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Letter: Maybe the Berkshire Mall should be owned by the community for the community

Oct 27, 2022

To the editor: Regarding the future of the Berkshire Mall ("Lanesborough residents seek answers on proposed cannabis mini-farms at the former Berkshire Mall," Eagle, Oct.17), I have an idea that I believe should be seriously considered by the powers that be (Lanesborough, Baker Hill Road District, the Legislature, etc.). Maybe the Berkshire Mall should be owned by community members for the benefit of the community.

I can't help but note the past few owners of the Berkshire Mall (including the current owner) have something in common: out-of-county residents who only have an interest in making money off of the mall, nothing else. No care for the community, just monetary gain (or at least trying). We've seen this before with The Berkshire Eagle: an out-of-county company purchased The Eagle years back and stripped down the business to maximize profits, with no care or consideration for the community at all. But after local investors took ownership of The Eagle, quality improved and The Eagle was pretty much back to its former glory, albeit adapted to fit into the modern digital era. Maybe this is what needs to happen to the Berkshire Mall.

There has been a lot of discussion surrounding future use cases for the mall within the community, from the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's well in-depth report on redeveloping the mall to many letters to the editor regarding what could and should happen to the mall. It would be a huge shame to see all that work and vision wasted by out-of-county folk that have no business with the community and only want to make money off of something precious to most of the county's residents.

Hence why I believe the Berkshire Mall should be owned by members of our own community. Whether it be owned by investors that live in the community, or even by a government body such as the town of Lanesborough or the road district through the process of eminent domain - yes, I think that is an idea that should be considered - the Berkshire Mall needs to be owned by the community in some manner. It will only survive long-term that way. The mall has helped to shape the community here, and now I believe it is the community's turn to shape the mall for its future for our benefit.

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The writer is a former student representative to the Pittsfield School Committee.