

EXECUTIVE ORDER

CITY OF STAMFORD HOUSING AFFORDABILITY INITIATIVE

WHEREAS, the State of Connecticut, and the City of Stamford, is facing a housing crisis; and

WHEREAS, according to the [City of Stamford's 2022 Affordable Housing Plan](#), the number of low-and moderate renters spending over 30% of their income on housing increased by 16% from 2010 to 2019 to over 12,000 households; and

WHEREAS, in 2019 there were still 8,600 cost burdened homeowners; and

WHEREAS, currently our homeless shelters in the city are at capacity and the length of stay for our homeless population has increased due to the lack of supply of affordable housing, and our homeless population is increasing; and

WHEREAS, housing affordability is a problem not only for low- and very-low-income households, but also for middle-income earners; and

WHEREAS, to remain a viable economic engine for the southern part of the state, Stamford must continue to provide opportunities for advancement in both the housing and workforce sectors; and

WHEREAS, the statistics presented in the Affordable Housing Plan demonstrate the urgent need for the City to address this crisis with a comprehensive plan that includes buy-in from stakeholders in the community including residents, civic organizations, faith base organizations, housing developers, the business community and elected officials; and

WHEREAS, we have a moral and economic imperative to provide safe, quality, and affordable housing in our city; and

WHEREAS, our city's economy will not be able to grow without stable and affordable housing for our workforce; and

WHEREAS, housing insecurity is linked to mental health challenges, adverse health outcomes, negative academic performance, racial injustices and inequities, and an increase in reliance on other social services that strain government systems; and

WHEREAS, we also have the opportunity to be a model city in the region on this critical issue facing our state; and

WHEREAS, this Housing Affordability Initiative provides a vision for the City over the next two years and beyond to achieve demonstrable progress in alleviating the financial pressure and housing insecurity faced by Stamford residents.

NOW THEREFORE, I, Caroline Simmons, Mayor of the City of Stamford, with the powers vested in me by the Charter and the voters of Stamford, hereby **ORDER AND DIRECT**:

1. **Adoption of this Housing Affordability Initiative.** There shall be established a Housing Affordability Initiative in the City of Stamford with the goal of supporting the equivalent of 1,000 new or substantially renovated affordable units by 2025, and the development of 2,443 new

affordable units by 2033 (priority types such as very-low-income units, family sized units, single room occupancy units, or supportive housing would count for two units toward the City's goals).

2. **Priorities of the City.** As an extension of the 2022 Housing Affordability Plan, the Mayor's Office instructs all departments, elected and appointed boards, and quasi-governmental or city-funded agencies to prioritize the following in existing and future policies, procedures, projects and/or activities:
 - a. **Creation of more family-size units (2 bedrooms and larger).**
 - b. Development of housing for families and individuals earning less than 50% of the Area Medium Income.
 - c. Creation of more homeownership opportunities.
 - d. Renovation and preservation of existing affordable housing, including market-rate affordable housing.
 - e. Conversion of existing market rate residential or commercial space to affordable housing.
 - f. Elimination of illegal and dangerous housing.

3. **Lead Department.** The Land Use Bureau's Housing Division shall be the lead agency responsible for this initiative and shall work closely with the Grant's Office, Health Department, Social Services Department, as well as other City agencies, departments, boards, commissions, and housing providers in executing this initiative.

4. **Duties.** The Land Use Bureau's Housing Division shall:
 - a. Oversee implementation of the City of Stamford's Housing Affordability Plan and subsequent related plans.
 - b. Support the development of a community engagement and education strategy in coordination with the Mayor's Office and Social Services Department to empower residents to support development of affordable housing.
 - c. Report quarterly to the Mayor's Office and prepare an annual report of housing programs and implementation progress, made publicly available.
 - d. Create a website, which shall include information on the housing market, City housing programs, affordable housing plans and plan implementation progress.
 - e. Develop, in coordination with the Social Services and other City Departments and non-profit partners online resources for renters and homeowners who are rent burdened, face housing discrimination, are threatened by homelessness or face other housing related problems.
 - f. Develop recommendations for revisions to the City Charter, Code of Ordinances, or other rules, policies and procedures that will promote the goals described herein.
 - g. Incorporate affordable housing funding recommendations into future capital budgets.
 - h. Incorporate housing solutions for veterans facing homelessness or housing insecurity.
 - i. Develop strategies to enforce safe and legal housing conditions, in collaboration with respective City and other agencies.

5. **Immediate actions to be undertaken by the City of Stamford by December 1, 2023:**
 - a. Complete a comprehensive review of the Below Market Rate Program and plan to improve program administration, including initiation of a consolidated waitlist, to improve administrative efficiencies, compliance, and user experience.
 - b. Initiate a policy change prioritizing fee-in-lieu over on-site development for the Below Market Rate Program to expand funding for priority units distributed through the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.
 - c. Pursue state affordable housing subsidies in partnership with the state Department of Housing and through other grant opportunities, including the Community Investment Fund.
 - d. **Begin a comprehensive land use planning process and plan using zoning reform to reduce barriers to developing a diverse typology of rental and homeownership units for families at all income levels.**
 - e. Develop a home-owner rehabilitation pilot program by collaborating with nonprofit partners to sustain existing affordable homeownership opportunities.
 - f. Revise the procedures for awarding funds from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to more rapidly deploy resources.

6. **Other actions to be undertaken:**
 - a. Support standardization of the tax abatement process for properties exceeding affordable housing requirements.
 - b. Review of permitting process and fees to reduce barriers for projects that include affordable housing units.
 - c. Utilize fee-in-lieu dollars and linkage fees, as available, in the Affordable Housing Trust Fund to partner with affordable housing providers, ideally prioritize development of new affordable units for homeowners and extremely-low-income rental housing.
 - d. Propose increased funding dedicated to affordable housing in the city's capital budget and utilize to develop or redevelop affordable housing.
 - e. Utilize a portion of HOME-ARP funding for the development of units for extremely-low-income households.
 - f. Explore further expanding the HOME Down Payment Assistance Program using existing Community Development funds.
 - g. Develop a Homeownership Rehab Program using existing Community Development funds.
 - h. Prioritize, where possible, use of existing Community Development HOME funding for rehabilitation and preservation.
 - i. Actively seek federal and state funding opportunities for related projects or programs and support developers with applications related to affordable housing development.
 - j. Propose targeted increases to the Below Market Rate (BMR) Program (up to 12% and 15% requirements in some areas) and other strategic updates.
 - k. Collaborate with city agencies to creatively repurpose city-owned property to expand affordable housing.

- l. Propose re-zoning to support higher density residential development in areas around commercial and transit hubs, allowing more affordable housing and transit-oriented-development goals in alignment with the City's climate strategy.
- m. Explore strategic, low-cost programs with community partners to support residents on the cusp of losing or gaining access to rental or homeownership housing.