



*REPORT RECOMMENDING THAT THE ELLINGTON PLANNING AND
ZONING COMMISSION VOTE AGAINST THE PROPOSED ZONING CHANGE
FOR 36.73 ACRES AT 185 WEST ROAD (#Z201024)*

February 28, 2011

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Protect Why We Love Ellington

Ellington's population is growing faster (15.4%) than the rest of the Tolland County (6%) and the state (4%)¹. It is growing because of its rural character, natural features, open space, trees, our absolutely incredible breath-taking scenic views and top-notch school system.

The important decisions the Ellington Planning and Zoning Commission (PZC) make on re-zoning and approvals of new residential, commercial and industrial development all have a direct effect on the qualities of Ellington that are stated right on the town website: Rural Charm, Strong Heritage and a great place to grow.

In this particular case, we are urging the members of the PZC to vote against the proposed zoning change for 36.73 acres at 185 West Road (#Z201024) from residential to multi-family residential. The applicant also, while not required, submitted a preliminary plan to build a 22 building apartment complex on this land which would contain over 130 individual rental units.

The re-zoning of this land was attempted once before in 1987 and was denied unanimously by the PZC on April 6, 1987² due to failure of the applicant to demonstrate why the zone change is in the best interest of the town, the zone change was inconsistent with the comprehensive Plan of Development for that parcel at that time, the zone change was considered spot zoning, issues with sewer capacity and the fact that other land in the town was zoned multi-family and was underdeveloped.

We believe that the re-zoning of this land to multi-family does not meet the requirements in Section 3.3.1.A of the Ellington Zoning Regulations which state that, "No MF zone shall be established unless the Commission finds that the location of such proposed zone is consistent with the purposes contained in Article I, Section 1.1 of these regulations."

Article 1, Section 1.1 states that the purpose of the Ellington Zoning Regulations is to:

1. Encourage the most appropriate use of land.
2. Conserve and stabilize the value of property.
3. Promote health, safety and general welfare.
4. Provide adequate open spaces for light and air.
5. Secure safety from fire, panic, flood and other disasters.
6. Lessen congestion in the streets.
7. Prevent undue concentration of population.
8. Facilitate adequate provisions for community utilities and facilities, such as transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks and other public requirements.

The following document outlines the reasons that application #Z201024 does not meet the purposes above, and as such, **it is recommended that the PZC vote against the approval of application #Z201024.**

¹ Page 1-2, *Plan of Conservation and Development*, Town of Ellington, April 15, 2008

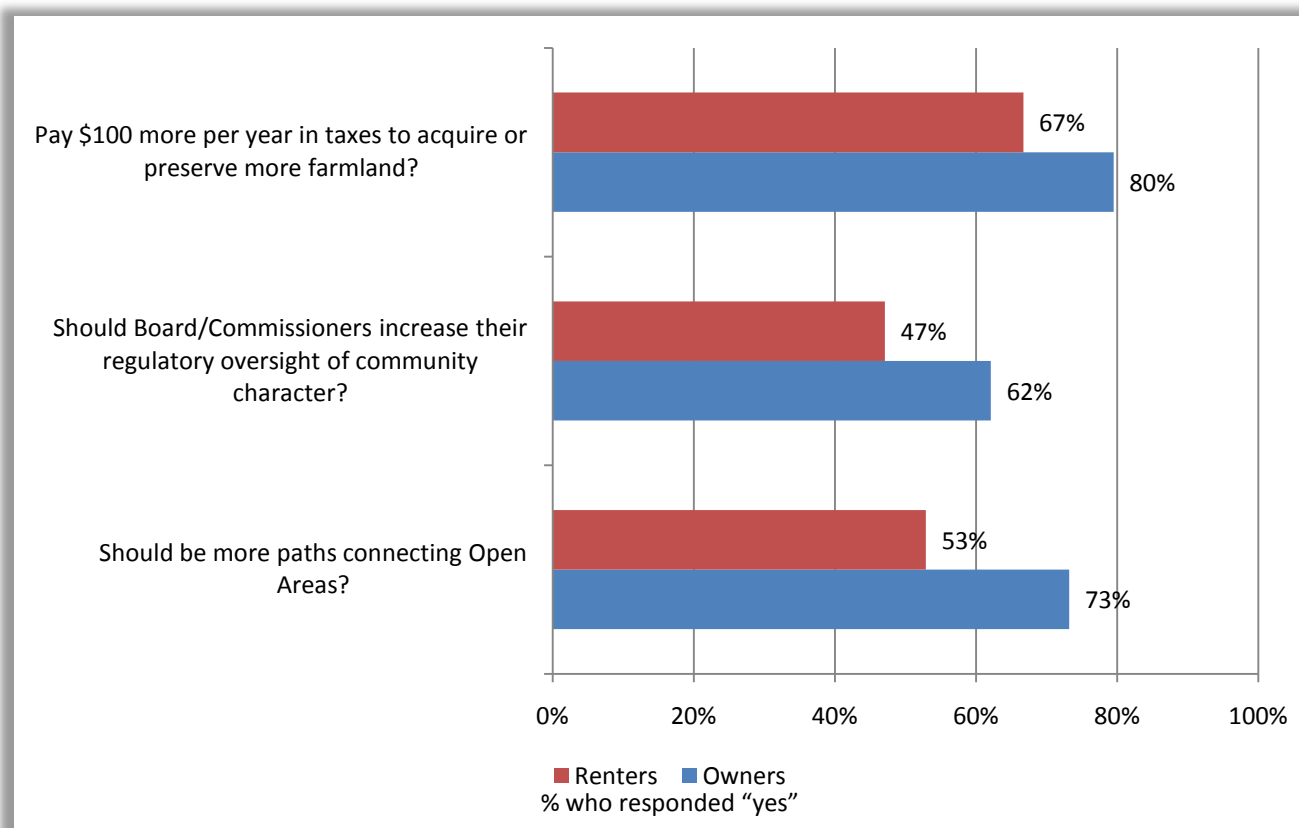
² Ellington Planning and Zoning Commission, Meeting Minutes, April 6, 1987

Encourage the Most Appropriate Use of Land

The Residents Speak Loud and Clear

In 2007, a survey³ conducted during the development of the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) stated that 83.3% of those surveyed felt that Ellington had either too many or just right number of apartments, and 80.5% felt we had either too many or just right number of condos. The responses also showed that 51% felt that this town could use more restaurants and 42.2% felt we could use more small retail stores. Finally, 92.8% felt that Ellington needed to save its current community character.

The most startling information comes when you compare the opinions of people who own their property versus those who rent:



It is clear to see in most of the other results of this 2007 survey, that owners of property are more willing to invest in their community than those who rent in Ellington. The re-zoning of land from residential to multi-family and future development of rental units will cause this gap to increase and as a result qualities that make Ellington what it is now, will be lost.

This data is further backed by other studies including a detailed analysis using two national data sources. Rossi and Weber⁴ found owners to be consistently more engaged in local politics than renters because owners believe that local elections are important. Proportionately, more owners participated in groups that “tried to solve local problems,” and were more likely to have held leadership and activist positions in local improvement

³ Center for Research & Public Policy, Town of Ellington Community Survey, April-May 2007

⁴ *The Social Benefits of Homeownership: Empirical Evidence from National Surveys*, Rossi, Peter H., and Eleanor Weber, 1996

groups. Their results showed higher levels of owners serving on group committees, attending group conferences, serving as group officers, and donating funds beyond membership dues. They also found that owners are more likely than renters to have participated as voters or activists in national elections, to have lobbied state and federal officials, and to have given money to support candidates.

Over a 12-month period, Rohe and Stegman⁵ studied the neighborhood social and political involvement of 140 low-income persons who had recently become homeowners and a comparison group of low-income Section 8 renters from the same population. A year after moving into their new dwellings, the owners were more likely than the comparison group to participate in neighborhood organizations.

A paper by Glaeser and Sacerdote⁶ shows that homeowners are about 12 percent more likely to vote in local elections than otherwise similar non homeowners. They also report that homeowners are seven percent more likely to “work to solve local problems” compared to otherwise statistically identical renter voters.

It may be brought up that this data is simply due to the fact that homeowners tend to be older, wealthier, and are more likely to be married and have a college degree than renters. But, the approaches taken by these studies strongly suggest that the differences reported are due to moving from renting to owning and not due to the aforementioned attributes correlated with those decisions.

Plan of Conservation and Development and Current Zoning Issues

The PZC created a Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) in 2008 to be used by the PZC “on an on-going basis as a guide for future land use and zoning decisions for the next ten years and beyond.”⁷

During the PZC meeting on June 28, 2010, it was stated Mr. Rob Phillips, Town Planner, that “the Planning and Zoning Commission has been working on ways to change residential zoning to reduce overall development, to preserve the character of the Town and to promote more flexible options for development. This undertaking is a result of the conclusions made from the Build-Out Study and Plan of Conservation and Development and it has arguably the greatest impact on the town's future development and the associated fiscal impacts of residential construction.”⁸

Also during the same meeting, “Comm. Kupecky stated her agreement with Comm. Strom and that she wanted to be on this commission in the first place because of the runaway building in town. She stated that the commissioners' hearts should be for the town. She felt the Commission has to do something to control growth.”⁹

If application #Z201024 is approved to be re-zoned from residential and commercial to multi-family residential, the Town will remove commercial land from Rt.83 and create a high density residential area in direct conflict with the town’s future land use plan developed in the POCD.¹⁰

⁵ *The Effects of Homeownership on the Self-Esteem, Perceived Control, and Life Satisfaction of Low-Income People*, Rohe, William M., and Michael A. Stegman, 1994, *Journal of the American Planning Association* 60 (2): 173-184

⁶ *The Social Consequences of Housing*, Glaeser, Edward L. and Bruce Sacerdote, 2000, Harvard Institute of Economic Research, Discussion Paper 1915

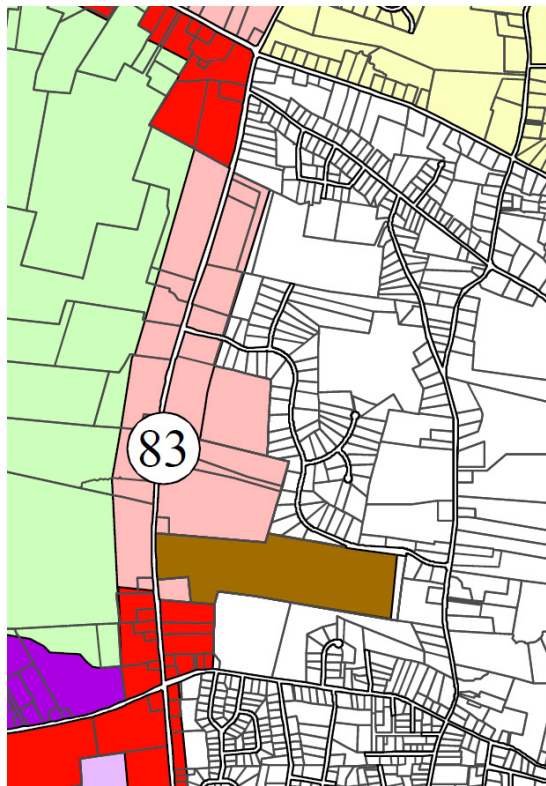
⁷ Message from the Chairman, *Plan of Conservation and Development*, Town of Ellington, April 15, 2008

⁸ PZC Meeting Minutes, Town of Ellington, June 28, 2010

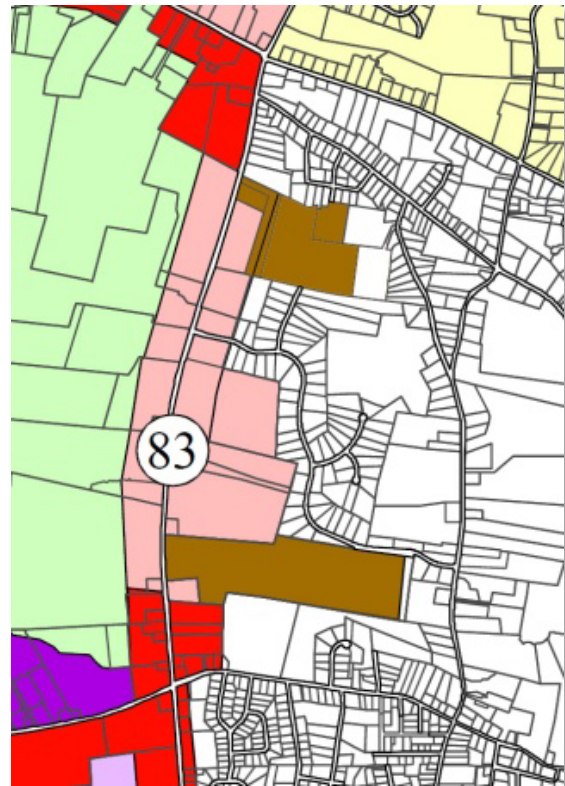
⁹ PZC Meeting Minutes, Town of Ellington, June 28, 2010

¹⁰ Page 6-3, *Plan of Conservation and Development*, Town of Ellington, April 15, 2008

Taking a look at the entire current land use in the town of Ellington, as of the date of the POCD, it is apparent that nowhere in town does a zoning setup occur like the one that would be created with the approval of application #Z201024:



Current Zoning



Future Zoning



If the application is approved, this would be the only place in town where a single family residential neighborhood is sandwiched between two large multi-family zones where both multi-family zones would funnel traffic through the existing single-family residential neighborhood. In addition, it would break up the natural tendency to continue the residential zone from one neighborhood to the next. The applicant is basically wedging a multi-family zone in a large single family residential area. The approval of this type of zoning setup will not only damage these neighborhoods, it sets a precedent for this type of zoning setup in other areas of the town.

It would be in the best interests of the PZC to look at this potential zoning change in light of the factors mentioned above as this zoning change will set a precedent and have impacts felt throughout the town for many years to come.



Satellite View of Land in Question and Neighboring Residential Areas

Conserve and Stabilize the Value of Property

Proponents of multi-family developments will bring forth arguments touting the fact that multi-family developments do not lower property values of adjacent neighborhoods. While this can be true in cases of middle to high end multi-family developments located near similarly valued homes, it is not always true and is highly dependent on the current zoning layout and adjacent neighborhoods.

Assessed values of homes and property values near multi-family complexes may appreciate at the same rates as homes not near multi-family complexes, but the real effect is felt when the home is trying to be sold. The home's location has a direct effect on the real sales price as a result of the environmental impressions on the buyer. The property value may not change greatly but the seller feels the real effect when trying to sell the home.

A study published in the December 2010 International Research Journal of Applied Finance¹¹, looked at the effects of various home locations on the real sales prices of homes. The study was conducted using data from the Savannah, GA housing market and based on data from 2000-2006. A summary of the findings regarding effects of home location on real sales prices of homes:

Location of Home...	Price Premium
Across from or adjacent to a park or square	+12%
On a cul-de-sac	+9%
On a Lake or River	+11%
Within 2 blocks of an apartment complex	-3.5%
On a busy street	-8.0%
Within ½ mile of public school	+3.4%

¹¹ *An Expanded Version of the Tiebout Hypothesis: Housing Price Capitalization and the Market System at Work*, Richard J. Cebula, Jacksonville University, Davis College of Business, published in the December 2010 International Research Journal of Applied Finance

Health and Safety

Those who built on Miller Lane in 2003 were informed at the time of purchase that the road could be extended since the land in question was zoned for single family residential. Purchasers knew that it would not be commercial, or multi-family, they knew it would just extend the neighborhood and they were accepting of that. They moved to this development to be a part of a safe neighborhood.

As such, Section 8.2.2.G of the Ellington Zoning Regulations states that “No development shall be approved which is inconsistent with the public welfare, or which impairs the integrity of these regulations, or which does not fully safeguard the appropriate use of the land in the immediate neighborhood.”

As previously stated in this report, the approval of application #Z201024 will cause a zoning setup unlike any other in Ellington. An established single family residential area will be sandwiched between two large multi-family zones. Those multi-family zones will funnel traffic through the existing single family residential neighborhood. The proposed zone change would not safeguard the appropriate use of the current single family residential zone which would be sandwiched between these two zones.

The following is a list of comments from residents near the Autumn Chase/Highland Avenue entrance who have been most affected by the Autumn Chase development:

1. “Excessive speeding up and down Highland Ave coming from many of the residents of Autumn Chase using the emergency entry/exit connected to Highland Ave. Biggest concern here is the safety of my two young children and all the other children on Highland Ave.”
2. “On two occasions our mailbox was destroyed by explosives and other acts of vandalism. Police reports were filed. Police suspected that the individuals responsible were coming from Autumn Chase Apartments.”
3. “On another occasion two suspects were discovered in our garage trying to steal our children's bikes. The two individuals ran off before being caught. Police report was filed again and police suspect it was again coming from the Autumn Chase Apartments.”
4. “Also, aside from the speeding, there was a significant increase in traffic up and down the street since the new emergency entry/exit was put in a couple years ago. Many of those cars coming and going late at night. “



Friendly Neighbors? What do you think?
(Autumn Chase Sign at Highland Avenue Entrance)

General Welfare

A study by Green and White¹² found that 15 percent fewer teenage daughters living in owned homes are likely to become pregnant before age 18 compared to otherwise similar adolescents girls of renters. These authors also found that adolescents from home owning families had lower arrest rates than equivalent adolescents living in a rental facility.

Research by Rossi and Weber¹³ also found that with homeownership comes a small, yet consistent, improvement in one's sense of well-being. Their research shows that owners are higher than renters in measures of self-satisfaction, and are more likely to believe that they can do things as well as anyone else. In addition, owners are "more sure that their lives will work out as they want, score lower on a scale of depression, show higher levels of happiness with life in general, and rate themselves higher in physical health."

As said before, it may be brought up that this data is simply due to the fact that homeowners tend to be older, wealthier, and are more likely to be married and have a college degree than renters. But, the approaches taken by these studies strongly suggest that the differences reported are due to moving from renting to owning and not due to the aforementioned attributes correlated with those decisions.

Provide Adequate Open Spaces for Light and Air

While the current open space requirements of the town can be massaged to benefit the applicant, it is clear when you drive north up Rt. 83 what will happen to some our classic Ellington imagery, more so than any other development due to the elevation and location of the parcel of land in application #Z201024:



If this land is re-zoned to multi-family, the hillside orchard you see as you drive North on Rt. 83 will be replaced by potentially 22 apartment buildings with over 130 rental units.

Property owners on Miller Lane were also approached by the applicant regarding purchasing pieces of their current land. The assumption was that these pieces could be used to meet the open space requirements of the future development. The residents on Miller Lane refused to sell the land to the developer.

¹² *Measuring the Benefits of Homeowning: Effects on Children*, Green, Richard K. and Michelle J. White, 1996 Journal of Urban Economics 41:441-446

¹³ *The Social Benefits of Homeownership: Empirical Evidence from National Surveys*, Rossi, Peter H., and Eleanor Weber, 1996.

Secure Safety From Fire, Panic, Flood and other Disasters

Because multi-family developments tend to have a greater square footage of impermeable surfaces than single family residential developments, the storm water runoff from these developments is significant. Due to the elevation of this land, and as can be seen during storms at the end of Highland Avenue, the potential for flooding on Rt.83 is great from any development on the elevated land on the east side of Rt. 83. These water collection points will cause traffic incidents along the most congested stretch of road in town¹⁴.

Lessen Congestion in the Streets

According to the POCD, Route 83 has the highest traffic counts in Ellington¹⁵. The section of Rt. 83 between Butcher and Mountain Road, where the land in question is located, has an average daily traffic count of 14,200 while the section between Mountain Road and Main Street has a traffic count of 15,600. The POCD stated that, according to the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the accident experience already exceeds the standard parameters in this area.

The re-zoning of this land to multi-family could add over 150 additional cars to the current traffic situation on Rt. 83. Whereas if the land was developed as single family residential, the amount of cars added to the traffic flow would be 50-60 cars (based on 25-30 houses @ 2 cars each). (Disclaimer: The amount of single family homes that could be placed on this land, with its topographic features, open space requirements and road requirements is unknown and our estimate is very conservative.)

Zoning	# of cars per unit ¹⁶	# of homes/rental units that could be built on land	# of cars added to population
Residential (current)	1.9	30	57
Multi-Family (proposed)	1.2	132	158

The proposed building plan, though not required to be submitted for the re-zoning request, show that there would be approximately 400 available parking spaces in the entire complex (2 per rental unit plus visitor spaces as required by zoning regulations) with 240 (60%) of them on the upper level of the complex, which preliminarily would be connected to Miller Lane. There is no argument that can be made to deny the fact that traffic on Miller Lane, Highland Avenue and Rt. 83 will increase. As a comparison, if the land could hold 30 single family homes with an average of two cars per home, we would only see an additional 60 cars added to the traffic flow on these roads.

Because the proposed multi-family zone would funnel traffic through the existing residential neighborhood, Miller Lane would become a throughway for the complex. Highland Avenue has already become a throughway for the upper level apartments in Autumn Chase. This is due to the PZC recommending that the emergency entrance road proposed by the Autumn Chase applicant be converted into a permanent road¹⁷. This has caused a visible increase in traffic and speeds along the length of Highland Avenue. A second permanent entrance into a second multi-family zone at the end of Miller Lane would cause even more traffic on the lower end of Highland Avenue and cause Miller Lane to have the same traffic and speed issues as the rest of Highland Avenue is already experiencing.

¹⁴ Page 5-2, *Plan of Conservation and Development*, Town of Ellington, April15, 2008

¹⁵ Page 5-2, *Plan of Conservation and Development*, Town of Ellington, April15, 2008

¹⁶ American Housing Survey compiled by the National Multi Housing Council, Mean Number of Motor Vehicles for new Construction, 2009

¹⁷ PZC Meeting Minutes, Town of Ellington, February 25, 2008

Proponents of multi-family developments bring forth the statistic that rental units generate fewer trips per day than single family homes. While many studies agree with this statistic, we must look at this re-zoning in particular to see the effect on traffic.

A standard reference for road use statistics is the 7th edition of Trip Generation, published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers, which compiles data from roughly 4,000 transportation studies conducted by public agencies, developers, consulting firms, and associations. The compilation includes the average number of trips (vehicles entering or leaving a site) generated by different types of land developments, including several categories of multifamily projects. Average trips per day and, during peak travel times, per hour are given.

For example the study shows that during the weekday there are 42% more automobile trips in a single family detached unit (9.57) than an apartment unit (6.72). On Saturdays there are 58% more automobile trips for a single-family-detached house (10.10 vs. 6.39) and on Sundays there are 50% more trips (8.78 vs. 5.86). These numbers are significant as a generalization for supporting multi-family development over single family homes, but for this specific project, the numbers will tell the truth:

	Automobile Trips per day				% Increase in Automobile Trips over current zoning
	Single Family Home ¹⁸	Rental Unit ¹⁹	Land Zoned as Residential (current, approx 30 homes)	Land Zoned as Multi-Family (proposed, 132 units)	
Weekday	9.57	6.72	287.1	887.0	208%
Saturday	10.10	6.39	303	843.5	178%
Sunday	8.78	5.86	263.4	773.5	193%

It is clear to see that, while on the average rental units create less car trips per day, the re-zoning of this land to multi-family residential will result in an almost 200% increase in car trips over a single family development on the same piece of land.

Prevent Undue Concentration of Population

If application #Z201024 is approved, the density of the land in question would increase from Moderate density (1-2 units per acre) to High Density (2+ units per acre).

In the POCD, strategies are recommended to curb population density growth with recommendations ranging from modifying lot area requirements to reducing maximum density of multi-family developments.²⁰ It is readily apparent when reading the POCD strategies, that concentration of population is an important factor to consider when developing in the Town of Ellington.

Per the 2000 Census, the average number of persons in an owner-occupied unit is 2.81, whereas the average in a rental unit is 1.76.²¹ This statistic is one that would, on the surface, seem to benefit the developer of multi-family units when considering the prevention of undue concentration of population. When these statistics are analyzed for the land in question, the benefit for a multi-family development disappears:

¹⁸ Trip Generation, 7th Edition, Institute of Transportation Engineers, Volume 2

¹⁹ Trip Generation, 7th Edition, Institute of Transportation Engineers, Volume 2

²⁰ Page 3-9, Plan of Conservation and Development, Town of Ellington, April15, 2008

²¹ Page 1-7, Plan of Conservation and Development, Town of Ellington, April15, 2008

Zoning	# of persons per unit ²²	# of homes/rental units that could be built on land	Population Increase (# of persons)
Residential (current)	2.81	30	84
Multi-Family (proposed)	1.76	132	232

The re-zoning of this land to multi-family would result in 176% more people than a single family development on the same piece of land. Ellington's current population is nearly 15,000, re-zoning this land to multi-family would result in an estimated 1.5% overall increase of Ellington's population.

Proponents of multi-family developments may make the suggestion that rental units are in high demand right now, and they are correct as most of the time there is some sort of demand for rental units. But it may also lend to the suggestion that home ownership is way down. According to the US Census Bureau report on residential vacancies and home ownership from January 2011²³, data indicated that home ownership in the northeast has increased 0.3% over the last year.

Home Ownership Rates in the Northeast 2005-2010²⁴

Year	Homeownership Rate
2010	64.1
2009	63.9
2008	64.0
2007	64.6
2006	65.3
2005	65.4

Indicators are also showing that while rental vacancies and homeowner vacancies in the northeast are both near all time highs, over the last year, both homeowner vacancies and rental vacancies have increased. Rental and homeownership vacancies are both traditionally lowest in the northeast but both areas have seen increases in vacancy rates.

Rental Vacancies vs Homeownership Vacancies 2009-2010²⁵

	2009	2010	% increase in vacancies since 2009
Northeast – Rental Vacancies	7.2	7.5	4.2%
Northeast – Homeownership Vacancies	1.9	2.0	5.0%

This data demonstrates that while there is a demand for homeownership in the Northeast as home ownership rates are rising. For both rentals and home ownership, there are an increasing amount of vacancies, which lends to the fact that there may not be a high demand for either of these types of new developments as there may be an adequate inventory of existing units.

²² Page 1-7, *Plan of Conservation and Development*, Town of Ellington, April 15, 2008

²³ U.S. Census Bureau News, *Census Bureau Reports on Residential Vacancies and Homeownership*, January 31, 2011

²⁴ U.S. Census Bureau News, *Census Bureau Reports on Residential Vacancies and Homeownership*, January 31, 2011

²⁵ U.S. Census Bureau News, *Census Bureau Reports on Residential Vacancies and Homeownership*, January 31, 2011

Facilitate Adequate Provisions for Community Utilities and Facilities, such as Transportation, Water, Sewerage, Schools, Parks and Other Public Requirements.

Schools

In 2007, education costs were over \$27 million which equates to 65% of the total expenditures in the Town of Ellington.²⁶

Enrollments at all schools in Ellington are at or above state recommended capacities. Total enrolled students as of January 2010 is 2680 students.²⁷ This is a 414 student, or 18%, increase over the last 10 years.

School	Capacity	Enrollment ²⁸	% Capacity
Ellington High School	800	778	97.3%
Ellington Middle School	400	390	97.5%
Windermere	610	816	133.7%
Center School	486	429	88.3%
Crystal Lake	204	221	108.3%

With the exception of the \$20 million expansion at the High School, none of the other schools have significant adjacent areas to expand. Further increases in population will result in the need for a new school.

Class sizes for all of our schools are over the 20 students per classroom mark with some being as high as 26 students per class.²⁹ On average, Connecticut has a 13.6 to 1 student to teacher ratio³⁰ where the national average is 17.6 to 1³¹. Ellington already exceeds the national and state averages for student to teacher ratio. The classroom size is important because numerous studies have shown a direct relation that reducing classroom sizes below 20 leads to higher student achievement.³²

In March 2010, the following items were presented by the Ellington Board of Education as areas of serious concern³³:

- Class sizes
- Kindergarten enrollment
- Windermere 4, 5, 6 grades
- appropriate services for our students
- continued enrollment growth

A paper by Haurin, Parcel and Haurin³⁴ found that that home environments and child outcomes are better for children raised in homes that are owned. In particular, they found the cognitive stimulation/physical environment to be 22% higher, and the emotional environment to be about 16% higher. As far as outcome measures are concerned, math scores were found to be 7% higher, reading scores to be 6% higher and an index

²⁶ CERC Town Profile 2010, Ellington, Connecticut

²⁷ Ellington BOF Presentation, March 2010

²⁸ Ellington Strategic School Profiles, 2008-09

²⁹ Ellington BOF Presentation, March 2010

³⁰ www.statemasters.com

³¹ Boston Indicators Project

³² *Reducing Class Size*, National Institute on Student Achievement, Curriculum and Assessment, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education

³³ Ellington BOF Presentation, March 2010

³⁴ Haurin, Donald R., Toby Parcel, and R. Jean Haurin. 2000. "The Impact of Home Ownership on Child Outcomes,"

of behavior problems to be about 4% lower. They also found that the longer the household owned the home, the higher the environmental and outcome measures were.

A study by Green and White³⁵ found that three to five percent more seventeen-year-olds living in home owning families will stay in school compared to identical seventeen-year-olds living in rented units.

Proponents of multi-family housing continuously bring up the statistic that shows that multi-family developments have a lower level of demand for schools. While this has been proven true in multiple studies, it is based on an average, and any average must be analyzed for any specific project.

In a 2001 American Housing Survey compiled by the National Multi Housing Council, it was found that, for new construction, there are only 29.0 school-aged children per 100 occupied multi-family units compared to 64.0 children per 100 single family detached homes. This sounds like a startling difference, but the density of a multifamily development compared to a single family development, in the same land area, is great.

The particular piece of land in question is nearly 37 acres. An early proposal by the applicant shows that there would at least 132 units at this development. The land is currently mostly zoned for residential with 4.5 acres of Commercial land. If a developer were to build single family homes, he would be required to set aside some area for open space and have a minimum lot size of 1 acre. The land in question does have elevation issues as it is on the side of a hill. Not taking this into account and assuming the land could be fully utilized, it would be very conservative to assume 30 single family homes could be built on this piece of land. Based on these facts, let's do the comparison on how many school-aged children would be generated by the current zoning and future zoning of this land:

Zoning	# of Children per 100 units ³⁶	# of homes/rental units that could be built	# of Children generated
Residential (current)	64.0	30	19
Multi-Family (proposed)	29.0	132	38

Changing the zoning of this land to multi-family would result in 19 more school-aged children than would the development of 30 single family homes at this site. As can be seen from the statistics earlier in this section, our schools are at capacity and growth of school-aged children in town should be slowed in order to maintain the high quality education that students at our public schools currently receive.

When a new school is built in the future, it will cost the taxpayers more than previous projects. In February 2011, CT Governor Daniel Malloy announced that his new budget would lower state reimbursements to towns for new school projects³⁷. The average state aid provided to a town for a new school project is currently 20-80%, but under the proposed budget the state aid would drop to 15-65% of the total cost of the project. This would put a larger burden of the cost of any new school on the taxpayers of Ellington.

³⁵ *Measuring the Benefits of Homeowning: Effects on Children*, Green, Richard K. and Michelle J. White, 1996 Journal of Urban Economics 41:441-446

³⁶ American Housing Survey compiled by the National Multi Housing Council, Average Number of School-age Children in New Construction, 2001

³⁷ Hartford Courant, Front Page, February 13, 2011

In the POCD, it was stated that there is a relatively high percentage of rental units in Ellington which results in a wide choice of rental housing available to potential Ellington residents based on information from the 2000 US census. When you take this chart from the POCD and overlay Mastery scores and % expenditures on education in each of these towns, it becomes clear that generally towns with a high percentage of rental units spend less of their money on education and as a result education benchmarks are lower.

Town	Rentals as % of Total Housing 2000 ³⁸	Mastery 8 th Grade '05-'06 ³⁹			% Expenditures on Education (2007) ⁴⁰
		Reading	Math	Writing	
Manchester	44%	58	45	52	65.0%
Vernon	43%	60	50	62	64.9%
East Windsor	35%	62	45	37	59.4%
State	31%	65	56	61	n/a
Ellington	30%	77	67	66	64.7%
Stafford	25%	75	71	75	69.0%
Enfield	24%	63	62	69	66.2%
Somers	13%	81	76	77	69.3
South Windsor	11%	75	72	75	69.7
Tolland	7%	78	73	72	70.5%

Sewer

On December 17, 2010 the Water Pollution Control Authority Administrator, Peter Williams, recommended that the PZC “only approve developments that require special flow conditions which will not use more than the available reserve.” The zone change in question would reduce the flow reserve by 26.4%. Mr. Williams stated that by approving this zone change, the PZC will “greatly limit the WPCA ability to service future special flow conditions for residential, industry and business requirements.”⁴¹

As was noted by the WPCA, sewer capacity is crucial in the growth of Ellington and the properties along Rt. 83. The capacity available must be utilized for the greatest good of the community and the best long-term interests of the town. Public sewers should support commercial and industrial growth to help balance tax base.

In the PZC meeting on March 22, 2010, Mr. Peter Williams, WPCA administrator, “cautioned the commissioners about changing industrial and commercial to residential. When adding density in the Sewer Service Area, the excess flow allowance gets drained. The WPCA has to make sure there is enough capacity to service the lots purchased in the sewer areas that the owners are already paying for.”⁴² Be aware that this zone change request will not only convert residentially zoned land, but it will also convert some commercially zoned land into multi-family residential land.

In the PZC meeting on June 28, 2010, Rachel DeRham, Thompson Family Farm, “asked if the town is looking into more sewers or any new schools planned. Mr. Phillips stated that the Board of Education does the studies for schools. There is limited sewer capacity within the sewer service areas and the state will not allow expansion outside of those designated areas. If the town were to violate that requirement then it would be at risk of losing future state funding across the board.”⁴³

³⁸ Page 1-7, *Plan of Conservation and Development*, Town of Ellington, April 15, 2008 or www.city-data.com

³⁹ CERC Town Profiles 2010

⁴⁰ CERC Town Profiles 2010

⁴¹ Memo from Mr. Peter Williams, WPCA Administrator to Ellington PZC, December 17, 2010

⁴² PZC Meeting Minutes, Town of Ellington, March 22, 2010

⁴³ PZC Meeting Minutes, Town of Ellington, June 28, 2010

When the Ellington Highlands development (Highland Ave and the new roads off of that) was designed, the town required homes to have only 3 bedrooms instead of the 4 bedrooms as the homes were designed. This was, supposedly, due to the sewer system not being able to handle the additional bedrooms or people. We know the sewer system has not been upgraded significantly since then, so why would there be sewer capacity now for a large multi family complex? If there is capacity and Ellington Highlands was forced to go to 3 bedrooms per house in 2003, then the bedroom limit was enacted to control population growth. Either way, a new multi-family complex would have an effect on both sewer capacity and population growth, both of which are things the Town of Ellington are trying to control.

Is a new multi-family zone the best use of our limited sewer capacity along the Rt. 83 corridor? It surely is not if the POCD future land use plan is being used as Ellington's guide.

Infrastructure

The more that Ellington's population grows, the more necessary it becomes to increase the town's infrastructure and public services. The Town will need a new Fire Station, a permanent police force, new schools, traffic control and more. Due to recent public opposition for building a new fire station and purchasing a new fire engine, what type of response will the town have when we tell them we must build a new school, fire station and have a permanent police force?

In the December 21, 2009 PZC Meeting while discussing the Comprehensive Residential Re-zoning Initiative, "Mr. Wehr felt that new density factors would help to avoid bankruptcy to the town and strain on municipal services. He asked if there were some way to find out how many residences the town can support."

⁴⁴ The fact that there is some concern of the town going bankrupt due to expansion out pacing funding is an issue that must be taken seriously by the PZC. Another multi-family zone will only bring the town closer to bankruptcy.

During the PZC Meeting on June 28, 2010, "Comm. Wehr stated that collecting no taxes on a property costs the town less in services than large developments with multiple children in each house".⁴⁵ While comparing the multi-family zone to no development is not a fair comparison, throughout this document we compare the multi-family development to a similar single family development on the same piece of land. As was stated earlier in this document, zoning this land for multi-family would result in 100% more children and 176% more people over a single family development on the same piece of land. The town will pay more in services for a multi-family development over a single family development on the land in question.

Taxes

Proponents of multi-family developments will debate that multi-family units will impose lower expenditures for local government services and contribute more than their fair share to the local tax base and actually subsidize their single-family neighbors and not vice-versa.

The NAHB Local Economic Impact Model measures the local impact of building a home including the impact of that household's purchases of goods and services from local businesses and many other net benefits to the community.

⁴⁴ PZC Meeting Minutes, Town of Ellington, December 21, 2009

⁴⁵ PZC Meeting Minutes, Town of Ellington, June 28, 2010

The model estimates that the construction of single family homes generates 105% more new income to local businesses and workers in the year of construction than the construction of the same number of multi-family units and 61% more every year thereafter.⁴⁶

Local governments also realize new revenues from new construction as building new single family homes results in 107% more taxes and other local government revenue (permits, fees, etc) in the year of construction over multi-family units and 53% more every year thereafter.⁴⁷

The 2000 census shows that there are an average of 2.81 persons per single family household and 1.76 persons per rental unit. The assessed value for the Autumn Chase apartments for 2010 is \$18,035,270. Assuming that the mill rate is 25.3, Autumn Chase property tax would be \$456,292 for a year (assuming taxes are paid on 100% of the assessment, which is very conservative). Autumn Chase has 252 rental units to give an average tax burden of \$1800 per unit. With an average of 1.76 people per rental unit, this comes out to a \$1028 tax burden per person per year for Autumn Chase.

Looking at the Ellington Highlands development, property tax on these homes range between \$7000-\$9000 per home per year. Using the low end of the scale of \$7000 per home per year and assuming 2.81 people per household, the tax burden per person would be \$2491 per person, more than double that of a person living in an Autumn Chase rental unit. So while single family homes may house more children and people, when you break it down to a per person basis, the proponent's argument that multi-family apartment complexes do not contribute their fair share to the local tax base may be faulty or not as great as they make it seem.

	Estimated Property Taxes per unit/home	Average Taxes per Person
Autumn Chase Apartment	\$1800	\$1022
Home in Ellington Highlands	\$7000	\$2491

Looking at the bottom line, if a new complex is built about ½ the size of the Autumn Chase complex, we can assume it would be assessed at approximately \$10 million. With a mill rate of 25.3, the property tax would be \$253000 (once again assuming they are taxed at 100% of the assessment to be conservative). With a development of 25-30 single family homes at \$7000-\$9000 per home, the total property tax would be \$175,000-\$270,000.

In February 2011 it was acknowledged by the Board of Finance that there has been an unprecedented decrease in taxable property in a revaluation year of 1.67% (\$21 million)⁴⁸. First Selectman Maurice Blanchette said, "Our concern is our population is still growing. A level funded budget is disastrous because it's less money per person."⁴⁹ If multi-family developments are used as a way to increase the grand list, there will be even less money per person over a single family development due to the concentration of population multi-family areas create.

⁴⁶ *Housing's Impact on the Economy*, Report of the National Association of Home Builders Submitted to the Millennial Housing Commission, November, 2001

⁴⁷ *Housing's Impact on the Economy*, Report of the National Association of Home Builders Submitted to the Millennial Housing Commission, November, 2001

⁴⁸ Journal Inquirer, *Sinking grand list hinders Ellington budget deliberations*, February 24, 2011

⁴⁹ Journal Inquirer, *Sinking grand list hinders Ellington budget deliberations*, February 24, 2011

Zoning previously denied in 1987 and more

On April 6, 1987 the Ellington PZC denied a very similar zone change application for this same piece of land. PZC member William Hogan commented at the time that “the zone change was in the best interests of the landowner, not the Town.”⁵⁰ PZC member Robert Wallace also commented that “a zone should not change to benefit an individual.”⁵¹

The denial was based on the following:

- The applicant had failed to demonstrate why the zone change is in the best interest of the Town of Ellington;
- The zone change was inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan of Development in place at that time for that parcel of land;
- The zone change to MF was considered spot zoning;
- Sewer capacity had not been provided for that parcel of land in the Contractual Agreement with the Town of Vernon; and
- Ample Multi Family zoned land existed in the Town which was currently undeveloped.

It is believed that these facts still apply today for this piece of land and many of the arguments are even stronger than they were at that time.

In November 1995 when the PZC approved the zone change for the land that would eventually become the Autumn Chase Apartments, an Attorney for the landowners convinced the PZC that the multi family complex would fit well into the area. The reason he gave was that the apartments would provide a transition or buffer between the commercial developments on West Road, the school and the church and the houses in the Ellington Avenue area.⁵² The problem is that the PZC has since allowed the development of a large shopping center and a residential neighborhood north of Autumn Chase. As was previously discussed in this document, if the land in question is rezoned as multi-family, it would result in a zoning setup unlike any other in town and set a precedent for years to come.

Also at the November 1995 PZC meeting, the attorney stated that apartment dwellers usually have fewer children and the developer would pay for the roads in the complex, taxing the town services less than a single family housing development. PZC member Emery Zahner also stated that the alternative of single family houses on the parcel of land would be problem, “We could have 60 houses, and then we’d have a problem”⁵³ Once again, this document outlines the faults in using averages for specific projects and demonstrates that town services and the school system will be stressed more with a large multi-family development versus a single family development on the same piece of land. If the PZC did the math, they would have found that 60 single family homes would have resulted in nearly 50% less children than 252 rental units:

1995 Autumn Chase Zoning Comparison	# of Children per 100 units ⁵⁴	# of homes/rental units that could be built	# of Children generated
60 Single Family Homes	64.0	60	38
Autumn Chase	29.0	252	73

⁵⁰ PZC Meeting Minutes, Town of Ellington, April 6, 1987

⁵¹ PZC Meeting Minutes, Town of Ellington, April 6, 1987

⁵² Hartford Courant, *Zone Change Granted To Allow Apartments At Old Farm In Ellington*, November 29, 1995

⁵³ Hartford Courant, *Zone Change Granted To Allow Apartments At Old Farm In Ellington*, November 29, 1995

⁵⁴ American Housing Survey compiled by the National Multi Housing Council, Average Number of School-age Children in New Construction, 2001

During the Ellington Board of Selectman meeting on November 17, 2008 to discuss the petition to overrule the Fire Truck Lease, Joseph Wehr stated that most people only attend meetings when there is a self interest and most people become misinformed. He chastised the owner of Autumn Chase Apartments due to a statement the owner made that the cost of the fire truck would come to \$35 per unit on his taxes. Mr. Wehr stated the fact that it came to \$9.60 per unit. Mr. Wehr said this does not mean you should not go to referendum, but should know what you are talking about.⁵⁵ It is critical that the PZC look at the benefits of a development like this to the town and think back to the data that shows that homeowners in Ellington are more willing to invest in the town than renters in Ellington.

Conclusion

The application to re-zone the property in question to multifamily (#Z201024) clearly does not meet the intent of the 8 purposes as outlined in Article 1, Section 1.1 as referred to by Section 3.3.1.A of the Ellington Zoning Regulations. More importantly the re-zoning does not meet the qualities of life the Ellington community has come to expect, holds in high esteem and continuously tries to achieve and preserve. The bottom line is that this proposal is a very inefficient and irresponsible use of our precious land, and the wrong decision will have a long-lasting impact on the financial wellbeing of our town especially if Ellington experiences a large influx of new residents without the appropriate tax dollars to properly support the community and its infrastructure.

Throughout Ellington's growth spurt over the past several years, there has been an undercurrent culture within Ellington of the so-called "heritage" vs. "newcomer" residents. The fact is that we were all "newcomers" at one time, only some of our families were more fortunate in being able to get here first and realize the benefits of living in such a great community sooner. Many of these early "newcomers" came from disadvantaged communities wanting a better life for their families and ownership in a community they could be proud of. The more recent "newcomers" came to Ellington because of the hard work that the original "newcomers" have put in to maintain a certain quality of life in Ellington.

Communities can make good growth decisions and bad growth decisions, we only need look at some of our neighboring towns to see the effects of good and bad decision making. On our own doorstep, once thriving, proud communities are in a state of alarming decay, while others flourish and appreciate attracting a lucrative, reliable tax base and strong sense of community ownership. The truth is whether "heritage" or "newcomer", we were all attracted here for the same reasons, we share the same core values, and love of life and ownership in the town of Ellington.

Ironically, there could be no "newcomers" without a "heritage" resident literally selling out on those core values, forcing bad growth decisions for the town in order to maximize their own selfish, short-term capital gain. Let us make a good growth decision today, to ensure what brought us all to this great community, keeps us in this community and see to it that our town will grow in the right direction at a rate we can sustain to preserve our core values and objectives. We want our town to continue to develop and attract new people and businesses that share our common values and goals, and are willing to take ownership in Ellington – not to just fleetingly use it and leave it behind without giving back. Let us all keep striving to make this an enduring, positive community that our children and our children's children want to always live in and raise their families, just as we all do today.

It is therefore recommended that the Ellington Planning and Zoning Commission deny the zoning application #Z201024.

⁵⁵ Board of Selectmen Meeting Minutes, Town of Ellington, November 17, 2008