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**TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD**

**TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING**

**June 14, 2022, 7:04 p.m.,**

**Legislative Chambers**

**Re: Ordinance Establishing the  
Transit-Oriented Development Zoning District.**

**A p p e a r a n c e s:**

**Town Council Members Present:**

**MAYOR SHARI CANTOR**

**LEON DAVIDOFF**

**MARK ZYDANOWICZ**

**ALBERTO CORTES**

**ADRIENNE BILLINGS-SMITH**

**CAROL BLANKS**

**BEN WENOGRAD**

**LIAM SWEENEY**

**MARY FAY**

**DALLAS DODGE,  
Corporation Counsel**

**RICK LEDWITH  
Town Manager**

**TODD DUMAIS  
Town Planner**

**ESSIE LABROT  
Town Clerk**

1                   PRESIDENT CANTOR: All right.  
2   Calling the 7 p.m. public hearing to order.

3                   We will start with a roll  
4   call, Ms. Labrot.

5                   THE CLERK: Ms. Blanks?

6                   COUNCILOR BLANKS: Here.

7                   THE CLERK: Ms. Cantor?

8                   PRESIDENT CANTOR: Here.

9                   THE CLERK: Mr. Davidoff?

10                  COUNCILOR DAVIDOFF: Here.

11                  THE CLERK: Ms. Fay?

12                  COUNCILOR FAY: Here.

13                  THE CLERK: My goodness. Hold  
14   on one second.

15                  Mr. Cortes?

16                  COUNCILOR CORTES: Here.

17                  THE CLERK: Mr. Davidoff?

18                  COUNCILOR DAVIDOFF: Here,  
19   again.

20                  THE CLERK: And Ms. Fay? I'm  
21   not in the right order.

22                  COUNCILOR FAY: Still here.

23                  THE CLERK: Mr. Sweeney?

24                  COUNCILOR SWEENEY: Here.

25                  THE CLERK: Mr. Wenograd?

1 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: Here.

2 THE CLERK: And

3 Mr. Zydanowicz?

4 COUNCILOR ZYDANOWICZ: Here.

5 THE CLERK: Thank you.

6 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,  
7 Ms. Labrot.

8 THE CLERK:

9 Ms. Billings-Smith, you were  
10 supposed to be first. Sorry. You're now on  
11 the end.

12 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Oh, boy.  
13 This is going to be an interesting meeting.

14 We will start with a  
15 presentation from the Town Planner -- or  
16 we'll start with the Town Planner?

17 MR. LEDWITH: Thank you, Madam  
18 Mayor. I'll begin the public hearing with a  
19 little history about how this  
20 transformational ordinance evolved, and we'll  
21 then turn it over to our Town Planner  
22 Mr. Dumais to provide an overview of the  
23 transit-oriented development ordinance itself  
24 from a zoning perspective.

25 This ordinance is the result

1 of a tremendous amount of work through our  
2 planning and zoning division, and really goes  
3 back six years now when our planning division  
4 managed the New Park Avenue transit area  
5 complete street study.

6 Then back in 2020 the West  
7 Hartford Plan of Conservation and Development  
8 was finalized, which you know placed an  
9 emphasis and focus on transit-oriented  
10 development -- but it was not until April of  
11 2021 where we began to conduct a TOD planning  
12 initiative that resulted in the ordinance  
13 that is before you this evening. Included in  
14 this work was a significant community  
15 engagement process that began in the spring  
16 of 2021 which helped shape the ordinance that  
17 is before you as well this evening.

18 TOD is a high-density  
19 mixed-use development located within a short  
20 walk, a quarter mile or less to mass transit  
21 stations, which in our case includes the  
22 Elmwood and Flatbush Connecticut Fastrak  
23 stations, along with our planned Connecticut  
24 rail station.

25 In addition to promoting

1 mixed-use and pedestrian-friendly  
2 environment, the TOD encourages lower parking  
3 requirements which benefits our community by  
4 reducing energy consumption, greenhouse  
5 gases, and contributes to a vibrant, livable  
6 and sustainable community. This ordinance  
7 will also encourage infill development,  
8 rehabilitation and redevelopment.

9           The success of this type of  
10 development is dependent upon the degree of  
11 which its land-use composition, streetscape  
12 design and urban form allow between the  
13 community and the local transit asset. And  
14 thanks to our Town Planner and his team, we  
15 feel we have an ordinance that will allow for  
16 a very positive change for the New Britain  
17 Avenue/New Park Avenue corridor in and around  
18 the Elmwood and Flatbush Connecticut Fastrak  
19 stations.

20           At this point, through you,  
21 Mayor, I'll turn it over to our Town Planner  
22 Mr. Dumais who will walk us through a larger  
23 portion of the presentation.

24           MR. DUMAIS: Thank you,  
25 Mr. Ledwith.

1                   For the record, Todd Dumais,  
2                   Town Planner. And thank you for the  
3                   introductory remarks, Mr. Ledwith, and  
4                   providing some of the context and background  
5                   to this initiative, which as Mr. Ledwith  
6                   said, has gone back many years -- in fact,  
7                   even longer than six years, if we go back and  
8                   look at some earlier initiatives that we  
9                   collaborated with the State of Connecticut  
10                  and Regional Council of Governments on.

11                  When we talk about TOD -- and  
12                  I'd like to provide a brief overview in  
13                  addition to what Mr. Ledwith said. Let's  
14                  remember the four D's.

15                  So we have distance; so  
16                  generally a five to ten-minute walk from the  
17                  fixed node of transit, and that is a half  
18                  mile to a quarter mile. So a half mile being  
19                  a ten-minute walk. A five-minute walk being  
20                  a quarter mile. Having density, a relatively  
21                  high population and/or employment densities  
22                  is critical to successful transit-oriented  
23                  development.

24                  Diversity, having a diverse  
25                  mix of land uses that create opportunities

1 for vibrant live, work and play.

2 And then design; this is the  
3 other critical component that I think the  
4 ordinance highlights, to create pedestrian  
5 friendly public room and building designs  
6 with compact development and well-designed  
7 parking opportunities that support public  
8 transit use.

9 We might be asking ourselves,  
10 how do those principles relate back to  
11 zoning? Well, first we'll talk about  
12 density. Residential densities can correlate  
13 with floor area ratios, building coverage and  
14 building heights, and also parking  
15 requirements.

16 Diversity, we can think about  
17 that in the context of what type of uses are  
18 permitted within the district.

19 Design, these are things that  
20 we talk about with setbacks, how far  
21 buildings have to be from a street or  
22 adjacent properties, the orientation of the  
23 building. Where is the building front? How  
24 does it open? How does it activate the  
25 street? Basic architectural standards or

1 other site design standards.

2 So in the ordinance we talk  
3 about fenestration, the amount of windows and  
4 doors that activate in front on the street,  
5 and also parking requirements.

6 This is the only TechSell  
7 read, I promise -- but I think it's  
8 important. So this is right from the  
9 ordinance, and it's the purpose of the TOD,  
10 and I think it's informative and instructive  
11 to our conversation this evening. The  
12 purpose of the district is to encourage  
13 development in a predictable, contextually  
14 design-focused manner within walking distance  
15 of the CTfastrak stations.

16 The TOD is intended to support  
17 transit-oriented development principles which  
18 foster the creation of complete  
19 neighborhoods. The district is designed to  
20 help preserve and expand opportunities for  
21 businesses and employers that serve West  
22 Hartford residents and the surrounding  
23 region; to encourage a mix of retail,  
24 restaurant office, entertainment, and  
25 residential uses that provide opportunities

1 to live, work and play; to promote moderate  
2 to high residential and employment densities  
3 that support transit use to encourage infill  
4 development, rehabilitation, redevelopment  
5 and adaptive reuse that promote a consistent  
6 pedestrian-oriented building and site design.

7 So that's a lot to try to fit  
8 into an ordinance, and I can't promise that  
9 we got it a hundred percent correct, but I  
10 think we have a good starting point to see  
11 how this can help transform these two  
12 important areas of the community.

13 Having said that, the first  
14 area is the Flatbush transit station. When  
15 we talk about this transit-oriented  
16 development district it's really our two  
17 station areas a quarter mile out from each.

18 So the map on the screen right  
19 now is the Flatbush station located in the  
20 middle. That red dot around that, that halo,  
21 that is a five-minute walk shed. And all of  
22 the streets highlighted in yellow are streets  
23 to which this ordinance applies, and they are  
24 generally predominantly all some type of  
25 commercial zoning.

1                   The Elmwood station area,  
2 similarly the map here identifies Elmwood  
3 station in the center, again with the  
4 highlighted streets or the streets that are  
5 impacted by the proposed ordinance within a  
6 five minute walk shed analysis.

7                   How that translates into the  
8 existing zoning -- what you see on the slide  
9 now to the left is our existing zoning map.  
10 Anything you see in pink or red -- and I  
11 apologize. The sun is not going to make --  
12 so pink -- here is our corridor -- is one of  
13 two industrial zones, IG or IE.

14                  Then the red is BG zone.

15                  So you can see at the northern  
16 edge of the two districts and at the southern  
17 terminus we have a mix of BG, which is  
18 general business. And for the most part  
19 we're talking about industrially zoned  
20 properties, and that's what comprises the  
21 corridor.

22                  So the way the ordinance was  
23 constructed was to try to start with a  
24 five-minute walk shed in properties within  
25 that zone that are already zoned commercial,

1 to try to create a mixed-use environment.  
2 And the map on the right -- or left, I guess,  
3 based on your perspective -- depicts areas  
4 subject to rezoning to the new proposed TOD  
5 zone.

6 So this is the Flatbush  
7 station area, a little more than 40  
8 properties included there. And then close to  
9 70 properties here down on the Elmwood  
10 station area. Again, Elmwood station being  
11 in the middle here, New Britain down at the  
12 bottom; and New Park going roughly  
13 north-south.

14 The ordinance itself provides  
15 for a number of mechanisms to try to  
16 encourage its purpose that I just discussed,  
17 one of which is to provide for reduced  
18 parking standards. Another is to provide for  
19 increased residential and building densities,  
20 and then a requirement for new buildings to  
21 be built and oriented to the street, and  
22 that's very important if we're trying to  
23 create an active neighborhood environment.

24 And it also somewhat uniquely  
25 incorporates incentives to promote infill

1 development for the creation of new public  
2 space, sustainability, access management and  
3 affordable housing. And we'll talk about  
4 each of those things in a moment.

5 In the development standards  
6 of the ordinance we achieve or attempt to  
7 achieve increased residential density by  
8 reducing the amount of square feet of land  
9 per dwelling unit on the site.

10 So a parcel's yield, currently  
11 the highest density zone we have in town --  
12 and there's a number of them, but they max  
13 out at 43 units an acre, which translates  
14 into you need a thousand square feet of land  
15 area to achieve one dwelling unit in our  
16 multifamily zones. So this is an increase  
17 from that standard. So it increases the  
18 permissible residential density under this  
19 ordinance.

20 There is a reduction of  
21 open-space requirements for those units, and  
22 that is largely because we're trying to  
23 promote public space creation as part of the  
24 ordinance. And then there is a large  
25 section -- and we'll go through it briefly --

1 about parking, and a series of parking  
2 reductions from our current zoning standards,  
3 both in the dimensional space requirements,  
4 reducing down to 9 by 18 feet.

5 And I apologize. There wasn't  
6 an easier way to put this on the screen --  
7 allowing for a combination of on-street  
8 parking where it's available and permitted in  
9 the district, and off-street to satisfy your  
10 zoning demand. And then really the reduced  
11 parking requirements.

12 So this is the real meat and  
13 potatoes of the reductions as of right, and  
14 it reduces parking requirements for  
15 residential units down to one space per unit.  
16 Currently anywhere else in town we're at a  
17 one and a half standard.

18 An office reduction of one  
19 space per every 350 square feet of gross  
20 floor area. Retail and personal service,  
21 three per thousand; that's over 50 percent  
22 reduction in both of those. And also a  
23 reduction in the amount of parking required  
24 for both restaurants and seats, and that's as  
25 of right under the ordinance.

1                   We also included new to West  
2                   Hartford a minimum bicycle parking standard,  
3                   because this is important with the  
4                   infrastructure improvements that the Town has  
5                   currently underway along New Park Avenue, and  
6                   also to support multimodal transit ridership,  
7                   to require standards for bicycle parking for  
8                   both residential, office and other uses.

9                   Another unique feature of the  
10                  TOD ordinance provides for a built-in  
11                  mechanism to allow for shared parking uses,  
12                  and there's two ways to do it with a somewhat  
13                  complicated chart.

14                 The first is if someone is  
15                 looking to develop under this ordinance, they  
16                 could hire a transportation or traffic  
17                 engineer. And if they're utilizing the Urban  
18                 Land Institute's or a similar manual to do a  
19                 shared parking methodology, many times when  
20                 the Council is acting on a special  
21                 development district developers will come  
22                 before you if there's a mixed-use component  
23                 and you'll often hear, Urban Land Institute  
24                 document, because certain uses have different  
25                 peak parking demands.

1                   So the most obvious that we  
2 could talk about would be office and  
3 residential. Generally when people are home  
4 they're not at work, or vice versa. So those  
5 two have a good peak parking overlap where  
6 they can share. So the idea behind this is  
7 to allow for not constructing more parking  
8 than is needed in any given parcel.

9                   So you could hire a traffic  
10 engineer to provide documentation that you're  
11 doing that, or you could use this built-in  
12 table that also takes that same Urban Land  
13 Institute methodology and then does a  
14 time-of-day parking variation. So it tries  
15 to accomplish the same thing with a number of  
16 the uses. So it provides for pretty  
17 substantive parking reductions depending on  
18 mix of uses on a parcel.

19                  There's a provision to require  
20 more pedestrian scaled signage as part of  
21 this ordinance.

22                  I apologize. I feel like I'm  
23 pointing this laser right at Essie, and I'm  
24 going to hit her in the eye.

25                  Okay. Special design and form

standards. Again, here the first standard is an important one. It's trying to ensure that new buildings that are built under this ordinance are built up near the street within the street wall to create a more active pedestrian environment with buildings activating the street. They need to occupy a certain percentage of the lot. And again, we want to avoid large expanses of parking lots or other nonactivated uses along these corridors.

Building design, we want primary entrances to buildings to front and activate on the streets, to provide that vitality and sense of place along the corridor, and then also the windows to do the same thing. So that's what that fenestration requirement in the middle is.

And this does largely borrow from but modifies what we have in place in the TND zone, because that was a well-intentioned zone. And it did have some admirable zoning traits built into it.

Another change here, we talked about increasing building density. It is

1 allowing buildings as of right to go up to  
2 five stories. So that that's an important --  
3 we heard that from the development community  
4 and also, through the community engagement  
5 efforts, we found broad support within the  
6 community for up to five stories.

7 And built in is a mechanism  
8 whereby if you're going to propose a fifth  
9 story, it needs to be stepped back from the  
10 parapet wall so that way its mass is going to  
11 be concealed as for a pedestrian walking up  
12 or down the street.

13 Site access, trying to limit  
14 the number of curb cuts on a public street  
15 for each 500 feet street of frontage. So we  
16 don't want to create or replicate what we  
17 have in the corridor now of small parcels  
18 having multiple curb cuts. So a curb cut is  
19 a driveway going in or out of the parcel.

20 And you'll see a bonus  
21 standard that we've included, but driveways  
22 are an impediment to creating a walkable  
23 pedestrian scaled environment. The more  
24 driveways we have the more potential  
25 conflicts we have for pedestrian cyclists and

1 cars going in and out of properties. So the  
2 idea is to limit or restrict based on  
3 frontage.

4 And then also we talk about  
5 the bonuses, to further provide a bonus if  
6 you're able to consolidate or eliminate curb  
7 cuts that exist today.

8 The last section of the  
9 ordinance is that bonus development standard.  
10 And within here there's a chart, and this is  
11 left up to someone that's looking, a business  
12 owner or a property owner or a developer;  
13 whatever is most important to them in terms  
14 of their potential development they could  
15 choose if they want an increase in floor area  
16 ratio -- so that's the volume of the  
17 building -- more building coverage, more  
18 footprint on the ground, or further  
19 reductions in parking requirements.

20 So there's a point equivalency  
21 and we'll talk about the standards, and then  
22 there's a maximum bonus where you can add  
23 onto the underlying standards.

24 The first bonus is access  
25 management. We had talked about trying to

1 eliminate and create a more walkable  
2 pedestrian-friendly environment. So if you  
3 can eliminate the pre-existing curb cuts, you  
4 can get a bonus for that, or create  
5 interconnections, shared access between  
6 existing parking lots to not create unneeded  
7 parking on the backside of properties.  
8 There's a bonus standard.

9           The next standard would be an  
10 affordable housing incentive to encourage the  
11 growth of affordable housing and mixed income  
12 within the district. Here there are two,  
13 essentially two standards; one at 80 percent  
14 area median income, and the other at  
15 60 percent area median income.

16           And one suggests if you  
17 provide for 15 percent of the total number of  
18 units in the development as set aside -- so  
19 those are deed-restricted, 30-year qualifying  
20 under 830G. You get the points there, and  
21 then at the deeper affordability level you  
22 get more points for a smaller amount of  
23 units.

24           The next infill development  
25 bonus standard is to encourage the

1 development within existing parcels of  
2 parking lots or other areas of a lot that are  
3 adjacent or approximate to the street that  
4 don't have any activating uses now. So  
5 getting a bonus for developing some type of  
6 commercial mixed-use building in those areas  
7 of lots.

8 A public space amenity  
9 standard, and this is to encourage the  
10 private development of a permanently  
11 dedicated and reserved public space. We  
12 heard this was an important component when we  
13 went through our community outreach, creating  
14 more opportunities for small pocket parks.

15 That's another way of creating  
16 pocket parks. The developer or property  
17 owner would develop them if they qualify.  
18 They would have to be, you know, preserved,  
19 deed restricted, but they would be available  
20 to the public for perpetuity as long as the  
21 incentive was being used.

22 And lastly, there is a  
23 sustainability standard. If development  
24 encourages or includes green building  
25 practices with either a true green roof or a

1 renewable energy system as part of its  
2 development proposal, they can get a bonus  
3 procedure for that.

4 And lastly, the application  
5 procedure. All development with a few  
6 exceptions within the zone would be subject  
7 to site plan or as-of-right administrative  
8 approval. There are a couple special use  
9 permits uses that we carried forward from  
10 underlying zones and kept those as special  
11 use permits. Most notably, some of the  
12 drive-thru ordinances that were just passed.  
13 So we kept that kind of structure in place.

14 Are there any questions by the  
15 Council on anything I've covered so far?

16 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,  
17 Mr. Dumais. Any questions for the Town  
18 Planner?

19  
20 (No response.)

21  
22 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Okay. Keep  
23 going.

24 MR. DUMAIS: I'm almost done  
25 with my presentation. I would like to put in

1 the record we have two referral letters, both  
2 required. One letter from CROG -- and I  
3 lied. I will read two more things verbatim  
4 into the record.

5 A CROC letter dated 5/27. The  
6 staff of the regional planning commission of  
7 the Capitol Regional Council of Governments  
8 has reviewed this summary referral and finds  
9 no apparent conflict with regional plans or  
10 policies, or concerns of neighboring towns.  
11 The staff commends the efforts around  
12 mixed-use and transit-oriented development,  
13 which directly support the regional Plan of  
14 Conservation and Development's policy to  
15 encourage residential mixed-use and infill  
16 development around transit stations.

17 Also another positive referral  
18 from our Town Planning and Zoning Commission.  
19 This letter dated 6/9/'22; the TPZ  
20 recommends approval of the ordinance finding  
21 it consistent with over a decade's worth of  
22 past planning efforts with local, regional  
23 and state partners and with the Plan of  
24 Conservation and Development.

25 And in particular the

1 Commission noted that the proposed ordinance  
2 furthers several of the POCD's suggested  
3 action items including but not limited to  
4 encouragement of mixed-use and higher density  
5 developments in proximity to existing and  
6 planned transit stations and existing  
7 commercial districts, to encourage infill  
8 development on vacant and underutilized  
9 parcels, and then to review the zoning  
10 ordinances and consider the creation of a new  
11 transit-oriented development district.

12 I would further add that all  
13 of those action items are supported and  
14 directly derived from the POCD and further  
15 both the neighborhood and housing goal within  
16 the Plan of Conservation and Development, the  
17 economic development goal, and the  
18 transportation goal.

19 And that concludes my  
20 presentation, Madam Mayor.

21 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,  
22 Mr. Dumais.

23 I just want to -- being part  
24 of this journey for a long time I'm sad that  
25 this is graduation night and there's not more

1 people here. This is a very, very, very  
2 important night for the Council, and you have  
3 done tremendous work over so many years to  
4 get us to this place. So this is a big deal,  
5 a transformational one.

6 We do have some people ready  
7 for public comment, but is there anybody that  
8 would like to ask any questions of the Town  
9 Planner? Ms. Blanks?

10 COUNCILOR BLANKS: Thank you,  
11 Madam Mayor.

12 And thank you, Mr. Dumais, for  
13 the great presentation. I'm pretty excited  
14 about this and I really can't wait. I feel  
15 like a kid. Like, are we there yet? Because  
16 I really can't wait to see the development.

17 On the design piece -- and I  
18 may have missed this in terms of lighting for  
19 that particular area. What are we looking  
20 at?

21 Because I know it's going to  
22 be beautiful and bright and everything, but  
23 could you just elaborate on that?

24 MR. DUMAIS: So the lighting  
25 standards don't change from the existing

1 zoning ordinances. So they require  
2 essentially no light trespass, full cutoff,  
3 Dark-Sky compliance. So there's no negative  
4 impact to adjacent parcels.

5 What I think you might be  
6 asking is a related project, and that's our  
7 New Park Complete Streets physical  
8 infrastructure improvement project. And I --  
9 perhaps Ms. Gorski could answer, or  
10 Mr. Ledwith.

11 There is new lighting  
12 designed, incorporated as part of the design  
13 work that will reimagine the street itself,  
14 including that road diet and public amenity  
15 zone. I don't have the details of what that  
16 lighting would look like at this point,  
17 though we could get that for you.

18 COUNCILOR BLANKS: Okay.  
19 Thank you.

20 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,  
21 Ms. Blanks.

22 Ms. Fay?

23 COUNCILOR FAY: Yes. Thank  
24 you, Mayor Cantor.

25 Mr. Dumais, just really

1 quickly, I think this is definitely a step in  
2 the right direction and good for all of West  
3 Hartford, but especially where we've planned  
4 where there's major public transformation --  
5 transportation.

6                   Could you give me an example,  
7 or the audience or other people of where  
8 something like this has worked really well?  
9 What's a comparable result of this kind of an  
10 ordinance in something nearby, or even a  
11 bigger city? Or just an example so we can  
12 visualize it?

13                   MR. DUMAIS: Sure. I think  
14 there are a number of examples. We could go  
15 to the biggest city around, New York City.

16                   So generally speaking if you  
17 look at development in and around any of the  
18 subway stations, that's probably the most  
19 apparent of higher development densities  
20 around those, you know, permanent fixed  
21 transit nodes.

22                   Then if we come up the Metro  
23 North line for example, the city of Stamford  
24 first -- the second stop in the state, has  
25 capitalized and leveraged their Stamford

1 Metro Station. And you've seen a lot of  
2 development with both office and residential  
3 within a half mile, or a quarter mile walk of  
4 that station. And that largely holds true  
5 and particularly in communities along the  
6 Metro-North line have capitalized this, on  
7 this, or have had an historic development  
8 pattern that largely reflects the intent and  
9 purpose of TOD.

10 So some of the shoreline east  
11 communities that have rail stations have kind  
12 of historic vestiges of really traditional  
13 walkable mixed-use environments that grew  
14 organically around their transit node. So  
15 it's kind of the Metro-North example.

16 Obviously, the Hartford line  
17 coming up our way and Fastrak line -- it's a  
18 little bit newer, but certainly downtown New  
19 Britain at one time was a transit hub, as is  
20 downtown Hartford which is, you know, the  
21 terminus of the Fastrak station -- could be  
22 examples of TOD development as well.

23 COUNCILOR FAY: Thank you.  
24 And just a quick followup -- you're right.  
25 We don't have the metro. We can't go into

1 New York City -- well, we can, but it's an  
2 elaborate way to get there. I used to do  
3 that a lot -- or to Boston, even.

4 So how much progress can we  
5 expect to see with, you know, the buses and  
6 those kind of things recognizing that  
7 we're -- I don't think, not that I've heard  
8 of -- probably. Maybe there is a train  
9 station planned in West Hartford and I fell  
10 asleep, but I don't remember that.

11 But what can we expect from  
12 something with a Fastrak as opposed to a  
13 train? Thank you.

14 MR. DUMAIS: Sure. It's a  
15 great question, Councilor. I think --  
16 actually, I'd point to the Flatbush station  
17 area. Because this presents a unique  
18 opportunity within the Fastrak corridor to  
19 create what planners or transportation  
20 engineers would call a true multimodal  
21 transportation node.

22 So right now our Flatbush  
23 station has a Fastrak line. In the future --  
24 and I think the percentage is maybe  
25 30 percent designed for a new train station

1 at Flatbush immediately on the east side of  
2 the tracks. So on one side you'd have the  
3 Fastrak. The other side you'd have the  
4 Hartford line, eventually a rail station. So  
5 you could conceivably ride anywhere on the  
6 Fastrak, get off, cross the station to a  
7 different mode of traffic and then get on and  
8 connect down to Metro-North or Shoreline  
9 East.

10 So it presents a really  
11 exciting and unique opportunity for, not only  
12 West Hartford, but the greater region.

13 COUNCILOR FAY: That's very  
14 good. Thank you.

15 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,  
16 Ms. Fay. Anything else? Further questions?  
17 You'll have time after public comment.

18 But Ms. Labrot, are there any  
19 written comments? Did you receive anything?

20 THE CLERK: Yes, I received a  
21 letter in support of the ordinance from  
22 Mr. Chuck Coursey; and a letter in support of  
23 the ordinance by Sami Abunasra, owner of the  
24 Ashley Home Store Outlet located at 1051-1061  
25 New Britain Avenue.

1                   **PRESIDENT CANTOR:** Thank you  
2 very much, Ms. Labrot.

3                   And we have some people signed  
4 up to speak. And if you are speaking as an  
5 individual you have three minutes. If you  
6 represent a group, we ask that you limit your  
7 comments to five minutes.

8                   Erik Castiglione is the first.  
9 And state your name and address for the  
10 record.

11                  **ERIK CASTIGLIONE:** Good  
12 evening. My name is Erik Castiglione. I am  
13 speaking on behalf of the Elmwood Business  
14 Association, and I live at 17 Clifford Drive  
15 in West Hartford.

16                  The transit-oriented district  
17 zone overlay is a legal document that  
18 provides specifications for buildings and  
19 lots. It's not a plan and it's not a design.  
20 It's only a technical specification.

21                  It's not much different than  
22 saying, I want a structure to accommodate my  
23 family of four that has parking for two cars  
24 and a lot size of one quarter acre. You can  
25 end up with a center-entry colonial, or you

1 could end up with a double-wide trailer. And  
2 while this is clearly hyperbole, the point is  
3 there's a missing piece here.

4 In the rest of the town that  
5 piece is provided by the Plan of Conservation  
6 and Development. While the 2020 POCD briefly  
7 mentions the areas around and to the east of  
8 the transit stations, it mentions potential  
9 opportunities.

10 The Town has made no clear  
11 statement of what it wants to see or where it  
12 wants to go. Does it want to reinforce light  
13 industry? Do we want to see housing mixed  
14 in? What about improving traffic circulation  
15 in the area? And what about anticipating the  
16 development of private land, such as the  
17 access road to 635 New Park Avenue that may  
18 eventually become interconnected with the  
19 neighborhood?

20 If the Town is truly looking  
21 to increase the grand list this is the place  
22 to do it, but the Town will have to invest in  
23 infrastructure. And if we want the TOD to be  
24 an effective ordinance, infrastructure  
25 improvements in the surrounding community

1 also need to be made, otherwise the  
2 neighborhoods and landscape you see today  
3 will substantially remain the same or become  
4 more unwieldy to manage. The TOD relies  
5 entirely on private investment to do the job.  
6 As we have seen with the traditional  
7 neighborhood design district, that's not  
8 enough.

9                   In the POCD's description of  
10 commercial and retail districts, a quadrant  
11 graph is presented. New Park Avenue South,  
12 New Britain Avenue and the proposed transit  
13 districts are all listed in quadrant one.  
14 Quadrant one's emphasis is in need of  
15 physical improvement and having low density.  
16 It's also subtitled, starting from scratch.

17                   Since the next POCD won't be  
18 mandated until 2030 we should strive to have  
19 some guidelines in place that are specific to  
20 the transit-oriented zones in what we once  
21 called the southeast quadrant of town.  
22 Essentially, this would be a focused POCD for  
23 the southeast quadrant. This was done in the  
24 1980s with the establishment of the southeast  
25 quadrant advisory committee, and then again

1 in the late nineties with the Elmwood  
2 charrettes. We could argue the southeast  
3 quadrant is still stuck in the 1980s.

4 The POCD does mention working  
5 with the City of Hartford to develop mutual  
6 transit-oriented zoning, utilizing access  
7 parking lots and establishing an opportunity  
8 zone designation. But no action has been  
9 taken and no plans are in place at this time.

10 So what can the Town do to  
11 provide the bones needed to grow a healthy  
12 neighborhood? Infrastructure that's needed  
13 includes, number one, development of streets  
14 and blocks. The Southeast area of Elmwood  
15 has three immovable pieces that inhibit  
16 development and traffic circulation; the  
17 transit line, Trout Brook, and New Britain  
18 Avenue.

19 The POCD named both New Park  
20 and New Britain Avenues among West Hartford's  
21 most heavily traveled corridors, and one of  
22 the goals of the TOD is to increase  
23 pedestrian and bike traffic in the area. We  
24 see a potential safety hazard here. The  
25 Complete Streets Initiative allows for bike

lanes, but it does nothing to mitigate traffic volume. We need alternate routes in the area.

We recognize that the POCD lists in its transportation section action item 1A as, explore opportunities to enhance and expand the street/road network such as extending Oakwood Avenue to New Britain Avenue to improve accessibility and reduce traffic congestion.

A Shelton Avenue bridge was also suggested as an idea. Once again, the intent is there, but action is needed. This is vital to have in place for that moment ten years from now when the present Elmwood Community Center is likely transformed into a private development.

Also adjacent to the proposed transit districts are substantial industrial areas that need to be maintained or improved. This does not necessarily mean we want to gentrify these areas, but these areas need to be easily accessible and connected with the rest of town.

Number two, development east

1 of the transit line. East-west flow across  
2 the transit line is difficult to achieve.  
3 Because of this the east side of the transit  
4 line needs to be improved into an area that  
5 can stand on its own as a neighborhood, and  
6 not just be an ugly stepsister to the town.  
7 We urge the Town to develop long-term plans  
8 to improve the areas here.

9                   Number three, emergency  
10 services access, increase the school  
11 population, social services, and sewer usage.  
12 Assuming the TOD does lead to increased  
13 population in the New Park Avenue corridor,  
14 we need to address the safety issues and fire  
15 and police access, increased busing for  
16 school population, demands for social  
17 services and the costs of sewer usage.

18                   And number four, the likely  
19 redevelopment of the Elmwood Community  
20 Center. The Community Center and the  
21 adjacent lands that could become part of any  
22 such development are covered by and adjacent  
23 to the transit-oriented design overlay zone.  
24 Additionally they are covered by  
25 the traditional neighborhood design district

1 overlay. This redevelopment is on the near  
2 horizon and we need to have plans in place  
3 for a change that is almost sure to come.

4 In conclusion, the Elmwood  
5 Business Association feels that the goals of  
6 the transit-oriented design overlay zone are  
7 worthy, but unlikely to produce change on  
8 their own. The Town needs to develop a  
9 vision of what we want to see happen here and  
10 commit to planning for further infrastructure  
11 improvement.

12 We would urge that the Council  
13 commission a mini POCD that specifically  
14 targets the areas within a half-mile of the  
15 transit stations and east of the transit  
16 corridor. Otherwise, for years to come  
17 things will remain substantially the same, as  
18 you see them today. Thank you.

19 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you  
20 very much, Mr. Castiglione.

21 Next, I have Mr. Liftig, Rick  
22 Liftig.

23 RICK LIFTIG: Good evening,  
24 everybody. Rick Liftig, 75 Foxridge Road in  
25 West Hartford. As some of you may know, this

1 is not my first go around with zoning  
2 ordinances in Elmwood. I was part of the  
3 group that helped craft the traditional  
4 neighborhood design ordinance almost 25 years  
5 ago.

6 Now from that experience I can  
7 tell you that you don't know how these things  
8 are going to work until they're tested. The  
9 TND was never tested because it had a big  
10 loophole in its trigger clause, and I daresay  
11 the TND has inhibited development, as opposed  
12 to promoting it.

13 So what did I learn from the  
14 TND experience watching the development  
15 projects over the last 20 years? I learned  
16 that zoning rules do not create a market.  
17 Development only takes place when market  
18 forces are favorable. On the other hand, if  
19 you have rules in place in advance of the  
20 next market surge, it's an invaluable guide  
21 and protector.

22 I've learned if there are any  
23 weaknesses in a zoning ordinance a clever  
24 developer and their legal team will exploit  
25 them. I've learned that without incentives

1 the desirability of rebuilding is lessened,  
2 and without incentives convincing an existing  
3 property owner to redevelop their property is  
4 often a stretch.

5 I've learned that we  
6 undervalue our businesses and what they bring  
7 to the Town. A fully gentrified town is an  
8 expensive town. Locally owned businesses  
9 bring taxes, convenience and support our  
10 community. West Hartford's many locally  
11 owned businesses are an incredible asset.

12 I've learned that the SDD is  
13 overused. It serves some good purposes, and  
14 some bad purposes. The overuse of the SDD  
15 has led to uncertainty to many adjacent  
16 property owners -- and when they found by  
17 chance that they're underlying zone has been  
18 subverted.

19 And perhaps most important of  
20 all, I've learned that things change. For  
21 example, what we consider a vehicle-intensive  
22 business in 2022 may be a totally different  
23 business in 10 to 20 years when we've shifted  
24 to electric vehicles. Demographics change  
25 and transportation patterns change.

1                   In ten years we may look back  
2 and say, that was a great ordinance. Just  
3 look at the neighborhood that grew up around  
4 the transit stations. Or we may look back  
5 and say, well, we meant well, but it's never  
6 been put to the test. It's just like the  
7 TND.

8                   For this reason I feel that  
9 the biggest issue with the TND and  
10 potentially with the TOD is a lack of a  
11 mechanism to review and revise it after a  
12 certain amount of time. If the TND had been  
13 reviewed after its implementation we could  
14 have turned it into an effective guideline,  
15 as opposed to an historical footnote.

16                  In my opinion one goal of  
17 zoning is not just to restrict use, but to  
18 develop and protect the neighborhood. I  
19 often use the example of New York City where  
20 every few blocks you'll find a new  
21 neighborhood, and each has many uses  
22 contained within -- even auto-centric uses,  
23 although they're well hidden or very  
24 attractive.

25                  As councilmembers your role of

1 zoning authority is one of the more important  
2 tasks you take on. It's not exciting and  
3 it's usually tedious, but your actions can  
4 easily affect a neighborhood or the Town for  
5 many years to come. So I thank you for your  
6 time in service, and a good evening.

7 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,  
8 Mr. Liftig.

9 Next I have Ed Pawlak.

10 ED PAWLAK: Good evening. My  
11 name is Ed Pawlak. I'm a longtime resident  
12 of West Hartford. I'm a small business owner  
13 with my home office here in town.

14 And earlier this year this  
15 Council appointed me to the West Hartford  
16 Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission. And in my  
17 first meeting the commission elected me to be  
18 their chair. So needless to say, it's been  
19 an interesting learning experience making  
20 rookie mistakes -- but I'm doing my best.

21 And as you know, the  
22 commission promotes safe, accessible and  
23 interconnected opportunities for walking and  
24 bicycling in town, and I'm here tonight on  
25 behalf of the Ped and Bike Commission to

1 speak in strong support of the proposed  
2 transit-oriented development zoning district.

3 Now the goal of the proposed  
4 TOD ordinance is to create neighborhoods that  
5 are more livable, more walkable and more  
6 ridable. These are neighborhoods that are  
7 less dependent on motor vehicles and they're  
8 more accessible to other sustainable modes of  
9 transportation, including walking, bicycling  
10 bus and train.

11 Now the neighborhoods that are  
12 covered by the proposed TOD zone, they have  
13 unique amenities that make them ideal  
14 candidates for this new zoning district. And  
15 these include the two Fastrak bus stations, a  
16 planned CT Rail station, easy access to the  
17 ever growing Trout Brook Trail, as well as  
18 the upcoming complete streets improvements on  
19 New Park Avenue.

20 I'd add to that an existing  
21 mix -- a really, really interesting existing  
22 mix of restaurants, cafes, retail, along with  
23 new residential developments.

24 As Mr. Dumais told us, the  
25 ordinance incentivizes developers to include

1 many desirable elements in their plans,  
2 including minimizing curb cuts which make  
3 that neighborhood safer for pedestrians and  
4 cyclists.

5                   You know, this ordinance, it  
6 aligns with the Town's Plan of Conservation  
7 and Development, with its complete streets  
8 policy, and with the goals of the Ped and  
9 Bike Commission. Because of this the West  
10 Hartford Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission  
11 fully and strongly supports this proposed TOD  
12 ordinance, and we urge the Town Council to  
13 approve it.

14                   Thank you very much for your  
15 time.

16                   PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,  
17 Mr. Pawlak, and thank you for your service.

18                   ED PAWLAK: Thank you.

19                   I have a letter I'd like to  
20 submit from the Commission.

21                   PRESIDENT CANTOR: All right.  
22 And while Mr. Pawlak is handing that out, the  
23 last person I have signed up on the sheet is  
24 Emily -- I think it's You-mahn-oh [phonetic]  
25 or Oo-mahn-oh [phonetic].

1                   Please feel free to correct  
2 that.

3                   EMILY OUMANO: Town committee  
4 members, thank you for your willingness to  
5 hear from the public. My name is Emily  
6 Oumano, 637 Prospect Ave, West  
7 Hartford. And I support the proposal to  
8 allow more housing and more types of housing  
9 to be zoned and built near public  
10 transportation.

11                   I have lived in West Hartford  
12 just on this side of the dividing line  
13 between our town and the city of Hartford for  
14 a few years. During that time I've made an  
15 effort to be part of my community. I  
16 volunteered for a local community  
17 organization, I donated to the library, I  
18 support local businesses, and I paid about  
19 \$47,000 in rent to my West Hartford based  
20 property management company.

21                   Yet despite my efforts to make  
22 a positive contribution to the town where I  
23 live, it has never really felt like home.  
24 The truth is I plan to eventually leave West  
25 Hartford, and I plan to do so since I moved

1 here, and I hope to relocate soon.

2           The rent is high and it gets  
3 higher almost every year. The commute is  
4 bad, and the drive to and from work is a cost  
5 on my time, a cost to my pocketbook and a  
6 cost to the environment that I can't bear to  
7 pay anymore. Staying here is not a viable  
8 option for me, and it's not a good option for  
9 so many others like me because of the  
10 expensive housing and the difficult commute.

11           Building more housing,  
12 especially more modest apartments and  
13 condos near public transportation hubs could  
14 alleviate both of those problems. Although  
15 these changes are coming too late to prevent  
16 me from moving, I know that if these  
17 transit-oriented development land-use  
18 regulations were passed and West Hartford was  
19 the more affordable, walkable, equitable  
20 community I hoped it would be, I would have  
21 more reasons to stay and fewer reasons to  
22 leave.

23           Because of circumstances  
24 outside of my control I never felt fully  
25 included in West Hartford. I wonder if my

1 neighbors who did not feel invested enough in  
2 the community to attend this meeting might  
3 also feel the same way.

4 If you want to create thriving  
5 inclusive communities you need to build the  
6 housing that people want and need. Passing  
7 this ordinance is a good place to start.

8 Thank you for your time.

9 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,  
10 Ms. OUMANOU. Is there anybody else that did  
11 not sign up on this to speak to this public  
12 hearing?

13  
14 (No response.)

15  
16 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Okay. I  
17 don't see any. All right.

18 Mr. Dumais, why don't you come  
19 back up in case we have some questions from  
20 the Council, and any comments you might have  
21 on what you heard from the speakers.

22 MR. DUMAIS: Thank you, Madam  
23 Mayor. I think we heard all comments in  
24 favor of the proposed ordinance. We did hear  
25 two different takes, one from the EBA and one

1 from Mr. Liftig. I don't disagree with  
2 either of those comments.

3 What we heard is, this is not  
4 a plan or not a design -- and that's true.  
5 Keep in mind that zoning is a tool that  
6 implements our planning document, which is  
7 the Plan of Conservation and Development.  
8 The stated purpose is derived from the POCD.  
9 We've documented how the POCD supports the  
10 ordinance.

11 And Erik was correct. The  
12 other critical component -- and we've had  
13 countless conversations with business  
14 associations -- is infrastructure  
15 improvements and continued planning. So  
16 there are other plans and ideas in the POCD  
17 that should not be forgotten and should be  
18 taken up.

19 So I think we are in agreement  
20 on that, and I'd like to commend him for his  
21 very detailed reading of the POCD and his  
22 very accurate comments.

23 And the same with Dr. Liftig.  
24 You know the TND has a number of loopholes  
25 that we tried to avoid with this ordinance,

1 but he is correct. We can't be afraid to let  
2 this ordinance, if it passes, stay without  
3 reporting back and studying.

4 So you know, as staff, I would  
5 offer at a minimum that we report back to the  
6 Council and to our Planning and Zoning  
7 Commission with the results. If it's not  
8 every year -- because development does take a  
9 while, but at least some periodic basis to  
10 report about the development that has  
11 occurred, that we know didn't occur, and try  
12 to figure out why or what we might not have  
13 gotten right. And we should revisit that to  
14 make sure it's achieving the purpose that's  
15 up there on the screen.

16 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you.  
17 And I agree with all that you just shared.

18 So any comments or questions  
19 for -- and the sun is in my eyes. So I  
20 apologize if I'm looking -- I'm going to look  
21 this way. Any comments or questions?

22  
23 (No response.)

24  
25 PRESIDENT CANTOR: No? Okay.

1 All right. And just to reiterate a letter  
2 dated June 9, 2022, from Town Planning and  
3 Zoning Commission recommending approval; a  
4 letter dated May 27, 2022, from Capitol  
5 Regional Council of Governments finding no  
6 apparent conflict with regional plans and  
7 policies or concerns of neighboring towns.

8 And again, any questions from  
9 the Council?

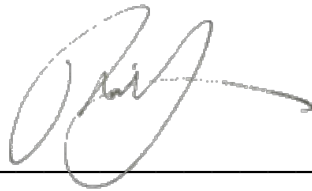
10  
11 (No response.)  
12

13 PRESIDENT CANTOR: No  
14 questions from the Council. Then this public  
15 hearing is closed. Thank you very much.  
16

17 (Whereupon, the above proceedings were  
18 concluded at 7:49 p.m.)  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

**CERTIFICATE**

**I hereby certify that the foregoing 49 pages are a complete and accurate computer-aided transcription of my original verbatim notes taken of the Public Hearing in RE: ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT ZONING DISTRICT, held before the West Hartford Town Council, at Town Hall, 50 South Main Street, Room 314, West Hartford, Connecticut, on June 14, 2022.**



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**Robert G. Dixon, CVR-M 857**  
**My Commission Expires:**  
**6/30/2025**