

**DRAFT**

# **AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN**

City Plan Commission

Adopted | July 2023



# City of New Britain Affordable Housing Plan

## **City Plan Commission**

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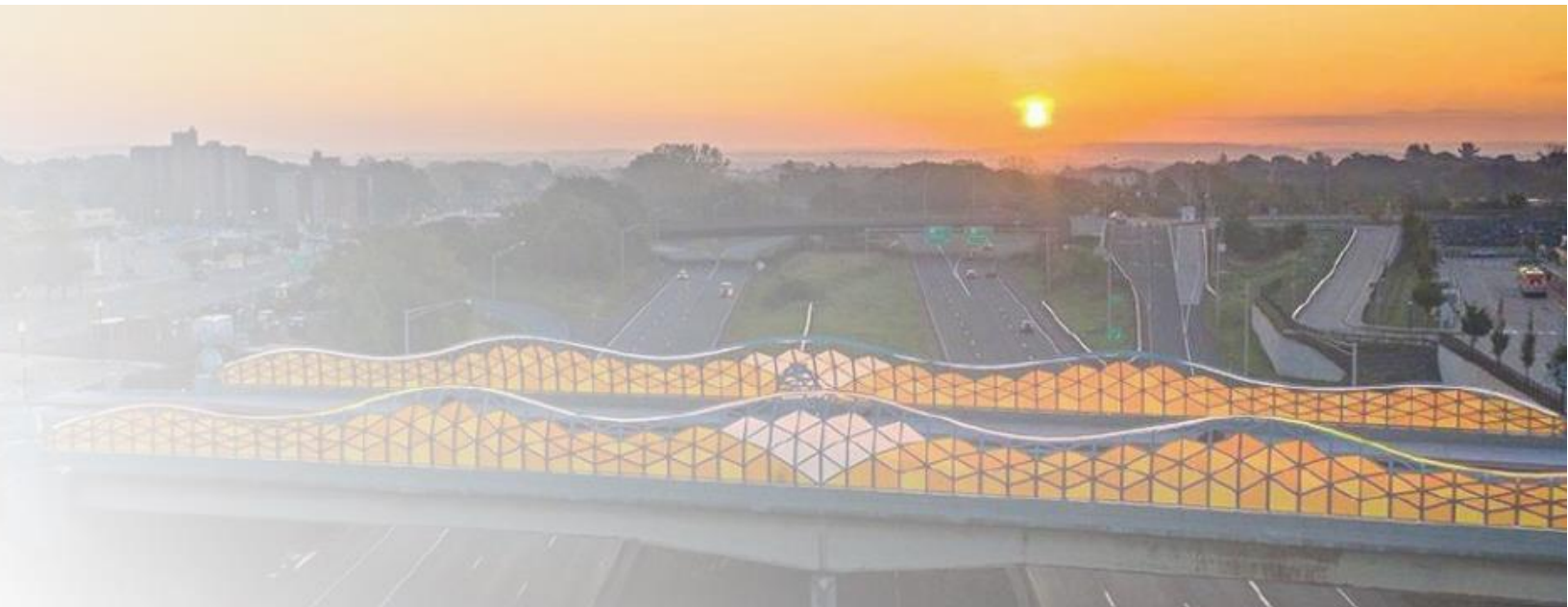
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## Background

Dating back to the 1970's the State of Connecticut recognized that there was a lack of affordable housing options available statewide. Therefore, Connecticut General Statute 8-30g (CGS 8-30g) was enacted as a way to increase the amount of affordable housing projects in Connecticut towns. This legislation defined the maximum housing cost for a dwelling unit to be considered 'affordable' housing. In addition, the law established a minimum percentage of deed-restricted affordable housing required for each town. If the town is not at, or above, the required minimum, developers are allowed to appeal the zoning regulation requirements in order to provide deed-restricted affordable housing. Any town in Connecticut that does not have at least ten percent (10%) of their housing stock in deed-restricted affordable housing is open to an appeal under CGS 8-30g.

CGS 8-30g, places the burden of proof for that appeal on the town rather than the applicant. The town must demonstrate that the threat to local health, safety and welfare is far greater than the general need for affordable housing. The law also provided increased flexibility to developers; they may not need to adhere to all zoning standards including setbacks, zone restrictions, parking requirements and lot coverage standards.

Every year, the Department of Housing prepares an Affordable Housing Appeals list for all 169 Connecticut towns. The most recent listing (2022) finds that 29 towns have met the minimum requirement that 10% of all housing stock be deed-restricted affordable housing (See Figure 2). New Britain is amongst these towns meeting the minimum requirement of at least 10%.



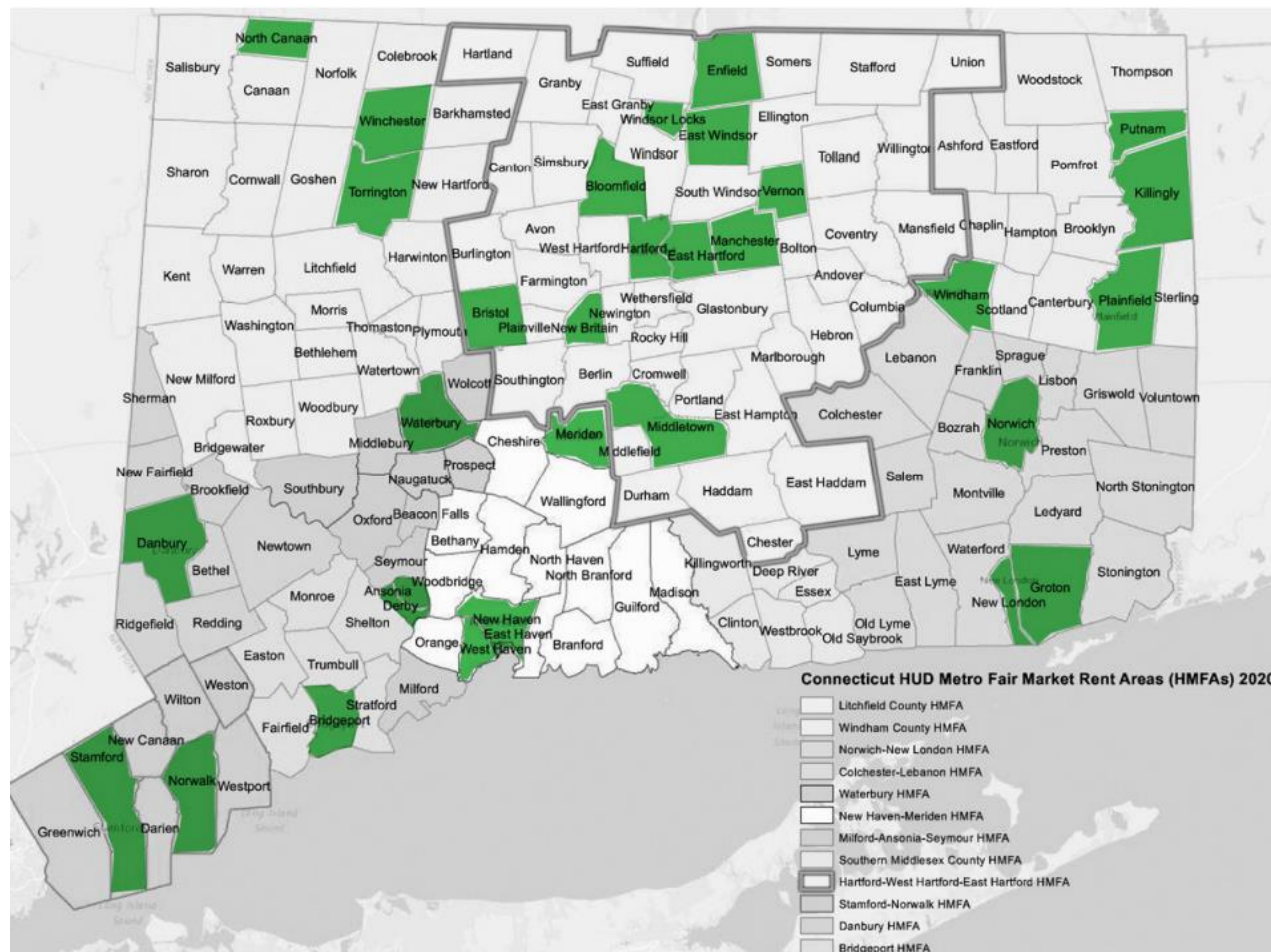


Figure 2: The towns in green have more than 10% of housing stock in deed-restricted affordable housing.

Based off the 2022 Affordable Housing Appeals List, the Department of Housing (DOH) found that 5,848 of New Britain's dwelling units were affordable by the CGS 8-30g definition, or 18.73% of the total housing stock. Of those, 1,167 were home owners receiving mortgage assistance from the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA) or the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2,913 had government assistance, 1,583 had rental assistance such as Section-8, and 100 are deed restricted.

Total CGS 8-30g Affordable Units in New Britain (2022)	
Total Housing Units per Census	31,226
CHFA/USDA Mortgages	1,048
Governmentally Assisted Units	3,017
Tenant Rental Assistance	1,692
Deed Restricted	91
Total Assisted	5,848 (18.73%)

The Connecticut Legislature recently adopted a comprehensive update of the planning and zoning statutes that include certain measures to promote affordable housing. The preparation and adoption of an Affordable Housing Plan every five years is required by Section 8-30j of the Connecticut General Statutes. Such plan shall specify how the municipality intends to increase the number of affordable housing developments in the municipality. This plan is intended to satisfy the statutory requirements under CGS 8-30j.

### What is Affordable Housing?

The State defines affordable housing in CGS 8-30g as housing that is less than 30% of the gross income of a household earning no more than 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI), whichever is lower. Furthermore, for the housing to count towards the community's official tally of affordable housing stock, the property has to be subject to a deed restriction for at least 30 years. Income calculations are adjusted annually based on projection by the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

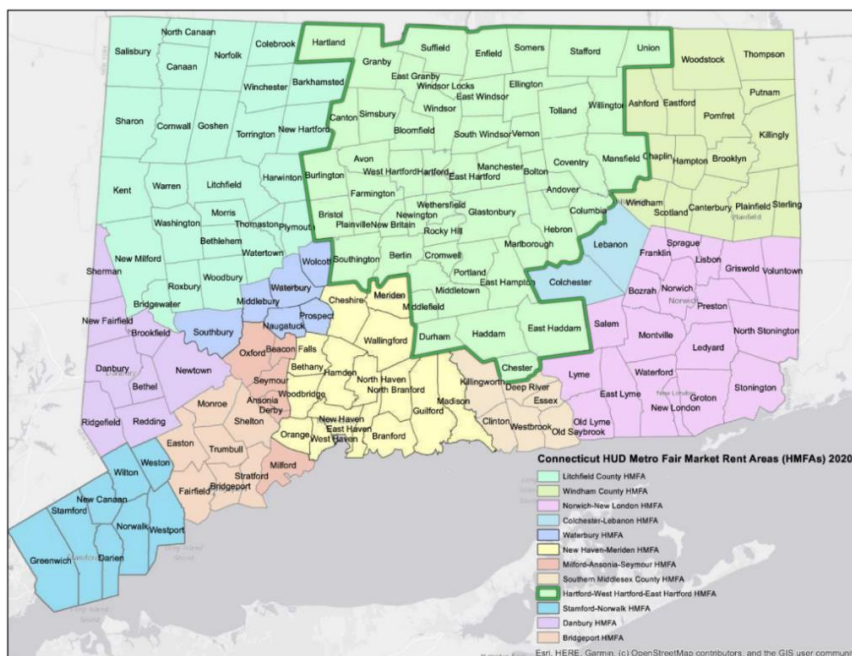


Figure 1: Connecticut HUD Metro Fair Market Rent Areas (HMFAs) 2020

The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has divided Connecticut into 12 regions known as HUD Metro Fair Market Rent Areas (HMFA) based on census data. New Britain is in the Hartford-West Hartford-East Hartford Region (See Figure 1), and by CGS 8-30g requirements that is the HMF Area that will be used to determine New Britain's median income and housing cost. The table below illustrates rent and income limits based on household size:



## HUD RENT AND INCOME LIMITS (2023)

RENT LIMITS	Studio	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	4 Bedroom
20% of Median	\$413	\$443	\$531	\$614	\$685
40% of Median	\$827	\$886	\$1,063	\$1,228	\$1,370
60% of Median	\$1,240	\$1,329	\$1,594	\$1,842	\$2,055
80% of Median	\$1,654	\$1,772	\$2,126	\$2,457	\$2,740

INCOME LIMITS	1 Person	2 Person	3 Person	4 Person	5 Person
20% of Median	\$16,540	\$18,900	\$21,260	\$23,620	\$25,520
40% of Median	\$33,080	\$37,800	\$42,520	\$47,240	\$51,040
60% of Median	\$49,620	\$56,700	\$63,780	\$70,860	\$76,560
80% of Median	\$66,160	\$75,600	\$85,040	\$94,480	\$102,080

Source: HUD 2023 Income Limit Area Definitions Connecticut Metropolitan & Non-Metropolitan Areas

According to the 2021 American Community Survey (ACS), the median household income in New Britain was \$51,586.

### Why is Planning for Affordable Housing Important?

A common myth of affordable housing is that it's large, institutional-style buildings with very high density on very small parcels. However, that is not the case. Affordable housing can be like any other type of housing and comes in many forms, shapes and sizes ranging from single-family homes to duplexes and from townhouses to apartments. It can be privately owned or rented. It can house seniors, families with children, single individuals, or persons with disabilities. It can also come in a range of architectural styles making it virtually indistinguishable from other housing types. While some affordable housing units are owned and managed by public entities, like a housing authority, most are privately owned and managed.

Affordable housing provides many benefits to any community including:

- ❖ Growing the number of affordable housing units would allow those with roots in the community to continue living there after a change in economic status.
- ❖ Affordable and diverse housing choices would allow young adults to move back to the community in which they grew up.
- ❖ Seniors would be able to remain in the community after they retire and, if they want to downsize, there are opportunities to do so.



- ❖ Households that experience a loss of income due to economic circumstances, disability, divorce, or loss of a spouse, will not be displaced from the community due to the inability to pay for housing.
- ❖ Workers in essential jobs such as teachers, home health aides, childcare workers, restaurant workers, and first responders would have an opportunity to live near to where they work.

In 2022, the share of New Britain renters who pay more than 30% of their income towards housing was about 50%. Homeowners with mortgages also saw their budgets stretched, with about 37% being housing cost-burdened. These numbers indicate a need to continue to increase the amount of affordable housing options provided throughout the City.

MEDIAN RENT		RENTAL HOUSEHOLDS		
Median Gross Rent	\$1,030	Number of Rental Households	16,445	
Studio	\$818	Rental Households Computed	15,431	
1 Bedroom	\$806	Households with Gross Rent as Percent of Income >30%	Number 8,023	Percent 52%
2 Bedroom	\$1,060	OWNER HOUSEHOLDS		
3 Bedroom	\$1,224	Number of Owner Households	7,373	
4 Bedroom	\$1,636	Owner Households Computed	7,265	
		Households with Selected Monthly Owner Costs as Percent of Income >30%	Number 2,618	Percent 36%

## Affordable Housing in New Britain

According to the DOH, about 19% of all housing units in New Britain are restricted affordable by deed or type of financing. This percentage has fluctuated between 17% to 20% since 2002. The DOH classifies affordable units into the four categories below:

**10%**  
*of total city  
housing units*

**Government Assisted Housing** – Projects that receive financial assistance under any governmental program for the construction or substantial rehabilitation of low and moderate income housing, and any housing occupied by persons receiving rental assistance.

**5%**  
*of total city  
housing units*

**Tenant Rental Assistance** – Rental units subsidized by Housing Choice Vouchers and administered by public housing agencies.

**3%**  
*of total city  
housing units*

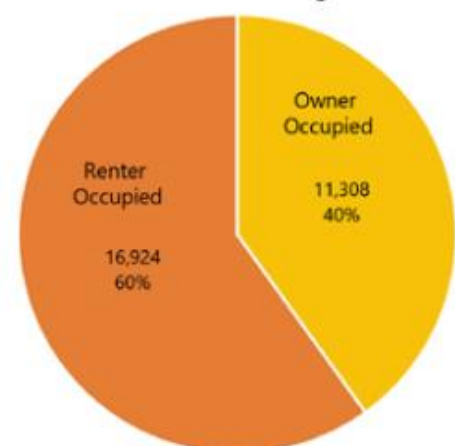
**Single Family CHFA/USDA Mortgages** – Ownership housing financed by Connecticut Housing Finance Authority or U.S. Department of Agriculture through certain home loans that reduce mortgage payments.

**0.3%**  
*of total city  
housing units*

**Deed Restricted Units** – Properties with deeds containing covenants or restrictions requiring the unit to be sold or rented below a certain price for a period of time for households earning less than 80% area median income.

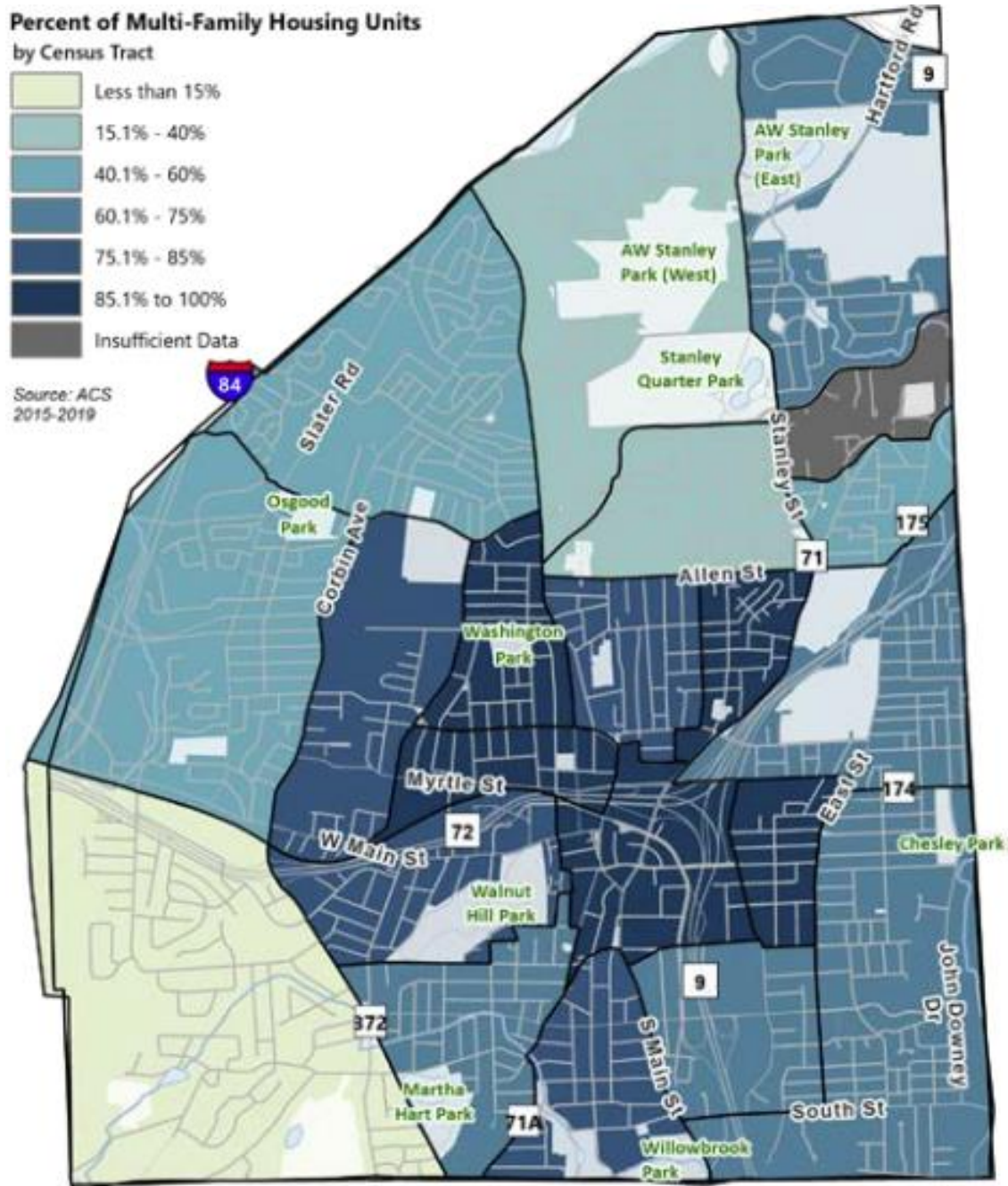
New Britain has a very diverse housing stock and occupancy status. About 60% of housing units are renter occupied and 40% are owner occupied. New Britain's housing stock is about evenly split between single-family homes (34%), 2- to 4-family homes (37%), and 5+ unit apartments (28%). As a highly developed community, New Britain has limited vacant land available to support new development; future growth is tied to infill projects as well as the redevelopment of underutilized or obsolete uses. Recent housing development has been concentrated in Downtown New Britain, where over 200 units have either been built over the last 5 years or are in the pipeline.

**New Britain Housing Tenure**



Source: ACS 5-Yr (2015-2019) Table B25003

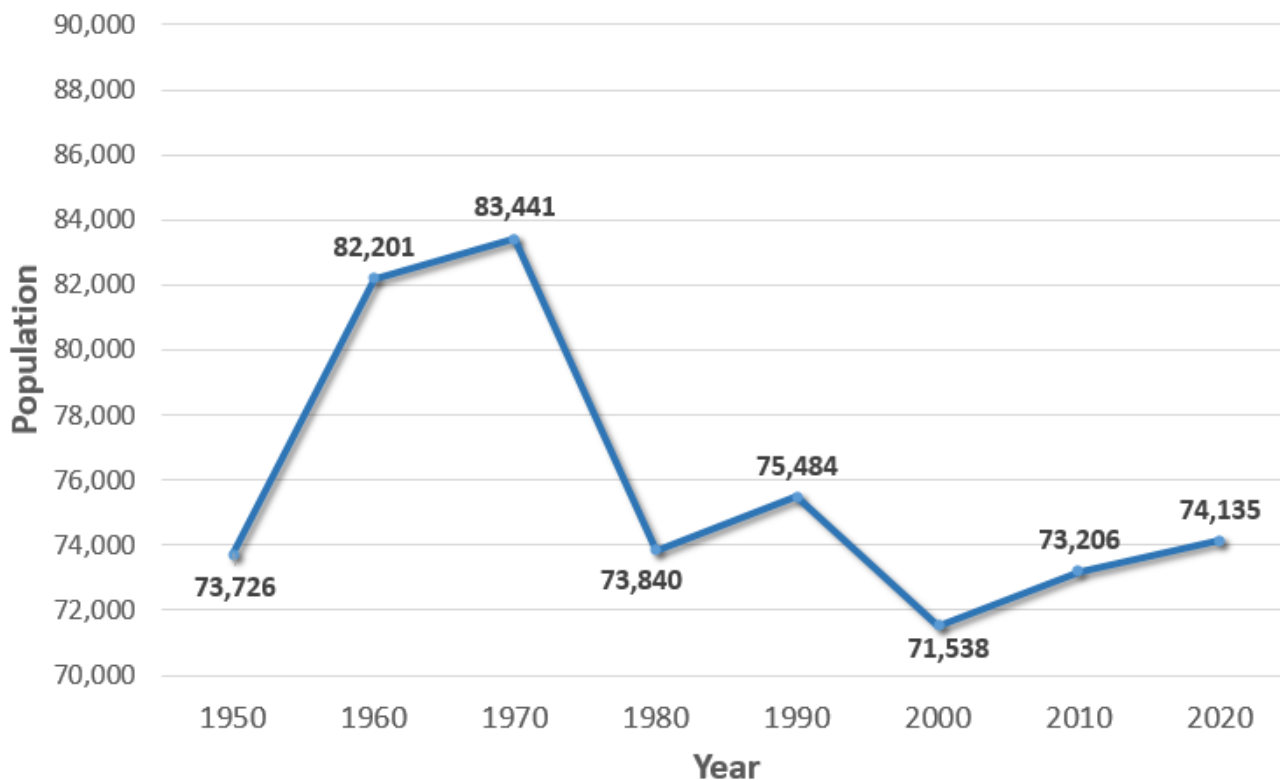




As of the 2020 decennial census, New Britain's population is estimated to be 74,135 residents, making it the eighth largest city in Connecticut. This represents an increase of 929 residents (1.3%) since 2010. New Britain's population has stayed largely stable since 1980, fluctuating between 71,000 and 75,000 residents. New Britain's population is extremely diverse; about 43% of the population is Hispanic, 40% is non-Hispanic white, 11% is Black or African American, and

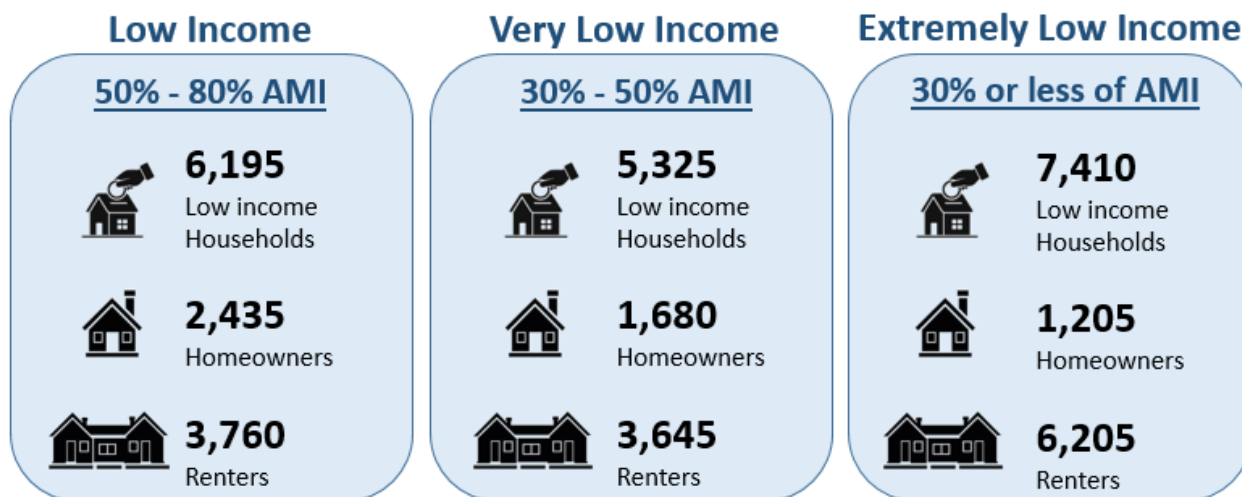
3% is Asian (according to the 2019 American Community Survey). New Britain has always been a city of immigrants and is home to large immigrant populations from Poland, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico, India, and Peru, as well as a large migrant population from Puerto Rico. The median age for New Britain residents is 33.9 years old, compared to a median age of 41.2 in Connecticut as a whole. Despite having a younger than-average population, New Britain's senior population is growing, leading to increased demand for senior housing and services.

### New Britain Population Trends



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1950-2020 Decennial Census Counts

Affordable housing remains a need within the community, especially among seniors and renters. Over 40% of New Britain households spend more than 30% of their income on housing and may have difficulty affording other necessities. As of 2022, 19% of the City's housing stock meets the statutory definition of affordable housing, nearly double the state requirement. New Britain is also home to many lower-priced units that do not meet the statutory definition of affordable housing but nevertheless provide housing choices for low- and moderate-income families.



Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Income Limits for New Britain Comprehensive Housing Affordability Survey (CHAS) 2015-2019

An ongoing priority is to ensure that existing affordable units are safe and well-maintained. Over the last decade, the aging Corbin Heights and Pinnacle Heights affordable housing complexes were redeveloped through public-private partnerships. The Jefferson, a senior community, was built in 2013, also utilizing a public-private partnership, greatly expanding the number of affordable senior housing units in the City. However, demand for affordable senior housing continues to outpace supply and will continue to be a focus over the next decade.



Corbin Heights Revitalization Development

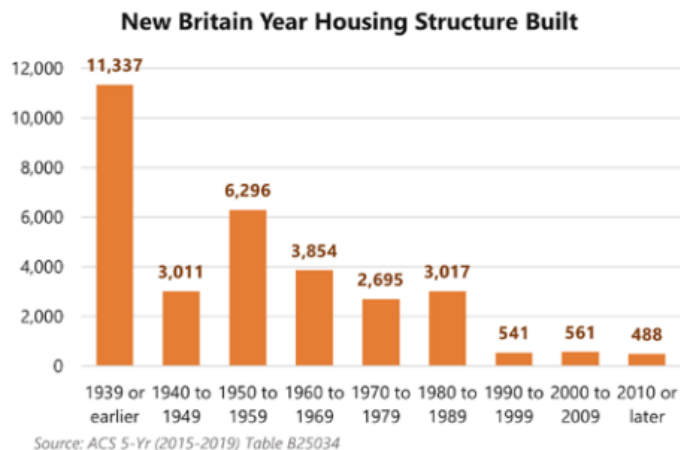


Pinnacle Heights Revitalization Development

## Housing Needs Assessment

New Britain's population is projected to grow slowly over the next decade. This growth, coupled with smaller household sizes, will lead to demand for new housing units. New Britain seeks to concentrate new multifamily development within the Downtown and TOD areas, while growing single family homeownership opportunities in the remaining neighborhoods. The zoning

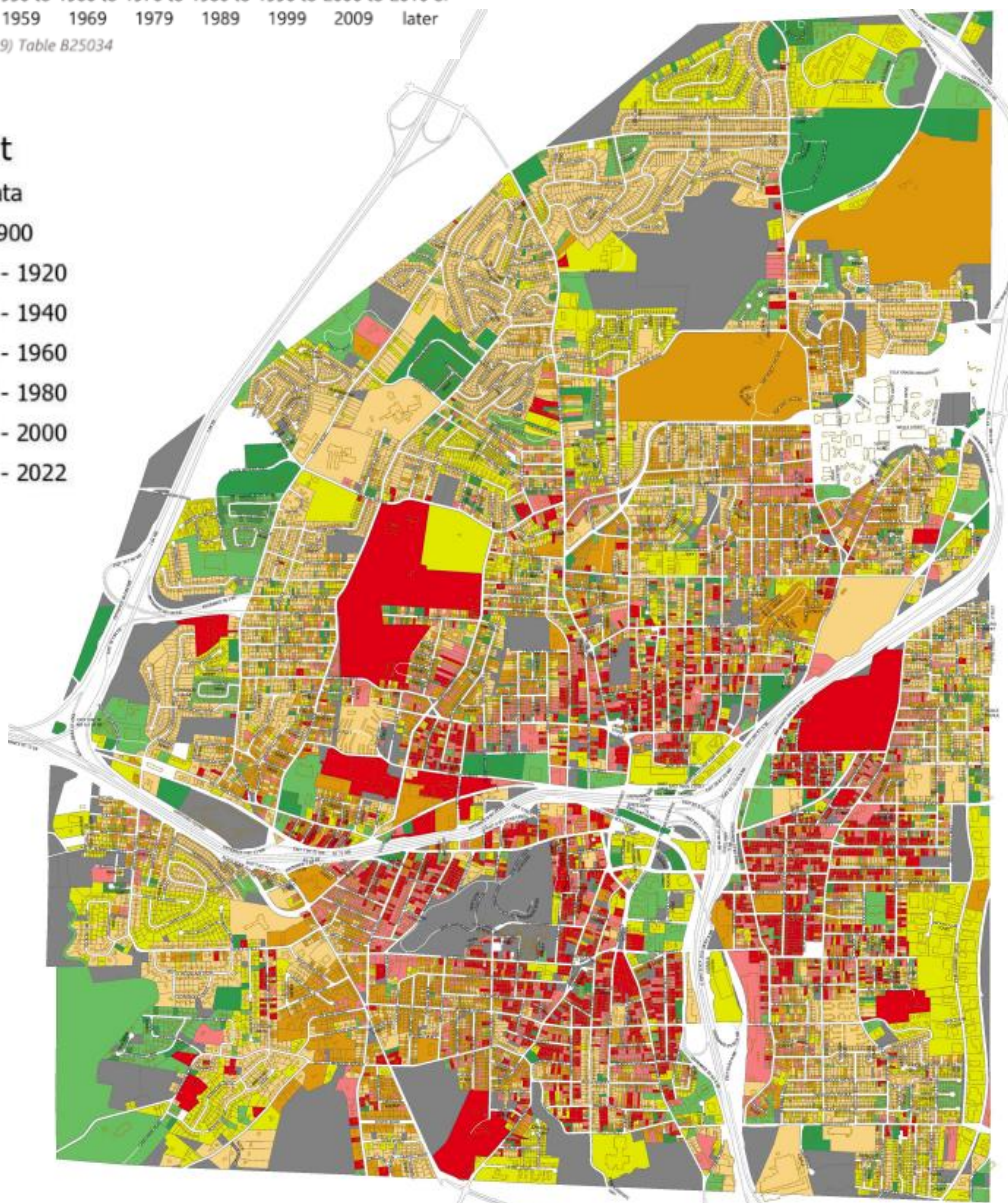
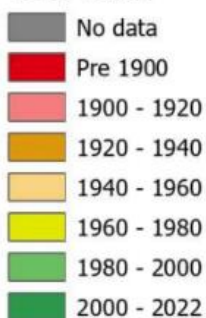




regulations were amended in Downtown, the East Main Street, and the East Street TOD areas to facilitate higher-density, market-rate housing within walking distance of CTfastrak.

New Britain's housing stock is aging as about two-thirds of homes were built before 1960. This underscores the importance of repair and rehabilitation projects, which remain a priority in the City.

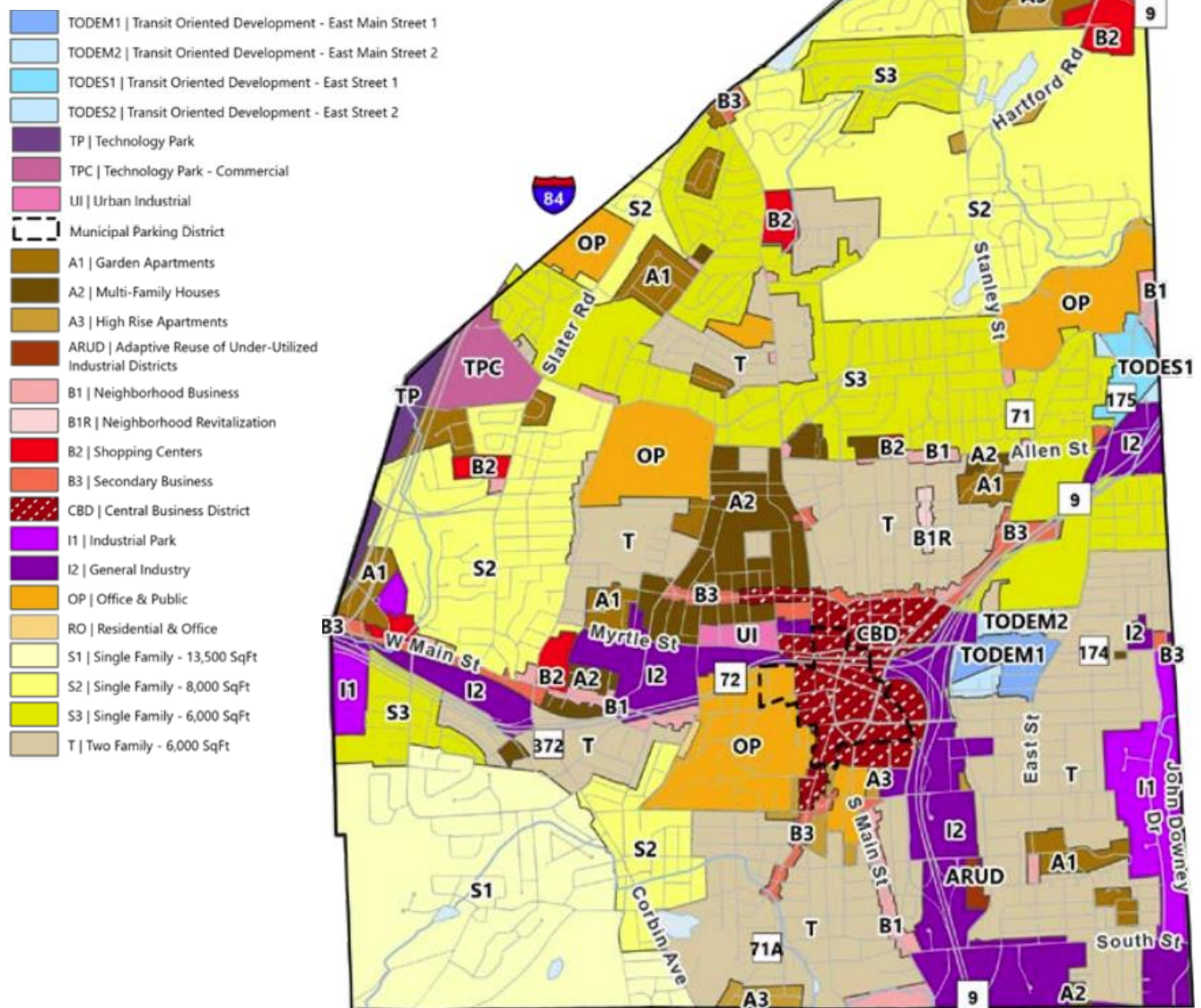
### Year Built



## Land Use and Zoning Assessment

The City of New Britain Zoning Regulations permit a range of housing types and densities. The City contains twenty-seven (27) zoning districts. Of the twenty-seven (27) districts, nineteen (19) of them allow for some form of housing, ten (10) of those districts allow for various multifamily housing types.

### Zoning Districts



In a 2022 revision to the Zoning Regulations, the City recently permitted accessory dwelling units (ADU) by special exception in all of our single-family and two-family zoning districts (4 districts total). Prior to this approval the City of New Britain did not permit ADUs in any of our zones. The size of the ADU can be up to 40% of the existing buildings square footage or 800 square feet;

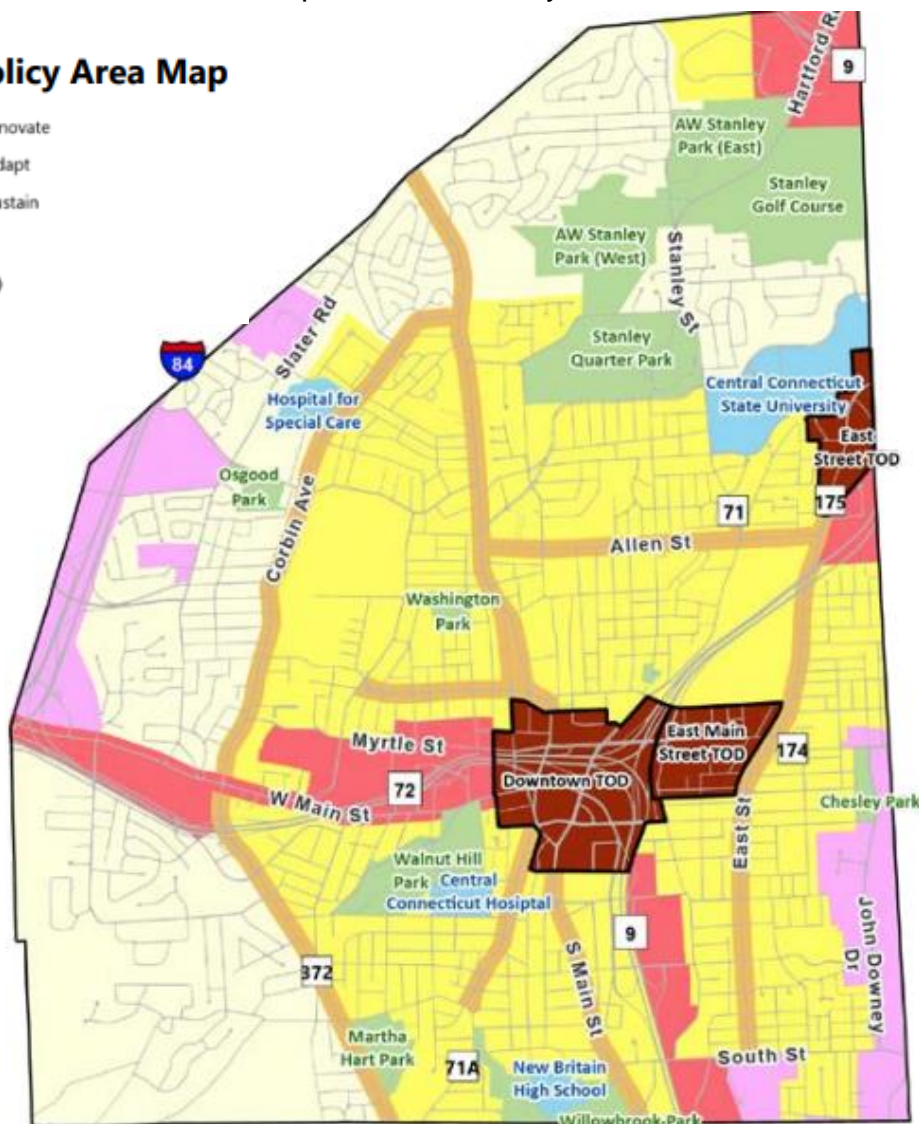


deferring to the lower value, and should be located within the existing buildings envelope or attached to the principle structure with a common wall. Overlaying the City's Central Business District (CBD) is the "Incentive Housing Zone/Transit-Oriented Design District – Downtown" (IHZ/TOD-1) district. This overlay was created with some of the following goals:

- ❖ Promote development of quality housing opportunities serving a diverse and balanced socio-economic range of households.
- ❖ Facilitate the creation of attractive mix of workforce housing.

The IHZ/TOD-1 zoning district contains the "Municipal Parking District" which waives the parking requirements for all non-residential uses within the district. The IHZ/TOD-1 zoning overlay also allows for projects involving the rehabilitation and adaptive re-use of any vacant or underutilized

### Future Land Use Plan | Policy Area Map



commercial or manufacturing building, in which new residential dwelling units are created, the parking required shall be equivalent to the number of spaces that can be physically accommodated on the property in a reasonable and conforming manner. The above regulations help lower a project's total cost, therefore providing an incentive to developers to build within the IHZ-TOD-1 overlay.

The Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) supports a range of housing densities. The Plan divides the goals for housing into three (3) focus areas; Live – Innovate, Live – Adapt, and Live – Sustain:

Live – Innovate focuses on neighborhood and mixed-use corridors that contain a blend of residential and other uses. These are higher to moderate density neighborhoods (Broad Street and Arch Street for example), where a mix of uses are encouraged to create shopping, cultural, and service hubs in the community over the next 10 years.



The Live – Adapt area focuses on moderate to high density residential neighborhoods radiating away from the City's CBD. These areas contain the most diverse housing types within the City of New Britain, including single-family, 2- to 4-unit multifamily houses, condominiums, and apartment complexes. With an aging housing stock, the goal of these focus areas is to adapt to meet modern housing needs, and to look for home repair and rehabilitation projects, blight removal, homeownership programs, and expanded senior housing options.

Lastly the Live – Sustain focus area refers to lower-density residential neighborhoods in the City. This area is comprised of single-family homes ranging from small starter homes to larger single-family homes. The goal for this area is to implement homeownership and property maintenance programs, infrastructure investments, and natural resource protection.

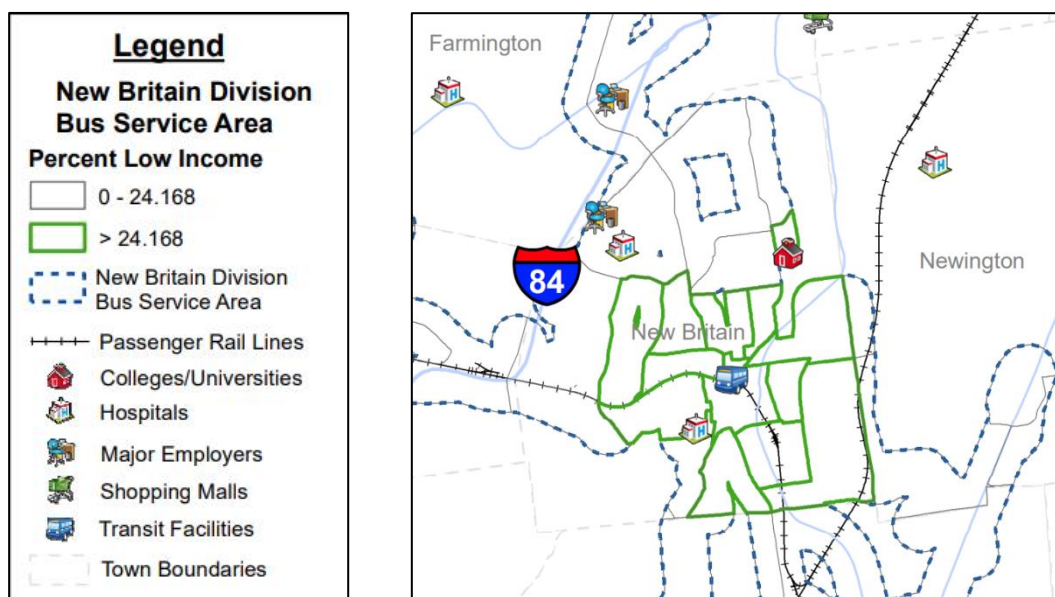
## **Infrastructure and Transportation**

New Britain is well served by utility infrastructure, including 274 miles of water mains, 179 miles of sanitary sewers, and 154 miles of storm drains. With limited opportunities for utility expansion, the City has focused its efforts on modernizing and rehabilitating existing utilities, ensuring that they are in a state of good repair and meet the needs of residents and businesses. Infrastructure

upgrades are budgeted for through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), supplemented with state and federal grant funds for larger projects.

New Britain is served by a transportation system consisting of 193 miles of City streets, 33 miles of highways, a bus rapid transit system, local bus routes, and many miles of sidewalks and bike lanes. New Britain is recognized as a leader for complete streets improvements and the City has achieved a bronze-level certification from the League of American Bicyclists. Since 2013, significant upgrades have been made to streets in Downtown New Britain, expanding opportunities for parking, pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users while maintaining traffic flow.

The City of New Britain provides a number of bus transit options for residents living within the community. CTtransit has ten (10) lines that serve New Britain including the following routes; 41 New Britain/Hartford, 501 Arch Street, 502 Black Rock Avenue, 503 Corbin Avenue, 505 Burrit Street, 506 Farmington Avenue, 507 Oak Street, 509 East Street, 510 South Street, and 512 South Main Street. Many of these routes help service low-income families living within New Britain. The below graphic shows “CTtransit New Britain Division - Bus Service Area - Low Income” which outlines the percentage of low-income households serviced by CTtransit.



New Britain also has three CTFastrak stations located in the City; Downtown New Britain Station, East Main Street Station, and East Street Station. These stations provide access to three (3) routes including; 101 Hartford/New Britain route, 102 Hartford/New Britain/Bristol route, and 128 Hartford/Westfarms-New Britain. Through ongoing Complete Streets efforts and other infrastructure improvements, the City plans to bolster its connection to these lines via continuing sidewalk, bicycle, and other pedestrian improvements. The POCD recommends providing bus shelters in order to enhance the aesthetics and comfortability of bus stops.



## Funding Sources

Several funding sources are utilized by the City and private developers to finance affordable housing projects. Many are secured through public-private partnerships:

- ❖ **HOME Investment Partnership Program**, Department of Housing: Program was authorized by the Cranston-Gonzalez National Affordable Housing Act of 1990 (P.L. 101-625). The HOME program is a federal block grant program that provides funding to states and localities to be used exclusively for affordable housing activities to benefit low-income households. HOME funds are awarded as loans and/or grants to eligible applicants. It is the largest federally-funded program administered by the DOH and is designed to create affordable housing for low and moderate-income households.
- ❖ **Connecticut Community Challenge**, Department of Economic and Community Development: DECD funds multiple projects under the CT Communities Challenge Grant Program in an effort to improve livability, vibrancy, convenience, and equity of communities throughout the state. The Program is intended to potentially create approximately 3,000 new jobs. It is DECD's goal to allocate up to 50% of the funds to eligible and competitive projects in distressed municipalities.
- ❖ **Community Investment Fund**, Office of Policy and Management: CIF awards up to \$175 million each fiscal year to promote economic and community development in Public Investment Communities.
- ❖ **Brownfield Municipal Grant Program**, Department of Economic and Community Development: Grants up to \$4 million for costs associated with the investigation, assessment, remediation and development of brownfields associated with returning a brownfield to productive use to facilitate community development and increase tax revenues.

## Strategies and Implementation

There are various strategies the City can implement to increase the total number of affordable housing units. Some are focused on strategic sites that can be redeveloped to provide new housing opportunities:

### Short Term (1-2 years)

- ❖ Expand senior housing options, including units affordable to low- and moderate-income seniors. Prioritize these units in locations proximate to retail, shopping, services, and healthcare.





- ❖ Modify the City's accessory dwelling unit ordinances in accordance with statutory requirements.
- ❖ Continue to grow market rate rental housing within Downtown New Britain and the East Main Street and East Street TOD station areas. (zoning regulation changes for TOD zones).

### **Medium-term actions (2-5 years)**

- ❖ Conduct a site feasibility study of the Israel Putnam and St. John Paul II schools to determine their capacity to support affordable senior housing. This study should examine site features, circulation, building reuse, and potential impacts to adjacent properties.
  - Based on the recommendations of the site feasibility study, modify the zoning of recommended sites to allow for affordable senior housing and identify potential development partners.
- ❖ Consider adopting a Landlord Registration ordinance to better enforce property maintenance and blight issues at rental housing units.
- ❖ Support the creation of affordable single-family homeownership units on the St. Thomas Aquinas School site.

### **Long-term actions (5+ years)**

- ❖ Redevelop the New Britain Housing Authority's Mount Pleasant apartments, exploring opportunities for public-private partnerships. Portions of this site may be suitable for light industry or other tax-generating use. If all units are not rebuilt on site, ensure that these units are replaced elsewhere in the City
- ❖ Work with local employers to establish an Employer-Assisted Housing program, which would provide financial assistance to eligible employees who buy homes in New Britain.

### **Ongoing**

- ❖ Prioritize single-family homeownership opportunities in residential neighborhoods outside of Downtown and the TOD station areas.
- ❖ Continue blight enforcement and "clean and lien" programs.
- ❖ Utilizing HUD funds, continue to repair and rehabilitate New Britain's housing stock, prioritizing homeowner units.
- ❖ Continue to prioritize HUD CDBG and HOME funds in support of affordable homeownership opportunities, prioritizing rehabilitation and strategic infill development projects.



## Housing In Action

The Downtown housing market has been particularly strong over the last 5 years, and over 200 new units have either been built or are in the pipeline. Recent projects include Columbus Commons, 222 Main Street, and Courtland Arms. This has allowed New Britain to capture upwardly mobile households who previously left due to the lack of housing options while also sparking additional demand for Downtown retail and restaurants.

Other housing developments outside of the Downtown include affordable multi-family units as well as planned single family dwellings at the former St. Thomas Aquinas site.

RECENTLY COMPLETED			
			
Columbus Commons 80 Units (100% LMI)		Courtland Arms 24 Units (100% LMI)	
			
222 Main St 43 Units		67 Arch St 9 Units	



Berkowitz Building  
24 Units



Doris Building  
24 Units



Corbin Heights  
235 Units (100% LMI)



Andrews Building  
20 Units

## PLANNED/UNDER CONSTRUCTION



The Strand  
100 Units (20% LMI)



The Highrailer  
114 Units (3% LMI)





102 West Main  
 79 Units (20% LMI)



The Brit  
 107 Units



34 Walnut







480 Myrtle  
 115 Units (20% LMI)




5-39 Arch  
 10 Units



189 Chestnut  
 30 Units (17% LMI)

	
<p>125 Columbus 86 Units (100% LMI)</p>	<p>30 Bank 32 Units</p>
	
<p>Bennett Building 10 Units (30% LMI)</p>	<p>Kelsey Subdivision 11 detached units (100% LMI)</p>

FUTURE PROJECTS		
		

Mount Pleasant (Housing Authority) 188 Units
<p>Mount Pleasant is located at 707 Myrtle St. It is owned and managed by a Public Housing Authority. As an affordable public housing project, all of the rents at this property are based on tenant incomes. Tenants will make a monthly contribution toward rent equal to 30% of their adjusted income.</p> <p>The site is made up of 22 residential buildings each with an occupancy of around 10 units. No significant changes have been made to the site since the project was completed in 1941. In the decades since it was built, basketball courts and a small amount of public space have been added. However, due to limited funds, overall maintenance has been relatively slow.</p> <p>Today, the Housing Authority for Mt. Pleasant is looking to redevelop the site. Plans for the redevelopment of this site will include a higher-density of residential buildings. Increasing the density of residential while simultaneously optimizing their placement, will provide more diverse housing options, while maintaining existing functions and allowing room for new ones.</p> <p>The project will be completed in multiple phases with minimal impact on the lives of existing residents. The first phase of the project will be to develop the vacant parcels located on the west side of Armistice Street and east side of Bond Street (recently rezoned from I2 to A2 to allow residential). This allows for existing residents to move into the new units while the existing units are remediated and/or demoed and rebuilt.</p> <p>Plans show that with the addition of the units built on Armistice Street and Bond Street, plus with the redevelopment of the current Mt. Pleasant site, approximately 112 affordable units will be added. This would result in around 300+ affordable units being located on the site.</p>

## Sources Used

[http://data.ctdata.org/visualization/cost-burdened-households-by-town?v=table&f={%22Town%22:%20\[%22Connecticut%22,%20%22New%20Britain%22\],%20%22Variable%22:%20\[%22Cost-burdened%20Households%22,%20%22Margins%20of%20Error%22\],%20%22Measure%20Type%22:%20%22Percent%22,%20%22Year%22:%20%222015-2019%22}](http://data.ctdata.org/visualization/cost-burdened-households-by-town?v=table&f={%22Town%22:%20[%22Connecticut%22,%20%22New%20Britain%22],%20%22Variable%22:%20[%22Cost-burdened%20Households%22,%20%22Margins%20of%20Error%22],%20%22Measure%20Type%22:%20%22Percent%22,%20%22Year%22:%20%222015-2019%22})

Above: Used for % of renters and homeowners cost burdened in New Britain.

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/DOH/2020-Affordable-Housing-Appeals-List.pdf#:~:text=2020%20Affordable%20Housing%20Appeals%20List%20-%20Exempt%20Municipalities,Municipalities%20Bethlehem1%2C575%2024%200933%202.10%25%20Bolton2%2C015%20022830%201.49%25>

Above: Used for table on 2020 affordable housing appeals list.