

Monthly Update from Citizens for Responsible Growth (CRG)

The results are in and the message is clear – families living around both Barley Mill Plaza and Greenville Center, as well as concerned residents throughout the surrounding area, overwhelmingly support the alternative design concepts produced for Citizens for Responsible Growth in New Castle County (CRG).

Public Meeting To Review Concept Plans for Barley Mill Plaza and Greenville Center

Last month, CRG unveiled their concepts and sponsored an open house to solicit public comments. Over 170 nearby residents and their elected State and County Representatives attended the two-hour event. The Open House featured a presentation by Torti Gallas and Partners, the nationally renowned community planning firm that developed the concepts. Those attending the public open house filled out a questionnaire on the plans, which yielded the following conclusions on traffic and what the vast majority of residents would prefer to see:

BARLEY MILL PLAZA

- Create a new signalized “Main Street” entrance to the property off Route 141 to include retail and tree-lined streets. Retail should not be done in a conventional “strip center” approach anywhere on the site.
- Provide green areas, open-air plazas and other park-type features that link the two mature wooded areas.
- Provide two-story (three level) parking garages between new office and residential buildings and existing neighborhoods.
- Hide parking for residential buildings - locate parking behind or wrap residential units around structured parking.
- Vertically integrate first floor retail with office and residential uses above
- New Castle County should insist that Level of Service D be maintained
- Expansion at Barley Mill beyond the square footage of what is there today should trigger the expansion of the Tyler McConnell Bridge.
- Routes 52 and 100 have been designated as a National Scenic Byway. DeIDOT must address the importance of this designation as it relates to traffic impacts.

GREENVILLE CENTER

- Maximum height of any residential structure should be no greater than the adjacent office building at Greenville Crossing II.
- No new buildings should be constructed along the frontage of Route 52 (Kennett Pike).
- Existing pedestrian walkways are neither adequate nor safe. Vehicle traffic is hazardous.
- A vehicular and pedestrian connection between Greenville Center and Greenville Crossing II should be established to alleviate traffic flows.
- Berming along the Kennett Pike and Buck Road, as well as along the rear edge of the property, should be constructed in a manner sensitive to the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Truck traffic should be limited to normal business hours.

Complete results of the surveys can be viewed by visiting the CRG website

<http://www.crginnewcastlecounty.com>

The Stoltz plans have generated widespread concerns that proposed 11 and 12 story buildings and the close to 2 million square feet of proposed new construction would have serious negative impacts on surrounding property values, would hurt existing area businesses would degrade some of the State's most significant historic and scenic resources and would cripple the transportation network in the region. By way of comparison, the Christiana Mall, at 1.5 million square feet, is significantly smaller than the new retail, office and residential development Stoltz desires to squeeze onto two parcels in a largely suburban section of the County that was considered fully built out decades ago.

At the core of the controversy over the Stoltz plans has been the company's effort to benefit from significant bonus densities, traffic waivers and other rewards provided by New Castle County's policy encouraging smart growth and innovative design. Many believe Stoltz has produced plans that meet neither the spirit nor letter of the County Comprehensive Plan and supporting Ordinances. More specifically, CRG and others have viewed Stoltz's actions as an attempt to take undue advantage of the County's desire to promote pedestrian-oriented "mixed-use" development and encourage "redevelopment" of old dilapidated buildings that become eyesores, safety concerns and harm nearby property values because they cannot be rehabilitated in compliance with existing codes.

The CRG design concepts illustrate what Barley Mill Plaza and Greenville Center could look like if nationally recognized mixed-use design concepts were applied. The plans also reflect a number of changes in the Stoltz plans that had been previously voiced by area residents through their

representative on CRG. The concepts do not, however, address or make any concessions on the matters of traffic. CRG stands opposed to any development that cannot meet the transportation and traffic requirements imposed by the state and the county, and will not support any development proposal that seeks a waiver and/or modification of those requirements.

CRG POSITION ON INCENTIVES TO PROMOTE MIXED USE AND REDEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

CRG firmly supports the financial incentives provided by New Castle County to encourage mixed – use projects and redevelopment of deteriorating properties when properly implemented and applied. However, granting density bonuses and relaxing a developer’s contribution to traffic improvements for buildings on the scale of those planned for Barley Mill Plaza and Greenville Center is inappropriate. Both Barley Mill Plaza and Greenville Center are in good condition and currently occupied. Tearing sections down in the name of ‘redevelopment’ is not what was envisioned when these incentives were established. It is impossible to credibly contend that Barley Mill Plaza meets the criteria of ‘vacant, abandoned, or run down’ as defined by the County.

CRG echoes the concerns New Castle County Land Use officials have expressed – that the developer is tacking on residential and office development to commercial centers. We do not believe this is superior planning and these plans do not meet the criteria for bonus densities and traffic waivers. CRG is concerned that these plans will set the precedent for mixed-use development in New Castle County and calls on the County to disallow the evasion of the code provisions and legal protections that would otherwise apply, simply because a developer labels its plans ‘mixed-use’ and ‘redevelopment’.