

LETTERS FROM OUR READERS

Don't give up our most valuable assets

As I write this through the hazy silver gelatin of summer air in Connecticut (a toxic stew we remorselessly pass along to our own young in the form of epidemic asthma rates), I am dismayed by reports of development plans for some of the few remaining tracts of open space left in the region.

Remington Woods, we're proudly told by Chamber of Commerce boosters, will become another corporate campus, while Pleasure Beach in Bridgeport and Short Beach in Stratford are targeted for some mixed-use development that is certain to forever alter their beauty and degrade their value as open space. Likewise, Veterans Memorial Park in Bridgeport, a portion of which is presently being clear cut by bulldozers for soccer fields, is also likely to become home of a new magnet school. What's going on here?



Consider for a moment what we will lose if Remington Woods is developed. The 450-acre woodland on the Bridgeport-Stratford line is about half the size of Central Park in New York and contains a mix of

wetlands, brooks, a large lake, meadows, cliffs and wildlife that has been largely isolated for decades. It has been described by the Connecticut Audubon Society as possibly the largest piece of urban open space in the Eastern US. Surely, in a densely populated area with degraded air quality, this land is critical for health and recreation purposes.

Both Short Beach and Pleasure Beach should be absorbed into the McKinney National Wildlife refuge before they are carved up for short-term gain that will ultimately further impoverish the area. As part of the refuge they will join 70 miles of protected Fairfield County coastline and will be preserved for future generations. These tracts of Bridgeport and Stratford but to the entire region as we work to preserve open space, clean air and

water, and the beauty of our landscape.

With so many "brownfields" left in Bridgeport, what collective failure of leadership and vision would lead us to even consider developing this land? I wouldn't follow the pied pipers that play the familiar jobs and economic development tune. These proposals don't even come near "smart growth" concepts which promote greenbelts and conservation of resources. And just what is it the area will lose if developers are not allowed to make money off public lands?

Once developed, the land can never be returned to open space—a resource which may prove to be one of the most valuable assets we can preserve for ourselves and future generations.

Brian Wallace
Fairfield