

1999 - 2000
HOUSING TAX CREDIT PROGRAM
DEVELOPMENT FEATURES

To be responsive to the larger picture of this program's impact on the state's housing arena, the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) has simplified the design requirement this year by modifying a few issues in the basic design requirement and completely eliminating the self-scoring portion of the application. In Addition, the MHFA's Board approved a policy change on the accessibility requirements for MHFA developments and developments with MHFA allocated tax credit.

Design Pointers are also included in this year's packet due to the many favorable responses to it. The Design Pointers are intended to provide information to further clarify the MHFA's design objectives. For that matter, Design Pointers are not requirements, but are meant to provide clear guidance for design professionals. MHFA encourages creative and innovative solutions in housing design and construction whenever possible.

When applying for a tax credit allocation, please remember to use the 1999 version of design requirements. This way you will benefit from the simplified design requirements.

The award of tax credits is based on information provided in the application and the plans submitted with the application. Until the property is placed in service, any change in the design, construction method or use of material must be submitted in writing to the Agency for review and approval.

To further streamline the design review process, we have established the following guidelines:

1) Categories A and B will be reviewed on the same level of design requirement, not one less than the other, and;

2) Category C and developments with tax credits alone (without additional MHFA funding) will be offered one (1) hour of an MHFA staff architect's design consultation. This one hour consultation is not a requirement, but a public service on the Agency's part in the spirit of its Mission Statement. The parameters of the consultation is not to increase the cost necessarily, but to advise on the design improvement, tapping into our staff's extensive experience in housing development design. The categories remain the same, as follows:

Category A:

Housing developments receiving the MHFA's investment in terms of mortgage, mainly New Construction Tax Credit (NCTC) or Low and Moderate Income Rental (LMIR) Programs.

Category B:

Housing developments receiving funds/grants administered by MHFA, such as the Family Housing Fund, Greater Minnesota Housing Fund, etc., in excess of \$200,000 and/or 20% or more of the Total Development Cost (TDC).

Category C:

Housing developments receiving a smaller amount of funds/grants than Category B.

For the detailed review requirement, please contact the MHFA as soon as you are notified of award/selection.

We strongly discourage applications from areas with no municipal water and sewer, and applications utilizing liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) as a permanent source of fuel.

MHFA has learned that once the design is completed, some of the architects are not retained to oversee the construction. The construction administration is a very important part of the program and MHFA strongly suggests that the design architect be retained for construction administration. Please inform MHFA staff if this situation arises.

The revised policy on Accessibility Requirement is presented at the end of this Design Requirements section and before the Design Pointers section.

MHFA Housing Tax Credit Design Requirement -- 1999 - 2000

I. Design Requirements for New Construction and Rehabilitation of Existing Structure*

*All applications must meet the Basic Design Requirements below. In addition to meeting the Basic Design Requirements, all family developments must meet the *Additional Requirements for Family Developments* and all elderly developments must meet the *Additional Requirements for Elderly Developments* as separately listed below.

A. Basic Design Requirements (For Both Family and Elderly Developments)

- *For the following items, minimal variation is permissible for rehabilitation developments. The variation must be approved by the Agency in writing.*
 1. Design must comply with all applicable codes, rules and regulations including but not limited to zoning, building and energy codes, accessibility and other local, state and federal requirements. Those developments for cities and municipalities that have not adopted the State Building Codes must design and build the development to comply with the current edition of the State Building Code.
 2. All habitable rooms including the kitchen must have natural light in the form of a window. The kitchen should be designed to permit natural light as close as possible if it is not directly provided in the kitchen.
 3. Bedrooms must contain a minimum of 100 square feet in area excluding any closet space, with a minimum dimension of 9'6".
A living room's least dimension must be 11'6".
 4. The kitchen in three-bedroom or larger units should have countertop, excluding appliances, with a minimum, cumulative length of 7'0". In smaller units it should not be less than 6'0". The length must be measured on the front, facing the user. For "islands" only the length will count.
 5. All units with either attached garages or individual combustion appliances such as furnace, domestic hot water heater, stove and oven must be provided with a hard-wired carbon monoxide detector.
 6. There must be a minimum slope of 6" in the first 10'0" around all buildings to accommodate site drainage.
 7. Vehicular access to the main building entrance and provision for the move-in and move-out process, conveniently relating to the building entrances, must be provided. This requirement does not apply to townhouses, quads, and one-story units, having direct accesses to each unit. The maximum distance from such access to the unit, or building entrance is 50'0".

8. On site parking (paved either with bituminous or cement concrete) must be provided, along with concrete curb and gutter for the driveways. This is subject to the area zoning requirement.
9. Concrete or bituminous sidewalk is required to parking, each unit entry, and to major amenities, including play areas on site. This sidewalk must be accessible by the mobility impaired.

B. Additional Requirements for Family Developments*

- Please note that this set of requirements may be forgiven for rehabilitation developments, only when the development does not seek *family housing points* (as defined in Section 7.E.1).
- *For the following items, minimal variation is permissible for rehabilitation developments. The variation must be approved by the Agency in writing.*

1. 14 DU/acre maximum for two-story townhouses, two-story quads, and two-story back-to-back townhouses. The dwelling unit is a townhouse when the two opposing sides of the unit are exterior walls; the unit is a quad unit, when the two adjoining walls are exterior walls; and the unit is a back-to-back townhouse unit, when there is only one exterior wall to the unit.
16 DU/acre maximum for walkups.

NOTE: Include only the usable land in the density computation. Wetlands and unusable physical conditions must not be included in the area for the density computation. This requirement applies to both new construction and rehabilitation.

2. Developments providing 75% or more units with an individual entrance at grade and having about one half of the unit's floor area on grade in a two-story structure may earn "Design Feature" points in the program portion of the "Self Scoring Worksheet". Refer to the "Selection Priorities" section VII.F.7. of the manual for additional requirements.
3. Three-bedroom and larger dwelling units may not be placed higher than the second floor of the building, when the building entrance is on the first floor level. This does not mean to limit the total building height. For example, and example only, as long as such larger family units are on the grade (with required parking and pedestrian access to public ways) or within one story up or down (not basement), this requirement is satisfied. For further illustration, consider a building on a slope with two different levels of grade. When both grades serve building entrances on different floors (both with required parking and pedestrian access to public ways), the total number of floors that can accommodate such larger units may be more than two.
4. Three-bedroom and larger units must have a minimum of one and one-half baths, and the main bathroom must be compartmentalized for simultaneous, multiple use. Or, if the compartmentalization is not desired, provide at least one

and three-quarter bathrooms (one full bathroom and one 3/4 bathroom with a shower) within the unit, or provide one additional vanity, complete with a sink in a base cabinet and a mirror, in addition to the main and half bathrooms. When the bathroom is compartmentalized, the wall opening to the vanity room from the hallway must not have a door.

5. 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 arrange free-standing table and four chairs within the kitchen.
6. Play area(s), sized and equipped for the child population of the development, but not less than 30'0"x30'0", must be provided. Play areas, whenever possible, are to be placed in the center of the development and at a location where the children do not have to cross driveways. Consider separate play areas for tots and teens.
7. Garages may be either attached to or detached from the dwelling unit.
8. Walk-ups are required to provide a community room with a small kitchen and a unisex bathroom.
9. If clothes washers and dryers are not located in each unit, a central laundry facility must be provided in proportion to the number of families on site.

C. Additional Requirements for Elderly Developments

- *For the following items, minimal variation is permissible for rehabilitation developments. The variation must be approved by the Agency in writing.*
 1. The site design must reflect utmost concern for the residents' security, safety, convenience, market sensitivity, and ease of maintenance and daily operations.
 2. Include a tub room if the units are provided with showers only. Also include a craft/activity room.
 3. Provide on each floor a trash chute and an untreated cold water faucet if the building is supplied with softened water. This is applicable for structures higher than one story.
 4. Provide a lobby including mailboxes, elevators and an office. The elevator requirement is applicable for structures higher than one story.
 5. Provide a vestibule with a security system call panel, seating with a view to the pick-up/drop-off area. This is applicable for structures higher than one story.
 6. Slope in parking areas must be a minimum of 1% and maximum of 5%. This requirement applies to new construction only.

7. Provide site lighting and particularly ample lighting at building entrance areas and along the sidewalks.
8. Walk-ups are not allowed for elderly developments. Elevators must be provided in structures higher than one story.

Revised MHFA Policy on **Accessibility Requirements**

At the June 25, 1998, Agency Board meeting, a revised accessibility policy was adopted for the Agency as follows:

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 sub-allocators in the state.
2. A minimum of 3% 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% requirement applies to the two-story townhouses as well as other types of housing.
3. An accessible unit is defined as having either ;
 - (1) at least two bedrooms on grade level along with the entrance, kitchen, living room, and a full or 3/4 bath, or
 - (2) the entire unit on grade level as a one-story unit.
4. 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.
5. This revised policy takes full effect beginning with developments selected at the 1998 Second Round Super RFP and First Mortgage Developments (Fall Selection), and until the Board revises the requirement.

II. Design Pointers for New Construction and Rehabilitation of Existing Structure

A. Family Housing Design

We look for developments with the following design qualities:

1. Site Plan
 - The building footprint is kept to a minimum to optimize the amount of open space. Minimize the pavement area to create an ecologically sound environment.

- Vehicular and pedestrian circulation are reasonably separated, with a particular emphasis on the avoidance of children having to cross vehicular traffic to reach a play area.
- Pre-existing site amenities are capitalized to the maximum degree possible, preserving views, vegetation, sun-orientation, etc.
- Generally two parking spaces and not to exceed two and one half spaces per unit are provided, including garages.
- Site surveillance is very important to housing developments for the security of the residents. Place buildings and objects on the site with the ease of such surveillance in mind. Additional care must be provided for the townhouse design with attached garages by designing the unit in such a way that the resident can view the driveway from a habitable room on the ground level.
- The site plan fits into the larger context of the community's vitality and historic values.

2. Unit Plan

- The Agency encourages unit designs that provide for family interaction. Eat-in kitchens and adequate dining areas/rooms, (forming sufficiently sized "great rooms"), to accommodate the size of the family expected to reside in the unit, are encouraged.

These activity areas/rooms should be provided with plenty of natural light and views into the immediate outdoor spaces to supervise children's play and neighborhood surveillance.

- If the dining room/space is separated from the kitchen, a snack accommodation within the kitchen, be it a space large enough to set up a table and chairs or an extended counter top with chairs/stools, should be provided to qualify as an eat-in kitchen. The emphasis is on easy and efficient operation for food preparation, serving and cleaning thereafter. Please note that the minimum eat-in counter length at the front is 4'0".

B. Elderly Housing Design

We look for developments with the following design qualities:

1. Site Plan

- Both for sidewalk and driveway, slope should be kept to a minimum.
- Focus on security for the residents. Make all areas of the site visible, well lit, and landscaped specifically for easy and safe operations of daily activities.
- Site surveillance is very important to housing developments for the security of the residents. Place buildings and objects on the site with the ease of such surveillance

in mind. Additional care must be provided for the townhouse design with attached garages by designing the unit in such a way that the resident can view the driveway from a habitable room on the ground level.

- Provide protection from the elements at entries.
- Provide vehicular pick-up/drop-off areas near building entrances. Also, provide waiting area within the building from which you can see approaching vehicles.

2. Building Design

- Provide activity room and/or craft/card-playing room with a good outdoor view and plenty of daylight.
- Cold tap water, which has not been softened, should be provided on each floor.
- Provide a tubroom, if the units are provided only with showers.
- Include all the aging-assisting building features: well-lit public spaces, hand-rails in corridors where appropriate, ramps rather than steps, clearly and boldly marked signs, etc.