

August 18, 2020

Dear Commissioners,

On behalf of the Community Builders, please accept this letter clarifying a number of statements made in written testimony submitted by Ms. Kate Walton on 8/15/20 requesting the board to table agenda item #1571-13. The purpose of this letter is to respond to the questions raised by Ms. Walton to assist the City Plan Commission in your review of the Board of Alders Referral.

City Plan Commission reviewed and approved the site plan for the new development on the site being referred by the Board of Alders for conveyance in October 2019, however, the letter from Ms. Walton asks questions related to the overall neighborhood revitalization and development strategy in partnership with Livable Cities Initiative (LCI), Greater Dwight Development Corporation (GDDC), and the Dwight Street Management Team (DCMT), so we will attempt to provide clarifications that provides greater context below. We wish to highlight that TCB has attended all monthly DCMT meetings over the past year and provides an update on the project to the DCMT every month, thus many of these questions have been answered in previous community meetings.

Questions posed by the Letter from Ms. Walton dated 8/15/2020

How much is TCB paying for the land?

TCB is making a monetary contribution of \$80,000 to the City Parks Dept. to be earmarked for improvements to the Day Street Park in the Historic Dwight Street neighborhood. This is outlined in the Board of Alders referral documentation.

Where is TCB getting the money from?

TCB received a Federal LIHTC tax credit award – one of 7 projects funded in the state. This is the primary source of funds which relies on private investment to purchase tax credits. There are also CHFA mortgages, TCB resources, utility rebates, and HOME funds. City HOME funds only make up 1.6% of total budget.

What is the City going to do with the money it receives?

The agreement outlines that funds are to be used for the improvements to the existing Day Street Park located in the Dwight Street neighborhood.

What other Park is this one being substituted for – where is it located?

- Creation of new park at 16 Garden Street (Dwight Street Neighborhood)
- Capital improvements to Day Street Park (Dwight Street Neighborhood)
- Creation of new parklette at 1335 Chapel Street Street (Dwight Street Neighborhood)
- Other sites provided by LCI in the Winchester neighborhood as outlined in the Board of Alders documentation.

What is GDDC getting out of the deal? How would residents be selected for any Beers Street building swap?

GDDC's mission is to invest in the social and economic life of the Dwight community and as a result, in the City of New Haven. GDDC provides a locally owned and managed housing presence in the neighborhood. GDDC can provide more details on their plans.

What would be the construction timeline?

Winter 2020/2021-Spring 2022. This information has been presented to the DCMT.

How would it be coordinated with the hospital construction timeline less than 50 feet away from the park site?

It is our understanding that hospital construction has been delayed due to COVID moratorium on hospital developments. That said, we have met with YNNH representative to discuss project timelines. Once a Construction Manager is selected (in process), they will coordinate construction process, schedule, and coordination with city and other contractors.

How would the residents of Chapel and Kensington be communicated with regarding street disruptions from dueling construction sites?

TCB regularly communicates with our residents through written notices. Most recently we have held community meetings with residents to discuss the We currently attend all DCMT meetings and will continue to do so. We are happy to discuss other options for regular updates and communication with neighbors, abutters, and other community stakeholders during construction.

How would GDDC and TCB address the negative quality of life challenges that their activities engender?

We do not agree with the assumptions in this statement. We believe that improving existing housing and expanding affordable housing options in the neighborhood results in overall improvement for residents, for the neighborhood, and the community. New Haven is in critical need of affordable housing and it is important to both preserve and expand options for residents.

Further, the project will result in a net gain of park land to the city and increase in tree canopy for the neighborhood, offsetting concerns around environmental impacts to quality of life. Per conversations with police department, the park currently presents a challenge to public safety – the site was selected to address these challenges and is adding additional public safety measures including cameras and additional lighting. We believe that the partnership on this project with the community and the city is providing solutions to the existing negative quality of life challenges that residents face.

Response and clarifications to other comments outlined in the Table Request:

TCB's track record and credibility - Ms. Walton's article from 2016 not reflect the current track record and relationships within the neighborhood four years later. TCB began the process of actively working to improve the condition of its properties over a decade ago and has made consistent and committed steps to be a good community partner and steward of the neighborhood, as reflected in our current support from organizations like GDDC. The current plans for redevelopment have moved forward under LCI

direction. TCB has improved both management practices and relationships within the neighborhood over a number of years, and currently has positive working relationships with LCI, NHPD, GDDC, and DCMT as a result of these efforts

It is not accurate that the 40 properties owned by TCB are deteriorated or that they have high crime statistics. LCI's code inspectors can provide detail on our management and maintenance practices, and the NHPD can provide crime reports demonstrating this. Recent blight surveys and maps conducted by the Friends of Dwight show that none of TCB's properties are listed as what is considered to be blighted properties. The surveys look specifically at issues like trash/litter, maintaining building exteriors, and landscaping as Ms. Walton highlights.

We have made a commitment to the community and our residents to upgrade the aging apartments. Renovations on one-half of the buildings were completed in 2017 and are well managed and maintained. This project is the second half of the redevelopment plans. These renovations will have larger community benefits as they adhere to the CT SHPO and NPS guidelines to preserve the historic quality of the buildings. Further they provide improved living conditions for our low-income residents who rely on affordable housing in the city.

We have also been a regular stakeholder at DCMT meetings and have invested in our resources to the community, including expanding our Community Life program which provides residents with opportunities for education, jobs, and childcare. Further, we have staff working on all levels (maintenance, management, development) that live in New Haven or the surrounding Towns (North Haven, Hamden). We are invested personally and professionally in the community.

We understand that as a multi-property development it can often be difficult to determine which property is owned by TCB and which are owned by private landlords. We have offered and will continue to make ourselves available for any residents that would like to participate in a site walk for us to clarify and demonstrate the quality of properties owned by TCB.

Access to Green Space - We agree with Ms. Walton that access to green space is vital to the health of residents. The project does three things to address these concerns:

- 1) *TCB is constructing an additional park at 16 Garden Street.* This park will have play areas, sitting areas, and community gardens.
- 2) *Improve conditions at Day Street Park* – This park is more highly used than the Kensington Street Playground. TCB is providing funding to the city to make more improvements to further enhance the park – including the potential of adding a splash pad (the one currently at Kensington Playground has not operated for several years).
- 3) *The project will provide a net gain of tree coverage for the neighborhood.* The development at Kensington Playground sets aside open space that will result in a net gain of 20,000 sq feet of tree coverage compared to what exists currently in the neighborhood. This provides benefits both to air quality and to heat effect in the neighborhood.

TCB's portfolio – TCB does not have plans to amass a greater number of properties. The redevelopment plans do call for a net gain of 7 affordable units in the neighborhood, but no net change to the number of buildings/properties owned by TCB. The strategy for redevelopment was developed with guidance

and feedback from the City, DCMT and GDDC. The goals of this plan from the beginning have been to 1) renovate and improve the conditions of TCB's existing properties, 2) offer more local control of housing in the neighborhood *without* displacing residents, and 3) address public safety and neighborhood amenity needs.

We have heard from the community that what is needed in the neighborhood are more homeownership opportunities given the existing stock of single, two-, and three-family buildings within the Dwight neighborhood. This project does not take away any housing stock for achieving this goal. TCB is ending this project with the same number of buildings we currently own and manage – there is no amassing of property.

All updates provided in this letter are the result of partnership between the City, Community and TCB. This project received a public hearing during the site plan review process and was approved, and we have participated in all DCMT meetings since planning on this project began. Residents from our properties have submitted letters of support for our project to various reviewers and over 50% of our residents have actively participated in the rebranding and revitalization efforts of this property. Per Ms. Walton's request, we are also planning to present progress on these updates at the September and October DCMT meetings. At this time we will also be presenting our plans for local and Women/Minority Hiring goals in which we are coordinating with the City's Small Contractor Department on.

We will continue to answer additional questions that arise from residents throughout the process, and are committed to continuing to work with the community, as we have been for the past year on the specifics of this development.

Thank you,



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Development Project Manager