

Public Comment to Simsbury Zoning Commission on Application #21-17  
by Mark Scully, on behalf of the Simsbury Clean Energy Task Force

My name is Mark Scully, a member of the Simsbury Clean Energy Task Force and chair of the Simsbury Sustainability Team. My comments are on behalf of the Clean Energy Task Force.

We would like to commend the developers Chris Nelson and Greg Ugalde for their willingness to engage with the Task Force on a range of issues pertaining to Sustainability and Clean Energy. This team is clearly committed to energy efficiency and Sustainability, and this commitment is evident in several features in their plans for Barber Cove.

As a community, there are a range of steps we can take to reduce our energy usage and transition to a clean energy economy. These include weatherizing our buildings, switching our lightbulbs, putting up solar and transitioning to electric vehicles and electric heating and cooling. None of these will have the impact that a development like Barber Cove will have. We will live for decades with the decisions we take today about the design, efficiency and heating systems of these 175 apartments.

Foremost among these decisions pertains to heating and cooling. We laud the developers' choice not to heat with natural gas but rather with mini-split heat pumps. We face a climate crisis attributable primarily to our continued burning of fossil fuels, including natural gas. The single decision not to use natural gas at Barber Cove means that 175 residences will not be burning this potent fossil fuel for several decades. Admittedly, fossil fuel is still used to provide the electricity for these heat pumps, but Connecticut is committed to a carbon-free electric grid by 2040. Heat pumps are not the only solution, but they are an essential part of our transition to a clean, renewable, all-electric economy. When you are in a hole, stop digging.

In addition, the developers appear committed to providing sufficient electric vehicle charging infrastructure for residents. We encourage them to ensure that this infrastructure is scalable, as we anticipate a sharp rise in the adoption of EVs, as all manufacturers are now committed to this technology. We encourage the developers also to take steps to reduce residents' reliance on private vehicles. Such steps include ample bicycle parking and nearby access to public transportation.

The plans for Barber Cove provide for potential rooftop solar. We encourage them to follow through with these plans and to explore ways to provide an even larger share of the development's energy needs through renewable energy, both on- and off-site.

Most importantly, we welcome the opportunity to continue to engage constructively with the developers on these and other issues. The Clean Energy Task Force seeks to be a resource to the town as well as its residents and businesses to direct us further along our path to a clean, sustainable economy.

Submitted July 19, 2021