

Note to Affordable Housing Plan:

1) Kellogg Enrollment

According to the Region One enrollment numbers attached to the Region One Budget – Kellogg is seeing an increase in enrollment, not a decrease – the AH Plan states, “Recent data indicates a decrease in enrollment at both HVRHS and Kellogg”. In addition, there are currently 9 home schoolers in FV. I believe Kellogg enrollment is now up to 70 for 2021-2022 – again showing an uptick every year, plus the home schoolers.

According to the Region One Budget - The information in the AH plan is off by one year for both HVRHS and Kellogg. The numbers listed under 2021-2022 in the AH plan is actually 2020-2021, according to Region One numbers.

| Member Town | Enrollment * | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | 2018-2019 | 2019-2020 | 2020-2021 |
| Canaan | 66 | 67 | 69 |

2) HVRHS Enrollment.

As noted above, the chart in the appendix has 20-21 numbers as 21-22 numbers.

The enrollment at HVRHS is increasing. 69 students graduated in 2021, and 102 came in as Freshmen this year.

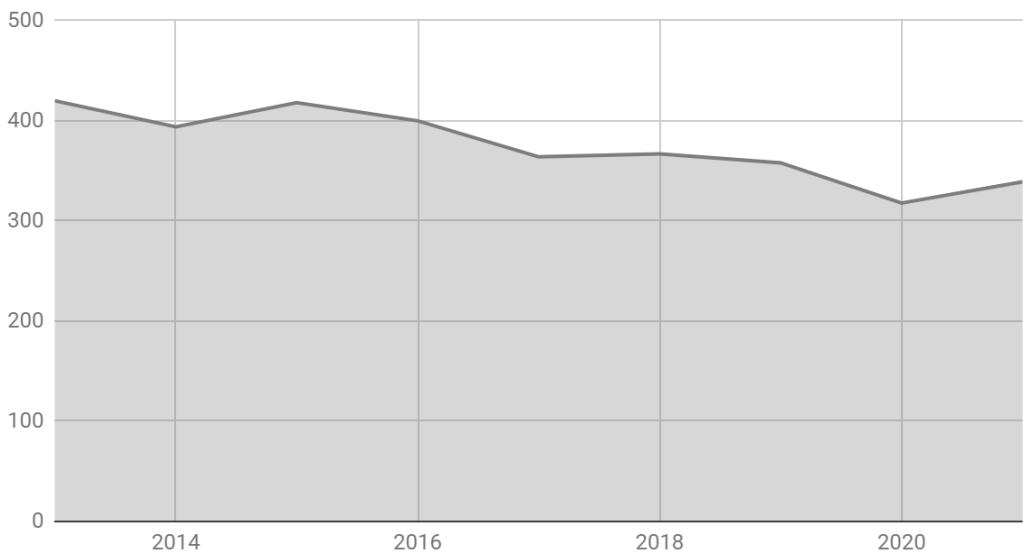
In addition, the enrollment at HVRHS is not a reflection on population in the Region. As of 19-20, only 66% of students living in Region 1 went to HVRHS verses a private school, home school or Oliver Wolcott/tech schools. You can see from the data below the decline in students attending HVRHS over the past few years, but you can also see a big leap last year which is a reflection on the excellent job Ian Strever, Lisa Carter and all the professionals are doing to increase local enrollment – it’s working. However, the graph in the AH plan does not reflect population. To properly calculate a graph/data on student population you would have to include the population of students in Region One who attend schools other than HVRHS. Ian Strever provided the data below and the graph on the next page.

| | Region-Wide |
|-------|--------------------|
| 03-04 | 84.24% |
| 04-05 | 83.17% |
| 05-06 | 75.47% |
| 06-07 | 89.76% |
| 07-08 | 82.61% |
| 08-09 | 85.11% |
| 09-10 | 91.89% |
| 10-11 | 75.21% |
| 11-12 | 78.95% |
| 12-13 | 74.83% |
| 13-14 | 72.13% |
| 14-15 | 80.27% |
| 15-16 | 77.78% |
| 16-17 | 67.83% |
| 17-18 | 67.19% |
| 18-19 | 67.77% |
| 19-20 | 66.27% |
| 20-21 | 77.60% |

As you can see, enrollment is increasing at HVRHS. In 2015 80% of 8th graders went to HVRHS, then a steady decline for 4 years, and then an uptick in 2021. Again, this reflects the number of kids who attend HVRHS rather than Region One population.

Using only enrollment of HVRHS in the AH plan distorts the numbers. The data showing how many kids go to other schools must be part of the data. Currently there are 63 students in 10th grade at HVRHS – and 102 in 9th grade. That is a 38% increase in enrollment at HVRHS.

HVRHS Student Enrollment, 2013-Present



- 3) “There were 215 children in FV in 2010 and 182 in 2020 – a 15% decline”. I am not disputing that statement but reflecting on the past ten years for this statement, and only using the last 5 years in the rest of the data is confusing. If the population at Kellogg and HVRHS is increasing, it’s difficult to use a 10-year statistic comparison when the most recent data suggests otherwise.

I understand this is just data – however the AH plan states “this (meaning the data) suggests a future need for housing types other than what has been traditionally designed for households with children”. That statement can be said, but it needs to be based on accurate data.

Housing Data:

Below is a graph with data from the CT MLS (multiple listing service). The only sales not included in this data are private sales – which are very few and far between and generally sales between family members (usually at a below market price). So, adding those few sales would most likely lower the median and average sales prices across the board, year after year.



As you can see, 2020 only brought in one more sale than 2019. There is no indication Covid had anything to do with home sales – one more sale in 2020 over 2019 is surely not an indication of a Covid influx.

The median sales price in Falls Village was not \$135,000 in 2016 and it hasn't been that low in at least the last 9 years. Using \$135,000 grossly distorts the figures.

With so few sales per year, these numbers are difficult to use as a guide, one 1mm sale can distort the entire median price. But if you look at the Sales by Price chart you can see that year after year, the bulk of sales are in the 0-299k range. Currently 57% of the homes on the market, under contract or sold in 2021 fall into the under 350K category.

The 4.5% increase in sales from 2019 to 2020 is one, just one, sale.

With correct data, that entire page should be rewritten. It changes the perspective a great deal.

Homeownership:

This paragraph is not accurate. The options for homeownership and First-Time homebuyer opportunities are more widely and openly available now than I have ever seen – and I have been in the housing business since 1996. The options available through USDA, CHFA, FHA, VA, FNMA and FHLMC are numerous and abundant. The constraints are easier now, not more difficult. One example, FHA uses half of what it used last year for student loan payments. It's easier to qualify for a mortgage now than it was just a year ago. The barriers to homeownership are less now, not more.

Buyers in this price range are not up against cash buyers, really. That is a rare occasion in the 350 and under market. The competition with cash buyers is in the higher end in this area.

The statement “demand has resulted in limited houses for sale” – the graph shows the opposite. 2018 had 10 sales, 2019 had 22 sales and 2020 had 23. Doesn’t that show more homes are available for sale over the past few years?

I am not sure how renters are more cost burdened than homeowners based on the calculations. (That’s definitely a question).

The statistic of 46% of young people aged 19-34 still living with their parents may be correct for Litchfield County (it’s a huge county with lots of cities, larger populations and I assume that number includes college kids who are in college but still use their parents address) but certainly does not represent Falls Village.

Homeownership – I strongly feel the plan for our town to increase affordable housing must include homeownership and not just focus on rentals. The data shows that’s where our sales are – a price range that is affordable. There are hundreds and hundreds of studies which show a homeowner adds more to a community – they invest in the community, volunteer, pay taxes, attend our schools, and so much more.

I am not against rentals – but to sway the data to represent only rentals with data that is not accurate, is a disservice to the whole concept of Affordable Housing.

The AH plan states the median income in FV is \$80k. Using just the 30% marker from your report, that is \$2000/month for housing. Most of the sales in FV would carry a lower monthly payment than \$2000.

Recently I helped a young man buy a new home. He was paying \$2100 in rent. He purchased the home and is now paying \$1641/month. That \$1641 included his mortgage, taxes, homeowners, and mortgage insurance.

The paragraph on Equity, Opportunity and Housing is quite insulting to those of us who work in this industry and anyone reading it. This paragraph “Access to homeownership has had a long history of discriminatory practices that continues to restrict access to equitable housing opportunities today” – is not a valid blanket statement. Sure, there are probably pockets of places which this still holds true in the US, I’m sure. But I don’t think you will find an industry more regulated than housing to insure equal access to housing. The reporting requirements are enormous and the multitude of audits and criteria in place is huge. I really hope that statement is removed.

Otherwise, I would like to see data for this area that supports this claim.

Strategies:

CHFA/CT already has a down payment assistance program with much higher income limits than the AMI. Not only can you borrow the down payment, you can also borrow the closing costs. Which means zero out of pocket other than a home inspection.

Here are CHFA income limits and please note – this does not include every wage earner in the household, it is only the income of the individual(s) on the mortgage. Meaning if Jane makes \$101,000 and qualifies for the mortgage on her own – if her partner Joe made another \$50,000, they would still qualify for CHFA if his income isn’t used on the mortgage. This change was made about 3-5 years ago to help more people qualify for homes. Another example of barriers to homeownership being lifted, not made more stringent. The country and mortgage lending are going in the opposite direction of what the AH plan dictates.

| Litchfield County | 1 or 2 | 3 or more |
|---------------------|---------|-----------|
| Barkhamsted | 102,900 | 118,335 |
| Bethlehem | 102,900 | 118,335 |
| Bridgewater | 102,900 | 118,335 |
| Canaan | 102,900 | 118,335 |
| Colebrook, Cornwall | 102,900 | 118,335 |

Tom McGowan’s sales are 2019 sales, not 2020 sales.

Here are the sales for these few years from the MLS – just to show 2019 compared to 2020 and the 2016 sales to show the median isn’t close to \$135k.

| 2019 Sales | | 2020 Sales | | 2016 Sales | |
|-------------|-----------------------|------------|------------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| \$45,000 | 59 Prospect St | \$70,000 | 35 Facchin St | \$130,000 | 20 Route 63 |
| \$63,000 | 17 Facchin St | \$122,500 | 39 Route 7 S. | \$140,000 | 7 Railroad St |
| \$78,000 | 62 Railroad St | \$187,500 | 16 Johnson Rd | \$198,000 | 73 Dublin Rd |
| \$85,000 | 36 Dublin Rd | \$195,000 | 402 Route 7 N. | \$209,000 | 275 Music Mountain Rd |
| \$100,000 | 263 Route 63 | \$199,000 | 55 Prospect St | \$210,000 | 100 Beebe Hill Rd |
| \$104,500 | 202 Route 7 S. | \$223,750 | 46 Johnson Rd | \$230,000 | 18 Lime Rock Stra |
| \$115,000 | 5 Stein Ln | \$239,932 | 22 Lime Rock Sta | \$280,000 | 23 Route 7 N. |
| \$140,000 | 196 Route 7 S. | \$240,000 | 21 Beebe Hill Rd | \$373,500 | 9 Seneca Ln |
| \$169,950 | 28 Stein Ln | \$246,000 | 57 Warren Tpke | \$400,000 | 92 Main St |
| \$172,200 | 186 Route 63 | \$252,000 | 36 Dublin Rd | \$480,000 | 200 Music Mountain Rd |
| \$198,000 | 263 Route 7 S. | \$255,000 | 17 Barnes Rd | | |
| \$212,500 | 64 Belden St | \$257,500 | 39 Stein Ln | | |
| \$224,500 | 84 Beebe Hill Rd | \$272,000 | 101 Main St | | |
| \$255,000 | 19 Prospect St | \$350,000 | 24 Arnott Dr | | |
| \$265,000 | 148 Sand Rd | \$355,000 | 104 Belden St | | |
| \$280,000 | 84 Railroad St | \$385,000 | 25 Amy Rd | | |
| \$350,000 | 162 Music Mountain Rd | \$395,000 | 124 Canaan Mountain Rd | | |
| \$445,000 | 32 Amy Rd | \$395,000 | 41 Prospect St | | |
| \$540,000 | 354 Route 7 N. | \$450,000 | 15 Cobble Rd | | |
| \$550,000 | 196 Route 63 | \$460,000 | 64 Music Mountain Rd | | |
| \$825,000 | 80 Under Mountain Rd | \$800,000 | 15 Belden St | | |
| \$1,000,000 | 181 Beebe Hill Rd | \$823,000 | 119 Under Mountain Rd | | |
| | | \$935,000 | 28 Aspen Hill Dr | | |

Suggestions:

Use valid statistics that relate to FV, not the County or US, to show a valid picture of FV housing.

Correct the data to be accurate so conclusions can be drawn on correct information and background.

Focus much more on homeownership. We have affordable housing. The number one reason young people don’t buy here rather than some other towns, are our taxes. People budget based on monthly payment. That includes property taxes. Paying double in taxes here, then Salisbury or Sharon, means they can buy a more expensive home in a neighboring town and still have a smaller monthly payment. This is one of the many reasons why Salisbury saw an enormous influx of young people during the pandemic, and we have an enrollment increase of one student. We had the houses for sale as the data shows – but the taxes are too high.

One of the focuses of this plan to make housing affordable should be a focus on how to cut the mill rate. Creating rentals through municipal properties does nothing to increase the tax base but could easily add more expenses to the town and increase an already very high mill rate.

I spoke with several members of the State DOH and one of the legislative issues every small town should focus on is changing the blanket regulations of 10% across the State for affordable housing. Having 10% in large cities is easy. Creating 10% affordable housing in a town with 1200 people is close to impossible. That, in my opinion, should be a major focus of the town. Miguel Rivera noted that is a legislative issue to take up with CT. Everyone I spoke to agrees – the regulation needs to be changed to consider the population of the municipality.

The State also prefers housing funds be spent on homeownership.

If this document is going to be used as a basis to make decisions on housing, it has to be accurate. If it is to be used in any way as a basis for funding opportunities – it has to be accurate. Any agency granting funds can easily look these numbers up as quickly as I did and see they do not accurately portray our town and determine the numbers and data are not accurate.

Thank you for your time. I hope the team will re evaluate the plan based on the data. I also hope the team can be put back together to complete a plan that truly meets the housing needs in FV.