

October 15, 2024

To: Empire Master Plan Update Working Group

(M. Bacon, B.Chase, M. Ellibee, C. Ford, M.Walton, C.Webb)

From: Frank Clements

Re: Land Use/ Zoning Recommendations/ Fisher Road Site

Cc: Sue Palmer, Derith Smith, B. Lonberger, J. Ferrari, E Loud

Dear Master Plan Update Working Group

Background:

Currently Empire has no industrially zoned land available to accommodate any light industrial uses, or other types of non-commercial business uses. This is a concern because Empire needs more diverse businesses and jobs to provide alternatives to our tourist based, one dimension seasonal economy which is primarily retail and hospitality oriented.

Proposal:

I propose the MP Update Work Group think about additional ways the existing Land-Use and zoning of the 13+- acre vacant parcel on Fisher Road can be changed to accommodate a broader range of uses not just commercial and residential.

The site's current zoning, (MR) or Mixed Residential and Commercial is not its highest and best use, nor is it in sync with meeting today's market needs and demands. I believe this site provides an opportunity to help create a more diversified business economy by designating the 13+- acre site on Fisher Road, to a Mixed-Use/Business/High Density Residential site. (MX/B/R)

What would this new land-use designation provide?

- Space for new entrepreneurial businesses, and start-ups
- Space for light manufacturing, research and development
- Land-uses which are compatible and attractive to a broad range of inventors and developers.
- New jobs with higher pay than commercial retail uses

- Higher land values
- New tax revenues to offset Increased residential property taxes
- Increased Village revenues from water usage
- Land-Uses which provide a more rapid build out than the current land-uses
- New jobs which are less reliant on the seasonal economy
- A project which can be branded and marketed state-wide, not just locally.
- Allows space for expansion of current businesses
- Provides a place for a mix of higher density housing such as duplexes, townhomes triplexes, etc.
- Has adequate on-site room for a central waste water system.

Allowing a broad mix of land uses on the overall 14+- acre site will make the site more attractive to outside investor's and developers but may require more actions on behalf of the Village.

Developers prefer shovel ready sites, however if they are not available they at least expect as-of-right zoning in place which prevents them from engaging in expensive time consuming rezoning to a PUD. A new zoning classification will be necessary, and to be pre-approved.

Developers also look for incentives from the communities they work in, such as tax incentives, or tax abatements, density bonuses, or financial help with infrastructure improvements like street extensions, or water line extensions, etc. These types of incentives are not unusual for municipalities to offer in today's competitive environment to attract investors and developers to one's community.

Last, this land use concept is compatible to the approach outlined in the Redevelopment Ready Community guidelines which helps communities attract new investors, businesses, and residents utilizing RRC initiatives to make Empire an attractive place that creates places where people want to live, work and invest,

Thanks for your consideration of this important matter to the Village of Empire.

Frank Clements