



May 9, 2023

To: Eau Claire County Staff and Committee on Planning & Development

The purpose of this letter is to provide comments to the Eau Claire County Committee on Planning & Development related to the comprehensive zoning code rewrite currently underway.

The Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce has served our community since 1915 as the advocate of business. We have 1,100 investor organizations who employ more than 45,000 individuals throughout the Eau Claire area. We work to represent the business community as a champion of a strong local and regional economy. Our 2023 Business Issues Agenda includes the following excerpts related to housing policies:

The local supply of available and affordable housing impacts our ability to meet the needs of a growing population, as well as affordability for all individuals and families. The Chippewa Valley Housing Task Force found that there is a shortage of housing in our community at all price and income levels. It is important for public policy to encourage increasing the supply of housing and removing barriers to housing development.

- The Chamber will encourage local jurisdictions to follow through on comprehensive planning activities that foresee future housing development. We will support approval of responsible development proposals that meet needs to increase housing supply, including appropriate annexation, zoning, site plan, and other approvals.
- Review, and modify as needed, regulations, policies, and building codes to ensure that they are up to date and do not unnecessarily hamper construction activities or increase costs.
- Update zoning codes and policies to eliminate outdated and arbitrary standards in order to encourage infill development, creation of missing middle housing types, compact growth, efficiency of public resources, and the ability to build the types of housing demanded by the marketplace.

For the zoning code updates currently being considered, we share the concerns expressed by the Chippewa Valley Home Builders Association (CVHBA) about the provisions that would require subdivisions to have shared drinking water systems and/or shared wastewater treatment systems if they have lots smaller than 1.5 acres. While it is appropriate to encourage developers to use these types of systems whenever possible, mandating them in all circumstances could be a deterrent to homeowners and may create an adverse impact on creating new housing supply in the County. Among those concerns are added costs and developer risk, the necessity of setting up Homeowner Association (HOAs) that may be undesirable to buyers, that such systems are not

right for all topography, and may discourage conservation-oriented designs with set asides and small home lots. The bottom line is that this mandate would create a burden on the housing industry, encourage developers to pursue land in other counties or within cities, and force larger lot sizes and more developed land in order to expand the housing supply.

Thank you for your consideration

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "J. A. Rogers", is positioned above the typed name.

Vice President Governmental Affairs
Eau Claire Area Chamber of Commerce

Reply to:
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