



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
MAYOR BRETT P. SMILEY

March 24, 2026

Rep. Carol Hagan McEntee, Chair
Committee on Judiciary
R.I. House of Representatives
82 Smith Street
Providence, RI 02903

Re. House Bill 2026-H8004

Dear Chair McEntee and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to comment on House Bill H8004. In general, we are in favor of this bill's package of technical amendments as they help to clarify regulations related to land use, zoning, and development review. For several years running, Providence has amended its zoning ordinance and land development and subdivision regulations in accordance with state law and our new comprehensive plan. This work has resulted in a significant amount of new development and record production of housing, both market rate and affordable.

While the changes have paid off in housing production, they have also resulted in significant increases in workload for our planning and zoning staff. For example, we saw a 50% rise in land development projects and subdivisions, from 60 to 90, between 2023 and 2025. In 2026, we have already received 37 applications. At this rate, we will receive over 160 applications for the year. With this kind of workload, the current timeframes for reviewing projects are barely sufficient to keep up with the flow of applications.

We agree with the intent of the proposal to shorten the timeframes for review of minor land development projects and subdivisions in Section 45-24-38(d). Property owners and developers should expect predictable and swift approvals. In fact, we typically issue approvals much sooner than required. But with the development pressure we're seeing due to regulatory changes, the current review timeframes are necessary. We respectfully request that they not be shortened.

We appreciate the General Assembly's work to alleviate the housing crisis. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the bill.

Sincerely,

Robert E. Azar, AICP
Deputy Director