

2020 -- S 2670

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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

A N A C T

RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- LOW- AND MODERATE-INCOME HOUSING

Introduced By: Senator Elaine J. Morgan

Date Introduced: February 27, 2020

Referred To: Senate Housing & Municipal Government

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 45-53-3 of the General Laws in Chapter 45-53 entitled "Low and
2 Moderate Income Housing" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **45-53-3. Definitions.**

4 The following words, wherever used in this chapter, unless a different meaning clearly
5 appears from the context, have the following meanings:

6 (1) "Affordable housing plan" means a component of a housing element, as defined in
7 subdivision 45-22.2-4(1), to meet housing needs in a city or town that is prepared in accordance
8 with guidelines adopted by the state planning council, and/or to meet the provisions of subsection
9 45-53-4(b)(1) and (c).

10 (2) "Approved affordable housing plan" means an affordable housing plan that has been
11 approved by the director of administration as meeting the guidelines for the local comprehensive
12 plan as promulgated by the state planning council; provided, however, that state review and
13 approval, for plans submitted by December 31, 2004, shall not be contingent on the city or town
14 having completed, adopted, or amended its comprehensive plan as provided for in sections 45-
15 22.2-8, 45-22.2-9, or 45-22.2-12.

16 (3) "Comprehensive plan" means a comprehensive plan adopted and approved by a city or
17 town pursuant to chapters 22.2 and 22.3 of this title.

18 (4) "Consistent with local needs" means reasonable in view of the state need for low and
19 moderate income housing, considered with the number of low income persons in the city or town

1 affected and the need to protect the health and safety of the occupants of the proposed housing or
2 of the residence of the city or town, to promote better site and building design in relation to the
3 surroundings, or to preserve open spaces, and if the local zoning or land use ordinances,
4 requirements, and regulations are applied as equally as possible to both subsidized and
5 unsubsidized housing. Local zoning and land use ordinances, requirements, or regulations are
6 consistent with local needs when imposed by a city or town council after comprehensive hearing
7 in a city or town where:

8 (i) Low or moderate income housing exists which is: (A) in the case of an urban city or
9 town which has at least 5,000 occupied year-round rental units and the units, as reported in the
10 latest decennial census of the city or town, comprise twenty-five percent (25%) or more of the year-
11 round housing units, is in excess of fifteen percent (15%) of the total occupied year-round rental
12 units; or (B) in the case of all other cities or towns, is in excess of ten percent (10%) of the year-
13 round housing units reported in the census; provided, however, that for the purposes of calculating
14 the number of low- and moderate-income housing units that exist in the town of Richmond, all
15 residential units constructed or to be constructed at the Preserve at Boulder Hills, designated as Lot
16 38 on Richmond Tax Assessor's Plat 5B, Lots 5 and 25 on Richmond Tax Assessor's Plat 6A, and
17 Lots 2, 4, and 9 on Richmond Tax Assessor's Plat 6B, shall not be considered year-round housing
18 units.

19 (ii) The city or town has promulgated zoning or land use ordinances, requirements, and
20 regulations to implement a comprehensive plan which has been adopted and approved pursuant to
21 chapters 22.2 and 22.3 of this title, and the housing element of the comprehensive plan provides
22 for low and moderate income housing in excess of either ten percent (10%) of the year-round
23 housing units or fifteen percent (15%) of the occupied year-round rental housing units as provided
24 in subdivision (2)(i).

25 (5) "Infeasible" means any condition brought about by any single factor or combination of
26 factors, as a result of limitations imposed on the development by conditions attached to the approval
27 of the comprehensive permit, to the extent that it makes it impossible for a public agency, nonprofit
28 organization, or limited equity housing cooperative to proceed in building or operating low or
29 moderate income housing without financial loss, within the limitations set by the subsidizing
30 agency of government, on the size or character of the development, on the amount or nature of the
31 subsidy, or on the tenants, rentals, and income permissible, and without substantially changing the
32 rent levels and unit sizes proposed by the public agency, nonprofit organization, or limited equity
33 housing cooperative.

34 (6) "Letter of eligibility" means a letter issued by the Rhode Island housing and mortgage

1 finance corporation in accordance with subsection 42-55-5.3(a).

2 (7) "Local board" means any town or city official, zoning board of review, planning board
3 or commission, board of appeal or zoning enforcement officer, local conservation commission,
4 historic district commission, or other municipal board having supervision of the construction of
5 buildings or the power of enforcing land use regulations, such as subdivision, or zoning laws.

6 (8) "Local review board" means the planning board as defined by subdivision 45-22.2-
7 4(26), or if designated by ordinance as the board to act on comprehensive permits for the town, the
8 zoning board of review established pursuant to section 45-24-56.

9 (9) "Low or moderate income housing" means any housing whether built or operated by
10 any public agency or any nonprofit organization or by any limited equity housing cooperative or
11 any private developer, that is subsidized by a federal, state, or municipal government subsidy under
12 any program to assist the construction or rehabilitation of housing affordable to low or moderate
13 income households, as defined in the applicable federal or state statute, or local ordinance and that
14 will remain affordable through a land lease and/or deed restriction for ninety-nine (99) years or
15 such other period that is either agreed to by the applicant and town or prescribed by the federal,
16 state, or municipal government subsidy program but that is not less than thirty (30) years from
17 initial occupancy.

18 (10) "Meeting housing needs" means adoption of the implementation program of an
19 approved affordable housing plan and the absence of unreasonable denial of applications that are
20 made pursuant to an approved affordable housing plan in order to accomplish the purposes and
21 expectations of the approved affordable housing plan.

22 (11) "Municipal government subsidy" means assistance that is made available through a
23 city or town program sufficient to make housing affordable, as affordable housing is defined in §
24 42-128-8.1(d)(1); such assistance may include, but is not limited to, direct financial support,
25 abatement of taxes, waiver of fees and charges, and approval of density bonuses and/or internal
26 subsidies, and any combination of forms of assistance.

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

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
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RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- LOW- AND MODERATE-INCOME HOUSING

1 This act would allow the town of Richmond, when calculating its number of low- and
2 moderate-income housing units to not consider certain residential units constructed or to be
3 constructed on certain identified assessor's lots located at the Preserve at Boulder Hills as year-
4 round housing units.

5 This act would take effect upon passage.

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