

Comments Received regarding Bill 20, St Elmo Rezoning

Harry Berger, 2118 W Fairview St.

This area has a lot of wildlife why would you want to destroy it? Also Union Terrace school and the Allentown school district won't be able to handle the extra children.

Please do not change zoning to allow townhomes off St Elmo St. Too much traffic in area already.

JoAnne Zairo, 420 S Glenwood St

I am writing to ask you to not approve the rezoning request for the quarry area on St. Elmo Street. If townhouses area allowed there, I am concerned about the increased traffic, and especially about the further demands on our already distressed school district. Please consider having this land remain as it is currently zoned.

Carol Mickley, 2667 Mosser St.

Dear Mr. Hanlon:

Kindly accept this opposition statement to be presented to Mayor O'Connell and City Council regarding the above zoning hearing. Thank you.

Richard D Gorski, Esq., 2029 West Union St.



Please note my objection to the requested rezoning request to the land off St Elmo St. On the reasonable assumption that there are 2 motor vehicles per home, and that each of these vehicles leaves and enters the proposed development once per day, that means 4 uses per proposed home per day in the development. As I understand it, there is only one entrance proposed for the development-onto St. Elmo St.

St Elmo St. is a narrow curving road with its closest intersections on MLK Blvd and West Union St. Each of these intersections is fraught with danger. Currently, it is extremely difficult to pull onto MLK, where vehicles commonly travel 40 mph or more, from St. Elmo St. Similarly, the intersection with Union St. is extremely dangerous due to the hilliness of Union St as well as its narrowness. In the time I have lived here, there have been at least two dozen accidents at this intersection, not to mention the countless near-misses and the perfunctory poundings on vehicle horns. (Two while composing this e-mail).

In addition, St Elmo St. is in a flood plain from Cedar Creek. Each year, it is closed to the public approximately 12 times due to extensive flooding. I've inserted a photo taken one month ago which depicts an area of St Elmo St. just 300 feet from the "entranceway" to the proposed development.

From a legal viewpoint, I have to question the concept of "pocket zoning" which sounds suspiciously like "spot zoning" which is the antithesis of good city planning.

Hamilton Park is a neighborhood which is adjacent to a beautiful stream and lake. It is an integral portion of the park land which extends from Cedar Beach through Union Terrace Park to the Lehigh Parkway. This strip of land brings wildlife (deer, fox, birds) into the city limits, limits which are shrinking around a terribly dense downtown area. Sticking a few hundred homes in the middle of it is not beneficial to the city nor its parks nor the residents who bought their homes for what the neighborhood is now. Please support the community we've bought into; don't make these residents pawns in profit-making enterprises. Thank you.

Michele McLaughlin and husband live, 2220 West Walnut Street

We absolutely do not want you to agree to these townhouses along St. Elmo and Martin Luther King.

First of all, we don't have police protection now; no matter who or how many times we ask, we do not have regular police patrolling in this neighborhood. If resources are that tight, why are you thinking of adding more residents?

We already have a problem with cars racing throughout this neighborhood which the city refuses to address. Adding more residents will increase the probability of accidents; especially for the senior citizens and youth in this area.

Our schools cannot accommodate even more students. We do not want to have our school taxes increased.

The flooding in that region is terrible and it would be a real disservice to allow people to buy a townhouse and then be stuck there during the flooding that occurs regularly in this area.

It will displace more wildlife. The city refused to do anything about the coyote and other wildlife in our area. Instead we are again expected to foot the bill and hire a trapper certified by the city.

This neighborhood is furious with our lack of services. The city has repeatedly neglected our community and expects us to supplement the city beyond our high taxes with programs such as SWEEP. If the city wants to regulate the height of our grass and weeds, they should consider the example they set with the weed infested park system. If you choose to vote in favor of this project, we will organize and vote you all out of office. We can do it. We will too.

Kristopher and Joyce Yoder, 2217 W Union St

Dear Mr. Hanlon and City Council:

I'm writing to voice my concern over the Bill 20 Pocket Development Proposed zoning changes to be voted upon at the Council Meeting Sept 30th. I don't understand how this bill has gotten as far as it has. I thought this was decided a number of years ago to keep the Park Land along St Elmo/Fairview streets designated as PARK land, and not allow hundreds of townhouses to be built in that area? No one wanted them built then. NO ONE wants them built now.

I find it unconscionable that someone would use the Coronavirus Pandemic to underhandedly force this through the council while the constituents that are most impacted by it are locked at home under quarantine, and distracted by fear for their lives due to the virus, unable to personally express their cases in an open public forum. Posting "public notices" in newspapers that no one reads, or along roads no one drives due to being stuck at home, and having virtual meetings online hardly counts towards openness.

This seems like the case of a petulant spoiled child that, when he doesn't get his way the first time, either runs to mommy to ask permission when daddy already told him "no," or harangues you with "Can I have some candy, Can I have some candy Can I have somecandycanIhavesomecandy" over and over until, exasperated, you eventually cave in.

I live in Hamilton Park and will be directly impacted by this proposed development. My concerns are for the educational, environmental, infrastructural, and criminal impact this

development would make on the area.

As For Educational:

The Allentown School District is already overcrowded with students, and experiences a budget deficit every year, especially now as having to provide virtual learning tools in the terms of laptops or internet access, and now you are proposing to add potentially hundreds of more families with children into that district?

As for Environmental:

The area of St Elmo Street, and Union Terrace Park (not to mention Martin Luther King Parkway) already floods during torrential rains which costs the city money to repair, as the city well knows from the flooding in August from Tropical Storm Isaias, among others. The paving over of open green space for roads and houses will only lead to more flooding and more cost to the city.

Also, Allentown prides itself on its park system, and the City's Parks and Recreation Department does a wonderful job taking care of them. Even last year, Allentown was once again named "Tree City USA" for the 40th year in a row, but now you are proposing to eliminate many of those trees for more houses. That park land is home to many different species of wildlife, from deer and fox, to heron and hawk, as well as serving as a cross-over from Cedar Beach to Lehigh Parkway. Attached are pictures I took last year of a poor herd of deer that got turned around, and ended up in our neighborhood, frightened and scared because they couldn't find their way back to the park. The building of hundreds of townhomes in that area will only serve to cause more harm to their lifestyle and ruin any cross-over path the wildlife might have.

As for Infrastructure:

Reading Rd/Union Street is already being used as a raceway from Dorneyville to Allentown, with cars travelling at high rates of speed, far exceeding the posted 25mph. This was addressed in a Road Warrior column of the Morning Call last October. More recently, high powered "crotchrockets" have been using Union St, Hamilton Blvd, and Martin Luther King Blvd as a veritable test track with the high whine of their engines disturbing the quiet neighborhoods day and night as they race down the streets. Hamilton Blvd/Rt 222 Corridor from 15th street to South Cedarbrook Rd in South Whitehall was already deemed one of the more dangerous stretches of road in the Lehigh Valley with the number of crashes. With hundreds of additional townhomes in the proposed area, Union and Martin Luther King will become even more traffic laden as the shortest route between the city and that section of South Whitehall.

I am not even mentioning the impact hundreds more homes will have on the already over-taxed sewer and water system.

As for Criminal:

At the moment, we in Hamilton Park see very little police presence, with very few patrolling vehicles (as the plethora of uninhibited, unticketed speeders mentioned above can attest.) Union Terrace Park acts a buffer from the encroaching crime that is slowly creeping westward from downtown. Hundreds of more townhomes in the proposed area will only increase the amount of crime seen in that neighborhood and ours, leading to even more territory the overworked police force in Allentown will have to cover.

Please vote NO on approving the zoning changes. Any potential tax income from the additional properties might look good on paper but will not pay for the increased detriment this development will cause to the city and its citizens.

Shane Fillman, 120 S. 22nd Street

Dear Council Members,

I recently purchased 120 S. 22nd Street and just learned of this proposed townhouse development and feel this proposed zoning change would not only burden the School District, but also displace the wildlife drastically increase traffic and drastically change the peaceful characteristics of the surrounding neighborhood for the worse.

Building hundreds of townhouses would add way too much density to the area.

I fully understand a “comprise” is needed to do something viably with the property, but townhouses is definitely not the solution.

I feel this property would lend itself perfectly for smaller single homes that empty nesters or seniors could gravitate to. Small ranch homes, cape cods or small bungalows would be extremely charming, not burden the school district and would be extremely marketable, and still also generate additional tax revenue for the City.

I feel 100% filling this property with townhouses will be detrimental to the surrounding areas and ultimately have a negative impact on the school district as well.

I respectfully request that you deny the request to fill this property with townhouses.

Michele Varricchio, 110 S. St. Elmo St. Allentown

I would ask that you vote against the rezoning of the St. Elmo properties. First, vote no based upon the recommendations of the Lehigh Valley Planning Commission letter dated February 21, 2020. Specifically, I would ask that prior to rezoning the properties that a determination is made whether or not the site is able to withstand the weight of the medium-density development, utilities and infrastructure. This potentially reduces the risk to the citizens of Allentown as it would ensure that development is viable prior to adopting a zoning change that would allow the development of residences by right, including extensive ground testing and environmental remediation of the project site. Additionally, vote no because the properties are located in an area that has been subject to increased flooding over the years as evidenced in city records such as road closures and road repair. Flooding further taxes some of the aging bridges in the St. Elmo St. area. Finally, as the gatekeepers of our future, I would ask that your decision is based upon what is in the best interests of the citizens of Allentown and not what the developers would suggest bears them the most profit.