

May 11, 2021

Dear Planning Commissioners, Design Review Board Members, Bainbridge City Council Members, and Hearing Examiner:

I am a resident of the Stonecress neighborhood adjacent to the proposed Wintergreen housing project. I want to make it clear that I am not opposed to development on the site and that I am in favor of affordable housing on Bainbridge Island. But the project has some serious problems which the Design Review Board has pointed out. Many of these problems have to do with failure to comply with Design for Bainbridge guidelines relative to massing, siting, and scale. Other issues include safety and pedestrian movement compromised by the busy road bisecting the development which carries big trucks to Pro-Build and ambulances to Virginia Mason. Also, there is limited landscaping and common space for outdoor activities.

Parking is certain to be a problem. One space is allocated to each unit, but some units include office space for commercial activities without additional parking for guests and/or client customers. Moreover, parking for VM already takes up most of the area that is allocated to the Wintergreen development. As those familiar with the off-set intersection connecting Wintergreen Lane, Ace Hardware and High School Road are aware, adding vehicles for 70-plus units will further complicate ingress and egress to the development. Although it is about a mile from the ferry, it is unlikely that very many residents will choose to walk rather than drive. Pedestrian access to Ace and McDonalds will require a crosswalk across High School Road where there is a lot of high-speed traffic.

Another issue has to do with affordability. The pricing of the units is promoted as affordable, but only a very limited number—five or so—will continue to be affordable. The rest will be bought and sold, many of them by LLCs that will put them on the rental market. Do we wish to compromise the Design for Bainbridge standards for such a small number of units, or can the development be built on a smaller scale in accordance with the guidelines with the same number of permanently affordable units?

The only part of the Wintergreen development proposal that directly impacts the Stonecress neighborhood has to do with trash collection. As currently designed, a single trash receptacle for garbage and recycling is located within fifty feet of Stonecress townhomes. This collection area is expected to accommodate trash collection for 70-plus units. It will attract area rats, be smelly, and noisy as trucks load up and cart away all the refuse. City requirements are intended to guard against such impacts on neighboring residential areas.

The issues raised by the proposed Wintergreen development are not minor ones. Why should people who qualify for affordable housing be expected to live in conditions that do not measure up to Design for Bainbridge standards? I, for one, would welcome housing that is not only affordable, but also attractive, safe, and with ample space for outdoor play.

Sincerely,  
Barry Andrews  
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