

Palm Beach Post Article 8/27/2020

Delray Beach news: 24-hour McDonald's approved for Oriole Plaza



McDonald's will build a 24-hour restaurant at the busy shopping plaza across the street from Gleneagles Country Club on West Atlantic Avenue. (Provided by McDonald's)

PROVIDED

MIKE DIAMOND | SPECIAL TO THE POST | 3 hours ago

McDonald's is coming to the Village of Oriole Plaza, a heavily frequented shopping center west of Delray Beach.

Palm Beach County commissioners voted 4-1 Thursday to approve plans for the fast-food restaurant with a drive-thru despite strong community opposition. The Alliance of Delray Residential Associations reiterated its long-standing objections to the proposal, arguing it will be "most injurious to the most vulnerable population residing in our west Delray communities."

Lori Vinikoor, executive vice president of the Alliance, told the commissioners that the region cannot handle the additional traffic that a McDonald's will generate.

With the exception of County Mayor Dave Kerner, the commissioners accepted the staff recommendation that the plans should be approved because they were consistent with the county's growth plan.

Vinikoor called the approval "sad," noting that the commissioners had the discretion to reject the project. But she acknowledged that it would be futile to challenge the decision in court since the plans do "fit within the zoning rules."

McDonald's had a more difficult time obtaining approval for a 24-hour operation. It passed 3-2 with Commissioner Gregg Weiss joining Kerner in voting against the measure.

The restaurant will seat 67 people. It will be built on a one-acre parcel of land currently used for parking just to the east of the Dunkin' and to the west of a Mobil gas station.

In addition to the Alliance, opposition to the McDonald's came from a number of nearby developments – Emerald Pointe, Gleneagles Country Club, Valencia Falls and the Villages of Oriole. County staff received 151 emails in opposition to the project and three emails in support of it.

At issue was increased traffic on heavily congested West Atlantic Avenue and at the Legends Way entrance into the shopping plaza. While McDonald's received approval for a 24-hour operation, it will be unable to receive deliveries from 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. And McDonald's must provide additional trees along the east property line to allow for "visual buffering" to protect a nearby development.

Weiss urged county officials to see if traffic signals can be better timed to allow for improved traffic flow into and out of Oriole Plaza, which is across the street from Gleneagles. Residents there often have to wait for two to three light changes before they can return to their homes, according to Gleneagles President Stephen Wolk.

The additional amount of traffic will only "add to a terrible traffic situation," Wolk said in a letter to the county commissioners. Vinikoor reported that there have been 69 traffic accidents within the shopping plaza during the past 12 months.

Wolk raised the issue of security resulting from a 24-hour operation. Wolk said he was concerned that the adjacent Dunkin' will also now try to stay open 24 hours.

“The only people that will be visiting McDonald’s at 2 a.m. will be transients from the Turnpike,” Wolk said, adding that the west Delray area is predominantly safe. “Why take that away from us?”

The main entrance to Oriole Plaza is at Legends Way and West Atlantic Avenue, a busy intersection that Vinikoor called “the carotid artery of west Delray.” This project targets that intersection, she said.

The closest McDonald’s to Oriole Shopping Plaza is a 10-minute ride, according to attorney Scott Backman, McDonald’s agent. That is far enough away to warrant another restaurant, he said. In addition, he noted that the west of Delray Beach shopping plaza is in a region that continues to see new residential development, warranting the construction of another facility.

Email Mike Diamond at dimes706@gmail.com