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Big Mac attacked: W. Delray fights proposed McDonald's

New eatery would cause traffic nightmare along West Atlantic, residents say

By Mike Diamond
Special to the Post

A 24-hour McDonald's wants to come to Village of Oriole Plaza, a busy west of Delray Beach shopping center on West Atlantic Avenue. But area residents are not putting out a welcome mat.

"This would be a disaster waiting to happen," said Stephen Wolk, president of Gleneagles Country Club. "It is the last thing we need. Already, it is difficult to get in and out of the shopping center."

The Alliance of Delray Residential Associations and

its member communities are expected to vigorously oppose McDonald's plans for a 67-seat, 4,455 square-foot restaurant with a drive-thru on a one-acre parcel of land that is currently used for parking. The parcel is to the west of a Mobil station and just to the east of the Dunkin' near the Legends Way entrance of the 25.5-acre shopping center. It is directly across the street from Gleneagles.

McDonald's representatives will participate in a June 4 virtual meeting before the county's zoning commission to seek approval. They will appear June 25 before county commissioners for final approval.

Bob Schulbaum, president of the alliance, said this area of West Atlantic Avenue is

"bursting at the seams" and called traffic within the shopping center "treacherous."

McDonald's own traffic consultant estimates the fast-food restaurant will increase trips in and out of the shopping center by nearly 23 percent on a daily basis. That's an additional 2,000 cars.

McDonald's needs a number of variances. It wants to operate 24 hours a day, will be within 250 feet of a residential development — Gleneagles — and part of its landscape divider median will be just 5 feet wide instead of the required 10-foot width. Without the variances, McDonald's says that it will not build the restaurant. The variance for the landscape divider is needed

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to enable McDonald's to have two drive-thru lanes.

Oriole Plaza has 20 tenants anchored by a Publix supermarket. The plaza currently supports 274,156 square feet of commercial and retail space.

The McDonald's would be the first free-standing building at Oriole Plaza since it opened in 1986.

Wolk said there is so much traffic now that cars often back up into the parking lot

of Oriole Plaza to exit and they stack up on Atlantic Avenue trying to get in.

"It will make an unsafe situation even more unsafe," he said.

Lori Vinikoor, executive vice president of the alliance, said a number of other area communities are concerned about the impact a McDonald's would have on traffic patterns. They include Huntingdon Lakes and Vizcaya. She said the alliance has received more than 100 emails from area residents opposing the McDonald's.

She noted that developers routinely meet first with the alliance to discuss and review their plans before seeking county approval.

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TRAFFIC

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The alliance reviews plans for the county zoning commission and county commission. "McDonald's chose not to meet with us," she noted.

Vinikoor argues the shopping center cannot afford to lose parking spaces to the McDonald's. She said there is no reason for the county to grant the variances that McDonald's is seeking.

"They need to demonstrate a hardship and I do not see one," she said. "These are self-imposed hardships. There are other McDonald's in the area. We do not need another one here."

In its filing with the county, McDonald's argues that a "literal interpretation of the Code will prevent the proposed development from coming to fruition." It claims its plan meets the intent of the Code and will "benefit citizens of Delray Beach."

Efforts to obtain additional comment from McDonald's were unsuccessful.