

Community Cultural Center Room 111

March 22, 2023

COMBINED MEETING OF TOWN COUNCIL AND
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

TOWN COUNCIL
PRESENT Chair Richard F. Kehoe, Vice Chair Donald Bell, Jr., Majority Leader
Sebrina Wilson (via Teams, arrived in person 6:48 pm), Minority Leader
John Morrison, Councilors Angela Parkinson, Harry O. Amadasun, Jr.
(via Teams, arrived in person 6:48 pm) Awet Tsegai (via Teams, arrived
in person 6:48 pm, Thomas Rup and Travis Simpson

P/Z COMMISSION
PRESENT Chair John Ryan, Vice Chair Henry Pawlowski- via Teams, Secretary
Carol Noel, Valentine Povinelli, Sidney Soderholm, Peter Marra

ABSENT Stephen Roczynski

ALSO
PRESENT Eileen Buckheit, Development Director
Carlene Shaw, Town Planner
Steve Hnatuk, Interim Town Planner
John Guskowski, Principal, Tyche Policy and Planning

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m.

Presentation of the East Hartford Draft Affordable Housing Plan by Tyche Policy and Planning

John Guskowski, Principal of Tyche Policy and Planning presented the draft affordable housing plan which is being developed pursuant to state law, Conn. Gen. Stat. section 8-30j which requires each town to develop an affordable housing plan with affordable being described as deed restricted rent payments, section 8 and other state assisted rental properties.

The Councillors appreciated the work that went into developing the draft and noted that while East Hartford is one of a few towns that meet the state minimum mandate for providing affordable housing as defined in Conn. Gen. Stat. section 8-30g and 8-30j, we should do more to ensure that our housing opportunities are generally affordable to a broad spectrum of people - not just subsidized or deed restricted - and maintained in good condition. The plan should go beyond the narrow definition of affordable housing and provide an overview of the town's housing stock, measures we are taking to ensure quality, diverse housing opportunities and steps to take to improve our housing opportunities.

Specifically, the Councillors suggested:

- The plan should have two sections. The first deals with the affordable housing plan as limited by state law. It should contain an overview of East Hartford's

affordable housing stock, compare East Hartford's percentage to the rest of the CT towns, and note that we have a disproportionate share of such housing. It should also note that the East Hartford Housing Authority is renovating approximately 300 units of such housing, making them more modern and meeting modern housing needs. Also note that East Hartford has partnered with Habitat for Humanity on several home ownership properties and that King Court has several deed restricted rental units.

- The second section should encompass a review of the broader housing market. The following bullets pertain to this section
- The report should start by highlighting current programs and recent changes and additions of programs made proactively by P&Z as well as Town Council.
- Metrics should be proposed to track effectiveness of existing programs that can be reviewed to determine if desired effect is being achieved. The summary of the report can recommend any additional measures that should be considered.
- Because the survey in the draft plan had very limited responses, the results should be in a general narrative summarizing the broad takeaways of the responses rather than in poll result format. The information is useful but the results were not statistically significant.
- Given East Hartford's lower than CT State average median income, special attention needs to be given to initiatives lifting up the community through enhanced employment opportunities and education to better their general financial well-being and reduce the income gap
- The housing data for East Hartford should also include a comparison to statewide averages. This is important because while we have a large percentage of people spending more than 30% of their income on housing, that is likely because we have a household income less than the statewide median.
- The section should note that housing affordability is a function of state and national economic issues and the town is limited in what it can do to address the affordability gap.
- The section should note that affordability without quality and well maintained housing does not help residents. Therefore, attention should be made to ensure quality housing.
- The section should talk about East Hartford's housing stock in positive terms as we have a solid, comparatively affordable housing opportunities for lower income households
- Among the initiatives that East Hartford has taken is requiring inspection of rental units upon tenant vacancy and the budgeting for additional inspectors. We worked with the housing authority on its renovation of Veterans Terrace. and we allocate several hundred thousand dollars a year in CDBG funding to assist low income homeowners with necessary repairs.
- The Planning and Zoning Commission adopted accessory use housing zoning and expanded the ability of developers to incorporate rental housing units in commercial zones to increase more affordable housing choices.
- Recommendations for action that require town funding should make clear that this would need to be done within the context and constraints of local budgeting.
- If East Hartford and statewide eviction and foreclosure rates are available, they should be included in the plan.
- There was general agreement that simply looking into the age of a building is not a good metric to judge quality of housing, an equivalent year built, or other metric is needed to judge quality of housing. East Hartford has an existing stock of

ADJOURNMENT

Attest _____
Richard F. Kehoe
Town Council Chair