

Questions development on land near Woodridge

Woodridge's Planning and Development Commission met Nov. 17 to discuss the future of two property parcels near the intersection of 63rd Street and Walnut Avenue. The parcels consist of nearly 10 wooded acres running parallel to 63rd Street and Willow Creek, not far from the elementary school bearing the same name. The property was purchased earlier this year by Airhart Construction, which wants the village to annex the property and give it permission to build 23 single-family homes with an estimated price range of \$375,000 to \$425,000.

In a neighborhood braced by major thoroughfares, those 10 acres may represent something of a respite from the surrounding concrete environment. Coming off the expressway and passing by those trees, it is perhaps possible to imagine them as a natural barrier to the outside world. People passing by in the early morning or just around dusk have sometimes seen a deer or two come out to drink at the creek which borders both parcels. On a less Bambi-like note, a coyote and a hawk have also been spotted. It would be a shame to see all that slip away just for a few more houses.

According to the Planning and Development Department, the lot sizes of the 23 homes to be erected on these 10 acres are similar to those in the surrounding Woodridge neighborhoods. Of course, the village's Comprehensive Plan designates this property for low-density, single-family residential development at a density of one to four dwelling units per acre, possibly leaving open the opportunity for further construction. The developer has promised to preserve some of the trees and add site enhancements such as landscape buffers.

I'm sure the village and representatives from Airhart Construction will be able to explain how residents of these new homes will get in and out of their subdivisions. Trying to enter and exit from 63rd Street during the morning and evening rush hours could be tricky.

Finally, and purely from an aesthetic perspective, will the homes Airhart intends to build really fit in with the houses already in existence? Residences in the Willow Creek area are at least 25 years old, and for better or worse reflect a certain style. Owners have worked hard to upgrade them. That hard work has paid off with beautiful homes which have commanded some impressive sales

prices. Will all that hard work be complemented by the homes Airhart intends to build, or will they produce an unfavorable comparison of old versus new?

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