



The Honorable Stephen M. Casey
Chair, House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

Re: Support for H7981 (Duplexes and Mixed-use Districts)

Dear Chairman Casey:

Neighbors Welcome! Rhode Island is a grassroots network of neighbors advocating for abundant housing in Rhode Island. We write today in support of H7981, a bill that would increase housing supply by legalizing more duplexes and mixed-use districts across the state.

These reforms would promote exactly the type of “gentle density” that historically shaped Rhode Island’s residential character and can help us to address the contemporary housing shortage. In 2016, the Rhode Island Housing and Finance Corporation warned that our state needed to add approximately 40,000 homes over the next ten years in order to meet demand. Since then, we have added less than half that number—approximately 18,000—and demand has only increased in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We urge you to support a robust version of the bill that responds to the scale of this need.

In particular:

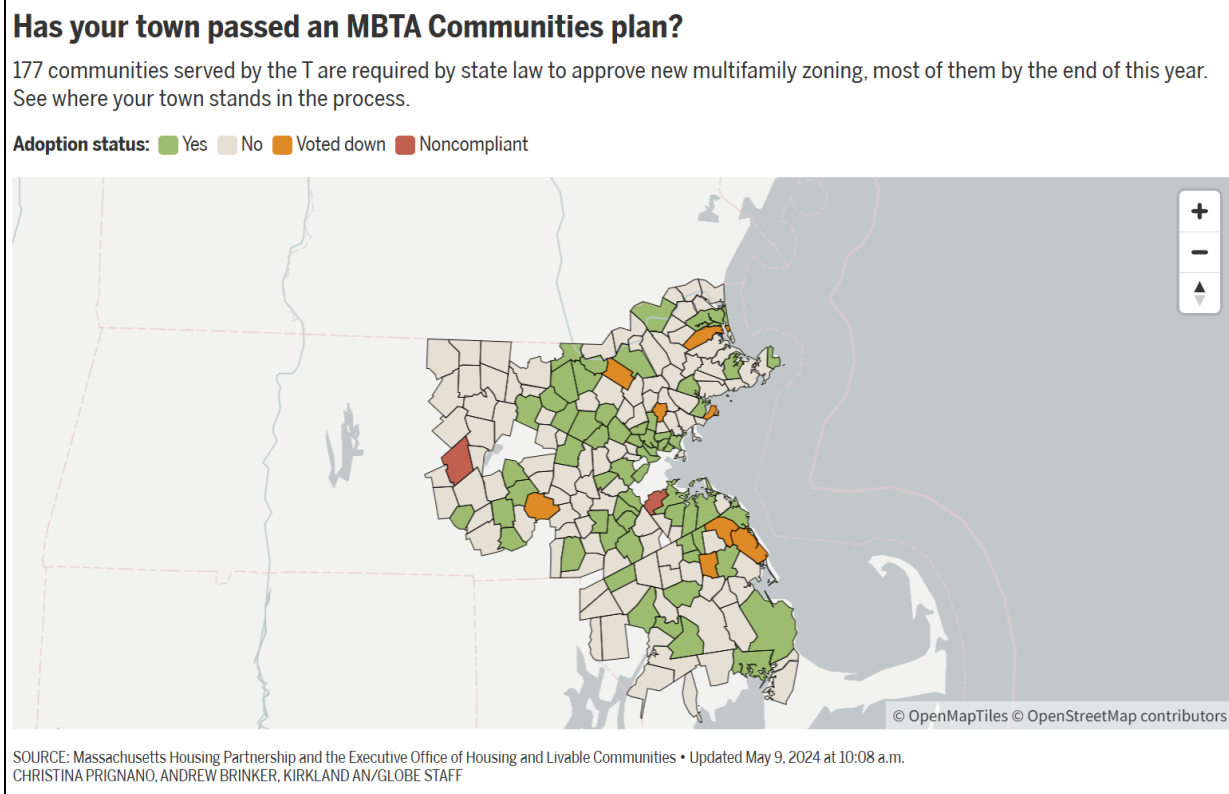
- Please maintain the provision legalizing duplexes by right on at least 30% of the developable land in each city and town (which the city or town can choose how to implement); and
- Please maintain the provision legalizing mixed-use districts broadly. One district per city and town is not enough, particularly without guardrails to ensure that districts are designed and implemented meaningfully.

Concerns that the bill “oversteps” local authority are misplaced. In Massachusetts, critics voiced similar objections about the rezoning obligations that the state put in place through its new MBTA Communities law. Yet in practice, the vast majority of communities that have voted on a rezoning

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plan so far have seen residents vote to adopt the plan (often by a strong margin) and come into compliance with the state housing law.¹



We believe that H7981, if properly implemented, will produce a similarly positive result. Thank you for your time and consideration of this extremely important bill, which will help Rhode Islanders to be able to afford a home in the state that we all love.

Yours,
Claudia Wack, Director
Greg Miller, Director
Seth Zeren, Director

¹ <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2024/05/07/business/boston-housing-mbta-communities-law-towns/>