

Development Quality Standards for Three-Bedroom Affordable Dwelling Units Policy

Effective Date: June 1, 2023

Policy Statement

Per Somerville's Zoning Ordinance, the Housing Director has the authority to establish quality standards for three-bedroom Affordable Dwelling Units (ADUs). Quality standards established by the Housing Director will be utilized by the review boards as a condition of discretionary or administrative permits. In working to establish quality standards, a document review was performed using relevant community development agencies as a guide for establishing this policy.

Policy

Per Section 12.1.7 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, residential developments with thirty (30) or more units are required to provide 20% of the obligated ADUs as three-bedroom units. The following quality standards apply to all three-bedroom ADUs:

New Construction

Target Unit Size

Three-bedroom ADUs should be a minimum of 1,000 square feet. Unit square footage is measured from the inside face of the units' bounding walls and includes usable storage space, stairwells, and hallways inside the unit, as well as space occupied by interior walls within the unit. Fifty percent of the area under sloped ceilings with greater than 5'-0" clearance and less than 7'-6" clearance should be included in the unit square footage.

These square footages represent target sizes, units much smaller than these targets will be questioned in terms of livability.

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Unit Layout Best Practices

Example Three-Bedroom Unit Layout

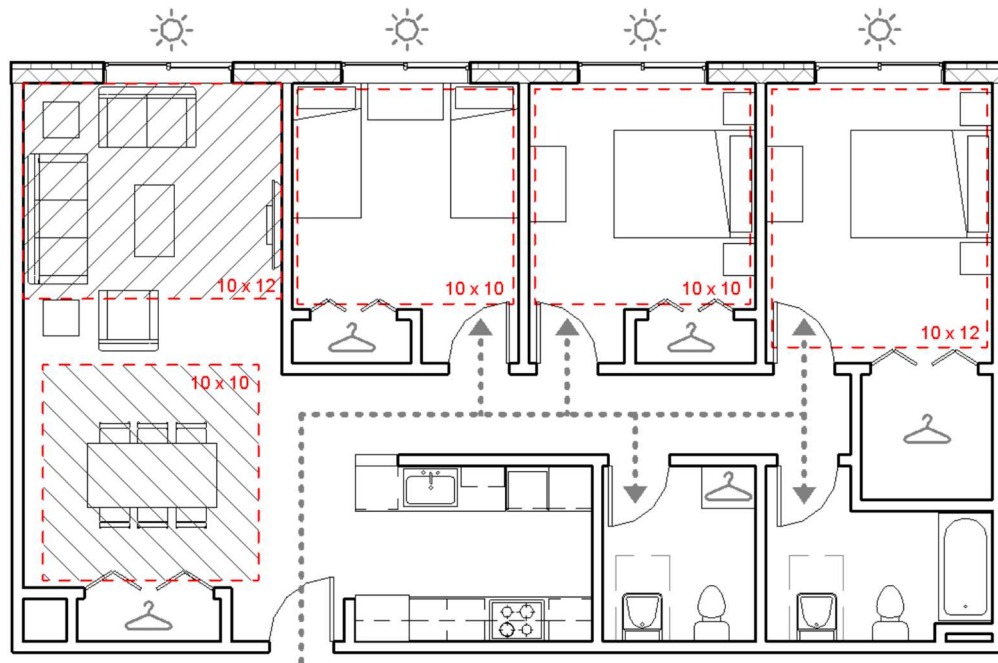


Figure 1 Typical three-bedroom unit. Image is courtesy of DHCD's Massachusetts Multifamily New Construction Design Requirements.

- Three-bedroom units should have larger common living spaces than the one- and two-bedroom units in the same building.
- Circulation spaces should be designed efficiently and kept to a minimum and access to bedrooms and bathrooms should only be from circulation spaces.
- Bedrooms and living/dining areas must have direct access to natural light. Kitchens should also have direct access to natural light where possible, but, if necessary, can receive indirect natural light. Bathrooms and closets/mech. spaces are the best elements to locate farthest from natural light.
- Layout of buildings and units should optimize the use of space, provide spacious, furnishable main living areas, and provide adequate storage. Project Architects and Developers must provide furniture plans and demonstrate compliance with general principles for efficient layout of furniture commensurate with the probable number of occupants.

Unit Dimensional & Use Requirements

Bedrooms

All Bedrooms

- 100 square feet minimum with no obstructions

Bedroom Closets

- 2' x 4' clear dimension minimum (8 square feet minimum)

- Closet shelving shall allow for a full bearing shelf or similar with integral clothes rod.
- Clothes closet in each bedroom shall be provided. Bedroom closets shall not be dual purposed to meet other storage requirements.
- Walk in Closets are to have lighting.

Common Use Areas

Living Room

- 150 square feet minimum

Dining Room

- 10' x 10' clear dimension minimum (100 square feet minimum)
- Accommodates an 8-person table in three- bedroom

Common Use Area Closets

- An entry closet shall be provided and be six square feet minimum
- A linen closet shall be provided and be four square feet minimum

Application of Common Use Areas requirements

- The total living and dining square footage must exceed 200 square feet and maintain a 12' clear width. In the Living room specifically, there must exist an exterior wall with access to natural light. Obstructions such as HVAC may obtrude into the living area required as long as a functional furniture layout can be maintained.

Kitchens

- Provide 18" (15" minimum cabinet size) to 24" minimum linear counter space on both sides of the range and sink. Lazy Susan's are required in all corner base cabinets.
- Provide under-cabinet lighting for increased visibility on kitchen work area.
- A dishwasher is required in three-bedroom units.
- A 30" minimum range is required.
- Garbage disposals (encourage composting and recycling) and range hoods are required.
- A frost free refrigerator with a separate freezer door of adequate size. This may mean a 3+ bedroom unit requires a larger refrigerator, of comparable quality, to those provided in smaller units within in a project.
- Finish flooring shall continue under refrigerators, stoves, dishwashers, and base cabinets in kitchens.

Application of Kitchen requirements

- The type and configuration of kitchens in a development are to be standardized to the greatest extent possible in order to create efficiencies for purchasing cabinetry, appliances, equipment, and finishes.
- Unit circulation cannot pass through the kitchen work area.
- The work area (triangle) within the kitchen may not be obstructed by furniture.

Bathrooms

- Three-bedrooms are required to include no less than 1.5 bathrooms.

- All half and full bathrooms shall receive a vanity cabinet and sink, a shower curtain rod (in a full bath), a toilet paper holder, and a mirror-front medicine cabinet with lighting over the mirror.
- Blocking in bathrooms should be provided for future installation of grab bars and shower seat.
- Accessible bathrooms (MAAB Regulations, Group 1) are required, unless the unit is fully accessible or a hearing/vision impaired unit. Provisions for adaptable bathrooms as defined in Federal Fair Housing Amendments Act should be incorporated in all designs.

Application of Bathroom requirements

- A shower stall may be substituted for one bathtub where two full bathrooms are provided.
- At least one bathroom must have entry from a common hallway. Entry to the bathroom (full or half) may also be accessed from the bedroom (en suite) if an entry from a common hallway is also provided.
- All bathrooms must comply with Group 1 MAAB.

Windows

- Window treatments must be provided in all units, regardless of affordability. All window treatments must be cordless for child safety.
- Window guards and/or other means to protect children must be provided.

Unit Entry Doors

- Steel or Solid Wood Unit Entry Doors are acceptable if rated to code and are durable. A peep hole shall be provided.
- Interior unit doors are to be solid core wooden doors.
- Doors opening onto patios or decks should swing in and have flush thresholds for accessibility. Drainage is to be provided at decks to prevent water and snow build up.
- Sliding doors accessing the exterior are discouraged at ground floor conditions where they pose a security concern.

Door Hardware

- Lever door handles are to be provided throughout for universal design. Peep holes shall be provided.
- Exterior and Interior unit entry doors should be provided with deadbolts; adjustable thresholds and weather-stripping, as appropriate.
- Bathrooms and Primary bedrooms should provide privacy sets. Exterior and interior doors should have a baseboard-mounted stop to prevent damage to wall finishes.

Unit Finishes

- All finishes should be durable, easy to maintain and provide a long useful life. In addition, finishes should not contribute to respiratory ailments due to off-gassing over time. All adhesives should consist of low or no volatile organic compounds (VOCs).

Sound Control

- Architects and Developers are required to review construction detailing and materials for compliance with code requirements for sound control.
- Where possible, sound isolation clips should be used in the ceiling to reduce noise from units directly above.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation projects shall conform to the same provisions and requirements described in New Construction. Except:

- Three-bedroom units in a rehabilitation project shall be free of lead.
- Three-bedroom units shall have access to Broadband.
- If due to limitations with existing building configuration, the project team is unable to meet any of the standards set forth, a narrative explanation must be provided.