

## Pamela S. Ulmer

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**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Friday, January 8, 2021 1:51 PM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

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**Submitted on:** Friday, January 8, 2021 - 1:51pm

**Name:** Marcia Chamberlin  
**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg City Council  
**Date of Meeting:** Tue, 01/12/2021  
**Agenda Item Number:** 4  
**Comment:**

To the Harrisonburg City Council members,

I am writing concerning the request for rezoning, a special use permit and over-development of 2 parcels of land known as 161 and 241 Blue Ridge Drive from R1 (single property residential) to R5HC (residential high-density, multiple family units). I understand this request is included in the agenda of the January 12, 2021 City Council meeting. I am strongly opposed to this specific rezoning and development.

I have lived at 920 Oakland Street, which is on the corner of Oakland Street and Blue Ridge Drive for 7 years. The 60-year-old, established neighborhood is quiet, peaceful and friendly and the 7.2 acres in question has been the closest thing our neighborhood – this whole part of town - has to a park – a bit of unspoiled nature that revitalizes us, and that acts as a buffer between our quiet, peaceful neighborhood, and the developed, noisy city that surrounds us. We don't have a manicured park with mowed lawns and sidewalks, but that 7.2 acres has done very well to give us that retreat to nature that we need.

Yes, we ARE an 'older neighborhood' – one without pretension, where we can live in our OWN houses with our OWN small yards – homes we can afford. We don't need or want a big walled development squeezed into that buffer of sanity; a development whose residents will have little in common with our neighbors, and will probably remain strangers, moving in and out every few years – transients moving on to better paying jobs elsewhere. And we will be left, facing a wall with windows – where all those strangers can look down into our houses whenever they want. I hope the property owners will decide to renew the lease the trucking depot – that depot has been part of our neighborhood for years, and having that active business there is much more preferable than being faced with the backside of a towering development.

With adding 140 units, the traffic for the residents of those units WILL increase detrimentally to the already clogged traffic bottlenecks in our neighborhood, and will force many frustrated driver to take shortcuts through our side streets. Also, now the neighborhood kids often play in the streets, because there is little traffic – if this development is built, it won't be safe

Also, the developer mentioned that 1.5 parking spaces would be allotted for each of the units in the development. He also mentioned that 'no more than 3 unrelated individuals' would be allowed to reside in those units. I strongly doubt that 3 unrelated adults would agree to only use 1 car (or 1.5 cars). I also strongly doubt that families living in those units would limit themselves to one vehicle, if both parents have jobs. There WILL be overflow parking into our neighborhood, making traffic through the side streets difficult for cars, city buses, garbage trucks, fuel trucks, etc. to access the homes in our neighborhood.

A few years ago, we had a hard rainstorm that dumped just under 5 inches of rain on our neighborhood. My house is at the bottom of the hill, and is at the lowest spot, except for the drainage field that the developer plans to cover in buildings and asphalt. Knowing the amount of water that flowed past my house and spread over that field to drain into the little tributary that flows beside the railroad tracks, it seems that Bluestone Land LLC has underestimated the amount of water that will be flowing through that field.

The developers insist that this block of 140 units will meld in – will FIT in our neighborhood. My impression is, that they know it won't – and they don't really care. They just want to squeeze these 140 units where they don't fit in, make as much money as they can out of every square inch, and hope that our neighborhood will decay and die away, so they can raze our single-family homes and plant more towering monstrosities where our neighborhood once thrived; just so they can make more money and the city can rake in more tax revenue.

There are many other places within the city that would welcome such development, our neighborhood is not one of those. Please leave our quiet, peaceful neighborhood the way it is, and find somewhere else to develop.

Sincerely,

Marcia Chamberlin

Property Owner

920 Oakland Street

Harrisonburg, VA

**Contact: No**

**Contact Info:**

907 Country Club Road, Harrisonburg, VA  
January 8, 2021

Dear Members of City Council,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed rezoning 161 and 241 Blue Ridge Drive (R-1 to R-5C) and the Special Use Permit to Allow Multi-Family Dwellings of more than 12 units per building. While development can be a positive thing, in this instance I believe it will be detrimental to the area of Blue Ridge Drive, Country Club Road and the surrounding neighborhoods.

Increased traffic is a major area of concern regarding this additional housing. Even now, Country Club Road supports an excessive amount of daily traffic. I have lived on Country Club Road for approximately 43 years, and the ability to pull into or out of my driveway has become an onerous task. Most all day, traffic is backed up an entire block or two, preventing the ability to turn into my driveway and blocking and backing up both lanes of traffic for extended periods of time. This traffic also prohibits the ability to back out of our driveways and has forced us to use our front yard and our neighbors driveway as a pull through circle just to be able to get out onto the street.

Pedestrian safety is also an added concern. The extreme traffic that we already see, negatively impacts safety for our neighbors who like to exercise and walk the neighborhood, especially the ability to get to a less traveled road. We also see daily foot traffic using Country Club Road as a cut through and with increased traffic, I am concerned for the safety of these individuals and the drivers who need to visually be on alert to so many added distractions.

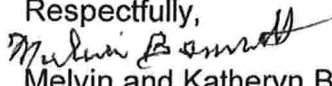
I am also concerned that the rezoning request is extreme. The desire to rezone a R1 single family residential area which if developed would include approximately 25 to 30 houses and rezone it to a R-5 high density multiple family residential area which would house 142 apartments, club house, parking lots and support buildings is preposterous. In addition, this request is incompatible with the surrounding properties, which are not 4 story or apartments. The special request to oppose the current Harrisonburg restriction and allow more than 12 units per building is only looking to benefit the landlord's pockets and not consider what is best for the current neighborhood or new residents.

Another concern is taking six acres that are currently wildlife, trees and waterway and the effect that 4 4-story buildings, asphalt and clubhouse will have on that. Has a study been designed and considered? What are the short- and long-term impacts on that?

In closing, I believe if this rezoning is approved and the planned development completed, the residential neighborhoods surrounding the property will witness a dramatic increase in traffic in an already heavily congested area which will lead to safety concerns and possibly more accidents and injuries. The proposed rezoning is inconsistent with the neighborhood context and to our detriment wants to ignore current Harrisonburg restrictions. The plan will also affect the current wildlife and waterways of the area.

I am asking the counsel to put themselves in the shoes of the current residents and consider if they lived in this neighborhood. Personally, I don't want 4 story building housing 142 apartments 4 doors down the road from me. I don't want even more traffic as I return from work every evening. I think we need to put safety, congestion and the current neighborhood ahead of making a dollar.

Thanks for your consideration to our request to deny this proposed rezoning.

Respectfully,  
  
Melvin and Katheryn Bennett 