

TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD

TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

APRIL 11, 2023, 7:15 p.m.

LEGISLATIVE CHAMBERS

Re: Application filed on behalf of Steele Road, LLC, owner of 243 Steele Road, located within Special Development District (SDD) #139. The application seeks permission to amend the existing SDD, a 190-unit multifamily residential complex, through the addition of a new building containing 18 units, along with associated parking, landscaping, and site amenities changes.

DEBRA A. CHASSE, CSR #00055

APPEARANCES:

Town Council Members Present:

SHARI CANTOR, MAYOR

LIAM SWEENEY, DEPUTY MAYOR

CAROL BLANKS

ALBERTO CORTES

DEBRA POLUN

BEN WENOGRAD

MARK ZYDANOWICZ

TIFFANY MCGINNIS

ALSO PRESENT:

RICK LEDWITH, TOWN MANAGER

LEON DAVIDOFF, TOWN CLERK/COUNCIL CLERK

DALLAS DODGE, CORPORATION COUNSEL

1 MAYOR CANTOR: It's 7:15 and I will
2 call the 7:15 meeting to order. It's an application
3 filed on behalf of Steele Road, LLC, owner of 243
4 Steele Road, located within Special Development
5 District (SDD)#139. The application seeks permission
6 to amend the existing SDD, a 190-unit multifamily
7 residential complex, through the addition of a new
8 building containing 18 units, along with associated
9 parking, landscaping, and site amenity changes. Role
10 call, Mr. Davidoff?

11 MR. DAVIDOFF: Thank you, Madam
12 Mayor. Counselor Blanks?

13 MS. BLANKS: Present.

14 MR. DAVIDOFF: Mayor Cantor?

15 MAYOR CANTOR: Here.

16 MR. DAVIDOFF: Councilor Cortes?

17 MR. CORTES: Here.

18 MR. DAVIDOFF: Councilor Fay?

19 MS. FAY: Here.

20 MR. DAVIDOFF: Councilor McGinnis?

21 MS. MCGINNIS: Here.

22 MR. DAVIDOFF: Councilor Polun?

23 MS. POLUN: Here.

24 MR. DAVIDOFF: Deputy Mayor Sweeney?

25 MR. SWEENEY: Here.

1 MR. DAVIDOFF: Councilor Wenograd?

2 MR. WENOGRAD: Here.

3 MR. DAVIDOFF: And Councilor
4 Zydanowicz is not here.

5 MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Mr.
6 Davidoff. We will begin with a presentation by the
7 applicant.

8 MR. SAGER: Good evening, Madam
9 Mayor, members of the West Hartford Town Council. My
10 name is Geoff Sager. I'm from the Metro Reality Group.
11 My business office is 6 Executive Drive in Farmington.
12 Can everybody hear me? I'm going to have a hard time
13 reading.

14 So I'm joined this evening by Brock
15 Edmond, our civil engineer from SLR. I'll raise my
16 voice a little bit, just to make sure everybody can
17 hear. If anybody can't hear, just wave your arm and
18 I'll be happy to repeat it. Mark Vertucci is here from
19 Fuss & O'Neill, and then Chuck Coursey is here and he
20 did our outreach.

21 So you're looking at a slide, an
22 aerial view of our clubhouse and entrance to 243 Steele
23 Road, and we're here this evening to discuss the
24 proposal for an eighth building at 243 Steele Road.
25 That is just a shot of our entrance drive at Steele

1 Road.

2 So, Madam Mayor, you are, I think,
3 the only one on the counsel in 2016 when this site was
4 originally approved. So I did want to spend a moment
5 on history, because I think it's helpful.

6 So this was the building that
7 previously occupied the site at 243 Steele Road. It
8 was a convent operated by the Sisters of Mercy,
9 constructed in 1960. And then it went through a series
10 of changes, so in the 1970s the upper floors were
11 converted to an infirmary, and they ultimately included
12 skilled nursing for 59 beds. And then in the 1980s and
13 1990s, the sisters began to explore closure of the
14 building and repurposing of it through various
15 renovations.

16 Then in 2004 the Sisters of Mercy
17 decided to close Mercy Knoll and find alternate
18 residences, both for the convent residents and for the
19 nursing home patients. And then in 2006 Mercy Knoll
20 closed with the nursing home residents going to St.
21 Mary's home, so that's the building at the corner of
22 Albany and Steele, and the sisters going to convents
23 based in Newington.

24 And then from 2006 until 2016 the
25 building sat vacant, and by the time we came along it

1 was in very much a state of grave disrepair. So then
2 in 2016 this council approved 160 homes in six
3 buildings, so approximately 25 homes per building. And
4 in 2018 this council approved building 7. So you'll
5 see that is in the northwest corner of the site
6 adjacent to the University of St. Joseph.

7 So in 2016, at the time of the
8 initial application, there were concerns expressed by
9 the neighborhood. I want to put them in two groups;
10 one being what I'll call tangible things you can touch
11 and one being the intangible.

12 The first group, the tangible
13 concerns, residents at Trumbull and Buckingham were
14 most concerned about having adequate screening between
15 our proposed development and their homes. The School
16 for Young Children was concerned about adequate parking
17 and safety of their staff and the students. Steele
18 Road residents were concerned about speeding on Steele
19 Road. Stratford Road residents were concerned about
20 cut-through traffic that would race down Stratford to
21 connect to Albany. Folks, in general, were concerned
22 about safe pedestrian access to Elizabeth Park.

23 So we introduced a number of
24 improvements to attempt to mitigate these concerns, and
25 they were as follows: We initiated a pedestrian walk

1 phase at Elizabeth Park, so at the intersection of
2 Steele and Asylum. Stratford Road, with the approval
3 of this council, is now a dead end. So there's no more
4 cut-through possible to Albany.

5 Steele Road has a variety of traffic
6 calming measures. You see the cobblestones there, the
7 road was narrowed in parts, and there was a flashing
8 speed limit sign, which is still there today. You're
9 looking north on Steele Road. And as it relates to the
10 School for Young Children, the problem was, and this
11 was a serious problem, that parents discharging the
12 students -- well, the parking on the campus at the
13 school for the School for Young Children was used by
14 the teachers arriving in the morning. So when parents
15 would arrive to discharge their children, they couldn't
16 park next to the building, so they parked on Steele
17 Road. And that was very dangerous. There were
18 oftentimes other children in the car, they had to walk
19 up to the school in all sorts of weather conditions
20 with oncoming traffic in both directions.

21 So the remedy that we proposed, and
22 that we have constructed, is 24 spaces at the very
23 front of our site, so that's our site entrance there at
24 the bottom of the screen with 12 spaces planking it on
25 each side, and those are permanent spaces for the

1 benefit of the School for Young Children. So long as
2 that school is in operation, those spaces are there and
3 reserved for their benefit.

4 What happens now is that the
5 teachers park there, and we have sidewalks where they
6 can then circulate to the school, the crossing on
7 Steele Road, and that frees up the spaces adjacent to
8 the school for the parents to be able to park their
9 cars next to the building and there's no more
10 discharging onto Steele Road.

11 So most of you probably know, but
12 the School for Young Children is operated by the
13 University of St. Joseph, and there are many occasions
14 where teachers and students will walk between the two
15 campuses, between the two buildings. There was -- you
16 would leave the School for Young Children and walk up
17 The McAuley site drive, but when you got to the top of
18 the site drive, there was no connection to the USJ
19 campus, so we installed the sidewalk that you see in
20 the picture in the right and located in the depiction
21 on the left which connected, so now students and
22 teachers can walk from the School for Young Children to
23 USJ, and that's another improvement that we did.

24 To get to what I'll call the
25 intangible concerns. So there was discussion of gee,

1 renters versus owners, what does that mean. We have
2 concerns about rowdy, noisy residents. We're concerned
3 about the impact on neighborhood property values, we're
4 concerned about a drain on town services and public
5 schools. So, to the best of my knowledge, none of
6 those concerns have come to pass, and the statistics
7 I'd like to share with you will support that, in part.

8 So existing today is 190 apartment
9 homes that are 100 percent occupied. There's a total
10 of 280 residents at the community, of which 153 are
11 female, 127 are male. We have 12 school age children.
12 Our median age is 35. Our median income for our one
13 bedroom home is 124,000, our median income for a two
14 bedroom home is 172,000. It's not a densely populated
15 community, so our occupants per bedroom is only 1.02.
16 We have more empty nesters than I had projected. We're
17 north of a third at 36 percent. I was thinking 20, 25
18 percent. In terms of where our residents are coming
19 from, 43 and a half percent come from outside
20 Connecticut, 14 percent come from inside Connecticut,
21 but outside Hartford county. We pay about \$1,065,000 a
22 year in property taxes. There's another \$85,000 paid
23 by our residents for personal property.

24 So I was before you a few weeks ago,
25 and you approved a lot line revision, but I just wanted

1 to review three things quickly. One is that no portion
2 of the physical building we're proposing this evening
3 is on land that was formally owned or owned at all by
4 McAuley. McAuley is receiving, from us, two-thirds of
5 an acre, we are receiving from them a third of an acre.
6 And, more importantly, McAuley recaptured its site
7 drive.

8 So why are we proposing an eighth
9 building or 18 more homes at 243 Steele Road. So,
10 aside from three weeks ago when I was here, I was last
11 before this council in 2018. And the real estate
12 market then was that the backdrop was that residents
13 struggled to sell their homes. A popular narrative was
14 millenials don't want to live in Connecticut, that the
15 suburbs are dying, that young adults prefer to be in a
16 city.

17 Then you have the pandemic in 2020.
18 Residents now can sell their homes, but they need a
19 place to downsize. Employees are now working from
20 home. So we're beginning to see an influx of adults
21 from cities, the opposite of what the narrative was,
22 into Central Connecticut, many finding their way to
23 West Hartford, finding their way to our community.
24 Adults already renting in Central Connecticut, since
25 they were now spending so much time at home, decided to

1 upgrade to better apartments, more space. They wanted
2 more amenities.

3 So that is a very different fact
4 pattern than existed last time we were here in 2018,
5 and I would submit to you that it just wasn't
6 foreseeable. And since 2020, since the pandemic, we
7 have consistently managed a waiting list for 50 plus
8 homes at our development. So at any point in time the
9 people may come and go on the waiting list, but the
10 waiting list is always north of 50 plus homes. And I'm
11 here tonight because we would like to address some of
12 that housing need, and we would propose to do so by
13 reinvesting in your community and reinvesting in West
14 Hartford.

15 So the proposed building of this
16 application is comprised of 18 homes; 10 one bedrooms,
17 8 two bedrooms, 10 garages, an elevator building.
18 We're proposing 5 percent be affordable at 80 percent
19 of area median income. The building, as you can see
20 from this depiction, building 8 on the right, is
21 located on the northern boundary of 243 Steele Road,
22 and that's our common boundary, of course, with The
23 McAuley.

24 The building is set back 450 feet
25 from Steele Road. The building style and architecture

1 is identical to the existing building. The proposed --
2 but the proposed building is smaller. It's about
3 two-thirds the size.

4 So you know that we have a lot line
5 agreement with McAuley, but I'd like to go over with
6 you some other understanding that we have with them.
7 So for construction access to Building 8, the closest
8 point is to come in The McAuley site drive to access
9 building 8 during construction. Now, that is currently
10 our property and we're allowed to do that, but
11 notwithstanding we've gone over this with McAuley in
12 great detail. We would go in from Steele Road, which
13 is over on the right, and then when we get to this
14 point here, we would be, you know, cutting into the
15 hill but using that as our access for building 8. We
16 believe that is the shortest distance, it passes the
17 fewest pedestrians, and we think that it's the safest
18 access for the site. We have agreed with McAuley that
19 we will reconstruct this road in this area that I'm
20 showing here, and I'll go over the specification of
21 that in a moment.

22 So we have worked extensively on
23 this proposal with our neighbors to the north, The
24 McAuley, meeting with them, the administration there,
25 several times; a couple of times in the field, a couple

1 of times in their office with our landscape architect.
2 We have come up with what we believe is a very robust
3 screening and planting plan. You have the colored
4 image on top, down below it you have kind of more
5 detail. But, in any event, you've got a very extensive
6 planting plan, which they are satisfied with. There's
7 50 trees, of which 38 are evergreen -- yeah, 38 are
8 evergreen, 12 are deciduous. We have 99 evergreen
9 shrubs, 102 perennials, and 84 grasses. So, again, The
10 McAuley would be up in this area here, and they are the
11 closest neighbor, and this screening was done with
12 their advice for their benefit.

13 So when we did the outreach, we
14 heard that some of the residents at the McAuley would
15 like to see wild flowers in the area I was just showing
16 you. So -- and I think you got written correspondence
17 to that effect, as well. And please keep in mind that
18 what I need to do is coordinate with the
19 administration. So when a resident has a suggestion,
20 we take it to heart. We handle it respectfully but,
21 ultimately, it's the decision of the administration.
22 And, as you can see, we've done very considerable
23 landscape plantings and buffering that we worked out
24 with them. But I did inquire of our landscape
25 architect if it made sense to integrate wild flowers

1 into that plan. He said that he did not think it was a
2 good idea. He thought that they would have a good year
3 or two, and that would be the end of it. And the
4 reason for that is that the land is facing north and
5 The McAuley incurred maximum screening which, as a
6 completed condition, is going to have a lot of shade.
7 So the wild flowers they want to be in open sunlight,
8 they want to be in an open field, they're not going to
9 do well there. Now, having said that, they're not
10 expensive; if people want them to go in, we can put
11 them in. That's the due diligence that I performed so
12 far.

13 As it relates to the specification
14 on the road that I referred to earlier. There had been
15 concern that we were just going to topcoat it. That is
16 not the case. Our intention has always been to rebuild
17 it. Now, rebuilding a road can mean a lot of different
18 things. So I want to go through that in some detail.

19 We will reclaim the existing asphalt
20 that's there today. We'll regrade and roll that
21 material, we'll apply a 2 and a half inch binder course
22 of bituminous concrete and an inch and a half of
23 topcoat. There isn't any curbing proposed and the only
24 curbing there today is 150 feet of concrete curbing,
25 which would remain in place. If there's any excess

1 material onsite, we will haul it off and we will
2 reestablish the shoulders of the road. The distance,
3 linear feet, that we're talking about, 24-foot wide
4 road, is 473 feet and that was in the depiction that I
5 showed you earlier.

6 I do also want to point out on this
7 topic that DRAC had specifically reviewed it and spoke
8 to it in the approval. My reading of that is that
9 they're quite satisfied with the quality, the quantity.
10 They liked the variation that we're showing between
11 shade flowering, etc. You know, I think our site
12 always looks great. This will certainly be consistent
13 with that. The area will be irrigated.

14 I would also like to spend a moment
15 just to mention that these will be Energy Star homes.
16 So our doors and windows, our insulation, our
17 appliances, our lighting, hot water heating. Most
18 importantly, the air ceiling on the outside of the
19 building where we passed the blower door tests, we'll
20 retain a professional to come in and audit it. The
21 HVAC, not just the material but the entire assembly,
22 and water saving fixture in our faucets, our toilets,
23 our showers.

24 So during construction, and this is
25 with guidance from McAuley, we're proposing to commence

1 at 7:30 in the morning and that is consistent -- the
2 reason they gave us that guidance is that is consistent
3 with the people that do their lawn, when they arrive
4 with their blowers and their mower. And there was
5 concern expressed about parking, so we are not
6 utilizing any McAuley land for parking during
7 construction.

8 There was some Health District
9 correspondence. They wanted an assessment by a
10 licensed pest control company. That's fine. They
11 wanted a pest management contract. That's fine. They
12 inquired about the dumpster adequacy. We have 6-yard
13 containers. That's what we keep onsite. They're
14 picked up eight times a month. That's roughly two
15 times a week. We have recycling in four containers
16 that are picked up twice weekly. If, for any reason,
17 that was ever deficient in any fashion, we'd simply
18 have that picked up more frequently.

19 We received a letter from Todd Dumas
20 that's probably in your packet, as well, advising us
21 that there's separate lot line revision application.
22 He cites a section of the code, says it's outside of
23 the STD process, so we need to fill that out and submit
24 it to him before we would take any action relating to
25 tonight's application.

1 This is a rendering of the building.
2 From where I'm standing, it looks a little odd but, in
3 any event, so it's the same materials that exist out
4 there today, a generous application of masonry,
5 horizontal siding. You see the garage with the
6 plantings, restored building, decorative dormers.

7 So I'm about to introduce Brock
8 Edmond, who's from SLR, and he's our civil engineer.
9 Our traffic engineer is here. I know you got the
10 report. I'm happy to have him present if you need him
11 to present. He's also happy to just answer questions,
12 so you folks can make that decision, and that's it for
13 now. Thank you.

14 MR. EDMUND: For the record, Brock
15 Edmond. I'm from SLR International Corporation out of
16 99 Realty Drive, Cheshire, Connecticut. I'm an
17 associate civil engineer. So, obviously, we're talking
18 about building 8 over at 243 Steele Road. Just some
19 technical details I just want to go over.

20 So with the land swap, we're looking
21 at about 15.39 acres that are going to be total on the
22 property. Of that 15.39 acres, we're looking at this
23 very small kind of nodule. So one of the reasons why,
24 as you kind of look at one of those projects,
25 specifically a project like this, it adapted for use,

1 essentially. So what you're doing is you're taking a
2 piece of your property and molding it and sculpting it
3 to, essentially, bring new use to it, as well as just
4 using just best practices to allow for minimal impact.

5 So, specifically, as it relates to
6 the building itself, there was a specific rendering
7 that was shown that showed the entire development, and
8 this specific building is located on the essential
9 north side of this. So what's going on is you have the
10 surrounding buildings going around and then this
11 particular building occupying this particular space,
12 the amount of disturbance for that is about a half to
13 an acre. You know, I think it comes out to
14 specifically -- I think it comes out to,
15 specifically -- if I have the number for you. Right
16 here. It comes specifically to 1.3 acres of total
17 disturbance. So 1.3 acres over a 15-acre site, 15.39
18 acres, you know, that's really not that much when it
19 comes to actual disturbance. So really when you're
20 looking at that kind of volume, it's one of those kind
21 of white glove scenarios where you're massaging the
22 area to make sure that there's minimal impact to those
23 that are actually living in the development.

24 If you haven't noticed, there's 190
25 units that exist on the site. 100 percent are

1 occupied. The idea to build another building is to
2 make it as minimal impact to those people's family
3 lives as possible. That's why, if you can see the site
4 plan before you, it's actually really good planning, in
5 my opinion. Because what's happening is, and it's kind
6 of hard to see, but there's a significant grade change
7 between the top and bottom of these two areas, and
8 what's happening is the building itself is being keyed
9 in to that site. So there is a retaining wall that's
10 going to be kind of on the back of the building. The
11 first floor is at grade width with the surrounding
12 apartment buildings, and the back of the property
13 actually extends to the second floor, The McAuley side,
14 and that is the high side. So it's essentially keyed
15 into the site itself, which, once again, is kind of a
16 best management practice to kind of create a very
17 minimal impact to, one, constructability and, two, just
18 to utilize the existing site the best that it can be,
19 because you're going to be looking at major export and
20 regrading if you were going to be doing anything more
21 substantial.

22 As it relates to parking, as you can
23 see on this kind of plan, the building itself is
24 flanked by two sets of parking areas; the north side
25 being 15 spaces, the south side being 14 spaces. And

1 then interior, as Geoff notified to you, is there are
2 10 internal garages, so that's a total of 39 in total.
3 Existing today, there are 21 spaces that were occupying
4 that space, so obviously there's a net gain of, I
5 think, 18, if I did my math right. With regard to
6 that, the existing unit per -- space per unit would be
7 existing 1.6 and we're going down to 1.52, so it's a
8 very minimal impact. The requirement for this would be
9 1.5 so, obviously, we're meeting the requirement.

10 In relation to that, the development
11 itself, specifically as it relates to building 8 with
12 respect to utilities, once again, kind of good site
13 planning, the accessibility to the existing utilities
14 is very readily available. So where you kind of see
15 where there's islands that are extending from the
16 figures of the building, that's exactly where water,
17 gas, and sewer are readily available due to the,
18 obviously, increase in pervious -- approximately point
19 43 acres of increase in pervious over the original, or
20 the existing. We're mitigating that. We have the best
21 management practices, such as -- what we're proposing
22 today is an underground retention system, which is
23 comprised of 18 Oldcastle StormCapture SC2 units.

24 Prior to those, we were also
25 providing water quality through the use of hoods and --

1 so, per the DEP manual, you need to provide certain
2 measures to provide additional water quality. Existing
3 today, you can see in the top right of this document,
4 there's an existing detention basin that was done with
5 the overall project in 2016 and then updated in 2018
6 with building 7. There's an existing Vortex unit,
7 which is called a higher end separator, so it,
8 essentially, treats water quality and takes out the
9 pollutants for about 80 percent of total suspended
10 solids. That meets and exceeds the requirements that
11 we actually need for this. The there were
12 correspondences between myself and town engineering
13 staff regarding the usage of the existing Vortex unit.
14 We provided them with calculations that show that we
15 are meeting and exceeding the water quality flow for
16 this development, as a whole, with this particular
17 existing unit. So, by adding the additional pervious,
18 it's still doing A-okay.

19 In relation to that, we also
20 received notification that the engineering department,
21 we've addressed all their comments adequately, so yay,
22 me.

23 With regard to just the roach
24 control, obviously, there's going to be 1.3 acres of
25 total disturbance, so best management practice is to

1 utilize different types of roach control, such as
2 filter fence, which is typical. You'll see it pretty
3 much anywhere. There's also protection, so maintaining
4 that you're going to be keeping any kind of hard solids
5 away from the catch basins themselves.

6 The beauty of actually connecting to
7 an existing development is that the existing separator
8 would most likely assist in also providing control if
9 there was ever a break during construction. So there
10 is kind of a belt and suspenders approach,
11 incidentally, because it's a development that already
12 exists. So that's always fun.

13 And that's -- oh, just one last
14 thing. So there's an existing dumpster that is being
15 relocated. It's really just turning 90 degrees, so if
16 you look kind of on the right of the building, this
17 allows for the trash pickup to, one, maintain the kind
18 of already agreed upon location, as well as allow for
19 an easier truck maneuver to just come right in, pick it
20 up, back up, go out, leave. Nobody's ever the wiser.
21 Thank you.

22 MR. COURSEY: Good evening, Madam
23 Mayor, and members of the town council. My name is
24 Chuck Coursey. I live at 21 Walbridge Road in West
25 Hartford. I've been retained by Mr. Sager to do

1 neighborhood outreach for this project, as I did in
2 2016 and 2018.

3 You have -- you should have before
4 you, or in your packet, my outreach report that was
5 submitted last week. I just want to draw your
6 attention to one change. It's not a big one. If you
7 look on page 11, 248 Steele Road, Mr. John Lubszewicz.
8 I received a returned e-mail back from him about the
9 screening that he asked for across the street from his
10 house, and it was just a very short thank you for
11 accommodating his request.

12 So the outreach area and, again, if
13 you don't -- if you can't hear me, please let me know.
14 The outreach area is similar to what we did the last
15 two go-arounds. Here you see the site on Steele Road,
16 Albany Avenue, Steele Road. Outreach area included
17 Stratford Road, Steele Road, Buckingham and Trumbull
18 Lane, University of Saint Joseph, and also the Mercy
19 Community Trinity Health, our neighbor. So everyone
20 within this block that is shown on the screen.

21 You should have in your packet a
22 letter of support from Rhona Free, the president of
23 University of St. Joe's, representing the college and
24 the School for Young Children, as well as from the
25 director of Trinity Health representing The McAuley and

1 St. Mary's.

2 Madam Mayor, you should have also
3 received a letter from Chris Conway at Chamber. I
4 believe that was e-mailed to you in the last hour.
5 Their executive committee met this morning and voted
6 unanimously to approve support for this project. We
7 apologize for not getting that to you sooner. I wanted
8 to make sure that gets into the record.

9 One other thing I wanted to say
10 before I get into some of the details of our meeting.
11 My client, Mr. Sager, is -- one of the things he forgot
12 to mention when he was going through those off site
13 improvements, and I think it's very important that we
14 get this on the record, is that none of those were paid
15 for with taxpayer dollars. Those were all, when we're
16 talking about dead ending Stratford, the traffic common
17 on Steele Road, the parking for School for Young
18 Children, the sidewalks, the pedestrian signals, making
19 the access to Elizabeth Park safer, those were all paid
20 for by the developer, Mr. Sager, and that tallied just
21 under a million dollars in offsite improvements. Mr.
22 Murphy might tell me otherwise, but I don't believe
23 that any developer has done that much offsite
24 improvements as Mr. Sager did on this original project.
25 He definitely is a man who keeps to his word and does

1 what he says.

2 We had three meetings and, again,
3 you'll see in your packet the letters that we sent out
4 to folks. Our first meeting was the meeting of the
5 residents of Steele Road. They had many questions that
6 that you or I would have, very understandable and
7 important questions. Mr. Sager has touched on a lot of
8 these in his response to those. I -- you know, a lot
9 of them focused on noise, parking.

10 I would say probably one of the
11 things that brought the most discussion was once the
12 project is done and keeping proximity, the parking
13 space proximity to their unit, there is more than
14 adequate parking on the space. That has been shown
15 throughout. But people like to be able to park as
16 close as they can to their unit. That is still going
17 to be the case. The parking for the new units, as well
18 as parking that is there now that serves other areas,
19 that's going to be reconfiguration, in addition, so
20 residents are going to be able to be as close to their
21 units now as -- after construction as they are now.

22 We also had a wonderful meeting with
23 the residents at The McAuley. Again, these things are
24 all things that Geoff had talked about but, again, if I
25 was to pinpoint one of the things that folks really

1 focused on is the site lines. This building is going
2 to be closer than the existing buildings are to McAuley
3 but, again, residents at The McAuley, wherever you are
4 on The McAuley grounds, you are not going to see the
5 first two floors of this new building because it's
6 built into the hill that gradually goes up. On top of
7 that hill, you're going to have the screening that's
8 there. So the visibility, it's not on the The McAuley
9 property, obviously, and it's going to be very heavily
10 buffered, again, as Mr. Sager has done with the
11 residents of Trumbull and Buckingham in the past.

12 They also, I thought this was nice,
13 and it's an excellent idea once it is done, the
14 residents asked if they could have a tour. There is a
15 lot of synergy there. It's wonderful the way that
16 Geoff and his staff keep in touch with the folks at The
17 McAuley because his community, obviously, it could be
18 an excellent transition place for folks who may not be
19 ready for The McAuley and vice versa. So they would
20 like to have a tour.

21 We've also found it, when we talk
22 about the waiting list, I can tell you that there are
23 people on the waiting list that live on Stratford Road,
24 and some of those folks, you might recall, Mayor, were
25 here in 2018 and weren't particularly happy about it.

1 This has been --

2 Let me go to the next slide. I want
3 to wrap up with this. We also had a meeting with --
4 invited all the neighbors on Steele, Stratford,
5 Buckingham, Trumbull. We had just a couple of folks
6 come, but the one question that they asked, it's a good
7 question, is why do you need more units. Why are you
8 back again with more units? I think Geoff answered
9 this question already, but if you'll indulge, I'll kind
10 of give my take on this. It's whether you think this
11 project, this community is a burden or a benefit to
12 West Hartford. Clearly, the first time we came around,
13 we heard a lot of folks that thought this was going to
14 be a terrible burden on the town. That hasn't proven
15 out. It's, you know, you take a piece of property that
16 ten years ago sat untaxable for half a century. Now
17 it's adding to the vitality of our community and adding
18 to our tax base.

19 It's also, if you look at all the
20 other wonderful communities that are coming in West
21 Hartford, and this council in its work has seen fit to
22 approve many of these. This is different. It's not
23 better. But this is different. The building markets
24 itself to a different customer. A lot of the ones that
25 we see in the center on Park Road over by Corbin's

1 Corner, those are for people that really want to be
2 close to restaurants. They want to be able to walk to
3 these attractions. They're more dense communities, and
4 that's the lifestyle they want. Personally, it's
5 something that I would probably like when the time
6 comes.

7 What 243 Steele Road does is it's a
8 more suburban, less dense, open -- people don't move to
9 Steele Road because they want to walk to Bricco. They
10 move there because they want the quiet of the
11 neighborhood. They want something that resembles their
12 previous home, more than something -- maybe the great
13 places that you'll find here in the center on Park
14 Road. You know, that's why he's building. Obviously,
15 he wants to make his product even better.

16 But going back to what we just heard
17 about the engineering. You know, this is a sustainable
18 proposal because we're not talking about having to go
19 into a brand-new site, have to put brand-new utilities
20 in, brand-new water, brand-new construction. All the
21 utilities are there. Everything is there to make this
22 a, you know, seamless transition into the new addition
23 to the community.

24 So with that, I'm more than happy to
25 answer any questions. As Geoff had said, we also have

1 a traffic engineer with us tonight. I always love to
2 hear the traffic engineer story, but you may feel
3 different. He can be available for questions, Mayor,
4 or else he can go through his presentation right now.

5 MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Mr.
6 Coursey. I think questions will be fine.

7 MR. COURSEY: Excellent. I'll turn
8 it over to Geoff.

9 MR. SAGER: Thank you, Chuck. So
10 just to conclude -- so it will be hard to state it more
11 eloquently than Chuck just did, but I would say that in
12 support of this application, I would offer you the
13 following in conclusion. That I think it makes sense
14 to prioritize smart, sustainable developments. It
15 leverages the existing infrastructure, so here the
16 utilities, the access drives, the maintenance
17 facilities, the common amenities, they're all there.

18 This development, as proposed, is
19 significantly less dense than the recently approved or
20 proposed residential community. There are over 30
21 existing residential communities within West Hartford
22 that are more dense than what it is that we're
23 proposing.

24 So I just want to go for a minute
25 through the zoning data table on some of the high

1 points. So the density that we're proposing, at the
2 end of the day, is 13 and a half units per acre. So if
3 you look at the underlying zone, which is RM-MS, the
4 lot area per unit that's required at 1,000 square feet.
5 We're proposing three times that lot area. The maximum
6 FAR is 1.25. We're proposing point 43. The maximum
7 lot coverage, 40 percent. We're down to 15.1. We have
8 almost seven times as much usable open space than the
9 zone requires. We are less than half of the maximum
10 height that's permitted within the zone, the parking is
11 slightly more than required, and the units per building
12 is less than half of what is required within the zone.

13 So, again, as Chuck said, and not
14 just because I'm an advocate of the development, I
15 honestly truly believe that this is a resource for the
16 Town of West Hartford.

17 So why do I say that. Because I
18 know on that waiting list our most popular home is the
19 large two bedroom home with an elevator with a garage.
20 And I know that the profile of that customer is
21 typically downsizing from a West Hartford home.
22 They've sold a single-family home, they want to stay in
23 the community, they need a place to go. Exacerbating
24 the shortage is that those that move in tend to stay
25 significantly longer than other residents. So there's

1 even fewer of them available, because once people get
2 in there, they stay longer. And so there's a real
3 shortage that we see and that the people on staff
4 manage every day.

5 As Chuck mentioned, and I'll just
6 say it briefly, for the reasoning that he said, I do
7 honestly believe that that is a unique residential
8 community that, yes, there's a lot of more homes,
9 multifamily homes, that will be coming to the market,
10 but they're not 243 Steele Road. The people that are
11 on our waiting list are not on other waiting lists.
12 And as Chuck said, they're different than the walkable
13 town center residential communities, both approved and
14 proposed. I would say they favor a little bit more
15 urban where, as Chuck said, we're more suburban. We're
16 more horizontal, less vertical, fewer units in each of
17 the buildings. Steele Road is a quiet road. Our site
18 is a large site, 15 and a half acres.

19 So I would welcome the opportunity
20 to reinvest in that community and reinvest in West
21 Hartford. That really concludes my remarks. The
22 letter of support from University of St. Joseph, Chuck
23 touched on it, he did for Trinity Health which, of
24 course, operates the McCauley. So thank you very much.
25 That concludes my remarks, and I'm happy, as are the

1 rest of the team, to answer any questions.

2 MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Mr. Sager.
3 Mr. Dodge.

4 MR. DODGE: Madam Mayor, if I could
5 just inquire of the applicant. You made mention of an
6 affidavit, if you want to describe what that is and
7 also hand it in to the council for the record.

8 MR. SAGER: Sure. This is the
9 signed affidavit for 243 Steele Road, SDD #139.

10 MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you. Thank
11 you, Mr. Sager. Thank you, Mr. Dodge. We're going to
12 begin with public comment. Have you, Mr. Clerk,
13 received any written comments on this public hearing?

14 MR. DAVIDOFF: Madam Mayor, we have.
15 We received correspondence from Allen Freshler of 275
16 Steele Road, we received correspondence from Eric
17 Gainer on behalf of Trinity Health Communities, and
18 we've received correspondence from Rhona Free on behalf
19 of the University of St. Joe's. As of right now, we
20 have not received any correspondence from Christopher
21 Conway from West Hartford Chamber of Commerce.

22 MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Mr.
23 Davidoff. We have three people signed up. If you
24 haven't signed up, you can still speak. So the first
25 person -- if you could state your name and address for

1 the record, the first person is Allen Freshler. The
2 mic is an automatic mic. Speak into it, and it will
3 work for you.

4 MR. FRESHLER: I'm Allen Freshler,
5 and I'm a 5-year resident of The McAuley. The McAuley
6 has currently about 190 senior residents. The average
7 age there, I would assess, is approaching 90. We have
8 one party that is 105 years old. The property works
9 pretty well, but we have suffered greatly because of
10 the virus issues and some of the competition in the
11 area. Anthology has built two for rent kind of senior
12 living properties nearby just over the mountain and, of
13 course, Duncaster, and Seabury had 68 additional units
14 that came on-line probably about three years ago.

15 We actually had a deposit at
16 Duncaster, and the waiting list situation -- my partner
17 is an interior designer and he had a client at The
18 McAuley, so that was our first exposure to The McAuley.
19 We actually loved it there. The floor plans were
20 great, it was a well-run property from our discussions
21 with others in the area.

22 I would like, though, however, to
23 focus on a few things and, before I do that, Chuck,
24 thank you for addressing some of the issues when you
25 came to the meeting at The McAuley about ten days ago.

1 Particularly, the reconstruction issues that run out to
2 the stop sign. Okay? All right. Thank you. That was
3 an important concern on the part of the residents.

4 I come to you as a resident, not
5 representing McAuley interests or Trinity interests.
6 We believe that their interests are not always aligned
7 with our interests. Trinity is really operated out of
8 Michigan, so they are the owner of our property. They
9 do come maybe once a year and do a walkthrough and have
10 meetings with the management, but they don't meet with
11 us, the residents. So I am -- I have collected the
12 interests of some of the other residents there, and I'd
13 like to express those.

14 There are -- in the opinion of us,
15 Trinity Health has gained from this. They have the --
16 now their entrance, but somehow when this property was
17 divided, it didn't belong to us. We did not know that
18 when we signed up to go to Trinity, and in the big
19 picture it probably does not matter. But they probably
20 also received a payment, but this is an area I'm
21 unfamiliar with, but I do know that The Hartford
22 Courant is talking about property on Troutbrook and,
23 where the children's museum was, that sold for
24 substantial amounts of money, record prices. So there
25 was probably some money there. None of that money

1 flowed to us.

2 Metro Realty had tax benefits,
3 flexible rental pricing, and more land for development
4 when this property was agreed to, this land switch.
5 The Town of West Hartford, you folks have an enormous
6 financial interest in this. You have a long tax
7 revenue coming from this property; not only the actual
8 real estate but the automobiles, these 30 automobiles
9 that will be located there.

10 MAYOR CANTOR: We try to keep
11 comments to a few minutes so we can get -- we still
12 have a full meeting ahead, so if you could just --

13 MR. FRESHLER: Can I have 5 more
14 minutes?

15 MAYOR CANTOR: A few more minutes.

16 MR. FRESHLER: The residents of The
17 McAuley received nothing from any of this. In fact,
18 our driveway may or may not be impaired for a while,
19 our major driveway. I do like, as I said, earlier some
20 of the things that Chuck has agreed to, based on our
21 meeting. We, as senior residents, do not have freedom
22 of movement. We pay a buy-in to belong to the -- or
23 reside at the property, and that buy-in can be as high
24 as \$250,000. It's a substantial investment for
25 seniors.

1 There's a 4-year vesting period
2 there. This is an important consideration. We feel
3 that that is being impaired because the construction
4 period here of approximately 14 months, it hits the
5 front end when the heavy construction vehicles will be
6 in the area, will impair our marketing efforts. I'm
7 not a direct part of that. As I said, I'm a resident.
8 But I can see that that's a possibility.

9 We have been running around 80
10 percent occupancy. It's gone up a little bit higher
11 since the virus scares have ended. So we're in a
12 little better shape, but that's a factor here. Most of
13 us live on fixed income. By the way, I would like to
14 have this paper written into whatever --

15 MAYOR CANTOR: You can submit that
16 for the record and follow up.

17 MR. FRESHLER: You talked about
18 rebuilding embankments. I'd like 10 to 12 inches of
19 topsoil. I'm sorry, maybe I did not hear.

20 MAYOR CANTOR: No, you did not. If
21 you can just finish in the next minute or so, that
22 would be very helpful.

23 MR. FRESHLER: I have a Cochlear
24 implant, so I'm hearing impaired.

25 We'd like 10 to 12 inches of top

1 soil there, Chuck. I disagree with you regarding the
2 comments by your nursery people, that it faces north.
3 We have a wonderful sun there. We live there 24 hours
4 a day. We have a wonderful morning sun in the summer
5 and overhead. So we think the wild flowers may, in
6 fact, work on parts of that disturbed surface.

7 This proposal is for you here and
8 it's regarding a possible tax abatement that's for,
9 perhaps, a 5-year period. You might consider a
10 property like The McAuley who has been a major taxpayer
11 for the Town of West Hartford when we are a
12 not-for-profit property. So it's like whatever taxes
13 you people approve are passed through to us in our
14 monthly maintenance fees, so I'm looking for some
15 consideration here. It's a little different kind of
16 looking at that from a senior standpoint. We're on a
17 fixed income, so whatever you guys approve gets passed
18 through to us. Maybe during this 5-year period there
19 could be a moratorium on an increase for a
20 not-for-profit property. Please consider that.

21 I would like the developer to
22 promote at least one meet and greet. On his schematic
23 here, he showed one period it was -- you were going to
24 have an open house for McAuley residents. I applaud
25 you for that. I think that's wonderful, but I'd like

1 to flip that and also maybe have you offer a meet and
2 greet where our marketing people could come. I love
3 the idea that 36 percent of your people are seniors.
4 Maybe they'll be potential residents of The McAuley
5 down the road.

6 MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Mr.
7 Freshler. If you could wind it up, we need to have our
8 next speaker. Thank you.

9 MR. FRESHLER: That's the essence.
10 Thank you very much for your time.

11 MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you. The next
12 person that signed up is Michael Bohn.

13 MR. BOWEN: Madam Mayor, council
14 members, my name is Michael Bohn. I live at 243 Steele
15 Road. I've lived there for six and a half years. In
16 fact, when I looked at my unit, I wore a hardhat to go
17 look at it. And at that time I was about to retire, 30
18 years as an engineer. I've lived in various cities
19 around the U.S. I'm from New England, but we decided
20 that we wanted to make West Hartford our home, and
21 after 30 plus years of owning a home, my wife and I
22 looked at the prospect of moving back into an
23 apartment. Our first apartment was in Groton,
24 Connecticut when I worked at Millstone when Unit 3 was
25 under construction, but the prospect of moving back

1 into an apartment was -- you know, it was hard to get
2 our heads around that after having a house in various
3 places. When we got here and we looked around, there
4 was nothing like this 243. I could see it. You know,
5 having spent my career as an engineer, almost all of it
6 in construction, despite the nature of the site at the
7 time, I could see what this was going to be become and,
8 in fact, it did become that.

9 So my wife and I represent a piece
10 of that 36 percent, we're empty nesters, been here for
11 six and a half years and, I mean, we'll -- that long
12 list of people, they're not going to get ours. Maybe
13 I'll move to the McAuley when the time comes. I said
14 to Geoff when I got here, I said hey, I have friends
15 that have come and stayed with us and they've applied
16 and they're on the list. You know, and he said, "Would
17 you stand up and say that?" And so that's what I'm
18 here to say, so I'll leave it at that.

19 MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you very much,
20 Mr. Bohn. The next person that signed up is Erika
21 Circo-Soicon (phonetic.)

22 MS. CIRCO-SOICON: Hi everyone. I'm
23 Erika Circo-Soicon. This is my daughter, Kathleen
24 Soicon. We live at 243 Steele Road. We are in
25 building 7. So on the map our building 7 kind of is

1 where McAuley property and St. Joseph, in that corner
2 intersection.

3 So I have three concerns. One of
4 them primarily is a health concern that is unique to
5 building 7, building 5, building 4, and building 8 will
6 be in the stream. This came up in 2020 in the summer
7 of 2020 when we had a storm and we lost power for one
8 week. And what happened is the backup diesel generator
9 that is on The McAuley property does not have a stack
10 to go up higher. There's different elevations on the
11 property, so what happened is we woke up, we didn't
12 have air conditioning, so we left our windows open, and
13 my daughter was 9 months old at the time, and our
14 bedroom filled with carbon monoxide from the exhaust
15 from it. So when they run that test monthly, or
16 quarterly, if we have our windows open to reduce our
17 carbon footprints, that carbon monoxide goes into our
18 homes and it's toxic. So we were without power for one
19 week, and an infant doesn't have the ability to
20 regulate their body temperature like we do. So when we
21 expect baby No. 2, God forbid we lose power, we're
22 going to run into that problem. I feel like that was
23 an environmental health concern that was overlooked
24 because it's invisible. So it's a major concern. It
25 was overlooked by a lot of people, and if you walk

1 outside and they run that, it's like ten
2 tractor-trailers, the exhaust coming at you at once.
3 So I hope that while there's an opportunity to review
4 the changes on the property, that they could either
5 raise the exhaust system so that it's not going into
6 our apartments.

7 Two, I think that while we have
8 wonderful residents that live at the property that help
9 contribute to the West Hartford Community -- it's a
10 wonderful town to live in. My husband and I are both
11 from out of state. This apartment complex, they have
12 very nice staff that work there and we really do feel
13 like they help to enhance the community. They're very
14 slow with public safety concerns.

15 So in the summer of -- August of
16 2021, September 2021, building 7 had a break-in. My
17 building. My husband and I own an investment property,
18 vacation investment property, in South Carolina, so we
19 were visiting our other home and we did not receive
20 notice that our building was broken into. They're very
21 quick to send an e-mail of when the coffee machine is
22 broken, but when it comes to public safety, I've had
23 people walk into my apartment that don't live in the
24 building or don't work for the apartment complex. They
25 didn't -- they only now installed cameras on the

1 backside of building 7 this week.

2 So when it comes to concerns of
3 safety, major safety concerns for me and my family, I
4 found that the notice period, that's something, as an
5 attorney myself licensed in Massachusetts, not in
6 Connecticut, you were given notice upon the break-in,
7 you would think, right then and there, an owner would
8 react. It's a safety concern. And it didn't happen
9 until last week.

10 And I know there was a petition that
11 went around for our building and it wasn't -- you know,
12 after the break-in it went around, after the break-in
13 in 2021, and they still didn't react. That's a concern
14 for me as a resident there.

15 You know, and then, lastly, the
16 parking issue. I didn't make it to the meeting that
17 they had for the residents because I had surgery that
18 day, but I was told that the parking situation was
19 going to go down to 1.3 parking spots per resident. My
20 husband and I, we occupy one of those two-bedroom
21 apartments in building 7, so we pay extra for a garage.
22 Garages are not included. So in order to kind of -- we
23 lived in Boston for many years, so we know what it's
24 like to fight for a parking spot. So to go down to 1.3
25 parking spots where you're forced to buy a garage so

1 you have a guaranteed parking spot is a little
2 unreasonable for the suburban lifestyle that they're
3 proposing right now.

4 When you look at the average income
5 in order to use one of those units, most of them are
6 occupied by two individuals; right? Whatever their
7 family composition is that they make up on that one
8 unit and it's -- while West Hartford is located next to
9 Hartford, every unit has two cars. So in the end they
10 said even though you're rearranging the parking, I was
11 told that we would be down ten spots. So, you know,
12 you have a little bit of neighbors rubbing like this,
13 especially since a lot of the people that live on the
14 property are resident doctors or emergency room
15 doctors, and they come home from their shift at 10
16 o'clock and they don't have parking, they have to park
17 really far away, and we don't have assigned parking,
18 which is kind of nice, because, for us, we don't care
19 when we're out of state. We spend about four months of
20 the year out of state. But, still, it's unreasonable
21 to think that the parking situation for what they have
22 proposed will be adequate for the complex.

23 So those are my three concerns, and
24 I hope that something can be done without retaliation
25 against us as a renter.

1 MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you. I
2 appreciate it. Okay.

3 Is there anybody else in the
4 audience that has not spoken at this public hearing
5 that would like to? All right.

6 Why don't we bring the applicant
7 back up, and they can respond to the comments that they
8 received, the public comments, and then we'll open it
9 up to counsel.

10 MR. SAGER: Thank you, Madam Mayor.
11 I believe, as it relates to Mr. Freshler's comments
12 that in my initial presentation I spoke to most of
13 them, we are unable to move the building, which was one
14 of the suggestions in the letter. The meet and greet,
15 we embrace that idea.

16 The whole notion of senior living,
17 we are very involved in the senior living community.
18 We understand the continuum of care, we understand
19 that, as residents age in place in our building, as an
20 elevator building, they could be candidates for The
21 McAuley. We understand why they would want to stay in
22 the neighborhood. I think it's a great idea that Mr.
23 Freshler came up with, and we will undertake to have
24 such a meeting.

25 As it related to the woman who just

1 spoke, I was not aware of that concern about The
2 McAuley exhaust, but I will look into it right away. I
3 don't have much more to say on it, because I just don't
4 know anything about it. It sounds like a possible
5 remedy is to extend the stack, but I'm really
6 completely outside my lane, so I don't want -- of
7 course, that's a very serious concern. I get that. We
8 will get to the bottom of that starting tomorrow
9 morning.

10 As it relates to the intrusion
11 event, we checked with the West Hartford Police,
12 because I hadn't heard about that. We did know as a
13 company. I didn't know, personally. But I said please
14 check, have there been any other intrusions. There
15 have been no other intrusion events on our site since
16 2017. So that was an isolated event.

17 As it relates to the cameras, there
18 are no cameras in the back of that building covering
19 the sliding glass doors, because we cover the
20 pedestrian entrances. So a sliding glass door is
21 access from somebody's unit to the outside. It still
22 has a fence up there, but it's not how you would get
23 into the home. You get into the home through a common
24 corridor. There's two for each building. That
25 particular building has no entrance on the back of it.

1 So that's why there's no cameras there, because the
2 cameras cover the pedestrian entrances. Since then, we
3 have installed a camera, but there was no camera at the
4 time.

5 So, parking, I can give you a very
6 detailed and depicted 6 or 7-minute answer, or I can
7 also just tell you that on a net basis, we will be
8 losing two parking spaces. So how do I get to that
9 number? Because there are 18 units in the new
10 building, you need one and a half parking spaces per
11 unit. That's 27. We have 15 parking spaces in the
12 parking lot to the west, we have 14 spaces to the
13 parking lot to the east. That's 29. We have 10
14 garages. That's 39. We need 27. That was the 18
15 times one and a half, so we're 12 to the good, but
16 where the building is, we're eliminating 22 spaces, so
17 now we're 10 to the bad, but we have parking -- we have
18 units that -- we have spaces that we can put in the
19 parking lot that is on the south side of building 7,
20 and we have other spaces where we can pick up 8 of
21 those. So for a net, it would be 10.

22 Now, I also want to make the point
23 that in our count of parking spaces we do not include
24 the apron in front of the garage. So anybody that has
25 a garage has an apron in front of the garage, and

1 there's a 100 garages on premises. So that's not even
2 in our count. So in addition to all the surface
3 parking and the statistics we showed you, there's
4 another 100 spaces on those aprons that aren't
5 available to the public at large or to other residents
6 at large, but, of course, if a resident has two cars,
7 one can park inside, one can park on the apron. I
8 believe that was it.

9 Madam Mayor, if there's anything
10 else.

11 MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Mr. Sager.
12 Why don't you stay up, because there may be questions
13 from the council. I'll just start with one quick
14 question.

15 The air conditioning units on that
16 eighth building, where will they be?

17 MR. SAGER: In the unit itself. You
18 saw them on the illustration. They're not on the
19 ground.

20 MAYOR CANTOR: All right. Mr.
21 Sweeney.

22 MR. SWEENEY: Thank you, Madam
23 Mayor. And thank you for the presentation and for the
24 work you guys are doing in town. One of the things
25 that I noticed about the presentation is you had some

1 really great statistics about who lives there, the
2 makeup, but you added in that 5 percent affordable
3 piece. Can you tell us about how you got to that
4 number and like the discussion of adding on new units
5 and how you guys are going to factor in the affordable
6 units into your expansion?

7 MR. SAGER: That is guidance that we
8 received from other people within the community that we
9 don't have affordable units in the rest of the
10 development. What I am is an affordable housing
11 developer. So if you go back and look at my history,
12 we own and operate, we build from the ground up, and we
13 continue to own 22 affordable housing communities, all
14 in the high opportunity suburban towns in Connecticut.

15 So we have an entire compliance
16 department, I'm building 88 affordable homes in Berlin.
17 I just submitted to CHFA an application for 65 homes in
18 Farmington. We know affordable housing very well.

19 Notwithstanding, this is a market
20 rate development. Everything has been predicated upon
21 market rate standards, and we receive guidance that
22 look, you need to include some affordable housing,
23 which is what we did. I mean, it's a small -- it's one
24 unit, but it's also a small building, so it's 5
25 percent. It's one home.

1 MR. SWEENEY: Out of 190 units that
2 you have now, and you're going to add one, why bother
3 with one?

4 MR. SAGER: It's meaningful. For
5 that one person, it's meaningful. I can walk you
6 through the story. So if somebody gets that home,
7 they'll think they hit the lottery, so to speak. I
8 hear that all the time from our affordable housing
9 residents.

10 You know, given the cost of building
11 in today's environment, given the cost of interest
12 rates, given the cost of various off site improvements
13 we've been discussing, it's hard to make everything
14 work. So, you know, that is why we're proposing what
15 we do.

16 MR. SWEENEY: Is that one unit a
17 single?

18 MR. SAGER: It is. It's a
19 one-bedroom, yes.

20 MR. SWEENEY: Okay.

21 MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Mr.
22 Sweeney. Mr. Cortes?

23 MR. CORTES: I just want to get the
24 math. 18 units, how many are two bedrooms?

25 MR. SAGER: Eight.

1 MR. CORTES: Because it's very
2 funny. I called today and the staff was extremely
3 friendly, and there is no wait for one bedroom, but
4 there is definitely -- I have plenty of clients for the
5 two bedrooms. So why not increase, why not more two
6 bedrooms than the one bedroom?

7 MR. SAGER: The configuration and
8 the lot constraints. It's a box and you fit widgets in
9 a box, and I can call that up on the screen and show
10 you, but it doesn't work.

11 MR. CORTES: Thank you.

12 MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Mr.
13 Cortes. Miss Fay?

14 MS. FAY: Thank you very much. We
15 didn't go through -- well, we all did on our own. We
16 didn't go through the parking on the traffic study.
17 What was the end result and net gain because of this
18 new 18 unit building?

19 MR. SAGER: Of parking spaces?

20 MS. FAY: No, of our traffic.

21 MR. SAGER: Can I defer to Mark
22 Vertucci, our traffic engineer, who's here with me this
23 evening?

24 MS. FAY: Sure.

25 MR. VERTUCCI: Good evening. I'm

1 Mark Vertucci, senior transportation here at Fuss &
2 O'Neill in Manchester. We did prepare a brief traffic
3 statement for the 18 additional units, and to determine
4 how much additional traffic this would generate, we
5 actually went out and counted the existing development
6 driveway for how much the existing 190 units are
7 generating. Then we applied a rate to what the
8 additional 18 would generate, and what we came up with
9 is seven additional vehicle trips in the morning, peak
10 hour of traffic, and eight additional vehicle trips in
11 the afternoon peak hour of traffic. We did compare
12 that with industry standardized ITE rates, and they
13 were pretty much dead on with what we counted.

14 So this development is generating
15 what we would expect it to, based on other rates at
16 similar developments around the country.

17 MS. FAY: Thank you.

18 MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Miss Fay.
19 Miss Blanks.

20 MS. BLANKS: Thank you, Madam Mayor,
21 and thank you for the presentation. As always, I
22 always enjoy these presentations. I have a couple of
23 questions for you, and perhaps it's in the packet, and
24 I didn't get to it all, so what's the square footage of
25 the two bedroom and the one bedroom?

1 MR. SAGER: So I can call it up
2 exactly. We can go through it with precision, but I
3 can tell you, generally, the two bedrooms are 1,225
4 square feet. The one bedrooms vary. They'll go
5 anywhere from the low to mid 900s to 806, I believe.

6 MS. BLANKS: Okay. And the parking,
7 I think I can identify with the young lady, because I
8 have a daughter and she's always complaining about when
9 she comes home at the end of the night and can never
10 find a place to park. Do you or are you planning to
11 have some type of overflow parking in a situation like
12 that, where folks come home and they can't find a place
13 to park or close to their unit?

14 MR. SAGER: Just to be clear on what
15 we heard, so it's not a shortage of spaces. It's
16 convenience. So as a general proposition, as you get
17 deeper into the site, it's a little tighter, so that
18 means you have to park more --

19 MS. BLANKS: Further away.

20 MR. SAGER: Well, you have to park
21 further away but more toward the front of the site.
22 The front of the site has loads of parking and, you
23 know, the distance that you'd be talking about -- and,
24 look, on any given day, any series of events might find
25 people parking on one place or -- you may have to walk

1 a little bit further.

2 So, just to point out, we don't do
3 reserve spaces, with the exception of the garages,
4 because you want the benefit of what is called a float.
5 So in other words, if I had a reserved surface space
6 and I was away, nobody could use it. So we don't do
7 that. We don't reserve any spaces or handicap
8 ourselves in anyway. We have plenty of parking on the
9 site.

10 What do I think the true parking
11 utilization is on the site overall? It's the 1.3
12 number that you heard, and we count cars all the time.
13 That is what's really utilized, but what you're hearing
14 is that there might be -- it might not be convenient,
15 which I understand and appreciate, and we want to
16 mitigate and adopt the measures that we mentioned
17 earlier and get it down to a net loss of maybe one or
18 two spaces or even to zero. We'll work with staff on
19 that.

20 MS. BLANKS: Okay. One more
21 question. I just forgot it, so I'll come back. Thank
22 you.

23 MAYOR CANTOR: Mr. Wenograd.

24 MR. WENOGRAD: Very briefly. The
25 power point presentation, can we get that submitted to

1 the clerk and added to the record?

2 MR. SAGER: Of course.

3 MAYOR CANTOR: That's it?

4 MR. WENOGRAD: Yes.

5 MAYOR CANTOR: All right. So where
6 are we on the -- Mr. Cortes has another question.

7 MR. CORTES: For you, Madam Mayor, I
8 don't know who I ask the question to, but with regard
9 to the stack at the McAuley, I know you're going to
10 follow up and look into it. Is there any way that
11 someone can let us know what the outcome is to that?

12 MAYOR CANTOR: Mr. Dodge, will you
13 be able to -- is there a condition that we can put on
14 it? It doesn't apply to this particular presentation
15 but. . .

16 MR. DODGE: Thank you, Madam Mayor.
17 It's difficult to see how we could draft a condition
18 that would apply to The McAuley. I'm not sure what
19 mitigation measures to be taken by the applicant, so I
20 would be hesitant to put it in the conditions of
21 approval. That being said, I would leave it to the
22 town manager. Our town staff, I'm sure, will work with
23 the applicant to make sure what whatever safety issues
24 are there are addressed, and they certainly report back
25 to the council at a future date on compliance, building

1 codes, and that sort of thing.

2 MAYOR CANTOR: This could be
3 something that the fire department will send --

4 MR. LEDWITH: Absolutely. We can
5 work with Mr. Sager to ensure that something is done
6 with the stack. We can report back to a certain
7 committee, I'd have to think about which one, but we'll
8 work with Mr. Sager and McAuley and get back to the
9 council.

10 MAYOR CANTOR: Okay. Thank you.
11 Anything else?

12 MS. BLANKS: I have a followup. The
13 construction, once construction begins, how would that
14 impact the parking for the current residents and the
15 traffic flow?

16 MR. SAGER: Thank you. So what we
17 showed you for a construction strategy is the shortest
18 distance to access the building from Steele Road, and
19 it has the fewest possible encounters with pedestrians,
20 but there will be no construction parking on the 243
21 Steele Road site. We will come up with a parking plan
22 that we will work with the planning department or with
23 the town engineer, but we are very mindful of the two
24 communities. The outreach was loud and clear. You
25 know, it's going to be akin to building like a museum

1 or something in an inner city area where you just have
2 to be on your game all the time. If I need to hire
3 people to direct the traffic, as we did when we were
4 initially constructing in 2016 for the benefit of the
5 School for Young Children, we will do so.

6 MADAM MAYOR: Thank you, Miss
7 Blanks. Mr. Sweeney?

8 MR. SWEENEY: I have one follow-up
9 question. The affordable thing. So is there -- how
10 long are you securing this for affordable?

11 MR. SAGER: 20 years.

12 MR. SWEENEY: The other aspect,
13 would you be open to making it two bedrooms?

14 MR. SAGER: Sure.

15 MR. SWEENEY: I think, to your
16 point, since this is an amazing property and could
17 really be inviting and inclusive, as you guys are
18 talking about, I think having a family live there, as
19 opposed to a single person, I think -- one of the
20 things that we've been trying to do here on affordable
21 is allow for families to move into them and benefit
22 from the ability to go to school here, and I think
23 that's one of the things that we tried to work on. I
24 think with a single family, that would preclude it to
25 people that don't have kids, obviously, but I think if

1 you did that, that would be a really nice gesture to
2 really be inviting to families in the community.

3 MR. SAGER: I'm agreeable to that,
4 yes.

5 MR. SWEENEY: I appreciate it.

6 MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Mr.
7 Sweeney. Okay. All right. So I will read into the
8 record, and I'll go back around with questions one more
9 time. Letter dated March 24, 2023 to the Town Planning
10 & Zoning Commission recommending approval, letter dated
11 March 13, 2023 from Design Review Advisory Committee
12 recommending approval. We did receive the letter from
13 Mr. Conway, chair of the chamber. Okay. And are there
14 anymore questions? Miss Fay.

15 MS. FAY: Yes, thank you. So this
16 seems to be a hot topic right now about the traffic and
17 the parking situation. How do you provide for
18 visitors? I'm sure a lot of people, like the woman in
19 the back who are out of state and have visitors coming;
20 in-laws, what have you, how do you accommodate that and
21 for the net gain or loss, is it worthy, at this point,
22 to consider a designated visitor parking. I don't know
23 what the visitor to resident ratio is, but, you know,
24 maybe we could do something with that to help alleviate
25 some of the owner concerns.

1 MR. SAGER: Thank you for that
2 question. So we don't have a specific visitor policy,
3 so visitors would park in surface parking along with
4 everybody else. Any -- if we were to designate any
5 areas as visitor parking, and we often see that when we
6 go to the doctor, or whatever it may be. It's not a
7 good idea, because you're taking the spaces off line.
8 It's actually exacerbating the problem, because those
9 spaces are coming out of the mix for residents, let's
10 say, to park there. So we don't have a formal strategy
11 for residents.

12 You know, if you had a dozen homes
13 or 20 homes, you can have a set of circumstances that's
14 particular to those people that are living there, but
15 when you have 200 homes in the community, the law of
16 averages is very compelling and, as I said, we count
17 cars all the time, because we're very mindful of it.
18 Our true utilization is about 1.3. We're providing
19 1.54, so that's a lot of extra spaces. I'll grant you
20 that most of them, as I mentioned, are on the east side
21 of the building. I shouldn't say most of them. I
22 should say often, if there is a tight situation, people
23 would walk to the east, but it also doesn't consider,
24 as I also mentioned, that there's another 100 spaces on
25 the aprons in front of the garages.

1 So I don't think there's a parking
2 problem there. Not on the site. What we're going to
3 lose, we're proposing, is two. If we need to find the
4 two, we'll find the two.

5 MS. FAY: Thank you.

6 MAYOR CANTOR: Thank you, Miss Fay.
7 All right. With that, thank you very much, Mr. Sager,
8 for a wonderful presentation.

9 Actually, I just wanted to follow up
10 on the safety protocol. Do you have a different kind
11 of method of communication with the owner if there were
12 to be a break in?

13 MR. SAGER: I'm afraid I don't have
14 a good answer for that. I think that's a legal
15 question, too, so I've got to defer to that. I just
16 don't have a good answer. I'm sorry.

17 MAYOR CANTOR: It doesn't really
18 apply to this particular application.

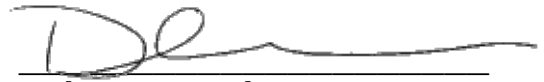
19 MR. SAGER: You have my commitment
20 to look into it.

21 MAYOR CANTOR: With that, we'll
22 close the public hearing, and I'll start the town
23 council meeting.

24 (Whereupon, the hearing was
25 adjourned at 8:44 p.m.) C E R T I F I C A T E.

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2
3 I, DEBRA A. CHASSE, Court Reporter and
4 Notary Public within and for the State of Connecticut,
5 duly commissioned and qualified, do hereby certify that
6 the foregoing 59 pages are a complete and accurate
7 computer-aided transcription of my original verbatim
8 notes taken of the Public Hearing held before the West
9 Hartford Town Council.

10
11 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my
12 hand and affixed my notarial seal this 23rd day of
13 April, 2023.

14
15 
16 Debra A. Chasse, CSR
17 Notary Public
18 State of Connecticut
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

My Commission Expires:
June 30, 2026
CSR No. 00055