

UL v. Piscataway

1/24/85

(1985)

Letter that Harris Steel Site is not suitable  
for Mt. Laurel Housing

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## WILENTZ, GOLDMAN &amp; SPITZER

A PROFESSIONAL CORPORATION  
 ATTORNEYS AT LAW  
 PLAZA 9 BUILDING  
 900 ROUTE 9  
 P. O. BOX 10

WOODBRIDGE, N. J. 07095

(201) 636-8000

TELECOPIER  
 (201) 636-0860

DAVID T. WILENTZ  
 G. GEORGE GOLDMAN (1922-1959)  
 HENRY M. SPITZER  
 WARREN W. WILENTZ  
 MATTHIAS D. DILEO  
 ROBERT A. PETITO  
 MORRIS BROWN<sup>o</sup>  
 HAROLD G. SMITH  
 FREDERIC K. BECKER  
 DOUGLAS T. HAGUE  
 NICHOLAS L. SANTOWASSO  
 ALFRED J. HILL  
 FRANCIS X. JOURNICK (1962-1982)  
 RICHARD F. LERT  
 JOHN A. HOFFMAN  
 STANLEY L. BENN

STEPHEN E. BARCAN  
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 FRANCIS V. BONELLO  
 VINCENT P. MALTESE  
 KENNETH B. FALK\*  
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 FRANK M. CIUFFANI  
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 STUART A. HOBERMAN\*\*  
 NICHOLAS W. McCLEAR  
 STEPHEN A. SPITZER  
 RICHARD R. BONAMO\*  
 HELEN DAVIS CHAITMAN\*

<sup>o</sup> CERTIFIED CIVIL TRIAL ATTORNEY  
<sup>o</sup> CERTIFIED CRIMINAL TRIAL ATTORNEY

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JAN 25 1985

MILTON B. CONFORD  
 JUDGE BEN SERPENTELLI'S CHAMBERS  
 COUNSEL

LAWRENCE J. FREUNDLICH\*  
 FREDERICK J. DENNEHY  
 PETER C. PARAS  
 RICHARD M. BROCKWAY  
 BRIAN J. MOLLOY  
 ANNE S. BABINEAU\*  
 ROY H. TANZMAN  
 RANDALL J. RICHARDS  
 CHRISTINE D. PETRUZZELL  
 BARRY T. ALBIN<sup>o</sup>  
 ROGER B. KAPLAN\*  
 PHILIP A. PAHIGIAN\*\*\*  
 BONNIE M. S. REISS  
 SHELDON E. JAFFE+  
 RICHARD M. METH

RICHARD P. DAINGERFIELD+  
 KAREN ANN KUBULAK  
 STEVEN J. TRIPP  
 RICHARD J. BINDELGLASS  
 LINDA LASHBROOK  
 CHRISTOPHER M. PLACITELLA  
 JAMES E. TRABILSY  
 MAUREEN S. BINETTI  
 JAMES M. BURNS  
 LILIAN MESSINA NUGENT  
 JOHN F. PAONE, JR.  
 MICHAEL J. BARRETT  
 AIMEE L. MANOCCHIO  
 PETER C. VISCEGLIA  
 ROBERT J. LEVIN

<sup>+</sup> ALSO ADMITTED IN V.I.  
<sup>+</sup> ALSO ADMITTED IN D. C.  
<sup>+</sup> ALSO ADMITTED IN PA.  
<sup>\*</sup> ALSO ADMITTED IN N.Y.

January 24, 1985

Honorable Eugene D. Serpentelli  
 Superior Court of New Jersey  
 Ocean County Court House  
 CN-2191  
 Toms River, New Jersey 08754

Re: Urban League of Greater New Brunswick vs.  
 Township of Piscataway, et al.

Harris Structural Steel Co. - Piscataway  
 Property

Dear Judge Serpentelli:

*repared*

This office represents Harris Structural Steel Co. ("Harris Steel"), owner of approximately 125 acres of land in Piscataway adjacent to New Brunswick Avenue; the site is designated as Site #2 in the "Site Analysis" report of Carla L. Lerman transmitted with Ms. Lerman's letter to Your Honor of November 10, 1984. Please accept this letter as Harris Steel's objection to the rezoning of its property from industrial to residential use; the objection is raised pursuant to the last paragraph of Your Honor's Order of December 11, 1984. We understand that a trial on the report will commence on January 28, 1985 and we request an opportunity to participate in that trial. Our arguments that the Harris Steel site is not suitable for Mt. Laurel housing include the following:

1. A July 12, 1984 Lerman report divides vacant land in Piscataway into three categories. Category II properties are those sites that may be suitable for residential use but

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Honorable Eugene D. Serpentelli

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have some factor such as being partially in a flood plain or being adjacent to heavy industry that makes residential development unlikely. The Harris Steel site is partially in a flood plain and, of course, is immediately adjacent to heavy industry, including Harris Steel's plant. Yet, the Lerman report fails to include the Harris Steel site in Category II and places it in Category III which consists of sites that do not contain obstacles to residential development.

2. Factors that Ms. Lerman notes as reasons to reject otherwise suitable properties from her list are present in the Harris Steel site: adjacency to industry, large common ownership and greater potential benefit to the Township as a non-residential use. I refer especially to Site #30 which was deleted in the November 10 report and will be developed as offices; this is Mr. Bernstein's client.

3. The Lerman report recognizes that the Harris Steel site would need "substantial buffering" to make the site usable for residential purposes and that the soils impose "'severe' constraints to dwellings with or without basements". Such conditions render a residential development unfeasible, financially and otherwise.

4. The Harris Steel site is the only property in the Lerman report that is adjacent to a currently operating heavy industrial plant. This condition is more severe than all other sites, including Site #30 which was deleted by Ms. Lerman. Site #30, currently farmland and also zoned industrial, is adjacent to an office park which is a more compatible adjoining use for residences than a steel plant.

5. Because the Harris Steel site is immediately adjacent to an operating steel plant, there is a substantial risk that its location will severely impede the marketability of the market rate units, thereby seriously jeopardizing the potential for successful internal subsidy of the 20 percent low and moderate income units.

6. Harris Steel has always intended to use its site for light and/or heavy industrial use, activities more compatible with an existing steel plant and yard than a residential use.

7. Development of the Harris Steel site for industrial purposes, complementing the existing steel plant, is more

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important to the long term viability of the municipality for employment and tax base reasons than is housing, as the site is one of the few significant nonresidential locations in the municipality. This is the same reasoning Ms. Lerman used in her July 12 report in rejecting Site #30 as unsuitable for Mt. Laurel development.

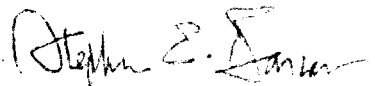
8. Our investigation has documented that New Brunswick Avenue will not be widened to 104 feet as stated in the Lerman report. The proximity of the Harris Steel manufacturing plant and of certain homes prevents this. This, then, would create a severe traffic impact with Mt. Laurel development, especially considering the Mt. Laurel rezoning in South Plainfield which adjoins Piscataway at the Harris Steel site. We also understand that the sanitary sewer system in the area is at capacity and that the storm sewer system needs extensive work. In fact, the brook on the site currently floods.

9. An additional 85 acres of Harris Steel's property is in South Plainfield and that tract is about to be rezoned for Mt. Laurel housing under this Court's Order of May 22, 1984. Harris Steel had always contemplated industrial development there as well and we respectfully submit that Harris Steel has done its "part" in the Mt. Laurel process.

Our client has retained a planning consultant firm which is prepared to review the positions set forth herein in testimony at the trial scheduled to commence on January 28, 1985. We plan to be present at that time and, as stated above, request an opportunity to participate in that hearing.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully yours,



STEPHEN E. BARCAN

SEB:ls

cc: Barbara J. Williams, Esquire  
Bruce S. Gelber, Esquire  
Philip L. Paley, Esquire  
Raymond R. Trombadore, Esquire  
Lawrence B. Litwin, Esquire  
Daniel Bernstein, Esquire  
Harris Structural Steel Co.  
John Rahenkamp and Associates, Inc.  
(Attention: Robert Hertzfeld, Esq. & Robert Gray)

Express Mail