

September 3, 2020

Senator Christopher Bray, Chair
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy
Vermont State House
115 State Street
Montpelier, Vermont 05633-5301

Dear Senator/Chairperson Bray:

This letter is to inform the Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy that the City of Winooski, Vermont is in full support of Act 250 exemption for housing, mixed use, and commercial development within designated downtowns and neighborhood development areas. This boosts the vitality of these areas and it advances the state's land use, environmental, fiscal, and public health policies and goals.

Act 250 should not have jurisdiction in areas planned for smart growth to encourage affordable housing and economic investment. The downtowns and neighborhood development areas have been identified as the locations where development is desired so regulatory barriers to developing in these locations appears to undermine the intent of the designations. Providing exemption for housing while maintaining Act 250 jurisdiction for mixed use and commercial development disregards the necessity for economic investment to support affordability.

In addition to local review, the redundancy in review by the District Environmental Commission in areas planned for growth can add additional costs both monetarily and in time. This results in increased development fees thereby reducing affordability. Through extensive planning and public engagement, the City has adopted a comprehensive set of regulatory tools to ensure developments in areas planned for growth are consistent with community priorities. These priorities are designed to create a walkable, livable, and affordable community for all Winooski residents.

The City of Winooski has outperformed many Vermont communities in the creation of Affordable housing, with 20% of all housing citywide being Affordable. This has established our community as an affordable haven for lower income households. Winooski is a low resourced, high needs community, with over 31% of individuals living below the poverty line.

Building Affordable housing is the just first step to supporting low to moderate income Vermonters. The second step is to support the employment opportunities, grand list growth, and quality of life in affordable communities. That means removing obstacles and unnecessary expense for projects creating new employment, infrastructure, services and opportunities for our residents. Act 250 jurisdiction in areas with a robust and professional local planning process, intended for development creates barriers to development through an unnecessary, duplicative, lengthy and expensive process.



City of Winooski
Vermont's Opportunity City

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

The Act 250 exemption for mixed use, and commercial development within the NDA provides the necessary support to maintain Winooski's affordability and truly offer low income neighbors the opportunities they deserve, while avoiding detrimental impacts of concentrating poverty. This exemption will support Winooski's adopted goals and policies and support the implementation of the City's community supported vision.

Sincerely,



Jessie Baker
City Manager

CC: Mayor Kristine Lott
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Energy
Chittenden County Senators
Winooski State Representatives
Kate McCarthy, VNRC

