



HARRISONBURG - ROCKINGHAM
Chamber of Commerce

January 17, 2023

Dear Members of City Council, Planning Commission and Staff,

The Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce would like to register our support for the proposed Bluestone Town Center Housing project.

As you are aware, the business community, through the Chamber, have been actively working on the issues of childcare, transportation and affordable housing as they relate to workforce development. Housing is a critical need and key piece to our local workforce needs.

We feel that the Bluestone project can be a “game-changing” decision for our area and a project we, as a community, will own together and see the benefits to be had for all.

The project developer, along with the Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority have proposed not only housing, but offices and other services such as childcare, which is another critical need. They have also discussed their willingness to make modifications and work with the city to address any concerns that might arise such as, but not limited to, environmental sustainability, traffic and transportation, and provisions for affordable housing in both rental and for-purchase dwellings.

Transportation routinely seems to be an issue when developments are proposed. The developer has talked about the willingness to construct turn lanes, traffic lights, sidewalks, crosswalks, and additional bus stops along with the appropriate infrastructure. We are happy to see these proffers put forward and particularly pleased to see transit included as that will be key for workforce connectivity.

We also understand that there have been questions about the project as it relates to the current comprehensive plan. It should be noted that the current plan was developed in 2018 and is due to be reviewed this year. A lot has changed in those five years, and much will change over the next several, but action needs to be taken now.

City staff have done their due diligence and we were pleased to see recommendations of general approval with suggested improvements. As your Chamber of Commerce and a representative of the business community at large, we strongly encourage you to also signal your approval for this project.

As your community partner, we will work with you and the developer to ensure the Bluestone Town Center Housing project is a model for other communities across the Commonwealth and to provide the housing we all desperately need.

Rest assured that when this project is approved, the Chamber of Commerce looks forward to standing with you to show we are all serious about housing and that the time is now.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Quinn', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Christopher Quinn
President & CEO
Harrisonburg-Rockingham Chamber of Commerce

Thanh Dang

From: Shawn Tysinger <turnaleaflandscape@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 5:38 PM
To: Thanh Dang
Subject: BTC

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Hello.

My name is Shawn Tysinger. I live at 860 Garbers Church Road. I am writing this letter in disapproval of the Bluestone town center. I disapprove this for many reasons. Higher taxes are guaranteed due to this project, which Harrisonburg is already faced with having very high tax rates. This will put a burden on our school systems where we already fight for space, teacher shortages, and staggered bus schedules due to shortages of buses and drivers. This will also put a strain on our roadways nearby the location which was graded poorly in the traffic study. This will burden our safety officers and fire departments as well. It will affect the environment by building this enormous facility in the area proposed. I feel affordable housing is needed but not of this size to begin dealing with the issues. There is very few opportunities for employment in this area, so where will people work that may not have transportation. There is no entertainment value in this area as well, not very many places to go eat or things to do. I love heritage oaks golf course and feel that the course will end up dealing with people using the course in manners not intended which will damage the course itself. The city just opened the Bluestone trail which I think is ok, but I've had kids and adults crossing my property from the path. This development will increase trespassing opportunities of nearby properties in my opinion. Please do not pass approval to this Bluestone town center. It hasn't been thought through and is a very unprofessional decision of the city. Think about all the tax payers, not just a select few. This "affordable" project will make it unaffordable for many other residents. I disapprove!!!!

Concerned neighbor
Shawn Tysinger

Thanh Dang

From: Pamela S. Ulmer
Sent: Wednesday, January 18, 2023 8:29 AM
To: Thanh Dang
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

From: HarrisonburgVA.gov via HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 6:19 PM
To: Pamela S. Ulmer <Pamela.Ulmer@harrisonburgva.gov>
Subject: Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

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Submitted on: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 - 6:18pm

Name: Erica Lewis
Type of Meeting: Harrisonburg Planning Commission
Date of Meeting: Tue, 01/17/2023
Agenda Item Number: 4.1

Comment:

According to the PEW Charitable foundation, property taxes are the central pillar of economic stability in small and mid-sized US towns and “by far” their largest tax source. In Virginia specifically, property taxes account for more than 70% of local government funding.

Thus, I set out to answer the questions.... What percentage of citizens need to be tax-paying to maintain a city? I couldn't find an exact answer. What I found...

In 2021 the median income in Harrisonburg city was 51,000 compared to 67,000 in Rockingham County.

According to federal data, in 2020, 25.5% of people in Harrisonburg, VA, lived in poverty. This is a rate 150% higher than the Virginia average.

This raises important questions. How might people currently experiencing poverty be given the best chance at good lives while maintaining a healthy city?

HRHA and EquityPlus still need to address this question.

In the absence of this long-term thinking. I request that we ask them to do a small-scale project, 100 or 200 units. See if they earn our trust and test how the change affects our city, including our schools which I've run out of time to mention in my research explaining my concerns.

Contact: No
Contact Info:




Mr. Adam Fletcher
Director of Community Development
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Dear Mr. Fletcher,

The Harrisonburg Rockingham Association of Realtors takes an active role in promoting homeownership and affordability on our community. It is our business and focus to make sure that local markets are well served across the price spectrum and for both ownership and rental occupancy. Our membership has been following the very important and “game changing” proposed Bluestone Town Center development which is before the City for approval in southwestern Harrisonburg and want to evidence our enthusiastic support for the new project.

The need for creative partnerships is vital in overcoming the housing shortage in our community. The partnership between Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority and Equity Plus on the affordable workforce housing development at Bluestone Town Center is an example of how these partnerships can bring together a project that can greatly benefit many residents in our area. By leveraging the public housing expertise and experience of HRHA, Bluestone makes excellent use of finite public housing dollars to house citizens living at or below median area incomes who are key components of a healthy workforce.

Harrisonburg City is very much in need of homes that are affordable for teachers, police officers, fire fighters, and other civil servants who are priced out of the current market, not to mention are large blue collar and service industry workforce. We are already over 1,000 units short of meeting current housing demand according to HRHA data. Local employers from our major manufacturing, agricultural, distribution, educational, healthcare and tourism economic base are having trouble recruiting workers because of the local lack of both rental and for sale housing. Small business owners of all types are facing a similar shortage of workers for hire and affordable places for their workers to live in the local community. REALTORS® see this firsthand as we struggle to find available and affordable options for our clients.





Bluestone Town Center also offers some of the most environmentally friendly housing types. It is shown in study after study that approving more dense housing types is much more energy efficient and environmentally friendly than approving traditional detached single-family communities on a per residence basis.

We need to House Harrisonburg Now, and support housing for all. We need to be the Friendly City for all. We are happy to support the work that is being done to expand critical housing options in our community. The most dangerous words in progressive and affordable housing policy remain, "I(We) are in favor of affordable housing options, but... traffic, parking, schools, et al." These will always be the keywords used to oppose affordable housing projects by those with vested and legacy interests to maintain their comfortable status quo at the expense of the less affluent and fortunate who desperately need affordable and safe places to live.

We at HRAR want to play an active role in promoting these important local housing policies and projects, and Bluestone Town Center is a positive breakthrough housing opportunity for our community. It deserves the City's support and approval. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Brent Loope
HRAR President

Input Date

Michael G. Wong
Executive Director, Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority
286 Kelley Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

Re: Bluestone Town Center housing

Dear Mr. Wong:

I am writing in favor of the affordable workforce housing development at Bluestone Town Center on Erickson Avenue and Garber's Church Road in Harrisonburg City. I fully support the Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority's efforts to bring affordable housing, housing for the elderly with supportive services, and workforce housing to our community.

Harrisonburg City is very much in need of homes that are affordable for teachers, police officers, fire fighters, and other civil servants who are priced out of the current market. We are already at least 1,256 units short of meeting current housing demand. Top employers are having trouble recruiting workers because of the local lack of both rental and for sale housing. **[Supporters can insert own example here]** Bluestone Town Center also will generate increased real estate tax revenue for the city.

We need to House Harrisonburg Now, and support housing for all. We need to be the Friendly City for all. **[I am/We are]** happy to support the Authority as it expands critical housing options in our community. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Anne W Nielsen
Sec. Valley Justice Coalition

RECEIVED
JAN 23 2023

BY:

- and more for reentry purposes of persons released from jail with proven nonviolent attributes!
AN

Thanh Dang

From: Adam Fletcher
Sent: Monday, January 23, 2023 1:15 PM
To: Thanh Dang; Meghan T. Rupkey
Subject: FW: Bluestone Project - please support :-)

From: Sam Nickels <sam@ourcommunityplace.org>
Sent: Monday, January 23, 2023 10:37 AM
To: Monica Robinson <Monica.robinson@friendlytown.org>; Deanna R. Reed <Deanna.Reed@harrisonburgva.gov>; Ande Banks <ande.banks@harrisonburgva.gov>; Christopher B. Jones <Christopher.Jones@harrisonburgva.gov>; Laura A. Dent <Laura.Dent@harrisonburgva.gov>; Adam Fletcher <Adam.Fletcher@harrisonburgva.gov>; Dany Fleming <fleming.dany@gmail.com>; Dany R. Fleming <Dany.Fleming@harrisonburgva.gov>; Monica L. Robinson <Monica.Robinson@harrisonburgva.gov>
Cc: Michael Wong <wongway@harrisonburgva.com>; Larry Jones <larryjones1951@gmail.com>
Subject: Bluestone Project - please support :-)

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Greetings City Council Members.

Congratulations to the new members, and thanks to everyone for your service to the city.

I write to urge you to support the proposed Bluestone development.

As the director of OCP, the primary day program for homeless and low-income individuals in our community, I see every day, persons struggling to find housing, including those with housing vouchers. The Bluestone development would provide 75 units for elderly or disabled persons with housing vouchers. One of the highest priorities for obtaining vouchers is experiencing homelessness. This means that a significant portion of those receiving voucher housing at the Bluestone development would be formerly homeless persons.

Thus this project would help to reduce our homeless population, take pressure off homeless providers, and give hope to those waiting on the streets. At the same time, placing these folks into a community where there are families and businesses will provide a real sense of community that is normal and fun and peaceful for these folks to move into. The units I assume will be spread out across the development and will allow persons formerly homeless to integrate more effectively back into a normal community, where they can help others and be helped, where they can develop healthy relationships, where they can be around kids and families and young professionals and teachers.

Finally, I live in the Sunset Heights neighborhood close to this development, and I strongly support it, even if it has an impact on increased traffic. I shop at the Food Lion right next to this development, and that grocery store is never full of customers, so I'm sure there are many businesses on that side of town who would benefit from this development as well.

Thank you.

Sam Nickels
Exec Director, Our Community Place
Resident: 340 Maryland Avenue, Hburg

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Sam Nickels
Executive Director, Our Community Place

OurCommunityPlace.org, 540-476-4180 (cel)
(he/him, ze, theirs) [\(What does this mean?\)](#)