

Southeastern Connecticut  
Blue Ribbon Housing Initiatives Panel

STRATEGIC PLAN

2004

**Adopted: 4 June 2004**

## STRATEGIC PLAN

### Southeastern Connecticut Blue Ribbon Housing Initiatives Panel

The Blue Ribbon Housing Initiatives Panel was formed as outgrowth of the study *Housing a Region in Transition: An Analysis of Housing Needs in Southeastern Connecticut, 2000-2005*. This study was conducted by the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG), in collaboration with the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, the Southeastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board, and the United Way of Southeastern Connecticut. The study, completed in April 2002, found that southeastern Connecticut faces a housing crisis characterized by a limited supply of units, limited choice of housing types and locations, and an increasing lack of affordability. The collaborators on the study held a region-wide forum in October 2002, where it was determined that there was widespread support for the formation of a coalition that would focus and coordinate efforts to address housing needs. The Panel is made up of an-hoc group of volunteers, whose members serve on one of the Panel's five committees: Executive Committee, Community Perception and Education Committee, Funding and Finance Committee, Statutory Change Committee, and the Zoning and Infrastructure Needs Committee.

The Blue Ribbon Housing Initiatives Panel's Executive Committee met on April 1, 2004 to map a direction for the Panel for the next two years. The group was assisted by a facilitator and used an introductory activity as the basis for the work that included the review of past and current data, the development of a mission statement, a review of accomplishments thus far, the development of goals and strategies, and an obstruction analysis.

### Context for the Work of the Blue Ribbon Housing Initiatives Panel

- *Housing a Region in Transition: An Analysis of Housing Needs in Southeastern Connecticut 2000-2005*
  - Five major findings and conclusions were reported:
    - The region was facing a housing crisis
    - By 2005 the region would need approximately 5,000 new housing units
    - There were potential obstacles for dealing with regional housing issues
    - A regional response was necessary to handle the complexity and scale of the issue
    - A marshaling of resources should be pursued through public awareness, public forums, and the creation of a regional housing coalition
  - Other conclusions included:
    - The importance of the Tourism and Entertainment Cluster in the economy of southeastern Connecticut

- The changes in population growth across towns
  - The rising costs of housing
  - The systems perspective of housing and it being interwoven with economic development, workforce development, demands on the social service system, and community infrastructure
  
- *An Analysis of Selected Data and Updated Forecasts of Housing Need for the Southeastern Connecticut Planning Region, 2000 – 2010* was completed in April 2004.
  - This report updates several elements of the 2002 report, *Housing a Region in Transition: An Analysis of Housing Needs in Southeastern Connecticut, 2000 – 2005*, and extends the forecast of regional housing needs to 2010.
  - This updating was performed at the request of the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) and was intended for use by the region's Blue Ribbon Housing Initiatives Panel.
  - An updating of the earlier housing analysis is appropriate at this time for several reasons.
    - First, the updating provides an opportunity to assess the level of progress in meeting the regional housing needs anticipated in the 2002 study.
    - Second, this current review provides more recent information on housing cost trends throughout southeastern Connecticut.
    - Third, with 2005 less than 12 months away, it is useful to extend the forecast of housing needs out to 2010.
  - A review of the updated report was discussed at the April 1, 2004 meeting and the following observations were made by the Executive Committee:
    - Population shifts occurred in the urban and suburban areas
    - The region still has significant problems
    - The gap is getting larger
    - The region is falling behind in rental units for workforce housing /students
    - The need has increased with regard to the number of units needed
    - Housing costs have risen
    - Population growth rate has increased
    - The region needs a method for collecting data beyond the Census data, which can be used as a baseline
  
- The Executive Committee identified obstructions and challenges that will effect the achievement of a diversified housing stock in the region. Identifying and discussing these obstructions is meant to assist in the recognition of the challenges faced by the region, not to allow them to be impediments to the work. Obstructions include:
  - The current economic situation
  - The perception that the housing problems are too big and too complicated to even begin to tackle
  - That government is the clearinghouse for interests

- There is no centralized body to be influenced to make broad/long term change
  - The localized governmental structures
  - Those in the greatest need have least influence politically and the least opportunity to make systemic change
  - The “not in my backyard.” mentality regarding affordable and accessible housing
  - Varying regulations across the communities in the region
- It is important to recognize the complexity of the housing needs issue in southeastern Connecticut. There are many factors impacting this issue. Factors include:
- Independent Planning and Zoning commissions and regulations in each municipality in the region
  - Population growth and the different strata of age, income, and race within each community
  - Developers and builders
  - Federal, state and local regulations
  - Environmental impact, open space, and natural resources in each community
  - The character and culture of each community
  - Tax policy
  - Education in each community (public schools, private schools, higher education)
  - Political structure and the politics of doing business
  - Employment opportunities
  - Commercial development and commercial developers
  - Infrastructure: roads, sewers, water, trash removal, energy, transportation

The process for developing a mission statement for the Panel included reviewing suggested mission statements and the history of the Panel developed by members of the Panel’s Executive Committee. After three iterations, the Executive Committee adopted the following mission statement:

**The mission of the Blue Ribbon Housing Initiatives Panel is to drive the creation of a diversified housing stock in Southeastern Connecticut to meet ever-changing demands of the region.**

The Blue Ribbon Housing Initiatives Panel defines diversified housing stock as housing that is affordable, supportive, multi-family, single-family and accessible to all levels of income. This includes student housing, workforce housing, elderly housing, housing for the homeless, and housing for families.

# 1. Housing Coordinator

## Goal:

To secure assistance for the Blue Ribbon Housing Initiatives Panel in achieving its mission by hiring a Housing Coordinator who will act as a full-time staff person to the Panel.

## Action:

- Raise dollars to fund the position of the Housing Coordinator for three to five years.

*Lead Responsibility:* Sub-committee of Executive Committee

*Timeframe:* January 2005

- Seek a qualified candidate for the position of Housing Coordinator to perform the following responsibilities:

- Administrative support to the Panel
- Conduct research, compile data, analyze data
- Seek grants and other funding for the continuation of the Housing Coordinator position
- Seek grants and other funding to drive the creation of a diversified housing stock
- Act as a spokesperson for the Panel on the issue of housing in the region
- Work to create financial incentives or a revolving loan fund for investment in affordable housing
- Develop partnerships with other agencies
- Facilitate collaborations between housing and service providers
- Work with government officials to draft and create public policy reforms

*Lead Responsibility:* Executive Committee

*Timeframe:* September – December 2004

- Hire a Housing Coordinator.

*Lead Responsibility:* Executive Committee

*Timeframe:* January 2005

## 2. Creation and Education of a Housing Coalition

### Goal:

To create a strong coalition of support between government, non-profits, for-profits, financial institutions, employers and others that will work toward the creation of more affordable housing including changes in the infrastructure components of the system.

### Action:

- Identify potential coalition members throughout the region.

*Lead Responsibility:*                      *Community Perception and Education Committee*  
*Timeframe:*                                      *Ongoing*

- Hold periodic meetings of all coalition members at which attendees may express their needs, update information and any data collected, and educate other members.

*Lead Responsibility:*                      *Housing Coordinator*  
*Timeframe:*                                      *Beginning April 2005*

- Continue to have influential and regionally recognized leadership on the Panel, bringing this issue to the forefront.

*Lead Responsibility:*                      *Blue Ribbon Housing Initiatives Panel Chair*  
*Timeframe:*                                      *Ongoing*

- Host educational forums to advocate for regulatory reform to improve housing opportunities across the region.

*Lead Responsibility:*                      *Community Perception and Education Committee*  
*Timeframe:*                                      *Beginning April 2005*

### 3. Public Awareness and Local Grassroots Efforts

**Goal:**

Promote, market, and make the public aware of the need for a diversified housing stock throughout southeastern Connecticut, including the need for changes in zoning, planning, and infrastructure.

**Action:**

- Create communication tools (web site, newsletter, annual report) and promote/host events to keep the public informed.

*Lead Responsibility:* Housing Coordinator  
*Timeframe:* Beginning 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter 2005

- Provide testimony at the legislature and local government level on the regional need with regard to the system of a diversified housing stock.

*Lead Responsibility:* Statutory Change Committee and  
Funding and Finance Committee  
*Timeframe:* Beginning First Quarter 2005

- Meet with local Planning & Zoning Commissions to update and inform them of the needs of the region.

*Lead Responsibility:* Zoning and Infrastructure Needs Committee  
*Timeframe:* Beginning 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter 2005

- Initiate discussions with Planning & Zoning Commissions to redraft regulations that allow for an increase in multi-family housing.

*Lead Responsibility:* Zoning and Infrastructure Needs Committee  
*Timeframe:* Beginning 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2006

- Advocate for statewide fiscal and regulatory reform to improve housing opportunities.

*Lead Responsibility:* Statutory Change Committee  
*Timeframe:* Ongoing

## **Members of the Southeastern Connecticut Blue Ribbon Housing Initiatives Panel**

James Cronin. Dime Savings Bank – Chairman

Margaret Ayers, Franklin Planning and Zoning Commission

Peter Battles. ECHO

John Bolduc, Eastern Connecticut Association of Realtors

Mark Brown. Mohegan Tribal Nation

Charles Bunnell. Mohegan Tribal Nation

James Butler, SCCOG

Diane Contino, American Realty

Karen Cummings, CT Department of Mental Health and Addictive Services

Jane Dauphinais, Office of Congressman Rob Simmons

Kevin Essington, The Nature Conservancy

Sharon Gowen. Fannie Mae

Marlene Heald, Town of Ledyard

Grace Jones, Three Rivers Community College

Richard Leco. New London Housing Authority

Joyce Martin, Three Rivers Community College

Andrew Maynard, Borough of Stonington

Deborah Monahan, TVCCA

Frances Moulder, Three Rivers Community College

Mark Oefinger, Town of Groton

Janet Pearce, United Way

Calvin Price, Liberty Bank

Christopher Rixon, Mason's Island Realty

Keith Robbins, Town of Bozrah

Charlotte Schroeder, City of New London

Jack Smey. Catholic Charities

Beth Ann Stewart, Town of Stonington

Judy Walter, CHFA

David Whitehead, Backus Hospital

Charles Whitty, Norwich Public Housing Authority

*The Blue Ribbon Housing Initiatives Panel wishes to recognize and express its appreciation to two individuals whose work has been instrumental in assisting the Panel in formulating this Strategic Plan. Doreen Marvin, Director of Development at LEARN, facilitated the planning session that led to and drafted the initial iteration of this Strategic Plan. Planning consultant Richard B. Erickson, author of the original "Housing a Region in Transition", working under contract to SCCOG provided the Panel with a 2004 update to the original housing study.*

## Blue Ribbon Panelists

| <b>Formal Name</b>                  | <b>prefix</b> | <b>Last</b> | <b>First</b>   | <b>Firm</b>                      | <b>Street</b>             | <b>CityStateZip</b>     | <b>Phone</b>      |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Mr. Battles                         | Mr.           | Battles     | Peter          | ECHO                             | 105 Huntington Street     | New London, CT 06320    | 447-8055          |
| Mr. Brown                           | Mr.           | Brown       | Mark           | Mohegan Tribal Nation            | 5 Crow Hill Road          | Uncasville, CT 06382    | 862-6114          |
| Mr. Bunnell                         | Mr.           | Bunnell     | Charles        | Mohegan Tribal Nation            | 5 Crow Hill Road          | Uncasville, CT 06382    | 862-6120          |
| Mr. Cronin                          | Mr.           | Cronin      | James          | Dime Savings Bank                | 290 Salem Turnpike        | Norwich, CT 06360       | 859-4300          |
| Ms. Dauphinais                      | Ms.           | Dauphinais  | Jane           | Congressman Simmons Office       | 2 Courthouse Square       | Norwich, CT 06360       | 886-0139          |
| Mr. Leco                            | Mr.           | Leco        | Richard        | NL Housing Authority             | 78 Walden Avenue          | New London, CT 06320    | 443-2851          |
| Mr. Maynard                         | Mr.           | Maynard     | Andrew         | Council of Governments           | 5 Connecticut Avenue      | Norwich, CT 06360       | 535-9048          |
| Ms. Monahan                         | Ms.           | Monahan     | Deborah        | TVCCA                            | 401 West Thames Street    | Norwich, CT 06360       |                   |
| Ms. Pearce                          | Ms.           | Pearce      | Janet          | United Way                       | P.O. Box 375              | Gales Ferry, CT 06335   | 464-3312          |
| Ms. Schroeder                       | Ms.           | Schroeder   | Charlotte      | City of NL, Continuum of Care    | 111 Union Street          | New London, CT 06320    | 447-5203          |
| Ms. Stewart                         | Ms.           | Stewart     | Beth Ann       | Stonington Human Services        | 166 S. Broad St           | Pawcatuck, CT 06379     | 535-5077          |
| Mr. Whitehead                       | Mr.           | Whitehead   | David          | Backus Hospital                  | 326 Washington Street     | Norwich, CT 06360       | 823-6539          |
| Mr. Whitty                          | Mr.           | Whitty      | Charles        | Norwich Public Housing Authority | 10 Westwood Park          | Norwich, CT 06360       | 887-1605, ext. 12 |
| <b>Names Added at Housing Forum</b> |               |             |                |                                  |                           |                         |                   |
| Ms. Ayer                            | Ms.           | Ayer        | Margaret       | Franklin Planning & Zoning       | 151 Pond Road             | Franklin, CT 06254      | 642-4318          |
| Mr. Bolduc                          | Mr.           | Bolduc      | John           | Eastern CT Assoc of Realtors     | 238 West Town St          | Norwich, CT 06360       | 892-2595          |
| Ms. Contino                         | Ms.           | Contino     | Diane          | realtor                          | 231 Lambtown Road         | Ledyard, CT 06339       | 848-5616          |
| Ms. Cummings                        | Ms.           | Cummings    | Karen          | Dept. of Mental Health           | 401 W Thames St Bldg 301  | Norwich, CT 06360       | 859-4649          |
| Mr. Essington                       | Mr.           | Essington   | Kevin          | The Nature Conservancy           | PO Box 250                | No Stonington, CT 06359 | 535-1355          |
| Ms. Heald                           | Ms.           | Heald       | Marlene        | Ledyard Social Services          | 741 Col Ledyard Highway   | Ledyard, CT 06339       | 464-8466          |
| Ms. Jones                           | Ms.           | Jones       | Grace          | Three Rivers Comm College        | 7 Mahan Drive             | Norwich, CT 06360       | 383-5201          |
| Ms. Moulder                         | Ms.           | Moulder     | Frances        | Three Rivers Comm                | 7 Mahan Drive             | Norwich, CT 06360       | 892-5708          |
| Mr. Oefinger                        | Mr.           | Oefinger    | Mark           | Town of Groton                   | 45 Fort Hill Road         | Groton, CT 06340        | 441-6630          |
| Mr. Price                           | Mr.           | Price       | Calvin K.      | Liberty Bank                     | 315 Main Street           | Middletown, CT 06457    | 704-2110          |
| Mr. Rixon                           | Mr.           | Rixon       | Christopher J. | Mason's Island Realty            | 12 Roosevelt Ave., 3rd Fl | Mystic, CT 06355        | 536-4100          |
| Mr. Robbins                         | Mr.           | Robbins     | Keith          | Town of Bozrah                   | 1 River Road              | Bozrah, CT 06334        | 889-2689          |
| Mr. Smey                            | Mr.           | Smey        | Jack           | Catholic Charities               | 331 Main Street           | Norwich, CT 06360       | 889-8346          |
| Ms. Walter                          | Ms.           | Walter      | Judy           | CHFA                             | 999 West St               | Rocky Hill, CT 06067    | 571-4201          |

