

VERONA RESERVE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION, INC.

A Corporation Not-for-Profit
c/o Access Management – Sarasota
2970 University Parkway, Suite 104, Sarasota, FL 34243
813-607-2220

May 6, 2026

Commissioner Thomas Knight
Sarasota County Commission
1001 Sarasota Center Blvd.
Sarasota, FL 34240

Re: Proposed Live Local Act Multi-family Development on Clermont Rd., Venice
Venice Avenue Apartments LLC

Dear Commissioner Knight,

While we understand the need for affordable housing in Sarasota County, I am writing to express Verona Reserve Community Association's opposition to the multi-family apartment complex being proposed on Clermont Rd. in Venice.

As a homeowner's association, the Board of Directors has a fiduciary responsibility to our owners to protect their investment. Owners purchased homes in Verona Reserve with the understanding that the property on Clermont Rd. would be developed at some point in time and the zoning of RSF4-Residential, Single-family assuaged their fears. Three or four-story apartment buildings are not appropriate with the one-story, single-family homes surrounding all four sides of the property. Our concerns include:

1. Potential flooding - As more of the vacant land that absorbs rainfall is built over, we are more prone to flooding. Much of the subject property was underwater after Hurricane's Ian and Milton. What are the plans to handle stormwater runoff? How will neighboring communities be protected from flooding? Have adequate studies been done?
2. Impacts to our pond/wetland/preserve area that flows into the Hatchett Creek/Dona and Roberts Bay Watershed.
3. Environmental destruction - There is a treasure trove of wildlife on the property which should be protected and preserved. You often see majestic birds like Bald Eagles and Great Blue Herons, as well as Bobcats, Coyotes, Otters and other wildlife that make their homes on the Clermont Rd. property.
4. Sarasota County (and all of Florida) is experiencing water shortages – Homeowners and residents are required to conserve water, while developers continue to build additional housing that tax water resources and aquifers even more.
5. Development is outpacing the infrastructure, i.e. roadway widening and traffic signals to support higher traffic volumes, water treatment facilities to provide safe drinking water for the increasing population, etc. Are developers being assessed these costs or are the taxpayers?
6. Depreciation in home values and marketability – already demonstrated as a result of the construction of the Villas at Venice.
7. Noise and negative visual impact of the proposed development.

Two Live Local Act rental developments are already under consideration and we believe the Commission recently put them on hold:

- 2575 E. Venice Ave. (just east of Jacaranda Dr.) - 112 rental units on 10.08 acres, no more than 3 stories high, with 45 units set aside for households earning at or below 120% percent of the Area Median Income ("AMI").
- 0 E. Venice Ave. (further east near Jackson Rd) - 64 rental units on 5 acres, up to 3 stories high, with 25 units set aside for households earning at or below 120% percent of the Area Median Income ("AMI").

As you may be aware, Sarasota County approved rezoning land at the same intersection of Venice Ave. and Clermont Rd. to make way for the construction of 81 rental units. This development was strongly opposed by homeowners living in Venice Palms, The Enclaves of Venice, Grand Oaks and Verona Reserve. The one-and two-story structures of **Villas at Venice** were presented to the County as more affordable, worker housing. The zoning was subsequently changed and the development constructed. Locally referred to as "the barracks" or the "Monopoly houses", the Villas at Venice's two-story apartment buildings along Venice Ave. have negatively impacted the price and marketability of homes within Verona Reserve. Recent inquiries have confirmed of the 81 apartments, 41 units are available, or a 50% vacancy rate. They are offering 3-months free rent to attract tenants. A 1BR, 1BA, 749 SF apartment is renting for \$1,795/mo.

Other recently constructed apartments have significant availability and are offering substantial rent incentives to attract new tenants. While they lack formal affordable housing set-asides, their current promotions effectively lower the entry costs:

- **The Archer** on Jacaranda Dr. between Venice Ave. and Center Rd. is offering 2-months free rent and a \$1,000 gift card. Of the 216 apartments, 135 units are currently available, or 62% vacancy rate. A 1BR, 1BA, 707 SF apartment is being leased at \$1,575/mo.
- **Marlowe Jacaranda** also on Jacaranda Dr. between Venice Ave. and Center Rd. is offering 2-months free base rent and a \$1,000 gift card. Of the 240 apartments, 64 units are available, or a 27% vacancy rate. Rents for a 1BR, 1BA, 809 SF unit is \$1,650/mo.
- **The Cottages of Venice**, a single-family development on Venice Ave. originally intended for purchase, are now offering their homes for rent at \$1,999/mo. per month for 2BR, 2BA, 1,064 SF.

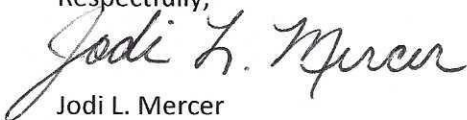
These are all examples of the private sector being forced to respond to excess housing market conditions, exacerbated by continued development.

The County's apartment rental market has more vacant units than at any other time in decades. In a recent interview about the proposed development at Tatum Ridge, you were quoted "It's ridiculous to think that Live Local is something that will increase affordability for citizens of Sarasota County," said Commissioner Tom Knight, who also called the affordable housing component of the law a Trojan horse. "To say this will resolve our affordable housing problem is a fantasy." **We couldn't agree with you more.**

Has One Stop Housing explored the 8+/- acres of vacant land on the corner of Venice Ave. and Auburn Rd. that the City of Venice owns? It is across the street from San Lino, a 3-story condominium community, which may be better suited for 3-4 story apartment buildings. Have they considered rehabbing a long-vacant hotel at 1111 Avenida de Circo on Venice Island, where a nearby apartment building was recently approved for up to 65 feet high? Although the Venice Mayor doesn't have a personal interest in selling these properties like the property on Clermont Rd., they are within the city limits and would benefit the same 10 city employees (as well as workers employed by Venice Pier Group) who want to live and work in Venice.

Based on the County's Live Local Act webpage under Development Criteria, multi-family residential developments are allowable in areas zoned for commercial, industrial or mixed use. With the property on Clermont Rd. currently zoned RSF4 – Residential, Single-family, we do not believe that the proposed property development is eligible for the Live Local Act. Regardless of whether our understanding of the zoning is correct, we would oppose any residential construction higher than one-story and implore you to **not approve** the Venice Avenue Apartments LLC project.

Respectfully,



Jodi L. Mercer

President

Verona Reserve Community Association, Inc.
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