

New Haven Affordable Housing Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: September 22, 2021

Members Present: Elias Estabrook, Anika Singh Lemar, Claudette Kidd, Jamie Myers-McPhail, Serena Neal-Sanjurjo, Honda Smith (alder)

Staff: Arlevia Samuels, Vivian Rodriguez

Call to Order: 6:37 pm

End: 7:52 pm

- I. Facilitator updated the Commission on the following items.
 - A. South Central Region Council of Governments' Housing Survey
 1. The completion of the South Central Region Council of Governments' Housing Plan Survey. This survey is accessible in both English and Spanish. SCRCOG urges New Haven residents and the Commission to complete their surveys by October 15th.
 2. David Fink, SCRCOG's housing expert is interested in scheduling a follow up meeting with the Commission in response to survey questions. The Commission was given the dates of Oct. 4th or Oct. 11th. The Commission agreed to Oct. 4th at 6:30 pm. (*Fink's follow-up meeting moved to November, rather than October 4, 2021.*)
 - B. Transitions
 1. The Commission was informed of the upcoming review of potential Bylaws and the nominations of a Chair and a Vice-Chair.
- II. The Role of Affordable Housing Commission
 - A. The Affordable Housing Commission was established through New Haven's Affordable Housing Task Force's report of 2019 and Ordinance 1868.
 - B. The commission's role is to "ensure continued action on the creation and preservation of affordable housing by monitoring, addressing, and making recommendations on affordable housing."

- C. The commission will submit annual recommendations to the Board of Alders.
 - D. The commission's statutory power is to advise the City and the Board of Alders on areas of affordable housing. The commission does not have the authority to determine whether or not the city or the Board of Alders approve a housing development; however, city officials and departments can seek the Affordable Housing commission's advice.
- III. New Haven's Need of Affordable Housing - (*May 2021's meeting led by David Fink and Data Haven*)
- A. Provide alternative affordable housing options.
 - B. Create new developments to combat New Haven's outdated housing stocks.
 - C. Create "good" jobs.
 - D. Revise zoning policies, when needed, to permit greater density, omit parking requirements, and the development of accessory dwelling units.
 - E. Encourage city officials to be more transparent on housing developments, tax abatements guidelines, and the need for affordable housing.
 - F. Collaborate with grassroots housing advocates, non-profits/private developers, and city officials to build affordable housing.
 - G. Distinguish the need of housing units based on demand, rather than identifying a specific number as a goal.

(Commissioners' Feedback)

- Access to affordable housing rentals is difficult and rather impossible for New Haven residents and social service agencies to secure. The city does not have a database or rental registry in which prospective renters can search for affordable housing units. In comparison to the City of Stamford's rental registry of affordable housing, the commission invites New Haven to consider a similar approach.
- Despite the increased creation of housing units, rental rates continue to increase. For instance, in September 2021, the average rent for a 1-bedroom apartment was estimated at \$1,600 whereas a 3-bedroom ranged between \$2,000 to \$2,500. New Haven's current rental trends exceed the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) fair market rates by 11%- 27%. As a result, the Commission seeks ways to further examine affordability factors of housing such as household income(s), the city's employment rates, and the continued creation of "good" jobs.
- The Commission also discussed the impact of transportation on affordable housing and the demands for viable local jobs that promote walkability; thereby,

potentially diminishing transportation expenses and offsetting housing burdens of current and prospective New Haven residents.

- IV. Evictions and Foreclosures (*May 2021's meeting led Erin Kenple of CT Fair Housing*)
 - A. Reconsider the accessibility of rental/mortgage relief programs
 - B. Review the eligibility requirements of Unite CT and CASTLE
 - C. Consider how race and income impacts eviction and foreclosure trends
 - D. Acknowledge that Latinos and single Black women are highly vulnerable to evictions in New Haven.
 - E. Create funding sources to further support the eviction/foreclosure work of agencies such as New Haven Legal Aid.
 - F. Lobby the state for eviction/foreclosure reforms

Commissioners' Comments:

- The eviction and foreclosure proceedings are judicial matters that require the city to lobby the state for the continued funding from CARES resources and other federal sources. Within 2022, the city can partner with Connecticut BAR Association to urge the state to allocate funds to further support eviction and foreclosure mediations and free legal representation through agencies such as New Haven Legal Assistance Association and other eviction and foreclosure prevention agencies.
 - In terms of emergency rental assistance, New Haven's CASTLE program has paid approximately \$221, 000 in rent arrears and served over 47 households. The Commission advises LCI to continue its outreach to housing distressed households and to further market CASTLE's services.
 - In response to the statewide increases in eviction and foreclosure filings from August 2021 to September 2021, the Commission urges the city to continue marketing Unite CT and Emergency Mortgage Assistance Program (EMAF) to the public.
- V. New Haven's suggested benefits of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) (*June 26, 2021 meeting led by Aicha Woods, Executive Director of City Plan*)
 - A. Increase affordable housing choices especially for residents of all income levels including very low-income residents.
 - B. Provide housing that responds to changing family needs, smaller households, and increasing housing costs;
 - C. Provide accessible housing for seniors and persons with disabilities.
 - D. Create new housing units while respecting the scale of historic fabric and neighborhood patterns of development.

- E. Support more efficient use of existing housing stock and infrastructure;
 - F. Offer environmentally friendly housing choices with less average space per person and smaller associated carbon footprints;
 - G. Create small contractor workforce opportunities
 - H. Bring “illegal” rental units into compliance.
- VI. New Haven’s predicted benefits of Inclusionary Zoning (*June 26, 2021 meeting led by Aicha Woods*)
- A. Increases affordable housing supply by creating new affordable units as a part of new development
 - B. Fosters mixed-income development rather than 100% market-rate housing projects
 - C. Provides affordable housing in areas of opportunity with greater access to jobs, services, and amenities, where new development is occurring
 - D. Captures a portion of the value of rising land costs to fund affordable housing

Commissioners’ feedback on Accessory Dwelling Units and Inclusionary Zoning-

- Commissioners referred to their positions as noted in City Plan Commission’s public hearings on July 28, 2021, and August 2, 2021. (*For further details, please access City Plan Commission’s meeting records on the dates cited above.*) Overall, the Commission urges the city to find reasonable ways of requiring developers who benefit from inclusionary zoning to practice equitable leasing policies for non-subsidiary renters (households without rental vouchers) in need of affordable housing.
- Establish lieu-fees that are paid into a housing trust fund. The accumulated funds would be used to develop off site affordable housing and to support community land banks.

- VII. Housing Development (*August 25, 2021 meeting led by Housing Development Fund’s Ali Robinson and Jaclyn Alves*)
- A. Support homeownership down payment and education programs
 - B. Assist non-profit agencies in Finance management resources
 - C. Accessible city managed database of affordable housing opportunities
 - D. Community Land Banks
 - E. Develop alternatives to affordable housing that do not require Low Income Housing Tax Credit.

Commissioners’ feedback on Housing Development-

- Commissioners acknowledged the competitiveness of homeownership opportunities and the limited pool of affordable homes and homeownership assistance. It was noted that prospective buyers who rely on mortgage offers are often overlooked by private investors, who purchase homes through cash sales. As a result, the Commission discussed the creation of affordable homeownership opportunities throughout the city similar to LCI's initiatives in Newhallville.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 27th at 6:30 pm.