



UNIQUE  
DIVERSE  
AFFORDABLE

University Heights Collaborative  
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Buffalo, NY 14214  
[www.ourheights.org](http://www.ourheights.org)

City of Buffalo Planning Board  
901 City Hall  
Buffalo NY 14202

September 21, 2015

Dear Member of the Planning Board,

I am writing to you today on behalf of the University Heights Collaborative in regard to the proposed storage facility at 416 Kenmore Avenue. In a community that values a vibrant and walkable urban environment, our organization is actively working to ensure that these values are reflected in the built environment of our neighborhood, both presently and into the future. The proposed project, as it stands, does not take into consideration those values or the significant public feedback presented to Mr. Dash.

On Tuesday, February 10, 2015 at the Gloria J. Parks Community Center, the University Heights Collaborative (UHC) held a community forum to solicit ideas and perspectives related to the proposed public storage facility at 416 Kenmore Avenue. Residents of University Heights and the Town of Tonawanda shared their thoughts on the project, identified potential neighborhood impacts, and suggested next steps. The UHC Board met to review these comments on February 17. Themes that developed from community feedback were:

- Identifying potential alternative uses for site (e.g. subdividing the parcel, multi-tenant options, alternative supermarket operators)
- Reasonable mitigation of reduced neighborhood food access (e.g. aquaponics, community gardens, location for the farmers market, limited shuttle service from site, sponsoring Buffalo CarShare hubs)
- Improvements to ongoing investment in North Buffalo Rails-to-Trails project and Kenmore Avenue reconstruction (e.g. benches, bike racks, trash cans, public art, signage, etc).

This feedback was forwarded to Mr. Dash and his legal representation in a letter on February 18th. Many of the residents who joined our general meeting also attended the Common Council Community Development Committee meeting on February 24th to express the same feedback.

While the community was encouraged by Mr. Dash's willingness to work toward a mutually-beneficial agreement, our organization expresses concern over the Uncle Bob's Self Storage proposal as submitted to the Planning Board. Priorities identified by the community to Mr. Dash, including the soon to be completed \$1.4 million North Buffalo Rails-to-Trails project, do not seem to be reflected in the proposal. The Short Environmental Assessment Form for the project states that there are no public transportation and bicycle routes / facilities nearby, yet one of the largest investments in dedicated bicycle infrastructure in the region abuts the property and connects to the LaSalle Park and Ride lot. In addition, the proposed elevation for Kenmore Avenue lacks the proper fenestration for a street-facing commercial structure on a major commercial thoroughfare and lacks any relation to the surrounding neighborhood amenities. As identified in the Buffalo Green Code's Unified Development Ordinance, ground floor transparency is critical to pedestrianizing a commercial street.

The University Heights Collaborative urges the planning board to consider this project in the context of the surrounding neighborhood and how it can better leverage major public infrastructure investments in the area. In our original letter to Mr. Dash, in light of the loss of a major food vendor in the neighborhood, a Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) was suggested as an appropriate vehicle to develop a mutually beneficial solution. While a CBA is one option, in general, the UHC is open to continuing to work with Mr. Dash in an open and transparent manner. We look forward to a project that is developed through an iterative and collaborative process.

If you have any further questions or need for clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me at 716-698-4392.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Vertino", followed by a horizontal flourish.

Mickey Vertino  
President  
University Heights Collaborative