

# Housing FAQ

## Housing Rehabilitation

- **How long does the whole process take?**

The rehabilitation process should take a minimum of 2 months to close a loan before any work can begin. The length of time can vary and depends mainly on the applicant supplying all of the requested documentation to our office and how quickly the applicant can solicit a minimum of two bids from licensed contractors (usually a 30 day bid period).
- **What does a 0% deferred payment loan mean?**

A 0% deferred payment loan is a loan that you do not make monthly payments on, but there is a mortgage on the property that is recorded at the Registry of Deeds and when the property is sold, transferred or refinanced the full loan amount is due back to the City, but with no interest.
- **What restrictions are placed on my property after the rehabilitation work is completed? (Not for all Programs, just RR and Neigh First)**

An "Affordable Housing Restriction" lien is placed on your property for a predetermined number of years. This allows the OHCD to inspect your property to make sure that there are no Code Violations and ensure that your property is rented to low/moderate income tenants and that the rent that you charge is an affordable rent. Tenants rent and income gets monitored once per year and consists of a form to be submitted to this office completed by the tenants living in the "Restricted" Units.
- **I am pretty handy; can I do some of the rehabilitation work myself?**

All work through the OHCD must be completed by a Licensed and Insured Contractor.
- **How is my income calculated to see if I meet the income guidelines of the programs?**

HUD guidelines state that we calculate the gross income, before any deductions, of all household members over the age of 18 years.
- **Are there any *grants* for home improvement?**

The Office of Housing & Community Development (OHCD) has low interest **loans @ (3%)** for low-moderate owner-occupants of 1-4 family properties if their gross annual income limit does not exceed HUD's median family income limits.
- **Can I do the work myself and receive the loan?**

No. Based on the program requirements, only Licensed General Contractors may bid on your project when the completed bid specifications for the proposed scope of work have been completed by a rehabilitation specialist from OHCD.
- **Are there contractors that work for your office?**

No. The homeowner selects the licensed contractor after the completed Bid Specification packages have been completed by the rehabilitation specialist from the OHCD.

- **Can I choose what type of home repair I would like done on my property?**  
The OHCD must adhere first to correct any code violations to comply with Minimum Housing Quality Standards. A rehabilitation specialist will determine the scope of work at his first initial inspection of the property.
- **How long will it take before the handicap accessible ramp is completed?**  
Once the completed application is received, it can take anywhere from 1 - 3 months depending on the ability to get contractors to submit bids.
- **If I want to buy in my name only, would you count only my income to qualify me for down payment/closing cost assistance?**  
All household income is counted when determining eligibility for down payment/closing cost assistance.
- **My parents own rental property and I helped collect rents and did evictions; do I need homebuyer counseling?**  
All participants in our Neighborhoods First program require homebuyer counseling from an approved agency. Check at [www.chapa.org](http://www.chapa.org) for the list of approved agencies.
- **I filed bankruptcy 7 years ago. When can I apply for a mortgage?**  
Depending on lender and your re-established credit history, you may qualify for a mortgage as early as 2 years after discharge. This would be on a case-by-case basis.
- **I can only afford to buy a "fixer upper". Will your program help me with this?**  
All properties purchased through our program must be considered "lead safe" and meet minimum housing quality standards and building code. Usually "fixer upper" properties are NOT "lead safe" and need substantial rehabilitation. Therefore, a fixer upper would not be considered as a good purchase for a First Time Home Buyer. Remember, for properties built before 1978; **NO peeling, flaking, chipping, scaling, cracking, chalking paint. ALL PAINTED SURFACES MUST BE INTACT.**
- **Can I buy a home in Dartmouth, Acushnet or Fairhaven through the Neighborhoods First Program?**  
No. However, there may be other programs that you could qualify for in those towns. You can call us and we can give you further information relative to which community you choose; or you may call the town hall to find out what they offer.
- **Can I use MassHousing programs in conjunction with Neighborhoods First Program?**  
As long as you are Income eligible for the Neighborhoods First Program you can combine the two programs.
- **Do I have to buy a house in New Bedford if I go through MassHousing Programs?**  
MassHousing Programs may be used anywhere in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

- **ONE is a MassHousing Program, so I can use it anywhere in the state?**  
ONE is **Not** a MassHousing Program, ONE is offered by Massachusetts Housing Partnership Fund, a completely different entity. Therefore, ONE can only be used in communities that are participating in the Program. You may go to the [Massachusetts Housing Partnership Fund](#) for a list of participating communities.
- **Can I use Get the Lead Out funds on my 6 family home?**  
Get the Lead Out funds can only be used on 1- 4 family properties.
- **I got my deleading started last week, can I still receive funds from Get the Lead Out program?**  
Deleading begun prior to closing on your loan is ineligible.
- **Can I use this program with Get the Lead Out Program?**  
You may do so as long as you are an income eligible owner occupant or are an investor with tenants whose incomes fall within HUD program guidelines.