

Leeanne DiGiacomo
10-1-3 Estate Glucksberg
6550 Glucksberg
St. John, VI 00830
303.638.4309

8 June 2023

Via Email

Leia LaPlace-Matthew
leia.laplace@dpr.vi.gov
Territorial Planner
Department of Planning and Natural Resources- <https://dpr.vi.gov>
Division of Comprehensive and Coastal Zone Planning

Re: Application ZAJ-23-1, Parcel 9-3 Estate Glucksberg

Good Day Ms. LaPlace,

I'm writing to record my opposition to Application ZAJ-23-1, regarding Parcel 9-3 Estate Glucksberg.

I live at 10-1-3 Estate Glucksberg. My husband and I purchased our home in June, 2014. We lived in a wooden home, and it was completely destroyed in Hurricane Irma. The Giff Hill neighborhood, especially the homes along the ridge on which parcel 9-3 sits, sustained a lot of damage (every home on that ridge was destroyed). When we rebuilt, but a concrete house this time, the engineer required two changes to the architect's plans: 1. Increase the pitch of our hip roof, and 2. Install three vertical, coated steel beams anchored into the concrete floor and into the roof beam. Mr. Goldschneider doesn't seem to appreciate the strength of the 2017 storms, proposing to build structures that he claims would sustain 190mph winds. Irma was just getting started at 190mph. Remember that it isn't **that** the wind is blowing, but **what** the wind is blowing. I believe that the structures that Mr. Goldschneider proposes would become part of the debris blowing around in a strong storm, endangering the surrounding structures and the neighbors sheltering in their homes (We don't have a storm shelter on St. John).

R-2 is the correct designation for our neighborhood, and the zoning should be consistent throughout our neighborhood. Spot zoning is wrong for the sole purpose of allowing a particular project, and a zoning change to R-4 on this 1.14-acre parcel would adversely affect our neighborhood in several ways.

Traffic: Giff Hill Road has hills and curves, and almost no shoulder (only drainage pan) that make walking dangerous. We live across the street from the lower campus at Giff Hill School, and 1/3 of a mile from the upper campus. I am familiar with traffic patterns on our road, including parents dropping off and picking up students. Our daughter attended school at the

upper campus beginning in middle school, and graduated from Giff Hill School in 2020. We drove her to and from school because it wasn't safe for her to walk the 1/3 mile in each direction. Our Toyota 4Runner was totaled two years ago on Giff Hill Road by a drunk driver, in daylight, while our daughter was driving, and her defensive driving saved her and her friend's lives. We have large trash trucks that pick up the dumpsters on Giff Hill Road, and we have the Susannaberg Transfer Station on Giff Hill Road, near Centerline Road. We don't have many water trucks travel on our road because this is a residential neighborhood, and we conserve our water, unlike visitors/tourists. If DPNR would grant the proposed spot zoning change to R-4, with the design/density proposed by Mr. Goldschneider, then we would have another at least 72 people needing transportation, potentially 144 car trips per day for work alone. Add to this the many water trucks delivering water often –maybe daily. To the suggestion that I heard at the online zoning hearing from DPNR staff that Giff Hill Road needs sidewalks, thank you for recognizing the situation. However, I'm not hopeful that we will see sidewalks installed anytime soon, if ever.

Parking: Mr. Goldschneider's proposal lacks enough parking spaces for the number of people he proposes housing. This would mean people parking along the road, and I imagine parking at both campuses of Giff Hill School. I hope that they wouldn't park in any of these places, and especially hope that cars wouldn't block emergency vehicles and equipment from getting out of the St. John Rescue facility. The parking plan shown on the screen at the online meeting a couple of weeks ago looks dangerous in that I can see how emergency vehicles, especially fire trucks would not be able to access the property. This is if everyone parks as the layout suggests, and if they double park, because there aren't enough spaces, then certainly emergency vehicles couldn't access the property.

Sewage: 72 or more toilets, sinks, and showers on one acre?! I have a hard time imagining how you could have a large enough leach field on the property, and the cisterns that Mr. Goldschneider claims he would install. Do we now add sewage pump trucks to the traffic issues? Happy that I don't live directly downhill from parcel 9-3, but I do have an interest in keeping the environment clean and safe.

Noise: Housing people who work in restaurants in a concentrated area would mean those workers returning home late at night, every night.

Trust: I don't trust Mr. Goldschneider because: 1. He pretends to be offering a solution to the housing shortage on St. John, and acts as though his is an altruistic endeavor, but he is tone deaf to the concerns of the St. John community. He would not directly answer Alex Gibney's questions at the online hearing, and didn't even seem to understand the concerns of local families. 2. He doesn't have a handle on what's going on at the property. He claimed to not know about excavating over the boundaries of his property, and he again pretended to be ignorant of this fact at the online zoning hearing when he had already been told about the over excavating. Whether he is ignorant, or inept, or dishonest, our neighborhood would suffer the consequences. 3. He advertised his project on FaceBook to people in New England as an opportunity to come to St. John and work, and live in his new project; and simultaneously told

local people that the housing would be for people who already live here. His explanation was that his potential lender needed to see a market of people that was beyond St. John. So, to whom is he lying? Potential lenders? Local people? Stateside people? Will he say anything to get what he wants, and then do as he pleases? Is he playing the same game with DPNR? 4. Mr. Goldschneider won't commit to never turning the project into short-term rentals, saying at the online meeting that if the current plan becomes unfeasible, then he would consider short-term rentals. Well, construction costs often run way over estimates on St. John. Will Mr. Goldschneider recalculate, and then open as a short-term rental property? 5. Mr. Goldschneider proposes to offer affordable housing, and then states that the monthly rents will be \$1550-\$1600 for a bedroom within communal living. Affordable? 6. His design proposal changes with the wind. He should have to present a final design plan to DPNR for his application for a zoning change to R-4, and then DPNR should have another public hearing. 7. I believe that the only reason that Mr. Goldschneider puts forth an argument that his project would alleviate the tight housing market on St. John is because it is one way through to get a spot zoning application approved –to say that an exception should be made because his project would solve a local problem, like could happen for a health clinic, daycare, etc. He wants what he wants, and he'll say whatever he needs to say in order to get approval.

Culture: To propose to house temporary workers in communal housing away from town is to isolate them from local people, and not encourage them to learn about local culture and customs by living among local people. St. John is not the Jersey Shore, or a stateside ski resort, where seasonal workers come in to work and play, and then leave in a few months. It sometimes seems like St. John is transitioning to such, and there should be efforts to avoid the dilution of culture and local customs. DPNR could play a role in such efforts to preserve local culture.


The argument that Mr. Goldscheider puts forth is that people who are currently living in two and three-bedroom houses and apartments, with 3, 4, or 5 roommates, would move into his single-occupancy bedroom/dorm units at ~\$1600/mo. for each person, and a kitchen shared among 12 people. And, then the apartments and homes with roommate situations would free up for local families to rent. I don't buy this argument. Anyone at DPNR reading this may ask themselves, "Would I rather pay ~\$1600/month for a bedroom with a twin bed and ensuite bathroom, and share a kitchen with 11 other people, or live with four people for ~\$1,000/mo. for my share of \$5,000/mo. rent for a house or apartment?" Since this doesn't make sense, then what actually is Mr. Goldschneider's plan? To propose to solve a need in order to get a spot zoning change, and then 1. Sell the property that would then have a higher value than when he purchase it? 2. To use it for short-term/vacation rentals?

R-4 (Residential-Medium Density) zoning on a 1.14-acre parcel in the middle of an established R-2 (Residential Low Density One and Two Family) residential neighborhood is not a good fit, and the proposed lodging house project is not a good fit for the neighborhood or for St. John. I urge DPNR staff to deny the application, and make a recommendation to the legislature that the zoning remain as R-2.

Actually, I think that it would be an excellent idea if DPNR would wait for the current Water And Land Use master planning process that is taking place throughout the Territory to finish and make recommendations before considering any zoning changes, and especially applications for spot zoning.

Thank you for considering my input.

Sincerely,



Leeanne DiGiacomo