



2025 HOUSING PROGRESS REPORT

City of Providence

2025 | OCTOBER

The Challenge

The City of Providence, like many U.S. cities, faces a serious housing shortage. Rising rents, older and poorly maintained homes, and not enough new homes being built make it harder for residents to find safe, affordable homes. Rhode Island has ranked last in the nation for housing production in recent years, showing why this challenge must be addressed now.

Our Approach

- 1 Production:** Build more housing at every income level by updating zoning, making approvals faster and easier, and investing in affordable housing construction.
- 2 Preservation:** Protect affordability and quality in our existing homes, upgrade older housing, and turn old, unused buildings into useful spaces for housing.
- 3 Protection:** Support housing stability for residents through help with rent, legal services, eviction defense, more shelter access and placement support, and outreach that tackles the underlying causes of housing insecurity.

Key Achievements in FY2025

Boosted housing production through our once-in-a-decade Comprehensive Plan update and zoning changes, allowing more homes to be built, making the process easier, and giving developers more flexibility.

857 new housing units permitted (outpacing peer cities like Boston and New York).

Surpassed \$55 million in commitments to affordable housing through the Providence Housing Trust Fund plus \$10 million in HUD grants to create or preserve over 1,600 affordable homes, with a focus on families with the lowest incomes.

Made the building approval process faster and simpler by introducing one-stop reviews and cutting down on duplicate steps.

Surpassed \$6 million in investment in shelters and transitional housing, including warming centers and Rhode Island's first pallet shelter village, providing private, safe, and low-barrier options for people in crisis.

Created a new Department of Housing and Human Services to connect housing work with public health and recovery services, including \$1.2 million from Opioid Settlement Funds to support recovery housing and harm reduction programs.

Improved outreach and behavioral health response to better support people experiencing homelessness, following national best practices for humane, effective support.

Looking Ahead: FY2026 Priorities

Production: Building New Housing

Move forward with strategic **redevelopment of City-owned land**, and purchase and hold land to prepare sites for future housing, like 246 Prairie Avenue (four acres) and 158 Messer Street (former Messer Street School).

Guide **redevelopment around hospitals** into vibrant, mixed-use neighborhoods that combine housing, health services, and economic development.

Reinvest in the **Providence Housing Trust Fund** to help priority projects get built and expand the number of affordable homes.

Propose **lower taxation and predictable tax incentives** to support residential developments that meet affordability and community benefit goals.

Launch a program to **convert empty commercial buildings** into new housing.

Push for new **State Housing Bond** funding for cities like Providence that are leading the way with housing changes and progress.

Improve customer service by **co-locating city permitting offices** at a new Chapman Street facility.

Preservation: Maintaining Quality and Affordability

Develop **stable, long-term funding for the Housing Trust Fund** and Revolving Loan Fund to keep affordable housing production and preservation going strong.

Partner with the **Providence Housing Authority** to improve the quality of public housing for residents.

Protection: Keeping Homes and Residents Safe and Secure

Expand tenant protections so renters can only be evicted for legal reasons and have stronger safeguards for month-to-month or unwritten leases.

Strengthen code enforcement to ensure more housing is safe and livable.

Protect homelessness services in the face of federal cuts, with new local funding to meet seasonal needs and fill service gaps.

Our Commitment

Providence is leading with urgency, equity, and transparency. By combining smart policies, sustained investment, and strong partnerships, the City is transforming short-term progress into long-term solutions. We're building a stronger, more affordable Providence for all.

