

TESTIMONY BEFORE HOUSE ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

APRIL 20, 2023

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak with you about S 100. My name is Helen Riehle and I serve as the Chair of the South Burlington City Council. It is in that capacity that I come before you to share my city's thoughts regarding a few aspects of the bills. With me is the Director of Planning, Paul Conner. I will briefly set the table and Paul will provide what we intend to be suggested tweaks that will allow South Burlington and other communities to advance our shared goals without jeopardizing the city's future work.

Let me begin by saying that the city strongly supports the goals and many of the provisions. We are deeply appreciative of your efforts to address the critical shortage of affordable housing in VT and the state's leadership on climate change. We feel that our experiences at the local level may provide some important information to your deliberations.

I would be the first to admit that South Burlington is not a typical Vermont town. We are the second largest with a population of 20,000 and growing. We are situated in a relatively vibrant economic sector. We have a well-staffed planning department, we have infrastructure for water and sewer throughout much of the city, we have committed residents who participate in shaping their community through committee membership and outreach events and we have generous voters who are willing to invest in housing and parks and conservation. We are experiencing growth in our school population. We are blessed in many ways. And we have worked hard to make our community a better place for all and welcoming to others.

In the eleven years I have been a councilor, South Burlington has been actively working on the housing shortage and searching for the right balance between natural areas and developed areas within the context of housing needs and climate change. Some of the things we have achieved include:

- Created an open space fund with 1 cent on the property tax to provide resources for purchase of open spaces for parks, recreation and conservation

- Established an Affordable Housing Trust Fund with annual general fund dollars
- Through the TIF program created a new downtown or City Center and adopted Form-Based Code that enables housing density and multiple stories
- During an Interim Zoning period we identified critical natural resources and open spaces, re-structured a TDR (Transferrable Development Rights) program in the SEQ, developed and adopted LDRs to increase housing density and types, require inclusionary zoning with incentives for additional units, and strengthen protection for habitat blocks, stream corridors and natural areas resulting in a careful and balanced approach to density, environmentally sound principles and smart growth
- Partnered with non-profits to build senior and affordable housing in our new City Center and invested \$1 million of City ARPA funds to build another 180 affordable unit building with 20 units for homeless, and the re-design and re-use of a motel for 17 more units of housing for homeless individuals and families
- UVM and UVMMC have begun two more large developments to meet workforce housing including a childcare center in city center
- developed and adopted a Climate Action Plan that supports development in the right areas and identifies community level actions to reduce dependence on fossil fuels

The results so far: 1000 permanently affordable homes, 180 more are approved , more in preliminary permitting. 2500 acres of SB are zoned to allow 4 or 5+ units per acre with the majority being over 7 units per acre. Other areas achieve compact development through high density on portions of a parcel and conservation on the remainder. Many market rate homes have also been build.

Housing and climate change are two of the most pressing issues for our community, the state and the country. Municipalities are excellent incubators for change. We would like to be able to continue doing that as we best envision for SB.

Thank you and let me turn to our director of planning.