

# Inclusionary Zoning

---

**“Governments at all levels must redouble their efforts to expand the affordable supply. And with growing recognition that children’s lifelong achievement rests on stable, safe, and healthy living conditions, policymakers must also ensure better access of minority and low-income households to higher opportunity communities.”**

*–The State of The Nation’s Housing 2016, Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University*



## WHAT ARE INCLUSIONARY ZONING POLICIES?

Inclusionary zoning (IZ) is an affordable housing policy tool that requires developers to set aside a portion of housing units for low- and moderate- income residents. Units created via IZ are available to homeowners and renters and are typically part of multifamily developments. IZ policies may apply to all or certain units, and often require any resales go only to low- or moderate-income purchasers. The availability of affordable housing sets low- and moderate-income residents up for healthy lives.

## HOW DOES INCLUSIONARY ZONING IMPROVE THE LIVES OF BIG CITY RESIDENTS?

Across the country, many cities are grappling with ensuring housing remains affordable to residents at all income levels—especially when new developments come in. Inclusionary zoning is only a single tool what must be part of a larger and more comprehensive toolbox that ensures safe, stable, affordable housing. However, it is an important indicator of a city’s commitment to producing affordable options alongside new development and growth.

[Affordable housing has been shown to be associated with myriad health benefits](#), from reducing crowding to making more household resources available to pay for health care and healthy food. High quality, stable, affordable housing not only reduces exposure to environmental toxins, but also supports mental health.

Inclusionary zoning policies [promote inclusive communities](#) by locating affordable housing in low-poverty, high-opportunity neighborhoods. A study by the RAND Corporation found that [inclusionary zoning policies increase access to better performing schools](#).

According to the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, IZ policies can also help [combat urban sprawl and decrease traffic congestion and air quality issues](#).

---

## WHAT IS THE EVIDENCE THAT INCLUSIONARY ZONING POLICIES WORK?

In its review of the evidence, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's County Health Rankings finds IZ policies [increase access to quality, affordable housing and boost neighborhood socioeconomic diversity](#)—both of which are shown to decrease health disparities and improve quality of life for children and adults.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta calls IZ policies a “[promising tool for housing affordability](#),” noting, “Production and preservation of affordable homes are critical for creating inclusive communities and addressing housing needs among families with modest incomes.”

## ISSUES FOR FUTURE POLICY IMPROVEMENT

As noted above, ensuring all city residents have access to safe, stable, affordable housing is a complex issue that requires a multi-faceted policy response. In choosing a single policy—inclusionary zoning—CityHealth sought to identify an “indicator policy” showing that cities had made a commitment to preserving affordable housing options. IZ policies are not a panacea for all cities' housing needs. For instance, in economically depressed cities there is little new development and in cities with high concentrations of people in extreme poverty, families with the most need are likely ineligible. Additionally, when IZ policies allow developers to move low- and moderate-income families offsite, the goal of increased socioeconomic diversity can be lost.

One way for cities to get at this issue as well as some of the other questions of efficacy is to ensure IZ policy is based on a housing needs assessment that disaggregates the needs of the low-income population in the area. A good policy should be setting income requirements and bedrooms within units in a way that reflects the demographics of the area. For example if a city has a high number of low income seniors who are in insecure housing, then the inclusionary zoning policy should emphasize production of studio or 1 bedroom units that meet the income capacity of the senior population.

## RESOURCES FOR CITIES ON IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIONARY ZONING POLICIES

[PolicyLink-IZ 2003](#) - PolicyLink. Equitable development toolkit: Inclusionary zoning. 2003.

[IHI](#) - Innovative Housing Institute (IHI). Inclusionary housing.

[National Housing Conference](#): Inclusive Communities Research

[MA EEA-IZ](#) - Massachusetts Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (MA EEA). Smart growth/smart energy toolkit: Inclusionary zoning.

[ChangeLab-Housing toolkit 2015](#) - ChangeLab Solutions. Preserving, protecting, and expanding affordable housing: A policy toolkit for public health. 2015.

[ULI-Building healthy places](#) - Urban Land Institute (ULI) and Building Healthy Places Initiative. Building Healthy Places Toolkit: Strategies for Enhancing Health in the Built Environment.

[LISC-Affordable housing](#) - Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). Helping neighbors build communities: Affordable housing.

Resources from [Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta](#)

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta's [Real Estate Research blog](#).

Robert Hickey, Lisa Sturtevant, and Emily Thaden. [Achieving Lasting Affordability through Inclusionary Housing](#). Cambridge, MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, July 2014.

National Community Land Trust Network's Resources on Developing an Inclusionary Housing Policy: [Part I. Key Considerations for the Policy and Regulations](#) [Part II. Key Consideration for the Homeownership Program](#) [Sample Documents Library](#)

C. Tyler Mulligan and James L. Joyce. Inclusionary Zoning: A Guide to Ordinances and the Law, Chapel Hill, NC: School of Government, University North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2010.

[Center for Housing Policy publications on inclusionary zoning](#)