

**PUBLIC WORKSHOP – AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN
TOWN OF BOZRAH
PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
February 25, 2021**

Chairman Steve Seder called to order a public workshop of the Town of Bozrah Planning and Zoning Commission at 6:32 PM, on Thursday, February 25, 2021. The meeting was held via Zoom video/teleconference.

Members present: Stephen Seder (Chairman), Nancy Taylor, Steve Coit (alt.).

Others present: Glenn Pianka (Board of Selectmen), Rob Ladd (resident), Sarah Orr (resident), Jeanne Goulart (resident), Sam Alexander, AICP (Town Planner/SCCOG), Justin LaFountain, CZEO (SCCOG), Carly Holzschuh, AICP (SCCOG).

1. Opening Remarks:

Chairman Steve Seder called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM. Steve Seder explained the purpose of the workshop, which is to gain input from the public into an Affordable Housing Plan, which the Planning & Zoning Commission is undertaking in compliance with CGS 8-30j.

2. Purpose of the Plan and Planning Process:

Sam Alexander (Consulting Town Planner/SCCOG) began a PowerPoint presentation (attached). Sam Alexander reviewed the intent of the plan and the process for writing and adopting it.

3. Data Overview:

Sam Alexander reviewed relevant Census and housing data that applies to Bozrah and New London County. Sam Alexander also reviewed relevant sections of the Plan of Conservation and Development and zoning regulations. Finally, Sam Alexander reviewed preliminary results of a survey (<http://tiny.cc/BozrahAHP>) for the Affordable Housing Plan.

4. Moderated Discussion:

There was a discussion amongst attendees about the types of ways that Bozrah could grow, consistent with its own growth principals outlined in the Plan of Conservation and Development, as well as actions that a town can undertake to encourage housing affordability. Highlights of the discussion include:

- Allowing accessory dwelling units to be occupied by non-family. Accessory dwelling units maintain the “rural character” of single-family zoning districts.
- Lots of older residents have left Bozrah when downsizing.
- Smaller-scale rental housing consistent with what already exists in Fitchville, with a preference for architectural consistency.
- Salem Turnpike is the only area of town where a larger development would be feasible because of the presence of sewer.

- Salem Turnpike is a far distance from the fire department, so service calls would be an issue. The Town is experiencing this with the senior housing development.
- Potential beneficiaries of affordable housing include seniors looking to downsize, and younger residents wishing to remain in town.
- The Town should seek to maintain low density in most areas.
- The zoning regulations could require that a number of units in new multi-family development be set aside and deed-restricted at rents affordable to low- and moderate-income people.
- Income-restricted units can still be taxed at “highest and best use”.
- The State cannot mandate that a municipality undertake construction or authorization of new affordable housing units. Most municipalities in the State, however, are subject to CGS 8-30g, which allows developers of affordable housing a legal avenue to avoid zoning regulations that could prohibit their development. This law is not employed often in eastern Connecticut and very rarely in areas lacking sewer.
- People often fear municipal service and educational cost increases due to new residents. Some new residents could be volunteer fire fighters. School enrollment is trending downward.

5. Next Steps:

The Planning & Zoning Commission will continue to work on the plan. The Commission will be looking to May for a hopeful public hearing date, with adopting anticipated in June.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35

Respectfully submitted,
Samuel Alexander
Town Planner/SCCOG

Town of Bozrah Affordable Housing Plan

Public Workshop
Night of February 25th, 2021



Agenda

1. Opening Remarks.
2. Purpose of the Plan and Planning Process.
3. Data Overview.
4. Moderated Discussion.
5. Next Steps.



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Purpose of the Plan

- **Comply with State law**
 - *At least once every five years (beginning 2017), each municipality shall prepare or amend and adopt an affordable housing plan for the municipality. – CGS 8-30j.*
 - *CGS 8-30g connection...*
 - *8-30g land use appeals procedure for affordable housing developments*
 - *Bozrah is subject to this*
 - *No formal connection between the plan and 8-30g*
 - *Could be a "stick" at a later date*



Purpose of the Plan

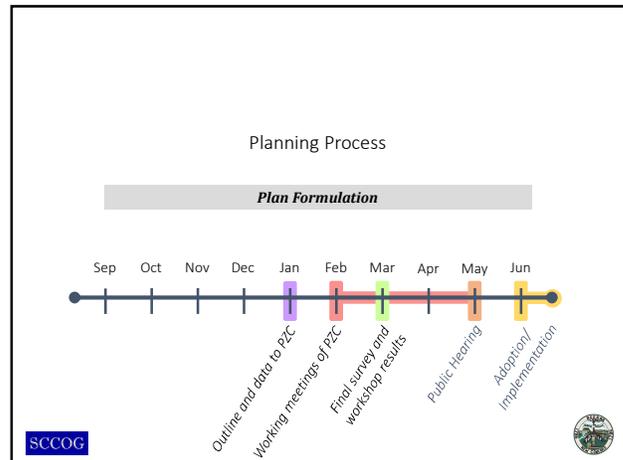
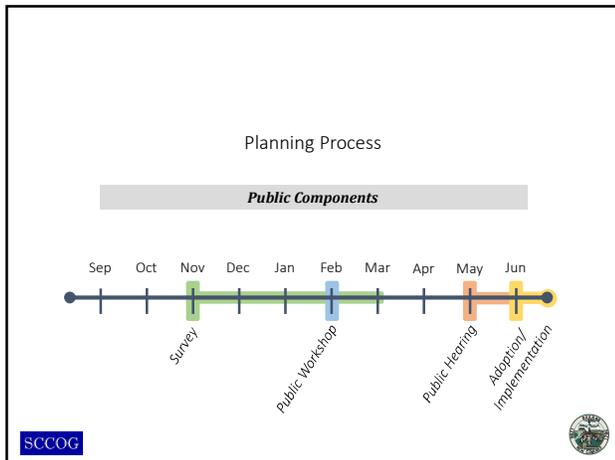
- **Assess and reassess the housing needs of residents**
 - *The Plan of Conservation and Development does this every ten (10) years.*
 - *The next iteration of this plan can be rolled into the 2025 Plan of Conservation and Development.*



Purpose of the Plan

- **Housing touches everyone**
 - *Ensure the residents of Bozrah can remain in Bozrah.*
 - *Consider new policies that promote options and affordability in Town.*





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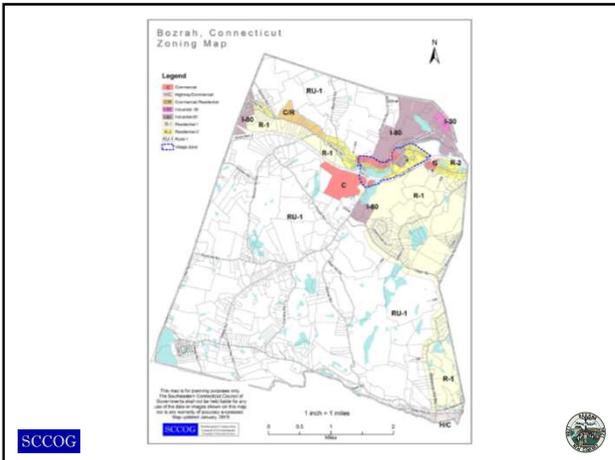
- ### Data
- 2018**
- About 2,600 population
 - Average age: 46.8 (compare to 41.4 NL County)
 - 1,079 Housing Units
 - 86% owner-occupied (compare to 66.5% NL County)
 - 14% rented
 - 90% single-family (compare to 65% NL County)

- ### 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development
- Let's be consistent**
- Retain Bozrah's rural character outside of the designated higher density growth areas delineated in [the POCD].
 - Encourage a variety of housing types, designs, and settings to accommodate present and future residents of all age groups and economic levels.
 - Promote the enhancement of the existing densely settled village areas of Fitchville and Gilman.
 - Encourage the utilization of existing public water supply for intensive land uses and patterns of development.

- ### 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development
- Let's be consistent**
- Encourage the improvement and utilization of the public water supply in the Fitchville area of town.
 - Promote the expansion of public utilities in areas deemed appropriate by this plan.
 - Preserve and enhance those features in the town that have historical and architectural significance.
 - Promote architectural design standards which have styles typical of New England and which are harmonious within each locational setting as part of the site plan requirements.

Zoning

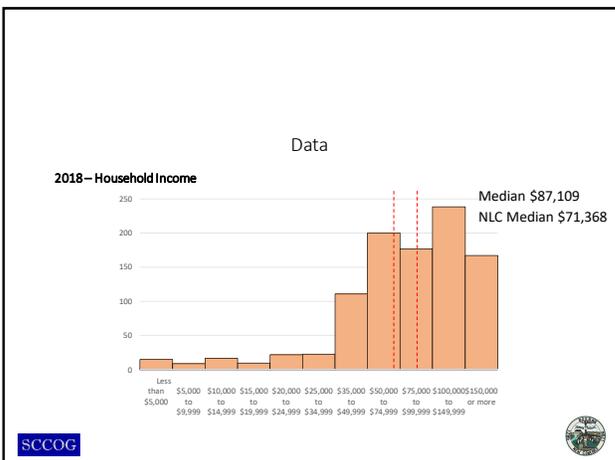
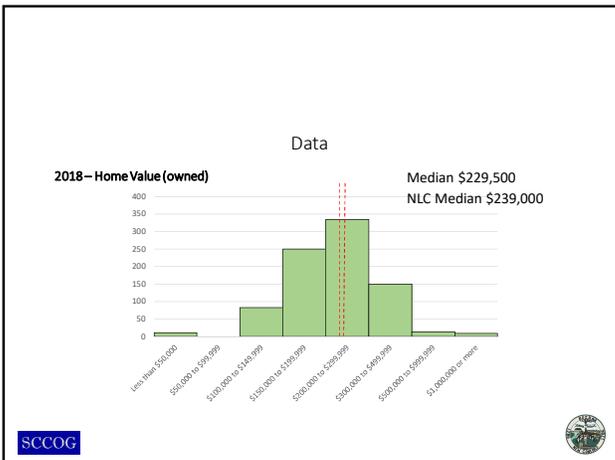
	Single-family	Two-family	Multi-family	Mixed-use	In-law Apartments
RU-1	✓				✓
R-1	✓				✓
R-2	✓	✓			
C/R	✓				✓
C					
Village		✓	✓	✓	
HC					
I-30					
I-80					



Zoning

Projects may be Constricted by:

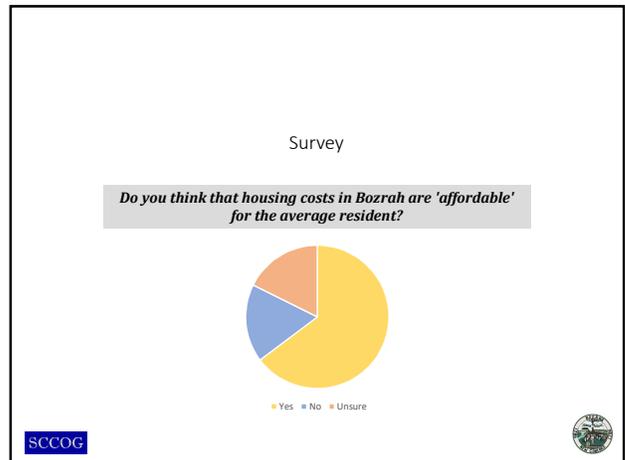
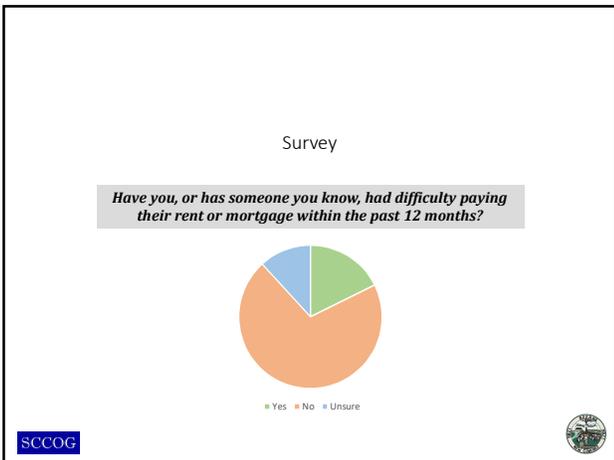
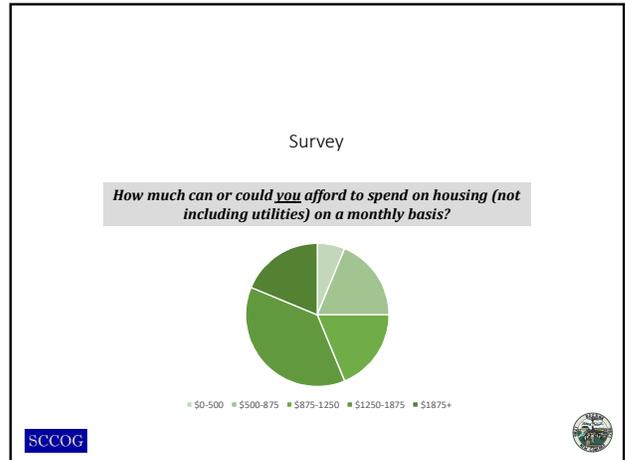
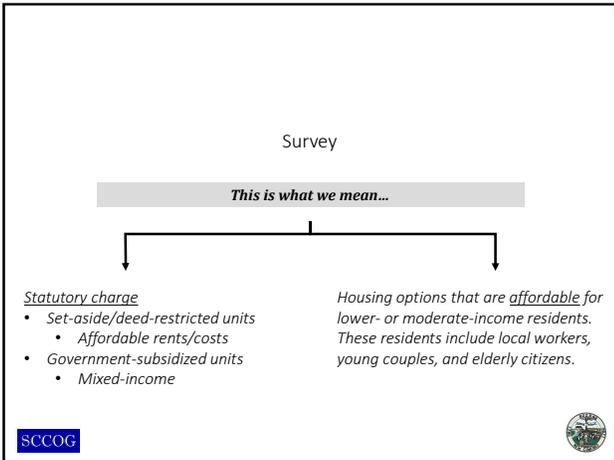
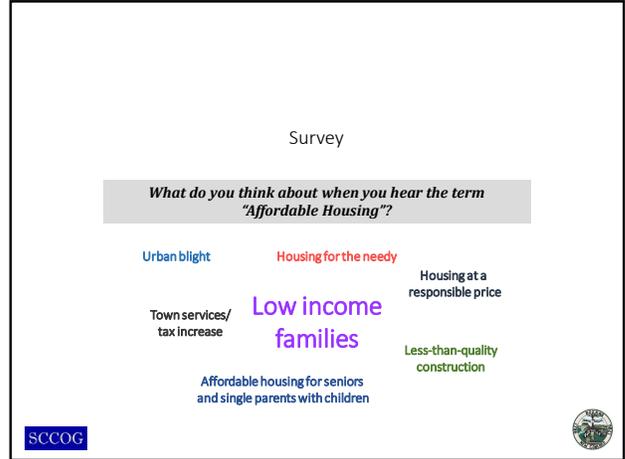
- Lack of sewer
- Lack of water in low-density areas



The portion of southeastern Connecticut households that can afford the housing they live in has dramatically decreased in the last twenty years. Since 2000, the share of renters who cannot afford their housing, and are therefore housing-cost-burdened, increased from 31% to 46%. As previously mentioned, as of 2018, 29,000 households in southeastern Connecticut earned less than 80% of the area's median income and were housing cost-burdened, or one in four households.

The rise in housing challenges is linked to a growing mismatch between incomes and housing costs. Adjusted for inflation, income growth in the region has been stagnant, growing less than 1% between 2000 and 2019, while for-sale housing prices and rents have increased 23% and 19%, respectively.





Survey

In the Town of Bozrah, 17% of residents pay more than 30% of their income towards housing. Based on this information, do you think Bozrah should...



- Increase the amount of affordable housing
- Decrease the amount of affordable housing
- Keep the amount the same

SCCOG 

Survey

Which types of new housing should the town have more of?



- Apartments
- Single-family
- Other
- Townhouses
- In-law/accessory apartments

OTHER:

- Small apartment buildings, like we have on Fitchville Rd near the rest home there;
- None;
- Housing like Trading Cove Circle/Arrowhead drive off Rt. 82.

SCCOG 

Survey

Which types of new housing should the town have more of?




Maintain existing character of the town

SCCOG 

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SCCOG 

Discussion

What should an individual town's responsibility be to its residents, and to the residents of the greater region, when renters find themselves in "unaffordable" situations, or when younger generations cannot afford homes?

SCCOG 

Discussion

What concerns do you have about more housing in Bozrah for lower- or moderate-income families?

SCCOG 

Discussion

What steps can Bozrah take that would be supportive of its existing character, but still provide more opportunities for lower- and moderate-income people and families?




Discussion

What other issues do we care about? Seniors?




Discussion

How might the needs of residents be accommodated?

- Preservation of natural affordable housing
- Home-buyer assistance
- Zoning amendments
- Publicizing availability of CHFA/USDA mortgages
- Home-buyer assistance
- Articulating our desires (geography)




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Next Steps

- *Planning & Zoning Commission hears feedback*
- *Considers options (zoning, etc.) for plan objectives*
- *Public hearing in May*
- *Plan adoption possible in June*