

Consolidated Rental Waitlist Frequently Asked Questions

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1. Application Process

Q: How do I apply for Inclusionary Rental Housing?

A: To apply for Inclusionary Rental Housing, you must complete and submit an application form online on the Consolidated Rental Waitlist portal. If you need assistance or do not have access to a device to submit the application online, please contact Housing Division to set up an appointment to submit the application. Individuals who need accommodations to applying online can contact Housing Division at 617-625-6600 ext. 2566 or inclusionary@somervillema.gov as well as the ADA Coordinator, Adrienne Pomeroy, at 617-625-6600 ext. 2259 or apomeroy@somervillema.gov.

Q: What documents do I need to submit with my application?

A: The only documents required to apply for rental Inclusionary units are documentation verifying an accessibility need from a health care provider, if applicable. Please do not send or submit any income or asset documentation unless specifically requested to do so.

Q: Can I check the status of my application?

A: Yes, you can check the status of your application by logging into Emphasys and viewing your place on the Consolidated Rental Waitlist on your dashboard or by contacting our Housing Division office. Please have your identifying information ready for assistance.

Q: Is the application available in multiple languages?

A: The application will always be available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Nepali, Traditional Chinese, and Simplified Chinese. We can also help with live interpretation and translation of important documents in any language – just send us a request.

2. Waitlist Management

Q: How long will I have to wait for Inclusionary Rental Housing?

A: Wait times vary based on several factors, including program availability, applicant priority status, and unit turnover. We strive to provide updates on estimated wait times, but please understand that they can change due to demand and other factors.

Q: Can I update my information on the waitlist?

A: Yes, you can update your contact information or household details through our online portal or by notifying our office in writing. It's essential to keep your information current to ensure you receive timely communication regarding your application status.

Q: When will the waitlist reopen?

A: After the waitlist closes on May 30, 2025, it will likely not reopen for at least one to two years.

Q: If I am already on the waitlist for an Inclusionary unit at a specific property, do I need to apply to the Consolidated Rental Waitlist?

A: Yes, you need to apply to be on the new waitlist. Households on other waitlists will not be moved onto to this new waitlist.

Q: Is this the waitlist for all affordable units in Somerville?

A: No, this is only the waitlist for Inclusionary units. You can find other affordable units in Somerville and the surrounding areas with the assistance of local and City agencies such as the [Office of Housing Stability, Somerville Housing Authority](#), [Community Action Agency Somerville \(CAAS\)](#), [Somerville Homeless Coalition](#), and [Somerville Community Corporation](#). You can also search for affordable units using [Housing Navigator MA](#) and [Metrolist](#).

Q: What does my displayed rank mean?

A: Your displayed rank is your overall rank compared with everyone on the Consolidated Rental Waitlist. However, because you are applying for a specific unit size or unit sizes and are placed in a specific AMI tier based on your income, there are fewer people ahead of you for each unit type in your AMI tier than your overall rank reflects.

3. Eligibility and Preferences

Q: What are the eligibility criteria for the Inclusionary Housing Program?

A: Eligibility criteria for each unit includes income limit and household size. For some units, such as ADA accessible units, there are other specific program requirements. Each program may have different criteria, so it's important to review the details when applying.

Q: What documentation is needed when an applicant is selected for a unit?

A: The Inclusionary Program requires income and asset documentation, the most recent year's tax documentation (if applicable), and documentation of Somerville preference or priority status. After completion of the income certification, each individual property *may* screen applicants, including checking credit, criminal background, and/or rental history.

Q: What if I don't have rental or credit history?

A: Lack of rental or credit history will not impact your eligibility to be on the waitlist. If neither are available, building owners must decide how they will approach the verification of a household's ability to pay rent once they have been selected for an available unit. For example, they may ask to review pay stubs or bank statements.

Q: Can I request a preference for a specific housing development or neighborhood?

A: When you are at the top of the waitlist, the Housing Team will ask if you want to see the unit. You will be able to see the unit address, and if it is not in a development or neighborhood that you would like to live in, you can decline the unit (before viewing it) with no penalty and remain in your position on the waitlist.

Q: What is preference? How does it work?

A: The Consolidated Rental Waitlist is sorted by preference, with all applicants who have tier 1 preference nearest to the top of the waitlist, followed by tier 2 preference, then tier 3 preference. Tier 1 preference includes all current Somerville residents (including those experiencing homelessness and living in Somerville) and households including at least one (1) child in Somerville Public Schools or a charter school in Somerville. Tier 2 preference includes all households with a household member who works in Somerville at least 20 hours per week and all households who have moved out of Somerville within the last two (2) years. Tier 3 preference includes all households without tier 1 or tier 2 preference. Only one household member needs to meet the preference requirement for the household to be eligible to the applicable preference tier.

Q: What is priority? How does it work?

A: Households that report having a priority status are placed higher on the waitlist within that preference tier. Priorities don't add up, so a household with one priority is placed the same as a household with two or three priorities. The priorities for the Consolidated Rental Waitlist are 1) experiencing homelessness; 2) experiencing domestic violence, 3) in a unit that is unsafe because of poor condition (as determined by the Inspectional Services Department); 4) in need of a unit that is mobility-accessible, adaptable, or for those vision/hearing-impaired; 5) having a mobile voucher; and 6) at-risk of losing housing (e.g. being served a notice to quit).

Q: What size units can I apply for? Can I apply for multiple unit sizes?

A: A minimum of one person per bedroom is required unless you have a disability or medical need for an extra bedroom. You can select multiple unit sizes in your application.

4. Transfers and Changes

Q: How can I request a transfer to a different housing unit or program?

A: To request a transfer, submit a written request detailing the reason for transfer and any supporting documentation to our Housing Division office. Transfer requests are reviewed based on eligibility and unit availability.

Q: Can I update my household size or income information after submitting my application?

A: Yes, you should update your household size or income information within the application portal as changes arise. Changes may affect your eligibility or placement on the waitlist, so it's important to keep your information current. After the waitlist selection, households should reach out directly to the Inclusionary team to make changes to their application.

5. Privacy and Confidentiality

Q: How is my personal information protected by the Housing Division?

A: We are committed to protecting your privacy and adhere to strict confidentiality policies. Your personal information is securely stored and used only for housing-related purposes in compliance with applicable privacy laws. Information on applicant identities, immigration status, etc. is never shared with those outside of the applicant's household.

6. Additional Support and Services

Q: Are there supportive services available for tenants?

A: Yes, the City offers supportive services such as case management, educational programs, and community referrals to help tenants achieve housing stability and self-sufficiency. Contact the Office of Housing Stability for more information on available services.

Q: What should I do if I have a complaint or grievance related to housing assistance?

A: If you have a complaint or grievance, please contact our office to discuss your concerns. We have procedures in place to address grievances promptly and fairly to ensure resident satisfaction and program compliance.

7. Inclusionary Rules and Procedures

Q: Why do some Inclusionary units at the same income tier charge different rents than others?

A: There are several reasons why units of the same tier may charge different rents. First, different properties cover different utilities, thus the deduction from rent for utilities varies. Secondly, as the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance has changed, the rent calculation methods required by the Ordinance have changed as well. Maximum rents are calculated for properties based on the Ordinance they were under at time of permitting.

Q: Is Inclusionary rent based on my income?

A: No, for almost all Inclusionary units, rent is not adjusted based on an individual's income. Maximum rents are calculated based on the income tier (50%, 80%, or 110% AMI) and the utilities charged by the property.

There is one exception to this, which are 110% AMI units developed under the 2016 Zoning Ordinance. The rent for these units is 30% of the household's gross income.

When you are selected to view and income certify for a unit, the rent amount will be listed.

Q: What kind of accommodations are available to different kinds of disabilities within Inclusionary units? For instance, what do accommodations for hearing impairments look like? What are some examples of mobility accommodations?

A: Here are some examples of accessibility features in Inclusionary units: flashing doorbell, wide doorways, low kitchen appliances, closet hangers, light switches, etc.

Q: Can I use my housing choice voucher in an Inclusionary unit?

A: Yes, households can apply their mobile vouchers (including Section 8, MRVP, etc.) to Inclusionary units. Households with vouchers also have priority status on the waitlist.

Q: Is this program government-funded?

A: No, Inclusionary units are created within market-rate developments in Somerville per the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance. They are not tied to local, state, or federal funding.

Q: Are Inclusionary units pet-friendly?

A: Pet rules vary by property. Applicants will be able to see if the unit is pet-friendly before deciding whether to see the unit.

Please note that assistance animals (service animals and emotional support animals) are NOT considered pets and allowed in all units.

Q: Is there a Consolidated Waitlist for Inclusionary homeownership units in Somerville?

A: No, Inclusionary homeownership lotteries will still be done individually, as applicants need to submit a mortgage pre-approval covering the sales price of each unit they apply for, which can vary. You can sign up for our [email list](#) to receive notifications any time there is a new homeownership opportunity. You can also visit our website, where we post any currently available homeownership opportunities: <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/programs/inclusionary-housing-program>.