

March 24, 2025

Sen/Rep Name  
Address  
Address

Dear Senator/Representative \_\_\_\_\_;

The City of West St. Paul respectfully asks you to oppose [HF 1987/SF 2229](#) (“Minnesota Starter Home Act”), [HF 2140/ SF 2231](#) (“More Homes Right Places Act”), and [HF 2018/ SF 2286](#) (“Transforming Main Street Act”). Cities recognize that there is a housing shortage across the state and across the housing spectrum, though the shortage looks different in each community. Alongside the state, cities play a key role in tackling housing challenges and continue to lead with local solutions. In West St. Paul we have continued to innovate at the local level and have supported both affordable and market rate development.

- Since 2015, our community has added 783 units of multi-family affordable housing in the City, a nearly 10% increase in 10 years.
- Since 2021, our community has added 354 units of multi-family market rate housing in the City, a nearly 5% increase in 4 years.
- Since 2023, our community has added more than 100 units of owner-occupied housing, which is no small feat in a fully developed city, which demonstrates our commitment to finding housing solutions.
- As of today, we have over 700 units of multi-family housing at various stages of our planning pipeline.
- Using the funding provided by the legislature through the Metro-wide sales tax as seed funding, West St. Paul Economic Development Authority is currently planning a pilot project to develop 12-16 units of permanently affordable owner-occupied housing on a two acre parcel we recently acquired, and we plan to do more if the pilot proves successful.
- We have significantly reduced our parking minimums twice since 2021 to recognize the need for flexibility, and we are always willing to work with housing developers to provide exceptions if they are reasonable.
- We are using innovative solutions to ensure that our naturally occurring affordable housing are maintained and are healthy homes for people in our community, solutions that are potentially at risk if this legislation passes.

We are concerned that the aforementioned legislation seeks to broadly limit local decision-making authority on residential development by imposing a rigid state framework on all cities, regardless of their own unique needs and circumstances. These bills would eliminate low-density zoning options, eliminate resident input before our council or planning and zoning commission

on virtually all residential development, and strip reasonable local planning and zoning standards, which ensure development compatibility and scale.

Additionally, these bills create significant implementation challenges for our city, increasing costs for taxpayers and complicating zoning and land-use planning, all without guaranteeing more affordable housing or increased development.

While cities, including West St. Paul, have zoned land for higher density developments in areas where it makes the most sense for our community, these bills would force cities to allow for higher density in all residential areas without regard for strategic planning. This removes the flexibility needed to accommodate local housing needs. Conceptually, this means cities and their residents could no longer responsibly plan for growth and instead, that responsibility would be shifted solely to the developers who would determine what gets built and where.

Though HF 1987/SF 2229, HF 2140/SF 223, and HF 2018/SF 2286 do not provide viable solutions, we understand that a meaningful city-state partnership is necessary to address housing shortages. We ask you to oppose these bills due to their rigid approach, prescriptive mandates, and lack of flexibility. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues on an alternate approach that is flexible in nature, workable, practical, involves public input, and includes local decision-making so policies can fit each community's unique needs.

Sincerely,

Signatures