

Subject: Concerns Regarding the "Residences at 340 North" Development in Estate St. Joseph and Rosendahl

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express significant concerns regarding the proposed "Residences at 340 North" development in Estate St. Joseph and Rosendahl on St. Thomas. While addressing the island's housing needs is commendable, several critical issues must be considered to ensure the project's compatibility with the existing community and infrastructure.

Access and Traffic Concerns

One of the most pressing concerns is the current plan for Phases 1 and 2, which designates **Gooseberry Lane** as the sole access point to the development. The lane's narrowness presents significant challenges, particularly for construction vehicles attempting to turn onto the site. The design limitations will force vehicles to utilize private driveways to maneuver, leading to potential property damage and safety hazards for residents.

As of the time of the public forum, **no traffic survey** had been completed to assess the impact of an influx of approximately 175 residents during Phases 1 and 2, escalating to around 250 residents upon the completion of Phase 3. Such an assessment is crucial for understanding and mitigating potential traffic congestion and safety concerns. Additionally, the developer nonchalantly referenced "four residents" of Gooseberry Lane, which is both inaccurate and misleading. This oversight shows that the proper research has not been conducted regarding the true scale of the development's impact on the existing community. The actual number of residents on Gooseberry Lane is higher, which highlights the lack of proper consideration for the broader community's concerns.

Moreover, the developer has mentioned that if funding for the project runs out, there is a possibility the development may remain unfinished, which would mean that **Gooseberry Lane** would remain the only access road for the foreseeable future. This adds further uncertainty to the long-term impact on the neighborhood.

Pictures illustrating the road conditions clearly show that Gooseberry Lane and the main access road are not wide enough to accommodate two cars side by side. Additionally, the sharp turns from Skyline to Gooseberry and from Gooseberry to the main access road are too tight for large trucks to navigate, let alone the extra-large construction vehicles and equipment that will be required. This will lead to severe traffic congestion and safety concerns, especially with the anticipated increase of approximately **250 new residents** by the completion of Phase 3. Moreover, the lack of proper turnaround locations on Gooseberry Lane will force vehicles to use private driveways as makeshift turnarounds, further inconveniencing residents and creating potential hazards. This road is used for exercise and recreational activities for families, thus increasing the safety concerns and negative impact on the existing community.

Environmental and Viability Concerns

Beyond infrastructure and affordability issues, there are numerous additional concerns regarding the viability of a community in this area. The development impacts two nearby guts, raising significant concerns about runoff and potential environmental degradation. While we are not experts in this field and cannot provide specific data-driven assessments, the surrounding neighborhoods already report frequent flooding incidents, which could be exacerbated by the development, leading to further water damage and strain on the drainage

systems. Additionally, increased waste runoff and light pollution could disturb surrounding natural habitats, home to unique wildlife. These environmental considerations, coupled with the topographical challenges, raise doubts about the sustainability of such a large-scale project in this location. We urge the relevant authorities to thoroughly investigate these concerns, using the data raised during the public forum as well as additional information sure to be submitted by concerned residents.

Community Engagement and Transparency

The lack of transparency regarding the stateside investors involved is concerning. Although the development is marketed as “affordable housing for the community,” assurances that units will be allocated to local families and friends remain unconvincing without enforceable mechanisms. Relying on a future homeowners association to enforce these commitments is precarious, particularly when financial incentives may prioritize profits over community well-being.

Affordability and Housing Market Dynamics

While the development is touted as a solution to the middle-class housing crisis on St. Thomas, the construction of three-bedroom homes (and only three bedroom homes) in an area where housing prices are significantly higher than the local median income raises serious concerns about the true affordability of these units. Although current, accurate data is limited, the median household income in St. Thomas was listed as \$40,408 in 2022 and homes in the area where this development is proposed are typically priced far beyond what the average household can afford. Even modest three-bedroom homes are priced well above the median income level, creating a significant barrier to homeownership for most local families.

This further highlights the discrepancy between the development’s goals and the reality of local financial capacity, casting doubt on whether this project will genuinely serve the community it is intended to help.

There is growing concern that this development is being promoted as “for the community” in order to gain approval, only for the homes to eventually be sold to the highest bidders. This raises the real possibility that the unnamed investors behind this project will profit from reselling these properties, rather than providing affordable housing for the local population as promised. This undermines the integrity of the development and calls into question its true purpose. If the project is to serve the community, it must genuinely prioritize the needs of local families over profit-driven motives.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Given these concerns, I urge the relevant authorities and stakeholders to:

1. **Conduct Comprehensive Impact Assessments:** Undertake thorough traffic and environmental studies to evaluate and mitigate the potential effects on the existing community and infrastructure.
2. **Ensure Genuine Community Engagement:** Foster transparent and inclusive dialogues with all affected residents, accurately representing their numbers and concerns.
3. **Guarantee Affordability and Local Benefit:** Implement binding agreements to ensure that the housing units are genuinely affordable and prioritized for local residents, with clear pricing disclosures.

4. **Maintain Transparency with Investors:** Provide full disclosure of the investors involved and their commitments to the community's well-being.

Addressing these issues is crucial to ensuring that the "Residences at 340 North" development aligns with the best interests of the St. Thomas community and contributes positively to resolving the island's housing challenges.

Sincerely,

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