



Housing/Community Development/Social Services Committee - Board of Representatives

Gloria DePina, Chair

Lila Wallace, Vice Chair

Committee Minutes

Date: Monday, July 20, 2020

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Place: Meeting Held Remotely

The Housing/Community Development/Social Services Committee met as indicated above. In attendance were Chair DePina, Vice-Chair Wallace and Committee Member Reps, Palomba, Michelson and Moore. Absent was Reps. Roqueta and Pratt. Also present: Reps. De la Cruz, Cottrell, Graziosi, Lee, Lion and Summerville; Ralph Blessing, Land Use Bureau Chief; Richard Freedman; and Ellen Bromley, Social Services Director.

Chair DePina opened the meeting at 6:41 p.m.

Item No.	Description	Committee Action
1. HCD30.037	REVIEW: Role of Zoning Regulations on Racial and Socioeconomic Disparities in Stamford Housing 07/08/2020 – Submitted by Lee, Lion, Stella and Roqueta	REPORT MADE

Rep. Lee stated the objective of this item is to identify possible racial and socioeconomic disparities exist in Stamford. If we conclude as a committee that these disparities exist does, does Zoning play a role in this, and what can we do about this for our city. Mr. Lee asked Mr. Blessing are there racial and socioeconomic disparities in Stamford?

Mr. Blessing discussed the information that he gathered since he began working for the City of Stamford. The committee discussed the attached [presentation](#).

- Zoning maps that include racial demographics
- Brief History of Affordability in Stamford
- Map of Connecticut COVID cases
- Map of Distribution of people and color and opportunity in Connecticut
- [2019 BMR program report](#)
- [The State of CT summary of affordable housing units](#)
- [An opinion piece from the former NYC Health Commissioner](#) in the New York Times that explains why it's poverty and not density that determines the COVID cases.

Mr. Freedman stated:

- Being in real-estate development, he uses state law that allows you to override zoning in Connecticut to build low income housing (Stamford does not allow this)

- New notion of Opportunity mapping is by census tract that calculates areas of low or high opportunity scale (this is a direct correlation between actually includes where you grow up and your life outcome; health, lifespan, income)
- Opportunity map of Stamford is almost exactly like the Zoning maps
- Stamford follows history of State
- Zoning started in the 1920's and is a State police power; Racism in zoning began shortly after
- The state abdicated its role in zoning in the whole state
- "race to the bottom" New Canaan, Fairfield, Darien
- Almost no significant amount of multifamily zoning - Impossible to build apartment building (Westport, Darien, New Canaan) this changed slightly lately for show (alternatively it is happening in Stamford)
- Large parts of town are zoned at more than 1 acre
- People believe it is normal to need an acre to live on their home and it's created traffic, wasted land, created more development than we had, worst air pollution
- Large lot zoning is made to keep minorities out even though it is not stated explicitly.
- North Stamford, 1-acre zone
- Oregon Example to show change is coming– law passed that towns with over 10k people single family housing is banned and towns with 25k or more banned anything less than 3 family homes.
- Change was already coming, but with the murder of George Floyd and the Pandemic it is accelerated.
- Hard to get this passed in Stamford since people are invested in large lot single family homes
- Litigation to build 19 units in Westport generated opposition

Rep Lee asked:

- Since we are seeing change across the country, if we were to reform zoning within the control of the various boards ultimately coming to our approval (BOR), what would be some of the things as a developer that needs to happen?

Mr. Freedman answered:

- Stamford needs 20,000 single family houses
- This needs to done with great care since there are areas where it's not going to work
- Parking is a big issue when thinking of this change.
- Expand market to create more housing
- Unfortunately land in Stamford costs \$60k a unit, which forces you to build expensive units

Chair Depina

- What about lower class since they are the ones who need housing

Mr. Freedman

- Affordability can be set wherever you would like
- BMR currently does not create enough low-income housing for people
- \$750 a month for 2-bedroom Franklin St. If you make \$30,000 you can afford this
- 300 applicants for 53 units showing that there is a demand

The committee concluded:

- There are disparities within the city overlapping within zoning
- Elsewhere in CT as well as North Stamford association have shown that zoning can be used for purpose of segregation often in coded language

- Maintaining these walls of segregation are what we've seen in neighboring towns as well as within the city
- If we are willing to pick that fight and go through what could be controversial and allowing those 3 acres lots to have 2 houses instead of 1 we could start seeing much more housing at middle class housing level
- Generate money for affordable housing where the need is endless within our state
- If we create more housing in general expanding the tax base in the city to create revenue for other things like school infrastructure improvements
- List of recommendation of things that we can change within our existing zoning rules to improve opportunity for people
- Possibly taking office parks and making those available for residential housing

Mr. Blessing added:

- There are factors in North Stamford that don't support density; raising density in certain areas doesn't mean it's right for all and Low density areas should allow apartments
- We can do more in locations closer to downtown and near transit
- Office parks – seen success with senior housing projects, lifetime fitness not so successful.
- If the committee needs more information please contact

The meeting adjourned at 8:39 pm.

Submitted by,
Gloria DePina, Chair

This meeting is on [Video](#).