

<https://beacononlinenews.com/2021/09/21/volusia-county-council-approves-rezoning-for-648-unit-development-near-deland-sunrail-station/>

# Volusia County Council approves rezoning for 648-unit development near DeLand SunRail station

September 21, 2021



GRAPHIC COURTESY VOLUSIA COUNTY VILLAGES — The proposed Villages at Pelham

Square development, as approved for rezoning by the Volusia County Council Sept. 21, would bring 648 units of residential housing to the area around State Road 44 and Grand Avenue near the DeLand station. The project is a part of the transit-oriented development, or TOD, area surrounding the future DeLand SunRail station.

The Volusia County Council approved rezoning for a 648-unit, 123-acre mixed-use development south of State Road 44 and along Grand Avenue near DeLand at its meeting Sept. 21.

Villages at Pelham Square is part of the greater, more-than-300-acre transit-oriented development near the DeLand train station, 2491 Old New York Ave., which will someday include the DeLand SunRail extension.

Villages at Pelham Square's 648 planned units include 114 single-family homes on 40-foot-wide lots, 210 town homes and 324 apartments. The completed development would also feature roughly 1.3 acres for commercial development.

When Villages at Pelham Square last came before the County Council Sept. 7, the council hesitated to approve the rezoning upon learning the owner of [a nearby metal recycling plant had not been consulted](#) about homes that could be built just a stone's throw from his business.

Since then, the applicant, Richard Wohlfarth of DeLand Development IV, worked with Dominion Metal Recycling owner Bart Phillips to come to a consensus.

Wohlfarth agreed to expand an existing wall running along the shared property line of Villages at Pelham Square and Phillips' property. The new wall will add some 250 feet to roughly 250 feet of existing concrete wall. An additional 100-foot vegetative buffer will be built from that wall toward the closest residential unit, approximately 154 feet away from the concrete wall.

Anyone purchasing property within 500 feet of the shared property line, Volusia County Growth and Management Director Clay Ervin explained, will go through a notification process to ensure they understand there may be some distant clanging noises beyond the buffers.

Phillips said the compromise wasn't perfect, but, he added, "We'll have to live with it."

Wohlfarth showed off plans for the project, including plans to make Grand Avenue more "grand" by adding housing on either side of the two-lane road and a multiuse trail that would connect to the DeLand station, among other additions.

Walking trails within Villages at Pelham Square's neighborhoods would also be connected, he showed off, to promote walkability and more multimodal transportation.

The project had its naysayers who spoke to the County Council during the public comment periods.

Four Volusia County residents spoke about the project, and three were vehemently against it.



One speaker was born and raised in DeLand and said she wanted to see it kept the way she remembered it. Another speaker said she and her husband moved to DeLand in 2008 because it was quiet. That's not the case anymore, she said, adding that she thought the development looked "disgusting."

"Don't allow this to happen," the speaker said.

County Chair Jeff Brower led the conversation with the applicant and county staff.

When he walked into the County Council Chambers that morning, Brower said, he was certain he would vote against the project. But seeing the progress that had been made and the potential Villages at Pelham Square had to set the standard for developments on the west side of DeLand had changed his mind.

“We are all putting our reputations on the line with this vote,” he said. “As part of economic development, we need to keep a county that looks beautiful.”

County Council Member Ben Johnson agreed with Brower.

“I’d love to see it like it was in 1960, but it’s not,” Johnson said. “Whether we like it in the long run or not, I think it is probably a good project. I think we have to look at what’s the best: that or a whole lot of commercial out there.”

The rezoning — from industrial and agricultural land uses to planned unit development, or PUD — was approved on a 6-1 vote.

County Chair Jeff Brower was the only dissenting vote, but not because he was against the project, he explained. His vote was a symbolic protest.

“You won the zoning change 6-1,” Brower said. “I’m asking you to take that one vote against it as a plea to continue to keep your word and make this the standard-bearer for this area, because we can’t redo it afterwards.”

Villages at Pelham Square’s next step is to draw up site plans. Subdivision plans and final plats will have to come before the County Council once more for a final approval.