

Applicant's Response to Council Questions - May 27th, 2010

1. Location:

There is no farm site available in the village area that matches the unique characteristics and natural setting of the proposed site. This site is near, and adjoins, one of four historical Lake Elmo family farms. The proposed location will preserve the rural farm characteristics associated with Lake Elmo.

2. Access/Safety:

The proposed access on Hwy. 5 is a split access that utilizes the two current driveways to allow one driveway as an entrance and one driveway as an exit. The project will include a right turn and bypass lane, paid for by the applicant. MnDOT has already indicated that they will permit this access. The existing Lake Elmo developments accessed by Hwy. 5 also have right turn and bypass lanes, which have proven to be safe. We will construct the westward trail leading to Jamaca Court to insure it can be used as a second emergency entrance.

3. Affordability:

While this means different things to different people, these moderately priced units will be in line with, or below, current market prices. Our target market is working class seniors that want to live in Lake Elmo to enjoy its rural character.

4. Senior Housing Demand:

As the 2008 Senior Housing Update compiled by Maxfield Research indicates, there will continue to be demand for senior housing. As baby boomers age, there will be huge demand for developments that cater to their active lifestyles. There are many seniors interested in this project as it includes the intergenerational component of working with children in a farm setting. This environment caters to an "active" lifestyle with both the farming element and the interaction with children. We expect seniors will want other housing options and will find the village and 94 corridor to be desirable as well.

5. Precedence:

We agree with the unanimous Planning Commission recommendation along with the City Administrator and City Attorney that this project is sufficiently unique and that the Council can exercise its' right to alter the Comprehensive Plan to allow this project.

6. Buffers:

Buffers are designed to minimize the impact to adjoining properties. The areas where we have less buffer are shielded from the adjoining homes with existing and new vegetation. In the areas without vegetative cover we have more than double the current 200' buffer.

7. School:

We are working with staff to supply a definition and/or description of what a school/preschool/farm school actually is. We agree with staff's recommendation that "the keeping of animals associated with the agricultural activities on the site shall comply with all applicable City and MPCA requirements for the keeping of domestic farm animals."

8. Open Lands:

As the concept layout shows, we have agricultural areas such as an orchard and vineyard, along with crops and pasture for our working farm. We also envision community flower and vegetable gardens for the seniors and children. These areas will be part of the "open space plan" and maintained by the Home Owners Association as required by the existing city ordinance. This plan will be refined during the preliminary plat process.

9. Metropolitan Council:

We are working with staff to make sure this concept isn't inconsistent with the cooperative agreement in place with the Met Council. We believe this project will help Lake Elmo reach its population requirements.

10. Height/Elevation of large buildings:

We believe that the visual impact of the main building will be similar to the back side of a two story home with a walkout basement. In listening to the land, we've designed the building to incorporate the three story sections next to the existing oaks and behind the knoll. Away from those natural features we've reduced the building to two stories. In addition, it isn't economically feasible to have underground parking for a two story building and remain affordable. This design also decreases the projects overall footprint on the land.

11. Background zoning: We agree with staff's interpretation.

12. Senior Housing allowed in the village:

Current zoning does not allow senior housing in any district. Wherever senior housing is proposed, ordinances and standards will need to be created.

13. Transfer of Density: We agree with staff's interpretation.

14. Comp Plan/Zoning changes kept together:

We will work with whatever process the City of Lake Elmo deems appropriate.

15. Fire Marshall Review:

We will work with whatever process the City of Lake Elmo deems appropriate.