

New London Housing Forum

Nov. 13, 2024



Over **100 people** attended the November 2024 Housing Forum and submitted compelling comments and questions on a range of housing related issues. The feedback collected has been thoroughly reviewed and will inform New London's efforts to plan for the housing needs of the community during Phase 2 and 3 of the Paths Home initiative. If any regulatory changes related to housing are proposed in the future, they will need to go before the voters for adoption first. The New Hampshire Housing Opportunity Planning Grant Program allows the extensive time necessary to properly understand, define, and envision solutions for regulatory changes that may or not be proposed for the Town Meeting in 2026.

Below we have provided responses to the most frequent and complex feedback received. Our hope is that this will be informative and encourage residents to continue engaging in and supporting this work over the coming year!

Future Housing Needs

Question: What type of housing could you see yourself living in ten years from now?

Answer: While many participants are content in their existing home, 27% of participants shared that they could see themselves living in a smaller style home such as an Accessory Dwelling Unit, condominium, townhouse, or in a retirement or group care facility in the next ten years. There was also some concern from participants that these types of units are not currently available in New London.

Infrastructure

Question: What is the current state of municipal infrastructure and services in New London, and can it support additional housing units?

Answer: Many of the infrastructure related questions specifically identified concerns related to water and sewer capacity. This is an evolving issue in New London, and public water/sewer utilities are an important development component in the area of the community where lots are smaller and higher density development already exists. Other than a known locale in the town "core" where contamination must be addressed, private water and septic infrastructure remains to be viable and sufficient. This infrastructure question is something that will be explored further during Phase 2 to understand what additional housing possibilities could be considered in the Commercial Zone and adjacent zones.

Available Land

Question: *Is there enough buildable land in New London to support a variety of housing options?*

Answer: Although New London has successfully conserved many important properties, and does have areas that are too steep or wet to accommodate future development, based on an initial mapping analysis recently completed, there are still ample opportunities for future development activity. This question will be examined further during Phase 2 of this initiative using the map and assessing files that the Housing Commission has been reviewing with the consultant team.

Community Character

Question: *How will the variety or density of housing types to be considered impact New London's town character?*

Answer: This is an interesting question because New London's largest existing housing type is single family homes, and the character or appearance of these structures is not regulated. Some of the other housing options that New London may consider could be required to meet architectural standards, and this will be explored further in Phase 2 of this project. One related concern is that design requirements not result in only higher priced units in New London.

Housing Types

Question: *Do we need to allow all types of multi-family building styles?*

Answer: The simple answer is no. This topic will be thoroughly examined in further detail during Phase 2 of this initiative, when the community will be engaging in envisioning different types of development might be desirable. NH State statutes (NH RSA 674:58-61) require that, beyond single-family homes, there must be reasonable opportunities for varied housing alternatives to be constructed in all New Hampshire's communities. This could include some multi-family building types, such as town houses, garden style apartments, etc., but not all types are required.

Our Residents

Question: *Hasn't New London always been unaffordable to first-time buyers and lower-income residents?*

Answer: While that may have been the case, there are many reasons to create different housing possibilities within New London as we look to the future. One reason is the state law that has been in place since 2008 (NH RSA 674:58-61). Another is a recognition by many residents that having homes available to local employees, families, and seniors adds to the community's vibrancy, as well as the vitality of the local economy.

State Requirements

Question: *Is New London's focus on affordable housing driven by state mandates that require all towns to provide workforce housing?*

Answer: Somewhat. While New London recognizes the state mandates and wants to remain in compliance with respect to Workforce Housing, there is an opportunity to be even more intentional in how we plan for the housing supply needs of the broader community, including senior citizens and young families. The formation and funding of the Housing Commission clearly demonstrate the town's commitment to understanding and addressing the housing needs of all of our residents. These efforts pre-date, but are now supported by, State funds. However, there are no specific regulatory requirements beyond compliance with RSA 674:58-61.

Data Presented

Question: *Why does the Housing Forum presentation appear biased toward justifying the need for affordable housing?*

Answer: A wide variety of data was extracted to better understand New London's existing housing supply and the needs of the community. This was in response to earlier requests by residents that more data be made available to guide policy decisions. That data clearly indicates that there are a number of housing related issues the community is facing, only one of which is housing that is within the financial reach of town residents. While the data shows that addressing the need for affordable housing is an important part of this initiative, it is also a state requirement.

Tax Impacts

Question: *Will workforce housing and apartments worsen our already high property taxes?*

Answer: During Phase 2 of the Paths Home initiative, we are going to look at the cost and revenue implications of single family and multi-family housing in New London. In fact, this will be addressed with the help of the consultant team early in 2025 and the results will be shared with the public in a second Community Forum.