

Information Packet

Paddock Estates

An Affordable Housing Opportunity Boxborough MA

This packet contains specific information on the affordable housing program and application process for the affordable rental units being offered at Paddock Estates in Boxborough, MA.

All households first need to complete a Waiting List Application and get on the Waiting List.

This packet is for households who have high enough positions on the Waiting List to move forward in the process of reserving an affordable apartment.

Please hold on to this packet until you have leased a unit as it will be a useful guide throughout the entire process.

For Affordable Unit Information call (617) 782-6900

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GENERAL OVERVIEW AND RENTS

Paddock Estates is a 244 unit rental apartment community located in Boxborough at Cumberland Road. 61 of these apartments will be made available through this application process. The unit mix of the affordable units is as follows:

# of Units	# of Bedrooms	# of Bathrooms
33 <i>(2 of 33 units are Disabled-Accessible Units)</i>	1	1
27 <i>(2 of 27 units are Disabled-Accessible Units)</i>	2	2
1 <i>(None of the 3BR units are Disabled-Accessible)</i>	3	2

Affordable rents are set annually using a calculation that determines the “affordable” rent, which is based on the Area Median Incomes for the Boston-Cambridge-Quincy HMFA. Tenants are responsible for paying the full amount of rent each month. Rents are not based on each applicant’s income (unless they already have a Section 8 voucher already or similar). Tenants will be responsible for paying their own utilities except Water and Sewer. Utility types are: Electric Heat, Gas Water Heating, Gas Cooking, Electricity.

Paddock Estates does not discriminate in the selection of applicants on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, age, ancestry, children, familial status, genetic information, marital status, public assistance reciprocity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran/military status, or any other basis prohibited by law. Persons with disabilities are entitled to request a reasonable accommodation in rules, policies, practices, or services, or to request a reasonable modification in the housing, when such accommodations or modifications may be necessary to afford persons with disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy the housing.

Q: How long will the designated apartments remain affordable?

A: As a **current resident only**, you are considered income eligible for an affordable unit as long as your household earns an income that does not exceed 140% of the current applicable income limit for a household of your size (*see Yearly Eligibility and Rent Review for more details*).

APPLICATION PROCESS

Q: What are the steps in leasing an Affordable apartment?

Step 1: Fill out a Waiting List Application at the Leasing Office

Every household not entered into the original lottery needs to complete the Waiting List Application so they can be properly placed on the Waiting Lists for the units they are interested in. Please contact the Leasing Office for the Waiting List Application. Once units are available, the Leasing Office will contact the top households on the waiting list who qualify for the unit type and size available.

Step 2: Fill out a Lease Application at the Leasing Office

The top households on the waiting list will need to go to the Leasing Office and complete a *Lease Application*. During the Lease Application, criteria such as credit scores, references, and current employment income will be reviewed. Households will put down a deposit with the completion of their lease application and will be given a move-in date by the leasing office.

Step 3: Fill out the Affordable Housing Program Application

Households must complete the *Program Application* (which includes submitting all required documentation) in entirety prior to their move-in date. Failure to complete the Program Application (which includes submitting all required income, asset and tax documentation) by the given date will result in the loss of the holding deposit. If an application is completed but a household is deemed ineligible for the Affordable housing program, the holding deposit is returned.

Step 4: Notification of Affordable Housing Program Approval

If the applicant is found eligible for an Affordable apartment according to program guidelines, they will be notified by phone and/or by email and/or by postal mail. The applicant will then need to go to the Leasing Office, fill out a Lease Agreement and an Affordable Lease Addendum, and move into their affordable apartment by the scheduled move-in date.

APPLICATION TIMELINE

Q: What is the schedule for applications and the selection of renters for the affordable apartments at Paddock Estates?

A: This process can be as short as 2 weeks or longer than 2 months.

Step 1: Now The applicant completes a Waiting List Application. They will remain on the Waiting List until appropriate units are available.

Step 2: **Contacted by Leasing Office to complete Lease Application** at Paddock Estates.

Step 3: +2 weeks: The applicant fills out the Affordable Housing Program Application and gathers all required documentation listed on the checklist and sends it to SEB.

+0-2 weeks: Based on information in the application, SEB requests that the applicant mail in additional documentation that was missing from their application. *(This step happens with approximately 90% of all applications. If you want to expedite the time it takes to process your application, send in ALL documentation up-front. Do not wait for SEB or Monitoring Agent to request a piece of documentation you probably knew was missing).*

+1 week: SEB processes the completed application. If an applicant is deemed ineligible, this process is over. If they are deemed eligible, SEB contacts the applicant and notifies them that they may now proceed to the Leasing Office to fill out a Lease Agreement.

Step 4: 0-90 days: Applicants must move into their affordable unit by the date determined when they put their deposit down on a unit in Step 2 above.

Q: How is the Affordable Housing Program Application different from a Lease Application?

A: The Lease Application uses criteria including employment history, credit score or reports, former lease history etc and determines if applicants have ENOUGH INCOME to *afford* the Affordable rent and have enough income remaining for other costs of living. The Affordable Housing Program Application is used to determine if applicants make less than the maximum income allowed to be eligible for an Affordable apartment.

Q: What happens if I don't submit all necessary documentation or fail to correctly complete my Affordable Housing Program Application?

A: Households that submit incomplete documentation will be mailed a notice detailing the additional documentation that is needed to make their application complete. If the household submits all additional documentation their application will be processed in the order the application was completed. If a household fails to submit all required documentation, their application will remain in an "Incomplete Application Pool" and will only begin being processed once all requested materials have been received. Households who fail to complete the Affordable Application by the move-in date will lose the holding deposit and lose their chance to lease an apartment.

Q: What information is required when an application is submitted?

A: For an application to be considered complete it must be filled out in entirety, signed and dated. **In addition, all required income, asset and tax documentation (and if applicable, disability documentation) must be submitted.** If any documentation is missing the application will not be processed but a notice will be sent stating what documentation is missing. If you are following the application closely, it should guide you through everything you need to include.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Q: Who is eligible to apply for the affordable apartments in Paddock Estates?

A: In order to qualify for an affordable unit:

- 1.) Households must have income and assets that qualify within the parameters as highlighted in this section.
- 2.) 1 person households cannot live in a 2BR unit unless they have a disability that requires a reasonable accommodation for a 2BR unit. And 2 person households cannot live in a 3BR unit unless they have a disability that requires a reasonable accommodation for a 3BR unit. Additional household priority will be given based on household composition. For questions on household size and composition, please read "**Household Size and Composition**".
- 3.) Households cannot own a home, including in a trust, upon move-in. All homes must be sold before leasing a unit.
- 4.) Households, or their families, cannot have a financial interest in the development and a household member cannot be considered a Related Party (which includes employees of the development or management entity)

Note: All households may apply for the disabled-accessible apartments but households in need of an accessible apartment will get top priority.

Q: Can I apply if I currently own a home or am losing a home through foreclosure or divorce?

A: You may put down a deposit but SEB cannot deem you Program eligible until the home is no longer in your name. Therefore, the home must be sold or your name must be removed from the deed prior to your move-in date. If you are going through a divorce, your divorce decree or separation papers must state that you will no longer be on the deed or mortgage of the home. If your house is going through foreclosure, you must prove that it will be foreclosed on prior to your move-in date. All this must be documented for SEB prior to them issuing your letter of eligibility.

Q: What are the income eligibility requirements?

A: To be eligible to lease an affordable unit, the combined annual income for all income sources of all income-earning members in the household must be at or below eighty percent of median income for the local area. **All sources of income are counted, see below for more details.**

Maximum Income

Household Size	Maximum Income Limit
1	\$70,750
2	\$80,850
3	\$90,950
4	\$101,050
5	\$109,150
6	\$117,250

Minimum Income

The affordable housing program does not have a set minimum income limit. Rather, the Leasing Office will determine if an applicant has enough monthly income to cover the rent using the same methodology for applicants applying to their market rate units. **Applicants who receive a housing subsidy (like Section 8) are not subject to the minimum income requirements** but, like all other applicants, will also have to pass reviews on credit scores, tenant history, and criminal background checks in accordance with DHCD's requirements regarding same. Please see "Leasing Office Review" in the step-by-step process for more details.

Q: How is a household's income determined?

A: A household's income is the total anticipated amount of money received by ALL members of the household over the next 12 months (starting from the date of application and projecting forward 12 months) based on their current income and assets. In an effort to provide as accurate an income estimation as possible, the Lottery Agent will also review historical income data to provide a basis for future income estimates. Any monies you anticipate receiving in the next 12 months will be counted as income and monies received over the previous 6 months will be analyzed to help estimate future income. This includes, but is not limited to, Social Security, alimony, child support, overtime pay, bonuses, unemployment, severance pay, part-time employment, matured bonds, monies to be received in court settlements, and actual or imputed interest and dividends on bank accounts and other assets. **ALL SOURCES OF INCOME ARE COUNTED** with the exception of income from employment for household members under the age of 18 and any income over \$480/year for full time students who are dependents (but note that all such income must still be documented even if it is exempt from the household income calculation).

It will be assumed that all applicants will continue to receive any monies they have received over the past 12 months unless supporting documentation proves otherwise. It is also not up to the household to determine what monies received over the past year should and should not be counted as their calculated income. Therefore, all monies should be listed on the application and the inclusion of these monies in determining a household's eligibility will be based on affordable housing guidelines.

Allowable Assets

There is no asset limit for applying households for this development. However, the higher of the actual income earned from assets, or the imputed income of 0.06% of all assets, will be counted as income. Household Assets are calculated at the time of application. Assets may include cash, cash in savings and checking accounts, net cash value of stocks, net cash value of retirement accounts (such as 401k), real property, bonds, and capital investments.

If any household member currently owns property, the total amount of equity in the home shall be added to their total value of assets.

Example: A household has \$8,000 in savings, \$30,000 in a retirement account that they are not drawing down from (\$20,000 net cash value) and a home assessed at \$300,000 on which they currently have \$278,000 remaining on the mortgage (\$22,000 in equity).

<i>Their assets total is:</i>	$\$8,000 + \$20,000 + \$22,000 = \$50,000$
<i>Actual Income from assets is:</i>	$\$300 + \$0 + \$0 = \$300 (A)$
<i>Imputed Income at 0.06% is:</i>	$0.06\% \text{ of } \$50,000 = \$30 (B)$

For this household, \$300 would be added to their income they receive from all other income sources (employment, Social Security, Alimony etc.) as the program takes the greater of (A) actual income from assets OR (B) imputed income from assets.

Q: I cannot withdraw money from my 401k or retirement fund, do I have to include it when I list my assets?

A: Yes. You need to include the *net cash value* of all your current retirement funds. We realize that most retirement funds assess large penalties for early withdrawal but this does not technically mean that you “cannot” withdraw your funds. The post-penalty amount is what you need to provide along with supporting documentation.

Q: If I cannot qualify for a Lease based on my own income or credit history, can I have a co-signer on my Lease?

A: No. Only people who will live in the apartment can sign the lease. Applying households must be able to meet the income qualifications on their own. If someone outside the household is going to help pay the rent, the amount to be paid must be listed as “Periodic Payments” on the Income Table in the Program Application. These payments will be counted towards the applying household’s income.

Q: Do I have to be a resident of the Town of Boxborough to apply?

A: No. All households that meet the income guidelines specified above may apply for an affordable unit. Local Preference was given to some households through the original lottery process but there is no local preference after the initial lease-up.

HOUSEHOLD SIZE AND COMPOSITION

Q: How is appropriate household size determined?

A: According to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development guidelines:

Within an applicant pool, priority as set forth below, shall be given to households requiring the total number of bedrooms in the apartment based on the following **criteria**:

1. There is at least one occupant and no more than two occupants per bedroom.
2. A married couple, or those in a similar living arrangement, shall be required to share a bedroom. Other household members may share but shall not be required to share a bedroom.
3. A person described in the first sentence of (2) shall not be required to share a bedroom if a consequence of sharing would be a severe adverse impact on his or her mental or physical health and the lottery agent receives reliable medical documentation as to such impact of sharing.

Household size shall not exceed state sanitary code requirements for occupancy of a unit.

Q: Can a one person household or a married couple (or those in a similar living arrangement) lease a two-bedroom unit?

A: A one person household cannot lease a 2BR unit, unless that one person household has a disability and needs a 2BR unit as a reasonable accommodation, in which case that one-person household will be treated as if they were “appropriately sized” for a 2BR unit, as described below. On the other hand, a married couple or those in a similar living arrangement may live in a 2BR unit, but only when there are no larger households on the waiting list for a 2BR unit.

Q: Can a two person household or a married couple (or those in a similar living arrangement) with one child lease a three-bedroom unit?

A: A two person household cannot lease a 3BR unit, unless that the two person household has a disability and needs a 3BR unit as a reasonable accommodation, in which case that two-person household will be treated as if they were “appropriately sized” for a 3BR unit, as described below. On the other hand, a married couple (or those in a similar living arrangement) with one child may live in a 3BR unit, but only when there are no larger households on the waiting list for a 3BR unit.

Q: If I am currently going through a divorce/separation or planning on being divorced / separated soon, can I still apply?

A: For non-homeowners, you will need to provide proof that the separation or divorce process has begun or has already been finalized. The **Program Application** will guide you through the documentation you will need to provide. If you have only begun considering a divorce or separation, and no legal action has been taken, you cannot apply as a single head-of-household and your application will be reviewed as if your current spouse will be moving into the affordable unit with you. **For homeowners going through a divorce**, the home must be sold or the divorce must be finalized (as you must be off the deed) before you move-in.

Yearly Eligibility and Rent Review

After a household has moved in, and approximately 90 days before lease renewal, tenants of affordable apartments will need to submit updated income and asset documentation to the Leasing Office so they can ensure continued eligibility under the affordable housing guidelines. Tenants will not be able to renew Leases until all required documentation has been submitted. Records of taxes, pay-stubs, bank statements and asset statements should be maintained while living in the affordable apartment.

Q: How long can I lease my affordable apartment?

A: As a **current resident only**, you are considered income eligible for an affordable apartment as long as your household earns an income that does not exceed **140% of the current year's income limit** for a household of your size.

Using the Current Income Limits as an example:

Household Size	Current Income Limit for New Applicants (80% AMI Units)	Income Limit for Current Tenants (140% of Current Income Limit)
1	\$70,750	\$99,050
2	\$80,850	\$113,190
3	\$90,950	\$127,330
4	\$101,050	\$141,470
5	\$109,150	\$152,810
6	\$117,250	\$164,150

According to the table above for the years shown, if a household's income exceeds the Income Limit for Current Tenants at the time of their renewal, their apartment shall still remain affordable until the next available market rate apartment with the same or greater number of bedrooms is rented at an affordable price. Once this market rate apartment becomes newly deemed as affordable, the apartment that was previously deemed affordable can subsequently be rented at market rates. The household with earnings exceeding the Income Limit for Current Tenants can choose to stay in their apartment, yet would then have to pay the market rate rent.

Q: Will my rent increase each year, and if so, by how much?

A: Rents may increase a few percentage points if Boston HMFA Area Median Income increases or the costs of utilities in Boxborough decreases. Likewise, if the Boston HMFA Area Median Income decreases and the costs of utilities increases, rents may decrease.

DISABLED-ACCESSIBLE UNIT INFORMATION

Q: Who qualifies for a disabled-accessible (DA) apartment?

A: According to *Mass Access: The Accessible Housing Registry*, “units that are barrier-free are accessible to people with disabilities that are wheelchair users, but could also be used by people of different types of disabilities. For example, a person of very short stature, a person with a brain injury or stroke, severe cardiac or respiratory problems, or a person with limited standing, walking, or reaching ability, may use the design features of a wheelchair accessible unit.” Verification from a doctor or other medical professional, a peer support group, a non-medical service agency, or a reliable third party who is in a position to know about the individual’s disability may be requested.

Q: How are disabled-accessible units awarded?

A: A household in need of a disabled-accessible unit will get priority for a DA unit over any household who does not need the disabled-accessible features. So if a DA unit is available, and there is a waiting list for the DA unit, the household in need of the unit will jump to the top of that Waiting List.

Q: Can households that qualify for a DA unit also apply for a non-DA unit?

A: Yes. Households that qualify for a DA unit will get priority for a DA unit but they can also have positions on Waiting Lists for non-DA units. Their positions on the Waiting List for the non-DA units will be based solely on the time of their application and their household size and their need of an accessible unit will not give them any priority.

Q: Who is entitled to request a reasonable accommodation?

A: Persons with disabilities are entitled to request a reasonable accommodation in rules, policies, practices, or services, or to request a reasonable modification in the housing, when such accommodations or modifications may be necessary to afford persons with disabilities an equal opportunity to use and enjoy the housing.