



## **Municipal Engagement Initiative**

**CHAPA's Municipal Engagement Initiative seeks to build support for affordable housing production in communities across the Commonwealth.** CHAPA staff will work with community groups and local municipalities to conduct public education efforts in support of housing production, with an emphasis on affordable housing. Strategies will be developed to work within the context of each community.

While all communities will benefit from public education and community discussions about the need for housing development and how it benefits communities economically, each community is unique in its character, land, zoning, and housing stock. **CHAPA will work to develop a community engagement model that will broadly work in all communities while allowing for flexibility in the model to work within each unique environment.** The model will be based on the collaborative model CHAPA uses at the state level, focusing on building coalitions that work together to address each community's housing challenges. Coalition building will bring together stakeholders representing local businesses, civic groups, houses of worship, and other groups and individuals that are active in each community.

### **Collaboration**

In addition to the lessons learned from work on the ground, CHAPA, with DHCD's Housing Choice Initiative, is convening regular meetings of statewide and Metro-Boston organizations working in local communities, through a Municipal Technical Assistance Providers Coordinating Group. DHCD and CHAPA have also created a Municipal Technical Assistance Tracking Database to ensure coordination of TA efforts in each city and town. Current members include:

- Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP)
- Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations (MACDC)
- Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance (MSGA)
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
- MassHousing
- MA Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
- MA Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs (EEA)
- Governor's Office

- MassDevelopment
- CHAPA

Meetings provide opportunities for organizations to share information on their models and progress as well as to coordinate work between groups who are doing work simultaneously in particular communities. By coordinating efforts, groups can better serve communities and work together to address challenges. Goals of this group include: Leveraging information and knowledge about who is doing what; increasing efficiency of funds/technical assistance resources; and creating a place to discuss solutions for communities that have requested various technical assistance programs.

### **Communities**

The Municipal Engagement Initiative is currently working in six communities: Acton, Amherst, Arlington, Essex, Medford and Newton

### **New Communities:**

CHAPA will be seeking additional communities under the Municipal Engagement Initiative as capacity allows (goal of 5 communities per year). Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria;

- 1) Market Conditions to support Housing Production,
- 2) Additional Conditions needed to build support. Examples of conditions that indicate need may include, but are not limited to; no existing coalition, high level of opposition, close votes on zoning or development proposals,
- 3) Welcomed by Municipality at some level, and
- 4) Bonus for a Trigger event like a change of leadership, new zoning proposal or specific site changing hands.

Attention will be paid to reaching communities of different sizes, geographies and stages of housing production activity, but this will not be the only criteria.

Applicants will submit an online application, followed up by due diligence by Municipal Engagement staff for a determination of need/fit. Referrals for non-selected communities will be made to other Municipal Technical Assistance Providers Coordinating Group members as appropriate.

### **Additional Resources:**

The Municipal Engagement Initiative will also work on additional projects to maximize impact including; polling and focus groups to understand attitudes around housing and affordability at the local level, Municipal Engagement forum series highlighting the report “Who Participates in Local Government? Evidence from Meeting Minutes”, regional convening of Municipal partners, and development of templates and models for additional community use.

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