

From: **Barbara Deutsch Lynch** <bdl5@cornell.edu>

Date: Tue, Apr 21, 2020 at 10:03 AM

Subject: Retail store location

To: Review Board@townofcaroline.org <Review Board@townofcaroline.org>

Cc: Planning Board@townofcaroline.org <Planning Board@townofcaroline.org>

Dear Review Board and Planning Board members:

I strongly oppose location of a national chain retail outlet at the corner of Route 79 and Landon Road.

I understand both the problem of food deserts and the ways in which some NIMBY movements can serve the needs of a well off minority at the expense of other town residents. Some studies have found that in some locations Dollar Stores are the only accessible source of food for some poor communities. I also understand that local governments often rely on such businesses to expand their tax base.

That said, locating a store on the very edge of the town of Caroline, within a short distance of our wonderful and thriving Brookton's Market would not serve the town well, nor would it be consistent with the guidelines set out in the towns Comprehensive Plan.

It would have a negative impact on our community for the following reasons:

1. As the comprehensive plan concludes, local commercial activity should be centered in the town's three hamlets. Of these, it would appear that Speedsville would be the hamlet most likely to benefit from additional commercial activity, particularly if it made available healthy food at reasonable prices.
2. The developer is not local. Caroline needs local businesses that contribute to the well-being of its residents and serve as focal points for community activity over the long haul. Dollar stores come and go quickly, leaving behind asphalt-covered surfaces--eyesores that exacerbate runoff problems--and cheaply built structures that are so often left to rot because they cannot easily be converted to other uses.
3. Their contributions to town revenues is often minimal, as large chain stores seek locations that are less likely to impose taxes or restrictions that their shareholders see as diminishing their profitability.
4. This logic also applies to wages. Any jobs created by these national retail chains are likely to offer substandard wages and benefits. Low wages add to the burden of services for the county.
5. It is not clear who a retail facility at the very edge of the town would benefit. It is most likely that rather than serving isolated parts of the Town of Caroline a cheap retail store in this location would simply increase car traffic coming from other parts of the county if indeed it attracts anyone.

6. The corner of Landon Road and Route 79 offers some of the loveliest views in the town of Caroline, rural views that symbolize what the town is about. We are already seeing erosion of this viewshed as a result of construction of storage facilities along the road. Quickening the pace of this kind of development would turn the main entrance into the town from the Southwest into a periurban slum. Is this what we want?

To conclude, our comprehensive plan envisions a town where

- “Green space is plentiful, enabling sustainable agriculture and forest production, reducing pollution, providing outdoor recreational opportunities, and preserving biodiversity and rural views. Sprawl is limited because development is concentrated in housing focus areas and in the hamlets of Brooktondale and Slaterville Springs.”
- “Environmentally aware and informed citizens take pride in passing along natural areas and resources to future generations. By careful advance planning, they preserve and promote the Town's rural character, public areas, historical heritage, cemeteries, unique natural areas, well-connected recreational spaces, community centers, high quality of water, air and land, and peaceful night skies.”
- “The local economy flourishes with locally-owned small businesses. Scattered throughout Caroline, the businesses complement the peaceful rural nature of the town. The prospering local hamlets support a diversity of local businesses and are boosted by increased pedestrian and bicycle traffic due to increased housing density there.”

The plan calls for locating small businesses in existing hamlets in order to minimize sprawl, reduce the need for frequent car trips, and make our communities more human-scaled and walkable. It concludes that “Supporting this diverse mix of local businesses and increasing support for retail trade in the hamlets strengthens the vitality of the Town and offers economic opportunity for residents. . . . Concerns have arisen about how businesses fit into the landscape and support the values residents place on living in the Town. Issues such as visual appearance, noise and light pollution, and air and water quality emerge. Because the town currently has few regulations or guidelines, inappropriate business development could adversely affect the quality of rural living. The situation is exacerbated as neighboring towns place additional restrictions on business development, making unregulated municipalities susceptible to undesirable businesses unable to find locations elsewhere.”

Construction of a retail establishment firmly associated with sprawl in a location where sprawl threatens to destroy the Town's rural character and scenic charm. Moreover, a location only accessible by car and distant from the town's centers of population not serve most Caroline residents. I would strongly urge the Town to insist that any enterprise of this sort be located where it would not threaten thriving establishments, where it would not contribute to sprawl, and where it would be accessible to those most likely benefit from its presence.

Respectfully,

Barbara D. Lynch

1047 Snyder Hill Road