



Affordable Housing Plan

TOWN OF WOODBURY

2021-2026 Plan



Image Credit: Kathryn Sherer

Affordable Housing Plan

Town of Woodbury, Connecticut

Town of Woodbury, Connecticut
PLANNING COMMISSION

281 Main Street South
Woodbury, CT 06798

Tel. 203-263-2141
Fax. 203-263-4755

www.woodburyct.org

Executive Summary

In 2017 the Connecticut General Assembly adopted Public Act 17-170, which requires every municipality to write a plan every five years that indicates how that community intends to “increase the number of affordable housing developments in the municipality.” In accordance with this requirement, and in fulfillment of one of the goals of the 2020 Plan of Conservation and Development, the Woodbury Planning Commission has developed this Affordable Housing Plan.

Affordable housing is generally defined as housing that is available to households making less than the area median income and costing less than 30% of a household’s annual income. This can include both naturally occurring market-rate apartment units or specifically restricted properties that have been income-limited by deed. In developing this Plan, members of the Planning Commission, aided by the Town Planner and an outside consultant, reviewed current housing conditions, demographic and market trends, community resources, and the input of Town residents, including nearly 600 responses to a public survey, to assess Woodbury’s current and future needs and develop recommendations.

While recognizing that Woodbury’s historic settlement pattern, limited public infrastructure, constrained employment market, and concern for its essential small-town spirit may preclude any rapid housing or population growth, this Plan strives to make progress in several ways.

Executive Summary Continued

Over the next five years, the Town of Woodbury will seek to increase the number of affordable housing developments in Town through one or more of the following:

1. Increase the awareness of the availability of USDA/CHFA loans
2. Facilitate an increase in the total number of accessory dwelling units
3. Encourage the establishment of income limited accessory dwelling units
4. Develop Design Guidelines or Standards for multifamily housing and accessory apartments
5. Facilitate the creation of additional multi-family housing in Woodbury
6. Facilitate the repurposing of existing structures to middle-density and multi-family housing
7. Increase public awareness of Woodbury's housing efforts
8. Evaluate properties in Town for potential public private affordable housing partnership
9. Other opportunities that may be identified in the future.

This Plan lays out a series of implementation steps that assigns responsibility and priority to these actions so that progress can be recognized and tracked. Working collectively and seeking to improve the community's approach in numerous smaller ways, this Plan will assist the Town of Woodbury to become more attainable and equitable for current and future residents alike.

This page is intentionally left blank.



01

How did we get here?

Since 2017, Connecticut law has required that all Towns adopt or amend an Affordable Housing Plan every five years. This law, PA 17-170 was codified as Conn. Gen. Stat. Section 8-30(j). Woodbury, therefore, needs to adopt an Affordable Housing Plan by July 2022. In recognition of this requirement and in response to concerns expressed by residents in connection with the development of our 2020 Plan of Conservation and Development (the “2020 POCD”), the Planning Commission included the development of an Affordable Housing Plan as one of our priority items in the 2020 POCD. In furtherance of this goal, Woodbury applied for and received a grant from the State to assist the Town in preparing its Affordable Housing Plan at the end of 2020.

The State has not provided a great deal of guidance regarding the development of Affordable Housing Plans. There are, however, a few statutory provisions to consider:

- Per 8-30j, The Plan must specify how the Municipality intends to increase the number of affordable housing developments in the Municipality.
- Per 8-2, a Town’s Zoning Regulations should:
 - encourage the development of housing opportunities, including opportunities for multifamily dwellings, consistent with soil types, terrain, and infrastructure capacity;
 - promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for below and moderate income households and;
 - encourage the development of housing that will meet the housing needs identified in the state's consolidated plan for housing and community development and in the housing component and the other components of the state plan of conservation and development.

While the development of the Affordable Housing Plan is required by the State, the Woodbury Planning Commission viewed the development of this Plan as an opportunity to look more closely at the current housing situation in Woodbury as well as the needs of our current and future residents, to refine our long-range planning. Consistent with the goals articulated in the 2020 POCD, we have sought to develop a plan that will help stabilize the Town’s population while ensuring that Woodbury continues to be “a vibrant community that celebrates and protects its historic landscape and character.”

02

What is Affordable Housing?

Affordable Housing can mean different things to different people. To most, the term affordable housing simply refers to housing that is reasonable in cost. To others, the term conjures up large-scale developments of subsidized housing on very small lots. In Connecticut, and as used in this Plan, Affordable Housing means housing that meets the criteria outlined below.

Financial Criteria

An Affordable Housing Unit is a dwelling that:

(A) costs (on an annual basis) less than 30% of the income of a household earning 80% of the Area's Median Income (the "Affordable Housing Cost"); and

(B) Is:

1. Assisted housing (i.e., housing that is receiving, or will receive, financial assistance under any governmental program for the construction or substantial rehabilitation of low-and moderate-income housing, and any housing occupied by persons receiving rental assistance under chapter 319uu or Section 1437f of Title 42 of the United States Code);
2. Currently financed by Connecticut Housing Finance Authority or USDA mortgages; or
3. Subject to binding recorded deeds containing covenants or restrictions which require that such dwelling units be sold or rented at, or below the Affordable Housing Cost.

Under State law, the maximum cost of housing, including utilities, for housing to be deemed "Affordable" is based on the Area Median Income, not the Town's median income. The Area Median Income for Woodbury is therefore the median income for a household of four in Litchfield County, which is currently \$78,500 based on the Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2020 income data. Accordingly, the Affordable Housing Cost for Woodbury is currently \$18,840 per year, or \$1,570 per month (30% of 80% of \$78,500 is \$18,840).



Appearance

The State generally does not regulate the appearance or size of Affordable Housing Unit developments. Affordable Housing Units can be created with as little as one unit and employ many design types, including single-family (attached or detached) units, small-scale multi-family units, and larger scale developments with multiple units, all of which can be rented or owned. Indeed, per Section 8-30g, an accessory apartment can qualify as Affordable Housing if it is a separate living unit that:

- (A) is attached to the main living unit of a house, which house has the external appearance of a single-family residence,¹
- (B) has a full kitchen,
- (C) has a square footage that is not more than thirty percent of the total square footage of the house,
- (D) has an internal doorway connecting to the main living unit of the house,
- (E) is not billed separately from such main living unit for utilities,
- (F) complies with the building code and health and safety regulations, and
- (G) has a deed restriction as described above that runs for 10 years.

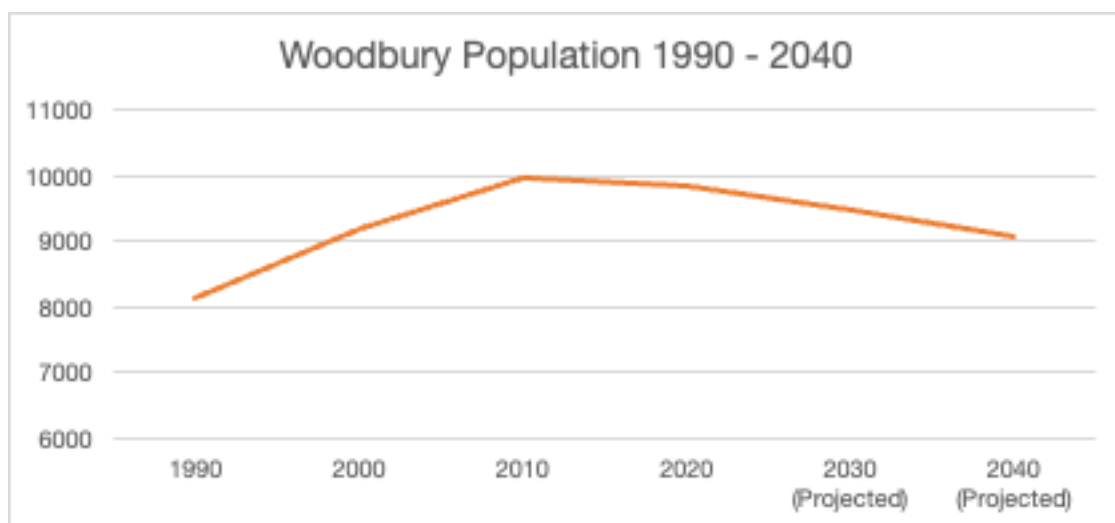
One of the goals of this Plan is to establish design styles for Affordable Housing Units in Woodbury that are compatible with the appearance and architecture of the Town.

¹ At the time the Planning Commission approved this Plan, on June 2, 2021, legislation had been passed by the General Assembly and was awaiting signature by the Governor that would modify the definition of an accessory unit to include units in accessory buildings, such as apartments above garages, and would allow such units to share a septic system with the primary residence. This legislation was signed on June 10, 2021.

03

What is Woodbury's Current Housing Situation?

Like many rural and suburban Connecticut Towns, Woodbury experienced steady growth in population from 1970 to 2010. Over that period, Woodbury's population increased by more than 70% from 6,000 to 10,000. Since 2010, Woodbury's growth has stalled, and pre-pandemic projections estimate that Woodbury's population will decline to 9,000 over the next twenty years.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau and CT Data Collaborative

Home construction in Woodbury generally mirrored trends in Litchfield County and in Connecticut as a whole: as populations stayed flat or declined, construction dropped off in 2008 and has yet to climb back to the peak levels experienced in the 1990s and early 2000s.

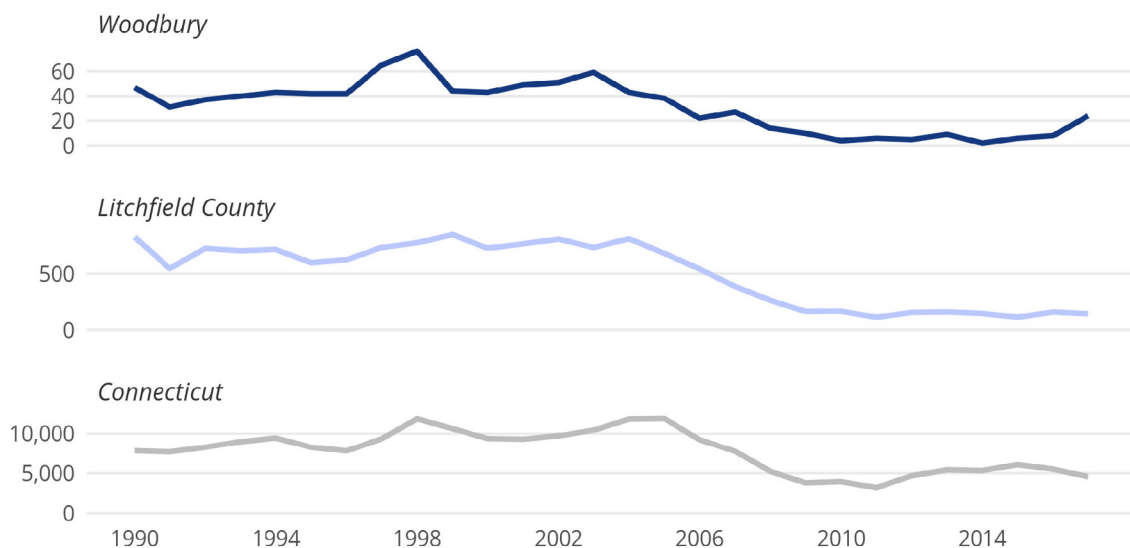
The Partnership for Strong Communities put together a series of analyses and visualizations to help Connecticut Municipalities better understand their current housing stock, demographics, and elements of affordability.



Many of the graphics presented in this overview are drawn from their 2020 Housing Data Profiles, which can be found at <https://housingprofiles.pschoosing.org>. It is important to note that the American Community Survey numbers are statistical estimates with high confidence, but which still contain a margin of error. They should be used primarily to identify general characteristics and trends. The results of the 2020 U.S. Census are still pending as of the development of this Plan.

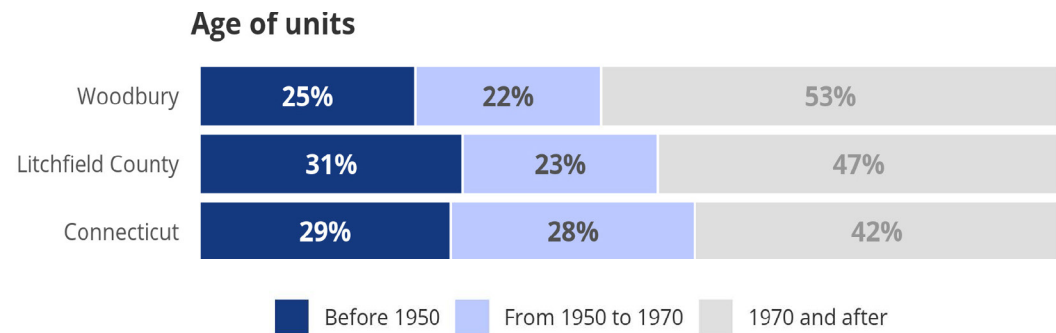
Number of building permits per year, 1990-2017

Note: y axis varies between locations



Source: Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development

Reflecting the fact that recent housing development has been relatively slow in Woodbury, adding less than 0.5% to its housing stock annually, the Town has an aging housing supply. Nearly half (47%) of the existing housing units were built before 1970. With 53% of the housing stock constructed within the last 50 years (much of that in the building booms between the mid-1980s and early-2000s) housing in Woodbury is slightly younger than Litchfield County and Connecticut overall. Further, the 25% of homes built before 1950 may be valued, particularly in a community such as Woodbury, for their age and craftsmanship.



Source: 2018 American Community Survey via Partnership for Strong Communities

The make-up of Woodbury’s housing units is set forth in the chart below. As of the 2018 American Community Survey, Woodbury had 4,687 housing units, of which 4,139 were occupied. Woodbury, like much of Litchfield County generally, has been characterized as a low-density, single-family community. Statewide, the mix is much more diverse, with approximately 64% of the housing stock comprised of single-family detached units and the remaining 35% are multifamily units. As noted above, the ACS contains statistical estimates and specific numbers may not reflect the accuracy of a 100% Census count. Case in point, the 2018 ACS shows that 23 of Woodbury’s housing units are in the “Boat, RV, Van, or similar” category, while in fact, the Town does not allow for long-term housing in these facilities or vehicles. It is likely that many of those units are temporary during housing construction or reflect a statistical aberration in the ACS estimates.

Units in Structure, Woodbury

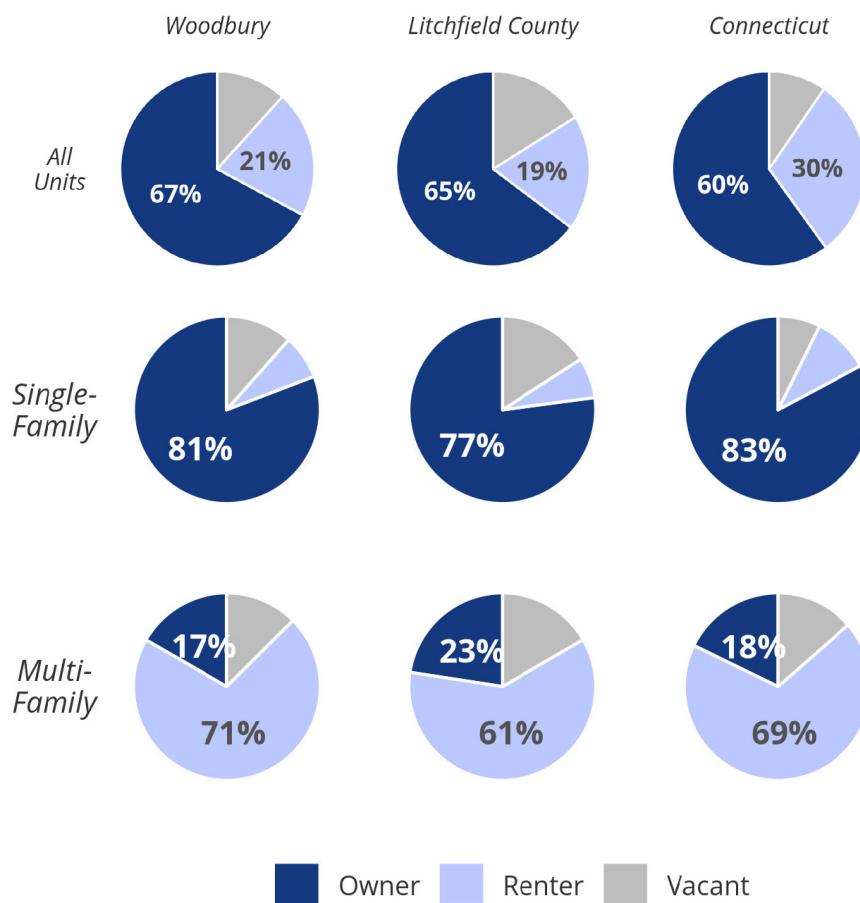
	Single-family detached	Single-family attached (townhouse)	Two family	3-4 family	5-9 family	10-19 family	20+ family	Boat, RV, Van or similar
Units	3206	452	170	359	134	216	127	23
Percentage of units	68.4%	9.6%	3.6%	7.7%	2.9%	4.6%	2.7%	0.5%

Source: 2018 American Community Survey, 5-year estimates

Ownership and Occupancy

As reflected in the charts below, owner-occupancy is 67% in Woodbury, 65% in Litchfield County, and 60% in the State overall. The percentage of owner-occupancy of single-family homes is 81% in Woodbury, 77% in Litchfield County, and 83% in the State overall, while owner-occupancy for multi-family homes is 17% in Woodbury, 23% in Litchfield County, and 18% in the State overall.

For both home rental rates and home sales prices, Woodbury costs run quite a bit above the larger geographies. As of the 2018 American Community Survey via CERC 2019 Community Profile, the median sales price for homes in Woodbury was \$350,800, which is higher than both the Litchfield County median of \$250,100 and the overall Connecticut median of \$270,100. The median rent in town was \$1,172, which also is above the Litchfield County median of \$995 and State median rent of \$1,123.



Source: 2018 American Community Survey via Partnership for Strong Communities

Affordable Housing

The Connecticut Department of Housing maintains a list of Affordable Housing Units in each municipality for its annual publication of the Affordable Housing Appeals List. As of the 2019 Affordable Housing Appeals List, the Department of Housing recognized only 92 of Woodbury's 4,564 housing units, or 2.02% of the total housing stock as Affordable and contributing to the Town's 10% requirement. Of those, nearly two-thirds were governmentally assisted and largely accounted for by Spruce Bank Farms, a housing complex for seniors and disabled residents. Most of the remaining Affordable Housing Units were homes for which the owner received mortgage assistance from the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) or the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Because of the nature of that component of the "Affordable Housing" accounting, the CHFA/USDA mortgage element holds the most potential for being expanded without new construction. As such, broader use of these mortgage assistance programs could be promoted more assertively among both potential homebuyers and the real estate and mortgage broker community as attractive programs.

CHFA/USDA Mortgages	Governmentally Assisted Units	Tenant Rental Assistance	Deed Restrictions	Total Affordable Housing
29	60	3	0	92 (2.02%)

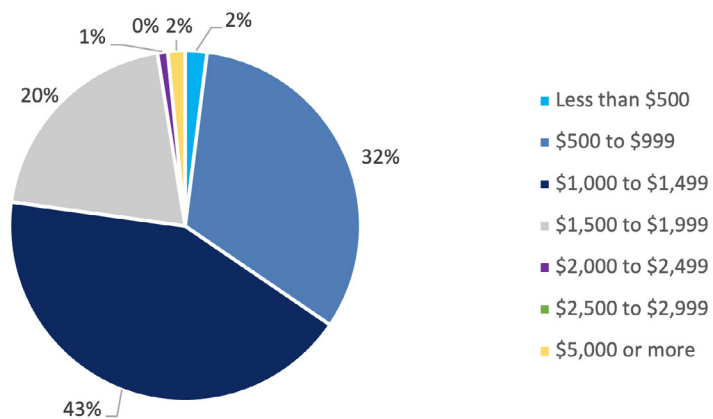
Source: CT Department of Housing, 2019 Affordable Housing Appeals Listing

This percentage has remained relatively stable over the past fifteen years, with the number fluctuating between 2.01% in 2006 and 2007 then hovering at approximately 1.8% for much of the last decade and just ticking up over 2% again more recently. Much of the fluctuation is due to the numbers of regular housing units coming online and small changes in the numbers of CHFA/USDA mortgages. Overall, the numbers are quite small, so minor changes in the employment of these financing tools can have a noticeable effect on the percentage of Affordable Housing Units available in the Town.

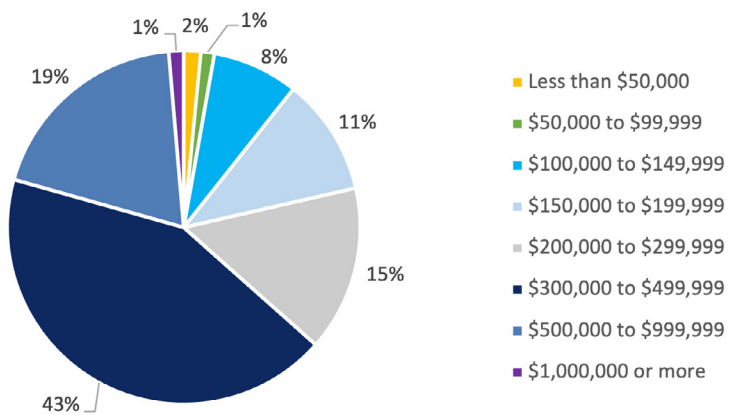
The state numbers present an incomplete picture of the Town's housing availability, as the state only includes housing that was purchased with CHFA/USDA mortgages, governmentally assisted units, tenant rental assistance units, and deed-restricted units. The following page includes charts that show (i) Woodbury gross rents and (ii) Woodbury home values, in each case by number of units. While the data is from 2018, it is useful to look at these figures in considering Woodbury's housing availability. Looking only at the cost of housing, and assuming, for purchases, a 4% annual rate on a 30-year fixed mortgage with 5% down, approximately 77% of rental units in Woodbury are "affordable" and approximately 20% of owner-occupied homes are affordable. Based on this data, it may be possible for Woodbury to meaningfully increase the number of Affordable Housing units in town by encouraging qualified buyers to use CHFA or USDA mortgages and encouraging landlords to place deed restrictions on their rental units.



Woodbury Gross Rent Paid



Woodbury Home Values

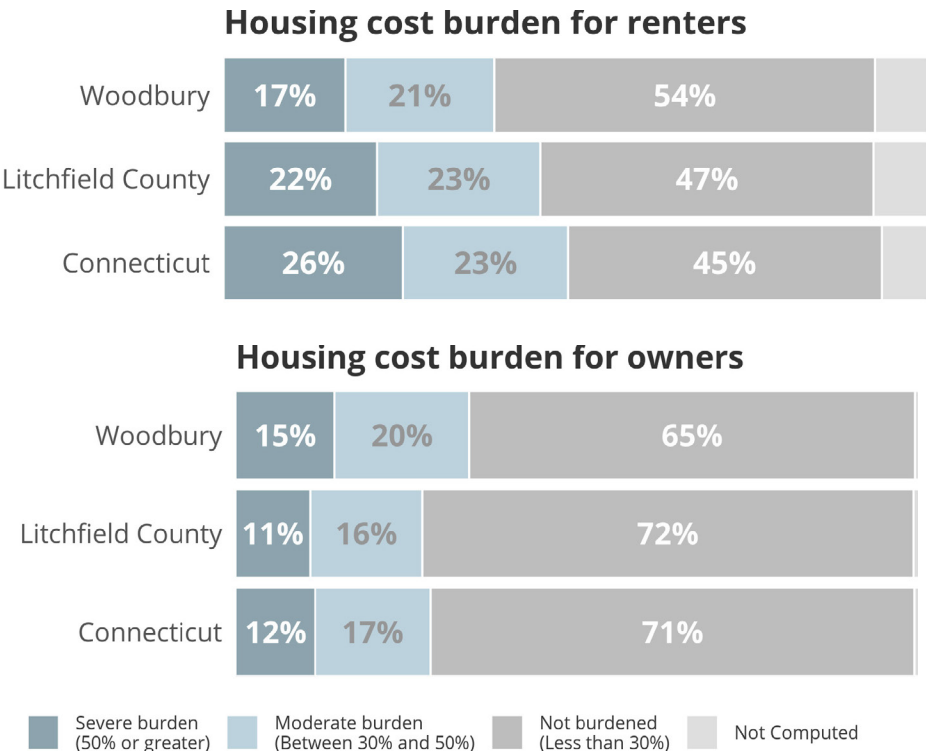


Incomes and Cost Burden

The affordability of housing is not based solely on price: heating and other utilities costs, taxes, and maintenance also are a factor. These costs are largely dependent on factors that are not within the Town’s control; the housing cost burden in Connecticut as a whole is the third highest in the country. Households that annually spend 30% or more of their income on housing costs are considered “cost burdened,” which is a strong indication of income insecurity. Households spending at least 50% of income on housing expenses are considered “severely cost-burdened.”

The percentage of homeowners who are considered moderately or severely cost burdened is higher in Woodbury (35%) than in Litchfield County (27%) or in Connecticut as a whole (29%). The percentage of renters who are considered moderately or severely cost burdened, on the other hand, is lower in Woodbury (38%) than in Litchfield County (45%) or Connecticut as a whole (49%).

The differences in cost burden between owners and renters in Woodbury reflect the relative affluence of these two groups. On average, homeowners have a median household income of over \$133,000 and spend approximately 16% of their income on housing expenses. Renters, with a median household income of just over \$57,500, pay on average 26% of their income on housing. This means that a typical renter in Woodbury will pay a relatively higher cost to live in Town than will a homeowner.





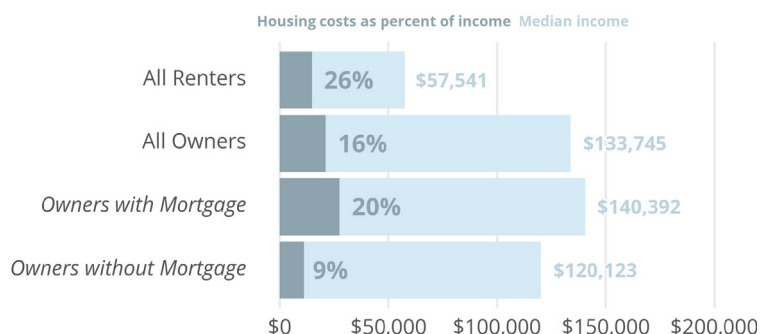
As seen in the discrepancy between owner and renter incomes, it is clear that rental units, while providing some opportunity for lower-income residents to live in Woodbury, are still not quite inexpensive enough to avoid a rental cost burden. Each year, the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) calculates the hourly wage that would be required

in order to afford a two-bedroom rental unit without slipping into a cost-burdened scenario. The “housing wage” in town is lower than the overall state average. According to the 2019 NLIHC

calculations, Woodbury’s “housing wage” is \$22.69/hour, or approximately

\$45,000 per year, a bit below Connecticut’s housing wage of \$26.42/hour but still almost double the State’s minimum wage. As noted in the 2020 Plan of Conservation & Development, the largest job sectors in Woodbury, in both 2008 and 2017, were “Accommodation and Food Service,” “Education,” and “Retail Trade.” While Connecticut average salaries in Education (not including para-professionals or teachers’ aides) are above Woodbury’s housing wage, average salaries in the Accommodation and Food Service and Retail Trade sectors are below Woodbury’s “housing wage,” meaning many people who are able to find jobs in Woodbury may struggle to find housing suitable to their ability to pay.

Woodbury housing costs as percentage of income

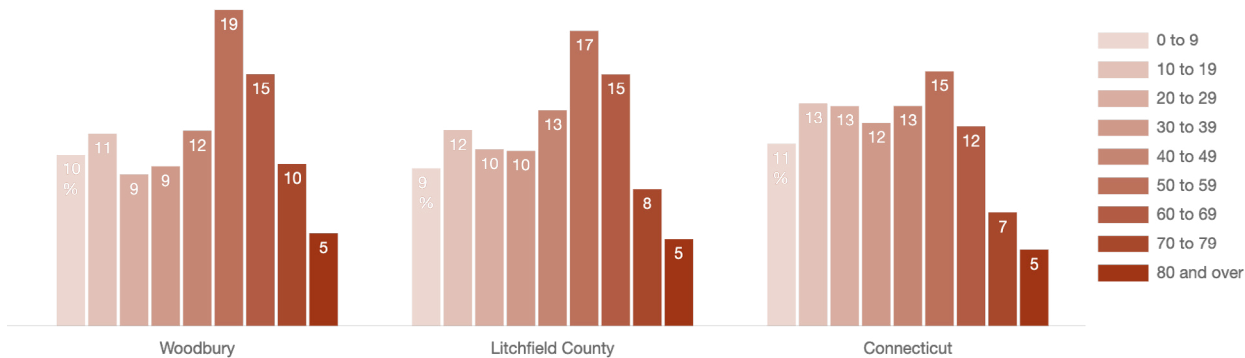


04

Current and Projected Population

While analysis of population and demographics are only snapshots in time, it is and has been the case that Woodbury residents are older than Connecticut, but similar to Litchfield County’s profile generally. The median age in Woodbury of 49 years old is notably older than Connecticut’s median of 40.8 years and slightly above Litchfield County’s number of 47 years old. The older and more well-established households in Woodbury help to explain the higher relative incomes and percentages of homeownership.

Percentage of Population by Age Cohort

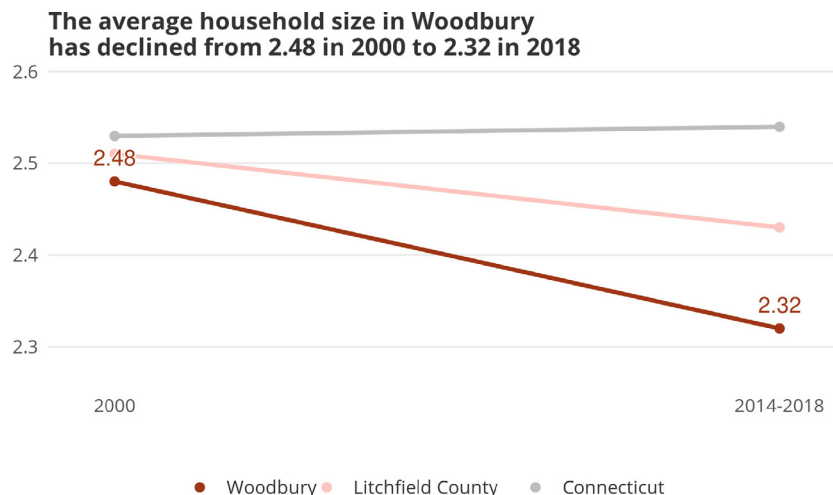


Source: 2018 American Community Survey, via Partnership for Strong Communities

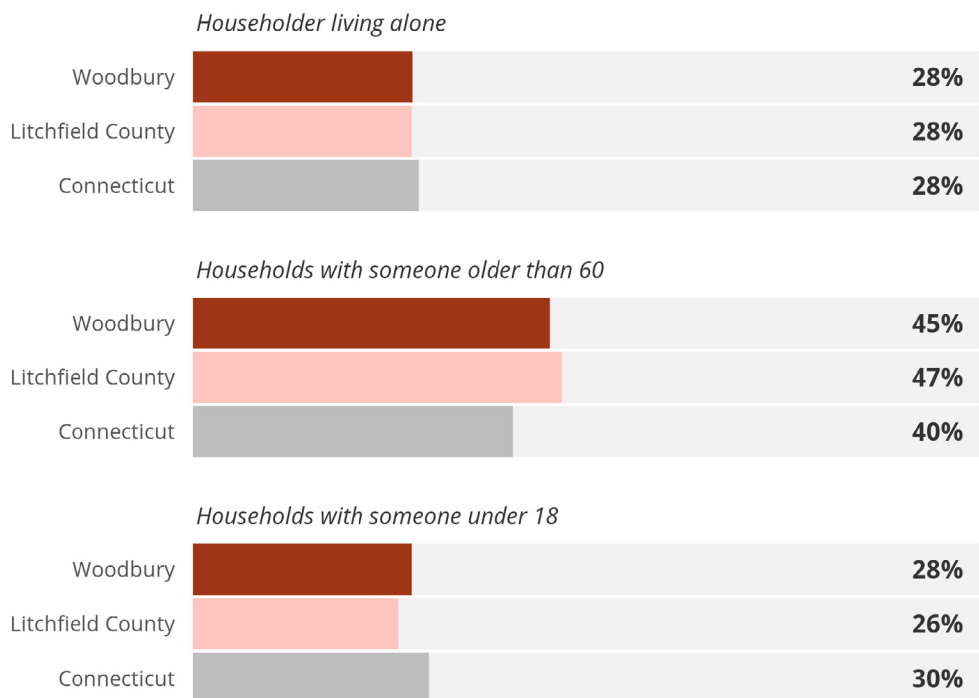
The largest population cohorts in Woodbury were in the 50-59-year-old range, with 19% of the total population, and the 60-69-year-old range, with 15%. Overall, 50% of the total population of Woodbury was over 50 years old.



As of the 2000 Census, the household size in Woodbury was similar to household sizes in Litchfield County as a whole and the State of Connecticut. The household size in all three geographies was close to 2.5 persons/household as of the 2000 census. Since 2000, however, household size has declined in Woodbury at a steeper rate than in Litchfield County, while the State of Connecticut saw a slight uptick in household size. These snapshots and trends are important considerations when projecting and planning for housing needs and affordability into the future. Even relatively slow growth in total population may generate higher demand for housing units because more people are living alone. Woodbury also had slightly more households with a resident over 60 and slightly fewer with a resident under 18 than Connecticut generally. The overall reduction in household size and the above-average median age is an indicator that the Town has a low “replacement” rate which is a matter of concern when considering the Town’s overall financial sustainability long-term.



Household types as a percent of total



Source: 2018 American Community Survey via Partnership for Strong Communities

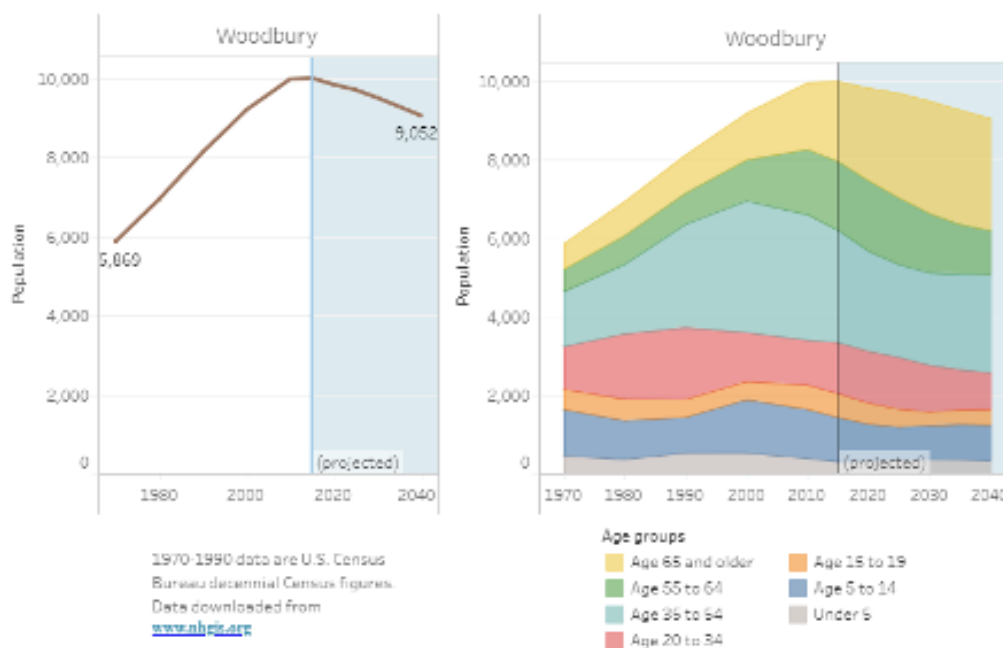
Projected Population

Looking to the projectable future based on these trends, the Connecticut State Data Center predicts that Woodbury's population, which has grown steadily over the last four decades, is likely to decline gradually over the next twenty years. If this data is accurate, Woodbury may be at or just beyond its peak population of approximately 10,000, which is not uncharacteristic for the Region.

Breaking down this same projection into age cohorts, the State Data Center anticipates that nearly all age groups will be stable or will decline in overall numbers in Woodbury, with the exception of senior citizens aged 65 and over. This group is anticipated to grow from its 2015 number of 2,041 to a peak of nearly 3,000 in the year 2035 and slowly decline from there. In contrast, the high school age population of 608 in 2015 is projected to decline to under 400 as soon as 2030, and young adults (20-34) are projected to shrink from around 1,300 to under 950 in the next two decades. These changes are not very dramatic in raw numbers but could certainly affect issues such as school and senior facility planning in addition to housing considerations. Woodbury is certainly not unique in these population projections, as much of suburban Connecticut seems poised to grow older, see an outmigration of younger cohorts, and see overall populations contract.

Based on these projections, demand for Single-family housing suitable for young and growing families in Woodbury is likely to decline while the demand for housing suitable for an aging population will likely increase. The demand for an expansion of senior housing facilities is likely to escalate and waiting lists may grow longer throughout the region.

The effect that the overall population decline in raw numbers may have on housing demand could be partially mitigated by shrinking household sizes. As an aging cohort seeks to divest themselves of larger homes on larger lots, more housing may become available for growing families. In addition, aging residents seeking to remain in town may create increased demand for smaller homes on smaller lots, apartments, or condominium units, where maintenance demands and costs are typically lower.



Source: Population projections by CT State Data Center

Infrastructure and Other Trends

While projections about the specific magnitude of population change over the next twenty years may fluctuate, it seemed unlikely, at the beginning of 2020, that Woodbury was headed toward a major real estate boom. One year later, competing trends tell different stories about potential futures for communities like Woodbury. Before the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, Connecticut was seeing a substantial, state-wide exodus of two large population groups: so-called “Baby Boomers” born between 1945-1965, and “Millennials,” born between 1983-2000. Both groups were moving out of Connecticut’s rural and suburban communities, seeking more densely populated, vibrant, walkable places to live.



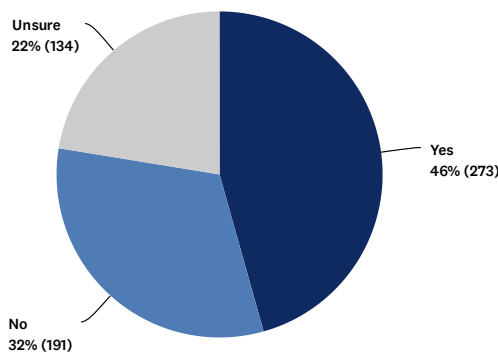
The pandemic may have slowed this long-cycle tendency, just a bit. As COVID-19 spread more quickly in larger, urban areas, real estate in lower-density areas in southern New England saw dramatic increases in demand. According to The Warren Group, which publishes The Connecticut Record, median home prices increased by over 17% in 2020 from 2019, a jump of over forty thousand dollars. This continued as more and more workers and students found themselves working or learning from home, opening the potential for housing locations that did not need to be close to work or school. Despite the vaccination campaign and anticipated return of relative normalcy, communities that are well-positioned to support both the small-town charm and the technological infrastructure for remote working and learning could benefit as they compete to retain those residents' long term. Woodbury has no current or planned public sewer infrastructure and only limited public water service areas, so it is likely to remain a quiet, low-density community. Ensuring wide access to high-speed data, however, is an important infrastructure component that could strongly affect the Town's attractiveness as a work-from-home haven by improving access to broadband resources.

Survey Results

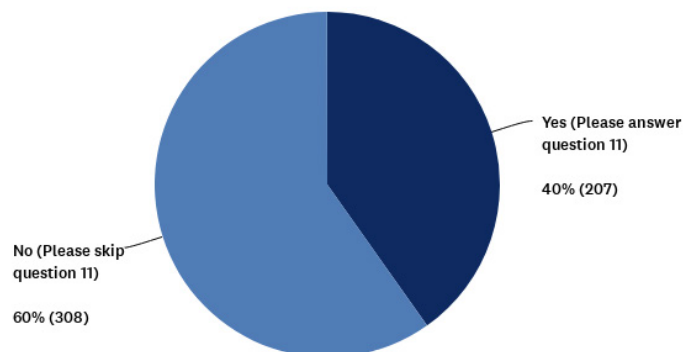
As part of the process to develop this Plan, the Planning Commission conducted a public outreach survey to gauge residents' views of their current housing supply, affordability of the housing inventory, and opinions on future needs of the community. Nearly 600 residents responded, and the replies generally reflect Woodbury's predominant low-density, owner-occupied, single-family detached development pattern. While a majority of respondents (56%) indicated that affordable or attainable housing is an important component of Woodbury's longevity, a plurality believed that the housing options currently available were satisfactory to existing residents' needs (46%) and that this housing stock was sufficient to satisfy future demand as well (46%).

Reflective of this relative comfort with existing conditions, respondents were evenly split in believing that increasing housing options would either positively impact the town or not have much effect at all (45% combined said positive or neutral, 45% said negative). In considering future housing needs, the two groups that were perceived to be most in need of additional housing options were seniors (51% listed among the top three choices) and young families (50%). The most popular types of housing development options were all single-family homes, on lots of various sizes. There was some appetite for seeing a slightly higher development density for lots smaller than the current one-acre minimum in Town and for townhouse developments.

Do you think that the existing housing stock in Woodbury is adequate to satisfy future market demands?

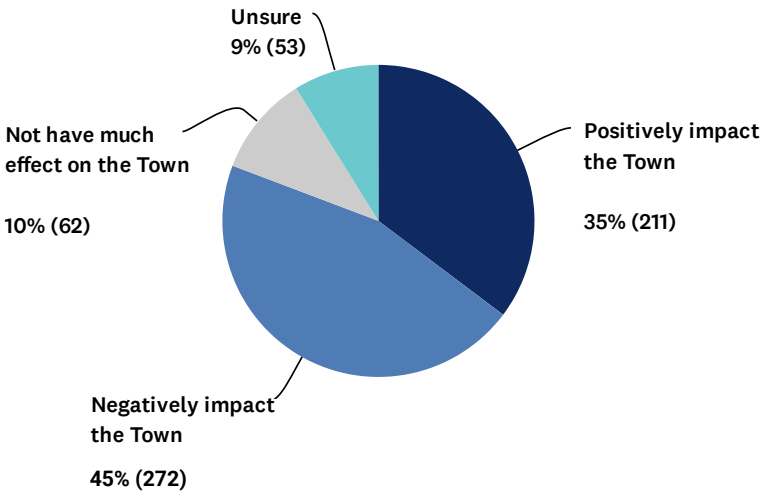


Should the Town of Woodbury seek to focus new, somewhat higher-density housing in specific areas?

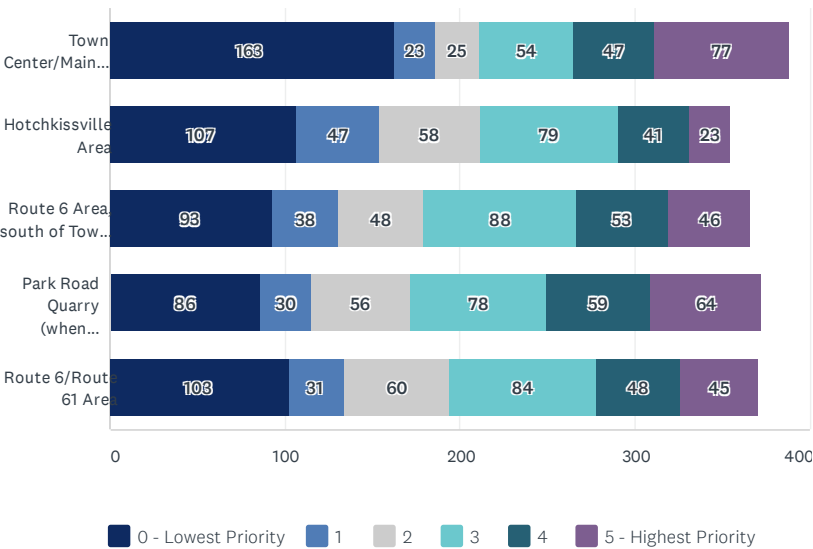


In terms of the location of new development, the majority of respondents were not interested in seeing additional housing-focused in any particular area – nearly 60% of respondents stated that the Town should not create focused, somewhat higher-density development. Of the 40% who did favor a focused approach, the Town Center/Main Street area was the most popular target.

Do you think increasing the housing options Woodbury would positively impact the Town, negatively impact the Town, or not have much effect on the Town?



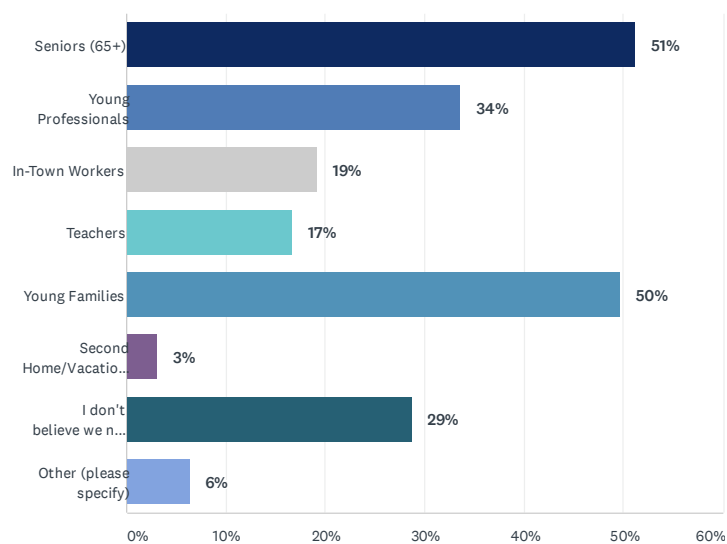
If the Town were to focus on new housing options, which areas of Town should be of the highest priority? Use a scale of 0= Lowest Priority to 5= Highest Priority.





Overall, the survey served to inform both the community about the ongoing discussion and focus on the topic of affordable housing, and to inform the Commission about general public preferences. These views were useful in shaping the ultimate recommendations for action items for this Plan.

If you think more housing options are needed in Woodbury, for whom do you think they are most needed? (Select top 3)



05

How do Woodbury's Current Policies Affect Affordable Housing?

As evidenced by the Plan of Conservation & Development (PoCD) adopted in 2020 and the community survey conducted in conjunction with this Plan, Woodbury residents hold mixed perspectives about housing. In the context of this Plan specifically, the creation of new multiple-unit dwellings, or affordable housing in general, is an idea that is not universally supported, a situation that is also not unique to Woodbury. At the same time, a number of residents have expressed a desire for lower-cost housing options. Further, the small number of Affordable Housing units (as defined in CGS 8-30g) and other housing profile metrics indicate that there is room for progress. The demographic information, as outlined within earlier sections of this Affordable Housing Plan, demonstrate that Woodbury's population and housing stock is aging, that homeowners are cost-burdened, and that based on the number of new building permits issued per year, a wide-spread development boom is not likely to demand the creation of these housing types on its own. Over the last few decades, the Town has added slightly less than seven hundred (695) new housing units. Within the same period, the Town has added only twelve (12) Affordable Housing units, all but one of which were from Federally backed mortgages (CHFA/USDA).

With that in mind, The Town of Woodbury has determined that a concise evaluation of the current policy and regulatory environment is important to help inform any actions moving forward. While the 2020 PoCD and Zoning Regulations have wide applicability, the evaluation of these regulatory documents within the context of this Affordable Housing Plan is much more specific. The purpose of this section is to evaluate the overall regulatory environment in Woodbury to get a sense of how, if at all, the Town's policies currently facilitate and/or encourage the development of Affordable Housing. What follows is a table that summarizes the current policy, how the policy relates to housing development, any active proposals for policy change, and some suggestions for potential changes. The suggestions were prepared by Tyche Planning & Policy Group, an outside consultant hired to assist in the development of this Affordable Housing Plan and were considered by the Planning Commission in developing the recommendations contained in this Plan.

Plan of Conservation & Development

Adopted in February of 2020, the PoCD outlines specific goals and action steps related to the Town's housing stock. Including these points within the 2020 PoCD is important. It serves to further demonstrate to business owners, developers, residents, and property owners that the Town's vision for the future includes the creation of a more diversified, balanced, and sustainable housing stock.

TARGET	RELEVANCE	CONSULTANT COMMENTARY
Goal: Implement policies and programs designed to facilitate the development of affordable housing (p. 60).	This is the most direct and forceful statement in the 2020 PoCD affirming that affordable housing should be a community priority.	The focus should be placed on measurable outcomes based on specific policies.
ACTION: Review and update existing regulatory documents to ensure they do not create a barrier to the development of affordable housing.	Zoning Regulations are a powerful tool to affect the density, type, and regulatory challenge of housing development.	This Affordable Housing Plan section, in part, is structured to assess those regulatory barriers. It will be incumbent on the Zoning Commission to act upon that assessment.
ACTION: Review and update existing Zoning Regulations to ensure flexibility and the development of mixed use is supported, particularly in the Main Street Design and Middle Quarter districts.	Mixed use development, meaning allowing residential uses to be added to commercial uses within the same site or building, could create broader housing opportunities.	The scale and density of the housing opportunities in mixed-use areas are just as important as the mere allowance of residential units. The Zoning Regulations should consider these elements specifically.
ACTION: Review and update existing Zoning Regulations as they related to "garden apartments" to ensure existing language is supportive of the creation of additional, location appropriate apartments.	The "Garden apartment" category allows for multifamily housing development, which is uncommon in Woodbury and represents an important category of housing diversity.	"Garden apartments" in the current Regulations are a floating development category, nearly entirely at the discretion of the Zoning Commission. Being "supportive" should include targeting specific locations and reducing the regulatory burden for development.
ACTION: The Planning Commission should review the Town's subdivision regulations and make necessary changes to ensure that local regulations fully support and are not a barrier to the development of affordable housing.	Subdivision regulations do not have much direct impact on affordable housing, which is more impacted by Zoning regulations. Certain improvement standards, like clustered housing, can reduce infrastructure costs.	Cluster developments, as seen in open space subdivisions, could be allowed more broadly to achieve reductions in development costs that can reduce end-user housing costs.
ACTION: The Planning Commission should produce and adopt an affordable housing plan that specifies how the Town intends to increase its number of Affordable Housing units, as mandated by the State.	The development of a specific Affordable Housing Plan, while a vaguely-defined requirement of the State Statutes, can be a critical foundation for a sustained town-wide effort.	The development of this plan is a key implementation step of an important PoCD priority.
Goal: Develop and Implement a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program (p. 59).	A TDR program would allow for increased housing or other development density in targeted areas of town, potentially increasing opportunity.	Increased density in "receiving" areas of the TDR program could be paired with elements of inclusionary zoning to ensure that developments included affordable units.



Zoning Regulations

The Town has a current set of Zoning Regulations in effect, which have guided development in Woodbury for decades and have been revised periodically. In 2019, the Town began working on a comprehensive update to these Regulations; that work accelerated after the adoption of the 2020 POCD but was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As of the development of this Affordable Housing Plan, these Regulations had not been fully completed nor formally considered by the Planning Commission as a statutory referral and the Zoning Commission through the public hearing process. Accordingly, both current and proposed Regulations based on the draft dated July 2021 are referenced on the following page.

Specific recommendations for targeted changes to the regulations and the 2020 PoCD focused on implementation and tracking are included in the recommendations section of this Plan.

TOPIC	RELEVANCE	CURRENT REGULATION	PROPOSED REGULATION	CONSULTANT COMMENTARY
Residential Density	Increased densities allow for more housing units on a given parcel of land, increasing opportunity and lowering costs.	Section 4.2 establishes residential densities starting at approximately one acre (40,000 sf) minimum and increasing to 100,000 sf for OS-100 Districts	No fundamental changes proposed to densities.	Residential densities could be increased by moving to a soil-based approach to allow higher unit counts on well-drained soils.
Accessory Apartments	Allowing secondary units in single-family areas can effectively double residential densities in a low-impact way and generate significant housing opportunities.	Section 4.1.1.5 allows for a single accessory unit but limits the size, ownership, and occupancy of the unit.	Section 5.2 would allow for the creation of as-of-right units in single-family districts, removing several of the prior limiting factors.	The proposed regulation is a significant improvement from current requirements but could be enhanced by incentives to owners to restrict accessory units as affordable.
Conversion of Single-Family to Multi-Family	Larger and historic single-family units could be updated to create multiple internal apartments, increasing opportunity.	Section 4.3.3 allows older (10-25+-year-old) homes to be converted to two or more dwelling units via Site Plan and Special Permit, and with larger lot sizes.	Section 4.14 removes the larger lot size requirement but otherwise retains the former standards.	Instead of a Special Permit, the Regulations could allow via a Site Plan with some design criteria to streamline permitting and reduce costs.
Multi-Family Development	Multi-family is traditionally the best pathway toward affordable housing by virtue of unit size and density	Section 5.4, "Garden Apartments" and Section 6.4 "Planned Residential Development," which are both special development districts, are the only districts where multi-family developments are allowed, at a maximum density of 4 units/acre.	Section 4.16 allows for the development of multi-family housing in specific areas of the RC district (with public water and state road frontage), in accordance with specifically outlined design, layout, and maximum yield criteria following the approval of a Site Plan and Special Permit. Densities are increased to six units/acre and minimum acreage of 3.6 acres for development.	Multi-family development is only possible in the proposed "RC" district, which is a floating zone, requiring a map change to enable. This creates significant uncertainty for potential developers and discourages proposals. A broader allowance, via Special Permit throughout residential areas, as well as relaxed density limits, would encourage more diverse development.
Inclusionary Zoning	Section 8-2i of the State Statutes allow towns to require affordable set-asides	Not included in the Regulations.	Not included in the proposed Regulations.	For larger developments (10+ units), the Town could require a percentage set aside for income restrictions, or otherwise establish a housing trust fund to finance the establishment of affordable units.
Incentive Housing	Section 8-13n of the State Statutes allow communities to create higher-density areas with 20% affordable stock	Not included in the Regulations.	Not included in the proposed Regulations.	As-of-right developments with a minimum of 20% affordable units and increased densities (above baseline), along with design control, could be targeted at specific properties or areas of Town.
Mixed-Use	Allowing residential units to be added in commercial areas can increase opportunity and economic diversification.	Non-multi-family mixes of residential uses are allowed in the Main Street District and Middle Quarter Districts, by Special Exception.	Retains but clarifies the mixed uses allowed via Special Permit.	Accessory apartments could be included as-of-right above commercial or retail uses to align with Section 5.2

06

What Should be Woodbury's
Affordable Housing Goal?

This page is intentionally left blank.

What Steps can Woodbury Take to Improve Housing Access?

The requirement of the State Statute governing Affordable Housing Plans is simply that each municipality must develop a plan to “increase the number of affordable housing developments” in that community. The Town of Woodbury will seek to meet that requirement in both qualitative and quantitative ways. For the five-year period 2021-2026, the Town of Woodbury will seek to increase the number of affordable housing developments in Woodbury through one or more of the following:

1. Increase the awareness of the availability of USDA/CHFA loans
2. Facilitate an increase in the total number of accessory dwelling units
3. Encourage the establishment of income limited accessory dwelling units
4. Develop Design Guidelines or Standards for multifamily housing and accessory apartments
5. Facilitate the creation of additional multi-family housing in Woodbury
6. Facilitate the repurposing of existing structures to middle-density and multi-family housing
7. Increase public awareness of Woodbury’s housing efforts
8. Evaluate properties in Town for potential public-private affordable housing partnership
9. Other opportunities that may be identified in the future

In support of these objectives, the Commission recommends the following actions:

A. Designate a Municipal Housing Official:

Whenever a municipality identifies a priority topic or action, the most immediate question should be “whose job is it?” Simply making a goal or vision statement is virtually useless unless there is a plan for implementation and accountability for action. In relatively small community such as Woodbury, there is not a robust administrative infrastructure for addressing the multi-faceted topic of housing. It is neither the core function of the Board of Selectmen nor the Planning Commission, and the Town’s Social Services Director/Municipal Agent may lack the authority or administrative scope to effect change.

To maximize the chances of success of delivering upon the mandate of CGS §8-30j and “increase the number of affordable housing developments” in Woodbury, the Board of Selectmen should designate a “Housing Officer,” who may be an existing employee, new hire, a consultant, volunteer, or shared resource so that there is a specific answer to the question “who in Woodbury do I talk to about housing?” If that task is assigned to the Municipal Agent/Director of Social Services or the Fair Housing Officer, some consideration of additional administrative resources should be included. Ideally, budgetary funds should be set aside for some administrative support and to allow for public outreach and information. Finally, the Planning Commission, responsible for the writing and tracking of this Plan, should provide some sort of ongoing guidance to the Housing Officer, perhaps by establishing a standing Ad-Hoc Committee within the Commission to provide that support.

B. Promote ADUs as a concept:

For many years, the regulatory provisions for accessory apartments in Woodbury have been rather narrow, limiting size, ownership, and occupancy. During the recent overhaul of the Zoning Regulations, the proposed provisions for accessory apartments relax these provisions and make an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) essentially as-of-right across residential zoning districts in Woodbury. This proposed allowance will place the Town among the more progressive communities for accessory dwelling units (ADU) in the state. This change, combined with the relatively large lot zoning standards for residences, makes it theoretically possible that the Town could increase its number of households with no further subdivision or regulatory changes. Further, legislation adopted in June 2021, that would permit accessory apartments in accessory buildings to connect to the same septic system as the primary residence. As a result, homeowners who did not wish to incur the cost of installing a separate septic system may now be able to create accessory units in otherwise unused or under-used accessory buildings.

The fact that Woodbury does not currently have a large number of accessory dwelling units is almost certainly a combination of the overall housing market and the fact that the historic regulatory process was limiting. If and when the new, more permissive, regulatory standards are approved, some effort to educate the community about this change should be undertaken. A simple series of articles in local papers, notifications on the Town website and social media pages, and even mailers to individual homeowners could dramatically increase the public awareness that ADUs will be available on most properties in Woodbury. The Town could also develop a guide to what ADUs are, what types can be developed, and the regulatory and construction processes involved. Many property owners facing either the need for additional income or a space for extended family would appreciate and see benefit from this information.

C. Consider tax abatements for income-restrictions on accessory apartments:

While most ADUs are generally available for individuals and households making less than the area median income, it is rare that these “affordable” units count toward the Town’s total supply that qualifies under CGS Section 8-30g. The reason for this is that these ADUs are considered “naturally occurring affordable units” and are not protected by any deed restriction or income limitation that guarantees they remain affordable, regardless of housing market prices. A provision within the statute, Section 8-30g(k) allows accessory units to be counted toward the town’s total if they are income-restricted for 10-year periods. If the Town wished to capture some current and future accessory dwelling units within the confines of the 8-30g “Affordable” inventory, the Town could seek to incentivize property owners accordingly.

By providing a local property tax abatement or similar incentive, many property owners could be persuaded to place income limits through deed restrictions on their accessory units and make them available to lower-income tenants. In many cases, the difference between market rents for an accessory unit and restricted “affordable” rents may be very close, and it is only a matter of paperwork to convert the otherwise uncredited apartments to be included in the Town’s official inventory. Should the Town proceed with that recommendation, it should also specify how this administrative task will be managed at Town Hall. Procedurally, the tax abatement could be similar to the “PA-490” open space provisions, in which a property owner signs an agreement not to develop a property for a period of ten years in exchange for a reduced tax assessment and tax bill. The town would have to establish the value of that tax reduction, and the property owner would be responsible for filing an annual report demonstrating that their tenant is income-qualified to occupy the unit.

D. Allow for middle-density housing as-of-right in certain areas, and as large-home retrofits:

Beyond single-family and two-unit housing (via ADU), the Town should consider a wider range of housing opportunities that would help with the Town’s growth and equity without sacrificing its rural charm and settlement patterns. Specifically, the Zoning Regulations could be modified to allow for smaller-scale multifamily housing options in certain locations and under certain circumstances. In many cases, three- and four-family dwellings can be designed and placed on single-family lots in single-family neighborhoods in a way that is virtually indistinguishable from the surrounding homes. Design considerations that include placement of doors, traditional pitch of roofs, and other architectural considerations, and location and screening of parking would provide for the visual assurance of context sensitivity. The density for these projects could be regulated based on a total bedroom count, to effectively mimic a larger single-family dwelling in terms of impact to wastewater (septic system) discharges and management.

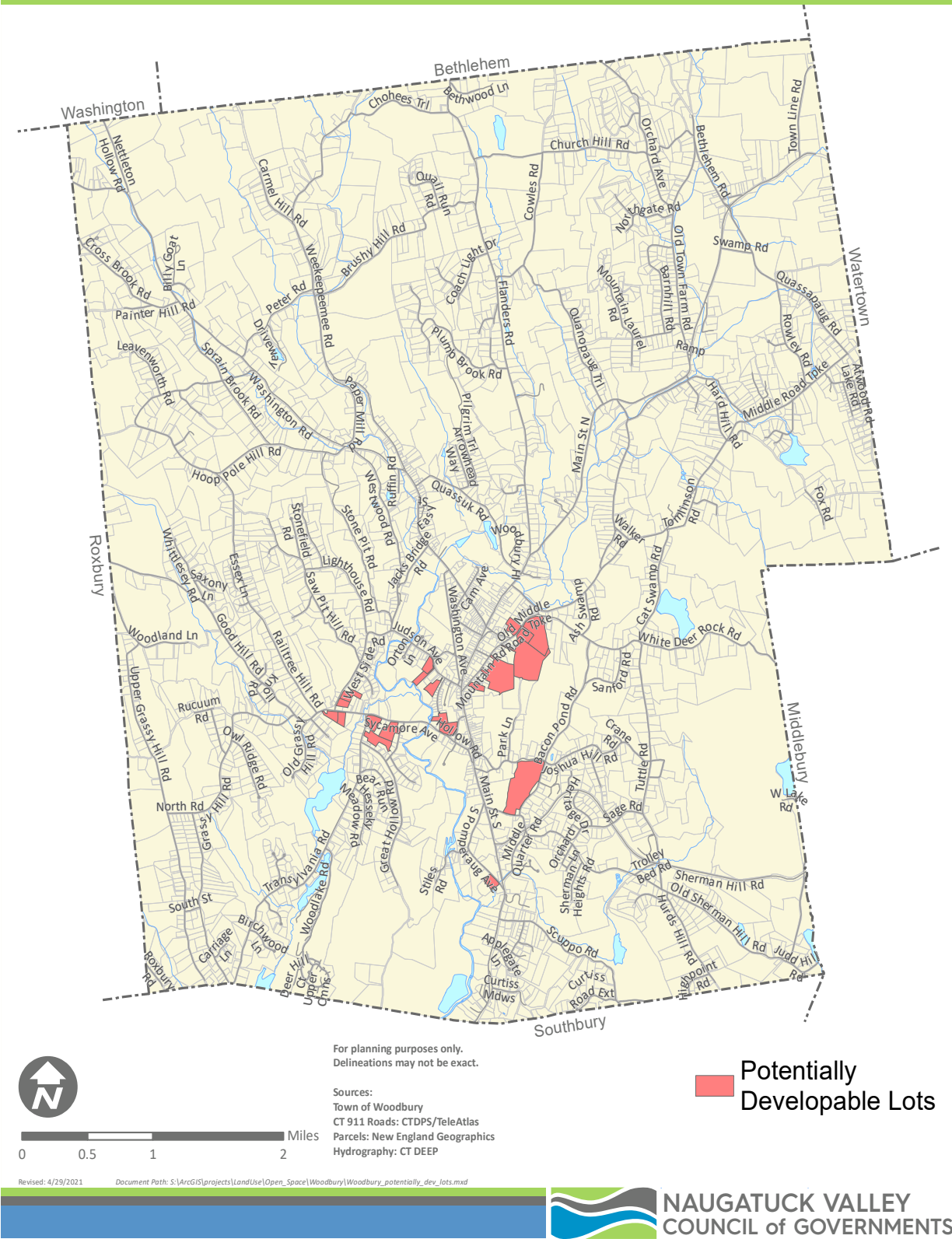
In addition, the Town recognizes that because of demographic changes and shrinking household sizes, an increasing number of very large single-family homes – particularly in more historic areas of town – are becoming “too much house” for single owners or very small households. The Zoning Regulations have a method of allowing these larger existing homes to be converted, internally, to multiple dwelling units. Historically, these regulations required larger lot sizes in exchange for adding units, which is not often feasible. The proposed regulatory revisions would eliminate this increased lot size but keeps in place the Special Exception procedure for these conversions. Streamlining this review and approval process, either via a single meeting Site Plan review, or a staff-level review with specific design criteria could help encourage both the protection and maintenance of these valuable structures while also increasing housing opportunity. Combining a regulatory change that permits large home retrofits with tax abatements, low-interest loan programs, or other incentives to help defray the cost of the retrofit in exchange for appropriate deed restrictions may be another avenue to increase the availability of affordable housing while preserving the Town’s historic homes and physical appearance.

E. Allow higher-unit multifamily housing in the Town Center area:

Because of the Town’s lack of public sewer and water infrastructure, a level of high-density, large-scale development is somewhat impractical. Further, the lack of a strong proximate job market and access to public transit lines can limit the market demand for larger housing developments in Woodbury. Despite these limitations, the Town has historically focused civic and commercial activity along Main Street in Woodbury Center. This area remains the heart of the community and encouraging its continued vibrancy through increased population and housing opportunities is a concept supported by the Plan of Conservation & Development. The current and proposed zoning regulations concerning multifamily housing development are centered on a floating-zone process, which requires a multiple-step endeavor of changing the Zoning Map before then going through a Site Plan and Special Permit review. This approach provides the Zoning Commission with leverage and discretion to act on the map change but creates substantial cost- uncertainty on the part of potential developers.

Through an analysis of the Woodbury Center area, parcels could be identified that are geographically suitable and of sufficient size such that a well-designed multifamily development could both enhance the activity in Woodbury and provide much needed housing choices. An exercise that identified these properties and changed the Zoning Map in advance, allowing those areas to be eligible for a multifamily development (via Special Exception) would lower the risk to developers and point to specific areas in Town where this sort of housing would be more welcome. To further promote equity, these regulation changes that allowed for multifamily development could also be compelled, through the Inclusionary Zoning statute of Section 8-2i, to set aside a portion of the development as income restricted.

Woodbury Potentially Developable Lots



The map on the previous page preliminarily identifies parcels that, based on size and location, may be suitable for such developments. These parcels were identified by identifying those parcels in the R-40 zone that are at least three acres, and those in the OS-60 zone that are at least five acres and are within approximately one mile of the Shove Building, and then excluding those parcels that are already in use for schools, cemeteries, town parks, and town office buildings. Further analysis and discussion is needed to determine whether (i) any of the identified parcels should be used for multi-family development or (ii) other parcels that do not fit the criteria described above should be used for multi-family development. As part of the process of identifying parcels suitable for multi-family development, the Planning and Zoning Commissions should consider specific types of development and, to the extent the Commissions determine that certain parcels are suitable for such development, should identify the specific type(s) of development that should be permitted on such parcel, including, where appropriate, providing design standards.

F. Promote USDA and CHFA loan programs with Real Estate community:

One of the four major categories of “affordable housing” included on the Department of Housing’s “Affordable Housing Appeals List” is homes that have CHFA- or USDA-assisted mortgages. These programs provide mortgage and down-payment aid in such a way that first-time and lower-income homebuyers are able to afford to purchase properties that they would ordinarily not be able to acquire. Historically, a large percentage of Woodbury’s units counted toward 8-30g fall under this category (29 of the Town’s 92 units as of 2019).

There is no formal program within the Town to encourage homebuyers and home-seekers to be aware of and take advantage of these resources. As likely as not, it could fall to the familiarity of individual realtors and mortgage brokers to ensure that buyers are properly informed.

The programs can dramatically increase the population of potential buyers who would love to include certain homes in Woodbury in their search. Thus, with a relatively simple public education and outreach effort, targeted at the real estate community and using existing informational resources of USDA and CHFA, the Town could encourage the use of these programs and experience an increase in this type of affordable housing.

G. Consider development potential of unused municipally-owned land:

Aside from infrastructure costs, the cost of the land itself is one of the greatest drivers of the cost of development, and thus of housing. If increasing the availability of affordable housing in Woodbury is a recognized Town priority, one of the ways it could assist with the implementation of this priority would be to reduce the cost of land.

The Town owns numerous parcels of land and has the ability to acquire additional land through tax foreclosure when conditions warrant. Certainly, most municipally-owned land has a specific purpose for municipal uses (schools, town facilities), parks, recreation land, or open space. This is not necessarily the case now or will be in the future. An inventory and analysis of town-controlled land could reveal that some of these properties hold development potential for housing.

If one or more of these properties can be identified as a potential development target, the Town could seek a private-sector partner to develop housing units for sale or rent. Because the Town could make the land available at very low or no cost, the developer can reduce overall project costs and thus reduce the housing costs of the future residents. Additionally, the Town's ownership of the property and project provides the opportunity to control important elements of scale and design so that it can ensure that the project is both accessible and appropriate to the community. Finally, as the Town considers future land acquisitions, one of the potential factors for strong consideration in weighing the merits of property should be the potential to host new housing opportunities.

H. Pursue partnerships with nonprofit and senior community developers:

Because the overall housing market in Woodbury is relatively quiet, particularly for larger-scale development, and because the Town government lacks the resources to undertake housing projects unilaterally, the Town should seek to foster new partnerships. The current senior and disabled housing development is owned by nonprofit groups such as Woodbury Interfaith Elderly Housing Corporation and the Woodbury Senior Housing Corporation. Mission-driven development groups with a focus and expertise in housing bring a wealth of information and experience and can help identify potential projects, seek funding, and otherwise be key actors in housing projects. Led by the Woodbury Council on Seniors, engaging with these groups will serve to amplify the Town's efforts. Woodbury could also seek to partner with other communities in Litchfield County to share information and contribute to projects of mutual benefit.

I. Explore other opportunities that may be identified in the future

Affordable Housing has been the subject of a number of news reports and initiatives over the last several months, and housing laws are changing in a number of states, including, Connecticut. Given the enhanced focus on affordable housing, we may see new strategies developed over the next few years to improve housing affordability in smaller towns while retaining the physical appearance and charm of these communities. The Planning and Zoning Commissions should remain open to these possibilities and should consider strategies not included in this Plan where and when appropriate.

This page is intentionally left blank.

07

Implementation: How does
Woodbury Move Ahead?

ACTION ITEMS		LEAD ORGANIZATION	PARTNER ENTITIES	PRIORITY
A. Make Housing Plan Implementation a Priority				
1.1	Designate a Town “Housing Officer”	Board of Selectmen		High – Year 1
1.2	Establish Goals and Work Plan for Housing Officer	Planning Commission	Board of Selectmen	High – Year 1
B. Promote Accessory Dwelling Units as a Concept				
2.1	Develop public outreach information on ADUs	Housing Officer	Planning Commission	Moderate – Year 2
2.2	Host public information forum with homeowners, builders, and realtors	Housing Officer		Moderate – Year 2
C. Consider incentives for income-restrictions on accessory apartments				
3.1	Conduct analysis of “delta” between market rates and income restricted rents for accessory units	Housing Officer	Board of Selectmen	Moderate – Year 2
3.2	Develop tax abatement program for 10-year restriction on accessory unit rents	Board of Selectmen	Town Assessor, Board of Finance	Moderate – Years 2-3
3.3	Explore availability of funding to aid in construction of deed-restricted accessory units	Housing Officer		Moderate – Years 2-3
D. Allow for middle-density housing as-of-right in certain areas, and as large-home retrofits				
4.1	Develop regulations to allow for existing property retro-fit to allow for middle-density housing	Zoning Commission	Planning Commission, Housing Officer	Moderate – Year 2
4.2	Develop and incorporate Design Standards for multifamily developments	Zoning Commission	Planning Commission, Town Planner	Moderate – Year 2-3
4.3	Explore the potential of moving to a soil-based zoning for development density	Zoning Commission	Planning Commission	Moderate – Year 3-5
4.4	Undertake analysis of Zoning Regulations and Zoning Map to determine if there are areas of town better suited to middle-density housing	Planning Commission	Zoning Commission	Moderate – Year 2
E. Allow higher-unit multifamily housing in the Town Center area				
5.1	Develop Zoning Regulations to allow and manage multifamily housing development in targeted Town Center-area properties	Zoning Commission	Planning Commission, Housing Officer	Moderate – Year 3
F. Promote USDA and CHFA loan programs with Real Estate community				
6.1	Develop and promote informational resources among real estate and home mortgage professionals	Housing Officer	USDA and CHFA staff	High – Year 1 and Ongoing
G. Consider development potential of surplus municipally-owned land				
7.1	Undertake an investigation about the conservation priorities and development potential of non-restricted municipal lands	Board of Selectmen	Housing Officer, Planning Commission	Moderate – Year 2
7.2	Identify 1-2 high-potential town land holdings for redevelopment and solicit public-private development partnership	Housing Officer	Board of Selectmen, Planning Commission	Moderate – Years 3-4
H. Pursue partnerships with nonprofit and senior community developers				
8.1	Convene partnership conversations and establish common goals	Commission for Seniors	Regional partners & Housing Officer	Moderate – Years 2-5
I. Explore other opportunities that may be identified in future				

* If the Board of Selectman does not appoint a Housing Officer within a year, the Planning Commission will review the appropriate tasks within this Implementation Plan and designate an individual or entity to assume responsibility.

This page is intentionally left blank.



Town of Woodbury, Connecticut

PLANNING COMMISSION

281 Main Street South
Woodbury, CT 06798

Tel. 203-263-2141
Fax. 203-263-4755

www.woodburyct.org