



# BE THE CHANGE

## A PLAYBOOK FOR LAND USE BOARD CANDIDATES



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## INTRODUCTION

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

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

- The basics: zoning terms, pointers about how to frame the housing problem and your solutions, key messages, and useful statistics.
- Background information about state and local zoning frameworks, the 2021 statewide zoning reforms, and zoning in your town.
- Platform development ideas.
- How to handle questions you're likely to get on the campaign trail.

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](mailto:info@desegregatect.org)!



## MESSAGING FUNDAMENTALS

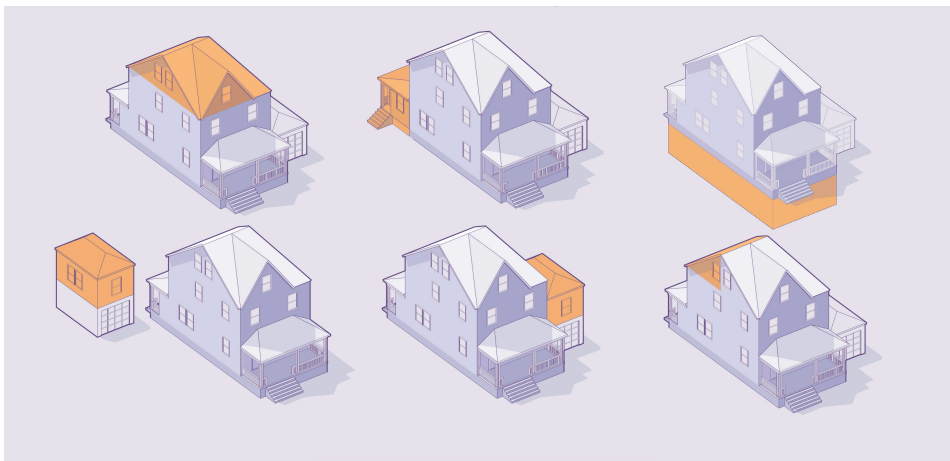
The right messaging is key to a successful campaign. Many voters will consider a candidate’s literature and online presence before casting their vote. Pro-homes land use commission candidates can use consistent, positive, battle-tested messaging to win.

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](http://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 housing to be built in a separate building, like a garage, or on the third floor or back of the primary home.



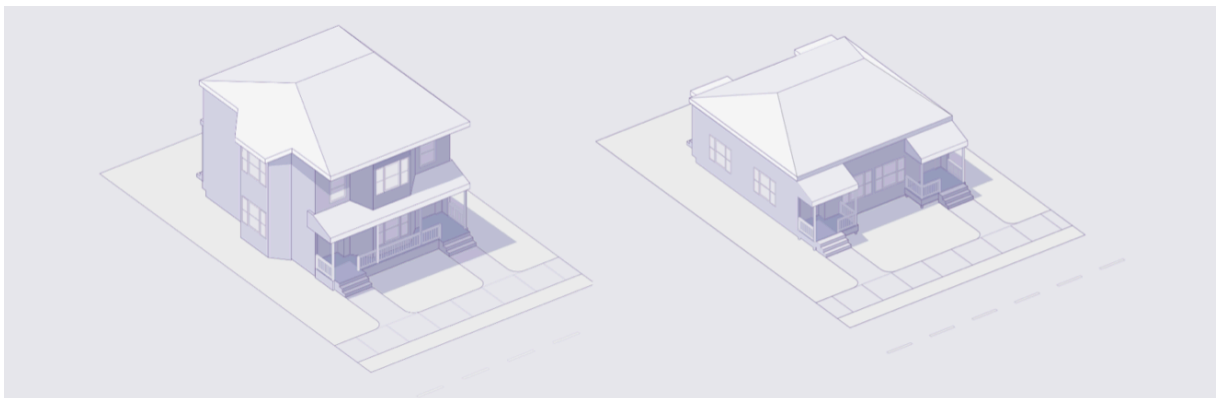


**AS OF RIGHT:** As-of-right means that project applications are reviewed for their compliance with the zoning code by town staff, without needing to undergo a public hearing, variance, or special permit/exception. If an as-of-right application meets the criteria outlined in the zoning code, it will be approved.

**DIVERSE HOUSING:** This broad term describes housing options that go beyond single-family zoning, including: accessory apartments, multi-family housing, and mixed-use developments. Here are some examples of diverse housing!



**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 have started to use this term to ensure people who rent are given as much dignity and value as people who own their own homes.

**INCLUSIONARY ZONING:** Zoning that sets aside a percentage of units to be affordable. This is not a term that refers to zoning being inclusive in the general sense.

**MIXED-USE ZONING:** A type of zoning that allows for both residential and commercial development, 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.

**MULTIFAMILY HOUSING:** This term means different things to different people, but when we talk about multifamily housing, we usually distinguish between two units (duplexes), three units (triplexes), or four-or-more units.

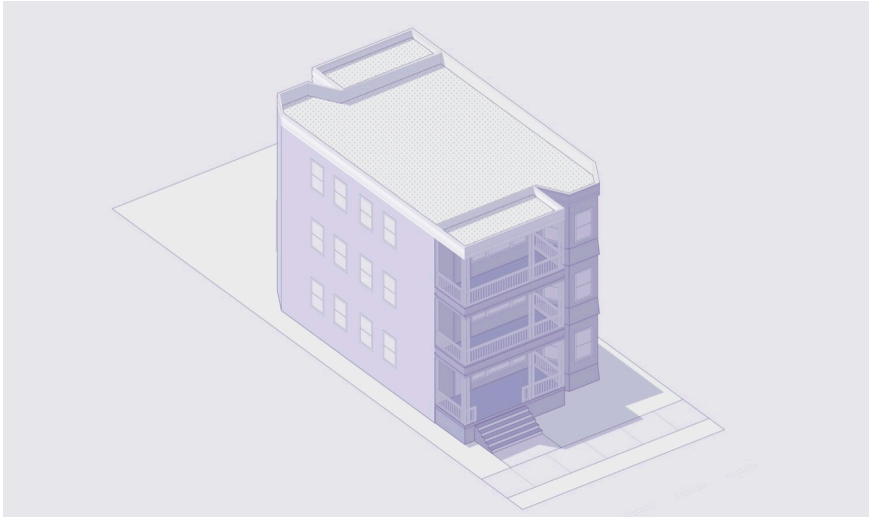
**OVERLAY ZONE:** A specific type of zone that can be mapped on top of an existing zone.

**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 neighborhood centered around an existing transit station.

**TRANSIT STATION:** We define a transit station as a fixed station, like a platform for passenger or commuter rail (Amtrak, Hartford Line, Metro North, and Shoreline East) or bus rapid transit (CTfastrak), not a bus stop.

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



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, 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 creates inequities.

- THE ECONOMY PROBLEM: Restrictive zoning and costly land use review processes have stopped housing production and driven up prices. The high price of housing means essential workers can't afford housing, small businesses and manufacturers can't fill jobs, and young families and minority homeowners are priced out of homeownership.

- 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. This gobbles up our farmland and forest and pollutes our waterways. Our housing is built too far away from shops and jobs, making us a car-dependent state and contributing to an 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 overwhelmingly create 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 excludes people with diverse backgrounds and needs, including the elderly and disabled, from Connecticut.
  - 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](http://www.desegregatect.org/background).



## C. Framing the Solution

Similarly, you should also consider how you're going to frame the *solution* to status-quo zoning. Here's how we frame the solution: We must change zoning laws to make it easier to build diverse types of housing in cities and towns across the state.

Here's how this "pro-homes" solution responds to each of the 3 problems noted above:

- THE ECONOMY SOLUTION: Zoning reform that makes it easier to create diverse housing can stimulate the economy by creating construction jobs and by indirectly supporting jobs in nearby shops and offices. New housing adds to the property tax base – and multi-family housing contributes 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. If we build 1,500 multi-family units, 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.
- THE ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTION: Zoning reform that gives property owners the choice to build walkable communities can reduce the time we all spend in cars and give people housing they want. We have to build more housing, and it's smarter if we build it in places that don't require us to destroy our farms and forests.
  - More Details: Zoning reform can nestle additional housing 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. Check out a

video of a longer presentation that makes the environmental case for zoning reform.

- THE EQUITY SOLUTION: Zoning reform that enables diverse housing will make our communities more diverse, too. More diverse neighborhoods can reduce racial disparities in access to grocery stores, child care, and vital services.
  - 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 housing (especially larger apartment buildings) can help reduce rents for everyone.

In summary, 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. Candidates that oppose your message are “anti-homes.”

## **D. Who Benefits?**

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, of course, that some who may benefit from your pro-homes approach do not yet live in your town. To be in a position to welcome those people to your town, your message must reach and convince your current constituents first.

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 housing 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 may not be ready to buy a home yet!"*

#### Problem:

Restrictive zoning in our town prevents us building the kind of housing people are more likely to rent. The limited supply of rental housing in Connecticut is making existing rental housing increasingly difficult to afford.

#### Solution:

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

#### Useful Stats:

- The median rent in Connecticut is \$1,180.
- 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 works for our businesses and through pro-homes strategies that bring workers, customers, and complementary growth."*

#### Problem:

Small businesses need customers to survive. But Connecticut residents are spending too much on rent, 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 costs, they can spend more at local businesses. We should locate housing 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 attainable housing in amenity-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."*

### 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 housing options that make aging in Connecticut possible.

### Solution:

Changes to zoning laws can help seniors "age in place," by providing them with affordable and accessible housing options, like accessory apartments. With more diverse housing options, our town can make it possible for residents to upsize/downsize without having to look elsewhere 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 housing 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 housing more accessible. 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 housing near transit centers and commercial areas. In such housing, 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 the cost of a one-bedroom rental unit ranged 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.

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](http://www.desegregatect.org/laws).

### B. The State's 2021 Zoning Reforms

Some constituents may ask you what your position is on the 2021 zoning reforms (also known as Public Act 21-29 or HB 6107) adopted by the State legislature. We call them



a common-sense set of long-overdue reforms that made modest, “pro-homes” changes to the State Zoning Enabling Act.

If pressed for more details, know that the 2021 zoning reforms require municipalities to:

- Legalize accessory apartments – both attached and detached – as of right.
  - *Note that there is a provision for towns to opt out of the accessory apartments and parking mandate requirements – if there is conversation about this in your town, please be in touch with us at [info@desegregatect.org](mailto:info@desegregatect.org), and we can help with more tailored information!*
- Cap costly parking mandates.
- Require training and certification for land-use commissioners.
- Define a town’s “character” by physical site characteristics.
- “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 housing units.
- 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 2021 zoning reforms also require zoning regulations to:

- Consider the restoration and protection of the ecosystem and habitat of Long Island Sound.
- Protect the state's historic, tribal, cultural, and environmental resources.
- Allow “cottage food” as a home-based occupation.

- At a town's option, use a more sustainable vehicle-miles-traveled standard for traffic calculations.

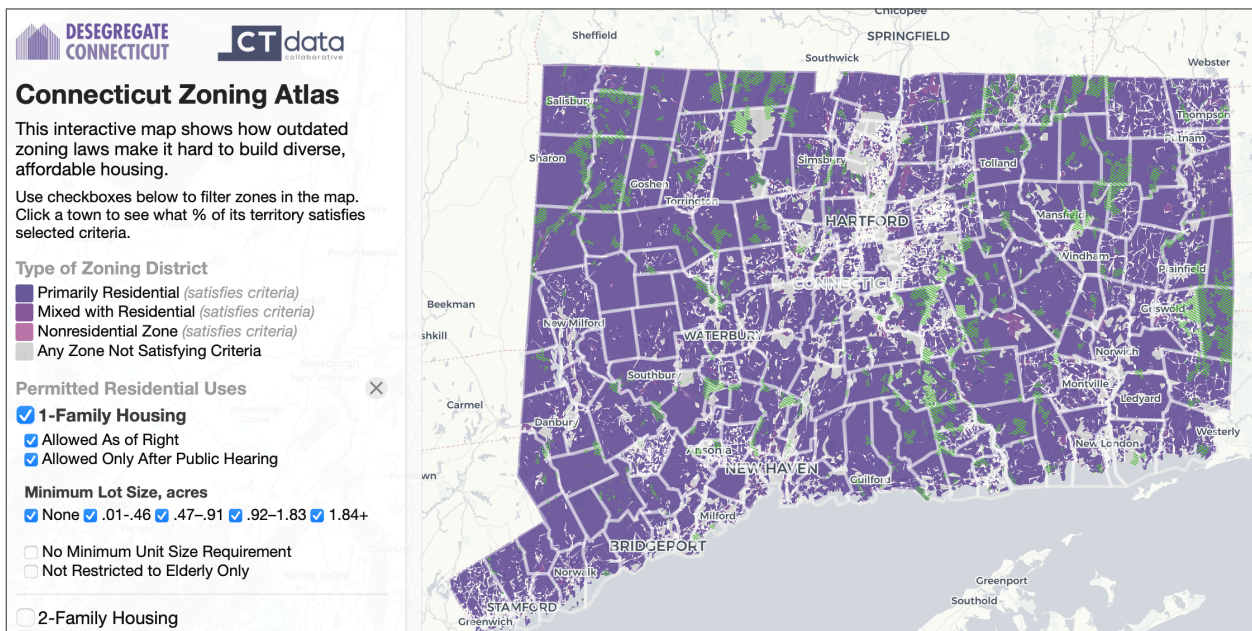
Finally, the reforms create a study commission and, for the first time ever, a model form-based code.

For a more in-depth look at the 2021 reforms, visit [www.desegregatect.org/hb6107](http://www.desegregatect.org/hb6107).

### C. Your Town's Local Zoning

You might be asked how your town currently zones for new housing. Start by reading your town's zoning code, usually available on your commission's official website.

If you prefer visuals, we've got your back! You can see your town's zoning code translated into interactive maps online at [www.desegregatect.org/atlas](http://www.desegregatect.org/atlas).



Our Zoning Atlas will show you how much of your town allows certain types of housing, 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.

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

- Does your town zone primarily for 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 your town zone to allow two, three, or four-family housing near commercial areas? Near train or CTfastrak stations?
  - Zoning for housing around shops and jobs is better for business, people, and the environment.
- Does your town align its zoning with existing sewer lines?
  - Areas served by sewer are great places to put more diverse housing options.

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## **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. Creating a vision will both educate voters and help you plan for how you'll use your time in public office.

### **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 justify any specific proposal you make.

#### **2. Know Your Town**

Know your codes. Your zoning code and our [Zoning Atlas](#) can help you understand how your town treats housing.

Know your context. It's important to understand the history, informal associations, and political context of your town. Talk to your town's residents, community associations, and business 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 vision for your town's bright future ahead.

Know your leaders. Find out which elected officials in your town have input on zoning policies. Connecticut town governments are all unique, so make sure you're up-to-date



on who makes zoning decisions in your community. Then, learn more about the decisions they've made in recent years on land use policies.

### **3. Match Message to Audience**

As you go out on the trail, you'll be speaking to different types of people. 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.

### **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!

### **5. And Finally, Be Specific**

Be specific about what you and those you have spoken with want to see in your town. 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](http://www.desegregatect.org/parking).

### **1. Improve Permitting for Small-Scale (2-4 Family) Housing**

If your town imposes onerous public hearing requirements on 2-4-family housing, you could propose that the town write zoning regulations to permit this type of housing "as of right." More information is at [www.desegregatect.org/walkable](http://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

Ideas for Change:

- Advocate for 2-family housing to be allowed as-of-right in your town, or at least within a 10-minute walk of downtown/commercial areas
- Reduce parking requirements that prevent multi-family housing
- Document architectural standards that already work for the community so review is streamlined and not arbitrary
- Upzone certain areas of town to allow for more forms of multi-family housing

## **2. Promote Accessory Apartments**

If your town 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](http://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:

- Homeowners looking for naturally affordable housing
- 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

#### Ideas for Change:

- Educate people about the benefits of accessory apartments
- Campaign to “opt in” to the 2021 reforms
- Lift any bans and onerous permitting requirements on accessory apartments
- Establish programs/discussions which educate property owners on the benefits of accessory apartments and their creation in your town

### **3. Allow Equitable Transit-Oriented Communities**

If your town has a transit station (or areas with clustered bus stops), you could propose allowing diverse types of housing to be created around those stations. More information is at [www.desegregatect.org/toc](http://www.desegregatect.org/toc).

#### Why:

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

- ETOCs 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
- Homeowners 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)

#### Ideas for Change:

- Advocate for a diversity of housing 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 housing near transit be deed-restricted affordable

## **4. Reduce Minimum Lot Sizes**

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

#### Why:

- Reduces sprawl and cuts back vehicle emissions
- Reduces surging housing costs by allowing more housing 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

### Ideas for Change:

- 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 resources 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 awakening to these issues. 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, Vermont, and Oregon. If zoning reform is politicized on party lines in your town, 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. 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 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](http://desegregatect.com/faqs). Topics addressed there include:

- "Home rule" and local control
- Whether Connecticut is really segregated
- Why conservatives nationally support zoning reform
- The impact of zoning reform on:
  - o Home values
  - o Schools and enrollment
  - o Traffic
  - o Gentrification
  - o Open space

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## VI CONCLUSION

As a local commissioner, you will play a critical role in advancing municipal-level reforms, making your town a model for good zoning, and securing more wins for the pro-homes movement. In turn, your voice as a commissioner will help spur statewide change. As we saw in the last legislative session, local commissioners and planning staff play a key role in crafting legislation, implementing policy provisions, and championing reform.

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 have a deeper understanding that one of the most powerful manifestations of racial inequity in America is housing segregation, which was established in part through restrictive zoning.

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



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[www.desegregatect.org](http://www.desegregatect.org)