



RIHousing  
Special Achievement  
**MTAP: Turning Housing Policy Into Development Action  
Across Rhode Island**

**Municipal Technical Assistance Program: Turning Housing Policy Into Development Action  
Across Rhode Island**

Rhode Island is grappling with a severe and persistent housing shortage. As market prices rise and affordable housing opportunities grow scarcer, our housing challenge requires bold and effective changes at state and local levels.

One major hurdle: outdated or convoluted zoning and land use laws—unnecessary red tape that was bottlenecking development and preventing housing growth in our communities.

In response, the Governor and General Assembly passed more than 60 housing and land use reforms over five years to remove barriers to development and accelerate housing production. From legalizing Accessory Dwelling Units, to eliminating density restrictions beyond those required in the building code for adaptive reuse projects, to expanding the kinds of projects eligible for an expedited administrative review, to moving all building permit and environmental application processes to a coordinated online system, these laws created powerful new opportunities, but also a significant challenge. How could municipalities quickly and accurately implement complex new laws, and importantly, ensure they are consistently interpreted statewide? RIHousing stepped in to solve that challenge.

**A Statewide Solution to a Local Implementation Barrier**

Recognizing that legislation alone would not drive housing progress, RIHousing launched an initiative through the Municipal Technical Assistance Program (MTAP) to translate state housing reforms into actionable tools for every municipality.

Funded through a dedicated \$5 million from a surcharge on the state's Real Estate Transfer Tax, MTAP provides municipalities with the resources, expertise, and support needed to modernize their zoning, permitting, and land use processes.

**Quick and Strategic Work: Program Launched in 7 Weeks**

The core of MTAP is a highly innovative model, including:

- Standardized, ready-to-use templates that translate complex, new legislation into clear and actionable ordinance language.
- Guidance on required versus flexible provisions, helping municipalities understand their local control options as they comply with new laws.
- Best practice frameworks for key areas, such as zoning, subdivisions, adaptive reuse, and permitting.
- Visual tools and training videos to simplify adoption.

To quickly implement and scale this work, RIHousing put out an RFP for a consultant with experience in Rhode Island land use laws to assist in the development of template and guidance documents to support municipalities. The timeline for the development of these resources was expedited to ensure municipalities would have time to apply them to their local processes and ordinances by the deadlines in the new state laws.



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RIHousing and its consultant coordinated closely with the RI Division of Statewide Planning, the General Assembly, and legal experts to ensure consistent legislation interpretation statewide—a critical step in reducing uncertainty for municipalities and developers.

- Our initial suite of tools and resources for municipalities was developed and deployed to RIHousing’s website ([www.rihousing.com/mtap-templates](http://www.rihousing.com/mtap-templates)) in just seven weeks.

Since the initial package of legislation was introduced, two more packages of land use bills have been passed at the state level in 2024 and 2025. These new laws made further improvements or corrections to the previous bills and expanded into new areas of land use and zoning policies and requirements. After each round of law change, RIHousing engaged a consultant to update its existing municipal templates, tools, and resources to ensure municipalities stay in compliance and meet statutory deadlines.

### **Removing Barriers for Municipalities**

MTAP not only provides important guidance and resources to our communities, it removes operational hurdles, too:

- Municipalities were allowed to apply for MTAP assistance to tailor the templates for their own community.
- In an effort to further streamline the process for municipalities, RIHousing contracts with and pays the consultants directly, so municipalities can focus on the actual projects at hand. Our pre-qualified pool of contractors helps eliminate procurement burdens.
- The streamlined model makes participation accessible to municipalities of all sizes and demographics in our state.

### **Statewide Impact and Adoption—Measurable Results**

MTAP has achieved broad reach across our state:

- 23 municipalities (over half the state) have received MTAP assistance for 22 projects updating their land use and zoning ordinances. These municipalities vary in size, municipal structure, and geographic location.
- Grant amounts have varied from \$31,500 to \$100,000 depending on the scope of work and tailored to local needs.
- As of December 2025, seven municipalities had fully implemented these changes in their cities and towns, with additional communities working their way through the approval process.

By standardizing these processes and resources for our communities, and reducing ambiguity, MTAP is enabling faster and more predictable housing development approvals in Rhode Island.

### **Leadership and Collaboration**

Throughout the process, RIHousing has served as a central convener—working closely with municipalities and elected officials to keep them updated on the tools available and connecting them to available resources.



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We organized a virtual meeting with the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns to walk them through our resources and how municipalities can utilize the tools provided. RIHousing also hosted key workshops at the League's highly-anticipated Annual Conference in 2024 and 2025 to educate municipal leaders and staff on our MTAP resources to help reduce barriers to housing development.

The resources on our MTAP website have also been helpful to developers seeking a clearer understanding of what is allowable under the new statutes. In 2024, RIHousing hosted an in-person training with affordable housing developers and the very land use attorneys who helped draft the new legislation. Together, we reviewed our new template land use documents, shared resources available on the MTAP website, and discussed changes made by new state statutes. The Speaker of the House of Representatives, who has been the driving force for Rhode Island's housing legislation progress, also spoke at that training.

### **Benefits vs. Cost**

The benefits of implementing this program have far outweighed any costs—which have been minimal on the part of RIHousing, as we are administering funds on behalf of the state (Rhode Island's Housing Production Fund). Manpower has been the greatest cost for our agency, with the program helmed by two employees as one of their ongoing projects, with support from additional colleagues as needed to coordinate municipal meetings, set up and run trainings, and create and share communication about MTAP.

By giving municipalities the tools to implement land use changes that streamline the permitting process and reduce barriers to housing development, RIHousing has been able to facilitate affordable and market rate housing development with a minimal investment of staff time and modest program investments in land use consultants.

### **A Model for Change and Progress**

More than a technical assistance program, MTAP is a statewide housing implementation and progress strategy. By bridging the gap between legislation and local execution, RIHousing has:

- Accelerated the adoption of critical housing reforms across Rhode Island.
- Increased consistency across municipalities.
- Reduced barriers to housing production.

As Rhode Island continues to work to address our housing crisis, new laws alone can't solve our challenges—those laws need to be adopted on the ground to lead to progress in our communities.

Through MTAP, RIHousing has demonstrated how a housing finance agency can lead beyond our traditional roles—serving as a policy translator, leadership convenor, community supporter, and implementor of statewide change.

This innovative and scalable model is helping Rhode Island communities unlock new housing opportunities -- and offers a replicable model to other states.



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## VISUAL AIDS

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### Program Overview

#### Municipal Technical Assistance Program (MTAP)

The Program helps Rhode Island cities and towns expand local housing by providing technical assistance for eligible activities such as zoning updates, infrastructure assessments, site analysis, and community engagement.

- [MTAP Program Details](#)

#### Pipeline Development Program

Pipeline Development Program assists municipalities in identifying potential sites for redevelopment as affordable or mixed-income housing and successfully moving those projects forward.

- [Pipeline Development Program Details](#)

#### Transit Oriented Development Zoning Program (TOD Program)

### MTAP Municipal Projects List

RIHousing has created a page that lists the awarded municipal projects and other information, such as short summaries, funding amounts, and project status.

[Click here to view the municipal projects page >](#)

### Templates and Resources

RIHousing has created a series of guidance documents and template materials to guide municipal officials as they [update local land use, permitting and zoning enforceable policies](#).

[Click here to view the Templates and Resources Page >](#)

[www.rihousing.com/mtap-templates/](http://www.rihousing.com/mtap-templates/)



# RIHousing Special Achievement MTAP: Turning Housing Policy Into Development Action Across Rhode Island



[Municipal Technical Assistance Program \(MTAP\)](#) > **Templates and Resources**

Last Updated: 11.07.2023

In 2023, the General Assembly adopted a package of bills which made changes to various aspects of zoning, planning, and permitting statutes for the purposes of standardizing and streamlining the development process and otherwise reducing barriers to housing development. To assist Rhode Island municipalities in implementing these statutory changes, RIHousing has created a series of guidance documents and template materials to guide municipal officials as they update local land use, permitting and zoning enforceable policies (e.g., zoning ordinances and subdivision regulations). The templates and other resources should only be used in consultation with a municipality's solicitor to ensure that they are used appropriately within the local regulatory framework.

– [Video Tutorial: MTAP Webpage Overview](#)

## Introduction and Summary of Guidance Documents ▼

### Guidance Documents

[Click here to download all templates and helpful documents.](#)

#### Land Development Projects and Subdivisions ▼

#### Development Plan Review ▼

#### Unified Development Review ▼

#### Adaptive Reuse ▼

#### Appeals ▼

#### Comprehensive Permit ▼

#### Technical Review Committee ▼

#### Modifications, Variances and Special Uses ▼

#### Inclusionary Zoning ▼



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**Technical Review Committee** ▼

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**Modifications, Variances and Special Uses** ▲

**Templates**

- [Zoning Modification \(2025 New\)](#)
- [Substandard Lots Zoning Template \(2024\)](#)
- [Dimensional Variance Definitions and Standards \(2023\)](#)
- [Modifications \(2023\)](#)
- [Nonconformance \(2023\)](#)
- [Special Use Permit \(2023\)](#)

**Best Practices**

- [Best Practices: Zoning \(2023\)](#)
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