

McKownville Improvement Association
Founded 1924

To: Michael M. Phillip, Officer in Charge
State University of New York At Albany
From: Don Reeb, McKownville Improvement Association, president
Subject: McKownville Planning
Date: November 2, 2007

The March 3, 2004 letter signed by James Doellefeld for the University to the Shabbos House granting it 30 parking spaces on the campus nearly nullifies any leverage that McKownville has to guide its nonresidential development. A copy of the University letter is attached.

The Association very much wants the University to rescind that letter.

The present Shabbos House, a 1,300 square foot building, at 316 Fuller Road applied for a building permit to construct a 10,000 square foot Shabbos House at 320 Fuller Road. The new building will provide classes and other events for up to 250 people. The building requires several variances and the Zoning Board of Appeals is convening another hearing on the topic on Wednesday November 7, 2007 in Guilderland Town Hall.

More suitable building lots for the Shabbos house in McKownville are available, would require fewer variances and be less intrusive on residential neighborhoods. At least one of these McKownville parcels is on Western Avenue across from the University entrance.

McKownville is a neighborhood of some 3,000 people and a 1,000 homes bordering the City of Albany and includes a significant portion of the State University campus. Fuller Road in McKownville is largely a residential street of nineteen homes.

The Capital District Transportation Committee financed study, Western Avenue Corridor Plan, completed in 2003 and adopted by the Town states that the Town will strive to direct future non-residential development to parcels on Western Avenue that are appropriately zoned.

The strategy the Town and the Association uses to fend off non-residential development in residential areas is through zoning and enforcement of the parking requirement.

Nonresidential uses require larger amounts of parking and since the lots in McKownville are quite small it usually is possible to thwart the nonresidential applications for construction on our residential streets by insisting that the full measure of parking as stipulated in the zoning ordinance be provided.

In effect, the University, by granting the Shabbos House parking privileges, nullifies the zoning ordinance, the parking requirement and the intentions of the Western Avenue Corridor Plan.

The Shabbos House is perfectly welcome in McKownville—as it has been for nearly 30 years at 316 Fuller Road. But a building, between two homes that are each less than 1600 square feet, attracting 250 persons for classes and other events is hardly a welcome and unobtrusive neighbor. Moreover the proposed Shabbos House will have but 6 parking spaces on site which

nearly requires that any use of the new building in the future by another user will be accompanied by tearing down yet one or more additional homes along Fuller for necessary parking.

McKownville and the University have always had a wonderful relationship. Most recently we have worked quite closely with the University on its Purple Path proposal and wrote a letter of support for its financing.

As a community of modest homes—usually under 2500 square feet on lots of 15,000 square feet with many of the homes being built either just after WWI or WWII and present prices in the \$185,000 range—it is nearly a built-out community. With well maintained homes McKownville is a desirable neighborhood which provides the University with an attractive neighbor that enhances, in some small way, the University environment.

McKownville is united—or as united as any community is on public questions—in wishing that the University had never issued that letter to the Shabbos House providing it with 30 parking spaces.

Of course we would also hope that the University would never again issue such a letter for a project being built on the residential streets of McKownville. That is, this note is more about the ability of the Town and McKownville to control its own development than it is about the Shabbos House.

The Shabbos is and will continue to be welcome but just not on that site with those plans. This may not seem like a big issue to the University, but it really is to us.

PS: You may not remember me but we met many times. I was the Grand Marshall for our graduations during the 1990's. I was a professor in the Department of Economics, retiring in 1999 after 34 years of teaching. I was named a Collins Fellow in 1992. I have been president of the McKownville Improvement Association since 2001.

cc: Kenneth Runion, Guilderland Town Supervisor