

TO: CT General Assembly Planning and Development Committee

From: Emily Wolfe

RE: SB 1024, An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualification of Certain Land Use Officials and Certain Sewage Disposal Systems

Date: March 15, 2021

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 a resident of Hartford and the Executive Director of Sheldon Oak Central, Inc. a Hartford-based non-profit affordable housing organization that has developed over 800 family and senior rental apartments, townhouses and owner-occupied dwellings in Hartford and Norwich.

I strongly urge passage of SB 1024 and am offering testimony specifically in support of the provision to cap parking mandates. I do so as part of an organization that has undertaken affordable housing developments in Hartford when it imposed parking minimums and after it eliminated them.

In our experience, the existence of parking requirements limited our ability to acquire and renovate blighted buildings and to redevelop vacant lots. Parking was a key factor in whether or not a project could realistically proceed because the requirements imposed significant costs and design restrictions. The financial burden of providing off-street parking and the physical requirements of car storage interfered with other more important goals. In two new construction projects that we completed and still operate, the parking requirements limited the site layouts and building sizes and resulted in excessive paving and permanent loss of green space.

Capping how much parking can be forced on property owners will:

- Reduce the costs of developing housing that working families can afford. Mandating parking spaces increases the costs of construction; in fact one parking space per unit adds approximately 12% to the cost of that unit.
- Ensure that families who can't afford car ownership or choose other non-car forms of transportation are not paying (through higher rents) for parking they aren't using.
- Respond to shifts in transportation preferences and modes that are underway as we confront climate change and environmental challenges.
- Improve the attractiveness and quality of housing and neighborhoods. De-emphasizing parking makes our residences, towns and cities more livable. As developers we would prefer to provide amenities, including green space and walkable features, for children and families.

The cap on mandates does not mean eliminating parking supply; it addresses excessive parking requirements. It allows developers to decide how many spaces are appropriate for their particular project based on market locational demands and financial considerations, and promotes a more productive use of land. It is a sensible and effective way to reduce a barrier to the development of housing and address our housing shortage in Connecticut.