

# Riverview residents oppose 'niche' retail outlets

**■ St. Andrews-style retail outlets would draw consumers to Riverview, suggests economic development director**

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A proposal to put 'niche' retail outlets in a section of Riverview has raised the ire of several residents, who claim it would virtually destroy one of the town's oldest residential neighbourhoods.

"In fact, the oldest residence in Riverview is situated on our street," notes Theresa Quigley, who along with her husband Louis, has been a resident of the town for the past 40 years.

"I know that the town is envisioning what they call a 'village-type' recreation of the area, with small boutiques, flower shops, craft shops, etc.," she said. "It sounds lovely. But people who have lived here a long time are generally realists, not pipe dreamers."

Quigley noted the town had a nice waterfront area that could have been converted to fit their village-type concept of retail outlets.

"But what do we have there, now? (We have) large grocery chains, fast-food outlets and, among them and dwarfed by them, one or two little craft shops. . . . So much for a 'vision of Riverview.' It seems that vision

closely resembles a copy of Mountain Road in Moncton."

Quigley was referring to statements last week by Coun.-at-large Sherry Wilson and Brenda Orchard, the town's director of economic development, in the wake of a "visioning workshop." The session was held at the Coverdale Recreation Centre to get public input into a new five-year Municipal Plan, which the town is preparing in conjunction with the Greater Moncton Planning District Commission.

What was most "exciting," said Wilson, was the idea of expanding the commercial area beyond Coverdale Road back to Philip Road to create a niche retail zone between Blythwood Avenue and Pine Glen Road. She said this would accentuate retail facilities such as the current Morning Glory, Rick's Flower Store and Marwin Interiors.

Orchard said unique boutique type outlets will draw visitors to Riverview and would be a much better way to go than opening the big box stores that are already in place in Moncton and Dieppe.

Not counting the apartment facilities on Blythwood and Philip, Quigley said approximately 100 homes, housing more than 500 residents, would be affected if that 16-block area were rezoned to commercial from residential.

"The residents of this area will see their house prices tumble, because who would want to buy these houses for residential use when no one knows what will be built across the street. . . . I hardly think that

craft boutiques will go in there. What we most likely will see is a strip mall with whatever stores is willing to try its luck in Riverview.

"With the Parklane Mall as an example, I am not optimistic," said Quigley.

Willmot Street resident Mike Magennis said the town would be "pretty hard-pressed" to find any resident in the 12-block radius who wants to see their neighbourhood rezoned commercial. "It is a very popular residential zone with three schools (Frank L. Bowser, Riverview Middle and Riverview High schools) close to each other.

"Once it is rezoned commercial, there is absolutely no control over what type of business might be started there," said Magennis. "Somebody could find out all of a sudden that their next-door neighbour has sold their property and they now have a 24-hour-a-day drive-through beside them."

If the town wants to put in niche retail outlets, he said they have Findlay Park and a 13-acre site on Coverdale Road, between the Lions Club and Campbell Auto Sales, that are already zoned commercial. He added that not one council candidate in the last election mentioned the idea of setting up niche retail outlets in this residential neighbourhood.

Willmot Street resident John Dixon noted that, during the visioning workshop, they were asked to put stickers on posters in terms of what they felt were high and low priorities. And no one put the idea of having these retail outlets in the neighbourhood as a high priority.

"In fact, the opinion we gave was the opposite," he said.

Dixon said the town began encroaching on the neighbourhood when the Superstore, McDonalds and Wendy's went in nearby. And now they are talking about putting walking paths through people's backyards and installing boutiques and other outlets.

"Nobody here wants that," he said. "It has always been a residential area and we want to keep it that way."

Orchard said last night that C. B. Richard Ellis Ltd. did its second retail study for Riverview in the past 10 years, and both times recommended the clustering of smaller niche type stores to complement the downtown.

And all the developers made it clear that these outlets have to go in the area between the Superstore and Pine Glen Road, she said. That is because the major facilities on Coverdale Road are needed to feed the boutiques, craft shops and other smaller retail outlets running off it.

Maybe, down the road, council might decide this is not the way to go, said Orchard. But at some point, she emphasized Riverview is going to have to make decisions regarding its economic future. Niche retail is a very good option, one that will dress up the community, not dissuade from it.

Wilson said this is just the very beginning of the municipal plan process and there are several focus groups still to come.

"People with opposing views will have every chance to make their concerns known," she said.