

## Land Use Regulations

### *Conditions and Trends:*

A comprehensive revision of the zoning regulations and map (Map 1) was approved in 2018, effective 2/1/19. This followed a multi-year process starting with a Town Council sponsored ad-hoc committee in 2015. The ad-hoc committee was tasked with simplifying the regulations and providing more streamlined application process for commercial and industrial applications. The subdivision regulations have not been updated since 2012. Challenges such as balancing the needs for a variety of housing with watershed and open space protection require a continued evolution in land use regulation to keep with the changing needs and desires of Ledyard's population.

### *Goals:*

**Manage Development** - Support and manage the growth and development of Ledyard in order to maximize both the environmental and functional quality of life. Regulations must carefully protect the character of Ledyard while providing the flexibility needed to continue to attract new residents and new businesses.

**Maintain Regulations** - Maintain suitable subdivision and zoning regulations that reflect the development pressures on the town and that maximize compatible uses, maintain property values, minimize the impact of new development on natural resources and manage the growth of public services and maintenance costs.

**Support the POCD** - Revise zoning, inland wetlands and subdivision regulations as necessary to implement the goals and strategies of the Plan of Conservation and Development and promote consistency between the Plan of Conservation and Development, regulations, and policies of all land use boards.

### *Implementation:*

|                                     |                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Zoning Regulations</b>           | Accessory dwelling units, changing definitions of families, and the need for alternative and affordable housing will require regulation for the town to evolve. |
| <b>Subdivision Regulations</b>      | The subdivision regulations were last updated in 2012 and need to be updated to improve alignment with the zoning regs and to ensure consistency with the POCD. |
| <b>Aquifer/Watershed Protection</b> | Updated Zoning regulations and discussions with WPCA will be needed in order to implement effective aquifer and watershed protection.                           |

## IV. Housing

### Overview

\* Ledyard is a predominantly residential community principally comprised of single-family detached houses. Although classified as suburban by the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG) large parts of the Town retain a strong rural character. It is this rural nature that has attracted many residents and it is a character many residents wish to retain. Residential land use dominates all other land use categories in Ledyard. Of the approximately 24000 acres in the Town of Ledyard, about 22600 acres are zoned for residential use. \*

According to 2018 CERC (CT Economic Resource Center) data, Ledyard has 6297 housing units, 85% of which are single-family residences. With limited land zoned for higher density development, significant building challenges such as wetlands and ledge, and limited infrastructure nearly all the new development in the past 10 years has been in large lot subdivisions or individual, large-lot single family houses. Recovery from the 2008 Recession has been slow in the area, with only 153 housing units built between 2008 and 2018 (139 being single-family units).

Within the Town are large older subdivisions in the Highlands, Avery Hill, Aljen Heights and Gales Ferry area and newer and smaller subdivisions sprinkled throughout the town. There are few apartment complexes, rental units and minimal diversity of housing types. The 22 town SECOG area has a significant problem with access to affordable housing, with 37% of households considered to be cost-burdened (spending >30% of income on housing). However, Ledyard is below this value with only 27% of homeowners considered to be cost-burdened. Housing units are considered affordable if a person earning no more than the AMI (Area Median Income) pays no more than 30% of their annual income for it (CGS 8-39a). The household AMI for New London is \$84000, which corresponds to an affordable threshold of approximately \$2000 per month, or a home purchase cost of approximate 225k.

### Goals

- \* \*
- To guide the residential growth and development of Ledyard and ensure high standards of design and quality of life.
  - To encourage a diversity of housing types and ensure an adequate supply of housing at affordable cost.
  - Encourage and expand on cluster subdivisions on large parcels.

- Adopt regulations that increase the zones where Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's) are allowed.
- Adopt regulations to allow by-right development of multi-family and infill housing.
- Maintain existing affordable housing already present in older developments through blight control and housing rehabilitation grants.

## **Issues, Policies and Strategies**

### **1. Quality Residential Development**

The Town of Ledyard is predominantly residential. According to surveys done for the 1993 Plan of Development, and a workshop held in April of 1997 to gather input for the Economic Strategies Plan ("Mullin Report") residents desire to maintain the town's low-density residential character. In general, the current existing, residential zoning districts and their bulk requirements support the desired development patterns. Since limited infrastructure is available, homes must rely on private wells and septic systems. Therefore, larger lot sizes (and therefore lower density) are necessary to provide sufficient room for these structures and the requisite separating distances.

The Town should continue to support higher density residential development and diverse housing type construction as a component of mixed-use development near Ledyard Center, along the Route 12 corridor and where water and/or sewer is available and continue lower density single family development in other areas.

The water quality in older developments, specifically Aljen Heights and Avery Hill must be addressed. Ledyard should plan to link the Route 12 water line or connect a water tower to the Aljen Heights and Avery Hill Developments. There is the potential for financing part of this work with Federal funds through the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

### **2. Cluster Development**

The cluster development (Conservation and Open Space) regulations have provided a good tool for promoting quality development in large parcels that creates smaller building lots and allowing for more affordable housing while preserving significant open space and hence preserving Ledyard's rural character. These regulations have been heavily used and the recent refinements to the regulations appear to have helped encourage the desired development styles. However, because these regulations can only be utilized on large parcels, this encourages development on larger outlying parcels which tends to create sprawl instead of concentrating development nearer to commercial services. The current cluster regulations don't work on smaller parcels and are still designed for single family homes, not the higher densities desired in

## **Issues, Policies, and Strategies**

### **1. Expanding and preserving open space for natural resource and habitat protection**

Ledyard is rich in natural resources. Wetlands, lakes, vernal pools, forests, coastal areas as well as productive farmland soils contribute to the landscape of the community. The natural environment is a primary influence on the quality of life and character of the Town of Ledyard that must be protected.

The benefits of open space are multifold. Enhanced quality of life for residents is achieved through access to areas set aside for passive and active recreation. Hikers, birdwatchers, photographers and other naturalists can enjoy the ability to observe from within protected parcels, while causing minimal impact to them. Residents can enjoy walking or biking safely away from roads and cars. Connected corridors of open space provide habitat for many species of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians. Rare or endangered flora and fauna identified in the Natural Diversity Data Base can be provided undisturbed living space. Furthermore, protecting our open space provides a natural drainage, flood storage and/or erosion control reducing the speed of runoff from developed areas and mitigating the inevitable pollution that accompanies human activities.

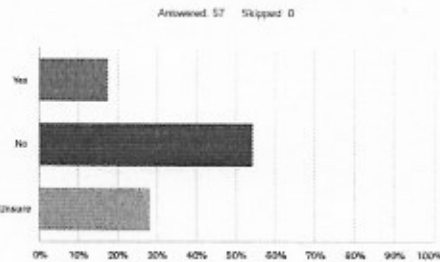
At the beginning of 1999, over sixteen percent of Ledyard's total land area, approximately 4,120 acres, was permanently protected open space. This figure includes over 100 parcels owned by the Town of Ledyard, Groton's extensive reservoir system, lands of the Nature Conservancy, Avalonia Land Conservancy, Department of Environmental Protection, and tracts for which farmland development rights have been acquired.

The continued acquisition of open space for passive recreation and habitat protection is a positive step for the community. However, much of Ledyard's open space, such as the reservoir property, remains off-limits to the general public. Other preserved lands, although considered open to the public, are largely inaccessible due to lack of trails or the presence of thick swamps and wetlands. Further, other open space holdings are small and fragmented between various residential subdivisions. These parcel set-asides were required by regulation, and often located haphazardly following no open space development or linkage plan.

Open space preservation efforts must be targeted to preserve critical and valuable land and natural resources and maximize open space benefits to the community. Efforts should be made to:

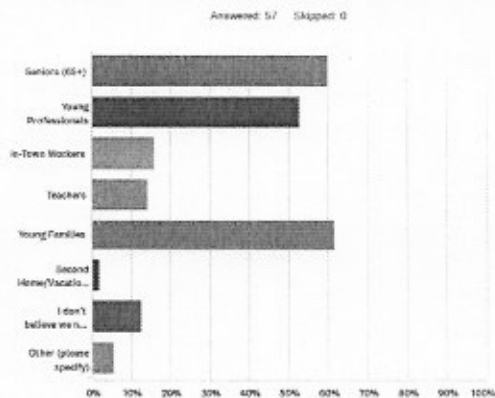
# FROM AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN

Q9 Are there places for elderly residents to move (downsize) so that they can remain in town?



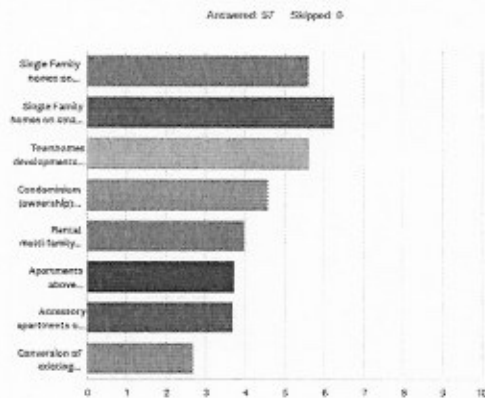
A portion of survey questions asked respondents their opinions on housing types, and for whom housing is most needed. When asked for which groups of people more housing options are most needed, respondents selected Seniors, Young Professionals, and Young Families as their top three choices.

Q14 If you think more housing options are needed in Ledyard, for whom do you think they are most needed? (Select top 3)



When asked about what specific housing types would be most appropriate to add to Ledyard, respondents provided a diverse range of responses but most selected Single-Family Homes on Large Lots, Single Family Homes on Small Lots, and Townhome Developments of 12-36 units.

Q15 What types of affordable housing would be most appropriate and best suited to add in Ledyard? Please rank your choices (1 being the top priority).



Although we can not empirically claim much about the community from this survey due to the small amount of responses, this survey provided some information to consider recommendations, and reinforced a few of our earlier data points on the need for affordable housing for the elderly, young adults, and families.