

**Barkhamsted Housing Public Forum
Report**

**Town of Barkhamsted
Connecticut
January 27th, 2016**

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Introduction

The Housing Forum was the last of three Barkhamsted public forums dedicated to gathering residents' input on the future of Barkhamsted's policies and overall identity. The topics and ideas exchanged between residents from these public forums will be used in the update of the Plan of Conservation and Development, which is a legally required document outlining a town's vision for the next ten years (years 2017-2027) of land use decisions.

The forum took place on January 27th, 2016 at 7 PM at the Town Garage Community Room. In total, there was a headcount of 21 residents and 19 residents had added their names on the Town's sign-in sheet.

Summary of Economic Development Public Forum Structure

The forum began with an introduction to some basic information regarding Barkhamsted's current housing stock, the demographics, and the affordability of Barkhamsted's housing. This introduction was facilitated by UConn Masters of Public Administration student and Town of Barkhamsted intern Natalia Zagula, who was hired to draft a Plan of Conservation & Development (POCD) for the Town.

After a general overview of Barkhamsted's housing situation, the public forum turned to the 'worksheet portion' of the meeting. Natalia Zagula shared photographs of nearby housing developments representing different types of housing that Barkhamsted could consider for the future (typical two-family single-family houses, condominiums, connected and disconnected one-level single family houses that are senior friendly, cluster housing, one-floor senior housing rentals, and senior apartments). Participants were asked to rate these pictures on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 meaning that the resident strongly liked this type of housing and 1 meaning that the resident strongly disliked this type of housing). The worksheet also asked some other questions about what type of housing residents might be interested in seeing in the coming years. These slides and the collective results of the worksheets are provided in the next section of this report; a copy of the worksheet is supplied in the Appendix.

Next, attorney and previous Barkhamsted Selectman Greg Cantwell took over the second half of the public forum, questioning residents about their preferences and opinions. Overall, present Barkhamsted residents expressed interest in senior housing, while urging the town to cautiously approach development so that the Town does not attract too many interested households.

The Housing Forum concluded with an Exit Ticket, asking the residents demographic questions and feedback on the meeting, similar to those surveys handed out at the Environment & Recreation and Economic Development Public Forum.

Barkhamsted's Housing Stock

Barkhamsted is in a fairly advantageous position at the moment. Its median household income is higher than the County's and the State's; additionally, its median housing price is smaller than the County's and Connecticut's.

| <i>Population (2012)</i> | <i>Town</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>State</i> |
|--------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| Median Age (2012) | 45 | 44 | 40 |
| Households (2012) | 1,424 | 76,149 | 1,360,184 |
| Med HH Inc. (2012) | \$84,861 | \$71,345 | \$69,519 |

| <i>Housing Stock (2012)</i> | <i>Town</i> | <i>County</i> | <i>State</i> |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|
| Median Price | \$247,500 | \$254,000 | \$291,000 |

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey Estimates

Barkhamsted is affordable for some current residents and less affordable for others

The State of Connecticut defines housing as affordable if the collective cost of principal, interest, taxes, insurance, and utilities (for housing owners) or the collective cost of rent and utilities (for renters) is less than 30% of a household's annual income.

Approximately 1 in 3 Barkhamsted homeowners with mortgage will spend more than 30% of their household income on housing. Meanwhile, about 1 in 5 Barkhamsted households without mortgage will spend more than 30% of their household income on housing (includes renters and households that have paid off mortgage)(2011-14 American Community Survey).

II. Background on Affordable Housing

Connecticut Affordable Housing Legislation

A frequently mentioned topic of the night was affordable housing. To provide some background for the readers of this report, Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-30 g state that ten percent of all housing units in a community must be affordable to households earning 80 percent or less of the regional median household income.

What would be considered affordable housing in Barkhamsted?

To put affordable housing in perspective, Litchfield County median income is \$72,068 according to 2014 American Community Survey estimates; keeping this number in mind, 80% of this income is \$57,654. An affordable housing expense for a household making about \$57,654 would entail spending \$17,296 annually. Put differently, an individual with this much annual income can afford to pay about \$1,441 per month in rent & utilities or about \$1,441 per month in principle, interest, taxes, insurance, & utilities (so a house costing about \$170,000).

Notes on Discussion that Took Place at Housing Forum

Because particular topics were brought up more than once in the discussion, the summary of the Public Forum's conversation will be grouped into themes.

I. Senior Housing

Most seniors expressed their desire to stay in their current homes for as long as they could maintain them; however, seniors also reported some frustration with the lack of affordable housing options that would allow them to stay in Barkhamsted. There was outspoken interest in the development in senior housing.

There was some concern about affordable housing when it came to the Town's older population. One resident asked the Town to take measures to avoid having HUD or homes for younger mentally challenged adults living in the vicinity of senior housing (as is the case in the Torrington affordable housing development). First Selectman Don Stein pointed out that if age-restricted housing were built, such a situation would not be an issue.

Many present residents commented on the attractiveness of the 55+ age-restricted Canterbury Village (previously referred to as Messenger's Farm) in New Hartford. Perhaps Barkhamsted can work off of this model for 'affordable housing'.

II. Workforce Housing: Young Professionals and Young Families

There were various perceptions on the issue of young families leaving Barkhamsted. Some residents expressed concern with school enrollment dropping. For example, Terri Collins from the Town Hall noticed that residents were moving out of Barkhamsted but their reason for moving had nothing to do with the Town; their motivation for moving lay with the housing market, state taxes, and jobs. On the other hand, other participants had a different view on the issue. They observed that younger families were moving back into the neighborhood. Perhaps if the response rate of the upcoming Barkhamsted Town survey is high, this instrument will shed some light as to what proportion of young families that make up the town demographic today.

Some residents pointed out that what had attracted them to Barkhamsted was the nearby natural recreation that allowed children to play outside and be active (such as skiing, swimming, hiking, biking, boating, rafting, etc.). Many had mentioned that conserving this natural quality of Barkhamsted would be vital in capitalizing on its financial health both in economic development and housing development.

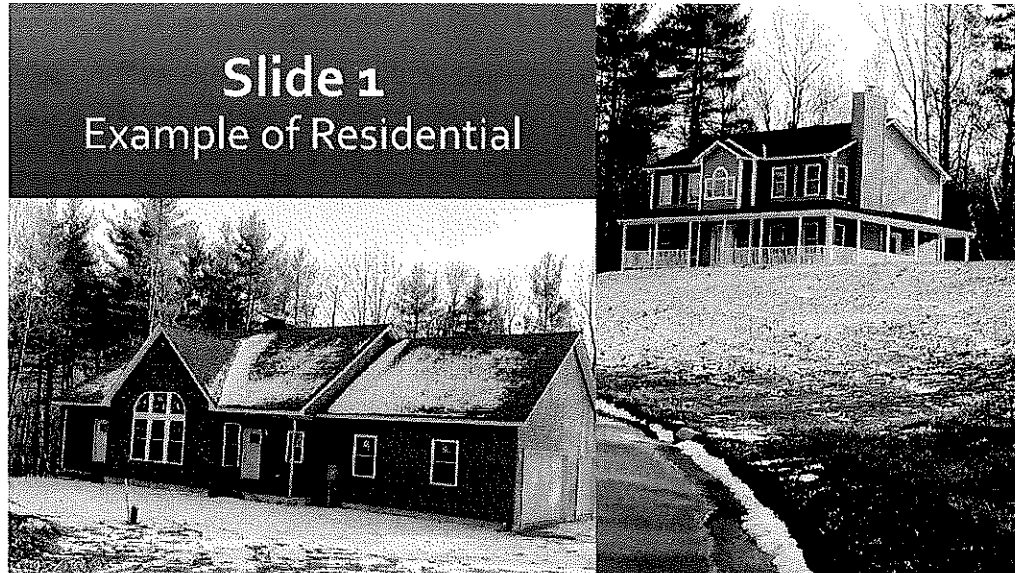
III. Locations to build Housing in Barkhamsted

Participants mused a variety of locations where potential housing could be built. For example, the discussion mentioned the possibility of building housing at the Mallory Brook property or perhaps if the storage business were to move, in the Riverton Hitchcock Factory (40,000 square feet). Another resident thought that building on the undeveloped property on the corner of Route 44 and Ripley Hill Road would be a nice area to build senior housing—the site would maintain the essential wooded quality of Barkhamsted while simultaneously offering seniors an inexpensive lifestyle.

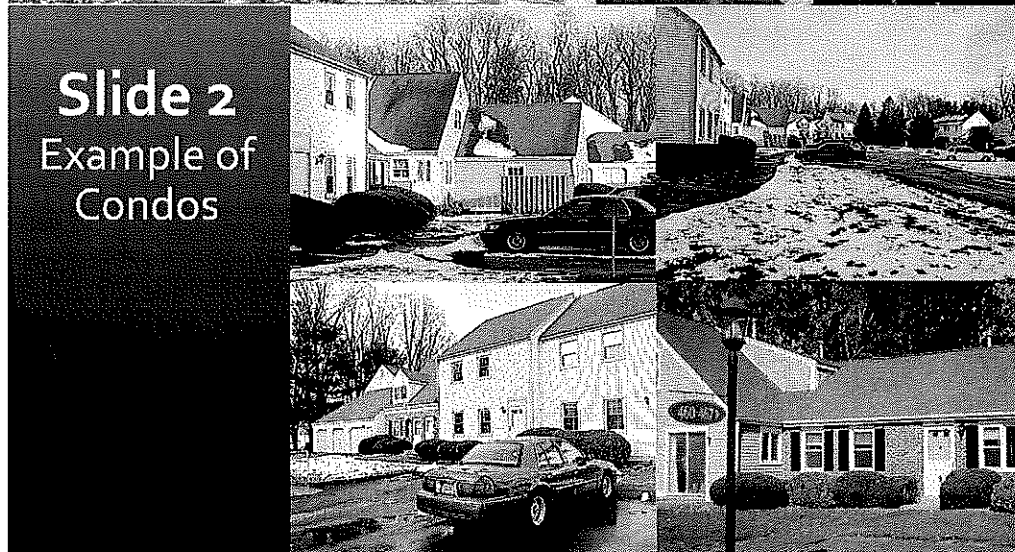
Summary of Housing Forum Worksheets

As aforementioned, the first section of the worksheet provided at the Housing Public Forum asked residents to rate a series of photographs of developments on a scale of 1 to 10 (where 10 means that the residents strongly preferred this type of housing and 1 meant that residents did not really like this type of housing). The following are the slides shown at the Public Forum:

Visual Preferences

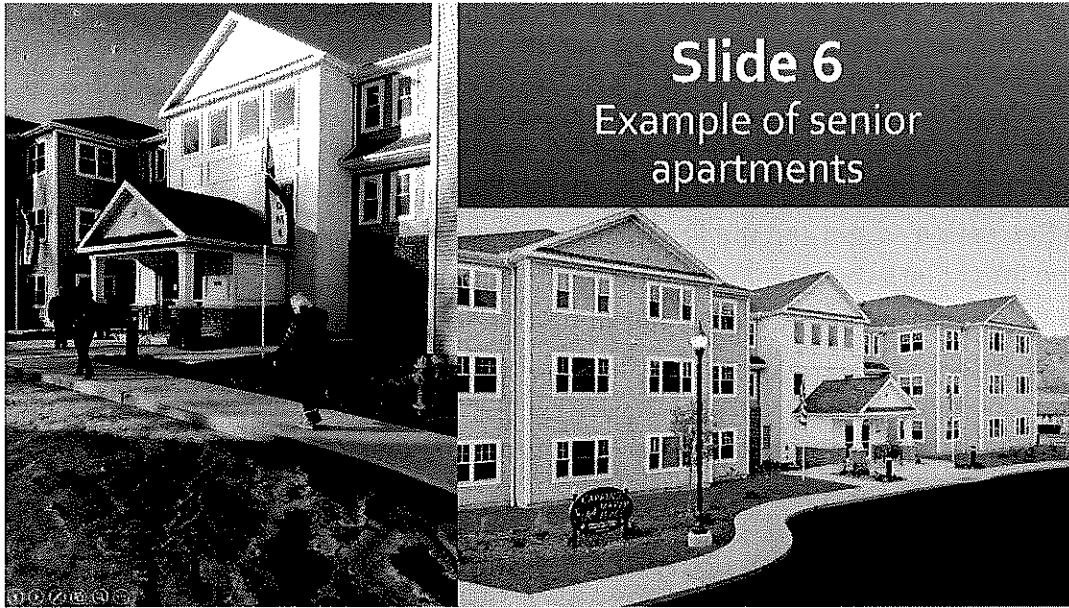


Residents assigned Slide 1 (an example of single-family residential houses) an average rating of 8. In other words, residents somewhat like this type of housing.



Residents assigned Slide 2 (an example of condominiums) an average rating of 4. In other words, residents somewhat dislike this type of housing.

Residents assigned Slide 3 (an example of one level connected single family homes and cluster disconnected single family homes) an average rating of 8. In other words, residents somewhat like this type



What type of housing would Residents like to see?

Piggybacking off of the slides asking about visual appeal of various developments, residents were also asked to share how interested they would be to see various types of developments. The following chart is a summary of the results:

| <i>Housing</i> | <i>Averaged Interest</i> |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Senior housing | High Interest* |
| Single Family Homes (<\$150,000) | Moderate Interest |
| Single Family Homes (>\$250,000) | Moderate Interest |
| Cluster Housing | Moderate Interest |
| Two Family Duplexes | Low Interest |
| Condominiums | Low Interest |
| Apartments | Low Interest |
| Single Family Homes (\$150,000-\$250,000) | Low Interest |

Housing Needs of Public Forum Attendees

The last few questions of the provided worksheet asked present residents to share whether their current housing meets their needs, whether these residents plan to move, and how likely the residents are to move from where they live now. Overall, the most frequent response was that housing did in fact meet these attendees' needs, that they plan to remain in their current residences, and that *most* will definitely *not* be moving in the next 5-10 years.

Conclusion

Summary of Discussion

Overall, most respondents expressed significant interest in senior housing created in Barkhamsted. Although attendees had expressed an interest to remain in their current housing for as long as possible, participants emphasized their desire for affordable housing options accommodated to aging needs in Barkhamsted.

There was some discussion as to why young and middle-aged adults were leaving the Town and State; some concerns were that there were little jobs or affordable housing to keep people in the town. Some residents suggested developing a few small businesses in town to attract younger families. However, a major issue that resonated among attendees across all public forums and business owner focus group was the lack of public sewer and water acting as an obstacle to any kind of productive development (economic or housing).

There was some concern about attracting too many people to the Town or “non-community-minded” populations. Additionally, like the comments received at the two other public forums, residents strongly desired the town to conserve its rural, wild and natural quality and to continue offering excellent natural recreation.

Characteristics of Attendees

Attendees of the Housing Forum represented 0.05% of the entire Barkhamsted population. Most residents were over the age of 50, have lived in Barkhamsted for a few decades. This forum had more diversity in terms of education attained as compared to the other forums.

Final Thoughts across All Three Public Forums

The main issues that were discussed in nearly all the forums included the residents’ desire for the Town to remain rural and conserve natural resources, the cautious interest in very limited economic development of existing and new small businesses, interest in senior housing, and the challenge of developing without sewer and water.

The demographics of public forum attendees were very similar across the board. As mentioned in other public forum reports, though the public process is important to the Town of Barkhamsted in compiling in the POCD, the opinions that arose during this meeting may not represent the Town population. The Planning and Zoning Commission will have to give leeway to the official mailed survey results as the responses that the Town will receive will represent more demographic characteristics.

Appendix:

What kind of Housing You would like to See?

On a Scale of 1 to 10 (10 meaning that you strongly like this type of housing and 1 meaning that you strongly dislike this type of housing), please give a rating to each slide. You may assign a number rating more than once.

Write your Rating on the line Slides

_____ Slide 1
 _____ Slide 2
 _____ Slide 3
 _____ Slide 4
 _____ Slide 5
 _____ Slide 6

Please state your interest in seeing the development of the following in Barkhamsted:

| | High Interest | Moderate Interest | Low Interest | No Interest |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Senior Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Two Family Duplexes | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Small Scale Condominiums | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Small Scale Apartments | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Single Family Homes (<\$150,000) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Single Family Homes (\$150,000-250,000) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Single Family Homes (>\$250,000) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Cluster Single Family Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Exit Ticket: Feedback on Housing Public Forum

Thank you again for stopping by the Housing Forum! To finish our session, we ask for you to fill out a quick survey about yourself and your experience. We will not publish this information. We will only use this survey to construct the Plan of Conservation and Development.

Please do not write your name on this survey!! Your response is anonymous!

How did you hear about this event? (check all that apply)

- Newspaper Email from the Town Someone told me about the public forum.
- Other (specify): _____

Approximately how many years have you lived in Barkhamsted?

- 1-2 years 3 – 5 years 6-10 years 11-20 years 21-30 years 31 years or more
- I used to be a Barkhamsted Resident but I do not live in Barkhamsted anymore.
- I have never been a Barkhamsted Resident

What is your gender? Male Female

- How old are you?** under 18 18–30 31–40 41–50 51-60 61-70 71-80
- over 80

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Less than High School Some High School High School/GED Some Community College
- Community College Some College College Some Graduate School Graduate School

Please mark the box of one statement that most closely matches your attitudes about today's focus group session.

- I feel my concerns and ideas have been received and noted during today's session.
- I feel my concerns and ideas have somewhat been received and noted during today's session.
- I feel like my concerns and ideas were ignored.

How would you rate how well Town representatives listened to the residents today (1 being poor, 10 being excellent)? Circle one rating.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|---|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Poor | | | Room for Improvement | | | | | | Excellent |