

From: [JUDITH ALEXANDER](#)
To: [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#)
Cc: [Ty Alexander](#)
Subject: The Closing of W. 20th Street- Belle Heights
Date: Tuesday, January 2, 2024 3:50:54 PM

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My name is Judith Alexander and I live at 2132 Semmes Ave. in the Belle Heights neighborhood.

As a homeowner, taxpayer and avid voter, I strongly oppose the closing of W. 20th St. This will cause more congestion in an already congested area. We already face challenges getting in and out of our neighborhood. The new apartment development will just put a strain on our very narrow streets **within** this neighborhood if the apartment dwellers are allowed access through our neighborhood. Parking is already at a premium here and it would just become unbearable.

All of this will negatively affect our property values and any piece of mind we could have. Renters do not have the same mind-set about a property as do owners. The city seems to be interested in protecting the developers at a high cost to us citizens.

I would like to see W. 20th Street kept open for the benefit of the future apartment renters and have Belle Heights streets closed with no access by the apartment dwellers.

Sincerely,

Judith Alexander

From: [Larissa Hutson](#)
To: [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#); [City Clerk's Office](#)
Cc: amy.robbs@rva.gov; [Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office](#)
Subject: Comments on ORD. 2023-340
Date: Saturday, December 30, 2023 12:45:25 PM

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Hello,

As a homeowner in the Belle Heights community I would like to state my objection to the proposal to close west 20th street per ORD. 2023-340.

Closing this road will force all residents of the developers planned housing to exit via Belle Heights and our community is already struggling with narrow streets and one main exit to Semmes road. Additional traffic may increase the risk of accidents as drivers exit the neighborhood.

Please do not approve the ordinance.

Regards,
Larissa Hutson
2116 Tobacco Mill Street, Richmond.
Ph 804-651-7526

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Kathryn Wilson](#)
To: [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#); [City Clerk's Office](#); [Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office](#); amy.robins@rva.gov
Subject: ORD 2023-340 - KEEP W. 20th STREET!
Date: Monday, January 1, 2024 4:37:26 PM

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Hello and happy new year,

I am submitting my public comment for ORD 2023-340 regarding the closure of W. 20th St. I am a homeowner in the Belle Heights neighborhood and will be directly affected if 20th street is closed.

As a member of the HOA and full time resident, I have serious concerns for the implications of closing this route. The neighborhood was designed to have that road be an exit for the neighborhood. I bought my townhouse with this agreement with the developer.

If the road is closed, there will be significant traffic rerouting that will affect the safety of the neighborhood, especially when the surrounding land becomes developed. It will cause unprecedented and unsustainable congestion on Manastoh/previous 21st St. There is already a congestion issue at the intersection of Manastoh/Semmes currently, and this will exacerbate it. We have families and kids in the neighborhood- funneling the traffic to Manastoh/21st Street will put pedestrians at risk. It will make it incredibly difficult to head west on Semmes; make Sioux Falls Alley a shortcut (a huge safety concern for residents); threaten pedestrian safety; and worsen our already strained parking situation.

I attended a meeting with an attorney that represents the landowners of the surrounding property's interest and was displeased with their proposed solution(s). They discussed putting another East/West road from the neighborhood to Cowardin. They claim this will improve the neighborhood, and I completely disagree. They have shared that a stoplight at the intersection of Manastoh/Semmes is not feasible, so their solutions do NOT resolve the issues that closing 20th street will create. Additionally, people in Springhill and Woodland Heights neighborhoods also share concerns of the density of development that closing 20th St. will create. Several blocks of residents wish 20th street to remain.

Please consider this opinion in your decision and keep West 20th Street open. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,
Katy Wilson

From: [Janice Carter-Lovejoy](#)
To: [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#); [City Clerk's Office](#)
Cc: [Robins, Amy E. - City Council Office](#); [Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office](#)
Subject: ORD 2023-340 Requests by Springhill Neighborhood
Date: Monday, January 1, 2024 5:28:31 PM
Attachments: [ORD 2023_340 Petition .pdf](#)

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January 1, 2024

To: Richmond Planning Commission and Richmond City Council
cc Stephanie Lynch, Amy Robins

I appreciate the Commission's December 4, 2023 delay of action on ORD 2023-340 until the January 2, 2024 meeting. This delay gave the neighborhoods adjacent to the proposed closure of W 20th St. some time to examine the proposal further, meet with the developer's representative (Preston Lloyd), and speak with members of the Planning Commission, City Council, and staff,

The Springhill Old and Historic District and neighborhood has concluded that vacating the re-establishment of W 20th St from Semmes Ave south to Sioux Falls Alley will be detrimental to the adjacent neighborhoods.

We urge the Planning Commission and City Council to do the following:

- Reject proposed ordinance 2023-340
- Ensure the completion of W 20th St
- Provide safe vehicular and pedestrian passage at the intersection of W 21st St and Semmes Ave

The original plans for developing Belle Heights include completion of W 20th St. The street was also included in materials presented to purchasers of the new townhomes. That portion of the street grid is vital to traffic flow in and out of the Belle Heights neighborhood, *even before* approximately 250 new apartments are built along the 2000 and 1900 blocks of Semmes Ave (south side) plus twenty *senior* apartments on the 1900 block (north side) of Semmes Ave which have already been approved and are underway. The City's Master Plan also calls for completion of the street grid because it helps the interconnectedness of neighborhoods and helps vehicles and pedestrians move freely.

Every Springhill neighbor I spoke with about the proposal was eager to sign the petition communicating our request to require the completion of W 20th Street. Further, many shared their fear when traveling Semmes Ave when needing to turn into and out of the Springhill neighborhood because of uninhibited traffic speeds. Not only is it difficult for vehicles to enter and exit Semmes Ave, but pedestrian crossing is also treacherous. Vehicle speeds make it unsafe for pedestrians to get across to bus stops, other neighborhoods, and businesses. Some neighbors asked, "When will a traffic light and cross walk be installed at the intersection of W 21st St and Semmes Ave", and "How can we get

more police patrols to ticket speeders?"

A scanned pdf copy of the petition, accompanying illustration, and two pages of signatures from the Springhill neighborhood are attached herein.

Thank you,

Janice Carter-Lovejoy
Springhill Neighborhood

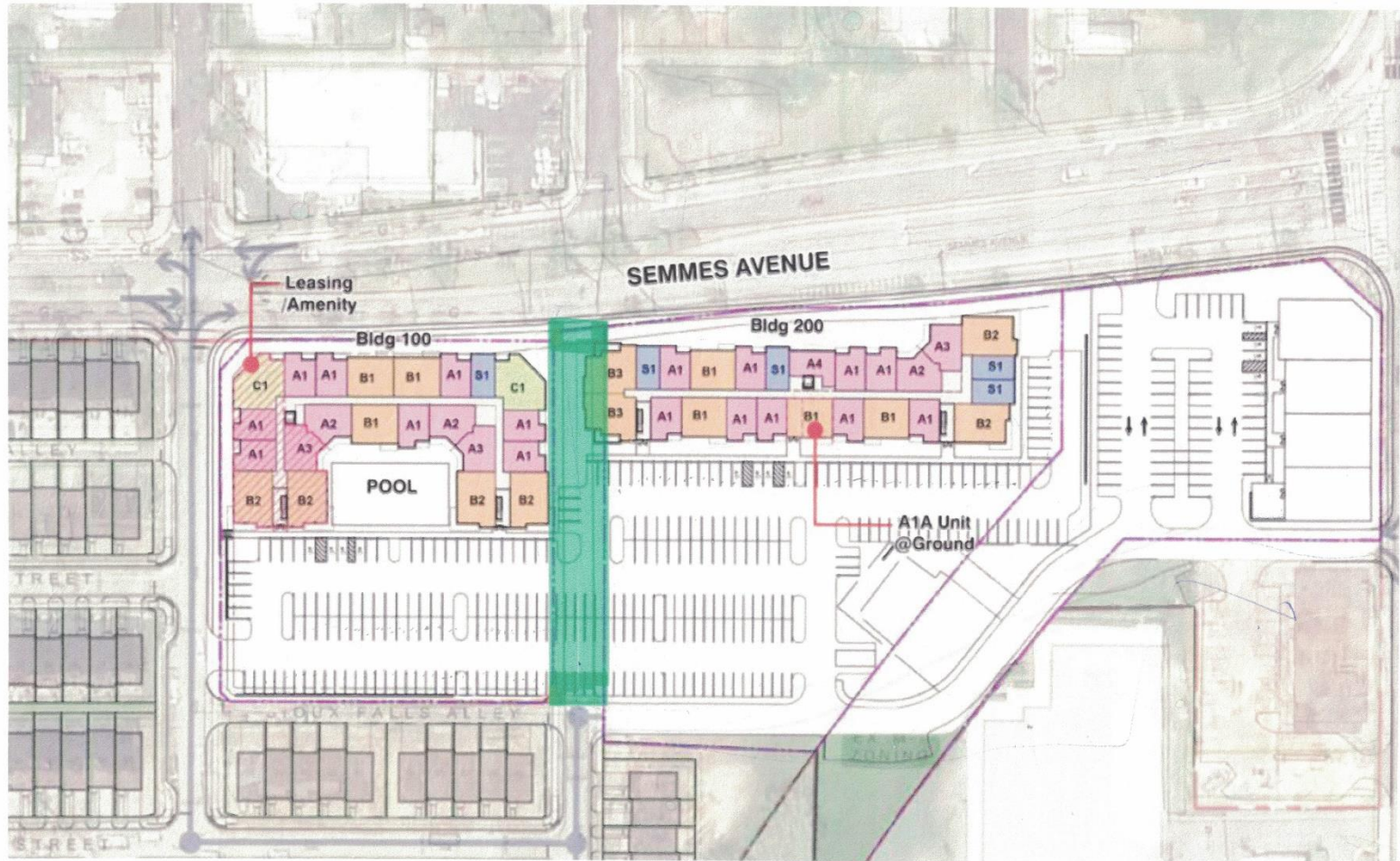
PETITION
FOR
TRAFFIC CONTROL AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY MANAGEMENT
Adjacent to 2200 – 1800 Semmes Ave and 400 block of W 20th St.

As the residential and commercial build-out continues along Semmes and Cowardin avenues, traffic volume will increased significantly. Traffic control and safety are lacking there for motor vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. We, the neighbors, are concerned that if W. 20th Street spanning Semmes Avenue and Sioux Falls Alley is not built, and traffic and pedestrian signals are not installed at the W. 21st Street and Semmes Avenue intersection, there will be more near misses, traffic accidents, and pedestrian injuries and deaths.

Is the City interested in creating a failure?

By signing this petition, I support the following:

- That Richmond City Council, Planning Commission, and Department of Planning and Development require that Harper Associates fulfill the commitments of their original, approved POD for the Belle Heights community with W. 20th featured as an entrance/exit.
- The completion of W. 20th St from Semmes Avenue to Sioux Falls Alley.
- Provide safe vehicular and pedestrian passage at the intersection of W 21st and Semmes Ave, so that access to the James River Park System can be safely enjoyed by residents of the Belle Heights and neighboring communities.



Name [Please Print Clearly]	Resident's Signature	Date	Phone	Address	Email address
Janice Carter-Lovejoy	<i>Janice Carter-Lovejoy</i>	12/29/23	804 898 2804	604 W. 19th St.	jelrichmond@yahoo.com
Steven Carter-Lovejoy	<i>Steven Carter-Lovejoy</i>	12/29/23	640 9561	604 W 19th St	scarterlovejoy53@msn.com
Allison Midkiff	<i>Allison Midkiff</i>	12-29/23		609 W 19th St	
Daniel Midkiff	<i>Daniel Midkiff</i>	12-29-23		609 19th St	
Julie Pinkard	<i>Julie Pinkard</i>	12/29/23	(804) 350-7599	602 W 19th	julie.pinkard@aol.com
Ed Slipek	<i>Ed Slipek</i>	12/29/20	804-232-6100	610 W. 19th St.	eddie.slipek@gmail.com
Chris Bolt	<i>Chris Bolt</i>	12/29/23	804-919-7008	Baywood Ct	Chrisbolt.runt@gmail.com
Thomas Brown	<i>Thomas Brown</i>	12/29/23	540-816-8487	411 W 19th St.	tsbrown1023@gmail.com
Meredith McCarthy	<i>Meredith McCarthy</i>	12/29/23	804-335-6335	609 N 19th St.	meredithmccarthy2@gmail.com
Taylor Karren	<i>Taylor Karren</i>	12/29		607 W 19th St	taylor.karren@gmail.com
Jessie Hendricks	<i>Jessie Hendricks</i>	12/29	804 239 5653	603 W. 19th	vthendricks@gmail.com
Jessica Hendricks	<i>Jessica Hendricks</i>	12/29	757-377-7907	603 W. 19th St.	vthendricks@gmail.com
FANNIE ROBINSON	<i>FANNIE ROBINSON</i>	12/29	511 W 19th St		
Judy Marcello	<i>Judy Marcello</i>	12/29/23	757-272-7919	512 W 19th St	
Cody Crossley	<i>Cody Crossley</i>	12/29		503 W 19th St	
Matthew Stucker	<i>Matthew Stucker</i>	12/29		503 W 19th St	
Robert Chelton	<i>Robert Chelton</i>	12/29	804-554-4086	505 W 19th St	
Pam Kelleher	<i>Pam Kelleher</i>	12/29	804-337-9486	600 W. 19th St	pjembar@gmail.com
Erin Kelleher	<i>Erin Kelleher</i>	12/29	804-358-7429	"	Erin.kelleher@kelleherhvac.com
Cameron Ritcher	<i>Cameron Ritcher</i>	12/31	540-560-5115	519 W 19th St.	cameron.richter@gmail.com
Emily Ritcher	<i>Emily Ritcher</i>	12/31		"	emilymoss213@gmail.com
Trevor Badow	<i>Trevor Badow</i>	12/31	804-300-3894	512 W 20th St	
MegAnne Wood	<i>MegAnne Wood</i>	12/31	804-301-9244	600 W. 20th St	MegAnneLocks@gmail.com
Elizabeth Berman	<i>Elizabeth Berman</i>	12/31	804-366-5103	604 W. 20th St.	bermancooksey@gmail.com
Christopher B. Montgomerie	<i>Christopher B. Montgomerie</i>	12/31		612 W. 20th St.	cbmontgomerie67@yahoo.com
Neryn Pally	<i>Neryn Pally</i>	12/31	804-599-8810	617 W. 21st St	kpally@mac.com
Ed Pally	<i>Ed Pally</i>	"	"	"	"

From: [Gerd Langenbucher](#)
To: [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#); [City Clerk's Office](#); [Robins, Amy E. - City Council Office](#); [Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office](#)
Subject: ORD 2023-340: Belle Heights Neighborhood Petition in opposition to the proposal
Date: Monday, January 1, 2024 8:05:14 PM
Attachments: [petition belle heights.pdf](#)

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To: Richmond Planning Commission and Richmond City Council
cc Stephanie Lynch, Amy Robins

With this email and public comment, I would like to submit Belle Heights petition against ORD 2023-340.

The delayed action on ORD 2023-340 has allowed Belle Heights Neighbors to review the Ordinance and meet with a representative of the developer, Preston Lloyd for additional information, and speak with city officials and representatives of adjacent neighborhoods.

With only one resident undecided, all other residents who have participated consider the proposed vacation of the public right of way and permanent closure of W20th St between Sioux Falls Aly and Semmes Ave as detrimental to Belle Heights, adjacent neighborhoods, and the new development and have therefore signed the attached petition which asks to

- Reject the proposed ordinance 2023-340
- Ensure the completion of W 20th St as required in Ord 2019-013 and promised to homebuyers in Belle Heights
- Provide safe vehicular and pedestrian passage at the intersection of W 21st St and Semmes Ave

No single resident has spoken in favor of Ord 2023-340!

It is important to understand that the community welcomes the development of the vacant lots, but is opposed to the closure of this vital connection to Semmes Ave which is in agreement with the Richmond 300 Masterplan, Ord 2019-013, and every single document available to Belle Heights homeowners during the purchase of their home, including the governing documents of Belle Heights.

A digital copy containing 66 signatures of residents of 111 Belle Heights homes is attached. The original will be available during the public hearing on Jan 2.

Thank you,

Gerd Langenbucher
Belle Heights Resident,
Future Transitional HOA Board Member

From: [William Kirk](#)
To: [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#); [City Clerk's Office](#); [Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office](#); [Robins, Amy E. - City Council Office](#)
Subject: ORD. 2023-340 - Keep W 20th Street
Date: Monday, January 1, 2024 11:59:35 PM

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Hello and Happy New Year,

I am submitting a public comment for the ORD. 2023-340 regarding the proposed closure/vacation of the right-of-way of W 20th St. at the intersection of Semmes Ave. My wife and I are homeowners in the Belle Heights neighborhood and will be directly and negatively affected if the right-of-way of W 20th street is closed/vacated based on the sole interest of a single proposed developer of the adjacent vacant lot.

As a member of the Belle Heights HOA and full time resident, there are serious concerns about the implications of closing off the possibility for W 20th St of being a road in the future. It's only a single developer who wants to have the ROW vacated in order for them to make even more money at the expense of neighboring landowners by building a large development on the adjacent undeveloped land without having to worry about the existing street grid. By closing down that section of W 20th St, that will result in nearly all traffic of the future development using W 21st St south of Semmes Ave (A/K/A "Manastoh Rd" in the Belle Heights neighborhood) in order to either: 1) exit onto Semmes Ave to turn Left and head West on Semmes Ave.; AND/OR 2) enter into and travel towards the back of the proposed development.

In short, the section of W 21st St south of Semmes Ave., is not designed (or sufficient) to handle an increase of any more traffic than it currently serves for the Belle Heights neighborhood. It's simply too small of a street and barely serves the current traffic volume of Belle Heights - much less handling more traffic from an adjacent development that is poorly designed to allow for sufficient traffic ingress/egress on its own.

If the ROW at W 20th St is closed, there will be significant detrimental impacts from the resulting oversized development that will negatively affect the safety of the neighborhood. It will cause unsustainable congestion on Manastoh/W 21st St. There is already a congestion issue at the intersection of Manastoh and Semmes currently and any closure of W 20th St would only exacerbate it.

My wife and I are also concerned that by allowing such a large development on the vacant land (which the closure of the ROW of W 20th St would allow), the resulting oversized development will inevitably not have enough parking spaces and there will be spillover of future cars looking to park in the Belle Heights

neighborhood - which already has barely enough parking spaces for current residents.

Plus, with many families and children in the neighborhood, any increase of traffic on Manastoh/W 21st St will be a safety issue for pedestrians and bicycle traffic. Having a huge apartment building or other large development adjacent to Belle Heights and W 20th St will hurt pedestrian safety, make it incredibly difficult to exit Belle Heights and head West on Semmes Ave, and threaten to worsen the already strained parking situation.

My wife and I attended a meeting with an attorney that represents the landowners of the adjacent property's interest and we are displeased with a solution they proposed. In fact, we really don't consider it to be a "solution" at all because it doesn't seem to actually solve any of the problems that the closure of W 20th St will create. The proposed developers discussed putting another road from the Belle Heights neighborhood with an exit out to Cowardin Ave. They claim this will improve the neighborhood, and we completely disagree. If W 20th St is closed, there is absolutely no need for a connection to Cowardin Ave, as anyone in the neighborhood can easily head East on Semmes a very short distance to the intersection with Cowardin and turn Right if we ever wanted to head South on Cowardin (or alternatively, head out the back of the Belle Height neighborhood to Perry St and out to Cowardin directly). Practically speaking, there's probably not a single person in the Belle Heights neighborhood that ever has trouble heading South on Cowardin - nor do we need a way to turn Right off of Cowardin and take a winding, S-shaped road into our neighborhood. In summary, it's hard to see how the proposed solution of a connecting road to Cowardin Ave. truly benefits Belle Heights. (Now, if the future developers of the adjacent land want to build their own connection out to Cowardin Ave to serve the purposes of directing traffic to their development from Cowardin, that is their prerogative to pursue)

Additionally, people in the nearby Springhill and Woodland Heights neighborhoods also share concerns with the density of development that closing W 20th St. will create. There are lots of people in the surrounding area who wish W 20th St to remain. Any future development of the adjacent land needs to simply provide sufficient options (like using W 20th St) for ingress/egress on to Semmes Ave as part of the development.

Please consider our opinion in your decision and keep the ROW at W 20th Street open. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,
William Kirk

From: [Crista Fore](#)
To: [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#); [City Clerk's Office](#); [Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office](#); [Robins, Amy E. - City Council Office](#)
Subject: ORD. 2023-340; Belle Heights
Date: Tuesday, January 2, 2024 8:51:33 AM

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I am writing to request

1. Richmond city council, Planning Commission, and Dept of Planning and Development require Harper Associates (developer of Belle Heights) fulfill the commitments of their original and approved POD for the Belle Heights community with W. 20th as an entrance and exit.
2. To complete West 20th St from Semmes Ave to Sioux Falls Alley.
3. Provide SAFE vehicle and pedestrian/bike passage at the intersection of West 21st Street and Semmes Avenue, so all neighboring communities on the south side of Semmes can SAFELY access to the James River Park System which is a main reason many residents like myself chose to live in this area!

Thank you!

Crista Fore

From: [Ty Wilkinson](#)
To: [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#); [City Clerk's Office](#)
Cc: [Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office](#); [Robins, Amy E. - City Council Office](#)
Subject: ORD. 2023-340
Date: Friday, December 29, 2023 10:48:03 AM

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Closing this street would be a poor urban planning choice and would make the area even more dangerous for non car users.

The developer said they were going to do it, so they should do it. Only changing your mind once you realize you could make more money is not good urban planning.

Thank you

From: [Jessica Lam](#)
To: [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#); [City Clerk's Office](#)
Cc: [Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office](#); amy.robbsins@rva.gov
Subject: Submission for Public Comment to Ordinance 2023-340
Date: Wednesday, December 27, 2023 7:59:15 PM

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Hello,

I am a homeowner in the Belle Heights community and petition Ordinance 2023-340 to permanently close the stretch of W20th St between Belle Heights' Sioux Falls Alley and Semmes Ave. This will cause so many dangerous backups in our neighborhood and cause even more chaos to the dismal parking situation for current residents. Please do not move forward with this ordinance!

Jessica Lam

From: [Abby Gurvich](#)
To: [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#); [City Clerk's Office](#)
Cc: [Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office](#)
Subject: Re: Ordinance 2023-340
Date: Wednesday, December 27, 2023 4:42:06 PM

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Good Afternoon,

Myself and many of my fellow neighbors are not in support of Ord 2023-340 that states "To close, to public use and travel, an unimproved portion of West 20th Street located between Semmes Avenue and Sioux Falls Alley, consisting of 10,486 square feet, upon certain terms and conditions." I live on 24th and have already seen increased travel on my street and despite multiple requests for traffic calming measures, all have been denied. This ordinance is sure to only out further strain on my street and those nearby in the neighborhood, solely at the benefit of the townhouses. I hope you will represent your constituents and renounce this proposed ordinance.

Thanks,
Abby Gurvich
403 W 24th St

From: [Pippa Holloway](#)
To: [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR; City Clerk's Office; Robins, Amy E. - City Council Office; Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office](#)
Subject: ORD. 2023-340
Date: Wednesday, December 27, 2023 1:55:05 PM

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Dear All,

I am writing as a resident of Richmond, residing on Semmes Avenue just a few blocks away from the Belle Heights development. I strongly oppose the permanent closure of W 20th St between Semmes Ave and Sioux Falls.

Over the past two years, Semmes Avenue residents have organized the Semmes Avenue Safety committee. We do not want Semmes Ave to continue to function as a high-speed thoroughway and are actively communicating with city leaders to advocate for safe, walkable neighborhoods. I believe that ORD. 2023-340 contradicts these goals.

Reopening W 20th would contribute to slowing down traffic on Semmes Avenue and within Belle Heights. The addition of a second outlet onto Semmes Ave, as outlined in the original SUP, would introduce traffic calming measures to a stretch where cars currently reach speeds of 50+ MPH regularly.

Furthermore, reopening W. 20th would help fulfill the promise of restoring the street grid in the area, enhancing integration of the development into the neighborhood. We are opposed to living near a walled-off suburban-style subdivision where residents must navigate traffic while racing in and out of the area by car at a single exit point. Our desire is for the development promised in the SUP—a pedestrian-friendly community that fosters connections across our wonderfully diverse neighborhood.

Please reject this ordinance and ensure the developer lives up to their original proposal.

Thanks,

Pippa Holloway

2510 Semmes Ave.

From: [Michael Gurvich](#)
To: [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#); [City Clerk's Office](#)
Cc: [Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office](#); amy.robbsins@rva.gov
Subject: Ordinance 2023-340
Date: Wednesday, December 27, 2023 8:52:02 AM

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.

Good Morning,

Myself and many of my fellow neighbors are not in support of Ord 2023-340 that states "To close, to public use and travel, an unimproved portion of West 20th Street located between Semmes Avenue and Sioux Falls Alley, consisting of 10,486 ? square feet, upon certain terms and conditions." I live on 24th and have already seen increased travel on my street and despite multiple requests for traffic calming measures, all have been denied. This ordinance is sure to only out further strain on my street and those nearby in the neighborhood, solely at the benefit of the townhouses. I hope you will represent your constituents and renounce this proposed ordinance.

Thanks,
Michael Gurvich
403 W 24th St

From: [Jason Hendricks](#)
To: [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#); [City Clerk's Office](#)
Cc: [Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office](#); [Robins, Amy E. - City Council Office](#)
Subject: ORD No. 2023-340
Date: Wednesday, November 29, 2023 5:20:24 PM

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I would like to voice my concerns for the relinquishing of this right of way for private use. It should be noted, this was an improved paved street until the recent demolition of the historic trolley repair facility.

Streets are important to connect neighbors and neighborhoods. They regulate scale and urban proportions through set backs (green space), sidewalks, trees, and parking. Here the re-establishment of this street could provide a critical missing visitor parking to the adjacent neighborhood. The horrendously inadequate parking is a result of the poor design by the very beneficiaries of this proposal. I live across Semmes in Springhill, and we now absorb the overflow parking from Belle Heights, compounding our own parking issues. We watch their residents and guests attempt to cross one of the most traveled roads in the city, without crosswalk assistance, we can only hope for their safety. In this case the street's redevelopment is also a critical public asset to relieve this parking deficit, but allow for vehicle access directly into the new development, and emergency vehicles as well.

Perhaps it's redevelopment should be at the cost of those who demolished a public asset?

I strongly would like the council to consider the benefit this street has to not only the residents of Belle Heights, but also the adjacent neighborhoods. Please review the type of development in the portfolio of this owner. I see limited benefit of a mega block suburban type, walled vehicle centric fortress spanning 3 blocks along semmes, hardly a neighborhood friendly construct.

Consideration should be given on what will be built and the land only conveyed upon neighborhood and council approval of a shovel ready project.

It should also be noted of a recent effort underway, with Belle Heights, Manchester, Sansboro, and Springhill, in association with the Storefront for Community Design to develop a vision for this gateway site that does justice to the city and the adjacent neighborhoods. We request time to allow this study to develop and have consideration.

Regards
Jason Hendricks
Springhill Resident.

From: [Janice Carter-Lovejoy](#)
To: [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#); [Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office](#); [City Clerk's Office](#); [Robins, Amy E. - City Council Office](#)
Subject: Important Info and Request Regarding Proposed ORD 2023-340
Date: Friday, December 1, 2023 9:28:18 PM

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.

December 1, 2023

To:
Richmond Planning Commission
Richmond City Council
Stephanie Lynch

The proposed ordinance (ORD 2023-340) is on the December 4, 2023 Planning Commission action agenda. The following week on December 11, 2023, it is on City Council action agenda. I request that no vote to approve or reject be actioned. Instead, please grant a continuance until the adjacent neighborhoods of Belle Heights and Springhill can meet with DPW and District 5 council representatives to discuss and make recommendations.

If adopted, the proposal as written will take away a number of existing assets and needed improvements including:

- the rebuild of that portion of W. 20th from the Sioux Falls alley (which was part of the demolished historic trolley repair facility) north to Semmes Avenue
- a second access point to Semmes for pedestrians, vehicles, bicyclists, etc. to and from Belle Heights
- an organic traffic calming device on Semmes resulting from a side street intersection, rather than making it easy for fast vehicles to travel the equivalent length of 3 unrestricted blocks to reach the Cowardin intersection
- trees or other plantings along W. 20th, and parking along it for visitors to Belle Heights and any potential commercial uses from W. 21st to Cowardin
- a Semmes Ave streetscape built to scale with the neighborhoods

Approximately 10,486 sq ft (approximately a quarter of an acre) is reserved for the rebuild of W. 20th street. Harper and Associates, the applicant and developer that currently owns the land parcels east and west of the planned W 20th extension, would exchange the street extension property for \$5000 to offset administrative costs, and the granting of an easement for new access to Cowardin Ave. The easement will essentially be an extension of the Sioux Falls alley east out of the development and IS NOT in the best interest of the neighborhood. Further, traffic exiting Belle Heights from "Sioux Falls alley" will only be able to turn right onto Cowardin, all such traffic intending to head north into the city center via Cowardin or Semmes will have to make a u-turn on Cowardin, or drive through a

Manchester residential neighborhood to get over to the Manchester bridge. Pedestrians exiting Belle Heights from "Sioux Falls alley" will have to cross Cowardin to get a bus heading north or east.

Note: in Harper and Associate's application to the city for the property changes, they state that the Belle Heights HOA approved of the plan. That's totally misleading because the HOA board is not currently in the hands of the residents and owners of the townhouses. Harper is in full control of the HOA board.

The commercial frontage should be developed in a neighborhood-centric way, such that it encourages pedestrians and slow driving vehicles.

I request the Planning Commission and City Council to postpone any action on ORD 2023-340 until the adjacent neighborhoods have a meeting with the Department of Public Works and District 5 council persons to discuss and propose alternatives.

Thank you,

Janice Carter-Lovejoy
Springhill Neighborhood
604 W 19th St.

From: [Sarah Sheridan](#)
To: [Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office](#); [Robins, Amy E. - City Council Office](#); [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#); [City Clerk's Office](#)
Subject: ORD. 2023-340 - Sheridan
Date: Monday, December 4, 2023 9:48:49 AM

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Hello all,

This is in reference to ORD. 2023-340, the closing of W 20th st between Semmes Ave and Sioux Falls. I am a property owner within a block affected by the closing at Sioux Falls and I would like to express my deep concerns with this proposal.

I would like to start out by addressing the line, "Belle Heights Homeowners Association Inc., a Virginia corporation, governs Belle Heights. The Board of Directors of the Association approved the vacation of the Subject Right of Way by written consent, a copy of which is attached hereto as Exhibit B."

- The HOA Board is developer controlled, according to the office of the Ombudsman, the only named board member is one Russel Harper Jr who is not a homeowner.
- The Transitional Board composed of myself and another member (who do not have board control) are strongly opposed to this proposal.

Additionally, there is a line in the proposal that outlines "Therefore, all parties with an interest in the subject right of way or the proposed public access easement have consented to the instant request"

- As outlined by the DPU terms in conditions within the proposal, "the applicant/owner/successor shall be responsible for obtaining the written consent of all abutting landowners to the closing and other property owners within the block affected by the closing"
- Property owners within a block (including myself) have not been asked for written consent nor did all property owners receive notification of the change (we just received ours in the mail but have heard from other neighbors on the block that they never received notice).

Moving to the issue as to why this proposal is not supported by my family as owners in proximity to the closure. My education is in Architecture and Urban Planning, I live in the City because I appreciate density and walkability among other things. While this proposal increases density of the parcel, it does so in a way that affects life safety.

- W 20th st. originally connected to Semmes before Manchester Town Center LLC closed/demolished it for construction of Belle Heights. It was communicated to all homeowners during purchase of the home that this would be a reestablished entrance once construction had completed.
- The proposed road to Cowardin funnels traffic straight to Sioux Falls Alley. As in the name, this is an Alley and therefore is much narrower than a road and has no sidewalks or other way of pedestrian access. Being a homeowner on Sioux Falls involves walking in the alley to access the back of our house and the driveway. Funnelling traffic from the proposed road to an alleyway would prove dangerous for a narrow pass that is already used as a cut through

from Cowardin --> Perry --> 20th --> Sioux Falls --> 21st --> to Semmes.

- The majority of traffic both from our neighborhood in addition to future development will require access to Semmes either through personal vehicle or public transit. The road to Cowardin puts drivers moving southbound on a road notorious for speeding in which drivers would have to make a tricky u-turn. Most current residents are either going into the city, north of the city, or east and west of the city. All of these options require utilizing Semmes to go either northbound or east/west. The proposed road does not serve the same traffic design intent as the current street at 20th st.
- Additionally, if there is only one access to Semmes, this could lead to the future development utilizing Belle Heights as a cut through to access 21st and Semmes ave. intersection. Belle Heights is a vibrant neighborhood that sees pedestrian as well as bike traffic throughout every day, this would prove detrimental to the walkability/safety of the neighborhood.
- Lastly, access on Cowardin as a more narrow road slows emergency personnel in their access of Belle Heights as well as the surrounding parcels. The fire station is located on Semmes, maintaining two entrances on Semmes allows for more open access in case of emergency.

I would love to see this parcel developed into something that as a gateway site to the southside, reflects what a vibrant and unique city Richmond is. I support urban density and projects to improve the southside while maintaining pedestrian/bike safety. Unfortunately, the proposal does not meet this criteria and would pose a significant life safety risk for my family, neighbors of Belle Heights, as well as members of a future development on that parcel.

Best,
Sarah Sheridan
Belle Heights Resident

From: [Todd Landrum](#)
To: [Oliver, Alyson E. - PDR](#); [Lynch, Stephanie A. - City Council Office](#)
Cc: [Robins, Amy E. - City Council Office](#); [Todd Landrum](#)
Subject: RE: Ordinance NO. 2023-340
Date: Monday, December 4, 2023 9:55:57 AM

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Hello,

My name is Todd Landrum and I and my wife, Jessica Landrum, are homeowners in the Belle Heights Community. This email is in response to proposed ordinance 2023-340. While we appreciate the further development of the property that further helps the area become a vibrant part of Richmond City, we expect development and growth to be done in a safe and smart manner. With that being said, we are in opposition of the proposed Ordinance NO. 2023-340 for the following reasons:

- Safety risk of community residents to include small children and pets
- Influx of vehicular travel creating bottlenecks on already narrow streets
- Reduction in public parking

W20th has always been communicated as a street

- In all official maps, Google, Microsoft, Tesla, etc, including all renderings used for the sale of properties in Belle Heights, W20th St has been a regular public street.
- The Declaration of Belle Heights, the Belle Heights SUP Ordinance contain the street as a public right of way and eastbound access to Semmes Ave.
- Purchase decisions of homeowners have been based on its availability for northbound and eastbound traffic towards the city and interstate highways.

I am requesting a 60-day continuance of this process to allow the developer and potential purchasers to meet with the neighborhood and review plans, benefits, as well as remaining close-out items for the Belle Heights Neighborhood.

Respectfully,

Todd & Jessica Landrum
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