

# Northfield restaurant loses bid for more seating, parking

■ The Planning Board says the additional spaces would be too close to residential neighbors.

By **CHRISTOPHER RAMIREZ**  
Staff Writer

**NORTHFIELD** — The city's Planning Board has denied variances sought by Ventura's Offshore Cafe to add an outside dining area and create an additional parking lot.

The board voted 7-1 against Ventura's application during a special meeting Thursday at City Hall.

Restaurant owner Lou DiVentura sought to build a covered and partially enclosed outdoor dining area on the northeast corner of the property along Shore Road, south of Mill Road.

The proposed 36-seat dining area would have included a 13-seat bar and fire pit with benches. The restaurant also requested permission to add 30 park-

ing spaces in a small wooded area at the rear of its lot.

But the new parking would have made for only a 15-foot buffer between the parking spaces and homes adjacent to the restaurant, which was an issue both to residents who attended the meeting and members of the Planning Board.

Commercial properties are typically required to maintain a 50-foot buffer in such cases.

Planning Board Vice Chairman Clem Scharff, who led the hearing in place of Chairman Richard Levitt, who had a conflict of interest with the application, said a majority of the board felt the restaurant's proposed expansion would come at a cost to the neighborhood.

"It's a quality-of-life issue," Scharff said Friday. "I like the restaurant myself personally. They're great businesspeople, and I'm glad it's in the town. But when you have neighbors, ... it's a balancing act."

He also said that an addition

of about 50 seats to the restaurant would "intensify the use" in an area that is mostly residential and required to remain residential under the city's master plan.

A day after the decision, DiVentura said he had hoped to increase business through the addition of outdoor dining and more parking.

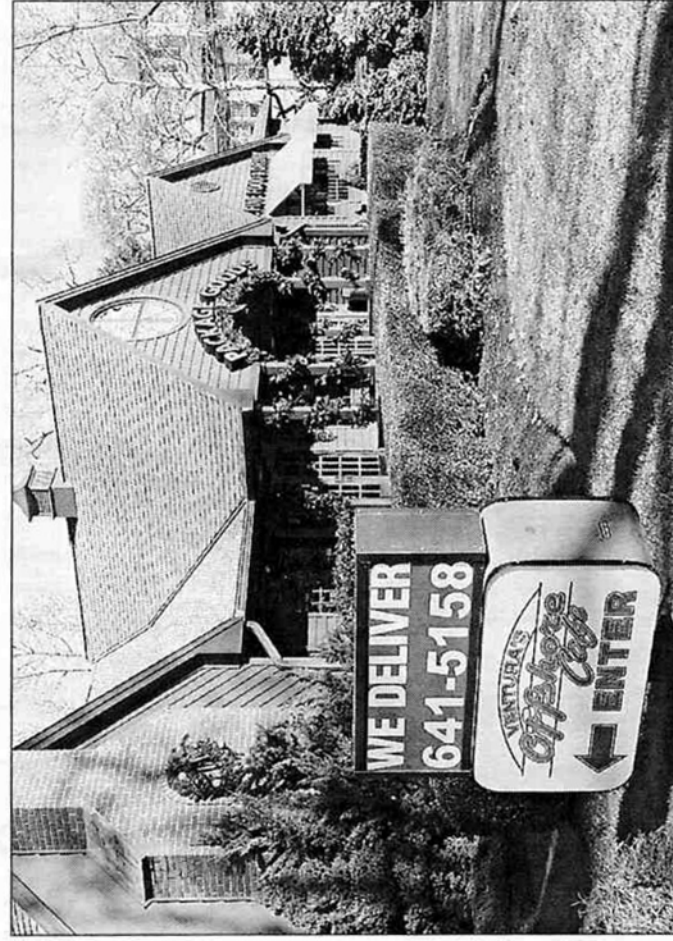
He also saw the extra spaces as a solution to complaints from residents about customers parking cars on neighborhood streets across from the restaurant, east of Shore Road.

DiVentura said he is "extremely disappointed" with the result and was unsure if he would alter the plans in an attempt to reapply for the variances.

"It came down to a lot of complaints from our closest neighbors who didn't want us to expand," DiVentura said.

Contact **Christopher Ramirez**:  
609-272-7147

**CRamirez@pressofac.com**



Staff file photo by Danny Drake, Dec. 2, 2009  
**Ventura's Offshore Cafe in Northfield sought to add a partially enclosed, 36-seat outdoor dining area with a bar and 30 extra parking spaces.**