

NATICK HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN, 2021 UPDATE

Sponsor: Natick Affordable Housing Trust

Consultant: Barret Planning Group LLC

BACKGROUND

A state-approved Housing Production Plan allows communities to manage Chapter 40B (“Comprehensive Permit”) applications if they cannot meet the law’s statutory minimum (“Safe Harbor”) threshold for housing affordability (at least 10% of dwellings meeting state affordability standards). These plans provide:

- A proactive strategy for affordable housing production,
- Allow communities to achieve, and maintain, Safe Harbor status by meeting production goals for affordable housing

ELEMENTS

The Natick Housing Production Plan consists of four key elements:

- Housing Needs Assessment
- Stakeholder Perspectives
- Housing Goals
- Strategies

DATA

- Data for the Natick Housing Production Plan comes from many sources, including the municipal departments, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Bureau of the Census. These include:
- The Census of Population and Housing (decennial census):
- The American Community Survey (ACS)
- Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data
- CoStar and Banker & Tradesman market reports
- Local knowledge from stakeholder and public outreach

NEEDS ASSESSMENT, 2021

- Natick is a growing town with approximately 35,957 residents, 11% more than in 2010. People aged 45-49 years have increased by 17%;
- MAPC projects further population growth of 3.2% by 2030, with particular increases among residents aged 65+;
- Natick has a fairly high homeownership rate of 72 percent. The median sale price for a single-family home in Natick is \$565,000 in 2020;
- Natick has more rental housing than most of the surrounding cities and towns, with median gross rent lower than that of some neighboring towns at \$1,393/mo.;
- Natick is gaining families, with or without dependent children. The town has limited options for older adults at all price points;

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Over a dozen stakeholders identified the following housing needs:

- Affordability of any type of housing, especially for seniors, veterans, single householders with children, and young families;
- High cost of affordable units for people with extremely low incomes;
- Lack of options for people looking to downsize;
- Lack of zoning flexibility, notably for accessory dwelling units (ADUs);
- Lack of affordable housing options that promote walkability and proximity to green spaces;
- Lack of public education about affordable housing and lack of awareness of housing needs;
- Demand for affordable units that significantly exceeds supply;
- Impact of housing growth on municipal and school services;

HOUSING GOALS (QUANTITATIVE)

5-year Quantitative Goals

- Housing Production Plans are implemented if a community is not able to achieve, or loses, 40B Safe Harbor status;
- Plans must contain minimum production goals to achieve “certification”, or temporary Safe Harbor status;
- If Natick loses Safe Harbor status from the 2020 US Census, the Town can achieve Housing Certification by developing at least:
 - ✓ 70 affordable dwellings for a 1-year certification by DHCD;
 - ✓ 141 affordable dwellings for a 2-year certification by DHCD;
- Certification means the Zoning Board of Appeals can deny Comprehensive Permits without being overruled by the state Housing Appeals Committee

HOUSING GOALS (QUALITATIVE)

5-year Qualitative Goals

Feedback from public outreach sessions identified three main goals:

- Provide low income seniors with housing options that include supportive services;
- Increase affordable homeownership opportunities for low-income, first-time homebuyers; and
- Preserve existing affordable homeownership and rental units;

STRATEGIES

Public feedback informed development of four primary strategies:

- **Leadership, Education, and Advocacy:** Develop a program to educate policy makers and residents about the need for affordable housing;
- **Regulatory Reform:** Continue encouraging housing development through regulatory methods like Chapter 40R and Inclusionary Zoning. Continue implementing Natick 2030+ Plan's housing recommendations;
- **Funding and Assets:** Maintain Town funding for affordable housing development, and use Town assets to increase affordable housing supply;
- **Planning and Public Policy:** Create a welcoming environment for housing development. Establish guidelines for “friendly” Comprehensive Permits to indicate projects that address concerns and move quickly through permitting;