

Chair Stevens and Members of the House Committee on General, Housing, and Military Affairs,

We, the undersigned organizations, request that you consider adding the accompanying language to S.237, an act related to affordable housing. As you likely know, this bill originally contained provisions that would remove areas of enhanced designation from Act 250 jurisdiction that were removed from the bill upon final reading to be covered under the Act 250 bill the Senate Was considering, H.926. On the morning of September 4th, the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee voted to adopt a strike-all amendment that would abandon any of the work in H.926 except the provisions around trail management and forest fragmentation. We request that the following sections that were removed from the bill on the Senate floor in favor of adding them to H.926 be brought back into the bill; Sections 2, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, and 15.

Affordable housing was a major goal of the Senate Economic Development Committee, which did a fantastic job with a state-wide listening tour to arrive at the conclusion that the Chair of that committee expressed when reporting the bill on the House floor, that “housing is not only about putting your hand out for more money, and resources, ... we can affect housing by policy changes that don’t cost money but in the long run, will making housing cheaper to build and buy.”

The removal of areas of enhanced designation has been a non-controversial component of many conversations around building vibrant downtowns with affordable housing, and Vermont cannot afford to miss the opportunity to make this crucial, ubiquitously agreed upon change before adjourning. We understand the desire to move a comprehensive Act 250 package this session, however, please do not allow an apparent impasse regarding this package to hold back a provision that will create meaningful, positive change for many Vermont families.

Sincerely,

Lake Champlain Chamber
Vermont Chamber of Commerce
Regional Development Corporations of Vermont