



2019 Massachusetts Opportunity Zones Academy

APPLICATION BOOKLET

LOCUS



Smart Growth America
Improving lives by improving communities



Why is a Massachusetts Opportunity Zones Academy important?

On December 20, 2017, the *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* created a new community development tax incentive aimed at encouraging long-term private capital investment in America's low-income urban and rural communities.

Across the country, the [Opportunity Zones](#) incentive is expected to funnel billions of dollars in new private investment into low-income communities and distressed businesses and properties. Under the terms of the incentive, communities will receive access to mission-oriented and patient capital, while those with capital gains will be able to concentrate capital in areas of most need and align their payoffs with long-term community success.

In early 2018, the U.S. Treasury approved Governor Charlie Baker's 138 Opportunity Zone census tract designations in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. At a glance, these census tracts:

- Account for 6 percent of Massachusetts' land area.
- Are home to 8 percent of its population.
- Have a 22 percent poverty rate and median household income of \$43,232.71.
- Have an average annual household housing and transportation (H+T) cost of 44 percent.
- Only 15 percent have at least one transit station.

Today, local governments have an opportunity to prepare for and direct inflows of private capital towards housing, transportation, business, and community-identified priorities. By applying to participate in the Massachusetts Opportunity Zones Academy, local communities can ensure that growth in their Opportunity Zones results in prosperous, equitable and resilient outcomes.

What is the Massachusetts Opportunity Zones Academy?

LOCUS' first [Massachusetts Opportunity Zones Academy](#) aims to ensure that Massachusetts communities are prepared to make the most of the federal Opportunity Zones tax incentive.

LOCUS will select 3-5 Massachusetts communities to participate in a three-part technical assistance program focusing on the role of Opportunity Zones and Opportunity Funds in stimulating investment in traditionally underserved census tracts. LOCUS' technical assistance team will work to equip participant communities with the tools, skills, and knowledge necessary for developing sustainable growth and development strategies that balance the demand for walkable Opportunity Zones with the need for jobs, housing, open space, and transportation that is attainable and accessible to all. LOCUS' technical assistance process leverages our membership coalition of New England-based real estate, planning, and design professionals to provide context-appropriate expertise to selected municipalities.

The technical assistance will consist of:

1. [Kick-off Convening: Opportunity Rising](#)

Successful applicants will attend the [2019 LOCUS National Leadership Summit: Opportunity Rising](#) from **June 23-24, 2019** in Washington, DC. This annual meeting of real estate developers and investors, planners, policymakers, and elected officials will

examine the policies, practices, and leadership strategies necessary for catalyzing prosperity, equity, and resilience in communities across the country.

As part of the Summit, Academy participants will meet each other and LOCUS' technical assistance team to launch the 2019 Massachusetts Opportunity Zones Academy, attend relevant Summit sessions, and begin framing the ways in which to leverage the Opportunity Zone program in their communities to achieve smart growth development, public and private investment, and equity goals.

Attendance at the 2019 LOCUS National Leadership Summit will be fully compensated by Smart Growth America/LOCUS thanks to the generous support of the Barr Foundation.

2. **Personalized Site Visit(s)**

From **July to October**, LOCUS will work with each selected community to identify its community strengths, issues, constraints, and opportunities related to Opportunity Zone growth and development. This will include 1-3 virtual roundtable discussions in which the technical assistance team meets with each community and their Opportunity Zone stakeholders to discuss the economic and real estate development context of each place, as well as the market and capacity gaps that exist there.

Community stakeholders and the LOCUS team will then design a one-day site visit in which LOCUS will visit the community, meet with stakeholders, and lead numerous training and capacity-building meetings on topics identified as being most prevalent to the community.

These topics can include:

Attracting Capital

- Establishing and operating an Opportunity Fund,
- Capacity building, community education, and inclusive engagement around Opportunity Zones,
- Writing strategic Opportunity Zone and community benefit plans,
- Building equitable development project pipelines,
- Pro-forma training for making real estate deals happen,
- Building public-private partnerships and other investment vehicles for smart growth development,
- Navigating federal financing programs for smart growth development,
- Fiscal modeling for development scenarios and hotspot analyses,
- Planning for economic & fiscal health.

Transportation and TOD

- Transit-Oriented Development (TOD),
- New mobility options,
- Equitable transportation performance measures and project selection criteria.

Complete Streets

- Designing streets for all users: drivers, transit, bikes and pedestrians,

- Formulating and implementing equitable Complete Streets policies.

Land Use and Development

- Land use and zoning code review to unleash economic potential and identify obstacles to place-based economic development,
- Form-Based Codes: The ABCs, Urban Design and Placemaking, Equity, and Formulating, Adopting, and Administering Form-Based Codes,
- (re)Building Downtown,
- Downtown revitalization without displacement.

Following the site visit, the technical assistance team will create a *Best Practices and Recommendations Report* for each participating community that identifies key community priorities and action items to address their Opportunity Zones' economic and social equity needs. All reports will be submitted to communities in **November 2019**.

3. [All-Applicant Convening at the 2019 LOCUS New England Leadership Summit](#)

The Academy will conclude with an all-applicant convening at the 2019 LOCUS New England Leadership Summit, scheduled to take place in **November 2019**. All applicants for the Massachusetts Opportunity Zone Academy will be invited to attend a convening with technical assistance recipients to learn about their experiences as part of the Academy and best practices for attracting investment, developing project pipelines, establishing equitable development frameworks, and building a strong ecosystem of Opportunity Zone knowledge across the Commonwealth.

Eligibility Criteria

To be considered for the Massachusetts Opportunity Zones Academy, applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. Locally led pursuit of Opportunity Zones - Eligible applicants include any local unit of government whose jurisdiction contains at least one federally designated Opportunity Zone; a governmental entity created by a state legislature doing work in an Opportunity Zone may also apply.
2. Demonstrate commitment or mission to pursue smart growth development - Seeking communities with comprehensive investment strategies and equitable development plans that promote walkable, mixed-use development. These include, but are not limited to: 40R Smart Growth Districts, TIF/DIF areas, TOD overlay zones.
3. Encourage inclusive stakeholder participation - Applicants will be judged based on their ability to include and engage a diverse group of key stakeholders in planning and decision-making efforts aimed at improving the community. These include, but are not limited to: local elected officials, municipal employees, housing, economic development, and social service agencies, and business, philanthropic, civic, community, and equity stakeholders.

Evaluation and Selection Criteria

Applications for the Massachusetts Opportunity Zones Academy will be evaluated based upon the following criteria:

1. Statement of need (20 percent) – A coherent and compelling statement introducing the applicant community and describing the historical and present day challenges facing development in its Opportunity Zones. The applicant municipality's willingness and ability to make changes to land use, affordable housing, and other local policies, regulations, and ordinances will also be considered.
2. Commitment to equity (25 percent) – Demonstrated focus on prioritizing equitable community development and planning that minimizes displacement of current residents and businesses, improves housing and transportation affordability, and/or expands access to job centers, education, medical services, and social services for low- and moderate-income households. The applicant must be able to articulate the importance of equity within the community.
3. Strong leadership (20 percent) – Evidence of the following: 1) commitment of elected and appointed leaders to engage in Academy activities and a commitment of senior staff to work with the LOCUS Team, including an explanation of staff roles and time commitment; and 2) strong organization, working relationships, and partnerships between the applicant's senior staff, elected officials, local jurisdictional staff, and community stakeholders.

Senior staff should have direct reporting to governmental or agency leadership, such as the mayor's chief of staff, city manager, or the planning director.

4. Partnership and engagement (20 percent) – A high level of engagement from partner agencies needed to create effective and equitable communities, including housing, economic development, and social service agencies, as well as partnerships with local business, philanthropic, civic, community, and equity stakeholders.

Applicants are required to submit *at least two (2)* letters of support, one from a chief elected official and at least one from a community partner who will be involved in the Academy.

5. Leverage and commitment of resources (15 percent) – Evidence of commitment of resources in the form of staffing, materials, facilities and/or funding from local sponsors, philanthropy, or other partners to support and magnify the work. There is no cost sharing or financial matching requirement.

Other considerations will include:

- **Geographic diversity:** LOCUS will choose communities from a variety of regions in the Commonwealth.
- **Community diversity:** LOCUS will choose communities of different sizes, economic conditions, and populations.

Application Submission

Applications for the Massachusetts Opportunity Zones Academy are due on **Friday, May 3, 2019** at 5pm EDT.

Complete applications can be submitted online at:

<https://smartgrowthamerica.org/massachusetts-opportunity-zones-academy-application>

There will be a webinar held on **Monday, April 15, 2019** to answer questions about the application process.

Applications received after the deadline will not be considered. All questions or inquiries must be made in writing to Elijah Plymesser at eplymesser@locusdevelopers.org or Tola Myczkowska at tmyczkowska@locusdevelopers.org. The team will respond promptly.

Application Review and Selection Process

LOCUS will evaluate applications that answer all components of the application form. LOCUS may contact the applicant during the application review process for any items requiring additional documentation for clarification purposes. The following steps provide a representation of the review process:

1. LOCUS will begin to review applications on Monday, May 6, 2019. Each application will be evaluated for completeness and per the criteria listed above.
2. Applications that do not meet eligibility requirements will not be considered.
3. LOCUS will notify applicants selected to participate in the Massachusetts Opportunity Zones Academy in **mid-May 2019**.
4. Successful applicants will have 7 working days to respond back to LOCUS to confirm their participation in the Academy.

LOCUS Background

LOCUS: Responsible Real Estate Developers and Investors is a program of [Smart Growth America](#) (SGA). Latin for “place,” [LOCUS](#) is a national coalition of over 300 real estate developers, investors, policymakers, and elected officials who advocate for sustainable, equitable, and walkable development in America’s cities and towns.

LOCUS members have projects in 48 states, hundreds of billions of dollars in real estate and development assets, and a unique understanding of America’s real estate challenges and needs. Thus, the coalition has become a key voice in the debate over federal housing, tax, infrastructure, and economic and community development policy, helping pioneer major federal programs, such as the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) and Hope VI. Today, LOCUS is a nationally-recognized thought leader in the implementation and execution of attainable housing strategies, equitable transit-oriented development (TOD) projects, Opportunity Zones, and community engagement and economic development activities.

The coalition's mission is to:

1. Conduct market-based research and policy analysis to inform implementation of smart growth and equitable development strategies;
2. Develop new private sector-led, place-based approaches to development and social equity in walkable places;
3. Increase the number of smart growth projects that are ready for private investment; and
4. Provide guidance to public officials on policy development that supports smart growth development.

LOCUS is supported by Smart Growth America's team of technical assistance and policy experts who possess extensive experience working with communities and creating place-based, private sector-led approaches to achieving neighborhood affordability, walkability, and connectivity.