



76 Riverview Ave.
Noank, CT 06340
Groconadv2017@gmail.com
grotonconservationadvocates.org

March 2, 2021

Dear Mayor Granatosky and Members of the Town Council,

I am speaking tonight on behalf of Groton Conservation Advocates in response to the op-ed piece that the Town Council members signed in yesterday's New London Day concerning redevelopment of the Mystic Education Center.

I would not be honest if I did not say that we are greatly disappointed that the Council has rushed out to fully embrace Respler Homes' Mystic River Bluffs project without also recognizing the serious concerns that have been raised including traffic, noise, light pollution, blasting damage and the sudden urbanization of a semi-rural area. This is a matter before the Planning & Zoning Commission, and we believe that the Council should follow their deliberations without trying to unduly influence that body.

We have been following the plans for the newly-named Mystic River Bluffs with considerable interest and have learned a number of things that Council members did not mention in their enthusiastic support for this project. First and foremost, while we strongly support mixed-use development in Groton and have no problem with redevelopment of the site, we are increasingly concerned, even alarmed about the gigantic size of this project and its impact on western Groton and Mystic.

Your op-ed piece did not mention that the redevelopment has already expanded from 750 units –already gigantic—to 931 units. If each unit averages two persons, we are looking at a whole new town of roughly 2000 people being developed right up the hill from Mystic village. What will the impact be on Mystic residents' quality of life with this huge invasion? "Seismic" is the word that comes to mind.

The project has also grown in terms of acreage. Mr. Respler has privately purchased at least 16 acres to add to the 48 acres he's receiving from the state. In theory, he could acquire more. The Ledges, a very large apartment complex in Groton built in 2005, has 339 units and occupies 24 acres. That complex is dwarfed by the Respler plans.

Other matters not mentioned in your op-ed:

- Traffic management will be extremely difficult; Mystic village—already a traffic nightmare for Grotonites and tourists—will become completely gridlocked by the numbers of cars added.
- The neighborhood will be overwhelmed, which is incompatible with Section 9.4-6.C of our code requiring that *“the design elements of the proposed development are compatible with the development in the district and surrounding area(s) and do not hinder or discourage the orderly development and use of other properties within the area or alter the essential characteristics of the area.”*
- A floating zone will be overlaid on the area to allow for a new town to be built; what will this mean? What will stop Respler from adding more units while zoning is floating in limbo?
- The Planning & Zoning Commission was shown only one plan by town staff as the preferred plan for this property. Thus, Planning and Zoning has not been able to do any comparisons with other applicants for developing the site.
- The impacts of both water delivery and sewage removal systems for this huge development on the area are so far unknown.
- What about the 16-acre forested parcel purchased by Respler that will be clear cut to make way for an access road and additional housing? Is that redevelopment or new development?

In closing we ask that the Groton Town Council qualify its endorsement of this project with recognition of the need to address the potential negative impacts as well as the benefits of Mystic River Bluffs and encourage a redevelopment that is compatible with our existing neighborhoods and quality of life.

Liz Raisbeck and Eugenia Villagra
Co-Chairs, Groton Conservation Advocates