

March 14, 2020

Dear Mr. Kovalchik,

I am writing to convey to you, Chairman Feeney and the members of the Planning Board, my opposition to the Rapp Rd. Development Project per the DEIS that was submitted for review.

At the outset, this project is completely at odds with purposes outlined in the Westmere Corridor study supporting a TOD district notably; to support development that adequately protects nearby residential neighborhoods, encourages traffic calming measures, improves the environment for non-automobile oriented modes of transportation, reducing the number of required parking spaces and focusing intense development away from existing residential neighborhoods.

Protecting residential neighborhoods: Despite recognition by the Westmere Corridor Study that single family neighborhoods remain intact along Western Ave., Westmere Terrace was the only unsignalized intersection of a viable residential neighborhood assessed by the traffic study. Per the study, present level of service in trying to access Western Ave. From Westmere Terrace is E/F. This is projected to deteriorate to F over the measured periods. What this categorization does not denote is in actuality how much further conditions will decline. The traffic study invokes a stance of maintaining at level F, suggesting that there will be no further deterioration. This is hardly a valid conclusion since there is no way to indicate a worsening condition if the categorization is already at the least tolerable standard. There is no reason to not surmise that similar results would be mirrored had other neighborhoods of similar constitution been evaluated.

The mitigation strategy offered to Westmere Terrace, in acknowledgement of these worsening conditions is to create an entrance road from the newly configured cul de sac to Rapp Rd. that could only be accessed by Westmere Terrace residents. This despite the fact that maintaining our closure as a dead end street was a paramount condition when we sat down in our negotiations with Mr. Soos, representing the applicant. We were given verbal assurances that 'under no circumstances' would Westmere Terrace be opened as a portal to Rapp Rd.

In addition to a complete defamation to the existing character of the neighborhood this option severely compromises the buffering that had been established through negotiations and frequently referenced in the DEIS, as a berm with trees and fencing along the southern boundary of Site 1 certainly intended to be contiguous. Buffering is noted as an integral component for neighborhoods when development is being proposed for a TOD area as the Westmere Corridor Study states: 'significant landscape buffers would have to remain in place between neighborhoods and any new development proposed.' This is necessary in 'preserving neighborhood character and property values by improving undesirable impacts.' It should be noted that in the case of this project that ability is severely limited in that there will be no buffering of the illumination and privacy invasion from stories 3, 4 and 5 of the apartment building overlooking us.

In short, there is no manner in which the character of Westmere Terrace or the quality of life for residents will not be denigrated by this project.

Encouraging traffic calming measures: The installation of a destination that is expected to attract large crowds, generating 600 additional trips for the evening peak periods and 813 for Saturdays, and this prior to what will be added on Site 3, is the antithesis of traffic calming. In 2000, The Comprehensive Plan advised strategizing a means of utilizing Ring Rd. as a bypass to relieve congestion on Western Ave. Twenty years later, necessitating the use of Ring Rd. because of a designed influx of new volume completely contradicts the problem it was supposed to address.

Improving the environment for non-automobile oriented modes of transportation/ reducing the number of required parking spaces: As previously referenced, Costco is expected to attract large crowds and as a business predicated on the ability of their clientele to transport large quantities of goods, large numbers of automobiles are to be expected. A cornerstone element of a TOD area is to reduce emphasis on automobiles. Additionally, the abundance of surface parking here (700 spaces) directly conflicts with this concept in form and function.

Focusing intense development away from existing residential neighborhoods: Per the Westmere Corridor Study the intent of focusing density in a proposed TOD area is to 'protect viable residential areas/neighborhoods from commercial and higher density residential development pressure.' Visiting the extreme limits in residential density and inviting high volume commercial endeavors to our doorstep, this project is the very definition of what TOD development is supposed to be protecting us from.

In addition to the apparent contradictions with development in a TOD area, there are omissions from the DEIS that require addressing by the applicant.

Impacts on services: There is/will be acknowledged deterioration of traffic conditions at the intersection of Westmere Terrace and Western Ave. Yards away from this location are the Fire Dept and Ambulance Service. One would be hard pressed to assume that the degrading conditions (and we don't know in real time how much more degraded because of the already least tolerable status) will not also impact the capability of these service providers to respond with continued efficiency. This means, not only egress from the stations, but also the capability of the volunteers to get to the origination sites. The DEIS states that the evaluation of this consisted of verbal confirmation from the Westmere Fire Chief that 'no adverse impacts are anticipated.' Provision of safety for the town, where seconds count, necessitates that this be analyzed with greater scrutiny.

Air quality analysis: The assessments of air quality were based on traffic study analysis limited to queuing at intersections. What has not been assessed as an impacting condition will be the addition of automobile emissions produced from queuing at the fueling stations on Site 2. Just as big box stores are noted for attracting big crowds and long check out lines, so too are long lines a characteristic expectation found at the fueling bays. This would be a new and harmful component being introduced to a delicate environment. As such it also requires greater scrutiny in analysis.

In summation, I could not help but notice that where adverse conditions were acknowledged by the DEIS particularly in regards to Westmere Terrace, the tenor was decidedly dismissive; minor or not significant in impact. We are one neighborhood admittedly of small number but, we are a reflection of others who were not counted. My home was built in 1949, which means my neighborhood has been a presence for at least that long. It is reprehensible that the quality of life for neighborhoods can be treated as expendable if they are incompatible with a vision designed to shore up corporate revenues. We were here before Pyramid, we deserve better.

Sincerely,
Iris Broyde
Westmere Terrace