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City of Lafayette, Planning Office  
1290 South Public Road  
Lafayette, CO 80026

Dear City of Lafayette Planning Commission and Ms. Karen Westover,

After participating in the 25 April 2006 Planning Commission meeting, I have continued concerns for the Markel Homes sketch plan of the Cabrini Gardens townhome project. This letter expresses my concerns and suggests possible solutions.

Most importantly, I continue to be troubled by the much more intense density of townhomes proposed for the Cabrini Gardens project than exist in any of the adjacent neighborhoods. The planned townhomes extend far beyond what is required to serve as a "buffer between single-family homes and commercial and institutional buildings," as the developer characterized them at the meeting. This is demonstrated by the "Interconnectivity" diagram provided at the meeting, with which one can easily compare the modest buffer of townhomes in Baseline Crossing with the extensive swath included in the Markel Homes plan. It is worth noting that no townhomes exist to the north, east or south-east, and only very few (i.e., 28) exist to the south-west. Therefore, the proposed project including 170 contiguous townhomes represents a dramatic shift in the density and character of housing compared to the surrounding neighborhoods, despite the fact that the City's Comprehensive Plan and zoning (i.e., medium-density residential) is the same for all of these neighborhoods.

I urge the commission to require the developer to reduce the dwelling-unit density to the 6 units-per-acre requirement in the zoning designation for this area.

At the meeting the builder suggested that no areas near the edges of Nuoci East were suitable for townhomes, and that the Walmart drainage way served as an adequate buffer between the townhomes and Baseline Crossing; however, he offered no analysis to support this assertion. There are at least three reasons that demonstrate this statement is not true.

First, the Walmart drainage way is too small to provide sufficient area for Tracts A & B to satisfy the medium-density-residential designation in the City's Comprehensive Plan. Eighteen acres are needed to accommodate the 110 townhomes in Tracts A & B so that 6 units per acre result. This would require the drainage way to be 4 acres larger, which would more than double its current width of 200 feet to over 418 feet. This demonstrates the degree to which the Comp. Plan is violated by the Markel Homes proposal. Whereas the Comp. Plan requires 15%-25% of Mixed-Use Parcel #9 to be used for medium-density housing, Markel Homes is proposing high-density housing instead for Parcel #9. Of course an additional 218 feet does not exist, so the only way to bring the proposed project


into compliance with the Comprehensive Plan is to remove roughly 26 units. If those nearest the Walmart drainage way were removed, the resultant space could be landscaped with trees and planting to provide an adequate buffer. Alternately, if the 54 units between B and C streets were replaced with 33 single family homes like those shown in the south-east corner of Nuoci East, then two significant advantages for the proposed project would result. First, the total number of units would be reduced by 21, bringing the density down to near the 6-unit-per-acre requirement, so that the Comprehensive Plan could be satisfied with some minor additional adjustments. Second, some of the 33 single-family homes here could be used to satisfy the "permanently affordable" requirement, providing some diversity for this housing category. This was a concern expressed in Karen Westover's 24 March 2006 Memo to the Planning Commission.

Second, the high density of townhomes proposed for Cabrini Gardens concentrates tightly together residents, their children, automobiles, pets, etc. The sound generated by such a high concentration of people will be a potential nuisance for Baseline Crossing because the planned north-south running streets and alleys in Cabrini Gardens will channel sound and direct it towards Baseline Crossing. The Walmart drainage way will do little if anything to reduce this sound impact. A more irregular and creative layout of streets for the townhomes would help mitigate such concentrated sound channeling.

Third, the planned townhome project is extensive both in width and depth. The tightly spaced buildings, which are four rows deep, will dominate the view from the south, completely blocking all views northward and significantly blocking views to the west and east. To get the appropriate impression, I paced 250 feet out into the existing field and looked back at Baseline Crossing, imagining near connectivity of all houses, in order to simulate the view Cabrini Gardens will offer. If you do this you will immediately conclude that the "buffer" offered by the Walmart drainage ditch is too shallow to avoid this perception of total townhome dominance. A greater distance (like the more than double 418 feet calculated above) would significantly reduce the visual impact. Similarly, replacement of the neighboring townhomes with single-family homes would break up the monotony of such a large townhome project and restore a sense of continuity with the character of the Baseline Crossing neighborhood to the south.

As before, the concerns I express here focus on maximizing the combined benefits for the city, the builder, and existing residents, without undo consideration for any one. I think this is an exciting project where all of us stand to gain in our quality of life, continuity of our Lafayette neighborhoods, and maintenance of our property values. Unfortunately, as the proposed plan stands now, it appears too heavily focused on cramming as many housing units into the townhome development as possible. I think this will produce large, adverse effects that all of us could easily anticipate when population concentrations are too high. The Comprehensive Plan exists to protect us from these potential ills. I vote we use it.

Thank you for considering my concerns. I appreciate your hard work in effectively planning the development of our Lafayette neighborhoods.

Sincerely, 

Joseph A. Werne (303-661-0891)