

January 19, 2023

My name is Kyle Kossak, I am a lifelong Rhode Islander and newly elected chair of Newport's Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) and I would like to enthusiastically state my support for the land use policy changes proposed for today. Active transportation and housing are intrinsically related, and any increase in the availability of housing where it's most needed will drastically improve the feasibility of walking and biking as means of transit. All the bike lanes in the world will be worthless if there's still a housing shortage near where people want to be.

I've lived in Newport for seven years, and in the past few years I've had to sit and watch while all my friends and family have been slowly priced out of town by the housing shortage. I've watched coworkers bid on rental units close to work for months only to give up and move so far out they're spending a quarter of their pay just to drive to work. Landlords used to compete for tenants, now tenants are competing for landlords. In the time I've lived there, I haven't seen a single new housing unit built near me downtown, the only work I see is to raise the value of existing units. If we want more traffic, more pollution, longer commutes, and expensive car commutes, then only building in the middle of nowhere like this is how to do it.

However, if we want a better future where children can play in the street and adults can see daylight after work, abundant housing is essential. I've looked over the proposed changes and endorse anything and everything that encourages and enables this, including:

- Elimination/reduction of mandatory parking minimums, especially in walkable downtowns and near transit
- Allowing construction of flexible ADU's, and small multifamily housing by right
- Allowing of mixed use development wherever possible as well as enabling small businesses/pubs/restaurants in residential areas
- Encouragement of infill development in downtowns and discouragement of greenfield development in our rapidly disappearing farms and forests
- Creation of a "builders remedy" to ensure that affordable units cannot be arbitrarily denied

I believe that any and all of these policies will help our state prevent a collapse of our economy, municipal budgets, mental health, and our ecosystem.

Thank you,

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