

## Thanh Dang

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**From:** Pamela S. Ulmer  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 8, 2024 1:28 PM  
**To:** Thanh Dang  
**Subject:** FW: Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

For the PC meeting 10/9

**From:** HarrisonburgVA.gov via HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, October 8, 2024 1:24 PM  
**To:** Pamela S. Ulmer <Pamela.Ulmer@harrisonburgva.gov>  
**Subject:** Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

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**Submitted on:** Tuesday, October 8, 2024 - 1:24pm

**Name:** Alexandra Loginov  
**Type of Meeting:** Harrisonburg Planning Commission  
**Date of Meeting:** Wed, 10/09/2024  
**Agenda Item Number:** 3.e.  
**Comment:**

I am in support of this project. The city needs more affordable housing, and also the Waterman Drive area could use some attention/improving. I am also in favor of more walking/biking paths. I am concerned about overcrowded schools and would like to hear more about a plan to address that.

**Contact:** No  
**Contact Info:** N/A

## Thanh Dang

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**From:** Megan Austin <austinmb@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 9, 2024 7:48 AM  
**To:** Adam Fletcher; Thanh Dang  
**Subject:** Quarry Heights

**WARNING: External email. Be cautious when clicking on links or opening attachments.**

Mr. Fletcher, Ms. Dang, and members of the Planning Commission,

I am writing to express concerns about the proposed Quarry Heights development. As a single-income Harrisonburg City resident, I am all in favor of the development of additional affordable housing options being developed within city limits. I personally dream of owning my own single-family home within the city, a dream currently out of financial reach that feels likely to never be achieved. I currently live in a townhome I purchased for \$166K eight years ago, and while the value of my home has increased substantially over the years, what I could potentially sell it for still does not allow me to afford any single-family, detached home within city limits.

The key concern of mine is **affordability**. I have read some reports regarding potential prices of the units to be developed and none of those prices are affordable for a single-income household. The connected-wall townhomes are projected to be \$300K at minimum. The single-family homes -- a dream of so many including myself -- are projected to be listed/sold at \$500K to \$600K. Those are not affordable prices.

Again, I support the development of additional affordable housing options. However, I cannot support this project as it once again pushes out low- and middle-income households, continuing to broaden the disparity between the "haves" and "have nots" within Harrisonburg.

Megan Austin  
[austinmb@gmail.com](mailto:austinmb@gmail.com)

Dear Commissioners,

I am a Harrisonburg resident and I write in support of the proposed Quarry Heights development, items 3.d through 3.i on the agenda. I regret that I am not able to attend this meeting in person, as I am quite excited for it.

I support this proposed development because 1) it fulfills a crucial need for more “missing middle” housing, 2) it includes substantial walking and biking infrastructure that improves connectivity throughout the northwest neighborhood.

### Housing

There is high demand for housing in general, and missing middle housing in particular, as indicated by the 2021 housing study. While some folks may specifically want a detached single-family home, most of us couldn't care less. To varying degrees, folks looking to buy housing in the city want affordable, safe, attractive, walkable/bikeable housing.

The affordability part of that is key – and that holds true even where market-rate housing is concerned. Just ask the developer the difference in their planned sales price for townhomes v. detached single family homes and you'll see what I mean. The price of housing in the last four years has skyrocketed, in part, due to supply being stifled by restrictive zoning. According to [harrisonburghousingmarket.com](http://harrisonburghousingmarket.com), the median sales price for a home in September 2020 was \$235,000. In September 2024, it was \$342,490.

And while below-market-rate housing is often desirable, additional market rate housing also plays a role in keeping housing affordable. As indicated in the housing study, there is a housing ‘mismatch’ whereby people with higher income still reside in older, relatively affordable homes. Older, affordable homes are attractive investments for flippers and landlords because supply is so tight and demand is intense. Where there is no luxury housing, everything becomes luxury housing, and prices act accordingly.

### Bike and Pedestrian Infrastructure

I am stunned by the dedication to Bikability in this plan. It opens the door to an effective extension of the Friendly City Trail from across West Market. It provides the most extensive internal shared-use paths that, I believe, exists on private property in the city. The proposed proffer to directly connect the apartments to FoodMaxx will make it much easier for residents to get groceries and other necessities without a longer car trip. Roundabouts and raised intersections will discourage speeding and make streets friendlier to everyone outside of a car.

The City will need to take care to address the needs of Waterman Drive following this construction. The developer yielding right of way to the city, as proposed, is essential. It is equally essential that the city considers bike transit options such as a shared-use path along Waterman Drive and adds traffic calming measures.

A small but significant component of bike infrastructure is the modal filters on Hillside and College Avenue. In the short-term, I'm sure residents on those streets are pleased to see that their streets

will not become through-ways to additional car traffic. But it is also a significant step to improve bike/ped access along the corridor by limiting access to cars. This is a step not yet taken in much of the city, but should be considered in existing neighborhoods where we wish to connect bike networks and prioritize the fastest travel routes to cyclists. It is as if the developers saw positive steps by the City to improve bike infrastructure and said “I’ll do you one better.”

#### A Missed Opportunity

I really like this proposal. There is a level of foresight in its infrastructure and how it fits in with the surrounding land use that I rarely see. Which is part of why the missed opportunity here is so disappointing.

There is no mixed-use development anywhere on the property. This nullifies much of the advantages of a connected bike/ped network. Here we have several hundred apartment units flanked by hundreds of townhouses with strong shared-use paths throughout the area. People can easily walk or bike all around the development. *But they don’t have anywhere to go within Quarry Heights.* A barbershop, a doctor’s office, a bar, a cornerstore, or other small businesses could be transformative for a community such as this, provided they have limited or no parking. Not only would such additions be convenient and improve walkability, but they also provide a genuine sense of community.

The argument that there is plenty of adjacent commercial space near West Market Street is underwhelming. Yes, there is plenty of space, but the most likely thing to be built there is what is already there – ugly strip malls with excessive parking. We should expect more imagination from developers to promote true mixed-use development.

#### Conclusion

Overall, this is a strong proposal for much-needed housing in the city, with some of the best attention paid to infrastructure needs I have seen in a proposal. While the proposal could be even stronger, we must not let perfect be the enemy of good.

In a way, this development is a metamessage for the city. Instead of an old industrial use, we create new housing and a new community. Instead of a walled enclave for luxury housing, it invites people in with shared use paths and an inviting lake. Developers gave great care not just for the development itself, but for the needs of the surrounding community. For these reasons, I ask that you approve Quarry Heights.

Sincerely,

KC Kettler

Hello Thanh,

Here's what I would like to submit in writing regarding the proposed Quarry Heights development. I plan to attend the meeting this evening and will speak some version of this during the public comments time. Thanks for all your time and help understanding much about this process and project.

### **CONSTRUCTION NOISE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

I'm distressed thinking about the massive impact of many years of construction on the neighborhoods around the quarry:

- The **auditory torture** of months or years of **daily drilling** and blasting into bedrock (it's a quarry, after all). Please do not underestimate or dismiss the trauma of daily bedrock drilling/blasting on close neighbors. It's overwhelming and awful to even think about having that level of pounding noise day in and day out for weeks and months and maybe years. I had hoped to live in this neighborhood for years to come, but this kind of noise trauma might be the tipping point for moving out.
- The **environmental impact of acres of woodland cut down**: loss of the cooling effect of trees on urban heat, loss of carbon capture which we need now more than ever, loss of urban wildlife habitat.
- The **impact on air quality** of so much digging: airborne dust and mold, carbon release.

I urge the planning commission to consider an environmental impact study to look at these issues for this development and more broadly for the City of Harrisonburg.

### **QUIET NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY OF LIFE**

I'm already depressed and filled with anxiety with the prospect of losing the quiet south Park View neighborhood I love, with its bird-filled woods and streets slow enough for the many walkers and runners who come through each day.

- The **woodland will be almost entirely removed**, according to the plan, and with it one of the largest non-park **wildlife habitats** remaining within city limits.
- The **narrow buffer** proposed along only one boundary in the concept plan will almost certainly **not provide a full visual screen and absolutely not an acoustic screen** between **hundreds of townhouses AND a new public road and existing College Avenue homes**.
- This **drastically changes the quality of life** we currently enjoy on this part of College Avenue. To be clear, I'm not opposed entirely to developing the quarry. I'm very concerned about the **enormous scale** of this project and the ways it dramatically alters the environment and neighborhoods around it.

I ask the planning commission and developers to make the woodland buffer **MUCH wider** between the boundary line and existing homes on the east side of College Ave, and to retain a wide woodland buffer between the new public road and the south end of College Ave.

## **AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEEDED IN HARRISONBURG NOW**

I'm concerned that this massive project doesn't directly address the urgent need for affordable housing in Harrisonburg.

- According to the "Quarry Heights Vision" (page 4 of the application & supporting documents linked in the meeting agenda), Quarry Heights "will be an **owner-occupied community with market-rate housing**. It will serve the higher income 'housing mismatch' that is prevalent in the city...by providing housing that aligns with the income of those residents currently living in housing 'beneath their means.'"
- Surely it will **take years to see any impact on the availability of affordable housing**, even after the years of construction.
- And this doesn't come close to addressing the question of **current levels of inflated housing costs**, especially for rental housing.

The Quarry Heights plan is written with glowing economic benefits for the City of Harrisonburg, but we need the planning commission to find other solutions in the near term for affordable housing in Harrisonburg.

## **MORE TIME FOR PUBLIC INPUT**

- Because this project is so huge and impactful to many neighborhoods in the north and west quadrants of the city, I think the planning commission needs to give the public more time to comment. It was publicized with so little time before the developer open house and today's meeting that many people didn't have time to make room in their schedules to attend either event. I want more time to talk to my neighbors and make sure people know that they can give input.

Thank you,  
Kris Shank Zehr  
867 College Ave  
Harrisonburg

## Thanh Dang

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**From:** Christopher Tipton <catipton@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 9, 2024 5:01 PM  
**To:** Thanh Dang; Adam Fletcher  
**Subject:** Support for Quarry Heights

**WARNING: External email. Be cautious when clicking on links or opening attachments.**

Dear Harrisonburg Community Development,

I write to you in support of the proposed Quarry Heights neighborhood. The plans for medium density housing are a good start. Mixed use would be better, but perfect is the enemy of the good. I look forward to my child being able to bike through this area when she attends middle and high school. Please ignore the NIMBYs who call for further studies that only serve to delay and kill such projects.

Regards,

Chris Tipton  
771 Stuart St