



TOWN OF NEW CANAAN
PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION

TOWN HALL, 77 MAIN STREET
NEW CANAAN, CT 06840

PLANNING & ZONING
DEPARTMENT

March 15, 2021

RE: SB 1024 AN ACT CONCERNING ZONING AUTHORITY, CERTAIN DESIGN GUIDELINES, QUALIFICATIONS OF CERTAIN LAND USE OFFICIALS AND CERTAIN SEWAGE DISPOSAL SYSTEMS

Esteemed Chairs Cassano and McCarthy Vahey, Members of the Planning and Development Committee,

My name is John Goodwin and I chair the Planning and Zoning Commission of New Canaan. You have received very detailed and well thought out testimony from some of my Chair colleagues of Planning and Zoning Commissions in Fairfield County as well as from the Western Connecticut Council of Governments (Westcog). Having reviewed the Westcog submission in detail, I support their analysis and conclusions.

Rather than repeat the testimony, I would like to offer some observations.

First I am concerned about the quality and some of the tortuous reasoning behind the input that you have received that appears to be driving the construction of the proposed legislation. I am an analyst by training. So for the past few months I have taken the time to listen to, read and study the arguments behind the premise of much of the proposed legislation, which is local application of planning and zoning regulations is exclusionary and restricts the supply of affordable housing. I find the arguments questionable and often based upon incorrect data and/or flawed reasoning.

For example, the argument that a few examples of exclusionary use of zoning regulations years ago makes all zoning by definition exclusionary is nonsensical. I see that special permits are bad, yet in 16 years of Planning and Zoning Commission service, we have approved over 95% of such applications. Character is an evil term, yet we have never used character from an anti-affordable housing perspective. I see that parking is not needed, yet in New Canaan, we are on a spur with mediocre train service – you need a car in New Canaan. Finally, I am concerned these sources of input have a priori decided their goals, and have not made an effort to understand the facts on the ground of what smaller towns have done to promote affordable and diverse housing.

So what is New Canaan, as an example, done, and what are we aiming to do. I highlight:

- New Canaan has an affordable housing fund for 14 years funded by building permits which supports a progressive and active housing authority.

- We are currently working on a fourth recent affordable housing project which will enable us to achieve our second moratorium for 8-30g purposes.
- We already have multiple zones for multi-family and smaller footprint housing including a multi-family zone, an apartment zone and specific affordable housing zones.
- Local zoning commissions have been criticized as not having expertise- the New Canaan Planning and Zoning includes two architects with one New York City based, two former planners from large cities, and the lead lender for one of the largest affordable lending banks in Connecticut.
- We are working on and will deliver new Regulations that will include greater inclusionary zoning for affordable, workforce and senior living purposes.

All of this has been achieved through the rigorous application of the Connecticut statutes concerning zoning, while tailoring the solutions to the reality of the local community.

Respectfully submitted,

John Goodwin
Chair, New Canaan Planning and Zoning Commission