

Re: Snoqualmie Ridge II, Parcel S-20

Application CUP 2017-0002, MOD 2017-0001 and MUCR 2017-0004

I would like to address the proposal for the DevCo project to be greater than 3 stories high. First, I would like to stress that this community is not against affordable housing. In fact, we understand and embrace its necessity. What is objectionable about this development is its scale or size.

In 2012, the City made a "minor modification" to the Snoqualmie Ridge II (SR2) plans which collapsed and condensed the multiple affordable housing parcels in the SR2 master plan into a single parcel (S-20). The sheer size of this project, 191 units, 11 buildings, up to 5 stories tall, would be 4 times larger than the average affordable housing developments in King County, and out of characteristic with the rest of the city. When 120 units fulfill the city's requirements for affordable housing, 191 units is neither necessary nor appropriate. This should be about fulfilling the need for affordable housing. But DevCo's proposal has no requirement to remain "affordable". In fact, changing the target incomes from at-or-below 60% of median income to 80% will make it un-affordable to those for whom affordable housing should be intended.

The request of the minor modification/conditional use permit is to increase the height of the development above the allowed 3 stories to 4 or 5 stories. However, this would violate Snoqualmie Municipal Code, Chapter 17.20, section 17.20.050 ("Is at a scale which serves to maintain existing small-town character;"). With the current proposed footprint, 4 or 5 stories is not necessary to meet the 120 affordable housing unit requirements. We should ensure the quality of life and "small-town character" that defines Snoqualmie is protected. Unfortunately, public input (town halls, forums, council meetings) has been limited, at best, in relation to this project. It is disturbing when a Councilmember and one of the three members of the Community Development Committee voiced on Facebook his displeasure that he "knew nothing about this despite the fact this application was filed prior to our last committee meeting last week. There was every opportunity for City staff to put this on the agenda. Disappointing to say the least." He further stated, "...something of this magnitude is a big deal. I know I wasn't the only councilmember caught off guard." However, the mayor expressed his displeasure on Facebook that his staff had sent notification out to residents, stating that the normal process is to "withhold information from the public" until the Council has been fully briefed.

In order to approve a request to be 4 or 5 stories tall, a new and updated Environmental Impact Study needs to be conducted before any project application and/or request for minor modifications is approved. The last such study was completed in February 2004...more than 13 years ago. Many things have changed in Snoqualmie since that study was done, and it is irresponsible to use an outdated study in making decisions that affect the City, the community,

and the environment. That study was conducted prior to the city's minor modification which collapsed and condensed the multiple affordable housing parcels in the SR2 master plan into a single parcel (S-20). It was conducted prior to the hospital being built adjacent to and down slope of S-20...the hospital was not even planned when the study was done. It was done prior to Pulte coming in and increasing the number of homes built on the ridge, specifically Eagle Point which is directly adjacent to S-20. It was done prior to the retention ponds on S-20 being moved multiple times, the Montessori school and Woodlands apartments, the Goddard School, the Timber Ridge Elementary School, the Safeway and Bartels and warehouses/manufacturing on the parkway, and prior to the increase in traffic on the parkway directly impacting S-20 and S-21. Things have changed, a 13-year old Environmental Impact Study is no longer relevant, and a new Environmental Impact Study must be done. Additionally, the King County iMap lists S-20 as an environmentally sensitive area, an erosion hazard area, and having 2 wetlands.

In order to approve a request to be 4 or 5 stories tall, a new and updated traffic study needs to be conducted. It needs to be conducted during peak or high volume times, and include the impact on Frontier Street, Jacobia Street, as well as the Parkway. It needs to factor in the traffic generated by Jeanne Hansen Park (when Soccer and Lacrosse season are in full swing...). The mayor insists that the traffic generated development of S-20 would all go north on the parkway, and therefore not impact traffic on the parkway related to the Hwy18/I-90 interchange...this is asinine and ignorant. That may be the mayor's desire, but it is sheer fantasy and neither based on fact or study. The fact is, there is no requirement, nor can there be, that a resident of affordable housing built on S-20 be required to be gainfully employed in the City of Snoqualmie. In fact, there is a higher probability that those residents will be commuting to North Bend, Issaquah, Maple Valley, and even Seattle. This is especially true if the target income is raised to 80% median. Regardless, the backup on the parkway will overflow to Jacobia with the increased amount of traffic generated by the DevCo development, and the wait to get out of Eagle Point will increase substantially. Conducting "traffic modelling" from a desk somewhere or during non-peak usage will not capture these realities.


Building 4 and/or 5 story buildings (191 units rather than 120) means greater population, which means more traffic. Unfortunately, this project has a single ingress/egress. This is neither practical nor proper. Frontier Street was originally supposed to go through to SE 99th Street. However, when the mayor negotiated with the hospital to have them relocate to their current location, he agreed to close off Frontier and not put it through to SE 99th. So the hospital has more say than the citizens of Snoqualmie. Oddly, the hospital's address is 9801 Frontier Ave SE...which actually caused the city to have to post signs through Eagle Point that there was no hospital access. As a result, all traffic from the DevCo project will have to go through one exit down Frontier Street through Eagle Point. While Frontier Street is considered a "collector", it is neither practical nor appropriate to run the amount of traffic generated by a development the size of what is being proposed down Frontier. Before approving 4 or 5 story buildings, the City needs to: 1) renegotiate with the hospital; 2) put access from S-20 to the parkway through S-21

north of the hospital, or; 3) create a road/extension of Frontier west of the hospital to access SE 99th Street. Option 3) should be pushed back to the developer to fund.

In closing, I ask you to deny any minor modifications and/or conditional use permits being requested by DevCo in the development of parcel S-20. The policies, regulations, and requirements for development of that property are already sufficient for the city, and any developer, to meet the requirements of affordable housing, for which that parcel is designated. Allowing additional height, regardless of topography, will set a precedent that the city won't be able to overcome in the future. The size of 191 units is not needed, and this project/development is too big.

Thanks.

Sincerely,



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