



**Housing Finance
Agency**

2027 Design & Architectural Process Manual

Second Draft – 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:](mailto:DAS@ohiohome.org)

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

[arch@ohiohome.org:](mailto:arch@ohiohome.org)

- Submission of [Exception Inquiries](#)
- All communication related to the architectural review

[constructionmonitoring@ohiohome.org:](mailto: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.

2. Architectural Submission and Review Process

Submission

Architectural plans must be submitted with the project's application via [OHFA's File Transfer Site \(FTS\)](#); see applicable funding program guidelines.

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 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 scheduled 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 corrected drawings, specifications or forms as applicable.

All OHFA architectural corrections and approvals must be completed prior to construction commencement. All requirements identified in the Architectural Review/Approval letters must be followed during construction. 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.

Applicant must notify OHFA of any proposed substantial changes in plans, scope of work, or materials after submitting 80 percent drawings. See [Construction Progress & Monitoring](#) for more details.

Required Documents – 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.)
 - include all site elements, landscape intent, and parking data and layouts
 - Description of existing historic features, if applicable
 - Dimensioned floor plans with room designations and proposed finishes
 - Exterior elevations with material notations (rehab may provide notated photographs)
 - Schematic drawings or written narrative describing mechanical, electrical & plumbing 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

If the funding program required a proposal application, the final application must include the project name as submitted with the proposal application, the OHFA tracking number, and must align with the proposal drawings and scope of work unless otherwise discussed with OHFA architectural staff.

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

- The DCF, updated from the proposal application and included in the published drawing set.

- 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 items 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 at approximately 80% completion, so long as they provide evidence of the project meeting all design requirements of the Design & Architectural Standards (DAS), and include the following:
 - 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 elements, and parking data and layouts;
 - Landscape intent
 - Demolition plans if applicable
 - Drawings and notes identifying existing historic features if applicable
 - Interior and Exterior elevations with material notations
 - Dimensioned floor plans
 - Wall sections
 - 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.

3. Exception Requests

All program participants must conform to the DAS requirements unless waived by OHFA in writing. All requests for exceptions must be submitted using the [OHFA Exception Request form](#) 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-builts 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.

Exceptions after Architectural Review Approval

Exception Requests 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.

4. Construction Progress & Monitoring

Quarterly Construction Monitoring Reports

All developments 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 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 documentation of 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).

For all OHFA projects, OHFA requires the submission of any changes that involve a significant deviation from the original materials or design. Examples of changes that should be submitted for review included but are 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, cost savings of \$10,000 or more, and value engineering.

Developer must also notify OHFA of 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.

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 closeout visit 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. Project closeout and issuance of Form 8609 will not occur until all documentation has been submitted and reviewed by OHFA and any remaining issues have been resolved.