

MassHousing's Commercial Conversions Initiative

The Application is open for MassHousing's Office Conversion Initiative!

* Required

About the Commercial Conversions Initiative

MassHousing's Commercial Conversion Initiative promotes growth and vitality in downtown areas, while addressing the statewide need for new housing. The program provides municipalities with a suite of planning services that will accelerate the reuse and redevelopment of underutilized commercial buildings across Massachusetts.

Cities across the United States are responding to changes in the nature of work by promoting residential uses in their downtowns. They are seeking to activate downtown neighborhoods by repurposing underutilized commercial space into new housing.

Communities across Massachusetts are poised to transform vacant commercial spaces into new homes, but commercial conversion efforts can be hampered by gaps in opportunity, capacity and funding. MassHousing's Commercial Conversion Initiative addresses these gaps by offering new planning resources that will assist the redevelopment of underutilized commercial spaces.

The Commercial Conversion Initiative supports the redevelopment of vacant and underutilized commercial buildings by:

- Identifying the best candidates for commercial-to-housing conversions in participating cities;
- Conducting floor plan and feasibility analyses for well-positioned buildings; and
- Assisting in lowering regulatory barriers to redevelopment and reuse.

Technical assistance services under the Commercial Conversion Initiative will position projects to compete for capital funding proposed under the Governor's Affordable Homes Act (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/the-affordable-homes-act-smart-housing-livable-communities>).

Eligibility and Selection Criteria

Massachusetts municipalities with downtown areas containing potential commercial-to-residential conversion projects are eligible to apply for technical assistance under the Commercial Conversion Initiative.

The Commercial Conversion Initiative recognizes that municipalities across Massachusetts vary in size and character and what constitutes a downtown area in each municipality is unique. The Commercial Conversion Initiative aims to support many municipalities and the eligibility criteria are flexible to reflect the unique nature of each municipality.

Municipalities must meet the following criteria to apply:

- 1. have a population of under 250,000**
- 2. have downtown areas that feature three or more commercial buildings of at least three stories, located in close proximity to other active uses, and with pedestrian access to local amenities**

Technical assistance services are reserved for downtown buildings of at least three stories, in which uses above the ground floor are currently assessed as commercial space. Both occupied and unoccupied downtown buildings are eligible for planning services under the program.

Participating communities should be prepared to share Geographic Information Service (GIS) shapefiles and assessor's data for the downtown study area at the time of application.

Application Process

In addition to filling out the application here, please submit the following documents to officeconversions@masshousing.com

1. Letter of support from Chief Administrative Officer
2. GIS shape files with tax assessment data at the parcel level
3. GIS shape files with building footprints

Applications are open until May 1, 2024 and MassHousing will process applications as they are received. Depending on the level of interest, MassHousing may reopen the application after processing the applications that are received by May 1, 2024.

Application

1. Municipality *

2. Name of Chief Administrative Official *

3. Application Contact *

4. Title of Application Contact *

5. Email Address of Application Contact *

6. Phone Number of Application Contact *

7. Name of GIS Contact Person, if available (GIS Coordinator, Planner, etc.)

8. Email Address of GIS Contact Person, if applicable

9. Phone Number of GIS Contact Person, if applicable

10. Does your municipality's downtown corridor have 3 or more commercial buildings with 3+ stories? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

11. Describe your municipality's downtown area and any commercial buildings located in the downtown area. *

12. Does your municipality work with any regional planning agency to compile GIS data? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not Sure

Documents

Please submit the following documents to officeconversions@masshousing.com

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3. GIS shape files with building footprints (if available)

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