

May 25, 2020

Dear City of Grand Junction Planning Commission and City Council,

On February 25, 2020 the City of Grand Junction Planning Commission voted 4 to 3 to deny recommendation to the City Council of the Magnus Court Subdivision, ANX-2019-137, PLD-20190374. The Planning Commission heard from 13 neighborhood residents who voiced concerns about the lack of safety for pedestrian traffic, the increased amount of traffic and access to the site, drainage issues, the lack of consideration of nearby proposed developments, unsuitability of the building site, and urban sprawl. The citizens, staff and developers spent 2.75 hours discussing the subdivision. Citizens voiced their concerns about protecting the safety of their families and the neighborhood and were looking forward to a final disposition at the City Council meeting.

However, on May 15, 2020 my husband and I received a Notice of Public Hearing and were surprised to learn another Planning Commission meeting was scheduled for May 26 and the process would be repeated. A thorough review of the resubmittal reveals that the revisions are minor and do little or nothing to alleviate the concerns of the neighborhood residents. Below are the primary concerns regarding the proposal that were heard on February 25 with updates on the resubmittal where appropriate. Apologies for the length of this letter, but I feel the content is important and relevant enough to be considered when making a decision about recommending the Magnus Court Subdivision.

Community concerns about the proposed Magnus Court Subdivision

1. The lack of safety for pedestrian traffic due to existing narrow roads with no curbs, gutters or sidewalks is a concern of residents and commissioners.

Resident Lisa Lefebre of 22 1/4 Road said, "I have three small children, there are no sidewalks on these county roads. They are not wide enough. These maps are not topographic and they don't show you that if there are two cars going and there is a pedestrian you can't just step over to get out of the way, you'll fall off. What do you do? We have senior citizens who walk every day. Their agility to move out of a vehicle's way is slower. I'm concerned about my children and their safety walking to school. It's not going to happen with additional traffic."

Naomi Rental of 515 22 1/4 Road said, "This should be a fairly easy neighborhood to walk around and it's not. The walkability score is 16 out of 100. Bikability score is 30 out of 100. Transit score is 0. Real estate websites list the neighborhood as car dependent."

Ted Ciavonne, the developer's representative said, "A lot of the roads are in the county, the county is not going to go out there and improve them ahead of time."

Jay Thompson, 495 Escondido Circle said, "A really good attempt at responsible development but access is the problem. You got narrow roads through small neighborhoods, up to ten years of heavy equipment and trucks coming in and out of there. It's not just 300 cars. Its hazardous enough on construction sites without this kind of traffic."

Commissioner Ken Scissors said, "How can we be assured that the construction traffic won't be an issue? It seems the study is mostly about resident traffic, an extra 300-500 cars. But it's going to be awhile for the resident traffic, but looking at the roads and the circuitous route to get in there, how can we be sure there is not a safety concern at that stage?" "There are just

too many concerns. For me, the one that tips it over is the safety concern for the neighborhood. I understand that there are things that could be done but I'm not hearing definitive enough they will be done, and they will be satisfactorily and they will be done in time."

In the resubmittal the developer will combine phases and their intentions are that the heaviest equipment (for heavy mass grading and site balancing) will be used the first 90 days. The equipment goes to the site and stays until done. However, there is no way the developer can guarantee that work will be completed on schedule, nor that the contractor will leave their equipment on site until the project is completed. They state the phasing plan will NOT be changing but they'll try to get it done in a shorter time.

In the resubmittal it states the developer met with the County and City and discussed conditions of roads and the safety of pedestrians, in particular kids walking to school. The City and County deem the roads acceptable and will not improve them. However, the City, County and the developer say they will support a trail or sidewalk to Broadway. Details regarding location of a trail or sidewalk are not listed. A trail or sidewalk to Broadway will make pedestrian traffic going in that direction safer. But please consider the many residents who walk or bike on South Broadway to get access to the pedestrian/bike trail on the Redlands Parkway. The safety of residents will be greatly affected considering 85% of the additional 700 cars will be using this route.

2. The two access points to this neighborhood will be strained by an increase in traffic.

A traffic impact study was performed and it stated the proposed site-generated traffic from the Magnus Court subdivision will be 700 vehicles per day. The study stated a typical neighborhood street is comfortable at 1000 vehicles a day. The study based their findings on 28-foot wide, standard, two lane neighborhood roads with curbs, gutters and sidewalks, not the 22-foot wide rural narrow roads in this area that don't have curbs, gutters and sidewalks and with gravel shoulders which are nonexistent to approximately six feet wide. The study said, "Having sidewalks is preferred but the low volume of traffic allows streets to be shared by all users." How can the level of service not be affected after adding 700 cars a day? There will be more traffic and it will affect the safety of pedestrians sharing the roads with vehicles.

The TIS stated a right turn lane on southbound Redlands Parkway will be required. The study did not address the more difficult left-hand turn from South Broadway north onto Redlands Parkway. The TIS reported that 142 cars travel this section in a 15-minute period during peak times. This intersection has a stop sign and the speed limit on the Redlands Parkway is 45 mph with two blind corners. It is already difficult getting onto the Parkway and if the majority of traffic from Magnus Court and the surrounding area uses this intersection we will see a long backup of traffic.

Commissioner Ken Scissors said, "Just putting in the infrastructure for this is going to be a huge amount of large vehicle traffic. It sounds like those roads would not be able to handle that from day one. The residents will be suffering through this heavy traffic waiting for the city and county to catch up and fix their roads."

Commissioner William Wade said, "I agree with Commissioner Gatseos to adequate circulation and access being provided within the development but because of the particular juxtaposition of this to the county roads and the only ways in and out. Now, I don't see that's adequate access for a development of this size."

In the resubmittal the traffic study revised the distribution of traffic to access points. The original traffic study said 35% would use the north access point to Broadway and 65% would use the south access to South Broadway. In the resubmittal it was stated 15% would use the north access point and 85% would use the south. This revision doesn't resolve traffic issues, however it does point out the greatest traffic issues will be at the South Broadway and Redlands Parkway intersection.

It is not known if the traffic study considered the increasing number of developments in the area and how this will also increase traffic on Redlands Parkway.

3. Increased runoff from this development threatens neighboring properties.

Many residents currently experience drainage issues. The subdivision will add of 24 acres of paved roads and landscaping, increasing the volume of drainage into neighborhoods below.

Resident Wayne Smith, 2222 S. Broadway said, "The developer said storm drainage will come off the hill to Goat Wash. My house is located here. I don't know how he is going to get to this without crossing my property. This wash gets close to flooding every year, I don't know what will happen with the additional water that will run. I'm concerned with safety and maintaining my property in that kind of situation."

Mike Mahoney, Mowry Dr. & 22 1/4 Road said, "There are existing issues not addressed in their plan. One is the draining of Magness where it meets 22 1/4. It drains straight into my front yard. That is a dirt road that absorbs part of that water. If they double the width and pave it, it will become a raceway for water. The retention pond is a great distance above this intersection. What happens to water below this pond? It gets magnified. You're greatly amplifying the potential of flooding."

Ted Ciavonne, development representative said, "Additional drainage coming down Magness Road — we are already aware of that. It's not just about water getting to a detention pond. There has to be other interceptions that happen. It's created its own watershed and made matters worse. Those things get resolved. Do they get totally fixed? No, I don't think so. Are we aware of them and need to address them? Yes."

In the resubmittal the developer claims the Magnus Court Development reduces existing drainage to the surrounding areas by intercepting the vast majority of water at the top of the watershed and directing it towards proposed storm water facilities, which directs it towards drainage to Goat Wash on South Broadway. This information is not new, it is in the development application, see page 77. Per the new illustration they may be directing more of the water to a storm water facility than previously planned. They do not explain how they will safely pipe the water across an unstable hillside without endangering the homes below. Nor do they explain how they will physically get the water across South Broadway to Goat Wash without easements from landowners. Goat Wash is a natural creek that flows year-round and is not maintained by the City or the County. The proposal fails to address the impact of the added runoff to Goat Wash. Could it flood Redlands Parkway or homes along the wash? Will existing culverts under the road be able to handle the increased runoff?

Also in the resubmittal is a letter from Scott Mai stating the County will share a drainage feasibility study in an adjacent neighborhood and that "I'm sure the developer's engineer can provide solid numbers showing how the Magnus Court project deals with drainage through the area." I'm assuming the developer included the letter as proof they will mitigate the drainage

issues. It does not. It seems to me it only shows there are additional drainage issues in the area being studied by the County.

4. Individual proposals are considered without accounting for their collective impact on infrastructure and the tranquility of the community.
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In addition to the proposed Magnus Court subdivision, three other subdivisions are being built or proposed that will affect the infrastructure of the area and greatly increase traffic. Building on Renaissance Boulevard (7.5 acres), Canyon Rim (23 acre rezone request), and Redlands 360 Planned Development (624 acre property) are all within three miles of this proposed development.

Richard Swingle, a resident of the Renaissance said, "There is a huge amount of development and population growth in this area of South Broadway, Redlands Parkway, South Camp. We don't understand the constraints to our system of what will happen. We are looking at them as individual elements instead of a broader perspective. We need to consider the broader perspective of what will happen to our community."

Commissioner William Wade stated, "The problem is not that the project is not good, the problem is one of our citizen speakers asked us to look at this from 50,000 feet and see the other projects that are coming around it and what that does to our infrastructure. Unfortunately, you counter that by saying we're not responsible for taking a long-term view, well we have to take a long-term view of planning and that's our responsibility. We have to look at each project that is brought before us on it's own merits."

5. Unsuitability of land for development: this area is known for its expansive clay soils and bentonite which causes foundation problems.
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At the meeting on February 25, resident Sharon Sigurist said, "Our neighbor had to dig down 18 feet to build a stable foundation. They themselves had to dynamite to put in fence posts."

Resident Laura Curry said, "The soils are horrible. The development will be really difficult. My house is having major foundation issues. Our neighborhood on Riggs Way, over 50% of houses are having foundation issues due to soil. Responsible building means learning from past mistakes and this community has made a number of mistakes, we need to look into that. Friends off South Camp in a newer development have all kinds of issues there. This area is notorious for that. Clustering houses on this hill, given soils and rockiness, is a major mistake. An employee from Foundation Repair was at my house, and he said, "I'm sure I'll be visiting those houses soon."

Commissioner Kathy Deppe said, "Less than two months ago we had a property on the Redlands very similar to this with similar kinds of conditions. We had people get up from the audience and tell us they built houses there, spent \$500,000 and after they moved in had to spend another \$100,000 to fix the foundation." "... we also have a responsibility to not create any kind of financial burden or harm to the citizens of Grand Junction. So looking at this one and the one we saw before, in my opinion, it does cause a burden. Or it could cause a burden."

6. Unfettered suburban development paired with a lack of community centers is leading to urban sprawl.

Resident Naomi Rintoul of 515 22 1/4 Road, said, "The GJ Comprehensive Plan and the Path for Growth for the City states 'Centers are the logical location for public facilities, fire stations, police stations, branch libraries, parks, schools. These mixed-use centers combine working, housing and shopping and are used to reduce driving.' There are two neighborhood centers within walking distance of my house and they are mostly empty. Since I've moved in we've lost the hardware store, the Safeway, the Wells Fargo, the greenhouse and Loki moved downtown. Our post office, which doesn't have full services, operates out of a gas station and is constantly on the closing list." "I'm just asking if these growth plans shouldn't include, before we start putting this many houses out there, infrastructure before planning this large subdivision. This park will bring more people to the area. And I can't walk to it anyway. So think about pedestrian and bike safety. This is quite literally the definition of urban sprawl if we have this many houses and no services."

Resident Noella Cumin said, "My biggest problem is a human concern. Most people chose to live there because it's a quiet, rural area. We never expected to have something coming right through our neighborhood that would bring upwards of at least 300 cars a day back and forth. I realize you did a traffic study...it doesn't take into account the traffic coming from new developments from South Camp, from the west on Broadway and developments all over. It is urban sprawl and the impact on our little neighborhood is going to be quite something."

Resubmittal of project

Based on the feedback at the February 25 meeting the developer resubmitted the project "with changes showing they listened to the neighbors and staff, and with additional 'Significant Community Benefit' enables a new hearing." (See page 273 of application) The changes address five lots whose dimensions were too small, construction phasing and construction traffic on roadways, pedestrian traffic on roadways, paths/sidewalks to schools, drainage diversion, traffic, and public use trails. The developer's resubmittal doesn't resolve pedestrian safety, increased traffic volume, drainage impacts, the unsuitability of the land and the entire area's infrastructure. Therefore, I urge the County Commissioners to again vote nay on this project.

Sincerely,
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