

GUIDE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Overview

This “briefing booklet” has been prepared as part of the process of preparing an update to the 2008 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) for Branford. This booklet is intended to familiarize the members of the POCD Update Committee and others existing and potential future strategies related to residential development.

What Is “Residential Development”?

For the purposes of the POCD, “residential development” includes all the different forms and types of housing in Branford ranging from detached single-family housing units to mid-rise multi-family buildings. It also includes some mobile homes and residential units in mixed use buildings.

House



House



Condominium



Apartment



Five-Year Update

In the POCD Five-Year Update, it was reported that the Planning and Zoning Commission adopted regulations for:

- Accessory apartments in accessory structures;
- Affordability requirement for accessory apartments;
- Mixed Use district;
- Age Restricted Housing District;
- Incentive Housing Overlay District;
- Special provisions for undersized residential lots;
- New method for calculating maximum lots in cluster developments;
- Assisted living and continuing care facilities; in business districts

Background

Inventory

According to the Connecticut Economic Resource Center (CERC), Branford had 13,967 housing units in 2015. After significant housing growth in the 1970s and 1980s (averaging about 280 units per year), housing growth has slowed in Branford since 1990, averaging just over 36 units per year.

Branford has a very diverse housing stock. Census data indicates that about half of the housing units in Branford are considered single-family units (both detached and attached) and the other half are multi-family residences (condos and apartments) and mobile homes.

About 60 percent of the housing units in Branford are owner occupied and about 30 percent are renter occupied. The remaining units are in the process of being sold or rented or are kept for recreational / occasional use.

Assessment

The diversity of Branford's housing stock is an asset since it increases the opportunity that people of all ages, means, and interests will likely be able to find housing in the community that meets their needs. The availability of water and sewer services helps support the diverse housing stock.

Future housing issues are likely to include:

- The challenge of maintaining and updating older multi-family units to meet current and future housing desires.
- Providing for housing that is more affordable.
- Meeting the demand for housing for the rapidly growing population of older people.

Branford Center



Residential Development

Branford, CT

North
Branford

East
Haven

Guilford

Branford
Hill

Branford Center

Pine Orchard

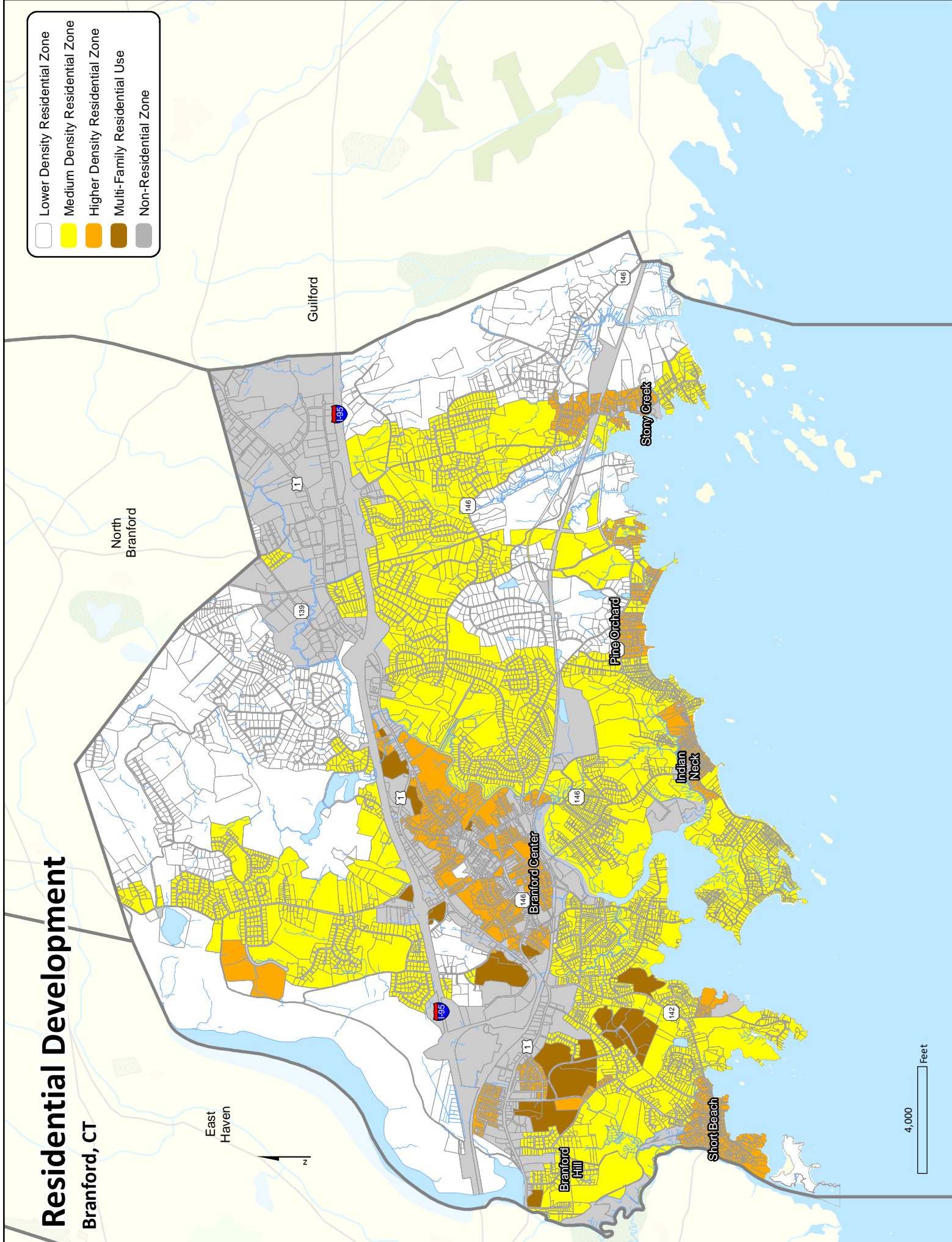
Indian
Neck

Stony Creek

Short Beach

- Lower Density Residential Zone
- Medium Density Residential Zone
- Higher Density Residential Zone
- Multi-Family Residential Use
- Non-Residential Zone

4,000 Feet



“Affordable Housing” And Housing That Is Affordable

In Connecticut, the term “affordable housing” is used to refer to housing that is dedicated or reserved in some way for households earning 80 percent or less of the area median income.

Housing is considered to meet this standard if it:

- receives financial assistance under any governmental program for the construction or substantial rehabilitation of low and moderate income housing,
- is housing occupied by persons receiving rental or mortgage assistance under the United States Code, or
- the dwelling unit has a deed restriction requiring that such dwelling unit be sold or rented such that persons and families earning eighty per cent of the median income or less will not have to pay more than thirty per cent of their annual income for such housing

Branford has 451 housing units that meet these criteria and this accounts for about 3.2 percent of the housing in the community

Governmentally Assisted Units	243
Tenant Rental Assistance	63
Single-Family CHFA/USDA Mortgages	145
Deed Restricted Units	0
Total Assisted Units	451
As Percent of 2010 Housing Units (13,972 units)	3.2%

In Connecticut, municipalities with less than ten percent of their housing stock meeting the above criteria are subject to the “Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure”, also known as CGS Section 8-30g.

Since Branford does not meet the ten percent threshold, it is subject to the “Affordable Housing Appeals Procedure” (CGS Section 8-30g).

This is an important consideration since, if a developer proposes a housing development containing affordable housing meeting certain criteria specified in the statute, such development may not have to comply with all local land use regulations. In some situations, in Branford and elsewhere, some developments have been proposed that were criticized, due to density, height, design or other aspects, for being distinctly out of character with the environs.

While the creation of affordable housing units can provide many benefits, many communities would prefer that such units be created in a way that fits into the character of the community.

If Branford wishes to gain more control over the development of CGS 8-30g affordable housing in the community, there are two ways to become exempt:

- find ways to create enough affordable housing units to meet the 10 percent threshold, or
- find ways to create enough affordable housing units to get a series of four-year moratoria.

To meet the percent threshold (10 percent of the units in the last Census), Branford would need to have 1,397 affordable housing units. With 451 units today, reaching this threshold would require the creation of 946 affordable units. This is more units than Branford has built in the last 25 years and would represent about 60 percent of all the remaining buildout potential in Branford according to the 2010 buildout study conducted by SCRCOG . Note that this threshold will change once the 2020 Census is released.

The other way to get a moratorium, is to accumulate enough “housing unit equivalent points” to surpass two percent of the units in the last Census. With 13,972 units in the 2010 Census, Branford would need to accumulate 280 housing unit equivalent points. Points can be obtained as follows:

	Owner-ship Unit	Rental Unit
Family units at 40% of area median income	2.0	2.5
Family units at 60% of area median income	1.5	2.0
Family units at 80% of area median income	1.0	1.5
Elderly units at 80% of area median income	0.5	0.5
Unrestricted units in a “set-aside” development	0.25	0.25
Bonuses for 3+ bedrooms, elderly units mixed with family units, approved incentive housing development, resident-owned mobile manufactured home park	varies	varies

2008 POCD	
GOAL	Provide for a variety of housing choices within the community
STRATEGIES	Provide for housing opportunities Evaluate undersized lots and update zoning Create “green” neighborhoods Monitor changes in house construction

Possible Strategies For 2018 POCD

NEW STRATEGY

Guide / Manage Residential Development

Five-Year Update

In the POCD Five-Year Update, it was reported that the Planning and Zoning Department continues to administer the Housing Rehabilitation Revolving Loan Fund, which has assisted over 60 residential units since the program began in 1993.

A. Manage Residential Neighborhoods	Comments
1. Carefully manage special permit uses and non-residential uses in residential neighborhoods.	
2. Maintain Section 3.9 of the Zoning Regulations which provides some relief for area and dimensional standards for under-sized lots.	

B. Encourage Housing Maintenance / Improvement	Comments
1. Encourage maintenance of existing housing units.	
2. Continue to use the Neighborhood Assistance program to help fund housing rehabilitation programs.	
3. Encourage upgrade of housing units to avoid functional obsolescence and to meet current and future housing needs.	
4. Continue to use the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to provide housing rehabilitation options.	

Stony Creek



Address Housing Choice And Opportunities

2008
KEY STRATEGY

A. Evaluate Local Needs		Comments
1.	Update the 1990 Housing Needs Assessment.	
2.	Investigate the number of housing unit equivalent points that Branford has accumulated and might need for a CGS 8-30g moratorium.	
3.	Evaluate each of the existing multi-family developments in Branford in terms of their functionality for meeting the housing needs of current and future residents (and an aging population).	

B. Provide For Housing That Is Affordable		Comments
1.	Investigate affordable housing programs that are appropriate for Branford and implement them.	
2.	Seek to expand the supply of affordable housing units in Branford to help meet local needs.	

C. Provide For Housing For An Aging Population		Comments
1.	Maintain the "age-restricted" housing district codified in Section 5.6 of the zoning regulations.	
2.	Consider allowing assisted living facilities and comprehensive care communities in residential zones by Special Permit (currently allowed in business zones).	

Multi-Family Developments In The Branford Hills Area



Possible Strategies to Create Affordable Housing

INCLUSIONARY ZONING

1. As authorized by CGS Section 8-2i, adopt an inclusionary zoning requirement requiring that **any and all housing development** make provision for affordable housing:
 - Creation of affordable units within that development or elsewhere in the community where such location is found acceptable by the Commission, or
 - In lieu of providing such units, pay a fee into a municipal Housing Trust Fund.
2. As authorized by CGS Section 8-2i, require payment of a fee into a municipal Housing Trust Fund for any activity requiring a Zoning Permit.

OTHER ZONING APPROACHES

3. As authorized by CGS Section 8-2i, consider requiring:
 - that affordable units be deed-restricted for 99 years (or longer) or be subject to an affordability easement so that such units are not lost over time.
 - a right-of-first-refusal on existing deed-restricted units so that such affordable housing units are not lost over time.
4. Use the Incentive Overlay Zone contained in Section 5.7 of the Zoning Regulations (although financial incentives contemplated in the statutes have not been funded).
5. Ease the requirements for accessory apartments.
6. As authorized by CGS Section 8-30g, require accessory apartments to be configured so that they will meet statutory requirements to be counted as affordable units.
7. Allow third floor development in areas (such as Town Center, other appropriate commercial areas, and in close proximity to major transportation routes) when such space will be used for the provision of affordable housing units.
8. Specifically provide for - and make it easy to create – mixed-use buildings where appropriate in business districts.
9. Allow the “un-merging” of lots if used for single family affordable housing.
10. Revise zoning to allow for affordable units on substandard lots.
11. Consider a density bonus for the creation of affordable units.
12. Allow conversion to multi-family housing (or intensification of multi-family housing) in appropriate areas, even if non-conforming currently.

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FUNDING

13. Establish a Housing Trust Fund.
14. Fund a Housing Trust Fund:
 - Operating and/or capital funding from the Town.
 - Grants from the State and/or other sources.
 - Payments from an inclusionary housing regulation.
 - Funds from the Neighborhood Assistance Program
 - Donations from interested parties.
15. Pursue grants for the construction and maintenance of affordable housing.

PRESERVING EXISTING HOUSING UNITS

16. Maintain the affordability of existing affordable housing units.
17. Consider a program where the Town offers to subsidize the purchase of an existing unit provided that such unit becomes deed-restricted.
18. Consider a program where the Town offers homeowners in residence a tax reduction (or a payment) in exchange for a deed restriction.
19. Adopt a tax incentive program to encourage existing multi-family properties to deed restrict a percentage of units.
20. Consider a program where the Town purchases existing housing units, deed restricts them, and re-sells the units (particularly for units that are already selling at affordable prices).
21. Offer grant funds and/or low interest loans to provide an incentive for multi-family units that will be deed-restricted to be rehabilitated and brought up to local codes (building, housing and fire codes, and related health and safety standards).

PARTNERSHIPS

22. Work with local faith-based and non-profit organizations to create affordable housing units.

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MUNICIPAL ASSISTANCE

23. Prepare conceptual design plans for commercial and other areas which would allow a mix of affordable and market-rate housing on the upper-floors of commercial developments and incorporate such plans into the POCD.
24. Use municipal resources to purchase sites that where affordable housing could be developed.
25. Consider affordability deed restrictions on foreclosed properties.
26. Allocate local funds (operating, capital, tax-increment, etc.) for infrastructure or other improvements to enable affordable housing.
27. Offer municipal property at little or no cost for development of affordable and/or mixed-income housing

OTHER APPROACHES

28. Create an information clearinghouse through the Planning and Zoning Department.
29. Work with charitable and other organizations to increase the stock of affordable housing.
30. Seek private donations of property for development of affordable and/or mixed-income housing.

LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

31. Seek to have CGS 8-30g recognize naturally-occurring affordable housing units.
32. Advocate for special legislation to establish a real estate transfer fee to promote creation of affordable housing

If so, please make notes below.



70 County Road, Simsbury, CT 06070 860-913-4080