

Stamford Housing Affordability Plan

2022



**CITY OF
STAMFORD**
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HR&A
Analyze. Advise. Act.

Background

The Stamford Housing Affordability Plan was developed over a 10-month planning process to evaluate conditions in Stamford today and prioritize strategies for the future.

Developing the Housing Affordability Plan

In response to a State mandate and a growing need for affordable housing, the City of Stamford undertook a 10-month housing planning process to evaluate conditions in Stamford today and create a plan to have enough housing for all. The Stamford Housing Affordability Plan has been completed in four major phases: review and analysis of changing market conditions, discussion of community goals and priorities (throughout all phases), development of strategies, and completion of the final plan.



← *Community engagement occurred throughout the process* →

Community Meetings: Key Themes

In community meetings, participants expressed interest in new ways to provide affordable housing and highlighted the lack of affordable rental options in Stamford. There was interest overall in adjustments to current programs to better meet housing needs, as well as new programs to meet some of the more pressing housing challenges in Stamford.

250+

Community Meeting
Attendees

23

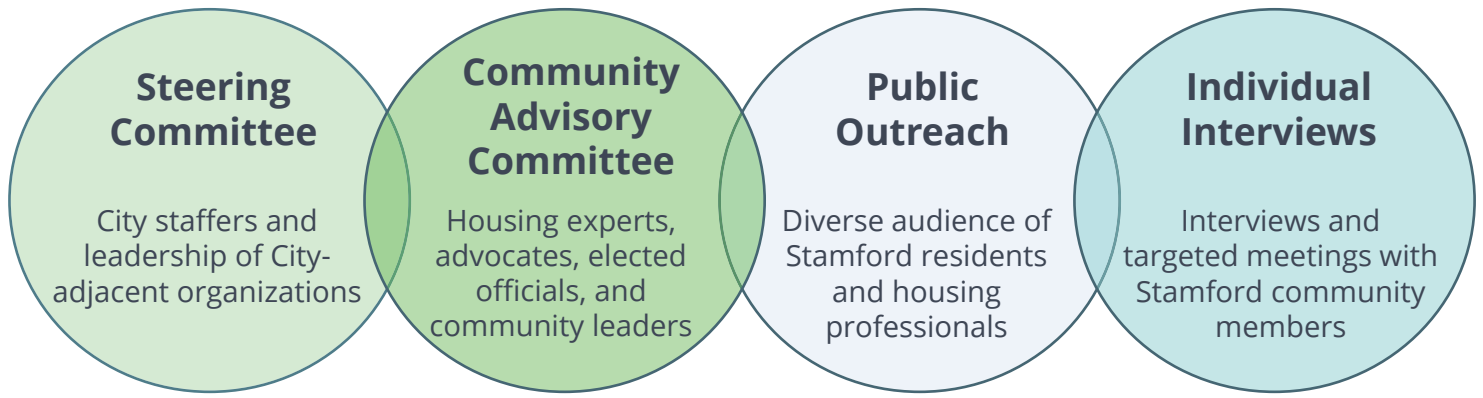
Organizations
Engaged

~25

Community Discussion
Meetings

Background

Community engagement was central to developing the Housing Affordability Plan. There were four engagement components over 10 months.



Steering Committee: HR&A engaged a Steering Committee throughout the process comprised of City staff and housing, community and economic development professionals.

Community Advisory Committee: HR&A engaged a Community Advisory Committee throughout the process comprised of members of the public, housing advocates, City representatives, and housing, community and economic development professionals.

Community Meetings: HR&A prepared materials and helped coordinate over 25 meetings in the community, 13 of which were hosted by Steering Committee and Community Advisory Committee members. Feedback was gathered through a survey, offered in Spanish and English. Two Town Hall events were held by the city to further solicit feedback from residents.

The following community organizations were engaged during this process:

- Building One Community
- Charter Oak Communities
- Community Care Team
- Fairfield County's Center for Housing Opportunity (FCCHO)
- Glenbrook Neighborhood Association
- Ferguson Library
- Harbor Point
- Housing Court
- Housing Development Fund
- Inspirica
- Interfaith Council
- Parent Leader Training Institute
- People Friendly Stamford
- Property Managers in the Downtown/South End
- South End NRZ
- Stamford Board of Realtors
- Stamford Boys and Girls Club
- Stamford Women's Talking Circle
- Stamford Downtown
- Stamford Partnership
- Stamford Public Schools
- The Vita Health and Wellness Partnership
- West Side NRZ
- Women on Watch

Individual Interviews: HR&A conducted interviews and held targeted meetings throughout the process to ground-truth findings and gather feedback on housing tools and potential implementation challenges. Over the course of the 10-month period, HR&A spoke with over 20 local housing experts to understand the full picture of housing need in Stamford.

Background

The purpose of the Stamford Housing Affordability Plan is to support a housing market that sustainably and equitably meets the housing needs of all community members.

Recognizing that Stamford is a dynamic, growing city with evolving needs, the Plan is written to be a living document to be used by City staff, housing policy advisors, and elected leadership to guide affordable housing policies and investments in the coming years. This Plan contains strategies to increase the supply of housing, expand access to homeownership, and make rental housing more affordable.

Toward this goal of adapting to changing conditions, the Plan includes recommendations on governance, administration and decision-making processes for Stamford housing policies and programs. The Plan also addresses opportunities for improvement for existing programs based on the feedback and input of Stamford community members and housing professionals.

Stamford Residents Face Ongoing Housing Challenges

The many community members, organizations, housing professionals, and City staff engaged throughout this process revealed a set of ongoing challenges that make it difficult to find affordable housing in Stamford.

Pressing Challenges: Vulnerable Populations

During conversations with local nonprofits, housing providers, and residents, lack of affordable rental options was a consistent theme. For low-income families, rent is too expensive and there is not enough supply. Some families stated that this required them to live in homes with several other families, or in buildings where landlords did not repair or fix issues. These challenges are particularly exacerbated for immigrant communities within Stamford. Accessibility and access for elderly residents also emerged as a central theme during these conversations.

Pressing Challenges: Workforce Housing for Current Residents

Many professionals who work in Stamford struggle to live in the city due to high housing costs. Some long-term residents who have lived and worked in Stamford for years cannot afford to stay, and new staff, such as teachers, struggle to access affordable rentals in the current housing market.

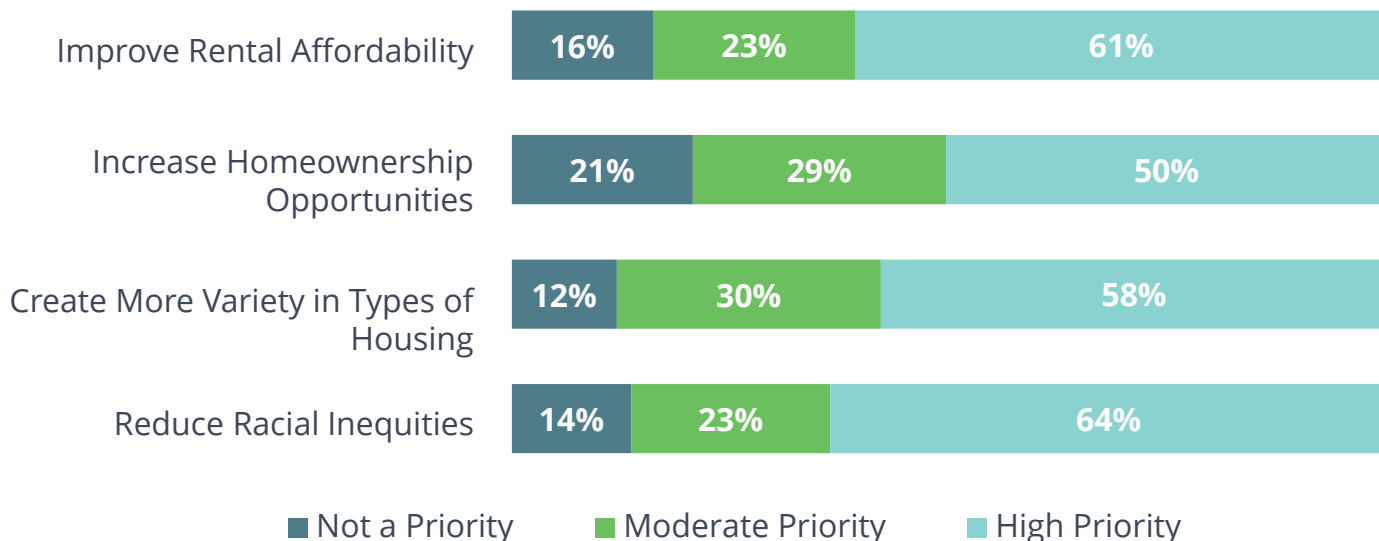
Pressing Challenges: Land Use

Some community members called for more efficient use of land for the betterment of the whole community. Preserving current affordable housing, and creating new, innovative ways to increase housing were well received by community groups. Participants stressed the importance of ensuring that infrastructure investments match proposed land use changes.

Background

The majority of community survey and town hall polling respondents expressed that addressing housing issues is a high priority.

Priorities for City Intervention: Public Responses



Feedback forms were distributed at the end of community meetings and through community partners to residents and local housing program participants.

- **50%** of renter respondents were unable to afford a house or apartment in the neighborhood they wanted to live in.
- **37%** of homeowners have at some point had difficulty affording repairs for their home, and **20%** of homeowners have had difficulty affording their mortgage.
- **33%** of respondents to the Spanish language Feedback Form took time to write in feedback about the high rental costs in Stamford. **79%** of total Spanish language respondents indicated having challenges paying their rent.

“Most people working for this city can’t afford to live in this city.”

“Seniors need ground floor affordable housing.”

“I’d like to see more opportunities to transition from renting to homeownership.”

“When we let people live in areas where they can shop, work, eat, relax, then they don’t have to drive everywhere.”

“Applying for affordable housing is complicated especially for non-English speakers.”

**There were 242 total responses from community members during community meetings. HR&A, the City, and community organizations hosted roughly 25 meetings with local community groups and the general public to gather community input during this planning process.*

Executive Summary

Housing for the Community

Housing affordability is essential to a prosperous, inclusive and growing Stamford.

Preserving and creating a wide range of housing to meet growing housing demand is good for *all* members of the Stamford community. A diverse, growing housing stock allows the City to foster economic prosperity and growth. Preserving and growing the housing stock also requires appropriately planned public infrastructure investments, such as street improvements, schools, and parks to serve residents.

The benefits of preserving and building housing in Stamford are far-reaching.



Prosperity

Building new housing increases options for different household needs and reduces the amount that households spend on housing. This will help the roughly **20,700 households** in Stamford that currently spend more than they can afford on housing to cover other necessities such as food and childcare, as well as free up income for higher income households to save and reinvest in the community.



Economic Growth

Growing the City's economy requires that the City continue to attract businesses to Stamford. Attracting new businesses requires having both diverse and affordable housing options for employees. Without this, employers will choose to locate elsewhere. For example, the educational services, health care and social assistance industries grew by 13,000 people from 2014 to 2018, with median earnings of \$42,000.¹ These employees need housing options they can afford.



Fiscal Impact

The City of Stamford incurs some fiscal costs when new residents move to the City, but new residents also generate new tax revenue through property tax and sales tax revenue. In most cases, the balance of the fiscal impact of new residents is positive. This fiscal benefit allows the city to invest in services and infrastructure to serve all.

There is also a direct fiscal benefit to providing high quality affordable housing to those with the greatest need. By providing high-quality housing, the need for more expensive social services – emergency room visits, evictions, court proceedings, etc. - decreases dramatically, creating net savings to society in most cases.



Community-Building

Diverse, affordable housing options help ensure that those who were born and raised in Stamford can afford to stay in Stamford, join the workforce, and potentially buy a home. Those who wish to age in place in Stamford generally need to find housing that meets their needs and is affordable on a fixed income.²

1. Bureau of Labor Statistics, American Community Survey, City of Stamford.

2. Joint Center for Housing Studies, Harvard University, State of the Nation's Housing Report (2019).

Meeting Housing Needs

Housing “affordability” means different things for different households in Stamford.

There are different types of affordable housing, and affordability can mean different things for different households. Under a standard set by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), housing is affordable when housing costs are less than 30% of a household’s income. A household that spends 30% or more of their income on housing costs is considered “**cost burdened**.”

Types of “affordable housing” vary by level of subsidy:

No Subsidy

- **Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing (NOAH):** Market-rate housing (for rent or purchase) that is priced at levels that are affordable to low- or moderate-income residents. Stamford has historically had a significant inventory of NOAH.
- **Subsidized Housing:** Affordable rental and ownership housing developed and/or operated by nonprofit and for-profit developers using public subsidies. Subsidy can be both at the building level (project-based) or the tenant level.
- **Tenant Based Vouchers:** Families receive a voucher to be used to pay for a portion of rent at an apartment of their choice.
- **Public Housing:** Housing managed by public housing agencies with operating and capital funds historically provided by Housing and Urban Development.
- **Permanent Supportive Housing:** A model that combines housing, health care, and supportive services to help individuals and families lead more stable lives.

Highest Level of Subsidy

Residual Income as a Measure of Affordability:

A household’s **residual income**—how much they have left over for other necessary expenses such as food, childcare, health care, and transportation—significantly impacts their quality of life. For instance, a single-mother with one child working in Stamford as an elementary school teacher has, on average, an after-tax income of \$3,450 per month.* Factoring in typical housing costs, the teacher’s housing cost burden is nearly two-thirds of their income.

$$\text{\$3,450} \quad \text{—} \quad \text{\$2,300} \quad \text{=} \quad \text{\$1,150}$$

Average Monthly After-Tax
Income for an Elementary
School Teacher

Average Monthly
1 Bedroom Cost

Residual Income

**Pay level for a teacher who has a Bachelor's Degree and 4 years of experience. This pay level falls at 50% Area Median Income Level for a 2-person household in the Stamford-Norwalk region.*

Meeting Housing Needs

The Housing Affordability Plan focuses on addressing three pressing housing needs in Stamford: rental affordability, the supply of housing and access to homeownership.

The purpose of the Stamford Housing Affordability Plan is to help the City address the areas where the market is not meeting community needs. Based on data analysis, community engagement, and interviews with impacted individuals and those who provide services to those households, **Stamford's most pressing housing needs can be understood in three major categories:**



Rental Affordability

A shortage of affordable rental units for low- and moderate-income renters.*

Cost burdened renter households in Stamford rose by 16% from 2010 to 2019 to over 12,000 households.



Housing Supply

Demand for more diverse housing types at all incomes. Lack of diverse, affordable housing supply impacts everyone by driving up costs and limiting options.



Homeownership Access

The income required to buy a home is increasingly out of reach for moderate- and middle-income households.**

Cost burdened owner households in Stamford fell by 23% from 2010 to 2019 as homeownership has declined.

In 2019, there were still 8,600 cost burdened owner households.



In line with county and state trends, these housing needs disproportionately impact Black and Hispanic households in Stamford. (Details are provided on page 46 in Housing Challenges.)

- **Segregation:** Households of color are concentrated in neighborhoods with more rental supply, while owner-occupied single-family neighborhoods in Stamford are almost entirely white.
- **Wealth:** Black and Hispanic households have lower median incomes than white households and have lower rates of homeownership.
- **Opportunity:** Black and Hispanic households are not moving into new multifamily housing at the same rates as white and Asian households.

*Rental Affordability targets households with an annual income under \$75,000, particularly under \$50,000.

**Homeownership Access targets households with an annual income under \$100,000.

Source: American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year 2010 & 2019

Meeting Housing Needs

To meet the housing needs of all residents, the City of Stamford should focus on three strategies to address existing barriers in the housing market and meet housing needs.

1 Consolidate Management and Administration of Housing Programs

Combine Stamford's different housing functions into a cohesive team to implement and administer housing programs and increase the expertise available to evaluate affordable housing transactions.

Key Actions:

- Reorganize housing programs into a single department with increased staff capacity.
- Establish ongoing communications on housing market conditions and programs.
- Expand affordable housing expertise to evaluate real estate transactions.

2 Scale Up Investments in Housing

Increase the scale of the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) and leverage state resources to make long-term investments in both preserving and building new, high quality affordable housing. **Stamford should strive to dedicate at least \$35 per capita to bring the City in line with cities that are effectively deploying funds to impact housing needs. Stamford currently dedicates \$7 per capita.**

Key Actions:

- Prioritize use of fee-in-lieu payments from the Below Market Rate (BMR) program.
- Dedicate new sources of local funding to housing through the AHTF.
- Pursue additional state and federal funding.

3 Use Land More Effectively to Create New Housing

Survey developable land throughout the city and adjust land use regulations to allow for the development of housing that meets anticipated population growth and the diverse needs of Stamford residents. Focus on areas that have important infrastructure, such as city water and sewer, transit access and access to employment centers.

Key Actions:

- Create a land inventory to identify and track developable land.
- Implement site-specific strategies to build affordable housing in the near-term.
- Undertake a comprehensive land use planning process.

These strategies will set *the conditions* under which the City can deploy a range of housing tools and programs to address rental affordability, housing supply, and homeownership access challenges.

Housing Ecosystem

The City of Stamford is one of many actors that impact affordable housing.

State, City, and local community partners all play a role in Stamford’s housing ecosystem. The City of Stamford offers housing and services to the Stamford community. However, this would not be possible without funding, implementation support, and additional independent services provided by community partners and the State.

Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA)

CHFA manages over \$500 million annually for financing of affordable housing development and lending for first-time homeowners in Connecticut. CHFA allocates tax credits (such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits or LIHTC) to fund affordable housing development, directly to housing developers. It also supplies funds directly to local governments and community partners to provide a variety of housing programs for renters and homeowners.

City of Stamford

The City’s housing roles currently include leading community planning, designing and enforcing zoning and land use regulations, managing the BMR program, granting development approvals, and implementing housing support programs. Relevant Boards and Departments include the Community Development Department, Land Use Bureau, Social Services Department, Planning Board, Board of Representatives, and Board of Finance. The Mayor’s Office can also help advance policy by prioritizing efforts to secure local, state and federal resources.

Charter Oak Communities

Stamford’s Housing Authority

- Manages subsidized public housing and rental voucher programs (HCV) for seniors, low-income families, and veterans.
- Develops new and rehabilitated housing in Stamford.
- Provides residential services to tenants through the Vita Health and Wellness Partnership

Housing Developers

Non-Profit Affordable Housing Developers

- Stamford Affordable Homes, Inc. Neighborhood Housing Services
 - Rippowam Corp. (Charter Oak Communities)
 - Housing Development Fund
- #### BMR Program Developers
- Jonathan Rose Cos.
 - Building and Land Technology
 - Garden Homes

Community Partners

Support for Renters and/or Homeowners

- Inspirica
- SilverSource
- Housing Development Fund (HDF)
- Vita Health and Wellness Partnership
- Family Centers
- Neighborhood Housing Services
- New Neighborhoods
- Pacific House

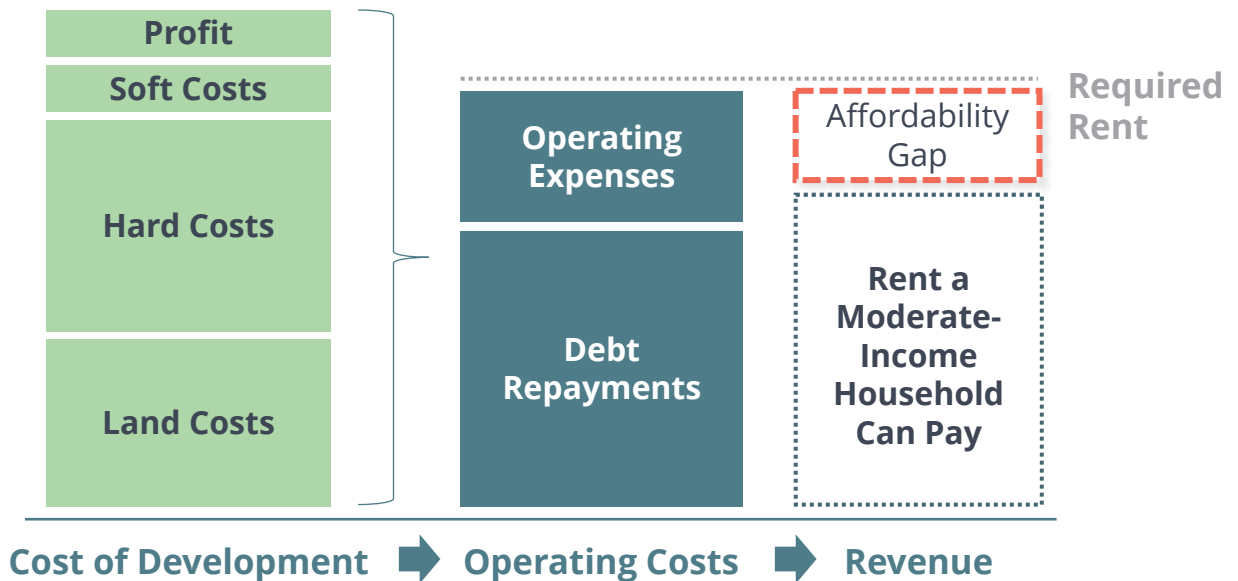
* LIHTC is the primary tool of development of new affordable rental housing. / Source: City of Stamford

The Role of the City

The City of Stamford impacts housing supply and affordability by setting local regulations and deploying public subsidy.

The market sets housing costs (rents and sales prices) based on the cost to build and operate it, as well as the level of demand for housing. The different component costs of development—the cost of purchasing land, hard costs (construction materials and labor), soft costs (architectural drawings, permitting fees, holding costs, etc.), and the profit to the developer—are aggregated to determine a total development cost. Development costs must be financed, typically through a combination of a mortgage (debt) and equity. Financing payments must be paid along with the cost to operate the property (property taxes, maintenance, etc.). The revenue from rent, or sales proceeds, must be sufficient to cover the operating and financing costs or the developer will not build the housing.

Economics of Rental Housing

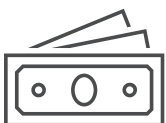


The City of Stamford influences the cost to build and operate housing, and thus the cost of housing, in two key ways:



The City influences the **regulatory environment** in which developers make decisions and disseminates information to developers, key service provider partners, and residents.

Examples include the land use code, the development review process, design guidelines, the building permit process, and the Below Market Rate (BMR) program.



The City deploys **public funds** for infrastructure, amenities, and affordable housing, all of which help shape the development environment.

Examples include parks, transit, and loans and grants for housing through the City's Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

The Role of the City

Stamford has a strong set of existing programs and policies to help guide the housing market to meet community needs.

The City already successfully offers crucial housing and services to the Stamford community. **The Housing Affordability Plan builds on these existing practices to help the City evaluate how to plan for housing to meet a broader range of needs.**

Existing Local Programs	Program Description
Below Market Rate (BMR) Program	Stamford's inclusionary zoning program. Requires a minimum share of new multifamily units to include permanently affordable rental units, mostly targeted at households earning 50% of Area Median Income (AMI).
Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)	By regulating land use, the City encourages higher density multifamily development in transit infrastructure-adjacent areas. TOD places residents in proximity to jobs and transportation while reducing development costs.
Gap Financing for Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Projects	The City provides gap financing (low interest loans and grants) to help meet development costs for new affordable rental housing that is subsidized by the federal LIHTC program.
Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF)	The City established a centralized, transparent, competitive AHTF to hold and allocate funding for affordable housing. The main funding sources are BMR program fee-in-lieu payments and commercial linkage fees.
Fair Rent	By Charter and Ordinance, the Stamford Social Services Commission receives and investigates tenant complaints alleging unfair rent increases and can adjust rents on a case-by-case basis.

Source: City of Stamford

The Role of Partners

Local partners, including nonprofit organizations, also provide crucial housing services in Stamford.

Local partner organizations offer crucial housing and services to the Stamford community. Some partner organizations receive operating funds or capital contributions from the City, and others operate fully independently. These partner organizations meet substantial housing needs that the City does not have the capacity or funding to address. **The Housing Affordability Plan includes strategies to support these important partners.**

Existing Local Programs	Program Description
Community Land Trust	Established in the South End neighborhood of Stamford by the nonprofit Housing Development Fund (HDF), the first community land trust property in Stamford is a 23-unit affordable condo project, currently under construction at 287 Washington Blvd.
Down Payment Assistance & Homeownership Counseling	To reduce the upfront costs of homeownership, HDF provides income-qualified households with a loan or grant to cover a portion of down payment and closing costs. HDF also offers counseling services to first-time homebuyers to help them plan and budget for homeownership.
Foreclosure Intervention Program	HDF recently relaunched this program to address COVID-19 impacts. HDF serves as a liaison between clients and mortgage lenders to establish feasible solutions to mortgage delinquency.
Housing Developers	Nonprofit and for-profit developers and Charter Oak Communities develop a wide variety of types of affordable housing in Stamford by utilizing local, state, and federal subsidies.
Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program	The Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, also known as Section 8, is a federal program administered at the local level. In Stamford, Charter Oak Communities administers more than 2,000 active vouchers to families and individuals citywide and partners with over 800 property owners participating in the program.
Transitional & Permanent Supportive Housing	Inspirica, a major homeless services provider in CT and lower Fairfield County, operates crucial transitional and permanent supportive housing programs. The former allows homeless families and single adults to stay in housing while they receive other Inspirica services; the latter provides affordable rental housing and on-site “wrap around” support services to individuals with disabilities who may otherwise be homeless.
Legal Aid	Connecticut Legal Services and other nonprofit legal aid providers support low-income individuals in housing discrimination and eviction cases.

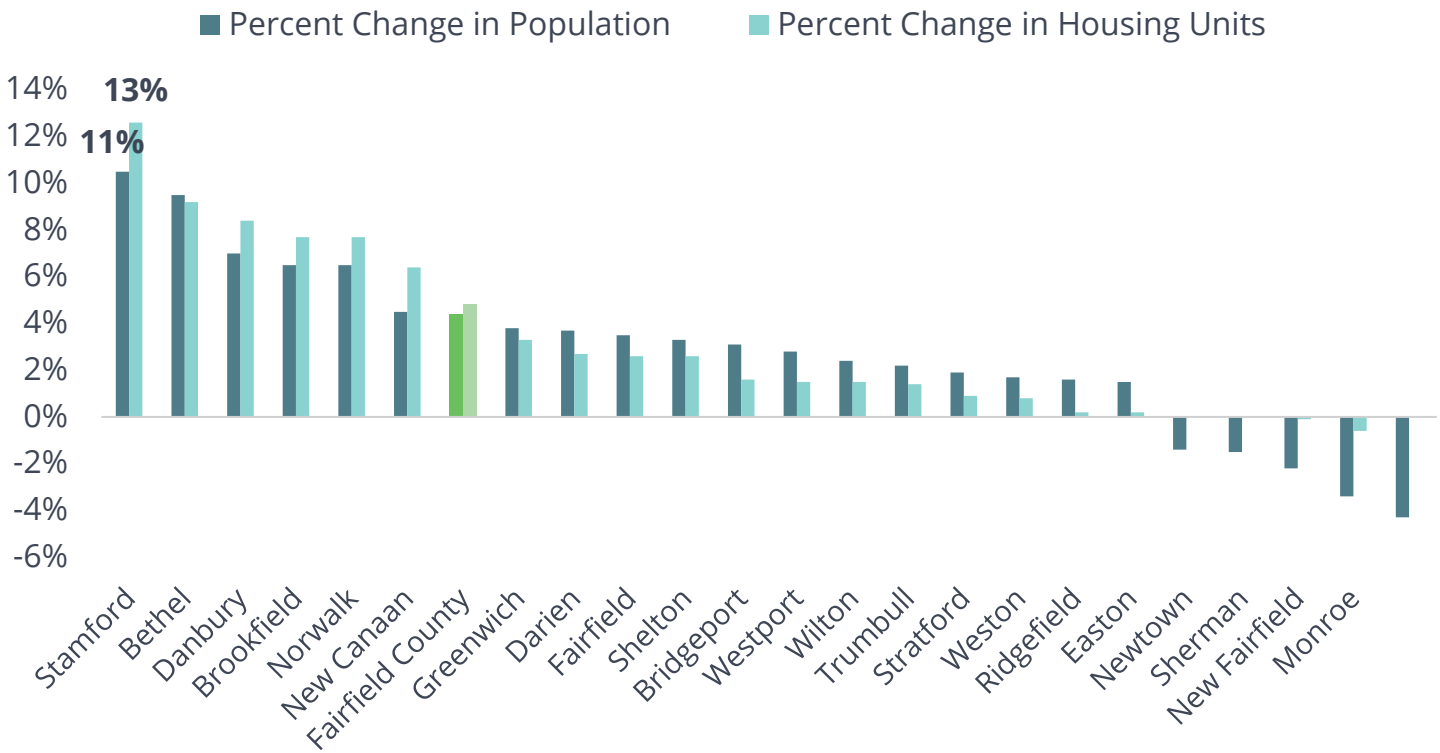
Sources: Charter Oak Communities; Connecticut Legal Services; Housing Development Fund; Inspirica

Stamford in the Region

Stamford is the growth leader of the County and the State. Investing in a diverse housing supply will ensure that it retains this advantage.

Housing markets are regional, and Stamford both benefits from and is challenged by two major geographic factors: accessibility to New York City and proximity to highly affluent towns with high housing costs. These factors benefit Stamford in that they help drive economic growth and the attractiveness of Stamford as a place to live: Stamford's population and housing unit growth is in part a result of economic growth in New York City, which drives employment for the region. This location challenges Stamford because it increases pressure on the housing market and contributes to rising housing costs.

Fairfield County Percent Change in Population and Housing Units by Town (2010-2020)



Stamford's population has grown by 11% since 2010, outpacing Fairfield County and significantly outpacing Connecticut, which has only grown by 1%. This signals Stamford's strong economic advantage in the region.

Change in housing units from 2010 to 2020:	+6,380 Stamford	+83 Darien (downtown)	+63 Greenwich	+2,856 Norwalk
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Sources: CT Data Collaborative; U.S. Census Bureau; Zillow Home Value Index (ZHVI)

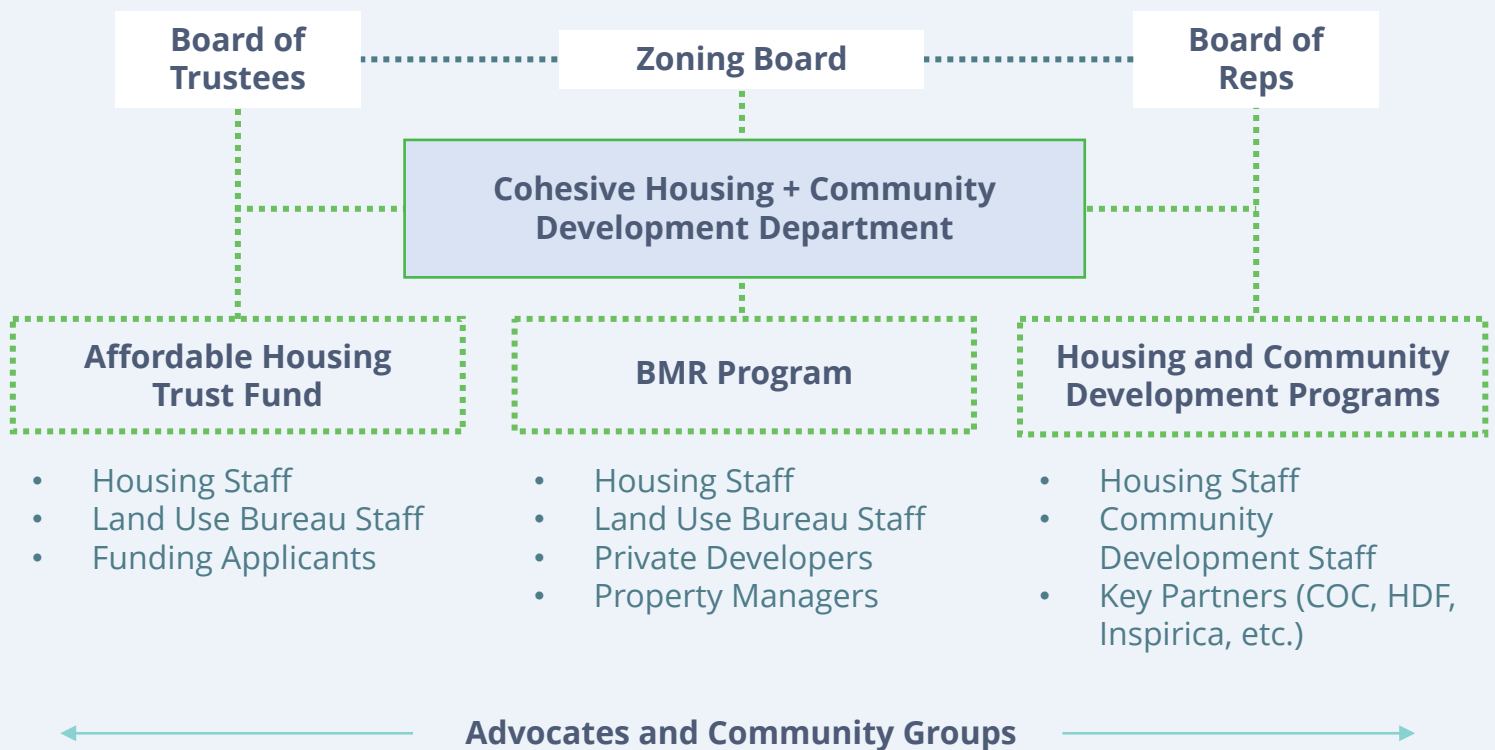
Recommended Strategy 1

The City's different housing functions should be brought together into a cohesive team to plan for and execute Stamford's housing programs and policies.

The City currently has three primary housing program areas: the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, the BMR program, and Housing and Community Development Programs, each administered by staff in different departments and overseen by different governing bodies.

The scale and complexity of Stamford's housing programs require increased staff and stakeholder capacity and training to effectively administer housing programs, allocate funding, set clear housing priorities, and measure the success of its programming. The City should assess the appropriate place for housing staff within City government—whether within the Land Use Bureau, within another department, or as a separate department or entity. The City should increase the number of staff dedicated to housing programs, with at least one dedicated staff member per program area, both to **run existing programs more efficiently and improve services**, such as management of the BMR program, and **adequately staff new housing programs** in Stamford, such as the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

Stamford Housing Ecosystem: Proposed Structure



Recommended Strategy 1

Stamford should build housing and real estate capacity for City staff to ensure that the City can fulfill its responsibilities for each housing program and solicit regular community feedback.

Under the proposed consolidated structure, existing and new City staff gain clearer responsibilities for managing the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, the BMR program, and Housing and Community Development Programs. There are several key steps that the City should take now and moving forward as programs are implemented to increase **efficiency, transparency, and accountability.**



Build Expertise



Monitor & Evaluate Progress



Publish an Annual Report



Standardize a Competitive Process

The City should be transparent in its priorities and decision-making across housing programs and through spending from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Transparency of funding allocations and uses serves to maximize the impact of public funds by increasing the competitiveness of programs and deals and by increasing accountability. The City can increase accountability through the following actions:

Build real estate and housing expertise. The City should invest in training for existing and new staff, including in real estate and affordable housing finance. This will allow staff to underwrite potential deals that seek funding from the City and ensure that public funding is maximizing the leverage of state and federal funds.

Monitor affordable housing. The City should monitor specific metrics to track the impact of housing programs, including BMR units, new condo development or subsidized homeownership units, NOAH, and others. These metrics can be made publicly available on the City's website or through a dashboard. Monitoring compliance of the BMR program is crucial to its success.

Publish an annual housing report. City staff will need to prepare an annual housing report to track City spending on housing and housing programs and the number of households served. The report should be made public and available on the City's website.

Standardize a competitive RFP process. As the Affordable Housing Trust Fund's Board of Trustees finalizes their governing bylaws and begins allocating funding, the Board and City Staff should implement a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process for funding awards with clear eligibility requirements and application standards.

For more detailed management recommendations, see pages 48 to 57.

Recommended Strategy 2

Stamford should dedicate more funding to housing and deploy a set of subsidy tools to increase access to affordable housing.

Many housing programs require **dedicated funding**. The City has allocated an annual average of **\$1.07 million** from its capital budget and **\$205,000** from its operating budget to housing over the last 10 years. Stamford's Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) currently holds \$2.2M, or about \$7 per capita. Relative to the scale of need in Stamford, the current size and pace of commercial linkage fees and BMR fee-in-lieu payments **does not generate enough revenue** for the AHTF to make a substantial impact on housing need. **Stamford should strive to dedicate at least \$35 per capita** to align with cities that are seeking to deploy funds to impact housing needs, and over \$100 per capita to align with best-in-class efforts to reduce housing need.

Stamford's current funding commitment in context:

City	Funding Commitment Size and Sources	Time Period	Population	\$ Per Capita Per Year
Stamford, CT	About \$10 million has been generated through both linkage fees and fee-in-lieu over the last 10 years	10 years	135,470	\$7-8
Charlottesville, VA	\$70M in direct subsidy funding.	10 years	50,000	\$140
Richmond, VA	\$80M from dedicating tax revenues from properties phasing out of partial tax exemption.	10 years	230,000	\$35
Washington, D.C.	\$100M+ through housing trust fund, from transfer taxes and general fund.	Annual	706,000	\$146+
Pittsburgh, PA	\$100M+ over a 10-year period. The Housing Opportunity Fund annually receives \$10M from the city's real estate transfer taxes. Additional ARPA funding was allocated from 2021-2023.	10 years	300,281	\$35

The City of Stamford has two primary options to increase funding for housing. Scaling up investments in housing will require both prioritizing fee-in-lieu and identifying new sources.

- ① Prioritize the payment of fee-in-lieu under the BMR program in the short-term. This can help create deeper affordability for units off-site. Fewer mixed income buildings will be built, but the City will be able to help households in greater need.
- ② Identify new sources of revenue for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, either through new revenue sources or reallocated revenue sources.

**The City's Special Housing Fund is an existing fund within the capital budget, separate from the more newly created Affordable Housing Trust Fund. For more detailed subsidy recommendations, see pages 59 - 76.*

Sources: ACS 5-Year; Charlottesville Affordable Housing Fund; [Buy CT Bonds](#); [CHFA LIHTC Resources](#); [CHFA Summary Report](#); Pittsburgh URA Housing Opportunity Fund Annual Budget; Washington DC Housing Production Trust Fund

Recommended Strategy 2

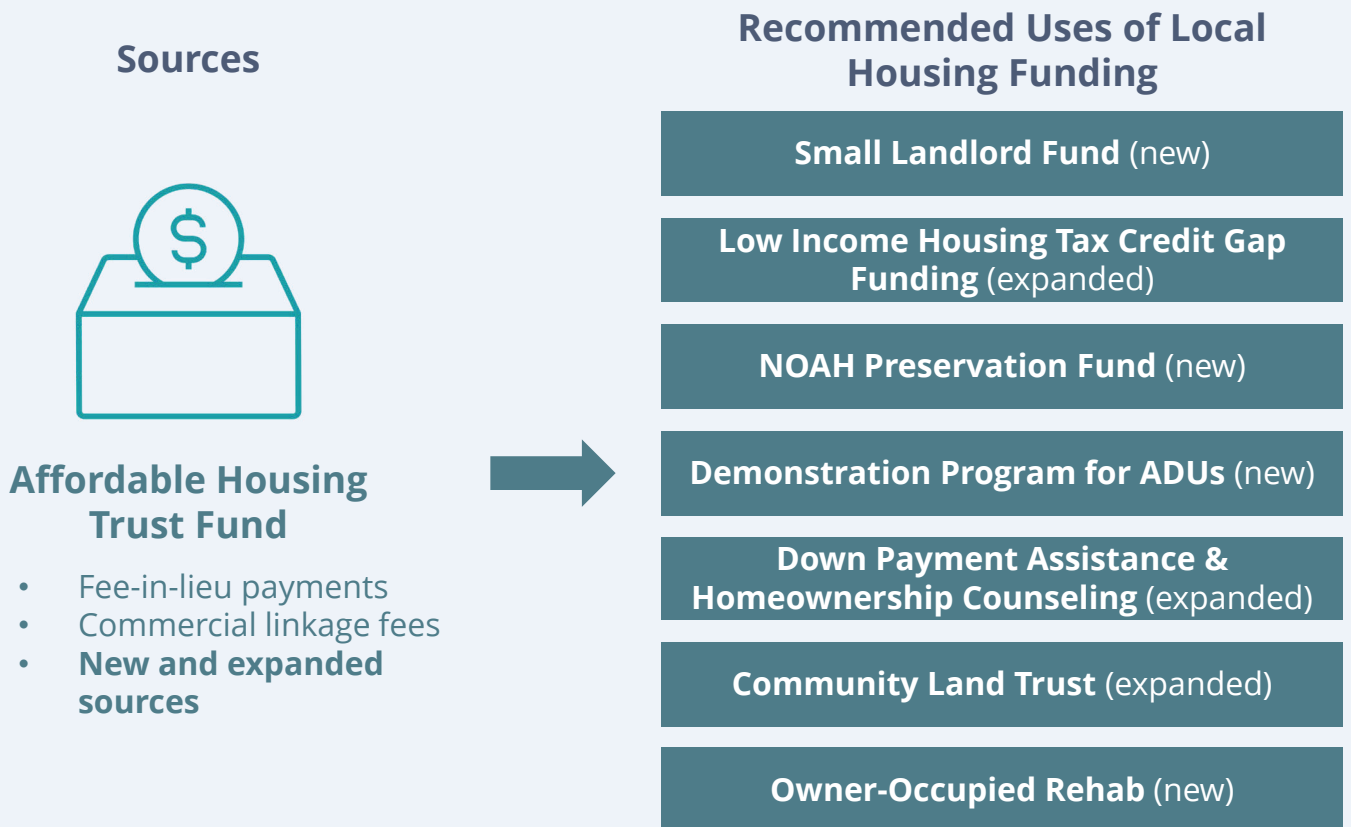
Stamford can dedicate more local funding as well as leverage state and federal resources in order to make long-term investments in affordable housing.

Scaling up investments in affordable housing will require two key steps:

Leverage state and federal resources. The City and the Board of Trustees should prioritize projects that use CT Department of Housing Bond funds and federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits and identify additional capital funding as available. This will require regional and statewide advocacy to adjust scoring criteria for funding awards in Stamford for 9% tax credit deals and partnerships with developers.

Identify new sources of revenue for the Fund. The City and the Board of Trustees will need to advocate for more funding from fee-in-lieu or new sources of revenue for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. This will allow the City to scale up investments in affordable rental and homeownership opportunities by funding programs through partner organizations.

As Stamford identifies additional revenue for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (sources), **there are a series of subsidy tools (uses) that the City can fund through partner organizations to make investments in affordable rental housing and homeownership opportunities.** Some of these tools are already successfully deployed in Stamford and can be scaled up. Others are new programs that can be funded in part through the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, with a priority for programs that leverage other funding.

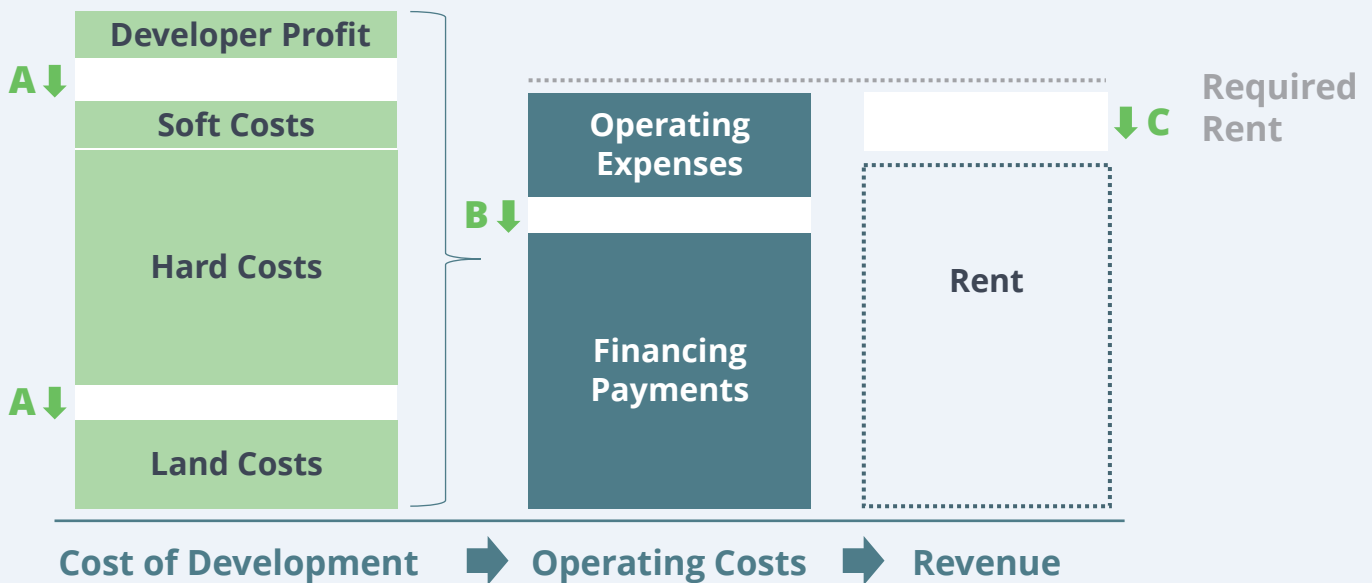


Recommended Strategy 3

More effective use of land can help to address both the challenge of rental affordability and a lack of diversity in housing supply.

State and local governments often establish policies and regulations, such as strict density limits, extended review periods, and inflexible design requirements, that increase the costs of new housing without considering the impact those policies and regulations have on housing costs. Alternately, the city can set policies that reduce the **cost of development (A)**, which reduces **financing payments (B)**, and, in turn, the **revenue (C)** required to support operating costs.

Impact of Decreased Costs on Rental Affordability



How can Stamford's land use regulations impact rental affordability?

- **Land costs:** Increasing density brings down the land cost per unit by dividing fixed costs—roofs, foundations and building systems—by more units, increasing affordability.
- **Soft costs:** Reducing the cost of required reviews, studies, and other approvals directly brings down construction costs.

These regulations also impact the **diversity of housing types**. Reducing these regulations allows for more diverse housing types, such as duplexes and triplexes, to be built, serving a broader range of housing needs and preferences.

Recommended Strategy 3

Stamford should create a land inventory and implement site-specific strategies while beginning a longer-term comprehensive land use planning process.

The Land Use Bureau should lead a comprehensive effort to create a City land inventory and implement site-specific strategies—including the identification of areas well-suited for housing development—while educating the public and soliciting community feedback about land use changes that will help increase diverse housing supply over the long-term. Each land use tool below is described in greater detail in the report.

Short-Term Steps

Create a land inventory

Implement site-specific strategies

In the short-term, the City should:

- Partner with developers for **office and retail conversions** and **condo development**.
- Implement a **demonstration program for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)**.
- Identify **publicly-owned land** for affordable housing development.

Long-Term Steps

Complete a comprehensive land use planning process

Through a comprehensive land use planning process, the City should:

- Consider opportunities to permit **2- to 4-unit structures (soft density)** in areas where zoning allows only single-family housing. Focus on areas that have important infrastructure to support increased density, like water, transit and employment access.
- Allow **multifamily development as-of-right** in areas where zoning currently requires conditional approval (e.g., public hearings). Focus on areas within ½ mile of train stations to increased transit-oriented development (TOD).
- Study opportunities to **reduce barriers** that increase housing costs, such as large lot zoning designations and parking requirements (including parking tied to Below Market Rate program developments).
- Implement stronger affordability **requirements for redevelopment** (e.g., requiring a higher share of Below Market Rate units for multifamily developments that demolish existing affordable housing or naturally occurring affordable housing).

For more detailed land use recommendations, see pages 77 - 105.

Implementation

The City should take immediate next steps within each strategy to meet housing need.

Timeline



Immediate Next Steps (2022-2023)

SCALE UP INVESTMENTS IN HOUSING

1. Prioritize fee-in-lieu payments from the Below Market Rate (BMR) program to expand funding for the Affordable Housing Trust Fund in the near-term.
2. Dedicate new sources of local funding to housing through the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, with a total goal of at least \$35 per capita in funding annually.

USE LAND MORE EFFECTIVELY TO CREATE NEW HOUSING

1. Create a land inventory to identify and track developable land.
2. Implement site-specific strategies to build affordable housing, including:
 - Partnering with developers for office and retail conversions and condo development.
 - Implementing a demonstration program for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).
 - Identifying publicly-owned land for affordable housing development.

CONSOLIDATE MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF HOUSING PROGRAMS

1. Reorganize housing programs into a single department with increased capacity.
2. Invest in trainings for City staff and Board of Trustees to build real estate expertise.
3. Develop an annual housing report to track programs, spending, and units created.
4. Standardize a competitive RFP process and set clear evaluation criteria for RFPs.

Implementation

The City should continue to monitor emerging issues and trends to adapt to shifting needs and market conditions.

CONTINUE TO TRACK HOUSING NEEDS

Some of Stamford's most vulnerable community members, including a quickly-growing, low-income Hispanic community, those facing mental health challenges, and seniors struggling to live on fixed incomes, may face acute housing needs in the short-term **particularly in the wake of COVID-19**. The City of Stamford should continue to focus on identifying the housing needs of the most vulnerable and deploy strategies presented in this Plan to help meet their needs.

Issues to Monitor:

Senior Housing: As housing costs have skyrocketed in the wake of COVID-19, seniors living on fixed incomes who do not have the opportunity to seek better employment opportunities are particularly impacted by housing affordability challenges. The City should track and monitor this issue and seek out ways to support senior households.

Overcrowding: Overcrowding and substandard living conditions can be challenging to track and monitor, as households in these conditions are often not accurately captured by the US Census. Stamford has a quickly-growing, low-income Hispanic community that is vulnerable to overcrowding and poor housing conditions. The City should seek ways to monitor overcrowding and address substandard housing and code enforcement issues.

Utility Costs and Efficiency: For housing that is sub-standard or aging, utility costs can significantly impact affordability. The City can consider energy efficiency and sustainability standards for housing that receives public funding to reduce utility costs and increase affordability for residents.

Eviction Prevention: As eviction moratoriums are lifted following COVID-19, households are at higher risk of eviction due to lost income during the pandemic. The City should monitor evictions and identify if additional funding and support is needed in addition to State and non-profit partner relief.