



Salisbury Republican Town Committee

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Salisbury Planning and Zoning Commission
Town Hall
PO Box 548
Salisbury, CT 06068

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ORIGINAL

LAND USE OFFICE
March 26, 2021
Salisbury, CT

Dear Chairman Klemens et al -

One of the core principles that Republicans believe in is that decisions affecting our lives should generally be made by the people closest to the matter in question. State rather than Federal. City or Town rather than State.

We believe that this principle is particularly applicable to the pending Affordable Housing (AH) proposal for Holley Block. Your Committee has heard from a plethora of high priced attorneys, architects and engineers warning of a never-ending cascade of problems if the project is permitted to proceed. Parking problems, traffic problems, school bus problems, drainage problems, waste disposal problems - not to mention the loss of a thin strip of grass with two trees where you can sit and watch the traffic on Route 44 go by.

Lost in all this is any recognition of the serious problem our town will eventually face if this and other AH projects are blocked. Simply put, our ability to make our own decisions about building, zoning and land use matters could be lost. Decisions about AH in Salisbury could suddenly be made by bureaucrats in Hartford or, worse, Washington. This is not an imaginary concern. There are already several existing laws and regulations on the books that affect local control of land use and zoning decisions and new ones are quickly working their way to the surface.

State law already requires every town to have an AH plan specifying how the town intends to increase the number of AH units. Another State law provides that, if a town has less than 10% of its housing stock devoted to AH (a requirement we do not come close to meeting), a developer may come in and build a development without securing zoning approval so long as the development has 30% of its units reserved for AH.

More than a dozen bills have been introduced in Hartford that would allow the State to override local zoning and land use decisions under the guise of generating more AH and low income housing and "desegregating" our cities and towns. For example, in mid-March the General Assembly's Planning and Development Committee held a lengthy hearing on legislation that would allow developers to construct 2, 3 or 4-

bedroom units in downtown corridors without securing local zoning approval. And, if the development consisted of more than 10 units, 10% of them would have to be preserved for “low income” residents. Even the Federal government is getting into the act. Sparked by a complaint from the Open Communities Alliance, the Department of Housing and Urban Development is investigating whether Connecticut’s reliance on local zoning laws has led to segregated housing in violation of the federal Fair Housing laws.

Salisbury is extremely fortunate to have its current AH plans in the hands of local organizations. The two most significant ones are the Salisbury Affordable Housing Commission, which prepared the excellent 2018 Affordable Housing Plan, and the Salisbury Housing Committee, which oversees most of the AH units in town and has spent countless hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars developing the current Holley Block plan. It is these organizations – made up of residents of the Salisbury community – that are working to bring more AH to our town and thereby bring us into compliance with State mandates.

If we continue to put endless roadblocks in the way of every AH proposal, and put every project at risk of being quashed as a result of local opposition, we will end up with insufficient AH. And that would not only be a tragedy for Salisbury workers who cannot afford to live here, but could be a tragedy for our town when we find that decisions of this nature have been taken out of our hands and given to bureaucrats in Hartford.

Sincerely,



Tom Morrison
Chair, Salisbury Republican Town Committee