

Rezoning Plan is 'Down-Zoning' area man says

Editor's Note: the following is a copy of a letter written by William J. Embler, 119 Birchwood Dr, Town of Guilderland, to a committee appointed by the Guilderland Town Board to consider the rezoning of a section of Route 20. The letter was addressed to Councilmen Robert Johnstone and Gordon Robinson, and Justice of the Peace Harold J. Hughes Jr.

Today's Times-Union (Jan. 2) reports that you have been appointed a committee to consider the rezoning of Route 20 from the Albany city line to McCormack's Corners.

While I was an officer of the McKownville Improvement Association about 15 years ago, I was one of those who urged that the town of Guilderland adopt a zoning ordinance. This was finally done. A "rezoning" move such as proposed loses sight of the basic purpose of zoning: to protect property zoned for residential purposes from loss of value because commercial properties are built nearby. To the extent that parts of Route 20 are still protected by being zoned residential, this protection should be continued. To permit even a few commercial properties to be developed in residential areas will damage not only the adjoining property but entire neighborhoods. This is especially true of that part of McKownville north of Western Ave. - which, incidentally, is still "protected" by deed restrictions. Property in the area bordering on the Stuyvesant Shopping Plaza has already been damaged so far as residential value is concerned.

If residential property which was purchased and developed for that purpose is to be rezoned on a wholesale basis, then zoning amounts to exactly nothing. There is plenty of property along Route 20 already zoned for commercial purposes.

This type of wholesale rezoning is really down-zoning, and is the beginning of the disease known as "urban blight" which later leads to the spending of billions.

Instead of talking about down-zoning as connected with "future development" it would be more accurately described as deterioration of the town.

Those who get excited about adding a few thousands of assessed valuation for a new fish-fry forget that the resale value of nearby residences is reduced by an even greater amount and this loss also is eventually reflected on the assessment rolls.

Property owners ought to be entitled to the protection of zoning without having to fight to keep it every time someone with an idea for a "quick buck", usually an outsider, comes along.

The way to avoid the beginning of "urban blight" is for the Town Board to have some guts and turn down property-damaging attempts of a few to gain personal advantage at the expense of the many.

(see next page for scanned image of this column in the printed newspaper, and an adjacent report of the appointment of the committee to which it was addressed)

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Route 20 Rezoning Plans To Be Studied

Route 20, presently spot-zoned residential and business, will be studied for possible rezoning from the Albany city line to McCormick's Corners to suit the present and future development of Guilderland.

A three-member Guilderland Town Board committee will meet shortly with the town's Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals to study the issue.

Supervisor John E. King said following the study the plans will be submitted to the entire board. If approved, the proposal will be submitted to the public.

Serving on the committee are Councilmen Gordon Robinson and Robert Johnstone and Justice of the Peace Harold J. Hughes.