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TO: Planning & Zoning Commission
 FROM: Barbara H. Butler, Director *BHB*
 DATE: July 3, 2014
 RE: Text Amendment # 677

At the June 19th Public Hearing to consider the proposed Text Amendment #677, some Commissioners requested information demonstrating the need for affordable housing that supports seniors aging in place, i.e. independent living with services available as people need them over time. In response to that concern, I have updated the statistics presented to the Planning & Zoning Commission during its review of the Text Amendment #625 application in 2010-11.

I think these statistics support the need for the changes proposed in Text Amendment #677 in order for the Town to serve a greater (and more representative) number of our senior citizens in any Senior Residential Community that may be developed on Town owned land.

I'll begin with census data regarding Westport senior households ages 65+ taken from the 2012 ACS (American Community Survey) 5-year estimate, meaning it is an average of the results from 2007-2012, which makes it more accurate. The ACS is the interim data made available in between censuses, since the census data can get outdated over 10 years.

In the income group qualifying for the 80% of State Median Income (SMI) limit there are 719 households, or 7.7% of Westport households. In the 120% of Area Median Income (AMI) category there are 960 senior households, or 10.2% of Westport households. That is a total of 1679 senior households eligible for the 40% Below Market Rate (BMR) units allowed for in Text Amendment #677.

In reviewing data from this Department's work with Westport senior households, it is important to note that not everyone who is eligible for programs offered by the Town chooses to apply for those benefits. However, our statistics support the relationship of affordable and moderate income groups represented in the census data above. For example, 120 senior households who applied for energy assistance and/or tax relief met the 80% SMI income eligibility guidelines. Another 150 senior households met the 120% AMI income limits.

The Municipal Agent for Seniors Annual Report filed by this Department with the State of CT shows unduplicated requests for housing information. The unduplicated number of Westport (senior) inquiries for FY 2012-13 totaled 98 and for FY 2013-14 totals 150.

These numbers represent seniors who met with a social worker to discuss housing alternatives. They do not include calls taken at the front desk from people seeking information but not making an appointment. In addition, there were 312 requests in FY 2012-13 and 306 requests in 2013-14 for housing information by seniors at the Westport Center for Senior Activities.

Another useful statistic is the number of unduplicated senior households who have asked to be on our email distribution list updating them on the progress of a proposal that would fit the guidelines of this Text Amendment. We have been keeping this list since July 19, 2010 when Text Amendment #625 was before the P&Z. The vast majority of the 280 households on this list are currently Westport residents. However, there are also some seniors who are relatives of Westport residents, or who lived here for many years and had to move out of town when they sold their Westport home but who would like to return if there were an opportunity to do so.

Finally, the Westport Housing Authority, which operates subsidized housing serving an income range including the affordable and moderate income groups, recently opened its waiting lists for one month to accept applications for all its properties. Of the 438 households currently on its waitlist, WHA Executive Director Carol Martin estimates that 134 are senior households and are represented in both income groups.

I would like to make two additional points. First, while we are all appropriately concerned for our low income senior residents, the reality of land values in Westport make it virtually impossible for moderate income seniors to find an age appropriate living situation when they can no longer maintain their single family homes either because of financial strain or because it is not designed to allow them to grow old there if health and mobility issues arise as they often do.

Second, while many Westport senior residents have had successful and lucrative careers and can afford some of the very nice condominium developments in Westport, these do not have services readily available nor the ease of social interaction and physical and mental stimulation that are available in a residence designed for an aging population. I cannot overstate the value of having professional services available on site and the security that offers older residents. Thus the mixed income approach to well-designed senior housing with services available as needed addresses the needs of people of all income levels.

I hope this is helpful background for your consideration of Text Amendment #677, but please feel free to call me if you have questions or need additional information.