

Tiny Homes

2021 Legislative Agenda

House Bill: H 5632

Sponsored by Representative Ackerman & Speaker K. Joseph Shekarchi

Legislative Explanation

[H 5632](#) Requires towns and cities to allow tiny homes to be used as accessory dwelling units and to be counted as affordable housing.

Issue Background

In 2020, the Commission of Health Advocacy and Equity reported that there are no communities throughout Rhode Island with low-to-moderate income housing stock that meets demand. And according to [HousingWorksRI](#), there are only six Rhode Island communities that are achieving the state-mandated ten percent affordable housing stock target. [According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the United States has a shortage of 7.4 million affordable and available housing units as of 2017.](#) In Rhode Island, our State faces a shortage of more than 23,000 rental units deemed as affordable.

Research suggests that Rhode Island has an opportunity to diversify its housing stock by adopting policies like changing local zoning ordinances to permit the use of tiny homes. A tiny house is typically sized between 150-400 square feet and can benefit a range of residents who require transitional housing or who are homeless, such as veterans, victims of domestic violence and seniors, to name a few. Tiny homes also allow a family member to age in place with loved ones without moving to another community or an expensive assisted living home.

Please let your Representatives and Senators Know:

Tiny Homes Provide Affordable Homeownership Opportunities

- Rhode Island's homeownership rate hovers around 60 percent, which is lower than the national average.
- Owners of manufactured homes typically spend half the monthly housing cost of all homeowners.
- Because of the lower housing costs, only 13 percent of owners of manufactured homes pay more than 30 percent of income on rent (cost-burdened) (NAR Data).
- More than one-third of Rhode Islanders are housing cost burdened.
- More than half of Americans said they would consider living in a tiny home, according to a 2018 survey from the National Association of Home Builders, and the trend still holds true two years later during the pandemic: 56 percent of Americans in a late 2020 poll conducted by a Fidelity National Financial subsidiary said they would consider living in one. In fact, 86 percent of the respondents in the Fidelity poll who have never owned a home said they would consider buying a tiny home.

Tiny Homes Offer Options

- A tiny house can be a specially tailored space for a relative with special needs.
- A tiny house can be a starter home for grown children or grandchildren who may not be able to afford other options.
- A tiny house can serve as a home on a property a person owns but can't build on, or it can serve as a home while a permanent home is renovated or built.
- A tiny house can provide a living space for aging parents or other relatives.
- A tiny house can be a private living space for a live-in caregiver.

Rhode Islanders Want More Options at Affordable Prices

- A Rhode Island Association of REALTOR® (RIAR) poll revealed that residents think there is too little housing for people with low incomes, young people and seniors.
- RIAR polling data suggests that Rhode Islanders overwhelmingly view housing affordability as a big problem in our State.
- Two-thirds of Rhode Islanders support changing zoning laws to allow the development of alternative housing options like carriage houses, garage apartments or tiny houses, according to our polling data.