



Town of Weston Affordable Housing Plan (AHP)

Public Workshop

April 19, 2021

Prepared by:



**MILONE &
MACBROOM**



Now
part of
SLR



Tonight's Agenda

1. Introduction and Background
2. Community Survey Results
3. Case Studies and Potential Strategies

Your role tonight is to provide us with input on potential affordable housing strategies.

If you have any questions or comments, please type them in the chat. Questions will be answered at the end of the workshop.

Email comments can be submitted to Tracy Kulikowski at tkulikowski@westonct.gov.

Introduction and Background

This is an opportunity to create
an Affordable Housing Plan
that reflects **Weston's** values
and priorities

What is an Affordable Housing Plan?

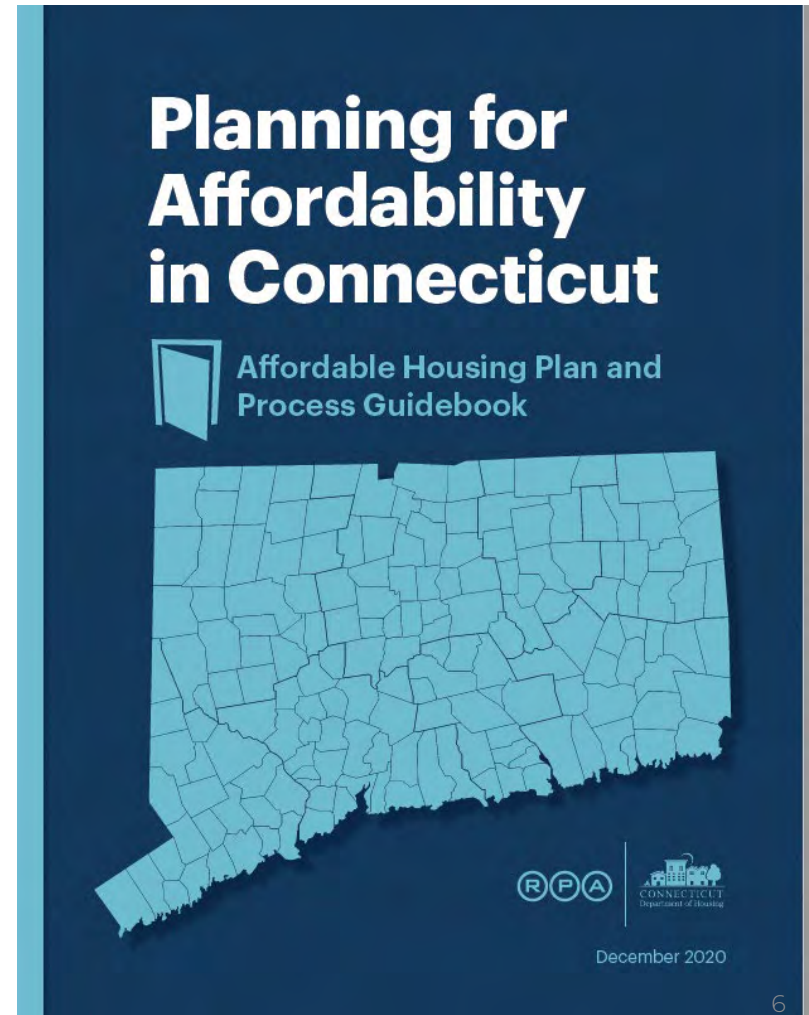
All communities in Connecticut are required by Statute (8-30j) to create and maintain an affordable housing plan every 5 years.

- Bottom-up approach to increasing affordable housing supply in Connecticut.
- The Town of Weston received a \$15,000 grant from the Department of Housing (DOH) and a Town match of \$5,000 to develop this Affordable Housing Plan.

What is an Affordable Housing Plan?

State guidance recommends that an affordable housing plan contain the following:

- A Community Values Statement
- History of Affordable Housing in your Town
- Housing Needs Assessment
- Land Use & Zoning Assessment
- Plan Principals, Goals, and Actions
- Implementation Strategy



What is Affordable Housing?

- **Affordable housing is typically defined as housing that costs no more than 30% of a household's income.**
- Under 8-30g, "affordable housing" is housing which, due to deed restriction or subsidy, costs a low-income household no more than 30% of their income.
 - A goal of state law is for 10% of housing units in every town to be "affordable," per this definition
 - "Low-income household" is a household making less than 80% of state or Area Median Income (AMI), whichever is less.
 - A family of four making less than \$95,000 per year or an individual making less than \$66,500 per year in Weston would qualify as low-income based on AMI.
 - Housing costs include rent or mortgage payments, property taxes, utilities, HOA fees, and maintenance costs.
- **Area Median Income better reflects Weston and Fairfield County incomes and cost of living.**
 - Used for this analysis in accordance with DOH guidance to identify affordable housing needs.
- **Income-based calculation. Does not include wealth, assets, or benefits.**

State



\$1,374/month
for an individual
\$54,950 annual income



\$1,962/month
for a family of 4
\$78,500 annual income

Area



\$1,663/month
for an individual
\$66,500 annual income



\$2,375/month
for a family of 4
\$95,000 annual income

Housing Opportunities from POCD Town Center Plan

- POCD and Town Center Plan discuss enabling the development of a diversity of housing in Weston while respecting existing character and natural environments.

Goal 5: Improve housing options for all life stages and lifestyles, while protecting existing community character

Objectives:

Improve availability of quality, attainable housing for Weston's workforce and senior population

9. Do you agree or disagree that Weston has the right amount of the following housing types:	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
Large, single-family homes	59.4%	18.7%	14.6%	5.1%	2.2%
Small, single-family homes	26.2%	26.4%	19.5%	19.2%	8.7%
Affordable housing (not age restricted)	20.1%	11.4%	26.2%	19.9%	22.4%
Affordable senior housing (age restricted)	13.3%	6.4%	28.4%	19.8%	32.1%
Senior housing of any type	12.7%	6.7%	28.6%	20.6%	31.3%



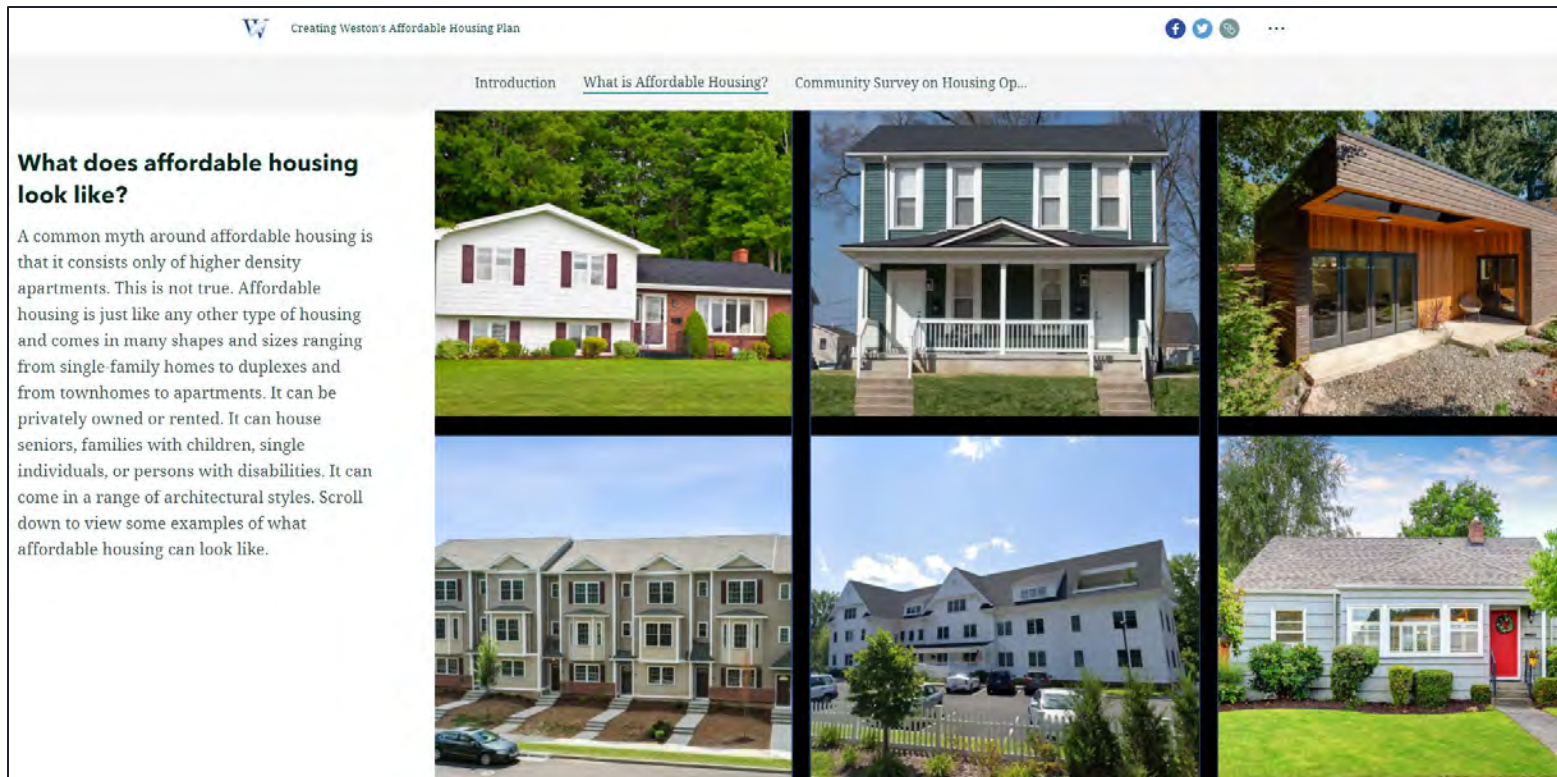
Housing Opportunities from Town Center Study

- *Town Center* – desire for mixed-use and new housing types
- Enhanced public spaces and pedestrian connections
- Expansion of commercial opportunities, amenities, and connections to civic uses



Progress to Date

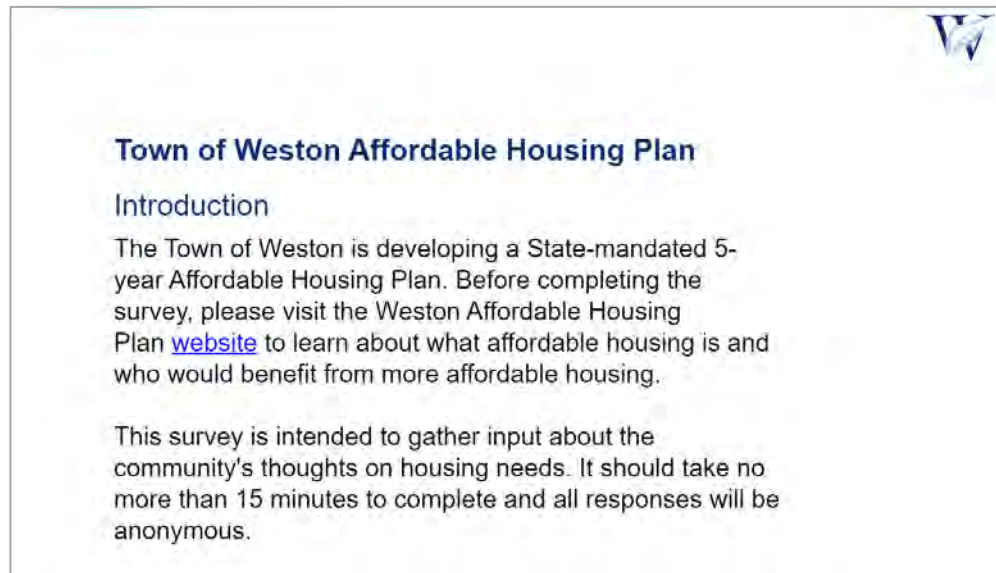
- Created an informational website: arcg.is/1DWbLT0
- Conducted a Housing Needs Assessment
- Conducted and analyzed a Housing Opportunities Survey



Community Survey Results

About the Respondents

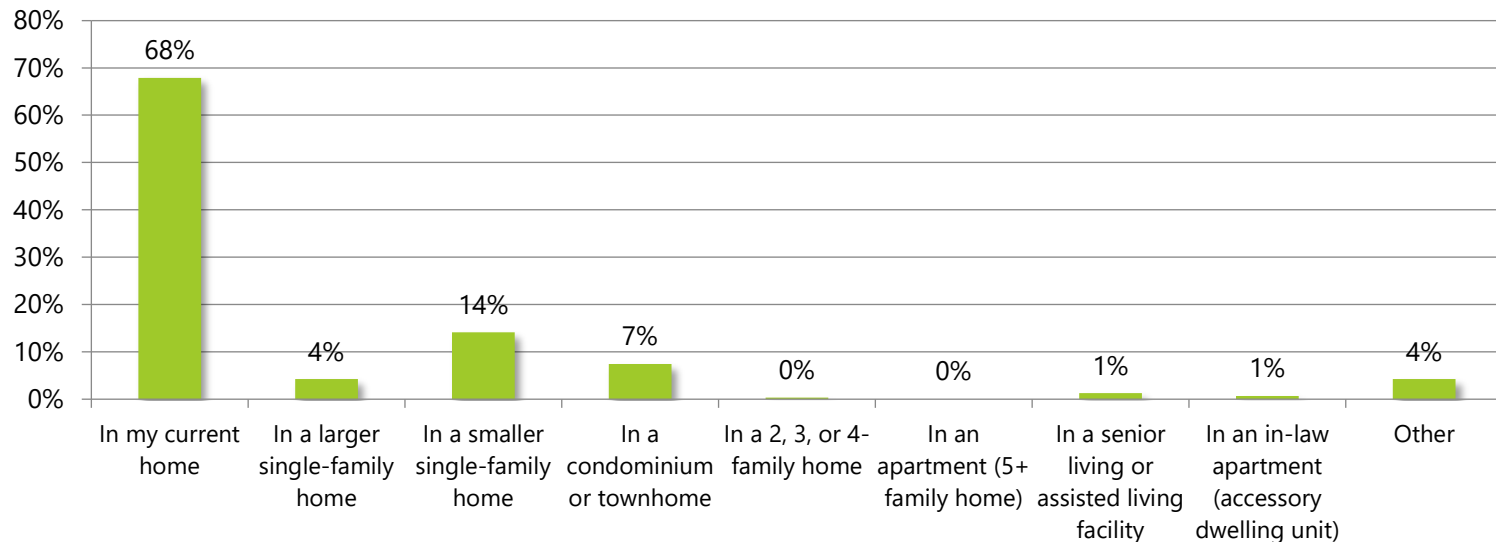
- Ran from March 17 to April 7, 2021
- 1,552 responses – unique IP addresses
 - 1,428 respondents said they reviewed the background website
- 38% of respondents have lived in Weston for 20+ years, 25% have lived in town for 10 to 20 years
 - 8% have moved in since 2019 – not enough to change major trends from 2018 Community Survey
- 98% own their home
- 54% are couple households with children in residence
- 22% are empty nesters
- Older adults are oversampled compared to town population (49% 55+ vs. 32%)
- Only 36% of respondents live in 1- or 2-person households – lower than the whole town (49%)



About the Respondents

- 68% of respondents see themselves living in their current home 5 years from now
- 24% are likely looking to downsize in 5 years
 - into a smaller single-family home, condo/townhome, multifamily, senior living, ADUs
- "Other" responses typically referencing places outside of Weston

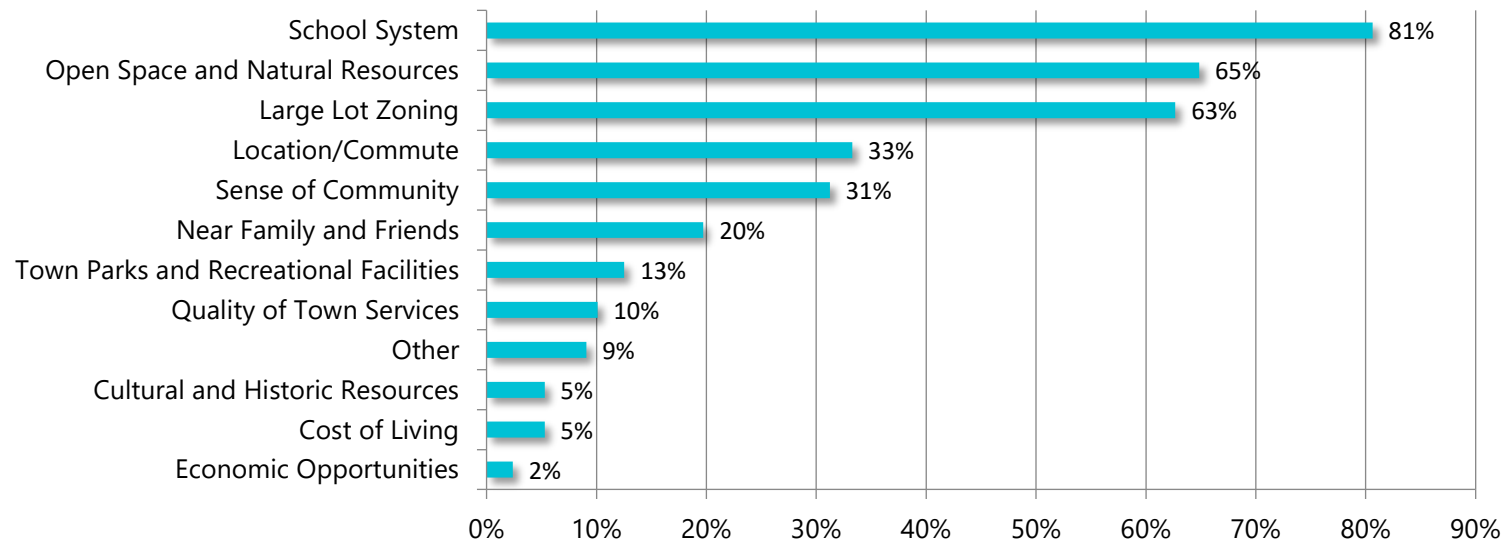
What type of housing do you see yourself living in five years from now?



Community Values

- The school system was the most cited reason respondents moved to Weston, followed by Open Space & Natural Resources and Large Lot Zoning.
- In 2018 POCD survey, participants were asked to pick the “top 3 reasons you chose to live in Weston.”
 - School system was cited by 75% of respondents, followed by quality of life (37%), safe environment (35%), 2-acre zoning (24%), and open space and natural resources (27%).

What are the main reasons why you moved to and continue to live in Weston?

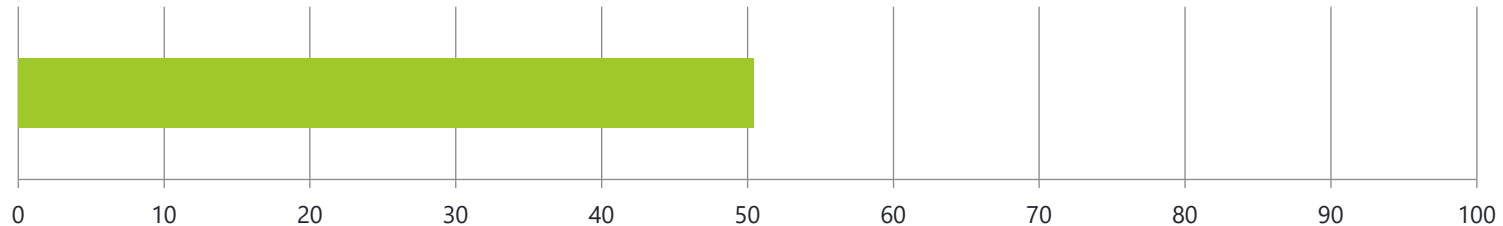


Community Values

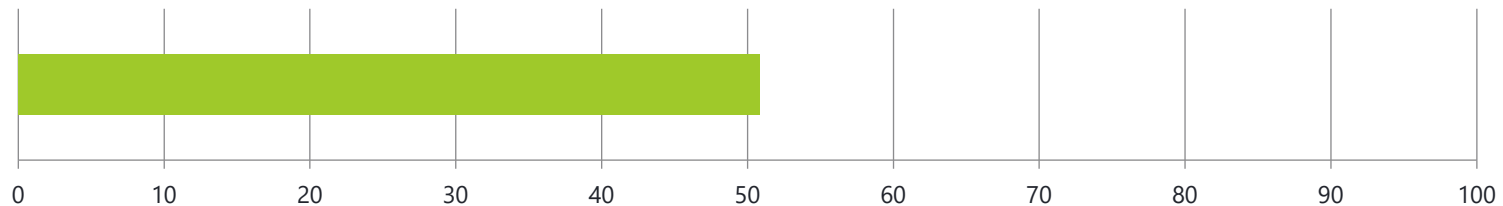
- Respondents were asked to rate the value of concepts from "Not Important at All" (0) to "Extremely Important" (100).
- Average rating was neutral (51) on the importance of the local workforce being able to afford housing in Weston and of the importance of housing diversity in Weston.

The local workforce including teachers, police officers, and other essential workers that are integral to the community have salaries that largely fall below the \$95,000 threshold.*

How important is it that these employees live in the community where they



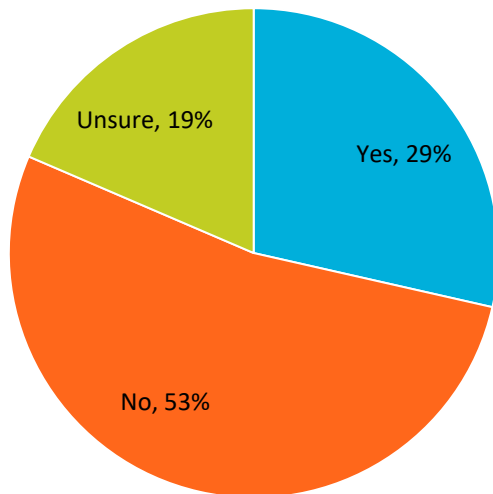
How important is having a diversity of housing in Weston?



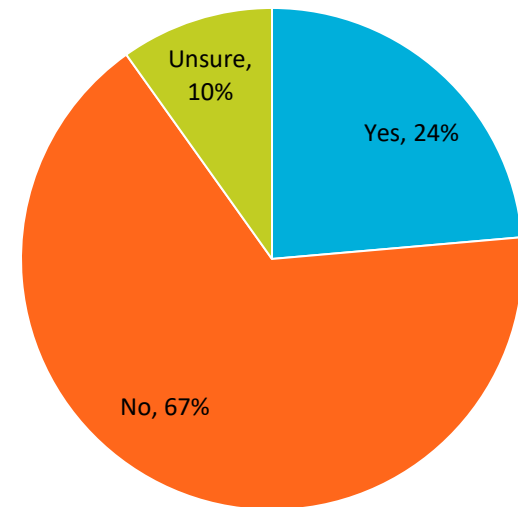
Housing Needs

- 29% of respondents are aware of households who would benefit from more affordable housing in the community.
- 24% of respondents know someone who would benefit from different types of housing in Weston.
- *Feedback Loop* – If community lacks options, people seeking those options will leave/not move in, and respondents would not know them.

Are you aware of any households currently in Weston that would benefit from **more affordable housing**?



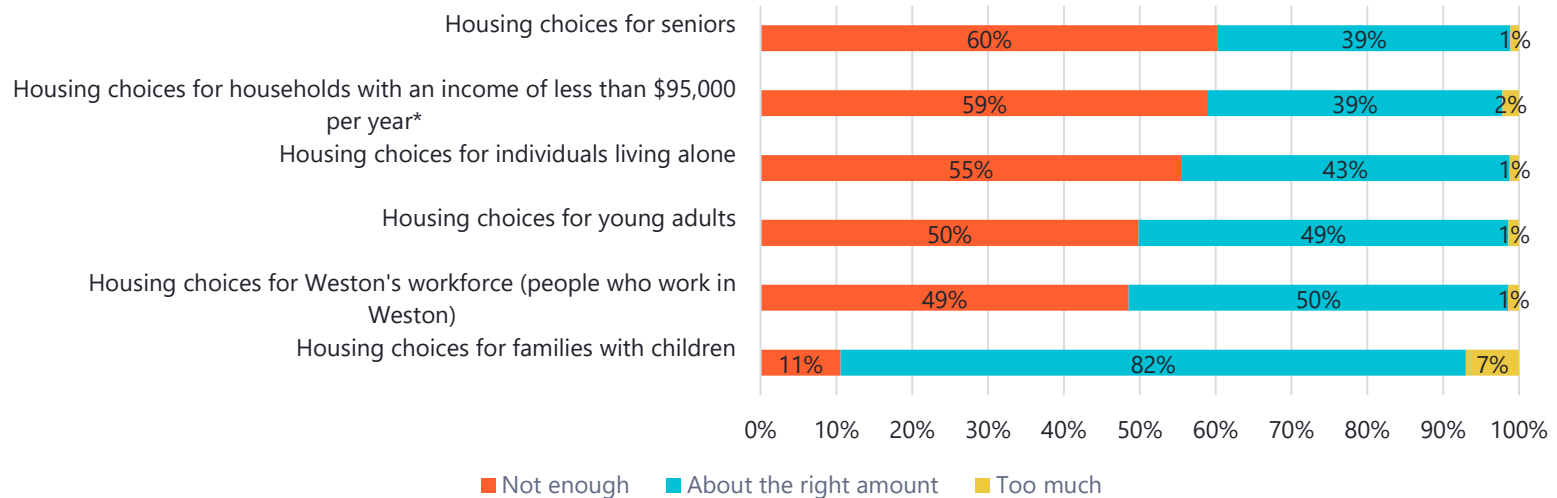
Do you personally, or do you have any family members, neighbors, or friends who live in Weston and are in need of **different housing options** than what is currently available in town?



Housing Choices

- Respondents most frequently cited that there are not enough housing choices for:
 - Seniors (60%)
 - Households with an income less than \$95,000 (59%)
 - Individuals living alone (55%)
- Respondents were split on the need for housing for young adults (50%) and Weston's workforce (49%).
- General agreement that Weston has about the right amount of housing for families with children.

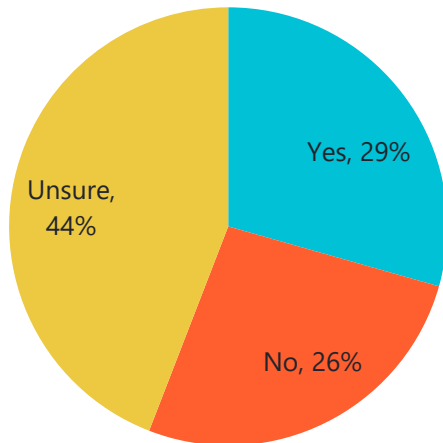
Does Weston have not enough, too much, or about the right amount of housing choices for the following populations?



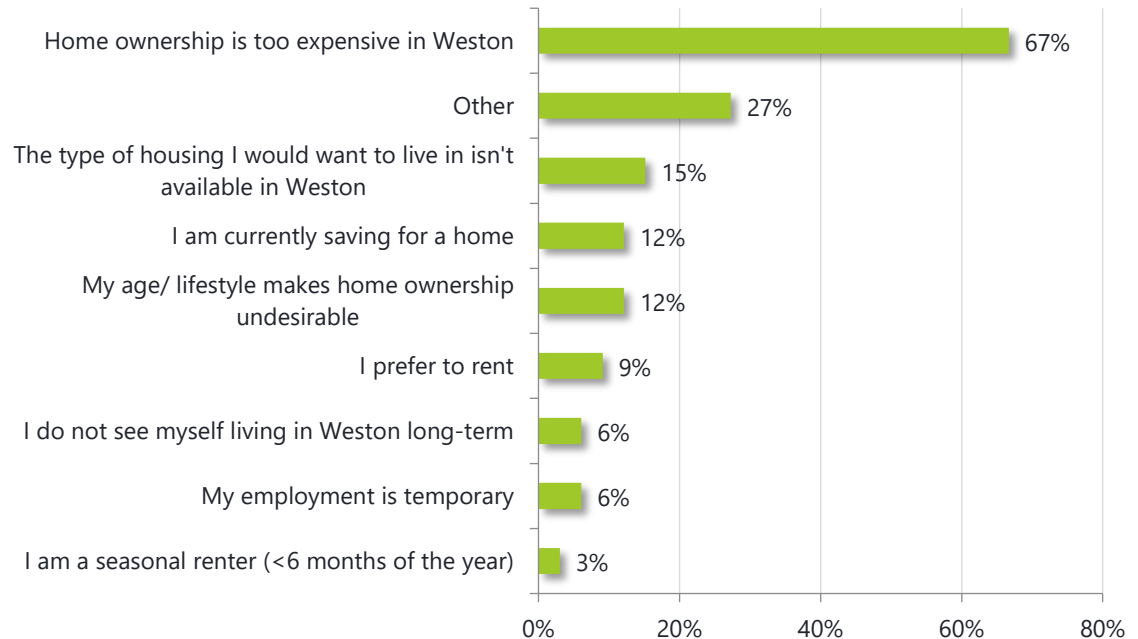
Housing Choices

- 2% of respondents do not own their homes in Weston.
- Less than 30% of those respondents definitely want to own a home in Weston in the future.
 - Only 6% do not see themselves living in Weston long-term.
- Two-thirds of respondents say homeownership in Weston is too expensive.
- 15% say the type of housing they would want is not available in Town.
- “Other” answers typically referenced renting from family.

Do you eventually want
to own a home in
Weston?



Why do you not own a home in Weston?
Check all that apply.



Potential Benefits of Housing Diversity

- 874 responses
- When asked what the benefit of housing diversity would be in Weston, 66% of respondents identified at least one benefit.
- 32% of respondents said there would be no benefit.

Top Benefits

- 1) Increased diversity of residents (socioeconomic, cultural, racial, age, etc.)
Emphasis on benefits for children
- 2) Enable seniors to age in place
- 3) Enable employees in Weston to live where they work
- 4) Create opportunities for lower-income residents
- 5) Enable young people to remain in town
- 6) Improve the community and its longevity
- 7) Economic development/ support for the Town Center



Case Studies and Potential Strategies

Audience Polling Intro

*We are going to use interactive polling during this workshop.
You will need access to an additional webpage.
Let's get started!*

Go to [PolEv.com/SLR2021](https://Pollev.com/SLR2021)

or

Text [SLR2021](https://Pollev.com/SLR2021) to [22333](https://Pollev.com/SLR2021)

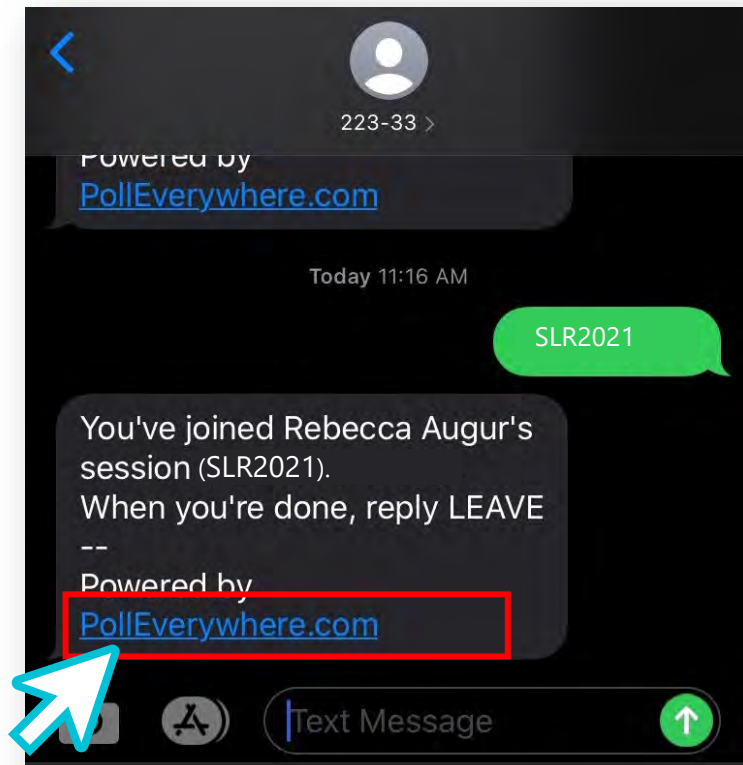
Enter SLR2021

if it opens browser

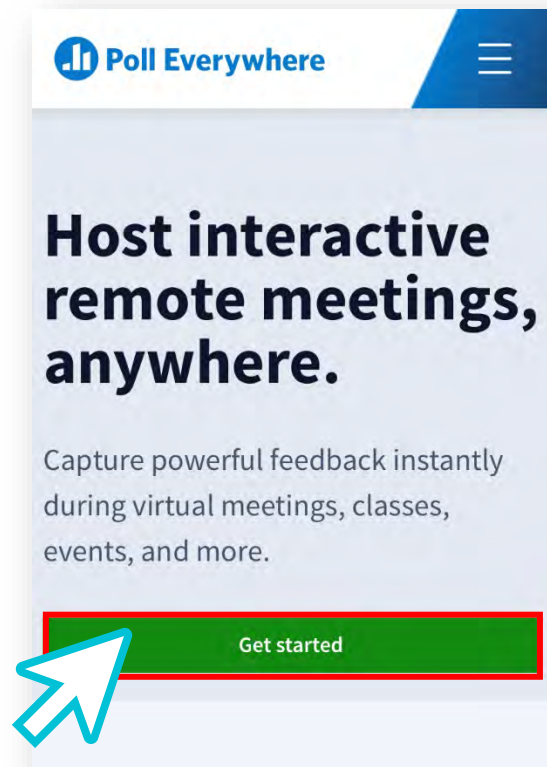
Audience Polling Intro

If Joining by Phone

1) Text **SLR2021** to **22333**

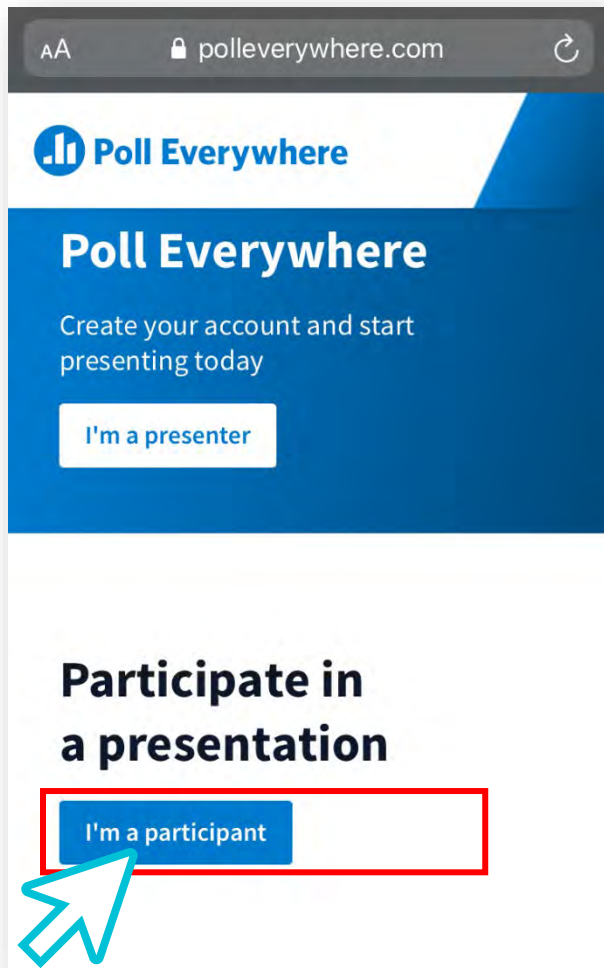


2) Click link

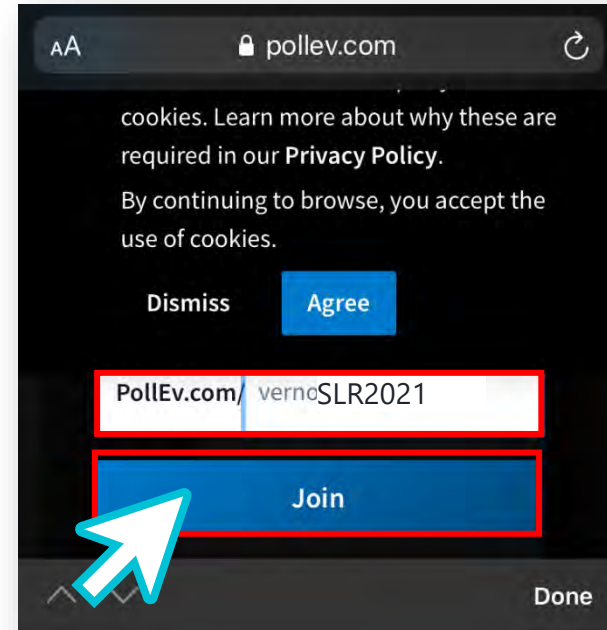


3) Click "Get Started"

Audience Polling Intro



4.) Click "I'm a participant"



5.) Type **SLR2021** after the backslash and hit "Join"



What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?

Potential Strategies

- Accessory Dwelling Units
- Village Centers
 - Mixed-use
 - Multi-family
- Open Space Subdivisions

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

ADUs, sometimes referred to as "in-law apartments," are small dwellings that are on the same property as a regular single-family home.

ADUs can provide affordable housing options and can also provide the homeowner with an additional income stream, which can reduce their overall housing costs.

Can add deed restriction requirements to ensure that these meet statutory definition of "affordable." **pending legislation SB-1024 see slide 28*

Examples of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

ADUs in blue; main residence in white

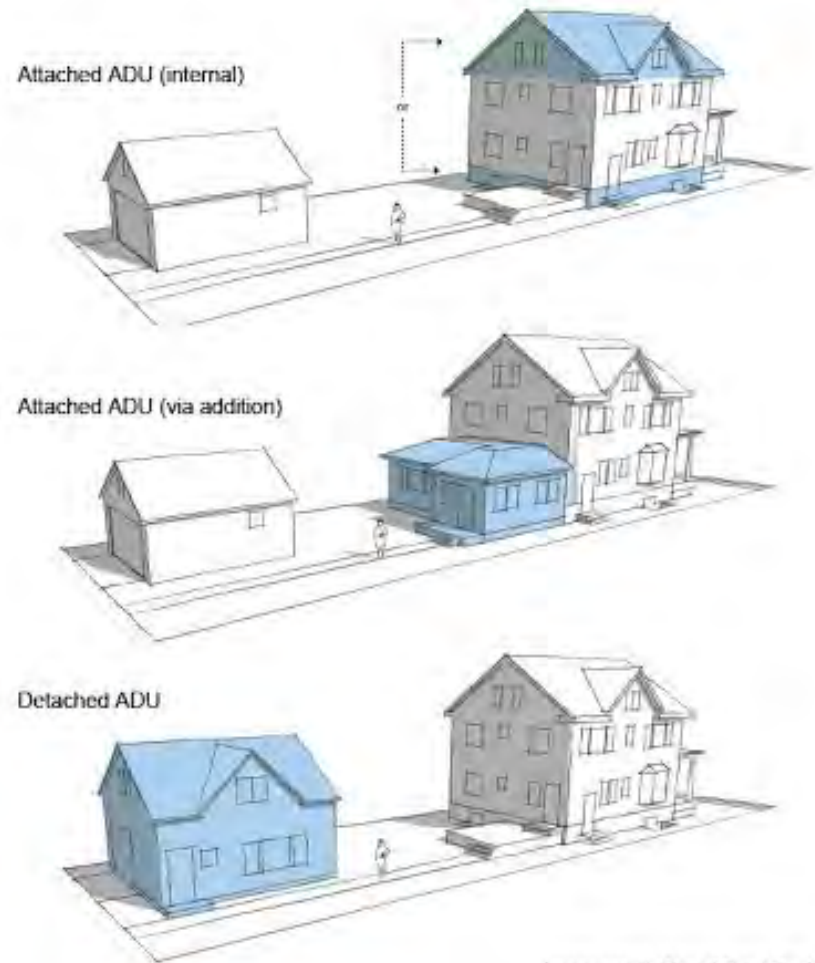


Image credit: City of Saint Paul, MN

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

Accessory Dwelling Units in Weston

Accessory apartments are permitted subject to the following conditions:

- Must be located on a conforming lot.
- Must be within the main dwelling (detached not allowed).
- Shall not exceed 25% of the floor area of main dwelling, up to 800 square feet.
- Owner must occupy the principal home.

Proposed legislation (SB-1024) would eliminate some of these restrictions

A Quick Note on SB-1024

SB-1024: An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications of Certain Land Use Officials and Certain Sewage Disposal Systems

- Bill recently voted out of committee.
- Likelihood of passage is unknown.
- If made into law, it could change Weston's ADU provisions to:
 - Allow detached ADUs.
 - Increase the maximum floor area: Shall not exceed 30% of the floor area of the main dwelling, up to 1,000 square feet.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

Case Study: Town of Mansfield

- Accessory dwellings permitted with Zoning Permit approval in single-family residential zones.
- ADU can be detached or attached.
- ADU or principal dwelling must be owner-occupied for at least 6 months each year.
- Size limits of 1,000 square feet or 50% of the area of the principal dwelling, whichever is less.
- Must have separate kitchen, bathroom, and entrance from main dwelling. If attached to the main dwelling, entrance can't be located on the front façade.
- Maximum occupancy requirements.
- Certification with Town planner required every 5 years.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)

Takeaways

- Many Connecticut towns have reduced restrictions on ADUs in recent years while still maintaining reasonable restrictions on size, parking, and owner-occupancy.
- Modifications to existing regulations require changes to Town zoning code.
- ADUs would only meet the state definition of "affordable" if the unit is deed restricted for at least 10 years. **pending legislation see slide 28*
- Town staff administration to ensure compliance with zoning or affordability requirements.

Weston should allow ADUs in detached structures

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

**Weston should consider allowing ADUs
below 800 square feet in size with zoning
permit (staff) approval**

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Weston should allow ADUs between 800 and 1,200 square feet with zoning permit (staff) approval

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Weston should require that ADUs be deed restricted as "affordable"

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Village Centers

Village Districts Approach

- Village District approach enables greater local control over building and site design to ensure that future development is compatible with community character and that measurable objectives and standards are met.

Municipal Hubs

- Many village centers contain underutilized municipal properties that could be leveraged to meet other public policy goals.

Village Centers

Case Study: Town of Guilford

- Woodruff Property (formerly Town-owned) located near Village Center and train station.
- Town obtained a state grant for site feasibility study to determine appropriate size and scale of development.
- At a Town Meeting, residents voted overwhelmingly in favor of conveying the land to a non-profit affordable housing developer.



Village Centers

Case Study: Town of Madison

- Adopted Village District overlay zone with several design subdistricts.
- Mix of uses permitted in underlying zones.
- Enhanced regulations on construction materials, architectural design, size and scale, signs, lighting, and landscape design.



Village Centers

Takeaways

- Typically contains greater density and diversity of land uses than surrounding neighborhoods
- Mixed-use development common
- Village District approach has greater local control, but also requires greater administrative effort
- Opportunities to leverage vacant or underutilized municipal property

Weston should allow townhomes within the Village Center

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Weston should consider allowing small mixed-use development (apartments above commercial) within the Village Center

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Weston should consider allowing small multi-family development (less than 5 units) within the Village Center

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Weston should require that a certain percentage of units in the Village Center be set aside as affordable housing for all new developments

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

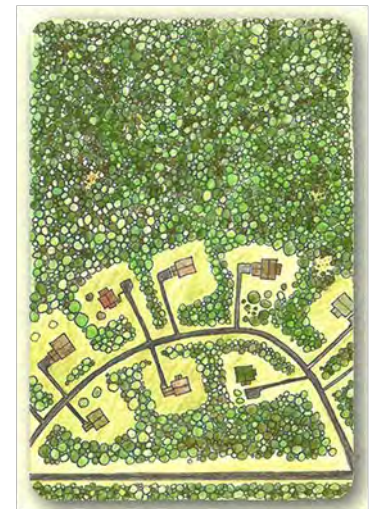
Open Space Subdivision

Open-space subdivisions, also known as a cluster development, allow for more intensive development a portion of a lot, while preserving the remaining area of the lot as open space. Cluster layouts reduce development costs by allowing development on smaller lots, by cutting road and utility costs, and by allowing the developer to bypass natural obstacles in the site.

In order to meet the statutory definition of affordable housing, cluster subdivisions would need to contain a share of units to be affordable.



Traditional Subdivision



Cluster Subdivision

Open Space Subdivision

Case Study: Town of Guilford

Great Hill Cottage Community

- 10 deed-restricted, 1,400 – 1,700-square-foot cottage homes
- 2 to 3 bedrooms, 1.5 stories
- 12-acre lot, 1 mile from town center
- Designed to meet United States Department of Energy's "Net Zero Energy Ready" program



Open Space Subdivision

Takeaways

- Allows for development of smaller housing units on smaller lots.
- Would require modification to zoning code – typically only permitted on large parcels.
- Accounts for and designs around natural resource constraints.
- Open space provisions can be set by the Town – i.e., dedication to Town, land trust, or held in common by property owners.

Weston should allow Cottage Cluster Developments within the Village Center

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

**If open space subdivision was permitted,
Weston should require that a certain
percentage of units should be set aside as
affordable housing**

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Weston should allow open space subdivisions with provisions that protect natural resources

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Please review and rank the following potential housing choice strategies from most appropriate to least appropriate:

Weston should allow ADUs in detached structures

Weston should consider allowing ADUs below 800 square feet in size with zoning permit (staff) approval

Weston should allow ADUs larger than 800 square feet with special permit approval

Weston should require new ADUs to be deed restricted as "affordable"

Weston should allow cluster development with provisions that protect natural resources

If cluster development was permitted, Weston should require that a certain percentage of units should be set aside as affordable housing

Weston should allow townhomes within the Village Center

Weston should allow small mixed-use projects (apartments above commercial) within the Village Center

Weston should allow Cottage Cluster Developments within the Village Center

Weston should require that a certain percentage of units in the Village Center be set aside as affordable housing for all new developments

Next Steps

- Develop Draft Affordable Housing Plan
 - Identify priority strategies
- Draft Plan will be released to the public in late spring/ early summer

How to Stay Involved:

Updates will be posted to the project website: arcg.is/1DWbLT0

Questions and Answers

If you have any questions or comments, please type them in the chat.

Thank You!