

9-8-80

R. H. FORRESTER ASSOCIATES

Fund Raising Management Consultants

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September 3, 1980

Mr. Joseph S. Murphy
President
Bennington College
Bennington, Vermont 05201

Dear Joe:

Earlier you wrote regarding a land development proposal for Bennington College, and while this is not my area of expertise, I have given it some thought and would like to respond.

First, I would agree with your sentiment about not being generally optimistic. Aside from the poor supportive demographics for the Bennington region, the general experience of colleges in such matters has not been good. I think both Dartmouth and Amherst have had some experience in this regard.

More importantly, such a project easily could divert the attention, energies and resources of you, the Board, and potential givers from the more important and practical needs and opportunities for the College i.e. major gift fund raising.

On a very practical level there are serious hazards with such deals about which a college should be especially careful. As an example, if you were to remain involved in the management of the property, you are almost certain to run into conflicts between the College's general philosophy and that required to run a business. Even if you were to remain clearly outside the management/ownership, the project would always be the Bennington College development and its problems would be yours in terms of public relations and dealings with faculty, alumni, students, etc.

Should you decide to continue to pursue this idea, the following are some recommendations:

- 1.) Form a committee of the board to review the project. Select people who can understand the concept and, if possible, are not important to fund raising.

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- 2.) Solicit competing proposals for feasibility studies and carefully review credentials of those doing the feasibility study.
- 3.) Financing in today's market for such a project is not good, perhaps low costs subsidized housing would be a good alternative.
- 4.) Following on #3, perhaps subsidized housing for intergenerational living would be an avenue to explore. Ever wonder where most of the artists who have not made fortunes or have residuals go to retire? Not only is this a potential market with attractive available financing, but it also is a use of Bennington within your tradition. Such a project could perhaps lead to substantial grants.

The above are my thoughts as a non-professional in the field.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "R. H. Forrester".

R. H. Forrester

RHF/1