

2002 HOUSING TAX CREDIT DESIGN STANDARDS

Introduction

The formula for a state's allocation of Housing Tax Credits has not been changed since the program's inception in 1986. As a result, there has been significant erosion in the value of the tax credit allocation because of inflation in construction and rising land costs which have resulted in a steady reduction in the number of housing tax credit units that can be produced annually. In order to attempt to leverage housing tax credits and other public, private, and philanthropic funds into more quality, durable, affordable rental housing units, the Agency is altering its housing tax credit design standards. We encourage developers, architects, contractors, and local building and zoning officials to utilize their creative and technical talents to develop family friendly housing and site plans that will help contain the costs of the production of this much needed affordable housing.

General

- Design must comply with all applicable codes, rules and regulations, including the Agency's Accessibility Standard and the State Building Codes, whether the development is within the State Building Codes' jurisdiction or not.
- Family housing, general occupancy, and elderly housing may be included.
- For the tax credit development seeking a mortgage and/or gap financing, the design review will be conducted in conjunction with the underwriting process and will be subject to a higher degree of design refinement. Consult with your Housing Development Officer at the Agency for the extent of the design requirement.
- Any design features outside the requirement may not warrant compliance with the design standards. When there is an unclear portion in the standards, please consult the Agency tax credit program administrator for clarification.

MHFA Accessibility Standard

On June 25, 1998, the following revised accessibility policy was adopted by the Agency:

1. This revision applies to all new construction multifamily developments with four or more dwelling units financed by the Agency and for all housing tax credit developments where the tax credits are secured by the Agency allocation. This excludes the tax credit developments where the tax credits are wholly provided by suballocators in the State, and the Agency is not providing financing.
2. When there are other applicable accessibility regulations/codes and there is different requirement, the most stringent must be complied with, and all the applicable regulations/codes, including this MHFA Accessibility Requirement, must be complied with.

3. A minimum of 3 percent of the total units (with its fraction rounded up) in the development, but not less than the State Building Code provisions, must be designed and constructed to meet the accessibility requirements of the State Building Code. This 3 percent requirement applies to two story townhouses as well as other types of housing.

4. An accessible unit is defined as having either;

For two-story townhouses:

At least two bedrooms on grade level along with the entrance, kitchen, living room, and a full or ¾ bathroom, or

The entire unit on grade level as a one-story unit.

For multi-story apartment building:

The unit must be on a floor with an approved accessible route, either on grade or involving elevator/s. If such unit is a multi-level unit, at least two bedrooms along with the entrance, kitchen, living room, and a full or ¾ bathroom must be provided on an accessible floor, if not all the floors are accessible.

5. When a given development has federal funding included in the development cost, the developers are required to provide compliance with the applicable federal accessibility requirements. Such compliance is entirely the developer’s responsibility.

Tax Credit Housing Design Parameters

To Qualify the Selection Priorities

Item 1. Large Family Housing for 10 points

All items of the following must be complied with before scoring 10 points for your development.

1. Comply with items 1, 2, and 3 of **Site Design** section below.
2. Comply with all the items in **Building Design** section below.
3. Comply with items 1, and 2 of **Unit Design** section below.

Site Design

1. Unless there is a public park with play equipment within 1,000 feet of the development (measured from the closest property line to the public park as a straight line distance, and not travel distance), provide a play lot with play equipment for children on the property to qualify for family housing design points as follows. The size of the play lot must be provided in proportion to the child population of the development. The child population for each unit is computed as the following:

Unit Type	Number of Children in Unit
Efficiency	0
One-Bedroom	0
Two-Bedroom	1.5
Three-Bedroom	3
Four-Bedroom	4.5
(Each additional bedroom)	(1.5 children per bedroom)

Based on the types of the units and the number of units in the development, the total development child population can be computed, and the size of the play lot should be determined as follows:

The minimum size of the play lot must be 24'0"x24'0". This is good for up to one hundred children in the development. Add four square foot of additional lot area per each additional child above one hundred children. The entire area must be filled with natural or synthetic protective materials, and equipped with reasonable play equipment for the size of the lot. The perimeter should be designed to keep the play lot material from spilling, such as curb, and/or sidewalk to comply with the accessibility requirement.

The play lot does not have to be square, and as long as the minimum play lot area is complied with, it may be multiple play lots to best serve the development's particular needs.

When there are non-tax credit units in the development, the child population must include all units of the development to arrive at the play lot size for the development.

The play lot sized in the above method is the minimum size required for qualifying for the family housing design points. Without reasonable play equipment, the family housing points are not awarded even with the qualifying play lots.

2. Sidewalk, either concrete or asphalt, is required to provide for accessibility, complying with the requirements of the State Building Code.
3. On-site parking must be provided in conformance with the applicable zoning requirements.
4. Developments with three-story and higher buildings must provide a truck parking space near the main entrance or an entrance with nearest to an elevator for the move-in and move-out activity.
5. Unless dictated by the zoning regulation, attached garages are not required.
6. Central laundry rooms are recommended. Provide appliances in the following ratio: one washer and one dryer for each twelve units.
7. When the development includes non-tax credit units, laundry appliance hook-ups in each unit are allowed.

Building Design

1. Buildings up to three stories* need not have an elevator to qualify for the family housing design points. The first floor must be on grade and accessible by the physically disabled.
2. Buildings from four stories to five stories high need at least one passenger elevator capable of carrying a minimum of 12 passengers. The distance between the elevator and the farthest unit may not be more than 120 feet. The floor on grade must be accessible by the physically disabled.
3. Buildings from six stories to eight stories high must have at least two passenger elevators, each capable of carrying a minimum of 12 passengers. The distance between the elevator and the farthest unit may not be more than 120 feet. The floor on grade must be accessible by the physically disabled.
4. Developers with proposals of buildings nine stories and higher should consult with the MHFA Tax Credit Administrator for specific requirements for family housing design points.
5. The presence of other occupancies in the building such as commercial, administrative, parking, etc. may not increase the allowed maximum height of the building for the family housing occupancy.

*The terms, 'story,' 'first story,' and 'grade' are used in this section, *Building Design*, to mean as they are defined in the Uniform Building Code, 1997 Edition, which reads:

“**STORY** is that portion of a building included between the upper surface of any floor and the upper surface of the floor next above, except that the topmost story shall be that portion of a building included between the upper surface of the topmost floor and the ceiling or roof above. If the finished floor level directly above a usable or unused under-floor space is more than 6 feet (1829 mm) above grade, as defined herein, for more than 50 percent of the total perimeter or is more than 12 feet (3658 mm) above grade, as defined herein, at any point, such usable or unused under-floor space shall be considered as a story.

“**STORY, FIRST**, is the lowest story in a building that qualifies as a story, as defined herein, except that a floor level in a building having only one floor level shall be classified as a first story, provided such floor level is not more than 4 feet (1219 mm) below grade, as defined herein, for more than 50 percent of the total perimeter, or not more than 8 feet (2439 mm) below grade, as defined herein, at any point.

“**GRADE (Adjacent Ground Elevation)** is the lowest point of elevation of the finished surface of the ground, paving or sidewalk within the area between the building and the property line or, when the property line is more than 5 feet (1524 mm) from the building, between the building and a line 5 feet (1524 mm) from the building.

Unit Design

1. Three-bedroom and larger units must have a kitchen designed with eat-in counter at the standard counter height, with a minimum frontage of 48", or provide space to accommodate a freestanding table and four chairs within the kitchen.
 - In two-story units when the units are three-bedroom and larger, provide a half bath with a water closet and a lavatory (sink) on the same floor with the living room.
 - In one-floor units when the units are three-bedroom and larger, provide an additional lavatory with mirror, in addition to the main bathroom. This lavatory space should not restrict the access to the main bathroom.
2. For new construction, the following minimum dimensions apply. For the living room, 11'6"; the dining area/room, 10'0"x8'6"; and the bedroom, 9'6" and 100 square-feet. The dining space should be provided appropriately sized for the intended household size. This dining space may be contiguous with, but must be in addition to, and distinct from the designated minimum living or kitchen spaces. The minimum kitchen countertop work area shall be 6'0" along the frontage for the one and two bedroom units and 7'0" for the larger units.

Rehabilitation Design Standard

1. Minimum room sizes specified under New Construction apply, and when the situation limits compliance, a variance is allowed up to a 10 percent reduction without having to obtain the Agency's approval. Any situation requiring more than a 10 percent reduction, requires a written variance from the MHFA.
2. Grand-fathered, or existing non-code complying, conditions may be allowed, unless they endanger residents' life and safety, as far as the local building authority allows such condition.
3. Some of the requirements listed under the New Construction Family Housing may be relaxed, provided a reasonable cause is presented. A written variance must be obtained from the MHFA.

Materials Selection Recommendations

For the long-term viability of housing provided through the use of tax credits, we would like to emphasize the following important points.

1. Be conscious of the lasting impact of the materials selected within your proposal. The materials selected should ideally serve the longest reasonably expected term. This is to minimize the unnecessary upkeep and replacements, which frequently reduce development equity.
2. Minimize the impact the development might have on the surroundings. Particularly the negative ones. Minimize the pavement areas, building footprints, and increase green open spaces.

3. Consider the sustainability, or green building concept, when selecting the building materials.
4. Strive to reduce the waste of construction materials.

With these points in mind we have made a list of what we consider ‘good materials choice’ and recommend them highly for your consideration. Any material not listed in this list, when deemed to have merit, may be allowed. Please contact the tax credit staff at the MHFA for their opinion and experience.

All manufactured building materials must be installed in accordance with the manufacturer’s recommendations.

Exterior Envelope

- Roofing
 - Shingle Roofing
 - 235 lb. seal tab type over 15 lb. felt, with a minimum of 25-year product warranty.
 - Ice dam shield must be provided with one layer of 40 lb. roll roofing, or 40-mil self adhering modified bitumen membrane, extending from eave to 4’0” past face of exterior wall.
 - Galvanized iron valley and flashing, 24-gauge minimum.
 - Built up roofing, 4-ply
 - Membrane roofing, 60-mil EPDM
 - Rubber membrane roofing, allowed only with a 20-year warranty.
- Prefinished galvanized iron parapet cap flashing
- Prefinished soffits with ventilation
- Exterior Siding
 - Vinyl siding with 42-mil minimum thickness
 - Steel siding
 - Masonry – face brick, brick panels, architectural CMU
 - Fiber cement board siding
 - Stucco on metal lath
 - Architectural precast concrete panels
- Air infiltration barrier
 - On all areas of the exterior wall, provide an air infiltration barrier including the attached garage walls.
- Window
 - Vinyl windows approved by the MHFA*:
 - A. Gerkin Windows
 - B. Hayfield Windows
 - C. Lindsay Windows

- D. Silver Line Windows (1000,1100, 2500, 2800, 2900, 2950, 3550, 3650, 3700, 4100, 8700)
- E. Simonton Windows (5500 Series)
- F. Thermal Line Windows
- G. Thermo-Tech Windows
- H. Weather Shield Windows (Vision 2000)
- I. Windsor Windows (Next Dimension)

Note:

Test size is a critical factor in determining compliance with Agency's window performance specification (MHFA 08630-01). If the size of window product selected for a particular development exceeds the AAMA/NWEDA Residential Gateway test size used in determining compliance with the Agency's specification, a larger specimen size must be tested for compliance. It is the responsibility of the Owner or Owner's designated Agent to verify that all windows used on a particular project meet the Agency's requirements.

*For the up-to-date listings of the Agency approved windows, visit MHFA web site: www.mhfa.state.mn.us.

- Aluminum windows – having the same thermal and infiltration performance standards as the MHFA's approved vinyl windows.
- Clad windows – having the same thermal and infiltration performance standards as the MHFA's approved vinyl windows.
- Door
 - Overhead doors – embossed steel panel doors without insulation.

Interior Finishes and Materials

- Flooring
 - Carpet
 - Within the dwelling unit
 - 26 oz. minimum, 100% nylon, continuous filament type
 - Other type recommended include Berber type with blended fiber
 - Within shared or public area
 - 30 oz. minimum, 100% nylon, continuous filament type
 - Resilient Flooring
 - Vinyl tiles of 1/8" vinyl composition tile, color and pattern full thickness.
 - Sheet vinyl over wood product underlayment for bathrooms.
 - Ceramic tiles
 - Terrazzo
- Painting
 - One primer and two finish coats.
 - Interior drywall must have washable finish of two-coat application.
- Kitchen and vanity cabinets

- Cabinets with hardwood frames, hardwood veneer panels, with plywood, hardwood or plastic laminate on particleboard doors and drawers.
- Window sills
 - Cultured marble
 - Plastic laminate
 - Hardwood