

The amended HB 6781 combines the most toxic elements of other discarded housing and zoning bills. They are an existential threat to Ridgefield's way of life!

Please do not negotiate against Ridgefield.

Reasons to vote NO on HB 6781: DE FACTO STATE ZONING

- Cedes local control of our land-use and zoning decisions to an unelected coalition of unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats in Hartford who don't know Ridgefield and its capacity constraints for development **These decisions also DO NOT include input from environmental experts or conservation officials.**
- **De Facto State Zoning Mandates:** "Fair Share" sets housing construction "goals" for 162 municipalities across Connecticut. Yet, the bill does not specify what those numbers are. Where these goals are not met – regardless of the cause – **local governments are held legally responsible through litigation.** Under the bill, developers can sue to **force Ridgefield** to accede to developer demands to build at virtually any size or scale, and force Ridgefield to pay damages, under threat of attorneys fees and costs. The bill requires OPM, in consultation with DOH and DECD, to establish a methodology for determining each municipality's fair share housing allocation by 2024. Does not consider market conditions, Ridgefield's infrastructure, environmental or economic factors.
- Existing state law allows an applicant to go to court to obtain approval when a town rejects their affordable housing application. Fair Share goes beyond this allowing any **Housing Authority or developer to sue** a) even when they have not been rejected, let alone filed an application and b) to force the municipality to pay them to build at public expense and c) plaintiffs can be awarded reimbursement for legal fees, costs, and damages.
- **Subjective, Arbitrary Appeals Process:** The bill grants OPM unilateral authority to decide appeals to a Ridgefield's's fair share allocation with zero objective input.
- **Unfunded Planning Mandate:** The bill requires each municipality to develop, adopt, and submit a fair share plan to OPM by 12/1/26 that sets forth new zoning regulations, planning documents, and other actions the municipality will take to achieve its fair share goal.
- This bill will require rezoning for developer focused projects that will only require 20% affordable housing units and 80% at market rate. This is **density not affordability.**
- The bill (from line 2632 on) bypasses "planning and zoning commission, sewer commission, water commission, municipal wetlands commission, municipal conservation commission or board or municipal historic preservation commission" approval for applications that receive state funding for affordable housing.
- **Failure to Submit Fair Share Plan – Requires municipalities to spend any STEAP or LoCIP funds received on the development of affordable housing** until the municipality submits a plan that is approved by OPM.
- **Failure to Adopt Fair Rent Commission or Adopt Inclusionary Zoning – Municipalities would be ineligible for discretionary infrastructure funding under STEAP, Urban Act, and the Main Street Investment Fund.**

· **Failure to Report to DECD regarding housing permits – Municipalities that fail to provide DECD with detailed building permit information are ineligible for discretionary economic development funding.**

Impacts on our environment and natural resources

Virtually every aspect of this complex, onerous, fragmented bill prioritizes development without regard to environmental concerns, climate change, open space preservation or even wetlands preservation.

While the bills to date had skirted environmental issues, the bill contains provisions that may directly take on environmental protections. Specifically, the bill (from lines 907 on) would require municipalities (162) to:

- Review of all residential zones for rules that unnecessarily limit density;
- Review of the **definition of buildable land** and the elimination or reduction of requirements that limit its availability;
- Review of zoning regulations to ensure that middle housing is permitted without automatically requiring the availability of public sewer;
- Review of design standards for residential construction, if any, for unnecessary added costs;
- Review of procedural requirements that are in excess of state law and elimination or reduction of those that add time or cost;
- Review of **subdivision and wetlands regulations** for unnecessary requirements that exceed state law and add expense or delay;

Lost in all the high pressure lobbying of Ridgefield's State delegation by development interests, is the actual benefit to Ridgefield from local land use decision making. It is our Planning and Zoning Commissioners who are accountable to local constituents; and who conduct proceedings in a fair, open and democratic process; and are who are held accountable to due process and judicial review standards. This is how a democratic quasi-judicial body should operate.