FAIR HOUSING ACTION PLAN

TOWN OF WATERTOWN

I. Policy Statement

It shall be the policy and commitment of the Town of Watertown to ensure that fair and equal housing opportunities are granted to all persons, in all housing opportunities and development activities funded by the town, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, marital status, lawful source of income, familial status, national origin, ancestry, age or mental or physical disability. This shall be done through a program of education, an analysis of impediments, and designation of a Fair Housing Officer and development of a procedure for complaints of discrimination. This plan will incorporate the directives of state and federal laws and executive orders, including, but not limited to:

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
The Fair Housing Act – Title VIII of the Civil Rights Action of 1968, as amended
Executive Order 11063, as amended by Executive Order 12259
Section 104(b) of Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended
Section 109 of Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended
Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968, as amended
Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended
The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
The Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended
Executive Order 11246 (as amended by Executive Orders 12375 and 12086)
Equal Opportunity under HUD contracts and HUD-assisted Construction Contracts
Executive Order 12892, Leadership and Coordination of Fair Housing
Connecticut General Statutes 46a-64c as amended

The Town of Watertown commits to providing and promoting racial and economic integration in any housing development financially supported with DOH funding and will take affirmative steps to reach beneficiaries from all racial and ethnic groups as well as the physically or mentally handicapped and families with children and to reach a broad range of income eligible beneficiaries for appropriate and applicable housing opportunities.

II. Selection of Fair Housing Officer

In accordance with Title VIII, Civil Rights Act of 1968, as amended, the Fair Housing Officer below has been designated to handle fair housing complaints and activities

Mark Massoud, Town Planner, 61 Echo Lake Rd., Watertown, CT 06795

The Fair Housing Officer is responsible for the intake and processing of all housing complaints as well as implementation of the Fair Housing Plan activities and actions. While not expected to be an "expert" in Fair Housing Laws, at a minimum, the officer will be familiar with the complaint process and federal and state laws, which address Fair Housing. Records which show the date, time, nature of complaint and decisions made in the complaint process will be fully documented. A separate file will maintain a record of all housing discrimination complaints and follow-up actions.

III. Complaint Process

Housing discrimination complaint forms such as Forms HUD-903 and HUD-903A (Spanish version) from HUD, as well as, a summary of actions which may constitute housing discrimination, and instructions for completing and filing housing discrimination complaints will be made available to citizens at Town Hall, 61 Echo Lake Rd., Watertown, CT. Complaints need not be made on official forms to be valid.

Forms will also be distributed to lenders, realtors, and at other public places such as the library periodically.

The Fair Housing Officer will reasonably assist the complainant in submitting the complaint to the appropriate body by providing assistance in explaining the form and/or contacting the appropriate office and allowing the use of town phones for communication.

The individual(s) filing the complaint will then be advised of the option of filing directly with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) within one year after an alleged violation, the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) by filing a notarized complaint within 180 days of the alleged violation, or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or with all agencies simultaneously. The individual should also be advised of the option of filing suit, at his/her expense in Federal District Court or State Court within two years of an alleged violation. The individual should be further advised that if he/she

cannot afford an attorney, the Court may appoint one and that a suit may be commenced even after filing a complaint, if the individual has not signed a conciliation agreement and an Administrative Law Judge has not started a hearing. A court may award actual and punitive damages and attorney's fees and costs.

The Fair Housing Officer will keep a record of the progress on the number of complaints filed, actions taken, and the status of each complaint.

IV. Opportunity Mapping

Using the Connecticut Opportunity Map, which is available at the DOH website, the Town has determined that the target area for the proposed project or activity is a Low Opportunity area.

V. Implementation and Action Steps

The Town will take specific action steps and implementation activities over the next three-year period following the guidelines provided by DOH.

Action Steps 1, 2, 9, 10, 11 or 12 (Set I) Minimum (1) selection

EXAMPLE Step #2 – Participate in regional planning efforts to ensure that there is affordable housing in a variety of locations.

The Town takes advantage of any regional planning efforts to assist in reducing barriers to fair housing efforts and strives to continually identify locations where appropriate for such development.

The regional planning agency has provided comprehensive review and recommendations for the affordable housing plan in the final stages of adoption.

Action Steps 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14 or 15 (Set II) Minimum (1) selection

EXAMPLE Step #4 Publish the municipality's plan of conservation and development on its website.

The Town adopted its current plan of conservation and development in 2017. The plan will be updated in the next review period for 2027. The plan is available on the town website and is always reviewed when considering developmental activities.

EXAMPLE Step #7 Review zoning ordinances to determine if they require special permits for affordable housing or require larger lot sizes, low density requirements, or other policies that would make the development of affordable housing expensive end proposed changes to such requirements.

The Town is in the process of a comprehensive review of its zoning regulations. The Commission has identified as a high priority the review of standards that present obstacles to higher density development particularly in zones located closer to the town business districts which can support the increased density. This effort involves allowance of 2, 3 and multifamily dwellings in zones that can support such development. Another recommended revision modifies cluster type developments by eliminating overly broad minimum acreage requirements which have effectively curtailed the opportunity to utilize these types of development. One past revision allowed the conversion of historic manufacturing buildings located near the core downtown areas to allow rental units.

Additional Steps

The Town of Watertown will adopt annually a Fair Housing Policy Statement and a Fair Housing Resolution as an indication of its commitment to Fair Housing Month during the month of April.

The Town of Watertown will display its fair housing policies/procedures and ADA policies and grievance procedure on its website.

The Town of Watertown will display Fair Housing posters identifying the town's Fair Housing Officer, title, address and phone number in prominent locations. In addition, fair housing information will be distributed outside of traditional municipal locations including local realtors and banks.
All advertising of residential real estate owned by the Town of Watertown for sale, rent or financing will contain the Fair Housing logo, equal opportunity slogan as a means of educating the home seeking public that the property is available to all persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, familial status, marital status, national origin, age, ancestry, or lawful source of income. All bid advertisements by town sponsored programs must include the phrase "Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer." The type of logo, statement or slogan will depend on the type of media being used (visual or auditory). All logos/statements must appear at the end of the advertisement.

VI. Analysis of Impediments

The Town will cooperate and assist the state with its periodic Analysis of Impediments and conduct a review of policies, practices and procedures that affect the availability and accessibility of housing.

VII. Timetable

The Town will initiate Fair Housing activities immediately upon funding approval. Action steps will be carried out during the grant period.

VIII. Amendments

The First Selectman shall amend and revise this Plan as required to keep current with state/federal affirmative action and equal opportunity policies and procedures and local actions and activities to further the purposes of this Plan.

Mark A. Raimo, Town Manager, Town of Watertown

Rev. 5.22.2024