

Lenox Housing Production Plan 2017-2021

Key Ideas, Goals, and Strategies

□ FIVE IMPORTANT FINDINGS

1. Approximately **47 percent of Lenox households have low or moderate incomes**. Put in perspective: for a household of two, this means a maximum annual income of \$51,200.
2. For Lenox, affordable housing is not only a matter of basic social fairness. It is also an **economic development imperative**. Lenox does not have housing that employees of the Town and many local businesses can afford to buy or rent.
3. Lenox has **no low- or moderate-income homeownership units** on the Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). All 178 units currently listed on the SHI are rental units, and mainly age restricted.
4. Lenox needs a **larger inventory of homeownership housing** that is affordable for moderate-income and middle-income families. There is not enough housing to encourage families from other towns whose children attend the Lenox Public Schools to move to Lenox and become part of the community.
5. Lenox has a rapidly aging population and **no affordable assisted living residences**.

□ EIGHT 5-YEAR GOALS

1. Increase the supply of **year-round market-rate and affordable rental housing** for seniors, families, town employees and others who work in Lenox, or people with disabilities.
2. Ensure that affordable housing is available in a **variety of unit types**: detached single-family homes, multifamily units, townhouses, congregate dwellings, and assisted living.
3. Increase the **supply of affordable rental housing and affordable homeownership units**.
4. Increase the variety of **mixed-income housing options in or near commercial areas and villages** in order to support the local economy and promote smart growth.
5. Provide affordable **housing choices throughout the town**.
6. Create and preserve **at least 10 percent** of Lenox's year-round housing units as **affordable housing** in order to provide the Town's share of regional housing needs.
7. Increase the supply of housing that would be **affordable to middle-income families and individuals** even though the units would not count toward the Town's 10 percent minimum under Chapter 40B.
8. By the end of this Five-Year Plan, **create at least 60 new low- or moderate-income housing units** that will count on the Town's Chapter 40 Subsidized Housing Inventory.

□ FOURTEEN 5-YEAR STRATEGIES

1. Amend the zoning bylaw to encourage creation of **accessory apartments**.
2. Make it as easy as possible to create **apartments over commercial space** in business-zoned areas such as the Town Center and Lenox Dale, and horizontal mixed uses with free-standing residential buildings along Route 7.
3. Provide effective **incentives to create affordable housing**, e.g., by establishing realistic density standards for multifamily dwellings, townhouses, and “pocket neighborhoods” with affordable units and replace special permit decision criteria with performance standards for multifamily dwellings by right.
4. Revise, update, and clarify the Residential **Inclusionary Zoning** Bylaw.
5. Allow small affordable units on vacant **nonconforming lots**.
6. Maximize the allocation of **Community Preservation Act** (CPA) funds for affordable housing production, and give preference to activities that create new SHI-eligible units with long-term deed restrictions.
7. Use the CPA-funded **Sawmill Brook** property and other municipally owned sites for affordable housing development.
8. Work with nearby communities in Berkshire County to **pool CPA funds** and other revenue to construct affordable housing in suitable locations throughout the region and meet regional housing needs.
9. Explore possibilities for **local property tax incentives** to help fund the creation and preservation of affordable housing.
10. Advocate for adoption of special legislation to create a **seasonal and weekend rentals excise tax**.
11. Expand the Housing Trust and Committee’s current **mortgage grant program**.
12. Create a **regional housing coordinator** position.
13. Develop a comprehensive **housing education plan** (public education).
14. Make the **best possible use of Chapter 40B** as a vehicle for creating affordable housing, and continue to loosen regulatory barriers through local zoning and other changes.