

## CHAPA's 2024 Regional Meeting Takeaways

On October 23rd, CHAPA gathered hundreds of advocates across the state for a hybrid regional forum to hear their ideas, challenges, and hopes for the future of housing in Massachusetts.

The call included municipal staff, elected officials, local housing advocates, state policy makers, housing nonprofits, technical assistance providers, and interested residents who are new to housing advocacy. We held conversations across the following regions:

- Berkshires (virtual)
- Cape & Islands (virtual)
- Greater Boston (virtual)
- Greater Boston (in person @ MetroHousing|Boston)
- MetroWest (virtual)
- North Shore/Merrimack Valley (virtual)
- South Shore (virtual)
- Pioneer Valley (virtual)
- Pioneer Valley (in person @ Way Finders)
- Worcester/Central MA (virtual)

Over 400 attendees registered for the in person and virtual sessions from across the Commonwealth to come together and share their experiences and expertise when it comes to housing needs and solutions in Massachusetts. Below please find a summation of the takeaways and common themes that came up. The following is a brief and high-level overview of what we heard from attendees. It is by no means exhaustive, and only represents the opinions of those who were able to attend.

CHAPA will continue to work alongside housing advocates at all levels to ensure that our work is firmly rooted in their expertise and lived experience. Some topics included: homebuyer assistance, lack of diverse housing options, potential policy and funding solutions, and more! If you have any additional feedback on the regional meeting, please let us know.

*What are you grappling with in your housing, affordability and advocacy work that needs more attention and support?*

- Lack of affordable homeownership opportunities
- Need support for first time home buyers to shepherd them through the process
- Significant increase in the number of unsheltered residents
- Public Housing stock is in very poor condition across many communities
- Continued resident opposition to creating new housing opportunities
- Investors buying up homes, especially in the Inner Core
- High land costs make it challenging to lower home prices
- Not enough family-friendly housing (3+ bedrooms)
- Lack of planning capacity in smaller towns
- Need for advocacy toolkits so that resident advocates don't need to recreate the wheel with each new campaign

- Enforcing Fair Housing laws

*What are the biggest funding gaps you are seeing in your work?*

- Funding to help low-income residents, especially seniors and people with disabilities, to make necessary repairs to their homes
- In addition to the rising cost of housing, other costs have also increased - utilities, Condo Association fees, etc. We need additional funding to help homeowners with these types of expenses
- Preservation is a huge challenge - some older houses are cheaper to knock down and rebuild than to repair
- Funding for supportive/transitional housing
- Funding for deeply affordable units (under 50% AMI)
- Funding to encourage ADU production
- Some communities are not using their CPA funds for affordable housing
- We need a new line of pre-development funding to enable small developers, especially developers of color, to get a foot in the door

*What barriers are you seeing on zoning and production that we can be working to remove?*

- We don't do enough regional planning as a state
- The entire planning, permitting, and construction process favors larger scale developments (at least 20+ units), which is a challenge for small developers looking to produce more Missing Middle Housing, and even more so for homeowners looking to add one or two units to their home.
- Lack of sewer infrastructure is a serious barrier to producing more housing in many, many communities across the state
- We need to expand MRWA so all communities can access clean drinking water
- Lack of effective solutions for building housing in more rural areas of the state
- We need an inventory of developable land
- More guidance from the state on ADU regulations
- Title 5 restrictions

*What solutions have you found that could be replicated?*

- Growing community support for rent stabilization measures, like the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA)
- Lowering or eliminating parking minimums
- Exploring modular construction
- Municipal voucher program
- Writing Letters to the Editor and Op-Eds in local newspapers
- Loans to build ADUs
- Home Share program for seniors to share living expenses
- Developing housing above libraries

- Permanent supportive housing programs
- Disposition of public land for affordable housing
- Exploring public-private partnerships
- Community Success Stories:
  - Acton loosened their restrictions on ADUs, for example: increasing the allowed size, and creating more flexibility, and saw a direct impact on the number of ADUs being produced
  - Collaboration across neighboring towns on the Cape has been critical

*What policy or funding solutions would you like to see CHAPA pursue?*

- Rent control
- Rural and small community funding programs
- Local Option Transfer Fee
- Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act
- Increased funding for CPA matching funds
- Legal support for affordable housing homeowners
- Preservation funding
- Senior rent stabilization state-wide
- Voucher to Homeownership programs
- Statewide multifamily zoning by-right
- Funding sources specifically for small scale developers
- Increased MassDREAMS funding