
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 7113

AN ACT CONCERNING LIGHT-TOUCH DENSITY HOUSING.

SUMMARY

This bill creates a framework for municipal regulation of “light-touch density housing.” Broadly, these are residential developments that are deemed compatible with single-family homes. The framework generally allows municipalities to adopt zoning, subdivision, and health or safety standards for these developments that are no stricter than those for detached single-family homes. It also prohibits certain specified standards (e.g., imposing certain height limitations or requiring units to be set-aside as affordable housing, see below).

The bill additionally explicitly authorizes municipalities to opt to review and approve light-touch density housing developments with up to four units administratively, without discretionary review or a public hearing. This authorization applies to developments proposed on a parcel (1) zoned for single-family dwellings and (2) with an available source of water and sewerage. The bill does not specify what constitutes water availability (e.g., public water).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2025

LIGHT-TOUCH DENSITY HOUSING DEFINED

Under the bill, “light-touch density housing” includes specified building types that are (1) compatible in scale, form, and character with single-family housing and (2) located where water and sewerage are available. Presumably, municipalities may adopt criteria for evaluating whether a proposed development is compatible with single-family housing in terms of its scale, form, and character.

The bill specifies the following building types qualify if they meet the above-mentioned criteria:

1. two or more attached, detached, stacked, or clustered dwellings;
2. two, three, or four family residential dwellings;
3. duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhouses, cottage housing, and accessory dwelling units; and
4. single-family attached or detached dwellings on smaller lots.

Existing law defines some of these terms for purposes of the zoning statutes, but the bill does not incorporate them by reference (see CGS § 8-1a). Neither existing law nor the bill define “smaller lots.”

LOCALLY ADOPTED OBJECTIVE STANDARDS

The bill includes a provision broadly allowing municipalities to adopt “objective zoning, subdivision, and health or safety standards” for proposed developments that qualify as light-touch density housing. The bill explicitly specifies certain standards that municipalities may adopt. But it also limits local regulation of these proposed developments by prohibiting certain standards and generally requiring proposed developments to be treated like detached, single family homes. The bill does not contemplate how these requirements interact with existing land use regulations and ordinances.

Under the bill, “objective zoning, subdivision, or health or safety standards” for light-touch density housing means standards that:

1. are uniformly verifiable by reference to a publicly available external benchmark or criterion;
2. compared to those for detached, single-family dwellings, do not impose requirements that are more “restrictive” and apply the same development permit, environmental review, and available expedited processes; and
3. do not discourage their development through unreasonable costs, fees, delays, or other requirements that individually or cumulatively make impracticable their permitting, siting, construction, or ownership (the bill does not define

“unreasonable” or “impracticable”).

Prohibited Requirements

For proposed developments that qualify as light-touch density housing, the bill prohibits municipalities from adopting objective zoning, subdivision, health or safety, or other (unspecified) standards:

1. setting a minimum or maximum unit size requirement (existing law already prohibits most zoning regulations from imposing minimum floor area requirements that exceed those in applicable building or housing codes (CGS § 8-2));
2. setting a maximum lot size requirement or setting a minimum lot size requirement exceeding 5,000 square feet;
3. setting a maximum floor-area ratio of less than 150% (i.e. the ratio of the building’s total closed, conditioned floor area divided by the parcel’s total area);
4. setting a maximum building-coverage ratio of less than 50% (i.e. the ratio of the building footprint area divided by the parcel’s total area);
5. prohibiting construction on parcels due to an interior lot configuration;
6. imposing a height limitation of less than three stories; and
7. imposing owner occupancy standards or income limits.

For qualifying developments, the bill prohibits municipalities from imposing fee requirements beyond those required for “traditional” single-family dwellings. Existing law, unchanged bill, prohibits municipalities from using a fee schedule charging more because a residential building has more than four units, including higher fees per unit, per square footage, or per unit of construction cost (CGS § 8-1c).

For qualifying developments, the bill also prohibits municipalities from imposing affordability set-aside requirements. Current law, which

the bill does not supersede or amend, specifically authorizes municipalities to require developers to set-aside a reasonable number of units as affordable housing (CGS § 8-2i).

Permissible Requirements

Under the bill, the following objective zoning, subdivision, health or safety, or other (unspecified) standards are explicitly allowed:

1. no required setback for an existing structure or a structure constructed on the same parcel and to the same dimensions as an existing structure;
2. as long as there are no minimum or maximum unit size requirements, required front and rear setbacks of up to 10 feet and side setbacks of 5 feet; and
3. required off-street parking of up to one space per dwelling, except no off-street parking can be required if the parcel is located within a (a) half-mile radius of a rail, transit stop, or a bus transfer station, or (b) quarter-mile radius of a bus stop with regular service.

BACKGROUND

Related Bills

sSB 1313, favorably reported by the Planning and Development Committee, requires most municipalities to allow a greater density of housing development around public transit stations.

HB 7035, favorably reported by the Housing Committee, prohibits most municipalities from implementing a temporary or permanent ban on developing multifamily housing.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Housing Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 17 Nay 1 (03/06/2025)