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**TOWN HALL
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, Connecticut 06897**

TO: Michael Wrinn/Planning and Zoning
FROM: Allison Sanders, Chair
DATE: November 16, 2021
RE: RFQ/Feasibility Study of Redevelopment of Town Properties (7 and 31 New Street) for Affordable Housing

The Historic District Commission (HDC) advocates that the RFQ for assessing redevelopment of town properties (7 and 31 New Street) for affordable housing must require the firm to consider the architectural context of the location as strongly as other aspects of the site.

Language should emphasize the importance of respecting and responding to the scale and style of Local Historic District #6 Extension's existing streetscape in considering the scope and design of the project. This area also falls within the National Register's Georgetown Historic District, adding a further layer of importance to design considerations.

The neighborhood along New Street is anchored by a National Register-designated building, the Gilbert and Bennett School, c 1915. According to the National Register statement of historical and architectural significance, "the New Street District includes one of the most outstanding buildings in the village, that is the Gilbert and Bennett School at 49 New Street. The building and its location continue the early twentieth century development of the village. The New Street homes are nicely situated around the school, one of the earliest buildings in the district. ...the survival of these "cottage" homes, without intrusion from newer, larger homes, is in itself testimony to the continued harmony and innate contentment of the village atmosphere . . . many of these homes were built by Swedish and Finnish immigrants who had come to America to find a better place for themselves and their families. They found jobs in the Gilbert & Bennett Manufacturing Co., rented homes nearby, and when they had saved enough money, bought a lot and built a home, many on New Street . . . the commonality among them brought pride and cohesiveness to this unique and remarkable neighborhood."

While the town-owned 1940 structure that stands at 31 New Street is architecturally unremarkable, the house at 7 New Street (also listed as 872 Danbury Road) was built c 1914 and should be saved and incorporated into a redevelopment plan, as it is a contributing property in

the National Register's Georgetown District. Facing LHD#6, both 31 and 7 New Street are part of the district visually; the Town would be well-advised to take design cues from existing well-preserved and well-loved examples of "affordable housing" from the turn of the century.

Additionally, the HDC requests that the Commission be specifically named in the RFP and given an opportunity to provide input to the Consultant(s) regarding the historic architecture aspect of the assessment.