

# RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 183

Approved April 24, 2024

WHEREAS, House Bill 2024 H-7981, sponsored by Representative Joshua J. Giraldo (D-Dist. 56, Central Falls), proposes an essential amendment to the current zoning laws, aiming to permit residential uses in commercial zones by right; and

WHEREAS, The existing legal framework recognizes the right of "households" to exist within all zoning districts, yet, paradoxically, some municipalities have imposed restrictions that prohibit residential developments within commercial zones; and

WHEREAS, This legislation seeks to clarify and ensure that residential uses are permitted within commercial zones, thereby aligning with the principles of flexibility, inclusivity, and sustainable urban development; and

WHEREAS, While allowing residential uses in commercial and, by extension, industrial zones (except in cases where public health and safety concerns necessitate prohibition), House Bill 2024 H-7981 respects and upholds the autonomy of municipalities to maintain other zoning requirements for residential uses in these zones; and



WHEREAS, The enactment of House Bill 2024 H-7981 would facilitate a more dynamic and adaptable urban landscape, capable of meeting the diverse housing needs of Rhode Island's residents, and promoting a mixed-use development approach that is vital for vibrant, livable communities; and

WHEREAS, By encouraging residential development within commercial zones, this bill supports economic growth, enhances the viability of public transportation, reduces urban sprawl, and contributes to the environmental sustainability of our cities and towns;

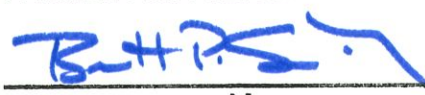
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Providence City Council hereby expresses its strong support for House Bill 2024 H-7981, recognizing the bill's potential to significantly improve the flexibility of land use, address housing shortages, and foster the development of cohesive, integrated communities within the State of Rhode Island; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That this resolution be transmitted to members of the Rhode Island State House of Representatives and Rhode Island State Senate, and the Office of Governor, to affirm the Providence City Council's endorsement of House Bill 2024 H-7981 and its provisions for enhancing urban development and housing accessibility.

IN CITY COUNCIL  
APR 18 2024  
READ AND PASSED

  
RACHEL M. MILLER, PRESIDENT  
  
CLERK

I HEREBY APPROVE.

  
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Mayor

Date: 4/24/2024

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2024

A N A C T

RELATING TO TOWNS AND CITIES -- ZONING ORDINANCES

Introduced By: Representatives Giraldo, Speakman, Biah, Henries, Voas, Kislak, Batista,  
Diaz, Alzate, and Kazarian  
Date Introduced: March 05, 2024

Referred To: House Municipal Government & Housing

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Section 45-24-37 of the General Laws in Chapter 45-24 entitled "Zoning  
2 Ordinances" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3           **45-24-37. General provisions — Permitted uses. [Effective January 1, 2024.]**

4           (a) The zoning ordinance shall provide a listing of all land uses and/or performance  
5 standards for uses that are permitted within the zoning use districts of the municipality. The  
6 ordinance may provide for a procedure under which a proposed land use that is not specifically  
7 listed may be presented by the property owner to the zoning board of review or to a local official  
8 or agency charged with administration and enforcement of the ordinance for an evaluation and  
9 determination of whether the proposed use is of a similar type, character, and intensity as a listed  
10 permitted use. Upon such determination, the proposed use may be considered to be a permitted use.

11           (b) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, the following uses are permitted  
12 uses within all residential zoning use districts of a municipality and all ~~industrial and~~ commercial  
13 zoning use districts ~~except where residential use is prohibited for public health or safety reasons:~~

- 14           (1) Households;  
15           (2) Community residences; ~~and~~  
16           (3) Family daycare homes; ~~and~~  
17           **(4) Residential uses.**

18           (c) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, the following uses are permitted  
19 uses within all industrial use districts except where residential use is prohibited for public health or

1 safety reasons:

2 (1) Households:

3 (2) Community residences; and

4 (3) Family daycare homes.

5 (d) Any time a building or other structure used for residential purposes, or a portion of a  
6 building containing residential units, is rendered uninhabitable by virtue of a casualty such as fire  
7 or flood, the owner of the property is allowed to park, temporarily, mobile and manufactured home,  
8 or homes, as the need may be, elsewhere upon the land, for use and occupancy of the former  
9 occupants for a period of up to twelve (12) months, or until the building or structure is rehabilitated  
10 and otherwise made fit for occupancy. The property owner, or a properly designated agent of the  
11 owner, is only allowed to cause the mobile and manufactured home, or homes, to remain  
12 temporarily upon the land by making timely application to the local building official for the  
13 purposes of obtaining the necessary permits to repair or rebuild the structure.

14 ~~(d)~~(e) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, appropriate access for people  
15 with disabilities to residential structures is allowed as a reasonable accommodation for any  
16 person(s) residing, or intending to reside, in the residential structure.

17 ~~(e)~~(f) Notwithstanding any other provision of this chapter, an accessory dwelling unit in an  
18 owner-occupied residence that complies with §§ 45-24-31 and 45-24-73 shall be permitted as a  
19 reasonable accommodation for family members with disabilities or who are sixty-two (62) years of  
20 age or older, or to accommodate other family members.

21 ~~(f)~~(g) When used in this section the terms “people with disabilities” or “member, or  
22 members, with disabilities” means a person(s) who has a physical or mental impairment that  
23 substantially limits one or more major life activities, as defined in § 42-87-1(7).

24 ~~(g)~~(h) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this chapter, plant agriculture is a permitted  
25 use within all zoning districts of a municipality, including all industrial and commercial zoning  
26 districts, except where prohibited for public health or safety reasons or the protection of wildlife  
27 habitat.

28 ~~(h)~~(i) **Adaptive reuse.** Notwithstanding any other provisions of this chapter, adaptive reuse  
29 for the conversion of any commercial building, including offices, schools, religious facilities,  
30 medical buildings, and malls into residential units or mixed-use developments which include the  
31 development of at least fifty percent (50%) of the existing gross floor area into residential units,  
32 shall be a permitted use and allowed by specific and objective provisions of a zoning ordinance,  
33 except where such is prohibited by environmental land use restrictions recorded on the property by  
34 the state of Rhode Island department of environmental management or the United States

1 Environmental Protection Agency preventing the conversion to residential use.

2 (1) The specific zoning ordinance provisions for adaptive reuse shall exempt adaptive reuse  
3 developments from off-street parking requirements of over one space per dwelling unit.

4 (2) Density.

5 (i) For projects that meet the following criteria, zoning ordinances shall allow for high  
6 density development and shall not limit the density to less than fifteen (15) dwelling units per acre:

7 (A) Where the project is limited to the existing footprint, except that the footprint is allowed  
8 to be expanded to accommodate upgrades related to the building and fire codes and utilities; and

9 (B) The development includes at least twenty percent (20%) low- and moderate-income  
10 housing; and

11 (C) The development has access to public sewer and water service or has access to adequate  
12 private water, such as a well and and/or wastewater treatment system(s) approved by the relevant  
13 state agency for the entire development as applicable.

14 (ii) For all other adaptive reuse projects, the residential density permitted in the converted  
15 structure shall be the maximum allowed that otherwise meets all standards of minimum housing  
16 and has access to public sewer and water service or has access to adequate private water, such as a  
17 well, and wastewater treatment system(s) approved by the relevant state agency for the entire  
18 development, as applicable. The density proposed shall be determined to meet all public health and  
19 safety standards.

20 (3) Notwithstanding any other provisions of this chapter, for adaptive reuse projects,  
21 existing building setbacks shall remain and shall be considered legal nonconforming, but no  
22 additional encroachments shall be permitted into any nonconforming setback, unless otherwise  
23 allowed by zoning ordinance or relief is granted by the applicable authority.

24 (4) For adaptive reuse projects, notwithstanding any other provisions of this chapter, the  
25 height of the existing structure, if it exceeds the maximum height of the zoning district, may remain  
26 and shall be considered legal nonconforming, and any rooftop construction shall be included within  
27 the height exemption

28 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect on January 1, 2025.

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

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- 1           This act would amend the provisions relative to permitted uses within residential, industrial  
2   and commercial zoning use districts.  
3           This act would take effect on January 1, 2025.

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LC005509  
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