11.3 Implement Policy for Sustainable, Diverse Housing Options

20 Points | 40 Points | 60 Points

Action Updates

This action is available for the **current certification cycle** and was newly added in 2021.

Objective

Implement zoning and other policies that enable production and preservation of a diversity of housing options and promote inclusivity.

Complementary Action:

- Design and Implement an Affordable Housing Plan

What to Do

Note: A full spectrum of housing includes affordable housing, flexible housing, and 2+-unit housing. Zoning strategies include expansion and protection of affordable residences that are deed-restricted; not necessarily age-restricted; and ideally comparable to non-restricted units in location, access to public amenities, and design, appearance, construction and quality. Further, municipal policy should meet everyone's housing needs, including those of the region's low and moderate-income residents.

The more you do, the more points you earn. **(up to 60 points)**

1. Establish a state-approved incentive housing zone (IHZ) in eligible locations, such as near transit facilities, an area of concentrated development or an area because of existing, planned or proposed infrastructure that is suitable for the development of an IHZ. The purpose of establishing the IHZ is for incentive housing development, which is a residential or mixed use development that, among other requirements, sets aside lower cost units for a minimum of 20% of the households earning 80% or less of the area median income for a minimum of 30 years. **(20 points)**

   Submit: A PDF of your municipality's officially adopted incentive housing zone (IHZ), including evidence that it has been approved by the Connecticut Department of Housing and thereby meets all state criteria to be an IHZ eligible to receive state incentives for incentive housing development.

   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).

2. Allow, without requiring a special permit or public hearing, for housing arrangements that include architecturally compatible accessory dwelling units (ADUs), tiny homes, carriage house conversions, and/or micro-efficiency units. **(20 points)**

   Submit: A PDF of your municipality's officially adopted zoning regulations with the relevant portions highlighted and/or described, including evidence that such units are allowed without a special permit or public hearing.

   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).

3. Allow four or more unrelated people to live in a single household, pursuant to your municipality's definition of "family" and/or your municipality's maximum occupancy limitation; and/or provide flexibility within your municipality's definition of "family" that allows for alternative living arrangements, such as non-traditional families, cooperative housing, and groups that meet the definition of disability found in the Fair Housing Act, while still ensuring health and safety. **(20 points)**

   Submit: A PDF of your municipality's officially adopted zoning regulations with the relevant portions highlighted and/or described, a description of/comparison to what the prior definition of family and/or prior maximum occupancy limitation, and the date your municipality's zoning implemented these changes.

   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. Eliminate special permitting processes and make application fees and requirements comparable for all housing types (e.g., no distinction between single and multifamily, market rate and affordable, etc.). **(20 points)**

   Submit: A PDF describing your municipality's processes with relevant portions highlighted and/or described, any additional descriptions that would explain how disparities between different fees and processes for different housing types have been eliminated, and the date such changes were officially implemented.

   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).

5. In at least one residential zone, allow developers to get an increase in density (i.e., density bonus) if at least 20% of the proposed housing development is affordable AND/OR require that 10% of all housing units in developments of more than 5 units are affordable. **(20 points)**

   Note: "Affordable" housing costs 30% or less than 80% of median income in the state (or 80% of area median income, if that figure is lower than the state's median income). This definition of "affordable" is consistent with that used in Section 8-30(g) of the Connecticut General Statutes.

   Submit: A PDF of your municipality's officially adopted zoning regulations with the relevant portions highlighted and/or described, as well as (for the first part of the action) the approximate total percentage of residential zones in which developers would receive a density bonus for a proposed housing development in which at least 20% of the units are affordable.

   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

This type of effort may be led by municipal planning staff in collaboration with your municipality's planning and zoning commission or comparable body, as well as the governing body who must ultimately adopt changes to any relevant ordinances and policies, if not the planning and zoning commission. The most successful processes to move toward more sustainable-supportive planning and zoning engage the public early, throughout the planning process, as well as through official public hearings.

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.

Resources

Toolkits, Calculators, Guidance Documents

- Connecticut Fair Housing Center's Guide to Zoning for Fair and Open Communities
- Connecticut Opportunity Map
- American Planning Association's Policy Guide on Planning for Sustainability
- Roles and Responsibilities of Local Land Use Officials: Zoning Commission
- Land Use Law Center: Pace University and US Green Building Council: "Technical Guidance Manual for Sustainable Neighborhood Development Rating System to Evaluate and Amend Local Plans, Codes, and Policies
- Desegregate CT Statewide Zoning Code Research
- Connecticut Fair Housing Center: Fair Zoning
- Missing Middle Housing
- Be my neighbor. Untapped Housing Solutions: ADUs and Conversions
- The Residential Infill Project
- Desegregate CT: Zoning Atlas

Organizations and Relevant Programs

- Desegregate CT
- Open Communities Alliance
- Connecticut Department of Housing
- Connecticut Fair Housing Center
- Regional Plan Association
- Fairfield County's Center for Housing Opportunity
- Partnership for Strong Communities
- UCONN CLEAR
- LISC Connecticut
- LISC Connecticut Housing Connections

Why This Matters

Connecticut's municipalities often struggle with having an adequate, affordable housing supply and a diversity of housing opportunities for people of all incomes and backgrounds. Restrictive zoning, expensive application and review processes, and unnecessary housing development guidelines stunt the creation of affordable housing. Implicit segregation principles in these zoning laws and practices must be addressed. As roughly 28% of Connecticut's working age population is now comprised of people of color, and as the poverty rate rises above 10% in the state, it is pertinent that we ensure municipal zoning regulations work for all residents by providing

adequate affordable housing opportunities, including non-traditional and co-housing arrangements, multifamily housing, and mixed-income residential opportunities.

Inclusionary zoning advances the public welfare by ensuring that every Connecticut resident, regardless of income, race, age or other demographic indicators, can access housing in neighborhoods of opportunity.

Benefits

Results of inclusionary zoning and affordable housing creation can include reduced greenhouse gas emissions, enhanced sustainable economic development, reduced transportation costs, increased active transportation and community cohesion, and a greater range of housing opportunities, both in terms of type and affordability. Further, everyone benefits from living in more racially and economically diverse communities.