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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

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A N A C T

RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- RHODE ISLAND COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING  
AND LAND USE ACT

Introduced By: Representatives Noret, and Read

Date Introduced: February 27, 2026

Referred To: House Municipal Government & Housing

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Section 45-22.2-10 of the General Laws in Chapter 45-22.2 entitled "Rhode  
2   Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Act" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3           **45-22.2-10. Coordination of state agencies.**

4           (a) State agencies shall develop their respective programs and conduct their respective  
5   activities in a manner consistent with the findings, intent, and goals established under this chapter.

6           (b) The chief shall develop standards to assist municipalities in the incorporation of the  
7   state goals and policies into comprehensive plans, and to guide the chief's review of comprehensive  
8   plans and state agency activities.

9           (c) The state planning council shall adopt and maintain all rules and regulations necessary  
10   to implement the standards established by this chapter.

11          (d) The chief shall develop and make readily available to all municipalities statewide data  
12   and technical information for use in the preparation of comprehensive plans. Data specific to each  
13   municipality shall be provided by that municipality. The chief shall make maximum use of existing  
14   information available from other agencies.

15          (e) The chief may contract with any person, firm, or corporation to develop the necessary  
16   planning information and coordinate with other state agencies as necessary to provide support and  
17   technical assistance for local planning efforts.

18          (f) The chief shall notify appropriate state agencies of the approval of a comprehensive

1 plan or amendment to a comprehensive plan.

2 (g) Once a municipality's comprehensive plan is approved and remains valid under § 45-  
3 22.2-12(b), programs and projects of state agencies, excluding:

4 (1) The ~~the~~ state guide plan as provided for by § 42-11-10; and

5 (2) Those residential projects to which the process in subsection (g)(1) of this section  
6 applies, shall conform to that plan. In the event that a state agency wishes to undertake a program,  
7 project, or to develop a facility which is not in conformance with the comprehensive plan, the state  
8 planning council shall hold a public hearing on the proposal at which the state agency must  
9 demonstrate:

10 (1) That the program, project, or facility conforms to the stated goals, findings, and intent  
11 of this chapter; and

12 (2) That the program, project, or facility is needed to promote or protect the health, safety,  
13 and welfare of the people of Rhode Island; and

14 (3) That the program, project, or facility is in conformance with the relevant sections of the  
15 state guide plan; and

16 (4) That the program implementation, project, or size, scope, and design of the facility will  
17 vary as little as possible from the comprehensive plan of the municipality.

18 (g)(1) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, any adaptive reuse project on  
19 state-owned vacant land, meeting the requirements and definitions set forth in § 45-24-37(h) on  
20 state-owned property, which is not in conformance with an approved and updated local  
21 comprehensive plan, and/or local zoning ordinance provisions, then, prior to a building permit  
22 being issued, the state planning council shall issue a determination, within sixty (60) days of receipt  
23 of the proposal, as to whether:

24 (i) The project meets the requirements set forth in § 45-24-37(h); and

25 (ii) The project has sought written feedback from the planning, zoning, public works and/or  
26 engineering staff of the municipality in which the property is located; and

27 (iii) The agency has obtained reports from experts, to the extent applicable, which conclude  
28 that there will not be a detrimental impact on traffic, stormwater, wetlands, sewer capacity, potable  
29 water availability, or historic features.

30 (2) Nothing in this section shall prevent the respective state agency from partnering with,  
31 or transferring, leasing or selling the property upon completion of the project, to any nonprofit, or  
32 privately-owned entity or person under any approved and lawful process.

33 SECTION 2. Section 45-23-27 of the General Laws in Chapter 45-23 entitled "Subdivision  
34 of Land" is hereby amended to read as follows:

1           **45-23-27. Applicability.**

2           (a) Sections 45-23-25 — 45-23-74 and all local regulations are applicable to all  
3 applications under this chapter, except that the local regulations and processes adopted pursuant to  
4 this chapter are not applicable to any adaptive reuse project on state-owned property; provided that,  
5 the project complies with §§ 45-24-37(h) and 45-22.2-10(g).

6           **(b) Plats required.**

7           (1) All activity defined as a subdivision requires a new plat, drawn to the specifications of  
8 the local regulations, and reviewed and approved by the planning board or its agents as provided in  
9 this chapter; and

10          (2) Prior to recording, the approved plat shall be submitted for signature and recording as  
11 specified in § 45-23-64.

12          SECTION 3. Section 45-24-28 of the General Laws in Chapter 45-24 entitled "Zoning  
13 Ordinances" is hereby amended to read as follows:

14           **45-24-28. Continuation of ordinances — Supercession — Relation to other statutes.**

15          (a) Any zoning ordinance or amendment of the ordinance enacted after January 1, 1992,  
16 shall conform to the provisions of this chapter. All lawfully adopted zoning ordinances shall be  
17 brought into conformance with this chapter by December 31, 1994. Each city and town shall review  
18 its zoning ordinance and make amendments or revisions that are necessary to bring it into  
19 conformance with this chapter.

20          (b) All zoning ordinances adopted under authority of §§ 45-24-1 through 45-24-26 or any  
21 special zoning enabling act that is in effect on June 17, 1991, shall remain in full force and effect  
22 until December 31, 1994, unless earlier amended so as to conform to the provisions of this chapter,  
23 except that § 45-24-37 and § 45-24-44 shall become effective on January 1, 1992.

24          (c) Former §§ 45-24-1 through 45-24-26 and all special zoning enabling acts, including,  
25 but not limited to, chapter 2299 of the public laws of 1922, as amended (town of Westerly); chapter  
26 1277 of the public laws of 1926, as amended (town of Narragansett); chapter 2065 of the public  
27 laws of 1933, as amended (town of West Warwick); chapter 2233 of the public laws of 1935, as  
28 amended (town of Johnston); chapter 2079 of the public laws of 1948, as amended (town of North  
29 Kingstown); chapter 3125 of the public laws of 1953, as amended (town of New Shoreham);  
30 chapter 101 of the public laws of 1973, as amended (town of South Kingstown); are repealed  
31 effective December 31, 1994. All provisions of zoning ordinances adopted under authority of the  
32 provisions of former §§ 45-24-1 through 45-24-26 or of any special act are repealed and are null  
33 and void as of December 31, 1994, unless amended so as to conform to the provisions of this  
34 chapter.

1 (d) Chapter 24.1 of this title, entitled “Historical Area Zoning”, and chapter 3 of title 1,  
2 entitled “Airport Zoning”, are not superseded by this chapter; provided, that any appeal to the  
3 superior court pursuant to chapter 24.1 of this title, entitled “Historical Area Zoning”, or pursuant  
4 to chapter 3 of title 1, entitled “Airport Zoning”, is taken in the manner provided in § 45-24-69.

5 (e) Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to limit the authority of agencies of state  
6 government to perform any regulatory responsibilities. [A local zoning ordinance adopted pursuant](#)  
7 [to this chapter is not applicable to any adaptive reuse project on state-owned property; provided](#)  
8 [that, the project complies with §§ 45-24-37\(h\) and 45-22.2-10\(g\).](#)

9 SECTION 4. Section 45-53-10 of the General Laws in Chapter 45-53 entitled "Low and  
10 Moderate Income Housing" is hereby amended to read as follows:

11 ~~45-53-10. Repurposing of vacant schools for affordable housing program~~  
12 **Repurposing of vacant schools for housing program.**

13 (a) There is hereby established the repurposing of school buildings for ~~an affordable~~  
14 housing program (the “program”). The program shall be administered by the ~~secretary executive~~  
15 [office](#) of housing as set forth herein.

16 (b) The purpose of the program shall be to provide guidance and assistance in the  
17 repurposing of vacant and unused school buildings as identified and existing as of July 1 of each  
18 year, commencing October 1, 2022.

19 (c) The department of elementary and secondary education (the “department”) shall,  
20 commencing on October 1, 2022, on an annual basis, provide to the speaker of the house, the  
21 president of the senate, and the secretary of housing a list of all school buildings that have been  
22 abandoned or are no longer being used by a school district, [including buildings formerly used for](#)  
23 [educational instruction, administration and ancillary uses.](#)

24 (d)(1) Each municipality shall provide the department with a complete list of buildings  
25 abandoned or no longer being used by the school district for the purposes of conducting a feasibility  
26 assessment to repurpose the building as ~~affordable~~ housing, [including at least twenty-five percent](#)  
27 [\(25%\) of the units designated as affordable housing.](#) The department shall also include and identify  
28 in the list those school buildings that the department anticipates will become abandoned or no  
29 longer used by a school district within the next six (6) months following the issuance of the list.

30 (2) The secretary of housing shall convene a task force comprised of the Rhode Island  
31 housing and mortgage finance corporation, the department of environmental management, the  
32 department of health, and a fire marshal to develop assessment criteria to conduct preliminary  
33 assessments to determine if a building may be repurposed into ~~affordable~~ housing, [including at](#)  
34 [least twenty-five percent \(25%\) of the units designated as affordable housing.](#) Once the preliminary

1 assessment criteria are established, the executive office of housing shall conduct the assessments  
2 for each school on the vacant schools list.

3 (3) If the executive office of housing finds that the assessed building meets the preliminary  
4 assessment criteria, the office may, contingent upon program funding, facilitate a feasibility study  
5 to determine the anticipated costs to repurpose the building for **affordable** housing, including at  
6 least twenty-five percent (25%) of the units designated as affordable housing. This feasibility study  
7 shall be completed within one hundred eighty (180) days after the executive office of housing has  
8 been notified of the availability of a vacant building pursuant to this section.

9 (4) Once a building is determined by the executive office of housing to be appropriate for  
10 repurposing as affordable housing, through a completed feasibility study, if completed, the  
11 executive office of housing, in collaboration with the respective municipality, may invite  
12 prospective developers to submit proposals for redevelopment of the site through a competitive  
13 process, with the goal of repurposing the building into **affordable** housing, including at least twenty-  
14 five percent (25%) of the units designated as affordable housing.

15 (e) The executive office of housing shall maintain on its website a separate page related to  
16 the repurposing of buildings for the **affordable** housing program. This website shall contain a listing  
17 of all buildings for which a feasibility assessment was conducted and the outcome of the  
18 assessment, including a general statement of the condition of the property, an estimate of the types  
19 of renovations, if any, that must be performed to the property, a copy of the feasibility study, and  
20 an estimate of the costs thereof. Provided, it shall be made clear on the website that these are  
21 estimates to repurpose used buildings, and that neither the state, the corporation, the division, the  
22 commission, or any instrumentality of the state or of a municipality or school district shall be liable  
23 for any estimates that are incorrect.

24 (f) The executive office of housing may seek to assist and facilitate persons and developers  
25 who or that want to repurpose former buildings as **affordable** housing. This assistance may include,  
26 but need not be limited to, technical and financial assistance, all to assist in the repurposing of the  
27 school building.

28 (g) The Rhode Island executive office of housing shall promulgate rules and regulations  
29 for the implementation and enforcement of this section.

30 (h) The secretary of housing shall provide an annual report on or before December 31,  
31 commencing with calendar year 2023, including, but not limited to, the number of schools that are  
32 vacant and include a status report of any development and/or feasibility to repurpose a vacant  
33 building.

34 (i) As used herein, the term “affordable housing” means housing that meets the definition

1 for low- or moderate-income housing in § 45-53-3.

2 SECTION 5. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- RHODE ISLAND COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING  
AND LAND USE ACT

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- 1           This act would amend various provisions relative to adaptive reuse projects on state-owned
- 2 property and certain conditions applied thereto.
- 3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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