

TOWN OF BAR HARBOR



HOUSING POLICY FRAMEWORK

V2

December 19, 2023

Housing vision

Support Bar Harbor’s workforce and economy by having available, safe, and affordable housing for people that desire to live here because they work here, they want to raise a family here, they want to stay here as they age, and for the community to prosper.

Housing Goal

Provide a framework for the Town of Bar Harbor to ensure that we are fast-tracking the increase in housing availability and affordability by addressing the unique and pressing challenges as identified in, but not limited to, the 2018 Island Housing Trust Housing Needs Analysis and Assessment, the 2023-2024 Town Council Goals, 2023 MDI Housing Solutions Summit; the 2022 draft Existing Conditions Analysis, and the 2022 draft Bar Harbor Housing Analysis.

ACRONYMS AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Acadia Region	Ellsworth, Lamoine, Trenton, Bar Harbor, Southwest Harbor, Mount Desert, Tremont, and Acadia National Park.
Acadia Region Group	Grassroot group that is organizing for the purpose of addressing issues that transcend political boundaries.
COA:	College of the Atlantic
DRB	Design Review Board
ELQ	Employee Living Quarters
JAX:	The Jackson Laboratory
LMI:	Housing for low- and moderate – means earners (50% to 120% of the area median income).
LUO:	Land Use Ordinance
MDI:	Mount Desert Island
NPS:	National Park Service
PB:	Planning Board
PUD:	Planned Unit Development
SA	Shared Accommodations
STR:	Short-term rental
Workforce Housing:	Housing for household middle income earners (about 120% to 200% of area median income).

Note: Yellow highlights (grey if printed in black and white) denote priorities identified in 2023.

Housing Strategies

Strategy A	Develop Housing Targets	
Why?	To ensure that efforts, actions, and initiatives are producing the intended and needed results.	
Actions	Identify price points, income targets, number of bedrooms, mortgage and rent affordability gaps, etc. for the 524 rental units and 92 homes needed by 2033.	Identify other desired targets such as annual increase in housing stock, % of employees who live where they work, % of deed restricted housing for locals, % of employer-owned dwelling units, and % of year-round-occupied housing units.
	Engage with development professionals, realtors, landlords and others to understand the potential impacts of certain initiatives and incentives.	Track housing growth and the success of the actions in this document and present annual updates to Town Council.
Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in housing stock that meet the targets. • Unified and harmonized data set for Bar Harbor. 	

<p>Strategy B</p>	<p align="center">Remove Zoning Barriers to Housing and Provide Zoning Incentives for LMI and Workforce Housing</p>	
<p>Why?</p>	<p>High land costs and low-density zoning requirements, coupled with the complexity of the Land Use Ordinance, limit overall housing options and make it virtually impossible for developers to provide housing for LMI and workforce income earners. Meaningful and effective incentives are needed to encourage developers to engage in this type of housing development.</p>	
<p>Actions</p>	<p>Conduct a comparative analysis of the purposes, dimensional requirements, and allowed uses for the 40 zoning districts and propose changes that may focus on different housing types; height; area per family; lot size; variations in lot sizes while maintaining the base density; district merging and re-delineation to follow lot lines, natural resources, topography, and roads; increase density, infill development while being mindful of the draft Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map.</p>	<p>Propose changes to the definitions of multi-family I and II.</p>
<p>Propose ways to simplify the subdivision review process, especially for amendments to approved plans.</p>		
<p>Propose inclusionary housing policies and zoning to require or incentivize LMI and workforce housing in new developments.</p>		
<p>Provide for increase housing opportunities by proposing changes that build off of LD2003.</p>		
<p>Propose changes to the definition of affordable housing and PUD related requirements.</p>	<p>Change attitudes towards increased housing production, density, and affordability to “Yes In My Backyard” through new and creative form of public engagement.</p>	
<p>Success</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in overall housing. • Increase in LMI and workforce housing. • Pass Land Use Ordinance amendment. 	

Strategy C	Facilitate and Support Retention and Creation of LMI and Workforce Housing	
Why?	Major employers and developers will benefit from easy access to relevant information, targeted incentives, and local funding resources (needed to help fill the funding gap) tailored to meet community needs.	
Actions	Work with JAX, MDI Bio Lab, MDI Hospital, COA, Bar Harbor Housing Authority, Connors Emerson School, and others, and developers to identify needs and ways to retain and create housing.	Take a leadership role with the development of the ANP 55-acre Town Hill parcel.
	Assist the YWCA with the development of the Hamilton Station parcel.	Develop housing program and incentives specific to Bar Harbor to encourage the retention and creation of housing by building off of programs such as inclusionary zoning, purchase of deed restrictions, land acquisition, tenancy in common, homebuyer assistance, etc.
	Document approved PUD projects, and track and ensure affordability overtime.	
	Capitalize a Housing Fund from sources that may include revenues from fees, donations, parking fund, etc. to support housing efforts and programs.	Create revenue sources that may include impact fees, conversion and demolition fees, in lieu of housing fees, etc.
	Leverage local monies with grant and foundation funds to support specific housing projects.	Identify and prioritize parcels that are vacant, underutilized, and town-owned parcels and redevelopment opportunities suitable for affordable ownership and rental opportunities.
	Work with legislators to develop a law to allow a transfer fee to towns on real estate transfers to fund housing (based on the MA model).	
Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of LMI and workforce housing. 	

Strategy D	Collaborate with the Acadia Region Group	
Why?	Where people live and work is regional by nature. People usually will live in a location that is affordable to them and within a reasonable commuting distance to work. A balanced housing market that provides housing options affordable to all incomes has significant impacts on residents, the local and regional economy, transportation and traffic patterns, and quality of life. For the region to continue prospering, we all need to provide our fair and equitable share of LMI and workforce housing.	
Actions	Work with the Acadia Region Group to identify housing needs, either through a regional housing needs plan or local plans.	Work with the Acadia Region Group on the development of a consistent region-wide approach to track housing change.
	Work with the Acadia Region to identify, assess, and develop solutions to include transportation, workforce development, economic diversity and sustainable tourism.	Coordinate with the Ellsworth-MDI Housing Authorities, Island Housing Trust, and Maine Coast Heritage Trust, Downeast Partners, etc. to discuss goals, priorities, and needs, and identify ways to work together to continue developing housing that meets the needs of the region.
	Support a senior home sharing program.	Support a rental referral system to connect qualified renters with landlords.
	Collaborate on the implementation of the actions identified at the 2023 MDI Housing Solutions Summit.	
Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track region-wide housing changes. 	

Strategy E	Improve Rental Conditions	
Why?	Having a LTR management program is a good way to ensure that all rental units have smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, adequate and usable means of egress; and be safe and sanitary.	
Actions	Analyze the LTR Registration Program data collected in 2023.	Convene the LTR Task Force and develop ways to manage LTRs.
Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance with Ch. 130 Long-Term Rental Housing. • Meet Life Safety. 	

Strategy F	Encourage LTRs	
Why?	There are numerous dwelling units that are underutilized and could provide places for locals to live year-round.	
Actions	Consider offering incentives to encourage LTR.	Document housing-related deed restrictions of dwelling units with a STR.
	Monitor effectiveness of the STR regulations.	Monitor STR trends in residential neighborhoods to inform future policy decisions.
Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • STRs are converted to LTRs. • Seasonal homes are used as winter rentals. 	

Strategy G	Balance Seasonal Employee Housing Needs with Year-round Housing Needs		
Why?	Businesses have a difficult time attracting seasonal workers due to a lack of available and affordable housing. An increase in seasonal employee housing opportunities could help slow-down and/or reduce the conversion of year-round dwelling units into seasonal employee housing.		
Actions	Continue to work with businesses to understand seasonal housing needs.	Continue to expand programs and develop new uses, such as ELQs and SAs.	Promote housing opportunities such as ELQs and SAs.
Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase seasonal employee housing opportunities. • Decrease in the number of dwelling units used for seasonal employee housing. • Increase hours of operation for seasonal businesses. 		