

WESTHAMPTON CITIZENS ASSOCIATION
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To: Department of Planning and Development Review
From: Westhampton Citizens Association
Re: Libbie Avenue - 14-Unit Townhome Project
Date: August 13, 2020

The attached comments on the SUP application for the project at 509 & 511 Libbie Avenue are being submitted by the Westhampton Citizens Association, which is the largest civic association in the west end of Richmond. This submission is on behalf of members who emailed comments and observations to the WCA after we notified our membership of the project and provided them with a copy of the SUP application. While these comments are from individual WCA members, we believe that they are representative of the opinions of a majority of the overall WCA membership.

As shown in the comments, there are substantial objections to the height of the project, the lack of adequate parking, the inadequacy of the setbacks from Libbie, and the negative impact that the project could have on the green spaces, traffic congestion and walkability along Libbie.

The area in which the proposed project is located is highly valued for its village-like feel. Our members' comments reflect the concern that if this project is approved in its current form, the area's village-like feel could be undermined, which would negatively impact literally thousands of west end residents and others who frequent the Libbie/Grove area.

In addition to the foregoing, the City should be aware that the proposed project is inconsistent with the Richmond 300 proposed master plan. Specifically, under the proposed master plan, residential buildings in the Libbie/Grove area are to be limited to three stories (see page A-25). If the City approves the four-story height of this project, the integrity and seriousness of the City's master plan would be in question, and it would set a negative precedent for additional out-of-scale developments like this in the future.

These comments are submitted to provide constructive input to not only the City officials, but also the developers of the proposed project. If there are any questions, please contact us.

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509 – 511 Libbie Avenue SUP Comments

From Members of the Westhampton Citizens Association

NOTE: In addition to comments on the 509 – 511 Libbie Avenue project, WCA members commented on the overall Libbie/Grove/Patterson corridor and those comments are also included.

- 14 houses on 2 lots! One can only imagine the traffic problems with that many houses. The road narrows to 2 lanes there also. Please no! We have enough congestion with 3 schools and 2 churches. We are going to look like Short Pump soon if they keep packing people in this neighborhood!
- 14 attached single-family units on two lots across from the Tiber!! You have got to be kidding. Just close the streets & put in bikes lanes because bikes will be the only thing that will move with that much congestion. People will be desperate to move away from the city. The [Westview project] is 12 detach on 6 parcels of land. The [Libbie Ave. project] on about ½ acre will be 4 levels.
- We are deeply concerned about this increased density. The units facing the Tiber are our biggest concern where they plan to put 7 times what was initially intended for that plot of land. This is truly outrageous and has zero regard for the existing neighborhood makeup.
- The Tiber is an assault on every count and has been since its inception. To have an equally densely populated plan across the street is yet another nightmare and migraine. Visual impact is horrific, traffic is abysmal at best and the lack of height restriction is the final blow. I am ill with the thought, but the reality is that it's a done deal and there will be many, many more following quickly on the heels of this monster.
- I do have concerns with the plans for 509-511 Libbie. I'm concerned about the scale, height, and square footage per unit. I believe it's an unfair comparison to use the Tiber as justification for this new project. The fact that the Tiber is on a corner helps mitigate concerns about scale. Also, it abuts existing commercial property on Libbie, and the developer constructed a stand-alone home on the Guthrie side to buffer the existing homes. This new project is smack-dab in between existing Cape Cod houses that are small in scale and will be dwarfed by the new buildings. I'm not opposed to multiple homes on that property; however, they should be more in keeping with their surroundings. I also question the architecture, which appears unlike anything within a several block radius of the project. Maybe something like Hampton Commons on Granite would be more palatable.

- Townhome developments on Maple (and the Tiber apartments) are just devoid of proportion, aesthetic appeal, green space, etc. Higher density ought to allow for green space, charming facades, etc.
- If the neighborhood must put up with higher density for the sake of developers' profits, I would ask that the design and orientation of the houses fits in with a feeling of walkability and have some aesthetic integration. EG. Studies show that townhomes with garages at front discourage "walkability". Designated visitor parking spaces should also be required. Some attractive green space at the front of developments and distance from the sidewalks would all help the homes "fit in" and enhance the neighborhood feel. 4 stories feel out of keeping with neighborhood buildings.
- I am opposed to both projects [Note: this refers to 502 Westview as well as 509 – 511 Libbie]. They present way too much density in a relatively small area and will increase parking and traffic problems already being exacerbated by the Bon Secours construction on Patterson Avenue.
- My feeling is that dense housing on Libbie is somewhat more appropriate than on Westview Avenue. Two rows of townhomes sound like an awful lot for that location.
- My wife and I have no objection to the changes on Libbie Ave north of Grove Ave. Of course, additional traffic will still be a problem.

Comments on overall area:

- I am not happy about the population and traffic increases being crammed into our neighborhood. Builders are undoing the very things that make this area so quaint and desirable. They can get big bucks for the square footage, leaving us with more cars, dirtier air, and fewer trees. Please stop the bleeding.
- Why can't they wait to see the impact of traffic from what is being built where Westhampton school was. The Quaintness of this area is being lost as the architecture of what has already been built doesn't seem to be the same as what is currently being built. Traffic and pollution continue to get worse and worse. The charm of this area is being totally ruined. Does the development ever stop? I would love to see them blocked for another 20 years or so.
- What use is a master plan and zoning put in place if you're going to change all that by special use permits and change your plan?
- Sounds like Westhampton may become a suburb of Tiberville. Density and congestion are my primary concerns, and, of course, the City is most interested in enhanced and expanded real estate taxes. Too, I hate to see this area lose its village-like aura in the name of growth - seems like we are halfway down that path.
- Stop building. Too much traffic. City will allow development anywhere for more taxes. Do not support.

- These developments plans are consistent with the desire for higher density in this area. Development must be confined to the Libbie /Grove/Patterson corridor, and not extend south, west, or east of Libbie Ave. at Grove Ave.
- Perhaps there should be some diversity in sizes of homes - allowing for a variety of ages and stages to enjoy them and for façades to feel less “industrial”.