

Rozanna Patane
York

I am a member of Midcoast Cohousing LLC. We are planning a 40-unit affordable, net-zero cohousing community in the Midcoast. This will be a neighborhood of diverse family types, abilities, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The homes will be mostly two- to four-unit attached homes for purchase, but some single-family homes will also be built. We currently don't plan any rentals but are open to that possibility. One-third to one-half of the units will be priced to be affordable at incomes of 80% to 120% of AMI. The units will not all be identical; a few designs will be offered with limited flexibility, and some custom homes will be permitted. All units will meet net-zero energy and other standards. The affordable units will be interspersed with the market-rate units. Cohousing communities are self-governed using a democratic process such as sociocracy for decision-making. Cohousing by nature fosters community and also reduces operating costs because residents perform many management tasks. It's a creative and exciting way to add to Maine's supply of affordable housing.

I was excited to see this bill. However, as I read it, our project would not qualify to participate in this program. So I am here to request that you consider several revisions to expand the possible housing solutions.

- a. Allow a mix of single-family homes as well as multifamily homes
- b. Allow purchase as well as rental units to be available to income-qualified families
- c. Increase eligibility as well as prioritization to 100% of AMI. The affordability crunch is keenly felt by families with incomes above 70% of AMI as well as those below that marker (paragraph 10.G stipulates 30% of AMI and seems in conflict with paragraph 4 eligibility requirements)
- d. Recognize cohousing organizations in the bill along with cooperative organizations
- e. Allow renewable energy of different kinds (not just solar) and allow solar to be derived from solar farms in Maine, not just on-site or "nearby" (or define "nearby" to include all of Maine)

Questions

1. Complying to Section 1.1 (Labor agreement) and 1.5.A, 1.5B and 1.5C (certification in Passive House, LEED 4 or Living Building methods) will require that a trained contractor and building workforce is available. Today there is a severe shortage of such a workforce. Will the resources be in place when needed to make it possible for a developer to comply with this requirement?
2. Section 1.10.B calls for prioritizing projects near public transportation. This could eliminate projects in smaller towns or just outside of downtown where land is more available and less costly. Our project would be built just outside of downtown and not on a public transit route. How will Maine's transportation plan consider the need for more public transportation in rural areas and smaller towns?