

Dear Members of the Planning Board,

I am writing this letter regarding the rezoning of Hellgate Special Zoning District to B2-1 Community/Business. It is with much passion that I write in opposition to rezoning Hellgate Meadows to an area where, as it's described, multi-dwelling buildings and greater density will be created. I attended the meeting on the 3rd and didn't speak.

Argument for people having to commute and the need for more homes:

I heard it stated that we need more places for people to live so they don't have to commute from the surrounding areas and that Missoula is missing out on economic opportunities because of that. There has not been a study that proves the people who are commuting are doing so because of lack of housing or lack of affordable housing. It is possible they choose to live outside Missoula for many reasons. I also question that by the time these homes are built they will qualify as affordable.

I believe the original plan for the Hellgate property did not include any multi-family dwellings thus making the big difference in the two planning maps. What Nick showed on the first 8.5 acres that is being developed was pleasing, even tho very tight. (80 units on 8.5 acres). Do the math...if the entire property was developed in that fashion there would be 541 new units and that's without apartments. You could easily be adding over 1000 cars to this congested area.

One handout from Nick on the 3rd stated his latest revision on his plans dropped the density to 50%. IMAGINE 50%. That should tell you what they had in mind as far as apartment dwellings. In one of his earlier meetings he stated that some buildings could be 5 stories. He now says that the largest apartment complex won't be greater than 16 units which in most cases actually sounds reasonable, but he's not clear on how many of those will be built. I think at the very least he should be forced to be more specific about the real number that is being planned. A bunch of circles on a planning map doesn't give a true picture.

This area already is home to over 1100 apartment units. That number is from the apartments along Mullan and several small buildings behind them. Again do the math ... when you think the majority of those units possibly have TWO cars. I know we have some college students living in our complex with 4 cars to one unit. Now add new apartment complexes to the mix and it can get pretty alarming. Please don't add to the mess that already exists by adding more apartment/condos dwellings. Duplexes and 4-plexes at least become part of a neighborhood. The surrounding infrastructure can't accommodate apartment complexes.

From meetings I have attended, I have heard the thought behind limited and narrow streets in Hellgate Meadows was in hope that more people would take buses. Let's be realistic ... that's not happening. Because the developers chose to make such narrow streets and the city approved it, the city now has to live with the fact that there is no way the streets can accommodate the added burden of high density building to the west. At what point is the city going to take responsibility for the quality of life in Missoula's neighborhoods. By allowing apartment buildings you are taking away any possibility for a neighborhood to exist.

I realize that with this development will come increased infrastructure, but I am very skeptical that it will relieve anything, especially if the property contains apartment structures. There's no way we will end up with traffic improving. When you start stacking people on top of each other, the new infrastructure will not be sufficient. I believe just by building single family homes the increased traffic will create gridlock. People should not have to stop, back up or pull off to the side just to get down a street.

I have attached a map of the area I'm referring to. I drive through these streets every day where only one car can pass. All the pink roads are basically one lane streets because if cars are parked on both sides of the streets, two cars can not pass. One car must stop and hopefully pull over if there is a spot or back up. I'm guessing those roads will continue into the new neighborhood and your plans may be to widen the new roads BUT, and this is a big BUT...if a person wants to go east through Hellgate Meadows the traffic will be squeezed down to one lane. On the map note the yellow star. If you are driving west on O'leary from Home Depot and want to veer left to continue down O'leary many times you are forced to hang out in the middle of the intersection because of traffic coming from the west on O'leary. Because traffic is allowed to park on both sides of the street you can't go through unless you have a clear shot. The orange line shows where that part of O'leary doesn't allow parking on both sides so at least when you are going east on O'leary and making that right hand swing, two cars fit. If the city stops allowing two sided street parking in this area it would help with the flow of traffic, but the over flow of cars will then go on to O'Shaughnessy and down Dublin, which is problematic because those streets are already FULL. The Multi-family dwellings that exist now do not have enough parking designated for its residents, hence the over flow. The blue line is just one example of an apartment building that does not have the appropriate number of parking stalls for its residents so many people park on the streets. Parking is not allowed on Flanagan or Geary Lanes because these are even narrower than the other roads and one parked car would block the road.

Yes, we know Mary Jane will go all the way from Mullan to Broadway, but you don't have any control over the number of people that will choose to go directly east through Hellgate to get to Reserve. The impact on Hellgate Meadows will be tremendous. Safety will be compromised. The issue with the growth of traffic will be compounded by the building of apartments/condos and any type of dwellings that stack people on top of each other. I urge you to look at the traffic flow as it exists right now and try to rectify it before adding to the problem. I would urge the city take a serious look at the roads that are being built in the new development and how they will impact the surrounding neighborhoods.

The increased cars on Mullan will impact homeowners in 44 Ranch and further down Mullan. During certain times in the morning cars are at a stand-still, bumper to bumper as far as 44 Ranch. Again... we have no way of knowing what path people will take for their commute, but I feel like frustration with traffic flow will be one of the biggest issues living in the new development. If this land is developed with high-density format there's no going back. All the chaos and gridlock that will certainly be created won't be able to be fixed. We need to be forward thinking and understand there is a limit to what roadways can handle.

In closing, I want to voice strong objection to the building of any apartment/condo complexes on this piece of property. I know many others in this neighborhood are also voicing their objection to the possibility of apartment complexes and high density living. I hope you hear our concerns and not recommend this rezoning. We all know that land will be developed... we are just asking for an area that is a neighborhood, one where you can travel through with ease, and have pride and a sense of well-being. Tall buildings surrounded by asphalt does nothing to add to quality of life.

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