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Letter Against Pyramid DEIS

1 message

Margaret Stein <mstein052412@gmail.com>
To: kovalchikk@togny.org

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215 Cooksboro Road
Troy, New York 12182-4029Kenneth Kovalchik, Town Planner
Town of Guilderland
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May 25, 2020

Dear Mr. Kovalchik, Supervisor Barber, and all agency personnel,

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the proposed development by Pyramid Crossgates on Rapp Road, the Mall Road and Western Avenue to build up to 360 Apartments with up to three five-story apartment buildings, up to 50,000 sq ft of office space and up to 278,900 sq ft commercial expansive retail including a Costco with a 700 car parking lot and a 18 pump gas station is an atrocity, incomplete and inaccurate and should be rejected for the following aspects which are not adequately addressed:

The Albany Pine Bush borders the Crossgates expansion. The Albany Pine Bush is considered the best example of an inland Pine Barrens ecosystem in the world. The Pine Bush contains 78 wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need, including the federal and state-endangered Karner blue butterfly and state-threatened frosted elfin butterfly, and the largest inland sand dune system in eastern North America. The site has been designated a National Natural Landmark, a National Heritage Area Site, a New York State Bird Conservation Area and a National Audubon Society Important Bird Area. Appendices F and G in the DEIS are inadequate to evaluate the impact of the proposed development on the plant and animal species in the Pine Bush.

This is a generalized and holistic comment on the proposed development which would further encroach upon a historic neighborhood and ecologically sensitive ecosystem. For over thirty years, area municipalities and agencies across the board have allowed for the destruction of an ecologically significant area, and now they are proposing threatening quality of life for neighborhoods including a historic district and its residents. Profits are placed above people, places, plants, phylum....., pushing a behemoth project through in a pitiful non-publicly accessible way, amidst a world pandemic. People not provided for access to provide input because perhaps they don't have internet capability? Lack of notice for the development project and public comment opportunity? Tearing down trees in advance of and disregard for proper environmental and town approvals? Questionable economics with the economic downturn, questionable profitability of mall retail establishments, and the blatant blind eye to the quality of local character, of which is so difficult to quantify and calculate but nonetheless vital and important.

Being a participant in the recognition of the erection of the historical marker in the Rapp Road Historic District neighborhood when I had to stand in the roadway to ensure Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan could pull her vehicle out safely, with the speeding and frequent cars through the community on Rapp Road. Developers and town officials not seeing nor acknowledging the effects of their projects on the traffic levels and community character. Whole neighborhoods allowed to be bought up and destroyed by an out of town developer and corporations for pure profit. Sitting and watching roadway paint marker personnel risk their lives as tremendous traffic pours past them. Sitting at intersections with hundreds and hundreds of vehicles passing by over several hours. Seeing the car tire marks on Washington Avenue Extension and wondering how midnight drag racing is allowed to happen near a residential community? Wondering how gargantuan projects are developed and proposed while less than a mile away, a mountain of trash is allowed to expand and grow. All the while the state attempts to develop a plan for solid waste and regional community leaders suffer from budgets that depend on trash generation. To build a huge residential and commercial project without a plan?

Profits have been placed above people in their neighborhoods and habitat for threatened and endangered species for too long. Agencies and representatives have for years hid behind a veil of piecemeal review of development projects which have carved away bit by bit our area's most unique and sensitive areas. For over thirty years now, Pyramid and/or its predecessors have pushed for a regional mall and associated developments projects and built in stages, each one cumulatively tearing down globally rare species and overall ecology with horrendous and negative overall impact. Your development is harder to assess and quantify if you are allowed to tear down in stages, which is bordering on illegal! Now people and their homes are being directly affected and it is deplorable and shameful. The fact that no efforts are being made to mitigate the traffic effects alone is poor planning at the minimum.

The Pine Bush habitat is threatened by the expansion of this commercial venture, whether it is adjacent to the construction or a few hundred feet away. Unique and vital historical and cultural characteristics would be negatively affected by traffic, high density, and out of control development. Visual impacts, traffic, and removing lands potentially intended to protect species and provide for public recreation is a mistake. These species are important not only to the Pine Bush but to the local ecosystem as well.

What is the responsibility of Pyramid to the region? They should have to create a multi-million dollar museum, visitor education, and cultural center to commemorate the historic nature of the community(ies) they are attempting to decimate. Also to offset via mitigation the destruction of neighborhoods and community character, and the loss of species habitat. And what is the obligation of developers of the area that have created supposed easements for protections and then the stipulations are not upheld so ecology can't be monitored and then they can argue that development can occur? Mitigation of land swaps is handily accepted as appropriate, while the allowance of piecemeal destruction of sensitive and protected lands is permitted. Buying up houses and land to enable the further development of the area, without regard to how it changes the ecology, character, and feel.

The fact that less human influence and interaction in nature has led to increased wildlife activity in our built and natural areas. And the pandemic has forced all of us to re-think our connection to our places of work, our cars, our ways we secure essential and non-essential goods, our health. Perhaps this economic stress makes a gigantic project such as this infeasible or if you build it will they come? And if you peel away all the precious qualities of an area bit by bit time after time it is less noticeable and easier to accept? The mitigation measures offered in the DEIS are inadequate to address the destruction of 46 acres of land. The proposed development decreases the size of the Pine Bush and any mitigation measures offer no possibility for expanding the habitat.

The cumulative impact of this development plus other proposals on the Pine Bush is not adequately addressed. The DEIS is woefully incomplete because it does not adequately address the effect this massive the development would have on the ecosystem of the Pine Bush, or the effect on people's homes, neighborhoods, and plant and animal species.

Thank you,

Margaret Stein