

The Town of New Market



September 2, 2020

RE: Infill Development located at 113 West Main Street, 21774

Dear Neighbors,

On Thursday, September 2 the Town's Planning Commission (PC) will see for the first time a proposal for infill development located at 113 W. Main St. (Currently Lawson's) Some of you have already seen this on social media. The purpose is to provide the PC an initial introduction to the proposal. No approvals will be made. Likewise, both I and the Town Council will be learning about this project at the same time. Why? Because we have competent staff and a zoning ordinance adopted in 2009 that sets Town policy on these issues. No board member needs to micromanage projects. We strive to be a professional organization that looks at projects objectively without bias or emotion.

The zoning ordinance requires that decision making occurs in several steps. There will be several opportunities for residents to learn more and give input. The Planning Commission hold at least one public hearing on the zoning request and make a recommendation to Council. Council will also hold a public hearing before voting on it. If zoning is approved, a masterplan and a preliminary plan of subdivision will be reviewed and voted on by the Planning Commission. All hearing dates will be announced. We look forward to your input.

The policy this proposal addresses is infill and redevelopment as outlined in Managing Maryland's Growth Volume 23 by the Maryland Department of Planning. This is not a policy the Town simply conjured up. It follows generally accepted planning principals. I have attached the introductory pages to this letter.

First, I would like to give you a little general background information. Everyone wants a quaint and charming Historic District. But this cost money. Streetscape was a very expensive project to provide you just that. It addressed ADA issues, street lighting and drainage. Streetscape provides a wonderful economic platform to increase business and residential opportunities in our HD such bakeries and other businesses you have expressed desire for in our recently completed branding study. As such, it was also predicated on the infill concept to pay for it. The dilemma is that we have to make the investment first so we have a product to sell. This means that until we get these infill projects, we are not covering our infrastructure costs. What does this mean to you? It means when it comes time to repave roads, sidewalks and drainage in your village we may not have the money. We have already spent a lot of money repairing roads in Sponseller's Addition. Royal Oaks and Brinkley Manor have been around long enough that they will have projects come due in the next 5-10 years.

I recognize there is a lot of concern about traffic on Main St. I live on Main St. I understand Main St. traffic. Main St. traffic is hugely impacted by County development. It will continue to be impacted by the County for many years. Many have suggested no more building until the roads are improved. The County has no intention of doing anything about Main St. traffic. All of the development happening in the 21774 zip code is County development not Town. Ironically, this project might likely pass the County's road APFO because it will not add the trips to put its Level of Service in a failing status. So, you can see the impossible situation the County has put us in with respect to traffic safety. I would ask each and every one of you, as the process moves along, to think about how we accomplish the objectives of improved traffic safety and economic development. Otherwise, the Town may completely shut down. That will have significant consequences.

I have provided some of the benefits and barriers of infill from the document below for quick reference.

Benefits

- Relieves growth on rural areas
- Supports new compact mixed-use development
- Increases walkability
- Saves taxpayer from high cost of infrastructure by taking advantage of existing infrastructure.
- Mixed-use creates a sense of place.

Barriers

- Physical constraints of sites. (These are the things that the PC will be considering)
- Resistance to change, fear of unknown that leads to vociferous opposition centered on density, housing types, parking, traffic or type of people moving in.
- Regulatory constraints in zoning ordinances. (This is why we have floating zones that increase the PC's flexibility and discretion)
- Economic. Infill sites are inherently expensive. (Thus, the need for density to make them feasible. Whether 22 units is the appropriate number is a fair question, but some density is needed to support the businesses you want and make the street cost efficient)

Thank you,

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