

MFA Year 2012 Mandatory Design Standards For Multifamily Rental Housing

The following Design Standards represent the minimum requirements for MFA-financed multifamily rental housing. MFA values excellence in design because well designed housing meets the needs of tenants, attracts market renters and promotes community acceptance of housing financed by MFA. All projects must meet or exceed each of these standards, as well as the minimum requirements of all applicable building codes and regulations. In addition, projects must meet ADA and Fair Housing Requirements. Each Project architect and owner will be required to certify at application that the Project design meets these Design Standards, and at completion will be required to certify that the Project was built in compliance with these Design Standards.

A. GENERAL DESIGN

1. Provisions must be made for accessibility for people with disabilities in conformance with the requirements of federal and state law including the Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
2. Incorporate "Visitability" standards for at least 50% of the units. The minimum features of this will include:
 - One Zero Step Entrance (can be primary entrance, garage entrance or other) on a route that has no steps, steep slopes, or abrupt level changes from the driveway, sidewalk or other point of arrival. Zero step means that there is no, or a low (3/4" maximum, beveled), level change at threshold.
 - All main floor interior passage doors, including bathrooms, should have 32 inches of clear passage space.
 - At least a half bath, preferably a full bath, on the main floor of the unit with a minimum area of 30" by 48" area beyond the swing of the door.
3. Amenities should reflect the desires of the target market. Amenities should be shown clearly on the plans and should be fully described within the narrative portion of the application package.
4. Insulate all water lines hot and cold. Rehabilitation projects should meet this to the extent possible by insulating all exposed water lines or insulating that will be exposed during the course of the rehabilitation.
5. All ventilation ductwork must be air sealed and located within the building's thermal envelope.
6. Plumbing must not be located in exterior walls unless its is furred off of the exterior wall and contained within the thermal envelope of the building.

B. INTERIOR DESIGN

1. All residential dwelling units must meet minimum units size requirements. Unheated areas such as patios, decks, porches, stoops, or storage rooms cannot be included.

Efficiency	425 gross heated square feet
1 Bedroom	575 gross heated square feet
2 Bedroom	750 gross heated square feet
3 Bedroom	1,000 gross heated square feet
4 Bedroom	1,200 gross heated square feet

2. The minimum bedroom size for the primary bedroom is 120 gross heated square feet. The minimum bedroom size for secondary bedrooms is 100 gross heated square feet with a minimum 9 foot width. Minimum bedroom sizes are to be understood as the room immediately surrounding the intended bed location, not to include interior closets or hallways separating the sleeping area from adjacent rooms, closets or spaces.
3. Kitchens must be equipped with pantries or broom closets.
4. Plumbing fixtures must be low-flow fixtures with the following specifications: 1.6 gallons-per-flush toilets, 2.0 gallons-per-minute showerheads, 1.5 gallon per minute kitchen faucets, 1.0 gallons-per-minute bathroom faucets.
5. Other features which must be provided include:
 - Linen closets outside the bathrooms; and
 - Bulk storage for items like snow tires, suitcases and sports equipment. (This may be located outside each unit.)
6. Water heater closets can not be considered to meet any of the above storage requirements.
7. All rooms must have permanent fixed lighting. Sleeping areas and living areas must not be dependent on switched outlets or floor lamps for lighting.
8. Kitchens must vent to the exterior and kitchen ranges must have hoods.
9. All bathroom exhaust fans, range hood, and dryer vents must vent directly to the outdoors.
10. Install Energy Star® lighting systems and appliances. Provide evidence that the water heater energy factors (EF) equate to or exceed the Energy Star® recommended levels.
11. If carpet must be used it must not be installed in high moisture areas including: entryways, bathrooms, kitchens and laundry areas. Installation of carpet must be tacked down, cannot be glued.
12. Roof/attic/ceiling insulation must have an R-value of no less than R-30, exterior wall insulation must have an R-value of no less than R-13.

C. LARGE UNIT DESIGN (applicable to units having three or more bedrooms)

1. The common spaces of units should be proportionately larger as the number of bedrooms increases.

2. Three-bedroom units and four-bedroom units must have at least 1.75 baths.

D. EXTERIOR DESIGN

1. Low maintenance exteriors should be used.
2. A complete landscape plan which maximizes existing natural features or otherwise enhances open space is required. Native, semi-native, or drought tolerant plants should be used and low water use maintenance systems such as drip systems and rainwater harvesting. Maintenance systems (e.g. irrigation systems) must be installed to maintain landscaping.
3. Water must be diverted away from the building walls and foundations by sloping exterior grade, or the installation of crushed rock and/or drainage pipe to allow for water drainage in cases where exterior grade cannot be sloped away from building.
4. Roof water must be diverted away from the building by the use of gutters and downspouts or roof overhangs.
5. Trash removal areas must be screened.
6. Buildings and dwelling units must be individually marked with visible, contrasting identifying signage to minimize the response time for receiving aid by police and/or emergency personnel. The building identifying signage must be illuminated so that it is clearly visible from dusk to dawn, as well as during daylight hours.
7. Single lever deadbolts and eye viewers are required on all entry doors to residential units.
8. On-site playground areas (as applicable based on target tenant population)
 - a. Recreational facilities must be provided for different age groups. (For example, sand boxes within sight of units for children under 5, "tot lots" for ages 5 to 12, and a basketball court for ages 12 and older.)
 - b. Play areas and playgrounds for children should be located away from high automobile traffic patterns, and situated so that the play area is visible from the maximum number of dwelling units possible for safety.
 - c. Designated play areas and playgrounds are considered "common areas", and must be on an accessible route per accessibility codes.
 - d. A bench must be provided at playgrounds to allow a child's supervisor to sit and rest comfortably. The bench must be anchored permanently, must be on an ADA accessible route, and must be weather resistant.
 - e. A "warning" sign must be posted to advise residents that children playing at the playground will be doing so at their own risk. The sign must be posted at a visible location, and use contrasting colors for better identification.

E. COMMON AREA FACILITIES

1. On-Site Laundry Facilities

- a. Laundry facilities are required at all developments with twenty or more residential dwelling units.
- b. There must be a minimum of one washer and one dryer per twelve dwelling units if washer/dryer hookups are not available in each dwelling unit. If hookups are available in each dwelling unit, there must be a minimum of one washer and one dryer per twenty dwelling units. If washer and dryers are provided in each unit, additional facilities are not required.
- c. A “folding” table or countertop must be installed at an ADA compliant height.
- d. The laundry room must have adequate entrance lighting from dusk to dawn to assist in greater security during evening hours.

2. Community / Office Space

- a. All special needs and elderly developments must have a community room on site, or immediate access to such space on an adjacent property.
- b. All developments consisting of twenty (20) residential dwelling units or more, must have a site office of at least 200 square feet (inclusive of an accessible toilet facility) and a maintenance room of at least 100 square feet.

F. REHABILITATION PROJECTS

MFA will exercise reasonable flexibility in applying the above standards to rehabilitation projects, but wherever possible the Design Standards should be incorporated into the rehabilitation scope of work. Any building system being replaced should be replaced in accordance with the requirements listed above. Rehabilitation projects do not have to meet the minimum area requirements described above. Applications must propose a scope of work appropriate to the building(s), as reflected in the Capital Needs Assessment, but should not involve unnecessary work. Proposals must address the following elements:

1. Making “common areas” accessible for people with disabilities.
2. Improving site and exterior dwelling lighting, landscaping/fencing, and installing high-quality finishes.
3. Adding porches, or other aesthetic amenities to enhance the exterior quality and interest of the project.
4. Using energy-efficient related products to replace inferior ones, including insulated windows and doors, and adding additional insulation. Improving water efficiency with changes in landscaping, appliances, and fixtures. Using low maintenance materials.
5. Improving electrical system, heating and cooling units, plumbing fixtures, water heaters, toilets, sinks, faucets and tub/shower units, especially with use of water and energy conserving equipment and systems.
6. Improving quality of interior conditions and fixtures, including carpet, vinyl, interior doors, painting, drywall repairs, cabinets, appliances, light fixtures and mini-blinds.

7. Where possible, upgrading bathrooms and kitchens.
8. Water drainage should be managed as outline in criteria D-3 and D-4 above, if its is not already.

G. SINGLE ROOM OCCUPANCY DEVELOPMENTS

1. The minimum unit size is 140 gross heated square feet; and the maximum unit size is 500 gross heated square feet.
2. Each unit must contain at least one full size single bed, a lockable storage compartment or chest of drawers, and a vertical clothes closet measuring at least three feet wide.
3. Each project must provide at least one set of bathroom facilities for every 16 units: Each bathroom facility must contain at least one sink, one shower with curtain or door and one toilet with door for every 4 units.
4. Each building composing the project must include a food preparation area if the individual units do not. The food preparation area must be adequately sized for the number of resident in the building.
5. A community center or meeting room and laundry facilities must be provided on site.
6. Office space must be provided for provision of personal services to tenants.
7. Public transportation (where applicable) must be within .5 mile.