

To: CT General Assembly Planning & Development Committee

From: Stephen Devoto, Middletown

Re: SB 1024, An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications Of Certain Land Use Officials And Certain Sewage Disposal Systems.

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

I am writing to support SB 1024. **As Chair of Middletown's Planning and Zoning Commission, I rarely see proposals that make so much sense from so many perspectives, in particular economic, environmental, and equity.** You have an opportunity to help all towns and cities to thrive, to maintain open space for farming and recreation, to make housing accessible and affordable to those on limited incomes. In short, you have an opportunity to help us strengthen our local communities.

Training. Service on the Middletown Planning and Zoning Commission currently requires political connections but not any understanding of land use policies. SB1024 would ensure that commissioners receive at least minimal training in land use law, and the impact of their decisions on the local economy, environment, and housing equity.

Transportation. Middletown's Plan of Conservation and Development emphasizes Connections, the multiple paths that link residents to each other, to jobs, to schools, to parks, and to businesses. This bill promotes connections by fostering the development of housing around transit stations, including bus and rail.

Main Street. Middletown's Main Street is a vibrant because it has diverse housing and businesses that allow a high-quality lifestyle. There is a synergy: businesses create a demand for housing, and housing supplies foot traffic for businesses. This bill makes two-to-four unit housing "as of right" in the right places; this is business friendly and people friendly.

Affordability and flexibility. Accessory Dwelling Units are small living units that are appealing to seniors and young adults. They allow property owners to generate income while creating affordable housing options. This bill would make ADUs accessible and affordable to everyone.

Parking. Costly mandates for excessive numbers of parking spaces inhibit economic development in two ways: parking lots are expensive to build, and parking lots take away land that could be used more productively for another business or residence. This bill would cap parking requirements.

Modernize the standards. Outdated technical standards do not match current town goals or conditions, and provide no flexibility for towns to adapt standards to local conditions. This bill would eliminate overly stringent sewerage standards, and outdated metrics for measuring traffic impacts.

"Character" clarification. The character of a building is vital to neighborhood vitality and it is important that this be part of zoning codes. The "character" term has been used historically to discriminate against newcomers. This bill would encourage better standards for architecture, landscapes and streets, the important and fair measures of "character".

Design. Many towns and cities have developed guidelines to help developers. Middletown has not had the expertise or resources to create design guidelines that identify options for rooflines, heights, door placement, and windows. This bill would create a free tool for all towns to use.

Thank you for your consideration as you deliberate on this bill.

Sincerely,



Stephen H. Devoto
Chair, Middletown Planning and Zoning Commission
476 Country Club Road
Middletown, CT 06457