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Market Study Terminology

Effective January 1, 2007, all affordable housing market studies performed by NCAHMA members incorporate the member certification, market study index, the market study terminology and market study standards.

State Housing Finance Agencies and other industry members are welcome to incorporate the information below in their own standards. NCAHMA only requests [written notification of use](#).

I. Common Market Study Terms

The terms in this section are definitions agreed upon by NCAHMA members. Market studies for affordable housing prepared by NCAHMA members should use these definitions in their studies except where other definitions are specifically identified.

Terminology

Definition

Absorption period	The period of time necessary for a newly constructed or renovated property to achieve the <i>stabilized level of occupancy</i> . The absorption period begins when the first certificate of occupancy is issued and ends when the last unit to reach the <i>stabilized level of occupancy</i> has a signed lease. Assumes a typical pre-marketing period, prior to the issuance of the certificate of occupancy, of about three to six months. The month that leasing is assumed to begin should accompany all absorption estimates.
Absorption rate	The average number of units rented each month during the <i>absorption period</i> .
Acceptable <i>rent burden</i>	The rent-to-income ratio used to qualify tenants for both income-restricted and non-income restricted units. The acceptable rent burden varies depending on the requirements of funding sources, government funding sources, target markets, and local conditions.
Achievable Rents	See <i>Market Rent, Achievable Restricted Rent</i> .
Affordable housing	Housing affordable to low or very low-income tenants.
Amenity	Tangible or intangible benefits offered to a tenant. Typical amenities include on-site recreational facilities, planned programs, services and activities.
Annual demand	The total estimated demand present in the market in any one year for the type of units proposed.
Assisted housing	Housing where federal, state or other programs <i>subsidize</i> the monthly costs

	to the tenants.
Bias	A proclivity or preference, particularly one that inhibits or entirely prevents an impartial judgment.
Capture rate	The percentage of age, size, and income qualified renter households in the <i>primary market area</i> that the property must capture to fill the units. Funding agencies may require restrictions to the qualified households used in the calculation including age, income, living in substandard housing, mover-ship and other comparable factors. The <i>Capture Rate</i> is calculated by dividing the total number of units at the property by the total number of age, size and income qualified renter households in the <i>primary market area</i> . See also: penetration rate.
Comparable property	A property that is representative of the rental housing choices of the subject's <i>primary market area</i> and that is similar in construction, size, amenities, location, and/or age. Comparable and <i>competitive</i> properties are generally used to derive market rent and to evaluate the subject's position in the market. See the NCAHMA white paper <i>Selecting Comparable Properties</i>
Competitive property	A property that is comparable to the subject and that competes at nearly the same rent levels and tenant profile, such as age, family or income.
Concession	Discount given to a prospective tenant to induce the tenant to sign a lease. Concessions typically are in the form of reduced rent or free rent for a specific lease term, or for free amenities, which are normally charged separately (i.e. washer/dryer, parking).
Demand	The total number of households in a defined market area that would potentially move into the proposed new or renovated housing units. These households must be of the appropriate age, income, tenure and size for a specific proposed development. Components of demand vary and can include household growth; turnover, those living in substandard conditions, rent over-burdened households, and demolished housing units. Demand is project specific.
Effective rents	Contract rent less concessions.
Household trends	Changes in the number of households for a particular area over a specific period of time, which is a function of new household formations (e.g. at marriage or separation), changes in average household size, and net <i>migration</i> .
Income band	The range of incomes of households that can afford to pay a specific rent but do not have below any applicable program-specific maximum income limits. The minimum household income typically is based on a defined <i>acceptable rent burden</i> percentage and the maximum typically is pre-defined by specific program requirements or by general market parameters.
Infrastructure	Services and facilities including roads, highways, water, sewerage, emergency services, parks and recreation, etc. Infrastructure includes both public and private facilities.
Market advantage	The difference, expressed as a percentage, between the estimated market rent

	for an apartment property without income restrictions and the lesser of (a) the owner's proposed rents or (b) the maximum rents permitted by the financing program for the same apartment property. (market rent – proposed rent) / proposed rent * 100
Market analysis	A study of real estate market conditions for a specific type of property.
Market area	See <i>primary market area</i> .
Market demand	The total number of households in a defined market area that would potentially move into any new or renovated housing units. Market demand is not project specific and refers to the universe of tenure appropriate households, independent of income. The components of market demand are similar to those used in determining project-specific demand. A common example of market demand used by HUD's MAP program, which is based on three years of renter household growth, loss of existing units due to demolition, and market conditions.
Market rent	The rent that an apartment, without rent or income restrictions or rent subsidies, would command in the <i>primary market area</i> considering its location, features and amenities. Market rent should be adjusted for <i>concessions</i> and owner paid utilities included in the rent. See the NCAHMA publication <i>Calculating Market Rent</i> .
Market study	A comprehensive study of a specific proposal including a review of the housing market in a defined market area. Project specific market studies are often used by developers, syndicators, and government entities to determine the appropriateness of a proposed development, whereas market specific market studies are used to determine what housing needs, if any, exist within a specific geography. The minimal content of a market study is shown in the NCAHMA publication <i>Model Content for Market Studies for Rental Housing</i> .
Marketability	The manner in which the subject fits into the market; the relative desirability of a property (for sale or lease) in comparison with similar or competing properties in the area.
Market vacancy rate, economic	Percentage of rent loss due to concessions, vacancies, and non-payment of rent on occupied units.
Market vacancy rate, physical	Average number of apartment units in any market which are unoccupied divided by the total number of apartment units in the same market, excluding units in properties which are in the lease-up stage.
Migration	The movement of households into or out of an area, especially a <i>primary market area</i> .
Mixed income property	An apartment property containing (1) both income restricted and unrestricted units or (2) units restricted at two or more income limits (i.e. low income tax credit property with income limits of 30%, 50% and 60%).

Mobility	The ease with which people move from one location to another.
Move-up demand	An estimate of how many consumers are able and willing to relocate to more expensive or desirable units. Examples: tenants who move from class-C properties to class-B properties, or tenants who move from older tax credit properties to newer tax credit properties-
Multi-family	Structures that contain more than two housing units.
Neighborhood	An area of a city or town with common demographic and economic features that distinguish it from adjoining areas.
Net rent (also referred to as contract rent or lease rent)	Gross rent less <i>tenant paid utilities</i> .
Penetration rate	The percentage of age and income qualified renter households in the <i>primary market area</i> that all existing and proposed properties, to be completed within six months of the subject, and which are competitively priced to the subject that must be captured to achieve the <i>stabilized level of occupancy</i> . Funding agencies may require restrictions to the qualified Households used in the calculation including age, income, living in substandard housing, mover ship and other comparable factors. units in all proposals / households in market * 100 See also: capture rate.
Pent-up demand	A market in which there is a scarcity of supply and vacancy rates are very low.
Population trends	Changes in population levels for a particular area over a specific period of time—which is a function of the level of births, deaths, and net <i>migration</i> .
Primary market area	A geographic area from which a property is expected to draw the majority of its residents. See the NCAHMA publication <i>Determining Market Area</i> .
Programmatic rents	See <i>restricted rents</i> .
Project based rent assistance	Rental assistance from any source that is allocated to the property or a specific number of units in the property and is available to each income eligible tenant of the property or an assisted unit.
Redevelopment	The redesign or rehabilitation of existing properties.
Rent burden	Gross rent divided by adjusted monthly household income.
Rent burdened households	Households with <i>rent burden</i> above the level determined by the lender, investor, or public program to be an acceptable rent-to-income ratio.
Restricted rent	The rent charged under the restrictions of a specific housing program or subsidy.
Restricted rent, Achievable	The rents that the project can attain taking into account both market conditions and rent in the <i>primary market area</i> and income restrictions.
Saturation	The point at which there is no longer demand to support additional units. Saturation usually refers to a particular segment of a specific market.

Secondary market area	The portion of a market area that supplies additional support to an apartment property beyond that provided by the primary market area.
Special needs population	Specific market niche that is typically not catered to in a conventional apartment property. Examples of special needs populations include: substance abusers, visually impaired person or persons with mobility limitations.
Stabilized level of occupancy	The underwritten or actual number of occupied units that a property is expected to maintain after the initial rent-up period, expressed as a percentage of the total units.
Subsidy	Monthly income received by a tenant or by an owner on behalf of a tenant to pay the difference between the apartment's <i>contract rent</i> and the amount paid by the tenant toward rent.
Substandard conditions	Housing conditions that are conventionally considered unacceptable which may be defined in terms of lacking plumbing facilities, one or more major systems not functioning properly, or overcrowded conditions.
Target income band	The <i>income band</i> from which the subject property will draw tenants.
Target population	The market segment or segments a development will appeal or cater to. State agencies often use target population to refer to various income set asides, elderly v. family, etc.
Tenant paid utilities	The cost of utilities (not including cable, telephone, or internet) necessary for the habitation of a dwelling unit, which are paid by the tenant.
Turnover turnover period	<p>1. An estimate of the number of housing units in a market area as a percentage of total housing units in the market area that will likely change occupants in any one year. See also: vacancy period. $\text{Housing units with new occupants} / \text{housing units} * 100$</p> <p>2. The percent of occupants in a given apartment complex that move in one year.</p>
Unmet housing need	New units required in the market area to accommodate household growth, homeless people, and households in substandard conditions.
Unrestricted rents	Rents that are not subject to <i>restriction</i> .
Unrestricted units	Units that are not subject to any income or rent restrictions.
Vacancy period	The amount of time that an apartment remains vacant and available for rent.
Vacancy rate- economic vacancy rate - physical	Maximum potential revenue less actual rent revenue divided by maximum potential rent revenue. The number of total habitable units that are vacant divided by the total number of units in the property.

II. Other Useful Terms

The words in this section are not defined by NCAHMA.

Area Median Income 100% of the gross median Household income for a specific Metropolitan

(AMI)	Statistical Area, county or non-metropolitan area established annually by HUD.
Attached housing	Two or more dwelling units connected with party walls (e.g. townhouses or flats).
Basic Rent	The minimum monthly rent that tenants who do not have rental assistance pay to lease units developed through the USDA-RD Section 515 Program, the HUD Section 236 Program and HUD Section 223(d)(3) Below Market Interest Rate Program. The Basic Rent is calculated as the amount of rent required to operate the property, maintain debt service on a subsidized mortgage with a below-market interest rate, and provide a return on equity to the developer in accordance with the regulatory documents governing the property.
Below Market Interest Rate Program (BMIR)	Program targeted to renters with income not exceeding 80% of area median income by limiting rents based on HUD's BMIR Program requirements and through the provision of an interest reduction contract to subsidize the market interest rate to a below-market rate. Interest rates are typically subsidized to effective rates of one percent or three percent.
Census Tract	A small, relatively permanent statistical subdivision delineated by a local committee of census data users for the purpose of presenting data. Census tract boundaries normally follow visible features, but may follow governmental unit boundaries and other non-visible features; they always nest within counties. They are designed to be relatively homogeneous units with respect to population characteristics, economic status, and living conditions at the time of establishment. Census tracts average about 4,000 inhabitants.
Central Business District (CBD)	The center of commercial activity within a town or city; usually the largest and oldest concentration of such activity.
Community Development Corporation (CDC)	Entrepreneurial institution combining public and private resources to aid in the development of socio-economically disadvantaged areas.
Condominium	A form of joint ownership and control of property in which specified volumes of space (for example, apartments) are owned individually while the common elements of the property (for example, outside walls) are owned jointly.
Contract Rent	1. The actual monthly rent payable by the tenant, including any rent subsidy paid on behalf of the tenant, to the owner, inclusive of all terms of the lease. (HUD & RD) 2. The monthly rent agreed to between a tenant and a landlord (Census).
Difficult Development Area (DDA)	An area designated by HUD as an area that has high construction, land, and utility costs relative to the Area Median Gross Income. A project located in a DDA and utilizing the Low Income Housing Tax Credit may qualify for up to 130% of eligible basis for the purpose of calculating the Tax Credit allocation.
Detached Housing	A freestanding dwelling unit, typically single-family, situated on its own lot.

Elderly or Senior Housing	Housing where (1) all the units in the property are restricted for occupancy by persons 62 years of age or older or (2) at least 80% of the units in each building are restricted for occupancy by Households where at least one Household member is 55 years of age or older and the housing is designed with amenities and facilities designed to meet the needs of senior citizens.
Extremely Low Income	Person or Household with income below 30% of Area Median Income adjusted for Household size.
Fair Market Rent (FMR)	The estimates established by HUD of the Gross Rents (Contract Rent plus Tenant Paid Utilities) needed to obtain modest rental units in acceptable condition in a specific county or metropolitan statistical area. HUD generally sets FMR so that 40% of the rental units have rents below the FMR. In rental markets with a shortage of lower priced rental units HUD may approve the use of Fair Market Rents that are as high as the 50th percentile of rents.
Garden Apartments	Apartments in low-rise buildings (typically two to four stories) that feature low density, ample open-space around buildings, and on-site parking.
Gross Rent	The monthly housing cost to a tenant which equals the Contract Rent provided for in the lease plus the estimated cost of all Tenant Paid Utilities.
High-rise Household	A residential building having more than ten stories. One or more people who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence.
Housing Unit	House, apartment, mobile home, or group of rooms used as a separate living quarters by a single household.
Housing Choice Voucher (Section 8 Program)	Federal rent subsidy program under Section 8 of the U.S. Housing Act, which issues rent vouchers to eligible Households to use in the housing of their choice. The voucher payment subsidizes the difference between the Gross Rent and the tenant's contribution of 30% of adjusted income, (or 10% of gross income, whichever is greater). In cases where 30% of the tenants' income is less than the utility allowance, the tenant will receive an assistance payment. In other cases, the tenant is responsible for paying his share of the rent each month.
Housing Finance Agency (HFA)	State or local agencies responsible for financing housing and administering Assisted Housing programs.
HUD Section 8 Program	Federal program that provides project based rental assistance. Under the program HUD contracts directly with the owner for the payment of the difference between the Contract Rent and a specified percentage of tenants' adjusted income.
HUD Section 202 Program	Federal Program, which provides direct capital assistance (i.e. grant) and operating or rental assistance to finance housing designed for occupancy by elderly households who have income not exceeding 50% of Area Median Income. The program is limited to housing owned by 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations or by limited partnerships where the sole general partner is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Units receive HUD project based rental assistance that enables tenants to occupy units at rents based on 30% of tenant income.

HUD Section 811 Program	Federal program, which provides direct capital assistance and operating or rental assistance to finance housing designed for occupancy by persons with disabilities who have income not exceeding 50% of Area Median Income. The program is limited to housing owned by 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations or by limited partnerships where the sole general partner is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.
HUD Section 236 Program	Federal program which provides interest reduction payments for loans which finance housing targeted to Households with income not exceeding 80% of area median income who pay rent equal to the greater of Basic Rent or 30 percent of their adjusted income. All rents are capped at a HUD approved market rent.
Income Limits	Maximum Household income by county or Metropolitan Statistical Area , adjusted for Household size and expressed as a percentage of the Area Median Income for the purpose of establishing an upper limit for eligibility for a specific housing program. Income Limits for federal, state and local rental housing programs typically are established at 30%, 50%, 60% or 80% of AMI. HUD publishes Income Limits each year for 30% median, Very Low Income (50%), and Low-Income (80%), for households with 1 through 8 people.
Low Income	Person or Household with gross Household income below 80% of Area Median Income adjusted for Household size.
Low Income Housing Tax Credit	A program to generate equity for investment in affordable rental housing authorized pursuant to Section 42 of the Internal Revenue Code, as amended. The program requires that a certain percentage of units built be restricted for occupancy to households earning 60% or less of Area Median Income, and that the rents on these units be restricted accordingly.
Low Rise Building	A building with one to three stories
Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)	A geographic entity defined by the federal Office of Management and Budget for use by federal statistical agencies, based on the concept of a core area with a large population nucleus, plus adjacent communities having a high degree of economic and social integration with that core. Qualification of an MSA requires the presence of a city with 50,000 or more inhabitants, or the presence of an Urbanized Area (UA) and a total population of at least 100,000 (75,000 in New England). The county or counties containing the largest city and surrounding densely settled territory are central counties of the MSA. Additional outlying counties qualify to be included in the MSA by meeting certain other criteria of metropolitan character, such as a specified minimum population density or percentage of the population that is urban.
Mid-rise	A building with four to ten stories.
Moderate Income	Person or Household with gross household income between 80 and 120 percent of area median income adjusted for Household size.
Public Housing or Low Income Conventional Public Housing	HUD program administered by local (or regional) Housing Authorities which serves Low- and Very-Low Income Households with rent based on the same formula used for HUD Section 8 assistance.
Qualified Census Tract	Any census tract (or equivalent geographic area defined by the Bureau of the

(QCT)	Census) in which at least 50% of Households have an income less than 60% of Area Median Income or where the poverty rate is at least 25%. A project located in a QCT and receiving Low Income Housing Tax Credits may qualify for up to 130% of eligible basis for the purpose of calculating the Tax Credit allocation.
Rural Development (RD) Market Rent	A monthly rent that can be charged for an apartment under a specific USDA-RD housing program, that reflects the agency's estimate of the rent required to operate the property, maintain debt service on an un-subsidized mortgage and provide an adequate return to the property owner. This rent is the maximum rent that a tenant can pay at an RD Property.
Rural Development (RD) Program (Formerly the Farmers Home Administration Section 515 Rural Rental Housing Program)	Federal program which provides low interest loans to finance housing which serves low- and moderate-income persons in rural areas who pay 30 percent of their adjusted income on rent or the basic rent, whichever is the higher (but not exceeding the market rent). The Program may include property based rental assistance and interest reduction contracts to write down the interest on the loan to as low as one percent.
Single-Family Housing	A dwelling unit, either attached or detached, designed for use by one Household and with direct access to a street. It does not share heating facilities or other essential building facilities with any other dwelling.
State Data Center (SDC)	A state agency or university facility identified by the governor of each state to participate in the Census Bureau's cooperative network for the dissemination of the census data.
Tenant	One who rents real property from another.
Tenure	The distinction between owner-occupied and renter-occupied housing units.
Townhouse (or Row House)	Single-family attached residence separated from another by party walls, usually on a narrow lot offering small front and back-yards; also called a row house.
Very Low Income	Person or Household whose gross household income does not exceed 50% of Area Median Income adjusted for Household size.
Zoning	Classification and regulation of land by local governments according to use categories (zones); often also includes density designations.