



The American Institute of Architects, Connecticut Chapter
370 James Street, Suite 402, New Haven, CT 06513
203-865-2195
aiainfo@aiact.org www.aiact.org

Joint Planning and Development Committee:
March 15, 2021 Public Hearing

Testimony in Support of SB 1024
An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications of Certain Land use Officials and Certain Sewage Disposal Systems

Submitted by:
Gina Calabro, Executive Director, AIA Connecticut
370 James Street, New Haven, CT 06513

Dear Chairman Cassano, Chairwoman McCarthy Vahey, Vice Chairman Needleman, Vice Chairwoman Goupil, Ranking Member Senator Hwang, Ranking Member Zullo, and Members of the Joint Planning and Development Committee:

On behalf of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), I am offering testimony in support of SB 1024, An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications of Certain Land use Officials and Certain Sewage Disposal Systems.

The Connecticut Chapter of the American Institute of Architects with a membership of over 1,500 is comprised of architects, architectural designers working towards licensure, students, and professionals in allied fields and serves as a resource to architects and the public.

Architects work is significantly affected by zoning regulations. The transit-oriented development, main streets, model zoning code, and commissioner training provisions of the bill represent needed changes to bring our zoning policies and practices into the 21st century. As architects and designers, we seek to promote medium density, walkability, safe streets, mass transit, and adaptive reuse for energy conservation. These are objectives that most if not all Connecticut residents share for their towns, particularly near transit, and historic downtowns. By allowing small-scale density in these areas, we can develop better streetscapes, design more walkable and bikeable neighborhoods, and construct housing that consumes less energy per capita.

2021 Officers

Angela D. Cahill, AIA
President
Randall Anway, AIA
President-Elect

Paolo Campos, AIA
Treasurer
Susan Wyeth, AIA
Secretary
George E. McGoldrick, AIA
Past President

Directors

Marc Andre, AIA
F. Michael Ayles, FAIA
Max Ballardo, Assoc. AIA
Catherine Ellithorpe, AIA
Andrew Gorzkowski, AIA

Thomas Haskell, AIA
Jennifer Huestis, AIA
Ming Thompson, AIA
Michael Tyre, AIA

Gina Calabro, Executive Director



The American Institute of Architects, Connecticut Chapter
370 James Street, Suite 402, New Haven, CT 06513
203-865-2195
aiainfo@aiact.org www.aiact.org

We believe we can maintain a robust, beautiful built environment and provide for the housing needs of Connecticut residents at the same time. We know that multifamily housing—particularly on the modest scale that this bill would require—adds to the rich architectural character of neighborhoods. Many Connecticut homes could be remodeled to allow for multiple dwelling units with minimal exterior modification.

Restrictive zoning compromises the quality of the built environment; deteriorates the natural environment by mandating sprawl; and thwarts good design practices, for example by imposing unseemly parking requirements that cannibalize open space. Loosening zoning restrictions enhances architects' ability to preserve and remodel historic buildings. In Connecticut and elsewhere, architects have been able to preserve historic structures by remodeling the interior to house two, three, or four families instead of just one. Without that ability, many such buildings would deteriorate or be demolished.

Beyond merely allowing more housing, this bill makes important process improvements that are vitally important to members of our profession. Through special permit requirements on multifamily housing and new housing types like ADUs, municipalities exercise exacting, often arbitrary control over new development. By setting as-of-right requirements, this bill ensures that municipalities will provide predictable standards for architects to comply with, rather than an unpredictable process that drives up costs and undermines the architectural quality of the resulting housing. The inclusion of a training requirement for land use commissioners is also an important step to ensure that those entrusted with making important decisions about the form of the built environment have the requisite knowledge to understand the consequences of their decisions.

In addition, the bill's proposal to develop a model form-based zoning code offers tremendous promise for architects, designers, and the communities they serve. Form-based zoning is a modern, state of the art practice that offers residents, businesses, and developers predictably about the shape of their neighborhoods. The pioneering of a model code would provide a tremendous opportunity for towns to draw on a valuable resource to improve the shape and form of new development.

2021 Officers

Angela D. Cahill, AIA
President
Randall Anway, AIA
President-Elect

Paolo Campos, AIA
Treasurer
Susan Wyeth, AIA
Secretary
George E. McGoldrick, AIA
Past President

Directors

Marc Andre, AIA
F. Michael Ayles, FAIA
Max Ballardo, Assoc. AIA
Catherine Ellithorpe, AIA
Andrew Gorzkowski, AIA

Thomas Haskell, AIA
Jennifer Huestis, AIA
Ming Thompson, AIA
Michael Tyre, AIA

Gina Calabro, Executive Director



The American Institute of Architects, Connecticut Chapter
370 James Street, Suite 402, New Haven, CT 06513
203-865-2195
aiainfo@aiact.org www.aiact.org

While our focus is on preserving and enhancing built and natural environment, we are cognizant that they mean little if only a select few can enjoy them. This bill promises to increase access to communities across our state by increasing housing supply, enabling greater housing diversity, and improving the processes for reviewing new development. Of equal importance, the bill would give residents greater options for remaining in their communities, allowing empty nesters to downsize and homeowners to generate extra income—or provide housing for family members—through the construction of accessory dwelling units.

Equity and access are at the heart of the work we do as architects and designers—it is vital that policymakers take action to promote affordability and accessibility across our state so that everyone is able to reap the benefits of the work done by the members of our organization.

Thank you for your consideration.

2021 Officers

Angela D. Cahill, AIA
President
Randall Anway, AIA
President-Elect

Paolo Campos, AIA
Treasurer
Susan Wyeth, AIA
Secretary
George E. McGoldrick, AIA
Past President

Directors

Marc Andre, AIA
F. Michael Ayles, FAIA
Max Ballardo, Assoc. AIA
Catherine Ellithorpe, AIA
Andrew Gorzkowski, AIA

Thomas Haskell, AIA
Jennifer Huestis, AIA
Ming Thompson, AIA
Michael Tyre, AIA

Gina Calabro, Executive Director