

September 15, 2020

**TO: Charlottesville City Council  
Charlottesville Planning Commission  
Charlottesville City Staff- Neighborhood Development Services**  
**FR: Fry's Spring Neighborhood Association (FSNA)**

**RE: Preliminary Comments on 240 Stribling Ave. PUD Proposal from Southern Development**

*Via electronic mail*

Dear Council, Planning Commission, and Staff:

As the elected Board of the Fry's Spring Neighborhood Association (FSNA) we submit these comments for the record regarding the Planned Unit Development proposal for 240 Stribling Ave. (Tax Map Parcel ID# 18A025000). Please include these comments in the administrative record for this project.

We cordially invite all Councilors, Planning Commissioners and City Staff to walk Stribling Ave. with residents to understand in person what we outline below. We will follow up with you to arrange site visits prior to final decisions. Please feel free to contact us at any time: [fsnapresident@gmail.com](mailto:fsnapresident@gmail.com), [fsna-board@googlegroups.com](mailto:fsna-board@googlegroups.com).

#### **SUMMARY**

It is the view of the FSNA Board that this proposal:

- provides a mix of housing types and ownership models that is welcome in the city and the neighborhood;
- provides a density much needed in our city and welcome in the neighborhood.
- is too far removed from services and amenities to encourage non-car dependent transit
- is not in keeping with the letter or intent of the current comprehensive plan and zoning ordinance. (It proposes high density in an area identified for low density due to poor access, steep slopes, and limited infrastructure);
- does not meet nor support the goals outlined in the City's [vision statement](#) for Connection, Health, Sustainability, or Safety;
- is wholly dependent on substantial capital improvements funded by city taxpayers for its success
- will dramatically increase motor traffic on Stribling Ave. to the detriment of pedestrian/bike access and safety. Without additional street improvements, it will reduce community, welfare, and quality of life for a racially diverse community of all income levels and housing status;
- proposes a modest percentage of affordable units, but limits affordability to the short-term rather than putting land or units into a perpetual trust;

This PUD proposal must not be approved unless the developer and the city fund and deliver critical infrastructure upgrades to support this dramatic departure from existing city planning and the neighborhood fabric.

## BACKGROUND

In early 2018 the FSNA completed a capital improvement survey in the Fry's Spring neighborhood. That survey was then shared with Councilors, Planning Commissioners and City Staff. Since then we have continually advocated for our top priority: improved safety on Stribling Avenue through infrastructure investment via the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Stribling Avenue has long pushed pedestrians and cars into close contact. Current conditions are demonstrably inadequate to consistently manage current levels of bike/ped and auto traffic in a reliably safe manner along its length and at the intersection with JPA Extended. Yet despite apparent risks, the public way between Sunset Ave/Huntley Ave and JPA Extended is consistently filled with pedestrians of all shapes, sizes, colors, purposes, and economic strata. They are joined by baby strollers, runners, bikers, the UVA cross-country team, UVA students and workers commuting from housing in the county, skateboarders, and scooters as well as substantial motor traffic. Able-bodied residents have a shared knowledge of the street and negotiate relatively comfortably with the notable exception of high-speed, inattentive drivers.

The most recent neighborhood requests to Council have yielded at most a uniform acknowledgement by City staff and officials that there is an issue. Regardless of the PUD proposed for 240 Stribling, the street needs immediate placement on the CIP list for near and long-term improvements before someone is seriously injured or killed.

We recognize and acknowledge Charlottesville's history of racist exclusionary zoning laws and covenants and their continued impact on our city. Previous downzoning in Fry's Spring to R1 and R1S keeps density low, favors home ownership over rentals, and stifles new affordable housing. In the late 1950's City neighborhoods were allowed to vote on whether to permit public housing construction and this neighborhood has none. The history of the Fry's Spring Neighborhood cannot be written without a clear understanding of systemic, intentional racism. We hope our comments reflect this understanding and the need for serious change. We see opportunity to correct the wrongs of the past through thoughtful investment in neighborhoods and through welcoming increased density that includes a range of affordable housing.

The current sustained absence of an updated comprehensive plan and progressive Zoning and PUD ordinances is a disservice to city residents, staff, developers, and future generations. Increased density should be located to leverage existing and planned city outlays for infrastructure and transportation upgrades. **PUD proposals should not be allowed to divert city funds from a coordinated plan to offset their weaknesses.** Our neighborhood residents have been actively participating in the Comp plan process to ensure a more equitable and livable City.

The Planning Commission has stated it is [reluctant to approve density increases piecemeal](#) until a Comp Plan is approved. We respectfully request that this sentiment is applied consistently and that this PUD be coordinated with the current citywide plan.

### Comments on 240 Stribling Ave. PUD submission

We support increasing mixed-income high-density development provided the existing infrastructure can support it. We also support a range of affordable housing including extremely low-income (<30% Area Median Income). We support the mix of housing types and mixed ownership and rental in the proposed PUD.

On Sunday 8/30/2020 the FSNA Board voted to conditionally support the 240 Stribling Ave. PUD with the proffered 15% affordable units (or more) and the \$500,000 cash (or more) for pedestrian/safety improvements to the street **if and only if** the developer and the City of Charlottesville commit to a specific timeline and budgeted funds for safety improvements prioritizing bike /ped infrastructure including sidewalks, traffic calming, stormwater infrastructure, and lighting/utility upgrades for the entire length of Stribling Ave. If the City is not able or willing to provide the needed infrastructure prior to project completion, then this proposal should be denied.

**Without desperately needed improvements to Stribling Ave. the FSNA - opposes ANY development of 240 Stribling Ave.** The street is not safe now and will be made even more unsafe by developing this property.

Currently there is little existing infrastructure for pedestrian, bicycle and even vehicular safety on the only street access to the development. Stribling Ave. does not meet current city design standards for complete streets - creating direct confrontations between walkers, cyclists, and vehicles. In short, the street, in its present state, is not in keeping with multiple portions of [Charlottesville City Council's 2025 Vision Statement](#):

#### ***A Connected Community***

*The City of Charlottesville is part of a comprehensive, regional transportation system **that enables citizens of all ages and incomes to easily navigate our community.** An efficient and convenient transit system supports mixed use development along our commercial corridors, **while bike and pedestrian trail systems, sidewalks, and crosswalks enhance our residential neighborhoods.** A regional network of connector roads helps to **ensure that residential neighborhood streets remain safe and are not overburdened with cut-through traffic.***

#### ***America's Healthiest City***

*All residents have access to high-quality health care services. We have a community-wide commitment to personal fitness and wellness, and all residents enjoy our outstanding recreational facilities, walking trails, and **safe routes to schools.** We have a strong support system in place. Our emergency response system is among the nation's best.*

It is our understanding that the City Planning Commission and City Council members explicitly asked the developer for more density and affordable housing in this PUD. While perhaps feasible within the bounds of the parcel and proforma, this PUD will double the daily trips on the entire stretch of Stribling Ave from 2,000 to over 4,000 trips without upgrading infrastructure. **This traffic would directly impact 180-200 low to middle income households, of which over 80% are renter occupied.** Adding 2,000 vehicle trips per day will devastate community interactions, safety, and quality of life in this neighborhood unless adequate street safety improvements are made prior to project completion.

Some points to consider:

- The parcel is too far from transit and critical amenities including grocery and schools. 240 Stribling has “[below average](#)” [walkability](#) according to the EPA and it’s [Multi-modal scores](#) are also quite poor indicating almost all errands will require a car (see attached graphs and source vetting);
- Urban planning for high density housing suggests a maximum 10 minute walk (half mile) to amenities. Preferred proximity for regular use on foot is a 5 minute walk (quarter mile).

Proposed location has the following attributes:

- > 2 miles to the nearest grocery store (40 minute walk)
- > 1.5 miles to the corner of Alderman & McCormick and classroom buildings (25 min)
- > 1.5 miles to nearest park and playground (25 minutes)
- >0.5 miles from nearest convenient store (JPA Fast mart, 12 min)
- >0.5 miles to nearest bus stop (Fry’s Spring Station, 13 min)

**Due to these distances, it is highly likely that most users will drive**

- The site has over 11 acres of mature canopy with a high percentage of steep slopes directly next to Moores Creek, one of the two primary watersheds in the city:
  - Proposed impact of regrading and removing canopy would heavily impact the health of Moores Creek with the amount of impervious surface proposed;
  - The developers assertion that building sites will not impact steep slopes is disingenuous. The plan appears to show regrading and impact of nearly every available square foot of land that they are not required to preserve.
- Steep slope waivers are permitted when the public benefit of the development outweighs the public benefit of the undisturbed slope:
  - *“Public benefits include, but are not limited to, stormwater and erosion control that maintains the stability of the property and/or the quality of adjacent or environmentally sensitive areas; groundwater recharge; reduced stormwater velocity; minimization of impervious surfaces; and stabilization of otherwise unstable slopes.”.*

**This PUD does not present ANY of these stated public benefits.**

- Impacts on the neighborhood quality of life extend well beyond Stribling Ave. The Stribling/JPA intersection is already beyond its service capacity and will therefore be unable to absorb the increased volume of trips this PUD will generate. The Sunset Ave/JPA Extended intersection is viable, but the steep, narrow lane between JPA circle and Sunset Ave limits safe access for cars and pedestrians. This site has already had multiple accidents.
- Access to or from the county should not be assumed. Although Stribling Extended connects to Fontaine, it is not reasonable to expect that it will be used daily by residents, due to the steep grades, tight curves, single-lane railway underpass, one way turn onto Fontaine, and unpaved condition which frequently washes out. Even if Albemarle County improves the road at some future date, the Stribling/JPA intersection will remain the primary connection from the proposed development to the city.

Despite the site’s poor suitability for transit-oriented development or high density, we recognize the city’s affordable housing needs and could support increased density on this parcel in line with the

approved comprehensive plan if, and only if, the City and property developer will provide the necessary safety improvements and capital investment. We encourage the city to be creative and prudent with tax dollars to seek low-cost, easily implemented measures such as traffic calming, bio-swales for stormwater retention, lane share painting, crosswalk striping, improved lighting, tree planting according to current street standards.

In response to the proffers offered, the FSNA strongly encourages the developer to:

- If feasible without losing affordable units, increase the cash proffer to \$2 million tightly restricted to pedestrian, bicycle, and green stormwater improvements for the length of Stribling Ave;
- ensure permanent affordability of proposed units. Perhaps through a land trust or partnership with non-profit service;
- Provide financial support for continuity and enhancement of existing Moore’s Creek trail networks from Stribling Ave. to a multi-modal node at Fifth St. Extended. The trail connection at Stribling should be clearly marked. This will help the City achieve the Vision Statement goals of being a connected city and one of America’s Healthiest Cities;
- Work with the residents of Morgan Court to design a safe and slow connection that prioritizes pedestrians and public space including the playground in the event the proposed connection is not able to be limited to emergency vehicles and bike/pedestrians. The City should note that roads into and through Huntley subdivision also appear to not currently be designed nor constructed to handle the additional levels of auto/bike/ped traffic.

In responding to this PUD proposal, the FSNA strongly encourages the City to:

- Commit to fully funding the remainder of the pedestrian, bicycle, and stormwater improvements along Stribling via the CIP or other appropriate funding stream and provide a specific, enforceable timeline by which these improvements will be accomplished.

In closing, FSNA supports higher-density development like that proposed for 240 Stribling. We support a range of affordable housing. We cannot support this development without the long overdue and substantial improvements to Stribling Ave, the Stribling/JPA intersection, and even Sunset Ave. This project could be a welcome addition to the neighborhood if the City matches its commitment on density and affordable housing with safe streets that can handle existing and new neighbors playing, walking, biking, and driving. Without a safe Stribling Ave. this project will not succeed.

Sincerely,

## **Fry’s Spring Neighborhood Association**

**Co-Presidents:** Jason Halbert and Will Abrahamson

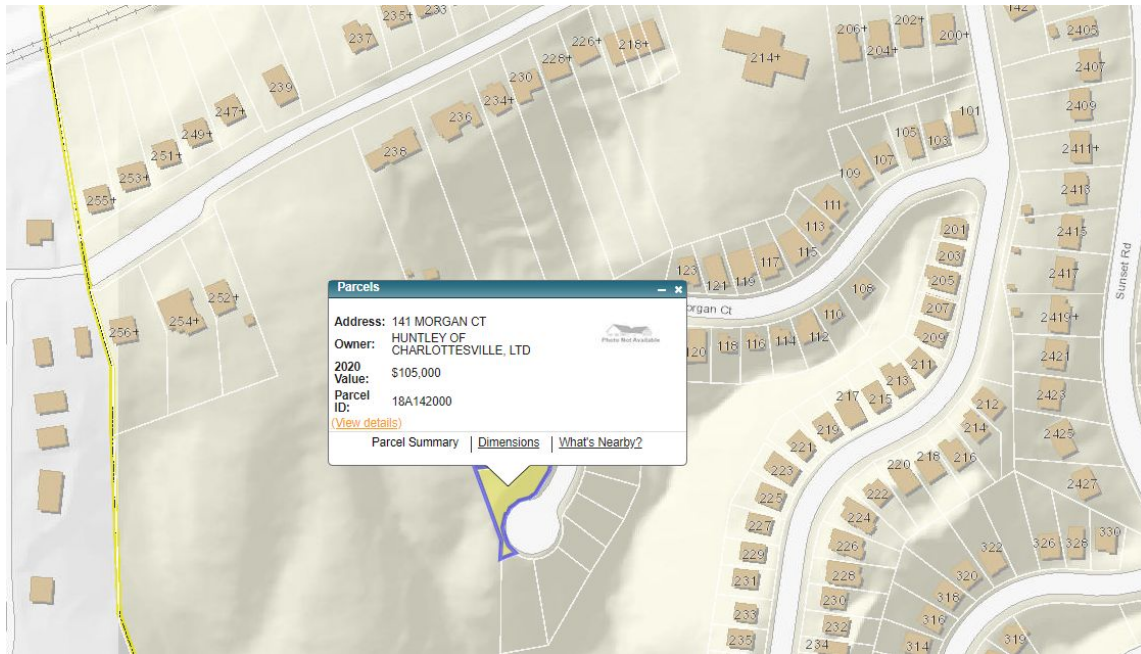
**Treasurer:** Allen Bailey

**Secretary:** Jess Wenger

**At Large Members:**

Brian Becker

Casey Gioeli  
Chris Meyer  
Susan Quinn  
Anne Reed  
Jacob Sztraicher



**Figure 1:** Lot that connects Huntley Subdivision at Morgan Court to 240 Stribling Property. City EMS has requested access here for increased safety/response. Homeowners in Huntley were sold on this being a cul-de-sac. Access should be limited to ped/bike/EMS only.

Sources:

<https://www.cvilletomorrow.org/articles/awaiting-consultants-to-complete-updated-comprehensive-plan-city-planning-commissioners-hesitate-to-take-a-piecemeal-approach/>

<https://edg.epa.gov/metadata/catalog/search/resource/details.page?uuid=%7B7B251AFDD9-23A7-4068-9B27-A3048A7E6012%7D>

<https://www.walkscore.com/>

[Walk Score™ As a Global Estimate of Neighborhood Walkability](#)

[Lucas J. Carr](#), PhD, [Shira I. Dunsiger](#), PhD, and [Bess H. Marcus](#), PhD

## Scores for 240 Stribling Avenue



Walk Score	Transit Score	Bike Score										
<a href="#">Score Details</a>	<a href="#">What is Walk Score</a>											
<p>Walk Score measures the walkability of any address based on the distance to nearby places and pedestrian friendliness.</p> <table border="1"><tbody><tr><td>90-100</td><td><b>Walker's Paradise</b> Daily errands do not require a car</td></tr><tr><td>70-89</td><td><b>Very Walkable</b> Most errands can be accomplished on foot</td></tr><tr><td>50-69</td><td><b>Somewhat Walkable</b> Some errands can be accomplished on foot</td></tr><tr><td>25-49</td><td><b>Car-Dependent</b> Most errands require a car</td></tr><tr><td>0-24</td><td><b>Car-Dependent</b> Almost all errands require a car</td></tr></tbody></table>			90-100	<b>Walker's Paradise</b> Daily errands do not require a car	70-89	<b>Very Walkable</b> Most errands can be accomplished on foot	50-69	<b>Somewhat Walkable</b> Some errands can be accomplished on foot	25-49	<b>Car-Dependent</b> Most errands require a car	0-24	<b>Car-Dependent</b> Almost all errands require a car
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# Scores for 240 Stribling Avenue



Walk Score  
**19**

Transit Score  
**28**

Bike Score  
**33**





## Scores for 240 Stribling Avenue



Walk Score	Transit Score	Bike Score
Transit Score measures how well a location is served by public transit based on the distance and type of nearby transit lines.		
<b>90-100</b>	<b>Rider's Paradise</b> World-class public transportation	
<b>70-89</b>	<b>Excellent Transit</b> Transit is convenient for most trips	
<b>50-69</b>	<b>Good Transit</b> Many nearby public transportation options	
<b>25-49</b>	<b>Some Transit</b> A few nearby public transportation options	
<b>0-24</b>	<b>Minimal Transit</b> It is possible to get on a bus	

## Scores for 240 Stribling Avenue



Walk Score	Transit Score	Bike Score
<p>Bike Score measures whether an area is good for biking based on bike lanes and trails, hills, road connectivity, and destinations.</p>		
<b>90-100</b>	<b>Biker's Paradise</b>	Daily errands can be accomplished on a bike
<b>70-89</b>	<b>Very Bikeable</b>	Biking is convenient for most trips
<b>50-69</b>	<b>Bikeable</b>	Some bike infrastructure
<b>0-49</b>	<b>Somewhat Bikeable</b>	Minimal bike infrastructure