



Dear Members of the House Environment and Energy Committee:

Vermonters are struggling to find homes and every community must put forward its best effort to help. We are urging our State and Local elected officials to find innovative solutions to our housing crisis. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring affordable housing, building modern and scalable infrastructure, and supporting the social services that underpin our economy. All while protecting our environment and open spaces by eliminating sprawl.

These are not mutually exclusive goals. Vermonters have the ingenuity to accomplish great things. It starts by ensuring our regulations support our environment, inclusivity, and prosperity. The legislation as approved by the Senate (S.100) is currently missing critical Act 250 changes encouraging high-density, reasonably priced housing. While we applaud Act 250's success in protecting Vermont's character, it is not without faults. Counterintuitively, it has created more sprawl and burden on the environment. It disproportionately harms low-income Vermonters by imposing burdensome development costs on housing and infrastructure. It provides cover for a "not in my backyard" mentality that is abhorrent to Vermonters' natural altruism and sense of community. Act 250 should be updated to reflect the current needs of all Vermonters by easing barriers to infilling towns and communities with reasonably priced housing and scalable infrastructure.

The original proposal to increase the Act 250 10-5-5 threshold to 25-5-5 took a small, but important step in this direction. However, the modification to this provision, limiting it to a small fraction of buildable land, results in excluding buildable land between South Burlington and Montpelier, a rapidly growing area home to many growing communities and enterprises. It further exacerbates Vermont's historically low unemployment rate and adversely impacts business's ability to recruit and hire.

We ask Vermonters who count themselves fortunate enough to own a home, to remember that people who facilitate our happiness, wellbeing, and safety need reasonably priced homes in our neighborhoods. Nurses, emergency personnel, teachers, trades people, food industry personnel, and others are a vital part of life. They bring possibility, opportunity, and vitality to our neighborhoods. Let's work together to support inclusive and vibrant neighborhoods across the state by fixing Vermont's housing crisis.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tracy Davis".

Tracy Davis

Chair of South Burlington Business Association