

Thank you for this opportunity to include my comments with other members of the public who have participated in the Dutchman's Harvest project review.

The objections I raise to the Dutchman's Harvest project are not based on prejudice of below market housing being constructed within the city of Lewes.

Instead, my primary objection is focused on the *process* that has been followed up to this moment in time that has enabled this project to advance to the MCC for preliminary consent. For a number of years members of the Lewes community have often spoken to the need for affordable housing, without offering any method or description of how "affordable" is going to be realized in the housing mix. The city's guiding planning document, the 2015 Comprehensive Plan acknowledges a need, but is devoid of an action plan, a means by which the need can be addressed.

In fact, as stated in the final and approved 2015 Comprehensive Plan, the city recognized " the importance of affordable housing within the *greater* Lewes area (emphasis added). "Greater Lewes area" is not defined in the Comp Plan nor is it understood as a well-defined area. It is safe to assume that it includes those lands within the city limits but also suggests a very large section of unincorporated Sussex County will be included. This area of Sussex County shares a Lewes mailing address (and zip code), residents identify as being a part of Lewes, yet they do not shoulder any of the fiscal or civic responsibilities associated with city residency. When taken into account, two elements that comprise "greater Lewes area" i.e. land mass, and population, Sussex County's contribution to the "greater Lewes area" dwarfs that of Lewes City and its residents yet, should this project be green-lighted, the fiscal burden and the project's impact will be on the backs of city residents and the city, respectively. Assigning responsibility to one class of citizens not only does not comply with the Comp Plan, it is also not fair nor equitable.

In addition, I would argue, recognition of a *perceived* need should not be construed to be the same as *required to remedy* . In other words, how did we as a city of fewer than 3000 residents accept the challenge to host a housing solution that is eluding our much larger neighbor Sussex County and the entire state? Nor I must add, do locally elected officials enjoy the public's support to committing the city's limited resources to create a solution to satisfy affordable housing needs. In fact, the same Comp Plan also recognizes "Lewes' *limited* ability to address affordable housing issues on its own"

thereby suggesting that a type of partnership, a co-sharing of responsibilities and costs amongst local and state governments should be formed to work towards creating a solution. (Comp Plan, Housing Plan, pg 46)

I suggest that an in-depth business plan study be conducted. This is an opportunity for due diligence to be applied. A good first step would be to form a committee comprised of unbiased members of the community to determine the probable financial consequences should the Council approve this proposed project. This business study must also include the costs associated with the creation of the requisite housing authority and its annual administrative costs prior to the city granting approvals.

## **Project Design Comments**

The project developer, OA-Vanatage Point, and its site engineers have made a remarkable, some might even say heroic, effort to maximize the build-out plan for this site and provide the stated need for affordable housing. When I look at the site plan, I am impressed with the number of buildings and the density of units that are proposed. I commend the developer for their efforts, including identifying examples of workforce housing built in far-away communities, and including some of those design elements in their proposal for Dutchman's Harvest. However, in an effort to maximize the full potential of the site, as measured in density and return to investment, there are consequences which must be vetted and considered with open minds.

We are all familiar with the children's story, "Cinderella". When presented with the opportunity to marry Prince Charming, Cinderella's two older sisters go through all sorts of contortions in an effort to fit into the silver slipper. Their feet were simply too large to fit into the slipper. This story is analogous to the Dutchman's Harvest site. Too much is being expected of the design to be squeezed into a finite space, compromising adversely its livability and possibly crippling the project's success.

To support this analogy, I offer these observations:

Sidewalks. One of the purported goals for building workforce housing is to provide affordable housing close to employment centers. The city of Lewes with its retail and services is such a center. More specifically, the property owner,

Beebe Medical Center, Inc, certainly is a major employer. In fact, it is expected that Beebe will purchase a block of units and make them available for itinerant employees and regular staff to be able to be a short walk from home to work. In public presentations, the builder has explained that the site is not large enough to accommodate sidewalks for safe, intra-community walking, and still have space for 10 buildings and associated supporting elements such as streets, curbs, garage aprons. The city would be wise to not compromise on the opportunity to reduce further dependence on cars by foregoing sidewalks, as a basic tool of infrastructure for accessibility to areas both inter and intra the development . A planned community such as Dutchman's Harvest needs to accommodate this intrinsic pedestrian element in any approved design. The current site plan does not even provide pedestrian connectivity to the adjacent parcel where a multistory senior residence will be constructed. Are communities being constructed or inland islands within City limits?

Lack of open space. Some 2 and 3 bedroom units are proposed to be part of the housing mix, suggesting that families with children may take up residence. There are extremely limited opportunities for any outdoor, age-appropriate, recreational areas to be included on the site. As a function of planning and design, where would any resident child go to recreate?

Visually impactful. 10 identical sized buildings are proposed to be built on 5.7 acres (of a 7.9 acre parcel). Inward facing buildings with entire opposing facades dedicated to supporting multiple garage functionality is visually impactful and not pleasing. Is this monolithic design element compatible with previously stated requirements precedents? The City Code Chapter 70-15 Design review criteria paragraph (6) speaks to "monotony of design in single or multiple building projects shall be avoided.....In multiple building projects, variable siting or individual buildings may be used to prevent a monotonous appearance." It would be wise for the MCC to apply this Code requirement in the design review and approval process for Dutchman's Harvest. Afterall, should work force housing be constructed, its architectural design and siting alone should not set it apart from other Lewes communities permitted under the same Code.

Respectfully,

Tim Ritzert

What has changed in the 4 years since the Comp Plan's approval and acceptance by the community, the MCC and the State Office of Planning? for those conclusions and recommendations to be put aside and in place, the city is now considering the creation of a housing option authority administrative