

ACHIEVABLE HOUSING LOOKBOOK



JUNE 2024

SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT HOUSING ALLIANCE

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SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT HOUSING ALLIANCE (SECHA)

ABOUT SECHA

The Southeastern Connecticut Housing Alliance (SECHA) was incorporated in 2006 as an advocacy organization, dedicated to promoting affordable housing in Southeastern Connecticut. SECHA was a recommendation of the Blue Ribbon Panel for Housing, which was formed following a 2002 study of housing needs in the region. Today, SCCOG and SECHA work closely, with SCCOG providing administrative and program support to SECHA.

MISSION

“SECHA will work to advance access to housing through continuous collaboration and leadership.”

Collaboration

Equipped with adequate skills and resources, stakeholders need to coordinate their combined efforts to affect change. Through collaboration among its diverse membership and community connections, SECHA will build capacity with the region to increase affordable housing and develop solutions for additional housing options.

Advocacy

SECHA recognizes the need to develop informed policymakers, activists, and communities in order to improve public and private housing programs and policies. SECHA will foster support and leadership for affordable housing.

Management

Our internal capacity to provide value for the community and advance SECHA's goals requires us to effectively monitor the organization's governance, marketing, and communications, as well as its financial stability.

Introduction to Achievable Housing

Why do we need achievable housing?

A growing number of residents and families in Southeastern Connecticut are struggling with paying their mortgage or rent. 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.

One in four households in our region are both low-income and cost-burdened. A job loss could put these families at risk of eviction or foreclosure. Many full-time working families would qualify for affordable housing if it were available.

Achievable housing is housing that meets the needs and budget of residents and families. Households are considered **cost-burdened** if they pay more than 30% of their income for housing. Achievable housing can be market-rate or can be produced or managed under a program that ensures

its affordability for its occupants.

In our region, a household is considered **low-income** if their income is less than 80% of the median income – for a family of four, earning \$85,600 a year or less is considered low-income. For that family, housing costs (rent, mortgage, utilities, taxes) less than \$2,140 a month would be considered affordable.

The table below shows the annual income for two- and four- person households at 60%, 80%, and 100% area median income (AMI). The table also breaks down the maximum housing budget for each income level. Additionally, an hourly rate based on a full-time job was calculated for each income level. For reference, in 2024 the federal minimum wage is set at \$7.25 per hour and the state minimum wage is set at \$15.69 per hour.

Two-Person Household			
Percent AMI	Annual Income	Max budget (30%)	Hourly
100%	\$85,600	\$2,140	\$41.15
80%	\$68,480	\$1,712	\$32.92
60%	\$51,360	\$1,284	\$24.69
Four-Person Household			
Percent AMI	Annual Income	Max budget (30%)	Hourly
100%	\$107,000	\$2,675	\$51.44
80%	\$85,600	\$2,140	\$41.15
60%	\$64,200	\$1,605	\$30.87

Source: 2024 CT DOH Income Limits based on HUD Median Incomes

Encouraging a Range of Housing Types

Shelter is a basic human need, at every life stage. From a young adult or family forging a new household unit, to expanded space needs that come with a growing family or caretaking role, to seniors ready to downsize who may want to age in place by finding a smaller option in their current community – southeastern Connecticut is made up of a spectrum of households that all contribute to the stability and vitality of our region, and that need a safe and dignified place to call home.

Households are as varied as these examples and so many more. Ensuring an adequate supply of regional housing requires a variety of housing types that suit the needs of and are financially accessible to households of varying compositions, incomes, and preferences. However, the SCCOG region is dominated by detached single-family home houses (estimated at 62% of the region's total housing stock in 2022 ACS data), lacking the diversity and quantity of housing required to ensure affordable and achievable housing at median and lower household income levels.

Affordable and achievable housing includes both owner-occupied and rental units. In particular, the SCCOG region faces a shortage of achievable and affordable rental units. Rental units are an important part of any housing landscape, as most households that eventually buy homes will require time in a rental to save for a downpayment on a home. Cost is not the only factor, with young and senior households in particular trending toward rental units where home maintenance demands are minimized or shared with a landlord. SCCOG's 2019 Housing Needs Assessment found a particular lag in the creation of new rental units regionwide, estimating that of new households expect to form in the region, over half (54%) will rent, significantly higher than the current 35% of households that rent. Demand is likely to be especially high for lower-cost rental units. Rentals and ownership units can take the form of single-family homes, multifamily apartments and condominiums, or moderate density "Missing Middle" housing.



Source: *Opticos Design*

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Achievable Housing Typologies

The Achievable Housing Lookbook Structure

This lookbook is meant to showcase the range of achievable housing types that can be realized. This menu of achievable housing options supports the idea that housing that is accessible to a range of households can fit into many local community contexts – there is an achievable housing option for every kind of community. In some cases, partnerships between municipalities, non-profits, state agencies, and local groups help to bring about the financing, regulatory environment, and support necessary to overcome the market forces and housing scarcity underpinning price increases and alleviate housing cost-burdened households. This lookbook highlights recent examples of the following housing types in the SCCOG region:

Single Family Homes



Low and Medium Density Multi-Family Homes



High Density Multi-Family Homes



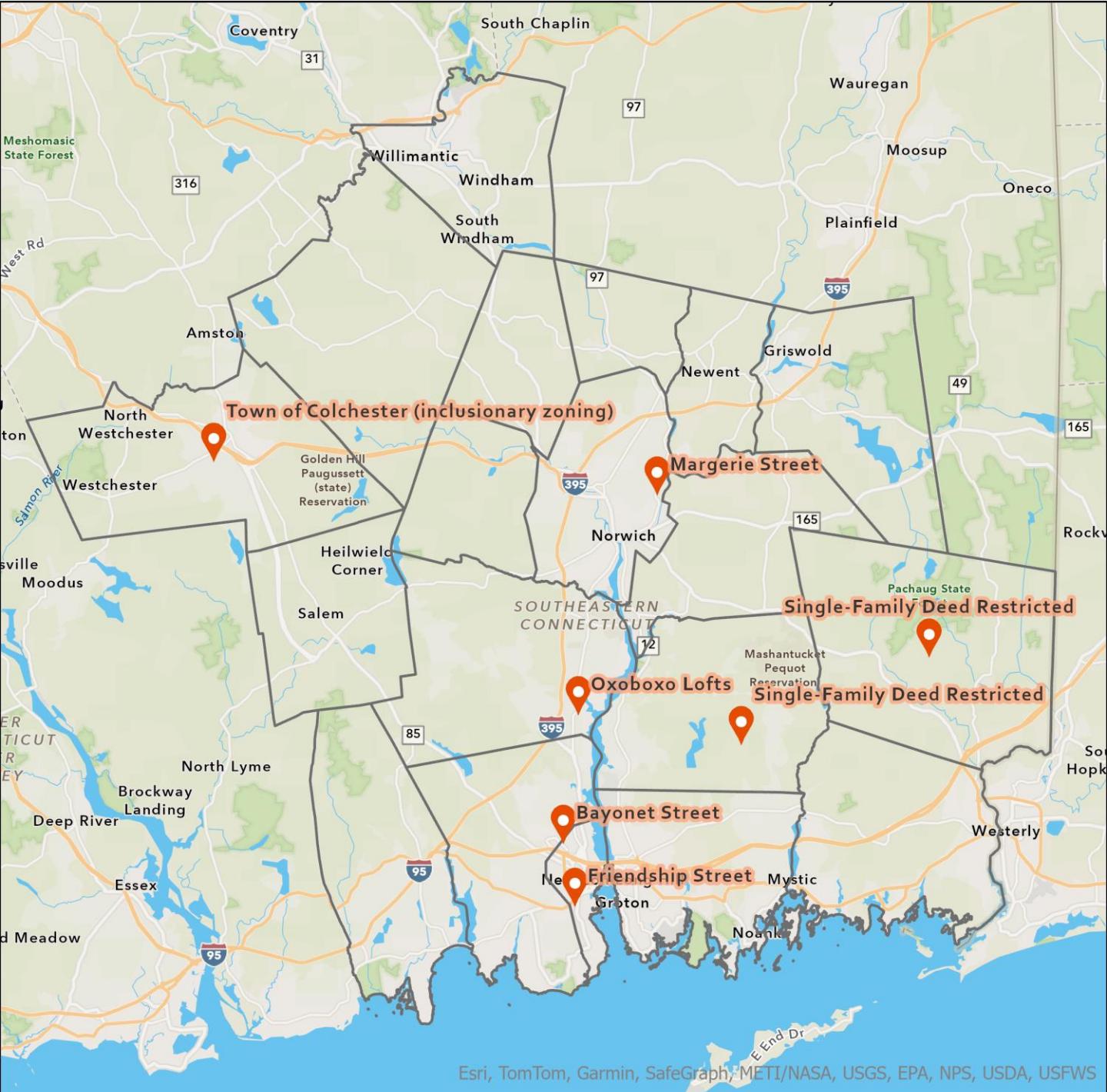
Historic Building Rehabilitation



Read on to discover more about these highlighted projects, including their density, cost, funding mechanisms, compelling appearance, and other unique elements.

LOOKBOOK ORIENTATION MAP

The Lookbook highlights affordable and achievable housing developments and housing development strategies in the following locations (note, single-family home locations are keyed to the town, not to the specific point on the map):



Single Family Homes

Zoning for Achievable Housing

Lower land cost per unit and smaller unit square footages tend to make denser development more affordable. Rural and suburban communities can find the development of medium-density housing to be a challenge given existing development patterns. These areas may currently lack the supportive infrastructure components to enable denser housing development. Though many lower-density municipalities are working toward village-style or similar zones of medium-density housing, implementing public water, sewer, and roadway infrastructure can take time.

However, municipalities can act now and do not have to delay in enacting zoning regulations that will bring about more single-family affordable and achievable housing units.



Developer: Varies



Site: Typically part of a larger subdivision approval



Density: Pinned to underlying zoning, but can be increased through a density bonus mechanism when developments exceed base set-aside requirements



Total Project Cost: Varies

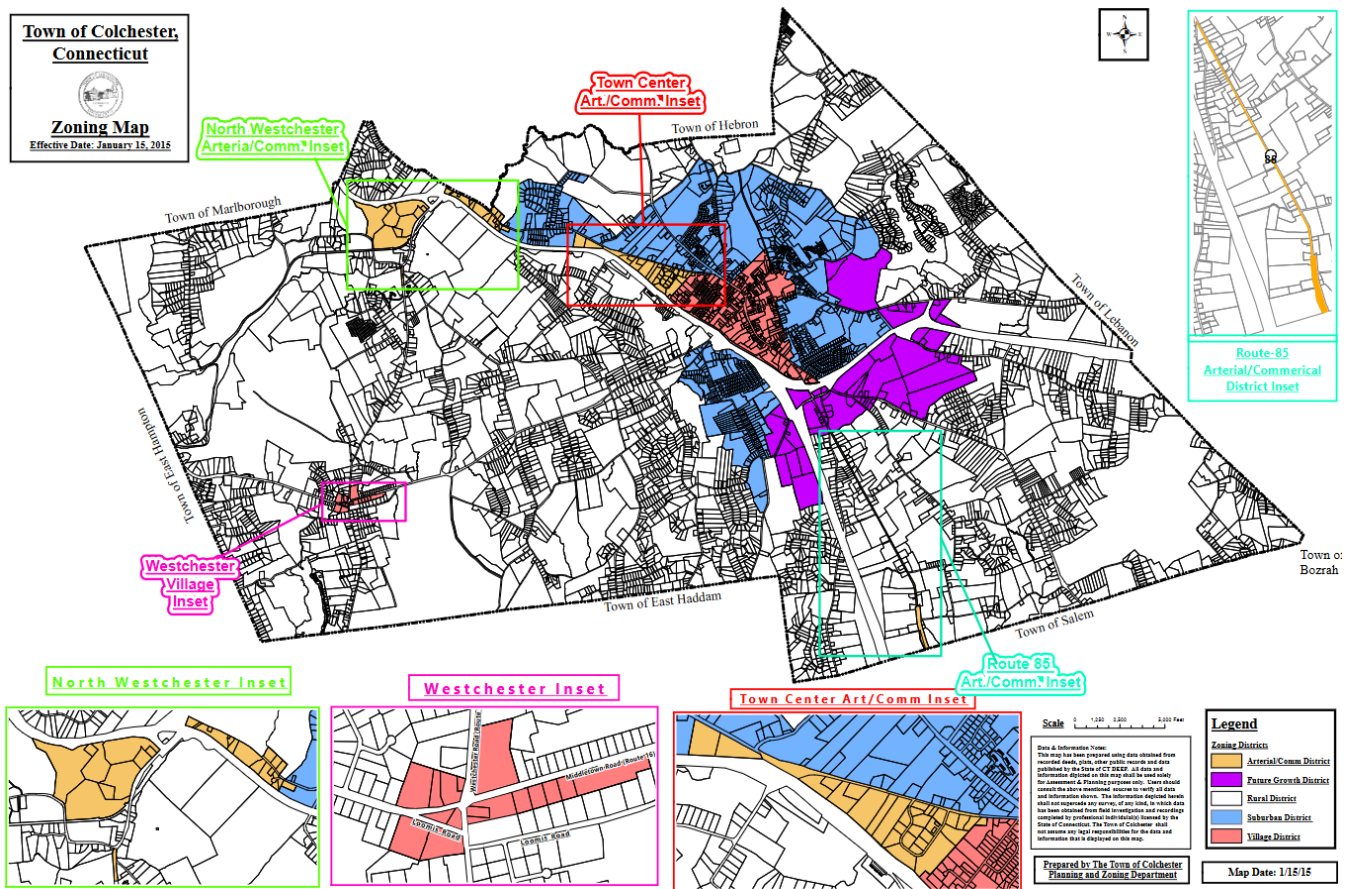


Public Sewer/Water: No, but sometimes community or "package" systems



Funding Mechanisms: Deed-restricted affordable units typically subsidized by market rate units





As with many other affordable housing types, single-family units can be developed and deed restricted to limit their sale or rental to qualifying families. The units shown on the opposite page are both deed-restricted affordable housing units in North Stonington and Ledyard, respectively. While many single-family affordable units constructed to date have been the result of 8-30g subdivision applications, which have a mandatory 30% affordable unit set-aside requirement, municipalities do not have to wait for an 8-30g application.

Instead, Planning and Zoning Commissions can implement "inclusionary" zoning requirements that have similar mandatory affordable housing set-asides and offer density bonuses to direct affordable housing to their locations of choice, as in the highlighted example from the Town of Colchester, passed in May 2024.

Town of Colchester's Affordable Housing Regulation

Standard Affordable housing Requirement (10%): Any development with more than 6 single-family units or more than 3 multi-family units must set aside 10% as affordable housing units.

Density Bonus (15%): If 15% of the units in a development are rented or sold as affordable units, the development can qualify for a 20% increase in gross density, provided there is adequate connection to water and sewer.

Multi-Family Affordable Housing Incentive (30%): In the Town Center and Suburban Use Districts, multi-family units with adequate water and sewer that provide a 30% affordable unit set aside can have the flexibility to deviate from certain dimensional and bulk requirements.



Margerie-Sylvester Street Single Family Homes

Norwich

The 1.17-acre lot between Margerie, Lois and Sylvester Streets was acquired by Habitat for Humanity of Eastern Connecticut in 2011. In 2019, Habitat began clearing the land that had been subdivided into five lots for ten single-family homes. Each lot has two homes that are connected by a shared exterior storage room firewall. This design maximized the property's capacity while maintaining open space between neighbors. The City of Norwich provided water, sewer, and gas lines to the property, allowing for efficient gas boilers to be installed. The final two homeowners closed on their homes in December 2023.

The total project cost was \$2.193m, financed by five primary sources: \$895k from a Connecticut Housing Finance Authority and State Housing Tax Credit Contribution, \$375k from the City of Norwich through the federal American Rescue Plan Act grant, \$106k in donations from 14 businesses, foundations and community partners, \$665k in general donations and ReStore sales, and \$151k in donated materials.

Habitat is proud of the collaborations and partnerships that were forged during the building of this neighborhood. These ten homeowners will contribute to the local economy while creating a stable, safe area for their families to thrive and grow. Together we build homes, communities, and hope.



Developer: Habitat for Humanity



Site: approximately 1 acre, divided into 5 lots, 2 houses per lot



Density: 10 units/acre



Units: 10 units



Total Project Cost: \$2.193 million



Public Sewer/Water: Yes



Unique Project Aspects: infill, Neighborhood Redevelopment Zone



Funding Mechanisms: CT Housing Finance Authority and State Housing Tax Credit Contribution, City of Norwich ARPA grant, donations, ReStore sales, and donated materials.

Before



After



Low- and Medium-Density Multi-Family Homes

New London Homeless Hospitality Center – Friendship Street

New London

The New London Homeless Hospitality Center has developed an achievable housing project with unique shared living space aspects, re-activating an abandoned bank site on Friendship Street. The project includes three two-family homes. Each home has three bedrooms (each with its own bathroom) plus a shared kitchen/living room area. Each home also has access to outdoor space and off-street parking. The target tenant population is individuals below 30% of AMI. In 2024, individuals making under \$24,000 per year would meet this threshold.

The project came about through a partnership effort. The New London Homeless Hospitality Center is the owner and property manager, with construction management provided by Eastern CT Housing Opportunities (ECHO). Project funding was provided by the Department of Housing under the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (“SLFRF”) program. The project utilized modular construction techniques, with units supplied by Signature Building Systems of PA LLC.



Developer: Eastern CT Housing Opportunities (ECHO)



Site: approximately 0.5 acres



Density: 12 units / acre



Units: 6 units



Total Project Cost: \$1,000,000



Public Sewer/Water: Yes



Unique Project Aspects: infill, modular construction, shared common areas



Funding Mechanisms: CT Department of Housing’s State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds



High-Density Multi-Family Homes

Bayonet Street Apartments

New London

Eastern Connecticut Housing Opportunities (ECHO) is developing a two-phase, 64-unit, mixed-income apartment complex on Bayonet Street in New London.

Construction of Phase I (28 units) commenced in August 2022 with completion in Fall of 2023. The 28 units will consist of one, two, and three-bedroom apartments. Nine will be leased at market-rate rents with the remainder leased at varying rental price points based on income. Six units will be set aside for individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism. The apartment complex includes amenities like in-unit laundry, a community center, and a gym.

Phase II construction is expected to commence in 2024. Phase II is expected to be complete in the summer of 2025, and will include 36 additional units.

The apartment complex is located on a SEAT bus route and is located across the street from the New London Mall, which includes a grocery store a medical urgent care facility and dining options.



Developer: Eastern CT Housing Opportunities (ECHO)



Site: approximately 3 acres



Density: 10 units/acre Phase I and 28 units/acre once Phase II is complete



Units: 28 units in Phase I and 64 once Phase II is complete



Total Project Cost: \$11.7 million



Public Sewer/Water: yes



Unique Project Aspects: in-unit laundry, community amenities



Funding Mechanisms: Low-income Tax Credits, CT Department of Housing



Historic Building Rehabilitation

Oxoboxo Lofts

Uncasville (Montville)

Dakota Partners' adaptive reuse project, Oxoboxo Lofts, will transform a historic turn of the century mill and approximately 100,000 square feet of industrial space into 72 studio, one- and two- bedroom apartment homes. Bordered by the Thames River, the former textile mill will provide housing opportunities for all segments of the local market, including market rate apartments, workforce housing and affordable opportunities.

The project has been awarded federal and state historic tax credits and low income housing tax credits to support the restoration and conversion of the former mill. Extensive building improvements for the existing historic structures include new windows, roofs and HVAC systems. Additionally, the iconic smokestack that acts as a beacon for the Thames River will be restored and remain a distinctive community landmark. All rehabilitation will be completed under the guidelines of the CT State Historic Preservation Office and the Department of the Interior.

Upon completion, residents will have access to a variety of amenities including a community clubhouse, fitness center, basketball court, playground and on-site management and resident services. The proximity to Interstate 395 and local shopping, dining and entertainment makes the centrally located community convenient for ease of living.



Developer: Dakota Partners



Site: 10.7 acres



Density: 7 units/acre



Units: 72 units



Total Project Cost: \$32.3 million



Public Sewer/Water: yes



Unique Project Aspects: historic rehabilitation, flood certificate, community amenities



Funding Mechanisms: Bank of America, N.A (construction lender); Bank of America CDC Special Holding Company, Inc. (investor); Eversource Energy (investor), MHIC (investor); BlueHub Capital (investor); Lower Roxbury Community Corporation (investor); Maggiore Construction, Inc. (general partner and general contractor); and Vesta Corporation (property manager); federal and state historic tax credits and low-income tax credits

**REGIONAL
NON-PROFIT
PARTNERS**

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY OF EASTERN CONNECTICUT

Program

Habitat for Humanity of Eastern Connecticut (HFHECT) was founded in 1987. Habitat homeowners are low-income heads of household who invest 350 hours of sweat equity to help build their homes, and buy their homes with a no-profit, affordable mortgage financed by the organization. Mortgage payments are re-invested to build more homes, and property taxes paid by homeowners help fund local municipal services.

Habitat homeowners undergo more than 30 hours of training for first-time home buyers and financial counseling to ensure the responsibilities of home ownership are understood and to help provide them with the tools they need to succeed. HFHECT has housed 98 families across Eastern Connecticut since its founding and aims to house five families each year.

To learn more about HFHECT's work or to volunteer, visit www.habitatect.org or call (860) 442-7890.



Homes

The houses we build are modest, one-story homes with 3 to 4 bedroom and 1 or 1.5 bathrooms. The homes are around 1,000 square feet in area which keeps the homes affordable for our families to purchase and affordable to operate. We use Energy Star rated appliances, windows, and WaterSense certified plumbing fixtures to keep the utilities efficient. We insulate with above-standard R-value insulation and create a very tight energy envelope by using a great deal of caulk in the framing process to make our homes nearly air-tight.

Funding

Our work is funded via individual gifts, re-invested Habitat homeowner mortgage payments, and grants from private foundations and government agencies. We also operate two ReStores in Waterford and Plainfield whose proceeds fund help to fund our construction. ReStores are home improvement stores and donation centers that sell new and gently used furniture, appliances, home goods, building materials and more.

EASTERN CONNECTICUT HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES (ECHO)

Program

Eastern Connecticut Housing Opportunities, Inc. ECHO Homes is a non-profit CT 501(c)3 with a mission to create and provide equitable, healthy and sustainable housing for individuals and families in Eastern Connecticut whose combined income is too low to support the typical purchase or rental of a home at market rates.

Eastern Connecticut Housing Opportunities, Inc. (ECHO) is a Connecticut private, nonprofit corporation established with the mission of improving lives and strengthening communities in Eastern Connecticut by providing equitable housing opportunities to individuals and families in the communities in which they work and wish to live.

To learn more about ECHO's work visit <https://www.echohomes.org> or call (860) 447-8055

Housing Development

Sustainable development is high-quality development, but it does not need to be high-cost development. Through creative design and value-engineering, developers can create sustainable communities while maintaining affordability. Key qualities of sustainable housing are that it promotes economic vitality, fosters environmental integrity, and encourages a sense of community today and for future generations. More specifically, such housing should promote health and mobility; conserve energy and natural resources; and provide easy access to jobs, schools and services. It is best to take a holistic approach to sustainable housing that focuses on people instead of buildings.



Housing Consultation

Financing options for the development of mixed-income and workforce housing are an alphabet soup of loans, grants, and various other programs containing numerous qualifications and restrictions. Developing all types of housing requires in-depth knowledge of these options as well as the ability to stitch a number of them together seamlessly to create a development proposal that pencils out financially. Knowing the myriad funding sources and how to put them together to make a deal work is the art of housing that is affordable for all.

Depending on capacity and resources, many communities and nonprofit organizations may choose to engage ECHO as the consultant to assess housing needs, planning, and resource development. In the capacity of the Housing Consultant, ECHO will collect and analyze data and information related to a specific housing development and/or the community considering housing options. Working through basic development processes, the development team gains a better understanding of the community needs, the type of housing to focus on, and the resources available.



ECHO was founded in

1989

with the mission of providing affordable housing to families in Eastern Connecticut whose combined income is too low to support the purchase or rental of a home at market rates in the communities in which they work and wish to live.

As a development corporation, the ultimate objectives of ECHO are to:



Build housing that otherwise would not be built.



Rehabilitate housing in disrepair.



Make that housing available to individuals and families with limited traditional housing choice.

HOPE, INC.

Program

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, HOPE's goal is to provide decent and affordable housing for low and moderate-income families. Our Inner-City Renovation Program provides three major benefits to the community:

1. Decent and affordable home ownership opportunities are made possible to people in need. All houses are totally renovated - brought up to code and made lead-safe.
2. Historical architecture is preserved for future generations. Woodwork, trim and other unique features are restored.
3. Neighborhoods are improved. Hardworking and caring homeowners are given hope and encouragement to take care of their own properties.

To learn more about HOPE's work or to donate, visit www.hopenewlondon.org or call (860) 447-0812.



Homes

For the last few years HOPE has been focusing work on one neighborhood, that around Belden Street in New London. HOPE obtains a distressed property as a donation or for a low price. As the renovations begin, the executive director solicits donations and support for the project from the community. The executive director counsels potential buyers in terms of their readiness and eligibility to buy a home. After the homes are sold, follow-up calls are made to help ensure a smooth transition from the role of tenant to homeowner. Each Spring, HOPE offers free workshops for first-time homeowners in basic repairs in plumbing, electrical, and carpentry. Proceeds from each house are returned to a revolving renovation account to help fund future projects.

Funding

With a paid staff of only one (and a low operating budget), HOPE depends greatly on the pro bono services of many professionals, such as architects, attorney, and accountants. Contributions of building materials and carpeting are obtained from local businesses. Community service workers and youth groups provide labor for yard work. The City of New London is also very supportive. Contributions are also obtained from foundations, financial institutions and through a state tax credit program.

SOUTHEASTERN CONNECTICUT COMMUNITY LAND TRUST

Program

The Southeastern Connecticut Community Land Trust (SE CT CLT) is a membership-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization that holds land for the development and stewardship of permanently affordable housing, land for food production, green space, and facilities for community organizations. SE CT CLT works to support access to affordable home ownership, advance community development, promote social justice, and further neighborhood revitalization across Southeastern Connecticut.

Funding

The Southeastern Connecticut Community Land Trust (SE CT CLT) is a membership-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable organization that holds land for the development and stewardship of permanently affordable housing, land for food production, green space, and facilities for community organizations. SE CT CLT works to support access to affordable home ownership, advance community development, promote social justice, and further neighborhood revitalization across Southeastern Connecticut.

What is a Community Land Trust?

Community land trusts (CLTs) are nonprofit organizations that provide lasting community assets and permanently affordable housing opportunities for families and communities. Each CLT is governed by a board of CLT residents/lessees, general member representatives, and public representatives. CLTs are committed to the creation of homes that remain permanently affordable, providing successful home ownership opportunities for generations of lower income families. CLTs advance rural and urban agricultural projects, develop commercial spaces to serve local communities, create affordable rental and cooperative housing projects, and conserve land or urban green spaces. There are currently over 225 community land trusts in the United States. Join this rapidly growing movement.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



