

March 14, 2021

**RE: SB 1024**

Dear Members of the Committee on Planning and Development:

In 1950 a post-World War II development was established on the shores of Long Island Sound in Fairfield County. What had long been a girl scout campground was developed as a subdivision of 65+ single family homes. The neighborhood included a playground, a private beach, boat docks, tennis courts, ballfields and courts. The homeowner's association hired a lifeguard each summer to give swimming lessons to the local children during high-tide and serve as a recreation counselor at the playground during low tide. Most of the children from this community post 1960's attended private schools. This same community had a covenant that all property owners were required to sign prior to closing.

It is unlikely that anyone is surprised that such a subdivision was successfully established. What may surprise you about this same neighborhood are the following:

- The covenant stated that at least 51% of the properties were required to be owned by people of color;
- No FHA loan was ever approved for the construction of any of the original 60+/- homes due to redlining;
- This subdivision was consciously developed as an inter-racial, middle-class neighborhood within one mile of a Metro-North Railroad Station, one mile of the local elementary school, a public bus stop at its entrance;
- The parking for the beach and tennis courts is minimal because walking paths and road design are friendly to pedestrians and bicyclists;
- To enter and leave this neighborhood, one can go by boat, helicopter (this has never been done to the best of my knowledge) or driving through some of the most poorest, most disenfranchised areas of the city, populated almost exclusively by people of color.

I know all of this because I grew up there. For the record, it remains inter-racial although the housing prices are no longer within reach of the middle-class.

Without the moral commitment of its founders to an integrated neighborhood, this place would not exist. This is a success story of the private market creating and sustaining an inter-racial community. Developments like Village Creek in South Norwalk exist, but they are extremely rare by comparison to the Levittown-esque developments known for their discrimination against people of color, Jews, gays, and other "untouchables".

**The purpose of government is to step in where the capitalist private market fails to act.** Our government regulates food production, drug testing and approval, speed limits and seat belts, and land use. The establishment and enforcement of fairness – in deed and through generational repression has yet to be successfully fulfilled by legislation despite three Federal Constitutional Amendments (13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>), the Fair Housing Act, Civil Rights legislation and other well intended government action.

. Land Use Regulation, along with voter suppression, is one of the most insidious and subversive social constructs ensuring the continuation of segregation and discrimination.

The Zoning Atlas, developed by Desegregate CT brilliantly unveils Connecticut's dirty little secret - municipalities requiring a large minimum lot size, and restricting land use to single-family homes and places of worship, distanced "to-far-walk to anything else" reinforce segregation between the "haves" and "have nots". These municipalities, neighborhoods, *zoning districts*, are one of the most powerful enforcers of racial discrimination in Connecticut.

The private market has not met the moral, economic, and fairness requirement of a democratic society, so it is up to us - you, as legislators - who represent all the people of Connecticut, to step up and make this happen.

As a longtime professional planner in the State of Connecticut, having worked for several municipalities, written zoning codes for them and others, I have been privy to the conversations and hushed tone commentary in the back rooms. I know how uncompromising and racist (overt and covert) some government officials can be.

- Please support the ability for everyone to have a roof over the heads of themselves and their families;
- Protect needless and forests destruction;
- Increase quality design of a variety of housing stock in areas with existing infrastructure, resulting in a significant decrease in costs to local public works departments – and a decrease strain on local tax dollars.

I urge you all to do the good work of government. **Pass SB 1024**. Bring equity to the fore.

Sincerely,

*Leslie*

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