

Seven Locks Civic Association, Inc.
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February 14, 2026

Comments on Maryland House Bill 239 for the 2026 session.

The proposed construction of 3 or more attached flammable wood town houses in single family house zoning areas is dangerous and can cause deaths. These town homes will be taller than most adjoining houses. If the lots are large enough you could build 9 or more connected town houses, made of mostly wood that can start a large high temperature fire and help burn many adjacent houses.

Will the bill require the builder of these 3 new townhouses to pay for the immediate neighboring houses adjoining the new town houses with metal roofs so as to reduce the chance of major fires spreading from these large wooden town houses.

Fires in suburban areas like many parts of Maryland have, will get out of control can cause major problems when high winds are present and Maryland should not allow the construction of large wooden structures in single family zoned areas. We are having many more high wind events in Maryland because of climate changes that are occurring.

The California fires destroyed more than 16,000 homes, businesses, and other buildings, in addition to thousands of automobiles. The largest fires, the Palisades and Eaton fires, produced the costliest damage, in part because they cut across suburban landscapes. The Palisades Fire reduced much of the suburb of Pacific Palisades to ash, destroying 6,837 structures and claiming 12 lives. The Eaton Fire burned large parts of the unincorporated community of Altadena in Los Angeles, including 9,414 structures, and caused the deaths of 18 people. In both areas, numerous injuries were reported among both residents and first responders.

How much will the nearby single family detached houses have to pay in additional fire insurance or automobile comprehensive insurance with this increase in fire risk caused by the construction of large number of wooden town houses that can be built within 5 feet of the adjoining property line.

The bill does not require lighting rods or cinderblock or concrete construction between adjoining units. We have seen many fires that start in one town house unit and then spread to adjoining wooden town houses.

Page 4 of the bill item (s) "TOWN HOUSE" MEANS A DWELLING UNIT CONSTRUCTED IN A ROW OF 3 THREE OR MORE ATTACHED DWELLING UNITS, WHERE EACH DWELLING UNIT: (1) SHARES AT LEAST ONE COMMON WALL WITH AN ADJACENT DWELLING UNIT; AND (2) (I) IS LOCATED ON AN INDIVIDUAL LOT OR PARCEL;

Why would we keep the current fire codes when adding large burnable buildings next to small buildings which were not constructed expecting large burnable buildings to be built adjacent to them.

Page 9 of the bill item (6) THE PROVISIONS OF THIS SUBSECTION: (I) DO NOT SUPERSEDE APPLICABLE BUILDING CODES, FIRE CODES, OR PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY REGULATIONS THAT ARE NECESSARY TO ADDRESS IMMEDIATE THREATS TO PUBLIC SAFETY; AND SENATE BILL 36 (II) APPLY TO A LEGISLATIVE BODY ONLY TO THE EXTENT THAT THEY DO NOT CONFLICT WITH OTHER STATE OR FEDERAL LAWS OR REGULATIONS.