

Stoughton Affordable Housing Plan

2006



Town of Stoughton . 10 Pearl Street . Stoughton MA, 02072

Background

The Town of Stoughton is a former mill town with 27,000 residents that has experienced slow population growth over the past ten years. The majority of the existing housing stock was built prior to 1970, and most housing in town is owner occupied. While only 63% of the housing stock is single family units, almost all new construction is single family housing. Stoughton has modest potential for residential growth, but substantial potential for commercial and industrial growth, based upon the MAPC buildout analysis of the Town.

Stoughton has a history of manufacturing and an emerging cluster of regional retail, as well as a substantial base of land zoned for commercial and industrial purposes. The major commercial and industrial areas in town are located adjacent to Route 24 and along routes 138, 139 and 27, but smaller areas are interspersed with residential zones due to the community's industrial past.

The Town has significant protected open space resources, including the Bird Street Sanctuary, water department lands, recreational fields and a municipal golf course. Additional privately owned, but not protected, undeveloped lands are an important factor in the character of the community.

Stoughton has good access to the regional roadway network, being served by several state routes and 3 interchanges on Route 24. Stoughton also has access to regional transit, being served by bus from Brockton and MBTA Commuter rail at the station in downtown Stoughton.

Stoughton is one of the region's most affordable, accessible towns, but future housing is likely to be less diverse, less affordable, and farther from transit.

As baby boomers age, demand for smaller-scale, lower maintenance empty-nester and senior housing will grow.

Although 9.89% of the town's housing is subsidized, there is still a high need for affordable housing, indicated by large numbers of low-to-moderate income people, high rent burdens, and long waiting lists for elderly and family housing.

Middle-income households also face barriers to homeownership as costs escalate.

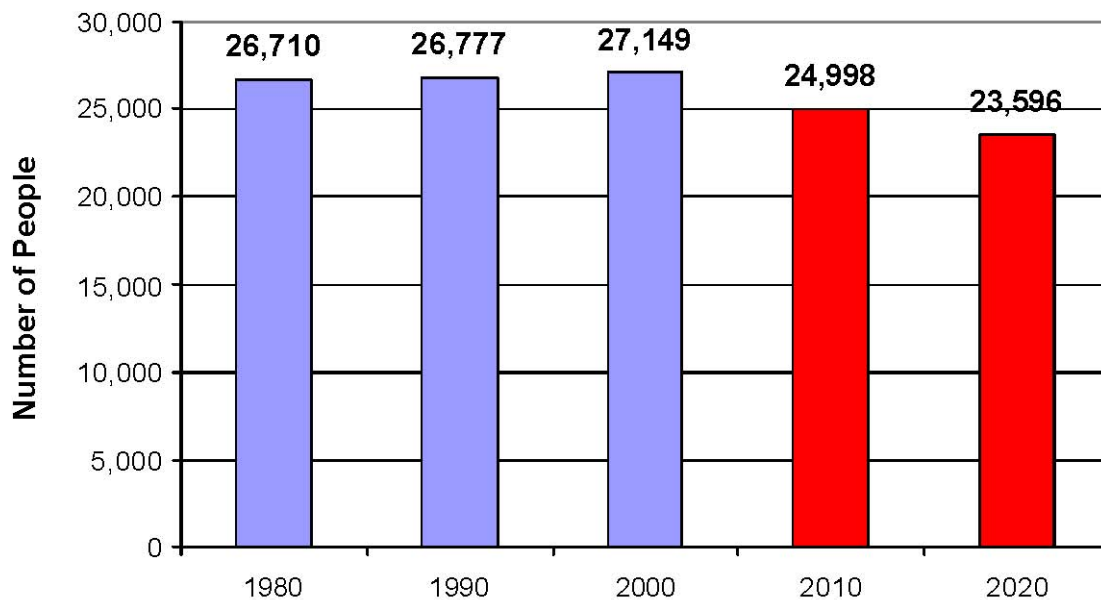
Assessment of Housing Demand Recent Population Trends

Population trends are among the key factors driving housing demand. The town's population grew less than 2% between 1980 and 2000. The Three Rivers sub-region (TRIC) also grew, but at a faster rate, as did the larger MAPC region (almost 7% each). In all three cases, there was more growth in the 1990s than in the 1980s. Past and future population trends appear in Figure 1.

While the population grew just a little over 1% in the 1990s, the number of households grew by 9%, and the average household size fell. Households are a little smaller than TRIC's and a little bigger than the region's. The trend toward smaller households is a nationwide phenomenon, driven largely by the growing diversity of household types and lifestyle choices and the aging of the population.

Figure 1

Stoughton Population Trends, 1980-2020



Data Source: U.S. Census

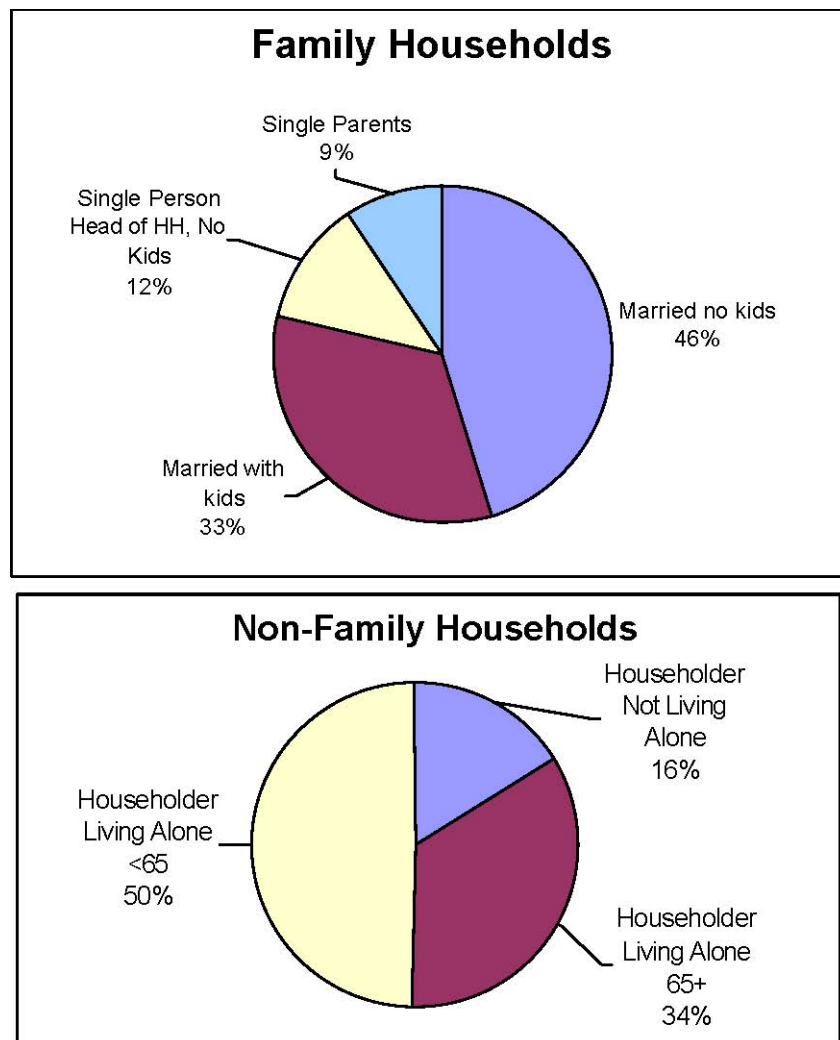
As we will see, this increase in the number of households led to declining vacancy rates and escalating housing costs.

Changes in household size were accompanied by changes in household composition. For the region as a whole, the decade saw a decline in the proportion of family households versus non-family households and an increase in the percentage of householders living alone. Only 22% of the region's households today are "typical" married couples with

children, while 30% of households are occupied by a single person living alone. Although the number of single parents grew, they continue to make up 7% of all households.

Seventy one percent of all households are families and 29% are non-families. The proportion of families is down from 75% in 1990 and is considerably higher than the 61% for the region as a whole. Of all family households, 79% are married-couple families, 33% are married couples with children, 9% are single parents, and 12% are headed by a single adult without children. Of all non-family households, 84% live alone – many more than the region’s 77% -- and 34% are elders living alone (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

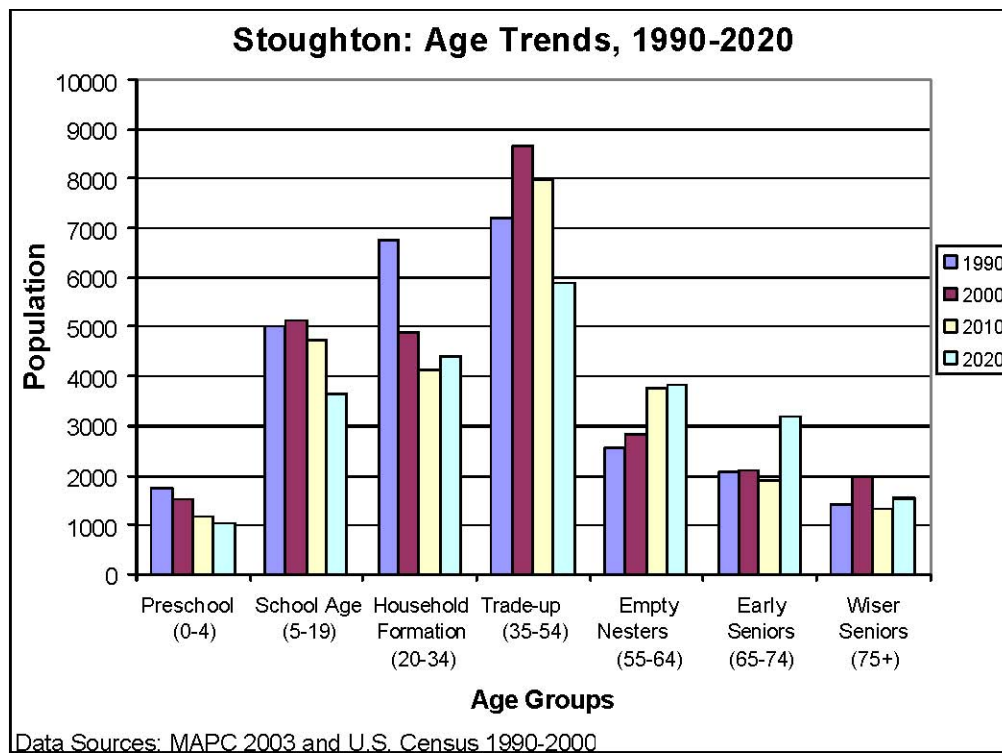


Of all households 24% are two-parent families with children, 7% are single-parent families, and 10% are elders living alone. Compared to the MAPC region, Stoughton has more two-parent families with children, fewer non-families, more single heads of household, and fewer elders living alone.

Changes in age mix also affects housing demand and housing need. To show this relationship, we have clustered age groups to relate them loosely to various stages in the housing market (for past and future trends, see Figure 3). Thus in the last decade, the town has seen:

- a slight decline in pre-school children and a slight increase in school-age children, suggesting a relatively stable demand for family housing;
- a sharp decline in household-formation years (ages 20-34), signaling a possible decline in demand for rentals and first-time homebuyer opportunities;
- growth in the middle years (ages 35-54), putting pressure on the trade-up market;
- a slight increase in the empty-nester years (ages 55-64), resulting in slightly increased demand for smaller units with less maintenance than larger, single-family homes; and
- a modest increase in the number of seniors, especially older seniors (age 75+), suggesting a need for small-scale housing and housing with services.

Figure 3



This is generally consistent with regional patterns, except that Stoughton has seen slightly less growth in the trade-up group and more growth in the older age groups. The increase in early seniors (ages 65-74) runs counter to the regional decline in that group, although in both cases the change is very small.

Housing Demand: What Will the Future Bring?

According to MAPC forecasts, the town's population is expected to decline over 13% in the next 20 years (see Figure 1). During that time, the sub-region's population is likely to decline (5%), while MAPC's population is expected to grow by almost 4%, driven largely by the fast-growing communities near the I-495 beltway. The trend toward more but smaller households is likely to continue in Stoughton, the TRIC sub-region, and the region as a whole.

We expect:¹

- a decline in the number of both pre-school and school-age children;
- a decline, followed by a small increase, in the household-formation years;
- a decline in trade-up demand;
- growth in empty-nesters; and
- a decline, followed by an increase, in seniors.

While the general trends, driven by the aging of the baby-boomers, are similar to the region as a whole, there are some differences. Stoughton's decline in school-age children is predicted to be both sooner and steeper than the region; the 2010 decline in the household-formation years runs counter to regional growth patterns; and the decline in trade-ups is much steeper. Only the older groups (age 55+) precisely track regional trends.

As this report shows, Stoughton is one of the most affordable communities in the region. With good transit and highway access and good schools, it may draw more young families than these predictions show.

Housing Supply Inventory

Quantity and Characteristics of Stoughton's Housing

The number of housing units in Stoughton grew by 10% in the 1980s and 8% in the 1990s, for a 20-year growth of 18%. The pattern of growth was the same as the sub-region and the region, with more growth in the 1980s than in the 1990s. The 20-year growth for the town, however, was less than that of the sub-region, which grew 21%, but more than that of MAPC, which grew 14%. Vacancy rates in town, especially for homeownership, were quite low as the 1990s began. Both rental and homeownership vacancies declined during the decade. By 2000, vacancy rates for both rental and homeownership were extremely low.

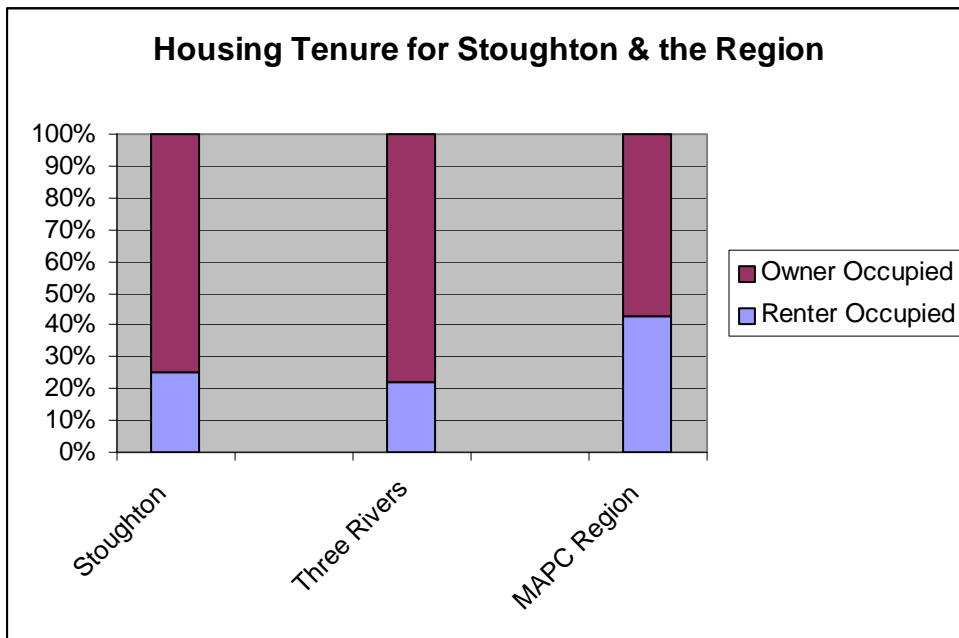
¹ Some of these age categories aggregate more ages than others, which contributes to the visual difference in the proportions of the groups (i.e., trade-up group includes the 20 years from age 35 to age 54, while empty nesters covers only the 10 years from age 55 to age 64).

Figure 4 Stoughton Vacancy Rates, 1990 and 2000

<i>Vacancy Rate</i>	1990	2000	National Standard
Rental	3.6%	2.2%	5%
Homeowner	0.8%	0.5%	3%

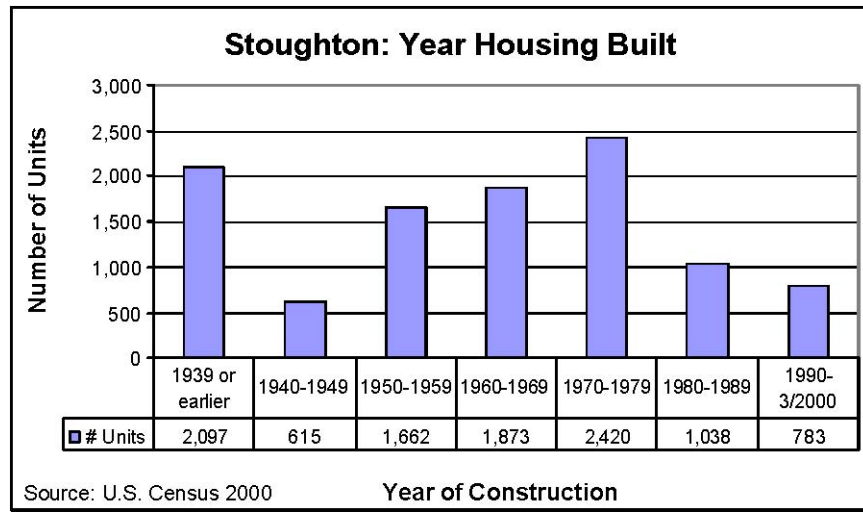
Of Stoughton's housing, 75% is owner occupied and 25% is renter occupied. This is a higher proportion of owner occupancy than the region as a whole (57%) but a lower proportion than the sub-region (78%) (see Figure 5). Although the amount of renter-occupied housing has grown over 9% since 1980, owner-occupied housing has grown more (21%), and the proportion of rental housing has declined from 28%.

Figure 5



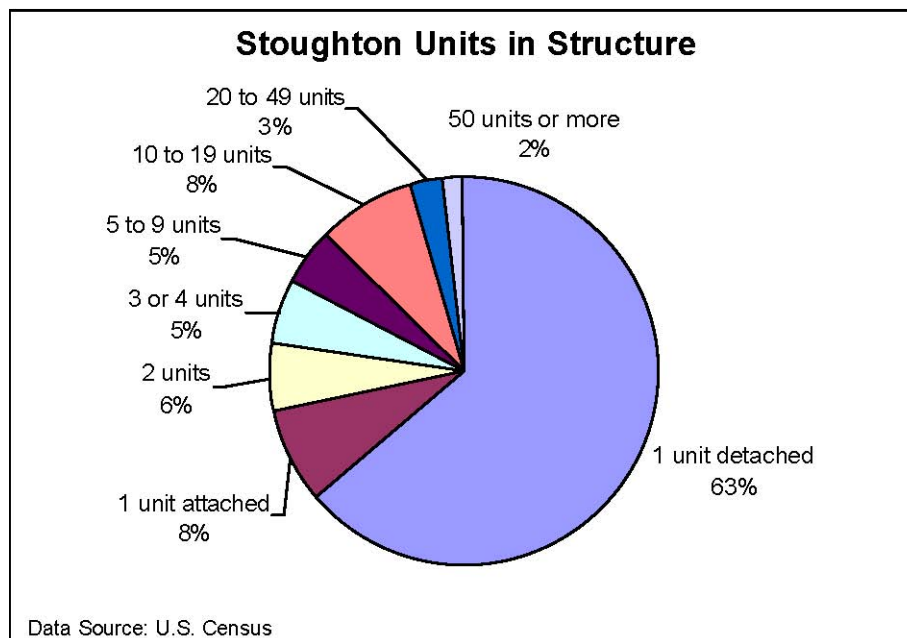
In spite of Stoughton's recent growth, much of its housing is relatively old. Only 26% of the town's housing units were built before 1950, but fully 60% were built before the 1970s, when lead paint laws were enacted. Stoughton's boom began in the 1950s and peaked in the 1970s (see Figure 6). Some of the older housing may need rehabilitation, repairs, and lead paint removal.

Figure 6



The town's housing is predominantly single-family detached (63%), and this proportion has increased since 1990, when it stood at 61%. The remainder is divided among a mix of structure sizes (see Figure 7). The current percentage of single-family detached homes is lower than the TRIC sub-region (71%) but more than MAPC (44%).

Figure 7



In recent years the town has issued almost no building permits for multifamily housing. After issuing permits for four multi-family units in 1990, the town did not issue another multi-family permit until 2001, when it permitted one two-family home; another two-

family home followed in 2002.

Housing Needs: What Will the Future Bring?

Based on available land, existing zoning, and land use constraints, the town may see about 824 additional dwelling units (see Figure 8). All of them will be single family, and 94% of them will be on lots of 40,000 square feet or more; the smallest lot is 25,000 square feet. This “build-out” could result in over 2,000 new residents and almost 350 new school children. These results do not consider possible zoning changes, 40B developments outside present zoning, or teardown/redevelopment options.

Figure 8

Potential New Housing and Its Impacts				
Zoning District	Lots	Dwelling Units	Residents	Students
Residence District A (R30)	419	419	1110	176
Residence District B (R20)	132	132	350	55
Residence District C (R15)	244	244	645	102
Residence District RU (R8)	29	29	78	12
Total	824	824	2183	345

Given recent trends and development projections, new housing will be primarily single-family, owner-occupied, lower-density, and more expensive housing than its existing housing. This will represent a further shift in housing balance and less housing choice.

To better address the Town’s housing needs, a new Cluster Residential by-law, which includes an affordable housing bonus should be created, to help preserve open space and create “affordable” single family homes for young families. The above data also shows we need to create more 55 and older housing and additional rental units.

Affordable Housing Inventory

Stoughton has approved 5, 40B projects, creating a total of 404 new housing units, for which 232 of those are affordable. This brings the towns affordable housing count to 9.89 percent. Not included in these numbers is the Goddard Highlands project was appealed by the neighbors and a decision is still pending. This project could add 28 more affordable single family homes to the town’s housing count.

Approved Units:

- Villages at Ames Pond, 55 and older – 40 Condominiums (Built)
- Stage Coach Crossing – 108 units of Condominiums
- Quail Run – 132 Apartments (Permit Issued)
- Pond View, 55 and older single family homes
- Page Street Place, 42 apartments
- Goddard Highlands, approved 112 single family homes (pending court case, not included in housing count).

The town must bear in mind several added considerations. First, 10% is a moving target: as the base number of housing units grows, the 10% grows as well; thus new affordable housing must be added simply to keep pace. Second, 10% is an arbitrary number and is not based on need; given that 42% of Stoughton’s households have low-to-moderate incomes (see next section of this report), 10% may not be enough to meet the need. Third, four privately owned affordable developments, totaling 418 units, may not be permanently affordable. These developments were built under programs with “expiring use” restrictions that allow owners to choose to raise rents to market levels or sell them as market-rate condos after a finite time period. These four projects were built under four different programs with different regulations and different expiration dates and agreements. There are steps that owners, the town, financing agencies, and others can take to keep properties affordable. The OCPC study presents some preliminary information about the status of these properties, but the town is advised to investigate further and to seek help in preserving affordability.

Linking Supply, Demand, and Affordability

High demand and limited supply have cut vacancy rates and forced up the costs of both owning and renting a home.

The Costs of Buying a Home

The town’s “Affordability Gap” – the relationship between income and home values – has grown substantially since 1980 (see Figure 10). In 1980, the median-income household could afford the median-value home; home values were 2.2 times incomes, a ratio that is below the 2.5 ceiling for affordability. In 2000, home values were about 3 times incomes, higher than this affordability rule of thumb.

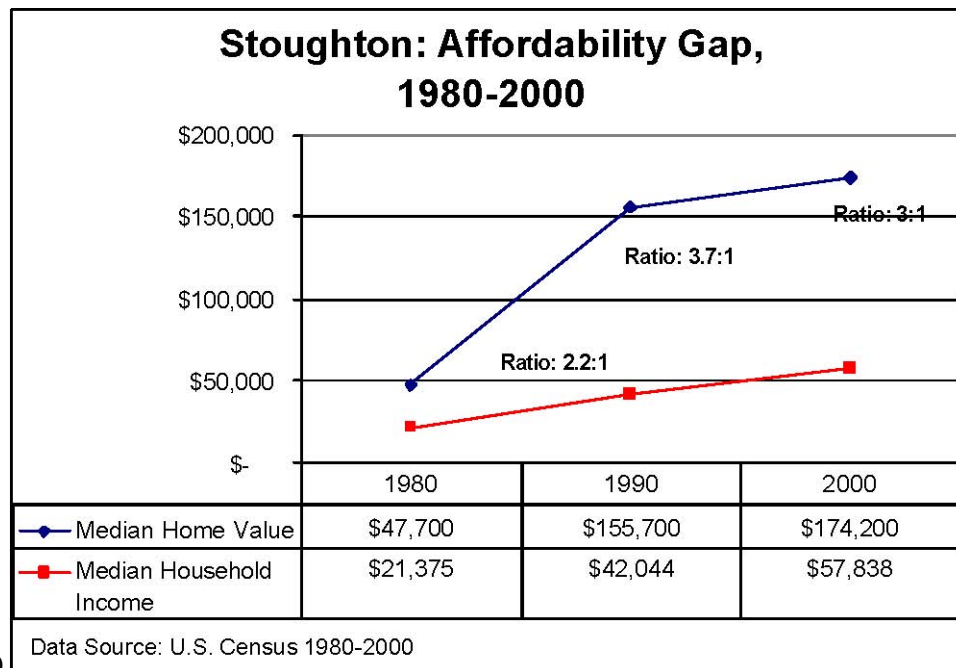
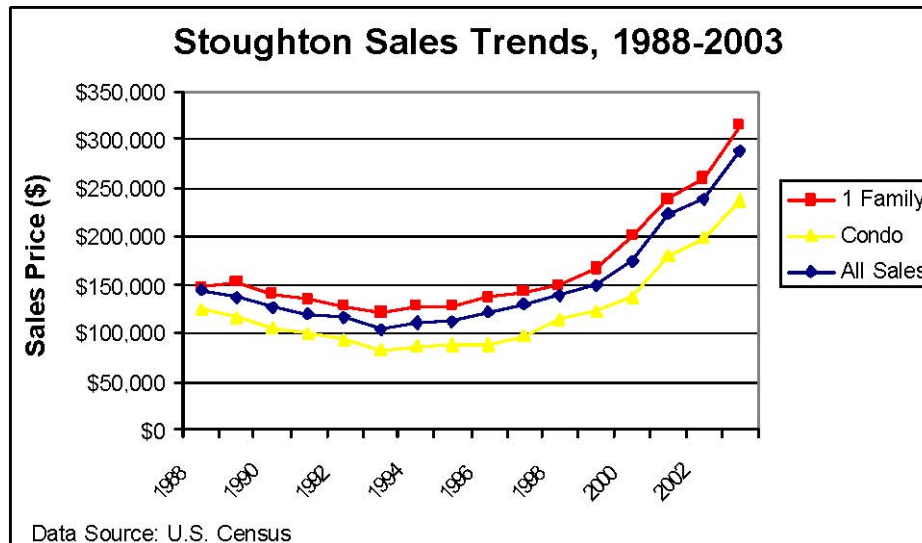


Figure 10

Clearly, housing prices have risen faster than incomes, and housing has become much less affordable. Stoughton has one of the smallest affordability gaps in the region, where the median ratio of home value to income is almost 4:1, and the highest ratio is 9:1. In 2000, the median-value home cost \$29,600 more than the median-income of households can afford and almost \$10,500 more than the regional median income household could afford. **By any of these measures, the town is among the ten most affordable of MAPC's 101 cities and towns.**

Home sale prices rose 108% from 1998-2003 (see Figure 11). The median condominium cost \$237,500; the median single-family home cost \$315,000, and the median for all residential sales was \$289,000. As recently as last year, a household with the regional median income could have afforded the median-priced condo but faced a gap of \$58,000 between the median single-family sales price and the price it could afford. Today – FY 2004 --a household with the regional median income (\$82,600) can afford \$206,500, less than the median condo sales price and \$108,500 shy of the median single-family sales price!

Figure 11



To bring the situation closer to home, we estimated how a young family two town-worker salaries might fare in trying to buy today's typical condo as a starter home. An entry-level police officer and DPW worker together might earn just over \$64,100 and could afford about \$160,258. Given the median condo price of \$237,500, that family would have a gap of over \$77,200 just to buy a condo.

Future housing is likely to be even more expensive. As we have seen, all new housing under current zoning will be single family, and 94% will be on lots of 40,000 square feet or more. For new single-family homes permitted in 2002, average construction cost alone, not counting land and other costs, was almost \$232,000. Of the new units built in 2002, only 30% had sales prices below \$375,000.

The Cost of Renting

The costs of rental housing also rose substantially during the 1980-2000 time period. Rents more than doubled in the 1980s but slowed to a 12% increase in the 1990s for an overall increase of 139%. Our median rent in 2000 was \$711, requiring an annual income of \$28,440 to be affordable.

Rents as reported in the Census seem low. They are as reported by tenants in 2000. Thus they are relatively old. More importantly, they reflect rents paid by in-place tenants who may be long term and have rents that rise only incrementally from year to year. Newcomers seeking market rentals today most likely face considerably higher rents.

Although accurate current rent level data are not available, a recent national study found that Massachusetts had the highest rents in the country. The study found that the statewide “fair market rent” (FMR)³ -- \$1,165 – required an income of \$46,582, while the metro Boston FMR --\$56,760 – required an income of \$56,760. Furthermore, 61% of Massachusetts renters and 64% of metro Boston renters cannot afford the FMR.⁴

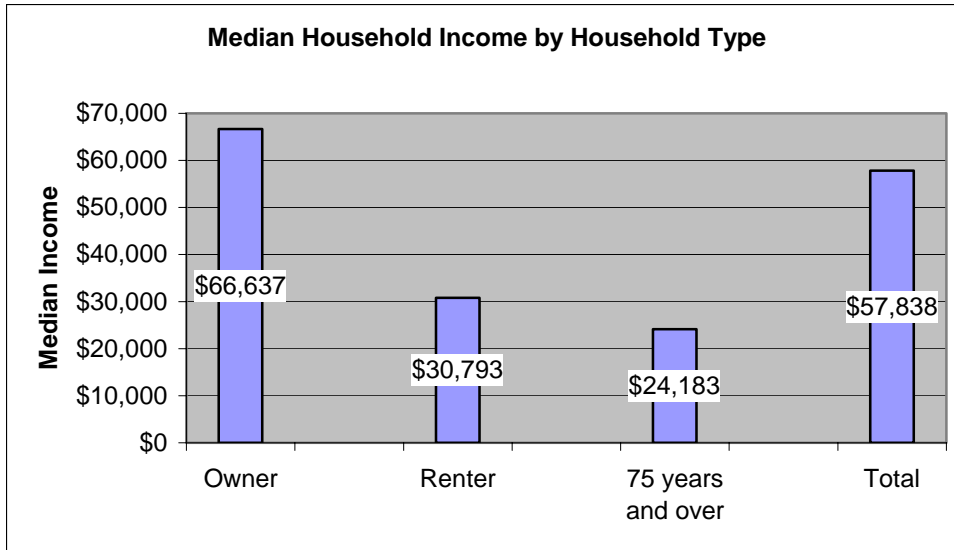
There are some indications of a slight slackening in recent rents, especially for luxury rentals. Nonetheless, of the various sources cited in a recent report,⁵ none shows rents below \$1,000 per month; median advertised 2003 rents in Dedham and Quincy, the only communities south of Boston for which data are available, were \$1,275 and \$1300 respectively. Dedham’s rent was identical to its 2001 median, and Quincy’s had risen 4%.

Housing Cost Impacts and Housing Need

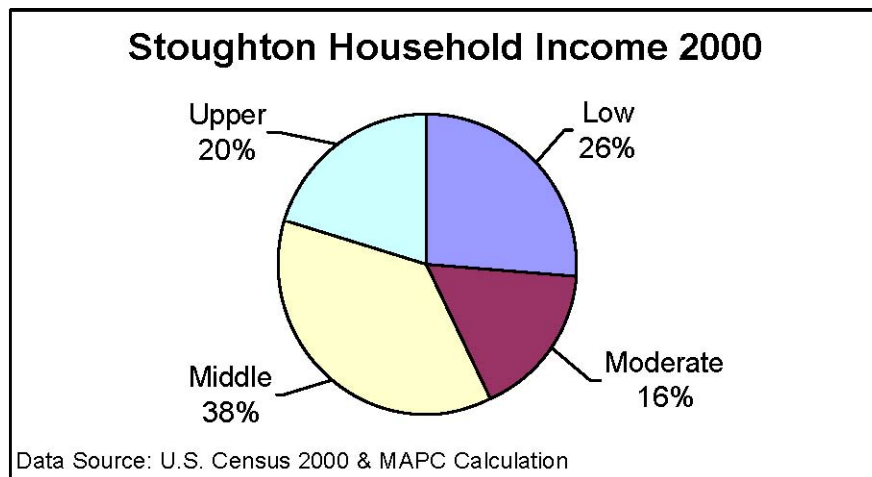
High housing costs have the most severe impact on those on the lowest rung of the income ladder. Of Stoughton’s renter households, 41% (1,007 households) pay more than 30% of their income for rent; 39% of renters (943 households) have incomes below \$35,000 and pay more than 30% of their income for rent; and 60% of elderly renters (295 households) pay more than 30% of their income for rent. Renters and elders have the lowest incomes (see Figure 12).

³ FMRs are estimated annually by HUD . They determine the eligibility of rental housing units for the Section 8 Housing Assistance Payments program and are used to calculate subsidies under the Rental Voucher program.⁴ National Low Income Coalition, *Out of Reach*, 2003. ⁵ Northeastern University Center for Urban and Regional Policy, *The Greater Boston Housing Report Card 2003*, April 2004.

Figure 12



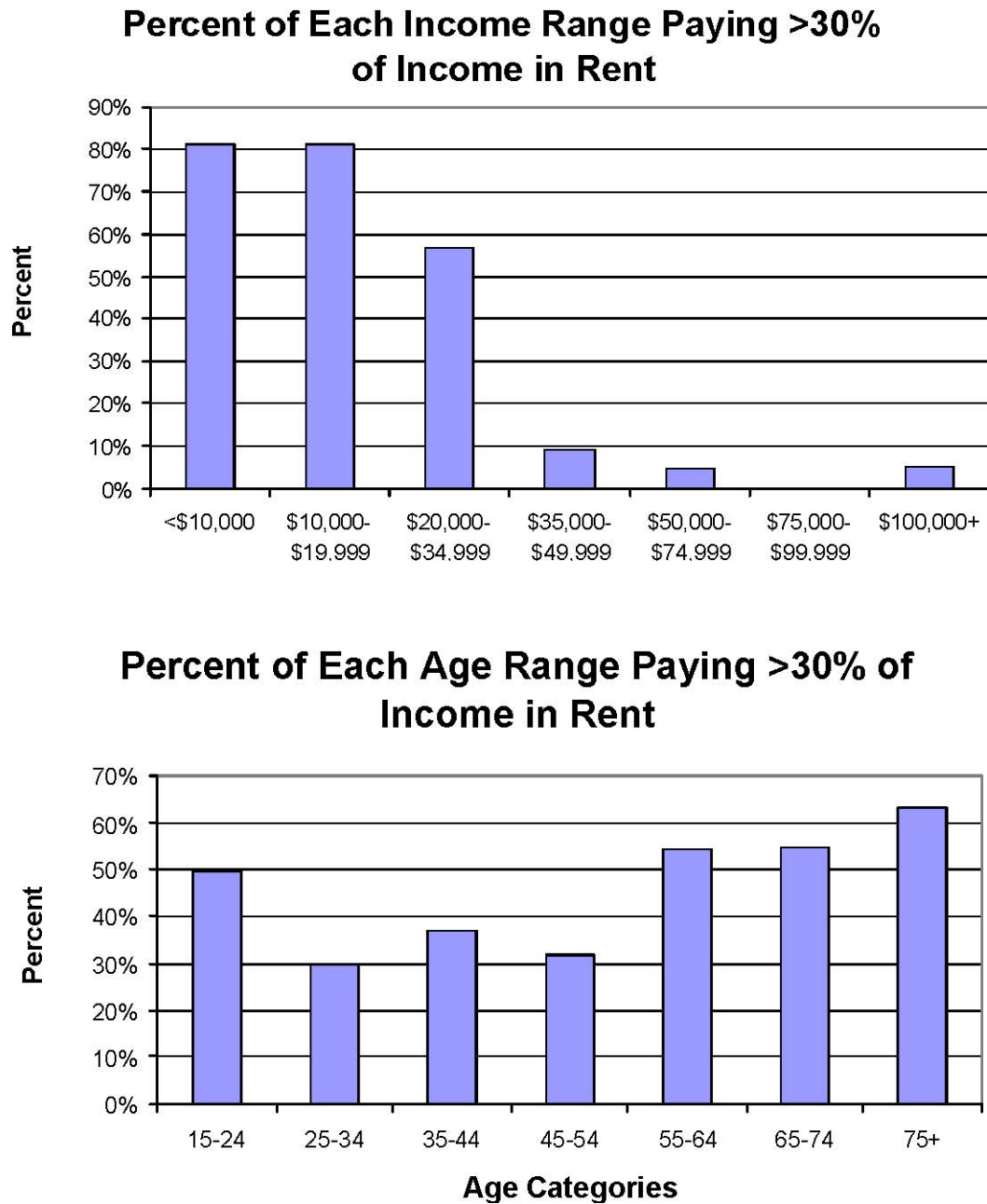
Households have an estimated 42% -- 4,390 households -- have incomes below 80% of median (see Figure 13). This is considered to be “moderate income” and is the income level that qualifies for affordable housing. Of these households, over 2,700 are estimated to have incomes below 50% of median, considered “low income.” Middle income households -- those with incomes up to 150% of median -- make up 39% of the town’s households, while upper-income households constitute about 18%.⁶



⁶ This is a statistical estimate only and does not adjust for family size. Cut-offs used in chart are for the year 2000, coincident with Census data. Low income (50% of median) = \$32,750; moderate income (80% of median) = \$50,200; middle (81% -150%) = \$98,250; upper income (over 150%) = over \$98,251. According to HUD, 9,176 people, or 34% of Stoughton’s residents, have low-to-moderate incomes. According to the Census, 223 local families are below the poverty level.

Lower-income people are most burdened by high rents (see Figure 14). Similarly, young people and older renters face especially high rent burdens (see Figure 15).

Figure 14 & 15



Low-to-moderate income demand far exceeds subsidized housing supply. About 125-150 families and 125-150 elderly people are on the town's public housing waiting lists. The wait is about 13-15 years for family housing and 2-3 years or more for the elderly.

Housing Goals and Objectives

Stoughton is one of the more affordable communities in the high-cost Boston region. It has a mix of single-family and multi-family houses. Nearly all recent development, however, has been “higher end” single-family homes, and the MAPC buildout analysis indicates that, under current land use regulations, almost all of the potential future residential construction will be single-family low-density homes farther from transit and presumably more expensive. It is clear that the town is becoming much less affordable and continues to have a sizable population that cannot compete in today’s marketplace.

The town’s housing goal is to diversify the mix of housing options and preserve affordability for residents of all income levels, life stages and persons with special needs. On going negotiations with developers will encourage them to design projects that meet these general development guidelines while meeting the town’s need for diverse housing.

The town will use a balanced approach and encourage retention of town character.

Stoughton has the following specific goals for affordable housing:

Increase our affordable housing inventory from 9.89% to 10% by the end of 2006 and increase our affordable housing by $\frac{3}{4}\%$ or 78 units. We will do this adding 80 units to our inventory of affordable housing (See projections below).

- Create a TOD mixed-use downtown, including both rental and ownership units (Spring 2006); creating 10 affordable units in its first year, with potential to create up to 20 affordable units over the next couple of years.
- Establish a 40R district within the TOD mix-use district, adding 17 affordable units in 2007
- Establish 40R district in North Stoughton, adding 40 affordable units in 2007
- Stoughton Housing Authority to create 40-50 units for seniors in 2007

Housing policies will target the following needs:

Preserving affordability of housing for all residents of all income levels, life stages and persons with special needs, especially young adults and seniors, who are most burdened.

- More Housing Authority rentals, targeting very low-income families
- Assisted living for seniors
- Senior housing – seniors who want to move out of large homes but are not ready for assisted living
- Young adults
- Young families
- Persons with special needs

Consistent with “smart growth,” the town will:

- Target infrastructure rich areas;
- Plan for development in an anti-sprawl manner –
 - In the downtown, promote mixed use development near transit and services and on sewer; and
 - In new developments on natural landscapes, promote cluster subdivision to preserve open space while providing housing;
 - In downtown redevelopment, preserve existing affordability and include a percentage of permanently affordable housing.

Identifying Potential Locations for Housing

Potential sites where housing might be appropriate either as new construction or redevelopment of existing structures. Opportunities map and the list of potential sites, with some preliminary ideas about who might live there and what type of housing might be most appropriate (see next page), present a “starter set” for future investigation by the town and other partners. Further study of these sites will be needed to determine their development potential and feasibility and to address a range of issues including parking, site design, ownership, and affordability levels.

Seizing Opportunities and Overcoming Barriers

The town's ability to preserve and create housing to meet its needs depends on many factors, including available land and buildings, funding and financial resources, staff, public awareness, political will, zoning regulations, policies, and programs.

With a great percentage of Stoughton served by town water and sewer allows us the flexibility to promote affordable housing throughout most of the town. Stoughton also has a commuter rail located in the town center, which is part of the town's effort to create a TOD mix-use district, with an affordable component.

Stoughton's local zoning constraint is its current Cluster Residential zoning by-law. To promote smart growth and create affordable units, a new Cluster Residential by-law should be proposed for all residential zones within the town and incorporate bonuses for affordable units.

Stoughton's Housing Authority is currently looking to construct 40 to 50 senior units. The Authority constraint lies in the funding of this project. The town and the Housing Authority are working together to make this project a reality.

Means to Mitigate Local Constraints

- Temporary housing units are allowed by special permit
- Zoning allows for conversion of large single-family houses to up to 4 units by special permit, but only in some districts
- Resolution of water issue – the town has resolved its water issue by joining the MWRA; although this is not an unlimited source, there is enough to help for now

The availability of some low-cost housing and some property in need of rehabilitation may also be an advantage in creating affordable housing.

Potential Housing Locations

Location & Possible Uses
Rear of St. James Church, Low-mod apartments, esp. low income, Senior &/or assisted living, perhaps a mix with higher income (Housing Authority)
Downtown Smart growth –mixed use □ 1/4 mile radius from the train station, commercial/industrial reuse for mixed use, possible 40R district

Town-wide, Reuse – redevelopment of properties for housing (possible partnership between the town and developers)
Town owned properties - buildings
Woodbridge 40B (across from Hansen School), Multi-family proposal or Mixed use?
Gill Machine, possible re-zone single family residential
Goddard Highlands, 112 single-family (40B)
Housing Authority, create 40 to 50 new units at Stoughton Memorial Village
North Stoughton village type development (Mix of retail and residential) and/or 40R

Taking Strategic Action

- Hire Town Planner
- Create a mixed – use by-law for the downtown district, with an affordability component
- Adopt Community Preservation Act
- Update the towns Cluster Zone by-law – possible bonus for affordable units
- Explore the creation of a 40R district within the downtown, near the commuter rail station and North Stoughton
- Institute inclusionary zoning, requiring (or encouraging) a % affordable housing as part of all developments
- Partner with developers and housing authority on town-owned land
- Create a Housing Trust Fund
- Review in-law apartment by-law
- Investigate the potential for accessory apartments in other areas
- Provide tax incentives for redevelopment/rehabilitation
- Retain “Historical” homes to maintain the character of the town
- Consider adopting linkage
- Encourage transfer of development rights
- Work with realtors on determining the needs of the market
- Fast-track projects that meet the plan & provide housing
- Inventory vacant & underutilized commercial-industrial lands for reuse potential
- Seek grants for redevelopment with future affordability restrictions

Recommendations to Achieve Housing Goal

Based on the towns Housing Profile, it is recommend that the town pursue the strategies outlined below.

Develop Leadership and Organizational Capacity

In order to actively guide housing, it is important to establish a strong voice for housing and an organizational framework to pursue plans. For a mid-sized town like Stoughton, the most important first steps are for local leaders to:

- make a strong public commitment to housing;
- establish a housing partnership or housing committee; (*A Housing Policy Committee was recently formed, consisting of 2 members from the Planning Board, ZBA, Housing Authority and 1 member from the board of Selectmen*).
- designate a staff person responsible for housing (*A Town Planner position is being added to the Planning Board's budget for 2006*)

The committee's role includes recommending policy, planning, guiding action, engaging the public, reporting regularly to the Selectmen, and other responsibilities as determined by the Selectmen.

Public housing authorities generally have a particular mission and clientele. The town may wish to have a broader purview on types of housing, target clientele, and funding sources. The Housing Authority might be appropriate if it can provide this breadth, but planning staff, if available, might have a broader perspective and be more accountable to town officials.

Opportunities to Achieve 10% Affordable Housing

As we have seen, Stoughton is close to achieving the 10% affordable goal. There are a number of steps the town will take to ensure that new affordable housing fits in with the town's vision, both before and after the town reaches 10%. These steps include:

Seek technical assistance in working with proposed 40B developments

Contrary to popular opinion, communities can help shape 40B developments; they need not accept whatever the developer proposes. Both the Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) provide assistance. They can strengthen our ability to negotiate with developers to help craft proposals that the town deems more appropriate.

Pursue the inclusion in the 40B inventory of the 20 group home units & perhaps other units identified in the 40B study

Single-room-occupancy (SRO) units, transitional housing, and the new homeless facility are potential candidates.

Take steps to ensure the continued affordability of all privately owned mixed-income housing with potentially expiring use restrictions

Affordability in some privately owned, mixed-income developments is governed by use restrictions that allow owners to sell or rent at market rates after a given number of years. There are steps the town can take to extend affordability, beginning by investigating the status of the property and its restrictions and getting technical advice and assistance. The list of expiring use properties and information about maintaining affordability is available at www.chapa.org. Expert guidance is available at CEDAC at (617) 727-5944 or www.cedac.org.

The town has four privately owned affordable developments, totaling 418 units, that may not be permanently affordable. As we have seen, these projects were built under four different programs with different sets of regulations and different expiration dates and agreements. The OCPC study presents some preliminary information about the status of these properties, but the town should investigate further and to seek help in preserving affordability.

The town should consider this issue a priority; it is almost always preferable and more cost-effective to preserve existing affordable housing rather than build new affordable housing. It is especially important for these developments, which are often well-maintained properties housing long-time community residents.

➤ Encourage 40B developers to provide rental housing

This will address an important need and will also help achieve 10% faster, since all units in a 40B rental – both affordable and market units -- “count” toward the 10% goal.

Adopt inclusionary or incentive zoning to ensure that new housing developments routinely include enough permanently affordable housing to achieve and stay current with the 10% target

“Inclusionary” zoning requires residential developers to provide for affordable housing. “Incentive” zoning provides that developers seeking special permits may receive some sort of beneficial treatment, such as increased density, in exchange for providing affordable housing. In either case, the law may limit the developer to producing units within the development or it may allow off-site production or in-lieu payment into a housing fund to support a range of housing programs.

Inclusionary/incentive zoning offers a scattered site, low-impact mechanism for communities to control growth and increase affordable housing in proportion to new market-rate housing. It uses an “internal” subsidy, using the proceeds from the market-rate units to support the affordable units. It does not require additional financial support, and it works especially well in strong markets.

Use the leverage of zoning and funding to promote housing affordability

Use of accessory apartment and mixed-use provisions, could require affordability; similarly, grants and loans for rehab of 2-3 family structures could require affordable rentals for a fixed period of time.

Establish a Local Initiative Program (LIP)

The Local Initiative Program (LIP) is a state housing initiative designed to encourage communities to produce low and moderate income housing. The program operates through state regulation (760 CMR 45.00 et. seq.) and agency-issued *Guidelines*. The town may produce units eligible for the Chapter 40B subsidized housing inventory through local zoning or other agreement with the developer (see "Local Initiative Units," 760 CMR 45.03). Projects with a minimum of 25% affordable units for households at or below 80% of median income, or 20% of affordable units for households at or below 60% of median income that require the issuance of a Comprehensive Permit are also eligible for inclusion in the inventory through the "Local Initiative General Program" (760 CMR 45.05).

These options offer the town an opportunity to tailor programs to local needs and to get credit toward 40B for housing units meeting the statutory qualifications. In addition to meeting the affordability criteria above, the units must be subject to use restrictions and be sold/rented using affirmative marketing procedures.

The LIP program options could be used to promote accessory apartments, housing above stores, mixed-use development, infill, adaptive reuse, substantial rehabilitation, or other types of housing. The program is especially useful in supporting small, relatively low density, scattered site development consistent with community character as an alternative to large-scale housing development.

Applications and information are available in the 40B section of the DHCD website at www.mass.gov/dhcd

Pursue Financial Resources

- **Offer rehab loans and/or grants with funds from state programs or other sources**

The town has had rehab programs in the past. These programs maintain and improve existing property. For information, contact DHCD at (617) 573-1100 or at www.state.ma.us/dhcd or contact MassHousing at (617) 854-1000. Appendix B of CHAPA's *Taking the Initiative* (see www.chapa.org) includes a comprehensive catalogue of common funding sources. It includes grants, loans, and financing tools for predevelopment activities; affordable homeownership, rental housing, and housing for seniors and special needs; and preservation of existing affordable housing.

It may also be possible to link with neighboring communities to apply for funds and run programs jointly. Alternatively, neighboring towns may already have programs in place and be able to expand to cover others as well. Some programs are also run through regional non-profits; the regional non-profit serving Stoughton is the South Shore Housing Development Corporation (SSHDC).

Adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA)

Adoption of CPA would provide more locally controlled resources and more partners with resources and expertise. It helps communities balance housing, open space, and other priorities, and is recommended to achieve several of the goals in this plan.

For information on local campaigns to adopt CPA and success stories about how funds have been used, visit www.communitypreservation.org and www.tpl.org.

Set up a Housing Trust Fund

This can be done in conjunction with inclusionary or incentive zoning (see above); funds could be generated by allowing developers to pay into a fund instead of creating on-site units. Over time, there may be other sources of funds as well. Funds could be used to write down the interest on rehab loans, provide gap financing for property acquisition, write down mortgage interest, provide down payment or closing-cost assistance to first-time homebuyers, or for other purposes.

Revise Zoning to Meet Housing Goals

Review key housing-related provisions of the Zoning By-law for opportunities to encourage housing that fits with the Town’s expressed vision and goals. Goals that lend themselves to zoning solutions include diversifying the mix of housing options, targeting development to infrastructure-rich areas, and developing in an anti-sprawl manner, with increased density downtown and a mix of uses near transit and services and on sewer.

- **Inclusionary or incentive zoning** (see above)
- **Allow mixed-use zoning, including housing above stores, as an overlay or as a new zoning district**
- **Update towns Cluster Zone by-law – include a bonus for a affordable units**

Allowing a mix of residential, commercial, and other uses where there is infrastructure to support it is a prime example of “smart growth.”

In the downtown there is currently a mix of zoning districts, including some outdated industrial zoning and a prohibition against residential uses. Downtown Stoughton is a good place to create a mixed-use overlay that would allow housing and commercial uses.

Consider allowing greater flexibility to add accessory apartments and accessory dwelling units in separate structures (carriage houses, barns, garages) and to convert single-family to multi-family houses.

An accessory apartment is generally a second, subordinate dwelling unit within a single-family house. Accessory units provide rental opportunities for tenants, added income for owners, and more efficient use of space. For older homeowners, tenants may offer additional benefits by assisting with chores or yard work and providing a sense of security.

Other accessory dwelling units (ADUs) may include the reuse or adaptation of secondary structures – e.g., barns, garages, or carriage houses – on the same lot but in a separate structure. The same general principle applies to the conversion of large, single-family residences to two or more unit structures. In all these variations, units provide similar benefits.

The town may want to allow accessory units in some or all residential zoning districts, sometimes by right and sometimes by special permit, usually with some restrictions on size and appearance, and occasionally with provisions to encourage affordable rents, income eligibility of tenants, and inclusion of units in the state’s Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory.

There are also illegal accessory units that remain “under the radar.” We could take steps to legalize these units by enacting “amnesty” provisions to encourage code compliance and more affordable housing.

Consider allowing new SROs with suitable standards and oversight

Single-room-occupancy units (SROs), where residents have their own rooms but share bath and kitchen facilities, provide a very affordable housing alternative for people in transition toward self-sufficiency. New SROs are not allowed under current zoning. Although the law contains a definition of rooming houses, it does not include them in the Table of Use Regulations.⁸ The town may wish to consider allowing SROs in certain areas.

Preserve Existing Property Resources

- **Preserve expiring use properties (see discussion above)**
- **Pursue opportunities to turn SROs into permanently affordable housing**

Stoughton has lodging houses and rooming houses that offer very low-cost rentals for lower income people in single rooms with shared kitchen and bath facilities. It is often a challenge to keep these homes in good condition, and communities are often ambivalent at best about their existence.

Establish a housing buy-down program

Stoughton still has some relatively low-cost housing, where if a buy-down program was established to buy affordable condos or two- and three-family houses, rehab as needed, and rent or sell them as permanently affordable housing. Although Stoughton would need both funding and organizational capacity such as a non-profit to initiate such a program, it is worth considering as a way to preserve currently affordable housing.

Pursue programs that help seniors remain at home and independent

In certain sections of town and in certain housing developments, seniors may be clustered in sufficient numbers to make it cost-effective and efficient to deliver support services on a group basis rather than on an individual basis. This would enable seniors to “age in place” rather than face the prospect of moving to assisted living facilities or nursing homes. There are also other types of housing and program options that help seniors reduce the costs of remaining in their homes. They include accessory apartments, home-sharing programs, and reverse mortgages.

Explore Opportunities to Produce Housing in Keeping with Community Character

In keeping with the town’s vision and goals, any “production” of new housing should be small scale, in a mixed-use setting, and located in proximity to transit and other infrastructure. It should also take advantage of existing property opportunities and emphasize rehabilitation and reuse over new construction. The recommendations below are designed to produce housing in keeping with these ends.

Inventory potentially surplus municipal property, other potentially available public or institutional property, and vacant and underutilized properties

Use of public property for housing dramatically lowers acquisition and land costs, thus lowering the cost of housing built there. Surplus municipal property provides an opportunity to address a range of local needs. Communities should view this property and their various needs comprehensively and develop a plan to balance the need for housing, open space, and other priorities. With an overall plan, communities can prepare in advance for timely implementation actions.

The town owns a number of small parcels in a subdivision off Park Street as well as several individual parcels also off Park Street. The town may wish to consider a scattered site program to produce in-fill housing in this area. Such a program would begin with some technical assistance to determine feasibility of development, discussion of preferred development criteria, and preparation of a Request for Proposals.

Other property might become available as well, including state, federal, county, or MBTA properties, facilities or land owned by religious organizations, etc.

There are also privately owned vacant or underutilized sites where housing might be appropriate. Examples included Gill Machine, Corcoran Shoe, Suburban Insulation, or other sites where industrial uses may no longer be appropriate.

Ensure that New Market rate Housing is Compatible with Planning and “Smart Growth” Goals

➤ Cluster Development and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

The first step in improving the design of market subdivisions in natural landscapes would be to update the cluster by-law, perhaps even requiring cluster for subdivisions over a certain acreage or number of lots (as is done in several other communities in the state). Once the cluster by-law is updated, the town could consider more conceptually difficult by-laws such as Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), in which the allowable density from an area the town wants to preserve is moved to an area where the town wishes to promote development.

Mission Statement

In order to achieve our housing goals in a “smart growth” manner, we will address the discrepancy between our goals and the direction housing development is currently taking. Neither of the two current trends -- the market-driven, large-lot, high-end new construction and the spate of 40B developments -- lead the town toward a diverse mix of housing options consistent with “smart growth” principles and affordable to residents of all income levels, life stages and persons with special needs.

Affordable units must serve households with incomes no greater than 80% of the median income for which the unit is located. Units must be subject to use restrictions or re-sale controls to preserve their affordability as follows:

- For a minimum of thirty years or longer from the date of subsidy approval or construction for new construction.
- For a minimum of Fifteen years or longer from the date of subsidy approval or completion for rehabilitation.
- Alternatively, a term of perpetuity is encouraged for both new construction and completion of rehabilitation.

Units are or will be subject to an executed Regulatory Agreement between the developer and the subsidizing agency unless the subsidy program does not require such an agreement. The units have been, or will be marketed in a fair and open process consistent with the state and federal fair housing laws.