

April 12, 2022

Frank Gordon, Manager, Devon Lane, LLC
3354 Lawyer Rd
McGaheysville, VA 22840

City of Harrisonburg Planning Commission
% City of Harrisonburg Office of Community Development
409 S. Main St
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Re: Special Use Permit Application for 716 & 722 Foley Rd

Ms. Dang,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide additional information to Planning Commission members regarding my motivation to reduce the parking planned for the addition of affordable efficiencies at 716 and 722 Foley Rd.

In my original letter, I referenced my desire to "enhance the lived experience of the residents." Perhaps a fuller explanation of what I intend, including some specifics, could be helpful.

First, it is important to distinguish between Places and Non-Places in a community. Places are destinations. Whether it is a place to sleep, shop, work, or simply a place to relax - it adds a destination to the city. Building interiors are the most common form of Places found in cities. Examples of outdoor Places include parks and gardens. Non-Places are everything in between. Examples of Non-Places include roads, parking lots and even greenspace. It is important that we make a distinction between greenspace and an outdoor place such as a park, garden, or someone's yard. If children can play out there or if you can sit down and enjoy your lunch out there, then it is a Place. If it is just mere landscaping where loitering is discouraged, then it is likely to be greenspace.

The city's design standards require greenspace, especially around parking lots. I will certainly comply with the requirement for greenspace. But greenspace is not a substitute for an outdoor place. I would like to reduce the required parking to provide an outdoor place for the residents here. Specifically, an area of lawn with a picnic table and a perennial flower garden attractive to butterflies and birds. This will be a place to enjoy a lunch al fresco, a place to meet and speak to neighbors, an island of natural beauty rather than an unused asphalt heat island. No one marvels at the beauty of a parking space, people do not linger in a parking lot to build understanding with their neighbors, and parking areas exclude natural elements on purpose.

It is also very important to recall that the decision to reduce parking is reversible by the council. If the council later decides that additional parking is needed, they may simply require that it be built without further discussion.

I am also aware that the planning staff wishes to revisit the recent and unanimous decision of the Planning Commission and Council to accept an allowance of land for a sidewalk rather than

building a disconnected sidewalk immediately. I believe this is irrelevant to the decision to require or not require an additional 6 parking spaces. No factors weighed by the Planning Commission or Council have changed in the interim. I was honored that a number of Commissioners visited this location in person when making their decision to defer sidewalk construction.

I believe Commissioner Armstrong put it best when she said "I do think that, having been to the site and being a strong supporter of sidewalks and a walker, it [the lack of a sidewalk on this side of the street] did not seem to be inhibiting the walkability of that street." She was correct then and, since no conditions relevant to her determination have changed, she is still correct. I would simply ask that the Planning Commission ignore this well intentioned but redundant and irrelevant request from the Planning Staff.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frank Gordon", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Frank Gordon, Manager, Devon Lane LLC