

**Hartford Planning Commission/Town Plan Steering Committee Meeting**  
**Town Plan Housing Chapter Update Draft Minutes**  
**Homes for Hartford Community Discussion #3**  
**November 9, 2023**

A community discussion was held at the Bugbee Senior Center on Thursday, November 9, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. about the Draft Town Plan Housing Chapter.

**Attendance:**

**Planning Commission & Town Plan Steering Committee Members:**

John Reid	Planning Commission
Bruce Riddle	Planning Commission
John Heath	Planning Commission
Colin Butler	Planning Commission
John Haffner	Vital Communities

**Staff:**

Lori Hirshfield	Director, Department of Planning and Development
Matt Osborn	Town Planner, Department of Planning and Development
Kevin Geiger	Director of Planning, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission
Kyle Katz	Planner, Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission

**Others Present:** Sylvia Provost, Dave Brown, Michael Redmond, Dale Snader, Norma Young, Byron Young, Phil Sargent, Suzanne Provost, Mark Detzer and Jonathan Rugg. Since some folks may not have signed the attendance list, there may have been a few participants who aren't included.

1. **Welcome & Meeting Purpose:** Hartford Planning and Development Director Lori Hirshfield welcomed everyone to the discussion and went over the meeting purpose which is to get feedback on the Draft Town Plan Housing Chapter.
2. **What is a Town Plan and Why do Towns have a Plan:** TRORC Planner Kyle Katz gave an overview of town plans, the chapters included and the importance of having a Town Plan.
3. **Background of the Housing Chapter, Town Plan and the Update Process:** Hartford Planner Matt Osborn provided background information on Hartford Town Plans over the years as well as the planning process for the current update of the Housing Chapter. He emphasized the importance that public input plays in the planning process.
4. **Highlights & Data from the Housing Chapter Update:** Kyle Katz discussed the critical housing issues facing Hartford today:
  - a. Limited housing supply
  - b. Age of our homes
  - c. Changing demographic
  - d. The affordability gap
  - e. Addressing homelessness
  - f. Create neighborhoods, not just homes
  - g. Infrastructure capacity

h. Diversify our housing

Kyle proceeded to review data gathered for the housing chapter update that has been incorporated into the Housing Chapter.

TRORC Planning Manager Kevin Geiger discussed Act 47 (the Home Act), passed by the State Legislature in 2023 that prescribes minimum density requirements for residential development where Town water and sewer exist as well as other requirements such as making a duplex an allowed use wherever a single unit dwelling is permitted. The Act also limits the amount of parking that a municipality can require. The Home Act was intended to create more opportunities for housing.

Kevin Geiger also discussed the bylaw modernization process that is currently underway. The TRORC is reviewing Hartford and other municipality's zoning bylaws to create more opportunities for housing.

5. **Breakout Groups:** The large group broke into two smaller groups to provide comments about housing issues and the Draft Housing Chapter.

**Breakout Group #1**

- 1970s housing construction is now 50 years old and in need of extensive work including energy efficiency.
- We are still using 1970s building technology.
- We need to build net zero housing or close to it.
- High construction costs are a major impediment to new housing.
- Even the cost of subsidized multi-unit housing is very expensive.
- Stick built homes are no longer affordable.
- We need a new paradigm shift.
- There is too much emphasis on affordable housing and the homeless. Would like to attract higher income folks to live here to support the local economy.
- A developer commented that he is looking for land to put in modular housing.
- We need an accurate study of where there is land to develop.
- Private covenants can place additional restrictions on the development of housing.
- There is a problem with the Forest Conservation (FC) zoning district being too restrictive.
- We need to rethink rural residential development.
- Dartmouth is contributing more funds to the Upper Valley Housing Fund
- We need an accurate study of water and wastewater to ensure the needed capacity to accommodate future housing development.
- We need to think outside the box to solve the housing shortage.
- We need to provide pre-approved septic designs.
- We need to ensure the future capacity of groundwater for wells.
- The individual design and construction of wells and septic is expensive.
- We should borrow from existing paradigms.
- Community geothermal could reduce the cost of heating and cooling homes.
- We need to tie housing to the economic development chapter of the Town Plan.
- Good design can reduce the impact of new development.

**Breakout Group #2**

- Duplexes can provide opportunities for more housing.
- There are infrastructure constraints.

- We need to think outside the box to solve the housing shortage.
    - Invest in infrastructure.
    - Improve the systems we have (utilities, wastewater, how land use is regulated etc...).
    - Cause issues with subdivisions when existing infrastructure does not align with new subdivisions and lines must be run through properties.
    - Support needed for infrastructure.
  - Stormwater retention/run-off.
    - Permeable vs impermeable. Increasing permeable surface area (such as through the use of permeable pavers) can reduce the development impact of new housing.
    - Town responsibility for water & sewer.
  - Open fields/natural resource conservation. How do we allow new housing while also preserve the open spaces we have?
  - Look at how neighborhoods tie together.
  - Who is “all” referenced in goal 1?
  - How are demographics changing?
  - Bend the demographic curve through housing choices that meet the needs of current and future residents.
  - Housing affordability vs costs. Housing is expensive and very difficult to make affordable.
  - Make more units with existing space.
  - Land constraints limit what can be done.
  - Emphasize infill/conversion.
  - Smaller families in more space. Find ways to increase units.
  - Absentee landlords -neighborhoods impacted.
  - How do we free-up larger homes in ways that benefit homeowners and allows for the creation of more units?
6. **Final Remarks:** Lori Hirshfield thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. She noted that if you signed and provided your email address, you will receive notification of future meetings.
7. **Adjournment:** The community discussion was adjourned at 8:04 p.m.