

Lauren Stevens

From: Dave DeGrandpre
Sent: Friday, May 24, 2024 1:41 PM
To: Lauren Stevens
Cc: Char Hay
Subject: FW: High Park Views public comment

Hi Lauren,

Please see the message below from Char Hay (copied on this message) regarding the High Park Views Subdivision. Char is concerned the formatting got messed up on the Engage page so please upload this message for the Planning Board and City Council when you are ready.

Thank you.

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Promoting equitable growth and a resilient, sustainable community.

From: Allen and Charlotte Hay <achay23@msn.com>
Sent: Friday, May 24, 2024 1:36 PM
To: Dave DeGrandpre <DeGrandpreD@ci.missoula.mt.us>
Subject: High Park Views public comment

Hi Dave,

I just got done submitting a very long comment on Engage Missoula re. the High Park views subdivision. Unfortunately when I submitted it all formatting was gone and it looks like an extreme mash up of run-on sentences that makes no sense. I hate to think that that is what the City Council is going to see as Engage Missoula comment. I am including a copy of my text below. I hope somehow that's what's going to be passed on to the Council.

Thanks,
Char Hay

The proposed High Park Views subdivision site is very unique in that its property line borders the High Park Conservation Area, making it an extension of the sloping terrain of the conservation area. This gem of combined South Hills open space can be seen from across the valley floor. It is

filled with old-growth trees and criss-crossed by a wildlife corridor of trails that house deer, raccoon, denning fox, owls, hawks, small birds and other small animals. This prime piece of open space, so highly valued in Missoula, informs the neighborhood character and quality of life for both humans and wildlife.

We do not support the proposal as it stands. Our comments in response to issues in the proposal are as follows:

Variance Requests #1 - #4: Ms. Donnelly is asking the city for four variances: dead end-streets, cul-de-sacs and circle and loop streets, street designs and improvements, lots and blocks and Simons Drive. In a nutshell she is asking to construct a major subdivision on a cul-de-sac with traffic access solely from Landons Way with the exception of one lot that would be accessed from Simons Drive. The recurring reason behind each variance request is that the steep slope of the property and existing topographical conditions makes it "impossible" to adhere to building codes. The proposal is the "only feasible design" and requiring otherwise by "enforcing the strict letter of the regulations would present a hardship to the owner" due to the topography of the site.

Response: Nonsense. It is hyperbole to suggest that anything other than the current proposal is impossible. After all, this area is the South Hills, not the South Flats. For decades the entire South Hills area has been composed of streets that have been built to accommodate varying elevations and grades of land.

For some historical background, this property was owned for years by WSB, a partnership. Originally, they proposed a subdivision with ingress/egress from both Landons Way and Simons Drive as required by city code. According to Tom Boone, "the costs of developing the property at that time precluded our investment in the development costs." They later tried again with another layout that also had two exits. Eventually they chose to not go forward with the subdivision process.

Unfortunately, when Ms. Donnelly bought this piece of property she purchased land that, because of slope and access issues, makes it costly and difficult to develop. And she is now asking the city to waive four major code requirements, (which we assume are in place for good reasons,) to make it easier and less costly for her to move this project forward. Her perceived hardships do not outweigh the impact that her proposal has on the entire neighborhood.

Mitigation for Variance Request #1: "Mitigation for this variance (construction of a cul-de-sac) generally includes two pedestrian access improvements to the site."

Response: This mitigation solution makes no sense. Requesting a building/traffic variance has nothing to do with, and is not mitigated by, including conservation area pedestrian access improvements. There are already pedestrian access sites in place in two locations.

Parkland Dedication: "The portion of the property to be developed consists of a relatively consistent slope" with a "steeply inclined hillside, along its eastern property line, that will mostly be designated as parkland as dedication to the city."

Response: We have walked this property for the last sixteen years. This statement is a red herring. The portion that is described as "parkland" is adjacent to a cliff that goes down a steep draw into a gully. We don't even let our dogs go down the edge of that gully. How dedicating this area to the city benefits the city is questionable at best.

Impact on the High Park Conservation Area: Not addressed by this proposal

Response: This proposal does not include any buffer between the subdivision and the conservation area directly to the south. The edges of the south lots (i.e. back yards) are directly adjacent to the lower trail of the conservation area. Buffer zones are used to protect terrestrial habitats from surrounding land-use practices and negative human influences (e.g. movement of sediments, soil erosion, stress on wildlife from noise and human activity, etc.) that could damage these areas. There is nothing in the proposal that discusses the impact of a major subdivision on the existing conservation area. This is a major omission.

Traffic Considerations: Analysis from IMEG indicates that a single family home can "generally be expected to generate about ten trip ends per day and one or two in each peak hour." They conclude that "Given the [Landons Way] street width and layout, this level of new traffic is not expected to create any prominent traffic impacts to current users of that street segment."

Response: Using those statistics, at this time 20 end trips per day pass by our house which is located one house away, on both sides of Landons Way, from the proposed entrance to the subdivision. Twelve new homes would theoretically increase that number to 120 end trips per day. That is a 500% increase. That percentage of course increases as traffic moves further down Landons Way and Woodbine toward Hillview. We are skeptical about that statistic. Does the 10 trips per day estimate include multi-vehicle households, visitors, deliveries, trash pickup, snow removal, contractors and so on?

There are also major safety issues that need to be addressed related to increase in traffic.

Because there is not a left turn lane from Hillview onto Woodbine, that intersection is problematic at all times of the year but particularly during the winter. Cars turning from Hillview onto Woodbine have to make a hard-left-almost-U-uphill turn. If you compare the Woodbine intersection to the Black Pine intersection one street below (which does have a left-turn lane off Hillview) there is a dramatic difference in the curb radius and corner clearance. The curb radius at Woodbine and Hillview is not large enough to accommodate two cars entering and exiting at the same time. With the major increase in traffic anticipated by further development on Hillview, the Hillview/Woodbine intersection is going to get worse. Numerous times in the past, cars have missed the curve at this intersection and collided with street and stop signs at the Hillview/Woodbine intersection, at times ending up high centered on private property on the corner. There is a white cross just past the Hillview/Woodbine intersection which indicates a past fatality.

Because of the steep slope, vehicles traveling downhill on Woodbine have to stop well away (uphill) from the intersection in order to allow the vehicle making a left turn from Hillview onto Woodbine to enter. In winter the incoming vehicle has to hope that it can avoid vehicles coming down (a polite euphemism for speeding down) Hillview, as well as accumulated snow and ice, as they make the left turn onto Woodbine. Vehicles trying to make a right turn from Woodbine onto Hillview sometimes have to drive up on the right-hand sidewalk to avoid incoming vehicles. This is a daily issue in good weather but snow and ice berms exacerbate the problem significantly because of the corner clearance and the steep grade of the street, turning that intersection into one lane for both incoming and outgoing traffic. We have included pictures of this intersection in winter in our public comment that is attached to the subdivision proposal.

Additionally, because of inadequate width Woodbine narrows into a one-lane street from Hillview to the Landons Way intersection because no-parking signs are not enforced, neighbors' cars are parked on both sides the street and snow berms create a one-lane street in the winter.

Combine these facts and it's clear that there are significant safety issues that would only be compounded by increased traffic, negating IMEG's conclusion that there would not be negative traffic impact from the new development.

The obvious solution is to continue Landons Way through to Simons Drive, thus providing an alternative ingress/egress. In fact, Ms. Donnelly currently owns the property at 503 Simons (lot 13 in the proposal) which already accesses Simons via a driveway. She may not prefer to make Landons Way a through street, hence her variance requests, but not doing so creates an undue hardship on Landons Way homeowners and it is certainly not impossible to do.

Other concerns include but are not limited to:

1. Potential water issues: As noted in the proposal there are numerous springs and seeps in the South Hills. There is a permanent spring that closes the sidewalk just around the corner from us and neighbors have had water issues in their basements. The subdivision property already has a spring that feeds a small pond at its base. Although we are not downhill from the subdivision we are concerned about the affect that unleashing any water source could have on the property in our neighborhood.

2. Potential for further lot subdivision as mentioned in the proposed covenants that we would have no recourse to impact.

3. Vegetation - we are unsure when the aerial photo of the property was taken, but it is not an accurate representation of the trees on the property. Contrary to the vegetation report, the trees on the property are not "young and therefore small pine trees" and they are scattered throughout the property, not just the easternmost portion. During the initial IMEG presentation, an IMEG representative stated, "A lot of earth is going to have be moved and trees removed" to

terrace the proposed houses. 4. Mitigation for loss of wildlife habitat is not addressed in the current proposal.

There are specific problems about the proposed development as noted above. But beyond practical matters we also regret seeing another bit of within-city-limit open space - and particularly open space that is the continuation of a conservation area - lost to development. Tracy Stone-Manning, in her tribute to John Engen said, "He understood that the open space surrounding our town ... is not only critical to Missoula's economy but a fundamental part of who we are as Missoulians." We can only ask, is it critical? Once open space is gone, it's gone forever.

According to the subdivision proposal, "Ultimately the goal for the subdivision is to help fill the much-needed demand for housing within Missoula." Playing the "Missoula lack of housing" card is not appropriate in this situation and it has not been our experience that altruism is a prime motivator for most property development. This proposal is trying to fit a square peg into a round hole: city requirements should be set aside because of the the difficult topography of the site and resulting hardship to the developer. Frankly, we are more concerned about the impact of the proposal on the character of our neighborhood, the impact on quality of life, the impact on the adjoining conservation area, wildlife and the environment and the safety of all who use the affected intersections and streets.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Char and Allen Hay

1204 Landons Way
