

April 1, 2019

City of Olathe  
Planning Division  
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Delivered via email: [planningcontact@olatheks.org](mailto:planningcontact@olatheks.org)

Re: Four-story Apartment Complex Proposed on Brentwood Across from Saddlewood Downs

Dear Olathe Planning Commission:

The Saddlewood Downs Homeowners Association and residents of Saddlewood Downs were made aware of the proposed development of an apartment complex located on the west side of Brentwood between 153<sup>rd</sup> Terrace and 155<sup>th</sup> Street. Several members of the Saddlewood Downs neighborhood attended a formal presentation held on February 28 and we have had direct communication from the developer's attorney.

As a community of homeowners, the focus of Saddlewood Downs Homeowners Association (Saddlewood HOA) is to maintain architectural standards, promote safety and security within our neighborhood and uphold decisions that protect the investments of homeownership. The developer's proposed apartment complex and requested rezoning will have an impact on each and every resident of the Saddlewood Downs subdivision.

Saddlewood HOA's key concerns regarding the proposed apartment development:

- Height of the proposed buildings
- Amount of available parking
- Increased traffic flow on Brentwood
- View-blocking berms and landscaping

#### **Height of the Proposed Buildings**

We understand the proposed development to include three 4-story buildings, and one 3-story building. Two of the buildings immediately adjacent to Brentwood would be 4-story buildings. The existing Saddlewood Apartments buildings are no taller than 2-story buildings immediately adjacent to Brentwood, while the 3-story buildings are on the Mahaffie side. Saddlewood Downs' homeowners whose property backs on the Brentwood will be directly across the street from the proposed 4-story apartment building.

Height of the 4-story buildings, even with a proposed step-down to three stories at the end of the building, will result in decreased environmental views and decreased privacy for those homeowners whose property backs on to Brentwood.

#### **Amount of Available Parking**

Documentation provided by the developer stated that the existing Saddlewood Downs apartment complex (Phase I) has 92 dwellings/196 bedrooms with 205 parking spaces—a ratio of 2.23 parking spaces per dwelling (1.05 parking spaces per bedroom).

Information we gathered from the February 28 presentation from the developer stated that the proposed plan of 444 dwellings/760 bedrooms would include 690 parking spaces—a ratio of only 1.55 parking spaces per dwelling (0.91 parking spaces per bedroom). This is a decrease in available parking from the existing Saddlewood Woods Downs Phase I apartment complex. We understand that a recent design change, which includes removal of a street at 155<sup>th</sup>, will potentially increase the number of parking spaces. We ask for additional clarification of the number of actual parking spaces proposed by the developer.

Olathe has limited access to bus service (one route from Olathe Medical Center across 151<sup>st</sup>) and rapid transit is non-existent in south Johnson County. Car-free households are more likely to exist in densely-populated urban areas or areas where light rail and rapid transit are readily available. Residents of Olathe are vehicle-reliant.

The developer believes Olathe residents will rely less on vehicles, relying on a nationwide study that indicates millennials (the target lessors) are less inclined to own vehicles and are more likely to rely on public transportation and Uber/Lyft for commuting and shopping. However, the statistics for vehicle ownership in Olathe, KS prove otherwise.

According to 2016 statistics on vehicle ownership, Olathe households average 2.01 vehicles, with only 2.7% of Olathe households having no access to a vehicle. In fact, between 2015 and 2016, more Olathe households reported vehicle ownership, as the number of Olathe households without cars dropped from 4.6% in 2015 to 2.7% in 2016.<sup>1</sup>

Lack of parking on the apartment complex property will drive apartment residents and their visitors to use the adjoining streets in Saddlewood Downs for parking. This situation already occurs with the residents/visitors at the existing Saddlewood Downs apartments. Although residents may choose to use Uber or Lyft, lack of public transportation and number of households who own at least two cars in Olathe demonstrates the need to address adequate parking. Providing parking solutions for the proposed apartment complex is critical to keep our city streets, and the adjoining streets at Saddlewood Downs, clear and safe for our families.

#### **Increased Traffic Flow on Brentwood**

Based on the volume of new residents, traffic will increase on Brentwood, adding noise and congestion especially during the morning drive and evening drive times. Saddlewood HOA is concerned about safe ingress and egress from the apartment complex and Saddlewood Downs. We appreciate clarification on steps taken to provide safe access to both sides of Brentwood.

#### **View-blocking Berms and Landscaping**

The developer's plan showed view-blocking berms and landscaping on the apartment property on the west side of Brentwood. Berms and landscaping create a barrier to the street and diminish sound from the high-density apartment complex. Additionally, landscaping must be planted to screen views from the apartments to the neighboring backyards of Saddlewood Downs' single family homes. The height of the proposed apartment buildings will give an apartment dweller a line of sight into the backyard of homeowners to the east. Saddlewood Downs HOA requests that the developer's plans consider extending landscaping on the east side of Brentwood, with addition of trees to maintain the

privacy of the Saddlewood Downs single family homeowners. We believe this addition to the plan will go a long way to help ease the transition for Saddlewood Downs' homeowners.

**Summary**

In summary, Saddlewood Downs HOA asks for additional clarification of the number of actual parking spaces proposed by the developer. We also ask the developer to re-consider the parking configuration to allow for a similar ratio of parking spaces as the existing Saddlewood Downs apartments (Phase I). We also ask the developer to consider extending the landscaping efforts to the east side of Brentwood to include trees to provide an effective barrier against increased street noise and privacy to homeowners' backyards. Saddlewood HOA welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with the developer on a landscaping plan for the east side of Brentwood.

As representative for the Saddlewood Downs Homeowners Association, I have articulated our concerns about the proposed apartment complex on Brentwood. We thank the Planning Commission for your willingness to read and consider our position on this proposed development.

With regards,



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**References:**

1. Vehicle Ownership in U.S. Cities, Olathe, Kansas. Retrieved from <https://www.governing.com/gov-data/car-ownership-numbers-of-vehicles-by-city-map.html>