

This situation began with a simple premise: a piece of land was sold to a developer and the proposed development is a dollar store. Some people don't want that particular project in this location, but that's almost beside the point. It could have been a fast food chain, an apartment complex, a garden supply company or a Starbucks. There are likely to be a range of opinions about each of these projects, and we cannot judge each of them in a reactive manner on an individual basis as they submit their applications to our Review Board. I believe that there is mostly agreement here; that some more strategic planning is in order for our town. So what to do?

Zoning would be unlikely to stop the Dollar General project, even if we had zoning in our town, given the other commercial businesses in the immediate vicinity of the project site.

Trying the "nodal development" route is a worthy attempt but without law to enforce it, this is only an aspirational phenomenon in our Comprehensive Plan. I'll get to the Plan in a minute, but first I'd like to propose another approach.

I am strongly urging the Town Board to adopt Formula Business Restrictions which function in service to our Town's vision. For those not familiar, these are requirements which serve to align the aesthetics and other features of a business which would otherwise be a recognizable national chain with the character of a town. If you've ever seen a McDonalds with clapboard siding, or a big box store that's 2500 square feet instead of the usual 9000, *that's* a formula business restriction. Interestingly, the most compelling of the comments (in my view) that has come into the Planning Board in *opposition* to the moratorium describes the economic benefit that a "small retail store" would provide to both the landowner who is selling the land, and the town. My problem with this story is that a nearly 10,000 square foot Dollar General that continues to plant its flag in every unregulated rural town in America is not a small retail store. Put some formula business restrictions on it, in both design and community engagement, and I would be able to find more common ground with this argument.

Regarding the Comprehensive Plan, I cannot emphasize enough that the Plan *in its current form* presents a clear picture of our town, and one that is not friendly to the proposed project, but without people to stand by it when policy decisions are made, the plan is just a bunch of words. Moratorium or not, the town must use existing means and language to assess whether projects are consistent with town vision and values. If they are not, that's grounds for rejecting a proposal. The applicant can then decide whether they will take steps to comply or take their business elsewhere.

One way to invoke both the Comprehensive Plan and our Site Plan Review law immediately, is to require the applicant to provide evidence of compliance with Site Plan Review Design Guidelines (which they will not be able to do, specifically related to items 2, 8, 11, 13, 14 and 15). The Review Board can then reject the project if these tasks are not satisfied. I understand that guidelines are not law, but if they cannot be invoked to shape policy, what's the point of having them?

It is striking that over 600 people have signed the moratorium petition. I hope that our elected town officials can see that our community opposes this project. I am asking that our town leadership be forceful in standing up against this applicant in any and every way possible, even when legal action is threatened, and we should expect that it will be - please know that your constituents are behind you!

Thank you.
Katherine & Jia (Goldberg) Forrest