

April 15, 2024

To: Chair Dziedzic  
Seante State and Local Government Committee

Re: Support for SF 4254 a2

From Minneapolis to Moorhead, from Winona to Warroad, a place to call home is a basic need for all Minnesotans. Many of us want to live in areas close to jobs, transit, grocery stores, and restaurants that are walkable. Few of us enjoy spending too long in traffic, or want to see our forests, lakes and farms paved over. For too long, planning rules have made it difficult for Minnesotans to buy or rent the kind of homes they want in the places they want to live.

When courts rejected racial covenants that prevented Black and Brown families from buying homes, cities made building affordable homes harder. For example, many cities restrict apartment buildings only to certain parts of town, rather than allowing them on main streets and transit corridors, which would create more walkable communities.

We represent part of a growing coalition who care about Minnesotans having access to abundant, accessible, and affordable homes. We support SF 4254 a2 because it will allow more homes to be built in areas zoned commercial.

While we believe that clause starting at line 3.13 will slow and stop some developments, especially affordable developments, by putting too onerous of requirements on incorporating mixed use, the bill as a whole will:

1. Provide local jurisdictions a floor to allow more homes in their communities close to jobs and transit while maintaining local character and responding to local circumstances, while setting consistent rules across Minnesota cities and allow more apartment homes and mixed use development. These needed homes will give more Minnesotans an opportunity for a home close to jobs, transit, and grocery stores.
2. Allow more homes to be built near our best transit networks and on main streets across the state, incentivizing climate friendly development of new homes, and helping to create more walkable communities with vibrant main streets.
3. Bring more local tax revenue by allowing more apartment homes to be built wherever cities already allow stores and offices. Needed homes in communities will increase the local tax base and support local, small businesses who will be able to rely on new residents in close proximity to support their businesses.

Minnesotans need more affordable homes, and more choices about the kind of home they can buy. This bill represents an opportunity to change how we plan for housing and set Minnesota on a path to affordable and abundant homes.

Neighbors for More Neighbors

Move MN

Sierra Club

SEIU Healthcare MN & IA

Sustain Saint Paul