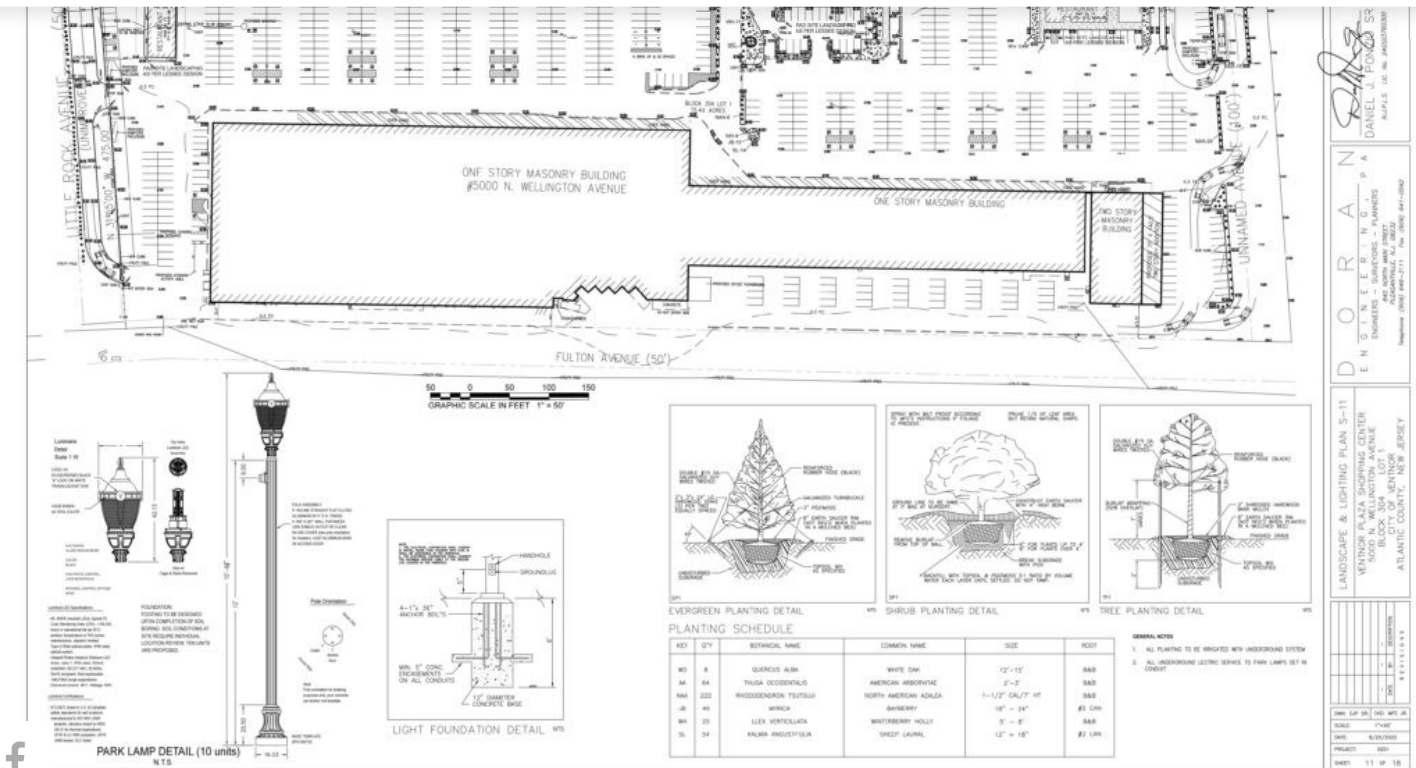


Ventnor Plaza neighbors are concerned about paving a road so close to their homes

Published by **Nanette LoBiondo Galloway** on November 8, 2022






Schematic for Ventnor Plaza redevelopment.

By NANETTE LoBIONDO GALLOWAY

VENTNOR – Following the Planning Board’s approval of the redevelopment of Ventnor Plaza shopping center, some nearby residents are concerned certain planned improvements will disrupt the quiet enjoyment of their homes.

Downbeach.com spoke with two residents who live on Victoria Avenue, which is adjacent to the plaza. Their yards back up to Little Rock Avenue, which is currently a paper street. About 50 feet from their back yards is a fence that separates the plaza from the city owned street. A little further away is an access road for inbound traffic to the mall. The fence provides some privacy for Victoria Avenue residents, but the developer’s plans for the long neglected strip mall include improvements to Little Rock Avenue. The roadway is paved about 50 feet from its intersection with Wellington Avenue, where there is a traffic signal, but turns to dirt for the rest of the block. Motorists have little reason to travel on the roadway. In fact, one resident said he planted a tree there.



 Little Rock Avenue is a partially paved, paper street next to Ventnor Plaza shopping center.

During the planning board meeting, developer Mark L. Greco of MLG Realty, LLC, who lives in Ventnor, said the plans include paving Little Rock and installing a row of arborvitae to provide a privacy buffer for residents.

While residents are happy to see the mall improved, they are concerned that trucks delivering goods to the rear of the mall will disturb them during early morning deliveries and heavy tractor trailers could rumble them out of bed.

Fred Mello said he understands the shopping center needs an overhaul, but he is disappointed neighbors were not notified of the meeting.

“I want to know exactly what they intend to do there. I don’t want people looking into the back of my property,” he said in a telephone interview last week.

His back yard fence is 3 feet from the street.

“I’ve lived here for 32 years, and I bought the house because it’s a paper street and non-buildable,” he said.



f

Pump station at the end of Little Rock Avenue, an unpaved road.

Mello said he also has concerns about stormwater runoff from the proposed raised parking lot.

“When they put that street behind me, where will the runoff go?” he said. “I just want to know more, and why we weren’t invited to any meetings.”

A check at the Planning Board office revealed that Victoria Avenue was not on the notification list. Applicants asking for planning board approvals are required to notify everyone within 200 feet that they have the opportunity to testify under oath about their concerns.

“That’s just common courtesy since we’re so close to the property,” he said.

Mello said he does not want to jeopardize much needed improvements at the plaza.

“I’m happy they will have more shops and restaurants, which the city needs,” he said.



f View from rear of Ventnor Plaza shopping center of fence separating the shopping center from Little Rock Avenue.

The city held a public hearing and approved a Redevelopment Plan for the property in 2018. The improvements Greco is planning fulfill the city's wishes to see the property revitalized and new uses added.

Commissioner Tim Kriebel, who is a member of the planning board, said Greco would incur the cost of paving the road, which would give the city access to a pump station at the end of the road. However, Mello said the city already utilizes an existing access road further down Victoria Avenue when they need to repair the equipment.

The board enthusiastically approved Greco's plans, which include raising the parking lot, installing a berm and landscape buffer around the property, repaving the sidewalk, and adding pad sites for Starbucks and Burger King. The board approved a variance to install a larger sign than is allowed by code. The company would also like to add a second floor to the building closer to Atlantic City that can be used as a banquet hall.

Victoria Avenue resident Bob Rosenblit asked what the heavy trucks delivering goods would do to their properties. Trucks currently access the site from the mall's main entrance, and they unload in the parking lot, Rosenblit said.



Paving

f Little Rock would provide access to the rear of the property where deliveries can be made like they do in other shopping centers, Greco said.

“The noise from early deliveries will wake us up. Our property values will drop,” Rosenblit said.

He is also concerned that paving the road would exacerbate an already wet area.

“That back road is a sponge for when the property floods during high tide storms. My backyard already floods. It will just get worse,” he said.

“Vibrations, water runoff, house shifting. We have a lot of concerns,” he said.

Greco said he spoke with one of the residents and agreed to meet with them this week.

“I understand their concerns, however, I think we did address many of these issues already in multiple meetings with the city, and after we meet this week with neighbors and go over the plans, they will feel much more comfortable with the project,” Greco said in an email statement.



today only 30-40 feet away,” he said.

Greco said he is trying to balance the safety of vehicles and pedestrians.

“By moving cars to the public street and the traffic light, accidents should be reduced, and the residents of Ventnor can visit the plaza for all of their needs,” he said. “We want to be good neighbors and we think everyone will be happy with all the improvements we are doing to this essential destination.”

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Nanette LoBiondo Galloway

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