

**TESTIMONY ON H.B. 7061**  
**AN ACT CONCERNING MANDATORY MINIMUM PARKING REQUIREMENTS**

*submitted via the CGA electronic portal*

March 6, 2025, updated April 7, 2025\*

By: Sara C. Bronin

Chair Kavros-DeGraw, Chair Rahman, Ranking Member Zullo, Ranking Member Gordon, and distinguished members of this committee:

I write in **support of House Bill 7061**, which would change the state zoning enabling act to prevent local governments from enacting parking mandates that require private property owners to build a specific number of on-site parking spaces for each unit of housing they create. Four years ago, the legislature passed Public Act 21-29, in recognition of the fact that parking mandates drive up housing costs, foster sprawl, result in the demolition of historic buildings, increase polluted stormwater runoff, and create unattractive places. As you know, Public Act 21-29 capped local parking mandates at one parking space per accessory dwelling unit, studio apartment, or 1-bedroom apartment, and two parking spaces for larger units. H.B. 7061 would expand on this progress – by preventing local governments from imposing parking mandates at all.

By way of brief background, I am an architect, attorney, and law professor who studies how land use law and policy shape our communities. I served as chair of the Hartford planning and zoning commission for around seven years, and in 2020, I founded DesegregateCT, a pro-homes grassroots coalition that helped to promote Connecticut’s first major statewide zoning reforms in decades. I currently lead the National Zoning Atlas, where 27 full-time staff members work to digitize, demystify, and democratize information about zoning regulations. In these roles, I have led local elimination of parking mandates (in Hartford in 2017), successfully advocated to cap parking mandates statewide (Public Act 21-29 in 2021), chronicled them in great detail (across thousands of jurisdictions in the National Zoning Atlas), and written about them for a national audience (including in my recent book, *Key to the City: How Zoning Shapes Our World*).

My research and practical experience has led me to believe that parking mandates are unnecessary, and that statewide elimination of them would greatly benefit Connecticut’s communities and towns.

***How Restrictive are Connecticut Parking Mandates?***

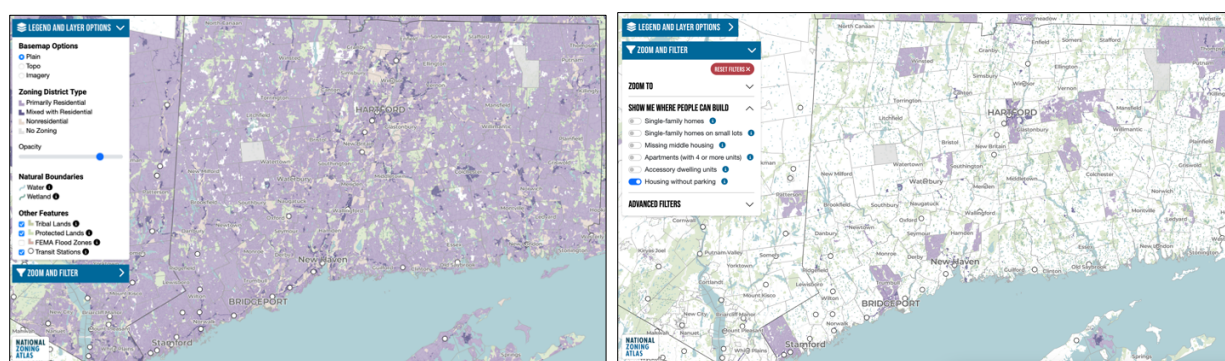
To understand the potential impact of H.B. 7061, it’s worth considering how commonplace parking mandates are now. While the state has 169 towns, the legislature has granted zoning authority to 187 different jurisdictions, including municipalities, other units of local government (such as villages and boroughs), and private associations. All but fourteen of these jurisdictions have

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\* This was updated to correct an error at the bottom of page 1, and footnote 1, which in the original testimony indicated that all but seventeen jurisdictions have parking mandates. Unfortunately, only fourteen jurisdictions have parking mandates! I have also updated the map on page 2.

parking mandates.<sup>1</sup> My team at the National Zoning Atlas has combed through 31,090 pages of Connecticut zoning codes to try to understand how they handle parking (among other things) across 2,726 zoning districts.<sup>2</sup>

From that research – available at *zoningatlas.org* – we found that 87% of all land allowing residential development in Connecticut is subject to mandatory parking requirements. While these 170 jurisdictions differ in their particular rules, they share that they are fundamentally out of sync with the communities they are meant to serve. Indeed, it is difficult to reason why rural governments need to tell residents to remember to provide a place to park their cars. Or why suburban zoning boards know better than developers, who have plenty of financial incentives to provide sufficient parking to meet future residents’ needs. Or why cities, with large numbers of car-free households, impose parking mandates that become irrelevant and costly for the many who will never use them.<sup>3</sup>



*Images from the National Zoning Atlas. At left, purple designates the state’s residentially-zoned land; at right, purple shows where housing can be built without parking mandates.*

One can’t help but wonder whether parking mandates are used, intentionally or not, to drive up the cost of multi-family housing that seems to be disfavored by too many Connecticut communities. Ultimately, such onerous mandates may discourage new apartments construction altogether.

Perhaps the clearest example of how parking mandates can run counter to a community’s needs appears in the towns and cities served by commuter rail and bus rapid transit, where excessive parking is routinely required *around those stations*. The majority of the forty Connecticut towns with a train or bus rapid transit station require excessive parking mandates for new homes.<sup>4</sup> When I served on the project team for the 360 State Street development in downtown New Haven, directly across the street from the State Street Train Station, I was baffled at the city’s insistence that we have 500 on-site parking spaces. This requirement drove up the cost of that mixed-income

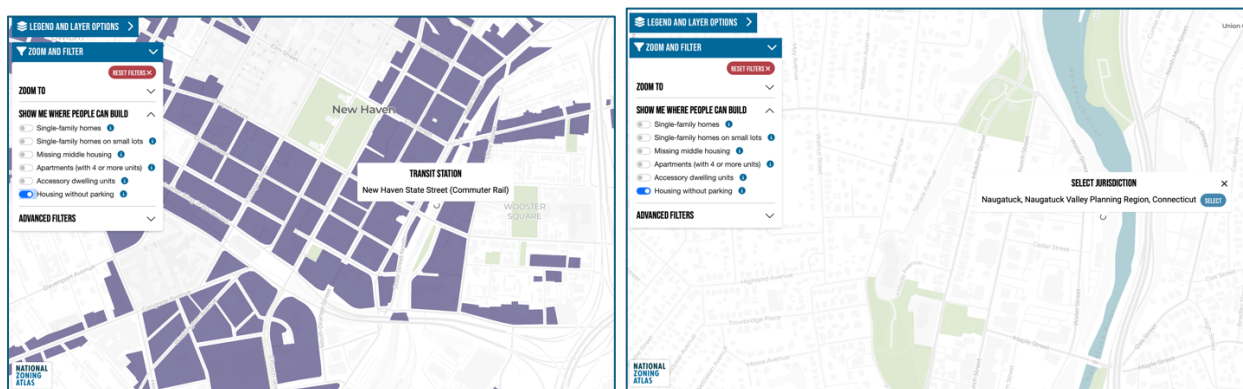
<sup>1</sup> Twelve jurisdictions have no parking mandates: Bolton, Bridgeport, East Lyme - Black Point Beach Club, East Lyme - Crescent Beach Association, East Lyme - Giant’s Neck Beach Association, Fenwick, Hartford, Sterling, Thompson, Trumbull, Woodbridge, and Woodstock. In addition, Bethlehem and Eastford do not have zoning and thus do not impose parking mandates.

<sup>2</sup> The number of districts we have included in the National Zoning Atlas has increased since I wrote “Zoning by a Thousand Cuts,” published in the Pepperdine Law Review in 2023 and chronicling Connecticut’s zoning codes. It is at [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=3792544](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3792544).

<sup>3</sup> Roughly 30% of households in Hartford (which has eliminated parking mandates) and New Haven (which has not) do not own a car.

<sup>4</sup> See also DesegregateCT, Get on Board for Equitable Transit-Oriented Communities (2021).

housing development by millions of dollars – costs that were unfortunately passed on to the residents of the building. Today, the garage is seldom full, and fortunately the city’s current regulations allow multi-family housing in the Central Business Zoning District, without parking mandates.<sup>5</sup> New Haven has addressed the zoning around State Street Station, but most Connecticut communities with train stations have not. For example, Naugatuck’s Business-1 District, directly adjacent to its train station, requires three parking spaces per studio apartment.<sup>6</sup> This requirement defies logic given the slim odds that someone living in a studio apartment next to a train station would ever have, use, or need three cars. Government should not make it harder for developers to build housing near train stations by requiring them to build parking spaces that will sit empty and drive up costs.



*Images from the National Zoning Atlas. At left, current zoning around New Haven’s State Street Station, allowing housing to be built without parking mandates. At right, Naugatuck takes an exclusionary approach.*

At a minimum, the Connecticut legislature should eliminate parking mandates in the forty Connecticut communities with train or bus rapid transit stations. California and Oregon both adopted legislation in 2022 prohibiting local governments from imposing parking mandates within a half-mile of transit stations. In 2024, Colorado eliminated parking mandates for multifamily housing within a quarter mile of certain transit stops. Connecticut would be in good company if it took this approach.

### ***Noncompliance with Public Act 21-29***

As an aside, it is worth noting that Naugatuck joins at least 13 other Connecticut zoning jurisdictions that we believe have failed to comply with Public Act 21-29, passed in 2021: Ansonia, Avon, Bethel, Bristol, Burlington, East Lyme, Granby, Lebanon, Milford, New Haven, and Westport.<sup>7</sup> Legislators representing those towns might remind local planning staff to update the zoning codes to comply with state law. For now, the National Zoning Atlas continues to log noncompliance.

<sup>5</sup> See New Haven Zoning Ordinance § 45(a)(1)a.1.B.

<sup>6</sup> See Naugatuck Zoning Regulations § 26.5.2.

<sup>7</sup> The National Zoning Atlas analyzes zoning codes at points in time, but any jurisdictions that have updated their codes may submit corrections or notices of updates via our website.

### *How H.B. 7061 Would Help*

H.B. 7061 would make Connecticut the first state to eliminate parking mandates statewide. You have testimony from others about the many negative consequences of parking mandates – supported by decades of research, including from the late UCLA professor Donald Shoup. But I want to emphasize that excessive minimum parking requirements are, at their core, an equity issue. They drive up the price of housing (a cost passed on to renters and homebuyers), stymie new construction of affordable developments, and ignore the needs and preferences of residents who either do not own personal vehicles or elect to use public transit. Parking mandates have also resulted in the demolition of buildings on our main streets and downtowns (to make way for parking), and in historic buildings falling into disuse because repurposing them would trigger impossible-to-satisfy parking mandates.

Improvement is possible. The most straightforward way to create people-centric development is to start dropping requirements to create car-centric development, including parking mandates. The legislature's passage of H.B. 7061 would abolish outdated zoning provisions that encourage sprawl, hamper walkability, and stifle housing diversity. Passing H.B. 7061 would enable us to trade trees and greenery for asphalt. It would reduce urban heat islands and polluted stormwater runoff. It would take a stand against exclusionary and auto-oriented development. Eliminating parking mandates would open the door to more affordable housing, greater flexibility for home creators, and a revitalization of Connecticut's main streets.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.