NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: **ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENTS,** (i) to Modify the building, parking, open space, professional offices and retail requirements for general high density districts (RH-2) (Secs.16 and 28); (ii) to add, modify and delete definitions; (Sec. 1), (iii) in residence districts, to delete garden apartments provisions (Sec. 22), delete optional rules for measuring building height (Sec. 30), permit compact car spaces (Sec. 29), eliminate screening requirements for parking lots on public housing authority lots (Sec. 29), modify minimum horizontal distance requirements between buildings (Sec. 23), allow parking on another lot in multi-lot residential developments, (Secs. 14-17), (e) reduce required usable open space in the RH-1 and RO districts (Secs. 15 and 18); and (iv) to amend Section 43 to reflect new usable open space and common amenity space definitions (Executive Director, City Plan Department).

REPORT: 1483-05

ACTION: Approval

BACKGROUND

Before the Board is an Order for a proposed Text Amendment to the New Haven Zoning Ordinance. The amendment was submitted by the City Plan Department and includes changes to Article III, Section 16: the RH-2 Residential (General High Density) zone; as well as accompanying changes to related sections in Article IV Residence Districts General Provisions such as Section 29 (Residential Parking), Section 28 (Corner Visibility) and several others. The text change also adds new language concerning zero lot line buildings (row or townhouses) and allows more non-residential uses on the lower floors of multi-family buildings.

The RH-2 zone permits the densest residential development of all of New Haven's seven residential zones, and it is the standard for residential development in the BD (Central Business) district. Yet the maximum floor area ratio (FAR) allowed in RH-2 is 1.85, while in the BD itself it is 6.0. The newer BD-1, BD-2 & BD-3 districts refer to some of the RH-2 standards but not all of them; in part because the bulk and yard standards require extensive yards between buildings and setbacks from the street and require extensive open space, all of which break the "street wall". The RH-2 district requires 1 parking space per dwelling unit, on site or within 300 feet; relief from this provision in walkable, bike able, transit served central New Haven is frequently sought from the BZA.

In reviewing variances and special exceptions for existing building conversions from commercial to residential, as well as new proposed developments, particularly in the downtown area, it is apparent that many of the bulk and yard standards are no longer considered desirable in the current housing market, do not accommodate mixed use easily, and will not lead to reinforcing the attractive urban pattern of central New Haven.
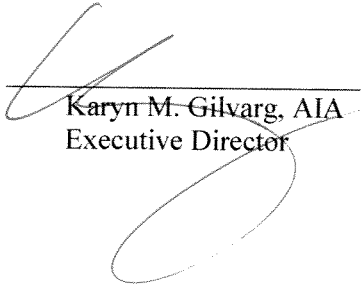
PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Section 64 of the Zoning Ordinance charges the City Plan Commission and its staff with "...continuous review of the effectiveness and appropriateness of the zoning ordinance..." and sets out the criteria for Amendments to the Ordinance. These include but are not limited to:

a) Errors in the existing ordinance, changes that have taken place in the city and in patterns of construction and land use, the supply of land and its peculiar suitability for various purposes, the effect of a map change on the surrounding area, the purposes of zoning and the comprehensive plan of the City of New Haven;

b) Whether some other method or procedure under the zoning ordinance is more appropriate; and

c) In the case of a map change, the size of the area involved. As a general policy, the City Plan Commission shall not consider favorably any petition which would result in a total contiguous area (separated only by streets, and excluding the area of streets) of less than 2 acres in the case of a Residence District, less than 1 acre in the case of a Business District, or less than 4 acres in the case of an Industrial District.

ADOPTED: October 16, 2013
Edward Mattison
Chair

ATTEST: _____
Karyn M. Gilvarg, AIA
Executive Director