

For 18 years I have been the owner, operator and sole proprietor of SNS dry cleaner formerly located at 223 Hope Street Stamford and now located at 914 East Main Street in Stamford. Six small businesses located in the 221 through 227 block of Hope Street were displaced by CVS Pharmacy in the winter and spring of 2013. Three of these businesses Hua Lin Chinese restaurant, Enzo's Fine Italian Food and SNS Cleaners suffered catastrophic financial damage because of being forced out. The Stamford Advocate on September 27 2012 did an article giving the background of our plite. The front page article entitled Forced Out.

Moving a deli or a Chinese restaurant or a dry cleaner is a near devastating task. Each business has had to purchase new equipment or move machinery or rent cranes and rigging equipment to finalize the move.

The Zoning Board approved CVS to build their latest two story, 14,000 square foot, big box CVS on October 15th 2012. We attended all the meetings and presented our united voice but the city put money before small business and approved CVS presumably to increase the tax rolls.

Both Wendy Lee of Hua Lin and I live and own properties in Stamford. Wendy has owned Hua Lin for 17 years, she raised her children in Stamford, all of whom attend Stamford public schools and she employs workers who live both in and outside of Stamford. I own a mixed used property on the corner of Cove Road and Avery Street. I have lived in Stamford my entire life, I attended Stamford public schools in all of my employees reside in Stamford. Enzo Cardillo, although a resident of Fairfield Connecticut employs workers who reside in the city of Stamford.

In order to save our businesses and continue to provide work for our employees each of us has incurred significant debt Wendy Lee had to take out a \$150,000 second mortgage on her home in addition borrowed fifty thousand dollars from her father. After opening her restaurant at the new location the debt was so significant that Wendy had to sell a third of her business to the chef who put in \$65,000 and now owns one third of the restaurant. Wendy now owns two thirds of a restaurant she built from the beginning 17 years ago.

Enzo had to take out an \$80,000 second mortgage on his home to save his business. I incurred at minimum \$65,000 debt moving my dry cleaning business from Glenbrook to the east side. Additionally I am still not fully operational. I have had to take on two other jobs bartending at the Stamford Yacht Club and working for a security company to cover my daily living expenses. My property that I own and reside at is in foreclosure. I have owned this property since 2004 with a perfect record of paying my mortgage and taxes. The move has destroyed my perfect record and I'm about to lose my property.

So a law needs to be put in place on the state level to help protect small business from developers destroying what has been productive in communities and playing with neighborhoods. This cannot be left to the local level because it will never be implemented correctly. Deals will be cut and nothing would happen to protect the small business. Whoever does the developing should pay a fee as an insurance policy to the town and whatever is broken the town can allocate the money back to whoever became broken to fix the problem. This way neighborhoods and communities can stay intact people's lives and families are not destroyed and development can still continue. This does not come out of the taxpayers pocket.

I have met with our mayor Mayor Martin and he is aware of our situation and he agreed that we got pushed. Clearly, we have sustained tremendous financial injury in the past 18 months. It seems like the city of Stamford put CVS on a one-way path to corporate success and left the small business of Stamford flapping in the wind.

So, Commerce Committee consider this bill carefully because there are more voters in small business then there are in big business. This is very important to all of us.

Very truly yours,
Michele Coppola
Owner SNS Drycleaner