

Council targets 51 sites

Southfield opts for assisted housing

By JACKIE KLEIN

Subsidized family housing is coming to Southfield after nearly two years of vehement protest and legal challenges by irate residents.

In an emotion-packed, seven-hour meeting Monday, about 500 provoked homeowners crammed city hall while Southfield City Council selected five scattered sites for 51 low and moderate income family dwelling units. Most dwellings will be townhouses.

Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), the agency financing the mortgage for the projects, requires 62 housing units. Another 11 units are to be placed in rehabilitated homes and possibly added to scattered sites approved by council.

Amid cheers and jeers from the gallery in the meeting which lasted until 3 a.m., council members rezoned some sites, gave the nod to other parcels already zoned multiple-family and listened to a parade of speakers who wanted the housing plan dumped.

Eleven sites were recommended by Southfield Scattered Site Housing Committee for council consideration. These are the sites to be developed by private enterprise, partially financed by MSHDA, rent-subsidized by HUD and managed by Southfield Non-Profit Housing Commission:

- West side of Greenfield between Webster and Morrison, 1.62 acres, 11 townhouse units, was zoned office-service.

- Southwest corner of Eleven Mile and Franklin Road, 1.65 acres, 9 townhouse units and one 69,000 existing home, was zoned single-family residential.

- Southeast corner of Lahser and Eight and One-Half Mile, 1.4 acres, nine townhouse units, was zoned single-family.

- West side of Lahser between Brookside and Ten Mile, three acres, 15 townhouse units, already zoned multiple-family.

- South side of Eleven Mile between Greenfield and Fairfield, 3 3/4 acres, six townhouse units, already zoned multiple-family.

- Council President Philip Peterson voted against all rezonings and site plans. Councilwoman Vicki Goldbaum cast a "no" vote on rezoning the Lahser-Eight and One-Half Mile site. Lillian Jaffe was absent.

- Councilman Steve Hurite asked the city attorney and administrator to review the possibility of the city buying McDonnell Tower II, a senior citizen housing center under construction on Civic Center Drive and Berg. The project is funded by MSHDA.

- Building and rehabilitating 62 housing units for low and moderate-income families was a condition agreed upon by the city in return for financing McDonnell Tower, Hurite said.

"THE TOWER is being built by private developers who may consider

selling. If voters approved a ballot proposal for a bond issue or millage increase to fund the senior citizen project, scattered site family housing would be dead," he said.

The annual rent subsidy required for the second senior citizen tower is \$20,000, according to Joseph Sutschek, community development director. It would cost \$9 million to buy the project, he said.

The newly-formed Southfield Citizens for Responsive Government opposes the scattered site plan. The group has hired attorneys to recommend legal action in a last-ditch effort.

Another homeowner coalition, Combined Property Owners Association, opposed the original plan to build 62 family townhouse units on the McDonnell Tower site. Because of opposition from these area residents, city officials and MSHDA agreed to scatter the dwellings throughout the community.

"This council is a buffer between the people and the federal bureaucracy," Hurite declared. "Cities should take on the feds and try to cut the strings attached to housing and other projects."

A host of residents Monday talked about devaluation of property, block-busting, traffic congestion and flight as some of their reasons for opposing the housing plan.

A number of residents questioned the need for subsidized housing in Southfield.

At least 1,464 families living or working in Southfield and earning less

than \$19,200 a year would be eligible to occupy low and moderate income family units, Sutschek said.

"There's no such thing as a free lunch," maintained J. M. Goldberg, a resident of Aberdeen. "We'll be paying more in taxes for police, fire, schools and other services. We want to run our own city. Let's give the money back to the government instead of having Big Daddy looking over our shoulders."

Arle Fields, a Beechwoods resident and school board trustee, claimed residents want to leave the city because of the housing issue.

"It's damn well not too late to keep this mess out of Southfield," Fields said. "More lawsuits will be filed and the housing will be tied up in court. Why can't the city rehabilitate existing homes as an alternative? Let the people decide what they want for a change."

MSHDA, according to Sutschek, is reluctant to finance rehabilitated homes because remodeling costs are uncertain.

James Molnar, a resident of Beechwood Acres subdivision and a member of the new citizens' group, said senior citizens and young families can co-exist on one site.

"RESIDENTS in the Civic Center-Berg area claimed families would be stigmatized and children would bother the elderly if they were clumped together," Molnar said. "Those homeowners are saying poor people are good enough to live anywhere except near them. Elderly people don't object to kids. We object to independent scattered housing sites."

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