



Statement from Councilman Robert Weiner

General remarks about Barley Mill Plaza proposal

March 3, 2009

To: New Castle County Planning Board and Land Use Department

The redevelopment of the Barley Mill Plaza site presents a tremendous opportunity for the community as a mixed use development that can create a walk-able community with a unique sense of place. The programming of phases, site plan details and architectural design will play a determining role as to whether a truly wonderful place is created in which the community can take pride or instead, something which detracts from the quality of the community. While there are different uses which are incorporated into the current site plan, it does not create a well integrated, walk-able neighborhood using the best mixed-use principles that can be incorporated to create the type of neighborhood that is discussed in the Comprehensive Plan and zoning ordinance.

The “Sea of Parking” that lines Centre Road is close to a half mile in length and is the predominant view to the surrounding neighborhood along the street. Buildings should be located along Centre Road in order to screen the parking from Centre Road.

The retail component should create a “Main Street”, which is a sense of place, a sense of arrival, and a pedestrian friendly street. This can be accomplished by creating this street perpendicular to Centre Road.

Blocks should be created with parking located at their centers in order to create a walk-able traditional neighborhood environment. There should be a continuity of the streetscape without gaps between buildings that expose parking lots to pedestrian-friendly streets.

Some of the office components should be vertically integrated with retail in what is likely a first phase.

Some office program should be surface parked in order to increase the likelihood of being built in one of the initial phases. This is more realistic in the short term and more economically viable for the applicant.

An increase in the residential program (and accompanying reduction in commercial program) would make it possible to reduce structured parking. It would also make it possible to program and locate building types that will provide a more sensitive transition to the scale of the surrounding communities.

Smaller scale residential buildings located to the east would be a better transition to the adjacent residential communities and be more in scale with the surrounding communities.

Public spaces such as plazas and squares should be included and integrated into the plan to provide public open space.

A pedestrian “place” needs to be created in the first phase that contains a mix of uses, walkable streets and public spaces.

Pad sites need to be located and oriented to contribute to the making of blocks.

Given the context of the surrounding area, appropriate building heights would be four stories or less. Building heights and mass are too large to be economically viable. A maximum height of four stories or less would better enhance the mixed use concept.

Proximity of new buildings to existing neighborhoods is inconsistent with community character.

Screening of buildings and garages from neighborhoods and roads needs improvement.

Buffer size, berming, vegetative screening are not delineated.

“Greening” of parking garages facing existing neighborhoods should be incorporated.

Orientation of commercial space needs to be vertically and horizontally integrated into the office and residential components.

Public amenities provided within the project need enhanced interconnections.

Meaningful and active open space is deficient.

Connectivity of existing isolated open space pockets is needed.

Internal traffic circulation needs more thought.

Architectural design guidelines should be incorporated which also assure quality of construction materials.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to place my comments on the record.

Robert S. Weiner
Council District 2, New Castle County, DE
www.bobweiner.com
Louis Hinkle, aide to Councilman Weiner 302-395-8362