



TOWN OF BERLIN

Office of the Mayor
Town Hall • Berlin, CT 06037

Adam P. Salina
Mayor

Rep. Butler, Sen. Bartolomeo, Rep. Miller, Sen. McKinney, Distinguished Members of the Housing Committee,

I am Adam Salina, the Mayor of the Town of Berlin, and I am here to tell you about our experiences in making progress toward the affordable housing goals set forth in 8-30g. First I'd have to say that like all Towns, we would prefer to make our own land use decisions without interventions like the 8-30g Statute that creates a process under which local zoning policies and decisions can be overridden. Second, as you all know, the process of creating affordable housing in Connecticut is challenging. Nonetheless, Berlin has found a way to make meaningful progress in creating affordable housing within the definitions of the 8-30g.

In Berlin we have been able to achieve an 8-30g moratorium by proactively planning and zoning for affordable, mixed-income housing developments. We recently submitted an application for a second moratorium and we are now only 150 units from achieving the 10% goal. It has not been easy. It has taken concerted effort. We have suffered some setbacks, but have succeeded with thoughtful planning, consulting our residents and choosing locations that were a good fit for the new housing options we needed.

The progress we've made is unmistakable. A decade ago, in 2002, we had only 203 affordable units, or only 2.9% of our housing stock. By last year, we had added 383 affordable units for a total of 586, and our percentage had risen to 8.3%. We now have a moratorium from 8-30g proposals, thus giving us the time and space to plan, zone and develop more of the affordable and mixed-income housing options we need. We fully intend to continue on the proactive development path 8-30g and this legislature have laid out for us.

Berlin is a great town, but it is not superhuman! Other towns can make the progress we've made. I think that the greatest concern should be that so few towns have made enough progress to earn a moratorium. I would suggest that the challenge in reviewing the 8-30g Statute is to make changes that will get more Towns to participate and create affordable housing units. One area to look at is the criteria for achieving an initial moratorium and even more importantly, the criteria for a Town to achieve subsequent moratoriums until they have met the 10% goal.

We have not found 8-30g impossible, but it has been difficult. I think that law is difficult with respect to earning an initial Town moratorium and believe that more incentive should be added by counting a certain percentage of the units by zoning approval or building permit rather than by certificate of occupancy. However I would urge you to especially make an effort to devise more flexible provisions for granting subsequent moratoriums.

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We need more Towns working on the path to create affordable housing opportunities and I think that making more flexible criteria for additional moratoriums will help encourage towns to engage in the process. If Towns see a realistic path to achieving the 10% goal, they may be more motivated to get started. The housing that 8-30g provides ALL of our constituents is definitely needed in the State of Connecticut. Berlin's experience shows that other towns can be successful if they embrace the goal of providing affordable housing and devise a strategy to work toward the State's 10% goal. You can help motivate Towns to engage in the affordable housing creation effort by amending the rules to create a clearer path for Town's to achieve the 10% goal while retaining control over their own land use decisions once they've demonstrated clear progress.