

# Welcome to the debate Mr. Universal! Let's talk!

The members of Please Don't Destroy Geneseo (PDDG) welcome the entrance of our fellow Geneseo citizen Ted Universal, and his as yet unnamed supporters, in the new group Keep Geneseo Vibrant and Growing (KGVG), to the ongoing debate about the Newman PDD application. Please be assured that we are also interested in seeing Geneseo increase its tax base and continue to grow and be vibrant.

We do, however, have serious concerns about other negative impacts that a new Lowe's could bring to our town and want to see those impacts properly studied and addressed by our representatives on the town planning board and the town board. In the interest of community harmony, we invite you and the members of your group to meet with us either privately or in a public forum to talk about these issues.

At that time we would like to discuss what appear to be a number of factual errors and misunderstandings in your recently published statement. Although space limitations will not permit us to address all of those here, the most troubling is your implication that the Gateway was zoned for this kind of use.

This is clearly not true. Your logic seems to be as follows:

1. The Gateway was planned and built for business.
2. Lowe's is a business.
3. Therefore the Gateway was planned and built for Lowe's.

Let's suppose that instead of a Lowe's, a nuclear waste processing plant, an adult business or a high-rise office complex was being proposed. Would you use the same logic? The Gateway was planned and built for a very specific type of business that is defined by the existing zoning to include "limited commercial" buildings not larger than 35,000 square feet. In contrast, non-retail businesses are allowed with very

few restrictions and no size limitations.

Also please be aware that your statement that the Super Wal-Mart is located in the Gateway is also untrue. That business is located in the village which has a totally different zoning scheme that allowed such Big Box uses. The Gateway is located completely in the town and the public money that was used to build Volunteer Road and extend water and sewer to the site came mainly from the county's Industrial Infrastructure Fund. That money was restricted by state law and county policy from being used for retail development.

We also note that in your rather long statement the words "Empire Zone" are never used, but this is a very important fact about the Gateway. It is one of five areas in the county, and the only area in Geneseo, designated to be part of this very generous business development zone. Perhaps this is because you know that Empire Zone regulations discourage those benefits from going to retail businesses.

We believe that the Gateway should be preserved for the type of development for which it was planned and which the Empire Zone program is designed to attract. Those types of businesses, such as light industry, research and development or office parks, truly will keep Geneseo vibrant and growing!

In addition, your tax calculations appear to be based on some fuzzy math. To begin with you assume that all of the sales tax revenue generated by a Lowe's is new revenue for the county. In fact, however, it is obvious that a large percentage of that sales tax will simply be transferred from existing businesses in the county and represents no net gain.

The same is true of the new jobs that are claimed. Many of these will simply replace existing jobs that will be lost as competing small businesses, run by our neighbors, are forced to downsize or go

out of business.

There is also a large piece of the puzzle missing in your claim that Big Boxes like Wal-Mart and Lowe's "place little pressure on existing public structures." Aside from the fact that police calls in Geneseo have gone up 30 per cent since the Wal-Mart opened two years ago, what about the cost of highway upgrades to accommodate all the new shoppers that flock to these kind of stores from up to 40 miles away?

Although it is true that Rt. 20A is a state highway, many local roads will also need to be built and upgraded to keep pace with the increased traffic and guess who will pay for that? To the extent that the town and county will have to bear these costs, your hopes for tax relief will quickly erode.

Finally, we have concerns about the quality of life that will remain after your kind of logic is employed, not just for this project, but for the many high-intensity retail projects that will inevitably follow in the future. Perhaps as a Booher Hill Road resident, it will take a long time for those changes to affect you personally, however, for those of us who live in or near the village these are immediate concerns.

We look forward to learning the names of some of your other members so we can discuss these concerns with them. We are also willing to engage your group in a public forum on these issues, which would be much more friendly and less expensive than conducting this debate through paid advertising.

The membership of PDDG is well known. You can see most of us at any planning board meeting. This letter is signed by some of the PDDG members that we could reach on short notice, but there are dozens more who are proud to be publicly identified. Will your members do the same so we can talk it over?

*Jim Allen  
Deb Allen  
Celeste Boatwright  
Phil Braachi  
David Campbell  
Nancy Campbell*

*Amy Carpenter  
Oliver Chanler  
Kurt Cylke  
Sharon Duffy  
Connie English*

*Cathryn Evershed  
Sally Fox  
Stirling Harris  
Kathleen Houston  
Anna Kowalchuk  
Russell Laidlaw*

*Bill Lloyd  
Bill Lofquist  
Wayne Mahood  
Frances Millard  
Mike Millard  
Betsy O'Mara*

*Liz Porter  
Kay Sheffield  
Corrin Strong  
Rock Vinci  
Sally Wood*

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## **Please Don't Destroy Geneseo**

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