

Letter to the Editor: Too Many Changes Motivated by Business

: 12/23/2015

By [Door County Pulse](#), [Peninsula Pulse](#) – December 23rd, 2015

I became a regular summer visitor to Door County beginning in 1959. Since 1991, my wife and I have made the peninsula our year-around home. My wife's first visit to the area was with her family in 1939. Over the years, we have observed many changes in the fabric of the county, especially those that occurred in Sturgeon Bay, the gateway city.

We followed the gradual degradation of some of the city's greatest assets, which we perceive as open views of the water and waterfront. First a huge restaurant building was permitted along the water on the west side, blocking views of the water and waterfront. Then a monolithic hotel complex was allowed to be built across the bay, limiting shoreline access and obscuring an open view of the water from the east side of the city.

We followed the indecisive actions of the city as regards traffic flow downtown, and perceived an apparent reluctance to embrace tourism as the engine of business in the community. Although business growth is important, it appeared to us that self-serving business interests usually won out over enhancing the city's viewscape, sustained efforts to make it a tourism showpiece, and creating people-friendly parks.

A case in point is the effort of business interests to force the establishment of a large hotel complex on the west side along the waterfront. Another proposal would move Selvick's tugs away from the Maritime Museum area, apparently ignoring that these tugs help establish the city's identity and are modern day icons of the city's past. In my opinion, too many changes in Sturgeon Bay have been driven by the belief of some influential "leaders" that the city is all about business first and the public good second.

As regards developments on the west side, my feeling is that creative reuse of the granary building and establishing a waterfront park are much more desirable than another hotel on the site, especially when existing lodging establishments have trouble filling their rooms. That old granary, like it or not, is a monument to Sturgeon Bay's past. It should remain part of its future.

The city has a great opportunity to invest, on behalf of the people, in development that emphasizes public greenspace and open views of the water for tourists and residents to enjoy. I hope the day comes when Sturgeon Bay pays more attention to creative people lobbying for public use of property rather than the handful of people who always think they know best when it comes to economic issues.

Paul Burton

Ephraim, Wis.

Article Comments