

defeated

To: The Zoning Board, Town of Guilderland
From: McKownville Improvement Association (contact Don Reeb, president, 489-3909)
Subject: Starbucks
Date: March 6, 2005

15-7-44
51 (incl 9)
44 2nd
15
36

Concerning the proposed Starbucks at 1206-1210 Western.

While McKownville has fewer businesses (along Western and Fuller and McKown and Schoolhouse) that look like "strip" development than do many other suburban towns, the area near the proposed Starbucks is an unfortunate exception. There is great danger that the strip looking development that presently exists near the proposed Starbucks will not be ameliorated by the new development, that is an opportunity for improvement may not be captured. This point will be returned to later.

Starbucks is proposing too few parking spaces--the County says there are too many but then there is the lease of parking spaces to Sutters and that number is 25 or maybe it is 15 or maybe it is zero--depending on how the agreement with Sutters plays out--51 provided spaces minus 25 leaves too few since 41 are probably needed and maybe more than that since the site drawing appears to include outside seating which is not accounted for in the number of provided parking spaces.

Drainage--the 0.96 acres site, partly in the City and partly in the Town, is sloped towards the south--the rear--of the property which is in the City. Storm water management needs to be carefully considered--drainage from the neighboring Best Western property seems to flow into the crevice at the rear of 1206-1210 Western as does the drainage from Sutters and nearby properties, both City and Town. The plans do not appear to include adequate provision for storm water runoff--or from the University pond either which runs under Western at the entrance to the University.

The site is across from the Western Avenue entrance to the University. It is like the Burger King at Fuller Road intersection. Those familiar with that intersection know of its accident prone character because drivers forget that it is "4 way" intersection and not a "T" intersection and the holding lane (there really is not a holding lane at Burger King but cars use it as if it is) is overused.

The intersection at Starbucks is especially dangerous for cars turning east coming out of the University and those going directly north out of Starbucks. Special signing must be provided to warn motorists that while it looks like a "T" intersection to cars coming out of the University it really is a "4 way" intersection for everyone. Possibly special traffic lights are needed as well.

And there is no holding lane or even a make believe one. The Sutters parking lot is signed to prevent left turns and for good reason. It is a dangerous intersection already. This does not prevent a large number of left turns and dangerous "U" turns of cars exiting Sutters. As my previous letter said, the Starbucks and Sutters sites are conjoined in many ways and joint planning of their parking/traffic/driveways is necessary.

The intersection is intensively used by pedestrians. Cross walk areas, cross walk lights, and even the pole from which hangs the traffic lights need be changed/improved. Starbucks should aid these changes and construction should not interfere with further improvements.

Schedule 1.5 Trips per minute

44
29
22+7

8 spaces in Starbucks lane in parking

15

bank 44

19 50 Sept 1985

40

Jon Weston (planner)
Terry Coburn
Paul Caputo

Steve Feerey
Mike Cleary
Linda Clark

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James Cohen
Thomas
Paul (counsel)

The drawings show access to the Best Western towards the rear of Starbucks but the file does not contain an agreement with Best Western. And since the two properties are very close, traffic exiting one will be in danger of colliding with traffic exiting the other. Possibly Best Western can be required to move its left turn only exit to the curb cut nearer Dunkin Donuts.

The Starbucks building design is more like adobe than it is New York brick or wood—more TexMex than country-prairie or Frank Lloyd Wright. It is important that McKownville be permitted to look like a residential area. The proposed building does not look at all like Guilderland residences.

Sidewalks and curbs connecting Hillcrest to the city line are planned as are general improvement in the appearance of Western Avenue. Starbucks will be required to build a sidewalk, of course, but should be asked to help promote other improvements—like joining in a legal action to require the owner of the garage at the rear of next door property—to the west-- to either improve the garage or tear it down—it is presently an eyesore—and the house is not much better than the garage.

While Starbucks is proposing that about 26.7 percent of the 0.96 acres to be green space, not all of it is visible from Western. Green space that contains small trees and flowers and plants—like the Jiffy Lube near Route 155 on Western—is a much more attractive to residential neighbors than the plantings, for example, at the “99” restaurant. The latter are a thin string of plantings on the sides and in front. An equal sized area as a compact site in front, with small trees, grass, and flowers, is much more residential in appearance. A residential type green space in front of a business obviously can be provided and maintained. The Association hopes that as businesses in Guilderland come in for Town approval, special use permits etc. they will be required to not only build sidewalks but that also provide a compact residential site in the front. It is important to promote a look of village and residential development. To attain a “lawn and garden” space at Starbucks may require that the parking along the east and west side be pushed rear-wards a little so that some of the green space at the rear of the lot can be transferred to the front, it may also require fences and other screening be erected to protect the properties at the rear and sides from being negatively impacted, it may require that the two-way driveway and the Starbucks building be pushed a little bit south, but it is important to make Western Avenue in McKownville and throughout Guilderland to appear to be as much like a residential area as is possible.

The applicant should be asked to provide drawings of its “lawn and garden” area along Western and be encouraged to make it is as near as possible the entire 26.7 percent of the site—and that it be compact garden which would be as much more like that of a residential front lawn.

Starbucks is a large international firm but they have been required many times to adapt their businesses to a wide range of cities and nations—it is not too much to ask that they be required to adapt themselves to Guilderland. We are what we are—a residential area. Starbucks should be required to make its development look as much like Guilderland residences as possible—this includes paving materials, sidewalks, trees, flowers, building materials—everything.

The Town moved in this direction with the new Cabernet restaurant—it would be wonderful to see this become the standard for all business development in Guilderland.