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Sent: Monday, June 10, 2024 3:17 PM
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Subject: Housing Claims (in relation to HTD Text)

Good afternoon Lindsey,

We wanted to respond to the Stamford Neighborhood Coalition members' claims of over 7,000 apartments approved but not yet completed. These claims have been made publicly several times and were also included in opposition correspondence to the Planning Board in regard to the HT-D Text Change application. We reviewed the list and found that many of the projects/units claimed in their counts do not meet their own criteria. Some sites were counted twice. Some claims include buildings that are already up and operating, some of which have been operating for several years. Other claims include approvals for things other than housing. And some include projects that have not yet received any site plan approvals, including some that were actually denied by the Zoning Board. Once these simple criteria (approved apartments, not yet completed/occupied) are applied correctly, the actual numbers are much lower – roughly 60% of those claimed. Many of the housing numbers that are valid should also include relevant context; like whether they are limited to seniors, or if they replaced an intense commercial use.

Furthermore, regardless of these numbers, Stamford's recent growth has been relatively modest and certainly sustainable by our infrastructure. From 1960, and even including over the last census decade (2010-2020), Stamford's population growth has averaged roughly 1% increase annually. That is hardly something to be alarmed about. We have also demonstrated, with data on sewer flows, water usage, reservoir status, public school enrollment, and roadway volumes, that residential development over the last 10± years has had relatively no impact on our City infrastructure.

Rick recently wrote to the Advocate about this and other relevant context surrounding the application. Please pass along to the Planning Board members and include in the record for the pending application.

Thanks

RAY MAZZEO, AICP 
SENIOR PLANNER

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"over 30 major development projects approved by planning and zoning with 7,000 additional apartments to what's been built so far"

	Project	Claims	Actual	Fact Check
1	154 Greyrock	228	0	The Asher. Complete and operating.
2	733-777 Summer St.	376	356	Units reduced from initial approval. Office redevelopment
3	441 Canal St.	401	401	
4	The Riverhouse- 17 West Main St.	110	110	
5	The Lafayette- 819 West Main St.	130	130	
6	419 West Ave.		0	Warehouse/industrial
7	One Atlantic- 1 Atlantic St.	77	77	Office conversion (66,000 sf)
8	72 Spruce St.	132	43	89 units existing. Partially operating.
9	100 Elmcroft Rd.	256	256	Office conversion (284,000 sf)
10	100 Clinton Ave.	471	471	
11	0 Walton Pl and 80 Prospect Street	224	224	
12	677-707 Washington Blvd. The Knife	406	406	
13	HP Parcel C2- Woodland Ave/ Pacific St. B& S	540	540	
14	HP Parcel C1- Walter Wheeler Dr. B& S Carting	174	174	
15	83 & 85 Morgan St.	42	42	
16	Metro Tower- Station Pl.			
17	780 Summer St.	73	73	GDP only. No Site Plan Approval. Office conversion.
18	589 Bedford	21	21	
19	171 Stillwater Ave.	36	36	
20	583 Pacific St.		9	Historic preservation.
21	The Dogwoods at Long Ridge Rd.-210 Long	200	210	Mozaic Concierge Living. Senior housing.
22	Pacific & Henry St.	61	61	Historic preservation.
23	Delmar Residences- 68 Seaview Ave.	52	52	Office conversion (107,000 sf)
24	3 Landmark Square	400	400	Office redevelopment (134,000 sf)
25	128 Broad Street	198	198	
26	41-45 Stillwater Ave.	39	39	Pacific House - supportive housing
27	Park Square West III- 66 West Park Pl.	26	0	No such approval. Hotel application pending.
28	Peninsula at Harbor Point			
29	Old Town Hotel- Veteran Park- 160 Atlantic	100	0	Hotel approval. Not housing.
30	916 Long Ridge Rd & Wire Mill		0	No such approval. Application denied by PB.
31	Lifetime 245 Atlantic Street	291	291	
32	421 Atlantic Street	650	0	Atlantic Station. Open since 2016.
33	885/875 Washington Blvd	424	0	The Smyth. Open since 2022. 414 units.
34	800 Long Ridge Rd	345	0	No such approval. Application pending.
35	900 Long Ridge Rd	508	0	No such approval. Application denied by ZB.
36	1600 Summer Street	250	0	No approval. No proposal for housing.
37	Hotel Next to Curleys	90	0	No approval. Hotel app pending. Duplicate (#27 above).
38	66 Still Water	18	18	Pacific House - supportive housing
39	Burlington Coat factory 74 Broad Street	280	0	No housing proposal submitted. Zone change only
	Total	7,629	4,638	61%

Rick Redniss (opinion): It's possible to reduce Hope St. traffic

By Redniss

June 7, 2024



River Bend Center in Stamford.
Ned Gerard, Staff Photographer / Hearst Connecticut Media

The April 29 Advocate story “River Bend housing plan tough sell” touched on some of the land use issues and attitudes facing River Bend industrial park. The May 19 front page article began to focus on solutions.

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Understanding how we here got requires a broader historical context.

Since World War II land use in Stamford has been impacted by numerous factors including the GI Bill, Interstate-95, urban renewal, 1970s New York City office bombings, COVID, etc. From 1960 to 1990, Stamford added more than 15 million square feet of office space.

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The jobs created translated into tens of thousands of workers driving to and from work. Jobs are great but cars clogged our highways and streets. During that time, Stamford's housing supply failed to keep pace with demand, causing housing and rent prices to steadily increase.

Stamford has had many Master Plan and rezoning efforts to rebalance the jobs/housing ratio to be healthier. Office construction has slowed while residential opportunities have grown. Data from the Public School System, Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA), Aquarion, State Department of Transportation, local Transportation Traffic & Parking Department, and the Tax Assessor all indicate that we are headed in the right balanced direction.

Despite thousands more units of housing, school enrollment has remained level at just over 16,000 students; sewage flow is down about a million gallons a day; and water usage is down about 25% from a peak in 2016. We did not make up this data. It is public information from the sources listed above. It seems counter-intuitive but those are the facts.

Yet when presented with WPCA data at our second in-person public meeting at the site, a Stamford Neighborhood Coalition leader said, "I don't believe you." Someone else said "They're (WPCA) a bunch of crooks." Rather than ask questions or try to understand how these results came to be, skeptics scoff, refuse to believe, disrupt important land use conversations, and mislead citizens of Stamford. Fortunately, two Planning Board members who live near River Bend had a more salient perspective.

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River Bend is not an office park with limited uses. River Bend is an industrial park. They have spent millions of dollars adapting space into family recreational and educational uses, while avoiding nuisance uses. Without marketing efforts, River Bend's investments have only slowed the decline in occupancy, now down

Management has not challenged their taxes, yet. Stamford has a huge and growing inventory of vacant buildings. Ignoring this impending avalanche is not good planning. Property taxes from largely vacant office buildings have plummeted. The tax burden continues to shift onto homeowners despite the growth of the Grand List. We can't stop that trend and the pandemic accelerated it. We can plan for it and mitigate it. River Bend's proposed text change does just that.

Multi-family rental housing generates less than three public school students per 100 units (data from Stamford Public Schools, the Stamford Master Plan, and sample research). That's on average less than \$60,000 in "expense" with more than \$600,000 in tax revenue, equating to more than one-half million dollars per year per 100 units benefiting all Stamford taxpayers. The director of administration recently presented data that showed new development in Stamford since 2013 has added more than \$50 million per year. Per year! Our taxes are rising more slowly than if we didn't have that constant revenue stream. Think where our taxes would be without this new tax revenue.

The May 19 Advocate article reported the key concern: traffic. Hope Street is a frequent traffic nightmare. No question about that. Yet average daily traffic on Hope Street is actually down about 7% compared with state data from 2011. Again, this is objective, factual, data directly from professional state and city sources.

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Why then is there still congestion on Hope Street? There are many reasons. One reason we learned has been the extensive utility work involving laying optical fiber and natural gas piping. This reduces the street to one lane for long periods. A 2,500-linear foot stretch of Hope Street has more than 50 curb cuts (driveways or roads) for an average of one every 50 feet, most with four turning movements. Add to these almost 200 conflicts, there is parking on both sides including perpendicular spaces that back out and stop traffic in two directions.

Since the public meetings, I have continued to drive the area, meet, and talk with people who have experience coping with traffic operations. There are solutions, including simple little changes such as reducing curb cuts and turning movements.

Pulling back vehicular stop bars would allow room for trucks to operate better rather than block traffic with wide turns. Changing the timing of traffic lights. Striping for turning lanes at key intersections. These are just some of the inexpensive easy fixes that could improve traffic flow. I was shown documents going back almost 20 years where traffic issues were identified. Yet I'm told little has been done to address the concerns. Reports abound where trucking "behavior" is causing many problems. Considering the 150-plus acres of industrially zoned land feeding into Hope Street, it is no real surprise. More enforcement is needed. Approving River Bend's text change is an important step to making these traffic improvements a reality since any future zoning application would require funding solutions.

River Bend has declined leasing to trucking operations that would add significant large truck traffic. Extensive unused paved area exist for heavy truck movements with no additional River Bend investment. W this at the recent public meeting, ironically one attendee complained this showed the pending text unnecessary because there are potential tenants out there. The implication is River Bend should br rather than housing. Really? Would people be happier with large-scale, tractor-trailer operations ar industrial rather than residences with their fewer (yes, fewer) peak-hour passenger cars? The coali on this and is trying to turn it against the text application. They also feed people exaggerated data i political agenda. Coalition leadership claim "over 7,000 apartments have yet to open." That is ove thousands of units. Check the facts.

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If you listen carefully to people in the neighborhood, the Planning Board members who live close by, and those who take the time to learn and digest the facts is this: “We gotta do something”; “Rather have cars than trucks”; and “Housing brings more money to Springdale to support the stores, restaurants, and businesses.” One thing is certain: River Bend industrial park will not remain 65% vacant.

Evaluating River Bend’s text change application, the city’s Transportation Traffic & Parking Department wrote on May 7. “The adaptive reuse and redevelopment of the property to replace industrial or commercial uses with residential uses is not expected to result in an increase of traffic generated from this site.” These are the facts.

There are more than 180 uses including many heavy industrial uses that generate more traffic and many large trucks without any land use review. Rejecting River Bend’s proposed text change is more than just saying “no” to much-needed housing. It is more than condemning Hope Street to its existing traffic problems. Rejecting the proposed text change would add to Hope Street’s traffic problem because River Bend’s would have only one other realistic way to reoccupy the park.

Stopping residential development in Stamford has serious adverse consequences for every taxpayer. Planned development of housing has many benefits, especially when located next to public transportation centers like the Springdale train station.

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Preventing future congestion on Hope Street is possible. We just need to learn from the facts and make better informed decisions for everyone. Just saying “no” is not good planning. ×

Stamford native Rick Redniss is a certified land use planner and representative of the owners of R1
June 7, 2024