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**March 14, 2021**

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

On behalf of the Connecticut Green Building Council (CTGBC) Board of Directors, we write today to express our enthusiastic support for SB 1024: AN ACT CONCERNING ZONING AUTHORITY, CERTAIN DESIGN GUIDELINES, QUALIFICATIONS OF CERTAIN LAND USE OFFICIALS AND CERTAIN SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS.

The Connecticut Green Building Council or CTGBC is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization and a chapter of the US Green Building Council (USGBC). We are committed to accelerating a healthy, equitable, resilient and sustainable transformation of Connecticut's built environment. Our membership includes developers, architects, engineers, consultants, building operators, builders and contractors, product manufacturers, public officials, and more. Several of our members volunteered to participate in the GC3 Working Groups to help Connecticut be a leader in developing policies and legislative actions that can reduce the negative impacts of climate change on our citizens.

Members of our organization are leaders in the development of built environments, stewardship of the natural environment, and protection of public health, safety, and welfare. We believe that local zoning regulations and building codes in Connecticut need to be updated and revised to enable significant improvements in social equity, public health, public safety, sustainability, climate resilience, economic development, and environmental protection.

- Past and current land use policies encourage poor land use decisions that create social and economic inequities in the development of housing, business, industry, energy, and transportation.
- Furthermore, they have accelerated cutting of timberlands, loss of agricultural lands, erosion of topsoil, siltation of watercourses, [degradation of wetlands, and other environmental problems](#).
- The disproportionate amount of zoning for single-family housing only creates [residential sprawl](#) and energy inefficiency in that [single family housing expends more energy than multifamily housing](#).

CTGBC members are committed to advancing just and equitable land use policies in Connecticut so that communities can make better urban planning decisions. Incumbent in this work is acknowledging the significant social, economic, and environmental harm that has already been caused by our poor land use decisions. Repairing the harm will require a concerted effort by designers, planners, and community leaders to develop our communities and protect our natural resources in fundamentally new ways. It is our hope that **SB 1024** will improve these issues and benefit our environment and communities by offering new zoning options for affordable housing, including accessory dwelling units, capping excessive parking

mandates, promoting development near our main streets and transit stations, and updating our outdated traffic standards.

We also support the clauses on promoting energy efficiency, renewable energy investment strategies and passive solar strategies for developers, and applaud the creation of the new context appropriate streets working group and updates to sewage requirements that will protect our waterways and allow for new sanitation solutions.

Pertaining to the context appropriate streets working group, we would highly recommend the addition of at least two more architectural and urban design experts, with one slot specifically reserved for a licensed landscape architect and another for a sustainability expert. Appropriate placemaking requires landscape and land use decisions and expertise in resilient and sustainable design principles.

We especially are in favor of:

**ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADUs):** This bill would encourage the use and construction of additional housing options throughout the state.

- ADUs assist with increasing density within suburban and rural landscapes, and offer additional income streams for some homeowners.
- ADUs may also assist with advancing alternative home ownership options that prioritize low-impact living and sustainable lifestyles. These smaller footprint homes frequently are off-grid options, and [require special zoning and building code approval](#). The language of the bill provides opportunities to make Connecticut a champion of small-footprint homes.
- To advance equity within the ADU framework, it is important to allow for code changes that support a variety of affordable housing options, offering new pathways to homeownership that improve the property tax base of municipalities.

**PARKING CAPS:** This bill would cap parking mandates to better match demand. For a studio or 1-bedroom apartment, parking mandates would be capped at 1 space. For 2+ bedrooms, parking mandates would be capped at 2 spaces. Parking mandates would be eliminated altogether for multifamily housing or mixed-use developments within a ½ mile of public transit.

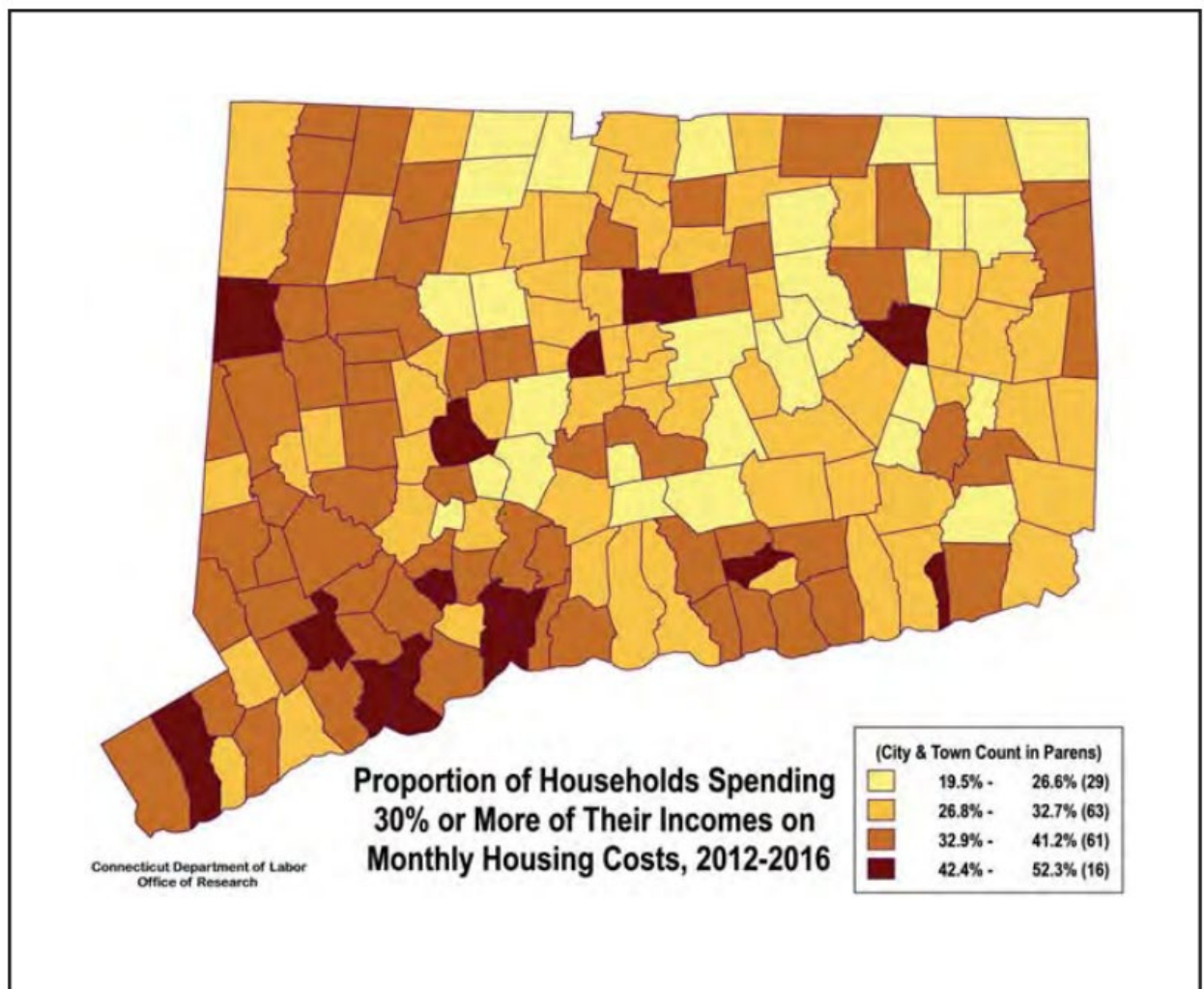
- Parking mandates encourage sprawl and [lead to more driving](#).
- Automobile dependence is linked with "[traffic congestion, environmental degradation, and negative health and safety impacts](#)."
- Parking minimums [hurt water quality](#).
- Parking minimums create externalities, [like congestion and pollution](#).
- While many municipalities already comply with the proposed parking mandate caps, other municipalities mandate as many as 3 parking spaces for a studio apartment, which reduces the feasibility and affordability of developing multi-unit apartment projects.

**MAIN STREET ZONING:** The proposed bill would have municipalities choose 50% of an area within ¼ mile of a main street for by-right 2-4-unit housing. It would also require that 10% of housing in 10+ units be affordable.

- Building housing near main streets [promotes walkability](#) over auto-oriented development.
- Building near main streets puts housing where development already exists, rather than forcing new outward development that cuts into green space.

**TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) ZONING and AFFORDABLE HOUSING:** The proposed bill includes a provision for municipalities to choose 50% of an area within ½ mile of transit for 4+ unit housing, and a minimum of 10% of 10+ units should be affordable.

- TOD promotes the use of public transit, which lowers carbon output ([with 57% of Americans saying it would lower their reliance on driving](#)).
- TOD would allow for the placement of modest density housing where development already exists, rather than using open space, forests and farmland.
- Although we believe that 10% of the 10+ units is a good starting target, we are experiencing a significant shortage of affordable housing especially for extremely low wage workers, with [86% already housing cost burdened](#). The state will need to provide nearly 90,000 additional extremely affordable housing units in order to meet [current projections](#) by 2030. Therefore, it would be more impactful for the requirement to be raised from a minimum of 10% of the 10+ units reserved for extremely low income, and an additional 10% of the 10+ units to be raised to 20% for low-income residents in order to better reflect the need to provide mixed income housing and affordable housing units.

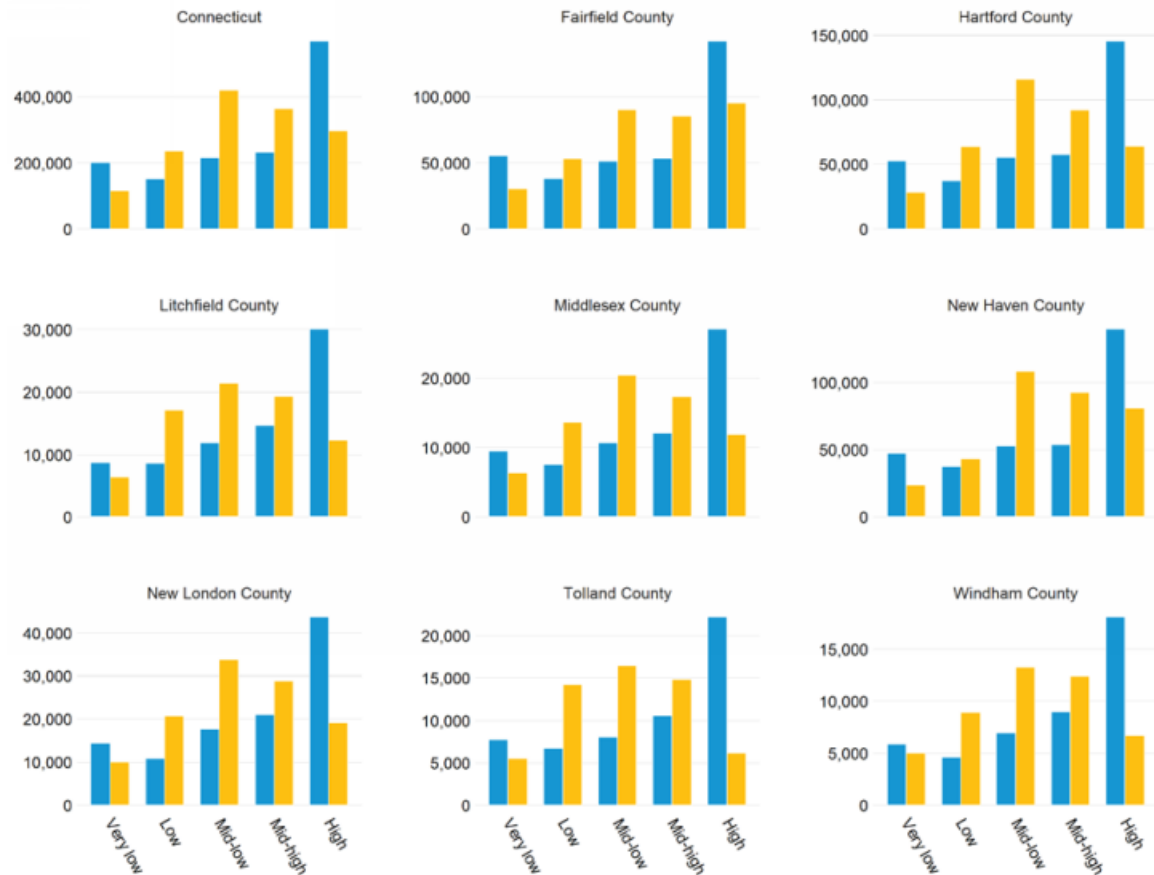


All of the cities and towns in CT have a minimum of 20% of their households spending 30% or more of their incomes on Monthly Housing Costs.

Source: ["The Connecticut Economic Digest, April 2018."](#)

## Comparison of Housing Needs and Supply by Income and Housing Cost Bands, Connecticut and Counties, 2018

■ # Households = Need    ■ # Units = Supply



### Bands (Very low - High) Separate Quantities of Households by Income and Units by Affordability

Every county demonstrates insufficient quantities of affordable units for very low incomes and although most other income bands appear to have a surplus of affordable units, the large gap in high-cost housing units means that high-income households are competing with lower-income households for less expensive housing, exacerbating the affordability challenges for lower-income homeowners and renters.

Source: ACS 2014–18 data.

Note: Unit counts include vacant units.

Source: "[Housing Connecticut's Future: Meeting the State's Affordable and Accessible Housing Needs.](#)"

- Connecticut is [failing to meet the demands of 22% of households that include at least one person with a disability. It's expected that this need will grow.](#) The bill should also place a specific target and emphasis on designing ADA-accessible units in order to fulfill the gap in housing demand for both temporarily and permanently disabled residents.

**VEHICLE-MILES-TRAVELED:** The proposed bill expressly allows municipalities to choose to measure traffic impact with the “vehicle miles traveled” (VMT) calculation instead of the outdated “level of service” (LOS) calculation.

- LOS only focuses on speed of traffic, and [may push for road expansion](#), which promotes sprawl. VMT standard focuses on emissions and volume of traffic, and it requires traffic mitigation strategies to lower volume of vehicles and air pollution.
- Using [VMT standards would promote](#) walkability, protect open space, and reduce emissions.

The proposals in **SB 1024** will allow our state to build better communities. Land use reform will protect our environment, while encouraging our cities and towns to grow and succeed equitably. For the many reasons detailed here, the Connecticut Green Building Council strongly supports **SB 1024**. Thank you for your consideration of our testimony.

Sincerely,



Ross Spiegel, FAIA, FCSI, CCS, CCA, LEED AP BD+C  
Chair, CT Green Building Council



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Vice Chair, CT Green Building Council  
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