

Dear Commissioners,

Many thanks for considering this letter and hearing my concerns about the development proposed at Clermont Rd, Venice. There are serious issues surrounding this proposal which are shared not only by my neighbours but also the wider community.

The development project planned for Clermont Road, directly behind Verona Reserve, will have a significant negative impact on our lives, our homes, our ecology, and our community.

As more information about the project emerges, the worse it gets.

Financial Arrangements: I am puzzled, and perhaps alarmed, reading about the financing arrangements and the backstage political maneuverings that have driven this project forward.

They leave one with the sense that something is decidedly not right, by which I mean unethical and immoral. Indeed, when the dust has settled, I think the whole project should be thoroughly investigated.

I am led to believe that vast sums of money are being given to the Mayor of Venice and his chums to fund this project. This comes out of taxpayer money. Ultimately, my concern is that it will enable some of the wealthiest people in society to profit off the backs of the most vulnerable.

It would appear that the County is giving \$11.2 million dollars from the Resilient SRQ funds to the Clermont Rd development. To many, this looks and feels like a political stunt, as the Mayor seeks higher office and needs more lines on his CV. It has the dual benefit for him of being a get rich quick scheme.

Unfortunately, our community has to bear the brunt of the harm that it will cause.

Resilient SRQ funds & why this development achieves the opposite: As I'm sure you are aware, the Resilient SRQ was supposed to be disaster recovery money. Therefore, it has rules around what it can (and cannot) be used for. Again, I'm sure you know these rules, but nonetheless, according to the County's website:

What can CDBG-DR funds be used for?

CDBG-DR funds can be used for activities that address the impact of the disaster(s), provided they meet specific criteria:

- Tie-back to the disaster: The activity must directly or indirectly address damage caused by the disaster, and in this instance, either storms Debby, Helene and/or Milton.

The problem is, as again, I'm sure you know, **nothing** has been harmed on this land from any of the aforementioned storms.

If anything, the land—and the land surrounding it—has prospered as a consequence of its vacancy during these storms. It has made both the site and the situation more resilient. Furthermore, we have seen the land become a much-needed home to a large number of wildlife, especially those seeking refuge from storm-hit places and over-developed ones.

There is a counter-argument that this land being vacant meant that Verona Reserve and the surrounding communities escaped more lightly than otherwise might have been the case from Ian and Milton. The land provides natural protection and shelter for us, including preventing major flooding, wind damage, and so forth. If this land is paved over, the resilience will be downgraded. In other words, the exact reverse might be the consequence of what these Resilient SRQ Funds are meant to achieve.

(Re-)Zoning: Next, the (re-)zoning of the land should raise eyebrows. In the last few years, the land has been re-zoned from no residential development allowed to single-family housing. I note that the outcome of this process (as OUE and RSF-4) strictly only permits single-family homes. However, what is proposed by the developers is something else entirely. Based on the plans, the twin tower blocks will loom over us, stripping us of privacy and safety.

Ecology: Inevitably, the project will destroy more of the local habitat, surrounding nature reserve, and ultimately facilitate the downward trajectory in the environment for our children and grand-children.

The land itself is home to several protected species. It is a wild reserve, and in an increasingly over-developed section of Venice, we really need to look after what we have. It is a home to various breeds of turtle, including gopher turtles. There are also many types of heron regularly spotted on the land as well as other birds living there, including blue jays and bald eagles. Alligators regularly roam our neighbourhood, and they are being starved of somewhere to live.

This seems to have been overlooked. My feeling is that once this land is lost, the damage cannot be undone.

Flood plain: Our community has had severe problems with flooding in the past, and the recent storms have shown how vulnerable Sarasota and Venice are. If you allow the Clermont Rd buildings application to proceed, this will create a flood plain nightmare. The site sits upon low lying land that allows water to collect, and therefore protects everyone else from flooding.

Affordable Housing: The planners claim that this housing will be 'affordable' and responds to an urgent need for more rental apartments in Venice. Even a quick look will tell you that this is at best a spurious argument, and at worst a lie.

The facts on the ground are very different. We are surrounded by vacant rental property which meets the conditions of 'affordable'. Much of this property has been empty for months and months. There is no data that suggest we need more. Indeed, the over-development of the region suggests that: (a) we need less, and/or (b) the level of infrastructure spending needs to exponentially rise to keep pace with the situation.

Please say 'no' to this project.

Again, thank you for considering my letter. Appreciate the work you do.

With best wishes and kind regards.

Yours Sincerely,
M Bamber
[2210 Terracina Drive](#)
[Venice, FL 34292](#)