Sustainable CT

Work Session Questions for July 11, 2018 Housing and Equity Work Session

Coventry

1. What does your Sustainability Team define as the three most important equitable community outcomes related to understanding your community's housing needs (include possible community indicators that measure these outcomes)?

- Keep affordable housing options available – to meet 10% - focus on senior needs
- Attract and retain millennial population by meeting their wants and needs
- Provide a more diverse portfolio of housing types; single family, multi family, senior housing, apartments, etc.

Analyzing Data

Analyzing the data provided in your Partnership for Strong Communities Housing Data Profile and other relevant data sources, please the questions below.

2. Define diversity within your community. Specifically, what are the demographics of the target groups or those living, working, or socializing in your community? (for example, race, ethnicity, age, gender, physical disability, retired/working, vehicle/commuting needs, shift worker, dependents/not, homeowner/renter, income level, other)

- Mostly white = 95% of population
- Aging +60 population increasing by 26% by 2030
- School age children decreasing by 16% by 2030
- Commuting is a problem – need to provide more public transport and walkability
- More rental options are a necessity to attract young professionals and support the elderly.
- The housing market in Coventry is largely made up of suburban, single family homes in a rural/low density setting.
- Coventry has about 1,500 jobs, 500 of which are filled by Coventry residents.
- About 90% of employed citizens (6,079 total) in Coventry commute to work outside of town. This means Coventry is dependent on outside sources of employment to sustain population growth and economic security. Some of the larger employment destinations for Coventry residents include Uconn and the Hartford area. The town is also dependent on State roads and access to highways for the thousands of commuters that come in and out of the town each day.

3. Which geographic areas/neighborhoods in your community most require an understanding/analysis of housing needs?

- Coventry Village/downtown and Route 44 have the most potential for dense population housing growth.

- It is worth investigating the possibilities of high density housing development in these areas based on the capacity of developable land, sewer and water.

4. What additional data would be helpful in analyzing your community's housing needs and their impacts on equity and how can you obtain it?

- Local survey data to understanding the preferences and satisfaction of the community
- Infrastructure data such as septic/sewer and public/private water supply, to understand where larger affordable housing projects can be located.
- Parcel ownership data and site plans/data

5. Overall, how do you view the age, income, racial, ethnic and other demographic indicators of your municipality? Please compare your assessment of your municipality with surrounding municipalities, your region and the state overall.

- View- typical rural CT community with a lack of racial diversity; potential limited capacity for larger housing development because of insufficient infrastructure. The population tends to be more affluent in income and aging. As shown in the data tables below; Coventry has roughly the same demographics as abutting rural towns such as Andover, Tolland, Bolton and Columbia. The most notable data are the overwhelmingly large white population in each town being mostly above 90%, where the state average is under 70%. In addition, there is a clear projected decrease in school aged children in each town, paired with a sharp increase in the elderly population. This demonstrates that most of Coventry's population challenges are also shared by other towns in our region.

Town	Population (2011-2015)	Population (% change since 2000)	Households (2011-2015)	Households (% change since 2000)
Coventry	12,450	8%	4,580	7%
Andover	3,217	6%	1,158	1%
Tolland	14,935	14%	5,238	14%
Bolton	4,959	-1%	2,021	6%
Columbia	5,460	10%	2,063	11%
State of Connecticut	3,593,222	6%	1,352,583	4%

Town	Average Household Size (2011-2015)	Average Household Size (% change since 2000)	Average Family Size (2011-2015)	Average Family Size (% change since 2000)
Coventry	2.71	1%	2.99	-3%
Andover	2.77	5%	3.23	6%
Tolland	2.82	0%	3.12	-1%
Bolton	2.45	-7%	2.86	-7%

Columbia	2.62	-1%	3.07	2%
State of Connecticut	2.57	2%	3.17	3%

Town	Householders Living Alone (2011-2015)	Householders Living Alone (% change since 2000)	Residents living in Families (2011-2015)	Residents living in Families (% change since 2000)
Coventry	15%	-4%	79%	4%
Andover	21%	2%	78%	3%
Tolland	13%	0%	82%	0%
Bolton	24%	4%	75%	0%
Columbia	22%	5%	73%	-5%
State of Connecticut	28%	2%	66%	-2%

Town	Households with Someone <18 (2011-2015)	Households with Someone <18 (% change since 2000)	Households with Someone >65 (2011-2015)	Households with Someone >65 (% change since 2000)
Coventry	35%	-5%	24%	7%
Andover	32%	-8%	31%	15%
Tolland	41%	-2%	25%	10%
Bolton	30%	-6%	28%	7%
Columbia	31%	-7%	3%	9%
State of Connecticut	32%	-3%	28%	3%

Town	Hispanic or Latino (%)	White (%)	Black or African American (%)	American Indian and Alaska Native (%)	Asian (%)	Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander (%)	Other/Multi-Race (%)
Coventry	3%	95%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Andover	2%	94%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%
Tolland	4%	94%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
Bolton	3%	91%	2%	0%	2%	0%	2%
Columbia	3%	86%	2%	0%	1%	0%	8%
State of Connecticut	15%	69%	10%	0%	4%	0%	2%

Town	Median Household Income
Coventry	$90,309.00

Andover	$100,321.00
Tolland	$107,290.00
Bolton	$97,019.00
Columbia	$89,986.00
State of Connecticut	$70,331.00

Town	Change in School Age Population (Projected 2020-2030)	Change in 65+ Population (Projected 2020-2030)
Coventry	-16%	26%
Andover	-37%	37%
Tolland	-31%	18%
Bolton	-2%	17%
Columbia	-5%	21%
State of Connecticut	-2%	12%

6. Assess whether your municipality is projected to get older, younger or stay about the same, and whether your current housing stock will be affordable and appropriate for your anticipated age groups, or whether you foresee the need to provide new housing choices.

- Coventry is expected to increase its elderly population by 26%. The current housing stock will likely not meet the needs of the increased senior population. There needs to be more affordable housing options with handicap friendly/accessibility, with more public transportation access.

7. Assess your residential grand list, whether it has grown in value, fallen in value or stayed about the same and what factors in the housing market (supply, demand, mix, those factors in surrounding municipalities) have had an impact on that grand list.

- Coventry's Grand List increased by 8% from 2008 to 2016. Much of this increased value can be credited to the higher impact of town revaluation, higher demand for lakeside (Coventry Lake) properties, newer homes that have replaced smaller homes near Coventry Lake, and public sewer that has been introduced to the Coventry Lake region.
- This is unique for most towns in CT and the region for the Grand List value to increase. Very few towns gained in value like Coventry.

8. Assess your municipality's residential zoning and determine whether it allows for a variety of housing choice creation, should the municipality want to add to the spectrum of choices, or whether lot size, floor area ratio and other factors limit your municipality's housing creation ability.

- Zoning allows for the following housing types:
  - Single family
  - Two-family

- o Multi family (In Coventry Village)
- o Commercial – Mixed Use Zone in the village
- o Condominiums
- o Apartments
- o Flexible In-law apartment regulation
- o Granny pod accessory dwelling units
- Floor area ratio does not play a role and lot size requirements are reasonable because they are not restrictive. Coventry only provides a minimum lot area for new lots, which are tailored to each zone based on the use and preexisting lot sizes. The setback requirements are not restrictive. They provide plenty of room for development on conforming lots.
- Coventry also has a section in the regulations to help apartment and condominium developments. The intent of the section is as follows:
- Section 5.13.01 Intent - The intent of this section is to provide an opportunity for the construction of a variety of housing types in Coventry to meet varying life styles, family sizes and income levels; to provide for apartment developments which are compatible with the character of the town and existing neighborhoods; to allow apartment developments on those tracts of land which, by reason of topography, favorable soil conditions, adequate road access and neighborhood character, are favorable to accommodating such clusters; and to encourage an aesthetically pleasing complex of multi-family units. Designed Apartment/Condominium Developments may be approved by special permit in the zones specified in Article VI, provided, however, that no such permit shall be issued for any such development in the drainage basin (watershed area) of Coventry Lake (Wangumbaug Lake).
- More affordable rental apartments and owned housing would be valuable to the community.

9. Assess your current housing choices: how wide a spectrum of unit types (single-family detached, duplex, multifamily, mixed-use, etc.) your municipality currently has, where they are generally located, and whether a diversity of housing types could be expanded in areas of municipality.

- Mostly owner occupied single-family homes (89%)
- Two condo complexes - (Country Place & Flanders Woods)
- Some apartments and multifamily houses (6%) - (The Village)
- One subsidized senior housing complex- (Orchard Hill Estates)
- Large stock of small house lot sizes in the Lake district (Coventry Lake and Eagleville Lake) that assist in providing affordable housing in the $150,000 - $220,000 range. These are not deed restricted, which does not mean they are perpetually affordable.
- We need to expand senior housing options and low-moderate income rentals and ownership.
  - o These developments will be best in the village and on Route 44 near the Bolton line, as
    - This land is the most suitable for high density housing because of proximity to public sewer and water.
    - These areas also have the most access to future public transportation options and mixed use zoning for the walkability to jobs, food, entertainment, recreation, health services and other goods.

10. From your housing data profile, determine the number and percentage of income restricted housing units (affordable housing), their type (single-family, multifamily), their location (confined to an area of municipality, with/without access to transit, jobs, healthcare, shopping, recreation) and whether there are locations where such housing could be created. How do your municipality's numbers/percentage compare to surrounding municipalities, the region/county, and the state as a whole?

- State – 11%
- Tolland County – 8%
- Coventry – 4.9%
- Tolland: 3%
- Andover: 3%
- Bolton 1%

Figure 1. represents current affordable housing in Coventry, as well as the possible locations for future affordable housing development.
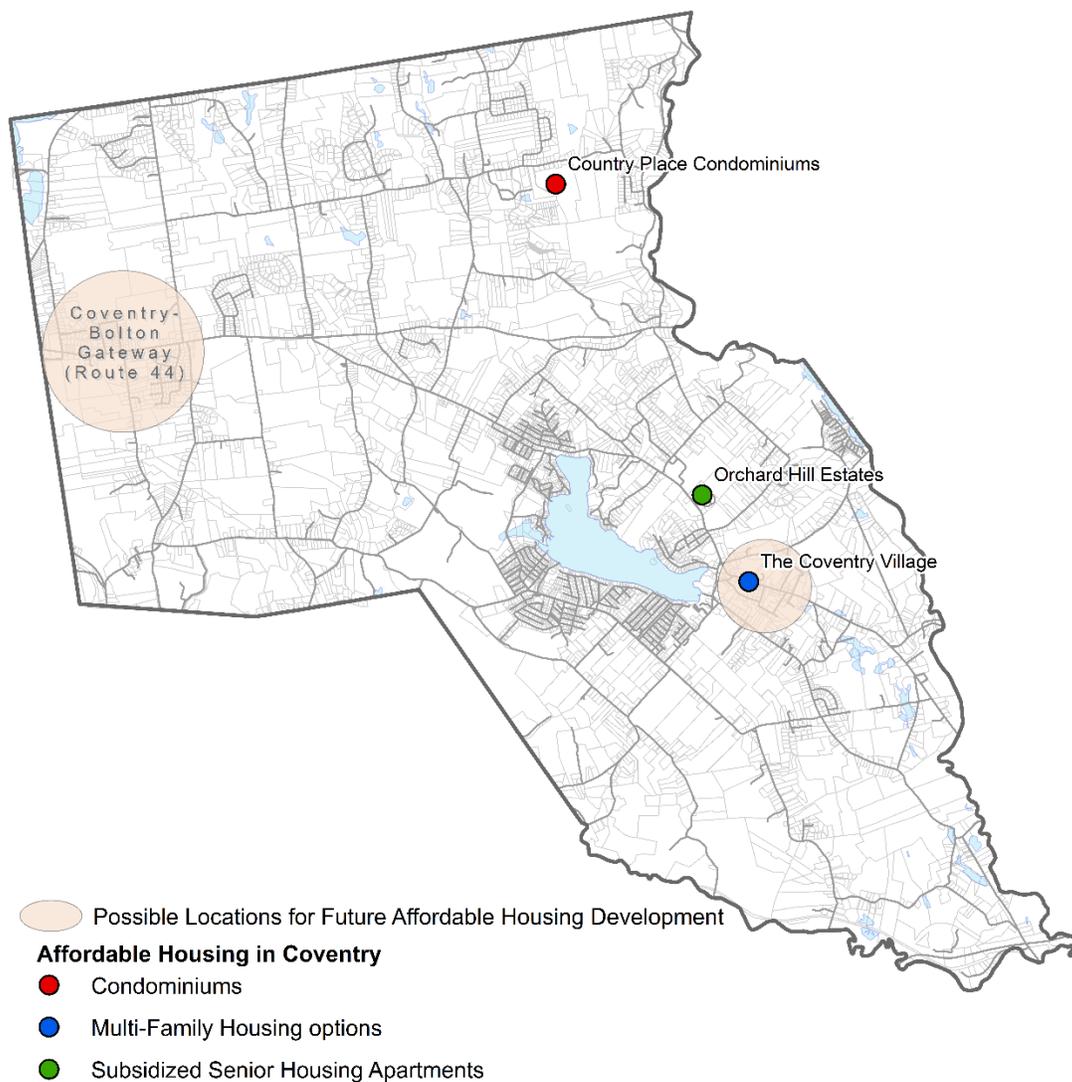

Figure 1. Coventry Current and Future Affordable Housing Locations.

- As shown in Figure 1., Coventry offers affordable housing in a number of locations. The possible future affordable housing locations are located in the Coventry Village and the Coventry-Bolton Gateway along Route 44. Based on current knowledge, these locations have the greatest potential for dense population growth because of possible sewer capacity, public water availability, public transportation availability, developable land, and location in a mixed-use setting.
- Coventry needs an additional 250 units to reach 10% income restricted housing in town.
- The local employees who make low/entry-level incomes do not have many options of affordable housing in the region, seeing most of the towns in the area have less than 5% affordable housing. This means many workers are burdened by housing costs locally, or are forces to live farther away in towns that provide more affordable housing.
- In addition, Coventry residents who are aging and require affordable senior housing are often forced to move out of the region in search for more affordable housing.

11. From your housing data profile, determine the median household income overall, for homeowners, and for renters, the median sales price and median gross rent, and how many households (renters and owners) are burdened by their housing costs (spending more than 3 0% of their income on housing).

- Median house/mortgage income: $104,338; Median rental income: $33,598; Overall Median income: 95,544.
- The Median Home Value is $256,700
- Number of burdened home owners (>30% of income) = 1,108; Number of burdened renter (>30% of income) = 228.
- Median gross rent = $1,141

    *The data provided on the 2018 data profile is actually from the 2011-2015 American Community Survey. There is no 2018 data available.

12. How are your residents served by the existing housing in your community now? What are the root causes or factors of current inequities or barriers related to your community's housing needs?

- Served by predominantly houses (89%-Single family, 2% - Multifamily).
- There are currently no incentives (financial and non-financial) or mandates for developers to build larger housing complexes in Coventry.
- At present, Coventry likely does not have the public sewer capacity to support larger housing developments in Coventry Village. This issue continues to be examined for resolution by the water pollution authority.
- The public is very resistant to change and more development in the town, there is also a stigma that affordable housing is not good for the community, property values and crime. This can be addressed with public outreach and education.

13. How will you engage those most impacted? Who is collecting and contributing feedback? Have you created accessible opportunities for these groups to engage? Public engagement should prioritize opportunities to collaborate and co-create.
- Coventry organized a housing and equity public forum on August 13th, 2018 to start the conversation. The focus was to update the public on the latest housing data, to gain feedback on future

new/modified housing with the goal to accommodate a more diverse demographic. We will follow up from the meeting with a statistically valid survey for town residents on topics discussed during the meeting. We will continue to hold housing forums with the public and developers. The data and findings will be included in our Plan of Conservation and Development in 2020.

- We will use our various media platforms to connect and advertise with the public about these opportunities and events. Media platforms include the town website, press releases, local cable access, e-blast, the community newsletter and flyers.

14. What did those engaged tell you about the potential benefits, burdens, and/or community priorities related to community housing needs? What results and outcomes would they like to see? Did they identify ways to lessen any potential unintended consequences and/or to broaden any potential positive impacts?

- Some benefits of introducing more affordable housing that were brought up included the ability of families and residents to stay in Coventry throughout all stages of their lives, more customers to local businesses, a younger demographic for the longevity of the town, more workforce available for various positions in town (preschool teachers, volunteer firefighters, part time employees, etc.)
- Some burdens included the strain to public infrastructure (roads, public sewer, public water) and resistance from the public for more development.
- Based on prior public forums, there is a clear desire for more housing choices to be provided for seniors.
- We expect more details to come as we hear more from the public via future forums and continues work on the POCD.

15. Given what you have learned, what steps will you take to address any remaining barriers, impacts, or unintended consequences of understanding your community's housing needs and planning for the future on equity (include immediate and long-term impacts)?

- Currently, we do not have any substantial feedback from Coventry residents on this topic because we have yet to send out a community survey and have not conducted additional public forums. Thus, there is still a lot to be determined as we get further in the process.
- Based on the experiences of other towns such as Suffield and Guilford, we can anticipate the following barriers:
  - The challenge of overcoming the fear of change and Not In My Back Yard-ism (NIMBYism).
  - Determining how the town can have an influence on the housing market, where there is a history of the housing market running itself.
  - Concerns over the types of people affordable housing will attract, property values decreasing, traffic issues, design (look) of the buildings.
- We can attempt to address these concerns by properly educating the community on the realities of affordable housing, such as demonstrating success stories in CT. The design and fit of a project is of course a concern, but the town has a strong history of applying appropriate design guidelines in other development projects.

16. How will you include and benefit from diverse representation in presenting your community's housing data at a regular meeting of your community's legislative body or other public meeting?

- Media platforms (referenced on answer to question 13)
- For our community survey, better outreach will bring new people with different perspectives, bringing a broader spectrum of input and reality. We received an incredibly high response rate from our prior community survey, so we expect the same or better results as we focus more on reaching out to all demographics. A wider variety of survey respondents will help provide a clearer picture of the scope of the project.

17. How will you document, evaluate, and report progress to increase equity and access to services as you move toward designing and implementing a housing needs assessment?

- Create a user-friendly web-page/landing spot on the town website for a variety of information specifically focused on housing for the public. This will be a clearinghouse of information will include policy changes, meeting/event dates, a database of existing housing, a database for specifically affordable housing, and survey data. All of this information and data will be updated regularly, and include the date of the last update on each section.
- By making all of the data we collect publically available and easily sharable, we are welcoming engagement by citizens, advocates and experts.
- We will evaluate progress by setting goals for affordable housing development, and evaluate how these goals are being met at our annual housing forum with the PZC using updated data and surveys.

18. How will you continue to partner and deepen relationships with impacted segments of your community to make sure your strategies to meet housing needs works for all in the long-term?

- As indicated above, this webpage/landing spot for data and regulations will help maintain the relationship of trust and transparency between the town and the citizens. We will provide the public access to both online and paper Help Centers to provide feedback or ask questions about housing and overall development strategies in town. These comments will be directed to the Land Use Office for the Planning Technician and/or Town Planner to address.
- We will conduct annual public forums with the Planning and Zoning Commission, as well as regular media advertisements of events, development plans, and the online database. We will encourage residents to get involved in the planning and development process.
- An overall marketing effort can be used to better broadcast the idea of "live, work and play" in our community, and the steps we can take to make our community better for everyone.
- We will continue to survey the public to ensure the town residents are satisfied with any changes, and to act upon comments and concerns including goal setting and evaluation.

19. What challenges did you encounter while considering how to optimize for equity in understanding your community's housing needs, and how might you learn from them for future applications?

- The timeframe to prepare the Sustainable Ct application was short to fully examine the issue, but serves to establish a good foundation and template for analysis and goal setting. The preparation of the POCD review will provide more sufficient time to property evaluate the issue, share and discuss with the community and develop an appropriate action plan that is incorporated into the towns plan.

- Taking action to address our need for more affordable housing is complex with many layers to consider. This involves infrastructure, suitable land (location), interest from developers, code/regulations, design standards, and public cooperation and input.
- From past observations, the planning aspect does not see as much participation as when the application is submitted and plans are made. We will need to inspire public interested in participating during the initial planning and policy decisions.
- In addition, the people who feel against certain developments are the most passionate about the subject, thus participate far more at public forums and times of decision making than people who support the proposed development. We have found it difficult to gain feedback from a more diverse pool of people with differing opinions, backgrounds, ideas, demographics and income levels at public forums involving land development. We can alleviate this challenge by improving our outreach to the public by introducing new marketing and communication techniques. Our survey will also reach out to all types of people in town because there will be online and paper surveys available and sent out to all addresses in Coventry.
- Perhaps the greatest barrier to gaining more widespread public support is the fear of change and NIMBYism deriving from emotion rather than factual evidence. Education early in the planning process will help overcome this barrier.