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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2013

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A N A C T

RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- SUBDIVISION OF LAND

Introduced By: Representatives Gallison, Marcello, Edwards, San Bento, and Blazejewski

Date Introduced: February 27, 2013

Referred To: House Municipal Government

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Sections 45-23-32 and 45-23-44 of the General Laws in Chapter 45-23  
2 entitled "Subdivision of Land" are hereby amended to read as follows:

3           **45-23-32. Definitions.** -- Where words or phrases used in this chapter are defined in the  
4 definitions section of either the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation  
5 Act, section 45-22.2-4, or the Rhode Island Zoning Enabling Act of 1991, section 45-24-31, they  
6 have the meanings stated in those acts. Additional words and phrases may be defined in local  
7 ordinances, regulations and rules under this act. The words and phrases defined in this section,  
8 however, shall be controlling in all local ordinances, regulations, and rules created under this  
9 chapter. See also section 45-23-34. In addition, the following words and phrases have the  
10 following meanings:

11           (1) Administrative officer. - The municipal official designated by the local regulations to  
12 administer the land development and subdivision regulations and to coordinate with local boards  
13 and commissions, municipal staff and state agencies. The administrative officer may be a member  
14 of, or the chair, of the planning board, or an appointed official of the municipality. See section  
15 45-23-55.

16           (2) Administrative subdivision. - Re-subdivision of existing lots which yields no  
17 additional lots for development, and involves no creation or extension of streets. The re-  
18 subdivision only involves divisions, mergers, mergers and division, or adjustments of boundaries  
19 of existing lots.

1 (3) Board of appeal. - The local review authority for appeals of actions of the  
2 administrative officer and the planning board on matters of land development or subdivision,  
3 which shall be the local zoning board of review constituted as the board of appeal. See section 45-  
4 23-57.

5 (4) Bond. - See improvement guarantee.

6 (5) Buildable lot. - A lot where construction for the use(s) permitted on the site under the  
7 local zoning ordinance is considered practicable by the planning board, considering the physical  
8 constraints to development of the site as well as the requirements of the pertinent federal, state  
9 and local regulations. See section 45-23-60(4).

10 (6) Certificate of completeness. - A notice issued by the administrative officer informing  
11 an applicant that the application is complete and meets the requirements of the municipality's  
12 regulations, and that the applicant may proceed with the approval process.

13 (7) Concept plan. - A drawing with accompanying information showing the basic  
14 elements of a proposed land development plan or subdivision as used for pre-application  
15 meetings and early discussions, and classification of the project within the approval process.

16 (8) Consistency with the comprehensive plan. - A requirement of all local land use  
17 regulations which means that all these regulations and subsequent actions are in accordance with  
18 the public policies arrived at through detailed study and analysis and adopted by the municipality  
19 as the comprehensive community plan as specified in section 45-22.2-3.

20 (9) Dedication, fee-in-lieu-of. - Payments of cash which are authorized in the local  
21 regulations when requirements for mandatory dedication of land are not met because of physical  
22 conditions of the site or other reasons. The conditions under which the payments will be allowed  
23 and all formulas for calculating the amount shall be specified in advance in the local regulations.  
24 See section 45-23-47.

25 (10) Development regulation. - Zoning, subdivision, land development plan,  
26 development plan review, historic district, official map, flood plain regulation, soil erosion  
27 control or any other governmental regulation of the use and development of land.

28 (11) Division of land. - A subdivision.

29 (12) Environmental constraints. - Natural features, resources, or land characteristics that  
30 are sensitive to change and may require conservation measures or the application of special  
31 development techniques to prevent degradation of the site, or may require limited development,  
32 or in certain instances, may preclude development. See also physical constraints to development.

33 (13) Final plan. - The final stage of land development and subdivision review. See  
34 section 45-23-43.

1 (14) Final plat. - The final drawing(s) of all or a portion of a subdivision to be recorded  
2 after approval by the planning board and any accompanying material as described in the  
3 community's regulations and/or required by the planning board.

4 (15) Floor area, gross. - See R.I. State Building Code.

5 (16) Governing body. - The body of the local government, generally the city or town  
6 council, having the power to adopt ordinances, accept public dedications, release public  
7 improvement guarantees, and collect fees.

8 (17) Improvement. - Any natural or built item which becomes part of, is placed upon, or  
9 is affixed to, real estate.

10 (18) Improvement guarantee. - A security instrument accepted by a municipality to  
11 ensure that all improvements, facilities, or work required by the land development and  
12 subdivision regulations, or required by the municipality as a condition of approval, will be  
13 completed in compliance with the approved plans and specifications of a development. See  
14 section 45-23-46.

15 (19) Local regulations. - The land development and subdivision review regulations  
16 adopted under the provisions of this act. For purposes of clarification, throughout this act, where  
17 reference is made to local regulations, it is be understood as the land development and  
18 subdivision review regulations and all related ordinances and rules properly adopted pursuant to  
19 this chapter.

20 (20) Maintenance guarantee. - Any security instrument which may be required and  
21 accepted by a municipality to ensure that necessary improvements will function as required for a  
22 specific period of time. See improvement guarantee.

23 (21) Major land development plan. - Any land development plan not classified as a  
24 minor land development plan.

25 (22) Major subdivision. - Any subdivision not classified as either an administrative  
26 subdivision or a minor subdivision.

27 (23) Master plan. - An overall plan for a proposed project site outlining general, rather  
28 than detailed, development intentions. It describes the basic parameters of a major development  
29 proposal, rather than giving full engineering details. Required in major land development or  
30 major subdivision review. See section 45-23-40.

31 (24) Minor land development plan. - A development plan for a residential project as  
32 defined in local regulations, provided that the development does not require waivers or  
33 modifications as specified in this act. All nonresidential land development projects are considered  
34 major land development plans.

1 (25) Minor subdivision. - A plan for a subdivision of land consisting of five (5) or fewer  
2 units or lots, provided that the subdivision does not require waivers or modifications as specified  
3 in this chapter.

4 (26) Modification of requirements. - See section 45-23-62.

5 (27) Parcel. - A lot, or contiguous group of lots in single ownership or under single  
6 control, and usually considered a unit for purposes of development. Also referred to as a tract.

7 (28) Parking area or lot. - All that portion of a development that is used by vehicles, the  
8 total area used for vehicular access, circulation, parking, loading and unloading.

9 (29) Permitting authority. - The local agency of government specifically empowered by  
10 state enabling law and local ordinance to hear and decide on specific matters pertaining to local  
11 land use.

12 (30) Phased development. - Development, usually for large-scale projects, where  
13 construction of public and/or private improvements proceeds by sections subsequent to approval  
14 of a master plan for the entire site. See section 45-23-48.

15 (31) Physical constraints to development. - Characteristics of a site or area, either natural  
16 or man-made, which present significant difficulties to construction of the uses permitted on that  
17 site, or would require extraordinary construction methods. See also environmental constraints.

18 (32) Planning board. - The official planning agency of a municipality, whether  
19 designated as the plan commission, planning commission, plan board, or as otherwise known.

20 (33) Plat. - A drawing or drawings of a land development or subdivision plan showing  
21 the location, boundaries, and lot lines of individual properties, as well as other necessary  
22 information as specified in the local regulations.

23 (34) Pre-application conference. - An initial meeting between developers and municipal  
24 representatives which affords developers the opportunity to present their proposals informally and  
25 to receive comments and directions from the municipal officials and others. See section 45-23-35.

26 (35) Preliminary plan. - The required stage of land development and subdivision review  
27 which requires detailed engineered drawings and all required state and federal permits. See  
28 section 45-23-41.

29 (36) Public improvement. - Any street or other roadway, sidewalk, pedestrian way, tree,  
30 lawn, off-street parking area, drainage feature, or other facility for which the local government or  
31 other governmental entity either is presently responsible, or will ultimately assume the  
32 responsibility for maintenance and operation upon municipal acceptance.

33 (37) Public informational meeting. - A meeting of the planning board or governing body  
34 preceded by a notice, open to the public and at which the public is heard.

1 (38) Re-subdivision. - Any change of an approved or recorded subdivision plat or in a lot  
2 recorded in the municipal land evidence records, or that affects the lot lines of any areas reserved  
3 for public use, or that affects any map or plan legally recorded prior to the adoption of the local  
4 land development and subdivision regulations. For the purposes of this act any action constitutes  
5 a subdivision.

6 [\(39\) Slope of land. - The grade, pitch, rise or incline of the topographic landform or](#)  
7 [surface of the ground.](#)

8 ~~(39)~~[\(40\)](#) Storm water detention. - A provision for storage of storm water runoff and the  
9 controlled release of the runoff during and after a flood or storm.

10 ~~(40)~~[\(41\)](#) Storm water retention. - A provision for storage of storm water runoff.

11 ~~(41)~~[\(42\)](#) Street. - A public or private thoroughfare used, or intended to be used, for  
12 passage or travel by motor vehicles. Streets are further classified by the functions they perform.  
13 See street classification.

14 ~~(42)~~[\(43\)](#) Street, access to. - An adequate and permanent way of entering a lot. All lots of  
15 record shall have access to a public street for all vehicles normally associated with the uses  
16 permitted for that lot.

17 ~~(43)~~[\(44\)](#) Street, alley. - A public or private thoroughfare primarily designed to serve as  
18 secondary access to the side or rear of those properties whose principal frontage is on some other  
19 street.

20 ~~(44)~~[\(45\)](#) Street, cul-de-sac. - A local street with only one outlet and having an  
21 appropriate vehicular turnaround, either temporary or permanent, at the closed end.

22 ~~(45)~~[\(46\)](#) Street, limited access highway. - A freeway or expressway providing for  
23 through traffic. Owners or occupants of abutting property on lands and other persons have no  
24 legal right to access, except at the points and in the manner as may be determined by the public  
25 authority having jurisdiction over the highway.

26 ~~(46)~~[\(47\)](#) Street, private. - A thoroughfare established as a separate tract for the benefit of  
27 multiple, adjacent properties and meeting specific, municipal improvement standards. This  
28 definition does not apply to driveways.

29 ~~(47)~~[\(48\)](#) Street, public. - All public property reserved or dedicated for street traffic.

30 ~~(48)~~[\(49\)](#) Street, stub. - A portion of a street reserved to provide access to future  
31 development, which may provide for utility connections.

32 ~~(49)~~[\(50\)](#) Street classification. - A method of roadway organization which identifies a  
33 street hierarchy according to function within a road system, that is, types of vehicles served and  
34 anticipated volumes, for the purposes of promoting safety, efficient land use and the design

1 character of neighborhoods and districts. Local classifications use the following as major  
2 categories:

3 (a) Arterial. - A major street that serves as an avenue for the circulation of traffic into,  
4 out of, or around the municipality and carries high volumes of traffic.

5 (b) Collector. - A street whose principal function is to carry traffic between local streets  
6 and arterial streets but that may also provide direct access to abutting properties.

7 (c) Local. - Streets whose primary function is to provide access to abutting properties.

8 ~~(50)~~(51) Subdivider. - Any person who (1) having an interest in land, causes it, directly  
9 or indirectly, to be divided into a subdivision or who (2) directly or indirectly sells, leases, or  
10 develops, or offers to sell, lease, or develop, or advertises to sell, lease, or develop, any interest,  
11 lot, parcel, site, unit, or plat in a subdivision, or who (3) engages directly or through an agent in  
12 the business of selling, leasing, developing, or offering for sale, lease, or development a  
13 subdivision or any interest, lot, parcel, site, unit, or plat in a subdivision.

14 ~~(51)~~(52) Subdivision. - The division or re-division, of a lot, tract or parcel of land into  
15 two or more lots, tracts, or parcels. Any adjustment to existing lot lines of a recorded lot by any  
16 means is considered a subdivision. All re-subdivision activity is considered a subdivision. The  
17 division of property for purposes of financing constitutes a subdivision.

18 ~~(52)~~(53) Technical review committee. - A committee appointed by the planning board  
19 for the purpose of reviewing, commenting, and making recommendations to the planning board  
20 with respect to approval of land development and subdivision applications.

21 ~~(53)~~(54) Temporary improvement. - Improvements built and maintained by a developer  
22 during construction of a development project and prior to release of the improvement guarantee,  
23 but not intended to be permanent.

24 ~~(54)~~(55) Vested rights. - The right to initiate or continue the development of an approved  
25 project for a specified period of time, under the regulations that were in effect at the time of  
26 approval, even if, after the approval, the regulations change prior to the completion of the project.

27 ~~(55)~~(56) Waiver of requirements. - See section 45-23-62.

28 **45-23-44. General provisions -- Physical design requirements. --** (a) All local  
29 regulations shall specify, through reasonable, objective standards and criteria, all physical design  
30 requirements for subdivisions and land the development projects which are to be reviewed and  
31 approved pursuant to the regulations. Regulations shall specify all requirements and policies for  
32 subdivisions and land development projects which are not contained in the municipality's zoning  
33 ordinance; provided, however, that the regulations shall be consistent with the substantive  
34 requirements of the zoning ordinance, including, but not limited to, lot size and development

1 [density](#).

2 [\(b\) Nothing in this section shall be construed to restrict a municipality's right, within state](#)  
3 [and local regulations, to establish its own minimum lot size per zoning district in its town or city.](#)

4 [\(c\) The slope of land shall not be excluded from the calculation of the buildable lot area](#)  
5 [or the minimum lot size, or in the calculation of the number of buildable lots or units.](#)

6 ~~(b)~~(d) The requirements and policies may include, but are not limited to, requirements  
7 and policies for rights-of-way, open space, landscaping, connections of proposed streets and  
8 drainage systems with those of the surrounding neighborhood, public access through property to  
9 adjacent public property, and the relationship of proposed developments to natural and man-made  
10 features of the surrounding neighborhood.

11 ~~(e)~~(e) The regulations shall specify all necessary findings, formulas for calculations and  
12 procedures for meeting the requirements and policies. These requirements and policies apply to  
13 all subdivisions and land development projects reviewed and/or administered under the local  
14 regulations.

15 SECTION 2. Sections 45-24-31 and 45-24-33 of the General Laws in Chapter 45-24  
16 entitled "Zoning Ordinances" are hereby amended to read as follows:

17 **45-24-31. Definitions. --** Where words or terms used in this chapter are defined in section  
18 45-22.2-4 [or 45-23-32](#), they have the meanings stated in that section. In addition, the following  
19 words have the following meanings. Additional words and phrases may be used in developing  
20 local ordinances under this chapter; however, the words and phrases defined in this section are  
21 controlling in all local ordinances created under this chapter:

22 (1) Abutter. - One whose property abuts, that is, adjoins at a border, boundary, or point  
23 with no intervening land.

24 (2) Accessory Dwelling Unit. - A dwelling unit: (i) rented to and occupied either by one  
25 or more members of the family of the occupant or occupants of the principal residence; or (ii)  
26 reserved for rental occupancy by a person or a family where the principal residence is owner  
27 occupied, and which meets the following provisions:

28 (A) In zoning districts that allow residential uses, no more than one accessory dwelling  
29 unit may be an accessory to a single-family dwelling.

30 (B) An accessory dwelling unit shall include separate cooking and sanitary facilities,  
31 with its own legal means of ingress and egress and is a complete, separate dwelling unit. The  
32 accessory dwelling unit shall be within or attached to the principal dwelling unit structure or  
33 within an existing structure, such as a garage or barn, and designed so that the appearance of the  
34 principal structure remains that of a one-family residence.

- 1           (3) Accessory Use. - A use of land or of a building, or portion thereof, customarily  
2 incidental and subordinate to the principal use of the land or building. An accessory use may be  
3 restricted to the same lot as the principal use. An accessory use shall not be permitted without the  
4 principal use to which it is related.
- 5           (4) Aggrieved Party. - An aggrieved party, for purposes of this chapter, shall be:
- 6           (i) Any person or persons or entity or entities who can demonstrate that their property  
7 will be injured by a decision of any officer or agency responsible for administering the zoning  
8 ordinance of a city or town; or
- 9           (ii) Anyone requiring notice pursuant to this chapter.
- 10          (5) Agricultural Land. - "Agricultural land", as defined in section 45-22.2-4.
- 11          (6) Airport Hazard Area. - "Airport hazard area", as defined in section 1-3-2.
- 12          (7) Applicant. - An owner or authorized agent of the owner submitting an application or  
13 appealing an action of any official, board, or agency.
- 14          (8) Application. - The completed form or forms and all accompanying documents,  
15 exhibits, and fees required of an applicant by an approving authority for development review,  
16 approval, or permitting purposes.
- 17          (9) Buffer. - Land which is maintained in either a natural or landscaped state, and is used  
18 to screen and/or mitigate the impacts of development on surrounding areas, properties, or rights-  
19 of-way.
- 20          (10) Building. - Any structure used or intended for supporting or sheltering any use or  
21 occupancy.
- 22          (11) Building Envelope. - The three-dimensional space within which a structure is  
23 permitted to be built on a lot and which is defined by regulations governing building setbacks,  
24 maximum height, and bulk; by other regulations; and/or by any combination thereof.
- 25          (12) Building Height. - The vertical distance from grade, as determined by the  
26 municipality, to the top of the highest point of the roof or structure. The distance may exclude  
27 spires, chimneys, flag poles, and the like.
- 28          (13) Cluster. - A site planning technique that concentrates buildings in specific areas on  
29 the site to allow the remaining land to be used for recreation, common open space, and/or  
30 preservation of environmentally, historically, culturally, or other sensitive features and/or  
31 structures. The techniques used to concentrate buildings shall be specified in the ordinance and  
32 may include, but are not limited to, reduction in lot areas, setback requirements, and/or bulk  
33 requirements, with the resultant open land being devoted by deed restrictions for one or more  
34 uses. Under cluster development there is no increase in the number of lots that would be



1 permitted under conventional development except where ordinance provisions include incentive  
2 bonuses for certain types or conditions of development.

3 (14) Common Ownership. - Either:

4 (i) Ownership by one or more individuals or entities in any form of ownership of two (2)  
5 or more contiguous lots; or

6 (ii) Ownership by any association (ownership may also include a municipality) of one or  
7 more lots under specific development techniques.

8 (15) Community Residence. - A home or residential facility where children and/or adults  
9 reside in a family setting and may or may not receive supervised care. This does not include  
10 halfway houses or substance abuse treatment facilities. This does include, but is not limited, to the  
11 following:

12 (i) Whenever six (6) or fewer children or adults with retardation reside in any type of  
13 residence in the community, as licensed by the state pursuant to chapter 24 of title 40.1. All  
14 requirements pertaining to local zoning are waived for these community residences;

15 (ii) A group home providing care or supervision, or both, to not more than eight (8)  
16 persons with disabilities, and licensed by the state pursuant to chapter 24 of title 40.1;

17 (iii) A residence for children providing care or supervision, or both, to not more than  
18 eight (8) children including those of the care giver and licensed by the state pursuant to chapter  
19 72.1 of title 42;

20 (iv) A community transitional residence providing care or assistance, or both, to no more  
21 than six (6) unrelated persons or no more than three (3) families, not to exceed a total of eight (8)  
22 persons, requiring temporary financial assistance, and/or to persons who are victims of crimes,  
23 abuse, or neglect, and who are expected to reside in that residence not less than sixty (60) days  
24 nor more than two (2) years. Residents will have access to and use of all common areas, including  
25 eating areas and living rooms, and will receive appropriate social services for the purpose of  
26 fostering independence, self-sufficiency, and eventual transition to a permanent living situation.

27 (16) Comprehensive Plan. - The comprehensive plan adopted and approved pursuant to  
28 chapter 22.2 of this title and to which any zoning adopted pursuant to this chapter shall be in  
29 compliance.

30 (17) Day Care -- Day Care Center. - Any other day care center which is not a family day  
31 care home.

32 (18) Day Care -- Family Day Care Home. - Any home other than the individual's home  
33 in which day care in lieu of parental care or supervision is offered at the same time to six (6) or  
34 less individuals who are not relatives of the care giver, but may not contain more than a total of

1 eight (8) individuals receiving day care.

2 (19) Density, Residential. - The number of dwelling units per unit of land.

3 (20) Development. - The construction, reconstruction, conversion, structural alteration,  
4 relocation, or enlargement of any structure; any mining, excavation, landfill or land disturbance;  
5 or any change in use, or alteration or extension of the use, of land.

6 (21) Development Plan Review. - The process whereby authorized local officials review  
7 the site plans, maps, and other documentation of a development to determine the compliance with  
8 the stated purposes and standards of the ordinance.

9 (22) District. - See "zoning use district".

10 (23) Drainage System. - A system for the removal of water from land by drains, grading,  
11 or other appropriate means. These techniques may include runoff controls to minimize erosion  
12 and sedimentation during and after construction or development, the means for preserving surface  
13 and groundwaters, and the prevention and/or alleviation of flooding.

14 (24) Dwelling Unit. - A structure or portion of a structure providing complete,  
15 independent living facilities for one or more persons, including permanent provisions for living,  
16 sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation, and containing a separate means of ingress and egress.

17 (25) Extractive Industry. - The extraction of minerals, including: solids, such as coal and  
18 ores; liquids, such as crude petroleum; and gases, such as natural gases. The term also includes  
19 quarrying; well operation; milling, such as crushing, screening, washing, and flotation; and other  
20 preparation customarily done at the extraction site or as a part of the extractive activity.

21 (26) Family. - A person or persons related by blood, marriage, or other legal means. See  
22 also "Household".

23 (27) Floating Zone. - An unmapped zoning district adopted within the ordinance which  
24 is established on the zoning map only when an application for development, meeting the zone  
25 requirements, is approved.

26 (28) Floodplains, or Flood Hazard Area. - As defined in section 45-22.2-4.

27 (29) Groundwater. - "Groundwater" and associated terms, as defined in section 46-13.1-  
28 3.

29 (30) Halfway House. - A residential facility for adults or children who have been  
30 institutionalized for criminal conduct and who require a group setting to facilitate the transition to  
31 a functional member of society.

32 (31) Hardship. - See section 45-24-41.

33 (32) Historic District, or Historic Site. - As defined in section 45-22.2-4.

34 (33) Home Occupation. - Any activity customarily carried out for gain by a resident,

1 conducted as an accessory use in the resident's dwelling unit.

2 (34) Household. - One or more persons living together in a single dwelling unit, with  
3 common access to, and common use of, all living and eating areas and all areas and facilities for  
4 the preparation and storage of food within the dwelling unit. The term "household unit" is  
5 synonymous with the term "dwelling unit" for determining the number of units allowed within  
6 any structure on any lot in a zoning district. An individual household shall consist of any one of  
7 the following:

8 (i) A family, which may also include servants and employees living with the family; or

9 (ii) A person or group of unrelated persons living together. The maximum number may  
10 be set by local ordinance, but this maximum shall not be less than three (3).

11 (35) Incentive Zoning. - The process whereby the local authority may grant additional  
12 development capacity in exchange for the developer's provision of a public benefit or amenity as  
13 specified in local ordinances.

14 (36) Infrastructure. - Facilities and services needed to sustain residential, commercial,  
15 industrial, institutional, and other activities.

16 (37) Land Development Project. - A project in which one or more lots, tracts, or parcels  
17 of land are ~~to be~~ developed or redeveloped as a coordinated site for ~~a complex of~~ one or more  
18 uses, units, or structures, including, but not limited to, planned development and/or cluster  
19 development for residential, commercial, institutional, recreational, open space, and/or mixed  
20 uses as ~~may be provided for~~ in the zoning ordinance.

21 (38) Lot. - Either:

22 (i) The basic development unit for determination of lot area, depth, and other  
23 dimensional regulations; or

24 (ii) A parcel of land whose boundaries have been established by some legal instrument  
25 such as a recorded deed or recorded map and which is recognized as a separate legal entity for  
26 purposes of transfer of title.

27 (39) Lot Area. - The total area within the boundaries of a lot, excluding any street right-  
28 of-way, usually reported in acres or square feet.

29 (40) Lot Area, Minimum. - The smallest land area established by the local zoning  
30 ordinance upon which a use, building or structure may be located in a particular zoning district.

31 ~~(40)~~(41) Lot Building Coverage. - That portion of the lot that is or may be covered by  
32 buildings and accessory buildings.

33 ~~(41)~~(42) Lot Depth. - The distance measured from the front lot line to the rear lot line.  
34 For lots where the front and rear lot lines are not parallel, the lot depth is an average of the depth.

1           ~~(42)~~[\(43\)](#) Lot Frontage. - That portion of a lot abutting a street. A zoning ordinance shall  
2 specify how noncontiguous frontage will be considered with regard to minimum frontage  
3 requirements.

4           ~~(43)~~[\(44\)](#) Lot Line. - A line of record, bounding a lot, which divides one lot from another  
5 lot or from a public or private street or any other public or private space and shall include:

6           (i) Front: the lot line separating a lot from a street right-of-way. A zoning ordinance shall  
7 specify the method to be used to determine the front lot line on lots fronting on more than one  
8 street, for example, corner and through lots;

9           (ii) Rear: the lot line opposite and most distant from the front lot line, or in the case of  
10 triangular or otherwise irregularly shaped lots, an assumed line at least ten feet (10') in length  
11 entirely within the lot, parallel to and at a maximum distance from the front lot line; and

12           (iii) Side: any lot line other than a front or rear lot line. On a corner lot, a side lot line  
13 may be a street lot line, depending on requirements of the local zoning ordinance.

14           [\(45\)](#) Lot Size, Minimum. - Shall have the same meaning as lot area defined herein.

15           ~~(44)~~[\(46\)](#) Lot, Through. - A lot which fronts upon two (2) parallel streets, or which fronts  
16 upon two (2) streets which do not intersect at the boundaries of the lot.

17           ~~(45)~~[\(47\)](#) Lot Width. - The horizontal distance between the side lines of a lot measured at  
18 right angles to its depth along a straight line parallel to the front lot line at the minimum front  
19 setback line.

20           ~~(46)~~[\(48\)](#) Mere Inconvenience. - See section 45-24-41.

21           ~~(47)~~[\(49\)](#) Mixed Use. - A mixture of land uses within a single development, building, or  
22 tract.

23           ~~(48)~~[\(50\)](#) Modification. - Permission granted and administered by the zoning enforcement  
24 officer of the city or town, and pursuant to the provisions of this chapter to grant a dimensional  
25 variance other than lot area requirements from the zoning ordinance to a limited degree as  
26 determined by the zoning ordinance of the city or town, but not to exceed twenty-five percent  
27 (25%) of each of the applicable dimensional requirements.

28           ~~(49)~~[\(51\)](#) Nonconformance. - A building, structure, or parcel of land, or use thereof,  
29 lawfully existing at the time of the adoption or amendment of a zoning ordinance and not in  
30 conformity with the provisions of that ordinance or amendment. Nonconformance is of only two  
31 (2) types:

32           (i) Nonconforming by use: a lawfully established use of land, building, or structure  
33 which is not a permitted use in that zoning district. A building or structure containing more  
34 dwelling units than are permitted by the use regulations of a zoning ordinance is nonconformity

1 by use; or

2 (ii) Nonconforming by dimension: a building, structure, or parcel of land not in  
3 compliance with the dimensional regulations of the zoning ordinance. Dimensional regulations  
4 include all regulations of the zoning ordinance, other than those pertaining to the permitted uses.  
5 A building or structure containing more dwelling units than are permitted by the use regulations  
6 of a zoning ordinance is nonconforming by use; a building or structure containing a permitted  
7 number of dwelling units by the use regulations of the zoning ordinance, but not meeting the lot  
8 area per dwelling unit regulations, is nonconforming by dimension.

9 ~~(50)~~[\(52\)](#) Overlay District. - A district established in a zoning ordinance that is  
10 superimposed on one or more districts or parts of districts. The standards and requirements  
11 associated with an overlay district may be more or less restrictive than those in the underlying  
12 districts consistent with other applicable state and federal laws.

13 ~~(51)~~[\(53\)](#) Performance Standards. - A set of criteria or limits relating to elements which a  
14 particular use or process must either meet or may not exceed.

15 ~~(52)~~[\(54\)](#) Permitted Use. - A use by right which is specifically authorized in a particular  
16 zoning district.

17 ~~(53)~~[\(55\)](#) Planned Development. - A "land development project", as defined in section  
18 45-24-31(37), and developed according to plan as a single entity and containing one or more  
19 structures and/or uses with appurtenant common areas.

20 ~~(54)~~[\(56\)](#) Plant Agriculture. - The growing of plants for food or fiber, to sell or consume.

21 ~~(55)~~[\(57\)](#) Preapplication Conference. - A review meeting of a proposed development held  
22 between applicants and reviewing agencies as permitted by law and municipal ordinance, before  
23 formal submission of an application for a permit or for development approval.

24 ~~(56)~~[\(58\)](#) Setback Line or Lines. - A line or lines parallel to a lot line at the minimum  
25 distance of the required setback for the zoning district in which the lot is located that establishes  
26 the area within which the principal structure must be erected or placed.

27 [\(59\) Slope of Land. - The grade, pitch, rise or incline of the topographic landform or](#)  
28 [surface of the ground.](#)

29 ~~(57)~~[\(60\)](#) Site Plan. - The development plan for one or more lots on which is shown the  
30 existing and/or the proposed conditions of the lot.

31 ~~(58)~~[\(61\)](#) Special Use. - A regulated use which is permitted pursuant to the special-use  
32 permit issued by the authorized governmental entity, pursuant to section 45-24-42. Formerly  
33 referred to as a special exception.

34 ~~(59)~~[\(62\)](#) Structure. - A combination of materials to form a construction for use,

1 occupancy, or ornamentation, whether installed on, above, or below, the surface of land or water.

2 ~~(60)~~(63) Substandard Lot of Record. - Any lot lawfully existing at the time of adoption  
3 or amendment of a zoning ordinance and not in conformance with the dimensional and/or area  
4 provisions of that ordinance.

5 ~~(61)~~(64) Use. - The purpose or activity for which land or buildings are designed,  
6 arranged, or intended, or for which land or buildings are occupied or maintained.

7 ~~(62)~~(65) Variance. - Permission to depart from the literal requirements of a zoning  
8 ordinance. An authorization for the construction or maintenance of a building or structure, or for  
9 the establishment or maintenance of a use of land, which is prohibited by a zoning ordinance.  
10 There are only two (2) categories of variance, a use variance or a dimensional variance.

11 (i) Use Variance. - Permission to depart from the use requirements of a zoning ordinance  
12 where the applicant for the requested variance has shown by evidence upon the record that the  
13 subject land or structure cannot yield any beneficial use if it is to conform to the provisions of the  
14 zoning ordinance.

15 (ii) Dimensional Variance. - Permission to depart from the dimensional requirements of  
16 a zoning ordinance, where the applicant for the requested relief has shown, by evidence upon the  
17 record, that there is no other reasonable alternative way to enjoy a legally permitted beneficial use  
18 of the subject property unless granted the requested relief from the dimensional regulations.  
19 However, the fact that a use may be more profitable or that a structure may be more valuable after  
20 the relief is granted are not grounds for relief.

21 ~~(63)~~(66) Waters. - As defined in section 46-12-1(23).

22 ~~(64)~~(67) Wetland, Coastal. - As defined in section 45-22.2-4.

23 ~~(65)~~(68) Wetland, Freshwater. - As defined in section 2-1-20.

24 ~~(66)~~(69) Zoning Certificate. - A document signed by the zoning enforcement officer, as  
25 required in the zoning ordinance, which acknowledges that a use, structure, building, or lot either  
26 complies with or is legally nonconforming to the provisions of the municipal zoning ordinance or  
27 is an authorized variance or modification therefrom.

28 ~~(67)~~(70) Zoning Map. - The map or maps which are a part of the zoning ordinance and  
29 which delineate the boundaries of all mapped zoning districts within the physical boundary of the  
30 city or town.

31 ~~(68)~~(71) Zoning Ordinance. - An ordinance enacted by the legislative body of the city or  
32 town pursuant to this chapter and in the manner providing for the adoption of ordinances in the  
33 city or town's legislative or home rule charter, if any, which establish regulations and standards  
34 relating to the nature and extent of uses of land and structures, which is consistent with the

1 comprehensive plan of the city or town as defined in chapter 22.2 of this title, which includes a  
2 zoning map, and which complies with the provisions of this chapter.

3 ~~(69)~~(72) Zoning Use District. - The basic unit in zoning, either mapped or unmapped, to  
4 which a uniform set of regulations applies, or a uniform set of regulations for a specified use.  
5 Zoning use districts include, but are not limited to: agricultural, commercial, industrial,  
6 institutional, open space, and residential. Each district may include sub-districts. Districts may be  
7 combined.

8 **45-24-33. Standard provisions.** -- (a) A zoning ordinance addresses each of the purposes  
9 stated in section 45-24-30 and addresses, through reasonable objective standards and criteria, the  
10 following general provisions which are numbered for reference purposes only:

11 (1) Permitting, prohibiting, limiting, and restricting the development of land and  
12 structures in zoning districts, and regulating those land and structures according to their type, and  
13 the nature and extent of their use;

14 (2) Regulating the nature and extent of the use of land for residential, commercial,  
15 industrial, institutional, recreational, agricultural, open space, or other use or combination of uses,  
16 as the need for land for those purposes is determined by the city or town's comprehensive plan;

17 (3) Permitting, prohibiting, limiting, and restricting buildings, structures, land uses, and  
18 other development by performance standards, or other requirements, related to air and water and  
19 groundwater quality, noise and glare, energy consumption, soil erosion and sedimentation, and/or  
20 the availability and capacity of existing and planned public or private services;

21 (4) Regulating within each district and designating requirements for:

22 (i) The height, number of stories, and size of buildings;

23 (ii) The dimensions, size, lot coverage, floor area ratios, and layout of lots or  
24 development areas;

25 (iii) The density and intensity of use;

26 (iv) Access to air and light, views, and solar access;

27 (v) Open space, yards, courts, and buffers;

28 (vi) Parking areas, road design, and, where appropriate, pedestrian, bicycle, and other  
29 circulator systems;

30 (vii) Landscaping, fencing, and lighting;

31 (viii) Appropriate drainage requirements and methods to manage stormwater runoff;

32 (ix) Public access to waterbodies, rivers, and streams; and

33 (x) Other requirements in connection with any use of land or structure;

34 (5) Permitting, prohibiting, limiting, and restricting development in flood plains or flood

- 1 hazard areas and designated significant natural areas;
- 2 (6) Promoting the conservation of energy and promoting energy-efficient patterns of  
3 development;
- 4 (7) Providing for the protection of existing and planned public drinking water supplies,  
5 their tributaries and watersheds, and the protection of Narragansett Bay, its tributaries and  
6 watershed;
- 7 (8) Providing for adequate, safe, and efficient transportation systems; and avoiding  
8 congestion by relating types and levels of development to the capacity of the circulation system,  
9 and maintaining a safe level of service of the system;
- 10 (9) Providing for the preservation and enhancement of the recreational resources of the  
11 city or town;
- 12 (10) Promoting an economic climate which increases quality job opportunities and the  
13 overall economic well-being of the city or town and the state;
- 14 (11) Providing for pedestrian access to and between public and private facilities,  
15 including, but not limited to schools, employment centers, shopping areas, recreation areas, and  
16 residences;
- 17 (12) Providing standards for and requiring the provision of adequate and properly  
18 designed physical improvements, including plantings, and the proper maintenance of property;
- 19 (13) Permitting, prohibiting, limiting, and restricting land use in areas where  
20 development is deemed to create a hazard to the public health or safety;
- 21 (14) Permitting, prohibiting, limiting, and restricting extractive industries and earth  
22 removal and requiring restoration of land after these activities;
- 23 (15) Regulating sanitary landfill, except as otherwise provided by state statute;
- 24 (16) Permitting, prohibiting, limiting, and restricting signs and billboards, and other  
25 outdoor advertising devices;
- 26 (17) Designating airport hazard areas under the provisions of chapter 3 of title 1, and  
27 enforcement of airport hazard area zoning regulations under the provisions established in that  
28 chapter;
- 29 (18) Designating areas of historic, cultural, and/or archaeological value and regulating  
30 development in those areas under the provisions of chapter 24.1 of this title;
- 31 (19) Providing standards and requirements for the regulation, review, and approval of  
32 any proposed development in connection with those uses of land, buildings, or structures  
33 specifically designated as subject to development plan review in a zoning ordinance;
- 34 (20) Designating special protection areas for water supply and limiting or prohibiting



1 development in these areas, except as otherwise provided by state statute;

2 (21) Specifying requirements for safe road access to developments from existing streets,  
3 including limiting the number, design, and location of curb cuts, and provisions for internal  
4 circulation systems for new developments, and provisions for pedestrian and bicycle ways; and

5 (22) Reducing unnecessary delay in approving or disapproving development  
6 applications, through provisions for preapplication conferences and other means.

7 (23) Providing for the application of the Rhode Island Fair Housing Practices Act,  
8 chapter 37 of title 34, the United States Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 (FHAA), the  
9 Rhode Island Civil Rights People with Disabilities Act, chapter 37 of title 42, and the Americans  
10 with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), 42 U.S.C. section 12101 et seq.

11 (24) Regulating drive-through windows of varied intensity of use when associated with  
12 land use activities and providing standards and requirements for the regulation, review and  
13 approval of the drive-through windows, including, but not limited to:

14 (i) Identifying within which zoning districts drive-through windows may be permitted,  
15 prohibited, or permitted by special use permit;

16 (ii) Specifying requirements for adequate traffic circulation; and

17 (iii) Providing for adequate pedestrian safety and access, including issues concerning  
18 safety and access for those with disabilities.

19 (b) A zoning ordinance may include special provisions for any or all of the following:

20 (1) Authorizing development incentives, including, but not limited to, additional  
21 permitting uses, increased development and density or additional design or dimensional flexibility  
22 in exchange for ~~known as incentive zoning, for purposes of providing increases in the permitted~~  
23 ~~use or dimension as a condition for, but not limited to:~~

24 (i) Increased open space;

25 (ii) Increased housing choices;

26 (iii) Traffic and pedestrian improvements;

27 (iv) Public and/or private facilities; and/or

28 (v) Other amenities as desired by the city or town and consistent with its comprehensive  
29 plan. The provisions in the ordinance shall include maximum allowable densities of population  
30 and/or intensities of use and shall indicate the type of improvements, amenities, and/or  
31 conditions. Conditions may be made for donation in lieu of direct provisions for improvements or  
32 amenities;

33 (2) Establishing a system for transfer of development rights within or between zoning  
34 districts designated in the zoning ordinance; and

1           (3) Regulating the development adjacent to designated scenic highways, scenic  
2 waterways, major thoroughfares, public greenspaces, or other areas of special public investment  
3 or valuable natural resources.

4           (c) Slope of land shall not be excluded from the calculation of the buildable lot area or  
5 the minimum lot size, or in the calculation of the number of buildable lots or units.

6           (d) Nothing in this section shall be construed to restrict a municipality's right, within state  
7 and local regulations, to establish its own minimum lot size per zoning district in its town or city.

8           SECTION 3. This act shall take effect on January 1, 2014.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF  
A N A C T  
RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- SUBDIVISION OF LAND

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- 1           This act would provide for the addition of certain definitions relative to "slope of land"
- 2   within the chapters dealing with zoning and subdivision of land.
- 3           This act would take effect on January 1, 2014.

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LC01077  
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