

Risler, Hillary

From: Nancy Williams <nancywilliamspark@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 9, 2021 9:33 AM
To: Risler, Hillary; Prawer, Samuel
Subject: Comment to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions

This message originates from outside the Maine Legislature.

Hi Hillary and Sam,

I am unable to attend this meeting but would like to include the following comments to the committee. Please let me know if you received this email and if my comments will be included.

May have a zoom link in order to listen to the proceedings?

Thank you,
Nancy Williams

To: Senator Craig Hickman and Speaker Ryan Fecteau

As a volunteer director of Waterville Community Land Trust, dedicated to providing workforce owner-occupied homes and as a retired person looking to downsize, I wish to include my point-of-view to the committee's hearing regarding the impacts of zoning on housing.

Increasing housing density

The need to provide more homes could be answered partly by zoning which permits greater density. This would seem to be most appropriate in suburban areas and in some city locations where buildings could be built higher (with adequate fire equipment available) and as condominiums designed with adequate parking and landscaping.

However, in cities such as Waterville, many of our neighborhoods are so tightly developed that whenever a fire occurs, there is fear of losing adjacent homes. Because so many small homes have been converted to apartments, sometimes with tenants who tend to invite even more tenants to live with them, inadequate parking spaces means that cars are parking on front lawns and on narrow city streets. Dumpsters are sometimes provided for tenants, but those must be placed in front yards in order to be serviced.

Neighbor conflicts regarding parking, noise, and animals are more likely to occur where homes have little distance between structures. Bleak landscaping results from overcrowding with yards full of household implements and little sunlight reaching the ground. In some neighborhoods, houses are so tightly packed that it's impossible to paint or reside a structure due to inadequate space for a ladder!

These homes once held large families but now would be perfect for starter or retirement homes if investments are made and policies developed to encourage homeownership and to decrease the criminal elements now present on the streets. More open space needs to be developed to provide parks.

If the intent of changing zoning is to increase affordable homes then it is important to place restrictions on developers taking advantage of using the new zoning to increase their profits rather than build smaller, affordable homes. I've seen

similar changes to local zoning occur with the good intention of permitting two homes on what would have been only one lot which only resulted in two expensive homes built on smaller lots.

Also, if homes are built to be affordable, I encourage this hearing to consider the advantages of community land trusts (CLTs). CLTs have the unique ability to enforce affordability with each sale of a home (or apartments) throughout the life of the structure, rather than require that future reinvestments must be made in order to retain affordability, as is true of most of our current stock of affordable structures. CLTs often partner with Habitat but both organizations need more support from state and federal sources.

Retirement homes

Affordable homes are not always possible to build because of restrictive zoning; it is often also due to private covenants. While looking for lots to build a small, energy efficient home for retirement I have found that many properties have deeded covenants that require that I build a much larger house than I desire or can afford. Typical limitations I have found require over 1300 sf heated space or even require that a minimum of \$200,000 be spent on the structure.

The latter covenant means that I would not be permitted to include my own labor to build my own home. Time permitted for the construction process are also limited, often to no more than one year. This also decreases the ability for someone to build their own home. Other 'snob' covenants do not permit outdoor clothes lines that would decrease energy expenses. Lots within a city are often clear-cut and leveled by the owner which decreases the opportunity to design a home which fits into natural contours and uses trees to naturally keep the interior cooler during the summer.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

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