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Letter: Proposed Change to Zoning Regulations Threatens All New Canaan Residential Neighborhoods

By: **JENNIFER HOLME & DAVID MARKATOS** | 22 HOURS AGO

To the Editor:

At the May 30th P&Z hearing, a change was proposed to New Canaan's zoning regulations that has the potential to fundamental alter the character of our residential neighborhoods. This proposed text change would allow multiple, independent and unrelated principal uses to co-exist on a single residential lot.

Why is this important? If approved, any homeowner in New Canaan could set up one or more businesses and actively operate those businesses at their property in addition to maintaining their primary residence. Some recent examples in town—the Sober House on West Road, Orchards' End Spa on Oenoke Ridge, and the One King's Lane "residential retail" design showroom—would all be perfectly legitimate activities in their respective neighborhoods. With a special permit in hand, each of these businesses could set up shop, operate and grow right next door to you. As long as the special permit criteria are satisfied, there is no limit to the number of principal uses on any residential lot.

Should this text amendment be approved, "institutional creep" in our residential neighborhoods will no longer be limited to traditional institutions such as St. Luke's School, Silver Hill Hospital, the YMCA or The Glass House. The certainty that you had thought the zoning regulations provided when you purchased your property will be shattered. How does allowing this level of intense commercial activity in our residential neighborhoods comport with New Canaan's Plan of Conservation and Development? Put simply, it doesn't.

Don't be fooled—for-profit or not-for-profit activities would all be permitted. Once approved, controls would be hard to place on the new business. As that business grows, how are you going to prove that it exceeded its approval? Wouldn't it make more sense to allow only one principal use on each residential lot? So when your neighbor advertises a restaurant/café in their barn, re-develops a guesthouse into medical office space, and starts up a day care facility in their home—all of which would be possible if the proposed text change is approved—there is no need to debate if they

are running a retail establishment, renting commercial office space and running a business in your neighborhood?

P&Z will be discussing this proposed text amendment at their June public hearing. If you feel strongly about protecting the character of New Canaan's residential neighborhoods, write the Commission and Town Planner or, better yet, come and speak at the June public hearing. Let's have one principal use in our residential neighborhoods. We shouldn't permit our residential neighborhoods to morph into commercial, mixed-use zones. Multiple principal uses must remain restricted to New Canaan's downtown business district.

Jennifer Holme & David Markatos