

Woodbridge Town Plan & Zoning Commission  
11 Meetinghouse Lane  
Woodbridge, CT 06525  
Via Email: [ksullivan@woodbridgect.gov](mailto:ksullivan@woodbridgect.gov)  
Tue, Sep. 2, 2025

Re: 804 Fountain Street  
Site Plan Application and Application for Special Exception  
Applicant: Angelo Melisi

Dear Chairman Klee and Members of the Commission:

The Woodbridge Conservation Commission recommends that the Town Planning and Zoning Commission (TPZ) reject the referenced application relating to the property at 804 Fountain Street. After appropriate review, we have determined that the 804 Fountain Street property has considerable conservation value and that pursuing the development of the proposed structure would irreparably degrade the site and severely impact its ecological functions and adjacent ecosystems, impair regional processes, and adversely affect the health of town residents.

In accordance with Goal 1.1, action item A in the town's 2025 draft Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) to "continue to review development applications for consistency with the ... POCD's goals ...", we have determined that the activities described in the application are in direct conflict with Woodbridge's existing POCD, the 2025 draft POCD, as well as the State of Connecticut's 2025 plan. The State's vision of conservation and development is centered around climate change. It acknowledges that "... (climate change) effects are felt across all sectors and all sectors have opportunities to contribute to the efficacy of resilience and sustainability efforts." Contributing to "better environmental and public health outcomes" and "balancing the need to develop more housing with the need to conserve land to protect biodiversity" are key to achieving the State's vision. Accepting this proposal is inconsistent with these goals.

Considering the conservation value of the property and evaluating it against the criteria outlined in the town and state POCDs, we can only conclude that the pending application to develop 804 Fountain Street should be denied.

**Environmental justification**

The 804 Fountain Street site, as described in the report by Dr. George Logan on behalf of the Woodbridge Park Association, features unique characteristics that impact its ecology and enhance its conservation value. The exposed rock on the site is 500-million-year-old Precambrian bedrock, some of the oldest in Connecticut. Biodiversity, particularly local flora such as mosses, lichens, and herbaceous plants, often follows the local geology; thus, this site is likely to harbor unique biological communities. We strongly suggest that the Applicant conduct a formal survey for these species groups, as well as for insect diversity, which often follows plant diversity and supports migratory and resident bird populations, as well as other wildlife. Protecting these features is consistent with the State's stewardship target, "Protecting and enhancing biodiversity," and the town's 2025 draft POCD strategy, 2.1.2, "Protect and conserve natural resources and scenic views." The site has many additional natural resources worth protecting. Its undisturbed forest has several properties that positively enhance biodiversity and climate resilience, such as native species composition and greater structural complexity. The forest at this site has few invasive species, and thus acts as a buffer against the spread of invasive species to adjacent properties. Protecting these assets is consistent with the State's stewardship target for "Preserving, protecting, and enhancing the quality and connectivity of critical habitats, natural lands, riparian and coastal buffer zones, and open spaces" and the town's 2025 draft POCD strategy 2.1.3 "Protect and enhance wildlife habitats". Undisturbed forests have significant carbon storage and sequestration capacity. Large amounts of carbon are stored in the above-ground biomass (e.g., trunks) and in the soil. Disturbing this site will expose both carbon pools to the atmosphere and will also reduce the site's ability to sequester carbon emissions in the future. Building and enhancing climate resilience is consistent with the State's stewardship target for "Advancing meaningful and equitable strategies to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change..." and the town's 2025 draft POCD Goal 2.3, "Enhance Local Climate Resilience and Emergency Management Capacity."

Developing this property will also impact adjacent properties. Bishops Pond is directly west of the site and will receive runoff and pollutants from the increased impervious surfaces, as well as pollutants from vehicles, trash, and other activities by residents. The Yale Preserve, directly east of the site, will suffer a similar impairment. It is unlikely that the stormwater retention plan submitted by the Applicant will sufficiently capture and treat runoff for the entire life of the development, even if all of the concerns raised in Engineer Steven Trinkaus' report are addressed. Conversely, if the system captures more water than anticipated, as the Applicant suggested, it will disrupt the natural hydrologic inputs to downstream waterways, depriving them of essential flows and interfering with the dispersal and gene flow for native fauna and flora. Protecting water resources is consistent with the State's stewardship target for "Improving water quality in drinking water watersheds and conserving drinking water supplies through watershed

scale management of the built environment”, and the town’s 2025 draft POCD Strategy 2.1.1 “Protect and enhance water resources and air quality”. In addition, the loss of forested vegetation and the addition of impervious surfaces will contribute to the urban heat island effect, which is already a concern due to Woodbridge’s proximity to New Haven. In addition to the multifarious impacts on local wildlife and waterways, and combined with future climate change, residents will be exposed to an increasing number of dangerously hot days. Promoting a healthy environment for residents aligns with the State’s vision for “Healthy People and Places” and the town’s 2025 draft POCD Strategy 2.2.3, “Promote healthy living and wellbeing for Town residents.”

Degrading this site will also have regional implications. The property is part of a densely forested corridor described by the Audubon Society, which includes RWA land, the Yale preserve, and Woodbridge Land Trust properties, among others. This corridor serves as a migration and dispersal path for wildlife, providing an increasingly limited refuge from the urban sprawl of New Haven. In addition, the site is directly adjacent to the former Country Club of Woodbridge (CCW), which is itself an extremely rare, young forest and grassland habitat, representing only 3% of the state's total and deemed a State conservation priority. Many species require both open and forested habitats. For example, forest interior birds will nest in forests to avoid detection of their nests by predators, but will forage in open areas, such as the CCW. Protecting and conserving these ecological functions is directly relevant to the State’s stewardship target for “Preserving, protecting, and enhancing the quality and connectivity of critical habitats, natural lands, riparian and coastal buffer zones, and open spaces” and to the town’s 2025 draft POCD Goals 2.1, “Embrace Environmental Sustainability and Conservation,” and 2.2, “Promote Social Sustainability and Wellbeing.”

## **Conclusion**

In summary, we conclude that the 804 Fountain Street property exhibits unique ecological characteristics, serves as a wildlife corridor and hydrological buffer for nearby wetlands, and acts as a carbon sink to mitigate climate change. Conversely, the proposed development will destroy the site's unique ecology, increase impervious surfaces, lead to pollutant runoff, habitat fragmentation, and provide vectors for invasive species. It will generate unacceptable carbon emissions and reduce capacity for future carbon sequestration. Its impacts on temperature regulation, air quality, and water quality will affect nearby residents and cannot be dismissed. Approving this application would be inconsistent with the stated goals of the State’s and town’s POCD, as discussed above. Moreover, the State’s housing guidelines stipulate development through “infill, new construction, rehabilitation of existing units, and adaptive reuse of existing buildings”, all of which point away from extending new footprints into intact

edge-forest near sensitive waters, and toward infill/redevelopment elsewhere. In the town's 2025 draft POCD, the community vision statement "envisions a future where **growth is pursued in a responsible manner**; where housing choices, sustainability, and resiliency are at the forefront of community decision-making", and that the town will "emphasize the importance of **balancing environmental conservation and clean energy initiative with thoughtful innovative development**". Approving this development directly contradicts this vision.

We hope that you will carefully consider our input and use our expertise and knowledge to inform your decisions. Your board's primary expertise lies in planning and zoning, rather than conservation science, which will naturally tilt your focus toward development and away from environmental concerns. We provide the complementary expertise needed to ensure decisions reflect the full range of community priorities. Although the current TPZ board has yet to solicit our input in its decision-making process, we are eager to collaborate with you in the future to collectively make the best decisions for the environment and the town. We look forward to working with you to achieve the ambitious goals of the town's POCD and find solutions that will strengthen Woodbridge's housing stock while promoting a sustainable future.

Sincerely,

The Woodbridge Conservation Commission

Sharon do Kadat (co-chair)

Diana McCarthy-Bercury (co-chair)

Ben Carlson

Barbara Hagan-Smith

Rachel Guerra

Valerie King