



Housing Production Plan – Frequently Asked Questions

What is the problem the Housing Production Plan is trying to address?

South Hadley is experiencing a shortage of housing stock available and affordable to low- and moderate-income households, impacting individuals, families and the community in a myriad of ways. This housing shortage and affordability gap is being experienced not only throughout Massachusetts but nationwide and is considered a “housing crisis”. The Housing Production Plan provides analysis and discussion on South Hadley’s population, housing stock and housing affordability using current demographic and market data. These existing conditions have informed the community’s goals for housing and strategies that can be implemented to achieve these goals over time.

What is considered “Affordable” housing? What does “deed restricted” mean?

Housing units that have restrictions placed on their deeds stating they must be sold or rented at an affordable rate (capped price/rent) to income-qualifying households (typically, but not always, low-income households). Affordable rates are determined with reference to AMI and housing cost burden. Restrictions are usually placed on the home for thirty years or in perpetuity. Affordable Housing includes public housing, but most Affordable Housing in the United States is privately developed and operated by nonprofits or state agencies. Affordable Housing does not include homes without deed restrictions that rent or sell below market rate (due to condition, location, etc.) or homes with market rate rents that are subsidized by housing vouchers (such as Section 8 vouchers). The term “affordable” housing (small “a”) or “market affordability” is also used when generally referring to housing that costs less and doesn’t overburden household incomes but is not capped through a deed restriction for income eligible households. Housing with rents below market rate or that are subsidized with housing vouchers would be examples of small “a” affordable housing.

What levels of household income qualify or meet thresholds for deed restricted Affordable Housing?

A low-income household is any household with a total income that is 80% or less than the area median income (AMI), adjusted for household size. An estimated 30% of South Hadley homeowners (1,535 households) are low income, while 63% of renters (1,150 households) are low income.

Most subsidized housing programs are targeted to low-income households. Some programs may target even lower incomes (50% or 30% of AMI), while others target “workforce” incomes (80%-120% of AMI). The table below provides the area median income by household size for South Hadley. For example, a single-person household in South Hadley earning under \$52,750 is low-income, and a family of four earning under \$75,300 is low-income. The median household income in South Hadley is \$73,601.

Percent of Area Median Income	Household Size					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
80%	\$52,750	\$60,250	\$67,800	\$75,300	\$81,350	\$87,350
50%	\$32,950	\$37,650	\$42,350	\$47,050	\$50,850	\$54,600
30%	\$19,800	\$22,600	\$25,450	\$28,250	\$32,470	\$37,190

Source: US Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2022

To break this down further, let’s apply this framework to some of the average salaries by job in the South Hadley area. In South Hadley, the average salary per year per person is \$56,183. For a single-person household with this annual salary, the household could qualify as low-income and potentially be eligible for subsidized Affordable Housing.

The table below provides the average salary per occupation in the South Hadley area. Using these values, a single parent working as a medical assistant or teaching assistant with two children would qualify for a 50% AMI subsidized housing program.

Occupation	Average Salary in South Hadley
Lawyer	\$131,830
Management Occupation	\$114,260
Accountant and Auditor	\$80,520
Registered Nurse	\$77,569
Elementary School Teacher	\$73,530
Medical Assistant	\$40,288
Teaching Assistant	\$38,210
Home Health Aide (CAN)	\$34,650
Direct Support Professional	\$36,053
Sales Associate	\$34,543

What is MGL Chapter 40B and how is it relevant to South Hadley?

Chapter 40B is the state’s Affordable Housing Law, enacted with the goal of making at least 10% of every community’s housing affordable. The law allows developers to build Affordable Housing by allowing for a streamlined permit process and more flexible zoning rules.

The process is available to developments that devote at least 25% of their units to low and moderate income families. Also known as the Comprehensive Permit Law, Chapter 40B was enacted in 1969 to help address the shortage of affordable housing statewide by reducing unnecessary barriers created by local approval processes, local zoning, and other restrictions.

The goal of Chapter 40B is to encourage the production of affordable housing in all cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth and many communities have used it to negotiate the approval of quality affordable housing developments. The program is controversial, however, because the developer (a public agency, nonprofit organization or limited-dividend company) has the right to appeal an adverse local decision (denial of a 40B permit application) to the State in communities with little affordable housing (less than 10% of its year-round housing or 1.5% of its land area). Communities that have not yet met one of these thresholds can also receive one- or two-year exemptions from state appeals by adopting a Housing Production Plan and meeting short-term housing production goals.

How many new deed restricted Affordable Housing units are needed for South Hadley to meet the goal of 10% units affordable under MGL Chapter 40B?

South Hadley **currently has 426 deed restricted Affordable Housing** units spread across seven public and private housing developments, resulting in a Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) of 5.78% of total housing units. Approximately **312 additional deed restricted affordable housing units are needed to meet the 10% threshold**. To reach this target, South Hadley will need to produce 63 SHI eligible units annually.

Municipalities can achieve temporary “safe harbor” under MGL Chapter 40B —the ability of the local Zoning Board of Appeals to deny or condition Comprehensive Permit applications—by producing a portion of the needed Affordable Housing units. Communities must permit new SHI-eligible units at 0.5%

of their total year-round housing units over one year or 1% over two years to be eligible for temporary safe harbor. South Hadley must produce **37 SHI-eligible units over a one-year period or 74 SHI-eligible units over a two-year period.**

What guidance did the 2020 Master Plan offer for new housing?

The Master Plan prioritized focusing new development within existing roadways, buildings and neighborhoods to preserve existing open space for conservation and recreation. Specific Goals, Objectives and Strategies from the Master Plan include:

Objective 1-2: Support the development of housing at different scales and price ranges to meet the needs of people at all life stages and incomes.

Objective 2-4: Develop regulations and programs that support the reuse and rehabilitation of historic buildings, the retention of historic development patterns (the interrelationship of streets, building footprints and open spaces), and the creation of new and protection of existing viewsheds (views of landscapes and/ or natural and historic resources), especially those of the Connecticut River and the Mount Holyoke Range.

G1-8: Advocate for programs and services to allow seniors to age in place.

G1-15: Support implementation of the 2016 Housing Production Plan with relevant regulatory strategies and update the plan in 2022.

G1-16: Engage an affordable housing developer to build new housing.

G1-20: Assess and map undersized (non-conforming) and undeveloped lots to understand where they are located and the adjacencies to other land uses.

G1-23: Distribute information about existing programs to assist residents of the Falls, e.g. CDAC Home Modification Loan Program, for housing rehabilitation for low income families.

G1-24: Develop a marketing and facilitation campaign to encourage more housing and small business for the Town, with a focus on the Falls.

G3-8: Consider adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA).

What is “infill” and its relationship to strategies for new housing?

Infill is the addition of new development within already developed areas. For example, infill strategies for housing could include adding an Accessory Dwelling Unit to an existing single-family residential lot, or converting a large single-family dwelling into a two- or three-family dwelling.

What does “historical patterns of development” mean?

This term is defined in the 2020 Master Plan (Objective 2-4) as the interrelationship of streets, building footprints, and open spaces within established neighborhoods: *“Develop regulations and programs to support the reuse and rehabilitation of historic buildings the retention of historic development patterns (the interrelationship of streets, building footprints, and open spaces), and the creation of new and protection of existing viewsheds (views of landscapes and/or natural and historic resources), especially those of the Connecticut River.”*

What is the Town doing to protect undeveloped areas/open space?

The Town of South Hadley owns over 1,100 acres of ecologically important open space in the form of 14 different Conservation Areas under the care and control of the Conservation Commission. To learn more about these areas, visit: <https://www.southhadley.org/607/Conservation-Lands>

The most recent 20-acre Range View Meadow Conservation Area was purchased in 2021 through a combination of Town funds and a LAND Grant from the State. The Town is actively involved in the permanent long term protection of a 210-acre farm on Alvord Street through the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources' Agricultural Preservation Program (APR). Matching funds for this land protection project in the amount of \$180,000 have been raised through a combination of Town funds and private donations, raised in partnership with Kestrel Land Trust.

In addition to targeted land protection projects, Town bylaws and regulations include provisions within permitting processes to evaluate site disturbance and its impact on the environment. For example, the Conservation Commission amended the local Wetlands Regulation in 2022 to add standards and requirements for tree removal and replacement for projects permitted under their jurisdiction. However, outside of wetland resource areas, there are limited ways to fully prevent the removal of trees and loss of open space from residential development. More effective ways to do this are being considered by the Planning Board.

What is “form-based zoning”?

One of the strategies under consideration is to assess the use of form-based zoning as part of amendments to the Falls 40R Smart Growth Zoning District to encourage the development of new affordable housing units within the 40R District. Form-based zoning (or code) is a land development regulation that uses physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the zoning. Form-based codes address the relationship between building facades and the public realm, the form and mass of buildings in relation to one another, and the scale and types of streets and blocks. The regulations and standards in form-based codes are presented in both words and clearly drawn diagrams and other visuals. They are keyed to a regulating plan that designates the appropriate form and scale (and therefore, character) of development, rather than only distinctions in land-use types. This approach contrasts with conventional zoning's focus on the segregation of land uses, and the control of development intensity through other parameters (e.g., floor area ratios, dwellings per acre, setbacks, parking ratios), to the neglect of an integrated built form and layout.

How were the opportunity sites selected? Are these sites available for housing?

The opportunity sites were selected based on feedback during the 2020 Master Plan Update community planning process and the Route 202/33 Corridor Study. Each of the locations are within areas the public prioritized for new housing. It was also the intent to assess sites in multiple parts of town to see how new housing might be integrated into existing neighborhoods. The Town does not own any of the identified sites and therefore there is no commitment that new housing will be built at these locations. Property owners for several of the sites are seeking to develop the land for housing and/or some level of mixed use development and participated in the planning exercise to gain further insight into what might be most advantageous for the community.