



TOWN OF DARIEN
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TESTIMONY SUBMITTED TO THE HOUSING COMMITTEE
HOUSING COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING—17 FEBRUARY 2009
FROM THE TOWN OF DARIEN
RE: PROPOSED AFFORDABLE HOUSING AMENDMENTS

Ladies and Gentleman:

I am writing to you today to express the Town of Darien's support to amend 8-30g. Before you are a number of Bills that scratch the surface, but are worthy of consideration and support.

Darien like other municipalities has been working towards attaining the goal 8-30g sets forth - to have 10% of our housing as affordable - although given some of our challenges, we feel this goal may not be attainable unless 8-30g is amended. Like other municipalities Darien is 98% developed and the cost of land is so high that building affordable housing in this area necessitates financial assistance from municipalities. A number of Bills were introduced this session that appear to amend 8-30g so that the State's 10 % goal may become a realistic and attainable one.

The Town of Darien respectfully submits testimony to support the following Bills:

- 206 – An Act Concerning Moratoriums on Affordable Housing
- 208 – An Act Concerning the Determination of the Number of Affordable Housing Units in a Municipality
- 5240 – An Act Concerning the Threshold for Compliance with Affordable Housing
- 5525 – An Act Concerning Exemptions to the Affordable Housing Land Use Appeals Process

Bills 208 and 5240 take a creative approach to achieving the 10% goal by including in-law apartments, existing affordable units and accessory apartments to be considered as affordable housing and to count toward the State goal. These Bills take the stress off of a community with very little or no land to build new units. These units already exist and are meeting the needs of community members, it would make good sense to have them count. These Bills also

support The Aging in Place initiative that Darien and other municipalities have in place.

Bill 206 addresses two issues: the first issue proposes defining the median income to be that of the local area income. This will not only enable the workforce in Fairfield County to qualify for affordable housing, but also keep Darien Seniors as well as Fairfield County seniors in the area. As you know, in Fairfield County the pay scale is higher than the State median which means we are unable to provide housing for the very people in our own communities - our own workforce. We see our seniors moving from Connecticut to more affordable areas. Given the established income levels, our workforce does not have the opportunity to live near their employment, which adds to our increasing roadway congestion, creating yet another problem.

The second issue provides an incentive for Cities and Towns working toward the 10% goal to build more senior affordable housing by suggesting to raise the point value for senior affordable housing to one point. The need for senior affordable housing has been established throughout the State, because our seniors are moving out of Connecticut. Specifically in Darien our senior flight is greater than that of the State average. In communities like Darien who are trying to balance the need for affordable housing with the desire to reach the 10% goal raising the equivalency point value would provide an incentive for communities to build the must needed senior affordable housing.

Bill 5525 allows municipalities to plan for and control the location of affordable housing developments. Darien like many other municipalities through its planning has identified areas in town in which affordable housing makes sense to build, while keeping in mind the principles of smart growth. These identified zones would give clear guidance to developers.

The Town of Darien is committed to increase our stock of affordable housing. Like other communities we have long wait lists for family and senior affordable housing, our workforce would like to live here, our seniors would like to stay in their hometown. To that end the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Representative Town Meeting have taken a number of steps to achieve this goal. They are:

2005 –

- Board of Selectmen establish affordable housing as a priority and develop associated strategies; and
- Appoint the Darien Affordable Housing Ad Hoc Committee

2006 –

- Boards of Selectmen, Finance and Representative Town Meeting (RTM) funded predevelopment grant for the redevelopment of Allen O'Neill.

- Board of Selectmen established Darien Affordable Housing Advisory Commission (DAHAC).
- Board of Selectmen, Darien League of Women Voters, Darien Community Association, Darien United Way and Darien Clergy Association sponsor affordable housing educational forums.

2007

- Continued Educational Forums.
- Planning & Zoning Commission had an informal discussion with a representative of 599 Boston Post Road regarding redevelopment of that property. Sept. 10, 2007, another discussion held regarding this property. The Commission noted its desire to have all or part of the building become affordable housing.
- The approvals and start of construction of the Cottage on Edgerton Street.
- The Board of Selectmen voted to accept DAHAC's final report. Purchase of former Darien Library, 35 Leroy Avenue.

2008

BOARD OF SELECTMEN TOWN OF DARIEN AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY

The Darien Board of Selectmen is committed to increasing the availability of diverse affordable housing in the Town of Darien, including that which qualifies as affordable housing under C.G.S. §8-30g. The Board recognizes the need that exists to increase affordable housing not only in the Town of Darien, but also in the region for our senior and workforce populations and housing that will attract the young adult population.

The Board of Selectmen recognizes that Darien has a number of opportunities to provide more affordable housing to seniors, working families and young adults.

The Board of Selectmen is committed to taking a proactive approach to control growth and to ensure that the character of the Town will be maintained. The Town of Darien is a premier municipality in the State of Connecticut and the Board is entrusted to maintain that status. Significant progress in increasing the availability of affordable housing will ensure Darien's health and viability and also the health and economic viability of our southwestern region.

- Board of Selectmen voted to support Inclusionary Zoning Regulations.
- Preparation and review of RFP for redevelopment of the former Darien Library property at 35 Leroy Avenue to be affordable housing.
- Board of Selectmen approved an Affordable Housing Policy.

- Darien Housing Authority submits formal plans for redevelopment of Allen O'Neill Housing. Formation of 35 Leroy Ave. RFP Review Panel: Community Homes at Leroy Advisory Committee (CHALAC).
- December 2008—Planning & Zoning Commission considered the adoption of Inclusionary Zoning Regulations.

2009

- January 6, 2009—Inclusionary Zoning Regulations adopted by Planning & Zoning Commission
- January 2009—Affordable Housing Plan drafted.
- May 31, 2009—Effective date of Inclusionary Zoning Regulations.

Thank you for your time and consideration of the Town of Darien's testimony.

Very truly yours,



Evonne M. Klein
First Selectwoman