

Workforce Housing Coalition

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Statement to Harrison Planning Board Regarding Playhouse Lofts Development

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The Westchester Workforce Housing Coalition continues to advocate for transit-oriented development and applauds the town of Harrison's willingness to consider housing options designed to invigorate the downtown. The 42-units Playhouse Lofts project is no exception. However, the project before the Planning Board ignores a large segment of the region's population of residents and workers who desperately need affordable housing.

Because of Harrison's quarter century history of excluding the development of any workforce and affordable housing, we believe that any multifamily development must include units to meet that need. The town's attitude flouts federal and state law, including the Fair Housing Act and Berenson legal precedents, especially since Harrison ranks among the most egregious of the 31 municipalities in the federal discrimination Consent Decree with Westchester County, and especially given that the county's housing allocation plan fixed the town's fair share at 756 affordable units by the end of last year.

The town has seen large losses in the number of young adults due to the lack of housing options other than single-family houses. In the 10528 zip code, the population of 25-34 year olds declined by 24% since the 2000 census, despite an increase of over 5% in the rest of the country.

The Planning Board has the right to ask that the developer look at the need and provide at least ten percent affordable housing—five units in which rents would be affordable to households earning up to 60% of the Area Median Income adjusted by family size, or about \$50,000 per year for a couple. The need is amply demonstrated—and since the project requires variances, the town may ask this small accommodation in the interest of justice and economic health. Otherwise, the town and developer risk legal action.

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Lena Anderson, White Plains/Greenburgh NAACP
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