

Article 45 - Planned Residential Development Density Bonus

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What section of the zoning bylaw does this amendment address?

A: Section 10.2.3.6 of the existing bylaw allows a developer to apply for up to twice as many units in a planned residential development if at least 10% of them are affordable.

Q: Why offer a density bonus?

A: It creates a financial incentive for developers to add affordable ownership units as an integral part of their developments, without public subsidies.

Q: What change is proposed?

A: The existing bylaw requires that the first, third, fifth, etc. affordable units qualify as low-income housing (80% AMI), while the second, fourth, sixth, etc. can be up to 150% AMI. The amendment would change the requirement for first, third, fifth, etc. affordable units to the “starter-priced” housing (110% AMI) threshold.

Q: Why switch the incentive from low income to moderate income?

A: The existing bonus density incentives aren’t working. The developer investment required to build a low-income unit (\$400,000-\$700,000) is too high to recover the lost margin with additional market-rate units. As a result, developers are opting to build market-rate PRDs or switching to the subdivision model. This change reduces the required investment about 25%, encouraging developers to pursue PRDs that include affordable units - at least moderately affordable ones.

Q: Is there a need for moderate affordable housing in Concord?

A: There are currently only 36 moderately affordable regulated units in Concord, and a dwindling number of other moderately-priced homes available, due to teardowns. The Select Board identified a critical need for moderately affordable “workforce” housing last year. They also designated \$500,000 of ARPA funds to workforce housing related projects.

Q: Are there still opportunities to develop low-income affordable units?

A: Yes. In addition to 111 low-income rental units recently approved as part of 40B projects (Thoreau and NOVO), the Concord Housing Development Corporation, Habitat for Humanity, and other organizations continue to develop low-income ownership units in their projects. The MBTA overlay zoning district also specifies that any new developments include low-income housing.