11.1 Design and Implement an Affordable Housing Plan

10 – 55 Points

Action Updates

This action has been revised for the **current certification cycle**. A version of this action from the prior program year is available for comparison. Edits are highlighted in yellow. (Last updated 2020)

Objective

Understand your community's residents and existing housing options, and assess what type of housing is needed and where it might be needed.

Complementary Actions:

- Grow Sustainable and Affordable Housing
- Implement Policy for Sustainable, Diverse Housing Options

What to Do

For each of the items below, an inclusive planning process and creation of a proactive communications strategy is encouraged. For additional information, please consult the Sustainable CT Equity Toolkit in the Sustainable CT Action Optimize for Equity, as well as "Planning for Affordability in Connecticut: Affordable Housing Plan and Process Guidebook".

The more you do, the more points you earn.

1. Create a housing committee with diverse membership, ideally reflective of the demographics of your community and region. Members may include representatives from planning, public health, housing authorities, schools, and social services; landlords; housing developers; residents (including both renters and homeowners); and individuals who work in your municipality may not be able to afford to live in the community. Roles on the committee include bringing together local leaders to proactively plan for affordable housing; creating a constituency of advocates for more affordability in the community; and providing support to municipal leaders on decision-making related to affordable housing development. **(10 points)**

   Submit: A list of names and titles of current members of the housing committee; a description of its community engagement process and communication strategy; and at least one additional piece of documentation related to the meetings, such as a promotional flyer, an agenda, minutes, presentations, sign-in sheets or photographs.

   Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit and rolling credit. This action falls under the action type "Committee/Task Force/Position Creation" (see "Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document for submission requirements).

2. Create, expand or maintain your community's housing data profile, starting with information in municipal housing data profiles produced by the Partnership for Strong Communities (required) and potential additional data points outlined in this worksheet 1 ***(optional for 5 additional points)***. Analyze the data and describe the implications of the data for your community's housing future by filling in worksheet 2 ***(required)***. Present and discuss your municipality's housing data profile and your analysis of it as part of a community conversation, led by your community's housing committee (if you have one), with participation from a broad group of stakeholders, including one or more members of your municipality's legislative body and planning

and zoning commission (or equivalent entity). **(10 points, or 15 points if additional data is gathered as described in worksheet 1)**

Submit: The most recent municipal Partnership for Strong Communities housing data profile and other data, if pursuing 5 additional points (see worksheet 1), your completed housing data analysis worksheet (worksheet 2), and the date on which you presented the data at a public meeting and which meeting (i.e., Town Council, Planning and Zoning Commission, etc.).

Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit. This action falls under the action type "Data Tracking/Benchmarking and Meeting Performance Metrics" (see "Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document for submission requirements).

3. With a process of community engagement and education, create an affordable housing plan, which includes a municipal or regional housing needs assessment, land use and zoning assessment and the basic elements outlined below. Regional affordable housing plans are eligible for credit only if officially adopted by the municipality. **(up to 25 points, see worksheet 3)**

   Effective July 24, 2017, Connecticut General Statute, Title 8, Chapter 126a, § 8-30j requires every municipality in the state to prepare an affordable housing plan at least once every five years. The best practices below on creating and adopting an affordable housing plan are not statutory requirements but rather intended as a helpful tool in assisting municipalities with creating meaningful and effective local plans. These guidelines were initially created by the Sustainable CT Housing Working Group and then revised with the Regional Plan Association and other partners to align with the Connecticut Department of Housing's Affordable Housing Plan and Process Guidebook.

   Note: Though completion of worksheet 2 in 11.1.2 above may contain helpful information in preparing your housing needs assessment, submission of worksheet 2 alone is ***not*** sufficient to meet the housing needs assessment requirements of this action 11.1.3.

   a. ***Community Values Statement.*** Based on community conversations, create a statement on what residents most value. Community values can include things like equity, opportunity, health and well-being, sustainability, and inclusivity.

   b. ***History of Affordable Housing in Your Community.*** Describe your municipality's history with respect to affordable housing, including a history of past successes and challenges in planning for and creating affordable homes.

   c. ***Housing Needs Assessment.***

   - ***Scope.*** Identify areas to study (municipal-wide, neighborhood-level, and/or regional).
   - ***Demographics.*** Evaluate demographics to determine housing needs for the future. In addition to including race, national origin, family status and disability status, this evaluation should identify areas that have racially and ethnically concentrated areas of poverty (R/ECAP). Please also consider the demographics of individuals who might live in your community if appropriate housing were available.
   - ***Housing Supply and Retrospective Analysis.*** Gather data on the supply of housing in your municipality, including housing type, (single-family versus multi-family), housing tenure (owner- or renter-occupied units), vacancy rates, unit size, age of housing stock, housing cost, and number and type of subsidized units, including but not limited to the inventory of homes that meet the state's definition of affordable housing. Determine how many income-restricted housing units are currently available and at what income threshold (e.g., 80%, 60%, 50% or 25% the lesser of state or area median income). You should also review recent housing development trends in your town and region, through a review of building permits and/or a literature review of recent development proposals.

     Note: If your city or town is one of the "entitlement communities" receiving Community Development Block Grant funding directly, you'll find this analysis similar to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Assessment of Fair Housing required by regulation 24 CFR §5.154. Data provided by HUD can be used to complete the analysis for this action step.
   - ***Economics.*** Evaluate economic information, including, but not limited to information on residents'

income, employment and how much residents spend on housing costs.

- ***Community Connections.*** Evaluate connectivity to community services, which includes access to transportation, child care, health care, and other critical connections in determining where to locate housing.
- ***Housing Gap Analysis.*** Conduct a housing gap analysis, ideally including (1) an assessment of whether existing and projected housing will accommodate current and future housing needs, and (2) an analysis of the relationship between housing costs and access to housing in your community. The analysis should also include the number of shelter beds and the extent of supportive housing, if any.

d. ***Land Use and Zoning Analysis.*** Conduct a land use and zoning analysis to understand how land in your municipality is used today and how it may be used in the future under your existing zoning regulation. Your analysis should include (1) a land use map that highlights the lots in your municipality that are current used for housing and other uses, distinguishing between single-family, low (2-3 units), medium (3-5 units), and higher density (5+ units), with lots that include accessory dwelling units also notes; (2) identification of underutilized lots; and (3) a review of your zoning code, including information on topics such as minimum lot size, maximum lot coverage, special permit requirements, parking requirements, how to request a reasonable accommodation to zoning rules for older adults or people with disabilities, rules regarding group housing, housing of unrelated persons, and rules for temporary health care and similar structures.

e. ***Analysis of Your Housing Market.*** Determine the strength of your regional and local housing market to help determine how to constrict the financing package for affordable housing development.

f. ***Principles, Goals and Actions.*** Draft affordable housing plan principles that connect to the community values determined from your inclusive planning process. Create three to five primary goals reflective of these principles. Determine actions associated with each goal that include short, medium and long-term strategies.

g. ***Implementation Strategy.*** Create an implementation strategy for actualizing the goals and actions outlined in the affordable housing plan.

Submit: The officially adopted affordable housing plan and a completed worksheet 3. ***Please note*** that the submission of worksheet 3 alone does not replace submitting an affordable housing plan--both are required.

Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit and rolling credit. This action falls under the action type "Websites, Maps, Inventories, Checklists, Assessments, Plans, Ordinances, Policies, Regulations and Resolutions" (see "Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document for submission requirements).

4. Distribute the completed affordable housing plan to relevant municipal departments, relevant regional and local organizations, and community members, especially those involved in its creation. Conduct a presentation of the final affordable housing plan as part of a community conversation, led by your community's housing committee (if you have one), with participation from a broad group of stakeholders, including one or more members of your municipality's legislative body and planning and zoning commission (or equivalent entity). **(5 points)**

   Submit: Evidence that you distributed the affordable housing plan to relevant municipal departments and a copy of your presentation.

   Timeframe for Credit: Eligible for new action credit and rolling credit. This action falls under the action type "Websites, Maps, Inventories, Checklists, Assessments, Plans, Ordinances, Policies, Regulations and Resolutions" (see "Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document for submission requirements).

Timeframe for Credit

Actions can either be "New" or considered for "Rolling Credit."

New Action Credit. Any action completed within the past three years (from January 1 of the year seeking certification) is eligible for potential certification points. If you are applying for recertification in your year of expiration, you may not claim New Action Credit for items that previously received credit.

Rolling Credit. For any action older than three years (from January 1 of the year seeking certification), you must

demonstrate ongoing, currently relevant, and meaningful impact in your community to be considered for certification points. If you are applying for recertification in your year of expiration, you must apply for Rolling Credit for any item that previously received credit, even if it was completed within the past three years.

View the "Timeframe for Credit" Guidance Document for detailed submission requirements.

Engaging Partners

Sustainable CT encourages regional collaboration and other forms of partnership. For every action, please complete the "Partners" box in your submission, indicating the name(s) of any municipalities and/or organizations you partnered with (if any) and a brief description of your municipality's role. If you collaborate with other municipalities, each community will receive points. For additional information, please see the "Partners Guidance Document".

Potential Municipal and Community Collaborators

There are numerous potential collaborators for this action: anyone who collects and maintains information about your community demographics, your local elected officials and other representatives from your municipality's governing board, the planning and zoning commission, public health professionals, transportation and housing agencies, redevelopment agencies, businesses, municipal planning department staff, nonprofit leaders, community leaders, regional councils of government and other regional planning groups and statewide and community housing organizations.

Funding

If available, below are potential funding sources specific to this Action. For a complete listing of potential funding opportunities to assist with implementing Sustainable CT Actions, please visit the Sustainable CT Grants Portal, which is searchable by Action. Please also visit the Support for Your Town page for opportunities for technical assistance and other supports.

- Urban Act Grant Program
- Municipal Grant Program (MGP)
- 2021 Sustainable CT Community Match Fund

Resources

Toolkits, Calculators, Guidance Documents

- Partnership for Strong Communities: Municipal Housing Data Profiles
- National Low Income Housing Coalition
- U.S. Census: American Fact Finder
- Connecticut Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice
- MAGIC at UConn (maps and data about Connecticut)
- Does Your Town Have Real Housing Options?
- Conducting A Housing Needs Assessment for Your Community: A Manual Provided by the Minnesota Housing Partnership
- Connecticut's Urban Housing Policy: A New Approach Focused on Sustainable Neighborhood Revitalization
- Benchmark CT

Organizations and Relevant Programs

- Partnership for Strong Communities
- Connecticut Data Collaborative
- Operation Fuel
- Connecticut Energy Assistance Program
- Connecticut Fair Housing Center
- Open Communities Alliance
- Urban Land Institute
- National Low Income Housing Coalition
- AdvanceCT (formerly the Connecticut Economic Resource Center, CERC)

- Connecticut Department of Housing
- Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development
- Connecticut Office of Policy and Management
- LISC Connecticut
- LISC Connecticut Housing Connections

Why This Matters

Municipal and statewide economic challenges, changing demographics, challenges in affordability, and preferences for more walkable neighborhoods that offer high quality of life all suggest that Connecticut municipalities will need to adapt their housing stock to emerging needs. For example, the vast majority of occupied homes in Connecticut are single-family, but demand is increasing for other housing types. The majority of Connecticut's housing stock is more than 50 years old, and the need for energy efficient housing that utilizes more renewable energy and incorporates universal design and other features will demand retrofits and new constructions.

Benefits

Collecting, reviewing and analyzing your municipality's housing data is the first step in planning for the community's housing future, setting the stage for conducting a housing needs assessment. Things like transit-oriented development, affordable housing, accessible housing, and housing density often intertwine when building sustainable, thriving communities. With the information from the assessment, you'll be able to lower adverse environmental impacts from development, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improve health and wellness, enhance economic well-being, and increase community and regional equity.

CT Success Stories

- East Lyme - Oct 2019 Certification
- Portland - Oct 2019 Certification
- Vernon - Oct 2019 Certification
- Waterford - Oct 2019 Certification
- Bristol - Oct 2020 Certification
- Stratford - Oct 2020 Certification
- Trumbull - Oct 2020 Certification
- Litchfield - Jun 2021 Certification
- Durham - Aug 2021 Certification