



*Distinctive Communities
Powerful Alliance*

March 18, 2025

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

RE: BILL NUMBER H-5794 – AN ACT RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- LOCAL PLANNING BOARD OR COMMISSION

Chairman Craven and Honorable Committee Members,

On behalf of the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, I write to express our support for House Bill 5794, which seeks to clarify processes outlined in the Zoning Enabling Act and the Subdivision Act. This legislation is an important step in addressing concerns raised by the Land Use Commission and various stakeholders, including municipalities, developers, advocates, and planners, regarding inefficiencies and delays in land use procedures.

The League recognizes the importance of streamlining regulatory processes while preserving the authority of municipalities to implement sound planning and zoning practices. By addressing ambiguities and procedural challenges, House Bill 5794 enhances predictability for applicants and municipalities alike, reducing unnecessary delays and administrative burdens. These improvements will help ensure that development efforts can proceed more efficiently while maintaining proper oversight at the local level.

Additionally, the bill provides further clarification of Rhode Island's Adaptive Reuse law (2023-H 6090A, 2023-S 1035A), which facilitates the conversion of underutilized or vacant commercial properties into housing and other beneficial uses. These adjustments are critical to ensuring that adaptive reuse projects can move forward efficiently, contributing to the state's efforts to expand housing opportunities while making productive use of existing structures.

The League acknowledges the diverse needs and characteristics of each municipality and is actively reviewing this legislation in collaboration with our members. As this review continues, we look forward to working with the bill's sponsor and other stakeholders to discuss potential amendments that further clarify and strengthen the bill's impact. Our goal is to ensure that the final language effectively supports Rhode Island's cities and towns while fostering responsible development practices.

We remain committed to policies that balance the need for housing and economic development with municipal autonomy and comprehensive planning. House Bill 5794 presents an important framework for helping municipalities address the state's housing needs while maintaining the integrity of local governance.

Thank you for your continued leadership and efforts to address housing challenges in Rhode Island. We look forward to engaging in further discussions on this important issue and working collaboratively toward a balanced and effective solution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Randy R. Rossi".

Randy R. Rossi
Executive Director

Cc: Honorable Members of House Judiciary Committee