

***APPENDIX A6***

***HOUSING***



## **Introduction**

Existing housing in Darien can be distinguished into two types: single-family and multi-family. Since affordable housing can be one or the other, that topic is treated separately.

## **Housing by Type**

### **Single-family housing**

Over 90% of the dwelling units in Darien are in the form of single-family housing detached units (6,213 out of 6,792 overall units). This is a lower percentage than in past years (see page A6-2 for details on housing by type). The percentage will continue to decrease over time, as condominium units were built in the 1980s and apartment units such as the recently constructed Avalon Darien were completed. Issues related to the construction of single-family residences are covered in the Housing Chapter.



*Two examples of single-family houses built in the late 1990s in the R-2 Zone in Darien.*

Exhibit 6-1 shows the number of Zoning Permits issued for new single-family residences.

### **EXHIBIT 6-1 ZONING PERMITS FOR NEW SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENCES BY YEAR**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>PERMITS</b>
1997	21
1998	24
1999	28
2000	45
2001	43
2002	28
2003	30
2004	41
2005	54

*Source: Darien Planning & Zoning Department records.*

Exhibit 6-2 shows housing by type in Darien and surrounding communities. Except for the cities of Stamford and Norwalk, most housing within the Southwestern region consists of one unit detached (single-family) housing.

**EXHIBIT 6-2  
 HOUSING BY TYPE, 2000**

<u>COMMUNITY</u>	<u>TOTAL HOUSING UNITS</u>	<u>1 UNIT, DETACHED</u>	<u>1 UNIT, ATTACHED</u>	<u>2 UNITS</u>	<u>3 OR 4 UNITS</u>
Darien	6,792	6,213	183	120	57
Greenwich	24,511	15,651	1,310	2,556	1,451
New Canaan	7,141	5,339	584	494	285
Norwalk	33,753	16,670	1,971	4,127	2,769
Stamford	47,317	19,017	2,958	3,849	4,758
Weston	3,532	3,463	62	7	0
Westport	10,065	8,755	408	334	196
<u>Wilton</u>	<u>6,113</u>	<u>5,403</u>	<u>238</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>90</u>
<b>Southwestern Connecticut Region</b>	<b>139,224</b>	<b>80,511</b>	<b>7,714</b>	<b>11,507</b>	<b>9,606</b>

<u>COMMUNITY</u>	<u>5 TO 9 UNITS</u>	<u>10 TO 19 UNITS</u>	<u>20 OR MORE UNITS</u>	<u>MOBILE HOME</u>	<u>BOAT, RV, VAN, ETC</u>
Darien	79	25	109	6	0
Greenwich	1,002	614	1,912	9	6
New Canaan	124	98	201	16	0
Norwalk	2,567	2,384	3,160	86	19
Stamford	3,523	2,350	10,835	27	0
Weston	0	0	0	0	0
Westport	139	55	97	81	0
<u>Wilton</u>	<u>96</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>245</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
<b>Southwestern Connecticut Region</b>	<b>7,530</b>	<b>5,547</b>	<b>16,559</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>25</b>

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Demographic Profile, DP-4. Profile of Selected Housing Characteristics.

**Housing Complexes**

Multi-family housing exists both as complexes, whether it be condominiums or apartments, and “scattered” multi-family housing, such as apartments above downtown buildings or grandfathered multi-family structures. Darien currently has five condominium complexes, one large apartment complex (Avalon Darien), and two Town-owned moderate-income multi-family complexes (see Exhibit 6-3, below).

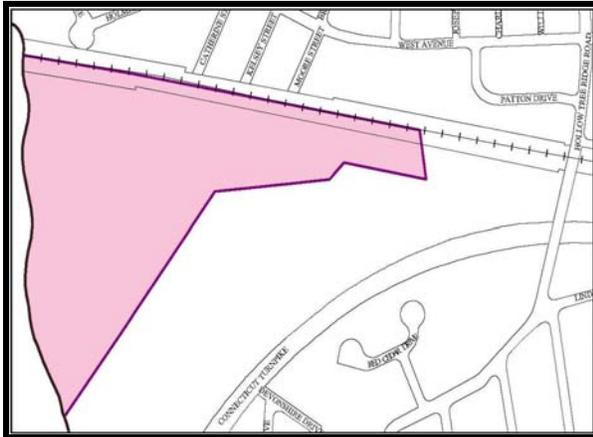
Condominiums were allowed by zoning in Darien starting in the mid-1980s. Since that time, approximately 200 condominium units were constructed. At the time, the Commission put restrictions on the size of the units partially with the expectation that this would help keep the units affordable. Recently, those restrictions were reduced (ie. the units could become larger).

**EXHIBIT 6-3  
 LARGE MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING PROJECTS**

<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>NUMBER OF UNITS</b>	<b>SITE ACREAGE</b>	<b>ZONING DISTRICT</b>
<b><u>Apartments</u></b>				
Avalon Darien 189 apartment units in 24 buildings	<i>Hollow Tree Ridge Road</i>	189	32+/-	DMR
<b><u>Condominiums</u></b>				
Pine Brook	<i>Old King's Hwy. North</i>	20	5.2	DBR/DB-1
Middlesex Commons	<i>Hale Lane</i>	60	10.5	DBR/DB-1
Villager Pond Includes 2 income-restricted units	<i>Boston Post Rd.</i>	37	4.4	DBR/DB-2
Sedgwick Village	<i>Old King's Hwy. North</i>	22	3.2	DBR/DB-1
Darien Close	<i>Old King's Hwy. North</i>	21	2.7	DBR/DB-1
<b><u>Darien Housing Authority-owned multi-family housing</u></b>				
Old Town Hall Homes 20 one-bedroom units; 10 efficiencies--moderate income senior housing	<i>Academy St./Post Rd.</i>	30	2.5	DBR/DB-1
Allen O'Neill 41 houses; 1 twelve-unit apartment building	<i>Allen O'Neill Drive</i>	53		R-1/3
<b><u>Town-owned projects</u></b>				
Clock Hill Homes (moderate-income condominium units)	<i>Gideon Lane</i>	30	2.2	DBR/DB-1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>462</b>	<b>30.73</b>	

*Source: Darien Planning & Zoning Department, and 1995 Town Plan of Development.*

**EXHIBIT 6-4  
REVIEW OF ZONING DISTRICTS  
WHICH ALLOW MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING COMPLEXES**



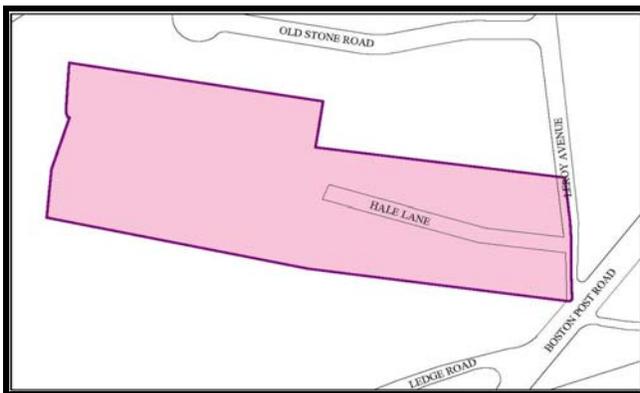
***Designed Multi-Family Residential (DMR) Zone***

Total: ±31.52 acres      Properties: 1      Status: fully developed—no vacant land.  
Avalon Darien 189 apartment units, including 42 affordable units



***3.7 acre Hollow Tree Ridge Road Small  
Acreage Zone for Affordable Housing (3.7AH) Zone***

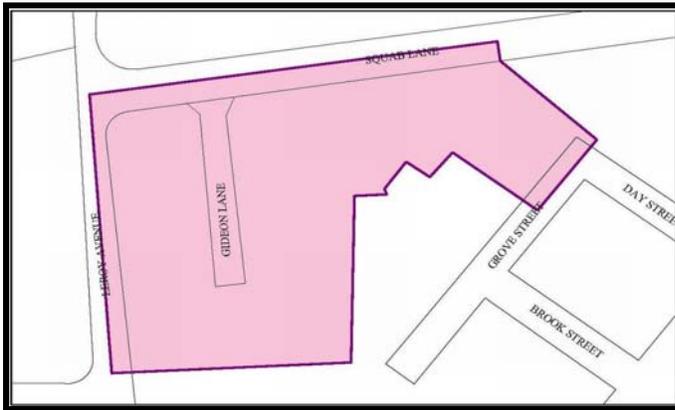
Total: ±3.7 acres      Properties: 1      Status: Vacant  
Development Potential: 33 housing units, including affordable units



***DBR Zone - Hale Lane***

Total: ±10.17 acres      Properties: 2      Status: fully developed—no vacant land.  
Development: Middlesex Commons, 60 condominium units

**EXHIBIT 6-4 continued**



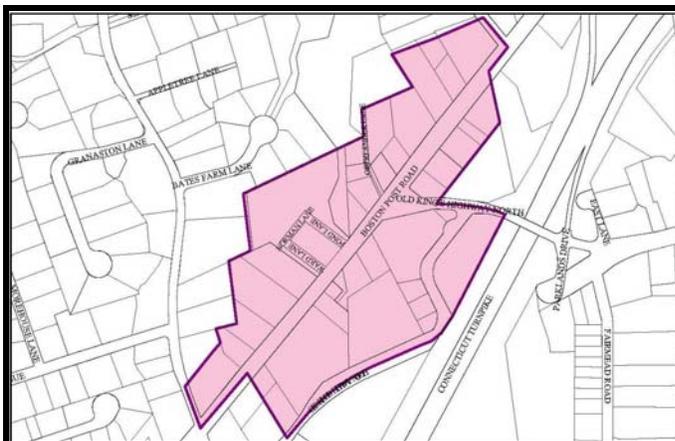
***DBR – Gideon Lane***

Total: ±3.4 acres                      Properties: 2                      Status: fully developed  
Clock Hill Homes, 30 condominium units



***DBR – Boston Post Road (DB-1 Zone)***

Total: ±24.9 acres                      Properties: 39                      Status:  
Old Town Hall Homes, 30 units; Pine Brook, 20 condominium units;  
Sedgwick Village, 22 condominium units



***DBR – Boston Post Road (DB-2 Zone)***

Total: ±39.9 acres                      Properties: 39                      Status:  
Villager Pond, 37 condominium units, including 2 affordable units  
Darien Close, 21 condominium units

Other forms of housing

Section 405e of the Darien Zoning Regulations specifically allows, as an accessory use requiring a Special Permit, “living accommodations and/or dwelling units in conjunction with a Special Permit use where the applicant clearly demonstrates a reasonable safety, security or similar need to have an employee or specified number of employees reside on the premises”. This provision, or similar wording, has been in the Darien Zoning Regulations since 1957. The current Section 405e of the Regulations gives the Planning and Zoning Commission the ability to permit such housing.

This provision has been used to construct housing for workers at the three local Country Clubs, the Noroton Yacht Club, and for other Special Permit uses such as the Darien Community Association (DCA) and some of the local churches. Because of the cost of housing in Darien and the Southwestern Region in general, providing on-site housing in these situations results in on-site security for these facilities as well as taking commuters off the road, as these workers live on the same premises where they work.

These facilities generally fall into three categories—apartments; dormitory style housing; and single-family residences. Apartments over existing buildings such as the Darien Community Association and the Noroton Yacht Club allow for on-site maintenance and security. The Country Clubs have a mix of housing, much of it “dormitory style”. This allows co-workers to live together in one building, usually with one shared kitchen facility. Many of the churches have one or more single-family residences on their property. This allows the clergyman to live on the premises.

Exhibit 6-5 shows that there are over 100 of these types of units throughout the community. These are all “affordable” units, as the facilities usually do not charge rent, but rather include the housing in the benefits package for working at the facility. In the cases of the three country clubs, most of the housing is seasonal, and that many of the units are not inhabited during the winter months. There is the possibility that these units could be counted towards “Affordable Housing” as outlined in Section 8-30g of the Connecticut General Statutes in the future. However, certain restrictions would need to be filed with the Planning and Zoning Commission and in the Darien Land Records to formalize this conversion. However, at the current time, all of these units function as affordable housing within the community, although they do not count towards the “goal” as outlined in the State Statutes.

**EXHIBIT 6-5  
 HOUSING ASSOCIATED WITH SPECIAL PERMIT USES**

<b>USE</b>	<b>HOUSING TYPE</b>	<b>NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES</b>
Darien Community Assoc.	apartment on 3rd floor of building	1
Darien YMCA		2
Noroton Yacht Club	apartment above Club	1
Ox Ridge Hunt Club	4 living facilities including "corn crib". 16 bedrooms total--15 employees maximum	15
Tokeneke Beach Club		1
Pear Tree Point School	caretaker cottage on westerly portion of site two faculty apartments on 2nd floor of admin. building	1
<b>Country Clubs</b>		
Country Club of Darien	staff housing in middle of site (18) housing above pro shop (10)	28
Wee Burn Country Club	staff housing in middle of site	24
Woodway Country Club	staff housing constructed year 2000	24
<b>Churches</b>		
Noroton Presbyterian Church	house at 23 Noroton Avenue this second parsonage was approved in 1997 house at 2075 Post Road built in 2001 for musical director	3
St. Luke's Church	rectory	2
St. Thomas More	rectory for pastor and his family	1
First Congregational Church	parsonage	1
St. John R.C. Church	rectory (addition in 1998)	1
St. Paul's Episcopal Church	rectory and sexton's house (addition in 1977)	2
<b>TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES HOUSED:</b>		<b>107</b>

Source: Darien Planning & Zoning Office, October 2004.

Other housing allowed in Darien

Section 650 of the Darien Zoning Regulations allows as a permitted principal use, dwelling units located on upper floors in the Central Business District Zone (the CBD Zone, which is downtown Darien). They are also allowed by right in the SB and SB-E zones (except above automotive service uses). They are also allowed in the DC Zone (Noroton Heights), NB Zone, DB-1 Zone, DB-2 Zone, by Special Permit. Thus, there is opportunity for additional housing to be built in these areas. The Grove Street Plaza project consists of two mixed-use buildings with apartments on the upper floors. This project provides 10 new residential units in the middle of Downtown Darien across from the Darien Train Station. This is the first new housing constructed downtown since Clock Hill Homes back in the early 1990s.

In 2004, the Grove Street Plaza project was constructed in the CBD Zone. It consisted of two mixed use buildings on the north side of Grove Street in downtown Darien. The upper floors on each of the buildings will have residential apartments of various sizes—a total of 10 in all. As noted in the 1995 Town Plan, apartments in downtown may provide “desirable housing alternatives for childless households, both young and old, who may work in the business area or who desire the convenience which such a location offers. It also has the advantage of introducing a night-time population that add to the security as well as the variety of life in the business areas.”

In the late 1990s, the Planning and Zoning Commission amended the Darien Zoning Regulations to allow Assisted and Independent Living Facilities in the Service Business (SB) zone (Section 667 of the Regulations). This resulted in the constructed of an assisted living facility on Ledge Road, a facility with 86 units.

Another related issue is group homes. It is likely that in the future, requests will be made to allow group homes in Darien. These may consist of a group of supervised developmentally disabled adults who live together in a house. Such a use may be affordable housing, or may not be. Such uses should be located within walking distance of public transportation facilities such as the train or bus.

Affordable Housing

Section 8-30g of the Connecticut General Statutes gives special treatment of affordable housing within certain communities in Connecticut, including Darien. According to the Department of Economic and Community Development, as of 2003, only 29 of the 169 communities in Connecticut are exempt from Section 8-30g. Although the Planning & Zoning Commission has reviewed and approved a number of projects that have been submitted under that Statute, the only one actually constructed was a project on Hollow Tree Ridge Road. That project includes 42 affordable units amongst the 189 apartments constructed. A future site that can also accommodate affordable housing is the adjacent Duhaime property. That property is 3.7 acres in size and can accommodate about 33 apartment units, with the possibility of 11 of those being affordable.

### **Subsidized Housing**

It is likely that within the 10-year planning period, a decision will need to be made regarding the Allen O'Neill housing. As these units become in need of more repair, it may be more cost-effective for the Darien Housing Authority to demolish and rebuild, rather than to renovate. It is possible that the existing cape-style houses will be replaced with a different type of unit, such as a townhouse, creating a more land-efficient design. The apartment building (shown below, converted into apartments in the 1940s) is likely to stay. The use of the existing soldiers' field should be preserved if it is determined that it has historical value.



*Allen O'Neill housing owned by the Housing Authority of the Town of Darien.*

Old Town Hall Houses at 719 Post Road, the location of the Old Town Hall, will not likely need significant renovations over the 10-year period.

### **Housing by Value**

Housing values have increased at a rapid rate in Darien over the past 10 years. Further details are shown in Exhibits A6-6 and A6-7. Much of the costs associated with housing in Fairfield County and the Southwestern Region are the land costs, which in Darien can reach over a million dollars an acre in some cases. Exhibit 6-7 shows the average price of houses sold in 2003. Note that this Exhibit shows average value, which can be skewed with one or two high values. Median value, as shown in Exhibit 6-6, is the median price of all houses sold, and would not be as skewed by the sale of one very-high priced property.

**EXHIBIT 6-6  
 HOUSING BY VALUE, 1980, 1990, 2000**

<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>1980 MEDIAN VALUE</b>	<b>1990 MEDIAN VALUE</b>	<b>2000 MEDIAN VALUE</b>
Darien	\$156,700	\$462,500	\$711,000
Greenwich	\$165,800	\$500,000+	\$781,500
New Canaan	\$186,700	\$500,000+	\$831,000
Norwalk	\$90,100	\$241,300	\$270,100
Stamford	\$108,800	\$295,700	\$362,300
Weston	\$164,900	\$458,900	\$633,900
Westport	\$149,000	\$422,400	\$625,800
Wilton	\$149,200	\$408,000	\$561,100
Southwestern Connecticut Region			\$469,500

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Demographic Profile, DP-4. Profile of Selected Housing Characteristics, and SWRPA 1992 Planners Data Book.

**EXHIBIT 6-7  
 HOUSING BY AVERAGE VALUE, 2003**

<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>AVERAGE VALUE</b>
Darien	\$ 1,190,297
Greenwich	\$ 1,757,020
New Canaan	\$ 1,415,462
Norwalk	\$ 522,131
Stamford	\$ 668,714

Source: Stamford Advocate, September 2004.

**Housing Density**

The Exhibit below shows Darien having the third highest housing density in the Southwestern Region, behind only the two cities—Norwalk and Stamford. It is somewhat surprising to compare Darien with New Canaan—a community of generally the same population. It shows that New Canaan’s housing density is nearly ½ that of Darien’s.

**EXHIBIT 6-8  
 HOUSING DENSITY, 2000**

<b>COMMUNITY</b>	<b>TOTAL HOUSING UNITS</b>	<b>AREA (SQUARE MILES)</b>	<b>HOUSING DENSITY</b>
Darien	6,792	12.8	528.3
Greenwich	24,511	47.8	512.5
New Canaan	7,141	22.1	322.7
Norwalk	33,753	22.8	1,480.0
Stamford	47,317	37.7	1,253.6
Weston	3,532	19.8	178.3
Westport	10,065	20.0	502.9
Wilton	6,113	26.9	226.8

*Source: US Census Bureau. 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 1.*

**Housing by Tenure**

Most of Darien’s housing is owner-occupied. This is reflected in the accompanying Exhibit. Again, the construction of Avalon Darien, which consists of 189 rental units, has changed the percentages, so that rental units now comprise approximately 14% of the housing stock.

**EXHIBIT 6-9  
 HOUSING TENURE, 1990 and 2000**

<b>HOUSING TENURE</b>	<b>1990 NUMBER</b>	<b>1990 PERCENT</b>	<b>2000 NUMBER</b>	<b>2000 PERCENT</b>
<b>Occupied housing units</b>	<b>6,399</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>6,592</b>	<b>100%</b>
Owner-occupied housing units	5,480	86%	5,799	88%
Renter-occupied housing units	919	14%	793	12%

*Source: US Census Bureau. 1990 and 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 1.*

See the Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations for a definition of tenure.

**EXHIBIT 6-10  
HOUSING TENURE, BY NUMBER OF BEDROOMS, 2000**

<b>TENURE BY BEDROOMS</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>	<b>PERCENT</b>
<b>Owner-occupied housing units</b>	<b>5,800</b>	<b>100</b>
No bedroom	0	0
1 bedroom	95	1.6
2 bedrooms	402	6.9
3 bedrooms	1,757	30.3
4 bedrooms	2,341	40.4
5 or more bedrooms	1,205	20.8
<b>Renter-occupied housing units</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>100</b>
No bedroom	40	5.1
1 bedroom	187	23.6
2 bedrooms	206	26
3 bedrooms	159	20.1
4 bedrooms	166	21
5 or more bedrooms	34	4.3

Source: US Census Bureau. 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Summary File 1.

**Housing by Age**

The chart below shows housing stock by age, as of the 2000 Census. One notes that although substantial development still occurs, there are only 30-40 new single-family residences built annually in Town. This is because of the very limited amount of vacant land. Only a fraction of the 30-40 new houses are on vacant land. Most of them are “teardowns”—a term explained on the next page.

**EXHIBIT 6-11  
 HOUSING UNITS BY YEAR BUILT, 2000**

<u>AREA NAME</u>	<u>TOTAL HOUSING UNITS</u>	<u>1999 TO MARCH 2000</u>	<u>1995 TO 1998</u>	<u>1990 TO 1994</u>	<u>1980 TO 1989</u>	<u>1970 TO 1979</u>	<u>1960 TO 1969</u>	<u>1940 TO 1959</u>	<u>1939 OR EARLIER</u>
Darien	6,792	23	224	114	452	453	819	2,595	2,112
Greenwich	24,511	129	519	875	2,038	2,522	3,383	7,360	7,685
New Canaan	7,141	136	281	218	692	979	1,321	1,918	1,596
Norwalk	33,753	201	869	1,069	4,032	4,522	5,317	10,607	7,136
Stamford	47,317	583	1,917	1,647	5,995	7,129	8,870	12,921	8,255
Weston	3,532	77	187	106	492	561	908	817	384
Westport	10,065	121	286	180	1,045	813	1,818	3,454	2,348
<u>Wilton</u>	<u>6,113</u>	<u>94</u>	<u>275</u>	<u>173</u>	<u>1,135</u>	<u>938</u>	<u>1,332</u>	<u>1,223</u>	<u>943</u>
<b>Southwestern Connecticut Region</b>	<b>139,224</b>	<b>1,364</b>	<b>4,558</b>	<b>4,382</b>	<b>15,881</b>	<b>17,917</b>	<b>23,768</b>	<b>40,895</b>	<b>30,459</b>

*Source: US Census Bureau. 2000 Census of Population and Housing, Demographic Profile, DP-4, Profile of Selected Housing Characteristics.*



*One of the oldest houses in Town—the Mather Homestead.*

**“Teardowns”**

The phrase “teardowns” has come into use recently, as the trend towards building larger houses continues in the region. The concern with teardowns is that the new structure is always larger than the structure being demolished. Neighborhoods can change or be greatly impacted through this type of activity. One example is on Brush Island Road, where in a five year period, three houses on the street were demolished, and new, larger houses constructed. Because of the very limited amount of vacant land remaining in Darien, teardowns will continue. Issues related to teardowns include drainage, and view impacts. The Exhibit below shows that over 75% of all new single-family residences constructed in the past two and a half years was a “teardown”.

**EXHIBIT 6-12  
 “TEARDOWNS” BY QUARTER  
 2003-2005**

<u>DATES</u>	<u>TOTAL PERMITS</u>	<u>"TEARDOWNS"</u>	<u>VACANT LAND</u>
2003 Jan.-March	8	6	2
2003 April-June	6	5	1
2003 July-Sept.	8	4	4
2003 Oct.-Dec.	8	6	2
2004 Jan.-March	17	14	3
2004 April-June	6	6	0
2004 July-Sept.	3	2	1
2004 Oct.-Dec.	15	13	2
2005 Jan.-March	11	7	4
2005 April-June	17	10	7
2005 July-Sept.	11	9	2
2005 Oct.-Dec.	15	13	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>30</b>

*“Total permits” reflect the total number of zoning permits issued for new single-family residences. The “vacant land” column indicates the number of zoning permits issued for new single-family residences on vacant properties.*

*Source: Darien Planning & Zoning Department records.*

An issue often related to the teardown issue is the “Monster House” or “McMansion”. These are considered to be very large houses, and will be referred to as such in this Plan. Oftentimes, large houses can be over 9,000 square feet in size. Darien has no overall restriction on the square footage of a residence, but rather, has limits on building coverage and building height. Together, along with basic yard setback provisions, houses are restricted in size. However, in the R-1 and R-2 zoning districts, some houses have been constructed which exceed 9,000 square feet in size, and are out-of-scale for the neighborhood.