



# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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May 12, 2023

Testimony  
In Support of

### **LD 492: An Act to Repurpose Vacant Shopping Mall and Retail Space for Mixed Use.**

Good Morning Sen. Pierce, Rep. Gere and Joint Standing Members on the select committee on housing, it's my honor to present LD 492 **An Act to Repurpose Vacant Shopping Mall and Retail Space for Mixed Use.**

I have truly enjoyed serving on this specially focused committee to identify the tremendous need for creative solutions to the housing shortage in Maine.

Together we have identified the overwhelming demand and are exploring solutions.

Over my 50 years of employing innovative concepts for cost effective passive solar energy savings environmentally sound green residential, recreational, commercial and industrial construction and development projects I have provided Maine people with exciting solutions to new, recycled and repurposed design/build dwelling envelopes.

All within existing zoning and code requirements.

Now it's time to think outside the box by statutorily encouraging and suggesting creative thought to our ever increasing demand for affordable housing and prosperous living.

The trend for online shopping and vacant mall, shopping and commercial space can provide the perfect opportunity to create smaller, more affordable and efficient living units adjacent to or within commercially zoned property that presently is not allowed.

If allowed, zoning restrictions don't allow creative opportunities for residential use, have low allowable unit numbers and have many restrictions that could change once considered.

I have provided an interesting project constructed in an abandoned sardine factory in Bass Harbor on Mount Dessert Island.

This building had been vacant for 25 years and was about to fall into the Harbor.

The town didn't allow the 10 unit density we wanted in the building so we went across the street and developed a 10 unit duplex to prove our worth.

The factory land was barely enough for the building constrained by a road that crossed the property by easement, the Atlantic Ocean and no room for septic. Even though the road was a deeded part of the property the town considered the total property two parcels. The total property allowed for the development of 18 units.

This is just one example of how developers can work with towns to create housing but with the crisis

we have been talking about for the last 5 months we need to approach residential and community living differently.

LD 492 is a small step to encourage that.

Thank you and I would be willing to answer any questions you might have.