

# State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

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Senate Chamber

Secretary  
Committee on Commerce

Committee on  
Special Legislation and  
Veterans' Affairs

December 1, 2014

Mr. John Flaherty, Director  
of Research & Communications  
Grow Smart Rhode Island  
235 Promenade Street, Suite 550  
Providence, RI 02908

Re: RhodeMap RI

Dear John:

I am writing as a follow-up to our recent communications to share some of my thoughts regarding the recently released draft of RhodeMap RI's Economic Development Plan dated November 20, 2014.

As you know, the people of Woonsocket are extremely sensitive to the prospect of expanding government-subsidized affordable housing within our community (whether through Federal programs such as the HUD Section 8 program, or housing developed with the assistance and funding support provided by Rhode Island Housing), since Woonsocket's current share of low- and moderate-income housing by percentage of housing stock is one of the highest in the state and far exceeds the 10% threshold that is expected of all communities across our state.

Reference: [http://www.rhodeislandhousing.org/filelibrary/2013\\_LowMod\\_ShortForm\\_Final.pdf](http://www.rhodeislandhousing.org/filelibrary/2013_LowMod_ShortForm_Final.pdf)

As a result of the presence of this high percentage of affordable housing, coupled with state law that establishes a real estate tax cap of 8% of gross income on many existing and potential future affordable developments that would qualify for this favored tax treatment, the balance of property owners in our community are currently shouldering an added real estate tax burden – since the cost of community services provided to these developments exceed the revenue generated by the 8% tax cap. This added burden will only continue to grow with additional affordable housing development in Woonsocket under the current statutory and policy framework. A specific resolution of this problem should be addressed within the policy objectives of the draft plan.

The draft plan also reinforces this concern about the potential expansion and concentration of affordable housing in urban communities like Woonsocket, since the plan acknowledges that

most of the required infrastructure (water, sewer service, etc.) for the development or redevelopment of higher density affordable housing inherently exists in the urban core communities (Page 46 – Infrastructure and Land Constraints).

I am also concerned about the prospect of establishing a state-run Urban Redevelopment Office with the potential of this office being granted powers generally associated with a Redevelopment Authority that “could provide the state the opportunity to assume permitting and development control over particularly challenging sites upon recommendation from the host community.” As a strong advocate and believer in personal property rights, I am extremely concerned about expanding government influence and/or control over individual property owner rights that could occur within the context of the general statements and objectives as described in this portion of the draft plan.

I sincerely believe that the draft plan needs more public scrutiny, comment and potential revisions, and respectfully request your organization’s assistance in requesting an indefinite postponement of the plan’s adoption in its current form.

Sincerely,



Marc A. Cote  
Deputy Majority Leader  
Senator, District 24

Attachments

Cc: Senate President M. Teresa Paiva Weed  
Senator Dominick Ruggerio, Majority Leader  
Senator Roger A. Picard

Rep. Nicholas A. Mattiello, Speaker of the House  
Rep. Stephen M. Casey  
Rep. Michael A. Morin  
Rep. Robert D. Phillips

Mayor Lisa Baldelli-Hunt  
Woonsocket City Council c/o Christina Duarte, City Clerk