

The background image shows an aerial view of Voluntown, Connecticut during sunset. The town is nestled in a valley, with a mix of residential houses, larger buildings like a church with a steeple, and agricultural fields. A road winds through the center of the town. The sky above is a vibrant mix of orange, pink, and purple.

VOLUNTOWN AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN 2022-2026

Approved by the Voluntown Board of Selectmen, May 31, 2022

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

Section 1: Introduction

In the last few decades, Connecticut has become less affordable for both current and prospective residents. Median home values, rent, and cost of living have simultaneously increased, outpacing increases in household income. These costs have challenged various groups in Voluntown, including the small renter population in Town, as well as the large and growing elderly population who desires downsizing to live within fixed incomes. The need for affordable housing options in communities is urgent, and requires action on local, state, and regional levels.

Affordable housing is typically defined as housing available to households making less than the area median income and costing less than 30% of a household's annual income. Area Median Income (AMI) is the midpoint in the income distribution for a surrounding area or market and is the basis for many calculations concerning housing affordability and cost of living.

Breakdown of the 2021 Fair Market Rate for a Two-Bedroom Unit for a Four-Person Household in Voluntown

Example: 2 Bedroom Unit and 4-person household	Total/Year	Total/Month
Area Median Income (AMI)	\$88,600	\$7,383
<i>Median income level per household in the surrounding market/area</i>		
80% of AMI	\$70,880	\$5,907
<i>80% of median income listed above</i>		
30% of 80% of the AMI	\$21,264	\$1,772
<i>Maximum non-burdened budget for living</i>		
HUD 2021 Fair Market Rate , 2BR in Norwich-New London, CT HUD Metro FMR Area = \$1,772		

Source: US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Policy Development and Research

Voluntown has an Area Median Income of \$88,600 for a family of four. The table above shows the calculation for the maximum non-burdened budget for a moderate-income household living in Voluntown, which is \$1,772 a month. This number represents 30% of 80% of the AMI, broken down per month; this is the standard definition of Affordable Housing used by the State of Connecticut, quoted below:

In Connecticut, an Affordable Housing unit is defined as a dwelling that:

- 1) costs less than thirty percent of the income of a household earning eighty percent of the Area's Median Income; and
- 2) has been deed restricted to ensure that the housing unit will remain Affordable for a period of forty years; or
- 3) ownership units that are currently financed by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) or the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The State's affordable housing concerns have led, in part, to two important statute subsections, 8-30g and 8-30j, that both seek to increase affordable housing supply in the State. Together, 8-30g and 8-30j encourage municipalities to provide more housing options, whether through subsidized or naturally occurring housing.

CT General Statute 8-30g allows the courts to override local zoning denials of affordable housing proposals (provided

those denials were done without “just cause”). “Affordable Housing” in this context is defined by the State as housing made affordable by nonprofit or government subsidies or those that have been deed-restricted or otherwise income-limited for a fixed period. This process potentially subjects any town with a housing stock that is less than 10% affordable to a lengthy and expensive appeals process. Because Voluntown has an Affordable Housing supply of only 3.82%, the town is at risk of having to defend against costly appeals.

Effective July 24, 2017, Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-30j requires each municipality to prepare or amend and adopt an affordable housing plan at least once every five years; the municipality must specify the ways in which it plans

to increase the number of affordable units in the town moving forward. The statute is intentionally vague, allowing towns the flexibility to craft their own unique plans.

As the gap between annual household income and housing costs grows and grows, so too does the urgency for municipalities to address the housing challenges in their communities. The changing circumstances of housing affordability in the State have pushed local and state actors to develop affordable housing plans and commit to tangible goals. These statutes have spurred several innovative and bold plans in towns across Connecticut, all with the same goal of providing more affordable housing options for current and future residents.

Voluntown has embarked on its plan’s development to promote equity, sustainability, and quality of life in Town. The purpose of this plan is to not only fulfill the statutory obligation required by the State of Connecticut, but also to recommend a reasonable set of strategies for housing development that fits the current and future needs of the community.

Methodology

The team assembled for the Plan’s development includes an Ad Hoc Affordable Housing Plan Committee, Town Staff, and consultants (Tyche Planning and Policy Group, LLC). The plan was developed over several months, with regular meetings where the Committee, Town Staff, and consultants discussed the plan’s goals, progress, and components.

Understanding affordable housing requires a holistic approach, as there are strengths and shortcomings to any data set, survey, or report. Therefore, there are several tools and sources referred to throughout this plan, including the US Census American Community Survey, CT Data Collaborative, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, CT



Department of Housing's Affordable Housing Appeals Listing, Partnership for Strong Communities (PSC), and the report "Planning for Affordability in Connecticut" prepared by the Regional Plan Association and Connecticut Department of Housing. In addition, planning staff utilized the Town's Zoning Regulations and Plan of Conservation and Development to review current town policies' role in housing development in the community.

Most observations in this Plan are made using the most recent five-year estimates from the 2019 American Community

Survey, which do not account for the recent and ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While the pandemic has had an impact on local housing markets over the short term, it is unlikely to have significantly altered the nature of Voluntown's population in that time.

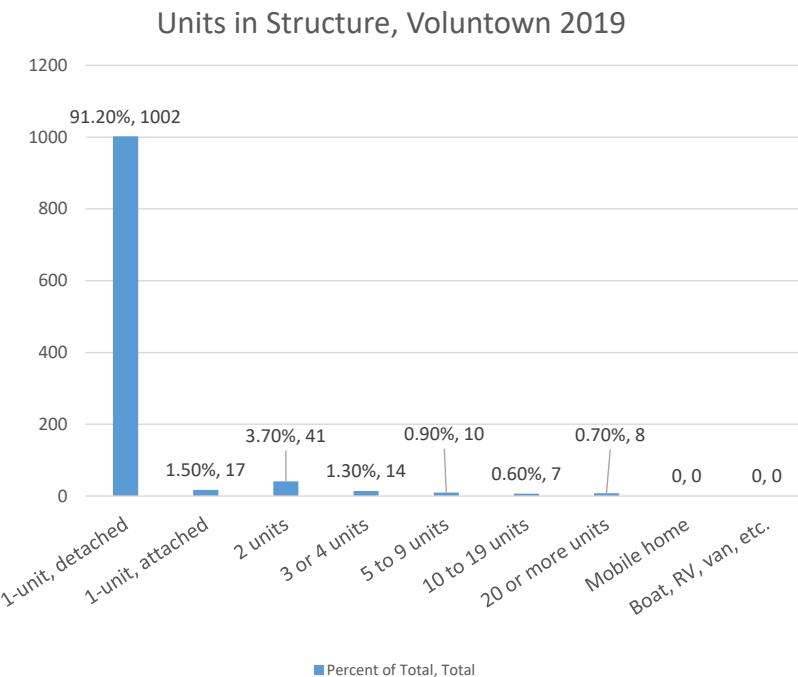
Lastly, a glossary of terms has been provided in Appendix A for clarity in definitions used throughout this report.



SECTION 2: VOLUNTOWN'S HOUSING STOCK

Section 2: Voluntown's Housing Stock

Voluntown's current housing stock is overwhelmingly made up of owner-occupied single-family homes. 93% of Voluntown homes are single family homes. Multifamily housing makes up the remaining 7% of the Town's housing stock. The median value for a home in Voluntown is \$228,200, and the median rent is \$1,089. Both median home value and rents for Voluntown are slightly below the State medians, which are \$275,400 and \$1,180 respectively (2019 American Community Survey).



With most of the Town's housing units built between 1980 and 2000, Voluntown has witnessed a slower pace of development in the past two decades. Since a short-lived surge of permitting

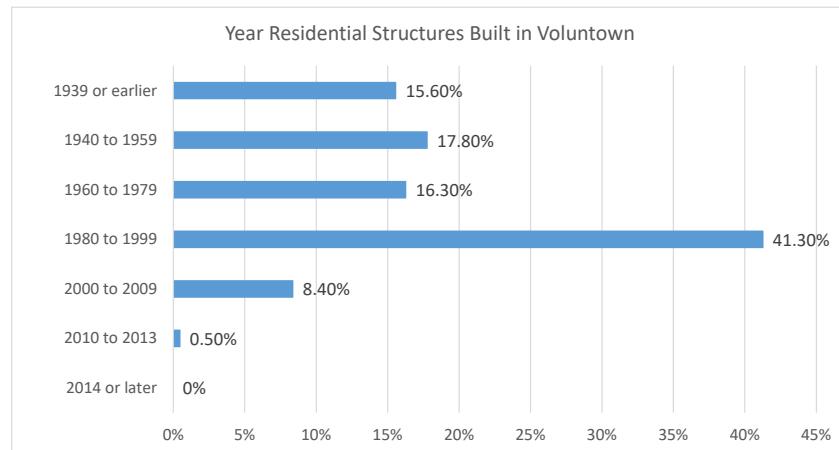
activity in the late 1990s, permitting for new construction has dwindled, amounting to only a handful of permits issued yearly.



Source: CT DECD



Half of Voluntown's units are considered newer builds, constructed after 1980. Still, about 15% of units were built before 1939, and are considered 'aging.' Aging units tend to have higher upkeep and repair costs, lack accessible units, and may even pose health risks to those living there.



*Source: American Community Survey 2019 Estimates
(Table DP04)*

Ownership and vacancy rates in Town further illustrate the housing situation in Voluntown. About 73% of residents own their homes, while 16% rent. With most of the Town's units full, there is a low vacancy rate of 1.4% for homeowners, and a nonexistent rental vacancy.

The high rate of single-family homes and slow pace of development in Town challenge the community. If Voluntown lacks diversity in its housing options and costs, the Town risks not only losing long-time residents, but shutting out new ones.



SECTION 3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN VOLUNTOWN

Section 3: Affordable Housing in Voluntown

While there are many ways to gauge housing affordability in an area, this Plan considers a handful of the most commonly used tools and calculations to assess housing cost and burden in Voluntown. These methods include looking at the total number of Affordable Housing units in the town (provided by the Housing Appeals Listing by the State), the rate of cost-burdened households in the community, what 30% of 80% of AMI actually means for Voluntown, and Fair Market Rents calculated by HUD.

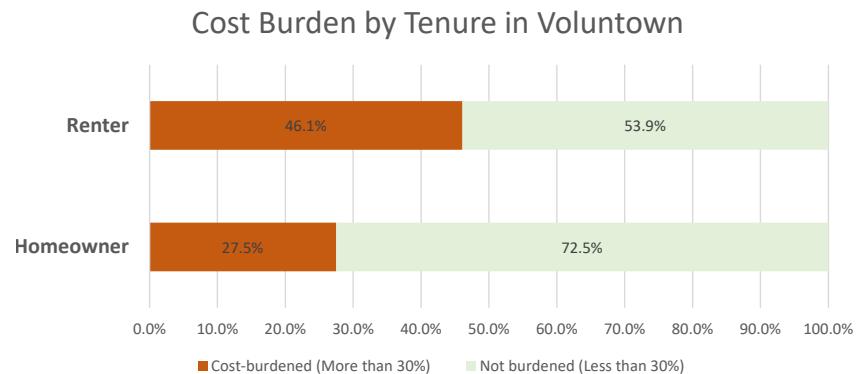
Voluntown has a limited number of Affordable Housing units in Town. Only 3.82% of the Town's housing stock is assisted via government assistance, CHFA or USDA loans, tenant rental assistance, or otherwise, according to Connecticut's Affordable Housing Appeals List in 2021. Voluntown has its own Housing Authority, which operates out of Greenwood Manor on Main Street. Greenwood Manor offers rental housing for income eligible adults ages 62+ or adults with disabilities 18+. This accounts for about half of the affordable housing supply in Town, while the remainder is one tenant rental assisted household and 22 single family CHFA or USDA mortgage recipients.

A common way to assess housing needs in a Town is by looking at rates of cost-burdened households. The Department of Housing and Urban Development defines and deems a household "cost-burdened" when they spend 30% or more of their annual household income on housing costs. According to 2019 estimates, in Voluntown, 29.7% of its 987 households are cost burdened. Breaking this number down between renters and owners, renters struggle much more with housing costs

	Number of Units
Gov assisted	20
Tenant Rental Assistance	1
Single Family CHFA/USDA Mortgages	22
Deed Restricted Units	0
Total Assisted	43 (3.82% of all housing units in Voluntown)

Source: 2021 Affordable Housing Appeals List

than homeowners, as 46% of renters in Voluntown are cost burdened. Even so, a quarter of homeowners are also cost burdened. While this method of evaluating affordability and burden is widely used, it should be considered alongside other measurements for a more comprehensive understanding of Voluntown's housing situation.



Source: CT Data Collaborative Cost-burdened Households by Town, 2019

It is also helpful for our understanding to break down what Area Median Income means for Voluntown, and what housing costs are deemed “affordable.” As previously mentioned, the state defines affordable housing as units that cost less than 30% of the annual income of a household earning 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). In Voluntown, the AMI for 2021 is \$88,600 for a family of four. 70% of renter households and 29% of owner households earn less than 80% of the AMI and are therefore considered “low-income households.” That equals 370 households in Voluntown that may experience unstable housing situations and need assistance. According to the calculation below, for a two-bedroom unit for a four-person household, the maximum that these households should spend on housing is \$1,772 a month.

Breakdown of the 2021 Fair Market Rate for a Two-Bedroom Unit for a Four-Person Household in Voluntown

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HUD 2021 Fair Market Rate , 2BR in Norwich-New London, CT HUD Metro FMR Area = \$1,772		

Source: US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Office of Policy Development and Research

Another way of viewing affordability is by looking at the Fair Market Rent (FMR) for an area, which is determined by HUD and used to set a limit on what units can be rented in the private market by Certificate and Voucher program households. FMR is calculated from the 40th percentile of gross rents for regular, standard quality units in a local housing market. More information on these calculations can be found on HUD’s

website. If a Certificate or Voucher program household wanted to rent a two-bedroom unit in Voluntown, that unit’s gross rent could not exceed \$1,254/month (HUD).

Final FY 2022 & Final FY 2021 FMRs By Unit Bedrooms					
Year	Efficiency	One-Bedroom	Two-Bedroom	Three-Bedroom	Four-Bedroom
FY 2022 FMR	\$833	\$1,006	\$1,254	\$1,616	\$2,102
FY 2021 FMR	\$810	\$976	\$1,227	\$1,584	\$2,027

This high-cost burden in town coupled with a large amount of single-family homes and recently slow pace of development, stresses existing residents and could impact future prospective homebuyers and renters.



SECTION 4: VOLUNTOWN'S DEMOGRAPHICS, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND OTHER TRENDS

Section 4: Voluntown's Demographics, Infrastructure and Other Trends

Current and Projected Population

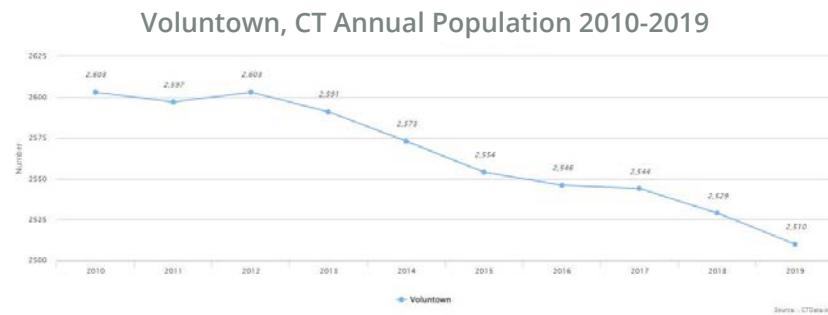
As of 2019 American Community Survey estimates, 2,535 people reside in Voluntown, enjoying its rural surroundings, small community, and state forests.

In terms of general population trends and makeup, a sizable portion (92%) of Voluntown is White, with the remainder being Black or African American (1.9%) and Two or More Races (5.2%). 3.6% of Voluntown is Hispanic or Latino. Like the State overall, Voluntown has an aging population, with a median age of 45.7 expected to trend older over the next two decades.

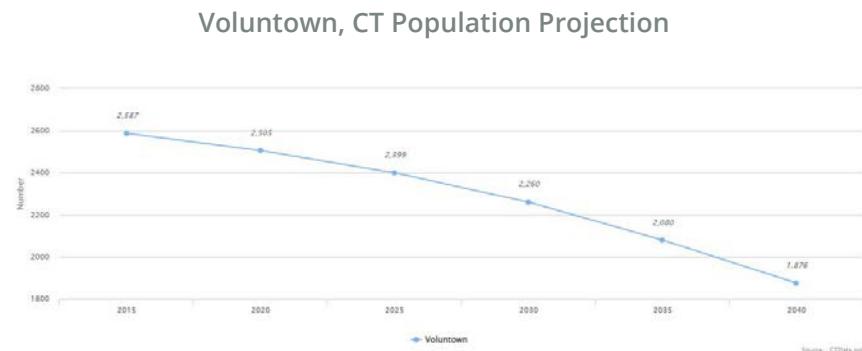
Voluntown's overall population has been on a decline for the last eight years, which is expected to continue to decline over the next two decades. In line with the shrinking population, the average household size in Town has been decreasing, dropping from 2.66 in 2000 to 2.57 in 2019. Although there is no single factor responsible for this current and projected

decline, and it may not accurately represent Voluntown's future, it is likely attributed to an overall aging of the population without sufficient replacement numbers.

As the proportions of various age groups change, so too does Voluntown's typical household size and type. Reflecting on changes in age cohorts in Town is important, as different age groups require housing suited to different stages in their life cycles. A young adult may prefer a small, one-bedroom apartment close to their place of employment. Growing families tend to look for homes with three or more bedrooms and access to schools. A senior citizen may look to downsize into a smaller one-story home, an in-law apartment, or assisted living. Whatever those preferences may be, an understanding of Voluntown's changing age groups and their needs and desires is helpful to plan for future housing development.



Source: CT Data Collaborative Annual Population Estimates by Town, 2019



Source: CT Data Collaborative Annual Population Estimates by Town

Voluntown's largest age groups are its middle-aged cohorts, particularly the 45-54 year age range making up 15% of the total population in town. The 65+ population comprises about 14% of Voluntown. The Town's young adult population also makes up a significant portion of the town, at 11%. Overall, the town has a healthy mix of age groups. A large middle-aged population should be closely watched, as they will be aging into their retirement years in the next two decades and adding to an already large elderly age group; they will potentially require more assisted or supportive living arrangements and might seek to live outside of Voluntown in their later years if local options are unavailable.

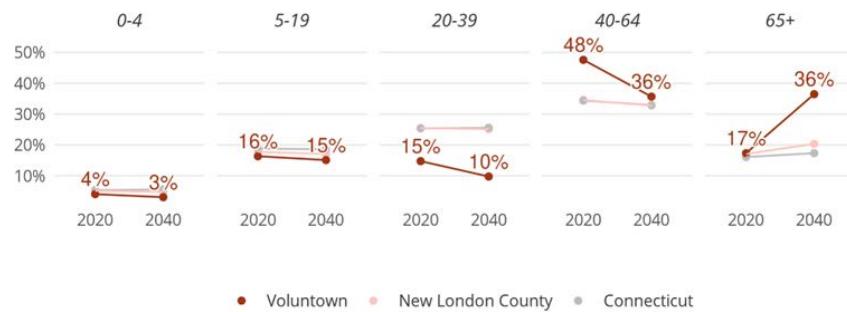
In the next two decades, these age group proportions are expected to shift in a number of ways. The most notable shifts are occurring in the 40-64 and 65+ age cohorts. As the very large, existing 40-64 year age group ages into the 65+ group, the share of the population they comprise will dramatically decrease, from 48% to 36%. Reflective of this same shift is the large projected growth of the 65+ age cohort, growing from 17% to 36% of Voluntown's population.

As previously mentioned, demographic shifts may demand different housing types as preferences change. With a potential for fewer middle-aged residents and more elderly residents in town in the next two decades, it is important that Voluntown actively assists with creating housing opportunities for these groups. Seniors often wish to age in place, and may require downsizing to live in smaller, ranch-style homes or condos that they can afford on a fixed income; some might need to live in more assisted or supportive living situations. This Plan's recommendations can hopefully guide the Town towards supporting these population shifts.

Percent of Population by Age Cohort, Projections

Age Range	Estimate	Percent of Total
Under 5 years	79	3%
5 to 9 years	153	6%
10 to 14 years	184	7%
15 to 19 years	152	6%
20 to 24 years	145	6%
25 to 34 years	281	11%
35 to 44 years	233	9%
45 to 54 years	390	15%
55 to 59 years	291	11%
60 to 64 years	252	10%
65 to 74 years	215	8%
75 to 84 years	105	4%
85 years and over	55	2%

Percent of Population by Age Cohort, Projections



Infrastructure and Other Trends

In terms of the Town's infrastructure and other trends, Voluntown has many strengths. The Town is within close proximity of Long Island Sound, the City of Norwich, and Providence. The Town has therefore become a bedroom community, offering residents a quiet respite from the busier towns and cities in which they may work. The rural character of Voluntown can also be owed to a significant amount of state forest and recreational land. State land holdings comprise a large portion of the Town's land, estimated to make up around 66% of land in Town and leaving a little less than 10,000 acres

available for private and municipal development (2020 Plan of Conservation and Development). While many residents appreciate the rural charm of Voluntown and the abundance of state forests, these factors leave less land in Town available for development. Another setback for Voluntown is that the town lacks public sewer and water infrastructure, relying instead on individual, on-site septic systems. This limits the density of new developments, making a project like a larger multifamily development a greater challenge.



SECTION 5: HOW DO VOLUNTOWN'S CURRENT POLICIES AFFECT AFFORDABLE HOUSING?

Section 5: How Do Voluntown's Current Policies Affect Affordable Housing?

In an effort to comply with the terms of CGS Section 8-30j, the Town of Voluntown 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 update to the PoCD and the Voluntown 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 Voluntown get a sense of how, if at all, the Town's policies currently facilitate and/or encourage the development of Affordable Housing. What follows are tables that summarize the current policies, how the policies relate to housing development, any active proposals for policy change, and some suggestions for potential changes.

Plan of Conservation & Development (PoCD)

Adopted in December 2019, the PoCD outlines a few goals and action steps related to the Town's housing stock. Including these points within the 2020 PoCD is important. The PoCD, ideally, 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 and affordable housing stock. The Housing Chapter of the PoCD (pages 24-28) focuses on issues including:

- Lack of housing diversity and needs for affordable housing
- Perception that affordable housing is a net negative to the Town
- Little opportunity to "downsize"
- No requirement for affordable deed-restricted units in new subdivisions
- Senior, Flexible, and Family housing opportunities such as "in-law apartments"

Review of 2019 Plan of Conservation and Development, Page 1

Goal	Significance	Observation
<i>Promote housing, both rental and home ownership, that is in an acceptable quantity, quality and diversity within the economic means of the town's population and encourage young families that maintains the rural character of Voluntown.</i>	<p>The overarching goal of the Housing section of Voluntown's PoCD is intentionally broad, committing to large concepts like 'acceptable' quantity, quality, and diversity with regard to housing development. Creating an environment that is attractive and financially feasible for young families is also included in this statement, reflecting the concern that young families have sought to move out of town rather than staying. Given Voluntown's history and context with its abundance of state land holdings, protecting the Town's rural character (the reason for which many families move to and stay in Voluntown) is also very important context for the Town's development of housing, regardless of the type.</p>	<p>This broader goal outlines a set of subgoals, which one assumes will be discussed in the following action items in the PoCD. While it is somewhat touched upon by parts of the next section, there are no explicit action items that support this goal's completion. Instead, the following sections are non-committal and vague.</p>
<i>The Planning and Zoning Commission to review and revise as necessary, its regulations to promote a mixture of housing for all stages of life.</i>	<p>The PoCD tasks the Planning and Zoning Commission with reviewing and revising regulations to promote diverse housing types for all ages.</p>	<p>Taking care to update zoning regulations as needs in town change is critical. In this Plan's review of Voluntown's Zoning Regulations (discussed next), consultants offer commentary on the current regulations' strengths and shortcomings as they relate to housing and affordable housing development in Voluntown.</p>
<i>Provide for the protection of home values.</i>	<p>Protecting property values is important for residents who wish to sell their homes one day. With the lack of developable land in Voluntown, it is necessary that the value of developed land is maintained.</p>	<p>The median sales price for a home in Voluntown has decreased in the last decade or so, and is currently on a plateau, which tends to make a community apprehensive about affordable housing development. Many people believe adding affordable housing will negatively impact property values; research has largely proven this untrue, finding instead that affordable housing development leaves property values either unchanged and can even raise them in some cases. This Plan should work to debunk myths surrounding affordable housing.</p>

Review of 2019 Plan of Conservation and Development, Page 2

Goal	Significance	Observation
<p><i>Town Regulations, Ordinances, and Policies will be reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure that they are reflective of all Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity federal legislation ... Particular attention should be given to family households' definitions, manufactured homes, group homes, housing unit square footage, acreage requirements vs. buildable area requirements, affordable housing requirements.</i></p>	<p>Being compliant with federal legislation is very important but should go without saying.</p>	<p>In its development of this Affordable Housing Plan, Voluntown is undergoing a review of its zoning regulations and their role in affordable housing requirements and development in Town.</p>
<p><i>2b. Town officials (Town Hall staff, First Selectman and Planning and zoning Commission) will be cognizant of the State's requirements on affordable housing (especially regarding manufactured homes, and of the affordable housing appeals procedures).</i></p>	<p>The last several years of state legislation have brought different requirements and regulations in regard to housing. Ensuring that local policies are in compliance with evolving standards is a critical responsibility for the Town.</p>	<p>This is not a specific action item that contributes to either of the overarching goals in this section.</p>

Review of 2019 Plan of Conservation and Development, Page 3

Goal	Significance	Observation
<p><i>Town Hall (Selectman's Office) will have current information available on financing programs available at private lending institutions and through state and federal programs.</i></p>	<p>In an ownership-heavy community, information about financing programs that can assist home purchases can be very useful to potential buyers looking to move or remain in town.</p>	<p>Although there are some resources on Covid-19 rental and mortgage assistance on Voluntown's website, there is no dedicated webpage for non-pandemic times that outlines the various routes a homeowner or renter can go for help.</p>
<p><i>Increase affordable housing opportunities for all stages of life.</i></p>	<p>A community's population is dynamic, from household size to income across different age and demographic groups. Having wide options would allow residents to grow up, grow a family, and grow old in town.</p>	<p>Creating affordable housing for all types of residents important for Voluntown's longevity. However, this goal lacks specificities actually required to complete said goal. This Plan will work to create tangible goals and action items for Voluntown's future housing development.</p>

Zoning Regulations

The Planning & Zoning Commission first adopted Zoning Regulations in 1973 and have gradually made minor and targeted amendments over the last few decades. The Regulations are fairly simple and concise and reflect Voluntown's character and aspiration to remain a quiet, rural community. There is some current sentiment among the Commission that the overall regulatory environment may be in need of a comprehensive overhaul. Zoning Regulations are meant to deliver upon the goals of the PoCD in specific ways, and have the power to very strongly shape a property owner or developer's ability to create new housing opportunities.

Topic	Relevance	Regulation	Observation
Residential Density	<p>Increased density allows for more housing units on a given parcel of land, increasing financial viability and lowering costs</p> <p>increasing financial viability and lowering costs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All residential districts (Rural District & Village District) allow both single- and two-family dwellings. Rural District minimum lot size for single family is 80,000 sq ft. Minimum lot size for two family is 140,000 square feet Village District minimum lot size for single family is 30,000. 40,000 for two family. Family apartments are allowed in all residential districts 	<p>Minimum lot sizes in the Rural District are generally large, falling short of 2 acres for a single family home. Although the Town's PoCD justifies this large minimum lot size on the basis of septic/well requirements, this is larger than is really necessary. The Town could consider techniques like soil-based zoning or decreasing minimum lot sizes to allow smaller and cheaper residential development.</p>
Multifamily Housing	<p>Multi-family development is traditionally the best pathway toward increasing affordable housing by virtue of unit size and density. Housing trends indicate that not all in search of housing want or can afford a single family detached home. 91% of the Town's housing stock is comprised of SFD's so regulations to encourage alternative housing types are important.</p>	<p>Allowed in Village District by special exception</p>	<p>The Town could allow smaller-scale multifamily (3-4) units as of right on lots that can support the infrastructure required.</p>

Review of Voluntown's Zoning Regulations, Page 2

Topic	Relevance	Regulation	Observation
Accessory Apartments	Allowing secondary units in single-family areas can effectively double residential densities in a low-impact way and generate significant housing opportunity.	Section 8 – family apartments are allowed in residential districts by zoning permit.	Voluntown's regulation on family apartments is very restrictive, only allowing occupancy by blood-related family members. This excludes other types of occupants who would benefit from such a living situation, such as non-blood related caregivers or students.
Conversion of Single-Family to Multi-Family	Larger and historic single-family units could be updated to create multiple internal apartments, increasing opportunity.	Not included in regulations.	Allowing homeowners to convert their lots to multifamily can increase residential density and create less expensive units that are more palatable for a range of residents, like young families, those on fixed incomes, or low-income individuals.
Elderly Housing	Voluntown's demographics show that 15% of the population is over 65 years old; this number is projected to double in the next two decades. Allowing alternative housing types for seniors will encourage current residents to stay and new residents that want to be closer to family to move to Voluntown.	Elderly housing is allowed only in Village Commercial Overlay District.	A growing elderly population in the next two decades could see a new demand for age restricted housing situations. In addition, elderly age groups tend to desire smaller, less expensive living arrangements in general. If such residents seek to stay in Voluntown, the current housing profile in Town might not accommodate many downsizers.
Mixed use development	Allowing an accessory dwelling unit within a commercial building diversifies the rental income for the building owner, which will increase confidence and investment while also helping put "feet on the street" in commercial areas.	Allowed in Village District by special exception	If Voluntown wants to increase residential density in its existing commercial center, promoting mixed use development is a great way to encourage this. The Town can allow mixed use in different ways as of right, rather than through special exception.

SECTION 6: AFFORDABLE HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 6: Affordable Housing Recommendations

Policy #1: Make improvements to Voluntown's administrative systems that facilitate housing development and provide ease of access to resources.

Action 1.1 – Create a webpage as part of Voluntown's main website that provides resources and links to information on housing in Town.

Why: Dedicating a webpage to housing information creates a useful, centralized resource for residents to use when they want to know more about town policies, relevant agencies to contact, or housing-related opportunities. This limits confusion and lifts some of the burden off of town staff.

Example: <https://www.salisburycthousing.org/>



Example of a municipal housing webpage from Salisbury, CT

Action 1.2 – Designate a municipal official as an affordable housing “point person” who coordinates with other municipal staff to help implement Voluntown’s affordable housing goals.

Why: Plans can lose their effectiveness if there is no established department, staff, or person charged with leading initiatives. Knowing who exactly to contact for housing related questions supports affordable housing by limiting interdepartmental confusion.

Action 1.3 - Promote, through the real estate and lending community, homebuying funding programs through USDA, CHFA, and municipal staff

Why: In an ownership-heavy community like Voluntown, it's important that realtors and both current and prospective residents have information to take advantage of single-family USDA/CHFA mortgages, as well as funding opportunities for home repairs and maintenance. Resources can be included on the municipal housing website, and informational fliers can be sent to real estate agents that feature eligibility requirements for buyers.

REAL ESTATE AGENTS, THE FRONTLINE SALESFORCE FOR CHFA MORTGAGES

CHFA values the role Real Estate Agents and REALTORS® play in CHFA's mission of expanding homeownership among low- to moderate- income residents in Connecticut. As a source of information for homebuyers and often the first to mention CHFA to potential borrowers, real estate sales people are the frontline salesforce for CHFA's first-time homebuyer programs.

This website is designed to provide the tools and information real estate agents need to work easily and efficiently with CHFA. Below you'll find links to detailed information on CHFA's Sales Price and Income limits for borrowers, mortgage programs, training opportunities and file turn-time information.

CHFA offers loans for first-time borrowers who might have a difficult time getting an approval for conventional loans, including special programs for police, teachers, veterans and current members of the military services, and people with disabilities. Use the links below for details on all CHFA mortgage programs.

			
Marketing Materials	Loan Status Information	CHFA Resource Map	Real Estate Agency Activity Reports
Download and print CHFA marketing materials to share with your clients.	Track the status of your buyer's loan. Only complete applications are input for tracking.	The CHFA Resource Map can tell you if you are within the Sales Price and Income Limit guidelines and will provide you with Targeted Area property information.	This report will show the CHFA Program loan activity generated by your company.

Resources for real estate agents, provided by CHFA

Policy #2: Make modifications to Voluntown's Zoning Regulations that promote housing opportunities in town.

Action 2.1 - Allow Multifamily housing up to 4 units per lot in Village District as of right

Why: Currently, regulations allow multifamily housing in the Village District by special exception, which is an added barrier for those wishing to develop land in this way. Multifamily development promotes affordable housing by creating higher density, smaller unit housing options at typically lower price points compared to single family homes. Allowing multifamily in the Village District as of right encourages alternative housing types in an area where infrastructure can support it.



Examples of small-scale multifamily homes

Action 2.2 - Allow elderly/age-restricted housing in all residential districts as of right

Why: Current regulations only allow elderly or age restricted housing in the village districts. Voluntown's elderly population has been growing and is expected to continue to increase in the next twenty years. Elderly age groups tend to desire smaller, less expensive living arrangements in general. Allowing more opportunities for residents to age in place can accommodate this growing 65+ population in Voluntown.

Action 2.3 - Adopt an Inclusionary Zoning regulation per CGS Section 8-2i. including a Housing Trust Fund for new multiple dwelling developments

Why: Inclusionary Zoning can require developers to set aside a certain amount of units in a project over a certain size for low- or moderate-income residents OR can require a Fee in Lieu paid into a Housing Trust Fund which can eventually be used to further housing opportunities in Voluntown. Using the power of the private development market, Inclusionary Zoning creates affordable housing opportunities at no cost to the Town.



Policy #3: Make town-wide commitments to furthering affordable housing options for residents, particularly for senior citizens.

Action 3.1 - Pursue partnerships with affordable housing and senior housing developers

Why: Forming partnerships with developers is important for Voluntown's affordable housing development. With Voluntown as an active partner to developers pursuing Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC – i.e. tax incentives for affordable housing development), developers have a much better chance securing those tax credits.



Greenwood Manor, income-restricted housing for seniors in Voluntown

Action 3.2 - Actively seek funding for senior housing expansion

Why: There is state and federal funding that is often not utilized by the municipalities that really need it. Perhaps with the help from the affordable housing point person (see Action Item 1.2), town staff can seek out these funds for senior housing development via CHFA, state grants, or otherwise.

Action 3.3 - Promote accessory dwelling units by providing information online and user-friendly resources for property owners.

Why: Voluntown is currently in the process of adopting zoning regulations that expand on its existing family apartments regulation. This will in theory allow homeowners to double their density and collect rent from an accessory dwelling unit. The key to this regulation change is ensuring that residents know what an ADU is, how they can build one, and what the regulatory process will look like for them. Therefore, providing resources via fliers, pamphlets, and on a municipal webpage will be critical to the regulation's success.



An example of an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)

SECTION 7: IMPLEMENTATION

Section 7: Implementation

Action	Responsibility	Priority & Timeframe
Action 1.1 – Create a webpage as part of Voluntown’s main website that provides resources and links to information on housing in Town.	Town Staff	High – Year 1
Action 1.2 – Designate a municipal official as an affordable housing “point person” who coordinates with other municipal staff to help implement Voluntown’s affordable housing goals.	Board of Selectmen/ Town Staff	High – Year 1
Action 1.3 - Promote, through the real estate and lending community, homebuying funding programs through USDA, CHFA, and municipal staff	Town Staff/Board of Selectmen	Moderate – Year 1 and ongoing
Action 2.1 - Allow Multifamily housing up to 4 units per lot in Village District as of right	Planning and Zoning Commission	Moderate – Year 2-4
Action 2.2 - Allow elderly/age-restricted housing in all residential districts as of right	Planning and Zoning Commission	Moderate – Year 1-3
Action 2.3 – Adopt an Inclusionary Zoning regulation per CGS Section 8-2i, including a Housing Trust Fund for new multiple dwelling developments	Planning and Zoning Commission / Board of Selectmen	High – Year 1-3
Action 3.1 – Pursue partnerships with affordable housing and senior housing developers	Board of Selectmen / Town Staff	High – Years 1-5
Action 3.2 - Actively seek funding for senior housing expansion	Town Staff	Moderate – Year 1 and ongoing
Action 3.3 - Promote accessory dwelling units by providing information online and user-friendly resources for property owners.	Town Staff	High – Year 1

APPENDIX A: GLOSSARY

Appendix A - Glossary

Affordable Housing: The term “affordable housing” can be broken down into two categories: subsidized affordable housing and naturally occurring affordable housing.

Subsidized affordable housing is often called “Capital A Affordable Housing” and refers to housing made affordable by nonprofit or government subsidies instead of the private market. Examples of Affordable Housing range from programs like tenant rental assistance, CHFA/USDA mortgages, and Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, to apartments managed by nonprofits.

Naturally occurring affordable housing (sometimes called “NOAH”) is regular, market-rate housing that just so happens to be affordable and within budget for many families. This type of housing is available to anyone, and not subsidized through a government or nonprofit. Most affordable housing in the United States is naturally occurring. Many towns and cities might have older houses that are not as well-maintained compared to newer, more desirable development occurring elsewhere in town, and therefore has a lower, affordable price tag.

Area Median Income (AMI): Median income in a given county or metropolitan region, determined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on an annual basis. It is often used to determine eligibility for affordable housing programs, and often expressed as a percentage. A shortcoming of using AMI is that it does not consider the often stark differences in median income between zip-codes and even neighborhoods, and can therefore distort data; for this reason, this report considers a number of factors that tell the holistic story of Voluntown’s housing situation, rather than just looking at one piece. For purposes of this calculation, Voluntown is part of the Norwich-New London, CT HUD Metro Fair Market Rent Area. An explanation of how this calculation is conducted can be found on the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s website.

Cost-burdened: A term used to describe households spending 30% or more of annual income on housing costs. Data on cost-burdened households is collected through the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS collects this data from a sample pool of households on a monthly basis, and aggregates these samples into one, three-, and five-years periods. This report uses five-year estimates, as they are considered the most accurate, particularly for smaller geographic areas.

CT General Statutes (CGS)

CGS 8-30g: In 1989, the CT General Assembly enacted Connecticut General Statutes (CGS) Section 8-30g, the “Connecticut Land Use Appeals Procedure,” establishing an appeals process to override rejections of affordable housing proposals by

local zoning boards. So long as the town's housing stock includes less than 10% Affordable Housing, developers can appeal a zoning denial in court. Unless the local zoning authority can point out an obvious health or safety concern, municipalities with less than 10% affordable housing units cannot deny such proposals. HUD calculates income and rental limits using the State Annual Median Salary, which is currently \$102,600.

CGS 8-30j: This 2017 statute builds on CGS 8-30j, requiring that at least once every five years, Connecticut municipalities prepare or amend and adopt an affordable housing plan to increase the number of affordable housing options in the town. The broad language of the statute allows towns flexibility in their plan's development and implementation.

