



October 17, 2018

Members, Affordable Housing Task Force  
c/o Alder Aaron Greenberg  
Facilitator, Affordable Housing Task Force  
165 Church Street  
New Haven, CT 06510

Dear Task Force Members,

On behalf of concerned residents and community organizations in the City of New Haven, we write this letter to inform the Affordable Housing Task Force of our concerns and to make an urgent request. It is our hope that the contents of this letter are well-received and responded to in a timely manner.

**A. New Haven Residents Struggle to Afford a Home**

In recent years, New Haven residents have experienced an increase in the cost of living primarily in the area of housing. Since the early 2000s, the price of housing has increased dramatically, but per capita incomes in New Haven have barely budged. This increased cost of living is regressive and disproportionately impacts New Haven's working class, working poor, unemployed and underemployed communities.

These diverse communities, which serve as the engine that runs this city, are being faced with rising rents, poor conditions, evictions and the constant fear of homelessness. Ultimately, residents are being priced out of the neighborhoods that they and even their parents grew up in and are forced to look for housing outside of New Haven.

Recently, the City of New Haven, like many other urban governments, has employed an economic development strategy focused on "growth" that excludes the needs of these communities and further escalates the housing price for local residents.

As a result, there has been a growing trend in the construction of apartment buildings priced at "market rate". Between 2002 and 2015, units renting for more than \$2,000 a month in New Haven increased 97%, while units renting for \$800 or less decreased by 2%. The median rent in New Haven is \$1,090 per month. To afford that, a household would have to make \$53,000 per year. However, the median household income is a little over \$38,000 a year. This reality has left 41% of New Haven residents paying more than 30% of their income toward housing - a situation that puts them one financial hiccup away from eviction and a host of related problems.

We need new measures introduced on behalf of local residents. We are calling on members of the Affordable Housing Task Force and public officials to take action- now!

## **B. The Task Force Must Look for Actionable Solutions**

We know members of the Affordable Housing Task Force have been working diligently to address the lack of quality affordable housing in New Haven. Since the first public hearing on June 6, 2018, the task force has been meeting monthly with the goal of recommending actions that the Board of Alders can take on the issue of Affordable Housing. We understand that the Task Force is scheduled to make these recommendations by the start of the 2019 legislative session. We cannot miss this opportunity and we are worried that the New Year may come without actionable recommendations from the Task Force. As a community that suffers from the lack of quality affordable housing, we find it crucial that the Affordable Housing Task Force follow through in recommending concrete, city-focused actions to the Board of Alders.

In addition, we seek assurance that New Haven residents will be included in the development of these affordable housing recommendations. We call on the Task Force to include a set of community-led recommendations that would include, at a minimum, a proposal for an Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance and methods to preserve existing affordable housing, among other possible solutions. We hope that the Task Force will look at affordable housing as a collective issue that impacts many different populations within our community.

Therefore, we find it imperative that the recommendations produced by this Task Force be informed by and best reflect the needs of those who are most impacted by the lack of affordable housing in New Haven.

Since there has been such a large amount of market rate development in New Haven recently, which prices out New Haven's working class and low-income communities, we feel that there is an urgency to ensure that the Task Force focuses on resident-driven solutions to improve the lack of quality affordable housing options in the city. In order to provide a resident voice, we believe it is necessary to hold meetings at a time that is more accessible to the community - namely during evening hours.

## **C. We Request that the Task Force's Actions be City-Focused, Inclusive and Transparent**

We seek to ensure that the following items are addressed:

1. That the Task Force follows through with providing a set of **actionable recommendations** on Affordable Housing to the BOA that include city-focused solutions.
2. That the Task Force recommendation process is **inclusive** of the New Haven community and allows for the formation of a set of community-led recommended actions. This includes:
  - a. An Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance, concrete methods to preserve quality affordable housing, and other solutions
  - b. Acknowledging that affordable housing is a collective issue that impacts a range of populations including the homeless, youth, elderly, working families and very low-income communities.
3. The Task Force recommendation process is **transparent** to the New Haven community. This includes:
  - a. Scheduling meetings in the evening to accommodate working families.

- b. Providing a public schedule of meeting dates from now until the conclusion of the recommendation process.
- c. Providing an opportunity for the public to hear and offer feedback on that Task Force's recommendations before they officially make them to the Board of Alders.

We look forward to working with the Affordable Housing Task Force and supporting the process of improving the state of housing in New Haven. We hope to hear from you on this matter soon.

Sincerely,

*Community Economic Development (CED) Unit,  
New Haven Legal Assistance Association, Inc  
Mothers & Others for Justice  
Connecticut Bail Fund's Housing Not Jails  
Dixwell & Newhallville Watchdog & Advocacy Committee  
New Haven Rising  
Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven*