



BE THE CHANGE

A PLAYBOOK FOR PRO-HOMES LAND USE BOARD CANDIDATES



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INTRODUCTION

So, you're thinking of running for (or applying to serve on) your town or city's planning and zoning commission, planning commission, or zoning board of appeals? And you support "pro-homes" policies that make your town/city – and Connecticut – a more welcoming home? Great! This nonpartisan "Be the Change" Playbook is for you.

The Playbook will give you 4 critical tools for your discussions with voters and officials:

- The basics: zoning terms, pointers about how to frame the housing crisis and your solutions, key messages, and useful statistics.
- Information about where to learn about your town/city's land use, state and local zoning frameworks, and recent state-level zoning reforms.
- Platform development ideas for finding the right pro-homes message for you.
- How to handle questions you're likely to get on the campaign trail.

NOTE: We do not endorse candidates in elections and can not offer you any material support for your campaign outside of this training. This might change down the line, but that's the case for now.

We want you to win, and we're here for you! Your success locally is our success statewide. If you have questions or want to be put in touch with our network of like-minded candidates, please be in touch at **info@desegregatect.org**!

Welcome to the Pro-Homes Movement!

We are a growing group of residents, advocates, students, business & faith leaders, and elected officials who want to see a more prosperous, equitable, and sustainable Connecticut by reforming our land use laws at all levels of government. We welcome people of all professional, political, and personal backgrounds to join our movement. Here's what we believe and want to see in pro-homes candidates!

What Does the Pro-Homes Movement Believe?

- Everyone deserves a safe & secure home
- The housing crisis is real and impacts every type person, family, and business
- Restrictive zoning has helped create the housing crisis and is based on historic patterns of housing & land use discrimination
- Restrictive zoning is bad for our economy and our environment
- It will take an "All of the Above" approach to solving the housing crisis
- Pro-homes reforms benefit all types of members of our community
- Pro-homes reforms will make our community and our state more welcoming to new residents and businesses

What Does It Mean to be a Pro-Homes Candidate?

- You will promote pro-homes reforms in your community tailored to your community
- You will advocate for the pro-homes agenda with your neighbors and other local leaders
- You will advocate for the pro-homes agenda in your position where ever appropriate
- You will be kind, patient, informed, and dogged in the face of resistance
- You will be a good ambassador for the pro-homes movement in Connecticut

What Does a Pro-Homes P&Z Commissioner Do?

While you're running, it is important for you to understand what you want to accomplish on your local commission so you can properly communicate that to your neighbors on the campaign trail. It's just as important to understand what you can and can not accomplish, so you don't set expectations for yourself or voters that you can't meet. Here's what to expect!

At the Administrative Level

- Your primary role will be to review applications to determine if they meet existing regulations or require special amendments to be approved.
- You must review every application with a good faith open-mindedness about if they satisfy zoning regulations or deserve amendments.
- *Pro-homes role:* Remember the people who are not in the room speaking for an application. Often times, the people who will live in proposed homes won't be there, so it is your job to voice their needs and benefits.

At the Legislative Level

- Your secondary role will be to consider reforms to your current zoning regulations, but this won't happen without work.
- *Pro-homes role:* You need to be the voice pushing the commission to consider amending existing regulations to meet pro-homes objectives and to set up public input for them.
- *Pro-homes role:* You will also need to hold the commission and the community accountable for its existing planning documents including the POCD and AHF when considering projects.

At the Democratic Level

- Your other role is to encourage more democratic participation in your community's planning process, which is not generally very representative of the community's demographics, needs, or future.
- *Pro-homes role:* Activate other local pro-homes advocates to attend meetings and speak up.
- *Pro-homes role:* Work to make the process less burdensome to commissioners and the public.



MESSAGING FUNDAMENTALS

The right messaging is key to a successful campaign. Many voters will consider a candidate's literature and online presence before casting their vote. Pro-homes zoning candidates have consistent, positive, battle-tested messaging to win - use it!

In this section, we offer key terms, frame the problem of exclusionary zoning, and explain the solutions of pro-homes zoning. We also identify key messages and useful statistics that will resonate with your constituents.

A. Basic Zoning Terms

Before we begin, you might find a few key terms useful. Updates will always be available at www.desegregatect.org/definitions.

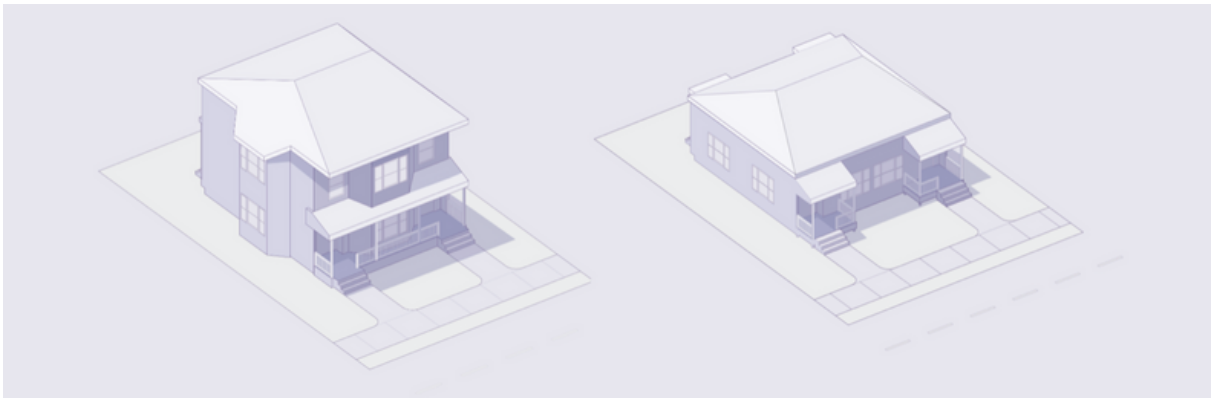
ACCESSORY APARTMENT: Also known as an accessory dwelling unit (ADU), this term refers to a smaller home on the same lot as a larger home. State laws enable this type of home to be built in a separate building, like a garage, or on the third floor or back of the primary home.



AS OF RIGHT: As-of-right means that project applications are reviewed for their compliance with the zoning code by town staff, without needing to undergo a public hearing, variance, or special permit/exception. The public pre-determines what is as of right at the district-level instead of project-by-project. This lessens the burden on commissioners, the public, and public/private/non-profit developers.

ALL OF THE ABOVE: This broad term describes the pro-homes approach to solving the housing crisis, meaning we need more types of homes across the board - whether its owning, renting, publicly owned, privately owned, we need it all. Zoning reform must spur diversity and innovation in home construction and policy.

DUPLEX: A single building that contains two homes. They can be stacked, as shown in the below image at left, or side by side, as shown on the right.



EXCLUSIONARY ZONING: Zoning that ends up keeping people, particularly low-income people and people of color, out of certain communities. Scholars usually say that large-lot single-family zoning is the most exclusive.

FOURPLEX: A single building that contains four homes. It can come in many configurations!

HOMERENTER: Someone who rents his or her home. We use this term to ensure people who rent are given as much dignity and value as people who own their homes.

INCLUSIONARY ZONING: Zoning that sets aside a percentage of homes to be deed-restricted for affordable income levels. This is not a term that refers to zoning being inclusive in the general sense. It can also be a backdoor way to prevent construction if it is not balanced properly.

MIXED-USE ZONING: A type of zoning that allows for both residential and commercial development in one area, often in the same building. For example, buildings with retail shops on the ground floor and housing on the upper floors are mixed-use buildings.



MISSING MIDDLE HOMES: A type of development or project that falls between single-family developments and large multi-family developments, that historically existed in CT but is currently illegal in most places; usually 2-10 homes per development. For example, duplexes, triplex, quads, or perfect sixes. Note the image above.

MULTIFAMILY HOMES: Any development that contains more than 1 home per building, whether it is owned or rented.

OVERLAY ZONE: A specific type of zone that can be mapped on top of an existing zone.

PRIMARY DWELLING: Also known as a main unit, this term means a larger home on the same lot as an accessory apartment.

TRANSIT-ORIENTED COMMUNITY: A mixed-use zoning neighborhood within walking distance (usually around 1/2 mile) of a transit station.

TRANSIT STATION: Any public transportation station; could be a fixed station, like a platform for passenger or commuter rail (Amtrak, Hartford Line, Metro North, and Shoreline East) or bus rapid transit (CTfastrak), or a local bus stop (CTtransit, local transit districts).

TRIPLEX: A single building that contains three homes. It can come in many configurations, including the common arrangement, the stacked flats, shown below aka "Tripledacker."

ZONING ENABLING ACT: The state law that delegates zoning authority to towns and establishes regulations within which towns can zone.



B. Framing the Problem

To convince people you're the right candidate for the job and the pro-homes agenda is the right fit for your community, you should correctly frame the **problem** that status-quo zoning creates. Here's how we frame the problem: Connecticut's status quo zoning hurts our economy, damages our environment, and maintains socio-economic and racial inequities.

- **THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM:** Restrictive zoning and costly land use review processes have stunted home construction and driven up prices. The high price of housing means essential workers can't afford homes (or they pay too much); small businesses and manufacturers can't fill jobs; young families and minority are priced out of homeownership; seniors can't afford to downsize in their communities; local governments and utilities spend and waste money on spread out infrastructure.

- More Details: Restrictive zoning, costly review processes, and arbitrary impediments have ensured our housing supply falls short of necessary levels. They drive up prices, which in turn makes it harder for people to find attainable housing.

- THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEM: One-size-fits-all zoning laws require us to build single-family housing on large lots, which creates serious sprawl. Logically, this gobbles up more and more of our farmland and forest and pollutes our waterways. This housing is built too far away from transit, shops, and jobs, making us a car-dependent state and contributing to our international climate emergency.
 - More Details: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has provided irrefutable evidence that the warming of our planet is caused by man. Land use laws contribute. Connecticut's zoning laws require a minimum of one acre per house on 81% of residential land in our state. Sprawl makes us use more land for housing, which requires us to drive and build roads, and thus pollutes our waterways. Researchers have found that between 1985 and 2010, Connecticut lost 6.5% of our forests and 15% of agricultural land – primarily to sprawling residential development.

- THE EQUITY PROBLEM: Connecticut's zoning laws, like other states, directly or indirectly led to racial exclusion for generations. Today, these same laws maintain this segregation by overwhelmingly favoring the most expensive kind of housing: freestanding, single-family housing (which according to our Zoning Atlas is allowed on 91% of the land in state). This kind of zoning keeps Connecticut economically and racially segregated by blocking people with diverse backgrounds and needs, including the elderly and disabled, from moving to or staying in large parts of the state.
 - More Details: In Connecticut, one in six families in our state pay more than 50% of their income on housing. Our land use laws prevent us from attracting and retaining racially and economically diverse populations.

Check out further stats and links at www.desegregatect.org/background.

C. Framing the Solution

Similarly, you should also consider how you're going to frame the solution to changing status-quo zoning. Here's how we frame it to start: We must change zoning laws to make it easier to build diverse types of homes in our cities and towns across the state for our economy, society, and environment. Here's are pro-homes solution responses to each of the 3 problems noted above:

- THE ECONOMIC SOLUTION: Pro-homes zoning reform is pro-growth. It makes it easier to create diverse homes that stimulate the economy by creating construction jobs and by indirectly supporting jobs in nearby shops and offices. New homes adds to the property tax base – and multi-family homes contribute more taxes on a per-unit basis than single-family housing.
 - More Details: By creating more attainable housing options, zoning reform will make our economy work for everybody. According to one study, if we build 1,500 multi-family homes, we will generate \$271 million dollars in income and almost \$40 million dollars in revenue for state and local governments, not to mention over 3,000 jobs.
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- THE ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTION: Pro-homes zoning reform is pro-environment. It helps build more walkable, transit oriented communities that reduce the time we all spend in cars and the amount of land dedicated to parking, reduce energy and infrastructure costs and give people the variety of homes and activities they want close by. We have to build more homes, and it's smarter if we build them in places that already have infrastructure like sewers, sidewalks, and transit. In-fill density also means we don't destroy our farms and forests.

Zoning reform can nestle additional homes into existing neighborhoods, using the streets, sidewalks, sewers, water lines, and stormwater systems that are already in place. Zoning reform can also help create more centralized neighborhoods where residents are able to walk from their homes to their workplaces, local businesses, and transit stations.

- These walkable communities reduce reliance on cars and thus reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Your platform can also include a push to reduce or eliminate costly parking mandates, because research shows more minimum parking requirements leads to more driving and more polluting runoff. Check out a video of a longer presentation that makes the environmental case for zoning reform.
- THE EQUITY SOLUTION: Pro-homes zoning reform creates more diverse homes, which makes our communities more diverse, too. More diverse neighborhoods reduce racial disparities in access to grocery stores, child care, and vital services and and improve outcomes for all residents.
 - More Details: Studies show that children of low-income families who live in income-diverse neighborhoods make more money, go to college at higher rates, have measurably better life outcomes and benefit from lower income gaps. If you live in a city where gentrification is a concern, note for your constituents that more homes can help slow or even reduce rents for everyone by increasing the overall supply.

D. Who Benefits?

Being pro-homes means embracing zoning that produces more diverse types of homes in more accessible and sustainable places that benefits the economy and environment. We all benefit from zoning reform! But as you talk with different people, be prepared to show how a pro-homes agenda will benefit them personally.

Note that there are people who will benefit from your pro-homes approach that do not yet live in your town/city. It's your responsibility to speak up for them too!

Here are six groups pro-homes zoning benefits – with stats to prove it!

1. Homeowners

Your Overall Message: *"Let's benefit existing homeowners by ensuring they can improve their property values."*

Problem:

Current, restrictive zoning prevents homeowners from maximizing the potential of their greatest asset. Even if homeowners want to subdivide large lots for a second house or add an accessory apartment, they often face undue barriers.

Solution:

Zoning reforms enabling accessory apartments and allowing smaller lots give homeowners the freedom to invest in, and build wealth from, their homes. In addition, zoning that allows new, diverse housing options (including multi-family housing) can actually increase property values in single-family neighborhoods.

Useful Stats:

- Single-family housing is allowed as of right on 91.1% of the land in Connecticut, making it the most dominant type of housing.
- Accessory apartments can increase the resale value of a home by up to 50%.
- Single-family homes near multi-family homes appreciate in value faster than homes in single-family neighborhoods.

2. Homerenters

Your Overall Message: "Let's make our community welcoming and affordable for individuals and families who want a step ladder to homeownership or want to downsize!"

Problem:

Restrictive zoning in our community prevents us from building the kind of homes people are more likely to rent. The limited supply of rental homes in Connecticut is making existing rental housing increasingly difficult to afford and making it difficult for people to move in or out of owning a home.

Solution:

Diverse housing options – including accessory apartments and multi-family homes – tends to be a better option for young, mobile professionals, working class families, and empty-nesters. More of these homes means rents become lower and more affordable.

Useful Stats:

- Search for home sale and rental pricing in your community
- In the United States at large, more and more high-income people are renting their homes instead of buying them. Their demand for housing has made it harder for lower- and moderate-income people to afford housing.
- In addition, more older Americans and larger households (primarily families with kids) are renting than in prior years.
- Only 2.1% of the land in Connecticut allows four-or-more family housing as of right, meaning that more affordable rental options are few and far between.
- About 64% of Connecticut's homerenters with extremely low incomes in the state are severely cost burdened and risk becoming homeless
- Studies have shown that a 10 percent increase in housing construction can lead to a 4 to 7 percent reduction in rents, which makes housing more affordable for all people.
- Harvard University reported that between 2012 and 2017, the number of housing units renting nationally for less than \$600 a month fell by 3.1 million.

3. Employers

Your Overall Message: *"Let's ensure that the zoning code is pro-business that supports bringing workers, customers, and complementary growth to our community."*

Problem:

Small businesses need customers to survive. But Connecticut residents are spending too much on housing & transportation costs, which means they can't spend money at local businesses. Additionally, businesses don't just need customers: they need workers. Our businesses, including manufacturers, struggle to find housing for skilled workers.

Solution:

When Connecticut residents spend less on housing & transportation costs, they can spend more at local businesses. We should locate homes near main streets and near publicly accessible transportation to make businesses in your community more successful and to boost Connecticut's economy.

Useful Stats:

- See the stats on rental housing above.
- The Connecticut Business and Industry Association reported in 2020 that the manufacturing industry was losing jobs due to Connecticut's high cost of living, and that only 25% of manufacturing employers reported "no trouble" in retaining and recruiting young workers.
- A study of 34,000 workers found that those who commute fewer than 30 minutes per day gain seven days' worth of productive time annually.
- 64% of workers who earn less than \$50,000 said they would consider a lateral employment move if it would shorten their commute, while 60% of workers earning more than \$50,000 said the same.

4. Young People/Families

Your Overall Message: *"Let's attract young people and young families back to Connecticut by building more homes in transit-rich, walkable neighborhoods."*

Problem:

Our state is suffering from brain drain. Young people are opting to establish homes, start families and create businesses in places like Massachusetts, New York, and Washington D.C.

Solution:

Attracting new residents will expand our tax base and help pay for essential services for our aging population. Improved zoning can help Connecticut maintain its vitality while building and educating the workforce of the future.

Useful Stats:

Connecticut's population only grew by 1% over the past 10 years, trailing our competitor states.

- Most towns in Connecticut (likely including yours!) are facing declining school enrollments.
- For the sixth consecutive year, Connecticut's K-12 public school enrollment has decreased.
- Connecticut's child population dropped by 10% over the past decade.

5. Baby Boomers and the Elderly

Your Overall Message: "Let's make Connecticut a place where people of all ages can thrive for their entire lives and age-in-community with dignity."

Problem:

- Restrictive zoning laws are forcing older residents out of communities where they have spent their whole lives. The AARP reports that we as a nation do not have adequate housing for America's elderly, and Connecticut is no exception. We need to act before the housing crisis among elderly residents gets even worse. We must create homes and neighborhoods that make aging in Connecticut possible.

Solution:

Changes to zoning laws can help seniors "age in community," by providing them with affordable and accessible housing options, like accessory apartments. With more diverse housing options, our communities can make it possible for residents to upsize/downsize without having to move out and can make it possible for multi-generational families to live together. In addition, zoning laws that foster walkable communities can provide for older residents who, because of preference or ability, do not drive cars anymore.

Useful Stats:

- Connecticut has the 7th oldest population in the country.
- Baby boomers make up a third of our population, and the 65+ population projected to grow by 57% between 2010 and 2040.
- By 2030, one fifth of America's population will have reached the age of retirement.
- Connecticut's population grew by barely 1% over the past decade.

6. People with Disabilities

Your Overall Message:

- "Let's provide adaptable, accessible homes and communities for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities so we can ensure that they, their families, and their caregivers have housing options matching their needs."

Problem:

People living with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) are facing a housing crisis that is exacerbated by restrictive land use laws. Just like the rest of us, members of the I/DD community have expenses beyond their rent, but they often subsist on extremely fixed incomes. As a result, many are effectively locked out of entire housing markets.

Solution:

If we want to be a state where everyone belongs, we need to change restrictive zoning laws and make more accessible homes. Ensuring accessory apartments are accessible to people with a wide range of physical abilities can ensure integration of members of the I/DD community into existing neighborhoods. Members of the I/DD community who cannot drive will also benefit if we build more homes near transit centers and commercial areas. In such homes, members of the I/DD community can live near family members, support networks, and health services while maintaining an independent lifestyle.

Useful Stats:

- 50,000 Connecticut residents are intellectually disabled, and many rely on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments.
- Disabled Connecticut residents only receive \$932 per month in Supplemental Security Income benefits.
- Rent for an average one-bedroom apartment ranges from a low of 88% of SSI payments in the Windham County housing market area to a high of 183% in the Stamford-Norwalk housing market area.



LEGAL FRAMEWORK

A. State Land Use Laws

Understanding the structure of our state's land use laws can help you answer your constituents' questions and understand your duties. There are several legal obligations every town and city has in Connecticut in regards to planning and zoning that we will outline in this section.

Local zoning powers are derived from the State Legislature. A century ago, the Legislature adopted the "Standard Zoning Enabling Act" (now Chapter 124 of the General Statutes) and the "Standard Planning Enabling Act" (now Chapter 126 of the General Statutes). These laws *enable* towns to zone and plan, under certain circumstances. In fact, there have always been constraints on what types of provisions towns can place on new buildings. While these laws have been modified here and there over the last century, the basic structure of local zoning remains intact.

Some of your constituents may talk about "8-30g." In 1989, Connecticut adopted an affordable housing bill (contained in Chapter 126a of the General Statutes), known as 8-30g. It established a 10% baseline for affordable housing in each municipality, letting towns decide how they would achieve that goal. Most towns have not satisfied 8-30g. As a candidate, you can review your town's status on the latest Affordable Housing Appeals list. If your town has not satisfied the 10% baseline, be ready to discuss how zoning reforms would make your town more affordable while also enabling property owners to create the kind of housing that gets your town to improve its stats.

More background information can be found at www.desegregatect.org/laws.

B. Recent State-Level Zoning Reforms

Many residents (and commissioners) prefer "local control" to state laws. This is a false choice. The pro-homes movement supports smart local, regional, state, and federal planning - all working together to create more homes and better communities. You may be passed about state laws like 8-30g or more recently passed laws. Here's a quick primer.

The 2021 zoning reforms (aka Public Act 21-29) require municipalities to:

- Legalize accessory apartments – both attached and detached – as of right and cap costly parking mandates.
 - Note: Municipalities were allowed to "opt-out" of both of these provisions by 12/2022. Refer to our report to see if your town or city did.
- Require training and certification for land-use commissioners.
- “Affirmatively further fair housing,” making Connecticut the first state to have this requirement.
- Promote housing choice and economic diversity in housing, including housing for both low-income and moderate-income households.
- Address significant disparities in housing needs and access to educational, occupational and other opportunities.
- Expressly require the development of housing as determined by the state's consolidated plan for housing and community development.

The 2021 zoning reforms prevent towns from enacting zoning regulations that:

- Discriminate on the basis of income source (including public assistance),
- income level, or “immutable characteristics” (other than age and disability).
- Cap the number of multi-family homes.
- Charge unreasonable or different fees for multifamily affordable housing or impose onerous consulting fees on property owners.
- Require housing units to be a minimum square footage, except for public health reasons like those enshrined in building and housing codes.

The 2023 zoning reforms (Aka Public Act 23-207) requires the state to:

- Establish an Office of Responsible Growth to coordinate state and local planning priorities
- Establish a process to determine regional housing needs
- Create a state working group to address the housing crisis

A note on upcoming state-level reforms

- Our coalition will continue to advocate for pro-homes zoning reforms at the state level as part of our "All of the Above" approach to addressing the housing crisis in CT. It will be important to stay informed about what these reforms could mean for your community (and to help us pass them!) You can always find our state-wide legislative agenda on our website.

C. Your Town or City's Approach to Planning & Zoning

You should know how your community's zoning works now, if you want to change it! Every town and city in Connecticut is required to produce planning documents that serve as a guide to growth and preservation.

Become familiar with these resources to better understand what is working and what isn't working. Many communities take these documents very seriously and engage in detailed public outreach and planning and reference them as projects come up. Others do not. Visit our [Local Hub](#) to find all of your local information.

Currently, the state doesn't do much to hold municipalities accountable for these plans, so pro-homes advocates have to step up!

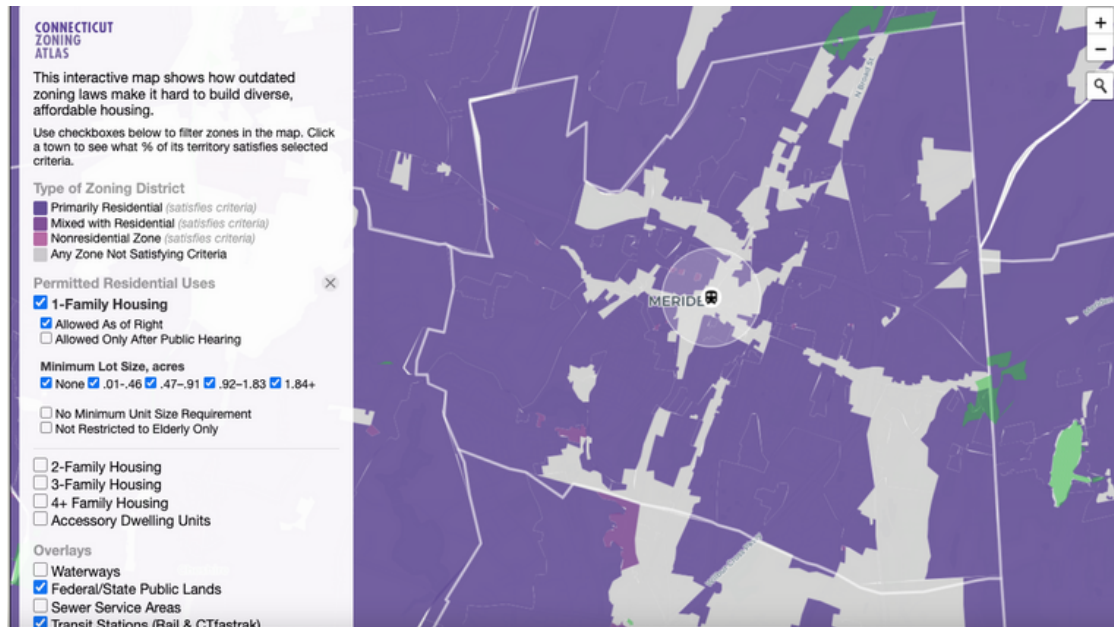
Local Zoning Code - Start by reading your town/city's zoning code, usually available on your commission's official website. We have specific things to look for on the next page.

Plan of Conversation and Development (POCD) - Every municipality is required to complete a POCD every 10 years to outline the overall planning framework for the community. Does it have pro-homes priorities? When is it up for review?

Affordable Housing Plan (AHP) - A 2017 law requires that every municipality create an AHP every 5 years, but didn't specify what it should include. The Department of Housing partnered with RPA in 2020 to [provide a guideline](#). At the first deadline in June 2022, less than half submitted plans to the state. Did yours?

Our Zoning Atlas will show you how much of your community allows certain types of homes, and what types of permits are required. A step-by-step tutorial appears when you first visit the site, but we are always available to provide additional resources or information if needed. Note: It also shows what % of residents are housing cost-burdened in your community.

As you review the code and the Atlas, consider a few additional issues:



- Does your zoning code primarily require large-lot, single-family housing?
 - The Atlas will tell you the percentage of town requiring 1-acre or 2-acre minimum lot sizes, which are considered very exclusionary by national standards.
- Does it allow Missing Middle homes? - two, three, or four-family homes near commercial areas
 - The Atlas will tell you where (and if) developments of 2+, 3+, or 4+ homes are allowed as of right (unlikely) or with a special permit (also rare)
- Does it allow more density near existing sewer lines?
 - The Atlas shows areas served by sewer, which are great places to put more diverse housing options.
- Does it allow more density near transit stations?
 - The Atlas shows train and rapid bus stations, but not local bus stations.

IV

DEVELOP YOUR PLATFORM

So far in this Playbook, you've been exposed to key terms, messages, and statistics, and you have learned about the legal framework in which zoning is created. Now you can put all the pieces together to develop your own pro-homes vision for your town/city. Creating a vision will both educate voters and help you plan for how you'll use your time in public office. Remember, the pro-homes agenda will look different in every community. That's a good thing!

A. Top 5 Platform Development Tips

Here are some helpful tips for developing your platform:

1. Become Well-Versed on the "Why"

Our team has compiled a bank of data and reports that can get you up to speed on how restrictive zoning hurts our state and country. Studying and internalizing these arguments can help you anchor your arguments. Note: Never forget to turn these data points into positive, inclusive, and forward-projecting hopes for the future.

2. Know Your Town or City

In the previous section, we outlined how to understand your local planning and zoning documents. But it's important to understand the history, informal associations, and political context of your town or city that created them. Also learn the demographics of your community, specifically how many are owners/renters, how many are cost-burdened, etc. Talk to your community's residents, community associations, and business & faith leaders about their housing challenges. They can help illustrate, with lived experience, the reasons for zoning reform and can be called upon to support a compelling pro-homes vision for your community's bright future ahead.

Know your leaders. Find out which elected officials in your town or city have input on zoning policies. Connecticut town governments are all unique, so make sure you're familiar with how decisions get made. If you're running as part of a party slate, you should also know what the other candidates think about housing policy, especially if you need to advocate for pro-homes reform with them too.

Then, learn more about the decisions they’ve made in recent years on land use policies so you aren't surprised by a particular development, law, or other issue that has come up.

3. Match Message to Audience

The pro-homes agenda can appeal across the political spectrum. Understanding your audience means you can pivot to speak about economic, racial, or climate benefits based on who you are talking to. There will be an argument that resonates with any audience or stops a bad-faith attack in its tracks - have it ready when knocking doors, tabling, or sending out messages.

4. Keep It Simple

When you’re coming up with your platform, don’t use words and phrases that are overly complicated. If more people can understand your ideas, you’re better positioned for success! Keep talking about *homes*. That's why we're here.

5. And Finally, Be Specific

Be specific about what you and those neighbors you have spoken with want to see in your community. Having a clear, articulated set of goals means people won’t fill in the blanks with misinformation or misrepresent these goals.

B. Specific Platform Suggestions

Drawing from the last point in our “Top 5 Platform Development Tips,” we have a few suggestions about things you might include in your platform. In addition to these ideas, we encourage you to check out our arguments for reducing or eliminate minimum parking requirements, online at www.desegregatect.org/parking.

1. Remove Permitting for Missing Middle (2-10 Family) Homes

If your town/city imposes bans or puts onerous public hearing requirements on missing middle homes (it could also mean 2-4-family homes, etc), you could propose that it write zoning regulations to permit this type of home “as of right.” More information is at www.desegregatect.org/walkable.

Why:

- Small multi-family homes increase housing supply without significantly changing the look and feel of existing neighborhoods
- They encourage walkable communities that enable residents to walk to school, entertainment, and shops
- They bring more foot-traffic and consumers, thus stimulating local businesses

Who Benefits:

- Homeowners seeking to live in walkable neighborhoods
- Home renters or first-time home buyers who cannot afford to rent or own a single-family home
- Elderly or disabled individuals seeking an independent lifestyle where they also can live close to family members
- Local businesses who benefit from having more consumers closer to their business
- Property owners seeking to increase the value of their homes

Pro-Homes Ideas:

- Advocate for 2-family homes to be allowed as-of-right anywhere in your town, and find areas that make sense for 4+ missing middle homes on sewer or near transit
- Reduce parking requirements that prevent multi-family homes
- Document architectural standards that already work for the community so review is streamlined and not arbitrary
- Find areas that could be zoned for even larger multi-family developments

2. Promote Accessory Apartments

If your town/city has outdated restrictions on accessory apartments, you could propose updating them to ensure that these are permitted as of right everywhere single-family housing is allowed. More information is at www.desegregatect.org/adu.

Why:

- Accessory apartments are naturally affordable, meaning that they are budget-friendly because of their size

- Accessory apartments reduce sprawl because they are built where housing already exists
- Accessory apartments are environmentally efficient – their small size means they use less electricity and water
- Accessory apartments increase housing supply without changing the look and feel of the neighborhood

Who Benefits:

- Home renters looking for naturally affordable homes
- Property owners seeking to increase property value and generate rental income
- People with disabilities seeking independent living situations close to home
- Seniors looking to downsize or live close to family
- Young people seeking to live where they work or grew up

Pro-Homes Ideas:

- Start by determining if your town/city opted in or out of PA 21-29
- If you opted-in, find ways to educate residents on ADUs
- If you opted out, lift any bans and onerous permitting requirements on accessory apartments for your local regulations
- Establish programs/discussions which educate property owners on the benefits of accessory apartments and their creation in your town

3. Allow Transit-Oriented Communities

If your town/city has a transit station, you could propose allowing a higher density district of diverse types of homes and mixed-use buildings to be created around the station. More information is at www.desegregatect.org/toc.

Why:

- Transit-oriented communities (TOCs) reduce reliance on cars, leading to less pollution and cleaner air
- TOCs increase affordable housing supply by allowing naturally affordable homes as well as income-based homes
- TOCs create jobs and promote denser communities, stimulating local business

- TOCs generate new town tax revenue by increasing the supply of taxable property

Who Benefits:

- Communities of color and working-class individuals most reliant on public transit
- Home renters desiring more affordable housing options
- Local property owners who can increase the value of their property by building more densely on it
- Employers near transit who benefit from increased foot traffic
- Employers on transit lines who have access to a growing workforce
- Town officials seeking to increase tax revenues and the grand list (listing all taxable property in town)

Pro-Homes Ideas:

- Advocate for a diversity of homes and mixed-use buildings to be allowed as-of-right near your transit station(s)
- Eliminate all minimum parking requirements within a half-mile of transit
- Advocate that a percentage (such as 10%) of the homes near transit be deed-restricted affordable

4. Reduce Minimum Lot Sizes

If your town/city has large minimum lot sizes (as 81% of Connecticut does), you could propose allowing homeowners to subdivide their land or put more than one home on their lot. More information is at www.desegregatect.org/lots.

Why:

- Reduces sprawl and cuts back vehicle emissions
- Reduces surging housing costs by allowing more home creation in existing neighborhoods.
- Enables denser neighborhoods with greater walkability
- Grows a town's tax revenue by increasing housing on land that was previously not generating the higher tax rates that housing does

Who Benefits:

- People who care about climate change and want to make our air and water cleaner
- Home renters and first-time homeowners seeking more affordable housing options
- Property owners seeking to subdivide lots and increase wealth
- Towns that can disperse taxes among more taxpayers, thus decreasing taxes for everyone but increasing tax revenues to fund schools, essential services, and infrastructure improvements

Pro-Homes Ideas:

- Reduce minimum lot sizes in large-lot areas of an acre or more
- Allow homeowners to add a dwelling unit to larger lots
- Develop smaller minimum lot sizes in areas served by sewer and water, which is done in Vermont (on a statewide basis)



HANDLING QUESTIONS

Many people have a new curiosity about zoning and its impact. You have a wonderful opportunity as a candidate to help advance education and awareness about the issues that exclusionary zoning creates, which are so important to our state as a whole. Just as important as what you say is how you say it: good politics is about openness and engagement, leading from reason, evidence, experience, and conviction. Be sure to be respectful of others' views and to stay calm if conversations ever get heated.

In this section, we will provide you with some techniques to handle both criticism and good-faith questions.

A. Responding to Critics



If you remember nothing else from this Playbook, remember to treat all questions as if they are good-faith questions, expressing good-faith concerns, unless you know, or it is obvious, that they are not.

If you receive questions or comments that are not made in good faith, or if criticism becomes personal, it is important to stay cool. To extract yourself from a particularly heated exchange, say something neutral like, "It looks like we aren't going to agree on this, and while I appreciate hearing your perspective, I have to move on." Try it!

More likely than direct confrontation, people will express genuine concerns about zoning reform. We offer you talking points for many questions we have frequently heard in the next section. But before we get to the specific questions, we would like to offer a perspective on how to respond to a range of comments where issues of race may underlie the concern.

Connecticut's history of racial segregation is a difficult but essential issue for land use candidates to understand and communicate on. We live in one of the most segregated states in the nation because, for generations, federal, state, and local laws actively enforced racial exclusion. (See our Learn page, including the "[Segregated by Design](#)" video, for more on this history.) The effects of policies like redlining are still visible in our communities and institutions. Unfortunately, our land use laws did and currently do exacerbate inequality.

Many residents, of all races, are not aware that zoning has historically been used as a tool of segregation, and local candidates have a unique opportunity to communicate that legacy to voters as part of their platform. If somebody does not understand how Connecticut became segregated, it is important to treat them with respect. If we disrespect those who simply do not understand the history of segregation by labeling them as racists or bigots, we lose opportunities to educate and convince. Even when presented with this information, a person might still support local zoning restrictions that were based on racist policies, but for other reasons. This can be frustrating, but take a different approach and highlight other aspects of reforms.

Spend energy identifying and activating voters who are already aware of these issues. Then focus on those who are persuadable and just need more information and support.

We should also make a note about partisanship on the trail. We have always believed that zoning reform is a bipartisan concern. Zoning reform has been achieved on a bipartisan (and sometimes even unanimous!) basis in Massachusetts, Montana, North Carolina, Vermont, and Oregon. If zoning reform is politicized on party lines in your town/city, we suggest focusing on areas of common ground. Highlighting the economic benefits of zoning reform, whether for small businesses or for homeowners, is one example of messaging that nationally receives strong bipartisan support.

B. FAQs You'll Get on the Trail

You're running because you have a new vision for your town or city. You're going to get a lot of questions about this vision and about change – and as a candidate, you should be well-versed on the best responses. In general, note that Connecticut is already

changing. As a candidate, you can help your town/city adjust to new realities by being open to more sensible, sustainable land use policies

You can find effective responses to questions that you'll hear on the trail at desegregatect.com/faqs. Topics addressed there include:

- Common topics you'll get asked about, and a quick response:
 - Local control - We need good local planning and state planning together. We can't solve the housing or climate crisis on our own.
 - Property values - Zoning reform is good for property values. You might not want to live next to a duplex, but there are plenty of people who do.
 - Property taxes - If you don't want taxes to go up, we need more tax revenue. There are also state programs to help vulnerable populations from tax increases if they do occur.
 - Schools and enrollment - Child-age population has declined in CT. Even in towns that are growing like West Hartford or Milford, they project decreases. We have plenty of capacity in our schools.
 - Traffic - Suburban sprawl is why we have traffic, we need to get people off of roads by building walkable neighborhoods near transit.
 - Gentrification - We need to protect existing residents and more homes lower costs and lower pressure on displacement.
 - Climate change - More density reduces emissions from car trips and energy costs from big single-family houses. It also means we can protect natural spaces from development.
 - Transit ridership - Bus ridership has surpassed pre-COVID numbers, train ridership is close. But if we want more riders, we need more homes and jobs in walking distance of our stations.
- Sewer/water infrastructure - Chances are we have capacity already. But we also need more revenue to support our infrastructure as it continues to age.



CONCLUSION

Good luck! Once you win, as a local pro-homes commissioner, you will have the chance to play a critical role in advancing pro-homes reforms in your community, making your town/city a model for good zoning, and securing more wins for the pro-homes movement and, most importantly, for your neighbors. In turn, your voice as a commissioner will help spur statewide change. As we have seen in previous legislative session, local commissioners and planning staff play a key role in crafting legislation, implementing policy provisions, and championing reform. And don't worry, we have pro-homes resources for commissioners once you're seated!

Along the way, we invite you to work in partnership with our organization. DesegregateCT was started in June 2020 in response to the murder of George Floyd, when public awareness of racial inequities in American society was rapidly growing. Today, we are a large coalition of nonprofits and neighbors who believe that land use reform is the critical connection to securing economic prosperity, social mobility, and environmental sustainability for all of us in Connecticut.

Our support for your candidacy is informed by the recognition that statewide legislation isn't enough to make Connecticut more equitable, more economically strong, or more environmentally sustainable. Local land use commissioners have the authority and power to make our towns and cities places everyone can call home. That is why your candidacy is incredibly important.

Happy campaigning! We wish you the best of luck and hope to help however we can.



www.desegregatect.org