

The Honorable Stephen Casey,

May 9, 2024

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 and Members of the House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing:

I am writing in support of bill H7981, which proposes to allow more duplexes across the state and more apartments in commercial zones.

Duplexes and mixed-use districts are exactly the type of “gentle density” that made up Rhode Island’s historic character and can help us address the current 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.

Gentle density is what allowed me to buy a house and build wealth. I am young, and my partner and I prioritized education and thus spent many years in graduate school, not making much money (or making negative money!). We've looked at buying houses in other places out west, but we can't find anything we could afford there - because they only have single family homes! Our condo in a 6-unit building is perfect for us, and it was affordable by nature. We need more of that so more young families and people with low income can afford to buy and rent homes in Rhode Island, and have some money left over to spend on everything else in life.

I urge you to support a strong version of this extremely important bill so that residents can continue to afford a home in the state that we all love. 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 legalize mixed-use districts broadly. One district per city and town is not enough, particularly without guardrails to ensure that districts are designed meaningfully.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Liza Farr  
Providence, RI

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