

Governor Phil Murphy

ICYMI: Record 424 Municipalities Adopt Fair Housing Plans

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Far More Municipalities Participating in Affordable Housing Process Than Any Time in 50-Year History of Mount Laurel Doctrine

CHERRY HILL – According to an analysis by Fair Share Housing Center, 424 New Jersey municipalities have adopted and filed Housing Element and Fair Share Plans (HEFSPs) – which detail how they will meet their legally-mandated affordable housing responsibilities – following the state’s June 30 deadline.

Under a new, streamlined procedure established by

[landmark legislation \(https://www.fairsharehousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/NJs-New-Affordable-Housing-Law_Fact-Sheet_Fair-Share-Housing-Center_July-2024.pdf\)](https://www.fairsharehousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/NJs-New-Affordable-Housing-Law_Fact-Sheet_Fair-Share-Housing-Center_July-2024.pdf).

(A4/S50) last year, 452 towns adopted resolutions to participate in the state’s “Fourth Round” affordable housing planning process – representing approximately a 25% increase in municipalities participating in the process compared to the Third Round that began in 2015. Ninety-four percent of those municipalities have now adopted fair share plans on time.

“It’s encouraging to see so many towns stepping up to build the affordable homes New Jersey urgently needs,” **said Adam Gordon, Executive Director of Fair Share Housing Center.** “This shows the new law is working – cutting red tape, lowering costs, and getting more towns involved.”

Signed by Gov. Murphy in March 2024, A4/S50 was sponsored by Senate President Nicholas Scutari, Senate Majority Leader Teresa Ruiz, State Senator Troy Singleton, Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, and State Assemblymembers Yvonne Lopez, Benjie Wimberly, and Verlina Reynolds-Jackson.

“When I signed A4/S50, I did so to honor the promise of the Mount Laurel Doctrine and ensure that more hardworking families have access to a quality, affordable place to call home,” **said Governor Phil Murphy.** “It is promising to see that 94 percent of the 452 municipalities that committed to this legislation have adopted fair share plans on time. I am grateful to the Fair Share Housing Center for their continued analysis and advocacy, helping to keep New Jersey on track to meet our affordable housing goals.”

“The belief that everyone deserves a place to call home has been a guiding principle in our efforts to expand



affordable housing, and I am proud to see the results of that commitment taking shape across the state,” **said Assembly Speaker Craig J. Coughlin**. “When we enacted landmark legislation, A4, we set in motion a statewide push to address one of the most pressing affordability challenges facing New Jersey families by laying the groundwork for more housing, more opportunity, and more stability. We have more work ahead, but this moment shows what’s possible when we work together toward a common goal.”

“This demonstrates real progress in our efforts to make housing more affordable and more accessible in New Jersey,” **said Senate President Nick Scutari**. “The law is working. It has cut red tape, streamlined the process and lowered costs as it gives towns more freedom to create affordable housing that meets their own needs. I want to thank the many local officials who have worked so effectively to take advantage of the opportunities the law provides to make housing more affordable in their communities.”

“The strong response from municipalities across New Jersey shows that communities are truly committed to building more inclusive and accessible housing – and it’s clear that the law we passed is doing exactly what it was designed to do,” **said Senate Majority Leader M. Teresa Ruiz**. “Towns up and down the state are stepping up, with 94% submitting their plans on time. This proves that when we pass strong, clear laws, communities respond. We will continue to work with local officials to ensure they have the resources needed to build stronger, more affordable communities.”

“When we crafted this law, our goal was simple: to empower more municipalities to be active partners in solving New Jersey’s affordable housing crisis,” **said Senator Troy Singleton**. “The fact that a record number of towns have stepped up to meet their obligations shows that the law is working as designed. This is a major milestone in delivering a more affordable New Jersey.”

“Municipalities are critical partners in the construction of affordable housing and I am encouraged to see that our new affordable housing law has put towns in the driving seat to meet their fair share,” **said Assemblywoman Yvonne Lopez**. “The numbers speak for themselves and I have full confidence that in these next months the new law will continue delivering the foundation for the housing we so desperately need in New Jersey.”

Over the next two months, Fair Share Housing Center and any other interested party has the opportunity to review municipalities' fair share plans to ensure they are in compliance with New Jersey's new affordable housing law, ahead of the state’s August 31 deadline for interested parties to file challenges. Municipalities then have until December 31 to address any challenge to its plan through the Affordable Housing Dispute Resolution Program, and until March 15, 2026 to adopt a revised fair share plan and change their zoning accordingly.

In New Jersey, the constitutional obligation for each municipality to allow its fair share of affordable homes, known as the

[Mount Laurel Doctrine \(https://www.fairsharehousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Mount-Laurel-Doctrine_Fact-Sheet_Fair-Share-Housing-Center_July-2024.pdf\)](https://www.fairsharehousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Mount-Laurel-Doctrine_Fact-Sheet_Fair-Share-Housing-Center_July-2024.pdf)

, is recalculated every 10 years in cycles known as Rounds. Each municipality’s obligations are calculated by looking at factors in various regions of the state – such as job growth, existing affordability, and the growth of low- and moderate-income households – which determines an individualized requirement for affordable housing.

Ahead of the Fourth Round – which officially began on July 1 – NJ's

[new affordable housing law \(https://www.fairsharehousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/NJs-New-Affordable-Housing-Law-Fact-Sheet-Fair-Share-Housing-Center-July-2024.pdf\)](https://www.fairsharehousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/NJs-New-Affordable-Housing-Law-Fact-Sheet-Fair-Share-Housing-Center-July-2024.pdf)

streamlined the affordable housing development process and codified the methodology used to determine each municipality's obligations over the next decade. The updated framework safeguards towns' discretion in deciding how they want to fulfill their affordable housing needs.

When the Third Round process began in 2015, things looked very different – towns argued that 253 municipalities didn't have to build any affordable housing for the next 10 years. That led to dozens of lawsuits – and instead of being resolved quickly, like we are seeing now under the new law, it took the courts many years to sort it all out.

For example, Princeton's Third Round affordable housing number was not determined until 2018, following a 41-day trial, and their actual plan to meet that obligation was not adopted until 2020. Princeton's Fourth Round plan, on the other hand, was filed in a timely manner – and is a model for how towns can meet their affordable housing needs while promoting smart, sustainable growth. By reusing vacant office buildings and focusing development near jobs, schools, and transit, the plan reduces sprawl, limits environmental impact, and supports walk-able, connected neighborhoods.

"Princeton's plan is about more than meeting a legal mandate: it reaffirms our commitment to enhancing racial and socioeconomic diversity through inclusive development, while strengthening the fabric of our community," **said Princeton Council President Mia Sacks.**

New Jersey's law gives towns a wide variety of tools to create affordable housing in the way they prefer. Municipalities can choose from

[a range of options \(https://www.fairsharehousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Developing-Effective-Housing-Plans-In-The-Fourth-Round.pdf\)](https://www.fairsharehousing.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Developing-Effective-Housing-Plans-In-The-Fourth-Round.pdf)

– such as 100% affordable housing, mixed-income housing, supportive housing for seniors or people with disabilities, or re-purposing abandoned malls or offices. The recently-enacted law and associated bills give towns additional tools like new bonuses, financing options, and credits to meet their affordable housing responsibilities.

The new law also requires more transparent information to be shared with the public at each stage of the process, from adoption of initial plans to what is built and what trust funds are available to non-profit developers to create and rehabilitate affordable housing.

Since the inception of the Mount Laurel Doctrine 50 years ago, it has led to the creation of more than 75,000 affordable homes – including over 25,000 new affordable homes since 2015 alone – and over 130,000 middle-class homes. Today, more than 400,000 New Jerseyans live in homes created through the Mount Laurel Doctrine.

To view each municipality's fair share housing plan, visit New Jersey Courts'

[Affordable Housing Dispute Resolution Program \(https://www.njcourts.gov/courts/civil/affordable-housing\)](https://www.njcourts.gov/courts/civil/affordable-housing)

and click through the counties on the left column. This site itself is an outcome of the new law – which for the first time requires all towns’ plans to be publicly available online upon filing.

“Legislative leaders, legislators from both parties, and Governor Murphy came together to pass our affordable housing law because they understand that thriving communities start with housing people can afford,” **said Fair Share Housing Center's Adam Gordon.** “When local leaders support affordable homes, they are prioritizing stronger neighborhoods and more resilient local economies.”

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