



Making Great Communities Happen

Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association

Amanda Kennedy, Government Relations Co-Chair

Testimony in Support of Raised H.B. No. 7297 An Act Establishing a Private Right of Action in the Duty to Promote Fair Housing and Requiring a Study of Connecticut's Housing Inventory and Current and Future Housing Needs

CCAPA supports this proposal to develop better guidance on how much housing is needed in Connecticut. Housing affordability in Connecticut is getting worse and worse, and is affecting households at all incomes. Over the last fifteen years, the share of renters in Connecticut who can't find housing affordable to them has grown from $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of all renters. We need to do a better job at producing new housing, and determining how many units we need to produce is a critical step. Right now, no agency or organization in Connecticut generates estimates of future housing need, so towns and regions have no guidance on how much new housing is needed to address affordability issues or just to maintain the status quo.

In my current position as Director of Special Projects at the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG), I've taken a look at housing need and have developed an estimate for our region, based on the most recent population projections (2012) developed by the CT State Data Center. The clear trend in southeastern Connecticut, and I expect elsewhere in the state, is a demographic shift toward smaller household sizes that means the need for housing is growing faster than the overall population. Our estimate is that southeastern Connecticut will need 10,000 more housing units over the next decade. To meet that need, we'd have to ramp up housing production to levels we last saw at the peak of the housing market in 2006. The Regional Plan Association is likewise calling for a 50% increase in housing production for the Metro NY area, which includes southwestern Connecticut, based on their own analysis of projected growth.

A housing study can do more than just tell us how many homes are needed. It can also provide information about what kind of housing best suits existing and future households. My analysis of southeastern Connecticut's projected growth shows that while we'll see a huge increase in the share of households led by seniors, the largest number of new households will be formed by people in their twenties and thirties with lower incomes. This information has been helpful for SCCOG as we've developed policies in our Regional Plan, and we'll be working this year to further develop the analysis into more concrete recommendations as to what kind of housing we should focus on adding to the region, how much of it should be affordable to low-income residents, and what special features, such as handicapped accessibility, will be important for new homes. This kind of information can be the basis for more proactive planning to increase the number and types of housing options available to Connecticut residents going forward.

CCAPA strongly supports the proposed housing study and encourages its passage by the Legislature.

WHO WE ARE

The Connecticut Chapter of the American Planning Association (CCAPA) has over 420 members who are governmental and consulting planners, land use attorneys, citizen planners, and other professionals engaged in planning and managing land use, economic development, housing, transportation, and conservation for local, regional, and State governments, private businesses and other entities. CCAPA has long been committed to assisting the legislature and State agencies with developing and furthering responsible growth management principles. The American Planning Association is an independent, not-for-profit, national educational organization that provides leadership in the development of vital communities.

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