

July 6, 2023  
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Sucette Harbor signs popping up in my neighborhood piqued my curiosity, so I investigated. The more I learned, the more this reminded me of a familiar case. This is referred to by the famous orator, Yogi Berra as "déjà vu" all over again.

I moved to STP in the mid-70s, bought a home in Riverwood, first block on the right. Settled in with my wife and 5 children. Everything was fine until a yellow rezoning sign appeared on the vacant land directly behind my back fence. This vacant parcel extended from the back of my fence to the Causeway exit off of I-12. A local developer was proposing a truck-stop with overnight parking, a Diesel repair facility, a hotel, restaurant, and a bowling alley to top it off.

The Riverwood Improvement Board felt this was an expensive losing battle and we should merely try to negotiate with the developer to gain minor concessions. I did some research and contacted J. Arthur Smith, an attorney from Baton Rouge, specializing in zoning. I sent him a retainer and he met with a number of us, outlining his strategy.

His plan was to accumulate as many groups, people, clubs, etc. who would be adversely affected by this rezoning. We obtained support from the Sierra Club because of the wetlands, St. Tammany Sportsman Club because the project impacted waterways draining into the Tchefuncte River and then into Lake Ponchatrain.

The developers original plan was to cut a new entrance from the I-12/Causeway exit to the service road near the existing Riverwood entrance but Mr. Smith knew that that proposal would not meet federal regulations and the closest entrance to the service road had to be at Country Club's main entrance. Now this development provided us with more needed support. The Country Club board was now on board as were the people of Country Club Estates, the PTAs of the local schools joined in. concerned about the children's safety exiting school buses on that narrow service road, dodging 18 wheelers. The Bus Drivers Assoc. had serious safety concerns.

Well, the rezoning for the commercial project was not allowed but several single-family developments were built on that parcel of land and stand today.

The commercial stuff was put on the North side of I-12 where it was more appropriate.

There are many analogies between my Riverwood case and Sucette Harbor which the City Council should consider.

The moral of my experience is to think of the future. This is a gem of a property; they are not making it anymore. Don't sell it short. Someone with a more Mandeville compatible project will come along.

Sincerely,



D.R. Saucier