

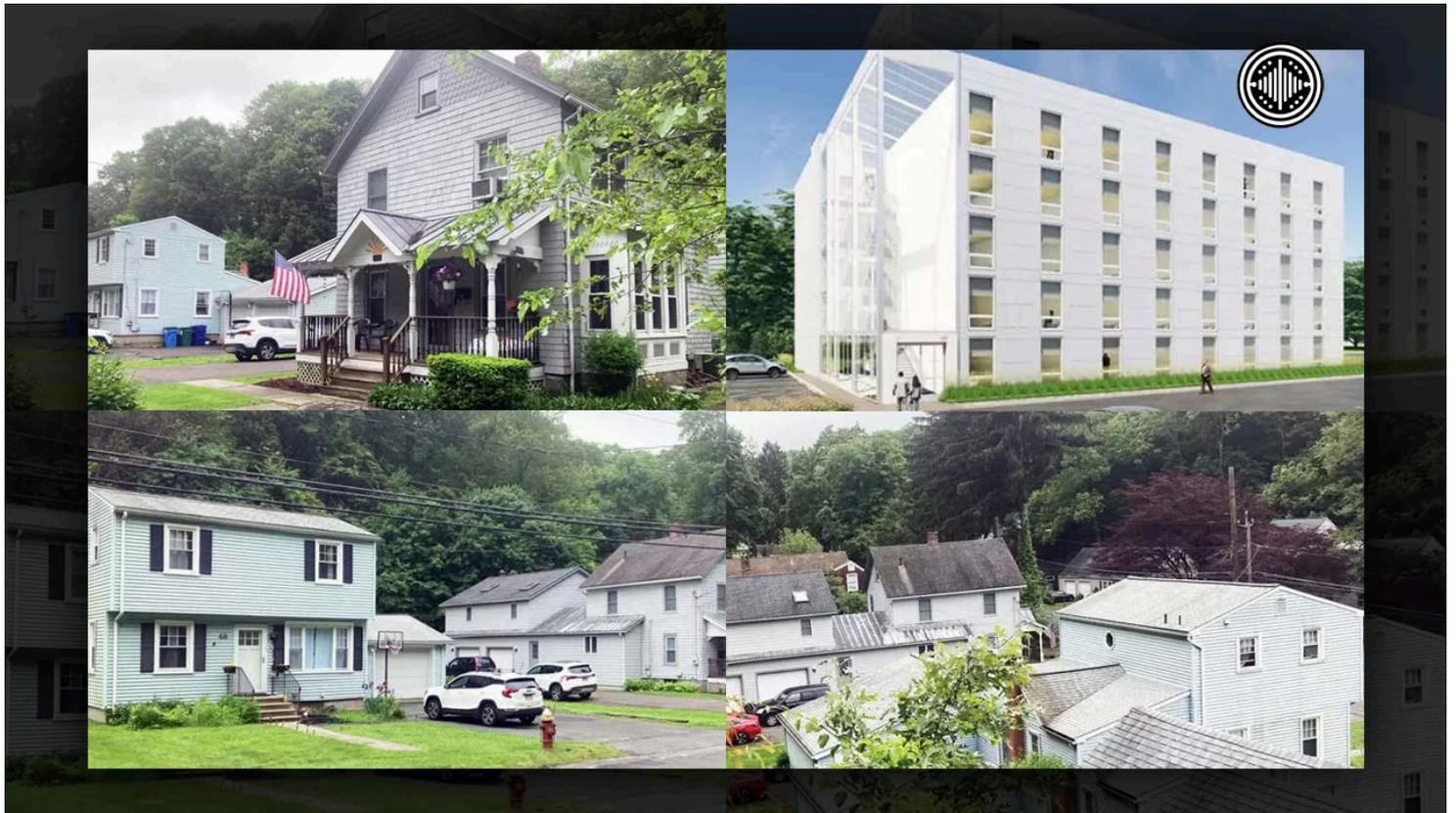
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## Bethel Residents Oppose Manhattan Developer's 75-Unit Apartment Plan.

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– Categories: Real Estate



Residents of Bethel have voiced strong opposition to a proposed five-storey apartment block on Nashville Road, spearheaded by Manhattan-based Vessel Technologies. The plan, which includes 75 units with 23 designated as affordable housing, has sparked outrage among locals who see it as a blight on the town's traditional character. At a heated public hearing on Tuesday, which stretched over two and a half hours, residents made their objections clear, criticising both the project's design and the state law enabling it.

Paul Shanley, chair of Bethel's Planning and Zoning Commission, highlighted the unprecedented scale of the proposal. "Would a five-storey building be permitted without the state law? The answer is no," he said during the hearing. "We have no such buildings in Bethel, and I share the serious concerns raised by residents." The state law in question grants developers density bonuses for including affordable housing, a mechanism many in Bethel feel overrides local planning rules and erodes the town's identity.

The design of the proposed building, described as a modernist modular complex, has drawn particular ire. Josh Levy, executive vice president of Vessel Technologies, acknowledged its departure from Bethel's New England aesthetic. "We understand Connecticut's traditional architecture is beautiful," he said at the hearing. "From the street, you'll only see the driveway and trees we'll plant." Yet this did little to appease residents, many of whom found the design jarring.

"It's an eyesore," said Glenn Fields, one of 21 residents who spoke against the project. "It looks like a self-storage unit or a mausoleum. Bethel was once a charming town, but developments like this are destroying its character." Another resident, Jefferson Kolle, was equally blunt, comparing the building's rendering to a "Motel 6" and expressing dismay at the prospect of it dominating the skyline.

Susan Miller, a retired teacher living on Nashville Road, was scathing in her critique. "This glass monstrosity looks like it belongs on Mars, not in Bethel," she said. "It's an insult to our town, and it's infuriating that it's even being considered."

Vessel's representatives attempted to address the backlash. Jason Klein, a land use attorney working with the developer, insisted they were listening to concerns. "We're not here to force anything on anyone," he said. The hearing is set to continue on 22 July, with Vessel promising to incorporate feedback.

The project has also raised practical concerns, particularly about traffic. Thomas Cronin, president of the Chestnut Hill Village condominium association, argued that Nashville Road is already overstretched. "It's clear to anyone who uses that road that it can't handle more traffic," he said. Cronin accused Vessel of exploiting the state law to maximise profit, "hiding behind the bare minimum of affordable housing requirements."

Bethel's frustration with such developments is palpable. The town has already approved two affordable housing projects this year, a six-unit development on Putnam Park Road and an

11-unit project on Milwaukee Avenue, while two others are under review. In response, Bethel is preparing to petition the state for a moratorium on further affordable housing proposals, reflecting widespread discontent with the state's density bonus law.

Josh Levy defended Vessel's intentions, arguing the project addresses a pressing need for workforce housing. "The state law exists because we can't keep saying 'not here' indefinitely," he said after the hearing. "This is about creating homes for people who need them."

However, residents remain unconvinced, viewing the development as a threat to Bethel's heritage and quality of life. As the debate continues, the town stands at a crossroads between growth and preserving its distinct identity.

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