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# Lamont: CT needs more housing inventory, 'we're desperately short right now'



Brandon Bell/Getty Images North America/TNS

A "For Rent" sign is posted near a home on Feb. 7, 2022, in Houston, Texas. Since March 2020, the estimated median rent of new leases has increased by double digits in several Texas cities. The increase in sales prices has made it more difficult for people to buy a home, as a result increasing the number of people looking to rent.

By **GINNY MONK** | CT Mirror

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Gov. Ned Lamont told Connecticut real estate agents that the primary solution to one of the industry's most pressing problems — a dearth of houses to sell — is to build more housing.

Lamont gave the statement in response to a question posed by a presenter at the [Connecticut Association of Realtors](#) conference in Hartford about how he would help incentivize homeowners to sell.

"First of all, you need more housing inventory," Lamont said. "Let's start with that. I mean, we're desperately short right now."

Lamont gave a speech about the draw of moving to Connecticut, real estate agents' role in marketing the state to potential buyers, and housing and population growth.

The state's cities are growing, he said, and more young families want to live in Connecticut than in past years.

Yet the real estate industry has seen a drop in the number of homes for sale.

As of Jan. 14, there were about 3,600 homes for sale compared to about 15,000 in 2019, according to data from a presentation members of the National Association of Realtors gave to lawmakers earlier this year. The Realtors' presentation tied that low inventory to underbuilding and delays in finishing new construction.

The state also lacks about 89,000 units of housing that are affordable and available to its lowest income renters.

Lamont's remarks on Monday came as the state legislature is considering several measures to increase housing stock and improve affordability for Connecticut residents.

Legislative session

"We've put \$600 million over the next two years into housing," Lamont said. "And that's not just affordable housing, and what I call workforce housing — those are our studios and one bedrooms — often in downtown areas, hopefully next to major transit areas."

Earlier in the year, Lamont announced his plan to spend \$600 million on housing ventures, including to build thousands of units of new housing in Connecticut over the next two years. The bonding proposal that emerged from the committee process

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It would add money to the Connecticut Housing Receivership Revolving Fund, which aims to improve housing conditions at large apartments in the state. It also has funds to retrofit apartments in environmental justice communities — certain communities of color that have been disproportionately impacted by climate change.

The state budget is still a work in progress, and lawmakers will work with the governor to hash out the final figures in the coming weeks.

Lamont also said he'd support transit-oriented development in downtowns across the state, a proposal that's received harsh backlash from some local groups and officials.

The bill, known as Work, Live, Ride, would push towns to increase residential density near train and bus stations by offering certain money for infrastructure. The goal is to develop walkable communities where people can easily access transportation and local businesses.

Restrictive local zoning has long depressed housing development in Connecticut, particularly multi-family apartments, housing experts say. Multi-family housing tends to be more affordable to people with low incomes.

Legislators are also considering a land use reform proposal known as Fair Share. It would require the state to analyze the housing need by region, then divide that need between municipalities. Towns would be required to plan and zone for a set number of units.

Both proposals have met fierce resistance.

Opponents say they would weaken local control, force a one-size-fits-all approach and are onerous, particularly to smaller communities that may not have many city planning resources.

And opponents fear that the Work, Live, Ride proposal would mean that towns that don't participate will be deprioritized for infrastructure funding.

But housing advocates have said that towns have had their chance to change their zoning regulations, and widespread resistance to building enough affordable housing means the state needs to step in.

During a question-and-answer session with reporters, Lamont said he wants to see towns create their own plans for increasing affordable housing. A 2017 law requires

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Less than half of towns in Connecticut submitted their plans by the first deadline last summer. In January, more than 30 towns still had not submitted their plans, according to data from the Office of Policy and Management.

In response to questions from presenters, Lamont mentioned Connecticut's "suburban lifestyle" as a draw for new residents. He said more development in walkable downtowns could mean senior citizens would be able to downsize and stay in the state.

"We've got probably the greatest suburban lifestyle in the country, or certainly one of them," he said. "But also we have up-and-coming cities and some beautiful rural areas."

To close out his time with the real estate agents, Lamont answered a final question from a presenter: "What is your favorite tune to dance to?"

His answer: "I Gotta Feeling" by the Black Eyed Peas. He quietly sang the namesake line of the song as he walked away from the microphone.

*Ginny Monk is a reporter for The Connecticut Mirror (<https://ctmirror.org/>). Copyright 2023 © The Connecticut Mirror.*

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