

Mayor Caroline Simmons Transition Policy Committee Reporting Document

Committee Name: Affordability and Housing

Co-Chairs: Joan Carty and Denise Williams

1. How do you propose the Simmons Administration should prioritize policy goals in this area, and on what timeframe?

A. Use land more effectively to expand the supply of housing by permitting office/office park/retail conversions to residential use for all income levels. Develop inventory of city owned land, analyze BMR rental and ownership portfolios to assess impact of current guidelines.

B. Scale up investment in housing through immediate deployment of ARPA funds. Advocate for additional state/federal resources for development, rehabilitation, and preservation. Launch programs to shore up existing affordable housing and neighborhoods and expand the supply of affordable deed restricted rental and ownership housing. Consider tax abatements/ tax relief for deed restricted housing and seniors. Explore new sources of revenue for the Housing Trust Fund through additional fees and licensing on certain activities.

C. Consolidate the management of existing Stamford's Housing Programs internally within the Mayor's office in Stamford and externally create a Housing Council to serve as a policy advisory group to Mayor Simmons and to the Director of the Housing and Community Development Department.

2. Which Goals are achievable in the first 100 days of Administration?

A. Start process to add residential use as an allowed use of office/office park/retail conversion. Identify/track pipeline of new development and preservation projects; assess current production capacity and identify gaps/opportunities.

B. Use ARPA funds to build stronger communities through investments in housing and neighborhoods: production and preservation of affordable rental housing, rehabilitation of owner-occupied single family and condominium units, expand homeownership opportunities through down payment assistance, preservation of public housing, supportive housing, expand rental vouchers, develop housing navigation system to centralize waiting lists for all deed restricted units.

C. Recognize the Housing Affordability Study by HR&A, prioritize and adopt key recommendations that align with the consolidation of Stamford's existing housing programs. Appoint a new Housing and Community Development Director. Establish the Housing Council as an advisory group to Mayor Simmons on all Stamford's Housing programs inclusive of an affordability agenda, housing market conditions and housing needs.

3. Which goals will require legislation to move forward?

- Board approval will be needed to allow residential use of office/office park/retail conversion.
- State funding will require special appropriation; federal funding will require earmarks, budget appropriation; local funding will require budget allocation, board approval for tax abatement or property tax relief.
- The establishment of a new department to consolidate the existing housing programs may require new legislation. The costs to implement the consolidation would entail capacity building of the existing staff, potential hiring of new staff if needed, and the hiring of a Director for this new department.

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Which items can be advanced through action of the Administration alone?

- Design and implementation of allowed uses of ARPA funding (see 2B).
- Adoption of recommendations from HR&A's Housing Affordability Study, determination of priorities for state and federal funding, appointment of Advisory Council.
- **What is the financial impact of these legislative or executive actions?**
- Undetermined but likely fiscal impact of allocation of general revenue, tax abatements or grants of City-owned property. The establishment of the Housing Council, an external community advisory group to Mayor Simmons, do not require any legislation and can be advanced by the new administration. There should be no fiscal impact to this action.

4. Are there specific challenges you can identify with regard to achieving the Simmons Administration's goals, and how would you suggest addressing those?

A. We anticipate community support for conversion of office/office park/retail properties to allow residential use.

B. New programs to assist owner-occupants of single family and condominium units should be thoughtfully designed and implemented.

C. The challenges for consolidating the housing functions will be met with resistance from the Board of Trustees, the Zoning Board, the Land Bureau, and the Board of Reps. The concept of consolidation under one department is not designed to take away the governing structure of the Housing Land Trust, the BMR program and the existing Housing and Community Development program but to become more efficient and transparent in the administration, management, coordination, data maintenance, information dissemination, and enforcement of these programs. Identifying the gaps will be key in building support from key members from the Board of Trustees, the Zoning Board, and the Board of Reps. The new Housing Council can also be influential in supporting the consolidation in order to preserve and protect limited affordable housing resources.

5. What examples of success from other states, countries or the public sector in this policy area should the Administration study.

The Housing Affordability Study prepared by HR&A represents a "window" into best practices and lessons learned from communities, with issues like ours from across the country. Consider examples from the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

6. Are there any other issues/consideration you would like to highlight regarding this policy area?

Currently, there are some reservations from community leaders that the current housing functions are not transparent and responsive to community leaders' and residents' informational requests and affordable housing concerns. It will be key that if a consolidation of the housing functions occur that the head of this newly formed department is accountable only to Mayor Simmons and there is transparency with data and updated housing program information throughout Stamford. Additionally, it will be important that the Housing Council truly represents the community with diverse backgrounds of residents, housing providers, advocates, and community leaders.