**Introduction & Background** *prepared by Bill Herring (2/22/19)*

* My name is Bill Herring, I live at 1856 Hampstead Court in Manchester Meadows in Valparaiso. My wife & I, and our family, first moved to this location in 1996 and I have been on the Manchester Meadows POA Board since it was first established by Urschel Development. Over the past 22+ years I have been the VP of the Board or President, my current post, that I have held for about the last 10 years. I have multiple Engineering degrees, had a very successful 45-year career as a business executive and have also headed up HOA’s in California, New Jersey, Ohio (2X) and here in Indiana. Additionally, I have chaired Planning Commission in other cities (CA) and was the VP of the San Gabriel Planning Committee, the steering organization for the 32 cities of LA County, which oversaw & provided guidance on regional issues. During that period SoCal experienced the horrific San Bernardino fires and the Long Beach earthquake.
* My experiences on the Planning Commission and having worked with other planning commissions from the developer side of the table, I am quite aware of the rights of a property owner to develop their land within the bounds of the City Master Plan, ordinances & regulations, zoning restrictions, public safety and good tastes. I am also well aware of the trickier nature of developing an in-fill project, being that last puzzle piece to be put in place.
* This document is not presented as a “development denier,” however it is meant to question & challenge some aspects of what is being proposed and to offer some alternatives. Because we are dealing with the last major parcel to be developed, **the fact that it is surrounded by a large population of well-established developments, we fully expect that those neighborhoods be given the appropriate consideration.**
* This document represents the questions, concerns and suggestions from many residents currently residing in the existing developments surrounding the proposed new development of The Brooks at Vale Park. Residents of Keystone Commons, Beauty Creek, Windsor Park, Manchester Meadows and Oak Wood Estates have met, discussed and believe issues will or may emanate from the site preparation and completion of the proposed development. **We wish to make these concerns known, discussed and expect that our input to be carefully considered** **and appropriate responses to be provided** before any final decisions are rendered.

**Overall Plans**

* It is understood that for many decades (dating back nearly 70 years) that Vale Park Road has been part of the Master Plan for Valparaiso with the intent to be ultimately be completed as a major east-west traffic artery across the northside of the City. That Master Plan has been updated/reviewed on occasion and generally reaffirmed. **However**, it would seem obvious that **an obsolete “traffic” plan** conceived of many years ago, before many of these parts of the City were built out/developed, **needs to be reviewed in the** **context of connecting this final segment and its known impact on existing developments**.
* During several presentations by **representatives of the development it has been stated that no traffic studies** **are “required” (or “needed”) because the development is not introducing “any new streets or roads” and is simply “connecting” roads already in existence.** I find these statements **oversimplify and dodge the basic concerns of all the surrounding communities**. Further, if one reviews some possible options, they might conclude these **alternatives are being ignored as they may trigger the requirement of a traffic study.**
* This **proposed development** is being designed **to be accessed** ***only after first travelling through the heart of one or more of five already well-established communities*** *before even reaching this new development*. In other words, there is **no “main entrance” to the proposed development or individual access from a main road**, which is most unusual and virtually unheard of. This issue is at the heart of many of the concerns with these plans.
* Given there is open acreage (1.48 ac) in the NE corner of the site and a N-S right-of-way granted along the eastern boundary, **why a development entrance cannot be designed into the plan by extending 50W to the south** is questionable at best. **Please explain why this not viable.**
* The **lack of a main/unique entrance** would be quite abnormal and the **avoidance of passing** all traffic right **through** the middle of **5 other major developments** seems quite odd on its face. Additionally, poor development access has also been expressed as a concern from fire, rescue and EMS groups.

**Single-Family Residential**

* These two parcels to be utilized for the Brooks at Vale Park have been designated as SF-1 (Single Family) for development purposes. The neighboring homes on all sides of the proposed development are also SF-1. When one buys a property, builds a home and sees that adjacent parcels are designated as the same, there is an expectation that any future neighbors and neighboring developments will be compatible and of a similar character.
* **All** along the western border of **Keystone Commons**, where **single-family lots/homes** **exist**, the new development **plans call for single-family lots** to be placed in their adjacent/abutting lots.
* **Of the 16 lots on the northside of Manchester Meadows that directly border the new development**, indeed it appears that **similar consideration was given for 12 of those Manchester Meadows lots**, **but not for the remaining 4 lots in the SW corner** of the Brooks. ***It is wholly unacceptable to approve multi-family dwellings (tri-plexes!) on lots directly abutting to any existing single-family lots.***
* The **single-family lots of Manchester Meadows**, like those in Harrison West and Pepper Creek, are significantly larger, with larger homes and **there is** **minimum expectation is that these homes would have a like, single-family lot adjacent/abutting them.**

**Roads 🡪 Traffic, Ingress & Egress**

* Given the major concerns from all the already-developed bordering developments regarding the increased traffic volume on our existing streets due to this development, there are many questions that need answered. These would include:
	+ **What traffic analyses** been done to determine the **obvious increased flow through the existing** **developments** based on the final build out of this development? The **organic traffic volume** from the residents of the Brooks at Vale Park **alone will significant**, much the increased through traffic!
	+ **What studies** have been done of the **existing traffic problems and congestion** that occurs every morning and afternoon **at the Valpo High School?**
	+ **What plans are there to mitigate, reduce or redirect traffic** from the above areas? What plans are there for signage, signals and other traffic control measures **to provide for the safety and well-being of the residents of the** **existing developments?**
	+ **Why is there no consideration for entrance(s) off Ransom Road into the new development?**
	+ What considerations have been given to the fact that there are **other new developments** (Pepper Creek & Pepper Cove, west of Froberg Road) **adding to the traffic issues** along the Vale Park extension? Also, there will additional “through” traffic from Rte.130 across Valparaiso to Rte. 49.
* **What upgrades, modifications and better maintenance for the existing roads** will there be by the City due to these much-increased traffic flows?
* **What plans for street lights and additional police patrols** to maintain the safety and well-being in the **existing neighborhoods**.
* **It appears that the “bridge” extending Vale Park to the west, is really a culvert arrangement (some what like the Harrison Blvd replacement). No one seems to know an approximate cost for its construction nor is there a conclusion as to who will pay for building it. Please explain.**
* **There have been several references to a public/private arrangement regarding this development. Is there such an arrangement and/or tax abatement plan? What are the terms of these proposed arrangements and what portion will be borne by “the public” over its life?**

**Single-Family Residential Districts (100 lots for Traditional Homes plus 75 dwellings as Cluster Homes)**

* Explain the purpose/logic for **Accessory Units. If interpreted accurately,** *this would allow for a* ***detached******dwelling*, up to 40% of the total residential floor area, to be built and occupied as a separate residence on the same lot.** The argument has been given that this is a new trend (especially in California?) due to multi-generational living arrangements. Fancy speak for a “mother-in-law suite” or “my college-educated offspring is living in the basement” **does not need to be detached!** Additional private entrances, walkout basement designs or separate quarters over the garage are all common, **but not separate detached dwellings!** These **lots are all much smaller than other adjacent developments**, so additional, **detached dwelling (plus the possibility of two out buildings/sheds) is just not logical!**
* Traditional Homes (94X max) will be detached homes on lots that are 12,000 ft² minimum.
* Cluster Homes (75X max) will be detached homes of lesser square footage and on even smaller lots.
* **The “Flex Area” (consists of 34 lots and nearly 20 acres) and can be configured at the sole discretion of the Developer?? Please explain how this will be approved and managed.**
* **The allowance for fencing in all locations on the lots is a bit sketchy. Fencing in the back and side yards could be problematic unless carefully regulated, *but in the front yards could really lessen the attractiveness and architectural harmony with adjacent neighborhoods*. Please explain your Architectural Control perspective on “fencing.” This will become a real problem in no time.**

**Multi-Family Residential District (Townhome Subdistrict 70 homes and Multiplex Subdistrict 45 units)**

* On the **northwest section of the development** there are multiple units of the **townhomes situated on Ransom Road**. These **multi-family dwelling (at least 6 units) have no “connection” to the remainder of the development**. Yes, on a sunny day someone could walk across country to say the Club House, otherwise they are their own island. If they desire **to go anywhere by automobile within their own development** (say with a baby or young children), they look forward to **nearly a 2-mile drive**.
* Where are the details for the dwelling square footages, configuration of the Multiplex units, max lot coverage % and other pertinent information regarding these “Districts”? Please share these data.
* There is a great deal verbiage regarding “**Bufferyards**,” however it is unclear **exactly what bufferyard treatment** **and “opacity” would be installed** **especially adjacent to** **existing, single-family homes**. **Please provide, in some detail**, what landscaped transitions (berms, plantings, etc.) will be provided between the existing home sites on the northside of Manchester Meadows (16 lots) and those lots on the westside of Keystone Commons?
* What **preventative measures and protections will be made to not disturb or damage these directly adjacent Manchester Meadows and Keystone Commons homesites** during the site preparation or construction?

**Timing, Alterations, Accountability**

* **Please layout and share all the remaining steps in this approval process**. Specifically, which City bodies will this development come before, in what order, to seek what approvals and in which of these steps will there be public hearings or testimony?
* **Where is the Secondary Development Plan?** Has it been developed yet? When will it be approved?
* **What are the planned phases** for this development, once approved and expected timelines for each phase?
* **What assurances** are there that the plan will be completed & the approved plan will be adhered to?
* **Who will own, maintain and be responsible for all runoff, retention and drainage control systems once installed and operational?**
* **Who will own and maintain the entire trail system?** If these are left to a fragmented set of HOA’s it is doomed to fail and become rundown.
* **The concept of 4 “district” HOA’s with a “oversight” HOA is not practical or workable over the long haul.**
* **There needs to be more transparency and feedback in this process.**

**Site Preparation**

* Considering the above observations **regarding the site access**, it would be expected that **construction entrances** would have to be created **other than using the existing streets through existing neighborhoods.** It has been understood that there are considerations for having such construction entrances to be created coming off Ransom Road (from the north). One might ask, if these entrances are possible during the development of the site, then **why similar designs could not be considered for a major entrance** or access to the site in the final layout.
* It was previously explained (at an earlier Developer meeting) that there will be “***massive amounts of earth movement***” (the developer’s words) to excavate and redistribute earth across the site. Some of these activities are to create storm water retention areas and to mitigate unacceptable runoff, while other earth movement is to more “level” the site by filling in low spots (like the SW corner of the Ransom parcel). We would like to be provided the **final contour maps** explicitly showing the original & final elevations across the entire site (plus relative to adjacent development properties) as a result of these earth moving efforts. **There is over 75 feet of elevation difference across the site.**
* There have been **many problems with the entire Beauty Creek Watershed** that numerous residents of Manchester Meadows and Oak Wood Estates have been impacted by and endured for the past two decades. As the **previous studies for the water runoff/drainage were based on the two undeveloped parcels**, we would like to **review all new calculations & plans showing the final full site development for mitigating the runoff/drainage**. Of special concern is the how the **flow control will be managed for all the various tributaries** that ultimately feed into Beauty Creek at Harrison Boulevard.
* **What will be the SOP’s and protocols for site preparation and construction?** These would include start/stop times, site clean-up at the end of the day, no dirt & debris on adjacent lots or public streets, **minimization of dust** or runoff onto adjacent lots (from wind & rain), noise abatement, etc. “Construction Pollution” for a site this large, whose build out will last for years, is of real concern. **What assurances and controls will there be to protect all the existing homes** in adjacent developments (& later within this development) from the above problems??

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