

Residents blast 59th, Walnut linkup

Staff writer

Road plan part of 23-unit development

"We are really disappointed the board didn't at least table the action until Downers Grove officials could meet with Woodridge and discuss the proposal, and perhaps review the plan."

Richard Weber

Woodridge resident

By Don Grigas

Some residents said they are disappointed Woodridge recently approved a developer's plan to build a 23-unit residential subdivision between Walnut and Lomond avenues in Woodridge, and may appeal to Downers Grove to influence Woodridge to reconsider the project's traffic scheme.

One of the key elements of the plan, approved April 20 by the Woodridge Village Board, calls for connecting 59th Street and Walnut Avenue.

Walnut Avenue is a dead-end street near the east end of the proposed development.

"We don't object to the development itself, but the plan to connect Walnut Avenue to 59th Street is a safety issue," said Alan Baldwin, of the 5800 block of Walnut Avenue, Downers Grove. "At this point we can only hope Downers Grove will step in and close off Walnut Avenue permanently where it dead-ends now."

Baldwin submitted a petition signed by several Walnut Avenue homeowners to Downers Grove officials recently voicing concerns over the project.

Opponents of the plan say the signalized intersection of Walnut and Maple avenues already is heavily used by area motorists traveling to and from residential areas of northern Woodridge and unincorporated Lisle Township, and they said the proposed connection of 59th Street to Walnut Avenue will create an unsafe surge in vehicular traffic there.

"There is a unanimous feeling among neighbors that this is a bad idea to open up 59th Street to Walnut," Baldwin said. "Walnut Avenue south of College Road is unpaved, basically a country lane. ... If it is opened up to more traffic, during winter the road will become mush."

During a public hearing at the April 20 Woodridge Village Board meeting,

Woodridge resident Richard Weber, of the 2500 block of West 59th Street, also urged Woodridge officials to put the development plan on hold until further studies could be done.

"I've lived here for 30 years and there already is an established traffic pattern," he said. "There is no need to change it. ... We are really disappointed the board didn't at least table the action until Downers Grove officials could meet with Woodridge and discuss the proposal, and perhaps review the plan."

At least eight residents attended the April 20 Woodridge board meeting, and three spoke out against the plan.

Baldwin and Weber said they represented several neighbors in the area of the development.

Weber said motorists who have been weaving their way through the residential area seeking routes to and from main arterial roads for "many, many years" will likely overutilize 59th Street to access Walnut Avenue in the future.

"Motorists connect with 59th Street from Jackson Drive to the south, then take 59th Street west to Elinor Avenue, which they then take north to Maple Avenue. If the plan goes through a significantly higher number of vehicles will be using 59th Street to access Walnut Avenue. It is just human nature to drive a route that has less turns," Weber said.

At the April 20 meeting, Woodridge trustees voted to approve an annexation agreement with Chicago-based Woodgrove LLC to build Offerman Estates, a 23-single family unit subdivision on the 8-acre site located in Woodridge, adjacent to unincorporated Lisle Township to the north. The board also approved an annexation/development agreement and a resolution to rezone the parcel to R-3 Residential.

Trustee Robert Brandt was the only trustee to vote against all three items.

"I think we are doing a disservice to residents while trying to accommodate a developer," he said.

Among Brandt's concerns are the proposed narrowing of 59th Street through the subdivision from 32 feet to 28 feet, connecting Walnut Avenue and 59th Street, and the lack of a traffic control device such as a stop sign, at the proposed intersection of 59th Street and Walnut Avenue.

Downers Grove Mayor Brian Krajewski said Downers Grove plans to address the situation in the coming weeks before the Woodridge Village Board votes on the final plat proposal.

"I'm sure we will be able to work something out," Krajewski said.

Downers Grove will "study the exact jurisdictions of Walnut Avenue" before making any decisions, he said.

Walnut Avenue, which dead-ends about one-quarter of a mile south of Maple Avenue and is unpaved south of College Avenue, is bordered by Downers Grove to the west and unincorporated Lisle Township to the east.

There are about 12 homes along the east side of Walnut Avenue in unincorporated Lisle Township, and Bristol Club Apartments are on the west side of Walnut Avenue.

Baldwin also said an increase in traffic on Walnut Avenue could increase the

risk of accidents involving pedestrians, particularly school-age children.

"Walnut Avenue is unimproved south of College Road, and there aren't sidewalks along the east side of the street south of College Road," Baldwin said. "During the school year, especially in the morning during rush hour, school students waiting for their bus often stand in the street at the northeast corner of the intersection because there is no sidewalk there."

Trustee Mary Ann Frank said the issue "has been a difficult one. ... We have taken great pains to consider our neighbors and other communities. ... But I think it makes more sense for 59th Street to go all the way to Walnut Avenue."

If developers build the road as planned, the intersection of 59th Street and Walnut Avenue would be softened with a curve, which Woodridge officials said would serve to calm traffic along that route.

"Throughout the area there are 11 stop signs, and the proposed curve at Walnut Avenue and 59th Street should calm traffic because people tend to speed up on straight roads and slow down at curves," said Michael Mays, director of planning and development for Woodridge.

A letter written by Krajewski to Woodridge Mayor William Murphy and dated April 19 -- the day before the Woodridge Board meeting -- asked Woodridge officials to delay project approval "until there is an opportunity for myself and the Downers Grove Village Council to more fully understand this matter and determine what, if any, infrastructure changes to Walnut Avenue the village of Downers Grove may wish to consider."

The letter was not mentioned during the public hearing, or during board discussion prior to the final vote.

In an informational packet sent recently from Mays to Woodridge Village Administrator John Perry, a memo written by a staff member indicated Downers Grove had been consulted about the project.

"Throughout the review process, staff consulted with Downers Grove and Lisle Township regarding the configuration of these streets and the enhancements of these this neighborhood's street network," said Sara Hage, associate planner for Woodridge.

"The consensus of the parties was to implement the planned street network by constructing 59th Street and connecting it to Walnut Avenue," Hage wrote.

Murphy said Woodridge had been in contact with Downers Grove and Lisle Township about the development for more than a year.

According to the memo, Downers Grove planned to pave Walnut Avenue this summer, but the project will be delayed until Offerman Estates is completed.

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New subdivision prompts traffic concerns

By Don Grigas

Staff writer

Some local residents -- disappointed by the Woodridge Village Board's approval of a 23-unit residential subdivision between Walnut and Lomond avenues -- want Downers Grove village officials to intercede on their behalf because of potential traffic hazards.

One of the key elements of the plan, approved April 20 by Woodridge trustees, calls for connecting 59th Street and Walnut Avenue. Walnut is a now a dead-end street near the east end of the proposed development.

"We don't object to the development itself, but the plan to connect Walnut Avenue to 59th Street is a safety issue," said Alan Baldwin, who lives at 5873 Walnut Ave. in unincorporated Lisle Township. "At this point we can only hope Downers Grove will step in and close off Walnut Avenue permanently where it dead-ends now."

Baldwin submitted a petition signed by nearly all Walnut Avenue homeowners to Downers Grove. The petition cites concerns that include school-aged children walking on a narrow, unimproved street without sidewalks.

Opponents also said the signalized intersection of Walnut and Maple Avenue is heavily used by motorists accessing homes in northern Woodridge and unincorporated Lisle Township, and argue that linking 59th and Walnut will create an unsafe surge in traffic.

Woodridge resident Richard Weber also urged Woodridge officials to put the development on hold pending further study.

"We are really disappointed the (Woodridge Village Board) didn't at least table the action until Downers Grove officials could meet with Woodridge and discuss the proposal, and perhaps review the plan," Weber said.

A letter written by Downers Grove

Mayor Brian Krajewski to Woodridge Mayor William Murphy and dated April 19 -- the day before the Woodridge Board meeting -- asked Woodridge to delay approval until Downers Grove could "fully understand this matter."

Krajewski's letter was not mentioned during the public hearing nor during discussion prior to the final vote. Krajewski said Downers Grove Village Manager Cara Pavlicek and Woodridge Village Administrator John Perry have been in contact about the project.

"Throughout the review process, staff consulted with Downers Grove and Lisle Township regarding the configuration of these streets and the enhancements of these this neighborhood's street network," Woodridge Associate Planner Sara Hage said.

Krajewski said Downers Grove plans to address the situation in the coming weeks before the Woodridge Village Board votes on the final plat proposal.

"I'm sure we will be able to work something out," Krajewski said.

Downers Grove will study the exact jurisdictions of Walnut Avenue before making any decisions, Krajewski added.

Despite the concerns, Woodridge trustees voted to approve an annexation agreement with Chicago-based Woodgrove LLC to build Offerman Estates, a 23-single family unit subdivision on the 8-acre site located in Woodridge, adjacent to unincorporated Lisle Township to the north.

If developers build the road as planned, the intersection of 59th Street and Walnut Avenue would be softened with a curve, which Woodridge officials said would serve to calm traffic.