

January 17, 2024

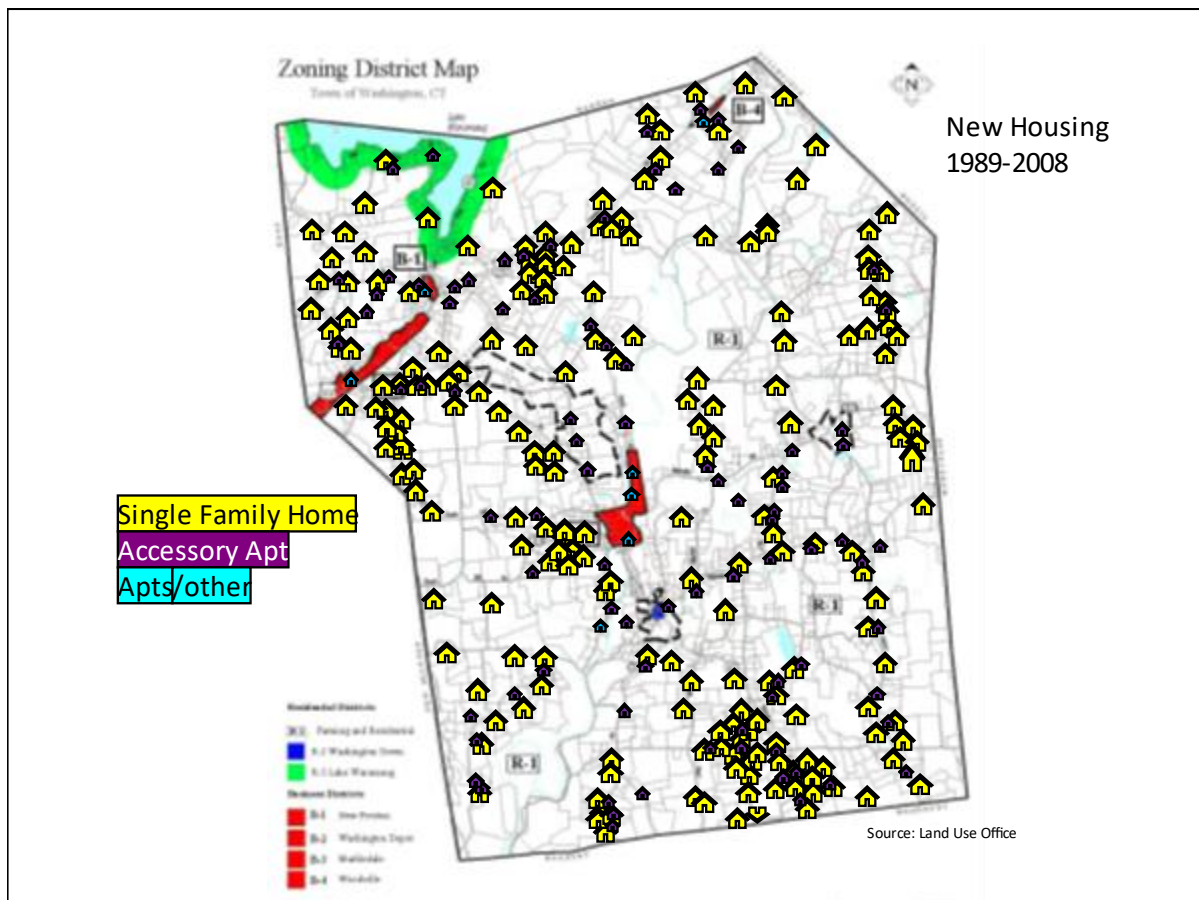
To: Washington Zoning Commission

Fr: Wayne Hileman

Re: Proposed revisions to Zoning Regulations: Section 13.12 – Multifamily Housing

My years of local public service (Planning & Housing Commissions, Economic Development Committee) have given me a unique opportunity to assess the long-term effects of land use policies in Washington. Since 1978, we have zoned the land around our villages the same as our farmland and forestland. Over these decades, new housing has been overwhelmingly built on the latter rather than the former.

Back in 2019, I presented a 3-part series to the Economic Development Committee called *Washington by the Numbers*. Part 3 addressed housing and land use, and I shared a map that showed all the newly created housing over a 20-year period (attached).



I noted that although successive POCDs had called for steering new housing toward our villages, the opposite happened. The reason was simple: imposing the same large-lot requirements throughout the R-1 zone made virtually all the lots around the villages arbitrarily non-conforming. This has hindered village development and encouraged a gradual “hollowing-out” phenomenon. This trend continues.

Now that we are seriously considering allowing multifamily housing in Washington (which is long overdue), I fear we are making the same mistake of “treating all the land the same.” We must instead create new districts to incentivize new housing around our villages. Otherwise, it will not get built there, and years from now, someone will create a similar map showing a similar result.

To be clear, I am not calling for banning or restricting multifamily housing in our outlying areas; rather, I am calling for actively promoting the building of *all forms* of housing around our villages, a strategy that is consistent with all our planning documents.

To those who assert that the villages are “built out” and cannot handle this level of development, I respectfully disagree. I believe these critiques are based on a false premise that conflates the business districts (which may be built out) with the villages (which are not). To my mind, parcels within walking or easy biking distance of a business district should be deemed “in the village.” Using that more realistic definition, we have plenty of opportunities for responsible housing development around our villages.

In closing, I applaud the efforts of the Zoning and Housing Commissions to create meaningful regulations for multifamily housing opportunities in Washington. That said, I believe the good work accomplished to date remains unfinished. There must be better adherence to the stated goals of our POCD and Housing Plan, both of which call for promoting new housing around our villages.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wayne Hileman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and a long, sweeping underline.

Wayne Hileman
43 River Road
Washington Depot