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To: CT General Assembly Planning and Development Committee

From: Hiram Peck, Residence: Woodbury, CT. Employment: Town of Avon, CT

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

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

This testimony is submitted in support of SB 1024.

While much has been said about SB 1024, I would like to focus your attention on some key aspects of this bill which are critically important from a local planning and zoning standpoint. First I would like to mention that in addition to over 25 years of professional practice on land use in CT and certification by the American Institute of Certified Planners, and a Certified Floodplain Manager and a CT licensed arborist, I also have taken the three course curriculum from the Form Based Codes Institute (FBCI) and have a certificate from FBCI.

Section 8 of SB 1024 calls for the development of a model or template Form Based Zoning Code for use by CT municipalities. This aspect of the bill is a very helpful and potentially very substantive part of any local zoning code. The positive effects of a form based code (FBC) are clear and well known nationwide. Contrary to popular misinformation FBC do NOT remove local authority from a community or its zoning commission. In fact the exact OPPOSITE is true. My most recent 12 years of professional experience with FBC in the Towns of Simsbury and Avon as their Director of Planning has given clear proof of this point. A few results of this work are as follows.

FBC ALLOWS and in fact requires a municipality to create the exact image for the community that its citizens desire. Built into the creation of the FBC is a vast amount of TRANSPARENCY and collaboration. This is far more than is common with a typical Euclidian zoning ordinance. Thus the FBC process at the local level INCREASES public input and develops a solid community vision rather than lessens it!

The creation of a template for CT municipalities to use in revising outdated and cumbersome zoning codes will allow the advancement of **local planning AND economic development** efforts at the local level. The economic development impact is clear when knowledgeable and properly trained staff and commissioners administer a well-developed local FBC. This is clear with the results of the FBC done in Simsbury for Simsbury Center and for the Hartford Insurance campus which was rezoned and well on its way to redevelopment within 1 year.

At the present time a new Avon Village Center with ultimately over 1.2 million square feet of mixed use development is under construction with its first store scheduled to open in June of 2021, covid notwithstanding. The code used in Avon has many FBC aspects and is unique to the Town and its long standing suburban zoning efforts. The design is pedestrian friendly and will be a well-loved fixture in the Town for years to come.

The requirements contained in SB 1024 for the creation of the FBC template by a well-represented group including planning professionals is an excellent start to RETURN LOCAL VISION and TRANSPARENCY and solid planning to municipalities. The examples of the positive effects of such codes nationwide AND here in CT are well known. I would be happy to submit several examples of such codes and their results from across the State or Nation if any members are interested in the planning professional perspective and built results.

The claim that such efforts remove local authority from municipalities could not be further from the facts. Examples in CT municipalities including Hartford are well established proof that such codes work well and are extremely well received, if properly constructed.

Finally, the need to require additional training for local commissioners as is required by Section 9 of SB 1024 is an essential component of zoning and land use reform in CT. The cost savings alone to BOTH municipalities and applicants is clearly substantial. The complex nature of land use matters in today's planning and development climate, especially at the local level is much needed. A visit to any local land use commission meeting when a complicated issue is at hand will reveal this truth clearly. The savings from an educated commission in both time, anxiety and legal cost would be substantial.

I would welcome any questions from the Committee on these points or any of the points in SB 1024 which may be of concern and are of interest from a local land use planning perspective.

Respectfully submitted.

