



# Town of Smithfield

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SMITHFIELD, RHODE ISLAND 02917

**PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

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March 25, 2021

Representative Raymond Hull  
Chair, House Committee on Municipal Government and Housing  
State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Re: H6093 – An Act Relating to Towns and Cities – Zoning Ordinances

Chairman Hull and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Town of Smithfield, we thank you for the opportunity to raise some concerns for H-6093, which seeks to prohibit single-family residential zoning in municipalities with populations of over twenty-thousand (20,000) and mandate that those municipalities adopt zoning regulations for middle housing in single-family residential zones.

This bill mentions the “urban growth boundary” and “city centers,” which are undefined concepts in Rhode Island General Law. Approximately 95% of the Town of Smithfield is located within the “Urban Serves Boundary”, which is concept that is discussed in a Land Use element of the State Guide Plan: Land Use 2025. Within this boundary there are large areas of land that can only be characterized as rural, not urban as stated in the Legislative Purpose. In fact, the northwest part of Smithfield is predominantly a forested area dotted with single family homes on lots greater than 2 acres in area. The USB was established in the northwest corner of Town because EPA ran a water line up Log Road to help residents whose wells were at risk from contamination from the Davis Super Fund Site. The imposition of the type of density proposed by this legislation would fundamentally change the character of these sparsely settled areas. The development pattern in much of the Town was dictated by the physical constraints of the land but, was also due to a conscious effort on the part of the community to maintain the orchards and working farms that most people see as the defining characteristic of the Town.

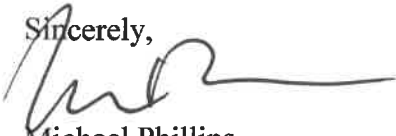
One of the stated purposes of the legislation is to “expand the supply of affordable housing in urban areas...” The Town, through its Comprehensive Community Plan, has identified a number of strategies for increasing the amount of affordable housing in the Town. One such strategy implemented through our zoning ordinance, provides

special density provisions for our village areas and areas along major transportation routes that are served by municipal sewers and water. These are the areas where it is appropriate to have higher densities. Unfortunately, many of the areas within the USB and targeted by this legislation are well outside our villages and not easily accessible to mass transit or even major transportation routes.

While we appreciate the sponsors' intention to expand the supply of homes affordable to most Rhode Islanders by mandating zoning that allows greater residential density in larger municipalities, we believe that this legislation would run contrary the strategies that we have been implementing for a decade now to increase affordable housing and would make it more difficult to protect the farms, forests, and open spaces that Smithfield residents hold dear.

At this time, we would suggest that H6093 be held for further study and referred to the proposed Land Use Commission (per H-5950).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Phillips', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Michael Phillips  
Town Planner

Cc: Planning Board  
Randy Rossi, Town Manager  
Town Council