

Dear Families of St. Martha,

We families are deeply invested in dissemination of crucial information to the St. Martha Catholic School community. This email is to ensure that you are informed as parents in the St. Martha community and to ensure that you have a voice. We seek to inform you of a planned project and ask that you use your voice to assist the community.

On Friday, many of you may have seen trees being removed near the Fruitville entrance of our school. It was the first visible step in preparation for construction in that area that is not for the direct benefit of the school.

It is with much concern that we share with you that recently, we were notified by the Diocese of Venice that they have been moving forward with the development of a housing project that will offer twenty townhomes in that cleared area. There is tremendous frustration that communication was not transparent between the Diocese and the school community regarding this project. The Diocese has had its application approved for these plans since August of 2023 with no communication to the school about the changes.

Additionally, the Diocese could be granted a rezone requested in this petition that would also allow the opportunity to build twenty more homes as a phase 2. So, there is the potential that up to forty townhomes could exist in this space in the future.

In order to move forward, the Diocese has petitioned the City of Sarasota to rezone a portion of the St. Martha campus, which is owned by the Diocese. The St. Martha Campus parcel they wish to use abuts our driveway entrance off of Fruitville Rd., which has historically been in St. Martha's Strategic plan for the benefit of the school and our children. This is a part of the land that has already been cleared without the rezone approval.

There are 2 aerial photos below. One includes the entire campus as is recorded with the city. (Exhibit 1) The link is attached. The second is taken from the Diocese's application to the city. It shows the lots that are planned to be combined and used as the site for the housing project. There is a line in the middle that identifies the approximate lot lines. (Exhibit 2)

There are several opportunities for us as parents to get involved and help to prevent or delay this from happening. Our goal is for the City of Sarasota to grant a continuance to delay the project. This would effectively allow the school and the Diocese time to work things out.

What you can do:

1. There is a mass this upcoming Wednesday at 9AM with Bishop Dewane presiding where parents may have the opportunity to speak with him in regard to

the project. It would be helpful to email him as well as other leadership before. It is important that we can honestly say that we have tried to communicate with them.

Email the Diocese:

Bishop: Dewane@dioceseofvenice.org

Chancellor:

Smeryk@dioceseofvenice.org

Superintendent

Belmonte@dioceseofvenice.org

2. Parents and friends who are concerned about the project will have a final opportunity to express any concerns with the City of Sarasota on March 18, 2024, at 9AM. [City Hall 1565 1st Street, Sarasota, FL 34236](#). [\(941\) 263-6000](#).

3. Send Emails to all City Commissioners: comissioners@sarasotafl.gov . Be creative and sincere. Just remember that these are all public record, so don't get too personal.

a. Some Ideas: #1 talking point Lack of communication from the Diocese and your interest and failed efforts-if any in trying to work something out with them. We would like for them to engage with us to hear our concerns as parents to find a mutually agreeable plan for our children.

b. As a Private school we feel that we have no voice, but we are here (Private schools are not contemplated in the comprehensive plan, therefore there is no argument that we can make what states that this is contrary to that)

c. Being a private school, we feel like we are disregarded.

d. Loss of access to school grounds that limits and likely eliminates future opportunities for growth such as new facilities.

e. The City would not take back land from a school to build any form of housing. Please do not allow it here.

f. Do not focus on Traffic or safety. The traffic count on Fruitville road is at least 40,000 to 50,000 per day. Traffic generated here is not going to make a measurable impact in their opinion.

g. Security is a slippery slope. If you want to discuss your concerns, generalize them portraying anyone is a concern no matter the socio-economic class. We all know there are real issues here in Sarasota and the elite are just as culpable. They do not want us to complain that this is low income housing and therefore more dangerous.

4. Write a letter to Diocese: While we are concerned about safety and security the city is not interested in that it is a good thing to bring security and safety and future growth up with them.

5. Write a comment on the Agenda comment link.
 - a. Below is a link to an active comment portal at the City Commission website. It should take you to Legislative Public Hearings. This is a Public Hearing on Ordinance 24-5511
 - b. Please click the comment box just below which will take you to a spot to offer public comment. These are very important as you will see that the comments are presented as Positive, Negative, or Neutral; and you can present your comments/ concerns here.
 - c. https://sarasota.granicusideas.com/meetings/6684-regular-city-commission-meeting/agenda_items?page=3
6. People can attend via zoom by emailing clerk@sarasota.gov by 5pm Friday 3/15Create online Petition and let the St. Martha Community know about it.
7. https://sign.moveon.org/petition/start?source=ads.ms.ga.search.20220310.natl.op.a002&gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAjw17qvBhBrEiwA1rU9wwX8wvW0pVwqhlgsTTcWSYpn2AvWmk0Gar3g2klXcLrE8A26cQ-sRoCuuAQAvD_BwE

Send letters to the Editor at Sarasota Herald Tribune:

<https://www.heraldtribune.com/story/opinion/letters/2020/09/22/herald-tribune-how-send-letter-editor/3492961001/>

There will be an informational gathering for all those wishing to know more and be involved on Wednesday at 3pm at Fruitville Park- 5151 Richardson Road.

Best Regards,

DOV School Families

Current School Property Record<https://www.sc-pa.com/propertysearch/parcel/details/2033010001>

/Bill Furst v 2.21 Disclaimers Info/Help

Parcel Search

By Shape By Value Results

Features selected: 1

Account Number: 2033010001

Owner: DEWANE FRANK J

Owner 2: BISHOP OF DIOCESE OF VENICE

The map displays an aerial view of a large property outlined in purple, labeled 'GREEN HOME LAND SUB-RENTAL OF PB 03/63'. This property contains several large white circular structures and a building. Surrounding areas are outlined in orange and labeled with various parcel numbers and names like 'Whispering Oaks', 'Arbor Oaks', and 'Fruitville Rd'. The map also shows 'Fruitville Rd' and 'McIntosh Rd'.

Proposed Housing Project Site

Illustration 1, Aerial Photograph

