

Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR

From: Cobb, Stephanie <scobb@richmond.edu>
Sent: Saturday, January 2, 2021 5:36 PM
To: PDR Land Use Admin
Subject: RE: Ordinance No 2020-269 Special Use Permit for Westview Ave

CAUTION: This message is from an external sender - Do not open attachments or click links unless you recognize the sender's address and know the content is safe.

To the Members of the Planning Commission,

I write to express strong opposition to Ordinance No 2020-269 for special use permit for 502, 504, 506, 508, 512, and 514 Westview Ave.

My home is located at 700 Seneca Rd. Thus, the largest set of new homes is planned for directly behind my house. (See below) Should this special use permit be approved, it will wholly alter the atmosphere of the home I purchased 10 years ago. I currently sit on a quiet end of the road with a park on one side and a quiet neighborhood road behind my home. Not only would I be required to endure the months (years?) of construction noise, that noise would not come to an end. Instead, it would simply be replaced with the noise from additional homes (and their occupants) and the many more cars that would use Westwood Ave, which is already a very narrow road.

The homes that are currently on Westview Ave represent some of the few affordable single-family houses in this part of town. It would be a shame if the city voted to (in effect) evict the individuals renting these homes in order to allow million dollar homes to be built on those lots.

The existing homes on Westview Ave have very large yards, which house a good deal of wildlife. Should that space be removed, the environmental impact will be high. I urge the Members of the Planning Commission to consider carefully whether such an impact is necessary. Similarly, members in Glenburnie take much pride in their property, particularly in terms of landscaping. I have myself just wholly redesigned my landscape in front and back in just the last few months. Should these houses be approved for construction, it will completely alter the sunlight I have planted for. I will sustain a sizable loss in plantings that cannot tolerate the reduction in afternoon sun. The impact of these new homes on existing properties on Seneca, which sit opposite them, should be considered carefully. What was, when I purchased it, a small but private back yard will become something that several homes will now look over into from the second floors of their homes. The Westbury neighborhood is, now, a very popular neighborhood precisely because of its well-established layout of single-family dwellings. Building so many homes on these few lots will alter the ambiance of the neighborhood.

Finally, traffic in the Patterson/Libbie area, especially with the popularity of Yellow Umbrella Provisions, is already very difficult to maneuver by car or foot. Doubling the housing on Westview will significantly impact the traffic problems. It will likely mean that those of us who live on the Patterson end of Seneca will have to stop leaving the neighborhood via Patterson Ave, because it will be nearly impossible to turn left at that intersection. The impact of these proposed new homes should not be weighed independently of other new construction on Libbie and Patterson, which will also add to the traffic difficulties in the area.

I hope you will vote to reject the proposed exception to the zoning guidelines. The combination of loss of privacy, noise, affordable housing, and traffic will, I believe, considerably devalue my property value and the value of all the homes along Seneca Rd.

Sincerely,

L. Stephanie Cobb, PhD



700
Seneca
Rd

(This is the only plan of the complex that I can find; I do not know if it is current or not, but it shows the direct impact of the planned community on my home at 700 Seneca Rd)

--
L. Stephanie Cobb
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Ebinger, Matthew J. - PDR

From: Darin Williams <sidsinatra@aol.com>
Sent: Monday, January 4, 2021 9:45 AM
To: PDR Land Use Admin
Subject: Ord 2020-269, proposed Westview Avenue development

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Dear Richmond Planning Commission members,

I am writing to express some concerns about Ord. 2020-269, a proposal by Markham Planning and FW Associates for development along Westview Avenue in the Westhampton neighborhood of Richmond. My home at 529 Granite Avenue is immediately Northwest of this proposed development and I and my neighbors will all be directly affected by it. My concerns and those I have gleaned from my neighbors are as follows:

Traffic and Parking: This 2 block, dead-end section of Westview Avenue is a narrow little street that is already choked most weekdays with the not infrequently illegally parked cars of employees of the businesses along this stretch of Patterson Avenue. I have spoken with some of them and they say they are instructed by their employers to park on the streets, not in the parking lots of these businesses. It's a real issue now, there is absolutely no current enforcement of parking regulations anywhere in the area, and adding to the amount of traffic coming into and leaving Westview Avenue will only make it worse. Also, the stoplighted intersection at Patterson and Westview is already hellish at certain times of the day for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians alike; the addition of more cars turning left there from westbound Patterson at, say, 5 pm on a weekday is going to be a big headache for anybody who must travel in the area.

Drainage: All of the houses along the 400 and 500 blocks of Granite and Westview Avenues and Seneca Road have swampy yards. There are multiple reasons for this but primary among them is that the city long ago buried Jordan's Branch Creek, which runs from St Christopher's School to Willow Lawn and beyond, so there is no place for rainwater to go. Years ago there was a 12 foot alley between the 400-500 block of the east side of Granite and the same blocks of Westview which aided drainage from these yards towards the encapsulated creek, but this alley has long since been taken over by the houses in this section of Westview and the drainage is no more. Adding to the problem is the fact that the businesses along this section of Patterson, on the south side of the street, all have rearward sloping roofs and downspouts in the back emptying onto paved parking lots. The water has no place to go but to our yards, and then it really has no place to go because the creek has been covered over. The amount of impermeable surfaces such as roofs and driveways this project would add to the neighborhood certainly aren't going to help the drainage issues, which deserve to be remedied regardless of whether this development goes forward or not.

Trees: There are several very large beautiful old trees currently in the yards of the houses on Westview that are included in this proposal for development. I notice the trees do not figure in the renderings for the new development, so I assume the entire area is to be bulldozed to the ground and then built upon. These trees are habitat for numerous wildlife, they absorb sounds and harmful emissions as they purify our air, they're wonderful to look at and enjoy, and they drink water which aids the aforementioned drainage issue. It would be meaningful to the people who already reside in the affected area for the trees to remain, as these trees are part of the overall appeal of the neighborhood in the first place.

Style of Development and Quality of Life for Existing Residents: There is nothing like this development in the immediate area. There are a couple of developments west of Libble that appear similar to this proposal and they have created traffic and other issues for the people who chose to live there prior to the development. Having a 35-foot-tall, 3500 square foot house six feet from the fence in my back yard will obviously create a much different environment than the trees and relative quiet I and my neighbors currently enjoy. These proposed houses are all larger than anything in the immediate area. I am concerned about lights at night, looking at the back of a big, ugly, expensive box of a house, and having new neighbors overlooking my now-private back yard. Mr. Lloyd Poe of FW Associates, the developer, has said he expects construction to last for 4.5-5 years. That's a lot of time to have construction going on in what is literally my back yard. We've just been through 3 years of the Westhampton Theater site project and another year of the new office building at Granite and Patterson, and now there's the Westhampton School project, which is unpopular to folks who live nearby, very loud 6 days a week, bigger than what was originally sold to the neighborhood, and not aesthetically to everyone's taste. Also, if this special use permit is allowed to go through, will I and my neighbors all be allowed to build additional giant houses in our 10,000 square foot backyards? Because that's how neighborhoods are destroyed.

In conclusion I would urge members of the planning commission to consider limiting the size of this development to something like 9 houses, which Mr. Poe had originally said was a possibility, and limiting their height to 30 feet or less, which is much more in scale with the biggest houses in the immediate area, and maybe requiring the houses to be built more than merely six feet from the rear property line. Replacing six 1000 square foot, single-storey houses with twelve 3500 square foot, 35 foot tall newly constructed homes is a big change to any neighborhood, and some of us have chosen to live here because we like the size and scale of things as they are. I would also hope something can be done about the current parking situation around here, that consideration be given to keeping at least some of the trees on the development site, and that, regardless of the outcome of this permit application, something be done about the drainage issues currently plaguing my neighborhood.

Thanks for your consideration!

Darin Williams
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