

To: Members of the Planning & Zoning Commission - Land Use Office
From: George and Lorraine Faison
Re: Response to the September 3, 2024, *Sustainable Salisbury, Plan for Conservation and Development*
Date: September 26, 2024

James Howard Kunstler's *The Geography of Nowhere* (Simon & Schuster, 1993) examines the evolution of American towns from communities of individual character to suburban burbs that look depressingly alike. Traditional main streets and countryside views have disappeared in favor of paved sprawl and look-alike architecture. Some of that could happen to Salisbury if the make-over of its center is fully implemented, as proposed in the 2024 *Sustainable Salisbury, Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD)*, including the proposed Pope property development. Traffic alone may forever change the nature of our village.

Consider the possible fate of the Rail Trail, the town's lovely walkway in its historic district. Some sign displays ("Save the Rail Trail") have been told that paving the trail to accommodate the Pope development should not be a concern—"the signs are a lie." But the Colliers Report to the town indicates the possibility of a paved road alongside the Trail, effectively cancelling the natural landscape. A member of the Planning and Zoning Commission advocated a similar two-lane highway stretching from a new bridge over the Wachocastinook Brook straight across to Salmon Kill Road. And the draft of the *POCD* repeats the possibility.

The paved road is part of the current plan to develop the Pope property for affordable housing. The need for housing is clear, but currently the intention is to build 64 units there, a density that is likely to result in upwards of 200 residents and 125 or more vehicles. This housing design, Concept #6, was the result of the work of the Pope Land Design Committee, which was appointed by the Board of Selectpersons. Committee members completed their design without the participation of the Planning & Zoning Commission, which has statutory authority to conduct planning for the town, as pointed out by Michael Klemens in his May 29, 2024, letter to the Lakeville Journal. Moreover, Concept 6 was done without extensive prior investigation and reporting of traffic congestion and safety, sewer and water availability, wetlands, protected species concerns, and historic district lines. This kind of investigation can take years, not weeks or months.

In short, the number 64 did not take into account what the land could tolerate. In fact, it was the result of a political decision to raise Salisbury's percentage of affordable housing from 2.5% to 5% of available housing to reach the halfway point of the state's recommended 10%. The need for affordable housing is clear, but to build 64 units on the Pope property without required development procedures is unacceptable.

We recommend that large-scale proposals for the future development of the town center, such as those contained in the *POCD*, result from careful consideration of the unique qualities of the town, in general, and of the Pope property, in particular. For the latter, determine what the Pope

land can reasonably tolerate in affordable housing construction and build accordingly. If it's fewer than 64 units, then the town should double its efforts to find other locations to take the pressure off this beautiful natural resource that enhances the town's center. For the former, a revised POCD should have as its overarching goal, preservation of the town's unique character—unlike the current plan that threatens to turn the town into a suburban wannabe. Let Salisbury remain a geography of somewhere.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
George and Lorraine Faison

82 Main Street
Salisbury, CT 06068