

Dear Mayor Morrissey, Mr. Adams and City Council Members,

Concerning the mill site rezoning request, Tribune and Georgian states that 29% of citizens polled are against rezoning, 29% are for rezoning and 41% are for rezoning with conditions. I am a solid opponent against rezoning. The word conditions is what bothers me the most. Given the history of industry and their lack of complying to conditions is of great concern to me. This curiosity led me to a little research on the EPA website of Civil Cases and Settlements. These settlements are for violations of air pollution, water pollution, oil spills, waste management, clean water violations and various chemical violations. There were 96 pages with 8 to 10 Settlements per page. This confirmed my personal concerns. More times than not, industry breaks their promises. Promises easily made are promises easily broken. Industry seems to have a habit of making a lot of promises to get their foot in the door. Once the industry is established in the chosen city, all bets are off. When courting cities to establish a site, I don't think honesty is the calling card. Imagine that they told the truth? Would they say we will bring air, land and water pollution, along with chemical contamination to your city? Air that makes it difficult to breathe, produce waters of black foam that you cannot swim in and possibly undrinkable tap water? I don't think so. I think they would say something along these lines. "Our industry will stimulate your economy, bring in more jobs and encourage conservation." This sounds all too familiar. Yes, I am very skeptical of the term "conditions" when dealing with big industry.

We have come too far as a city to compromise our gains that we have made. It is said that when one door closes, another opens. This is the case with the closing of the paper mill. It was indeed bitter sweet. Approximately 1,200 people lost their jobs. Many of these people, however, went back to school and got a higher degree and better jobs. St. Marys started

attracting more people to the area, not just as visitors, but as residents. Once there were no more smoke stacks billowing stinking black puffs of air, land values increased and everyone started breathing easier. St Marys and notably, Cumberland Island, have become known globally as a conservation area, attracting ecotourism from around the world to appreciate our nature wonderland.

St. Marys has been moving in the right direction. For example, purchasing the land on the waterfront to build a park and buying the old Gilman house site for future development were positive, progressive actions. I feel that we have a vision to emulate other wonderful cities like Helen, Ga., Greenville, S.C., Augusta, Ga., Savannah, Ga., and Beaufort, S.C.,. All of these cities enriched and preserved their character by replacing industry with parks, shops, restaurants, hotels and pedestrian friendly, tree-lined streets. As a result, these cities are enjoying a thriving economy with revenue brought in by tourism and jobs, thus, increasing land values and enhancing quality of life for everyone.

We are now being led to believe that rezoning the old mill site back to industrial use is our only viable option. This is a 20th century solution to a 21st century problem. I believe with the right incentives, we can attract the right buyers. We must be patient and make the right decision now rather than trying to clean up our mistakes in the future.

Our community is at a precarious fork in the road. The path we choose will affect generations to come. This is why I urge fellow citizen's to look toward the future as we make this very important decision. Please say NO to rezone! Not under any conditions!

Donna Hooton

St. Marys