



**Housing Finance
Agency**

2027 Design & Architectural Process Manual

Second Draft – ~~May~~ August

2026

Office of Multifamily | Effective December 1, 2026

Seeking to Provide Input?

OHFA will be accepting comments on these draft standards beginning Thursday, August 20, 2026 through Thursday, September 3, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Comments may be submitted via e-mail to DAS@ohiohome.org.

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1. Communication with OHFA

The Ohio Housing Finance Agency relies on multiple email addresses for communication. Here's your cheat sheet for choosing the right one:

DAS@ohiohome.org:

- Submission of comments on any draft architectural standards
—Only monitored during the posted public comment period
-

arch@ohiohome.org:

- Submission of **Exception Inquiries**
—All communication related to the architectural review
-

constructionmonitoring@ohiohome.org:

- Notification of construction start
- All communication related to construction progress and construction observation

For all other communication, see:

<https://ohiohome.org/ppd/contact.aspx> and
<https://ohiohome.org/contact/default>

Any email message sent to OHFA may constitute a public record, and if so may be publicly available to anyone who requests it.

Developer must notify the OHFA Underwriting Analyst via email if there are changes to the development team contacts, including project architect, after the initial application.

1.2. Architectural Submission and Review Process

Submissions and Correspondence

~~All communications related to the architectural review, including notification of submission of architectural plans, should be sent to arch@ohiohome.org. Architectural plans must be submitted with the project's application via OHFA's File Transfer Site (FTS); see applicable funding program guidelines.—State the project name as it appears in the AHFA/GFA and OHFA tracking number in the subject line, and copy the OHFA architectural staff, and the OHFA Underwriting Analyst on the email. Architectural plans must be submitted with the project's application via OHFA's File Transfer Site~~

~~(FTS). Notify OHFA if there are changes to the contacts after submission and send **Change of Contacts Form** to the OHFA Underwriting Analyst and arch@ohiohome.org.~~

Review Process

OHFA staff are available to meet with applicants early in their design and planning process, and to provide guidance before the formal submittal. Staff are also ~~able available~~ to join applicants in meetings with any other governmental entity involved in the project as requested, including but not limited to USDA, HUD, SHPO, and local governments.

After submitting 80 percent drawings, applicant should expect to receive a review letter from OHFA architectural staff no later than six weeks prior to the ~~indicated date of financial closingscheduled OHFA board date (when applicable - if the project does not require OHFA board approval, coordinate review date with OHFA underwriter and architectural staff).~~ Please see OHFA's website for more detail on the review timeline. The architectural review letter will provide confirmation to the underwriter and development team that the project is allowed to proceed with presentation to board. If the review identifies any items of noncompliance, the development team must reply to OHFA to schedule a virtual meeting, then provide a follow-up letter with a response to each comment. Developer's response letter must include ~~and~~ corrected drawings, specifications or forms as applicable.

All OHFA architectural reviews corrections and approvals must be completed prior to construction commencement. ~~For any outstanding items the development team must contact the OHFA architectural staff the earlier of 60 days prior to construction commencement or as identified in the architectural review.~~ All requirements identified in the Architectural Review/Approval letters must be followed during construction. ~~OHFA architectural reviews and approvals must be posted on site with the permit and construction documents.~~

Decisions made by the OHFA Staff Architects may be appealed to the Director of Multifamily Housing in writing; please put "ARCH APPEAL" in the subject line. ~~Appeals must be specific and, where appropriate, cite the governing regulation that conflicts with the Staff Architect decision.~~

Applicant must notify OHFA of any proposed substantial changes in plans, scope of work, or materials ~~that are contemplated~~ after submitting 80 percent drawings. See Construction Progress & Monitoring for more details.

Required Documents -- Preliminary Proposal Application Architectural Submission

At minimum, the proposal application architectural submission (when specifically required by funding program guidelines) must include all of the following:

- The Design and Construction Features Form (DCF), including Construction Certification, completed, signed and submitted as a pdf.
- Scope of Work form (SoW), if required by the QAP.
- Exception Request form(s), if applicable.
- Preliminary drawings, which must include all of the following:
 - Cover sheet with name of development, development address, development team, drawing index, code information, and table indicating unit schedule (including mobility, semi-ambulatory, flex, and sensory impaired units), types and sizes
 - Site plan

- include adjacent parcel information (e.g. zoning, roads, railroad tracks, etc.)
- ~~clearly show the context of the neighborhood where property will exist~~
- include all site ~~detail~~elements, landscape intent, and parking data and layouts
- Description of existing historic features, if applicable
- Dimensioned floor plans with room designations and proposed finishes
- ~~Color-coded floor plans with legend, indicating area classifications per BOMA and OHFA guidelines. See DCF and **OHFA Square Footage Calculation** for more details.~~
- Exterior elevations with material notations (rehab may provide notated photographs)
- ~~Typical wall sections (new construction only)~~
- Schematic ~~Drawings~~drawings and/or written ~~descriptions~~narrative describingfor HVAC, plumbing, and ~~mechanical~~, electrical & ~~plumbing~~ or similar items that are included in the scope of work ~~systems~~.

Preliminary drawings described above must be submitted electronically as a single PDF file. Should questions arise regarding dimensions or areas, OHFA reserves the right to request floor plan files in DXF or DWG format.

Required Documents -- **Final Application Architectural Submission**

~~Final applications must include 80 percent complete drawing sets, including complete plans for all trades. Unless approved by OHFAIf the funding program required a proposal application, the plans final application must include the project name as submitted with the proposal application, andthe OHFA tracking number, and .The submission must show conformityalign with to the preliminary proposal submittal drawings and formsscope of work unless otherwise discussed with OHFA architectural staff if applicable.~~

At minimum, the final application architectural submission must include all of the following:

- ~~AHFA, DCF, SoW, and 80% drawings must all be consistent with matching information (e.g. safe harbor, number of units, accessible units, contact information, etc.).~~
- The DCF, ~~updated from the proposal application and -included d/incorporated into the front of in the published 80% drawingdrawing sets. The DCF must include:~~
 - ~~Updated information, if needed, from the proposal application submission, matching the information in the 80% drawings;~~
 - ~~The signed Construction Certification pages;~~
 - ~~Completed verifications, as applicable, that the drawings comply with accessibility, energy efficiency and/or green building requirements required for the development or committed to in the application for funding.~~
- Updated Scope of Work form (if required by the QAP).
- Asbestos, mold, lead-based paint considerations as required.
- Documentation that all items required to be completed per Phase I or II Environmental Site Assessment, or per applicable Environmental Review performed by OHFA, have been completed. Alternately, if itemsor will be completed during construction, this must be incorporated into the drawings and specifications.
- If applicable, a description of condominiumized space:
 - Plans identifying any areas that are not part of OHFA's funding, and/or identifying which project features & common areas will be shared by multiple entities.
 - Draft legal agreement detailing costs & maintenance of common space (including percentages to be paid by each condo unit if applicable), parking availability, air rights, default remedies, commercial uses, and tenant selection.

- Drawing sets should at approximately 80% completion, so long as they provide documentation evidence of the project meeting all design requirements of the Design & Architectural Standards (DAS), and must include all of the following, each to a level of 80% completion or greater:
 - Name of development, development address, development team, drawing index, code information, and table indicating unit schedule (including mobility, semi-ambulatory, flex, and sensory impaired units), types and sizes
 - Site plans
 - including adjacent parcel information (e.g. zoning, roads, railroad tracks etc.), all site detail elements, and parking data and layouts;
 - Landscape intent
 - Demolition plans if applicable
 - Plan Drawings and notes identifying existing historic features if applicable
 - Interior and Exterior elevations with material notations
 - Dimensioned floor plans
 - ~~Color-coded floor plans with legend, indicating area classifications per BOMA and OHFA guidelines. See OHFA Square Footage Calculation for more details.~~
 - Wall sections ~~(if applicable)~~
 - Structure (if applicable)
 - Finishes and schedules
 - Any Details required to show conformance with DAS guidelines
 - Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing -plans
 - Specifications

80% sets, described above, must be submitted electronically as a single PDF file for drawings and a separate PDF for specifications. Applicant must also submit CAD files for dimensioned floor plans in either DXF or AutoCAD R14 DWG format. CAD files must include the polylines used for the area calculations as required by BOMA. Include or bind all xrefs; proprietary authorship information such as title blocks, Architecture seals, etc. should be removed from files.

2.3. Exception Requests

All program participants must conform to the DAS requirements unless waived by OHFA in writing. ~~OHFA will accept requests for an exception to specific requirements as noted throughout the document and as summarized below.~~

All requests for exceptions must be submitted using the OHFA Exception Request form; ~~must include reasonable justification for the exception including supporting documentation~~, and must be submitted to OHFA on or before the date indicated in the respective program calendar. A final determination to accept, deny, or modify the exception will be made by OHFA by the date indicated in the program calendars. All exceptions granted are based on the unique circumstances of the project and the QAP, DAS, and guidelines for the funding year, and will not be transferred to other projects. Among other factors, OHFA may consider:

- How different is the proposed exception from the OHFA standard?
- What impact will the proposed exception have on the project?
- What unique characteristic(s) of the project have created a technical infeasibility or justification for the request? (For example: unique site, design, or use of the development)
- Is there a conflict between the DAS and other funding sources (e.g. HUD, USDA-RD, SHPO)?

Applicant must include details (for example, if requesting an exception to unit sizes please list all noncompliant unit types and their size) and supporting documentation (for example: screenshots of as-

builds with structural column locations, letters or reviews from SHPO, preliminary plans for a DAS-compliant unit kitchen showing that it encroaches unacceptably on the existing living room).

Exception Inquiries before Application

Circumstances may compel the development team to inquire with OHFA regarding an exception to the DAS requirements prior to submitting a preliminary or final funding application. For example, a Rehabilitation project may wish to confirm an exception to smaller unit sizes before finalizing an acquisition. The owner of a historic building may hope to document an exception to sustainability requirements prior to specifying new windows for a Historic Tax Credit application.

OHFA is committed to providing these answers via the **OHFA Exception Inquiry form**. The process is identical to an Exception Request in that it must include reasonable justification for the exception including supporting documentation; all exceptions granted are based on the unique circumstances of the project and the funding year, and will not be transferred to other projects. Exception Inquiries should be submitted via email to **arch@ohiohome.org** with “Exception Inquiry” in the subject line. If the developer anticipates submitting multiple Exception Inquiries for an upcoming project, OHFA asks that these be bundled and submitted in a single email. A final determination to accept, deny, or modify the exception(s) will be made by OHFA within 10 business days.

If the project is eventually submitted to OHFA, the Exception Inquiry form along with OHFA’s response should be included with the application in lieu of submitting a new Exception Request. If the project is submitted to OHFA in a later program year, the Exception Inquiry is no longer valid and should be resubmitted or submitted as a new Exception Request.

New Construction

Requests for exceptions may only be submitted for the following:

- Items that are subject to non-OHFA (such as local codes or design standards, funding source, etc.) requirements that may conflict with the DAS; or
- Items that are unable to be complied with for a compelling reason, as fully described by the applicant in the Exception Request form.

Rehabilitation and Adaptive Reuse

Projects involving rehabilitation or adaptive reuse may seek an exception to any design requirement in the DAS if able to provide evidence that incorporating a specific element is infeasible. The exception request must include adequate supporting documentation to demonstrate how incorporation of the element is infeasible. Justification is often focused on structural infeasibility but can include other considerations (e.g. terrain, historic features).

Exceptions after Architectural Review Approval

Exception **Requestss** submitted after Architectural Review Approval must be based on something that is outside of the control of the project team (for example – a historic remodel discovers during demolition that they cannot install roll-in showers due to previously hidden structural reinforcement in the slab). These exception requests should be submitted promptly when such a condition is discovered and OHFA will provide expedited review given the time-sensitive nature of construction. Any exceptions requested cannot violate the program requirements or scoring criteria used for OHFA funding received. ~~OHFA must be notified of such a request within 30 days, and the complete exception~~

~~request can be submitted when a solution has been identified. The complete exception request must include all information noted above.~~

3.4. Construction Progress & Monitoring

Quarterly Construction Monitoring Reports

All developments ~~utilizing HTC or HDAP funds~~ are required to complete the [OHFA Quarterly Construction Monitoring Report \(QCM\)](#), available on the OHFA webpage. The Report must be submitted quarterly beginning the first quarterly reporting period following either OHFA Board approval or actual construction start, whichever is earlier. Reports are due January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1 of each year until the project is placed into service. OHFA reserves the right to suspend disbursement of funds if the Report is not submitted.

Notification of Construction Start

Projects must notify OHFA at the constructionmonitoring@ohiohome.org mailbox when construction begins, ~~and copy constructionmonitoring@ohiohome.org on any site observation reports for the project (from the architect, syndicator, etc.).~~ Projects with HDAP funds ~~must are required to~~ hold a preconstruction meeting [per HUD guidelines](#), and [must invite OHFA to that meeting. Whether or not OHFA is able to attend, developer must provide OHFA with documentation of that the preconstruction meeting with the first draw of HDAP funds.](#)

Construction Monitoring

The OHFA Construction Monitoring team ensures that construction progresses according to schedule and that the recipient fulfills all terms of the funding agreements and related policies. Staff will conduct periodic site visits during construction to provide technical assistance, verify that the project is on schedule to meet required deadlines, and to ensure requirements of the various funding sources are being met based on the Architectural Approval for the project and DAS that the project was awarded under. [Visits will be scheduled at approximately 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100% completion.](#) A member of the development team (owner or architect) must attend all Construction Monitoring site visits.

For projects utilizing HDAP funds, staff will also review construction costs, progress, third-party inspection reports, and [all](#) change orders as part of each request for funds [\(per HUD guidelines\)](#). ~~Change orders submitted must include any revised drawings as well as the related AIA G701, AIA G702 and AIA G703 (or similar non-AIA contract documents). OHFA may request copies of change orders if additional information is needed to verify project costs or to verify that commitments made by the recipient during the application process will still be met.~~

~~Additionally, for~~ For all OHFA projects, OHFA requires the submission of any changes [orders for any major building systems that do not have a substantially similar material or solution involve a significant deviation from the original materials or design.](#)

~~Examples of changes~~ [orders](#) that should be submitted [for review](#) included but or not limited to: 1) durability of materials, 2) changes in or removal of features, e.g. fences, pools, community rooms/buildings, accessibility features, 3) loss or moving of units between buildings, 4) changes in programmatic space, 5) substantial changes in costs including [cost changes to the total project of 20% or greater, use of contingency 10% or greater, cost savings of \\$10,000 or more, and value engineering.](#)

The ~~development~~Developer must also notify OHFA of ~~any substantial changes in plans, scope of work, or materials that are contemplated after submitting 80 percent drawings and throughout construction of the project. This includes~~ any damages, fires, archeological or environmental issues during construction that adversely impact the project, project completion or occupancy. Notifications must be made to the constructionmonitoring@ohiohome.org mailbox. ~~When a change order is submitted it should include the related AIA G702 and AIA G703. OHFA staff will provide a response within two weeks.~~

Additional Documentation required for HOME and NHTF

All HOME and NHTF awards must complete documentation to comply with Section 3 requirements. Documentation at minimum includes identifying the total hours, Section 3 hours, and Section 3 targeted hours for all contractor employees working on the project on the [Monthly Section 3 Utilization Report](#), identification of whether the contractor has Section 3 business concern status, and verification of meeting or exceeding benchmark goals to the greatest extent feasible. Review [Policy 21-04](#) for details on compliance including when the benchmarks aren't met to complete "Qualitative efforts".

Starting with 2024 awards, all HOME and NHTF awards must maintain compliance with the Build America Buy America (BABA) Act.

All Section 3 submissions to OHFA and any applicable BABA documentation can be attached to [the OHFA Quarterly Construction Monitoring Form](#). Contact your Project Administration Analyst with any questions.

Construction Completion

OHFA Construction Monitoring staff will [coordinate with the development team to](#) conduct a ~~construction~~-closeout visit ~~once construction is substantially complete~~at around 100% construction completion to verify all requirements are being met based on the Architectural Approval for the project and DAS that the project was awarded under. ~~A copy of the applicable DAS must be provided to the property management team as part of the final O&M manual.~~

~~In addition, the following documents are required to be submitted to OHFA with the request for HDAP project closeout and/or issuance of Form 8609:~~

- ~~• Certificate(s) of Occupancy (or Final Inspection from the governing jurisdiction, if applicable);~~
- ~~• AIA G704 Certificate of Substantial Completion;~~
- ~~• O&M Manual (must include a copy of the applicable DAS);~~
- ~~• Evidence of final certification from third party for Sustainability requirements, if applicable;~~
- ~~• Verification that architectural/design requirements that were committed, such as Exceptional Development criteria, exercise and wellness features, or universal design features, have been completed; and~~
- ~~• Verification that any unresolved site-specific mitigations as specified in the project's environmental review clearance letter from OHFA have been completed (HDAP and 811 only).~~

Project closeout and issuance of Form 8609 will not occur until [the above have all documentation has](#) been submitted and reviewed by OHFA and any remaining issues have been resolved.