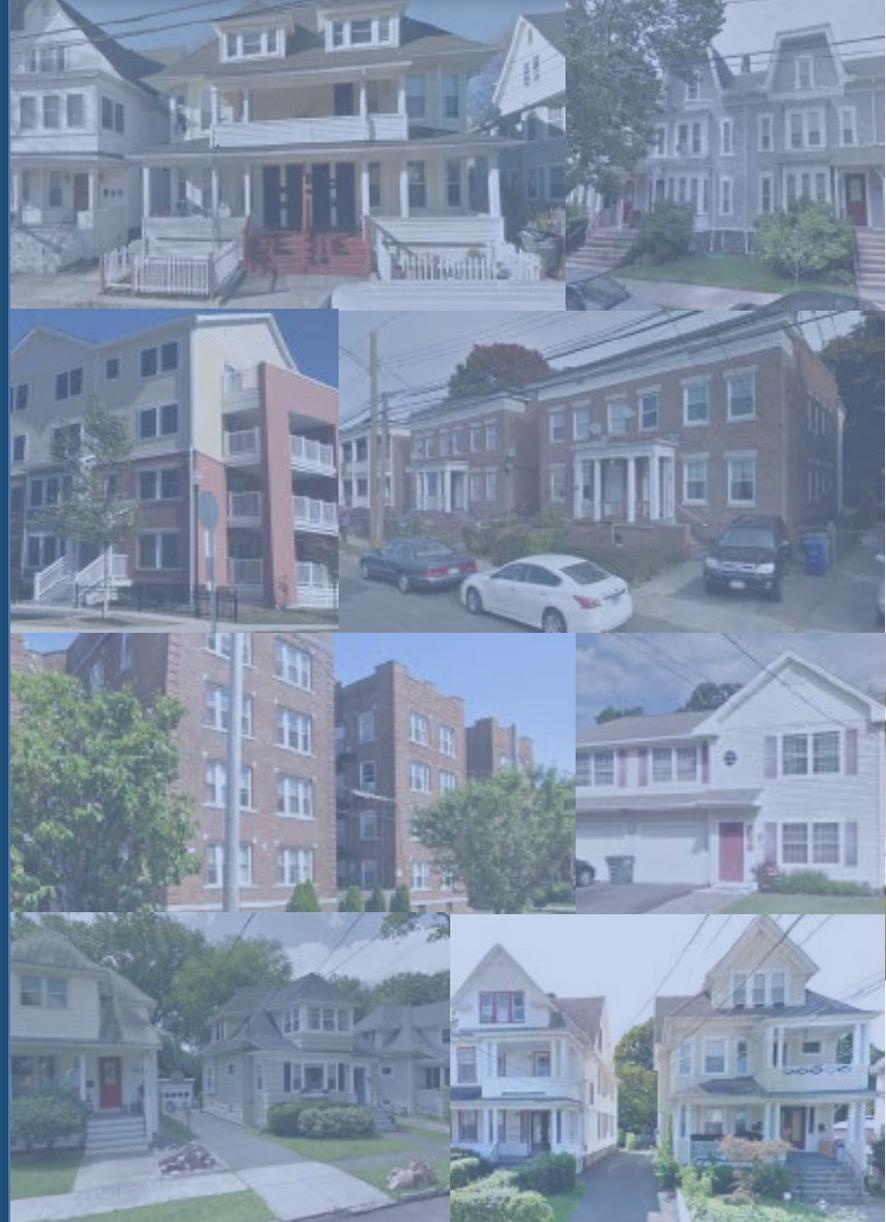




City of Bridgeport

Affordable Housing Plan



Adopted October 16, 2023

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Credit: the formatting template for this Plan was provided by Jocelyn Ayer, Litchfield County Center for Housing Opportunity and was created utilizing technical assistance grant funding provided by the CT Department of Housing.

INTRODUCTION

Bridgeport Within the Region and the County

Connecticut General Statute, Section 8-30j, passed in 2017, requires every municipality to prepare and adopt an affordable housing plan at least once every five years. **The plan must specify the ways in which the municipality intends to increase the development of affordable housing.** In Connecticut, where land use policies, governance, and fiscal policies are fragmented among 169 cities and towns, it becomes more difficult to address a regional issue such as affordable housing.

Bridgeport Leads the Region and the County

Within this context, Bridgeport leads the immediate (MetroCOG) region in the provision of affordable housing. In fact, according to the Connecticut Department of Housing 2021 Affordable Housing Appeals Listing) **Bridgeport provides 81% of the region’s affordable housing.**

In addition, each year since 2016, Bridgeport has increased the total number of affordable units located within the city, both on an absolute basis and on a percentage basis.

State of Connecticut Department of Housing Affordable Housing Appeals Listing: City of Bridgeport

<u>Year</u>	<u># Units</u>	<u># New Units</u>	<u>% City</u>
2016	11,300	n/a	19.82 %
2017	11,480	180	20.14 %
2018	11,593	113	20.33 %
2019	11,631	38	20.40 %
2020	11,777	146	20.66 %
2021	12,134	357	21.28 %

As of this latest (2021) data, **21.28%** of Bridgeport’s housing stock is deemed affordable by the State. That translates to 12,134 units out of the total of 57,012 housing units in the city. Only three other cities within Fairfield County exceed 10% -- Danbury at 12%; Norwalk at 13.5%; Stamford at 15.65%. Most towns and cities in the area immediately around Bridgeport provide comparatively little affordable housing. In Easton and Redding, less than 1% of the housing is deemed affordable by the State. In Newtown and Shelton, less than 3% of the housing stock is affordable. In Trumbull and Milford, just over 5%. In Stratford, just over 6%.

By all measures, and consistently year over year, Bridgeport’s commitment to producing affordable housing sets the standard for the region.

Building and on Master Plan Objectives.

As affordable housing development is a key component of *Plan Bridgeport*, our City's Master Plan of Conservation and Development, our Affordable Housing Plan expressly incorporates our *Plan Bridgeport* housing objectives as follows:

- 1) *Plan Bridgeport* calls for **the development of 150 new units of public housing integrated into new mixed income developments** (from 04.22.2019 to 04.21.2029);

The City's Affordable Housing Plan expressly adopts this Plan Bridgeport objective.

- 2) *Plan Bridgeport* calls for the development, outside of the expanded downtown, of **another 440 new affordable housing units to be available to residents earning no more than 80% of the Area Median Income as determined by HUD**, during the period from 04.22.2019 to 04.21.2029;

The City's Affordable Housing Plan expressly adopts this objective.

- 3) *Plan Bridgeport* calls for the development, within the expanded downtown [including out to Park Ave, down to UB, and across the river to Kossuth], of **4300 new transit-oriented, mixed-income units, (including units available to residents earning less than 120% of the Area Median Income as determined by HUD)** during the period from 04.22.2019 to 4.21.2029.

This Affordable Housing Plan expressly adopts this Plan Bridgeport objective.

THE BRIDGEPORT APPROACH

How do we approach Affordable Housing?

Production, Economic Mix, and Quality: Use All the Tools

Because there are many aspects to the affordable housing challenge, our responses must be **multi-faceted and holistic**. They must be focused on the cost to build and on the cost to maintain housing. They must be focused on the development of income as well. Our policies have to be persistent in their application, equitable in their design, and informed by approaches that can be sustained economically.

STRATEGIES

To increase the supply and quality of affordable housing within Bridgeport, the City will pursue a variety of strategies. Each strategy is grouped into one of the following categories: Physical Development, Procedural & Regulatory, Financial, and Collaboration.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Development of all housing of all types, is necessary to meet the demand. Public support should be prioritized for housing development that reuses vacant and historic structures, is located close to transit, and redevelops brownfield sites.

1. Expand All Housing Production

Bridgeport is fortunate to have a wide variety of housing types: large (16+) multi-unit structures, medium (6-15) multi-unit structures, small (2-6) multi-unit structures, single-family homes, condominiums, cooperatives, lofts, townhouses, and row houses. These units and structures are owned by for-profit developers, non-profit corporations, individuals, and the federal government.

Some units are dedicated to specific vulnerable populations and provide support services; other units have income restrictions, and still others are classified as live-work. The range of housing types covers the spectrum in Bridgeport.

Our ability to produce and sustain *affordable* housing depends in no small measure upon our success in producing housing generally. On a basic level, we understand the impact of supply and demand upon affordability; and we know that, especially post-pandemic, demand is outstripping supply. **Increasing overall supply is a must.**

How do we lower housing costs?

By increasing housing supply generally, we will produce many welcome consequences that advance affordability. With increased building permit fee revenue and with an increased grand list, *we will lower the real estate tax burden, which translates into **lower housing costs for Bridgeport families.***

By providing more housing generally, not only will we increase options for those who would come to live here, but *we will increase options for those who want to stay, particularly for our young people.* By increasing quantity, by providing options, we will also create *pressure to improve quality, especially with respect to energy efficiency.*

About 40% of Bridgeport's housing stock was built prior to 1940 and would benefit from the kinds of energy-saving, cost-saving upgrades that would occur more routinely in a housing market that features significant new production. The production of additional housing, both new and refurbished, also **brings additional private capital into the city** and establishes new appraised values.

New appraised values can help **reverse stagnant or negative equity** situations for owners who can now *rebuild and recapture their nest-egg investment and provide for generational wealth within families.* New appraised values will also generally provide for greater likelihood of **private financing of naturally occurring affordable housing** ("NOAH") and of specifically programmed affordable housing.

As new housing is built, and older housing is refurbished, **we will increase business growth locally.** Bridgeport is home to a great concentration of construction-related businesses, up and down the supply chain and throughout the relevant trades. This industry-cluster uniquely positions the city to capitalize on increased housing production as a means to *increase wealth within the home-based business community. This in turn translates into a greater community-wide wealth, and greater ability to afford housing.*

Residential development can be a core industry within Bridgeport just as it is in the U.S. The National Association of Home Builders states that residential construction industry represents approximately 5% of the country's gross domestic product. Additionally, residential construction has one of the highest economic multipliers of any industry sector.

According to Professor Stephen Fuller of the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University:

**The added
Economic
Benefit of
Constructing
Affordable
Housing**

“Residential construction outlays have a total output multiplier of 3.08, a personal income multiplier of 1.08 and a jobs multiplier of 21.66 jobs supported per \$1 million in direct outlays.”¹

Published monthly by the U.S. Census Bureau in partnership with HUD, “Housing-Starts” is one of the key indicators of economic growth or decline. By increasing housing starts of all kinds, in an equitably distributed manner, we will advance the economic prosperity of the city in a balanced way, providing for more affordable housing throughout.

Housing Development Examples:

The Windward Apartments: 20 Johnson Street 54 Affordable Housing Units, with 30% Public Housing Replacement



The Willows: 1043-1081 Stratford Ave. Affordable Homeownership



¹ *The Contribution of Residential Construction to the U.S. Economy* by Stephen S. Fuller, Ph.D, University Professor Emeritus, Founding Director, The Stephen S. Fuller Institute, Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University, May 14, 2020.

**Crescent Crossings: 252 Hallett St. & 581 Waterview Ave
177 Affordable Housing Units, with 30% Public Housing Units**



**Waltersville Commons: 167 Steuben St.
70 Affordable Housing Units at 60% AMI - Historic School Restoration**



1188 Lofts - 1184 Main St.



Cherry Street Lofts



Cherry Street Lofts Phase III (West Side)

- **Address:** 80 Cherry Street
- **Project:** Rehabilitation of a former factory to convert into approximately 100 residential units
- **Developer:** Corvus Capital

2. By building more housing of all types we will increase the affordability of the overall housing stock by:

- 1) Addressing supply and demand imbalance.
- 2) Gaining economic (cost) efficiencies in production.
- 3) Producing a positive fiscal impact (and lower taxes) for residents.
- 4) Modernizing the housing stock & improving its energy efficiency.
- 5) Reversing negative equity situations and increasing equity wealth.
- 6) Increasing wealth within the community through residential construction.

Public Transit and Affordable Housing

3. Continue Emphasis on Housing Within Transit-Oriented Developments (TOD)

T.O.D. saves on transportation, which increases income and the ability to afford housing. We support this smart strategy not only by supporting T.O.D. housing (e.g., with tax incentives and/or capital support) but also by supporting investment in better transit. More buses, more frequently. Continued improvement to the Downtown Transit Center. Preparing for water taxi service.

4. Prioritize Developments that Reuse Buildings and Develop Vacant Lots and Brownfields

Housing development that utilizes existing structures produces the double benefit of providing good housing while preserving good buildings. Existing structures have architectural features and scale that contribute to a sense of place. Vacant lots and brownfields contribute little to the tax base, and as such should be prioritized for redevelopment.

Examples of Brownfield Sites Suitable for Residential Development:

AT&T at 430 John Street and at 455 Fairfield Avenue Downtown
Waltersville School at 167 Steuben Street on the East Side
Ostermoor Complex in the Hollow
Warnoco Complex in the South End
AGI Factory Site on the East Side
The Willows Redevelopment Site on Stratford Avenue
Cherry Street Part III on the West Side

Historic Restoration & Affordable Housing

5. Expand Emphasis on Historic Restoration

State and federal historic tax credits provide a tremendous resource for housing development. These tax credits were integral to the successful development of housing units at Cherry Street Lofts and every single Downtown building conversion in the past ten years. We should expand historic districts to allow for greater use of tax credits, particularly Downtown.

PROCEDURAL & REGULATORY

The City shall continue to improve the review and permitting processes that support the efficient development of affordable housing.

1. Provide Continued Staffing Support for Efficient Permitting and Regulatory Review of Residential Projects

With *Energov* electronic permitting and the *Zone Bridgeport* digitized zoning code, the City has created more efficient platforms and clearer standards for residential project review. It is important to keep staff levels at sufficient strength (particularly within the Fire Marshall's Office and within the Building Department) to provide for timely and thorough review of building plans and of work in the field. This will lead to faster, less costly construction and to more affordable housing production.

2. Continue Expedited Review of Residential Solar Installations

Although it is generally perceived to have gained greater acceptance in suburban towns, residential solar installations have proven popular in Bridgeport. With 3097 solar installations since January 2015, Bridgeport has one of the highest absorption rates of any urban area in the state.

To support this industry, and the positive impact it has on housing affordability, the Building Department has established a separate expedited review process. This should continue.

3. Provide for Additional Code Enforcement Staff

Routine housing inspections ensure public safety and the quality of affordable housing.

4. Re-Establish the Fair Rent Commission

This function provides a direct place of appeal and information in support of resident rights.

5. Support Development of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's)

Review Municipal Code to ensure consistency and compliance with *Zone Bridgeport* and Connecticut Public Act 21-29 as it relates to accessory dwelling units. Pursue Municipal Code amendments as necessary.

**Sustainable
Energy &
Affordable
Housing**

FINANCIAL

Several funding sources and mechanisms are in place to provide financial support to homeowners, renters, and developers of affordable housing. These must continue to be used in the most effective manner to expand the affordable housing options within Bridgeport.

How Does the City Provide Added Assistance?

1. Utilize Tax Incentives, Federal HOME Funding, and City Capital

Effectively utilize tax incentives, HOME funding, and City capital funds as complementary tools in support of affordable housing production. Municipal Codes 3.20 and 3.24, authorized by Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 8-215 and Sec. 8-216, provide for limited term tax abatements on affordable housing. HOME funding can be part of the development financing program, while City capital funds may be used for pre-development work and complementary infrastructure.

2. Continue to Market & Increase the Use of the CDBG Homeowner Rehabilitation Program

Increase awareness and use of the federally funded Homeowner Rehabilitation Program of forgivable grants for income-eligible homeowners who wish to undertake homeowner repair projects.

3. Continue to Market & Increase the Use of Rental Assistance Through ESG and HOPWA Programs

Increase awareness and use of the existing rental assistance programs offered through the federally funded Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG) and Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) programs.



4. Continue to Market and Improve and Increase the Use of Down Payment Assistance Through HOME

Increase awareness and use of the federally funded HOME Down Payment Assistance program to assist more families to become homeowners.

5. Provide City Resources to Projects Consistent with Neighborhood Revitalization Zone ("NRZ") Plans

Projects that are consistent with the objectives of NRZ plans should be considered for City support and subsidy. An example would be a plan objective to increase homeownership in the neighborhood; and the proposed development might be a two-family structure being offered for sale to a limited-income household. This project would meet the neighborhood plan objective and should be considered, if necessary, for financial support from the City.

COLLABORATION

Collaboration and coordination are imperative to ensuring that affordable housing is created and maintained in Bridgeport.

How Does the City Support our Most Vulnerable Population?

1. Support Park City Communities' (PCC) Redevelopment Program

The nearly 2,600 public housing units located within the city provide shelter to some of the lowest income families in the community, many of whom earn less than 30% of the area median income. It is essential to preserve this housing, to improve its quality, and to improve its management.

Toward those ends, the City has supported PCC's ongoing efforts to modernize its public housing stock and to integrate it economically into mixed-income communities and privately managed development settings. Such efforts have been well received thus far. The City shall continue to support such work with capital contributions to development as appropriate and with the provision of tax incentive structures as warranted.

The City will work with PCC to encourage the continued and focused distribution of rental assistance vouchers units within privately owned and managed housing complexes. Doing so will support new developments financially and expand options for new housing to eligible residents.

2. Support the South End Flood Protection Project

As damage from past storms has shown, the South End neighborhood is vulnerable to catastrophic flooding. Much of the undeveloped and underdeveloped property is in the flood plain, and as such, incurs high premiums for flood insurance and is ineligible for any new federal or state housing development funding.

In the case of some individual properties, these issues may be overcome by specific design approaches to new construction such as elevation of the development site and/or of the building to be constructed.

The proposed flood control project for the South End would alleviate this problem on a broader level, both by providing protection to existing residences and by placing much of the undeveloped land into a lower flood risk category pursuant to which eligibility for lower premiums and access to public funding would be restored.

How does the City Protect our Most Vulnerable Housing?

3. Create Housing Partnerships with Anchor Institutions and Major Employers

Major employers, such as Hartford Health Care's St. Vincent's Medical Center and Yale-New Haven Health's Bridgeport Hospital, as well as the City of Bridgeport itself, should explore the creation and funding of housing partnerships designed to provide financial support for employees who would reside in the city through renting or homeownership.

4. Support and Market Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP)

The number of residents participating in this program continues to rise. The City should support use of this energy assistance program offered through the Alliance for Community Empowerment by increasing awareness of it.

5. Engage with Lenders Regarding Community Reinvestment Act

There is a consistent complaint offered by developers that conventional bank financing of residential development in Bridgeport is hard to come by. Consequently, much of such development is funded by hard-money lenders and investment groups. This must change if we are to increase housing production.

Outreach is needed to federal regulating agencies (e.g., the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation; the Federal Reserve Board; the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency) to critically assess, and encourage, the participation of state and local banks in the financing of residential development in Bridgeport, all as pursuant to their obligations under the *Community Reinvestment Act*.

6. Cultivate Relationships with Socially Conscious Investors

With a focus on preserving Bridgeport's considerable NOAH assets (Naturally Occurring Affordable Housing), the City must continue to cultivate forward-looking relationships with socially conscious investors and lenders who are similarly focused on the production of affordable housing within urban areas. Such groups include Turner Impact Capital, Leviticus Fund, and Capital for Change.

By increasing socially conscious lender awareness of the Bridgeport market and by cultivating business relationships with local residential developers and investors, we will create better capital and human infrastructure in support of affordability.

Who can the City Partner with?

The City needs to Create more Interest.

Demographics

Demographic information produced in this document was collected from U.S. Census Data 2020.

What are Bridgeport's Demographic Trends?

Demographic changes

Bridgeport has approximately 148,000 residents living in 58,114 households. Over the last 10 years (between the 2010 Census and the 2020 Census) the City's total number of residents increased slightly by 3.1%.

Bridgeport's population has also become more diverse over the last ten years with an 5% increase in non-white residents according to DataHaven's equity profile. As shown in the figure below it is more diverse than both the county and the state.

Figure 1: Population by Race/ Ethnicity

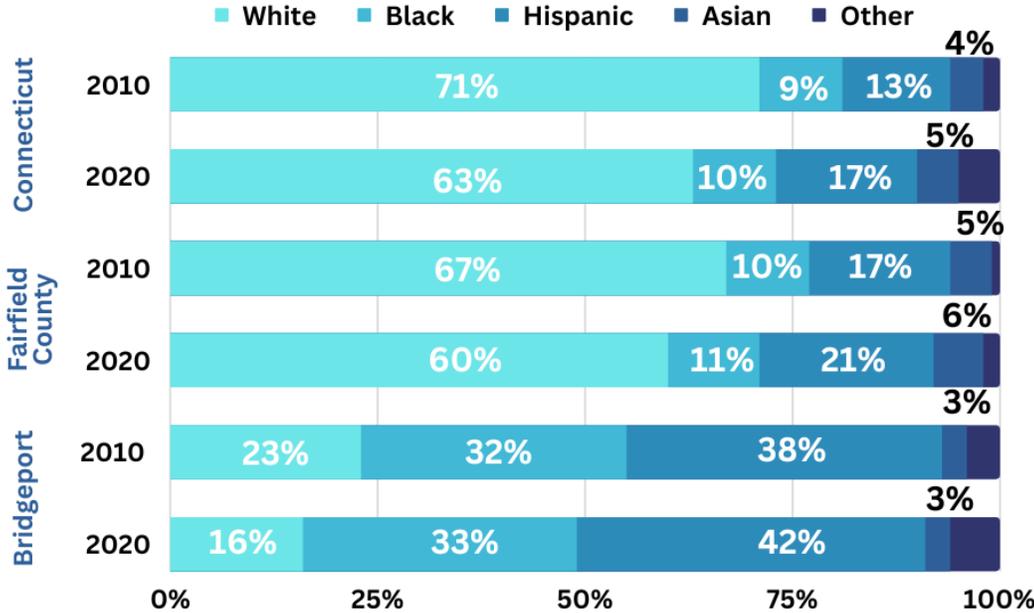


Figure 1. U.S. Census Bureau (2010-2020) Race and Ethnicity, Table B01001A-I. data.census.gov

Figure 2: Change in Population by Neighborhood

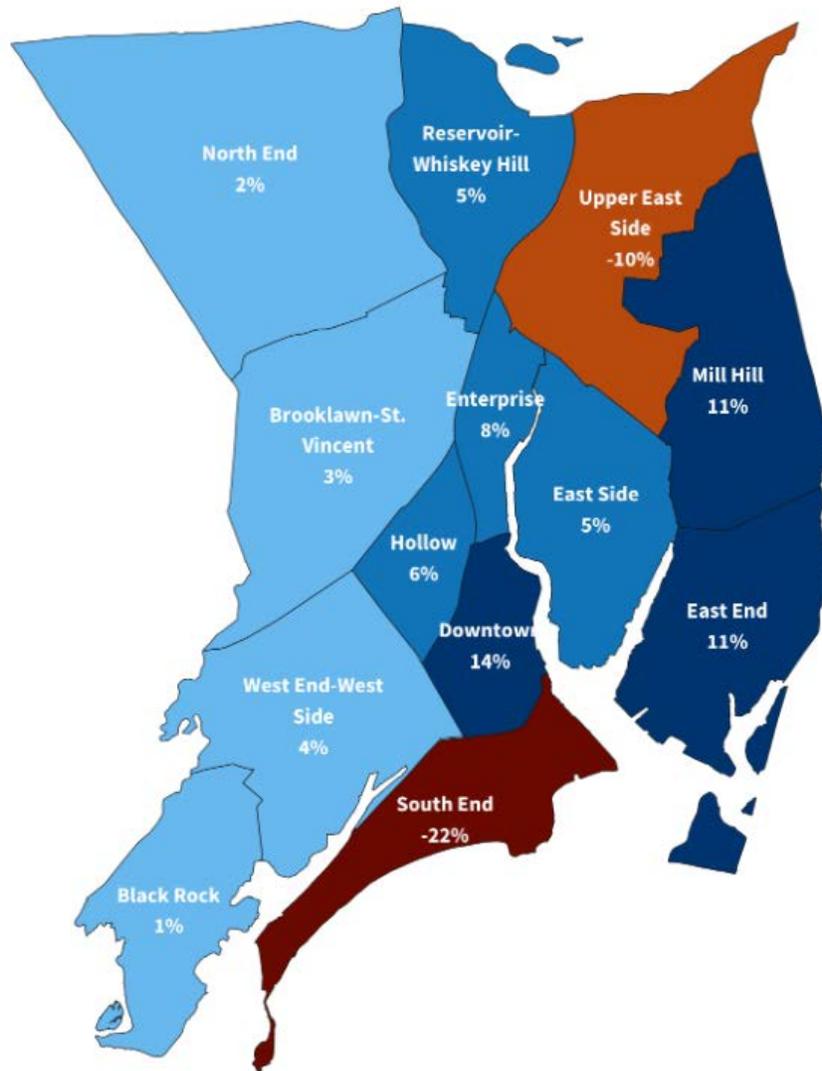


Figure 2. Change in Population by Neighborhood. Data Haven. Aug 8, 2021
<https://www.ctdatahaven.org/reports/2020-census-data-demographic-change-connecticut-town-and-city-neighborhoods/bridgeport-neighborhood-changes-2010-2020>

Between 2010 and 2020, the population of Bridgeport increased by 4,425 to 148,654 (a **3% increase, compared to the 1% increase statewide**).

Our Aging Population: Young and Old

Bridgeport hosts people of all ages. As a percentage of the overall population, Bridgeport's elderly population has decreased from **14% to 12%**, between 2010 and 2020.

In the same timeframe, Bridgeport increased in total families from **30,467 to 32,272**. Additionally, the city's adult population grew by **5%** compared to **4% growth** statewide.

The child population decreased by **3% in Bridgeport**, compared to a **10% decrease statewide**. Even though families are becoming smaller, Bridgeport continues to retain and support families.

Figure 3: Change in Vacancy Rate

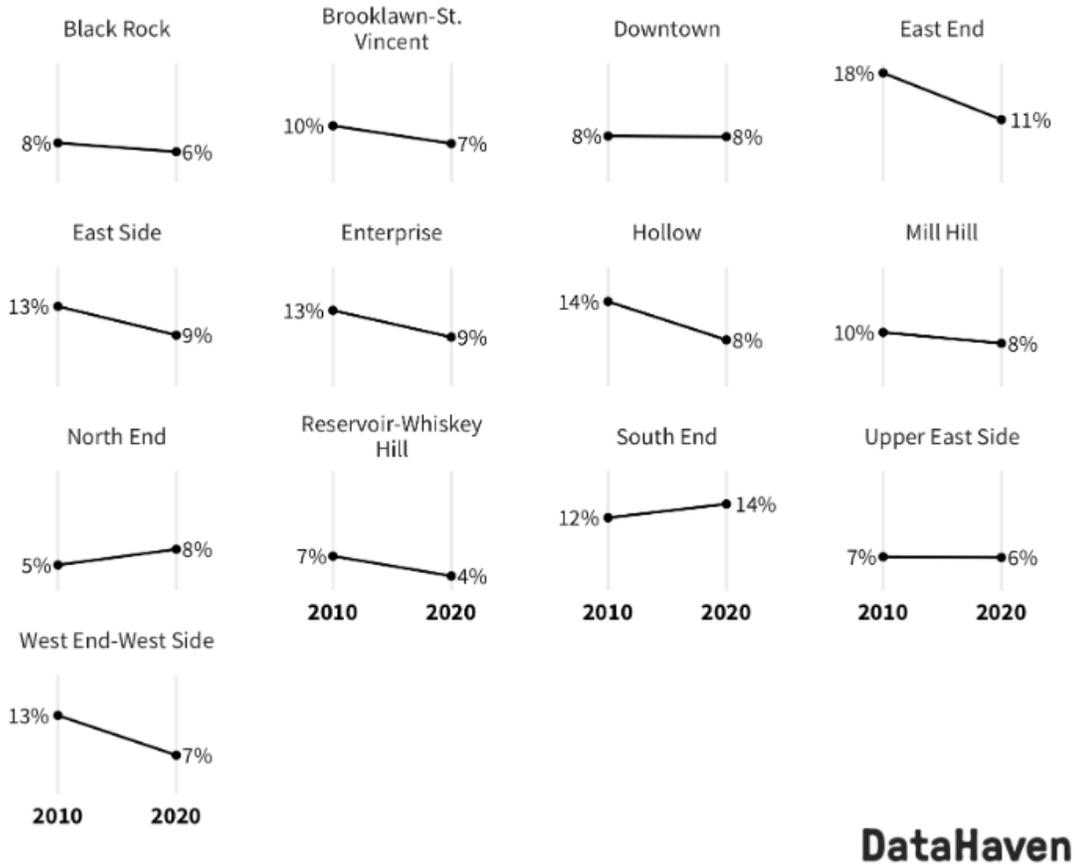


Figure 3: Aug 8, 2021. Change in Vacancy Rate by Neighborhood. Data Haven.
<https://www.ctdatahaven.org/reports/2020-census-data-demographic-change-connecticut-town-and-city-neighborhoods>

Figure 4: Occupancy Status

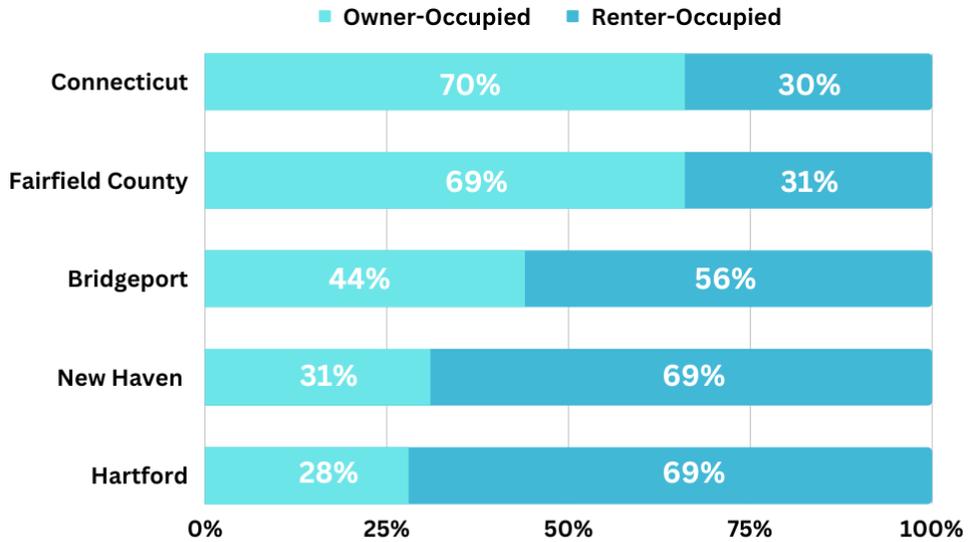


Figure 4: Occupancy Status, U.S. Census Bureau (2020) characteristics for Occupied Housing, Table S2502. data.census.gov

Figure 5: Household Income vs. Cost

	Owner -Occupied Housing Units	Renter-Occupied Housing Units
Median Household Income: Annual	\$75,923	\$29,934
Monthly Housing Cost	\$1,671	\$1,157
Monthly Housing Cost vs Income*	26%	46%

*The Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals Procedure (CT General Statute 8-30g) recommends housing cost NOT exceed 30% of household income.

Figure 5: Housing Income vs. Cost, U.S. Census Bureau (2020) Financial Characteristics, Table S2503. data.census.gov

In 2020, Bridgeport’s average gross rent per resident stood at \$1,157 per month. This was lower than Fairfield County’s average of \$1,511.