

Neighbor supports Mahackeno

As a resident in the neighborhood very near Camp Mahackeno, a 50-year member as well as a former member of the board of directors of the Family Y, I support its plans to build a great new facility at Mahackeno.

Concerns about traffic congestion have been going on in Westport for as long as I can remember, even before the new Family Y was an issue. I'm sure that there were complaints about all the horse and buggies clogging up the streets at one time. And I'm old enough to remember the public outcry at the town's interest in buying Longshore. Some ideas just get better over time. The money! The traffic! Those who have not kept up with all the facts are mistakenly convinced that there is somewhere else in town that the Y can go.

First: There's no denying that our town has always had a lot of traffic. No matter where a new Y might go, traffic would be an issue. Westport's growth and affluence is a fact of life and its impact can't be ignored. I'm not particularly happy about all aspects of this situation, but I think that what we are getting in return with a new Y far outweighs whatever changes in traffic patterns may result.

In reality, with slated improvements at Exit 41, maybe a minute or so might be added to the wait at the peak time, or perhaps none at all. But it's a more than acceptable trade-off to me in order to have a 21st-century Y nearby. And the fact is, some of the traffic that now heads downtown to the current facility will be eliminated.

Second: For seven years, — including the months of discussions about Baron's South — I served on the board of the Y. We made every effort to find a site downtown or anywhere else that might make sense. We also listened to and explored every suggestion offered. I went on field trips with the board and our site committee explored dozens and

dozens of properties for viability of size, cost, parking, access, etc. Plain and simple — there was, and is, no option downtown! The Town has made it clear that town-owned land is not available to the Y. And there is no other location suitable or affordable for a Y to meet the future needs of the community.

What's getting lost in the complaining is that Mahackeno is an ideal place for the new Y. The Y already owns the land, which makes it affordable. It's centrally accessible, will preserve acres of open space and improve the public's ability to enjoy them, and will create the woodsy "campus" feel that was so desirable with the Baron's South proposal.

It will give handicapped accessibility to all of its programs — which the current facility does not and never could. The current Y is a patchwork of alterations and additions with a high percentage of unusable space and decaying facilities. I love the Y and am concerned that if nothing is done soon, Westport will be robbed of a wonderful organization and facility that can never be reclaimed.

Once the new Family Y is built, I am sure that it will be welcomed as one of the best-loved and well-used places in Westport. I don't want to imagine Westport without a Y as part of its heart and soul.

*Miggs Burroughs
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