

SUMMARY of the 2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION



Legislation Enacted that Affects Local, Regional and Statewide Planning

During the **2024** Rhode Island General Assembly session, numerous bills were enacted that will impact local, regional, and statewide planning. An estimated total of 2,427 bills were filed in 2024. This year, **95** planning related bills were tracked and, of these tracked bills, more than 50 were enacted as laws. The Land Use Staff of the Division of Statewide Planning (DSP) scans for a variety of topics related to centralized planning responsibilities for the Division, the State Guide Plan, and other requirements as the State's single Metropolitan Planning Organization. This Summary provides a snapshot of short explanations of the enacted bills for general information. Below is a list of the enacted bills, accompanied by links to the actual legislation on the web. The bills that were signed into law and that affect the Division are shown first, then bills related to transportation, energy, other state government, solid waste, water supply, housing, and land use regulation follow. All Bills are effective upon passage unless other time periods were stipulated within the Bills themselves.

DIVISION OF STATEWIDE PLANNING

Approved Resolutions:

- House Resolution No. [7731 A](#) (Resolution 361) - STUDY COMMISSION ON CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT & SOLUTIONS - 06/11/2024 House passed Sub A - appoints Associate Director of DSP to study commission
- House Resolution No. [7977 SUB A](#) (Resolution 214) – STUDY COMMISSION ON PLANNER EDUCATION IN RI - 04/11/2024 House passed Sub A - appoints Associate Director of DSP to study commission

Approved Bills:

- House Bill No. [7666](#) (Chapter 105) & Senate Bill No. [2821](#) (Chapter 106) - RI MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT PROGRAM - 06/12/2024 Signed by Governor - Clarifies the role of the Technical Committee as an advisory committee representing communities providing recommendations to the State Planning Council on issues related to local comprehensive planning and land use. Also updates membership of the State Planning Council to include the Secretary of Housing or designee, in place of the Chair of the Housing Resources Commission.
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- House Bill No. [7985 SUB A](#) (Chapter 304) & Senate Bill No. [2995](#) (Chapter 305) – DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION - 06/25/2024 Signed by Governor - Requires the Department of Administration to publish a report by January 31, 2025 to the Speaker of the House, President of the Senate, and Secretary of Housing evaluating the cost to establish and maintain a statewide geographic information system. The Report should focus on:
 - the cost to establish and maintain a statewide platform
 - the personnel needed to establish and maintain the system
 - the organizational changes, if any, needed
 - the data security costs and requirements
 - the types of data needed from agencies and local governments to maintain the system, and the timeframe for obtaining that data, and
 - other items deemed integral to maintain a statewide platform.

TRANSPORTATION

- House Bill No. [7713 SUB A](#) (Chapter 172) & Senate Bill No. [2829 SUB A](#) (Chapter 172) - ELECTRIC BICYCLES - 06/17/2024 Signed by Governor - Defines 3 classes of electric bicycles, authorizes the Depart. of Environmental Management (DEM) to determine allowable uses of electric bicycles at properties under the Department's jurisdiction, allows Class 1 electric bicycles to legally access State bicycle trails or paths.
- House Bill No. [8119](#) - LOW-SPEED VEHICLES - 06/28/2024 Effective without Governor's signature - Low-speed vehicles may be operated on limited access highways, state highways, through highways and public highways or roadways provided the speed limit on the highways and roadways is no more than thirty-five miles per hour (35 m.p.h.).

ENERGY

- House Bill No. [7616 SUB A](#) (Chapter 314) & Senate Bill No. [2293 SUB A as amended](#) (Chapter 315) - RENEWABLE READY PROGRAM - 06/25/2024 Signed by Governor - Establishes the renewable ready program and fund to promotes the responsible siting/development of renewable energy generating resources in locations where it would be an ancillary beneficial use to the redevelopment of previously contaminated property.
- House Bill No. [7426 SUB A](#) & Senate Bill No. [2808 SUB A](#) - SOLAR DECOMMISSIONING PLANS - 06/26/2024 Signed by Governor - Requires that developers of ground-mounted solar systems submit a plan for decommissioning to be held on file by the municipality and requires DEM, with the Office of Energy Resources to make publicly available model decommissioning plans.

OTHER/ STATE GOVERNMENT

Approved Resolutions:

- Senate Resolution No. [3149](#) Resolution 365 - REQUESTS THE DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATION TO UNDERTAKE A REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF THE COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT COUNCIL -06/11/2024 Senate read and passed
- House Resolution No. [7361](#) (Resolution 193) STUDY COMMISSION TO MAKE A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY AND PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REMEDIES TO THE EROSION OF RHODE ISLAND BEACHES - 04/09/2024 House read and passed - Creates a 9 member commission to study and provide recommendations for remedies to the erosion of RI beaches, and would report back by January 5, 2025 and expire on March 5, 2025.

Approved Bills:

- House Bill No. [7022 SUB A as amended](#) & Senate Bill No. [2298 SUB A as amended](#)- ACT ON COASTS - COASTAL RESILIENCY - 06/26/2024 Signed by Governor - Requires the Chief Resilience Officer be charged with creation/maintenance/updating of the State's resiliency/recovery program along with climate change resiliency plan with ocean/riverine coasts resiliency advisory board.
- House Bill No. [7064 SUB A](#) (Chapter 003) & Senate Bill No. [2028 SUB A](#) (Chapter 004) - OUTDOOR DINING ACT - 02/09/2024 Signed by Governor - Establishes standards governing the municipal regulation of outdoor dining provided that such use is compliant with the RI Food, Fire Safety, and Building Codes.-
- House Bill No. [7246 SUB A](#) (Chapter 193) & Senate Bill No. [2043 SUB A](#) (Chapter 194) - LONG-TERM ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT - 06/17/2024 Signed by Governor - Adds climate change, sea-level rise and coastal resiliency to the analysis of data of the strategic plan for economic development policy
- House Bill No. [7225 SUB A as amended](#) (Chapter 117) - APPROPRIATIONS FOR THE SUPPORT OF THE STATE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2025 - 06/17/2024 Signed by Governor
- House Bill No. [7986 SUB A as amended](#) (Chapter 245) & Senate Bill No. [2992 A](#) (Chapter 246) - ABANDONED PROPERTY - 06/24/2024 Signed by Governor - On or before April 2, 2025, requires towns and cities to publish a list of abandoned properties and makes various other amendments relative to the sale of abandoned property by a receiver.

SOLID WASTE

- House Resolution No. [8354](#) & Senate Resolution No. [3159](#) - EXTENDS THE REPORTING AND EXPIRATION DATES AND AMENDING THE PURPOSE OF THE SPECIAL JOINT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION TO STUDY AND PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS TO PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES FROM PLASTIC BOTTLE WASTE - 06/11/2024 House read and passed & 06/12/2024 Senate read and passed - Extends the reporting /expiration dates and amends an existing Commission's purpose to include glass and aluminum products, and would report back by April 30, 2025, and expire on May 5, 2025.

WATER SUPPLY

- House Bill No. [8147](#) (Chapter 152) & Senate Bill No. [2997](#) (Chapter 153) - AN ACT RELATING TO AMENDING THE CHARTER OF THE HARRISVILLE FIRE DISTRICT AND ESTABLISHING THE CLEAR RIVER ELECTRIC AND WATER DISTRICT - 06/17/2024 Signed by Governor - Amends the Harrisville Fire District Charter allowing the district to provide rescue services, fire suppression, medical and ambulance services/water services would be provided by a separate entity.

Municipal planners should consult with their solicitors and advise their city/town councils about amendments or other actions needed to bring land development and or other regulations into compliance with the following amended laws.

HOUSING

- House Bill No. [7980 SUB A as amended](#) (Chapter 286) & Senate Bill No. [2989 SUB A](#) – (Chapter 287) MOBILE AND MANUFACTURED HOMES - 06/25/2024 Signed by Governor
 - Makes amendments relative to manufactured homes, including a definition for a manufactured home and a provision where cities/towns may allow manufactured homes which comply with the State Building Code as a single-family home on any lot zoned for single-family use provided the home complies with all dimensional requirements for a single-family home in the District or seeks appropriate relief.
- House Bill No. [7984 SUB A as amended](#) (Chapter 302) & Senate Bill No. [2993 as amended](#) (Chapter 303) - HOUSING RESOURCES ACT - 06/25/2024 Signed by Governor
 - Provides that owner occupied mobile/manufactured homes be counted as one affordable housing unit under certain conditions.
 - Provisions are also provided for mobile/manufactured homes which do not have a federal, state, or municipal government subsidy and/or do not have a deed restriction or land lease to count as one-half of one affordable housing unit provided the municipality contracts with a monitoring agent to verify that the requirements of [§ 42-128-8.1\(d\)\(1\)\(ii\)](#) are met for the units.
- House Bill No. [8336 as amended](#) (Chapter 306) & Senate Bill No. [2089 as amended](#) (Chapter 307) – LOW/MOD HOUSING - 06/25/2024 Signed by Governor
 - Amends the definition of "low and moderate income housing" to include housing and rental housing secured by a federal government rental assistance voucher to qualify as low/ moderate-income housing, as long as a municipality confirms with the issuing authority that the voucher is in good standing and active.
 - **This act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.**

LAND USE REGULATION

- House Bill No. [7062 SUB A](#) (Chapter 284) & Senate Bill No. [2998 A](#) (Chapter 285) - ZONING ORDINANCES - 06/25/2024 Signed by Governor
 - Amendments addressed providing a uniform definition and sets standards for regulating accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
 - Owner-occupied properties requesting ADUs must be allowed "*as of right*" in many locations under certain conditions with no local approval required other than a building permit.
 - ADUs cannot be used for short-term rentals.
- House Bill No. [7324 SUB A](#) & Senate Bill No. [3148](#) - ZONING ORDINANCES
 - Amends the definition of floor area ratio (which is a tool to control building mass by removing the basement area from the calculation of floor area ratios).
- House Bill No. [7382 SUB A](#) (Chapter 241) & Senate Bill No. [2635 SUB A](#) (Chapter 242) – ZONING ORDINANCES - 06/24/2024 Signed by Governor
 - Amends the definition of a household by providing the maximum number of unrelated persons living together that could be constitute an individual household.
 - The maximum number may be set by local ordinance, but this maximum shall not be less than one person per bedroom and shall not exceed five unrelated persons per dwelling.
- House Bill No. [7948 SUB A](#) (Chapter 294) & Senate Bill No. [2999 A](#) (Chapter 295) – ZONING ORDINANCES - 06/25/2024 Signed by Governor
 - Provides amendments to the requirements for use of inclusionary zoning to provide affordable housing by reducing the percentage of total affordable units required to 15%.
 - The total number of units in the development may include less than 15% affordable units after the density bonus is determined but the density bonus is available only if the affordable units are built as part of the development itself.
 - **This act takes effect on January 1, 2025.**

- House Bill No. [7949 SUB A as amended](#) (Chapter 292) & Senate Bill No. [3001 A –](#) (Chapter 293) SUBDIVISION OF LAND & ZONING ORDINANCES - 06/25/2024 Signed by Governor
 - Amends provisions relative to subdivision of land review, review stages, the timing of certification of completeness by administrative officials, the procedures for approvals from various permitting authorities and revises the precedence of approvals.
 - It limits development plan review (DPR) to five specific uses and makes DPR optional.
 - Dimensional regulations including how the maximum lot coverage is determined are changed for regulating standard lots.
 - Notice provisions for special use permits are changed to be the same as for dimensional variances.
- House Bill No. [7950 SUB A](#) (Chapter 298) & Senate Bill No. [3000 A](#) (Chapter 299) - SUBDIVISION OF LAND - 06/25/2024 Signed by Governor
 - Provides amendments relative to the permitting authority of, and set three acceptable forms of financial security permissible for construction and/or improvement guarantees relating to the completion of required public improvements.
 - Requires timely inspections by municipal staff of improvements and sets 10 % of the original guarantee as the maximum allowable maintenance guarantee on constructed required improvements.
- House Bill No. [7951 SUB A](#) (Chapter 300) & Senate Bill No. [2988 A](#) (Chapter 301) – RHODE ISLAND COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND LAND USE ACT - 06/25/2024 Signed by Governor
 - Regulates how municipalities may use land use related moratoriums by setting minimum standards as protecting public health and welfare as reasons for adoption, exempting comprehensive permits, setting a maximum time period not to exceed 120 days, requiring a vested rights provision, and requiring public notice of the moratorium.
- House Bill No. [7978 SUB A](#) (Chapter 219) & Senate Bill No. [3036 A](#) (Chapter 220) - SUBDIVISION OF LAND - 06/24/2024 Signed by Governor
 - **Requires that on or before October 1, 2025**, municipalities must implement electronic permitting for all development applications pursuant to zoning, comprehensive permits, and the subdivision of land.
 - Municipalities may impose a surcharge on applications, equal to an additional one-tenth of one percent (0.001%) of the total fee, that shall be transmitted monthly to the State, to defray the costs of the e-permitting software.
 - The Department of Business Regulation shall reimburse municipalities for annual fees and costs associated with the e-permitting requirement.
 - The State Building Commissioner, with the assistance of the Office of Regulatory Reform and the DSP, may promulgate rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this section.
- House Bill No. [7979](#) (Chapter 288) & Senate Bill No. [2991](#) (Chapter 289) – LOCAL PLANNING BOARD OR COMMISSION - 06/25/2024 Signed by Governor
 - Municipalities may establish, by ordinance, a combined review board pursuant to the provisions of § 45-24-56.1 which shall have the authority, and certain powers, requirements and duties, as well those of a "planning board or commission" and "zoning board" and replace separate planning and zoning boards.
 - **This act would take effect on January 1, 2025.**
- House Bill No. [7982](#) (Chapter 296) & Senate Bill No. [2994](#) (Chapter 297) – ZONING ORDINANCES - 06/25/2024 Signed by Governor
 - Updates existing provisions of the Enabling Law that clarifies DEM and the Coastal Resources Management Council have exclusive jurisdiction over setbacks from wetlands pertaining to wetland buffers to projects for development, redevelopment, construction, or rehabilitation.

DISCLAIMER: *This report is a working document intended solely for land use/ transportation planning purposes. It is not an exhaustive summary of the activities of the General Assembly but rather an inventory of selected topics of interest to the Division of Statewide Planning. Access to or forwarding this working document by anyone to anyone else is not authorized. For complete scanning of all of the activities of the General Assembly please see the [Getting Started](#) web page for personal or other scanning purposes.*

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If you have any questions regarding this Summary, please contact either:

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