

City of Winooski

Vermont's Opportunity City

27 West Allen Street
Winooski, Vermont 05404
802 655 6410
winooskivt.gov

4/24/2023

From the Office of the Mayor of Winooski

Kristine Lott, Mayor
klott@winooskivt.gov

To: Members of the House Committee on Environment & Energy
Cc: Speaker Krowinski, Representatives Small and Berbeco

Hello Representatives and Committee Members. I write to you today regarding S.100, the legislation relating to housing opportunities made for everyone. I urge the committee to adopt the language proposed by the Rural Caucus to exempt the construction of four or fewer units from counting toward determining jurisdiction for Act 250.

I think we can all agree that we are in a state of housing crisis. Housing experts at VHFA have shared that we need to produce 30,000 new homes in the next 7 years to meet the need ([source](#)). And we need new homes right now, as soon as possible. We've had 3 families in Winooski displaced by fires this winter, all of whom are still looking for new housing due to the lack of supply. Last year, the landlord at 300 Main St. in Winooski threatened to evict 27 families to make upgrades to the property. This event was very scary because those families literally would not have found anywhere to go and it required much external pressure to get this landlord to reconsider. What if they change their mind? USCRI has only settled one refugee family in Winooski in the past year because of no housing. New arrivals are even living in hotels. The motel program is ending this summer, where will those displaced residents be housed? I hear regularly from residents who cannot find a place to live. 3,000 members of the Nepali community have left our state in the past 3 years due to lack of housing. Consider that hit to our workforce and school enrollment.

We need reform to reduce the time and cost to build new housing and get new units online rapidly. Reducing duplication in the permitting process is a sure way to do this. The language proposed by the Rural Caucus is a great compromise that can make an impact without full Act 250 reform. Adjusting the trigger threshold will speed up, and reduce costs for, development in places like Winooski. We have the infrastructure and review processes to support density in an environmentally thoughtful way.

In Winooski, we've increased density in our regulations, streamlined permitting, created development incentives, even given City owned land to affordable housing development. We are doing everything we can locally to increase supply but we can't do it alone. Our Downtowns are designated for growth, and we need to find ways to support that growth and meet this crisis.

Thank you,



Mayor Kristine Lott

