

# 2024 RI Housing Fair Housing Policy Report

November 2025

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## Introduction

In accordance with section 42-55-22.2, this annual report submitted to the General Assembly details the measures that RIHousing has taken to further the policies of Chapter 37 of title 34 (Rhode Island Fair Housing Practices Act).

Recognizing the importance of fair housing protections, RIHousing plays a leadership role in ensuring that members of all protected classes have fair access to all affordable homeownership and rental housing programs. RIHousing has an Affirmative Action Plan in which its goals for elevating participation in fair housing programs, as well as contracts for goods, services, and housing development, are detailed.

Described in the remainder of this report are agency efforts that further the policies of the Fair Housing Act, such as: developing strategies that further fair housing; prioritizing the development of homes in areas of opportunity; ensuring equal access to housing for persons with disabilities; and increasing access to education and information about fair housing.

## Fair Housing Objectives

RIHousing continuously strives to improve homeownership opportunities for low- and moderate-income households in a safe and supportive lending environment. In doing so, the agency affirms its goal to provide equal opportunities for accessible subsidized housing for all eligible Rhode Islanders, among other goals, which are further defined in the state's 2020 – 2024 Consolidated Plan, such as:

- Developing and preserving the existing stock of affordable housing through new construction and rehabilitation for homeowners and renters,
- Preventing and ending homelessness by increasing opportunities for access to affordable housing that meets residents' needs,
- Improving health, safety, and efficiency of all homes by providing safety improvements, energy efficiency improvements, access modifications, or treatment of lead or other home hazards for owner- and renter-occupied housing units,
- Enhancing publicly owned facilities and infrastructure, and increasing economic stability through improved access to jobs, training and education, health and wellness, and more.

Additionally, RIHousing continues to pursue programs that address the impediments described in the State's 2020 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing (AI). Such impediments identified in the AI include:

- An inadequate supply of affordable housing that: is accessible to persons with disabilities, provides a healthy home environment, and is located in higher opportunity areas,
- An inadequate level of public transportation to efficiently connect people with employment and other important community assets,

- Public opposition to new affordable housing developments,
- An inadequate level of funding to address affordable housing throughout Rhode Island,
- Discriminatory behavior toward members of the protected classes in their search for housing and their attempts to maintain their housing.

Further, the 2022 RIHousing Five-Year Strategic Plan serves to guide the work of RIHousing in addressing the state’s housing issues identified through research and stakeholder engagement. The Plan identifies five strategic goals that reflect a comprehensive approach to addressing those issues. The goals outlined in the Plan for 2022-2027 are the following:

- Increase new housing production for low and middle-income Rhode Islanders,
- Expand partnerships to increase the creation and preservation of affordable homes for Rhode Islanders,
- Drive innovation and accessibility in housing development, mortgage financing and leasing services,
- Invest in the expansion of partner technical expertise and capacity to develop, preserve, and manage affordable housing across the state,
- Transform RIHousing into a flexible, dynamic, top-performing housing finance agency.

These goals and areas identified for improvement consistently align with RIHousing’s ongoing efforts to further fair housing, as described throughout this report.

## 2024 Housing Background

Rhode Island is currently experiencing a serious housing shortage. Vacancy rates are declining in both the rental and homeownership markets, and housing costs are increasing. According to the RI Foundation, the growth in housing supply in Rhode Island is exceeded by growth in the number of households, which led to vacancy rates declining by about 30% between 2018 and 2022.<sup>i</sup> In 2024, the average vacancy rate for Rhode Island was 2.8%.<sup>ii</sup>

In terms of both homeownership and rental, Rhode Island housing costs have increased significantly in the past few years. According to the RI Association of Realtors, the median sale price of a single-family home in Rhode Island in 2024 was \$475,000, an 11.8% increase from the median home price in 2023.<sup>iii</sup> The average asking rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Rhode Island in 2024—\$2,073—was 14% higher than in 2020, adjusted for inflation.<sup>iv</sup> In 2024, a Rhode Island household earning the median homeowner household income of \$112,858 or the overall median household income for Rhode Island (\$86,372) could not afford to purchase a home in any Rhode Island municipality. Similarly, households earning the state’s median renter household income of \$48,434 would not be

able to afford the average 2-bedroom rent in any Rhode Island town.<sup>v</sup> In Rhode Island, a third of households—about 142,920 households—are housing cost-burdened (paying more than 30% of their income for housing costs)<sup>vi</sup>, emphasizing a need for assistance and affordable housing production.

In April 2021, Governor McKee signed the Fair Housing Practices Act, which adds “lawful source of income” to the list of protected classes under Rhode Island’s fair housing laws. This new law prohibits landlords from engaging in actions such as denying housing, limiting access to housing, discouraging home seekers, making or publishing discriminatory statements, or creating different terms, conditions, rules, fees, or standards because of a renter’s reliance on a lawful source of income including rental assistance programs. This measure will help to reduce the barriers to accessing affordable housing for lower-income residents in the state. Information on the rights of tenants under this Act is provided to all RIHousing Housing Choice Voucher Program participants.

### Homeownership Programs

Through the many first-time homebuyer assistance programs administered by RIHousing, the agency continues to provide the resources necessary to bridge the homeownership gap that disproportionately burdens lower-income residents and residents belonging to protected classes. Having access to stable, high-quality housing is essential for families to access better opportunities for employment, education, and positive health outcomes.

In 2024, RIHousing continued its efforts to reduce the barriers for protected classes in part through its *First Homes*, *Extra Assistance*, *10k DPA*, *15k DPA*, *Statewide DPA*, and *FirstGenHomeRI* programs. During the year, 1,611 *First Homes* mortgages were issued to Rhode Islanders. 88% of those who participated in the *First Homes* program in 2024 also received assistance from one of our extra assistance programs, downpayment assistance programs, or from *FirstGenHomeRI*. The *FirstGenHomeRI* program, launched in 2022, provides downpayment and/or closing cost assistance to first-generation homebuyers. To qualify, applicants must reside in Central Falls, East Providence, Pawtucket, Woonsocket, Providence, or Newport (specifically census tract 44005040500). There were 42 total participants in the program in 2024.

Launched in 2023 and made available to first-time homebuyers, the *Statewide DPA* program offered \$17,500 in down payment and closing cost assistance grants to each recipient. By the close of the program in July of 2024, a total of 1,672 households had been assisted through the *Statewide DPA* program.

### Homebuyer Education and Homeowner Counseling

Evidence suggests that homeowner education counseling administered early in the homebuying process has the potential to yield numerous positive outcomes for prospective homeowners, including more secure mortgages, lower housing costs, improved credit scores, and decreased likelihood of delinquency or foreclosure.<sup>vii</sup> In order to prepare Rhode Islanders to successfully engage in the homebuying process, first-time homebuyers seeking

to receive a RIHousing mortgage are required to participate in homebuyer education classes either online or in person prior to closing on their loans. In 2024, both English and Spanish-led in person homebuyer education classes were available. At these in-person classes, there were 129 enrollees in the Spanish-led class and 43 enrollees in the English-led class. The virtual English-language homebuyer education classes that initially became available in October 2020 also remained available in 2024. In total, 2,532 residents participated in homebuyer education through the virtual English-led sessions in 2024. Online courses in both English and Spanish remained available during the year through RIHousing's *eHomeAmerica* homebuyer education platform. Education through *eHomeAmerica* had 1,402 participants, 113 of whom (8% of participants) enrolled in the Spanish-instructed option.

RIHousing has also been offering confidential HUD-approved counseling to struggling homeowners since November 2007 through its HelpCenter services. The HelpCenter specializes in helping Rhode Islanders avoid foreclosure by providing individualized guidance on finding an affordable mortgage or modifying an existing mortgage, budgeting, developing repayment plans, or connecting with RI Legal Services. In 2024, 105 households were supported through HelpCenter counseling. These efforts to prepare Rhode Islanders to engage in the homebuying process and to prevent foreclosure, particularly for members of protected classes, continued in 2024 to align with RIHousing's mission to further fair housing.

### Home Repair Programs

During 2023, RIHousing continued to provide lead hazard remediation resources for homes constructed prior to 1978 that were finished with lead-based paint. 26 loans/grants were issued through RIHousing's *LeadSafe Homes* program in 2024 and remediation work was completed on 42 units. 73% (19 grants) of grants/loans were issued to households with incomes at or below 80% AMI, and the other 7 grants were issued to participants at or below 120% AMI. 9 loans/grants were issued to tenants, and 17 were issued to owner-occupants.

In 2019, Rhode Island was awarded an \$8.4 million grant to support lead abatement efforts in four census tracts in Pawtucket and Central Falls with a high number low-income households and a high incidence of blood lead poisoning cases. RIHousing has since received HUD approval to expand targeting to East Providence and Newport as well as all of Pawtucket, and Central Falls.

RIHousing's home repair programs not only serve to improve the quality of Rhode Island's older housing stock but also make homebuying significantly more accessible for lower-income prospective homeowners since homes in need of rehabilitation tend to be more affordable than newer homes. While the majority of the resources offered by RIHousing to residents for home repair are made available through its *LeadSafe Homes* program, the agency also issued 8 FHA 203(k) loans in 2024, which help to defray the costs of any necessary repairs.

## Rental Housing Development

RIHousing provided funding for 1,517 housing units to be developed or preserved in 2024. Of those 1,517 housing units, 58.5% were set aside for families (888 units), 29% were set aside for seniors (440 units), and 12.5% were set aside for Permanent Supportive Housing (189 units). Additionally, RIHousing continues to monitor thousands of housing units funded through the *HOME* and *LIHTC* programs, which aim to increase affordable housing opportunities for low- and very low-income residents. RIHousing had 2,124 units funded by the HOME program and 13,137 units funded through the LIHTC program under its management in 2024.

RIHousing is committed to expanding housing opportunities in communities throughout the state, particularly in rural and suburban communities where affordable housing options are limited. 32.8% of the units funded in 2024 were in municipalities located outside of the urban core, which tend to have higher opportunity in education, labor force engagement, environmental health, and lower concentrations of poverty than those within the urban core<sup>1</sup>. Increasing the stock of rental units in cities and towns with greater opportunities for economic mobility is essential for continuing to enable upward mobility for the state's disadvantaged populations. Additionally, 16.6% of the 1,517 units funded during the year were in Hopkinton (17 units), Johnston (22 units), Lincoln (26 units), Middletown (64 units), Narragansett (9 units), North Kingstown (40 units), Portsmouth (54 Units), and Smithfield (20 units), which are eight of the 28 municipalities in Rhode Island that have not yet met the state's requirements under the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act as of 2024.

To further promote equal opportunities for members of protected classes, RIHousing requires that all contractors and suppliers of goods and services sign contracts containing an Equal Opportunity Clause, in accordance with Rhode Island General Law 28-5.1.

## Rental Assistance and Homelessness Prevention Programs

RIHousing continued in 2024 to assist disadvantaged residents through the administration of various rental assistance programs, including the *Housing Choice Voucher Program* (HCVP), as well as sponsor-based programs such as the *RI Continuum of Care* (RiCoC). These programs aid those who qualify in avoiding homelessness and accessing housing subsidies and supportive services. The *Housing Choice Voucher Program* (HCVP), *Road Home*, and *Rhode Island Continuum of Care* (RiCoC) programs are targeted specifically towards lower-income renter households and serve to expand housing opportunity for

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<sup>1</sup> Cities considered part of the urban core in Rhode Island are: Central Falls, Newport, Providence, Pawtucket, and Woonsocket.

qualifying Rhode Islanders. At the end of 2024, 1,440 housing assistance vouchers were issued through HCVP and 178 were issued through the RI Continuum of Care. Seven families were being assisted by the Road Home program at the end of 2024.

RIHousing also continued to administer the *Family Self-Sufficiency Program* (FSS) in 2024, which links HCVP participants with resources aimed to help them avoid future housing insecurity. Such resources may be provided by private and public agencies and include job training, education, and other services that improve access to stable employment and financial independence. In 2024, RIHousing had a total of 171 families enrolled by the end of the year. In total, \$599,253 in FSS funds were held in escrow in 2024.

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<sup>i</sup> RI Foundation, “Housing Supply and Homelessness in Rhode Island.” 2023.

<sup>ii</sup> CoStar Market Trends, retrieved September 2025.

<sup>iii</sup> Rhode Island Association of Realtors. “R.I. Home Sales Rose in 2024 Reversing Downward Trend.” <https://www.rirealtors.org/news/2025/02/13/press-release/r.i.-home-sales-rose-in-2024-reversing-downward-trend/>.

<sup>iv</sup> CoStar Market Trends, retrieved January 2025.

<sup>v</sup> HousingWorksRI, “2025 Housing Fact Book.” 2025.

<sup>vi</sup> HousingWorksRI, “2025 Housing Fact Book.” 2025.

<sup>vii</sup> Sackett, Chase. “The Evidence on Homeownership Education and Counseling.” Evidence Matters. HUD User, Office of Policy Development and Research, 2016.

<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/periodicals/em/spring16/highlight2.html>.