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“A sense of Place” is where I call home.

I'd like recommend everyone read (or re-read) James Howard Kuntsler's 1993 book - The Geography of No Where, in it He claims he could blindfold anyone, drop them anywhere in the US, and they would not know if they were in New Jersey, Rhode Island, Iowa, Nebraska or anywhere else in the country due to the homogeneous cookie cutter architecture of our modern culture.

Block Island would be the exception that proves the rule. So, for the last several years when I saw the prominently displayed message on the Empire Theater asking, “Why is Block Island the only place without a game arcade?” My answer was clear and unambiguous: Because Block Island is not the Jersey Shore, that's why.

Nothing against the Jersey shore, I have been there lots of times and enjoyed all it had to offer. The Jersey Shore is available and welcoming if that is what you seek, a boardwalk and arcades adjacent to wide sandy beaches.

As I understand it, and correct me if I am wrong, what is before you is not just approving an arcade in the movie theater; it will not be limited to old school pinball machines. We will be opening a door on our unique downtown environment to everyone who has a few extra square feet of space deemed not productive enough for retail or food service.

Evidence the effect “screen time” has on developing brains. Research in schools as far back as 1962 tells us it is screen time alone which inhibits cognitive development in children. Harvard Medical calls it “Impoverishment”. Dr. Jared Horvath in his testimony before congress claims It doesn't matter if it is a 7-inch cell phone, a laptop, tablet, or a 60-Inch TV screen, It is the child's focus on the screen itself, regardless of where it is encountered, in school, a restaurant at home or anywhere else, that precipitates the decline of the child's image and language processing skills, exponentially, over time.

Block Island has much more to offer our children than just more of the same. We have beaches, walking trails, surfing and fishing, turfing and exploring clay head or the bluffs, snorkeling in our tidal pools and salt ponds, so many more things to challenge a young developing mind than a Mario Brothers epic or a “call of Duty, Bloodbath. Even “stalking the wily Clam” is more mentally challenging to a developing mind than Minecraft.

I urge our Town to deny the application for change of use legislation.

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