



HON. ALEXANDER MARION, MPA
CITY AUDITOR

November 12, 2024

Syracuse Planning Commission
300 South State Street, Ste. 700
Syracuse, New York 13202

Re: SP-24-23, Special Use Permit for 123 Ashworth Place

Dear Planning Commission Members,

I write in opposition to SP-24-23, a special use permit for 123 Ashworth Place. This proposed permit would create a parking lot in the middle of Ashworth Place.

First, this property is uniquely located. Just off the East Genesee Street Corridor, with ample access to bus, bike, and pedestrian infrastructure. This is an area where we have the opportunity to increase density because area residents do not need to rely on motor vehicles. Building more parking infrastructure in that area does not comport with the goal of greater density.

Syracuse needs fewer parking lots. A recent *Wall Street Journal* article estimates the number of surface parking spaces in the United States at more than 2 billion. Our City is filled with street parking, parking garages, and surface lots – issues highlighted by my office’s earlier report “Park At Your Own Risk.” This property alone is directly across the street from not less than three surface parking lots. On either side of the proposed lot, there is available housing. The City of Syracuse, we all agree, is in dire need of more housing and cannot be sacrificing more of our limited land space for additional parking lots.

Furthermore, the City’s fiscal situation and ballooning deficit is well-known. Parking lots are never the highest, best use of any space. This will depress the value of that land and reduce future potential property tax collections. Whereas, if this lot was available for future housing or other types of development, there is a greater likelihood that it will be an appreciating asset that will grow in its assessed value – and revenue – for years.

Additionally, surface parking lots are harmful to the environment. They have the potential to act as heat islands – absorbing the sun’s energy during the day, releasing it at night, when temperatures are meant to cool naturally. Surface lots also harm water runoff, making it harder for rainwater to naturally saturate into the ground. These phenomena occur around parking lots

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wherever they are built. Increasing paved surface area in this way will continue to harm our climate in the long term.

I urge the Planning Commission to reject this proposal, and future proposals for surface parking lots like this, so our community can have additional space to grow and thrive.

Sincerely,

Alexander Marion, MPA
Syracuse City Auditor