

November 29, 2021

To: LaConner Town Planning Commission:

Regarding the proposal draft plan submitted for a multi-apartment and vacation rental development at 310 Centre Street, discussion with Michael Davolio on November 18th.

As a current owner, and resident of 307 Centre Street from 1986-2015, I have concerns from recollections and some research. The proposal submitted to SEPA with answers consisting of “none” to questions in section 7 regarding “any known possible contamination...” and “Describe existing hazardous chemicals or conditions...”.
None?

Is the developer unaware of or avoiding knowledge that this property held three oil storage tanks at the west end of the property for 30 years or more? Is developer aware that tanker trucks were stored in a building on that property for years?

To give one example of the kind of use and oversite over time, I recollect in the fall of 1988 one morning I sat at my kitchen window drinking coffee while a double tanker oil truck parked and began filling/emptying one of the stationary tanks. After some time, I noticed oil coming out and down the sides of the tank and ran out to alert the attendant who was standing on the other side of the tanker. He stopped the flow. I called town hall to alert them to the accident. I know there was some investigation.

When the tanks were removed a few years later was the site cleaned up per SEPA regulation before the double wide trailer was installed? Was any other contamination discovered and removed? Shouldn’t the developer be required to have the site tested for contamination in several areas across the property?

Those of us who have lived in LaConner for more than a few years remember the three gas stations in town. All three were installed long before there were stringent requirements for gas/oil storage tank safety that we know is necessary now. Chet Pierson’s station, later owned by Jerry Blades took up most of the block between 3rd and 4th on Morris Street. There was the station for getting gas in front of NW Fuel and Sliders now. And a car rack for oil changes and repairs where Fifi’s Palace now resides. Does the town know the status of safety of the ground under these buildings, where the underground gas tanks were? Have they been removed and investigated for SEPA contamination issues? The gas stations and property directly behind to the north were all one property at that time.

The building directly across from 307 Centre Street, partially hidden by the trees, about to fall down, was home to the oil delivery trucks which retrieved oil from the above ground tanks to the west. Has that ground been tested for possible seepage of contaminants from years of sitting there? Are there other underground tanks we don’t

know about? Recently that building was used for automotive repairs and housing. Has it been investigated since for contamination?

By their answers to the SEPA you must realize that the developer/architect has no knowledge of the history of this site. You, town administrators should. And you should act on behalf of the town and neighborhood, not the developer.

In regard to the development itself, 3 stories, 14 apartment units, 6 short term vacation rentals: apparently the apartments need a conditional use permit and the vacation rentals are granted in under commercial use. I understand that there is some question as to the ability of the LaConner Fire Dept to successfully put out fire and save people on a third floor. Do not, under any circumstances, put people and property at risk in this way. This is an ethical and liability concern not to be taken lightly.

The 6 vacation rentals on the ground floor show entrance and exit directly onto Centre Street. This design confronts a hotel environment right up against a residential neighborhood. Call them what they really are: Ground Floor Hotel rooms. The Town Comprehensive Plan has something to say about this under 6A-7, "protect residential zones from encroaching commercial use."

These short-term rentals will use the parking along Centre Street regardless of what the town planner thinks. Parking is always difficult during prime hotel stays during spring, summer and fall in LaConner. The Hotel Motel Tax is a minor amount compared to property taxes, and is used primarily to promote tourism, not town infrastructure and maintenance.

If you have ever visited the third floor of the LaConner Retirement Inn, down the street from this proposed development, you know how invasive a third floor window can be to the privacy below for a good block or so. One gets a bird's eye view of arguments, car repairs, and what's on the BBQ at 307 Centre and 306 State Streets. This proposal does not continue to enhance the small-town neighborhood setting we have come to love and defend from encroachment.

In regard to the 14 apartments planned for floors 2 and 3; we have new homes approved and under construction on Snapdragon Hill and Landed Gentry on Maple Street. I understand that Channel Cove is planning for addition of 3 low income homes at the south end of town in the future.

The Town Comprehensive Plan notes the need for more low income housing as the median income for LaConner residents lags behind the county by some \$20,000 per year. (2016) The average rental cost in LaConner, as far as I can ascertain, is \$1185 per month. We would like to know the rental cost per unit planned for this development. Will this development give access to homes for middle to low-income families? The answer to that question should influence your decision on whether to approve these plans.

The plan shows all entering and exiting from the apartments onto the south side parking lot. This is as it should be, not from Centre Street.

My suggestion and request to the town planner, planning commission, and town council is that they require the developer to amend the plan to 2 stories only, with 14 apartment rentals, no vacation rentals, 28 parking spaces in the south parking lot to support one car per unit, one car for guests, demand a fully accurate SEPA/EIS, and require developer to follow through on all these requirements before a square foot of concrete is poured. And correct the spelling on all plans to "Centre Street".

Respectfully

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Co-Owner of residence at 307 Centre Street since 1985.
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