

February 18th 2015

From: Donna E. Senk DBA PAPARAZZI (est. 1996)
To: Commerce Committee, PROPOSED BILL #726
Re: Renaissance District for Oakville/Watertown

Getting to the point, the following is a list of cultural aspects that The Watertown/Oakville District now offers:

- 1) Live theater productions at the Clockwork Theater (Main St, Oakville) Originally an art deco neighborhood movie house from the 1930's, now an award winning playhouse since 1981.
- 2) Live bands and open mike jams at the Red Door on Main St. (boasting the #1 venue in the State of Connecticut.
- 3) Country Cinema, considered a cinema treasure, a small one-screen theater showing second runs (Main St., Watertown)
- 4) The Watertown Art League recruits local artists that you can meet at their Annual Fall Festival where you can actually purchase the art. They have participated in town events with "pop up" galleries for the public's viewing.
- 5) Westbury Music is a school and store offering a full line of musical instruments, lessons from beginners to masters and repairs on the premises (Main St. Watertown)
- 6) Live and local musicians weekly at the Rock Garden Restaurant (Main St., Watertown)
- 7) Connecticut Dance Theater offering a variety of classes to children and adults under the artistic direction of Donna Bonasera providing educational arts training regionally, nationally and internationally. Students participate in town events, (Main St. Watertown)
- 8) The Watertown Garden Club is an organization that works with students and members to be involved in civic development through gardening.
- 9) Watertown Park and Rec has organized in the past two years a series of block parties in the summertime offering live entertainment, local artisans, eclectic food choices and family fun as well as open house by the Main St. merchants. This event is open to the public and has been a huge success indicating revival potential (Main St, Watertown).
- 10) Glazy Dayz, a pottery studio for children to work on their own piece of pottery from start to finish (Main St., Watertown)

Along with the cultural arts, one has to include the culinary diverse options: A new gem to Main St. in Watertown is the Main St. Grill, accolades in the New York Times. There are also Asian, Italian, Mexican, Portuguese and American. There are several dress boutiques, jewelers, and gift shops that line the trek from Oakville to Watertown. Watertown has 2 beautiful Golf courses, one private and one public. The town is home to the prestigious Taft High School with its beautiful campus and international alumni. Main St. Watertown is in walking distance and could only benefit by appealing to this segment via a cultural revival.

As an owner and operator of Paparazzi for over 18 years in Watertown, CT, I have experienced firsthand what the area has to offer as well as what it lacks in being a destination. When entering Oakville, the beginning of Watertown from the South side of town, one gets a feeling of nostalgia with charming old New England store fronts. The feeling is quaint but

lacking in “up to date appeal”. There are small businesses operating for many years next to empty commercial rents that cannot hold a tenant for more than 6 months. We, as merchants are anxious to work with the State to make Watertown a destination. We feel the town has potential but needs a facelift and a plan of action to develop the area as a place for commerce and culture. Watertown also has a downtown area with foot traffic, a benefit that allows people to get out of their cars and enjoy an afternoon shopping, dining, listening to music, etc.

We have recently formed a Merchants Association with 30 members and growing. The desire to grow Watertown into a vibrant downtown destination has never been stronger since I’ve been in business. A lot of new talent is emerging but we need the expertise of a developer/planner. I hope this testimony is helpful in assessing Watertown for the Proposed Bill.

Sincerely,

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