

The Connecticut General Assembly



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PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE TO BRING PROPOSED ZONING AMENDMENTS TO PUBLIC HEARING

Proposals would pave the way for more diverse housing options in Connecticut

HARTFORD, Conn. — On Monday, March 15, the legislature's Planning and Development Committee will hold a public hearing to gather input on a number of proposals to update, re-organize and clarify Connecticut's zoning enabling statutes as calls for action grow among state leaders and advocates.

Connecticut's zoning statutes empower municipal zoning and land use officials to create local regulations.

Among the items on the public hearing agenda are:

- [HB 6611](#), An Act Concerning a Needs Assessment and Other Policies Regarding Affordable Housing and Development
- [HB 6612](#), An Act Concerning Protection for Family Child Care Homes and the Zoning Enabling Act
- [HB 6613](#), An Act Concerning Accessory Apartments, Middle Housing and Multifamily Housing
- [SB 1024](#), An Act Concerning Zoning Authority, Certain Design Guidelines, Qualifications of Certain Land Use Officials and Certain Sewage Disposal Systems
- [SB 1026](#), An Act Concerning Training for Certain Planning and Zoning Officials
- [SB 1027](#), An Act Concerning Accessory Dwelling Units and Zoning Regulations

The abovementioned bills were developed with input from zoning and land use experts and advocates across the state on how to best incentivize the development of diverse housing options that are good for residents' wallets and the state.

“This is an opportunity for people throughout the state to express themselves on housing and related zoning issues that impact individuals, communities and quality of life,” said **Senator Steve Cassano** (D – Manchester), who serves as Senate Chair of the Planning & Development Committee. “We’re looking forward to people sharing their views on what is important to their communities.”

“Monday's public hearing is an opportunity to consider a diverse set of proposals, some complementary, some competing. I am eager to hear from the people across our state about their needs and the needs of their communities,” said **State Representative Cristin McCarthy Vahey** (D – Fairfield), who serves as House Chair of the Planning & Development Committee. “I am committed to working collaboratively to

improve our zoning laws so that we can support economic growth, environmental sustainability, and connectivity and be a state that advances equity, inclusion and affordability.”

"Zoning and land use have helped prevent the development of diverse communities. As legislators, we have a choice – we can continue the politics that defined the past several decades, or we can engage each other to develop solutions that address the cost of housing and the legacy of morally bankrupt policies that perpetuate racial and economic segregation," said **House Majority Leader Jason Rojas** (D – East Hartford, Manchester).

"On so many issues, Connecticut is a pioneer in the U.S., but when it comes to housing and zoning policy, it's trapped in its steady habits. We understand the impending crisis that is on the horizon should our state's leaders elect to do nothing. We need to seize this moment to make housing equity a reality for those in our state who need it and whose lives depend on it," said **Sara C. Bronin**, founder of Desegregate Connecticut.

“CCM wants to be a part of the solution. We want to be at the table. We are committed to working through zoning reform proposals before the legislature and encourage advocates to seek out our input early and often. We have been and continue to be dedicated to hearing ideas, offering suggestions and finding common ground. We look forward to productive and constructive dialogue as we continue to put Connecticut first," said **Joseph DeLong**, Executive Director and CEO of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities.

“The time is now for Connecticut to address the needs for additional housing space due to the pandemic and the lack of affordable housing options for buyers and tenants. CT REALTORS (CTR) has put forward reasonable legislative proposals to move the state forward in addressing the needs for additional space, decreasing the voting threshold to approve local zoning proposals, removing a municipal construction cost and addressing the opportunity gap for the property owners who are being excluded from building wealth. CTR recognizes the important role municipalities play in real estate, environmental impact and delivery of services; and the local voice property owners expect to have as they personally shoulder the burden of municipal income with their property tax payments. All parties must be respected in the very important conversations happening now,” said **Carol Christiansen**, President of CT Realtors.

“We have a vision for Connecticut that is vibrant, diverse, and sustainable. There are solutions to planning and zoning challenges that work effectively to empower local control, fuel economic growth, and create integrative affordable housing choices, counteracting our state's history of segregation. Working together, we can reform land use in our state and emerge a regional leader in equity *and* economic development," said **Erin Boggs**, Executive Director of Open Communities Alliance.

“This legislative session, Connecticut has the opportunity to promote diverse housing options, a stronger economic base, and more equitable communities. Much of this proposed legislation would benefit all of Connecticut's communities and lay the groundwork for a better future for our state's residents,” said **Kiley Gosselin**, Executive Director of the Partnership for Strong Communities.

By increasing the available stock of diverse housing options in the state, advocates and elected officials hope to build a more robust and resilient economy that expands opportunity for residents while diversifying Connecticut's communities and providing much needed options for seniors seeking to downsize and young people starting out.

Connecticut's zoning and land use codes have limited growth and diversification of the state's housing supply, particularly impacting those who are income constrained, senior citizens seeking to downsize, or young people embarking on their professional careers. The Partnership for Strong Communities estimates that about 50% of renters and about 32% of homeowners spend 30% or more of their income on housing. This leaves little room to pay for transportation, utility, food, or medical bills, and unforeseen emergencies.

The COVID-19 pandemic has created opportunity for Connecticut by increasing demand for suburban real estate, and land use reforms could pay immediate dividends for Connecticut and spur additional economic growth.

Interested members of the public are encouraged to share their thoughts with the committee by submitting written testimony and signing up to testify during the hearing. **The deadline to register to testify virtually before committee members is Sunday, March 14, 2021 at 3 p.m.** Individuals should complete the [Online Testimony Registration Form](#) by visiting <https://bit.ly/3tbp71C> to testify via Zoom. Those who do lack internet access can register to testify by phone by calling the Phone Registrant Line at 203-350-3769 and leaving their contact information.

Written testimony should be emailed to pdtestimony@cga.ct.gov in Word or PDF format. Testimony must clearly state the testifier name and related bill number.

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