

# PLANNING FOR HOUSING CHOICES



## Overview

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The Town of Stratford is preparing a housing plan for the community. This booklet is intended to provide an overview of the process so that Stratford residents and property owners can participate to the extent they desire.

## Overall Goal

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Addressing changing housing needs and promoting diverse housing opportunities are priorities for the Town of Stratford. People's housing needs and desires change over the course of their lives and providing for a diverse mix of housing helps ensure that people of all ages and characteristics will be able to find housing in Stratford to meet their needs.

For people and households that earn more than the median income, a variety of housing choices are available. Maintaining a mix of housing types to meet their changing needs will be important.

On the other hand, housing choices may not be available for people earning less than the median income. This can include young people and young families just venturing out on their own, workers providing essential or convenient services to residents and businesses, and people who may have lived here their whole lives and now need or want smaller and less expensive housing so they can stay in Stratford.

So really, the issue at hand is one of housing choice.

### GOAL

***Seek to provide for a variety of housing choices in Stratford for people and households of all ages and characteristics.***

*"If you don't know where you're going, you'll wind up somewhere else."*

Yogi Berra,  
Baseball Legend  
Renowned Punster

## Relevant Considerations

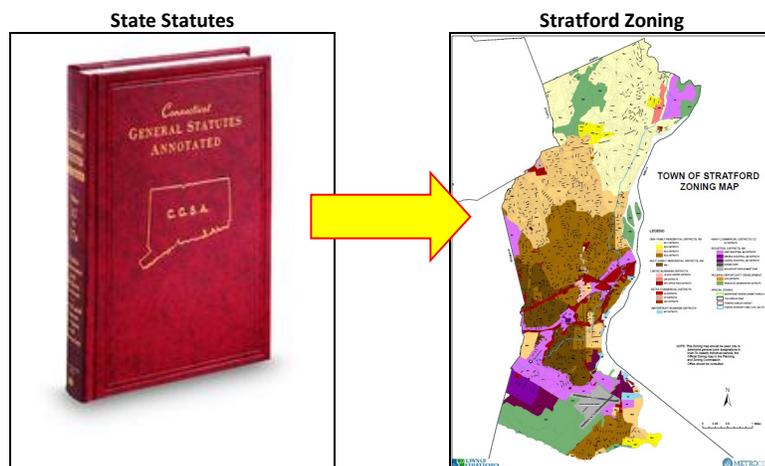
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In addition to accomplishing Stratford's overall goal as stated previously, there are other relevant considerations.

### Zoning Authority Requires Consideration Of Housing Needs

Stratford, like all Connecticut municipalities, gets its ability to enact zoning from the State of Connecticut and the parameters are contained in the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS):

1. *Such regulations shall also encourage the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multifamily dwellings, consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity, for all residents of the municipality and the planning region in which the municipality is located ... (CS 8-2)*
2. *Such regulations shall also promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low- and moderate-income households, and shall encourage the development of housing which will meet the housing needs identified ... (CGS 8-2)*
3. *Such regulations shall not impose conditions and requirements on manufactured homes ... which are substantially different from conditions and requirements imposed on single-family dwellings and ... multifamily dwellings ... (CGS 8-2)*
4. *... any zoning commission ... may provide by regulation for a special exemption from density limits ...for construction of affordable housing. (CGS 8-2g)*
5. *any municipality ... may, by regulation ...implement inclusionary zoning regulations, requirements or condition [to promote] the development of housing affordable to persons and families of low and moderate income (CGS 8-2i)*

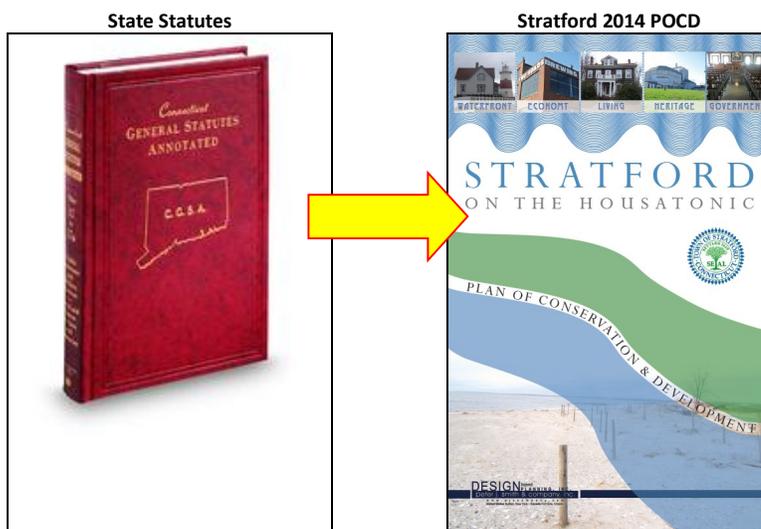


## Plan Of Conservation And Development Must Consider Housing Needs

State statutes also require that Connecticut municipalities prepare a Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) at least once every 10 years and the parameters relevant to housing include the following:

1. *In preparing such plan, the commission ... shall consider the ... (2) the need for affordable housing, ... (8) the needs of the municipality including, but not limited to ... housing (CGS 8-23(d))*
2. *Such plan of conservation and development shall ... (G) make provision for the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multifamily dwellings, consistent with soil types, terrain and infrastructure capacity, for all residents of the municipality and the planning region ... (H) promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low and moderate income households, and encourage the development of housing which will meet the housing needs identified ... consider allowing older adults and persons with a disability the ability to live in their homes and communities whenever possible. (CGS 8-023(e))*
3. *Such plan may show the commission's ... recommendation for ... the extent and location of public housing projects ... [and] programs for the implementation of the plan, including ...plans for implementation of affordable housing ... (CGS 8-23(f))*

***It is envisioned that this planning process on housing choices for Stratford will inform the 2024 POCD.***



## **Affordable Housing Plan Required by 2022**

In 2017, the Connecticut legislature adopted Public Act 17-170 which established a statutory requirement for each municipality to adopt an “affordable housing plan” and update it every five years. The target date for such a plan is July 24, 2022.

### ***Sec. 8-30j. Affordable housing plan. Hearing and adoption. Amendments. Filing requirement.***

*(a) At least once every five years, each municipality shall prepare or amend and adopt an affordable housing plan for the municipality. Such plan shall specify how the municipality intends to increase the number of affordable housing developments in the municipality.*

*(b) The municipality may hold public informational meetings or organize other activities to inform residents about the process of preparing the plan. If the municipality holds a public hearing, at least thirty-five days prior to the public hearing on the adoption, the municipality shall file in the office of the town clerk of such municipality a copy of such draft plan or any amendments to the plan, and if applicable, post such draft plan on the Internet web site of the municipality. After adoption of the plan, the municipality shall file the final plan in the office of the town clerk of such municipality and, if applicable, post the plan on the Internet web site of the municipality.*

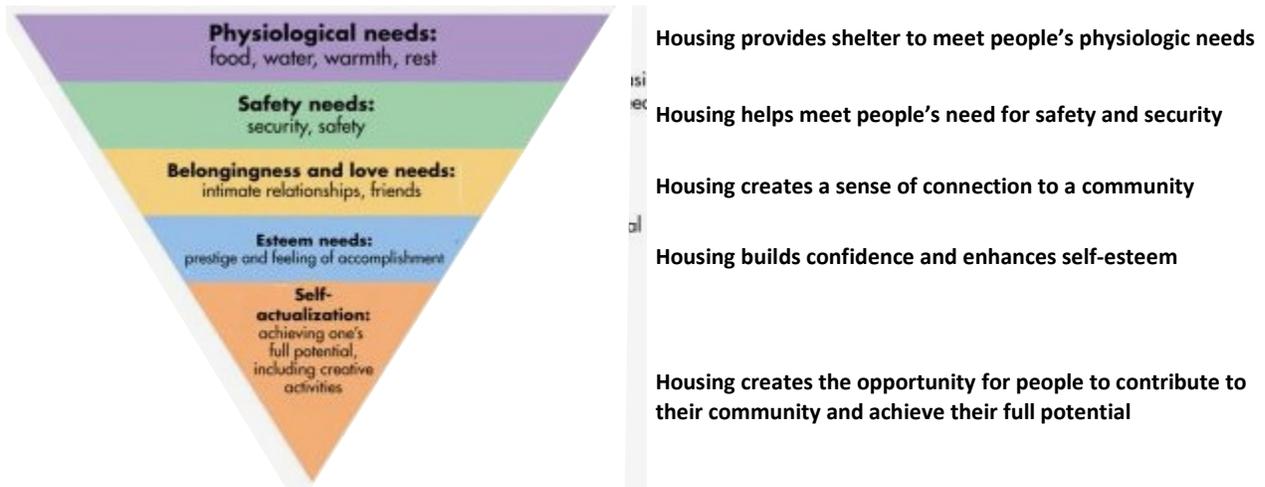
*(c) Following adoption, the municipality shall regularly review and maintain such plan. The municipality may adopt such geographical, functional or other amendments to the plan or parts of the plan, in accordance with the provisions of this section, as it deems necessary. If the municipality fails to amend such plan every five years, the chief elected official of the municipality shall submit a letter to the Commissioner of Housing that explains why such plan was not amended.*

***It is envisioned that this planning process on housing choices for Stratford will address this requirement.***

## Other Reasons For Studying Housing

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Everyone needs housing and for a variety of reasons. In fact, housing plays a part in almost every level of Maslow's "hierarchy of human needs":



And everyone wants housing that is affordable. For people and households that earn more than the median income, they generally have the means to find housing that addresses their income and personal needs/desires. However, people earning less than the median income generally have a harder time finding housing they can afford or the cost burden of the housing they can find takes away from other life needs (health, transportation, etc.).

Some housing discussions focus mainly on the social responsibility related to addressing housing and housing affordability. However, housing and housing affordability are also important to the local and regional economy. Research consistently shows that attractive, well-planned housing that is affordable to a range of socio-economic and age groups:

- Provides *housing for essential employees* (in areas such as emergency services, health care, education, government, retail, etc.),
- Improves employee productivity and reduces employee turnover,
- Increases jobs and consumer spending in the surrounding economy,
- Increases revenue for local governments, and
- Helps municipalities attract new business and economic development.

In the current economy, as communities and regions try to retain existing businesses and compete to attract new investment, having an adequate range of affordable, conveniently located housing options can be a critical factor in boosting a community's overall competitive edge.

## Suggested Action Steps

The 2014 POCD identified the following action steps:

1. Support development efforts to create well designed affordable housing units, particularly within mixed-use developments and as part of infill developments proportionately scaled to the neighborhoods in which they are located
2. Facilitate the development of higher density, mixed use structures in the Stratford Center area according to the TOD zoning overlay
3. Revise Section 5.3 of the Zoning Regulations by modifying the standards and locational criteria for new housing developments
4. Implement the recommendations of the Town's 2012 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice report to overcome barriers to integration and further the tenets of fair housing in its federally funded housing and anti-poverty programs
5. Work with area legislators to amend Connecticut State affordable housing law section 8-30g to contain a more realistic definition of affordable housing projects and improve the appeals process

## **Stratford's 2014 POCD Recognized Need To Plan For Housing Choices**

Stratford adopted a POCD in 2014 and it indicated on page 5 that the Goal for housing was to "provide a range of housing types for all incomes and lifestyles to attract families and households to settle in the town."

Objectives included the following:

1. *Identify appropriate areas for increased densities such as transit-oriented development*
2. *Provide rental as well as owner-occupied housing*
3. *Reach the state's target that 10% of the Town's housing stock be affordable*
4. *Develop living opportunities that promote healthy lifestyles ...*

Policies included the following:

1. *Encourage developments that diversify housing choices in the Town*
2. *Improve provision of affordable housing to meet or exceed the standards set by the State*
3. *Provide an adequate supply of public housing to meet the demand*
4. *The preservation of neighborhood and community character will be a primary consideration when approving the design of residential development*
5. *Promote and encourage the adaptive reuse of commercial buildings into mixed-use developments, where appropriate*

Some of the recommended action steps are listed in the sidebar.

Since the POCD is required to be updated by 2024 (or Stratford would become ineligible for State discretionary funds), it is envisioned that this process will inform the Housing Element for the 2024 POCD

***It is envisioned that this planning process on housing choices for Stratford will inform the 2024 POCD.***

## **Stratford Housing Partnership To Oversee Process**

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Stratford adopted an ordinance in 1990 establishing the Housing Partnership based on State legislation promoting such entities and local concerns over housing-related issues. The ordinance was amended in 2020.

The ordinance states that the Partnership shall:

1. Examine and identify housing needs and housing opportunities within the Town.
2. Establish the price range of affordable housing.
3. Explore the availability of any state, municipal or other land that is suitable for the development of affordable housing.
4. Periodically advise the:
  - a. Town Council as to those properties identified as suitable for the development of affordable housing, and
  - b. other Boards, Commissions, or Committees of the Town as to such other matters which may restrict the development of affordable housing.
5. Review applicable zoning regulations to determine whether such regulations restrict the development of affordable housing in the community and identify and recommend to the Zoning Commission any necessary changes to such regulations to promote development of affordable housing in a manner consistent with the surrounding neighborhood.
6. Develop and activate a long-range plan to satisfy housing needs in the Town.

## Anticipated Approach

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The anticipated process is as follows:

<b>Scoping / Researching</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Meet with the Housing Partnership to discuss/confirm the overall goals of the project.</li> <li>2. Review existing plans, studies, and documents relative to housing issues and strategies</li> </ol>
<b>Inventory Report</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Prepare report for the Housing Partnership summarizing issues (Town staff will assist in mapping)</li> <li>4. Discuss findings with Housing Partnership</li> </ol>
<b>Assessment Report</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Prepare report for the Housing Partnership evaluating the findings from the inventory report and identifying issues</li> <li>6. Discuss findings with Housing Partnership</li> </ol>
<b>Strategies Report</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Prepare report for the Housing Partnership discussing possible strategies to address issues</li> <li>8. Discuss findings with Housing Partnership</li> </ol>
<b>Community Input</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Seek community input and feedback with regard to housing needs and possible options</li> <li>10. Discuss findings from public meeting / possible strategies with Housing Partnership</li> </ol>
<b>Prepare Draft Plan</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Prepare draft housing plan</li> <li>12. Discuss findings with Housing Partnership</li> <li>13. Issue revised report</li> </ol>
<b>Finalization</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>14. Presentations / refinements / endorsements / adoption as appropriate</li> </ol>



**HOUSING PARTNERSHIP**



**Planimetrics**

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