

Information Packet

Jefferson at Bellingham

Bellingham Affordable Housing

This packet contains specific information on the affordable housing program and application process for the affordable rental units being offered at the Jefferson at Bellingham in Bellingham, MA.

Applicants must apply for a lease through the Leasing Office first. Once found eligible for a Lease, Applicants will then complete the Affordable Housing Application that this Information Packet addresses.

Please hold on to this packet until you have leased a unit as it will be a useful guide throughout the entire process.

Units are now being leased on a first-come, first-served basis.

A 40B Program

Developed by Lincoln Property Company

Phone Number: (617) 782 6900 (voicemail)

Table of Contents

General Overview and Rents.....	pg. 3
Eligibility Requirements	
<i>General Requirements.....</i>	pg. 4
<i>Maximum Income.....</i>	pg. 5
<i>How Income is Calculated.....</i>	pg. 5
<i>Asset Limits.....</i>	pg. 5
<i>Household Size.....</i>	pg. 6
Application Process	pg. 7
Application Timeline	pg. 9
Yearly Eligibility Review.....	pg. 10

GENERAL OVERVIEW AND RENTS

A private developer, Lincoln Property Company, and the Town of Bellingham are working to provide this affordable housing opportunity in Bellingham through MassHousing. The development consists of **two hundred and eighty five units**, **seventy-two** will be rented to households with incomes at or below 80% of the area median income.

Jefferson at Bellingham does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, and handicap (disability). Disabled persons are entitled to request a reasonable accommodation of rules, policies, practices, or services, or to request a reasonable modification of the housing, when such accommodations or modifications are necessary to afford the disabled person equal opportunity to use and enjoy the housing.

There are **40 affordable 1-bedroom** apartments and **32 affordable 2-bedroom** apartments. The rental prices as are follows:

<u># of Bedrooms</u>	<u>Rent</u>
1	\$ 965**
2	\$ 1,349**

These rents include gas heat and hot water. No other utilities are included.

**The rents are set annually using a calculation that determines the “affordable” rent, which is based on the Area Median Incomes for the Boston MSA. They are therefore subject to increase or decrease based on changes in Area Median Income and utility allowances.

Q: How long will the designated apartments remain affordable?

A: Rents may increase a few percentage points if Boston Area Median Income increases or the costs of utilities decreases. Likewise, if the Boston Area Median Income decreases and the costs of utilities increase, **rents will decrease**. For historical reference, the Boston Area Median Income did not change between 2005 and 2009 and utility costs increased therefore the rents that affordable tenants paid have decreased or stayed the same over the last few years.

Please see **YEARLY ELIGIBILITY REVIEW** on pg. 10 for information on Income Limits for tenants who are renewing leases.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Q: Who is eligible to apply for the affordable units in Jefferson at Bellingham?

A: In order to qualify for an affordable unit, households must meet each of the three following criteria:

- 1.) Households must have income and assets that qualify within the parameters as highlighted in this section.
- 2.) Households must also be between 1 and 4 persons, but priority is given based on household composition. For questions on household size and composition, please read "**Household Size and Composition**".
- 3.) Households cannot own a home upon move-in to their affordable unit.

Q: If I cannot qualify for a Lease based on my own income or credit history, can I have a co-signer on my Lease?

A: If you cannot qualify for a lease because of insufficient income, you cannot have a co-signer. If someone outside the household is going to help pay the rent, the amount to be paid must be listed as "Periodic Payments" on the Income Table in the Program Application. These payments will be counted towards the applying household's income. **If you cannot qualify for a lease based on poor credit you may be able to have a co-signer pending a review with the Monitoring Agent.**

Q: Are there disabled-accessible units?

A: Yes, some of the units will be disabled-accessible. All households may apply for the disabled-accessible units but households in need of an accessible unit will get top priority.

Q: Who qualifies for a disabled-accessible apartment?

A: All persons with a physical or mental handicap that meet the standards established by the Department of Housing and Community Development and state laws for handicap housing. Verification of need of an accessible apartment must be provided in the form of a doctor's note or equivalent if applicant is selected to rent one of the affordable apartments.

Q: Do I have to be a resident of the Town of Bellingham to apply?

A: No. All households that meet the income guidelines specified above may apply for an affordable unit.

Maximum Income

To be eligible to apply for renting an affordable apartment, the combined annual income for all income sources of all income-earning members in the household must be at or below eighty percent of median income for the local area. ALL SOURCES OF INCOME ARE COUNTED. Income counted in all cases is based on GROSS and not net income. Any monies you have received in the past 12 months will be counted as income. Please see the Program Application for the Income Table which lists all income that will be counted.

Household Size	Maximum Income Limit
1	\$ 46,300
2	\$ 52,950
3	\$ 59,550
4	\$ 66,150

Q: How is a household's income determined?

A: A household's income eligibility will be based on their income over the past 12 months. Income projections are not performed. In general, the income total will be a combination of all income for this calendar year added to the prorated amount of income from the last calendar year.

If a household applied for an affordable unit on February 15th, 2010, the total amount of money received by all members of the household from Feb. 15th 2009 thru Feb. 15th, 2010 will be counted as income. There are some exceptions that will not be counted, most notably income from employment of children under the age of 18 years.

It is not up to the household to determine what monies received over the past year should and should not be counted as their calculated income. Therefore, all monies should be listed on the application and the inclusion of these monies in determining a household's eligibility will be based on affordable housing guidelines.

Allowable Assets

There is no asset limit for applying households for this development. However, 2% of assets will be imputed as income. Household Assets are calculated at the time of application. Assets may include cash, cash in savings and checking accounts, net cash value of stocks, **net cash value of retirement accounts** (such as 401k), real property, bonds, and capital investments.

If any household member currently owns property (to be sold for eligibility for this lottery), the total amount of retained equity after the sale of their current home shall be added to their total value of assets.

Example: A household has \$10,000 in savings, \$20,000 in a retirement account (\$13,000 net cash value) and a home assessed at \$300,000 on which they currently have \$280,000 remaining on the mortgage (\$20,000 in equity).

Their assets total is: \$10,000 + \$13,000 + \$20,000 = \$43,000

Imputed Income is: 2% of \$43,000 = \$860

Household Size

Q: How is appropriate household size determined?

A: According to the Affordable Housing Program Guidelines used for this development, there should be at least one occupant and no more than two occupants per bedroom and a husband and wife (or those in a similar living arrangement) shall be required to share a bedroom unless they provide medical documentation that sharing a bedroom would impact their physical or mental health.

Therefore, there is no minimum size for one bedroom apartments. However, applications for two bedroom apartments from households with 3 or 4 members or from single parents with children or from couples who cannot share a bedroom will get initial priority over single person households and couples without children.

Q: Can a one person household lease a two-bedroom unit?

A: Yes but only when there are no households of “appropriate size” on the waiting list. By this program’s definitions, a one person household or a couple without children is not a household of “appropriate” size for a two bedroom unit.

Q: If I am currently going through a divorce/separation or planning on being divorced / separated soon, can I still apply?

A: For non-homeowners, you will need to provide proof that the separation or divorce process has begun or has already been finalized. The **Program Application** will guide you through the documentation you will need to provide. If you have only begun considering a divorce or separation, and no legal action has been taken, you cannot apply as a single head-of-household and your application will be reviewed as if your current spouse will be moving into the affordable unit with you. **For homeowners going through a divorce**, the home must be sold or the divorce must be finalized (as you must be off the deed) before you move-in.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Q: What are the steps in leasing an affordable unit?

A: Step 1: Fill out a Lease Application at the Leasing Office.

The Leasing Office reviews a household's **Lease Application** using different criteria than the Lottery Agent uses in reviewing a household's **Program Application**. At the Leasing Office, criteria such as credit scores, references, and current employment income will be reviewed. If a household is found to be eligible for a lease, they will put down a \$250 holding deposit to reserve a unit and then they may fill out the Affordable Housing Program Application.

Step 2: Fill out the Affordable Housing Program Application in entirety and submit the Program Application with ALL required documentation to the Lottery Agent.

The Program Application will then be reviewed by the Lottery Agent for program eligibility. Only when all documentation is received will their application be reviewed and processed.

Step 3: Notification of Affordable Housing Program Approval

If the applicant is found eligible for an affordable apartment according to program guidelines, they will be notified by phone and/or by mail. The applicant will then need to go to the Leasing Office and fill out a Lease Agreement. First months rent and the security deposit must be paid upon move-in.

Q: How is the Affordable Housing Program Application different from a Lease Application?

*A: The **Lease Application** is completed first. It is used to determine if applicants have **enough income to afford the affordable rent** and have enough income remaining for other costs of living. The Lease Application uses criteria including employment history, credit score or reports, former lease history etc.*

The Affordable Housing **Program Application** is completed second by households who have been found lease eligible. The Program Application is used to determine if applicants make **more than the maximum income allowed** to be eligible for an affordable apartment according to state and program guidelines.

Q: What happens if I don't submit all necessary documentation or fail to correctly complete my Affordable Housing Program Application?

A: Households that submit incomplete documentation will be will be mailed a notice detailing the additional documentation that is needed to make their application complete. If the household submits all additional documentation their application will be processed in the order the application was completed. If a household fails to submit all required documentation, their application will remain in an "Incomplete Application Pool" and will only begin being processed once all requested materials have been received.

Q: What information is required when an application is submitted?

A: For an application to be considered complete it must be filled out in entirety, signed and dated. **In addition, all required income documentation and if applicable, disability documentation, must be submitted.** If any documentation is missing the application will not be processed but a notice will be sent stating what documentation is missing. If you following the application closely, it should guide you through everything you need to include.

Q: What happens to my holding deposit if I am deemed ineligible to lease an affordable unit based on affordable housing guidelines (ex: a household that makes over the allowable income limits)?

A: Your holding deposit will be returned to you if it is deemed that you are not eligible according to affordable housing guidelines for this development.

APPLICATION TIMELINE

Q: What is the schedule for applications and the selection of renters for the affordable apartments at Jefferson at Bellingham?

A: This process can be as short as 2 weeks or longer than 2 months. To ensure the fastest approval possible, carefully complete all sections of the Program Application and send in copies of everything required. Below is an approximation of the time needed for each step:

Step 1: The applicant completes a Lease Application at Jefferson at Bellingham Leasing Office. All applicants that are found to be lease eligible (based on the review of credit scores, references, adequate income) can then fill out an Affordable Housing Program Application.

Step 2: +2 weeks: The applicant fills out the Affordable Housing Program Application and gathers all required documentation listed on the checklist and sends it to the Lottery Agent. Applications and *copies* of all income and asset documentation should be mailed to the address below.

SEB

**Re: Jefferson at Bellingham
165 Chestnut Hill Ave Unit 2
Brighton, MA 02135**

+0-2 weeks: Based on information in the application, the Lottery Agent requests that the applicant mail in additional documentation that was missing from their application. *(This step happens with approximately 90% of all applications. If you want to expedite the time it takes to process your application, send in ALL documentation up-front. Do not wait for the Lottery Agent or Monitoring Agent to request a piece of documentation you probably knew was missing).*

+1 week: The Lottery Agent processes the completed application. If an applicant is deemed ineligible, this process is over. If they are deemed eligible, the Lottery Agent contacts the applicant and notifies them that they may now proceed to the Leasing Office to fill out a Lease Agreement.

Step 3: +0-2 weeks: Applicants will have two weeks to sign a Lease. The Leasing Office will be expecting the applicant's arrival as they will be notified of an applicant's approval at the same time the applicant is notified.

YEARLY ELIGIBILITY REVIEW

Approximately 90 days before lease renewal, you will need to submit updated income and asset documentation to the Leasing Office so they can ensure that you are still under the maximum income guidelines. You will not be able to renew your Lease until you have submitted all required documentation. You should maintain records of your taxes, pay-stubs, bank statements and asset statements while living in the affordable unit. Maintaining records makes this yearly review very simple.

Q: How long can I lease my affordable unit?

A: As a **current resident only**, you are considered income eligible for an affordable unit as long as your household earns an income that does not exceed **140% of the previous years Income Limit for your household size**. The Income Limits are shown below and on page 5. Total Income for all *new* applying households must still always be below 80% of AMI.

Using the 2009 Income Limits as an example:

Household Size	2009 Income Limit (80% of 2009 Area Media Income)	2010 Income Limit for Current Tenants (140% of 2009 Income Limit)
1	\$ 46,300	\$64,820
2	\$ 52,950	\$74,130
3	\$59,550	\$83,370
4	\$ 66,150	\$92,610

According to the table above for the years shown, if a household's income exceeds the 2009 Income Limit for Current Tenants at the time of their renewal, their unit shall still remain affordable until the next available market rate unit with the same or greater number of bedrooms is rented at an affordable price. Once this market rate apartment becomes newly deemed as affordable, the apartment that was previously deemed affordable can subsequently be rented at market rates. The household with earnings exceeding the 2009 Income Limit for Current Tenants can choose to stay in their apartment, yet would then have to pay the market rate rent.

Q: Will my rent increase each year, and if so, by how much?

A: Rents may increase a few percentage points if Boston Area Median Income increases or the costs of utilities decreases. Likewise, if the Boston Area Median Income decreases and the costs of utilities increases, **rents will decrease**. For historical reference, the Boston Area Median Income did not change between 2005 and 2009 and utility costs generally increased therefore the rents that affordable tenants paid have decreased or stayed the same over the last few years.