

**From:** [Sarah Gorin](#)  
**To:** [Council](#)  
**Cc:** [Planning](#)  
**Subject:** Little Valley  
**Date:** Thursday, October 3, 2019 6:18:02 PM

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Dear City Councilors,

I am writing to you as a person deeply concerned about aquifer protection. Last summer I commented on the Little Valley project extensively when it came before the City Planning Commission.

As you consider the proposed preliminary plat, I would like to offer the following:

1. There still appears to be confusion about the Sherman Hills Fault and its relationship to the Little Valley property. When I spoke to the City Planning Commission last summer, I noted that the city planning office and the developer were relying on insufficient information. The Phase II Laramie Monitor Well Project Report completed for the City in 2015 shows that the Sherman Hills Fault is not a skinny little line, but rather a fault “zone.” This information was not picked up either in the SSI or in the peer review. So while the city staff technically are correct in asserting that the city’s aquifer protection ordinance has been complied with, there exists a sin of omission, not commission, that affects how much of the property can be developed.

I would have preferred to see a delay of annexation to bump down the zoning to R1, but given the stance of the developer and the desire of the city to annex adjacent land, I understand the decision that was made. That said, and given the heartfelt comments of the neighbors regarding traffic, drainage and other concerns related to density, I urge you to work on designing the preliminary plat to the absolute minimum of development that could be considered R2.

Another reason for allowing only minimal development is the message it sends to others. As I commented to the City Planning Commission, “the more times you say yes, the harder it becomes to say no.” Every bit of development over the aquifer incrementally increases the potential for contamination, even if the development is on city water and sewer.

The next most obvious sources of contamination (after eliminating septic systems) are pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, and road runoff. You can require xeriscaping, which would be good, but we all know that at this point there is no institutionalized aquifer protection education or aquifer protection enforcement within the aquifer protection zone. The City cannot guarantee that conditions will be complied with, especially long into the future, and we also know that people do weird things – like dumping trash next to City Springs. There is no question that as the housing density increases, the likelihood that contamination will occur increases as well.

No single development is going to “ruin” the aquifer. What will ruin it is the cumulative effect of many small developments.

2. I want to address the implication that we have to choose between affordable housing and aquifer protection. I for one support both. And in this instance, I agree with the speakers who pointed out

that the proposed housing is not particularly affordable, and the developer himself said the prices would be near the median price for housing in Laramie. To my mind, that is not “affordable” for people whose incomes fall below the median. The aquifer protection zone in its entirety encompasses less than 1.6% of the area of Albany County. We do not have to build over the aquifer in order to supply affordable housing.

Thank you so much for the time and attention you put into your work. It is especially appreciated in matters like this one where the issues are complicated.

Sincerely, Sarah Gorin

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