

Top Ten* Reasons Why Selling Public Land to Arbor Haven is a BAD DEAL for Woodbridge

*Part 2. Top Ten Reasons Part 1 appeared in the last edition of this paper.



Woodbridge's First Selectman persists in promoting a massive housing development at the former Country Club of Woodbridge (CCW) that will destroy irreplaceable open space and, long term, cost taxpayers millions of dollars for increased education and other town services. Arbor Haven's spin on the finances does not add up because:

- Revenue figures are inflated and not guaranteed
- School costs are under-estimated
- Other governmental costs are ignored
- Beecher Road School is already at its enrollment limit
- Taxes will not decrease

In case you need other reasons to oppose a sale to Arbor Haven, here are five more:

✓ **Woodbridge zoning now allows 15 homes per acre "by right" at CCW site:** Zoning regulations were radically changed last year in the wake of the multifamily housing application for 2 Orchard Road. If the Town relinquishes ownership of the CCW land, it also relinquishes the ability to control the future of that property. Arbor Haven has submitted a proposal for 145 homes, but if the Town sells the developer 100 acres, nothing could stop them from changing their proposal and building as many as 1500 homes under the new zoning rules or flipping the property to a new owner, who would be free to develop it in any way allowed by zoning.

✓ **Woodbridge's own analysis shows high cost of residential development:** Prior Town leaders have always understood that tax revenue from residential development will never exceed the expenses created by new homes. An analysis by consultants Milone & MacBroom commissioned by the town in 2014 to evaluate proposals by Toll Brothers estimated that 65 homes on the CCW would produce a \$500,000 annual deficit for the town. Why is this previously accepted fact being ignored now?

✓ **Open space produces proven economic benefits:** While the environmental, recreational, and quality of life benefits of open space preservation are obvious, the many economic benefits are less broadly understood. All the independent data show that open space creates a financial gain and residential development creates a financial loss for towns. This is one of the reasons that towns in Connecticut are purchasing open space, rather than selling it for development. (See Thomas DiNapoli, New York State Comptroller, "Economic Benefits of Open Space Preservation," and Highstead Foundation, Redding, CT., "The Economic Case for Conservation.")

✓ **Remaining "Open Space" not usable:** Arbor Haven has proposed purchasing the entire 155-acre parcel and "gifting" about 50 acres back to the town as "Open Space." This is no gift. Most of the 50 acres are unusable since they are adjacent to the parkway or the cell tower, or so steep and rocky as to be impractical for development or recreation. This "gift" provides a self-serving way for Arbor Haven to get a large tax deduction and avoid annual taxes on the "gifted" land.

✓ **Affordable housing goals not met:** The First Selectman tries to portray the Arbor Haven proposal as a cure-all for the town's affordable housing goals. In fact, it's not even a good start. Arbor Haven's proposal provides a very small number of legally affordable homes compared to a huge number of UNAFFORDABLE homes. It makes virtually no progress toward the 10% goal, since it increases the overall number of high-priced homes in town by so many. New zoning regulations enacted last year encourage increased density and permit multifamily units throughout the town. Thus, affordable housing can be integrated into existing neighborhoods without sacrificing public open space land.

Woodbridge, we can do better!

Residential growth creates profits for developers, it never has and never will be profitable for towns that must provide education, public safety, roads, library, recreational programs, and general government services for residents. Instead of chasing this fool's gold, the First Selectman should engage in a proactive, comprehensive planning process that incorporates the input of all town residents.