

Huntington Township Housing Coalition

October 23, 2014

Ms. Joan Cergol, Director
Community Development Agency
Town of Huntington
Town Hall
100 Main Street
Huntington, New York 11743

Dear Ms. Cergol:

I am writing on behalf of the Huntington Township Housing Coalition to urge that the Town of Huntington's Consolidated Plan 2015-2020 and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) 2015 application translate into the actual creation of affordable housing, in particular family and rental housing. We appreciate that previous Consolidated Plans and CDBG documents have referenced the need for, and identified goals to create, affordable housing. *However, the Coalition is deeply concerned that these plans have not yielded significant numbers of new affordable ownership or rental units, especially when measured against the goals for affordable housing identified in the Town's 2008 Comprehensive Plan.*

Attached please find the Coalition's analysis that compares the calls for affordable housing in the Town's much-acclaimed 2008 *Horizons 2020: Town of Huntington Comprehensive Plan* with the actual creation (planned or completed) of affordable units since 2008. Disturbingly, we found that only 592 new units of affordable housing have been planned or completed, of which 116 or only 20% will be rental.

More important, the total 592 planned affordable units (ownership and rental) will hardly make a dent in the need for 2,789 affordable housing units projected by a Rutgers University study of Huntington's housing needs, 2005-2020. The Rutgers assessment, which was commissioned by the Suffolk County Legislature for each town in Suffolk, reported a grim housing situation in Huntington. Using US Census data, the study found:

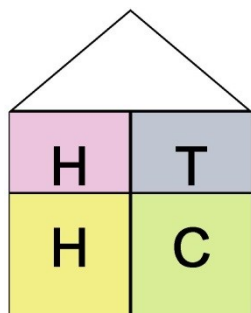
- 10,053 cost-burdened households paying more than 30% of their income toward housing costs, that is, living in "unaffordable" housing.
- 257 households living in what the Census defines as "deficient" housing meaning two or more serious structural issues.
- 515 households living in what the Census defines as "crowded" housing.

Given the clear disconnect our report demonstrates between the goals for creating more affordable housing, particularly rental housing, in both the Town's Comprehensive and Consolidated Plans, and the actual construction of this desperately needed housing, we call upon the Town to develop in its Consolidated Plan, 2015-2020 and Community Development Block Grant application for 2015, concrete plans that will actually transform these worthy goals into brick and mortar affordable homes.

Yours truly for the Coalition,

Richard Koubek, PhD, President
631-499-6725

CC: Supervisor Frank Petrone, members of the Town Board and Town Clerk Jo Ann Raia



Huntington Township Housing Coalition

The Huntington Comprehensive Plan's Call for More Rental Housing Failed to Significantly Impact Huntington's Affordable Housing Stock

A Report by the Huntington Township Housing Coalition on the 2015 Community Development Block Grant Application and Five Year Consolidated Plan

October, 2014

**By Richard Koubek, PhD, President
Huntington Township Housing Coalition**

The Huntington Township Housing Coalition is aware that the Town of Huntington's "Five Year Consolidated Plan, Annual Action Plan, Fifth Year, 2014" has, among its objectives:

- "Increase the supply of affordable renter occupied housing for extremely low, very low and low-income households.
- Improve the condition of existing housing for renter and owner occupied households principally occupied by extremely low, very low and low income families."¹

The Coalition appreciates the efforts outlined in this Consolidated Plan to secure funding and participate in programs to expand the stock of affordable rental housing for a range of incomes. However, the Coalition is also deeply concerned that these plans have not yielded significant numbers of new affordable housing, in particular rental units, when measured against the goals of the Town's 2008 Comprehensive Plan.

In December 2008, after conducting a town-wide visioning process, the Town Board adopted - with much public acclaim - *Horizons 2020: Town of Huntington Comprehensive Plan*. This Comprehensive Plan could not have been clearer in criticizing the lack of

¹ Town of Huntington "Five-Year Consolidated Plan Annual Action Plan, Fifth Year 2014 (April 1, 2014 –March 31, 2015)". Page 6.

affordable housing in Huntington, particularly “quality, affordable rental housing” which was described as “limited” for both “lower-income residents” and “moderate and middle-income members of the local workforce.” The Comprehensive Plan also criticized Huntington’s 85%/15% ownership/rental housing ratio (compared with the U.S. 67%/33% ratio) which “falls short of providing a balance or range of choices for those with different housing needs.”

A close examination of housing data since the Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2008 reveals that only 592 new units of affordable housing have been planned or completed of which 116 or only 20% will be rental. When a total of 378 new, planned rental units are built (affordable and market rate) Huntington’s ownership/rental ratio will have been tweaked to 82%/18%, almost the same problematic ratio reported in the 2008 Comprehensive Plan and still well below the national ratio for rentals. More important, the total 592 planned affordable units (ownership and rental) will hardly make a dent in the need for many thousands of affordable housing units projected by a Rutgers University study of Huntington’s housing needs, 2005-2020.

A detailed assessment follows of the Town’s affordable housing needs – particularly for rental units - and the shortfall since release of the Huntington Comprehensive Plan in 2008.

Chart 1

Huntington’s 2008 Comprehensive Identified a Serious Shortage of Affordable Housing, Especially Rental Housing

The Horizons 2020: Town of Huntington Comprehensive Plan noted that:

- “Except for the affluent...all segments of the population are affected by the scarcity of affordable housing in Huntington.”
- “Rental housing options for Huntington’s lower income residents are limited.”
- “For moderate and middle income members of the local workforce, such as nurses, police officers, secretaries, and mid-level managers, choices for quality, affordable rental housing are similarly limited.”
- The Town’s 85%/15% ownership/rental housing ratio “falls short of providing a balance or range of choices for those with different housing needs” compared with the U.S. 67%/33% ratio.²

Thus, the 2008 Huntington Comprehensive Plan – or master plan – threw down a clear challenge: Huntington has a serious lack of affordable housing, particularly rental housing, that does not meet the needs of its citizens. To illustrate, typical Suffolk County rents are: \$1,309 for a one-bedroom unit and \$1,613 for a two bedroom unit.³

² *Horizons 2020: Town of Huntington Comprehensive Plan*, Chapter 9, Affordable Housing, Pages 9-3, 9-4, 2008

³ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development 2014 Fair Market Rental for Suffolk County.

- In order to afford a two bedroom unit a family must earn \$58,000 a year (using the standard that 30% of family income should be spent for housing costs.)
- But about one quarter of Suffolk residents earn under \$58,000 a year and 16% of Huntington families earn under \$50,000 meaning that the typical apartment is unaffordable for them.⁴
- Because Huntington rental apartments are scarce and therefore expensive, 54.1% of Huntington renters pay “unaffordable” rents that are more than 30% of their income.⁵

Huntington’s shortage of affordable housing choices is having an especially harsh impact on young people.

- A 2014 study found that 75 percent of young people, ages 20-34, said the lack of affordable housing options on the Island may limit their ability to stay.⁶
- Because Long Island lacks affordable rental housing, there were 15% fewer 25-to-34-year-olds in 2009 than there were in 2000, a larger decline than in any other part of the New York metropolitan region.⁷
- A 2014 study found “a huge exodus of young people, especially from mostly white, higher-income Long Island neighborhoods” like the Town of Huntington due to the lack of affordable rental housing.⁸
- This brain drain is a threat to the LI economy and a net loss to taxpayers who spend on average \$300,000 to educate a child, grades K-12, only to see them leave the Island because, in part, they can’t find affordable rental housing here.

Long Island business leaders have long recognized that the shortage of affordable housing imperils the future of Long Island’s economy and tax base.

- A 2013 study concluded that “the shortage of affordable rental homes is already straining Long Island’s economy, and will make it much harder to compete for jobs in the years ahead.”⁹
- *Newsday* reported on June 5th, 2014, that Computer Associates was moving their headquarters off LI, joining “a parade of [almost 30 companies] that have done so”¹⁰
- Recognizing the threat to the LI economy, the Long Island Association has as one of its 2014 priorities, to “generate construction of rental units throughout Long Island [and]

⁴ U.S. Census American Fact Finder, Suffolk County, 2012.

⁵ U. S. Census, American Fact Finder, Huntington, 2012.

⁶ Winslow, Olivia, “Young adult survey: LI needs more housing options, jobs to keep us here,” *Newsday*, June 10, 2014.

⁷ The Long Island Index, 2010 report.

⁸ Winzenberg, David. “Young, Restless and Getting Out of Here, Fast,” *Long Island Business News*, February, 2014.

⁹ Regional Plan Association, Long Island Community Foundation, Ford Foundation. “Long Island’s Rental Housing Crisis,” September, 2013.

¹⁰ Ryan, Joe. “CA Shifts HQ to Manhattan,” *Newsday*, June 5, 2014.

increase the availability and diversity of the region's housing supply including new affordable and multi-family housing projects.”¹¹

Given the dire nature of Huntington’s and Long Island’s affordable housing shortage, what steps has the Town taken since its 2008 Comprehensive Plan warned that this problem was affecting all but “the affluent?” The Coalition studied planned and constructed affordable housing units since 2008, detailed in Chart 2, and found the Town’s record wanting.

Chart 2
New Huntington Affordable Housing Planned Since 2008 Does Not Significantly Add to the Town’s Stock of Affordable Rental Housing

Affordable Units Planned	Ownership	Rental	Status
Matinecock Court (NAR ¹²)	73	73	Construction not begun
Columbia Street (NAR)	14	0	Construction not begun
Avalon at Huntington Station (NAR)	11	43	Near completion
Ruland Road (NAR)	117	0	In planning
“The Club”, Deshon Drive (AR) ¹³ completion	261	0	Near
Total Affordable Units Planned	476	116	
Avalon at Huntington Station Market Units	55	262	Near completion
Total Huntington Housing Units 2010¹⁴	49,511 (85%)	8,737 (15%)	
Housing Built or Planned, 2014	50,042	9,115	
Ownership/Rental Ratio, 2014	82%	18%	

Thus, only 592 affordable housing units (476 ownership; 116 rental) have been planned or constructed since 2008, a number that pales against the need for affordable housing documented in a 2008 Rutgers University study commissioned by the Suffolk County Legislature. The study’s key Huntington findings regarding housing needs of housing-stressed Huntington residents and of Huntington income groups are summarized in Charts 3 and 4 below. It should be noted that this study was published the year that the Great Recession hit Long Island and the nation. Thus, it is fair to assume that some of the needs documented in the Rutgers study, which used 2000 Census data, may have worsened between 2008 and 2014. This might explain why the Rutgers study was again presented to a committee of the Suffolk County Legislature in the spring of 2014.

¹¹ <http://www.longislandassociation.org/lia-priorities.cfm>

¹² NAR = Non Age Restricted (family housing)

¹³ AR= Age Restricted (senior housing)

¹⁴ US Census Quick Facts includes these Census Areas: Cold Spring Harbor; Centerport; Dix Hills; East Northport; Fort Salonga; Greenlawn; Huntington; Huntington Station; Melville; Northport; West Hills (not Commack which is divided between Huntington and Smithtown.) Data does not include new building permits, 2010-2013.

Chart 3
Huntington Fails to Meet the Needs of Housing-Stressed Residents:
Workforce Housing Demand (Households) by Housing Needs, 2005¹⁵

PUMA Region	Income Constrained (Households)	Deficient (Occupied Housing Units)	Crowded (Households)	Cost-burdened (Households)	Total Workforce Housing Demand (Households)	Percentage of Total Households
Huntington	33,197	257	515	10,053	10,825	10.6%

Total Workforce Housing Demand by Housing Needs	10,825
Total Workforce Housing Units Planned	592
% of Demand Satisfied	5%
Number of Units Still Needed	10,233

Chart 4
Huntington Fails to Meet the Housing Needs
Of Low, Moderate and Middle-Income Residents:
Projected Increase in Workforce Housing Demand by Income, 2005-2020¹⁶

Towns	Low Income	Moderate Income	Middle Income	Total Increased Demand	Percent of Total
Huntington	803	905	1,080	2,789	7.0%

Total Workforce Housing Demand by Income	2,789
Total Workforce Housing Planned	592
% of Demand Satisfied	21%
Number of Units Still Needed	2,197

Conclusions:

1. Despite the Town's 2008 Comprehensive Plan criticism of the 85%/15% home ownership/rental ratio, the Town's planned construction since 2008 barely moves the ownership/rental ratio to 82%/18%, almost the same as the problematic ratio identified in the Comprehensive Plan and still well below the 67%/33% U.S. ratio for rentals. (Chart 2)
2. The 116 units of affordable rental housing constitute only 20% of the 592 affordable units (ownership and rental) planned or completed since 2008 when the Comprehensive Plan called attention to the "limited" supply of rental units in Huntington. (Chart 2)

¹⁵ Burchell, Robert; Sean DiGiovanna; William Dolphin, *Suffolk County Workforce Housing Needs Assessments and Responses*, Center for Urban Research, Rutgers University, 2008, P.23.

¹⁶ Ibid., P 28

3. The 592 units of planned affordable housing provide only 5% of the 10,825 units projected by the Rutgers study to meet the needs of housing-stressed Huntington residents who are income constrained, cost-burdened or living in deficient or crowded housing. (Chart 3)
4. Despite the Town Comprehensive Plan's call for more affordable housing, as well as the Rutgers study analysis of the need for more affordable housing, the Town plans to add only 592 units of affordable ownership and rental housing, far below the Rutgers study projected need of 2,789 units for low, moderate and middle income people. (Chart 4)
5. Therefore, the Town's 2015-2020 Consolidated Plan and 2015 CDBG application must recognize the failure of previous Town documents to translate its goals for affordable housing into the creation of actual, brick and mortar, affordable units, especially rental units and housing for families.