



Narragansett

TOWN RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

February 20, 2024

TO: House Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi (rep-shekarchi@rilegislature.gov)
House Majority Leader Christopher Blazejewski (rep-blazejewski@rilegislature.gov)
House Municipal Government Committee
(HouseMunicipalGovernmentandHousing@rilegislature.gov)
Committee Chair Steven Casey (rep-casey@rilegislature.gov)
Committee Vice-Chair Kathleen Fogarty (rep-fogarty@rilegislature.gov)
Committee Vice-Chair June Speakman (rep-speakman@rilegislature.gov)
Narragansett Representative Carol McEntee (rep-mcentee@rilegislature.gov)
Narragansett Representative Teresa Tanzi (rep-tanzi@rilegislature.gov)

FROM: Harold Schofield, Chair, Narragansett Town Residents Association (NTRA)
SUBJECT: Pending House Bill H7324 – Zoning Ordinances

On behalf of the Narragansett Town Residents Association (NTRA), consisting of approximately two hundred Narragansett Families who advocate for quality of life and families, neighborhood preservation and infrastructure improvements in Narragansett (<https://narragansettresidents.org>), we strenuously oppose passage of House Bill H7324, which would strip Floor Area Ratio (FAR) from Section 45-24-33 of RI General Laws.

As I'm sure you all know, Narragansett has been besieged by the combination of student and summer rentals. Further exacerbating this problem, Narragansett now accounts for 21% of all short-term rentals in RI at 978. For decades, too many Narragansett residents have suffered the annoyance of revolving door dormitories next door, instead of families as neighbors. The lure of turning family homes into investment properties is making it increasingly difficult for new families to compete with investors for the available housing stock. This trend is also overtaxing our sewer and water systems.

Another problem is that this conversion of family homes to businesses has motivated investors to enlarge existing homes and build outsized new homes that press against lot size restrictions, in a quest to maximize the number of "sellable" bedrooms. To combat this, the Narragansett Community Development Department, the Planning Board and the Town Council spent several years developing, implementing and refining a town

zoning ordinance that limits developers or land owners from building oversized structures on small lots in town. The ordinance is commonly referred to as "Bulk Zoning." House Bill H7324 would effectively gut this ordinance. Many other cities and towns in RI have similar problems, and rural communities that do not have municipal sewer and water systems would likely face environmental difficulties if you pass this bill.

Each RI city or town has their own unique challenges and build-able footprint limitations. Therefore, it is important for towns to retain the tools necessary for managing development and redevelopment, especially on very small lots.

If the sponsors of this bill are proposing it in the interest of promoting affordable housing, they should focus on redevelopment areas and leave FAR rules to the individual towns and municipalities. As a nearly fifty-year resident of Narragansett, I can guarantee you this bill will simply result in another give-away to developers looking to maximize short-term or seasonal rental profits. And this is true for all the coastal towns and cities in Rhode Island. H7324 will do nothing for affordable housing and may, in fact, worsen the problem.

Please vote to reject House Bill H7324.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harold Schofield". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Harold Schofield
BOD Chair, Narragansett Town Residents Association (NTRA)

CC: J. Tierney, Town Manager; Narragansett Town Council, Michael Deluca, Town Planner