
| ___ 2 Bedrooms | ___ 2 Bedrooms | ___ 2 Bedrooms |
| ___ 3 Bedrooms | ___ 3 Bedrooms | ___ 3 Bedrooms |
| ___ 4 Bedrooms | ___ 4 Bedrooms | ___ 4 Bedrooms |

Rent (or Sales Price for Ownership):

| Total | \$ at Market Rate | \$ at Below Market |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| ___ Studio | ___ Studio | ___ Studio |
| ___ 1 Bedroom | ___ 1 Bedroom | ___ 1 Bedroom |
| ___ 2 Bedrooms | ___ 2 Bedrooms | ___ 2 Bedrooms |
| ___ 3 Bedrooms | ___ 3 Bedrooms | ___ 3 Bedrooms |
| ___ 4 Bedrooms | ___ 4 Bedrooms | ___ 4 Bedrooms |

Income Eligibility Requirements _____

Project Amenities _____

Waiting List? _____ Vacancies? _____ % Local Residents _____

Overall Housing Quality* _____

Other Comments _____

* The quality assessment of the quality of the existing housing stock is a qualitative measure — including age, outside appearance and other indicators of physical deterioration; problems with occupancy due to of the unit condition, size, or accessibility (for senior). As you talk with local housing officials you may want to ask about the condition of the property, how recently it has received significant improvements; and problems with occupancy.

Template 2 Current Waiting Lists for Subsidized Rental Housing

Administering Agency _____

Units Managed _____ # Certificates/Vouchers Managed _____

Waiting List Size (*residents/non-residents*)

Non-elderly Applicants _____ # Elderly Applicants _____

Handicapped/Special Needs Applicants _____

Expected Length of Wait (*residents/non-residents*)

Non-elderly _____ Elderly _____ Handicapped/Special Needs _____

Waiting List Size:

| Non-elderly | Elderly | Handicapped/Special Needs |
|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| ___ Studio | ___ Studio | ___ Studio |
| ___ 1 Bedroom | ___ 1 Bedroom | ___ 1 Bedroom |
| ___ 2 Bedrooms | ___ 2 Bedrooms | ___ 2 Bedrooms |
| ___ 3 Bedrooms | ___ 3 Bedrooms | ___ 3 Bedrooms |
| ___ 4 Bedrooms | ___ 4 Bedrooms | ___ 4 Bedrooms |

Is the waiting list open? _____ If not, when was it closed? _____

How recently was the waiting list updated? _____

Has there been any significant change in the waiting list in the past two years?

Note: Some housing developments are privately owned but have subsidized units as a condition of their financing or permitting. The length of time these units will remain affordable should be included in the inventory. CEDAC (www.cedac.org) has information on “expiring use” projects with expiration dates for the affordability restrictions.

Template 3 Local Market Rate Rental Housing Conditions

Contact a number of housing professionals who have a current sense of the rental housing market. Typically, the director of the local housing authority keeps up with rental trends. Local landlords, management companies, apartment complexes, and local real estate professionals are also important resources for collecting the following information.

Site's name and address, and name and phone of the site's public housing official; or if major landlord, management company, or apartment complex, name and phone of property manager.

Current Rent Range (including heat and hot water) and Median Rent:

| | SF HOMES | SMALL BUILDINGS | APARTMENT BUILDINGS | MEDIAN (ALL TYPES) |
|------------|-------------|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Studios | | | | |
| 1 Bedroom | | | | |
| 2 Bedrooms | | | | |
| 3 Bedrooms | | | | |
| 4 Bedrooms | | | | |

Change in Typical Rents over last two years _____

Estimated Vacancy Rate today _____

Change in Vacancy Rate over last two years _____

Any other significant changes in market over last two years _____

Template 4 Local Ownership Housing Conditions

Contact a number of housing professionals who have a current sense of the ownership housing market. Typically, realtors and local builders and developers represent important resources for collecting this anecdotal information. Many realtors will also share actual sales data if asked. The city or town assessor may also be able to provide recent sales information. Many local assessors subscribe to private services such as Banker & Tradesmen or County Comps that list residential sales by type for each community. You may wish to ask these housing professionals for hard data, if available, in addition to their opinions.

Name and phone of realtor or developer.

Current Price Range for Ownership *(including lower quartile and median)*

| | EXISTING SF HOMES | NEW SMALL BUILDINGS | CONDOS | OTHER |
|------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------|-------|
| 1 Bedroom | | | | |
| 2 Bedrooms | | | | |
| 3 Bedrooms | | | | |
| 4 Bedrooms | | | | |

Change in price of typical starter home over last two years _____

Change in sales activity over last two years _____

Any other significant changes in market over last two years _____

Current Property Tax Rate *(for calculating mortgage affordability)* _____

Identify any ownership housing options specifically designed for seniors

(55 and over communities or condominiums, life care, etc.)

Resources & Publications

The following is a list of publications and web sites that provide resources that can be helpful in moving from information to action.

Produced jointly by CHAPA and MHP, the publication *Taking the Initiative: A Guidebook on Creating Local Affordable Housing Strategies*, December 2002, is a comprehensive resource manual cover the spectrum of issues and resources related to affordable housing in Massachusetts. This publication is available for purchase from Citizens' Housing and Planning Association, 18 Tremont Street, Boston, MA, 02108

Massachusetts Housing Partnership www.mhp.net

The MHP site links to publications and presentations:

- Community-initiated Housing
- General Development Tools
- MHP Project Profiles; and Inclusionary Zoning

Publications available include:

- Getting Started: Building Local Housing Partnerships*
- Inclusionary Zoning: A Tool to Help Towns Create Housing*
- Case Studies in Community-initiated Housing*
- Zoning Basics*
- Forming a CDC or not-for-profit organization-articles of incorporation*

MHP provides technical assistance to communities undertaking the development of affordable housing and provides assistance to municipalities in the process of reviewing Ch. 40B applications. Program information about the **MHP Community Assistance Program** is available at this site or you may call 617-338-7868 for additional information or to request assistance.

Citizen's Housing and Planning Association www.chapa.org

The CHAPA site provides current legislative information; a housing consultant registry, research and reports; and publications that include:

- The Homes of 40B: Case Studies of Affordable Housing*
- Using the Comprehensive Permit*
- Massachusetts Housing Affordability Review:*
the Skyrocketing Costs of Homeownership in Massachusetts

Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development www.state.ma.us/dhcd/

The DHCD site has a very extensive compilation of information on Ch. 40B which includes:

- The Comprehensive Permit Law
- Ch. 40 B Subsidized Housing Inventory
- HAC Regulations
- Local Initiative Program Regulation

This site links to information about DHCD housing programs, publications, Executive Order 418 information including the planning guide *Building Vibrant Communities: Linking Housing Economic Development, Transportation and the Environment*.

Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC) www.cedac.com

MassHousing www.masshousing.com



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