



Town of Bloomfield, Connecticut

Town Plan and Zoning Commission

Affordable Housing Plan

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GOMAN+YORK
PLANNING AND DESIGN

Town of Bloomfield, Connecticut
Town Plan and Zoning Commission
Affordable Housing Plan

Town Plan & Zoning Commission

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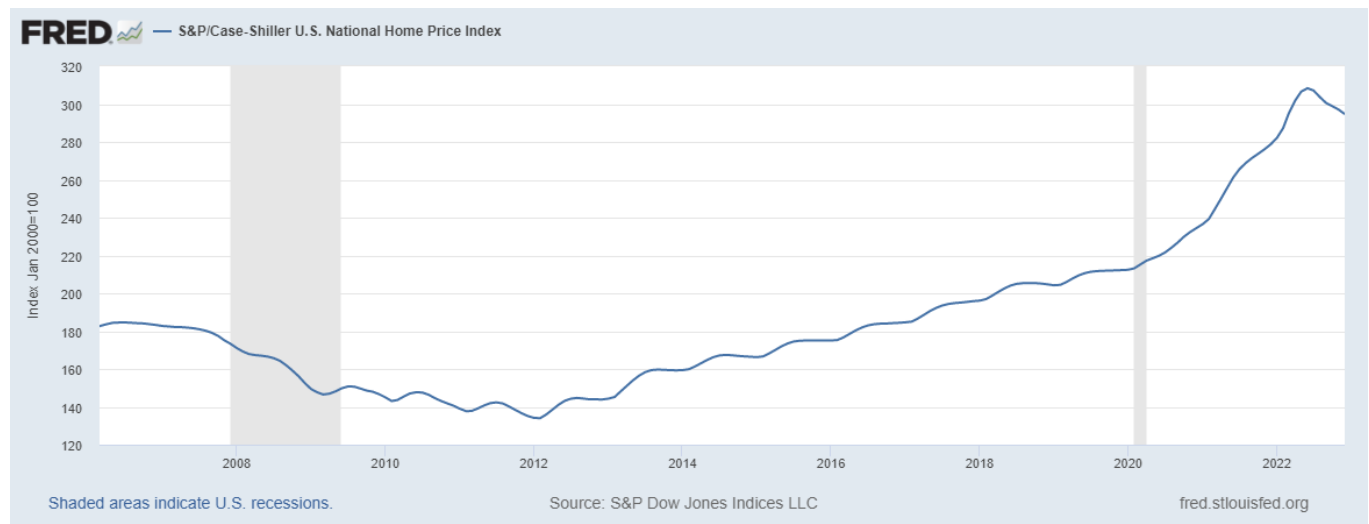
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Introduction

The United States is experiencing a housing crisis and Connecticut is not immune. This is a crisis of housing affordability (i.e., the need for affordable housing) and the social and economic ramifications bestowed upon lower-income, working- and middle-income households who are unable to access affordable housing. Both nationally and locally, the cost of housing has outpaced income growth, especially for low-income households. This has undermined access to quality housing proximate to transportation infrastructure and economic opportunities at affordable prices.

Historically, an average house in the U.S. costs around five (5) times the yearly household income. During the housing bubble of 2006 the ratio exceeded seven (7) - in other words, an average single-family house in the United States cost more than seven (7) times the U.S. median annual household income. Connecticut and Bloomfield have experienced similar increases in housing cost compared to income. The [Case-Shiller Home Price Index](#)¹ seeks to measure the price level of existing single-family homes in the United States. Based on the pioneering research the index is generally considered the leading measure of U.S. residential real estate prices. The index has a base as of Jan 2000=100 and is multiplied by 1800 in order approximate the [Average Sales Price of Houses Sold for the United States](#). This ratio is heavily influenced by mortgage interest rates. When interest rates go down the affordability of a house goes up, so people spend more money on a house. Today, the ratio of home value to household income 5.4, compared to 2.6, the commonly assumed healthy ratio.



Bloomfield is not immune to the national trend of housing value increasing and outpacing income. The economic and social ramifications of this affordable housing crisis are substantial. For example, many businesses struggle to retain and attract a qualified workforce because housing costs exceed the means of workforce salaries. Also, society and communities are becoming more segregated by both income and

¹ The data sets used in this Plan are based on most recent data available. Therefore, dates and sources vary based on the data set. U.S. Census data includes 2018 and 2020 estimates, and 2020 decennial census.

race.² The poor, working, and even some middle-income families are priced out of prosperous communities that provide opportunities for upward mobility. Most concerning, minority populations are disproportionately excluded from prosperous communities, economic opportunities, and improved quality of life. This is due to the correlation between wealth and race in America.³ Collectively, the economic and social ramifications of our affordable housing crisis often result in lower-income populations most often being isolated in distressed urban and rural communities, with few chances of betterment.

Bloomfield, like many middle-income Connecticut communities, is not immune to this crisis or the negative consequences of a housing stock that is unaffordable to many households both in Bloomfield and surrounding communities. Bloomfield's bucolic suburban aesthetic and centralized location makes Bloomfield a desirable community. Desirability induces demand, creating upward pressure on housing prize. That means that even though 11.13% of Bloomfield's housing stock is *qualified affordable*,⁴ Bloomfield must continuously work to maintain and provide housing affordability.

Planning for affordable housing is foundational to maintaining a vibrant and prosperous community. Without safe, quality, affordable housing, Bloomfield will struggle to maintain its prosperity—if Bloomfield can't maintain a workforce. This affordable housing plan is aimed at positioning Bloomfield to compete for wealth and investment and to maintain a vibrant and prosperous community for generations to come. Becoming and remaining a vibrant and prosperous community does not occur by happenstance. It requires hard work, dedication, constancy of purpose, and good governance. It also requires the community to provide and maintain a quality housing stock that is competitive, desirable, and affordable. The more vibrant and prosperous the community, the less affordable the housing. Prosperity and unaffordable housing are a good problem to have because they are more easily solved than problems of community stagnation, decline, and an overabundance of affordable housing resulting from weak demand and disinvestment.

Good governance starts with managing mundane qualities of everyday community life, with a view toward continuous improvement. Good governance is about managing, not resisting change, and ensuring that a community can fend off threats, cope with disturbance, and mitigate the negative consequence of well-intended actions. Having an unaffordable housing stock is a negative consequence of well-intended actions aimed at maintaining and growing prosperity. The more desirable a community becomes, the greater the demand for housing and the greater property values increase. However, when prosperity—wealth and property value—escalates, social, economic, and even racial exclusion threaten to undermine community well-being and place prosperity at risk. (*If the community cannot attract and retain a qualified workforce to provide basic needs and satisfy wants, then desirability and demand suffer, and prosperity wanes.*) Therefore, Bloomfield must be intentional in its actions and work to maintain and provide a stock of well-maintained affordable housing if it wants to retain and attract a qualified workforce, the next generation of property owners, and a social and economic future of

² This may not be the case with Bloomfield, recognizing it is a minority majority community.

³ In 2021, the median income of a non-Hispanic White household was \$71,033, compared to \$57,981 for a Hispanic household, and \$45,208 for a Black household. U.S. Census.

⁴ Connecticut Department of Housing, 2022 Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals List

vibrancy and prosperity. Otherwise, Bloomfield runs the risk of social and economic stagnation or decline.

Bloomfield, Why Affordable Housing Now?



This Affordable Housing Plan is the result of State government (Executive and Legislative branches) prioritizing Connecticut's need for affordable housing and passing legislation (PA 17-170 and codified as CGS 8-30j) that requires *every municipality to prepare an affordable housing plan at least once every five years*. Also, the legislation requires that the affordable housing plan *specify how the community intends to increase the amount of affordable housing available in the community*.

To facilitate this prioritization of housing affordability and the requirements to plan for affordable housing, the Connecticut Department of Housing awarded the Town of Bloomfield a competitive grant to create an affordability plan. That said, it is important to recognize that requirements to plan for affordable housing are not new. Section 8-23 of the Connecticut General Statutes for three decades has required that the municipal plan of conservation and development:

- make provisions for the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multifamily dwellings, consistent with soil types, terrain, and infrastructure capacity, for all residents of the municipality and the planning region in which the municipality is located... [and to]
- promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low- and moderate-income households, and encourage the development of housing which will meet the housing needs identified in the state's consolidated plan for housing and community development...

These longstanding requirements for affordable housing highlight the importance of residential development, housing, and affordable housing in all communities. *Housing is where jobs go at night*. Housing is where individuals and families live their lives. When a community considers land use issues, housing density, style, and tenure all contribute to its physical character and economic wellbeing. Homeownership, and the equity derived from homeownership, have been the foundation to creating American middle-income wealth for generations.



These characteristics of residential development and housing have shaped and contributed to Bloomfield and its rural-suburban character. Today, Bloomfield's most common land use is single-family residential. Also, 63.2% of Bloomfield's housing stock is single-family detached and 20.1% of Bloomfield's housing stock is multi-family housing (five units or more). The remaining 16.2% is a mix of single-family attached and missing middle housing, 2 to 4 units.

While the high percentage of single-family housing is not uncommon, an overreliance on a single-family housing aimed at homeownership (68.1%) can undermine community resilience, creating a lack of housing diversity that is susceptible to market disturbance and slow-moving changes in demographics and consumer preferences. Also, overreliance on single-family housing and homeownership favors middle- and high-income households over households of lesser means, resulting in social, economic, and racial exclusion.⁵ Furthermore, an overreliance on single-family housing and homeownership can create challenges for retaining and attracting a qualified workforce, including young professionals and skilled trades workers. The fact is Bloomfield can and will benefit from planning for greater housing diversity—specifically, planning for and providing more multi-family and missing middle housing.

Table 1. Housing Units in Structure (2020 Estimates)⁶

| | Bloomfield | Hartford County | Connecticut |
|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Total housing units | 9,305 | 379,602 | 1516,629 |
| 1-unit detached | 5,884 | 210,665 | 893,531 |
| 1-unit attached | 667 | 21,892 | 81,832 |
| 2 units | 234 | 29,450 | 124,082 |
| 3 or 4 units | 605 | 36,302 | 130,863 |
| 5 to 9 units | 603 | 23,719 | 82,695 |
| 10 to 19 units | 214 | 16,718 | 57,281 |
| 20 or more units | 1,051 | 38,674 | 134,093 |
| Mobile home | 47 | 2,111 | 11,826 |
| Boat, RV, van, etc. | 0 | 71 | 426 |

What is “Affordable Housing” and What Does “Affordable Housing” Mean?

Too often individuals and communities associate affordable housing with the public housing of decades past. It is important to recognize that affordable housing today is not public housing. Federal, state, and local government learned valuable lessons from the failed policies and experience of past public housing and the negative consequences of clustering large numbers of low-income households into substandard housing. Today, affordable housing policies have moved away from both the public model and clustering. Affordable housing policy today focuses on public-private partnerships and inclusive mixed-income policies to provide much-needed affordable housing. As a result, most affordable housing hides in plain sight, blending into the community, to such an extent that most do not even know the difference between what housing units are market rate and what housing units are qualified affordable.

⁵ While social and economic exclusion should be of concern for Bloomfield, racial exclusion is not an issue in Bloomfield.

⁶ Total housing unit, occupied housing units, and total number of households vary in different sections of this Plan based on U.S. Census source. This is the result of data of only selected portions of the 2020 Decennial Census being released at this time. For example, this table is based on 2020 estimates for total housing units and the breakdown of unit types. If actual 2020 total housing units were inserted here, as such number is use elsewhere in this Plan, it would distort the backdown in this table and the table would not total correctly.

Housing is deemed unaffordable if a household pays more than 30% of their gross income for housing.⁷ For example, if a household earning \$75,000 per year is spending \$22,500 (30% gross income) or more per year (\$1,875/month) on rent/mortgage and utilities, then housing is unaffordable. The median household income for the Hartford County is \$75,381 and the median household income for Bloomfield is \$79,134. Affordable fair market rental housing in the Hartford Metropolitan Area (and Bloomfield), based on the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) range from \$1,002 per month for a studio to \$2,226 per month for a four-bedroom apartment.

Qualified Vs Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing

Qualified Affordable Housing is a specific statutory phrase to describe housing that meets the State definition of affordable housing regarding the requirements of Section 8-30g, which regulates specific land use applications for providing affordable housing. Just because housing does not meet the statutory definition of Qualified Affordable Housing, does not mean a community does not have housing that is affordable to households of lesser means. Most communities have naturally occurring affordable housing that does not meet the definition of Qualified Affordable Housing but serves populations of lesser financial means.

The problem of affordable housing in the Hartford Region is more pronounced than most realize. For example, the Capitol Region Affordable Housing Assessment (2022) by the Capitol Region Council of Governments demonstrated the spatial and inequitable distribution of affordable housing in the region. However, the study showed Bloomfield's moderate number and high percentage of subsidized housing compared to other communities. While Bloomfield performs better than the region, the percentage of High Housing Cost Burden households in Bloomfield is a concern.

Qualified affordable housing, as defined by the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), Chapter 126a Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals, Section 8-30g, is: housing [or households] that receive government assistance or are deed-restricted to be sold or rented at or below prices for which a household pays 30% or less of their income.

Table 2. Bloomfield Qualified Affordable Housing (2022)

| 2010 Housing Units | Gov. Assisted | Tenant Rental Assistance | CHFA Mortgages | Deed Restricted | Total Assisted | Percent Affordable |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 9,019 | 612 (61%) | 115 (11%) | 277 (28%) | 0 (0%) | 1,004 (100%) | 11.13% |
| (2020 actual housing units = 9,717) | | | | | | 10.33% |

Qualified affordable housing is different than naturally occurring affordable housing, which is housing that sells or rents at values affordable to households at or below 80% AMI but does not meet the criteria to be included as *qualified affordable housing*, as defined by 8-30g. In most cases, qualified affordable housing developments have 30% or less of the units dedicated as affordable. This low percentage of affordable units in affordable housing developments demonstrates the policy shift away from clustering

⁷ The 30% threshold is established by HUD.

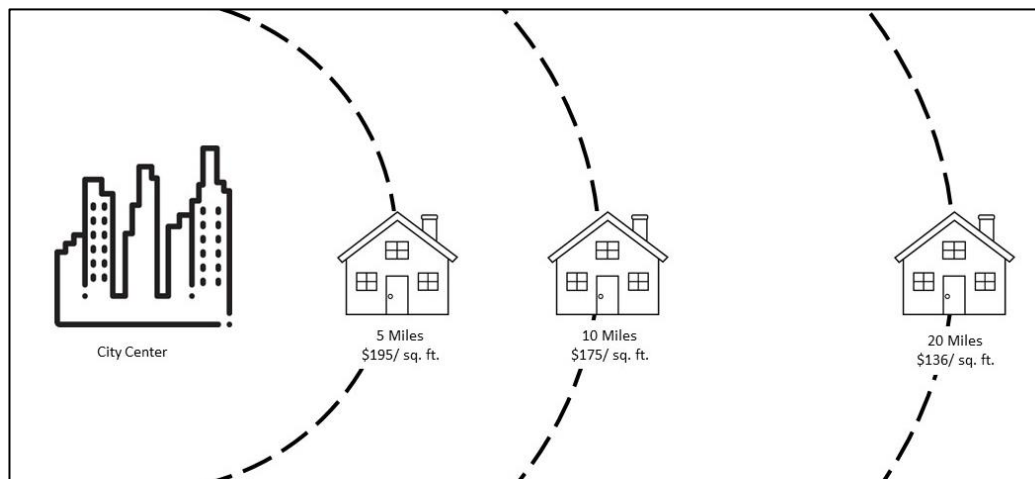
lower-income households and ensures a mix of incomes to mitigate the potential negative effects of excessive clustering. The CGS 8-30g 10% threshold is a minimum standard established to determine the applicability of 8-30g land use provisions, it is not a determination of affordable housing need. Bloomfield, as of 2022, has 1,004 qualified affordable housing units, or 11.13% of Bloomfield's 9,019⁸ housing units counted as *qualified affordable housing*.

Housing Market Geography

When thinking about housing and housing markets, it is important to understand how housing market's function and organize spatially. Housing market's function and organize at the metropolitan scale and include regional submarkets (or a local community scale). Metropolitan regions are primarily labor markets—persons and firms locate in metropolitan areas for employment opportunities—to access jobs and a qualified workforce.⁹ This creates a symbiotic relationship between the place of home and place of work—*housing being where jobs go at night*. The place of home and place of work, along with the transportation network (accessibility), organize the functionality and pricing of the housing market.

The spatial organization and location of housing—and the spatial organization of transportation networks—within the metropolitan region determines accessibility to employment opportunities. The more centrally located the place of home is within the metropolitan region, the more accessible it is to employment opportunities within the metropolitan area.¹⁰ Therefore, commuter times—an average of 26 minutes in Central Connecticut—frame the extent of the regional and subregional housing market. To put it another way, the distance (in space and time) from employment centers within a region define the accessibility to employment opportunities from the place of home.

Figure 1. The Impact of Distance from the Core on Value Per Sq. Ft.



⁸ Based on 2010 U.S. Census. As of the 2020 U.S. Census, Bloomfield has 9,717 housing units. Therefore, once the State Department of Housing begins using the 2020 Census date, Bloomfield's qualified affordable housing units could drop to 10.33%.

⁹ Bertaud, Alain, (2018): Order Without Design: How Markets Shape Cities. The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA

¹⁰ Bertaud, Alain, (2018): Order Without Design: How Markets Shape Cities. The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

Bloomfield, as an inner suburb, is near the core of the region with good access to the Interstate Highway System. Therefore, Bloomfield is centrally located with good accessibility to employment opportunities—including large employers and employment opportunities within Bloomfield. The result—housing market demand, in terms of land/rent value (property value) is strong and density is higher (and can be even higher) than in more distanced periphery communities.

In addition, and as important, as household income increases, land consumption and floor area consumption increase. This means that wealthy households typically consume more land and/or more floor area than households of lesser means. Therefore, land (adequate suburban yards) and floor area consumption (larger housing units) further drive the high value of housing in Bloomfield. Furthermore, Bloomfield's positive image, strong sense of place, quality of life, and good municipal governance further contribute to Bloomfield's desirability, driving up housing value and costs.

There are exceptions or distortions to the spatial organization of the metropolitan housing markets. The most common causes of these distortions are proximity to the transportation network (accessibility), smaller subregional job centers toward the periphery of the region, and the amenity value of some communities.

- **Proximity to Transportation Network:** Places more distant from the core may experience higher densities (and higher values) if they have good accessibility to the transportation network.
- **Subregional Center:** Subregion centers that are distanced from core, yet have higher density, larger populations, and meaningful employment opportunities.
- **Amenity Value:** Desirable (or undesirable) locations (neighborhoods and communities) can and do impact density and income patterns.

Land/Rent (Property) Value: Land/rent value is highest near the metropolitan core due to accessibility to employment opportunities and land/rent value is lowest near the periphery due to limited accessibility to employment opportunities. Therefore, a household at a given income can access a larger home (floor area) on more land (larger lot) further from the center and nearest to the periphery. The value of land and rent, the value of housing, adjusts for the location within the region—the regional housing market. The housing market adjusts value for accessibility to employment opportunities.

Using the Hartford metropolitan market as an example, comparable homes (i.e., style, size, number of bedrooms, bathrooms, etc.) differentiated by distance (drivetime from Downtown Hartford) will adjust for accessibility to employment opportunities. A 2,200 square foot custom Cape with three bedrooms, two and a half bathrooms, a two-car garage, and on a 1-acre lot in Stafford—approximately a 30-minute drive to Downtown Hartford without traffic, is valued at less per square foot than comparable properties in more centrally located communities, such as South Windsor and West Hartford—the highest per square foot value for a comparable home being nearest the core in West Hartford (See Figure 1).

Changing Demographic Structure and Housing

Connecticut has been a slow-to-no-growth state for three decades. Job growth has been mostly stagnant and population growth has been anemic.¹¹ This lack of statewide economic and demographic growth has resulted in changes to Connecticut's demographics and demographic structure. It is often said that demography is destiny. If that is true, then most communities in Connecticut should be concerned. In Connecticut and Bloomfield, the primary outcome of our demographic destiny is that we are aging—growing older. Older populations require more government services, need to be supported by a labor force that is contracting in size proportionally, and resulting in fewer young families with fewer children—further reducing the next generation of our labor force.

Table 3. Connecticut Total Employment

| CONNECTICUT TOTAL EMPLOYMENT (Seasonally Adjusted) | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------|
| | 1985 | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 | 2020 |
| Jan | 1,614,600 | 1,720,300 | 1,657,800 | 1,721,200 | 1,687,700 | 1,712,600 | 1,788,400 | 1,850,700 |
| Connecticut Department of Labor - Office of Research | | | | | | | | |

Table 4. Connecticut Non-Farm Employment

| NONFARM EMPLOYMENT (Seasonally Adjusted) CONNECTICUT and HARTFORD LMA | | | | | | | | |
|---|------------------|----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------|
| | 1985 | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 | 2015 | 2020 |
| CT | 1,549,800 | 1,653,200 | 1,567,300 | 1,689,800 | 1,666,600 | 1,601,000 | 1,683,900 | 1,698,000 |
| Hartford | --- | 603,400 | 548,200 | 568,900 | 556,500 | 545,100 | 575,000 | 591,900 |
| Connecticut Department of Labor - Office of Research | | | | | | | | |

From 2010 to 2020, Connecticut population grew by 1%, adding only 31,847 persons, and Hartford County added only 5,484 persons, also 1% growth. During that same time, Bloomfield's population grew by 1,049 persons, or 5% of total population.¹² Household formations,¹³ in Connecticut and Metropolitan Hartford, have been the only truly positive demand driver for the past three decades—the primary driver of most new residential development. Household formations are the creation of new households out of both new population and existing households. The positive household formations are mostly the result of our changing demographic and social structure that are reflected in decreasing household size and an increasing number of single person households—this will be discussed in greater

¹¹ From 1985 to 1990, Connecticut's total employment increased by 105,700 and nonfarm employment increased by 103,400. By comparison, in the thirty years to follow, from 1990 to 2020 total employment increased by only 130,400 and nonfarm employment increased by only 44,800 (CT Department of Labor, Office of Research, 2021). From 2020 to 2010, Connecticut's population increased by only 1% and New London County's population decreased by 2% (U.S. Census, 2020 Decennial Census).

¹² United States Census of Population, 2020.

¹³ Household formations are the creation of new households. While mostly driven by increases in population through net positive migration, in stagnant markets, other factors such as divorce and young person's moving out of their parent's homes drive household formations. In addition, increases in 1- and 2-person households, and decreasing household sizes have also driven household formations.

detail below. However, with 5% population growth, Bloomfield has experienced real demand from population growth, in addition to household formations.

Table 5. 2020 Census of Population

| Total Population | Population 2010 | Population 2020 | Population Change 2010 - 2020 | % Change 2010-2020 |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Connecticut | 3,574,097 | 3,605,944 | 31,847 | 1% |
| Bloomfield | 20,486 | 21,535 | 1,049 | 5% |
| Fairfield County | 916,829 | 957,419 | 40,590 | 4% |
| Hartford County | 894,014 | 899,498 | 5,484 | 1% |
| Litchfield County | 189,927 | 185,186 | -4,741 | -2% |
| Middlesex County | 165,676 | 164,245 | -1,431 | -1% |
| New Haven County | 862,477 | 864,835 | 2,358 | 0% |
| New London County | 274,055 | 268,555 | -5,500 | -2% |
| Tolland County | 152,691 | 149,788 | -2,903 | -2% |
| Windham County | 118,428 | 116,418 | -2,010 | -2% |

Unfortunately, stagnant, or slow growth in demand drivers have consequences. This is especially true regarding population and the demographic structure. Most important, as the demographic structure of a community's population changes, the consequences for municipal governance are real. For example, an aging population, with more households on fixed incomes, can result in decreased housing investment, depreciating housing values,¹⁴ and an increased taxed burden to compensate for a depreciation in the housing value.

Demographics and Demographic Structure

Population, that is the total number of persons in a community, is only one variable in understanding the demographic trajectory of a community—growth or contraction. Other variables, such as age, household size, and household composition are more dynamic variables and indicators that better explain the demographic structure of a community and socio-economic implications—this is especially true in stagnant or slow growth regions and communities. For example, as population growth slows, the demographic structure of the population changes (i.e., the population ages). While such a slow-moving variable is hard to notice in real time, it becomes apparent when analyzing demographic data over time. The Age Pyramid (Figure 2) shows the change in population structure. The 2010 pyramid shows a smaller number of persons 65 and older, compared to 2022, indicating the population is aging.

¹⁴ Depreciating values result from the cost of deferred maintenance being capitalized into the value of housing.

Furthermore, and related to the aging population, the 2022 Age Pyramid also shows a dramatic contraction in person 19 years old and younger. This contraction in young persons is consistent with the declines in school district enrollments.¹⁵

The size of households (including family households) is primarily driven by the social, economic, and cultural characteristics of the population. Therefore, it is the change in demographics and socioeconomics that mostly drive community change. For example, older populations have fewer children than younger populations. This is important to understand because as population growth slows or stagnates, and the population of a community ages, births and the number of children in a community decrease. This decrease in births and young children then translates into declining school enrollments—declining fertility rates¹⁶ (birth rates) are a key driver of declining school district enrollments. This example demonstrates the importance of demographic analysis and how such analysis informs us about housing products, community planning, and the relationship to municipal government services.

Declining fertility rates are a key reason why Connecticut and Hartford County are experiencing anemic population growth and why Bloomfield is experiencing declining school enrollments. The total fertility rate is the average number of children that would be born to a woman if all women lived to the end of their childbearing years. Since only women have children, and since all women do not live to the end of their childbearing years (or have children), the replacement level of the fertility rate is between 2.1 and 2.3 (births per women) to maintain a stable population—higher rates result in population growth and lower rates result in population decline.

Figure 2. Bloomfield's Population Structure



¹⁵ Bloomfield's school district enrollments peaked in 2010 at 2,298, compared to 2,017 in 2022 (a loss of 281 school district enrollments or an 8.8% decline in total enrollment).

¹⁶ PEW Research Center, 2018. The US Total Fertility Rate—lifetime births per women—has declined from 3.6 in 1960 to 1.64 in 2020.

Another way of understanding this is to understand how the fertility rate interacts with the death rate. The equation for population growth (not including immigration and migration) is births minus deaths equals growth. If births are higher than deaths, the population grows. If births are lower than deaths, the population declines. Table 1. below shows how the fertility rate translates deaths and births to population growth or decline. Note that the United States fertility rate is 1.64 (down from 2.08 in 2008) and Connecticut's fertility rate is 1.51 (down from 1.88 in 2008)—both are well below the replacement rates (2.1 to 2.3) to maintain a stable population. That means, in Connecticut, 29 fewer persons are born for every 100 persons who die. Excluding foreign immigration and domestic migration, given enough time at a 1.51 fertility rate, Connecticut's population would decline to zero.

Declining fertility rates also reflect economic opportunity (wealth), educational opportunity (educational attainment), and the associated changes in social-cultural behaviors that come with wealth and education.¹⁷ Most important, these structural changes in our demographics can be traced across generations. For example, if you are of the Baby-Boom generation (born between 1946 and 1964),¹⁸ it's likely that you have more siblings than you have children. It is also likely, as a Baby Boomer, you moved out of your parent's home, got married, and had your first child at a younger age than those in Generation X (born between 1965 and 1980) and the Millennial Generation (born between 1981 and 1996). These slow-moving changes in our social-cultural behavior that are hard to notice in real time, are revealed by analyzing demographic structure and paying close attention to changes in social-cultural behaviors (generation by generation). The effects of these slow-moving changes can be and often are profound.

Table 6. Fertility Rates and Natural Increase

| | Fertility Rate | Deaths | Births | Replacement Rate |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Above Replacement | 2.4 | 100 | 120 | Growth |
| Replacement | 2.3 | 100 | 115 | Stable |
| Replacement | 2.2 | 100 | 110 | Stable |
| Replacement | 2.1 | 100 | 105 | Stable |
| Below Replacement | 2.0 | 100 | 100 | Decline |
| United States | 1.64 | 100 | 82 | -18 Births = Decline |
| Connecticut¹⁹ | 1.51 | 100 | 71 | -29 Births = Decline |

It is these slow-moving changes in demographics and social-cultural behaviors that help us to better understand Bloomfield and to better plan for Bloomfield's future. The Connecticut State Data Center projects that Bloomfield's population will decrease 20,508 persons in 2020 to 20,152 persons in 2040.²⁰ More important, demographic structure of Bloomfield's population will also change during this time, and Bloomfield will continue to age. Today, the median age of Bloomfield is 49.1, much higher than Connecticut's median age of 41, and the United States median age of 38.

¹⁷ For example, prioritizing career over childrearing.

¹⁸ PEW Research Center, 2018.

¹⁹ [www. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_U.S._states_and_territories_by_fertility_rate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_U.S._states_and_territories_by_fertility_rate)

²⁰ Note, the Ct Data Center underestimated Bloomfield's 2020 population at 20,508 compared to the 21,535 actual persons counted in the 2020 US Census. Therefore, Bloomfield outperformed the State Data Center estimates/projects.

Table 7. Median Age

| | USA | CT | Bloomfield |
|------|------|------|-------------|
| 2020 | 38.0 | 41.0 | 49.1 |

Other changes in our national, regional, and local demographic structure, socioeconomics, and social behaviors have also transformed household structure. For example, in 1960 only 13.0% of housing units in the United States were occupied by 1-person households. Today, 28% of our nation's housing stock are occupied by 1-person households.²¹ Bloomfield is not immune to these changes. Today 30.2% of Bloomfield's housing stock is occupied by 1-person households²² and 46.2% of Bloomfield's renter-occupied housing units are 1-person households. These profound changes in household structure have meaningful consequences on household formation, population, income, and purchasing power. More single-person households help to explain Connecticut's continued household formations even though jobs and population growth have been stagnant and anemic. Single-person households mean fewer persons or population per housing unit, fewer school age children, and increased household incomes that are constrained to a single salary and diminishing purchasing power from the absence of a second income.

Another profound trend is the decline in married-couple households with children (under the age 18). In the United States, from 1970 to 2012, the percent of married-couple households with children declined from 40.3% to 19.6%, today it is 19%.²³ Bloomfield's households with persons under the age of 18 account for only 32.4% of total households today.²⁴ That means over two-thirds of Bloomfield's housing units have no school age children—another data point that explains contracting school enrollments.

The changes in demographic and household structure discussed above are the result of both an aging population and changes in social-cultural behaviors. Today, compared to prior decades and the generations that came before, as a society we marry later, marry less, and we have fewer children. As household size continues to decline, and one- and two-person households continue to increase in percent of total household, household formations will continue to be a driver of housing market—regardless of job and population growth (decline or stagnation). Most important, with smaller households, fewer family households, and more one- and -two person households, it is likely that demand for smaller homes, multi-family housing, and renter-occupied will remain robust and demand for larger single-family detached housing will soften. This is why a multi-family housing product is important, including an affordable housing product.

²¹ United States Census, [www. https://census.gov](https://census.gov) (2019).

²² United States Census, [www. https://census.gov](https://census.gov) (2019).

²³ United States Census, [www. https://census.gov](https://census.gov) (2012).

²⁴ United States Census, [www.https://census.gov](https://census.gov) (2020 estimates)

The Impact of Multi-Family and Affordable Housing on Property Values

Concerns over the potential of negative impacts of new residential development, especially negative impacts on property values, are common in planning and the land use approval process. One of the foundational concepts of zoning in the original Zoning Enabling Act (1922) is that “such regulations shall be made with reasonable consideration...to the character of the district...with a view to conserving the value of buildings.” The concept of *a view to conserving the value of buildings* needs to be contextualized to the time when it was written and the problems that zoning was designed to solve. The 1920’s context was the harsh conditions of the industrial city and the lack of regulatory provisions to deal with incompatible uses and the negative consequences of proximity. In addition to the *character of the district* and *conserving the value of buildings*, zoning was intended to protect us from *fire, panic, and other dangers*, conditions that no longer threaten us in the ways they did in the 1920’s industrial city. Simply stated, zoning (along with other policies and regulations) has successfully solved the problem of the industrial city and has created stability and predictability in real property markets. Therefore, today, how we need to conceptualize *the character of the district* and *conserving the value of buildings* has changed. That is, the dissimilarity in uses has been greatly reduced. Also, the negative impacts on the proximate property have been mostly reduced to the most undesirable land uses. For example, undesirable land uses such as airports, landfills, superfund sites, etc., and their impact on residential and other nearby uses have been extensively studied and documented as having potentially negative impacts on adjacent and proximate property values.

However, such concerns and claims of the negative impact created by other less noxious and dissimilar uses have persisted, especially concerns regarding multi-family and affordable housing development adjacent and proximate to existing residential properties. It is not uncommon to even hear claims that new single-family residential development will negatively impact the value of existing single-family residential properties. Fortunately, such concerns and claims have led to academic and industry research on the impacts of new development on existing residential property values. Most importantly, the abundance of academic research has shown that such claims are not substantiated.

For example, a notable and comprehensive longitudinal study by the MIT Center for Real Estate, *Effects of Mixed-Income, Multi-Family Rental Housing Developments on Single-Family Housing Values* (2005), of seven high-density affordable housing developments adjacent to medium- and low-density single-family residential areas in six communities spread across Metropolitan Boston. The researchers stated that the findings “in all seven case study towns lead us to conclude that the introduction of larger-scale, high-density, mixed-income rental developments in single-family neighborhoods *does not* affect the value of surrounding homes. The fear of potential asset-value loss amongst suburban homeowners is misplaced.” A study by Harvard’s Joint Center for Housing Studies, *The Vitality of America’s Working Communities* (2003), found that apartments posed no threat to surrounding single-family house values.

The findings of the MIT and Harvard studies are further substantiated in a recent study by Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute at the University of Utah. The study, *The Impact of High-Density Apartments on Surrounding Single-Family Home Values in Suburban Salt Lake County* (2021), analyzed the construction of 7,754 units between 2010 and 2018 and the impact of these multi-family rental developments on single-family home values within a half-mile of the new apartments. The researchers found:



...apartments built between 2010 and 2018 have not reduced single-family home values in suburban Salt Lake County [...] However, denser development continues to be a politically controversial topic on city council agendas as existing residents often bring up negative impacts on home values. Single-family homes located within 1/2 mile of a newly constructed apartment building experienced higher overall price appreciation than those homes farther away.

Overall, academic research shows that multi-family development, which is most often of a higher density than single-family residential development, either has no impact or a positive impact on adjacent and proximate single-family residential property values. For example, a study by the University of Washington, *Denser Development is Good for Single-Family Home Values* (2012), found single-family home values increase when located near denser development.

The National Association of Homebuilders, *Market Outlook: Confronting the Myths about Apartments with Facts* (2001), found that single-family residential property values within 300 feet of multi-family rental housing increased by 2.9%. Researchers at Virginia Tech University, in a study titled *Price Effects of Apartments on Nearby Single-Family Detached Residential Homes* (2003) concluded, multi-family rentals that were well-designed, attractive, and well-landscaped, increased the value of nearby single-family residential housing. What was most interesting about the Virginia Tech study, as explained by Eskic (2021), were the researchers three possible reasons to explain their findings:

1. new construction serves as a potential indicator of positive economic growth;
2. new apartments increase the pool of future homebuyers for current homeowners; and
3. apartments with mixed-use development often increase the attractiveness of nearby communities as they provide more housing and amenity choices.

These three possible explanations are important. They highlight the importance of continuous investment in a community, providing a modern, diverse, and competitive housing stock—the positive economic growth, the need to attract newcomers to the community to create a pool of future homebuyers, and the amenity value of diverse housing stock that offers housing alternatives for other residents already in the community—retaining young adults and empty-nesters who seek to remain in the community but need and want housing other than larger single-family homes.

While claims of negative property impacts are likely to persist in the local land use approval process, the unbiased academic research is clear in its findings, *apartments posed no threat to surrounding single-family house values and the fear of potential asset-value loss among suburban homeowners is misplaced*. This is important for Bloomfield, especially the land use boards and commissions, to understand and embrace. New housing development, including multi-family and affordable housing, *when well designed and aesthetically pleasing*, does not negatively impact the value of adjacent and nearby housing.

Finding Balance – Social and Economic Value of Housing

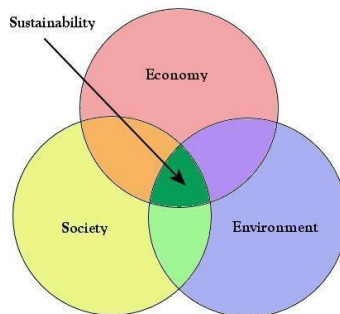
In land-use planning, especially in the land use application process, it is common for environmental issues to be pitted against social or economic issues. This either-or perspective creates tension, misses the bigger picture, and often creates more harm, at the expense of others.

The challenge for Bloomfield is to continuously work toward finding the right balance between economic, environmental, and social issues and goals. Striking such a balance is the essence of sustainability. For example, the United Nations, World Commission on the Environment and Development (Brundtland Report, 1987), explains:

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Doing so must integrate and balance economic, environmental, and social goals.

While environmental concerns need to be considered as part of development proposals, said concerns should not automatically favor the environment over economic and social issues or goals. Nor should environmental concerns be used as impediments to deter or prevent development, especially housing and affordable housing that are of equal importance as a social (and economic) need of society.

Finding the balance between economic, environmental, and social goals, means that Bloomfield and its land-use commission *must* trust in the governing regulations to guide and direct the decision-making process. Applications that comply with environmental regulatory requirements should be approved. Decision-makers must resist the temptations of speculative considerations and projections of yet-to-be-realized future conditions that color the merit of the application and reasonableness of the regulations in place at this moment in time.



The Bloomfield Housing Study

To produce the Bloomfield Affordable Housing Plan, an extensive housing study was conducted to assess the local and regional housing market, determine affordable housing needs, identify impediments to housing and affordable housing, and identify potential strategies that Bloomfield could implement to promote, encourage, and provide for *qualified affordable housing*. In doing so, the study reviewed and gave due consideration to state and regional planning efforts by reviewing and considering: the State of Connecticut 2020-24 *Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development*, the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) 2014 *Plan of Conservation and Development*, CRCOG's *Capitol Region Affordable Housing Assessment*, and the State of Connecticut 2018-2023 *Conservation & Development Policies: The Plan for Connecticut*. Also, past studies by the Town of Bloomfield were reviewed; Bloomfield's 2012 *Plan of Conservation and Development*, 2013 *Bloomfield Center Plan*, the Tax Increment Finance Districts Master Plan (2021), and current Zoning Regulations were also reviewed and considered. This comprehensive study resulted in a detailed Affordable Housing Plan Analysis Report (2022/2023) and presentations to the Town Council (September 2022) and the Town Plan and Zoning Commission (February 2023).

Housing Needs Assessment

To start the housing needs assessment, a review of Census data related to affordability was conducted. For example, the Selected Monthly Owner Costs (SMOC), as explained by the U.S. Census, “are calculated from the sum of payment for mortgages, real estate taxes, various insurances, utilities, fuels, mobile home costs, and condominium fees.” The SMOC provide a good estimate of the cost of buying and owning a home. The median SMOC for housing units with a mortgage is \$1,876 and \$960 for housing units without a mortgage. At \$1,876 in monthly owner housing costs for a home with a mortgage, the household with an annual income of approximately \$75,000 would be spending 30% of their income on housing—the affordability threshold.

Table 8. Selected Monthly Owner Costs (SMOC) – Without Mortgage

| | Bloomfield | | Hartford County | | Connecticut | |
|---|--------------|-------|-----------------|-------|-------------|-------|
| Housing units without a mortgage | 1,904 | 32.4% | 72,332 | 32.2% | 291,330 | 32.2% |
| Less than \$250 | 35 | 1.8% | 574 | 0.8% | 2,676 | 0.9% |
| \$250 to \$399 | 67 | 3.5% | 1,102 | 1.5% | 6,386 | 2.2% |
| \$400 to \$599 | 150 | 7.9% | 8,036 | 11.1% | 31,527 | 10.8% |
| \$600 to \$799 | 378 | 19.9% | 20,415 | 28.2% | 71,187 | 24.4% |
| \$800 to \$999 | 408 | 21.4% | 18,353 | 25.4% | 66,179 | 22.7% |
| \$1,000 or more | 866 | 45.5% | 23,852 | 33.0% | 113,375 | 38.9% |
| Median | \$960 | | \$859 | | \$894 | |

Selected Monthly Owner Costs as a Percentage of Household Income (SMOCAPI) as explained by the U.S. Census, “is used to measure housing affordability and excessive shelter costs. For example, many government agencies define excessive as costs that exceed 30 percent of household income.” Based on the SMOCAPI, 37.5% of Bloomfield's households with a mortgage and 20.8% of households without a

mortgage are paying 30% or more of their household income on housing costs. Based on this SMOCAPI, approximately 32.1% (or 1,884 households) of Bloomfield's owner-occupied housing is unaffordable. However, these calculations do not inform us whether the cost of housing being more than 30% of household income is the result of need (a burden on income) or want (a personal choice).

Table 9. Selected Monthly Owner Costs as Percentage of Household Income (SMOCAPI)

| | Bloomfield | Hartford County | Connecticut |
|--|------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Housing units with a mortgage | 3,969 | 151,726 | 612,195 |
| Less than 20.0 percent | 1,508 | 66,286 | 249,997 |
| 20.0 to 24.9 percent | 606 | 26,340 | 102,323 |
| 25.0 to 29.9 percent | 368 | 16,578 | 69,615 |
| 30.0 to 34.9 percent | 347 | 11,032 | 45,964 |
| 35.0 percent or more | 1,140 | 31,490 | 144,296 |
| Not computed | 0 | 582 | 2,156 |
| Housing unit without a mortgage | 1,839 | 71,665 | 288,537 |
| Less than 10.0 percent | 457 | 22,281 | 89,190 |
| 10.0 to 14.9 percent | 533 | 14,522 | 58,665 |
| 15.0 to 19.9 percent | 231 | 10,447 | 38,097 |
| 20.0 to 24.9 percent | 196 | 5,997 | 24,355 |
| 25.0 to 29.9 percent | 39 | 4,234 | 16,989 |
| 30.0 to 34.9 percent | 51 | 2,627 | 11,960 |
| 35.0 percent or more | 332 | 11,557 | 49,281 |
| Not computed | 65 | 667 | 2,793 |

Gross Rent paid for occupied rental units and Gross Rent as a Percentage of Household Income (GRAPI) are provided below. The median gross rent is \$1,428 and 38.8% of renter households pay \$1,500 or more per month for rent. In addition, 1,229 (45.2%) of the rental households are spending 30% or more of their household income on rent. Approximately 36.1% (3,113) of Bloomfield's households, both owner- and renter-occupied are paying above the 30% of income affordability threshold for housing. This should raise concerns about housing affordability in Bloomfield.

Table 10. Gross Rent

| | Bloomfield | Hartford County | Connecticut |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Occupied units paying rent | 2,718 | 121,315 | 446,564 |
| Less than \$500 | 374 | 13,230 | 43,948 |
| \$500 to \$999 | 261 | 34,055 | 107,314 |
| \$1,000 to \$1,499 | 888 (32.7%) | 52,796 | 172,238 |
| \$1,500 to \$1,999 | 733 (27.0%) | 16,500 | 77,046 |
| \$2,000 to \$2,499 | 170 | 3,163 | 26,477 |
| \$2,500 to \$2,999 | 149 | 735 | 9,972 |
| \$3,000 or more | 143 | 836 | 9,569 |
| Median (dollars) | \$1,428 | \$1,106 | \$1,180 |
| No rent paid | 29 | 4,453 | 18,501 |

Table 11. Gross Rent as Percentage of Household Income (GRPI)

| | Bloomfield | Hartford County | Connecticut |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Occupied units paying rent | 2,668 | 118,654 | 437,384 |
| Less than 15.0 percent | 514 | 15,313 | 52,712 |
| 15.0 to 19.9 percent | 315 | 15,387 | 52,270 |
| 20.0 to 24.9 percent | 410 | 14,730 | 54,264 |
| 25.0 to 29.9 percent | 200 | 14,241 | 52,657 |
| 30.0 to 34.9 percent | 234 (8.8%) | 10,330 | 39,555 |
| 35.0 percent or more | 995 (37.3%) | 48,653 | 185,926 |
| Not computed | 79 | 7,114 | 27,681 |

While the Census data above provides a firm understanding of affordability and the households paying more than 30% of their income on housing, the following calculations seek to identify (approximate) supply (housing units available at certain price points) and demand (households as specific incomes). Therefore, the tables below provide a summary of findings from the affordable housing needs assessment that calculated the need (demand) for affordable housing. Table 5 addressed owner-occupied housing and Table 6 addresses renter-occupied housing. To accomplish this, the needs assessment compares the number of housing units available to the number of households in specific income cohorts.

- The negative values (in red) indicate where there are *fewer housing units available* than there are households that need housing affordable at the respective income level.
- The positive value indicates where there are more housing units available than there are households that need housing affordable at the respective income level.

Table 12. Households by Income Compared to Existing Owner-Occupied Housing Stock by Value

| Household Income | <\$15,000 | \$15,000-\$24,999 | \$25,000-\$34,999 | \$35,000-\$49,999 | \$50,000-\$74,999 | \$75,000-\$99,999 | \$100,000-\$149,999 | \$150,000+ |
|--|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| Households @ Income | 216 | 227 | 344 | 586 | 891 | 936 | 1,281 | 1,392 |
| Est. affordable home Value (HH Income x 2.8) (rounded) | \$42,000 | \$70,000 | \$98,000 | \$140,000 | \$210,000 | \$280,000 | \$420,000 | \$560,000 |
| Existing Housing Units | 60 | 81 | 82 | 632 | 1,564 | 2,201 | 626 | 627 |
| Units Available Vs Adequate Income | -156 | -146 | -273 | 46 | 674 | 1,256 | -655 | -765 |

Table 13. Households by Income Compared to Existing (Rental) Housing Stock by Value

| Household Income | Less than \$15,000 | \$15,000-\$24,999 | \$25,000-\$34,999 | \$35,000-\$49,999 | \$50,000-\$74,999 | \$75,000-\$99,999 | \$100,000-\$149,999 | \$150,000 or more |
|---|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Households @ Income | 414 | 125 | 381 | 351 | 394 | 407 | 313 | 362 |
| Est. affordable monthly rent Value (HH Income x 0.30) | \$375 | \$625 | \$875 | \$1,250 | \$1,875 | \$2,500 | \$3,750 | \$3,750+ |
| Existing Housing (Household) Units | 476 | 159 | 488 | 400 | 733 | 170 | 149 | 143 |
| Units Available Vs Adequate Income | -62 | -34 | -107 | -49 | 339 | -237 | -164 | -219 |

The findings of the housing needs assessment are as follow:

- **Owner-Occupied Housing:** Below household incomes of \$34,999 is where the greatest need for owner-occupied housing—demand outpaces supply, demonstrating housing affordability need. That said, it may be unreasonable to assume that households of such little means can afford to buy, own, and maintain housing. For household incomes \$100,000 and housing valued over \$325,000 there are fewer housing units available than households that can afford such housing. This does not mean there is a housing affordability issue at this higher end of the housing market. It means there is more income than housing product value at this price point. However, it is important to note, these households likely put downward pressure on housing affordability at lower values, as they may own units that would otherwise be affordable to households with lower incomes.
- **Renter-Occupied:** Below household incomes of \$44,999 is where the greatest need for renter-occupied housing—demand outpaces supply, demonstrating housing affordability need. The analysis also shows that there is demand for rental housing units serving income at or above \$75,000—a population that would be well served by new multi-family construction.



- **Overall Finding:** It is very challenging to address owner-occupied affordability—the cost to construct single-family and duplex housing typically exceeds the capabilities of lower income households—even when subsidies are provided. Therefore, it is best to focus on rental housing at or below incomes of \$49,999.

The Bloomfield Affordable Housing Strategy

This section is the Affordable Housing Strategy—the specific policies, programs, and strategies to implement to encourage and provide more *Qualified Affordable Housing* in the town of Bloomfield. It is important to recognize, it is not enough to simply adopt this plan and implement the recommended strategies. Encouraging and providing affordable housing is challenging and difficult work. It is easy to lose momentum and the political will required to achieve the desired outcomes of inclusion and investment. Therefore, Bloomfield must embrace this plan, the need for affordable housing, and the desired outcome as a new philosophy of improvement, inclusion, and betterment for the community. This requires a constancy of purpose to implement the plan and achieve the desired outcomes. Bloomfield must work, continuously and passionately to provide affordable housing.

Bloomfield’s Guiding Principles for Affordable Housing

The following are a set of guiding principles that frame Bloomfield’s Affordable Housing Plan:

- **Target housing investment:** Bloomfield will target multi-family and affordable housing development into areas best suited for higher density housing and where housing development can assist in repositioning properties and areas to compete for investment.
- **Encourage and provide for housing diversity:** Bloomfield will seek to provide a diversity of housing types, tenure, and affordable to all incomes. This includes a mix of single-family, missing-middle, and multi-family housing.
- **Protect and preserve:** Bloomfield will maintain the physical, aesthetic, and cultural character of the community by maintaining the suburban residential development patterns of the community.
- **Focus on Bloomfield residents and employees, with a view toward regional need.** Bloomfield will seek to provide a housing stock that meets the needs of the community, as determined in the housing needs assessment. In doing so, Bloomfield recognizes it does not exist in a vacuum and is part of a regional housing market—a market where Bloomfield already outperforms its neighboring community in the amount/percent of qualified affordable housing provided.
- **Focus on redevelopment.** Bloomfield will encourage and utilize multi-family housing and affordable housing as means to reposition older commercial areas to compete for investment.
- **A balanced and sustainable approach to housing.** Bloomfield will encourage and support development opportunities that can and will strike a balance between economic, social, and environmental concerns.
- **Fair housing.** Bloomfield, through its planning and zoning efforts will affirmatively forward fair housing.

Removing Regulatory Impediments – Recommended Modifications to the Zoning Regulations

The following are specific recommendations for modifications and improvements to the Bloomfield Zoning Regulations aimed at removing impediments to housing, investment, and the creation of affordable housing. By implementing such changes, Bloomfield can create a more predictable land-use system, ensure greater confidence in housing developers and investors, and encourage greater investment, in the form of infill development, redevelopment, and new development within the areas of the community that can accommodate development and best serve the needs of moderate- and lower-income households in Bloomfield and the region.

It should be noted that Bloomfield’s zoning regulations are comparatively much better than most zoning regulations in terms of encouraging housing, multi-family housing, and affordable housing. In fact, there are very few provisions that are overt impediments housing and affordable housing. Therefore, the recommendations below are aimed at creating improvement—to better encourage and allow housing and affordable housing.

Zoning Purpose:

- The Purpose section of the Zoning Regulations does not include the statutory language regarding providing for multi-family and low- and moderate-income housing or the recent statutory language on “affirmatively forwarding fair housing.” The Town Plan and Zoning Commission should amend the Regulations to include such language.

Zoning Definitions:

- The Zoning Regulations do not define affordable housing. The Town Plan and Zoning Commission should define affordable housing. The definition of affordable housing should be based on and consistent with the 8-30g definition of *qualified affordable housing*.

Zoning Accessory Apartments:

- Accessory apartments provide a simple, low-cost, and low-risk means to diversify the housing stock, increase the amount of rental product, and provide a form of housing that is often more affordable—market rate affordable. The Town Plan and Zoning Commission should move forward with and adopt its proposed amendment to allow for Accessory Dwellings and provide an Accessory Dwelling provision to guide their utilization.

Missing Middle Housing:

- Bloomfield has a modest amount of missing-middle housing and should seek to increase opportunities for such housing, especially townhomes and two-family homes. Unfortunately, the provisions requiring increased lot size for two-family dwellings creates a physical and financial barrier to producing such housing. The Town Plan and Zoning Commission should consider removing this increased lot size provision and allow two-family dwelling on lots that meet the minimum lot size for the zoning district—provided on-site parking and other site development requirements can be accommodated.

Mixed Use Development:

- In commercial zones, especially the three TIF Districts, the Town Plan and Zoning Commission should encourage and allow mixed-use developments. Mixed-use developments can be effective means to reposition existing underperforming properties and areas, while creating more walkable communities. Bloomfield Center, including the Wintonbury Mall property, are prime locations for mixed-use development with high-density housing and affordable housing units. Therefore, the Town Plan and Zoning Commission may want to consider allowing density bonuses for development in Bloomfield Center that include affordable housing units.



Inclusionary Zoning:

- Inclusionary zoning is an approach to zoning that requires the inclusion of affordable housing units in residential developments. Provided the inclusionary requirements are reasonable and do not overburden the financial feasibility of a development, inclusionary zoning can be an effective means of providing affordable housing. The Town Plan and Zoning Commission should consider creating an inclusionary provision that is applied to all residential uses and developments over 10 units that requires a minimum of 5% qualified affordable for single-family developments and 10% qualified affordable units for multi-family developments. The Town Plan and Zoning Commission should also consider a fee-in-lieu of affordable housing as part for the inclusionary provision and pair it with the Housing Trust Fund proposed below.

Providing Incentives – Housing and Affordable Housing Incentive Programs

The following are specific recommendations for incentives to create housing and affordable housing in Bloomfield. These recommendations are derived from *Housing and Affordable Housing Incentive Programs* report. By implementing such incentives, Bloomfield can and will proactively intervene in the housing market by providing resources that can mitigate the fiscal barriers to housing and affordable housing productions.

Density and Density Bonuses:

- Density bonuses are regulatory (zoning) incentives that allow land to be developed at a higher density than is allowed by zoning. The increased density (or greater housing unit yield) allows for the cost of land to be spread over more units, effectively reducing the per unit land costs and the total per unit housing cost. The Town Plan and Zoning Commission should explore, consider, and implement density bonuses as an incentive for housing and affordable housing production. Such density bonuses could be paired with an inclusionary provision applied to all residential zones and development over 10 units. For example, a minimum of 5% qualified affordable for single-family and 10% for qualified affordable for multi-family.

Efficient Permitting – Swift, Simple, and Certain:

- The Bloomfield Town Plan and Zoning Commission should review the Zoning Regulations, specifically the permitting provisions for multi-family housing development, with an eye toward ensuring and creating a swift, simple, and certain land use approval process. The greater certainty and predictability that can be provided in the land use approval process, the more likely housing will be built, including affordable housing. This includes, where acceptable, reducing the reliance on special permits.

Property Tax Abatement:

- Local property taxes contribute to operating expenses/costs of multi-family and mixed-use developments. Therefore, the granting of a tax abatement has become a strategy to reduce costs, increase returns, and to assist housing developments that otherwise would not be financially feasible—would not get built, contribute to the grand list, or pay taxes. Bloomfield should utilize the authority granted to it by the State in CGS 12-65b (Agreements between municipality and owner...of real property...fixing the assessment of such property...) to incentivize multi-family housing, mixed-use development, and affordable housing.

Tax Increment Financing:

- Bloomfield has established three TIF Districts (Bloomfield Center, Blue Hills, and Tobey Road) through its creation and adoption of the TIF District Master Plan. Bloomfield should utilize the authorities granted through the TIF Districts to use TIF and Credit Enhancement Agreements to incentivize mixed-use, multi-family, and affordable housing development within the TIF Districts. These areas are well suited for mixed-use, multi-family, and affordable housing.

Housing Trust Fund:

- A Housing Trust Fund (in accordance with the Connecticut General Statutes, Chapter 98, Section 7-148(c)(2)(K)) is an innovative tool to raise funds for affordable housing and other housing programs aimed at affordability. Most important, when paired with an inclusionary zoning provision (CGS 8-2i. Inclusionary Zoning), a Housing Trust Fund can be a powerful tool for incentivizing and producing affordable housing—including the use of a fee-in-lieu of affordable housing. Bloomfield should create an Affordable Housing Trust Fund. In doing so, Bloomfield should consider targeting the funds raised in the Affordable Housing Trust Fund at affordable housing for households at or below 50% AMI. Households at incomes at or below 50% AMI is where there is the greatest need for affordable housing.
- In addition, the funds from the Trust could also be used to fund the Housing Investment Loan Fund that Town has recently established. This could include funding energy audits for income qualified households, and grants to incentivize energy efficiency improvements (i.e., insulating attics) for income qualified households.

- The following are some considerations for the creation of an Affordable Housing Trust Fund:
 - Pair the Trust Fund with an *inclusionary zoning provision* that requires a fee-in-lieu of affordable housing for all housing developments of 10 units or more that do not provide affordable housing units.
 - Designate an Affordable Housing Advisory Committee to oversee and administer the fund.
 - Promote the fund for tax deductible donations, including hosting fundraiser events and drives. (Under the IRS code Section 170(c)(1) contributions to a state or a political subdivision "made for exclusively public purposes" qualify as a tax-deductible charitable donation.)

Affordable Housing Production – Need versus Demand, and Absorption

Housing need and demand are not the same. Just because there is a need for affordable housing at certain price/income points does not mean there is actual market demand for construction of new housing at such price/income points. Housing demand is driven by job growth, population growth, and ultimately, household formations. Connecticut and the Hartford Metropolitan Region have experienced stagnant job and anemic population growth over the past 30 years. Therefore, housing demand drivers overall are weak and demand for new housing has been driven mostly by household formations, functional obsolescence of existing housing units creating markets for new product, and the replacement of demolished housing units.

To understand demand in Bloomfield, specifically the absorption of new housing into the Bloomfield housing market, housing permit data from the State Department of Economic and Community Development for a 25-year period from 1997 to 2021 (Table 14) was reviewed. During this period, 1,656 new housing units were constructed. Of these new units, 877 (53.0%) were single-family dwellings, 8 were 2-unit dwellings, 10 were 3- & 4-unit dwellings, and 749 (45.2%) were multi-family (5+) unit dwellings. A total of 61 units were demolished, resulting in a net gain of 1,593 housing units. This results in a historical absorption rate of 64 (63.72) units per year over the 25-year period. It should be noted that the 25-year period included both housing market booms and busts. The highest year of new housing permits was 2016 with 411 and the lowest year 2014 with only 6 new housing permits.

To analyze Bloomfield's capacity to increase its affordable housing percentage, the first objective is to ensure that enough affordable housing is created each year to not decrease the current percentage (11.13%) of qualified affordable housing units in accordance with 8-30g and the DECD Affordable Housing Appeals List for 2022. The second objective is to ensure adequate affordable housing is provided to meet the needs of households of lesser means.

Today, the 11.13% of qualified affordable housing equals 1,004 housing units. Of these 1,004 affordable units, 612 (61%) are government assisted, 115 (11%) are tenant rental assistance, and 277 (28%) are qualified mortgages. None of the 1,004 qualified affordable units are deed restricted. Therefore, the total number (and percent) of qualified affordable units is volatile and can shift and change from year to year.

To maintain, at a minimum the 11.13% (or 11% rounded) qualified affordable housing units, Bloomfield should seek to ensure that moving forward that between 10-12% of new housing construction is deed restricted as qualified affordable. Based on the historic absorption rate of 64 units per year, 10-12% qualified affordable units would equal approximately 7-8% qualified affordable units per year would need to be constructed. To reduce volatility—the transient nature of tenant rental assistance and qualified mortgages, Bloomfield should seek to ensure that future qualified affordable housing units constructed are deed restricted units—40-year deed restrictions per 8-30g.

Based on the housing needs assessment, Bloomfield needs approximated 252 affordable rental housing units. At 7 units per year, based on the historical housing absorption rate, it would take approximately 36 years to provide 252 units. However, since demand is greatest for multi-family rental housing, Bloomfield is positioned to outperform the historical absorption rate. Therefore, it plausible to assume that Bloomfield could absorb between 10 and 15 qualified affordable units per year, reducing the 36 year timeframe to between 17 and 25 years.

Table 14. Housing Permits by Year, Bloomfield 1997-2021

| Year | Total Units | 1-Unit | 2-Unit | 3-4-Unit | 5+ Unit | Demo | Net Gain |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| 2021 | 46 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 42 | 1 | 45 |
| 2020 | 25 | 15 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 25 |
| 2019 | 32 | 16 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 27 |
| 2018 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | -1 |
| 2017 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| 2016 | 411 | 28 | 0 | 0 | 383 | 11 | 400 |
| 2015 | 16 | 16 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 14 |
| 2014 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| 2013 | 105 | 27 | 0 | 0 | 78 | 0 | 105 |
| 2012 | 25 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 22 |
| 2011 | 24 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 23 |
| 2010 | 23 | 23 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 23 |
| 2009 | 19 | 19 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 19 |
| 2008 | 48 | 48 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 47 |
| 2007 | 49 | 49 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 42 |
| 2006 | 99 | 99 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 98 |
| 2005 | 71 | 71 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 70 |
| 2004 | 96 | 96 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 93 |
| 2003 | 309 | 63 | 0 | 0 | 246 | 3 | 306 |
| 2002 | 61 | 61 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 59 |
| 2001 | 40 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 33 |
| 2000 | 33 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 31 |
| 1999 | 40 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 36 |
| 1998 | 37 | 37 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 35 |
| 1997 | 33 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 33 |
| Total | 1,656 | 877 | 26 | 4 | 749 | 61 | 1,593 |
| Percent | 100% | 53.0% | 2.0% | .002% | 45.2% | 3.7% | 96.2% |

Implementation Schedule

Implementation of this Plan is a gradual and continual process—a continuous process of working towards improvement through achieving the goals and objectives of this Plan. While some recommendations can be carried out in a relatively short period, others may only be realized towards the end of the plan implementation period, and some may be even more long-term in nature. Furthermore, since some recommendations may involve additional study or a commitment of fiscal resources, their implementation may take place over several years or occur in stages or phases. The following chart identifies the specific strategy, the agency responsible, and the recommended priority for implementation.

| Affordable Housing Plan | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|----|
| Strategies | PZC | TC |
| Zoning Purpose | | |
| Zoning Definitions | | |
| Zoning Accessory Apartments | | |
| Accessory Apartments | | |
| Missing Middle Housing | | |
| Mixed-Use Development | | |
| Inclusionary Zoning | | |
| Density Bonuses | | |
| Efficient Permitting & Permitted Uses | | |
| Property Tax Abatement | | |
| Tax Increment Financing | | |
| Housing Trust Fund | | |

Implementation Schedule Legend

| Agency | Abbreviation |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Town Plan and Zoning Commission | PZC |
| Town Council | TC |

| Priority | |
|---------------|--------------|
| High | Year 1 |
| Medium | Years 2 to 3 |
| Low | Years 4 to 5 |

Town of Bloomfield, Connecticut

Town Plan and Zoning Commission

Affordable Housing Plan