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Posted on: May 30, 2018

[ARCHIVED] First Selectman Vicki Tesoro's Statement on Proposed Zone Change by Westfield Mall

5/30/2018 - First Selectman Vicki Tesoro's Statement on Proposed Zone Change by Westfield Mall

UPDATE: 6/1/18 - The Westfield Mall, in an email to town Planning and Zoning staff and at a meeting with Town residents Wednesday evening (5/30/18), amended its proposal by **reducing the number of proposed housing units from 580 to 290.**

May 30, 2018 - First Selectman Vicki Tesoro's Statement on Proposed Zone Change by Westfield Mall

At the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting on May 16, 2018, the Westfield Mall presented a zoning regulation amendment application. Within that amendment, the mall is requesting a number of changes to the present zone. For details of what is being proposed, please contact Town Planner Rob Librandi at (203) 452-5047:

This zoning amendment is early in the process. The town administration has serious concerns regarding the magnitude of the proposed zone change. At the appropriate time in this process, town staff will weigh in with significant comments related to the number of housing units proposed in the zone, the height allowance, bulk requirements, setbacks, and other related items.

Retail has been changing for quite some time, and malls across the nation are reinventing themselves in response to this changing climate. Our mall is an important part of our community. A successful mall is important to everyone in our town, so we intend to work collaboratively with the mall as it goes through its transformation. As with any zoning change, preservation of the quality and character of our community is of paramount concern, and this zoning amendment is no exception.

Additional public comment will be taken at the **June 20th** Planning and Zoning Commission meeting. Community input is critical to a good result.

I am confident that by working together, negotiating in good faith, and following our well-established zoning processes, we can reach a result that is beneficial to both the mall and to our town.

<https://www.trumbull-ct.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=181&ARC=214>

Posted on: June 20, 2018

[ARCHIVED] Planning & Zoning Special Meeting on July 19, 2018 on Trumbull Shopping Center "The Trumbull Mall"

6/20/2018 - Planning & Zoning Special Meeting on July 19, 2018 on Trumbull Shopping Center
“The Trumbull Mall” Application

From the Trumbull Planning and Zoning Commission:

The Trumbull Shopping Center “The Trumbull Mall” (application File#18-23 and 18-16 Text Amendment and Zone Change) has requested a continuation from the June 20th public hearing of their application to a Special Planning & Zoning Meeting to be held on July 19, 2018 in the Town Hall Council Chambers at 6:30 pm.

Residents may attend this meeting and speak to the proposal, or submit comments in writing. In addition, the public hearing will be kept open into August to ensure broad opportunity for input.

<https://www.trumbull-ct.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=179&ARC=212>

Posted on: July 11, 2018

[ARCHIVED] First Selectman Tesoro's Statement on Proposed Multi-family Housing Developments in Trumbull

7/11/2018 - First Selectman Vicki Tesoro's Statement on Proposed Multi-family Housing Developments in Trumbull (Updated 8/16/18)

First Selectman Vicki Tesoro's Statement on Proposed Multi-family Housing Developments in Trumbull

July 11, 2018 (*Updated 8/16/18*) - - In an effort to make residents aware of several proposals before our land use boards, I am issuing this statement to the residents of Trumbull. I want residents to understand what is being proposed, how the development process works, where residents can have impact, and what I am doing to protect our high quality of life in Trumbull. I want everyone to know that I am working with my staff to make sure there is sensible development that does not compromise the character of Trumbull.

Land use and development are critical issues for our community. Well-planned growth and appropriate use of our land resources consistent with our Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) are essential for our success as a town. My administration is committed to balanced grand list growth, while ensuring our schools, public safety, town services, and quality of life are not compromised.

The Trumbull Westfield Mall has proposed a zone change that would allow for expanded uses of their property, including multi-family residential housing. On May 30, 2018, I issued a statement noting strong concerns about their proposal. At the same time, I expressed an understanding that malls throughout the country are reinventing themselves out of necessity. We, as a town, should work with them to the extent possible in that process. The mall is our largest taxpayer, and its success is a shared goal.

Since my initial statement, we have had several detailed meetings with the mall to share ideas and address an extensive list of concerns, many of which have been voiced by our residents. We

have asked the mall to consider a number of changes to their proposal and we have asked for more information and details on a wide range of issues related to the request for a zone change.

The mall and the developers who may develop the multi-family housing complex presented at the July 19th Special P&Z meeting. The potential development was outlined in preliminary conceptual drawings. The July 19th meeting is [available for public viewing on Trumbull Community Television](#).

The P&Z Commission met on August 15, 2018. The August 15th meeting will soon be [available for public viewing on Trumbull Community Television](#).

At the same time this zone change is being requested by the mall, a great deal of development activity is being proposed in another part of our town, specifically, the industrial zone in the area of Reservoir Avenue, Lindeman Drive, and Oakview Drive.

It is important for residents to understand the background of this situation. In 2017, the outgoing Herbst administration supported a change in the zoning regulations in the Reservoir/Lindeman/Oakview area. This change was approved by the Planning & Zoning Commission on June 21, 2017 prior to my taking office. This zone change allows for the development of up to 600 units of multi-family housing in this industrial zone. This regulation cleared the way for the approval of 202 units of market rate apartments on Oakview Drive on June 21, 2017. This project is now under construction. Also, to facilitate this development, the Herbst Administration supported and advanced a 10-year tax abatement to the developers. **This new zoning regulation has opened the door for the new projects now being proposed in this same area, including 128 units of 55+ Independent Living for seniors at 101/109 Oakview Drive and 215 units of market rate apartments on Reservoir Avenue.**

As with the mall, we are sharing our detailed concerns regarding each proposal, seeking additional information and looking to assess and mitigate the impact on municipal services. Both of these development proposals will be back before PZC on August 15. This meeting is a public hearing and I encourage all to attend and submit comments for the PZC to consider.

While it is good that there is interest in so much development in Trumbull, there is such a thing as too much at one time. That being said, property owners have a right to propose development of their land. A proposal is just a proposal and we must remember there is a process that must be followed for every proposal. There will be no short cuts and no incentives have been offered to these developers. This will be an open, transparent process and I urge all citizens to join me in learning about these proposals and making their opinions heard.

I remain confident that by working together, negotiating in good faith, and following our well-established zoning processes, we will make the right decisions for our town. **Let me be clear: my administration will work with all parties, but we will fight for the best interests of our community as a whole.**

While we know that change in any community is certain, we are committed to preserving the character of Trumbull. Every development should be safe and well-planned. This is why we were

so opposed to the proposed sale of the six properties proposed by the last administration. The more Trumbull can control our own destiny, the better we are for it.

I will update the community further as this process unfolds. Ultimately, the approval or disapproval of these developments and the Mall's proposed zone change rests with the Planning and Zoning Commission. For your benefit, we have prepared a [document to help residents understand the development process](#).

As always, I am interested in your comments and concerns. Please feel free to contact my office at 203-452-5005. Also, Rob Librandi, Town Planner, can assist you as well. He can be reached at 203-452-5047.

Thank you.

<https://www.trumbull-ct.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=176&ARC=209>

Posted on: September 17, 2018

[ARCHIVED] First Selectman's Statement on Multi-family Housing Developments in Trumbull

9/17/2018 - First Selectman's Statement on Multi-family Housing Developments in Trumbull
First Selectman's Statement on Multi-family Housing Developments in Trumbull (Updated 9/17/18)

I want to start by thanking the volunteer members of our Planning and Zoning (P&Z) Commission for the time they are investing on the three large proposals under consideration. Further, I want to thank the public for coming out and sharing, through a variety of outlets, your concerns and thoughts related to these potential developments. I have listened carefully and read every letter that has been submitted both for and against. A strong community has engaged citizens and volunteers, and Trumbull is—and will remain—a strong community.

For your information, the **P&Z Commission will meet on Thursday, September 20, 2018**. The agenda for that meeting includes the applications for the developments on Reservoir Avenue and Oakview Drive.

The **P&Z Commission will also meet on Thursday, September 27, 2018**. That agenda includes the Mall's zone change proposal.

There were multiple public hearings on each of these applications; however, Connecticut law requires that the public hearings be closed within 35 days of opening the hearing with a possible extension of 65 additional days. In accordance with Connecticut law, the period for public comment for these applications has closed and no further public comments are permitted. The meetings on Sept. 20th and 27th are open to the public.

Although public comments can no longer be accepted, **I encourage all of our residents to attend**. By law the P&Z Commission has 65 days from August 15, 2018, the date these public hearings were closed, to render a decision on each of these applications. The Commission can approve, deny or amend the applications.

As I said in my earlier statement, land use and development are critical issues for our community. Well-planned growth and appropriate use of our land resources, consistent with our Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), are essential for our success as a town. My administration is committed to balanced grand list growth, while ensuring that our schools, public safety, town services, and quality of life are not compromised. We continue to work with all parties, but we will fight for the best interests of our community as a whole. We are committed to preserving the character of Trumbull while managing change and ensuring the quality of new development and commitment from developers and property owners. Let me bring you up to date on developments to this point.

We have met with the applicants for these three projects numerous times to discuss our concerns about each of these proposals. Please be reminded that the zoning change made prior to my taking office regarding the Reservoir/Lindeman/Oakview zone allows 600 multi-family apartment units in our industrial zones. The property owners in that area have the right to propose development in accordance with that new zoning regulation. Nonetheless, we have continued to examine the design, impact and quality of all these developments and have been successful in working with the developers to ensure high-quality developments that are all market rate luxury one and two bedroom apartments. There are no three bedroom apartments in any of these developments. Here are some examples from our discussions:

Reservoir Avenue:

- Negotiated a change in the scale of buildings to respect the transition from the residential neighborhood of single-family homes in the area and to be potentially less intrusive to the neighbors. The multi-level buildings fronting Reservoir Avenue have been scaled back to two-story townhouses, which have been pushed back further from the street.
- Reduced the number of units from 215 to 199.
- Negotiated the gating of the community based on neighborhood feedback and my commitment to safe and smart development.
- Secured the developer's commitment to participate in the master planning for the area.
- Ensured that the landscaping, sidewalk connections and construction/design are high quality.
- Redesigned the entrance to reduce traffic queuing on Reservoir Avenue.
- Extensively researched the background of the developer and quality of his projects and relations in communities where he has worked.
- Achieved changes to dens in the apartment units, reducing the number of dens, and ensuring that dens are bump outs only, not additional rooms.

Mall:

I'm working closely with my staff to make sure that any changes related to the mall are balanced and consider the community's concerns as well as the success of the mall into the future. It is in the Town's best interest to work innovatively, within reason, with the owners of this property. That being said, I want everyone to know that we've made many requests for additional information and for changes to the original proposal. We have had many constructive discussions, and here are some examples:

- Negotiated a revision of the request for 590 units to 260 units and encouraged a further

reduction to 250 units.

- Insisted that the Mall reveal the potential developer and their early concept for housing to the P&Z Commission and community.
- Insisted on larger setbacks and requested a reduction in building height.
- Strongly pushed for any housing development to have intentional and safe connections to the Mall and urged that the development have a neighborhood feel, improving the gateway to Trumbull.
- Pushed for a Master Plan requirement to guide the ongoing transformation of the zone.
- Supported the streamlining of the Mall's ability to swap out tenants in their existing building, making it easier for stores to come into the mall. We need to help the Mall be competitive.
- Supported the addition of entertainment-style businesses into the Mall.
- Performed extensive research and commissioned a third-party, independent review of the Mall zone request and the transformation of malls throughout the country.
- Requested that the P&Z Commission remove or greatly reduce dens in the apartment units.

A note about the schools. In both of the above developments, the projections made by the developers for impact on our schools are, in my opinion, overly optimistic. I encourage all developers in the future to be more realistic in their projections for two reasons. First, it allows us to make more informed and better suggestions and decisions. Second, in the eyes of the public, it gives the developers greater credibility.

Because of our concerns about those projections, we looked at a similar new multi-family housing development in Glastonbury, CT, a town very similar to our own. The number of school aged children there was greater than that suggested by our developers. The Glastonbury data is in line with the 2017 Milone and MacBroom study commissioned by the Trumbull Board of Education to provide data for the Oakview housing complex that was approved in 2017. That study found that the likely range of school enrollments that would be generated is between 30-42 students per 200 units of apartments, once the development is completed and fully occupied. I believe that those numbers are more realistic than the numbers proposed by the developers. That being said, there is one important thing to remember: our school system today has **over 300 students fewer than the peak years** here in Trumbull. That includes the students currently in our system from the Royce. Further, enrollment is still projected to decrease in the coming years, which would offset, in part, new enrollments resulting from these developments.

Also, please remember that **each of these developments will come on line over time, not all at once**. The first development from the 2017 zone change in the Oakview area is still under construction and will not be completed until 2020 at the earliest. The second apartment development, if approved, will probably not **begin** construction until 2019.

In the case of the Mall, we are at the very first stage, an application to change the zoning. If that is approved, the developers will have to submit a detailed site plan subject to the scrutiny of the P&Z Commission. That too will take significant time.

It is my job as First Selectman to ensure that all developments in Trumbull are well-planned, smart, safe and enhance the community as a whole while positioning Trumbull to remain a community of choice into the future. We are doing just that. All developments must benefit the

Town both financially and aesthetically.

Your elected P&Z Commissioners will vote on these applications. I am confident that by working together and following our comprehensive development process, the P&Z Commission will be prepared to make these decisions.

<https://www.trumbull-ct.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=175&ARC=208>

Posted on: September 28, 2018

[ARCHIVED] First Selectman's Statement on the September 27, 2018 Planning & Zoning Meeting

9/28/2018 - First Selectman's Statement on the September 27, 2018 Planning & Zoning Meeting
9/28/2018 - First Selectman's Statement on the September 27, 2018 Planning & Zoning Meeting

Last evening, September 27, 2018, Trumbull's Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) voted on a bi-partisan basis to approve a zoning change that will allow apartments to be built on land owned by the Westfield Trumbull Mall. **Please understand that no plans for apartments have been approved as a result of this change.**

Any plan for apartments must go through the rigorous P&Z approval process before anything is built. This vote was the culmination of months of work by my administration that is detailed in my earlier update. Substantial changes were made to the original proposal made by the mall owners including the reduction in the number of units from 580 to 260 and the disallowance of dens in the apartment units. These and other changes were incorporated in the zoning change passed last evening.

I want to thank the members of Trumbull's Planning and Zoning Commission for their hard work and thoughtful consideration of the issues. This bipartisan vote demonstrated the ability to put politics aside and work together for the future of our community.

The zoning change was not done lightly. To the contrary, it went through an extensive process of give and take in order to respect and balance all of the interests of the Trumbull community. This is a critical juncture for the future of not only our mall, but malls across the country. This outcome represents the best direction to help transform our mall into a live-work-play destination for the future.

This decision will secure the value of the property and open up opportunities for new and existing businesses to flourish, for additional grand list growth to occur, and for Trumbull to have a vibrant zone that continues to be a regional destination in this new era of retail.

The crafting of this zone draws on best practices from around the country in securing the future of mall properties. Extensive input from residents, town staff, outside professionals, and a variety of national retail experts was obtained during this process. Whether the mall remains with its

current owners or is sold to new investors, the bipartisan action of the P&Z Commission has given our mall the best chance to succeed. A successful mall, with ownership committed to investment, is in the best interests of Trumbull.

Some things should transcend politics. Complicated and rapidly changing issues, such as the decline of malls and the disruption to the traditional retail industry, are often difficult to comprehend and communicate to the community and we will work to educate and inform the public.

Thank you again to all the P&Z Commission volunteers and professional staff, who I know will continue to work together to implement this newly approved zone change.

As your First Selectman, I will continue to work with the Mall, our residents and all others concerned for Trumbull's future to insure a vibrant mall zone and Trumbull community. Together we will make the tough decisions to ensure that Trumbull remains a community of choice into the future for our children and grandchildren.