

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: ORDER OF THE NEW HAVEN BOARD OF ALDERS CALLING FOR A PUBLIC HEARING TO DISCUSS THE FEASIBILITY OF REQUIRING CITY DEVELOPERS WHO PLAN TO STRIP THEIR PROPERTY OF TREES TO PETITION FOR APPROVAL BEFORE THE CITY PLAN COMMISSION. (From Alder DeCola, Ward 18)

REPORT: 1494-05

ADVICE: Hold a Hearing before the BOA to hear resident concerns

BACKGROUND

Alder DeCola suggests a public hearing by a BOA committee to determine feasibility of requiring property owners to petition the City Plan Commission for removal of trees on their property, subject to a public hearing of the Commission.

Alder Decola notes that “with the increase in development activity in the city, it’s a growing concern in many neighborhoods that a developer presently has the right to remove all trees on their property if they so wish. Trees and vegetation are an important part of the general environment of a neighborhood, and have a significant impact on an area in many ways, contributing to aesthetic appeal, as well as to soil stability and air quality. There have been several areas of New Haven where developers have unilaterally made the decision to clear a property of trees prior to building, which has surprised and displeased affected neighbors who had no opportunity to express their views on that plan.”

Alder Decola further suggests requiring city developers to petition for approval before the City Plan Commission, “would allow for neighbor input and a more transparent review process of such a plan prior to its implementation.”

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS


The Commission notes that the City’s authority over trees in the public ROW and in Parks lies with the Department of Parks Recreation and Trees. State Statute and City Ordinance require that removal of trees in these public locations must be posted and a public hearing held concerning their removal.

The Commission believes there is no such public authority over trees on private property.

Development of large, sloped, rocky and otherwise difficult or environmentally sensitive, or environmentally degraded sites is an issue of concern to the City. The lack of trained site and zoning enforcement personnel as well as very limited enforcement capacity make this a challenging area for enforcement. Ordinance additions or amendments concerning site work, excavation, fill and grading may help if they are well researched and grounded in existing state statute and city code, backed up by new enforcement and meaningful penalties for late filing or infractions.

ADVICE: Hold a Hearing before the BOA to hear resident concerns

ADOPTED: June 18, 2014
Edward Mattison
Chair

ATTEST: 
Karyn M. Gilvarg, AIA
Executive Director