

TO: Chatham County & Town of Pittsboro Planning Board

FROM Ruth L Green
Owner 175 East Salisbury St.
Pittsboro, NC

RE: Zoning of Property

DATE: February 12, 2014

The purpose of this letter is to request and support re-zoning the block on which my property (175 East Salisbury St) is located from a C2 to a Mixed Use zoning. This change in zoning will help me to maintain the property in good condition and promote growth and highest and best use for the property and for the Town of Pittsboro. Below is information about history and current issues.

Ownership and Zoning History:

When I purchased the property at 175 East Salisbury Street, Pittsboro NC in 1976 it was zoned residential and was my home until 1999. At the time, except for the car wash, all the structures were residences. At some time during the 1990s the entire block on which this house is located (borders Salisbury St., Masonic St. Small St. and Thompson St.) was re-zoned C2. I, along with other property owners were unaware of this change.

In 1999, my house was struck by lightning and required 18 months of extensive renovation. I could not live in the house during the renovation but intended to move back into the house and changes made during the renovation were made thinking the house would remain a residence. As I moved through the renovation process, in discussions with town officials, I was told I would not be able to move back into the house due to the 1) length of time I was not living in the house during renovations and 2) the C2 re-zoning requirements. I was advised that my only option was to do the necessary changes to qualify the house as a commercial property. And so began a long and expensive process to bring this 85 year old house up to commercial code. This necessitated 4 additional months of construction time, personal investment, and expertise (provided by Gerald Baughman, NC State structural engineer). Structural changes required by the C2 zoning included adding structural support from the ground up to the second floor (removal of ceilings in order to reinforce second floor, adding structural beams from the ground to the second floor, widening of halls and doors adding a handicap ramp, etc.). I was troubled at this process and expense but at the time did not realize I had any other option. I still have additional and ongoing difficulties and expenses related to maintaining the house as a commercial property.

Between 2000 when the renovation was completed until October 2014, I was able to find tenants for the house as a commercial property. Because it is an 85 year old house, with each new tenant I have been required to undertake additional renovations and expense in order to respond to new zoning, fire, ADA, health codes and regulations.

C2 Zoning Issues:

Since October 2014 I have advertised the property for lease or for sale and have been unable to find either a lease or a buyer. Influencing factors include: an "overage" of commercial/office space for rent within the Town of Pittsboro, challenging economic conditions and recovery thus fewer new business endeavors, extreme difficulties related to obtaining business financing, and use restrictions imposed by C2 zoning. During this six months, there have been many individuals interested in the house as a residence but C2 zoning eliminates residential use and readily available low interest financing for residential properties. Many others have been interested in buying the house as a commercial property but encounter extreme difficulties in obtaining business finances. There are also restrictions and difficulties that eliminate potential business uses of the property. For example, both historic buildings and medical facilities can be located within in a C2 zone. But in both instances, ADA code requires total access necessitating an elevator in all two-story structures. Installing an elevator is not financially (\$120,000) or structurally practical in this 85 year old house. Thus, use as a medical facility and tax incentives related to historic property development are eliminated. Additionally, with each new commercial use, I have had to make significant changes and investments to meet all changes in ADA, fire, health and safety and zoning requirements.

Current Issues and Re-Zoning Request:

The property at 175 East Salisbury St. is in excellent condition, sits on a large lot (approximately .83 acres), provides ample parking and outdoor space, and fronts on both East Salisbury and Thompson Streets. To maintain this structure in its current good condition requires that I keep it occupied with suitable and responsible tenants and that it earns sufficient income to maintain it. Because of the challenging and changing economic times, it would be very helpful to have more flexibility in how this house and land can be used. Thus changing the zoning from C2 to Mixed Use would be extremely helpful.

I strongly request and urge that the Planning Board re-zone the block (identified above) as Mixed Use, providing more flexibility and options related to use, financing and growth for both current and future owners and investors. I am happy to provide additional information or come to a Planning Board meeting for additional discussion.

FYI: In discussions about this house, I have found Mr. Stuart Bass, Town Planner to be available, congenial, extremely knowledgeable and helpful. The Town of Pittsboro will benefit from having such a competent and professional person leading their planning efforts.

Ruth L. Green, Owner
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