

31 Forest Road
Delmar, New Yst.
May 2, 2020

Mr. Kenneth Kovalchik
Guilderland Town Hall
P.O. Box 339
5209 Western Turnpike
Guilderland, New York 12084

Dear Mr. Kovalchik:

I am writing to oppose the Rapp Road Residential / Western Avenue Mixed Use Redevelopment Projects in the Pine Bush, which the Rapp Road Development Corporation aka Pyramid LLC are proposing.

When Crossgates Mall was being proposed back in the late 1970's and early 1980's, the idea of building a large mall at that location did not bother me that much. Although I thought that it was desirable to have the Pine Bush, I reasoned that Crossgates Mall would only take up a little tiny corner of the Pine Bush, and that was acceptable to me at the time.

In some ways, having Crossgates Mall has been beneficial to the Capital District. It has given us a one stop shopping center with a large number of stores under one roof, where one can conveniently shop for many of one's needs. It has brought people from miles away to do their shopping, at least once or twice a year. It has brought a lot of money

into the Capital District, and the people from outside the Capital District spend money at other stores, restaurants, and entertainment venues in the area.

However, Crossgates has expanded since it first opened. A few years after it opened an addition was built that nearly doubled its size. Now Pyramid wants to develop an additional forty-seven acres. In my opinion, the combination of Crossgates Mall, Crossgates Mall's parking lot, and Pyramid's proposed business ventures would be taking up more than a little corner of the Pine Bush, if these projects are allowed to be built.

Originally, the Pine Bush extended from what is now the Pine Hills neighborhood in Albany to Central Park in Schenectady. For over one hundred years we have been chipping away at the Pine Bush, ever, you cannot keep taking away parts of an ecosystem like the Pine Bush, making the ecosystem smaller and smaller, without the ecosystem eventually dying.

The Pine Bush is a very beautiful area to hike in. One of the good things about it is its proximity to both Albany and Schenectady. From either Albany or Schenectady one can drive to the Pine Bush, go on a hike, and drive home in half of a day.

But another reason why we must save the Pine Bush is because it is home to several endangered species, including, but not limited to, the Karner Blue Butterfly. The Pine Bush is a type of ecosystem which is found in very few places in the world, especially very few inland places. The Karner Blue Butterfly is found in very few places in the world, and if the Karner Blue Butterfly in the Pine Bush were to die out, a significant percentage of the Karner Blue Butterflies in the world would be gone. Once a species becomes extinct, it is gone.

forever. The breeding ground for the Karner Blue Butterfly is Butterfly Hill, which is not far from one of the areas where Pyramid wants to build. There should be a buffer between a breeding ground like Butterfly Hill and a built up area.

There is another reason why Pyramid should not be building new stores at this time. That is because all or most of the stores in Crossgates have been closed because of the COVID-19 epidemic. Who knows how many of these stores can survive being closed for two or more months? J.C. Penny's, which is an anchor store, has filed for bankruptcy. Before Pyramid destroys part of the beautiful Pine Bush to build new stores, they should wait to see how many empty spaces they have in the existing Crossgates Mall. It makes no sense for Pyramid to build stores in the Pine Bush if they have a large mall that is only half full.

These are the reasons why I believe that Pyramid's request to build the Rapp Road Residential / Western Avenue Mixed Use Redevelopment Projects in the Pine Bush should be denied.

Sincerely yours,
Nancy A. Benedict