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Dear New Canaan Planning and Zoning members,

My name is Roger Williams. My wife and I have lived at 195 Putnam Road for almost thirty years. During this time there have been three different YMCA Executive Directors, and multiple requests from the YMCA to expand its hours, parking lots, programs, pools, open a restaurant and patio, and open a physical therapy business. All leading to an increase of members resulting in an increased level of noise, car alarms, garbage, etc... What was a successful local YMCA when we moved in has become a very large regional YMCA, especially with the closures of the Stamford YMCA and Norwalk YMCA facilities.

Each time the Y has requested its expansions, they promised to install landscaping and screening and to maintain both to lessen its impact on the neighbors. Which it did. However, in all cases, they have not maintained that promised screening and/or landscaping and that is the issue. The neighbors universally state that the "Y does not keep its promises."

In 1976, they increased the size of the parking lot and promised: **"the parking area of the Y, the entrance side of the Y, the movement of cars in this area, the movement of people in that area is completely screened."** The yews they planted died and the remaining white pine trees no longer offer any kind of screening. Frankly the remaining pines are a hazard and a financial burden for me. The only time the Y ever touched the 50 to 60-year-old white pines was when I formally wrote the Y expressing concerns regarding their safety. Each time they hired an arborist and removed several trees that the arborist identified as dead or a hazard. The current director kindly removed the dead branches on the remaining trees, while the prior director did not. Every storm resulted in my having to remove large dead branches from my property. I even lost an apple tree as a result of a partial tree dropping in my yard.

Later after 2000, the Y requested to expand its parking lot along Putnam Road. The P&Z declined the request and the Y sued the town. As a result, the P&Z negotiated with the Y and agreed to the parking lot, the cafe, and the physical therapy business, if they installed a specific landscaping plan. The objective was to replace a very pleasant open field with a pleasant-looking professionally landscaped area that looked beautiful and screened the now larger industrial-looking building. This was not the result we wanted, but it was a decent compromise. Again, I must stress this was not just a question of screening, it was a specific landscaping plan. If it were just screening, they would have planted just a row of spruce trees. An important part of this agreement was that the Y agreed to replace any plant that died within 30 days. Other than plants that died under warranty in the first year,

none of the plants that died were ever replaced. Not one. The prior director ignored the agreement, and the town did not enforce it. This was especially true after last year's drought when several plans died.

While I appreciate the current enforcement officer's efforts, I and the rest of the neighbors do not believe this goes far enough. To replace the fourteen dead white pine trees with two arborvitae along my property line is very troubling. For the Putnam landscaping, to allow the plants to die for seven years and then only replace a few of them is far from what we had agreed to.

I would appreciate a better effort along my border. The fence cuts diagonally across my back yard and the land slopes up. We see every truck or bus come in and go out of the Y, we see the tops of any regular car and we see each person's head as they around the parking lot (they can also see into our family room). The Y has also recently trimmed the remaining shrubs nearer the building up (removed the lower branches). While this looks nice, it negates the shrub's ability to block the headlights. It is difficult to enjoy our deck or family room with headlights shining through or the thought that people are looking in.

The property along Putnam simply looks neglected. Several of the planting islands have obvious gaps, and several of the spruce trees that died and were not replaced. I understand the photographs recently taken show fairly good screening, but please remember that was only part of the deal that was struck. The pleasant landscaping was to replace the nice open field. Also, please remember that the Sweetgum trees and the forsythia bushes will lose their leaves in the fall and will do little to block the view or noise from that large industrial-looking building. We are trying to maintain a nice residential neighborhood and this strip of land looks like the back of a factory.

We are not asking the Y to reduce its members, its hours, or anything else, we understand we lost that fight. But we are asking them to honor their agreement to maintain the screening that they promised as consideration for their expansion efforts. These were compromises that we were asked to accept. Please don't ask us to compromise yet again. It is clear the Y will only do what the town tells them to do and we ask for your help in enforcing the agreements. The best way to see this is to walk along Putnam.

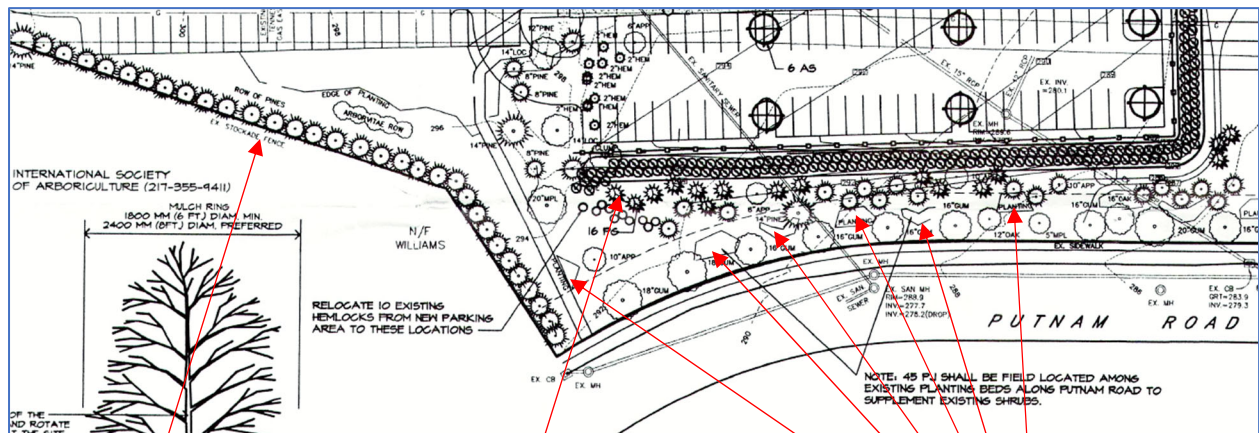
Attached are several photographs showing the absence of screening along my property line and the gaps in the landscaping along Putnam Road.

Thank you for your consideration,



Roger S. Williams

The south side of the New Canaan YMCA

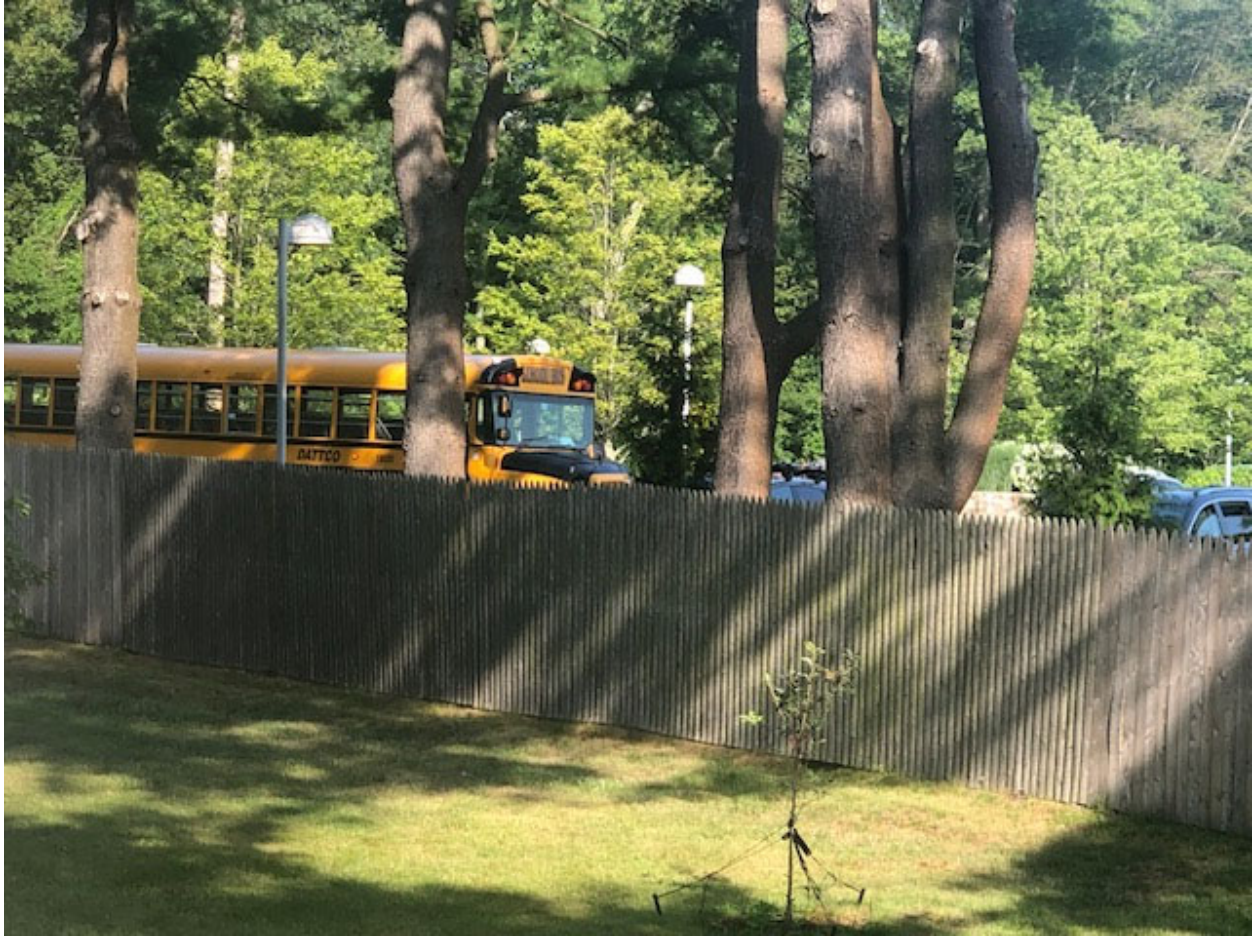


32 White Pine Trees:

Approximately, 12 were removed after I formally complained that they were unsafe. They have now grown sparse and the trunks offer very little screening.

Several of the spruce trees along this back line died and were removed. A few arborvitae were planted to replace them. Nowhere near enough to screen the building, especially in the winter. This is especially true at the tip of the red arrow. Only one arborvitae was planted to replace several pine trees and what was once three flowering plum trees. One of the plum trees died a few years ago and two were taken down this year.

These planting beds have been neglected since they were installed. They currently look awful. There are several obvious gaps.



This is the view we have from our family room and kitchen. The Y's property cuts diagonally across our back yard and the land slopes up. We see their red temporary sign out on South Avenue and the top of every car, every school bus, delivery truck, food delivery truck for the snack bar, garbage truck, any kind of commercial truck, and the tops of people's heads walking around the parking lot.

The promise: In July 1976, in the minutes of a P&Z meeting a representative of the Y, Mr. Lee stated: "So by these screening techniques here, this barrier here, this screening barrier here, **the parking area of the Y, the entrance side of the Y, the movement of cars in this area, the movement of people in that area is completely screened.**" In the prior paragraph, he stated "...hemlock trees 6 foot high, there are some 35 of them spotted around in here, the specific requirement there is that those trees be planted in locations where they will fill in the gaps of those pine trees which are now growing up and the bottom branches are dying out so that those hemlocks are being planted to fill in the voids.."



South Property line from YMCA Parking lot looking towards South Ave.

What remains of the promise: The white pines are just trunks and offer no screening and the new yews are only two or three feet high. With the land sloping up into the parking lot we have a view from our family room of every truck, SUV, and top of car driving by. People can also look over the fence into our family room.



South Property line from YMCA Parking lot looking towards my home.

We are concerned that the Y has been trimming the lower branches of the plants eliminating their ability to screen headlights. They look nice, but..





It is hard to see in the photo, but this area is along the sidewalk between Putnam and the Y. More than half of the planting area has died and is overgrowth.



This area is along Putnam road near the sidewalk. In this area, there were three flowering plumb trees and at least two spruce trees. These were all replaced with one arborvitae. You can see where at least three of the above-mentioned stumps were recently taken out.



The are plants missing on either side of the thin plant in the middle.



Three dead plants were recently replaced with one shrub.



There is not much left of this island.



On either side of this plant, at least two, possibly three plants are missing. The one remaining plant should be pruned.



These photos show the remains of some of the spruce trees that were along the forsythias. The last director left the stumps, the new director recently removed them.





Here is another example of at least one missing plant.



Missing at least one, maybe two shrubs.



This shot shows the missing plants.

This also shows where some of the spruce trees were not replaced in the background.

Remember the forsythias will lose their leaves in the winter offering very limited screening. The Y is good about lowering its shades, but the industrial-looking building is still very visible and unattractive.