

# **DRAFT GOALS AND STRATEGIES 2026-2030 HOUSING PLAN**

## **Goals in Old Plan**

GOAL 1: Increase affordable housing opportunities for lower-income households (less than 80% AMI) affordable housing stock

GOAL 2: Increase affordable housing opportunities for those needing deeper affordability (less than 60% AMI)

GOAL 3: Increase affordable and supportive housing opportunities for seniors and individuals with disabilities

GOAL 4: Encourage the creation of a variety of housing types at different price points, with particular emphasis on providing options for residents and workers who wish to remain in Watertown

GOAL 5: Preserve existing housing affordability

GOAL 6: Increase community engagement around affordable housing

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## **PROPOSED GOALS**

GOAL 1: Increase, deepen affordability of, and preserve deed-restricted affordable housing

GOAL 2: Encourage the private market to create a variety of housing types at different price points

GOAL 3: Assist residents who want to continue living in Watertown while remaining a welcoming community for all

**Strategies in old plan that are part of continuing regulatory role**

STRATEGY 5A: Continue monitoring affordable housing stock on the Subsidized Housing Inventory

STRATEGY 5B: Prevent loss of any affordable units that have expiring deed-restrictions.

STRATEGY 6B: Evaluate using local preference in affordable housing lotteries. (note: with policy adopted, continuing activity is collecting data for next time policy needs to be evaluated)

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**PROPOSED SECTION TO CAPTURE THESE STRATEGIES ELSEWHERE IN PLAN**

The Trust and/or city staff have continuing responsibilities related to monitoring and planning that are not separately identified as “strategies.” These include the following:

1. Ensuring that proposed developments comply with the city’s inclusionary zoning requirements; this includes review of affordable housing plans, Trust recommendations to the permit-granting authority, and obtaining state approval of the inclusionary units.
2. Monitoring affordable housing stock on the Subsidized Housing Inventory.
3. Tracking affordable units that have expiring deed-restrictions.
4. Collecting data on affordable housing lotteries, including demographic information that sheds light on the impact of local preference.
5. Participation in the WestMetro HOME Consortium, including submission of annual action plans, annual CAPER report, and five-year plans and analysis of fair housing impediments studies when required
6. Participation in MAPC’s Metro Mayors Housing Task Force, including submission of building permit data and participation in working groups as needed

**Strategies to be restated as foundational principles or tools**

STRATEGY 1C: Leverage public funds such as those from the Community Preservation Act and Commonwealth sources.

STRATEGY 1D: Leverage opportunities on public land.

STRATEGY 1E: Maximize Transit-Oriented Development opportunities.

STRATEGY 2A: Prioritize the use of public funds, public land, and TOD locations to create more deeply affordable units.

STRATEGY 2C: Partner with community development corporations and others to explore new ways to create/support more deeply affordable units.

STRATEGY 4B: Leverage public funds such as CPA (up to 100%) and State sources (up to 120%).

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**PROPOSED SECTION TO CAPTURE THESE STRATEGIES ELSEWHERE IN PLAN**

The Trust and city staff operate with certain assumptions about how best to achieve the Plan’s goals. While not separately identified as “strategies,” it is useful to articulate them. They include the following:

1. Maximizing opportunities for Transit-Oriented Development is good for tenants and homeowners and serves the City’s Climate Plan goals.
2. Use of public land can lower development costs and make affordable development more feasible.
3. Use of local resources (land and/or funding) are a key lever to obtain substantial federal and state affordable housing awards.
4. Community development corporations and other affordable housing developers are important partners on specific projects and other shared initiatives.
5. The Trust and Community Preservation Committee are partners in the production and preservation of affordable housing; a strong working relationship is important.

**PROPOSED Strategies in (hopefully) logical order**

**STRATEGY 1:** Identify potential affordable housing sites and work with developers on projects

1A Continue current efforts to identify sites through locational metrics and through encouraging affordable developers to work in Watertown

1B Explore additional methods to find suitable sites, such as using a real estate agent and/or publicly highlighting the site search

**STRATEGY 2:** Promote the use of public land for affordable housing development

A: Consider including an affordable housing development on the City’s 148 Waltham Street site

B: Work with the MBTA to consider an affordable housing development on its Watertown Yard site

C: Consider including an affordable housing development on the City’s parking lots in Watertown Square

[Note: text would make clear that affordable housing development is defined as more than 50% affordable, so would include mixed-income]

**STRATEGY 3:** Support the Watertown Housing Authority and others in the effort to rehabilitate public housing inventory and create new units on its existing land.

A: Assist the Watertown Housing Authority in evaluating the potential for redevelopment of existing properties

B: Continue to support the proposed Willow Park redevelopment project

C: Consider financial assistance for other WHA redevelopment and/or modernization projects

**STRATEGY 4:** Implement recommendations of affordable housing incentives study

[This is a placeholder. Wording of strategy and the list of actions to be proposed when the study is substantially complete.]

**STRATEGY 5:** Increase the City’s capacity to implement the strategies listed in the Plan

A: Employ a full-time housing planner within three years

B: Continue to include \$250,000 in the annual budget for the affordable housing trust as a bridge to the linkage fees

C: Consider participating in a regional housing program that would monitor inclusionary zoning units and review requested rent increases for the city

D. Increase collaboration between the Affordable Housing Trust and Community Preservation Committee, while recognizing each body’s particular statutory goals and process

**STRATEGY 6:** When evaluating new affordable housing developments, consider opportunities to include supportive services for seniors and individuals with disabilities

**STRATEGY 7:** As part of the City’s general zoning review, evaluate the impact of current zoning and parking requirements on residential development and consider amendments, as needed

**STRATEGY 8:** Track and potentially help meet the need for capital improvements and/or major recapitalizations in existing affordable housing developments

A: Periodically discuss capital needs and funding sources with existing affordable housing developments

B: Plan for potential use of HOME funds (WestMetro consolidated pool and/or Watertown allocation) to minimize the need for emergency funding for critical repairs

**STRATEGY 9:** Encourage higher universal design and visitability standards for large residential development projects.

A: Consider adding universal design and visitability elements to the city’s design guidelines

B: Consider peer review of development plans for inclusive design

**STRATEGY 10:** Encourage the creation of more 3+ bedroom units in both affordable and market rate developments

**STRATEGY 11:** Promote fair housing

1A Continue to fund fair housing testing programs and publicize results

1B Continue to work with the Human Rights Commission to offer education to owners, property managers, real estate agents, tenants and the public on fair housing

1C Work with local brokers to promote acceptance of housing vouchers

**STRATEGY 12:** Help educate cost-burdened tenants and homeowners about available housing resources

A: Increase and periodically update housing resources identified on the city’s website

B: Consider ways for the community development and human services departments to work together in providing technical assistance to cost-burdened tenants and homeowners

**STRATEGY 13:** Consider short-term rental assistance in the event of an emergency need affecting Watertown

**STRATEGY 14:** Evaluate impact of city’s new zoning at appropriate intervals

A: Watertown Square zoning after five years (during 2029)

B: New accessory dwelling unit ordinance after three years (during 2028)

**PROPOSED Strategies in the buckets discussed at June 23 meeting—with old strategies for reference**

**Strategies where there is clear consensus to add**

Identify potential affordable housing sites and work with developers on projects

Promote fair housing

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**STRATEGY 1:** Identify potential affordable housing sites and work with developers on projects

1A Continue current efforts to identify sites through metrics and encouraging affordable developers to work in Watertown

1B Explore additional methods, such as using a real estate agent and publicly highlighting the site search

**STRATEGY 11:** Promote fair housing

1A Continue to fund fair housing testing programs and publicize results

1B Continue to work with the Human Services Commission to offer education to owners, property managers, real estate agents and the public on fair housing

1C Work with local brokers to promote acceptance of housing vouchers

**Strategies that will be informed by affordable housing incentives study**

STRATEGY 1B: Evaluate increasing inclusionary zoning requirements.

STRATEGY 4C: Continue to evaluate current zoning, parking requirements and other incentives to shape residential development.

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**STRATEGY 4:** Implement recommendations of affordable housing incentives study

[This is a placeholder. Wording strategy and the list of sub-strategies to be proposed when the study is substantially complete.]

**STRATEGY 7:** As part of the City’s general zoning review, evaluate the impact of current zoning and parking requirements on residential development and consider amendments, as needed

**Strategies that can be sharpened/reformulated (discuss)**

STRATEGY 2B: Support the Watertown Housing Authority and others in the effort to rehabilitate public housing inventory and create new units on its existing land.

STRATEGY 3B: Encourage universal design and visitability standards in new development.

STRATEGY 3C: Enter into partnerships with supportive service providers to create housing and/or provide services to seniors and individuals with disabilities.

STRATEGY 4D: Evaluate use of regulatory/administrative policies to encourage creation of 3+ bedroom units.

STRATEGY 5C: Provide emergency funding for critical repairs in existing affordable units.

STRATEGY 5D: Evaluate short-term tenant-based rental assistance.

STRATEGY 6A: Increase public education/awareness of the need for a variety of housing types at various income levels, via community workshops or other events.

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**STRATEGY 3:** Support the Watertown Housing Authority and others in the effort to rehabilitate public housing inventory and create new units on its existing land.

A: Continue to support the proposed Willow Park redevelopment project

B: Consider financial assistance for 103 Nichols Avenue

C: Consider financial assistance for elevator modernization at Woodland Towers and Munger Apartments

D: Assist the Watertown Housing Authority in evaluating potential for redevelopment of existing properties

**STRATEGY 9:** Encourage higher universal design and visitability standards for large residential development projects.

A: Consider adding universal design and visitability elements to the city’s design guidelines

B: Consider peer review of development plans for inclusive design

**STRATEGY 6:** When considering new affordable housing developments, consider opportunities to include supportive services for seniors and individuals with disabilities

**STRATEGY 10:** Encourage the creation of more 3+ bedroom units in both affordable and market rate developments

**STRATEGY 8:** Track and potentially help meet the need for capital improvements and/or major recapitalizations in existing affordable housing developments

A: Periodically discuss capital needs and funding sources with existing affordable housing developments

B: Plan for potential use of HOME funds (WestMetro consolidated pool and/or Watertown allocation) to minimize the need for emergency funding for critical repairs

**STRATEGY 12:** Consider short-term rental assistance in the event of an emergency need affecting Watertown

**STRATEGY 13:** Help cost-burdened tenants and homeowners understand available housing resources

A: Increase and periodically update housing resources identified on the city’s website

B: Consider ways for the community development and human services departments to work together in providing technical assistance to cost-burdened tenants and homeowners

**Strategies that should be added**

**STRATEGY 5:** Increase the City’s capacity to implement the strategies listed in the Plan

A: Employ a full-time housing planner within three years

B: Continue to include \$250,000 in the annual budget for the affordable housing trust as a bridge to the linkage fees expected before 2030

C: Consider participating in a regional housing program that would monitor inclusionary zoning units for the city

**STRATEGY 2:** Promote the use of public land for affordable housing development

A: Consider including an affordable housing development on the City’s 148 Waltham Street site

B: Work with the MBTA to consider an affordable housing development on its Watertown Yard site

C: Consider including an affordable housing development on the City’s parking lots in Watertown Square

[Note: text would make clear that affordable housing development is defined as more than 50% affordable, so would include mixed-income]

**STRATEGY 14:** Evaluate impact of city’s new zoning at an appropriate interval

A: Watertown Square zoning after five years (during 2029)

B: New accessory dwelling unit ordinance after three years (during 2028)

**Strategies to revisit**

STRATEGY 3A: Evaluate rehab loan program.

STRATEGY 3D Partner to provide financial planning assistance to enable seniors to age in place

STRATEGY 4E: Ensure that affordable units are compliant with DHCD guidelines for SHI units, but allow flexibility as needed to increase the number of functionally affordable units.

STRATEGY 6C: Improve marketing and outreach for affordable housing lotteries.

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Recommend that these strategies not be included in the new plan. Strategies 4E and 6C do not address identified problems. Strategy 3D is outside the scope of the proposed housing plan. Strategy 3A is unrealistic based on the likely funding and staff capacity during the next five years.