



Westport Historic District Commission

Town Hall

Westport, Conn. 06880

TO: Gordon Joseloff, First Selectman

FROM: Francis Henkels, Chairman, Historic District Commission

DATE: January 11 2013

RE: Preservation of the Gunn House at 35 Church Lane

The HDC has consistently advocated for the preservation of the 1885 Queen Anne style house (known as the Gunn House) located at 35 Church Lane in the face of development pressure from the Bedford Square project. The Commission considers this to be a valuable historic asset to the town, a notable example of the residential architecture of this period, which represents an important stage in the physical and cultural evolution of Westport. The house is currently listed on the State Register of Historic Resources and is listed on the town Historic Resources Inventory. Members of the Commission have toured the house and found much of the original fabric of the house intact or salvageable and the structure apparently sound.

The preferred option for preserving the house, from the standpoint of the HDC, would be to retain it on its original site or possibly relocated on that site, and integrated into the development plan for Bedford Square. The developers have consistently stated that they don't consider this a viable part of their plan.

Bedford Square Associates has proposed, as an alternative to the demolition of the house, to arrange and pay for the relocation of the house across the street to town property occupied by the Baldwin parking lot. The house would be donated to the town. Bedford Square Associates believes the relocation of the house could be done in such a way as to allow it to be integrated into a future plan for a parking structure on that site.

Although not in receipt of any application pertaining to this offer, the members of the Commission voted to initiate this statement of support for the fundamental concept of relocating this structure, as is being offered by Bedford Square Associates. We urge your support for this exciting opportunity for preserving and repurposing this notable house. As you are aware, the HDC has been involved in a number of similar efforts to save historic structures such as the Sherwood House and the house on the Terrain site. We can envision a number of new uses for the house that would benefit the town and offer any assistance we might be able to provide the town in helping to bring this idea to fruition.