

# Town of Fairfield News

9/8/2022 - Development & Affordable Housing in Fairfield



## Affordable Housing & Development in Fairfield

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Dear Fairfielders,

Recent development proposals in Fairfield continue to be a frustration amongst our residents and a topic in the local papers, including the New York Times over the weekend.

The Covid-19 pandemic created a surge in demand for housing in suburban communities like Fairfield. Housing inventory is at an all-time low, creating a greater need for additional housing. In parallel with the active real estate market, there has been a dramatic acceleration in 8-30g projects. For the first twenty years after 8-30g became law, the Town saw only one application made. In the last ten years, the Town Plan & Zoning Commission has considered and reviewed and rendered decisions on 22 applications, with ten of these applications occurring in the past two years.

I wanted to share with you my recent op-ed published in the CT Post on common sense solutions I believe the state can and should address.

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**ctpost**

# Brenda Kupchick (opinion): Housing law needs common-sense updates

**Brenda Kupchick**

Sep. 7, 2022 | Updated: Sep. 7, 2022 1:11 p.m.

The 8-30g statute, while well intentioned, is seriously flawed and in need of reform. I don't believe my stance or voting record makes me "anti-housing", as recently described by Hugh Bailey in an [August 7<sup>th</sup> op-ed](#), it makes me pro common sense solutions.

I support the spirit of 8-30g and efforts to create affordable housing. It's vital we provide a full range of housing options, including affordable housing for our young people, working families and senior populations.

I have seen the unintended consequences of this law, as some developers use it to subvert land-use regulations, without furthering the number of affordable units as a percent of the total housing stock.

The years I spent as Ranking Member of the Housing Committee in the state legislature were in an effort to achieve reform, but even the smallest rational changes were met with opposition. My concerns and common sense solutions are as follows:

1. ***The "one size fits all", ten-percent goal is unrealistic and unattainable for the majority of communities.***

Thirty years since enactment, there has been little to no change in the number of communities that attained the 10% goal, proving its ineffectiveness. In Fairfield for example, with 21,648 dwelling units, 608 units (2.81%) meet the State's affordable housing criteria. To reach the 10% threshold, Fairfield would need to produce or newly deed restrict an additional 1,557 below market rate units, translating into an additional 5,190 units overall, based on the 30% set aside for 8-30g developments. That is clearly unattainable and unrealistic.

2. ***Communities should receive proper credit for the affordable housing units they developed regardless of when they were placed into***

***service.***

CGS 8-30g provides temporary relief from unfavorable set aside developments in a moratorium, which communities can apply for, provided that they have been able to amass and document housing unit equivalency points (HUEP) equal to the greater of two percent (2%) of all dwelling units or seventy-five (75) HUEP.

In Fairfield's case, a moratorium would require 433 housing unit equivalency points. However, communities can only count affordable units constructed or newly deed restricted *after* 1990. Unfortunately, this threshold disadvantages communities like Fairfield that took an early leadership position in developing 200 affordable housing units prior to 1990.

Fairfield first adopted an Affordable Housing Plan in 1989, and worked creatively to address the issue of housing affordability. Additionally, the Town converted a former school, creating forty elderly housing units, partnered with several non-profits to create additional affordable housing opportunities, and provided tax abatements and/or pre-development financing to facilitate development. The Town also appropriated funds and developed affordable ownership housing on town-owned property adjoining a public park.

None of these affordable housing developments—all of which are deed-restricted in perpetuity—count toward the Town's moratorium threshold only because they were built before the statute. That is irrational and must change.

***3. Towns should not be discouraged from meeting the affordable housing needs of the growing elderly populations.***

With people living longer than at any point in history and the advancing retirement age of Baby Boomers, communities need flexibility to respond to housing needs of their elderly populations. These efforts should be awarded one housing unit equivalency point as well.

***4. There must be better incentives in place to encourage communities to work together and create affordable housing.***

In Fairfield, we have made strides in developing affordable housing, including enacting inclusionary zoning, which requires that all developments of ten or more dwelling units set aside no less than ten percent of those units as affordable to residents with incomes at or below eighty percent of the area median income.

The Town has created a transit-oriented development overlay zone around the Fairfield Metro Center, allowing multi-story, mixed-use developments with residential densities of up to fifty bedrooms per acre with reduced parking requirements.

The Town established a Housing Trust Fund and enacted an inclusionary zoning fee on all new construction or building additions, which in three years has raised \$1.5 million toward the creation and preservation of affordable housing units. Fairfield recently acquired property utilizing those funds and is partnering with Habitat for Humanity to build our own affordable units.

Fairfield is actively working to do its part, but I believe the State should create better incentives. Why not provide meaningful relief from set-aside developments under CGS 8-30g in exchange for the production of affordable units in incentive housing zones?

Further, why not encourage towns and cities to collaborate by establishing regional compacts that would apportion affordable housing units fairly and encourage development in suitable areas and discourage greenfield development?

There is exigency for more affordable housing, but CGS 8-30g is not achieving its intended result, and needs common sense reform.

For more information, please visit the Town's newly launched 8-30g Q&A: [www.fairfieldct.org/8-30g](http://www.fairfieldct.org/8-30g).

**Read it Online Here**

## Fairfield's 8-30g FAQ

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brenda". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'B'.

First Selectwoman Brenda L. Kupchick

[Archives](#)