

## **Bull Creek Road Coalition Consensus Feedback on MileStone Community Builders' "The Grove at Shoal Creek" Conceptual Plan**

The proposed mixed use development has the potential to be a great addition to the area, but there are a lot of details that need to be worked out before the neighborhoods of the Bull Creek Road Coalition can support the project. These comments are our first reaction and not necessarily a final version of the issues that may arise concerning the development. They are based on the information currently available and may be amended as additional information becomes available. Also, these comments are intended as a general overview from the BCRC and as such cannot cover the wide range of concerns of individual landowners. Milestone should continue to work with individual landowners to address their concerns to the greatest extent possible.

We greatly appreciate MileStone's willingness to engage with the BCRC and area neighborhoods to create a "legacy-quality project" that all the surrounding neighborhoods can support. We look forward to working cooperatively with MileStone, the BCRC, the City, and the State over the coming months to ensure the project realizes its bold vision while comprehensively and equitably addressing all of the following:

**Traffic, Parking, and Connectivity.** The most-cited concern of residents of the surrounding neighborhoods about the proposed development is the potential impact of increased traffic, not only on Bull Creek Road but throughout the area. In an effort to move forward productively, the BCRC would like to partner with MileStone to develop a comprehensive transportation enhancement plan for the area that addresses:

- **Total vehicular trips:** The transportation enhancement plan and updated multi-modal transportation impact assessment need to provide adequate assurance that the total number of vehicular trips will not create a level of congestion that outweighs the positive aspects of the plan. Residents do not view currently proposed traffic mitigation as adequate and view the proposed new traffic levels as problematic.
- **Parking:** the potential impact of non-resident parking on surrounding neighborhood streets in Oakmont Heights, Ridgelea, and Allandale, both short-term with the closure of the TxDOT/TxDMV parking lot on Bull Creek Rd. and long-term with possible spill-over from the development.
- **Traffic calming and sidewalk and streetscape improvements:** along key streets in Oakmont Heights and Allandale to address cut-through traffic.
- **45<sup>th</sup> and Bull Creek multi-modal improvements:** that add vehicular capacity and improve transit, pedestrian, and bicycle access.

- **Additional Bull Creek Road connections:** pedestrian/bicycle connections from the development along Bull Creek Road.
- **Internal street layout:** reconfigure to minimize traffic impact on Bull Creek Road by routing internal traffic through the development.
- **Shoal Creek bridge:** pedestrian/bike bridge or possibly a low-water crossing of Shoal Creek from MileStone to Shoal Creek Blvd; the BCRC will work proactively with MileStone to secure the necessary easements from the State to make this connection.
- **45<sup>th</sup> Street pedestrian crossing improvements:** Create a safe and convenient pedestrian/bike crossing of 45<sup>th</sup> somewhere between Bull Creek Road and Shoal Creek through installation of a pedestrian hybrid beacon or other appropriate traffic controls.
- **45<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge trail connection:** A separated-grade trail connection under the bridge connecting the Milestone trail system to the existing sidewalk on the north side of 45<sup>th</sup>.
- **Bull Creek road trail:** connect the new Milestone Bull Creek Road trail via a cycle track or shared use path all the way down 38<sup>th</sup> to the Shoal Creek Trail at 35<sup>th</sup>.
- **Shoal Creek trail connection:** extend a trail connection along Shoal Creek from the MileStone development at least as far as the Ridgelea Greenbelt.

The BCRC will partner with MileStone to jointly approach the City with a plan to equitably fund the full range of off-site mitigation efforts through value capture, tax rebates, parking benefit districts, or other mechanisms. MileStone's participation and demonstrated commitment to this issue is a critical component to achieving a true partnership with surrounding neighborhoods.

**Land use/zoning.** We are concerned that the intensity of allowable density in the Development Assessment that MileStone submitted to the City is too open-ended and far greater than the level of density it presented in its April 2 conceptual plan, which itself proposes density much greater than now exists in the surrounding neighborhoods. Any zoning/Planned Unit Development plan approved by the City will establish the parameters for how the property may be developed in the future regardless of who manages or owns it. Therefore, it is crucial that reasonable, enforceable limits on the use and intensity of development on the property be established before the BCRC can consider whether to support any proposed development plan.

The overall plan is generally responsive to the BCRC Design Principles regarding compatibility and integration with the surrounding neighborhoods, but the following issues have been identified:

- The mixed-use office/commercial/multi-family residential portion of the development should be restricted to the area across from the existing multi-family housing on Bull Creek Rd., and this part of the Grove conceptual plan should be locked into the zoning/PUD plan.
- The commitment in the conceptual plan to the public plaza, parks, greenbelts, and other amenities should be locked into the zoning/PUD plan.
- The area of the development across Bull Creek Road from and adjacent to existing single-family residences should be limited to single-family residential uses, and this part of the conceptual plan should be locked into the zoning/PUD plan.
- Additional setback and height limitations are required for lots abutting Idlewild and 45<sup>th</sup> Street properties, as well as compatible size and configuration of those lots. Additional information, including scale cross-sections, will be needed to assist with this discussion and in continuing to work with the residents.
- The PUD plan should ensure compatibility of commercial uses with surrounding residential areas by addressing issues like deliveries and noise and light pollution.

**Open Space and Public Amenities.** There is concern that the amount of open space shown in the conceptual plan is insufficient. The BCRC neighborhoods appreciate the green space in the conceptual plan and want to save as much of the existing natural area and green space as possible. This tract is unique in being historic open space, so residents feel protective of that attribute, especially as the surrounding neighborhoods already are greatly underserved by parkland under City of Austin standards.

We appreciate MileStone’s commitment to dedicate the open space permanently to public use. However, more information is needed about a variety of issues, including the extent of the space, design details, ownership, maintenance, and public access to other amenities, in order to adequately assess open space needs and amenities. The tract should be staked to show the actual boundaries of the proposed open space “on the ground” so that our neighbors can make an informed assessment.

The heritage trees in the northeast area of the tract should be protected. Trails should be kept to minimum in this section, and amenities like playscapes and swing sets should be located away from root zones of the trees to protect the soil from becoming overly compacted. There should be a long-term commitment to management of this area by an appropriate non-profit entity.

**Drainage.** Substantively address drainage impacts to adjacent homes on Idlewild and also ensure no adverse drainage effects to other properties in Ridgelea and downstream on Shoal Creek.

**Shoal Creek Restoration and Enhancement.** The Grove at Shoal Creek has the opportunity to be a model for Shoal Creek restoration and enhancement. One of the goals of the BCRC Design Principles is to "restore Shoal Creek to a live, flowing creek while controlling flood potential with well-designed, appropriate flood controls." The BCRC looks forward to working with Milestone, the Shoal Creek Conservancy, and the City of Austin to identifying and equitably funding ecologically sensitive solutions to the issues of erosion and flooding.

**Flooding and Storm Water:** Our area was hard hit by the tragic deaths of our neighbors in the 1981 Memorial Day floor, so we are especially sensitive to additional run-off potentially exacerbating flooding on Shoal Creek. Examination of the conceptual plan indicates up to 50 acres of impervious cover on the tract, which will mean massive run-off. The plan should address both stream-flow flooding and surface sheet-flow flooding as well as contributions the tract will make to flooding downstream.

In areas north of 45<sup>th</sup> where the creek banks have been stabilized, the 100-year flood levels have risen year by year and now are at the back doors of homes. To be a 100-year 'Legacy Project,' the plan should ensure that in 25 years, 50 years, or 100 years homes there are not flooded or subject to erosion hazard.

**Affordable Housing:** The BCRC neighborhoods are experiencing rapidly declining affordability. The Grove represents a unique opportunity to incorporate housing that is affordable to people who live and work in the area. Recognizing that PUD zoning requires the demonstration of a "superior" development, MileStone should work to maximize the number of onsite affordable units, in excess of any affordability requirements. MileStone should work with area employers, including Westminster Manor and Seton, to ensure that housing that is built onsite is affordable for employee rental and ownership.

**Construction Staging and Security.** Ensure that construction staging is located well away from nearby residents, especially those on Idlewild and 45<sup>th</sup>, and construction hours and noise are limited. Sufficient barriers and oversight should ensure security during the construction phase.

**Other significant areas of interest:**

- Ecologically sensitive design, including analysis of the project under independently verifiable standards like LEED-ND and SITES as outlined in the BCRC Design Principles.

- School impacts, including whether the new development might impact the elementary, middle, and high school “tracks” of existing neighborhoods.
- Supporting local businesses and contractors.

**Ongoing Collaboration throughout the life of the project:** The BCRC welcomes MileStone’s outreach efforts and willingness to work with us on mutually beneficial revisions to its conceptual plan. We look forward to a similar cooperative effort during the zoning/PUD process and the continuing development and implementation of the plan. We believe a solutions-oriented dialogue has the greatest potential for reaching mutually acceptable outcomes.

We are interested in working together to establish a process and forum to ensure that commitments made during the review and approval stage are locked in during the zoning/PUD process and implemented throughout the life of the project.

We propose a series of focused working group meetings to cooperatively explore solutions for these issues with MileStone, the City and other stakeholders as appropriate.