



Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development Newsletter – Summer 2012

Message from the Undersecretary



Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) newsletter.

This newsletter will serve as a tool to keep our partners up-to-date with what is happening at DHCD, what we have accomplished and where we are headed.

In my first months at DHCD, we have established key goals that further the Patrick-Murray Administration's priorities and have taken action toward achieving those goals. These include:

- Reducing homelessness and implementing policies to reform the system;
- Sustaining our public housing stock while reforming management and governance;
- Producing and preserving housing that is affordable to a full range of households and income levels;
- Continuing to address the foreclosure crisis; and,

- Planning ahead for growth while spurring new housing production in a sustainable manner.

This newsletter is timely as Governor Patrick signed the FY13 budget on July 8. The budget includes significant initiatives in moving toward a housing-first response to homelessness and prevention, and we greatly appreciate the close collaboration with the legislature in reaching this outcome. We look forward to implementing all of the elements of the reform as soon as possible to provide families with the assistance they need to get back on their feet and to sustain their tenancies over the long-term.

I have met with many of you to discuss how we can work together to improve a whole range of services and programs. We want to be responsive, flexible and creative in getting our work done. Thank you for taking the time to provide ongoing input and advice, and I look forward to continuing our collaboration in an effort to find innovative solutions to the Commonwealth's housing issues.

Please mark your calendars. On **November 13, DHCD will host a statewide Housing Conference at the DCU Center in Worcester**, bringing together stakeholders from all aspects of housing and community development to discuss challenges and new initiatives in our field. We will be sending you more information shortly and we hope you will join us.

Sincerely,

Aaron Gornstein
Undersecretary of Housing and Community Development

Combatting Family Homelessness

The [FY13 budget](#), signed by Governor Patrick on July 8, includes several key reforms that will continue our effort to combat family homelessness in the Commonwealth. We have maintained a strong safety net for those Massachusetts families in emergencies while reinvesting in the Commonwealth's homelessness prevention and rehousing programs. These changes and investments will reduce the number of families being sheltered in hotels as a last resort, stabilize hundreds of households in their

current living situation and allow families to put down roots and move toward self-sufficiency.

- DHCD will work to implement four new categories of eligibility for emergency assistance after the required legislative review periods have passed. Emergency shelter will be available to families who meet the Emergency Assistance income limits, are Massachusetts residents and who meet one of the following eligibility criteria:
 - Victims of fire, flood and natural disaster;
 - Fleeing domestic violence;
 - Facing eviction through no fault of their own; or,
 - Currently in a housing situation that exposes children to substantial health and safety risks (determined by the Department of Children and Families).
- Families who are not eligible for emergency assistance may be eligible for alternative prevention/rehousing programs. Working with the legislature, the Patrick-Murray Administration has increased the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program budget from \$276,000 to \$8,760,000. DHCD will continue to administer the RAFT program that will provide up to \$4,000 in assistance to prevent a family from becoming homeless either by helping them stay where they are or helping them move to a new housing situation.
- The Administration also secured \$6 million in additional funds for the Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program that will provide rental assistance to over 500 families in FY13.
- HomeBASE will continue to provide up to \$4,000 in household assistance to families as an alternative to shelter and will now also provide up to \$4,000 for families to exit shelter.
- DHCD will implement a new supportive housing program using MRVP project-based vouchers to assist approximately 100 families with significant barriers to stable housing.
- Other programs that received budget increases include: public housing operating subsidies; Home and Healthy for Good; and the Tenancy Preservation Program

Public Housing Reform

The [Commission on Public Housing Sustainability and Reform](#), established by Governor Deval Patrick in January, has [issued substantial recommendations](#) that call for a new professionalized system that maintains local control while increasing oversight and investments in public housing.

In addition to restructuring, the Commission identified a series of reforms to further increase transparency and accountability within the system, including mandatory annual independent financial audits of local housing authorities, public access to local housing authority staff listings and required board member trainings.

At Governor Patrick's direction, the Division of Public Housing and Rental Assistance has been working to implement several administrative reforms relative to local housing authorities in an effort to increase transparency and accountability while protecting taxpayer dollars. To this end, DHCD has issued guidance [capping executive director's compensation](#) at \$160,000, requiring all LHAs to report their [top management salaries](#) each year and requiring monthly reports to confirm board meeting occurrences and attendance.

In March, DHCD issued a report following our [review of local housing authority financial information and contracts](#). The proposed action steps called for implementing a required standard contract for executive directors, disallowing unreasonable terms and requiring LHAs to report total executive director compensation in their annual budgets.

The Commonwealth's public housing stock is one of the most important resources for low-income families, elders and people with disabilities. Home to over 45,000 households, these units are overseen by 242 local housing authorities.

Investments in Affordable Housing

On May 9th, Lieutenant Governor Murray announced [\\$105 million for affordable housing](#) across the Commonwealth, creating or preserving over 2,000 units of housing and over 3,000 jobs in the process.



Congressman McGovern, Lieutenant Governor Murray and local seniors look at the development plans for Paxton Senior Housing, one of the projects to receive funding this round (PHOTO CREDIT: Adam Freudberg - Lieutenant Governor's Office).

Since 2007, our Administration has worked with the state legislature and our partners in Congress to direct over \$700 million in federal and state tax credits and state housing program subsidies to developments that improve the state's affordable housing stock, as well as create jobs and build stronger communities. These investments have generated more than 14,000 jobs and 10,000 homes, 9,000 of which are affordable.

News Clips:

[Boston Globe - Your Town - Beverly](#)

[MetroWest Daily News](#)

[Springfield Republican](#)

[Salem News](#)

[Taunton Daily Gazette](#)

[GoLocal Worcester](#)

[Wicked Local Somerville](#)

[Cape Cod Times](#)

[Brockton Enterprise](#)

Community Development Block Grants

Governor Deval Patrick announced on June 12th that 46 cities and towns across the Commonwealth will receive \$26.8 million in federal [Community Development Block Grants \(CDBG\)](#) to support housing rehabilitation, public service projects and local infrastructure. Governor Patrick made the announcement at Dennis Town Hall. Dennis, jointly with Harwich, received \$994,000 for housing improvements and childcare assistance.



Governor Patrick announces the 2012 CDBG awards at Dennis Town Hall in June
(PHOTO CREDIT: Eric Haynes – Governor's Office)

News Clips:

[Daily Hampshire Gazette](#)

[Worcester Telegram](#)

[iBerkshires](#)

[Springfield Republican](#)

[GoLocal Worcester](#)

[Newburyport News](#)

Market-Rate Housing in Gateway Cities

The Patrick-Murray Administration is always looking for innovative ways to grow the economy and make Massachusetts a better place to live, work and do business. The [Housing Development Incentive Program](#) is DHCD's first tax-credit program to support market-rate housing.

Launched in June, HDIP is a new program for the Commonwealth's 24 gateway cities that will provide an incentive to support market-rate housing development. Developers of market-rate housing can receive a tax credit worth the value of 10% of their eligible development costs to redevelop properties into housing. Market-rate housing is important to gateway cities because it can help attract new residents and families. This has a positive impact on the cities' tax-bases and income diversity in neighborhoods.

News Clips:

[Worcester Telegram](#)

[Brockton Enterprise](#)

[Sentinel and Enterprise](#)

DHCD Employee Recognized with 2012 Carballo Award

Governor Patrick recognized Alvina Brevard, DHCD Assistant Director of Field Operations in Western Mass, with a [2012 Manuel Carballo Award for Excellence in Public Service](#). She defines what it means to be a good public servant and shined a little over a year ago in her role leading DHCD's tornado response effort in Western Mass. After the June 1st tornado hit, Alvina went straight to work nearly around the clock, seven days a week. She set an unparalleled example of leadership and continues to make DHCD proud.



Governor Patrick and Secretary Jay Gonzalez present Alvina Brevard with the 2012 Carballo Award (PHOTO CREDIT: Jeremiah Robinson – Governor's Office).

DHCD's Nancy DePaul (Human Resources), Donna Flynn (Human Resources) and Rebecca Frawley Wachtel (Housing Development) were also recognized with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Performance Recognition program award. This program formally recognizes outstanding state employees who demonstrate exemplary leadership, strong commitment, and an extraordinary work ethic.

Other News:

- On June 8th, Undersecretary Gornstein was one of four witnesses who testified in Washington, D.C. before the House Ways and Means Committee regarding expiring tax provisions and the importance of the New Markets Tax Credit and the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit. [WATCH VIDEO](#). In addition, the Undersecretary has met with our Congressional delegation to discuss the Governor's key federal housing priorities, including Section 8 Rental Assistance, HOME, CDBG, and the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program.
- DHCD [launched its first-ever pre-application](#) for the fall 2012 rental round; pre-applications are due August 1st. We have also established [four priority categories](#) for funding: housing for extremely low-income individuals; investments in distressed and at-risk neighborhoods; preservation of existing affordable housing; and, family housing production in neighborhoods that provide access to high opportunities including jobs, transportation, and schools. One-stop applications for the fall rental round are due on October 12.
- Since the Commonwealth's Affordable Housing Preservation Law, Chapter 40T, was signed by Governor Patrick in late 2009, DHCD has been working closely with CEDAC and our other quasi-public partners to focus on preserving existing affordable housing. In that time, no project has lost affordability as the result of a sale. From 2010 to 2011, 6,100 affordable housing units were preserved. Read more in CEDAC's [Affordable Housing Preservation Fact Sheet](#).
- DHCD's Fair Housing Advisory Panel has reconvened to advise the agency as it updates its "Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice" ("AI") for submission to HUD later this year. The AI identifies state policies, practices and regulatory infrastructure, or the lack thereof, that create or foster obstacles to housing choice for persons protected under federal fair housing laws.
- DHCD has certified 17 Community Development Corporations (CDCs) under the new Chapter 40H, which created a new definition for the term "Community Development Corporation," and established a certification program. The legislation directed DHCD to develop the process for certification and to report annually to the legislature a list

of certified CDCs and a summary of programs, initiatives or partnerships operated by EOHEd that support CDCs.

- On March 22nd, Governor Patrick signed into law “An Act Relative to Community Housing and Services”. The law requires 18 state agencies to draft and execute a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that includes an action plan to coordinate and procure services, capital subsidies, and operating subsidies. The ultimate goal is to create up to 1,000 units of supportive housing by December 31, 2015. Lt. Governor Murray asked Undersecretary Aaron Gornstein and Assistant Secretary Marilyn Anderson-Chase to co-chair a working group to implement this legislation. The Chairs will regularly update the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness about the group’s progress. Undersecretary Gornstein and Assistant Secretary Anderson-Chase have recruited a small group of designees to serve on this working group to draft and execute the MOU by the end of 2012. The working group held its first meeting on June 28th and formed three subcommittees to advance the effort.
- DHCD is working closely with Secretary Bialecki to articulate the need for communities to plan for housing growth for the full spectrum of household incomes, including housing affordable to middle class and moderate income families and individuals. DHCD has been working with the Secretary’s office to develop new strategies designed to promote market-rate housing and will participate in a policy summit on this issue in late July.
- DHCD has launched a Joint Task Force on Housing for People with Disabilities with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. Co-chaired by Assistant Secretary Christine Griffin and Undersecretary Gornstein, the task force will be developing strategies for expanding community-based housing options for persons with disabilities. Towards that end, the two agencies will be submitting a joint application and an MOU to HUD under the revised Section 811 Program.

Follow us on [Twitter @MA_DHCD](#) to learn more about DHCD events and announcements.