



HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT, INC.
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*Your Home
Is Our
Business*

March 3, 2008

To: Senator Eric Coleman, Co-Chairman
Representative Art Feltman, Co-Chairman
Members of the Planning & Development Committee

From: Bill Ethier, Executive Vice President & General Counsel

Re: **Raised Bill 5714, AAC Zoning for Starter Homes**

The HBACT is a professional trade association with over one thousand five hundred (1,500+) member firms statewide employing tens of thousands of Connecticut's citizens. Our members are residential and commercial builders, land developers, remodelers, subcontractors, suppliers and those businesses and professionals providing services to this diverse industry. We also created and administer the CT Developers Council, a professional forum for the land development industry in the state.

While the HBA of Connecticut supports the goal of promoting the development of starter homes, we do not believe requiring half-acre lots on 20% of all remaining residentially zoned land in every municipality is the right approach.

New home builders find it very difficult to build new homes that can be bought by first time home buyers. Land is simply too expensive in almost all cases. One of the cost drivers for high land prices is related to exclusionary zoning practices, such as large lot zoning, but other drivers include the restrictive land use processes many towns employ and many other zoning techniques, such as buildable square requirements, that drive up the price of land and the homes that can be built on them.

The bill would leave municipalities to game the system by changing the amount of land zoned residential or designating the worst developable land in its community for the half acre lots. Half-acre lots would not be affordable in some of our more exclusive (and expensive) communities and half-acre lots could increase costs in some of our urban areas.

A better approach to encourage the production of more starter homes and workforce housing is to put some teeth into 8-23 and 8-2. Section 8-23, the enabling legislation for local plans of conservation and development, contains good language on promoting affordable and workforce type housing, but it is our experience that too many towns pay lip service to it. Likewise, 8-2, the zoning enabling authority, contains some good language regarding housing, but it, too, is often ignored. **If the state wants to get serious about promoting housing solutions in CT, it needs to do one of two things (and we would urge both).** Force municipalities to accommodate housing, through strong incentives for good behavior and strong disincentives for bad behavior by putting teeth into these sections of the statute. The state should also adequately fund the incentives in the HOMEConnecticut legislation passed last year. There has been a healthy level of interest in this program and it deserves better funding. If you do both, they can work together to solve our housing crisis. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.