



**City of Sunfish Lake
Sunfish Lake, Minnesota**

March 21, 2024

Representative Mary Frances Clardy (rep.mary.frances.clardy@house.mn.gov)

Representative Michael Howard (Rep.Michael.Howard@house.mn.gov)

Representative Larry Kraft (rep.larry.kraft@house.mn.gov)

Sent Via Email

RE: Missing Middle Housing Bill (House File #4009 and Senate File #3964)

Dear Representatives Clardy, Howard and Kraft,

On behalf of the City of Sunfish Lake, we thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns and comments in opposition to various aspects of the above referenced bill. Additionally, thank you for the virtual meeting you arranged with the cities of Sunfish Lake, Mendota Heights, West St. Paul, Lilydale and Inver Grove Heights on March 20, 2024. Your time and concern are noted and much appreciated.

The population of our city was 520 people at the time of the last census and would be considered a fourth class city within the seven county metro area. We are contained in a one square mile area. Our city is served entirely by well and septic systems. We have investigated and the cost of public utilities is cost prohibitive for our citizens. Our lots though large, do not have the capacity for additional drain fields. Indeed, we are currently dealing with issues of limited drain field capacity on a residential lot. In order to comply with State septic laws, this situation has required expensive mounding of the drain field. The current cost to that homeowner is over \$100,000. However, the cost of providing infrastructure to the entire city might cost every homeowner in the hundreds of thousands of dollars for city sewer and water. That would be beyond the capacity of most citizens, let alone those that need affordable housing.

The city does not have any commercially zoned property within its boundaries but we have four churches. I have spoken with two of the Pastors who indicated if they were assessed for public utilities, they could not afford it and would sadly have to relocate to another city which would be devastating for their congregations. I was unable to reach the other two Pastors but know they are in the same situation.

We understand the statewide need for affordable housing and know the intentions of this bill are well-placed. However, we, like other small cities, have unique characteristics, which would be impossible to be taken into consideration in a one size fits all bill. You heard from Lilydale about their unique circumstances as well.

A very high percentage of city lots are located on the shores of three different lakes under the jurisdiction of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Our city takes pride in the beauty of our lakeshores and makes every effort to preserve this shoreline in its natural state. Our residents have significant concerns regarding the health of the lakes and the environmental

detriments this bill could cause by requiring higher density development. Additionally, the hills and bluffs associated with these lakeshores provide yet another obstacle to higher density development.

Importantly, for those needing affordable housing, our city not only has no commercial property to provide grocery or other stores, we have no means of public transportation, thus forcing residents with limited means to obtain a vehicle to get the most basic of necessities.

We attach to this letter, the cover sheet and page 4 of the 2015 System Statement for City of Sunfish from the Metropolitan Council. The Metropolitan Council took all the above noted factors into consideration when evaluating Sunfish Lake's ability to provide low and moderate housing. We have highlighted their determination:

“The Council has determined that Sunfish Lake does not have a share of the region's need for low and moderate income housing.”

All of you acknowledged that despite the best efforts of legislators, bills can have serious unintended circumstances. To reiterate, the “one size fits all” approach on this bill will have unintended consequences for cities of all sizes, but particularly for small cities like Sunfish Lake which have only wells and septic systems. No laws can take into consideration all the variables and unique conditions of small cities across the State. The additional density obtained would not warrant the devastating effects to small cities and cost to all residents; which I am sure the legislature understands are as deserving as those people needing affordable housing.

Therefore, we respectfully urge the legislature to amend the provisions of this Bill to exempt small cities that rely solely on septic and well systems, inside and outside the seven-county metropolitan area. Given all the unique circumstances of small cities, we would also urge exemption for those cities that have a population below 5,000.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,



Daniel B. O'Leary, Mayor
On behalf of The Sunfish Lake City Council:

Dan O'Leary, Mayor
Ginny Beckett, Councilmember
Steve Bulach, Councilmember
Shannon Nelson, Councilmember
Mike Hovey, Councilmember

cc. Senator Matt Klein (via website email form)
Majority Leader Erin P. Murphy (via website email form)
Speaker of the House Melissa Hortman (rep.melissa.hortman@house.mn.gov)