

CITY OF TORRINGTON



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To: Planning & Zoning Commission
From: Jeremy Leifert, AICP, City Planner JL
Date: December 21, 2022
Subject: Proposed Amendments to the Plan of Conservation and Development, Section 9, Housing

At the request of the Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC), I have reviewed the 2022-2027 City of Torrington Housing Affordability Plan, which was adopted by the City in October 2022. The purpose of the review was to begin steps to implement the sections of the Plan assigned to the PZC.

The first implementation action that I have proposed to the PZC is to “Amend the City’s Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) to Reference the Housing Affordability Plan”, as is stated on page 26 of the housing plan. Attached are two proposed amendments to the POCD:

1. Add a paragraph on page 9.5 of the POCD to “Encourage the Construction of ADU’s (Accessory Dwelling Units)”. The commission recently adopted regulations to comply with changes to state law, but also recognized the importance of ADU’s in the City’s housing stock. ADU’s are also described on page 15 of the housing plan.
2. Add a side bar column on page 9.8 of the POCD to describe the 2022-2027 Housing Affordability Plan process and adoption. A clickable link to the housing plan is also provided in the electronic copy.

I recommend that a public hearing for these amendments to the POCD be scheduled for the regular February 15, 2023 meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission.

END OF MEMO

- 5. Continue to direct residents who are in danger of becoming homeless or experiencing homelessness to call 211 or visit 211ct.org to be directed to resources and services. Important resources in Torrington for addressing these issues include FISH (Friends in Service to Humanity) and Gathering Place- New Beginnings. Residents that call 211 will be directed to the appropriate services. MO

Related Links:

Blight Task Force webpage: www.torringtonct.org/administration-mayors-office/blight-task-force

2-1-1 is a free, confidential **information and referral service** that connects people to essential health and human services 24 hours a day, seven days a week online and over the phone. 2-1-1 is a program of United Way of Connecticut and is supported by the State of Connecticut and Connecticut United Ways: www.211ct.org

What is FISH (Friends in Service to Humanity)?

Since opening its doors in 1972, FISH has evolved into the largest emergency homeless shelter (35 beds) in the NWCT corner, providing families, individuals, and veterans a safe and secure haven as they await permanent supportive housing; as well as serving area residents (over 1500 annually) as a food pantry, distributing food for over 91,000 meals. For more information visit: www.fishnwct.org

What is the Gathering Place- New Beginnings?

The mission of New Beginnings of Northwest Hills Litchfield County is to improve the quality of life of homeless individuals in Litchfield County, to provide referral services and advocacy, and to end the cycle of homelessness. For more information visit:

www.thegatheringplaceofnewbeginnings.org

How can we ensure these strategies are implemented over the next 5 years?

Convene a Housing Plan implementation team including the Economic Development Director, City Planner, and Blight Enforcement officer to meet at least quarterly and discuss next steps for implementation of this plan.	MO
The implementation team will prepare an annual summary report to the City Council to report progress on housing plan implementation and note priority actions planned for the coming year.	IT
Amend the City's Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD) to reference the Housing Affordability Plan.	P&Z
Create a plan for monthly communications about the strategies in this plan (including increasing awareness of existing resources and programs) to residents utilizing existing newsletters/publications put out by the Chamber, library, United Way, etc.	IT
Assist with ongoing volunteer recruitment and capacity building efforts for existing organizations or boards/commissions tasked with implementing these strategies.	IT

Prepare for Changing Housing Needs

People are living longer and healthier lives. The older age group (age 55+) will continue to grow. The 'baby boom' (people born between 1946 and 1964) has entered or will enter this age group during the next 20 years.

By the year 2020 adults aged 55 and over will comprise up to 50 percent of the total population of Torrington, up from 30 percent in 1970. There is a potential that an increased number of elderly residents will constrain the number of housing units that are in the market. This reduction in housing supply and an increase in demand for worker housing will further stress housing affordability.

Torrington Towers



Active adult housing (above); Elderly needs (below)



Torrington needs to prepare for these changes, as:

- 80 percent of seniors want to "Age in Place," and
- 20 percent of seniors will want other housing choices, such as assisted living.

Torrington may want to consider adopting policies that integrate housing and transportation with active aging principles to allow older residents to "Age in Place" (see sidebar).

Provide for Senior Accessibility and Mobility

Accessibility will be an increasingly important issue because Torrington has an aging population. Making housing and other places "visit-able" is important. Visitability involves creating inclusive home designs that are accessible to all. To accomplish this objective, Torrington may need to evaluate zoning setback requirements for ramps and other structural features that may be required.

Torrington may also want to evaluate pedestrian road crossings to improve ramps and pedestrian signals. It is particularly important that pedestrian signals provide adequate time for older residents to cross safely and that crosswalks are highly visible, especially in areas with housing for the elderly.

Encourage the Construction of ADU's (Accessory Dwelling Units)

A state law passed in 2021 loosened the restrictions that municipalities may place on the construction or conversion of ADU's and the process for local approvals. These units are a great way to provide for workforce housing, housing for seniors or as rental income for property owners. Torrington should evaluate ways to incorporate ADU's into all zones that allow for single family dwellings as an as-of-right use to comply with statutory changes.

Age in Place

Enabling older residents to stay in their homes comfortably, safely and independently as they age, regardless of physical challenges.

Housing Needs of an Aging Population

An aging population changes the housing dynamics of the community:

- people remain in their homes for a longer period of time than has occurred in the past, reducing the availability of homes,
- aging homeowners may need more assistance to maintain their homes,
- aging residents require additional healthcare services which requires workers to perform those services, and
- older persons have different lifestyle needs, which may not be satisfied in a mature housing stock.

Torrington Housing Authority

A City agency that provides housing for 428 elderly and disabled persons.

**Housing Affordability Plan
2022-2027**

A State law passed in 2017 (Statute 8-30j) requires every municipality to prepare and adopt an affordable housing plan at least once every five years. In 2021, the City of Torrington received a grant from the Connecticut Department of Housing to undertake a proactive planning process and lay out a strategy for meeting the housing needs of existing and future residents and workers.

A Housing Plan Steering Committee was appointed which met monthly to provide feedback throughout the planning process and to ensure that the community was engaged in the conversation around housing affordability needs and possible strategies for meeting those needs. The plan was adopted in October 2022.

The Plan contains Goals and Strategies for implementation by the City over the five-year duration of the plan.

https://www.torringtonct.org/sites/g/files/vyhiif5091f/uploads/torrington_housing_affordability_plansept2022.pdf

Preserve the Existing Single-Family Zones

Recently the Planning and Zoning Commission has determined that multi-family residential uses are not appropriate in the single-family zones. Torrington should continue to promote this overall development objective.



Single-family homes (above and below)



Presidential Neighborhood

Housing Strategies

	TASK
9-1	Consider using the Incentive Housing Zone tool
9-3	Promote sustainable residential development
9-4	Prepare for changing housing needs
9-5	Consider adopting policies that integrate housing and transportation with active aging principles to allow older residents to "age in place"
9-6	Evaluate zoning and other constraints to mobility and visitability
9-7	Preserve the existing single-family zones
9-8	Encourage housing rehabilitation