

To: Planning & Development Committee
From: Christine Pattee
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Re: Testimony in favor of SB 1024

As a 15 year member of Coventry's Planning and Zoning Commission, I support SB1024; partly because it's the right thing to do, but mainly from self interest. I'm a 79 year old senior who has come to realize that the kind of zoning regulations that prevent people of color from obtaining affordable suburban housing also have the unintended consequence of preventing the construction of multiunit housing for seniors in rural Connecticut.

In a rural community, three interlocking factors determine housing development:

1. Available land

Rural towns like Coventry have lots of no-longer-farmed-land, and developers have been building 2-acre lot, single family homes on it for decades. We revere our rural heritage, but our current farmland is mostly on Main Street, with subdivision housing developments off the main roads on what used to be farmland.

2. Access to public sewer and water, (versus private wells and septic systems, which are MUCH more expensive that hooking up to a sewer line)

Rural towns built around a lake are often mandated by the CT DEEP to install sewers in order to improve water quality, but sometimes, as in Coventry, they also prohibit expanding new residential development associated with sewer lines. Coventry's sewage treatment plant is bumping up against state-mandated capacity limits, and will require a multi-million dollar upgrade to allow multiunit housing, or any other kind of development, in the Village, the most appropriate area for senior or workforce housing.

3. Zoning codes

Coventry has always prohibited multiunit dwellings in the Lake Area Residential Zone, but now that most of the LAR has access to sewers, there is no longer an environmental rationale for such a restriction. Our current Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) recommends changing that section of the zoning code to allow multiunit construction on large land parcels off the waterfront.

There are hundreds of small affordable houses throughout Coventry and much of rural northeast Connecticut, and once seniors who want or need accessible housing have an affordable place to move to, those small residences then become available to young families and working folks looking for affordable housing as they move into town.

Changing zoning regulations to allow affordable multiunit housing is a win/win for city and country, black and white.

[371 words]