

Area residents are hot over multi-family plans on Southfield acreage

By Jackie Klein
staff writer

Controversy erupted at Wednesday's Southfield Planning Commission over a plan to develop 1,000 units of multifamily housing on 100 acres of land in the northwest part of the city.

Some residents in the area of 12 Mile, Franklin Road and I-96 alleged developers Lawrence LoPatin and Robert Rosin are using "scare tactics" to force homeowners to sell their properties to make way for the massive project.

Other homeowners maintain financial offers from the developers fall short of property values. Few residents said they want to remain in their houses.

The Southfield Planning Commission gave its preliminary blessing Wednesday for rezoning the single-family residential land to allow the first phase of the project, which includes cluster housing, townhouses, and two- and three-story apartment buildings.

LoPatin Thursday denied residents' allegations and said developers have options to buy 55 percent of the homes in the 100-acre section. "San Marino subdivision was planned in the depression years," he said. "Planners say the area includes a number of moderate and substantial homes. And yet a couple of people want \$250,000 for their property."

"RESIDENTS LIVING on 100 acres in the most dynamic city in Oakland County aren't paying enough taxes to pay for police and fire services. Three or four homeowners are looking to make a windfall. A few refuse to sell. We're the ones being harassed."

"In no instance have we offered anyone less than the assessed value of their property. In fact, we're offering more and in cash. We're trying to define an area that's like a jigsaw puzzle to assemble, and we've been negotiating for properties for at least 18 months."

LoPatin said developers are offering about \$50,000 an acre to residents.

The 100 acres, assessed at \$12

'I won't sell until I get some straightforward answers. I'm afraid of developers who deal from the bottom of the deck.'

— Wilson Olmes
Southfield resident

million (50 percent of market value), will have an assessed value of \$20 million when it's developed, Rosin said. Property taxes on the land will increase from the current \$72,000 to \$1.2 million, he said.

Access to the site is expected to be provided with a bridge over the I-96 expressway and with widening Tyler in the San Marino subdivision to a four-lane boulevard to become an interchange at I-96.

Phil Spellman, an area resident, said Wednesday that he feels threatened.

"SPECULATORS ARE playing with the land and talking in millions," Spellman said. "A decision better be made soon, or we'll all be next to the freeway. That little white house on three acres has just been bought."

Marvin Kramer, attorney representing the developers, said the proposed project ties in with the future land use plan recommended by the planning commission. It's rare for the public and private sector to agree, he added.

"The state wants access to the ex-

pressway, and the city wants to take traffic from Inkster Road," he said. "This will be accomplished by making Tyler a north west major road."

The pressure to rezone this area is intense. If there's a delay, Rosin will lose his options and Southfield will be stuck with fragmented parcels of land instead of a consolidated development the city can control.

"We're talking about the makings of an idea and a window in which to let it happen. The city may never have another chance like this."

RICHARD BLADE, a 20-year resident of Tyler, said he's been expecting a change in the area for 19 years. His property is available, he said, but he's looking for a "fair deal, not a fortune."

Wilson Olmes, another longtime resident of Tyler, said he doesn't want to hang in limbo for 15 years.

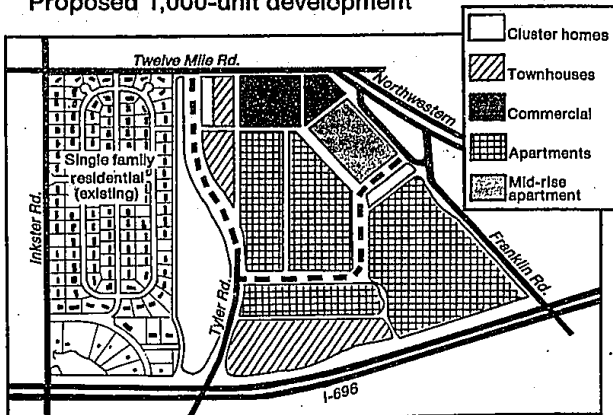
"I won't sell until I get some straightforward answers," he said. "I'm afraid of developers who deal from the bottom of the deck."

Wendy Anderson said she was unaware when she built her house that the large development was being considered.

"Will I be rezoned because of Tyler Boulevard or will I be the exit ramp?" she questioned. "My front yard's in the Tyler right-of-way and my backyard is in the ramp. Why wasn't I told this?"

Planning commissioner Denise Alexander said area residents should have known the section, which includes vacant land, would be rezoned. Homeowners want to be treated fairly, compensated for their property and be told what's going on, she said.

Proposed 1,000-unit development



Local group in exchange

Glenn Gayer of Farmington Hills, president of the Kibson Chapter of AZA/B'nai B'rith Youth Organization, describes his group's involvement in an Urban-Suburban Youth Exchange as "an expression of concern about escalating problems among teens in Farmington Hills and as an effort to help promote understanding among different parts of the community."

The exchange is coordinated by Jewish Community Council and Metro-Detroit Youth Foundation. Other Farmington Hills youth who represent Kibson AZA and the Machar Chapter of B'nai B'rith Girls in the exchange are Bill Neuschaefer, Jonathan Dwoskin, Jeff Dwoskin, Howard Rosher and Carrie Broe Rice.

Adult supervision is being provided by Roger Winkelman, Jewish Community Council Urban Affairs Subcommittee chairman; Delois Robison, coordinator of the MDYF Basic Skills Program; and Adele Lewis of B BYO.

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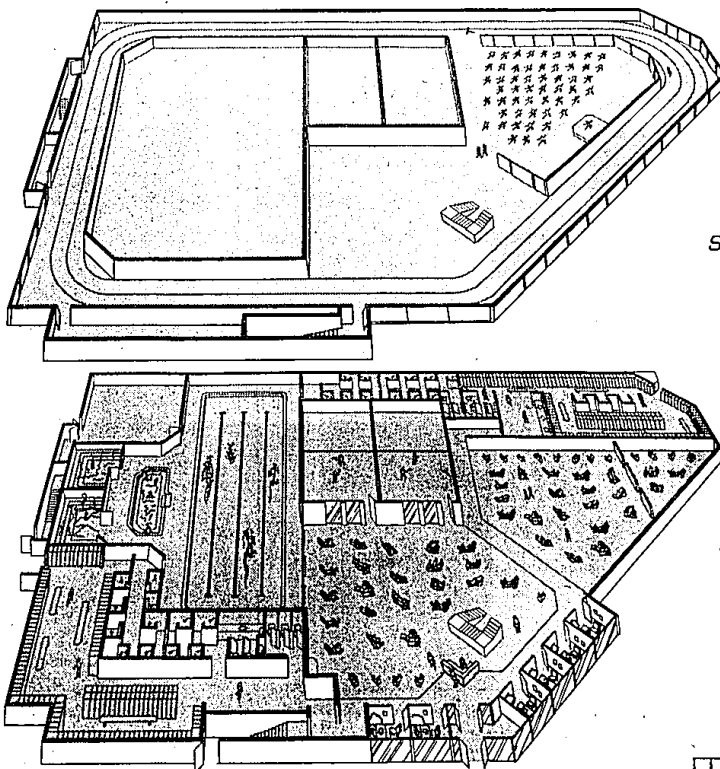
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