



OAKWOOD PARK

NEIGHBORHOOD UPDATE

December 8, 2023

The public review process for our proposed neighborhood village is underway before the Town's Inland Wetland and Watercourses Agency. Through this ongoing public hearing process, we have had the opportunity to show how our plans to bring the abandoned former University of Connecticut campus back to life have evolved and improved over the past year.

We appreciate the comments made by everyone at the first hearing and continue to make plan changes where we can. We are also heartened by the amazing level of support expressed by many West Hartford residents and business owners who spoke and wrote in favor of the project.

We provide the following update to address the main topics and questions that were raised at the first hearing:

Site cleanup and remediation

We will need to spend more than \$5.5 million to remove the decaying buildings and remediate the property's contamination and will invest even more to restore, replace, repair and rectify the impact from years of a declining landscape of abandoned lawns and overgrown invasive vegetation. Much of the campus land and wetland resources are unhealthy, and the eastern side, 1700 Asylum, is dominated by an empty, crumbling parking lot.

Trees and native plantings

Beyond the champion white oak tree that has flourished on the eastern side of the campus for well over a century and a half, the campus is appreciated for its trees—863 to be exact, according to a tree survey of the two parcels.

- Special attention will be given to maintaining the champion white oak on 1700 Asylum Ave.
- At least 99 of the trees on campus are dead or are in poor condition. Of those, 39 will be removed and the remainder will be left alone in their natural habitat.
- A total of 357 trees will be removed from the two parcels to accommodate the development.
- We will be planting a total of 882 new trees throughout the property.
- All new trees will be either native or naturalized to support wildlife and help the environment.
- Of the 882 new trees, 540 will be planted as part of the wetland, stream and buffer mitigation areas.
- **There will be a net gain of 525 trees - far more trees will be planted than removed.**

Land stewardship, rescuing of wetlands and new wildlife habitat creation

We agree with those who long to see open, welcoming to the public, green spaces in the middle of this suburban neighborhood, and we have the only plan on the table that will:

- Remediate PCBs in the wetlands and watercourses on site.
- Convert the bare, sterile, lawns into meadows, wetlands and pastoral, naturalized greenspaces.
- Restore existing wetlands and create new wetlands and environmental buffers.
- Create a system of walkways for the public through or along those revived wetland areas.
- Monitor the success of our wetland rescue plan and make adjustments over a 10-year period.

For the total permanent wetland disturbance of 3,747 square feet, we propose across both parcels, we will restore, enhance or create 435,150 square feet of high-functioning wetland resource areas—an **astounding mitigation ratio of 116 to one**.

Stormwater management, drainage and flooding concerns

We are designing a stormwater collection and treatment system that is a vast improvement over what exists today, a benefit for the community and the environment overall. The stormwater leaving our two properties will now be cleaned to State standards where previously there were no water quality improvements in place.

We are further protecting the site wetlands, Trout Brook and St. Joseph's Brook by removing a number of existing direct drainage impacts.

The system is designed to maintain the flood-holding capacity of 1700 and 1800 Asylum Ave. as it exists today, and to mitigate peak stormwater flows. Our hydraulic modeling shows it will not cause any increase in flood levels.

We will also work with West Hartford on its project for culvert replacement in the neighborhood to help address historic flooding.

Traffic and road alignment question about Fox Meadow Lane

Our traffic generation and roadway improvements will need approval from the Office of the State Traffic Administration before we can proceed.

Our traffic study will be shared with the public once completed for filing with the Town. We are focused now on traffic calming efforts for Trout Brook Drive and Asylum Ave. as well as for Fox Meadow Lane.

Currently, the location of the entrance to the village's main street is offset to the west from Fox Meadow Lane. We staggered the alignment of these two roads on Asylum Ave. to:

- Prevent increased traffic on Fox Meadow Lane and through the neighborhood from cars looking for a shortcut into or out of the village
- Have room for more townhomes along Asylum Ave., more in keeping with the single-family homes across the street
- Soften the streetscape view into the village from Asylum Ave.

We have been asked to show what a direct intersection of our village's main street with Fox Meadow Lane would look like, instead of our preferred offset design.

That layout is shown here at right.

We believe that creating a 4-way intersection here is the wrong approach on several fronts and seek your input.

Our current design to offset those two roads will discourage traffic from cutting through this neighborhood.

Changing our design will also reduce the number of townhomes that currently provide a visual buffer from Asylum Ave. to the assisted living building and the larger buildings in the village.





LATEST DESIGN HIGHLIGHTS





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This is the updated wetland meadow walk on the west side of campus, looking southwest toward the assisted living building. The townhouses on Asylum Avenue are just beyond the trees to the left.

The updated view to the right is on the west side of campus, looking from the woodland trail that begins on Trout Brook Drive, looking westward toward the central plaza with its mixed-use retail and residential buildings.



A small, vibrant village and a great place to live

People in this neighborhood have been used to open spaces and places to walk their dogs since UConn left, but this abandoned campus is today a mix of vacated buildings, chain link fences and overgrown, polluted marshes.

These two properties can be revived to become a welcoming, green, walkable village that will fit well into its developed suburban surroundings, with reclaimed and restored greenspaces and public walking trails designed to invite people who live in the surrounding neighborhoods to utilize the parkland and walk to the grocery store, restaurant and small shops.

It will also give West Hartford residents new options to stay in town when making the decision to downsize and move out of their larger homes.

We look forward to continuing the review and permitting process with West Hartford's land use authorities and welcome your continued ideas and comments via our website, www.oakwoodparkwh.com.