



Connecticut

Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association

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PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

HB – 5714: AN ACT CONCERNING ZONING FOR STARTER HOMES

OVERVIEW: This bill appears intended to promote the important goal of improving housing diversity and affordability in Connecticut towns. However, the bill would impose State zoning standards for residential development by requiring that any residential zone established by a municipality include at least 20 percent of the land area zoned for lots no larger than one-half acre. **CCAPA** does not support the imposition of statutory zoning that applies prescriptive density standards to Connecticut towns and believes that better progress on housing needs can be made through incentives and technical assistance such as initiated in the 2007 General Assembly.

ANALYSIS: The bill proposes to add a zoning standard to Section 8-2, which authorizes the adoption of zoning regulations and provides basic guidelines. Unlike the existing zoning guidelines, however, this proposal would require that 20 percent of all undeveloped land zoned for residential use allow lots no larger than one-half acre. The bill does not address how such zoning is to apply in areas without sanitary sewers if soils are incapable of supporting septic systems.

Additionally, it is not clear that such a State zoning standard would accomplish the goal of providing a better diversity of affordable housing. Housing development, particularly in “undeveloped” areas entails many cost factors, such as road and stormwater management design and construction, that are not necessarily directly related to lot size. Further, there is no guarantee of market acceptance of such housing in all areas, possibly leaving towns with un-developable land.

Any such zone changes would be subject to the adoption procedures of Section 8-3 and with consideration of the town Plan of Conservation and Development. Certainly, many towns would expect considerable opposition to such a dramatic change, based on perceived loss of local character and property values.

RECOMMENDATIONS: **CCAPA** recommends that the Committee review the opportunity for promoting affordable housing through incentive and technical assistance programs, such as those developed by HOMEConnecticut's Housing Program for Economic Growth.

CCAPA POSITION: **CCAPA strongly supports legislative efforts to promote housing diversity and affordability. However, CCAPA does not support imposition of statutory zoning that applies prescriptive density standards to Connecticut towns. Efforts to encourage responsible local actions to promote housing diversity and affordability should be based on incentives and technical assistance and guided by the appropriate growth management principles embodied in the State's planning statutes.**