

# NORWALK DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

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**TO: REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY COMMISSIONERS**

**FROM: TAMI STRAUSS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLANNING**

**DATE: JANUARY 22, 2019**

**RE: RESPONSES TO REDEVELOPMENT PLAN PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENT**

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The public hearing on the Wall Street / West Avenue Redevelopment Plan held on January 8<sup>th</sup> evidenced the community's interest and desire to actively participate in the formulation of this important municipal planning document. Nearly 40 people attended the public hearing, with 17 offering public comment regarding the Plan. In addition to the 40 people attending, the Agency received written comments from another 11 people and there has been ongoing engagement with the public through the Norwalk Tomorrow Website.

As part of the public comment process there were some specific questions asked about the plan. My responses to these questions are addressed below. Further, specific public comments were made that sought consideration of some form of modification to the plan. These comments have been fully reviewed and I have outlined the specific areas of the plan which will be subject to review/modification going forward. Finally I have offered a revised plan approval schedule which will also be posted on the Agency website.

## **Questions**

### ***Can the wastewater treatment plan handle another 4000 apartments now being built, planned or coming online?***

As part of the proposed Wall Street / West Avenue zoning review, the City received a letter from the Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) regarding the sanitary sewer capacity. The WPCA indicated that the Norwalk Wastewater Treatment Plant has a permit limit capacity of 18 million gallons per day. The current available capacity of the system is 2.6 million gallons per day (MGD), which is sufficient to serve 26,000 dwelling units. WPCA reviews project drainage on a project by project basis as part of the Code Enforcement Administration Committee (CEAC) review prior to a development project advancing to Zoning Commission for customary site plan review.

### ***What are the impacts of multi-family apartments on the public school system?***

Multi-family housing has realized additional school children to the Norwalk School District. The Waypointe developments (including Mid-Block, North-Block, Quincy Lofts, and The

Berkeley) have realized 25 additional students to the school system out of 662 housing units. Similarly, in South Norwalk developments (Ironworks, the Pearl, Sheffield, and 19 Day Street), 7 students have been realized out of 367 units. In total 32 students have been realized in over 1,000 apartment units in all of Norwalk's urban areas. This data and its interpretation is supported by the demographer for Norwalk Public Schools as confirmed by Thomas Hamilton, the Chief Financial Officer for Norwalk Public Schools. The demographer stated "The number of students coming out of the new apartments that have been developed in recent years is quite low in comparison to the number of students coming out of other housing types."

### ***Why do we need density?***

The Wall Street-West Avenue area, population 1,822, is the second least populated Census Tract behind the Silvermine area. Despite recent growth associated with the new development in the area it is still one of the least populated Census Tracts in Norwalk. Urban areas are meant to be dense, walkable, and highly populated areas. Without additional housing, Norwalk's urban geography will fail to meet the population levels necessary to economically sustain an active urban environment.

### ***Has Norwalk Qualified to be a federally designated Opportunity Zone?***

Three Norwalk census tracts – 437, 441 and 434 – have been federally designated as Opportunity Zones. Census Tract 437 and the Redevelopment Area intersect. The City and the Agency have begun to make strides to realize the benefits of the federal designation and will be launching a website and marketing campaign in early 2019 to attract quality Opportunity Funds to make investments in the area.

### **Areas of plan that generated public comment seeking additional review and or modification which will be addressed in the final draft version of the Plan include:**

- Blight determination
- Affordable Housing
- Relationship of the Redevelopment Plan to the POCD
- Historic Preservation
- Innovation District
- Small Business Incentives
- Trees / Green Infrastructure / Open Space
- Norwalk River as a resource
- Public Art
- Pedestrian and Vehicular Improvements
- Transportation Improvements
- Eminent Domain
- Safety

### **Proposed Schedule**

February 5, 2019 – Post revised plan to website, social media, Norwalk Tomorrow

February 12, 2019 – Review revised plan at meeting of the Norwalk Redevelopment Agency

March 7, 2019 – Planning Committee to consider advancing revised plan to Common Council

March 12, 2019 – Review of revised plan at meeting of Norwalk Redevelopment Agency

March 26, 2019 – Common Council meeting to consider approval of revised plan

April 9, 2019 – Norwalk Redevelopment Agency meeting to consider approval of revised plan