

CONNECTICUT PLANNING

Fall 2020

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American Planning Association
Connecticut Chapter

Creating Great Communities for All

Affordable Housing in Connecticut

Embracing the Opportunity to Plan for Affordable Housing **4** A Legacy of Racist Land Policy **6** What is the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority? **8** Desegregate Connecticut **10** What Does Affordable Housing Success Actually Look Like? **13** Transforming Blight into Housing Opportunity **16** Affordable Housing and Financial Feasibility **20**



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I hope that this issue finds everyone in the Connecticut planning community still healthy, safe, and busy extracting whatever goodness you can from this year, both personally and professionally.

As an organization, CCAPA has long recognized Connecticut's inadequate, inequitable, single-family-dominated housing supply as a fundamental challenge to sustainable growth and development. Our members have advocated at the local and state levels for regulatory and policy reforms for years. Our [Housing Policy Statement](#) from March of 2018 (eons ago in pandemic time) stated: "Residents...are being failed by a regulatory environment that makes it difficult to build anything but single-family homes" and called for statewide leadership in planning to meet the housing needs of our residents. Though it has taken the tumult of this year, I am finally hopeful that substantive progress on removing barriers and encouraging more equitable development is underway in Connecticut.

Amanda and our contributors have put together an excellent issue on our housing crisis, outlining the issues, identifying resources, providing success stories, and previewing regulatory debates to come. Please share this edition with your local land use decision-makers, if you don't already do so on a regular basis. It is important for us as planners to facilitate informed and productive discussions as this conversation continues into next year. I look forward to discussing this topic further at our Chapter meeting coming up during SNEAPA 2020.

I also wanted to let you know that the Chapter is furthering its Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED+I) work through an ad hoc committee headed by Khara Dodds. We were recently awarded a grant from the American Planning Association to engage a consultant to help us in formulating an ED+I Action Guide for the Chapter. Please get in touch with myself or Khara if you are interested in participating.

I look forward to hearing from you and seeing you again sometime soon. Please feel free to reach out at any time at (203) 271-1773 or raugur@mminc.com.

— Rebecca Augur

On the cover: Stonington's Threadmill Apartments opened in 2016 with 46 market-rate and 12 affordable apartments. (Photo: Amanda Kennedy)

CONNECTICUT PLANNING

is published quarterly by the Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association. Contributions are encouraged. Submissions must include the name and contact information of the contributor. Material may be edited to conform to space or style requirements. Please address submissions to Executive Editor Amanda Kennedy, AICP (contact information below).

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FROM THE EDITOR



This issue dives headfirst into the question that many of Connecticut’s planning and zoning commissioners and planners are finally grappling with: how to expand access to quality affordable housing in their communities for Connecticut’s low- and moderate-income residents. This topic is always relevant, but even more so in the fall of 2020. The Desegregate CT movement is putting a renewed spotlight

on the role that zoning has played in perpetuating segregation and injustice (as discussed in this issue by Connecticut Fair Housing Center’s Fionnuala Darby-Hudgens and Desegregate CT Policy Fellow Duncan Grimm), at the same time that municipalities across the state are beginning work to develop their local Affordable Housing Plans, required by state statute to be adopted by July 2022.

It is good news that 43 municipalities have received funding from the Department of Housing to support technical assistance for their Affordable Housing Plan work. The Department of Housing has also hired the Regional Plan Association to develop guidance for the Affordable Housing Plans. In this issue, RPA VP and Connecticut State Director Melissa Kaplan-Macey explains some of the components that the guidelines will encourage municipalities to include, as well as where the guidebook will function as a “how-to” playbook to assist municipalities in their analysis of potential strategies. For more information about Affordable Housing Plans, please visit the collection of guidance and best practices that we have posted at CCAPA’s [Resource Library](#).

An article by Don Poland digs into the economics of 8-30g development. Jonathan Cabral from the Connecticut Housing Finance Agency reviews how CHFA supports affordable housing, and he also provides a run-down of the comprehensive housing data and analysis that the agency has been working to expand access to. CCAPA student member Hamsa Ganapathi gives us her thoughts on the importance of “dignified” affordable housing and her impressions as a 2020 Sustainable CT fellow working in the WestCOG region. Lastly, look for examples of how CT Vibrant Communities Coalition members have turned blight into community assets, and an update from CCAPA’s Government Relations Co-Chair John Guskowski on recent legislative developments and a review of the legislation that has been proposed as part of the Desegregate CT efforts.

In this issue’s President’s Message, CCAPA President Rebecca Augur hopes we are extracting some goodness from these bizarre times. I am pleased that the shift to virtual meetings seems to have improved attendance and engagement on multiple levels, and on a personal level, has opened up opportunities to learn about new things (Data Viz! Bird Behavior! Historic Archaeology!). I pass on Rebecca’s wish that we can each find some good things to carry forward into 2021. 🍀

— Amanda Kennedy, AICP

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Embracing the Opportunity to Plan for Affordable Housing

by Melissa Kaplan-Macey, VP State Programs & CT Director, Regional Plan Association

Regional Plan Association is working with the State’s Department of Housing and partners across Connecticut to develop a guidebook that will help municipalities create local affordable housing plans, as required by State statute §8-30j. While §8-30j requires all towns to create an affordable housing plan by 2022, it doesn’t specify what should be included in the plan, leaving many local communities with a lot of questions... particularly, “What should we include in our plan?” and “How do we create a plan for affordable housing when it can be such a hot button issue in our town?”

The guidebook focuses on answering both of these questions. It will be a “how to” on both the process for conceptualizing the plan and for developing the document itself, helping local communities to not just comply with §8-30j, but to make the most of the opportunity to come together to plan for affordability.

Affordable homes and a variety of housing types that meet the needs of people of different ages and incomes are the foundation of thriving, diverse communities. More places where people can afford to age in place and live where they work strengthens local economic and social sustainability. Rather than an obstacle to be surmounted, the planning process can be an exciting opportunity to bring people together, connecting affordable homes to community values like diversity and opportunity. By creating space for productive dialogue on this important issue, local leaders and engaged residents can build a shared understanding of how homes that meet the needs of current and future residents can improve the overall health and economic vitality of their towns.

The guidebook, which we expect to release in November, will provide a framework for engaging communities in the planning process, recommendations on elements that should be included in the plan, tips for creating specific elements of the plan, and a toolkit to support plan implementation.

(continued on page 5)

RPA’s July 2020 “Be My Neighbor” report explores how additional homes in the region can be created through Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and the conversion of large single-family homes into two- or three-family houses. Image source: Regional Plan Association.

By creating space for productive dialogue on this important issue, local leaders and engaged residents can build a shared understanding of how homes that meet the needs of current and future residents can improve the overall health and economic vitality of their towns.



Embracing the Opportunity, cont'd

Specifically, it will include recommendations for how to:

- ❖ Conduct a housing needs assessment
- ❖ Evaluate local land use and zoning to identify barriers to affordable housing development
- ❖ Understand local and regional housing market conditions with respect to the types and scales of housing that can be supported by the market
- ❖ Develop plan goals, strategies and actions
- ❖ Utilize best practices to implement the recommendations of the plan, with a toolkit that will include:
 - Best practices for community engagement and engaging residents on social media
 - A graphically illustrated “lookbook” highlighting examples of affordable housing design at different scales and in different neighborhood contexts

- Best practices in crafting supportive regulations such as inclusionary zoning, deed restrictions, land banks and adaptive reuse
- Recommendations for streamlining the approvals process
- Guidance on affirmatively furthering fair housing

Although one size doesn't fit all, there are a common set of tools and strategies that can be very helpful in planning for affordable homes. Synthesizing those tools and strategies, the guidebook will be a helpful resource making it easier for towns to successfully plan for more affordability. ■■

— *Melissa Kaplan-Macey is Vice President for State Programs and Connecticut Director with Regional Plan Association, a nonprofit research, planning, and advocacy organization working to develop and promote ideas to improve the economic health, environmental resiliency, and quality of life in the NY-NJ-CT metropolitan area.*

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A Legacy of Racist Land Policy

by Fionnuala Darby-Hudgens, Director of Operations, Connecticut Fair Housing Center

Connecticut is one of the most segregated states in the country. The greater Bridgeport area is in the top five most segregated regions of the nation. And 67% of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color live on only 8% of the land in Connecticut. These statistics are the outcomes of a long and sustained legacy of discriminatory housing and land use policy that has built systemic barriers to affordable housing outside of urban areas for Black and Latinx people. Ironically, the success of white people has been dependent on access to subsidized and affordable housing for over a century. However, today's public outcry against inclusionary land use policy is deeply rooted in our country's tradition of exclusion of people of color from predominantly white suburbs.

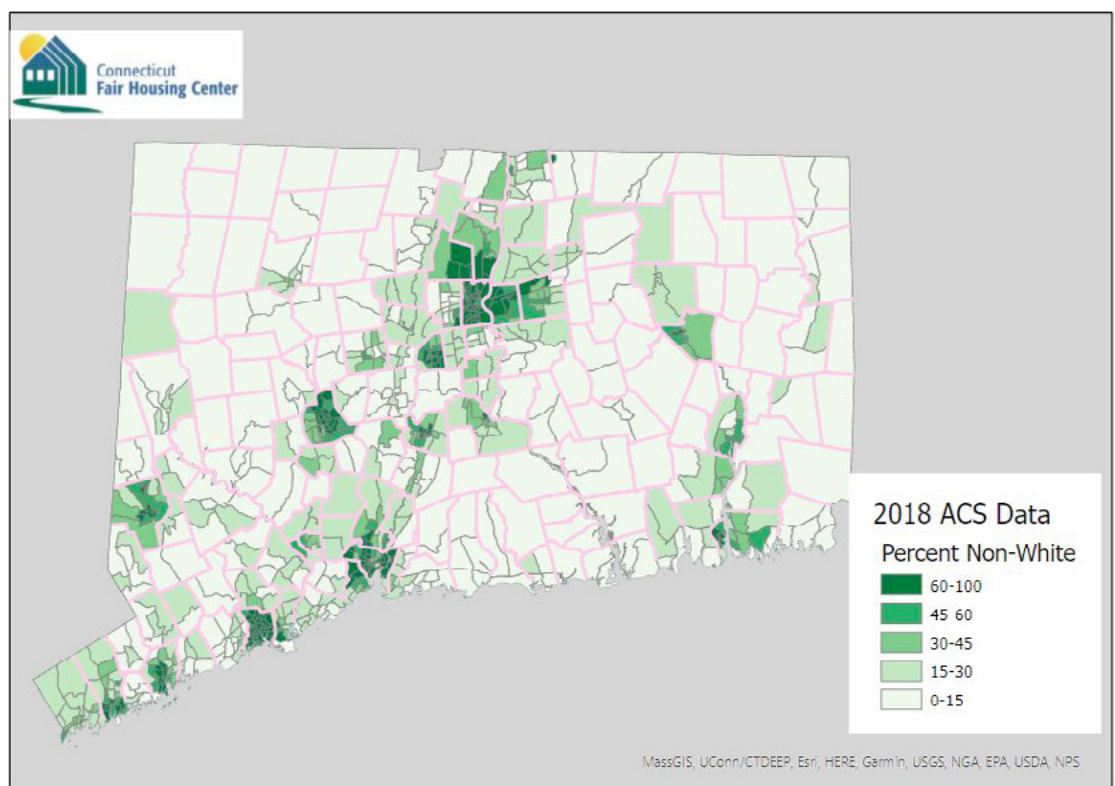
In the early part of the 20th century, land use decisions were typically restricted to accommodate the needs of industry, agriculture, and access to transit. That pattern changed throughout the first half of the 20th century, as access to transportation increased, and wealth accumulation for white families was no longer exclusively linked to agriculture land use. In Connecticut, these economic shifts, coincided with the passage of the 1926 Zoning Enabling Act, which granted municipalities the authority to zone or plan their com-

munities. Almost immediately, residential zoning codified the practice of segregating neighborhoods by housing type.

Throughout the 1940s, restrictive land use policies and zoning were supported by racially restrictive deed covenants which expressly prohibited the sale of desirable homes to members of the non-white race (although they did permit their presence in those homes as "domestic servants"). These covenants served as an additional barrier for people of color to be able to access affordable housing.

(continued on page 7)

To redress the legacy of generations of discriminatory land use policy, we need strong anti-racist actions that support housing opportunities for people of color outside of urban centers.



Connecticut's patterns of segregation are clear from current census data on race.

Legacy of Racist Policy, cont'd

Throughout the middle of the 20th century the federal government sponsored the development of the suburbs, mostly with investments in infrastructure. Moderately priced single-family housing development in the suburbs soared. At the same time, the federal government also began to offer generous financial support in the form of inexpensive mortgages that would vault many white families into the middle class. This support was not extended to Black Americans who were excluded through red-lining, blockbusting, and discriminatory lending practices. Naturally, land use policy followed the way of federal monies, and supported the construction of single-family homes.

Neighborhoods where law and custom permitted African-Americans to purchase homes were starved for credit and investment. Ultimately, many neighborhoods of color were bulldozed or cut off from other neighborhoods and amenities by “urban renewal” and highway construction of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s. Even after the Fair Housing Act prohibited denying or making housing unavailable based on race in 1968, discrimination persisted in the housing market.

While housing opportunities were consistently limited for people of color, affordable homeownership in the suburbs also began to decrease. Exclusionary zoning became an even greater barrier to development, making it more costly for developers to propose projects and jump through the hoops required by planning and zoning commissions. Existing housing became significantly more costly as a natural result of limited development and increased demand.

Throughout this time, state and federal policy directed the creation of subsidized rental housing and affordable homeownership opportunities only into urban centers. These subsidies strengthened the existing patterns of racial segregation. In the early 1990s and early 2000s, Black borrowers and homeowners were subjected to a targeted campaign of predatory lending that resulted in them facing enormous rates of foreclosure in the financial crisis, equity stripping, and then

disinvestment in their segregated neighborhoods as banks prioritized maintaining foreclosed properties in white areas.

Today, persistent exclusionary zoning, the government subsidization of concentrated poverty, and thinly veiled racism continue to restrict housing options for people of color. In Connecticut, 23 municipalities prohibit the development of multifamily housing, while others require 4-acre lot sizes, obstructing the creation of working-class homeownership opportunities. And municipalities continue to adopt or consider adopting exclusionary zoning regulations.

Ironically, the availability of affordable housing in the past has played a role in the histories of most white professionals. The ability to attend college or purchase their first home was likely dependent on the affordable homeownership accessed by their own parents, enabled and subsidized by federal actions. Today it is these same people, in predominantly white municipalities, that protest in support of the Black Lives Matter movements. However, it is also their communities where affordable housing is demonized, and inclusionary land use is considered violent and offensive. To redress the legacy of generations of discriminatory land use policy, we need strong anti-racist actions that support housing opportunities for people of color outside of urban centers. It is the time to center racial equity as the mission of every policy. ■

— Fionnuala “Finn” Darby-Hudgens is the Director of Operations for the Connecticut Fair Housing Center. Finn’s expertise in fair housing is in land use and housing policy, and Connecticut’s fair housing history. She earned her bachelor’s degree from Trinity College and earned a Master’s of Public Administration from the University of Connecticut.



Highway construction in Hartford, CT devastated the Parkville neighborhood and isolated the North End neighborhood from the rest of the city. Photo is used with permission from the Hartford History Center at the Hartford Public Library, for educational purposes only.

What is the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority?

A Resource for First-Time Homebuyers, Rental Housing Developers, and Planners!

by Jonathan Cabral, Connecticut Housing Finance Authority

The Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) is a quasi-state agency with a mission to alleviate the shortage of housing for low- to moderate-income families in the state. CHFA issues bonds in the marketplace and uses those proceeds to provide low-cost financing that has helped create affordable housing opportunities in every community in Connecticut. CHFA allocates Connecticut's federal low-income housing tax credits to help build and rehabilitate affordable rental housing, and provides other forms of financing and equity that have supported the development of over 55,000 affordable multifamily rental units throughout the state. CHFA's first-time homebuyer mortgages and down payment assistance are offered through a network of 70 lending institutions. In its 50+ years of operation, CHFA has provided over 145,000 home purchase mortgages to mostly first-time homebuyers, benefiting all 169 municipalities throughout Connecticut.

CHFA also works with stakeholders providing additional resources that help expand affordable housing options. Over the last several years, CHFA has partnered with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation in providing technical assistance to Connecticut's suburban and rural communities with the goal of developing more community-scaled affordable housing. CHFA has also partnered with the Connecticut Main Street Center in providing technical assistance and financing options to rehabilitate underutilized small mixed-use properties found in Connecticut's downtowns and along key commercial corridors.

Beyond CHFA's financing products and housing programs, the organization publishes reports on housing and makes housing data available. Over the last year, CHFA has made a concerted effort to provide housing-related data that can help policymakers, planners, and practitioners make informed, data-driven decisions.

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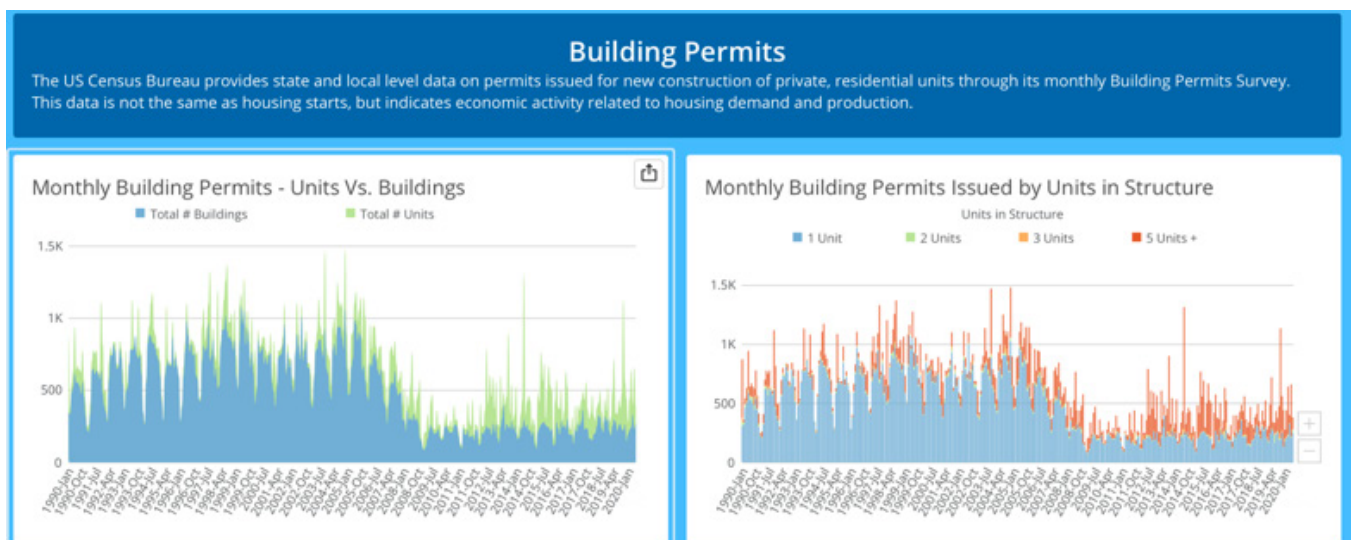


Figure 1. Building permit data displayed on CHFA's data dashboard.

CHFA, cont'd

The [Connecticut Monthly Housing Market Dashboard](#) is one such example. This dashboard was designed to provide data on the health and stability on the state's housing market.

The dashboard compiles information from a variety of sources that show home sales activity, CHFA first-time homebuyer lending, foreclosures, building permits, and a number of economic indexes. Another dashboard focuses on [CHFA's home purchase borrowers](#), while the [Annual Report re Fair Housing Choice and Racial and Economic Integration](#) report provides lending and investment data on all of CHFA single family and multifamily housing programs by census tract, income group, households served, race, and ethnicity.

Municipal officials and planners may find the [Connecticut County & Municipal Housing Market Profiles](#) particularly useful. This interactive dashboard provides a one-stop-shop overview of local housing market information which includes median property tax amount, median assessed values on homes sold, U.S. Census data, and grand list data from the Office of Policy and Management. These dashboards can assist planners in understanding their community's housing stock, sales activity, as well as identify potential gaps in their communities housing needs.

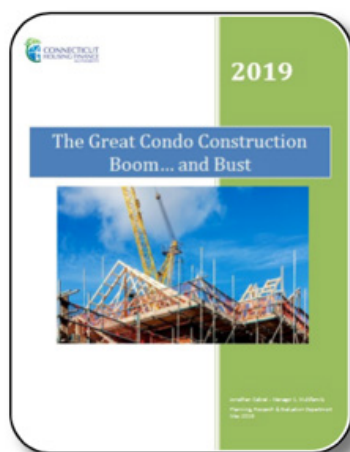
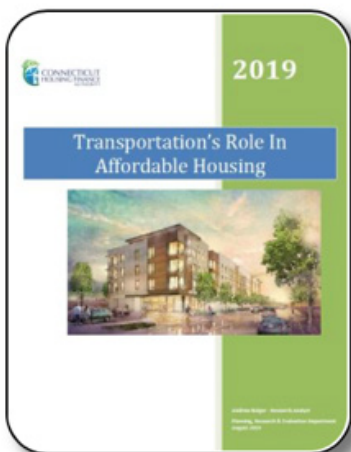
In addition to data and dashboards, CHFA regularly publishes [research briefs](#) on a variety of specific housing topics focused on Connecticut. These include written reports that look at transportation's role in affordable housing, an analy-

envpartners.com

sis of rural housing in Connecticut, and reports regarding trends in Connecticut's housing market. CHFA's [success stories](#), highlight program or project successes in a number of communities across the state.

As communities struggle to cope with the economic crisis as a result of the worldwide pandemic, local planners are asked to do more around housing. Gaining a better understanding of your local housing market and having access to data will be critical when planning for the future. The readily available resources provided by organizations like CHFA will assist planners tackling these current issues and assist in engineering plans for the future.

More information about housing program can be found on [CHFA's website](#). Research and Data resources can be found [CHFA's Research, Data & Reports page](#).



— Jonathan Cabral is the Interim Director of the Planning, Research & Evaluation Department at the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority and an adjunct professor of political science at Central Connecticut State University. Jon is currently a PhD student of Geography, studying urban planning and policy at Birkbeck, University of London.



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What's going on?!

Stay current with CCAPA happenings! Bookmark our online events page at <https://ct.planning.org/conferences-and-meetings/> so you don't miss out!

Desegregate CT's website has archived research conducted by project members as well as many of the informational sessions conducted since June.

Desegregate Connecticut: An Interdisciplinary Movement to Collect Knowledge and Drive Change to Create a More Just and Equitable State

by *Duncan Grimm, Policy Fellow, Desegregate CT*

As Americans, many of us have been asking what we can do to acknowledge and end discriminatory practices in our communities. In Connecticut, people and organizations recently formed a coalition called Desegregate Connecticut to reform statewide land use laws.¹ We know that planners can and should play a central role in land use reform. To successfully desegregate our state by expanding housing diversity, increasing housing supply and improving the development process, planners' appreciation of "the interrelatedness of decisions and the long range consequences"² means they are well positioned to educate, research and advocate for change.


Understanding Solutions

Since early June, Desegregate Connecticut has hosted regular events featuring interdisciplinary presentations by lawyers, architects, planners, politicians and others. These public conversations about land use impacts and our proposals have engaged the perspectives of advocates, practitioners, and the general public.


Discussions have featured the work of respected non-profits and also the efforts of local officials. For example, the tri-state Regional Plan Association presented on the opportunity to address the housing

shortage through accessory dwelling units and single-family home conversions by highlighting their "Be My Neighbor" report.³ (ADUs were part of our initial [policy recommendations](#).)⁴ We also co-hosted a webinar with National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership-member DataHaven, which spotlighted their report, "Towards Health Equity in Connecticut."⁵ That report explained how addressing social needs like housing can lead to improved individual and public health, and how zoning reform is essential to ensuring a diverse supply of housing.

(continued on page 11)



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Connecticut's land use system is broken.
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Our land use system marginalizes low-income residents of color, impedes our economy, and harms our environment. [Learn more about the causes and costs of segregation.](#)

Desegregate Connecticut, cont'd

In addition to being a convener of reform proposals, we are also listening to the efforts of on-the-ground policymakers. This fall, we invited zoning officials from Manchester and Westport to speak about how their communities are thinking about land use reforms against the backdrop of desegregating their municipalities. We also have discussed the merits of form-based codes in the context of both cities and small towns, and how zoning reform is something all communities must investigate.

Collecting Data to Drive Change

In addition to serving as a forum where advocates and officials can discuss problems, progress and solutions, Desegregate Connecticut itself is undertaking a variety of efforts to support our advocacy for statewide land use reform. Looking ahead to the next legislative session in Connecticut, our volunteers are collecting information on local efforts and collecting statewide land use data.

(continued on page 12)



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Desegregate Connecticut, cont'd

Not only are we [monitoring updates](#)⁶ to local zoning regulations and updates to Plans of Conservation and Development (POCDs), we have volunteer researchers combing our state's zoning codes, and GIS mappers planning to overlay those findings with existing data to help visualize the literal land use landscape in Connecticut. By comparing what is written in the zoning codes with zoning data, we hope to illustrate what communities have made progress and where disparities still exist. Planners will continue to be instrumental in this effort, so please help us collect accurate data for your municipality when we reach out through the CT-Planning listserv.

Legislative Goals

Our hope is that by collecting stories and solutions through conversations, and by collecting data to tell a visual story, land use disparities for policymakers will become more real. They will both understand the lived experiences of their constituents, and have cognizable data that can be used as a tool to inform legislation.

To that end, Desegregate Connecticut plans to advocate for statewide changes to land use practices. You can read more about our three goals — growing housing supply; increasing housing diversity; and improving land use processes — and ideas to achieve these goals on our website.⁷ The planning community has the opportunity to be at the forefront of this advocacy, and we welcome any and all feedback as we work towards an inclusive and equitable state. Indeed, the Ethical Principles in Planning encourage planners to “[p]ay special attention to the interrelatedness of decisions and the long range consequences of present actions.”⁸ Planners are already lending their voices and their expertise to movements like Desegregate Connecticut and similar movements in other states. You are the change makers we need today. Monitor the listserv for updates, subscribe to our own [mailing list](#),⁹ follow us on [Twitter](#)¹⁰ and get in touch by emailing desegregatect@gmail.com. 

— *Duncan Grimm is a student at the University of Connecticut School of Law. Originally from Noank, he is part of Desegregate Connecticut's legislative team as a Policy Fellow.*⁹

Footnotes

¹ Desegregate Connecticut, [About Us](#).

² American Planning Association, [Ethical Principles in Planning](#).

³ Regional Plan Association, [Be My Neighbor: Untapped Housing Solutions: ADUs and Conversions](#) (2020).

⁴ Desegregate Connecticut, [Policy Recommendations](#).

⁵ DataHaven, [Towards Health Equity in Connecticut: The Role of Social Inequality and the Impact of COVID-19](#) 15, 32 (2020).

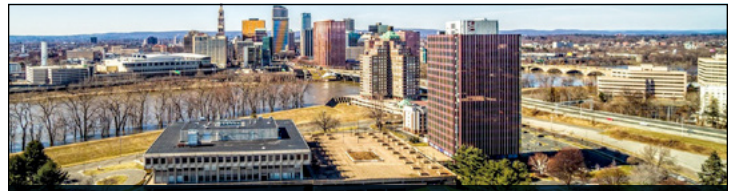
⁶ Desegregate Connecticut, [Local Reforms](#).

⁷ Desegregate Connecticut, *supra* note 4.

⁸ American Planning Association, *supra* note 2.

⁹ Desegregate Connecticut, [Take Action](#).

¹⁰ Desegregate CT (@desegregateCT), [Twitter](#), twitter.com/desegregateCT.



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What Does Affordable Housing Success Actually Look Like?

by Hamsa Ganapathi, MS Candidate, Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy

While the development of affordable housing may look different from town to town, there are some key aspects that highlight potential success, or failure, for housing in Connecticut.

In 2020, we're dealing with a pandemic, a loud and urgent call for racial justice, a presidential election, and of course, making sure our sourdough starters are properly fed. In the midst of these current events though, I hope that specific questions about affordable housing have become more important for planners because, with the exception of that sourdough starter, affordable housing is actually a crucial factor in all of them. So, what does affordable housing success look like? After a summer as a Sustainable CT fellow in the Western Connecticut region of Connecticut, there are some observations I have made that may help make a start in finding those answers.

Before identifying where success lies though, it may be helpful to first understand where affordable housing development goes awry. From working with towns in the western region of Connecticut, I observed that two phrases were often coded key words that meant that affordable housing was going to be a difficult concept in some way: zoning regulations and community character. Neither one of these concepts seems overwhelmingly inhibitory to affordable housing development on the surface. But, more often than not, hearing these words made it clear that a difficult conversation about affordable housing was coming.

Zoning regulations are important. They decide what goes where and how regulations will dictate some standard for towns and cities in Connecticut. But zoning regulations used poorly can end up being inhibitory and often blatantly racist or classist structures for denying housing opportunity. For example, a two-acre minimum lot size zoning regulation may help to preserve large, single-family

homes as the standard housing model in a town; but this same zoning practice can also systematically prevent affordable housing development by not allowing denser dwellings on smaller units of land that are more affordable in nature.

Similarly, arguments for community character tend to paint affordable housing units as unattractive building complexes that will disturb the image of a community. However, building designs can be modified, and town planners should use their experience and knowledge to ask developers to design affordable housing complexes that match a community's character, instead of blaming the affordable housing in the first place.

Beyond exclusionary coded language of zoning and community character, another key failure of some affordable housing policy is unnecessarily strict interpretations of family and family dwellings. By limiting the kinds of individuals that qualify as family members living in one unit, towns effectively restrict accessory dwelling and other similar arrangements for those individuals and families who might benefit from them.

All of these policy choices contribute to the failures of affordable housing development, or lack thereof, in Connecticut. If it were simple to just remove and replace these policies with more inclusive ones, such as flexible definitions of family, smaller lot acre requirements, and a more reflexive view of community character, affordable housing development would be starting off in a much better, likely more successful place.

But once intrinsically exclusive housing policies are amended, what actually constitutes a successful affordable housing

(continued on page 14)

Ogden House has all the makings of a dignified affordable housing development. It's not in a polluted part of town, it's not in a place where no one wants to be, and it offers its residents the sovereignty to shop, travel, and access town resources on their own, should they choose to, within close proximity.

Affordable Housing Success, cont'd

development? For that, we might need to do some COVID-19 approved in-state traveling to the northern Fairfield County town of Wilton.

Driving north on River Road towards Wilton Center, it would be easy to miss one of the best examples of affordable housing success: Ogden House. Ogden House is an affordable senior housing development on River Road, funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

What makes Ogden House an excellent example of an affordable housing development is that it isn't just some housing development relegated to the outskirts of town, left to be unseen. Instead, this housing development is clearly marked, easy to get to, and even provides phone numbers on its entryway sign for those in need of housing assistance. Its driveway allows residents some level of privacy, and the units themselves look like a normal apartment complex.

Neatly laid sidewalks connect the residents of Ogden House to the many amenities available in Wilton Center, including a grocery store, a library, town buildings, a post office, a pharmacy, banks, a train station, bus stops, and a day care center. Residents can therefore walk, use a wheelchair, bike, drive, or use any other vehicle of choice to access those amenities. With the Wilton Center area also clearly marked with crosswalks and equipped with multiple parking lots, traveling to and from Ogden House seems to be a relatively safe endeavor. All of Wilton's public schools are also within a two-mile radius of Ogden House.

Neatly laid sidewalks connect the residents of Ogden House to the many amenities available in Wilton Center, including a grocery store, a library, town buildings, a post office, a pharmacy, banks, a train station, bus stops, and a day care center.



With this collection of resources, families living at Ogden House have a lot within two miles of their fingertips. What about these features of Ogden House make it an affordable housing success story? Primarily, Ogden House has all the makings of a *dignified* affordable housing development. It's not in a polluted part of town, it's not in a place where no one wants to be, and it offers its residents the sovereignty to shop, travel, and access town resources on their own, should they choose to, within close proximity. Ogden House may not have been easy to develop, and there may still be individuals who oppose its existence. But at the end of the day, it represents what affordable housing approaches need.

Affordable housing is not an easy project to address, let alone implement and construct. But given the very serious need for affordable housing in Connecticut, it is more important than ever that we are serious about changing the policies like exclusionary zoning requirements and family definitions that inhibit affordable housing development in our towns. Furthermore, in building affordable housing, it is essential that we advocate for and create real homes that are accessible, well-resourced, and most importantly, dignified. By committing to these values, we may truly see affordable housing success in Connecticut. 🏠

— Hamsa Ganapathi is a graduate student at Tufts University Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy. This past summer, she was a Sustainable CT fellow assisting the Western Connecticut Council of Governments. Throughout the summer, she worked with partners at Sustainable CT and with fellows and interns at other organizations to assess affordable housing issues around the state of Connecticut. Questions and further dialogue are welcome and can be directed to Hamsa at hganapathi21@gmail.com.

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Transforming Blight into Housing Opportunity: The Work of the Connecticut Vibrant Communities Coalition

Submitted by Connecticut Vibrant Communities Coalition partners

When searching for a housing development site, an opportunity might be right around the corner. Many Connecticut communities have discovered that vacant or problem properties can be valuable resources for housing development. Using collaborative approaches among code enforcement officials, community and economic development staff, neighborhood and nonprofit organizations, developers and investors, these communities have transformed problem properties into community assets offering an array of housing opportunities.

The Connecticut Vibrant Communities Coalition (CVCC) brings together members from municipalities and partner organizations dedicated to transforming vacant, abandoned, and deteriorated properties into productive assets. The Coalition addresses these goals through education, peer learning and policy development. Members include municipal representatives, non-profit organizations, community development leaders, state and regional agency representatives, city planners and enforcement officers.

CVCC connects members to the latest national research and best practices through programming and information sharing. CVCC quarterly meetings have featured presentations on strategic code enforcement, tax delinquency, land banks, best practices statewide and across the country, state and federal legislation and strategies for returning vacant, abandoned properties back to productive use. During the 2019 State Legislative session, CVCC took a leadership role in passing important land bank and receivership legislation, enabling creation of land banks and allowing nonprofit housing corporations or others to remediate vacant and deteriorated properties. Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) facilitates the CVCC with support from the Harold Webster Smith Foundation.

The following pages highlight three projects that illustrate how municipalities,

residents, developers, funders and investors can collaborate to transform vacant and abandoned properties into affordable housing. The projects in Norwich, Hartford, and New Haven each created new affordable housing opportunities and have transformed problem properties into valuable community assets. These examples show community benefits, including:

- Eliminating unhealthy and dangerous conditions in the neighborhood
- Improving quality of life for residents
- Bringing new investment to the neighborhood
- Restoring historic assets and character
- Strengthening property values and increasing the tax base
- Building neighborhood pride and engagement.

CVCC is a forum for these communities and many others to exchange ideas and to learn about new tools and techniques. CVCC is currently working to expand membership. Meetings are open to all and are being planned for January, April, July and October for 2021. For more information, please visit CVCC on the LISC website or contact Jim Horan at LISC Connecticut jhoran@lisc.org.

(continued on page 17)

CVCC quarterly meetings have featured presentations on strategic code enforcement, tax delinquency, land banks, best practices statewide and across the country, state and federal legislation and strategies for returning vacant, abandoned properties back to productive use.

Transforming Blight, cont'd

445 Zion Street, Hartford

Originally built in 1907, 445 Zion Street was home to immigrant families that worked at area factories. Abandoned in the late 1980s, it was severely damaged by fire in 2002. The City of Hartford took possession of the building, gutting it and removing the uppermost floor and part of the roof for safety reasons. The City tried for years to dispose of the property but the extensive damage, environmental abatement requirements, and deteriorating foundation and walls turned away developers.

In 2012, the City agreed to donate the building to [Mutual Housing Association of Greater Hartford](#) (MHAGH), a non-profit housing developer. MHAGH was committed to bringing 445 Zion back to its original glory. Since the building was located in the Frog Hollow Historic District, MHAGH wanted to create a building that matched the original, selecting architectural elements that would harken back to the early 1900s.

MHAGH also wanted to ensure the building would be sustainable. Using a variety of energy-efficient elements and with solar panels on the roof, MHAGH was able to deliver apartments where residents pay substantially less for utilities than in similar properties. The hardwood floors and granite countertops were sustainable choices that will require less maintenance and replacement. Every choice weighed the historic value with the sustainable value, finding a balance between preservation and greening.



445 Zion Street – Before and After. Source: Mutual Housing Association of Greater Hartford.



445 Zion Street – Architectural detail. Source: Mutual Housing Association of Greater Hartford.

The building's 15 apartments are designated for seniors with incomes from 25% to 50% of Area Median Income. Handicap-adaptable units, an elevator, and a first-floor common area for socialization were some of the design choices MHAGH made to ensure the building was accommodating to seniors. The building at 445 Zion Street went from blighted, abandoned, and dangerous to beautiful, functional, and safe. What once was a burden to the City is now a fully occupied building back on the tax rolls.

(continued on page 18)

The building's 15 apartments are designated for seniors with incomes from 25% to 50% of Area Median Income.

Transforming Blight, cont'd

Ponemah Mills, Norwich

Ponemah Mill was built in 1866 on the banks of the Shetucket River in the Taftville section of Norwich. Over the years, the mill complex expanded to include multiple mill buildings, commercial

and office structures, housing for workers and management, a boarding house, three barns, two churches, and a park. For many years, Ponemah Mills was one of the largest textile mills in the United States, but by the 1990s the buildings were vacant, and the site was contaminated (www.connecticutmills.org).

Recognizing the site's potential for economic and community development, the City of Norwich and Norwich Community Development Corporation (NCDC) worked to find a reuse for the mills. In 2007, they were successful at marketing the property to the developer OneKey. The plan included three phases of development including loft apartments, commercial space and amenities. The City of Norwich and NCDC secured brownfield funding for environmental remediation. Although encumbered by FEMA-designated special flood hazard areas, the project was exempted locally for compliance due to its designation and listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The City waived all building permit fees for the project and provided an important assessment deferral package. NCDC also supported the project, becoming a 1% owner in the development. As a non-profit development corporation, NCDC was able to bring additional equity and tax savings to the project.

When fully developed, the Lofts at Ponemah Mills will include 314 apartments, 183 of which are designated as affordable. The financing for the \$75 million development includes multiple private and public sources, including State funding along with historic and affordable housing tax credits. Phases I and II of the project are now complete. Ponemah's 1, 2 and 3-bedroom apartments rent from \$1,005 to \$1,875. The Lofts also offers amenities such as a fitness room, steam room, sauna, theater, community room and several outdoor spaces. After decades of productivity and then a period of dormancy, Ponemah Mills is again contributing to the community. The new development successfully preserves the historic character of the buildings and has brought new residents and investment to the community.

A historic postcard of Ponemah Mills. Source: Wikipedia.



Ponemah Mills under construction. Source: Norwich Community Development Corporation.



Apartments look down on a new courtyard at the Lofts. Source: OneKey.

(continued on page 19)

Transforming Blight, cont'd

Thompson-Winchester Homeownership, New Haven

New Haven's Newhallville neighborhood was once a leading center for manufacturing, located along the Farmington Canal and railroad line. Winchester Repeating Arms Company, the major employer, opened in 1870 and grew through the end of World War II.

By the end of the 1960s, the factory and the neighborhood were declining. During the foreclosure crisis of the mid 2000's, many of the Newhallville homes in the area of Thompson Street and Winchester Avenue were in trouble. Crime increased dramatically, property values plummeted, and many homes were left vacant and abandoned. The City of New Haven took ownership of many of the properties and subsequently made the decision to demolish the worst of them. The city-owned lots on Thompson Street and Winchester Avenue stood vacant for nearly fifteen years, becoming a place for illegal dumping and other problems.

At the same time, the City of New Haven's Livable City Initiative (LCI) (www.newhavenct.gov/gov/depts/lci/default.htm) was focusing on homeownership development to offer homeowners an opportunity to invest, build equity and community. LCI was also working to reduce the negative effects of speculative development affecting many New Haven neighborhoods. LCI realized that there was a market for the owner-occupied two-family homes, especially for first-time homebuyers. With the strong rental market in New Haven, the additional rental income could make the homes affordable for many of the residents.

In 2017, LCI launched redevelopment of the ten vacant lots for the construction of nine new two-family homes for sale to first-time homeowners. The Thompson-Winchester Homeownership project is now underway. The project will provide homeownership and rentals for working families with income up to 100% of the Area Median Income (AMI). The \$5.7 million of development financing will leverage more than \$100M in investment, including state and local funding. The access to new affordable, quality homes will enable new owners to invest and grow roots in Newhallville. They will be able to participate in the economic growth in the neighborhood that includes the redevelopment of Science Park and Winchester Lofts. ■



Vacant lots along Winchester Avenue.



Construction along Thompson Street.



Completed homes along Winchester Avenue; Source (for all photos): New Haven LCI.

— This article was a collaborative effort that reflects the spirit of CVCC. The following writers contributed to this story: Sarah Miner, Mutual Housing Association of Greater Hartford; Deanna Rhodes, City of Norwich; Jason Vincent, Norwich Community Development Corporation; Linda Davis and Cathy Carbonaro-Schroeter, City of New Haven, Livable City Initiative. Thanks also to Laura Settlemyer of the Hartford Land Bank and Jim Horan of LISC for providing information. The article was edited by Andrea Pereira, consultant to LISC for CVCC.

Affordable Housing and Financial Feasibility

by Dr. Donald J. Poland, AICP

It has been over 30 years since 8-30g, the Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals Act, was adopted into law. Three decades on, and the need for affordable housing is still as great. Unfortunately, while most agree on the need, there is often disagreement on the policies needed to increase the supply of affordable housing. In addition, there remains much debate over the effectiveness of 8-30g.

I have been fortunate to have worked on housing and affordable housing issues for developers, municipalities, and non-profit neighborhood investment programs. I believe this broad experience has afforded me the ability to understand the complexity of affordable housing from different perspectives. Therefore, this article's aim is to focus on the perspective and challenge that receives the least attention in our planning efforts to address housing availability. That issue is the economics of housing, affordable housing, and the financial feasibility of 8-30g developments.

Housing markets function in accordance with the laws of supply and demand. Scarcity of housing overall — and at specific price points — results in higher housing costs. Demand drives scarcity when demand outpaces supply. Therefore, if we are to understand the challenge of affordable housing, it is critical that we understand the economics and financial feasibility of developing affordable housing. While 8-30g is a well-intended policy, it has fallen short of performing as it was intended — producing an adequate supply of affordable housing in

(continued on page 21)

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Affordable Housing, cont'd

underserved higher-income communities. Unfortunately, growth in two of the three demand drivers (jobs and population) has been anemic since 8-30g was adopted — household formations being the third demand driver with moderate growth. Affordable housing aside, the economics of speculative real estate development has been sluggish at best across all asset classes since 8-30g was adopted. The result: soft-to-weak market demand with high costs and low returns that challenge the financial feasibility of most real estate developments.

While some communities resist development — change, growth, and affordable housing — others have embraced development. However, even those communities that embrace development are often confronted with the challenges of weak-market conditions and marginally feasible developments that often require public participation in the form of subsidies, the most common being tax abatements. Developers would develop more

real estate, including housing and affordable housing, if there were ample demand and stronger returns — i.e., if more developments were financially feasible. However, anemic demand, modest returns, and unpredictable land use approvals undermine market confidence and increase risk.

The development of affordable housing poses even greater risks (e.g., community-opposed and denied applications) than market rate housing, and lower returns (e.g., below-market rents). As designed, 8-30g is intended to mitigate this increased risk and the low returns. However, 8-30g cannot overcome the anemic demand and modest returns that can undermine financial feasibility. Understanding this is important to the broader discussion of affordable housing and public policy.

Simply put, 8-30g is a market-based approach to a social need for affordable housing. 8-30g provides regulatory incentives (e.g., increased density, greater chance of approval, etc.) to entice private developers to build, own, and manage

(continued on page 22)

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... 8-30g assumes that incentives will overcome the risk and cost of developing and operating the affordable units. In theory, this is a novel and innovative policy approach. In practice, when confronted with the realities of weak-market conditions, it is challenging at best to design and develop a financially feasible 8-30g project.

Affordable Housing, cont'd

affordable housing, provided 30% of the units are restricted as affordable. In other words, 8-30g assumes that incentives will overcome the risk and cost of developing and operating the affordable units. In theory, this is a novel and innovative policy approach. In practice, when confronted with the realities of weak-market conditions, it is challenging at best to design and develop a financially feasible 8-30g project.

The reason for this is many variables that determine financial feasibility — the unique financial dynamics of all real estate developments. These many variables include market strength, land cost, labor cost, site development cost, utility connection fees, utility user fees, permitting fees, financing interest rates, tax rates, and achievable market rents. Most important, each of these variables influences both the upfront development costs and long-term operation costs. Cost vs. Returns = financial feasibility.

To understand how financial feasibility works, let us explore some basic economics of developing a 2-bedroom housing unit in the Hartford region. To accomplish this, I will compare the costs and returns of a market rate unit, and of affordable units at 60% and 80% AMI. In addition, I will extrapolate the per unit calculations to a 100-unit market rate and affordable developments. In doing so,

income of \$88,100. At 30% of their income, the family's housing budget is \$26,430/year (or \$2,202/month), enough to pay the market rate rent for a 2-bedroom of \$2,070 (or \$1.97/sq. ft.). Typically, as the starting point for determining feasibility, a return of \$2.00/sq. ft. is required to cover costs. Therefore, the \$1.97/sq. ft. is deemed reasonably feasible.

The feasible return of \$1.97/sq. ft. is assumed to cover all development and operation costs spread over an 8-year development proforma, including a 12% return on investment (ROI). The reason the \$2.00/sq. ft. is a starting point for feasibility is that costs and returns are not fixed values for all developments. The values will vary, often between \$1.85 and \$2.40/sq. ft. depending on the actual costs and the attainable rents.

Let us explore one variable cost, property taxes. In our first example, the \$1.97/sq. ft. includes taxes on an assessed value of \$105,000 (70% of appraised value) at a mill rate of 27 mills. An identical unit in a neighboring community with a mill rate of 33 mills would raise the per-square-foot rent by four cents to \$2.01. While such a small increase sounds insignificant, the difference, extrapolated over 100 units or 105,000 square feet, results in an additional \$4,200 per year in tax and operating expenses (or \$33,600 increase over the 8-year proforma). The same would be true of marginal increases in other costs (e.g. land cost, site improvements, utility connections, user fees, etc.). If each of these costs increased by 4 cents per square foot, the identical unit in the neighboring community would require a rent of \$2.16 per square foot to be feasible. However, if the maximum achievable remains \$1.97/sq. ft. the development would not be feasible. Hopefully, you are starting to see not only the effects of marginal variations costs, but that excessive municipal fees (e.g. sewer connections, land use application, building and zoning permits, etc.) can and do impact feasibility and the cost of affordable housing.

Now let us consider the same 2-bedroom unit and 3-person household

(continued on page 23)

Table 1: Market Rate Rent

Household/Income	Unit Sq. Ft.	Rent @ 100% AMI	Market Rent	Market Rent/ Sq. Ft.
3-person at \$88,100	1,050	\$2,202	\$2,070	\$1.97

I use generalized market values and development costs based on recent market research to provide reasonable representation of an actual development in the Hartford region.

For the market rate unit, we shall assume that the occupants are a 3-person household with the median household

Affordable Housing, cont'd

Table 2. Taxes Per Square Foot

Unit Sq. Ft.	Appraised Value	Assessed Value	Mill Rate	Taxes	Monthly Taxes Per Sq. Ft.
1,050	\$150,000	\$105,000	28	\$2,940	\$0.23
1,050	\$150,000	\$105,000	33	\$3,465	\$0.27

adjusted for affordable rents. Table 3 shows that the maximum affordable rent at 80% AMI is \$308 less per month than the market rate rent (\$3,696 less per year). The maximum affordable rent at 60% AMI is \$762 less per month (\$9,144 less per year). However, qualified affordable rents must also adjust for utility costs since total housing costs cannot exceed 30% of household. Conservatively adjusting for utility costs further reduce the

Table 3. Affordable Rents

Unit Sq. Ft.	Market Rent	Rent @ 80% AMI	Rent @ 60% AMI	Market Rent/ Sq. Ft.	Rent/Sq. Ft. 80% AMI	Rent/Sq. Ft. 60% AMI
1,050	\$2,070	\$1,762	\$1,308	\$1.97	\$1.68	\$1.25
Utility Adjusted Rent		\$1,562	\$1,108	\$1.97	\$1.49	\$1.05

maximum affordable rents by \$200 per month, as shown in the table. As a result, the yearly decrease in unit rental income increases to \$6,096 at 80% AMI and \$11,544 at 60% AMI.

The loss in rental income for the affordable units is substantial and the cumulative effect extrapolated over 100-units significantly impacts financial feasibility. Table 4 shows the gross income of a fully market rate

Table 4. Gross Incomes of Hypothetical Market-Rate and Mixed-Income Developments

	Units	Per Month Rent	Gross Income Per Unit	Gross Income Total Units
Market Rate Development	100	\$2,070	\$24,840	\$2,484,000
Mixed-Income 8-30g Development	70 Market Rate	\$2,070	\$24,840	\$1,738,800
	15 (80% AMI)	\$1,562	\$18,744	\$281,600
	15 (60% AMI)	\$1,108	\$13,296	\$199,440
	100	Total		\$2,219,840

development versus a mixed-income development. The 100 market rate units (assuming 100% occupancy) gross \$2,484,000/year. The mixed-income development, with 70 market rate units, 15 affordable units at 60% AMI, and 15 affordable units at 80% AMI, has a gross income of just \$2,219,840/year. That is \$264,160 (or 11%) less in yearly income than the market rate development. While an 11% decrease may not sound significant, it is important to understand that most costs are fixed (e.g. debt, utilities, taxes, insurance, management, etc.) and remain the same for both the market rate and affordable development — the debt service alone likely accounts for 50% of yearly gross revenue. The result, the 11% decrease in revenue, directly impacts profitability and return on investment, substantially decreasing the financial feasibility of the project

Developing a financially feasible market rate housing development is challenging enough with anemic demand and marginal return. Add to the development a requirement for 30% affordable units and it becomes next to impossible. While increases in density reduce the cost of land per unit, most of the other costs remain constant. Therefore, the benefits of density are minimal in the context of total cost. The many variables and variation in their costs have meaningful impacts on financial feasibility. In addition, since such costs vary across different geographies, understanding these costs helps to better understand locational variation in the production of affordable housing. By reducing or waiving fees and abating taxes on affordable units, municipalities could meaningfully and positively impact the financial feasibility of affordable housing development.

— *Don Poland is Managing Director of Urban Planning at Goman+York and Visiting Associate Professor of Urban Studies at Trinity College.*

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CCAPA Legislative Update: The “Off Season” Sees Some Movement

by John Guskowski, AICP, CCAPA Government Relations Co-Chair

In a typical year, the late summer and early fall would be considered a legislative downtime. Particularly in an election year when the entirety of the Connecticut General Assembly is on the ballot, significant movement on bills is rare, or at least happening well behind the scenes. But in example #17,244 that 2020 is not a typical year, there have been a few steps forward in recent weeks that CCAPA’s Government Relations team has been tracking. In order of progress:

Transfer Act Law Passed: In a Special Session of the Assembly at the beginning of October, the legislature passed [H.B. 7001](#), *An Act Revising Provisions of the Transfer Act and Authorizing the Development and Implementation of a Released-Based Remediation Program*. The environmental law group at Pullman & Comley described this bill as “putting the first nail in the Transfer Act’s coffin.” The Transfer Act ([CGA §22a-134 – 22a-134d](#)), adopted in 1985, applies to the transfer of establishments at which hazardous waste was generated or used. It requires disclosure of conditions, and frequently the investigation and remediation of the site. The Act has long been derided for making the redevelopment of brownfield sites massively complicated, time-consuming, and costly. In a New England state with hundreds of old mills, thousands of factories, service stations, and other underutilized real estate, the burden imposed by the Transfer Act has been identified as one of the factors limiting our economic competitiveness. HB 7001 is, it is hoped, the first step toward phasing out this Act and replacing it with a “release-based” property remediation program.

The bill was proposed by the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection itself, who administers the current Transfer Act, and gives DEEP the authority and the responsibility to propose a new set of standards that can accelerate the redevelopment and reuse of contaminated properties that will ultimately take the place of the Transfer Act. The bill

sets forth several factors for the new standards to deliberate and requires DEEP to assemble a Working Group to develop the new regulations. Considering the current Brownfields Working Group has been meeting for over a decade with few legislative or policy victories to show, there is reason for skepticism that the Transfer Act will be gone in a year or two. Nevertheless, if progress on the brownfield redevelopment front is going to happen in Connecticut, this bill was a necessary first step. We will hope that the second, third, and fourth steps are shortly behind.

Desegregate CT Bill Proposed: In our last *Connecticut Planning* legislative update, we outlined the early progress of the [Desegregate CT](#) movement. This effort, spearheaded by APA Member Prof. Sara Bronin of UConn Law School and others, seeks to push forward statewide legislative proposals to enable and require communities to increase housing supplies, broaden housing diversity, and streamline regulatory processes that exacerbate Connecticut’s poor record on economic and racial segregation. In response to this effort, State Senator Saud Anwar has presented [LCO No. 3508](#), *An Act Concerning Legislation for Special Session Concerning Zoning and Affordable Housing*. The proposed bill lays out much of the Desegregate CT agenda in legislative form and is likely to be one of the most significant proposals to be considered by the Planning & Development Committee when (I guess we should say “if”) the 2021 regular session convenes.

(continued on page 25)

Desegregate CT seeks to push forward statewide legislative proposals to enable and require communities to increase housing supplies, broaden housing diversity, and streamline regulatory processes that exacerbate Connecticut’s poor record on economic and racial segregation.

Legislative Update, cont'd

Anwar's proposed bill is a very lengthy (nearly 50 pages) legislative proposal that includes a number of key areas and priorities developed in the conversations surrounding Desegregate CT this summer, including:

- Making it easier for multifamily housing to be developed in non-sewered areas (*Sections 1-3*);
- Strengthening local zoning requirements to enable housing development of wider type and cost (*Sec. 5*);
- Requiring local zoning to authorize accessory dwelling units (ADU) and small-scale "middle housing," particularly in areas near transit or in higher-activity village centers or downtowns (*Sec. 5-8, 13*);
- Limiting the ability of local commissions to unduly burden affordable housing projects with additional fire protection requirements (*Sec. 11*);
- Providing incentives for municipalities that allow affordable housing as-of-right (*Sec. 14-15*);
- Requiring the CT DOT to develop a means of assessing the transportation impacts of development, which should reduce the costly local traffic impact analysis requirements (*Sec. 16*);
- Requiring CT OPM to take the lead in developing model zoning guidelines (*Sec. 17*);
- Requiring environmental intervenors in 8-30g affordable housing proposals to show standing, and allowing the awarding of damages (*Sec. 12, 31*);
- Authorizing a process that allows renters with Section 8 housing vouchers to live outside of the granting Housing Authority's jurisdiction (*Sec. 18-21*); and
- Requiring annual training for land-use commissioners (*Sec. 32*).

It is unclear at this point whether Sen. Anwar's bill will proceed as-is into 2021 or will be updated or even broken into

(continued on page 27)



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Jenny Fields Scofield, AICP

*National Register and Architectural Survey Coordination
Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office*

What is your current position?

My job is usually not in your standard drop-down list. I am the National Register and Architectural Survey Coordinator at the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), housed within the Department of Economic and Community Development. SHPOs were created in every state through the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966, which established federal policy for preservation amid urban renewal. My office is responsible for administering a range of state and federal programs to identify, protect, and support stewardship of Connecticut's cultural resources. Part of my job involves helping to communicate specifically what history is associated with a place and what physical features relate to that history. In addition to listing properties in the National Register of Historic Places and helping to initiate architectural surveys, I contribute to reviews of projects completing an environmental review process and rehabilitation projects using our various financial incentives.

What is your hometown?

I grew up on family land with an active maple sugaring house in rural Harwinton and now live in Torrington, along one of the rivers that fed the city's early twentieth-century industries.

What are your favorite places (cities, towns, neighborhoods, etc.)?

We might need to change this question to favorite virtual tour, but in normal times, I love the scenery of New England and can't resist the built environment of New York City. In Connecticut, you can find me exploring downtowns and driving back roads just to see what's around. As an architectural historian, I have a habit of checking out stuff that gets less attention, like historic cemeteries or an Art Deco storefront.

What made you decide on a career in planning?

Design, the spatial arrangements of places, and the history of how our surroundings came to look the way they do now have always interested me. As a kid, I spent a lot of time in local woods (trails or not), visiting area attractions, and making "cities" with whatever materials were around. For college, I enrolled in an architecture program, and happened to find a school that also taught historic preservation, where I learned that Historic Preservation was an actual career. I later attended Columbia

University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, which offered an irresistible combination of topics with preservation and planning studios just down the hall from each other. I spent a lot of time on both ends of that hall and now get to work in both fields.



Why did you decide to be a planner in Connecticut?

I love that in Connecticut you can drive 20 minutes and be in a completely different feeling place with variations in the landscape and local culture. After studying and working out of state for many years, I missed the scenery and people here. It is a privilege to be able to contribute to programs to help maintain Connecticut's personality.

What projects/initiatives are you currently working on as a planner?

Within SHPO, I advocated the need for the creation of a statewide geospatial database of cultural resources information. SHPO hopes that efficient access to geospatial data and related digitized documents will aid in incorporating historic preservation into local planning processes. Providing better access to data and enhancing local and state partnerships are goals of my office's five-year State-wide Historic Preservation Plan.

Why did you join CCAPA/What do you like about being a member?

I joined for the network of thoughtful and productive people that are part of CCAPA. It's important to stay connected and understand what topics planners are working on throughout Connecticut.

How should we as planners balance historic preservation goals with other needs, such as affordability and adaptability?

Start with the mindset that multiple goals can coexist and be combined in successful projects. There is a misconception that if you are preserving a resource it is not possible to meet affordable housing needs, plan for resiliency, or be energy efficient, but there is more flexibility in historic preservation than people think. A substantial number of the projects enrolled in the state Historic Preservation Rehabilitation Tax Credit are housing projects and about three-quarters of those are for affordable housing. Also, housing is more affordable if energy costs are low. Keep

(continued on page 27)

Planner Profile: Jenny Fields Scofield, cont'd

in mind that historic preservation starts with retaining design and materials that are already present and often have functioned well over time. A key to integrating multiple goals while working with historic property is to have a clear understanding of what physical aspects of the property are most critical to the history that is significant. Understanding what these features are will enable design solutions by helping to identify areas where change will have less of an overall impact to the historic resource. A draft guide to energy efficiency in historic homes is available on SHPO's website here.

Do you have any favorite websites/tools/blogs that relate to planning and/or your job that you'd like to share?

The National Park Service's Technical Preservation Services department has a range of information about how to complete projects involving historic properties, including briefs related to energy efficiency and guidance on flood adaptation and affordable housing case studies. The federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation also has helpful information and training regarding environmental review, particularly under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act on their website at www.achp.gov. 🏡

Legislative Update, cont'd

several individual proposals. Discussions on the specifics of the bill are ongoing, particularly among housing advocates. CCAPA remains at the table in many of these conversations and will strive to keep our membership informed as this proposal advances.

GIS Project Advanced: Geographic information is critical for the State of Connecticut and its numerous public- and private-sector users; however, the lack of centralized planning has resulted in a patchwork of datasets, data access, and data quality with both extreme redundancy and large holes. An effort to address this problem, [HB 5476, An Act Concerning A Statewide GIS Task Force](#), was set for a public hearing just before COVID-19 abruptly interrupted the 2020 legislative session. It set out to create a working group to study the feasibility of establishing and structuring a centralized, coordinated statewide GIS for Connecticut. The working group had three tasks: (1) an examination of GIS expertise and mapping resources within the state; (2) an examination of GIS data centers in other similar states; and finally (3) recommendations for establishing a GIS center in Connecticut.

Because the need is obvious and the topic was too important to let lapse for a whole year, Representative Cristin McCarthy-Vahey and Senator Norm Needleman, along with several stakeholders, convened the group this summer. Its members represent state agencies, Councils of Government, University personnel, and more. The Team has been researching on two fronts — other states and inside Connecticut. Both groups are consolidating the information to inform draft recommendations and requirements to establish a successful, long-term GIS Center for Connecticut. CCAPA's Government Relations Co-Chair, along with John Bailey from TCORS (CCAPA's lobbyist), have been participating actively in this effort. It is anticipated that we will have a set of recommendations ready to be converted to a formal legislative proposal for the 2021 Session.

As ever, we are happy for feedback, questions, or contributions of insight and the volunteer spirit from our membership. You can reach out to the Government Relations Committee at ctplannersgovrel@gmail.com. 🏡

— *John Guszowski is a senior planner with CHA's Planning and Landscape Architecture Group based in Storrs, CT. John's work has spanned numerous sectors of planning, including work as a regional planner with CRCOG, a full-time staff planning director in Woodstock and Thompson, a consulting planner for the Towns of Essex, Clinton, and Hampton, lead planner for special studies in Wethersfield, Manchester, Derby, Brooklyn, and Putnam, and a project manager for numerous private development projects across southern New England.*

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