

Minutes of Waterbury Housing Task Force Meeting

Thursday, July 17, 2025 | 6:00-8:00 pm
Steele Community Room (28 N. Main St.)

Attendees: Owen Sette-Ducati (Chair), Chris Balzano, Jess Neubeit, Alyssa Johnson, Em Lawson, Skip Flanders, Bill Vigdor. Martha Staskus (Planning Commission)

Absent: Joe Camaratta, Eliza Novick-Smith

Assignment: Provide input into the development of the 2026 Waterbury Town Plan (planWTB) in the following categories for housing:

- **Aspirations (max 3): Broad, long-term statements of desires and ambitions for the future - the 'why' behind more specific steps.**

1. Ensure the availability of safe, decent and affordable housing for all current and future Waterbury residents.

2. Create new housing in locations that maintain the integrity of neighborhoods while increasing density, respecting the natural environment, and minimizing the need for infrastructure improvements.

- Flood resilient/safe housing > It's own aspiration as part of one? Of a goal for "safe" housing?

Additional Ideas Brainstormed by Task Force and PC members

- Bylaws review to make these things happen (strategies for new housing)
- Create an enabling regulatory environment
- Culture and narrative change: momentum, conversations
- Inventory of housing that is vacant, underutilised, not able to be fully built out to accommodate more housing: is this a major problem in Waterbury: property being refreshed

Note: statute requires Smartgrowth development

- Density in Waterbury Center > different dynamics/opportunity if infrastructure is expanded
- Impact of lot size minimums
- Waterbury Center as an area for growth > where would housing be most important?
- More generous subdivisions: but challenges with housing locations
- Density as impacted by zoning, infrastructure (municipal, soils and ability for sceptic)

"What do we want to be when we grow up"

- Turn the Shaw's parking lot into housing
- Homeownership options

- Suss building/land as an area for growth (Kingsbury: becoming office space)
- Senior Housing
- Private financial support for Community Land Trust, etc.

Note: Flood resiliency chapter will include acknowledgements of state level updates that will be actionable when the town plan is in gear, note Act 250 changes, etc.

CHIP training for SB

Waterbury Housing Improvement Program - metrics and tracking (utilized, utilized for intended purposes, other metrics)

• **Goals (max 5):** Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound steps taken to reach the goals.

- Implement the outcomes of the Better Connections process re: infrastructure in Waterbury Center

Objective 1: Continue to support for small scale development (1 - 4 units)

The second goal for the task force calls for new housing in areas that minimize the need for infrastructure improvement (also known as “infill development”). This goal was supported in 2024 by passing of the Unified Development Bylaws (Phase #1), establishment and funding of a Housing Trust Fund, and securing a grant for a workshop series to educate and empower individual property owners to increase housing capacity. The Task Force will build on these successes through the following actions:

1. Hold 4 workshops in an education series called Building Better Waterbury: Homeowner Solutions for Housing Growth and Resilient Living targeted to individual property owners.
2. Develop at least one program for the Housing Trust to increase availability of affordable housing in the town.
3. Support Habitat For Humanity with site selection for an initial project (duplex) in Waterbury (this supports item 8 of the 2018 Municipal Plan Housing Actions)

Objective 2: Support town’s efforts on mid (5 - 20 units) and large (20+ units) development

The task force can assist the town in expanding housing capacity by supporting the development of larger projects through the following actions:

1. Conduct a focus group with (local) developers to discuss how to initiate and accelerate new development projects, and recommend incentives for developers for creating long term housing units.
2. Engage local employers in efforts to expand workforce housing through solutions that aim to increase the overall supply of affordable housing in the community. (Owen)
3. Continue to engage other Vermont Housing Committees to identify best practices that can be implemented in Waterbury.

Objective 3: Assess the continued development and allocation of the town's housing

Longer-term planning for investment and actions to support additional housing, and measuring impact of existing initiatives will be supported as follows:

1. Support Planning Commission to develop housing chapter of updated town plan.
2. Track progress with applications and analyze data from town's rental registry

• **Strategies (max 10): Specific steps that are measurable and detailed that can be taken to accomplish Aspirations and support achieving**

- Review bylaws to accommodate additional housing units on a property (e.g. on Town water but has specific septic capacity)
- Relax zoning
- Use the CHIP law that comes into effect
- Water and sewer up to the center > More housing in the Center to have the community path to connect

• **Other town plan topic areas, where your organization would like to provide input (e.g. economic development, land use, utilities, etc.)**

General comments:

- Concern about density "maxing out" in the Village area: how to have additional housing development in other areas of town
- >2% population growth forecasted
- Vacancy for rental 5% is "healthy"

Proposed Updates to 2018 Town Plan Housing Goals based on Conversation at the Waterbury Housing Task Force Meeting 7/17/25

1. Utilize the village's Urban Development Action Grant (UDAG) and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and the town's CDBG revolving loan funds for renovating affordable housing stock, for both homeowners and landlords, and to assist with the construction of new affordable housing.

Notes from the meeting: Expand to include the Housing Trust Fund money. Consider more flexible wording to allow for uses that "Facilitate housing development"

2. Ensure that Waterbury's bylaws allow for residential development in locations of employment and service areas to serve people with special needs and seniors who wish to age in place.

Adjust language to reflect a broader goal of eliminating zoning/regulatory review barriers for residential housing development (which will support housing for the locations/populations mentioned, but also extend beyond them).

3. When public funds are being used to assist affordable housing projects and single family homes, give highest priority to projects which will be permanently affordable (99 or more years).

Task force suggests eliminating to allow additional flexibility, and noted that this requirement is already regulated through other entities that finance affordable housing projects.

4. Promote the utilization of the Downstreet's Home Ownership Center to assist with the purchase of homes for people of diverse income levels.

Change wording to "state and regional resources, such as Downstreet..." to recognize the availability of additional programs that serve the whole state through Vermont Housing Finance Agency and others.

5. Ensure that current and future zoning practices support and encourage the development of safe, decent and affordable housing.

No reason to not to continue this goal, with note of revisions to goal 2 above.

6. Continue and enhance participation in the FEMA sponsored Community Rating System in order to further reduce anticipated increases in flood insurance premiums.

Support keeping as written.

7. Explore the expansion and infill of the village growth centers, allowing higher density residential and mixed uses that include housing.

There was support for adding additional language reflecting the need to maintain fire safety with density, and additional definition of "village growth centers", which can be confusing when referring to areas outside of the previous "Village of Waterbury", such as Waterbury Center. The group supported naming growth into Waterbury Center specifically.

8. Encourage partnerships with non-profit agencies such as Habitat for Humanity, Downstreet, and Housing Vermont to provide assistance with financing affordable housing projects.

Keep, with the update to reflect that Housing Vermont is now Evernorth.

9. Consider formation of a Housing Task Force with local and regional partners, including those identified in Action 7, to facilitate the implementation of the actions in this chapter to include exploring areas, sites, and specific projects that will create a diversity of housing options in Waterbury.

Completed!!! And can be removed as a goal 😊 (Alyssa note: perhaps a note about continuing to meet/exist/make recommendations?)

10. Explore increasing density for Planned Residential and Planned Unit Developments to encourage residential development that reduces infrastructure and housing costs while respecting the natural environment.

This seems less relevant and can be removed, as Waterbury has Planned Unit Development regulations, which are infrequently used.