



# Housing Framework for Equity and Growth: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Housing is complicated. How we afford to buy it, rent it, and develop it are different depending on how much we earn, how large our household is, and what our specific needs are. This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) guide aims to demystify housing in the District and the Housing Framework for Equity and Growth initiative. If you still have questions, that's okay! Email us at [housingdc@dc.gov](mailto:housingdc@dc.gov).

If you are looking for more information on housing programs and have immediate housing needs, head to our Resident Resources page ([link here](#)) and/or contact the Department of Human Services (DHS) at (202) 7093. If you have housing needs, please contact the Department of Housing and Community Development's Resource Center at (202)442-9505 or visit in person at 1800 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue SE. The DHCD Resource Center is open Monday-Friday from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm.

Check out the **glossary section** ([link here](#)) of this FAQ guide to learn more about these concepts.

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## What is the Housing Framework for Equity and Growth? What did the Mayor's Order do?

The Housing Framework for Equity and Growth is intended to accelerate housing production of affordable and market rate units by better understanding the needs, impediments, and forces driving the current housing market in Washington, DC. Increased housing production and preservation is required to address growth and ensure the District lives up to its values of being diverse and inclusive.

In her Second Inaugural Address, Mayor Bowser announced a bold challenge to address housing affordability across the city in the midst of a growing population and rising housing costs. The District must create 36,000 new residential units by 2025 with at least 12,000 new residential units being affordable to low-income households and an additional 7,200 affordable housing units preserved. In May 2019, Mayor Bowser further strengthened the District's commitment to tackling housing affordability in a Mayor's Order directing District agencies to identify new policies, tools, and initiatives to achieve the 2025 goal.

Fulfilling this ambitious vision requires the District to think differently about housing development. OP, DHCD and partner agencies will recommend area-specific housing goals to ensure that all residents can access and afford housing that meets their needs. This initiative will evaluate housing trends, needs, and capacity; identify housing production and pipeline patterns; establish needs and identify trends for production by income level, tenure, type, and affordable preservation.

## What is the Housing Equity Report?

Released in mid-October 2019, the [Housing Equity Report](#) provides goals for the equitable distribution of affordable housing in Washington, DC, supporting Mayor Muriel Bowser's vision for creating 36,000 new housing units by 2025. The report is the first in a series that will comprise the *Housing Framework for Equity and Growth* and sets bold goals for affordable housing production across the District's ten Planning Areas. Figure 6 from the report highlights those goals per Planning Area and highlights how much affordable housing is currently in the pipeline for each area.

**Figure 6. Current Affordable Housing Pipeline & 2025 Production Goals by Planning Area**

Planning Area	Affordable Housing Production Goals	Affordable Housing Pipeline	Shortage of Affordable Housing	2025 Total Housing Production Goals*
Rock Creek West	1,990	80	1,910	1,260
Capitol Hill	1,400	280	1,120	3,270
Near Northwest	1,250	270	980	1,850
Mid-City	1,010	620	390	4,210
Rock Creek East	1,500	1,160	340	1,580
Central Washington	1,040	750	290	3,940
Upper Northeast	1,350	1,160	190	6,900
Lower Anacostia Waterfront & Near Southwest	850	910	on track	7,960
Far Southeast & Southwest	1,120	1,450	on track	2,040
Far Northeast & Southeast	490	1,290	on track	2,990
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,000</b>	<b>7,970</b>	<b>5,220</b>	<b>36,000</b>

\*The total housing goals consist of net new market rate and affordable housing production. For Rock Creek West, the new affordable housing goals are greater than the total housing goals because the affordable housing goals include not only net new production, but also conversion of existing housing into subsidized housing and voucher recipients living in non-restricted housing. Reaching our goals will require a mix of these strategies, especially in Rock Creek West, where new housing has been extremely limited to date and where land use changes must be made to the Comprehensive Plan to reach these housing goals.

These goals are a first step toward achieving broader equity and access to opportunity and addressing the District's housing challenges. What this means is while certain areas will need to prioritize affordable housing production, others will need to focus on preserving existing dedicated and naturally-occurring affordable housing. Some areas will also need to expand job opportunities, enhance neighborhood amenities, and increase low- and moderate-income homeownership. Put simply, every Planning Area across the District will need to be examined for specific housing and neighborhood needs and the subsequent steps to address them.

You can read the full report on our website [here](#).

## What were the goals of the summer resident engagement?

We know that it will take the entire city and all of the District's residents to achieve our housing goals by 2025. We care about understanding resident's housing and neighborhood stories, concerns, and questions, and we want to ensure that our work is shaped by the feedback we receive from communities across the District. We know that housing, where it currently exists, and where it will be developed will impact generations of Washingtonians. It

is important to us that we captured residents' concerns and feedback for how they would prioritize the development of affordable housing.

We conducted outreach at 24 events across all Wards. We launched a resident survey where we asked community members for their feedback on the current distribution of affordable housing and what areas they would prioritize for future affordable housing. You can learn about the results of the survey on our website ([link here](#)). The summer 2019 outreach culminated in a citywide Community Conversation on Housing at Ron Brown College Preparatory High School on September 21, 2019. You can read more about the conversation and findings from that event on our website ([link here](#)).

Our community engagement over summer 2019, including the Community Conversation on Housing, was incorporated into the [Housing Equity Report](#), our report to Mayor Bowser on where we should prioritize affordable housing development.

## What comes next for this project? How will residents be involved moving forward?

The Housing Framework for Equity and Growth will be ongoing, and the Housing Equity Report is just the first of many steps toward achieving the Mayor's 2025 goals. The next steps will be to understand housing supply and demand through 2045. The study will examine opportunities for a more equitable distribution of affordable housing, analyze the nature and pace of new housing supply, and estimate how demand from existing and new households will change through 2045.

We will work to achieve the Mayor's 2025 housing goals by conducting a Housing Experience and Design Analysis and generating Opportunities and Recommendations based on our overall findings, including through continued community engagement.

### Housing Experience and Design Analysis

The next step in this initiative will examine factors affecting the District's housing market and system, including local market factors for supply and demand, land use and zoning capacity for new housing (including analysis of single family zoning and its effect on housing production), and regional and national drivers of housing. Performed on both a citywide and Planning Area basis, analyses will look into the experiences and needs of specific populations, such as older adults, families, and residents experiencing homelessness, as well as a range of household incomes, unit sizes, and design typologies for both rentals and homeownership.

### Opportunities and Recommendations

The final portion of the Housing Framework for Equity and Growth initiative will synthesize what we learned about opportunities and impediments and provide a roadmap for

strengthening approaches for producing both affordable and market-rate housing in each Planning Area. This roadmap will help us meet both citywide and neighborhood needs, including equitable share commitments. As part of this, we will recommend how the District can focus resources, enhance existing policies, tools, and programs, and develop new ways to support housing production, preservation, and public housing.

## How can I stay informed and involved in this effort?

We have and will continue to work with residents across the District to help us work through our district-wide analysis. You can learn more about our progress on our website ([housing.dc.gov](http://housing.dc.gov)) and you can also:

- Sign-up for our newsletter: <https://tinyurl.com/newsletteropindc>
- Follow us on social media: <https://twitter.com/OPinDC/>
- Write us an email: [housingdc@dc.gov](mailto:housingdc@dc.gov)

## What is displacement?

Displacement is an issue that many residents and policymakers are concerned about and is a critical challenge when attempting to achieve an equitable city. But it is also not a clearly defined term. It often relates to observation of neighborhood change at a high level, as well as situations in which a household is forced to move from their residence at the individual level. For purposes of clarifying processes and use for the Comprehensive Plan, there are three forms of displacement: physical displacement as households must move when the properties they occupy are redeveloped; economic displacement as housing cost increases in the neighborhood force the household to find other housing options; and cultural displacement as residents lose a sense of belonging or shared identity in their neighborhood due to neighborhood change or growth. While these may relate, they each have different planning responses.

## How does displacement affect Washington, DC?

The loss of naturally occurring affordable housing units along with the decline of lower income, primarily black, households discussed in the Framework Element indicate Washington, DC has experienced significant displacement in many neighborhoods and across the city. National-level studies suggest that, by some measures, the District is the US city most impacted by both the increasing demand for housing from higher-income households and the decline in the number of lower income households.

Between 2006 and 2017, Washington, DC experienced a decline of more than 15,600 households earning between 30 and 80 percent of the MFI; 9,250 households were homeowners and 6,350 were rental households. Capitol Hill and other NE neighborhoods experienced the greatest decline with a decrease of 5,950 households earning between 30 and 80 percent of the MFI. During this time the data suggests there was a modest increase of

extremely low-income households citywide; most moved East of the River and to Upper NW/NE where many have ended up paying more than 50 percent of their income on housing.

## What has the District government been doing for affordable housing?

We know that the cost of housing is impacting everyone in the District, regardless of household income. The District is taking a renewed focus on housing to make sure all Washingtonians can live in the District.

The District has long been committed to advancing fair, safe, and affordable housing. There are a wide range of existing programs and policies supporting the production of and access to affordable housing including the Housing Production Trust Fund, Inclusionary Zoning, District Opportunity to Purchase Act (DOPA), the Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act (TOPA), and more. You can find more detailed information on these programs and more at our Resident Resources page on our website ([link here](#)).

## What is Affordable Housing and Affordable to Whom?

Affordable housing is defined as housing that is restricted for households meeting specific income limits based on Median Family Income (MFI). Different affordable housing programs are used to meet varying household income limits.

The benchmarked incomes for the Washington Metropolitan Area in 2019 are shown in Table 1. Most programs target income at or below 60 percent of the MFI, while a few programs target up to 80 percent of the MFI. The cost of affordable housing is limited to 30 percent of the targeted household's income limit (which varies according to the number of people in the household assumed to be living in a unit). The cost is maintained below market rate using restrictive deeds and covenants, and is supported by grants, mortgage subsidies, vouchers, or tax credits. In 2019, the MFI for a family of four was \$121,300, which is one of the highest in the country.

Table 1: Maximum Annual Income as of June 28, 2019

Household Size	30% of MFI	50% of MFI	60% of MFI	80% of MFI	100% of MFI	120% of MFI
1	\$ 25,450	\$ 42,450	\$ 50,950	\$ 67,950	\$ 84,900	\$101,900
2	\$ 29,100	\$ 48,500	\$ 58,200	\$ 77,650	\$ 97,050	\$116,450
3	\$ 32,750	\$ 54,600	\$ 65,500	\$ 87,350	\$109,150	\$131,000
4	\$ 36,400	\$ 60,650	\$ 72,800	\$ 97,050	\$121,300	\$145,550
5	\$ 40,050	\$ 66,700	\$ 80,050	\$106,750	\$133,450	\$160,100
6	\$ 43,650	\$ 72,800	\$ 87,350	\$116,450	\$145,550	\$174,650
7	\$ 47,300	\$ 78,850	\$ 94,600	\$126,150	\$157,700	\$189,250
8	\$ 50,950	\$ 84,900	\$101,900	\$135,800	\$169,800	\$203,800

Source: DHCD 2019 Maximum Income, Rent and Purchase Price Schedule; June 28, 2019

How does housing affordability compare? Housing affordability is a broad measure of whether housing is affordable to a range of households and the extent to which they spend less than 30 percent of their income on housing costs. An important part of affordability are neighborhood assets and transportation options that allow households to reduce related housing costs.

## Why Doesn't DC Use a Local MFI Instead of the Metropolitan Area's?

Affordable housing often requires multiple sources of federal and local subsidies. District programs utilizing federal funding use the metropolitan area's MFI to leverage these funds. However, the District's programs such as the Housing Production Trust Fund (HPTF) use an income spectrum and household housing cost burden to provide housing assistance. As an example, the HPTF is required to target 80 percent of the funds evenly to households earning less than 30 and 50 percent of the MFI.



## How does this analysis connect with the Comprehensive Plan?

The Housing Framework for Equity and Growth initiative is being undertaken while the Council considers the Framework Element of the Comprehensive Plan. OP is planning to report back and engage the public around the high-level values it has developed from the numerous proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan is a high-level policy document intended to provide long-range guidance for land use and housing (among other topic areas) in the District. In the current amendment cycle, the Comprehensive Plan will include new policy guidance to support Mayor Bowser's call to action. The Housing Framework for Equity and Growth analysis will look to implement the Comprehensive Plan's broad policy guidance to encourage increased housing production in the near- and mid-term throughout the District.

It is expected that the Housing Framework for Equity and Growth and the current Comprehensive Plan Amendment process will proceed in parallel and use common data sets and growth assumptions. It is intended that the Housing Framework for Equity and Growth recommendations and reports will:

- Support the Comp Plan's broad housing production policies and actions,
- Support the Comp Plan's land use policies and maps, and
- Be the vehicle in which OP will present new policies to accelerate and promote housing affordability and production in the District.

While the results from the Housing Framework for Equity and Growth is separate and therefore not on the same schedule, it will still serve as a guide for evaluating the remaining 24 elements and 2 maps, which was released for public review in mid-October 2019; you can read more about the Comprehensive Plan on our Office of Planning website ([link here](#)). Once completed, the Housing Framework for Equity and Growth analysis may serve as an input into the next Comprehensive Plan Rewrite process, anticipated for some time after 2025.

## What about housing affordability across the region?

Although there is much that Washington, DC can and must do on its own to address its housing needs, the city's housing market does not exist in isolation. Consequently, the District's efforts to meet the housing needs for existing and future residents must leverage regional and national resources. The demand for more housing is regional in nature and based on regional job growth.

Based on projections from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, DC and surrounding jurisdictions will require a minimum of 240,000 net new housing units by 2025. If other jurisdictions produce insufficient levels of housing and affordable housing or refuse to





acknowledge the shared responsibility to accommodate growth, cost pressures will impact District resources and residents and disadvantage low-income residents.

Mayor Bowser called for the creation of 240,000 net new housing units by 2025. We are continuing to work with our regional partners to make sure there is a shared responsibility.

Interested in learning more about the effort? Here is a bit more background on the Mayor's Order and current housing conditions in the District. Still want more? Check out [dhcd.dc.gov](https://dhcd.dc.gov) and [planning.dc.gov](https://planning.dc.gov) for more information on housing programs, the comprehensive plan, and more.

## Glossary of Terms

We want to make sure we're all using the same language. Below are some of the common terms used when describing housing in the District.

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**Affordable Housing:** Is broadly considered when a household pays 30% or less of their gross income towards mortgage or rent

**Area Median Income (AMI):** Also known as MFI (see above). AMI is calculated based on the median household income of each metropolitan statistical area (MSA) adjusted for family size

**Extremely Low-Income:** Are considered households earning less than 30% of the areawide median income and include individuals experiencing homelessness and families in need of permanent shelter

**High-Opportunity Areas:** Neighborhoods that provide access to amenities and community attributes and which provide opportunities for upward economic mobility

**Housing Affordability:** More generally refers to a household's ability or lack thereof to reasonably meet the cost of housing; national standards for affordability are that households pay no more than 30% of their income on housing costs

**Housing Cost Burdened:** Households spending 30% or more of their income on housing costs

**Low-Income:** Are considered households earning less than 80% of the areawide median income

**Market-Rate Housing:** Housing with rents or sale prices that charge based on market conditions, including increased demand

**Median Family Income (MFI):** The median income is based on the distribution of the total number of households and families including those with no income. It is annually calculated by The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and is published annually to determine applicants for housing assistance programs

**Mixed-Income Housing:** consists of housing units with varying levels of affordability

**Moderate-Income:** Are considered households earning less than 120% of the areawide median income

**Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing:** Unsubsidized housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income households

**Preservation:** Supporting housing units currently deemed affordable to remain dedicated to affordable households

**Public Housing:** Rental or owned housing which primarily serves extremely low-income households and is operated by local housing authorities

**Purchasing Power:** 25% of gross monthly income toward principle and interest on a 30-year mortgage at the average interest rate for that year, plus a 10% down payment

**Severely Housing Cost Burdened:** Households spending 50% or more of their income on housing costs

**Very-Low Income:** Are considered households earning less than 50% of the areawide median income

**Work Force Housing:** Housing that is affordable to households earning 60 to 120% of the MFI