

## Planning Issues

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# HOUSING

### North Stonington, Connecticut

This booklet is a summary of the scoping meetings and workshops held by the North Stonington Affordable Housing committee. There are three phases of the planning process:

- Inventory
- Assessment
- Strategies

Scoping is the one of the first steps in the process of preparing any plan, because it is important to inventory existing conditions, ideas and perceptions.

This booklet summarizes the various scoping meetings and our findings:

- A Public Workshop
- A meeting with the Economic Development and Planning and Zoning commissions
- Affordable housing committee member concerns
- A workshop with Wheeler High School students



*Residents attending the workshop*



## What We Found

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North Stonington residents **are receptive** to new housing choices. There are three key themes that appear in many of the meetings that were held during this program. These are:

<b>Respects Who We Are</b>	<b>Is Done Correctly</b>	<b>Is Located in the Right Places</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rural is an important character attribute</li><li>• Don't try to "over do" it. Keep it simple...</li><li>• Housing can be used to support and promote community values (e.g., agriculture, small town feel)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It is about the type, size and style of housing</li><li>• Small-scale is better</li><li>• Design is important</li><li>• Has to use on-site utilities</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Routes 2, 95 and 184 might have areas where higher density, village-style housing works</li><li>• Mixed-use could make sense if it is in the right places</li></ul>

## Public Workshop Findings

A public workshop was held on Saturday April 28<sup>th</sup> to give North Stonington residents an opportunity to identify issues they felt should be addressed as part of the housing and economic development chapters of the Plan of Conservation and Development. It is estimated that about 40 residents attended the meeting and participated in several exercises.

Those exercises included:

- What types of housing have you lived in over your life? Where do you hope to live?
- Does North Stonington have the right mix of housing?
- Where do you work?
- Where do you shop?

### Types of Housing People Have Lived In?

Residents were asked where they have lived (orange dots), and where they plan to live (green dots) at various ages in their life.

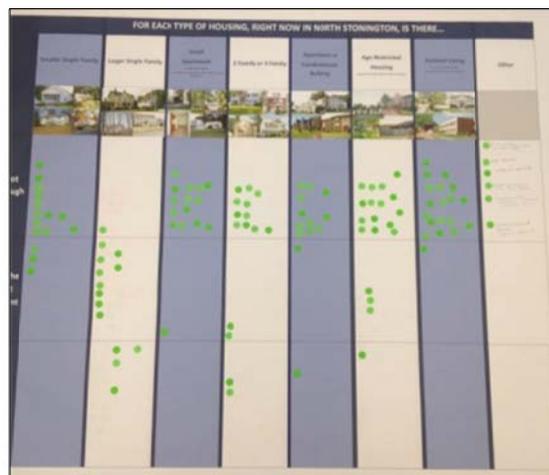
As young adults (aged 24) many of North Stonington’s residents lived in small houses and apartments. As they aged, they were able to move into larger housing units (as defined by the attendees own perceptions) Some residents even identified that they would like to change their housing in the future.



### The Mix of Housing?

Residents were then asked to think about the various types of housing and whether there were: Too Much, Not Enough, or the Right Amount.

Apartments, Assisted Living Units, and age-restricted units were identified as areas where more were needed. Large houses were “just about right / too much.”



### Three Ideas

Next, participants were dividing into four groups and were asked to identify three ideas that the community should consider (some groups identified more than three...). These are as follows:

Group 1
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. 10 units or less deed-restricted affordable housing throughout town (rental)</li><li>2. Larger than 10 unit deed-restricted affordable housing on the west end of Route 2 (workforce housing)</li><li>3. <b>Accessory apartments / cottages</b> on existing lots.</li><li>4. Tax abatements for deed-restriction of accessory apartments</li></ol>

Group 2
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Pursue <b>small cottages</b> as deeded affordable units with limitation to quantity (allow in-law assisted living, farmhand and property management use)</li><li>2. Allow larger homes to be split into multiple units (adaptive reuse)</li><li>3. Reasonably-priced assisted living home residences</li><li>4. Consider inclusionary zoning (10% minimum)</li></ol>

Group 3
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Land along the I-95 corridor can accommodate seniors and young people</li><li>2. Modify the free split provisions to increase free splits for families / family compounds; allow splits for farm housing</li><li>3. 1-4 unit buildings or 2-3 unit homes; <b>make it easier to add apartments to homes</b></li><li>4. Educate people about development</li><li>5. Develop better design guidelines and control are important</li></ol>

Group 4
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Allow apartments</b> in current homes; allow subdivisions and add cottage apartments</li><li>2. Condos / clustering of homes with open-space / recreation (along route 184)</li><li>3. mixed-use village centers - housing above business use (along route 2)</li></ol>

### Open Discussion

The following additional ideas were offered during the workshop:

- Eliminate 8-30g
  - Change the threshold from 10 percent to a lower number, especially for rural towns
  - 10 percent may not be appropriate for all towns, because there is less access to transit, jobs and it is generally more expensive to live in rural areas
- Convert private residences into senior suites
- Define North Stonington's affordable housing values
- Consider temporary deed-restrictions to comply with 8-30g
- Consider Inclusionary Zoning for all development of ten lots or more.

## Issues Identified by the Affordable Housing Committee

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On February 23 2012, the North Stonington Affordable Housing Committee met and discusses some of the issues and concerns they had about housing in the community. The following comments were made:

- Two groups in need of housing that is affordable: elderly citizens and younger residents.
- It would be nice to not have to deal with 8-30g appeals
- Mobility is the new phenomenon for younger people who will go where the work is and where housing is “affordable” (less transportation costs).
- Housing and economic development, in turn, are seen as intertwined and recent studies show a direct correlation between both.
- Senior citizens wish to remain in the Town in which they either grew up in or have lived for a significant period of time. The challenge for many is how to downsize in town (live in a home more compatible with their current needs and in some instances financial constraints).
- The housing stock and zoning regulations should be assessed to determine what opportunities might exist to accommodate such needs.

## Issues Identified by the PZC and EDC

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On March 8, 2012 the Economic Development Commission and Planning and Zoning Commission held a joint meeting to discuss housing. The following comments were made:

- What does the term Affordable Housing mean?
- We feel like we have a lot of it, but can count it under the 8-30g law
- Choice can be important for all income levels
- D prefer not to have multi-family housing
- Series of dilemmas:
  - Rural
  - No bus routes / limited transportation
  - Not an employment center
  - Limited goods and services are available here
  - Limited utilities (no sewer)
- 8-30g is still in the background
- Is there a need for it (if you build it will they come?)
- What types of housing might it be?
  - Multi-family
  - Rental
  - Smaller units

- Senior housing
- Town is too expensive for starter homes (lot costs and development costs make it too expensive)
- Cedar ridge probably could not be built today
- Mil town commons idea was okay
- We don't have any senior housing; no place for people that don't want to manage a yard
- What is the most efficient way?
- What is the town's role in affordable housing? Prefer not to use town money.
- Who would build it?

## Issues Identified by High School Students

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On April 5<sup>th</sup> the Affordable Housing Committee arranged for a small workshop with students enrolled in Wheeler High School's Advanced Placement Civics course. A one hour workshop was held. It was recorded for future use.

First, students were asked to share their plans for the future. After sharing, they were asked to be a North Stonington "tour guide" and share places that there are "proud of" and "sorry about":

### **Prouds**

- Concerts
- Winery
- Scenic resources (farms and farmland)
- The fairgrounds - everyone goes to it (second center)
- the village
- Wheeler High School – small, as competitive as bigger schools and more opportunities
- Rural

### **Sorrys**

- Amazing.net – next to school and church (how did that happen?)
- Chinese restaurant site
- Recreation fields are in bad shape
- Condition of building at the intersection of routes 49 / 184 buildings
- Loss of small, local businesses
- The bridge

Following that discussion, they were asked to identify issues that North Stonington should think about in the future. These include:

### **Providing A Nurturing and Competitive High School**

- A center of town
- Need to get older residents involved in the schools
- Need electronic signs to advertise events
- There are three sport events happening in one day but not enough people show up to watch

- there a lot of different events and residents might want to attend
- Losing athletes to other towns
- Incredible athletics for such a small school
- No high school football here but (not 100% sure it is a good idea though); maybe team up with another time for football
- Need more students
- Everyone getting to play is not right (not the real world)
- New people is a good thing; not too much though 200 students is probably the max

#### **Maintaining Community Character**

- Small town
- We lost some character
- Business on the bridge (small café)
- Market / advertise what we have (potentially there's money there)
- Chester main Road sums up the community
- Lots of variety (Kingswood neighborhood)
- Spirit
- Family-oriented
- Lost little league teams

#### **Promoting Appropriate New Business Opportunities**

- Make chain stores match our character / modernize
- Need more places for local family-owned businesses
- Health center - how do we keep it?
- Need more entertainment and more restaurants
- It would be nice to not have to drive to Groton to get things
- Important that the schools remain open
- Continue to update town plans. It might happen too slowly here; need to keep up with the times (it took the town 15 years to fix tennis courts – way too long)
- Losing hope in the town - don't care about businesses
- Need more housing
- Partner with existing businesses individual
- Promote businesses through the website
- People work elsewhere and only live here; needs to change

## What Types of Strategies Are Available?

### Free Market Approach

1. Wait to see if market forces provide housing alternatives.
2. Wait to see if developers propose using the Affordable Housing Appeals procedure (CGS 8-30g) to provide housing alternatives.

### Education Approach

3. Educate property owners, developers, institutions, and others about housing needs and desired alternatives.
4. Identify other organizations which might help address housing needs and encourage and assist them with this effort.

### Municipal / Institutional Assistance (Helping)

5. Provide services that will help an aging population age in place if they so choose (e.g., home maintenance, transport, nutrition, recreation).
6. Encourage preservation of existing housing that sells or rents at affordable prices (e.g., naturally occurring affordable housing, purchase deed restrictions).
7. Promote housing that is configured to meet the needs of an aging population (naturally occurring retirement communities).
8. Encourage preservation of existing units that are counted as affordable housing (e.g., assisted housing, CHFA financed, deed-restricted).

### Regulatory Approaches (Encouraging / Enabling)

9. Promote adaptive reuse of existing structures, accessory apartments, shared housing, and other approaches to addressing housing needs.
10. Encourage the creation of additional housing types on the “housing ladder” (e.g., apartments, condominiums, starter homes, age-appropriate housing, retirement housing, assisted living, life care facilities, nursing homes).
11. Provide density bonus or other incentives for providing for housing diversity (such as Incentive Housing Zones).

### Regulatory Approaches (Requiring)

12. Require that all new development make provision for housing diversity (e.g., set-aside units, fee payment).

### Municipal/Institutional Provision (Providing)

13. Develop housing that sells or rents at affordable prices (including deed-restricted).
14. Develop housing that is configured to meet the needs of an aging population.
15. Develop assisted housing.
16. Establish shared equity arrangements for municipal workers or other persons.
17. Provide mortgage financing or interest rate subsidies.
18. Provide down payment assistance in exchange for shared equity.
19. Obtain state / federal funding to provide housing that will meet local needs.



**Planimetrics**

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