Dear Covington Community Development Team,

I am writing on behalf of the Informed Neighbors Project and other concerned Covington residents. We have all been thinking about the Lakepointe Urban Village development. While we agree that there are some benefits to having more amenities close by, and that a certain amount of development is inevitable, there are a few concerns that we have that we would like to address.

Specifically, the concerns addressed here are:

- Preserving tree canopy in Covington
- Preserving the sense of community created by the quiet and natural environment in our neighborhoods.

Attached you will find some documentation giving credence to our concerns about preserving The Greenbelt behind our neighborhood, as well as having the potential for a four-story hotel behind our homes. We do understand that the developer does take on a lot of risk, and there needs to be financial reward for doing so. That said, there is also altruistic rewards for being a good neighbor on both sides of the fence. We truly do appreciate the fact that Oakpointe has taken at least one of our concerns and put it into action. That does speak volumes about their willingness to collaborate.

We all truly believe that Covington is a great city in which to live! We all moved here because of the environment - the natural beauty, and the peace and quiet of a more rural setting than most other cities provide. Helping to retain this piece of our city's appeal would be a benefit to all. Preserving and protecting established neighborhoods, while allowing for new development, is a balanced approach to growth and maintaining a high level of quality of life. We hope the city will take these comments into account when making the final decisions on the LUV development agreement.

We have included these documents to be presented to the Planning Commission for the Public Hearing on March 16th, 2017. Hopefully there is still time to be distributed before the hearing for their perusal. In the spirit of transparency, we have also forwarded a copy to Colin Lund.

Sincerely,

Concerned Covington Residents, and Members of the Informed Neighbors Project:

Sheryl Ward       Wilton Ward
Elizabeth Porter  Mike Porter
Elaine Kellner    Matt Kellner
Lynn Bubenas      Tony Bubenas
Rod Rodriguez     Maureen Rodriguez
Mike Bell         Marlene Bell
Finding statistics on the impacts of a hotel being built next to a housing neighborhood are very slim because... it just doesn’t happen that often! Not in western Washington. These types of buildings are generally reserved for industrial areas, city centers, or thoughtfully placed near freeways/major roads away from current established neighborhoods.

**QUALITY OF LIFE.**
Nobody wants a 4-story hotel 150 feet from their back porch. Associated nuisances:
- Customer noise - cars, customers leaving at all hours of the day
- Noise from general operations such as garbage pick-ups, noise from dumpster
- Smells from pool or restaurant
- Potential for increased crime that could spill into bordering neighborhoods:
  - Auto vehicle theft is #1 crime.

Living next to hotel, we either have less privacy if the hotel faces us, or we are more exposed to parking lot criminals if the parking lot faces us. (Where would criminals run to? Most likely through the trail system and into our neighborhood!).

**THE UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE**
While we know that the intent is to have a mid-priced hotel for families, etc.. there is no guarantee that would be the case. If it gets zoned commercial, there is no guarantee that a hotel would end up there at all. It could be any kind of business, really. There needs to be some kind of protection for current residents.

Other Use/Zoning Suggestions:
- At least having it zoned residential would provide consistency, and comparable environment. (Think R-12 with townhomes?)
- Even better would be to have it zoned with more greenspace/park area. The area is tight to begin with, so having a small park along the trail would be ideal.
- Maybe a sculpture park, or garden space?
- Perhaps a small footprint of zoning for commercial (ie with the enough to allow for a small business such as an espresso stand - great to stop at during a run/bike ride around the property.
- Still close to the freeway, something like this would be a great way to frame the entrance to LUV. Would be more inviting and quieter activity in the evenings and through the night.
Reason #1: Quality of Life. Covington declares that it is a tree city. It publicly recognizes that trees and green spaces are an important part of maintaining a quality of life for its citizens and wildlife.

*Excerpts from Covington’s “Understanding the Tree Preservation Ordinance” Brochure: “Why did the City Council pass the Tree Preservation Ordinance?”:
• Establishes regulations and procedures for preserving more existing trees; retaining desirable trees and maintaining a viable tree canopy for the City of Covington
• Helps balance reasonable development of property with reasonable preservation and enhancement of surrounding property values, and increase privacy for residential sites.
  “The new ordinance provides incentives for location of required tree tracts adjacent to critical areas, storm water retention areas, wildlife habitats, parks, trails or existing stands of significant trees.*”

*Notes by E. Porter:
• An existing tree is considered any healthy tree with a DBH (Diameter at Breast Height) of 6” or greater. Per CMC 18.45.030 “Definitions”.
• The tract that we studied is the most western two-thirds of the section “A” of the before/after Tree Base Canopy Area pages of Oakpointe presentation from 3/2 meeting.
• For this tract in we estimated at least 600 major trees. Approximately 70 trees will be removed to make room for the entrance round-a-bout.
• Currently, the buffer width is 110 and 120 feet, and the developer’s proposal is reduction to 70 feet and 50 feet respectively.
• Maintaining current greenbelt will not only provide a space buffer between our neighborhood and LUV, but will also maintain existing wildlife habitat that is essential in preserving the natural quality of life of long-time and newer residents, most of whom were attracted to this area due to the natural beauty and wildlife.

*Additional Support: Provided by Elaine Kellner, Covington Resident and Informed Neighbors Member
• According to a Washington State University nationwide survey, urban residents not only overwhelmingly desire trees in cities - 83% strongly agreed that trees are important to their quality of life.

• According to the Urban Forestry center at the University of Washington, green spaces are excellent for mental health and can provide help with everything from Alzheimers to ADD in nearby residents.
  • Source: [https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm_Mental.html](https://depts.washington.edu/hhwb/Thm_Mental.html)

Reason #2. Maintaining a Healthy and Safe Forest
Refer to CMC 18.45.060,070,080.
CMC 18.45.070 Item (1) tree clearing activity shall not significantly create or contribute to blowdowns, landslides, accelerated soil creep, settlement, subsidence or other hazards associated with strong ground motion and soil liquefaction.
cont’d on next page....
• “Trees most at risk are those whose environment has recently changed (say in the last 5 - 10 years),” Smith says. When trees that were living in the midst of a forest lose the protection of a rim of trees and become stand-alones in new housing lots or become the edge trees of the forest, they are made more vulnerable to strong weather elements such as wind.

• Land clearing may wound a tree’s trunk or roots, “providing an opportunity for infection by wood decay fungi. Decay usually proceeds slowly, but can be significant 5-10 years after basal or root injury.” What humans do to the ground around trees -- compacting soil, changing gradation and drainage “can kill roots and increase infection,” Smith warns.


#3. Win-Win Financial Reasons for Maintaining Greenbelt

• Heating and cooling bills of residents (both existing and new) will be lower with the shelter provided by the trees. In fact, trees near buildings can cut air conditioning use by 30%, and reduce heating energy by 20-50%.
  • Source: https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/oct/12/importance-urban-forests-money-grow-trees
• Noise from new roads, commerce, and dwellings will be muffled - so the developer won't have to worry as much about noise mitigation measures, perhaps saving them money
• Trees increase the value of homes (old AND new). Just one large street tree can increase home sales prices by 1% - that's an extra $1,500 for a $150,000 property! Given this, a green belt of mature trees is an excellent selling point to new residents.
  • Source: https://www.fs.fed.us/psw/topics/urban_forestry/products/cufr_339_APWA_Reporter_August_2003.pdf
• Not only are they worth more, but homes next to a little natural space sell faster. In fact, a Colorado study showed that 73% of the real estate agents interviewed believed that a home adjacent to an urban trail would be easier to sell.
  • Source: http://www.americantrails.org/resources/adjacent/sumadjacent.html
• Trees help with water runoff, reduce costs of repaving nearby roads by shading them from destructive UV rays, and of course clean the air, all of which contributes to a desirable location for new residents and less overall maintenance costs for landowners.
  • Source: https://www.fs.fed.us/psw/topics/urban_forestry/products/cufr_339_APWA_Reporter_August_2003.pdf
• Trees even help reduce neighborhood crime! A 2012 study showed that just a 10% increase in tree cover was associated with a 12% decrease in crime.
  • Source: https://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/pubs/jrnl/2012/nrs_2012_troy_001.pdf

All in all, preserving our green belt will not only keep current residents happy - it will raise property values in the new development, save money on maintenance and utilities, improve the health of residents, and produce a safer and more desirable place to live for old and new residents alike. This wooded environment is why we all moved here, and why we believe future residents will want to move here. We believe it is in the best interest of residents, the developer, and the city of Covington to leave these trees standing.

For a faster read, here's a good high-level article on benefits of urban trees: