

Planning and Zoning Commission
Ridgefield, CT
12/27/2022

I am writing in opposition to the proposed Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance. I believe the evidence is clear that Inclusionary Zoning [“hurts more than it helps”](#). It needs to be understood that Inclusionary Zoning is [“essentially an extra tax on development, making building more costly and reducing housing supply.”](#)

Urbanist Alain Bertaud explains in his book [“Order Without Design”](#) that trying to “build affordable housing below market” is simply “not serious”, and that inclusionary zoning is just another “stage in the long quest for a costless solution to affordable housing” and nothing more than a “free-lunch strategy”. He goes on to state the better approach is to increase the availability of “housing which is affordable at market price.”

If in fact Inclusionary Zoning does help with housing affordability through incentives, it is only because the underlying zoning is exclusionary. The efficient policy response should be to liberalize zoning to allow the construction of lower-cost market-rate housing.

It needs to be further understood that pursuing a project-based approach to affordable housing is far inferior to providing housing vouchers. Robert Ellickson in his book [“America's Frozen Neighborhoods”](#) came out unequivocally against project-based assistance in favor of housing vouchers in conjunction with the liberalization of lower cost market-rate housing construction. He states that with project-based housing assistance “the horizontal inequity is manifest”. Those households living in a subsidized unit are no different than those on a [waiting list](#) receiving no benefit at all. Better to use scarce housing funds to provide everyone in need some type of voucher. He also cited the [high cost of subsidized building projects](#), lack of mobility with a project-based housing benefit, and the fact that “vouchers enable quiet integration”. Additionally, [lack of oversight](#) in managing housing inventory and [potential fraud](#) have been perennial problems with project based housing assistance.

What should the town do?

- 1) The town should reject both inclusionary zoning and the housing trust fund (if it is funded by a levy on building permits) provisions because both are effectively a tax on housing. Investment into any big public housing project should also be rejected because of high costs and other drawbacks such as lack of mobility.
- 2) The town should formally call for 8-30g reform. It should be stripped of its misguided and arbitrary set-aside requirements, and it should give the presumption to lower-cost market-rate housing that is built in accordance with objective, regionally appropriate design principles. The form-based zoning code provision in the RAHP would be the vehicle for implementation. The town should advocate for a compromise with the state, that if a town adopts an innovative form-based zoning code, that facilitates well designed lower-cost market-rate housing, it should be exempt from 8-30g.
- 3) The town needs to put both time and money into listening and addressing residents' concerns over development and illustrate approaches to lower-cost housing that have been successful elsewhere.

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