



## TESTIMONY BEFORE THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

SEAN GHIO  
POLICY DIRECTOR  
PARTNERSHIP FOR STRONG COMMUNITIES  
MARCH 8, 2020

### **H.B. 6570 - AN ACT CONCERNING TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT AND MUNICIPAL ZONING.**

Senator Cassano, Representative Lemar, Senator Somers, Representative Carney, and members of the committee, my name is Sean Ghio, and I am policy director at the Partnership for Strong Communities. We are a statewide nonprofit policy and advocacy organization dedicated to ending homelessness, expanding the creation of affordable housing, and building strong communities in Connecticut. We serve as the organizer of the HOMEConnecticut campaign to expand housing opportunities in Connecticut.

Since 2004, the HOMEConnecticut campaign has brought together more than 100 diverse stakeholders, including housing advocates, non-profit organizations, business leaders, lenders, non-profit and private housing developers, and builders who care about ensuring every resident has a safe, stable place to call home.

**We ask the committee to pass H.B. 6570 which will permit accessory apartments and multifamily housing near transit stations, and explore developing transit oriented housing on some state owned transit parking lots.**

Our 2021 legislative agenda was developed through consensus of our diverse advisory committee representing a wide range of viewpoints. Our agenda asks that CGS Section 8-2 be amended to require zoning regulations to permit Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and 2-4 family housing as of right. We believe these steps are simple, no cost, and incremental policies that can expand the supply of lower cost housing across the state.

Over the last decade or more Connecticut has consistently invested hundreds of millions of dollars in the creation of new affordable housing developments and must continue that commitment. There also are ways to expand lower cost housing supply with little to no state investment. H.B. 6570 will serve to expand opportunities for lower cost housing types to be constructed in areas of Connecticut with the best transit service. Efforts to incrementally increase lower cost housing supply in transit station areas will, over time, help to create more walkable and vibrant centers through construction of accessory dwelling apartments, small





scale multifamily housing such as duplexes and three-family homes, as well as apartment buildings built in existing parking lots adjacent to transit stations. A variety of housing types is critical to a community's sustainability.

## Equitable Transit Oriented Development

Requiring a percentage of TOD built homes be set aside with income restrictions is an essential, equitable component of TOD's success in Connecticut. Requiring mixed income housing in transit oriented developments will help mitigate against displacement and gentrification in some communities and expand access to more communities for Connecticut's low- and moderate-income households.

Requiring TOD to include a set aside of affordable units is essential to ensure that the development serves those who most stand to benefit from proximity to public transit and walkable communities. While car ownership is often viewed as essential to life in Connecticut, many lower income, disabled, or elderly households do not have access to a personal car. In fact, 8.7% of Connecticut households (120,000) do not have access to a vehicle.

The benefits of equitable transit-oriented development to our state are great. Increasing the number of residents within a adjacent to the train station in Windsor Center are a great example. [Montgomery Mills](#) in Windsor Locks is another. Concentrating more dense development near transit stations limits sprawl and the costs of providing infrastructure and public services to outlying areas, promotes healthier living through walkable design and context, and minimizes the impacts of traffic congestion and limit greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>1</sup>[Windsor Station Apartments](#) adjacent to the train station in Windsor Center are a great example. [Montgomery Mills](#) in Windsor Locks is another. Concentrating more dense development near transit stations limits sprawl and the costs of providing infrastructure and public services to outlying areas, promotes healthier living through walkable design and context, and minimizes the impacts of traffic congestion and limit greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>2</sup>

Transit-oriented development at its simplest is development that's built to take advantage of the ability of people to access it with transit. TOD is a strategy for

---

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.enterprisecommunity.org/solutions-and-innovation/equitable-transit-oriented-development>





growth that produces less traffic and lessens impact on roads and highways. Households located within walking distance of transit own fewer cars, drive less, and pay a smaller share of their income on transportation-related expenses. Homes and businesses can be built with less parking, reducing the cost of development, making development more feasible in weak markets, and increasing local tax revenue.<sup>3</sup>

## Accessory Apartments and Middle Housing

An accessory apartment, accessory dwelling unit, ADU, granny flat, in-law apartment are all names for a similar concept. It is a secondary home on the same lot as an existing home. An ADU can be part of the existing structure, attached to it, set back from the main house or above a garage.

Housing policy conversations in Connecticut often ignore ADUS and small multifamily housing. The universe of housing choices typically viewed as a dichotomy – large apartment buildings on one side and single-family homes on the other. One reason this is the case may be that very few apartment homes in smaller buildings are built anymore. Of the smallest multifamily buildings (2 – 4 units) only 4.9% of the existing supply was built in the last 20 years, but these small buildings still house more than 250,000 Connecticut families.<sup>4</sup>

Permitting ADUs, duplexes, fourplexes, and other so-called middle housing, is a simple, no cost action the state can take to allow private property owners and builders to incrementally increase the supply of lower cost housing in Connecticut with \$0 public investment. “[E]very municipality can create more housing simply by allowing more flexibility within the context of existing land use patterns.” We can easily create thousands of new lower cost housing across the state that will add to the variety of housing types in all our towns providing housing choices to meet the needs of residents at all of life’s stages.<sup>5</sup>

Permitting ADUs and small multifamily housing more broadly and without undue restrictions will allow for an incremental growth of our lower cost housing supply, but it is not a solution to our affordable housing crisis. These are small tools in what needs to be a full toolbox of options.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.pschousing.org/sites/default/files/CT2013TODToolkit.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2014-2018 5 Year Estimates, Table: B25127

<sup>5</sup> <https://rpa.org/work/reports/be-my-neighbor?s=09>

