

League of Women Voters of Lawrence-Douglas County

P.O. Box 1072, Lawrence, Kansas 66044

July 22, 2007

Grant Eichhorn, Chairman
Members
Lawrence-Douglas County Planning Commission
City Hall
Lawrence, Kansas 66044

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City County Planning Office
Lawrence, Kansas

RE: ITEMS 2, 3, 4A, 4B: DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND REZONING FOR WEST 6TH STREET & WAKARUSA

Dear Chairman Eichhorn and Planning Commissioners:

The primary issues concerning this proposal are: Does Lawrence need this development, and in this location? *Horizon 2020* designates the intersection of West 6th Street and Wakarusa Drive for a CC200 center, which is a Commercial Center normally limited to 200,000 square feet of commercial square footage. However, *Horizon 2020* also states that 400,000 square feet of commercial space have been approved for this intersection. Thus, this center would be twice as large as other centers of the same category elsewhere in Lawrence.

According to Kirk McClure, professor at KU, retail space in Lawrence has been growing at an annual rate of 3 percent, while retail sales have grown at an annual rate slightly below 1 percent. This suggests we already have over-building.

McClure also reports that the vacancy rate for retail space in the Lawrence market is 8.3 percent, whereas 5 percent is normally considered to be an acceptable rate. Even more significant, the vacancy rate for the district centered on 6th Street and Wakarusa Drive is 13.7 percent. This indicates that we already have over-building in the specific area in question.

The development would certainly increase traffic in the vicinity. According to traffic impact analysis conducted by the Kansas Department of Transportation, the peak-hour travel time on 6th Street between Folks Road and K-10 would approximately double, and delays at intersections would increase. Some neighbors are concerned about so-called "cut-through" traffic, meaning that drivers would take residential streets to avoid the congestion on collectors and arterials. This suggests that improvements would have to be made to improve traffic flow along the correct paths.

It is uncertain what effect the development would have on Free State High School, which is adjacent. No doubt students would spend time at the mall, and possibly would skip classes to do so. Some students might be encouraged to drive to school because of free parking at the mall. This, combined with the increased traffic, suggests potential pedestrian safety issues.

For these and other reasons, we believe that the Planning Commission should not approve this proposal. Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Sincerely yours,



Paula Schumacher
President



Alan Black, Chairman
Land Use Committee

Dear Chair, Grant Eichorn, and Planning Commissioners;

1. As you will note item number 2 of this agenda is a rezoning from PRD2 to OS from The Village Meadow's L.L.C. I would like you to understand that this is the exact same property that the 6th and Wak property owners claimed a reason for a substantial change because of the removal of 24 apartment units. Since June 5th the Village Meadow's LLC was required to put their detention pond off site and this is the property that they own for the offsite detention pond.

2. You will also note that Bauer Farms is requesting 10,000 sq ft of additional Commercial for this node. I ask that you do not take each item under consideration independently. There are several requests being made by several different property owners, BUT their request affects the same nodal plan.

3. a. Under the facts of finding the health and welfare of the community comes first. The amount of traffic that is usually generated from Wal-Marts is 3 to 5 time more traffic that even a Target. The new KDOT VISSIM shows 161 cars along Congressional to Harvard between 4pm and 5pm. Congressional maybe a collector, but along that street are houses facing the street and driveways from each house on both sides of the street.

b. As of Saturday's paper Wal-Mart has let go of the VP for the new upgraded style stores and the best that Wal-Mart could say of the new upgraded stores was sales were "tepid". Therefore the idea of a different Wal-Mart type of store will not be happening. People do not come from Topeka and KC to shop at Wal-Mart and therefore the sales generated for Wal-Mart MUST come from what is already here. Wal-Mart must pull their sales from local businesses or businesses that are already here. Dillion – 6th and Wakarusa, West Lake and Walgreens at Kasold and 6th and other places. By allowing Wal-Mart to pull from other businesses you will NOT BE taking care of the health and welfare of the community. Vacant stores along 6th street will really create an unfavorable entrance into Lawrence and blighted commercial centers along 6th street will create Whitelakes to downtown.

c. The need for new jobs that pay a decent wage for employees to live in Lawrence is crucial at this time. Wal-Mart does not do either. The NW corner of 6th and Wakarusa is commercial. We all acknowledge that. But deny the Wal-Mart on this corner to give the property owners a chance to find a business that will create those needed new jobs.

d. Northgate is for sale. Proof that even the banks know that Lawrence is overbuilt.

Gwen Klingenberg