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Testimony on Planning and Development Bills

HB 7148, AN ACT CONCERNING RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENTS IN COMMERCIAL ZONES.

HB 1444, AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONVERSION OF COMMERCIAL REAL PROPERTY FOR RESIDENTIAL USE

HB 7063, AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONVERSION OF VACANT MOTELS TO MULTIFAMILY HOUSING

**Submitted to the Planning and Development Committee
by Connecticut REALTORS®**

March 10, 2025

Connecticut REALTORS® (CTR) appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony relating to numerous bills before the Planning and Development Committee. CTR represents nearly 19,000 members involved in all aspects of real estate in Connecticut. Our members work with many thousands of buyers, sellers, landlords and tenants annually.

CTR Opposes HB 7148, AN ACT CONCERNING RESIDENTIAL AND MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENTS IN COMMERCIAL ZONES. This proposal would allow for the as-of-right development of a residential development or a mixed-use development on any lot that allows for commercial use; and **CTR Opposes HB 1444, AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONVERSION OF COMMERCIAL REAL PROPERTY FOR RESIDENTIAL USE.** This proposal would allow the conversion or partial conversion of any commercial building into a residential development as of right. CTR believes that conversion from commercial to residential is an important approach to providing housing, however this proposal fundamentally removes zoning from municipalities as-of-right and will often be contrary to the comprehensive plans that municipalities are separately required to develop. Towns will no longer have the ability to make decisions with town planning, the power will instead shift to real estate developers.

Commercial zones are not one-size-fits-all with Connecticut's municipalities. The tax base for many municipalities relies on commercial properties along with municipal efforts for economic development with local workforce opportunities. Removing commercial buildings can forever remove the potential for use with creating or maintaining local businesses and local jobs. Once commercial use is removed, it is unlikely to be able to return. However, if a municipality is already structured for mixed use, then it is an existing option within a town and not a state mandate.

There are commercial properties that are vacant and should be converted to housing. CTR encourages the state to identify financial incentives for such development including partnerships with municipalities to align housing development with comprehensive plans. CTR does not support the removal of zoning in Connecticut or to remove the importance of town planning and municipal efforts to grow local economic development with specific location of commercial business.

CTR Supports HB 7063, AN ACT CONCERNING THE CONVERSION OF VACANT MOTELS TO MULTIFAMILY HOUSING . The proposal would allow converting vacant motels to multifamily housing as of right. This as-of-right proposal is distinct from others as it is a conversion from one housing use to another housing use. There is currently nothing that would stop an apartment building from becoming co-op or condominium or for a single-family home to have its use covert to rental. This is another example of an existing unit changing its housing function. Motels are already being used for housing, including for rentals monthly or longer. A motel can often be a municipal eyesore in need of renovation and this proposal can result in significant improvements to an existing housing unit, including the potential for ownership not just rental use . CTR encourages the state to create developer incentives for conversions from motels to more permanent housing solutions.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns related to the legislation before you today. CTR looks forward to collaborating with the members of the committee.