



OPEN COMMUNITIES ALLIANCE

Embracing Diversity to Strengthen Connecticut

HB 5002: Towns Take the Lead

For Families. For Communities. For the Environment. For Connecticut.

Core concept: Connecticut municipalities plan to meet a set, individualized affordable housing goal and then change local zoning to match their plan. If the goal is too high, the municipality justifies an attainable goal.

"My deal with the towns is, I want you to take the lead on this. You show us where that housing is going to go and we'll give you relief. But you take the lead."

Gov. Ned Lamont, Oct. 24, 2024

Background: Currently, Connecticut law provides that all municipalities help meet the state's need for housing that is affordable to its residents – but does not provide enough structure.

- Connecticut's Zoning Enabling Act (CGS Sec. 8-2) delegates the authority to zone from the state to municipalities under certain conditions, including that towns allow affordable and multifamily housing and help meet their region's need for affordable units. No details are provided on how much housing to allow.
- Under current law (CGS Sec. 8-30j), every Connecticut municipality is required to issue an affordable housing plan every five years, but this law does not set any unit goals for towns and does not require that plans be translated into actual zoning or policy changes.

Towns are left to plan and zone in a vacuum with no connection to the state's actual need for housing that is affordable for Connecticut families. Restrictive zoning is fueling the state's affordable housing crisis.

The Proposal: Amend 8-30j to require that municipalities:

- Plan to reach a specific unit goal, contributing to the regional need for affordable housing.
- Designate specific areas of town – potentially including downtowns, areas near transit stops and other amenity-rich areas – that would be good locations for mixed-income housing developments.
- Alter local zoning and other relevant rules to allow that housing to be built.
- Provide an explanation and alternative target if they are not able to plan and zone for their affordable housing unit goal.

Standards:

- A town's 8-30j plan would need to create a "realistic opportunity" for affordable housing to be built considering financial feasibility and applicable municipal rules, policies, and practices.
- The state's housing need study provided towns with a unit goal tailored to each municipality. Municipalities with poverty rates of 20% or greater will have no set goal but can identify their own production targets.
- Municipalities with higher per capita grand lists would complete **Priority Affordable Housing Plans**, focused on generating the housing types most needed to support sustainable growth and prosperity, including defined percentages of units not restricted to seniors and that include 2+ bedrooms.

State Agency Acceptance: Municipal plans and updated zoning would be submitted to the Office of Policy and Management for approval based on criteria it would develop through regulation. This will allow for the allocation of incentives.

Incentives:

- ⇒ **Priority for Discretionary Infrastructure Funding:** Municipalities will be eligible for prioritized discretionary infrastructure funding under these circumstances:
1. The town completes a **Priority Affordable Housing Plan**, if so required, and updates its zoning according to its plan.
 2. The town falls into the bottom 20 percent of the state ranked by per capita grand list.
- ⇒ **Technical Assistance:** Planning, development, and zoning technical assistance support may be available for municipalities and regional councils of government.

Towns Likely Exempted from Priority Affordable Housing Plans (Bottom 20% of per capita grand list income in 2022)

Ansonia
Bridgeport
Bristol
Brooklyn
Chaplin
Derby
East Hartford
East Haven
Enfield
Danbury
Griswold
Hartford
Killingly
Manchester
Mansfield
Meriden
Montville
Naugatuck
New Britain
New Haven
New London
North Stonington
Norwich
Plainfield
Putnam
Scotland
Sprague
Sterling
Thompson
Torrington
Waterbury
West Haven
Winchester
Windham