



May 6, 2024

Members of the House of Representatives,

Please vote yes on two “Comp Plan Clarity” amendments (A46 and A60) to HF3431. Thanks to months of work by multiple organizations and sustained engagement by Representative Jordan, Housing Chair Howard, State & Local Government Chair Klevorn and Speaker Hortman, we have threaded the needle to protect cities from misinformed anti-housing litigation while also ensuring that the Minnesota Environmental Rights Act (MERA) will continue to protect our environment for future generations.

For many decades, far too many cities have used zoning and other land use tools to make their cities [exclusive](#). This is not a problem unique to southern states, but a nationwide phenomenon. Policies have evolved over time from explicit racial covenants to downzoning which locks in place existing patterns of [racial and economic segregation](#). Minnesota is not [immune](#), neither historically or today.

Decades of these local decisions have severely limited the supply of new housing, except for unaffordable housing at the perimeter of the region which requires the most expensive combination of [housing and transportation costs](#). **Minnesotans need more housing in total and more choices in housing types.**

To their great credit, many suburban communities, like Hopkins and North Saint Paul, are seeking to revitalize their pre-war downtowns or main streets with new multi-story housing that allows new residents to walk to local businesses. Other cities, like Burnsville and St Louis Park, are creating [new](#) downtowns and main streets, also with new housing. City leaders in these communities recognize that young adults should be able to afford to live in the communities they grew up in and senior citizens shouldn’t have to move out of their local communities when they need to downsize. **City leaders in these communities should not fear bad faith litigation when they responsibly plan for full lifecycle housing for all of their residents.**

The same local policies that are harming housing affordability are also exacerbating the climate crisis. They force development to the periphery of the region, which dramatically increases climate pollution by forcing longer commutes by car, destroying greenfields and habitats, requiring more street and sewer infrastructure for each home, and more. So it is galling that those who have sued to stop housing choices have done so by misusing environmental laws to stop equitable and sustainable city planning.

Most of the bills we advanced to reform inequitable and unsustainable land use policies are not moving forward this year. But the Legislature still has one opportunity to make progress. The A46 and A60 amendments will simultaneously allow cities to plan for the future, get stalled housing construction projects moving and protect MERA for us all.

Thank you again to Representatives Jordan, Howard, Klevorn and Speaker Hortman for your willingness to keep engaging on this issue to get to a successful outcome.

Sierra Club North Star Chapter

Move Minnesota Action

Sustain Saint Paul

Neighbors for More Neighbors

ISAIAH

Minnesota Housing Partnership