



To Members of the Planning Board, City Council, and the Citizens of Cranston,

Please accept this letter as our written testimony in support of the proposed Cranston Crossing project at Mulligan's Island. As owners of Mulligan's for over 20-years, we are uniquely qualified to reveal the true nature of this site, its potential, and the likely outcomes for the City of Cranston. When we started working with the State of Rhode Island and the City of Cranston to create a golf and entertainment center on a prison farm, many neighbors came out to protest the development and its potential negative effects on the community. Since that time we have become a strong member of the community, employed high school valedictorians, honor students, athletes and simply many fantastic kids from across the state who are now, moms and dads, doctors and nurses, and fantastic adults of all kinds. Mulligan's has hosted first dates, family reunions, campaign rallies, and corporate outings big and small. It seems that after all these many years, the development that no one wanted, now no one can live without.

But a lot has changed over the past two decades. Running a seasonal business has become very difficult due to rising costs, lower disposable incomes, and the changing global climate. In just the last few years our payroll costs (our single largest expense) soared as the minimum wage rose over 40% along with increases to the costs of insurance, property taxes, chemicals, and utilities. Similarly, families in our area are living on thinner margins and have less money to spend on recreation. After raising our prices to meet the costs, our guests can now make fewer trips to Mulligan's Island and we are making less on each visit. And with rising summer temperatures we have experienced far fewer days available for miniature golf and batting cages in recent years. Shrinking returns make it nearly unworkable to afford to reinvest in the facility to keep it updated with the latest equipment and technology. Our experience is not unique; countless golf and entertainment facilities have been closing at a rapid pace for redevelopment across the country.

And if the strong economic headwinds we face were not enough of a challenge, there's new competition coming to town. Last year, the City Council approved a zone change to a 4.8-acre parcel on an already congested Sakonnet Crossroad to allow for commercial recreation uses including a 3-story, 67,000 square foot Topgolf with a large parking facility. This multi-tiered driving range will have 176-foot high poles which can be seen from miles away. The lights throughout the facility will be intense and the noise and traffic will likely burden the residents of the neighborhood in perpetuity. The impact to our already challenged business will likely be cataclysmic when Topgolf opens.

While material changes to the zoning code have happened all around us in the City (including within nearby MPDs just like ours), some vocal opponents of this project have taken the position

1000 New London Avenue, Cranston, RI 02920



that this land is untouchable and must always remain what it is. That position is entirely inconsistent with the prior decisions voted on by the boards and councils that you serve on. Our simple, but important request is that Cranston Crossing be given the required amendments to the zoning ordinance and the necessary approvals to make the improvements to the property to build a contemporary retail center.

The project's developer has worked in earnest with elected city officials and the professional staff to meet the needs and concerns of all parties. He has put together a plan where the half of the property abutting the neighborhood will be made forever recreation and open space. The new traffic improvements will greatly improve flow around the entrance to the Pastore Complex. And unlike the overly congested Sockanosset Crossroads development sites, street traffic will not be an issue here.

The potential to bring Costco to Cranston is a generational opportunity to sustainably increase the tax base, raise revenues to the city, create jobs for our neighbors, and expand the availability of essentials at affordable prices for hard-working families. Costco is one of the most sought-after job creators in the country. Property tax revenue to the City will increase tenfold immediately upon completion and help boost our city's tightening budget, without cutting services, increasing tax bills, or affecting our schools. By all measurable standards, this proposal respects the abutters, the environment and provides massive economic gains for the City.

Mulligan's Island will not be in Cranston forever and presented before you is the best laid plan in writing the next chapter in the story of this property. The State of Rhode Island has already tried to reabsorb the land back into the corrections facility and without a permanent structure buffering the neighborhood from the prisons, there will be little to stop an expansion in the future. We would like the City to take an affirmative position on the long-term benefit to the community by approving Cranston Crossing.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Michael L. Friedman'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael L. Friedman, Managing Partner
Mulligan's Island, LLC