

New Jersey Highlands Council **Letter 13**

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To whom it may concern, Living on the 173 Corridor on the line between Bethlehem and Union Townships for more than 50 years on the stretch of what was once called Old 22 from Clinton to Bloomsbury it is hard to watch as the lack of Commercial growth runs down this stretch of hi-way. I understand about the clean water and preservation. But there must be a more relaxed standard put in place for these Commercial Areas so that they are allowed to prosper. This corridor is suffering. Potential property developers are forced to give up, are scared away or don't even want to try to update, rebuild or build something new because the Highlands Act and with the Governing Bodies being so against any type building the builders just think it is much easier go somewhere else. This first of two examples is Jugtown Mountain Liquors in Bethlehem Township which about one half mile west of exit 11 on Rt. 173 on the west bound side. Approximately 10 years ago the then owner wanted to update and or build a new building on the same lot. I sympathetically watched and listened to him as he was denied and was not even able to get started after a year. Next they figured they would try and put on a second story and give the place a face lift which took a couple years to be denied. Finally they sold out to someone else who owned it for six or eight years. Not being able to make improvements the new owner could not make a profit so they just closed the doors a couple months ago. Another example in Union Township is the Shell Gas Station on exit 12. The Design Engineer, RBZ of Clinton told me the Owner has spent over \$120,000 to try and update his place. It is an existing gas station with a small building maybe 30' x40' they have been trying for years to update keeping the same footprint but can't even get started. They want to improve the looks of an existing building, remove the gas pumps make the place nice, give the Township more tax money and after 3 years they can't even get a shovel in the ground. This is not unusual. At this point he is in too deep to stop. This is a big reason why builders are leaving NJ only to be welcomed elsewhere and excavating contractors like myself (Brian Plushanski Const Co) are suffering because of it. I used to employ over 50 operators and laborers and mechanics and now I have just 5 operators and struggle every week just to make payroll. Thanks for listening, Brian P

Respondent

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Organization	none
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