

January 16, 2023
Barbara McDonald-Pyle
1199 S. Dogwood Drive
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Thanh Dang
Interim Zoning Administrator
City of Harrisonburg Department of Community Development
409 South Main St. Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Re: Bluestone Town Center Rezoning Request. Please deny or at least table until you get more information.

Dear Ms. Dang and Harrisonburg Planning Commission members:

In a perfect world and in theory, Bluestone Town Center(BTC) is exactly what we need in Harrisonburg to alleviate our affordable housing shortage. And bonus, it promises to be environmentally friendly. I wish it were so. As with most things in life, reality rears its inconvenient head. I cannot support the rezoning that would allow this project to move forward without some basic information. First, is this location really suitable for such a large project? Second, can this project be completed without serious environmental damage? Third, is it really connected to neighborhoods, stores (other than Walmart and Food Lion) and job locations? Fourth, how realistic is it to expect people, especially elderly individuals, to walk to the grocery store or cross Erickson Avenue and walk to Walmart? What about going downtown to the library? Walking to work? Or even walking kids to school? Fifth, what are the hidden costs of this project? And last, why hasn't the community been included in the discussion in a meaningful way? These are just some of the questions I have before I would support moving forward with BTC by allowing the rezoning of the proposed site.

Why this particular location and size for BTC? Based on public information and information from BTC's website, the ONLY reason EquityPlus(EP) chose Harrisonburg was that EP would be able to get tax credits for providing affordable housing. The location on the very southern end of Harrisonburg, bordered by Erickson Avenue, Garbers Church Road and South Dogwood Drive, was selected mainly because it was available and large enough; certainly not because it met any particular "smart growth" criteria. It appears that the main motivation is profit, hence the massive scale of the project. EP and Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority(HRHA) seem to be misrepresenting this project by claiming that it will be "Smart Growth" and environmentally sound.

As far as the site of the project, has anyone even visited it? This parcel has many environmental challenges. Much of the site is covered with outcrops which would require blasting or rock hammering it out. Then, where do you take all of this rock and what do you replace it with? The rest of the site is an urban forest. As a certified Tree City USA, I would think the city would want to keep this urban forest. But, according to information presented by EP, **ALL OF THE URBAN FOREST** located on the site would be demolished. How is it taken down? Bulldozed, chainsaw? Does it all get trucked to a landfill? And what is it replaced with? What happens to all the wildlife that is displaced? Further, EP and HRHA are vague about how they will try to compensate for this loss with the greenspace they show in their plan. And these parks and greenspaces are not necessarily conveniently located for the residents of BTC. Per the Planning Commission(PC) memorandum regarding :

"57.6. However, staff does not believe that items (6), (7), and (8) have been adequately addressed. First, our concerns with subsection (6) are described later with Proffer #3 in the Proffers section below. With regard to subsection (7), **staff advised that to meet the requirements of this subsection, that the applicant should describe what general types of plants would be planted (for example, deciduous**

and/or ever green trees at 6-feet in height at the time of planting and maintained) in different types or areas within the development or illustrated areas within the master plan layout. This information does not exist within the master plan or proffers. “

“With regard to Proffer 3.f., staff does not believe this proffer adequately addresses design objective (3) in Section 10-3-57.2 of the ZO (as mentioned above), which states that, among other things, the master development plan shall achieve the following: The open space system is as carefully designed as the housing area so as to offer usable parks, connected green spaces, and village greens and civic spaces visible from roadways and spatially defined by abutting building facades and/or landscape elements. Proffer 3.f describes that all residential units shall be within 1,000 feet of a green space and/or common area and staff believes that this distance criteria is too great and is a long distance for community members to travel to get to green spaces and common areas. For perspective, 1,000 feet is the approximate distance between the two proposed development entrances (Road A and Road E) along Erickson Avenue. The R-7 district requires that 15 percent of the development be 7 dedicated to common open space and as previously noted Section 10-3-57.6 (6) requires that the master plan describes proposed active areas and recreation facilities; staff does not believe that these requirements have been met.”

Are EP and HRHA intentionally vague or just clueless. Is this one of the things that will unfortunately be left to the end when there are minimal funds to properly complete? Losing this forest will increase run-off in an area already prone to flooding (S. Dogwood Drive and Erickson Avenue). BTC's plan does include stormwater impoundments, but given the constraints of the area where one is located (a high pressure gas line and regional water and sewer lines where they propose to create the impoundments) it is unclear what this would really look like and how it would function. And with more severe weather becoming more common is EP and HRHA using data to design these impoundments that will be ill equipped to meet the job. Think New Orleans 9th Ward; the flooding that is occurring in California right now; Florida sinkholes. Is this project unwittingly putting people at risk?

Is BTC really connected to any existing neighborhoods? Perhaps the houses located across the creek on the S. Dogwood Drive section would be tangentially part of the S. Dogwood Drive neighborhood, King's Crossing, but they are likely to be cut off due to the stormwater impoundments. The only other neighborhood that is nearby is across Garbers Church Road and four lanes of traffic. As far as shopping, what can a resident reasonably and safely walk to from BTC? Again, the houses on the S. Dogwood Drive side would be close enough to Food Lion to walk there. Depending on how many groceries they are buying, getting home with their purchases might be more challenging. The section near Walmart does not look so convenient or safe. To get downtown is 2.7 miles, going straight up High Street. It would not be bad by bike if you had bike lanes; it is probably not a conveniently walkable distance for most people. And honestly, how many people in the nearby neighborhood of Sunset Heights walk or bike into town or take city transit? Why would we have any expectation that residents of BTC would be more likely to walk or ride a bike than the average Harrisonburg resident currently does. (That is entirely other conversation worth having). Are we in actuality isolating the residents of BTC from the rest of Harrisonburg?

Where are the walkable jobs that residents of BTC are going to work at? Hopefully, but not a given, some of those jobs would be located in BTC. How is that supposed to happen? We currently have vacant retail space in buildings downtown and at the mall. I'm not saying it couldn't happen, but it won't happen if there is not an intentional plan and recruitment. And whose responsibility would that be? EP, HRHA or City Council? The “build it and they will come model” is not the most dependable nor productive.

Let's briefly discuss schools and walkability. Many of the residents of BTC would in theory be located near enough to walk to Harrisonburg High School and Bluestone Elementary, but many would still probably take the bus. Have there been any calculations to determine how many students and staff could take advantage of this feature. It should be noted that since 2005 Harrisonburg has built the new Harrisonburg High School, Skyline/Smithland/Elon Roads Complex, and Bluestone Elementary and is currently completing Rocktown High School. None of these schools are walkable from local neighborhoods (except the one neighborhood next to the HHS. Do we know how many students and teachers walk/ride to these schools from this neighborhood?). If the city is serious about smart growth, locating schools where students and staff can walk or ride seems like it would be a significant step in the right direction and send the message that it is serious about making smart decisions for the future. And yet, we missed that opportunity several times.

What are the "hidden" costs of BTC? Does anticipated tax revenues offset the increased cost for BTC? If approximately 3,000 people (more people than currently live in Elkton) are going to live on this 90 acre parcel, more bus routes (3 are proposed), drivers and buses would be needed. How are they paid for? An increase of more than 300 students are projected to live in BTC. This would require more staff in schools. How is this going to be covered? Likewise, more fire and police services would be needed on this side of Harrisonburg. How much will that cost? What about water and sewer costs? What about maintenance on traffic signals and roads? After EP finishes, who will maintain the common areas of BTC?

Finally, where has the public input and conversation been? This is the biggest housing project ever proposed in Harrisonburg and there has been no good faith effort to include the community in the discussion. Since HRHA received the unsolicited BTC proposal from EP in the fall of 2021, HRHA and EP have been in conversation/actively working together (15 months ish). They agreed to a joint venture in December of 2021. All with no public notification. EP met with the Planning Committee members in June 2022. EP and HRHA say that they have provided opportunities for community member meetings, but they only posted the information on their Facebook pages. Well, you can't look for something if you don't know it exists. While EP and HRHA can say that they provided opportunities for community meetings it is disingenuous: giving the appearance of community involvement without really including the community. Residents have in essence had three weeks to absorb and understand this complex project. Honestly, it has the feeling of being steamrolled.

Finally, I would like to include several quotes from *This is Smart Growth*, a Smart Growth Network publication, produced under a cooperative agreement between the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). I realize that the Planning Council is probably well aware of these principles, but I am including them for members of the public who might be reading this letter because this is how we should have started this process.

Developers expect a timely and predictable approval process, and citizens expect that new development will not harm them and will be consistent with the community's vision. Both groups should work constructively with local government and each other on development proposals. Local officials should establish development policies and priorities that use tax dollars wisely, protect public health and welfare, balance the needs of residents and developers, include citizens in the decision-making process, and plan for the long term.

"One such process is a "charrette," a series of workshops in which community members discuss their concerns, ideas, and goals for development; developers explain their proposals; and professional designers illustrate these ideas and suggest ways to fulfill the community's vision."

"Ultimately, "fair" does not mean that everyone will agree with the result. What it does mean, at a minimum, is that a community should engage the public in development decisions in good

faith. This means involving citizens early enough for their input to be effective, letting people air their concerns openly, assessing impacts, addressing undue hardships, and providing developers with a more predictable process.” (My emphasis)

“Paying for new infrastructure for development on the fringes of a community—while neglecting buildings and infrastructure in which the community has already invested—is not fiscally prudent, but it is often how communities grow. Increasingly, however, communities are realizing that this approach undermines their efforts to strengthen downtowns and improve existing infrastructure. “

<https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2014-04/documents/this-is-smart-growth.pdf>

I think BTC has missed the mark on many points. I have not even talked about the Traffic Impact Study; the fact that there is a poultry operation adjacent to BTC, affecting air quality and health; the use of manufactured homes instead of stick or modular built homes. I'm sure there is much more, which is my point. I would like you to pause and suggest that it would be in everyone's best interest to put the hard work in on the front end answering these basic questions so that Harrisonburg can meet all the goals it has set for affordable housing and smart growth and not be saddled with unexpected environmental impacts, tax increases and subpar housing. This is a massive project and you owe it to everyone to consider all aspects of it carefully and critically. I believe BTC gives us a great starting point, not a foregone conclusion

Respectfully,
Barbara Pyle

Thanh Dang

From: RANDY CLINE <randy_cline@comcast.net>
Sent: Monday, January 16, 2023 12:37 PM
To: Thanh Dang
Subject: Bluestone Town Center, BTC

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I am not against affordable housing but the BTC has some major common sense issues that have to be addressed.

It has come to my attention that a huge housing project (BTC) is being voted on tomorrow by the Harrisonburg Planning Commission. This past summer I walked the Bluestone Trail almost everyday, the trail sets next to the proposed housing project. It seems to me that some of the members of the planning commission have not inspected this property closely. It is evident to me that there are issues with this piece of ground.

First and foremost, there are three active poultry houses right next to the proposed housing development. I have experience with poultry, I was raised in a chicken hatchery. I am guessing most of these folks who are applying to buy or rent have never had the pleasure of living next to a poultry house. The odor of ammonia during the ninety degree summers days will not be fun. The Shenandoah Valley has westerly prevailing winds, that odor will permeate the whole housing complex.

As I look at your drawings, the city is going to stuff these dwellings right next to the poultry houses. In my opinion, at the very least, there should be a huge set back to off set the smell. Even if a set back is enacted, the smell will waft through the complex.

Under certain conditions, this "smell" can be hazardous to folks with lung and general breathing problems. That "smell" contains ammonia, carbon dioxide and low amounts of carbon monoxide and hydrogen sulfide. There are people in the valley who raise poultry that are disabled because of clogged lungs stemming from fumes and dust emanating from poultry houses. It is not as prevalent as black lung disease but it does happen.

Who are the people that are going to be living in this complex? There will be a fair number of minorities living in Bluestone, by definition they will be more susceptible to health issues and smelly poultry houses are not the ideal living conditions for anyone.

For those who buy property, what will there resale value be? You may want to buy one of these houses but not me, resale value next to poultry houses is not the best.

The only solution to this problem is for the city to buy the poultry farm. But you have other issues with this property, water run off, traffic, police and fire protection, just to name a few.

I have read some of the traffic study and in that report, it says there will be 6100 sorties per day coming from BTC. As I calculate, cars end to end, is over one mile and quarter with cars being 14 feet long. This may be what Harrisonburg wants, but it is not my cup of tea.

Thanks for listening, I hope to hear from you about this important matter. Until then, I am

Randy Cline
480 Hartman Drive
Harrisonburg, VA 22802

(C) 540.442.0348

Dear Planning Commission,

As a concerned City resident, I note that there is a growing need for affordable housing, especially for our lower income ALICE population. Our City Housing study bears this out. That is why I strongly support approval of the Bluestone Town Center. This is exactly the kind of project this City needs and could be the template for continuing City development that addresses our housing needs while simultaneously addressing some local transportation needs.

In the recent past, our local Faith in Action organization of which I am part strongly advocated for a Housing Trust Fund. Recent public input on the use of ARPA funds again underlined both the need and public support for housing projects like this.

I urge you to support this necessary project.

Respectfully,

Hadley H. Jenner
525 Hickory Grove Circle
Harrisonburg, 22801

Thanh Dang

From: Pamela S. Ulmer
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 8:09 AM
To: Thanh Dang
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

From: HarrisonburgVA.gov via HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>
Sent: Monday, January 16, 2023 11:16 PM
To: Pamela S. Ulmer <Pamela.Ulmer@harrisonburgva.gov>
Subject: Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

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Submitted on: Monday, January 16, 2023 - 11:15pm

Name: Chris Orem

Type of Meeting: Harrisonburg Planning Commission

Date of Meeting: Tue, 01/17/2023

Agenda Item Number: 4.b

Comment:

I wish to express my opposition to the proposed rezoning for the Bluestone Town Center. I am in favor of affordable housing within Harrisonburg city, but I have serious concerns about the size and scope of the current project, particularly as it directly affects my home, which is located off of Hidden Creek Lane, one of the primary entrances into the proposed Center.

I have three specific concerns as it relates to this project:

1. The letter from City Attorney Chris Brown, dated January 12, 2023 is extremely concerning, stating that Proffer 4, a proposed source of \$20,000,000 in revenue is untenable and in its current form, illegal. The proposal even notes that this proffer is currently inconsistent with City Code. I do not claim to be an expert in understanding city planning, but it is my sincere hope that this letter and its ramifications on the exclusion of this proffer on the viability of the project is discussed earnestly by the Planning Commission and that its impact on this project is explained to the public.
2. The size and its direct impact on traffic will have an outsized impact on the surrounding residential neighborhood. Based on the most readily available Traffic Impact Analysis, traffic into and out of Hidden Creek lane alone will increase by six fold by the completion of Phase 2, increasing from an average of 900 cars per day to over 5,800 cars per day. This is a substantial increase that threatens to decrease the quality of living for many in the neighborhood, likely lower property value, and increase safety risk. Other than a proposed roundabout at Hidden Creek Lane and S. Dogwood Dr. and a traffic signal at S. High St. and Hidden Creek Lane, what other mitigation strategies can be considered to lessen the traffic burden in this residential area? While much attention has been given to the increased traffic on Erickson and Garbers Church Rd, Hidden Creek Lane appears to see the greatest percentage increase in cars per day of anywhere in the project. Please consider additional ideas to lessen traffic in this residential neighborhood before approving this request. The amount of projected traffic was not why we moved to this neighborhood.
3. The proposed site appears to be inconsistent with the goals of the project, according to Housing Coordinator Liz Webb. The goal for location and transportation is to have housing near transit, employment, commercial centers, and

downtown. Yet, the proposed site, according to Housing Coordinator Webb, was noted as having "below-median access to amenities, and as such, is not ideally suited for new affordable housing." There is a Wal-Mart close by, but it is not accessible to pedestrians as you must cross Erickson Ave. The Food Lion on Hidden Creek Lane and S. High St. is smaller compared to other city grocery stores. What research has been done to consider the impacts on these businesses and their ability to serve the growth that will occur from this project? Has this information been made public?

In considering the needs of the city and the current infrastructure, what thought has been given to a smaller scope of project, or one that provides affordable medium density housing across multiple locations? This proposal appears to be too much too fast in one location, with serious issues still regarding the viability of the proffers made by the developer, the strain on the surrounding infrastructure, and the suitability of this location to meet the needs of the city. For these reasons, and those offered by other concerned residents, such as the strain on our school systems, please consider rejecting the current proposal in order to find a more suitable project that diffuses the strain on residential traffic, follows existing city code, and is better suited for the goals of this project. Thank you.

Contact: No
Contact Info:

Thanh Dang

From: Pamela S. Ulmer
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 8:09 AM
To: Thanh Dang
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

From: HarrisonburgVA.gov via HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>
Sent: Monday, January 16, 2023 9:30 PM
To: Pamela S. Ulmer <Pamela.Ulmer@harrisonburgva.gov>
Subject: Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

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Submitted on: Monday, January 16, 2023 - 9:29pm

Name: Carey Petit
Type of Meeting: Harrisonburg Planning Commission
Date of Meeting: Tue, 01/17/2023
Agenda Item Number: Agenda # 4.b. (File # ID 23-018)

Comment:

Mr Dang,

Please use the comments below in lieu of the version I previously submitted earlier this evening. Thank you.

COMMENTS:

It has become clear that the Planning Commission is unduly biased in its vote on the Bluestone Town Center (BTC) rezoning request (File # 23-018). This is demonstrated by the Commission Chair's January 12, 2023 article in the online publication, The Citizen, in which he wholly advocated for the BTC. And the potential \$20 Million dollar payout to the City from the developer's proffer letter, and future tax revenue, are drowning out the deafening list of growing citizen concerns. The developer's funding structure has been determined to be illegal and against city code on many levels by the City's lawyer, with the developer even acknowledging the illegality of it in the footnotes of their own proffer letter. The developer's solution is to have the Commission blindly approve the zoning request, and that they will "work" with the City later to amend the zoning text.

I thought the Planning Commission was supposed to consider citizen concerns and get all the facts prior to making up their minds? Never mind about destroying the city's last and largest forest which has not been touched in the city's 244yr history, until now. Why is there a complete lack of: an environmental impact study; an erosion and sediment control plan; a stormwater management plan; any power grid and water supply impact analysis; an impact assessment on the Cook's Creek watershed; or a school student capacity impact assessment? Why was a clear conflict of interest allowed by having the Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) conducted by the developer, and then the TIA not be publicly accessible after the City Public Works Dept and VDOT approved it? Does no one in city government care about the 10 years of continual construction and noise neighbors will be subjected to? Or about the massive 2,300+ person increase in population density BTC will create in the southwest end of the city (based on the Virginia average household population rate)?

The Bluestone Town Center is not needed now or even warranted. There was already another 728 home, 133 acre mixed-use housing project (called Bluestone Development) approved in 2020 to be built next to the main Harrisonburg

Post Office just over the city/county line. And the 2021 Harrisonburg Housing Assessment Executive Summary itself says: “Harrisonburg has a significant stock of units that are affordable to renters and owners (80% of all rental units and 38% of all sales units are affordable for households up to 80% AMI), and which have no public subsidy attached to them. In other words, much of the City’s housing is relatively affordable.” (<https://harrisonburgrha.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/1.-Harrisonburg-Housing-Study-Executive-Summary.pdf>) By its own Assessment, the city already has sufficient “affordable housing.”

The BTC needs a great deal more planning, a lot more transparent analysis needs to be done, and citizens’ voices should be heard before the rezoning request is considered. The Planning Commission should vote NO to the proposed illegal BTC request.

Contact: Yes

Contact Info: Cell Phone: 478-397-6074

Email: Carey.E.Petit@gmail.com

Thanh Dang

From: Pamela S. Ulmer
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 8:10 AM
To: Thanh Dang
Subject: FW: Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

From: HarrisonburgVA.gov via HarrisonburgVA.gov <noreply@harrisonburgva.gov>
Sent: Sunday, January 15, 2023 12:55 PM
To: Pamela S. Ulmer <Pamela.Ulmer@harrisonburgva.gov>
Subject: Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

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Submitted on: Sunday, January 15, 2023 - 12:55pm

Name: Robert Peterson

Type of Meeting: Harrisonburg Planning Commission

Date of Meeting: Tue, 01/17/2023

Agenda Item Number: 4.a Request from the HRHA to amend the R-7Medium Density Mixed Residential Planned Community District Regulations

Comment:

Please note that I stand against the proposed Zoning Ordinance Amendments as they are illegal and disrespectful towards the citizens of Harrisonburg and current residents who live nearby.

1. It is illegal as described by Mr Chris Brown and Mr Wesley Russ as described in their 12 Jan 2023 letter to Mr Adam Fletcher and Mr Thanh Dang Re: Bluestone Town Center Proffer 4, Impact Fee.
2. It is disrespectful towards Harrisonburg citizens and nearby residents to build what would essentially be a "trailer park", low-income subsidized housing and high density apartments in this area that is a common sense location for continued development as single family homes, multiplexes and townhomes. The proposed development would turn this part of Harrisonburg into a low income slum area with substandard housing. It would create a high crime area right next to Harrisonburg's primary high school, and right next to our premier golf course, serene agricultural area and low density housing with bicycle paths and wooded areas.

The interest of the Harrisonburg Planning Commission should be to develop nice, modern areas to be occupied by people with jobs who can afford to secure loans to purchase their own housing in order to develop Harrisonburg into a self-sustaining city not dependent upon foreign immigrants and the poor and homeless who need our tax dollars to secure a place to live. These types of housing should be built in facilities close in to the mail city area where facilities are available for them.

Contact: No

Contact Info:

Thanh Dang

From: Pamela S. Ulmer
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 8:10 AM
To: Thanh Dang
Subject: FW: Please vote NO on the Bluestone Town Center

From: Laura Stutzman <tim1laura@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, January 16, 2023 11:18 AM
To: Richard Baugh <Richard.Baugh@harrisonburgva.gov>
Subject: Please vote NO on the Bluestone Town Center

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Richard,

As a home owner on South Dogwood Dr. the Bluestone Town Center will directly affect my home and neighborhood. Just up from Hillandale Park we were not part of the traffic calming study but continually deal with many vehicles at both normal and high speeds going past our home and while we walk on the road. This LARGE volume of added vehicles on South Dogwood Drive will be very detrimental to all who live here.

Please vote NO on the Bluestone Town Center.

Thank you!
-Laura Stutzman
1184 S. Dogwood Dr.



P.O. Box 2277, Harrisonburg, VA 22801; 540-478-8199

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

January 6, 2023

Re: Bluestone Town Center housing

Dear Mr. Wong:

I am writing on behalf of Virginia Poultry Federation (VPF) to share our support of the affordable workforce housing development at Bluestone Town Center on Erickson Avenue and Garber's Church Road in Harrisonburg City.

As you know, the poultry industry is one of the top economic sectors in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. According to a recent economic study (John Dunham & Associates. *2022 Economic Impact Study of the Poultry Industry*. New York, October 2022), the poultry industry employs as many as 6,814 people in the two jurisdictions and generates an additional 1,688 jobs in supplier and ancillary industries. The study also indicates that the industry directly and indirectly supports \$366,051,888 wages and \$2.75 billion in total economic activity.

In recent years, one of the biggest challenges facing our industry has been workforce and the ability to attract employees to staff poultry plants and other industry facilities. Virtually all plants have experienced periods when they operated below maximum employment levels due to a scarcity of candidates for open positions, despite generous signing bonuses and competitive (and rising) wages. This impacts production output and the entire supply chain, including the family farms that supply poultry to plants.

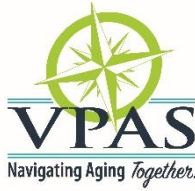
An important factor in attracting a workforce is affordable housing. Area poultry companies see a lack of affordable housing in the Harrisonburg-Rockingham County area as a major issue that hinders their ability to staff their facilities. VPF strongly supports the Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority's efforts to bring this affordable housing, housing for the elderly with supportive services, and workforce housing to our community, and fully supports its Bluestone Town Center project.

Please let me know if you would like any additional information or to discuss further our concerns about this issue. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hobey Bauhan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hobey Bauhan
President



975 South High Street, VA 22801 • 540.615.5341 • www.vpas.info

January 3, 2023

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. Elderly residents struggle to find accessible and affordable housing. 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 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,

Beth Bland, VPAS
Director of Senior Services, Harrisonburg-Rockingham County
& Director of Development

Valley Program for Aging Services

Serving older adults and their families in the counties of Augusta, Bath, Highland, Rockbridge, and Rockingham, and the cities of Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton, and Waynesboro

Supported by federal, state, and local governments, United Ways, and the generosity of our neighbors
FEIN 54-0958526



**Harrisonburg-Rockingham Living Wage Certification Campaign
355 Hartman Drive
Harrisonburg, Virginia 22802**

(540) 433-1165

December 12, 2022

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

Re: Bluestone Town Center Housing

Dear Mr. Wong:

We are writing in favor of the affordable workforce housing development at Bluestone Town Center on Erickson Avenue and Garber's Church Road in Harrisonburg City. As members of the Steering Committee for Harrisonburg Rockingham Living Wage Campaign, we 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 demands. Top employers are having trouble recruiting workers because of the local lack of both rental and for sale housing. 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. We, members of the Steering Committee, are happy to support the Authority as it expands critical housing options in our community. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Ramona Sanders (rsanders97@verizon.net)
Janet E. Harvey (j.elaine.harvey@gmail.com)
Steering Committee Members
Harrisonburg Rockingham Living Wage Campaign (hburg.rockinghamlwc@gmail.com)



Mercy House, Inc.
"Changing the world one family at a time"

P.O. Box 1478
Harrisonburg, Virginia 22803
540-432-1812

October 4, 2022

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

Dear Mr. Wong:

I am writing to express the enthusiastic support of our agency for the Bluestone Town Center project that is being proposed by the Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority. The Bluestone Town Center is an example of the type of affordable, mixed income development that is absolutely needed to address the untenable housing shortage in our region.

Mercy House is uniquely positioned to understand the adverse impacts that the lack of affordable housing options is having on local working families. The simple fact is that the scarcity of housing and the significant proliferation of rental rates within the City of Harrisonburg is slowly eroding the fabric of our community. The level of housing instability that our agency is now seeing is unprecedented and is not only destabilizing lives, but is also adversely impacting our schools, local businesses, and social service institutions.

The concerns currently being brought forward by the community regarding this development should be guideposts for improved design and implementation- not a reason to simply dismiss this critical housing opportunity. We need over 1,200 units of housing according to the City of Harrisonburg's own Comprehensive Housing Assessment and Market Study. The Bluestone Town Center not only addresses the overall need but also targets critical income levels and demographic groups including first time homeowners, young families, and seniors.

On behalf of the Mercy House Board of Directors, staff, and those in desperate need of a place to live within our community, our agency pledges its support to this project. I would welcome the opportunity to speak to any elected official, city staffer, or community member that would be seeking more insight into the critical need for this development.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any further assistance that can aide in successfully advancing this vital development.

Sincerely,

Shannon Porter
Executive Director



STRENGTH IN PEERS

Mailing Addresses:

917 N. Main St. Unit 1 Harrisonburg, VA 22802

P.O. Box 892 New Market, VA 22844

Main Office Phone: 540-217-0869 | www.StrengthInPeers.org

September 28, 2022

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

Re: Bluestone Town Center housing

Dear Mr. Wong:

Strength In Peers would like to express its support for the affordable workforce housing development at Bluestone Town Center on Erickson Avenue and Garber's Church Road in Harrisonburg City. Our organization fully supports 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.

Strength In Peers is a nonprofit organization made up of people in recovery from substance use, mental health, and/or trauma-related challenges. Grounded in our lived experiences, our mission is to offer hope, support and advocacy for those seeking recovery so that they can build resilience and thrive in their lives and communities. We operate the Harrisonburg Community Resource Center as well as a variety of programs that provide case management, recovery support and outreach to people in need.

Harrisonburg City is in need of homes that are affordable for its diverse residents, including individuals who work in nonprofit organizations, like Strength In Peers, and individuals who work in the numerous health, social services, and first responder organizations that we collaborate with. These essential workers are critical to the city's infrastructure and ability to thrive as a community. Affordable housing is also needed for the people who we serve and their opportunities to create a better life for themselves and their families. Harrisonburg City already is at least 1,256 units short of meeting current housing demand. The Bluestone Town Center will support the city's growing need for essential workers. It 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. Strength In Peers is 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,

Nicky Fadley
Executive Director

Physical Office Addresses:

917 N. Main St. Unit 1 Harrisonburg, VA 22802

9560 S. Congress St. New Market, VA 22844

Your recovery. Your path.

Strength In Peers Community Resource Center:

917 N. Main St. Unit 1 Harrisonburg, VA 22802 | **Phone:** 540-208-2941



Valley Associates for Independent Living, Inc.

*3210 Peoples Drive Suite 220 • Harrisonburg, VA 22801
Voice (540) 433-6513 • FAX (540) 433-6313 • www.govail.org*

September 28, 2022

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

Re: Bluestone Town Center housing

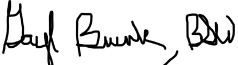
Dear Mr. Wong:

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 and individuals with disabilities along 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. Valley Associates for Independent Living (VAIL) also recognizes the shortage of accessible affordable housing in our community. VAIL's own employees face challenges in securing housing in our community. 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. VAIL is 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,


Gayl Brunk
Executive Director

Bluestone Town Center has received a new message.

Reply to Conversation

Name

Isai

Email

drequeno10@gmail.com

Tell us about what we can do to support your real estate goals.

This is an amazing concept for the low housing inventory in Harrisonburg. Most of the complaints are centered around citizen's personal concerns, but do not tackle the main issue that is present in Harrisonburg, affordable housing. As a resident of Harrisonburg, I back this project up.

Device

mobile

Language

en-US

Submitted_from
Contact us

This message came from your contact form, [Bluestone Town Center](#)



October 1st, 2022

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. 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. The Welcoming Harrisonburg Council (WHC) is happy to support the Authority as it expands critical housing options in our community. Please feel free to contact me at nshenk@skylineliteracy.org if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nelly Moreno Shenk".

Nelly Moreno Shenk
Chair-Welcoming Harrisonburg Council



Faith in Action
P.O. Box 964
Harrisonburg, VA 22803

October 10, 2022

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

Dear Mr. Wong:

I am writing in favor of the ongoing affordable housing work that Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority continues to develop and support. 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. This work should continue to be a top priority for HRHA and the City of Harrisonburg.

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. Any future development projects in the city should be focused on providing such affordable options. Development in the city cannot solely be driven by for-profit entities but must have support as well from bodies such as HRHA.

We need to House Harrisonburg Now, and support housing for all. We need to be the Friendly City for all. We at Faith In Action 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adam Blagg", written over a white background.

Adam Blagg
President, Faith In Action Executive Committee

January 13, 2023

Members of the Planning Commission
City of Harrisonburg

Re: Letter of Support for Bluestone Town Center

Dear Planning Commission Member,

This letter supports the approval of the Bluestone Town Center because there is not enough housing that meets the needs of working families in our community. Everyone in Harrisonburg should have access to decent and affordable housing. Currently families have to spend a disproportionate amount of their income just to find adequate housing. The 2021 City of Harrisonburg Comprehensive Housing Assessment and Market Study says:

“More than 3,600 lower income renter households are cost-burdened and pay more than 30% of their income on housing costs.”

1/12/21 City of Harrisonburg Comprehensive Housing Assessment and Market Study Powerpoint- page 7

Additionally, the Study's primary conclusion is that there is a mismatch in housing available for homeownership and rental. Only ten percent of Harrisonburg's rental units are available for families making \$27,750 (30% of the Area Median Income) and 8% of the ownership units are available to families making \$38,250 (50% of the Area Median Income). 1/12/21 Powerpoint-Page 4

While much more needs to be done, I support the plan for the Bluestone Town Center because it will begin to address the critical need highlighted in the Study by offering a mix of rental units and for-sale homes. Rental units will be affordable to families with an income of \$64,000 and below. The new homes that will be sold to households making \$64,000-\$100,000. These are households that are working in our educational institutions, factories and medical facilities. At present this type of housing is not being constructed in Harrisonburg. The demand for these units already exists in Harrisonburg.

Having enough housing for working families is not unique to Harrisonburg, many communities around the country are facing the same challenge as the cost of housing escalates. I have no doubt that due to the good quality of life in Harrisonburg and the Shenandoah Valley, we will continue to attract people, particularly higher income households. The Bluestone Town Center represents an opportunity to make sure that working families have homes where they can thrive in the community.

As leaders you have the opportunity to lead and prepare for the future by supporting the Bluestone Town Center.

Regards,
Art Stoltzfus

September 6, 2022

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. 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 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,



Anna Campbell
959 Gravels Rd
Harrisonburg, VA 22802
540-421-4871

1/5/23

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. As the homebuyer assistance program coordinator, I have heard from several members of the public regarding their struggles finding housing due the lack of options available. This development is needed for our expansive community. The 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 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,

Victoria Hill



CHURCHES RESPOND. HOMELESSNESS ENDS. HOPE BEGINS.

P.O. Box 535 Harrisonburg, VA 22803

December 8, 2022

Planning and Zoning Commission
Department of Community Development
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Re: Bluestone Town Center housing

Dear Mr. Fletcher and Commission Members:

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. We fully support the Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority's efforts to bring affordable housing and workforce housing to our community.

We at Bridge of Hope serve single-parent families living on one income. Now more than ever we struggle to find affordable units for our clients to maintain after graduating from our program. We are already at least 1,256 units short of meeting current housing demand. We trust that the Planning and Zoning Commission has the best interest of the entire community at heart - with considerations for protecting green space and working to ensure an efficient and effective design for traffic flow and general safety.

We need to House Harrisonburg Now, and support housing for all. We need to be the Friendly City for all, in ways that are not only fair, but equitable and consider the most vulnerable in our community - women and children. 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,

Chris Hoover Seidel
Executive Director, Bridge of Hope Harrisonburg-Rockingham



Environmental Coalition Statement of Support for Bluestone Town Center

Climate Action Alliance of the Valley, 50 by 25 Harrisonburg, and Shenandoah Valley Faith and Climate are committed to addressing climate change, promoting social justice, and promoting community resilience. To that end, we support the proposed Bluestone Town Center (“Bluestone”). We support this project because it provides needed affordable housing with walkable, bikeable, transit-oriented development consistent with the City’s Environmental Action Plan. We thank Harrisonburg Redevelopment & Housing Authority (“HRHA”) for their commitment to making Bluestone Town Center a reality. We ask members of the City Council and Planning Commission to approve the present proposal.

Harrisonburg Needs Additional Housing Units

The Harrisonburg housing study shows that we suffer from a severe shortage of housing. According to the study, “Harrisonburg is a growing city and lacks an adequate inventory of housing for current residents of all income levels.”¹ In 2022, the median home sold within 5 days of posting.²

The effects are clear. Employers have difficulty hiring staff because applicants have nowhere to live. Essential city staff positions, including those for Community Development itself, go unfilled. For individuals without stable housing, the situation is even more precarious.

Additional Housing Units Should Match Development Needs in the Environmental Action Plan

Having recognized the need for additional housing, we must also ensure that such housing is sustainable. Low density, car-dependent suburban sprawl hurts our climate first by taking up more land, and second by requiring people to drive. Instead, we should promote more dense, compact development and encourage a mix of uses and transportation options. When people can easily walk down the street to the neighborhood grocery store, to schools, parks, and businesses, we can make their lives easier and tackle climate change at the same time.

That is precisely why we favor this project.

¹ *Comprehensive Housing Assessment and Market Study Project* (2021), page 100.

² https://www.harrisonburghousingtoday.com/blog/archives/2022/12/home-sales-slow-in-november--but-prices-keep-on-rising_1670933344/index.php?f=1

The Environmental Action Plan adopted by the City Council on January 14, 2020 declared the need to apply smart growth principles in housing policy.³ The plan states, in pertinent part:

“High density, compact, and mixed use development, as opposed to low density, car-dependent, suburban sprawl, can help make communities more sustainable, economical, and healthy. High density and mixed use neighborhoods that are designed well with a mixture of housing types (single-family detached, duplex, townhomes, and apartments) located among public transit routes, jobs, schools, shops, services, green space, and walking and biking facilities can encourage behaviors that contribute to reducing traffic congestion and vehicle emissions, and can provide opportunities for more social interactions.”

We agree with this provision of the Action Plan laid out by the City Council, without reservation.

Bluestone Town Center Matches Our Development Needs in the Environmental Action Plan

Bluestone’s location is along the Friendly City Trail, a new shared use path connecting three schools, three large public parks, and several residential neighborhoods.⁴ HRHA proffers two connections to the Friendly City Trail. HRHA will provide two-way bike lanes along Erickson Avenue, with the city paying 10% of the cost of these improvements.⁵ Three HDPT bus routes will be created through the area.

Bluestone has easy walking and biking access to groceries. The development is located under a mile away from Food Lion on Hidden Creek Lane. In anticipation that residents will walk to Food Lion, HRHA offers to pay 50% of sidewalk construction costs on the south side of Hidden Creek Lane.

HRHA hopes to create a new “town center” in the area provided. In a central area, they propose multifamily units above mixed use spaces, with a community center nearby. “Pocket parks” are included as gathering places. Farther out, there will be townhouses and multifamily units, with detached single family homes on the edges of the development.

HRHA proffers that solar panel systems will be incorporated on all multi-family housing units as a supplementary energy source,⁶ and that at least 6 electric vehicle charging stations will be constructed and maintained at various locations throughout the project. Modern building and appliance efficiency standards proffered also help reduce energy consumption and residents’ energy costs.

The proposed development has met Council’s expectations as specified by the Environmental Action Plan. Bluestone has easy walking and biking connections to schools,

³ *Environmental Action Plan* (adopted Jan. 14, 2020), page 29.

⁴ *Environmental Action Plan*, page 31 (“Continue to Expand Sidewalks, Shared Use Path, and Trail Facilities to Connect People to Places they want to go, Including Private and Public Green Spaces”).

⁵ *Bluestone Town Center Street Improvement Agreement*, page 2.

⁶ *Bluestone Town Center Proffers*, page 4; See also *Environmental Action Plan*, page 26 (“Encourage the Construction of High-Performance Buildings and Operations”).

parks, stores, and other residential neighborhoods. It includes space for public transit. It includes a variety of housing options and housing density levels, which contribute to walkability by shortening the distance between homes. It includes mixed-use space so individuals can walk to work and to stores. It includes widespread solar and energy efficient construction to lower energy costs, especially important to low and middle income residents.

The Proposed Development Can Benefit from Higher Density and Tree Coverage

We are deeply gratified by HRHA's strong commitment to the environment as evidenced in their proffers. Substantial room for improvement is still possible, however.

First, we recommend more of the development be used for townhomes and multifamily units rather than detached single family homes. The land in question has strong access to public amenities including schools, parks, stores, and the mixed-use space provided by the development. Even so, the proposed plan uses more land for detached single family homes (27.816 acres) than for multifamily units (25.984).⁷ We recognize the desirability of individuals to gain equity in homes, but this goal can likewise be accomplished through building more townhome units at nearly three times the density.

Second, we ask for clarification on the amount of tree coverage to be created in the development. As of this writing, the proposal does not include a proffer on such tree coverage. Tree coverage and green space are essential for combating climate change, mitigating the heat island effect, and making the space more attractive for residents and visitors.⁸

Conclusion

While there are aspects of Bluestone Town Center that can be improved, the plan clearly recognizes the need for sustainable development and modern urbanist "smart growth" principles. In this design, Harrisonburg Redevelopment and Housing Authority met the standards developed by City Council in the Environmental Action Plan. More than that, this project meets the needs of residents by providing sorely needed affordable housing in the city. Students will be able to walk to school. Residents can get groceries without spending hours on a bus or adding to traffic. Anyone can walk down the street to local parks and employment opportunities.

Fighting climate change is a challenge on every level, from international agreements to household expenses. It often involves making difficult sacrifices and tradeoffs. This is not one of those situations. This project is an opportunity to provide for the needs of our community and fight climate change simultaneously. For that reason, we ask you to approve the application for Bluestone Town Center.

⁷ *Bluestone Town Center Rezoning Narrative*, page 3.

⁸ *Environmental Action Plan*, page 31 ("Maintain and Increase a Healthy Tree Canopy")

Respectfully,

Andrew Payton, Steering Committee Chair
Climate Action Alliance of the Valley

Earl Zimmerman, Coordinator
Shenandoah Valley Faith and Climate

Steering Committee
50 by 25 Harrisonburg

https://www.dnronline.com/opinion/open_forum/bluestone-town-center/article_45231773-ecf0-5e03-b6c4-3ec82f29a931.html

Bluestone Town Center

Mary Martin

Jan 17, 2023

Open Forum: Brent Loope

The Harrisonburg Rockingham Association of Realtors takes an active role in promoting homeownership and affordability in 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, firefighters, and other civil servants who are priced out of the current market, not to mention are largely blue-collar and service industry workforce. We are already over 1,000 units short of meeting current housing demand, according to HRHA data. Local employees 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® sees 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.

Brent Loope, HRAR President

Mary Martin

HARRISONBURG ROCKINGHAM SOCIAL SERVICES DISTRICT

110 North Mason Street
P.O. Box 809
Harrisonburg, VA 22803-0809

540-574-5100 (Main Number) • 540-574-5110 (Benefit Programs)
540-574-5127 (Main Fax) • 540-574-5182 (Benefit Programs Fax)
540-574-5120 (Services) • 540-574-5104 (CPS/APS)

September 14, 2022

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. Harrisonburg Rockingham Social Services District (HRSSD) 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. The HRSSD and HRHA already work in partnership to address other vast community needs in Harrisonburg and Rockingham County. HRSSD serves over thirty thousand unique individuals per year and employees 168 staff members. The mission of the HRSSD is the promotion of self-reliance and protection of citizens through community-based services, committed to help grow and make references to community resource programs.

We need to House Harrisonburg Now, and support housing for all. We need to be the Friendly City for all. HRSSD is 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,



Celest Williams

Director



United Way of Harrisonburg
and Rockingham County

January 17, 2023

Dear Planning Commission Members and City Staff,

Knowing the City of Harrisonburg finds itself in an affordable-housing crisis, United Way of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County supports the proposed Bluestone Town Center mixed-income housing development and the service-oriented commercial space projected to come with it.

Since the release of the ALICE Report in 2018, United Way of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County has been steadfast in its support of the ALICE population. Of the plethora of challenges ALICE families face, affordable housing is among the most pressing and this project will move the City a step closer to fulfilling the Vision of "Available Housing For All."

Workers and working families need places to live to keep our economy vibrant and the lack of affordable housing forces families to move further away from their places of employment, displacing their children from a comfort-zone education and their friends.

That makes it tougher for employers — large and small — to recruit and retain employees, makes it harder for non-students to live in the city, pushing tax bases into neighboring localities. Those moves hamstring ALICE Families into spending more money on transportation and keeps them away from their families longer due to extended commutes, which contribute to increased absenteeism and diminished productivity at their jobs.

United Way strongly supports the City's efforts and attention to ensuring our neighbors can live, work, and move about town safely. We trust that in the time it will take to complete all of the phases of this ambitious project, the City's continued investments in community infrastructure, public services, and transportation, will serve to ease concerns that come with being a growing and thriving community that truly is The Friendly City for all of its current and future neighbors.

We applaud Planning Commission for approving the dozen or so projects that have been proposed since the release of the 2020 housing study. U.S. Census data tells us the City of Harrisonburg will see a population increase of more than 10,000 new residents over the next 25 years, with most of those falling into the millennial and senior demographics - the two groups most in need of and least able to afford housing. Planning Commission carries the burden and responsibility of making these tough decisions with not only the wants and needs of today's City residents in mind, but even more so, tomorrow's.

The City needs this housing development for people who long for the stability of finding a housing option they can afford, which includes the 61% of City residents who live below the ALICE Threshold.

We support the Bluestone Town Center because this is the kind of project that will directly benefit the ALICE population and it is our hope that our City will do everything in its power to move this project forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Leech".

Amanda Leech, Executive Director
United Way of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County

Thanh Dang

From: Pamela S. Ulmer
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 10:25 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 9:05 AM
To: Pamela S. Ulmer <Pamela.Ulmer@harrisonburgva.gov>
Subject: Form submission from: Agenda Comment Form

WARNING: This email was sent from outside of your organization.

Submitted on: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 - 9:05am

Name: Nathan Shaw
Type of Meeting: Harrisonburg Planning Commission
Date of Meeting: Tue, 01/17/2023
Agenda Item Number: 4.a.

Comment:

As I will not be able to attend the meeting in-person, I wanted to write a quick note regarding the proposed Bluestone Town Center. My understanding is that it would significantly increase the automobile traffic on S. Dogwood Dr. As a resident who lives on S Dogwood Dr. that would be impacted by the increase in vehicular traffic, I recommend the commission deny the permits required by the project. S Dogwood Dr. is a very high pedestrian and bicycle thoroughfare. Adding thousands of additional vehicles to the road would create an undeniable safety issue. Furthermore, the neighborhood, and city, have spent countless hours over the past 6 years working on implementing a traffic calming plan to try to reduce the number of vehicles that use S Dogwood Dr. as a cut-through to avoid S. High St.

While I support the development of affordable housing in Harrisonburg, I do not believe the Bluestone Town Center is the correct model for the City. It is simply too large and will add too many vehicles to streets that are heavily used by pedestrians and cyclists.

Contact: No
Contact Info:

As a community member, parent, and homeowner in Harrisonburg City, I respectfully request that the planning commission refuse the current proposal for rezoning for Bluestone Town Center, or request from the developers a meaningful and substantial revision to the plan -- downsizing its footprint, prioritizing homeownership for its future residents, and making it a more feasible and productive addition for Harrisonburg overall. The proposed number of units is way too many for the proposed site, especially given the traffic problems that already exist on all the roads the development touches. Roadway expansions and traffic/speeding mitigation would need to be completed before such a development could be undertaken. Further, expanded public transportation needs to be available for such a development -- and that, too, will take time and money to institute. This is all before considering the additional schools needed to support the existing and future residents of Harrisonburg: our schools are strained as it is. Adding a thousand more kids to the mix without appropriate spaces and staffing does everyone a disservice.

A development of half this size -- with the promised 60%+ homeownership as a condition of the development -- would be more appropriate and more manageable for our community. We desperately need high-quality, accessible, and affordable housing. But this development as proposed will NOT provide that: it will lower the quality of life, education, and commerce in Harrisonburg if it proceeds as planned. BTC needs to be drastically rethought and downsized, and there needs to be a concrete and detailed plan shared with the public for how the city and the developers will manage issues with roads, traffic, public transportation, walkability and bikeability, and educational needs BEFORE any such development proceeds.

Thank you for considering this request and for all your work for our community.

Heidi L. Pennington

Thanh Dang

From: Pamela S. Ulmer
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 10:32 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 10:32 AM
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 - 10:31am

Name: Sharon A Delawder

Type of Meeting: Harrisonburg Planning Commission

Date of Meeting: Tue, 01/17/2023

Agenda Item Number: 7

Comment:

- Coming out of a pandemic with high inflation and possible recession on the horizon seems a poor time to saddle taxpayers with such a burden as this large project. While initial costs may be covered with federal dollars, what about the cost of maintenance, new schools, road improvements, etc.; it's simply too much.
- Who are the people on a waiting list for housing assistance? If they are immigrants, why is it thought more will not be coming? Will waiting lists be abolished, no more can sign up? In my opinion, this project is likely to increase people coming to the area looking for housing.
- If this project's location is part of the city's plan to prevent sprawl and preserve green space, where are the properties the city is trying to protect? Are they in the county? What influence does the city have over county land use decisions? It seems this is the type of land the city should be trying to protect. Why not rezone property where instead of more car washes and storage units some high-density housing could be built? I believe redevelopment is better than new development. Farmland has its own set of environmental issues. What we need is more land left undeveloped and natural to keep our water clean and provide habitat for wildlife and to fight climate change.
- In my opinion, it's "magical thinking" to believe many residents of this development will be walking or using public transportation to travel to most of their destinations, such as shopping or working.
- Finally, how did a project of this magnitude with such irreversible consequences, get so close to approval without more answers to legitimate concerns and more input from city residents? As I recall, more debate was had about another controversial development, the city golf course, than this project. Was a lesson learned from the golf course—spend so much money before people know what is happening, that it will be too costly to stop. I have the perception that some council membership may be so involved with the project, it could be hard to be objective. I hope that is not the case, because city taxpayers certainly don't need another "done deal". If members of this commission or city council are not able to make decisions with sound reasoning based on reliable facts and figures, they should not vote. Or they need to be held accountable for the consequences of this unfolding disaster.

Contact: No

Contact Info:

January 17th, 2023

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.

I work for a local land trust focused on preserving the open space of Rockingham County and the Shenandoah Valley – developments like these are what help keep the Shenandoah Valley beautiful and open. Not to mention the importance of locating developments near existing services like schools, grocery stores, and public green space. 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 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael G. Wong". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Thanh Dang

From: Adam Fletcher
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 11:57 AM
To: Thanh Dang; Meghan T. Rupkey
Subject: FW: Please support the construction of the Bluestone Town Center

From: Aliese Gingerich <aliese.gingerich@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 10:53 AM
To: Deanna R. Reed <Deanna.Reed@harrisonburgva.gov>; Laura A. Dent <Laura.Dent@harrisonburgva.gov>; Christopher B. Jones <Christopher.Jones@harrisonburgva.gov>; Dany R. Fleming <Dany.Fleming@harrisonburgva.gov>; Monica L. Robinson <Monica.Robinson@harrisonburgva.gov>; Adam Fletcher <Adam.Fletcher@harrisonburgva.gov>
Subject: Please support the construction of the Bluestone Town Center

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Hello everyone!

I'm emailing to ask you to green light the Bluestone Town Center proposal. I believe it represents a crucial investment in affordable housing for our area.

Thank you for considering and for your important work in our community.

-Aliese Gingerich, Harrisonburg resident, former HCPS teacher

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[Aliese Gingerich](#)

(319) 530-3161

Thanh Dang

From: Adam Fletcher
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 1:04 PM
To: Thanh Dang; Meghan T. Rupkey
Subject: FW: Bluestone Town Center

From: Tom Hook <tomhook580@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, January 14, 2023 3:26 PM
To: Adam Fletcher <Adam.Fletcher@harrisonburgva.gov>
Subject: Bluestone Town Center

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Adam,

I am writing in support of the Bluestone Town Center Project. We live in Sunset Heights and welcome this worthwhile project to provide affordable housing for all.

Thank you,
Tom Hook
580 Elmwood Drive
Harrisonburg VA 22801
540-246-6075

Thanh Dang

From: Diane Bayer <dlb2459@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 3:55 PM
To: Thanh Dang
Subject: I am against BTC

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I am writing to express my thoughts that the proposed Bluestone Town Center is not the right move for the city of Harrisonburg.

My first comment is that the infrastructure is not in place for that location. Garbers Church Road and Erickson Ave are already over crowded at school drop off and dismissal times as well as “rush hour” times. There is no way they can handle the impact of the cars that will be associated with a building project that consists of 850 plus units. Have you yourself been in those two roads at the aforementioned times. This project is going to cost the city major dollars to improve the infrastructure and as a citizen of this city I do want my tax dollars used to improve these roads just do some NoVa developer can line his pockets.

My second concern is what impact this project will have on our local school district. You have to know that this many housing units is going to result in many more kids in the Harrisonburg School District. That will equate to more schools being built which will continue to raise our taxes to build these schools....essentially defeating the purpose of “affordable housing” because no one will be able to afford the taxes on their homes. In addition the city schools are already facing staffing shortages-where are the new teachers and support staff going to come from?

I am not against affordable housing in our city-I am against it at this location because you are basically putting the entire population of Bridgewater in a tiny condensed spot. There are also not enough goods and services on this end of town to support all these new residents.

I hope that the planning commission will truly listen to the concerns of the citizens and not approve this project in its present scope. Perhaps it needs to be a much smaller project and it needs to include retail goods and services. I attended a meeting earlier where the developer said he has never built a town center without restaurants and retail but that Mr Wong does not want that-he wants community services. In order for more residents to accept this project there needs to be compromise from both parties...this should not be a done deal without input from the community that is being effected. Everyone’s needs should be carefully considered.

Thank you.

Diane Bayer

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

Thanh Dang

From: Adam Fletcher
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 4:04 PM
To: Thanh Dang; Meghan T. Rupkey
Subject: FW: Opposed to Bluestone Town Center

From: Chris Orem <chorem@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 4:03 PM
To: Adam Fletcher <Adam.Fletcher@harrisonburgva.gov>
Subject: Opposed to Bluestone Town Center

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Dear Mr. Fletcher,

I submitted this message as a public comment to tonight's agenda but wanted to send them to you directly in advance of tonight's Planning Commission meeting.

I wish to express my opposition to the proposed rezoning for the Bluestone Town Center. I am in favor of affordable housing within Harrisonburg city, but I have serious concerns about the size and scope of the current project, particularly as it directly affects my home, which is located off of Hidden Creek Lane, one of the primary entrances into the proposed Center.

I have three specific concerns as it relates to this project:

1. The letter from City Attorney Chris Brown, dated January 12, 2023 is extremely concerning, stating that Proffer 4, a proposed source of \$20,000,000 in revenue is untenable and in its current form, illegal. The proposal even notes that this proffer is currently inconsistent with City Code. I do not claim to be an expert in understanding city planning, but it is my sincere hope that this letter and its ramifications on the exclusion of this proffer on the viability of the project is discussed earnestly by the Planning Commission and that its impact on this project is explained to the public.
2. The size and its direct impact on traffic will have an outsized impact on the surrounding residential neighborhood. Based on my reading of the most readily available Traffic Impact Analysis, traffic into and out of Hidden Creek lane alone will increase by six fold by the completion of Phase 2, increasing from an average of 900 cars per day to over 5,800 cars per day. I would love to be wrong in my analysis, but if it is accurate, this is a substantial increase that threatens to decrease the quality of living for many in the neighborhood, likely lower property value, and increase safety risk. Other than a proposed roundabout and traffic signal at S. High St. and Hidden Creek Lane, what other mitigation strategies can be considered to lessen the traffic burden in this residential area?
3. The proposed site appears to be inconsistent with the goals of the project, according to Housing Coordinator Liz Webb. The goal for location and transportation is to have housing near transit, employment, commercial centers, and downtown. Yet, the proposed site, according to Housing Coordinator Webb, was noted as having "below-median access to amenities, and as such, is not ideally suited for new affordable housing." There is a Wal-Mart close by, but it is not

accessible to pedestrians as you must cross Erickson Ave. The Food Lion on Hidden Creek Lane and S. High St. is smaller compared to other city grocery stores. What research has been done to consider the impacts on these businesses and their ability to serve the growth that will occur from this project? What other sites were considered and why was the current location chosen?

In considering the needs of the city and the current infrastructure, what thought has been given to a smaller scope of project, or one that provides affordable medium density housing across multiple locations? This proposal appears to be too much too fast, with serious issues still regarding the viability of the proffers made by the developer, the strain on the surrounding infrastructure, and the suitability of this location to meet the needs of the city. For these reasons, and those offered by other concerned residents, such as the strain on our school systems, please consider rejecting the current proposal in order to find a more suitable project that diffuses the strain on traffic, follows existing city code, and is better suited for the goals of this project.

Thank you for reading,
Chris Orem

Thanh Dang

From: Pamela S. Ulmer
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 4:46 PM
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 1:50 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 - 1:49pm

Name: Gabriella Crivilare
Type of Meeting: Harrisonburg Planning Commission
Date of Meeting: Tue, 01/17/2023
Agenda Item Number: 4b
Comment:

I fully support both the development of Bluestone Town Center and HRHA in their efforts to bring affordable and sorely needed housing to the community. Although I am a newer Harrisonburg City resident, it has quickly become clear to me that the city needs more housing than is currently available, and that this proposed development provides the necessary units.

As a person who does not drive, I also appreciate that Bluestone Town Center will be a more walkable development, with access to both shopping and schools, and I think this will be beneficial for those in the area who do not have cars or licenses, who are all too often left out of conversations regarding community planning. Unless you are fortunate enough to be able to afford living within a few blocks of downtown, it is extremely difficult to get where you need to go. Bluestone will enable more people to go about their daily lives without the use of cars, which is fantastic!

Additionally, I find it unconscionable that the city spends half a million dollars a year on the golf course, but is unwilling to consider putting funds toward affordable housing. The latter is necessary, and needed by all. The former is not.

Please approve the proposal for Bluestone Town Center, which will allow Harrisonburg to grow in a way that will serve those who need it.

Contact: No
Contact Info: